

'Galoomf!' Goes Jonah in the Whales' Belly

New York — "Close to the tossed ship the fish swam and waited, gaping his jaws wide to welcome Jonah in. Galoomf! Down he went, with a horde of other food, too. 'Praised be the Lord for this food,' said the fish."

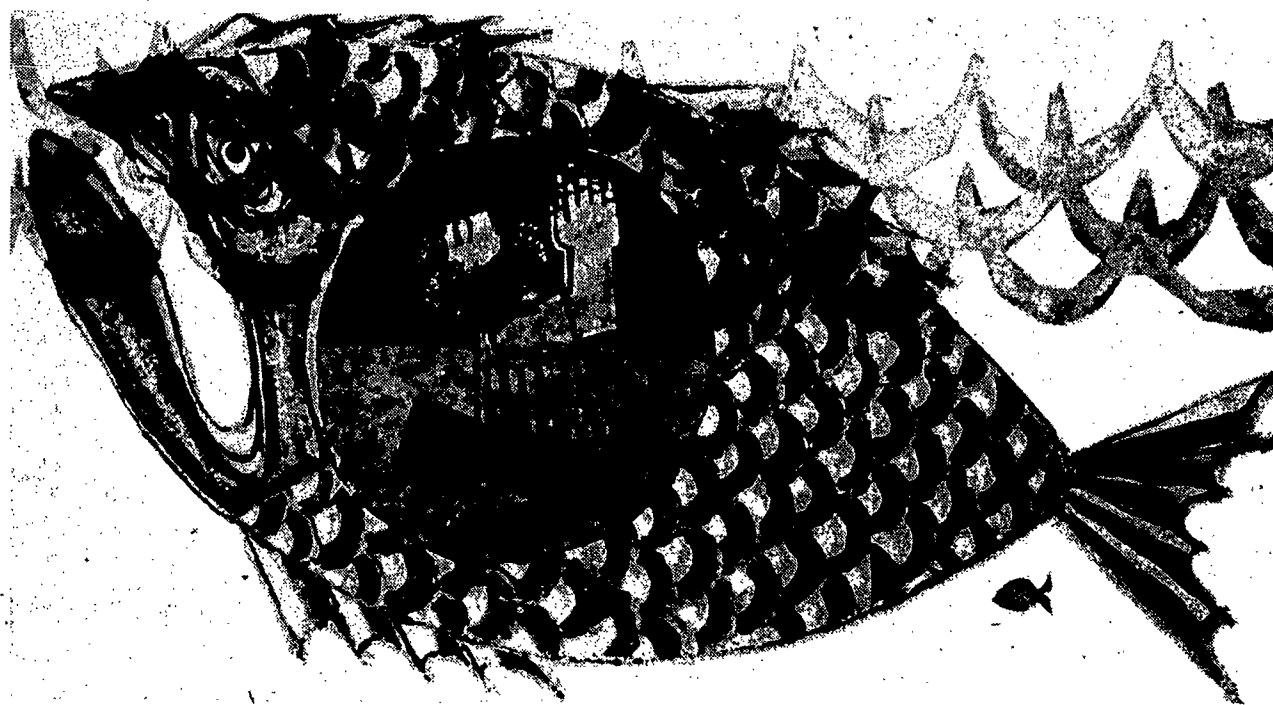
In a new, widely-praised children's book called "Jonah and the Lord," not only does the fish go "galoomf," but anchors go "ploosh," sails go "ploof" and worms sent by the Lord to eat gourds go "snizzersnoop"

Written by Scottish-born poet George MacBeth, who was attracted to the story of Jonah because of a personal fondness for whales (although, in his book, he refers only to "a great fish"), "Jonah and the Lord" has been described by Catholic catechist Mary Reed Newland as "a little work of art, to be enjoyed by both parents and children."

MacBeth's prose, she wrote in the Sunday New York Times Book Review, "clangs with strength and humor."

Illustrated with Greek-flavored drawings by Margaret Gordon, "Jonah and the Lord" is a straight re-telling of the Old Testament story of the prophet Jonah, seen as pre-figuring the death and resurrection of Christ.

But in recounting what Mrs.



Picture by Margaret Gordon in "Jonah and the Lord," by George MacBeth.

Newland calls "one of the most endearing morality tales of the Old Testament," MacBeth employed a rhythmic word pattern that could almost be set to a hand-clapping gospel-song beat:

"Now the Lord heard Jonah, and he smiled on his cloud. High above the sea where he sat, throwing sleet about, the Lord heard Jonah, and he hearkened to his thought. The Lord heard Jonah and he made him a plan. 'Thou shalt have a

voyage, Jonah, said the Lord.'"

The above passage comes early in the story, when the Lord is angered by Jonah's refusal to go to Nineveh and chastise the evil-doers there. Jonah has

planned to escape from the Lord by going on a sea voyage.

"So the Lord took Jonah and he set him on a ship. Ploosh went the anchor and the ship sailed for Tarshish. Over the

green sea, and over the blue sea, faster and faster, the black ship sailed. 'Soon I shall escape from the Lord,' thought Jonah."

But the Lord raised up a sea storm ("Ploof! went the canvas, and sloaf! came the high waves"), until the repentant Jonah volunteered to be put over the side to spare his fellow mariners.

The rest of "Jonah and the Lord" recounts Jonah's being swallowed by the great fish, being spewed out on land after three days and three nights in its belly and going to Nineveh where he warns that the city is to be destroyed in 40 days.

Heeding Joanh's warning the people there repented, and MacBeth presents an easy-going Lord who is quick to show mercy despite his threats:

"The Lord changed his mind . . . and spared them. Laying his wrath aside, he lolled on his soft throne, pleased with their new ways. The Lord looked down and he thought well of Nineveh. 'Nineveh shall not die,' the Lord said. 'I swear it.'"

Balancing the Books

"Looking for Dilmun" Exciting Archeology

By Father John S. Kennedy

Bahrain is a small island (30 miles long, 15 miles wide) in the Persian Gulf. It has about 150,000 inhabitants. It is a modestly wealthy sheikhdom, thanks to its oil deposits. Nothing is known of its history before the seventh century A.D. The people are of Arab stock and Muslims.

An Englishman named Geoffrey Bibby lived there briefly after World War II, his work having to do with the drilling for oil. He became interested in peculiar burial mounds to be found in great numbers on the island, 100,000 in all. These seemed to be of some antiquity.

Later, Bibby was drawn into archaeology, and was attached to a small museum in Denmark. It was from Denmark that he organized, in 1953, an expedition to investigate the burial mounds of Bahrain.

This continued and expanded prodigiously in the next 15 years, and resulted in the discovery of a great civilization, of the third millennium B.C., completely unknown to history. The story of this astounding find is enthrallingly told in his book "Looking for Dilmun" (Knopf, 501 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022, \$10).

Dilmun figures as a place name in the mythology of ancient Babylonia and Sumer, and also in cuneiform tablets giving details of trade between it and Mesopotamia. But where it was, how great its extent was, these were questions regarded as permanently unanswerable. Dilmun had utterly disappeared from the face of the earth.

Bibby's expedition uncovered it. He and his associates first tackled the burial mounds on Bahrain, then moved on to what they considered likely spots elsewhere on the island. Slowly, patiently digging, they uncovered a great temple, a palace, an entire city. Indeed, the city was not one but, like Troy, seven, one built upon the ruins of another.

One does not have to be even an amateur archaeologist to find Mr. Bibby's lengthy, well-illustrated book as exciting as

the cleverest mystery story. There is extraordinary suspense, and extraordinary gratification, in this account of a doughty search which begins with a few cryptic clues and proceeds through trial and disappointment to marvelous discoveries.

The flower of immortality proved to be the pearl, and on Bahrain were found shell heaps which established that pearl fishers had labored there in the remote past. Also, in the myths, the flower of immortality was stolen from its finder by the serpent. And in Bahrain the expedition dug up burial pots which each contained the skeleton of a serpent, with, in one instance, an intact pearl.

Also, from the remains they drew from deep in the earth, Mr. Bibby and his colleagues verified not only the trade between Dilmun and Mesopotamia which the cuneiform tablets recorded, but also items definitely linking Dilmun with the Indus Valley civilization on the Indian subcontinent.

Dilmun, then, was an important factor in trading which represented an interchange between peoples who lived thousands of miles from one another. It was a kind of clearing house, and the reason for this was the fact that the island, now Bahrain, was a watering point. There, and on the Arabian mainland opposite, were the only places in the whole Persian Gulf where fresh water could be obtained in quantity.

The expedition found unmistakable traces of lakes in places which are now but expanses of sand. It found evidences of fishing communities in sections which are now inland, but once were right on the sea. And Bahrain, which is now wholly Muslim, once had no fewer than six Christian dioceses.

This last fact belongs to historical knowledge; the rest are data painstakingly recovered from prehistoric times. But both categories of information point the same lesson for us: that the world as we know it today is by no means the same as that of yesterday, nor will it persist un- changed into tomorrow.

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