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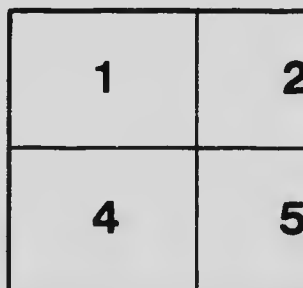
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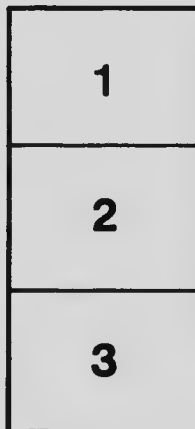
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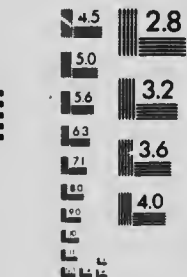
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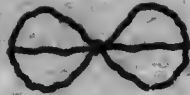


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JONAH:
The Book and the Man.



Rev. Canon Dyson Hague, M.A.

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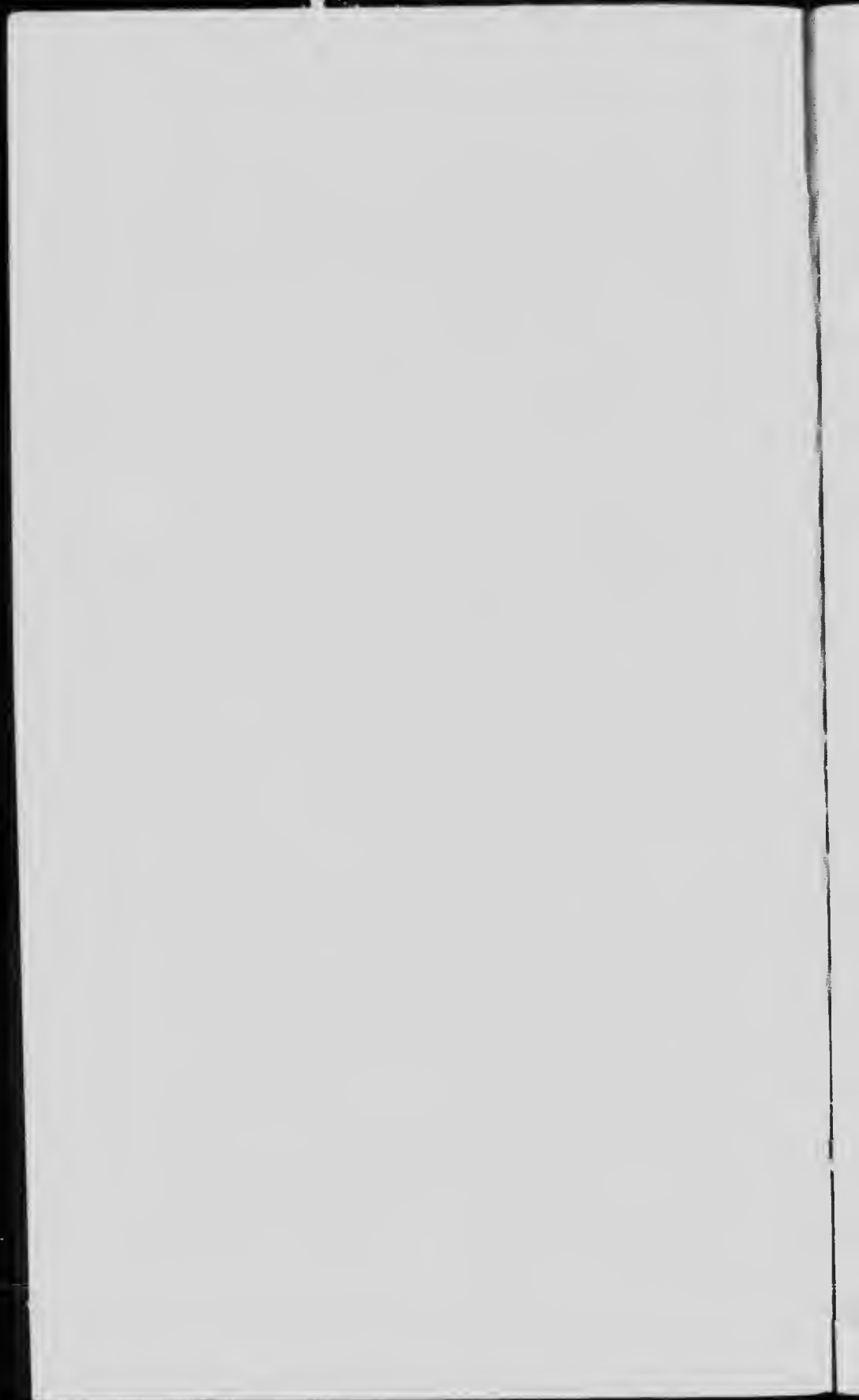
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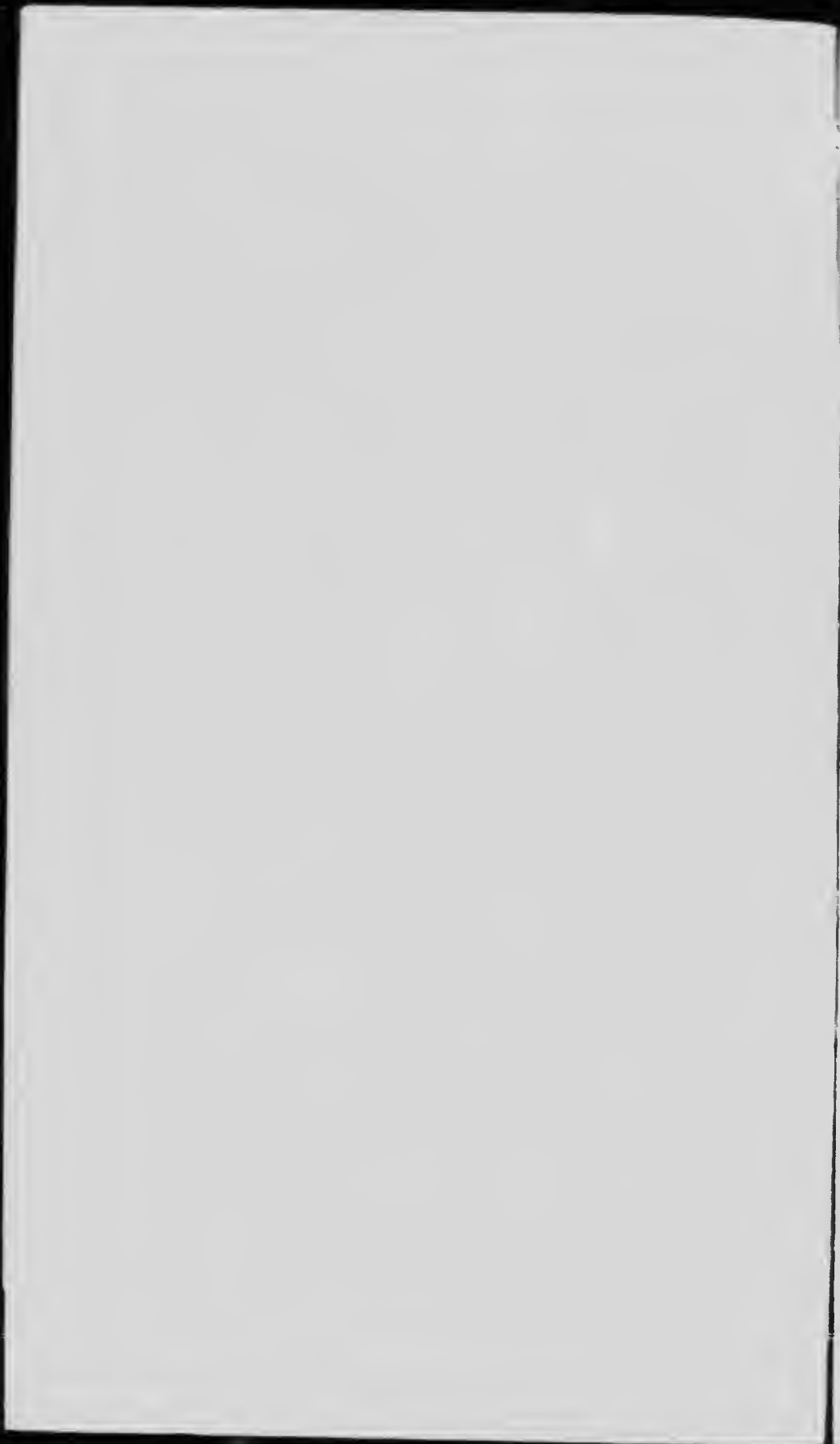
A TWENTIETH CENTURY MESSAGE BY
CANON DYSON HAGUE
RECTOR OF MEMORIAL CHURCH,
LONDON, ONTARIO.



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This was originally delivered in a series of addresses to college men in the chapel of Wycliffe College, Toronto. It was afterwards given as an address before the Conference of Christian Workers in Chicago on the first day of June, 1910, and was extemporaneously delivered, not read. It is printed in the form in which it was originally given, which will account for its somewhat colloquial and conversational style. It is published by request.



JONAH: THE BOOK AND THE MAN

A TWENTIETH CENTURY MESSAGE.

By CANON DYSON HAGUE.

THE BOOK of Jonah is one of the most charming biographs in the Bible. It is a drama of real life in three acts; a masterpiece of inspired story. The fascination of the book lies in its candour; its charm in its graphic description. It is short; a five minutes' bit of reading, in four chapters, forty-eight verses, 1,328 words; but it is a study for time and eternity. It is the story of a man who was a minister, an open-air evangelist, a missionary, and a preacher, with all the faults and foibles, with all the weaknesses and pettinesses, of a ministerial soul. Its glamour lies in its vividness as a personal experience. It is a matchless Apologia, a confession far finer than Augustine's. It is the marvellous unfolding of the secrets of a soul. It shows how a narrow, exclusive, proud, and self-centred ecclesiastic with haughty ideas of all outside his own ecclesiastical circle, is humbled by storm and brought low by God's hand to emerge a kinder, a nobler, and a humbler man; and how, borne along by the Spirit of God, the humbled and Spirit-led prophet, in sublime oblivion of

self, delineates line by line the humiliating story of his guilt, his cowardice, his unloving insularity of thought, his grudging illiberality, so renegade in will and shrivelled in soul; and then, finally, how he passes out of sight, silenced and disgraced, that he may thereby glorify the God who pardoned a rebel like him and covered with the mantle of His infinite love his foolish and refractory self will.

Jonah is a wonderful little book. It has seized on the imagination of Christendom as few other books of the Old Testament. One of the greatest novelists of modern times, Charles Reade, has described it as the most beautiful story ever written in so small a compass. If we may say it reverently, it imbedded itself especially in the imagination and consciousness of the Son of Man, who recognized in the personality of Jonah a marvellous type of His entombment and resurrection, and in his mission to the Ninevites a prophetic illustration of the attitude of the Gentiles to His evangel. The song of the sceptical, the laughter of the rationalists, a storm centre of criticism, it is for those who love the Word what all the Word is found to be. 2 Tim. 3: 16.

The book is one of the twelve prophets called the minor, though nothing is major or minor in God's Word. All Scripture is given by inspiration by God; and though all is not equally valuable, all is equally inspired, for canonicity involves inspiration. It is a little segment, but still it is a segment of this Word of God; this living Word of the Living God;

supernatural in origin; eternal in duration; inexpressible in value; infinite in scope; Divine in substance; regenerative in power; personal in application; inspired in totality!

THE WRITER was Jonah, a man of ministerial family, and from the North. (2 Kings 14:25; cf. Josh. 19: 10-13). He was a Galilean by nature, and displays many of the characteristics of Peter and John. He was a man of impulse, of moods, easily upset, of fickle temper and excitable. Like many theological students and young ministers to-day, he was inclined to do rash things fatuously, and yet withal stubborn in selfwill. He was, moreover, like many of us, perhaps a man of small sympathy with men, narrowly intolerant, bitter in his hereditary ecclesiastical prejudices. But in spite of his impulsiveness, and narrowness in texture of thought, he was possessed of latent qualities of nobility that needed only to be evoked and ennobled by the winsome Spirit of the Lord.

Chronologically he was one of the most ancient of the prophets, a contemporary of Hosea and Amos. (2 Kings 14: 25). His writing is one of the briefest in the Old Testament, beginning and ending with unexplained abruptness.

HE WAS A PROPHET. This is expressly declared in the Book of the Kings. Therefore, in passing, to alter the words of George Adam Smith, we would say that it is the first duty of every student of the prophetic books of

the Old Testament to earnestly and stubbornly rid himself of the idea that a prophet was merely or even mainly a preacher, and not one who foretold the future. It is our first duty to earnestly and stubbornly grasp the idea that a prophet was a foreteller, not merely or mainly a forthteller. In other words, a prophet was primarily one who in and by God's Spirit did see and describe the things of the ages to come:

“Dipped into the future farther far
Than human eye could see;
Saw the Vision of the future, and the
Wonder that would be,”

that is, the Christ. Nay, further, as students of the Word of God, it is our duty to know and believe with heart and soul that prediction is not merely a subordinate part of the prophetic office. They were mainly and supremely employed by God's Spirit to reveal God as the God of the future, not merely as the God of Providence, and as Joel, and Habakkuk, and Haggai, and Micah, and Malachi, and Zechariah did, to tell above all things the coming of Christ and His kingdom. Now that is the only way in which we can understand Christ's reference to Jonah. It was prophecy.

CHAPTER 1: 1—“Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying:”

The first words of the first chapter start the first question of all of Revelation. “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah.” That is fact. It is reality. The Bible never raises the

question of the modern theological mind as to the possibility and probability of Revelation. The possibility of a revelation lies in man's nature; the probability in God's love. A living and a loving God must needs speak, as Saphir has finely said.

Thus we see that Jonah begins like Genesis. Genesis begins as Revelation ends. The Holy Ghost is never the author or suggester of doubts. No note of doubt with regard to the authenticity or genuineness of any segment of the Bible ever comes from the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, as Luther said, is not sceptical. He does not write upon our hearts objections and doubts, but convictions. Nor is there any note of doubt from the beginning to the end of that marvellous Book. The Bible is the Book of Assurance. For the Holy Ghost has two functions: the verification of our knowledge of Scripture, and the vivification of our knowledge of Scripture. The Holy Spirit makes us know and feel that the Bible is truth. As against the unsettling tendencies of the day, the Holy Ghost is the Author of all certainty of truth, and of all conviction of truth. Our beloved Master, the Truth, said "I am not come to destroy, or to unsettle, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5: 17), a mission grandly different from that of many professors and preachers to-day, who apparently come not to fulfil, but to unsettle and unloose. The Holy Ghost has for His second function the revivification of Scripture. The Bible is ever being revivified in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is ever the same,

but not the same; for the Holy Spirit gives us the moral and spiritual enthusiasm of firsthand knowledge, enabling us to see as in a fresh blaze of light the Word as though it were for the first time seen and read. It is ever inspiring because ever inspired.

NOW, THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME unto Jonah. How we cannot tell. Whether in trance or vision, in ecstasy, or in still, small voice, we do not know. But as we know nothing at all yet as we ought to know, that ought not to trouble us very much, and does not trouble the truly thoughtful and humble man who knows that apart from his deserving altogether, the Word of the Lord has come to him oftentimes. You all know it, do you not? It has come to you. The Word of the Lord came unto you when you heard Him say "Come unto Me," and your heart responded, "Oh Lamb of God, I come." It has come to you as you opened Isaiah 53: 5, 6, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities," and you answered, "Yea, Lord, He was. He was." It came to you when you heard John 3: 16, or for the first time the preciousness of Psalm 23 overflowed you. It is the Spirit that beareth witness, and the old becomes the new Word according as it is written: "Again a new commandment I write unto which thing is true in Him and in you. And you know because he that believeth on the Son of God hath witness in himself that God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake

in times past unto the fathers in the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son."

CHAPTER 1: 2—"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, because their wickedness is come up before me."

To the average man there is something appalling in the sudden surprise of an unexpected call to assume a great obligation. As the voice of the Lord is heard saying "Whom shall I send, who will go for us"; or "Lo, I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles," there looms up large and terrific the over-exaggeration of the untried and the distant. The spirit shrinks. That awful instinct of cowardice which is latent in us all involves us in a very nerve-collapse of sudden fear. Go to Nineveh? What? That awful city, so evil, so wicked, and cry against it! I cannot; I cannot.

CHAPTER 1: 3—"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."

Ah! We all know how God sometimes lays hold of mind and conscience with voices that call from deep to deep, and height to height; and when those calls come, whether to city or to country, or to mission station far away, we know we feel, we ought to go. And then, as if every element of revolt that ever stirred in our reluctant will was excited into a flame of rebellion, we cry impossible! impossible! And we hurry from the presence of the Lord. Yes.

ere is not only something appalling in the sudden surprise of an unexpected summons like that, but there is always something appalling in the sin that stares at us from the midst of a multitude of men, and the overpowering sense of our impotence in the face of the indifferent crowds. How Satan's seat seems ever to be in the city centres! Glance over the field of history; Babylon; Antioch; Corinth; Rome; Paris; London; New York; Chicago; and if the reports of travellers be reliable, those seats of Satan's supremacy, the great cities of the Orient! The wickedness of that great city comes before God; and we, poor humans, re-echo the poet's thought:

I said: "Let me walk in the fields."
He said: "No; walk in the town."
I said: "There are no flowers there."
He said: "No flowers, but a crown."
I said: "But the skies are black.
There is nothing but smoke and din."
And He wept as He sent me back,
"There is more," said He, "there is sin."

And here, may we add this word especially to the younger: Be willing to go where you are sent without murmuring and without pride. "I ventured once," said a missionary, "to consult old Bishop Selwyn about the choice of a place. That unlucky word was enough. The storm broke, and the lightning fell. 'Young men must not pick and choose. Young men must go where they are sent?' said the stern old hero. Then in a moment the storm cleared up, and the sunshine came out. 'Go,' he said, with

a fatherly hand upon my shoulder, 'Go where Christ is not and take Him there.' Five years in Africa was the result of that one sentence.' Yes. It is hard, awfully hard, as any one who has ever honestly tried to do will confess, to talk to a city man about his soul. It is hard, awfully hard, to talk to a city man about his sin.

CHAPTER 1: 3—"But Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa."

There is not a worker, there is not a minister who does not know the meaning of those words: "He rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord, and went down." Down? In very truth he did go down. Down to Joppa? Yes. Down into the ship? Yes. Down into the very hold? Yes. Down into the sea? Yes. Down into the very heart of the bottom of the deep; down to the bottom of the subaqueous mountains (2-6)? Yes. But that was nothing compared with the depth of the misery and the profundity of his self-reproach as he went down from the height of communion and gladness and joy and duty. And ever as he went there rang in his recreant ears the burden of the Lord: "Go to Nineveh!" "Go to Nineveh!" Even as to-day in many a city and country parish in our land, the voice of the Lord, that still, small, inextinguishable voice, is crying day in and day out, year in and year out, to many a worker and many a minister in the luxury of city parish or country parsonage: Go to Cairo! Go to Calcutta; Go to Tokio! Go to Teheran! Go to Central Africa! Go to the Isles of the Sea!

CHAPTER 1: 3—"So he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."

So Jonah went down into the company of the Godless, to flee from the presence of the Lord, and to go with them from the presence of the Lord. But he couldn't do that. No, thank God, he couldn't do that? For he Lord follows us even where we do not follow Him. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence!" (Ps. 139: 7-12). "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." God is at Tartessus as well as at Gath-hepher. And then came the storm!

CHAPTER 1: 4—"For the Lord sent out a great wind unto the sea (hurled it out of heaven) and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken."

We do not wonder there was a storm. There is a God in heaven, and His name is Love. The God of Love was behind that storm and shipwreck. There was mercy, goodness in that tempest. Every flash of lightning was lit by loving kindness, and in every billow that buffeted the frail vessel there was a loving Father's tenderness. We make out little plans, and God upsets them. We try to go far from Him, and we find He is still before us. O thank God for the stoppages, and the breakdowns of our lives;

the storms that stay, and overwhelm, and destroy our fatuous designs. Far up to the east and north is the Nineveh of Divine direction; far off to the west is the Tarshish of our infatuated impulse. Yet the first glint of light that came to the unhappy renegade was the breaking of that storm.

One would like to dwell upon the mere literary charm of the narrative here. Did Shakespeare in his *Tempest* write anything so graphic as the picture of that storm at sea, or did Clark Russell ever delineate anything so true to life as the behaviour of the mariners and the Captain? Read the whole passage from verse four to sixteen.

I have been often in a storm at sea, and I was once shipwrecked with all hands on a rock-bound coast of the Atlantic. There were no agnostics on that occasion. The rudest and roughest were still before God, and all bowed in prayer, even as Jonah so vividly describes these men.

CHAPTER 1: 5, 6—“Then the mariners were afraid and cried every man unto his god. . . . But Jonah was gone down unto the lower part of the ship and lay fast asleep. And the ship-master came to him and said, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise! call upon thy God.”

That question of the Captain to the sleeping prophet is one of those questions that has sunk deep into the heart of the universal reader. The man of God rebuked by the man of the world; the expostulation of the man who knew with the man who ought to have known; the

astonishment of the man who was a heathen at the man who was named in the name of Jehovah. It is a rebuke that may be made to many a modern Christian, and many a modern minister. We are living in stirring, tempestuous times. The storms of life are raging all around us. It is an age of enthusiasm and intensity. In this great working world men everywhere are in earnest, straining nerve, and striving. And here and there in these times of energy and strain are men of God asleep. O incredible infatuation! O incredible stupidity! Do we wonder that the man of the world oftentimes rebukes the sleeping man of God for his indifference and lack of prayer! Do we wonder at their indignant surprise at ministerial inconsistency! Do we wonder that they say: We are in earnest. We are wide awake. We rise up early. We so late take rest. We eat the bread of carefulness. We are willing to go on the night shift and work overtime. And, after all, it is all for the inferior, the lower, the transient, the temporal. But YOU! YOU who profess to seek the higher, the eternal, how is it YOU are not awake to the great realities—the thunderings of judgment, the dangers of falling into the hands of the living God? How strangely complacent you are! How apparently unconscious of peril you see others to be! There are only two classes of men that can be called rational, said the great Pascal: those who serve God with all their hearts because they know Him, or seek Him with all their hearts because they know Him not. What meanest thou, O sleeper?

What are you doing asleep? Can you be unconscious of death and eternity and of the judgment? What meanest thou? Do you really believe you are in danger, in peril of the judgment? Oh, sleeping men of God in this sea, rage. Shame on us that heathen men of the world should rebuke us. Shame on us who do not pray, and work, and cry and strain. We should be indifferent. It is our duty as a minister to call, to cry; it is our duty as a man to awaken; it is our duty as a man to warn.

The rest of the narrative, the men's colloquy and lot-casting, their foreboding question to the discovered Jonah; his true confession and their contagious fear and sympathy, are described in the seventh and following verses, and are told in the wonderfully graphic style of the man who just tells the thing that happened in his life. If ever there was a book that has none of the marks of parable, allegory, it is this book of Jonah. As George Adam Smith says elsewhere: the style betrays narrative rather than parable. The simple facts are told; there is an absence of elaboration; there is no effort to make every detail symbolic.

There are two points here, though, that are of interest. The first is the nobility of those men. I have lived among sailors, and I can testify that it is marvellously true to life. They are a fine and heroic class of men. There are splendid elements of self-sacrifice in them. We do not wonder our Saviour chose His apostles from men of this type. There is a humanity

and fellow sympathy in them, for all their roughness that almost startles us. This man Jonah had caused them a great deal of trouble. He was at the bottom of all that storm and loss, yet how noble their consideration for him, how nobly they tried to save him. Yes. There is a nobility, an unselfishness, a glamour of self-sacrifice in men like these that often is not found in professing Christians.

And notice, too, how the nobility of the sailors evoked a respondent nobility in Jonah. "Take me up and cast me into the sea. I knew that for my sin this great tempest is upon you." It was as if he said, "I will die for you. Throw me into the tempestuous billows." Yet they tried hard to row, and did all in their rude, rough way to save their fellowman. But failing, with a prayer for pardon, they took up Jonah and cast him into the sea and offered their sacrifice unto the Lord. (1: 14-16).

CHAPTER 1: 7—"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."

It is, of course, only natural that this narrative in the mind of the unbelievers should provoke the suspicion of allegory, and to those who reject miracles altogether, the story is of course ridiculous. But if as believers in God's Word we are asked: Do you believe that? our only answer is: Of course we do. But do you believe a whale swallowed a man? Who says a whale swallowed a man? The Bible does.

No. The Bible simply says a great fish. But Mat. 23: 40 says so? True, but that may be an error in translation. We must ever remember that in all Biblical discussion we must define accurately, and translate properly. But even so, do you believe that a man could be three days inside the bowels of a great fish of the sperm whale or of the shark or any other variety, and live beneath the waters of the sea for that length of time? Certainly we do! We believe it because the Bible affirms it. We believe it because the Lord Jesus re-affirms it. We believe it because it sounds true. It sounds true? Yes! It sounds true. It has the ring of truth. The ingenious and evasive theories of the German critics, for all their cleverness, do not sound true. The modern idea that the whale was some heathen power which as a monster swallowed up God's prophet and then disgorged him, is absurd to the man of common sense. Only a theorizer with a motive would ever have thought of such a thing.

But it is wonderful! Quite so. It is extraordinary! Quite so. But is that strange in a wonderful Book, a Book that comes from Him whose name is Wonderful? Is that extraordinary in a world full of the supernatural? "Oh Lord, how manifold are Thy work. Thy wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches. So is this great wide sea also wherein are things creeping innumerable," etc. (Ps. 104: 24). And the God-prepared fish was there. God ordained and ordered that great fish which was swimming that

day in this great and wide sea, the Mediterranean, a Physeter or Cachalot, a Rorqual, or whatever it was, to swim up just then and swallow him up. And then by God's will in God's way he was preserved.

But the advance of science? The advance of science does not involve the retreat of the truth of the Bible. Postulate The Wonder of wonders, even Him whose Name is Wonder, and the wonder is not that He should have worked wonders, but that He should not. We do not wonder at the sun emitting rays of light and heat. Some modern divines tell us they cannot believe this story, even though it is in the Bible, simply because it contravenes common sense and the first laws of thought. They ask us how we can believe a thing that contradicts reason and violates natural law. What violates natural law? A miracle. Who says so? The agnostics say so. The rationalistic critics say so. A Bostonian divine recently sneered at the floating iron of the prophet because it was a violation of natural law. Why! We have crossed the ocean, some of us, on a piece of floating iron! If the will of man can make a gigantic piece of iron float for years, why should it be thought incredible for God to make a piece of iron float for a minute? If we can suspend or vary the natural laws by the introduction of a higher law, cannot the mighty God who created the universe? Postulate God, and miracles are not only possible, they are not only credible, but the Book that tells about Him and His Son and His doings without recording the things that

savor of the supernatural, would at once suggest a doubt in the mind of the modern man of common sense.

Now, let me say a word or two here especially to divinity students and young ministers.

First. Never be ashamed of the miraculous. As Christian believers be proud of it. The cry has lately gone out with regard to the miracles: Get rid of them. They are only hindrances. Throw them overboard as the sailors tossed overboard Jonah to save the ship from the storm! They are only mythical accretions! Do hesitate, my young friends, before you listen to voices like that. No. No. The miraculous is so inwoven with the texture of the Bible that to eliminate them would be to destroy its very essence. It has been well said that a man would as soon continue to work and live after his vital organs have been removed, as Christianity to remain Christianity, or the Bible to be the Bible after the miracles have been eliminated. You cannot vitalize the Christian faith by destroying the vitals of the Christian faith. Without miracles Christianity would be infinitely more miraculous than with them, for no modern mind can believe that the marvels of Christianity could have resulted from the mythical works and the fraudulent resurrection of a mere natural son of a poor Hebrew woman. Our blessed Lord Jesus appealed again and again to His mighty works without a blush and without apology. Why then would we attempt to naturalize and apologize and neutralize with such studied care. Remember the word that He said

unto us: The servant is not greater than his Lord. What the Lord believed and accepted we do well to believe and accept. We who are His representatives and agents are proud to stand up for our Master's views. We thank God for these mighty works, and we say as the great apostle: Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead, or that God should prepare a great fish to enshrine his renegade messenger. Oh do not surrender at the dictates of a sciolistic school the grandest element of the Holy Bible. There is no aid to faith in reducing the number of miracles. Nor is it going to make Christianity more presentable to a modern mind. It is an utter delusion to imagine you are going to gain anything by giving up one miracle after another, or to suppose you will dispose men to accepting the greater or the Greatest by destroying the lesser or the least. Why otherwise sensible men like Driver, and Cheyne, and George Adam Smith, should run like frightened rabbits and hide themselves in a hole of theory and allegory when a German rationalist holds up before them the bogey of a miracle, and romance about the story belonging to the realm of imagination, is to me far more incredible than that God should prepare a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Why should these men, or any other men, be so absurdly deferential to the Germans? Many of these Germans are confessedly rationalists, and after all, it is only to make the Bible difficult. It does not dispel the difficulties, it simply creates them. As we

read these painful efforts to get rid of a miracle which distorts the common sense and even the orthodoxy of these writers, we are reminded of the story of the German musician who said to a young English pupil: "You blay de easy passages with a deeficulty which is simply enormous!"

Remember in the second place that that remarkable story had a remarkable purpose; not only to convert Jonah and to convert Nineveh, and to exhibit God's power, but also to prophetically delineate in type and figure the foundation fact of our religion, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In that sense it is a predictive and a prophetic book. Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites. That is, he was prophetic of Christ; in His entombment and burial for a three-day period; in His resurrection, unexpected and impossible save by the power of God; and in His mission, for as Jonah came out of the depths of death to carry the Word of the Lord to the Gentiles, so Jesus Christ, rejected by His own, was preached to the Gentiles.

CHAPTER 2: 1, 2—"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell (of Sheol or the grave) cried I, and Thou heardest my voice."

The prayer of Jonah when in the depths is a *de profundis clamori* that will forever stand as a model for all true prayer. Surely it was the strangest prayer room ever known! Jonah's

subaqueous dungeon became a temple. And like many great prayers, it was evoked by trouble: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy Word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes."

It was very earnest (I cried, I cried unto the Lord, v. 2).

It was very humble, uncomplaining, submissive, and unrebelling (v. 3).

It was very hopeful (Yet will I look again, v. 4).

It was very personal and believing (O Lord my God, v. 6).

It was very scriptural (Psm. 42: 7; 116: 3, 8, 14, 17; 3: 8, etc., etc.).

It was very practical and grateful (I will sacrifice unto Thee; I will pray, v. 9).

It had a grand conclusion; a glorious conclusion. Salvation is of the Lord! Why, that is all evangelical theology in a nutshell! It is the glorious gospel of God's grace in epitome! In short, it is a confession, a creed, a Sursum Corda, a Te Deum, a Gloria in Excelsis, all in one.

CHAPTER 3- And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

The second chance! Surely it was love; it was wondrous love. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgression from us. He has not dealt with us after

our sins. The Lord is merciful and gracious. The Lord is good and His mercy endureth for ever.

Oh do not judge yourself; do not judge others; do not judge anyone from first failure. The best is yet to be. Oh what would some of us have been to-day if it had not been for the second chance! Yea, as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. But the word of the Lord, the word of pardon and peace, came unto me a second time, even as of old it did unto Moses, and David, and Peter, and Thomas, and Mark. "The second time!" O never despair! If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Yes, and if at first you do succeed, try, try again, for it is just possible your pride will carry you farther away from ultimate success than if you had failed. "The second time"!

"I hold it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

"The second time"!. But it is the first message. It is the word of the Lord; the old, old story, with a new meaning, a fresh delight, and a novel sense of power.

CHAPTER 3: 3—"So Jonah arose and went into Nineveh according to the word of the Lord."

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the lonely man trudges over the sands, away off there to the north-east. But there is no fear now. There is no cowardice

now. There is no stubborn reluctance now. For it was according to the word of the Lord He went. And when he got to Nineveh, boldly he cried until that great city was shaken from circumference to centre; from the greatest to the least, from the king on his throne to the poorest of the paupers. So the people of Nineveh believed God (3: 5). They cried mightily to God (v. 8). They turned from their sins (v. 10). They fasted, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them (v. 5). Conscience was king. A great revival broke out. It was as if God's voice stirred their very soul: Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him when He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy. And when the word went out from the King that all should cry mightily unto God and turn every one from his evil way, they did. One of those sudden religious impulses not unknown in Oriental centres swept like a typhoon over the city, abashing all. And God repented too. For God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way (ch. 3: 10).

But, says the critic, does God repent like that? Why not? Because He is unchangeable. He is constitutionally immutable. (Numb. 23: 19). He is Jehovah. He would not change like that, because He cannot change like that. But we must remember the conditionality of all God's threats. We must read Jer. 18: 7, 8, to understand. Read those verses. Read them

over and over again, and learn with joy the infinite love and the unsparing mercy of God to the sinner who turns from his evil way. "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."

But, cries the critic, it is impossible? What is impossible? That a great city should be spiritually revolutionized and that the records should say nothing about it. The city newspapers of to-day are not much given to record the mighty works of God's Spirit, as you all know. And it is far more likely that the brick books of Nineveh will be found to record their conquerors' campaigns and splendours and like matters of barbaric interest, rather than the mere wonder of a religious revival. But it's impossible! Who says so? Why, the rationalists say so. The higher critics say so. What do they say? They say "contrary to analogy" (Driver, O. F. Introduction, p. 324). Contrary to analogy? I should think it was! Thank God, it was contrary to analogy! Pentecost was contrary to analogy! And every manifestation of God's power from that day to this has been contrary to analogy. But all things are possible with God, and all things are possible to him who believeth. And if a Patrick, an Aidan, a Peter the Hermit, a Latimer, a Baxter, a Judson, a Taylor, a Moody, could shake cities and countries from circumference to centre, shall we not rather rejoice and glorify God for this marvellous manifestation of His Spirit.

Remember also that this incident made a great impression upon the Master. He referred to it in one of his most solemn discourses, and in words that not only press home one of the most vital of all eschatological truths, but settle forever the historicity of Jonah. (Luke 11: 32). This passage not only proves that our Lord thought of confirming, but did confirm the historic character of the story. Our Saviour was accustomed to use allegory and parable, and it is within the bounds of possibility to believe that he might have used the analogy of Jonah's sign even if the book had been an inspired bit of parabolic prophesying. But the reference to the men of Nineveh is impossible on the assumption of its being a parable. For, as a modern writer has pointed out, it is surely impossible for Jesus to have asserted that a body of imaginary persons, described in a fictions book, who fictitiously repented at the preaching of an imaginary prophet, shall rise up in judgment and condemn the actual impenitence of His actual hearers in that generation, and that imaginary characters shall rise up in judgment at the same judgment bar as the men of His day.

CHAPTER 4: 1-11—The prophet's anger and God's rebuke.

As to the rest of the story, how exceedingly angry the prophet became and how the gourd grew up in the night, and was withered, and how God expostulated with him for his narrowness and petulance like a pouting boy in the

sulks, it is written to show the power of the mighty Spirit who records with such fidelity a good man's faults and foibles and a true man's limitations. We have seen it all! We know it all! Oh! it is so true to life! This smallness of some men of clerical mind. Their little jealousies and narrownesses; their selfishnesses and sulkings. Oh! it is so real. It is so real. Romance? Poem? Allegory? No, no! It is life, life, life! It is so true! Everything is so true to things as they are, not to things as they are dreamed of in the brain of a Teutonic theologian. The scenes are so vivid. To treat this as poetry whose figures are drawn from legends and myths, is not only to sin against the common sense which God has given us, but against the simple and obvious intention of the author. It betrays such an absolute failure to appreciate the standpoint of the writer. It is blindness both to reason and to Scripture. How long, O Lord, how long must Thy prose suffer from those who only treat it as poetry. How long, O Lord, must Thy words of truth, so real, so simply told in the natural and believable tones of truth, suffer from the incredible obtuseness of men who at the dictate of an hypnotizing rationalism would fain destroy and denude and evacuate the Word of Life, by turning fact into legend, history into allegory, and miracle into myth. Parable? Allegory? Oh, the book is too simple, too grand for that!

And so we leave Jonah and this book with these thoughts.

First, God is great, God is merciful, God is Love. But man! oh man is wilful, man is narrow, man is cowardly, man is proud. And man does fall. Yes. Though he be in very truth a man of God. But man can rise, rise, rise, and be as swift to go as he was to flee; as ready to obey as before to disobey, and though not perfect, to perform marvels for Him who made him willing in the day of His power.

Second, to make men rise up we must rise ourselves; to make men repent we must repent ourselves; to do great things in the name of the Lord we must go according to the word of the Lord, and speak and spare not. The Book of Jonah teaches us that nothing turns the coward into a brave preacher like a miracle. And to-day nothing makes a man so fine a missionary, so dauntless a preacher, so sure of Pentecostal revivals, as a supernatural experience in his own life.

Third, and last of all. Noble things are ever difficult. O you who are candidates for God's hero-roll, be willing to go to the hardest places. Let others take the easy; do you take the hard. God's calls are high calls, oftentimes hard calls. The grandest trial-beds for character are the difficult posts. That was a noble saying of one of the American leaders to her graduating classes: Go, said she, when you choose your fields of labour, go where nobody else is willing to go.

Yes. This is the word of the Lord, that comes to His servants to-day as it did of old to Jonah: Go to Nineveh! Arise and go to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord,

NOTE

The reader will observe that in our treatment of this book we have taken a diametrically opposite line of treatment to Principal George Adam Smith in the Expositor's Bible, and have sometimes even utilized his very language to show how diametrically opposite we think the true exegesis to be. Few modern writers are at times more suggestive, and even inspiring, than George Adam Smith, and it is with rare pleasure we read such a delightful little book as his Four Psalms. But when he wanders from the path of simple exegesis to follow theoretic eccentricities with Deists and Agnostics, we feel that he ought to be withstood to the face, because he is to be blamed.



