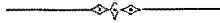


child," yet Mark applies this term to Jairus's daughter (whom Luke calls *παῖς*), and nevertheless knows that she is of an age at which Oriental females marry. *Οψάρια*, one of the two words for "fish" in that miracle of John xxi., is itself a diminutive, yet immediately afterwards John tells us that the haul consisted of 153 "great" fish. The *γυναικάρια*, or "silly women," whom St. Paul describes in 2 Tim. iii. 6, as so ready to run after pernicious teachers, may doubtless have lacked mental development, but are not generally conceived to have been females of defective stature. And possibly even Mr. Green, whom I know to be alike an experienced sailor and an exemplary ecclesiastic, forgets occasionally that in English his "vessel" must always suggest a "*little vase*," and his "chasuble" a "*little cottage*."

ARTHUR C. JENNINGS.



### ART. III.—THE MIRACLES OF JOSHUA IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN DISCOVERIES.<sup>1</sup>

IT is scarcely worth while considering the miracles of Joshua unless we believe them to be recorded in an authentic history; and it is clear from internal evidences that the book is such a history.

It is called the Book of Joshua because it contains an account of his doings. But it is distinctly stated that he himself wrote some portions of it. Thus, in xxiv. 26 we read: "And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God." And the rest cannot have been written long after his death, for Rahab the harlot was still living at the time (vi. 25). And the same expression, "unto this day," occurs in many other cases.

Like the writings of Xenophon and Cæsar the narrative is often in the third person, but in many cases the date is suggested by the use of the first person. Thus, Rahab "hid the messengers which *we* sent" (vi. 17). "Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver *us* into the hand of the Amorites to cause *us* to perish? Would that *we* had been content and dwelt beyond Jordan! Oh, Lord, what shall *I* say," etc. (vii. 7, 8).

Then, the little incident of the erection of the altar of witness by the trans-Jordanic tribes would never have been inserted by any other than a contemporary writer, even if

<sup>1</sup> A paper read to the Winchester Clerical Association by the Rev. Canon Huntingford, D.C.L.

some later author can be supposed, as some critics assert, to have invented the story of the erection of the tabernacle itself.

And, then, whatever moral difficulties may be suggested by the narrative of the extermination of some of the first opponents of Joshua, the story of the conquest of the land is very natural. The book gives us a mere summary of it. The author describes two great campaigns—one in the south, and another in the north. But a long seven years' war is implied which issued in a state of perfect rest.

Some of the cities in the north he utterly destroyed; but others he left standing, and slew the men only who fought against him. "So Joshua took the whole land . . . and the land had rest from war" (xi. 23).

But few readers of this history realize how small a proportion of the population of Canaan the Israelites formed at this time, and for many subsequent generations, even up to and after the time of David and Solomon.

Israel in the time of Joshua held Canaan much as we hold India or Egypt, being a very small fraction of a vast population, but the ruling race. They held the country in subjection, as we do, by the force of character and military renown. The Canaanites knew that Joshua would suppress any rising or conspiracy, just as we suppressed, with a few thousand soldiers, the Indian Mutiny in a country inhabited by millions.

These are a few, but only a few, of the indications of date which the book contains, and whatever doubts and difficulties may be suggested by our modern critics, a fair-minded reader can scarcely read the narrative with close attention without feeling that he has in the Book of Joshua an authentic history.

And if the book had contained no record of miracles, its authenticity would rarely have been questioned.

Let us, then, examine the recorded miracles of Joshua in the light of modern discoveries.

"The whole subject of miracles," writes Edersheim, "requires fuller and clearer treatment than it has yet received." "The objection to miracles, as such," he says, "proceeds on that false supernaturalism which traces a miracle to the immediate fiat of the Almighty without any intervening links" ("Life and Times of Jesus," vol. ii., p. 626).

The discoveries of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and a careful consideration of the language in which the miracles of Joshua are described, enable us to understand what were the intervening links of the two great miracles of the drying up of the waters of the Jordan and the answer to Joshua's prayer at the battle of Beth-horon.

A miracle does not cease to be miraculous when we can see by what application of natural forces it was wrought. And our not being able to see by what intervening links a miracle was effected does not even suggest the absence of such intervening links; it only proves that we cannot see them.

By the application of a natural force, and as the result of countless experiments as to its behaviour under certain conditions, Marconi has succeeded in sending a message across the Atlantic without a wire or cable. This and many other modern human miracles are the result of man's knowledge and power and will.

The miracles of the Bible are the result of the use of His own created natural forces by Him whose knowledge and power are infinite, and whose will is irresistible.

But sometimes, as in the case of the miracles of Joshua, He enables us to see by what intervening links they were wrought.

The drying up of the river Jordan was unlike that of the waters of the Red Sea, and the miracles are attributed by the sacred writers to very different natural causes. The one is attributed to "a strong east wind" which "the Lord caused to blow all night" (Exod. xiv. 21).

But the stream of Jordan is described as being cut off by some obstacle which caused the upper waters to stand up in a great heap far above the ford. If this was caused by one of those landslips which often occur at the time of flood in that most remarkable river, the circumstance of its occurrence exactly at that time would make it as miraculous as if it were the result of any other cause.

The following is written by Harper in his book entitled "The Bible and Modern Discoveries":

"Not like the Nile in its overflow, which fertilizes the land, the Jordan merely hurries on so rapidly that its fall is sixty feet to the mile; difficult to approach in many places, impossible in others, because of the jungle and banks, it has yet many fords. In some places there are cliffs, old deposits of marl, which crumble and fall into the river in time of flood. It was, therefore, at flood-time (April) that Joshua led the Israelites through the river. The spies had crossed the ford, but no 'ford' would be broad enough for the host to pass; and as the Israelites left Egypt and crossed the 'sea of reeds' by a miracle, so their children cross this torrent stream by another miracle. The water stood still near 'the city of Adam, that is beside Zaretan.' The Revised Version translates this passage thus: 'The waters which came down from above stood and rose up in one heap—a great way off at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan.' The meaning of

'Adam' is 'red earth.' Near Beisan is an unusually large mound called Tell es Sarem. A good deal of clay is found here, and a mile to the south is a stream, the Arabic of which means 'red river.' The soil is red, and a ford near is also called by an Arabic name which means 'red earth.'

"It has been suggested that the waters of the Jordan were suddenly dammed up by a landslip or similar convulsion. The appearance of the banks, and the curious bends of the river near this place, would seem to support the idea" (p. 184).

If this were so, it only makes the record of the event more intelligible, but does not at all lessen its miraculous character.

It is very probable that the same may have happened often in such a river as the Jordan; but it is a historical fact that it did happen in A.D. 1266, as described in the writings of an Arab historian. "The Sultan Beybars caused a bridge to be built across Jordan to facilitate the strategic movements of his army. . . . When it was completed and the people were dispersed, part of the piers gave way. The Sultan was greatly vexed, and blamed the builders, and sent them back to repair the damage. They found the task very difficult, owing to the rise in the waters and the strength of the current. But in the night the water of the river ceased to flow, so that none remained in its bed. They remedied the defects of the piers and strengthened them, and effected repairs which would otherwise have been impossible. They then despatched mounted men to ascertain the nature of the event that had occurred. The riders found that a lofty mound which overlooked the river on the west had fallen into it and dammed it up. The water was held up, and had spread itself over the valley above the dam. The water was arrested from midnight until the fourth hour of the day. Then the water prevailed and the dam was broken up" (*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, July, 1895).

The other most startling miracle is that of the supposed standing still of the sun upon the prayer of Joshua at the battle of Beth-horon.

Mr. Palmer, in his excellent little book entitled "A Misunderstood Miracle," has shown how much light the survey of the Holy Land, and our consequently more accurate knowledge of its topography, have thrown upon this event, and have proved that what Joshua must have wanted was not longer daylight, but the continuance for a whole day of that obscuration of the sun and moon which was striking such terror into the hearts of his enemies, the worshippers of those heavenly bodies.

The Gibeonites by treachery had persuaded Israel to make

a covenant of peace with them. To punish them five kings of the Amorites made a combined attack upon their city. They send an urgent message to Joshua begging him to help them. Joshua marches all night, and falls upon the Amorites early in the morning. "And the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon." West of Gibeon was the descent of Beth-horon, a rugged and most difficult pass, which proved fatal in later times to a retreating Roman army. If anywhere, a defeated enemy would here make a final stand before committing themselves to this dangerous ravine. It was there, therefore, that the Lord sent that terrific hailstorm in their faces which sent them headlong down the fatal gorge. It was there, too, that Joshua, having the sun in the east over Gibeon behind him, and the moon in the west over Ajalon, at this momentous crisis in the battle prayed that the terrifying darkness might continue until his enemies were completely routed.

He cannot have wanted longer daylight, for from the position of the sun behind him over Gibeon in the east, and the moon before him in the west, it must have been about nine in the morning when he uttered his prayer. At no much later time could the sun and moon have been so situated.

The words which Joshua used are consistent with this more rational explanation of the miracle, for he does not command the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, but, as more literally translated in the margin, both of the Authorized and Revised Versions, to "be silent." *Dôm*, the Hebrew word which he uses, means to be dumb or silent, and never has any signification connected with movement or cessation of movement. Mr. Palmer has shown in how many languages the same word is used to express the ideas of darkness and silence. Indeed, in our own language Milton represents the blind Samson as saying :

"The sun to me is dark,  
And silent as the moon,  
When she deserts the night,  
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave."

The same word is used in the Hebrew in verse 13: "And the sun was silent, and the moon stayed"—*i.e.*, stayed from shining, or stayed as it was.

Such were the recorded words of Joshua, from which it seems evident that he did not call upon the sun to stand still in its course, but to continue in obscurity. Of course, nothing is impossible to the Almighty; but it is in the highest degree

improbable that He would work such a miracle as that which He is supposed to have done, especially when under the circumstance, now better understood, it would have been wholly unnecessary.

But what of the words which follow: "And the sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day"?

It is from these words rather than from those spoken by Joshua that a wrong view of what actually happened has so universally prevailed, causing so much perplexity to the believer and putting such a strain upon his faith.

But as Joshua certainly did not command the sun to stand still in its course, which would have been of no use to him, but to be silent or dark, so the verb *Amad*, stood or stayed, must be understood in a sense consistent with the verb used in the principal clause of the prayer. And it is so used of the moon just before: "And the sun was silent, and the moon stayed" (remained so).

It is used, apparently, in this sense in Hab. iii. 11: "The sun and the moon stood in [betook themselves into] their dwelling."

It often means "to remain in any state or condition." Thus, it is said of Leah, after the birth of Judah, that "she stood from bearing"—that is, ceased bearing (Gen. xxix. 35, xxx. 9).

And so this inserted comment on the answer to Joshua's prayer must mean: "And the sun stayed"—*i.e.*, stayed in the condition which Joshua desired. "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man," spreading a thick darkness over the sun and moon, to the terror of the Amorites who worshipped them, "for the Lord fought for Israel."

There is another miracle connected with the sun in which modern science enables us to see by what intervening link of a natural cause it was probably effected. To confirm God's promise to Hezekiah, Isaiah prayed that the shadow of the sun might go back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. This must have been the natural result of a sudden and miraculous change in the density of the atmosphere, causing a refraction of the sun's rays. Every evening after the sun itself has sunk below the horizon its image remains visible for some little time, its rays being refracted by the denser atmosphere near the surface of the earth. A few weeks ago an elongated image of the sun suddenly appeared above the horizon, due probably to some unusual condensation of the air. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that the intervening link in the causation of this miracle had anything to do with the revolution of the earth on its axis, when it might so naturally result

from a sudden refraction of the rays of the sun, causing the shadow to appear ten degrees higher on the dial.

We don't know what sort of dial it was or what were the width of the degrees, but of course the retrogression of the sun's shadow would depend upon the density of the medium through which its rays passed.

Another difficulty in the book is that of the commanded wholesale slaughter of the Canaanites. Such massacres, indeed, are far from uncommon in the history of the world. They have occurred in modern times, and even in so-called Christian countries. In the age of Joshua, and for many centuries before and after his time, the slaughter of men, women and children, and even the ripping up of the pregnant, was far from uncommon. Accustomed to such ruthless treatment of the vanquished by the victors, the Israelites were not shocked, as we should be, by the command of Joshua to exterminate the conquered Canaanites.

There is no difficulty, therefore, in believing the truthfulness of the historian in his account of these massacres. It may be a question whether God gave such a command, and so sternly insisted upon its being carried out to the letter; but the record of the massacre itself does not in any way affect the question of the historical character of the book.

It is important, however, to observe that the Israelites were strictly forbidden to adopt this common practice of heathen nations, in all other battles with their neighbours. The Canaanitish races were to be specially dealt with for very special reasons.

The following was to be their ordinary practice in warfare :

“When thou drawest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee an answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein shall become tributary unto thee, and shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: and when the Lord thy God delivereth it into thine hand, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take for a prey unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; but thou shalt destroy them: the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Perizzite,

the Hivite, and the Jebusite; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God" (Deut. xx. 10-18).

Here, then, we have the meaning of this unique Divine purpose.

This strange command to make no peace with the cities of Canaan, but to slay with their own hands the men, women, and children which were in them, was intended to burn into the hearts of Israel a sense of God's hatred of the cruel and unnatural crimes which they committed in the obscene worship of their gods.

And it had this effect. For, except when they apostatized from their own Jehovah, and worshipped the idols of Canaan, the Israelites were conspicuous among the nations for their abhorrence of infanticide and the unnatural and cruel practices of the heathen.

In His moral government of a race to whom He had given freedom of will, God seems to have educated mankind as we educate our children. From Adam to Christ His system of government has been one of more or less immediate or temporal rewards and punishments.

But having once proved by signal judgments His hatred of impurity, He has left men free to profit by their teaching. For a too frequent use of rewards and punishments obviously interferes with man's freedom of choice and action.

Sexual sins are the only causes mentioned of the universal corruption of the society of the antediluvian world, and the flood was God's expression of His hatred of them.

When this proved insufficient, the fires of Sodom and the annihilation of the cities of the plain were added to emphasize and make clear this teaching to all future generations of men.

But this was not enough to put an end to the "abominations which the Canaanites did unto their gods."

Here, then, we see the meaning of the selection of a chosen people to be the teachers and the witnesses of God's moral law until the coming of Him who should entirely change God's system of government by temporal rewards and punishments, and raise mankind to a higher moral level, as no longer servants under bondage, but the free and loving children of the Father through the Incarnation and Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Few readers of the Bible realize sufficiently the great difference which is apparent between the system of Moses and that of Christ, and between the nation of Israel and the Christian Church.



The nation of Israel was an army sent out to fight with the literal sword and spear against the enemies of mankind, against the enemies of God and His law.

The Church of Christ is an army of martyrs led to victory by a Martyr King, sent forth to overcome evil by good, to conquer the devil and the world, "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and because they loved not their lives even unto death" (Rev. xii. 11).

Christendom, since the age of Constantine, has often sadly forgotten this. Hence the sword has been freely used to propagate the religion of the King of Peace (Rev. vi. 4).

Emperors and kings have compelled their subjects and conquered nations to be baptized; and the rulers of the Church have employed the armies of kings and the tribunals of the temporal magistrates to suppress all opposition to their decrees by fire, and sword, and the horrors of the torture chamber.

And have we yet thoroughly learned the lesson so plainly taught by Jesus to His impetuous disciples, when they asked Him whether they should call down fire from heaven to destroy His enemies? It was quite right that Elijah should do this, because he was living under the system of Moses, but the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them (St. Luke ix. 54).

As it was the duty of Elijah, at the command of God, to slay the false prophets of Baal, so it was the duty of Joshua and his warriors to exterminate the sinners of Canaan.

As God destroyed men, women, and children by the waters of the flood and the fires of Sodom to express His abhorrence of their cruel and unnatural crimes, so by the sword of Joshua He exterminated the sinners of Canaan who practised the same abominations in the worship of their gods.

It was a terrible lesson, and this is given as the reason why these sinners were to be utterly destroyed: "That they teach you not to do after all their abominations which they have done unto their gods, so should ye sin against the Lord your God" (Deut. xx. 18).

It is important also to remember that Israel was not given the possession of the Promised Land for their own righteousness, but because of the wickedness of the Canaanites (Deut. ix. 4-6).

Again and again this is impressed upon them.

"Speak not thou in thy heart after that the Lord thy God hath thrust them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: whereas for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee . . . know

therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness : for thou art a stiff-necked people."

After giving a terrible list of the crimes of these nations, God says by Moses: "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things : for in all these things the nations are defiled which I cast out from before you ; and the land is defiled, therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomiteth out her inhabitants. . . . Ye therefore shall keep My statutes . . . and shall not do any of these abominations . . . that the land vomit not you out also, when ye defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you " (Lev. xviii. 24-29).

It was, therefore, to impress upon Israel first, and then upon all future generations of men, the duty of purity, that these wholesale slaughters of sinners were commanded. And through all their history Israel was appointed to be the sword of the Lord to execute vengeance upon sinners.

Israel was to go forth as the army of the Lord into a sinful and God-forgetting world, "with the praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hands ; to be avenged of the heathen, and to rebuke the people ; to bind their kings in chains, and their nobles with links of iron " (Ps. cxlix. 6).

All this was to be changed when Christ came, as the Captain of an army of martyrs, with His call to suffering here and His eternal rewards and punishments hereafter.

But the Christian Church has too often forgotten this, and lost sight of the secret of Christ's victories, following Moses and Joshua instead of Christ ; using force and the sword to make converts instead of persuasion and kindness, and the example of a holy and self-denying life.

Like the infant Christian Church, united by love into one society of believers, the Israelites little thought what a falling away from God and scattering was soon to follow, so that for many generations any central place of worship should be as impossible as a united Church. For when we wonder at the apostasies of Israel, we must never forget that the Christian Church has imitated, or, rather, far exceeded, the sins of God's ancient people, and has fallen further away from Him who said : "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" ; whose words of prayer are the condemnation of a divided Christendom : "That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me " (St. John xvii. 21).

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