

Jonah

Lectures on the Minor Prophets.

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The most cursory reader can hardly avoid seeing that Jonah has a peculiar place among the prophets. There is none more intensely Jewish; yet his prophecy was addressed to the Gentiles, to the men of Nineveh in his day. Indeed here we learn nothing at all of his service in Israel. He is severed by God's call to this then most extraordinary mission and testimony. Thus, as it has been well observed, Jonah seems outwardly as singular in the Old Testament among the prophets as James is apt to sound strange to many ears among the New Testament apostles. Perhaps every one has felt the difficulty: certainly we know that in some eminent servants of the Lord the difficulties have been allowed to interfere with the reverential confidence due to an inspired writing, as I am assured most mistakenly. Nevertheless such remains the notorious fact. Even a man known for the wonderful work God gave him to do like Luther put a signal slight on the Epistle of James. No argument is needed to prove that he had not one good reason, that his unbelief was quite unjustifiable, and that the error wrought exceeding evil in proportion to the eminence of the man. For the influence of a leader's words, if he go seriously astray, is so much the more dangerous. Hence the Lutheran party in Germany have always shown the strongest tendency towards what some have called "a free handling" of the word of God, but it is to be feared in anything but a becoming spirit. Who can wonder that this has at length developed into the various forms of decided rationalism in the present day, though indeed more or less ever since the Reformation? They may ever so little reflect or sympathize with what was of faith and of divine excellence; but they are none the less disposed to cite Luther as giving an anticipative sanction to their own sceptical spirit towards the word of God.

The truth is that the value of the books of both James and Jonah is chiefly owing to, and seen in, their peculiarity. God is not narrow, though man is; and our wisdom lies in being lifted out of our own pettiness into the vast mind of God. Hence it will be found that, so far from James being one who slighted grace, his epistle is unintelligible unless a man really understands and holds fast the grace of God. He is the only apostle who uses the remarkable term "the perfect law of liberty." This supposes not law but grace. Therefore it was really the feebleness with which grace was apprehended which made people fancy and shrink back from the bugbear of legalism in the Epistle of James. Had they read it in the liberty of grace, they would have seen the real power of the Spirit of God in giving the Christian to realise his liberty.

Just so it appears to me that Jonah in the same way, although personally he might be eminently Jewish in his feeling, nevertheless was used of God for a final Old Testament testimony to the Gentiles. Nineveh, the capital of the then Assyrian kingdom, was at that time the great power of the world. It was before the days when Babylon aspired to supreme empire, and was permitted to acquire it; for Babylon was of itself a most ancient city probably before Nineveh; but it was not allowed to rise up into supremacy until the complete trial of Israel, and the proved failure even of Judah and David's house. Jonah was an early prophet. He lived in or before the days of Jeroboam II. I believe that modern speculation has put him a hundred years perhaps too late. However, this is a small matter. The grand point is the bearing of his prophecy. There is another difference too that is worthy of note in Jonah, and that is, that the book differs from others of the minor prophets by being for the most part prophecy in fact and not so much in word. The whole history of Jonah is a sign. It is not simply what he said but what he did, and the ways of God with him; and this it will be my business to endeavour to expound.

The New Testament points us out some of the most prominent parts of this prophecy, and will be found, I think, to give us the key to the bearing of it in a distinct and material way. Our Lord Himself refers to it, particularly also, it may be added, to that which has drawn out the incredulity of many divines. Now it is well known to those who are acquainted with the working of mind in the religious world, that they have found enormous difficulties in the facts of the book of Jonah. The truth is that, as elsewhere, they stumble over the claims of prophecy; it is here the difficulty of a miracle. But to my mind a miracle, although no doubt it is the exertion of divine power, and entirely outside the ordinary experience of man, is the worthy intervention of God in a fallen world. It is a seal given to the truth in the pitiful mercy of God, who does not leave a fallen race and lost world to its own remediless ruin. So far therefore, from miracles being the slightest real difficulty, any one who knows what God is might well expect Him to work them in such a world as this. I do not mean arbitrarily, or at such a time as ours; for although there be answer to prayer now and the most distinct working of God according to it, it is all to my mind a simple thing. We must never confound an answer to prayer, precious as it may be, with a miracle. For an answer to prayer is no more unintelligible than that your own earnest request to man should bring out a special intervention to your mind. What greater difficulty is there for God to hear the cry of His children? Have baptized men and women sunk into degrading epicureanism? It is then truly monstrous to shut out such a gracious interference of God every day, and there cannot be a stronger proof of where and what man has come to in Christendom than the notion that special answers to prayer are irreconcilable with the general laws God has established to govern the world as well as mankind. Now there is no doubt that there are general principles, if you will, as to everything, — as to the universe, as to the moral ways of God with men, and also as to His dealing with His own children. But then we must never shut out that He is a really personal God, who, even when a miracle may not be, knows how to make His care a living and a known reality for the souls of all that confide in Him.

In the present case then we have one authority weighing infinitely more than all the difficulties which have been mustered by unbelief. For it is plain that our Lord Jesus singles out the particular point of greatest difficulty and affixes to it His own almighty stamp of truth. Can you not receive the words of the Lord Jesus against all men that ever were? What believer would hesitate between the Second man and the first? The Lord Jesus has referred to the fact that Jonah was swallowed up by the great fish, call it what you will: I am not going to enter into a contest with naturalists whether it was a shark, a spermaceti whale or another. This is a matter of very small account. We will leave these men of science to settle the kind; but the fact itself, the only one of importance for us to affirm, is that it was a great fish which swallowed and afterwards yielded up the prophet alive. This is all one need stand to — the literal truth of the fact alleged. There is no need to imagine that a fish was created for the purpose. There are many fishes quite capable of swallowing a man whole: at any rate such have been. If there was one then, it is enough. But the fact is not only affirmed in the Old Testament, but reaffirmed and applied in the New by our Lord Himself. Any man who disputes this must give an account of his conduct before the judgment seat of Christ ere long.

Turning then to our prophecy, we read, "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. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah, and went down to Joppa; and 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 Jehovah." But in Jonah is seen the stiff-neckedness of man. Jehovah told him to go east, and he at once hurries west; that is, he flies exactly in the teeth of the divine command. To some this seems unaccountable in a prophet; to the rationalist it is incredible, and casts a doubt on the historical character of the entire book. But we have to learn that flesh is no better in a prophet than in ourselves. For the real difference between men is not that the flesh of some is better

than that of others, but that some have learned to distrust themselves altogether, and to live another life which is by faith, not by flesh. Therefore it is that the believer only in fact lives to God so long as he goes on in dependence on Him. The moment he ceases to do so, wonder not at anything he says or does. Here we have a flagrant witness of it in Jonah. He was told to go to Nineveh; but "he rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah, and went down to Joppa," — that is, to the neighbouring port of Palestine on the great sea, the Mediterranean, in order to go west.

"And 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 Jehovah. But Jehovah sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep." Now it cannot be doubted that there must have been some strong (however unjustifiable) impulse which gave a contrary bias to this godly man, as undoubtedly the prophet was. What was the motive? To our minds singular enough, but none the less influential over him for all that. Jonah was afraid that God would be too good! If Nineveh repented, he suspected that He would show it mercy. He feared therefore that his own character as a prophet would suffer. He did not choose them to hear the threat that God was giving to destroy the Ninevites for their wickedness, lest they might humble themselves under his preaching, and the threatened judgment might not be put into execution, and Jonah would thus lose his honour. What a miserably selfish thing is the heart even of a prophet, unless just so far as he walks by faith! Jonah did not so walk, but allowed self to gain a transient mastery. I do not speak of what Jonah felt as a man, but of his jealousy as he thought for his office. He could not bear that his ministry should be jeopardized for a moment. How much better to trust the Master!

Now I need not say at any length that we have the exact and blessed contrast to this in a greater than Jonah, who deigns to compare in a certain respect His own ministry with that of His servant. A greater proof of divine humility there could scarcely be. But in all things Jesus was perfect, and in nothing more than this — that He, knowing all things, the end from the beginning, came down into a scene where He tasted rejection at every step — rejection not merely as a babe when He was carried away into Egypt, but rejection all through a life of the most blameless yet divinely ordered obscurity; then through a ministry which excited growing hatred on man's part. There is nothing a man more dreads than to be nothing at all. Even to be spoken against is not so dreadful to the poor proud spirit of man as to be absolutely unnoticed; and yet the very much greater part of the life of Jesus was spent in this entire obscurity. We have but a single incident recorded of Jesus from His earliest years until He emerges for the ministry of the word of God and the gospel of the kingdom. But then He lived in Nazareth, proverbially the lowest of poor despised Galilee — so much so that even a godly Galilean slighted and wondered if any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Such was Jesus; but more than this; when He did enter on the publicity of divine testimony, there too He meets opposition, though at first there was a welcome which would have gratified most men, yea servants of God. But He the Son, the divine person who was pleased to serve in this world, saw through that which would have been sweet to others when they, astonished and attracted, hung on the gracious words that fell from His lips. And how soon a dark cloud passed over it! For even that self-same day in which men heard such words as had never fallen on the ears of man, miserable and infatuated they could not endure the grace of God, and, had they been left to themselves, would have cast Him down headlong from the precipice outside their city. Such man was and is. How truly all that was fair was but as the morning cloud and early dew. But Jesus, we see, accepts a ministry of which He knew from the first the character, course, and results, perfectly aware that the more divine grace and truth were brought out by Him, the sterner rejection He should meet with among men.

God deals very tenderly with us in this respect. He does not fail to send somewhat to cheer and lift up the heart of the workman in praise to Himself; and only just so far as there is faith to bear it does He put on him a heavier burden. But as to the Lord Jesus there was no burden that He was spared; and if none in His life, what shall we say of His death? There indeed a deeper question was raised, on which we need not enter now, only referring to the first great principle as the contrast to the conduct of Jonah in going directly in the teeth of the Lord's distinct commission.

Another trait we find marked in Jonah — his Jewish feeling. He was intensely national. He could not bear that there should be the slightest apparent failure of his word as a prophet in the midst of the Gentiles. He would rather that every Gentile had been swallowed up in destruction than that one word of Jonah should fall to the ground. It was precisely here where he had to learn himself short of the mind and heart of God. The wonders that were wrought were not too great for teaching the needed lesson. We have already referred to Jesus, but we need not even go so high as to the Lord of glory. In some respects the working of the Spirit of God in the apostle Paul may aptly serve for us, because he was a man not only of flesh and blood, but of like passions as we. Who ever suffered like him the afflictions of the gospel? Who with burning love to Israel so spent himself in untiring labours among the Gentiles — labours too so unrequited then, that among the Gentiles themselves who believed he so often knew what it is to be less loved the more abundantly he loved?

On the other hand Jesus had no sin. Although perfectly man, every thought, feeling, and inward motion was holy in Jesus: not only not a flaw in His ways was ever seen, but not a stain in His nature. Whatever men reason or dream, He was as pure humanly as divinely; and this may serve to show us the all-importance of holding fast what men call orthodoxy as to His person. I shall yield to none in jealousy for it, and loyally maintain that it is of the substance and essence of the faith of God's elect that we should confess the immaculate purity of His humanity, just as much as the reality of His assumption of our nature. Assuredly He did take the proper manhood of His mother, but He never took manhood in the state of His mother, but as the body prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost, who expelled every taint of otherwise transmitted evil. In His mother that nature was under the taint of sin: she was fallen, as were all others naturally begotten and born in Adam's line. In Him it was not so; and, in order that it should not be so, we learn in God's word that He was not begotten in a merely natural generation, which would have perpetuated the corruption of the nature and have linked Jesus with the fall; but by the power of the Holy Ghost He and He alone was born of woman without a human father. Consequently, as the Son was necessarily pure, as pure as the Father, in His own proper divine nature, so also in the human nature which He thus received from His mother: both the divine and the human were found for ever afterwards joined in that one and the same person — the Word made flesh.

Thus, we may here take occasion to observe, Jesus is the true pattern of the union of man with God, God and man in one person. It is a common mistake to speak of union with God in the case of us His children. Scripture never uses language of the kind; it is the error of theology. The Christian never has union with God, which would really be, and only is in, the Incarnation. We are said to be one with Christ, "one spirit with the Lord," "one body," one again as the Father and the Son; but these are evidently and totally different truths. Oneness would suppose identification of relationship, which is true of us as the members and body of our exalted Head. But we could not be said to be one with God as such without confounding the Creator and the creature and insinuating a kind of Buddhistic absorption into deity, which is contrary to all truth or even sense. The phrase therefore is a great blunder, which not only has got nothing whatever to warrant it from the Spirit, but there is the most careful exclusion of the thought in every part of the divine word.

And here it may be of interest to say a few words of explanation as to our partaking of the divine

nature, of which Peter speaks at the beginning of his second Epistle (2 Peter 1: 4). It does not seem to be the same as oneness with Christ, which in scripture is always founded on the Spirit of God making us one spirit with the Lord after He rose from the dead. Christ when He was here below compared Himself to a corn of wheat that was alone: if it died, it would bring forth much fruit. Though the Son of God was always the life of believers from the beginning, He promises more, and thus indicates that union is a different thing. They must never be confounded. They are both true of the Christian; but union in the full sense of the word was that which could not be till Christ had died to put away before God our sins, yea to give us our very nature judged, so that we might stand in an entirely new position and relationship, made one by the Spirit with Christ glorified on high. This I believe to be the doctrine of scripture. Along with this observe that the only one who brings out the body of Christ asserted dogmatically in the New Testament is the apostle Paul. Our spiritual oneness is referred to frequently in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John; but this is not exactly the same thing as being one with Christ according to the figure of the head and the body, which is the proper type of oneness in scripture. Now it is by the apostle Paul alone that the Spirit sets before us the body with its head; and this it is which figures the true notion according to God of our oneness with Christ.

To be one with or have life in Him is not the same thing. This may be clearly illustrated by the well-known instance of Abel and Cain. They had the same life as Adam; but they were not one with Adam as Eve was. She only was one with Adam. They had his life no less than their mother. Thus the two things are never the same and need not be in the same persons. Oneness is the nearest possible relationship, which may or may not be conjoined with the possession of life. Both are in the Christian. The pattern of oneness or its proper scriptural model is found under that of the head and the body, which is the more admirably expressive as the head clearly and of right directs all the movements of the body. In a man of sound mind and body there is not a single thing done by the extremity of the foot which is not directed by the head. Such exactly is the pattern spiritually. The Spirit of God animates the assembly, the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the true bond of oneness between the members on earth and Christ in heaven. By and by, when we go on high, it will be represented by another figure equally apt, though also anticipatively applied while we are on earth. We never hear of the head and the body in the day of glory? but of the Bridegroom and the bride. So we read in Rev. 19 that the marriage of the Lamb is then come. This takes place in heaven after the translation of the saints and before the day of Christ's appearing. Scripture: avoids speaking of the marriage until the whole work of God is complete in His assembly, so that those who are baptized of the Spirit into that one body may be caught up to Christ together. These between the two advents of the Lord are all in one common position. But those before Christ came were surely quickened of Him; sons of God, they were partakers of the divine nature. So are Christians now; so will be the saints when the millennial kingdom is set up under the reign of Christ manifest to every eye. But to be one with Christ, members of His body, is only true now that He is in heaven as the glorified man, and that the Spirit is sent down to baptize us into this new body on the earth. That one body is now being formed and perpetuated as long as the church remains on earth. The marriage of the Lamb (of course a figure of consummated union and joy) will only take place when the whole church is complete, not before, whatever may be the language inspired by hope ere then.

As to the difficulty of some minds, whether Christ partook of our nature as it is here, or we partake of Him as He is in heaven, the answer seems to me that both are true; but they are not the same truth. Christ partook of human nature, but not in the condition in which we have it. This has been already explained, as it is essential not only to the gospel but to the Christ of God. The man who denies this denies Christ's person; he wholly overlooks the meaning of the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. Such was the fatal blot of Irvingism — a far deeper mischief than the folly about tongues or the

pretensions to prophesying, or the presumption of restoring the church and its ministries, or even its gross Judaising. It made null and void the Holy Ghost's operation, which is acknowledged in the commonest creeds of both Catholics and Protestants. These all so far confess the truth; for I hold that as to this Catholics and Protestants are sound but the Irvingites are not, although in other matters they may say a great deal that is true enough. Certainly the late Mr. Irving saw and taught not a little neglected truth. Notwithstanding they were, and I believe still are, fundamentally unsound in holding the human nature of Christ to be fallen and peccable through the taint of the fall, thus setting aside the object and fruit of the miraculous conception by the power of the Highest.

Hence then our being partakers of the divine nature is one thing, the gift of the Holy Ghost quite another. Both we have now. The first is the new nature that pertains to us as believers, and this in a substantial sense has been true of all believers from the beginning. But besides this there is the peculiar privilege of oneness with Christ through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Clearly this could not be until the Holy Ghost was given to baptize the disciples of Christ into one body; as again the Holy Ghost could not be given to produce this oneness till Jesus by His blood had put away our sins and been glorified at God's right hand. (Heb. 1; John 1, 7) Those who should be saved had been in every kind of impurity, and they must be washed from their sins before they could be righteously set in that position of nearness and relationship as "one new man." Esther was chosen and called to a high position; still, according to the habits due to the great king, there must needs be a great preparation before the actual consummation. I grant you this was but a natural place; still it is the type of a spiritual relationship; so that we may use it to illustrate God's mind. It is not consistent with His ways or His holiness that any should be taken out of the old things and put into the wonderful position of oneness with Christ until the work of redemption completely abolished our old state before God and brought us into a new one in Christ. Such is the order of scripture.

But there is more to come. For although we have already the Holy Ghost as well as the new nature, there is a third requisite which the glory of Christ demands for us: we shall be changed. That is, we Christians, who have now not only humanity but this fallen, are destined at Christ's coming again for us to be changed. Christ had human nature but not fallen. In His case alone was humanity holy, free from every blemish and taint, and pure according to God. It was not only not fallen, but fit without blood to be the temple of God. This is far more than could be said about Adam in his pristine innocency. When Adam came from the hand of God, good as he was, it could not be said that he was holy. There was absolute absence of all evil. God made the man upright before he sought inventions. There was untainted innocence. But holiness and righteousness are more than creation goodness and innocency. Holiness implies the intrinsic power that rejects evil in separation to God: and righteousness means consistency with the relationship in which one is set. Both these qualities we see not in Adam but in Jesus even as to His humanity. "That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He was the Holy One of God, "Jesus Christ the righteous." Indeed He was the only one of whom it was or could be said of His human nature that it was holy; as it clearly is of humanity in His person that the expression "that holy thing" is used. The divine nature was not born of the virgin; and it was little needed to call that holy. There was the highest interest and moment in knowing the character of His humanity. Scripture as to this is most explicit. His humanity was holy from the very first, spite of being born of a fallen race.

And this agrees with all other truth. Thus had the human nature of Christ been tainted by the fall, how could He have been the "most holy" sin-offering for sinners? There was no instance about which there was so much scrupulosity of care as the meat-offering and the sin-offering. These two, are remarkable and remarkably opposed types of Christ: the one of His life, the other of His death.

But we shall have much more in the way of power and glory by and by. When Christ comes, human nature in us will participate in the victory of the Second Man, the last Adam, as it now shares in the weakness and ruin of the first man. Then indeed is the time when human nature will be promoted to a good degree; that is to say, it will be raised out of all the consequences of the fall of the first man, and will be placed in all the power and incorruption and glory of the Second Man as He is now in the presence of God. Never shall we be made *God*: this could not be, and ought not to be. It is impossible that the creature can overpass the bounds that separate the Creator from it. And more than that, the renewed creature is the very one which would most abhor the thought. No matter what the church's blessedness and glory may be, it never forgets its creature obligations to God and the reverence due to Him. For this very reason he that knows God would never desire that He should be less God than He is, and could not indulge or tolerate the self-exalting folly which the miserable illusion of Buddhism cherishes, along with many kinds of philosophy which are afloat now as of old in the west as well as the east — the dream of a final absorption into deity. This is altogether false and irreverent. All approach to such thoughts we see excluded in the word of God. In heaven the lowliness of those whom the sovereign grace of God made partakers of the divine nature will be even more perfect than now while we are on the earth. Human nature under sin is as selfish as proud. Fallen humanity always seeks its own things and glory; but the new nature, the perfection of which is seen in Christ, (that is to say, the life given to the believer, what we receive in Christ even now, and by and by when everything is conformed to it) will only make perfect without a single flaw or hindrance that which we now are in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Returning from our long digression, I would now direct attention to the plain fact that Jonah too faithfully represents the Jews in his unwillingness that God should show mercy to the Gentiles. The effect of this uncomely narrowness and indeed failure in bearing a real witness to the true God is, that far from being the channel of blessings to the Gentiles, he brings a curse upon them. So with the Jew now, and it will be yet more verified at the end of the age. The ringleaders of the actual rationalism in the world have derived a vast deal of their cavils from Jewish sources. The miserable Spinoza of Amsterdam, the theological pantheist of the seventeenth century, is really the patriarch of a great deal of the philosophy that is overrunning the world now and ever since. And this will grow far worse. It is granted that this did not begin with him, but with heathen unbelievers, yet made more and more daring by Jewish and then Christian apostasy. I have no doubt that there is yet to be, from the dragons' teeth which they are sowing over Christendom, an abundant crop of men given up to lawlessness.

Here however it is a very different state: we see a godly man spite of all faults. Nevertheless the result of his unfaithfulness is that he brings a tempest from Jehovah on the ship; and his error brought no small danger on unconscious Gentile mariners, who little thought of the question between God and His servant, or of the deep reason that lay underneath so singular a controversy. But Jonah knew what the matter was, though he had never dared to look it fairly to the bottom: as men never do whose conscience is bad. And this he showed when the shipmaster came and waked him up from his sleep with the cry, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." Even then he does not reveal the secret. "And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us." When men are ashamed and will is still active and unjudged, it takes no small discipline to set them right again. So Jonah held his tongue as long as he could, though he knew right well who was the culprit. "They did cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah." As it was not possible to hide his secret any longer, "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? And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then

were the men exceeding afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous."

The prophet then directs them like a genuine soul, as he was at bottom: all of which we have spoken freely and plainly, as the word of God warrants us to do, seems quite consistent with it. For all his short comings, his narrowness, and his official self-importance, he did not fear to trust himself in God's hands, as we shall see. For "he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." Is it not evident and sad the mixture one sees even in a real believer? It is plain that he has not the slightest doubt of his own relationship to God; he entertains no question that all will be well somehow with Jonah. Yet had he really been, as he was often in danger of being, impatient, self-willed, and presumptuous. Jonah knew God well enough to dread that He would be better than his own message and warning to the Gentiles. He did not mind that God should be ever so good to the Jews, but he could not bear that his threat should seem vain through divine mercy to repentant Gentiles.

Jonah, I say, tells them to take him up and cast him 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." The shipmen, not having the heart to do it, "rowed hard to bring the ship to land; but they could not: for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them." And they too cried unto Jehovah. A remarkable change, as we may here discern, takes place in them; for up to this time they simply owned God, but only after a natural sort, because they called on their gods withal. This was inconsistent enough. They did not see the grievous incongruity of worshipping false gods and at the same time owning the true God. Such however was exactly their state; but now they cried to the true God. They had heard His name was Jehovah, and they were struck by the reality of His government in the case of Jonah before their eyes. "And they cried unto Jehovah, and said, We beseech 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."

A remark may be made by the way in proof of the excess of the folly rationalism displays in judging of these names of God. In these days most people who read are aware that freethinkers have tried to build up the theory that each of the early books at least of the Bible must have been written by different authors at different times, because among other phenomena there occur two or more accounts sometimes of the same or of kindred features, in one of which the name God or "Elohim" is more prominent, in another the name "Jehovah." Their hypothesis is that the difference of these terms, backed up by other differences of thought and language, can only arise from distinct authorship. Superficial and transparent folly! As if even human writers do not vary their style with their subject and object: how much more when God gives according to His fulness and depth! There is not the slightest sense in the theory. And here is a proof before our eyes in the prophecy of Jonah. There is no question of early documents in this case. As compared with the books of Moses, Jonah after all is rather too late in the day. They contrived to eke out the case that in the dim and hoary age of Mosaic antiquity various documents had somehow been muddled together, and out of the later manipulation of these different records at length emerged the books of Moses as we have them: pretty much, one might suppose, as Jehovah plagued the people because they made the calf, which Aaron made, when he "cast the gold into the fire, and there came out this calf."

But, however this may be, the prophecy of Jonah rises up to refute this pretentious folly. Bear with me if I cannot but use strong and plain terms in speaking of that which is so irreverent and revolting. One should never find fault with a man for ignorance;* still less can one justly lay blame on any man for not being wiser than God has been pleased to make him. It is our business to make the best use of the little which God may have vouchsafed; but that man should allow his mind or

acquirements, whatever be his measure, to rise up in judgment of the precious and perfect word of God, to unsettle and destroy as far as his influence extends the absolute divine authority of everything that God has written, — this I cannot but condemn with all my soul, and believe that it is the truest love even to the wrong-doers. We cannot exaggerate the heinousness of the sin. May the Lord forgive every one guilty of it! But we ought not to forgive the thing itself. Can one conceive that God would have the believer forgive the sin of speaking against His own word? Grace can forgive the worst of sinners; but never let us allow any thought about the sin except that it is most hateful to God. To have the strongest sense of sin is in no way incompatible with the utmost pity for and interest in him who is deceived and guilty and condemned. On the contrary it is as much a Christian's duty to abhor that which is evil as to love that which is good. So true is this, that the man who does not abhor evil can never be justly thought to have real love in his heart for what is good; because it is always in proportion to moral power that one hates the false and evil, and loves the true and good. As for the shilly-shallying that calls itself charity but really is indifference to either good or evil, it is at bottom either intense self-seeking or mere love of ease without a single quality which becomes a man, because there is no thought nor care for what is due to God. Against such heartlessness may all God's children watch diligently; for the air now-a-days is full of it. Depend on it, there is no grace in such laxity. It is as far as possible from Him who is our only unfailling test.

{*The last words of the famous Laplace were, "Ce que nous connaissons est peu de choses; ce que nous ignorons est immense." Alas! he died without the knowledge of God, without eternal life in Christ. But he is no bad witness of the unsatisfying nature of the knowledge of one who knew much in comparison of most men, though he knew nothing of what man most needs to know.}

In his distress then we find Jonah turns to the true God. Even for the heathen sailors it was no time for thinking of their false gods. They felt themselves evidently in the hand of Jehovah. Accordingly they cry to Him, and as we are told, "They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging." What a sight! What solemnity must have filled these poor Gentiles! Thereon, we are told, they "feared Jehovah." They had cried to Him before; they feared Him now. If they cried to Him in their danger, they feared Him yet more when the danger was over. That is right, and shows reality. However common, it is a fearful mockery when a man fears the Lord less when he professes to have his sins forgiven by His grace. It is truly awful and perilous when the goodness of God weakens in the smallest degree our reverence for Himself and jealousy for His will. "Our God is a consuming fire, but this need not hinder our perfect confidence in His love. So here the mariners offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows at the same time. "Now Jehovah had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Next (Jonah 2) we come to a very great change. It is not a man sent out on an unwelcome errand from Jehovah; nor his endeavour to escape from the execution of God's commission; nor yet again the divine dealings with him when he proved refractory and kicked against the goads. We see by the way that Jehovah is exceedingly pitiful and of tender mercy as regards the Gentile mariners, when they forsook their vanities and were brought to worship the only true God, Jehovah the Lord of heaven and earth. But now we have the silent and secret dealings of God that went on during those three days and three nights when Jonah lay in the depths and spread his misery before God. "Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice."

In this there can be not the slightest doubt to the believer that Jonah is a type of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ when He too was for three days and nights, as He said Himself, in the heart of the earth —

the crucified Messiah. But then how different! Jonah's singular fate was because of his sin — his manifest insubjection to God. Christ suffered for others exclusively. It was for the sins of His people. Nevertheless the result was so far similar that our Lord Jesus Himself being without sin was utterly rejected, not because He did not the will of God, but because He did it to perfection, offering His body as a sacrifice once for all. Thus our blessed Lord obeyed unto death, instead of disobeying it like the first Adam. Jonah then cries, and Jehovah hears. Deeply does he feel the position in which he found himself; and this was well. Discipline is meant to be felt, though grace should not be doubted.

But I believe on the other hand that his confidence, as was natural, was not unmingled with fear. For if a type of Christ he was a type of the Jewish people. Indeed he sets forth not inaptly the people failing in their testimony, misrepresenting God before the Gentiles, not yet a channel of blessing on them according to the promises to Abraham, but rather a curse because of their own unfaithfulness. Nevertheless, just as Jonah was preserved of God in the great fish, so also are the Jews now preserved of God, and will be brought out to be a joy and praise to His name in the earth, whatever their present lost estate. That day is hastening apace. In Jonah's history we find its pledge; in Christ's its righteous ground and the means to accomplish it when Jehovah pleases to His glory.

It is a principle with God that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." This I do not doubt to be at least one reason for the three days, whether one looks at the case of Jonah, or of Christ, or of any other. It means a fully adequate testimony, as in our Lord's case, to the reality of His death when He had been rejected to the uttermost; so with Jonah. Two would have been enough; three were more than sufficient, an ample and irrefragable witness. So our Lord Jesus, though by Jewish reckoning three days and three nights in the grave, literally lay there but the whole of Saturday — the Sabbath, with a part of Friday not yet closed, and before the dawn of Sunday. For we must always remember in these questions the Jews' method of reckoning. Part of a day regularly counted for the four-and-twenty hours. The evening and the morning, or any part, counted as a whole day. But the Lord, as we know, was crucified in the afternoon of Friday; His body lay all the next or Sabbath day in the grave; and He rose early the Sunday morning. That space was counted three days and three nights according to sanctioned Biblical reckoning which no man who bowed to scripture would contest. This was asserted among the Jews, who, fertile as they have been in excuses for unbelief, have never, as far as I am aware made difficulties on this score. The ignorance of Gentiles has exposed some of them when unfriendly to cavil at the phrase. The Jews found not a few stumbling-blocks, but this is not one of them: they may know little of what is infinitely more momentous; but they know their own Bible too well to press an objection which would tell against the Hebrew scriptures quite as much as the Greek.

In Jonah 3 we come to another point. The word of Jehovah comes to Jonah again. How persistent is His goodness, and how vain for His servant to think of evading! A fresh message is given in these terms: "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah." And the Spirit of God tells us, "Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. 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." The people listened to the word. And here is another use for which our blessed Lord employs Jonah. He does not merely cite the most marvellous part of Jonah's history as a type of His own rejection in Israel, or of the consequence of that rejection for Israel, but He holds up before the proud and hard spirit of the Jew in His day the repentance of the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonah, two wholly different references which are main incidents in the history of the prophet. "So the people of Nineveh believed God." They did not go so far as the mariners: they "believed *God*." There was a certain conviction that His moral

character was justly offended by their wickedness; for well they knew that they were living as they listed, which practically means without God at all. "They believed God," it is stated, "and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth."

Does this again warrant the inference that the book had two authors? Later on, as at the early part, all is recounted with the most perfect order morally, and as naturally as possible flows from one and the same inspired mind. The fact is that the application of the different names for God is quite independent of the question of one or more authors, and is owing to a different idea which the author meant to convey: and this is true throughout scripture early or late, Old Testament or New. Indeed all the holy writings are parts of the same web; but it does not follow that there may not be a different pattern in different parts of it. To make it all the same monotonous colour or shape is not always necessary even among men. How strange that vain man should sit in judgment on God, not even allowing Him to do as He pleases with His own word! Of course the use of the names is adapted to a different apprehension of God on the part of men, the one being mainly the general expression of His nature, the other of that specific relation in which He was revealed to His chosen people of old; the one *what*, the other *who* He is. Hence under the hand of the Holy Spirit we may surely reckon that God furnishes the terms used with the most perfect propriety. Never is it either arbitrary or unmeaning; but we may not be able always to discern aright. So far indeed is it from being true, that I am persuaded a variety of authors would rather have struck these differences out. Thus, supposing there were two authors giving really conflicting reports, I consider that an editor, finding the two documents at variance, would have in all probability tried to assimilate them; for instance in this case either by striking out "Jehovah" and putting in "God," or by striking out "God" and putting in "Jehovah." This would have been no hard task, and most natural if there had really been a mere editor dealing with old relics which he wished to reduce into a tolerably harmonious whole for perpetuation.

Let me endeavour to illustrate the truth by a familiar figure. An artist of intelligence would not represent the Queen in the same way opening the Houses of Parliament as if reviewing the troops at Aldershot. He who could fail to see the reason of the differences in paintings of the two scenes' even if drawn by the same artist, would simply prove that he had no discernment of propriety. In the one case there might be a horse or a chariot; in the other there would be the throne. Horses would not be suitable in the House of Lords any more than a throne at the camp. Every one can see in such a case as this that the difference of the surroundings has nothing to do with a question of this or that artist, of few or many, but is due exclusively to the difference of relationship.

So even we in ordinary life do not always address the same person in the same way. Suppose the case of a judge, and of a barrister who is the judge's son addressing him in court. Do you think the barrister would so far forget the court as to call the judge his father when addressing the jury, or even the judge? Or do you suppose when at home in the intimacy of his father's house that his son would call the judge "my lord," just as he and all else would in court?

It is to me then certain that the objection raised is due to nothing else than an astonishing want of discernment; but I should never blame one for this if he did not pretend to teach and in his effort dishonour God's word, and injure if not ruin man. If people cannot form a sound and holy judgment as to such questions, it is their own loss. But they are not entitled to publish the fruits of their ignorance of scripture, and palm them off as something new, profound, and important, without being sifted and exposed, especially as the necessary tendency if not the object of all they say is to destroy the true character of scripture as divine. Were the learning in which such efforts may be arrayed ever so real, which it rarely is, I do not think a Christian ought to make a truce for an hour.

Here then we learn that God was believed by the men of Nineveh, who accordingly took the place of the guilty in repentance before God. When the matter came to the king, "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." Here the place of humiliation is kept up in a thorough, if somewhat singular, manner. "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" They have not long to wait for an answer of mercy. "And 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. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." Yes, Jonah is the same man still when proved to the core. It may appear to us wonderful that so it should be after all the dealings of God with him. The mercy shown was too much for him whose message covered Nineveh with sackcloth. What he had warned he had warned; and he could bear no mitigation lest it should detract from himself. This feeling was too deeply ingrained in his nature to be altered even by such discipline as he had passed through. No experience can ever correct the evil of the fleshly mind. So thoroughly hopeless is it in itself that nothing short of death and resurrection with Christ, given to faith and kept up in dependence on Him, can avail. To be swallowed up by the great fish and to come forth again was used for good doubtless; but no such measure sufficed to meet the demand. We only live by present dependence on God; and there can be no greater ruin for a soul than to attempt to live on the past alone, still less going back to one's old thoughts and feelings.

Jonah indeed practically set aside the fruit of the solemn discipline for his soul which he had gone through in the depths of the sea. But God was the same God; and had His own way of setting Jonah right. "He prayed unto Jehovah." Here we find the propriety of the language again. The prophet does not fall back merely on the place of man as such with God; he speaks to Him as one who knew Him on special ground, according to the covenant name of Jehovah in which He is known to the Jew. "He prayed to Jehovah, and said, I pray thee, O Jehovah, 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." This was the secret spring of the prophet's dread — God's mercy! "Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." He could not bear to live if his word were not accomplished to the letter. He would rather see that word carried out rigorously in the extermination of all the Ninevites than that it should seem to fail. How proud, selfish, and destructive is the impatient heart even of a godly man! And how beautiful it is to find in the apostle Paul what I referred to at the beginning! A man of like passions with Jonah and with us, who nevertheless gives patience as the special, chief, and most memorable sign of an apostle. He says truly that all the signs of an apostle were found with him in reproving the ungrateful Corinthians; but what does he allege as the first great sign of it? Not tongues or miracles. Be assured of this — that patience is better than any such powers; and patience in every form God wrought in the heart of that blessed man. Yet it does not seem to my mind from all we read that Paul was a patient man after his own nature. Does it not rather seem that he was amazingly quick of feeling, and as rapid in coming to a conclusion as he was firm in holding to it when formed? Nevertheless, though he had a mind as fitted for deep-sea fathoming as for taking in the various sides of whatever came before him, we know that he was thoroughly a Jew — "a Hebrew of Hebrews" as he says himself, to whom his nation was unspeakably dear. At the same time he was a man most energetic in carrying out practically whatever conscience and heart received as according to God. This he was even in his unconverted days; and certainly he was not less so when broken down by grace and filled with a love which poured forth from every channel of his large heart. But the permanent quality that

marks Paul as apostle, as he urges to the Corinthian doubters and for the good of all saints, is patience. I doubt that any other thing is so great a sign of spiritual power. There is a day coming when power will not be shown in patience; but the truest sign of divine power morally carried on now is this ability to endure. Now this was what Jonah completely failed in. He had known wonders of divine power and mercy in his own case; but there is nothing like the cross, no lesson like that of death and resurrection as Paul had learnt it. Some may think it a very unusual expression of our hearts, bad as they are, to put one's own reputation above the welfare and even the lives of the people of the great city; and that few or none of us would be tempted to feel so hardly. Be assured however that the flesh is untrustworthy; and that self is as cruel as it is paltry when allowed. This may seem to some a dreadful thought; but is it not true? Man is the first man still; and it is in the Christian ready to repeat itself, unless by faith held for dead.

"Then said Jehovah, Doest thou well to be angry?" How admirable His patience! "So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city." There sat the prophet coolly and deliberately waiting with what comfort he could muster to see if God would then and there exterminate the people he, Jonah, had devoted to destruction. And now we see the wonderful way in which Jehovah corrected the mischief. "Jehovah God prepared a gourd." It is not now simply "God," nor only "Jehovah," but the blending of nature with special relationship. Such seems the reason why it is Jehovah God in this instance. He "prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." Simply as God, we may say, He prepared the gourd; but as Jehovah God He prepared it to be a comfort for His servant Jonah. "But God prepared a worm." Observe the appropriate change. It is not "Jehovah God" now, but Elohim — the author of creation. "God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live." Indeed impatience must always be about self. The thing that ever most provokes human nature is such a wound. It is never God; nor need the test by which God puts one to the proof provoke impatience, which is found when analysed to be just a finding fault with Him. Do you think that God has not His eye on every thing and every one? Do you forget that God is measuring all the grief and trial and pain inflicted and borne here below? Of course He concerns Himself actively with each and all. Hence it is only when we lose sight of this that the impatience of nature breaks forth; but it is assuredly always there ready to break forth. So it did break out with the vexed prophet. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death." How manifestly we see the same soul hot but feeble: "I do well to be angry!" "Then said Jehovah, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" You would like the gourd spared. What is the gourd to Nineveh? You value its ephemeral shade: what is it in mine eyes to that great city with its teeming myriads of such little ones as know not their right hand from their left? Yes, God even thinks of and feels for the cattle. What surer or more evident sign of greatness than to be able to take in what we consider petty along with what is to us boundless in magnitude? And such does our God; He despises not any. Such exactly is the God whom Jonah knew so little and was so unwilling to learn. There is no real knowledge of God except in crushing nature in its impatience, pride of heart, self-confidence, everything And it is right that it should be so. It is a poor gain to acquire considerable knowledge of God without its having at the same time a deep moral effect on the soul. God at any rated

would have the two things together associated in us.

How admirably complete are His ways and His working! He who prepared the fish prepared the palmchrist and the worm and the vehement east wind. All things serve not His might only, but His gracious purposes. It is as characteristic of our prophet as of all scripture to state calmly every incident just as it was, all under God's hand, the least as truly as the greatest, and this too not to his own credit, but to the praise of mercy so infinitely above the thoughts of man. And this is imbedded among the Jewish prophets, written in the Hebrew tongue, by one who felt as keenly as ever Israelite did what it was to warn the destined captor of Israel, with the certainty that God would repent Him of the menaced judgment, if they by grace repented themselves of their ways against Him. And so he proved after that he, given back from the grave of the sea, had performed his mission, type of One risen from the dead, as much greater in His grace to the Gentiles as in the glory of His person and the perfectness of an obedience which went out only in doing the will of His Father. But God is as wise as He is good; and the prophet's grief over the perishing palma-christi is made a reproof to his own rash spirit, and a justification from his own mouth for the mercy of God to the men of Nineveh. Once more out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the weak, as erst out of the strong, comes forth sweetness.

Such then is the book of Jonah, and I cannot help thinking that, as far as it goes, a more instructive book for the soul, and in view of the dealings and dispensations of God with man and creation, there is not in the Bible.