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COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROPHET
NAHUM**

by John Calvin

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COMMENTARY ON

NAHUM

BY JOHN CALVIN.

*Now first translated from the original Latin, by the Rev. John
Owen, vicar of Thrussington, Leicestershire.*

THE COMMENTARIES
OF JOHN CALVIN
ON
THE PROPHET NAHUM
CALVIN'S PREFACE TO NAHUM

The time in which Nahum prophesied cannot with certainty be known. The Hebrews, ever bold in conjectures, say that he discharged his office of teaching under Manasseh, and that the name of that king was suppressed, because he was unworthy of such an honor, or, because his reign was unfortunate, as he had been led into captivity. When any one asks the Jews a reason, they only say, that it appears so to them. As then there is no reason for this conjecture, we must come to what seems probable.

They who think that he prophesied under Jotham are no doubt mistaken, and can easily be disproved; for he here threatens ruin to the city Nineveh because the Assyrians had cruelly laid waste the kingdom of Israel; and it is for these wrongs that he denounces vengeance: but under Jotham the kingdom of Israel had not been laid waste. We indeed know that the Assyrians were suborned by Ahab, when he found himself unequal to resist the attacks of two neighboring kings, the king of Syria, and the king of Israel. It was then that the Assyrians penetrated into the land of Israel, and in course of time, they desolated the whole kingdom. At this period it was that Nahum prophesied; for it was his object to show, that God had a care for that kingdom, on account of his adoption or covenant; though the Israelites had perfidiously separated themselves from the people of God, yet God's covenant remained in force. His design then was to show, that God was the father and protector of that kingdom. As this was the Prophet's object, it is certain that he taught either after the death of Ahab under Hezekiah, or about that time. ^{F1}

He followed Jonah at some distance,^{F2} as we may easily learn. Jonah, as we have already seen, pronounced a threatening on the city Nineveh; but the punishment was remitted, because the Ninevites humbled themselves, and suppliantly deprecated the punishment which had been announced. They afterwards returned to their old ways, as it is usually the case. Hence it was, that God became less disposed to spare them. Though indeed they were aliens, yet God was pleased to show them favor by teaching them through the ministry and labors of Jonah: and their repentance was not altogether feigned. Since then they were already endued with some knowledge of the true God, the less excusable was their cruelty, when they sought to oppress the kingdom of Israel. They indeed knew, that that nation was sacred to God: what they did then was in a manner an outrage against God himself.

We now understand at what time it is probable that Nahum performed his office as a teacher; though nothing certain, as I have said at the beginning, can be known: hence it was, that I condemned the Rabbis for rashness on the subject; for they are bold enough to bring any thing forward as a truth, respecting which there is no certainty.

I have already in part stated the design of the Prophet. The sum of the whole is this: When the Assyrians had for some time disturbed the kingdom of Israel, the Prophet arose and exhorted the Israelites to patience, that is, those who continued to be the servants of God; because God had not wholly forsaken them, but would undertake their cause, for they were under his protection. This is the substance of the whole.

With regard to Nineveh, we have already stated that it was the capital of the empire, as long as the Assyrians did bear rule: for Babylon was a province; that is, Chaldea, whose metropolis was Babylon, was one of the provinces of the empire. The kingdom was afterwards taken away from Meroc-baladan. Some think that Nabuchodonosor was the first monarch of Chaldea. But I bestow no great pains on this subject. It may be, that Meroc-baladan had two names, and this was very common; as we know that the kings of Egypt were called Pharaohs; so the Assyrians and Chaldeans, though otherwise called at first, might have taken a common royal name. Now Nineveh was so celebrated, that another kingdom could not have been established by the Babylonians without demolishing that city. We indeed know that it was very large, as we have stated in

explaining Jonah. It was, as profane writers have recorded, nearly three days' journey in circumference. Then its walls were one hundred feet high, and so wide, that chariots could pass one another without coming in contact: there were one thousand and five hundred towers. We hence see that it was not without reason that this city was formerly so celebrated.

They say that Ninus was its founder, but this is proved to be a mistake by the testimony of Moses in ^{<011001>}Genesis 10. They also imagine that emiramis was the first queen of Babylon, and that the city was built by her: but this is a fable. It may have been that she enlarged the city; but it was Babylon many ages before she was born. So also Ninus may have increased and adorned Nineveh; but the city was founded before his birth. Profane authors call it Ninus, not Nineveh; probably the Hebrew name was corrupted by them, as it is often the case. However this may be, it is evident, that when Meroc-baladan, or his son, who succeeded him, wished to fix the seat of the empire at Babylon, he was under the necessity of destroying Nineveh to prevent rivalry. It thus happened, that the city was entirely demolished. Of this destruction, as we shall see, Nahum prophesied.

LECTURE NINETY-NINTH

CHAPTER 1

<340101> Nahum 1:1

1. The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

1. Onus Nineveh: Liber visionis Nahum Helkosi:

Though a part of what is here delivered belongs to the Israelites and to the Jews, he yet calls his Book by what it principally contains; he calls its *the burden of Nineveh*. Of this word מֶשָׁא, *mesha*, we have spoken elsewhere. Thus the Prophets call their prediction, whenever they denounce any grievous and dreadful vengeance of God: and as they often threatened the Jews, it hence happened, that they called, by way of ridicule, all prophecies by this name מֶשָׁא, *mesha*, a burden.^{F3} But yet the import of the word is suitable. It is the same thing as though Nahum had said that he was sent by God as a herald, to proclaim war on the Ninevites for the sake of the chosen people. The Israelites may have hence learnt how true and unchangeable God was in his covenant; for he still manifested his care for them, though they had by their vices alienated themselves from him.

He afterwards adds, סֵפֶר חֲזוֹן, *sapher chezun*, *the book of the vision*.

This clause signifies, that he did not in vain denounce destruction on the Ninevites, because he faithfully delivered what he had received from God. For if he had simply prefaced, that he threatened ruin to the Assyrian, some doubt might have been entertained as to the event. But here he seeks to gain to himself authority by referring to God's name; for he openly affirms that he brought nothing of his own, but that this burden had been made known to him by a celestial oracle: for חֲזוֹן, *cheze*, means properly to see, and hence in Hebrew a vision is called חֲזוֹן, *chezun*. But the Prophets, when they speak of a vision, do not mean any fantasy or imagination, but that kind of revelation which is mentioned in

<051401> Numbers 14, where God says, that he speaks to his Prophets either

by vision or by dream. We hence see why this was added — that the burden of Nineveh was a vision; it was, that the Israelites might know that this testimony respecting God’s vengeance on their enemies was not brought by a mortal man, and that there might be no doubt but that God was the author of this prophecy.

Nahum calls himself an Elkoshite. Some think that it was the name of his family. The Jews, after their manner, say, that it was the name of his father; and then they add this their common gloss, that Elkos himself was a Prophet: for when the name of a Prophet’s father is mentioned, they hold that he whose name is given was also a Prophet. But these are mere trifles: and we have often seen how great is their readiness to invent fables. Then the termination of the word leads us to think that it was, on the contrary, the proper name of a place; and Jerome tells us that there was in his time a small village of this name in the tribe of Simon. We must therefore understand, that Nahum arose from that town, and was therefore called “the Elkoshite.”^{F4} Let us now proceed —

<340102>Nahum 1:2	
2. God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.	2. Deus aemulator (sic vertunt,) et ulciscens Jehova; ulciscens Jehova, et Dominus irae (vel, possidens iram;) ulciscens Jehova hostes suos, et servans (vel, responens) idem (vel, ipse) inimicis suis.

Nahum begins with the nature of God, that what he afterwards subjoins respecting the destruction of Nineveh might be more weighty, and produce a greater impression on the hearers. The preface is general, but the Prophet afterwards applies it to a special purpose. If he had only spoken of what God is, it would have been frigid at least it would have been less efficacious; but when he connects both together, then his doctrine carries its own force and power. We now apprehend the design of the Prophet. He might indeed have spoken of the fall of the city Nineveh: but if he had referred to this abruptly, profane men might have regarded him with disdain; and even the Israelites would have been perhaps less affected. This is the reason why he shows, in a general way, what sort of Being God

is. And he takes his words from Moses; and the Prophets are wont to borrow from him their doctrine:^{F5} and it is from that most memorable vision, when God appeared to Moses after the breaking of the tables. I have therefore no doubt but that Nahum had taken from ^{<023401>}Exodus 34 what we read here: he does not, indeed, give literally what is found there; but it is sufficiently evident that he paints, as it were, to the life, the image of God, by which his nature may be seen.

He says first, that *God is jealous*; (*amulus* — emulous); for the verb **קנא**, *kona*, means to irritate, and also to emulate, and to envy. When God is said to be **קנוא**, *konua*, the Greeks render it jealous, **ζηλωτην**, and the Latins, emulous, (*amulatorem*) But it properly signifies, that God cannot bear injuries or wrongs. Though God then for a time connives at the wickedness of men? he will yet be the defender of his own glory. He calls him afterwards the avenger, and he repeats this three times, *Jehovah avengeth, Jehovah avengeth and possesseth wrath, he will avenge*. When he says that God *keeps for his enemies*, he means that vengeance is reserved for the unbelieving and the despisers of God. There is the same mode of speaking in use among us, *Je lui garde, et il la garde a ses ennemis*. This phrase, in our language, shows what the Prophet means here by saying, that God keeps for his enemies. And this awful description of God is to be applied to the present case, for he says that he proclaims war against the Ninevites, because they had unjustly distressed the Church of God: it is for this reason that he says, that God is jealous, that God is an avenger; and he confirms this three times, that the Israelites might feel assured that this calamity was seriously announced; for had not this representation been set before them, they might have thus reasoned with themselves, — “We are indeed cruelly harassed by our enemies; but who can think that God cares any thing for our miseries, since he allows them so long to be unavenged?” It was therefore necessary that the Prophet should obviate such thoughts, as he does here. We now more fully understand why he begins in a language so vehement, and calls God a jealous God, and an avenger.

He afterwards adds, that *God possesses wrath*. I do not take **חמה**, *cheme*, simply for wrath, but the passion or he it of wrath. We ought not indeed to suppose, as it has been often observed, that our passions belong to God; for he remains ever like himself. But yet God is said to be for a time

angry, and for ever towards the reprobate, for he is our and their Judge. Here, then, when the Prophet says, that *God is the Lord of wrath*, or that he possesses wrath, he means that he is armed with vengeance and that, though he connives at the sins of men, he is not yet indifferent, nor even delays because he is without power, or because he is idle and careless, but that he retains wraths as he afterwards repeats the same thing, *He keeps for his enemies*.^{F6} In short, by these forms of speaking the Prophet intimates that God is not to be rashly judged of on account of his delay, when he does not immediately execute His judgments; for he waits for the seasonable opportunity. But, in the meantime there is no reason for us to think that he forgets his office when he suspends punishment, or for a season spares the ungodly. When, therefore, God does not hasten so very quickly, there is no ground for us to think that he is indifferent, because he delays his wrath, or retains it, as we have already said; for it is the same thing to retain wrath, as to be the Lord of wrath, and to possess it. It follows —

<340103> Nahum 1:3	
3. The LORD <i>is</i> slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit <i>the wicked</i> : the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds <i>are</i> the dust of his feet.	3. Jehova tardus iris (<i>ad verbum, sed, tardus ad iram</i>) et magnus robore; et purgando non purgabit; Jehova in turbine et tempestate via ejus, et nubes pulvis pedum ejus.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject; and still longer is the preface respecting the nature of God, which however is to be applied, as I have said, to the special objects which hereafter he will state. He says here that God is *slow to wrath*. Though this saying is taken also from Moses yet the Prophet speaks here for the purpose of anticipating an objection; for he obviates the audacity of the ungodly who daringly derided God, when any evil was denounced on them, — Where is the mercy of God? Can God divest himself of his kindness? He cannot deny himself. Thus profane men, under the pretense of honoring God, cast on him the most atrocious slander, for they deprive him of his own power and office: and there is no doubt but that this was commonly done by many of the ungodly in the age

of our Prophet. Hence he anticipates this objection, and concedes that God is slow to wrath. There is then a concession here; but at the same time he says that God is great in strength, and this he says, that the ungodly may not flatter and deceive themselves, when they hear these high attributes given to God, that he is patient, slow to wrath, merciful, full of kindness. “Let them,” he says, “at the same time remember the greatness of God’s power, that they may not think that they have to do with a child.”

We now then see the design of the Prophet: for this declaration — that God hastens not suddenly to wrath, but patiently defers and suspends the punishment which the ungodly deserve. This declaration would not have harmonized with the present argument, had not the Prophet introduced it by way of concession; as though he said, — “I see that the world everywhere trifle with God, and that the ungodly delude themselves with such Sophistries, that they reject all threatening. I indeed allow that God is ready to pardon, and that he descends not to wrath, except when he is constrained by extreme necessity: all this is indeed true; but yet know, that God is armed with his own power: escape then shall none of those who allow themselves the liberty of abusing his patience, notwithstanding the insolence they manifest towards him.”

He now adds, *By clearing he will not clear*. Some translate, “The innocent, he will not render innocent.” But the real meaning of this sentence is the same with that in ^{<023401>}Exodus 34; and what Moses meant was, that God is irreconcilable to the impenitent. It has another meaning at the end of ^{<290301>}Joel 3, where it is said, ‘I will cleanse the blood which I have not cleansed.’ On that text interpreters differ; because they regard not the change in the tense of the verb; for God means, that he would cleanse the filth and defilements of his Church, which he had not previously cleansed. But Moses means, that God deals strictly with sinners, so as to remit no punishment. By clearing then I will not clear; that is, God will rigidly demand an account of all the actions of men; and as there is nothing hid from him, so everything done wickedly by men must come forth, when God ascends his tribunal; he will not clear by clearing, but will rigidly execute his judgment.

There seems to be some inconsistency in saying, — that God is reconcilable and ready to pardon, — and yet that by clearing he will not clear. But the aspect of things is different. We have already stated what the

Prophet had in view: for inasmuch as the ungodly ever promise impunity to themselves, and in this confidence petulantly deride God himself, the Prophet answers them, and declares, that there was no reason why they thus abused God's forbearance, for he says, By clearing he will not clear, that is, the reprobate: for our salvation consists in a free remission of sins; and whence comes our righteousness, but from the imputation of God, and from this — that our sins are buried in oblivion? yea, our whole clearing depends on the mercy of God. But God then exercises also his judgment, and by clearing he clears, when he remits to the faithful their sins; for the faithful by repentance anticipate his judgment; and he searches their hearts, that he may clear them. For what is repentance but condemnation, which yet turns out to be the means of salvation? As then God absolves none except the condemned, our Prophet here rightly declares, *that by clearing he will not clears* that is, he will not remit their sins, except he tries them and discharges the office of a judge; in short, that no sin is remitted by God which he does not first condemn. But with regard to the reprobate, who are wholly obstinate in their wickedness, the Prophet justly declares this to them, — that they have no hope of pardon, as they perversely adhere to their own devices, and think that they can escape the hand of God: the Prophet tells them that they are deceived, for God passes by nothing, and will not blot out one sin, until all be brought to mind.

He afterwards says, that *the way of God is in the whirlwind and the tempest*; that is, that God, as soon as he shows himself, disturbs the whole atmosphere, and excites storms and tempests: and this must be applied to the subject in hand; for the appearance of God is in other places described as lovely and gracious: nay, what else but the sight of God exhilarated the faithful? As soon as God turns away his face, they must necessarily be immersed in dreadful darkness, and be surrounded with horrible terrors. Why then does the Prophet say here, that the *way of God is in the whirlwind and storms*? Even because his discourse is addressed to the ungodly, or to the despisers of God himself, as in ^{<191801>}Psalm 18; where we see him described as being very terrible, — that clouds and darkness are around him, that he moves the whole earth, that he thunders on every side, that he emits smoke from his nostrils, and that he fills the whole world with fire and burning. For what purpose was this done? Because David's object was to set forth the judgments of God, which he had executed on the ungodly. So it is in this place; for Nahum speaks of the future

vengeance, which was then nigh the Assyrians; hence he says, *The way of God is in the whirlwind and tempest*; that is, when God goes forth, whirlwinds and tempests are excited by his presence, and the whole world is put in confusion.

He adds, *that the clouds are the dust of his feet*. When any one with his feet only moves the dust within a small space, some dread is produced: but God moves the dust, not only in one place, — what then? he obscures, and thus covers the whole heaven, *The clouds then are the dust of his feet*.^{F7} We now apprehend the whole meaning of the Prophet, and the purpose for which this description is given. Of the same import is what follows —

<340104> Nahum 1:4	
4. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.	4. Increpat mare et arefaciet illud (hoc est, simulac mare increpauerit, arefaciet;) et omnia flumina exiccat, infirmatur (vel aboletur) Basan et Carmelus, et germen Libani aboletur (vel, infirmatur, est idem verbum.)

Nahum continues his discourse, — that God, in giving proof of his displeasure, would disturb the sea or make it dry. There may be here an allusion to the history, described by Moses; for the Prophets, in promising God’s assistance to his people, often remind them how God in a miraculous manner brought up their fathers from Egypt. As then the passage through the Red Sea was in high repute among the Jews, it may be that the Prophet alluded to that event, (<021422> Exodus 14:22.) But another view seems to me more probable. We indeed know how impetuous an element is that of the sea; and hence in <240501> Jeremiah 5:, God, intending to set forth his own power, says, that it is in his power to calm the raging of the sea, than which nothing is more impetuous or more violent. In the same manner also is the majesty of God described in <182801> Job 28. The meaning of this place, I think, is the same, — that *God by his chiding makes the sea dry*,^{F8} and that he can *dry up the rivers*. That the prophet connects rivers with the sea, confirms what I have just said, — that the passage through the Red Sea is not here referred to; but that the object is to show in general how great is God’s power in governing the whole world.

To the same purpose is what he adds, *Bashan shall be weakened, and Carmel, and the branch of Lebanon shall be weakened*, or destroyed. By these words he intimates, that there is nothing so magnificent in the world, which God changes not, when he gives proofs of his displeasure; as it is said in Psalm 104,

‘Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be renewed;’

and again, ‘Take away thy Spirit,’ or remove it, ‘and all things will return to the dust;’ yea, into nothing. So also Nahum says in this place, “As soon as God shows his wrath, the rivers will dry up, the sea itself will become dry, and then the flowers will fade and the grass will wither;” that is, though the earth be wonderfully ornamented and replenished, yet all things will be reduced to solitude and desolation whenever God is angry. And he afterwards adds —

<div><340105> Nahum 1:5</div>	
5. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.	5. Montes concutientur ab eo (vel, contremiscent, quanquam notat continuum actum; sensus est igitur, montes contremiscere ad nutum ejus,) et colles dissolvent se (hoc est, solvuntur, vel, liquefiunt,) et ardet terra a facie ejus, et orbis et omnes qui habitant in eo.

Nahum continues still on the same subject, — that when God ascended his tribunal and appeared as the Judge of the world, he would not only shake all the elements, but would also constrain them to change their nature. For what can be less consonant to nature than for mountains to tremble, and for hills to be dissolved or to melt? This is more strange than what we can comprehend. But the Prophet intimates that the mountains cannot continue in their own strength, but as far as they are sustained by the favor of God. As soon, then, as God is angry, the mountains melt like snow, and flow away like water. And all these things are to be applied to this purpose, and are designed for this end, — that the wicked might not daringly despise the threatening of God, nor think that they could, through his forbearance, escape the punishment which they deserved: for he will be their Judge, however he may spare them; and though God is ready to

pardon, whenever men hate themselves on account of their sins, and seriously repent; he will be yet irreconcilable to all the reprobate and the perverse. *The mountains*, then, *before him tremble, and the hills dissolve* or melt.

This useful instruction may be gathered from these words, that the world cannot for a moment stand, except as it is sustained by the favor and goodness of God; for we see what would immediately be, as soon as God manifests the signals of his judgment. Since the very solidity of mountains would be as snow or wax, what would become of miserable men, who are like a shadow or an apparition? They would then vanish away as soon as God manifested his wrath against them, as it is so in ^{<193901>}Psalm 39, that men pass away like a shadow. This comparison ought ever to be remembered by us whenever a forgetfulness of God begins to creep over us, that we may not excite his wrath by self-complacencies, than which there is nothing more pernicious. *Burned,* ^{F9} *then shall be the earth, and the world, and all who dwell on it.*

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before us here as in a mirror how dreadful thy wrath is, we may be humbled before thee, and of our ownselves cast ourselves down, that we may not be laid prostrate by thy awful power, — O grant, that we may by this instruction be really prepared for repentance, and so suppliantly deprecate that punishment which we daily deserve through our transgressions, that in the meantime we may be also transformed into the image of thy Son, and put off all our depraved lusts, and be cleansed from our vices, until we shall at length appear in confidence before thee, and be gathered among thy children, that we may enjoy the eternal inheritance of thy heavenly kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDREDTH

<340106> Nahum 1:6

6. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

6. Coram indignatione ejus quis stabit? Et quis consistet in furore irae ejus? Furor ejus effunditur tanquam ignis, et rupes solvuntur ab eo.

The Prophet shows here why he gave in the part noticed in the last lecture, such an awful description of God; it was that men might know, that when they shall come before his tribunal, no one will be able to stand unless supported by his favor. Of the Prophet's main object we have sufficiently spoken, nor is it necessary to repeat here what has been stated. It is enough to bear this in mind, — that as the enemies of the Church relied on their power; and daringly and immoderately raged against it, the judgment of God is here set before them, that they might understand that an account was to be rendered to him whose presence they were not able to bear. But the question has more force than if the Prophet had simply said, that the whole world could not stand before God: for he assumes the character of one adjuring. After having shown how terrible God is, he exclaims, *Who shall stand before his indignation? and who shall be able to bear his wrath?*^{F10} for his indignation, he says, is poured forth as fire. The Hebrew interpreters have here toiled in vain: as the verb נָתַךְ, *nutae*, means to pour forth it seems to them an inconsistent expression, that the wrath of God should be poured forth as fire; for this would be more suitably said of some metal than of fire. But to be poured forth here is nothing else than to be scattered far and wide. *Poured forth* then *is thy wrath as fire*; that is, it advances every moment, as when a fire seizes a whole forest; and when it grows strong, we know how great is its violence, and how suddenly it spreads here and there. But if a different meaning be preferred, I do not much object to it, “His wrath, which is like fire, is poured out.”

Some think that the Prophet alludes to lightnings, which, as it were, melt through the air, at least as they appear to us. But as the meaning of the Prophet is sufficiently evident, there is no need of anxiously inquiring how

fire is poured out: for I have already mentioned, that the Prophet means no other thing than the wrath of God spreads itself, so that it immediately takes hold, not only of one city but also of the widest regions and of the whole world, and is therefore like fire, for it passes through here and there, and that suddenly.

He then says, that *rocks are* also *broken* or dissolved *before him*. We must be aware how great our brittleness is. Since there is no hardness which melts not before God, how can men, who flow away of themselves like water, be so daring as to set themselves up against him? We hence see that the madness of men is here rebuked, who, trusting in their own strength, dare to contend even with God, because they forget their own frailty. This is the import of the whole. It now follows —

<340107> Nahum 1:7	
7. The LORD <i>is</i> good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.	7. Bonus Jehova ad fortitudinem in die angustiae, et cognoscens sperantes in se.

The Prophet expresses more clearly here what we referred to in our last lecture, — that God is hard and severe toward refractory men, and that he is merciful and kind to the teachable and the obedient, — not that God changes his nature, or that like Proteus he puts on various forms; but because he treats men according to their disposition.^{F11} As then the Prophet has hitherto taught us, that God’s wrath cannot be sustained by mortals; so now, that no one might complain of extreme rigor, he, on the other hand, shows that God favors what is right and just, that he is gentle and mild to the meek, and therefore ready to bring help to the faithful, and that he leaves none of those who trust in him destitute of his aid.

First, by saying that *God is good*, he turns aside whatever might be objected on the ground of extreme severity. There is indeed nothing more peculiar to God than goodness. Now when he is so severe, that the very mention of his name terrifies the whole world, he seems to be in a manner different from himself. Hence the Prophet now shows that whatever he had hitherto said of the dreadful judgment of God, is not inconsistent with his goodness. Though God then is armed with vengeance against his

enemies he yet ceases not to be like himself, nor does he forget his goodness. But the Prophet does here also more fully confirm the Israelites and the Jews in the belief, that God is not only terrible to the ungodly, but that, as he has promised to be the guardian of his Church, he would also succor the faithful, and in time alleviate their miseries. *Good* then is *Jehovah*; and it is added *for help*. The intention of the Prophet may be hence more clearly understood, when he says that he is for strength in the day of distress; as though he said, — “God is ever ready to bring help to his people:” ^{F12} And he adds, *in the day of distress*, that the faithful may not think that they are rejected, when God tries their patience by adversities. How much soever then God may subject his people to the cross and to troubles, he still succors them in their distress.

He lastly adds, *He knows them who hope in him*. This to know, is no other thing than not to neglect them. Hence God is said to know them who hope in him, because he always watches over them, and takes care of their safety: in short, this knowledge is nothing else but the care of God, or his providence in preserving the faithful. The Prophet, at the same time, distinguishes the godly and sincere worshipers of God from hypocrites: when God leaves many destitute who profess to believe in him, he justly withholds from them his favor, for they do not from the heart call on him or seek him.

We now then understand the Prophet’s meaning. He shows, on the one hand, that God is armed with power to avenge his enemies; And, on the other, he shows that God, as he has promised, is a faithful guardian of his Church. How is this proved? He sets before us what God is, that he is good; and then adds, that he is prepared to bring help. But he does not in vain mention this particular, — that he takes care of the faithful, who truly, and from the heart, hope in him; it is done, that they may understand that they are not neglected by God, and also that hypocrites may know that they are not assisted, because their profession is nothing else but dissimulation, for they hope not sincerely in God, however they may falsely boast of his name. It now follows —

<340108> Nahum 1:8

8. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

8. Et cum inundatione (vel, per inundationem) transiens consumptionem faciet locoejus; et inimicos ejus persequentur tenebrae (vel, persequi faciet inimicos suos a tenebris.)

The Prophet goes on with the same subject, — that God can easily preserve his people, for he is armed with power sufficient to overcome the whole world. But the Prophet now includes the two things which have been mentioned: Having spoken in general of God’s wrath, and of his goodness towards the faithful, he now applies his doctrine to the consolation of his chosen people. It is then a special application of his doctrine, when he says, *By inundation, he, passing through, will make a consummation in her place.* There is a twofold interpretation of this verse.

Some make this distinction, — that God, as it were, in passing through, would consume the land of Israel and Judah, but that perpetual darkness would rest on his enemies. Hence they think, that the distress of the chosen people is distinguished from the overthrow of the kingdom of Asshur, for God would only for a time punish his own people, while he would give up profane and reprobate men to endless destruction. Then, by *passing through*, must be understood, according to these interpreters, a temporary distress or punishment; and by *darkness*, eternal ruin, or, so to speak, irreparable calamities. But the Prophet, I doubt not, in one connected sentence, denounces ultimate ruin on the Assyrians. *By inundation, then, he, in passing, will make a consummation in her place;* that is, God will suddenly overwhelm the Assyrian, as though a deluge should rise to cover the whole earth. He intimates, that God would not punish the Assyrians by degrees, as men sometimes do, who proceed step by step to avenge themselves, but suddenly. God, he says, will of a sudden thunder against the Assyrians, as when a deluge comes over a land. Hence this passing of God is opposed to long or slow progress; as though he said — “As soon as God’s wrath shall break forth or come upon the Assyrians, it will be all over, for a consummation will immediately follow: by inundation, he, passing through, will make a consummation in her place.”^{F13} By place he means the ground; as though he had said that God

would not only destroy the face of the land, but would also destroy the very grounds and utterly demolish it. A feminine pronoun is here added, because he speaks of the kingdom or nation, as it is usual in Hebrew. But it ought especially to be noticed that the Prophet threatens the Assyrians, that God would entirely subvert them, that he would not only demolish the surface, as, when fire or waters destroy houses, but that the Lord would reduce to nothing the land itself, even the very ground.

He adds, *And pursue his enemies shall darkness*. He has designated the Assyrians only by a pronoun, as the Hebrews are wont to do; for they set down a pronoun relative or demonstrative, and it is uncertain of whom they speak; but they afterwards explain themselves. So does the Prophet in this place; for he directs his discourse to the Israelites and the Jews, and he begins by announcing God’s vengeance on Nineveh and its monarchy; but now he speaks as of a thing sufficiently known and adds, *Pursue shall darkness the enemies of God*. By this second clause he intimates that the ruin of that kingdom would be perpetual. As then he had said that its destruction would be sudden, as God would, as it were, in a moment destroy the whole land; so now he cuts off from them every hope, that they might not think that they could within a while gather strength and rise again as it is the case with the wicked, who ever contend against God. The Prophet then shows that evil which God would bring on them would be without remedy. Some render the verb ירדף, *iredaph*, transitively in this form, “He will pursue his enemies by darkness:” but as to the meaning of the Prophet there is but little or no difference; I therefore leave the point undecided. On the subject itself there is nothing ambiguous; the import of what is said is, — that God would, by a sudden inundation, destroy his enemies, — and that he would destroy them without affording any hope of restoration, for perpetual darkness would follow that sudden deluge. He afterwards adds —

<340109> Nahum 1:9	
9. What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.	9. Quid cogitatis contra Jehovam? Consumptionem ipse facit; non consurget iterum afflictio.

Some interpreters so consider this verse also, as though the Prophet had said, that the calamity of the chosen people would not be a destruction, as God would observe some moderation and keep within certain limits. The unbelieving, we know, immediately exult, whenever the children of God are oppressed by adverse things, as though it were all over with the Church. Hence the Prophet here, according to these interpreters, meets and checks this sort of petulance, What imagine ye against God? He will indeed afflict his Church, but he will not repeat her troubles, for he will be satisfied with one affliction. They also think that the kingdom of Judah is here compared with the kingdom of Israel: for the kingdom of Israel had been twice afflicted: for, first, four tribes had been led away, and then the whole kingdom had been overturned. As then one calamity had been inflicted by Shalmanezar, and another by Tiglathpilezar, they suppose that there is here an implied comparison, as though the Prophet said, “God will spare the kingdom of Judah, and will not repeat his vengeance, as it happened to the kingdom of Israel.” But this meaning is forced and too far-fetched. The Prophet then, I doubt not, continues here his discourse, and denounces perpetual ruin on the enemies of the Church. He says first, *What imagine ye against Jehovah?* He exults over the Assyrians, because they thought that they had to do only with mortals, and also with a mean people, and now worn out by many misfortunes. For we know that the kingdom of Judah had been weakened by many wars before the Assyrians made an irruption into the land: they had suffered two severe and grievous attacks from their neighbors, the king of Israel and the king of Syria; for then it was that they made the Assyrians their confederates. When therefore the Assyrians came against Judea, they thought that they would have no trouble in obtaining victory, as they engaged in war with an insignificant people, and as we have said, worn out by evils. But the Prophet shows here that the war was with the living God, and not with men, as they falsely thought. *What then imagine ye against Jehovah?* as though he said, “Know ye not that this people are under the care and protection of God? Ye cannot then attack the kingdom of Judah without having God as your opponent. As it is certain that this people are defended by a divine power, there is no reason for you to think that you will be victorious.” At the same time, I know not why the Prophet’s words should be confined to the tribe of Judah, since the purpose was to comfort the Israelites as well as the Jews.

Now this is a very useful doctrine; for the Prophet teaches us in general, that the ungodly, whenever they harass the Church, not only do wrong to men, but also fight with God himself; for he so connects us with himself, that all who hurt us touch the apple of his eye, as he declares in another place, (^{<380208>} Zechariah 2:8.) We may then gather invaluable comfort from these words; for we can fully and boldly set up this shield against our enemies, — that they devise their counsels, and make efforts against God, and assail him; for he takes us under his protection for this end, that whenever we are injured, he may stand in the middle as our defender. This is one thing.

Now in the second clause he adds, that he will make a complete end, *Rise up again shall not distress*; that is, God is able to reduce you to nothing, so that there will be no need to assail you the second time. This passage, we know, has been turned to this meaning, — that God does not punish men twice nor exceed moderation in his wrath: but this is wholly foreign to the mind of the Prophet. I have also said already that I do not approve of what others have said, who apply this passage to the Church and especially to the kingdom of Judah. For I thus simply interpret the words of the Prophet, — that God can with one onset, when it seems good to him, so destroy his enemies, that there will be no need of striving with them the second time: *Il n'y faudra plus retourner*, as we say in our language. God then will make a full end; that is, he will be able in one moment to demolish his enemies and the ruin will be complete, that is, the wasting will be entire. There will be no *distress again* or the second time; for it will be all over with the enemies of God; not that God observes always the same rule when he punishes his enemies, nor does Nahum here prescribe any general rule; but he simply means, that God, whenever it pleases him, instantly destroys his enemies. He afterwards adds —

<340110> **Nahum 1:10**

10. For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

10. Qui ad spinas perplexas et tanquam potatione sua ebrios (vel, et ebrios ubi inebriati fuerint; potest enim duplex sensus; postea) devorabuntur tanquam stipulae ariditatis planae (vel, quasi stipula ariditatis in plenitudine, vel, arida in plenitudine.)

He goes on with this same subject, — that Gods when he pleases to exercise his power, can, with no difficulty, consume his enemies: for the similitude, which is here added, means this, — that nothing is safe from God’s vengeance; for by perplexed thorns he understands things difficult to be handled. When thorns are entangled, we dare not, with the ends of our fingers, to touch their extreme parts; for wherever we put our hands, thorns meet and prick us. As then pricking from entangled thorns make us afraid, so none of us dare to come nigh them. Hence the Prophet says, they who are as *entangled thorns*; that is “However thorny ye may be, however full of poison, full of fury, full of wickedness, full of frauds, full of cruelty, ye may be, still the Lord can with one fire consume you, and consume you without any difficulty.” They were then as entangled thorns.

And then, *as drunken by their own drinking*. If we read so, the meaning is, — God or God’s wrath will come upon you as on drunker men; who, though they exult in their own intemperance, are yet enervated, and are not fit for fighting, for they have weakened their strength by extreme drinking. There seems indeed to be much vigor in a drunken man, for he swaggers immoderately and foams out much rage; but yet he may be cast down by a finger; and even a child can easily overcome a drunken person. It is therefore an apt similitude, — that God would manage the Assyrians as the drunken are wont to be managed; for the more audacity there is in drunken men, the easier they are brought under; for as they perceive no danger, and are, as it were, stupefied, so they run headlong with greater impetuosity. “In like manners” he says, “extreme satiety will be the cause of your ruin, when I shall attack you. Ye are indeed very violent; but all this your fury is altogether drunkenness: *Come*, he says, *to you shall the vengeance of God as to those drunken with their own drinking.*”^{F14}

Some render the last words, “To the drunken according to their drinking;” and this sense also is admissible; but as the Prophet’s meaning is still the same, I do not contend about words. Others indeed give to the Prophet’s words a different sense: but I doubt not but that he derides here that haughtiness by which the Assyrians were swollen, and compares it to drunkenness; as though he said, “Ye are indeed more than enough inflated and hence all tremble at your strength; but this your excess rather debilitates and weakens your powers. When God then shall undertake to destroy you as drunken men, your insolence will avail you nothing; but, on the contrary, it will be the cause of your ruin as ye offer yourselves of your own accord; and the Lord will easily cast you down, as when one, by pushing a drunken man, immediately throws him on the ground.”

And these comparisons ought to be carefully observed by us: for when there seems to be no probability of our enemies being destroyed, God can with one spark easily consume them. How so? for as fire consumes thorns entangled together, which no man dares to touch, so God can with one spark destroy all the wicked, however united together they may be. And the other comparison affords us also no small consolation; for when our enemies are insolent, and throw out high swelling words, and seem to frighten and to shake the whole world with their threatening, their excess is like drunkenness; there is no strength within; they are frantic but not strong, as is the case with all drunken men.

And he says, *They shall be devoured as stubble of full dryness.* מלא, *mela*, means not only to be full, but also to be perfect or complete. Others render the words, “As stubble full of dryness,” but the sense is the same. He therefore intimates, that there would be nothing to prevent God from consuming the enemies of his Church; for he would make dry their whole vigor, so that they would differ nothing from stubble, and that very dry, which is in such a state, that it will easily take fire. It follows —

<340111> Nahum 1:11	
11. There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counselor.	11. Ex te egressus est cogitans (vel, consultans) contra Jehovam malum, consultor Beliaal (hoc est, impius, vel, perversus; alii vertunt, Nihili.)

The Prophet now shows why God was so exceedingly displeased with the Assyrians, and that was, because he would, as a protector of his Church, defend the distressed against those who unjustly oppressed them. The Prophet then designed here to give the Jews a firm hope, so that they might know that God had a care for their safety; for if he had only threatened the Assyrians without expressing the reason, of what avail could this have been to the Jews? It is indeed gratifying and pleasing when we see our enemies destroyed; but this would be a cold and barren comfort, except we were persuaded that it is done by God's judgment, because he loves us, because he would defend us, having embraced us with paternal love; but when we know this, we then triumph even when in extreme evils. We are indeed certain of our salvation, when God testifies, and really proves also, that he is not only propitious to us, but that our salvation is an object of his care. This is the Prophet's design when he thus addresses Nineveh.

From thee has gone forth a devisor of evil against Jehovah, an impious adviser. The manner of speaking is much more emphatical, when he says, that the Assyrians consulted against God, than if he had said, that they had consulted against the Jews, or consulted against the chosen people of God.

But though this was said of the Jews, let us yet remember that it belongs also to us. The Prophet confirms the doctrine which I lately alluded to, that whenever the ungodly cause trouble to us, they carry on war with God himself, that whenever they devise any evil against us, they run headlong against him. For God sets up himself as a shield, and declares, that he will protect under the shadow of his wings all those who commit themselves to his protection. If we then lie hid under the guardianship of God, and flee to him in all our adversities, and while patiently enduring all wrongs, implore his protection and help, whosoever then will rise up against us will have God as his enemy. Why so? because he consults against him. And this reason shows, that whatever the Prophet has hitherto said against the Assyrians ought to be extended indiscriminately to all the enemies of the Church. For why did God threaten the Assyrians with a sudden inundation and with perpetual darkness? The reason is here subjoined, — because they consulted against him and his Church. The same thing then will also happen to our enemies, provided we remain quiet, as it has been said, under the protection of God.

But when he says that he *had gone forth from that city who contrived evil against Jehovah*, — this ought not to be confined to Sennacherib, but must rather be viewed as common to all the Assyrians; as though he said, “Thou produces the fruit which thou shalt eat; for from thee will arise the cause of thy ruin. There is no reason for thee to expostulate with God, as though he cruelly raged against thee; for from thee has gone forth he who devised evil against Jehovah: thou reapest now the reward worthy of thy bringing forth; for where have originated counsels against the Church of God, except in thine own bosom, and in thine own bowels? The evil then which has proceeded from thee shall return on thine own head.”

He then adds, *An impious consuler*, or counselor, בליעל יועץ, *ivots beliol*. Respecting the word בליעל, *beliol*, the Hebrews themselves are not agreed. There are those who suppose it to be a compound word, יעל בל, It profits not; and they think that it is applied to designate things of nought as well as men of nought.^{F15} There are others who, like *Jerome*, render it, Without a yoke, but without reason. Then *Beliol*, is properly a vain thing, which is wholly unsubstantial; and so it designates a man in whom there is no integrity. It is also applied to all the wicked, and to their crimes: hence a thing or work of Belial is said to be any heinous sin or a detestable crime; and the man who acts perversely and wickedly is called Belial. And Paul takes Belial simply for the very gravity of Satan, and of all the wicked; for he opposes Belial to Christ, (<470615> 2 Corinthians 6:15.) We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet to be this, — that God denounces war on the Assyrians, because they made war unjustly on his people, and consulted not only against the Jews, but also against God, who had taken them, as it has been stated, under his own keeping and protection. It follows —

<340112> Nahum 1:12	
12. Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.	12. Sic dixit Jehovah, Si tranquilli fuerint, utcunque fuerint multi (vel, potentes;) sic etiam tollentur et transibit: et si afflixerim te, non affligam te amplius.

The Prophet pursues here the same subject; but expresses more clearly what might have been doubtful, — that whatever strength there might be in the Assyrians, it could not resist the coming of God's vengeance. For *thus saith Jehovah, Though they be quiet and also strong*, etc. I cannot now finish this subject, but will only say this, — The Prophet intimates that though Nineveh promised to itself a tranquil state, because it was well fortified, and had a wide and large extent of empire, yet this thy peace, he says, or this thy confidence and security, shall not be an impediment, that the hand of God should not be extended to thee. *Though*, then, they be many or strong etc.; for we can render רַבִּים, *rebim*, strong as well as many; but either would suit this place; for we understand the Prophet's meaning to be, that all God's enemies would be cut off, however secure they might be, while depending on their own strength and fortresses. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as thou sees thy enemies at this day raging with cruel, yea, with diabolic fury against thy Church, we may find thee to be the same as the faithful in all former ages had found thee, even a defender of the safety of those who truly, and with a sincere heart, called on thee, and sought thee in extreme necessity; and do thou, at this day, stretch forth thine hand, and so restrain the fury which thou sees is against all thy servants and thy children, that the wicked may at length really find, even to their ruin, that they fight not with miserable mortals, disheartened and without defense, but with thine ineffable power, that they may be confounded, though not ashamed, and that, however they may glamour against thee and thine invincible hand, they may yet become an example and a manifest evidence, that thou art not only faithful in thy promises, but also armed with power, by which thou canst execute whatsoever thou hast promised respecting the preservation of thy Church, until thou at length gatherest us into that blessed rest, which has been provided for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND FIRST

We stated yesterday what the Prophet meant by these words, that *though* the Assyrians *were quiet and many*, they would yet be suddenly *cut off* by the Lord. He clearly intimates, that the wicked are never so fortified by their own forces or by the help of others, but that the Lord can, without any difficulty, destroy them.

As to the words, some connect the particle כֵּן, *can* with what he had said, “Though they be quiet,” and give this version, “Though they be quiet and in like manner many, that is, though they be secure, thinking themselves safe from all danger, and so also trust in their own number, yet they shall be removed.” But the repetition of כֵּן in Hebrew is common; and the sentence may be thus explained, Though they be quiet, and how many soever they may be, yet thus shall they be removed. וְכֵן וְכֵן, *ucan ucan*, that is, “As they are many, so also the many shall be destroyed.” With regard to the verb גָּזַז *guz*, (but some, though not correctly, derive it from גָּזַז, *gezaz*,) I take it in the sense of removing from the middle, of destroying: it properly means in Hebrew to remove to a distance, though almost all interpreters render it, “They are shorn,” which ought rather to be, “They shall be shorn:” and both the verbs, גָּזַז, *guz* as well as גָּזַז, *gizaz*, mean to clip or shear: but as the other sense suits the form of the Prophet’s discourse better, I hesitate not thus to render it, “They shall be taken away,” or destroyed. What the Prophet next adds, וְעָבַר, *uober*, and he shall pass, is applied by some to the angel, by whom the army of Sennacherib was destroyed. Others think that a temporary pestilence is meant; as though he had said, that it would only pass through. But the Prophet seems to refer to a former clause, where he said, that God would suddenly destroy the Assyrians as it were with a sudden and unexpected deluge. This, then, is the most suitable meaning, that however much the Assyrians excelled in number of men and in strength, they would yet be suddenly destroyed; for the Lord would pass through, that is, the Lord would by one onset reduce them to nothing. ^{F16}

Then it follows, *Though (and, literally) I have afflicted thee, yet afflict thee will I no more*. But this sentence must be thus rendered, ‘Though thee have I afflicted, I will not afflict thee any more.’ The Prophet meets a doubt,

which might have laid hold on the perplexed minds of the faithful; for they saw that God had been hitherto angry with them. They might then have succumbed under their griefs had it not been added, that they had indeed been afflicted for a time, but that God would now put an end to his severity, for he would no longer afflict them. It is indeed certain, that they were often afflicted afterwards; but this ought to be confined to what the Assyrians had done; for we know that our Prophet directed his predictions chiefly against that monarchy: and then the monarchy of Babylon succeeded; but it was necessary that Nineveh should be first subverted, and that the government should be transferred to the Chaldeans, that the Israelites as well as the Jews might know, that that monarchy had been overthrown, because it rebelled against God himself by distressing his own people.

We now then perceive the intention of the Prophet: after having threatened the Assyrians, he now turns his discourse to the Israelites, *Though I have afflicted thee, I will no more afflict thee*; that is, There is no reason for the faithful to despond, because they have been hitherto severely treated by God; let them on the contrary remembers that these scourges are temporary, and that God’s displeasure with his elect people and his Church is such that he observes moderation; for this must ever be fulfilled,

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‘In the moment of mine indignation I smote thee; but I will show thee perpetual mercies,’ (<235408> Isaiah 54:8.)

This promise has been once given to the Church; and it is now in force, and will be in force to the end of the world. Thus we see that the Prophet obviated a doubt, lest the faithful should think that there was no hope for them, because they had found God so severe towards them; for he says that God was satisfied with the punishment which he had inflicted and that he would no longer afflict his people. It follows —

<340113>Nahum 1:13	
13. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.	13. Et nunc conteram (<i>vel</i> , confringam) jugum ejus ab te, et vincula tua disrumpam.

He confirms what the former verse contains, — that God would now cease from his rigor; for he says, that the deliverance of this chosen people was nigh, when God would break down and reduce to nothing the tyranny of that empire. This verse clearly shows, that a clause in the preceding verse ought not to be so restricted as it is by some interpreters, who regard it as having been said of the slaughter of the army of Sennacherib. But the Prophet addresses here in common both the Israelites and the Jews, as it is evident from the context; and this verse also sufficiently proves, the Prophet does not speak of the Jews only; for they had not been so subdued by the Assyrians as the Israelites had been. I indeed allow that they became tributaries; for when they had broken their covenant, the Assyrian, after having conquered the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Syria, extended his arms at length to Judea. It is then certain, that they had been in some measure under the yoke; but it was not so hard a servitude that the words of the Prophet could be applied to it. I therefore take the expression generally, that God would free from the tyranny of Nineveh his own people, both the Israelites and the Jews. If any one objects and says, that the Israelites were never delivered. This indeed is true; but as to Nineveh, they were delivered when the empire was transferred to the Chaldeans, and Babylon became the seat of the empire.

We now then see, that the meaning of our Prophet is simply this, — that though God by the Assyrians chastised his people, he yet did not forget his covenant, for the Assyrians were punished. It was then sufficient for his purpose to say that the Jews as well as the Israelites were no longer under the yoke of Nineveh, how much soever they might have afterwards suffered under other tyrants. And what is said about the yoke being broken, belongs also in some measure to the Jews; for when we extend this to both, the Israelites and also the Jews, it would not be unsuitable to say, that they were both under the yoke and bound with chains. For though the servitude of Israel was hard, yet the Jews had also been deprived of their liberty. It is then right that this which is said should be taken generally, *I will now break his yoke from thee, and thy bonds will I burst.*

Now this verse teaches us, that the people were not so subdued by the tyranny of their enemies, but that their deliverance was always in the hand and power of God. For how came it, that the Assyrians prevailed against the Israelites, and then subjugated the Jews, except that they were as a rod in the hand of God? So Isaiah teaches us in the tenth chapter. Though they

armed themselves, they were yet but as the weapons and arms of God, for they could not have made any movement, except the Lord had turned their course, wherever he pleased, as when one throws a javelin or a dart with his hand. It follows —

<340114>Nahum 1:14	
14. And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.	14. Et mandavit super te Jehova, Ne seminetur ex nomine tuo posthac; e domo (vel, e templo) deorum tuorum excidam sculptile et conflatile; ponam sepulchrum tuum, quia execrabilis es (aut, vilis factus es.)

Nahum explains more clearly, and without a figure, what he had previously said of darkness, — that the kingdom of Nineveh would be so overturned, that it could never recruit its strength and return again to its pristine state. He indeed addresses the king himself, but under his person he includes no doubt the whole kingdom.

Commanded then has Jehovah, he says, *respecting thee, let there not be sown of thy name*; that is, God has so decreed, that the memory of thy name shall not survive: for to sow from the name of one, is to extend his fame. When, therefore, God entirely exterminates a race from the world, or when he obliterates a nation, he is said to command that there should not be sown of such a name; that is, that there should be no propagation of that name. In short, our Prophet denounces on the Assyrians a ruin, from which they were never to rise again. And when such a command is ascribed to God, it means, that by the sole bidding of God both nations and kingdoms are propagated, and are also abolished and destroyed: for what is said of individuals ought to be extended to all nations, ‘Seed, or the fruit of the womb,’ as it is said in the Psalms, ‘is the peculiar gift of God,’ (<19C701>Psalm 127.) For how comes it, that many are without children, while others have a large and a numerous family, except that God blesses some, and makes others barren? The same is to be thought of nations; the Lord propagates them and preserves their memory; but when it seems good to him, he reduces them to nothing, so that no seed remains. And

when the Prophet testifies, that this is the command of Jehovah, he confirms the faith of the Israelites and of the Jews, that they might not doubt, but that the Assyrians would perish without any hope of restoration; for it was so decreed by Heaven.

He afterwards adds, *From the house*, or from the temple, *of thy gods will I cut off graven images*. It is probable, and it is the commonly received opinion, that the Prophet alludes here to Sennacherib, who was slain in the temple of his idol by his own sons, shortly after his return from Judea, when the siege of the holy city was miraculously raised through the instrumentality of an angel. As then he was slain in the temple, and it was by his murder profaned, I am inclined to receive what almost all others maintain, that there is here a reference to his person: but, at the same time, the Prophet no doubt describes, under the person of one king, the destruction and ruin of the whole kingdom. Gods indeed, did at that time make known what he had determined respecting the empire of Nineveh and all the Assyrians; for from this event followed also the change, that Nebuchodonosor transferred the empire to Babylon, and that the whole race, and every one who assumed power, became detestable. When, therefore, the Assyrians were torn by intestine discords, it was an easy matter for the Chaldeans to conquer them. Hence the Prophet does not here predict respecting one king only; but as his murder was, as it were, a prelude of the common ruin, the Prophet relates this history as being worthy of being remembered, — that the temple would be profaned by the murder of Sennacherib, and that then the monarchy would be soon transferred to the Chaldeans.

When he says, *I will appoint thy sepulcher*, he connects this clause with the former; for how was it that idols were cut off from that temple, except that that tragic deed rendered the place detestable? For there is no one who feels not a horror at such a base crime as that of children killing their father with their own hands. We know when a proud woman at Rome ordered her chariot to be drawn over the dead body of her father, the road was counted polluted. So also the temple was no doubt viewed as polluted by the murder of the king. Then these two clauses ought to be read together, that God would cut off idols and graven images from the temple, — and then, that the sepulcher of Sennacherib would be there.

He adds, *For thou art execrable.* ^{F17} I have rendered קלות, *kolut*, a thing to be abominated. It may indeed be referred to that history; but I take it by itself as meaning, that Sennacherib was to be abominable, and not he alone, but also the whole royal family, and the monarchy of Nineveh. For it is not consistent, as we have said already, to say, that all these things refer to the person of Sennacherib; for the Prophet speaks of the destruction of the city and nation, and that generally; at the same time, this does not prevent him from referring, as it were, in passing, to the person of Sennacherib.

It must, at the same time, be noticed, that the vain confidence, which the Assyrian kings placed in their idols and graven images, is here indirectly reproofed; for we know that idolaters not only confide in their own strength, but that a part of their hope is also founded on their superstitions. Hence the Prophet says, that their temple was to be profaned by God, so that no aid would remain to the Assyrians, to the kings themselves any more than to the whole people. Let us proceed —

<340115>Nahum 1:15	
15. ^{F18} Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.	15. Ecce super montes pedes annunciantis, promulgantis pacem: celebra Jehudah solennitates tuas, redde vota tua; quia non adjiciet posthac ad transeundum in te, impius (Beliaal) in totum excisus est.

The Prophet again teaches us, that whatever he prophesied respecting the destruction of the city Nineveh, was for this end, — that God, by this remarkable evidence, might show that he had a care for his people, and that he was not unmindful of the covenant he had made with the children of Abraham. This prophecy would have otherwise produced no salutary effect on the Israelites; they might have thought that it was by chance, or by some fatal revolution, or through some other cause, that Nineveh had been overthrown. Hence the Prophet shows, that the ruin of the city, and of the monarchy of Nineveh, would be a proof of the paternal love of God towards his chosen people, and that such a change was to be made for the sake of one people, because God, though he had for a time punished the

Israelites, yet purposed that some seed should remain, for it would have been inconsistent, that the covenant, which was to be inviolate, should be entirely abolished. We now then understand the Prophet's object, and how this verse is to be connected with the rest of the context.

Behold, he says, *on the mountains the feet of him who announces peace.*^{F19}

Some think that the Prophet alludes to the situation of Jerusalem. We indeed know that mountains were around it: but the Prophet speaks more generally, — that heralds of peace shall ascend to the tops of mountains, that their voice might be more extensively heard: *Behold*, he says, *on the mountains the feet of him who announces peace*; for all the roads had been before closed up, and hardly any one dared to whisper. If any one inquired either respecting peace or war, there was immediate danger lest he should fall under suspicion. As then the Assyrians, by their tyrannical rule, had deprived the Israelites of the freedom of speech, the Prophet says now, that the feet of those who should announce peace would be on the mountains; that is, that there would be now free liberty to proclaim peace on the highest places. By *feet*, he means, as we have explained, coming; and Isaiah speaks a similar language,

‘How beautiful are the feet of those who announce peace,
who announce good things!’ (<235207> Isaiah 52:7.)

Arise, then, he says, shall heralds of peace everywhere: and the repetition in other words seems to express this still more clearly; for he says, *of him who announces and causes to hear*. He might have simply said מְבַשֵּׁר, *mebeshher*, but he adds מְשַׁמֵּיעַ, *meshemio*; not only, he says, he will announce peace, but also with a clear and loud voice, so that his preaching may be heard from the remotest places. We now perceive what the Prophet had in view, and what his words import.

Now he adds, *Celebrate, Judah, thy festal days*. It is indeed a repetition of the same word, as if we were to say in Latin, *Festiva festivitates*, feast festivities; but this has nothing to do with the meaning of the passage. I am disposed to subscribe to the opinion of those who think, that there is here an intimation of the interruption of festal days; for so disordered were all things at Jerusalem and in the country around, that sacrifices had ceased, and festal days were also intermitted; for sacred history tells us, that the Passover was celebrated anew under Hezekiah, and also under Josiah. This omission no doubt happened, owing to the wars by which the country had

been laid waste. Hence the Prophet now intimates, that there would be quietness and peace for the chosen people, so that they might all without any fear ascend to Jerusalem, and celebrate their festal days, and give thanks to the Lord, and rejoice before him, according to the language often used by Moses. At the same time, the Prophet no doubt reminds the Jews for what end the Lord would break off the enemy's yoke, and exempt them from servile fear, and that was, that they might sacrifice to God and worship him, while enjoying their quiet condition. And that he addresses Judah is not done without reason; for though the kingdom of Israel was not as yet so rejected, that God did not regard them as his people, yet there were no legitimate sacrifices among them, and no festal days which God approved: we indeed know that the worship which prevailed there was corrupt and degenerated. Inasmuch then as God repudiated the sacrifices which were offered in Israel, Nahum addresses here his discourse to Judah only; but yet he intimates, that God had been thus bountiful to the Israelites, that they, remembering their deliverance, might give him thanks.

Let us then know, that when the Lord grants us tranquillity and preserves us in a quiet state, this end ought ever to be kept in view, — that it is his will, that we should truly serve him. But if we abuse the public peace given us, and if pleasures occasion a forgetfulness of God, this ingratitude will by no means be endured. We ought, indeed, in extreme necessities to sacrifice to God, as we have need then especially of fleeing to his mercy; but as we cannot so composedly worship him in a disturbed state of mind, he is pleased to allow us peaceable times. Now, if we misapply this leisure, and indulge in sloth, yea, if we become so heedless as to neglect God, this as I have said will be an intolerable evil. Let us then take notice of the Prophet's words in setting forth the design of God, — that he would free his people from the power of the Assyrians, that they might celebrate their festal days.

He adds, *Pay thy vows*. He not only speaks here of the ordinary sacrifices and of the worship which had been prescribed; but he also requires a special proof of gratitude for having been then delivered by the hand of God; for we know what paying of vows meant among the Hebrews: they were wont to offer peace-offerings, when they returned victorious from war, or when they were delivered from any danger, or when they were relieved from some calamity. The Prophet therefore now shows, that it was right to pay vows to God, inasmuch as he had dealt so bountifully

with his people; as it is said in Psalm 116, ‘What shall I return to the Lord for all his benefits which he has bestowed on me? The cup of salvation will I take, and on the name of the Lord will I call.’ We also find it thus written in Hosea,

‘The calves of thy lips to me shalt thou render,’
(^{<281401>}Hosea 14:13.)

We now perceive what Nahum substantially meant, — that when peace was restored, the people were not to bury so great and so remarkable a kindness of God, but to pay their vows; that is, that the people were to testify that God was the author of their deliverance, and that the redemption which they had obtained was the peculiar work of God.

It follows, “Add no more to pass through thee shall Belial, for utterly is he cut off.” This passage must not be explained in a general sense; for we know that the Chaldeans became more grievous to the Jews than the Assyrians had been; but the Prophet here refers especially to the Ninevites, that is, to the Assyrians, whose metropolis, as it has been said, was Nineveh. *That wicked one then shall not add any more to pass through thee. — Why? for he is entirely cut off.* This reason given by the Prophet clearly proves, that he speaks not of the wicked generally, but that he especially points out the Assyrians. Now follows —

CHAPTER 2

<340201> Nahum 2:1-2

1. He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.

1. Ascendit destructor coram facie tua; custodi munitionem, respice viam, robora lumbos, fortifica vires valde:

2. For the Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

2. Quia abstulit (alii vertunt, recedere fecit; alii, quiescere fecit) Jehova fortitudinem (alii, superbiam) Jacob, sicuti fortitudinem (vel, superbiam, est idem nomen) Israel; quia evacuarunt avacuantes, et palmites eorum succiderunt.

The waster spoken of here by the Prophet, some consider him to have been Sennacherib, and others, Nebuchodonosor. The verb **עלה**, *ole*, is also variously explained: it is often taken metaphorically in Hebrew for vanishing, as we say in French, *Il s'en va en fumee*; for smoke ascends, and this is the reason for the metaphor. They then elicit this meaning, — that a destroyer had ascended before the face of the chosen people, that is, openly; so that it was evidently the work of God, that the Assyrians vanished, who had come to lay waste the whole land: Vanished then has the destroyer; and then *before thy face*, that is, manifestly, and before thine eyes. **מצורה נצור**, *nutsur metsure*, *guard the fortress*; that is let every one return to his own city, and keep watch, as it is usually done; for the country shall be left without men; and watch the way, that is, look out which way Sennacherib took in coming to assail the holy city; that way shall be now free from enemies; and then, keep firm or strengthen *the loins*, for **חזק**, *chesek*, sometimes means to keep firm, — keep *firm* then or strengthen the loins, that thou mayest not relax as before, but stand courageously, for there is no one who can terrify thee; and, lastly, *fortify strength greatly*, that is, doubt not but thou shalt be hereafter strong enough to retain thy position; for cut off shall be that monarchy, which

has been an oppression to thee. But others take a different view and say, — that the destroyer had ascended, that is, that Sennacherib had come; and what follows, they think, was intended to strike terror, as though the Prophet said “Now while ye are besieged keep watch, and be careful to preserve your fortresses and strengthen all your strongholds; but all this will avail nothing. — Why? Because God has taken away the pride of Jacob as he has the pride of Israel.” This is the second explanation. Others again think, that the Prophet addresses here the Assyrians, and that Nebuchodonosor is here called a waster, by whom the empire was removed, and Nineveh, as it has often been stated, was destroyed. According to these interpreters, the Prophet here denounces ruin on the Assyrians in this manner, — “The destroyer now ascends before thy face.” The Assyrians might indeed have regarded such threatening with disdain, when they were surrounded by many provinces and had cities well fortified: — “It will not be,” he says, “according to your expectation; the waster will yet come” before thy face; and how much soever thou mayest now guard thy fortresses, watch thy ways, and carefully look around to close up every avenue against thy enemies, thou wilt yet effect nothing; strengthen the loins as much as thou pleasest and increase thy power, yet this shall be useless and vain.” If this view be approved, it will be in confirmation of what has been previously said, — that God had now determined to destroy the city Nineveh and the empire possessed by the Assyrians. This meaning then is not unsuitable; but if we receive this view, something additional must also be stated, and that is, — that God now designed to destroy Nineveh and its monarchy, because it had humbled more than necessary his people, the kingdom of Judah, as well as the ten tribes. I cannot proceed farther now.

PRAYER.

Grant Almighty God, that since we are daily chastised by thy scourges, we may know that we are justly punished by thee, and so examine our whole life, that with true and sincere confession we may humbly flee to thy mercy, which is offered to us by thy gospel in Christ our Lord; and since thou dost also show us so many favors, may we not be ungrateful, and may no forgetfulness of thy grace creep over us, but may we especially exercise ourselves through our whole life in the worship of thy name and in giving thanks to thee, and so offer to thee, with our tongues,

the sacrifices of praise, that our whole life may be consistent, and thus glorify thy name on earth, that at length we may be gathered into thy celestial kingdom through the same Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SECOND

We said yesterday that some interpreters regard these words of the Prophet, *Ascended has the destroyer before it face, guard the fortress*, as having a reference to Sennacherib; that is, that God had taken him away and made him like mist to disappear. We also said, that some elicit this meaning, — that Sennacherib ascended into Judea and filled the whole country with terror, and that he had at length laid it wholly waste. But I am disposed to take their view, who think that this is said of Nebuchodonosor, the waster of Nineveh: as he had been raised up by God to overturn the tyranny of that city, the Prophet ridicules all the efforts and preparations made by the Ninevites (as it is usual when a country is invaded) to oppose him. He therefore says, *guard the fortress, watch the way, confirm the loins, and strengthen thy courage greatly*. But these are ironical expressions; as though he said, Whatever the Ninevites may contrive to defend themselves against the assault of their enemies will be all in vain.^{F20}

What is now subjoined has been added, in my view, in reference to what had already taken place, that is that God *had taken away the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel*. Some give this rendering, “God has made to returns or to rest;” and they take גָּאון, *gaun*, in a good sense, as meaning courage or glory. The sense, according to these, would be, — that God, having routed the army of Sennacherib, or destroyed the Assyrians, would make the ancient glory of his people to return; for both kingdoms had fallen. They then understand this to have been said respecting the restoration of the whole people; and they who translate, “he will make to rest,” think that continual peace is here promised to the Israelites, as well as to the Jews. But, on the contrary, it appears to me, that the Prophet shows, that it was the ripened time for the destruction of the city Nineveh, for God had now humbled his people. *He had then taken away the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel*; that is, God, having first corrected the pride of Israel, had also applied the same remedy to Judah: thus the whole people were humbled, and had left off their extreme height; for גָּאון, *gaun*, for the most part, is taken in a bad sense, for haughtiness or pride. This then is the reason why God now declares, that the ruin of Nineveh was

nigh at hand; it was so, because the Jews and the Israelites had been sufficiently brought down. This sense is the most suitable.

And then for the same purpose is the next clause, — that *the emptiers had emptied*, that is that robbers had pillaged them, and left nothing to remain for them. There is a passage in Isaiah which corresponds with this, where it is said, — that when the Lord had completed his work on mount Zion and in Jerusalem, he would then turn his vengeance against the Assyrians, (<231012> Isaiah 10:12:) but why were they not sooner destroyed? Because the Lord designed to employ them for the purpose of chastising the Jews. Until then the whole work of God was completed, that is, until he had so corrected their pride, as wholly to cast it down, it was not his purpose to destroy the Ninevites; but they were at length visited with destruction. The same thing does our Prophet now teach us here, — that Nebuchodonosor would come to demolish Nineveh, when the Lord had taken away the haughtiness of his people.^{F21}

What follows, *And they have destroyed their shoots*, or their branches, I take metaphorically, because the Israelites, as to outward appearances had been pulled up by the roots; for before the eyes of their enemies they were reduced to nothing, and their very roots were torn up so that they perceived nothing left. The Lord indeed always preserved a hidden remnant; but this was done beyond the perceptions of men. But what the Prophet says metaphorically of the ruined branches, is to be understood of what was apparent.

<340203>Nahum 2:3	
3. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.	3. Clypeus fortium ejus rubefactus est, viri potentiae ejus vermiculati (hoc est, rubro etiam colore;) in igne lampadum (vel, taedarum) currus in die expeditionis ejus, et abietes tremefactae sunt.

The Prophet describes here how dreadful the Chaldeans would be when prepared against the Assyrians. He says, *The shield of his brave men^{F22} is made red*. Some think that their shields were painted red, that blood might

not appear; and that the soldiers had on red garments, that they might not be frightened in case they were wounded; and this is what history records of the Lacedemonians. But as the habits of these nations are not much known to us, it is enough for us to know, that their warlike appearance is here described; as though he had said, that the Chaldeans would come against Nineveh with violent and terrible power. Hence he says, that *the men of his strength*^{F23} *would be clad in scarlet*; he refers no doubt to the color of their dress. Some expound this of the Assyrians, and say that their shame is here designated; but this is too strained. The Prophet, I have no doubt, describes here the Chaldeans, and shows that they would be so armed that even their very appearance would put to flight their enemies, that is, the Assyrians.

For the same purpose he afterwards adds, *With fire of torches*,^{F24} or lamps, *is the chariot in the day of his expedition*. The word פלדות, *peladut*, occurs nowhere else; and the Jews think that the letters are inverted, and that it should be לפדות, as this word is afterwards used by the Prophet in the next verse, and in the same sense. It is certainly evident from the context that either torches or lamps are meant by the Prophet. His chariot then is with the fire of lamps, that is, his chariots drive so impetuously that they appear as flames of fire, when wheels roll with such velocity.

And *the fir-trees*, he says, *are terrible shaken*. Some translate, “are inebriated” or, “stunned;” and they apply this to the Assyrians, — that their great men (whom they think are here compared to fir-trees, or are metaphorically designated by them) were stunned through amazement. Astonished then shall be the principal men among the Assyrians; for the very sight of their enemies would render them, as it were, lifeless; for the verb רעל, *rol*, is taken by some in the sense of infecting with poison, or of stupefying. But their opinion is more correct who think that fir-trees are to be taken for lances, though they do not sufficiently express the meaning of the Prophet; for he means, I have no doubt, that such would be the concussion among the lances, that it would be like that of fir-trees, tossed here and there in the forest. For lances, we know, are made of fir-trees, because it is a light wood and flexible, as when any one says in our language, les lances branslent. The lances then trembled, or shook in the hands of the soldiers, as fir-trees shake. Thus we see that the Prophet here

continues to describe the terrible appearance of the Chaldeans. Let us go on —

<340204>Nahum 2:4	
4. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.	4. In compitis insanient per currus (est hic nomen singulare, currus, ideo quidam subaudiunt viros currus, sed possumus aliter intelligere, quod insaninient in suis curribus; diende) properabunt in plateis (alii vertunt, congregabuntur; potest deduci tam a שִׁקָּק, quam in שׁוּק, sed hic significat properare;) aspectus eorum quasi lampades (hoc est, lampadum,) quasi fulgura discurrent.

He still goes on with the same subject, — that they shall be furious in the streets that is, that they shall be so turbulent, as though they were out of their minds: as furious men are wont to be who are impetuously carried away beyond all reason and moderation, so shall they also become mad in their tumult. He then says, *They shall hasten*. The verb is derived from the hips; for he who hastens shakes the hips, and moves them with a quick motion; and if it be lawful to coin a word, it is, they shall hip; *Ils remueront les hanches*. This is what the Prophet meant. And then, *Their appearance*^{F25} shall be *as lamps*. He refers here to the chariots. They shall then be like lamps; that is they shall dazzle the eyes of beholders with their brightness. All these things are intended to set forth what is terrific. He says also, *as lightning* they shall run here and there.

In short, he intimates, that the impetuosity of the Chaldeans would be so violent as to surpass what is commonly witnessed among men, that it would be, as it were, a species of fury and madness sent down from above. Thus, then, they were to be like lightning and flames of fire, that they might exceed every thing human. But these forms of speech, though they are hyperbolical, were not yet used without reason; for we may easily conjecture how great was then the security of the city Nineveh, and how incredible was the event of its ruin. That monarchy was then preeminent over every other in the whole world, and no one could have thought that it

could ever be assailed. Since then it was difficult to persuade the Jews that ruin was nigh the Assyrians, it was necessary for the Prophet to accumulate these various forms of expressions, by which he sets forth the power of God in the destruction of the Assyrians. It afterwards follows —

<340205>Nahum 2:5	
5. He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defense shall be prepared.	5. Recordabitur fortium suorum, impingent in itinere suo (vel, itineribus suis, si legamus plurali numero;) festinabunt ad murum ejus, parabitur integumentum.

Some interpreters explain this also of the Chaldeans: The king of Babylon then shall remember his mighty men; that is, shall recount his forces and whatever strength he will have under his power; all this he will collect to make war with Nineveh and the Assyrians. Others think that there is here a transposition in the words, (which is too strained,) “Mighty men shall remember,” as though it were a change of number. But I take the words of the Prophet simply as they are, — that he will remember mighty men: but this, as I think, refers to the Assyrians. He then, that is, either the king of Nineveh, or the people, will remember the mighty men; that is, he will gather from every quarter his forces and will omit nothing which may avail for defense; as it is usually done in great danger and in extremities: for they were noted then as warlike men; and every one who had any skill, every one who was endued with courage, every one who was trained up in arms, all these were mustered, that they might give help. So then the Prophet says, that such would be the dread in the land of Assyria, that they would collect together whatever force they had, to defend themselves against their enemies. The king then *shall remember his mighty men*, that is, he will muster all the subsidies within his reach.

Then he says, *They shall stumble in their march*; that is, the mighty men, when gathered, shall tremble and stumble like the blind: and this will be occasioned by fear; so that like men astounded, they will move to and fro, and have no certain footing. The Prophet then declares here two things, that the Assyrians would be diligent in gathering forces to repel the assault of their enemies, — but that yet they would effect nothing, for trembling

would seize the minds of all, so that mighty men would stumble in their marches. They shall stumble, and then it is said, *they shall hasten to its wall*, that is, they shall ascend the wall; and it is added, Prepared shall be the covering, as it is usual in defending cities. Some apply this to the Chaldeans; *prepared shall be the covering*, that is, when they shall come to the wall. It was indeed usual, as it is well known from histories, for those who approached a wall to defend themselves either with turrets or hurdles. But the Prophet, I doubt not, intimates, that the Assyrians would come with great trembling to meet their enemies, but without any success. However then they might defend themselves, their enemies would yet prevail. ^{F26} He therefore subjoins —

<340206> Nahum 2:6	
6. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.	6. Portae fluviorum apertae sunt, et palatium solutum est.

By the gates of the rivers the Prophet means that part of the city which was most fortified by the river Tigris; for the Tigris flowed close by the city. As then the Tigris was like the strongest defense, (for we know it to have been a most rapid river,) the Prophet ridicules the confidence of the Ninevites, who thought that the access of enemies could be wholly prevented in that part where the Tigris flowed. *The gates then of the rivers are opened*; that is, your river shall not prevent your enemies from breaking through and penetrating into your city.

We hence see, that the Prophet removes all the hindrances which might have seemed available to keep off enemies; and he did so, not so much for the sake of Nineveh as for the sake of his chosen people, that the Israelites and Jews might know, that that city was no less in the power of God than any other; for God can no less easily pass through rivers than go along the plain, where there is no obstacle. We now see why the Prophet says, that the gates of the rivers were opened: and then he adds, The palace is dissolved; that is, there will be no impediment to prevent the approach of enemies; for all the fortresses will melt away, and that of themselves, as though they were walls of paper, and the stones, as though they were water. He afterwards adds —

7. And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

7. Et quae stabat solida (vel, firma) ejecta est in exilium (vel, quae stabat occulta, patefacta est, jussa est ascendere;) et ancillae ejus ducentes tanquam in voce columbarum, plangentes super pectora sua.

There is some ambiguity in these words, and many interpreters think that **הַצַּב**, *estab*, to be the name of the queen. The queen then they say, of the name of **הַצַּב**, *estab*, is drawn away into exile; she is bidden to ascend, that she might migrate to a hostile land. But this view is too strained; nor was there any reason to suppose the word to be a proper name, except that there was a wish to say something, and that there was no other conjecture more probable. But I regard their opinion more correct, who refer this to the state of the kingdom; and there is here, I have no doubt, a personification, which is evident if we attend to the meaning. If any one prefers to regard the queen as intended, it would yet be better to take **הַצַּב**, *estab*, in its proper and real meaning, — that the queen, previously hid in her palace, and hardly able, through being so delicate, to move a step, — that she was brought forth to the light; for **גִּלָּה**, *gele*, means to uncover, and also to cast out. If we render it, was made manifest, the Prophet alludes to hiding-places, and means that the queen did not go forth to the light, but was like delicate women who keep themselves within their chambers: but if we render it, Who is drawn forth into exile, it would be more suitable to one who was previously fixed in her dwelling. The word comes from **צַב**, *itsab*, to stand; but it is here in Hophal, **הוּצַב**, *eustab*,: it then signifies one who was before fixed and firmly settled, that is, in her concealment; she is drawn, he says, into exile. If then any one chooses to refer this to the person of the queen, the most suitable meaning would be, — that the queen, who before sat in the midst of her pleasures, shall be violently drawn into exile, and carried away to another country. And it is probable that the Prophet speaks of the queen, because it immediately follows, *Her handmaids lead her as with the voice of doves, and smite on their breasts*; that is, her maids, who before flattered her, shall laments and

with sighing and tears, and mourning, shall lead away, as a captive, their own mistress. Thus the context would harmonize.

But, as I have said, their opinion seems right, who think that under the person of a woman the state of the kingdom is here described. She then, who before stood, or remained fixed, shall be drawn into captivity; or she, who before sat at leisure, shall be discovered; that is, she shall no more lie hid as hitherto in her retirement, but shall be forced to come abroad. And then, *she shall ascend*; that is, vanish away, for the verb is to be here taken metaphorically; *she shall* then *vanish away*, or be reduced to nothing. And as the Prophet sets a woman here before us, what follows agrees with this idea, — Her handmaids shall weep and imitate the doves in their moaning; that is, the whole people shall bewail the fate of the kingdom, when things shall be so changed, as when handmaids lead forth their own mistress, who had been before nourished in the greatest delicacies. ^{F27}

Now this accumulation of words was by no means in vain; for it was necessary to confirm, by many words, the faith of the Israelites and of the Jews respecting the near approach of the destruction of the city Nineveh, which would have been otherwise incredible; and of this we can easily form a judgment by our own experience. If any one at this day were to speak of mighty kings, whose splendor amazes the whole world, — if any one were to announce the ruin of the kingdom of one of them, it would appear like a fable. This then is the reason why the Prophet, by so many figures, sets forth an event which might have been expressed in few words, and confirms it by so many forms of speech, and even by such as are hyperbolical. He at length subjoins —

<340208> Nahum 2:8	
8. But Nineveh <i>is</i> of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, <i>shall they cry</i> ; but none shall look back.	8. Atqui Nineveh quasi piscina aquarum a diebus (<i>hoc est</i> , a longo tempore) fuit; ipsi autem fugiunt; state, state; et nemo respicit.

The prophet here anticipates a doubt which might have weakened confidence in his words; for Nineveh not only flourished in power, but it

had also confirmed its strength during a long course of time; and antiquity not only adds to the strength of kingdoms, but secures authority to them. As then the imperial power of the city Nineveh was ancient, it might seem to have been perpetual: “Why! Nineveh has ever ruled and possessed the sovereign power in all the east; can it be now shaken, or can its strength be now suddenly subverted? For where there is no beginning, we cannot believe that there will be any end.” And a beginning it had not, according to the common opinion; for we know how the Egyptians also fabled respecting their antiquity; they imagined that their kingdom was five thousand years before the world was made; that is, in numbering their ages they went back nearly five thousand years before the creation. The Ninevites, no doubt, boasted that they had ever been; and as they were fixed in this conceit respecting their antiquity, no one thought that they could ever fail. This is the reason why the Prophet expressly declares, that *Nineveh had been like a pool of waters from ancient days*; ^{F28} that is, Nineveh had been, as it were, separated from the rest of the world; for where there is a pool, it seems well fortified by its own banks, no one comes into it; when one walks on the land he does not enter into the waters. Thus, then, had Nineveh been in a quiet state not only for a short time, but for many ages. This circumstance shall not, however, prevent God from overturning now its dominion. How much soever, then, Nineveh took pride in the notion of its ancientness, it was yet God’s purpose to destroy it.

He says then, *They flee*: by fleeing, he means, that, though not beaten by their enemies, they would yet be overcome by their own fear. He then intimates, that Nineveh would not only be destroyed by slaughter, but that all the Assyrians would flee away, and despair would deliver them up to their enemies. Hence the Chaldeans would not only be victorious through their courage and the sword, but the Assyrians, distrusting their own forces, would flee away.

It afterwards follows, *Stand ye, stand ye, and no one regards*. Here the Prophet places, as it were, before our eyes, the effect of the dread of which he speaks. He might have given a single narrative, — that though one called them back they would not dare to look behind; and that, thinking that safety alone was in flight, they would pursue their course. The Prophet might have formed this sort of narrative: this he has not done; but he assumes the person of one calling back the fugitives, as though he saw

them fleeing away, and tried to bring them back: *No one*, he says, *regards*. We now see what the Prophet meant.

But from this passage we ought to learn that no trust is to be put in the number of men, nor in the defenses and strongholds of cities, nor in ancientness; for when men excel in power, God will hence take occasion to destroy them, inasmuch as pride is almost ever connected with strength. It can hardly be but that men arrogate too much to themselves when they think that they excel in any thing. Thus it happens, that on account of their strength they run headlong into ruin; not that God has any delight, as profane men imagine, when he turns upside down the face of the earth, but because men cannot bear their own success, nor keep themselves within moderate bounds, but many triumph against God: hence it is that human power recoils on the head of those who possess it. The same things must also be said of ancientness: for they who boast of their antiquity, know not for how long a time they have been provoking the wrath of God; for it cannot be otherwise but that abundance of itself generates licentiousness, or that it at least leads to excess; and further, they who are the most powerful are the most daring in corrupting others. Hence the increase at putridity; for men are like the dead when not ruled by the fear of God. A dead body becomes more and more fetid the longer it continues putrifying; and so it is with men. When they have been for a long time sinning, and still continue to sin, the fetidness of their sins increases, and the wrath of God is more and more provoked. There is then no reason why ancientness should deceive us. And if, at any time, we are tempted to think that men are sufficiently fortified by their own strength, or by numerous auxiliaries, or that they are, as it were, sacred through their own ancientness, let what is said here come to our minds, — that Nineveh had been like a pool of waters from the ancient days; but that, when it was given up to destruction, it fled away; and that, when their enemies did not rout them, they yet, being driven by their own fear, ran away and would not stop, though one called them to return.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou constantly remindest us, in thy word, and teachest us by so many examples, that there is nothing permanent in this world, but that the things which seem the firmest tend to ruin, and instantly fall and of themselves vanish away,

when by thy breath thou shakest that strength in which men trust,
— O grant, that we being really subdued and humbled, may not
rely on earthly things, but raise up our hearts and our thoughts to
heaven, and there fix the anchor of our hope; and may all our
thoughts abide there, and at length, when thou hast led us through
our course on earth we shall be gathered into that celestial kingdom,
which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten
Son. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRD

<340209> Nahum 2:9

9. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

9. Diripite argentum, diripite aurum; et non finis (quia non est, copula debet resolvi in causalem particulam; quia nullus finis) praeparationis ejus (sic vertunt, sed proprie תְּבוּנָה significat locum;) gloria ex omni vase desiderabili.

Here the Prophet, as it were, by the command and authority of God, gives up Nineveh to the will of its enemies, that they might spoil and plunder it. Some think that this address is made in the name of a general encouraging his soldiers; but we know that the Prophets assume the person of God, when they thus command any thing with authority; and it is a very emphatical mode of speaking. It is adopted, that we may know that the Prophets pour not forth an empty sound when they speak, but really testify what God here determined to do, and what he in due time will execute. As then we know, that this manner of speaking is common to the Prophets there is no reason to apply this to the person of Nebuchadnezzar or of any other. God then shows here that Nineveh was given up to ruin; and therefore he delivered it into the hands of enemies.

It is indeed certain, that the Babylonians, in plundering the city, did not obey God's command; but yet it is true, that they punished the Assyrians through the secret influence of God: for it was his purpose to visit the Ninevites for the cruelty and avarice for which they had been long notorious, and especially for having exercised unexampled barbarity toward the Jews. This is the reason why God now gives them up to the Babylonians and exposes them to plunder. But as I have spoken at large elsewhere of the secret judgments of God, I shall only briefly observe here, — that God does not command the Babylonians and Chaldeans in order to render them excusable, but shows by his Prophet, that Nineveh was to be destroyed by her enemies, not by chance, but that it was his will to avenge the wrongs done to his people. At the same time, we must bear in mind what we have said elsewhere, — that the Prophets thus speak when the

execution is already prepared; for God does not in vain or without reason terrify men, but he afterwards makes it manifest by the effect: as he created the world from nothing by his word, so also by his word he executes and fulfill his judgments. It is then no wonder, that the Prophet does here, as though he ruled the Chaldeans according to his will, thus address them, *Take ye away, take ye away*. But this must be viewed as having a reference to the faithful; for the Babylonians, in plundering the city Nineveh, did not think that they obeyed God, nor did they give to God the praise due for the victory; but the faithful were thus reminded, that all this was done through the secret providence of God, and that it was also a clear, and, as it were, a visible evidence of God's paternal love towards his Church, when he thus deigned to undertake the cause of his distressed people.

It then follows, *There is no end of preparations*: Some render תכונה, *techune*, treasure, or hidden wealth, and derive it from כון, *cun*, which is to prepare; but תכונה, *tacune*, is almost always taken for a measure. תכנות, *tacanut*, from תכון, *tacun* means a sum, for תכש, *tacan*, is to number or to count; and this meaning suits the passage.^{F29} But there is no need of laboring much about this word; if we take it simply for place, the meaning would be, that there was no plot of ground in that city which was not as it were a gulf filled up; for it had amassed all the wealth of the nations: and this sense would harmonize well with the subject of the Prophet, — that the soldiers were to plunder until they were satiated; for the place was, as it were, a deep abyss.

He afterwards adds, *There is glory from every desirable vessel*. Those who think מ, *mem*, a particle of comparison in this place are much mistaken, and misapply the meaning of the Prophet; their rendering is, In comparison with every desirable vessel; but this, as all must see, is very frigid. The Prophet, I have no doubt, declares that the wealth of Nineveh consisted of every desirable vessel; for they had for a long time heaped together immense wealth, and that of every kind. The Hebrews call what is precious a desirable thing; and their vessels we include under the term furniture. We now then perceive what the Prophet means. Some take כבד, *cabed*, as a participle, and give this version, It is burdened, or adorned, (for it means both,) with every desirable vessel. But the simpler mode of

speaking is what we have explained, — that its glory was from every desirable vessel.

And here the Prophet condemns what the Assyrians had done in heaping together so much wealth from all quarters; for they had committed indiscriminate plunder, and gathered for themselves all the riches of the nations. They had indeed plundered all their neighbors, yea, and wholly stripped them. The Prophet now shows, in order to expose them to ridicule, that other robbers would be made rich, whom the Lord would raise up against them. The same is said by Isaiah,

‘O thou plunderer, shalt not thou also be exposed to plunder?’
(Isaiah 33.)

So also the Prophet shows in this passage, that men foolishly burn with so much avidity for money, and with so much anxiety heap together great wealth; for God will find out some who in their turn will plunder those who have plundered. It follows—

<340210>Nahum 2:10	
10. She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.	10. Exinanita et exinanita est, et nudata; et cor liquefactum, et collisio genuum, et terror in omnibus lumbis; et facies omnium contraxerunt nigredinem (vel, splendorem, ut alii vertunt.)

The Prophet here confirms what the last verse contains; for he shows why he had called the Chaldeans to take away the spoil, — because it was to be so. He did not indeed (as I have already said) command the Chaldeans in such a way as that their obedience to God was praiseworthy: but the Prophet speaks here only of His secret counsel. Though then the Chaldeans knew not that it was God’s decree, yet the Prophet reminds the faithful that the Ninevites, when made naked, suffered punishment for their cruelty, especially for having so hostilely conducted themselves towards the Jews: and hence he declares, that Nineveh is *emptied, is emptied, and made naked*.^{F30} By repeating the same word, he intimates the certainty of the event: Emptied, emptied, he says, as when one says in our

language, *videe et revidee*. We hence see that by this repetition what the Prophet meant is more distinctly expressed that the faithful might not doubt respecting the event: and then for the same purpose he adds, she is made naked.

We now then perceive the Prophet's design. As in the last verse he shows that he had power given him from above to send armies against Nineveh, and to give up the city to them to be spoiled and plundered; so he now shows that he had not so commanded the Chaldeans, as though they were the legitimate servants of God, and could pretend that they rendered service to Him. He therefore points out for what end he had commanded the Chaldeans to plunder Nineveh; and that was, because God had so decreed; and he had so decreed and commanded, because he would not bear the many wrongs done to his people whom he had taken under his protection. As then Nineveh had so cruelly treated God's chosen people, it was necessary that the reward she deserved should be repaid to her. But the repetition, which I have noticed, ought to be especially observed; for it teaches us that God's power is connected with his word, so that he declares nothing inconsiderately or in vain.

He then adds, that *knees smite together*; and every *heart* is dissolved, or melted, and also, that *all loins tremble*. We hence learn, that there is in men no courage, except as far as God supplies them with vigor. As soon then as He withdraws his Spirit, those who were before the most valiant become faint-hearted, and those who breathed great ferocity are made soft and effeminate: for by the word heart is meant inward boldness or courage; and by the knees and loins the strength of body is to be understood. There is indeed no doubt but the Assyrians, while they ruled, were a very courageous people, as power ever generates boldness; and it is also probable that they were a warlike people, since all their neighbors had been brought under their power. But the Prophet now shows, that there would be no vigor in their hearts, and no strength in their loins, or in any part of their body. *The heart*, then, he says, *is melted*. And hence we learn how foolishly men boast of their courage, while they seem to be like lions; for God can in a moment so melt their hearts, that they entirely lose all firmness. Then as to external vigor, we see that it is in God's hand; there will be, he says, *a confriktion*, or the knees will knock one against another, as they do when they tremble. And he says afterwards, *And trembling shall be in all loins*.^{F31} He at last adds, *And the faces of all shall gather*

blackness. The word פֶּאֶרֶר, *parur*, some derive from פֶּאֶר, *par*; and so the rendering would be, “all faces shall draw in or withdraw their beauty,” and so also they explain ^{<290206>} Joel 2:6, for the sentence there is the same. But they who disapprove of this meaning say, that קִבֵּץ, *kobets*, cannot mean to draw in or to withdraw; and so they render the noun, blackness. But this is a strained explanation. פֶּאֶרֶר, *parur*, [they say,] does not mean a black color but a pot: when therefore a caldron or a kettle contracts blackness from smoke, it is then called פֶּאֶרֶר, *parur*: but in this place these interpreters are constrained to take it metaphorically for that color; which is, as I have said, strained and far-fetched. I am therefore inclined to adopt their opinion who render the sentence, all faces shall withdraw their beauty, or their brightness: but as to the import of the passage, there is little or no difference; let then every one have his free choice. ^{F32} With regard to the Prophet’s design, he evidently means, that the faces of all would be sad, for the Lord would fill their minds and thoughts with dread. The withdrawing then of beauty signifies an outward appearance of sorrow, or paleness, or whatever may appear in the countenance of men, when dejected with grief. In short, the Prophet means, that how much soever the Assyrians might have hitherto raised on high their crests, and breathed great swelling words, and conducted themselves insolently, they would now be dejected; for the Lord would prostrate their courage and melt their strength: he would, by casting down their high spirits, constrain them to undergo shame. This is the import of the whole. It now follows —

^{<340211>} Nahum 2:11-12	
11. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion’s whelp, and none made them afraid?	11. Ubi domicilium leonum, et locus pascui leonibus, quo veniebant leo, leo, catulus leonis, et nemo exterrens?
12. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.	12. Leo rapiebat quantum sufficeret catulis suis, et strangulabat leanis suis, et replebat repina speluncas suas et lustra sua praeda.

Here the Prophet triumphs over the Assyrians, because they thought that the city Nineveh was remote from every danger: as lions, who fear nothing, when they are in their dens, draw thither their prey in their claws or in their mouths: so also was the case with the Assyrians; thinking themselves safe, while Nineveh flourished, they took the greater liberty to commit plunders everywhere. For Nineveh was not only the receptacle of robbers but was also like a den of lions. And the Prophet more fully expresses the barbarous cruelty of the Assyrians by comparing them to lions, than if he had simply called them lions. We now then see what he means, when he says, *Where is the place of lions?* And he designedly speaks thus of the Assyrians: for no one ever thought that they could be touched by even the least injury; the fear of them had indeed so seized all men, that of themselves they submitted to the Assyrians. As then no one dared to oppose them, the Prophet says, *Where?* as though he had said that though all thought it incredible that Nineveh could be overthrown, it would yet thus happen. But he assumes the character of one expressing his astonishment, in order to intimate, that when the Lord should execute such a judgment, it would be a work of wonder, which would fill almost all with amazement. This question then proves that those are very foolish who form a judgment of God's vengeance, of which the Prophet speaks, according to the appearance of things at the time; for the ruin of Nineveh and of that empire was to be the incomprehensible work of God, and which was to fill all minds with astonishment.

He says first, *Where is the place of lions?* The feminine gender is indeed here used; but all agree that the Prophet speaks of male lions.^{F33} He then adds, *the place of feeding for lions?* כַּפְרִים, *caphrim*, mean young lions as we shall hereafter see; and אַרְיֹות, *ariut*, are old lions. He afterwards adds, *Where* אַרְיֶה, *arie came*: and then comes לְבִיא, *labia*, which some render, lioness; but לְבִיא, *labia*, properly means an old lion; the Prophet, no doubt, uses it in the next verse in the feminine gender for lionesses. I therefore do not deny, but that we may fitly render the terms here, lion and lioness; afterwards, and the whelp of lions, and none terrifying. He then adds, Seize did the lion (the word is אַרְיֶה, *arie*) for his whelps to satiety, that is, sufficiently; and strangle did he for his lionesses, לַלְבָּאִי, *lalabatui*. Here no doubt the Prophet means lionesses; there would otherwise be no consistency in the passage. He afterwards says, *And filled has he with prey his dens and his recesses with ravin;* it is the

same word with a different termination, **טֶרֶף**, *thereph*, and **טֶרֶפָה**, *therephe*.

Now the repetition, made here by the Prophet, of lion, young lion, and lioness, was not without its use; for he meant by this number of words to set forth the extreme ferocity of the Assyrians, while they were dominant. He no doubt compares their kings, their counselors, and their chief men, to lions: and he calls their wives lionesses, and their children he calls young lions or whelps of lions. The sum of the whole is, that Nineveh had so degenerated in its opulence, that all in power were like ferocious wild beasts, destitute of every kind feeling. And I wish that this could have only been said of one city and of one monarchy! But here, as in a mirror, the Prophet represents to us what we at this day observe, and what has always and in all ages been observed in great empires; for here great power exists, there great licentiousness prevails; and when kings and their counselors become once habituated to plunder, there is no end of it; nay, a kind of fury is kindled in their hearts, that they seek nothings else but to devour and to tear in pieces to rend and to strangle. The Prophet indeed wished here to console both the Israelites and the Jews by showing, that the injustice of their enemies would not go unpunished: but at the same time he intended to show how great, even to the end of the world, would be the cruelty of those who would rule tyrannically: and as I have said, experience proves, that there are too many like the Ninevites. It is indeed unquestionable, that the Prophet does not without reason speak so often here of lions and lionesses.

Hence he says, “Come thither did the lion, the lioness, and the whelp of the lion.” He means that when justice was sought in that city, it was found to be the den of cruel beasts; for the king had put off all humanity, as well as his counselors; their wives were also like lionesses, and their children and domestics were as young lions or the whelps of lions. And cruelty creeps in, somewhat in this manner: When a king takes to himself too much liberty, his counselors follow him; and then every one follows the common example, as though every thing received as a custom was lawful. This is the representation which the Prophet in these words sets before us; and we with our own eyes see the same things. Then he adds, ‘The lion did tear what sufficed his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses; he filled with prey his dens and his recesses with plunder. He goes on with the same subject, — that the Assyrians heaped for themselves great wealth by

unjust spoils, because they had no regard for what was right. The lion, he says, did tear for his whelps: as lions accustom their whelps to plunder, and when they are not grown enough, so as to be able to attack innocent animals, they provide a prey for them, and also bring some to the lionesses; so also, as the Prophet informs us, was the case at Nineveh; the habits of all men were formed for cruelty by the chief men and the magistrates. By the word **בֶּדִי**, *bedi*, sufficiency, he means not that the Ninevites are satisfied with their prey, for they were insatiable; but it rather refers to the abundance which they had. And he says, that the lion strangled for his lionesses: I wish there were no lionesses to devour at this day; but we see that there are some who surpass their husbands in boldness and cruelty. But the Prophet says here what is natural, — that the lion strangles the prey and gives it afterwards to his lionesses. He then adds, that the Ninevites were not satisfied with daily rapines, as many robbers live for the day; but he says, that their plunder was laid up in store. Hence they filled their secret places and dens with their booty and spoils. Still further, though the Prophet speaks not here so plainly, as we shall see he does in what follows, it is yet certain, that the reason is here given, why God visited the Ninevites with so severe a vengeance, and that was, because they had ceased to be like men, and had degenerated into savage beasts. It follows —

<div><340213> Nahum 2:13</div>	
13. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.	13. Ecce Ego ad te dicit Jehova exercituum, et comburam in fumo currum ejus, et leunculos tuos comedet gladius, et excidam e terra praedam tuam, et non audietur amplius vox nunciorum tuorum (aut, dentium molarium.)

To give more effect to what he says, the Prophet introduces God here as the speaker. *Behold*, he says, *I am against thee*. He has been hitherto, as it were, the herald of God, and in this character gave an authoritative command to the Chaldeans to plunder Nineveh: but when God himself comes forward, and uses not the mouth of man, but declares himself his own decrees, it is much more impressive. This then is the reason why God

now openly speaks: *Behold, I am*, he says, against thee. We understand the emphatical import of the demonstrative particle, *Behold*; for God, as if awakened from sleep, shows that it will be at length his work, to undertake the cause of his people, and also to punish the world for its wickedness, Behold, I am against thee, he says. We have elsewhere seen a similar mode of speaking; there is therefore no need of dwelling on it here.

I will burn, he says, *with smoke her chariots*. Here by smoke some understand a smoky fire; but the Prophet, I think, meant another thing, — that at the first onset God would consume all the chariots of Nineveh; as though he had said, that as soon as the flame burst forth, it would be all over with all the forces of Nineveh; for by chariots he no doubt means all their warlike preparations; and we know that they fought then from chariots: as at this day there are employed in wars horsemen in armor, so there were then chariots. But the Prophet, by taking a part for the whole, includes all warlike forces: *I will burn* then *the chariots*.^{F34} — How? By smoke alone, that is as soon as the first flame begins to emerge; for the smoke rises before the fire appears or gathers strength: in short, the Prophet shows that Nineveh would be, as it were, in a moment, reduced to nothing, as soon as it pleased God to avenge its wickedness.

He then adds in the third person, *And thy young lions shall the sword devour*. He indeed changes the person here; but the discourse is more striking, when God manifests his wrath in abrupt sentences. He had said, *Behold, I am against thee*; then, *I will burn her chariots*, he now hardly deigns to direct his speech to Nineveh; but afterwards he returns to her, *and thy young lions shall the sword devour*. Then God, by speaking thus in broken sentences, more fully expresses the dreadful vengeance which he had determined to execute on the Ninevites. He then says, *And I will exterminate from the earth thy prey*; that is, it will not now be allowed thee to go on as usual; for I will put a stop to thy inhuman cruelty. Thus *prey* may be taken for the act itself; or it may be fitly explained of the spoils taken from the nations, for the Ninevites, by their tyrannical ravaging, had everywhere plundered; and thus it may be applied to the pillaging of the city. *I will* then *exterminate* from the land, that is from thy country, those riches which have been hitherto heaped together as though a lion had been everywhere gathering a prey.

And heard no more shall be the voice of thy messengers. They who understand מלאכים, *melakim*, to be messengers, apply the word to the heralds, by whom the Assyrians were wont to proclaim wars on neighboring nations. As then they sent here and there their heralds to announce war, and as their terrible voice sounded everywhere, the words of the Prophet have this meaning given them, — that God would at length produce silence, so that they should not hereafter disturb all their neighboring countries with the clamor of war. But as this explanation is strained, I am inclined to adopt what others think, — that the grinding teeth are here intended. The word is not written, if it be taken for messengers, according to grammar; it is מלאככה, *melakke*; there ought not to have been the ה, *he* at the end, and י, *jod*, ought to have been inserted before the last letter but one: and if it be deemed as meaning the king, it ought then to have been written מלכך, *melkak*. All then confess, that the word is not written according to the rule of grammar; and as the Persians call the grinders מלאככה, *melakke*, we may give this version, which well suits the context, ‘No more shall be heard the sound of grinders.’ For since lions seize the prey with their teeth,^{F35} and also break the bones, and thus make a great noise when they tear an animal or a man with their teeth, this rendering seems to be the most suitable, *Heard no more shall be the sound of teeth*, that is, heard shall not be the noise made by thy teeth; for when thou now tearest thy prey, thy teeth make a noise. No more heard then shall the noise from that breaking, or the clashing or the crashing of the teeth. But as to the chief point, this is no matter of importance.

The Prophet simply teaches us here that it could not be, but that God would at length restrain tyrants; for though he hides himself for a time, he yet never forgets the groans of those whom he sees to be unjustly afflicted: and particularly when tyrants molest the Church, it is proved here by the Prophet that God will at length be a defender; and hence we ought to consider well these words, *Behold, I am against thee*. For though God addresses these words only to the Assyrians, yet as he points out the reasons why he rises up with so much displeasure against them, they ought to be extended to all tyrants, and to all who exercise cruelty towards distressed and innocent men. But this is more clearly expressed in the following verse.

CHAPTER 3

<340301> Nahum 3:1

1. Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies *and* robbery; the prey departeth not;

1. O urbs sanguinaria! Tota mendacio (*vertunt*) rapina plena est; non recedit praeda (*vel*, non recedet praeda.)

The Prophet, as I have said, more clearly expresses here the reason why the vengeance of God would be so severe on the Ninevites, — because they had wholly given themselves up to barbarous cruelty; and hence he calls it the bloody city. *Bloody city!* he says. The exclamation is emphatical. Though **אוי**, *eu*, sometimes means Woe; yet it is put here as though the Prophet would have constrained Nineveh to undergo its punishment, *O sanguinary city*, then, the *whole of it is full* of **כחש** *cashesh*: the word signifies leanness and the Prophet no doubt joins here together two words, which seem to differ widely, and yet they signify the same thing. For **פרק**, *perek*, means to lay by; and **כחש**, *cashesh*, is taken for a lie or vanity, when there is nothing solid in what is said: but the Prophet, I doubt not, means by both words the spoils of the city Nineveh. It was then full of leanness for it had consumed all others; it was also full of spoils, for it had filled itself. But the meaning of the Prophet is in no way dubious; for at length he adds, *Depart shall not the prey*; that is as some think, it shall not be withdrawn from the hands of conquerors; but others more correctly think that a continued liberty in plundering is intended, that the Assyrians were constantly employed in pillaging and kept within no bounds.

We hence see that the Prophet now shows why God says, that he would be an adversary to the Ninevites, because he could not endure its unjust cruelty. He bore with it indeed for a time; for he did not immediately execute his judgment; but yet he never forgot his own people.

As, then, God has once declared by the mouth of his Prophet that he would be the avenger of the cruelty which the Assyrians had exercised, let

us know that he retains still his own nature; and whatever liberty he may for a time grant to tyrants and savage wild beasts, he yet continues to be a just avenger. It is our duty calmly to bear injuries, and to groan to him; and as he promises to be at length our helper, it behoves us to flee to him, and to ask him to succor us, so that seeing his Church oppressed, and tyrants exercising licentiously their power, he may hasten the time to restrain them. If then we were at all times to continue thus resigned under God's protection, there is no doubt but that he would be ready even at this day to execute a similar judgment to that which the city Nineveh and its people had to endure.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God. that as we have now heard of punishments so dreadful denounced on all tyrants and plunderers, this warning may keep us within the limits of justice, so that none of us may abuse our power to oppress the innocent, but, on the contrary, strive to benefit one another, and wholly regulate ourselves according to the rule of equity: and may we hence also receive comfort whenever the ungodly molest and trouble us, and doubt not but that we are under thy protection, and that thou art armed with power sufficient to defend us, so that we may patiently bear injuries, until at length the ripened time shall come for thee to help us, and to put forth thy power for our preservation; nor let us cease to bear our evils with patience, as long as it may be thy will to exercise us in our present warfare, until having gone through all one troubles, we come to that blessed rest which has been provided for us in heaven by Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTH

<340302> Nahum 3:2-3

2. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

2. Sonitus flagelli, et sonitus commotionis rotae, et equus concutiens, et quadriga exultans;

3. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:

3. Eques ascendere faciens, et flamma gladii, et fulgur lanceae, et multitudo occisi (est mutatio numeri, occisorum,) et pondus cadaverum (hoc est etiam multitudo,) et nullus finis cadaveribus ejus; impingent in cadavera ejus:

The Prophet represents here as in a lively picture, what was nigh the Assyrians; for he sets forth the Chaldeans their enemies, with all their preparations and in their quick movements. ^{F36} *The sound of the whip*, he says; the whips, made a noise in exciting the horses: *the sound of the rattling of the wheel*; that is, great shall be the haste and celerity, when the horses shall be forced on by the whip; *the horse* also shaking the earth, *and the chariot bounding*; *the horseman making it to ascend*; and then, *the flame of the sword and the lightning of the spear*. He then says, that there would be such a slaughter, that the whole place would be full of dead bodies.

We now then understand what the Prophet means: for as Nineveh might have then appeared impregnable the Prophet confirms at large what he had said of its approaching ruin, and thus sets before the eyes of the Israelites what was then incredible.

As to the words, some interpreters connect what we have rendered, *the horseman makes to ascend*, with what follows, that is, he makes to *ascend the flame of the sword and the lightning of the spear*. But as a copulative comes between, it seems rather to be an imperfect sentence, meaning, that

the horseman makes to ascend or mount, that is, his horses, by urging them on. With regard to the word **לֵב**, *leb*, it means I have no doubt, a flame. By this word, I know, is also understood metaphorically the brightness of swords, which appears like a flame: but the Prophet immediately adds *lightning*. As then he says that spears lighten, I doubt not but that for the same reason he meant to say that swords flame. All these things were intended for the purpose of fully convincing the Israelites that Nineveh, however much it was supplied with wealth and power, was yet approaching its ruin, for its enemies would prevail against it: and therefore he adds, that all the roads would be full of dead bodies, that the enemies could not enter without treading on them everywhere. It follows —

<340304> Nahum 3:4	
4. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.	4. Ob multitudinem scortationum meretricis pollentis gratia, magistrae veneficiorum, vendentis gentes in scortationibus suis, et nationes in suis veneficiis.

The Prophet mentions again the cause why God would execute so dreadful a vengeance on that city, which yet procured by its splendor so much glory and respect among all people: and God seems in a manner to have but little regard for the order of the world when he thus overturns great cities. For since he is the Creator of the whole world, it seems to be his proper office to protect its various parts, especially those which excel in beauty, for they seem to deserve a higher regard. When therefore any splendid city is demolished, such thoughts as these occur to us, — That God is either delighted with the ruin of the world, or is asleep in heaven, and that thus all things revolve by chance and contingency. Therefore the Prophet shows, that God had just reasons for decreeing the ruin of Nineveh, and for deforming that beauty, that it might not deceive the eyes of men. Hence he compares Nineveh to a harlot. The similitude seems not to be very suitable: but yet if we take a nearer view of things, the Prophet could not have more fitly nor more strikingly set forth the condition of that city. He had before mentioned its barbarous cruelty, and said, that it

was the den of lions, and that savage and bloody wild beasts dwelt there. He now begins to speak of the frauds and crafty artifices by which the kings of this world attain for themselves both wealth and power. The Prophet then makes the city Nineveh to be like a harlot for this reason, — because it had not only brought under its power neighboring nations by threats and terrors, and also by cruelty, but because it had ensnared many by oblique arts and fraudulent means, by captious dealings and allurements. This is the reason why it is now called a *harlot* by the Prophet.

The Prophets of God seem indeed to speak but with little reverence of great cities and empires: but we know that it rightly belongs to the Spirit of God, that in exercising his own jurisdiction, he should uncover the base deeds of the whole world, which otherwise would lie concealed and even under the appearance of virtues deceive the eyes and senses of the simple: and as men so much flatter themselves, and are inebriated with their own delusions, it is necessary that those who are too self-indulgent and delicate should be roughly handled. As then kings ever set up their own splendor that they may dazzle the eyes of the simple, and seem to have their own greatness as a beautiful covering, the Spirit of God divests them of these masks. This then is the reason why the Prophet speaks here, in no very respectful terms, of that great monarchy which had attracted the admiration of all nations. For when the Spirit of God adopts a humble and common mode of speaking, men, blinded by their vices, will not acknowledge their own baseness; nay, they will even dare to set up in opposition those things which cover their disgraceful deeds: but the Spirit of God breaks through all these things, and dissipates those delusions by which men impose on themselves.

Such is the reason for this similitude; *On account of the multitude, he says, of the whoredoms of the harlot, who excels in favor.* It is said by way of concession that Nineveh was in great favor, that is, that by her beauty she had allured to herself many nations, like a harlot who attains many lovers: and thus the Prophet allows that Nineveh was beautiful. But he adds that she was *the mistress of sorceries*. כַּשֵּׁף, *casheph*, means sorcery, and also juggling: we may then render כַּשְׁפִּים, *cashaphim*, used here, juggleries, (*praestigias* — sleights of hand.) But the Prophet seems to allude to filters or amatory potions, by which harlots dementate youths. As then harlots not only attract notice by their beauty and bland manners and other usual

ways; but they also in a manner fascinate unhappy youths, and use various arts and delusions; so the Prophet under this word comprehends all the deceits practiced by harlots; as though he said, “This harlot was not only beautiful, but also an enchantress, who by her charms deceived unhappy nations like a strumpets who dementates unhappy youths, who do not take care of themselves.”

He afterwards adds, *Who sells nations by her whoredoms, and tribes by her sorceries*. Though Nahum still carries on the same metaphor, he yet shows more clearly what he meant by whoredoms and sorceries, — even the crafts of princes, by which they allure their neighbors, and then reduce them to bondage. Then all the counsels of kings (which they call policies) ^{F37} are here, by the Spirit of God, called sorceries or juggleries, and also meretricious arts. This reproof, as I have already said, many deem to have been too severe; for so much majesty shone forth then in the Assyrians, that they ought, as they think, to have been more respectfully treated. But it behaved the Spirit of God to speak in this forcible language: for there is no one who does not applaud such crafty proceedings. Where any one, without mentioning princes, to ask, Is it right to deceive, and then by lies, deceptions, perjuries, cavils, and other arts, to make a cover for things? — were this question asked, the prompt answer would be, that all these things are as remote as possible from virtue, as nothing becomes men more than ingenuous sincerity. But when princes appear in public, and make this pretense, that the world must be ruled with great prudence, that except secret counsels be taken, all kingdoms would immediately fall into ruin, — this veil covers all their shameful transactions, so that it becomes lawful for them, and even praiseworthy, to deceive one party, to circumvent another, and a third to oppress by means of deception. Since then princes are praised for their craftiness, this is the reason why the Prophet here takes away, as it were by force, the mask, under which they hide their base proceedings; “They are,” he says, “meretricious arts, and they are sorceries and juggleries.”

It is of one city, it is true, that he speaks here; but the Prophet no doubt describes in this striking representation how kingdoms increase and by what crafty means, — first, by robberies, — and then by artful dealings, such as would by no means become honest men in the middle class of life. But princes could never succeed, except they practiced such artifices. We yet see how they are described here by the Spirit of God, — that they are

like strumpets given to juggleries, and to other base and filthy arts, which he calls whoredoms. But I have said, that the meaning of the Prophet can be more clearly elicited from the second clause of the verse, when he says that the Ninevites made a merchandise of the nations. We see indeed even at this day that princes disturb the whole world at their pleasure; for they deliver up innocent people to one another, and shamefully sell them, while each hunts after his own advantage, without any shame; that he may increase his own power, he will deliver others into the hand of an enemy. Since then there are crafty proceedings of this kind carried on too much at this day, there is no need that I should attempt to explain at any length the meaning of the Prophet. I wish that examples were to be sought at a distance. Let us proceed —

<div><340305> Nahum 3:5-6</div>	
<div>5. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.</div>	<div>5. Ecce Ego ad te, inquit Jehova exercituum, et retegam fimbrias tuas super faciem tuam, et ostendam gentibus nuditatem tuam, et regnis foeditatem tuam:</div>
<div>6. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.</div>	<div>6. Et projiciam super te sordes (vel, inquinamenta) et ignominia afficiam te, et ponam te quasi stercus (alii vertunt; alii autem, quasi exemplum; dicam postea de ipsa voce.)</div>

The Prophet confirms here what he has said of the fall of Nineveh; but, as it was stated yesterday, he introduces God as the speaker, that his address might be more powerful. God then testifies here to the Assyrians, that they should have no strife or contention with any mortal being, but with their own judgment; as though he said, “There is no reason for thee to compare thy forces with those of the Chaldeans; but think of this — that I am the punisher of thy crimes. The Chaldeans indeed shall come; chariots shall make a noise and horses shall leap, and horsemen shall shake the earth; they shall brandish the flaming swords, and their spears shall be like lightning; but there is no reason for thee to think that the Chaldeans will, of themselves, break in upon thee: for I guide them by my hidden providence,

as it is my purpose to destroy thee; and now the time is come when I shall execute on thee my judgment.”

I am, he says, *Jehovah of hosts*. The epithet צבאות *tsabaut*, must be referred to the circumstance of this passage; for God declares here his own power, that the Assyrians might not think that they could by any means escape. He then adds, *I will disclose thy extremities on thy face*. He alludes to the similitude which we have lately observed; for harlots appear very fine, and affect neatness and elegance in their dress; they not only put on costly apparel, but also add disguises. Though then this fine dress conceals the baseness of strumpets, yet, were any to take the clothes of a harlot and throw them over her head, all her beauty would disappear, and all men would abhor the sight: to see her concealed parts disclosed would be a base and filthy spectacle. So God declares that he would strip Nineveh of its magnificent dress, that she might be a detestable sight, only exhibiting her own reproach. We now then apprehend the Prophet’s meaning; as though he said, “Nineveh thinks not that she is to perish. — How so? Because her own splendor blinds her: and she has willfully deceived herself, and, by her deceits, has dazzled the eyes of all nations. As then this splendor seems to be a defense to the city Nineveh, *I the Lord*, he says, *will disclose her hidden parts*; I will deprive the Assyrians of all this splendor in which they now glory, and which is in high esteem and admiration among other nations.”

And this passage ought to be especially noticed; for, as I have said, true dignity is not to be found in the highest princes. Princes ought, indeed, to seek respect for themselves by justice, integrity, mercy, and a magnanimous spirit: but they only excel in mean artifices; then they shamelessly deceive, lie, and swear falsely; they also flatter, even meanly, when circumstances require; they insinuate themselves by various crafty means, and by large promises decoy the simple. Since then their true dignity is not commonly regarded by princes, this passage ought to be observed, so that we may know that their elevation, which captivates the minds of men, is an abomination before God; for they do not discern things, but are blind, being dazzled by empty splendor.

Disclose, then, he says, *will I thy shame*. He says first, *Disclose will I thy fringes on thy face*; and then *I will show to the nations thy nakedness*. And the nakedness of great kings is shown to the nations when the Lord

executes his vengeance: for then even the lowest of the low will dare to pass judgment, — “He deserved to perish with shame, for he exercised tyranny on his own subjects, and spared not his own neighbors; he never was a good prince; nay, he only employed deceits and perjuries.” When, therefore princes are cast down, every one, however low, becomes a judge, and ascends as it were, the tribunal to burden and load them with reproaches. And hence the Prophet says, in the person of God, *Disclose will I thy fringes on thy face, and will show to the nations thy nakedness, and to kingdoms thy filthiness.*

He afterwards adds, *I will besprinkle thee with filth*, or defilements. The Prophet still alludes to the similitude of a harlot, who is well and sumptuously adorned, and by her charms captivates the eyes of all: but when any one takes mire and filth from the middle of the road, and bespatters her with it, there is then no one who will not turn away his eyes from so filthy an object. But we have already explained the import of this. God is indeed said to besprinkle kingdoms with defilements, when he casts them down; for they all begin freely to express their opinion: and those who before pretended great admiration, now rise up and bring forth many reproachful things. Then it is, that the Lord is said to besprinkle great kingdoms with filth and defilements.

He then adds, *I will disgrace thee.* נָבַל, *nubel*, is to fall, and it is applied to dead bodies; but it means also to disgrace, as it is to be taken here. *I will make thee as the dung.* Some think רוֹאִי, *ruai*, to be dung, or something fetid: but as it comes from רָאָה, *rae*, to see, and is in many parts of Scripture taken for vision or view, they are more correct, in my judgment, who render it thus, *I will make thee an example*; so Jerome renders it; as though he said, “Thou shalt be a spectacle to all nations.”^{F38} And Nineveh is said to be made an example, because its ruin was more memorable than that of any other which had previously happened. Thou shalt then *be a spectacle*; that is, the calamity which I now denounce shall attract the observation of all. It afterwards follows —

7. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

7. Et accidet ut quisquis te viderit recedat abs te, et dicat, Vastata est Nineveh: quis condolebit ei? unde quaeram consolatores tibi?

When he says, כַּל-רֹאֵי, *cal-raik*, ‘whosoever sees thee,’ we hence learn again that רֹאֵי, *ruai*, at the end of the last verse, is to be taken for example or spectacle; for the Prophet proceeds with the same subject: *I will make thee*, he says, *an example*, or a spectacle. — For what purpose? *that whosoever sees thee may depart from thee.*^{F39} And it was an evidence of horror, though some think it to have been a reward for her cruelty, that no one came to Nineveh, but that she was forsaken by all friends in her desolation. And they take in the same sense what follows, *Who will condole with her? and whence shall I seek comforters for thee?* For they think that the Ninevites are here reproached for their cruelty, because they made themselves so hated by all that they were unworthy of sympathy; for they spared none, they allowed themselves full liberty in injuring others, they had gained the hatred of all the world. Hence some think that what is here intimated is, that the Ninevites were justly detested by and so that no one condoled with them in so great a calamity, inasmuch as they had been injurious to all: “It shall then happen, that whosoever sees thee shall go far away from thee and shall say, Wasted is Nineveh; who will condole with her? Whence shall I call comforters to her?”

But I know not whether this refined meaning came into the Prophet’s mind. We may explain the words more simply, that all would flee far away as a proof of their horrors and that the calamity would be such, that no lamentation would correspond with it. Who will be able to console with her? that is, were the greatness of her calamity duly weighed, though all were to weep and utter their meanings, it would not yet be sufficient: all lamentations would be far unequal to so great a calamity. The Prophet seems rather to mean this. *Who* then *shall condole with her?* and whence shall I seek comforters, as though he said, “The ruin of so splendid a city

will not be of an ordinary kind, but what cannot be equaled by any lamentations.” It then follows —

<div><340308>Nahum 3:8-10</div>	
8. Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?	8. An melior es quam No (id est, Alexandria,) Amon (vertunt quidam, populosum; alii putant esse nomen Regis; an igitur melior es quam Alexandria populosa,) quae habitabat in fluviis? Mare in circuitu ejus, cujus fossa erat mare, et a mari murus ejus;
9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.	9. Aethiopia fortitudo ejus et Aegyptus; et nullus finis; Aphrica et Libyae fuerunt in auxilium ejus.
10. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.	10. Etiam ipsa in transmigrationem abiit ad captivitatem; etiam parvuli ejus allisi sunt in capite omnium platearum; et super proceres ejus (vel, honorabiles, ad verbum) jecerunt sortem, et magnetes ejus vincti sunt compedibus.

The Prophet, in order to gain credit to his prophecy, produces here the ensample of Alexandria. It is indeed certain, from many testimonies of Scripture, that Alexandria is called No, which was a very ancient city, situated on the confines of Africa, and yet in Egypt. It might, at the same time, be, that the Alexandrians formerly had their own government, at least their own kings: and this is probable; for the Prophet says here, that Egypt and Ethiopia, as well as Africa and the Libyan nations, were the confederates of this city. It may hence then be concluded, that Alexandria was not then a part of Egypt, but had its own government, and was in alliance with the Egyptians, as with the other nations. But as Egypt, after the death of our Prophet, was in part overthrown by the Assyrians, and in part by the Chaldeans, some interpreters think, that the Prophet speaks of a ruin which had not yet taken place.^{F40} But this would not harmonize with his design; for the Prophet shows here, as in a mirror, that the chief

empires fall according to the will of God, and that cities, the richest and the best fortified, come to nothing, whenever it pleases God. Unless, then, the destruction of Alexandria was notorious and everywhere known, the Prophet could not have suitably adduced this example: I therefore doubt not but that Alexandria had been then demolished. It is no matter of wonder that it afterwards returned to its former state and became rich; for the situation of the city was most commodious, not so much on account of the fertility of the land, as on account of its traffic; for ships from the Mediterranean sailed up near to it. It had, indeed, on one side, the lake Marcotis, which is not very healthy; and then the sea fortified it; and Pharos was a neighboring island: but yet the city was inhabited by many, and adorned with splendid buildings; for the advantage of traffic drew together inhabitants from all quarters. It was afterwards built again by Alexander of Macedon. But it is evident enough that it had been already an opulent city: for Alexander did not build a new city but enlarged it. ^{F41} Let us now come to the words of the Prophet.

Shall it be better to thee than to Alexandria? The word אַמון, *amun*, some render populous; and I am inclined to adopt this meaning, which has been received nearly by the consent of all. Others have supposed it to be the name of a king; but as proof fails them, I leave to themselves their own conjecture. *Shall it then be better to thee than to Alexandria?* For *it stood*, he says, *between the rivers*. Alexandria had the Nile, as it were, under its own power; for it was then divided into many parts, so that it intersected the city in various places. So then he says, that Alexandria dwelt between the rivers; for it divided the Nile, as it suited its convenience, into several streams.

Then he says, *The sea was around her*: for it was surrounded on one side by the sea, and protected by the island Pharos, which had a tower, not only for the sake of defense, but that ships coming in from the Mediterranean, might have a signal, by which they might direct their course straight to the harbor. *The sea then was around her*; for the sea encircled more than half of the city; and then the lake Mareotis was on the other side to the south. He afterwards adds, *And its wall* or moat *was the sea*. The word is written with י, *iod*, חֵיל, *chil*; but it means a wall or a moat, though Latins render *antemurale* — a front-work: for they were wont formerly to fortify their cities with a double wall, as old buildings

still show. According to these interpreters חֵיל, *chil*, is the inner wall, and so they render its front-work: and there was also an outer wall towards the sea. But we may take חֵיל, *chil*, for a moat or a trench; and it is easy to find from other passages that it was a trench rather than a front-work. It is said that the body of Jezebel was torn by dogs in the trench, and the word there is חֵיל, *chil*. As to the object of the Prophet, he evidently intended to show, that Alexandria was so well fortified, that Nineveh had no reason to think herself to be in a safer state; for its fortress was from the sea, and also from Ethiopia, on account of the munitions which he has mentioned. Then he speaks of *Africa* and *Egypt*, and the Libyan nations, and says in short, that there was no end of her strength; that is, that she could seek the help of many friends and confederates: many were ready to bring aid, even Africa, Ethiopia, and the Lybians.

Yet, he says, *she departed into captivity a captive*; that is, the inhabitants of Alexandria have been banished, and the city become as it were captive, for its inhabitants were driven here and there. *Dashed*, he says, *have been their little ones at the head of every street*. The Prophet means, that so great a power as that of Alexandria did not prevent the conquerors to exercise towards her the most barbarous cruelty; for it was a savage act to dash little children against stones, who ought on account of their tender age, to have been spared. There was indeed no reason for raging against them, for they could not have been deemed enemies. But yet the Prophet says that Alexandria had been thus treated; and he said this, that Nineveh might not trust in her strength, and thus perversely despise God's judgment, which he now denounced on it. He adds, *They cast lots on her princess and bound were her great men with fetters*. In saying that lots were cast, he refers to an ancient custom; for when there was any dispute respecting a captive, the lot was cast: as for instance, when two had taken one man, to prevent contention, it was by lot determined who was to be his master. So then he says that lots were cast on their princes. This usually happened to the common people and to the lowest slaves; but the Prophet says that the conquerors spared not even the princes. They were therefore treated as the lowest class; and though they were great princes, they were led into captivity and bound with chains, in the same manner with the meanest and the lowest of the people. They were not treated according to their rank; and there was no differences between the chief men and the most degraded of the humbler classes; for even the very princes were so brought down,

that their lot differed not from that of the wretched; for as common people are usually treated with contempt, so were the chiefs of Alexandria treated by their enemies.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since by thy awful judgments thou dost show thy displeasure at the pride of this world, we may be ruled by the spirit of meekness, and in such a manner humble ourselves willingly under thy hand, that we may not experience thy dreadful power in our destruction, but being, on the contrary, supported by thy strength, we may keep ourselves in our own proper station and in true simplicity, and, at the same time, relying on thy protection, we may never doubt, but thou wilt sustain us against all the assaults of our enemies, however violent they may be, and thus persevere in the warfare of the cross which thou hast appointed for us, until we be at length gathered into that celestial kingdom, where we shall triumph together with thy Son, when his glory shall shine in us, and all the wicked shall be destroyed. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH

<340311> Nahum 3:11

11. Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

11. Etiam tu inebriaberis, tu eris abscondita; etiam tu quaeres robur (*vel, suppetias*) ab hoste (*vel, propter hostem.*)

Nahum, after having adduced the example of Alexandria, now shows that nothing would be able to resist God, so that he should not deal with Nineveh in the same manner; and he declares that this would be the case, *Thou also*, he says, *shalt be inebriated*. Well known is this metaphor, which often occurs in Scripture: for the Prophets are wont frequently to call punishment a cup, which God administers. But when God executes a heavy punishment, he is said to inebriate the wicked with his cup. The Prophet says now, that the chastisement of Nineveh would make her like a drunken man, who, being overcome with wine, lies down, as it were, stupefied. Hence by this metaphor he intended to set forth a most severe punishment: *Thou* then *shalt be also inebriated*. The particle גַּם, *gam*, is here emphatical; it was introduced, that the Ninevites might know, that they could not possibly escape the punishment which they deserved; for God continues ever like himself. *Thou* then *shalt be also inebriated*. This would not be consistent, were not God the judge of the world to the end. There is then a common reason for this proceeding; hence it necessarily follows, — since God punished the Alexandrians, the Assyrians cannot escape his hand, and be exempt from punishment.

He adds, *Thou shalt be hidden*. Some refer this to shame, as though the Prophet had said, — “Thou indeed showest thyself now to be very proud, but calamity will force thee to seek hiding-places, in which to conceal thyself.” But I am more inclined to this meaning, — that Nineveh would vanish away, as though it never had been; for to be hidden is often taken in Hebrew in the sense of being reduced to nothing.

He afterwards says, *Thou shalt also seek strength, or supplies, from the enemy*. The words מַעוּז מְאֻיִּב, *meouz meavib*, may admit of two meanings, — either that she will humbly solicit her enemies, — or that on account of her enemies she will flee to some foreign aid; for the preposition מֵ, *mem*, may be taken in both senses. If we adopt the first meaning, then I think that the Prophet speaks not of the Babylonians, but of the other nations who had been before harassed by the Assyrians. Thou shalt now then humbly pray for the aid of those who have been hitherto thine enemies, — not because they had provoked thee, but because thou hast as an enemy treated them. Now it is an extreme misery, when we are constrained to seek the help of those by whom we are hated, and hated, because we have by wrongs provoked them. But the other sense is more approved, for it is less strained: *Thou shalt also seek aids on account of the enemy*; that is, as strength to resist will fail thee, thou wilt seek assistance from thy neighbors.^{F42} It follows —

<340312>Nahum 3:12	
12. All thy strong holds <i>shall be like</i> fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.	12. Omnes munitiones tuae ficus cum maturis (fructibus;) si moveantur, cadunt super os comedentis.

The Prophet here declares that the strongholds of the Assyrians would avail them nothing; whether they trusted in the number of their men, or in their walls, or in other defenses, they would be disappointed; for all things, he says, will of themselves fall, even without being much assailed. And he employs a very apposite similitude, “Thy fortifications,” he says, “which thou thinkest to be very strong, shall be like figs; for when the fruit is ripe, and any comes to the tree, as soon as he touches it or any of the branches, the figs will fall off themselves.” We indeed know that there is not much firmness in that fruit; when it is ripe, it immediately falls to the ground, or if it hangs on the branches, a very little shaking will bring it down. We now see the design of the Prophet.

And hence an useful doctrine may be deduced: whatever strength men may seek for themselves from different quarters, it will wholly vanish away; for

neither forts, nor towers, nor ramparts, nor troops of men, nor any kind of contrivances, will avail any thing; and were there no one to rise against them, they would yet fall of themselves. It afterwards follows —

<340313> Nahum 3:13	
13. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee <i>are</i> women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.	13. Ecce populus tuus mulieres in medio tui; inimicis tuis aperiendo aperientur portae terrae tuae; vorabit ignis vectes tuos.

The Prophet declares here, that the hearts of them all would become soft and effeminate when God would proceed to destroy Nineveh. We have said before that the hearts of men are so in the hand of God, that he melts whatever courage there may be in them, whenever he pleases: and God prepares men for ruin, when he debilitates their hearts, that they cannot bear the sight of their enemies. God indeed can leave in men their perverseness, so that they may ever run furiously into ruin, and not be able, with a courageous heart, to repel the attacks of their enemies; but he often softens their hearts and deprives them of power, that he may make more evident his judgment: God does not, however, always work in the same way; for variety in his judgments is calculated to do us good, for thereby our minds are more powerfully awakened. Were his proceedings uniformly the same, we could not so well distinguish the hand of God, as when he acts now in this way, and then in another. But, as I have already said, it is what is well known, that God enervates men and strips them of all courage, when he gives them over to destruction.

So now the Prophet speaks of the Ninevites, *Behold*, he says, *thy people are women*.^{F43} The demonstrative particle, Behold, is here emphatical: for the Assyrians, no doubt, ridiculed, as a fable, the prediction of the Prophet; and it was what the Israelites found it difficult to believe. This is the reason why the Prophet pointed out, as by the finger, what surpassed the comprehensions of men. By saying, *in the midst of thee*, he intimates, that though they should be separated from their enemies and dwell in a fortified city, they should yet be filled with trembling. This amplification deserves to be noticed: for it is nothing wonderful, when an onset frightens

us, when enemies join battle with us, and when many things present themselves before our eyes, which are calculated to deprive us of courage; but when we are frightened by report only concerning our enemies, and we become fainthearted, though walls be between us, it then appears evident, that we are smitten by the hand of God; for when we see walls of stone, and yet our hearts become brittle like glass, is it not evident, that we are inwardly terrified by the Lord, as it were, through some hidden influence, rather than through intervening and natural causes? We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning, when he says, that the people would become women, or effeminate, in the midst of the city, in its very bowels; as though he had said, that they would not cease to tremble, even while they were dwelling in a safe place.

By opening, opened shall be thy gates, he says, *to thy enemies*. He shows again, that though the Assyrians were fortified, every access would be made open to their enemies, as though there was no fortress. By saying, *the gates of thy land*, it is probable that he speaks not only of the city, but of all their strongholds. The Assyrians, no doubt, fortified many cities, in order to keep afar off the enemy, and to preserve the chief seat of the empire free from danger and fear. I therefore understand the Prophet as referring here to many cities, when he says, *By opening, opened shall be the gates of thy land to thine enemies and fire shall consume thy bars*. He means, that though they had before carefully fortified the whole land around, so that they thought themselves secure from all hostile invasion, yet all this would be useless; for the fire would consume all their bars. By fire, the Prophet understands metaphorically the judgment of God. For as we see that so great is the vehemence of fire, that it melts iron and brass, so the Prophet means, that there would be no strength which could defend Nineveh and its empire against the hand of God. It follows —

<340314> **Nahum 3:14-15**

14. Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln.

14. Aquas obsidionis hauri tibi, robora munitiones tuas, ingredere in lutum, calca caementum, fortifica fornacem (vel, laterem; alii vertunt, tene, vel, apprehende.)

15. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.

15. Illic vorabit te ignis, exterminabit te gladius, comedet te quasi bruchus (alii vertunt, quasi bruchum;) multiplicari (ad verbum, vel, multiplicando; est כִּירָק quasi bruchus,) multiplicare quasi locusta.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject, — that the Ninevites would labor in vain, while striving anxiously and with every effort to defend themselves against their enemies. The meaning then is, “That though thou remittest no diligence, yet thou shalt lose all thy labor; for thou wilt not be able to resist the vengeance of God; and thou deceives thyself if thou thinkest that by the usual means thou canst aid thyself; for it is God who attacks thee by the Babylonians. How much soever then thou mayest accumulate of those things which are usually employed to fortify cities, all this will be useless.” *Draw for thyself*, he says, *waters for the siege*; that is, lay up provisions for thyself, as it is usually done, and have water laid up in cisterns; *strengthen thy fortresses*, that is, renew them; *enter into the clay* for the sake of treading the mortar: *fortify*, or cement, or join together; the brick-kiln (for what some think that כִּירָק, *chezek*, means, here is to hold, or to lay hold, is wholly foreign to the Prophet’s meaning:) to *fortify* then the *brick-kiln*, that is, the bricks which come forth from the kiln, nothing else than to construct and join them together, that there might be a solid building: for we know that buildings often fall, or are overturned, because they are not well joined together: and he refers to the mode of building which historians say was in use among the Assyrians. For as that country had no abundance of stones, they supplied the defect by bricks. We now then understand the intention of the Prophet.

But he adds, *There shall the fire consume thee*. There is much importance in the adverb of place, *there*, which he uses: there also, he says, *shall the fire eat thee up*: for he expresses more than before, when he said, that the Assyrians would weary themselves in vain in fortifying their city and their empire; for he says now, that the Lord would turn to their destruction those things in which they trusted as their defenses; *There* then *shall the fire consume thee*. We now then see what the Prophet means.

We must at the same time observe, that he mentions water; as though he said, However sparingly and frugally thy soldiers may live, being content with water as their drink, (for it is necessary, when we would firmly resist enemies, to undergo all indulgences, and if needs be to endure want, at least the want of delicate meat and drink,) — though thy soldiers be content with water, and seek not water fresh from the spring or the river, but drink it from cisterns, and though thy fortresses be repaired, and thy walls carefully joined together in a solid structure, by bricks well fitted and fastened, *yet there shall the fire consume thee*; that is, thy frugality, exertion, and care, not only will avail thee nothing, but will also turn out to thy ruin; for the Lord pronounces accursed the arrogance of men, when they trust in their own resources.

He afterwards adds, *Exterminate thee shall the sword*; that is, the Lord will find out various means by which he will consume thee. By the fire, then, and by the sword, will he waste and destroy thee. He then says, *He will consume thee as the chafer*. we may read the last word in the nominative as well as in the objective case — He as a chafer will consume thee. If we approve of this rendering, then the meaning would be, — “As chafers in a short time devour a meadow or standing corn, so thy enemies shall soon devour thee as with one mouthful.” We indeed know, that these little animals are so hurtful, that they will very soon eat up and consume all the fruit; and there is in these insects an astonishing voracity. But as the Prophet afterwards compares the Assyrians to chafers and locusts, another sense would be more suitable, and that is, — that God’s judgment would consume the Assyrians, as when rain, or a storm, or a change of season, consumes the chafers; for as these insects are very hurtful, so the Lord also exterminates them whenever he pleases.^{F44} He afterwards adds, *to be multiplied*; which is, as I have said, a verb in the infinitive mood. But the sentence of the Prophet is this, *by multiplying as the chafer, to multiply*

as the locusts: but why he speaks thus, may be better understood from the context; the two following verses must be therefore added —

<340316> Nahum 3:16-17	
16. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away.	16. Multiplicasti negotiatores tuos quasi stellas coelorum; bruchus praedatus est et avolat.
17. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.	17. Principes tui (vel, coronati; deducitur enim a כּוֹר quod significat coronam; sed malo vertere, egregios, vel, praestantissimos quosque; principes ergo tui, vel, eximii tui) quasi locusta, et duces tui quasi locusta locustarum (est quidem aliud nomen, sed non possumus certo distinguere inter illas species, quemadmodum dictum est Jaelis 1 capite,) quae castramentantur (id est, considunt) in maceris (id est, clausuris) in die frigoris: sol exortus est, et migrarunt; et non cognoscitur locus earum ubi.

From these words we may learn what the Prophet before meant, when he said that the Assyrians were like locusts or chafers; as though he said, — “I know that you trust in your great number; for ye are like a swarm of chafers or locusts; ye excel greatly in number; inasmuch as you have assembled your merchants and traders as the stars of heaven.” Here he shows how numerous they were. But when he says, *The chafer has spoiled, and flies away*, he points out another reason for the comparison; for it is not enough to lay hold on one clause of the verse, but the two clauses must be connected; and they mean this, — that the Assyrians, while they were almost innumerable, gloried in their great number, — and also, that this vast multitude would vanish away. He then makes an admission here and says, by multiplying thy merchants, thou hast multiplied them; but when he says, as chafers and as locusts, he shows that this multitude would not continue, for the Lord would scatter them here and there. As then the scattering was nigh, the Prophet says that they were chafers and locusts.

We now understand the design of the Prophet: He first ridicules the foolish confidence with which the Assyrians were inflated. They thought, that as they ruled over many nations, they could raise great armies, and set them in any quarter to oppose any one who might attack them: the Prophet concedes this to them, that is, that they were very numerous, *by multiplying thou hast multiplied*; but what will this avail them? They shall be locusts, they shall be chafers. — How so? A fuller explanation follows, *Thou hast multiplied thy merchants as the stars of heaven*: but this shall be temporary; for thou shalt see them vanishing away very soon; they shall be like the chafers, who, being in a moment scattered here and there, quit the naked field or the meadow. But by merchants or traders some understand confederates; and this comparison also, as we have before seen, frequently occurs in the Prophets: and princes at this day differ nothing from traders, for they outbid one another, and excel in similar artifices, as we have elsewhere seen, by which they carry on a system of mutual deception. This comparison then may be suitable, *Thou hast multiplied thy traders*, — *tes praticiens*. But the meaning of the Prophet may be viewed as still wider; we may apply this to the citizens of Nineveh; for the principal men no doubt were merchants: as the Venetian of the present day are all merchants, so were the Syrians, and the Ninevites, and also the Babylonians. It is then nothing strange, that the Prophet, by taking a part for the whole should include under this term all the rich, *Thou hast then multiplied thy merchants*.^{F45}

He has hitherto allowed them to be very numerous; but he now adds, *The chafer has spoiled, and flies away*. The verb means sometimes to spoil, and it means also to devour: The chafer then has devoured, and flies away; that is, “Thy princes, (as he afterwards calls them,) or thy principal men, have indeed devoured; they have wasted many regions by their plunders, and consumed all things on every side, like the chafers, who destroy the standing corn and all fruits: thou hast then been as a swarm of chafers.” For as chafers in great numbers attack a field, so Nineveh was wont to send everywhere her merchants to spoil and to denude the whole land. “Well,” he says “the chafer has devoured, but he flies away, he is scattered; so it shall happen,” says the Prophet, “to the citizens of Nineveh.” And hence he afterwards adds, *And thy princes are as locusts*: this refers to the wicked doings, by which they laid waste almost the whole earth. As then the locusts and chafers, wherever they come,

consume every kind of food, devour all the fields, leave nothing, and the whole land becomes a waste; so also have been thy princes; *they have been as locusts and thy leaders as the locusts of locusts*, that is, as very great locusts; for this form, we know, expresses the superlative degree in Hebrew. Their leaders were then like the most voracious locusts for the whole land was made barren by them, as nothing was capable of satisfying their avarice and voracity.

The Prophet then adds, They are locusts, who *dwell in the mounds during the time of cold; but when the sun rises, not known any more is their place*. He now shows, that it would not be perpetual, that the Ninevites would thus devour the whole earth, and that all countries would be exposed to their voracity; for as the locusts, he says, hide themselves in caverns, and afterwards fly away, so it shall happen to thy princes. But this passage may be taken to mean, — that the Ninevites concealed themselves in their hiding-places during the winter, and that when the suitable time for plundering came, they retook themselves in different directions, and took possession of various regions, and brought home plunder from the remotest parts. This meaning may be elicited from the words of the Prophet; and the different clauses would thus fitly coalesce together, that when the Ninevites left their nests, they dispersed and migrated in all directions. I do not at the same time disapprove of the former meaning: they are then like locusts, who *lodge in mounds during the time of cold; but when the sun rises*, — that is, when the season invites them, (for he speaks not of the winter sun,) but when the heat of the sun prevails and temperate the air, — then, he says, the locusts go forth and *fly away, and known no more is their place*. He means, in short, that the Ninevites plundered, and that they did so after the manner of locusts; and that a similar end also was nigh them; for the Lord would destroy them, yea, suddenly consume them, so that no trace of them could be found. It follows —

<340318> Nahum 3:18

18. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust*: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth *them*.

18. Dormitaverunt pastores tui, rex Assur; jacuerunt fortes tui; dispersus est populus tuus super montes, et nemo congregans.

He confirms the preceding verse, and says that there would be no counsel nor wisdom in the leading men: for the *shepherds* of the king of Assyria were his counselors, in whose wisdom he trusted, as we know that kings usually depend on their counselors: for they think that there is in them prudence enough, and therefore they commit to them the care of the whole people. But the Prophet ridicules the confidence of the king of Assyria, because the shepherds would not have so much vigilance as to take care of themselves, and of the people, and of the whole kingdom. He speaks in the past tense, either to show the certainty of the prediction, or because the change of tenses is common in Hebrew. *Lie still*, he says, *shall thy mighty men*; ^{F46} that is, they shall remain idle; they shall not be able to sally out against their enemies, to stop their progress. *They shall* then *lie still*: and then he says, *Scattered are thy people*. פוש, *push*, is not to scatter; hence I doubt not, but that there is a change of letter, that ש, *schin*, is put for צ, *tzaddi*; and I am surprised that some derive the verb from פוש, *push*, when, on the contrary, it is from פוץ, *puts*, and the change of these two letters is common in Hebrew. *Thy people* then *are dispersed on the mountains and there is no one to assemble them*.

By these words the Prophet means, that such would be the scattering of the whole kingdom, that there would be no hope of restoration; *There will* then *be none to assemble them*. He had said before that the chiefs or mighty men would be still. Though it would be needful to go forth to check the progress of their enemies; yet he says, *They shall idly lie down*: He refers here to their sloth. But the people who ought to be quiet at home, as being weak and feeble, *shall be dispersed on the mountains, and no one will be there to gather them*. It follows —

<340319> Nahum 3:19

19. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

19. Non est contractio (vel, cicatrix) fracturae tuae; dolore est plena plaga tua; omnes qui audierint famam tuam (id est, de te) percutient manum super te; quia super quem non transiit malitia tua jugiter?

The Prophet shows here more clearly, that when the empire of Nineveh should be scattered, it would be an incurable evil, that every hope of a remedy would be taken away. Though the wicked cannot escape calamity, yet they harbor false expectations, and think that they can in a short time gather new strength. Hence, in order to take from them this hope, the Prophet says, that there would be no *contraction of the fracture*.^{F47} And this is a striking similitude; for he compares the ruin of Nineveh to a wound which cannot be seamed and healed. There is then no contraction; some render it, a wrinkle, but improperly. *There is then no contraction:* and he adds, *Thy stroke is full of pain*,^{F48} that is, the pain of thy stroke cannot be allayed. This is one thing, — that the ruin of Nineveh would be irreparable.

Then he says, *Whosoever shall hear the report, shall strike the hand on thy account*. Many give this rendering, They shall clap the hand over thee, or with the hands; and they think that the singular is put for the plural number. But as in Hebrew to strike the hand is a token of consent, it would not be unsuitable to say, that the Prophet means, that wherever the report of this calamity would be heard, all would express their approbation, “See, God has at length proved himself to be the just avenger of so much wickedness.” To strike the hand is said to be done by those who make an agreements or when any one pledges himself for another.^{F49} As then in giving pledges, and in other compacts, men are said to strike the hand; so also all shall thus give their assent to God’s judgment in this case, “O how rightly is this done! O how justly has God punished these tyrants, these plunderers.” *They will then strike the hand on thy account;* that is, “This thy ruin will be approved;” as though he said, “Not only before God art thou, Nineveh, accursed, but also according to the consent

of all nations.” And thus he intimates, that Nineveh would perish in the greatest dishonor and disgrace. It sometimes happens that an empire falls, and all bewail the event: but God here declares, that he would not be satisfied with the simple destruction of the city Nineveh without adding to it a public infamy, so that all might acknowledge that it happened through his righteous judgment.

He afterwards adds, *For upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually?* This is a confirmation of the last clause; and this reason will suit both the views which have been given. If we take the striking of the hand for approbation, this reason will be suitable. — How? For all nations will rejoice at thy destruction, because there is no nation which thou hast not in many ways injured. So also, in token of their joy, all will congratulate themselves, as though they were made free; or they will clap their hands, that is, acknowledge that thou hast been destroyed by the judgment of God, because all had experienced how unjustly and tyrannically thou hast ruled. As then thy wickedness has been like a deluge, and hast nearly consumed all the earth, all will clap or shake their hands at thy ruin.

And he says, *continually*, to show that God’s forbearance had been long exercised. Hence, also, it appears, that the Assyrians were inexcusable, because, when God indulgently spared them, they did not repent, but pursued their wicked ways for a long course of time. As then to their sinful licentiousness they added perverseness, every excuse was removed. But the Prophet does, at the same time, remind the Israelites, that there was no reason for them to be cast down in their minds, because God did not immediately execute punishment; for by the word תמיד, *tamid*, he insinuates, that God would so suspend for a time his judgment as to Nineveh, that his forbearance and delay might be an evidence of his goodness and mercy. We hence see that the Prophet here opposes the ardor of men, for they immediately grow angry or complain when God delays to execute vengeance on their enemies.

He shows that God has a just reason for not visiting the wicked with immediate punishment; but yet the time will come when it shall appear that they are altogether past recovery, — the time, I say, will come, when the Lord shall at length put forth his hand and execute his judgment.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are not able to keep a firm footing in the way of justice and uprightness, — O grant, that, being governed by thy Spirit, we may restrain ourselves from doing any harm, and thus abstain from all evil deeds, and that we may labor to do good to all, so that we may, by experience, find that all are protected by thee, who so conform themselves to the rule of thy Law, that they take no advantage of the simple, either for the purpose of ruining or of injuring them, but who, being content with their own small portion, know that there is nothing better than to be wholly subject to thee, and to thy guidance: and may we thus live in forbearance and justice towards our neighbors, that we may, at the same time, rely on thy mercy, by which alone we can be defended, and made safe against so many assaults of Satan and of the wicked, until, having at length completed the course of our warfare, we shall come into that blessed rest which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

END OF THE COMMENTARIES ON NAHUM.

A TRANSLATION OF

CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE PROPHECIES OF NAHUM.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 THE burden of Nineveh,—the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite:
- 2 A God jealous, and an avenger is Jehovah; Avenger is Jehovah, and a retainer of wrath; Take vengeance does Jehovah on his enemies, And keep *it* for his adversaries: (421)
- 3 Jehovah is slow to wrath, and great in power, And by clearing he will not clear: Jehovah! In the whirlwind and tempest is his way, And the cloud is the dust of his feet: (424)
- 4 He chides the sea, and it becomes dry; And all the rivers he dried up; Languish do Bashan and Carmel, And the flower of Lebanon languishes:
- 5 Mountains tremble at him, and hills melt; And burn does the earth before his face, Yea, the world, and all who dwell in it. (427)
- 6 Before his indignation who can stand? And who can bear the fierceness of his wrath? (429) His fury is poured out like fire, And rocks dissolve before him.
- 7 Good is Jehovah for strength in the day of distress; And he knoweth them who hope in him.
- 8 But with an inundation, he, passing through, Will make a consummation in her place; (433) And pursue shall darkness his enemies.

- 9** What do ye imagine against Jehovah? A consummation he makes! Not rise again shall affliction.
- 10** They who are like entangled thorns, And drunken as with their own drinking— Devoured shall they be as stubble fully dry. (437)
- 11** From thee has gone forth a contriver of evil Against Jehovah, a wicked counselor.
- 12** Thus saith Jehovah,— Though they are secure, and though they are many, They shall *yet* be cut off, and he shall pass through: (443) And through I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more;
- 13** For now will I break off from thee his yoke, And his bonds will I burst asunder.
- 14** And a command respecting thee hath Jehovah given,— “Let none be sown hereafter of thy name;” From the house of thy gods will I cut off The graven and the molten image; I will make thy grave, for thou art execrable.
- 15** Behold on the mountains the feet of him Who announceth, who publisheth peace! Celebrate thou, Judah, thy solemnities, Perform thy vows; for pass through thee Shall the wicked one no more,—he is wholly cut off.

CHAPTER 2

- 1** Come up is the destroyer before thy face; Watch the fortress, guard the way, (455) Make strong the loins, fortify mightily thy strength:
- 2** (For taken away hath Jehovah the pride of Jacob, As he had done as to the pride of Israel; As he had done as to the pride of Israel; For emptied them the emptiers, And their branches have they cut down:)

- 3** The shield of his mighty ones are made red, The men of his strength are clad in scarlet; With the fire of torches is the chariot, In the day of his expedition; And the fir-trees tremulously shake:
- 4** In the wide places they madden with their chariots, The hurry away through the streets, The appearance of them is that of lamps, As lightnings they run here and there.
- 5** He will remember his valiant men, They shall stumble in their march, They shall hasten to her wall, And prepared will be the defense.
- 6** The gates of the rivers are opened, And the palace is dissolved;
- 7** And she which stood firm is cast into exile, And her maids lead her as with the voice of doves, Beating on their breasts. (463)
- 8** And yet Nineveh had been As a pool of waters from *ancient* days; But now they flee—"Stand ye, stand;" And no one regards.
- 9** Take ye away the silver, take away the gold; For there is no end of her preparations; *Her* glory is from every desirable vessel. (468)
- 10** Emptied and emptied is she, and denuded; And the heart is melted; And there is a knocking of the knees, And trembling in all loins, And the faces of all withdraw their brightness. (472)
- 11** Where is the abode of lions? Where came the lion, the lioness, the cub of the lion; And none terrified them. (474)
- 12** The lion tare what sufficed his whelps, And strangled for his lionesses, And filled with raving his caves, And his dens with prey.
- 13** Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, And I will burn with smoke her chariot, And thy young lions shall the sword devour, And I will cut off from the land thy prey, And the sound of thy teeth shall no more be heard.

CHAPTER 3

- 1 Oh blood city! The whole is full of deceit, *and* of ravin; *From it* the prey departs not.
- 2 The sound of the whip! The sound of the rattling of the wheel! And the horse prancing, and the chariot bounding!
- 3 The horseman urging onward! And the flame of the sword, and the lightning of the spear! And the number of the slain, and the mass of carcasses! And there is no end to her dead bodies, They stumble on their carcasses!
- 4 *This is* for the multitude of the fornications Of the harlot who excels in beauty, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations by her fornications, And tribes by her sorceries. (481)
- 5 Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts: And I will throw thy skirts over thy face, And show to the nations thy nakedness, And to kingdoms thy filthiness;
- 6 And I will cast on thee filth, and disgrace thee, And I will make thee an example:
- 7 And it shall be, that whosoever seeth thee Shall flee away from thee, and say,—“Wasted is Nineveh! Who will condole with her? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?”
- 8 Are thou better than populous No, Which dwelt among the rivers? The sea was around her; Whose mound was the sea, and the sea was her wall;
- 9 From Ethiopia was her strength, and from Egypt, And there was no end *to it*; Africa and Lybia were her auxiliaries:
- 10 Even she migrated, she went into captivity; And her infants were bound in chains.
- 11 Thou also shalt be inebriated, thou shalt be hid; And thou shalt seek strength from the enemy.
- 12 All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with ripe fruit; If they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater.

- 13** Behold, thy people shall be women in the midst of thee; To
thine enemies shall be opened in the gates of thy land, Devour
shall the fire thy bars.
- 14** Waters for the siege draw for thyself, Strengthen thy fortresses,
Enter into the clay, tread the mortar, Make strong the brick-kiln:
- 15** There shall the fire devour you, Exterminate thee shall the
sword, It shall devour thee as the chafer. Increase as the chafer,
increase as the locust;
- 16** Thou hast multiplied thy merchants More than the stars of
heaven;— The chafer has spoiled, and flies away.
- 17** Thy princes are as locusts, And thy captains are as the largest
locusts; Which encamp in the fences in the cold day; The sun
rises, and they fly away, And not known is the place where
they are. (502)
- 18** Slept have thy shepherds, king of Assyria; Lie down did thy
mighty men: Dispersed is thy people on the mountains, And no
one gathers them.
- 19** There is no binding for thy fracture, Altogether grievous is thy
wound; All who shall hear a report of thee, Shall, on thy
account, strike the hand; For upon whom hath not passed Thy
wickedness continually?

FOOTNOTES

FT1 “I conclude from ^{<340202>}Nahum 2:2, that Nahum prophesied after the captivity of the ten tribes. Josephus places him in the reign of Jotham, and says that his predictions came to pass one hundred and fifteen years afterwards. *Ant.* IX. 11. 3. According to our best chronologers, this date would bring us to the year in which Samaria was taken. And I agree with those who think Nahum uttered this prophecy in the reign of Hezekiah, and not long after the subversion of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser.”—*Newcome*.

FT2 The distance is supposed by chronologers to have been about 150 years.—*Ed*.

CHAPTER 1

FT3 The word comes from נָשָׂא, to bear, to carry. Some regard it as the message *carried* or *borne* by the Prophets from God to the people, and hence the same as Prophecy. Others consider it to be the judgment to be *borne* by the people respecting whom it was announced. The latter seems to be its meaning here, where it is said, “the burden of Nineveh.” It was the judgment laid on them, and which that city was to bear, endure, and undergo.—*Ed*.

FT4 “It has been thought, and not without reason, by some, that Capernaum, Heb. כַּפְר נַחֻם, most properly rendered, *the village of Nahum*, derived its name from our Prophet having resided in it.”—*Henderson*.

FT5 How far this language is right, may be questioned. The Prophets, under the immediate direction of the Divine Spirit, can hardly be said to *borrow* from a previous writer. They have no doubt announced the same sentiments, and in some instances, used the same words, as those found in the writings of Moses; but they derived them not from those writings, but from Divine inspiration: and, as *Calvin* has often observed, they adduced nothing but what they received from God. But this language is not peculiar to *Calvin*: he adopted it from the fathers.—*Ed*.

FT6 The following may be proposed as the literal rendering of this verse,—

*A God jealous and an avenger is Jehovah;
Avenger is Jehovah, and one who has indignation:
Avenger is Jehovah on his adversaries,
And watch does he for his enemies.*

God is said to be *jealous* in the second commandment, being one who will not allow his own honor to be given to another. *Avenger*, נָקָם, is a vindicator of his own rights; and he is said to have indignation, or hot wrath, or great displeasure; בעל חמה, possessor, holder, or keeper of indignation. *His adversaries*, צָרִי, rather, his oppressors; the oppressors of his people were his own oppressors. נוֹטֵר means to watch, rather than to keep. Its meaning here is to watch the opportunity to take than to keep. Its meaning here is to watch the opportunity to take vengeance on his enemies. The description here is remarkable, and exactly adapted to the oppressive state of the Jews. The dishonor done to God's people was done to him. He is jealous, a defender of his own rights, full of indignation, and watches and waits for a suitable time to execute vengeance, to vindicate his own honor.—*Ed.*

FT7 I offer the following translation of this verse,—

*Jehovah is slow to wrath, though great in power;
Absolving, Jehovah will not absolve:
In the whirlwind and in the storm is his way;
And the cloud is the dust of his feet.*

The second line presents some difficulty. It is evidently an imperfect sentence; most supply the word, *guilty*; but rather the “enemies” mentioned before are to be understood. The meaning appears to be this,—Jehovah is slow to wrath, that is, to execute his vengeance, though he is great in power, capable of doing so; but though he delays, he will not eventually clear or absolve his enemies. With the Septuagint I connect “Jehovah” with the second and not with the third line, and agreeably with the idiom of the Hebrew; the verb generally precedes its nominative. The order of the words in Welsh would be exactly the same,—

Gan ddieuogi ni ddiuoga Jehova.—Ed.

FT8 Literally, “chiding the sea, he even made it dry.” The **ל** here, though conversive, must be rendered, “even,” for the first verb is a participle. By taking the words in their poetical order, the whole verse may be thus rendered,—

*Chiding the sea, he even made it dry;
And all the rivers he dried up:
Wither did Bashan and Carmel,
And the bud of Lebanon withered.*

The verbs in this, and in the following verse, are in the past tense; reference is made to the past works of God, and in some instances to those performed in the wilderness.—*Ed.*

FT9 This sense has been given to the verb by the Rabbins, which is inconsistent with it as found here without any variations, and with the Greek versions. **ששח** is either from **ששח**, to lift up, or from **שחשח**, to be laid waste, or to be confounded, the final **ח** being dropped; and this is what *Newcome* adopts. *Marckius* and *Henderson* take the former meaning in the sense of being raised up or heaving. “**Ανεσταλη**, was removed,” *Sept.*; “**Εκινήθη**, was moved,” *Symmachus*; “**Εφριξεν**, trembled,” *Aquila*. The idea of being confounded or laid waste harmonizes best with all parts of the sentence; for the idea of having does not apply well to the inhabitants. We see here that all the Greek versions have the verb in the past tense; and so are the previous verbs in the verse as given in the Septuagint, and agreeably with the Hebrew.

*Mountains have shaken through him,
And hills have melted away;
And confounded has been the earth at his presence,
Yea, the world and all its inhabitants.*

FT10

*And who shall rise up against his hot anger?—Newcome.
And who can subsist in the heat of his anger?—Henderson.*

Neither of these versions convey the meaning. The verb **קום**, with a **ב** after it, signifies to rise up against or resist. **Τις αντιστησεται**—Who shall resist?—*Sept.* So the line should be thus rendered,—

And who can resist the burning of his wrath?

This line conveys the same idea as the former, only in stronger terms. For displeasure or anger we have here the burning of his wrath, and for

standing we have resisting. *Can* is better than *will*; the Hebrew future ought often to be thus rendered. With the view of giving the words here used their distinctive character, I offer the following version of the whole verse,—

*Before his anger who can stand?
And who can resist the burning of his wrath?
His indignation has been poured forth like fire;
And rocks have been broken in pieces by him.*

The two last verbs are in the past tense, and are more expressive when so rendered.—*Ed.*

FT11 “This glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel, and a dark side towards the Egyptians.”—*Henry.*

FT12 This is no doubt the right view. The object here is not to assert generally that God is good, but that he is good for aid and help in the day of distress. The versions then both of *Newcome* and *Henderson* are faulty; for they divide into two clauses what is one in the original,—

*Good is Jehovah for protection in the day of distress;
And he knoweth them who trust in him.*

The word מַעִיז is from עָז, strength, and having the formative ה, it attains a causative sense, and means that which affords or gives strength,—a fortress, a stronghold, or protection.—*Ed.*

FT13 The first words in this line are better rendered in our version, “With an overrunning flood,” or, as by *Newcome*, “With an overflowing torrent,” or as by *Henderson*, “With an overflowing inundation.” The remaining part has occasioned a variety. The text as it is, and there are no different readings, is this, “A full end he will make of her place;” or, as *Henderson* renders it, “He will effect a consummation of her place.” The only difficulty is, that “her” has no near antecedent; but it is not unusual with the Prophets to allow the general context to supply this. As the vision is the “burden of Nineveh,” that city is no doubt referred to. *Newcome*, following the Greek versions, excepting that of Symmachus, translates thus,—“He will make a full end of those who rise up against him.” But it is better to follow the Hebrew text; for the many *evident* instances of mistake which are to be found in those

versions forbid us to put any great confidence in them. The following may be viewed as a literal version:—

*And with inundation overflowing
A full end he will make her place;
And darkness shall his enemies pursue.*

How completely has this prophecy been fulfilled! *Lucian*, a Greek heathen author of the second century, has these remarkable words,—
Νινος μὲν ἀπολώλεν ἤδη, καὶ οὐδὲν ἰχνος ἐτι λοιπὸν αὐτῆς,
οὐδ' ἀν' εἰπῆς οὐποῦ ποτ' ἦν—”Nineveh has already been destroyed, and there is no vestige of it remaining, nor can you say where formerly it was.” *Bochart* enumerates different conjectures which various authors have made as to its situation, most of them differing from one another.—*Ed.*

FT14 *Newcome*, on the sole authority of the Syriac and the Targum, changes “thorns” into “princes,” and thus wholly destroys the propriety of the simile of dry stubble at the end of the verse. *Henderson* says justly, that this change is on no account to be adopted.

*Though like thorns, entwined,
And as with their drinking drunken,
They shall be consumed as stubble fully dry.*

The particle עַד, before “thorns,” is to be here taken as in <130427> 1 Chronicles 4:27, as designating likeness.—*Ed.*

FT15 “From בַּל, not, and יַעַל, profit:—As an abstract noun, unprofitableness, worthlessness, wickedness:—As an adjective, worthless, wicked, good for nothing.”—*Parkhurst*. “It alludes to *Baal*, the common idol of the natives bordering upon the Jews, whom the penmen of Scripture changing some letters by way of scorn called *Belial*: to express a further hatred to this idol, they applied this name to the devil, <470615> 2 Corinthians 6:15; which word is derived either from a root that signifieth *not to profit*, or *not to mount upward*, because he seeks the fall of mankind, and to keep those that are fallen into his snares, <550226> 2 Timothy 2:26. *Jerome* fetcheth it from a root, which, with another word, signifieth *without a yoke*, or, *lawless*; therefore the Septuagint commonly translate it, παρανομος.”—*Leigh*.

FT16 The best and the most literal version of these two lines, with the exception of the last word, is that of *Dr. Wheeler*, as given by *Newcome*,—

*Though they are at peace, and also mighty,
Still shall they be cut off and pass away.*

The last verb is in the singular number, **וְעָבַד**, “and he shall pass through” or away, that is, the wicked counselor mentioned in the preceding verse. *Newcome*’s own version is that of new text, which he has himself formed, from a mere hint derived from the Septuagint.

Henderson’s version is the following,—

*Though they are complete and so very numerous,
Yet in this state they shall be cut off,
And he shall pass away.*

The word **שְׁלָמִים** means, no doubt, entire, complete, perfect, as well as to be at peace, secure, quiet; and may be referred, as the author says, to the complete condition of the Assyrian army: but what seems to be intended is the character of the nation.—*Ed.*

FT17

*For thou art become vile.—Newcome.
Because thou art worthless.—Henderson.*

Execrable, or accursed, which the word sometimes means, seems more suitable to the context.—*Ed.*

FT18 This forms the first verse of the second chapter in Hebrew. Most versions have followed the division of the Septuagint.—*Ed.*

FT19 *Calvin* gives to **מְבַשֵּׂר** only the sense of announcing or declaring. To spread or to bring news or tidings is its meaning; for it is used to designate bad as well as good tidings. See <090417> 1 Samuel 4:17; <100120> 2 Samuel 1:20; and <100410> 2 Samuel 4:10; <230307> Isaiah 3:7. It is commonly rendered **εὐαγγελιζεσθαι** by the Septuagint. It may be regarded here as a participle in the same predicament with the participle which follows. The same mode of construction we find in <235207> Isaiah 52:7; where it evidently appears that the word means strictly to bring or to declare tidings, for *good* is added to it. That passage is as follows:—

*How beautiful on the mountains
Are the feet of him who announceth,
Who proclaimeth peace,—
Of him who announceth good, (מְבַשֵּׂר טוב)
Who proclaimeth salvation!
Saying to Zion, Reign doth thy God.—Ed.*

CHAPTER 2

FT20 That the Babylonian power is meant by “the destroyer,” or disperser, or scatterer, is the opinion of *Jerome, Drusius, Grotius, Marckius*, and *Newcome*. But *Kimchi, Dathius, Henderson*, and some others, regard the “destroyer” as the king of Assyria. What agrees best with the context is the former opinion. Having in the preceding verse announced the release of the people of Israel from the rule of Assyria, the Prophet now introduces its destroyer, and then proceeds with the main object of his prophecy, and describes the fall of Nineveh. *Marckius* considers the whole verse as addressed to the Babylonian power under the person of the king, while *Calvin* regards it, with the exception of the first line or clause, as addressed ironically to Nineveh. The verbs are either participles or preterites indicative; but they are construed by the former as gerunds; most of them imperatives. **נָצַר** is rendered as a passive participle by the Septuagint, and so it appears to be, and the three which follow, as imperatives. But in two copies it is without the **ל**; then all the verbs in the verse appear to be in the same form, and may be considered to be either preterites indicative or participles; and participles are often used in Hebrew to express the present tense: and the Prophet may be considered as seeing the Babylonian ascending and laying siege to Nineveh, for **מְצֹרָה** means a siege as well as a fortress: then the rendering would be as follows,—

*Ascend does the waster before thee;
He watches the siege, guards the way,
Makes firm the loins, exerts strength mightily.*

But if “fortress” be preferred to “siege,” it may be adopted consistently with the context.—*Ed.*

FT21 *Drusius* confessed that he did not understand this verse. The view given of it by *Calvin* seems plain, and *Marckius* has taken the same view of it: but *Newcome*, as well as *Henderson*, differ widely, and give a rendering which seems not to comport with the context. It is like that of *Drusius*, which no doubt made him to say that he did not understand the passage.

*For Jehovah restoreth the excellency of Jacob
As the excellency of Israel.*

In this connection, this can have no meaning. The version of *Henderson* is the same, only he puts the verb in the future tense. The verb **שׁב** has the meaning of turning away, as well as of restoring, and *Marckius* renders it *avertit*, he turned away. Then **גִּאֲוֹן**, rising, swelling, *elatio*, is more commonly taken in a bad than in a good sense, as meaning pride, haughtiness. The latter part of the verse sets before us distinctly the means which had been adopted to take away this pride. The passage is evidently parenthetic.—*Ed.*

FT22 **גְּבוּרֵיהוּ**, of his heroes,—”heroum.”—*Dathius*.

FT23 **אֲנָשֵׁי-חַיִל**, men of war,—”warriors,” *Henderson*; “the valiant men.”—*Newcome*.

FT24 The most satisfactory explanation of this word is what is offered by *Parkhurst*, and adopted by *Henderson*. He says that **פֶּלֶד**, in Arabic, is to *cut*, or *cut in pieces*, and that **פִּלְדוֹת** may have been the *scythes* or cutting instruments with which the chariots were armed. Then in eight or nine MSS. The **ב**, *beth*, before **אֵשׁ**, is **כ**, *caph*. If this reading be adopted, and the poetical singular number be retained as to the word chariot, the clause may be thus translated: —

*Like fire are the scythes of the chariot,
In the day of his preparation.*

To which shall be added the line which follows,—

And the fir-trees (spears) tremulously shake.

Fir-trees are rendered “cypresses” by *Henderson*; and *Newcome*, following the Septuagint, changes to the word into what signifies “horsemen.” The figure is bold, but it is no unusual thing in poetry to call an instrument by the name of the material of which it is made.—*Ed.*

FT25 **מֵרֵאֵיהֶן**, three MSS. Have the masculine suffix **הֶם**—*Ed.*

FT26 This verse is applied by *Grotius* and *Newcome* to the Babylonian and not to the Assyrian king. The last clause seems to favor this opinion, but the second, the other. To render **יִכְשְׁלוּ** as a Hiphil, “They cast down,” without an objective case, cannot be approved; but they may have been said to “stumble,” as the word means, from their great haste,

afterwards mentioned. *Piscator*, *Marckius*, and *Henderson*, agree in the view given here.—*Ed.*

FT27 Various have been the opinions respecting the construction of this verse. The Rabbins have generally considered the first word as the name of the queen of Nineveh: but this opinion has been adopted but by a few. *Newcome* joins the word with the last verse, and changes it into מצב, on no authority but that of conjecture, and renders it “fortress.” What *Henderson* has adopted seems the best: he also joins it to the last verse, but makes no change in it, only he gives the ו an adversative meaning, which it often has. The evident gender, as he rightly says, of הצב proves its connection with the former verse, it being masculine, while the verbs in this verse are feminines. His version of the two verses is the following,—

*7. The floodgates are opened,
And the palace is dissolved,
Though firmly established.*

*8. She is made bare, she is carried up,
While her handmaids moan like doves,
And smite upon their hearts.*

With the exception of the word הצב, this version is liable to several objections. The verb גלה is often used in Kal intransitively, “is removed;” and this meaning enables us better to understand that of the next verb, “she is made to ascend,” that is, into captivity, even into Babylon, the seat of empire, being ever considered as the highest place. מנהגות is a word which in some form or another often occurs in Hebrew, and has never the meaning here given to it. Here it is a participle in Hophal, and “carried away” is its evident meaning, and is rendered ηγοντο, led away, by the Septuagint. “Like,” or, as “the voice of doves,” are literally the words which follow this verb. However connected, they must be considered as elliptical—“as with the voice, or, with a voice as that of doves.” They might then be construed with the next line. The whole verse would then be this,—

*She is removed, she is made to ascend;
Yea, her handmaids are led away,
Who with a voice as that of doves, tabor on their breasts.*

They were accompanying the tabering with a voice like that of doves. “Tabor” is literally the original, and “on their breasts” is an English idiom, as “on their hearts” is a Hebrew idiom.—*Ed.*

FT28 The original is in a singular form, מִיָּמֵי הָאֵל, “from the days of it,” or, of her. *Henderson* says, that “it is an antiquated mode of expressing the feminine pronominal affix—the absolute form of the pronoun being retained instead of the fragmental הָ.” The verse may be thus rendered:—

*Though Nineveh has been like a pool of water during her days,
Yet they flee;—”Stand, stand;”
But none is looking back.*

Newcome’s version of the first line is as follows,—

And the waters of Nineveh are as a pool of water:

And he says, that the pronoun sometimes is at the end of a clause: but it cannot be so considered here, because הָאֵל is in *regimine* with מִיָּמֵי. It is to be noticed, that the Prophet throughout represents the whole transaction as an eye-witness, as it had been shown to him in a vision.—*Ed.*

FT29 *Buxtorf* derives the word from כּוֹן, to prepare, and *Parkhurst* from תּוֹכֵן, to regulate, to measure. It is rendered “store” by *Newcome* and *Henderson*. What is meant is evidently the vast treasure amassed by the Assyrians. The next words are more variously rendered. *Newcome* connects the word כּבֹד with “store,” and renders the two lines thus,—

*And there is no end of the glorious store,
Because of all kinds of pleasant vessels.*

But more consistent with the character of the language, and agreeably to what Dr. Wheeler suggests, is this, —

*And there is no end to her store,
It is more precious than all desirable vessels.*

The preposition מִן, after כּבֹד, may be viewed as the comparative degree.—*Ed.*

FT30 The three words in Hebrew form a very striking alliteration; and they present another peculiarity, —they increase in length or in syllables, somewhat similar to what follows,—

She is made void, and empty, and desolate:

or,

She is empty, and emptied, and desolated.

בוקה ומבוקה ומבלקה

Buke, umebuke, umebelake.

Some consider the words as nouns, but they are evidently participles.—*Ed.*

FT31 These three lines are literally as follows,—

*And the heart is melted,
And there is tottering of the knees,
And anguish in all loins.*

The word **הלחלה** is not trembling, but violent pain, pang, or anguish as that of a woman in travail.—*Ed.*

FT32 *Parkhurst* and others agree with *Calvin*, as to the construction of this line. The idea adopted seems to have been first suggested by *Aben-Ezra*, as it appears from *Marckius*, but was strongly opposed by *Kimchi*, and on apparently a good ground—the meaning of the verb here used. **קבץ**, as a verb and as a noun, in all its variations, has invariably the idea of collecting or gathering, and in no instance that of withdrawing, except as it is said, in this sentence, and in *Joel*. *Dathius*, *Marckius*, and *Newcome*, retain the idea contained in our version; and consistent with this is the paraphrase of the clause given by the Septuagint, “**καὶ τὸ προσωπὸν (τὰ προσώπα, comp.) πάντων ὡς προσκαύμα χυτράς**—and the face (or, the faces) of all as the burning on the pot.” This idea is much more expressive and striking than the other.—*Ed.*

FT33 It is better to retain the gender as it is in Hebrew: and this makes the passage more consistent, and corresponds better with the “feeding-place” in the next line. The recesses of the lionesses and the whelps are here mentioned, and in the next verse is stated what the lions did for them:—

*11. Where is the haunt of the lionesses,
And the feeding-place, even that for the whelps,
Where did go the lion, the lioness, the cub of the lion,
And none made them afraid?*

*12. The lion ravined for the supply of his cubs,
And strangled for his lionesses,
And filled with ravin his dens,
And his haunts by ravining.*

“The allegory,” says *Newcome*, “is beyond measure beautiful. Where are the inhabitants of Nineveh, who were strong and rapacious like lions?”—*Ed.*

FT34 *Jerome* renders the clause, “Succendam usque ad fumum—I will burn to smoke” the chariots: and the version of *Henderson* is the same. But the most natural supposition is, that smoke here is mentioned instead of fire. And so *Dathius* renders it—”igni—with fire.”—*Ed.*

FT35 The context undoubtedly favors this rendering. The Septuagint has “τα ἔργα σοι —thy works,” which cannot consist with the word, “voice,” which precedes, though *Newcome*, following the Septuagint, renders it, “the fame of thy deeds.” There is but one different reading, except as to points, and that is, מַלְאֲכָם, “their messenger,” in two copies, and this comes nearest to the received text of any that has been conjectured: and to render “messenger” in the singular number comports better with the usual style of the Prophets, than in the plural. Perhaps the ׀ may be deemed redundant at the end of the sentence; and then it would be literally, “thy messenger,” taken in a collective sense.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

FT36 It appears from *Marckius* that *Theodoret* and *Cyril* regarded this verse, with *Calvin*, as a description of the Chaldean army after having invaded Nineveh, but that *Jerome* and *Cocceius* viewed it as a delineation of the state of Nineveh in the Prophet’s time; and with the last *Newcome* agrees, while *Henderson* coincides with the former. The version given by them is all nearly the same. It seems certainly more consistent with the order of the poem to regard the verse as describing the state of Nineveh at the time, for the sacking of Nineveh had been

before very minutely delineated. Having done this, the Prophet may be supposed to give here a reason for the dreadful catastrophe which he had mentioned. Entertaining this view, and differing from others as to the meaning of some of the clauses, I offer the following version of the three verses,—

1. *Oh! The city of blood! All of deceit;
Of plunder it is full, none can search out the spoil:—*
2. *The sound of the whip, and the sound of the rattling wheel!
And the horse prancing, and the chariot bounding!
The horseman mounting,
And the flaming of the sword and the glittering of the spear!
And a multitude dancing, and a mass inactive!
And no end to her people!
Who are fallen, with their nations,*
3. *Through the many fornications of the harlot,
That exults in beauty, and possesses enchantments;
Who sells nations by her fornications,
And tribes by her enchantments.*

מִיִּשׁ, “search out,” I derive from מִשׁ, which is to feel for the purpose of exploring, and then, to explore or search out; see <013134> Genesis 31:34. The second verse contains a simple enumeration of what the city exhibited. רַב חֲלָל, “a multitude dancing” or piping, the ו being dropped in חָלָל, as it is in חֲלָלִים, pipers, <110140> 1 Kings 1:40. Then as a contrast comes the dead, heavy, inactive mass, כְּבֵד פֶּגֶר. “To her people” or nations, לַגּוֹיִם, τοῖς ἔθνεσιν αὐτῆς.—Sept. In the word בְּנוֹתָם, I take that ת is a mistake for ה. If taken for carcasses, it wants a ו before ת; see <19B006> Psalm 110:6. The third verse must be connected with the second, as it has otherwise no grammatical construction.—Ed.

FT37 *Practicas*, used here evidently in a sense not classical, meaning the crafty tactics of politicians. The word *practic*, in English, was, at one time, used in a bad sense, signifying what was *sly* and *artful*, or *crafty*; and *practice* too was employed to designate a *trick*, or a *stratagem*.—Ed.

FT38 The *Septuagint* favors this meaning, “εἰς παραδειγμα—for an example.” In this sense *Grotius* and *Piscator* take the word. *Henderson*, with less propriety, renders it “gazingstock,” the word of

our version. *Newcome* translates it “dung,” according to the Rabbins.—*Ed.*

FT39 Literally, “Every one of thy seers shall hasten from thee.”—*Ed.*

FT40 So does *Newcome*, but with no countenance from the passage. The verb in the 10th verse which refers to the captivity of No, is in the past tense. Most commentators regard the event as having passed.—*Ed.*

FT41 Opinions differ as to No. *Bochart* supposed it to be *Diospolis*, near Mendes, in Lower Egypt. *Henderson* says, that later commentators are in favor of *Thebes*, the ancient capital of Upper Egypt. It is of no consequence to the present purpose which it was. It was some celebrated city in Egypt, whose ruin was well known in the Prophet’s time. Both the Rabbins and early Fathers thought that it was what was afterwards called Alexandria. But most probably it was a city which had lost its name and existence from the catastrophe that is here mentioned.—*Ed.*

FT42 The original names in this verse are כּוּשׁ, supposed to be Ethiopia,—מִצְרַיִם, Egypt, here, either Upper or Lower,—פּוּט, Put, a country to the west of Lower Egypt, its inhabitants the descendants of Ham, <011006> Genesis 10:6, —לּוּבִים, Lybians, who occupied the region between Put and Numidia.—*Ed.*

FT43 Thou shalt seek a refuge from the enemy.—*Newcome*. But מַעוֹז is rather a defense, aid, assistance, that which affords strength.—*Ed.*

FT44 Both *Homer* and *Virgil* have this comparison. “Ἀχαιίδες οὐκ ἐστὶν Ἀχαιοί—Grecian women, not Grecians.”—“O! vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges—O truly Phrygian women, but not Phrygians.”

FT45 *Grotius* agrees in this view, though *Newcome* takes the former, explaining, “as the locust,” that is, in a manner equally unsparing.—*Ed.*

FT46 The latter clause of the last verse and this verse and the following are evidently connected. The first, הִתְכַּבֵּד, hath ' added to it in ten or more copies, and may be deemed an imperative as well as the other, and in the feminine gender; *Calvin* takes it an infinitive. This would be literal rendering—

*Increase thyself as the chafer,
Increase thyself as the locust,*

**16. Multiply thy merchants more than the stars of heaven:
The chafer spoils, and flies away:**

**17. Thy crowned ones shall be as the locusts,
And thy rulers as the gibbous caterpillar;
Which lodge in the fences in the cold day;
The sun rises and they flit away,
And not known is the place where they are.—Ed.**

FT47 *Fortes tui*, אֲדִירִיךָ, thy eminents, thy nobles. “The shepherds,” the governors of the people, נָמְו, slumber; and the nobles, the princes, יִשְׁכְּנוּ, rest, sit still, without making any effort: then it follows,—

***Dispersed are thy people on the mountains,
And there is no gatherer.***

Calvin is mistaken as to the meaning of the verb פִּוֵּשׂ: it means more properly, than the other, a dispersed state. It is applied in <031305> Leviticus 13:5, and in other places, to the *spreading* of leprosy. When so used, it is in Kal. It is here, and here only, in Niphal.—Ed.

FT48 אֵין-כְּהָה לְשִׁבְרֶךָ—No stopping or restraining to thy breach. The word is applied to the restraint put on men’s wickedness, <090313> 1 Samuel 3:13, and to the checking and restraining of the spread of leprosy, <030628> Leviticus 6:28. The breach or breaking was such that there was no stopping of it from becoming entire and complete. The Septuagint gives the meaning—“οὐκ εἰσὶν εἰς τὴν σὺντέλειαν σου—there is no healing to thy breach.”—Ed.

FT49 Rather, “grievous is thy stroke.” The verb is נָחַלָה, from חָלָה, to be languid, and sometimes, to make languid, grievous or afflictive, and then in Niphal, as here, to be grievous. See the same clause in <241019> Jeremiah 10:19. As a noun it is rendered “grief” in <231711> Isaiah 17:11.—Ed.

FT50 The phrase here used, תִּקַּע כַּף, is found in three other places, <194701> Psalm 47:1; <201718> Proverbs 17:18; 22:26. In the first it is a symptom of joy; and in the two other places, in the sense here mentioned.—Ed.