

THE
BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR:

OR,

ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY,
SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC,
GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND
FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES
OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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JONAH.

London:

FRANCIS GRIFFITHS,
34, MAIDEN LANE, STRAND, W.C.

1905.

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH.

It is very interesting and very instructive to scrutinise the faces in a great gallery of portraits. The man who does so has before him materials which should help him to gain a wide knowledge of human character. Here is a countenance noble and winsome. The spectator is certain that it was a tender and brave and faithful heart which beat beneath an exterior so fair. Features like these could not cover any littleness of soul. Perhaps it is a soldier in his coat of mail, whose likeness the artist has drawn, or it may be a woman's face that looks out from the canvas ; but whoever it be, the onlooker is glad that he has seen the picture. But a painting of a different kind attracts him next—that of one who has evidently had many fierce battles with temptation, and who has not come out of them all scathless. This much the spectator learns from the sad expression which rests on the features ; and yet, as he examines them more carefully, he sees that dissatisfaction and sorrow are not their most prominent characteristics. There is peace stamped on the face as well as trouble—peace which seems in the end to have gained the mastery over the trouble. There are no portraits like those which have been painted for us in the pages of the Bible. They have been drawn by the hand of a Master, and they are very varied in the types of character which they represent. In the goodly fellowship of the prophets—to think meanwhile of no others—what differences of natural disposition, and of spiritual attainments, there are ! Some, like Joel, and Amos, and Hosea, are without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Beside them we see our own shortcomings, and know what manner of men our Lord would have us to be. And others, like Jonah, are far from faultless. They are genuine servants of God, but servants who sin and fall, whose loyalty is not steadfast and immovable, who carry to this day dark blots on their fair name. We are encouraged ourselves to make trial of His compassion and His grace. That Jonah, after his wilful disobedience and foolish querulousness, was healed of all the diseases of his spirit—that, like many a wayward child, he learned to sorrow over his self-will, and came home with a penitent and reproachful heart to his Father's house—who of us can doubt ? I take it that he was himself the author of the book which bears his name, though some have thought of it as the embalming by a subsequent writer of an ancient and venerable tradition.¹ I can see no reason for doubting that the prophet penned with his own hand these four short chapters. Before his life closed he sat down to recount for the generations that should follow the story of his memorable journey to Nineveh. And how does he tell the story ? Very humbly, we shall admit, and very impartially. They are bitter things which he writes in it against himself. He extenuates nothing. He unveils all his hard-

¹ "It is strange that any argument should be drawn from the fact that the prophet writes of himself in the third person. Manly criticism has been ashamed to use the argument as to the Commentaries of Caesar or the Anabasis of Xenophon. . . . It is the exception when any sacred writer speaks of himself in the first person."—Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*.

ness of heart, all his Jewish exclusiveness, all his murmuring against the Lord. He is relentless in his self-condemnation, whilst over against the confession of his lack of obedience and of charity he places the record of God's loving-kindness and tender mercy. The book exalts God, indeed, and rebukes and punishes Jonah. It is a book of Confessions which Jonah has written, not an *Apologia pro vita sua*. He acknowledges publicly the wrongness of his thinking and acting. When we read his chapters we are reminded of Peter going out to weep bitterly, and afterwards inspiring the Gospel of Mark, which tells more fully than any of the other evangelical records how he sinned and fell; of Augustine, composing the narrative of his foolish youth; of John Bunyan, declaring how grace had abounded in his experience to the chief of sinners. Jonah must have been a new man, with a heart within him from which the old pride and unkindness and disobedience had been driven quite away, before he could pen the book which bears his name. The Book of Jonah is not like other prophetic writings. It is not a recital of discourses, but a vivid narrative of a strange episode in its author's life. It has been described as a drama in three acts, each of which is full of interest and replete with instruction.

I. First of all, THE PROPHECY DEALS WITH JONAH HIMSELF. Very little is known regarding him beyond what we learn from these chapters. There is, however, one other mention of him in the Old Testament. We read, in the Second Book of Kings, about Jeroboam II., the powerful and able and sinful ruler of the Northern tribes under whom Amos and Hosea lived and preached, that "he restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher." Jonah was a native, then, of Lower Galilee, a child of the tribe of Zabulon, born in a little village among the hills not far from Nazareth. And his first message as a prophet was a message of gladness, in which he took delight, and which brought him honour and esteem. He had foretold the success of the king of Israel, how he should regain provinces that had been lost, how he should win back for a short space the glory of his empire. It is strange that one whose ministry began under such bright auspices should end it under a cloud, and should be presented to us not as a model but as a beacon. It is a warning to take heed lest we fall—an illustration of the truth that even the saints of God are weak and brittle in themselves, in constant danger of losing the crown, and needing always the support of a higher hand. We can scarcely be surprised that legend should have busied itself about Jonah, and should have tried to augment our scanty knowledge of his earlier years. There is the old tradition, for example, that he was the son of the widow of Zarephath, the boy whom Elijah brought back from death to life. And indeed it would be pleasant to think that the first apostle of the Gentiles, sent on a mission of mercy to a heathen people, was himself a Gentile on the mother's side;¹ and that he stood in so interesting a relation to the great prophet who fought single-handed the battle of God against Baal. But the very pleasantness of the fancy is its condemnation. It fits in too neatly with our preconceptions and desires. Whether, during the years when he lived at home in the Northern Kingdom, Jonah had other announcements given him to publish to his countrymen beside that happy announcement of victory and national enlargement, we cannot say. The time was very evil, and the land was sick unto death. What we do know is, that to the prophet, dwelling among his own people, there came one day a message from God which startled him, and for which he had no liking. He was commanded to leave his kindred, and journey to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire. There he was to proclaim the Lord's judgments. When God pointed in one way, he moved in exactly the opposite direction. What made him so rebellious? Partly it may have been fear. He was appalled at the greatness and the hazardous nature of the task allotted him. He forgot that God's servants, who do His will, are kept by Him safe in the hollow of His hand. But there was another reason for his disobedience, as he tells us himself. He could not help feeling that though he was sent to Nineveh with a fearful woe on his lips, his mission was in reality one of love. He understood well that often his God threatened in order that He might afterwards spare, and that His terrors were meant to drive to Himself, for forgiveness and healing, those who would not be won by gentler methods. And Jonah had no desire to go on an errand of compassion to Nineveh. A mistaken patriotism prompted

¹ Zarephath, "a city of Zidon," our Lord says.

him to recoil from seeking the good of the metropolis of Assyria. He would rather a thousand times that it should be left to its fate—that it should sink beneath God's hand to rise no more for ever. We can sympathise in some measure with him. We know how the hearts of our own fathers were filled with a stern joy when the tremendous power of the first Napoleon, which hung like a thunder-cloud over Europe, was dispelled and dissipated. They thought it no shame to triumph in his downfall. The instinct of self-preservation and the love of country kindled these emotions within them. So it was with Jonah; and indeed he had even better ground for the feelings he cherished. For Assyria was a heathen empire, while Israel was the land which God had blessed, the home of His chosen people. Why should an effort be made to save the foes of the true faith? Therefore he disobeyed. He thought himself wiser than God. He imagined that he had the interests of God's peculiar people more truly at heart. But whither shall a man go from the Spirit of the Lord? or whither shall he flee from His presence? If he dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall God's right hand hold him. The traveller who climbs a high mountain in the tropics passes through many zones of temperature, leaving the luxuriant vegetation of the plain to enter a land of pine forests and of colder skies, and finding himself at length in a region where God giveth snow like wool and casteth forth His ice like morsels. If we imagine the order reversed, we shall understand the progress of Jonah's prayer. It starts from the cold and gloomy wilderness, and it ends in the bright and warm sunshine. "Salvation is of the Lord," salvation even for souls so unworthy as mine—that is the last triumphant note. "The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." Thus the first section of the book closes. And this is the truth which it teaches us, the comfortable message which it brings, that the goodness of our God passeth knowledge. There can be no sin so grieving to Him as the sin of His chosen servants—those whom He has brought into His kingdom and entrusted with its high and honourable work. He expects much from them because they have received much from Him; and, when they disappoint Him, He must be wounded to the very heart. He must feel their disloyalty, as David felt the treachery of Ahithophel, his own familiar friend, and the rebellion of Absalom, the son whom he loved most fondly; as Christ felt the cruelty and faithlessness of Peter, the foremost of His disciples. Yet He forgives these worst offenders; He restoreth their souls. Is not this the very acme and climax of His mercy? Is not this what distinguishes Him from the best of men? They are unwilling to permit a servant who has failed them once to have an opportunity of retrieving himself; they will hardly allow him a second chance. Even Paul, the very noblest and tenderest of the apostles, refused to trust John Mark when he turned away from the work, and looked askance on him for many a day.

II. So we come to the second division of the narrative, **THAT WHICH CONCERNS ITSELF WITH NINEVEH.** It is a brief and yet most graphic account which is given us of the grandeur of the city. Its vast size is described; and the imagination is left to complete the scene, to fill in the wide area with royal palaces and crowded markets and vineyards and gardens, to summon up to view the most magnificent of all the capitals of the ancient world. The city was great, great not only to man's thinking but to God's, for that is the meaning of the Hebrew phrase. Looking down from heaven upon it, the Lord of all things admired its extent and stateliness and strength. But He sorrowed over its sin; and He bade His prophet travel all the way from Israel to warn it of its danger. His injunction, deliberately slighted at first, was graciously renewed; and, when it came the second time, Jonah made haste and delayed not to keep God's commandment. It is like what Josephus tells us of Jesus, the son of Anan, the unlettered rustic from the wilderness, who shortly before Jerusalem was destroyed burst in upon the people at the feast of tabernacles with the piercing and oft-repeated cry, "A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four winds, a voice on the bridegroom and the bride, a voice on the whole people." The magistrates and the cold and cynical historian himself thought that there was something preternatural here. But Jerusalem's day of grace was past; happily Nineveh's was not altogether gone; it was the eleventh hour indeed, yet there was time still for repentance. And the city knew the things which belonged to its peace. Critics have sought to throw discredit on the Book of Jonah, because of the physical miracle of the prophet's preservation within the great fish which the book narrates. But it recounts a more wonderful miracle still—the moral miracle of the sudden and

complete repentance of all Nineveh. In part, no doubt, the reason may be found in the superstitious bent and tendency of their minds. Like the ancient Athenians, they were very religious. They would listen eagerly to any word which purported to come from the unseen world. Then, too, they had heard of the God of Israel. They knew something of the marvellous deeds He had wrought on behalf of His people. They may have felt that, although He ruled over an alien race, it would be dangerous to disregard a message which reached them from Him. But Christ hints at a deeper cause for their penitence. They had learned in one way or in another the miraculous history of Jonah's mission. He was "a sign" to them, our Lord affirms. They were aware that he had passed through death to a new life, in order that he might publish God's word in their city; and his deliverance seemed to hold out a prospect of their deliverance, too, if like him they sought pardon and salvation ere it was too late. In this second part of the tale we read of two repentances—that of Nineveh and that of God; and the one is consequent on the other. God turns from the infliction of threatened punishment, because Nineveh turns from its sin. It is always so. Shallow minds have misunderstood these passages which tell us of God's repenting. They have said, "Then He cannot be immutable; He must be fickle and unstedfast, of one mind to-day, of another mind to-morrow." Why should there be such a discrepancy, they have asked, between His words and His deeds—between His announcement of a purpose of evil and His abstention from the execution of that purpose? The matter is mysterious; but of this we may be certain, that there is no caprice in our God. Nay, it is because He is unalterably the same, because His government is so uniformly righteous and just and true, that He must change His procedure toward men when their relation toward Him is changed. Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne. If we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes—if we sorrow over our disobedience with a godly sorrow—He will lose none of His consistency when He forgives us. He will remain a just God while He is a Saviour; rather, He will prove Himself a just God simply because He shows Himself a Saviour.

III. The third section of THE HISTORY TAKES US BACK TO JONAH. We should have supposed that, after the experience through which he had gone, he would never again murmur against God; but the old nature dies hard in all of us, even in the prophets and ministers of the Lord. Jonah, with that proud Hebrew heart within him, was utterly displeased at the result of his mission. He grew weary of life itself. He prayed that he might die. He built a little booth on the hills to the east of Nineveh, and sat under its shadow for forty days, still hoping for the worst—sat there, pitiless and revengeful, "till he might see what would become of the city." And God was grieved that His child should be of such a mind, and should foster so carefully a spirit the very opposite of His own. He would cure him of this bitterness of soul. So He caused a wide-spreading plant—the *Palma Christi*, botanists call it—to spring up and cover with its refreshing shade the prophet's booth, out there on the hot and parched hillside. But Jonah had scarcely commenced to rejoice in the welcome shelter when God sent some destructive insects against the tall and graceful Palmchrist, to strip it of its leaves and to make it pine away. Now was God's opportunity. He spoke to His prophet, not angrily but yet most effectually. He asked him a significant question. "Thou couldst have pity on a short-lived plant," He said, "which cost thee nothing, which thou hadst not trained or watered; thou art displeased on account of its loss; and shall not I, who am Maker and King of all, have compassion on a great city full of souls that are ready to perish? Are not these much better than the gourd?" And Jonah adds not a word more. He drops his pen when he has recorded God's tender and pregnant reproof. It is a most impressive contrast which this Divine question draws between man's pity and God's. We think with kindness of the objects of the natural world—of the flowers so blue and golden which are the stars in the firmament of the lower earth, of the trees which shelter us from the heat of the noonday sun. It is true that these flowers and trees have but a short life at the longest. It is true also that we did not call them into being of ourselves. We have not laboured for them, neither made them to grow. Yet we are interested in them. We love them after a true fashion. But God, while He forgets none of His works, is most deeply concerned about His human creatures. Jonah might sorrow over the gourd; Jonah's Lord sorrowed over the souls of the Ninevites. It was but one; and they were many, "a whole cityful" of

men and women and children. It had been sent to him without any thought or toil of his ; but God had given them their being ; they were His sons and daughters. He was their Father. Still, it is chiefly for souls like yours and mine, gifted with many great powers and with an undying life, that God yearns. Their redemption He accounts precious. To bring about their salvation He plans and pleads and strives. He has His richest joy when His children who were dead live again, and when the lost are found. And shall we not give Him this joy ? Shall we not look unto Him and be saved ? These, then, are the three parts of the Book of Jonah. The great difficulty in reference to the book is this : Is it historical ? Is it a narrative of what actually happened ? Or is it an allegory, a fable fraught with important meaning ? The strange events which it describes—did they really occur, or had they an existence only in the mind of him who wrote them down ? To me there is one reason which is sufficient to prove that these chapters are a true history. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of them as such. He declared that the imprisonment of the ancient prophet in the depths of the sea typified His own death and burial and resurrection. "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly," He said, "so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The one event was symbolic of the other. And once again, He affirmed that the men of Nineveh condemned by their repentance the men of His own generation. But how could He have instituted such a comparison if Jonah had never passed through the streets and squares of the Assyrian city, startling its inhabitants from their lethargy by his terrible cry ? Christ must have reckoned this Old Testament prophecy a reliable narrative of actual occurrences. The great lesson of the book is the lesson that God loves all men—Greek and Jew, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free. The prophet did not think that it was so. With the spiritual pride—the grudging narrow-mindedness—of his people strong in his breast, he imagined that only the chosen race was dear to God. He did not dream that Nineveh could be great in His sight. "He sought the honour of Israel, the son," an old rabbi said, "rather than the honour of Jehovah, the Father." But he was taught the truth by little and little through the vicissitudes of his history. Let us believe it and rejoice in it. God would have all men to be saved. His love is infinite, like Himself. "In every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." Yes, and our hearts will show likest His when they despair of none, and hold aloof from none, and seek and save all. That is the spirit inculcated upon us by the Gospel of the New Testament ; but the Old Testament, too, is full of the rich, free, evangelical Gospel. It rings with the same music. (*Original Secession Magazine.*)

THE BOOK OF JONAH.—One thing that strikes the careful reader of the Book of Jonah is its difference from the other books in the canon of Scripture among which it is classed, and in the midst of which it is placed. It does not consist of any connected series of prophetic discourses bearing upon the future of God's kingdom and the nations of the earth, such as are found in the Books of Hosea and Amos ; neither does it consist of one distinct prophecy, such as that contained in the Book of Obadiah, by which it is immediately preceded. It rather bears the character of a history of a special mission to a heathen city, which was laid upon one of the prophets. The biographical element in it is stronger than in other prophetic books, and surrounds it with a peculiar interest and attraction. This position in the canon of Scripture indicates the view taken of it by those who arranged it ; and this view has, with very few exceptions, been adopted by both the Jewish and Christian Church. In discussing the book we may first state this view, and then deal with the objections which have been urged against it. In this old view there is embraced these four points—1. That the facts it narrates possess a symbolico-typical meaning. If it had been only the record of events that happened to the prophet in the fulfilment of a divinely intrusted mission there could be no valid reason for its being placed among the prophetic books. It would have found a more fitting place in the historical books, where we have mention of one prophecy that was given through Jonah. It is in this connection that we have the record of remarkable incidents in the lives of the great prophets Elijah and Elisha. From its being found where it is, the Book of Jonah must have been regarded as a practical prophecy, and the facts which it narrates must have been viewed as invested with a symbolical and typical meaning. This is the character it has sustained in the opinion of the great majority of both Jewish and Christian interpreters. "The book is," in the language of one who has well expressed this view, "in

a great measure historical, but in such a manner that, in the history itself, there is hidden the mystery of the greatest prophecy, and that Jonah proves himself to be a true prophet by the events that happened to him not less than by his utterances." It is easy to understand how those facts connected with Jonah's mission to Nineveh bore against the exclusiveness and bigoted isolation in which the Jews shut themselves up. That there was mercy for the Gentile world was taught from the very first, for the promise to Abraham ran in these terms: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." But Jonah was the first to teach it plainly and directly to the Jews, and it was taught himself by the wonderful incidents connected with his mission to Nineveh. But this is not all the teaching of the book according to common Christian interpretation. There was in this mission not only a prefiguring or foreshadowing of the time when mercy would be extended to the Gentile world, but also a prefiguring of the way in which this was to be brought about. When Jonah rebels against the command to go to Nineveh, and seeks by flight to escape from the duties of his prophetic office, he is overtaken by a terrific storm. It is only allayed by his being thrown into the angry waves, and he remained entombed within a living grave beneath the waters for three days. After his resurrection from this living grave he goes to Nineveh, the inhabitants of which repent at his preaching and escape the threatened and impending judgment of God. In this there was a type of Christ's burial and resurrection, the subsequent preaching of the Gospel among the nations, and the conversion of the Gentiles. According to this view, then, there is embodied in the facts narrated in the book a hidden prophecy of Christ's work, the meaning of which was not made plain until He came. 2. Regarded in this light, the book has been received as historically true. It is in marvellous events which actually took place in the prophet's own experience—and not in vision only—that the prophecy lies. Just as in the birth of Isaac, Samson and Samuel we have a foreshadowing of the miraculous birth of Christ: in the death of Abel, and the substitute for Isaac, there was prefigured Christ's death. These typical events are all regarded as historical—as having transpired in the region of actual life, and not in the region of vision. 3. The position of this book in the canon indicates that it belongs to the earliest or Assyrian period of Scripture prophecy. In the collection of the minor prophets it is placed among those who prophesied during this period. Some have even thought that it was placed immediately after Obadiah, because Jonah was regarded as "the ambassador to the heathen" mentioned in his prophecy. 4. This assignation of the book to an early period was connected with the belief that Jonah himself was its author. Objection has been taken to its historical truthfulness, first, on the ground of the miraculous element contained in it. As might have been anticipated, it became a special object of attack on the part of those who sought to explain Scripture narratives on rationalistic principles and to eliminate from them the element of the supernatural. Some at first were disposed to regard it as a Jewish adaptation of heathen legends about the deliverance of heroes from sea monsters. But it was soon perceived that this account of the story was an absurd one, and that there was not the slightest probability of its being derived either mediately or immediately from heathen fables. The likelihood is all the other way, if there is any connection at all between them. The fact that Jerome states that near Joppa lay rocks which were pointed out to him as those to which Andromache was bound when exposed to the sea monster gives some maintenance to the thought that the story of Jonah may have passed through Phœnicia in corrupted form to Greece. Modern rationalists incline to the view that it is simply a parable or tale designed to teach an important lesson. It is not regarded by them as a record of actual events, but simply as a parable or myth attached to a historical name by which are inculcated truths important for the age in which it was written. All miracles, either in actual event or in prophetic intimation, are taken out of it. The design of the book, which on this view must have been written long after the time of Jonah, was simply to teach Israel lessons that were being too much forgotten, and not to foreshadow or foretell any coming event. Ewald thinks that it was designed to show how the true fear of God and repentance bring salvation, first in the case of the heathen sailors, then in the case of Jonah, and lastly in the case of the Ninevites. Bleek conceives it to have been written by an intelligent liberal-minded Jew for the purpose of exposing the narrow religious particularism which prevailed among his countrymen. It was, as we have mentioned, the miraculous element in the book that, in the first instance, led to the adoption of this theory. Not only does it

record miracles, but, without an understanding of the prophet's design, miracles of the most strange and startling description. It is a true principle that God never wastes His power—never works any miracles except for purposes worthy of Himself. But in this circumscribed view of the book there appears to be a useless expenditure of miraculous power. These lessons could surely have been taught without the prophet's being required to pass through such wonderful experiences. Even to those who have no philosophical objections to miracles in themselves, the working of such miracles for this end can hardly but appear uncalled for and unnecessary. But when we view the book as essentially a practical prophecy designed to prefigure by typical events the burial and resurrection of Christ, and through this the opening of the gates of mercy to the Gentile world, there can be no difficulty on the part of any who believe miracles possible to accept those recorded here as true. No one will venture to say that Jonah's preservation in the belly of the great fish, and his remarkable deliverance, viewed as charged with typical and prophetic meaning, was an unnecessary exhibition of Divine power. No one will venture to say either that the miraculous growth and miraculous destruction of the gourd was needless—if by it God's mercy to the heathen world was vindicated, and its truth placed in the very forefront of the prophetic writings. Many have thought, not without reason, that in this book we have the oldest written prophecy, and that it is because this truth is so prominent here that it is so conspicuously exhibited in all subsequent prophetic writings. It gives the keynote to them all, and, as serving this purpose, the miracles recorded in it cannot be regarded as useless manifestations of supernatural power. The miracles themselves too have oftentimes been so presented as to make faith as difficult as possible. It is not everyone that can say that though it had been recorded that Jonah had swallowed the whale it would not have affected or shaken their faith in the story. Faith, though it may soar high above reason, cannot accept what plainly contradicts its teachings and exceeds the utmost bounds of possibility. Attempts have been made to show that it is altogether impossible for the whale—which is the fish spoken of by our Lord when referring to the sign of Jonas—to have accomplished the feat here ascribed to it unless some remarkable change had been effected upon its structure. Some have allowed these attempts to weigh so much with them that they have intensified the miracle by insisting either that this change was effected or that a special fish was created by God for the emergency. The miracle proper seems to have consisted in the preservation of Jonah in his living grave for three days, and then being vomited unhurt upon the land. The sudden growth and destruction of the gourd becomes, on closer examination, merely a supernatural quickening of the power of nature. But objections have been taken to the old view of the book, not only on the ground of its miraculous element, but also on the ground of its literary construction and features. It bears a resemblance to the myths or parables that spring up in the course of a nation's literature and become attached to historical names. An example of this may be found in the tales which have gathered around our Saxon King Arthur, in the last development of which by Tennyson there is believed to be embodied moral and spiritual truth. Because of this resemblance this book is assigned to this class of literary production. On this view it must have been written as a parable with the design of rebuking the narrowness and exclusiveness of the Jewish people. The cause of its being connected with Jonah may have been some tradition of his having been sent to Nineveh on an errand of mercy. In regard to this view of the book we may note, that were it thoroughly established it would not destroy its prophetic value. The parable, instead of the actual miraculous events, as in the old view, would become prophetic. It would teach the boundless mercy of God, by prefiguring the burial and resurrection of Christ, the subsequent calling of the Gentiles, and their reception into the kingdom of God. "It would be," as has been said, "an epitome of prophecy, of the mediatorial work of Christ." The difficulties in the way of accepting this new critical view seem to us many and insurmountable. I. We cannot regard the argument from the literary construction of the books of the Bible and their resemblance to the literary works of other nations as very safe or conclusive. It may be quite valid and conclusive for those who accept the Bible simply as the growth of Hebrew literature—simply as the product of the national mind and consciousness in the various stages of its growth and decay; but not for those who accept it as a supernatural revelation of the God of the Hebrews. The supernatural element not only in narrative, experience, and prophecy, but also in the very composition itself, must be taken into account. This

puts a vast difference between the literature of the nation of Israel, along the whole line of its history, and the literature of any other nation. It is a growth, but it is not the product of genius or mere piety. It is the result of a continued revelation and inspiration. To refer again to King Arthur, the growth of legends around his name has led many to question if he was a historical person at all, and we cannot believe that God would give countenance to anything that would tend to lead to this confusion. The employment of parables in itself is not wrong, for Christ Himself frequently took advantage of this mode of instruction. But it was always done by Him openly, and so that His hearers understood that His statements were parabolical. There was no difficulty in distinguishing between the parts of His teaching that were parabolical and those parts which were historical. He never attached any of His parables to historical names. II. We may say that this new view of the book tends to shake our faith in other historical parts of Scripture. It bears a resemblance, both in its form and contents, to the narratives of remarkable incidents in the lives of Elijah and Elisha. If this be a parable, why may we not regard the others as possessing the same mythical character? III. This book bears many marks of being authentic history. It is, indeed, fragmentary, and does not furnish us with full information on all points about which our curiosity is aroused. It does not tell us anything about Jonah's life and labours previous to his call to go to Nineveh. It does not tell us anything about the spot where he was vomited by the fish upon the dry land, nor describe his journey to Nineveh; and some have seen in this evidence that it is not true history, but fable. "But," as Keil has remarked, "the assertion that completeness in all external circumstances which would serve to gratify curiosity rather than help to an understanding of the true facts of the case, is indispensable to the truth of any historical narrative, is one which might expose the whole of the historical writings of antiquity to criticism, but can never shake their truths. There is not a single one of the ancient historians in whose works such completeness as this can be found; and still less do the Biblical historians aim at communicating such things as have no close connection with the main object of the narrative, or with the religious significance of the facts themselves." This lack of detail in the narrative may also be accounted for by its prophetic character. It is not the design of the writer simply to give a historical account of Jonah's mission to Nineveh, but to present those incidents in connection with it which have a typical and prophetic signification. But while the narrative is by no means complete, there seems to us to be an unmistakable touch of reality in the experience of Jonah as here described. In the description of his feelings and conduct, when the call came to him to go to Nineveh; in his prayer in his wonderful grave; and in the record of his feelings and conduct under the unwished for and disappointing success of his mission, there is something so strange and yet so natural as to place them outside the domain of fiction. And when the narrative touches upon points on which any light can be thrown by the researches into antiquity, these researches have confirmed its truthfulness. The attempt to show from the statement in the third verse of the third chapter, "and Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey," that the greatness of Nineveh was a thing of the past when the book was written, has been perfectly futile. The plain meaning of the words is, as granted even by the rationalistic critics themselves, that Nineveh was a city of vast dimensions when Jonah reached it, in the prosecution of his heaven-given mission. Its dimensions as thus indicated have been found to correspond with the description of ancient profane historians, and with recent examination of the ruins of this city. The command too, issued by the King of Assyria, in proclaiming a national fast to put sackcloth on the beasts and flocks and make them fast, is quite in accordance with the customs which are known to have prevailed in the ancient Persian Empire. The book thus bears traces of having been written by one who had seen Nineveh in its greatness and glory, and who had gained some acquaintance with its customs. IV. We would simply mention that the book was received as historical by the Jews. The fact is indisputable, whatever weight may be attached to it in determining its literary character. V. The book was regarded as historical by our Lord Himself. In this reference there is also established the reality of the marvellous circumstances attending the mission. He speaks to us of Jonah's being in the belly of the great fish as a sign, σημειον, a term which is often applied to His own miraculous deeds, in which, through deliverance from bodily diseases, was typified His great work of spiritual salvation. It was thus spoken of by Him as a real miracle, and designed by God

to be a type of the still greater miracle of His own resurrection. And receiving the book as historical, the most likely author is Jonah himself. The objection against assigning it to so early a period because of the Aramaic colouring of its language has been so admirably dealt with by Dr. Payne Smith that we will conclude by quoting his answer to it. "This argument proves nothing; for scholars are not by any means agreed whether these Aramaisms belong or not to the declining age of Jewish literature, or whether they may not have been the patois or vernacular dialect of the country people. There is very much to make it probable that pure Hebrew was the language only of people of the highest caste, the kings and princes, the priests and prophets of Jerusalem, or at most of Judah; and that the mass of the people spoke Aramaic, or a debased Hebrew full of Aramaic words. Even with us many phrases which strike us as Americanisms are thoroughly good English forms, which, however, have not been used in literature, but belong to certain country districts where, if some poet had arisen, or writer of repute, they would, from his pages, have won their way into the language of scholars. Now, Jonah was of Gath-hepher, a village far away to the North in the tribe of Zabulon. If he had used no words except such as were employed by Isaiah, critics might with good reason have disputed the authenticity of the book. They might fairly have said, 'This book was not written by a man brought up in the provinces, but by one of the *literati* of Jerusalem; some practised hand there has employed the legend of Jonah as a vehicle for much pleasing instruction, and has constructed out of it a very admirable allegory.' " (R. Morton.)

IS THE BOOK OF JONAH TRUE HISTORY?—Let us examine the question critically, but fairly: Was there ever such a man as Jonah? I answer, there is just as good evidence of his being a real personality as is found in the case of any other of the prophets; and if we assume him to be a mythical character we may as well make a like assumption respecting almost any other personality brought before us in the Old Testament. He is distinctly mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25. Here he is mentioned in an incidental way (which is the most convincing); his father's name is also given, and he is designated as "the prophet." The identification is complete. He is also spoken of in Tobit, one of the apocryphal books, dating about 200 B.C. But far overtopping all other evidence, and in itself of sufficient force to settle any question whatever with those who accept the New Testament history and Christ's commission as the Son of God, is what is recorded in Matt. xii. 38-41, and also in Luke xi. 29-32. Let the reader please notice that Christ does not say, "as Jonah was represented as," &c., as if this book were a fictitious story. Neither does He refer to any moral lesson that this book might be intended to teach; but He simply refers to the *facts* recorded in the book. That Christ believed and accepted the genuineness and truthfulness of this history is too plain for argument. And was He mistaken in regard to it? If He did not know, what becomes of His Messiahship? Did Christ refer to some Münchhausen fiction when He gave Jonah's history to the generation in which He lived as an infallible sign of His Messiahship; and that He should rise from the dead on the third day? Are we to compare the whole teaching of the Gospel respecting Christ's resurrection to Gulliver's travels? That is just what Christ Himself did if there be only a wild piece of fiction in the Book of Jonah. As it was with Jonah, so shall it be with the Son of Man, says Christ. Whoever makes Jonah to be a dream makes the resurrection of Christ to be also a dream. I call attention to the form of introducing the book as being the same which is found in other books of the prophecies. For example, "the word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri"; "the word of the Lord that came unto Joel, the son of Pethuel"; "the word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah, the son of Cushi"; "the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah"; and so "the word of the Lord that came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai." The writer of this book evidently intended that the reader should accept it as genuine history; and he is justly chargeable with intentional deception if it is not so. I may state further that the Jews always regarded this book as true history (Josephus, ix. 11, sec. 2). And so the Christian Church has esteemed it such with great unanimity. One who spends hours and days in the catacombs of Rome sees the representation of this history on the walls many times repeated. I come in the next place to argue for the truth of this history from what it says about Nineveh. And this Book of Jonah has been illuminated and illustrated and substantiated by the discoveries of the nineteenth century, so that what sceptics used to say about it no one would think of saying

now. They argued up to 1841 that there could not possibly have been such a city as is described in this book, because the historians and geographers (Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and Ptolemy) made no mention of it, and certainly they would have spoken of it if there had been a city of three days' journey around it; and one containing one hundred and twenty thousand infants who did not know their right hand from their left. So they said, Alexander would have found it and fought it. But what now? This city, after having been buried up for more than twenty-five hundred years, was discovered in 1841; and every competent judge knows now that it was as large as this book represents it. It might easily have contained more than one hundred and twenty thousand infants. Marvellous are the testimonies of these uncovered monuments at Nineveh; and only a small part, probably, of the whole is yet in our hands. But already Hiram, king of Tyre, 1000 B.C., is recognised in these records at Nineveh. Benhadad and Jehu, 900 B.C., Hezekiah, king of Judah, Sennacherib and Lachish reappear. Demonstrations of high civilisation but monumental wickedness abound. We understand now why the Greek historians and the Roman say nothing about great Nineveh. Simply because they knew nothing about it. For although it was spared more than one hundred and fifty years after Jonah's day, it had been blotted out more than three hundred years before Alexander was born; more than two hundred years before Herodotus was born; nearly three hundred years before Xenophon was born; more than five hundred years before Ptolemy, Diodorus Siculus, or Strabo had learned their alphabet. It had been founded more than 2000 B.C. In Gen. x. 11 we read, "Out of that land went forth Asshur and builded Nineveh." It was standing in the day of its greatest glory in Jonah's time. It was finally destroyed about 713 B.C., in accordance with the terrible words of prophecy uttered by Nahum. For two years it was besieged by the Medes and Babylonians, and at that time was completely devastated. Herodotus passed over the site two hundred and fifty years later, but makes no mention of even any visible ruins. Neither does Xenophon. Is it incredible that Jonah should have been sent to such a city on such an errand of mercy? Is it incredible that he should have hesitated to undertake the mission? Is it incredible that he should have taken a ship for Joppa? He was born only sixty miles from that city, at Gath-hepher. Is it incredible that a storm should have overtaken him? It was in those same waters that Paul went through the trying experiences narrated in the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth chapters of Acts. Is there anything incredible in the account of the sailors praying to their respective gods? Is there anything incredible in a sea monster following a ship, ready to swallow a man if he should be thrown overboard? This story is often spoken of as the story of "Jonah and the whale," but the Hebrew word "*dagh*" is one of wide import. Our translation in the Old Testament calls it "a great fish"; in the New Testament it is called a "whale." Just five years ago in the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, vouched for by the editors, was a communication from a sea captain, saying that it was a mistake to maintain that the "great fish" could not have been a whale; and he went on to say that he had no interest in defending Jonah, or in defending our New Testament translation; but in the interest of natural science and of simple truth he stated that, having been for some years the captain of a whaling vessel, he knew that the sperm-whale could easily swallow a man whole; that one member of his crew, weighing one hundred and seventy pounds, had repeatedly crawled through a whale's throat (different whales at different times) as the throat lay on the deck of the ship. And then he proceeded to narrate a particular case of personal experience in which a man weighing one hundred and sixty-five pounds was one of his helpers; and one day they were in an exciting chase after some whales, when one of the boats was struck by one of the whales and the men were thrown out. All of them were successful in getting back into the boat save one, whom they missed on calling the roll after they had captured the monster they were pursuing. They gave him up for lost; but on cutting up the whale the next day they found him inside—unconscious, but alive. He was restored, and was still living, and was following his vocation at the time the captain wrote. Courbet, in *Cosmos*, of March 7, 1895, writes (and let the reader observe that this is not "a fish story" by a romancer, nor "a sailor's yarn," but the report of a scientific expedition; and such substantially are all the testimonies which I quote): "The discoveries of the Prince of Monaco were such as to relieve me of all difficulty in believing the Bible story that a whale swallowed Jonah." A writer in the *Academy of Sciences*—M. Joubin—says: "A sperm whale can easily

swallow an animal taller and heavier than a man." And he adds : " The animals when swallowed can keep alive some time in the whale's stomach." Lyman Abbott is reported as stirring up the mirth of his congregation a while ago by alluding to the " half-digested man Jonah." But if Lyman Abbott will study physiology a little he will learn that, although the gastric fluid is a remarkably powerful solvent, capable of dissolving many solid substances, yet it has no power whatever over living substances. And if he used a very little logic, superadded to his physiology, he would see that unless this were true the gastric fluid would at once assail the coats of the stomach itself, and render all animal life impossible. This is one of those wonderful proofs of the Divine wisdom in the working of living organisms. Jonah must first die before digestion could even begin. If we deny all miracles, then we must away with all revelation and all the supernatural. " But," says one, " I am prepared to admit miracles wherever there is a justifying reason ; but what reason is there here ? " Think a moment ; think a moment. Here was a wicked city going to destruction. God so loved them that He bade His servant give them warning ; and when he obeyed the Divine voice the whole city was moved to turn away from their sins, and as a matter of history, prolonged their existence for the space of more than a hundred years. And no doubt Jonah's wonderful experience proved to be as the mighty power of God in bringing about the result. What a preacher Jonah must have been after that living burial ! The Lord knows when it is worth while to work a miracle ; and a more satisfactory reason for one than is found in this history no man ought to ask. Jonah was worth saving ; the Ninevites were worth saving ; the one hundred and twenty thousand infants especially were worth saving. (*E. B. Fairfield, D.D.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

JONAH.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1-3. Now the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah.—*Jonah, the runaway prophet*:—The commission may be viewed—I. IN ITS SOURCE. It is—1. Supreme, as the Word of the Lord. 2. Peremptory; it is absolute, imperative, final. 3. Honourable. As associating the commissioned with the commissioner. Investing him with royal rights, privileges, honours. II. IN ITS RECIPIENT. Jonah. 1. In his filial relationship: the son. 2. In his official capacity: prophet. Learn—(1) That in the economy of moral purposes God makes use of creature agency. (2) That appointments in this economy are specific and sovereign. (3) That the rewards of faithfulness in Christian service will be promotion here, and coronation hereafter. III. IN ITS PURPOSE. “Arise, go to Nineveh.” It is—1. A summons to activity. Shake off dull sloth. Rouse thee from careless ease. (1) The physical plays an important part in the execution of Divine purposes. (2) The will too must give its sanction, or all the activities will be held in restless subjection. Where there is no will-power a man is a mere tool in the hands of others. 2. A call to arduous duty. Note—(1) Its sphere. “Nineveh, that great city.” In God’s great busy world there is a definite sphere for everyone. (2) Its spirit. “Cry against it.” Energy was to rise to its highest point. To cry requires energy of soul; a vivid realisation of sin, and moral courage. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The behests of God*:—We are apt to think that this coming of the Word of the Lord to men in ancient times was so special a circumstance that it has no application to ourselves. How rarely it occurs to us that he who spoke to the prophets in times past is now speaking unto us as directly and vividly, by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. How are we to understand that the Word of the Lord has come to us? Have we a strong conviction of duty? That is the Word of the Lord. We should ask, not “what is expedient?” but “what is right?” If a thing is right, then it is a revelation from God; it is a testimony of the Holy Ghost in my heart; and at all risks it must be done. No man knows what he is, and what he can do, until he knows the severity of the behests of God. Our call, like Jonah’s, is to go wherever wickedness is, and cry against it. Every child of God is to be a protesting prophet. Every earnest man is to have no difficulty in finding the word of condemnation when he comes into the presence of sin. In Jonah we have a man falling below the great occasions of life. Every man has some great chance put into his hands. How possible it is to be doing instead some little peddling work, to be mistaking fuss for energy, and an idle industry for that holy consecration which absorbs every power. It is said that Jonah “paid his fare.” How particular some of us are about these little pedantries of morality! Many of us are making up by pedantries what we are wanting in the principles of our life. We have good points without having a good soul; we have beautiful characteristics without having a solid and undoubted character. Jonah has paid his fare, but he has forsaken God. Can a man like that do anything right? It is said that the mariners “cast forth their wares.” The bad man never suffers alone. This bad man causes a loss of property. He paid his fare, but it was taken out again in the loss of the wares. Wickedness is the cause of social loss.

What a crying out for gods there is in the time of trouble ! Note the instinctiveness of the religious element that is in man. We are all religious. What was wrong was found out at last, in the case of Jonah, and they cast him into the sea, which then ceased from its raging. Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) Jonah was a man of the northern kingdom,—an Israelite prophet, who had been foretelling the highest prosperity to which the Ten Tribes ever attained, and the widest extension which, under Jeroboam II., their territory ever received. Nineveh was a Gentile, that is to say, a heathen city ; the very city, moreover, from which were to come those judgments and the destruction which prophets like Jonah's contemporary, Amos, were about this time beginning to announce as certain to fall upon Israel at no very distant date. Jonah, the Israelite, then, was sent to a heathen city, and—whether he knew it or not—to that particular enemy of his country from which there was most to fear. To an Israelite patriot, with even the smallest intimation of this, how natural to say, "To Nineveh ?" No, let Nineveh go on and sin, and perish ; the sooner the safer for my country. To warn Nineveh, and so to turn away its doom—what is that but to keep alive the fire which is to consume our Samaria and our national life ? In any case, whether Jonah felt any patriotic difficulty or not, the religious difficulty was great enough. To go to heathen people with God's message, one of mercy as he saw clearly, quite as much as of judgment—that alone was repugnant to all his instincts. "No ; rather let me no longer be one of the prophets who stand in the presence of Jehovah, ready for any errand, awaiting His commands. Rather let me lay down my office, and go out from before His face. Let me die first !" That is the heart of a good man, but of a narrow one. It is not the heart of the God even of the Old Testament. It is sometimes made matter of reproach to the New Testament, and to Christianity, as it is there expounded, that it makes little or no account of patriotism. There is some truth in the criticism ; but why ? Patriotism has often been a noble thing ; but it is really a narrow thing, narrower, at any rate, than the heart and view of God. The patriot sees and loves his fellow-countrymen ; God only sees man ! He loves Israel, even to idolatrous Israel of the Ten Tribes. But God loves the world. God so loved the world that He would have one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of the prophetic writers to go and offer His mercy to a heathen city, the enemy of His people. (*H. J. Foster.*) *The character of Jonah* :—One of the most remarkable facts about the Book of Jonah is, that while he himself is so prominent in it, yet there is not a word from beginning to end of comment upon his character and conduct. No word is said of his state of mind, his sense of sin, his repentance, his return to the attitude of submission and prompt obedience to the Divine command. The facts are set before us in the barest, most naked simplicity, without one single sentence of reflection. The only probable and consistent view of the work is, that Jonah wrote it himself. He therefore said as little about himself as possible. He told the facts with all their weight of meaning against his own character, just as they were, without a line of exculpation or condemnation. 1. The first point at which the narrative may be said to touch the personal character of the prophet is the flight to Joppa. Here is a man, conscious of special inspiration and authority, doing direct violence to the Word of the Most High ! We must begin our study with this conviction—Jonah meant nothing throughout like determined rebellion against God. From the first he seems to have understood the mission to have been one of mercy, and not of destruction. The man had laid hold of the thought of Divine goodness and compassion. Jonah's sin was not apostasy from God. He simply shrunk from the mission. The struggle in Jonah's mind must have been the result either of personal feeling or of mistaken ideas. It may have been personal feeling that lay at the root of his conduct. There was personal danger. He did not care to preach to heathen. But his feelings were founded on false ideas about God, and about the people of God, and their vocation. Another view may be taken of Jonah's mind. He anticipated the result of his mission, and did not like it. His prediction would be falsified in the result. And a mission to the stronghold of heathenism seemed quite a new departure in the religious history of Israel. It seemed to Jonah a change in the Divine action, so stupendous that he could not drive out of his mind doubts as to the authority of the message. 2. Look at another point,—the sleep into which the prophet fell instantly that he went down into the ship is quite consistent with a state of perplexity and fear. He was so wearied with the mental strain and struggle, so burdened with the weight

of a reproachful conscience, that he gladly hid himself from the faces of his fellow-men, and sought the darkness and solitude of his sleeping place, where nature asserted its demands, and he was soon wrapt in unconsciousness. When he was awakened he had no crime to confess, such as heathen men would understand, and condemn by the light of moral law. Jonah's character was defective rather than corrupt. Like the Apostle Peter, he needed a great deal of teaching, but the root of his piety was sound and deep. He put himself at once into the hands of the chastising Jehovah. (*R. A. Redford, M.A.*) *Jonah regarded as a type:—* 1. In his solemn discovery and apprehension. Sin hath entered among us, and the Creator is angry. Some victim is wanting to pacify His just indignation; but where is the sacrifice to be found? At length a merciful Heaven interposes, and the sacrifice is revealed. 2. In the generous self-devotement of the prophet. Applied to the doctrine of substitution, everything is plain, everything is instructive. 3. In his descent to the place of the dead. Two circumstances in the descent of Jonah. (1) His descent to the grave. "Out of the belly of hell." (2) In the midst of all this suffering the prophet was yet alive. 4. In the doctrine of Messiah's resurrection. 5. In the mission of Jonah to the Gentiles. His was just the commission of Jesus. To the lost sheep of the house of Israel He first turned His eyes; then He sent His disciples to the four winds of heaven, saying, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." (*James Simpson.*)

Ver. 2. Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it.—*The comparative corruption of great cities:—*Proposition. That though by no means exclusively, yet in cities that are great and luxurious, integrity is exposed to peculiar snares, and depravity cherished to an extraordinary growth. I. EXPLAIN THIS PROPOSITION. 1. We confine human depravity to no combination of circumstances. In some situations, it is true, the poison may evolve its noxious qualities more fully and freely than in others; but in one way or another it makes itself manifest in all. It is not intended to represent this depravity as in itself essential to our nature. Sin is not essential, but accidental, to our nature. 2. It should also be observed, that in great cities there are even advantages which are nowhere else to be so fully enjoyed. The children of this world, wise in their generation, instantly discern the advantages of city situations, in reference to their particular pursuits. Beside the civil and intellectual, there are moral and religious advantages which, in more sequestered situations, we can scarcely hope to enjoy. In cities there is an easy and regular access to the ordinances of grace. 3. There are peculiar temptations, to which more obscure situations are liable. In solitude the mind is in danger of being filled with prejudices, and the heart with passions, which at once destroy present tranquillity and endanger future well-being. II. ILLUSTRATE THE SUBJECT BEFORE US. That in populous cities corruption peculiarly prevails. Consider—1. The multitude of transgressors. 2. The aggravated nature of the sins there particularly indulged. 3. The individual sinner usually attains a degree of presumptuous hardness, not common in less frequented scenes. III. THE CAUSES FROM WHICH THIS PECULIAR DEPRAVITY PROCEEDS. 1. The depravity of the heart is the groundwork of the whole. 2. Neglect of parental instruction. 3. The infectious power of example. 4. The chilling influence of the world. 5. The seducing influence of luxury. (*James Simpson.*) *Every man his call:—*This same event comes to every man. Do not suppose that Jonah is a lonely creature afar off in the ages somewhere, having an experience unique and incommunicable. The experience of Jonah is the experience of every good man. What is your call in life? To go wherever wickedness is, and cry against it. Nineveh has perished, but Ninevish iniquity is upon our streets, is throwing its shadow upon our thresholds, is sending a keen wail of pain and blasphemy through the very air that blows about us. Every child of God is to be a protesting prophet. Every earnest man is to have no difficulty in finding the word of condemnation when he comes into the presence of sin. If we could realise this call, all the Lord's people would be prophets. Is it not a burden to speak against wickedness? Where is the man that dare do it? It is easy to condemn wickedness generally. The difficulty is to say to the individual—"Thou art the man." Almost anybody can stand up before a thousand people, and speak against iniquity in the mass. But he must be a lion from God that dare say to the individual criminal, "I charge you, in the name of the Living One, with doing things that are wrong." Still, it is well that we should have men who stand up in the midst of cities, and

who let the cities know that there are eyes upon them that see things in moral relationships, and aspects, and consequences: and woe betide the cities of the earth when the voice of the prophet is no longer heard in them. It is a harsh voice, it is a piercing cry; but believe it, and regeneration comes, and restoration and lost peace return, and things are set right before the face of God. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Jonah's commission*.—The city to which he was commissioned was remarkable for its magnitude and its wickedness. 1. Nineveh was a great city in many respects. (1) It was of great antiquity (Gen. x. 9-12). (2) It was great in respect of its power. It was the chief city of the mightiest monarchy in the world. (3) In respect of its wealth. (4) In respect of its extent. Probably sixty miles in circumference. (5) In respect of its population. Probably 600,000 persons resided within its walls. 2. Nineveh was a guilty city. Cruelty was the characteristic vice. No man in Nineveh was secure from the violence to which its people were prone. 3. Nineveh was a Gentile city. It was this circumstance which chiefly rendered the commission addressed to Jonah so remarkable. It was so unusual that it startled Jonah. God displayed His interest in the welfare of mankind at large, even at that remote and unripe epoch. The Israelites were slow to learn that God did thus interest Himself in the welfare of the Gentiles. Now consider the disobedience of Jonah to the mandate addressed to him. The prophet's object was to flee from the presence of the Lord; i.e., to get as far as possible beyond the range of those manifestations of the Divine presence which were peculiar to Palestine and its neighbourhood. Jonah sought to escape from such a consciousness of the Divine presence as he had been accustomed to experience in his own country, and may have regarded as peculiar to it. The presence of the Lord had become intolerable to Jonah from the moment that his want of sympathy with the Divine will in relation to Nineveh had become apparent to himself. Moreover, Jonah was an official of high rank in the theocracy, and his words may mean, "I will resign my office rather than undertake this duty." But he had no right to resign the office he held in the service of Jehovah. His guilt and presumption are apparent; but have we not been as guilty and presumptuous as he; shrinking from duties that we knew were laid upon us? (*Samuel Clift Burn.*) *Jonah sent to Nineveh*.—A natural interpretation of the book is this,—Jonah had as great contempt for the heathen as his bigoted brethren of Israel. He was sent on a mission of mercy to his political enemies. As he had never learned to love his enemies, he fled from so distasteful a service. He was disciplined in the stomach of a fish till he was willing to deliver formally the commission given. He preached in Nineveh, still hating those who, if spared, might overthrow Israel. He was further disciplined by the lesson of the gourd. He at last learned the lesson of pity, and rejoiced in the good that accrued to his enemies, singing, "Salvation is of the Lord."

I. THE PROPHET'S COMMISSION TO BLESS HIS ENEMIES. About 825 B.C. God sent Jonah with a message to Nineveh, which was regarded by Israel as its natural enemy. **II. JONAH'S REFUSAL TO ACCEPT A MISSION OF MERCY TO HIS FOES.** Jonah was not a son of Satan, but a wilful servant of the Lord, who, by reason of false views, failed to comprehend Jehovah's broad policy in the government of this world. **III. HOW GOD HUMILIATED HIS PROPHET BEFORE HEATHEN SAILORS.** Humiliating must have been the confession that he who knew more about holy things than all others on board was afraid to trust and obey his own God. **IV. HOW THE HEATHEN SAILORS MADE FRIENDS WITH JONAH'S GOD.** The prophet's acknowledgment of his fear of Jehovah struck a nameless terror to the consciences of the crew. They did their best to save him from his fate, but all was in vain. When Jonah was cast overboard, and the storm ceased, they felt that Jonah's God was the true God, and must henceforth be their God. (*Boston Homilies.*) *God speaking to man in mercy, and man fleeing from God in disobedience*.—**I. GOD SPEAKING TO MAN IN MERCY.** 1. Here He speaks. "The Word of the Lord." His Word to Jonah, like His word to all men, was clear, brief, weighty, practical. 2. Here He speaks to an individual. He speaks to all men in nature, conscience, history; but in sovereignty He singles some men out for special communications. 3. Here He speaks to an individual for the sake of a community. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city." Why does God call it a great city? To men it was considered "great," great in numbers, pomp, pretensions, masonry. But to God it could only be great in sin, for sin is a great thing to God; it is a black cloud in His universe. For the sake of this city, in order to effect its moral reformation, and therefore to save it, Jonah

receives a commission. "Arise," shake off thy languor, quit thyself for action, go down to this city, and "cry against it." Be earnest. The danger is great, near at hand, and approaching every minute. Observe here two things—(1) Man's distinguishing faculty. What is that? The power to receive, to appreciate, and to work out the ideas of the Infinite. No other creature on earth has this power. (2) God's method of helping humanity. God enlightens, purifies, and ennobles man by man. We have this "treasure in earthen vessels." II. MAN FLEEING FROM GOD IN DISOBEDIENCE. "But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord." Here is a threefold revelation of man. 1. His moral freedom. God did not coerce Jonah, did not drive him to Nineveh. Man has power to resist God—a greater power, this, than can be found in all the heavenly orbs, or in the whole history of material organisms. This power invests man with all but infinite importance, links him to moral government. "Ye do always resist the Spirit of God." 2. His daring depravity. Alas! men have not merely the power but the disposition to oppose God. This is their guilt and their ruin; it is what men are doing everywhere, trying to break the shackles of moral responsibility, trying to elude the Infinite. 3. His egregious folly. His endeavouring to escape from God was—(1) Not merely an impulse, but a resolution. Had it been a sudden wish it would have been bad. He "rose up." He rallied and marshalled his energies. (2) Not merely a resolution, but an effort. He "went down to Joppa." The probability is, that he went with the greatest speed to Joppa, the Jaffa of this day. When he reached the spot, how long he was about the quays in search of a suitable vessel. (3) Not merely an effort, but a persevering effort. It was not one or two or three spasmodic efforts and then over. When he found a suitable vessel he "paid the fare thereof." Ah, what fares men pay in the career of sin! (*Homilist.*) *Jonah's commission.*—1. When God has a work to do He is never at a loss for agents to accomplish His purposes. The Lord, on some occasions, fixes on instruments which appear to us the least suitable. All fitness is of God; He finds none fit for His service till He makes them so, and He can qualify the most defective. Should any ask why God fixed upon Jonah, and preferred him before any man on earth for this important service? We answer that God giveth no account of His matters; and though His footsteps are in the great deep, He never errs in judgment. The Word of the Lord came to Jonah. He knew who spoke to him, and what He said,—yet he was disobedient to the heavenly call. 2. The commission which God gave to Jonah. Great cities are great evils, seminaries of vice, and schools for profligacy. The more the fallen children of men herd together, the more deeply they corrupt one another. Cities may be great in many respects, and yet little in God's account, because they are low in all real excellence. 3. Nineveh was ripe for destruction. Mark carefully, that all our sins go up before God, and are registered in His book of remembrance, with a view to the day of judgment. Cry against this great city. "Their sins have cried long and loud against Me, and now My vengeance from heaven shall cry against them." When sinners kindle anger in the bosom of God, who is love itself, great must be their guilt, and tremendous will be their judgments when love turns to wrath. Nineveh is ripe for ruin; God is coming in His wrath against it; yet He halts by the way, and sends His messenger first, to say that He Himself is coming. (*Thomas Jones, of Creaton.*) *The reasons for Jonah's mission to Nineveh.*—Jonah was a suitable agent, but he was not indispensable. God called him, but He could do without him. To be the bearer of such a message as that which is here recorded could not in itself be pleasant, but it was highly honourable. To refuse to speak in such a case, at Divine bidding, was almost to take part with the wrong-doers, and is recorded in this book, by Jonah's own hand, to his personal discredit. There is but this one reason for the mission stated here; but there were at least several other reasons in reserve—some gently hinted, some unrevealed until ages afterwards. God, as we know, not only kindled in the indignation of justice against what was wrong, but He longed for the repentance of the wrong-doers, and for the manifestation of His mercy among them when thus penitent. He thought, too, of the future; of the use He would make of that people when His people should be led among them captive. As He sent Joseph into Egypt, He will send Jonah into Nineveh, to provide a remedy for a coming evil, a home for a captive people. He thought, too, of the far future of the world, and of the spiritual use to be made of the penitence of that wicked people in the proclamation of His mercy by the Gospel. He has made the Ninevites "a pattern"

to all cities and ages—a proof that shall be known as long as history remains, that if a whole city, full of sinners, turn unto the Lord, they shall live. Whether Jonah knew much of these and such like reasons or not, it is certain that he knew quite enough to make the road to Nineveh, far and difficult as it might be, the Lord's highway of duty and life to him; and any way else he could find, the devil's road of crookedness, danger, and death. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish.—*The refusal to obey a God-given charge*.—Jonah sullenly resolved not to obey God's voice. What a glimpse into the prophetic office that gives us! The Divine Spirit could be resisted, and the prophet was no mere machine, but a living man who had to consent with his devoted will to bear the burden of the Lord. One refused, and his refusal teaches us how superb and self-sacrificing was the faithfulness of the rest. Jonah represents the national feelings which he shared. He refused because he feared success. God's goodness was being stretched rather too far if it was going to take in Nineveh. His was the spirit of the prodigal's elder brother. Israel was set among the nations, not as a dark lantern, but as the great candlestick in the temple court proclaimed, to ray out light to all the world. Jonah's mission was but a concrete instance of Israel's charge. All sorts of religious exclusiveness, contemptuous estimates of other nations, and that bastard patriotism which would keep national blessings for our own country alone, are condemned by this story. Note the fatal consequences of refusal to obey the God-given charge. Jonah only meant to escape from service. The storm is described with a profusion of unusual words, all apparently technical terms, picked up on board. No wonder that the fugitive prophet slunk down into some dark corner, and sat bitterly brooding there, self-accused and condemned, till weariness and the relief of the tension of his journey lulled him to sleep. It was a stupid and heavy sleep. Over against the picture of the insensible prophet is set the behaviour of the heathen sailors, or "salts," as the story calls them. Their conduct is part of the lesson of the book. Their treatment of Jonah is generous and chivalrous. They are so much touched by the whole incident that they offer sacrifices to the God of the Hebrews, and are, in some sense, and possibly but for a time, worshippers of Him. All this holds up the mirror to Israel, by showing how much of human kindness and generosity, and how much of susceptibility for the truth which Israel had to declare, lay in rude hearts beyond its pale. Jonah's conduct in the storm is no less noble than his former conduct had been base. The burst of the tempest blew all the fog from his mind, and he saw the stars again. His confession of faith; his calm conviction that he was the cause of the storm; his quiet, unhesitating command to throw him into the wild chaos foaming about the ship; his willing acceptance of death as the wages of his sin—all tell how true a saint he was in the depths of his soul. The miracle of rescue is the last point. Jonah's repentance saved his life. The wider lesson of the means of making chastisement into blessing, and securing a way of escape—namely, by owning the justice of the stroke, and returning to duty—is meant for us all. The ever-present providence of God, the possible safety of the nation, even when in captivity, the preservation of every servant of God who turns to the Lord in his chastisement, the exhibition of penitence as the way of deliverance, are the purposes for which the miracle was wrought and told. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Jonah's self-will*.—The main features of the case are clear, and from these we draw the principles and lessons to be enforced. On the one hand, there is a Divine commission and command distinctly and authoritatively given, with some of the reasons for it annexed, although with others certainly not fully revealed. On the other hand, there is a state of reluctance and suspense ever verging towards actual disobedience—expressing itself, now in remonstrance, now in request for exemption, now in moody and distrustful silence. The situation is none so rare. The principles involved, and the lessons arising, are for all time. The supreme and unchallengeable obligation of the Divine will when clearly expressed. There can be no higher obligation to man or angel than that. That will is always in harmony with the eternal principles of truth and goodness. When God "speaks" to a servant, there can be no pretence for delay or non-compliance, much less for disobedience. Obedience, promptly, fully given, is the most beautiful thing that walks the earth. Prompt and simple obedience, when we are sure that God speaks, is the way to clearness, virtue, honour, strength, safety, and peace. 2. The exceeding danger of a mood of hesitation or remonstrance.

We should watch with great self-jealousy the moral hesitations of the will, and the silent petitionings for delay or exemption. All such heart movements are fraught with peril. Divine light is given for "walking" and "working." In most, if not all of the critical moments of life, duty is revealed very quickly, and made very plain and clear. In matters of expediency and prudence, wait for the afterthoughts. In matters of conscience and present duty, take the first thoughts that arise, for they are the Divinest. Happy is he whose action is as quick as the impulse that calls for it! whose daily obedience has in it the fresh colours of newborn convictions! whose feet sound the echo of God's "Arise"! (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Jonah's motive in his flight*:—This dereliction of duty could not arise from imperfect acquaintance with God's will. That is nowhere intimated in the narrative. It was deliberate disobedience. 1. The arduousness of the duty may have been one cause of the sin. He shrank from the service because of the hardships he supposed to be involved in it. He thought of the journey; of the probable reception of his message by the Ninevites; and of possible violence done to himself by them. If God calls to arduous duty, He is prepared to give all needed grace for doing it. 2. The mortification of his own vanity. God's mercy and forbearance on repentance Jonah feared would be a personal dishonour to him as a prophet. Rather than subject himself to the possibility of such mortification Jonah chose to decline the duty altogether. This motive argues a painful obtuseness of right human feelings. Learn—1. In the prosecution of arduous and self-denying duties to seek the help of God, and not throw off our responsibilities by shunning them. Responsibility can only be met by the conscientious discharge of duty. Human nature often shrinks, as Jonah did, from this duty, but let us be faithful to God, and depend on Him for strength and blessing. 2. And let us discharge all our obligations to our fellow-men from a sincere desire to benefit them and please God. Let us not mingle personal vanity with any of our religious endeavours, nor be too anxious about our fame and reputation. Our record is on high, our judgment is with our God. (*Thomas Harding.*) *Jonah's self-persuasions to disobedience*:—How did he persuade himself to enter on a course of disobedience to the Divine will so open and declared? 1. It was a long way. 2. The thing to be done was very difficult. 3. It would be natural that he should despair of any great success. 4. He may have thought that, in the event of attaining a spiritual success, failure must come in another way. His own reputation would suffer. Over-consciousness of personal character, and over-carefulness for the Divine honour, were not of old, are not now so very uncommon. 5. The prophet had some dark forecast of evil to his own country from the probable turn which matters would take, if his mission at Nineveh should be successful. We cannot pass any severe and overwhelming judgment on Jonah. There is too much reason to fear that his kind of disobedience is not at all uncommon. Far oftener than many suppose, great and gifted spirits have shrunk back from great responsibilities. See cases of Moses, Gideon, &c. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The story of Jonah*:—The Book of Jonah is a prophetic history. It sets forth in object-lessons truths which bring us very near to the heart of the Gospel. I. THE SCORNE MESSAGE OF MEROY. The prophet was the recipient of a Divine message. He was to declare to the people of Nineveh their sins, and summon them to repentance. This should have been an acceptable and agreeable duty. Why should Jonah have closed his ear against the Divine Word, shut up his heart against compassion for Nineveh, and fled from his duty? The answer uncovers at once God's compassion and Jonah's sin. Jonah's fault lay in narrowing the compassion of Jehovah, and exaggerating the claims of the chosen people. His pride of race overrode his humanity; his sectarian zeal consumed his charity. 1. What shall we say of one who refuses to enter upon a work of salvation such as this? Jonah sinned against God and humanity. 2. If we seek downward for the tap-root of Jonah's fault, where do we find it? In false views of God's nature. 3. There are still men and women—good but misguided people—who hold that the salvation of God is limited to their Church. In the light of Jonah's story, we may regard all such people with sincere pity, even while we condemn their presumptuous bigotry. II. THE SINNER PURSUED BY GOD. If God is compassionate, He is also just. He pities Nineveh, but He punishes Jonah. He pursues the offending prophet with a rod of judgment. If we suppose that Jonah's sleep was one of self-security, we may imagine the sharp awakening to the sad truth of his condition. III. A VERDICT OF THE SELF-CONDEMNED. The

behaviour of the ship's crew at the climax of the storm presents an interesting study. We are insensibly drawn to these rough pagan mariners. We respect their manhood, we praise their virtues, we pity their gropings after truth and duty, and long that they and such as they might have knowledge of the one sufficient atonement for sin. We are drawn with even tenderer sympathy to Jonah. He stands there on the tossing deck, self-condemned indeed, but his whole attitude is noble. His fault has risen upon him at once in its full magnitude. He neither denies nor extenuates it; he confesses it fully, and he offers himself in atonement therefor. No wonder that the sailors, profoundly touched by Jonah's act, struggled to the verge of hope ere they could find heart to sacrifice this man.

1. We see here a wonderful illustration of the force of conscience when it is once awakened within the breast. 2. We have here a fine example of the operation of a genuine repentance. What must have been the influence of this experience upon Jonah's after preaching? IV. BURIAL IN THE DEEP. The miracle consisted not so much in the fact that Jonah was swallowed alive, as that he was kept alive within the fish for three days. We must place this miracle upon the same footing as other Scripture miracles. Our Lord teaches that this burial and resurrection was a sign of His own burial and resurrection (Matt. xii. 40, 41). (*Henry C. M'Cook, D.D.*) *The prophet's disobedience, and what came of his flight from duty*:—Jonah must have been a contemporary, or near successor, of Elisha.

I. HIS DISOBEDIENCE AND FLIGHT FROM GOD'S PRESENCE. All men at least try to believe that they have good reasons for their disobedience. What was Jonah's? Told in chap. iv. 2. It was thought that God was specially present in Israel. If he left the country he would not be at hand to be sent on missions. His fleeing was a way of resigning his prophetic office. Have none of us ever done as Jonah did? When God calls to service or duty, do we never go another way? How easy to fancy that, by some means, we can escape the Divine presence! II. HIS ARREST AND EXPOSURE. Thus far all had seemed to go well with the renegade prophet. For a time the Lord allowed him to have his way. And so He does with us all. If one chooses to run from duty, to decline service, to defer obedience, God does not ordinarily interpose to prevent his doing it. The downward way is commonly broad and smooth for a time. But, happily for us, God often finds means for the arrest of the disobedient. In the case of the fleeing prophet, He made use of the tempest. All sorts of persons pray in those great emergencies, which prove to us how utterly powerless we are. There is a feeling, which seems native to the human heart, that behind all physical ills there is a moral cause. Troubles come out of sin. These seamen, imagining, as it is so common to imagine, that unusual calamity is proof of unusual guilt, jumped to the conclusion that their present peril was due to the presence of some flagrant wrong-doer. They thought that, by means of the lot, the culprit might be detected. The lot fell on Jonah. In so unlikely a way his sin had found him out. III. HIS CONFESSION AND SURRENDER. Crowding about this mysterious stranger, the questions of the sailors fell fast and thick. They wanted to have his whole story. Jonah made frank and full confession. There was no self-justification, but a declaration that God is to be revered and feared. And he put himself into God's hands. Understanding, as a prophet, that only by casting him into the sea could the tempest be stayed, he humbly, submissively, bowed his will to God's. It is precisely that spirit of penitence and trust which ever marks one as a sure subject of that mercy which, whatever befalls the body, saves the soul unto the life everlasting. IV. HIS CHASTISEMENT AND PRESERVATION. It is clear that Jonah's conduct had won the respect of the seamen, and touched their hearts. They would save him if they could. Jonah's preaching and conduct had convinced them of the true faith; for soon we find them offering sacrifice and making vows unto the Lord. True penitence does not save from present and outward ills. The forgiven still need correction. Note the blending of the providential and the miraculous in the story. Having brought a self-willed servant to account and repentance, and administered needed correction, it was the Lord's will to restore Jonah to the place he had deserted. The chief practical lesson is the great folly of attempting to escape the service or duty to which God may call us. To obey is easier than to flee. There are crosses and hardships in the way of obedience, but they are far lighter than those which are sure to overtake unbelief and self-will. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*) *Jonah's failure*:—Jonah was unwilling to execute his commission;—not under a humble sense of unworthiness and insufficiency;—this would have made him earnest in prayer to God for the

courage and strength in which he felt himself to be deficient. This would, in fact, have been the very best qualification for the work assigned him: such feelings and such qualifications we find in Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel,—but he shrunk from it, through a distrust of God, and a dread of the consequences. His faith in God failed; and then, what did he foresee at Nineveh, but ridicule, and bonds, and death? Perhaps, too, he was living in the enjoyment of comforts, which he must forego, for the chance only of returning from his perilous expedition. It seems, too, that he was apprehensive that the labour and peril might be encountered by him for nothing; for that, after all, the mercy of God would spare the Ninevites, and then some might pour contempt on his predictions. His motives were probably mixed: some of them might not be known to himself; for, having resolved to disobey God, he yielded himself to the power of Satan, who would pour darkness and perplexity into his mind, and would probably succeed at last in persuading him that his offence was far from heinous, and that the severity of the trial would almost excuse his sinning. Possibly he set against this act of disobedience his former zealous exertions in the cause of God; he excused his present cowardice by his former boldness—his present love of ease, by his former self-denial and endurance of injuries. Thus, while he regarded his own credit and ease and safety more than the honour of God and the deliverance of the Ninevites, he deserted his post. Let us not condemn him; but ask ourselves, before God, how we should have acted in the same circumstances. (*Matthew M. Preston, M.A.*) *Faithless to a high vocation*:—Though the Israelites were the elect people, the mercy of God was continually extending itself beyond them. He would from time to time send prophets and messengers to turn them from their idols, to reveal to them the knowledge of Himself, and bring them to repentance. Jonah resisted the call of God, and refused to go to Nineveh. Why did he refuse to go? Because he thought God would spare the Ninevites after he, His prophet, had proclaimed their ruin, and he shrank from the supposed humiliation of appearing in their eyes a false prophet. He shrank from the sensitiveness of a proud nature. Another reason has been suggested, that he passionately loved his country, and feared the uprising of this powerful nation on its borders. It is said that Jonah fled “unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” Is it possible that he thought by a change of place to get beyond the reach of the Divine displeasure? It is more probable that he fled from “the service of God.” He meant to abandon his prophetic office. He was faithless to his vocation, and would cast off the responsibility of a high calling. Dwell on this unfaithfulness, and draw lessons from it. Are we not, each of us, like Jonah, called to stand in the presence of God and to serve Him? We have each certain duties and responsibilities, as clear and definite as the prophet had when he heard the Word of God, bidding him go to Tarshish. We too may flee from the presence of God. Our calling may require effort and hardness, and we shrink from it. Jonah is the image of every man who, knowing the command of God, gives up the path of duty, choosing in preference something more congenial to his tastes and disposition, or some passing feeling, some desire or fear. The call of duty will constantly involve giving up some interest or pleasure. Some trouble one meets in daily life may try the soul and test its faithfulness. It is always true that only he who doeth the will of the Father can enter the kingdom. (*T. T. Carter.*) *The runaway prophet*:—I. WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THIS FLIGHT? The cause of disobedience is to be found in the significance of God’s message to the prophet. It was a message of judgment, and yet, underlying it, as Jonah easily perceived, was a message of mercy. It taught Jonah, and through him the Jews generally, that God had a grand purpose of love and mercy to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Such a thought as that was utterly opposed to Jewish ideas. Jonah’s conduct is but the representation of the whole national feeling. Jonah wanted the Ninevites and all other Gentiles to fall under the judgment of God, and to be destroyed from the face of the earth. This was the reason for his flight. Let us beware lest we should find his sin lying at our door. God taught the same lesson to Peter when the times of the Gentiles had fully come. We are now learning the lesson that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God’s message of love to no one nation, or select few, but to every member of the human family. II. WHAT WAS THE OBJECT OF JONAH’S FLIGHT? Not to flee from the omniscience of God. The object of Jonah was to escape from standing before God as His prophet. He regarded the revelation and voice of God as in some way confined to Jewish territory. Though

we, too, know that we cannot escape from the presence of God, we often fancy we can fly where the voice of God shall not be heard by us. When God calls men to go in one direction, and they like it not, immediately they set out to go in directly the opposite. III. THE SUCCESSIVE STEPS OF JONAH'S FLIGHT. 1. He went down to Joppa. His journey was downward in more senses than one. 2. He found a ship, and paid his fare to Tarshish. Is there not quite a parable in that paying the fare? It was the last barrier that kept him a prisoner to his native land. Now he thinks he is secure. 3. He falls asleep. He is tired out. No obstacles have been placed in his way. It seems as if everything had been providentially arranged. Yes, Jonah, thou sleepest, but God sleeps not. Now God will have a beginning. (*James Menzies.*) *The natural disposition of Jonah*:—It has often been remarked that religion and a good temper are by no means always allied. Though it cannot, perhaps, at all times be said that a religious profession is adorned by the meek and the quiet spirit so precious in the sight of the Lord, it must be always remembered that true religion has the most happy influence on all who in reality receive it. So far from producing the evil with which it has often been associated, it is associated with it for its correction, and does actually produce in due time its destruction. This sweet subduing spirit can tame the roughest passions; it can humble the proudest heart, and open the most avaricious, in a manner and to a degree that no other principle can. The natural dispositions of Jonah seem to have been uncommonly adverse. His supreme regard to the dignity of his own character, without respect to what concerned either Divine manifestation or human comfort, was selfish and arrogant; while his language with regard to the gourd, and to his own personal sufferings, seems altogether to represent him as a person of a proud, passionate, jealous, and intemperate mind. Indeed, so numerous and so striking are the instances of his misconduct, that they afford occasion to inquire whether he really was a saint at all? His wicked refusal of obedience, with the subsequent attempt to escape when under a special appointment of heaven, are circumstances in no respect favourable. His stupid security, too, during the tempest, and his sullen silence during the subsequent investigation, bespeak a mind very foreign from that which the lively exercise of religion would dictate. His angry complainings, also, at the dispensations of providence, seem in no common degree to indicate the workings of an unmortified mind. Still grounds are not wanting on which charity may found a better hope. See what may be pleaded in his favour. (*James Simpson.*) *The unfaithful prophet*:—In those days the prophet was the organ of a Divine revelation. He was the representative of that Holy Spirit who had been speaking through many ages to the fathers. If a word came to him which went beyond the ordinary scope of prophetic ministry it would be all the more solemn; it would be very clearly not the prophet's own, but "the Word of Jehovah" which had "come to him." To disobey that Word, to hide it within his own thoughts, to take from it, or add to it would be a grievous sin, to be conspicuously punished. It was "disobedience to the heavenly vision." It was renouncing the position and vocation of the Divine messenger. It was doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace." The whole book is a commentary on the expression, "Presence of the Lord." By the "presence of the Lord" is manifestly intended the organic centre of Divine revelation. The radical conception of Judaism is the foundation on which such an expression must rest;—it was that of a ministry gathered about Jehovah, who is seated on a throne of majesty and grace in the midst of His people. "The presence of the Lord," regarded as a place, is the chamber where the ministering priest, or prophet, is face to face with God. Forth from that chamber he goes to fulfil his mission, whatever it be, whether as a priest to bless, or as a prophet to speak the message, to proclaim the "Word of the Lord." Jonah rose up to flee from that centre of his spiritual responsibility, to turn his back upon One who was telling him what to say and what to do. At that special crisis in the history of His people such unfaithfulness was specially sinful. (*R. A. Redford, M.A.*) *The fugitive from duty*:—In estimating the character of Jonah we have no desire to palliate or to exaggerate. His prominent sin was disobedience to God. It cannot be said that he misunderstood the command of God. Could it be fear that induced Jonah to become a fugitive from duty? It was the character of God which made Jonah shrink from His service. Some of the fruits of Jonah's flight from duty. 1. He rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord. 2. The fugitive from duty was degraded before his inferiors. Jonah's flight subjected

him to the reproofs, examinations, and cross-examinations of heathen sailors. 3. Jonah, no doubt, suffered much at the near prospect of death. 4. His misery was prolonged in a living tomb. 5. The fugitive from duty had to do at length the work he first refused. When man contends with his Maker we may be certain who will be the victor. That Jonah needed much refining in the furnace of affliction is evident from the dross which remained after correction. Perhaps the Word of the Lord was never entrusted to a frailier earthen vessel. After Jonah had passed through the painful and humiliating punishments of disobedience, we find him still in a deplorable state of mind, and using most unbecoming language to God. Jonah should have known that when punishments are denounced as coming upon a nation, it is with the understanding that they continued in their sin. If both Jew and Gentile were acquainted with mercy as one of the glorious attributes of Jehovah, where was the room for Jonah's displeasure? But what Jonah did, we are all capable of doing, if not prevented by Divine grace. There are those who fly from duty, because pride hinders them from pursuing their most suitable calling, those who intrude into sacred places for which they were never designed; and generally, the unconverted. (*W. Holderness.*) *The disobedient act*:—"Jonah rose up." So far then he was obedient. No. He only rose up "to flee to Tarshish." His mind was made up, before he arose, to disobey. We sin in thought, resolution, will, before we take a single wrong step. Had Jonah sufficient grounds for his disobedient act? Was not his ministry in Israel a great failure? And if a great failure among his privileged kindred, might he not reasonably infer it would be a greater failure among untutored and degraded heathen? Moreover, it was a new expedition—there was no precedent for him to follow. And did not he fear that God might turn from His purpose? In the face of these considerations it may be asserted that he had no honest reasons for shirking duty, for running away from God. Our failures may be our greatest successes. **I. HIS DISOBEDIENT ACT WAS WILFUL.** It was not done without deliberation. It was not done without breaking through moral restraints. Jonah had a stern battle to fight with the checks of conscience and the promptings of his better nature. Through a whole "bodyguard" of moral influences, monitions, voices, hindrances, Jonah had to cut his way to Joppa for Tarshish. This made his act of disobedience all the more criminally wilful. The harder the path to ruin the greater the guilt and punishment. **II. THE ACT WAS FOOLISH.** He attempted—1. The impossible. The Presence like an all-encompassing atmosphere hemmed him in—beyond it he could not get. God meets man inevitably at every turn of life. 2. He abandoned the indispensable. He thought he could do without God, and so ventured on the mad experiment. God is a necessity. 3. He undertook the unmanageable. In fleeing from God, he flew in the face of God. In trying to escape Him, he came into collision with Him. No man is sufficient for such an engagement. How foolish is all sin! Disobedience is moral mania. **III. HIS ACT WAS ENCOURAGED BY OPPORTUNE CIRCUMSTANCES.** He "found a ship going to Tarshish." The accidental favoured the intentional. It so happened that the ship was freighted for Tarshish, and Jonah came on the quay just in time to pay his fare and get on board. Don't blame the ship, but blame the prophet. Don't censure the opportunities, but censure the disposition which seized and made them auxiliaries of evil intentions. Occasion for sin is no Divine warrant to sin. 1. Circumstances are rendered moral or immoral in their bearing on human actions, only as they further goodness or facilitate disobedience. 2. Opportunities in the way of transgression are accidental and not Divinely appointed, which if availed of to accelerate rebellious flight will entail heavier penal consequences. 3. The ready way is not always the right way. **IV. THE ACT WAS EXPENSIVE.** He might have gone down to Nineveh for less than it cost him to go to Tarshish. He paid his fare in a very expensive sense. It cost him his peace of mind, his conscience-approval, his official honour, mortification of spirit, risk of life, and peril of soul. As a mere matter of economy it is wiser and better to be good than sinful. Sin's pleasures, sin's fashions, sin's companions, sin's vanities are all prodigiously expensive. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *Neglect of Christian duty*:—"Sleep is one of the great essentials to human existence. Sleep in itself is right, but there is "a time to sleep." Jonah's sleep was sinful, it was at the wrong time and in the wrong place. Look at this religious deserter asleep. **I. IT IS A VERY EASY THING TO NEGLECT CHRISTIAN DUTY.** All that Jonah did was easily done. So are neglect of prayer, Bible study, services, work, &c., easy now. **II. NEGLECT**

OF CHRISTIAN DUTY IS A MOST DANGEROUS PRACTICE. Jonah went to Tarshish at the peril of his temporal and spiritual life. Every Christian who allows himself to be led away into bypaths of spiritual indolence, lethargy, and neglect, will suffer great loss, will imperil his soul. III. IT IS NOT FOR US TO CHOOSE OUR FIELD OF CHRISTIAN WORK. God sent Jonah to preach a short soul-stirring sermon to the Ninevites. How much more would be done if all Christians would just take the field God assigns them, and work with all their hearts for God and souls. IV. THE INFINITE FOLLY OF ATTEMPTING TO GET AWAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF GOD. "Whither shall I go from Thy presence?" The monarch who threw chains into the sea to bind it; the boys who undertook to count the stars; these were wise adventures compared with the folly of attempting to get away from God. Then "let us not sleep, as do others, but let us who are of the day be sober." (W. Rodwell.)

Sorrow follows disobedience.—You are seeking your own will. You are seeking some other good than the law you are bound to obey. But how will you find good? It is not a thing of choice; it is a river that flows from the foot of the invisible throne and flows by the path of obedience. I say again, man cannot choose his duties. You may choose to forsake your duties, and choose not to have the sorrows they bring. But you will go forth, and what will you find? Sorrow without duty—bitter herbs and no bread with them. (George Eliot.)

He found a ship going to Tarshish.—*Fatal success.*—I. ATTEND TO THE WHOLE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES CONCERNED. By partial and distorted views the most magnificent objects may be rendered contemptible, and the most perfect propriety ridiculous. 1. In this world the wicked often succeed, while the righteous are involved in distress. If any man be exempted from trouble in the present state, we should expect it to be a wicked man. The present is, with respect to the wicked, the only season of forbearance, the only time of indulgence. If any labour under a peculiar series of sufferings, we should expect him to be a saint. Because the present is, to the believer, a state of discipline. We cannot, however, conclude either that all the afflicted are righteous, or that it is only the tabernacle of the robber that prospers. 2. All the success of the wicked is confined to external objects. It would be affectation to say that man is independent of these. 3. The success of the wicked is but momentary. Duration is an important measure of value. 4. The worst moral effects are produced by success on the conduct of the wicked. But consequences cannot always be considered as a standard for regulating judgment. 5. The successful sinner would tremble did he look forward to the sufferings which must eventually overtake his crimes. II. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH DIVINE WISDOM PROCEEDS IN SUCH DISPENSATIONS. 1. Previous to such trials the sinner is already warned of his danger in the Word. It is to this men are to look for a regulating law. 2. Such trials are seldom permitted until conscience has been grossly violated. 3. No external obstacle can stop the career of the sinner. 4. Abused grace is properly and justly withdrawn. 5. These scenes of trial discover to others the dispositions that were previously in power. III. THE MARKS BY WHICH JUDICIAL

MAY BE DISTINGUISHED FROM SANCTIFIED SUCCESS. If sanctified it follows you in a course of obedience to the Word. It is not a partial or incidental circumstance. It recognises God as its origin. The effects will show whence the prosperity proceeds. (James Simpson.)

Jonah's flight.—In the case of Jonah we have a striking instance of Divinely located work and responsibility. How are we to know that the Word of the Lord really comes to us? What more can any man desire than to be fully convinced that his duty lies in a certain direction? We are so made that, if true to ourselves, we shall have clear, sharply defined religious convictions; and in so far as we are faithful in following them, we are in direct communion with the Spirit of God. I. LIFE HAS ITS GREAT OCCASIONS, AND WOE TO THE MAN WHO FAILS TO SUCCESSFULLY GRAPPLE WITH THEM. God signally honoured Jonah by selecting him as the first preacher to the heathen world. Human life does not always remain on the same key. Sometime, somewhere, God arrests the old monotonous tune, and strikes the keynote to a loftier anthem. Everything depends on how we catch the new tone, follow the leader, and master the music. How possible it is to be unequal to our opportunity, to let it pass unimproved, and to be doing a little paltry work,—to be mistaking fuss for energy, and an idle industry for that holy consecration which absorbs every power, and ennobles the man by the sublimity of its motives and aims. There are hours in the lives of most men, compared with which all after hours are poor and commonplace,—great critical hours, pregnant with the possibilities

of manhood and destiny. To fall below such crises is a calamity which the future can never repair. Society is full of poor men, both temporally and spiritually, because they did not manfully grapple with the great occasions of life. II. OPPORTUNE CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT OF NECESSITY IMPLY DIVINE APPROVAL. Here we see that a man may be strangely favoured by circumstances, who is in open rebellion against God. Rightly to interpret circumstances is one of the most difficult things in life. And a man who has become loose at the conscience may so interpret them as to embolden and fortify himself in a life of sin. There are people who make circumstances into a kind of Bible, and argue that, after all, it is impossible they can be so very bad, or Providence would not thus conspire to further their purposes. When a man gets himself mixed up with iniquity, it is not much wonder that he tries to set up a kind of supernatural wisdom of his own, as a sort of self-vindication. It is quite possible for a man so to put circumstances before his mind as to be fearfully misled by them. Much charity should be exercised towards those whose very circumstances invite their further continuance in sin. Many a man has had reason to thank God that the ship left before he got to Joppa; that was the only thing that saved him from disaster and perhaps destruction. III. A MAN MAY IGNORE THE CLAIMS OF GOD AND YET BE SCRUPULOUS IN HIS OBSERVANCE OF THE LAWS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY. Jonah "paid his fare." Honest with the owner of the ship, but dishonest with the Owner of the universe. God has claims upon us as well as man: and any man's integrity is partial and ruinously defective that does not honour both claims. IV. THE WICKED MAN IS A PUBLIC CALAMITY, A SOCIAL CURSE. No matter how much the sinner may have things his own way, God can head him off, frustrate his purposes, and convert the very elements that were most friendly to his progress into instruments of punishment and death. Learn that there is a right and a wrong way of settling things. We must have a settlement with God on a basis of mediation and righteousness, or the sea will always be rough. (*T. Kelly.*) *The unwisdom of disobedience.*—God said to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh." "I won't go; I'll go to Tarshish." He started for Tarshish. Did he get there? The seas raged, the winds blew, the ship rocked. Come, ye whales, and take this passenger for Tarshish. No man ever got to Tarshish if the Lord told him to go to Nineveh. The seas would not bear him; they are God's seas. The winds would not wait him; they are God's winds. If a man deliberately sets out to do that which God declares he must not do, the natural world as well as God is against him and the lightnings are ready to strike him, and the fires are ready to consume him, and the sun is ready to smite him, and the waters are ready to drown him, and the earth is ready to devour him. (*Christian Age.*) He paid the fare thereof.—*Paying the fare.*—There had been many hindrances in Jonah's way to prevent him from consummating the act of disobedience, but he overcame them all. And yet this fact that he had paid his fare might have startled him. It was the last hindrance to his headstrong will. Had he gone to Nineveh he would not have needed to pay his own fare. But deliberately selecting his own way, Jonah was left to pay his own fare. 1. Accept this feature of the case as a starting-point. Obedience is economy; disobedience is expensive. 2. This was only a small part of the fare that Jonah paid. Only the first instalment. In the second place, he paid his fare in the thwarting of his purposes. He made more haste than speed. The ready way was not the right way. If you will be disobedient, you must pay your fare in the thwarting of your purposes. 3. As part of the fare the prophet had to pay for his disobedience. I mention his moodiness and peevishness. 4. Part of the fare was the withdrawal of Jehovah's presence. 5. He paid part of his fare in the loss of reputation. Regard to reputation was the only defence he made. Reputation may be overestimated. If the means is exalted into an end; if reputation becomes the be-all and end-all of the ministry, there is no limit to the harm that may accrue. For the sake of reputation Jonah declined the call of God. And his disobedience was its own punishment. (*John A. Macfadyen.*) *Sinful pleasures dear bought.*—The sacrifices required by religion are infinitely more reasonable and light than those which sinful courses demand. I. THE SACRIFICES REQUIRED OF THE SINNER. The boasted pleasure of the sinner is obtained at a very disproportioned expence of time—of labour—and of substance: and moreover to it is freely sacrificed not only health, reason, conscience, but also the precious soul. II. THE SACRIFICES REQUIRED OF THOSE WHO ARE THE FRIENDS OF RELIGION. 1. Religion does not require the renunciation of any

lawful enjoyment. 2. Religion does require of its followers certain worldly sacrifices. Such as a seventh portion of time. Jehovah demands of all His worshippers—3. The total surrender of their persons. Your talents, with all their energies; your will, with all its propensities; your affections, with all their fervour, are exclusively and supremely His. The members of the body too are become instruments of righteousness unto righteousness. 4. When sinners come to the Saviour they present Him with their most cheerful services. 5. The severest sacrifice that religion requires is that of our unholiness. The service is severe, but the command is absolute. III. COMPARE THESE SYSTEMS. Each has something to enjoy. The Christian needs not fear to grant to the sensualist his luxuries; or to acknowledge the general depression of the faithful. To ascertain the several claims of these systems observe—1. That, while all the demands of religion are just, those of iniquity are the vexatious claims of a tyrant. 2. The demands of religion are most gracious, whereas those of a tyrant are insatiable. 3. The services of religion are beneficial; those of the world destructive. 4. The sacrifices of religion shall be richly repaid. Sin also has its wages, and to the uttermost farthing they shall be paid. Choose then what master you will serve. Listen not—1. To the seductions of pleasure. 2. Be not afraid of the reproaches cast upon religion. 3. Be truly wise. Listen to the cautions of Divine wisdom. (James Simpson.)

One virtue cannot atone for a wicked course.—Jonah's attempt to run away was a foolish and wicked act, all must admit; but there is one thing told of him that is very much to his credit: he "paid his fare" on board the ship that was to bear him away to Tarshish. He fulfilled his obligations to the shipowners in the matter of the passage money. He was none of your mean sneaks who, in running to destruction, try to go as dead-heads. Jonah went on his way like a man. How often, by some such reasoning as this, men make out a good case for themselves, or for others, in the face of flagrant and atrocious acts. Men use some single virtue to cover much wrong or vice. I know a young man who refused to obey the call of God, as clearly given as was ever that to Jonah, and is satisfying conscience by the assurance of honesty in a very different and self-appointed sphere. There is much of this Jonah business on every hand. Men are sharp in their dealings, even to rank dishonesty, but they talk well, and profess better. They cheat and shave right and left, but they found a scholarship or a seminary, endow a college, or build a church. They are helping to undermine every good institution in a community, but they are kind and obliging neighbours. Because the men that cheat, swindle, and murder us are possessed of some single excellent virtue, we are asked to set it over against their many nefarious acts and terrible failures in character and life, and call it even. Not that we would undervalue or despise the admirable traits that sometimes appear in wicked and debased lives. We only utter our protest against the attempt, so often made, to make them atone for the sin and failure by which they are surrounded. We are all liable to be satisfied with one little pet virtue, that blooms, perhaps, like a flower adorning a corpse. The way we help one another to this same self-complacency over small virtues cherished in the midst of flagrant wrong, is, perhaps, the worst part of the story. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Life's fare.*—Men get "passes" of railroads—all must pay the fare who go through life. Bible tells us there are two ways. You must pay the fare in either case. I. BROAD WAY TO DESTRUCTION. Fare? 1. Loss of conscience. 2. Loss of character. Character is built up by thoughts, words, deeds, little by little. 3. Loss of Divine image. 4. Loss of soul. No escape. "The wages of sin is death." II. NARROW WAY TO LIFE. Fare? Yes, we must pay the fare. The results are—1. Noble character. God's building. 2. Uplifting influence. People respect. 3. Satisfaction. Duty done; clear conscience. 4. Gain Heaven. Two ways are before you; which one will you take? (*Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 4. The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea.—*The Divine displeasure.*—There is a religious side to storms. Tempests have done what spiritual teachers could not do. 1. Disobedience ensures punishment. No man can sin with impunity. There is an absolute necessity for moral wrong to be judiciously dealt with. 2. The forces of nature are often the instruments of God's corrective or punitive purposes. There is a providence in all varieties of weather. 3. The sin of one involves others in its consequences. From verse 5, we gather—1. That in seasons of extreme peril the religious instinct invariably reverts to a real or imaginary superior power for help. The religious sense is

an inherent principle, a part of the very "warp and woof" of our moral constitution. When danger challenges our helplessness, unbidden our hands outstretch in imploration to God. 2. That possessions are valueless when life is at stake. 3. That remedial measures to alleviate the consequences of evil are futile while the cause slumbers undisturbed. Sin is the Jonah in every man which keeps him in jeopardy and restlessness every hour. From verse 6, we are taught—1. That adverse circumstances often require to be supplemented by direct appeal to arouse men to a sense of their perilous situation. 2. The insufficiency of nature to correct the false and teach the true object of worship. 3. The parallel and divergent points in human history. The same ship, route, port, &c., but widely different motives, ends, &c. Verse 7 teaches—1. That the casualties of life are not unfrequently associated with wrong-doing. No calamity without a cause, no sin without a calamity, sooner or later. 2. That necessity drives to expedients. 3. That detection will inevitably overtake the guilty, or the lot fall on the right man. 4. That the extremities of men are the opportunities of God. 5. That one rebellious act sends its ring down the vestibule of ages. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The disobedience of the prophet of Gath-hepher.*—This storm was not accidental,—accident has no place in the government of God. It is the name for a cause or causes of which we are ignorant. The sublimity of this description, and of others which occur in Scripture, will be more apparent when you compare them with the account which the heathen poets give of the deity to whom they assign the direction of this element. The varied operations and agencies in nature and providence which heathenism has distributed among lords many and gods many, the Bible centres in one. What a humiliating contrast is here presented between rational and irrational beings. Jonah obeys not. Inanimate nature waits God's commands. The following lessons may be deduced from the passage. I. **SEE HERE THE INSENSIBILITY OF THE DARING TRANSGRESSOR.** Jonah had entered into a contest with his God. The furious elements proclaimed the contest to be fearfully unequal. While every one else is uniting his exertions and his prayers to avert the threatened danger, Jonah had gone down into the sides of the ship, and was fast asleep. Contrast our Lord's sleeping during the storm on Galilee. But why wonder at the insensibility of Jonah? Look around and you will see insensibility as profound, and where there is the same difference between insensibility and safety. Engrossed by pleasure or business, how many are there who feel no concern for religion. II. **SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INSENSIBILITY AND SAFETY.** While the apprehensions of the prophet diminished, his dangers increased. In endeavouring to escape from the voice of God, given to him in prophetic direction, there was the near prospect of his hearing that voice announcing his destiny from the judgment-seat. Perilous, however, as the prophet's situation was, it was not in reality more so than that of thousands who nevertheless participate in the security. In the one case as in the other, there may be but a step between the sinner and death. III. **THE OBJECTS OF TRUST MADE THE INSTRUMENTS OF PUNISHMENT.** This is a marked feature of the Divine administration. See the case of David numbering the people. God permits Jonah to gain his object. Then his troubles begin. The vessel which he expected would bring him to his ultimate point threatens to become the grave of him and his shipmates. So men set their hearts on a favourite object. This is pursued not only without reference to God's will, but in manifest opposition to it. They gain it. And out of this their vexation and punishment arise. This is often seen in the acquisition of wealth. IV. **THE DUTY OF RECOGNISING THE VOICE OF GOD IN THE EVENTS WHICH THWART OUR WISHES.** "Affliction springeth not from the dust." It was God who sent forth that great wind which put in jeopardy the vessel in which Jonah sailed. It was for the purpose of arresting him in his course of disobedience—of bringing him to a sense of his misconduct—and of leading him to seek forgiveness. What is the obvious use which we should make of this narrative? The uniform doctrine of revelation is, that sin hardens the heart, and tends to the still further commission of sin. On this it grounds the exhortation to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure—to be sober and watch unto prayer. (*R. Brodie, A.M.*)

Ver. 5. **The mariners were afraid, and cried every one unto his god.—Fear driving men to God.**—We see how in dangers men are constrained to call on God. Though, indeed, there is a certain impression by nature on the hearts of men as to God, so that everyone, willing and unwilling, is conscious that there

is some Supreme Being; we yet, by our wickedness, smother this light which ought to shine within us. We indeed gladly cast away all cares and anxieties; for we wish to live at ease, and tranquillity is the chief good of man. Hence it comes that all desire to live without fear and without care, and thence we all naturally seek quietness. Yet this quietness generates contempt. Hence, then, it is that hardly any religion appears in the world when God leaves us in an undisturbed condition. Fear constrains us, however unwilling, to come to God. False, indeed, is what is said, that fear is the cause of religion, and that it was the first reason why men thought that there were gods; this notion is indeed wholly inconsistent with common sense and experience. But religion which has become nearly extinct, or at least covered over in the hearts of men, is stirred up by dangers. Of this Jonah gives a remarkable instance when he says that the sailors "cried, each of them to his God." We know how barbarous is this race of men; they are disposed to shake off every sense of religion, they indeed drive away every fear, and deride God Himself as long as they may. Hence, that they cried to God, it was no doubt what necessity forced them to do. And here we may learn how useful it is for us to be disquieted by fear; for while we are safe, torpidity, as it is well known, creeps over us. Since, then, hardly any one of himself comes to God, we have need of goads; and God sharply pricks us when He brings any danger so as to constrain us to tremble. But in this way He stimulates us; for we see that all would go astray, and even perish in their thoughtlessness, were He not to draw them back, even against their own will. (*John Calvin.*)

Fear at the prospect of death:—Pliny, who was a contemporary of the Apostle John, made some close observations of the animal world. Among other things he tells us of the mole—"Moriendo incipit oculos aperire," that is to say, "the mole first opens his eyes in death." And such is really the case, for the mole's eyelids, on account of his occupation, are closed all his life long, and only when he is dying does he force wide open his small black eyes and look round upon the world, and up to the sky. Now, although the mole is not a favourite among men either for its usefulness or its beauty, we may be permitted to say that most human beings, created in the image of God, do just the same as the mole. Of them, too, it is true that, for the most part, they only truly open their eyes, that is, their inward eyes, in death. Then only, when about to leave the world and time, are their eyes couched; not till then do they learn to distinguish between what is something and what is nothing, what is vanity and what is true glory; and then, for the first time, they look up to the inexhaustible sources of eternal life, and discover, to their horror, that like deluded fools they have all along been pursuing what was only illusion, deception, or imposture. Yea, only in that hour do they who took so much pride in their own wisdom become wise in the sense which Moses meant when he prayed: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." So late do they begin to seek the antidote to death. Thus we find the fellow-voyagers of the runaway prophet are full of dread and dismay at the gates of death. (*Otto Funcke.*)

The superstitious infidel:—The man who, in ordinary circumstances, refuses a just and enlightened submission to the authority of God is, in the hour of calamity, of all others the most likely to degrade his nature and his name by the low and debasing services of a gross superstition.

I. WHENCE DOES INFIDELITY ORIGINATE? 1. Not, assuredly, in the superior understanding of its subjects. Were it even so, that the most acute individuals were found in the ranks of infidelity, still infidelity gains nothing unless it can either be shown that it is itself the cause of this acumen, or that it results properly and immediately from its exertions. Infidelity is the vice not of mature but of juvenile minds, or of those whose minds never open beyond the attainments of indiscretion. 2. Infidelity, in very many instances, derives its origin from the distorted views of religion, which superstition or bigotry present. 3. The grand origin of all infidelity is the pride and pollution of the heart. Passion now usurps the authority over conscience, and the understanding submits to the will. What we strongly incline to we are easily persuaded to believe; whereas, a doctrine that opposes our desires, it is hardly possible to bear. The principles of infidelity may be held in the fullest harmony with indulged sensuality.

II. TRACE INFIDELITY IN ITS RESULTS. Follow the history of the infidel to his ultimate manifestation. That sooner or later he will be revealed is what we are warranted to assume. In one or other of the following ways is his folly revealed. 1. By voluntary confession on his acceptance of the Saviour. 2. By the despair which must follow the rejection of this salvation.

3. By the degrading superstitions to which the infidel is constrained to apply.

II. WHAT JUDGMENT OUGHT TO BE FORMED OF SUCH A SYSTEM OF PRINCIPLES?

1. Of its wisdom. Intellect is the boast of infidels. 2. Of its practical influence. The interests of society are concerned here. 3. What is infidelity with respect to its ultimate comfort? That is no religion for man which does not afford consolation. (*James Simpson.*) *Seamen in storms*.—I. THE MIGHTY AGENCY OF GOD. The wind is a strange power in nature. The fact that storms are under Divine direction should—1. Rouse us to consider them as God's voice. 2. Lead us to submit to the catastrophes they produce. II. THE NATURAL INSTINCTS OF MAN. These men developed—1. The dread of death. 2. Faith in prayer. Their prayer involved—(1) Faith in the existence of divinity. (2) Faith in the intreatableness of divinity. III. THE STRANGE VICARIOUSNESS OF SUFFERING. The storm came on as a consequence of the sin of Jonah. The innocent suffer for the guilty the world over. The principle of vicarious suffering is a principle developed in the experience of all. We suffer for others, and others have suffered for us. A man may deny the justice of vicarious suffering, but he cannot deny the fact. The sufferings of mariners are strikingly vicarious. Let shipwrecks remind us—1. To put our confidence in God. 2. Of our moral condition. 3. Of our duty to pray for our brethren on the sea. (*Homilist.*) They cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea.—*The unavailing sacrifice*.—Whatever sacrifices the sinner in the hour of trial may be disposed to make, nothing can avail him so long as unpardoned sin remains concealed in the heart. I. THERE ARE IMPORTANT SACRIFICES WHICH, IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL, THE AWAKENED SINNER WILL MAKE. 1. The awakened sinner may abandon, in the hopes of relief, his worldly companions. These were his treasure. 2. Conviction may even constrain the sacrifice of the most endeared and of the most inveterate habits of sin. 3. He sacrifices his prejudices. 4. He sacrifices his personal ease. 5. He will even sacrifice his worldly substance. II. SACRIFICES SO PRESENTED CAN NEVER BE ACCEPTED OF GOD. They have no intrinsic value;—they are involuntary—unseasonable—selfish—unauthorised—unbelieving—and unholy. Such sacrifices may be made while sin remains safely concealed in the soul. Two things are requisite in order to our intercourse with God. Not only must iniquity be pardoned, but it must also be destroyed as to the influence which it exerts on the heart. By that method of salvation which the Scripture reveals, holiness is effectually secured. (*James Simpson.*)

Ver. 6. So the shipmaster came to him.—*A model sea-captain*.—The shipmaster was a good workman. The spirit and manner in which he went about his work deserve our imitation. He was intensely in earnest. At any risk he wished to arouse this slumbering passenger to a sense of duty. Death was staring them in the face, and he was anxious that every person on board should be doing something to assist the ship, or to save his life. Seek to imitate—I. HIS EARNEST SOLICITUDE. When we remember that millions of our fellow-men are actually slumbering on the very verge of perdition, the first desire of every Christian heart should be to awaken them out of sleep. The conversion of men to God is the ultimate and immediate aim of all truly Christian effort. If we fail in this we fail altogether. This is the spirit of the age. In business, politics, and science, men may be as fanatical as they please, and society will applaud their zeal; while in any undertaking which is strictly Christian and spiritual, an ordinary amount of earnestness will not be tolerated. II. HIS RATIONAL APPEAL. "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" Give us a reason for this strange conduct. This inquiry is equally appropriate and rational as applied to unconverted men. In reference to a matter of such importance we cannot do rational men the injustice to suppose that this subject has not received their most earnest attention. The fact may be, that though there is so much nominal belief in the world, there is also, even amongst ordinary Gospel hearers, a wide-spread spirit of scepticism. III. HIS SIMPLE EXHORTATION. "Arise, and call upon thy God." Straightforward, honest, manly, and emphatic, the man came right to the point, and discharged his soul. Such a man as a Gospel preacher would be sure of success. Let us aim at the heart. Let our theme be the Gospel. This earnest sea-captain is an example for every Christian professor. (*W. H. Burton.*) *The good shipmaster*.—Jonah behaved at once like a very presumptuous and a very ignorant man. Jonah's slumbers were unaffected by the danger, and unbroken by the noise above and around. The shipmaster,

seeing that he was quite unconscious of his peril, and might probably be engulfed in the yawning abyss below them, before ever he knew that there was danger, came near and aroused him. The shipmaster had no very accurate ideas of Jonah's God, of His character, grace, mercy, long-suffering, or providence. Yet in the darkness of heathenism he had not absolutely lost sight of every glimpse of the truth. Amidst all the obscurity and ignorance in which they were involved many a heathen retained the knowledge that a power there certainly is that made heaven and earth, and all things therein; and that in evils which mock the weakness of human devices, the only probable road to safety is in appeal to that invisible Being, who certainly has the power, and may have the will, to save to the uttermost. (*W. H. Marriott.*) *Men aroused by unexpected means* :—If Jonah had been told one year before that a heathen sea-captain would ever awaken him to a sense of danger, he would have scoffed at the idea; but here it is done. So now, men in strangest ways are aroused from spiritual stupor. A profane man is brought to conviction by the shocking blasphemy of a comrade. A man attending church, and hearing a sermon from the text, "The ox knoweth his owner," &c., goes home unimpressed, but crossing his barn-yard, an ox comes up and licks his hand, and he says: "There it is now — 'the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib,' but I do not know God." The careless remark of a teamster has led a man to thoughtfulness and heaven. The child's remark, "Father, they have prayers at uncle's house, — why don't we have them?" has brought salvation to the dwelling. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Remarkable awakenings* :—By strangest way and in most unexpected manner men are awakened. The gardener of the Countess of Huntingdon was convicted of sin by hearing the countess on the opposite side of the wall talk about Jesus. John Hardoak was aroused by a dream, in which he saw the last day, and the Judge sitting, and heard his own name called with terrible emphasis—"John Hardoak, come to judgment!" The Lord has a thousand ways of waking up Jonah. (*Ibid.*) *Man's interest in God* :—To the end the Lord may discover the guilty man, and cause of this tempest, as he made the mariners sensible themselves, so the shipmaster is set on work to awaken Jonah, to try his interest with his God (whom they knew not yet to be the true God), if possibly He had more power or goodwill to such as worshipped Him than theirs had. Which is the first step to His discovery. *Doctrine*—1. A child of God may sometimes miscarry, so far through infirmity, negligence, and temptation, that even a pagan, by nature's light, may see him reproveable and blameworthy, for so is Jonah reproved by the shipmaster. 2. It is deeply censurable and absurd, even to nature's eye, to be secure in trouble. 3. Variety of false gods hold men in suspense and uncertainty. Therefore every "man having cried unto his God," yet they are not settled, but will have Jonah to essay his God, if He be better than the rest. 4. Nature's light will acknowledge that He who is the true God hath power to deliver in most extreme dangers; for in this great tempest they assert it, — "If God think on us, we will not perish." 5. Howsoever in a calm day, nature conceit and boast of merit, yet in a strait, natural men are forced to have their recourse only to the favour of God. For this pagan shipmaster hath no ground of hope that they shall not perish, but in God's thinking (or being bright and shining, as the word also signifies, that is, looking favourably) on them. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Arise, call upon thy God.—Asleep in sin* :—These were the words of the shipmaster to Jonah, and they present to us the strange anomaly of the reckless seaman upbraiding with impiety the prophet of the Lord. Jonah could not at that hour have possessed a conscience void of offence. At that time he was flying in the face of God, disobeying His Word, betraying His trust, and he could not have thought of Him without dread. He could not have dared to bend the knee to Him in prayer without conscience flying, like a scorpion, in his face. Was it the conflict of his feelings which overpowered him, and nature sunk exhausted under the dreadful struggle? Or was it that Jonah had succeeded in silencing the remonstrances of conscience? Only by way of accommodation can this passage be improved. 1. Apply it to the careless and ungodly. Thousands are rushing onward in the broad way which leadeth to destruction. Many a man, in the midst of the most awful realities of life, is locked up in fancied security, and not a pang, not a misgiving, not an apprehension is entertained. Well may it be said to such, "Awaken, thou that sleepest." 2. Apply to the backslider. Those who once knew the Lord, and who, remember-

ing the blessedness of knowing Him, have nevertheless fallen from their steadfastness; who, by sin, have inflicted a deadly wound upon their souls. They may be, like Jonah, sleeping, insensible to the perils around them. But the words admit of a more extended application. They come, in a greater or less degree, pointed to us all. It seems to say to us all, "watch and pray, arise and be doing." (*Dennis Kelly, M.A.*) "*Sleeper, arise*":—Notice the character of Jonah's sleep. It could not have been the sleep of innocence and confidence. Jesus Christ slept in the calm confidence of a mighty faith which knew that the elements were powerless to injure the Holy One of God. Jonah slept to escape from himself. He had already fled from the presence of God, but he could not escape from the sound of God's voice in his conscience. May we not see in this sleep of Jonah a type of the condition of many souls? As with him, so with us. God has given us a work to do for Him. But the work grows distasteful; so we gradually slacken our efforts, and perhaps at last abandon them altogether; and then try to escape from the presence of the Lord. . . . We lull ourselves more effectually to sleep by the expressed intention of making our peace with God at some far distant time, when we are less distracted by the world's claims upon us. But what are such intentions save as the dreams of an unhealthy sleep? Every landmark of our lives which tells us that another stage is reached, and our journey is so much nearer the close, is in point of fact as the voice of that heathen sailor who roused the sleeping prophet. It is no new or striking thing to say, that the time and manner of your death is uncertain. We need to take home to ourselves the common-places of religion before we can actually realise them. How can we dare to continue to live in such a state as we dare not die in? (*F. R. H. H. Noyes, D.D.*) *The sleeper called to awake*:—The prophet, jealous, as some think, for the honour of Israel, and unwilling that the Gentiles should partake of the benefits of prophecy; or fearing that, as others imagine, notwithstanding all the denunciations he might utter against them, the merciful God might still spare them, and thus tarnish the veracity of his predictions,—subjecting him, moreover, to the ignominy of being despised and punished as an impostor; or apprehensive, as is the opinion of a third class, of the perils to which this journey and message were likely to expose him, refused obedience to God's authority. What could the prophet mean by attempting to flee from the presence of the Lord? Possibly Jonah thought that by removing from Judea the special place of Divine revelations, he would remove from that presence of the Deity which was peculiar to it. During his passage he does not appear to have thought of the folly or sinfulness of his conduct. He fell fast asleep. Did not this splenetic seer know that it is in vain for a man to contend with his Maker? 1. It must be obvious to every one that this impassioned inquiry into the conduct of the sleeper speaks it to be fraught with extreme folly. Man is placed under the regimen of a moral and an equitable administration, in which God deals with him as a rational creature. A door of hope is set before us. The awful consequences of refusing to accept God's mode of deliverance are fully displayed. Now, does the sleeper act the part of a wise man; to remain locked in the embraces of a most sluggish inaction, when affairs of such moment are to be decided? Surely no frenzy is half so desperate as this! The sleeper's conduct is fraught with extreme folly. 2. This awakening salutation intimates that the sleeper's conduct is full of danger. See the appalling and perilous position of this ship. Far more appalling and perilous is your condition, O ye spiritual slumberers. You are embarked on the ocean of Divine wrath. The vessel to which you have committed yourselves is frail and shattered, yet an ark of safety has all along attended you, but you will not be at the trouble of accepting its aid. By neglecting the great salvation, your peril is increased a thousand-fold. Jonah's condition in the ship gives but a faint idea of the danger you every moment run while without Christ, and "without God in the world." 3. The earnestness of the interrogatory imports that now is the proper time to awake. It should be a rule with every man who wishes to regulate his conduct wisely, to put off nothing till to-morrow which is necessary to be done to-day. The present time is always the best, and, what is more, it is all that we can call our own. The circumstances of this case demand that you decide instantly. 4. The vehemence of this call tells us, that the business for which the sleeper is called to awake is of the utmost importance, and well deserves his attention. Inconceivably greater than Jonah's is the business to which we now solicit your attention. By nature you are lost and undone; but we

now announce to you a message of peace and reconciliation with God. We tell you of a Saviour. Will you, through the pride of your heart, banish from your mind that deep and mysterious project? Will you, through the listlessness of your inaction, discard, as not deserving your serious contemplation, that unrivalled event which filled the world with wonders? 5. The question here put to the sleeper may also be viewed as the language of reproof and astonishment. These sailors were heathen, yet in time of strain they called on their God. The one man who professed to fear the God of heaven remains fast asleep, makes no attempt to call upon his God. (*W. Nisbet.*) *The sleeper awakened*:—Like all who endeavour to frustrate the designs, evade the commands, or flee from the presence of God, Jonah found his hopes miserably disappointed. The address of the shipmaster to the slumbering prophet is equally applicable to those who are yet in their unregenerate state. 1. Like the prophet, you are exposed to the storm of Divine wrath, which every moment pursues and threatens to overwhelm you. 2. The inspired writers employ various figurative expressions to describe the situation and character of impenitent sinners. Persons of this description are represented sometimes as foolish, mad, or infatuated; sometimes as blind and senseless; sometimes as dead in trespasses and sins; and sometimes as slumbering or asleep. (1) Sleep is a state of insensibility. (2) Sleep is a state of dreams and delusions. Apply to unawakened sinners, and then to those whom God has been pleased to awaken. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The sleeper aroused*:—The circumstances connected with this message of the prophet are very striking. We may trace a parallel between those circumstances and man as we now find him. Every man, from the least to the greatest, is charged with a mission from God; every man comes into the world charged with this one great business, the bringing glory to God; and every man who goes forth, in the exercise of the faculties which God has given him, influenced and regulated by Almighty grace, fulfils his mission. But the greater part of mankind shrink from it; they flee (as it were) from the presence of the Lord; they go forth from the round of duty in which He places them, and seek to escape. Every soul who is not fulfilling his mission will sooner or later be convinced how fearful a thing it is, as well as vain, to seek to depart from God, and to neglect the one great business of life. The subject suggests one aspect of the unconverted man,—he is in a state of deep sleep. All his faculties whereby he might glorify God are inactive, or if employed at all, are employed unwisely and unfitly. He slumbers in sinful indulgence. There is an absorbing power in this; it holds the heart fast, it subdues the whole being, and brings it into entire subjection. He slumbers in spiritual feeling. What should be done in this case? Two things. “Arise.” “Call upon thy God.” To every slumberer in sinful indulgence and spiritual ignorance we say, “Arise.” Awaken to serious thought. Respond to the call of the Divine Spirit. Call upon God with all the lowliness of humiliation, and in the exercise of a simple faith, of a faith which He will give, of a faith which is even now tendered. And let me remind you that every day spent in the dangerous slumber of sinful indulgence and spiritual ignorance increases the difficulty of your awakening. (*George Fisk, LL.D.*) *A rousing voice to moral sleepers*:—Three practical appeals to the morally indifferent are suggested. I. JONAH WAS IN IMMINENT PERIL; SO ARE YOU. What are the perils of the material shipwreck to the perils of a corrupt and disobedient soul? II. JONAH WAS UNCONSCIOUS OF HIS PERIL; SO ARE YOU. You say to yourself, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” If you were aware of your position, you would give no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. 1. Jonah’s unconsciousness was foolish; so is yours. How unwise was the prophet to sleep under such circumstances; he should have been on deck, alert, all ear and eye, and with hands ready to grapple with the emergencies of the terrible hour. 2. Jonah’s unconsciousness was wicked; so is yours. For the sake of his companions on board he ought not to have been “fast asleep”; it indicated a shameful lack of interest in his fellow-men. Your indifferentism is wicked. You ought to be spiritually alive and awake, not only for your own sake, but also for those around you who are in similar peril. III. JONAH HAD A MESSENGER TO WARN HIM OF HIS PERIL; SO HAVE YOU. There are certain points of analogy between this “shipmaster” and the godly ministers that are warning you. 1. He believed in the existence and power of God; so do they. “Call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us.” 2. He believed in the efficacy of human prayer; so do they. What soul does not pray when in conscious

contact with overwhelming dangers? Your ministers believe in prayer; they pray for you, and urge you to pray for yourselves. 3. He believed it to be his duty to sound the warning; so do they. Your ministers have a right to warn you; they are bound to warn you. They are commanded to "cry aloud, to lift up their voices like a trumpet." Do you say, when godly men speak to you about your moral condition, What business have they to interfere? My soul is my own; if I choose to throw it away, what matters it to them? It does matter to them. You are not your own, you are not an isolated unit, you are a member of the spiritual universe; you have therefore no right to be dishonest, corrupt, ungodly, and throw your soul away. You were made to serve the universe, not to curse it; you cannot sin without injuring others. (*Homilist.*)

An alarm to the careless.—Observe the goodness and mercy of God. He would not punish without a warning, and affording opportunity to forsake their sin and turn unto Him. Jonah was to warn Nineveh, but instead of obeying he fled, hoping to hide himself from the eye of the Almighty. Consider Jonah as representing the state of the great bulk of mankind, the state of every unconverted sinner. I. THE EXPOSTULATION. "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" Sleep implies a state—1. Of insensibility. Jonah has no sense and feeling of his desperate condition. Sinners are dreaming, they are fast asleep. 2. Of insecurity. No one is more defenceless than he who is asleep. He is exposed to every danger, without anything wherewith to shield him. Just such is the state of the case with every impenitent sinner. 3. Of inactivity. Notwithstanding all the evils to which Jonah is exposed, he makes not one effort to escape. He is fast asleep. So is it with the souls of the unregenerate. 4. Of inability. What can a man that is asleep do to preserve himself, to save his property, or protect his life? The sinner cannot rescue himself from danger. II. THE ADVICE. Open thine eyes, and see thy danger. Look, and behold the remedy. "Call upon thy God." Prayer is a haven to a shipwrecked mariner; an anchor to them that are sinking in the waves; a staff to the limbs that totter; a mine of jewels to the poor; a security to the rich; a healer of diseases, and a guardian of health; prayer at once secures the continuance of our blessings, and dissipates the cloud of our calamities. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT. "If so be that God will think upon us that we perish not." It may be that God will hear us. At least we can try. Such was the encouragement which the shipmaster held out. We can add more to this. Our God can and will hear and answer prayer. He is "thy God." Address—1. The careless sinner. 2. Those who are beginning to awake to a sense of their awful condition. 3. Those who have complied with the advice given. (*Robert Simpson, M.A.*) *The awakening influence of light*.—A young lady was carried to the hospital of St. Lazare in a sleep that had continued for a week. All the chemical and medical appliances had been used, and yet she slumbered. There was an expert among these French doctors that awoke her. The last resource! On the cones of the eyes that have dropped into insensibility is light. He focussed into the eyeball of the sleeper the rays of the sun. Hardly had the concentrated ray touched the eyeball when she awoke. Is it in sight of this physical principle that Paul uttered without knowing it, or is it not a marvellous testimony to God's Holy Spirit and His guiding when he says that the last resource for the slumber, even of death, is Christ's light? When Christ shines into your soul you can't slumber. (*John Robertson.*)

A troublesome cabin passenger.—I know a shoal upon which I have seen several vessels come to ruin, but upon which I have never seen the remains of any two ships at the same time. It has been remarked that as long as the mast of a sunken wreck was to be seen above the water, another vessel was never known to strike on that bank. But it is seldom that that place is without its mournful beacon. As one ship thus becomes a beacon to another, so, in the voyage of life, one man's faults and failings should become warnings to all the rest. God has given us many such beacons by the way; for the very falls and weaknesses of His people are made to subserve our highest good. The rock of disobedience, upon which Jonah split, is one of the most dangerous. Some who have grounded thus have managed to get off again into deep water, but it has always done them permanent injury, and has maimed them for the rest of the voyage. Jonah never did much after this misfortune. We see in Jonah a type of many round us, both in the Church and in the world. I. INDOLENCE IN THE MIDST OF ACTIVITY. "He lay." Ease—rest—to be down in the sides of the ship, fast asleep in the bunks of formality and carnal ease, is the fullest realisation of the ordinary professor's dreams.

Respectable Jonahs are the curse of our churches. II. UNCONCERN IN THE MIDST OF DANGER. Men sleep on the very verge of eternal ruin. How is it possible to describe the sad condition of those who "will not" be aroused by all the Gospel admonitions which from time to time they hear? III. DETECTION IN THE MIDST OF FLIGHT. Jonah little dreamed, when he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, that the Lord was marking his every step. God knows us through all our disguises. We must all "appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," and He who is to be your Judge has watched all your doings right throughout. (W. H. Burton.) *Of the dispositions becoming men in the times of very threatening and impending danger*:—1. That apprehensions of the displeasure and vengeance of God, on account of sin, are apt to arise in all ingenuous minds in times of very threatening and impending danger. 2. That notwithstanding there is a just foundation laid in the human mind, for apprehensions of this sort, in a state of distress, or great danger, yet many of those who are most criminal and guilty are, in such a situation, quite unaffected and secure. 3. That a sense of the displeasure of God, manifested in present or apparently approaching calamities, would naturally excite and urge men to devotion, humiliation, and repentance. (J. Orr, D.D.) *The history of Jonah*:—Jonah is justly no favourite with us, though conspicuously a prophet of the Lord. Hardly one prophet's name is pronounced with so little respect. He was a real saint, with too much of the remaining elements of a sinner. His conduct on receiving his commission does appear very strange. We must accept his own explanation, given in chapter iv., which seems to amount to this,—he felt in danger of being disgraced as a prophet, the denunciation being to be uttered in positive, not conditional, terms. How abominably considerations of self may interfere with obedience to God! The purpose of his voyage betrays a most unworthy conception of the Divine Being, whatever was exactly the prophet's notion. He may have been under the influence of a notion, that God maintained a peculiar jurisdiction over Judea, and a less absolute one beyond; though he knew that it must extend, with awful authority at least to Nineveh. He may have thought that, if he went far enough away, God would do without him, and appoint some other agent. He slept, but it is not wise to sleep in guilt. The God that is disobeyed on land can make the sea avenge Him. There is no situation more pitiable than that of a religious man who has disabled himself to take the benefit of his religion. Jonah's associates had various gods, but they could all pray earnestly to their objects of adoration. He could not; he who knew the real Lord of the land and the ocean. There must soon have been manifested some peculiarity of circumstances in the storm, indicating that it was of a nature extraordinary and judicial. The mariners referred it to the avenging power to point out the criminal by "casting lots." There follows the decision of the lot, a series of questions and expostulations. Jonah's answers were perfectly explicit. The honesty he showed made the mariners think it best to inquire of himself what they should do to him. His ready, explicit answer and self-devotement, no doubt, made them much more reluctant to do what he directed them. It would strike them as generous and heroic. They rowed hard. But the necessity became imperative at length. Jonah was sacrificed, but he was a willing sacrifice. Think of the prophet in his living tomb. The "belly of hell," that is, the grave. Short of death, is it possible to conceive so strange a transition of state and feelings? By degrees the amazing fact that he did really live, and continue to live, would bring him to the distinct sense of a miraculous and protective Providence over him. Every moment would add strength to his impression of the Divine presence, and he came at length to a state of thought and faith and hope capable of prayer. What is given as the prophet's prayer is doubtless the brief recollection, afterwards recorded, of the kind of thoughts which had filled his mind during his dark sojourn, with the addition of some pious and grateful sentiments caused by the review. The final result of these mental exercises no doubt was a full consent of his will, that He who had sent him hither should send him anywhere else He pleased, even to Nineveh. Our Lord declares all this to be a type of Him. We may trace the analogy in the being consigned to the deep, and to the grave, in order that others might be saved;—the duration of time the same in the dark retirement;—the coming to light and life again, for the reformation of mankind. (Hercules was fabled to have had the same three days in a fish.) We follow Jonah to Nineveh, and there leave him. It does not appear that he showed any "signs

and wonders." There was a speedy humiliation and repentance, to which God graciously responded, but at which Jonah was angry. (*John Foster.*) *The sleep of Jonah, and the sleep of Christ* (taken with Matt. viii. 24):—Our Lord has taught us to associate His name with that of Jonah. Christ taught us how to find high teachings in that which is outwardly mean and insignificant. We may be permitted to observe an incidental resemblance between them, which appears to be fruitful of suggestion. There is a study for us here, in this sleep of Jonah and this sleep of Christ. 1. The physical conditions of human life are the same in all cases,—in the case of the good and of the bad. There is one law which makes sleep a necessity for all. In both these cases the immediate cause of sleep was bodily weariness and exhaustion. One had toiled in glad fulfilment of a ministry of love and sorrow; the other had angrily refused to obey the voice of the Lord. But both slept. Thus we see the check which the universal and mysterious law of sleep puts upon every form of human activity. This limitation of bodily energy puts its restraint on human wickedness. It enforces a perpetually recurring pause in the activities of the sinful, the thoughtless, the worldly. But we sometimes cry that the activities of the noble and the good should thus be stopped. Alas! that these must lay aside so often and so soon their toils, their consecrated tasks, their questionings, their search for truth. In discouragement and distress the Christian man at times longs for some exemption from the general law. But we may take heart again when we see Christ asleep. He sleeps, and His work stands still. 2. There are instances of peril in which physical causes conduce to the absence of alarm, both in the case of good men and bad. Jonah, fast asleep, was as untroubled by the threatening fury of the storm as Christ Himself. Sometimes the vigour and robustness of a man's bodily constitution contribute largely to indifference to dangers, which, if he regarded them, might fill him with dismay. Here is a physical cause largely helping to make a man altogether indifferent to the awful peril of irreligion. Often, when the time to die comes, the avenues of the soul seem to close up; the powers of expression fail; the whole man sinks into a lethargy and unconsciousness, in which he finally passes away. It is so with the good and bad, the prepared and unprepared. 3. This sleep of Jonah and sleep of Christ are indicative of two widely different spiritual conditions and processes issuing in strikingly similar results. We do not wonder that Christ should calmly resign Himself to sleep without apprehension or consciousness of peril. He knew that He was in the Father's hands. But how could Jonah sleep, whatever his weariness, in the very act of such unfaithfulness to God? In both instances the spiritual condition *may* have contributed to the soundness of the sleep and the consequent unconsciousness of danger. With what thought Jonah went to sleep we are not told. In proportion to the success which Jonah had in quieting conscience would be the ease with which he would drop off to sleep and the probable soundness of his slumber. There was no uneasiness at the heart of Christ, and so He slept. There was not uneasiness enough at the heart of Jonah to keep him awake, and so he slept also. Misery comes to men in gusts; it is not the permanent condition of life's atmosphere to any one. If a man refuse to be a Christian it by no means follows that he will live in a state of perpetual excitement and alarm. We almost wonder how it is that God lets men thus sleep on. It is not God's plan to compel men to His service. He never so speaks that we may not refuse to answer. He never so compels us to attend that we may not settle ourselves to sleep again. But the time of awaking comes. In most Christian congregations it may be there are some who are suffering from the pangs of an awakened conscience. For such Christ waits with infinite compassion and concern. But the probability is that the condition of the majority of those who habitually listen to Christian preaching is like that of the ten virgins, of whom Christ speaks in His parable. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." We slumber and sleep. Is it because we are finding our rest in reconciliation with God, or because we have dismissed the thought of God, and comforted ourselves with an opiate? (*Thomas Stephenson.*) *Call upon thy God.—Terrors of conscience.*—1. How natural it is to mankind to fly to God and to call upon Him in seasons of distress. If nature, dark and doubtful, and trembling with a sense of guilt, can yet fly to the Almighty and call upon Him, shall we, who are enlightened by grace, be careless and indifferent about this high privilege of drawing near to God in prayer? Shall we, as long as we can find any earthly satisfaction

and enjoyment, give them the preference to God; think much of them, and little or never of Him? Who that has a real concern for his own welfare and happiness will not perpetually call upon God? 2. The folly of contending with God. He sent the prophet one way; but because this prophet liked not the errand that he was charged with, he endeavoured to go quite a contrary way. The folly of such an attempt we are all ready to acknowledge; but are all, who would not hesitate or doubt to pass sentence upon Jonah, free from this very folly? Jonah disobeyed an express order of God; and in doing so somehow satisfied himself that an all-discerning Eye would not see perverseness in him, nor an almighty Hand reach him in his flight. Do not thousands practise the same deceit upon themselves? 3. Conscience hath its power and authority and terrors derived from God; with which it will surround the sinner in the day of trouble, forcing him to confess and acknowledge his guilt. 4. These terrors of conscience, if they seize the sinner in due time, are most blessed and desirable. For the most unhappy of all conditions is security in sin, without any feeling or apprehensions of danger from it. But an humble and contrite heart, confessing its unworthiness, bewailing its sins, fully sensible of its own inability to rid itself of this burden, is in the fit and only fit disposition to return to God: such a soul is not far from salvation. 5. The Almighty, who bringeth good out of evil, ordained that Jonah should set forth a type or sign of the burial and resurrection of Christ. (*T. Townson, D.D.*) *Natural religion—its strength and weakness.*—The pilot not only rebuked the prophet, he had a proposal to make to him. "Arise, call upon thy God." And he backs his proposal by a reason, a motive, an expectation of benefit. "If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." All this, as coming from a heathen, is peculiarly instructive. The two great truths conveyed are these. 1. That in man's inmost nature, originally and radically, there are certain principles of religion most strong and ineradicable. 2. That these, without the guidance of revelation and faith, are altogether insufficient as guides in his real relation to God. Man's natural helplessness, and his natural conscience, necessarily imply a capacity for religion and a certain religiousness, appertaining, of necessity, to human nature, and developed, in peculiar strength, even in heathen worship. In the progress of modern civilisation man may emancipate himself from the solemn awe with which the heathen contemplate the powers of nature, but if he rise not to a holy veneration of the one Supreme Author of nature, as a revealed and reconciled God, it is very questionable whether he does not become in some respects a more shallow and trifling being than the worshipper of idols. We might very easily maintain and prove the assertion, that godless men, in the days and in the state of society in which we live, are more thoroughly irreligious than the heathen are: that covetousness, which is idolatry, is more contemptible than the worship of stocks and stones. Two facts conspire to make man naturally and necessarily a religious being. 1. His observation of the powers of nature. 2. His experience of the powers of conscience. I. WHAT CAN NATURAL RELIGION DO FOR US? What is it that reason, unlightened by the Word and Spirit of God, can do towards furnishing man with a religion? 1. It may tell us that there is a God, that God is one. The existence and the unity of God may be proved by reason. These heathen mariners had many gods. Jonah, they took for granted, would have a God too. The whole herd of inferior deities whom the heathen worshipped were only so many sectional representatives of a portion of the powers believed to reside in a God, to whom might fairly be given, even by reason, the lofty designation, "God over all." The wisdom, power, and goodness which man sees to be requisite for creating, preserving, and controlling the visible universe, are felt to be unbounded, infinite. One such Infinite Being is felt to be necessary to account for things as they are. But not more than one is felt to be necessary. Indeed, more than one such Infinite Being, possessing all knowledge and power, is felt to be impossible. The same result follows from our connection with the moral world. Conscience tells of a Ruler and Judge, but only of one. 2. Reason, fairly interpreted, assures us that this God is a Being capable of intercourse with His creatures. The creation of an intelligent Being is manifestly the work of a Being who Himself is intelligent. Hence reason itself demonstrates the possibility of a revelation from God, and of the possibility and efficacy of prayer. II. REASON'S LIMIT, AND REASON'S WEAKNESS. 1. Reason knows that God exists, but it does not know God. We need revelation to make us acquainted with Him. You never really know any person merely by discovering his intellectual or

scientific abilities. You never do know a neighbour save by knowing his moral character and his heart. 2. Reason tells us that prayer is possible, yea reasonable, but revelation alone puts us in possession of the terms on which God actually hears prayer,—puts us in a condition actually to pray. Reason, therefore, without revelation, is sure fatally to err; and whether in ancient paganisms or in modern rationalisms, which are heathenisms, or in popery, or in nominal, formal Christianity, the error at bottom is identically one and the same. (*Hugh Martin, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.—*Conditions to be observed in casting lots*:—1. We must never fall to lottery but when necessity enforceth us: all other lawful means must be first assayed. 2. We must use great reverence and religiousness in the action. Holy things must be done in a holy manner. 3. We must avoid impiety and idolatry therein, ascribing the event of our wishes neither to the stars nor to any other celestial body, which cannot want the ingestion and intermeddling of devils. 4. We must not apply the oracles of God in His sacred Scriptures to our earthly, temporary, and transitory losses. 5. The ends of our lots must be respected; the honour of God, as the moderator of all such ambiguities; the furnishing of His Church, if two or more be fit, with the fitter; the preserving of justice; the avoidance of greater mischiefs. 6. We must eschew all fraud and deceit in permitting our causes to heavenly arbitrament. (*Bishop John King.*) *The lot*:—In the proposal of the sailors, though superstition seems to have dictated it, I perceive an implied recognition of the agency of God in the storm. They considered their present distress as a visitation from God. And in this they judged truly. Storms do take place under the direction of Divine providence. I perceive, further, the operation of natural conscience in these heathen men; for they believe not only that it was God who sent the storm, but that the storm was the evident token of His displeasure on account of sin. Sin indeed is the great cause of all the evils with which mankind are afflicted. The conscience of the sinner may at other times be lulled into a false peace, but the pressure of great calamity, or the fear of its approach, rouses it from its slumber. In this case, the conscience of these heathen, though not enlightened by revelation, accused them. There is, however, no direct evidence that these mariners were impressed, severally, each with a conviction of his own sins in particular. Every man looked away from himself, as if he were blameless, and turned his thoughts towards some other of the company as the guilty cause of the storm which threatened their destruction. Besides, they were ill-informed respecting the administration of Divine providence towards sinners in this present world. They seem to have thought that the sufferings which befall men in this life are in exact proportion to the measure of their iniquities. This was the error of Job's friends. The sailors considered the storm as a special visitation inflicted because of some more than ordinarily aggravated transgression, committed by some unknown individual among them. So they appealed to God by lot, in order to discover the guilty person. The whole business of the sailors casting lots must be ascribed to their ignorance and superstition. We should err were we to judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of actions merely by their event; and God is often pleased to employ for His purposes the ignorance and folly of men. (*James Peddie, D.D.*) *And the lot fell upon Jonah.*—*Finding the guilty one*:—God will certainly find out the Jonah that causeth the storm. The guilty person shall not always go undiscovered. I. PERSONS UNDER GUILT MAY GO A LONG TIME UNDISCOVERED. Some men's hidden works of darkness are sooner brought to light than others. II. SOME MEN'S SINS ARE NOT DISCOVERED UNTIL THEY COME TO THE GREAT RECKONING, THE GREAT AUDIT DAY. "Some men's sins are open beforehand to judgment, and some men they follow after." Then the hidden things of darkness that escape discovery now will all be brought to light; and what if you be hid here, this will but harden you: whereas a discovery might be a means to awaken you and bring you to repentance. III. SOME MEN'S GUILT COMES UNDER MORE DREADFUL AGGRAVATIONS THAN OTHERS. Ordinarily, the more aggravations that men's sins are clothed with, the sooner will God lay them open to a discovery. IV. UPON THEIR DISCOVERY THEY EITHER GROW WORSE AND ARE HARDENED, OR THEY ARE DEEPLY HUMBLLED. Jonah, upon his discovery, acknowledges and accepts the punishment of his iniquity. Now we inquire, What ways and means doth God take for the discovery of guilty persons? 1. By pursuing them with the terrors of conscience. 2. By sending judgments

and afflictions after them. 3. By suffering them to fall into some notorious sin. 4. By giving the guilty person up to some gross and notorious error. 5. By causing the power and authority of the Word to seize upon them and arrest them. 6. By wonderful providences. 7. By bringing them to heart and conscience examination. By such discovery of guilty persons God gets Himself a name. A name for His justice, wisdom, omniscience, omnipresence, and also for His Word and truth. Why will the Lord discover guilt? To bring poor souls to shame, and so to repentance, and all this while He hath a design of love to the soul in the discovery. Because He will have some persons made cautions and examples to others. That the world may know of His displeasure against sin. That the rottenness of many hearts may appear, and they may no longer go on to deceive others. (*John Ryther.*) *The discovery*:—Let sinners conceal themselves as they may, their transgressions will sooner or later assuredly discover them. I. SIN MAY BE LONG CONCEALED FROM THE EYE OF MAN. There is, indeed, a gracious covering provided for the sins of believers. There is also a charitable concealment to which in many instances we are bound; but this regards the transgressions of others. But there is a covering which is not of God's Spirit; a concealment by which sinners are encouraged to "add sin to sin." This is worn sometimes in the form of delusion, and then sinners deceive themselves. At other times they wear their covering in the broad and ostensible form of hypocrisy. Ought every transgression to be avowed, however secret? Were it viewed in relation to God we should say absolutely that it is hypocrisy to conceal. What are the cases where, in obedience to the Scripture, we are conscientiously bound to confess our faults, not only to God, but also in the presence of one another? 1. Such disclosure would be necessary when, in exercise of lawful authority, the sinner may be regularly called. 2. Disclosure of secret offences is required where, in their consequences, they may implicate others. 3. The interests of the Divine honour, not unfrequently, may require it. The honour of Divine grace is by such confession promoted. II. ALL SINS, EVEN THE MOST SECRET, SHALL BE EVENTUALLY REVEALED. Sentence against an evil work is not at all times speedily executed. But delay does not secure final impunity. As there can be no hiding-place to the impenitent, neither shall any species, any degree of transgression escape. III. THERE ARE CERTAIN KINDS OF TRANSGRESSION WHICH THE WISDOM OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT REVEALS, AND ITS JUSTICE GENERALLY AVENGES, EVEN IN OUR PRESENT STATE OF BEING. 1. The general characters by which such sins are distinguished. 2. God is in no want of instruments for the discovery of the concealed transgressor. 3. For what purposes are these discoveries made? (1) For the manifestation of the Divine glory. (2) In mercy to the sinner himself. (3) To afford us all the most salutary warning. (*James Simpson.*)

Ver. 8. What is thine occupation?—*What is thine occupation?*—In secular life God intends every man to have an occupation. So too in the Christian life. The world of sin inquires of the Church, "What is thine occupation?" A religion that cannot give a valid reason for existence will and ought to die. God's calls to duty are all special calls. So are His calls to us. What is our response? The Church has been sent into this world on a special errand, with a special message; but many of her members are fleeing from duty; many are asleep over a volcano of human hate; are tossed skyward and hellward by the tumultuous waves of social unrest, every lift of the wave bearing them further from duty and Divine destiny. The Church should be a nursery—not a nursery for adults, but for babes. Men and women in the Church should be nursing fathers and nursing mothers. Then "what is your occupation?" (*F. A. Swart.*)

Ver. 9. I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord.—*Jonah's confession*:—I. THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING BORN AND EDUCATED IN SOME COUNTRIES ABOVE OTHERS. Consider them both in a natural and in a spiritual sense. Some countries place their inhabitants under serious disabilities. The conditions are most deplorable when men's bodies draw the yoke of slavery, and minds are destitute of common civility, as well as of all true conceptions concerning God or religion. What then are the natural advantages into which we are born? And how great are the spiritual advantages? II. THE GREATEST HAPPINESS MEN CAN RECEIVE DOETH ARISE FROM THEIR BEING NUMBERED AMONG THOSE PEOPLE WHO FEAR THE LORD. This happiness is best demonstrated by comparison

with the enjoyments of other people and nations. That this happiness may abide for ever with us, we are obliged—1. To keep up a friendly society and correspondence with all men. 2. We are more particularly engaged to love and help one another, as fellow-countrymen. (*John Hartcliffe, M.A.*) *The confession and its sequel*.—Here is Jonah at the bar of inquiry. Conscience brings every man there. There is a present judgment-seat as well as a future. Observe—1. The interrogators. Heathen sailors. 2. The prisoner at the bar. A prophet of Israel. A degrading position to be in. 3. The investigation. It was kind, considerate, circumstantial. The verse 9 sets forth the elicited confession. Confession is a relief, a necessity, and a Divine condition of forgiveness. Here it was ingenious, contrite, humiliating, God-honouring. Verse 10 suggests that God's terribleness, as seen in His judgments on sin, inspires the greatest terror. This prompts to earnest inquiry. Verses 11-15 set forth the humanity of the jeopardised heathen crew and the self-sentencing of Jonah. Their conduct shows great caution, tenderness, sympathy, moral change. There was earnest prayer; reluctance to touch God's anointed; recognition of the Divine Sovereignty. The self-sentencing of Jonah was the result of conscious demerit. Learn—1. That no sinner visited with Divine judgments is justified in taking his own life. 2. When God intends to execute judgments. 3. That in executing sentence against transgressors we should be certified it is in harmony with the will of God. Verse 16 indicates the moral effects of the whole phenomena on the sailors. They feared, sacrificed, vowed. Verse 17 sets forth justice attempered by mercy through miracle. Learn that—1. Irrational creatures, as well as inanimate creation, are subject to Divine control. 2. That we may alight on the mercy of God at the most unexpected hour and in the most unlikely place. 3. That partial deliverance is Divinely intended to exercise and develop faith. 4. That salvation shall be wrought for the penitent if it necessitate a departure from the ordinary course of things. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

Vers. 12, 13. I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.—*Intelligible providences*.—It is certain that in all general adversities God has some purpose to accomplish with all those that suffer. But it is no less true that individual persons may be particularly aimed at. A few years ago the great steamship *Austria*, crowded with emigrants, was burned far out at sea, and only a few of the passengers were saved. Of these some afterwards published reports of the terrible event. One thrilling narrative was from the pen of a young man who had sunk very low in debauchery, frivolity, and scorn of all higher things. And this is what he said of himself: "I do not understand the ways of the Eternal; but I do know this, that it needed a terrible catastrophe to awaken me from my deathlike sleep. Nothing less than such awful event would have driven me from the path of ruin; and in the midst of all the frightful agony of the scene, an inward voice seemed to say to me, 'This is all for your sake, that your soul may be dragged from destruction.'" So also a Prussian musketeer who on the battlefield of Sadowa had both his legs shot off, said to me, "I can never reveal my sins to any human being; but believe me, that only in that way could I be plucked as a brand from the burning. As far as I am concerned, I know why the war had to come." (*Pastor Funcke.*) *The penitence of the prophet of Gath-hepher*.—This is the first clear indication of a return on the part of the prophet to a proper state of feeling. His confession did not necessarily imply this. I. THE REQUEST OF JONAH. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." These words imply—1. A conviction of the folly of attempting to resist God's will. It may be said that this none will dispute. In words, indeed, many may admit this, but in their practice they contradict it. Every disobedient sinner imagines that he can secure his happiness not only independently of God, but in opposition to what He hath revealed or what He can do. 2. An expression of his readiness to endure the chastisement due to his transgression. It is one thing to acknowledge our guilt and desert of punishment, and another practically to acquiesce in that punishment when it is about to be inflicted. It is a much more difficult thing, and much more indicative of true penitence, patiently to bear affliction than actively to perform duty. Jonah pronounces on himself the appalling sentence, that he should be cast into the sea. 3. An expression of his readiness to submit, not only as respected the matter of the punishment, but the manner of it. Though Jonah passed sentence on himself, he did not propose that he should himself carry it

into effect. Self-destruction is in no case justifiable. 4. The expression of his satisfaction that the innocent should escape, though he might suffer. II. THE CONDUCT OF THE MARINERS. It might have been expected that they would follow Jonah's advice. They did not at once. Notice—1. The benevolence of their exertions. 2. The inefficacy of their exertions. Learn the obstructions which sin presents to our efforts for the good of others. (*R. Brodie, A.M.*) *Settling the storm*.—Trace an analogy between the experience of these ancient mariners and that of those who are "led by the Spirit of God" to accept salvation through the death of Christ. "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows." It will be interesting to trace the steps by which this consummation was reached. 1. True spiritual religion is DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN. Some of us began life very much as these sailors commenced their voyage. Every prospect seemed bright. So easily we persuaded ourselves to rest. Jonah learned in the belly of the fish that "salvation is of the Lord." This at a stroke removes—1. Inherent goodness. 2. Inherited grace. 3. Imparted sanctity. As this spiritual religion is Divine in its origin, so it is—II. IRRESISTIBLE IN ITS OPERATION. When God said, "Let light be!" light was, and nothing could resist His decree. And so it is in the new creation. What could these sailors do against the "mighty tempest" which threatened to dash their ship in pieces? Men may encase themselves in pride, carnal reason, prejudice, unbelief, but the Word of God is "quick and powerful." III. ABSOLUTE IN ITS REQUIREMENTS. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." That was God's way of giving calm and rest. See the ways the mariners tried. 1. They began to be religious. 2. They tried to lighten the vessel. 3. They rowed hard to get to land. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Accept God's method. IV. BLESSED IN ITS RESULTS. This is precisely the way in which God works in grace. 1. Peace through faith. 2. Piety with peace. 3. Profession with piety. (*W. H. Burton.*) *Jonah's fate*.—Let us not fail to admire all that was admirable in the conduct of this heathen crew. A nobler ship's company was never gathered together. No human voice cried across the deck of the labouring vessel that the man who pronounced this sentence upon himself must be taken at his word. With a humane self-restraint which did them infinite honour the sailors set to work at an attempt to save themselves without sacrificing their passenger: and it was not until that attempt had completely and manifestly failed that they reluctantly and reverently consigned him to the deep. 1. THE NOBLE ATTEMPT OF THE SAILORS. 1. Notice the toil it involved on behalf of a stranger. 2. The risk to which it exposed them for the sake of one who had occasioned them loss. 3. It was a noble motive which prompted these men to make this attempt to save the prophet's life. They desired to show their sense of Jonah's own demeanour in relation to themselves, and to make a suitable response to it. 4. The failure of their attempt by no means detracts from the nobility of their conduct. It does not follow that they had nothing but their labour for their pains. They were morally the better for the purpose they had cherished of saving the prophet, and for the effort they had made to accomplish their purpose. II. CONSIGNING JONAH TO THE SEA. They handled the prophet as tenderly as the circumstances permitted. Look at the prayer these men offered before they put Jonah into the sea. 1. The prayer is replete with interest to those who regard it with attention. It was a prayer addressed to the true God by these heathen for the first time. It was a very earnest prayer. It was a prayer for their own preservation. It was a prayer for the prophet. 2. The reply to the prayer. "The sea ceased from her raging." This was a miracle. Miracles were signs. This was a sign that Jonah was indeed a prophet of the Lord. A sign that Jehovah is the ruler of the sea. And a sign that God hears and answers prayer. (*Samuel Clift Burn.*) Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land.—*Hard rowing*.—The unavailing efforts of these oarsmen have a counterpart—1. In the efforts we are making to bring souls to the shore of safety, and set their feet on the Rock of Ages. 2. In the efforts we are making to bring this world back to God, His pardon, and safety. If this world could have been saved by human effort, it would have been saved long ago. 3. In every man that is trying to row his own soul into safety. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.—*The crux of the miracle*.—The real miracle was that Jonah should survive so

long in his strange prison. "That violates the laws of nature." But let us once understand Christ's profound saying about a Father who "worketh hitherto" (John v. 17), that is, who has never taken His hand from off the thing which He has created, but is ceaselessly active and operative in His creation. Once let us understand that all force, in the last reach of our thought, is with force, and that the forces of nature are only the many-sided puttings forth of that force of the will of God, outspoken and expressed in that Word of His power by which He upholdeth all things. Once understand that there are no "laws of nature" to be violated, except the rules which He has laid down for His own ordinary and orderly action in governing His world. Once let it be seen that whilst for our sakes it is generally best and happiest that He should keep to His own rules, and should very seldom indeed do in any way differently, yet He is at perfect liberty to choose whether He will keep to His ordinary and orderly plan, or for some special reason will in any particular instance turn aside. Then, if there is as good evidence for the fact as the case admits of, and, above all, if plainly there is good reason for the fact, we may as reasonably find no more difficulty in the miracle than in the general providence. What is ordinary is of God, just as much as the extraordinary. The natural is of God, as much as the supernatural. Once more it may be said that if our eyes were not too much the eyes of the children, we should see that the wonder is the orderly, reliable, age-long, ordinary providence, rather than the special thing, done just once, to meet an emergency for which the ordinary rule and method did not sufficiently provide. And the special is not an after-thought. It is provided for in the whole great plan of the Worker. It is one of His rules. It quite as much needed God to keep Jonah alive year after year in the atmosphere and upon the earth, as to keep him alive for three days within the body of the great fish. (*H. J. Foster.*)

The miracle of the whale.—No miracle has been more frequently quoted, or more severely scrutinised. I. ESTABLISH SUCH PRINCIPLES AS WILL WARRANT THE FACT. 1. There are some things of which even the Divine power is incapable. Things inconsistent or contradictory cannot be asserted of God. 2. There are other instances in which the Divine power may be easily supposed to interfere for the suspension or even contradiction of those laws which God hath given to a material world. 3. Besides these parts of creation with which we are in some measure acquainted, there are, doubtless, many others of which we remain totally ignorant. The infinitude of the Divine power is the basis on which this observation is built. II. CONSIDER THE PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES WITH WHICH IT HAS BEEN THOUGHT THIS MIRACLE WAS ATTENDED. 1. The act of deglutition. 2. The difficulty of respiration in the body of a fish. 3. The impossibility of resisting for so long the digestive powers of so huge an animal. III. THERE WERE DESIGNS TO SERVE WHICH WERE WORTHY OF SUCH INTERPOSITION. 1. It was of important advantage to the prophet. 2. It was of vast importance to the mariners. 3. It was of vast advantage, we may believe, to the people of Nineveh. 4. It was of the utmost importance if you consider it in its relations to the promised Messiah. 5. The sign of Jonas is intended for standing use to the Church, to the end of the world. (*James Simpson.*)

The miracle of the great fish.—Strauss said, "He who will rid the world of priests, must first rid religion from miracles." But the Christian religion stands or falls with the supernatural. A man may believe in a living God who works miracles, and yet hesitate and recoil at the extraordinary one which is narrated in the history of Jonah. No one will say that every man who believes that God can work miracles is bound to accept implicitly every miraculous event described in the Bible as having really happened, and as being the work of God. Let no one think that he is not a Christian because he must hesitate about the literal interpretation of this miracle of the "great fish." Instead of adopting any artificial interpretation of this miracle, it would be better to suspend our judgment, and acknowledge that we cannot come to any conclusion about it. At any rate there is only the choice between saying that the whole history of Jonah is a parable, or an allegory, including the preaching in Nineveh, and saying that every event in it is related as an actual occurrence. To suppose that Jonah fell into a "mysterious hiding-place" is only to set aside the biblical miracle, and put another and more wonderful one in its place. We seek an answer to the general question, whether it is so wonderful a thing to believe that God works miracles: or whether, on the contrary, the belief that He must and does do so, is not founded on the very being of God, and on His relations with men. If we arrive at that

decision, the question of the miracle by which Jonah was saved will be settled. A God without miracles would be the greatest miracle of all. If we have not a God who works miracles, we have no *living* God; and if no living God who communicates with men, then no God at all. Whoever knows anything of the *living* God, cannot possibly think that God has tied His own hands, once for all, with laws of nature. The rank and privilege of man demands Divine miracles. God must work for us in extraordinary and exceptional ways, or we could neither fear nor love Him, and He would soon be indifferent to us. (*Otto Funcke.*)

Jonah's preservation.—I. AN ORDINARY EVENT IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. It was not a miracle that a large fish should swallow Jonah. Instances have been known in which sharks have swallowed men. II. WHAT MAY BE CALLED A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OF GOD. A remarkable coincidence of ordinary providences leading to some important result we generally regard as a special providence. III. WE HAVE A MIRACULOUS PROVIDENCE OF GOD. That the prophet should have lived in the fish was a miracle. And the miracle is the more striking because consciousness continued. Learn—1. That there is no way out of a plain duty except through chastisement. 2. That the *place* of prayer can neither add to nor take from the value of prayer. 3. That the inferior creatures may become instruments of moral instruction to man. 4. That the fish was honoured by being thus brought into the plan of God for Jonah's recovery to the way of duty. Consider—(1) The object and design of the miracle. (2) The Disposer and Ruler of the action. "The Lord." (3) The manner of doing it. "The Lord prepared." (4) The instrument. "A great fish." (5) The end of its preparation. To swallow up Jonah. (6) The time during which Jonah continued in the fish. "Three days and three nights." (*Outlines by a London Minister.*)

Jonah in the sea.—Mercy and truth, or an innate tendency towards kindness, and an essential love of rectitude form the most prominent features of the revealed character of God. A God all mercy would be a God unjust. The demands of justice were rigorously exacted, and the prophet was hurled into the deep. Why such severity? Jonah had sinned presumptuously against God, and he must bear the penalty. In this phase of Jonah's experience, which we now consider, we find "mercy rejoicing against judgment." I. THE PROPHET'S IMPRISONMENT. Note—1. The singularity of the mode of imprisonment; the agency of God in preparing the prophet's cell. On the supposition that Jonah retained his consciousness when cast into the mighty deep, it must have been with emotions of indescribable horror that he saw the jaws of this marine monster expanding to receive him. 2. The term of Jonah's captivity. Explain Jewish reckoning "three days and three nights." II. THE PROPHET'S PRAYER. Jonah retained his consciousness during the term of his imprisonment. Evidently we have only the substance of the prophet's prayer. Note the evidences which his spiritual exercises furnish of sanctified affliction. 1. The spiritual exercises with which the prophet's prayer is identified. 2. The conclusion of unbelief. "I am cast out from Thy sight." 3. The victory of faith. "Yet will I look again towards Thy holy temple." 4. The ardour of Jonah's gratitude. 5. His emphatic ascription. "Salvation is of the Lord." Notice the evidence of spiritual reclamation which the prophet's prayer supplies. See his altered feeling towards God: the rekindling of the spirit of devotion: the vigorous action of faith. In the expression of his faith Jonah embodied the sentiments of former saints. Jonah was evidently cured of his folly in flying from God. III. THE PROPHET'S DELIVERANCE. This was miraculous in its character. Jonah was conveyed back safely to the Holy Land, and cast upon the dry shore. It was intended to test the sincerity of the prophet's penitence, to secure the fulfilment and success of his errand, and to typify the mission of Christ. (*John Broad.*)

A restrained fish.—The chapter closeth with the narration of Jonah's preservation. Though thus pursued by justice in a fish's belly, where, in a miraculous way, he was kept three days and three nights. Doctrine. 1. When God is pursuing the rebellion of His children in a most severe way, yet doth He not altogether cast off His mercy toward them, but out of the abundance thereof, moderates their affliction: for "the Lord," pursuing Jonah, "had yet prepared a great fish to swallow him up." 2. God's providence overrules and directs the motions of irrational creatures and sea monsters, as pleaseth Him. For "the Lord had prepared a great fish," &c., whereas it knew nothing but to range up and down in the sea, and swallow him as any other prey. 3. God may have a mercy and proof of love waiting upon His people, in a time and place where it would be least expected; for Jonah meets a mercy in the heart of a

raging sea, into which he is cast in anger, as to be destroyed. 4. Albeit the mercy of God will not destroy His guilty people in their afflictions; yet His wisdom seeth it not fitting at first totally to deliver them, but will have their faith exercised. 5. God can, when He seeth fit, preserve His people from ruin in an incredible and miraculous way. Therefore Jonah is not only swallowed whole by the fish, not being hurt by its teeth; but is preserved in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, where he was in hazard of choking for want of breath, or of being digested by the fish into its own substance. (*George Hutcheson.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-9. And Jonan prayed unto the Lord his God, out of the fish's belly.—*The return to God*:—The object in setting forth the history of Jonah is to show the nature of his sin, the truth of his penitence, and the way in which he was restored to God's favour. Turn thought to the change which was worked in Jonah's soul. Bear in mind what was the nature of his sin. It was not that he was separated from God, but that he had abandoned his duty, had shrunk from his mission, had thought more of his own relief from trial than of God's will. When some wrong has been done which we have not the courage to confess, and the truth is discovered, fixing the charge on one's self-personality, we know what a terrible shock and deep inward sense of self-reproach is felt. Illustrate by the cases of Achan and David. When the sailors asked Jonah what was to be done, he replied, "Cast me forth into the sea, . . . for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." What do his words prove? Not only Jonah's personal sense of guilt, but his complete surrender of himself to God, whether to live or to die. "If I die," he seems to say, "it is my just doom; if I live, it is the pure undeserved mercy of God." It was the most perfect reparation we can conceive. As before he would not surrender his own will and his own judgment, notwithstanding the command of God, so now he would give himself up wholly for whatever God might will as his deserved punishment. The sailors cast him into the sea, but then a yet deeper sense of penitence awoke within him, and a yet stronger expression of profound sorrow and unquestioning childlike faith broke forth from him. Jonah saw, by faith, life restored; he saw Divine mercy working itself out in the midst of the deep darkness, and he acknowledged God as his Father, his Protector, his eternal Hope even then in the midst of his awful doom. Two lessons.—1. We see here an act of purest faith. There is a faith of a soft and easy kind, when everything goes smooth, and we have no anxiety, no fear or distress darkening the path of life. How glibly then do men speak of having their hope in God. There is another kind of faith, which produces resignation, patience, willingness to endure and be brave, and even willing to suffer. But yet it may not be faith that cheers the soul,—not a "rejoicing in the Lord," not the triumph of a trustful soul. The real saving faith is seen when the soul finds God working in the storm and tempest, and reads the handwriting on the wall, speaking even in the midst of death and terror, and yet can calmly look on the Redeemer on the Cross, and see in the future the immortality beyond the grave, see the brightness of the glory that will one day be to the faithful the heritage of boundless joy, and so be comforted and gladdened even in sorrow and pain,—it is such faith we see realised in the repentant Jonah. 2. We may learn the reason of trials and troubles which so often disturb the currents of our life. What would it be if we were always in the sunshine, always prosperous? Would there not be, even to the most faithful, a risk of too great confidence of a false assurance? (*T. T. Carter.*) *Jonah in the sea*:—1. Objectively, the prophet's experience was that of one in the belly of hell, in the midst of the seas, entangled in the weeds, and among the caverns worn by the waves beneath the mountains on the coast. Jonah was in the belly of hell—Sheol, the region of the dead. He was in the heart of the seas. He sank at once when cast into the sea. He was entangled with the sea-weeds. Entangled with the weeds which gathered about his head, the prophet drifted towards the coast, and was presently carried into some of its submarine caverns by the current, and there he must have perished but for the Divine mercy. 2. The subjective experience

of Jonah beneath the waves was that of a living, conscious, suffering, and suppliant person. It was a miraculous circumstance that the prophet remained alive in such a position. Jonah was not only alive, but conscious while under the sea. The distress he experienced beneath the water appears to have been spiritual rather than physical. His soul was overwhelmed with the consciousness that he was cast out of God's sight. Jonah was saved from despair by the suppliant mood which possessed him. We need despair of no man while he prays. His prayer was accompanied by a look toward the temple of Jehovah. It was prompted by his remembrance of the Lord. "I remembered Jehovah." It was accompanied by a vow. It was answered in a remarkable manner. Observe his reflections when in the fish. 1. "Thou hast brought up my life from destruction, O Lord my God!" 2. "My prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple." 3. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." 4. "Salvation is of the Lord." (*S. C. Burn.*) *Jonah's prayer* :—Here we have a very clear and intense history of Jonah's inward life. Notice some points of it. 1. There was a great and sudden quickening of consciousness. 2. Rapidly this new consciousness became distressful. The reserved sorrow of long sinning comes all at once. 3. Then he began to "look"—upwards to earth, eastwards to the temple where he knew that the lost presence was richly manifested. 4. The look soon became a cry. It may have been an audible cry. But evidently the soul of the cry was this, that it was the cry of the soul. 5. He began to be grateful. 6. The final state of his mind is a state of entire dependence. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The imprisonment of Jonah* :—It is evident from the chapter that, whether a longer or a shorter period elapsed, what befell him, and how he was exercised during his confinement, were things which he distinctly recollected. In verse 1 Jonah gives a summary statement of what was his situation and exercise. The belly of a fish. Clearly his preservation and escape were things altogether miraculous. That was his situation; his exercise was prayer. Let none then neglect secret prayer to God, or think themselves excused because they have not a proper or convenient place to which they may retire. The description given of the object of his prayer is worthy of notice. "The Lord his God." The God of Israel, the only living and true God, God in covenant. It was plainly the prayer of an appropriating faith. Verse 2 requires but little explanation. Here we have the success with which this exercise of prayer was crowned. His situation had been one of deep distress. He cried unto the Lord out of his affliction. He was in great straits, and very closely besieged. His body and mind were both shut up. The word "cried," as used in relation with the exercise of prayer, is very significant. It is not here merely a loud voice; it implies close engagements of heart, great fervour, earnestness, and importunity. This is the more strongly indicated as the word is repeated. Our prophet did not direct his cry to one whose ear was shut or averted. Our God is the hearer of prayer. Verse 3 contains an amplified account of the dismal situation of the prophet, and of the utter hopelessness of life being preserved, or deliverance obtained, except by miraculous influence. Without attempting to describe the peculiarly distressing feelings of the prophet when in the fish's belly, a case which baffles all description, let us direct attention to the piety of the man. He traces the storm to God Himself. In verse 4 we have a short but lively description of that conflict which often takes place, in the case of God's people, between grace and remaining corruption, particularly between faith and unbelief. This conflict, though incident to the people of God at all times, is specially felt in seasons of distress. The language is not to be understood as referring to God's natural presence, or as intimating that the prophet was beyond the sphere of God's omniscience; for he was better taught than to give any countenance to such an idea. But he then felt strongly tempted to say that he was cast out of the Lord's gracious presence. But he had in him the principle of a true saving faith. He says, "I will look again toward Thy holy temple." This language intimates that the faith of the prophet embraced God in His gracious and new-covenant character. The following truths may be inferred. That God is jealous of His glory, and frequently manifests this most signally in His dealings with His own people. That it is God who adjusts the kind, measure, and duration of the afflictions with which His righteous people are afflicted. That while God displays much of His sovereignty in the afflictions He sends upon His people, yet some sin is often the immediate precursor. That right exercise under affliction consists in a clear and impressive discernment of this connection. That when afflictions are sanctified

to persons they seek unto God by prayer for pardon and restoration. That although the genuine people of God, under this or the other affliction, may be reduced to a very low state as respects their soul-exercise, yet they are always upheld, and in the mercy of God are prevented from plunging into the fatal abyss of despair! (*James Clyde.*) *The conflict between despair and faith*:—Doctrine—1. It is the usual lot of the Lord's children to have not only outward afflictions to wrestle with, but spiritual temptations and sad conclusions, gathered from their troubles, which are sorer to endure than many simple afflictions. For so was it with Jonah when he was in the sea. 2. The children of the Lord in their troubles may be so tossed and divided betwixt hope and despair that faith and unbelief will be talking word about, for so doth Jonah's experience teach. "I said, I am cast out; yet will I look again." 3. In a time of temptation, unbelief's word is generally first out, till faith come and correct it; ordinarily what is said in haste is unbelief's language, and to be unsaid again, for this comes first out, "I am cast out of Thy sight." 4. A child of God may not only be assaulted with fits of despair, but for a time be overcome with it, and yield to it; and yet, for all that, recover his feet again. 5. As it is ordinary under temptation to judge of all God's respect, care, and love by our sense of His present dealing, so to be cast off by God, as one that He will not favour nor care for nor take notice of, is the sorest of trials, especially to the child of God, who lives by God's favour, and is made up in all his afflictions when he finds that God thinks on him, and that his troubles endear him to God's care. 6. It is no new thing to see a child of God, and vessel of mercy, apprehending reprobation and rejection from God, in his sad and dark hour, for this also is Jonah's temptation. 7. Nor is it strange to see the children of God exercised and sadly afflicted with that which hath never been, nor will be, save in their own fearful apprehensions; for so is Jonah with "casting off." When we reckon by our own deservings, and by probabilities in a strait, and not by God's love and all-sufficiency, we cannot but draw sad conclusions, and our own spirits will make us work enough. 8. Temptations, even when they have overcome for a season, are not to be lien with, and given way to, by the children of God, but ought to be resisted and set against, though they should (if it were possible) perish in the attempt, this being the way to honour God and get deliverance,—for vanquished Jonah will not quit it so; "Yet will I look again." 9. That whereby the children of the Lord must oppose all troubles inward and outward, and resist temptations, is naked faith closely adhering to the covenant of grace made in Christ, and gathering hope of better dealing. This is imported in his "looking again toward the holy Temple," or eyeing God in His covenant, whereof that was a sign. To cast away confidence as useless in a strait, or not to essay faith until we are hired by sense, or to lie by in wilful unbelief, think that is the way to get sense to loose our doubts; or to seek any footing for faith but in God's covenant and free grace in Christ, is the height of folly. 10. The weakest act of faith may do much good in a day of greatest need; for in all this extremity Jonah had no more but a "looking again" as a poor banished man. 11. Faith in a time of need will find a way through many a dark impediment to find God. 12. It speaks much to God's praise that when His people are laid by with their temptations yet He will not lose them, but recover them out of their deepest swoons, and make vanquished faith yet again to triumph over difficulties which they had judged insuperable. For this is also recorded to His praise: that not only Jonah persevered crying when his trouble was great, but that he was strengthened, after he had once yielded to the temptation, to believe and "look again." (*George Hutcheson.*) *The prayer of Jonah*:—This prayer, as it now stands, was obviously composed after his restoration. It may be regarded as a compendium of what he uttered in his distress. Notice—1. The depth of the prophet's misery. The prophet was in the utmost jeopardy. He knew not but that death might speedily be his portion. His misery arose chiefly from the agony of his soul—the conviction that he had been arrested in an act of wilful disobedience,—in the attempt, vain as that of the first fallen pair, to escape from the presence of the Lord. Many of his expressions are similar to those of the psalmist. David felt the bitterness which is the invariable result of a departure from the living God,—the intolerable anguish which arises from a consciousness of guilt when the conscience, by habitual transgression, has not been scared, and reverential fear of God not rooted out from the heart. When we contemplate the prophet in his dark hours of terror and agony, and behold the inevitable wretchedness which is the natural

consequence of disobedience, we cannot but admire the wisdom, while we should seek to follow the example, of that apostle who declared, in the presence of Felix, that he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Though depressed and desponding, Jonah did not give way to despair. He called to mind former mercies. His prayer ascended with the incense to heaven. And to whom should we betake ourselves in the hour of affliction, but to that God who dwelleth not in temples made with hands? We should not look to other sources for that comfort which Jehovah alone can bestow. As Jonah looked to the temple, and thought upon the legal sacrifices there offered, so must we, in all our addresses to the throne of grace, have respect to the meritorious efficacy of that great sacrifice by which the Lord Jesus hath averted the Father's displeasure, and opened a way of access through His blood. The prayer of Jonah was not in vain. He was speedily delivered from his prison-house. No doubt can be entertained of the sincerity of the prophet's repentance—of the deep humiliation of his soul, of his heartfelt contrition for having disobeyed the Divine command. No sooner was the prophet restored than, like the mariners, he offered praise and thanksgiving, and paid his vows unto the Lord. How overwhelming must have been his feelings on this miraculous deliverance from his strange and fearful prison-house. His soul must have been transported with gratitude and amazement, and his vows were doubtless poured forth with a fervour proportioned to a sense of deliverance. But how often are pious resolutions forgotten when the time of danger is past. "Salvation is of the Lord." What truth more important to be habitually realised than this,—that all our temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings proceed from God. What have we that we have not received? Our worldly success we are tempted to ascribe to our prudence and skilful management. We refer to second causes that which should be referred to the great First Cause of all. And we are apt to forget that it is "by grace we are saved." The great practical lesson for us to learn is—the value and importance of prayer. (*Thomas Bissland, M.A.*)

The prophet's prayer:—The bottom of the sea was Jonah's holy ground, and the belly of the fish his consecrated oratory. His gloomy prison was turned into a house of prayer. Jonah evidently retained his consciousness during the term of his imprisonment. We have only the substance of the captive's prayer preserved for us. 1. The spiritual exercises with which the prophet's prayer is identified. It is impossible to conceive of a more critical or distressing condition than that to which the servant of God was reduced. 2. The conclusion of unbelief. "Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight." An outcast from Divine favour. 3. The victory of faith. "Yet will I look again towards Thy holy temple." See faith's realised triumph. "Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." 4. The ardour of Jonah's gratitude. 5. His emphatic ascription. "Salvation is of the Lord." Notice also the evidence of spiritual reclamation which the prophet's prayer supplies. This is seen in his altered feeling towards God. In the rekindling of the spirit of devotion. In the vigorous action of faith. In the expression of this faith Jonah embodied the sentiments of former saints. The prophet's mind was evidently richly stored with the Word of God. (*John Broad.*)

The conflict of faith and sense:—The prayer of Jonah is an illustrious instance of the conflict between sense and faith. Sense prompting to despair,—faith pleading for hope and procuring victory. This prayer of faith, though in unparalleled circumstances, and spiritually noble in a marvellous degree, contains in it nothing but the ordinary principles of all believing prayer. It is the very trial of faith to have circumstances to contend with which appear to extinguish hope, which even seem to shut out hope altogether. This is the true place and action of faith. Surrounded by incidents, events, circumstances, influence, powers, all adverse to your deliverance and salvation; and with your hope, as far as this region of the things seen and temporal is concerned, utterly cut off; your faith discovers another region, a realm and kingdom unseen. Your faith draws upon them. I. VIEW JONAH'S POSITION FROM THE SIDE OF SENSE. Was ever a case so fitted to call forth utter despair? Mark—1. The case in which Jonah finds himself. 2. The hand to which he traces it. 3. The immediate effects produced on his mind by it. He felt to be cast out of God's sight. His soul fainted in him. Outwardly he was begirt with terrors unspeakable. These to him were tokens of an angry God. His soul was brought to the very verge of despair. II. JONAH'S FAITH ROSE IN ITS STRENGTH AND TRIUMPH. What can stand us in any stead in such an hour but the prayer of faith? 1. We

see the truth and power of Jonah's faith in that he betook himself to prayer at all. 2. He set before himself the certainty of Jehovah's reconcilableness, His promised forgiveness, His sure accessibility. 3. He did not do this in vain. He was answered in the progressive strengthening of his faith, even while his trial lasts. 4. Jonah offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving. He cometh unto God—unto God his exceeding joy. (*Hugh Martin, M.A.*) *Jonah the penitent suppliant*:—This has been called a "Song of deliverance." It suggests—1. The moral significance of adverse circumstances. Circumstances make or unmake, mould or mar us for future usefulness and distinction, according to the spirit in which they are received and utilised. Adverse circumstances are morally advantageous when rightly understood, patiently borne, and rightly used. Adversity ever has a spiritual significance. Whether it be guidance judicial or disciplinary, we cannot do better than acknowledge with reverence the hand that strikes, and supplicate His mercy. 2. The important part prayer plays in the adversities of life. It is indispensable in the trying and troublous experiences of our moral and physical being. Jonah's prayer was a necessity. He was borne on the wings of strong moral impulses. 2. That the hearer or receiver of prayer is always within reach and approachable. Time, circumstances, condition, place are no hindrances in themselves to drawing near to God. From every point in the compass of life He is accessible. (1) Jonah's prayer was a personal recognition of God. (2) He was earnest in supplication. Importunity is never unsuccessful. 4. That our prayers to a great extent are moulded by our experience. As the countenance indexes the mind, the eye, the health, so prayer is a pretty sure indicator of the soul's attitude Godward, its condition in grace, its experience in the faith-life. This chapter teaches the prevalency of prayer. It was answered in complete salvation. Note here, amazing Divine condescension. Great deviation from the Divine habitude. Prompt and perfect deliverance. Prayer is omnipotent, for it prevails with, it conquers God. There is no dilemma in Christian experience that prayer cannot deliver from. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *In the deep and mighty waters*:—Some few years ago a terrible calamity occurred in a colliery at Tynewydd, South Wales. The mine was flooded with water, and for several days the miners were entombed, despite heroic efforts to save them. As one of the rescuing parties was exploring the mine they thought they heard singing, and creeping in the direction of the sound, heard the entombed men singing the words of a Welsh hymn, "In the deep and mighty waters there is One to rescue me." (*S. S. Chronicle*.) *More of thanksgiving beneath the waters*:—There is an old legend concerning a golden organ which, when a monastery was being sacked, the monks threw into the rushing stream that hurried past their home; and the story has it that for long, long years thereafter the music of the organ was still heard beneath the waters; for, though they drowned the instrument, they could not drown its song. There is a lesson for us even in an apparently worthless legend. When God's waves and billows roll over us, let us remember that we are God's, and that will set the seal. Though the organ beneath the surface may run the risk of being drowned, if the Spirit of God is with us, then the sweet new song will be going on all the same. (*Christian Herald*.)

Ver. 2. I cried by reason of mine affliction.—*Troubles and deliverance*:—**I. THE FACT OF TROUBLE.** Jonah is at one with all men in a common experience of trouble. No child of God is born to a heritage of unmitigated grief. Some compensating mercy is sure to throw its mellow light over the angriest storm. Some specimens of trouble. So many hampered lives; so many obstacles to goodness; so many and so powerful temptations; so many apparent contradictions to the truth of an infinite goodness. Jonah's trouble was his being thrust off into a conscious distance from God. **II. DELIVERANCE FROM TROUBLE.** The steps toward such deliverance are stated in our Scripture. 1. Jonah remembered God. Submissive memory of God is the first step. 2. Prayer is the next step. 3. A thankful trust is the next. (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. Yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple.—*The backslider's row*:—The leading feature of the story is that of one man sacrificed for the rest of the crew: it is the execution of the culprit, in arrest of judgment on the innocent. Lessons—1. The deepest remorse has its remedy in a return to duty. Jonah's truant flight was a sudden impulse. The backslider often knows

that the sin by which he fell away was the result of sudden temptation. 2. Looking again to the covenant of God in Christ is the appointed way of salvation. It is also useful to consider what it was that cast you out of God's sight, in order that you may cast that out of your sight. (*Joseph B. Owen, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord.—*Jonah an example of sanctified affliction.*—It is interesting to mark the workings of a soul when struggling with the strong billows of affliction, especially if that affliction has come in the immediate train of backsliding, and appears as the net in which God has caught a wanderer from the fold, or the rod by which He would bring him back to wisdom and obedience. 1. The altered feeling toward God of which Jonah was now conscious, as compared with that state of mind which tempted him to go astray. Now, it is the bitterest part of his complaint that he was far from God. It must be a sanctified trouble which disposes the soul to feel thus toward God. 2. It was but the natural consequence of this state of mind in Jonah, though it may be noted as another mark of his sanctified affliction, that he poured out his heart in prayer: the spirit of Sonship was again revived in him, and it led him to cry, Abba, Father. 3. Mark the workings of faith here, sanctified affliction being always characterised by the degree in which faith is called into exercise. Notice the peculiar views and feelings which are expressed in this prayer. 1. The exercise of faith in regard to the appointment of the visitation: "Thou hast cast me," &c. 2. The confidence and hope in God not extinguished, but rather roused into action by the extremity of his distress. Faith always is, in proportion to its clearness and strength, fertile in resources. 3. There is a further manifestation of faith in the words of Jonah, although it lies less upon the surface than those already noticed. It is the use made of the earlier portions of God's Word, and the recorded experiences of former times. 4. The last thing to notice in the prayer, as a mark of sanctified affliction, is the purpose of amendment it expresses. (*Patrick Fairbairn.*)

Ver. 8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.—*The value of superstitions.*—Here we learn the value to attach to all superstitions, to all those opinions of men, when they attempt to set up religion according to their own will; for Jonah calls them lying or fallacious vanities. There is, then, but one true religion, the religion which God has taught us in His Word. Men in vain weary themselves when they follow their own inventions,—for the more strenuously they run, the farther they recede from the right way, as Augustine has well observed. But Jonah here adopts a higher principle,—that God alone possesses in Himself all fulness of blessings; whosoever, then, truly and sincerely seeks God, will find in Him whatever can be wished for salvation. God is not to be sought but by obedience and faith; whosoever, then, dare to give themselves loose reins, so as to follow this or that without the warrant of God's Word, recede from God, and at the same time deprive themselves of all good things. The superstitious do indeed think that they gain much when they toil in their own inventions; but we see what the Holy Spirit declares by the mouth of Jonah. The Lord says by Jeremiah, "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and cisterns have they digged for themselves" (Jer. ii. 13). There the Lord complains of His chosen people, who had gone astray after wicked superstitions. Hence when men wander beyond the Word of God, they in a manner renounce God, or say adieu to Him, and thus they deprive themselves of all good things; for without God there is no salvation, and no help to be found. (*John Calvin.*) *The sin and folly of observing lying vanities.*—I. THE FOOLISH PRACTICE OF OBSERVING LYING VANITIES. Lying vanities may comprehend all kinds of sin whereby men are deceived and led away from the paths of truth and righteousness into error and iniquity. The Hebrew words express the deceitful nature of the vanities here intended. That which is rendered *vanity* signifies falsehood, rashness, or deceit. That translated *lying* denotes light, trivial, or airy. 1. Those who follow the delusive practice of sin. Sinful objects and pursuits are all unprofitable and vain, and can never do us any real good. Those who worship and serve strange gods, or pretend to serve the living God in any other way than He hath appointed, follow after lying vanities. By sinful practices you may increase in riches, but your profit will not countervail your loss. By sinning against God you can have no real, lasting advantage. 2. Those who greedily pursue the deceitful enjoyments of this world. The most valued worldly enjoy-

ments cannot so much as alleviate personal distress ; how, then, shall they deliver out of spiritual trouble ? Need not vilify the things of this world. We speak of present enjoyments, separate from the love and favour of God, when the heart is supremely fixed upon them, and chiefly solicitous to acquire and preserve them. To those who choose them for their portion they prove lying vanities.

3. Those who entertain vain hopes of salvation upon insufficient grounds. We need not speak in disparagement of good works ; but they must not be the foundation of our hope. They are the blessed fruits of redemption and renovation.

4. Those who leave the paths of righteousness to walk in their own devices. There are various ways by which men come under this description. Sometimes laying aside a sense of the Divine presence and authority, men impose upon themselves by the most foolish pretexts. Sometimes men desert from their duty on account of the difficulties with which the discharge of it may be attended. Some neglect their duty through wrong apprehensions of Divine dispensations.

II. THE PERNICIOUS TENDENCY OF SUCH CONDUCT. They "forsake their own mercy." The words suppose that the tender mercy of Jehovah is communicated to sinners of mankind in various ways, suited to relieve their necessities ; and that to this abundant mercy which they obtain from God they may acquire such a covenant right and title, through the Lord Jesus Christ, by closely adhering to God and their duty, as that it may be considered as their own privilege and portion. What mercy, what spiritual benefit or comfort, can a man enjoy in sinning against God, whereby he dishonours his Maker, wounds his own conscience, and destroys his own soul ? Nothing is to be acquired by sinful practices that is worth the having. Application. Every one should be deeply humbled in the sight of God, on account of our having followed lying vanities and forsaken our own mercy. A little serious reflection may furnish each of us with many instances of this sort, with which we justly stand chargeable. How many erroneous doctrines and false principles are propagated and supported among us ! How many deceitful, ensnaring practices are indulged and followed among us ! (W. M'Culloch.)

Lying vanities :—It is not enough to show that Christ's claims are not opposed to our interests, and that therefore we do not sacrifice our true well-being when we submit ourselves to Him ; we must further show that Christ definitely proposes to advance our present as well as our future interests, and that these cannot be otherwise safely assured ; and hence that we sacrifice our personal interests, and sin against our true well-being when we turn our backs on Him. The prophet only expresses what we may all, if we will, see for ourselves. Even in this world the suffering and misery that men bring upon themselves by their own conduct far exceeds all that they would otherwise be called upon to endure. How much of all our sufferings springs directly or indirectly from sin ! And all this we might escape if only we yielded ourselves to God instead of flying away from Him. And such suffering is the cruellest of all, because we have to reproach ourselves for it, and because of the painful memories it leaves behind. And we must not dwell only upon the actual miseries that we entail upon ourselves, but also upon the comfort and consolation which we deny ourselves amidst the trials which are the common lot of all. "Our own mercy." Think of what that means. No petition is more common on human lips than the cry for mercy. We feel that we need mercy. Surely man is not only nature's greatest work ; but also nature's greatest victim, unless there be mercy within our reach, mercy from some Grandeur Power than nature, who can feel for us. And the great Father is rich in mercy. He brings within our reach such a provision of mercy as He sees to be perfectly adapted to our complex needs, and represents it to us in the Gospel of His Son. It is this provision that men turn their backs upon when they turn their backs on Christ. Verily, it is true, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." How comes it to pass that men are so blind to their own interests ? Why do men forsake their own mercies ? A certain class of persons is here dealt with—those who "observe lying vanities." Satan wins influence over men, and maintains and extends it, by falsehood. And falsehood is a power. The process of blinding is carried on by the great deceiver in such a manner as to induce a false and misleading estimate of the relative value of things, and even of their relations to our happiness and well-being. The objects which Satan exhibits to man's imagination through a distorted and deceptive medium are described here as "lying vanities." The phrase suggests specious falsehood, and pretentious inanity. Illustrate by the desert mirage. Who has not at one time or another been bewildered and misled by the vast

mirage of life? When we yield ourselves to the great deceiver we become his helpless dupes. "Observe" signifies diligent watching,—the giving up of our mind and attention to a specific object. Compare the sentence, "Who mind earthly things." All earthly things, viewed apart from their connection with things eternal, are in themselves vanities,—they leave the heart still unsatisfied. When we attempt to find our portion in these things of this world they become not only vanities, but *lying vanities*,—promising to do what they never can do, and ever leading their votaries, as on a fool's errand, in quest of that which they are foredoomed never to discover. When once man has surrendered his sense to the solicitations of the flesh, you can almost predict with certainty how he will act under certain circumstances. We have but little freedom left when once we have begun to observe—to give our minds to—*lying vanities*. Our freedom consists rather in our power to decide whether of the two classes of objects we will observe, whether we will yield our hearts to the Spirit of truth, who reveals to us the things that are above—the things of God; or whether we will yield our hearts to the spirit of lies, who spreads out before us earthly things, and endeavours to invest them in our eyes with fictitious qualities and characteristics. (*W. Hay Aiken, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. **I will pay that that I have vowed.**—*A forgotten vow*:—I heard of a sea-captain who had been wrecked, and with whose ship most of the crew and passengers were lost. He himself had only saved his life by holding on to a plank, and had for a considerable time been completely at the mercy of the waves, but fortunately had been rescued, and was then travelling in the stage-coach to rejoin his family. He told his fellow-passengers his sad story, and all of them pitied him, but wondered why a man so recently saved from imminent danger should end almost every sentence with an oath. The coach stopped to change horses, and one of the passengers proposed to the captain that they should walk on and let the coach overtake them. As they walked together the gentleman said, "You said last night you lost your ship?" "Yes." "And your life was saved by clinging to a plank? When you were hanging on to that plank, did you not vow that if God delivered you, you would lead a very different life from that which you had formerly done?" "That is no concern of yours," angrily responded the captain. At the end of the day's journey, as the travellers were about to take supper together, the captain was obliged to decline, saying he had no money. The gentleman who had spoken to him on the way offered him a goodly sum. The captain refused it at first, but eventually, rather ungraciously, accepted the gift. Next morning the captain surprised the gentleman by holding out his hand and saying, "I did, while on that plank, promise God that I would lead a different life if He would, in His mercy, save me. I had forgotten my vow, but with God's help I shall keep it from this day forth!" Do not many sinners so treat God? They call upon Him in the day of trouble, but when they are delivered they forget all about Him. (*J. Hamilton.*) **Salvation is of the Lord.**—*Jonah's praise of God*:—In his words we have a particular favour acknowledged. Jonah evidently had an eye to the wonderful and extraordinary deliverance that God had wrought for him; and indeed the hand of God did so eminently appear in it, that it could not be ascribed to any other. And there is a general truth asserted, "Salvation is of the Lord." This is certainly true in the most extensive sense. Whether the salvation be of a temporal or spiritual nature, it is of the Lord. **I. WHAT SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.** 1. The salvation of the soul, salvation from sin, and from all that misery which is consequential to it. There is a salvation by purchase and a salvation by power, and both are of the Lord. 2. Temporal salvation is of the Lord. God wrought a temporal as well as a spiritual deliverance for Jonah, and to Him Jonah ascribes the praise of both. **II. IN WHAT RESPECTS SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.** 1. In what respects spiritual salvation is of the Lord. (1) In respect of contrivance. (2) In respect of purchase. (3) In respect of the revelation, exhibition, and offer of it. (4) In respect of the application of it. (5) In respect of the progress of it. (6) In respect of the consummation of it. 2. Temporal salvation, or deliverance from outward troubles and afflictions, is of the Lord, as it is He alone who works it; and whatever the distress is, He is able to work it. Learn—1. Believers in the most afflicted condition have no reason to be cast down, as if their case were altogether hopeless. 2. Sinners, however guilty and wretched, have no reason to despair of salvation. 3. Believers are wholly indebted to the grace of God for their salvation, for every

spiritual and every temporal deliverance wrought for them. 4. That when any deliverance wrought for persons has been wrought for them in mercy, they will eye and acknowledge the hand of God in it. (*D. Wilson.*) *Salvation is of God*.—Observe what happens when the cry rises at sea, "A man overboard!" With others on deck, you rush to the side; and leaning over the bulwarks, with beating heart you watch the place where the rising air-bells and boiling deep tell that he has gone down. After some moments of breathless anxiety you see his head emerge from the wave. Now that man, I shall suppose, is no swimmer; he has never learnt to breast the billows; yet with the first breath he draws he begins to beat the water; with violent efforts he attempts to shake off the grasp of death, and by the play of limbs and arms to keep his head from sinking. It may be that these struggles but exhaust his strength, and sink him all the sooner; nevertheless, that drowning one makes instinctive and convulsive efforts to save himself. So, when first brought to feel and cry, "I perish!" when the horrible conviction rushes into the soul that we are lost, when we feel ourselves going down beneath a load of guilt into the depth of the wrath of God, our first effort is to save ourselves. Like a drowning man, who will clutch at straws and twigs, we seize on anything, however worthless, that promises salvation. Thus, alas! many poor souls toil, and spend weary, unprofitable years in the attempt to establish a righteousness of their own, and find in the deeds of the law protection from its curse. (*J. MacLaurin.*) *Salvation is of the Lord*.—Take the word "salvation" in its highest and in its lower senses. I. IN THE DELIVERANCE OF A SOUL. Comment upon our state of ruin. Salvation is—I. Of the Father. In its origin proceeding from the eternal love of God, even before all time. 2. Of the Son. In its meritorious cause. An obstacle to be removed; justice to be satisfied; our need of an atoning sacrifice. Note the willingness of Christ to offer Himself; and the fulness and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. 3. Of the Spirit. In its personal application. Our aversion to God to be taken away—in conversion, sanctification, perseverance. II. IN THE LESSER DELIVERANCES OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. 1. From outward difficulties. Such as Jonah's case. Jonathan and the Philistines. Children of Israel in the wilderness. David overtaken by Saul. Asa and the Ethiopians. Jehoshaphat and the Moabites. 2. From bodily afflictions. Hezekiah's sickness. *Psa. cvii. 17; Job xxxii. 19.* 3. From soul troubles. Temptation. Desertion. Backsliding. What are the legitimate deductions? (1) The subject checks the pride and vainglory of man. (2) Raises the hopes of the desponding. (*John D. Lawe, M.A.*) *What is salvation?*—Let us try to see what salvation means. I take it to be summed up in four things. First, knowledge that God is our Father; second, knowledge of the kind of life we are expected to live; third, reconciliation with ourselves, with our own consciences; fourth, a sense of pardon and communion with God, and knowledge of eternal life within us. If you test these things you will find how true it is that they are not found in any other name or person than Jesus Christ. (*R. F. Horton, D.D.*) *Salvation is of the Lord*.—This text announces, in general terms, a truth encroached upon by almost all systems of false doctrine, and repugnant to the natural heart. I. SALVATION IS WHOLLY OF GOD IN ITS ORIGIN WITH THE FATHER. 1. In the will and decree of the Father (see *Eph. i. 4*). 2. The Father's purpose and decree can be referred to nothing but His sovereign pleasure (see *Eph. i. 11*). 3. He was under no obligation to save man. 4. In order to receive salvation we must take the position in which it contemplates us. Condemned, as guilty. Hateful, through sin. The enemies of God, against whom sin is. Powerless to atone or obey. 5. We must further acknowledge God's absolute sovereignty in electing to salvation, and providing a Saviour, and in now saving us. II. SALVATION IS WHOLLY OF GOD IN ITS EXECUTION BY CHRIST. 1. Had man been equal to his own salvation, then had Christ not come (*Gal. iii. 21*). 2. Christ had to meet human opposition. Man opposed his own salvation, according to God's plan, as soon as practicable. III. SALVATION IS WHOLLY OF GOD IN ITS APPLICATION BY THE SPIRIT. Man is dependent on the Spirit for having the truth presented; for being able to understand the truth; for rendering him willing; for faith to receive and rest on Christ; for regeneration; for sanctification; for perseverance unto the end of life in Divine grace. Learn to pray for and rely on the Spirit. (*James Stewart.*) *The Christian's rejoicing and glory*.—In the former part of the verse the prophet expresses his determination to bless and praise the Lord. The ground of his doing so was what the Lord had done for him, notwithstanding his grievous crimes and rebellion.

That again embraced a twofold mercy, namely, what had been done, or what was about to be done, for his body and for his soul. The prophet had now been taught a lesson which it would be his wisdom never to forget, and which would the better enable him for the arduous work he was called to perform. Some indisputable facts in Christian experience. 1. That no one knows what salvation means but they who have seen their need of it. 2. That no one can praise the Lord for salvation but they who have experienced its blessing and power. 3. That no one can be insensible to the holy feeling of gratitude and praise to whom the grace of God hath brought salvation. 4. That it is generally through a variety of humiliating and painful discipline we are conducted to such an experience, and formed to such a confession and acknowledgment. This then is the subject of our discourse. Considered in every possible point of view, in its origin, source, revelation, execution, grant, efficiency, continuance, and consummation, "Salvation is of the Lord." I. WHAT DOES THE TERM "SALVATION" MEAN? 1. What the Lord had done, or was about to do, for Jonah in respect of his body. In this Jonah was a striking type of Christ. 2. What the Lord had done for him in respect of his soul, in preserving him from hell, and granting him repentance unto life. The word salvation, as applied to souls, does *not* mean—(1) Profession. (2) Privileges. (3) Attainments. (4) Names, sects, or parties. To see what it does mean we must ask, What is the state of man? He is lost, as being guilty, condemned, polluted, and depraved, exposed to many enemies, from which, by his own will and power, he can never escape. Salvation means deliverance from this state of wretchedness and misery, together with an investiture of all the blessings needful for his present peace and everlasting welfare. II. WHENCE DOES THIS SALVATION FLOW, AND BY WHOM IS IT CARRIED INTO EFFECT? It does not originate with man. It is not effected by man. It is altogether of the Lord. Consider from Scripture—1. The source of salvation. 2. The provision of the Saviour. 3. The assignment of His mediating work as the surety of His Church and people. 4. Look at the execution of this great work. So it is clear that salvation is altogether of the Lord. Consider how, and by whom, the time when, and the manner in which this gracious provision is carried into effect in the sinner's conversion. 1. The regeneration of the soul. 2. The sinner's pardon and justification. 3. The believer's sanctification and adoption. 4. The believer's succour, support, and safety. 5. The believer's perseverance unto the end, his safe death, and triumphant glory. III. WHEREIN DOES IT APPEAR THAT IT IS INDEED THE SALVATION OF THE LORD? 1. What hath the Lord spoken on this subject? 2. What does the state of the case absolutely require? 3. What does the experience of the people of God abundantly testify and confirm? 4. If salvation be *not* of the Lord, then how dark, how cheerless is the prospect set before us! (1) Take a word of instruction. Lay down this doctrine as a fundamental truth. (2) Take a word of discovery. How much error, delusion, and false doctrine does this subject bring to light! (3) Take a word of inquiry. In what way are you seeking your salvation? (4) Take a word of alarm. Is it not sad to consider how the Lord is slighted by some, and dishonoured by others, in this great work of salvation? (5) Take a word of encouragement. Can anything be more cheering than this assurance, "Salvation is of the Lord"? (6) Take a word of gratitude and joy. Is the Lord my Saviour? (*R. Shitler.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1, 2. **And the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying.**—*The restored commission.*—Here we learn what God is to those who truly repent. God may even restore all that has been forfeited. For those who have done grievous wrong, it is encouraging to think that there is honour, and glory, and a blessed restoration to the full love of God, if only they return out of the darkness into the presence from which they have departed. God sent Jonah on the very same mission in which he had failed before,—and yet with a marked difference distinguishing the second from the first call. The changed command, though full of restored confidence, implies a warning to be exact in fulfilling the will of God—to be careful as to giving the

message exactly as he received it. It seems to say, Risk not any further disobedience even in the least particular of the mission on which you are sent. 1. The exceeding mercy of God shown in this, that He offers renewed opportunities to those who fail to profit by the first opportunity; and it may be even opportunities of the same kind. They may have to be followed after a different manner, but yet the same object, the same end may be set before us till finally accomplished. 2. There is this further wonder in the forgiving and forbearing of God, that He causes the trials of the returning penitent to be the means of good. Those who have passed through the experience of such penitential struggles and fears may become afterwards a blessing to others, because they can tell of the dangers that beset them, and of the mercy through which they have been saved. The grace of God not only restores a man generally, as it were, but renews him in the very point in which he had sinned and failed. Take courage then, you who are beset with some special sin. Let us learn from the long catalogue of those who have fallen and have been recovered to take hope for ourselves. God desires a perfect, not an imperfect work. Grace crowns acts of penitence and faith. (*T. T. Carter.*) *The preacher of judgment:*—Jonah, the runaway prophet, is now before us as Jonah the successful preacher. 1. Sin in God's servants is a great hinderer. 2. Faithlessness in the servant does not necessitate failure to the Master. Chastisement may lead to consecration, and that to successful service. 3. Moral delinquency repented of is no impassable barrier to former favour, privilege, and honour. God does not take advantage of our weakness to cut us off for ever. He is patient, pitiful, forgiving, and will restore His penitent servants to forfeited blessings and dignities. 4. The preacher's true function is to declare what God commands him. The message as well as the commission must bear the impress of Divinity. Divine thoughts, purposes, desires, truths, and not human notions, creeds, sentiments, opinions, fancies, must ever fill the mind, inspire the tongue, constrain the utterance, and fire the eloquence and enthusiasm of every ambassador of the Cross. Note that Jonah was obedient at last to the holy orders. He did what he should have done at first. Obedience is true or false according to the temper in which we act. Notice the method and matter of his preaching. His method was earnest, courageous, impressive. He "cried." His matter was adapted to rich and poor. It was solemn, humiliating, definite, merciful. We have the practical fruits of the preaching,—repentance and reformation. Nineveh's repentance was well timed, well grounded, well evidenced, by self-denial, self-abasement, earnest prayer, personal reform. Learn that genuine repentance averts the punitive purposes of God. God watches for genuine indications of moral reform. Behold them, He refrains from executing His threatenings. Repentance is a wonderful power in the domain of moral government. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The history of Jonah set before the young:*—The prophet Jonah opposed the will of God, and would not do what God commanded him, as did Balaam; but there was this difference between them,—that Jonah did fear and love God. God destroyed Balaam. He only punished Jonah, and brought him to repentance. It is then a very good thing to love and serve God; because those who do so cannot quite turn away from God, and God will never quite turn away from them. If they sin, they will be punished, like Jonah was; but those who love and serve God are still under His care, and like Jonah are brought back to repentance. If there are among you any that are wishing to serve God, but are yet sometimes tempted to disobey Him, you may learn much by thinking of what happened to Jonah. 1. God gave him a command to go and tell the people of Nineveh that He was about to destroy them. It was a very hard command for him to fulfil. Jonah could not tell what might happen to him, if he ventured into that great foreign and heathen city. But God could take care of him. He knew that God was a loving Father to him. Whenever we are disposed to do wrong, then we are afraid of the Bible; we are afraid of everything that tells us of our sin; we are afraid of pious persons; we cannot bear to pray. Whenever you are disposed to do what is wrong, you feel equally disposed to flee from the presence of the Lord. You act like Jonah. Therefore our best way is to love and serve God with all our hearts, and ask Him for grace to do all our duty, as Jonah ought to have done. When the lot fell upon Jonah, they asked him what he had done; and he was obliged to tell them how he had been shrinking from doing his duty, and was trying to escape from God, who followed him, and who knew where he was, and what he was doing. It must have made him more miserable to have seen how much better the heathen were than he.

For he had brought them into danger, and they were trying to save his life. At last, at his own wish, they took him up, and threw him into the sea. Ungodly persons, when they are brought into trouble, cannot pray. Now there is not a place on earth, and there is not a degree of guilt in which we may be living, in which our believing prayer cannot reach the ear and heart of God: for when Jonah cried unto the Lord, in the midst of his troubles, God heard him, and caused the fish to vomit him out upon the shore of his own land. How humble and grateful he must have felt that day! He was not left, however, to be indolent and inactive. Jonah was brought through all his troubles, to just this point, that he must obey the commands of God. God's commands never alter. Our sins will not alter them; our troubles will not alter them; our deliverance will not alter them. God commands you to love and serve Him with all your hearts; God commands you to confess Jesus Christ in the world, to make the Bible your rule of life, and to live by faith and in prayer. Jonah was brought to God's command a second time; and if he had refused, he would have been brought to it a third time. He must do God's will. When he accomplished the will of God, and found it so easy, doubtless he thought, "Why did I not do it at first?" (*Baptist W. Noel, M.A.*)

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.—*Jonah's first and second commission*.—What are the points of difference between them? One respects Jonah himself. Formerly he knew the message that he was to deliver. Now he is simply told that a message will be given him, but he is not to know it until he arrives at the place. It may be the same. It may be milder; it may be sterner. Undoubtedly this change has reference to his former disobedience. The message was different in its substance also, to meet the change in Nineveh. When the message was given, it proved to be the never varying cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Some think he preached on this as a text; but as the cup of Nineveh's iniquity was now full, what was proper to the case was just a cry of coming judgment, brief and plain, startling, stern, unalterable, except by quick and unfeigned repentance. Probably Jonah did not add to this message by the faintest hint or suggestion. The simplest interpretation is the truest. This message makes us think. 1. Of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. 2. How inflexible is the justice of God. 3. What a stupendous power a city has for good or evil. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

A missionary message.—Jonah was foolish, Jonah was wise; foolish to expect to balk God, wise to learn so quickly his folly. Misery, calamity, peril, and the sense of an ever present God who had brought them, did their work; and the prophet, back again at the starting-point, heeds the Divine voice, and turns with an obedient heart to fulfil the mission which he had thought to escape. I. GOD'S AUTHORITY. The Being who speaks is conscious of His right. He does not mince words. God's demand on Jonah now is precisely what it was in the first place. There is no effort to compromise because of Jonah's former flight. Now comes the command again—plain, stern, uncompromising—"Arise, go, preach." The slight change of form in the expression seems full of meaning. "Arise, go, and preach the preaching that I bid thee." See that thou preach no other message than Mine. God owns men. All that we are, all that we have, all the service of our lives belongs to God. We delude ourselves with any sense of self-ownership. We get the idea that we own what God only *loans* to us. II. GOD'S WAY WITH THE DISOBEDIENT. See how God goes to work to bring this man's will into subjection to His own. What a complex of world-wide, universe-wide machinery the Sovereign of all can set in motion for the subduing of a human spirit! Jonah is not more obdurate than Pharaoh. The storms, the seas, the worse tumults in his own bosom, the upbraidings of the crew, his thoughts of his past, his fear,—all are God's instruments, and under His direction each does its unconscious part toward the subjection of Jonah, and the salvation of the Assyrian capital. Jonah is a changed man. From a coward he has become a dauntless hero and prophet. Jonah thought himself free when he fled, but in fact his first real enjoyment of freedom came when he started to fulfil God's command. III. GOD'S MISSIONARY MESSAGE AND ITS EFFECT. Jonah was the first foreign missionary. The men of far-off Nineveh were to learn of God, His love and holiness. The very heart of our conception of God as a moral being is His holiness. The holiness of God compels Him to insist upon holiness in all men. In Nineveh sin had taken on its most frightful developments. Nineveh had much, but it lacked just one element of fortune—righteousness. Nineveh's cup of iniquity was well-nigh full. Jonah's preaching was plain, earnest, effective, impressive. God went into the city with

Jonah, but God had also gone before. The men of Nineveh were ready for the missionary. "The people believed God." To believe God is a great thing. The best possible evidence of the Ninevites' belief in the missionary's sermon was their conduct. They acted. They bestirred themselves as if they believed that the sin of their hearts and lives was endangering them. The ringing cry of Jonah reaches even the royal palace, and the king, humbled, joins his subjects in their plea for God's mercy. The people turned from their sin, and cried for mercy. IV. GOD'S MERCY. God's heart was moved; doom was averted; Nineveh was saved. God was merciful to Jonah in following him through all his flight, in bringing him back to the starting-point, in using him though he had shown himself unworthy. God was merciful to Nineveh in sending the messenger to warn the city, and in preparing the hearts of the people for the message. And God is merciful in listening to their cry for forgiveness. God repented. His attitude toward Nineveh was changed. What changed it? Nineveh's attitude toward sin. What is meant by God's repentance? Speaking to man, God must use language with which man is familiar. Repentance means a changed attitude. The whole attitude of the Ninevites toward sin, and so, toward God, being changed, in that same hour God's attitude toward them was changed. (*John H. Mason.*)

Conditions of ministerial success:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE SERMON; or the objective elements of success. 1. It should be argumentative. To expect men to believe without proof is to expect them to become irrational. 2. It must be positive; mainly concerned in the teaching of truth, rather than in the refutation of error. 3. It is doctrinal. The larger part of those who compose our congregations depend upon the preacher for all the knowledge they will ever have of these great theological truths. That preaching is the most practical which indoctrinates the hearers with the fundamental elements of the Christian faith. 4. It should be systematic. As there is a logical coherence between all the parts of the religion we teach, why should we exclude system from our mode of exhibiting it? 5. A bold, unflinching testimony to the great doctrines of God's sovereignty, man's inability, election, and other unpopular doctrines of the Gospel. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE MAN; or the subjective elements of success. 1. Individuality. 2. Earnestness is self-evidencing. 3. Consciousness on the part of the speaker that he is speaking to his audience. Some preach for the sake of the sermon. Others preach for the sake of the people. 4. The good preacher speaks with authority. Which may be derived from—(1) Consciousness of official dignity. (2) Unwavering conviction of the truth. (3) Consciousness of personal acceptance with God. 5. The manner of delivery should be in accordance with the rules of good speaking. Delivery is an art, and is based upon scientific principles. 6. The preacher must have weight of personal character; not only piety, but weight of character. "Who of us is sufficient for these things?" (*J. W. Pratt, D.D.*)

Preaching to great cities:—The Lord seems to say to Jonah, "Begin where you were when you started out to have your own way. Come back to the very point at which we were, and start again." But the Lord distrusted him a little still, notwithstanding the discipline to which he had been subjected. Now God is more definite. "The preaching that I bid thee." There must be no mistake, no dodging, no evasion. Man may disobey God in two ways. He may not go, may plead excuses, and refuse to try to do the work. Or he may not do what God tells him to do, may do something somewhat like it, but not it. It is against this second kind of disobedience that God guards His servant. It is not difficult to obtain men, in this age, who are quite ready to go to great cities. But there are many who, when they go, do not do what God tells them to do. There is preaching enough, but when you come to take out of it the theological dialectics, and the wranglings, and the discussions of the secular phases of life, and the material interests of the Church, and the meddling with current events, you find that the bulk of God's preaching is comparatively small, and often of weak portent. The great question which lays itself down at the door of our hearts is, Are we doing our whole duty to the city?—not to one's self simply, but to the city? We are here upon God's errand. Is the city being saved? Is it being saved as we might save it? As God expects us to save it? I. WHAT ARE THE METHODS WITH WHICH WE ARE TO GO INTO THIS GREAT CITY AS APPOINTED BY THE ALMIGHTY? God sends us with a definite commission, and there is to be decisiveness of action on our part. There is to be activity, earnestness. We are to impress upon these sinners round that we can die for them, but we can never leave them unsaved. This indefiniteness, this far-off century, this millennium dawning out of small faith

is not of the Gospel. That is for the prophets of evolution, of æsthetics and social culture, for the false prophets. Within the Church are the leverages and forces to bring the millennium to this sinking world. II. WHAT ABOUT THE PLACE; WHAT ABOUT THE EXACT METHODS; WHAT ABOUT THE APPLIANCES OF THE GOSPEL? If we are to preach to people the preaching God bids us to preach them, how are we to reach them? Jonah was to preach street preaching. Jesus Christ preached in the streets. The preaching of the Gospel should be just as accessible to men as when it is preached in the streets and in the fields. Christ expects men and women to be able to come to the preaching of the Gospel with as much freedom as they go along the highways. There should be nothing in the Churches or in the preaching of the Gospel that shall embarrass in the slightest degree any poor man, or plainly clad man, who may want to find Jesus Christ. We have built our churches away from the people. We imitate a useless, liturgical style of architecture. We let pews to the well-to-do. When men come to the altar of God, and it is their home, how they then throng about their minister; they don't hide away from him. III. WHAT SHALL WE PREACH? The Gospel. Just simply the plain old Gospel of the old time. You and I are to preach that very same Jesus who went into Rome, and into Athens, and into Asia-Minor, and whom our fathers preached, and whom our fathers revered. Human nature needs it as much as ever it did. Preach to it the Crucified One; not a petty little philosophy of salvation, or a poetic story of a perfect Man Christ. But preach a God Christ, a Divine Christ, who was torn, lacerated by a devil-world; a risen Christ, risen by His own power, which He will exert in due time for all who die in Him. Preach a Gospel of conviction of sin, of repentance, of regeneration, of the witness of the Spirit, by which human hearts are made new, human character is transformed, human faces are transfigured, and dying mortals are translated into that glory where all are always like Him. (*J. R. Day, D.D.*) *Effect of Jonah's preaching*:—There was never a mission undertaken apparently more unpromising than this of Jonah to Nineveh. Here was—I. A MOST UNSUITABLE MISSIONARY. 1. To begin with, he was thoroughly unwilling to go. His reason he gives in chap. iv. 2. He was fearful that the heathen would repent at his preaching, and in that case God would have compassion, and forgive and spare them. What a fear to be entertained by a missionary! 2. Unsuitable because of the self-deception which he could practise on himself, and his moral confusion and compromise. Let us not think worse of Jonah than the case demands. He has his good traits. At least he is honest, and he is as severe on himself as he is on others. 3. It would have seemed unfavourable also that Jonah should be sent on such a mission entirely alone. II. NINEVEH WAS A VERY DIFFICULT FIELD. Perhaps the most discouraging thing about it was that its people already knew Jonah's country, his race, and his religion, and thoroughly despised them all. It was to the proud metropolis of a restless empire, overflowing with wealth and numbers, filled with insolence and luxury, that the lonely man from the village of Gath-hepher was sent. And did it not make matters worse that God had bidden Jonah to carry to Nineveh such a disheartening, exasperating message? III. YET THE MISSION OF JONAH WAS A SUCCESS. A success scarcely paralleled in ancient or in modern times. Nineveh "believed God." It is not possible to tell the extent or the permanence of this national repentance. Learn—1. All races of men have been in God's loving care. 2. We see the method of God's mercy to the heathen. 3. We may cherish great expectations concerning the hardest fields of the heathen world. 4. The religious use of fear. 5. The moral power of leaders, whether social or political. 6. Learn Christ's own lessons from this history. (*Arthur Mitchell, D.D.*) *Jonah's commission*:—The eye of God is always on man. We seem to act as if God retired into the distance of heaven, and took no cognisance of the actions of man. But if God's eye does look upon man, the disposition of God is to show mercy to man. For do we not see here the messenger sent to Nineveh? If God has a disposition to show mercy, God is one whose patience has limits. We are not to suppose that we can trifle with God; that we can go on with our iniquity, and that God will never vindicate His honour. Learn also that we may hope in preaching to the very worst and most abandoned. Wicked Nineveh listened to the voice of warning. The text further teaches us the duty of the Church, the duty of all God's people. They are to arise and go and preach the preaching which God bids. 1. We are to arise and go. Here at once activity is demanded at our hand. There must be no lethargy and no lukewarmness. 2. Besides showing activity, the Church is to be aggressive. Jonah was to go away

into the haunts of wickedness, and there to scatter in the midst of those people the warnings of Almighty God. So we are to go unto the dark places, and carry that light which God has communicated to man. 3. The Church is to be as the "salt of the earth." What does that involve? That it is to influence everything that it touches. And how many are the stimulants to urge us to this active, aggressive work! And observe that we are to preach the preaching that God bids. The preaching must be only what God wants. There must be no addition on our part, no fancies or imaginations of our own. Three parts in preaching. (1) A warning to the people. (2) We are affectionately to expostulate. (3) We must speak the language of comfort and encouragement. (*Canon Hussey.*) *Christian enterprise*.—This is an age of enterprise. The world is more active and energetic than ever before. Gigantic schemes, of which the world scarcely dreamed in days gone by, are being hourly put into practical effect. This spirit also pervades the Church of Christ. I. CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE IS DIVINELY COMMANDED. "Arise and go" is the Divine command to every church, to every society, to every Christian to-day. II. THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE. It is included in God's command to Jonah, "Arise, go . . . and preach . . . that I bid thee." The work of the Church is to preach, to proclaim what God commands it—all the word of God. Nothing can be accomplished without time, trouble, expense, and labour. III. THE EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE. 1. It had its proper effect upon the people toward whom it was directed. They believed God, they repented in sackcloth and in ashes. 2. It received the approval of God. God was pleased with Jonah and with the people. He heard their cry of repentance. (*S. H. Doyle.*)

Ver. 3. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the Word of the Lord.—*Obedient at last* (for children).—Introduce by description of Jonah's conduct and history. Dwell on his call, flight, peril, humiliation, prayer, restoration, and second call. Also on—(1) The city. (2) The preacher. (3) The message. (4) The fast. (5) The proclamation. (6) The Divine mercy. Impress that the long-suffering and forgiving grace of God are shown—1. In giving Jonah another commission. 2. In hearing the penitent prayer of the Ninevites. Show that penitence must, of necessity, precede forgiveness. Make this question the point of the address,—In what spirit should God's servants go forth to do His work? 1. They should be strictly obedient. 2. They should be simply trustful; quite sure that God would will the right, and give them grace as they needed. 3. They should be prompt and ready, going at once and cheerfully. 4. They should leave with God the results of their mission. Illustrate, from one Bible character, each of these divisions. (1) By Abraham. (2) By David. (3) By the missionaries who could say, "Immediately we conferred not with flesh and blood," &c. (4) By the apostle Paul. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *Obedience*.—Erastus Corning, when a little boy, applied at a shop for employment. The foreman looked down at the frail, lame boy, and asked, "Why, my little fellow, what can you do?" "I can do what I am bid, sir," was the answer. His willingness to obey secured a place, and was the beginning of his successful career as a merchant. (*Sunday School Teacher.*)

Ver. 4. Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.—*The knell of Nineveh*.—Sardanapalus puts off his jewelled array, and puts on mourning, and the whole city goes down on its knees, and street cries to street, and temple to temple. A black covering is thrown over the horses, and the sheep, and the cattle. Forage and water are kept from the dumb brutes so that their distressed bellowings may make a dolorous accompaniment to the lamentation of six hundred thousands souls. God heard that cry. He turned aside from the affairs of eternal state, and listened. He said, "Stop! I must go down and save that city. It is repenting, and cries for help." I. THE PRECISION AND PUNCTUALITY OF THE DIVINE ARRANGEMENT. God knew exactly the day when Nineveh's lease of mercy should end. He has determined the length of endurance of our sin. II. RELIGIOUS WARNING MAY SEEM PREPOSTEROUS. To many still it is more a joke than anything else. Men boast of their health, but I have noticed that it is the invalids who live long. "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." III. GOD GIVES EVERY MAN A FAIR CHANCE FOR HIS LIFE. The iniquity of Nineveh was accumulating. Why did not God unsheath some sword of lightning from the scabbard of a storm-cloud and slay it? It was

because He wanted to give the city a fair chance. And God is giving us a fair chance for safety, a better chance than He gave to Nineveh. **IV. WHEN THE PEOPLE REPENT, GOD LETS THEM OFF.** While Nineveh was on its knees, God reversed the judgment. When a sinner repents (in one sense) God repents (in another). Then repent, give up your sin and turn to God, and you will be saved. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *God has many preachers:*—God has many preachers that are not in human flesh. For instance, fever is a terrible Elijah. When the cholera came to London it was a Jonah in our streets. Many then began to think who would have gone blindfold down to perdition. When poverty visits some men's houses, and they can no longer indulge in drunkenness and gluttony, then they bethink themselves of their Father's house, and the hired servants who have bread enough and to spare. Omnipotence has servants everywhere; God can make use of even the ills of life to work eternal good. *A warning cry in the city:*—It was a great and wonderful thing that was wrought that day when Jonah "began to enter into the city." The great capital was suddenly startled by a voice of warning in her streets. A strange, wild man, clothed in a rough garment of skin, moved from place to place, and announced to the inhabitants their coming doom. Had the cry fallen on them in their prosperous time, it would probably have been heard with apathy and ridicule. But coming as it did when their glory had declined; when their enemies, having been allowed a breathing space, had taken courage, and were acting on the offensive in many quarters, it struck them with fear and consternation. It was a single day, apparently, that was marked by such wonders in the city of Nineveh. The prophet's "one day's journey" is supposed to have carried him about nineteen miles. The repentance of the men of Nineveh prolonged, in God's mercy and providence, the continuance of their city for more than a hundred years. (*Archdeacon Harrison.*) *Divine threatenings:*—**I. DIVINE THREATS ARE CONDITIONAL.** It is with them in this respect as it is with the promises recorded in the Scriptures. The appropriate condition is implied, whether it is mentioned or not, in all the promises, and in all the threats which are recorded in the Scriptures as coming from God. **II. DIVINE THREATS ARE MERCIFUL.** The threat fulminated against Nineveh was the means of bringing the Ninevites to repentance, and saving their city from destruction, as it was intended to be. It is the preacher's consolation that the Divine threats are always merciful. Observe also the suitableness of Jonah's preaching. It might be said, was not Jonah's preaching quite as likely to amuse or annoy the Ninevites as to effect a reformation on their part? They were certainly more likely to be annoyed than amused. If not mobbed and molested in the streets, the magistrate might be expected to deal with him as a disturber of the peace. But nothing of this kind occurred. 1. Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites of Jehovah's power. 2. Of Jehovah's justice. 3. Of Jehovah's mercy. Observe, too, how the preaching of Jonah was supplemented in Nineveh. The manner in which this royal proclamation was produced deserves consideration. It was not produced by the king alone, but by the king and his nobles. The drift of the proclamation may be regarded as either imperative or hortatory. It counselled the people to fast, to cover themselves with sackcloth, to pray, to reform their manner of life, to associate the very brutes with their appeal to God. Observe, the reason which the proclamation gives for acting as it counsels is couched in very plaintive terms. "Who can tell?" &c. This was language equally removed from despair and presumption. (*S. C. Burn.*) *The repentance of Nineveh:*—"The great city rises before us, most magnificent of all the capitals of the ancient world—'great even unto God.' It included parks, and gardens, and fields, and people, and cattle within its vast circumference. Twenty miles the prophet penetrates into the city. He has still finished only one-third of his journey through it. His utterance, like that of the wild preacher in the last days of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, is one piercing cry, from street to street, from square to square. It reaches at last the king on his throne of state. The remorse for the wrong and robbery and violence of many generations is awakened. The dumb animals are included, after the fashion of the East, in the universal mourning, and the Divine decree is revoked." **I. THE PENITENT PROPHET.** Recall the indications of his penitence, given in his prayer (chap. ii.). And note the signs in his obedient attitude, and his readiness at once to do God's commands. Truly penitent people give up their own wilfulness, and cheerfully submit and obey. If we have not this spirit we may be quite sure that our penitence has neither been sincere nor thorough.

Picture the prophet setting to his work. II. THE PENITENT CITY. Note the signs of earnestness and sincerity. All classes joined in the penitent acts. They united in prayer. They put away their sins. The king showed the good example. What a picture! A whole people prostrate before the God of judgment! III. GOD'S REACTION TO BOTH. Long-suffering to both. Forgiving to both. A prayer-hearer to both. Describe—How very strange it was that Jonah, though himself a forgiven man, was offended with God for making Nineveh a forgiven city. Our own sense of God's mercy in forgiving *us*, ought to make us very hopeful about others, and very thankful when we find that God's grace reaches also to them. There is joy among the angels over one penitent, and we should share their joy. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *The excitement produced by Eastern prophets*:—Orientals are still impressed, more or less readily, by the appearance of "holy men," such as their own dervishes, whose enthusiasm, in some cases, where high sincerity inspires them, is much like that which marks a true prophet in all ages. The name "dervish," Dr. Wolff tells us, means "one who hangs at the gate of God," awaiting His inspiration; and the ecstasy of some of the class may be compared to that of which we read, for example, of Micah, who, we are told, went about "stripped and naked, and howled like the jackals, and roared like the ostrich." I do not suppose that Jonah bore himself thus, but the fact that such appearances as those of Micah were familiar over all Asia must have opened the way for his influence in Nineveh. We may suppose him showing himself in such a garb as that of Elijah, or others of the prophets,—his hair streaming down his shoulders, his outer dress a rude sheepskin mantle. He may have arrived in the disastrous time after the death of Shalmaneser II., when the nations conquered by that great monarch, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, were, in most cases, in rebellion, and troubles oppressed the Nineveh palaces. Wandering over the open spaces, with their mansions and huts, and through the lanes and bazaars of each part of the city, he terrified the crowd by a piercing, monotonous wail, in a dialect which, though intelligible in a short sentence on the Tigris, must have sounded barbarous and uncouth,—“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” His appearance proclaimed him a “holy man,” and he might have been sent, in these dark times, by the gods. (*Cunningham Geikie, D.D.*)

Vers. 5-9. So the people of Nineveh believed God.—*Belief inspired by fear*:—How came the Ninevites to believe God, as no hope of salvation was given them? For there can be no faith without an acquaintance with the paternal kindness of God; whoever regards God as angry with him must necessarily despair. Since, then, Jonah gave them no knowledge of God's mercy he must have greatly terrified the Ninevites, and not have called them to faith. The answer is, that the expression is to be taken as including a part for the whole; for there is no perfect faith when men, being called to repentance, do suppliantly humble themselves before God; but yet it is a part of faith, for the apostle says in Hebrews xi., that Noah through faith feared; he deduces the fear which Noah entertained on account of the oracular word he received from faith, showing thereby that it was faith in part, and pointing out the source from which it proceeded. At the same time, the mind of the holy patriarch must have been moved by other things besides threatenings when he built an ark for himself as the means of safety. We may thus, by taking a part for the whole, explain this place—that the Ninevites believed God; for as they knew that God required the deserved punishment, they submitted to Him, and at the same time solicited pardon; but the Ninevites derived from the words of Jonah something more than mere terror, for had they only apprehended this—that they were guilty before God, and were justly summoned to punishment, they would have been confounded and stunned with dread, and could never have been encouraged to seek forgiveness. Inasmuch, then, as they suppliantly prostrated themselves before God, they must certainly have conceived some hope of grace. They were not, therefore, so touched with penitence and the fear of God but that they had some knowledge of Divine grace; thus they believed God, for though they were aware that they were most worthy of death, they yet despaired not, but betook themselves to prayer. They must therefore have derived more advantage from the preaching of Jonah than the mere knowledge that they were guilty before God. (*John Calvin.*) *Nineveh brought to repentance*:—Analyse and examine the main features of this repentance of the men of Nineveh. I. THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED GOD. The men

of Nineveh saw at once the reason for this sentence, for the very first impression produced on them was a belief in God. By this is implied not merely the acceptance of God's message as truth, but the much greater belief in God. Israel's God could not have been unknown to the Ninevites. II. **MOURNING IN THE CITY BECAME UNIVERSAL.** The sin had been universal, and so now became the mourning. III. **THEY TURNED FROM THEIR EVIL WAY.** Mourning was merely the outward expression of sorrow and repentance. The grand fact is the sincerity of the repentance. They were led to alter their conduct and change their whole manner of life. IV. **THEY CRIED MIGHTILY UNTO GOD.** And that cry of Nineveh was not unheard. It came up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. (*James Menzies.*) *The nature and result of true repentance.*—The Book of Jonah illustrates man's perverseness, God's love to sinners, God's tenderness to His people. It contains a type of our Lord's work. It shows God ever the same, whether dealing with Gentile or Jew: stern against sin; yearning over sinners; faithful to promises. As to the repentance of the Ninevites, mark—I. ITS ORIGIN. "They believed God." Repentance starts from faith and leads to faith. No true repentance till there is belief—1. That sin is hurtful. 2. That life is fleeting. 3. That God's Word is true. Faith of Ninevites very simple,—perhaps ignorant, yet they were led on. It came from God. The Holy Spirit's work thus to convince of sin. II. ITS SYMPTOMS. 1. Self-abasement. 2. It was universal. 3. It was thorough. The next symptom was earnest prayer. (1) They did not stop at humiliation; they cried for pardon. (2) They looked to the right source for help. (3) They cried mightily, as if they meant it. The next symptom was reformation. They turned from their evil way. They brought forth "fruits meet for repentance." The only proof of true repentance is to give up sin utterly. Not only fast for sin, but abstain from sin. III. THE RESULT. God repented; that is, He changed His dealings. This was foretold as possible. "Yet forty days,"—a time of grace given. There is room in the all-wise decrees for answers to faithful prayer. Application—1. God's laws are the same for all. We have more light, more responsibility than had the Ninevites; but for us the path is the same. Contrition, faith, pardon. 2. Have we repented? A "greater than Jonas" calls us. By His Word, His work, His death. Let us turn to Him while the day of salvation lasts. 3. What an encouragement to the true penitent. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (*A. G. Hellicar, M.A.*) *The repentance of the Ninevites.*—Notice the substance of Jonah's proclamation, and the strong effect which it was made instrumental in producing. Most probably, while with the zeal of an awakened spirit Jonah began to execute his commission, the burden of it, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed," was but used by him as a general theme suggestive of enlargement. To the eye of sense the enterprise thus commenced might seem most formidable and dangerous. But, in the view of faith, difficulties vanished. The effect produced was remarkable. All ranks were pervaded by feelings of disquietude and alarm. The woeful tidings spread from mouth to mouth. God gave unwonted power to the message of His servant, so that the inhabitants of this great and dissipated city were roused to deep concern, and its myriads bowed themselves in penitence and prayer. The impression produced might be partly the mere result of apprehension, as the sinner is often scared for a time, but without lasting and salutary effect. We must distinguish between such transient and partial feelings and genuine penitence. The latter issues in return to Him who has been so grievously offended. Its reality is shown in amendment of life. Notice the general nature of the Ninevites' penitence here described, in which we must recognise the exertion of a Divine influence and power. Fear is contagious: faith is the result of Divine influence upon the heart; and it shows the influence of prevailing wickedness in a community that, while some are roused by the preaching of the Gospel to religious earnestness and activity, a much larger proportion too often remain indifferent and slothful. The penitence of the Ninevites was in many cases genuine. We are reminded by this narrative of the propriety of rulers, in their official capacity, employing their influence with a view to promote the interests of righteousness and truth. Civil eminence is to be consecrated to God's service. We have ground for judging of the pervading and thorough character of the transaction. The vast city was filled with fear and lamentation. The outward signs of abasement were everywhere discernible. Had the repentance of the Ninevites been confined to external indications it would have been exclusive of

that homage which God requires, and has alone declared His readiness to accept. The most important feature of the sorrow consisted, not in the covering of the limbs with sackcloth, but in their "crying mightily unto God," and in "turning every one from their evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands." Godly sorrow will be followed by amendment, the view of sin by its loathing and detestation. We gather from this narrative the propriety of a nation, when threatened by disaster, turning to the great source of sufficiency and strength. And also the happy results that may be expected to follow from such a public recognition of the Ruler of the universe. Stand in awe of God's mighty power, and admire the wonders of Divine mercy and patience. This history is fitted to remind Christians of their duty and their strength. The duty is to "Go into all the world and preach,"—not the thunderings of wrath, nor the avenging sentence merely of a broken law, but—the "Gospel to every creature." (*A. Bonar, D.D.*)

Repentance.—1. Note the renewed charge to the penitent prophet, and his new eagerness to fulfil it. It is God's mercy that gives us the opportunity of effacing past disobedience by new alacrity. The second charge is possibly distinguishable from the first as being less precise. The substance of the message is set forth. "The preaching which I bid thee,"—not his own imaginations, nor any fine things of his own spinning. 2. Note the repentance of Nineveh. The impression made by Jonah's terrible cry is perfectly credible and natural in the excitable population of an eastern city, in which even now any appeal to terror, especially if associated with religious and prophetic claims, easily sets the whole in a frenzy. The specified tokens of repentance are those of ordinary mourning, such as were common all over the East, with only the strange addition which smacks of heathen ideas, that the animals were made sharers in them. There is great significance in that "believing God" (ver. 5). The foundation of all true repentance is crediting God's Word of threatening, and therefore realising the danger as well as the disobedience of our sin. We learn from the Ninevites what is true repentance. The deepest meaning of the whole narrative is set forth in our Lord's use of it when He holds up the men of Nineveh as a condemnatory instance to the hardened consciences of His hearers. The story was a smiting blow to the proud exclusiveness and self-complacent contempt of prophetic warnings, which marked the entire history of God's people. But if repentance be but transient, it leaves the heart harder than before. 3. Note the repentance of God. All God's promises and threatenings are conditional. God threatens precisely in order that He may not have to perform His threatenings. He repents of the evil which He said He would do when they repent of the evil which they have done. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*)

Jonah at Nineveh.—I. NINEVEH'S SIN. Nahum describes Nineveh as "the bloody city," "all full of lies and robbery." Zephaniah calls it "filthy and polluted," "the oppressing city." The Ninevites were gross and sensual, cruel in war, eagerly self-indulgent; a people of splendid physique and surprising courage, but cultivating bodily excellences and seeking physical pleasures without thought of their higher nature. II. JONAH'S PREACHING. Dove-like, he was timid and despondent. He naturally shrank from delivering a message which might save a godless and hostile people from destruction. Jonah's mission was one of great risk. III. NINEVEH'S REPENTANCE. The Ninevites stand aghast before Jonah. Though an immoral, yet they are a religious people. They believe in a higher power. They are moved by the voice of prophets. Jonah's terrible words are not unheeded. A panic seizes the inhabitants. The king also heard and believed; but he and his advisers discerned a ray of hope. A possibility of pardon seemed to be hinted in the very language of the message, and had foundation in the teachings of natural religion. What causes human misery?—Sin, nothing but sin. If the cause be removed may not the result cease? Still, in this chain of reasoning there is one broken link, and the Ninevites were not certain it could be welded. To stop present sin is indeed to stop the cause of woe; but repentance does not affect the past, and the momentum of sins before committed may hurl a train of miseries far into the future. Repentance is, in fact, of itself an insufficient ground for forgiveness. It does not touch the past. The wonder is, how God, on the ground of man's repentance, can make it consistent to forgive him. Had not God at this very hour of Nineveh's sin had it in His plan to send His Son to earth to die for man there could have been no forgiveness for Nineveh. The turning or repentance was the condition on which God would forgive. Was this repentance sincere and lasting? It did not produce permanent results upon

the nation. But this is no reason to suppose that the reformation in Jonah's time was not thorough. A nation easily relapses into sin. There is no evidence that pains were taken to confirm the work at Nineveh. IV. GOD'S FORGIVENESS. "God repented." How shall we reconcile this statement with God's unchangeableness? It is man that changes, not God. How shall we reconcile the statement with God's veracity? When God threatens, if the condition of things be changed which makes the evil necessary, the threatening may be mitigated, if not given up entirely. How shall we reconcile God's forgiveness with God's justice? Repentance does not atone for the past. It simply is man's part in making Christ's work efficacious. Repentance stops the entrance of further evil into the heart. The narrative strikingly illustrates God's love, His cagerness, we may say, to forgive. The love-side of God's nature is peculiarly prominent in the Christian dispensation. Notice, in conclusion, the contrasts suggested by the text. The case of Nineveh stands before the impenitent to-day as an expostulation and a rebuke. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*) *Genuine reformation*.—The end of all providential mercies, the theme of all Divine teachers, the indispensable condition of all true human power, dignity, and blessedness, is genuine reformation. I. ITS METHOD. 1. It was effected through man. Why did the Almighty require the services of Jonah? Why did He not speak with an audible voice to the men of Nineveh Himself? Or why did He not dispatch an angel from His throne? Or still, why did He not write what He had to say to them in red flame above their heads? All we answer is, Such is not God's method with man. He makes man the organ of blessing man. This plan serves several important purposes. (1) It serves to deepen man's interest in his race. (2) It stimulates men to seek the improvement of their race. If they are to advance they must look to themselves, &c. (3) It confers signal honour on the race. (4) It shows God's wisdom and power in the race. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2. It was effected through man speaking. Jonah was sent to speak,—he was "to preach unto the city." Truth spoken is the converting force. Christianity written, as compared with Christianity spoken, is as the winter to the summer sky. It may give as much light, but not as much heat; and without the summer radiance the landscapes will wither and the fountains freeze. 3. It was effected through man speaking what God said. "Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Had he spoken his own thoughts, no valuable effect would have been produced. God's thoughts are the converting forces. God's thoughts are always reasonable and universally benevolent. II. ITS DEVELOPMENT. 1. This reformation began with the intellect. "So the people of Nineveh believed God." All moral reformation begins with the intellect—the beliefs. Men must believe what God says, or no saving effect can be produced. 2. This reformation proceeded to the heart. "They put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." As they thought upon what they heard, deep contrition seized them, &c. 3. This reformation extended to the outward life. "They turned from their evil way." They renounced their old habits of wickedness, and adopted a new and virtuous course of life. Such is ever the natural development of true reformation. Divine ideas first enter the intellect, they are believed, they pass to the heart and generate emotions, and these emotions come forth in new actions. True reformation works from the centre to the circumference, from the heart to the extremities. III. ITS VALUE. "And God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them; and He did it not." Though this wonderful language is in accommodation to our modes of thought and action, it has a profound significance. It does not mean that God changed His mind towards them;—this would be impossible. 1. It is God's immutable purpose to pardon repentant sinners. When the impenitent therefore become penitent, God's conduct so far as they are concerned is changed. (*Homilist.*) *Effect of Jonah's preaching*.—In this chapter we have the prophet's second call, and what came of His obedience to it. I. A NEW SPIRIT (vers. 1-3). In part, the command is the same as before. In part, it was unlike the first. Before it was, "Cry against it." Now it is, "Preach unto it." Here is an intimation of just that mercy against which the prophet before rebelled. Jonah implicitly obeyed it. Here was a new spirit. God had just given him needed discipline. No doubt He now gave him needed grace. It is by both that He prepares us for usefulness. II. A FAITHFUL SERMON (ver. 4). In this sermon two things are noteworthy. 1. It was direct, simple, plain. There is no enlargement, no argument, no exhortation. There is great power in simplicity. It is God's

own truth, not human additions to it, or commendations of it, which stirs the consciences and wins the hearts of men. 2. It was also alarming. It sounded just one note, and that was a note of warning. It was an unqualified announcement of coming judgment. Denunciations and threatenings alone can never win and subdue to repentance. But God's denunciations and threatenings never are alone. There was mercy, as well as justice, in the alarm which Jonah sounded. But neither the plainness nor the faithfulness of Jonah's preaching can fully account for the results which followed. (1) Behind the message was the messenger. (2) Our Saviour tells us that He was Himself a sign to the Ninevites. (3) God was with the message spoken, to make it effective by the influence of His Spirit. III. A REPENTANT CITY (vers. 5-9). Those that heard gave heed. The people seem to have moved first. 1. There was first the fasting, together with the sackcloth and ashes. What did these signify but confession of sin and grief therefor? 2. The supplication for mercy. 3. A moral change. 4. This repentance had its root in faith. IV. JUDGMENT AVERTED (ver. 10). How widespread and deep the work was we cannot tell. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*) *God's purpose of grace in the salvation of sinners*:—The purpose of God unfolds itself gradually in the course of His providence; and when we see the end from the beginning, we see that it is a purpose of grace. He wished to save the men of Nineveh, and the only way of salvation with God was repentance unto life. The history of their repentance is therefore the revelation of God's purpose of grace in the salvation of sinners. God renewed His commission to Jonah, but He does not upbraid the prophet with his former refusal. All that is required is the doing of duty. That is the fruit meet for repentance. If there be any difference between this call and the former, it is that the terms of the second are more absolute and less definite. Jonah now yielded to the Spirit of the Lord. He went "according to the Word of the Lord." That was all the difference between Jonah a sinner and Jonah a saint, between the old man and the new. The old resists the Spirit and yields to the flesh; the new resists the flesh and yields to the Spirit. God's will, not his own nor man's, was now the law of Jonah's life. The Lord said "Go"; go therefore he must, go in spite of the world, go in spite of self, go whatever should be his fate or his reception at Nineveh. All the ancients speak of Nineveh as an exceeding great city. It must have been a sublime spectacle, to see this single man going from one end to another of this great heathen city, and at every step, or at every street, repeating the same awful message of God. The terms of the prophecy were most absolute. No proof was offered of the prophet's divine commission. No call to repentance was addressed to their consciences. No promise was made, or hope held out. The people believed God, and the immediate effect of their faith was repentance. They proclaimed a national and universal fast. They thus humbled themselves as sinners before God. In so doing they obeyed the voice of conscience. By the joint authority of the king and his government a proclamation was issued for public fasting, prayer, and penitence on the part of the people. While they cast themselves on God's mercy, they were to turn "every one from his evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands." Their faith was but a peradventure; their hope was in God's mercy. And God repented when they repented. He did not change His purpose, He only changed His method of outworking His purpose. His are purposes of grace, even when they seem to be nothing but proclamations of wrath to the uttermost. They are given for the very purpose of bringing the sinner to salvation by bringing him to repentance. Why is there no such humiliation before God on account of sin, personal and national, now-a-days? 1. Because there are few like Jonah to preach repentance: if they are called to preach, to be God's witnesses, in whatever place or way or walk of life, they are called to testify against the world that has not come to repentance. 2. Because the message of God is not seen to be a matter of fact as personal, and to those who are sinners like the men of Nineveh as terrible as that of Jonah to Nineveh. 3. Because God's purpose of grace revealed in the Gospel is little realised in its fulness and freeness of grace. Two things in relation to salvation which this history sets in the clearest light. (1) Repentance is the fruit of faith, not the root. The men of Nineveh "believed God," and therefore they repented. So must all sinners. (2) Faith in God, when it is living and genuine, ever works by such repentance, where there is such sin, personal or national. Faith brings the sinner to God, as a man who must bear his own burden, and answer to God for his own personal guilt. (*N. Paisley.*) *Jonah's*

preaching :—God had delivered Jonah ; but God's pardoning mercy was no plea for negligence of duty. The Lord requires Jonah to consider again the message with which he was originally charged. God will have His people obey His will instantly, unreservedly, and with a full desire to carry it out in all things. I. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MESSAGE WHICH JONAH WAS BIDDEN TO DELIVER. He has to proclaim that destruction is nigh at hand, that evil awaits the city, and that this evil is the immediate act of God. Second causes there may be, but they are only second. Most people talk in their time of trouble about God being "all-merciful." It is true, but He is also holy and faithful and just. Men speak of God's mercy as if it were to set aside God's truth. II. THE CONDUCT OF THE NINEVITES. They acknowledged that the message must have come from the Lord. External signs of repentance were used, and external signs are useful when they express internal feeling. Here we find that these outward signs were to be accompanied by prayer for pardon and for the averting of judgments, and also by cessation from sin. III. THE MERCY OF THE LORD. He is indeed more ready to forgive than to punish. Though there are fearful threatenings spoken in God's Word against the impenitent, there are full and free offers of mercy and pardon to every soul that turns from his wickedness and believes in Jesus. (*Montagu Villiers, M.A.*)

Ver. 8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God.—*The sin and repentance of Nineveh* :—We have in these words part of the means which the king of Nineveh and his nobles judged necessary for averting the calamities which threatened their city. Fasting and prayer were only subsidiary to personal reformation. 1. The guilt and danger of conduct which is at variance with the Divine requirements, and let us feel the necessity of actual reformation. These heathen felt that amendment of life was the truest devotion. There have always been persons who have cherished the expectation of acceptance with God while they continued in sin. They divorce religion and morality. They would secure Divine favour by ritual observances, while their conduct is in other respects habitually at variance with the Divine requirements. The men of Nineveh may be their reprovers, and teach them that they must reform before they can expect to be forgiven. 2. The guilt and danger of sins of injustice and violence, and the necessity of relinquishing them. These sins are specially connected with large cities. Inadequate payment of labourers. Grinding the faces of the poor. Reckless selfishness. 3. The necessity of individually relinquishing these and other sins to which we are addicted. Men naturally shut their eyes on their own deficiencies. To turn unreservedly from sin unto God is the last thing which a sinner will do. So the words are, "Let them turn every one." The great question for each to determine is, not what are the defects of others, but what are his own, and how the demands and threatenings of revelation affect him in particular. The duty required of us is, that "every man should mend one." The principal lesson of this history is, that we should duly impress our minds with the guilt, and incompatibility with a religious profession, of all acts of injustice and dishonesty. You cannot be in friendship with God while you are at enmity with man. (*Robert Brodie.*)

Ver. 9. Who can tell if God will turn?—*Peace has been proclaimed* :—During the Civil War in America some soldiers of the Southern Army deserted, and found themselves caught in a wood between their own regiment and the Northern lines. To go forward or backward equally meant death. So here they hid and starved, feeding on berries. Meanwhile the Southern Confederacy was broken up, and peace was made between North and South. One day an officer riding through found them, and challenging them, heard their ears. "You have nothing to fear," he said. "Peace has been proclaimed. You can have all you want by going to the nearest village and asking for it." So it is between the race and God. Men want to know that in Christ God has reconciled the world unto Himself. (*F. B. Meyer.*) *Who can tell?*—This was the forlorn hope of the Ninevites. The Book of Jonah should be exceedingly comfortable to those who are despairing because of the wickedness of their times. Is this, O God, Thy way? Wilt thou make Nineveh repent at the bidding of one man? So skilful is He that with the weakest instrument He can produce the mightiest workmanship. I. THE MISERABLE FLIGHT IN WHICH THE MEN OF NINEVEH FOUND THEMSELVES. They were like those in the days of Noah. They

were rich and mighty above all people. Locked in security, they fell into abominable sins. Their vices probably rivalled those of Sodom. Suddenly they were startled from their security, and convinced of their sin. Their miserable plight consisted in three discoveries—their great sin; the shortness of their time; the terrible character of their destruction. II. **THE SLENDER GROUND WHICH THE NINEVITES HAD FOR HOPE.** In Jonah's message there was no proclamation of mercy made. It was the trumpet of the judge, but not the silver trump of jubilee. He was sent with a thundering commission, and he dealt it out in a thundering fashion. The king's answer was, "Who can tell? There may be hope." Another thing that would cut off the hope of the Ninevites was, that they knew nothing of God except, it may be, some dreadful legends of His terrible acts. They lacked another encouragement that we have. They had never heard of the Cross. Jonah's preaching was very powerful, but there was no Christ in it. III. **THE URGING OF DIVINE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD IMITATE THE NINEVITES IN REPENTANCE.** God, in order that you may know His mercy, has been pleased to preserve instances thereof, that so often as you look upon them you may be led to say, if such and such an one was saved, why may not I? If you are conscious of guilt, your only hope of deliverance lies in the mercy of God. While it will be a happy thing for thee to be saved, it will be a serious thing for God to save thee. God delighteth to save sinners, because this puts jewels in His crown. He is glorified in His justice, but not as He is in His mercy. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The uncertain doom of kingdoms at particular times:—* A state of uncertainty, a suspense between hope and fear, about a matter of importance, is a very painful and anxious state. What can be more important, what more interesting, than our country! When the fate of our country is doubtful; when we can only ask with painful solicitude, What will be the end of these things? Every mind must be agitated with doubtful expectations. This was the state of Nineveh. What was the cause of its denunciation? Sin; national, epidemical sin, against an unknown God. They sinned against the light of nature, and that sufficed to bring down remediless destruction upon them. Before the fatal blow fell they had one warning more. We have the substance of Jonah's sermon. They understood him to plead for repentance. We have a very moving sight before us, a gay, magnificent city in mourning. The repentance does not wholly consist in ceremonies: they are sensible of the propriety and necessity of earnest prayer to God, and a reformation of life, as well as of afflicting themselves with fasting. The light of nature directed them to this as the only method of deliverance, if deliverance was possible. The case of such a people looks hopeful. Yet so sensible was the king of Nineveh of their demerit and of the insufficiency of their repentance to make atonement for their sins, that he is doubtful, after all, what would be the consequence. "Who can tell," he says, "whether God will turn and repent." Let us humble ourselves ever so low, we are not assured we shall escape. It is natural to a penitent, while he has a full view of all his sins, in all their aggravations, to question whether such sins can be forgiven by so holy a God. And Jonah was reserved on this point. National as well as personal repentance may come too late. When a nation is in such a state that no man can certainly determine what will be its doom, if there be any possible hope, it is only in the way of general humiliation, earnest prayer, and public reformation. 1. Sometimes a nation may be in such a situation that no man can tell what will be their doom; whether the threatened vengeance will fall upon them, or whether they shall escape. 2. The event of the present war will appear dismally doubtful if we consider some scriptural prophecies, particularly in Daniel and the Revelation. 3. The event of the present war, and the doom of our country and nation, will appear dreadfully uncertain if we consider our national guilt and impenitence. When a nation is in such a doubtful situation that no man can know its doom, if there be any hope, it is only in the way of repentance, reformation, and earnest prayer. This appears to be the only way of hope on two accounts. (1) National sin has a direct tendency, in its own nature, to weaken and destroy a nation. Repentance, reformation, and prayer are the proper cures for this disease. (2) This too is the only method to turn away the displeasure of God, and obtain His favour and protection. It is only to the penitent that promises of deliverance are made. National judgments are inflicted for national sins, and therefore reformation from national sins is the only hopeful way to escape them. (S. Davies, A.M.) *God's promises and threatenings:—* There is a simple distinction between the promises of Scripture

and its threatenings to which we should carefully attend. That distinction is, that the promises are recorded that they may be fulfilled, while the threatenings are written to prevent their fulfilment. We see the right influence of Jehovah's threatenings in the case of Nineveh of old. Only one thing could retard or prevent its ruin. That was repentance. Jonah's mission to Nineveh was really designed to prevent desolation. The threatening message was delivered. The heart of man was touched, sin was abandoned, and misery was, through grace, averted or postponed. Here we see the hopes and fears and agitations of the Ninevites. "Who can tell," &c. They had something to encourage, but nothing to assure. They had the forty days of respite. That brought in conditions and hopes. We know that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance; but, in imparting revelation from the unchanging One, language is employed which is strictly applicable to man, in order that man may understand the truth imparted. Human feelings and affections are thus described to the Divinity, though He be, in fact, unaffected by them all. It is man that changes, not God; but the language employed can occasion no difficulty to any humble mind. (W. K. Tweedie.)

Ver. 10. **And God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them.—God repenting.**—There are certain passages of holy Scripture which assert in the strongest way that God cannot repent, and that He never does. There are certain other passages which assert, just as strongly, and with as little qualification, that He can repent, and that, in fact, He has often done so. Here is an apparent contradiction. The ordinary method of interpretation applied to such texts is, to my mind, eminently unsatisfactory, and in fact involves erroneous and pernicious views of the Divine nature. We are told that the passages which speak of God's repentance are simply forms of speech to indicate a change of outward procedure, but do not imply any change whatever of interior feeling. This theory, in order to exempt God from those imperfections which are connected with the exercise of the affections and passions among men, virtually denies to Him the possession of any affections at all. It makes Him simply a Being of pure thought and unrelenting will. What a stupendous inroad is thus made on the fulness and beauty of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God!" I take the words to mean what we naturally understand by them—that God did really repent—i.e., changed His mind, which is the meaning of repentance. When He sent the prophet He meant destruction. When the city was humbled, He changed His mind, and waved the destroying angel home. There was a condition involved in the threat, and understood. God knew that the city would repent. Yes, but He also knew that the city would repent under commination. Why should it be incredible that God "repents" or changes? Would it not be more incredible if it were asserted that He never does? Are we to suppose that what constitutes a special perfection in the moral character of a man is an imperfection in God? God morally regards us at any one moment just as we are. (A. Raleigh, D.D.) **Repentance applied to God.**—As to what Jonah adds, that God was led to repent, it is a mode of speaking that ought to be sufficiently known to us. Strictly speaking, no repentance can belong to God; and it ought not to be ascribed to His secret and hidden counsel. God, then, is in Himself ever the same, and consistent with Himself, but He is said to repent when a regard is had to the comprehension of men; for as we conceive God to be angry whenever He summons us to His tribunal, and shows us our sins, so also we conceive Him to be placable when He offers the hope of pardon. But it is according to our perceptions that there is any change when God forgets His wrath, as though He had put on a new character. As then we cannot otherwise be terrified, that we may be humbled before God and repent, except He sets forth before us His wrath, the Scripture accommodates itself to the grossness of our understanding. But, on the other hand, we cannot call confidently on God unless we feel assured that He is placable. We hence see that some kind of change appears to us, whenever God either threatens or gives hopes of pardon and reconciliation; and to this must be referred this mode of speaking which Jonah adopts when he says that God repented. There is a twofold view of God—as He sets Himself forth in His word, and as He is in His hidden counsel. With regard to His secret counsel, God is always like Himself, and is subject to none of our feelings; but with regard to the teaching of His Word, He is accommodated to our capacities. God is now angry with us, and then, as though He were pacified, He offers pardon, and is propitious to us. Such is the repentance of God. Let

us remember, then, that it proceeds from His Word that God is said to repent. (*John Calvin.*) *Repentance, human and Divine*.—Jonah's prediction, we say, was not fulfilled. But was it not, in a very true sense? The city was not overthrown in one sense, but it was in another. A moral revolution took place, but it was a revolution. Nineveh was overthrown by the preaching of Jonah, as long afterwards the world was said to be turned upside down by that of the apostles. This, of course, was not what Jonah had in mind. It was not that the city was *destroyed*, in Jonah's sense. The inhabitants repented, and by so doing occasioned God Himself to repent of His purpose in relation to them. There is, then, such a thing as repentance, not only on the part of human beings, but also on that of the Divine Being. **I. THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES.** 1. It was a sincere repentance. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way." This settles the matter. It was impossible for them to deceive God. There is in our fallen nature a tendency to the hateful sin of hypocrisy, and there are two kinds of hypocrisy—the hypocrisy which affects holiness; and the hypocrisy which affects penitence. The latter is the more artful, as it is the more heinous. 2. It was occasioned by their faith in God. "The people of Nineveh believed in God." Faith in God is certain to produce repentance. A man cannot repent without repenting of his unbelief in God, and in God's Son. 3. It was universal. They seem to have turned every one from his evil way. It is probable that the case of Nineveh is unique in this respect. It was an earnest of the universal repentance of mankind. 4. It was exceedingly prompt. There was a necessity for promptitude, seeing that a time-limit had been fixed. Delay in such a case meant destruction. 5. It originated at the summit of society, and spread downwards to its base. But the repentance of the Ninevites, sincere and effectual as it was, did not prevent their descendants from doing all manner of evil, and incurring the destruction of their city. **II. REPENTANCE AS ASCRIBED TO GOD.** There is a doctrinal difficulty here. Some passages of Scripture attribute repentance to the Most High, and some other passages deny that He ever does repent. Truth may sometimes be formulated most conveniently by a paradox. God may be said to be, "unchangeably changeable." Illustrate from the thermometer or from the tides. As often as a change takes place in a human being from loyalty to disloyalty, or *vice versa*, a corresponding change in God occurs in relation to that person. This change takes place in the Most High, not because He is changeable, but because He is unchangeable. See Jer. xviii. 7-10. That gives the changeless principle of God's government, and it explains all the changes in His attitude towards nations and persons. God has often changed in the manner thus described, and that for the simple and sufficient reason that He is unchangeable. If there is one who knows only too well that he is regarded by the Supreme Being with deserved displeasure, let such an one know that a change on his part towards God will result in a corresponding change on God's part towards himself. (*Samuel Clift Burn.*) *God's mercy vindicated*.—The dealings of God with men have ever been characterised by judgment and mercy. God always deals with man according to his works; but the moral character of those works is determined by the state of the heart, and by the motives from which they spring. God deals with man according to his works. To the penitent God shows mercy; to the obedient, favour; to the rebellious and impenitent, judgment. The conduct of God towards the repentant Ninevites was in accordance with these general principles of His moral government. **I. GOD'S REPENTANCE.** Repentance in man is change of mind and purpose, issuing in change of conduct; but repentance in God is only change of operation or administration, according as man's conduct agrees with, or violates, the requirements of the Divine law. With the Ninevites God was justly angry. Their aggravated sins cried aloud for vengeance, and He determined to destroy them; but when they turned away from their sins He graciously withheld His avenging hand. This change in God's dealings, or threatened dealings, with the Ninevites, was not a change of principle or a change of mind, but simply a change of dispensation, arising out of their altered circumstances. Repentance in man always produces a corresponding change in God's administrations towards him. (Jer. xviii. 7-10.) This gives to the denunciations of God a conditional character. Sometimes the condition is expressed in the terms of the threatening, and sometimes it is understood. It is as much a principle of God's gracious government to suspend the execution of a threatened punishment on man's sincere repentance as it is to execute it in the case of obstinate and continued sin. Erroneous notions

have been adopted with respect to the immutability of God. God is unchangeable in His being, perfections, and principles of moral government. But in His actual dispensations with man He deals with him according to the state of his heart and life. II. THE EFFECTS OF GOD'S REPENTANCE ON JONAH. Such an act of grace and forbearance on the part of God ought to have excited the devout thankfulness of the prophet. But Jonah heard of the reprieve and pardon not only without joy, but with angry displeasure. The reason of his inhuman displeasure was a fear for his own fame. Jonah's unreasonable anger will account for his unseemly and censurable prayer. III. GOD'S REPROOF OF JONAH, AND VINDICATION OF HIMSELF. God's dealings with Jonah place His own character in the most gracious and amiable light, and in the most affecting contrast with that of the prophet. Jonah appears to have been a man of strong passions, and easily excited. Means had been found, in connection with the booth, the gourd, and the worm, to arouse conviction in Jonah's mind, and now God proceeds to make more direct application. He approaches Jonah with mild and dispassionate language—"Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?" How great the patience that bore with Jonah's petulance! "Thou hast had pity on the gourd; and should not I spare Nineveh?" Whether this appeal of God had any salutary effect on Jonah's mind, and led to any improvement in his conduct or not, is wholly unknown. We lose sight of Jonah under circumstances extremely disadvantageous to him. He drops out of history in a bad temper; and we have little to recall him to our remembrance but his sin, his punishment, and his petulance. (*Thomas Harding.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1, 2. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.—*The shortness of human charity*:—Why is Jonah so much offended and so very angry? Surely there is here some great dishonour to God; or some great enormity or departure from the immutable and unchanging law of everlasting righteousness, goodness, and truth. If neither of these two, at least there is some dreadful denunciation of judgment, or some terrible threatening, at which the very nature of man doth tremble. But here is the wonder, there is nothing that is any just cause; no cause at all of any true offence, or real provocation. It is a shame to say what is the cause. This good man is displeased with God Himself, and he is offended at the Divine goodness and compassion, and that God hath respect to the repentance of sinners. It is strange that he should be angry at this, because it is a thing contrary to the sense of the lower and of the upper world. We have found the man of whom it is spoken in the Gospel, that "his eye was evil because God's was good" (Matt. xx. 15). He prefers his own conceited credit and esteem before the lives and beings of six-score thousand persons. All God's denunciations against sinners are to be understood with a clause of reservation. He always excepts this case—if the sinner repent. If he forsake his iniquity he shall surely live. That which makes the wonder the greater is that Jonah, whom we find in this distemper, is of all the prophets the type of Christ. In his temper and disposition he is no type of Christ. That temper admits of no apology. 1. Nothing is more unreasonable in itself. 2. Nothing is worse for Jonah himself, and the whole world besides him. For what would become of us all if there were no place for repentance? And how should Jonah himself be pardonable for his present distemper if God should not allow place for repentance? 3. Nothing is more unnatural in respect of his office as a prophet. Was it not his very work to promote repentance and reformation among sinners? 4. Nothing worse can be put upon God than to be represented as implacable and irreconcilable. 5. And this would render men hopeless and desperate in the world. This is not the first distemper that we find Jonah in. At first we find him in great refractoriness and disobedience. Then we find him stupid and senseless, and more blockish than the idolatrous mariners. Then we find him in a case of desperate insolency. For we have no reason to think his wish to be cast into the sea came from the greatness of his faith. Then we find him in a state that is unnatural, barbarous, and inhumane; for he desired the destruction of others just to save his own reputation. All these distempers are aggravated by his late deliverance in the belly of the whale. Moreover, he is not overcome by the declaration of the reason of things, when it

comes out of the mouth of God Himself. The story leaves Jonah without any account of his returning to himself, and to a due temper. 1. Learn to consider in how sad and forlorn a condition we are, if God be not for us and with us. 2. How sin multiplies and grows upon us if once we fall into a distemper. 3. Notice the great danger of selfishness. 4. Let this be for caution and admonition. Persons acquainted with religion, if once out of the way of reason and conscience, prove more exorbitant than others. What great care a man should take to preserve his innocence and integrity! For our better security let us consider—(1) That it is much easier to prevent than to restrain sin. (2) Let us be very wary and cautious of approaching evil. Avoid self-confidence, and ever keep this confidence—our sufficiency is of God. It seems that Jonah did know beforehand that, if Nineveh did repent, God was so gracious and merciful that He would revoke the sentence. Observe, then, how passion transforms a man. How selfishness narrows and contracts a man's spirit. Sin is the cause of judgment. There is not stay at all in the way of sin. But repentance alters the case. Notice how God deals with man to bring him to a right mind when He finds him in his distemper. God deals with Jonah by reason and argument. What a strange kind of prayer Jonah's was! Indeed, he rather quarrels with God than prays to Him. In prayer let us take care of two things. 1. That our mind be in a praying temper. 2. That we offer to God in sacrifice prayer-matter. Consider the person with whom Jonah is displeased. None other than God Himself. Consider the cause of his offence. He is offended with God's goodness, and with sinners' repentance. He is offended that repentance takes effect. See, then, that you keep out of passion, if you would not shamefully miscarry. Remember your own weakness and infirmity, and be modest and humble. Let us preserve our innocence, and beware of running into such heat of temper and mind. Take care of selfishness and narrowness of spirit. (*B. Whichcote.*)

*Contrast between the response to God of Jonah, and of the Ninevites:—*1. Beware of a spirit of selfishness. 2. Beware of the peril of approaching your Creator in a peevish and discontented mood. 3. Rejoice that under the Gospel the true efficacy of repentance has been explained to you. You know how and why it can be effective. (*W. H. Marriott.*)

*Jonah's anger:—*There is one thing most wonderful, and that is, that God should be so good as He is. I. JONAH'S SELFISHNESS. Selfishness is one of the last evils that is rooted out of the nature of man, and it is hardly possible to limit the extent of the evil that selfishness works in us; it is the great hinderer of good. Selfishness is at the root of that exceeding anxiety lest our fellow-men should undervalue us. The great fear on the part of Jonah was lest his dignity should suffer by the repentance of the Ninevites, and lest, therefore, he should lose his character as prophet, and should be spoken of as an utterer of falsehoods. We see connected with it a slight estimation of the life and comfort of others. Thus the selfish man is continually violating the spirit of the second table of the law. We find selfishness existing in a very prominent way whenever men are found to be murmuring at God's will, if that will is opposed to their own. II. THE LORD'S LESSON TO HIM. Now Jonah was disposed to show the same rebellious spirit as before, in objecting to the manner in which God was dealing with Nineveh. In dealing with him, God gave him comfort to prevent his suffering, and then removed the comfort. God thus deals with us constantly. We all need to be taught that creature comforts are but vanities, and that our only real comfort and consolation is in the Lord Himself. III. GOD'S UNCHANGEABLE LOVE. We might have expected that such a man as Jonah God would have chastised and banished from His presence. What condescension we can see in His dealings with him! What a contrast between Jonah's selfishness and God's love. (*Montagu Villiers, M.A.*)

*Bible phases of indignation:—*Anger is not necessarily a proof of corruption of the heart, but is often an inseparable part of life. The Divine Creator has planted in our beings this self-defensive attribute for noble and serviceable purposes. See the two sides of this passion, as exemplified in the difference between the anger of Jonah and that of Jesus. One only shows the spirit of selfishness, which is fretful and unruly, while the other shows the grandeur of a self-sacrificing spirit united with piety and love. I. THE ANGER OF JONAH IS THE TYPE OF UNRIGHTEOUS PASSION. Its sin consisted in—1. Its selfish nature. It was his own honour he feared for, not the glory of God. 2. Its unjust character. He would have had God repudiate His justice and mercy and love to gratify a sinful prophet. 3. Its uncharitable folly. It was vindictive. It was not against the evil, but the good. II. THE ANGER OF CHRIST AS A TYPE OF RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION. "He

looked round about on them in anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Contrasting it with Jonah's, observe the following points. 1. It was sinless. 2. It was just. 3. It was merciful. Severity is no token of hatred. Kingsley says: "The highest reason should tell us that there must be indignation in God so long as there is evil in the universe." Hazlett says: "Good-natured people there are amongst the worst people in the world. They leave others to bear the burden of indignation and correction." (*Alfred Buckley.*) *The anger of Jonah*:—Servant of God as he was, Jonah here displayed the infirmity of many a good man in his irritability and ill-disposition. While, on the other hand, a bad temper has been described as the "vice of the virtuous," a good one has been characterised as nine-tenths of Christianity. Professor Drummond has forcibly pointed out, "that for embittering life, for breaking up communities, for taking the bloom off childhood, in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence of an ill-temper stands alone." It was this irritable, testy, uncontrollable disposition which cast such a reflection upon the prophet Jonah as he ran down to the port at Tarshish, and fled from the Lord, a disposition which appears to have cooled off after having passed through a period of trial and become repentant, but which, when God acted contrary to his expectations, flamed out again, as if he were composed of combustible material.

I. JONAH'S BAD TEMPER WAS SHOWN BY THE WAY IN WHICH HE DISPUTED WITH GOD. Jonah was neither willing to leave to God the results of his mission to Nineveh, nor ready even to go to that city. When God asks for that implicit obedience to which He has a right, He does not make an unreasonable demand. Some seem to think they display a human and rightful prerogative when they question God's ways and authority, forgetting that by a thousand ties we are bound to accede to the Divine wishes, and that our wills are never in a more normal condition than when they are subjected to the One who never errs. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine," said Tennyson, and when they will not be subservient to God a curse is pronounced upon them such as that uttered by Isaiah when he exclaimed, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker"—the woe of a conscience ill at ease, of a soul insensitive to the Divine love, and a heart shut out from that blessed communion which is accorded to those in harmony with God. And this penalty fell upon Jonah when he argued and disputed with God, who had an absolute claim to an unquestioned obedience.

II. THIS BAD TEMPER NARROWED JONAH'S VISION AND OUTLOOK. Intensely national, patriotic, and partisan, he could not see why Jehovah should display His saving mercy to another nation, and that so wicked as Nineveh, when He had made Israel His chosen, and the sole depositary of His will. Why take the children's bread and give it to dogs? Was not salvation of the Jews? He was against a missionary Gospel, just as the Pharisees objected to the Gospel being proclaimed to the publicans and sinners; and as Peter was opposed to opening the door to the Gentiles, but about which his eyes were opened when he saw the sheet let down from heaven, and was sent to the house of the devout Cornelius. Believing that God is a gracious God, slow to anger, and repents of the evil when He sees a heart contrite and penitent, Jonah, like the elder son of the parable, was angry when he saw there was a possibility of the Ninevites being saved from destruction. Oh, how passion will narrow one's vision! Scarcely anything will as surely exclude a wide, impartial, and generous view of things. Just as it is said that a frightened horse can see little and becomes almost blind, so an irritable temper will narrow the creed and sour the life. Just notice the way which God took to enlarge Jonah's vision and soften and mollify his disposition. Sorry for the gourd? Yes, though it was but a plant, but not sorry for the souls against whom he had cried, that they should be overthrown and destroyed, nor was he glad when they repented. What a lesson! Men grieve over the loss of property, but not over the loss of souls. They repent over the loss of a cargo, the burning of a house, or destruction of a church, but, how pitiable! there is so little anxiety for the eternal loss of that which is beyond the price of rubies, so that to-day many a man can say truly, "No man careth for my soul."

III. MOREOVER, JONAH'S ILL-TEMPER DIMINISHED HIS AFFECTION AND LOVE FOR HIS FELLOW-MEN. We draw artificial distinctions of soul values, by esteeming the soul of an educated, wealthy, and refined person of more value than that of the downtrodden and humanly forsaken one. But to such a man as Jonah, the prophet of God, or to any Christian worker, no such distinction should be made. And no such discrimination will be made if the right temper possesses the Christian. We must learn to love men, love them broadly, largely,

comprehensively. But you say there is nothing lovable in the vast majority of men. Even so; yet, Christian workers, you must love men, for there is no other force that will carry you through, and inspire you to the accomplishment of your mission. IV. THROUGH THIS ILL-TEMPER JONAH FAILED TO KEEP DUE AND NECESSARY CONTROL OF HIMSELF. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Our trouble is not in having strong, impetuous, fiery, passionate natures. Who can measure the fire and passion in such natures as Luther, Whitefield, Spurgeon, or Moody? They were volcanoes, Niagaras of passion, but made serviceable to God and humanity. "What a waste of power," said Edison, as he looked at the most magnificent falls in the world; and when I see deep, strong, fiery natures spending their vitality in petulant anger as did Jonah, I feel like saying, "What a waste of power." Bring the stream and electricity of your nature, and harness it in the service of God. It is little that the manufacturer cares for a small trickling stream running through the meadows, but he does value a torrent that leaps from rock to rock, and crag to crag, and rushes with furious energy through the valley. Smother your passion, crush your anger, quell your wrath? No; pour them out upon sin. Let them come down upon evil in high and low places, and switch them on to the waggons on the King's highway. "He was very angry." Is it unusual for the soul to be angry with God? Here is a man to whom God gave a child which was deformed in body, defective in mind, and an object of care day and night, which was freely given by a loving mother. Some years after another child was given, handsome, plump, and the pink of perfection; but, strange to say, in a short time it was taken, and folded in the bosom of a safe keeping God. Far from saying "Thy will be done," a spirit of petulance arose in the father's bosom, in which he denied the existence of God, and turned his back upon love and hope, running a swift course to business ruin and moral failure. "He was very angry." Shame! Pity! Keep the fiery steed in hand; or, better still, give God the reins. V. THIS BAD TEMPER UNFITTED HIM TO PASS INTO THE PRESENCE OF HIS MAKER. Jonah was not backward in talking about dying. "O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live," and when the sun's rays beat upon his head he wished in himself to die, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." Angry people are apt to wish they were dead, for when the fog of passion and disappointment weighs upon the spirit the ill-tempered man speaks unadvisedly with his lips. Is a man fit to die in such a temper as this? (*T. M. Fothergill.*) *Jonah's displeasure*:—I. THE NATURE OF JONAH'S DISPLEASURE MAY EASILY BE MISUNDERSTOOD. There are two kinds of displeasure. One is wrath, the other is grief. The word used of Jonah may mean either angry or distressed. Perhaps grieved is the proper idea here. Notice the impotence of mere external experience in relation to a person's inward disposition. Jonah had passed through trying experiences, yet he was the same man. II. THE INTENSITY OF JONAH'S DISPLEASURE: "Exceedingly, and he was very grieved." It was deep distress in the prospect of calamity to his own country. Sparing Nineveh involved the future destruction of Israel. The prophet may have foreseen this. No doubt the destruction of an impenitent heathen community would not have appeared to Jonah so terrible as such a thing must appear to ourselves. And if Jonah was grieved at the escape of the Ninevites from death, he was himself anxious to die. He did not desire a worse fate for them than for himself. Of some men it is said, "their bark is worse than their bite," and Jonah might have been one of these men. III. THE EXTREME DISTRESS OF JONAH FOUND EXPRESSION IN PRAYER. 1. The prayer contains a reference to a former saying of the prophet himself. 2. The prayer contains an account of his flight. 3. It contains an account of Jonah's conviction concerning the Divine character. He knew that the Lord is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness. 4. It contains a petition on the prophet's part for death. An unbecoming, as well as unusual, prayer; but the petition of a noble-minded man. He knew the sanctity of his own life too well to commit suicide. The prayer was caused by his despondency in relation to the cause of God. (*Samuel Clift Burn.*) *Jonah's temper*:—Jonah's spirit at this time was not worthy of the character in which he came to Nineveh. Courage, indeed, he had shown, in raising his single voice in the name of the Lord in the midst of an idolatrous and wicked people. But he had not yet learned compassion for perishing sinners; or, if he had any such feeling, it was quite overborne, for the present, by a selfish regard to his own reputation; he was chagrined at the

discredit brought upon his own predictions by the forbearance of God exercised towards the Ninevites. Foolish man! He had put himself in the place of God. He had forgotten, it should seem, that he was sent to preach the preaching that God should bid him, and had imagined that he was denouncing *Jonah's* threatenings, and not those of the Most High, when he said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Having put himself in the place of God, he vainly concluded that his own credit was concerned in the execution of the threatened judgment. But whosoever exalteth himself, though it be in the exercise of even a Divine commission, shall be humbled;—and the sooner he is effectually humbled, the better for himself. With respect to the Divine veracity, the vindication of that may safely be left in His hands whose "word is truth." As for the credit of His ministers, it is, indeed, a very light matter; but that, too, may be committed to Him who has the hearts of all men in His hands, and who has said, "Them that honour Me, I will honour." (*Matthew M. Preston, M.A.*) *The selfish man:—* We turn again to the dark side of *Jonah's* character; and very dark it is. Poor man! Whom is he angry with, and what is the ground of his displeasure? Some of the most prominent evil tempers that break out in the prophet on the occasion are the following—1. Extreme selfishness. There is no principle in fallen man that does so much mischief in the world as that of selfishness; none dishonours God more; none produces so much injury to mankind; it prevents more good, and produces more evil, than any other temper of mind. Indeed, every sin and every suffering seem to have their origin in selfishness, and to proceed from it in one way or another. Selfishness is sin essentially. Self is the fountain of evil, and all sorts of sins are but as so many streams that issue from it. What is self-will? It is a contest between man and his God who is to have his way. What is the real cause of so much discontent and restlessness in the minds of men? It is striving with God whose will is to be done. 2. *Jonah* was a very peevish, quarrelsome, and fretful man. He retains his unhappy temper of mind wherever he goes, and however he is treated. Whether you strike or stroke him, he snarls. Guard against this miserable temper of mind, which must be painful to one's self, disagreeable to others, and offensive to God. Learn that this peevish, fretful, and discontented temper is a stubborn sin, difficult to subdue, and a disease which is seldom cured. 3. *Jonah* betrays the greatest ingratitude to his kind, indulgent God. Not one expression of thankfulness do we hear from him. He is sullen and silent, full of anger and displeasure. The ungrateful man has a bad soul, unhappy in himself, and disagreeable to others; he enjoys nothing of what he possesses, let him possess ever so much. Possession and enjoyment are distinct things. True and lively gratitude is one of the most amiable and pleasing of all dispositions. May our wills be swallowed up in the will of God; may our spirits be satisfied with all that God does; and may our hearts be thankful for all His gifts, which are numerous, free, precious, constant, and eternal! (*Thomas Jones.*)

Ver. 2. *And he prayed unto the Lord, and said.—The secret of Jonah:—* In this verse we have the key to the whole Book of *Jonah*; the secret, the motive, both of his character and of his mission. God had sent the prophet to Nineveh, to threaten the inhabitants of that wicked city with the doom due to their sins. "God does not always pay on Saturdays," says an old proverb, but sooner or later He pays every man, and every race, the wages they have earned. When the Ninevites were convinced that pay-day had really come at last, that they were about to receive the wages of their iniquity, they repented and turned every one from his evil way. And when they repented of the evil they had done, "God repented of the evil He had said He would do unto them." That is to say, when they were no longer sinners, they were to be no longer treated as sinners. But when, and because, God was no longer angry, *Jonah* became very angry. That God should "turn away from the evil" He had threatened against Nineveh was itself an evil, and a great evil, to him,—so unlike may men of God be to the God whom they serve. *Jonah* was angry, and in his anger he "prayed unto the Lord"; and in his prayer he let out the secret of his anger, and, indeed, of the whole story. Now, an angry man may certainly do worse than pray. But if his prayer show that he is angry with God, and angry because God's mercy is wider than his own, can he do much worse than pray such a prayer as that? *Jonah* was angry not only because God's mercy was shown to be wider than his own, but because he had always known that it would be. *Jonah's* reluctance sprang from his fear of God's mercy, his knowledge of God's humanity. What

he was really afraid of was, that God would be too kind to keep His word. If the Ninevites were forgiven, instead of destroyed, why, then, he, Jonah, would be made to look like a fool—a prophet who could not read the omens, nor forecast the future, nor interpret the Voice that spake within his heart. There is no need, however, to insist that Jonah had no other motive than this. Human nature is so complex that men rarely act from a single motive. His main sin certainly was a want of pity for his fellows, an egotism so profound as to move him, a sinful man, to reproach God for His grace to man. He was angry with God for the very reason which should most of all have induced him to love Him,—because he knew God to be gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Have we mastered the great lesson of this book? Do we believe that God loves all men, without distinction of race and creed, and willeth not that any should perish, but that all should turn to Him? There are yet many among us who, if they never doubt God's mercy for themselves, utterly disbelieve that God's mercy, in any efficient sense, embraces the whole world. They have never thought nobly of God, but have rather conceived of Him as altogether such an one as themselves. No hope, however "large," should be unwelcome to a merciful man, who believes in a God more infinitely merciful than himself. Even though he be not able to entertain it, it should not make him angry. We should miss the moral of this story were we to conclude that we are merciful simply because we trust in a larger mercy than some of our neighbours. There is a taint of Jonah's selfish jealousy in us all, of his indifference to the fate of others, so that our comforts, our salvation, our security are assured. The better we are, and the better we know ourselves, the more eager shall we be to modify Jonah's prayer, and to cry,—“O Lord, I beseech Thee, make me to know that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil.” (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. *It is better for me to die than to live.—Is life worth living?*—Jonah's mission, though in some respects strange and terrible, was one of mercy, to lead the Ninevites to repentance; and Jonah knew this from the first. The Lord could have found another messenger, but He had chosen this man for His purpose; so He brought him back, and commanded him for the second time to go to Nineveh, and “cry the cry that I bid thee.” The mercy shown to Nineveh displeased Jonah exceedingly, and made him very angry. It was not merely that he seemed to be discredited by the issue, and made a fool of, but he was vexed and chagrined at what took place, and boded no good from it. He would have let the doom fall without a warning. As Jonah sat in his booth there is still some lingering hope in his mind that the threatened overthrow may yet take place. He shows no sign of brotherly-kindness; he does not sympathise with the Divine philanthropy that has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And so, when mercy rejoiceth against judgment, he thinks it well to be angry, even unto death. He counts that for him “it is better to die than to live.” It is the fretting of a wounded and disappointed spirit. His words bring up a question that has been asked again and again—*Is life worth living?* The question is a vague one, and really covers a wide diversity both of meanings and mental moods. Life is very different to different men. The problem of life will be viewed differently by men according to their different standing-point. We must find some standing-point which does not shift with the century, or with the changing conditions under which we pass. Such is furnished us by the revelation of God's purpose of grace in Christ Jesus. What we see in Christ is the very life which is the gift of God for man's possession. If we would only cease trying to fit theological notions into a perfect system, and set ourselves to view this revelation of God's gracious purpose, the problem of life would be wonderfully cleared and simplified. (*J. Culross, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. *Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry.—Anger reproved:*—Jonah's anger was not justifiable; for it rose high against God, and quarrelled with the dispensations of His providence and grace. A man is known by his temper, as much as by his speech and behaviour. The temper of Jonah was peculiar. He was a man of some goodness. He was a man of prayer and a prophet; yet his piety was greatly defective, and his virtues were tarnished with much imperfection. His history exhibits a sad picture of pettishness, fretfulness, and impatience. I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE, AND THE

TEMPER OF THE PROPHET UNDER THEM. Jonah was displeased exceedingly because God had accepted the repentance of Nineveh; that He exercised mercy, and turned away His wrath from that numerous people. We cannot acquit him of much that was wrong on this occasion. He was off his guard. He was greatly influenced by a proud and rebellious spirit. Henry observes of his prayer,—It is a very awkward prayer. Indeed, what could we expect from a man agitated with such a temper? How unhallowed is the petition, "Now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me." We cannot but notice the long-suffering goodness of God, the tenderness of Divine compassion, in the expostulation with Jonah. II. THIS TEMPER OF THE PROPHET WAS EXTREMELY CENSURABLE. Is anger, then, in no case allowable? It may be directed against sin, in ourselves or in others. It was not allowable in Jonah. Every emotion of displeasure with the dispensations of God is extremely censurable; for—1. Each of them is just. 2. Most of them are merciful. 3. All of them work together for good. Then, "in your patience possess ye your souls." Self-possession is a great and most desirable attainment. (*T. Kidd.*) *Jonah's vexation*.—With what strange feelings of disappointment must every one rise from the perusal of this chapter! For Jonah falls again under his disappointment. What was it that displeased Jonah? The salvation of the sinners of Nineveh who repented. The grace of God manifested in the salvation of Nineveh. With the Divine purposes of grace he had no sympathy. He was displeased because he was not a minister of wrath to sinners. But how does he give vent to his displeasure? In prayer to God. He upbraids God for being a gracious God, merciful, slow to anger, and of great compassion, and for having resolved to manifest this grace of His character in the salvation of this great city. For what does he pray? For death to himself, unless God would give up Nineveh and its inhabitants to death and destruction. This is the thing which he says in his heart's desire and prayer before God. Jonah even seems to say that he has not repented of going to Tarshish, but rather, in his present mood, repents of returning and going to Nineveh, after he received the second call. What is this but to say that he repents of his repentance? Every feeling was sacrificed to resentment at the non-fulfilment of his prophecy. If forty days passed and Nineveh were not overthrown, what would men say of Jonah and his prophecies? He would have sacrificed Nineveh to a point of honour, to a feeling of pride or vanity, to a thought of personal interest or aggrandisement, to public opinion, or national bigotry and sectarian spite. Such is selfishness when it stands up barefaced to proclaim itself in all its nakedness before God. Now admire the forbearance of God. All He said in answer to this prayer of mixed pride and petulance was, "Dost thou well to be angry?" God is not angry, though Jonah is angry. But a rebuke is not the less severe that it is administered in a spirit of mild and gentle love; and such surely is the spirit in which God deals with Jonah's conscience; not answering the fool according to his folly. With this question, like an arrow stuck in his spirit, God leaves the angry man to himself. Jonah gave no answer. Anger is sullen, and sullenness is silent. He went out to the east of the city, made a booth to shelter himself from the sun, and over this a large-leaved gourd quickly grew. Jonah began to be better pleased. The next day the gourd withered, and Jonah was exposed and distressed. Then God asked His question again, "Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Now Jonah's vexation rises; he justifies his anger, and says to God that he has good cause to be offended, and even weary of life. Then God interpreted the sudden withering of the gourd. Out of his own mouth Jonah was judged. He was pitiful towards a gourd, and complained of God's being pitiful towards myriads of immortal souls. God silences all cavil respecting His present work of providence; He sets at rest all controversy respecting His purpose of grace to sinners, like the men of Nineveh, by an appeal to Jonah's own conscience. And Jonah is speechless. Learn—1. That in the end God's purpose of grace in the salvation of sinners will be justified. 2. Want of sympathy with God's purpose of grace and salvation to sinners is a common sin. 3. This want of sympathy betrays itself, in selfishness like Jonah's, in self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-indulgence. 4. God is still rebuking this sin of selfishness, or want of sympathy, as He rebuked Jonah here, both in His Word, and in His providence. (*N. Paisley.*) *Jonah and the passions*.—This chapter presents the weakness of human nature; the illusion of the passions; the bad effects that flow from the want of self-government. Here is a prophet, an advocate of righteousness, and a denouncer of the judgments of heaven, fallen into rather

disgraceful circumstances, forgetting the dignity of his office, and losing the command of himself; discomposed and agitated by passion. And what was the cause? His work seemed to be a failure, and he would rather see that populous city laid in ashes, than that the least imputation should fall upon his own prophetic character. To him came the expostulating voice of God. "Doeſt thou well to be angry?" The mild rebuke was ineffectiſe. Then came the appeal, "Doeſt thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Stung with rage, and overcome by his paſſion, the prophet replied, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." Angry? With whom? With God, the Father of mercies. For what? For pardoning a vaſt multitude, all humbled in duſt and aſhes before Him. Could a ſmall perſonal intereſt plead againſt the voice of nature, and harden this prophet's heart againſt every ſentiment of humanity? It is the nature of the paſſions to concentrate our views in one glowing point, and thus cauſe us to overlook whatever might allay their fervour. Hence the undoubting confidence with which the impaſſioned mind inſiſts upon its own rectitude, and even glories in the violence of its emotions. Nor is it the angry and revengeful only; the voluptuous, the ambitious, and diſtempered minds of every deſcription all find ſpecious arguments to reconcile the indulgence of their own will, and their perſonal gratification, with the general good; at leaſt, to palliate, if they cannot altogether juſtify, their conduct, from the inevitable preſſure of events and peculiarity of ſituation. We cannot but be aſtoniſhed at the height to which Jonah's mind was inflamed—at the degree in which his feelings were exaſperated. How weak is man! When clouded with paſſion, his boaſted reaſon, inſtead of diſentangling the perplexity of his affairs, or impelling him to act wiſely and virtuoſouſly, often ſerves only to aggravate his miſery, and to juſtify him in his perverseneſs. During this temporary inſanity all things upon which the eye is fixed appear enlarged and gigantic. Into what extravagancies, what miſeries, what crimes are men precipitated for want of learning and practiſing the art of ſelf-government. How greatly ought we to be upon our guard, not only againſt the violence, but againſt the illuſion of the paſſions! It is certainly in our power, by the vigorous exerciſe of our mental faculties, to reduce the objects which are magnified and diſtorted by the magic of paſſion to their natural ſhape and juſt dimension. Change of ſcene will often help us in this ſelf-maſtery, and time has a quieting power. Devout and regular attendance on the duties of religion will greatly favour and ſhorten the proceſs, and render our paſſage through the tempeſtuous region of the paſſions not only ſafe but ſalutary. Let the conſiderations which reaſon and religion preſent induce calmneſs of ſpirit, and "give reſt to our ſouls." The ſhortneſs of life, the emptineſs of worldly pleaſures, the approach of eternity. Within the hallowed round of religion all is peace. (*P. Houghton.*)

Jonah, the petulant man.—I. THE REASON OF JONAH'S PETULANCE. Why was Jonah angry? The higheſt and nobleſt ſucceſs of preaching is in its conſtructive and ſaving effects, not in its deſtructive reſults. But Jonah thought otherwiſe. To him deſtruction meant ſucceſs, but ſalvation he thought failure.

II. THE RESORT. Whither did he flee in his petulant fit? "Unto the Lord." Can a man in a paſſion pray? Jonah's prayer was a perverted privilege. He made it the medium of acceſs to God for ſelf-vindication and Divine vituperation. This is the firſt attempt at excuſing himſelf for going to Tarſhiſh. The greatneſs of God's mercy was his preſent grievance. Jonah's prayer cloſed with—

III. A REQUEST. It was as unreaſonable as it was unjuſtifiable. Self-will prompted it, and peeviſhneſs uttered it. "My reputation as a truth-ſpeaking prophet will be ſlain, therefore I prefer being ſlain myſelf." What cowards diſappointed expectations make us.

IV. PETULANCE DIVINELY QUESTIONED. The queſtion has a ſting which enters deeply into Jonah's ſoul. Phyſicians probe wounds before they heal them. Temper is the ſhadow of the tempter.

V. PETULANCE IN RETIREMENT. Temper generally ſeeks ſolitude when its tide is ebbing. Sulks like to mope by themſelves in ſecluſion.

VI. PETULANCE SUBJECTING JONAH TO INCONVENIENCES. Petulance is the parent of manifold diſcomforſs—physical, mental, ſocial, moral, eccleſiaſtical. It is the multiplier of life's ſorrows, the inventor of ghroſtly troubles, the deſpotic ſubjector to manifold inconveniences.

VII. PETULANCE UNDER DIVINE SYMBOLIC CORRECTION. The gourd is to be the means of physical amelioration, and then the medium of ſymbolic ſpiritual correction. Jonah learned this leſſon. If the perishing of a mere gourd was a ſource of great grief to him, how infinitely more painful to God would be the deſtruction of multitudes of intelligent beings. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The recur-*

rence of old sins after repentance:—When Jonah saw that the threatened ruin came not,—“it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.” Jonah lived and served God under the old covenant, which spoke chiefly of Divine judgments, and comparatively little of Divine mercy. Moreover, he patriotically dreaded the growing power of the enemies of his race. He was moved, even to anger, at the sight of God’s mercy to the sinner. Though in this troubled condition, Jonah could pray, and complain to God. God dealt tenderly with him. God even withholds any reproof or censure. He but seeks to teach His servant by a sign, such as might personally touch his heart. The gourd sprung up. The gourd withered. Then God pleaded with His servant, bidding him to think how, if he were grieved for the plant, how much more God must desire to spare the great city. Let us take home a solemn warning. How striking it is that even in a prophet’s soul the same dispositions he had renounced when he returned to God could rise up again, and overcome him! Yet this is what we are all liable to. Old temptations, old passions, rise up again, and sometimes with even stronger force, because of having been long kept back. Repentance really is a state to be continued and persevered in. Contrition is a power that is to penetrate the soul, to make it and to keep it tender and soft; and this cannot be at once. Remember our Lord’s words, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” To cease from a penitent state of mind till sin is wholly vanquished is for a soldier in some dangerous country to lay down his arms and sleep, forgetful of the danger of a night attack. Why did Jonah become angry? Because he had not learned what he might have learned of the character of God. Whatever may be the ordering of the mysterious destiny that besets us, is it not a creature’s true condition to adapt his purposes and his feelings to the purposes of his Creator? (*T. T. Carter.*)

Uses of anger:—There is an anger that is sinful, and there is an anger which is not sinful. The difference lies not so much in the character or even the degree of the emotion, but rather in the motive which rouses it and the object towards which it is directed. Jonah’s anger was that of a mortified vanity and a wounded self-love; it was the anger of bodily discomfort and an insubordinate will; the anger of a most irrational jealousy, of an utterly selfish and heartless pride. Sometimes we read of anger in our Lord Jesus Christ. There we see it having place in the heart of absolute love and goodness, where selfishness is a name unknown, and where yet the very fire which warms and illuminates is a fire also of consuming fierceness towards the evil which will not have it for its good. The maxim “Be ye angry and sin not” has a voice for all of us. Anger need not be sin, but in human hearts it always borders upon it. Anger cherished and fostered is a sin at once. Being angry without sinning is an important point in Christian ethics. 1. There is a feeling to which we give the name of moral indignation. We thus distinguish it from other kinds of anger, more or less selfish and self-asserting, such as anger at an inconvenience, at a slight, at a disappointment, or even at a providence. Of this kind are all those broodings over the superior advantage or happiness of other ranks or other people, over the circumstances of the station or the education or the success in life, over the events which make a home dreary, or over the natural temperament which makes a heart gloomy, or over the peculiar predispositions and tendencies which make it doubly difficult to be good,—all of which, when thoroughly sifted, are a “replying against God.” Moral indignation is characterised chiefly by this, that it is quite unselfish. It is the feeling that rises in the breast of a man on seeing the ill-treatment of an animal, a child, or a woman. To stand by and see these things without remonstrance or without interference is no forbearance: it is cowardice, it is unmanliness, it is sin. In such cases to be angry is a virtue. It is a higher exercise of the same virtuous indignation, to feel where it does not see—where it only reflects and meditates upon the misery and the wickedness and the living death which hangs so heavily and so hopelessly upon the world. 2. There is place also for anger, not only in the contemplation of wrong, but in the personal experience of temptation. There is an indignation, even a resentment, even a rage and fury, which may be employed without offence to the Gospel, in repelling assaults upon our peace and virtue. “Be ye angry and sin not” has often been exemplified, in its truth and power, in the experience of the man, young or old, who would none of the tempter’s enticements, or of the companionship of the profligate. 3. There is a place for moral indignation in connection with the great personal tempter. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*)

Vers. 5-11. *So Jonah went out of the city.—God's expostulation with Jonah:—* We may presume that Jonah had two reasons for going out of Nineveh. One was, that he might provide for his personal safety. The other, that he might witness the execution of Jehovah's threatening, and be a spectator of the ruin which he had himself predicted. With this view he went to the east side of Nineveh, perhaps because there was an eminence where he would be secure from danger, and from which he could survey the wide extent of the devoted city. Whatever were the images of ruin which presented themselves to the mind of Jonah, it is certain that he looked, nay, that he longed, for the destruction of the city. What a contrast to our blessed Lord looking down upon Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. What forbearance and condescension Jonah had experienced at God's hand! The very mildness of the Divine expostulation ought to have made him ashamed of his folly and perverseness. But God's reproof was disregarded, and we have now to notice the other method which God adopted in order to bring him to a better mind. The gourd relieved Jonah from much physical suffering, and by diverting his attention from the bitter disappointment over which he had been brooding, it helped materially to tranquillise his mind. Brief, however, was the stay of the gourd, and of his tranquillity. A worm ruined the gourd. Afflictions seldom come single. Sun and wind followed loss of gourd. Jonah felt his very life a burden. When men set their hearts upon earthly treasures, and forget their obligations to the Giver of all good, they are ill prepared for encountering adversity. Then their days are days of darkness, and they become weary of life without being prepared for death. What was the design of the peculiar trial to which Jonah was subjected? The trial was sent to convince him of his sin in wishing the destruction of Nineveh in opposition to the will of God, and for the sake of maintaining his own credit as a prophet. Instruction had to come to him by the way of chastisement. But pride perverts the understanding, and passion darkens it; and when these unhappy influences are at work, men, when visited with trouble, are slow to perceive the end for which God afflicts them. Thus it was with Jonah. See God's reproof of the prophet, as given in ver. 11. He had sighed very bitterly over the premature decay of the mere gourd; should he not have had pity on the populous city? Thus God reproved Jonah, and condescended to vindicate His own procedure. With His solemn and touching expostulation the book closes. Learn from the case of this prophet the indispensable necessity of cultivating an humble and self-denying spirit, and of guarding with holy jealousy against any such feelings as would prompt us, on the one hand, to arraign the equity of Jehovah's dispensations, when they seem to be averse to our personal comfort or our fancied honour, or would prevent us, on the other, from cherishing compassion for any of our fellow-creatures, or even for the beasts that perish. And let us be encouraged, by the view here given us of the character of God, to approach Him, in the exercise of faith and penitence, by the way of His appointment. He delighteth in mercy. Beware lest we should be found to despise the goodness and forbearance of God. (*David Couper.*) *Out of sympathy with God:—* From first to last, in this book, we have an exhibition of God's mercy in all its greatness and heavenly grandeur, and, as contrasted with this in the most forcible way, an exhibition of man's littleness. The exhibition of mercy on God's part is of the richest and most gracious kind. Jonah in his conduct was but a representative of his nation. What he did and felt as an individual, they would have done and felt as a nation in like circumstances; and the one great purpose of the book seems to be to prove how wrong he was in his unwillingness to appreciate God's mercy towards the Gentiles, in order that his fellow-countrymen, who had exactly the same ideas, might take a warning from him, and give up their exclusive spirit and haughty bearing towards other nations. We are often in danger of sinning in the same way as Jonah and the Jewish people. There are times when we are inclined to take narrow and exclusive views of God's mercy. I. *JONAH'S DISPLEASURE.* He went out, and sat on the east of the city. He made himself a booth, a mere hut of branches. There he sat and watched the city to see what would become of it. He had hoped, perhaps, that fire would come from heaven and destroy Nineveh, as Sodom was destroyed of old. But no such hope was to be realised. The fortieth day arrived, and no destruction took place. Why was Jonah so displeased at this grand exercise of God's mercy, at this triumph of mercy over judgment? In some measure it may be accounted for on natural causes. He may have been experiencing that depression of spirit which is the

natural result of physical weakness, produced by bodily or mental toil. Mistaken zeal for God may also in part account for the prophet's displeasure. He may have fancied that the Ninevites were not in a fit state to appreciate mercy. Personal pride also had some share in it. It is hard for a man, even when a prophet of God, to forget himself in doing God's work. He was afraid that the Ninevites would despise him as a prophet of lies. A more satisfactory reason than these must be found. Jonah's displeasure resulted from the fact that his exclusive love for his own country and his own people caused him to have no sympathy with this extension of God's mercy to a Gentile people. To his way of thinking, Nineveh's being spared was like the strengthening and prospering of his country's greatest enemy. Taking such a view of the case, he had no sympathy whatever with God's mercy being extended to them. In God's dealings with Nineveh there was a glorious revelation of many mercies yet in store for the Gentiles. If Jonah saw that vision, that "first fruits" of mercy to the Gentiles, he turned away from the sight and shut his eyes. It did not agree with another vision, a picture of his own fancy—the lasting greatness of the Jewish people as the exclusive people of God. Jonah came to a better mind afterwards. His heart was enlarged, and his sympathies widened, when God spoke to him. It was then that he wrote this story. II. GOD'S PLEA IN VINDICATION OF HIS SPARING MERCY. There is something wonderful in this condescension on God's part to argue with the prophet and to justify Himself. He shows him the folly and the wrongness of his displeasure. But He has to prepare Jonah's mind first of all. 1. He begins by taking away Jonah's displeasure. An angry man cannot look all round a question; he takes a one-sided view, and keeps to that. And Jonah, before he can see the full meaning of God's mercy, must become calm, and rid himself of all his vexation. This God did when He prepared the "gourd," and caused it to overshadow the prophet. This plant is of exceedingly quick growth. It is chiefly remarkable for its leaves. Only one leaf grows on a branch, but, being large, sometimes measuring more than a foot, and spread out in the shape of an open hand, their collective shade would afford excellent shelter from the heat of the sun. There was nothing miraculous in the fact of this plant springing up beside Jonah's resting-place, but if the words be taken literally, the development of the plant so quickly is certainly miraculous. The Ruler of nature is here working, not contrary to, but in harmony with, and yet above, natural law. Under the shelter of this plant Jonah's spirits revive, displeasure vanishes, and he who yesterday was exceedingly displeased is now found "exceeding glad." Jonah is now in a better state of mind to listen to God. 2. But God has something more to do before He speaks to Jonah. Comfort is to be followed again by discomfort. The gourd withers, and a "vehement east wind" arises. This was not as our east winds. It was the sultry and oppressive wind which blows in the summer months across the vast Arabian desert, and produces universal languor and relaxation. Thus exposed, the prophet sinks down into weariness and languor. Sorrow comes over him, and he longs to die. Now the voice of God comes to him. "Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Let us have a clear idea of the point on which God's argument turns. It is neither the gourd nor the worm that God lays hold of in His plea, but Jonah's sorrow for the gourd. The gourd was a loss to the man, for which he grieved. But it was more and better than a selfish regret. Man has a sympathy with all life, not only in the animal, but also in the vegetable world. Jonah pitied the gourd, with its short life. Then came further sublime Divine pleadings. In the light of heaven Jonah now sees his unreasonableness. All his fault lay in not allowing God to have the same sympathies as he had himself. What was a gourd compared with the great city of Nineveh? Yet Jonah pitied the one, and was angry because God had pity upon the other; Jonah was all wrong, and he sees it now and is silent. Silently and in shame he rises and goes home to his country and to his people, to tell them how wrong he was, that they might know how right God was. (*James Menzies.*)

Ver. 6. *And the Lord God prepared a gourd.*—*The Eastern gourd.*—Is there any gourd in Palestine of growth so rapid as to lay a foundation for the statement that Jonah's grew up in a night? Certainly not. Without any of that anxiety about the *how* and the *possible* in miracles, we may remark that there is an economical propriety in selecting this vine rather than any other, and for several reasons. It is very commonly used for trailing over temporary arbours. It grows with extraordinary rapidity. In a few days after it has fairly

begun to run the whole arbour is covered. It forms a shade absolutely impenetrable to the sun's rays, even at noonday. It flourishes best in the very hottest part of summer; and, lastly, when injured or cut, it withers away with equal rapidity. In selecting the gourd, therefore, there is not only an adherence to verisimilitude, which is always becoming, but there is also an economy, if we may so speak, in the expenditure of miraculous agency. The question is not about power at all. The same God who caused the gourd to grow in a night could make a cedar do so likewise; but this would be a wide departure from the general method of miraculous interposition, which is to employ it no further than is necessary to secure the result required. Is there any reason to suppose that, after all, it was not a gourd, but some other plant—that of the castor-bean, for example, as many learned critics have concluded? Orientals never dream of training a castor-oil plant over a booth, or planting it for a shade, and they would have but small respect for any one who did. It is in no way adapted for that purpose, while thousands of arbours are covered with various creepers of the general gourd family. As to ancient translations, the Septuagint gives *colocynth*, a general name for gourd; and the Vulgate, *castor-bean*. (*Thomson's "Lard and Book."*) *Jonah and his gourd*.—Learn—1. That all our comforts, small and great, come from God. 2. As our comforts, so also do our trials, come from God. 3. Every gourd of earth, every enjoyment here, has a worm at its root. 4. There is a plant, better than any gourd of earth, under the shadow of which we may live in peace and die in hope. That plant is Christ. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *Jonah's gourd*.—Here the Lord doth first give Jonah matter of delight in a plant miraculously raised up to cover his booth, and keep him from the heat which increased his grief. Then again, his passion is stirred up by occasion of the Lord's sudden removal of the gourd, and raising such a wind as might effectually make the sunbeams beat upon him. By all which the Lord lays a ground of more sensible reproving of him for his former bitterness. Doctrine—1. A spirit once broken and embittered with troubles is easily grieved and stirred up. 2. The Lord, in healing the infirmities of His people, uses first to lance their sores, and discover more of their putrefaction, before He apply any healing plasters; therefore is Jonah's passion more kindled ere the former distemper be healed. 3. God in His holy providence may ensnare men who are wilfully given to passions, with more occasions to vent more of their corruptions. 4. From this sending of the gourd and the worm, and the effects of it in Jonah, we may see—(1) The vanity of all earthly delights, in that they all carry a worm of instability in their root, which in short time will turn upside down all the expectations which men have from them. (2) Much delight in earthly contentments is ordinarily a fore-runner of much sorrow in their removal. (3) Passion given way unto will soon turn men furious and absurd. So little are men themselves in their passions. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Jonah's gourd; or the vanity of all earthly enjoyments*.—There is that in the conduct of Jonah which claims our pity and provokes our resentment; especially when we see him have more regard for his own honour than for the lives of so many thousands that know not their right hand from their left. Perhaps, in passing our censure upon him, we shall condemn ourselves. Is it an uncommon thing to find Christians in the same spirit? The history records an instance of God's pity in the provision of the gourd. But the swiftly growing plant more swiftly faded. This reminds us of the vanity of all earthly enjoyments. What are they, even the best of them, but as the gourd that grew up in a night and perished in a night? We refer to those pleasures which have their root in corruption and luxury. But it is also true of those enjoyments which are consistent with virtue and piety. Which of them can afford us more than a momentary delight? Mutability is the characteristic of all things under the sun. The scene is ever shifting, and like the vagaries of a dream, which only appear to amuse for a moment, and then are gone. Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. He set great store by it, more than by the lives of all the inhabitants of Nineveh. And how apt are we, like him, to overrate our comforts! We forget that our happiness has its root in the earth. There lurks a worm at the root of every gourd. Sin has marred our happiness and given the death-sting to all our comforts. Sometimes our enjoyments are our punishments. Where is the heart that does not ache at the loss of some earthly good? The same God who prepared the gourd prepared the worm. The hand of God is to be acknowledged in all our pleasures, and in all our so-called calamities. He does not measure His kindness by our merit. Blessings that come in the ordinary

way deserve our sincere acknowledgments; much more should we be thankful for undeserved favours. But we often complain of the evils we suffer that God sends to us. We look to second causes, and fret as though there were no God to rule in the earth. There cannot be good or evil without the Divine permission. The gourd grew up in a night; might not this circumstance have taught Jonah to expect it as suddenly to decay? Pleasures that are quick in their growth seldom last long. The vanity and uncertainty of all our earthly enjoyments show us that error lies somewhere, and where should we look for it but in the nature of man? Whence is man's misery but from his inordinate attachment to the creature? God Himself is our only end. Let our trials remind us of our sins, and we shall see in the end that God has been correcting us for our profit, that compassion has guided the rod to recall us to our proper resting-place. Here we learn the importance of religious principle. Without it, what can we do in a changing world where all perishes in the using, and is sometimes blasted by the touch? Religion will produce a satisfaction in the mind which no evil can disturb; let the worm destroy, let the gourd wither, let all natural things take their course, or perish by violence, yet the well-principled man shall be happy without them all, for none of these things are essential to his bliss; having God for his portion and choice, he is blessed. (*Owen Morris.*) *Earthly comforts*:—From the history of the prophet thus brought to a close we learn—I. NOT TO PRIZE EARTHLY COMFORTS TOO HIGHLY. Jonah finds comfort in life only from the gourd which God had suffered to grow up. Improve this. 1. Let us remember that all our comforts spring but from the earth. 2. Earthly comforts are only gourds; they rise up suddenly, and as suddenly decay. 3. Earthly comforts have a worm at their root. They carry in themselves the seeds of their own dissolution. The very means by which we are supported in life have in them the seeds of disease, decay, and death. 4. Earthly comforts are short in their duration. As they rose like the gourd, so, like that, they may wither in a night. II. NOT TO BE GRIEVED OVERMUCH AT THE REMOVAL OF EARTHLY BLESSINGS. 1. Consider their real character. 2. We should believe that there is much wisdom and mercy in their removal. 3. Remember that God can either restore these things to us, or give us better in their stead. 4. We should look forward to a better and more enduring substance. III. LEARN FROM OUR OWN TROUBLES TO FEEL FOR OTHERS. 1. Learn to pity those who have not such comforts as we have. 2. To mourn on account of those who are losing their souls. Let the people of God seek resignation to His will. (*W. Cooper.*) *Emblems of man's earthly good, and God's disciplinary procedure*. I. EMBLEM OF MAN'S EARTHLY GOOD. The gourd represents this. It was like it in its development, its decay, and its destruction. It came out of the earth. It came out by Divine agency. The decaying agent was man. The decay was prompt. The work was done in secret. II. EMBLEM OF GOD'S DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE. 1. God disciplines man by facts. 2. These facts are varied in their character. 3. These facts are adapted to their end. Learn—(1) Not to trust in earthly good. (2) Improve under the disciplinary influences of heaven. (*Preacher's Finger-post.*) *The history of Jonah's gourd*:—I. THE SPRINGING UP OF THIS GOURD. This took place under very remarkable and truly affecting circumstances. 1. Learn that a gracious God sometimes visits us with mercies when we have reason to expect judgments. Rage drives Jonah out of Nineveh into the scorching heat of an eastern sun, and there, while he is quarrelling with God and asking for death, springs up suddenly a wide-spreading plant to shelter and comfort him. In seasons like these faith is weak, and a compassionate God stoops to its weakness. He gives the soul sensible indications of His love, recalls it to its duty and happiness, by mercies which it can feel and understand. 2. There is no want of His servants too small for God to notice, and no suffering too light for Him to relieve. Jonah's worthless head is as much an object of His concern as Jonah's guilty soul. In no point do we mistake more than in this. "This matter," we say, "is too contemptible to be taken to God." We limit, we dishonour God when we say, "This is too small for Him." The care He invites us to roll on Him is, *all* our care. 3. The Lord often reveals His greatness by the mode in which He imparts comfort and manifests compassion. Refer to those dispensations of Providence, those unexpected deliverances, and blessings and comforts which every servant of God occasionally experiences: things occurring so that he must be blind who does not see in them the Divine hand. We have not to run after goodness and mercy. II. THE EFFECT PRODUCED ON THE PROPHET'S MIND BY THIS INTER-

POSITION OF GOD ON HIS BEHALF. Jonah rejoiced in the gourd with great joy. I. Well may we wonder at the folly of that heart which could take so much pleasure in so mean a thing; but there is still greater reason to wonder at its amazing selfishness. This history is like a libel on human nature. 2. The ingratitude of the human heart. We too have often forgotten God in the comforts He has given us. Those very comforts have been the causes of our forgetting Him. They have separated between Christ and our soul. III. THE WITHERING OF THIS OVERVALUED GOURD. 1. All earthly comforts are short-lived; they are frail and perishing. They often die while we are rejoicing in them. 2. The comfort that most delights us is generally the first to perish. The mercies we lose the soonest are those we love the best. This is the testimony of fact. 3. Our comforts are often taken from us when they appear to be the most needed. Our prop gives way when we are the weakest. The gourd withers in the morning, just when the sun is beginning to scorch. 4. Our comforts often perish from unforeseen and very inconsiderable causes. A trifle—a worm—destroys them. Such is the history of this miraculous plant—it sprang up, it gave delight, it brought into sight the baseness of the human heart, and then it withered. Is not this the history of every comfort the earth yields? It speaks to us all. It bids us care less about a passing world. It calls us to seek after that refuge and comfort of which no creature, either small or great, can rob us. Is there such a refuge? Yes. It is in Christ Jesus, in a manifested, incarnate God; in His cross and righteousness and spirit, in union and intercourse with Him. And it is nowhere else. A crucified Jesus is the one only remedy for all human ills, the one only source of all solid happiness. (*C. Bradley.*) *The preparations of God.*—Let the subject be—The precise personal action of God in the discipline, or teaching troubles, of His people. The Lord's teaching by grouping and combination. One teaching suggested to us by these combinations of God is the need of profound humility in judging any of His dealings while they are going on; and of unlimited faith in Him as the preparer and arranger of everything. In no case do we know the whole of a matter. We see but one part, and do not understand the relation of that part to the whole. Jonah did not know what real relationship that gourd had to him. We are taught that we must not quarrel with any one dealing of God. We must not think there is failure because one part of a dealing is, to all appearance, not doing its work. Though one mean and another has apparently come short in your hand, view God in combination, and do not despair. God taught Jonah by a combination of facts, by personal experiences, personal suffering. The incidents of our lives are instinct with educational power. Only, we must see God in them. Alas! that life's facts are so barren of teaching to many. Men fail to read their own lives. By this education of facts God's teaching is very penetrating. Observe also the grouping together of opposites—of pleasure and pain; God reproduces in daily life—the gourd, the worm, the wind. Often we see light and darkness; or conversely, darkness and light mingled in our homes, our business, our relationships, and our only way of being at peace, and being helped heavenward by all that comes, is by seeing in them the preparations of the Lord. The same thoughtfulness by which God arranged the prophet's teaching arranges ours, if only we will learn. The same sovereignty which has the gourd, the worm, and the wind at command has things great and small, all ready to do us good. The same patience in waiting while His combination of circumstances were doing their work is waiting on us now. (*P. H. Power, M.A.*) So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.—*Gladness is not gratitude.*—The sequel shows clearly that the prophet had not one spark of gratitude to God for His merciful interposition in his extremity. He was “glad of the gourd,” which, springing up in a night, sheltered him from the burning rays of a fierce sun, but not *thankful* to God whose goodness had provided it; the feeling was purely selfish and sensual, destitute utterly of piety. Glad of the gift, but not a thought of the Giver; for as soon as the gourd “withered away” he was “angry,” and “wished for death,” and bitterly complained to God, and justified his folly and petulance. In all this, Jonah is a type of multitudes of nominal Christians—“glad” because of God's great mercies, but never grateful; the temporal gift, but not the Divine Giver, is thought of. (*Homiletic Monthly.*)

Ver. 7. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day.—*The prepared worm.*—Just when Jonah had felt the delight of the shadowing

foliage, and had begun to promise himself a most comfortable retreat against an Assyrian sun, the broad-leaved gourd withered. What caused this calamity? A worm. No, that is not all. God prepared the worm. But He also prepared the gourd. Does He, then, build up in order to destroy? Does He give comfort to His creatures in order to torment them by its removal? I. GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF AFFLICTION. God asserts in His Word, that all the losses in the world are sent by Him. By evil is often meant calamity, not wickedness. God is the Author equally of prosperity and adversity to His creatures. He uses agents, but we must not forget that He is behind them. He is the Author of affliction, whatever may be the agencies He uses in the course of His providence. II. HE USES THE NATURAL LAWS OF THE WORLD AS HIS AGENTS IN AFFLICTING. The worm merely followed the impulses of its nature. That is all science can say. But God has made all things, however great, however small, for Himself. The things which we call laws are only the methods of His activity. Nature is a forlorn object to study unless we find it a mirror to reflect God. IV. GOD IS JUST IN AFFLICTING US. Simply as the Maker and Owner of His creatures, God has a right to afflict. But He has entered into a covenant with us. He has said, "Do ye according to My commandments, and ye shall live." What is the record of our race since? Have we obeyed, or have we disobeyed? Surely we have come into the need of affliction. If God would be just in casting us down to hell for our disobedience, surely He is just in laying upon us disciplinary afflictions. IV. GOD AFFLICTS US IN HIS LOVE. With all Jonah's sins against God, it was not to punish him that God prepared a worm. God's aim in affliction is our restoration, our improvement. There are uses of adversity. However harsh the voice of God may seem to us, it is yet a Father's voice, with a Father's heart behind it. Inferences—1. If God afflicts, how foolish it is to go to the world for relief. 2. God's worms for us prove an interesting study. 3. When our gourds wither it is proof that God is near. (*Howard Crosby, D.D.*) *A worm-smitten gourd* :—I. GOD HAS A RIGHT TO RECALL HIS GIFTS. II. GOD MAY RECALL AT ANY TIME. He has placed Himself under no obligation. III. GOD MAY RECALL THE GIFT WHEN IT IS APPARENTLY MOST NEEDED. "When the morning rose" the gourd was smitten. IV. GOD MAY RECALL THE GIFT WHEN WE ARE BEGINNING TO APPRECIATE IT MOST. When "Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd," it withered. V. GOD MAY RECALL THE GIFT BY ANY INSTRUMENTALITY HE MAY CHOOSE. "A worm" smote the gourd. Some apparently insignificant thing may be God's agent for our deprivation. VI. GOD, AFTER RECALLING THE GIFT, CAN COMFORT THE SORROWING, AND CAN COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The lesson of the gourd* :—Jonah's gourd teaches us that the Lord mercifully cares for the comfort of His creatures, and that He is kind even to the unthankful and to the evil. Perhaps Jonah was a little too glad of the temporal refreshment of the gourd. This is the mistake we are all tempted to commit with regard to our temporal comforts and conveniences. We are so glad of them that we pillow our hearts upon them. But are our earthly comforts incorruptible and undecaying? There is a worm at the root of all our earthly comforts. The fashion of this world passeth away. But let a man, through grace, enjoy his comforts soberly, habitually regarding them as transient things; let him look up through the gift unto the Giver, and then, when his gourd is withered, he will still bless and magnify the Hand that withered it. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Creature comforts withered* :—A very awful proof of human depravity, in God's own people, is recorded in the case of Jonah. If Jonah's corruption is very conspicuous, the mercy of God is yet more so, both as it respects Jonah and the Ninevites. See what absolute obedience God requires of all His prophets and people in general. This prophecy teaches us that God's dispensations may vary, and be different from His threatening, without any change taking place in His nature or purpose. God so wisely governs His kingdom that even in His very punishment of the rebellions of His people He investeth them with honour, so little is His goodness dependent on human worthiness. Here we find Jonah exceedingly displeased, very angry indeed, at God's merciful conduct towards Nineveh. He reasons with God against His merciful conduct towards that great city. In the heat of his angry impatience he wants to die. God rebukes Jonah's impatience in gentle terms, and the prophet seems to have conceived some hope that God for his sake might yet destroy the city; therefore he fled from it and waited the issue in painful suspense. He made a booth, and rested under its shade, and to make it more comfortable God covered it with

a gourd. But as Jonah's grief had been carnal and rebellious, so now his joy was merely sensual, the excess of which it behoved the Almighty to curb. Therefore God suddenly destroyed the gourd. Doctrine—That as mankind in general are apt, like Jonah, to delight to sit under the shadow of a gourd, God hath very wisely, and in great love, ordained a worm at the root of every gourd of creature delight and comfort; by which means He drives His people to a more excellent dwelling-place, and more certain dependence. 1. Point out some things in which people are apt to promise themselves great pleasure and satisfaction, but which in the event evidently appear to be no better than Jonah's withered gourd. Such as riches, self-indulgence in food, children, human esteem, connections in social life. Trust in mere outward ordinances. Too high expectations even from relation to a gospel church. 2. At the root of every gourd there is a canker worm, whose envenomed bite smiteth it that it withereth. Apply to the above-mentioned human pleasures. God will by no means have creatures dignified with any dignity besides that with which He Himself is pleased to invest them. Now point out a certain antidote against the poison of this canker-worm which is the thing to be attended to. (1) The vanity, emptiness, and uncertainty of worldly riches. (2) All temporal honours vanish in the grave, where distinctions are no longer known. (3) Children are certain cares, but very uncertain comforts. Cease, then, O believer, cease from temporary gourds. Call back thy wandering affections from transitory objects, and sit down under the "shadow of thy only Lord and Saviour." (*John Macgowan.*) *The God of the worm:*—This writer does not, as many foolishly do, banish God from His universe to watch in idle unconcern its workings from afar. This book says, God answered, God commanded, God saved, God bethought, God excited the wind, God made the great fish, God caused a gourd to grow, God made a worm, God repented and God spared. It is God, God, God. He is the explanation of all things, and His existence gives purpose and meaning to all things. Or think again of the character of God as it is here explicitly set forth in words. He is "the gracious God and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in kindness, and repentant of the evil." This is one of the most evangelical writings in the Old Testament. What an expression it gives of the Divine love to all mankind, and how it foreshadows like the first gleam of the dawn that universal brotherhood of men so bound up with the Fatherhood of God as it is proclaimed by Christ. How nobly, too, the doctrine of repentance and its value are stated. Assuredly this is a great book with a great message and high teaching on the nature, character, and purpose of God. And now, keeping all that in view, and distinctly remembering that the God of this book is the merciful and is a God of purpose, let us think of the statement of the text, "And the Lord prepared a worm." That is a truth before which many people stagger. There are people, some who may be said never to have thought at all, and some who have thought much but mistakenly, who cannot understand the character of a holy God who in any way sends pain, suffering, loss, who, in short, prepares a worm. They can understand the God of the gourd, who provides protection and safety, but they cannot understand a God of discipline and rebuke and chastisement. At such a thought they rebel and stagger, or sulk in unbelief. They are prepared readily and gladly to believe in the God of the gourd, but not in the God of the worm; in the God of the rose, but not in the God of the thorn. Happiness, gifts, and love, these are all marked by His hand, but loss and suffering and sorrow, too, may be His instruments of good. Through the chastisement of His love men may find the best He has to give. And yet we must be careful here to differentiate. Is it not true that a great deal of the sorrow and evil that are in the world are wrongly blamed on God? There is nothing plainer than that a large proportion of the evil that afflicts man and burdens life is a direct outcome of the breach of God's laws of truth and justice and love. They are clearly the fruit of sin, and sin is in man's will. But sin is against God's purpose, and He is ever seeking to destroy it. Ah! "It's man's inhumanity to man that makes countless thousands mourn"; it is the selfishness and the pitilessness, the unscrupulousness and injustice of the human heart, the ignorance and superstition of the human mind that have caused the very creation to groan and travail in pain; it is no will or act of God's. To-day, as then, there is the tendency for people, by ignorance and injustice and moral laziness, to bring upon themselves and their neighbours the ravages of disease, the miseries of unholy social relationships, the shame that crushes the heart with unhealable sorrow, and to blame God for it all, and to preach resignation in the

midst of it, when it is our plain duty to rise up and to deal with the causes of such things—to slay the evil, to tear up its roots, to fight “against the wrong that needs resistance and for the cause that needs assistance,” and to bring in the Kingdom of God, which is life and health and peace. But after all that has been said, there still remain suffering and evil in the world, and we can do nothing to explain it, and still less to remove it. It is oftentimes a great mystery, and it burdens many hearts with heavy perplexity. The only explanation that can be given of it is that God permits it; yea, that He sends it, and that He has got a great purpose in it. “Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but he was born blind in order that he might manifest the works of God.” The man suffered not only for himself but for others; yea, in his suffering there was a Divine purpose. He illustrated that great principle everywhere present in nature and in life, and which found its sublimest expression in the Cross itself, the deep and precious truth that much suffering is vicarious. Now towards such pain, suffering, sorrow—and which cannot be removed and but little explained—two attitudes may be assumed. In the midst of it men may forget God, or ignore Him altogether, or rebel against Him. There are many people who are not able to see God for their trouble; they are afflicted with the rebellious heart. All this, of course, in no way mitigates the evil or helps them in the day of their suffering; it only twists their nature and warps and stunts their inner life. It is evil added to evil, and no gain anywhere, for the trouble still remains. Rebellion only aggravates the trouble. To have done with God and religion makes matters worse instead of better. The other attitude is that of humble submission and recognition of the truth that God has prepared a worm, and that He, the merciful and the holy, has a purpose in it. Before anyone can have any light on the great mysteries of suffering and sorrow he must first learn and distinctly recognise that the end of life is not happiness, but character; that discipline is necessary to character, that submission and a spirit of devout resignation are the only way to get good by seeking even through pain and suffering—character, holiness, Christ-likeness. It is a truth which all the great teachers of the world have declared. It was taught by Buddhist as it was by the Greek dramatist, by the Stoic as it is by the Christian; but the Christian looks at it from a loftier height than any other, and recognises in it the fatherly purpose of the Eternal God, “who maketh all things work together for good to them that love Him,” and causeth “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Resignation is the attitude of the wise. The distinct recognition of the fact that God made the worm is the wisdom of the holy. But how many mistake what is meant by resignation! Mr. Gladstone, whom Lord Salisbury described as a “great Christian,” in writing to his wife, said that “resignation is too often conceived to be merely a submission, not unattended by complaint, to what we have no power to avoid. But that is less than the whole work of a Christian. Our full triumph will be found when we not merely repress inward tendencies to murmur, but when we would not even, though we could, alter what in any matter God has willed.” Here is the great work of religion, here is the test from which sanctity is attained. And surely sanctity is God’s greatest gift to men. How many of the saintliest characters that the world has known have been those who have learned this great lesson in the school of God, when they met pain without murmuring, and sorrow with resignation; when through loss they found gain, and so treasured up in themselves that enduring wealth. The greatest instrument that the world has ever known for the shaping of human character is the will of God, and the glad acceptance of it as wisdom and love and life. I read somewhere not long ago an illustration that may help us to understand this truth and seal it on our hearts. The end is not clear, not yet; some day it will become plain, when the tuning is over and the discipline is done. Meanwhile we can trust Him who is the God of the worm as He is of the gourd, the God at once of the rose and thorn. (*D. L. Ritchie.*)

Vers. 8-11. **He fainted and wished in himself to die.**—*Jonah’s woe.*—It would be difficult to say whether the tokens of God’s holy justice, or of His abounding mercy, be the more numerous in the Scriptures. But all doubt is dispelled the moment that we understand the Gospel of our salvation. We can no longer question the loving-kindness of the Lord, when we see what has been done that sinners might have hope. But God’s mercy had strangely distempered the mind of the prophet. He complained like one defrauded of his due. And

that complaint led only to misery. What made others happy only fomented Jonah's grief. Sunrise brought no joy to him; the wind parched him, and withered the gourd; he was smitten with faintness by the eastern sun; he became weary of existence; he prayed that he might die. 1. The longer a sinner continues in his sin, the more wretched does he become. Jonah was obviously sinking deeper from hour to hour. 2. Suffering and sin are inseparably linked by the appointment of the holy God. It is the sinner himself who brings sorrow on the sinner. 3. God in holy sovereignty may punish sin by sin. When His creatures go astray His restraining grace is sometimes withheld, and then sin follows sin in rapid succession, until the wanderer at last perhaps stands appalled at his own iniquity, or else is proved to be hopelessly degenerate. See in Jonah's case how transgression followed transgression. He is offended at the mercy of God to Nineveh. He refuses to acknowledge his waywardness,—he would rather die. Then he withdraws from all intercourse with those whom God had in mercy spared; their proximity was a source of pain to Jonah. Then he pines for death; then he tries to justify his waywardness, and comes at last to declare that he did right in sinning. It is thus that sin deludes the very conscience, darkens the understanding, and enslaves the will. Blinded by passion, resolute in self-defence, determined to acknowledge no fault, but to vindicate all that he had done, Jonah makes a confession which justifies the ways of God with Nineveh. If the prophet lamented the loss of the gourd, and pitied it when it perished, surely much more might the compassionate One pity the city which had repented. (*W. K. Tweedie.*) *Impatience under trials*:—Afflictions produce a twofold effect: either making us more submissive to God, or rendering us impatient, irritable, and rebellious. They had the latter effect on Jonah. 1. His impatient grief was inconsiderate. It was passion, not reason, which dictated the prayer that he might die. No sooner were his wishes crossed than he broke out into discontented complainings. In our own case, reflection would silence many of our complaints. We should especially beware of expressing weariness of life in such cases. 2. His impatient grief was rebellious. He was not willing to have his Maker's will done. 3. It was extremely selfish. The saving of so many thousands gave him no pleasure unless his word was honoured. 4. It was unbelieving. Could he not trust God to take care of his reputation? And which of us can say that he is not often impatient and repining? The habit of recognising the hand of God in little things that try our temper would repress many a peevish exclamation. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *Jonah's passion, and God's forbearance*:—1. The first element in Jonah's character was moral cowardice. In what lay his sin? Simply in his unwillingness to discharge a plain positive duty. Learn—(1) When you are called to discharge a painful duty, the quicker you set about it the better. (2) The discharge of duty is always less difficult than we anticipate. (3) Neglected duty, if you are a Christian, will always follow you till it is performed. 2. The next element was, imperfect views of the Divine character and government. (1) Jonah had discharged his duty in proclaiming the burden of the Lord concerning Nineveh. (2) Jonah, having discharged his duty, thought that God ought to take the same view of things as he did. (3) Notice the practical but gracious manner which God took to reveal His mind to Jonah. (4) Observe the ominous silence of the sacred Scriptures concerning the end of Jonah. God will justify His own mercy and love. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The weariness of life*:—This was the desire of Jonah when the Lord smote the gourd so that it died. In the disappointment of his soul he wept over it, and in the trouble of his spirit his prayer was for death. It is so with not a few selfish people. When sorrow touches anything that is theirs they are overwhelmed. They seem to feel, think, and act as if all the agencies of life and providence were in motion but for them, and as if all were out of order when they suffer inconvenience, and all rightly going when they are in comfort. This estimate of ill-being or well-being, in its relation to self, is extremely low; and yet it often takes a religious form of expression. Why should we regard calamities as in any way peculiar or severe because they come near to us? This distinction you will ever observe through life—the selfish make little of the sufferings which their neighbours have to bear, however great, while they are loud about their own, however small. The sufferings of the selfish render them more selfish, the sufferings of the generous make them more generous. There are, however, many instances in which the weariness of Jonah may fall upon the spirit without his bitterness, and without his misanthropy. Many a one, with a sincerer despond-

ency, is ready to exclaim with him, "It is better for me to die than to live." How often is this the sentiment under severe physical pain, whether it is uttered or concealed. How natural, in the tossings of convulsive irritation, to fix the mind upon the quiet grave! If the love of life is stronger in age, the consciousness of life is stronger in youth. This very strength of consciousness may, and sometimes does, turn into a disgust of life. Having not deeply entered into the moral purposes of life, anything which cuts off the young from its sparkling felicities cleaves them almost to despair. The loss of this world's goods may fall heavy on the spirit, but the wound, though deep, is seldom incurable,—there is a wound more destructive than that which consumes our health and property. It is the worm of insatiable passion. This turns life into an irritable, discontented dream, with waking starts of more than ordinary loathing, in which the desire often obtrudes on the sickened mind, to be well rid of such an existence. Desire that once passes the moderation of nature is disease; it is worse than any ordinary illness, because it is in the mind. It becomes an inward and rooted malady. A man is thus a victim to his own best advantages. Many, whose circumstances and constitution place them much nearer to nature, are not always wholly saved from this temper. With all that is substantially needful for a good and enjoyable life, they become weary and sullen, and fret, and make others and themselves most unhappy; they are not content, because their wishes are not sound. I can conceive of one to whom life is worn out, and whose wish to leave it we can scarcely censure. It is one who has survived his kindred and his companions, and remains alone in the desert of adversity and the world. Many that are scorned elsewhere have an asylum from contempt among their kindred. They are nothing, or worse than nothing, to those who have only remotely seen them, and yet everything to those who have lived near them and with them. Much of dissatisfaction with life arises from a doubly false estimate of life. We underrate our own position in it; we overrate the positions of others. Out of this doubly false estimate spring correspondent false contrasts and desires. Take a certain level of comfortable existence to begin with, and life from that is equal in all essentials. All poetry, song, drama, fiction, and religion imply this. The passions are the same; the same in their experience, the same in their results. All that makes the essence of life is equal; and the proof may be put into one short sentence:—the grief or the enjoyment that reaches life makes nothing of station. But if it were not even so, yet complaint against life would be against wisdom, virtue, and religion. Where is the wisdom of that man who murmurs at that which he could not avoid, or could not have changed? There are those who say that they have lost all interest in life. It is to them and not to life that poverty comes; for life is ever rich in interest. Life is rich for the senses; for the affections; for the moral sentiments; for sympathy. If a man has clear views of God and of His providence, if he has a trustful and patient spirit, he will be grateful for his enjoyments, and he will meekly bear his griefs. He will try to extract from his circumstances all the good which they yield him, and he will not darken his position with imaginary calamities. Experience will convince him that he might be more unhappy, and humility will suggest that he has, on the whole, more pleasure than he merits. In the worst trials faith will teach him that earth is not his rest, that his afflictions here, light and enduring but for a moment, working for him an eternal weight of glory, are but as hasty April showers that usher in an everlasting summer. The day of life spent in honest and benevolent labour comes in hope to an evening calm and lovely. Earth, to each of us, is but as the gourd of Jonah. Happy for each if at the close of it he can say, not in a querulous discontent, but in believing trust, "It is better for me to die than to live"; or rather, if he can say with the tranquil joyfulness of old Simeon, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." (*Henry Giles.*)

Ver. 9. *Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?*—*Jehovah's appeal to Jonah.*—I. JONAH'S THEN MOOD. "God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry?" 1. Observe the point of this appeal. To be grieved for the gourd was to be grieved for himself. 2. The compliment involved in this Divine appeal. God made Jonah judge in his own case. 3. Note the response of the prophet to this appeal. "I do well to be grieved, even unto death." Candid, if somewhat passionate. II. THE PROPRIETY OF THE DIVINE PROCEDURE. Note the correspondence between the words "pity" and "spare." God did

not contradict the prophet. There is a double contrast presented in this branch of the appeal. The contrast between Jonah and Jehovah; and between the gourd and the city. 1. The labour expended on the city was one reason why God should spare it. 2. The growth of Nineveh was another reason. 3. The antiquity of Nineveh was another. 4. The commodiousness and magnitude of Nineveh was another. 5. The presence of the children and cattle was another. (*Samuel Clift Burn.*) *God reasoning with man* :—The amazing interest God takes in mankind is shown—I. IN HIS REASONING WITH A MAN WHO IS IN A BAD TEMPER. Jonah was angry, and the intensity of his anger became so intolerable that he wished to die. Why was he angry? 1. Because of the Divine compassion shown to the Ninevites. 2. Because of the loss of a temporal blessing. II. IN HIS REASONING IN ORDER TO IMPRESS THIS MAN WITH THE REALITY OF HIS COMPASSION. The comparison between the plant and Nineveh may be expressed in three questions. 1. What is this plant to the men that inhabit Nineveh? 2. What is this one plant even to the unconscious infants at Nineveh? 3. What is one plant to even the irrational creatures in Nineveh? (*Homilist.*) *The sinfulness and cure of absorbing passion* :—The Book of Jonah is a standing rebuke of intolerance among the sacred writings of a most intolerant people. It is because it exposes and rebukes the sin of intolerance that this book has been preserved. The reason of Jonah's disobedience to the heavenly voice is boldly and frankly told in the history. No tenderness for the prophet's reputation is allowed to veil his sin; exclusiveness is laid bare in all its baseness and malignity. There is no need for us to offer other explanations of the prophet's conduct. National antipathy and religious exclusiveness will account for it all. Equally marked in this history is God's determination to expose the workings and rebuke the sin of exclusiveness. Why was the hard and obstinate Jonah called and forced to a work that was so uncongenial to him, a work that goaded him to wildest turbulence, and called out his bitterest passion? It was for Jonah's sake, that his bad heart might be searched and corrected. We have here God's solemn rebuke of a common sin, and many a man may find here searching and humbling lessons. Jonah rebelled against the mission appointed him, but he had to fulfil it. To do God's work is our sole discharge. It is only by obeying God's bidding that we can be purged from the sinfulness that makes obedience unwelcome. God's chosen servants have to yield to Him, though often in the yielding they are searched and convicted of startling wickedness. In the working of Jonah's anger we see the characteristics of all absorbing passion; and God's mode of curing him is an example of the myriad influences by which He restores the self-absorbed to true and healthy life.

I. THE SINFULNESS OF ABSORBING PASSION. 1. The sinfulness is seen in Jonah's contempt of life. A man's worth may be measured by the reverence he has for his life. The Gospel, which delivers us from a coward fear of dying, was never intended to foster an equally coward fear of living. 2. The sinfulness is seen in that it works insincerity. Even after Jonah has recognised that God is sparing the city, he still affects to believe that it will be overthrown. He hastens out of it lest he should be partaker of its plagues. Under his booth he pretends that he is awaiting its destruction. What hateful affectation and insincerity! But is it very uncommon? How much of life is wasted because of our refusal to acknowledge that we have outgrown the expectations of the past, or that time and change have swept us far beyond them! 3. The selfishness of an absorbing passion is illustrated in Jonah's contempt for the men of Nineveh. He will not share in their repentance, nor encourage them to hope in God's mercy; he shuts himself up alone to brood over his anger. All passion tends to arrogance. Self-absorption means scorn of our fellows. A single passion may arrogate to itself the whole sphere of life, and constitute itself the be-all and end-all of existence. It is well for us to be aware of this. Our holiest emotions may become overweening.

II. GOD'S OURE FOR ABSORBING PASSION. Notice the exceeding gentleness with which God reproves and seeks to restore the angry prophet. The disobedient are constrained by a force too strong for them; but even the ungracious doing of duty brings the spirit into fitness for gentler discipline. The Lord cares for Jonah in his self-will. When God smites the gourd, and sends the vehement east wind and burning sun to beat on Jonah's head, it is that He may speak in words gentler than the gourd-shade, and reveal Himself to the stricken spirit as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." How different is this from man! We should have been glad that the self-absorbed man should be his own tormentor. God seeks to restore the prophet by awakening love in his heart: awakening his interest,

and making him tender over the gourd. Over the wretched, gloomy Jonah, sprung up the wondrous plant, and its leaves and tendrils drew off his thoughts from himself, and as he watched it grow, a new interest was awakened in him. His heart softened to the plant, and he becomes strangely tender and reverential over a gourd. There is something wonderful in life, even though it be the life of a common weed. Jonah loves his gourd, and "has pity" on it when it is smitten. The first result of Jonah's tenderness would seem to be a deeper gloom. Another wrong is added to his suffering; and again he cries for death. But it has not all been in vain; for he is prepared to listen to the voice that once more sounds in his ears. His reply, "I do well to be angry," was bad and bitter; but perverse and sullen silence before God is far worse than perverse and sullen speech. How wonderful is God's answer. The tenderness that was in Jonah, poor as it was, mingled with selfishness as it was, was yet, in its dim and partial way, an emblem of the tenderness of God for every creature He has made. "Thou canst not bear that what has lived, and lived for thee, should die. And shall I be careless of the great city?" There is this sacred energy in love, however poor it may be, however mixed with selfishness, that it admits us into the secret of God's counsel, helps us to bear Divine mysteries, and understand God's ways. Since on every hand God has put the tokens and witnesses of His Divine care and tenderness, do we not hear on every hand the voice that calls us from our absorbing passions, from our griefs, our angers, and our woes? Life is worth living when every human creature is felt worthy of our love: the voice of duty will sweetly beckon us to human sympathy and human helpfulness. And so the dark mystery of your life will be read. In God's care for all men you will find yourself surrounded by God's care for you. The wise and blessed purpose of the individual destiny is seen in the one eternal purpose of love to men. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The character of Jonah*.—The immediate occasion of Jonah's anger was the withering of the gourd. There had been, however, a prior occasion of his wrath. He had been offended with the patience and lenity which God had exercised towards the inhabitants of Nineveh, contrary (as he unreasonably thought) to the commission that had been given him, to threaten their destruction. If Jonah was grieved at the destruction of the agreeable and useful gourd, the destruction of a populous, flourishing, and powerful city ought to be a much more mournful and distressing sight; and if this could be prevented, though it had been threatened, it ought to give him joy. His behaviour exhibits to our view the hurtful effects of that pride and wrath, which, in certain circumstances, more or less arises in the breast of every man. Learn these lessons—1. That the mind of man, being prone to gratify every passion which it feels to the utmost possible extent, therefore gives the object for which it is conceived that figure and importance in its own imagination whereby it is fitted to afford the most extensive and complete gratification. 2. That the mind of man, being thus disposed to magnify the object of every passion beyond its real nature and extent, it is hereby equally disposed to justify the passion it conceives, however excessive and unreasonable. What use ought we to make of Jonah's example? It ought to put us on our guard against that fatal self-deceit which leads men to give themselves a false description of the objects of their several passions, and as false a description of the innocence and justice of the passions which they have conceived. Being of a passionate and peevish nature, his pride and anger being raised, by what Jonah apprehended might hurt his interest and reputation as a prophet, every pious, every tender and humane consideration was entirely overlooked. We should learn to put ourselves upon our guard against the influence of this pernicious self-deceit, and to make it, as far as possible we can, the invariable measure of our conduct. 1. To proportion the degree of our affections to the real merit and importance of the cause by which they are produced; and 2. To exclude the false, artificial apologies by which the most unjust and criminal attachments in the heart of man are ready to conceal, or justify their own excess. This conduct will, indeed, require a careful attention to ourselves and much self-correction and command. To enforce this instruction the following reflection ought to be attended to, namely, that the artifice by which the mind of man imposes on itself, in the indulgence of its sinful and irregular desires, whatever present ease or pleasure it may give, must become, ere long, the source of anguish and remorse. We have reason to believe that the consciences of men will hereafter punish them in the same manner for those iniquities which they now commit calmly and without remorse. Without great vigilance and much inspection of ourselves we are in the utmost danger of mis-

apprehending our own character and of justifying ourselves. This dangerous self-deceit proceeds from two causes. 1. From the self-love and vanity which is natural to every man. 2. From the artifice of sinful passions. By the first, men are laid under a general partiality in favour of themselves, and are disposed to form a more favourable opinion of their own character than it is entitled to. By the second, they are hindered in a more particular manner from perceiving the iniquity and guilt of those parts of their character and conduct which are directed by the influence of their sinful passions. When these two causes of self-deceit meet, they must betray a man into a total ignorance and misapprehension of himself. (*W. Craig, D.D.*)

Vers. 10, 11. Thou hast had pity on the gourd.—*Jonah's gourd.*—There is no mention of Israel in this Book of Jonah. It is concerned solely about the welfare of a foreign nation. There can be no doubt that the spirit of the book is entirely opposed to Jewish feeling. While its form is historical, in substance it is prophetic. It contains great and important truths which Israel was in danger of overlooking, and foreshadows a time when God's mercy towards mankind should no longer be restrained within the limits of the seed of Jacob. All the concern of the writer is to point a moral lesson. The exclusive spirit which regarded all nations as made to subserve the welfare of Israel was always hateful to God. But Jonah is scarcely to be blamed for not seeing what many excellent Christians have failed to see. We must not throw stones at Jonah, for our own houses are sufficiently brittle. Look at the lesson of the gourd. It had cost him nothing, his wisdom had not provided it, nor his care cherished its growth, yet he resented the loss of it as a personal injury. It was a parable designed to convey a needful lesson to abate Jonah's peevish grief at the sparing of Nineveh. God answered Jonah by dealing with the plant as Jonah would have had Him deal with Nineveh. What was there, then, in Nineveh, which answered to the consolation Jonah derived from the plant? Its sentient life and evident happiness, the work of God's hands, unspoiled as yet by human wickedness, was God's gourd, the consolation of His heart when the hot wind of Nineveh's wickedness blew upon Him. He could not bear the thought of sending the pestilence to crush in pain and death all this innocent life and enjoyment, or of giving up these tender little ones to the cruel carnage of savage foes. Judgment is His strange work, and only when absolutely necessary will He sacrifice the innocent and helpless for the sake of punishing the world and purifying its moral atmosphere. This is a very beautiful lesson. It sheds a shaft of tender light into God's dealings with mankind. God will not let the happiness of creation be sacrificed for the sake of punishing human corruption. The final lesson of this Book of Jonah is full of encouragement, and gives us a conception of God which is scarcely surpassed even in the New Testament. He is represented as more merciful than His servant, and as possessed of far wider sympathies. If God were not more merciful than man there would be little hope for us. Repentance instantly calls forth Divine mercy. The prayer of the contrite no sooner reaches His ear than the justifying word goes forth. (*E. W. Shalders, B.A.*)

Ver. 11. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city.—*Great cities; or our fellow-creatures.*—Jonah's disquietude had arisen from a strange cause; it was from the exercise of God's mercy in sparing the lives and the city of a mighty people. Jonah could not bear that his message should seem not to take effect. He regarded the sparing of the city as a dishonour done to him. 1. The great thought which these words suggest to our minds is God's great compassion for the helpless and ignorant. 2. A comparison between the view which God takes of great masses of human beings, and that with which we sometimes, in carelessness or pride, are disposed to look upon them. We live, in fact, on the outside of our fellow-creatures; we exercise little sympathy with them. Jonah's fault was his heartless selfishness. How could a man that knew anything of the soul's value express himself as Jonah did but under this fatal influence? 3. What are our thoughts and feelings and views in similar circumstances? What do we feel when contemplating great masses of human beings in helpless innocence, or in degraded ignorance? There is nothing more impressive than a great city. If we are true brethren of the God-man, if the manhood of Christ is more than a name to us, if it is a word of real sympathy, then it must unlock the chambers of our hearts to our brethren. Then every man we deal with, every servant,

every neighbour will be an object of interest to us. The watchword of the whole creation now is the name of Jesus Christ. (*C. E. Kennaway, M.A.*) *The Divine character and purposes*:—Had we met with the Book of Jonah in the Apocrypha, we should have been tempted to overlook the profound teachings contained in it, and we should have regarded it as a traditional story, wrought up into its present shape by some writer of a later time, whose spirit was, by contact with better forms of heathenism, liberated and delivered from Jewish prejudices. What is the special contribution which is made by it to the body of revelation? 1. The first and broadest teaching regards the character of God as the God of nations. 2. Another aspect of the book is its bearing upon the popular mind at the time it was written, its teachings as to the character of God as the God of Israel. 3. It was a direct and very powerful protest against mere priestism and ceremonialism. Jonah had nothing to do but preach repentance. And God spared Nineveh simply on their turning from their wickedness and confessing their sins. 4. What can be said of "God's repenting Him of the evil"? The proclamation to Nineveh carried an implied condition. It meant that the same God who pronounced the sentence was ready to recall it on the repentance of the people. The unconditional form of the proclamation is merely the tribute which is paid to the justice of God, which is absolute, which can never be changed as justice, which is honoured even in the remission of punishment, and which must be proclaimed as the foundation on which all true repentance is made to rest. But the prophet's appearance was an invitation to repentance and salvation. God morally regards us at any moment just as we are. Of course He has considered our future and provided for it all. What we are now God regards us as being, and treats us accordingly. (*R. A. Redford, M.A.*) *Reflections on the story of Jonah*:—1. The warning furnished by this history, to beware of allowing expected results to interfere with present and pressing obligations. 2. Another reflection respects the spheres of greatest usefulness for the servants of God, and admonishes them to watch for the leadings of providence, rather than give way to their own desires and inclinations. Men are not always the best judges of the department of service by which they can do most to glorify God, any more than of the particular stations they can most successfully occupy. 3. The benefit which may be derived, both for direction in duty and for the profitable study of His Word and ways, from a connected and orderly view of His dispensations. 4. Whenever and wherever God is pleased to manifest of His grace and goodness, it is our part to acknowledge and rejoice in the manifestation. (*Patrick Fairbairn.*) *The education of a prophet*:—According to tradition, Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath, whom Elijah raised to life again; and the sturdy youth who stood at the prophet's side throughout that long and terrible day on Mount Carmel. He was further identified with a young man whom Elisha sent to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel. Certainly he belonged to that stern order of men, and had a great "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." He greatly needed enlargement of mind and soul; and in the end, I think, received it. And the story of this book, so far as it relates to Jonah, is a study of a typical zealot or religionist in contact with the larger purposes of the Divine loving-kindness not sympathising with them, or even understanding them; yet learning at last, perhaps after much Divine discipline, in some small measure to share them. 1. He is first of all shown in association with the rough heathen Phœnician sailors, and their humanity is seen in gracious contrast with his own temper. For he is now endeavouring to put the whole Mediterranean sea between himself and his duty, which, if faithfully performed, may save a vast city from its doom; and it is because he foresees this as a likely result that, instead of going to Nineveh, he is trying to flee into Spain. But these poor sailors will save this foreigner, bird of ill passage though he is, if they can. But Jonah emerged from the dread experience that followed, when he "went down to the bottom of the mountains, and the earth with her bars was about him for ever," unsoftened in feeling. He is as austere and pitiless as before, and thinks himself more righteous than God. It is infinitely strange that men can come forth from dark seas of peril and judgment, and, after deliverance, deny one morsel of compassion to their fellow-sinners! 2. But Jonah, unreconciled to the thought of God's clemency to others, goes on his sulky way to Nineveh, "that great city," "great unto God," wherein were "six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand"—little children, and, as it is humanely added, "also much cattle." He cries aloud in the broad thoroughfares and beside the massive

temples his message of doom, "Yet forty days." It is said that four years before the siege of Jerusalem an unknown man traversed the city continually crying, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the Holy Place, a voice against the bridegroom and the bride! Woo, woe to Jerusalem!" But this voice was more immediate, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Now, it says a great deal for the tolerance of the people that they suffered a foreigner thus to denounce them. People do not always care to be told of their sins, and the judgment to come. "Am I therefore become your enemy," says Paul, "because I tell you the truth?" Ah, there is often no surer way! But these heathen not only permitted the message to be spoken in their midst; they allowed it to resound in their consciences. They repented, after a godly sort, "they turned from their evil way." And so theirs was a repentance unto life, not to be repented of. How salutary is this grace—this turning of the mind from sin, this honest regret and resolve! 3. "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." It is the littleness of man, which everywhere in this book is confronted by the majesty and the magnanimity and the philanthropy of God. The prayer of Jonah that follows is the most remarkable prayer on record. Here is this narrow, parochial, inadequate man presuming to speak to the Almighty as if on level terms with Him—nay, as if he spoke from a superior eminence of wisdom and virtue! "I pray Thee was not this my saying," he cries, "when I was yet in my country?" It has all turned out, he declares, as he knew it would. But when his prayer returns into his own bosom, Jonah now becomes a spectacle unto angels and unto men. He went out of the city, and built himself a booth and waited to see what would become of the city. Perhaps the clock had not struck; perhaps there was something wrong with his chronology; perhaps the people would lapse again into sin, and the doom fall after all. Ah, how different from the spirit of Him who, when He beheld Jerusalem in its sins and foresaw its coming ruin, wept over it! 4. But Jonah did not weep over the city: He wept over himself. In his mortification and mental and physical exhaustion he thought that he wanted to die; though, when death was very near him in the deep seas, he was of another mind. But just as when his great predecessor, Elijah, in the wilderness, "requested for himself that he might die," God took no notice of the request, but inquired about his duty once and again: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" So God took no notice of Jonah's request, but inquired once and again about his temper: "Doe'st thou well to be angry?" And, as God taught Elijah by a nature parable, the whirlwind, the earthquake, the fire, and the still, small voice, so He taught Jonah by the parable of the gourd. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd," said God. It was a form of self-pity, no doubt; but, then, how much of our sympathy starts from a selfish root! It is a great thing when feeling splits away from a purely personal reference, and puts forth an altruistic branchlet. Time and grace may make much of a sentiment not so pure and lofty in its beginning as one would wish. Think, Jonah, think! "Thou hast had pity on the gourd." You did not make it; it was not yours; yet its short-lived glory touched you with some regret. I have made both plants and men. Ought I not to have pity on men falling and passing? Think! till you, too, pity them with Me. 5. Did Jonah learn the lesson of charity, and take a larger and a gentler mould? There is some reason to think that he did, for as the story leaves him he is still under the hand of God, and God is still speaking. The inference is that he receives the Divine admonition. He has no answer to make, and God is still with him, and not failing nor forsaking this cross-grained servant of His. We love the amiable. What a mercy it is that God loves the unamiable also, and the awkward and ignorant and dim-sighted, and is kind to the unthankful and the evil. But there is perhaps another reason for hoping that God's teaching was not in vain. In 2 Kings xiv. 25 we learn that Jonah prophesied with reference to the re-conquest of Moab under Jeroboam II., who "restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath to the Sea of the Plain." Now, in the oracles contained in Isaiah there is one concerning Moab, not by Isaiah, but spoken, it is said, "in time past" (R.V.). By a number of eminent critics this is supposed to be the substance of Jonah's prophecy during the reign of Jeroboam II. If we can take this view we may well consider how different the tone of this prophecy is from that which we should expect from the accuser of Nineveh. It is full of tender feeling and humane regret. "I will weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon and Elcaleh: for upon thy summer fruits

and upon thy harvest the battle shout is fallen . . . Wherefore my bowels sound like an harp for Moah, and mine inward parts for Kirheres" (Isa. xvi. 9 and 11). We cannot recognise in these words the voice of the Jonah who went to Nineveh; and, indeed, it may be the voice of another Jonah, whom God's gentleness had made great. And, whether Jonah learned his lesson or not, the story remains—a poem, in which man is humiliated and God only exalted. "For My ways are not your ways, nor your thoughts My thoughts, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts." (A. H. Vine.) *The Church and the city* (with Luke xix. 41):—These texts from Jonah and the Gospel by Luke are selected that their light may fall upon the subject of the attitude of God toward the cities of to-day. I have not often found myself in agreement with Bismarck, but with his views of cities I perfectly agree: "Great cities are great sores on the body politic." The crowding of populations into great cities is never conducive to the development of individualism, nor does it make for the ideal socialism. The Divine attitude toward the city has never been that of aloofness from failure and sin, but rather that of keen interest, profound pity, ceaseless activity. Nineveh was a city outside the covenant of the chosen people, a city steeped in heathen customs and wrong-doing. Yet God sent Jonah, and proves in the language of the text this love and care. Jerusalem was the city of privilege and blessing, which killed the prophets and stoned the messengers. The city which Jesus wept over. The Divine attitude toward great cities is one of compassionate interest and love. Every city is known to God. Every part of it is known to Him, the rich and the poor parts. In this city "all things are naked and open to the eye of Him with whom we have to do." But beyond the infinite knowledge is this other thought, He cares. There is no sorrow that God does not feel. He has abandoned no part of what He Himself created. All the physical disability has His sympathy—the dwellings of the poor, the workshops of our men and women; all the mental sufferings, the misery of mystery and the mystery of the misery; all the spiritual death—"the cursed mountain of sorrow lies heaviest on the Divine heart." God has not forsaken the city: He is still sending His prophets, His messengers, His Son. Moreover, He is, by His Holy Spirit, the actual and ever-present force for the relieving of every condition of evil and sorrow. No problem is too complex for His wisdom, no opposing force too mighty for His power, no darkness too dense for His light, no trifle too trivial for His notice. He is working for its regeneration. What, then, is the responsibility of the city? What does the Church of Christ exist for? For the select few who to-day worship within the buildings called by His name? Then in God's name close the doors! Such churches have no mission, and should cease to exist. The Church of Christ exists to reveal God and to act in concert with Him. Would that I could startle you into Christian activity! The sorrow of the city awaits your sympathy, and the saving force and grace of Jesus Christ. How is the city to know that it is not God-forsaken? Through the Church. We have here no continuing city; we seek one to come, whose builder and maker is God. The centres of the Christian life and the civic life are diametrically opposite. The first principle of the Christian life is self-death; that of the civic life is selfishness. The second element of the one is sacrifice; of the other, self-seeking. The third law of the one is, "I believe in the salvation of the unfit"; that of the civic life is the survival of the fittest. We seek a city which hath foundations. Many are trying to find it by star-gazing. They thank God for their comfortable lot in life, and wait. Seek the city that is to be here. We must take part in the government of the city. Whether the factory is to be occupied so long and so closely that life and comfort are neglected is not the question of the manufacturer's profit, but of the worker's health. If you do not care you are not a Christian. You cannot live near to Christ and be indifferent. We must press forward all the time in our distinctive work of setting men and women into personal contact with Christ. The law of adaptation is one law of progress. There can be no failure in God; if there be any, it is in us. I call every Christian man and woman to attention. Concerning the Divine attitude there is no question. You believe that God loves the city. A boy asked his Sunday-school teacher, "Do you think God loves wicked boys?" "Certainly not," was her reply. Oh, the blasphemy of such an answer! Of course, God loves wicked boys. If He had never loved sinners there would have been no saints. Concerning our relation to God's attitude toward the city there is room

for much heart-searching. We must know the city. Contrast, in conclusion, our texts. Jonah was angry because God forgives. Jesus wept over the sins of the city. I am in sympathy with Jesus rather than with Jonah. Christian am I if I am Christ-like ; Christ-like am I if, like Christ, I weep over the city and give myself for it even unto death. (*G. C. Morgan, D.D.*)