

JONAH AND THE WHALE

BIBLE NARRATIVE UPHELD

REASONS FOR THE BELIEF THAT JONAH'S EXPERIENCES BELONG TO AUTHENTIC HISTORY

By

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THOSE who hold that the Book of Jonah is history, not fiction, have some good reasons for this belief.

1. That the literal sense of a writing is to be presumed, except when there is evidence that the figurative sense is intended; but no unprejudiced reader can discover in the Book of Jonah a single indication that its writer intended anything except authentic history.

2. A belief in the historical integrity of that book, continuously and universally prevailed among the Jews, also among Christians until a comparatively recent date.

3. Scholarly and critical study of the book supports the orthodox view to this extent, that its geographical, historical, and topographical statements, for instance, those relating to Joppa, Tarshish, the Mediterranean Sea and Nineveh; also its diction, idioms, style and descriptions are precisely such as would be employed if the book was authentic and genuine history. It also makes for its integrity that it employs almost identically the same form of introduction as is found in the nearly contemporaneous prophecies of Hosea, Joel, Micah and Zephaniah.

HIS PERSONALITY ASSERTED

Orthodox believers hold that the prophet Jonah was neither a symbolical nor mythical, but a historical person. The reasons for this belief are:

1. The signal failure of methods that are resorted to by destructive critics in attempts to disprove the personality of Jonah. Those methods prove too much; they are just as successful in showing that Shalmaneser, Saracus, Sennacherib, Heseod, Lycurgus and Homer, who were nearly contemporaneous with Jonah, or that nearly all persons mentioned in the Old and New Testament Scriptures are unhistorical, as they are in showing that Jonah is such.

2. Jonah lived, not in a mythic, but in an historic and prophetic age. Both oriental and Grecian fiction came into use from five to eight hundred years later. The literary remains of Jonah's time being historic, it is therefore an unwarranted begging of the question to say that the story of Jonah is probably a myth because the Bible is a book of myths. That the Bible is mythical is what orthodox believers strenuously deny.

3. Jewish writings, sacred and secular, always speak of Jonah as an historic person. II. Kings, 14:25; Matt. 12:39-40; Luke 11:29-32; John 21:15; Tobit, 4:14-15; Josephus Ant., chapter 9:10, section 2.

CHRIST'S REFERENCE TO JONAH

4. Our Lord mentions the name of Jonah in the same connection in which he speaks of Solomon and the "Queen of the South"—Matt. 12:38-42. The use of real and fictitious names in the same sentence is rhetorically, if not ethically, so unpar-

donable that it is difficult to believe Christ would be guilty of such usage. Or, stating the case more pointedly, if Jonah was a myth, these unqualified references to him as a person would seem to impeach either our Lord's intelligence or His integrity. For if Jonah was a myth, Christ should have known it, and not have spoken of him as a person, or if Christ supposed Jonah was a person when he was only a myth, then He lacked the wisdom commonly attributed to Him. But the orthodox believer is not compelled to take either horn of this dilemma, for he believes that Jonah was an historical person, and that Christ spoke of him as such.

DETAILS NOT INCREDIBLE

Orthodox believers hold that the story of Jonah presents no difficulties except as to his preservation in the stomach of a sea monster, and his subsequent deliverance.

The statement, for instance, that Jonah was sent to Nineveh to denounce the iniquity of her people, is not incredible, for such was the service frequently required of the Jehovah prophets. Ex. 3:10; II. Kings 18:13; Jer. 25:14, li. 59-64; Dan. 5:17-28.

Likewise the statements that Jonah abandoned his mission, fled to Joppa and went on board a ship, are not incredible, for the going to a great, proud and wicked Gentile city, on a most unpleasant mission, naturally would be distasteful, especially to a Jew, and the fleeing from repugnant duties has been no uncommon thing with both Jew and Gentile.

Nor is the statement that Jonah was cast overboard in a storm incredible, for the age in which he lived was superstitious, and in countries bordering on the Mediterranean it was not uncommon to appease the gods by offering human sacrifices. Eurip., Electr., V:1354; Theophr., Charact., 29; Cic., De Nat. Deor., I. 3., c. 37; Orph., Argon., V:1178; Hdt., I. 7, c. 191; Strab., I. 13., c. 2.

FICTION THEORY UNTENABLE

And various other incidents in this part of the narrative are not incredible, even when brought under the light of the keenest literary criticism. That is, the behavior and peril of the ship, the terror of those on board, the oaths and prayers of the sailors, the throwing overboard the cargo, the casting lots, the confession of Jonah, the efforts of the kind-hearted sailors to spare the unfortunate prophet, are all lifelike scenes and harmonize so perfectly with other well established historical and geographical facts and are given with such vividness that, unless based upon what actually took place, they would be quite unaccountable, if not impossible, in an historic age and among a people where fiction never had been cultivated as an art.

And even the statement that a sea monster swallowed Jonah is not incredible, for sperm and bowhead whales and sea dogs

are ravenous and easily can swallow animals much larger than man. A horse and also a sea calf of the size of an ox have been taken unutilized from the stomachs of sea dogs. (Article by Coubert in Comos, March 7, 1895; Histoire des Poissons, by Lacipede; Manuel of Nat. Hist., by Blumenbach; Annals of Nat. Hist., October, 1862.)

"WHALE" A SEA MONSTER

That in early times sea monsters frequented the eastern Mediterranean is well established. Pliny, 50 A. D., gives an account of the skeleton of a sea monster forty feet in length, "whose ribs were higher than those of an Indian elephant," that was brought from Joppa and exhibited in Rome by M. Scaurus. (Plin., Hist. Nat., 1:9, c. 4.) And it should be borne in mind also that the Hebrew word dahg and the Greek word katos, translated whale, mean rather any great monster of the deep.

And, too, if Jonah was swallowed by a sea monster and then escaped, the statements are not incredible that he then went to Nineveh and delivered his message; that the people of that city, after learning of the prophet's peril and deliverance, attentively listened to his message and repented of their sins. "I have known," says Layard, "a priest to frighten a whole Mussulman town to tears and repentance by proclaiming that he had received a divine commission to announce a coming earthquake or plague."

THE PROPHET'S ESCAPE.

Orthodox believers hold that the preservation of Jonah in the sea monster's stomach and his escape are not incredible, provided God can interpose and work what are called miracles, and provided still further that there were reasons which justified in the case of Jonah such an interposition.

Unless such interpositions are possible, then, according to orthodoxy, all the supernatural events recorded in the Bible—for instance, the wonders in Egypt at the hands of Moses, the preservation of the three companions in the fiery furnace, the miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles and Christ's resurrection from the dead—are fiction, and if this is so, then the foundations of Bible Christianity are dangerously loosened, and sooner or later the entire superstructure must fall to the ground. Orthodoxy, therefore, asks if it is not wiser to admit the possibility of the supernatural than by denying it to imperil Christianity?

ORIGIN OF LIFE.

But that divine interpositions are possible is in harmony with the most recent discoveries and conclusions of science. After fifty years of laborious effort it is acknowledged that no way has been discovered to bring life and man upon the earth except by the intervention of an intelligent, invisi-

...Tower. Professor Tyndall's lecture before the Royal Institute in London, Professor Beale's address on the "Nature of Life," before the Victoria Institute, 1899; some of Mr. Darwin's admissions, the still later confessions of Herbert Spencer and the teachings of many other noted scientists are offered in support of the foregoing proposition. Until, therefore, new evidence to the contrary is presented, orthodoxy is at liberty to put the argument at this point into two sentences: If God could originate life and create Adam he could save Jonah. He did originate life and did create Adam, therefore he could save Jonah. The only remaining question, therefore, is this. What reasons can orthodoxy present that would justify Divine interposition in the case of Jonah? They are:

WHY MIRACLE WAS JUSTIFIED.

First, that his preservation and deliverance would make him, on his visit to Nineveh, what God desired, a faithful and fearless prophet.

Second, those experiences when published would secure for him an attentive hearing.

Third, the fact and record of his preservation and deliverance became what doubtless they were designed to be, a great comfort and encouragement to early Christian believers. The paintings and frescoes

of the early church show three favorite subjects—Daniel in the den of lions, the three men in the fiery furnace and Jonah's experiences, these last receiving special attention, being regarded as a prophetic sign of Christ's resurrection, upon which events rest the fondest hopes of the Christian world. (I. Cor. 15:17-19.)

Fourth, Divine interposition in the case of Jonah seems justified because his preservation and deliverance give to thoughtful Christian people at the present time a rational hope as to their own resurrection. For if the Supreme Power could preserve Jonah and deliver him from his loathsome imprisonment that same Power can keep believers from all harm until the morning of the final resurrection, and then bring them forth to enjoy forever the blessed and immortal life.

Lastly, Divine interposition in the preservation and deliverance of Jonah would seem to be amply justified since they were of such importance in the mind of Christ that He gave them special prominence in one of His most impressive discourses. (Matt. 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32.)

Such are the reasons for supposing that the Supreme Being, who easily can interpose in human affairs, would do so in the preservation of Jonah, and such also, from an orthodox point of view, are the facts and reasoning in support of the credibility of the entire story of Jonah.

heart is on the earth, because its treasure is there, it will grow unspiritual and earthly, and everything within it that is noble and grand will perish.

If men have not understood the teachings of Jesus concerning possessions, that concerning mammon worship has not been believed. Men read the Gospels and speak of their simple beauty, especially of the Sermon on the Mount, but either they do not believe that Jesus meant what he said, when he spoke of mammon worship, or they consider his guidance in matters of money unsafe. It almost seems that the more Christian a nation is, the more fanatical a large number of its people are in the worship of mammon.

It seems to be the ruling passion in all the leading countries. Had our Savior said, "How hardly shall they that are poor," instead of "How hardly shall they that have riches, enter the Kingdom of God," the passion for money throughout the Christian world could not well be stronger. "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evils." (I. Tim. 6:10.) The oppression of the feeble races, the indifference to fair dealings with them on the part of the so-called civilized, war, the madness of anarchy, the brutality of trusts, drink, gambling, impurity, political corruption, unbelief, domestic infidelity, all grow on its stem.

It is love of money that is emptying our churches. Men who have accumulated a great deal more money than they will ever need, absent themselves from worship because they are too tired from their endeavors to get still more. Love of money is injuring our homes. Eager for money our women enter the industrial arena with men, home life is more and more going out of vogue, and when it is entered upon, the choice of a husband or wife is frequently dictated as much by money as by affection.

Love of money is destroying faith. It develops the keenest industrial competition. Amid the stress of this, men do and say what cannot bear the light. Thus suspicion is engendered, and faith in man is weakened, the power of faith declines through lack of practice, and unbelief follows. For when faith in man is lost, faith in God is impossible.

Love of money degrades our people. It creates and maintains the dram-shops and the dives, through which men of keen intelligence and great moral possibilities are often reduced to a level as low as the brutes. Men will steal, rob, deceive, oppress, default, sacrifice the welfare of wife, children, and friends; break any of God's commandments—do anything for money.

Nor is the love of money likely to grow less. Year by year extravagance increases, and men's needs grow larger. The larger they grow, the more will people stand in need of money, and the greater its influence on the hearts of men will become.

If Jesus Christ is not a man, but God's own son, then the setting aside of His teaching concerning mammon is serious.

A month's admiration of heroism is not worth a minute's imitation of it.

There is a difference between free-thinking and freedom from thought—though it is not always recognizable.

THE PERIL OF LOVING WEALTH

By

GERALD D. HEUVER

The strange discovery was recently made that there did not exist in the English language a book dealing critically with Christ's teachings concerning property. Mr. Gerald D. Heuver has entered this unoccupied territory by writing a volume entitled, "The Teachings of Jesus Concerning Wealth." It is a careful production and a strong denunciation of the present craze for money-making. The following extract concerning the worship of mammon reveals the author's method and his interpretation of Christ's stirring words concerning money-making.—The Editor.

A TOPIC upon which Jesus has said considerable is the worship of mammon. There are a number of sayings in the Sermon on the Mount which from their position in a sermon intended to set forth the nature of the Christian society, derive great importance.

The first, and the one most fundamental, is that money as a power is unholy, and that its influence upon earth has been opposed to God. Jesus called it mammon. We know not the precise meaning of this term "mammon," but it is claimed to have been the name of a Syrian god which the people worshiped when they were desirous of riches. There are those who deny this origin of the term, most likely correctly; but whatever it may be, Jesus used the term mammon as the name of a god. And he put the worship of this god as absolutely opposed to the worship of the true God. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and

despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6:24.)

In another part of the Gospel where money is referred to, he called it not simply mammon, but unrighteous mammon. (Luke 16:11.) So much unrighteousness had centered about its use and so much money had been unrighteously obtained that the very metal seemed to him to be tainted.

The position of Jesus was this: All the aspirations and labors of men had one of two objects: the worship of God, or the worship of wealth. In the case of many men the attempt was made to worship neither the one nor the other exclusively, but to render homage to both, to God perhaps upon the Sabbath, and to mammon the rest of the days. This attempt Jesus claimed was absolutely impossible. One must worship the one or the other, Jehovah or mammon; the worship of the two is diametrically opposed.

The second saying regarding it is his advice, or command, not to gather it, but gather Heavenly treasures. "Lay not up for yourself treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will thy heart be also." (Matt. 6:19-21.)

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"The Teachings of Jesus Concerning Wealth." Published by Fleming H. Revell, Chicago.