JONAH.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK AS A WHOLE.

(Extended Alternation.)

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NOTES ON JONAH.
The clue to the date is given in 1:1: which, by comparison with 2 Kings 14:25, falls within the time of Jeroboam II and the earlier years of Uzziah: therefore about 690 C. (see Ap. 50, p. 59).

Modern critics are practically unanimous in declaring that the book is a "combination of allegory and myth". But the fact that Jonah the prophet was a historic personage is settled by 2 Kings 14:25. And the fact that the prophecy, with its great miracle, was referred to by Christ as a type of Himself, places the book in as high a position as any other prophecy.

The Century Bible says that "we are not to conclude that the literal validity of the history of Jonah is established by this reference" (note on Matt. 12. 40, p. 206). But, apart from the fact that the Lord referred to the Queen of Sheba in the very next sentence, and thus places Jonah on the same level of "literal validity", the question is placed beyond all controversy by the further fact that seven times in John's Gospel the Lord declared that every one of His words that He uttered was given Him to speak by the Father (see below). Those who strike at these words of Christ are striking at God Himself, and are making the whole of Divine Revelation of none effect. All the puerile and fanciful assumptions used for arguments are swept away with one stroke, and are overwhelmed by this decisive and conclusive fact. Modern critics must now perforce find the answers to their own objections. We need not be at the pains to repeat the refutation of their assumption, that, because certain words have not been required or necessitated by the subjects of the earlier Scriptures, therefore such words did not exist before, and are thus evidences of the book's being written at a later period of time. Only a mind already hostile could invent such a proposition, and only those who are ignorant of "the laws of evidence" could make use of it.

The prophecy of Jonah is literal history, and is besides a twofold type.

(1) He was a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord: see Matt. 12:40, where the "as" and the "so" are sufficient to show us that a man's being miraculously kept alive for a particular period can be no type of another's being dead and buried for the same period.

As our Lord was raised from the dead at the end of that period (see Ap. 136), so Jonah must have been, as miraculously, raised from the dead.

Jonah's prayer could have been uttered in the last few moments of life. In any case the words of the prayer were not written down till after he had been vomited up alive (Jonah 2:1-10).

(2) "As Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation" (Luke 11:30). That generation were as grieved and angry at the faith and repentance of those to whom the resurrection of our Lord was proclaimed, as Jonah was at the repentance of the Ninevites.

Both these types were hidden in the history by the One Who knew the end from the beginning, and are declared to be so by Him of Whom Jehovah said, "I will put My words in His mouth".

Seven times in John's Gospel our Lord testified to the fulfilment of that promise:—

"My doctrine (i.e. teaching) is not Mine, but His that sent Me" (7:16).

"As My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (8:28).

"Why do ye not believe Me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (8:46, 47).

"I have not spoken of (or from) Myself: but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (12:49).

"The words that I speak unto you I speak not of (i.e. from) Myself: but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (14:10)."The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's Which sent Me" (14. 24).

"I have given unto them the words which Thou [the Father] gavest Me" (17:8).

The Century Bible (Jonah : Introduction, p. 200) may say: It is humiliating for a commentator to collect doubtful stories of sailors swallowed by sharks and vomited out alive." There is truth in this. But if we recognize the fact that the word "alive", includes the thought of resurrection, then we have ample evidence that this is conveyed and taught by the "as" and "so" in Matt. 12:40. In any case we have to remember the words of Jehovah in Deut. 18:18, 19: "I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hear My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." We leave the question with these solemn words: "I will require it of him."

The notes will show us Jonah, not as a wayward, thoughtless child, but as a "man of God", willing to sacrifice himself (mistakenly, of course) in order to save his nation. He knew that Assyria at that time was in great difficulties. There is a silence of eighteen years in Assyrian history at that time, and the surrounding nations were beginning to assert themselves. Jonah had just been commissioned to encourage Israel to a restored position (2 Kings 14: 25, 26). He must have known also that Nineveh (Assyria) was to be Jehovah's rod of judgment for Israel. He knew the well-known character of Jehovah, and feared that if he made Jehovah's proclamation Nineveh might repent, and her overthrow be averted. See Jehovah's words (4:2).

If, however, for the sake of his nation, he did not make the proclamation at all, Nineveh might be overthrown and Israel saved. He was mistaken, and had to be corrected (ch. 4:4-11).

The great lesson of the book is— not "Jehovah's care for children and cattle", &c., but that the devices of man shall not frustrate His purpose, and that what He hath said shall surely come to pass.

That is the lesson which gives to the book a dignity and importance which is worthy of it, and of its place in the Word of God.
1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me.
3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a large merchant ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare and counted the cost of his flight thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.
4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship thought to be broken.
5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried in prayer every man unto his god, and cast forth the tackleing that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone below deck of the covered part; and he lay, and was fast asleep.
6 So the captain came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God [the true God], if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

3 rose up to flee. Jonah knew that Assyria was to be God's sword of judgment against Israel. If Nineveh perished, Israel might be saved. God's mercy might arrest this overthrow of Nineveh. Was this why Jonah would sacrifice himself to save his nation? This would explain his flight here, and his displeasure, as clearly stated in 4.1-3. When he said (v.12), "Take me up," &c., he had counted the cost. He confesses to the men (vv. 9, 16), but not to God. He gave his life to save his People. The type of Christ may have begun here. See Gal. 3.13; and cp. Rom. 9.1-3.

1. 4-2. 10 (D, p. 1246). CONSEQUENCES. RESURRECTION OF JONAH. (Extended Atonement.)

   C | 1.17. The Fish. Preparation and Reception.
   B | 2.8, 9. Sacrifice and Vow.
   C | 2.10. The Fish. Ejection.

1. 4-15 (A, above). JONAH'S PUNISHMENT.
   (Alteration and Introversio.)

A | D
   F | 4. -The Tempest.
   E | H | 5, 6. Prayer of Mariners.
7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this calamity is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for what cause this evil is upon us? What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea grew more and more tempestuous.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

14 Wherefore they cried in prayer unto the LORD, and said, We beseech Thee, O LORD, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's soul, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for Thou, O LORD, hast done according as it pleased Thee.

15 So they took up with reverence Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and vowed that they would offer when they landed a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

17 Now the LORD had appointed a great fish large enough to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah came to be in the bowels of the fish three days and three nights.

2 And Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's bowels,

2 And said, I cried out by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and He answered me; out of the belly of hell cried I for help in distress, and Thou gavest heed to my voice.
For Thou didst cast me into the deep, in the heart of the seas; and the tides compassed me about: all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me.

Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple.

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: an abyss closed me round about, the floating sea-weeds were wrapped about my head.

I went down to the roots of the mountains; as for the earth, her bars were about me for ever: yet hast Thou brought up my life from the place of corruption, O LORD my God.

They that regard empty vanities do not heed their chastisement.

I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation belongeth to the LORD.

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey [in circuit].

And Jonah began to enter into the city one day's journey, and he cried aloud, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

So the men of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

3. 1 the word of the Lord. See note on 1:1. 2 the great city. Cp. 1:1, 2; 4:11. Diodorus Siculus (cent. 1 B.C.), and Herodotus (cent. 4 B.C.), both say it was about sixty miles in circuit and about twenty miles across. We must remember that such cities included large areas for cultivation and pasturage. Cp. "much cattle", 4:11. preach=proclaim. Heb. kara'=to cry aloud: as in vv. 4, 5, 8; 1:2, 6, 14. 3 three days, &c. i.e. in circuit.

4 cried. See note on "preach", v. 2.

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And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his great ones, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his wicked way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

Who can tell but that God will turn and repent, and turn away his fierce anger, that we perish not?

And God saw their works, that they turned from their wicked way; and God repented concerning the wickedness, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not.

But it vexed Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray Thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee 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.

Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made for himself a hut, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would happen to the city.

And the Lord God appointed a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

But God appointed a worm [blight] 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 appointed a sultry hot 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.

And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well [it is right] to be angry, even unto death.

Then said the Lord, Thou wouldst have spared the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which was the son of a night, and perished as the son of a night: and perished in a night = perished as the son of a night.

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein exist more than sixscore thousand [120,000] persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?