



B51.05

.8.K31

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JONAH.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

SECOND AND CHEAPER EDITION. Price 7s. 6d.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PLEA AGAINST MODERN UNBELIEF.

A HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE.

REVIEWS.

"A volume both interesting in itself and calculated to be of very important service to those whose duty it may be to present Christian evidences to others. The reader will find complete statements of the general arguments from miracles, from prophecy, and from history, with a very lengthy and able chapter upon the 'Authority of the Canon.' He brings to this work a mind thoroughly conversant with the literature and philosophy of his subject, and a clear and agreeable style."—*Guardian*.

"This volume is one of great ability and completeness. It is the fruit of a lifetime of scholarly, and, of late years, professional dealings with Christian truth. Professor Redford brings to bear upon the matters discussed, not only wide reading and accomplished critical scholarship, but an acute and patient intellect, as little likely to be deluded by sophisms as disturbed by passion. Among all works of its class that have come under our notice, there is none that for masterly cleverness, completeness, and compendiousness, we could place by the side of this."—*British Quarterly Review*.

"It has been executed by Mr. Redford with considerable skill and care, and with great fairness. Difficulties are not shirked, but met. It will be found by those who have to grapple with sceptical arguments a most convenient manual."—*Record*.

"The author's extensive reading and research are apparent in every chapter, while his skill in touching the weak points in the arguments or statements of sceptics is very conspicuous. This book is invaluable for the student who seeks to acquire an exact acquaintance with the various phases of opposition to Christianity, and will serve as an admirable book of reference to the Minister who, amid his pastoral duties, meets with those whose minds have been unsettled."—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*.

LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON, 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JONAH

A Defence and an Exposition.

BY

R. A. REDFORD, M.A., LL.B.,

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS,
NEW COLLEGE, LONDON.

AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN'S PLEA AGAINST MODERN UNBELIEF,"
"PROPHECY, ITS NATURE AND EVIDENCE," ETC.

London :

HODDER AND STOUGHTON,

27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXXXIII.

Butler & Tanner,
The Selwood Printing Works,
Frome, and London.

PREFACE.

NO part of the Bible is less studied than the Minor Prophets. Yet, as representing the decline and restoration of the Jewish people, they possess a singular interest and special significance. But such works require to be looked at attentively. They are full of allusions which are not on the surface, and their language is concise and sometimes obscure. We should endeavour to enter as fully as possible into the spirit of the time when they were written. We should listen to the voice of Divine Truth which spoke in them. Criticism has done much to destroy the feeling of reverence which has lingered long around such books. But it is time that criticism itself should be disarmed by the revived appreciation of the moral and spiritual features which characterise these short sum-

maries of what were, no doubt, powerful ministries of inspired messengers.

It seems, therefore, desirable to awaken attention to the value of such less read portions of Scripture, by means of studies, devoted to separate books in an exhaustive manner, describing the total impression to be gathered from them.

The Book of Jonah is the first of several which it is the author's intention, if life be spared, to treat in this method, thus supplying, in part, what appears to be a want.

PUTNEY,

August 15th, 1883.

CONTENTS.



Part I.

INTRODUCTORY.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK OF JONAH DEFENDED
AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF CRITICS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
ADVERSE THEORIES CANVASSED	3
CHAPTER II.	
THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE NARRATIVE	21
CHAPTER III.	
EVIDENCE OF LANGUAGE AND GENERAL FEATURES	51
CHAPTER IV.	
THE USE OF THE PSALMS IN JONAH'S PRAYER	71

Part II.

THE NARRATIVE.

CHAPTER I.	
THE WORDS THEMSELVES, LITERALLY RENDERED	87
CHAPTER II.	
VEGETICAL STUDY OF THE WORDS	96

Part III.

HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE BOOK.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THE OFFICE OF THE PROPHET IN THE TIME OF JONAH	127
CHAPTER II.	
SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE BOOK CONSIDERED	143
CHAPTER III.	
ISRAEL, AT THE TIME OF JONAH, IN RELATION TO SUR- ROUNDING NATIONS, ESPECIALLY TO ASSYRIA	152
CHAPTER IV.	
THE CHARACTER OF JONAH	200
CHAPTER V.	
THE SEAMEN, THEIR RELIGION AND CONDUCT	219
CHAPTER VI.	
THE TEACHING OF THE BOOK OF JONAH ON THE DIVINE CHARACTER AND PURPOSES	238
CHAPTER VII.	
THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES	263
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE PLACE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH IN MESSIANIC PROPHECY	275

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK OF JONAH DEFENDED
AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF CRITICS.



CHAPTER I.

ADVERSE THEORIES CANVASSED.

IN many respects, it may be said, there is a new spirit animating intelligent readers of the Old Testament. There is a decided reaction produced by the hard and barren criticism which would strip away the living flesh from the sacred writings, leaving nothing but dry bones. While it is not to be denied that many valuable results have been gathered from the bold and often irreverent, but learned and scientific, enquiries, which have been directed more particularly to the external form of the books of Scripture, still those results have been less appreciated than they might have been, because, to a large extent, they have remained in the hands of writers whose animus against the authority of the Bible has been only too manifest. It is time that we should examine again these ancient writings, not with a polemical aim uppermost in our thoughts, but with a simple, sincere desire to enter into the mind of the writers. No true work of man, whether of old time or of our days, can be properly understood, unless it is approached in a spirit of sympathy and

with an open mind. Criticism has its function, but it must be a subordinate one. The atmosphere of doubt is too near the earth to be free from refracting and distorting influences. The true science, whether of human things or of Divine things, must look upward and not downward, towards the highest end of *knowledge*, not towards the intermediate point of *speculation* or *theory*.

We propose to examine the Book of Jonah as a portion of the Book of God. It must be regarded in its proper place in the history of Divine communications, otherwise it cannot be understood and is likely to be depreciated. Startling as some of its characteristics are ; to some minds, perhaps, somewhat repellent, and to many more perplexing and strange ; it must be remembered that the fact of its holding a place in the Hebrew canon, taken in connection with its unique features, should at once draw to it a very special amount of attentive consideration. We must be prepared to meet the objections of critics ; we must be able to justify our high estimate of a book which has been placed by some in so low a rank. If we succeed in such aims we shall advance the study of the Old Testament.

The history of the Hebrew canon is involved in so much obscurity that it is not wonderful that modern criticism should find in such a book as Jonah ample field for its theories. The three scriptures of Ruth, Esther and Jonah, it must be admitted, present a

different aspect, as literary compositions, from the other books of the Old Testament, and might fairly suggest the question whether the standard of inspired authorship was strictly observed in the formation of the Hebrew canon. At the same time, the most cursory reader will observe that there is a tone of purity, simplicity, and piety, pervading these books, preserving them from extravagance and sustaining their theocratic character, which at once distinguishes them from such a book as Tobit in the Apocrypha and from the ordinary Eastern romance. The defender of the canon may fairly reason that the place of these books in Scripture is *prima facie* evidence in their favour. That the Jews should for centuries distinguish them from spurious works of a similar nature requires to be explained. That they should be assigned each one to its proper position in relation to the whole Revelation must surely not be a mere accident of time, but the result of careful consideration on the part of those who put the Old Testament together, guided as they were by Jewish tradition.

But in the case of Jonah, the miraculous element has, doubtless, had much to do with the persistent opposition to its authority. The whole of the modern critical school of Germany is actuated by a fierce hatred of the supernatural. The ruling principle in their criticism is denunciation of the miraculous. Whatever cannot be brought under

their *scientific canons* is to be rejected as mythical or fabulous. They feel themselves, however, under the necessity of putting forth some *theory* in order to relieve the audacity of their denials. They must explain the origin of the book which they attack. Generally speaking their theories are as varied as their names. They are agreed only in the negations. When they attempt to build up, in a new form, that which they have destroyed, their weakness immediately reveals itself. Much of their so-called criticism is simply the application of an arbitrary standard to what they have failed to understand, and their want of sympathy with the higher intention of Scripture betrays itself in the shallow and unsatisfactory *suggestions* which they put forth, by way of removing difficulties and accounting for obstinate facts.

There are questions of Hebrew philology which may be regarded as still open. When it is boldly asserted by certain scholars that the language of the Book of Jonah is positive evidence of its late composition, that it could not have been written in the eighth or ninth century B.C., and must have been in the sixth or fifth or even later still, the assertion must be tried by a *close examination of the words*. This we propose to supply in another chapter. The mere dogmatic affirmation of a few scholars, *if it is challenged by others equally to be relied upon*, will not have much weight with candid readers. There is often much slavish repetition of the *dicta* of authority

in matters of philology. The critics are not justified, as they are supposed by some to be, in laying down their decisions as final and unquestionable. In fact, they show so much of the spirit of partisans in their attacks upon the positions of the fathers, that we must always receive their statements *with reserve*, and determine to accept nothing from them for which they furnish no *sufficient* proof.

Now to the Christian, who holds that *the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ* is above question, it will be an answer to all objections against the historical credibility of the Book of Jonah, that the use of it by the Saviour precludes the possibility of *His* regarding it in any other light than as an inspired work. Not only does He point to the facts of Jonah's preaching and the repentance of the people of Nineveh, but He solemnly declares that in the day of judgment these facts will be remembered. He also uses the miraculous element and connects it immediately with the greatest miracle of Christianity, *His own Resurrection*. Plainly, therefore, it was no spurious book in the eyes of the Jewish Church of the Lord's days ; and He Himself sanctioned the popular view of its Divine authority. To some minds this overwhelming argument from the Christian point of view will stand in the place of all others.

But it is necessary, sometimes, to meet opponents *on their own ground*. The critic will not follow us

into the *innermost sanctuary* of Christian faith. Let us, then, remain with him for awhile in the *outer court* of human judgment and reasoning. Is he able to satisfy us there, that, in place of the older view (sanctioned by Christ and adopted by the universal Jewish and Christian Church, until the rise of the rationalistic school of Germany, without a question), he can furnish us with an explanation of the book which relieves us from difficulties and which can be harmonised with facts ?

We will supply the reader with a few instances in this chapter, without loading our pages with too many specimens of critical hypothesis. From the few he can easily judge of the value of all. The first, and that which has been approved by men of considerable eminence as scholars in our own country, is that of *Kuenen*, whose two great works on *The Religion of Israel*, and on *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, will be well-known to many as representative of the school. Now Kuenen has attempted to work out in his history a theory in regard to the religious state of the Jews after their return from captivity, which he has by no means proved, and which cannot be reconciled with many facts. He supposes that Ezra and Nehemiah, in effecting a great religious reformation, and restoring the authority of the neglected Mosaic Law, were actuated by *an extreme Levitical, a priestly spirit* ; that they were victorious over the opposition of the

semi-heathen party amongst the people ; but that there remained, in both periods, a small number of higher and broader spirits, who, by their contact with heathen systems, had been led to throw off their Jewish prejudices and embrace a more liberal view of the destination of Israel and the function of prophets. He suggests that the Book of Jonah emanated from this party, and represented the more *cosmopolitan* feeling which actuated them, and their desire to rebuke the *extreme strictness of the priestly party*. This, of course, involves a condemnation of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and (Kuenen would add) of *Malachi* as well, for he admits that, if we follow their representations, we should think only unfavourably of the opposition they met in the people. In other words, *there is no evidence whatever in Scripture itself of any such noble-minded and cosmopolitan spirit working in the nation* ; but the critic thinks there *ought* to have been such a spirit present, in order to account for *Ruth*, *Esther*, and *Jonah* ; therefore he introduces it into his theory. "Probability is in favour of the supposition that many noble and upright men ranged themselves among the opponents of Ezra and Nehemiah, from full conviction." This he endeavours to confirm by referring to the method by which Nehemiah suppressed the marriages with strange women ; and both he and Ezra, by their precipitation, while they succeeded in their object, must have "*excited opposition, and principally among*

the more cultivated and discreet of their contemporaries." This, however, is directly against the *original prohibition of intermarriage*. If the offenders violated the *Law of God* and the very spirit of *theocracy*, how can they have been "*the highest and most spiritual of the people?*" It is also affirmed by Kuenen, that "*Ezra and Nehemiah assailed as much the independence of the religious life of the Israelites, which found utterance in prophecy, as the more tolerant judgment upon the heathen to which many inclined; their reformation was, in other words, anti-prophetic and anti-universalistic.*" He goes on to say that prophecy disappeared about the same time as the reformation was effected by Ezra and Nehemiah; and he takes that as *proof* that *they suppressed the prophetic spirit!* But the *fact* is not substantiated; for the first Babylonian prophets (to say nothing of those who appeared during the captivity, Jeremiah's latest prophecies, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others) were certainly as great and wonderful manifestations of the prophetic spirit as any in Israel. *Zechariah* and *Malachi* themselves were marvellous outbursts of *Messianic hope, and quite irreconcilable with any such suppression of prophecy as Kuenen suggests*. Moreover, the tradition of the Jews is that Ezra and Nehemiah themselves, with the Great Synagogue, put together the works of the prophets with the other Scriptures. It is entirely gratuitous to say, as Kuenen does, "There was no room for the prophet in such a

society as Ezra and Nehemiah tried to establish. He is the man of the Spirit, and therefore a child of freedom. He must be able to speak as his heart prompts him, upon every subject which seems to him to concern religion, against all who endanger the spiritual worship of Jehovah. *We have no difficulty in discovering in the writings of the prophets before the exile, more than one saying which, spoken in Ezra's days, would have been considered high treason!*" This we cannot accept in view of the statements of Scripture, and in remembrance of the fact that *Ezra himself must have approved of the very sayings referred to, otherwise he would not have put them in the canon.* The critic admits that the reformation, as he calls it, was indispensable. *"Take away their measures and you would see the small Jewish nation lose itself among its neighbours and vanish without leaving a trace behind."* In other words, Ezra and Nehemiah were directed by God to do what they did. Israel was saved, both nationally and spiritually, by it. *And yet, forsooth, this Divine method was destruction of the Divine Spirit! God contradicted Himself!* Such reasoning is, surely, only worthy of rationalistic critics. It is utterly without foundation; in fact, it is mere gratuitous assumption to support a theory. Ezra and Nehemiah represented the highest spirit of the people, *the Divine voice*; and that voice, whether it spoke by way of *legal enactment* or of *prophecy*, was always the same. *There was no real*

inconsistency between a true Levitical reform and prophecy. Indeed it was, by means of the reformation which Ezra and Nehemiah effected, that the Messianic hope of Israel rescued itself from the corruptions of a semi-heathen state. The critic has found a mere mare's nest of his own. He wishes to account for the books in the canon which seem to indicate a Divine breadth of view, *not to be explained on any naturalistic principle.* He therefore begins by first post-dating the books—on the assumption (for it is no more) that their style and language belong to the later age—and then, in order to find *authors* for them in that later period, he has positively *to invent* a whole class of minds in the nation for the existence of which he has no evidence to bring forward. It is not likely that contact and intermixture with heathenism would develop such a state of mind and feeling as he presupposes. On the other hand, as those who broke down the distinctions of Judaism were *traitors to Jehovah*, it is a contradiction to suppose that *they would be the subjects of inspiration.* Certainly, the books of *Ruth* and *Jonah* bear no traces of their being originated among such a class. There is nothing in them like defection from *the true theocratic spirit.* The most wonderful fact about them is, that *they inculcate a true spiritual universalism, while they breathe no syllable of unfaithfulness to the covenant of Israel.*

Another point on which Kuenen lays great stress

is the change in the Divine procedure effected through the repentance of the Ninevites. This, he thinks, was imagined by the author in order to meet the objections of some to the prophecies against the heathen, that they were *not literally fulfilled*. But there is no evidence that any such objection was prominently before the minds of the people *in the sixth century*, when Kuenen supposes that the Book of Jonah was published. How could it be when *Nineveh had been destroyed*? When judgment had already overtaken other heathen nations, when the predictions in regard to Israel and Judah *had* been so exactly fulfilled even to the amount of years of their captivity, how could such an objection have been put forward? It is simply monstrous that any one should maintain that *the special object of the Book of Jonah was to meet an objection which would, at the time, have been met with infinitely more force by patent and indisputable facts*. Again the theory breaks down *for want of evidence*. *It is entirely gratuitous*.

Let us now take another example of critical candour. *Ewald* is certainly not so much a theoriser as *Kuenen*, but *he* has his literary hypothesis *to suit his philological judgments*. He supposes¹ that, about the time of the decay of prophecy, collectors of the Jewish writings put together the prophets, *according to their literary views*. He thinks that there were

¹ *Prophets of the Old Testament—Jonah.*

"*aftergrowths*," when, as he expresses it, "*the mighty ancient tree of Hebrew prophetism had completely fallen into decay*. It had sent its roots too deep into the life and especially the literature of the nation, and it had been too full of the energy of true life, to permit it to suddenly disappear without some new *aftershoots*. Many of these *aftershoots* start up, indeed, very soon, with peculiar luxuriance, and form a distinct kind of literature; but they were mostly sapless and feeble scions. *Some of them attain something of the elevation and greatness of the ancient prophetic books!*" A very remarkable fact, surely, especially in the sphere of religious writings! Quite unprecedented and without parallel!

If such instances are to be found in the sixth or fifth century, *why not in the remaining four centuries before Christ?* Certainly there is nothing in the *Apocrypha* to compare with any biblical book of the kind. It is easy, indeed, for Ewald to talk as he does of *legends*, and to class under that head a large part of the Old Testament; but it is not easy for him, or any other critic, to explain the fact that those "*legends*" are *inseparably bound up with the whole Revelation and with the spiritual history of a people manifestly led by God, and with a religion which culminated in Christianity*. Speaking of the Book of Jonah, Ewald admits that "*it is in itself a perfectly intelligible and complete piece of narration*"; but he regards it as "*taken from a large series of similar*

pieces, and belonging to an entirely new branch of literature," while at the same time he recognises in it *the sublimest teaching and extraordinary skill in the treatment of its materials!* That Jonah existed is not denied; and "*this later narrative, which is so modest and yet so exceedingly ingenious and profoundly suggestive, supplies evidence of his vastly impressive and daring labours.*" In a word, then, Ewald regards the book as the work of some prophetic spirit in the sixth or fifth century, *taking up an ancient legend and "shaping it with greater freedom in the same spirit in which it first arose, under the influence of prophetic thoughts, in such a way that it would serve the author simply as pliable material for the elaboration of his own principles!"* Now against this theory there are *two crowning objections:* (1) *The universal Jewish Church accepted the Book of Jonah as canonical, and it was so regarded at the time of our Saviour.* It is impossible to reconcile this fact with such an origin of the book. True, there is an *appearance* of legend on the surface, in the story of the whale and in the repentance of Nineveh, and especially in the lack of historical data in the book. But on the other hand, *the solemn commencement, "Now the word of the Lord came," and the serious tone of the whole narrative, and (which is admitted by all critics), the sublime teaching included in it,* forbid the supposition that it was a mere "*legendary aftergrowth.*" We have no reason to suppose that *the Jews did* (as the

early Fathers sometimes did) assume the names of great prophets to give weight to their own writings. There was always, among the Jews, *at least till the Alexandrian period, a profound reverence for Scripture*, which excluded the idea of a mere random and careless *accumulation of writings* to which canonical authority was attributed. (2) *The Lord Jesus Christ, both as Himself Divine and as representing the belief of His age, could not have used the book as He did, had it been what Ewald represents it to be.* He must have distinguished between the true *prophets* and the mere *writers of legends*. He would not have drawn special attention to the typical meaning of Jonah's history had it been fabulous?

But in addition to these *two leading objections* to Ewald's theory, we maintain that it is entirely inconsistent with *the admissions of Ewald himself*. He points to the fact that there is *no detail* in the book, no *working up* of the legend, no *connecting links* with Assyrian history, no attempt to render the story, as such, *fascinating*. It breaks off *abruptly*. It is penetrated with a *deeply religious spirit*. It is both *psychologically* probable, and *historically* possible.

One great point with the critics has been, that *Nineveh could not have repented so suddenly at the preaching of a foreign prophet*. Bleek, e.g. says, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (vol. ii. p. 182): "The chief difficulty in my eyes, consists in the improbability, which must necessarily appear to any

unprejudiced reader, that the whole of the inhabitants of so enormous a city as Nineveh is represented to have been, should have immediately felt such remorse at the exhortation to repentance from a foreigner of a strange nation, and that they should have been turned to such sincere contrition as is here described, from the king downwards to the very meanest of the people; added to which, that in the history of this nation not the slightest trace of the event and its results is at all alluded to," etc., etc. As to the latter point, we have no reason to suppose that every individual, or even the majority, *literally repented*; for, referring to the pleading of Abraham with God for Sodom, we know that even *a small number of true penitents would save the city*. The rest may have been partly influenced by example, and partly by their own feelings; but that such a change in a whole city should take place is not improbable. It will be shown in subsequent chapters of this work that sincere religious feeling was not unknown among the Assyrians, and that the preaching of Jonah had a foundation of knowledge to work upon. Ewald himself, referring to the fact, admits its possibility. "We know," he says, "as a fact, from other sources that among the ancient nations of those countries, days of profound humiliation frequently interchanged with the most luxurious life and feasts of wildest joy, as this was most plainly seen in the worship of Tammûz. How greatly, moreover, feeling changes

in great cities, and at times even the most serious feeling of repentance will become prevalent, is a phenomenon with which we are sufficiently familiar in our own day and experience both in Europe and America. A true Hebrew prophet, of the times when these prophets had often produced the most powerful effects, both in their own land and far beyond its limits, was able to become also in Nineveh the man of the day." Rev. T. K. Cheyne, writing on Jonah in the *Theological Review* for 1877 (vol. xiv. p. 217), accepting entirely Kuenen's proposed solution, describes thus the supposed intention of the book. "It may be asked in conclusion, What induced the writer of Jonah to take the trouble to work up this myth or symbol into a popular tale? Certainly it was not an artistic impulse; he wrote it neither to please himself nor to amuse others, but to press certain home truths upon his countrymen. These truths would seem to be, (1) *The equality before God of Jews and heathen*. The exclusiveness which showed itself in the episode of the 'mixed marriages' (Ezra ix. 10), was threatening to petrify national character, and to hinder the accomplishment of God's large designs for Israel. In opposition to this, the writer shows us an Israelite wilfully rejecting God's immediate revelation, and heathen acting in the spirit of high morality. One may indeed fairly extend to this book the criticism which has been passed on Lessing's immortal 'Nathan,' that the lower religion

shows better in its representatives than the higher. Very likely this was said at the time. For it was a true idea that the heathen could show a good disposition and even repent. We find even great religious writers describing the heathen as wicked because heathen (cf. Hab. i. 13, ii. 4, and iii. 13; Ps. lxxxiv. 10, lxxxix. 22; Isa. xxvi. 10; Ps. cxxv. 3). The scene of Jonah and the palmchrist (ch. iv.), was especially designed to check this feeling. (2) *The prophetic or missionary character of Israel*, the agent chosen of God for the fulfilment of His large designs for the world. It was the second Isaiah (xlii. 1-4) who first fully realized this prophetic character, though indeed it was only the corollary of the intense monotheism of the later Israelites. Jonah and Israel—type and antitype—had each to be brought to the consciousness of their mission by calamity.” Now it is strange that a scholar of Mr. Cheyne’s ability does not recognise the absolute contradiction in such a representation as this. If the meaning of the book was so much above the ordinary feelings of the people, then it was inspired, and if it was inspired it could not have taken the form of a mere popular tale, for that is entirely out of harmony with all the other inspired productions of the prophets. Moreover, if the story is fiction, why should a prophet of the sixth or fifth century take such a liberty with the character of one who is acknowledged to have been the true successor of Elijah and Elisha by Ewald

himself, and whose life passed through almost equally unusual vicissitudes of marvellous exaltation, victory, and glorification, and of flagging zeal and despair. The whole theory is beset with difficulties far more insoluble than those of the orthodox view. Holding that view, we have simply to admit the possibility of physical and moral miracles, which harmonizes with all the other supernatural elements of the Bible. There are, it is true, some superficial perplexities connected *with the language of the book*, but these, as we shall see in the sequel, are by no means insuperable. Criticism has made a very determined attack on the genuineness and authority of "Jonah," but hitherto it has failed to shake it. The substantial fact remains, *the Jewish Church received it*. We cannot prove that they were wrong. Until we do so, we should acquiesce in their decision.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE NARRATIVE.

A DEFENCE of a work, such as the Book of Jonah, against the attacks of adverse critics, must of necessity take account of *the miracles*, which form a substantial part of the narrative. To some minds the difficulty of admitting the truth of what is described as supernatural, is insuperable. Now it is not possible to discuss fully, in this chapter, the subject of miracles. It must be taken for granted that there is no such antecedent incredibility attached to all miracles that a book which includes them must, at once, be rejected as spurious. But no candid defender of Scripture will deny that some miracles are more credible than others. And no reader of the Book of Jonah can escape the impression that there is somewhat exceptional and peculiar in the two great miracles recorded there. The object of this chapter, therefore, will be to show, by a careful consideration of the facts, that while they are startling they are yet in harmony with the general tone of Scripture.

That any *special* manifestation of the Spirit of

God should be accompanied with *special* signs in the natural world, is not only possible, but probable. The human heart has testified in every age to its expectation that the *physical* shall bear witness to the *spiritual*, that the *seen* shall, in some measure, correspond with the *unseen*. Now the two great miracles of the Book of Jonah are, it must be noticed, intimately bound up with the narrative and, what is still more important, with the meaning and intention of the book. The one is the *miraculous preservation* of the prophet himself. The other is the *miraculous conversion* of the people of Nineveh. On both these two *main facts* the story rests, and both are equally essential to it. Let us take the former of the two and consider it, for a moment, in this aspect of it. Jonah is thrown out of the ship in a storm, swallowed by a great fish, cast out upon the shore, and preserved alive. We will not, at present, enter upon the question, what the narrative is intended to describe as the *form* of the miracle; whether a maintenance, supernaturally, of life, in circumstances which would naturally involve death; or a miraculous suspension of animation for some forty-eight hours or more; or a revival of an extinguished life, a literal raising of Jonah from the dead. That we must carefully discuss presently. Meanwhile the reader's attention is called to the following points. (i.) This miracle is distinctly affirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ to be a type of the Resurrection. If it were not a fact, if it were a mere

fiction, or exaggeration, it could not have been so employed. Indeed, it would, in that case, be a stumbling block in the Christian's path. It would imply that the Resurrection of the Lord was of the same shadowy character. (ii.) The gist of the whole narrative is *the Divine dealing with Jonah*, as the representative of His people. As an incident in the life of an individual, it would be a mere *moral history*; but as it is, it is a *profoundly significant parable*, pointing to the solemn responsibilities of Israel as the messenger of Divine mercy to the world. Now, apart from the vitiating of the whole book, if it is founded upon a fiction, it may be argued that the miraculous preservation of Jonah is necessary to the fundamental plan of the book. This will be admitted by those who represent it as an ingenious and artistically beautiful *apologue*. Take away the incident of the storm and the punishment of Jonah, and his ultimate fulfilment of the Divine command, and you have destroyed the unity and character of the whole. This will appear in the subsequent chapters more clearly. It must be remembered that what Jonah wanted was an overpowering manifestation of the Divine, to subdue his own unbelief and prejudice, and that was supplied him, in a manner in which it was impossible for him to doubt. Hence his immediate obedience to the *second* call of the Divine Word. It must also be remembered, that in preaching he required a background of supernatural fact upon which to set forth

the message which he was commanded to deliver. We are not told, indeed, that he used the miracle of his own deliverance as a credential of his mission, but we must admit that it is at least *possible* that he did so; nor is there any great *improbability* in the supposition that the fame of that miracle preceded him at Nineveh, and that it became the common accepted sign which God sent to the whole Semitic family of peoples about that time. (iii.) And then, once more, it must not be forgotten that the miracle is quite in harmony with the course of revelation, with those that had preceded it in Israel, and with the spirit of the time. Coming soon after the ministry both of *Elisha* and of *Elijah*, and being first sent to the same part of Palestine, it seems quite fitting that such a work should be wrought. The miracles of *Elisha* were of a wider scope than those which had hitherto been sent amongst the people. So this miracle is more adapted to strike the minds of the heathen than if it had been performed strictly within the limits of the chosen race. The sailors would be called in as witnesses, and possibly themselves proclaimed the facts. And if *Jonah* was to be preserved alive, when cast out of the vessel into a raging sea, what more fitting form of the miracle can we imagine, than that he should be cast out by a great fish on the neighbouring shore? To our minds, no doubt, there is something repellent in the quaintness of the story and its very simplicity. But that is partly the effect of an

irreverent use which has been sometimes made of it, and partly perhaps due to the broad difference in the character of the Western mind from the Eastern. Just as our associations with the ass, which are so entirely unlike those of Eastern countries, form an obstacle to the reception of the story of Balaam, so the element of the ludicrous and grotesque is to us almost inseparable from the narrative of Jonah. But this we must do our best to overcome. By throwing back our thought to the time and place of the incident, we are able to recognise that it both *might* be firmly believed by the men of Israel and Nineveh, and *would* by them be received as *a solemn message from God*.

The other great supernatural fact of the book is *the conversion of Nineveh through the preaching of Jonah*. This is a *moral* miracle of the highest order. We have already observed that there is no occasion to suppose more than a temporary and partial change to have been effected. Indeed, as the statement is that "*God saw their works that they turned from their evil way ; and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them ; and He did it not*" (iii. 10), the inference may be justly drawn that the repentance only went to the extent of *averting the evil*, which we have reason to believe, from other parts of Scripture, need not imply that it was a very *deep* repentance, or one that was *universally manifested*. We should conclude, then, that the preaching

of the prophet from Israel effected a vast humiliation of the people of Nineveh, a day of fasting and prayer, or several such, which would probably lead to the abandonment of some of those violent enterprises, the cruelty and oppression of which had brought down upon the city the threatened judgment of God. Now, as we have seen, this sudden and universal humiliation and fasting was not an unknown thing, and still is a familiar fact in Eastern countries, so that such a change is no *impossibility* in the nature of things. But is it not an extreme *improbability*, and does it not make an unreasonable demand upon faith? Certainly not, in view of that promise of *the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh* which the prophet Joel proclaimed only *a few years after the time of Jonah*, possibly in immediate connection with the incident described. The dates of the minor prophets cannot, it is true, be accurately fixed. But if *Joel* prophesied about 800 B.C., *Jonah* preceded him *by only a few years*. The fact of Nineveh's repentance might well be therefore in the thoughts of the later prophet. Mr. Cheyne asks, "*how could the Ninevites give credence to a man who was not a servant of Asshur?*" If Mr. Cheyne had looked further into Assyrian mythology he would have seen that the worship of Asshur rested on a higher basis of *Monotheistic belief* (as we shall see in a later chapter), and that the *community of religious ideas* among all the Semitic nations quite explains the reverential

attention given to a prophet who came to denounce a threatening in the name of "*the Great God of Heaven and Earth.*" *Nebuchadnezzar's* conduct amply confirms this : for the Babylonian and Assyrian religions were virtually the same. And we may refer to such a case as that of *Balaam*, who was both himself obedient to the voice of the Divine Spirit, and, as representing the true God, was suffered to go his way unharmed by the king of Moab, notwithstanding that he had blessed those whom Balak would have paid him abundantly to curse. If the narrative represented Jonah as effecting the vast moral change described by merely *moral* means, then it would be incredible ; but it is put before us as *a miracle of the Holy Spirit*, for it is under the direct command of that Spirit that the prophet goes to Nineveh, and it is the simple repetition of the *words put into his mouth* which produces the effect. As to the point that there is no confirmation of such a change in *the evidence of history*, it is met by the fact that *as yet* we are quite unable to speak, with any degree of confidence, on *details* of Assyrian history. Moreover, as is well said by Prebendary Huxtable (in *The Speaker's Commentary, Excursus A.*), "*We need not be disappointed or staggered if no traces of the event be found. The staple subjects of the inscriptions, so far as they have hitherto been deciphered, are campaigns, conquests, sieges, building of palaces and the like ; matters of barbaric interest, in which a merely moral*

or religious element is not to be looked for." If reference is sometimes made in the inscriptions to religion and its propagation in conquered lands, still we cannot suppose that a *merely temporary restraint*, produced, probably, in the life of one king alone, would be referred to as a *national fact*. It would not interfere with *the worship of Asshur*, nor have we any reason to think that it was intended to do so. Possibly, it was that very aspect of the Divine mercy, its breadth and liberality, not demanding a change of dogmas and religious practices, which offended the Hebrew prophet. *He* could not understand why the Lord should spare the city, notwithstanding that it *did not entirely put away its idolatry*. We may also lay some stress on the analogy which Preb. Huxtable refers to: "*That an outward profession of national repentance was treated by Jehovah as a ground for remitting the threatened overthrow, notwithstanding that it was both superficial and short-lived* (compare 1 Kings xxi. 27-29), *was in accordance with the pedagogic character of the Old Dispensation, wherein external shows were very commonly made use of to represent in vivid symbol the actings of God's justice and mercy, and thus to draw men on to that true spiritual repentance which it is the object of all Divine revelation to bring about.*" We have already alluded to Gen. xviii. 23-33, which is full of instruction as to the principles of the Divine method of procedure. That declaration of Divine mercy and judgment remained before

the minds of God's ancient people, to teach them how to estimate their own position as mediators, like Abraham, between God and the world. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with us" that a heathen city should understand enough of the Divine character to believe that if they turned from their evil ways and cried out to Heaven for mercy, the threatened destruction would be averted? That such a fact should be put into God's book is itself a sufficient reason for the whole history. It has helped to produce repentance in many minds. It remained age after age both as a witness to Divine forbearance, and as a warning to those to whom the word of God came, lest "*they who repented at the preaching of Jonah should rise up in the judgment and condemn them.*"

Having thus considered the two supernatural facts, *from the point of view of general principle*, it remains to adduce a few considerations, especially in respect to the miraculous preservation of the prophet, which may serve *to relieve the difficulty* which some may still feel in accepting the narrative as authentic.

First, then, we remark, *the manner in which the miracle is told is that of perfect simplicity and truthfulness.* Dr. Pusey has dwelt upon this feature of the narrative in his commentary. "It is perhaps a part of the simplicity of Jonah's narrative, that he relates these great miracles as naturally as he does the most ordinary events. To God nothing is great

or small ; and the prophet, deeply as he feels God's mercy, relates the means which God employed, as if it had been any of those everyday miracles of His power and love, of which men think so little because God worketh them every day. *God prepared a great fish*, he says, *God prepared a palmchrist ; God prepared a worm ; God prepared a vehement east wind*. Whether Jonah relates God's ordinary or His extraordinary workings, His workings in the way in which He upholds in being the creatures of His will, or in a way which involves a miracle, *i.e.* God's acting in some unusual way, Jonah relates it in the same way, with the same simplicity of truth. His mind is fixed on God's providence, and he relates God's acts, as they bore upon God's providential dealings with him. He tells of God's preparing the east wind which smote the palmchrist in the same way in which he speaks of the supernatural growth of the palmchrist, or of God's providence in appointing that the fish should swallow him. He mentions this, which was in the order of God's providence ; he nowhere stops to tell us the 'how.' How God converted the Ninevites, how He sustained his life in the fish's belly, he tells not. He mentions only the great facts themselves and leaves them in their mysterious greatness." Now if the book were written for the sake of the supernatural in it, that is, *if it were a mere fiction*, we should expect a very different tone, as we find in the apocryphal books ; but here the miracles

are so completely subordinated to the moral and spiritual intention of the work that we cannot but recognise its harmony with the rest of Scripture. It is true that Jonah wrote for a people who believed in miracles. But there is no evidence of any merely fictitious use of that faith. He does not appeal to the love of the marvellous. He writes as one who simply told of the Divine procedure.

The miracle itself is so briefly described that it remains an open question what was the exact nature of it. "*Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*" The kind of fish is left undetermined, for the Hebrew is simply "*great fish*" (דג גדול). The Septuagint renders the whole clause thus, *καὶ προσέταξε Κύριος κήτει μεγάλῳ καταπιεῖν τὸν Ἰωνᾶν*. Our Lord uses the Greek *κήτος*, from which our term "*cetacea*," describing the whole genus, is derived. There can be no doubt whatever that the term is one of general description, not of specific designation. *Any* great fish might be so described. Dr. Pusey points out that as used in Homer the word would include both the "*dolphin*" and the "*dog*." "In the natural historians (as Aristotle) it designates the whole class of sea creatures which are viviparous, as 'the dolphin, the seal, the whale;' Galen adds the *Zygæna* (a shark) and large tunnies; Photius says

that 'the Carcharias,' or white shark, 'is a species of it.' Oppian recounts, as belonging to the Cete, several species of sharks and whales, some with the names of land animals, and also the black tunnies Ælian enumerates most of these under the same head." But whatever meaning we choose to attach to the Greek, the real stress of the argument must lie on the Hebrew, and there we have simply "*a great fish*," so that nothing can be brought against the miracle on the ground of contradiction. The whale may be naturally so formed that a full sized man could not be swallowed by it; but whether that be so or not, the original leaves completely undetermined what kind of fish was "prepared by Jehovah" to do the work. Fish, of such size that they can swallow a man whole, and which are so formed as naturally to swallow their prey whole, have been found in the Mediterranean. The white shark, having teeth mainly incisive, has no choice, except between swallowing its prey whole, and cutting off a portion of it. It cannot *hold* its prey, or swallow it piecemeal. Its voracity leads it to swallow at once all which it can. Hence Otto Fabricius relates, "its wont is to swallow down dead and, sometimes also, living, men, which it finds in the sea." The white shark attains to the length of thirty feet. Blumenbach says that the whole body of a horse has been found in one. And it is not uncommon in the Mediterranean. There are wonderful instances

of fish swallowing the bodies of men, and in some cases throwing them out alive. But it does not seem of any importance to dwell on such narrations, as Dr. Pusey has done, for they provoke in some minds a feeling of revulsion, which hinders the calm consideration of the text itself. No one can possibly deny that a great fish could swallow a man, and more than that, it must be admitted that a body thrown out of a ship at sea would be likely to be immediately laid hold of by some sea monster. The real gist of the miracle lies in the preservation of the prophet under such circumstances. Those who wish to put together the facts and opinions which prove the possibility of a human body being held inside a "great fish," have only to read the evidence adduced by Dr. Pusey in his introduction to *Jonah* (*Com. Minor Prophets*, pp. 257-9). We desire to lay no special stress on such facts, as relieving the difficulty of faith, because the main point is left untouched by them, how a man could be preserved alive in the body of a fish for three days and three nights. But then, was he alive? The language of the psalm which Jonah offered up as thanksgiving seems to imply that he was either actually dead, or in a state of unconsciousness. "Thou hast brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." "The depth closed me round about the weeds were wrapped around my head." The language of the psalm, compared with the facts as

described, would seem to imply that on being cast out of the ship Jonah sank to the bottom of the sea. "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever." We must allow for the poetic hyperbole of the composition. But such language points to the natural fact of death, or insensibility. The fish seeking for food, finds the body and swallows it. In that case, the psalm would be entirely *ex post facto*. It would be a recollection of the rapid thoughts which passed through the mind of the prophet as he sank in the waters. But the words, "*Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly*," if taken literally, supposes a state of consciousness. The Hebrew word, however, is simply "*from*" (מִמֶּנִּי). It is no forcing of the preposition מִן "*from*," to translate it as equivalent to "*coming from*," i.e. "*when Jonah came out of the bowels of the fish*." Any way, it is not the psalm itself, which Jonah no doubt composed deliberately, but the *substance* of the psalm, the lifting up of the heart to God, which is immediately connected with the incident. "The testimony of many persons who have suffered drowning, or been otherwise in imminent danger of almost certain destruction shows, that, at such season of extraordinary experience, the extreme tension of the mind makes it capable of passing with amazing rapidity through a vast succession of thoughts and feelings, many of which are afterwards distinctly

remembered. Something of this kind we may surmise to have occurred in the case of Jonah; earnest prayers, while he was sinking in the deep, and was being swallowed up by the fish, with perhaps, even then, a prophetic assurance of Divine preservation; and when he awoke to consciousness, a joyous sense of safety and ardent outpouring of thankfulness to his Preserver. The *sentiments* of his ode are those which he thus felt; the *form* into which they here appear cast, and which presents a highly finished specimen of Hebrew poetry, we must suppose to have been the production of a later and more tranquil hour. A similar remark applies to the 22nd, 69th, and other Psalms" (*Speaker's Com.*, vol. vi. p. 593).

But it is necessary, before leaving the subject of the miracle, to give some attention to the remarks of the critics on the close affinity of the narrative with acknowledged legends, which in their view is a sufficient account of its place in the book. Mr. Cheyne, in the article before referred to (*Theol. Rev.*, vol. xiv. p. 213), admits what he calls the "psychological verisimilitude," and that the "orthodox or conservative argument" is strong in that respect. He means, that Jonah is a character likely to have been real, and that the circumstances as a whole, in their harmony with the purpose of Jehovah, are not unnatural; but he goes on to remark that "ordinary readers, especially when influenced by

theological prejudice, are unable to realize the inveterate love of romance common to the ancient Jews with the other nations of the East." Yet surely, if that were so, it would make the fact of the admission of a mere book of fiction into the canon all the more inexplicable, for the compilers of Scripture, knowing the prevailing tendency, would be careful to exclude such a book. "The marks of a story," we are told, "are as patent in the Book of Jonah as in any of the tales of the Thousand and One Nights. The hero no doubt acts most properly under the circumstances, but how grotesquely improbable those circumstances are!" Now, we do not admit, for a moment, any resemblance between the narrative of Jonah and a mere idle tale of romance. For *first*, there is the manifest religious purpose giving reality to all; *next*, there is the perfect simplicity and artlessness of the manner of narration; *thirdly*, there is the difficulty of reconciling such a legend about a great prophet, given in his name, with his character, unless it were true; and *lastly*, there is the main fact, that the book carries with it the whole authority of the Jewish nation and the compilers of the Old Testament canon. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that there is a possibility that we have in this book an antique legend wrought into a didactic form—what have the critics to say as to the legend itself? Here we will quote Mr. Cheyne's words: "Granting that the Book of Jonah

is a fiction, how shall we account for its origin? The later literature of the Old Testament supplies us with an answer. We know how lovingly the Jews of the Captivity and the Restoration brooded over the thought of the nation; how, like Rome to the Romans, Israel became to them an almost divine being, towards whom they cherished the strongest personal attachment. Just as the Servant or Liegeman of Yahveh in the second Isaiah, and the sufferer who is the subject of so many of the Psalms, are symbolical of the suffering righteous or ideal Israel, and (probably) the 'Son of man' in Daniel (vii. 13) of triumphant Israel, so Jonah, the recalcitrant prophet, may well be a type of offending Israel. From an exile or post-exile point of view, it seemed as if the calamities of Israel had arisen from her hankering after political instead of spiritual supremacy; in short, from the abnegation of her prophetic mission. The belly of a sea-monster is actually used in Jeremiah (li. 34, 44) as a figure for the captivity of Israel. And the restoration of the captives was really so unexpected an event, that it might fairly be likened to Jonah's no less strange deliverance in the story. This view is to some extent confirmed by the fact that the psalm, ascribed to Jonah when in the belly of the fish, is mainly composed of metaphorical expressions. Thus, the belly of Sheol (or Hades), the seas, the floods and the waves, are clearly figures of speech, meaning 'great affliction,' which made it all the

easier for the unknown writer to enclose it in his framework of romance. The solution here offered removes the chief difficulties which encompass the narrative. But there is still an element of uncertainty about it, until we can show the origin of the grotesque symbol of the 'great fish' (Jonah i. 17). And happily we are able to do this. No practised eye can doubt that the symbol in question is a shrivelled-up myth, and that the story in its original form related to the favourite mythic subject of light and darkness. The name and character of Jonah are a later addition. It would indeed be almost incredible if a story prevalent among so many various races, from New Zealand to India, had left no vestige of itself among the Israelites, especially as not a few other stories occur in the Old Testament, which are merely imaginative versions of nature-myths. And the myth of the sea-monster in particular is preserved, not only in the story of Jonah, but in fragmentary allusions to the leviathan, Rahab, and the dragon, in the books (probably nearly contemporary) of Job and the second Isaiah (Job iii. 8, xxvi. 12, 13; Is. li. 9, cf. xxvii. 1). All these appellations are really synonymous, and refer to the great enemy of the sun, the dragon of cloud and darkness, whose existence in the early Babylonian mythology, under the name of the seven-headed serpent, has been proved by M. Lenormant and Mr. Sayce; and under the name of Tiamtu (*i.e.* the sea, especially the

heavenly sea, like the Hebrew t'hom) by Mr. George Smith. Henceforth there can be no reasonable doubt that the cloud-dragon forms an essential part of Babylonian, Assyrian, and (at least at one period) popular Jewish mythology."

A theory of this kind, is based upon so many assumptions that it demands almost implicit faith in those who put it forth. The whole fabric falls to the ground when we maintain, which we do upon the evidence of Scripture as a whole, that the Jews were not, like other nations, the victims of mythological invention. It might be admitted that, previous to the Captivity, there was *some* influence of heathenism upon the popular mind, particularly in the northern tribes; but it is not at all probable that those who came out of the Exile and compiled the sacred books, were under such influence. Moreover, the reasoning of Mr. Cheyne is inconsistent. He admits the antiquity of the legend, and yet denies the antiquity of the book. He requires, in order to complete his theory, a state of feeling, out of which he supposes it to have arisen, and he assumes that that state of feeling was of late origin—after the Captivity. Yet he is obliged to acknowledge that the legend is quite old enough to have been introduced into the Book of Job, and he ought to add, must have been connected with the Book of Genesis. Jeremiah may have taken it from Jonah, and the presence of the allusions in his

writings confirm, so far, the priority of Jonah. But we deny *in toto* the resemblance of the narrative of Jonah to any such legend. The expression in the Hebrew is simply "*a great fish*," and there is no analogy to the dragon-story, neither is there in any legend anything which can be compared to the fish swallowing Jonah and preserving him alive, and at the command of Jehovah vomiting him again upon the shore. "The sun slaying the darkness" is not at all parallel. The idea in all such stories is that of an enemy of man waiting to destroy him and defeated of his purpose, but the idea of the fish in Jonah is that of preservation, not destruction. True, Jonah compares his situation in the belly of the fish to being in Hades; but we may take that as referring to his being in the depths of the sea and virtually dead, not to the rage of the monster. The whole story is told in a manner to put the fish into the background and lay stress chiefly on the preservation of the prophet. In fact the swallowing and vomiting forth are mere incidents in the personal history of Jonah. He is not introduced as fighting a monster and overcoming it, but as mercifully received by the fish and carefully kept the appointed time. Hence, symbolically, the fish has been taken to represent the true Church, which saves from death and introduces the sinner to a new state—in which he rejoices in Divine mercy. No doubt Jonah is a sign of God's love to His people, but however the history may be spiritually

applicable to the general purposes of revelation, we are not to conclude from its significance that it is of human invention; rather that significance proves that it is of Divine appointment. To show how this net of symbolism when once it is thrown over the histories of the Old Testament will easily catch up the familiar names and pull them into the hands of theorists, we may quote the note with which Mr. Cheyne concludes his article. "The substitution of Jonah, *i.e.* the symbol of the Jewish nation, for the sun, may be paralleled by the transformation of Samson ('the sun-god,' as Dagon=the fish-god) into an Israelite national hero, and possibly, if Goldziher's hesitatingly suggested interpretation be correct, of Balaam ('the devourer,' viz. of the sun=the leviathan or dragon), into the tempter and destroyer of the Israelitish people," and so on. There is really no end to such fancies. The whole history of the Jewish people becomes a mass of fables, and is therefore much more incredible than any number of genuine miracles.

The growth of the gourd and its rapid destruction, described in chapter iv., has been challenged by the critics. We certainly have the same language employed in that case as in the case of the "great fish." The Lord is said to have "*prepared*" the gourd, the worm that smote it, and the vehement east wind which was so trying to the prophet; but it may be doubted whether it is intended to represent

the growth and destruction of the plant as in any sense *supernatural*. The expression "*son of a night*," rendered in the English version, "which came up in a night and perished in a night," is so completely after the analogy of the Eastern mode of speech, that we could not conclude from it any supernaturally rapid growth. The idea of the whole passage seems to be a very rapid springing up of the "*kikaion*." The reference to time has been somewhat unnecessarily pressed. "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered." The next day referred to may have been that following Jonah's "*exceeding gladness*": that is, as soon as the plant was grown enough to be found serviceable, Jonah expressed in some form, on a particular occasion, "*exceeding gladness*," in the shade afforded by it; but he had only just begun to rejoice in it when it was taken away from him. If this explanation be not admitted, we must suppose either a hyperbolical representation, a day being used to express the rapidity of the growth, or a supernatural development of the vegetable life, in which case the miracle would harmonize with that of the prophet's preservation. Divine agency would, of course, be intended, but not necessarily in a supernatural form.

It seems doubtful whether the "*palma christi*" or *palmcrist* was really the plant referred to. Dr. Pusey quotes from Jerome that "the *kikaion*, called *kikeia*

[or Elkeroa] in Syriac and Punic, is a shrub with broad leaves like vine leaves. It gives a very dense shade, supports itself on its own stem. It grows most abundantly in Palestine, especially in sandy spots. If you cast the seed into the ground it is soon quickened, rises marvellously into a tree, and in a few days what you had beheld a herb, you look up to, a shrub. The kikaion, a miracle in its instantaneous existence, and an instance of the power of God in the protection given by this living shade, followed the course of its own nature." "It is a native of all North Africa, Arabia, Syria, India." We must refer, however, to the remarks made by Dr. Thomson in his *Land and the Book* (imp. 8vo. ed. 1881, p. 13). He maintains that the reference is not to the "palma christi," but to the gourd. "The word *kūr-ah*, gourd, closely resembles both in form and sound *khūrwah*, castor-bean, just as the *kikion*, gourd, of Jonah resembles the Egypto-Greek *kiki*, castor-bean, according to Dioscorides. These accidental resemblances may have led Jerome and others into the opinion that they were the same plants. But Orientals never dream of trailing a castor-oil plant over a booth, or planting it for a shade, and they would have but small respect for any one who did. It is in no way adapted for that purpose, while thousands of arbours are covered with various creepers of the general gourd family. As to ancient translations, the LXX. gives colocynth, which is a general

species of gourd ; and the Vulgate, castor bean." A few days would be sufficient for a gourd to run over the arbour which Jonah built. Indeed, when it is said that Jonah made him a booth, it is not stated how he made it. We may conjecture that he found gourds already growing on the spot, and trained them over his booth, and God made them to grow with unusual rapidity, which He might do by steady rain or in any other natural way. The Targums retain the Hebrew word. The Talmud substitutes the kiki of Egypt for it. Dr. Kitto mentions that the Ricinus abounds on the Tigris, and grows to a great size there. There can be no doubt of its rapidity of growth and its shady leaves fitting it for the purpose ; but Dr. Thomson's testimony is of great weight, and the gourd is certainly better adapted for the purpose than the palm-crist. Any way, we must allow for some degree of poetic colouring in such a narrative. The lesson conveyed required the speedy growth and speedy destruction of the gourd ; but there was no particular force in the *one* day, unless it was an allusion to the one day's preaching of Jonah in Nineveh. Even then it is only said that Jonah went one day's journey in the city, but not that he remained only one day within its walls. We must not unduly press such small details. The general impression is a broad one of rapid action and rapid decision. But, regarded as a miracle, there is no more incredibility in the incident of the gourd than

in any other miracle of the Old Testament ; though our principle should be that of parsimony in dealing with the supernatural element—God works no unnecessary miracle.

The *moral* miracle has not been so much dwelt upon by the objectors ; though it makes quite as great a demand upon faith. Now the remark just made, in regard to the gourd, applies to the account of *the repentance of Nineveh*. The manner of the narrative is so elliptical that we must supply much which is left unexpressed. “ *And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*” Here is no statement of the prophet’s appearance, or of any of his surroundings. Did he make any appeal to his own miraculous preservation ? Did he call upon the people to repent ? Did he refer to the histories of Divine judgments in the past ? Did he address himself to any one class in the community ? “ *So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything : let them not feed, nor drink water : but let man and beast be covered*

with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" This is a rapid summary of the work of the prophet and its results. The text of the sermon was the prediction of the overthrow in forty days. But it does not follow that Jonah said no more. The number *forty* is a symbolical number, and it may be taken to represent generally the decreed period, probably in allusion to the *forty years* in the wilderness, during which God bore the ill manners of the Israelites. Within a short and definite time, the judgment shall come down. Then, it is said that "*word came to the king.*" What word? Was it Jonah's words repeated in the palace, or was it word of the wonderful effect produced by the preaching? May we not take the whole passage to be a mere graphic Eastern representation of a prophetic mission, which may have endured a shorter or longer time, but which effected the conversion of the city? Upon this point it is difficult to speak with any confidence.

As we have already observed, the intention is to describe *an outpouring of the Spirit* on a heathen people. The substance of that truth is preserved either in the literal view of the words or in their wider interpretation. Dr. Pusey compares it to the voice of the fanatic "Jesus, the son of Anan, an unlettered rustic, who four years before the war, when

Jerusalem was in complete peace and affluence, burst in on the people at the Feast of Tabernacles with an oft-repeated cry : ‘ A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice on Jerusalem and the temple, a voice on the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice on the whole people ’ ; how he went about through all the lanes of the city, repeating day and night this one cry ; and when scourged until his bones were laid bare, echoed every lash with ‘ Woe, woe to Jerusalem,’ and continued as his daily dirge, and his one response to daily good or ill treatment, ‘ Woe, woe to Jerusalem.’ The magistrates, and even the cold Josephus, thought there was something in it above nature.” And so there may have been, though we have no authority for saying so. But the two cases were quite different. Jonah was sent to Nineveh by God to utter His own Divine message. Our Lord describes it as “ *the preaching of Jonah,*” and compares it in some degree with His own, “ *a greater than Jonah is here*” (Matt. xii. 41). The word used by our Lord is κηρύγμα, and that is the word used of the gospel itself, κηρύγμα ἀποστόλικον, and certainly meant more than a mere “cry” of alarm and terror. At the same time, there is great force in the remark which Dr. Pusey makes, that the threatening sent to Nineveh by Jonah was calculated to produce great alarm among the people of the city, for it was of a “miraculous overthrow.” It was a turning upside down (see Jud. vii. 13 ; Job ix. 5 and

xxviii. 9), like the overthrow of the five cities of the plain, which are known, throughout the Old Testament, and still throughout the Mahomedan East, by the same name, "*al-montaphikat*," "*the overthrown*" (see Gen. xix. 21-25 ; Deut. xxix. 23 ; Amos iv. 11 ; Jer. xx. 16 ; Lam. iv. 6).

When it is remembered that the tradition of the flood was familiar to the people of the Mesopotamian valley, and that the destruction of the cities of the plain was in all probability also among their familiar traditions, and when we remember at the same time that in those days of violence and rapine, it would be well understood that a great city might be destroyed suddenly by invasion, as both Nineveh and Babylon subsequently were, it is not at all an improbable thing that the solemn proclamation of approaching doom should produce such an effect as is described in the Book of Jonah. Mr. Cheyne reasons very unfairly when he says, "There is moral improbability in a whole city being converted by an obscure foreign prophet. To judge of the degree of this improbability, it is enough to read any inscription you please of an Assyrian king. Fancy Sargon or Sennacherib in the presence of Jonah ! How could the Ninevites give credence to a man who was not a servant of Asshur ?" All this is beside the point. Jonah was not "*obscure*," for he would be known as the representative prophet of Israel ; foreign he might be, but his language (as we

shall show in another chapter) would be understood. We are not told that the king himself was in the presence of Jonah. He may have been influenced by his people. Does Mr. Cheyne doubt that a great population can be wrought upon by a great preacher? Does he reject the possibility of a moral change produced upon a multitude rapidly? If so, he must be blind to undisputed facts of history. Moreover, apart from all question of probability, the narrative simply records the fact. If it is inexplicable on any natural grounds, then we are shut up to the miraculous. So it is that our Lord represents it. We certainly cannot let go a fact stamped with His authority, on the one vague objection that ancient Assyrian inscriptions represent the kings of Nineveh as men unlikely to be influenced by a prophet. Such semi-barbarous natures are often the most easily subdued by the supernatural and the mysterious.

While we would not lessen by one word the evident claim of the narrative on faith, we protest against the mere flimsy criticisms by which its authority is attacked. They are not worthy of those who make them; and, in the face of the Lord's own direct appeal to the historical truthfulness of the book, ought not to weigh with any candid mind a moment. The real question which a serious student of Scripture will ask is not, Can I reconcile these facts with my sense of probability; but can I harmonise them with the whole bearing of prophecy? Have they a fitting place

in the sacred volume? The conversion of Nineveh, or rather the temporary reformation of the people and their rulers, was a great sign. It had an incalculable spiritual worth at that period. It coincided in time with the commencement of written prophecy. It gave the keynote to all the subsequent messages to Judah and Israel and through them to the world. Is there anything improbable in miracles being included in the striking of that keynote? Was it not the case that at each important new departure in the history of revelation there were miracles? Miracles attended the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Miracles surrounded the people in their settlement in the promised land. Miracles characterised the ministry of the two great prophets Elijah and Elisha, who were pre-eminently the rebukers of idolatry and the restorers of the broken covenant. And when prophecy, during the latter part of the ninth century before Christ, came forth afresh, in a new form, as a direct appeal to the degenerate tribes of Israel, to fulfil their function as the witnesses of Jehovah to the world, when it commenced a succession of inspired messages which should be preserved to all generations as the voice of God to His people, what would be more in harmony with the whole method of revelation than such a narrative as that of Jonah, in which Divine sovereignty and grace were set forth with unmistakable distinctness and emphasis?

CHAPTER III.

VINDICATION OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK OF JONAH BY AN APPEAL TO THE EVIDENCE OF LANGUAGE AND GENERAL FEATURES.

THE argument of the critics against the early date of the Book of Jonah, from the supposed *traces of Chaldaic influence* upon the language, is not sustained by a close examination of the instances alleged. At all times such conclusions from single words must be precarious, especially if the words adduced are such as might be employed with a borrowed significance. Long before the ten tribes were carried away to Assyria, or the two to Babylon, there was some degree of communication between Palestine and Mesopotamia. It does not follow, because a word familiar among the Chaldeans in the fifth century is found in a Jewish writing, that it is to be explained by placing the date of that writing in the fifth century. The word may have been *an ancient Chaldean word*, and as such *borrowed* by the Jewish writer. Or again, there may be words which are *explained by the circumstances*. Jonah, as a man of Galilee, would be led to adopt *sea-terms*, which he learned by his contact with the sailors ; and when he

came to Nineveh he would naturally pick up the *indigenous words* for what was strange to him as a Jew. Moreover, it should be remembered that Jonah was brought into intercourse with a very wide range of peoples speaking *Aramaic* and not Hebrew, and that probably in northern Palestine the *provincial dialect* would lead in that direction. Aramaic became the language of diplomacy and commerce throughout the districts of western Asia. But notwithstanding this, *the absence of the Aramaic element from the book* is remarkable. Had it been written after the Captivity it is difficult to explain this purity of Hebrew. The style is Hebraic throughout. It is quite in harmony with the *simplicity and purity* of Hebrew narrative. It is, as Dr. Pusey has remarked, touched here and there with poetic expressions peculiar to itself. Such as, in the account of the storm: "The Lord *cast* a strong wind"; "the vessel *thought* to be broken"; "the sea shall be *silent*" (hushed, as we say), *i.e.* calm; "the wind was *advancing and storming*," as with a whirlwind [the word is used as to the sea by Jonah only]; "*the men ploughed*" or "*dug*" [in rowing]; "*the sea stood from its raging.*" Also, "*let man and beast CLOTHE THEMSELVES with sackcloth*"; and that touching expression, "*son of a night, it* [the palma-christi] *came to being, and son of a night* [*i.e.* in a night] *it perished.*" It is in harmony with the simplicity of Jonah's character, that he is fond of the old idiom, by which the thought of the verb is carried

on by a noun formed from it: "*The men FEARED a great FEAR*"; "*It displeased Jonah a great displeasure*"; "*Jonah joyed a great joy.*" Other instances will be mentioned in the course of this chapter. That the argument is precarious on the critic's side is seen from the fact that, while many agree in the rejection of the authenticity of the book, they disagree widely in their conclusions as to its date. De Wette would date it before the Captivity; Gesenius after it. Ewald as late as the fifth century; Hitzig places it in the second, and makes it of Egyptian origin. Baur derives it from an Assyrico-Babylonian symbol. And Bleek thinks it may have been written in the beginning of the Persian age, and that the author intended Babylon by Nineveh! though he admits that it bears evidence of having been composed in Judea and not in Babylonia. And Bunsen suggests that the song of thanksgiving was really composed by Jonah on the occasion of some great deliverance, and led to the invention of the story. Such diversity of opinion points to a very shallow foundation on which the whole edifice of criticism rests. The language is itself a proof that the book could not have been written after the Captivity. We will glance briefly at the individual instances adduced.

1. *Sephinah*, ship (סִפִּינָה). This is a Hebrew word from a root meaning *to board a floor*, a "*decked vessel.*" The verb does not occur in Chaldee, though it does

in Talmudic Hebrew. The Arabic cognate means smoothed, "*planed*." Our "deck" may be compared, which is from the Dutch *dekkcn*, to cover. That the same word is found in Syriac, Chaldee and Arabic, is no proof that it is taken from them. They borrowed it from the Hebrew. The use of the word is first found in Jonah, perhaps because a decked vessel was not known before to a scripture writer. The common word for ship is "*oniyyah*," אֹנִיָּה, from the word אָנָה, like the Latin *classis*, fleet, or ships generally, a word generally used of the large merchant ships. It is when Jonah's going "*down into the sides of the ship*" has to be mentioned that the term "*decker*" is chosen. Oniyyah and sephinah are employed in the same verse.

2. *Mallach*, in the plural מַלְחִים, is also Hebrew from מֶלַח, the sea, or salt; exactly equivalent to our seamen, or, as we say, "*old salts*," and like ἀλιεύς from ἅλς, salt. While not occurring in earlier books, this is explained by the absence of allusions to seamen.

3. *Rab hachobel*, רַב הַחֹבֵל, chief of the sailors, or perhaps *mate*, LXX. ὁ πρῶτος; "*Rab*" is Phœnician. This was a Phœnician vessel. Dr. Pusey says it occurs in all only four times, and in all cases as here, of persons not Hebrew: Nebuzaradan rab Tabbachim (2 Kings xxv. 8), captain of the guard; rab Sarasim (Dan. i. 3), chief of the eunuchs; *Col rab baitho*, every officer of his house (Esth. i. 8). "*Sar*," with which

Gesenius compares it, is never used except of an office of authority, of one who had a place of authority given by one higher. It occurs as much in the later as in the earlier books, but is not used in the singular of an inferior officer. It is used of military, but not of any inferior secular command. It would probably have been a solecism to have said "*sar hachobel*," as much as if we were to say, "*prince of sailors*." Chobel חֶבֶל, which is joined with it, is a Hebrew word.

4. *Ribbo*, רִבּוֹ, ten thousand, is said by some to be a later Hebrew word for רַבּוֹת, the Thau being cast away. רַבָּה is the word found in the earlier books, the Pentateuch, Judges, Samuel, and Canticles. It is also admitted that the word is found in the later books from Daniel to Nehemiah. But it is to be found in Psalm lxviii. 18 and in Hosea viii. 12, about the date of whose prophecy there can be little dispute. The form is too uncertain to allow of much being built upon it.

5. *Yith'ashshath* (i. 6), יִתְעַשֶׂת. The word used by the captain to Jonah and referring to God's thoughts. "*If God will think of us*." In Chaldee, only used of the evil thoughts of man. It is an old Hebrew word, as we see from the use of עֲשֵׂתִי in the number *eleven*, the first number thought of after the ten digits. The root occurs in Job, in Psalm cxlvi. 4 and Canticles.

6. Dr. Pusey has shown at great length that the abbreviated form of the relative *asher*, אֲשֶׁר, is no

argument for a late composition. It is Phœnician and old Hebrew, as we see in the old names, Methusael, Misael, etc., etc. He suggests that it was used more in the dialect of northern Palestine.

7. *Manah*, מָנַח, to prepare or appoint, is found in Ps. xi. 8, and is not a late word. Jonah uses it for the providential appointment of God.

8. *Taam*, טָעַם, a royal decree, probably a Ninevite word, as it is Aramaic, connected with טָעַם, to taste, and perhaps meaning *judgment*, like our word "*taste*" in art. The word would be טָעַם in Syriac. "The employment of the special word is a part of the same accuracy with which Jonah relates that the decree used was issued not from the king only, but from *the king and his nobles*; one of those minute touches which occur in the writings of those who describe what they have seen, but supplying a fact as to the Assyrian polity which we should not otherwise have known, that the nobles were in some way associated in the decrees of the king" (*Pusey*, p. 251). Is it likely that one writing in the fifth century about Assyria in the ninth would have thought of inserting so minute a particular, especially as the Jews would not have known it at that time, and Jonah himself, only because he had visited Nineveh?

With regard to these words the following is Dr. Pusey's summary of their evidence. "Out of these *eight* words or forms, *three* are naval terms, and, since Israel was no sea-faring people, it is in harmony with

the history that these terms should first occur in the first prophet who left the land on his mission by sea. So it is also that an Assyrian technical term should first occur in a prophet who had been sent to Nineveh. A fifth word occurs in Hosea, a contemporary of Jonah, and in a Psalm of David. The abridged grammatical form was Phœnician, not Aramaic, was used in conversation, occurs in the oldest proper names, and in the northern tribes. The seventh and eighth do not occur in Aramaic in the meaning in which they are used by Jonah" (p. 250). The argument against the authenticity of the book on the ground of late forms in the language, therefore, entirely breaks down. Had it been composed after the time of the Captivity it would have been full of Chaldaisms, but, as it is, there is not one instance which can be made out.

Is it, then, a stronger case which the modern critics make out against Jonah when they represent it as a moral fiction or parable, founded upon a legend of the prophet's history, and wrought up to its present shape some three hundred years after the time of the supposed occurrences? We have already referred to this theory and examined it from the critic's point of view. But apart from the question, whether it is presented to us by those who have set it forth, in a reasonable and probable shape, which we maintain it has not been, we may now meet the opponents of the orthodox position in another way. Looking into the

narrative itself, and laying aside the general question as to the possibility of the supernatural, we may examine those features of the writing which witness to its truthfulness.

1. *The favourable representation of heathen people*, their religious character and their humanity. This is seen in the conduct of the sailors towards Jonah and their appeals to Divine protection, their fear of Jehovah, and their recognition of Jonah's sin in fleeing from his prophetic mission. Again, the Ninevites are portrayed as open to reproof, as ready to repent, as putting away their violence, as mercifully regarded by Jehovah—and that upon broad principles of Divine compassion for their ignorance and the helplessness of the multitudes. This sympathy with the heathen is supposed to be the feeling of a minority of the Jewish people after the Captivity, expressed in this book as a protest against the views of the more authoritative leaders of the nation, who would naturally wish to separate the Jews more and more from those who had led them into idolatry. But why should a writer of the fifth century commit so great an anachronism as to put such sentiments into a writing claiming to be of the ninth century? It would strike every reader at the time as an anomaly. That God should have so plainly rebuked the prejudices of the Jews three hundred years before, would be incredible, except it were manifestly supported by fact. It would seem a contradiction to the Jewish mind that the nation should

be so severely punished for not holding aloof from heathens, and yet that Jonah should have been punished for not at once obeying a Divine commandment to go and preach to a heathen city. Now even though it should be admitted that in the time of Ezra or Nehemiah a feeling in favour of the heathen might be expressed in a writing of a fictitious kind, and such a writing might by chance find its way into the sacred canon, it cannot be granted by any candid student of the Scriptures, uninfluenced by a theory, that the writer of such a fiction would be likely to place his story in the time of Jonah. Nor can we understand how the Jews would continue to regard the writing as inspired, when it so evidently reprov'd the whole nation for its exclusiveness, unless they were convinced that it had come down to them with the stamp of Divine authority upon it.

2. *The character of Jonah himself* as described in the narrative is inexplicable, on any other ground than the truthfulness of the writing. We cannot at this point give the fullest attention which such an argument demands. It will be before us again in a later chapter. But we briefly notice the following remarkable facts as much too remote from ordinary Jewish thought to be invented by a writer in the fifth century. The daring attempt of Jonah to escape the fulfilment of his mission. His putting himself among heathen when he was averse to a mission among heathen. His going down into the hold of the ship to sleep, and

sleeping so profoundly that even the storm did not awake him, though he was conscious that he was in danger. His deeply religious spirit in the time of his extremity and after his deliverance, notwithstanding his offence against Jehovah. The strange contradiction between his fulfilment of his mission at last and its wonderful effect, and his peevish complaint against God and inhuman disappointment that Nineveh was saved. The unfavourable view of Jonah's character left without one word of explanation or abatement at the end of the book. Who could have dared to cast such a slur on a great prophet's name, without warrant from history? If there was a tradition to the same effect among the people, why then should we doubt the narrative? Surely only Jonah himself would have ventured to state such facts, and only Jonah would have told them so simply and without comment. "We have only to suppose the writer to have been Jonah himself, and then the whole composition assumes the character of a frank and self-humiliating confession; by the very act of penning it Jonah at once emerges out of his former character and appears to our view not only as a prophet, but as a remarkably humble and noble-spirited saint. For the self-humiliation of the penitent is made all the more striking, when he simply narrates the story of former folly and unworthiness, while he forbears all such expressions of self-disapproval as would tacitly serve as a justification of his present self. By writing

as he has done, Jonah (supposing him to be the author) has exposed his character to the reprobation and even contempt of the great majority of his readers ; grandly careless of what they would think of *him*, concerned only for the cause of God and His righteousness.”¹ Here, then, is the key to the whole mystery of the character. Had Jonah never written the book we should say it would be hard to believe that he could have been a true prophet of God, and then it would be incredible that he could have been employed on such a mission. But his depth of repentance and faith is seen in the fact that he laid himself as a sacrifice on the altar of revelation. Hence the strange mixture in his conduct of the spirit of obedience and the spirit of selfishness. It is what is seen in the greatest saints—in David, in Simon Peter, in multitudes far below them ; but the grace of God prevails over the infirmities and faults of a merely human character, and behind the distressing picture of inconsistency and moral weakness, there comes out the overpowering sufficiency of Divine strength, making the sinner into the servant of God—the man who fled from Jehovah’s presence, His chosen witness.

3. *The touches of nature and historical truthfulness in the narrative* are altogether unlike anything that we meet with in Eastern fiction. “Every phrase is vivid and graphic. There is not a word which does not advance the history. There is no reflection. All

¹ *Speaker’s Commentary*, vol. vi. p. 585.

hastens on to the completion, and when God has given the key to the whole, the book closes with His words of exceeding tenderness, lingering in our ears" (*Pusey*, p. 251). The touch in i. 3, is an instance in point. "*He found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.*" Why is it mentioned that Jonah paid the fare? Because it would be Jonah's object to secure his passage without dispute on the part of the heathen captain. Had he concealed himself on the ship, they might have put him out before sailing. Moreover, though he was fleeing from duty, he was not dishonest. He might have wished, too, to be undisturbed for some time, after a long struggle with anxious and distressing thoughts. He therefore paid his fare and immediately went down to sleep. Such a minute touch is not like the work of a mere writer of fiction.

Again, the whole passage i. 4 to i. 16, describing *the conduct of the heathen sailors in the storm*, is very unlike an invention. It is true to the sailor-character. It expresses at the same time the superstitious fears of the heathen, and yet their simple acknowledgment of Providence, and readiness to admit the superiority of the Hebrew's religion. The remarkable prayer put up after the vain effort of the men to bring the ship to land, is almost like a solemn funeral service over the grave of the prophet. "*Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah and said, We besecch thee, O Jehovah, we*

beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee." This is quite natural and consistent with the fact that Jonah had told them all, and that their minds were deeply affected by his story, especially as they were open-hearted sailors, not heathen priests. But who would invent such language and put it in the lips of ignorant heathen men, in the fifth century? It is simply incredible. No writer of fiction, unless he was miraculously inspired, could have drawn such a scene and invented such words.

Again, the description of *the repentance of Nineveh* has all the traits of truthfulness in it. It is just such a proclamation as Assyrians would make, bearing the marks of Eastern despotism and extravagance. And yet there is no attempt to represent the change as anything else than it was—repentance for the sake of averting Divine wrath. "*Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?*" Had it been the main object of the writer to present the heathen in a favourable point of view, one would have expected much more to be said about Nineveh and its adoption of Jonah's religion. We are left to conclude that while Divine wrath was averted, yet it was more because God had pity on the great city than because they were converted from heathenism to anything like an acceptance of the Jewish faith. This we know was the true

representation. Whatever effects might be produced at Nineveh, they did not influence the heathen character of the Assyrians as a people. They continued to worship Asshur, though we have reason to think that there was a period about Jonah's time when their violence, as an aggressive nation, was less than in either previous or subsequent ages. The judgments of God which ultimately overtook the city were delayed for several centuries. It has been brought forward as a difficulty, that Nineveh is mentioned as though it was not in existence at the time of the composition of the work. But nothing is said of the city more than was necessary to describe the facts of Jonah's mission. It is with reference to the prophet's preaching alone, that the fact is stated, "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city." The meaning therefore is, that Nineveh was a great city for Jonah to preach in, not that it was once and is no longer. There is no allusion to time. So in the whole book there is no attempt to paint up a narrative with historical exactness, as there would be in a fiction, because the spiritual intention of the book is uppermost in the prophet's thoughts. There is enough of history to give the air of truthfulness to the narrative, and yet not enough to divert attention from the main substance of the whole, which was the prophet's mission, and God's revelation of Himself and His purpose through him.

The last instance which may be adduced is, *the description of Jonah's conduct* in the fourth chapter.

It strongly recalls Elijah's despondency when he fled before Jezebel. But it could not be borrowed from it, for the character of Jonah is very different. The incident of the gourd, while plainly didactic, is yet very unlike a mere invention. It harmonizes with the natural circumstances in which the prophet was placed. And yet the manner in which the lesson is taught is very unusual. Who would have thought that such a man as Jonah could have shown any anger over the loss of the gourd? There is nothing of the kind in the case of Elijah sleeping under the juniper tree. His prayer for death meant disappointment in the great mission of his life, not anger at the loss of mere physical comfort. Moreover, in the case of Elijah, God provided miraculous meat and drink, and so He could have sheltered Jonah from the sun's heat had he prayed and waited. It was the petulance of the prophet which broke forth, and it was the contrast between the selfish smallness of the man and the large love and generous pity of God, which evidently was intended to be the main lesson of the incident. But who would have invented such facts? The form is too simple and natural for fiction. The character of Jonah is too extraordinary to be the product of mere genius. Its very improbability is the guarantee of its truthfulness. This however is a point which we must consider more fully and deliberately when we come to expound the words of the narrative in a later chapter

of this work. We must be content in this place with a very decided protest against the random assertions of the critical school. Both in the case of the Book of Ruth and in that of Jonah, we appeal to the deeper instinct of the Church of God in all ages, as bearing witness to the surpassing beauty of the incidents, and their teaching, placing them apart from mere legendary writings, as stamped with an authority which gave them their position among the Scriptures of God. Until spurious work can be found which will compare with them in simplicity, purity and significance, it is the part of believing common sense to receive them as the word of God.

4. There is another argument from the general features of the book which, perhaps, is even more convincing than those which we have just reviewed. It is impossible to doubt that the miracle of Jonah's preservation was intended to be a preparation of the mind of God's people for the doctrine of the Resurrection. It will be enough for the Christian that the Lord Jesus Christ has distinctly employed the facts of Jonah's history in His own teaching. "*As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Matt. xii. 39, 40). Is that like the use of an ancient parable or legend? Did it not correspond with the similar case of the preaching of Jonah to Nineveh, as a warning to the

men of that generation, that at the Day of Judgment the heathen would rise up and bear witness against them? But apart from this testimony of our Lord, is not the doctrine of the Resurrection plainly in the Book of Jonah? As coming after the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, it seems quite a natural development. It is the spirit of the doctrine which breathes in Jonah's preaching. Now, if the work be viewed in that light, is it at all likely that the teaching of Resurrection would have been disguised, and not didactically expressed, had the date of the work been after the Captivity? It is generally held by the critical school that the doctrines of a future state and of the Resurrection are post-exilic. But one who should compose a fiction, for the sake of embodying doctrine, would surely have expressed it much more decidedly. He would have left us in no doubt *e.g.* that Jonah died and was raised to life again. He would probably have introduced some reference to Jonah's own faith and to its proclamation at Nineveh. But the sign which the Lord Jesus distinctly acknowledged and employed, is yet sufficiently hidden to require faith to recognise it; while the fact that there is no evidence of its having been recognised and employed by the Jewish Rabbis previous to the time of Christ, shows that it did not lie on the surface. It was enough that the sign was there in the word of God, and those who sought after Divine light could find it. It is thought by some that our Lord

must have referred to this sign, when He said to His disciples, after His resurrection, "that it was written and it behoved the Christ to suffer and to *rise the third day*" (Luke xxiv. 46), and the apostle Paul (1 Cor. xv. 4) says that He "*rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*" "There is no other passage in the Old Testament Scriptures which could serve as a basis to this particular designation of time. Gen. xxii. 4 approaches the nearest to doing so, but the application is somewhat precarious. Of other passages which have been referred to on this point, Ps. xvi. 10 falls short, and is not used for this purpose either by St. Peter in Acts ii., or by St. Paul in Acts xiii., while Hosea vi. 2 cannot be regarded as strictly predictive, but only as faintly allusive. It follows that Christ and His apostles were accustomed to point to Jonah's entombment in the fish, not merely as an occurrence to which His own entombment might be compared, but as a prediction so definite that it therefore "*behoved* Christ to rise again on the third day." And this is an important fact for estimating this particular of Jonah's history. For we may in all reverence infer, that this most strange and otherwise utterly unaccountable circumstance was ordered by Divine Providence for the very purpose of providing a typical prediction in which both the Lord Jesus Himself (Luke xviii. 31-33), and His Church as taught by Him, should recognise the distinct foreshadowing of His preordained

death and resurrection." (*Speaker's Commentary*, vol. vi. p. 577).

Now if there is all this significance in the Book of Jonah, is it likely that it would be a mere fictitious legend or parable, invented in the fifth century? Even Ewald, who advocates the fiction theory, admits that the Book of Jonah is superior to all others of a merely legendary kind. "The story would have been wholly impossible, if legends of similar miraculous deliverances from the jaws of the sea and its monsters had not, long before our narrative, been in circulation, not only in other seaboard countries, but along those long-stretching coasts of Phœnicia, which were almost without harbours, and so difficult to navigate. These legends were used by our narrator so as to work in with the fundamental thought of all his narrations, and yet his story is incomparably superior to them all. The base and earthly elements are ennobled by the breath of the Divine in its purity, and things material and monstrous are transformed by contact with the light of the Immortal." Ewald refers to Philo, Burnouf's Introduction to the History of Buddhism, and the German story of Ortnit; but they by no means bear out his view that the author has worked up legendary matter into his narrative, and he admits that "it is remarkable that reminiscences of the name of Jonah and memorials of him are to be found in several places of the long coast-line. See Osborne's *Palestine*, p. 137." This does not look as

though there were a working up of early myths in the story; rather that it is immediately connected with the prophet. And why should such a deliverance be deemed impossible, if there are so many similar accounts? One would rather conclude that it is founded on fact. At all events, it is strange that such deep significance should be embodied in a mere idle myth, which had come down from the earliest times. The Jewish people must be credited with very little spiritual discernment that they should incorporate such materials in their Old Testament, that they should suffer them to be identified with the name of one of their greatest prophets, and a period so distinguished as that which immediately succeeded the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and preceded Isaiah. The view of the critics is shallow and unsatisfactory.

CHAPTER IV.

THE USE OF THE PSALMS IN JONAH'S PRAYER.

IT will be evident to the most cursory reader of the second chapter of the Book of Jonah, that what is called a prayer, which "*Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly,*" is not an original, ejaculatory prayer, such as would come from one in extreme danger and in sight of death, but a *poetical composition*. It would be quite consistent with truth and with the spirit of Hebrew poetry, that such a hymn of praise for deliverance should be called a prayer, and that it should be represented as offered to God at the time of danger. So it is that many of the psalms speak of immediate pressure of calamity and distress, although they must have been composed in a state of safety and peace. But the question at once suggests itself with regard to Jonah's language—Was it his own, or did he borrow it from well-known psalms, and simply adapt it to his own experience and feelings? It would be quite natural that he should offer to Jehovah that which was already regarded as sacred, and incorporated with the word of God, especially when he was himself inspired to

write a history which should take its place upon the pages of Scripture. But if it be granted that Jonah used the Book of Psalms, then we are brought face to face with a most important piece of evidence, either in favour of the received view of the Book of Jonah or directly against it. It seems necessary to give this question a separate and very careful consideration. If the psalms which Jonah quotes, or to which he refers, are of late date themselves, which some critics will perhaps maintain, then it would be impossible to resist the conclusion, the Book of Jonah was written long after the time when Jonah lived, and probably after the time of the Captivity. Then the whole character of the book and its value must be regarded differently. But such a conclusion must not be accepted until it is fully proved. We have seen so far, that there is no valid evidence on which it can be made to rest. The crucial point, however, is the use of the psalms, and to these we must now turn our attention as the last of the critical topics to which we shall refer in this work.

Chapter ii. 2. "*I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice.*" There are two references which are suggested by these words. The one is to the 18th Psalm, and the other to the 120th Psalm. The words are not exactly from either, but the eighteenth is so much in harmony with the whole of Jonah's prayer, that we can

scarcely doubt it was in his thoughts. Take *e.g.* the following parallel in the two compositions.

Ps. xviii. 4, 5, 6. The sorrows of death compassed me,
 And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
 The sorrows of hell compassed me about ;
 The snares of death prevented me.
 In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God :
 He heard my voice out of His temple,
 And my cry came before Him even into His ears.

Compare with these verses the following words out of Jonah's prayer—

"The waters compassed me about, even unto the soul,
 And the stream closed me round :
 The depth closed me round about.
 I called from my distress unto the Lord.
 Yet I will look again towards Thy holy temple.
 And my prayer came unto Thee, into Thine holy temple."

Again, in Ps. cxx. 1 we find similar language: "*In my distress I cried unto the Lord and He heard me.*" And in Ps. cxxx. 1 we have an echo of the same cry, which may, however, have been itself taken from the earlier Psalm, as it is one of the "songs of degrees" generally ascribed to a later date: "*Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.*" Now in the case of the 18th Psalm, which is much the most likely to have suggested Jonah's words, as it is so manifestly

a composition coming from circumstances of great calamity and danger, the title has the following explanation of its occasion. "A psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." Hengstenberg says, "The strongest scepticism has not ventured to deny here the Davidic authorship." With the solitary exception of Olshausen in the *Emendations*, it is generally recognised. Ewald urges in support of it, that we have here expressed, with the greatest clearness, David's nature, his mode of reflection and his deep consciousness, his experiences so peculiar in their kind. "That the psalmist was a king is quite manifest, from verse 50, as also from verse 43. The same confidence in the blessing of God, in respect to his latest posterity, discovers itself in the last words of David (2 Sam. xxiii.). The particular words have quite the Davidic tone. The recurrence in the Books of Samuel is also to be regarded as an external ground, the more so, as all other songs which these books contain, as of David, are certainly his genuine productions." So that the reference to the 18th Psalm is quite consistent with the authenticity of Jonah.

ii. 3. "*For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in
the midst of the seas ;
And the floods compassed me about :*

All Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me."

This immediately recalls the words of the 42nd Psalm, ver. 7.

*"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts;
All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me."*

The resemblance is too close to be doubted for a moment, and it is still closer in the Hebrew than in the English. The latter part is literally the same, though somewhat changed in our Authorized Version. Indeed, were it not that there can be no doubt about the date of the 42nd Psalm, we should say that it is more likely that the psalmist refers to Jonah, than that Jonah refers to the psalm. But Hengstenberg says, the internal evidence for the Davidic authorship is exceedingly strong, and the reference of Joel i. 20, besides this in Jonah ii. 3, may be regarded as strong external evidence. The whole tone of the 42nd Psalm is Davidic.

Ver. 4. *"Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight;
Yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple."*

Compare with this, Ps. xxxi. 22.

*"For I said in my heart,
I am cut off from before thine eyes."*

Also Ps. xviii. 6.

*"He heard my voice out of His temple,
And my cry came before Him, even into His ears."*

Also Ps. v. 7.

*"But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the
multitude of Thy mercy :*

And in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple."

See also 1 Kings viii. 38 ; Dan. vi. 10. Jeremiah uses the 31st Psalm, but only as Jonah did. "There is not the shadow of a reason," says Hengstenberg, "for setting aside the superscription, which expressly announces the Psalm to have been David's."

Ver. 5. *"The waters compassed me about, even to the soul:*

The depth closed me round about,

The weeds were wrapped about my head."

This is perhaps a recollection of Psalm lxi. 1 : "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul." The resemblance is not very close, and Jonah plainly adds a descriptive reference to the circumstance of his own case. The 69th Psalm is strongly Messianic, and like the 22nd, is much referred to, and applied to Christ, in the New Testament. It was ascribed to David by the Jews, and is full of originality and in perfect harmony with the other psalms which were in thought and language so suitable to the Royal Psalmist. "The arguments against David," says Hengstenberg, "are not of such weight as to counterbalance the strong evidence in favour." There might seem to be a dim reference to the Captivity in verses 33-36 ; but it is so vague that it can only be fairly taken as descriptive of the sufferings of the Lord's people in every age. The correspondence in Jonah, however, is in this instance

too wide to be employed on either side of the argument with any great force.

Ver. 6. *"I went down to the bottoms of the mountains ;*

The earth with her bars was about me for ever ;

Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God."

Here there would seem to be a recollection of Ps. xvi. 10. *"For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption."* And we may compare Ps. xxx. 3 and 9 : *"O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave : Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit."* "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit ? Shall the dust praise Thee ? shall it declare Thy truth ?" The reference to the bottoms or ends of the mountains is very singular. There could be nothing in Jonah's actual circumstances to lead him to think of the mountains, he must, therefore, have had the language of the psalms in his mind. We find such expressions as these : Ps. xxiv. 2, *"For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods"* (referring to the earth). *"To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters"* (Ps. cxxxvi. 6). The foundation-mountains of the earth were supposed to rest on the floor of the sea. Hence in Ps. xviii. 15.

"Then the channels of water were seen,

And the foundations of the world were discovered

At Thy rebuke, O Lord,
At the blasts of the breath of Thy nostrils."

Either the psalms were borrowed from Jonah, or Jonah used the psalms. Either way, it is unreasonable to doubt that Jonah's language was composed at an early period.

Ver. 7. "*When my soul fainted in me I remembered the Lord.*

And my prayer came in unto Thee, unto Thine holy temple."

This, as we before observed, is probably taken from the 18th Psalm; but there are other instances of resemblance. The reference in Psalms xlii. and xliii. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" and Ps. cxlii. 3, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me," and the language of Jeremiah in Lamentations, iii. 21-26. Beyond the reference to the temple, and therefore to the 18th Psalm, however, the correspondence is too wide to be of much significance. No doubt the general idea of remembering the Lord when the soul fainted had become incorporated into the religious language of the people, and would be used without direct quotation.

Ver. 8. "*They that observe lying vanities, Forsake their own mercy.*"

This is plainly a reference to Ps. xxxi. 6. "I have hated them that regard lying vanities. But I trust in the Lord." The term "lying vanities" was "a contemptuous designation of idols." "I will be glad and

rejoice in Thy *mercy*," says the Psalmist. "They forsake their own *mercy*," says Jonah. He has seen the mercy of the Lord, both to the Ninevites and to himself, therefore he speaks with deep feeling of the "*lying vanities*," because he knew that his book would be a great stimulus to the efforts of God's people in every age to proclaim His truth to the heathen. The 31st Psalm was undoubtedly Davidic, as we have just seen.

Ver. 9. "*But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving ;*

I will pay that that I have vowed.

Salvation is of the Lord."

In Ps. iii. 8 we have the latter part of this verse, "*Salvation to the Lord*," and in several psalms language corresponding to the former part.

Ps. cxvi. 17, 18—

"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving

And will call upon the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows unto the Lord

Now in the presence of all his people."

Ps. lxvi. 13, 14

"I will go into Thy house with burnt offerings.

I will pay Thee my vows,

Which my lips have uttered,

And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble."

So in the opening words, "*But I will sacrifice*," we have an echo of Ps. v. 7. "*But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy, and in*

Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple." The psalms thus quoted cannot certainly be proved to have been composed by David, but there is no evidence of their late authorship.

The remarks of Dr. Pusey on Jonah's prayer will show how these remarkable correspondences strike a deeply reverent mind, apart from critical argument; and it ought to be remembered that against such a testimony, from a profound student of Scripture, there is nothing which is of any force unless it be supported by overwhelming evidence. The judgment of critics on the dates of the psalms is very little to be relied on. Dr. Pusey says (*Minor Prophets*, p. 252), "The hymn itself is a remarkable blending of old and new, as our Lord says, *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven like a householder, who bringeth out of his treasure new and old* (Matt. xiii. 52). The prophet teaches us to use the psalms, as well as how the holy men of old used them. In that great moment of religious life, the well-remembered psalms, such as he had often used them, were brought to his mind. What had been figures to David or the sons of Korah, as, '*the waters are come in even unto my soul; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me,*' were strict realities to him. Yet only in this last sentence and in some other sentences, which doubtless had become a proverb of accepted prayer, '*I cried out of my trouble unto the Lord, and He heard me,*' does Jonah use exactly the words of earlier psalms. Elsewhere

he varies or amplifies them, according to his own special circumstances. Thus, when David said, 'the waters are *come in*, even unto my soul,' Jonah substitutes the word which described best the condition from which God had delivered *him*, 'the waters *compassed me about*, even to the soul.' Where David said, '*I am cut off* from before Thine eyes,' expressing an abiding condition; Jonah, who had for disobedience been cast into the sea, uses the strong word, '*I am cast out* from before thine eyes.' David says, 'I said in my haste;' Jonah simply, '*I said*,' for he had deserved it. David said, 'when my spirit was overwhelmed,' or 'fainted within me,' '*Thou knewest my path*'; Jonah substitutes, 'When my soul fainted within me *I remembered the Lord*;' for when he rebelled he forgot Him. David said '*I hate* them that observe lying vanities;' Jonah, who had himself disobeyed God, says mournfully, 'They that observe lying vanities *forsake their own mercy*,' i.e. their God, who is Mercy. Altogether, Jonah's thanksgiving is that of one whose mind was stored with the psalms which were part of the public worship, but it was the language of one who uses and recasts them freely, as he was taught of God, not of one who copies. No one verse is taken entirely from any psalm. There are original expressions everywhere. The words, 'I went down to the cuttings off of the mountains'; 'the seaweed bound around my head'; 'the earth, its bars around me for ever';—perhaps the coral reefs

which run along all that shore—vividly exhibit him sinking, entangled, imprisoned, as it seems, inextricably. He goes on. We should expect some further description of his state ; but he adds, in five simple words, ‘*Thou broughtest up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.*’ Words, somewhat like these last, occur elsewhere : *Thou hast brought up my soul from hell* (Ps. xxx. 3), agreeing in the one word ‘*brought up.*’ But the majesty of the prophet’s conception is in the connection of the thoughts. The seaweed was bound round his head as his graveclothes ; the solid bars of the deep-rooted earth were around him, and—God brought him up. At the close of the thanksgiving, ‘*Salvation is the Lord’s,*’ the deliverance is completed ; as though God had only waited for this act of complete faith. So could no one have written who had not himself been delivered from such an extreme point of drowning, as man could not, of himself, escape from. True, that no image so well expresses the overwhelmedness under affliction or temptation, as the pressure of storms by land, or being overflowed by the waves of the sea. Hence poetry knows of ‘a sea of troubles,’ or ‘the triple wave of evils.’ It expresses how we are simply passive and powerless under a trouble, which leaves us neither breath nor power of motion ; under which we can be but still, till by God’s mercy it passes. We are sunk, overhead, deep down in temptations, and the masterful current is sweeping in eddies over

us. Of this sort are those images which Jonah took from the psalms. But a description so minute as the whole of Jonah's would be allegory, not metaphor. What in it is most descriptive of Jonah's situation, as binding of the seaweed around the head, the sinking down to the roots of the mountains, the bars of the earth around him, are peculiar to this thanksgiving of Jonah ; they do not occur elsewhere, for, except through miracle, they would be images not of peril but of death."

There is only one other remark which remains to be made upon the critical aspect of this prayer, and that is, that had it been the composition of a writer living after the time of the Captivity, and were the whole story of Jonah an allegory or parable, we should have expected a much freer use of the later psalms, and a clearer reference to the parallel between the deliverance of Jonah and the release of the people out of their captivity. The thanksgiving of the prophet is short and exceedingly vivid in sentiment and expression ; altogether unlike the poetical rhapsody of a man who was dealing with allegory, but entirely in accordance with the view that Jonah was speaking from his own experience, briefly ascribing salvation to the Lord. It should also be borne in mind, in considering the relation of Jonah's hymn to the psalms and other portions of Scripture, that it is quite possible that it was the original from which some of them were taken, as *e.g.*

Ps. cxx. 1, from ver. 2, and Lam. iii. 54, from ver. 5. It is remarked in the *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. vi. p. 581, that "internal criticism furnishes no sufficient ground for determining with any preponderance of probability which in each case was derived from the other. The internal evidence, therefore, supplied by the hymn, taken all together, so far from proving a late era for the book, strongly favours the belief, that at least this portion of the book was written by Jonah himself." Some have even ventured to suggest the theory that the whole story of the book was an afterthought, founded on a hymn of praise for deliverance from drowning, composed by Jonah himself. That, however, is too evidently a mere shift of the uncandid mind. The only view which is consistent with itself throughout, is that which magnifies the power and mercy of Jehovah, and harmonizes with the place of the book in the Hebrew canon, namely, that Jonah wrote it under the guidance of the Divine Spirit.

PART II.

THE NARRATIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WORDS THEMSELVES, LITERALLY RENDERED.

IT seems due to a book like that which we are studying that we should give the narrative exactly as it is told, without note or comment, before we consider the words in a more exegetical manner. Ewald has rendered the Hebrew very ably in his work on "The Prophets of the Old Testament." We have kept his translation before us in putting together the following version, without paraphrase or substitution of English for Hebrew idiom.

1 Now there came the word of Jehovah to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying :—

2 "Rise up, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry against it ;

For the wickedness of it has come up before Me."

And Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from before Jehovah.

And he went down to Yâpho and found a vessel. It was going to Tarshish and he paid its fare—

And he went down into it, to go with them to
Tarshish,

From before the presence of Jehovah.

Now Jehovah cast a mighty wind upon the sea.

And there was a great storm in the sea,

And the ship was in danger of being broken to
pieces.

2 Now the seamen were in fear and they cried each
to his god.

And they threw out the freight which was in the
ship into the sea

In order to lighten the weight which was upon
them.

And Jonah had gone down into the hold of the
merchantman

And had laid himself down to sleep, and was
snoring;

And the chief of the sailors drew near to him.

And he said to him, "What is the matter with
thee, snoring so ?

Get up and call upon thy god—if so be the god
will think of us,

And we perish not."

And they said each to his neighbour,

"Come and let us cast lots, and we will
know

On whose account this evil is upon us."

And they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

3 And they said to him, "Tell us now, we pray thee,

On whose account this evil is upon us?

What is thy business, and whence hast thou come?

What is thy country, and of what kind of nation art thou?"

And he said to them, "A Hebrew am I,

And Jehovah, the God of heaven, I fear.

He it is who hath made the sea and the dry land."

And the men were afraid with a great terror.

And they said to him, "What is this thou hast done?"

For the men knew that he was flying from before Jehovah;

For he had declared it to them.

And they said to him, "What shall we do with thee,

That the sea may be hushed before us;

For the sea groweth more and more stormy?"

And he said unto them, "Take me and throw me into the sea,

Then the sea will be hushed before you.

For I know that it is for my sake

That this great storm is upon you."

Now the men strained hard to reach the dry land,
And they were not able;

For the sea grew more and more stormy against them.

Then they called upon Jehovah and they said,
“ We beseech Thee, O Jehovah, we beseech Thee,
Let us not perish on account of the life of this
man,
And lay not upon us innocent blood,
For Thou, O Jehovah, doest as it pleaseth Thee.

- 4 And they lifted up Jonah, and they cast him into the sea,

And the sea abated its fury.

And the men were afraid, with great terror,
towards Jehovah ;

And they sacrificed a sacrifice to Jehovah,
And they vowed vows.

- 5 And Jehovah appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah ;

And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days
and three nights.

- 6 And Jonah supplicated Jehovah his God
From the belly of the fish.

And he said, I called in my distress upon
Jehovah,

And he answered me from the belly of Sheol ;
I cried, and Thou didst hear my voice.

And a whirlpool cast me into the midst of the
seas,

And the currents encompassed me around.
All Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me.
And I said, I am cast forth before Thine eyes,
Yet will I continue to look towards the palace of
Thy holiness.

Waters had surrounded me, even my life ;
The deep was round about me.
The seaweed was wrapped about my head.
To the bottoms of the mountains I went down,
The earth with her bars was about me for ever.
But Thou, O Jehovah, my God,
Didst make my life to go up from the pit.

When my soul fainted within me
I remembered Jehovah,
And my prayer arose unto Thee,
Even to the palace of Thy holiness.

They that observe lying vanities,
Their mercy they forsake.
But I, with the voice of thanks, will sacrifice to
Thee,
I will pay Thee that which I have vowed.
Salvation is Jehovah's.

- 7 And Jehovah spake to the fish,
And it cast forth Jonah upon the dry land.

8 Now the word of Jehovah came to Jonah a second time, saying,—

“Rise up, go to Nineveh, the great city,
And cry against it the cry which I speak to thee.”

9 And Jonah rose up and he went to Nineveh,
According to the word of Jehovah.

And Nineveh was a great city before God—
Three days' journey to go through.

10 And Jonah began to go into the city,
Going one day into it.
And he cried, and he said,
“*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*”

11 Now the men of Nineveh believed on God,
And they proclaimed a fast; and put on sackcloth,
From their greatest even unto their least.
And the matter reached even to the king of Nineveh;
And he rose up from his throne,
And he put off his royal robe from upon him,
And he covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
And he caused it to be proclaimed and published in Nineveh,

“By the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,—

Man and beast, herd and flock,
Let them not taste anything ;
Let them not feed, nor drink water ;
Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth,
And let them cry unto God with all their might,
And let them turn each one from his evil way,
And from the violence which was in their hands.
Who knoweth if the God shall turn and repent,
And turn from the fierceness of His wrath,
And we shall not perish.”

12 And God saw their doings,
That they turned from their evil way.
And God repented of the evil which He said
He would do to them—
And He did it not.

13 Now it was wrong to Jonah, a great wrong.
And he was angry.
And he made supplication to Jehovah and he
said,—
Now, O Jehovah, I beseech Thee, is not this
what I said
While I was yet in my country?
Therefore it was that I was in haste to flee to
Tarshish.

For I knew that Thou art a God gracious and
merciful,

Slow to wrath and of great mercy,

And repenteth thee concerning the evil.

And now, O Jehovah, take away my life from me,
For my death is better than my life.

14 And Jehovah said, Art thou so very angry?

And Jonah went forth from the city.

And he sat down on the east of the city.

And he made for himself there a green booth,

And he dwelt under it in the shade,

Even until he should see how it would be in the
city.

15 And Jehovah-Elohim appointed a gourd,

And He made it to grow up over Jonah,

To be for a shadow upon his head ;

To deliver him from his trouble.

And Jonah rejoiced over the gourd

With a great rejoicing.

16 And God appointed a worm,

At the rising of the dawn on the morrow ;

And it smote the gourd and it withered.

17 And it came to pass when the sun rose,

That God appointed an east wind, a hot wind,

And the sun smote upon the head of Jonah,

And he fainted and begged that he might die ;

And he said, My death is better than my life.

18 And God said to Jonah, Is it good that thou art
angry for the gourd ?
And he said, I do well to be angry even to death.
And Jehovah said, Thou hast mercy upon the
gourd,
For which thou hast not laboured, neither madest
it to grow—
Which came as the son of a night, and as the son
of a night perished.
And I, should not I have pity upon Nineveh,
The great city :
Therein are more than twelve times ten thousand
men,
Which discern not between their right hand and
their left hand,
And multitudes of cattle ?

CHAPTER II.

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE WORDS.

CHAPTER I. ver. 1, וַיְהִי, "*And was.*" The historical *wayw conversive*, which is the commonest form of commencement of the historical books. So we find it in the instances of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings. After the time of the Captivity, Ezra begins in the same manner, and virtually Nehemiah, for the title, "*The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah,*" may be considered as separate from the book itself. Both Ruth and Esther begin so. It would seem to have been, properly speaking, confined to the historical books, for while Ezekiel might seem to be an exception, it is not really so, as the opening words of that book are put in the form of narrative: "*Now it came to pass,*" etc. Dr. Pusey thinks that there can be no doubt as to the meaning of this form of commencement, that it was intended to connect the writing which it introduces with the line of Divine Revelation. He would recognise still more in the case of Jonah, that the connection of prophecy to the

Gentiles with that to the Jews was intended to be thus expressed. "This form, And the word of the Lord came to—saying, occurs over and over again, stringing together the pearls of great price of God's revelations, and uniting this new revelation to those which preceded it. The word *And*, then, joins on histories with histories, revelations with revelations, uniting in one the history of God's works and words, and blending the books of Holy Scripture into one Divine book."¹ We must be careful, however, of building too much upon a slight and slender foundation of this kind. It is possible that the book which so commences was really part of a series, other parts of which are lost. In the cases mentioned above, a distinct connection is traceable, with historical matter to which the book attaches itself. It seems likely that the waw conversive was freely employed in the case of history, not as distinctly intimating the claim of the book to be received as Scripture, but as suitable to denote its connection with the body of fact. The sense is given better by our own "*Now*," than by the simple conjunction. It is the word with which a narrator opens his history. The absence of any formal title, such as we find in the case of Isaiah and other prophets, may be explained by the fact that it is rather a history than a collection of prophecies. Jonah is more an instrument in Divine hands than an inspired voice.

¹ *Minor Prophets*, p. 265.

דְּבַר-יְהוָה *The word of Jehovah.* There can be no doubt whatever that this expression denoted a solemn, oracular communication from Jehovah. So it is employed in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and throughout the Old Testament. It is true that the same form would be used by a false prophet, but only as claiming to be inspired. It would certainly at no period in Jewish history be regarded as losing its solemnity. Therefore, to suppose a devout Jew of the fifth century sitting down and deliberately inventing a fiction about the prophet Jonah, and opening it with these words of the most solemn meaning, is to suppose an anomaly which only the perverse ingenuity of criticism can for a moment tolerate. It would have been regarded as blasphemy for any Jew to trifle with the name and authority of Jehovah in that manner. No apocryphal book begins in this way.

יוֹנָה בֶן-אֲמִתַּי *Jonah the son of Amittai.* *Jonah* is the same word employed in Gen. viii. of the dove sent forth from the ark. Is there any special significance in the name? Perhaps not. But it is a coincidence worth remarking. *Amittai* signifies *the Truth of God*. Hitzig compares Matthew, *Ματθαῖος*, dropping the a. The Syriac has Mathai or Matthew in this place. The book certainly describes a dove-like mission from the ark of God, the Church, over the world as it was under Divine judgment, and that in the name of the God of Truth. At all events, the

name may refer to the consolatory message which Jonah brought to Israel (see 2 Kings xiv. 25). *Gath Hepher*, from which Jonah the prophet came, was a town of Lower Galilee, in Zebulon. גַּת הַחֶפֶר, "*The winepress of the well*," mentioned under the form of גַּת הַחֶפֶר, Josh. xix. 13, in the definition of the border of Zebulon. It was on the border of Zebulon. There is a little village called El-Meshdad on the top of a rocky hill, about two miles east of Sefurieh, the ancient Sepphoris, where is a tomb still pointed out as the tomb of Jonah. In the twelfth century, Benjamin of Tudela mentioned that such a tomb was there. Jerome says (*Proem. in Jonam*), "Geth, quæ est in Opher haud grandis est viculus, in secundo Sepphoris miliario, quæ hodie appellatur Diocæsarea euntibus Tiberiadem ubi et sepulcrum ejus ostenditur:" i.e. 2 miles from Sepphoris, which is now called Diocæsarea in the way to Tiberias. We may therefore conclude that the traditional site of Jonah's tomb may be traced back to the time of our Lord. He was probably really buried there. It is remarkable that he came "out of Galilee," therefore was a true predecessor of our Lord. His birthplace would account for his so promptly going to Joppa to embark for Tarshish.

Ver. 2. With regard to Nineveh, it is only necessary to point out here that the *city* is mentioned, and not the *kingdom*. Nahum only once speaks of the king of Assyria. Zephaniah (630 B.C.) couples

the capital and the kingdom together; the latest mention of Nineveh as an existing city. The destruction of the city is dated 606 B.C. The term "*great*" may be applied to Nineveh as a metropolis, or simply as a comparative term; it was immense as compared with any city in Palestine. Probably, however, the word "*great*" is employed simply to call attention to the fact that Nineveh was a vast stronghold of heathen wickedness, where the power and grace of God would be signally displayed. The wickedness referred to was chiefly *violence*. "Woe to the bloody city. It is full of lies and robbery: the prey departeth not" (Nahum iii. 1). It is "*a den of lions*" (ii. 11, 12). The command is to *cry*, or *call*, to it, or *against* it; not a mere proclamation of judgment, but the lifting up of the voice of warning, which was mercy.

Ver. 3. "*And Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from before Jehovah (from the presence of the Lord). And he went down to Yâpho and found a vessel. It was going to Tarshish, and he paid the fare of it. And he went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, from before the presence of Jehovah.*"

God said, "Rise up, and go to Nineveh." Jonah rose up and went to Joppa to go to Tarshish. As to the destination which the prophet sought there is some uncertainty. We read in Genesis (x. 4), "And the sons of Javan, Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim." These were grandsons of Japheth.

Various opinions have been held as to the locality intended. Josephus (*Ant.*, ix. x. 2) says *Tarsus* in Cilicia. Theodoret and others, *Carthage*. The Targum and Jerome render the word "*to the sea*," in other words, to some far off place on the sea, or by sea. It is generally held, however, that the reference is to the ancient city of Spain, Tartessus, proverbially famous for wealth in metals, such as silver, iron, lead, tin. Cf. Ps. lxxii. 10; Isa. xxiii. 14; Jer. x. 9. "Silver spread in plates is brought from Tarshish." The connection with Tyre, *i.e.* with Phœnicia, is well known. See Ezek. xxvii. 12. "Tarshish was thy merchant (speaking of Tyre) by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin and lead, they traded in thy fairs." The city was near the Guadalquivir. Pliny and Strabo seem to identify it with Carteia in the Bay of Gibraltar, or Gades, the Cathaginian Gadir, *i.e.* Cadiz. It would seem that "*ships of Tarshish*" became a kind of general nautical term, like "*East Indiaman*." Evidently, therefore, Tarshish was some well known place of commerce; and it suits the facts that Jonah should wish to flee westward from a commandment which would have sent him eastward. He rose up to flee "*from the presence of the Lord*," literally, "*from being before Jehovah*"; not a mere general expression to denote Jonah's fleeing from God, but plainly pointing to his official position. It is said by some critics that the character of a prophet is lowered by supposing him

capable of attempting to flee from the presence of the Infinite God. This, however, is to mistake the language. The meaning of "*presence of the Lord*" is frequently, in Scripture, ministration before God. See the following instances: Gen. xli. 46; Deut. x. 8; 1 Kings viii. 25, xvii. 1; 2 Kings iii. 14; Luke i. 19. The Targum renders the word, "*that he might not prophesy in the name of the Lord.*"

Yafa, Yâpho, Jaffa, Joppa, is the one port of the Mediterranean belonging to Israel. It was fifty miles from Jonah's country. In the days of Solomon it was the port for Jerusalem, and it still remains so. The materials of the temple were landed there, both in Solomon's time and after the Captivity. It was probably in the hands of the Phœnicians in the time of Jonah (Josephus, *Ant.*, xiii. xv. 4). It was at Joppa that the apostle Peter saw his vision, similar in import to the mission of Jonah, declaring Divine mercy for the Gentiles. The "*ship*" was Phœnician, for the Phœnicians had the carrying trade of Palestine. The Jews were never sailors. The word employed signifies a large merchant ship, afterwards described as a "*sephinah*" or "*decker.*" The fare or hire which Jonah paid would enable him to act as he pleased, and so hide himself at once, to remain undisturbed in his anxiety and gloom.

Ver. 4, 5. "*Now Jehovah cast a mighty wind upon the sea, and there was a great storm in the sea, and the ship was in danger of being broken in pieces. And the*

seamen were in fear, and they cried each to his god. And they threw out the freight which was in the ship into the sea, in order to lighten the weight which was upon them." It seems probable that the ship had not got far upon its way, for the sea is frequently very rough in the vicinity of Joppa. Josephus, in his *Jewish War*, describes such a storm there. The description is very vivid in Hebrew; literally, "the ship was driven along, and was thought to be broken," *i.e.* they thought that she would be broken. The word used for seamen is also very characteristic, like our word "old salt," men of the salt sea. In Phœnician vessels the men were often of different nations, and the Phœnicians themselves had many gods. The meaning may be, that each cried to his own national deity, or to his own household god.

Ver. 5, 6. "*Now Jonah had gone down into the hold of the ship, and had laid himself down to sleep, and was snoring. And the chief of the sailors drew near to him. And he said to him, What meanest thou, sleeping so? Arise, and call upon thy God, if so be that the God will think of us, and we perish not.*" We can well imagine that the misery of Jonah's mind affected his bodily state, and he fell into a profound sleep like a stupor, so heavy that even the storm did not awake him. It is interesting to notice that while the sailors call each one upon his god, still there is one God represented as the object of their thoughts;

"the God" will think of us, it may be, though we all cry to a different deity.

Ver. 7, 8, 9. "*And they said to one another, Come, and let us cast lots, and we will know on whose account this evil is upon us. And they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. And they said to him, Tell us now, we pray thee, on whose account is this evil upon us? What is thy business, and whence hast thou come? What is thy country, and of what nation art thou? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the God of Heaven, Jehovah; He it is who hath made the sea and the dry land.*" The word "lot" means "a small pebble," as in the Greek. "The lot was shaken out of the helmet" (*Hom. Il.*, vii. 177, 182). Such consultation of fate by lottery was regarded in ancient times as a solemn appeal to God. It is a testimony to the work of conscience that the storm was attributed to Divine displeasure. The ancient Greek Tragedy was founded on the same idea. Jonah calls himself a "*Hebrew.*" The name is not common in the Old Testament. It occurs only thirty-three times in all, and generally means, whether employed by Jew or Gentile, one who is set apart; *i.e.* not a Gentile.¹ In Jonah's brief answer to the sailors, it may be said, that he was already preaching to the heathen, for their idea of a Creator must have been very obscure. This also prepared the way for his confession afterwards.

¹ Gen. xliii. 32; Exod. i. 19, iii. 18, xxi. 2; 1 Sam. iv. 9.

Ver. 10-12. *“And the men were afraid with a great terror. And they said to him, What is this thou hast done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from before Jehovah, for he had declared it to them. And they said to him, What shall we do with thee, that the sea may be quieted before us? For the sea groweth more and more stormy. And he said unto them, Take me and throw me into the sea, then the sea will be quieted before you, for I know that it is for my sake that this great storm is upon you.”*

We must, of course, suppose that Jonah told them all his history. Their hearts were already open. They listened with awe and trembling. They had no deep and intelligent belief in their own superstitions, though they seemed to be influenced by a natural religion. The man who was evidently a “servant of the Lord,” as the Septuagint renders the words, at once moves their sympathy, and is their teacher. The simplicity of the narrative is remarkable. There is no attempt to fill it out with fictitious incident, or to dwell on the state of mind either of the prophet or of the seamen. A mere writer of fiction would certainly not have shown so much self-restraint. Jonah’s manner is very briefly indicated, but it evidently had a great effect.

Ver. 13, 14. *“Now the men strained hard to reach the dry land, but they were not able; for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. Then they called upon Jehovah, and they said:*

*We beseech Thee, O Jehovah, we beseech Thee,
Let us not perish on account of the life of this
man,
And lay not upon us innocent blood.
For Thou, O Jehovah, doest as it pleaseth Thee."*

The Hebrew expresses the effort of the men in a very forcible manner, as though they were digging through the waves with the oars. The scene is brought vividly before us. The wind was not, as Dr. Pusey says, "off shore;" because it was a north wind, it would blow them south, they would therefore be driven into the trough of the sea and be in the more danger. The powerful and persevering effort of the seamen shows their kindliness and Jonah's influence over them. We possess, in the recorded prayer of the heathen sailors, a very singular and valuable fact, far too significant to be, as the critics suggest, a merely feigned incident. No writer of the sixth or fifth century B.C. would have been likely to invent it, or to put it before us exactly in such a shape. The concluding words were a remarkable recognition of the justice of Jehovah, both in the storm and in the fate of Jonah, and it was intended to express their own solemn acceptance of the office assigned to them, to be the instruments in Divine hands of punishing the disobedient prophet.

Ver. 15, 16. "*And they lifted up Jonah, and they cast him into the sea. And the sea abated its fury. And the men were afraid with great terror, fearing*

Jehovah. And they sacrificed a sacrifice to Jehovah, and they made vows."

The language is here doubtless elliptical. The whole transaction, with the sudden ceasing of the storm, produced a great effect upon the sailors. They were afraid ; but it was not with the fear of ignorance and superstition. They perceived that Jehovah was present and had heard their prayer. They acknowledged Him, and immediately their religious worship took the form of *sacrifice and vows*: they vowed services and gifts, which in all probability they afterwards paid to Jehovah on their return from their voyage. It would be an easy thing to find that which would serve as a sacrifice on board the vessel. Such large merchantmen generally carried animals for food.

We can scarcely doubt that if the vessel was bound for Spain, such a conversion to the worship of Jehovah would be announced in the western world to some extent. Jonah was taken out of the vessel, and sent eastward to Nineveh. Thus, eastward and westward, the message was spread, and the name of the Lord was pronounced, in some sense, "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same."

Ver. 17. "*And Jehovah appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."*

The Hebrew word, rendered in the Authorized Version "*prepared*," simply means appointed, and the

reference is not to creation, but to the order of Providence. It was not a new kind of fish, but one providentially selected for the purpose, and guided by the Divine will to the spot. It is important to notice the rendering of the LXX., which has led to the tradition that the fish was a whale. Without entering here again into the subject of the miracle, we may refer briefly to the opinions held as to the meaning of the word which was chosen by the Greek translators, the word *κήτος*, from which is derived the scientific word cetacea. The Greeks used an adjective in the same sense. In Homer it includes the "dolphin" and the "dog." Aristotle, in his *Natural History*, uses it of the whole class of sea monsters which are viviparous, as the dolphin, seal, and whale. Galen adds the *Zygæna*, a shark, and large tunnies. Photius says the *Carcharias* or white shark is a species. Ælian enumerates most of them under the same head. While the true or Greenland whale has a small swallow, all species are not the same in that respect. See *Speaker's Com.*, vol. vi. p. 591, where Mr. Beale's treatise on the spermaceti whale is quoted, to show that "the throat is capacious enough to give passage to the body of a man, presenting a strong contrast to the contracted gullet of the Greenland whale," and Cuvier expressly asserts that the spermaceti whale (*Physeter Catodon*. Lin.) is found in the Mediterranean. The white shark (*carcharias vulgaris*), though not strictly a

cetacean, is the most voracious of the "*squalidæ*," and might swallow Jonah. It attains to 30 feet in length. Blumenbach says, the whole body of a horse has been found in one. And other cases are mentioned by Pusey, which leave it in no doubt that the physical circumstances are possible. Couch, in his *History of Fishes*, says, that sharks have a habit of throwing out whole anything that they have swallowed. The white shark is found in the Mediterranean. There is a Rorqual not uncommon in the Mediterranean, named indeed by Cuvier, *Rorqualis Mediterraniensis*, and by M. Lesson, *Balænoptera M.* the Rorqual *musculus* of Linnæus and Lacépède. One of this species was found at St. Cyprien, in 1828, 75 feet long. It has singular folds in the mouth and throat, of such size that Jonah might have been imbedded in them.

"*In the belly of the fish.*" In the bowels, or *within*, generally. There is no necessity to insist on the literal exactness of such a description. But the "*three days and three nights*" puts the fact entirely out of the sphere of the ordinary laws of human life. The only question needing to be entertained by the believer in miracles is, what was *the character of the miracle*? Was it *death*, or *suspended animation* and re-awaking? or was it simply *preservation* in circumstances in which death would naturally occur? The simple term, "*and Jonah was*," does not help us to an answer. Nor does the language of the prophet,

in the psalm of praise, decide it. Either way, it was *miraculous*.

Chap. ii. ver. 1. "*And Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God from the belly of the fish.*" Was the prayer actually offered in the fish, or when Jonah came forth from it? The punctuation of the Hebrew, which is of later date than the text itself, leaves the question undecided. The preposition "*from*" may mean, as he came from; or the intention may be to represent the prayer as the substance of what Jonah prayed.

Ver. 2. "*Out of the belly of Hell.*" בֶּטֶן שְׂאוֹל. That is, "*The lowest part of Hades.*" Sheol occurs in Job x. 21, 22. The idea is that of a subterranean place full of darkness, where the רָפָאִים, the shades, gather together. Some take it as derived from שָׂאֵל, to ask, because Death *gapes*, as it were, for all; but Gesenius thinks it is like שְׁעוֹל, meaning "*a hollow place,*" as the German *Hölle* or *höhle*, so in Latin "*cælum*" is probably from κοῖλος.

Ver. 3. "*The floods compassed me about.*" נָהָר is used very generally for "*current,*" i.e. the "*rushing water surrounded me,*" perhaps alluding to the motion of the fish, which would give to Jonah the sensation of the waters rushing by him.

"*All Thy billows.*" כִּשְׁבֵּר is only used in the plural, and is from שָׁבַר, to break in pieces (cf. shiver); that is, the waves broke on the shore, "*breakers.*" See Ps. xlii. 8.

Ver. 5. "*Even to my soul.*" עַד נַפְשִׁי, *even to my*

breath ; that is, *over my mouth*. There is some support in these words to the view that Jonah actually died and rose again.

“*The weeds.*” סוף, the seaweed. Hence the Arabian Gulf is ים-סוף. The word “*soughing*” may have some connection with it. Whether the word points to the bottom of the sea, or to the neighbourhood of the shore, cannot be said ; but the connection seems to determine the former.

The expression קָבוּשׁ, “*wrapped*,” or “*bound*,” is very graphic ; it would be used of binding a turban round the head.

Ver. 6. “*To the bottoms of the mountains.*” That is, the *ends* or *roots* of the mountains. קָצַב, from קָצַב, to cut (into shape), hence “*form*.” The Vulgate has “*extrema montium.*” The rendering of this verse by the LXX. is remarkable : ἄβυσσος ἐκύκλωσε με ἐσχάτη, ἔδυν ἡ κεφαλὴ μου εἰς σχισμὰς ὀρέων.

“*The earth with her bars.*” בָּרַחִיָּה, “*Her bars*,” or “*bolts*.” Gesenius says, “*The bars of the earth are at the gates of Hades.*” Cf. Job xvii. 16. בְּיָיִשׁוּלִי, “*The bars of Sheol.*”

“*My life from corruption.*” Literally, from the pit. שָׁחַת, from שָׁחַ, to sink down. Gesenius says it never means “*corruption*.” The LXX. has διάφθορα, that is, *destruction*. Cf. Ps. xvi. 10 ; Job xvii. 14.

Ver. 7. “*When my soul fainted.*” This surely points to insensibility, and therefore to an actual drowning. He cried to God, as he felt himself lost.

Ver. 8. "*Lying vanities.*" חֲבִלֵי שׁוֹא, cf. Ps. xxxi. 6; a description of idolatry, quite in consonance with the whole of Scripture. "*Their own mercy,*" that is, their merciful God; cf. Ps. cxliv. 2. "*My mercy*"; of God.

Ver. 10. "*And Jehovah spake to the fish, and it cast forth Jonah upon the dry land.*" That is to say, Jehovah answered the prayer which the prophet put forth, by speaking to the fish. "*The dry land*" would probably be the coast somewhere in the neighbourhood of Joppa, so that the prophet would, without any difficulty and no great delay, return to his own home.

Chap. iii. ver. 1-3. "*Now the word of Jehovah came to Jonah a second time, saying—*

*Rise up, go to Nineveh, the great city,
And cry against it the cry which I speak to thee.*

And Jonah rose up, and he went to Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah."

We are not told when the second time was, but probably it was not long after the miracle. Weeks, possibly months, might elapse. But Jonah's deliverance was, meanwhile, being proclaimed, certainly in his own country, probably elsewhere. The seamen might speak of it where they went. The miracle was assuredly a new revelation to the prophet. He was now better prepared for his mission. After such a rebuke he reverently awaited the repeated summons. He might have been super-

seded. He might have been rejected. The new call was a sign of forgiveness and acceptance.

Ver. 3, 4. "*Now Nineveh was a great city before God, three days' journey to go through. And Jonah began to go into the city, going one day into it. And he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*" In the Hebrew the words are, "*a city great to God*"; that is before the eyes of God, or in the judgment of God. See Gen. x. 9, where it is said that "*Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord.*" We find many expressions of a similar kind in Scripture. "Wrestlings of God," "mountains of God," "cedars of God," "prince of God," "in the sight of the Lord." We may compare the use of the word "*divinely*" in English; as, *divinely great* or *divinely beautiful*, i.e. beyond the scale of man. There is difference of opinion as to the meaning of the measurement of the city. "*Three days' journey*" is said by some to mean, a city whose diameter was three days' journey. Now the Assyrian inscriptions show that the day's journey was fourteen miles. That would make the breadth of the city forty-two miles, which is much too great. According to Herodotus, it would be fifty-one, or sixty-nine miles. Another suggestion is, that the three days' journey refers to traversing the principal thoroughfares; but in that case the distance could not be employed as a measurement. Jerome has proposed to refer it to the *circumference*—three days to travel round it, which would be a more reasonable

size, about fourteen miles in diameter; or probably, as it was in the shape of a parallelogram, some fifteen miles long by five miles broad. Taking the whole population as 700,000, with much cattle—that is, large empty spaces, without houses, where the cattle fed—we should expect the city to be about that size, and then it would be considerably less than our own London.

Ver. 4. “*A day's journey.*” That is, he went right into the city, and walked about for the day. The idea intended to be conveyed is, that he had no sooner begun his work than the desired effect was produced.

“*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*” עוֹד אַרְבַּעִים יוֹם וְנִינְוֶה נִהְפָּכָה (odd arbâim yôm wenineveh nipâcheh). If exactly in these words it would be understood (see 2 Kings xviii. 26), though it would sound like a strange dialect to the Assyrians. The Assyriac of both “*forty*” and “*days*” (“*irbu'ai*” and “*immi*”) was substantially the same in Hebrew (“*arbaim*” and “*yom*”). The word “*overthrown*” might also be known. The Hebrew has “*forty*,” but the LXX. followed the Arabic and has “*three*,” days. Theodoret and Theophylact believed that the reading originated in a clerical blunder. The word “*overthrown*” occurs of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, probably well known to the Ninevites. See Gen. xix. 21, 25; Deut. xxix. 23; and cf. Isa. xiii. 19, of Babylon. Josephus strangely enough says,

that Jonah preached that the Assyrians would, in a very little while, "*lose the dominion of Asia*," for which he has no authority, except as he inferred it from the likelihood that the overthrow would be accomplished by some great rival power.

Ver. 5-9. "*Now the men of Nineveh believed on God. And they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from their greatest men even to their least. And the matter reached even to the king of Nineveh; and he rose up from his throne, and he put off his royal robes from him, and he covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published in Nineveh:—*

*'By the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,—
Man and beast, herd and flock,
Let them not taste anything—
Let them not feed, nor drink water;
Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth,
And let them cry unto God with all their might,
And let them turn each one from his evil way
And from the violence which was in their hands.
Who knoweth if the God shall turn and repent,
And turn from the fierceness of His wrath,
And we shall not perish.'*"

The faith of the people of Nineveh was not merely belief in the truth of the proclamation, or the messenger, but in the God who sent it. In Gen. xv. 6 the same word is employed in the same sense, "*Abraham believed in God.*" For the time at least, the

people, heathen though they were, acknowledged the supremacy of Jehovah ; perhaps it might be said that they identified Jehovah with their own supreme God " *Il*," or " *Ra*," who was to them an " *unknown God*." This subject, however, is discussed more fully in another place. The practice of religious fasting is very ancient. The sackcloth which was put on was a coarse cloth of a dark colour, made of goats' hair. Sometimes it was worn next the skin, as a kind of penance. Sometimes it was put on as an outer garment. The sitting in ashes was also a very ancient practice. (See Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. *Mourning*.) The account of the decree is rather less forcible in the Authorized English version than in the original. It is given as a formal document. The word for decree (" *ta'am* ") is connected with the Assyrian language. It occurs also, frequently, in the Book of Esther in Chaldee, as the official order of the *Persian* sovereign, and in Daniel for the order of the *Babylonian* monarch. It is an Aramaic word, and may have been known all through western Asia. It cannot be properly brought forward as an evidence that the book is of late composition ; rather it proves that Jonah must have been in Assyria. The decree was issued in the name of the king and his great council of magnates. The king's rule, therefore, was not absolute. The command to cover the beasts with sackcloth, and to prohibit their food, is peculiar, and scarcely likely to be put into a work of fiction. " It

strikes our minds as a piece of barbaric enthusiasm, showing, however, its passionate intensity, that the decree associates with the self-affliction of man the compulsory affliction also of all such animals as stood in close connection with man ; but, like the mention, in the next verse, of sackcloth being put upon man *and beast*, it is a feature more likely to have been introduced into the narrative because of being true to fact, than to have been merely invented by a writer of fiction." (*Speaker's Commentary*, vol. vi. p. 598 ; cf. Joel i. 13, 14, ii. 12, 16.) Perhaps it was a suggestion of the heathen themselves, and not Jonah's suggestion, as there is nothing to give sanction to it in God's word. The moaning and distress of the beasts described in Joel was on account of the desolation of the land. The heathen may have thought they would be the better heard for the loud noise, and so would increase it with the voices of the beasts. Violence was the one special temptation of the Assyrians. They were a military people. In the ninth century it is known that their violent and cruel conquests were very numerous. Had the reference been to the sin of idolatry alone, we should expect that another word would have been employed. Moreover, it is said that the violence was in their hands—that is to say, they possessed wealth violently taken from their neighbours. The moral tone of the message proclaimed by Jonah may be inferred from the decree of the king in reply to the Divine denunciation. Some,

however, have held that Jonah did no more than repeat the cry, "*Yet forty days,*" etc.

Ver. 10. "*And God saw their doings, that they turned from their evil way. And God repented of the evil which He said He would do unto them, and He did it not.*" It is remarkable that the narrative here speaks not of *Jehovah*, but of *God*, using the same word, "*Elohim*," which is found in the book of Genesis and elsewhere as the name of God as God of the universe, as distinguished from *Jehovah, the God of Israel*. The decree was in the name of the supreme God. The repentance is therefore ascribed to Him. The idea seems to be that what the people of Nineveh believed might come to pass did come to pass. The evil was averted. The threatening was not fulfilled. (See Exod. xxxii. 14; Jer. xviii. 7-10.) On the subject of the Divine repentance, we must refer the reader to the chapters in which it is fully considered.

Chapter iv. ver. 1-3. "*Now to Jonah it seemed wrong, a great wrong, and he was angry. And he made supplication to Jehovah, and he said:—*

*Now, O Jehovah, I beseech Thee, is not this what I said
While I was yet in my country?*

*Therefore it was that I was in haste to flee to
Tarshish.*

*For I knew that Thou art a gracious God and
merciful,*

Slow to wrath, and of great mercy,

And repenteth Thee concerning the evil.

*And now, O Jehovah, take my life from me,
For my death is better than my life."*

It was wrong to Jonah, because his self-esteem was wounded. The whole of this chapter is so important, in its bearing on the character of the prophet, that it demands a separate treatment, which we have given it in a subsequent chapter. It is interesting to notice that the same request was made by the prophet Elijah in similar, though somewhat different, language (see 1 Kings xix. 4).

Ver. 4, 5. *And Jehovah said, Art thou so very angry? And Jonah went forth from the city. And he sat down on the east of the city. And he made for himself there a green booth. And he dwelt under it in the shade; even until he should see how it would be in the city."*

Whether we render the words "*Art thou so VERY angry?*" or "*doest thou well to be angry?*" the meaning is the same. We have followed the margin, which is the reading of the LXX., the Targum, the Syriac, Arabic, and others; but there are some ancient authorities, and most of the moderns, for the usual rendering. The "*green booth*" would be made of interwoven branches, probably with some creepers twined among them. The gourd was perhaps on the spot. It may have been growing there, but it grew more quickly and abundantly for Jonah. Another view is that the sense is pluperfect. Now Jonah *had*

done it; *i.e.* before the time of the prediction had expired. We may well believe that he would retire from the city each night, and lodge outside it. So Theodoret takes it, and in modern times, Rosenmüller and others. "He went forth, therefore, and took up his abode on the east side of the city;" "on some rising ground, we may suppose, not far off, such as the Jebel Maklub, or the more distant Kurdish hills, where he could command a view of the city." The only objection to this view is that in the Hebrew the narrative seems continuous, and we should expect some word to throw back the reader's thought to what had preceded the anger of the prophet. It seems to be a close of the mission and a winding up of the prophet's work which is being referred to. *He went out and sat down to wait*, for more than the time specified, as much as to say, *I will not doubt that the word will yet come true.*

Ver. 6-8. "*And Jehovah Elohim appointed a gourd and He made it to grow up over Jonah to be for a shadow upon his head, to deliver him from his trouble. And Jonah rejoiced over the gourd with a great rejoicing. And God appointed a worm, at the rising of dawn on the morrow; and it smote the gourd and it withered. And it came to pass when the sun rose that God appointed an east wind, a hot wind; and the sun smote upon the head of Jonah, and he fainted, and intreated that he might die. And he said, My death is better than my life.*"

The same word is employed in all the three instances of the Divine interposition,—the fish, the gourd, the worm. The meaning is that of appointment or special preparation, but not necessarily miraculous formation. As to the gourd, there is much discussion. The LXX., Syriac, and Arabic, Luther, Calvin, and English version have “*gourd*.” Jerome, from whom the Vulgate and others took the rendering “*hedera*,” was misled by the resemblance of the Hebrew word “*kikaion*” to the Egyptian “*kiki*.” In this he followed the Greek versions, which translated it by the word *κίσσος*. Augustine protested. But Jerome insisted that “*hedera*” was the nearest word. He is supposed to have referred to the palm-crist (Palma christi), or Ricinus communis, castor oil plant; but there is much to be said for the common rendering, gourd. The east wind was a *hot* wind, not as rendered in the English version, “*vehement*.” Jonah’s booth would have been blown away by a vehement wind. The affliction from which the prophet suffered was a fierce heat from the rays of the sun falling directly upon him.

Ver. 9–11. “*And God said to Jonah, Is it good that thou art angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. And Jehovah said, Thou hast mercy upon the gourd for which thou hast not laboured neither madest it to grow, which came as the son of a night and as the son of a night perished, and I, should not I have pity upon Nineveh, the great*

city, wherein are more than twelve times ten thousand men which discern not between their right hand and their left hand, and much cattle?"

The expression "*son of a night*" is an Aramaism, meaning "*in a night*," but the meaning must not be taken too literally. It describes rapid growth generally, but not necessarily within the space of a single night.

In ver. 11, "*Sixscore thousand persons*," means not necessarily *adults*, but may mean infants; cf. Deut. i. 39; Isa. vii. 15, 16. The reference to "*cattle*" seems to bring the whole under the idea of the helpless and innocent. Taking the period of irresponsibility as under seven years of age, and reckoning the average as one-fifth, there would be in Nineveh a population of six hundred thousand. This would be a moderate estimate for a city so described. It must not be forgotten that in the East large spaces are included within the walls of a great city, and that, like the suburbs of the Metropolis, a very vast population would be within reach of the message of Jonah. At the same time, it must be granted that the expression "*cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand*," is somewhat obscure. Is it certain that the reference is to the "*irresponsible*;" is it not possible that the meaning may be "who, as compared with the Hebrews, are to be pitied for their ignorance"? In that case the sixscore thousand (120,000) would represent the *whole population*. It is

remarked in *Speaker's Com.* (vol. vi. p. 607), that the history of chapter iii. shows that such a description of the Ninevites in general would be altogether out of place. But the rebuke would be more powerful to Jonah's prejudice as a Hebrew, if the comparison were distinctly made between the heathen *ignorance* and the Jewish *privilege*. Moreover, it is striking that no allusion is made to the repentance of Nineveh as a reason for Jehovah's forbearance. That is explained, if the reasoning be stated thus: The prophet is tempted to charge God with caprice. He proclaims destruction, and then suddenly, on the ground of a rapid profession of repentance, withdraws it. Is that repentance deep and true? If the people are so easily forgiven, why were they so severely threatened? They are not to be dealt with as though they are enlightened, and as though they had received constant and repeated warnings, like the Jews. They were ignorant, crude-minded people, who had only a very rough and broad conception of their moral obligation; they cannot discern between their right hand and their left, in spiritual things; therefore Jehovah must deal with them in a rough and ready kind of way; sending them an awful threatening of immediate destruction to rouse them to consider their past conduct, and then, on their showing themselves open to good influences, withholding the punishment for a term, until they have had ample space for reformation and change.

Beautiful as is the thought that the Lord regarded the little children as pleading for others, it is scarcely in perfect harmony with the general tone of the book, which is not so much *general* Divine benevolence, though of course that is included, as the *special* purpose of Jehovah to show mercy to the heathen. The expression, "*wherein are more than,*" etc., would naturally mean *the population of which is*, etc.; here "*the cattle*" are introduced as *making up* the population; *i.e. the whole living community*. At the same time, while exegesis seems to demand that the strict interpretation of the words should refer to the whole of the people, the spirit of the words is the same as though the little children alone were mentioned. It is the tender mercy of God that is expressed, and that "tender mercy is over all His works." God needs not that even little babes should intercede with Him for helpless creatures. He pities the grown-up men and women as much as the children.

PART III.

HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

THE OFFICE OF THE PROPHET IN THE TIME OF JONAH.

THE character and significance of the Book of Jonah, which probably stands *first*, in order of time, among the writings of the prophets (strictly so called) will be better understood when we have elucidated a few points with regard to the *position* and *office of the prophet* generally; and when we have explained how such a mission as that upon which Jonah was sent, to the heathen city of Nineveh, could be harmonized with the conception of the prophetic character.

Now, in the first place, with respect to *the Prophetic office, and how it was viewed by the people of God*, in the time when, it is supposed, this book was written; it must be remembered that from very early times, certainly long before the ninth century before Christ, when Jonah probably received his commission, there were religious teachers among the people of Palestine who, while they were separated by their character and work from others, were still not, like the priests or Levites, distinguished by family or by order, or

by the specific function assigned to them. The idea which was attached to the name of "*prophet*" was that of an *inspired* man, one who was called out from among the people by the special influence of the Spirit of God, resting upon him, and manifesting itself from time to time in his addresses and predictions. From the beginning of Scripture there would seem to be indications of prophetic gifts, bestowed upon individuals. The use of the name "*prophet*," though it was restricted in the late periods of Jewish history, was undoubtedly, at first, widely and somewhat loosely employed, to designate any one to whom was imparted an elevated utterance which was ascribed to Divine impulse. Beyond the individual and personal designation, there was the deeper conception of the "*word of the Lord*," which might reveal itself in various forms and through various agencies. Through a long course of ages there was a continuous line of Divine communications. In Paradise there was a "*word of the Lord*," which came to our first parents. And from that earliest instance of the intercourse between God and man, there followed an unbroken chain of revelation. Hence we find a fixed formula employed in Scripture, and especially after the rise of the prophetic schools, when inspired utterance became more frequent. "*The word of the Lord came.*" Very early we meet with the names of individuals, such as Enoch and Noah, to whom seems to have been committed a special prophetic mission to the age in

which they lived ; "*the word of the Lord came*" to them and *through* them. "*Enoch prophesied,*" we are told by Jude. Noah was "*a preacher of righteousness.*" In the case of Abraham, again, we have the three offices, afterwards embodied in the theocracy — the prophetic, the priestly, and the kingly—distinctly foreshadowed. "*The word of the Lord*" is said to have come to Abraham, again and again. The covenant is made with him as the representative man.¹ So with others, down to the time of Samuel, who established schools of the prophets, and prepared the way by his institutions for a wider diffusion of the gifts of prophetic utterance. There were individual men, like Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, upon whom the spirit of prophecy especially rested. And there were occasional instances of inspiration which show to us that, at any time or from any quarter, and through any instruments, "*the word of the Lord*" might be sent to Israel. The idea was always before the minds of the people, that Jehovah would send his word to them. They would easily distinguish between the ordinary and regular ministry of their prophets, and *special messages*, which were uttered as such, with the introductory formula, "*the word of the Lord came,*" or "*the burden of the Lord.*" The schools of the prophets, at Ramah and elsewhere, gave to young men a general training in the ancient Scriptures and in musical and poetical gifts, as doubtless

¹ See *Prophecy, its Nature and Evidence*, pp. 37-8.

also in the spiritual life in its fullest sense ; and those who came forth out of such schools would be fitted to expound the word of God, and exhort and warn the people, on the basis of great moral and national principles, which were recognised as inherent in the Law of Moses. But, in addition to that broad and general function of the prophet, there was, especially about the eighth century before Christ, the particular characteristic of the prophetic mission, which is embodied in the writings of the sixteen prophets, whose names are attached to the prophetic books of the Old Testament ; that is, *the reception from Jehovah of a message, which should be written down and handed on to the future as part of Scripture*. Elijah and Elisha were great prophets, but they wrote nothing. Why should those who followed them differ from them in that respect ? Why should men, certainly much inferior in their influence over the nation and their prominence in national affairs, in some instances men of very humble position and obscure origin, and so far as we can ascertain, of no great power of character, be appointed to *add their words to the body of Scripture*, while their greater predecessors left behind them no oracles and no verbal remains of their ministry ? The answer to this question is probably to be found in a consideration of the history of the people. Previous to the eighth century before Christ, the ministry of prophets was principally directed to the practical maintenance of the religious position of the

nation, the rebuke of their idolatrous practices, their wicked kings and their degenerate priesthood ; in other words, the rescue of the Law, as a sacred bond of union between the people and their God, from desecration, and of the nation from the ruin threatened them for their unfaithfulness. But after the mission of the great heralds of Jehovah, Elijah and Elisha, was shown to be substantially fruitless, the horizon was clouded with the rising darkness of judgment, in the appearance of the hostile heathen nations, commissioned to punish the fallen people. It was when the shadows of that approaching judgment began to deepen over Israel, that prophecy began to assume a new shape. It was then that prophets began to utter specific messages, which could be written down and preserved as Scripture. In two hundred years the whole of the twelve tribes would be swept away out of Palestine, and dispersed over a wide region of heathen country, where they would, even against their will, be acting as witnesses for God to the world. Hence the importance of those Scriptures, which during those two centuries would be sent by a succession of prophets, not likely to be able to effect any great changes, like Elijah, but still continuing the line of Divine mercy, repeating the same voice of the covenant, leaving the people without excuse. That the writings of such men as Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah, as well as those of the minor prophets who preceded the period of exile, would be of incal-

culable value to the captives in their seventy years of banishment from the favour of Jehovah, must be evident. They kept such writings together as their select Scriptures. And when they returned to Palestine, and restored the worship of the temple and all their religious services, they no doubt regarded the words of the prophets as second in importance only to the book of Legislation—the sacred foundation on which the whole of their religious economy was built.

We can understand, then, the solemnity which was attached to the mission of a prophet. He was the organ of a Divine revelation. He was the representative of that Holy Spirit who had been speaking through many ages to the fathers. If a word came to him which went beyond the ordinary scope of prophetic ministry it would be all the more solemn; it would be very clearly not the prophet's own, but "the word of Jehovah" which had "*come to him.*" To disobey that word, to hide it within his own thoughts, to take from it or add to it, would be a grievous sin to be conspicuously punished. Now we are told (chap. i. ver. 3) that "*Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.*" The meaning of that flight is explained by the book itself. It was "disobedience to the heavenly vision." It was renouncing the position and vocation of the Divine messenger. It was doing "despite unto the Spirit of Grace." And the whole book is a commentary on the expression, "*Presence of the Lord.*" Shallow

critics have objected that a prophet could not be so ignorant of the Divine character as to suppose that he could escape the presence of the Infinite Spirit. They have missed the purport of the whole narrative. By the Presence of the Lord is manifestly intended *the organic centre of Divine Revelation*. The radical conception of Judaism is the foundation on which such an expression must rest;—it was that of a *ministry gathered about Jehovah*, who is seated on a throne of majesty and grace in the midst of His people. “*The presence of the Lord*,” regarded as a place, is the chamber where the ministering priest, or prophet, is face to face with God. Forth from that chamber he goes to fulfil his mission, whatever it be, whether as a priest to bless, or as a prophet to speak the message, to proclaim “*the word of the Lord*.” Jonah rose up to flee from that centre of his spiritual responsibility, to turn his back upon One who was telling him what to say and to do. At that special crisis in the history of his people such unfaithfulness was specially sinful. The word which came to him then must have been a word of unusual grandeur and weight. It concerned the counsels of Jehovah, not only in respect to the Jews themselves, but in respect to the world, whose great empires were drawing closer round that central spot, where God’s truth had been for so many ages preserved. There are times when responsibility enlarges with the horizon of men’s thoughts, and when knowledge seems

to be summoned out of its recesses that it may be cast forth freely upon the spreading waters of a changing world, to be found in a mighty harvest after many days. Take for example such an instance as our own connection with the teeming population of Hindostan. Is not the imperial position of Britain with respect to India an overwhelming claim upon our faithfulness as heralds of the cross? Can we withhold the "*word of the Lord*," when it is manifestly given to us that we may publish it in a land over which we have commanding influence? So Jonah must have felt that when God spoke to him about Nineveh, He spoke of that which was in every one's thoughts at the time—the connection between Assyria, and the Mesopotamian world generally, and the chosen people. To shut his ears to that message, to withhold obedience to such a command, was to abrogate the functions of a prophet, to put himself in the place of God, and challenge the Divine voice itself. We can scarcely conceive a more direct contradiction of the prophetic name and office. He fled from "the presence of the Lord."

But further: *Was a mission to Nineveh, such as is here appointed to Jonah, in accordance with the vocation of a prophet of Israel at that time?* Much depends on the answer we give to that question. If Jonah could not reconcile obedience to that command, with his prophetic character, then we may be sure he would not have acknowledged it as sent from

Jehovah. No doubt there were forms of Divine communication, such as the vision, or ecstasy, which left no room to doubt—if the substance of them were in accordance with the Divine Word generally—that they were supernaturally given, though the prophet would probably receive an inward assurance, wrought by the Spirit of God, that he was inspired. But we can imagine that an entirely new revelation would cause him perplexity; especially if he could not understand it. The apostle Peter was not left to reason out the meaning of his vision of “the sheet let down from Heaven”; he received at once the providential confirmation of it, together with the inspired message it contained, so that he was prompted to act upon it, at once and without hesitation. Was there anything, then, we ask, in the case of Jonah, which would enable him to grasp the Divine meaning and purpose in the command to go to Nineveh? If there was not, we should be ready to plead for him, that he was so completely taken aback by the unusualness of such a mission, that he could not persuade himself that it had Divine authority. Let us consider this point more closely.

Now it must be remembered that the special function of the prophet was to lead the people into the more spiritual meaning of the Law. Hence we find that the writings of the prophets are more concerned with the Messiah and with the Hope of Israel, than with the Mosaic regulations. The priest ful-

filled his office in observing the Law, and teaching the people to do so. The prophet called them to look beyond the letter of the Law, and rise to their vocation as the ministers of Jehovah to the world. The primitive promise made to Abraham was, that "in him and his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed." It was therefore strictly in accordance with the prophetic office, that prophecy should concern itself with heathen nations. Jonah could not possibly know beforehand what was to be done with Nineveh. He had no more right, as a prophet, to determine the limits of his ministry, than to dictate to God how the Divine word should be spoken. He must simply do as he was bid, or resign his office.

But, again, at the crisis when Jonah lived there were distinct, providential indications, that Israel was about to enter upon a new stage of its history.

For a hundred and fifty years the ten tribes of Israel had gone from bad to worse in their rebellion against Jehovah. In the time of Jeroboam II. judgments were already falling very heavily on the land. "*The affliction of Israel was very bitter.*" Syrian armies swept over the northern parts of Palestine, and emptied their towns and villages almost entirely of their inhabitants. "*There was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel,*" i.e. their strong places were deserted and their solitary places were a vacancy. It was seventy years since the great Elisha had testified for God. The

long silence was a trial of faith. Had Jehovah forsaken Israel? Now it would seem that Jonah was raised up, at such a time, to *revive the fainting hopes of the people*. His word came to pass—God heard the prayers of the faithful. The invading Syrians were driven back, and the coasts of Israel restored.¹ But the temporary success only fed the pride of the stubborn idolaters. They drew down the judgment of Jehovah once more, and Jonah must have witnessed that abuse of Divine grace. At such a crisis, for God to send a message about Nineveh was very significant. It seemed to say: With Israel I have done; now I will turn towards the heathen. Upon them I will bring my judgments, and it may be they will repent. Jonah must have felt the solemnity of the mission entrusted to him. Never before was any prophet sent out of the land to proclaim a message, either of judgment or of mercy, amongst the heathen. What did it mean? We can easily imagine that national and patriotic revulsion from such an errand would be powerfully excited. The prophet was already regarded as a great friend of his country, because he had predicted good concerning it, and his prediction had been brought to pass. When it was

¹ The effect of that fulfilment of the prophet's word is recorded in the historical narrative (2 Kings xiv. 27), "And the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash."

known, as it must be known, that he had gone out of the borders of Israel to take up a mission in the name of Jehovah amongst the distant people of Nineveh, a people who were threatening both the neighbours of Israel and Israel itself, would not all the favour which he had won be withdrawn from him, and would he not be regarded as a traitor to the national welfare? Then, the mission was to announce a speedy destruction; but the real intention of the mission was to summon the people of the heathen city to repent, and avert the evil by their change of life. If God really determined to destroy the capital of Assyria in forty days, why not send the destruction without warning, which would make it the more complete? Jonah acknowledged that such were his thoughts, when the mercy of Jehovah was before his eyes, and it displeased him exceedingly. "Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil." That is to say, I foresaw that the result of such a mission would be the salvation of the heathen, otherwise why should it be sent? My revolt was from the thought of a *saved* Nineveh, and it is that which makes me angry now. Why should they be saved? Are they not the enemies of Israel? Are they not the greatest danger rising up on the horizon of the Lord's people? Would not

their overthrow mean a clear course for my fellow-countrymen for ages to come? Some such thoughts we may be sure were working in the prophet's mind, and, as he himself acknowledged, prompted his flight.

Now, it is in view of that contrast, between the thoughts of man and the thoughts of God, that we must examine the book itself. A flood of light is thus thrown upon it. Jonah represents, not so much a spirit of wilful insubordination and disobedience against God, as a false Judaism, a lower form of national feeling, which, no doubt, was the prevailing form eight centuries before Christ, and continued to be so, until the apostate Israel was swept away in the destruction of Jerusalem. The beginning of that defection from the true theocratic idea is seen in the time of Samuel, in the determination of the people to be like the surrounding nations, in the possession of a standing army and a military monarchy. The rebellion of the ten tribes, and the breaking up of the national unity, was a severe judgment sent from Jehovah to rebuke that spiritual defection. As idolatry increased, especially in the northern division of the land, the theocratic feeling grew weaker, and the spiritual mission of the people was suffered to fall into the background, obscured by their secular interests, by the wars which they were compelled to carry on, sometimes with neighbouring heathen nations, sometimes with their own brethren of the rival kingdom. It was a sad falling off from

the Mosaic standard and from the Abrahamic covenant. Why should an Israelitish prophet rebel against the command of Jehovah, to warn a heathen city of its danger? Simply because that prophet, good man as he was, had become steeped in the current ideas and sympathies of his day, instead of rising above them and calling back his contemporaries to the loftier conception of their mission as the Israel of God. "*While I was yet in my country.*" Yes, he was in it, and he yielded himself to the popular feeling, which was that of hating every neighbouring nation as a rival or opponent of Israel. So it was that the primitive Hope of the Messiah, the Divine Prince, who should appear as the Redeemer of the people, was lowered and secularised, until it became a mere political calculation, mingling with all the other national ideas and notions—Jewish, but not theocratic—cutting the nation off from other nations, not sending them out as the heralds of peace and salvation.

Now there cannot be a doubt, when we glance through the series of prophetic writings which follow the time of Jonah, from the eighth century to the fourth, that their main intention was to lift up that Messianic Hope out of the dust where it was defiled and lost, and to invite the chosen race once more, and with repeated voices from heaven, to take up their great vocation, to be the messengers of Jehovah to the world. Very soon after Jonah, came Isaiah.

His ministry was emphatically a Divine call to Judah, and so to Israel as well, to arise and shake herself from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments, and to be what Jehovah had appointed her to be, a light to lighten the Gentiles, until the whole earth should be full of the glory of the Lord.

What, then, could be more appropriate than that some striking appeal should first be made in the history and words of a prophet, declaring beyond all possible doubt, in a manner which must rouse the careless and indifferent to reflection, that Jehovah was not only the God of the twelve tribes of Israel, but of all the nations of the earth? That the form of the appeal should be miraculous was only to be expected, after the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, which were full of miracles. The people would scarcely be likely to give solemn attention to any message from a prophet, unless there were some credential of a supernatural kind to give weight to it. Moreover, if the purport of the message was to break down prejudice, and to call back the whole nation to a lofty spiritual conception of its mission, the miracle sent must be something very distinguished, something beyond dispute, and adapted to produce an impression over a very wide sphere—not a mere local occurrence, such as might be great to those immediately concerned, but not fitted to rouse the people of the whole country. Such was the narrative which Jonah placed before his contemporaries. There could be no

doubt about the facts: the miraculous deliverance of the prophet—the extraordinary results of his mission in the heathen city—his own renunciation of his former narrowness and prejudice, like that of the apostle Peter, under the influence of a Divine vision. The short, but deeply interesting story, was like a proclamation from heaven through the length and breadth of the land: Let us awake and respond to this appeal of our God against our worldliness and indifference, our neglect of God's word, and our alienation from His Spirit. Let us not, like Jonah, turn from the presence of the Lord, unfaithful to our vocation, lest judgment swallow us up; but let us come forth out of our sea of unbelief, out of our dark pit of rebellion, and be as the voice of Jehovah's Righteousness and Mercy to all the nations of the earth. Such is the evident meaning of the book, and hence its place as the first in the line of written prophecies.

CHAPTER II.

SPECIAL FEATURES IN THE BOOK CONSIDERED.

THE most cursory reading of the Book of Jonah must be quite sufficient to produce the impression, that it stands apart, in some respects, from other prophetic writings. We are immediately arrested by the fact, that while Jonah was, as the history shows us, a distinguished prophet, whose predictions were fulfilled, yet nothing of his prophetic mission and work remains but this singular record, founded upon a single passage in his life as a prophet, and preserving nothing of his general teachings. Another striking feature, on the surface of the narrative, is that it sets the character of a great prophet in a very unfavourable light, and leaves him at the end under the manifest rebuke of Jehovah. We cannot doubt that Jonah himself was an eminent saint of God. His mission was unique in Jewish history : he was delivered from death by a miracle ; he was inspired, and mighty power attended his words. Apart from his infirmities, he was appointed to fulfil a very momentous part, as the instrument of Divine purposes. We may fairly conclude, therefore, that the book

has special significance attached to it. Let us consider in this chapter some of those special features of the work, which by their very speciality authorize it as proceeding from God.

I. The first and most conspicuous fact which is brought before us, is that on which the book as a whole is founded, viz. *the mission of a prophet of Israel to a heathen nation*. This was an entirely new fact in Jewish history, and cannot be studied too attentively in all its aspects. The commission which was given to Jonah was clothed in very few, simple, but commanding words. "*Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me*" (i. 2). "*Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee*" (iii. 2). The narrative is content with the barest summary of Jonah's preaching. "*And Jonah cried, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*" This exceeding brevity is intended, no doubt, to enhance the impression of the *facts*. If the Book of Jonah had been written to preserve Jonah's *prophecies*, it would have contained more of his *words*. If there had been anything very special in the prophet's own mind, in his exposition of the word of God, in His message to Israel or to Nineveh, we may be sure, more of his own *language* would have been left on record. But even when he sings his song of deliverance, he does so, not in his own words, but in the words of his predecessors. It was *the fact itself*,

then, of Jonah's mission to Nineveh, which formed the substance of his prophetic function. Now the people were, no doubt, very much astonished at such a fact; but they could easily adjust it to previous revelations. The Messianic Hope had been abundantly revealed already. Jonah's own language is evidence how familiar were *the psalms* in the lips of devout men of that time. And the psalms are full of Messiah; full of large and liberal views of Messiah's office and work. The *history* of David and Solomon was a preparation for what was to come. How can we explain the appeals which were made to the devout feelings of worshippers—"Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth"—"Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people" (and many others, which we find in the psalms, and therefore which were constantly being repeated in public worship)—unless we grant that the minds of the most thoughtful and spiritual were being trained to familiarity with the idea of their missionary character as a people. We know that the Jews had many transactions with heathen nations, and that their commercial and military emissaries must have penetrated into distant lands, and brought back tidings of other people, while at the same time they spread the name of Israel over a very wide sphere. But a new and striking fact is sent, to touch their hearts and to open their eyes. Jehovah Himself chooses out one of the Jewish prophets, a distin-

guished man, and gives him a Divine commission to go to Assyria, and preach among the Gentiles. It seems difficult to conceive of any fact which could have been more powerful at that juncture in its influence over the popular mind, and especially as connected with *the personal history of Jonah*; so solemn in its warning against unbelief, and so emphatic in its confirmation of the Divine appointment of the prophet.

Again, take another instance, showing that the special significance of the book is in the facts. The fact is recorded that *Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah*. It is recorded in such a manner that the inference is plainly intended to be drawn, that the repentance was a *supernatural* fact. There was certainly nothing in the character of the prophet to account for it. The mere announcement that the city would be overthrown, made by a stranger, and he alone, and so far as we know without any *special signs*, at the time, of Divine authority, would not account for the impression produced. The voices of fanatics or maniacs were often, no doubt, heard in great cities. Tradition says, that before the destruction of Jerusalem, such a cry was heard for many weeks; but heard without heed. A nation like the Assyrians, given up to violence and rapine, would *not* be likely to repent, by the mere influence of natural causes. Indeed, it is one of the arguments employed by adverse critics, to undermine the authority of the

book, that the conversion of a whole city by the preaching of one prophet, for so short a time, is *absolutely incredible*. Incredible it is, except on the presupposition that Jehovah wrought specially with His messengers. The doctrine of a direct and special Divine influence, the work of the Spirit, was not unknown to the Jews. It is plainly taught in the psalms. Nor would it be beyond belief to a devout Israelite, that the spirit of repentance should be poured out on *a whole people*—that, as Isaiah afterwards predicted, “*nations*” should be “*born in a day*.” Still, at the time when Jonah wrote, it would, no doubt, be a great marvel, which would fill all with astonishment, that a heathen city should be suddenly turned from ungodly life to the confession of sin and amendment. The more wonderful the fact, the more clearly it spoke of Divine interposition. And the more distinct the message of the book, the more likely that it was authentic.

It is not a sufficient reply to this reasoning to suggest that the whole narrative was an invention of a later age. There is no reason to believe that the Jews would ever, of themselves, have so represented a Gentile people, except under special teaching. One who was so completely emancipated from Jewish prejudice as to originate such a book as the Book of Jonah, simply out of his own thoughts, would have been certainly far too devout and spiritual and lofty-minded to feign its truth; such a man could not have

have related the story as divinely authorised, when it was a fiction of his own invention. There is nothing in Jewish literature with which we can compare it, as we have seen in a previous chapter. How immeasurable then must have been the influence of such a fact as the repentance of Nineveh, upon the contemporaries of Jonah, and upon all subsequent prophets! It seems impossible to overestimate it. Can we not plainly recognise the influence in such a passage as that in Joel—the first prophet to proclaim the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, from that time a common topic? The great conflict between light and darkness was solemnly inaugurated by that repentance at Nineveh. A sign was thus given to the people of God, that the world would be conquered, that the kingdom of righteousness would spread to the ends of the earth.

2. *The peculiar character of the Book of Jonah is further to be observed, in its adaptability to parabolic use.* This has been so evident that it has been turned into an argument against its truth. There is no need, it has been said, to conclude, from the fact that the events are represented as real, that they actually occurred. A parable is usually so expressed. Our Lord's parables are clothed in the form of historical narratives, as *e.g.* Luke x. 30: "*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.*" The verisimilitude of the occurrence is sufficient ground on which to build up the

structure of didactic meaning. So, it is argued, into the *mould* of Jonah's story is poured the pure gold of great spiritual lessons. *But the value of the mould itself is nothing!* The parable remains, however we regard the narrative! Now, as to the worth of this reasoning, we have already shown it to be fallacious. But the admission, that the whole can be viewed as a parable, does not militate, in the least degree, against the truthfulness of the story, but rather lends it a very special character. All attempts to interpret parables must be regarded as open to criticism. At the same time, it can scarcely be doubted, that some of the meanings which are conveyed by the Book of Jonah were transparent enough to be recognised, even by the Jews themselves, certainly by those whose insight was the deepest. The moral identification of the prophet and the people, is quite a familiar thought, in the whole of the prophetic period. Hence the difficulty, sometimes, of exactly distinguishing, what is said of the individual in his personal capacity, and what is said representatively. The Messiah Himself is the ideal Israel. The people are continually addressed by Jehovah as being themselves the echo of His voice. He speaks through them to the nations. Their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to their Divine vocation is the chief subject of prophecy. Now it is easy to recognise, in the Book of Jonah, a parable, which would very powerfully appeal to the whole nation. Were not *they* "*fleeing*

from the presence of the Lord," instead of fulfilling their mission? Were not *they* in danger of being plunged into the great, heaving "*sea of troubles*," where the monster of the deep would await them? Would not heathen nations be the instruments, in the hands of a righteous God, in punishing their unfaithfulness? Yet, if they learned the lessons of Providence, ought they not, even yet, though so weak and worthless in themselves, by the preserving mercy and inspiring grace of Jehovah, to become His / messengers of Righteousness to surrounding nations? The conclusion of the book was also wonderfully significant. The angry prophet in his booth, praying for death, mourning the loss of his temporary refuge—over against the great teeming multitude of human beings, rescued by Divine compassion, men, women and children, on the simple ground of their repentance. Was it not a parable? Why should Israel be angry that Jehovah would break down the old distinction, and shed His love abroad? Why should they mourn for a gourd, "the son of a night," the mere offspring of changing circumstances? Their legal system was not identical with eternal truth. Their Jewish rites and ceremonies were not intended to be a permanent house of abode. If God smote the gourd, He could provide better shelter for His servant. If He called all nations into the participation which He promised, of the great inheritance of His love, it would not be because He loved Israel the

less, but because He loved all men. Surely such a parable would be an open secret, to all who sought to know the mind and ways of Jehovah; and though it might at that time need interpretation, yet, to those who read it side by side with the subsequent messages of the prophets, it must have been a powerful appeal, against pride, inhumanity, bigotry, pharisaism, and all the besetting sins of the Hebrew nation. Such a significance seals the book as Divine.

And then, lastly, it may be noticed that the book is eminently adapted to teach one of the most important views of the character of prophecy itself. God is not a mere arbitrary Being, making decrees and deciding destinies. He is the God of Righteousness and the God of Love, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is impossible not to recognise, apart from New Testament teaching, the Messianic sentiment running through the book. It breathes the spirit of the Messiah. It preaches the gospel, though there is no direct prediction of the Redeemer in it from beginning to end. The narrative itself was a proclamation, better than the utterances of any prophet by word of mouth, declaring the character of God and preparing the world for His grace. We shall, however, return to this view of the book in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER III.

ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF JONAH, IN RELATION TO
SURROUNDING NATIONS, ESPECIALLY TO ASSYRIA.

THE political relations of the Jews were their temptations. In the course of their national development it was a matter of necessity that they should be brought into some sort of contact with the heathen peoples around them. But they were from the first forbidden, by direct command of Jehovah, to form any close alliances with those who worshipped strange gods. Their isolation was part of their preparation for the office assigned to them, to be stewards of the mysteries of God. No sooner did they renounce the Divine ideal entrusted to them, the ideal of theocracy, and by their wilful and perverse adoption of the monarchical form of government, descend to a lower level of national existence, being compelled to imitate heathen methods of defence and aggrandisement, than they became involved in political difficulties and military strife; they were gradually drawn into that whirlpool of international conflict which for centuries seethed over the whole extent of western Asia. They were no longer, as they might have been, "*walled around*" in their

own small country, with the sea on the one side and the desert on the other, the mountains of Lebanon defending them on the north. Their national character greatly changed for the worse under the military reigns of Saul and David ; they became an ambitious people, aiming more or less at dominion over the nations, following the bad example of the Eastern despotisms.

But the judgments of Jehovah soon fell. Solomon's kingdom, great and splendid as it was, broke in pieces. Luxury and idolatry prevailed in the land. The two kingdoms which had at one time formed one empire, the ten tribes of Israel and the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, while they were jealous of one another, sought, each in their own way, for an increase of power. The sceptre of David was gone. But, by alliance with neighbouring kings, it would be possible to revive some of its grandeur. It was this fatal alienation from the ancient theocratic ideal which accounts for the subsequent history of Palestine. Hence the wars which occurred, the many entanglements, in which they would not have been concerned, but for association with heathen powers around.

In the year 825 B.C., Jeroboam II., the son of Joash king of Israel, began to reign over the ten tribes. "He reigned forty and one years." While himself unfaithful to Jehovah, as his people were, he was permitted to obtain advantages over the neighbouring powers in the north, in conflict with

the armies of Syria. "*He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.*" A prophet, like Jonah, who had been so intimately bound up with his country's military struggles against its neighbouring enemies, must feel a patriotic impulse mingling with his prophetic ministry. He was doubtless, like all the prophets, a thoughtful observer of contemporary events and their bearing on national affairs. It was not difficult for any inhabitant of northern Palestine at that time, about eight centuries before Christ, to estimate the growing power of the great Mesopotamian kingdom of Assyria, with its capital at Nineveh.

What, then, was Assyria at that time, and what was its relation to Israel? Mesopotamia, a low-lying, fertile district, watered by the great rivers Euphrates and Tigris, was always subject to inroads from tribes dwelling in the higher lands of Armenia. The earliest migrations of the human race proceeded from that centre of elevated country, on which, as we are informed in the Book of Genesis, the ark of Noah

rested, and from which the three great branches of the Noachic family diverged. It seems probable that the first possessors of the Mesopotamian lowlands were from Armenia, or from the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea. But it is now regarded as a settled point, that some two thousand years B.C. a Hamite or Cushite race (possibly from Ethiopia direct, or possibly driven onwards from Arabia, by migratory movements from the farther west), drove out the original inhabitants of southern Mesopotamia, and originated the ancient Chaldean or Babylonian kingdom, in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf. After about four centuries and a half, this southern kingdom was invaded by Arabian tribes, and became subject to an Arab dynasty. The northern districts of Mesopotamia underwent a change. A Semitic race became dominant there. And that Semitic people (probably the result of an Arabian immigration) grew more and more powerful, from the year 1298 to the middle of the eighth century. It is quite certain that the *Assyrians* were *Syro-Arabbians*, i.e. of the same Semitic descent as the inhabitants of northern Arabia and Syria; and with these were closely connected in race, the Phœnicians, *later* Canaanites, and subsequently, the descendants of Abraham (who went forth from the Chasdim, or Chaldean Ur, the modern Mugheir, the most ancient city of the world, somewhere about the time of the Assyrian dynasty).

The Assyrian kingdom probably commenced at

Asshur on the right bank of the Tigris (Kileh Shergat), sixty miles below the site of Nineveh. For many years it was a subordinate kingdom to Babylon, or Chaldea. But the power of Nineveh grew. Somewhere about 1250 B.C., Babylon became subject to it, remaining the inferior kingdom until 625 B.C., when again the Babylonian power, under the influence of Medes, rose against Nineveh and destroyed it. The real supremacy of Assyria, therefore, lasted from 1250 B.C. to 625 B.C., a period of more than six hundred years. But the main interest of the Assyrian history lies within a much shorter space. From about 900 to 650 B.C., that is, two hundred and fifty years, their career, under enterprising and warlike monarchs, was one of almost irresistible conquest and material prosperity.

It would not be interesting to the reader to go back much farther than 900 B.C. in our sketch of Assyria. There was, however, before that period, a great Assyrian conqueror, *Asshur-dani-pal* (or Sardanapalus), about 930 B.C. He made Calah his capital, the modern *Nimrud*, going north forty miles from the original capital of Kileh Shergat. "In his annals, which have come down to us in a very complete condition, it is apparent that he carried his army far and wide through western Asia, from Babylon and Chaldea on one side, to Syria and the coasts of the Mediterranean sea on the other. It seems to have been in the latter quarter that his most prominent and important conquests

were effected. Sardanapalus styles himself "the conqueror from the upper passage of the Tigris to Lebanon and the Great Sea, who has reduced under his authorities all countries from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof" (see Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, ch. xvi. p. 361). In his Syrian campaign, which is recorded at length not only in the general inscriptions, but also in the votive Bull and Lion which he set up at Calah on his return from it, he took tribute from the kings of the principal Phœnician cities, as Tyre, Sidon, Byblus, and Aradus: among the rest, probably from Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, the father of Jezebel, the wife of Ahab. He is the first of the Assyrian kings of whose grandeur we are able to judge, by the remains of extensive buildings and sculptures which have come down to us. He was the founder of the north-west palace at Nimrud, which, next to that of Sennacherib, at Kouyunjik, is the largest and most magnificent of the Assyrian edifices. The greater portion of the sculptures now in the British Museum are from this building. It was a structure nearly square, about 360 feet in length, and 300 in breadth, standing on a raised platform, overlooking the Tigris, with a grand façade to the north fronting the town, and another to the west, commanding the river. It was built of hewn stone, and consisted of a single central hall, more than 120 feet long by 90 wide, probably open to the sky, round which were grouped a number

of ceiled chambers, some larger and some smaller, generally communicating with one another. The ceilings were of cedar, brought apparently from Mount Lebanon; the walls were panelled to a certain distance from the floor by slabs of alabaster, ornamented throughout with bas-reliefs, above which they were coated with plaster. The smaller chambers were frequently dark; the larger ones were lighted either by openings in the roof, or by apertures in the upper part of the wall near the ceiling. The floors were paved with slabs of stone, often covered with inscriptions. A close analogy has been pointed out between this style of building and the great edifices of the Jews, as described in Scripture (1 Kings vi. vii.; 2 Chron. iii.), the Jewish kings having in all probability borrowed their architecture from Assyria. The dimensions, however, of the palace of Solomon fell far short of those of the great Assyrian monarchs" (Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. i. pp. 461-2).

Then followed another great conqueror, who made numerous inroads on the neighbouring countries for the thirty-one years of his reign, and brought many kings into subjection to Assyria. What is most remarkable in his expeditions is their extent. "At one time they are in Chaldea, on the very borders of the southern ocean; at another in eastern Armenia and the vicinity of the Caspian; frequently they are in Syria, and touch the confines of Palestine; occasionally they are in Cappadocia, and the country of

the Tuplai (Tibareni). Armenia, Azerbaijan, great portions of Media Magna, the line of Zagros, Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Phœnicia, the chain of Amanus, and the country beyond it to the north and north-west, are invaded by the Assyrian armies, which exceed upon occasions 100,000 fighting men. Everywhere tribute is enforced, and in most places images of the king are set up as a sign of his possessing the supremacy. The Assyrian successes are throughout attributed, after the favour of Asshur and Mero-dach, to their archers." "The most interesting of the campaigns of Shalmanubar are those which, in his sixth, eleventh, fourteenth and eighteenth years, he conducted against the countries bordering on Palestine. In the first three of these, his chief adversary was Benhadad, of Damascus, the prince whose wars with Baasha, Ahab, and Jehoram, and whose murder by Hazael, are related at length in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. Benhadad, who had strengthened himself by a close league with the Hamathites, Hittites, and Phœnicians, was defeated in three great battles by the Assyrian monarch, and lost in one of these 20,000 men. This ill success appears to have broken up the league; and when Hazael, soon after his accession, was attacked in his turn, probably about the year B.C. 884 or 885, he was left to his own resources, and had to take refuge in Anti-Libanus, where Shalmanubar engaged and defeated him, killing (according to his own account) 16,000 of

his fighting men, and capturing more than 1,100 chariots."

It was probably at this time, or perhaps three years later (882), when the conqueror once more entered Syria and forced Hazael to supply his troops with provisions, that the first direct connection of which we have any record, took place between the people of Israel and the Assyrians. "One of the first epigraphs on the black obelisk (in the British Museum), records the tribute which Yahua, the son of Khumri—*i.e.* Jehu, the son of Omri—brought to the king who set it up, consisting almost entirely of gold and silver and articles manufactured from gold. It was, perhaps, this act of submission which provoked the fierce attack of Hazael upon the kingdom of Israel in the reign of Jehu, when he 'smote them in all their coasts,' and deprived them of the entire country east of Jordan, the ancient possessions of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, as far as 'Aroer by the river Arnon,' which flows into the Dead Sea" (Rawlinson's *Herod.*, vol. i. p. 465).

The next monarch was *Shamas-iva*, who suppressed a violent rebellion led by his elder brother Sardana-palus, and obtained considerable victories in his expeditions. He was succeeded by his son *Iva-lush III.*, who is supposed to be the same as Pul mentioned in Scripture. (In the LXX. Phaloch, or Phalôs, or as Eusebius and others write it, Belochus). We learn from one of the slabs discovered and deciphered, that

he received tribute from various countries, among which Khumri or Samaria is named, as well as Tyre and Sidon, Damascus, Idumea and Palestine on the Western Sea (see 2 Kings xv. 19, 20). Menahem, king of Israel, gave a tribute of a thousand talents to Pul. He reigned from 800 to 747, and was probably the monarch referred to in the Book of Jonah. It is believed that a new dynasty ascended the throne of Assyria after Pul or Iva-lush III. Tiglath-Pileser II. revived the declining power of the kingdom, for luxury and sloth were rapidly consuming it. He is the great conqueror referred to in Scripture. During the period of conquest which he initiated, Assyria reduced Egypt, subjugated Susiana, crossed Tarsus in Asia Minor, invaded Cappadocia, and established relations with Gyges of Lydia. He also made some naval expeditions in the Mediterranean and in the Persian Gulf. Cyprus was subdued, and Grecian subjects were numbered amongst those in the Assyrian empire. The greatness of Assyria lasted about a century after this time, that is from about 747 to 647 B.C., when the attacks of northern tribes commenced. The wealth and luxury obtained by conquest undermined the strength of the people, and courted the assault of covetous neighbours. The Scythian hordes came down upon the plains from the mountains, just as the Northern races came upon the decaying Roman empire. The Medes and Babylonians seized the opportunity of revenging their own

past defeats, and from the year 634 onwards, Assyria became a prey to their joint attacks. The capital, Nineveh, was besieged and captured in 625 B.C.

The list of the Sargonidæ includes names familiar to the reader of Scriptures. Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Sardanapalus and Saracus, fill up a space from 745 to 647 B.C. *Tiglath-Pileser II.* took tribute from Menahem in 743, attacked and subdued Damascus, and Pekah, king of Israel, and received the submission of the king of Judah, Ahaz, 734-732 B.C. His successor, *Shalmaneser*, invaded Palestine several times, and commenced the siege of Samaria in 723 B.C. *Sargon*, a usurper, after leading a successful revolution, and dethroning Shalmaneser, himself became king, 721 B.C. He captured Samaria, the capital of the ten tribes, and carried away the Israelites, setting them in Gaulonitis and Media. *Sennacherib* ascended the throne about 705 B.C. His first expedition into Palestine was in 700 B.C. To him king Hezekiah gave tribute. His second expedition into Palestine took place in 698 B.C., about which time occurred the memorable destruction of his army near Pelusium, on the borders of Egypt. Sennacherib was subsequently murdered by his two sons, in 680 B.C. A struggle between the two murderers followed. *Esarhaddon* obtained the throne, 680 B.C., reigning alternately at Babylon and at Nineveh. He subdued Egypt, and punished Manasseh, the king of Israel, for his revolt. He introduced into the

conquered territories of the ten tribes, the colonists from Babylonia, Susiana, and Persia. The splendour of Nineveh, however, was connected with the reign of his successor, *Sardanapalus* or *Asshur-bani-pal*, 667 B.C., or a little later. His victories were wide spread, and his power overwhelming. Egypt, Asia Minor, Armenia, Susiana, Babylonia, Arabia,—he was surrounded on all points of the compass by a vast multitude of subject peoples. To him is attributed the greatness of the capital. Art flourished in his reign. The most magnificent of the Assyrian palaces was built and adorned by him. The royal library, discovered at Nineveh, was collected under his reign. But his later years were years of luxury and enervation. His son and successor *Saracus*, or *Asshur-emid-ilin*, made but a faint resistance to the invading forces of the enemies both in the north and in the south. The capture and destruction of Nineveh, in 625, was the overthrow of the Assyrian power. After that time two kingdoms became rivals for supremacy in western Asia. These were the revived kingdom of Babylonia—which subdued Egypt and Palestine—and the rising monarchy of the Medians, a hardy and warlike people who united for a time with Babylon to overthrow her rival, and then, uniting with the Persians under Cyrus to destroy the Babylonian empire, became the ruling power of western Asia.

It must be observed with regard to these names and dates that they are at present surrounded with

much obscurity. Until the tablets which have been discovered are more thoroughly examined, and the results can be carefully considered and tabulated, it is impossible to assign events to their precise places, and the names of monarchs must be in some confusion. The most important points, however, are the extent of the Assyrian dominions, and the nature of the empire over which the Assyrian monarch reigned. On these points there can be but little uncertainty, and the chief conclusions of modern historians may be summed up in a few words. The following is the list of countries subject to Assyria during the period of its supremacy. "Susiana, Chaldea, Babylonia, Media, Matiêné or the country of the Namri, Armenia, Mesopotamia, parts of Cappadocia and Cilicia, Syria, Phœnicia, Palestine, Idumea, and for a time Lower Egypt. Cyprus, also, was for some years a dependency." But we must not suppose that all this immense region of western Asia was a compact kingdom, like a modern European monarchy, as Germany or France. It has been compared with the empire of Solomon. "The first and most striking feature," says Canon Rawlinson (*Herodotus*, vol. i. p. 490), "of the earliest empires is, that they are a mere congeries of kingdoms; the countries over which the dominant state acquires an influence, not only retain their distinct individuality, as is the case in more modern empires, but remained in all respects just as they were before, with the simple addition of

certain obligations contracted towards the permanent authority. They kept their old laws, their old religion, their line of kings, their law of succession, their whole internal organization and machinery; they only acknowledged an external suzerainty which bound them to the performance of certain duties towards the head of the empire. These duties, as understood in the earliest times, may be summed up in the two words '*homage*' and '*tribute*;' the subject kings 'serve' and bring presents (see 1 Kings iv. 21); they are bound to acts of submission, must attend the court of the suzerain when summoned, unless they have a reasonable excuse, must then salute him as superior, and otherwise acknowledge his rank; above all, they must pay him regularly the fixed tribute which has been imposed upon them at the time of their submission and subjection, the unauthorized withholding of which is open and avowed rebellion. Finally, they must allow his troops free passage through their dominions, and must oppose any attempt at invasion by way of their country, on the part of his enemies. Such are the earliest and most essential obligations on the part of the subject states in an empire of the primitive type, like that of Assyria; other obligations, with the corresponding one on the part of the dominant power of the protection of its dependents against foreign foes, appear to have constituted the sole links which joined together in one the heterogeneous materials of which

that empire consisted. It is evident that a government of the character here described contains within it elements of constant disunion and disorder. Under favourable circumstances, with an active and energetic prince upon the throne, there is an appearance of strength, and a realization of much magnificence and grandeur. The subject monarchs pay annually their due share of 'the regulated tribute of the empire;' and, the better to secure the favour of their common sovereign, add to it presents, consisting of the choicest productions of their respective kingdoms. The material resources of the different countries are placed at the disposal of the dominant power; and skilled workmen are readily lent for the services of the court, who adorn and build the temples and the royal residences, and transplant the luxuries and refinements of their several states to the imperial capital. But no sooner does any untoward event occur, as a disastrous expedition, a foreign attack, a domestic conspiracy, or a mere untimely and unexpected death of the reigning prince, than the inherent weakness of this sort of government at once displays itself—the whole fabric of the empire falls asunder—each kingdom re-asserts its independence—tribute ceases to be paid—and the mistress of a hundred states suddenly finds herself thrust back into her primitive condition, stripped of the dominion which has been her strength, and thrown entirely upon her own resources. Then the

whole task of reconstruction has to be commenced anew ; one by one the rebel countries are overcome and the rebel monarchs chastised—tribute is reimposed, submission enforced, and in fifteen or twenty years the empire has recovered itself. Progress is of course slow and uncertain, when the empire has continually to be built up again from its foundations, and when at any time a day may undo the work which it has taken centuries to accomplish."

The Assyrian empire, like all the ancient monarchies, concentrated its strength and wealth around its capital. And like them, it exhibited the same fatal weakness in the subject states. Rebellion was perpetually breaking out, and such rebellions had to be subdued by conquests which themselves dried up the resources of the dominant power. So it has been always in the history of great empires. They are irresistible for a time, until they have subdued surrounding peoples, and then they begin to perish in their extremities. This was especially the case with the vast empires of the East. Though in the instance of the Assyrians, the character of the people who were concentrated around the capital would seem to have been so warlike and energetic that their power was preserved for a great length of time. The nations which dwelt in the west and in the north were no match for the Assyrians, until the dominant people themselves were enervated by luxury. The western countries were too small and subdivided to

resist the attacks of such a kingdom. For five centuries it maintained its position of supremacy, until the bold and fierce tribes of the Scythians came down upon it, and found ready helpers in the neighbouring kingdoms of Media and Babylonia.

We know but little of the internal government of Assyria. But there is one remarkable feature of its wars which, in view of the relations between Israel and the later kings, it is interesting to notice. There was no attempt to destroy the religion of any people brought into subjection. But there does seem to be something of a religious character attributed to the wars. They were made, by the power of the god Asshur. One inscription says: "I, Asshurdanipal, established true religious worship and holy rites throughout the land of Tsukhi. As far as the land of Carduniash I extended the true religion of my empire. The people of Chaldea, who were overthrowers and revilers of my religion, I crucified and slew them." Sennacherib says: "The men of the city of Khismi, impious heretics, who from days of old had refused to submit to my authority, I put to death, according to my religious laws." These and similar inscriptions show that there was a reverential feeling, at least professedly, attached to the military expeditions which were made. "Nothing," says Rawlinson, "is more universal than the practice of setting up in the subject countries 'the laws of Asshur' and 'altars to the great gods.' In some instances not only altars,

but temples are erected, and priests are left to superintend the worship and secure its being properly conducted." This propagandism, however, does not seem to have been very determined, and would probably be modified by the character of the religion which was found in the subject country. That of the Jews was certainly tolerated.

Another interesting point which should be remembered in studying the relation between the people of Palestine and those of Assyria, *is the similarity of their language*. The question may be asked, How was it that Jonah could be understood in Nineveh? It has already been observed that Semitic tribes probably drove out the more ancient Cushite or Hamite settlers, who had entered Babylonia coming from Ethiopia. Assyria was colonised by the same men. An Aramean element can be traced all along Mesopotamia and through the Arabian peninsula. The original language of Babylonia was the Akkadian, which is partly allied to the African dialects and partly to the ancient Turanian or language of High Asia. It belongs to the same primitive stock from which the Semitic languages went forth, but it is earlier in origin than the Semitic. This Akkadian tongue became the learned language of the priests and of science—the language of records and annals—as the Latin was in Europe. "When the Semitic tribes established an empire in Assyria in the thirteenth century B.C., they adopted the alphabet of the *Akkad*

and with certain modifications applied it to their own language ; but during the seven centuries which followed, of Semitic dominion at Nineveh and Babylon, this Assyrian language was merely used for historical and official documents. The astronomical, and other scientific tablets found at Nineveh are exclusively in the Akkadian language, and are thus shown to belong to a priest-class, exactly answering to the Chaldeans of profane history and of the Book of Daniel." (Rawlinson's *Herod.*, vol. i. p. 319.) The language of the people, however, was substantially the same all through Semitic or western Asia. There can be no doubt that any traveller going from Assyria west, to Syria, Palestine or Phœnicia, or travelling south, to Babylonia and through the Arabian peninsula to the borders of Egypt, would easily make himself understood, just as at the present time the Arabic is an introduction to almost all the dialects of the same regions, though it would scarcely supply the want of Turkish or Persian in conversing with the representatives of the Sultan or the Shah. It is thought by some that Semitic is a development from Hamitic : "In the Babylonian records there are said to be evidences of the gradual development of Semitic from the Hamitic type of speech. It is possible to group the Semitic tribes into three divisions, and in naming them it will be seen that while the people of Palestine should be placed in a different group from the Assyrian, they were yet

closely allied, as indeed we should expect from the fact that Abraham went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, probably in a stream of migration which followed the course of the Euphrates. *The Eastern Group* of Semitics occupied the valley of Mesopotamia, from Armenia on the north, and to Lebanon on the west. These were the Assyrians, the later Babylonians, the Arameans or Syrians, whose language is represented by the modern Chaldee. *The Western Group* contained the nations on the coasts of the Mediterranean 'from the borders of Egypt to Pamphylia, and then inland to Caria,' with the colonies sent out from this district. Such were 'the Canaanites, the Jews and Israelites, the Phœnicians, the Cilicians, with whom may be classed the Pisidians and the Solymi, the Cypriots and the Poeni of Africa. Remnants of this race remain in the modern Hebrews, and perhaps to some extent in the Maltese and the Berbers of North Africa. *The Central Group* occupied the desert between the valley of the Euphrates and that of the Jordan, and likewise the northern and western portions of the great peninsula. It consists of the Joktanian and Ishmaelite Arabs.' " About the time of the prophet Jonah this Semitic race occupied altogether a parallelogram which might be said to be 1,600 miles long and 800 miles broad, that is, only about *one-thirteenth* of the whole Asiatic continent. It is very true, as is observed by Canon Rawlinson, that the Semitic race has shown no great aptitude

for spreading its settlements over other countries, but at the same time it has most powerfully affected the world by its ideal tendencies, "by the projection into the fermenting mass of human thought of new and strange ideas, especially those of the most abstract kind. Semitic races have influenced, far more than any others, the history of the world's mental progress, and the principal intellectual revolutions which have taken place, are traceable, in the main, to them." The Christian religion and Islamism both proceeded from the Semitic race. The German Reformation owed much to the preceding revival of letters, which itself was due "to the spirit of enquiry aroused by the Arabians in Spain, who invented algebra, turned the attention of studious persons to physical science, and made Aristotle intelligible by means of translations and commentaries." (See Hallam's *Middle Ages*, and *History of Literature*.)

But before we pass from the subject of Assyria, it will be necessary to explain how it is that the name of the empire, and of the people, does not occur in the book of the prophet. The city of Nineveh, and the people of Nineveh, and the king of Nineveh and his nobles, we read of all these, but the name of Assyria does not appear, nor should we be able to gather from the prophecy itself that the great city was a capital, except from the fact that the king resided there. It is important to ascertain what was

the exact position of Nineveh, in order to estimate the bearing of the book upon several aspects of Jewish character. Was Jonah influenced by the thought of Assyrian aggrandisement, threatening his own nation? Was Nineveh taken as the type of a heathen kingdom, or simply as a great city, full of souls? Are we to understand the change produced by the prophet's preaching as spread from a capital city as a centre, through the provinces or satrapies of an empire? These are questions which cannot be answered without a clear understanding of the facts in regard to Nineveh itself, at the time of Jonah's mission.

Assyria, as a country, was a district of low-lying land which may be indicated by the course of the river Tigris. It was not large,—about 500 miles in length, and from 350 to 150 miles in breadth. We may compare it with Italy in size, or with Great Britain. But we must not suppose that the whole of that country received from the first the name of Assyria. In ancient times cities were the strongholds of distinct tribes or classes of people, who, having formed a settlement and fortified themselves against their enemies, began to throw out immediately offshoots from their original settlements, in neighbouring towns and villages; and thus, after a time, the name of a city would be given to a large district of country.

Asshur, now *Kileh Shergat*, some sixty miles south of Nineveh, on the right bank of the Tigris, was pro-

bably the original seat of the Assyrian people. Many of the earliest antiquities have been found there. *Asshur, the son of Shem* (see Gen. x. 22) doubtless gave his name to the place; but it does not follow that he actually founded it. He was worshipped by the Assyrians as their chief deity. The name, therefore, may be merely indicative of dedication to the worship of the deity. Another chief city of the Assyrian country was *Calah*, or *Halah*, or *Nimrud*, which again was at some time the seat of the monarchy. *Nimrod* is said to have founded it (Gen. x. 11). A large proportion of the remains brought to this country were derived from the *Nimrud* ruins. It would seem probable that, from about the year 930 B.C., the royal residence was there; but when it was removed it is difficult to say. Somewhere about the 8th century B.C. the seat of empire was removed to Nineveh. If the account in Genesis be received as historical, then the two cities of Calah and Nineveh were both built by Nimrod, the Cushite emperor. But again we are met with the mythological difficulty, for *Nin* was a deity of the Assyrians, and the question is suggested, did Nineveh receive its name from the deity to whom it was consecrated, or from the conqueror who founded it? Possibly the Greek form, *Ninos*, and the Hebrew *Nin*, may be closely connected with the name *Nimrod*, and, as in the case of *Asshur*, only represent in the name of the city the deification of its original founder.

Assyria was the "*land of Nimrod*" to the Jews (see Micah v. 6). We are left completely in the dark, so far as the Scripture is concerned, as to the position of Nineveh previous to the time of Jonah, for there is no reference to the city after its mention in Genesis. Moreover, it is remarkable that Assyria is only mentioned as a kingdom about the year 770 B.C. in the time of Menahem. The predictions of Nahum, which were certainly delivered much later than the time of Jonah, and when Nineveh was a magnificent capital, still refer to the city as though it were identified with the empire of Assyria, and the name Assyria occurs only once (Nahum iii. 18): "Thy shepherds slumber, thou king of *Assyria*! Thy nobles lie still. Thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and no one gathereth them." There seems little doubt that the destruction of the city occurred about the end of the 7th century, some say 606 B.C., others 625 B.C. Now, the immense size and wealth of the city point to a long-continued growth previous to that time. We may, therefore, safely conclude that towards the end of the 8th century, when Jonah first prophesied, Nineveh was not only a great city, but may have been the royal residence. It is impossible to ascertain the name of the king referred to in the prophecy. But there is reason in the argument that the preaching of Jonah probably coincides with a crisis in the national affairs, and that the reference is to that period when a change of dynasty occurred, and the

people of Nineveh under Pul were beginning to lose their ancient spirit and energy, which was revived under Tiglath-Pileser II.

Iva-lush III., or, as he is named in Scripture, *Pul*, came to the Assyrian throne according to some, 810 B.C., and reigned to 781 B.C. (but according to others, 772 to 747). Jeroboam II. reigned from 825 to 784 B.C. The latter part of his reign would therefore coincide with the latter part of Pul's reign in Assyria, according to the former reckoning (or within about thirty years according to the latter). Some king of Nineveh at that time certainly obtained warlike successes in the neighbourhood of Israel, and would be likely, therefore, to appear in the prophet's eyes the enemy of his country. Some, however, have thought that Shalmaneser III. is referred to, who reigned from 783 to 773 B.C. The name of the king is of much less importance than the position of the city. All our knowledge of Nineveh, previous to the discoveries made in recent times among its ruins, was dependent on traditions which were centuries old, and therefore must be received with the utmost caution; but there can be no doubt that the size and importance of the city, in the eighth century before Christ, were such as they are represented in the Book of Jonah. No description or measurement is to be found in any historian in whom confidence can be placed. Herodotus would undoubtedly have recorded everything that could be learned in his time.

Xenophon encamped on the site of the city with his ten thousand Greeks (B.C. 401), and he has nothing to say of it. Ctesias and Diodorus Siculus do not even know where the city stood, for they place it on the Euphrates instead of the Tigris. Strabo, Ptolemy, and Pliny simply repeat traditions, which were handed down to them, but into the authority of which they did not themselves enquire. The only mention of details in regard to it is found in Diodorus, whose authority is quite worthless, and who simply gathers together such tales and fables for the sake of interesting his readers. At the same time it is worth while noticing that the measurements he gives would correspond with the general description in Jonah. The city formed a quadrangle, he says, 150 stadia by 90 stadia, 480 stadia, or 60 miles; the wall surrounding the city was no less than 100 feet in height, defended by towers each 200 feet high, and 1,800 in number, and three chariots could drive abreast round them. This would be about the same measurement as Jonah's "three days' journey"—that is, allowing the usual Jewish measure for the day's journey (twenty miles), the city would require three days' journey to go round it. The population of adults would be about 600,000, the number of children being 120,000. But on investigating the ruins in the neighbourhood of the Tigris, it was found that there were mounds scattered over a wide district, all of them full of Assyrian, Babylonian

and Persian remains ; and while they are most numerous in the region of the ancient Nineveh, still it is difficult to ascertain what were the limits of the city. There is one mound on the north, lying east of the river Tigris, which is now called *Kouyunjik*. To the north-east, about ten miles away, is another called *Khorsabad* ; to the south, about six and a half miles from the junction of the Tigris and the Zab, is *Nimrud* ; and on the east of Nimrud, about fifteen miles north-east, is *Karamless*. These four mounds form an irregular quadrangle, and within them there are scattered ruins everywhere, showing that in all probability an immense city occupied the whole district. Mr. Rich first examined Kouyunjik ; Khorsabad was then examined by M. Botta ; and their discoveries were followed by the remarkable excavations at Nimrud and Kouyunjik made by Mr. A. H. Layard, the fruits of which now adorn the British Museum.

While it has been held by Sir H. Rawlinson and others, on the ground of the cuneiform inscriptions, that each of these mounds represents a distinct city, and that the true Nineveh was only that which is represented by the ruins opposite Mosul ; it has been, on the other hand, reasonably argued that the site thus indicated would be much too small to correspond with the traditions of the city. We know that in ancient times vast spaces were included within the walls of a city, as in the city of Pekin in our own days. “ It has been conjectured that these groups of

mounds are not ruins of separate cities, but of fortified royal residences, each combining palaces, temples, propylea, gardens, and parks, and having its peculiar name; and that they all formed part of one great city, built and added to at different periods, and consisting of distinct quarters scattered over a very large area, and frequently very distant one from the other. Nineveh might thus be compared with Damascus, Ispahan, or perhaps more appropriately with Delhi, a city rebuilt at various periods, but never on exactly the same site, and whose ruins consequently cover an area but little inferior to that assigned to the capital of Assyria. The primitive site, the one upon which Nineveh was originally founded, may possibly have been that occupied by the mound of Kouyunjik. Even Sir H. Rawlinson is compelled to admit that all the ruins may have formed part of that group of cities which, in the time of the prophet Jonah, was known by the common name of Nineveh" (Art. *Nineveh*, *Smith's Dict.*). At the same time it must be acknowledged that the surrounding walls have not been discovered. Probably the stories of such walls are merely fabulous, and all the defence consisted in the strongholds or fortifications—to which the prophet Nahum refers—which are surrounded by groups of houses, and dwellings scattered over a wide area, amidst fields, orchards, and gardens. This may account for the rapid destruction and entire overthrow of the city. There

seems much to confirm the suggestion that the name Nineveh was employed sometimes to denote the smaller city, sometimes the whole district, as London may mean either the city, strictly speaking, or the metropolitan district. "The probability amounts almost to certainty that the plain between the two great homes of Assyrian empire (Kouyunjik and Nimrud) was, during the 9th, 8th, and 7th centuries before Christ, sprinkled over thickly with a population which might very well amount to six or seven hundred thousand." "If ever there was a wall round the whole of the great city, it may have vanished, either through being, from strategic motives, purposely removed, or through being superseded by the stronger fortifications, first of Khorsabad by Sargon, and then of Nineveh proper by Sennacherib, both of which came into being later than Jonah." Mr. Layard is still of opinion that the whole quadrangle may have been designated as one city. It is certain that Kouyunjik and Nimrud were the seats of Assyrian kings, and, during the period from the 9th to the 7th centuries B.C. were "enriched with palaces, temples, and other monuments; Sargon (722-705) adding to them a new imperial city of his own founding, strongly fortified, which is now called Khorsabad, 'Dur Sargina.'" (See *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. vi. p. 601. Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, chap. ix. G. Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries*. Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*. Ménant's *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, etc.)

But there still remains one subject on which it is requisite to put together a few facts, that the reader may understand the Book of Jonah. We may ask, What was the relation of the Jewish religion, as it was practised at the time of the prophet, to the heathen religions, and especially to that of Nineveh? It is admitted almost universally among philosophical enquirers into the history of religions, and among philologists, that there is abundant evidence of an underlying monotheism in all the polytheistic systems of the world. "The idea of God," says Professor Max Müller, "was an idea which was not original to man, but derived." He would regard the earliest polytheisms as only the forms in which that idea was coming to an expression. But the facts show that the development of polytheism was accompanied by a moral degeneracy. The farther we go back in the history of religions the *simpler* have been men's ideas of dependence upon God, and obedience to His rule. Indeed, in polytheism itself we recognise a primitive *dualism*, the worship of a supreme male and female deity, which must have sprung from something more simple still, the recognition of *one supreme Power*. "Originally" (says a learned writer quoted in Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. ii. p. 296), "*the Egyptians had The Unity*, worshipped under a particular character, which was the case in other countries also, each considering him their protector, and giving him a peculiar form and name,

though really the same *one God*; and it was only when forsaken by him that they supposed their enemies were permitted to triumph over them (comp. also Josephus, *Ant.* viii. 10, 3, of the Jews and Shishak). But it was not long before they subdivided the one God, and made his attributes into different deities. In like manner *the Hindoos* have *one supreme Being*, *Brahme* (neuter), the great one, who, when he creates, becomes *Brahma* (masculine); when he manifests himself by the operation of his divine spirit, becomes *Vishnu*, the pervader, or *Narazan*, "moving on the waters," called also the first male; when he destroys, becomes *Siva* or Mahadiva, "Great God;" and as *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Siva*, is the *Creator*, *Preserver*, and *Destroyer*, which last answers to the regenerator of what only changes its form; and reproduces what he destroys. The same original belief in one God may be observed in Greek mythology; and this accordance of early traditions agrees with the Indian notion that "Truth was originally deposited with men, but gradually slumbered and was forgotten; the knowledge of it however returning like a recollection." For in Greece, Zeus was also universal and omnipotent, the one God, containing all within himself; and he was the Monad, the beginning and end of all (*Somn. Scip.*, c. 6; *Aristot. de Mund.*, 7); (comp. *Clemens, Stroph.*, v. p. 603). The Deity once divided, there was no limit to the number of His attributes of various kinds and of different grades; and in Egypt everything

that partook of the divine essence became a god." Pantheistic mythology is an aftergrowth, plainly the result of the human mind in its activity applying the conception of Deity to all things, perhaps from the idea of Deity being itself more profoundly thought upon, though not in the spirit of primitive reverence, but of philosophical development. It is impossible to conceive the idolater rising to monotheism, but it is quite possible to conceive the monotheist losing the purity of his conception, and dividing and diffusing his own deity among all the objects of the world, for man's mind tends to the material, and finds it difficult to retain the pure thought of an unchangeable, eternal, spiritual Being—Infinite, and yet Personal, and One. There is no necessity to discuss here the question of a primeval Revelation. The facts are difficult to explain without such a theory; for the traditions of mankind point to a golden age of knowledge, as well as life, in the first ages of the world. It may however be admitted that (apart from the evidence of Scripture) it is at present impossible to substantiate that view. Scripture evidence will not be accepted by the critics as valid. Putting aside then any such theory, we simply occupy this position—that in all nations, amid all the confusion and degradation of mythology, there is an underlying basis of Religious Truth, which explains the possibility of intercourse and exchange of religious sentiment between the Jews and the heathen. This is implied in the

whole of the Old Testament. The three names—Elohim, Elohim Jehovah, and Jehovah—refer to a progressive development of the revelations of God as a covenant God, in His special intercourse with Israel; but not to a progressive development of Jewish theology, regarded as the work of Jewish thought. The foundation of the patriarchal religion is exactly the same as that of the Mosaic, *i.e.* the one living and true God revealed to His creatures. It would be a distinct contradiction of the Book of Genesis to represent the Hebrews as *choosing* Jehovah as a national God. On the other hand, the history declares that *Elohim, El Shaddai, the God of their fathers*, appeared to Moses, and gave him the Law, as a structure to be built upon a basis, *viz.* the faith already delivered and preserved through many ages. Hence we find that Abraham, in his intercourse with the people of Canaan and with the Egyptians, had no difficulty in appealing to great moral principles, and does homage himself to Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness, the worshipper of "*the most High God.*" The children of Israel in Egypt fell back into idolatry. On what ground did their great deliverer and lawgiver appeal to them, but on the ground of that *pure monotheism* which they had received from their ancestor Abraham? This view is confirmed by the investigations of antiquaries into the remains of Chaldea and Assyria. There can be no doubt that substantially the same religion prevailed all through

the Mesopotamian valley, and that it was regarded as having both a Cushite and Semitic form.

The complicated polytheism of later times must not be taken as the original religion of either Babylon or Nineveh. The gods of Chaldea and Assyria were divided into three classes. *First*, there were the Great gods—"various deities," says Canon Rawlinson, "whom it was not considered at all necessary to trace to a single stock, regarded with equal respect and glorified with equally exalted epithets; some fifteen or sixteen personages." *Secondly*, there was an inferior class of divinities; "a far more numerous assemblage, less often mentioned, and regarded as less worthy of honour, but still recognised generally through the country." And then, *thirdly*, in addition to these two classes of national deities, "the Pantheon contained a host of more local gods or genii, every town and almost every village in Babylonia being under the protection of its own particular divinity" (*Ancient Monarchies*, vol. i. p. 139). Now, first among the highest rank of deities there stands one who is generally regarded as holding some sort of presidency among the gods, just as Zeus among the Greeks, and Jupiter among the Romans. This is *Il* or *Ra*. "The form *Ra* represents probably the native Chaldean name of this deity, while *Il* is the Semitic equivalent. *Il*, of course, is but a variant of El (אֵל). The root of the well-known Biblical Elohim (אֱלֹהִים), as well as of the Arabian *Allah*. The

meaning of the word is simply '*God*,' or perhaps '*the God*,' emphatically. *Ra* is a god with few peculiar attributes. He is a sort of fount and origin of deity, too remote from man to be much worshipped, or to excite any warm interest. There is no evidence of his having had any temple in Chaldea during the early times. A belief in his existence is implied rather than expressed in inscriptions of the primitive kings, where the moon-god is said to be 'brother's son of Ana, and eldest son of Bil or Belus.' We gather from this, that Bel and Ana were considered to have a common father, and later documents sufficiently indicate that the common father was *Il* or *Ra*. We must conclude from the name *Babil*, that Babylon was originally under his protection, though the god specially worshipped in the great temple there seems to have been in early times Bel, and in later times Merodach." This is a very remarkable indication of a monotheistic basis underlying the polytheistic worship of Chaldea. There cannot be a doubt that it remained in the *Assyrian* religion as well as the *Babylonish*, for we find the god *Asshur*, the great god of the Assyrians—in other words, their deified ancestor *Asshur*—worshipped in a manner which implied the general belief of the people in a supreme god. "His usual titles are '*the great lord*,' '*the king of all the gods*,' '*he who rules supreme over the gods*.' Sometimes he is called '*the father of the gods*.' He is regarded throughout all the Assyrian inscriptions as

the special tutelary deity both of the kings and of the country. He places the monarchs upon their throne, firmly establishes them in the government, lengthens the years of their reign, preserves their power, protects their forts and armies, makes their name celebrated, and the like. To him they look to give the victory over their enemies, to grant them all the wishes of their heart, and to allow them to be succeeded on their throne by their sons, and their sons' sons, to a remote posterity. Their usual phrase when speaking of him is, "*Asshur, my lord.*" They represent themselves as passing their lives in his service. It is to spread his worship that they carry on their wars. They fight, ravage, destroy, in his name. Finally, when they subdue a country, they are careful to '*set up the emblems of Asshur,*' and teach the people his laws and his worship." No such terms are employed of the other deities.

Now while it may be freely admitted that *Asshur* represents the great progenitor of the Assyrian people ("*Asshur the son of Shem,*" see Gen. x. 22), yet it must also be recognised that in attributing "the Divine character to him," the Assyrians did not merely glorify their national origin, but intended to give an embodiment to religious feelings which were already existent among them and probably derived from their ancestors. "It is indicative," says Canon Rawlinson, "of the (comparatively speaking) elevated character of Assyrian polytheism, that this exalted

and awful deity continued, from first to last, the main object of worship, and was not superseded in the thoughts of men by the lower and more intelligible divinities, such as *Shamas* and *Sin*, the sun and moon; *Nergal*, the god of war; *Nin*, the god of hunting; or *Iva*, the wielder of the thunderbolt." It may be remarked, too, that some such background of purer and more exalted religious faith is to be recognised all through the polytheistic systems. "In the worship of Egypt we may have such a gradual descent and deterioration (though in Assyria it did not take place) from *Amun*, the *hidden* god, to *Ptha* the demi-urgus, thence to *Ra*, the sun god, from him to *Isis* and *Osiris*, deities of the third order, and finally to *Apis* and *Serapis*, mere dæmons." So in reading the best of the Greek and Latin writers, such as Plato and Cicero, it is very evident that they made a distinction in their thoughts between *the God* and *the gods*. They regarded the polytheistic system as a religious necessity, but they did not allow it to obliterate their faith in a pervading omnipresent Deity.

There are many curious symbols to be traced in the religious remains of Assyria and Chaldea, such as *the wings* upon the emblem of Asshur, and *the three human heads* upon a signet cylinder of the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib, and *the sacred tree*, with its ram's horns and many blossoms, and many others which are not yet sufficiently understood, but which may be found hereafter to be connected with primitive religious

traditions. The remarkable resemblance of the Chaldean legends of the Creation and Paradise and the Flood, to those of the Bible, point to a very close connection between the religions of the Akkadian and Semitic families. However we explain that resemblance, whether by the theory of a primitive revelation, or by the common use of primitive tradition, it points to the fact that the peoples of the Mesopotamian country were probably closely allied to one another in their original faith, however they separated from one another in subsequent times. Abraham at Mugheir remained true to the simpler religion; and for the sake of preserving it, left his native country and became a pilgrim under special Divine guidance.

We can easily understand then, that a preacher of righteousness, denouncing violence and wrong in the name of the Most High God, declaring the judgments of El, or Elohim, against the wicked city, would not only be understood as the messenger of the supreme Deity, but would be believed as representing the character of that Deity, as the better thoughts of the Assyrians themselves regarded it. "The religious sentiment," says Canon Rawlinson, "appears on the whole to have been strong and deep-seated among the Assyrians. Although religion had not the prominence in Assyria which it possessed in Egypt, or even in Greece; although the temple was subordinated to the palace, and the most imposing of the

representations of the gods were degraded to mere architectural ornaments, yet the Assyrians appear to have been really, nay even eminently, religious. Their religion, it must be admitted, was of a sensuous character. They not only practised image-worship, but believed in the actual power of the idols to give protection or work mischief; nor could they rise to the conception of a purely spiritual and immaterial Deity. Their ordinary worship was less one of prayer than one by means of sacrifices and offerings. They could however, we know, in the time of trouble, utter sincere prayer; and we are bound therefore to credit them with an honest purpose, in respect to the many solemn addresses and invocations which occur, both in their public and their private documents. The numerous mythological tablets testify to the large amount of attention which was paid to religious subjects by the learned; while the general character of their names, and the practice of inscribing sacred figures and emblems upon the signets, which was almost universal, seem to indicate a spirit of piety on the part of the mass of the people" (*Ancient Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 278). It cannot therefore be doubted that while Judaism was separated by a great gulf from the polytheistic systems of the heathen nations around, still there was an underlying basis of natural religion, or of remembered tradition, which enabled a messenger in proclaiming truth which appealed to the conscience and to the deepest heart

of man, to wake up slumbering echoes there which would produce a very great effect, especially if the attendant circumstances were of a character to lend power to the natural fears of the multitude. The overthrow of great cities was not an unknown fact. Tradition amongst the Chaldeans, and probably amongst the Assyrians as well, told of a great destruction of the world. And there is little doubt that the overthrow of the cities of the plain was a well-known fact in the time of Jonah and in the Mesopotamian valley. The general religious features of the prophet's narrative, then, are quite historical. There is no good ground for rejecting it on the supposed incompatibility of a Jewish prophet's standpoint with that of a polytheistic nation.

We must now, however, deal with another question, which is suggested by a consideration of the relation between Judaism and the religions of the world. It is at first sight a startling fact, that a prophet should be divinely commissioned to travel from Galilee to Mesopotamia to proclaim a message of warning among a people with whom the Jews had no manner of dealing. So strange and perplexing is this fact, that objectors to the authenticity of the book, as we have seen in a previous chapter, have founded upon it the theory, that some late writer in the 5th or 6th century B.C. invented the story, as a suitable medium for the ideas which were then working in many minds, and which were the fruit of a wider expansion of

Jewish feeling, produced, instrumentally, by the discipline of Divine judgments, and the contact of the exiled race with heathenism. Such a spirit manifestly breathes in the Book of Daniel. It is admitted by all that the Messianic Hope was more developed, and more distinctly and emphatically expressed, *after* the Captivity than *before*. And while there is no very distinct reference to that hope, as such, in the Book of Jonah, yet it could easily be imagined that one who was under its influence and anticipating the widespread dominion of Messiah, *might* have been prompted to clothe his aspirations in the form of a religious romance. In that case, however, we should have expected a very different working out of the fundamental idea. There is nothing said of the reception of Judaism by the Ninevites, nor even of any permanent result effected by Jonah's mission; nothing is suggested of a Messianic nature in his preaching; nor is there anything throughout the book, from beginning to end, to lead us to suppose that the writer was thinking more of his own people's future than of the heathen nations. As an *ideal romance*, therefore, we should condemn it as singularly small and scanty in ideas; as so little suggestive, that it would defeat its own object. But if we take it for what it claims to be, a matter of fact narrative of a portion of a great prophet's history, then it becomes a deeply interesting and significant question: How was it that this unique mission was appointed

by God just at that period? How could a Jewish prophet receive such a command? And why did he, doubtless under special inspiration, place on record the Lord's dealings with him as an unfaithful minister, and the story of his visit to Nineveh? A few words will be sufficient on these points.

Now although the Mosaic economy rested on a very defined basis of national worship, and the restrictions forbidding intercourse with other nations were of the strictest and most solemn nature, it will be remembered that the Jews were often reminded, by providential occurrences, that their religious privileges were not bestowed on them that they might boast over other peoples, but that through them the world might be enlightened. The "*stranger within their gates*" was always regarded as under the special care of Jehovah. Those who became *proselytes* of the Jewish religion were in no wise excluded from the covenant of grace, but included in it. Moreover, we may take it for granted that there were many instances similar to that of *the Queen of Sheba*, who came to be instructed in Hebrew wisdom, as well as to behold the splendour of Solomon's kingdom.

The story of the little maid taken captive by the Syrians out of the land of Israel, and waiting on the wife of the great Syrian captain, throws light on the relation of Israel to other nations in respect to their share of Divine benefits. Had the people been taught that, on no occasion and on no consideration

were the blessings sent to Israel to be bestowed on other nations, the little maid would not have dared to utter her exclamation : "*And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy*" (2 Kings v. 3). Naaman did not hesitate, under the sanction of the king of Syria, to seek the healing power of Elisha, and Elisha did not hesitate to work a miracle on a Gentile, though still it was *in Jordan* that he was commanded to wash. It was by doing homage, in a certain sense, to the special Divine mission of Israel that he received the benefit. "*Are not Arbana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?*" He must bow down that Gentile pride and simply fulfil the prophet's word. Such an event was itself a preparation of the minds of God's people for their work as His witnesses to the heathen. Still it was a very different thing for strangers to *come to Zion* and be enlightened, or healed, and messengers to *go forth to heathen lands* from the midst of Israel. When the commandment came to Jonah there was no exact precedent to which he could refer in order to confirm it. At the same time, there was one part of the history of his great predecessor, Elisha, which might seem to explain what the Lord was intending by the mission enjoined upon him. When Elisha was at Damascus, possibly in a time of famine, the king of Damascus,

Benhadad, being sick, sent to inquire of him, as a prophet of God, whether he should recover, thus recognising his prophetic office ; and *Elisha* prophesied both the king's death and *Hazael's* treachery and cruelty to the children of Israel (2 Kings viii. 7-15). These two cases were striking and instructive. *Naaman* had become a proselyte, and even consulted the prophet as to how he should conduct himself in his own country when he accompanied his king to the temple of the Syrian god, *Rimmon*. Can he help bowing before the god, and will *Jehovah* overlook and pardon his apparent departure from his new religion ? The reply of *Elisha* was full of meaning. "*Go in peace.*" Be not disturbed in mind. God is not a man that He should be made angry in such a case. He is ready to accept your faith, and will not burden it with impossibility of practice. The fact that he anointed *Hazael* to be king of Syria, in accordance with the commission given him through his predecessor *Elijah*, pointed to the widening of the prophetic office to embrace within its sphere heathen nations. It was the result of the miracle, and of the conversion of *Naaman*, that *Elisha*, when he went to Damascus, obtained so much influence ; so that he carried the prophetic power over the borders of Israel.

But while these facts came to be known to *Jonah*, and to all the people of the Jews, still there was no instance, as yet, of a mission given to a prophet to pro-

claim a religious message sent directly, in the name of Jehovah, to a heathen nation. The prophet, therefore, must fall back upon the fundamental conception of the theocracy and the general bearing of the Divine commission. If he did so, he would find, especially *in view of such a character and work as Elisha's*, abundant confirmation of the Divine authority of the voice which spake to him. We must carefully remember the character of prophetic studies at that time. One who was holding the office of messenger of Jehovah to Israel, would certainly regard it as part of his divinely appointed duty to enter as deeply as possible into the spirit of the Law of Moses. He would ponder the *writings*, which formed part of his education as a prophet; not only *the Pentateuch*, but probably *other writings* which Samuel would preserve in his university of Ramah, and which would be viewed as practical *comments on the Law*. Such a life and mission as that of *Elisha* (whose name אֵלִישָׁע, that is, "to whom God is salvation," אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁע, was a distinct advance in revelation upon that of his predecessor Elijah, "My God is Jehovah") must have been an enlargement of the prophet's conception of his mission, as he studied it; for, it must never be forgotten, *one prophet stepped into the place of another*, so that the *tradition of doctrine* was handed on, and each decided advancement was perpetuated. Jonah, *coming after Elisha*, could not take the same view

of his prophetic office as Elijah did ; he was not sent merely to proclaim the supremacy of Jehovah over the idols of an idolatrous nation ; he was the immediate successor of one whose mission it was to announce salvation.

Healing miracles distinguished Elisha's ministry, and it is remarkable, as has been observed, that miracles, chiefly of mercy, form the staple of his prophetic work. This was perhaps divinely ordered, that the impression of his character might be the more powerful. Pre-eminently he was *a voice of Love*, of toleration towards those who were not included in Israel, and of benevolence, expanding in its object to a wider sphere. How could his successor fail to learn the lesson of such a life ? As yet, it is true, prophecy was little *written*, so that the exposition of the deeper meaning of the Law would be mostly *traditional*. But it is impossible to doubt that such a man as *Elisha*, who is represented as surrounded with *a school of prophets*, more or less under his instructions, would impress upon his contemporaries the stamp of his own mind, as a *student of the Word of God*. This would be handed on to the time of Jonah,—probably about a century later—and as no great prophet appeared in the interval, the people would be left to their own studies of what had previously been sent them. Now the work of the Spirit of God never ceased in Israel, notwithstanding the degeneracy of the nation.

There was always "*a remnant*" among them, "*according to the election of grace.*" Hence the appearance, from time to time, of an inspired prophet ; on several occasions of more than one at the same time. Such men came forth, not from an absolute *desert* of spiritual death and desolation, but from a *living Church of God*, where the grace of the Holy Spirit still preserved the remembrance of Divine truth, the Hope of Israel, and the higher conception of the Law. It was, therefore, only requisite that Jonah should take the place assigned to him, as the successor of Elisha, to rise to a very great height of spiritual vision and foresight. All the bearing of history and prophecy up to that time was a preparation for what followed. The religion of Palestine was manifestly the lifting up of the standard of Jehovah, that "*all nations might flow unto it.*" The time was hastening when the voice of the prophets would proclaim it, and that in messages which would be unmistakable, in clear, emphatic tones, as in *Micah and Isaiah*. But meanwhile, it seems to have been the Divine appointment that a prophet should be sent to Israel in whose *person* a very wonderful work should be wrought, and in whose *history* there should be given a *key* to the purposes of Jehovah, such as never before had been entrusted to His people. Just as *Elisha* was more a *worker of miracles* than a *preacher*, so *Jonah* was more a *sign* to the men of his day, than a *prophet* in the strictest

sense. At that time we can easily understand that *miracles and signs* would have more effect on the popular mind than verbal messages. Jehovah graciously adapted the form of His message to the moral state of those who received it. Hence, the key was one which could be easily used to unlock the secret: "*Israel, the preacher of righteousness to the world.*"

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHARACTER OF JONAH.

ONE of the most remarkable facts about the Book of Jonah is, that while he himself is so prominent in it, yet there is not one word from beginning to end of comment upon his character and conduct. He openly disobeys a Divine command ; he is followed silently and swiftly by the Divine judgment. Yet there is no word of the writer's own in condemnation of his flight. He passes through a wonderful discipline of Providence, and is miraculously saved. His hymn of thanksgiving is preserved. But no word is said of his state of mind, his sense of sin, his repentance, his return to the attitude of submission and prompt obedience to the Divine command. He receives his new commission and at once rises up to fulfil it ; goes to Nineveh and preaches with marvellous success ; still there is a strange reserve in the narrative. One would have expected some description of Jonah's feelings and experience in entering the heathen city, some account of the method which he followed in calling the Ninevites to repentance. But the facts are again set before us in the barest,

most naked simplicity, without one single sentence of reflection. This is still more noticeable in the last chapter, where again the contrast is suggested between what was in Jonah's mind and what was in the mind of Jehovah. We are looking on a very pitiable object ; a prophet of God under the influence of most unworthy and miserable feelings, betraying a rebellious anger against the appointments of the Divine will, which rouses a holy indignation against him ; and still the close of the book is significantly abrupt. Nothing added to the picture ; only the touching remonstrance against the selfish narrowness of the man, the tender pleading of Divine compassion against human prejudice and blindness. There is a sublime irony in the concluding scene which is full of meaning, and casts its reflection back on the whole book. We are evidently reading, not a chapter out of an autobiography, still less a fellow-creature's description of a sad episode in a good man's history ; we are not dealing with the airy materials of imaginative genius, nor with the slight framework of a novelist, into which he has wrought didactic truth or elevated sentiment. The only probable and consistent view of the work is that Jonah wrote it himself. He therefore said as little about himself as possible. He told the facts with all their weight of meaning against his own character, just as they were, without a line of exculpation or condemnation. He left his character to be a study for his successors, because he knew that

through him God was speaking to the whole world, and that the writing of the book would be itself, in the sight of God, compensation for that past dereliction and temporary spiritual eclipse, into which he had suffered himself to fall. It seems incredible that any other than the prophet should have written the book exactly as we now possess it. And if it be granted that Jonah is the author, then we find a still deeper interest in making the character of the man a subject of investigation.

I. The first point at which the narrative may be said to touch the personal character of the prophet is *the flight to Joppa*. "*But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa.*" We cannot certainly say at what time in his life the Word of the Lord, to go to Nineveh, reached Jonah. While it has been suggested that this may be the account of his first call to the prophetic office, and that therefore the whole would be the spiritual preparation for a life which he afterwards spent, as an acknowledged messenger of Jehovah in Israel, there is nothing on which such a suggestion can be supported. It seems much more probable that such a mission would be entrusted to a tried prophet, than to one not as yet conscious of his prophetic power. Moreover, if Jonah was a young man, we can scarcely explain his being so despondent and aggrieved when Nineveh remained undestroyed. He would then have no prophetic character which

would suffer by the apparent nullifying of his words. It is so unusual and extraordinary a mission which was committed to him, that we must believe he was trained first by a long course of Divine communications and special signs of his representative authority, as the leading prophet of his time. Here, then, we are led up to the man, at the beginning of the book, on a spiritual eminence—"The Word of the Lord came to him," solemnly, emphatically, unmistakably; the command out of heaven, which hitherto he had regarded it as a matter of life and death to receive and obey. When he turned from it we are told that he turned from "the presence of the Lord," or literally, "*from being with the Lord.*" It is, of course, the merest fatuity of criticism to take this as meaning that Jonah thought to hide himself from Omniscience. He renounced his official position, as the interlocutor between Jehovah and His people, as the mediator and messenger, as the leading prophet of his day. He was God's adjutant; he refused to carry His order. He would rather himself be cut off from Israel than fulfil the mission. He prefers to flee to a Gentile country in the west, that he may not be an ambassador to a Gentile city in the east.

It is a most extraordinary fact thus brought before us, and requires to be deeply pondered. Think of it. A man conscious of special inspiration and authority, doing direct violence to the Word of the Most High! We are, at first, almost ready to reject the anomaly as

inconceivable, and attribute it to the baseless imagination of a writer who invented such a story for the mere sake of employing it by way of parable. But human character has so vast a variety in it, that it would be unreasonable to doubt any phase of it on the ground of its presenting inconsistencies and contradictions to view. There are such in all characters, though not so profound and inscrutable in some cases as in others. Jonah was a true prophet or God would not have selected him for such a mission. We must, therefore, begin our study of his character with this conviction—he meant nothing throughout like determined rebellion against God as God. The first word was, “*Cry against Nineveh*”; the second command was, “*Cry, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*” It would seem, from what the prophet himself relates of his own thoughts, that at the very first he understood the mission to be one of mercy, and not of destruction. “*Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil.*” We seem to be plunged by these words into a still deeper depth of perplexity. The man had laid hold of the thought of Divine goodness and compassion with so firm a grasp, that when the message came, “Go and cry against Nineveh,” at once he understood it to mean, Go and stop those sinners in their mad career, lest suddenly

they be overwhelmed and that without remedy. Is it possible then to conceive that Jonah actually revolted from that thought of a merciful God? And is it possible, again, that he did so with deliberate purpose; not by a sudden impulse, but with the full glory of the Divine character shining round him? "His objections were such as he felt he could state calmly to the Lord. They were such as the Lord deigned to consider. Knowing their existence in His servant's mind, He seems to have considered them even before they were stated. There is a recognition of them in the very first Divine word that breaks on the prophet's ear. After the mystical preparation for conference with His servant, whatever that preparation was—a deeper silence in the air, perhaps, betokening the approach of the 'God of peace'; or a sudden elevation of sense and soul into the pure spirit life—the *very first word* he hears is *ARISE*. This is a word used before another verb as a term of excitement. 'Arise—I know you have difficulties in yourself, in your people, in the mission, in Nineveh; arise, therefore, gird your loins, and stir your strength, and go!'" (Raleigh's *Story of Jonah*, pp. 41-2).

Jonah's sin was not apostasy from God. He did not deny that the mission was worthy of Jehovah. He did not discuss with God the fitness of it, which would have been blasphemous self-assertion, of which such a man as a leading prophet would be incapable,

unless he had wholly fallen from his religious life. But he shrunk from the mission. As though he would say to God: Send, Lord, by whomsoever thou wilt send, only let me be spared from this, for it is too great and too tremendous a mission for me. It is very true, as Dr. Raleigh has remarked in the work quoted above, that in the brevity of the narrative we must suppose much to have transpired which is left unrecorded—"days of dark, troubled, anxious thought." And when we remember that, after these days, the decision of such a man was to banish himself altogether from Israel, where he would not dare any longer to hold up his head as a prophet of Jehovah, to live among the heathen of Tarshish, and that he acted on that decision, we are led to ask very urgently, what were the thoughts which were working within him, and how do we account for such a contradiction in his character—a good man and yet a disobedient prophet?

Now the struggle in Jonah's mind must have been the result either of personal feeling or of mistaken ideas. It may have been personal feeling that lay at the root of his conduct. The mission would end in the repentance of Nineveh, therefore in the non-fulfilment of Jonah's cry. He would be called a false prophet; he whose word had been so wonderfully fulfilled in the deliverance of Israel, could he bear that apparent falsification of his word? Would he not be mocked at as a prophet of evil which never

came to pass? Might there not be great personal danger in the mission itself? They would treat him at Nineveh, as some of the Jewish kings did the prophets who denounced their idolatries, as Ahab and Jezebel would have treated Elijah, had they been able. Moreover, was he fitted to preach among an unknown people, in the name of Jehovah? Had he strength, knowledge, boldness for it? It was a strange and uninviting errand on which the Lord would send him. He worked honourably and as a distinguished servant of Jehovah in the sight of all Israel, and was he to be suddenly carried away from that lofty position and sent to the ends of the earth to cry against a wicked city and threaten destruction? It was like a visitation of punishment upon him; exile, banishment, a cloud of Divine displeasure, burying him out of sight. Deeply the word seemed to eat into the heart of the man, like a sword piercing him through, with a sense of disappointment, reproach and fear. We can conceive that such was the personal feeling under the influence of which he probably yielded.

But such feelings were founded on false ideas about God, and about the people of God and their vocation, which could only be thoroughly rooted out of the prophet's mind, and out of the minds of those who thought with him at that time, by some such discipline as we find described in this remarkable book. Let us recall what some of those erroneous ideas and reasonings were.

It has already been observed, that the time when Jonah lived was one when Israel began to be placed in a position of critical importance among the surrounding nations. There was a period, but it was a very brief one, during which the power of the Hebrew people made itself felt over a vast extent of country to the north and east and south of Palestine. But the division of the tribes into two kingdoms, their mutual jealousies, and the rapid degeneracy of the northern tribes, with the threatened judgments of Jehovah hanging over them, must have shaken the confidence of such a man as Jonah in the future prosperity of his country. He may, indeed, have received some prophetic intimations which led him to look with foreboding on the growing darkness of the cloud in the east. His people would be visited for their sins with national judgments. Assyria which, at that time, seemed to be pushing her conquests nearer and nearer to Israel, might be the chosen instrument in the hand of Jehovah for the humiliation of the backsliding children. When, therefore, the prophet himself was summoned to avert from that great enemy of Israel the anger of God, the effect upon his mind was to produce a conflict between patriotic feeling and conscience, which he could not silence. The conflict was quite natural; but the grievous mistake was, that Jonah listened to his own thoughts instead of to the voice of Jehovah. He reasoned that if Nineveh should be destroyed

a great danger would be removed from the prospects of his own country, a great oppressor of humanity would be justly punished, and the Divine righteousness would be exemplified. If he went and preached to the cruel city, the probability was, the punishment would be remitted, and after a time the Ninevites would fall back into their old state of violence. But what had a prophet to do with such calculations? The question for him to ask was simply : What am I commanded to say and to do? It was a confusion in his mind of the political and the religious, which in such a man was inexcusable. We must not, however, forget, that in those times and in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the prophet had so much to do with the national life, was so powerful a factor in the commonwealth, that it was a temptation to which he was always exposed, to deal dishonestly with the oracles entrusted to him, as his private judgment or interest might dictate. If he had a Divine message which went against the prevailing feeling of the nation, he might conceal it, or modify it, or refuse, himself, to proclaim it. And if a mission were given him to fulfil which seemed to him simply one of evil to his own country, he was tempted to place too much confidence in his own interpretation of the Divine meaning, and charge Jehovah with placing upon him a burden too great for him to bear. Yet the true prophet, however great the conflict of his thoughts, would put the religious

above the political. He was first and chiefly the servant of the Lord, standing in His presence. He could only refuse a mission, whatever it was and however little he understood it, by forsaking that position of being before Jehovah and acting as His ambassador. Jonah's fault lay in listening too much to the false reasonings and remonstrances of his own mind.

But there is another view which may be taken of Jonah's state of mind. He anticipated the result. He would go to Nineveh and cry against it. He would predict the overthrow of the city. The people would put away their violence. They would be spared. The prediction would be falsified. Now probably this mission came to the prophet very soon after his predictions with respect to the restoration of the borders of Israel had been remarkably fulfilled. He was in the full flush of his prophetic triumph. The people proclaimed him the chosen messenger of the Lord, and looked to him as the oracle of Israel. Immediately then upon that comes a command to become the mouthpiece of a prediction which would certainly not be fulfilled, which was only a conditional prophecy, in fact a warning, the purpose of which was to procure its own nullification by the repentance of Nineveh! Was not that to humiliate the prophet in the eyes of his own country and the world? Was it not to lower the value of prophecy itself? Was it not to put prediction into the subordinate place and

set uppermost the moral and spiritual elements of the prophetic office, which the people were always disposed to undervalue? Thus it was a real test of the prophet's spirit. Did he think more of the work he had to do than of himself? Did he put Jehovah's glory above all glory of men? Jonah was not ready for that complete self-effacement which was the highest expression of obedience. He must be taught by a very severe discipline, that if he would be always a prophet and obtain a prophet's reward, he must not put the presence of fellow-men above the presence of the Lord; otherwise he will be cast out from Divine favour, and find himself in the depth of shame and in the darkness of death, from which only the infinite mercy of God can pluck him forth. He that "*goes down*," in the method and aim of his life, will certainly find that he has made a miserable exchange; instead of "*the presence of the Lord*," he is in the darkness of the pit.

There is just one other suggestion which may be made, as to the thoughts which were working in Jonah's mind. The mission to Nineveh, although not altogether unprepared for, as we have seen, by previous intercourse with Gentile nations and intimations of the wider diffusion of Divine blessings, was yet a distinct and special mission to the stronghold of heathenism, like a new departure in the religious history of Israel. We can easily believe that it seemed to Jonah a change in the Divine action so

stupendous, that he could not drive out of his mind *doubts* as to the authority of the message. They may have gone no further than doubts; a sense of perplexity which he could not overcome. Who am I, that I should be the instrument in such a work of prophecy to the heathen? Did not even Moses shrink from undertaking the leadership of Israel in their exodus from Egypt? What wonder then that Jonah should start back and flee from the Divine call! Was his flight more than a sort of "*nolo episcopari*"? Perhaps he only intended to flee that the Lord might fetch him back, with signs that should overcome all his unbelief and prejudice and fear. He meant by it, not that he refused to obey the voice of God, but that he must hear it louder, and that it should entirely destroy the paralysing perplexities of his own mind. We are inclined to take that more lenient view of Jonah's character. He was lacking in faith, in enlightenment, in moral courage, in simplicity of trust in God, in broad sympathy with mankind and interest in the welfare of souls; but he was not an apostate, and had no intention of ultimately rejecting the commands of God. Hence he was entirely brought back to implicit obedience by miraculous preservation, which plainly said to him, "Thou art the chosen servant of God; even against thine own will thou shalt be the Divine messenger; spite of thy fears thou shalt be strong, and shalt be a sign unto all the world of the grace of God." On

the whole, in the flight of Jonah we trace the main feature of his character. He was a true prophet, a man of God, a devout man, waiting for the word of God, but he leaned too much upon his own understanding and was lacking in faith. The purpose of the book is to show how such a character, with its infirmity and narrowness and proneness to error, is led by the gracious discipline and interposition of Jehovah, just as the apostles were in carrying the Gospel outside the limits of Judaism, from the lower to the higher position, from that of the mere Israelitish prophet of Gath Hopher to that of the messenger of a universal love to the world.

II. Let us now look at another point where the character of Jonah is exhibited. The sleep into which the prophet fell instantly that he went down into the ship, is quite consistent with a state of mental perplexity and fear. He had faith enough to know that he was turning his back upon peace of mind ; but he was so wearied with the mental strain and struggle, so burdened with the weight of a reproaching conscience, that he gladly hid himself from the faces of his fellow-men, and sought the darkness and the solitude of his sleeping-place, where nature asserted its demands, and he was soon wrapt in unconsciousness. All that is full of verisimilitude. Then follows the storm ; the waking up of the prophet ; his confronting the heathen mariners, and their simple-minded belief in the righteousness of

God and His avenging justice ; their appeal by lot to Divine omniscience ; and the finger of Providence as if pointing to Jonah as the guilty one. Now the conduct of the prophet at that crisis is very significant. He has no crime to confess, such as heathen men would understand and condemn by the light of the moral law. It would no doubt appear mysterious to them that he should have fled as he had. Why should he refuse to go to Nineveh ? Why should it be so dreadful a sin to renounce a mission which others might fulfil in his place ? But, instantly that Jonah saw the storm, and the sign of the lot pointing to himself, conscience began to gain the upper hand. He realized how great his offence was in setting himself against God, and he not only told all to the sailors, but became at once his own judge, passing the capital sentence upon himself. "And he said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea, so shall the sea be calm unto you, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Yet there must have been something in Jonah's manner which convinced the men that he was pronouncing a severe sentence on himself, and that he was a good man, for they wrought hard to save him ; and they prayed afterwards, when they felt compelled to offer up the prophet to the angry sea, that Jehovah would not lay the death of the innocent man to their charge. "For Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee," *i.e.* we are acting as unwilling instruments

of the Divine decree. The calm submission of Jonah, and his instant recognition of the hand of God, plainly indicate a mind intensely alive to moral truth, and ready at once to sacrifice self to the declared will of God. We cannot, therefore, for one moment entertain the idea that Jonah was an apostate, in any sense of the word. He was not a hardened hypocrite, professing to be a prophet of the Lord, and yet wilfully trampling His commandment under his feet. He was not a formalist; he was not a half-hearted servant of God, who, when he was summoned to a duty which required effort and endurance and courage, selfishly hid himself away from it. We cannot believe that God would have rescued him from his danger, had he been so abandoned and worthless. Nor was it likely that such a character would be united with that of a true and great prophet; though it is conceivable that a really great man might be betrayed for a time into a selfish or cowardly course of conduct, especially as a reaction from great success, as we see in the case of Elijah fleeing from Jezebel (1 Kings xix.). But Jonah's character was defective rather than corrupt. Like the apostle Peter, he needed a great deal of teaching, but the root of his piety was sound and deep. He puts himself at once in the hands of the chastising Jehovah. He sees his error and how great it is, and is ready to leave himself to the merciful disposition of Jehovah, just as David did, while doubtless

at the same time praying for deliverance. Unless there was an instantaneous Divine communication to the prophet's mind that he would be preserved, he must have looked at that moment into the jaws of death. But he was not unwilling to die, for he felt that he was unfit to live. Unless he could live an honoured and faithful life, death would be welcome. But all such calm contemplation of the judgment of God is not like the state of an apostate. Jonah could say at that moment, "*Salvation is of the Lord.*" He looked towards the holy temple. "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." His faith, though mixed with unbelief, was real and deep, and the Lord rewarded it by delivering him from all his fears, and lifting him up to the height of his vocation as the messenger of love to the world.

III. The psalm of thanksgiving speaks for itself. If the substance of it passed through Jonah's mind when he was sinking in the deep, then he was assuredly a devout man of God, full of faith and the Holy Ghost at that moment, whatever his error had been. If it was entirely a subsequent production, then we must believe that Jonah recognised the fitness of it to his own character, or he would not have introduced it, and certainly would not have represented it as coming from him in the midst of his trial.

IV. Passing by the preaching at Nineveh, which must have been with special power of the Spirit,

a power which certainly would not have been committed to Jonah unless he had been accepted of Jehovah once more, we come to the remarkable scene in the last chapter, the prophet's despondency in the booth, and colloquy with God, which concludes the book. What shall we say of Jonah's character as it is presented there? Can we ascribe such conduct to *mere* petulance? Can we believe that he would have recorded concerning himself a mere passing feeling of disappointment? Would he have dared to set his own selfish humour over against the greatness and graciousness of God? Again we must look deeper for the explanation, and give the prophet the benefit of any obscurity in the incidents. The evident intention of the whole chapter is to place Man in contrast with God. Jonah's idea of the Divine character was plainly an imperfect one. He thought that Divine repentance was Divine weakness, that the non-fulfilment of the word was a dishonour to Jehovah. What he did *not* understand was the supremacy of Love in the dealings of God with His creatures. He was displeased; he was very angry. Yet it was not entirely for himself. It was for Jehovah and the honour of His spoken word. But afterwards he came to see that the greatness of God is not that which man is prone to think it, the greatness of power alone, or even of justice alone, but the fatherly greatness, which smites only for the sake of saving life, and not for the sake of destroying it.

Why did Jonah pity the gourd? because it served him. Was it not a much greater pity which God had for Nineveh? absolutely unselfish, perfectly pure, infinitely great. The thoughts and feelings of the prophet are those of a man of like passions and infirmities with all others; but when we set over against them the purposes and revelations of God, surely we shall bow down and worship Him, before whom all men and things lie open; who while He has made Himself known to His servants the prophets, is yet unsearchable in His wisdom; but His love is a "height and length and depth and breadth which passeth knowledge."

CHAPTER V.

THE SEAMEN : THEIR RELIGION AND CONDUCT.

IT must be admitted by every candid reader of the Book of Jonah, that the representation of heathen religion given in it is very remarkable, as coming from a Hebrew source. The sudden storm and the imminent danger of the vessel tried the character of the seamen ; and the general impression which the brief narrative leaves is undoubtedly a favourable one, leading us to think of the men as simple-minded and sincere, reverent towards God, and kind to their fellow-men. So in the repentance of the great heathen city, we are brought face to face with the fact that, notwithstanding all the degradation of Assyrian polytheism, there was a susceptibility of conscience left undestroyed in the people, from the highest to the lowest, upon which the prophet was able to work, by the proclamation of approaching judgment. Postponing for the present the consideration of the repentance of Nineveh, let us in this chapter examine more closely the account given of the heathen seamen, in the narrative of the storm.

The first point is the effect of terror, of the nearness of death upon heathens. "*Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god.*" It was no ordinary storm, but "there was a mighty tempest in the sea, and the ship was like to be broken"; or, as Dr. Pusey expresses it, "The ship heaved and rolled and creaked and quivered under the weight of the storm which lay on her, and her masts groaned and her yard arms shivered." To a certain extent it may be admitted that the prayers of the sailors were the cries of towardice, of men unnerved by an overwhelming fear of death, stricken with a panic which rendered them helpless. And it is a remarkable fact, that those whose minds are unenlightened in religion are prone to such paralysis of fear. There is a great difference between different races in this respect, the Eastern being much less brave in danger than the Western, though quite as capable of desperate courage when it is once excited. The atmosphere of a Christian country has certainly something to do with the natural characteristics of the people. Even though the individual may be destitute of religion, still the general effect of religion may be traced upon his physical constitution and mental habits. In Britain, *e.g.*, the calm strength and self-possession and faithfulness to duty which characterize the people as a whole, and which are so nobly exemplified in numerous instances when great emergencies try them, are to be traced to the diffu-

sion in the nation of intelligence, morality, and good order, and these all rest upon Christianity as a foundation. In heathen countries the moral fibre of the people is relaxed by their superstitions. Hence we find, as a rule, that the more degraded the religious observances of a nation, the weaker are their men, the more easily reduced to helplessness by circumstances of great danger. "*The mariners were afraid.*" It seems probable that the vessel was manned from various nationalities, as was generally the case in the large Phœnician ships. In the twenty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel there is evidence that the crews were drawn from various parts of the world. They would be likely, therefore, to carry with them their different objects of worship, or emblems of their religions. They would recognise, possibly, each one a different tutelary deity. And the cry of helplessness in the storm would send each one apart to his separate religious observance. It is only the general fact that is stated ; but it has its importance. Their religion was not enlightened, and did not deliver them from the power of natural fears ; it was not a religion calculated to strengthen the mind and brace the energies, and give calmness and courage in the hour of extremity. But it is something to remember, that these heathen men, with all their ignorance and superstition, recognised the real worth of prayer and the dependence of man upon God. They certainly must have believed, however dimly, in the govern-

ment of God. Say it was polytheism that they professed, still polytheism is not atheism. It rests upon a general belief in the supernatural and invisible, in heavenly powers, which are regarded as in subordination to a supreme Will. "They did what they could. They were true to the best instincts of the human mind. They did not know God, and therefore could not call upon Him. They knew, however, that there was a Providence, and that there were powers—ruling powers—above men, laws, and forces. They believed in gods, and to the gods they cried. Honour their honesty, while you deplore their ignorance; reverence their worship, while you turn away from the objects of it. Bow the knee beside them, and feel that you are on holy ground while you are in company and fellowship with human spirits in prayer" (*Raleigh*, p. 85). It would seem, moreover, that while doubtless terrified and scared, the sailors did not entirely cease from action, for they "cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them." We may also take it for granted that they worked the ship, otherwise it must have gone to pieces.

It is an interesting question, whether it is the intention of the narrative, as an inspired narrative, to represent the heathen men as saving the ship by their prayers, or simply to describe their terror and extremity? The carefulness with which the conduct of the shipmaster is narrated, which is evidently intended to be set in contrast with Jonah's insensibility, lends

considerable force to the suggestion that these heathen seamen were really devout and God-fearing men in their own way, and that God heard their prayers. The shipmaster aroused the sleeping Jonah, that there might not be one unpraying soul in the vessel. "*So the shipmaster came to him, and said to him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.*" The inference from such words, surely, is, that in the mind of the shipmaster there was *one God*, called upon by different names. The prayers might be in different languages and to different objects, but they would be really one. "*If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.*" Dr. Raleigh has some forcible remarks on this subject. "Did God *hear* their prayers? Did He accept them? Did He answer them? Did they 'avail' and become 'effectual' in any degree, as the fervent prayers of righteous men do? Did the cries of these sailors become powers for the occasion, altering the chain of circumstances, and helping, among other things, to bring on the issues which actually came? God only can answer such questions fully. No one may dogmatise or speak as possessing absolute knowledge. But I am very much inclined to answer these questions in the affirmative. Something, of course, would depend on the character of the men. 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.' If men regard iniquity in their hearts, 'the

Lord will not hear them.' But looking at the question generally, the probability seems to be, that the earnest and agonising cries of such men as these to the only gods they knew, for deliverance from a danger expressly brought upon them not by their own misconduct, but by the misbehaviour of one of the Lord's own servants, would be heard of Him, accepted as a true prayer, and as though it had been made unto Himself." "If the prayers of these men are heard, we have here a strange, striking picture of men and things! A prophet of God refusing to go and speak to the heathen! Heathen sailors saving that prophet, or helping to save him, from the consequence of his disobedience, by their prayers!" (pp. 87, 88).

The next point is the casting of lots by the seamen. "*And they said every one to his fellow, Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.*" It seems strange that, having prayed to God for help, they should not have waited, to see if their prayers were heard. No doubt it was the fact that the sea continued raging, which seemed to the sailors an indication that the storm was not an ordinary visitation of calamity. It was sent, they thought, as an expression of Divine displeasure on account of some particular sin. We see an instance of that deep feeling of the pervading presence of Divine justice, a feeling which was common throughout the heathen world, in the saying

of the barbarians on Melita as they saw the viper on the apostle Paul's hand: "And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live" (Acts xxviii. 4). The ancient tragedy is an evidence of this prevailing belief in the heathen world, that moral and physical evil are closely connected together. It is very unlikely that such an incident as the casting of lots in the storm-tossed vessel would have been invented by a mere writer of fiction in the sixth or fifth century. Had it been simply for the sake of affording the occasion of the subsequent miracle, one cannot understand why the ship should not have been wrecked in the story, and Jonah saved. To suppose that the deliberate intention of the writer was to represent the heathen as favourably as possible, seems too far fetched. The ingenuity would be very unlike an ancient fable or any work of fiction emanating from the Jews. But as it is, taking the book as the genuine record of facts, all is fitting and congruous. The seamen were God-fearing men, fully convinced that such a storm, coming so suddenly and with so much violence, was not to be met by mere human effort. They first prayed for help and deliverance; and then, when their prayers seemed in vain, the storm took another aspect in their minds; it was not the mere raging of the adverse elements of nature, it was the raging of Divine ven-

geance against some terrible sin ; and as it seemed directed specially against their vessel, they naturally concluded that the object of that Divine vengeance was amongst them. Who was it? We have no need to suppose that they had any thought of becoming executioners of justice ; but in seeking out the offender, their object may simply have been to force him to confession, and to some special sacrifice which would appease the anger of the Deity.

It is impossible to doubt that the Divine mind influenced the thoughts of the men, and suggested to them the casting of lots, with a view to bring about the detection and punishment of Jonah. It is quite in accordance with other instances in Scripture, that God should employ a usage which He would not enjoin upon mankind generally, for the special purpose of His providence. There was an appeal by Urim and Thummim amongst the Jews which was divinely appointed, and in the instances of Achan and Jonathan, we are led by the sacred history to believe that God over-ruled the lot to direct His own people. So He caused the heifers which the Philistines sent forth with the ark, to take the way to Bethshemesh, that the heathen might know that their plague came from Him and not by chance. "Lots," says Thomas Aquinas, "according to the ends for which they were cast, were for (i.) *dividing* ; (ii.) *consulting* ; (iii.) *divining*. (i.) The lot for dividing is not wrong (1) if not used without any necessity ; for this

would be to tempt God : (2) if in case of necessity, not without reverence of God, as if Holy Scriptures were used for an earthly end, as in determining any secular matter by opening the Bible : (3) not for objects which ought to be divided otherwise (as an office ought to be given to the fittest) : (4) not in dependence on any other than God. ‘ *The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is the Lord’s*’ (Prov. xvi. 33). So then they are lawful in secular things which cannot otherwise be conveniently distributed, or when there is an apparent reason why, in any advantage or disadvantage, one should be preferred to another. (ii.) The lot for consulting, *i.e.* to decide what one should do, is wrong, unless in a matter of mere indifference, or under inspiration of God, or in some extreme necessity when all human means fail. (iii.) The lot for divining, *i.e.* to learn truth, whether of things present or future, of which we can have no human knowledge, is wrong, except by direct inspiration of God. For it is either to tempt God, who has not promised so to reveal things ; or, against God, to seek superhuman knowledge by ways unsanctioned by Him. Satan may readily mix himself unknown in such inquiries, as in mesmerism. Forbidden ground is his own province ” (See Pusey’s *Minor Prophets*, p. 270). The custom, however, is one of extreme antiquity. Among the heathen the following instances are cited in the article on *Lot*, *Smith’s Dictionary* : choice of a cham-

pion or of priority of combat ; decision of fate in battle ; appointment of magistrates, jurymen, or other functionaries ; priests ; a German practice of deciding by marks or twigs, mentioned by Tacitus (*Germ.*, 10) ; division of conquered or colonized land. Very similar instances are found mentioned in the Old Testament, and in the case of Matthias in the New. Election by lot prevailed in the Christian Church as late as the seventh century. There is every reason, therefore, for regarding the conduct of the seamen as a serious and solemn appeal to God. And as such, it is another evidence of their simple faith in the essential truths of the existence and government of the divine Being and His hatred of sin. The same recognition of omniscience and righteousness in God is seen in the Homeric poems :—

“ The crowd, with hands uplifted to the gods,
Trojans and Greeks alike, addressed their prayer :
‘ O Father Jove, who rul’st from Ida’s height,
Most great ! most gracious ! Grant that whosoe’er
On both our armies hath this turmoil brought,
May undergo the doom of death, and we,
The rest, firm peace and lasting blessing swear.’ ”

“ This terrified ship’s company, without Divine leave, fell upon lot-casting to discover a supposed culprit in the ship, for whom the angry elements were howling like beasts of prey, and God, with His unseen hand, shakes the fateful box or vessel, and makes the lot fall on Jonah. Is not this an instance of what

we may call the liberality of God? He comes to men as they are. He takes *what there is* in the form of worship and service of Him, if it is the best that men can achieve in the circumstances. He will be pleased with the manner of true prayer, although it exhales from a pagan censer. He will approve the efforts men make to find out truth, justice, crime, although these efforts do not seem to be regulated by pure reason, and although they are not conducted with perfect calmness. Men who have but broken lights to follow, in following them truly, are in 'the path of the just that shineth more and more.' The long 'times' of human 'ignorance' that preceded the coming of Christ, 'God winked at,' overlooked, and passed by. He did not try men by higher standards of knowledge than any which they possessed, or could possibly possess. He tried and judged and governed them by the laws and lights they actually had. He did that uniformly. It was a *discovery* He made to Peter; but it was not therefore a new thing with God. What the wondering apostle 'perceived' for the first time, had been true from the beginning of the world,—viz. that 'God was no respecter of persons' " (*Raleigh*, pp. 103-4).

"*The lot fell upon Jonah.*" We are intended to understand that in this case God undoubtedly used the heathen practice to accomplish His purposes. The strange man who had just been roused out of sleep is thus, before them, pointed out by the finger of

God as the object of Divine justice. At the same time, the men are not vindictive in their spirit. As throughout, so at that critical point, there is an immediate condemnation of Jonah in their minds. He is a mystery to them, and they simply inquire of him what is the secret he has to reveal. "*Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us : what is thine occupation ? and whence comest thou ? what is thy country ? and of what people art thou ?*" The natural excitement of the men is well expressed in these rapid, eager questions. They were evidently taken by surprise to find the culprit in the inoffensive-looking stranger, whom they had to waken to his danger in the storm. Jonah was a good man ; and though there may have been upon his countenance the lines of mental distress and dejection, still there would be no appearance of reckless criminality. His manner could scarcely be one of astonishment, or even terror, when the lot fell upon him, for he knew it all beforehand, and no doubt was quite prepared to die. He had gone through a terrible conflict of feeling in the past. He could not suffer more than he had suffered. Perhaps it was almost a relief to him when the crisis came. The meaning of the questions is well interpreted by Dr. Raleigh. "*For whose cause ?*" Have you wronged, injured, or slain some one in wrath, and are you fleeing with the guilt of blood on you ? Is there some mourning ? Some that you have desolated ? Is there some

hidden grave? '*For whose cause*'—literally, *For what, to whom?* What have you done, and *to whom* have you done it? *What is thine occupation?* Of what craft, trade, profession? Is it lawful, or is it something hateful to the gods, for which they are pursuing you? In the following of that occupation are you *now* on an evil errand, when thus apprehended by the storm and judged by the lot? '*And whence comest thou?*' What was the last journey you made before you came on board, and why did you make it? Where were you before we first saw you, and what were you doing? '*What is thy country?*' Is it far, or nigh—inland, or on the sea-board? Is it flat or mountainous, fruitful or barren? protected by many gods or few? blessed or cursed of the heavens? '*Of what people art thou?*' Are you possibly innocent yourself, yet suffering because you belong to some unfortunate family, or to some guilty, doomed race?" (pp. 112-113). The particularity of their inquiries were for their guidance in their difficult position, having to deal with a man on whom the Divine condemnation had fallen, yet being unwilling either to bring upon themselves innocent blood, or to be cruel in their treatment of a fellow-creature, even though he were a criminal. Such a state of mind does credit to the men, showing that they had humanity in their disposition and respect for the right in their consciences. It is certainly unlike a feigned incident. One would expect, in a mere

fiction, that the men would at once follow out the direction of the lot, and be glad to be rid of the curse which lay upon them on Jonah's account. It is true, however, to the character of sailors generally, to represent them as humane and kindly, and there is reason to think that the Phœnicians were not so morally degraded as other heathen peoples; perhaps the sea-faring men of that nation, by their extended intercourse with other nations, were enlightened and sympathetic more than others. We find the same remarkable susceptibility and openness to impression in the scene which immediately followed, when Jonah told them all, and no doubt told them, with the solemn manner of a prophet, speaking of things immeasurably important, and of a man in sight of death itself. *"And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."* That is to say, there can be no doubt that this storm is on my account. *"Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them."* He had told them exactly the nature of his offence—that he had thrown off his prophetic character and refused to fulfil his ministry as God appointed it. And those heathen men at once seized the awfulness of the prophet's position. They grasped the thought, that a spiritual offence was far greater than an ordinary moral crime—inasmuch as

it was more directly against God personally, and they understood that the raging sea expressed the wrath of an offended Being, whose servant was being pursued by Him and brought to judgment. There is an intense interest in the revelation of character in these few words, both of Jonah and of the seamen. In the prophet, there was a grand homage done to truth and righteousness, in the simplicity and fulness of his confession. And in the seamen, there was a very impressive example of the natural allegiance of the human soul to God. They had nothing to say for Jonah ; they took the side of God at once ; they felt that all the powers of heaven and earth were against a man who, having once gone into the presence of the Most High, turned his back upon the claims of such an office. The world may show great indifference to religion, and yet there is a homage to it in the secret depths of the heart which we can easily call forth. Even those who themselves are far off from the presence of the Lord, know what becomes those who profess to dwell in it. There is nothing to the ordinary mind more repulsive than unfaithfulness in a priest or prophet. Either stand afar off from holy things, or put off your shoes from your feet and remember that the ground is holy, and the men who are on it should be holy too.

The remainder of the description of the seamen's conduct perfectly harmonizes with what has gone before. They cannot treat the prophet as a mere

criminal. They remember that he is the Lord's messenger, notwithstanding his offences. The sanctity of his office still attaches to him in their view. They take him at once into their counsel; and indeed, it might be said, that they come to him as to an oracle, that they might know the will of God. "*Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?*" Of course, the thought would come at once to all, that Jonah must be got rid of; but the idea of laying violent hands on a prophet of Jehovah was to those simple-minded and reverent men something abhorrent. Yet the sea wrought and was tempestuous. Something must be done, and done at once. The prophet's sentence upon himself perplexed them still more. How could such a man be a bad man? And how could they cast him out of the ship without offence against God, if he was really a good man? There was so much firmness and decision however, in Jonah's language, that they knew not what to do. "*And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.*" Surely the scene that followed is far too touching and beautiful, too deeply significant and impressive, to be fiction. Only the inspiration of God could suggest such facts, and God would never inspire a mere fiction, for a place in His word. "*Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought and was tem-*

pestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech Thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee." There is nothing in all fiction to compare with this. The influence of Jonah's lofty self-surrender had its effect, no doubt, on the men, and they were under the impression of the nearness of God and the solemnity of the crisis. "Those men," rowing hard, "with hair tossing in the wind, faces dashed with foam, horny hands dripping brine, contribute a grander sight to the angels than philosophers lecturing on morals, or even than preachers delivering the gospel. They are preaching with every stroke the deepest gospel they know—working up to their last energies on behalf of a fellow-creature in great and awful straits, and hoping that it may be the will of the most High at length to favour their endeavour." Then it is very remarkable, that they are led on to prayer, a very beautiful and suitable prayer, before they put themselves as it were in the hands of God, by casting out Jonah into the deep. It would really seem as though the intention of the narrator was, that Jonah, and the facts together, had been the means of converting those poor heathen to the knowledge and worship of the one true and living God. It is a wonderful instance of rapid enlightenment, and of the work of the Spirit of God on the mind of Gentiles, and as such it was a preparation

of Jonah for the work he would have to do at Nineveh, and a most powerful rebuke of his unbelief in standing aloof from that task.

Then came the end. The sentence is already passed, and it has to be executed. They *must* obey, and in this they are a contrast to Jonah himself. "*Thou hast done,*" they said, "*as it hath pleased Thee;*" we must do Thy will. "*So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging.*" The work was no sooner done than God gave them the sign that they had accomplished His own decree, and that the innocent blood was not upon them. "*Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.*" The end of the storm was not the end of their religious feelings. They pledged themselves to Jehovah, and while they offered a sacrifice of some living creature in the ship, "acknowledged and glorified the justice and holiness that had just exacted and received a nobler and more awful sacrifice in the living man; appealing at the same time to Divine mercy, and placability, and propitious love."

Altogether, the character and conduct of the heathen sailors form a remarkable example of the openness of the Gentile world to the teaching of true religion. There is simplicity in the narrative, at this part of it, which is unlike the fictions of a later age, and yet it is impossible not to be struck with the boldness of the incidents. That a company of sailors,

knowing nothing but the superstitions of the Phœnicians, or other Pagan nations, and that as rude and uninstructed men would know them, should yet readily understand and appreciate Jonah's position, should reverence his office and life, and should seize the solemnity of the crisis with so much depth and earnestness of feeling, not only treating Jonah himself so considerately, but at once acknowledging Jehovah as the true God, fills us with surprise. It is not at all probable that one who sought to clothe a mere sentiment, that of sympathy with the Gentile world, in the form of a story, would have invented such details as we find in the first chapter. The hand of the artist would be certainly more easily traceable. As it is, simplicity and originality combine to bear witness to the truthfulness of the narrative.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEACHING OF THE BOOK OF JONAH ON THE DIVINE CHARACTER AND PURPOSES.

APART altogether from critical questions, there is on the very surface of the Book of Jonah a remarkable distinction to be recognised. While it deals with the history of a prophet, still it is impossible to believe that it was written for the sake of commemorating him, and his strange conduct and miraculous deliverance. And again, while it brings prominently before the reader the heathen city of Nineveh, it is remarkable that very little is said about that city, so that we are left with the impression that the book was not intended to fix special attention on a particular portion of the heathen world, and on the fate of a particular empire. It is true, that in the third chapter we are introduced to the great Assyrian capital, and the imagination is stirred by the suggestions of the narrative, so that we are carried in thought to the palace of the great king, to his council of nobles, and to the vast population of the city, all pervaded with the same spirit of humiliation and penitence, and filled with the sounds of lamentation

and appeal to God for deliverance. Such details are intensely interesting, as are the glimpses into the personal demeanour and experience of the prophet. But they fail to remove the prevailing impression of the book, which is, that the Spirit of God is employing all such facts in subordination to a single aim, and that of the very highest order and most permanent importance, in harmony with the whole bearing of Divine revelation.

Had we met with the Book of Jonah in the Apocrypha, we should have been tempted to overlook the profound teachings contained in it, and we should have regarded it as a traditional story, wrought up into its present shape by some writer of a later time, whose spirit was, by contact with better forms of heathenism, liberated and delivered from Jewish prejudices. But, as we have seen, the difficulty then would have been to account for the simplicity and purity of the book, and for the fact that the more it is studied the deeper and the more valuable its teachings are found to be. We do not receive it from the Alexandrian school, but from the Jews of Palestine. It is not an apocryphal book, but so far as we can trace it, has come down to us, with a recognised place in the Hebrew canon, from those who put that canon together. The book forms a constituent part of the Old Testament Scriptures. Then we are led to inquire, what is the special contribution which is made by it to the 'whole body of revelation? For that

surely is the only method by which we do justice to those who have gone before us ; to the Spirit of God in the Jewish Church ; to the law of progress in the dispensation of Divine grace. The character of the book is so diverse from any other in the canon, that it must suggest itself to any candid mind, whether it was not put where it is because it was regarded by those who first received it as the work of inspiration. A careful study of its profounder meanings bears fruit in this case as in every other, and "Wisdom is justified of her children." The peculiarities of the book fall into the background. The idiosyncracies of the prophet, the marvellousness of his history, the individual interest in the heathen city and its fate, all sink into comparative oblivion. The mind of the devout reader is enchained upon the one supreme topic which belongs to the very substance of Bible truth, and which is of universal and perpetual import,—the character of God ; His purposes towards mankind ; His ultimate end in His dealings with the one elect race, and with all the world through them.

I. The first and broadest teaching of the Book of Jonah regards *the character of God as the God of Nations*. The opening words suggest to us at once that what is about to be written in the book concerns not so much the religious welfare of Israel or Judah, but a great heathen city, which is representative of the world outside the elect people. "*Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,*

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me." There are many instances in which prophecies are delivered against heathen nations, but those prophecies were included in the ministry of men who preached among God's own people. The evident intention of such denunciations of judgment upon surrounding nations, was to maintain and exalt Divine authority amongst the Hebrew people themselves. They were filled with the thought of Divine Righteousness as vindicated among the heathen, and so were warned against their own sins and exhorted to fulfil their own vocation. But the message which came to Jonah was not to preach the destruction of Nineveh among his own people, but to turn his back for a time upon Israel and go and denounce the heathen city in the name of Jehovah whom he served; in other words, to transfer his ministry as a prophet to a heathen sphere. It was a most striking, and, to Jonah, perplexing announcement. But it was a new revelation of God, if only it was rightly received by those to whom it was sent. Now it has been the theory of some modern critics, that the Old Testament taught a view of the Divine character which rose no higher than that of the Judaizing scribes. Jehovah was a national deity, whose laws and works were a reflection of the Jewish mind. In other words, the religion which expresses itself in the Old Testament is only one factor in the religious history of mankind, and as such has only a

relative value. It served its purpose in the progressive development of Religion in its place in the world, but that purpose was only a subordinate and temporary one. But here we are met with a fact which directly traverses such a view. Jonah is commanded to preach at Nineveh in the name of *Jehovah*. The Phœnician sailors feared *Jehovah* exceedingly, offered sacrifice, and made vows to *Jehovah*. Moreover, it is remarkable that when Nineveh repents, it is not because Jonah's preaching has changed their form of religion, and they have adopted Jonah's faith instead of their own, but "*they believed God*" (*Elohim*), *they cried mightily to God*" (*Elohim*), and "*God saw their works, and repented of the evil that He said He would do unto them, and He did it not.*" Thus we are taught that *God* and *Jehovah* are one. The Jew is not permitted to make a distinction between his God and the God of Nineveh. The God of Israel is the God of the Nations. What could more plainly say that "God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth"—that the revelation identified with the name of *Elohim* is the same as that identified with the name of *Jehovah*. Whatever tendency there was to separate them in the minds of the Jews, this book denounced it as entirely contrary to the Spirit of God and to the bearing of the ancient Scriptures. Then, again, the God of the Nations was not only identified with *Jehovah*, in the story as a whole, but His character is proclaimed to

be the same towards all the world which it was towards His own people. The general result of this book is that God is at once righteous and merciful. He cannot pass by the transgressions of the wicked, but He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. Neither amongst the heathen themselves, nor amongst the tribes of Israel, was this character of God preserved incorrupt amid the superstitions and prejudices of ignorance and degeneracy. The heathen thought of God as arbitrary, despotic, capricious, and cruel. The Jews were tempted to think of Him as bound by a special covenant to one chosen race, and leaving the rest of the world to perish. Nothing could more signally rebuke such ignorance and prejudice, as the mission of Jonah to Nineveh. Go and tell that people that there is a righteous God in heaven who will by no means clear the guilty, whose eyes are in all the earth ; but tell them also that what He is to His chosen, covenant people of Israel, He will be to all mankind, a God passing by iniquity, transgression and sin, to all those who truly repent and turn from their wickedness.

Again, the proclamation of threatening against the Ninevites was a condemnation of despotic rapacity and violence. As such it was a revelation of the character of God which was needful both to the heathen and to the Jews. Nothing is said of the direct enmity of Assyria towards Israel. At the time of Jonah it

was still only a dark cloud on the horizon. It was therefore impossible to pervert the meaning of Jehovah's message to a mere reflection of His love for His people. It was a message to Nineveh. It was a condemnation of cruelty and worldly ambition as in themselves offensive to God. And yet among the Jews themselves, there is too much reason to believe that Divine sanction was often pleaded for a procedure which violated the laws of humanity and moderation as truly as the semi-barbaric policy of the Mesopotamian kingdoms. The tone of the whole Book of Jonah is that of sympathy with man as man ; and that sympathy is attributed to God, that it might be clearly taught that Righteousness is not inconsistent with Love, but is only another name for Love. Now these views of the Divine character may be found, it is true, in other parts of the Old Testament. They are prominently taught in the Book of Genesis. The God of the patriarchs was a Being who delighted in the order and happiness of the whole human family. While the nations of the earth are represented as ruled by the Divine hand, and the purpose of Jehovah is seen to be unfolding itself more and more in the history of the descendants of Abraham, there is nothing to warrant any narrow exclusiveness in the doctrines of the Mosaic economy. The separation from the heathen which is commanded and enforced, is separation from heathen abominations. While, all through the history, Israel is the beloved of the Lord,

the blessing which is preserved and handed on from generation to generation to the chosen people, is a blessing which is destined to be expanded until it shall embrace "all the families of the earth." This universality of the religion of Israel is the substance of the message sent by Jonah, and it is sent through him to all nations and all times. The God who cares for Nineveh is the God who cares for the world.

II. Another aspect of the Book of Jonah is its bearing upon the popular mind at the time when it was written, its teachings as to the character of God as the God of Israel. Now all we have just said, as to the proclamation of Truth to the nations, had to be put before the contemporaries of Jonah in his own land, in some form which would arrest their attention and deeply impress their hearts. We must bear in mind that Israel was about to be tried with a series of special messages, inciting all that believed in the Divine vocation of Jehovah's people to rise to the height of their privilege and realize His blessing. Prophet after prophet was to be sent, who should appeal to them to turn from their idolatries and national exclusiveness, and become the witnesses for God to the world. We have only to remember that it was no very long time after Jonah that Micah appeared, and that he was the immediate predecessor of Isaiah, in order to see that Jehovah was sounding a trumpet-call to those to whom He had entrusted His Truth, to become His ambassadors to the whole sphere

of His dominion, that the earth might be filled with His knowledge. The keynote of prophecy is the reign of Messiah, and the promise is that that reign shall be universal. But in the time of Jonah—that is, eight centuries before Christ—the people were scarcely prepared to listen to direct statements of this truth. It would occupy but a small space in prophetic messages, and would be introduced only in dim intimations and predictions capable of the widest application, while, at the same time, clothed in language which might be viewed in a narrower sense. Hence the peculiar character of the Book of Jonah. While the description of actual occurrences, it was yet a parable full of significance for all those who would look beneath the framework of fact and read the Divine lessons within. The prophet himself was, no doubt, almost a typical Jew of his time. We may well believe that there would scarcely have been found in all Israel or Judah one who would not have shrunk, as he shrank, from a mission to a heathen country. The purpose of Jehovah would be as mysterious to the whole land as it evidently was to Jonah. And yet he is put completely in the wrong by the narrative. He is exhibited in a most unfavourable light. His mistakes are arrested by a most merciful Providence, and the end is not glory to Jonah, but glory to Jehovah, the Saviour of Nineveh, the pitiful protector of the weak and the ignorant. The effect of such a parable upon the minds of the people must surely have

been very marked. We are not told of any actual results wrought by it; but perhaps it paved the way, more than we can ever now trace, for the subsequent messages of the prophets.

There is another point which ought to be noticed in considering the teaching of this book in Israel. It was a direct and very powerful protest against mere priestism and ceremonialism. Jonah had nothing to do but to preach repentance. And God spared Nineveh simply on their turning from their wickedness and confessing their sins. Some might have been tempted to reply, then why all the costly and complicated ritual which Jehovah has instituted among His own people? But while the teaching of the book is undoubtedly broad and liberal, full of the very milk of human kindness, there is no one word to be found in it disparaging the Mosaic system. The truth which is taught is, that God can dispense with all such external aids to religion when it pleases Him; and when He is seeking after the souls of the heathen, He will set them aside, for He is not a God who takes pleasure in such things for their own sake. He is not worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything. The rapid conversions described, first of the heathen sailors under the influence of the storm, and then of the Ninevites under the proclamation of approaching judgment, must have taught the people of Israel that, when the Spirit of God is at work, the agency of man need not be anything very

vast or extraordinary. One instrument, and he a very feeble and unworthy one, may be chosen of God to accomplish very mighty results.

And then there is the personal character of the prophet, which certainly would seem in some degree to reflect the attitude of the Jews towards their neighbours, and so indirectly to rebuke them. They were, like Jonah, angry at the loss of their position; and yet they dishonoured it, and lost it because they dishonoured it. They were proud and petulant; ready enough to copy what was bad among the Gentiles, and yet unwilling to share with them what was good among themselves. They had a power wherewith to bless the world, and instead of using it for the world's sake, they used it for their own, and brought themselves under the world's curse. The story of Jonah was a hidden prophecy of the future of both Israel and Judah. They turned away from the presence of the Lord. They were swallowed up by the calamities which arrested them. Yet in God's mercy they were cast out of the pit of trouble on the ground of repentance. They received a second call after their deliverance. They obeyed it, but not with the full purpose of heart which His discipline should have laid up in them; and while the heathen were called into the covenant, they sat aloof and sulked, until the Lord rebuked them again, and brought them to rejoice in His mercy.

Dr. Pusey has noticed that the form of words with

which the Book of Jonah opens must have suggested to the Jews the thought, that the Divine purpose was to extend the covenant of grace to the Gentiles. "Would then God deal thenceforth with the heathen as with the Jews? Would they have their prophets? Would they be included in the one family of God? The mission of Jonah itself was an earnest that they would. God, who does nothing fitfully or capriciously, in that He had begun, gave an earnest that He would carry on what He had begun. And so, thenceforth, the great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, were prophets to the nations also; Daniel was a prophet among them, to them as well as to their captives. But the mission of Jonah might, so far, have been something exceptional. The enrolling his book as an integral part of the Scriptures, joining on that prophecy to the other prophecies to Israel, was an earnest that they were to be parts of one system." We can scarcely doubt that one end of the book was to provoke the Lord's people to jealousy by them that were no people; to show them the heathen repenting, that they might feel the more deeply the heinousness of their own impenitence.

Moreover, the history of Jonah must have warned them against that unbelieving restraint of the Spirit to which they were tempted throughout their whole course, as they were reminded by the evangelist Stephen. "*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your*

fathers did, so do ye" (Acts vii. 51). The fault of the prophet was, that he put his own interpretation on the word of God, and refused to follow the guidance of the Spirit when he was led away from his old standpoint to assume a much higher. He would rather resign his ministry than go off the old lines. So the Jews, as a nation, when they were tried by the great crisis of their history, would rather renounce their Messiah than acknowledge One who was not according to their preconceived notions. How terrible the spiritual danger of those who are not open to the teaching of the Spirit! How possible to pervert a position of exalted privilege into one of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost! To be trustees of the Divine oracles is to be responsible for their faithful dispensation to the world. We must either use the foundation stone by building upon it, or be crushed by its weight as it falls into its true place, and we are not on it but under it. The Jews would not build upon the truth which was given in the Scriptures, and glorified in Jesus Christ. The kingdom of the Messiah had therefore to be established in spite of them. And the first great act of that work of establishment of the kingdom, was the crushing of Jerusalem, and its nationality, as the old dispensation closed and the new was inaugurated.

III. *God repenting Him of the evil.* Both in the case of Jonah and in the case of the Ninevites, the character of God is represented as compassionate and

patient. In dealing with His own servants there is no difficulty whatever in understanding, that while discipline was exercised towards the disobedient prophet, that discipline is yet controlled by the deeper purpose of the Divine will, which had appointed Jonah to a mission of the very highest and most arduous kind. It is quite in accordance with the teaching of Scripture throughout, and with the history of God's most distinguished servants, that before a great work is accomplished, the instrument appointed should himself be carried through a fiery trial by which his own crude knowledge and feelings were purged of their grossness, and the gold of his obedience purified. But it is somewhat different when we regard the dealings of God with the world at large, or with communities, or with mingled motives in human beings generally. We must then face the difficulty, that there seems to be something like inconsistency and contradiction between the Word of God and the actual appointments of His providence. The proclamation which Jonah was commanded to make among the multitudes of Nineveh was shaped in the form of a prediction: "*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*" But that a prophet should be sent to make the proclamation was itself, apart from anything which Jonah may have added, an implied condition. It meant, that the same God who pronounced the sentence was ready to recall it on the repentance of the people. The facts

are a perfectly indisputable proof of this. We do not need to know whether Jonah preached repentance by word of mouth or not ; his appearance preached it ; his cry evidently meant it, for the people did repent. Had they understood the sentence as irrevocable they would not have expressed their hope as they did, "*Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?*" The meaning of such words must of course be, that in their hearts there was the hope and the belief that He would. How then are we to construe the fact, that God had announced that He would destroy them, knowing and foreseeing that they would, through their repentance, turn away His anger ? To this question we must direct our attention briefly, that all difficulty may, if possible, be removed.

First, as to the use in Scripture of the term "repentance" as applied to God. There cannot be much difficulty in the mind of any thoughtful reader of the Bible in the mere verbal contradiction which appears on the surface. In some places God is represented as repenting, in other places it is said that He cannot repent, as *e.g.* Num. xxiii. 9 : "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said it, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Job xxiii. 13 : "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth." Mal. iii. 6 :

"I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Rom. xi. 29 : "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The meaning in all such passages is, that God is the God of truth, perfect and unchangeable in His character, therefore an object of unwavering confidence to His people. In Him "there is no variableness, neither the shadow of turning" (James i. 17). But there are other passages of Scripture which present another aspect of the Divine character, viz. that it is open to man and to the influence of human action. This is represented both under the form of a change of procedure in Divine providence, and a change of feeling towards man in God Himself. Gen. vi. 6 : "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." And in reference to the conduct of nations the principle is distinctly proclaimed. Jer. xviii. 7 : "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it ; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Here we have a rule of the Divine method laid down. Evidently the meaning of repentance, in such a case, is simply change of procedure. There is no reference

to any attribute of the Divine nature regarded absolutely, except that it is implied that God is just and pitiful. His sentence is according to the facts of the case. If the facts are changed, His sentence is removed. In the primitive religion of the patriarchs it would be quite in accordance with all the revelation of God given at that time to speak of His seeing the wickedness of man on the earth as a man would see it, as something which affected His thoughts and purposes. If the principle of the revelation then granted to mankind was that God should be represented anthropomorphically, that is, as having a similar relation to men to that which men have to one another, it would be quite consistent with that principle to speak of God seeing as man sees, and as being moved by what He saw. A man seeing the earth as it was, would be affected by the sight, according as he was a good man or a bad man. The object of the passage in Genesis is evidently to teach us that God's method of dealing with earthly facts may be judged of by the principles of human judgment, in so far as they are pure and true, and that the effect of those facts upon a human heart may be a help to us to understand how God regards them. Underneath all such passages there lies the Divine secret of the Incarnation. "*God manifest in the flesh*," the perfect revelation of the Divine in the "*Man Christ Jesus*." There is no contradiction in the various and yet corresponding parts of the one revelation.

To speak of God in human phraseology is not hiding Him, but helping our thought to approach nearer to His Spirit. Yet it is necessary to guard such a method of speech from abuse. God is not a man, therefore He is above the frailties and errors of mankind. He is unchangeable ; yet it is through humanity, which is changeable, that we are able to see the imaged reflection of His unchangeable perfection. We are accustomed to this double aspect of truth in every department. We have to be reminded everywhere that the Infinite and the Finite are in man himself. Apparent contradictions are only the result of the twofold relation of the human mind, on the one hand to that which can be expressed in terms of the earthly, on the other to that which is above this world and which must be expressed in terms which deny the limits of this world.

But there is another difficulty, which is much more pressing and definite in the case before us. God, we are told, commanded Jonah to proclaim the overthrow of Nineveh. How is it consistent with His truthfulness that He should put into the lips of His prophet an unconditional prophecy, when, as the facts proved, the future was really contingent upon the conduct of the people who received this prophecy ? Now there is one proposed explanation of this difficulty which we must utterly reject as unworthy of Divine sanction. It is said by some, that God sent the positive prediction of His judgment to Nineveh,

because if it had been expressed otherwise than positively the people would not have repented. In other words, He wrought upon their fears by the absoluteness of the terms in which this message was proclaimed. This cannot be the explanation. On the other hand, the passage just now quoted from Jeremiah xviii. 7, manifestly rests upon a well understood principle, that all threatenings made by God directly to a nation are conditional in their nature, not absolute. He denounces the sin by means of the threatening. Therefore, if the sin is put away the object of the threatening is attained. We must not carry notions derived from positive law and its execution into the sphere of ethics and religion, without modification. There is no such thing recognised in law as repentance. The offender, being convicted, is either punished or pardoned. The pardon is a sovereign act, which is above the sphere of the positive law. When God proclaimed to Nineveh that within forty days it should be overthrown, we can compare that proclamation to the sentence of a judge, which, regarded in itself, is absolute; but the fact that God sent the proclamation through His prophet, was a revelation to the Ninevites that He was not merely their Judge, but their Sovereign, to whom they could approach by prayer and penitence, and who could exercise the sovereign prerogative of mercy, and pass by their transgressions. What Jonah said therefore, was, in substance, this, "Your

sins have been before God ; He condemns them as worthy of death ; He will certainly punish them, and that speedily, within forty days, unless His mercy spares you." The unconditional *form* of the prophecy, then, is merely the tribute which is paid to the justice of God, which is absolute, which can never be changed as justice, which is honoured even in the remission of punishment, and which must be proclaimed as the foundation on which all true repentance is made to rest. We deserve the overthrow. It is the just sentence upon us. That was what the people must acknowledge. Therefore the prophet was commanded to pronounce the sentence in the name of God. But the prophet's appearance was an invitation to repentance and salvation. It was not a prediction of the future, for that future must depend on the moral attitude of the people. That must be the outcome of moral freedom. Therefore they must be left face to face with the justice and goodness of God—His justice in the sentence, His goodness in the visit of His prophet. They turned from the error of their ways. Therefore the justice of God was honoured, not in their destruction, but in their salvation, for "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

That this is the correct interpretation of the facts is evident from the last chapter, where the narrow mind of Jonah is exhibited in contrast with the

breadth of the Divine righteousness. Man is apt to think that justice is best honoured by the literal execution of a sentence; but this conception of justice is very far from the lofty and spiritual teaching of the Scriptures. The destruction of human beings is no satisfaction to the justice of God—apart from its bearing on the purpose of His law. He commands righteousness, because He delights in righteousness; if then the righteousness has been ultimately attained through His remission of punishment and His gracious renewal of the sinner, the law is more honoured in the non-execution of the sentence than it would have been if the threatened destruction had been fulfilled. The law is for the sake of men, and when both the law and the men are preserved, then He who created man in His image and delights in His creation, is glorified, not as the God of death, but as the God of life.

It has been pointed out by Dr. Raleigh, in his thoughtful work on *The Story of Jonah*, that if we only take this view of the Divine character as involving in itself at the same time both justice and mercy, then there is no need to put any meaning into the words other than that which they naturally bear. God did really repent or change His mind. "When He sent the prophet, He meant destruction, just according to the cry; and when the city was humbled, He changed His mind, put a seal upon the fountains and forces of ruin, which were throbbing in readiness

to break forth, and waved the destroying angel home. Did He *not* mean to destroy? Then how can we reconcile the prophet's cry with the Divine veracity? If He was merely holding out an empty threat, 'a terror of the Law,' which in fact was no terror at all, but only a cunning expedient to produce a beneficial end, then what threatening has truth in it? Is there a judgment? Is there a hell? Are not pangs of conscience, and penalties of law, and pointings of justice to a future life, *all* baseless and illusory? If God means to condemn unbelievers and disobedient men for the sin they have done, and for the rejection of His gospel, then He meant to destroy Nineveh. And if the question is put: 'Why, then, was it *not* destroyed? How can we reconcile the *sparing* of the city with Divine veracity, since there is no condition or qualification in the denouncing cry?'—the answer is, that the condition was involved *and* understood. The possibility of mercy was clearly understood by Jonah, for he was displeased with it. It was understood also by the Ninevites, for they cried for long days and nights, 'Who can tell?' If God had made unreserved announcement of destruction, the city *must* have been destroyed, 'for He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? Hath He said it, and shall He not do it?' 'But He *knew* that the city would repent. Why then did He threaten without any expressed reference to the eventuality?' The answer is, that He knew that the city would

repent under the shadow of the Divine commination. Not otherwise. The commination was uttered because it was deserved, because it suited the moral condition of the people, because it was necessary in the perfect government of God. Also, God foresaw its good effect, and therefore in all truth and sincerity it was put forth. God knows that His believing children will persevere unto the end. Why then does He speak to them as if they might not? as if they might apostatize and draw back unto perdition? The answer is: 'Because they might.' It is a clear possibility that they might; and, very likely, the *realization* by them of this awful possibility is *one* of the elements which compose and complete the certainty of perseverance unto the end. Some metaphysical objections, no doubt, lie against this reasoning; but not more than, not so many as, lie against any other theory that may be formed. It has the inestimable advantage of saving the Divine veracity and sincerity in all the utterances of the Bible. Why should it be incredible that God 'repents' or changes? Would it not be more incredible if it were asserted that He never does? Would it be to the honour of God if it could be said, with truth, that He thinks and feels concerning us *in our condition*, exactly as He would if we were in a condition the very opposite? Among men, a good father, a just master, will treat son or servant according to their works and their state. When they

wickedly transgress he is grieved and angry. When they repent and reform he is glad and pleased. Such a man is not called fickle and changeable in nature on account of those changing states. Because he has integrity and love in his nature as unchanging principles, therefore, as the ever varying facts and scenes of life arise and pass before him, as the different acts and moral states of men are perceived, there are emotions corresponding with them excited in his mind. And are we to suppose that what constitutes a special perfection in the moral character of a man is an imperfection in God? Surely not. His mind is the one perfect mirror, reflecting, without the least distortion or refraction, every object, act, state, being, in the universe, just as it is. This is the heart and core of what we are now saying—that God morally regards us at any one moment *just as we are*. He does not look upon hypothetical beings whose images and proportions he has written down in His plan, but on the living men, women, children and cattle, just as they are. Of course He has considered our future, and has provided for it all. He sees the germs in us of all that, by His grace, will make the future blossom into eternal beauty. But what we are *now* God regards us as being. If we repent of all sin and grow into all goodness, His thought and feeling will rise with us; and as, repenting, He spared Nineveh, so He will spare us, and we shall live and not die" (pp. 248-251).

The great value of the Book of Jonah, as setting such truth very strikingly before us, is itself a powerful argument for its authority. Mere ingenious fiction is not rich with spiritual suggestion as this book is. It is a parable of Divine character and action whose meaning we can never exhaust.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES.

THERE are two aspects of the repentance of Nineveh which must be distinguished. It was a popular movement first; and extended from the people to the throne. It became subsequently a universal act of the city; being proclaimed by the decree of the king and nobles, and then taken up in obedience to the command of the government. It appears of considerable importance to bear this twofold aspect of the one fact in remembrance. To many it has seemed almost incredible that the whole city should be converted by the preaching of one man, and that one man a stranger. But the narrative by no means goes so far as that. "So the people of Nineveh believed God;" that may refer to an extensive movement among the lower classes, "in the streets and lanes of the city." Then it is said that they "*proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.*" Now the poorer classes of the populace could not have made a proclamation; neither could the people have

done so by any other means than that subsequently described, viz. by the decree of the council of "*the king and his nobles.*" We must, therefore, interpret verse 5 as a summary of what occurred, and the following four verses as a particular description of that which is contained in the summary. "*For word came unto the king of Nineveh,*" i.e. word about the preaching and its effect upon those who heard it. He might have suppressed it, as many a king has done a similar movement; but he was himself touched by it, and changed, for it is quite possible that there may have been a special, coincident working of the Spirit of God upon the mind of the monarch, which opened his conscience to the Divine warning. We are distinctly told that in some way the matter came to the ears of the king; and as Jonah is not mentioned as the medium of that communication with royalty, we must conclude that only indirectly was the threatening of God repeated in the palace. But in the Eastern mind there is a peculiar openness to the impressions from prophetic messages, as we have seen in our own time. A coincidence between an event and an ancient prediction will wonderfully excite both fear and enterprise. As to the marvellous effect of the preaching of Jonah on the people of Nineveh, not only is it credible, but it is by no means unexampled. The preaching of Whitefield and Wesley in the last century produced overwhelming feeling in the hearts of tens of thousands at a time. "I have

known," says Mr. Layard, "a Christian priest frighten a whole Mussulman town to tents and repentance, by publicly proclaiming that he had received a Divine mission to announce a coming earthquake or plague." (*Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 367. London, 1867).

The preaching of some of our modern revivalists is another instance in point, one in which similar results are produced without the use of threatening messages, though perhaps with a plentiful employment of Christian denunciations of sin. Savonarola at one time held all Florence under the sway of his voice, and could excite them to the highest pitch of feeling by his sermons. But then it must be remembered that there is no statement as to how large a proportion of the inhabitants were moved by Jonah's cry. If the whole city was repenting there would be no need for the proclamation from the king; moreover, it would be most unlikely that the great mass of the city would venture to express their feelings of apprehension and penitence unless they were permitted to do so, and unless the movement were under royal sanction. It is true that Jonah's history may have been known, and that the facts of his miraculous deliverance may have added special force to his preaching, both of judgment and of mercy; but we are not told that the people were influenced by any such considerations.

"*They believed God.*" Dr. Raleigh thinks that the words employed by our Lord, "*Jonah was a sign to*

the Ninevites," must refer to the signal facts of his history; but in this he differs from other writers. "How could he be a sign unless they knew something of his previous history, and especially of that part of it which affected themselves? Would any city, ancient or modern, be justified in taking a man as a 'sign'—invested with supernatural significance, clothed with Divine authority—simply on his own profession, and because he appeared 'crying' in its streets? Any political demagogue could accomplish his object in this way; any religious enthusiast could put the fevered visions of his own fancy before men as the revelations of Divine truth; even the maniac might for a time be the ruler of the wisest of men. In order, therefore, to preserve the necessary and perpetual distinction between faith and credulity, between religion and superstition, we must suppose that this repenting city had rational and intelligible grounds for taking Jonah as 'a sign.' We must suppose that the man and his history, in that part of it at least which related to themselves, was very well known to them" (p. 218). Now while Dr. Raleigh follows out this argument with great care and thought, it seems to be too slenderly attached to the narrative to be sustained. Whence could the report have reached Nineveh? "Nothing more likely," says Dr. Raleigh. But would the miracle be of such a kind as to affect the population of a strange, heathen city? Would they not have mocked at it, and would

they have understood the bearing of it on Jonah's character?

Jonah might, indeed, relate the circumstances himself. But he is told simply to cry against the city, and his sympathy with the people was evidently not deep enough to prompt him to any very touching appeals; nor would it have increased his power with them if he had told them that he had been a disobedient prophet who had been punished by Jehovah. Our Lord would mean that he was a sign of the Divine visitation; and He used the reference to Jonah's miraculous deliverance to warn the Jews, lest they should reject a messenger who had not been merely plucked for their sakes out of the jaws of death, but raised from the dead with all the glorious attestation of the Saviour's victory. The mistake is in first exaggerating the effects of Jonah's preaching, and then requiring something beyond the simple cry against the city to account for such results. But it is better to understand the repentance as appertaining to a portion of the population, and so extending from one to another by rapid communication, until it reaches the precincts of the palace, and then the king himself.

At the same time, it may be freely admitted that the repentance of Nineveh is intended to be represented as the work of the Divine Spirit specially poured out on the city. "A sense of God filled the city. It was shed from group to group, from street

to street. It was awful, painful, at the first, like 'a resurrection of condemnation' to their spirits. It turned them away from their own gods as effectually as the sailors in the ship were turned from theirs; for this man Jonah seems to have a stupendous power, whether he serves or whether he sins, of making men conscious of the living God." "*They believed God.*" Doubtless there was much more to account for that impression on the people's mind than the mere cry of the prophet. So it is always when there is a vast impression produced on a multitude. We cannot account for it on any merely natural principles. The words may be simple and even sometimes in themselves weak and halting, the presence of the preacher by no means powerful; yet the souls of the people may be bowed down like the trees of the forest before the "mighty rushing wind." We are sure that in the case of Nineveh it was not the influences of the human personality which wrought the work. We are led to look at Jonah in the very next chapter, for the time at least, a poor, petulant, selfish, narrow-minded man, utterly unworthy of such a work, though chosen by Jehovah to be the instrument of it; but God hath magnified Himself by the selection of very humble agents at the greatest crises in the history of His Church. The Spirit of Truth was in Nineveh, and out of the dark chaos He called forth the new creation.

There is great beauty in the description of the

royal conduct. "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes." "The effect is instantaneous for the whole air is full of a spiritual electricity. As soon as the great dimensions and dark features of the case are revealed to him, he does not hesitate. He feels in a moment that this is no time for state ceremonial and gaudy show—for song, and feast, and revelry. No time even for repose and quietness. It is a time for *instant* action, if haply anything may yet be done to avert the dreaded calamity. There is probably but a brief consultation of the king with the nobles. The case is plain to them all. The wave of fear overpowers them just as if they were common men. In that very fear there is the breeding and stirring of a higher faith. They too 'believe in God.' The happy decision is, 'The people are right. We share their alarm, we must join them in humiliation, and put out a decree immediately to that effect.' 'Take the robe from me, the glitter of which is painful to my sight. Lay by the sceptre, and this crown, which perhaps I may never wear again. Darken the room, hush the babbling tongue, and soften the steps of the busy foot. Bring the sackcloth. Sprinkle me with the ashes.' How beautiful seems the monarch in this swift and happy descent! Beautiful almost as the feet of those who are passing along the mountains to publish salvation.

In this humbling of himself he is going to exaltation. In lowliness he rises. By abdication he reigns. By fasting he prepares a feast of joy for other days. By bending low in a sinner's sorrow he secures for himself and for his people God's rich and free forgiveness. Never in any battle has he made a conquest like this. By timely humiliation and repentance he reverses the currents of providence—he changes the very mind of God!"

Assuredly such facts, and if we give the simple words of Scripture their full weight, they may be so described, are not like the mere vapid fiction of an Eastern story-teller, nor can we imagine them invented for the sake of putting into them a special party sentiment. They are too vividly real and too deeply true to the more spiritual instincts. The remaining incidents of the fast are also striking; not at all such as a Jew would invent, and not such as would be likely to be inserted in a mere parable if the intention was solely to draw attention to the fact that a heathen city repented. "And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn

away from His fierce anger, that we perish not." Now it might be enough in some minds to represent this as the Eastern dress of the parable. It is painted up with the colours of hyperbole to heighten the effect. The superstitious feeling of the polytheist would be expressed in the dumb cries of the lower animals as readily as in the confessions and lamentations and vows of the people. "Keep corn from the horses' manger, and fodder from the beasts' stall; let the sheep bleat for the pasture and the dogs howl for hunger—as if helping 'our cry;' let the sleekness of the steed be hidden by the sackcloth, and let the ashes be sprinkled on all the glory." But there is more than the artist's skill in such details. They are not introduced only for effect. They are not simply part of a story. The depth of the feeling of repentance and of the belief of the people in the prophecy is thus vividly expressed. Their "mighty cry" could not be better represented as one which completely absorbed them. They would not have any signs of plenty and peace around them, such as feeding cattle and caparisoned horses would be; they must be surrounded with the emblems and sounds of lamentation and sorrowing everywhere and at every moment. "What a city it must have been, with a cry ascending from every house! coming even from children's mouths! wailing out of sick-beds! breaking from the lips of affrighted men as they went gliding, like ghosts, along the street!" And how could they

bear to be themselves in such agony of anxiety and dread, and not cast the shadow of their woe on the creatures around them? It was no mere childish superstition, it was the greatness and intensity of their feelings finding vent in a manner suited to their customary ways and thoughts.

The most remarkable fact, however, in the narrative of Nineveh's repentance is that they based their hope of pardon and salvation on the decided change of life which they called upon one another to manifest. "*Let them turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands.*" For such words to be included in the royal proclamation was to acknowledge that the besetting sins of the people of Nineveh were such as they must feel to deserve the threatened destruction. *Violence in their hands!* Was it not the common characteristic of ancient warfare? Did not all the despotic kingdoms of the East obtain their supremacy by violence? Might they not plead custom in excuse? Plainly there was a sense of right not entirely obliterated even in those heathen minds. Conscience could be awaked. Although they hardened their hearts in cruelty, they knew that they were wicked. And they knew that what God wanted to see was not their sackcloth, but their changed lives. "When you fast, undo the heavy burden; when you put on the sackcloth, strike off the slave's chains and open the prisoner's door; when you cry to God, cease to do wrong to men, and,

as far as possible, repair the injuries done already." And yet these heathen penitents are not so blinded by superstition that they take it for granted, God is immediately to be turned from His purpose by their show of reformation. They rightly seize the main principle of moral government. "*Who can tell if God will turn and repent?*" It is not absolutely certain, but it is possible, it is a matter of hope. We need not utterly despair, as we have to do with such a God—who even sends His prophet to cry against our sins. Surely that clear discernment of the relation of human feeling and conduct to Divine procedure, is very little like the random and groping course of superstition "ignorantly worshipping" "the unknown god." The same Spirit whose influence carried Jonah's cry to the hearts of the people, taught them that the righteous God loveth righteousness, that He will not be mocked, that while He overthrows the perverse and froward, He giveth grace to the truly humble and penitent. Dr. Pusey quotes beautiful words from Chrysostom on the example which such facts present for our imitation and warning. "They know not the issue, yet they neglect not repentance. They are unacquainted with the method of the loving-kindness of God, and they are changed amid uncertainty. They had no other Ninevites to look to, who had repented and been saved. They had not read the Prophets nor heard the Patriarchs, nor benefited by counsel, nor partaken of instruction, nor

had they persuaded themselves that they should altogether propitiate God by repentance. For the threat did not contain this. But they doubted and hesitated about this, and yet repented with all carefulness. What account then shall we give, when these, who had no good hope held out to them as to the issue, gave evidence of such a change, and thou, who mayest be of good cheer as to God's love for men, and hast many times received many pledges of His care, and hast heard the Prophets and Apostles, and hast been instructed by the events themselves, strivest not to attain the same measure of virtue as they." Certainly such facts, so full of gracious meaning for all ages, are not like the mere clothing of the ideas of a sect among the Jews, as Ewald suggests, desiring to enforce their broader and more liberal Judaism upon the authorities of the nation. There is not the faintest sign of controversial feeling in the whole book. It is the calm and deep flow of the water of life : the message of one who has been moved to write it by the Spirit of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLACE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH IN MESSIANIC PROPHECY.

LONG before the time of Jonah there was a line of Messianic prophecy which can be traced distinctly, from the "*Protevangel*" uttered in Paradise down to the broad and deep-toned anticipations embodied in the Psalms of David. It is necessary to bear in mind that while prophecy had taken a new departure in the time of Samuel, still there was very little that was written down, to be handed on to future ages in the form of predictions. The Davidic era, however, produced a considerable change in the spirit of the people and in their anticipations. David himself was the type of the Divine King, though the type was not complete in his own individual reign, but needed to be unfolded and to some extent rectified by the reign of Solomon. "What have we," asks Davison (in his *Discourses on Prophecy*, p. 206), "in the prophetic psalms (and those all, or most of them, ascribed to David) but an assemblage of many of the most considerable attributes of the reign and religion of Messiah foreshown? There is the

King set upon the holy hill of Zion ; His law ; the opposition made to Him by the kings of the earth ; their rage defeated ; His extraordinary sceptre of righteousness ; His unchangeable Priesthood ; His Divine worship ; His exalted nature ; His death, and early resurrection outrunning the corruption of the grave ; His dominion embracing both Israel and the Gentile world." The author has taken up this subject at some length in his work, *Prophecy, its Nature and Evidence*, Chapter VI., "The Messiah the soul of prophecy." Not only was there a Messianic spirit living and working in the Davidic period and coming into expression in the devotional poetry of that time, but it is important to remember that the use of the psalms in religious worship would very deeply imbue the minds of the people with the anticipations arising out of the prophetic language. "It seems to have been an appointment of the Divine Spirit, that, just when the predictions of prophecy were beginning to grow in breadth and fulness, the poetic and musical faculties of the people were trained and enlarged, so that they could take up the very spirit of prophecy into their worship and into their daily life. It is said that the Jews acknowledged the principle, in interpreting the language of the psalms, that any prediction which could not be regarded as entirely fulfilled in the time of David and Solomon was to be applied to the time of Messiah." Certainly there was ground for such a principle to rest upon in the study

of the more ancient Scriptures and their fulfilments. The larger spiritual scope of the primitive promises would be perceived by the more devout and earnest students of the Scriptures. It has been truly said of the Messianic psalms, that they "presented a perfect drama of Messiah's coming story." An outline was therefore already in the hands of the people. The prophets who followed had merely to fill in that outline and to deepen the colours of the picture.

And as with the psalms so with the facts of the national life. The history of Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon was another preparation for the development of Messianic prophecy. It carried the thoughts of the people out of their own land. It opened the prospect of that widespread reign of the King of Righteousness which was the glad tidings to be announced by the chosen people: "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people." "This grand prospect of the world's salvation through the covenant people Israel,"¹ says Dr. Titcomb, "found an admirable outline in their widespread distribution among heathen countries in the days of Solomon; by which they were placed in a position exactly adapted for the great work assigned them. Was it not so? Do we not read of the Hebrew navy trading along the Red Sea to Ophir? Were not

¹ *Revelation in Progress*, p. 198. (R.T.S.)

the Canaanites subject and tributary to Solomon's tax-gatherers? Did not Hiram, King of Tyre, welcome him to the throne, and open a commerce with his people? Had not Israel's fame extended as far as to the uttermost parts of the earth?"

The two hundred years which intervened, between the appearance of the first of the prophets whose prophecies were formally committed to writing and the completion of Jehovah's judgment on the tribes of Israel and Judah, were marked by a succession of Divine messages, embracing some of the grandest outbursts of the prophetic spirit. The line of Messianic prediction can certainly be discerned all along that period. We see it, in such a case as that of Isaiah, much more conspicuous and larger in expression than in others, but it is never entirely lost sight of.

If the view which we have put forth in this work is justified, that Jonah commences the line of written prophecy, then, while we should expect that there would be Messianic features in his book, we should also expect that they would be less fully developed than in subsequent writings. And this we find to be the case. The general tone of Jonah corresponds with the general tone of the Messianic psalms. The typical element is the prominent one, just as David and Solomon were typical anticipations of Messiah. There is no distinct prediction of the personal advent of the Redeemer such as we find in later prophets. At the same time the book ought to

be regarded in its practical bearing on the minds of the people to whom it was sent. It would certainly stimulate their thoughts in a remarkable manner; on the one hand, as to their influence over heathen nations and the character of a Divine messenger, and on the other (by the striking miracle wrought in Jonah's deliverance from the jaws of death, and again by the deliverance of Nineveh on their repentance, and the reproof of the prophet by the sign of the gourd), as to the spirit and working of that Divine kingdom which they as a people were appointed to proclaim. *Messiah* was the personification of the Theocracy in their minds. All their national glory was to be embodied in Him, and all their national wishes to be realized and fulfilled in Him; and this book seemed to say, with a loud, clear, ringing voice, your Deliverer is the Deliverer of the world, He is the Faithful and Merciful, rescuing from death, and turning the shadow of night into the morning. The first instalment of written prophecy, then, was a very fitting introduction to those that followed, breathing Divine love, calling the people to lift up their eyes, and look to the ends of the earth, and to hope, even in the midst of their own Jonah-like unfaithfulness, for One who should come forth out of their ruin to be the true Prophet of the Law, "*the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel.*"

We are not left to our own conjectures as to the estimate in which the Book of Jonah was held among

the Jews. The references which were made to the prophet himself and to the contents of the book by our Lord Jesus Christ, must be quite sufficient with all those who acknowledge His Divine authority, to show that He regarded it as holding an important place in the line of Messianic prophecy. There are two distinct uses which our Saviour made of the Book of Jonah. He sanctioned the typical view, that Jonah himself was in some respects a type of the Messiah. He also very emphatically pointed to the miracle of Jonah's rescue from the fish's belly, as foreshadowing in some sense His own resurrection. It is of the utmost importance that these references to Jonah in the New Testament should be carefully studied. We must, therefore, devote a few pages to their elucidation.

I. Our Lord speaks of "*the sign of Jonah*," Matt. xii. 40, xvi. 4; Luke xi. 29-32. While in the former case the Resurrection is the point especially alleged, in the latter the broader view of Jonah's mission to the Ninevites seems to be before our Lord's mind. "And when the multitudes were gathering together unto him, he began to say, This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah. For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them:

for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgement with this generation and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold a greater than Jonah is here.” [Revised Version.] There is no direct reference in these words to the miracle wrought for Jonah as typical of the Saviour’s Resurrection. At the same time, that *may* be included in the “*sign*” (σημείον) which Jonah “*became*” to the Ninevites. Some have argued that our Lord would not have employed the word “*sign*,” unless He had meant His hearers to understand that the “men of Nineveh” knew the history of Jonah, and that his escape had so impressed their minds that they believed in his message, and repented; whereas a still greater sign, in the Resurrection of Jesus, would fail to open the minds of that generation to the claims of Messiah. But while admitting that there is some force in this reasoning, it seems scarcely consistent with the concluding words of the passage in St. Luke, where the “*preaching of Jonah*” and “*the wisdom of Solomon*” are spoken of in the same manner as received by heathen joyfully.

The multitudes addressed would not be likely to appreciate the meaning of the Lord if it were at all remote from their ordinary thoughts. The allusion to Jonah’s rescue from the whale would certainly

be difficult for them to follow out. And it is only by a somewhat far-fetched use of the facts that we can suppose the people of Nineveh were acquainted with Jonah's personal history. He would not be likely to relate the story himself. If he did, it might have produced a prejudice against him in his hearers. The σημεῖον, or "*sign*," was the strange unexpected appearance of the prophet and his wild cry of denunciation. The two facts are compared : "*Even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.*" A prophet with a cry amongst a heathen people became a sign to them ; they looked upon him as a Divine messenger, they believed and repented. A prophet was amongst the Jews ; but while Jonah to the Ninevites was only a man with a message, Jesus to the Jews was a prophet accompanied with mighty works and all the credentials they could desire proving His Divine authority. But what did our Lord mean when He said, "There shall be no sign given to this generation but the sign of the prophet Jonah !" He referred, doubtless, to the general desire and expectation that there would be sent down from heaven some extraordinary manifestation of a purely external character, which would signify to all the presence and power of Messiah. This would not be granted ; but they might take the prophet Jonah and study his history, and that would be a help to them. The Ninevites rebuked them, for they demanded no such sign in

the case of Jonah. They repented at his preaching ; perhaps, we may add, at the simple recounting among them of the Divine righteousness and goodness as manifested towards him. But *they* (the Jews) were not ready to believe, though the Prophet who appeared among them wrought so many signs in their presence. And yet they should have one great sign which might be said to surpass all that they had yet witnessed, and which might be called the "*sign of the prophet Jonah*;" for as Jonah was in his own history a sign of Divine power and mercy, so they should see in the personal history of Jesus similar and still greater facts, His death and resurrection.

2. But the words as they are reported by the first Evangelist are more special, and point to the peculiar place which the Book of Jonah held in the line of Messianic prediction. Matt. xii. 40 : "*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale ; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" These words of course refer to the use of the sign for that generation. Our Lord distinctly affirmed that the facts of Jonah's history might be employed as typically predictive of His own ; not simply as "a likeness," but as a foreshadowing, in which the mind of the Spirit could be recognized. It has been suggested that the other instances in which the "*third day*" is mentioned, as Luke xxiv. 16 ; 1 Cor. xv. 4, etc., may be allusions to

this veiled anticipation in the Book of Jonah. Gen. xxii. 4 and Ps. xvi. 10, both fail to satisfy the precision of the language. "We may in all reverence infer," says Prof. Huxtable, in *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. vi. p. 577, "that this most strange and otherwise utterly unaccountable circumstance was ordered by Divine Providence for the very purpose of furnishing a typical prediction in which both the Lord Jesus Himself (Luke xviii. 31, 33), and His Church as taught by Him, should recognize the distinct foreshadowing of His pre-ordained death and resurrection. Those who seriously believe in the vast significance for mankind of those great events, will find it reasonable to suppose that, if any events at all were to be typically foretold in the Old Testament, these should be; and on the other hand, if this part of Jonah's history wears to our mind the aspect of being beyond all measure strange, we must consider, that any typical representation of events in themselves so beyond all parallel marvellous, could not fail, if viewed apart from such typical meaning, to wear just this very aspect. The all-but consummated sacrifice of Isaac by his father is a piece of history which stands in this respect by the side of Jonah's three days burial in the fish. Either narrative, if regarded by itself, shocks all the sense of probability; either, when regarded as typical, is seen to be in strict accordance with the main purpose of Divine revelation, which is the exhibition to the world of Christ." We must

here remind the reader of the special significance which attaches to Jonah's psalm of praise for deliverance. If it was the work of the Spirit upon his mind, employing the facts of his personal experience as a medium of inspiration, then we can apply to such a case what the Apostle Peter has said of the prophetic Scriptures: they "*came not by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Pet. i. 21). Many also place beside this instance that of David, to which the same Apostle refers in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost: "Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath unto him, that of the fruit of his loins He would set one upon his throne; *he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ*, that neither was He left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption" (Acts ii. 30, 31). Now if David could thus foretell the resurrection of the Christ when speaking of himself, so could Jonah. It seems more likely that Jonah should use inspired language, which extended the meaning of his own deliverance to Messiah, than that he should have magnified the deliverance itself for the sake of expressing his own feeling of thankfulness.

As to the correspondence between the two facts, the deliverance of Jonah from the prison-house in the fish, and the deliverance of Jesus from the grave, it is well to notice that in both cases the sign was connected with humiliation and an outcasting of

the Divine messenger, though there was the great distinction that in Jonah's case the sin of the prophet was represented in the darkness to which he was banished, whereas in the case of the Messiah it was the sin of the world which cast Him into death. Our Lord in calling the attention of the people to the case of Jonah, was no doubt intending to set their minds upon the way of faith, by leading them to think of resurrection as a possibility, and that in connection with a Divine Message; and not only so, but as Jonah after his resurrection became a successful preacher to Nineveh, so the Lord would seem to intimate, He who should be crucified, dead, and buried in the heart of the earth, after His resurrection would carry the message of Divine righteousness and mercy to the ends of earth. Whether or not it was the popular belief that Jonah had been actually raised from the dead after being confined in the belly of the fish, it seems difficult to decide; but the very emphatic use of the type by our Lord as a *sign* to that generation points to the possibility of such a view. We can well believe that the story of Jonah had been employed by Rabbinical interpreters as foreshadowing the restoration of Israel itself to the favour of Jehovah. All that could revive the languishing hopes of the people was eagerly seized. They groaned under the oppressions to which they were subject. They deeply mourned their national humiliation.

We can easily imagine that the typical meaning of Jonah was frequently referred to. See, said the Rabbis, though we may be cast away for a time, we may yet be restored. And they would connect such a type with the still more vivid prophecy of national revival in Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, which undoubtedly sustained the hopes of the people in a future restoration. The idea of resurrection must have been quite familiar to them, although they thought rather of the resurrection of the nation than of an individual. But when the Lord Jesus distinctly foretold that the Messiah should be hidden in the earth and after three days rise again, and pointed them to the prophet Jonah as a help to apply the thought of resurrection to an individual, He certainly was giving them a "*sign*," helping them to believe, surrounding the facts of His own personal history with the halo of inspired authority.

Looking back then from these words of the Saviour to the Book of Jonah, we are wonderfully relieved of the difficulty which seems to lie about it, when regarded as an isolated production of an individual mind. We are no longer called upon to account for the strangeness of the story, and we are no longer repelled by its abnormal character. "God needs to break through all the laws of taste, and to use language, and bring in figures, and perform typical actions, which are quite shocking to

the sophisticated sensibilities of men. He needs a flaming sword at the gate of every earthly paradise to keep men out of it until they are fit to enter! He needs priests, all bloody and smeared, ministering at the altar, without intermission of service, through long ages! He needs a father standing with gleaming knife above the bound body of his son! He needs to cast a prophet away down to the depths of a churning sea, and then into the noisome gurgling belly of a great fish! No polite figures these. But sin is not polite. Terrible actions those. Yes, because our redemption is a stupendous thing. On these grounds we may say that the three days in the deep were the greatest days of the prophet's life. He got his power then to speak with effect at Nineveh. Unknown to himself, he then became a figure and image of the Redeemer of the world. Let the men of this generation take heed lest the men of Nineveh should rise in the judgment to condemn them. To them the prophet was a sign—to some men now he is only a scoffing. They believed his story as sufficient evidence, while some men now are so impiously bold, and so incurably foolish, as to declare that no amount of evidence can prove it. They repented at his preaching, while some men now only make merry with his claims. 'Behold a greater than Jonah is here.' We have Christ—Christ incarnate, dead, buried, risen, living evermore—who died for our sins, accord-

ing to the Scriptures; who rose again for our justification; who ever liveth to make intercession for us; who is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him; who saith 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He speaks to us by miracle and mighty work, by cross and passion, by death and burial, by resurrection and ascension, by second coming and judgment, by eternal life and death. Let us flee, then, without delay to the shadow of His name, and trust to Him who is 'greater than Jonah'—for our whole salvation." (*Raleigh*, pp. 187-8).

There is another aspect of the Book of Jonah in which it may be described as Messianic. It was one of the clearest and loudest voices which were sent to the Jews to teach them that prophecy must be the Spirit of Christ, *i.e.* that He who was speaking to every age by various messages, in various modes and with various degrees of light, would at last speak to the world with the fulness of His wisdom and love, in His Beloved Son. It has been remarked by Dean Payne Smith, in his *Bampton Lectures, Prophecy a Preparation for Christ*, that the spirit of the Book of Jonah is in direct correspondence with the spirit of Christianity. "The great lesson of the Book of Jonah is, that prophecy is no blind fate, threatening men with an inevitable destiny; but that it has a moral

purpose, and is a warning given by an omniscient but merciful Ruler to beings capable of repentance, and of thereby reversing the decrees of justice. In the heathen world you ever find the idea of evil impending upon man without the possibility of escape. This is the one grand thought of the Greek drama; and the more innocent the sufferer, the more tragic and interesting is the onward course of events by which, through no fault of his own, he is doomed to destruction. This, too, is the one idea of all ancient oracles. Obscurely and in enigmas they predict some calamity. The prediction must be so given as that it shall not serve as a warning, but, if possible, rather invite its victim to his fate. In the opening book of prophecy all these detestable views are carefully guarded against. It is no blind fate, but a kind and merciful and ever-loving God, who orders all human things for man's good and life, directs the course of history, and guides the very laws of nature so as to make them serve for moral purposes" (p. 254). Such we may say is the true keynote of all evangelical prophecy, and it is the grand truth which found its embodiment in the Messiah. Moses predicted that there should be a prophet raised up who should be, like himself, a mediator between Jehovah and His people (Deut. xviii. 15-19). It cannot be doubted that while the succession of the prophets is there referred to, *i.e.* the continuance of the message, yet the promise

is distinctly included of One who should fulfil in himself the prophetic idea. We may well suppose that as each individual prophet came and ministered in the name of the Lord, the ancient words of Moses would be applied to him. And such a book of prophecy as Jonah would help the people to expect One greater than Jonah. The very incidents connected with Jonah's own character would be a preservative against the tendency to lower the standard of prophecy, especially as they were connected with other incidents which plainly said : the spirit of prophecy is greater than the prophecies themselves, or those through whom they were given. It is a fact beyond dispute that the Jews, in later times, applied the prediction in Deuteronomy to the Messiah, and it is also a fact that they regarded Jonah as a type of Messiah, so that the book would, if devoutly studied, enlarge their views of the character and mission of "that prophet who should come into the world."

But the Book of Jonah is distinguished from all the other books of Scripture, in that it describes the mission of a Jewish preacher in a Gentile nation. It seemed to say, in the powerful form of historical narrative, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah. True, the reigns of David and Solomon had already set forth vividly the possibilities which were laid up in the throne of Israel. The Psalms had put such

possibilities into inspired language and connected them with the Messianic hope. But the confusions which followed the breaking up of the Davidic monarchy would obscure the prospect once more. Prophets were sent who did much to recall the people to their larger and higher thoughts of Israel's mission; but, in the northern tribes more particularly, there was great reason to fear that the contact with neighbouring peoples, and internal political degeneracy, would almost obliterate the Messianic elements from their religious life, and they would sink into mere narrow-minded Mosaists. The mission of Jonah was appointed just at a time when it would be most striking and significant. The successes which had preserved the tribes of the North from the oppression of their enemies, and gave them a strong frontier and a sense of nationality and independence, were followed by this voice from heaven, which seemed to say, that same "*salvation of the Lord,*" in which you as a people rejoice, is "*unto the ends of the earth.*" A general promise that in Israel "all families of the earth should be blessed," needed to be translated into fact, that it might be more vividly impressed on the minds of the people. Jonah was not only sent by Jehovah to a Gentile city to preach, but he was, as it were, "*lifted up,*" by the miracle which made his name and story no doubt famous all over the land, so that he became a sign to every generation. If every book of Scripture had its bearing on

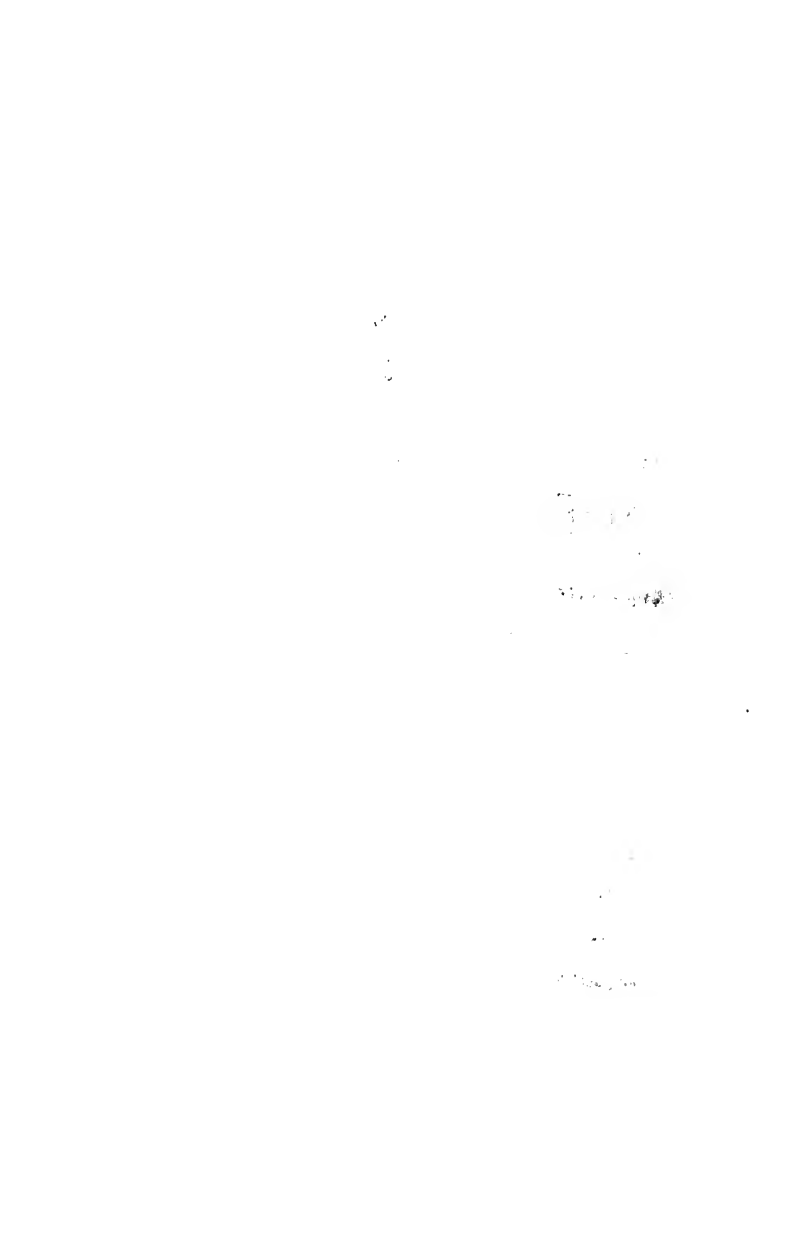
the one theme of Messiah, how could any reader miss the significance of this book? It seemed to say, Messiah when he comes will, like Jonah, be a wonder to all men. They will turn their eyes to Him from the remotest nations. They will listen to His voice and follow after Him from serving dumb idols to bless the name of the Lord. There was the fact of Nineveh's repentance and faith pleading on behalf of the Gentile world, age after age, and in face of all the bigotry and prejudice of the Jews. And when the true Messiah came, and declared concerning Himself that being "lifted up He would draw all men unto Him," Jonah and his mission to the Ninevites, with all the wonderful story of their salvation, was a sign unto the men of that generation, and, had they read its meaning and applied it faithfully, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

To those who were able, after the death and resurrection of the Lord, to put side by side the typical meanings of the Book of Jonah and the facts of the Saviour's history and of the beginning of the gospel, there must have been strong confirmation of their faith to be derived from the very remarkable correspondence. This has been referred to by Augustine (*Sex quæstiones contra paganos expositæ*, § 38). Jonah preached after *his* resurrection. Christ preached after *his*. Jonah's word was powerful, because the Lord had accompanied it with the mighty sign and wonder of his deliverance. It was

on the strong foundation of the resurrection that the apostles built up the structure of primitive Christianity. Moreover, the experience of the prophet was, in a certain sense, his "lifting up" out of a narrow Judaism to a wide platform of missionary zeal and marvellous success. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was in like manner the casting away of the lower mission for the higher, the burying of the Jewish prophet, priest, and king, and His rising again the prophet, priest, and king of the whole world—"the extinction of His character as 'a minister of the circumcision' (Rom. xv. 8), preparatory to His reappearing in a new character, as no longer the Messiah of Judaism, but the Christ of a more extended ministry, whose scope should embrace not Israel only, but the Gentile world also" (John xii. 24, 32; Gal. iii. 13, 14; see Preb. Huxtable in *Speaker's Com.*, vol. vi. p. 578). And we may add to this view that the witness borne by the Book of Jonah to the work of the Holy Spirit, to the universality of that work and to the fact that Divine grace is bestowed often through instruments in themselves faulty, but in accordance with the counsel and predetermination of God, prepared the way for that dispensation of the Spirit which was inaugurated by the Ascension of Jesus to heaven. All these intimations, which were put into the history of Jonah's mission to Nineveh, not with the formal distinctness of words, but with the force of facts, were subse-

quently expanded into the manifold messages of a long line of prophets, who preached concerning the coming Redeemer and His kingdom, for four hundred years, until the long silence of the voices without sent the people to their sacred books, to study the written Word, and wait until they heard again a living Voice crying in the wilderness, "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord.*"

[illegible]





W.D. R31

the Book of Jubah: a defence

by Frederick A. Seminary, Special Library



1 1012 00054 9735