



### Fish Oddities

**O**DD, HOW we have come to associate the idea of oddity with fish!

You will often hear the phrase "Odds Fish!" from some one using what he fancies to be archaic English. And from that the epithet "odd fish," as applied to slightly eccentric humans, seems to have been derived.

Actually, the phrase has nothing to do with oddity. It is a modern corruption of the sixteenth-century cant or petty-profanity "'Ods Fish," meaning "God's fish." At about that time, it was considered particularly bad to make direct use of the name of God in ordinary or profane conversation, so the clipped and elided forms 'Od and Gad came into use, in such phrases as Ods Fish, Ods Blood, Ods Bodikins, and Gadzooks—the latter being a compaction of Gad's hooks, and "hooks" in turn being slang for "hands."

But why ascribe to the Deity a particular proprietary interest in fish? The answer is somewhat obscure, but it may be that our early-modern forebears in England were referring to a practice a thousand years older than themselves, the use of the fish in early Christian symbolism.

One of the many honorific titles which the Greek-speaking Christians of the early centuries conferred upon the founder of their religion was the phrase, "Iesos Christos Theoi Ousion Soter." In English, this means "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour." The initial letters of the pious phrase spell out "Ichthos," which is the Greek word for fish.

So the Sign of the Fish became the equivalent of the Sign of the Cross among the persecuted hidiers in the catacombs. If you met a stranger, and thought he might be one of the brother-

hood, you scrawled a rough tracing of a fish on the ground, or even gestured it in the air. It was a sure means of identification, and less dangerous to use than the Cross, which the pagan enemy knew too well.

This fish symbolism became all the more firmly fastened in early Christian practice because so many of the early disciples, including St. Peter himself, had been fishermen, and because fish figured so often and prominently in the treasured New Testament to which the catechumens listened, often at the risk of their lives.

The later-originating practice of eating fish on Friday has no direct connection with this symbolic significance of the fish. The Church imposed abstinence from the flesh of warm-blooded animals (mammals and fowl) on that day in commemoration of the shedding of its Founder's blood on Friday. But the flesh of cold-blooded animals was still permitted. And because fish abounded along the seacoasts, as well as in the rivers that flowed past inland cities, it was only natural that the most frequently used of these "Friday meats" should be fish.

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#### MINERALOGY

### Meteorites Contain Large Amounts of Rare Metals

**D**ISCOVERY of notable amounts of the rare metals, gallium and germanium, in the earth's only imports from outer space, the meteorites that fall from the sky, was announced by Dr. Arthur S. King of the Carnegie Institution's Mt. Wilson Observatory in a paper presented to the Society for Research on Meteorites.

Emphasizing the usefulness of spectroscopic analysis instead of the regular chemical and mineralogical methods for determining the elements present, Dr. King found that iron meteorites have some 19 elements within them, including in largest quantities iron, nickel, cobalt and copper.

In spectroscopic analysis, the different kinds, colors, wavelengths or spectral lines of light are viewed or photographed and studied. Each element when heated intensely flies its own kind of light "flag." The larger the amount of the element present, the more intense is the brightness of the spectral line.

The rare metals gallium and germanium in meteorite samples produce very distinct spectrum lines, Dr. King explained. While they are widely distributed in earthly rocks, they occur in very small quantities.

Unlike irons of the earth, iron meteorites are almost free from chromium and manganese. Another interesting fact is that traces of silver are present and those from Meteor Crater in Arizona give the silver spectrum in considerable strength.

Stony meteorites are quite different in composition from the iron ones, although they contain a large percentage of iron. Dr. King suggests that their iron explains why the stony ones are not entirely consumed by heat when they smash into the earth's atmosphere.

A large amount of sodium is a striking feature of stony meteorites as analyzed by the spectroscope. There is nearly as much magnesium in them, and Dr. King suggests that their high content of this metal, which burns with a bright flame, accounts in large measure for the spectacular features of meteoric falls that are seen over large areas.

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