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WESTMINSTER COMMENTARIES

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THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS

ZEPHANIAH, NAHUM

AND HABAKKUK

THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS
**ZEPHANIAH AND
NAHUM**

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

THE LATE G. G. V. STONEHOUSE B.D.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET
HABAKKUK

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE BY THE GENERAL EDITORS

THE primary object of these Commentaries is to be exegetical, to interpret the meaning of each book of the Bible in the light of modern knowledge to English readers. The Editors will not deal, except subordinately, with questions of textual criticism or philology ; but taking the English text in the Revised Version as their basis, they will aim at combining a hearty acceptance of critical principles with loyalty to the Catholic Faith.

The series will be less elementary than the Cambridge Bible for Schools, less critical than the International Critical Commentary, less didactic than the Expositor's Bible ; and it is hoped that it may be of use both to theological students and to the clergy, as well as to the growing number of educated laymen and laywomen who wish to read the Bible intelligently and reverently.

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WALTER LOCK

D. C. SIMPSON

PREFACE

THIS volume is of composite authorship, and a brief statement concerning its origin seems to be required. The late G. G. V. Stonehouse, formerly scholar of Exeter College, Oxford, greatly distinguished himself (both before and after graduating there) in Theological and Semitic studies. After leaving Oxford, he was Vice-Principal of the Theological College at Edinburgh from 1903 to 1916; but his connection with his University was renewed when he served as Examiner in the Honour School of Theology for the three years 1916-1918. He first became an author in 1911, when he published a commentary upon the Book of *Habakkuk*. Not long after that, he was asked to contribute to a series of commentaries on the Bible by Anglican Churchmen, which was designed to be fully abreast of the highest standard of theological learning. The books assigned to him were *Zephaniah* and *Nahum*; and his commentaries upon these two prophets were apparently complete when he died in 1918 at the early age of 38. Of the series of which they were intended to form part only a very few volumes appeared: the scheme was abandoned; and Mr Stonehouse's work consequently remained for many years in manuscript. But it could not but seem very regrettable if productions which showed evidence of wide reading and accurate scholarship should fail to be given to the world in some form; and accordingly a few years ago Dr Lock, who at the time was the sole General Editor of the "Westminster" Series, asked me whether I would undertake to adapt them to the plan of that series. To this inquiry, after a cursory examination of the MSS, I rashly replied in the affirmative.

I have used the word "rashly" with deliberation because, when I began to deal with Mr Stonehouse's commentaries, I discovered that the task to which I had committed myself involved alike much labour and much anxiety. For, on the one hand, I was wishful to do justice to the author, who was deeply interested not only in the historical and exegetical questions

raised by the books which he had edited, but also in the reconstruction of the text, where this appeared corrupt; whilst, on the other hand, I had to meet the needs of the majority of the readers of the "Westminster" series of volumes, who were probably not sufficiently acquainted with Hebrew to appreciate textual problems in that tongue. And now that my task has been concluded, I have serious misgivings about my success in reconciling these two ends. However, I have done my best. Mr Stonehouse's introductions I have abbreviated to some extent; in one place the view expressed I have modified in consequence of fresh information that has come to light since the author wrote the passage; and his lengthy discussions of the textual emendations proposed by various scholars I have greatly reduced. But most of his own suggestions for the improvement of the text I have retained, thinking that these were, in some ways, the most characteristic features of his work. In a few cases I have altered his wording, feeling that he himself would have done the same if he had lived to prepare his book for the press. But, in general, of what he has written I have left untouched as much as I could, consistently with the necessity of fitting it to take its place in the series in which it now appears. My errors of judgement and other deficiencies in the execution of my undertaking are doubtless numerous, but I trust they will be regarded with leniency in view of the difficulties with which I have been faced.

My own share in the constituents of the present volume is the commentary on *Habakkuk*, which Dr Lock suggested I should add to Mr Stonehouse's two commentaries. In it I have not ignored textual problems (the book contains a great many); but I have not given to the discussion of them any extensive space, and in handling the different matters calling for notice I have endeavoured to maintain the same proportion as I observed in the two volumes which I have previously contributed to this series. For the Index to the whole book I, of course, am solely responsible.

Both Mr Stonehouse and myself have made use of most of the recent editions of the Minor Prophets (collectively or singly) which have proceeded from English, American, German and French scholars. Hence we are equally under obligation in

various degrees to Davidson, Driver, Sir G. A. Smith, J. P. Smith, Ward, Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, Duhm, and Van Hoonacker; whilst I individually have also had the advantage of consulting Mr Stonehouse's book on *Habakkuk* and Sellin's German notes on the same prophet. Mr Stonehouse was evidently a man of independent mind, and though he availed himself of the labours of others, he did not hesitate to form and to express opinions of his own. I hope that the like independence will not be found altogether absent from my own work. To my wife I owe much gratitude for help in preparing the ms.; and I am also indebted to Dr Lock for detecting in proof several oversights and for supplying the verses with which the Commentary on *Habakkuk* concludes.

G. W. W.

November, 1928

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A LIST OF TRANSLATIONS, COMMENTARIES, AND OTHER WORKS CONSULTED (WITH ABBREVIATIONS)

- Aq. Aquila's Greek Translation of the Old Testament (in Field's *Hexaplorum quæ supersunt*).
- Ar. Arabic.
- Aram. Aramaic.
- A.V. Authorized Version of the Bible.
- B.D.B. *Hebrew Lexicon*, by Brown, Driver, and Briggs.
- Camb. B. Cambridge Bible.
- C.B. Century Bible.
- Dav. Davidson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Camb. B.).
- DB. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.
- Dri. Driver, *The Minor Prophets*, vol. ii. (C.B.).
- „ *B.J.* Driver, *The Book of Jeremiah*.
- „ *LOT.* Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, ed. 9.
- „ *NHTS*². Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Samuel*, ed. 2.
- „ *Tenses.* Driver, *Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*.
- Du. Duhm, *The Twelve Prophets*.
- EB., *Enc. Bib.* Cheyne and Black's *Encyclopædia Biblica*.
- Exp. Expositor.*
- Hitz. Hitzig, *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten*.
- ICC. *International Critical Commentary*.
- JRAS. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.
- JTS. *Journal of Theological Studies*.
- Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets*.
- LXX. The Septuagint Translation of the Old Testament, ed. Swete.
- Mar. Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton*.
- No. Nowack, *Die kleinen Propheten*.
- Old Latin. The Old Latin Version (cited from *JTS.* vol. v.).
- O.T. Old Testament.
- R.V. The Revised Version of the Bible.
- Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch*.
- Smi. (G. A.). Sir George Adam Smith, *The Book of the XII Prophets*.
- Smi. (J. P.). J. M. Powis Smith, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Nahum and Zephaniah* (ICC).
- Sym. Symmachus's Greek Translation of the O.T. (in Field).
- Syr. The Syriac Translation of the Old Testament.
- Th. Theodotion's Greek Translation of the O.T. (in Field).
- Van Hoo. Van Hoonacker, *Les Douze Petits Prophètes*.
- Vulg. *Biblia Sacra Vulgatæ Editionis*.
- Ward, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Habakkuk* (ICC).
- Wellh. Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten*.

* * * In the transliteration of Hebrew consonants distinction has rarely been made between the letters *he* and *kheth* (both alike being represented by *h*), between *samech* and *sin* (the substitute for both being *s*), or between *teth* and *tau* (both appearing as *t*). The letters *aleph* and *ayin* are indicated by (') and (') respectively.

ZEPHANIAH

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE date at which Zephaniah is traditionally stated to have prophesied falls within the reign of Josiah; and, as we shall see, there is no sufficient reason for doubting the accuracy of this tradition. In order, however, to appreciate rightly the nature of the prophet's mission and the significance of his message, we must look beyond the years that immediately connect with his activity to a wider period. This wider period may be said to begin with the reign of Manasseh and to close with the death of Josiah. The history centres round Assyria, which was then the dominant power in the political world. When Manasseh succeeded to the throne of Judah, it had been for long the leading nation. The kingdom of Damascus had succumbed before it; Samaria, the capital of Northern Israel, had been overthrown and the land colonized; Egypt had more than once suffered defeat; while Judah, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon and the city-states of Syria and Palestine had become its tributaries. At Manasseh's accession the Assyrian throne was occupied by Sennacherib (705-681) who was bringing to a close an eventful but not very successful reign. He had inherited, rather than helped to form, the wide empire over which he ruled. But under Esarhaddon (680-669) and Ashurbanipal (668-626) the empire was further extended, and in the latter's reign reached the zenith of its power. First Egypt and then Elam were attached to its dominion.

In 670 Esarhaddon, whose army some three years before, it would seem, had already crossed the frontier but without success, organized a definite expedition against Egypt. The Egyptian throne was then occupied by the Ethiopian Tirkah (c. 689-663). Esarhaddon met Tirkah's forces by the frontier, and, driving them back, advanced on Memphis. Memphis was captured, and Tirkah had to flee into Ethiopia. Egypt now became an Assyrian province. But she was far from submitting quietly to the new régime; and unrest quickly manifested itself. In 668 Esarhaddon was compelled to undertake another campaign; but he died before reaching Egypt, and the campaign had to be continued by his

successor Ashurbanipal. Tirhakah was again defeated; and the Egyptian princes, under whose rule Egypt had been apportioned, were reinstated under Assyrian oversight. But even this did not break the spirit of unrest. For a second time Tirhakah rebelled, though unsuccessfully; but a few years later his successor Tanut-Amon succeeded in raising sedition and in establishing himself at Memphis. This latter revolt brought the Assyrian forces to Egypt for the last time; they drove out Tanut-Amon and sacked the famous city of Thebes (661). In reality, however, Assyria had effected no permanent conquest; and Psammetichus (Psamtik) I (663-610), who had succeeded, under Ashurbanipal's sanction, to the kingdom of Sais and Memphis, at length (probably about 651) threw off the Assyrian supremacy, which was never again asserted.

While the city-states of Syria and Palestine, with the exception of Tyre and Arvad, remained quiet during Assyria's conquest and re-conquest of Egypt, it was different in the case of the other notable addition, that of Elam, to the Assyrian dominion. This introduces us to widespread rebellion. Already between 665 and 660 Ashurbanipal had defeated the Elamites and had forced upon Elam Assyrian administration; and some eight years later the Elamites, though rent by internal discord, again showed their hostility by siding with Babylon in a revolt against Assyria. The revolt was instigated by Shamash-shum-ukin, brother of Ashurbanipal, who in 668, on the death of Esarhaddon, had succeeded to the throne of Babylon. While at first the brotherly relations between the two kings augured a peaceful future, it was not long before the old animosity against Assyria became once more apparent in Babylon; and in 652 Shamash-shum-ukin brought matters to a head by refusing to allow his brother, as protector of Babylon, to offer sacrifice in the Babylonian towns. The revolt was carefully planned; and ambassadors were dispatched far and wide to incite other dependent states to join in rebellion. The result, however, proved disastrous. Before the promised aid could be properly organized, the Assyrian forces swept down upon Babylonia and the rebels found themselves shut up in Sippar, Kutha, and Babylon, and forced at length to surrender. Shamash-shum-ukin rather than fall into the hands of his brother met death by burning the palace over his head. In 647 Ashurbanipal became king of Babylon. Those who had joined the rebellion were now visited with punishment; and Elam was among the first to suffer. Susa, its capital, was captured and sacked, and by 640 the entire country had been annexed to the Assyrian empire. In the south the Arabians and Bedawin tribes of Kedar and Nabatea had similarly to meet the deadly onslaught of the

Assyrian forces; while in the west the cities of Ushu (i.e. Tyre on the mainland) and Akku (Acre) were also forced to pay the penalty of rebellion. The other Syrian and Palestinian states seem to have bought off invasion by a timely submission. In these events no mention of Judah is found; yet there can be little doubt that the cry for liberty, which was raised in the north, was echoed in the southern borders, and that Manasseh was among those princes who joined in the general uprising. The Chronicler (2 Ch. xxxiii. 11) states that Manasseh during his reign was taken captive to Babylon; and, as it would be unreasonable to deny to his account any historical basis, we may well believe that there is a reference to the part which Manasseh had taken in the rebellion and that on its failure he either voluntarily did homage to Ashurbanipal at Babylon or was compelled to do so.

About 640 the records of Ashurbanipal's reign cease; and about that date also Amon succeeded Manasseh on the throne of Judah. After a brief reign of only two years Amon was murdered by his courtiers, who in turn were slain by "the people of the land." The reason for the conspiracy is not clear. But what took place testifies to internal discord between "the people of the land" (i.e. the people in general) and the aristocratic and ruling classes; and it is not unlikely that this discord was closely connected with foreign politics. Josiah, who succeeded his father, was but eight years old at his accession, and was too young to take part in the administration of affairs; and the government of the country must, for a time, have been in the hands of a regency.

The next movement in the political affairs of Palestine belongs approximately to the year 626. Somewhere about that year Palestine was invaded by the Scythians, who, in the eighth century, together with the Cimmerians, began to press into Western Asia. It was not long before the appearance of these invaders produced a startling change in the relations of Assyria and Egypt towards one another. Confronted by a common danger, the Egyptian king, Psammetichus, who in 651 had thrown off the Assyrian domination, found it to be to his interest to support his former enemy against the menace of the barbarians from the north. At first, indeed, the Scythians rendered service to Assyria. On the death of Ashurbanipal, that empire entered upon evil days. It was attacked by the Medes under Cyaxares, who so far succeeded in their assault upon it that they besieged Nineveh. The approach of the Scythians, however, caused the Median king to raise the siege; and the hour of peril for the Assyrian capital for a while passed. But the respite was only temporary. The Scythians suddenly joined forces with the Medes and

Babylonians, and in 612 Nineveh fell before their combined armies. The overthrow of the capital, however, did not immediately result in the destruction of the empire, for a new seat of government was established at Harran. This city lay between Nineveh and the Mediterranean, and was more accessible than the former capital to Egyptian armies. To defend it against its enemies Necho II, who had succeeded Psammetichus in 610, advanced with a force across Palestine. At Megiddo he was met by Josiah, who was not disposed to exchange one suzerain for another without a struggle. The battle proved disastrous for the Jewish king, who was defeated and killed; and Judah for a while passed under the control of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

With regard to the religious outlook during the period under review it must not be forgotten that in Israel religion and politics were not separated in thought and practice as they are in modern times. They were closely interwoven in the life of the nation; a change in policy introduced a corresponding change in religion, while the enforcement of a religious principle shaped a policy. This is evident during the whole period of the Hebrew monarchy. We find it illustrated, for example, in the alliances which Solomon made with his heathen neighbours, in Israel's close relations with Tyre in the days of Ahab, and, still later, in Ahaz's voluntary submission to the Assyrian monarch. These lines of policy directly affected the national religion of Jehovah, for new elements were introduced which cannot be rightly judged except in the light of them. The period in question forms no exception. The Assyrian domination, with which Judah had to reckon, was regarded by all alike, though by some more so than by others, as an evil. This evil Judah could meet in two ways, either of which bore directly upon her religious outlook. She could patiently endure it and, in so doing, maintain intact those principles of religion on which the true religion of Jehovah insisted; or she could plan in conjunction with her neighbours to throw it off and, by so acting, jeopardize her national religion. Both these opposing policies found advocates, answering to two main parties which may be termed respectively the prophetic and the anti-prophetic party. As Judah by herself was wholly incapable of coping with so great a power as Assyria, rebellion, if it was to have any chance of success, could only be effected through foreign alliances. But foreign alliances meant the practical recognition of heathen deities and, therefore, the consequent denial of Jehovah's sovereignty and of the sufficiency of His power. It was for this reason that the prophetic party counselled submission. Rather than jeopardize the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah and of its complementary truth of

the need of sole trust in Him, they chose to endure the evil of Assyrian domination, endeavouring at the same time to remove its sting by showing its necessity in the divine economy, and by giving the reassuring hope that Assyria, after she had fulfilled her punitive mission, would ultimately pass away. They appear to have gained the ascendancy towards the end (probably) of Hezekiah's reign, perhaps as a result of the signal deliverance of Jerusalem at the time of Sennacherib's second western campaign¹. Of the precise nature and extent of their work, however, we cannot speak with certainty. The account given in Kings represents the rédaction of a later hand. But what they purposed is clear. They sought to render the worship of Jehovah alone supreme, if not by centralizing it at Jerusalem, yet at any rate by sweeping away such foreign practices and cults as were in part the legacy of earlier times and in part due to heathen association. It could have been no easy task; for it meant the enforcement of a conception of Jehovah on a nation, whose ideas about Him were loose and ill-defined, who fully believed in the reality of other deities, and whose life had become through trade, alliances, and in other ways closely interwoven with that of the neighbouring peoples. Moreover, national isolation at such a time must have appeared suicidal in the extreme. At the best, the little they were able to accomplish must have been superficial; and it is not surprising to find that, as our period opened, they had lost their hold on affairs, and their opponents had once more regained control. When and how the reversal came about we are not told. But there can be little doubt that it was the result of the fierce opposition which the prophetic party had aroused. It is not unlikely that Manasseh may have come to the throne, as some think, in consequence of that opposition. The reversal was complete and severe. Whatever reformation had been accomplished was drastically set aside; and those who endeavoured to stand for a truer conception of Jehovah and His worship were openly persecuted (cf. 2 Kg. xxi. 16). Foreign alliances were again set on foot and the worship of foreign deities not only tolerated but *officially* recognized; and the life of the nation became once more blended religiously, politically, and morally with that of its heathen neighbours. So much was this the case that later writers (2 Kg. xxiii. 26, 27, xxiv. 3, 4; Jer. xv. 4) did not fail to trace the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile to the evil days that now under Manasseh fell upon Judah and her capital. But it was not merely prejudice against

¹ The disaster of 2 Kg. xix. 35 probably occurred in a campaign later than that of 701.

the spirit of reform, nor yet the material disadvantages which reform entailed, that stirred up opposition. Prejudice and grievances of one kind or another within the state doubtlessly abounded, but they did not eclipse the political evil that hung over Judah; and the reaction was essentially a movement against that evil. It is true that Judah submitted patiently to the Assyrian domination well into the reign of Manasseh. But that was because the opportunity for revolt had not yet come; and if several years had to elapse before the opportunity occurred, yet the reactionary movement was a preparation, and those who championed it were in reality preparing for the time when the signal could be given. Manasseh is especially said to have done after the "abominations of the heathen" (2 Kg. xxi. 2); that is to say, to have introduced such idolatrous practices as were found among the peoples. This indicates that the capital had once more become allied to her heathen neighbours. That such alliances should have been made is quite intelligible. For the desire for mutual co-operation must have caused itself to be strongly felt among the Palestinian states at this time; and, since Jerusalem enjoyed now the most influential position among the petty states of Palestine, the latter would not only be not unwilling but even desirous to be allied with her, and to come under the patronage of Jehovah, especially after He had so uniquely manifested His power at the time of Sennacherib's later western expedition. The temple became to all intents and purposes a pantheon, at the head of which stood Jehovah; and associated with Him were Chemosh of Moab and Milcom of Ammon and other deities, or Baals, with whom He was thought of as in union. Thus united under the combined protection of their respective deities, Judah and the other Palestinian states awaited the moment when they could successfully raise the standard of revolt.

The opportunity came in 650, when, as we have seen, there is every reason to believe that Judah, along with other states, was implicated in Shamash-shum-ukin's rebellion. This is suggested, also, by the fact that Manasseh is said to have worshipped the "host of heaven." This was essentially, though not of course exclusively, a Babylonian cult; and, in view of the close relation between politics and religion, its official admission into the capital marked the moment when Judah and the other Palestinian states hoped, in connection with Shamash-shum-ukin's rebellion, to secure at length their political freedom. When we remember how in Babylonia and elsewhere celestial phenomena were observed in connection with the general welfare of the country, the undertaking of war, and the like, we can understand how the cult of the heavenly bodies,

on its introduction into Judah, would be zealously practised in view of the movements then transpiring.

Against this syncretistic or polytheistic type of religion the prophetic party, of course, protested; but bitter persecution had thinned their ranks and silenced their voice. Yet even thus we may not doubt that during the dark days of Manasseh they quietly and all but against hope struggled on to make their influence once more felt for good. A change for the better seems to have set in under Amon: the anti-prophetic party became less united, and a cleavage began to manifest itself between the ruling classes and the ordinary citizens of Judah. On the death of the king the latter succeeded, apparently against the efforts of the court, in securing the election of Josiah. During, however, his minority the administration of the kingdom still lay largely in the hands of those who had little in common with the prophetic party. It was not until after the Scythian invasion that any definite change is perceived. The widespread dread which the Scythians inspired, the firmer hold which Josiah had now acquired over the kingdom, and not least the work of the prophets, all helped to strengthen the hands of the prophetic party. The decisive moment came in 621. In that year the "Book of the Law" was discovered during the repair of the temple. On being satisfied as to its authenticity, the king determined at once to carry out its demands. He convened the elders and people of Judah and Jerusalem, and a solemn covenant was entered into before Jehovah. Drastic measures were put into force; the capital and temple were cleansed of foreign cults; the high places in the land were abolished and the worship of Jehovah centralized at Jerusalem. For some ten years, headed by their king, the prophetic reformers maintained and pushed forward the work of reformation. On the death of Josiah, however, in 608 (607) their power was at an end; and from that time onward they were never again in the ascendancy. Care must be taken not to overestimate what the reformers were able to accomplish. The narrative in Kings tends to suggest that the reformation was thorough and complete in its effect, and carried out with little or no opposition. But that can scarcely have been the case. The events which immediately followed Josiah's death and the picture which Jeremiah gives of the religious state of Judah at this period show clearly that opposition must have been strong, and that those who were averse to reform were only awaiting their time when once more they might assume control. The reformation was in reality more superficial than penetrating. The reformers had re-organized the worship of Jehovah, cleared it of superstition, and safeguarded it from false conceptions; but

they had not changed the heart of the nation. The years of moral and religious disorder had done their worst; the nation was corrupt; and it needed more than they were able to give: it needed, as Jeremiah saw, a new spirit, a new heart; and nothing but the bitter experience of exile could, it would seem, help to effect this change.

§ 2. THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF ZEPHANIAH; AND THE DATE OF HIS PROPHETIC ACTIVITY

Apart from the book that bears his name, we hear no more of the prophet, although the name Zephaniah occurs more than once in the O.T. The name signifies "he whom Jehovah has hidden," i.e. probably from evil (cf. Ps. xxvii. 5, xxxi. 20). It is borne by one of Heman's ancestors (1 Ch. vi. 36), by a priest in the reign of Zedekiah (Jer. xxi. 1), and by the father of a certain Josiah, who lived in the time of the prophet Zechariah (Zech. vi. 10, 14). According to the title of the book, his great-great-grandfather is said to have been Hezekiah. The person intended is, as most writers hold, probably Hezekiah the king; for, as Gray (*Exp.*, sixth series, ii. 76 ff.) has shown, some person of eminence is certainly indicated, because it is quite exceptional to carry back a genealogy four generations; and the fact that four out of the five names are compounded with Jah, which is disproportionately great in a genealogy, is most naturally explained if the prophet was of royal lineage. The objection that the interval between Hezekiah and Zephaniah would be too short to admit of three generations cannot be substantiated, and fails to take into consideration the early age of maturity in the East (cf. Gray, *ibid.* pp. 78 ff.). Zephaniah is further stated to have prophesied "in the days of Josiah," though the exact period within the latter's reign is not given; but the majority of scholars are agreed that he prophesied *before* the reformation and most probably in view of the Scythian invasion, that is to say, somewhere about 626. Those who place Zephaniah's activity *after* the reformation do so chiefly on the grounds (1) that in i. 4 the expression "the remnant of Baal" seems to imply that the worship of Baal had been in the main already extirpated and would therefore indicate a post-reformation date; (2) that i. 13 echoes Deut. xxviii. 39; i. 16, 17, Deut. xxviii. 52, 28, 29; and iii. 5, Deut. xxxii. 4; (3) that in i. 18 there seems to be a reference to the buying off of the Scythians by the Egyptians alluded to in Herodotus, and, if so, this suggests a date subsequent to the Scythian invasion; (4) that the prophet could scarcely have written in view of the Scythian

invasion, for Assyria is included in the judgement, whereas the Scythians at first were allied with Assyria; and (5) that Jeremiah shows that the moral and religious state of Judah and Jerusalem was just as bad after the reformation as it was before, and therefore the prophecy may quite well have been uttered at the end of Josiah's reign. But these reasons cannot be regarded as conclusive. The expression "the remnant of Baal" represents most probably a corrupt text; but even if correct, it would not necessarily imply that Baalism had already to some extent been discountenanced (see *Comm.*). The passages quoted as echoes from Deuteronomy are so slight that they can scarcely be regarded as evidence; while i. 18 does not necessarily contain, as Is. xiii. 17 shows, the definite allusion supposed. The argument referred to under (4) would have weight only if the prophecy were homogeneous; but, as we shall see presently, this cannot be asserted. And lastly, while it is true that Jeremiah's prophecies are useful in revealing the moral and religious state of Judah at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign and during the early years of Josiah, they cannot be rightly quoted for the closing years of Josiah, for, as Driver (*B.J.*, p. xxviii) has remarked, little or nothing in Jeremiah's book seems to belong to the last twelve years of his reign. Accordingly we have little doubt that the generally accepted opinion as to Zephaniah's date is correct. In this case Zephaniah will have been a contemporary of Jeremiah. He was apparently resident in Jerusalem or at any rate delivered his message within the capital (cf. i. 4 "cut off from *this place*"), and shows his acquaintance with the general life of the city and knowledge of its suburbs and surroundings (i. 10, 11). That he enjoyed an influential position seems confirmed by his information respecting the aristocratic and princely classes (i. 8, 9). What response his message received we cannot say; but from i. 12 it may be inferred that he experienced the same general indifference and incredulity as other prophets before him had experienced. Still, it is not unlikely that the youthful Josiah was in no little degree influenced by him, and that the measure of success which attended the work of reformation was largely due to the way in which he and his contemporary Jeremiah had prepared the people for its inception. In view of the briefness of his prophecy it is probable that his prophetic activity was of no long duration. With no little courage he came forward at a crisis in Judah's history, warning his fellow-countrymen of the near judgement that awaited them; and either he felt that his mission was over when he had delivered his warning, or else perhaps his message of stern denunciation had so aroused the opposition of the leading officials of

the state that it cost him his life (cf. the fate of Uriah, Jer. xxvi. 20 f.). The tradition (cf. Pseudo-Epiphanius, *De vitis prophetarum*, ch. 19) that he was "of the tribe of Simeon from the mountain of Sarabatha" may be discarded: equally worthless is the Jewish tradition that his grave was to be seen at Geba in the Lebanon.

§ 3. THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE AND ITS REVISIONS

According to tradition, the book is ascribed in its entirety to the prophet Zephaniah; and in support of tradition we may point to the fact that its contents give a more or less complete picture of Judah's imminent and more remote future. First, there is the announcement of Jehovah's near day of judgement, falling with awful severity on Judah and her capital and on certain neighbouring peoples; and then we have a series of sketches outlining the bright era which is to open out, after the judgement has been accomplished, an era which concerns not only Judah but also the peoples whose conversion is predicted, and among whom Judah will be "a name and a praise." But a general coherency in thought, such as is here offered, is not sufficient to establish unity of authorship; nor is mere tradition a guarantee for this. As a matter of fact, recent criticism tends to show that not a little of the O.T. has been subject to expansion and revision; and does not represent the original as it left the hands of the authors. We know, in the case of the prophet Jeremiah, that his earlier prophecies were revised and adapted by him to meet the requirements of later years; and it is only an extension of the same principle when criticism presupposes that men schooled in prophetic teaching have taken up the words of their spiritual masters and re-interpreted and adapted them, partly by transposition, partly by substitution, and partly by addition, in order to meet the needs of their own times and to render them a living message. How far this is true in the case of the book of Zephaniah must be tested by reading the prophecy in the light of the historical background which we have just sketched; by comparing its different sections in point of thought, outlook, and language; and by reference to the formal structure of its verses, though this latter test must be applied with some caution.

Ch. i. opens with the announcement of a judgement which will sweep the face of the whole land. Man and beast, bird and fish will be swept away (*vv.* 2, 3). The judgement centres on Judah and Jerusalem. Jehovah will stretch forth His hand and cut off from the capital those who have set up the Baals (see *Comm.*), who worship the host of heaven, who

swear by Milcom (see *Comm.*), or who in other ways have apostatized from Him (*vv.* 4-6). This "Day of Jehovah" is near at hand, and the instruments of the divine wrath, who are represented as guests invited to a sacrificial feast, are already summoned (*ver.* 7). The state officials, the princes, and all who are aping foreign fashions, or who do not hesitate to commit violence and fraud in the service of their masters, will then be duly punished (*vv.* 8, 9). The cry of distress and of alarm which will reach the ear from the northern or north-western trading quarters of Jerusalem will be the first tidings that the day of visitation has come (*vv.* 10, 11). At that time those who have treated with indifference Jehovah's warnings and have thought that He would not intervene either in judgement or otherwise will discover their mistake; they will see their wealth plundered, their houses desolated and their labours rendered fruitless (*vv.* 12, 13). In the closing verses the warning as to the nearness of the "Day" is reiterated, and in well-chosen, popular language its awfulness and severity are emphasized (*vv.* 14-18).

We have already said that it is now generally admitted that Zephaniah prophesied about the time of the Scythian invasion; and as a matter of fact the contents of this chapter are well suited to the circumstances of that period. (1) We notice the religious situation. The presence of Baalism, the worship of the heavenly bodies, the syncretistic tendency which led men to combine, for instance, the service of Jehovah with the worship of Milcom, and the general attitude of refusing to seek Jehovah alone—all this, of which the chapter speaks, would agree admirably with the polytheistic condition of religion which, as we have seen, was prevalent under Manasseh and continued down to the early years of Josiah, prior to the inauguration of the Deuteronomic measures of reform in 621. (2) The reference to the royal princes and state officials *without any allusion to the king* would indicate the early years of Josiah, when the king was still a youth and the administration of affairs was as yet largely in the hands of the members of the court. (3) The aping of foreign fashions spoken of in *ver.* 8 may have been directly due to the foreign trade which was carried on at the capital; but it was probably not entirely so; for we may well believe that this adoption, by the residents of the capital, of foreign customs was to some extent a protest against the spirit of national exclusiveness advocated by the prophets, and therefore went hand in hand with the policy of foreign alliances. If so, then we have an additional reason for accepting the above date; for it would indicate that, when the words were spoken, Jerusalem was allied with her heathen neighbours. (4) The northerly direction, from which

the threatened judgement is viewed as coming, would suit the Scythians, who entered Palestine by the northern road.

The situation which ch. i. implies, then, would correspond well with what we believe to have been the state of affairs about the year 627 or 626; and, inasmuch as the chapter does not contain any feature which would be inconsistent with this view (on *ver. 4 v. supra*), we may further agree that it is by one author, and that that author was the prophet Zephaniah.

We have already discussed the events of the time in question; but it is necessary to bear them in mind, if we are to interpret rightly the import of the prophet's message. On first thoughts we might be disposed to believe that the judgement which he sees impending over Judah and Jerusalem is due solely to the idolatry and social wrongs of which they have been guilty; but to restrict ourselves to this view would be to miss the real significance of his prophecy. It is true that such idolatries and social injustices merited the judgement threatened. The prophet doubtless felt this as strongly as any of his contemporaries; but in reality he has in mind something deeper than mere idolatry and social wrong. He is inveighing against a definite, underlying attitude which Jerusalem and Judah have adopted in view of their political outlook, the consequence of which has been to fill the capital and its neighbourhood with idolatries, and to spread social evil. The policy is that of foreign alliances. Judah has allied herself with her heathen neighbours. It is this state of affairs which the events connected with the year 627, as we have seen, suggest. Zephaniah does not indeed allude to it in *explicit* terms; but that is because those to whom he spoke his message not only knew the situation but knew also that he was directly inveighing against it when he spoke of their idolatry: the two went together and the one implied the other.

It is noticeable that Zephaniah neither refers to by name nor yet describes the foe by which the judgement was to be executed. It may be that it was not then certain whether the armies of Assyria or of her allies would be the agents of the divine judgement. Still, the emphasis which he lays on the nearness of the "Day," on the terribleness and severity of it, and the way in which the foe are represented as guests ready to partake of Jehovah's sacrifice suggest that he had some definite people in view, and that in fact he was actually thinking of the Scythians, even though they are not named by him.

We pass to ch. ii., the text of which in several places is uncertain. The opening words, either by what can only be regarded as a strained rendering of the present text or by emendation, have been interpreted

as a call to repentance. The prophet is understood to summon Judah and her capital to repent before the "Day of Jehovah" comes. But, for reasons adduced elsewhere (cf. pp. 43, 44), it seems more probable that he is ironically bidding the people of Judah and Jerusalem persist in their present policy, only to find, before their plans have matured, that the fierce anger of Jehovah has broken out in judgement upon them. Accordingly ii. 1 has been rendered thus: "Gather for yourselves stubble and become stubble, O nation unadmonished¹," i.e. persist in your present policy and discover to your cost that both yourselves and those in league with you are mere stubble which will perish in the fire of judgement. In contrast to this ironical command, he turns in *ver.* 3 to the "humble of the land" (R.V. "meek of the earth"), who, true to Jehovah's covenant, though few in number, are endeavouring to fulfil faithfully His will; and bids them continue in what they are doing, holding out to them *as a possibility* the hope of protection when the judgement comes. In *ver.* 4 the reason is then given why, on the one hand, the faithless in Judah will fail to make good their policy, and why, on the other hand, the faithful should continue to seek Jehovah. Philistia, which protects Judah on the west, will fall before the foe, and thenceforth Judah's fate will be sealed.

The contents of ii. 1-4, thus interpreted, show quite clearly that we are moving amid the same circumstances as are implied in ch. i., and we have therefore every reason to suppose that Zephaniah is their author. The policy in which he ironically bids his countrymen persist is undoubtedly their alliance with their heathen neighbours, and especially (one may suppose) with the Philistine cities (*ver.* 4), in common action against Assyria; while the "humble of the land" are clearly those who like himself are content to remain submissive to Jehovah's will and to seek Him alone.

In the next section (*vv.* 5-7) we have a taunt-song on Philistia, the text of which in part is very uncertain. Philistia is addressed, and taunted with her coming destruction. Her land is to become pasture-ground for herds and flocks, and to belong to the remnant of Judah, whose captivity Jehovah will turn. There is nothing improbable in having in the present connection a taunt-song on Philistia; the prediction of her destruction in *ver.* 4 would quite naturally introduce this; and therefore there is no reason for denying these verses *at least in some form* to Zephaniah. What, however, does awaken suspicion is the mention of the "remnant of

¹ This is the rendering of an emended text.

Judah," and the presupposition that that remnant is already in exile. These facts imply a different situation from that indicated by the preceding verses, and betray revision. Moreover, the clauses in question break the connection and disturb the rhythm. We may therefore with little doubt ascribe the words "for the remnant of the house of Judah" and "for Jehovah their God shall visit them and turn their captivity" to the hand of a reviser. In what remains the text is very uncertain; but for reasons adduced elsewhere (cf. pp. 47-49) it perhaps approximated in its original form to the following: "Ah! inhabitants of the region of the sea, Jehovah's word is against you; and I will destroy thee, Canaan, land of the Philistines, without inhabitant. And she shall become pastures for herds and folds for flocks; they shall feed amid the houses of Ashkelon; in Ekron they shall lie down." In this form the verses may quite well have belonged to the original prophecy.

The following paragraph (*vv.* 8-10) predicts the coming destruction of Moab and Ammon. Moab and Ammon have reproached Jehovah's people, and for this they shall become, like Sodom and Gomorrah, an everlasting desolation. It is also stated that the remnant of Jehovah's people will inherit them. In a mere prediction of the fall of Moab and Ammon there would be nothing improbable in this: in view of the close relations they in all probability had with Judah at the period in question, they might quite well have been thought of by Zephaniah as sharing the fate of Judah and Philistia. The ground, however, on which their predicted destruction is represented as resting shows clearly that the paragraph cannot have been spoken at the same time as chs. i. and ii. 1-7; for, whereas from i. 5 we may infer that Judah was on friendly terms with these peoples—at any rate with Ammon—in the present passage the relation between them and Judah is one of hostility; moreover, the abrupt way in which the section is introduced suggests that it originally had no immediate connection with what has preceded. Accordingly, there seems little doubt that we have here the addition of a reviser; but if the correctness of this view be assumed, it will be necessary to admit further the presence not of one but of two revisers; for, on the natural interpretation of *ver.* 9, it is evident that the end of Moab and Ammon is viewed in a twofold way. In *ver.* 9*a* their land is said to become an *eternal* desolation, whereas in *ver.* 9*b* it is represented as falling to the remnant of Jehovah's people. These views are strictly inconsistent. Moreover, the following verse (*ver.* 10), besides being unrhythmical, simply repeats what has already been affirmed in *ver.* 8. This, together with the inconsistency just referred to, betrays the mark of more than

one hand in this section. The words "the residue of my people shall spoil them and the remnant of my nation shall inherit them," which overload the verse, have no doubt along with *ver.* 10 been added by the same hand that made the insertion in *ver.* 7 *a* and *c*; while *vs.* 8, 9 *a* are to be assigned to an earlier reviser whose date will be considered presently.

ii. 11, 12 refer to Cush (i.e. most probably Egypt¹). According to the present text, however, only *ver.* 12 has reference to Cush; but there are good reasons (cf. p. 51) for believing that the verses are now in their wrong order and should be transposed. In this case the "unto them" (*ver.* 11), which according to the present text can only refer awkwardly to Ammon and Moab, will refer to the Cushites. But even so, the text of *vs.* 12, 11 is questionable, and for reasons stated on p. 52 the original in all probability read thus: "Also ye, O Cushites—slain by the sword are they! Terrible is Jehovah against them and He subdueth the land. And all the coasts of the peoples shall worship Him, each from his place." The verses thus emended will refer (*a*) to Jehovah's predicted defeat of the Egyptians, and (*b*) to the future acknowledgment of His sovereignty on the part of the peoples. Since the Scythian invasion was due in part at least to Egypt's aggressive attitude, it is quite conceivable that Zephaniah may have referred to their coming overthrow. But the passage would follow quite naturally *vs.* 8, 9 *a*, and, as the third persons singular indicate, seems to connect inseparably with *vs.* 13 ff. (on *ver.* 11 *b v. inf.*). These latter verses (*vs.* 13 ff.) predict the fall of Assyria. Jehovah will stretch forth His hand against Nineveh and make it a desolation, a haunt of beasts and birds. Now it is generally agreed that, as Assyria had not fallen at the time when the prophet wrote, a reference to that power is not only conceivable but probable. That Zephaniah might have made some reference to Assyria may be freely admitted; but *is it so probable that he would have predicted its fall at the time of the Scythian invasion?* If what we have said on chs. i.-ii. 7 represents the situation which Zephaniah had to face, is it probable that he would have gone out of his way and predicted Nineveh's overthrow when he is employing all his energy in warning Judah of the judgement which is about to befall her and her neighbours *in consequence of their attitude towards Assyria?* For these reasons we must conclude that the passage ii. 13 f. represents a situation at any rate later than

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chs. i.-ii. 7; and if so, *vv.* 12, 11, with which it stands in close connection, will date from the same time; and since the two passages together follow naturally on *vv.* 8, 9*a*, we may further conclude that the whole section (*vv.* 8 f., 11 ff.) is from the same hand.

We have just said that *ver.* 11 connects immediately with *ver.* 13; but as a matter of fact in the present text the clause "and all the coasts of the peoples," etc. (R.V. "isles of the nations") tends to break the connection. There is little doubt, however, that the clause is an insertion: in language and thought it reminds one of Deutero-Isaiah and is similar also to the insertions found in *ver.* 7*a, c.* The hand which made those insertions in all probability added this clause also. ii. 15, which is a dirge on Nineveh's fate, is likewise somewhat doubtful; it reads a little like an after-addition, yet it must be admitted that there is no definite reason why it should not be original with *vv.* 13 f.

Now if, as we believe, *vv.* 8 f., 11 ff. represent an addition to the original prophecy, what shall we say was their inspiration? What was the situation which led a reviser to add these verses? There can be little doubt that it was a moment when things were looking bright; when Judah seemed to be going to emerge to the front (cf. esp. *ver.* 11*a*). As, however, Assyria had not yet succumbed but was only on the point of succumbing, then this bright outlook must have been prior to 612, the year when Nineveh fell. The reference to Moab and Ammon and their reproachful attitude towards Judah offers no objection to this view. It has been customary, it is true, to see in these verses an allusion to the malicious and hostile spirit which they displayed towards the Judæans on the fall of Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. xxv. 3 ff., where the reference to their taunts at that time is unmistakable). But the view is not necessary; and there is always need to remember that at best we have only glimpses into the history of these centuries and that there must have been other occasions in Judah's experiences to which the terms of these verses would be equally applicable. May not the bright years which brought to a close Josiah's reign be one? May we not have here actually a reference to these two peoples in their attitude towards Judah at this period? In the face of danger or in the hope of liberty, Judah was usually ready to enter into alliance with her neighbours. Thus in the time of Sargon II Moab is mentioned as allied with Philistia, Judah and Edom in a conspiracy against Assyria; and later in the time of Zedekiah we read of Moab and Ammon along with other states endeavouring to get Judah to join them in a revolt against Babylon (cf. Jer. xxvii. 1 ff.). Moreover i. 5, where in all probability we have a reference

to Milcom the god of the Ammonites, presupposes Judah's close contact with her eastern neighbours. But it was exactly such alliances that the prophetic party opposed; and since they were then in the ascendancy, Judah would certainly have abandoned them, and the one claim she would be making would be that she was prepared to stand alone. If so, may we not see in the section in question the consequence of this attitude? May not the reproach which Moab and Ammon were offering be either in view of her having broken off relations with them, or else due to her refusal to renew alliance with them at this critical moment in the history of the Palestinian and Syrian states? Such a refusal on Judah's part either to continue or to resume negotiations would have certainly called forth reproach not dissimilar, one may suppose, to that which the Assyrians under Rabshakeh were ready to offer when she refused to surrender in the time of Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kg. xix. 22, 23).

An examination of the contents of ch. ii. has revealed, then, at least three *strata*; the original prophecy (ii. 1-5, 6, 7 (in part)), a revision towards the close of Josiah's reign (ii. 8, 9*a*, 11*a*, 12-15), and a still later revision at the close of the exile (ii. 7*a*, *c*, 9*b*, 10, 11*b*).

Ch. iii. opens (*vv.* 1-4) with a denunciation of Jerusalem, which may well be original. The description of the capital as defiled and as refusing to *trust in Jehovah*, the reference to the extortions of her officials, to the corruption of her judges, to the recklessness of her prophets, and to the depravity of her priests, fit in well with what we know of the circumstances of Zephaniah's time. What follows, however, in *vv.* 5-7 is not so certain; in these verses we have partly a contrast, the rightness of Jehovah standing in contrast to the wickedness of the capital; and partly a statement of Jehovah's rejected appeal to the capital to receive discipline. It is possible that the prophet, after mentioning the deep-seated corruption of Jerusalem, may have been drawn to place in contrast Jehovah's faithfulness and His promise of divine favour, had she received instruction. Still, it must be admitted that the way this thought has been introduced is somewhat abrupt; and moreover we are led to expect after *vv.* 1-4 the immediate announcement of the judgement awaiting the capital in view of her moral and religious corruption rather than a statement of what Jehovah's attitude has been towards Judah. On the whole, then, we are inclined to think that these verses represent a later insertion; and as a matter of fact they gain in import and become much more intelligible when viewed in the light of the circumstances which form, as we have seen, most probably the background

of ii. 8 ff.; with the exception of *ver. 7b* we may conclude that they are from the same hand that inserted that section.

The purpose of the insertion was to modify the prophet's words which only held out to Jerusalem the certainty of her overthrow, and to make them applicable to the hopes which opened out for the capital in the years immediately following Josiah's reformation, when the prophetic party were in the ascendancy. As we have pointed out, towards the close of Josiah's reign the political world was witnessing a transition; the power of Assyria was rapidly declining, and unrest was manifesting itself throughout the different states. What, it was asked, would be Judah's fate? Could it be that the prophet's prediction was now at length to be fulfilled? The answer which the prophetic teachers returned may be seen partly in ii. 8 ff. and partly in the present passage. ii. 8 ff. has been sufficiently considered; the section predicts Jehovah's defeat of Judah's foes. Here, though the same outlook is presupposed (cf. *ver. 6*), the main purpose is to encourage the faithful partly by reminding them that Jehovah is in their midst and is righteous (i.e. true to His covenant) and partly by holding out to them the divine promise that, in spite of the punishment which the wickedness of the capital has incurred, they will not be cut off. The text of *vv. 5-7b*, as has generally been seen, has suffered in course of transmission, and there is some uncertainty how it should best be restored. For reasons stated elsewhere (cf. pp. 58 f.) we believe the following approximates to the original: (*ver. 5*) "Jehovah is righteous in her midst; He does no wrong; morning by morning His rightness (i.e. a token of His rightness) He gives forth; and He knows no shame (i.e. as a result of failure). (*ver. 6*) I have cut off peoples etc. (*ver. 7*) I have said: Only fear me and receive discipline (i.e. the lesson which past discipline was intended to give), and you shall not be cut off on account of all her iniquity which I visit upon her."

The following clause in *ver. 7b*, as the change in person indicates, is a later addition. When the hopes of the prophetic party were unfulfilled and the party had lost their power, and the moral and religious state of Judah reverted to what it was prior to Josiah's reformation, becoming perhaps even worse than it was then, the insertion in *vv. 5-7* was made applicable by the addition: "But they rose up early, they made all their deeds corrupt."

In *ver. 8* we come to a very difficult verse. But if what has just been urged with regard to the character of *vv. 1-7* is at least approximately true, then it may be assumed that *ver. 8* can scarcely in its present

form represent the original text. And this assumption is further borne out by a consideration of the verse itself.

For after the prophet has reproached Jerusalem for her wickedness in *vv.* 1-4, we naturally expect some fresh announcement of the judgement which Jehovah is about to visit upon her. Compare the case of Philistia in *ii.* 5 ff. And if so, it is clearly only to the present verse that we can look for a statement to this effect; but as the verse stands, such a statement has certainly not been handed down in its original form. For (1) we should expect Jerusalem to be directly addressed. (2) The expression "wait for" elsewhere means *wait with longing and trust for*, which would certainly be strange in a passage in which the prophet is announcing to the capital her imminent punishment. In the present text the reference can only be to the faithful within Judah. (3) While it is conceivable that Zephaniah might under the terms "peoples" and "kingdoms" include Judah, and might use them to indicate that the judgement would be general and affect also other peoples, yet in the present passage, seeing that no mention has been made of the peoples, and the prophet's attention has been confined solely to Jerusalem, it is only natural to suppose that he will have *directly* referred to her coming fate rather than let it be inferred from a general announcement of Jehovah's impending wrath on kingdoms and peoples. And (4) the verse, as compared with what has preceded, appears overloaded and may contain some textual error.

The case is such that we cannot very well escape the conclusion that the verse in its present form represents revision. In this case what was the original reading? Obviously it can only be conjectured. We believe that it may have read as follows: "Therefore—it is the oracle of Jehovah—my decision is to collect peoples in order to pour out upon her my indignation, even all the fierceness of my anger, for in the fire of my ardour shall all the land be consumed!" On the basis of this reading we may further suppose that the editor, who inserted *vv.* 5-7*a*, so transformed the original as to suit the hopes which he held out in those verses for the faithful. Instead of *ver.* 8 appearing as an announcement of Jehovah's decision to visit His wrath upon the capital, it now appeared, by the addition of the clauses "wait for me," "for the day of my rising up to the prey," "for my gathering together of kingdoms," and by the substitution of "upon them" for "upon her," as an address to the faithful, bidding them await "Jehovah's Day" when He would

¹ For this emended reading and its context see *the translation*.

pour out His wrath upon the kingdoms and peoples who were, as the Assyrian power declined, then threatening Judah's position. The general unrest and movements of peoples at that time might well have been viewed as a gathering together by Jehovah for the purpose of visiting them with His wrath. On this view the text, as it left the hand of this reviser, practically corresponded (it will be seen) with the present Hebrew text: the only difference is the transposition of "for my gathering together kingdoms" to after "for the day of rising up to the prey"—an essential transposition unless we accept the reading of the LXX and omit the pronoun "my."

When, however, the hopes of the prophetic teachers were unrealized and the moral and religious condition of Judah became again corrupt, the later reviser, who inserted the last clause in *ver. 7b*, must have re-interpreted the present verse, understanding Jehovah's judgement as lighting not upon the peoples but upon the faithless Judæans, and referring accordingly "upon them" to the subject of *ver. 7b*. The verse was left by him unchanged, as an address to the faithful—no doubt because, as we shall see presently, he viewed the judgement as one of purification in which a remnant would survive.

With *ver. 8* in its unrevised form the original prophecy of Zephaniah in all probability closed. This is suggested by the words "for all the land shall be consumed in the fire of my ardour," which correspond to the closing words "for an end...will He make of all the inhabitants of the land" of *i. 18*, as well as by the character of the section, which is, in reality, of the nature of a taunt-song on Jerusalem's fate. An examination of the sections which follow also tends to corroborate this view. The section *iii. 9, 10*, with its abruptly introduced announcement of the conversion of the heathen, is generally admitted to be out of harmony with what has preceded; *iii. 11-13*, though it might conceivably be Zephaniah's, nevertheless presupposes *definitely* the survival of a faithful remnant after the judgement has been accomplished; whereas in *ii. 3* this is only put forward as a *possibility*. And *iii. 14-20*, which presupposes the exile, the devastation of the capital, and the Diaspora, and which predicts a glorious restoration for Zion, is clearly much later than Zephaniah's time.

The first section *iii. 9, 10* is not to be credited either (*a*) to the earlier reviser who so expanded *ver. 8* as to make it clear that Jehovah purposed judgement on the peoples, for he could scarcely in the same breath have spoken of their judgement and conversion; or (*b*) to the later reviser who after making the insertion in *ver. 7b* interpreted *ver. 8* to mean that

Jehovah was raising up the peoples in order to visit judgement on the faithless nation; for there is no obvious reason why Judah's judgement should mean the peoples' conversion. The verses are most probably to be assigned to the same hand that inserted ii. 11 *b*. This writer no doubt thought that after Jehovah had manifested His wrath on Judah's enemies (for so probably he interpreted *ver.* 8) the nations would be so awed that they would turn to Him, and accordingly he fitted the thought in as best he could by a "for then."

The next section iii. 11-13 implies (1) that judgement will befall Jerusalem and (2) that a faithful remnant will remain *in the capital*, who will trust in Jehovah and no longer follow out that course of lies and deceit which was being generally adopted at the time when the insertion was made. We have already pointed out why the section is probably not Zephaniah's. But it will scarcely have been added when the original prophecy was first revised; for, though this reviser did picture Jerusalem as being visited for her iniquities (iii. 7 *a*), his main purpose was to show that Judah, if she endeavoured to be faithful to Jehovah, would at Jehovah's hands witness the overthrow of those kingdoms and peoples whose movements were a source of disquietude to her. He would therefore scarcely at such a time have inserted this passage. Nor will it have been added by the hand which inserted *vv.* 9, 10 and the clauses in ii. 7, 9, 11, for in those passages the exile is presupposed as having already taken place, whereas here Judah awaits her judgement. Moreover, in this passage the faithful are pictured as surviving that judgement *and remaining in their capital*: this shows that the verses will have been inserted sometime before Jerusalem's fall. In this case there is no reason why the hand which inserted *ver.* 7 *b* may not have added them. After inserting the clause in *ver.* 7 *b* the reviser may quite well have added a passage, which predicted Jerusalem's future after the judgement described in *ver.* 8 had befallen her and which held out to her the promise of a remnant that would fulfil the demands made in *ver.* 7 *a*.

In the case of iii. 14-20 it is possible that the section may not have been added wholly by one hand. The introduction of Jehovah's name in the first person in *vv.* 18 (?), 19 *f.* is somewhat abrupt; also *ver.* 16 does not conform strictly to the rhythm of the section; while *ver.* 20 is almost certainly a marginal variant on *ver.* 19. But apart from this last feature there is no cogent reason why *vv.* 14-19 should not have been added by the same hand: there is always the possibility that a redactor may be drawing on material which he has at hand; and this would

explain any irregularity in rhythm or lack of smoothness in his addition. In the present case the thoughts suggested all spring out of the same situation. The nearness of Jerusalem's restoration, the picture of Jehovah as a king rejoicing in her midst, and the promise of redemption for the scattered and the exiled, all reflect the teaching and situation of Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah. The verses therefore may quite well have been added about that time; and if so, probably by the same hand as made the additions in ii. 7*a*, *c*, 9*b*, 11*b* and iii. 9, 10.

To sum up, then, a critical examination of the Book of Zephaniah leads to the conclusion that it has reached its present form *through revision*. Besides the original prophecy, there are to be traced the hands of at least three revisers, the first of whom lived towards the close of Josiah's reign, the second in the last decade or decade-and-a-half of the monarchy, and the third at the close of the exile. It is possible, of course, that we may be wrong in assuming three *distinct* revisers; it is conceivable that Zephaniah himself may be responsible for part at least of the work of revision, or that the first and second revisers may be one and the same person: obviously we cannot speak with certainty; and the question after all is one of minor importance. What is important is that, if the prophecy has passed through three successive stages of revision (and we believe it has), they should be fully recognized, and the prophecy read as a whole in the light of each revision. This cannot be too strongly emphasized; for the main purpose of a reviser was to make the original prophecy a living message, applicable to the needs of his own time. It is not easy, in distinguishing original from later elements, to avoid such phraseology as "genuine" and "not genuine"; but it ought to be borne in mind in using these terms that a revised prophecy is scarcely less important than its original form.

§ 4. THE TEACHING OF ZEPHANIAH

The teaching of the prophet Zephaniah may best be treated under three heads: (*a*) his message of Judgement; (*b*) his view of the "Day of Jehovah" and (*c*) his conception of Jehovah.

(*a*) *His message of Judgement.* Zephaniah's message is essentially one of judgement. Judah and, in particular, Jerusalem have sinned; and Jehovah's judgement upon them is at hand. This is his central teaching. But what is the nature of this imminent judgement? Has the prophet in view a world-wide judgement, or is he thinking, on the contrary, simply of a judgement on Judah, or at most, on Judah and her

neighbouring peoples? In other words is it a universal or only a partial judgement that is announced? It has been argued that the judgement is represented as falling first upon the world in general and then upon Judah in particular; and in accordance with this view it has been further maintained that Zephaniah is the first of the literary prophets to announce a universal judgement¹. In favour of this view may be urged firstly the phraseology of i. 2, 3 (cf. "all things from off the face of the ground," "man from off the ground"), which certainly lends itself to this interpretation, and of i. 18, where the Hebrew *may* be rendered "*all the earth shall be consumed,*" "He maketh an end...of *all the inhabitants of the earth*"; secondly, the way in which the judgement on Judah is announced in i. 4 suggests that the judgement is thought of as *proceeding out of*, and *forming part of*, a wider judgement; and thirdly, the apparently indiscriminate character of the destruction (cf. i. 3 "I will remove man and beast...the birds of the heavens and the fishes of the sea"). This view seems only strengthened by the facts that Jehovah is represented as consuming by fire; and that the day of destruction is spoken of as a day of darkness and of gloom, of cloud and mist—features common to eschatological pictures of the destruction of the world.

But these arguments are not conclusive. (1) Though the language of i. 2, 3 lends itself to the above view, it does not *definitely* imply that the prophet had in mind a world-wide judgement: the language would be equally appropriate if the prophet was picturing only a definite portion of the earth; whilst the Hebrew of i. 18 may quite well be rendered "all the *land*," "the inhabitants of *all the land*." And (2) the wording of the announcement of Jehovah's judgement on Judah (i. 4) does not *necessarily* imply that the prophet regarded it as part of a wider judgement; it may quite well be a reiteration, in specific language, of what is intended in the preceding clause, "I will cut off man from off the face of the ground," just as that clause in turn takes up and reiterates the opening words, "I will destroy man," of the same verse, and just as this latter clause, again, particularizes the "everything" of i. 2. And (3) with regard to the description of the Day as a day of darkness it may be pointed out that there are also clear indications that it is conceived as brought about by a hostile power and not by a world-wide (physical) catastrophe. May not those expressions which seem to suggest the latter be differently explained?

¹ See Davidson (*Camb. Bib.*), p. 105; Charles, *Eschatology*, p. 97.

The interpretation that the prophet had in mind a universal, world-wide judgement is therefore not so clear as writers have been led to suppose; and we are inclined to believe that that view is correct, according to which the prophet pictures simply a judgement on Judah and some of her neighbouring peoples, and for the following reasons: (1) In ch. i. there is no clear reference to the world at large; his thoughts, on the contrary, are here full of Judah, and it is only in ch. ii. that he refers to the outer world, and then only to Philistia. (2) Since the historical background of his message is the imminent invasion of the Scythians, what we should expect would be only a partial, and not a universal, judgement. (3) If we ask what the prophet's hearers will have understood by the words, "I will remove everything from off the face of the ground," there can scarcely be any doubt that they will have been led to think of Judah, at any rate *in the first place and mainly*, since no previous mention had been made of the world at large. (4) In i. 7 Jehovah is represented as sanctifying His guests for the purpose of partaking in the feast He has furnished; and again in i. 16-18 the judgement is clearly pictured as brought about by a hostile power. These features would certainly be difficult to account for, if the prophet were depicting a universal judgement.

If, then, as we believe, Zephaniah had only a partial judgement in view, how are we to explain those passages, referred to above, which seem to hint at a world-wide, catastrophic judgement? Gressmann (*Eschatologie*, pp. 142 ff.) has shown with much plausibility that, in common with similar passages in the other prophets, they in reality embody traces of a primitive belief in a future world-catastrophe, which the prophet has utilized in his description of the imminent judgement predicted by him for Judah. Nothing was more natural than that he should have drawn from such material as had been transmitted to Israel from primitive days, not only to emphasize the terribleness of the judgement he predicted but also to correct, by using current language, such popular forms as this pre-historic belief had by his day come to assume. Whether this primitive language retained for the prophet somewhat of its literal meaning and he thought of physical terrors accompanying Jehovah's judgement on Judah may be doubted. Most probably the language with him is merely "poetical dress" and intended to be figurative of the awfulness with which Jehovah is conceived as acting. Compare in this connection the pictures of utter desolation in Jer. xxxiii. 10, 12, l. 3, li. 62 and Ezek. xxv. 13, all of which refer to partial judgements.

(b) *The Day of Jehovah*. It is under this term that Zephaniah

announces Jehovah's coming judgement on Judah; but the term was not coined by him: it had already been used by Amos and Isaiah; and in Amos' time it was then a *terminus technicus* and no doubt went back to a date long before his time. It has generally been supposed that it originally designated the day on which Jehovah was to triumph in battle over His people's foes; but, though something like this may well have been the popular meaning which the expression had come to bear in Amos' time, it is questionable whether that was its primitive meaning. It has been customary also to think of Zephaniah as the first of the literary prophets to picture a universal judgement under the term "Day of Jehovah"; but in view of what has been urged above it is difficult to maintain this for certain. On the contrary, Zephaniah would appear to import no new meaning into the term, but to use it essentially in the same sense as Amos had used it. In both (1) it is pictured as a day of judgement mainly on Jehovah's own people (in the one case on Israel, in the other mainly on Judah)—but (2) not exclusively, for other neighbouring peoples are represented as having to suffer (cf. Am. i. and Zeph. ii.). In Amos the judgement is viewed from an ethical standpoint; but in Zephaniah no reason is stated, though why Philistia should suffer disaster is obvious in view of the then political situation. Moreover (3) it is represented as accomplished by some hostile power (in Amos the Assyrians, in Zephaniah the Scythians); and (4), what is especially important to notice, in view of the question raised above, not only in Zephaniah but in Amos, it is described as a day of "darkness and not light," as a day "gloomy and without any brightness in it" (Am. v. 18, 20); so that if the similar phrases in Zephaniah are to be understood as indicating a world-wide, catastrophic judgement, consistency would demand that the expressions in Amos should be understood similarly—a view which few, if any, would be disposed to accept.

(c) As regards his *conception of Jehovah*, Zephaniah cannot be said to make any perceptible advance on his predecessors. He speaks of Judah's idolatry, mentioning her worship of the Baals, of the host of heaven, and of Milcom; but whether he himself actually believed in the existence of heathen deities, or is only assuming their existence, is not altogether clear. Their existence is nowhere questioned, nor is emphasis laid on the vanity of false worship as such. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that like Amos Zephaniah thought of Jehovah as all-sovereign and powerful, as One who had strength to control the destiny of peoples (cf. i. 7, ii. 4); so that probably we shall not be far wrong if we regard him as practically a monotheist. What he lays stress

on is Judah's *apostasy from Jehovah* in not seeking Him and Him alone. This to the prophet was the all-important question. Jehovah and Judah are in covenant with each other; Jehovah is Judah's God and Judah Jehovah's people; and because this is so, she must know none but Him. Zephaniah, it is true, does not speak directly of Jehovah's covenant with Judah, but it is throughout assumed; and the terms of ii. 3 can only be rightly understood when viewed in the light of it. Nor does he labour to show that it is only in being true to Jehovah, through manifesting a spirit of absolute trust in Him, that national safety lay. That message had long ago been given by Isaiah, and had for long been an accepted principle among that circle of religious teachers from whom Zephaniah had sprung. Rather, it is in view of the consequences which Judah's disobedience to that principle had brought about that Zephaniah directs the full force of his message. Like Amos he comes forward essentially as a prophet of doom; he sees no hope that the judgement which Judah has merited may be averted; nor has he any doubt but that it will mean the end of Judah, though he does hold out the possibility—but it is only a bare possibility—that those who continue to seek Jehovah and Him alone may escape. That is his message. Those passages which predict Judah's restoration and future glory for Zion are in all probability, as we have seen, later additions to the prophet's utterances.

5. THE LITERARY STYLE OF ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah's language is fresh and vigorous; and his style, though not ornate, is forcible and clear. He speaks as one who knows the urgency of his message, and delivers it in the most direct and effective way he can. Nowhere in his prophecy does he show any literary dependence on earlier writers. A few of his terms are rare (*kāphā, lēhūm, gāram*); and, as might be expected, several he has in common with Jeremiah and the literature of that, or a later, period. But there is nothing *distinctively* late; and words or expressions which characterize later literature (cf. the lists in G. A. Smith's *The Twelve Prophets*, II. pp. 36, 37 notes) are due to editors, to scribes, or to textual corruption. His utterances are cast into no one rhythmical scheme; lines of two, three, and four beats are represented in his prophecy, as also the so-called *Kīnā* measure, the particular rhythm being dictated rather by the nature of each utterance. The only sections in which uniformity of rhythm may be observed are ii. 1-7*b* (excepting *vv.* 4, 6, 7*b*) and iii. 1-4, 8 (probably), where we have a series of two-beat lines. In i. 2, 3, 7, 10-14, 18 the three-beat

line predominates, though two-beat lines are found in i. 3*c*, 10*b* (unless *vilālā* had two stresses) and in i. 15, 16, 17*a*. The so-called *Kīnā* measure is represented by i. 7*c*, *d*, 17, ii. 4, 6, 7. Four-beat lines appear in i. 5 (*ver.* 5*a* may have five beats), 6, 8, 9 (*ver.* 9*b* may have five beats). In regard to the additional material R¹ adopts the rhythm of the verse or section to which he attaches his material: thus the *Kīnā* rhythm prevails throughout ii. 8, 9, 11, 13–15, except in ii. 11, where we have the variant of a two-beat line followed by one of three beats, and the two-beat rhythm in iii. 5, 6, 7. R² wrote in lines of five beats. The rhythm of R³ is irregular, though the *Kīnā* measure is prominent in iii. 14–18.

ZEPHANIAH

CHAPTER I

I. 1 THE word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

1. 1. The Title, stating (*a*) the author of the prophecy, (*b*) his genealogy, and (*c*) the date when he prophesied. It suits well the contents of the book, and may be accepted as trustworthy; but in its present form it is probably not from the hand of Zephaniah, for it is unlikely that he would have added so detailed a title. Moreover the analogy of the titles found in connection with the other prophetic books, many of which are evidently not original, suggests that it is editorial. We cannot say exactly when it assumed its present form; but in view of the information it gives respecting the person of the prophet it may be conjectured that it was written not long after his time.

The word, etc. The same opening formula is found in Hos. i. 1; Joel i. 1; Mic. i. 1. The expression, *the word of Jehovah came* (lit. *was unto*, etc.), is of frequent occurrence, especially in Jer. and Ezek., and is employed generally to denote the prophet's reception of the divine message without reference to the precise way in which the communication has been made. Cf. 1 Sam. iv. 1, where the word of Samuel is said to have been unto all Israel, i.e. reached their ears.

Zephaniah. See notes on p. 8.

Cushi. As a proper name only again in Jer. xxxvi. 14; elsewhere it is a gentile appellation (= "Cushite"). Cushi, Gedaliah, and Amariah are not mentioned elsewhere as members of the royal family.

Hezekiah. Most probably the king of Judah is intended. This identification is now generally adopted by commentators. It supplies an explanation as to why the genealogy was traced back *exceptionally* to the fourth generation. The objection that the interval between Hezekiah and Josiah is too short to admit of three generations has little force, since Manasseh was only twelve when he began to reign (2 Kg. xxi. 1); and if we suppose that Hezekiah only lived some 45 years (the chronology of Hezekiah's life is uncertain), it is quite possible not only that Amariah may have died before Manasseh's birth, but, also (in view of the early age of maturity in the East) that Gedaliah may have been older than his royal cousin. See further *Introd.* p. 8.

2 I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith the LORD. 3 I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man

2-18. The first main division of the book. Announcement of judgement on Judah and Jerusalem. The nearness and awfulness of the Day of Jehovah.

2, 3. Jehovah's decision to remove everything from off the face of the ground.

2. *I will utterly consume.* The existing text involves two grammatical difficulties and can scarcely be correct; and most commentators replace it by *I will utterly remove* (reading 'āsōph 'osēph for 'āsōph 'āsēph).

the face of the ground. Not the ground of the whole earth but the ground of Judah. The prophet's hearers would naturally think of their own land of Judah: only on second thoughts would they have inquired whether the judgement was to be more extensive, and then they would have gathered from the political outlook and from what the prophet had to say (cf. ch. ii.) that it could concern also at the most only some neighbouring peoples.

3. *consume.* Better, *remove*, vocalizing in accordance with *ver.* 2. So in the following clause.

man and beast...the fowls, etc. Particularizing the "everything" of *ver.* 2. The land will be so devastated by the ravages of war that it will become an utter desolation, without man or beast, without bird or fish. The language is no doubt hyperbolic; cf. Jer. xxxiii. 10, 12, l. 3, li. 62. A similar classification of the animal world is found in Hos. iv. 3.

the sea. Suggested by the preceding "heaven" (Gen. i. 26, 28), streams being intended.

and the stumblingblocks with the wicked. By *stumblingblocks* are meant idols. But the Hebrew word thus rendered occurs again only in Is. iii. 6, and there it means "an overthrown mass"; so that the rendering "stumblingblock" is at least doubtful. But apart from this, the clause is clumsy, and, as Davidson remarks, "introduces an idea not in harmony with the rest of the verse." There can be little doubt that it is a marginal gloss, and the clause should be omitted. Perhaps it read originally: (creatures) *which cause the wicked to stumble*, the glossator explaining the removal of beast, bird, and fish as due to their having become objects of worship for the wicked (cf. Deut. iv. 16-19; Ezek. viii. 10; also Rom. i. 22, 23). G. A. Smith and others think the original reading was: *and I will cause the wicked to stumble.*

cut off man. From the classes of creatures mentioned in the preceding lines the prophet singles out man, as being the real offender, and emphasizes his destruction. The sum-total of men are to be destroyed. It is interesting to notice that, if, as the present writer believes, the rhythm of these lines consisted of three beats or stresses, this line has only two; but imagine the prophet slowly declaiming the line and pausing on the word *man* in order to emphasize it, and the effect is to make the

from off the face of the ground, saith the LORD. 4 And I will stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, *and* the name of the ¹Chemarim with the priests;

¹ See 2 Kings xxiii. 5, Hos. x. 5.

line rhythmically equivalent to one of three beats. Thus the rhythm of the verse also points to emphasis on the word *man*. It is necessary to indicate this as several recent commentators would dismiss this and the following line as a gloss, on the ground that they add nothing to what has already been said. But how could such a gloss have arisen?

4-6. This decision to punish the people of Judah and Jerusalem is due to the idolatrous worship of which they are guilty; they have set up Baalism, worshipped the heavenly bodies, compromised their allegiance to Jehovah in swearing by Milcom, and, instead of seeking Jehovah, have turned aside from Him.

The enumeration is representative rather than complete; for the worship of Chemosh, for instance, had certainly a place in Judah's pantheon (cf. 2 Kg. xxiii. 13 f.); and this is also suggested by *ver.* 6, which seems intended to cover all acts of faithlessness towards Jehovah. The prophet has not in mind four distinct classes of worshippers, for the type of religion in vogue at the time was syncretistic: those who worshipped the heavenly bodies combined their worship not only with the religion of Jehovah but with that of Baal. The description characterizes, and does not particularize, the dwellers of Judah and Jerusalem.

4. *And I will*, etc. I.e. contrary to what Judah and Jerusalem may think.

stretch out mine hand. Viz. in order to smite, cf. Ex. vii. 5; Is. v. 25, xxiii. 11.

this place. I.e. Jerusalem. Jerusalem is especially mentioned not merely because it is the capital but because it is the centre of apostasy. The capital is wholly idolatrous (cf. "all the inhabitants of Jerusalem") and its idolatry has influenced the land far and wide. Cf. Mic. i. 5.

the remnant of Baal...and the name of the Chemarim with the priests. This is exegetically and rhythmically difficult. "The remnant of Baal" suggests that Baalism had already partially been put down, and a reference has been seen to the earlier reformation spoken of in 2 Ch. xxxiv. 3-7, but, as the trustworthiness of the Chronicler's statement is questionable, it would be better, on the supposition that Zephaniah prophesied prior to the reformation of 621 B.C., to regard "the remnant of Baal" as redactional. This conclusion, however, might be avoided, if we were to adopt the less obvious rendering: "the Baal to the last remnant" (cf. Is. xiv. 22). But as a matter of fact, neither interpretation is quite satisfactory, for the following clauses no less than the preceding show that what the prophet has in mind is not the deities *per se* but the worshippers of them. The LXX has *the names of Baal*; and this is suggestive, for the Hebrew underlying *names* may well be a corruption of a verb ("have set

5 and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship, which swear to the LORD and swear

up") and the clause may originally have read, *those who have set up the Baal*: cf. 1 Kg. xii. 29. The term *Baal* is to be understood collectively of the different regional or local deities, whose worship had been established at the capital, alongside that of Jehovah. The introduction of such foreign cults was, no doubt, largely due to Judah's alliance with the different Palestinian states. The clause "*the name of the Chemarim with the priests*" is also suspicious, for (a) it stands without any connective (though the conjunction *and* is supplied by the Verss. and several Hebrew mss); (b) it overloads the verse; (c) it disturbs the sequence of the passage. It would appear to be a combination of marginal notes. The *Chemarim* were strictly the non-Jehovistic priests who had been introduced into Israel along with the foreign cults: in Hos. x. 5; 2 Kg. xxiii. 5, however, the term is used to denote contemptuously such priests as were associated with the unspiritual service of Jehovah at the high places. It perhaps means "those who prostrate themselves".

5. *and them that worship the host of heaven.* I.e. those who are engaged in star-worship. That this worship was popular during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon and in the early years of Josiah is seen from the references to it in Kings (cf. 2 Kg. xxi. 3, 5, xxiii. 4, 5, 11, 12), and from the warning against it in Deut. (iv. 19, xvii. 3); and even the reformation in 621 failed to stamp it out permanently, as is clear from the allusions in Jer. (cf. viii. 2, xix. 13). The worship of the heavenly bodies goes back to the remotest times, and its early presence in Palestine is testified to by such names as Beth-shemesh, 'En-shemesh, Jericho (probably). Before Israel's entry into Canaan, however, it had in all probability been replaced by, or blended with, the Canaanitish Baalism, so that what is spoken of here was to all intents and purposes an innovation. There is no satisfactory evidence to show that it had been introduced into Judah prior to the religious reaction under Manasseh, and the supposition that its introduction was due to Judah's close contact with Assyria during this period is, at the least, open to doubt. It is most probably the result of Babylonian rather than Assyrian influence, and betrays the secret relations which Manasseh had with Babylonia at that time. See further *Introd.* p. 6.

upon the housetops. This was the most suitable place, cf. Jer. xix. 13. The statement shows that the worship was offered directly to the stars themselves.

and them that worship, which swear to the LORD and swear by, etc. The juxtaposition of *them that worship, which swear to* is inelegant, and the two clauses together overload the line: there is little doubt that one of them should be omitted. Most recent commentators omit *which swear to* and, cancelling "and" of the following clause, render: *and them that worship Jehovah, that swear, etc.* But it seems easier to think that "them that worship" has been accidentally repeated from the previous line and that *them which swear to* is the original reading. This reading

by ¹Malcam; 6 and them that are turned back from following the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired after him.

¹ Or, *their king*

is supported by LXX Q and several cursives. It is difficult to see on what ground the following "and" should be cancelled; it may quite well be rendered "yet," which yields a satisfactory meaning. What the prophet is assailing is Judah's action in professing allegiance to Jehovah (cf. 2 Ch. xv. 14, 15) while at the same time being ready to swear by Milcom (*ver.* below). The latter proceeding may be understood quite generally of taking oaths or swearing by Milcom in case of a legal or business transaction, and J. M. P. Smith cites a good illustration of this from the Assuan papyri, where a Jewish woman in a legal transaction swears both by Jehovah and the Egyptian god Sati. But the prophet may also be hinting at some alliance between Judah and Ammon, at the effecting of which the representatives of each country would take oath by Jehovah and Milcom. In fact all these idolatries of which Judah was guilty were mainly due to the close political relations which she had with her neighbours. See further *Introd.*, p. 6.

Malcam. The Hebrew word naturally means *their king*. If the word is rightly vocalized, the reference will be to either the tutelary deity of a town, or, in particular, the Phœnician god Molech (or, as the word should be strictly written and pronounced, *Milk*). But it is much better, with most moderns, to vocalize the word as *Milcom*, this being the name of the national god of the Ammonites (1 Kg. xi. 5, 33; 2 Kg. xxiii. 13). The objection that, apart from Solomon's act in building high places to Milcom to gratify his strange wives, the worship of Milcom in Israel is nowhere else alluded to and is therefore improbable, is not very forcible; for, though we have no direct evidence at hand, a study of the history of the period in question leaves little doubt that Judah was in close touch with Ammon and other neighbouring peoples. Compare how, at a later time, the Ammonites along with others sought alliance with Judah in their revolt from Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. xxvii).

6. *and them that are turned back, etc.* I.e., those who are unfaithful to Jehovah's covenant by not seeking Him and Him alone (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 57). The statement generalizes. It includes all those who have been guilty of the acts of unfaithfulness enumerated in the preceding verses, and at the same time all such as have been guilty in other ways of apostasy.

have not sought. I.e., in individual service. It is true that the people of Judah did in a sense seek Jehovah, but they sought Him along with other deities, and this, to Jehovah's prophet, was tantamount to not seeking Him at all.

nor inquired after him. The verb *dārash* is used especially of inquiring of Jehovah at some sanctuary or sacred site (Gen. xxv. 22), and later of inquiring at the hand of Jehovah's prophet (1 Kg. xxii. 8;

7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath

Jer. xxi. 2, xxxvii. 7; Ezek. xx. 1, 3). Judah has refused to consult Jehovah's prophets; or, if she has, has stultified her act by neglecting the counsel given her. Zephaniah has no doubt specially in mind Judah's action in face of the political unrest which was then agitating the Palestinian states; though his words may be understood quite generally.

7. *Hold thy peace.* Cf. Hab. ii. 20; Zech. ii. 17 (Heb.). The judgement on Judah is pictured as a sacrificial feast, which Jehovah approaches to consummate. The call to silence as a mark of reverence, which the prophet now gives, is the signal of His near approach. Smend (*Alt. Religionsgesch.* 2, p. 140) remarks that "among the Arabs the congregation, after the sacrificial slaughter had been completed, stood around the altar a long time still and silent. That was the moment when the deity approached," and he is probably right in supposing that the injunction here used originally proclaimed among the Hebrews the moment when Jehovah was thought of as approaching the sacrifice. Schwally compares the Latin *favete linguis* (Hor. *Odes* iii. 1, 2; Verg *Aen.* v. 71).

the day of the LORD. The term *Jehovah's day* is first met with in Amos; but the way in which he uses it shows that it was already in his time a current expression (cf. Am. v. 18). It was in fact in use long before the period of the literary prophets, while the idea with which it was originally associated goes back to the pre-historic age. Primitive peoples expected a great world-wide catastrophe, and this expectation was inherited by Israel. The conception of a future universal catastrophe was accordingly associated with Jehovah, and the time came to be known as the "day of Jehovah." The term was an appropriate one; for the catastrophe was thought of as directly brought about by Jehovah's working through the convulsions of nature. Traces of this idea are still seen in Amos: "Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness and not light? even very dark and no brightness in it?" (v. 20, also *ver.* 18); and also in our prophet: "A day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and mist" (*ver.* 15). In Amos' time, however, the catastrophe had already begun to lose its universal character, and it was popularly held that it would befall not Israel but the heathen (cf. Am. v. 18). In opposition to this teaching, Amos taught (*a*) that it would be a day of judgement mainly on Israel, though neighbouring peoples are not excluded (cf. Am. i.); (*b*) that the "day" was imminent; (*c*) that in place of physical terrors Jehovah is conceived as acting through the instrumentality of an historical foe, viz. the Assyrians; and (*d*) that the "day" is to be regarded from an ethical standpoint. It is a day of judgement. Israel is judged because of its sins. Zephaniah in his teaching takes up the same point of view, though with him the historical foe is not the Assyrians but in all probability the Scythians. The "day" centres on Judah, and comes on her because of her transgressions. Whether he actually thought of the "day" as accompanied by supernatural phenomena may be

prepared a sacrifice, he hath ¹sanctified his guests. 8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will

¹ See 1 Sam. xvi. 5.

doubted; such references as are found in *ver.* 15 may be nothing more than poetical dress.

prepared a sacrifice. For a similar representation, cf. Is. xxxiv. 6; Jer. xlvi. 10; Ezek. xxxix. 17. The prophet is usually understood to picture the sacrifice (i.e. Judah) as already slain, and the guests (i.e. the foe) as ready to partake of the sacrificial meal. If so, then, as Davidson points out, there is a certain inconsistency in the figure; for it is the foe that in reality slays Judah, whereas the figure would represent Jehovah as slaying the sacrifice and the foe as guests who only consume it. But probably this is to read into the prophet's words more than they were intended to convey. The Hebrew verb, rendered "prepared," may also be translated "furnished" (cf. Num. xxiii. 1, 29; Jos. i. 11; 1 Ch. xxix. 16, 19; Ps. lxxviii. 20), and in this case all that the prophet may wish to imply is that the victim has been furnished and that the guests are ready to participate in the sacrificial act, without such questions as the actual slaying of the victim being entered into.

sanctified. I.e., hath seen to their sanctification. The sanctification of those who assisted at a sacrifice consisted in such ceremonial acts as purifications, the washing of garments, and abstinence from sexual intercourse, cf. 1 Sam. xxi. 4, 5; 2 Ch. xxx. 17. There is probably also in the word "sanctify" a side allusion to the fact that the guests are warriors, for war was viewed as a sacred institution, and all who took part in it had therefore to be "consecrated," cf. Is. xiii. 3; Jer. vi. 4, xxii. 7. That day will witness the punishment of the state officials and the members of the royal household, as also of all who ape foreign fashions and practise robbery and fraud.

8. *And it shall come to pass, etc.* The phraseology carries on the figure of *ver.* 7 *c, d.* Marti thinks the clause a later insertion on the ground of the following first person ("I will punish.") The objection is forcible, for it is scarcely a suitable introduction to the following "I will punish"; on the other hand, some introductory formula seems desiderated after *ver.* 7, so that we are hardly justified in simply deleting the clause. In *ver.* 10 there occurs the formula "and it shall be in that day, it is the oracle of Jehovah," which comes in very abruptly in its present position; and it does not seem improbable that its original place was at the beginning of *ver.* 8, whence it was displaced by the marginal gloss "and it shall be in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice" which was intended, it may be supposed, as a comment on "in that day." These latter words also occur in *ver.* 9, where they overload the line and look very much like a later insertion; it is possible that they were repeated from the above formula in the margin, to which the comment was attached, and that then both they and their comment were at a later time inserted into the text.

¹punish the princes, and the king's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. 9 And in that day I will ¹punish all those that leap over the threshold, which fill their master's house

¹ Heb. *visit upon*.

punish. Lit. *visit* (i.e., the consequences or reward of sin) *upon*: cf. Am. iii. 2; Ex. xx. 5 (where the full phrase is found); Is. x. 3; Jer. xxx. 20, etc.

the princes. I.e., the officials of the state.

the king's sons. Not to be restricted to the sons of the reigning king, but including the members of the royal house. The LXX reads τὸν οἶκον τοῦ βασιλέως, and this may imply the true reading; but, as Schwally has pointed out, the LXX not infrequently has "house" where the Hebrew has "sons," cf. 1 Ch. ii. 10; Jer. xvi. 15; Ezek. ii. 3; and *vice versa*, Gen. xlv. 10; Ex. xvi. 31, etc. In any case the meaning would be the same. It is noticeable that whereas the royal family is singled out for judgement, the king himself is not mentioned; probably because at this time the king was still a youth, and because the more intimate advisers or guardians of the king were such as were known to favour reform.

all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. The reference is to the wealthy classes who, like their rulers, hold free intercourse with their heathen neighbours and adopt in consequence foreign customs. The garments they wear reveal the nature of their ideal. They do not hesitate to surrender their distinctive national characteristics in their desire to make themselves and their nation one with the neighbouring peoples.

9. *that leap over the threshold*. The meaning of the clause has been much debated. (a) Most moderns think that the reference is to some superstitious foreign custom. In view of 1 Sam. v. 5 it may have been a Philistine custom, and it has been thought that the threshold is that of the Jerusalem sanctuary and that a similar practice as that mentioned in Samuel had been introduced there (cf. Trumbull, *The Threshold Covenant*, p. 109). Driver thinks that the prophet is alluding to the foreign bodyguard of the Jewish kings (cf. 2 Sam. xv. 18; 1 Kg. i. 38) who were addicted to corruption. Hitzig compares the custom, found among the Persians, of striding across the threshold of the royal palace because it was regarded as a great sin to tread upon it. (b) Others in view of the following clause, which describes those who fill their masters' houses with violence, understand the clause to refer to acts of robbery and to be descriptive of the sudden and violent way by which those who are guilty of such acts effect their entry into houses. Similarly (c) Van Hoonacker sees a reference to the fraudulent acts of the servants, who were stationed (cf. 2 Sam. xi. 9, 13, xv. 2) at the entry of the royal palace and of the houses of the nobility, towards those who had recourse to their masters—the designation "leapers over the threshold" being used contemptuously to indicate the eagerness with which they discharged their duty. None of these explanations, however, is quite satisfactory. In the case of (a) it is difficult to think, in view of "And I will punish,"

with violence and deceit. 10 And in that day, saith the LORD, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the ¹second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills.

¹ Heb. *Mishneh*.

which introduces the verse, that the prophet has still in mind the adoption of foreign practices or fashions. In the case of (b) and (c) the interpretations appear to be somewhat fanciful. May not the origin of the practice referred to be found in the sanctity of the threshold? The threshold was regarded as the special abode of the Penates, or household gods, who were thought of as guarding the entry of the house and protecting its members against intruders; whence it may be inferred that those who wrongfully intruded themselves into other people's houses would leap the threshold in order to avoid contact with the Penates and so escape harm. If so, "to leap the threshold" may well have become by the prophet's time a proverbial term for any plunderer or oppressor. Accordingly it may be supposed that the persons referred to are those who, placing themselves at the service of the nobles, helped to enrich them by perpetrating acts of violence and of oppression on their behalf. The words "in that day" are most probably a later addition (*v. above*).

with violence and deceit. I.e., with what has been obtained by violence and deceit. The reference is neither to the house of Jehovah nor to the palace of the king but to the houses of the nobility. The prophet is thinking of all those who leagued themselves with the nobles of the state and, by acts of fraud on the weaker members of the community, helped to enrich them and so increase their power. Cf. Am. iii. 10.

10, 11. The sound of wailing will be heard in the northern part of the city; for all the tradesfolk are to be cut off.

10. For the transposition of *And in that day, saith the LORD*, to *ver. 8* see above.

the fish gate. So called as being the site of the fish-market. It is mentioned again in 2 Ch. xxxiii. 14; Neh. iii. 3, xii. 39. Its exact locality is uncertain; but according to the last of the above passages it lay between the "Old Gate" and the "Sheep Gate," not far from the Tower of Hananel, and will have been at the northern wall of the city. Fish seems to have been largely supplied by Tyrian traders (Neh. xiii. 16).

the second quarter. Or "Mishneh." It is mentioned again in 2 Kg. xxii. 14; 2 Ch. xxxiv. 22, as the quarter where Huldah the prophetess resided. What site is intended is not known for certain; but it was apparently situated in the north of the city. Many think that the name designated a more recent addition to the city, in which case the reference may be to the quarter enclosed by the outer wall which Manasseh is said to have erected (cf. 2 Ch. xxxiii, 14), and which extended as far as the Fish Gate. Or the reference may be to one of the districts into which the city was possibly divided for administrative purposes.

crashing. Lit. *breaking* (cf. Jer. l. 22, li. 54), describing the noise of falling walls and buildings which resounds from the hills.

hills. Probably those situated in the northern part of the city; the

11 Howl, ye inhabitants of ¹Maktesh, for all ²the people of Canaan are undone: all they that were laden with silver are cut off. 12 And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search

¹ Or, *The mortar*

² Or, *the merchant people*

foe is thought of as entering the city from the north. The rhythm is incomplete; probably the opening words of *ver.* 11 should be transferred to this line.

Maktesh. Literally, *The mortar* (cf. Prov. xxvii. 22), the name of a district of the city. What district is intended, however, we do not know; but, to judge from the other localities, it probably lay in a northerly direction. Most moderns think that the name designated the Tyropoeon, and in particular the upper part of that valley; and that the locality was so called because in configuration it resembled a mortar (cf. Judg. xv. 19). The locality, wherever it exactly was situated, was mentioned by Zephaniah partly because it was the resort of traders and liable to invasion by a foe from the north and partly because its name pointed to the fate that was awaiting its dwellers.

11. *all the people of Canaan.* As the Cana'anites or Phoenicians were largely a commercial people, the term "Cana'an" or "Cana'anite" came to be used in the sense of "merchant" (cf. mg.) As originally applied, the term may have been used contemptuously and have implied that the Israelites, in adopting the pursuits of trade, had surrendered their traditional mode of life and become Cana'anite in habits (cf. Hos. xii. 8); in course of time, however, this implication would be lost and the term would be used merely as a synonym of "merchant" as in Is. xxiii. 11 (mg.); Prov. xxxi. 24, etc. It has been thought that the merchant-folk intended were actually Phoenicians who resided in the "Mortar"; but it seems better to suppose that the reference is to the Judæan merchants who had grown rich through trade.

that were laden with silver. By *silver* is meant money, viz. such as has been acquired by trade, or is required for purchase of articles, etc. Others render, *that weigh out silver.*

12-13. Jerusalem will be thoroughly searched; none of the wicked will escape Jehovah's wrath. The careless rich, who by their attitude seem to suggest that Jehovah is not going to act at all, will find out their mistake, when they see the foe plundering their substance and desolating their houses.

12. *search Jerusalem with candles.* The word *candles* is better rendered by *lamps*. No one will escape Jehovah's avenging wrath. "The figure is probably borrowed from the custom of the night-watchman carrying his lamp, and may involve also the thought of the diligent search of Jerusalem that will be made by her conquerors in their quest for spoil" (J. P. Sm.). Cf. Lk. xv. 8. The LXX has *with a lamp*, which is adopted by several commentators.

Jerusalem with ¹candles; and I will ²punish the men that are ³settled on their lees, that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil. 13 And their wealth shall become a spoil, and their houses a desolation: yea, they shall build houses, but shall not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but

¹ Heb. *lamps*.² Heb. *visit upon*.³ Or, *thickened*

the men. This is colourless, and many prefer the emendation *those that are at ease*: it involves little change. Cf. Am. vi. 1; Is. xxxii. 9, and especially Jer. xlviii. 11, where the term is connected directly with the phrase "*settle upon the lees*" (cf. following note).

are settled on their lees. For *settled* substitute *thickened*. Those who now are so self-contented that they cannot either see the corruptness of their ways, or heed the danger that they are in, will then realize their error; they will receive such punishment as they little suspect. To "*thicken upon the lees*" means more than to be at ease, contented with what they are and have: it implies that the state of ease and self-contentment had so dulled ("*thickened*") their moral and spiritual faculties that they were neither able to discern Jehovah's requirements nor follow out the working of His will. Wine left on the lees became thick and syrupy; and it was usual, after the stage of fermentation was over, to pour it off from the lees and other deposit into different jars or skins, where it was preserved ready for use.

say in their heart. I.e., think. For the idiom cf. Deut. viii. 17; Is. xlix. 21; Ps. xiv. 1, etc.

will not do good, neither will he do evil. I.e., will do nothing, will not interfere at all. The terms "good" and "evil" have here a physical and not a moral significance. For the idiom cf. Is. xli. 23; Gen. xxiv. 50; Jer. x. 5. The prophet does not charge the persons in question with any false assertion, as, for instance, that Jehovah is utterly powerless or indifferent to the affairs of human life, but only with a false attitude, which he infers is theirs in view of what they do and the manner of life they live. They are so engrossed in advancing their own personal welfare, so heedless of the prophet's warnings, and so self-deluded as to the character of Jehovah's requirements that the thought of Jehovah's manifesting Himself in judgement is absent from their minds.

13. These persons, however, will realize their mistake when they see their substance plundered by a foe and their houses a desolation.

yea, they shall build houses but shall not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. These words are probably a gloss, for (a) they do not connect very well with the preceding clauses and practically repeat what is there stated; and (b), considering the nearness of the day, there was scarcely time for houses to be built and vineyards planted. They were no doubt more or less proverbial (cf. Deut. xxviii. 30, 39; Am. v. 11; Mic. vi. 15), and therefore might have conceivably been added by the prophet; but it is more likely that they are the addition of a scribe who had in mind the passages just quoted.

shall not drink the wine thereof. 14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the LORD; the mighty man crieth there bitterly. 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness

14-18. The fast-approaching day of Jehovah will be a day of wrath, bringing destruction and distress untold. So perplexed and helpless will the men of Judah be before the foe that they will stagger as the blind; none will escape; silver and gold will be of no avail; for it is Jehovah's purpose to make an utter end of all the inhabitants of the land.

14. *the voice of the day*, etc. The text of the second half of this verse is very uncertain. The Hebrew is usually rendered: "*Hark! the day* (lit. as in the R.V. *the voice of the day*) *of Jehovah! Bitterly cries out there* (or *then*) *the warrior.*" But (a) there is no antecedent to which "there" can refer; one can only conjecture that the prophet may possibly mean Jerusalem or that quarter whence he imagines the cry has reached him; and (b), if we were to adopt the alternative rendering "then," we are faced by the difficulty that the temporal use of *shām* is at least questionable. The line, as it stands, moreover, is rhythmically irregular. Besides, the words *Hark, the day of Jehovah* follow very lamely after the opening words, *The great day of Jehovah is near*: to the present writer there is little doubt that the former was originally a marginal variant on the latter. But how the rest of the line should be read it is difficult to say. It is noticeable, however, that the next verse has an extra clause standing without a parallel. Most commentators rectify this by transposing the last clause of *ver.* 15 to the beginning of *ver.* 16, but this is surely an impossible arrangement, for "a day of cloud and mist" seems the obvious parallel to "a day of darkness and gloom." The isolated clause appears clearly to be "That day is a day of wrath," and if so, it will be the closing clause of *ver.* 14, and the original text of the present line will have had a clause parallel to it. Now in *ver.* 16 we miss a clause parallel to "a day of the trumpet and alarm": may not the present text contain a trace of this missing clause? The mention of *warrior* would fall into line with *trumpet* and *alarm*; see further on *ver.* 16. What the missing line, parallel to *that day is a day of wrath*, was can only be conjectured: perhaps *a day of bitterness and grief of spirit*.

That day is a day of wrath. The Vulgate's rendering "Dies irae, dies illa" forms the opening words of the famous hymn of Thomas of Celano (*cir.* 1250 A.D.) on the Last Judgement.

15. *trouble and distress.* Better, *distress and stress.* For a similar combination cf. Job xv. 24.

wasteness and desolation. Better, *devastation and desolation.* The same alliterative combination occurs in Job xxx. 3, xxxviii. 27 (Heb.).

and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fenced cities, and against the high ¹ battlements. 17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood

¹ Or, corner towers

darkness and gloominess...clouds and thick darkness. Cf. Joel ii. 2, where the words recur. Wonderful phenomena on earth and in the heavens were originally thought of as accompanying Jehovah's day, cf. Am. v. 18, 20, viii. 9; Is. xiii. 9, 10. It may be doubted, however, whether such popular conceptions which the prophet inherited were not already with him mere figures for extreme distress, cf. Is. lx. 2; Jer. xiii. 16; and see above on *ver.* 7.

16. *trumpet.* The Hebrew term originally denoted a curved instrument made of a ram's horn (cp. Ex. xix. 13; Jos. vi. 4); according to the Mishna (*Rosh Hashana*, iii. 2) the horn used might be that of any clean animal except the cow. See further *DB.* iv. 815. It was especially used in the time of war either for the purpose of assembling the army (Judg. iii. 27, vi. 34) or as a signal of attack or retreat (2 Sam. xx. 1, 22; Job xxxix. 24).

alarm. Better, *the battle cry*, i.e. the excited clamour of the attacking foe, Am. ii. 2; Jos. vi. 5, etc. The verse shows that Jehovah is thought of as executing His judgement at the hand of a foe. A line parallel to this is missing: it may be conjectured that its tenor was something like, *the day of the warrior and the armed man*, which, in a mutilated condition, was perhaps inserted wrongly in *ver.* 14.

against the fenced cities. Cf. 2 Kg. xviii. 13 (= Is. xxxvi. 1); 2 Ch. xxxii. 1, etc.

the high battlements. The Hebrew *pinnōth* means strictly "corners"; but is here and in iii. 6 used to denote the corners of the wall provided with battlements. Cf. 2 Ch. xxvi. 15.

17. *I will bring distress upon.* Literally, *I will make narrow for*: cf. Deut. xxviii. 52 (Heb.), Jer. x. 18.

men. I.e., not mankind in general, but the people of Judah.

walk like blind men. The distress will be so severe that men will be rendered as helpless as the blind; they will be utterly incapable of making good their escape. For the figure, cf. Deut. xxviii. 29; Is. lix. 10. The following words: "because...against *the LORD*" are probably the remark of a glossator who understood "men" in the sense of "mankind," for the third pers. ("against Jehovah"), coming so soon after the first pers., is strange; and the statement that the distress which will befall men is due to their having sinned against Jehovah is unnecessary in view of the context; the clause, moreover, disturbs the rhythm of the verse.

shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make an end, yea, a¹ terrible end, of all them that dwell in the land.

¹ Or, *speedy*

be poured out as dust. No value will be placed on life. The point of comparison is not the limitless quantity of dust but its worthlessness, as the following comparison "as dung" shows. Cf. 2 Kg. xiii. 7 and the similar use of "water" in Ps. lxxix. 3.

their flesh as dung. Connected by zeugma with "poured out." The meaning of Heb. *lēhūm* is doubtful; it occurs again in Job xx. 23, where, however, the text is questionable. It has been explained to mean (a) "intestines," "bowels" as fitting close together (cf. the Arabic *lahama*); (b) "moisture," "sap," as that which is adhesive (cf. the meaning of Arabic *lahama* and Syriac *lahēm*, "fit," "unite"); (c) "flesh," so the LXX. If the text is correct, this last seems the most probable meaning of the word. Several commentators, however, think the word is corrupt, and *lēhām*, "their moisture," and *hēylām*, "their strength," have been proposed. For the comparison, cf. Jer. ix. 22 (21), xvi. 4; Job xx. 7.

18. *Neither their silver, etc.* Those who have fancied themselves so secure in the abundance of their wealth will then realize their error; their silver and gold will be of no avail in the hour of need.

but the whole land...his jealousy. After the preceding words we look for a causal clause giving the reason why men will not be able to deliver themselves; and as a matter of fact such a clause we find in the closing sentence of the verse, "for he shall make an end," etc. This clause in its present position is made to assign a reason to "and by the fire of his jealousy (or ardour)," etc.; but such a reason is superfluous, if not altogether inappropriate. Moreover, the verse as a whole is overloaded. There seems to be little doubt that the words "by the fire of his ardour shall the land be devoured," which recur in iii. 8, have been added by a scribe from this latter passage on the margin as a parallel to "an end...He will make," etc., and have eventually found their way into the text.

yea. This is a slight emendation of the text ('*aph* for '*ach*): so the LXX, and most modern commentators. The traditional text would mean "altogether," "utterly": cf. Deut. xvi. 15; Is. xvi. 7, etc.

a terrible end. The R.V. mg. a *speedy* (end) is possible, but this meaning of *mibkhal* is late (v. BDB.).

land. Not "earth"; the prophet is not thinking of a universal judgement but of the judgement which Jehovah is about to inflict on Judah. See on ver. 2.

CHAPTER II.

II. 1 Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation

1-7. These verses constitute the second main division of the book. Let Judah pursue her policy and meet the fierce wrath of Jehovah! If the humble in her midst continue to seek Jehovah, it may be that they will escape in the day of His wrath. Whatever schemes she makes will be frustrated. Philistia, her bulwark, will be desolated, and woe to the inhabitants thereof!

A reviser has added a similar prediction of ruin (*a*) for Moab and Ammon on account of their reproaches against Judah (*vv.* 8, 9), (*b*) for the Ethiopians (*vv.* 12, 11) and (*c*) for Assyria (*vv.* 13, 14, 15). And a still later reviser has predicted Judah's return from exile and ultimate possession of Philistia, Moab, and Ammon (*vv.* 7 *a, c, 9, 10*).

1, 2. The prophet ironically bids Judah pursue her false policy and court disaster.

1. *Gather yourselves together.* The meaning of the clause has been much debated, and different renderings have been offered. (1) As rendered in the R. V. it has been understood in two ways: (*a*) figuratively of "that spiritual gathering which leads to self-examination and is the first condition of conversion" in which case it will be an exhortation for Judah to humble herself and repent; (*b*) as an ironical address either to Judah or to Philistia to brace herself for the coming judgement. This latter interpretation is certainly preferable to (*a*), which is most improbable. But, apart from the question of interpretation, the above rendering is exceedingly questionable. No root *kāshash*, "to gather," is known, and it is only assumed that because *kōshēsh* which is a *Po'el* denominative from *kash*, "stubble," is used in the sense of "gather stubble," therefore *kāshash* may mean here simply "gather." (2) Equally questionable are such renderings as, "Bend yourselves and bend," "Turn pale and be pale," "Accept reason and be reasonable," or "Conform yourselves to rule and be ruled." (3) Many commentators regard the text as unintelligible, and either leave it at this or propose some emendation. Some, following Cheyne (*Prophecies of Isaiah*, ii. 155), propose "Get you shame and be ashamed"; and, textually, this is the easiest of the emendations that have been suggested. But it seems very doubtful whether we should have recourse to this expedient. For, in spite of the difficulty which commentators have seen in the words, the Hebrew text, as it stands, seems to offer a satisfactory meaning. The verb *kāshash* is a denominative from *kash*, "stubble," and is used (in *Po'el*) in the sense "gather stubble or wood" (cf. Ex. v. 7, 12; Num. xv. 32, 33; 1 Kg. xvii. 10, 12): accordingly, the meaning here will be, "Gather for yourselves stubble and become, or be, stubble." And this rendering gives a natural meaning. Stubble, as being inflammable or easily driven away by the wind, is used figuratively to denote what is perishable and unstable; and if so, why should not the prophet use the verbal denominative in a similar way? Why should he not ironically

that hath no ¹shame; 2 before the decree bring forth, ²*before* the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD

¹ Or, *longing*

² Or, (*the day passeth as the chaff*.)

bid Judah follow out her present policy and discover that both she and the support which she seeks must perish like stubble? This figurative use of the verb is found nowhere else; but it may be illustrated by such passages as Mal. iv. 1 (Heb. iii. 19): "For behold the day cometh...and all the proud and all that work wickedness *shall be stubble*"; Is. xlvii. 14; and cf. also Jer. v. 14. The objection that *kūshash* is elsewhere found with *kash*, "stubble," or some similar word, cannot very well be pressed; for there is no reason why that should always be the case, especially as the prophet is here speaking figuratively. But to what is the prophet alluding? There would appear to be little doubt that under the phrase "gather for yourselves stubble" he is alluding to Judah's overtures to, and intrigues with, the neighbouring peoples in face of a common danger. These peoples, like Judah, will be seen to perish as stubble. This interpretation is not only borne out by the reference in *vv.* 4 ff. to the downfall of Judah's neighbour Philistia; but also by *ver.* 3 which refers, as we shall see, to the right course of action adopted by the "humble of the land." Verse 2, in spite of its manifestly corrupt text, would also appear to confirm the above rendering.

nation. I.e., Judah. J. P. Smith understands the Philistines; but in that case we should have expected them to be expressly named.

that hath no shame. The Hebrew, which elsewhere means "long for" (cf. Gen. xxxi. 30; Ps. lxxxiv. 2 (3)), is usually rendered "unabashed," a signification which the root has in New Hebrew, Aramaic, and colloquial Arabic, and if it is retained, the meaning will be: Judah knows no shame in rejecting the covenanted help of Jehovah and in seeking her security by alliance with her neighbours. But the LXX suggests *unadmonished*. Judah refused to be admonished either by Jehovah's prophets or by her past history.

2. This verse will express the result of Judah's unfaithfulness to Jehovah. Before her purpose is accomplished and her plans realized, the Divine wrath will vent itself and she will be pulverized like chaff before the wind. This appears to be the general meaning of the verse; but the text is very corrupt and it is far from certain how it is to be emended. The Hebrew can only be rendered as in R.V. mg.: "before the decree bring forth (the day passeth as the chaff), before the fierceness of Jehovah's anger come upon you, before the day of Jehovah's anger come upon you." On the basis of this rendering the first part of the verse has been understood to mean, "before the divine decree of judgement is realized"; while the parenthesis has been taken as equivalent to either "the day of respite passeth by like chaff" or "the day of judgement passeth on like chaff"; i.e., approaches rapidly. The verse, thus interpreted, is regarded as giving the reason for the prophet's supposed exhortation to repentance in *ver.* 1. Those moderns who accept this interpretation agree, however, that the text is at least in

come upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you. 3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which

part corrupt; the construction of *bēterem* with the infinitive and the pleonastic *bēterem lō* in clause *b* do not occur elsewhere; while clause *a*, as Driver remarks, is "expressed unnaturally" and yields "a forced sense." Wellhausen and many others read, on the basis of the LXX, *before you become as chaff that passes away*. But it is questionable whether this emendation represents the original, for it would be difficult to see how the present Hebrew text arose; and it is more likely that the LXX reading is a tacit emendation on the part of the translators. Moreover, the meaning obtained would not agree with the above interpretation of *ver.* 1. What is desiderated is a statement that before the Judæans are able to realize their plans, the day of judgement will be upon them: in other words, the clauses introduced by *bēterem* ("before") will have for their apodosis, not *ver.* 1, but each a clause contained in the present corrupt text of *ver.* 2. Of these two apodoses the words "passeth as the chaff" and "the fierceness of Jehovah's anger come upon you" are evidently traces; but what form the protasis and apodosis in each case originally assumed it is difficult to say. It may perhaps be conjectured that the original text of *ver.* 2 was, "Before the day brings forth (or is brought forth), we shall be pulverized like passing chaff; before your wantonness (*viz.* in denying your covenanted relationship with Jehovah and seeking alliance with other peoples) is fulfilled, there shall come upon you the fierceness of Jehovah's anger."

3. Not all Judah, however, has been faithless to Jehovah: there are still to be found those who seek Him; and just as the prophet has ironically bidden the faithless to follow out their wayward course and meet destruction, so now he turns to the meek of the earth (better *the humble of the land*) and bids them continue to seek Jehovah, holding out to them the hope that they may perchance be sheltered in the day of His wrath.

The verse has been rejected by several critics on the ground of its phraseology (esp. "humble of the land") and ideas, and because it interrupts the connection between *ver.* 2 and *ver.* 4. These reasons, however, are not cogent. There is no expression which Zephaniah may not quite well have used; and we have no right to assume that because the phrase "humble of the land" has a special significance in the Psalter it must therefore have the same significance elsewhere. The ideas suit admirably the situation of the prophet's time, and it would be difficult to see how else he could have expressed himself. As regards the connection, *ver.* 4 may quite well be dependent both on *ver.* 2 and *ver.* 3 (*v.* below). Nor can objection be raised on the score of metre (*cf.* *IOC.* p. 214), for *ver.* 2 is also rhythmically different from *ver.* 4.

Seek ye the LORD. In contrast to the faithless who are not doing so.

meek of the earth. Better, *humble of the land*, for the land of Judah is meant. For the expression, *cf.* Is. xi. 4; Ps. lxxvi. 9. The Hebrew *'ānāw*

have wrought his judgement; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger. 4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall

denotes "one who bows or humbles himself under the hand of God" (Driver); and describes the attitude of the faithful Judæan who amid all adverse circumstances remains true to Jehovah. Cf. the use of the term as applied to Moses, Num. xii. 3.

have wrought his judgement. Perhaps better (after the LXX) *do right*. The Hebrew *mishpat* here denotes that course of action which is due to Jehovah from His people in virtue of their covenant with Him. It is to do the opposite of the faithless who distrust Him and, breaking their covenant with Him, seek their salvation by alliance with other peoples. For this use of the word, cf. Jer. v. 1. To "do right" is to "seek righteousness" (cf. next clause) and also "humility," when, as here, it means the acceptance of adversity as the ordering of His will.

righteousness. Namely, that which is in accordance with Jehovah's covenant.

be hid. I.e., escape the divine judgement. Cf. Is. xxvi. 20.

4. This verse gives the reason why, on the one hand, the faithless Judæans will not realize their hopes, and why, on the other hand, the faithful should persist in seeking Jehovah. The Philistine communities will be reduced before the invading forces. The cities of Philistia are especially mentioned not only because Judah was in all probability politically in close touch with them but because they were Judah's bulwark and would be the first to meet the invaders coming down the sea-coast route towards Egypt.

The omission of any reference to Gath in the enumeration of the Philistine cities may be due to the requirements of parallelism, which only admitted of four names being mentioned, or, more probably, to the fact that Gath, since its capture by Sargon in 711 B.C., had sunk into insignificance. It is not mentioned either in Jer. xlvi. or in Zech. ix. 5 ff. The rhythm of this and the following verses is the so-called *Kīnā* measure.

Gaza. The most southern of the Philistine cities. It was situated on a hill about three miles from the sea and about 50 miles S.W. of Jerusalem, and was from early times a great caravan centre. It was razed to the ground by Alexander Jannæus in 97 B.C., but was afterwards rebuilt (57 B.C.) on a new site by Gabinius, governor of Syria. In A.D. 634 it passed into the hands of the Moslems, and from them to the Crusaders; it surrendered, however, after the battle of Hattin in 1187, and since then has remained a Muhammadan city.

In the original *Gaza* and *forsaken* form a paronomasia; similarly in the last clause *Ekron* and *rooted up*.

Ashkelon. Situated in a rocky amphitheatre on the coast and lying 12 miles north of Gaza. In the days of the Maccabees it surrendered

drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up.
5 Woe unto the inhabitants of ¹the sea coast, the nation of the

¹ Or, the region of the sea

both to Jonathan and Alexander Jannaeus. It was one of the most important of the Philistine fortresses at the time of the Crusades, but was finally destroyed in A.D. 1270.

drive out. I.e., expel its inhabitants. But perhaps read *devastate* (cf. Hos. x. 2 (Heb.)), an emendation which furnishes a word-play on the name *Ashdod*, similar to those occurring in connection with some other of the place-names in this verse.

Ashdod. The modern *Ēsdūd*, about three miles from the coast and 21 miles N.E. of Gaza. According to Herodotus (ii. 157), Psammetichus (664-610) besieged the city for 29 years (cf. Jer. xxix. 20); and in the days of the Maccabees it again suffered severely (1 Macc. v. 68, x. 83, 84). During the early centuries of our era it gradually sank into insignificance; cf. *DB.* i. 164.

at the noonday. I.e., unexpectedly. In the East a siesta is usually taken at noon on account of the heat: it would therefore be a time when an assault would be unexpected; cf. Jer. vi. 4, xv. 8. Not so probable are the explanations "openly," or "quickly," "after half-a-day's fight."

Ekron. The most northern of the four cities mentioned. It was identified by Robinson with the modern 'Akir and lay about 12 miles N.E. of Ashdod. It is mentioned as tributary to Assyria in the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. In the days of the Maccabees it was given by Alexander Balas to Jonathan in recognition of his services (1 Macc. x. 89). The city is also referred to in the time of the Crusaders.

5-7. The doom of Philistia. After having predicted in *ver.* 4 the destruction of the cities of Philistia as a warning to Judah, the prophet now directly addresses Philistia and formally pronounces the doom awaiting her. The verses no longer represent the original pronouncement, but have been so expanded by a later editor as to predict the ultimate occupation of the wasted land by the remnant of Judah. The text has also suffered in course of transmission. See further *Introd.* p. 13.

sea coast. Literally "region of the sea." Probably "region" came into the text from the original reading in *ver.* 7 (*v. infra*). This is suggested by the two-beat rhythm of the verse. The reference is either to the original home of the Philistines in the island of Crete, or more probably to their adopted territory by the Mediterranean Sea, extending (approximately) from the south of the plain of Sharon to the Wady el-Arish.

nation. The LXX has "sojourners," which may be original. The Philistines were termed "Cherethites" (cf. Ezek. xxv. 16) because the original home of at least a part of them was Crete; cf. Dent. ii. 23; Am. ix. 7; Jer. xlvii. 4, where Caphtor is usually identified with Crete (yet see *EB.*).

Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, the land of the Philistines; I will destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6 And the sea coast shall be pastures, with ¹cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks. 7 And the coast

¹ Or, *caves*

O Canaan. Probably the verb *I will destroy thee* (literally, *and I will destroy*) should precede this. The term *Canaan* is usually applied to the whole land west of the Jordan; here, however, it denotes simply the land of the Philistines. Kent remarks that as Canaan was also a synonym for merchant, it "may well have been applied to the commercial Philistines"; but a more probable explanation of its limitation to Philistia is to be found in the fact that, when the prophet wrote, Canaan, as the Hebrews once knew it, was practically confined to Philistia, the rest of the land west of the Jordan, apart from Judah, having now become part of the Assyrian empire and been largely colonized. Cf. Jos. xiii. 3.

6. *And the sea coast...for flocks.* There can be little doubt that this reading is not original. It contains a grammatical anomaly (a fem. verb with a masculine subject) and an otherwise unknown word. (The rendering *cottages* cannot be substantiated.) The LXX has ἔσται Κρήνη νομὴ ποιμνίων καὶ μάνδρα προβάτων, and this reading is suggestive. The words *the sea coast* are no doubt a marginal variant on *coast* in the following verse, which has falsely been inserted in the Hebrew, whilst the word rendered *cottages*, represented in the LXX by Κρήνη, is likewise to be regarded as a marginal variant, doubtless on *Cherethites* (ver. 5). The substitution of *herds* for *shepherds* is an easy change. The text should probably be restored thus: *And she shall become pastures for herds, and folds for flocks.* The meaning of the verse is clear. The land of Philistia will be so depopulated that it becomes mere pasture-ground for herds.

7. The first half of this verse, literally translated, is "and a (or the) coast (or region) shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; upon them they (i.e. the remnant of Judah) shall feed (viz. their flocks): in the houses," etc. This is clearly corrupt. Not only is there nothing to which "upon them" can refer (it cannot be referred to "pastures," for "region" intervenes, and we should expect agreement to be made with it) but the object to "feed" has to be supplied. The awkwardness of the reading confirms the secondary character of the clause "and a region shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah" (see below); but even with the omission of this clause the text, as it stands, can scarcely be original. The words "upon them," though their awkwardness is somewhat modified, are still difficult; while the parallel clause suggests strongly that the original had some phrase answering to "in the houses of Ashkelon." The versions offer no help. Wellhausen proposes "by the sea" for "upon them," and this reading has been adopted by Nowack and many others. The change is easy, but the line "by the

shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed *their flocks* thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for the LORD their God shall visit them, and bring again their captivity. 8 I have heard the reproach of

sea they shall feed: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening" does not conform to the type of *kīnā* rhythm found in these verses; and it seems much preferable to connect "in the houses of Ashkelon" with "and they shall feed"; in which case "upon them" may have been originally a variant on "against (upon) you" of *ver.* 5. On the assumption that the emendation advocated is correct, "in the evening" should no doubt be changed with Schwally to "in Ekron," for a locality parallel to "Ashkelon" is desiderated, and in any case the reading "in the evening" is too weak for the context. The translation will then be, *they shall feed amid the houses of Ashkelon; in Ekron they shall lie down.* The line, which in the traditional text introduces *ver.* 7, connects with the causal clause which stands at the end of the verse. Both were added by R³, who wished to indicate that what was once the possession of Philistia would ultimately become the possession of the Jewish remnant (see *Introd.* p. 14).

After *and the coast* add (with the LXX) *of the sea.*

visit. In the sense of "visit graciously," cf. Gen. xxi. 1; Is. xxiii. 17;

Jer. xv. 15.

8-10. The punishment awaiting Moab and Ammon. Because they have reproached the people of Jehovah, they will become, like Sodom and Gomorrah, an eternal desolation. The section is from the hand of R¹, with additions by R³. See *Introd.* p. 14.

8. *I have heard.* Not necessarily of what has reached the speaker from the past. Cf. Ex. iii. 7; Jer. xx. 10, xxiii. 25; Ps. xxxi. 13, where what is heard relates to the speaker's present.

the reproach of Moab, etc. To what occasion does the writer refer? Some suppose that no one occasion is in view, but that the charge refers to the general attitude of hostility assumed by both peoples towards Israel, which they never failed to manifest whenever they could, cf. Num. xxii.; Judg. iii. 12 ff., x. 7 ff. On the other hand, Nowack, Marti, and others think that the bitterness and hostility complained of are to be referred to the time of the fall of Jerusalem. And this reference, it must be admitted, is tempting, especially in view of such passages as Ezek. xxv. 3 ff., xxxv. 1 ff. (on Edom). But we hesitate to accept it for the following reasons. (1) The passage appears to be of a piece with what follows and to have been inserted at the same time; if so, the mention of Assyria (*ver.* 13) would presuppose a pre-exilic date: (2) there is no mention of Edom, which is strange if the reference is to the attitude of Judah's neighbours at the time of her fall. Edom was just as maliciously exultant as were Moab and Ammon (cp. Ezekiel and Obadiah): (3) in such passages as Ezek. xxv. 3 ff. the reference to the fall of Jerusalem is explicit; why should it not be so here, if the

Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, wherewith they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. 9 Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, a possession of ¹nettles, and

¹ Or, *wild vetches*

reference is the same? Most probably the reference is to the bitterness evoked by Judah's attitude towards the peoples mentioned, in view of her having broken off relations with them, and because of her refusal to renew alliance with them during the years immediately following 621: cf. further, *Introd.* p. 17.

revilings. Cf. Is. xliii. 28; li. 7; and cf. further the use of the verb *gādhaph* in 2 Kg. xix. 6 (= Is. xxxvii. 6), where the reference is to the blasphemies uttered by the Assyrian officials against Jehovah when Jerusalem refused to surrender.

magnified themselves against. Lit. *made themselves great, or acted greatly, against*, i.e. borne themselves insolently against. We may not say definitely that the insolent, haughty attitude on the Ammonites' part was shown in the present case by their endeavour to enlarge their own territory, though they were guilty of this at more than one period of their history, cf. Am. i. 13; Jer. xlix. 1. There would be many opportunities for the Ammonites and Moabites to show their insolence apart from invasion—for instance, in the matter of commercial control and trade transactions. Or it may be that the writer is definitely thinking, here as in the parallel clauses, of the insolent way in which they were known to speak of Jehovah's people; and some scholars would supply as object "mouth," i.e. make great the mouth (=speak insolently) against. Cf. Ob. 12, also Ezek. xxxv. 13.

their border. This may refer perhaps to the Ammonites, in which case for "against" one should substitute "upon" or "in the matter of." But it is better (with the LXX) to read *my border*.

9. *as Sodom, etc.* Sodom and Gomorrah were the typical examples of destruction and desolation, cf. Deut. xxix. 23; Is. xliii. 19; Jer. xlix. 18, l. 40. Here the writer adds in explicit terms the point of the comparison; the desolation of Moab and Ammon will be final and their land become, as it were, a mass of weeds and salt-pits.

possession. The Heb. word *mimshak* occurs only here, and its meaning is conjectural. It is usually rendered "possession," but several critics doubt the correctness of the text. Marti suggests *mōrāsh*, *heritage*, and if the present reading is felt to be untrustworthy, this emendation is to be preferred; for some word on which the following is dependent is suggested by the parallel clause, and *mōrāsh* occurs in Is. xiv. 23.

nettles. The meaning of the Heb. *hārūl* is uncertain. It occurs again in Job xxx. 7; Prov. xxiv. 31. In Syr. the corresponding word means "vetch," and Nowack adopts this rendering here; but the passage in Job suggests some kind of *bush* or *shrub* under which a person might

saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my nation shall inherit them. 10 This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts. 11 The LORD will be terrible unto them:

shelter. Post (*DB*. iii. 520) regards the word as generic and equivalent to *thorn, scrub*, etc.

saltpits. The comparison was no doubt suggested by the salt-beds of the Dead Sea.

the residue of my people, etc. The words have been added by R³ as is shown by the similar additions in ii. 7, and especially by the inconsistent representation which the insertion involves. In the first part of the verse the country of Moab and Ammon is to become an eternal desolation, whereas according to this statement the remnant of Judah is to inherit it. The inconsistency, however, has been explained by the supposition that the prediction is ideal, or by creating a distinction between the country and the peoples, the former becoming a desolation and the latter slaves of Judah. But these explanations are in reality subterfuges.

10. A concluding verse repeating the reason for the fall of Moab and Ammon. The repetition is uncalled for, and the verse prosaic and un-rhythmical. It was most probably added by R³, who, after the events connected with the fall of Jerusalem, not only felt that the statement of *ver.* 8 could be fully endorsed but should be further emphasized. Its late origin has been generally recognized by modern commentators.

their pride. Cf. Is. xvi. 6; Jer. xlvi. 29.

against the people of the LORD of hosts. The LXX has merely *against the LORD of hosts*; and the Hebrew text has perhaps been assimilated to *ver.* 8.

11, 12. There is probably some disorder in these two verses, for it is difficult to see to what the pronoun "unto them" can refer. If the context is correct, the pronoun can only refer to Moab and Ammon; but this seems excluded by *ver.* 10, which has every appearance of completing all that the writer has to say with regard to judgement on these peoples. In this case either *unto* (or "*against*") *them* is corrupt (some noun underlying the preposition and suffix) or else *ver.* 11 has been preceded by some clause the subject of which is referred to in the pronoun "them." The latter is the more probable, and there seems little doubt that this clause was actually *ver.* 12. A scribe, having omitted it accidentally, inserted it after *ver.* 11. In this case the reference will be to the Cushites. The section probably proceeds from the hand of R¹, with an addition by a later reviser (R³). See *Introd.* p. 15. On the assumption that the verses have been transposed, they are annotated in the reverse order.

for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the 'isles of the nations. 12 Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword.

¹ Or, *coastlands*

12. *Ye Ethiopians.* Lit. *Ye Cushites*; i.e., most probably, the Egyptians, and not the Ethiopians (as the word *Cush* strictly denotes). Egypt was under Ethiopian rule at the time of its conquest by Assyria; and it was not unnatural for a writer to speak of Egypt as Ethiopian even when that rule had finally come to an end with the accession of Psamtik I (664-610), see *EB.* col. 5403. Its use, too, may have been somewhat opprobrious. The Ethiopians were sometimes spoken of contemptuously, partly on account of their colour and partly because slaves were drawn from them (cf. Am. ix. 7; Jer. xiii. 23).

slain by my sword. The first person agrees neither with the third person of *ver.* 11 nor with those of *ver.* 13, and probably "*my sword*" is an error for "*sword*"; cf. Ezek. xxxii. 20 ff. "*slain of the sword*," which appears to be the common phrase.

11. *unto them.* Or *against*, or *over*, *them*, as He manifests Himself in judgement. The pronoun refers to the Cushites (see above).

for he will famish all the gods of the earth. This rendering tacitly involves a change of vocalization in the verb. But there is little doubt that the text is corrupt. The fact that Jehovah will weaken, or bring to nought, all the gods of the earth (or land) does not give a natural reason for his awe-inspiring attitude towards the Cushites. Both the causal clause and the reference to all the gods of the land seem out of place. It is significant that the LXX has *and*, instead of *for*; also it does not appear to have read "*will famish*"; whilst for "*all the gods of the land*" it has "*all the gods of the peoples of the land.*" It is not unlikely that "*all the gods of the peoples of the land*" is a combination of two variant readings "*all the gods of the land*" and "*all the peoples of the land*," found originally in the margin, and that the Hebrew has followed those exemplars in which the reading "*all the gods of the land*" alone had been retained. In this case we may further suppose that these marginal readings were originally explanatory glosses on "*against them*," after *ver.* 11 and *ver.* 12 had been transposed; what *cī rizzāh* ("*for he famisheth*," or "*maketh lean*") is a corruption of, can only be surmised, but *wayyārodh*, "*and he subdueth*" (the land) would be an easy emendation and would give an excellent sense. By "*land*" was probably intended that which the Egyptians were endeavouring to annex, viz. (virtually) Palestine. Not the Egyptians but Judah will subdue the land, the words being spoken in view of the Egyptian invasion and before Josiah's defeat, and voicing the high hopes which Judah had at that time.

and men shall...the isles of the nations. The clause overloads the verse and interrupts the third persons singular of lines *a* and *b* and *ver.* 13. It is no doubt an insertion of R³, cf. *vv.* 7, 9. This is indicated

13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. 14 And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, ¹all

¹ Or, *all beasts of every kind*

by the phraseology and thought, which resemble Deutero-Isaiah, cf. Is. xlv. 14, xlix. 7, 23. The term *istes* or *coasts* (Heb. 'iyyim) denotes properly isles, then coasts, especially those of the Mediterranean Sea; and was at a later time used representatively to designate the distant regions of the earth—a meaning which it probably has here, cf. Is. xl. 15, xli. 1, xlii. 4, etc. and see Driver, *LOT*. p. 239.

13-15. The doom of Assyria. The section is probably from the same hand as *vv.* 8, 9, 12, 11, i.e. R¹, dating from the close of Josiah's reign when matters began to take a very ominous turn for Assyria. See further, *Introd.* pp. 15, 16.

13. *And he will stretch*, etc. Connecting immediately with *ver.* 11 *b.* For the expression cf. i. 4.

against the north. Strictly speaking, Assyria did not lie due north but north-east of Judah; as, however, the Assyrian armies entered Palestine from the north, it was not unnatural for a writer to picture the country as situated north of Judah.

Nineveh. On the situation and fall of Nineveh, see *Nahum*, p. 77.

14. *all the beasts of the nations.* The Hebrew, which is literally *all the animals of the nation*, has been variously rendered. Thus (1) Keil proposed "all kinds of animals in crowds" or "in a mass," and for *gōy* in the sense of a "mass of animals" he compared Joel i. 6 and the use of 'am in Prov. xxx. 25, 26; but in these passages both *gōy* and 'am are used in figure and both bear the usual meaning "people." (2) Hitzig rendered "all the animals of every kind" (cf. R.V. mg.); but this is quite impossible, for *gōy* in sense of "kind" cannot be substantiated; nor, if it could, can we render by "every kind." (3) Wellhausen has proposed "a motley medley of people" (understanding *hayyā* in the sense which it apparently bears in 2 Sam. xxiii. 13, cf. Ps. lxxviii. 11 (Heb.)), but such a meaning is inappropriate in the present context, even if the Hebrew so rendered can be established, which may be doubted. Most likely the text is corrupt. The LXX has *καὶ πάντα τὰ θηρία τῆς γῆς*, which represents the usual phrase *all the beasts of the earth* (cf. Gen. i. 24, 25, 30; Ps. lxxix. 2; Job v. 22), and this points to the true reading; though Halévy proposes the attractive reading "valley." "All the beasts of the earth" is probably not in apposition to "herds," which "seems nowhere to be used of wild creatures but always of those tended by the shepherd" (Davidson), but connected with it by an "and," which has accidentally been omitted in the text.

The following lines do not conform to the *kīnā* measure of the verse; and there seems little doubt that there is some further textual corruption. Most probably the lines should be transposed; what, however, the subject of "lodge" is can only be conjectured: perhaps it was

the beasts of the nations: both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapters thereof: *their* voice shall sing in the windows; ¹desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he hath laid bare the cedar work. 15 This is the joyous city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me:

¹ Or, *drought*

tsiyyim, "yelpers" (cf. Is. xiii. 21, xxiii. 13, xxxiv. 14; Jer. l. 39), a wild beast at present unidentified.

pelican. Pelicans are found in uninhabited places (cf. Is. xxxiv. 11; Ps. cii. 6), and are abundant in the swamps of the Jordan and the Orontes, and frequent in other regions of Palestine (*DB*. iii. 738). They might well be thought of as inhabiting the marshes about Nineveh.

porcupine. Tristram and others support the A.V. and render *ḥippōdh* by "bittern," but probably incorrectly; for the kindred word in Syr. and Ar. denotes the "porcupine"; this animal inhabits desolate ruins.

their voice shall sing. This is unnatural. Most probably *cōs*, "owl," should be read for *kōl*, "voice." The owl frequents deserted places (Ps. cii. 6), and is called by the Arabs "mother of ruins."

desolation shall be in the thresholds. This can scarcely be correct; for the preceding verb "sing" presupposes some bird. The LXX has *κόρακες*, "ravens"; and there is little doubt that it has preserved the correct reading (*ōrēbh* for *hōrēbh*). The windows and thresholds are those of the ruined buildings.

for he hath laid bare the cedar work. The perfect tense will be the prophetic perfect and the subject will either be indefinite (lit. *one lays bare*) or, as in the English versions, "He," i.e. Jehovah. The word "cedar-work" (*arzah*) is a *ἄπ. λεγ.*, and, if correct, will refer to the cedar-work used for panelling the palaces and temples. But the clause has no suitable connection with what has preceded and is, moreover, rhythmically incomplete. It is most probably to be deleted either as an accidental repetition of the opening words of *ver.* 15 or a misplaced gloss on *rizzā* ("make lean") of *ver.* 11.

15. A dirge on Nineveh. The verse is probably from the hand of R¹. It is regarded as later than the preceding verses by Nowack, Marti and others on the ground that it is composed of phrases which are found elsewhere (notably in Deutero-Isaiah), and also because the verse suggests that the fall of Assyria was already an accomplished fact. We cannot, however, place too much stress on its phraseology, for the expressions were no doubt largely current terms.

the joyous city. Cf. Is. xxii. 2, xxiii. 7, xxxii. 13.

dwelt carelessly. I.e. as indicated by her attitude towards others.

said in her heart. I.e. "thought." A common phrase; see on i. 12.

I am, and there is, etc. I.e. I am unique, without my equal. The reference is to Nineveh's position among the kingdoms of the world, which inspired her with false confidence. The phrase occurs again in Is. xlvi. 8, 10 where the reference is to Babylon.

how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

how is she become a desolation. Cf. Jer. l. 23, li. 41.
every one that passeth by, etc. Cf. Jer. xix. 8, xlix. 17, l. 13; Lam. ii. 15.
wag his hand. Namely, in scorn and derision. The usual phrase is "wag his head," cp. 2 Kg. xix. 21 (= Is. xxxvii. 22); Ps. xxii. 7.

CHAPTER III.

III. 1 Woe to her that is rebellious and polluted, to the

III. 1-8. The third main division of the book. Denunciation of Jerusalem's faithlessness to Jehovah and of her religious and civic leaders, followed by a renewed announcement of Jehovah's decision to collect peoples and pour out upon her His wrath. The section closes in all probability the original prophecy of Zephaniah. It has been revised by two later editors, one of whom has added a reference (*a*) to Jehovah's faithfulness and (*b*) to His promise to defend Judah, if only she will fear Him (*vv.* 5, 6, 7 *a*, 8 (in part)); and the other, a reference to the response given by Judah to this promise (*ver.* 7 *b*). This latter editor has also probably added the announcement in *vv.* 11-13 of the peaceful future awaiting the remnant after the judgement has been executed on Judah. A still later editor has added (*a*) the prediction of the conversion of the peoples (*vv.* 9, 10), and (*b*) the announcement of Judah's happy restoration, of the destruction of her oppressors, and of her future renown among all the peoples of the earth (*vv.* 14-20).

1. The prophet's designation of Jerusalem.

Woe to her, etc. Better *Ha! rebellious, etc.* The city is termed *rebellious* because she has chosen to follow out her own policy rather than such direction as Jehovah has given at the mouth of His prophet (cf. *ver.* 2 *a*).

polluted. The text should be emended (by the change of a single consonant) to *loathed*¹, i.e. because of her immoralities (*ver.* 2, p. 56). The verb in the traditional text, meaning *polluted, defiled*, is a late word, found elsewhere only in late exilic, or post-exilic literature; and though we may not positively assert that it could not be used by a pre-exilic writer, its presence suggests a later hand.

the oppressing city. I.e. Jerusalem. Her oppression is seen in such acts as are mentioned in *ver.* 3.

¹ לעל means prop. to reject with loathing, cf. Dri., *NHTS*², p. 182.

oppressing city! 2 She obeyed not the voice; she received not¹ correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. 3 Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they² leave nothing till the morrow.

¹ Or, instruction

² Or, gnaw not the bones on the morrow

2-4. The verses expand *ver.* 1, showing how the capital has justly earned the designations given her by the prophet. Warning is unheeded; Jehovah unapproached; officials and judges oppress; while prophets and priests outrage their office.

obeyed not the voice. Namely, of Jehovah's prophets, who at each crisis did not fail to counsel what policy should be followed. Cf. Jer. vii. 28, xi. 4, 7, xxvi. 13, xxxii. 23, xxxviii. 20. The perfect expresses the attitude which she has adopted in the past and continues to adopt in the present.

received not correction. Namely, the lesson which the judgements that Jehovah had brought upon her were intended to enforce. Cf. ii. 1; Jer. ii. 30, v. 3, vii. 28 (almost a verbal parallel), etc., and, for the general idea, Am. iv. 4-13.

trusted not. Instead of heeding the prophet's voice and putting her sole trust in Jehovah as she was repeatedly urged to do, she has, in the political difficulties which she has had to face, trusted to policies of lies and deceit, cf. Jer. xiii. 25 and also Hos. x. 13.

drew not near to her God. But (it is implied) drew near to other gods, namely, by allying herself with her heathen neighbours and securing thereby the patronage of their deities. Cf. the picture of Judah's religious condition in i. 4-6; and see further *Introd.* p. 5.

3. She is not only rebellious but oppressive, as is shown by the impatient and cruel greed of her officials and judges.

princes. I.e. court-officials with whom the administration of affairs at this time for the most part lay.

are roaring lions. I.e. they are impatient to satisfy their greed at the expense of the weaker and poorer members of the community. The figure must at the time have been very applicable to the spirit and attitude of the ruling classes who felt the restraint of the Assyrian domination and who, regardless of the rights and position of others, were ready at all costs to further their own personal aims. For the figure, cf. Ezek. xxii. 25; Ps. xvii. 12, xxii. 13 (14).

evening wolves. I.e. fierce and rapacious. Instead of seeing that grievances and wrongs are righted these judges are only too ready to make the administration of their office an occasion when, by acts of violence and injustice, they may further some design or fill their own coffers. For the figure, cf. Hab. i. 8; Ezek. xxii. 27.

leave nothing till the morrow. They are as insatiable and voracious as wolves, which are wont to consume all their prey. The meaning of *gāram* is uncertain. The rendering "leave over," which is that of the LXX and Vulgate, rests on the assumption that the root which in Ar. and

4 Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

Syr. means "cut off" came in Hebrew to signify "cut off so as to leave," i.e. leave over, and is questionable. Several commentators connect it with the root *GRM*, "gnaw a bone" (denom. from *gêrem*), which occurs (in Pi'el) in Num. xxiv. 8 and possibly in Ezek. xxiii. 34 (text uncertain), rendering "they gnaw not bones till the morning," i.e. they devour all at once; or, omitting the negative, "they gnaw bones till the morning," i.e. so voracious are they. Van Hoonacker, who adopts this derivation, makes the clause directly dependent on "wolves," translating "which have not gnawed in the morning" (i.e. during the day), and so are famished by the evening. Some such meaning as "leave over," however, seems more suitable.

4. *Her prophets.* I.e. the false and professional prophets whom alone she recognizes as prophets. For the similar indictment of the prophets, cf. Mic. iii. 5 f.; Jer. xiv. 13 ff., xxiii. 33 ff.; Ezek. xxii. 28.

light. I.e. reckless in their assertions. In order to court favour they have not hesitated to enunciate a popular policy and bolster it up with extravagant promises.

treacherous persons. Lit. *men of treacheries, deceits*, i.e. full of deceit, the fem. plural of the participle being used to denote the abstract, the plural at the same time suggesting intensity. The prophets are so spoken of because by their reckless words and false counsels they deluded the people and were bringing, by such treachery, disaster on the state. Some, however, understand "treacheries" of faithlessness towards God, i.e. instead of giving His message they have faithlessly given their own imaginations as revelations from Him.

her priests have profaned, etc. The priests no less than the prophets have abused their office. That which belonged to Jehovah, or stood related to His service, and was therefore holy to Him, they have, in view (it is implied) of their own interests, either treated or caused others to treat as common. Cf. Ezek. xxii. 26 (which offers partly an expanded, partly a verbal, parallel). Zephaniah does not specify in what way the priests had profaned what was holy; no doubt in numberless ways they had been guilty of profanity, though it is possible that he is thinking mainly of the maintenance of heathen rites within the precincts of the temple and its neighbourhood.

the law. Better, *direction*. The priests were expected to give direction (*tôrâ*) not only on matters religious or ceremonial (Hag. ii. 11) and in cases of controversy and doubt (Deut. xxi. 5; Ezek. xliv. 24), but also in national affairs and at times of national crises (Ezek. vii. 26). It is usual to understand "direction" here according to the first of these usages, namely, of the law which regulated the common and unclean; but perhaps the prophet is thinking of such direction as was given by the priest in view of projected national policies. There can be no doubt that the false prophets and priests largely played into each other's hands (cf. Jer. v. 31, vi. 13 ff.); and it seems probable that by such judgements as

5 The LORD in the midst of her is righteous; he will not do iniquity; ¹every morning doth he bring his judgement to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

¹ Heb. *morning by morning*.

accorded with the utterances of these prophets they outraged that "direction" which as Jehovah's priests they ought to have given.

5-7. The verses are an insertion, in all probability from the hand of R¹; they interrupt the connection between *ver.* 4 and *ver.* 8. Instead of stating the punishment which the capital merits, as we should expect the following verse or verses to do, they speak, on the contrary, of Jehovah's rightness (*ver.* 5), of His power to bring peoples to nought (*ver.* 6), and of His promise not to cut off Israel on account of the guilt of their capital, should they now receive correction (*ver.* 7, in its original form). These thoughts, apart from interrupting the connection, are foreign to Zephaniah, who sees the inevitableness of the coming judgement and only holds out as a bare possibility the escape of a faithful few (ii. 3); but they accord well with the outlook of ii. 8 ff., and probably date from the same time. The purpose of the passage is to encourage the people, in face of the important issues then transpiring in the political world, to continue true to the prophetic principle of whole-hearted trust in Jehovah, by reminding them that Jehovah will be true to His covenant and is able to destroy peoples. See further *Intro.* p. 18.

5. *righteous*. I.e. true to the covenant He has made with His people. Is "in the midst of her" a later addition? Its presence spoils the rhythm. It may have been added when the alterations with reference to Jerusalem were made in *ver.* 7.

do iniquity. I.e. by acting contrary to, or deviating from, the conditions of His covenant.

every morning. I.e. "continually"; cf. 2 Sam. xiii. 4 (mg.).

his judgement. Or *his rightness*. For this sense of *mishpāt* cf. Gen. xviii. 25; Hos. ii. 19 (21); Is. xxx. 18, etc. In what way the writer especially thought of Jehovah as acting rightly, i.e. in accordance with His covenant, may be inferred perhaps from *ver.* 6. Every day seemed to make more and more evident His righteous action, not only (we may suppose) in respect of the internal affairs of Judah, but of the way events were shaping themselves in the political world. The words "to the light" are most probably to be cancelled as a false repetition of the letters of the following words, and for *bring* should be substituted *give forth* (see below).

he faileth not. Perhaps better *it* (i.e. Jehovah's judgement) *faileth not*; but see below.

the unjust knoweth no shame. This clause is usually taken in contrast to what has preceded and explained thus: While the people of the capital practise their wrongs, Jehovah in their midst is all the time setting them an example of what righteousness should be; morning by morning He brings His just judgement to light (i.e. discloses both in the life of the individual and in the history of the nations how He rewards the righteous

6 I have cut off nations, their ¹battlements are desolate; I have made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive ²correction; so her dwelling should not be cut off, ³according to all that I have

¹ Or, corner towers

² Or, instruction

³ Or, howsoever I punished her

and punishes the wicked) without fail; but to no purpose, for the unrighteous man is undeterred by it, and continues without any sense of shame in his evil course. But the rendering, apart from interpretation, is not free from difficulty; the expression "bring to light" is nowhere else found in the sense of "disclose," and is questionable Hebrew¹; the construction of the last clause ("but the unjust," etc.) is anomalous; while the second half of the verse seems overloaded. The original reading, however, can only be conjectured. Perhaps it had *every morning His righteousness He gives forth, and knows no shame*, i.e. does not experience that shame which results from failure. The words, *He faileth not* may be an early interpretative gloss on *knows no shame*, or on the preceding clause; and the words "to the light" an accidental repetition (*v. above*): the substitution of "*but the unjust knoweth no shame*" may represent a still later and euphemistic change.

6. *I have cut off nations.* By introducing Jehovah—to us abruptly—as the speaker the writer seeks to add emphasis to what he has stated of Him in *ver. 5*. Jehovah now, as it were, speaks for Himself, and protests what He has done, and will do, viz. in the matter of cutting off peoples (i.e. Judah's enemies) as proof of His rightness (i.e. of His being true to His covenant).

destroyed. The verb *tsādhāh* occurs only here in Hebrew but is common in Aramaic. Its use, however, cannot be quoted as indicating necessarily a late date.

so that there is no man. Though these words are found in the versions, they are probably a variant of *there is none inhabitant*; they are unnecessary and disturb the rhythm of the verse.

7. *I said.* Namely, through the voice of the prophet. Not, as generally understood, "I thought."

Surely thou wilt fear me. We must read (with the LXX) the plural, *Fear ye me*. That the plural is the original reading is proved by the last clause, *But they rose up early*, etc. Similarly in the next clause, *Receive ye correction*, i.e. learn the lesson which punishment is intended to offer, and turn and trust me (cf. *ver. 2*).

so her dwelling should...concerning her. The Hebrew is, in reality, untranslatable; the words "according to" cannot be legitimately inserted. The LXX reads *καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξολοθρευθῆτε ἐξ ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῆς πάντα ὄσα*, κ.τ.λ., and on the basis of this Wellhausen, G. A. Smith, Nowack, Marti,

¹ For the usual idiom see Job xii. 22.

appointed concerning her: but they rose early and corrupted all their doings. 8 Therefore wait ye for me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my ¹determination

¹ Heb. *judgement*.

Driver, and others, propose to read "and nothing which I have enjoined her will be cut off from her eyes," i.e. she will continually keep before her Jehovah's commandments. But the clause certainly expresses the *consequences*, if the advice to fear and receive discipline is followed. Moreover, the rendering assumes a late use of the word *pākadh* and a change of person from second to third. There is little doubt that the true reading is *and ye shall not be cut off* (the LXX has a second person plural for the Hebrew third person singular) *on account of all her iniquity which I have visited* (and do still visit) *upon her*. Apart from the change of person, this reading only assumes an accidental omission of a letter in one word—*culloh*, for *cōl* (for the idiom, cf. Ezek. xiv. 5) and a different vocalization of another, and gives excellent sense. If the Judæans only now fear Jehovah, they will not be cut off by the punishment which the past iniquity of the capital has merited.

but they rose early and corrupted. I.e. they eagerly corrupted. For the use of "to rise early" in connection with another verb to express the idea of "eagerly," "early," etc., cf. Jer. vii. 13, 25, xi. 7, xxvi. 5, etc., with whom the use is common. The clause, which expresses the actual response Judah gave to Jehovah's entreaty, has been added by R². See *Introd.* p. 18.

8. This verse has undergone many revisions which have not been generally recognized by commentators, who, with one or two minor textual changes, regard the verse in its present form as original, though opinion is divided as to whether it is original with Zephaniah or not. It is usually interpreted either (*a*) as an address to the faithful in Judah to wait till Jehovah gathers the nations to punish them (i.e. the peoples as well as the oppressors within Judah); (*b*) as an ironical address to Judah to wait till she and the peoples alike succumb to the universal judgement decreed by Jehovah. But in its original form the verse connected with *ver.* 4, and announced the judgement on the guilty capital; and it was then revised by R¹ in order to make it conform to the tenor of his insertion in *vv.* 5-7. It reflected the political situation at the close of Josiah's reign, when Assyria was threatened by the Medes and Babylonians. Later, the verse was again re-interpreted by R², so as to express once more Jehovah's decision to collect kingdoms and peoples in order to pour out upon them (i.e. Judah) His wrath. See the discussion on pp. 18-20.

wait ye for. I.e. with longing for; cf. Is. viii. 17, lxiv. 4 (3), etc. An addition of R¹.

rise up to the prey. In other words, to destroy the peoples hostile to Judah. Most moderns adopt the reading of the LXX and some other versions, *for a witness* (*lē 'ēdh* for *lē 'adh*), in which case the meaning will be that Jehovah will rise as a witness against the peoples. Cf. Mal. iii. 5. The clause has been inserted by R².

determination. Cf. 1 Kg. xx. 40 (Heb.).

is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. 9 For then will I turn to the peoples a pure ¹language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one ²consent. 10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia ³my suppliants,

¹ Heb. *lip*.

² Heb. *shoulder*.

³ Or, *shall they bring my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, for an offering unto me*

that I may assemble the kingdoms. Literally, *for my gathering of kingdoms.* As the pronoun shows, this clause originally followed *my rising up to the prey*, and not, as in the traditional text, *to collect peoples.* It is part of R¹'s insertion.

upon them. It is possible that "upon *them*" is authentic, the plural referring to the official classes mentioned in *vv.* 3, 4. But the original text was perhaps *upon her*, i.e. upon Jerusalem.

with the fire, etc. Cf. i. 18; with this clause the original prophecy of Zephaniah in all probability closed.

9, 10. These verses, as most moderns have seen, are an insertion. They were inserted by R², the same hand that inserted ii. 11 *c.* After Jehovah has manifested His power in judgement on the peoples (for so R² interpreted *ver.* 8) the latter will be so awed that they will turn to Him and henceforth serve Him with one consent. See further *Introd.* p. 20.

9. *For.* The force of the causal conjunction is not obvious, and the connection with *ver.* 8 is very loose; but no doubt the reviser intended that it should introduce the reason for Jehovah's decision to pour out His wrath upon the peoples. Only when this has been done can He give them a pure lip.

then. I.e. when the judgement has been executed. Cf. *ver.* 11; Deut. xxix. 20 (19); Jos. i. 8, etc.

turn to. For a similiar expression cf. 1 Sam. x. 9 (*mg.*).

a pure language. Literally *a pure lip*; which should be understood strictly. Their lips, which up to then have been rendered unclean through the names of the gods they have worshipped, will henceforth be pure because they will now acknowledge Jehovah alone, and name only His name in worship. Cf. Hos. ii. 17 (= Heb. ii. 19). For the universal religious outlook, cf. ii. 11.

call upon the name. Lit. *call with the name*, i.e. use it in worship, cf. Gen. iv. 26; Jer. x. 25, etc.

with one consent. Lit. *with one shoulder*. "The metaphor does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament, but is found in Syriac" (Driver).

10. *From beyond the rivers, etc.* The rivers intended are most probably the Nile and its tributaries; while Ethiopia (Heb. *Cush*) is mentioned as representing the most distant peoples. Cf. Is. xviii. 1.

my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed. How these words are to be interpreted, or what text they may in part represent, it is difficult to say. The Hebrew as it stands may be rendered in two ways:

even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. 11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee ¹thy proudly exulting ones, and thou shalt no more be haughty in my holy mountain. 12 But I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and

¹ Or, *them that exult in thy majesty*

(1) as in the R.V. text; (2) as in the R.V. mg. The latter rendering is preferable, for the context strongly suggests a reference to what the peoples of *ver.* 9 will do, and not to what the Jews scattered abroad will do. The text, however, on either rendering is doubtful. The word for "suppliants" is only found here; the phrase "daughter of my dispersed" is peculiar, for "daughter" as a personification for people is all but invariably (Mic. v. 1 (=iv. 14)) followed by the name of a place or country; while the word rendered *my dispersed* is at least suspicious. Various emendations have been proposed, but no suggestion offered by critics wholly commends itself, and it must be admitted that the text seems too deeply corrupted to be restored with certainty.

mine offering. I.e. as a token of homage. The offering is not necessarily pictured as brought to Jerusalem: Jehovah, as we now know, had a temple in Elephantine, and the writer may have thought of the worship of Jehovah as localized in different places.

11-13. After Jehovah's judgement has been accomplished, the capital will no more be put to shame: the remnant in her midst will dwell securely, taking refuge in none but Jehovah. These verses are no doubt from the same hand as inserted iii. 7c, i.e. R². Cf. the use of the word "doings" in *ver.* 11 and *ver.* 7c, and see further *Introd.* p. 21.

11. *In that day.* I.e. after Jerusalem has received at the hands of the peoples the judgement predicted in *ver.* 8.

shalt not be ashamed for all thy doings. I.e. wilt not be put to shame, since those who were guilty of such deeds will then have perished. Cf. the following clause "for then," etc.

for then. I.e. when the judgement (*ver.* 8) has been effected.

thy proudly exulting ones. Namely those (mainly influential) members of the community who in their self-confidence and arrogancy refuse to receive the prophetic warning and, heedless of what past and present judgements inculcate (iii. 2), pride themselves on the security of their schemes. Cf. Is. xiii. 3, where the same expression is used of Jehovah's warriors exultant with martial confidence.

shalt no more be haughty. Cf. Jer. xiii. 15; Ezek. xvi. 50.

12. *afflicted and poor.* The remnant that survives the judgement will be poor members of the community who are now oppressed and wronged. The word 'ānī indicates one who is afflicted or humbled by misfortune, oppression, etc.; and is to be carefully distinguished from the kindred word 'ānāw (ii. 3), which means one who is humble in character, who

they shall trust in the name of the LORD. 13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. 14 Sing, O daughter of Zion;

voluntarily submits to the divine will and prophetic instruction. As a matter of fact, however, the "afflicted and poor" represented for the most part the "humble of the land," and hence it is that the writer mentions them as those who will survive the judgement.

shall trust in the name, etc. Unlike the proudly exultant ones who have sought refuge in foreign alliances and in the combined protection of foreign gods. For the verb (= "seek refuge in"), cf. Is. xiv. 32, xxx. 2; Nah. i. 7; Ps. ii. 12, v. 11 (12). The "name" of Jehovah is His character as revealed and known to His people, see Burney, *O.T. Theology*, p. 10. The *kinā* rhythm of the section suggests that the words "the remnant of Israel" originally belonged to this verse and not to the following.

13. *iniquity, ... lies*. Unrighteousness and falsehood are probably not to be explained of acts of wickedness and deceit, such as members of the community had been guilty of towards one another; the verse seems rather to supplement *ver. 12b*, and accordingly unrighteousness, falsehood, and deceit will be used in a *political* sense. To refuse to seek refuge in Jehovah alone and to unite in alliance with other peoples and their gods was to be guilty of an act of unrighteousness towards Jehovah, while to substantiate such a course of action by holding out fair promises from it, or in other ways to justify it, was nothing less than to lie and deceive. This is what Judah had been guilty of doing, and it is this which the remnant of the future will not do. Cf. Hos. vii. 13, xi. 12, xii. 1, which form an excellent commentary on the passage.

for, etc. Introducing the proof of their faithfulness. That they are guilty of no act of unrighteousness towards Jehovah will be evident from the fact that they dwell in perfect security.

shall feed, etc. The terms are strictly applicable to a flock or herd; here they are used figuratively of the remnant of Judah. For the figure, cf. Is. xiv. 30; Mic. vii. 14.

none shall make them afraid. A standing expression for complete security. Cf. Lev. xxvi. 6; Is. xvii. 2; Mic. iv. 4; Jer. xxx. 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 28, etc.

14-20. A still later addition, probably from the hand of our third reviser (R³). Zion is bidden to rejoice because Jehovah is about to be again in her midst, to watch over her and save her. Her oppressors will be destroyed and her exiles gathered to her. They will be famed all the world over.

14. *Sing*. Better, *Ring out thy joy*. Cf. Is. liv. 1; Zech. ii. 10 (14); Ps. v. 11, etc. *Rānan* "properly means a shrill piercing cry, expressive of emotional excitement...equally adapted for rejoicing and lamentation" (Cheyne on Ps. v. 11).

daughter of Zion. I.e. people of Zion. The personification of the

shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. 15 The LORD hath taken away thy judgements, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not ¹fear evil any more. 16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: ²O Zion, let not thine hands be slack. 17 The LORD thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save: he will rejoice over thee

¹ Another reading is, *see*

² Or, and to Zion

inhabitants of a place as a daughter is especially found in cases "where it is desired to portray the people as feeling or expressing some keen or vivid emotion" (Driver); cf. Is. x. 30; Zech. ix. 9; Lam. iv. 21.

15. *hath taken away...cast out.* The perfects are "prophetic," the writer picturing as already realized what in reality lies still in the future.

thy judgements. I.e. such as have been visited on thee. Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, J. P. Smith, and others read "*thy opponents*" (a slight change): this would offer a more exact parallel to "thy enemies" of the following clause; but the emendation is not necessary, and it is more-over doubtful whether the writer, had he intended "opponents," would have used *mëshōphēt*, which means rather an "opponent-at-law" (cf. Job ix. 15).

thine enemy. Several versions and some Hebrew MSS. have the plural, and this reading is probably correct.

the king of Israel...of thee. LXX A has *Jehovah reigns in the midst of thee.* The words imply restoration to His favour and the blessings of protection and prosperity which His presence assures.

The words *the king of Israel* (cf. Is. xliii. 15, xliv. 6) probably constitute the completing clause of the *kīnā* line, which has accidentally replaced *reigns* in the first part.

fear. The verb should probably be replaced by *see* (i.e. experience) as read by the LXX. The change relieves what would otherwise be a tautology with the next verse. The words *thou shalt not see*, etc. are probably the opening words of another *kīnā* line, the rest of which has been lost.

16. *In that day.* Namely when Jehovah will thus take up His abode as king in Zion. Marti and others omit this verse on the ground of metre and because it breaks the connection between *ver. 15* and *ver. 17*. But the reiteration of "Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee" immediately after *ver. 15b* would not be very elegant, and it is more probable that the editor in these verses is utilizing current material.

Fear thou not. Cf. Hag. ii. 5; Zech. viii. 15. It seems better, against the accents, to connect "O Zion" with this clause.

let not thine hands be slack. I.e. do not lose heart. For the expression see 2 Sam. iv. 1; Is. xiii. 7; Jer. l. 43, etc.

17. *a mighty one.* Cf. Is. xlii. 13 (Heb.); Jer. xiv. 9, xx. 11.

rejoice over thee. Cf. Deut. xxviii. 63, xxx. 9; Jer. xxii. 41; Is. lxii. 5, etc.

with joy, he will ¹rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. 18 ²I will gather them that ³sorrow for the solemn assembly, who were of thee: ⁴to whom the burden upon ⁵her

¹ Heb. *be silent*.

² Or, *They have been sorrowful for the solemn assembly which I took away from thee, for the lifting up of reproach against her*

³ Or, *are removed from* ⁴ Or, *which has borne the burden of reproach*

⁵ According to some ancient authorities, *thee*

he will rest in his love. More literally, *he will be silent in his love.* This has been interpreted to mean undemonstrative, deeply-felt, love; but this is not at all suitable to the context, which, on the contrary, pictures Jehovah's joy as exuberant and demonstrative. The LXX has "He will renew thee in His love"; and this or a similar reading ("He will renew His love") has been favoured by several critics. This may possibly be the original reading; but the emendation *he will be stirred in his love* seems more suitable to the context. The root *rāhash*, from which the verb here adopted comes, occurs in Ps. xlv. 1 (2 Heb.).

To the close of *ver.* 17 should be transferred the opening words of the following verse, *as in the day of festival* (as read by the LXX), so that it will run *he will joy over thee with singing* (or *with ringing joy*) *as in the day of festival.* Otherwise the verse would be rhythmically incomplete.

18. This verse is difficult, and little, if anything, can be said for certain respecting it. The text, as it stands, is just translatable, and may be rendered: "*those that sorrow away from,*" or "*those that are removed from, the appointed place*" (i.e. the temple, cf. Lam. ii. 6) or "*from the appointed meeting* (viz. when the Israelites gathered to celebrate their sacred seasons or feasts) *I gather together, from thee they were* (i.e. they belonged to thee); *a burden upon her is reproach.*" In this last clause "her" has been referred (1) to "those that sorrow," understood collectively and construed with the feminine singular, or (2) more probably, to Jerusalem, in which case the clause is best understood as relative—"upon whom reproach is a burden," the change of person being explainable according to a well-known Hebrew idiom (Driver, *Tenses*, § 198, obs. 2). The verse thus rendered will predict the restoration of those Israelites dispersed among the nations. But the Hebrew reads very incoherently, and there is little doubt, as all moderns admit, that the text is corrupt; yet it is very difficult to see on what lines it is to be emended. The LXX renders the opening words *as in the day of the feast*, and connects them with *ver.* 17, and in this it is probably right: the change is favoured by the rhythmical measure of *ver.* 17 (see above). The LXX cursives 22, 36, 57, etc. have *He will gather for I gathered*, and probably preserve a trace of the original; for the third person is countenanced by *ver.* 17. The other versions afford no aid, and for a full reconstruction of the text we are left to conjecture. We suggest, *He shall take away ignominy and shame, (even) the yoke of reproach:* but how far such an emendation approaches the original we cannot say.

was a reproach. 19 Behold, at that time I will deal with all them that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven away; and I will make them a praise and a name, whose shame hath been in all the earth. 20 At that time will I

19. *deal with.* For this phrase in a bad sense, cf. Ezek. xxii. 14; in a good sense, Ezek. xx. 14 (Heb.); Ps. cix. 21.

all them that afflict thee. I.e. Jerusalem's heathen oppressors.

her that halteth...driven away. The politically disabled and exiled people of Judah, who are here referred to under the figure of a flock, will be delivered and gathered in. For the figure, cf. Mic. iv. 6, 7 (which affords a close parallel with the present passage) and Ezek. xxxiv. 4, 16.

a praise and a name. I.e. famous and renowned through the deliverance and material blessing which Jehovah will have bestowed upon them. Cf. Is. lxii. 7; also Deut. xxvi. 19; Jer. xiii. 11.

whose shame, etc. These words have been taken as by the R.V. in connection with "in all the earth," as a relative clause dependent on the preceding "them," viz. "whose shame (i.e. in view of their exile) is in all the earth"; but the construction is very awkward and severs the obvious connection of "in all the earth" with "a praise and a name." Wellhausen, followed by some others, thinks that the consonants BShT'M ("their shame") represent an abbreviation of the Hebrew for "when I turn their captivity"; and this conjecture is most probably correct. In this case we should no doubt insert "before their eyes, saith Jehovah." This is suggested by the words "when I turn your captivity before your eyes, saith Jehovah" of *ver.* 20, which are in all probability a marginal variant (see below).

20. The text of the first half of this verse is quite uncertain. The Hebrew is literally, "In that time will I bring you in, and in the time of my gathering." The reading is peculiar: we should expect in the first clause the mention of the place to which they are to be brought (cf. Is. xiv. 2); while the second clause stands isolated. The LXX has ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ ὅταν καλῶς ὑμῖν ποιήσω καὶ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ὅταν εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς. On the basis of this reading ἔτιβῃ (*I will do well* (with you)) has been proposed for ἄβῃ (*I will bring* (you) in). In the second clause most moderns favour the emendation tacitly adopted by the R.V., *at that time I will gather you.* But it is doubtful whether this latter correction represents the original: most probably the text should be read: "In the time (*bē'eth*) of my gathering." On the other hand, the LXX, with its καλῶς ὑμῖν ποιήσω, very likely retains the original reading of the first part of the verse. The verse practically repeats *ver.* 19, though it is noticeable that where *ver.* 19 has "them" this verse has "you." Was the verse originally a marginal variant on *ver.* 19? In all probability it was. A scribe perhaps wished to guard against the opening words of *ver.* 19, "Behold I will deal with all them that afflict thee" being taken in a sense favourable to the heathen, and so added on the margin "I will deal well with you." In the same way he may have

bring you in, and at that time will I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I bring again your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

written "in the time of my gathering you," "I will make you a name," etc., in order to guard against the words "I will gather" and "I will make them," etc. being taken together, and referred to "all that afflict thee." This supposition receives some support from the words "among all the *peoples* of the earth," which seems to be clearly a variant on "in all the earth."

TRANSLATION

The following translation is made from an emended text. Lines or verses that are inserted or transposed are enclosed between *pointed* brackets. Where lines or clauses are omitted, their position is marked by *square* brackets. Where emendations of one or more words have been adopted, they are placed between asterisks.

The sources from which the various parts of the book are thought to proceed are indicated by letters in the margin.

E. = Editor
Z. = Zephaniah
R¹ = First Reviser
R² = Second Reviser
R³ = Third Reviser

I

E. 1 The word of Yahweh which came unto Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah.

Z. 2 I will utterly *remove* everything

From off the face of the ground. It is Yahweh's oracle.

3 I will *remove* man and beast,

I will *remove* the birds of the heavens and the fishes of the sea;

[] And I will cut off men

From off the face of the ground. It is Yahweh's oracle.

4 And I will stretch out my hand upon Judah

And upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

And I will cut off from this place

Those who (have set up) the Baal [],

5 And those who worship on the roofs the host of heaven,

And [] those who swear (allegiance) to Yahweh, yet who swear by *Milcom*.

6 And those who are turned back from following Yahweh,

And who do not seek Yahweh nor inquire of Him.

7 Hush before the Lord Yahweh!

For near is Yahweh's day;

For Yahweh hath furnished a sacrifice,

Hath sanctified His guests.

8 [] (And it shall be in that day—it is Yahweh's oracle):

That I will punish the princes and the king's sons,

And all who clothe themselves in foreign apparel.

9 And I will punish all who *leap* over the threshold,

[] Who fill their masters' houses with violence and fraud.

10 [] Hark! a cry from the Fish-Gate,

And a howling from the Second-Quarter;

And a great crash from the hills,

(The inhabitants of the Mortar *howl*):

- 11 [] For all the merchant-folk are destroyed,
All those who weigh out money are cut off.
- 12 And it shall be at that time
I will search Jerusalem with lamps.
And I will punish *those who are at ease*
Who thicken upon their lees,
Who say in their hearts:
'Yahweh will do neither good nor bad.'
- 13 And their substance shall become a spoil,
And their houses a desolation [].
- 14 Near is Yahweh's great day,
Near and hastening fast;
[] (A day of) bitterness (and) *grief of spirit* [],
(A day of wrath is that day).
- 15 [] A day of distress and stress,
A day of devastation and desolation;
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of cloud and mist;
- 16 A day of the horn and battle-cry,
(*A day of* the warrior) (and armed-man);
Against the fortified cities
And against the lofty battlements.
- 17 And I will distress men,
And they shall walk as the blind [];
And their blood shall be poured out as dust,
And their flesh like dung.
- 18 Neither their silver nor gold shall avail
To deliver them in the day of Yahweh's wrath [],
For an end, *yea* a terrible (end), shall He make
Of all the inhabitants of the land.

II

- 1 Gather for yourselves stubble and become stubble!
O nation, *unadmonished*!
- 2 Before (the day) bring *eth* forth,
Ye shall be pulverized like chaff [],
Before (your wantonness) *is fulfilled*
There shall come upon you
The fierceness of Yahweh's anger [].
- 3 Seek Yahweh,
All ye humble of the land,
Who do [] right;
Seek righteousness,
Seek humility,
Perhaps ye may be hid
In the day of Yahweh's anger.

- 4 For Gaza shall be forsaken,
 And Ashkelon a desolation;
 Ashdod—at noon they shall *devastate* her,
 And Ekron shall be uprooted.
- 5 Ah! inhabitants of the [] sea,
 Nation of the Cherethites,
 Yahweh's word is against you;
 (And I will destroy thee), Canaan,
 Land of the Philistines,
 [] Without inhabitant.
- 6 And [] she shall become pastures [] for *herds*,
 And folds for flocks;
- 7 [] They shall feed amid the houses of Ashkelon,
 In *Ekron* they shall lie down.
- R³ (And the region of (the sea) shall be for the remnant of Judah
 []); for Yahweh their God shall visit them and turn their
 captivity.
- R¹ 8 I have heard the reproach of Moab,
 And the revilings of Ammon's sons;
 Wherewith they have reproached my people,
 And magnified themselves against *my* border.
- 9 Therefore as I live—it is the oracle of Yahweh of Hosts, God
 of Israel—
 Moab shall be as Sodom,
 And Ammon's sons as Gomorrah;
 A possession of shrub and saltpit,
 And a desolation for ever.
- R³ The remnant of my people shall spoil them,
 And the residue of my nation shall inherit them.
- 10 This they shall have for their arrogance because they have
 reproached and magnified themselves against [] Yahweh of
 Hosts.
- R¹ 12 Also ye, O Cushites—
 Slain of *the* sword are they!
- 11 Terrible is Yahweh against them,
 And He *subdueth* [] the land,
- R³ And all the coasts of the peoples shall worship Him, each from
 his place.
- R¹ 13 And He stretch *eth* forth His hand against the north,
 And destroy *eth* Assyria;
 And He mak *eth* Nineveh a desolation,
 A desert like the wilderness;
- 14 And herds *shall* lie down in her midst,
 And every beast of *the earth*;
 [] (Yelpers) in her capitals shall lodge,
 (Both pelican and porcupine);
 The *owl* shall cry in the window,
 The *raven* on the threshold [].

- R¹ 15 This is the exultant city,
 That dwelleth in security;
 That saith in her heart,
 ‘I and none besides!’
 How hath she become a desolation!
 A lair for beasts!
 Everyone that passeth by hisseth at her,
 Waggeth his hand.

III

- Z. 3. 1 Ah! rebellious and *loathed* one,
 The city that oppresseseth!
 2 She hath hearkened to no voice,
 Hath received no discipline;
 In Yahweh she hath not trusted,
 Unto her God hath not drawn near.
 3 Her princes in her midst
 Are roaring lions;
 Her judges evening wolves,
 They leave (?) nothing till the morning.
 4 Her prophets are reckless,
 Are treacherous men;
 Her priests have profaned what is holy,
 Have outraged direction.
 R¹ 5 Yahweh is righteous [in her midst],
 He doeth no wrong;
 Morning by morning
 His rightness He giveth forth [],
 And [] He know*eth* no shame.
 6 I have cut off peoples,
 Their battlements have been desolated;
 I have laid waste their streets,
 Without passer-by;
 Their cities have devastated,
 [] Without inhabitant.
 7 I have said:
 ‘Only *fear* me,
 Receive discipline,
 And *ye* shall not be cut off
 On account of all her *iniquity*
 Which I visit upon her’.
- R² But they rose early, they made all their deeds corrupt.
 Z. 8 Therefore R¹ wait for me Z² it is Yahweh’s oracle,
 R¹ For the day of my rising up to the prey,
 (For my gathering of kingdoms).
 Z. For my decision is to collect peoples [];

- In order to pour out upon *her* [R¹them] my indignation,
 Even all the fierceness of my anger;
 For in the fire of my ardour
 Shall all the land be consumed.
- R³ 9 For then shall I give to the peoples a pure lip,
 That they all of them may call on Yahweh's name,
 That they may serve Him with one consent.
- 10 Beyond the rivers of Cush
 ...shall bring my offering.
- R² 11 In that day :
 Thou shalt not be put to shame for all thy deeds by which thou
 hast rebelled against me;
 For then I shall remove from thy midst thy proudly exultant
 ones;
 And thou shalt not again be haughty in my holy mount.
- 12 But I shall leave in thy midst a people humbled and poor;
 And they shall seek refuge in Yahweh's name, ((even) the rem-
 nant of Israel).
- 13 [] They shall do no unrighteousness, nor speak falsehood;
 There shall not be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue;
 For they shall feed and lie down with none to terrify them.
- 14 R³ Ring out thy joy, O daughter of Zion!
 Shout, O Israel!
 Rejoice and exult with all the heart,
 O daughter of Jerusalem!
- 15 Yahweh hath removed thy judgements,
 Hath turned away thy enem*ies*.
 Yahweh *reigns* [] in thy midst,
 <The King of Israel>
 Thou shalt *see* evil no more,
- 16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem :
 'Do not fear, O Zion,
 Let not thy hands drop.'
- 17 Yahweh, thy God, is in thy midst,
 A warrior who saves;
 He will rejoice over thee with gladness,
 Will be *stirred* in His love;
 He will joy over thee with ringing joy,
 <*As in the day of* festival>;
- 18 [] *He shall* take away *ignominy and shame*,
 The yoke of reproach.
- 19 Behold I deal with all who afflict thee at that time;
 And I shall save her that halteth,
 And her that is driven out shall I gather.
 And I shall make them for a praise and a name in all the earth [],
 <When I turn their captivity before their eyes, saith Yahweh>.
- 20 [].

NAHUM

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

THE year 625 B.C. was critical in the history of Assyria. The political horizon had indeed for some time past assumed an ominous aspect; but it was not until 625 that the actual crisis came which marked for the Assyrian empire the beginning of the end. The year either actually coincided with, or immediately followed, that in which Ashurbanipal died; and Assyria found herself confronted almost on every side by pressing danger, and without any efficient ruler to meet the situation. In the east and north-east she was being pressed by the Medes; in the south-east there was general unrest among the Babylonians, and a certain Nabopolassar now occupied the throne of Babylon; while in the south Egypt, though her advance had been checked by the timely intervention of the Scythians, was in reality only awaiting her time when once more she could assume the offensive; and the same was true of the petty states of Syria and Palestine.

The different Median tribes, who had since the ninth century gradually established themselves in the land between the Caspian Sea and the Zagros mountains, and had there in course of time amalgamated, became under Phraortes (*cir.* 660–630) a powerful kingdom. Phraortes was an enterprising ruler: he not only subjugated Persia (*cf.* Herod. i. 102) but endeavoured to extend the Median power westward. In this he was opposed by the Scythians and Assyrians, who united to check his progress. Phraortes seems first to have directed his forces against Assyria in order that by compassing her downfall he might be free to measure his strength with the Scythian peoples. The advance was made towards the end of Ashurbanipal's reign. The attempt, however, proved disastrous; the Median forces were routed and Phraortes himself was killed. But Ashurbanipal died in 626; and his death appears to have been the occasion for another attempt on the part of the Medes to extend their power westward; though in all probability their intentions were already known to Assyria before that, seeing that the latter had been prevented from attending herself to matters in the south. Cyaxares, who had succeeded to the throne of Media on the death of Phraortes, was as energetic and

enterprising a ruler as his father, and is said, indeed, to have possessed greater military ability than any of his ancestors (Herod. i. 103). He advanced on Assyria, and, having defeated her forces, proceeded to besiege Nineveh. The situation became exceedingly ominous. Ashur-etililani, the son and probably immediate successor of Ashurbanipal, found himself not only forced to withdraw to his capital but obliged to face dissension and rebellion within his own kingdom. For, on the death of Ashurbanipal, Nabopolassar succeeded in establishing himself as king in Babylon. Who Nabopolassar was we do not exactly know; nor can we say by what steps he gained his kingship. He has been considered by some a native Babylonian; while others with greater probability regard him as a Chaldean. That he was a usurper rather than the recognized successor of Kandalanu (as Ashurbanipal was called in Babylon) seems indicated by his later alliance with the Medes and by the fact that he was recognized at first only, or practically only, in the city of Babylon. It is also noticeable that Abydenus speaks of him as one of Assyria's generals; and, if this representation is correct, it may be suspected that Nabopolassar, while appointed to superintend the affairs of Babylonia, had towards the last years of Ashurbanipal's reign, when matters were beginning to go from bad to worse, secretly sown the seeds of rebellion, and had then, on his master's death, openly revolted and secured for himself the throne of Babylon. Thus menaced by serious rebellion at home, and hard pressed from outside by a foe whose alertness and determined aggressiveness demanded her undivided attention, Assyria found herself in 625 in imminent danger. There was left to her but one hope of safety, namely, the almost impregnable position and well-fortified condition of her capital; and to it her forces withdrew. But if Herodotus (i. 103) can be trusted, the Medes, undaunted by the difficulties which the approach to Nineveh offered, followed up their successes and began the siege of the city. Though the Assyrians might well have held out for some considerable time, there can be little doubt that the Medes would have attained their purpose. As it happened, the Scythians, who had been dispatched into Syria and Palestine, having hastily come to terms with Egypt, hurried back to the north, and, reinforcing those of their number who had been left behind, advanced under their king Madyes, son of Protothydes, against Cyaxares. The latter was compelled to relinquish the siege and, being defeated by the Scythians, withdrew to the defence of his own kingdom.

Thus the crisis of 625 passed, and Assyria once more breathed freely. In reality, however, it was only the averting of immediate danger; the

power of Nineveh was broken and the events of 625 pointed to the end. Cyaxares, who had been within an ace of triumph, was too resolute and enterprising a ruler to allow the rebuff he had received at the hands of the Scythians to frustrate his hopes. Like Egypt, he withdrew, but only to wait for his schemes to mature and the fitting moment to come when he could advance once more and this time deal a decisive blow at Assyria.

Ashuretililani, whose building operations may perhaps have been necessitated by the events of 625, was succeeded by his brother Sinsharishkun. In what year Sinsharishkun ascended the throne we do not know; but contract-tablets have been found at Nippur, dating from Ashuretililani's second and fourth years, and also at Sippara and Erech, dating from Sinsharishkun's second, third, and seventh years; and on the basis of these dates Maspero gives 620 as the approximate date of Sinsharishkun's accession. It is significant that on these tablets neither Ashuretililani nor Sinsharishkun is entitled "king of Babylon" but only "king of Assyria." This confirms what has been noticed above, namely, that, while in some parts of both northern and southern Babylonia at least Assyrian rule was still acknowledged, the city of Babylon was already lost to the empire. It is unfortunate that we have no contemporary evidence to enable us to trace the steps by which Nabopolassar secured the supremacy over all Babylonia. The struggle between the rival parties must have gone on for some time. But at length Assyria was forced to relinquish her claim. We find reference made to this on a barrel-cylinder found in the temple of Ninib, on which Nabopolassar records the restoration of the temple, in the following words: "The Assyrians, who from remote days ruled all peoples, and with their heavy yoke oppressed the people of the land (i.e. Babylonia), I, the weak, the humble, the worshipper of the lord of lords, by the mighty force of Nabu and Marduk, my lords, cut off their feet from the land of Akkad, and caused their yoke to be thrown off¹." Probably more than one factor helped to bring about the end of Assyrian rule in Babylonia. It is not unlikely that Abydenus' somewhat confused statement—"Post quem Saracus Assyriis imperavit, et certior factus, quod exercitus locustarum instar e mari exiens impetum faceret, Busalossorum ducem confestim Babelonem misit. Ille autem consilio rebellionis inuito Amuheam Ashdahaki Medorum principis filiam Nabukodrossoro suo filio uxorem despondit"—should be interpreted in this connection. We may suppose that Nabopolassar,

¹ Adapted from Pinches, *O.T. in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*², p. 550.

allying himself with the Medes, had collected an army largely composed of Chaldeans, and, moving northwards, had in this way succeeded in bringing Babylonia wholly under his rule. We have no contemporary account of Cyaxares' movements; but Herodotus (i. 106) relates that "Cyaxares and the Medes invited the greater part of them (the Scythians), and having made them drunk, put them to death." Maspero (*op. cit.* p. 480) sees no reason for rejecting the account; but without going so far as to believe, as tradition clearly intends, that Cyaxares simply by treachery overthrew the Scythian power, we may well think that by acts of intrigue and artfulness he removed their leaders; and then, while Nabopolassar was engaging the attention of Assyria by his move in Babylonia, surprised the Scythians by force of arms and drove them back. Thus it would seem that, within 10 or 12 years after the crisis of 625, the earlier situation was reproduced; and Assyria found herself menaced in the south-west by Egypt, in the south and south-east by the Babylonians, and in the east and north-east by the Medes. But her danger now was far more serious than it was then; for not only was the opposition more vigorous, but she had lost Syria and Palestine, Babylonia and north-western Mesopotamia; and more than this, she could no longer count on the support of the Scythians, for these had been repulsed, and were themselves in danger. Assyria's days, in fact, were numbered and her end in view.

According to Abydenus, Nabopolassar, having allied himself with the Medes, is said to have advanced on Nineveh; and this statement agrees with the account given by Diodorus Siculus, according to which the Chaldean and Median leaders are represented as acting in concert. But more reliable evidence is now available by the discovery of the *stèle* of Nabonidus near Hillah in 1895. On this *stèle*, which is unfortunately imperfect, reference is made to the overthrow of Assyria in the following terms: "...as a helper [Marduk] gave him [i.e. Nabopolassar], as an ally he made him possess. The king of the Umman-manda, who had not an equal, he subdued; at his bidding he made him march to his assistance. Above and below, right and left, like a flood he overwhelmed; he avenged Babylon; he multiplied corpses. The king of the Umman-manda, the fearless, ruined all the temples of the gods of the land of Assyria; and the cities on the border of the land of Akkad [i.e. north Babylonia], which had revolted against the king of Akkad, and had not gone to his assistance, he destroyed, and of their sanctuaries (walls?) he left not any; he laid waste their cities. The king of Babylon, like a flood, carried beyond bounds the work of Marduk, who had entrusted him

with sway¹." From this passage it is clear that it was not Nabopolassar but the king of the Umman-manda (i.e. Cyaxares) who actually devastated Assyria and apparently destroyed its capital in 612.

ADDITIONAL NOTE.

Though Xenophon, when he passed by the ruins of Nineveh some two hundred years after its destruction, did not know that they were those of the once famous capital of Assyria but only that they indicated a city which had proved impregnable until "Zeus rendered its inhabitants stupid²," "the inhabitants of the neighbourhood never forgot the name of the great metropolis." This fact, which is borne out by the references in early writers³ and by the accounts of mediaeval travellers, was amply established in the last century by the successive labours of Rich, Botta, and especially of Layard, Rassam, Loftus and George Smith, who brought to light the long hidden palaces and other treasures of ancient Nineveh.

The site of Nineveh⁴ is marked by the two mounds of Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus. These mounds, which lie opposite the town of Mosul and on the left bank of the Tigris, are situated at the north-west corner of a tract of land, which forms an irregular trapezium and which is bounded on the N.E. by the range of Gebel Maklub and the hill of 'Ain-es-Safra, on the S.E. by the upper Zab, on the S.W. by the Tigris and on the N.W. by the Husur. The northern mound of Kuyunjik, the more extensive of the two, covers the sites of the palaces of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal, the former lying to the south and the latter to the north. The southern mound of Nebi Yunus, famous for the supposed tomb of the prophet Jonah and for its mosque, was the site of Sennacherib's palace-arsenal, which was later rebuilt by Esarhaddon.

Though the history of Nineveh goes back to the earliest times, its real maker was Sennacherib (705-681). The earlier palace which "the former kings...had made for their lordly habitation but had not adorned its structure" (*New Cylinder*, col. v. 61-63), had been seriously damaged at its foundation by the river Tebiltu. This small palace Sennacherib pulled down, and, diverting the course of the Tebiltu, enlarged

¹ The translation is taken with slight changes from Ball, *Light from the East*, pp. 213 f.

² *Anab.* iii. 4, 8-10.

³ Cf. *Tac. Ann.* xii. 13.

⁴ For the topography of Nineveh see Felix Jones, *Topography of Nineveh* in *J.R.A.S.* (1855).

considerably the area of the former platform, and on it built a palace which he named "The Palace which has no equal." At the same time the circuit of the city was extended to 21,815 cubits, and the city provided with an inner and outer wall and with no less than fifteen gates. The entire extent covered, according to Felix Jones (*op. cit.* p. 324), an area of about 1800 acres; while the length of the eastern wall is fixed at 16,000 ft., the northern at 7000 ft., the western (including the space occupied by the mounds of Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus) at 13,600 ft., and the southern at 3000 ft., making a total of 39,600 ft. or 7 m. 4 fur., just one-eighth of the dimensions given by Diodorus Siculus. The Husur, flowing southwards from Horsabad, the site of Sargon's palace and fortress, which guarded its sources, turns westward at Nineveh, and, entering the eastern wall, flows through the city, skirting the eastern side of the mound of Kuyunjik and emptying itself into the Tigris, which probably flowed originally close by the foot of the western wall but is now separated from it by a crescent-shaped tract of silt. The northern and eastern walls were guarded by a moat, and the southern wall by a brook dammed at its entrance into the Tigris, while the western wall was protected by the river. The eastern wall, especially south of the Husur, was further guarded by extensive outer ramparts and moats. The moats were fed by the Husur, by its tributaries and by canals, and the water-supply regulated by a system of dams, three such dams lying across the Husur as it entered the eastern wall. Further afield forts guarded the approaches to the capital; and of special importance were the fortified cities of Kalah (modern Nimrûd) and Dûr-Sargon (modern Horsabad), the former, situated near the juncture of the Upper Zab and the Tigris, commanding the south, while the latter, lying north at the sources of the Husur, protected the water-supply for the city, which was dependent on the Husur for its drinking-water, as the water of the Tigris was undrinkable.

The Book of Nahum, of course, offers no clue as to the nature of the capital's fall, unless it be indeed (what is quite improbable) a *vaticinium post eventum*; but even in that case it would remain doubtful whether the statement in ii. 9 pictures an actual flood (*v. Comm.*). Abydenus simply states that "when Sarakus the king was apprised of all these proceedings (*viz.*, Nabopolassar's rebellion and move on Nineveh) he burnt the royal palace, and Nabuchodrossorus succeeded to the empire." Diodorus Siculus, on the other hand, directly attributes the fall of the city to the intervention of a flood. But his account commands little confidence. As the excavations at Kuyunjik have shown, the buildings

there have been destroyed by fire, and this fact is most obviously explained as the work of an assaulting foe. In the northern portion of the eastern wall there is a breach, and a considerable length of the moat in front is filled with old wall-stones; and in view of this it may be inferred that it was at this point that the Medes attacked Nineveh's rampart. It is possible that after the dams had been destroyed and the palaces burnt, the Husur, swollen by the winter snow, may have flooded the capital. In that case Nahum's statement that Nineveh would become a "pool of water" will have received a *literal* fulfilment; and in any case it is more than probable that it was the flooded appearance which the site of Nineveh offered from time to time in after years that gave rise to the tradition that it had directly succumbed to a violent flood. But however that may be, there would appear to be little doubt that the direct factors in compassing Nineveh's fall were the Medes, who, with drastic force and unsparing hand, reduced it to utter ruin.

§ 2. THE PROPHET NAHUM AND THE DATE OF HIS PROPHETIC ACTIVITY.

Of the personal history of the prophet we know nothing beyond what is told us in the title to his book, according to which he is stated to have been an Elkoshite, i.e. a native of Elkosh. Elkosh has been identified with Alkush, a considerable Christian village, which lies about 25 miles north of Mosul, by Eichhorn, J. D. Michaelis, Ewald, and more recently by Franz Delitzsch and Jeremias, who think that the prophet may have been a descendant of the North Israelitish tribes. But this identification is improbable. Alkush is not mentioned before the eighth century A.D.; and the tradition connecting the place with the tomb of Nahum cannot be traced back earlier than the end of the sixteenth century¹. Most probably the tradition arose partly from the similarity of the name Alkush to that of the prophet's native place and partly from the desire to find his home in the neighbourhood of Nineveh. Moreover, the supposition that he was a descendant of the North Israelitish exiles has little probability; the district of Nineveh was not the scene of their exile; nor is there in the prophecy any hope expressed of the restoration of the ten tribes—a fact which, as Kuenen (*Einl.* ii. 367 f.) has pointed out, would have been surprising, had Nahum lived in their midst. Another view is that Elkosh was a village in Galilee. This was the view

¹ "The tomb is a simple plaster box, covered with green cloth, and standing at the upper end of a large chamber" (Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, i. 233).

of Jerome, who in the preface to his commentary on Nahum says: "Some think that Elcesaeus (Helkeseus) was the father of Nahum, and, according to Hebrew tradition, was also a prophet; whereas Elcesi (Helkesei) is to the present day a little village in Galilee, small, indeed, and scarcely by its ruins indicating the traces of ancient buildings; but known to the Jews and pointed out to me also by the guide." His statement has been accepted by many. Elcesi has been conjectured to be the modern El-Kauze, east of Ramiah about seven miles south-west of Tibnin. Cyril of Alexandria relies on the tradition that Elcesi (Elkese) was a village, but only observes that it was located somewhere in the land of the Jews; while Eusebius in his *Onomasticon* is still more reserved, and contents himself with the remark: Ἐλκεσῆ, ὅθεν καὶ Ναοῦμ ὁ Ἐλκεσαῖος. If Jerome's view is correct, Nahum will have been most probably a descendant of those northern Israelites who had been left behind after the fall of Samaria in 722, and had later, it may be supposed, settled either temporarily or permanently in Judah. Whether however, Jerome's statement is trustworthy may be doubted. There is of course, no positive reason why he should not have belonged to northern Palestine and subsequently removed to the south. Still, there is no indication in his prophecy that he was a Galilean; and, moreover, Elcesi looks very much like a mere reproduction of the gentile Elkoshi, which is found in the text; if this is so, it may be conjectured that some Galilean village, perhaps that represented by the modern El-Kauze, resembled in sound Elkosh and in consequence came to be associated traditionally with the prophet's birth place. A Galilean origin was attributed to the prophet also by Knobel and Hitzig, who regarded Elkosh as the same as the later Capernaum. Beyond the fact that the Greek Καφαρναούμ appears to be equivalent to "village of Nahum," there is not the slightest evidence to show that Capernaum was ever known as Elkosh. We have no proof that it is the prophet who is referred to by the ending ναουμ, even if it represents the original, and not possibly an abbreviated form. The most probable view seems to be that (now generally adopted by commentators) which places Elkosh in the neighbourhood of Bêt-Gibrin, the ancient Eleutheropolis, about twenty miles south-west of Jerusalem. This location rests on a statement found in the *Liber de vitis Prophetarum*, a work falsely attributed to Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, according to the Syriac version of which "Nahum was from Elkosh

¹ As is universally admitted, the representation in *Tobit* i. 10, vii. 3, xiv. 4, 8, 10, is untrustworthy.

beyond Beth-Gabre (i.e. Bêt-Gibrîn) of the tribe of Simeon." About six miles to the east of Bêt-Gibrîn there is an ancient well named Bir-el-Kaus, and it has been thought by some that the name preserves a trace of Elkosh. This, however, may be doubted; for, as G. A. Smith (*Twelve Prophets*, p. 81 n.) has pointed out, the position *east* of Bêt-Gibrîn is not altogether suitable, the above reference of Pseudo-Epiphanius placing it *beyond*, that is, presumably south or south-west of Bêt-Gibrîn, and in the tribe of Simeon. But though we cannot be sure of the exact site, the view that Nahum belonged to Judah and was therefore, like Micah, a native of the country, is much the most likely one, and in confirmation of this Budde (*EB.* col. 1281) has called attention to the fact that all similar names of places, viz. Eltekeh, Eltekôn, Eltôlad point to the kingdom of Judah.

Apart, however, from the question as to the site of Elkosh, it has been maintained by some scholars¹ that the prophet must have been resident in Assyria, at least when he wrote his prophecy. They base their view on three main grounds: on his use of Assyrian words, on his knowledge of Nineveh, and on the absence of any reproof of Judah. He seems to regard Judah, it is urged, "ideally as the kingdom of God rather than actually in its existing condition" (Kirkpatrick). But these grounds are by no means conclusive. Nahum's use of Assyrian words has been very much exaggerated. In fact we can only be certain that one word is Assyrian, namely, *Tiphsar* (iii. 17), though most probably *Minzar* (iii. 17) is Assyrian also (see *Comm.*). But these terms designate Assyrian officials and would be familiar to anyone resident in Palestine. The prophet's description of Nineveh is vivid, and his knowledge of her situation, of her wealth, of her trading population, and of the plunder she had gathered into her coffers from subject peoples is extensive; but they do not necessarily imply that he must have actually resided near the capital, or even that he had seen it. At this time any intelligent Judæan could have written of Nineveh as Nahum has done. Not only her fame as a centre of trade, and her harsh and cruel treatment of peoples, but her general situation must have been well known to an inhabitant of Judah from the close relations his country had with Assyria; the more so to Nahum, if he lived in the neighbourhood of Eleutheropolis, which was situated on one of the roads between Assyria and Egypt. The fact that Judah is nowhere reproved in the prophecy is explainable partly because the prophecy is directed against Assyria,

¹ Notably Ewald and Kirkpatrick.

but mainly, as we shall presently see, because of the particular time at which Nahum prophesied.¹

The period at which the prophet addressed his message has been much debated, and more views than one have been expressed. The principal data, which we have at our disposal for determining the question, are the following: (a) The fall of Thebes in 661, for though Thebes suffered more than once there can be little doubt that what Nahum refers to in ii. 8 f. is the capture and sack of the city by Ashurbanipal in 661. (b) The presence (apparently in the past) of a "deviser of evil against Jehovah" in Palestine (i. 11). (c) An imminent attack on Nineveh which is pictured as compassing her fall. As the prophecy is clearly not a *vaticinium post eventum*, this will mean that it cannot have been written later than 612, the year in which Nineveh fell. (d) The foe who is to accomplish this appears already to be on the move (iii. 2), and fortresses to have been taken (iii. 12 f.). (e) The prophet is able either actually to speak of Assyria as rapidly on the decline, or at any rate to conceive of its power as diminished. (f) It was a time when the prophet could represent Jehovah as saying to Nineveh: "Behold, I am against thee" (ii. 13, iii. 5). These data are not so definite as we might desire; for in the case of (b) it is uncertain who is intended by the "deviser of evil" or when "he went forth"; and again in the case of (d) the appearance of the foe might conceivably be still in the future and the fortresses in consequence yet to be taken. Nevertheless, they are significant, and the direction in which they point is unmistakable.

The prevailing view among older commentators was that Nahum wrote in the days of Hezekiah not long after Sennacherib's reverse before Jerusalem; but this view has been once for all negatived by the fact that the date of the fall of Thebes is now known (see above). Ewald's view that the prophet wrote in view of Phraortes' attack, which, after Eusebius, he places in 636, is not very probable, more especially as the capital was never in imminent danger, the Assyrians defeating the Medes before they made much progress.

Recent scholars think of either (a) the time of Shamashshumukin's rebellion, when there was a widespread revolt in the provinces and dependencies, that is to say, in the reign of Manasseh about the year 650; or (b) the year 625 when Nineveh was besieged for the first time

¹ In support of the view that Nahum resided in Judah and not in Assyria mention may be made of the reference to the palace in *the singular* (ii. 7), whereas there were more than one at Nineveh, and to the custom of beating the breast as a mark of grief, which was Judæan, not Assyrian.

under Cyaxares; or (c) the period immediately before the fall of Nineveh in 612. On behalf of (a) it is mainly urged (1) that the allusion to the overthrow of Thebes favours a date rather at the beginning than at the end of the period (664-612) for it "would be more forcible if the event had occurred within living memory" and (2) that "Nineveh, though threatened by its enemies, is still in full possession of its wealth and strength" (i. 12, ii. 9). But the text of i. 12 is far from certain, and ii. 9 (10) is certainly not a decisive indication that Assyria still fully retained her power. Moreover, seeing that Thebes fell at the hands of the Assyrians, would it not be more reasonable for a prophet, wishing to point out to the latter that no sure reliance could be placed on the strength of their capital's position, to quote the instance of Thebes *after a lapse of time* rather than almost immediately after the occurrence of the event? There are, however, two facts at least which tell strongly against the date in question; one is that Shamash-shumukin headed a rebellion, endeavouring to induce not only Babylonia but Assyria's other dependencies to revolt against Nineveh and aiming not at the actual overthrow of the capital but at bringing it, at the most, into dependence on Babylon; whereas Nahum looks forward to the actual overthrow of Nineveh, and that not at the hand of a confederate force but at the hand of some one foe. The other fact is that it is almost inconceivable that a prophet of Jehovah would have asked his people to see in the revolt Jehovah's hand, inasmuch as prophetic teaching was strongly opposed to intrigue and rebellion. For these reasons, then, the choice will lie between the year 625, when Cyaxares made his first attack on Nineveh, and the years immediately preceding her fall in 612. It is not, however, easy to decide which of these two dates is to be preferred. The latter has been urged on the ground that the siege of 625, resting simply on the authority of Herodotus, is doubtful, and that the certainty of Nineveh's fall, which pervades the prophecy, would betray rather the closing years of Assyria's existence. But the fact that the siege of 625 rests simply on the statement of Herodotus is not a sufficient reason for doubting its occurrence, more especially as it would fit in well with what we know of this period. And to urge that the prophet could not have then spoken with such certainty respecting the fall of Nineveh in 625 as his prophecy expresses is to assume more than we are in the position to do. On the other hand, if what evidence we have for the circumstances of the year 625 has been correctly interpreted above, then Assyria must have been at that time in a very critical condition, and the fall of her capital may well have

appeared certain to the prophet. Moreover, there is a freshness about the words a "hammer (see *Comm.*) has gone up" as well as in the description that follows, which strongly suggests that Assyria is being faced by forces, which, if not in one sense new to her, were at any rate, as then constituted, to all intents and purposes a new body, whose strength and military skill she had yet to gauge. This would suit admirably Cyaxares, who, as we know, re-organized the Median forces and whose military acumen Assyria had still in 625 to measure. Unless, then, we are prepared to regard the account of the siege of Nineveh in 625 as untrustworthy, this freshness in the prophet's description would, so far as we can judge, remain unexplained. That the prophet was wrong as to the immediateness of Nineveh's fall in 625 is of no moment. As the future showed, he had at any rate rightly understood the fate which awaited Nineveh at the hand of the Median forces, though, as circumstances then turned out, that fate was temporarily delayed.

We are accordingly inclined to believe that Nahum prophesied in view of Nineveh's siege by Cyaxares in 625; and this date suits well such data as the prophecy offers. There are, however, two points which may be especially noticed in this connection. The first is as to who the "deviser of evil" is that is referred to in i. 11. Now it is generally thought that the allusion is to Sennacherib; and there can be no doubt that much can be urged in support of this view. We know that Sennacherib purposed the capture of Jerusalem, and he might therefore be justly spoken of as "one who devised evil against Jehovah"; more especially if, as we believe, Assyria is represented in i. 9 as saying "I will make an end of His abode" (see *Comm.*). But is it quite probable that Nahum would have harked back to an event which happened many decades before, especially when Judah in the meantime had recovered her strength, after the destruction that had then been wrought upon her? Is it not much more probable that the prophet, writing in 625, had some more recent event in mind? If so, then there is only one event (unless indeed the reference is to an event of which no record is as yet to hand), of which we may think, and that is, the Scythian invasion in 626. Now, as we know (cf. p. 74), the Scythians went forth at Assyria's prompting and as her allies, in order to help her to check Egypt's advance and to quell the unrest among the Palestinian states. And this would fall in well with i. 11, which represents the "deviser of evil" as *going forth from Assyria*, that is, at Assyria's bidding or request, and also with iii. 11, where, if, as is not

improbable, the tenses are to be rendered as presents rather than as futures, there may well lie beneath the words, "and thou seekest a refuge from the enemy," an allusion to the help which Assyria sought from her Scythian allies not only for the protection of her capital but also to enable her to retain her hold in the west. But it may be objected to this interpretation that the Scythians could not possibly be called a "deviser of evil against Jehovah"; they went forth to frustrate Egypt's plans and to allay the unrest in Palestine; and the only evil they devised against Judah was such as Judah herself deserved for the way she had implicated herself in rebellion along with other states against Assyria (compare the prophecy of Zephaniah). Moreover, they did not as a matter of fact harm Judah; they simply marched down the coast, and on reaching the Egyptian frontier hastily came to terms with Egypt and withdrew. Unfortunately we do not know all the inner circumstances connected with the Scythian invasion, but we can gather from the prophecy of Zephaniah and the early chapters of Jeremiah (where in all probability the enemy from the north were originally the Scythians) that their advance caused widespread terror, and that their purpose to give little quarter to all who opposed their forces was apparently so relentless that Zephaniah could see in their advent the "Day of Jehovah." Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that the Assyrian officials resident in Palestine made it quite clear to their Palestinian vassals that through their Scythian allies they intended to put down once for all the unrest that had been a constant menace to their authority in these parts. We may not dogmatize; but Assyria was not the one to let occasion slip; and we may well believe that her representatives threatened Jerusalem with destruction, more especially as she was then the leading state in Palestine and had shown herself so ready to raise sedition, whenever the opportunity presented itself. Besides, though there is every probability that largely owing to the teaching of Zephaniah and Jeremiah and in face of the oncoming Scythian she retreated at the eleventh hour from rebellion, it is not probable that the Assyrian officials altered their attitude towards her until they were forced to do so, when it became clear that the Scythian forces were needed elsewhere. If, then, the circumstances of the moment have been correctly surmised, the attitude of Nahum will at once become clear. The relentless attitude of Assyria towards Judah on the one hand, and the sudden danger which threatened the very existence of the empire on the other, led him as a prophet to view these events with reference to Jehovah, and to see an explanation of them in the fact that Assyria had exceeded

her mission: in counselling evil against Jehovah, in that she had planned the destruction of His abode, she had brought upon herself destruction at His hand.

The other point is that, if Nahum prophesied in 625, then it must have been also at a moment when he could represent Jehovah as saying to Nineveh, "Behold, I am against thee" (ii. 13, iii. 5). Now we have every reason to believe that the circumstances of that year admitted of this representation. During the century of Assyrian domination, and since Isaiah had predicted Assyria's fall, no true prophet of Jehovah had raised his people's hopes by pointing out when that predicted end would come. The reason for this is clear. No indication of it had been discernible. On the contrary, the efforts of Jehovah's prophets had been directed towards retaining Judah's loyalty to Assyria and preventing her from revolt. "Shun intrigue and alliance; trust in Jehovah" had been the constant burden of their message. In 625, however, a new situation arose. Assyria was seen to be confronted by an enemy whose determined attack placed her in imminent danger. But—and this is especially important to observe—the situation had arisen apart from intrigue, apart from any organized rebellion, on the side of Judah or of Assyria's other dependencies. Assyria was being met by what was to all intents and purposes a new foe, who were neither the subjects of Assyria nor, so far as can be judged, in any way associated as yet with those who were. The situation corresponded exactly to what any true prophet of Jehovah might view as brought about by Jehovah: so far, then, from the circumstances of the year 625 being unsuitable to a *prophetic* prediction of Assyria's overthrow, it may be said that it would have been altogether remarkable had no prophet of Jehovah appeared at that moment. As it is, we may well believe that Nahum was raised up by Jehovah for this purpose, and that, as his fellow-countrymen, in common with other peoples, were wondering what would be the issue—whether after all Assyria was going to succumb or whether she would survive—he came forward to voice Jehovah's threat against Nineveh, "Behold, I am against thee"; and by such words bade his nation see in Assyria's critical situation Jehovah's hand. But the threat, "Behold, I am against thee," also implies that Judah's moral position was such that Jehovah could remit the punishment He had inflicted upon her through her loss of independence at the hands of Assyria. And, as various writers have observed, there is throughout the prophecy no word of reproach against Judah. In view of this, Marti (and he is followed by others) goes so far as to maintain that Nahum

was a precursor of those false patriotic prophets whom Jeremiah later so vehemently opposed. But that is not a true estimate; rather, the absence of reproof indicates that, when he wrote, the internal condition of Judah was such that he had every hope of her ultimate reformation; for it is not necessary to infer that she was then actually a "reformed" people; all that there is need to infer is that there were not wanting signs that she was responding to the teaching of her prophetic leaders. And this is what we believe was in reality happening in 625. We believe that largely owing to the strong protest of Zephaniah and Jeremiah and to the Scythian invasion, which brought about a wiser administration in the capital, movements for the better were already on foot, which, inspired by the teaching of the prophets and gaining popularity from the course events were taking, were fast reaching that stage which would permit of a thorough reformation being carried out. Accordingly, what we should expect the true prophet to have done would have been not to dwell on the past or present evils within the nation, but, seeing that Assyria's fall was not being brought about by intrigue and rebellion, to herald that coming event as the act of Jehovah, and in this way encourage Judah and her leaders in their work of reformation. The difficulty involved in the representation that the overthrow of Assyria was due to Jehovah rests, consequently, not with those who accept the year 625 as the date of Nahum's prophecy, but with those who date it immediately before 612.

To sum up: the above discussion as to the person of the prophet and the time when he prophesied leads us to conclude that Nahum was a Judæan; that as a true prophet of Jehovah he predicted the fall of Nineveh in view of the attack on Assyria by the Medes under Cyaxares in 625; and that this happened shortly after the return from Palestine of the Scythian forces which had been dispatched thither at the instigation of Assyria.

§ 3. THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE AND ITS REVISIONS.

Whereas it is easy to follow out the contents of the prophet's message in the case of ii. 3—iii. 19, it is different with the opening paragraphs in i. 1—ii. 2. These have in a large measure suffered textual corruption and disorder, and it is difficult at times to state precisely the nature and connection of their contents. Assuming, however, that the text, as emended and arranged in the present commentary, approximates

to the original, we may summarize the contents of the book as follows :

I. Superscription (i. 1).

II. A section celebrating the avenging wrath of Jehovah. Jehovah is full of wrath against His adversaries ; the measure of His anger is seen in the convulsions of nature as He manifests His Presence. None can stand before Him ; opponents are utterly consumed. On the other hand, He has regard for those who seek refuge in Him, and in the day of distress helps them (i. 2-8, 10).

III. The reproach and fate of (apparently) Assyria. Assyria is reproached for meditating the overthrow of Jehovah's abode, seeing that she sent forth one who devised evil against Him. For this the power and glory of her empire will pass away. There will be none to perpetuate her name, and the worship of her deities will cease (i. 9, 11, 12 *a*, 14).

IV. A twofold address to Judah. (*a*) Jehovah has afflicted her for long, but now He will break his (i.e. apparently Assyria's) yoke from off her. The destroyer shall no more pass through her midst (i. 12*b*, 13, ii. 2*b*). (*b*) An announcement of Judah's peace. The heralds of peace are already hastening across the mountains, and Judah may therefore prepare to keep her feasts and pay her vows, for Jehovah restores the ancient splendour of Jacob (i. 15 (as far as *vows*), ii. 2*a*).

V. The attack, and fall of Nineveh. A "hammer" has already gone up, and the Assyrian is ironically bidden to guard the way. The attacking forces, with their warriors and chariots and horses, present a dazzling array, as they hasten forward to the assault. The city walls are assailed and the river-gates opened. The palace succumbs ; the harem is entered ; and Nineveh becomes like a pool, the waters of which roar as they rapidly flow away. The gold, the silver, and the rich treasures are at the mercy of the invader. The ancient den of lions is no more. Jehovah is against her (ii. 1, 3-13).

VI. An address to Nineveh. In a series of vivid, kaleidoscopic utterances Nineveh is characterized as the bloody, treacherous, plundering city, and is threatened with the deadly onset about to be made upon her. Jehovah is against her. As she has played the part of the harlot in her relations with other peoples, so in return she will receive the harlot's treatment. No one will bemoan her fate. In point of position and natural defence she is no better off than No of Amon. Already she finds herself like that city, powerless and forced to seek refuge from the enemy. Her fortresses fall into the invader's hands as readily as the ripe fig falls into the mouth when the tree is shaken. The passes to the

capital are open ; her defenders are mere women. She *may* prepare for the siege and repair her forts, but fire and sword will do their work. She *may* count on the peoples with whom she has ingratiated herself through trade and in other ways ; but they will vanish like the young locust, which strips off its sheath and flies away. Her officials, too, will prove no better. The locusts, which throng the walls in the evening and disappear with the rising sun, are typical of how they will act in the hour of her need (iii. 1-17).

VII. A concluding dirge. Nineveh falls ; her leaders sleep the sleep of death ; and her people are scattered on the mountains. All who hear of it exult (iii. 18, 19).

Of these sections there can be no question of the authenticity of sections V-VII : they bear throughout the stamp of originality, and in content correspond in every respect to what, according to the title, purports to be the message of Nahum. The same, however, cannot be said with regard to sections II-IV ; here the question of authenticity has to be raised and faced. The above scheme offers, it will be noticed, a different order in more than one place from that which is presented by the Hebrew text ; and, even if we were to suppose that the disarrangement in the latter is simply due to transcriptional error, yet certain of the sections would still be open to doubt. We begin with Section II. The alphabetic structure of this section has been generally recognized. The verses, however, do not represent a complete acrostic, and the present text in several cases shows a disregard for their acrostic character. Attempts have been made to restore a full acrostic poem, notably by Bickell and Gunkel ; but, though they show much ingenuity, they cannot be said to command confidence. What we appear to have is a fragment of a psalm, which has been reproduced without regard to its original alphabetic character. Now, in itself it is conceivable that Nahum may have taken up part of an earlier alphabetic psalm, and, remodelling it, inserted it as an introduction to his main theme. The fact that the section clearly serves a didactic purpose, calling attention to the teaching underlying the announcement of Nineveh's overthrow and Judah's consequent deliverance—namely, that Jehovah has regard for those (i.e. Israel) who seek refuge in Him, and is full of wrath towards those who (like the Assyrians) oppose themselves to Him—betrays the age of reflection rather than of active prophecy. What concerned Nahum was the announcement of Nineveh's fall, not the indication of the lesson it might have for his people and later generations. Moreover, the fact that the language is general and contains no specific allusion

to Nineveh, as well as its underlying alphabetic structure, of which there is no certain trace in pre-exilic literature, tend to confirm the view that we have here an addition made by an editor rather than the work of, or a quotation by, the prophet. When the addition was made we cannot say definitely; but we shall not perhaps be far wrong, if we place it in the later post-exilic period, "when the yoke of the heathen pressed heavily on the people of God."

With regard to sections III and IV the question of authenticity is more complex. It is more complex because not only is the text in several places uncertain, but the verses are obviously in some disorder. We get in i. 11-ii. 3 what apparently is an address to Assyria alternating with an address to Judah; thus i. 11, 14, ii. 1 appear to refer to Assyria, while i. 12*b*, 13, 15, ii. 2 certainly refer to Judah. Several scholars have solved the difficulty by supposing that the rest of the acrostic psalm, just noticed, underlies the present text in the latter half of ch. i as well as in ii. 1-3, and more than one attempt at restoration has been made. This view, however, is not probable; for no *certain* trace of the remaining verses of the original acrostic can be found in i. 11 ff., and the attempts which have been made to restore them require such a very drastic treatment of the existing text that they inspire but little, if any, confidence. Nor may we argue that, because the first half of the chapter is based on part of an acrostic, therefore the rest of the latter must be sought for in i. 9 ff., for an editor may quite well have only quoted part of a poem as being alone suitable to the special purpose he had in view. Other scholars are of opinion that at least i. 11 and i. 14 belong to the original prophecy; and there would appear to be little doubt that they are right; for in *ver.* 11 there is clearly a reference to some external foe which had been a source of danger to Judah, and if so, then Assyria may quite well be the subject of the prophet's address: moreover, the wording of the sentence would suitably express what had been more than once the attitude of that empire towards Judah. Nor is there any reason to doubt the authenticity of *ver.* 14, for, though there is in the verse itself nothing which would definitely show that the reference is to Assyria, yet i. 11 would lead us to expect some announcement of Jehovah's purpose to visit judgment on Assyria for what she had done in the past, and the verse in question not only gives this, but leads up to the indication, in ii. 1, of the enemy at whose hand Jehovah's purpose is to be accomplished.

It is generally thought that the opening words of Nahum have been lost; this may be the case; and certainly is, if i. 11 and i. 14 alone are

authentic, for the former verse forms no suitable introduction, while the latter does not connect very closely with it, even if we, with some commentators, are prepared to cancel the opening "and" and to read, "Jehovah has commanded" for "and Jehovah commands" (or "will command"). But it may be doubted whether we are justified in limiting Nahum's utterances in ch. i simply to these two verses; the text, as we have already remarked, is far from certain in the latter half of this chapter, and it is therefore not improbable that, if not the actual opening words of the prophet's message, yet at any rate such as preface i. 11, as well as the connecting words between that verse and *ver.* 14, should be sought for in the other verses of the section. Ch. i. 11, it must be admitted, reads very much like a causal clause; and if so, it is tempting to see a connection in the "deviser" of i. 11 and "what (or how) *do ye devise*" of i. 9. The present text of this latter verse cannot, of course, on this view have preserved the correct reading; but, as in any case the text is suspicious, it seems justifiable to allow i. 11 to determine our conjecture as to what the original reading was. For reasons stated more fully in the commentary we believe that the original text may have approximated to: *How shouldst thou devise wickedness against Jehovah* (saying), "*An utter end will I make of His place; trouble shall not rise up twice*"? *For (ver. 11) from thee went forth, etc.* This emendation involves no considerable change; it would afford a good connection with i. 11, and, if correct, may actually represent the opening words of the prophet's message.

After this deprecation of Assyria's attitude towards Judah we naturally expect the prophet to introduce the divine sentence or judgement, or, at any rate, to point out what that attitude merits at the hand of Jehovah. If so, then the introductory formula, *Thus saith Jehovah*, of i. 12 leads us to think that the original text of this verse announced such a statement. The present text is admittedly corrupt. On the basis of some suggestions offered by the LXX we propose to read: *Though thou rulest over peoples and many be designated by thy name, yet the glory of thy power shall pass away and the report of thee shall no more be heard.* It may be noticed in favour of this reading that it would give just such a statement as the context would lead us to expect; that it connects well with i. 14, *And Jehovah will charge concerning thee*; and also agrees in content with it. The clause, "and the report of thee," etc., is suggested by the LXX, and, if correct, will have fallen out of the Hebrew text on account of its similarity to the following clause, "I have afflicted thee," etc., which belongs most probably to the next verse.

We conclude, accordingly, that not only i. 11 and i. 14 but also i. 9 and i. 12*a*, in their original form, are from the prophet's hand and form the opening section of his message, announcing Assyria's just retribution at the hand of Jehovah for her attitude towards Jerusalem, His abode. This is followed in ii. 1, 3 ff. by a description of the assailing forces at whose hand the divine judgement is to be accomplished.

Interwoven with this opening section are found, as we have seen, verses (viz. i. 12*b*, 13, 15, ii. 2) which clearly refer not to Assyria but to Judah. They break the original connection and are certainly an after insertion. Taken out of their present context they read thus: *And I will afflict thee, I will not afflict thee again; and now will I break his rod (so emend) from off thee, and thy bonds will I snap. Behold upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that published peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows, for the destroyer shall no more pass through thee; he is wholly cut off. For Jehovah restores the pride of Jacob, the glory (emending the text) of Israel, for devastators have devastated them, and their vineyards (emending the text) have they destroyed.* The verses at first sight might be thought to form a unity, but closer consideration reveals the fact that they do not. For (1) there is a succession of causal clauses which could scarcely have been written down by one author. Judah is bidden to perform her vows (*a*) because the destroyer will no longer trouble her, and (*b*) because Jehovah restores the pride of Jacob. It might be supposed, of course, that (*b*) gives the reason for (*a*); but in that case we should not expect the third causal clause, "for devastators," etc. And (2), if the verses were originally connected with each other, we should have expected i. 12*b*, 13 to follow somewhere after ii. 2, rather than to precede it. The mention of Judah by name and the clause, "Behold," etc., strongly suggest that we have here the beginning of a new section. And (3) the phraseology (cf. Is. lii. 7) and the announcement to Judah to keep her feasts almost certainly indicate that the historical background is that of the exile; whereas i. 13 can only have reference to the Assyrian, since there is no other power mentioned to whom the suffix in *his yoke* (or *rod*) can refer, unless, indeed, we are prepared to believe that the antecedent has been lost, or that the power referred to was so well known at the time that it needed no mention by name.

So far, then, it is to be concluded that we have not one but two distinct addresses to Judah, one dating apparently from before the fall of Assyria, and the other from the time of the Babylonian exile. The only difficulty that remains is the question of the causal clauses in

i. 15, ii. 2. Now it must be admitted that if i. 15 is intended to herald the glad tidings of Judah's restoration from exile, then i. 15*b* is scarcely the reason that we should expect would be given as to why Judah may now keep her feasts; for what she wanted to know was not that no destroyer would any more visit her land (for she was already wasted and desolate) but whether her people and land were to be restored to her; and this as a matter of fact is the information given in the causal clause which follows in ii. 2. We may conclude, therefore, with much plausibility that originally this latter verse followed immediately on i. 15*a*, and that i. 15*b* has been inserted at a wrong point in the text. The original connection of i. 15*b* would appear to have been with i. 13; the causal clause would round off that verse, and such a connection seems favoured further by the use of the same word for *wickedness* in both i. 15*b* and i. 11; the wanton destruction which Assyria, or her allies at her instigation, had planned against Judah will now cease; the destroyer will be wholly cut off; and Judah will be free from bondage.

On this view, then, the earlier of the two addresses to Judah will comprise i. 12*b*, 13, 15*b*; and will date most probably from very shortly before 612, that is to say, when the end of Assyria was already in view and before Egypt had brought Judah into vassalage. The addition was intended to indicate to Judah that the end, which the prophet had predicted for Assyria in 625, was *now* to be accomplished. Its original place will have been in all probability on the margin of the roll, where it was inserted either by an editor or possibly by Nahum himself. The other address, i. 15*a*, ii. 2, which, as we have seen, probably dates from the end of the Babylonian exile, will have been added by a later editor likewise on the margin, whence at a still later time both passages came to be inserted into the text with the result that they obscured and to no small extent disarranged the opening words of the prophet's message.

To sum up, then: the original prophecy of Nahum will have included i. 9, 11, 12*a*, 14, ii. 1, 3-14 and iii; and is, as we have already seen, to be dated most probably in the year 625. In this form it will have continued to exist till just before 612, when either the prophet himself or a disciple of his added on the margin i. 12*b*, 13, 15*b* in order to indicate, as has just been noticed, that the overthrow of Assyria, which had been delayed in 625, was now to be accomplished, when Judah would be delivered from her yoke and be afflicted no more. As a matter of fact, though Judah was at that time delivered from the yoke of Assyria, yet in reality she only exchanged it for that of Babylon;

and so far from not being afflicted any more by foreign invasion, she had to endure the still worse evil of exile. Would, then, the outlook, such as the prophetic writer had held out for Judah before 612, ever be realized? So Israel, no doubt, repeatedly asked herself; and for long she looked in vain for any answer. But at length the term of exile drew to a close; signs became increasingly apparent that the Babylonian power could not for long continue; there was opening out for Judah a future brighter and more certain than she had ventured to think could ever have been hers; the outlook matched that which had inspired her prophetic teachers some eighty years before; and so one of them appended his note to what he found written in the margin of the roll of Nahum, announcing by it the restoration of Israel to her former glory and at the same time bringing the earlier note that the destroyer would no longer pass through the country into close connection with it. Thus a second revision was made and i. 15*a*, ii. 2 added to the prophet's message. In 537 Babylon fell, and under the Persian domination, which then succeeded, the Jews were permitted to return: at first matters moved slowly for the Jewish community, yet progress was made; the struggling community became more organized and gradually increased both in numbers and strength. They were worried, indeed, by the hostility and jealousy of their neighbours, but they had not to witness the invading forces of a foreign power; so far, then, the prediction, which had been made towards the end of the Babylonian exile, was fulfilled, even though the glorious outlook, which had inspired Judah's religious teachers, still awaited complete realization.

By the middle of the fourth century B.C., however, history began to repeat itself and from that time onward Judah came into conflict with foreign powers similar to those of Assyria and Babylon in the past. And as in the former days, so then men in Israel began to ask themselves what the issue would be. Would Judah succumb? What was the meaning of their affliction? Apart from such prophetic utterances as may possibly have been delivered to them during these periods of distress, they turned instinctively to the older prophecies for their answer: these were studied, reflected upon, and re-interpreted in the light of the times, and additions were made. One such addition was Nah. i. 2-8, 10; this fragment of an alphabetic psalm pointed out the lesson taught by Judah's subjugation and Nineveh's fall; it enforced the truth that Jehovah regarded those who sought refuge in Him in the day of trouble; that He was jealous for His people's honour; and, inasmuch as their adversaries were His adversaries, visited upon those

who opposed them His consuming wrath. With this addition, which, as in the case of the others, was originally made in all probability on the margin of the text, the prophecy of Nahum, apart from minor glosses, received its third and final revision.

§4. THE TEACHING OF NAHUM.

In recent years a somewhat harsh judgement has been pronounced on the prophet's message, notably by Marti and Powis Smith. Thus the latter writer has scarcely anything better to say of the prophet and his prophecy than that "the whole prophecy is a paean of triumph over a prostrate foe and breathes out the spirit of exultant revenge"; that "if Nahum was not in active opposition to Jeremiah, he was at least indifferent to his efforts"; that he was "a representative of the old, narrow and shallow prophetism," whose point of view is essentially one with the so called "false prophets" in general, to whom "the relation between Jehovah and his nation Israel was indissoluble," and by whom "the teaching that for a lack of fundamental, ethical qualities Jehovah was intending to bring destruction upon his nation was branded...as treason both to Israel and to Jehovah."¹ And most writers, if they do not see in it an evident token that he was no true prophet of Jehovah, remark on the fact that no mention is made of Judah's sins.

But though Nahum has no theological contribution to make in the sense that Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah have, there is nothing in his short prophecy which any of his greater prophetic predecessors could not, and, it may be added, would not, have said, had they prophesied at the time when he did.

Thus in the first place Nahum is so far one with Amos and his successors that Jehovah is to him, as He was to them, the controller of the world. This is indeed not explicitly stated, but it is assumed as a truth which needs no verification. It is Jehovah and none else who brings Nineveh to ruin. "I am against thee: it is the oracle of Jehovah of Hosts"² is the twice repeated dictum of the prophet. The work of destruction is accomplished by a foe (ii. 1), and their terrible onslaught is described, but it is Jehovah who is against her; they are but His agents working out His purpose. And further, just as Amos taught that the surrounding nations were to be punished by Jehovah for their hostility towards other peoples, apart from Israel, so Nahum teaches exactly the same in the

¹ Cf. *ICC.*, pp. 280-282.

² This is an expression which is frequent in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

case of Nineveh. It is true Judah is not left out of consideration; but, while Assyria is said to have imagined, i.e. planned, evil against Jehovah, (notice, not against Judah), it is the *nations* whom she has sold by "her harlotries" and the *peoples* by "her sorceries" (iii. 4); and it is again the *nations* that are to see "her nakedness" and the *kingdoms* "her shame" (iii. 5), and it will be *all* who hear of her fall that will rejoice. This representation is not such as we should expect from "a representative of the old, narrow and shallow prophetism," according to which Jehovah existed for Israel and Israel for Jehovah. The Jehovah of Nahum is the Jehovah of Amos.

And, secondly, Nineveh's fall is viewed by Nahum from an *ethical* standpoint. She falls because she has *wronged* nations and peoples. This is clearly stated in the opening verses of ch. iii, where her cruelty, treachery, selfishness, and greed are warmly denounced: and also especially in iii. 5, where Jehovah is said to threaten her with the harlot's punishment because of "her harlotries" and "her sorceries." This stern denunciation is not that of "a suffering patriot" "breathing out the spirit of exultant revenge" over a prostrate foe, but that of a religious teacher, to whom treachery and greed and cruelty are *moral wrongs not to be endured*. Had Nahum been simply a patriot, who smarted under Assyria's domination and repeated invasions, we should have expected him to be a little more "patriotic" than he is, and to mention his country at least once by name; and also to refer to the material evils that it had endured rather than to confine himself to nations and kingdoms in general. But the truth is that to Nahum Jehovah was not only the God of Israel, not only the Supreme Controller of the world, but a *Holy God*, who hated wrong and robbery.

And, thirdly, since it is his conception of Jehovah that in reality lies behind his denunciation of Nineveh in ch. iii, so it is Jehovah and not his people or his country that is uppermost in his thoughts, as he charges Assyria with the evil that she had planned: "How dost thou devise wickedness *against Jehovah*...for from thee went forth one who devised *against Jehovah* evil, who planned wickedness" (i. 9, 11). The nature of the evil which she had planned is given, if the text has been rightly restored (see p. 91) in i. 9: there it is stated that she had contemplated the *complete* overthrow of Jehovah's abode. As with Isaiah, so with Nahum: Zion was the place which Jehovah, who controlled the world, who demanded righteousness and hated iniquity, had made His dwelling; when, then, Assyria planned its destruction, she was challenging the right of the one righteous and supreme God to exist; she was venturing

an attack on that one Personal Power "that made for righteousness." As it happened, the Scythians had no sooner reached the frontier of Egypt than they were compelled to return, and Jerusalem and Judah were left unmolested. Since the explanation of this deliverance could certainly not be found by the prophet in the fact that Assyria had ventured to attack Jehovah's people (for the people of Judah were anything but what they should have been, and Nahum, like his contemporaries Zephaniah and Jeremiah, knew that they deserved divine judgement), the only reason that could be given was that Assyria had arrayed herself against Jehovah: the immoral state had set herself against the righteous God, and made Him answerable for that "trouble" which had repeatedly manifested itself within Judah. And so the prophet writes: "How dost thou devise wickedness"—not against Judah or Jerusalem but—"against Jehovah (saying), An utter end will I make of *His* place"; and again, "From thee went forth one who devised"—not against Judah but—"against Jehovah evil, who planned ruin." In Jehovah and in Jehovah alone was to be sought the explanation of that change *to the advantage of Judah* in the political world.

Whether Nahum believed that Zion was permanent, and on no account could be destroyed, but must endure irrespective of the moral condition of Jehovah's people—in other words, that Jehovah's choice of her, as then constituted, was final and irrevocable—we have no means of saying definitely, for the question is nowhere raised in his prophecy. But we have the right to say, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, that the moral condition of Judah was to him a factor to be reckoned with, and that it did matter with him whether his countrymen were righteous or not. It must have mattered. For if Jehovah was against Nineveh because she was an *immoral* city, and thus detested the immorality of another people, much more must He have detested the immorality of His own nation. Most probably Nahum still had hopes of his people. Micah had, indeed, seen no hope, and had predicted that Zion would be "ploughed as a field" and Jerusalem would "become heaps"; but Zephaniah, even with his stern prediction of the terrible "Day of Jehovah," in which His fury would be poured out on Jerusalem, and all the inhabitants of the land would be consumed, seems to have hesitated in announcing in explicit language *the complete overthrow* of Zion: with him it is "I will cut off *from this place* those," etc., and not "I will make an end of this place"; and he also hints at the possibility of a righteous remnant surviving the disaster. Those prophecies of Jeremiah (chs. ii–vi), which *in their original form* go back to the time

of the Scythian invasion, and are therefore *antecedent* to Nahum, and which are the only ones dating from Josiah's reign (with the possible exception of Jer. ii. 1-8), do not go beyond the position of Zephaniah; it is only at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign that Jeremiah utters the explicit threat that Jehovah will destroy His abode at Zion (cf. ch. vii). In view of these facts, such an assertion as that Nahum could not and would not have endorsed the teaching of either Zephaniah or Jeremiah is without justification, even if the contrary cannot be *directly* shown.

The reason why Nahum has no condemnation of Judah is no doubt largely to be found in the fact that he prophesied at a time when movements for the better within Judah had already been set on foot, and there was every prospect that a serious reformation was about to be carried out (see p. 87).

Accordingly, it is scarcely to be expected that he would have set himself to denounce Judah for her sins, when she was already endeavouring to respond to the prophetic teaching. But, apart from this, would it not have been altogether remarkable for the prophet to indicate that Judah was worthy of Jehovah's wrath at the very moment when he had been called to tell them that Assyria, the rod of Jehovah's wrath, was passing away? It would have been, to say the least, a most inappropriate moment. And also, if the absence of censure on Judah is remarkable—so remarkable that some writers relinquish the belief that Nahum can be regarded as a true prophet of Jehovah—why is it less remarkable that Jeremiah too has, so far as we know, no word of censure for Judah *from the close of the Scythian invasion to the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign*? Consistency demands surely that the two prophets should be judged similarly for this period. And further, can we say definitely who composed Nahum's audience when he delivered his message? That he was a Judæan and prophesied in Judah we have already concluded. But have we any right, in the absence of information, to say definitely that his hearers were solely Judæans? May he not have gone down to one of the trading quarters of Jerusalem, where Assyrian merchants were to be found, and delivered there his message? The possibility must be allowed, especially in view of iii. 16, where reference is made to Nineveh's traders. If so, it can be fairly urged that this may have been an *additional* reason why he has in reality nothing to say of Judah (but only of Jehovah) in his denunciation of Nineveh and in the prediction of her imminent fall.

To sum up, then, we believe that a careful consideration of Nahum's prophecy will tend to show that he was an ethical prophet; that he was

a prophet of Jehovah in the sense that Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah were; that there is no indication that he did not share their religious aspirations and beliefs; and that any attempt to bring him into essential opposition to Jeremiah cannot be successfully maintained.

§ 5. THE LITERARY FORM OF NAHUM.

With regard to the literary form and style of Nahum's prophecy the words of Bishop Lowth: "*Verum ex omnibus Minoribus Prophetis nemo videtur aequare sublimitatem, ardorem, et audaces spiritus Nahumi: adde quod ejus vaticinium integrum ac justum est poema; exordium magnificum est et plane augustum; apparatus ad excidium Ninivae, ejusque excidii descriptio et amplificatio, ardentissimis coloribus exprimitur, et admirabilem habet evidentiā et pondus*" have been echoed by all subsequent writers.

His vivid imagination and his power to express what passes rapidly before his mental eye in vigorous, well-compacted, realistic language are unsurpassed by any of the O.T. prophets. Expressing himself in as few words as possible, he sets before his readers the entire scene which he describes in such a way that they are made to feel that it is actually being transacted before their eyes. It is like a picture which an artist sketches, while others look on, with a few bold strokes, never adding more than are absolutely necessary, never omitting any that should be there, and always drawing them in such a way that each succeeds the other in natural order. His constructions are classical and idiomatic, and his language forcible and pure; they reveal the intensity of his feelings and create the impression that he is convinced of the certainty of his prediction, the truth of his charge, and the necessity of his denunciation. It is not surprising in one who moulds his language to meet the exigencies of his message that the rhythm of his utterances should be found to be irregular, unlike the alphabetical fragment which, according to its original text, comprises a series of distichs, each line of which was marked by three beats or accented words. It is true that some writers, like Duhm, have endeavoured to show that his prophecy exhibits a series of strophes, all, or nearly all, of which are of the same length and each throughout, or with few exceptions, representing the same rhythmic measure; but these attempts demand changes and transpositions, which, apart from metrical grounds, have little or nothing to recommend them, and which, moreover, in several cases rob the original prophecy of much of its force and intensity of feeling.

According to the text, on which the following translation is based, the opening section (i. 9, 11, 14) is represented by three three-beat lines in *ver.* 9; a line of two beats followed by two in the *kīnā* measure (3 : 2) in *ver.* 11; three three-beat lines followed by one with two beats in *ver.* 12; while in *ver.* 14 we have a series of three-beat lines alternating with two-beat lines. In the next section (ii. 1, 3-13)¹ the rhythm becomes more regular. Here the predominant type is a line of three beats continued by a series of two-beat lines. Thus a first line of three beats is continued in *ver.* 1 by four lines each of two beats; in *ver.* 3 by three lines each of two beats (so in *ver.* 4 and *ver.* 5); in *vv.* 6, 7 (which are to be taken together) by six lines each of two beats; in *vv.* 8, 9 (which are to be taken together) by eight lines each of two beats; and in *ver.* 10 by five lines each of two beats. Verses 11 and 12 are represented by the *kīnā* rhythm. In *ver.* 13 we have two two-beat lines followed by four lines of three beats each. In the last section, ch. iii, *vv.* 1-3, 8-17, 19 exhibit the two-beat rhythm throughout; *vv.* 4, 18 represent the *kīnā* measure and *vv.* 6, 7 the ordinary three-beat line. In *ver.* 5 the rhythm is peculiar; it opens with two lines, each with two beats, which are followed by two *parallel* lines, each with three beats; but, instead of closing at this point, an extra two-beat line is added, which *echoes* line 4, with the result that the latter line, while parallel to line 3, is also rhythmically connected with this extra line, both together representing the *kīnā* measure. The characteristic two-beat line in these sections represents well the rapid movement with which both the defending and attacking forces are conceived as acting. As we read the description of the Ninevites' headlong flight, or of the invaders as they rush to the attack or fall upon the booty, it is as though the scene was actually being transacted before the eye; while the odd lines of three beats, which are noticeable in the second section, and which were perhaps declaimed more slowly by the prophet, mark off the different stages in his representation. The additional matter of R¹ is given in lines of five beats; that of R² in the *kīnā* rhythm.

¹ The numbering of the verses in ch. ii is that of the English versions.

NAHUM

CHAPTER I

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

¹ Or, *oracle concerning*

I. 1. The Superscription. Two titles have been prefixed to the prophecy. The first states its main theme, the punishment of Nineveh; the second indicates the prophet's name and the locality with which he was associated. Originally this latter title in all probability read simply "The Vision of Nahum the Elkoshite"; the first was no doubt added later; while the words "The book of" represent possibly a still later addition (see below). There is no reason for doubting that the original title represents a genuine tradition; it may have been added by the prophet himself.

burden. Or *oracle* or *sentence.* For the meaning of the Hebrew *massā* see on Hab. i. 1.

The book of. This, in a title to a prophecy, occurs only here. Earlier commentators have inferred that Nahum simply committed his prophecy to writing without announcing it to the people; but the inference is groundless. For a possible explanation of its origin, see below.

vision. I.e. message or prophecy. Vision was a method of prophetic intuition, but it is not to be concluded that what follows had been received in vision; for "vision" (*hāzōn*) came to be applied quite generally to the utterances of a prophet, whether he had received what he announced through vision or not; cf. its use as a collective title at the head of the Book of Isaiah i. 1, also Ob. 1, and see further Driver on Am. i. 1 (*Camb. Bib.*). It is not necessary to suppose that this wider meaning of the term came into use after the prophet's time, or that the prophet would not have used it in reference to his utterances; for Habakkuk terms the revelation which he received a "vision" (ii. 2); and we have no reason to suppose that that came to him actually through vision. Gray (*Isaiah, ICC.* p. 2) thinks that its use in such titles may be due to the later conception that "prophecy was a revelation of the final stage of history," and that to the authors of them "the prophecies of Isaiah, Nahum, Obadiah may have been.....not so much, or at all, the teaching of these prophets to their own age, but a record of events seen in vision [i.e. literally seen in vision] several centuries before they actually happened."

Nahum. We have no authentic information respecting the prophet beyond what is told us here: see *Introd.* pp. 79 f. The formation of the

2 The LORD is a jealous God and avengeth; the LORD avengeth and is full of wrath; the LORD taketh vengeance on his

name is intensive, like *rahūm* "full of compassion," *hannūn* "gracious"; and would, on the analogy of such words, mean "full of comfort." It is probably short for "Nahum-yah," i.e. "Yah is full of comfort," cf. "*Nehemiah*." The meaning "comfort" is less probable. The name does not occur again in the O.T., though we have proper names derived from the same root, e.g. Naham (1 Chr. iv. 19), Nahamani (Neh. vii. 7), Menahem (2 Kg. xv. 14, etc.); but it is found in Lk. iii. 25, in the Mishna, and in Phoenician inscriptions. J. P. Smith has suggested that the name is not a birth-name but one bestowed on the prophet by a later editor because of the character of his message which brings the promise of such great comfort to Judah. But the verses which speak directly of the happy deliverance and restoration in store for Judah are a later addition to the original prophecy, and moreover we should have to suppose that the editor further replaced the prophet's original name (for it is not likely that the prophecy was originally, or at any rate for long, anonymous), which is not a very probable procedure on the part of an editor.

Elkoshite. I.e. (apparently) a native of Elkosh. Where, however, Elkosh was located we cannot definitely say. The most probable view is that it lay in the neighbourhood of Bêt-Gibrin, the ancient Eleutheropolis. See further *Introd.* pp. 79 ff.

2-8, 10. A poetical fragment celebrating the wrath which Jehovah manifests against His (and Israel's) enemies. Nature testifies to the power and fierceness with which He acts. Those that thus meet His avenging anger are utterly consumed, whereas those (Israel) who make Him their refuge find in Him sure protection.

2. *a jealous God*, etc. Instead of the traditional Hebrew text Marti and others would read *Jehovah is a jealous God, avenging and full of wrath*.

jealous. I.e. of the position and honour of His people. The adversaries of His people are His adversaries. Usually Jehovah is said to be jealous of the service which His people owe solely to Him: cf. Ex. xx. 5, xxxiv. 14; Deut. v. 9, vi. 15.

full of wrath. Lit. *possessor of wrath*; for the idiom cf. (in the Hebrew) iii. 4; Ex. xxiv. 14; 2 Kg. i. 8; Prov. xxix. 22.

taketh vengeance on, etc. This and the following clause have been regarded by many critics as glosses. That they are an insertion in the original alphabetical poem is quite clear, but it may be doubted whether, had a glossator inserted them, he would have been so careful to preserve the original rhythm of the verse. Others consider the clauses to be the original *nūn*-couplet which has been displaced. This view is preferable and probably correct; in which case we may credit the insertion to the editor who interpolated the alphabetical fragment. The clauses are explicative of the preceding, and the reason why he was led to insert them here was probably not because they express essentially "the same

adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies. 3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear *the guilty*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the

thought as line 1" (*ICC*. p. 288), but because he wished to make it quite clear that the heat of Jehovah's wrath is directed against His (i.e. His people's) adversaries.

and he reserveth wrath. Not against His people (cf. Jer. iii. 12; Ps. ciii. 9) but against His enemies does Jehovah retain His anger. For the omission of the word "anger," cf. the passages just cited and Lev. xix. 18; Jer. iii. 5. Haupt maintains that the Hebrew verb *nātar* in these passages does not mean "retain," "keep," but is a distinct root. Arnold also disputes the rendering "retain," for which he says "there is not the slightest foundation." But it seems wiser to keep the usual rendering, though it must be admitted that the fact that *nātar* is not found with a term meaning "anger" renders it uncertain.

3. *The LORD is slow to anger...and will by no means clear* the guilty. These words are obviously an interpolation in the original acrostic poem, as the first letter (*yōdh*) shows; and if they have been interpolated by the editor who inserted the fragment, then it must be supposed that, as in the preceding words he states what Jehovah's attitude is towards their adversaries, so now he lays down what Jehovah is in His attitude towards Israel. In this case the addition may be taken as a further indication of the circumstances in view of which the editor wrote. It will have been a time of distress and despondency when Israel was beset by adversaries, and hard thoughts were probably being entertained about Jehovah. The prophetic editor will be understood to tell them that it is not against His people but against their adversaries that Jehovah directs the full force of His wrath; towards His people, on the contrary, He is slow to anger, and ready to manifest His power on their behalf, though even in their case, when they sin, He cannot let them go unpunished—a hint that the distress which they were experiencing was not altogether undeserved. But it may be doubted whether the words should not be regarded rather as a gloss. Had the editor added the words, he would have probably made it quite clear that he had Israel in mind instead of leaving it to be implied. They are, moreover, un-rhythmical and look very much like the remark of a glossator who desired to see some statement of the other side of Jehovah's character. For the phraseology and thought, cf. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7; Num. xiv. 18; also Jer. xxx. 11, xlvi. 28; Joel ii. 13; Neh. ix. 17; Ps. lxxxvi. 15, ciii. 8.

in the whirlwind and in the storm. The line introduces the *bēth*-couplet of the original acrostic. According to the Hebrew text it is prefaced by *Jehovah*, but the LXX connects this with the preceding clause, perhaps correctly; in that case it will have been inserted not by the editor but by the glossator. The language of these verses (i. 3b-6) is similar to what is employed elsewhere in the description of a theophany;

storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. 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. 5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth

cf. esp. Ps. xviii.; Hab. iii. The convulsion of nature at the manifestation of the divine Presence is intended to emphasize the fierceness of Jehovah's avenging wrath (cf. *ver.* 6). For the combination "*whirlwind and storm*" cf. Is. xxix. 6. The reference is to the sirocco in which Jehovah is conceived of as moving; whence in Jer. xxiii. 19, xxx. 23 it is directly spoken of as "the whirlwind of Jehovah"; cf. also Hos. xiii. 15.

and the clouds, etc. This fine representation occurs only here. In Ps. xviii. 11 the storm clouds are pictured as hiding the splendour of the divine Presence; here the sand-cloud is represented as the dust which is raised as He travels along in the storm-wind. One of the principal features of the sirocco are the clouds of small dust which it occasions.

4. *He rebuketh the sea*. Viz., by the storm-wind in which He is pictured as travelling; cf. Ps. xviii. 15, cvi. 9. It is possible that the poet may be generalizing from Israel's experience at the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus, but more probably he is describing the common experience of the effect of a whirlwind on rivers and watercourses, or as he witnessed it beating down on the sea and driving back its waves.

all the rivers. Cf. Is. l. 2.

Bashan languisheth, and Carmel. I.e. under the blast of the hot sirocco; cf. Am. i. 2; Is. xxxiii. 9. Bashan was the region east of Jordan, bounded on the south by the Yarmuk and extending on the north towards Hermon and on the east as far as the Gebel Hauran. Carmel is the ridge of hills running out into the Mediterranean Sea and forming the south side of the Bay of Acre. Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon (cf. Is. ii. 13, xxxiii. 9; Zech. xi. 2; Ps. xxix. 5) are mentioned for their woods, which are the most luxuriant in Palestine. Bashan was also famous for its cattle, cf. Am. iv. 1; Deut. xxxii. 14, etc. For the Hebrew *'amlal*, "languish," we should no doubt read *dālal*, "pine" (cf. Is. xvii. 4, xxxviii. 14; Ps. lxxix. 8, cxvi. 6). The same verb in this and the parallel clause is unlikely; the Verss., moreover, presuppose a different word, and the original acrostic poem suggests one beginning with the letter *dāleth*.

5. *The mountains quake*. Descriptive either of the vibrating effect of thunder, or perhaps of an earthquake or volcanic disturbance. "Mountains" is without the article in the Hebrew but the following "the hills," as well as the LXX *τὰ ὄρη*, suggest the emendation "*the mountains*." For a similar description, cf. Ps. xlvi. 3.

and the hills melt. Describing, in a fine figure, the rushing hill-torrents swollen by the heavy rain of the passing storm. Cf. Mic. i. 4, and also Judg. v. 4, 5. Gunkel and Gray read "*and all the hills*" (cf. *ver.* 4; Am. ix. 13; Jer. iv. 24); and the insertion is favoured by the rhythm.

is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. 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 broken asunder by him. 7 The LORD is

is upheaved. Another hyperbolical picture of the devastating effects of the storm. The earth is at once a scene of desolation and appalment to its inhabitants. The text is uncertain. The Hebrew (if correct) will mean "lifts itself up," but an intransitive use of *nāsā*, "lift up," is extremely doubtful (see note on Hab. i. 3). Most moderns would vocalize the verb differently and understand it as *Niph'al* of *shā'āh*, rendering "is laid waste"; but this verb means strictly "make a din," and then "crash into ruins," cf. Is. xvii. 12 (of nations in uproar) and Is. vi. 11 (of cities, with reference to the falling walls and houses); and it must therefore remain doubtful whether such a word can be deemed altogether suitable to the following clause, "the world *and all the dwellers therein.*" On the whole it would appear better to read *wattāshom*, "is desolated," from *shāmēm*, which means both "to be desolated" and "to be appalled" (cf. Lev. xxvi. 32)—a twofold meaning which would suit the present context.

yea, the world, etc. Cf. Ps. xxiv. 1, xcviii. 7. Most moderns follow the LXX and omit *yea* (better, *and*); but the second line of each couplet of the original acrostic, with the exception of the first, appears to have been introduced by "and."

6. This verse points out the significance of the preceding description. If nature is thus disturbed and the very rocks, which appear so hard and immovable, are torn down by the fierceness of Jehovah's consuming anger, what man or people is there that can be found to stand up before Him?

before his indignation, etc. Cf. Jer. x. 10; Mal. iii. 2. Most moderns make a slight transposition and read "His wrath—who can stand before it?" in order that the line may begin with the letter *zayin*. This, no doubt, was the original order of the words; but since the editor most probably disregarded the original alphabetical arrangement, it must remain uncertain whether he did not write down the clause as it now stands.

his fury is poured out. Cf. Jer. vii. 20, xlii. 18, xlv. 6; 2 Chr. xxxiv. 21.

like fire. I.e. is destructive as fire.

are broken asunder by him. Referring to the masses of rock loosened in a thunder-storm or a sirocco (cf. 1 Kg. xix. 11; Jer. iv. 26). Some read *are kindled*; but it is doubtful whether the emendation is really preferable to the Hebrew: it is not very natural to think of rocks as being kindled by fire. Moreover, the root *nāthats* is used of pulling or breaking down a structure, such as an altar (Ex. xxxiv. 13), a house (Is. xxii. 10), a wall (Jer. xxxix. 8), etc., and might well be applied to the tearing down of rocks.

7ff. Such consuming wrath Jehovah manifests on His people's behalf. In the day of trouble their enemies are His enemies; and against them

good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that put their trust in him. 8 But with an overrunning flood he

He directs the full measure of His wrath, bringing them to an utter end and thereby proving Himself a source of succour to those that take refuge in Him.

good. I.e. kind. Cf. Ps. xxxiv. 8, cvi. 1, cxxxv. 3, etc.

a strong hold. The LXX reads τοῖς ὑπομένουσιν αὐτόν, "to those who wait on Him" (cf. Lam. iii. 35), linking the words with *good* and omitting *a stronghold*. Of the two readings the Greek appears to be the better, for if "good" in such cases is more closely defined, it usually stands in connection with a word denoting the class of persons to whom Jehovah shows His kindness, cf. Ps. cxlv. 9. It is possible that the Hebrew reading is a corruption of the LXX reading; but it seems, on the whole, more probable that we have here two variant glosses and that the line read simply, "Good is Jehovah in the day of trouble." The text in this and the following verses is very involved and it is not easy to ascertain what the original was. Most commentators are of the opinion that the readings of the Hebrew and the Greek have arisen through omission of one of the two words and that both should be restored: according to this view, the verse would read: "Good is Jehovah to them that wait for Him, a stronghold (or, for a stronghold) in the day of trouble." But the present writer is inclined to think that the clause parallel to i. 7a is to be found in i. 8a (see below).

in the day of trouble. I.e. in the time of distress and oppression at the hands of hostile peoples, cf. Hab. iii. 16.

7b. For this see below.

8a. *But with an overrunning flood.* Figurative of hostile invasion; cf. Isa. viii. 8; Jer. xlvi. 2. But the rendering should perhaps be *But in an overrunning flood*, a verb being supplied. The missing verb may be *ya'āzor*, which accidentally fell out from the text by homoeoteleuton after the preceding *'ōbhēr*. Most commentators, however, supply *yēmallētēm*, "He will deliver them," understanding the clause as parallel to the half line, "He knoweth them that put their trust in Him." We are inclined, however, to transpose i. 8b and take the present line as parallel to i. 7a (see below).

7b. *he knoweth.* I.e. regardeth, taketh watchful and tender notice of, cf. Ps. i. 6, xxxvii. 18, etc. The Hebrew prefixes *and*, but this should be omitted; it was inserted when the line was transposed to its present place in the text. The line introduced the *yōdh*-line in the original acrostic.

them that put their trust in him. Cf. Ps. ii. 12, v. 11, xviii. 30 and often. Israel is thought of. The prophets had constantly emphasized for Israel the need of absolute trust in Jehovah; and the editor, in appropriating the words of the psalm and in asking his contemporaries to see their truth illustrated in the past overthrow of Nineveh, wished partly to encourage them, but mainly to urge upon them the duty of maintaining the same attitude of trust in Jehovah in their present distress.

will make a full end of the place thereof, and will pursue his enemies into darkness. 9 What do ye imagine against the LORD?

8 *a.* of the place thereof. The Hebrew is literally of her place, but in the preceding context there is nothing to which *her* can refer. The LXX has that rise up against him. But possibly the line is a variant of 9*b* and (slightly modified) should take its place (see below).

8*b.* will pursue his enemies into darkness, etc. Or his enemies darkness will pursue. Darkness is figurative of confusion and destruction, cf. Is. viii. 22; Prov. xx. 20; Job v. 14, xv. 30. There is also an apparent allusion to the suddenness with which the night succeeds the day in the east: destruction and confusion will come upon them as swiftly as darkness falls upon the day. Many moderns, however, slightly emend the text: "And His enemies He will thrust into darkness" (reading the imperfect of *hādhaph*). But it is doubtful whether one is justified in emending a text which offers a satisfactory sense. Moreover, *hādhaph* is found nowhere else constructed with an accusative of motion: cf. Job xviii. 18, where the preposition *unto* is inserted.

9-14. The first main section of the prophecy. Assyria is expostulated with for her attitude against Jehovah in planning the destruction of His abode; for it was at her prompting that one who devised evil went forth. Therefore Jehovah has determined to break her power, to cause the worship of her deities to cease, and to bring her to an ignominious end without any posterity to hand down her name.

i. 12*b*, 13 have been interpolated into the section by the hand of R¹; while i. 10 belongs to the preceding poetical fragment.

With i. 9 the original prophecy of Nahum began. This, however, has been rendered imperceptible by the present corrupted text; in fact, most moderns are of the opinion that we have here a continuation of the original acrostic; and that view is suggested to them all the more strongly because the verse in question begins with the letter *mém*, the very letter which, according to their restoration of the original acrostic, should follow next in order. But in that case (1) the second person plural ("what do ye imagine") is strange; the preceding verses of the acrostic have been describing the manifestation of Jehovah's wrath on His enemies, whereas now a class of persons are addressed, who (so far as we can judge) are left wholly undefined. This sudden change from narrative to address is, at the least, unexpected. And (2) the phrase "He maketh a full end of the place thereof" in i. 8*a*, followed in this verse by the almost identical phrase "He maketh a full end," rouses suspicion: they read very much like variants; but, if so, whatever text they represent (unless the corruption is very deep-seated) they would find a more suitable position before i. 9*b* ("trouble shall not rise up twice") than before i. 8*b*.

Unless we are prepared, then, to believe that the original acrostic adopted by the editor has been *very much* mutilated, we must admit that (1) the clause "an utter end He maketh of her place" (i. 8*a*) does not introduce the original *cap*-line of the acrostic but is a variant of

he will make a full end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. 10 For though they be like tangled thorns, and be drenched

the similar clause in i. 9*a*; and (2) the words "what do ye devise," etc., which introduce this latter line, form, so far as we can judge, no part of the acrostic. In this case we are naturally led to think of them as part of the original prophecy; and this supposition is strengthened by the second persons in i. 11, 14, ii. 1 (passages which certainly seem to belong to Nahum's prophecy), and also by the fact that the clause "one who deviseth against Jehovah evil" appears to be connected in some way with i. 9*a*, "what do ye devise." But if i. 9, 11, 14, ii. 1 stand related to each other, then it will be clear that the second person *plural* in i. 9*a* must be an error for the second person *singular* (cf. i. 11, 14, ii. 1). What the text of i. 9*a* probably is we shall presently see. All that this prefatory statement is intended to emphasize is that i. 9 in its original text in all probability introduced Nahum's original prophecy, opening with an address in the second person singular, and is not, as has been generally thought, a continuation of the acrostic poem.

9. For this verse, see below.

10. This verse is a *crux* to commentators. The Hebrew text has been usually rendered, "For entangled like thorns and drunken as with their drink they are devoured like stubble fully dry," and understood to mean that, though the Ninevites seem as unapproachable (in view of their strong defences) as a thorn-hedge, and though they are so soaked as with their wine (with reference to their carousals) that fire cannot harm them, yet they will be consumed like dry stubble. Or it has been rendered, "for *though* (they be like) thorns entangled and drenched as with their drink, they are consumed as stubble fully dry," i.e. "the Ninevites are compared to a tangled thorn-hedge soaked with moisture and thus inaccessible to fire, yet the fire of Jehovah shall consume them"—the meaning of both renderings being practically the same. But the Hebrew offers a very forced meaning, even if the renderings given can be justified, which is more than doubtful. The preposition *adh* in the sense of "though" or "like" is *very questionable*, and the rendering "fully" is only just possible. There can be little doubt that the Hebrew represents a much corrupted text; but it is not easy to say with certainty how it is to be emended; and the Verss. offer no practical help. We conjecture that the original may have approximated to: *Like a thicket of thorns are they devoured (or consumed), and like dry stubble from before fire.* The lines, thus emended, are then best regarded as the *caph*-distich of the original acrostic, their proper place being immediately after i. 8: it is to the "enemies" mentioned there that they refer. When, however, the original text of i. 9 was made to refer to Jehovah and to His overthrow of the wicked, and the acrostic fragment inserted into the text, these lines were placed after i. 9 as a kind of commentary on this verse, to show how completely the wicked were destroyed.

9. *What do ye imagine*, etc. The text is most probably to be emended to, *How dost thou imagine (or devise) wickedness*, etc.: cf. Mic. ii. 1;

as it were in their drink, they shall be devoured ¹utterly as dry stubble. 11 There is one gone forth out of thee, that imagineth

¹ Or, as stubble fully dry

Jer. iv. 14; Ezek. xi. 2; Ps. xxxvi. 4. The "wickedness" is explained by the following clauses; the reference is perhaps to the Scythian invasion (see below). The prophet is, no doubt, addressing Assyria. Assyria is not directly named because it was clear from his message whom he intended. The only question is whether Nahum has in mind Assyria's capital, in which case we should read the feminine instead of the masculine. The former view is the one usually accepted in the case of i. 11, etc., where the Massorettes have adopted the feminine punctuation of the pronominal suffixes. On the other hand, Wellhausen maintains that throughout the section ending with the last verse of ch. ii. it is Assyria and not Nineveh that is addressed; and that accordingly all the pronominal suffixes should be pointed as *masculine*. The ground on which, however, he bases his view is not sure.

In the absence of any definite indication, however, we agree with Wellhausen in adopting the masculine pointing, and in regarding the personified Assyrian people as addressed because in ii. 8 Nineveh is spoken of in the third person, and because, as we believe, "his rod" (i. 13 see note) refers to Assyria's.

9b. *he will make a full end*. This cannot be correct, and we have already concluded that this clause and that in i. 8a, "an utter end He will make of her place," are really variant readings which have displaced the original, which was most probably *an utter end I will make of His place*. *His* (i.e. Jehovah's) *place* is Zion: cf. Is. xviii. 7; Ps. xxiv. 3; Jer. vii. 4. The words are supposed to be uttered by the Assyrian.

affliction shall not rise up the second time. Better, *trouble shall not*, etc. Most moderns, on the basis of the LXX, emend this to, *he will not take vengeance twice upon his adversaries*, regarding the clause as introducing the *lamedh*-line of the acrostic; but the emendation is not necessary. The Hebrew gives an admirable meaning; and there seems little doubt that the LXX represents simply a variant reading according to which the whole line is referred to Jehovah.

11. It is probable that this verse was originally introduced by *For*: the insertion of i. 10 may have led to its omission.

gone forth, etc. Commentators generally see here a reference to Sennacherib and his attack on Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah; cf. 2 Kg. xviii. 13 ff.; Is. xxxvi. 1 ff. Others, less probably, have understood the reference to be not merely to Sennacherib but to other Assyrian oppressors as well. But, on the whole, it appears more likely that Nahum had some more recent event in view, and if so, it is quite possible that he is thinking of the Scythians. As we have seen (cf. *Introd.* pp. 84 f.), there is reason to believe that they entered Palestine as allies of Assyria in order to preserve the loyalty of this part of her empire. The singular "one that devised" cannot be urged against this interpretation; for in ii. 1 we find the singular used with reference to the Medes.

evil against the LORD, ¹that counseller ²wickedness. 12 Thus saith the LORD: Though they be in full strength, and likewise

¹ Or, a wicked counsellor

² Or, worthlessness Heb. *Belial*.

out of thee, or *from thee*, i.e. at thy prompting (*min* denoting the source of action or of counsel, cf. Gen. xxiv. 50; Hos. viii. 4; Is. xxx. 1). In these verses the reference, as we have seen, is probably to the Assyrian and not to Nineveh, and therefore the feminine pronoun should be vocalized as masculine.

evil. I.e. harm, injury: cf. Ezek. xxxviii. 10.

wickedness. The Hebrew *bēlayā'at*, which is of doubtful origin, is best regarded as a diminutive formation from *bāla'*, "swallow up"; its meaning will accordingly be *engulfing ruin*.

12. Another difficult verse. The Hebrew literally translated is, "*Thus saith Jehovah, If (or Though) full and thus many, and thus they were sheared (cut off?) and one (or he) will pass (or passes) away,*" which is quite unintelligible. The R.V. rendering, which is understood to mean that the Assyrian forces, though entire and numerous, will meet with disaster, implies a questionable usage ("likewise") for the particle *cēn*, and gives to *gāzax* ("shear") a meaning which is found nowhere else: moreover, the interchange of plural and singular would be difficult to account for. Several emendations have been proposed, but none of them commends itself to the present writer. But it may be suggested that the verse was originally intended as a continuation of i. 9, 11, and introduces the announcement of Jehovah's judgement on Assyria. If so, then perhaps the original text may have been of the following tenor: "Thus saith Jehovah, Though thou rulest over (cf. LXX *κατάρχων*)¹ peoples and many be designated by thy name, yet the glory of thy power shall pass away, and the report of thee shall no more be heard." The emendation represented by *be designated* is *wē-chunnu*. The root *cānā* is used in the Pi'el in the sense of "to give a title or cognomen." The title or name given or assumed is usually one of honour (cf. Is. xlv. 14): here, however, it would denote submission, namely, to Assyria, the different states or peoples that thus submitted receiving the designation "Assyria's" (cf. Is. xlv. 5). The last clause, *and the report of thee*, etc. is suggested by the LXX *καὶ ἡ ἀκρό σου οὐκ ἐνακουσθήσεται ἐτι* (cf. Hab. iii. 2; Jer. xxxvii. 5); it has probably fallen out before the subsequent sentence. If the above emendation be right, the meaning will be that the power and glory of the Assyrian empire will pass away.

12*b*, 13. These verses interrupt the connection between *vv.* 12*a* and 14; they speak of the end of Judah's bondage. They were probably inserted in the margin about the close of Josiah's reign, when it was already evident that the Assyrian power was rapidly declining and its end not far off. The prediction which Nahum had given (*cir.* 625 B.C.)

¹ According to Schleusner *κατάρχων* is corrupt for *κατ' ἀρχῶν*.

many, even so shall they be cut down, and he shall pass away. ¹Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. 13 And now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. 14 And the LORD hath given commandment concerning

¹ Or, *So will I afflict thee, that I shall afflict &c.*

of her downfall was *now* to be fulfilled. J. P. Smith thinks that they may probably reflect some such period as the days of Zerubbabel "when the world-power of the day seemed to be tottering to its fall and the hopes of faithful Israel were kindled to fresh vigour. The fall of Nineveh ...can hardly have occasioned such vivid and certain confidence of immediate relief for Israel as these verses reflect; for at that time Assyrian power in Syria had long come to an end and Judah was under the heel of Egypt" (*ICC.* p. 307). But if Nahum's prophecy was delivered in 625, why should not i. 12b, 13 at least have been added at the end of Josiah's reign? The Assyrian power had then recently been felt, and also Judah was not under Egypt.

Though I have afflicted thee, etc. Literally, *And I have afflicted*, etc.; but the conjunction can scarcely be original. Judah's bondage to Assyria is now to terminate. Jehovah will afflict her no more. The clause was probably preceded by *Thus saith Jehovah*, which, owing to the presence of the same formula at the beginning of the verse, was omitted when the clause was incorporated into the text. The whole line on this view will have been written in the so-called *kīnā* measure.

13. *And now*. I.e. probably towards the close of Josiah's reign, as Assyria's end approached.

his yoke. I.e. Assyria's. The Hebrew is *mōtēhū*, "a mixed form combining *mōtō* [his yoke] and *mattēhū* [his rod]." (J. P. Smith.) But *mōt*, though used in the sense of "pole," is nowhere else used of the yoke, *mōtāh* being employed with this meaning. The Hebrew consonants are probably to be vocalized *mattēhū* (cf. the LXX τὸν ῥάβδον αἰρού), and the translation will be, *And now will I break his rod from off thee*. For *rod* as a figure of oppression, cf. Is. ix. 4, x. 5, 24, xxx. 31.

thy bonds, etc. For the expression, cf. Jer. ii. 20, v. 5, xxx. 8; Ps. iii. 2. If the reading "yoke" be adopted in the previous line, then the "bonds" will be the thongs which fastened the yoke to the animal's neck.

14. *And the LORD hath given...concerning thee*. I.e. Assyria. The verb should be rendered by the future. The verse connects with *ver.* 12 (as emended) and introduces the judgement which Jehovah pronounces against the great world-power; the nature of the judgement is described in the next clause. For "give commandment concerning," cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 8; Jer. xxxix. 11. Several moderns propose to omit "and" on the ground that either a future is out of place or "the verse would be much more forcible" without it (Driver). But this is surely gratuitous: on the contrary, the conjunction seems clearly to indicate that in the original text it connected the verb with some previous imperfect (i.e. in this case our future).

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. 15 ¹Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows: for ²the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

¹ [Ch. ii. 1 in Heb.]

² Or, the man of *worthlessness* Heb. *Belial*.

no more...be sown, etc. Assyria shall be totally destroyed; there will be none left to perpetuate her name. Cf. Is. xiv. 20-22. For the participative use of the preposition *min*, cf. Ex. xvi. 27; 2 Sam. xi. 17, etc. Marti and others read "Let not thy name be remembered," but the emendation is unnecessary.

out of the house, etc. The deities of Assyria, so far from being able to deliver, will share a similar fate; their worship will be wholly exterminated. There is no doubt an allusion to a conqueror's custom of spoiling the temples of the conquered. The Assyrians themselves had been guilty of this. For the destruction of the Assyrian sanctuaries, see the *stele* of Nabonidus. For the combination "graven image" and "molten image," cf. Deut. xxvii. 15; Judg. xvii. 3, 4, xviii. 14. This and the following clause are best regarded as parallel to "And Jehovah will give charge," etc. and not as part of the charge given.

make thy grave. This has been interpreted to mean, "I will prepare thy grave," or "I will make it (i.e. the house of thy god) thy grave," or "I will make a grave for thee," i.e. consign thee to the grave. But such interpretations have little probability; what is desiderated is another object, indicating what the grave is to be made. Most moderns find this in the following words "for thou art of little account" (*ci kallōthā*), which they think represent a corruption of *kālōn*, "ignominy," "dishonour"; but it would seem better to retain the final clause and believe that some such word as *kālōn* is lost after *grave*; we seem to need some clause like "for thou art," etc. to round off the verse, and the rhythm (*kinā*) of these lines, moreover, appears to demand it.

for thou art vile. Cf. Gen. xvi. 4, 5; 1 Sam. ii. 30.

15. For this verse, see below.

CHAPTER II

II. 1 He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face:

II. 1-14. The second main section, describing the advent of Assyria's foe and an imaginative picture of Nineveh's fall. An irresistible enemy has gone up to invade her land, and Assyria is ironically bidden to see to her own defence. The attacking forces, with their scarlet-clad warriors and their glittering chariots and their chargers quivering with excitement,

present a dazzling and formidable array. They hasten forward towards the city walls and set in position the ram. The river gates are forced open and the palace is smitten with panic. The Ninevites fly for their lives, leaving the rich treasures of their capital at the mercy of the invader. The "den of lions" is no more. The voice of Assyria's officials, dictating their terms, exacting their tribute, will not again be heard throughout the land; for Jehovah is against her. The section is introduced by a passage, i. 15, ii. 2 (= Heb. ii. 1, 3), which announces for Judah restoration at the hand of Jehovah; the passage, which is itself composite, breaks the connection in the original prophecy, and is clearly a later insertion (see below).

I. 15, II. 2. These opening verses present much the same difficulty as we have noticed in i. 11-14; i. 15 breaks the connection between i. 14 and ii. 1; and ii. 2, the connection between ii. 1 and ii. 3. The two verses clearly represent an editorial addition to the original; and, with the exception of ii. 1*b* ("for not any more," etc.) which originally belonged to i. 13, may be dated towards the close of the exile or shortly after. The opening words of i. 15 occur almost *verbatim* in Is. lii. 7; the exhortation to Judah to keep her feasts and pay her vows implies their intermission, and therefore the exile; while the announcement that Jehovah is restoring the majesty of Jacob and the statement that its people have been plundered and destroyed point in a similar direction. See *Introd.* pp. 92 f.

I. 15. The announcement of Judah's restoration.

Behold, upon the mountains, etc. Cf. Is. lii. 7, also xl. 9; Rom. x. 15. The prophetic editor pictures the messenger hastening over the hills (those, no doubt, lying north or north-east of Jerusalem) to bring the glad tidings of restoration to Judah.

peace. I. e. welfare, or, as we should say, "all is well."

Keep thy feasts. Because Judah's bondage is at end and her restoration is heralded, therefore she may now keep her feasts. Most understand this and the following clauses as the tidings which are heralded, but it is more probable that it is the prophet's own summons to Judah, as he sees in imagination the messenger approaching.

perform thy vows. Namely, such as she had made during the time of her bondage in view of deliverance. For the phrase, cf. Ps. l. 14, lxvi. 13, cxvi. 14, 18.

for the wicked one, etc. This connected originally with i. 13: see *Introd.* p. 93. The *wicked one* is literally *destruction* (*bēliyya'āl*), a case of abstract for concrete. The original reference is to the Assyrian, who "is thus represented as ruin incarnate" (J. P. Smith): when the verse, however, was removed from its original setting, the reference was generalized so as to include any destroyer.

utterly. The LXX has *συντελέσται*, pointing *culloh* ("all of him") as *cālāh*, "he is destroyed": for this reading, cf. Is. xxix. 20. It is difficult to say which of the two readings was originally intended; but on the whole it seems best to retain the Hebrew, as "wholly" corresponds more closely to the preceding "no more."

II. 1. This introduces the second main section of the original

keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. 2 For the LORD bringeth again the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers

prophecy. The prophet characterizes the foe that has gone up against Assyria as a "hammer," and ironically bids the Assyrian defend himself.

He that dasheth in pieces. The Hebrew strictly means "scatterer," but this is not suitable: hence most critics adopt a different vocalization—a *shatterer*. The reference is most probably to the Medes under Cyaxares (see *Introd.* p. 84). For "shatterer," cf. Jer. li. 20.

is come up. Namely, in war. Cf. Judg. i. 1, xii. 3; 1 Sam. vii. 7, etc.

before thy face. I.e. the people of Assyria. We should no doubt vocalize the pronoun as masculine; the reference will be to Nineveh.

keep the munition. Or guard the rampart. This and the following imperatives may be taken either in the sense that the prophet is ironically bidding the Assyrians prepare to meet the attack, or "as the cries of the frenzied inhabitants of the doomed city"; the former interpretation, however, is the better.

make thy loins strong. I.e. brace thyself for the approaching attack. For "loins" as the seat of strength, cf. Deut. xxxiii. 11; Job xl. 16.

2. *For the LORD bringeth again.* This connected originally with i. 15 (see *Introd.* p. 92).

the excellency of Jacob. I.e. that on which he prided himself, viz. the material prosperity of his land, etc.; cf. Am. vi. 8; Zech. ix. 6. But the occurrence of *excellency* in successive lines is inelegant; and in view of the *kinā* rhythm there can be little doubt that it has accidentally been repeated in this line. Jacob and Israel are here equivalent to Judah; cf. Mic. iii. 1, 8; Is. lxxv. 9, etc.

as the excellency of Israel. The Hebrew yields no satisfactory sense. The old interpretation that "Jacob" is the natural name and "Israel" the spiritual name which the people received from God, and that this means that the nation would once more rise to the lofty eminence of its divine calling as the people of God is quite improbable. Also to take "Israel" as equivalent to the Northern Kingdom and to understand (with Davidson) the clause to mean that Jehovah will restore the glory of Judah as *He has promised* to do the glory of Israel is only less so; for on that view we should expect the comparison to be more clearly expressed by the use of "Judah" for "Jacob." The same objection would apply to the emendation "for the LORD will restore *the vine* (reading *gephen* for *gē'on* in both cases) of Jacob, like *the vine* of Israel." Gunkel, Nowack, Driver omit "like the pride of Israel" as a gloss, while the two former scholars agree in reading in the preceding clause "like *the vine* of Jacob" (cf. the preceding emendation) on the ground that the second part of the verse requires the mention of a vine in the first. But even supposing that the second part of the verse pictures Judah under the figure of a vine (see below), it is difficult to understand why it must be *necessarily* so pictured in the first part of the verse. As it has been pointed out above, *excellency* in the first line is probably an accidental

have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. 3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in

insertion; and if so, it may be conjectured further that "as" in this line has arisen out of an incorrect dittography of the preceding Hebrew letter (*b* being repeated and read as *c*). With these slight omissions the two lines yield a satisfactory meaning: *For Jehovah restoreth Jacob, the pride of Israel.*

for the emptiers have emptied them out. I.e. "devastated them," viz. their (= Judah's) land. But the line is metrically too short, and moreover some closer parallel to the object in the following line is desiderated. Most probably "them" has accidentally arisen under the influence of the following Hebrew word; and we should insert some term like "their vineyards," a trace of which may possibly be seen in the corrupt word which follows.

their vine branches. The Hebrew for this word is peculiar. It is generally understood to be the plural of *zēmōrā*, "branch," and rendered "their branches"; but in this case we should expect the form *zēmōrō-thēhem*; moreover, a plural of *zēmōrā* occurs nowhere else, nor is it obvious why "(vine)-branches" should be especially thought of. The text is no doubt slightly in error; and we should read *zēthēhem*, "their olive yards." Judah was *par excellence* the province of the grape and olive (cf. G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem*, i. 299 ff.), so that when the writer says that Judah's vineyards and olive yards have been destroyed, it is tantamount to saying that their country had been laid waste and their material prosperity gone. With this reading the clause fits in well with the sense of the preceding lines; and the usual view that Judah and Israel in this verse are pictured under the figure of a vine vanishes.

3 f. A description of the attacking forces—their equipment (*ver.* 4), and the marshalling and bringing up of the chariots ready for the attack (*ver.* 5). The verses continue ii. 1.

his mighty men. I.e. the shatterer's of *ver.* 1.

made red. What we are to understand by this is not certain. The reference has been supposed to be (1) to the blood-stained state of the shields; or (2) to the reddish reflection of the copper (or copper-faced) shields in the sunlight, cf. 1 Macc. vi. 39; or (3) to the actual colour of the shields, the leather of which was dyed or painted red, in order, it may be supposed, by the brilliancy of colour, either to give their bearers a more formidable appearance or else perhaps to conceal their wounds. Of the three views the last is the most probable, for in the case of (2) we should have expected some word like "glistening" or "bright," or at any rate the adjective "red" rather than the term "made red;" while against (1) may be urged the objection that this verse would appear to speak of the *preparation* for the onslaught rather than the onslaught itself.

are in scarlet. Among ancient peoples the soldiers' dress was frequently crimson or purple (cf. Aelian, *Var. Hist.* vi. 6); Pollux (i. 13) also speaks of the Medes as wearing a garment called *sarages*, which was of purple or crimson colour, striped with white; and in Xen. *Cyropaedia* (vi. 4. 1)

scarlet: the chariots ¹flash with steel in the day of his preparation, and the ²spears are shaken terribly. 4 The chariots rage in the

¹ Heb. *are with fire of steel.*

² Heb. *fir trees.*

the military cloaks of the Persian soldiery are described as purple-red or crimson. But whether Nahum intended garments of this colour may be questioned: *argāmān*, "crimson," is the word we should have expected in this case and not a derivative of *tōlā*, "scarlet." Perhaps, however, we should not place too much stress on his use of *mētullā'im*, as though he was describing in *exact* terms the soldiers' dress; most probably the desire to create the impression that the soldiery presented a *brilliant* appearance mainly dictated the use of the particular term, though as a matter of fact he knew the colour was more strictly crimson or purple. In this case the objection that material of scarlet colour was costly and therefore could hardly have been worn by the ordinary warriors need not be raised.

flash with steel. Literally, *are with fire of steel.* But perhaps substitute, *are like fire of steel* (c for b).

steel. The true significance of the word as rendered is quite uncertain and the term may be corrupt. Gesenius connected the word with Arabic and Syriac words meaning "iron," "steel"; in this case the iron or steel coverings or ornamentations of the chariots are to be thought of, and not chariots armed with scythes; for there is no proof of the use of these on the Assyrian monuments. But this derivation for the word has been rightly objected to on the ground that the words in Arabic and Syriac are borrowed from the Persian, and therefore could not have been in use in Hebrew at the period in question. Some propose to read *lappīdhōth*, "torches," with the Syriac. This diversity of opinion shows how difficult it is to fix on any meaning with certainty, and it is better to leave the word untranslated; though many may be inclined to agree with Davidson that the reference is possibly to "the burnished plates of metal with which the chariots were mounted or mailed."

in the day of his preparation. This is probably a gloss. If it is original, it is best connected with what follows, and not with the preceding line. But it is hardly likely that Nahum would have paused, in his vivid description of the forces ready to attack, in order to point out that what he described referred to the day of their preparation.

spears. The LXX and Syriac have *chargers* (*parāshūm* for *bērōshūm*). The word, as thus emended, might also be rendered "horsemen," but the reference to horses seems preferable. The Hebrew rendered *spears* is literally "cypresses" or "firs" and is supposed to mean lances or javelins made of cypress or firwood, but such a usage has little probability.

are shaken terribly. If the emendation mentioned in the preceding note be adopted, render *quiver*, i.e. with excitement and impatience, as they prepare for the fray.

4. *rage.* Literally, *act madly*; cf. Jer. xlvi. 9.

in the streets. The reference appears to be to the marshalling of the chariots ready for attack on the city; in which case we must think of

streets, they jostle one against another in the broad ways: the appearance of them is like torches, they run like the lightnings.
 5 He remembereth his worthies: they stumble in their march; they

the open ground (for the Hebrew word in the sense of "open country or fields," cf. Prov. viii. 26; Job v. 10) outside the walls. Some, however, think the verse pictures the attack on the suburbs of Nineveh; we should then render "in the streets," namely, those within the suburbs. Ewald thought of the streets within Nineveh, incorrectly taking the verse as descriptive of what the *Assyrians* need in view of the imminent attack.

in the broad ways. The "broad place" elsewhere in the O.T. denotes the square or open place *within* a city, usually found near the city gate; here, however, it denotes the broad, open space outside the city wall.

the appearance of them. Referring to the dazzling appearance of the ornamented and armoured chariots as they dart about like lightning.

run. I.e. dart to and fro.

5. This pictures the attack on the city walls.

He remembereth. This has been understood to refer to the *Assyrian* king, who on the approach of the opposing forces bethinks himself of his commanders (or valiant men) as being possibly able to defend the city. But the thought is extremely weak; the commanders or valiant men would naturally be bidden to see to the city's defence, and would be the first on the scene; they could hardly be thought of as a last hope of safety. Moreover, the king of Assyria has not been mentioned; had he therefore been intended in this connection, we should have expected him to have been expressly named, especially as what has preceded refers to the attack and not to the defence. J. P. Smith renders "He (i.e. the shatterer of ii. 1) summons his nobles," viz. to a council of war; but *zākar* in the sense of "summons," "calls for," cannot be substantiated. Nor may we render by "muster," for such a usage is equally unknown in O.T. There is little doubt that the text is in some error. But how it is to be emended is not easy to say; the preceding verses lead us to expect that the description of the attack is continued in this verse. Perhaps *yā'ūtsū yahadh* should be read "his worthies (or majestic ones) press forward together"; this verb might easily have fallen out after the preceding verb.

his worthies. The term denotes the majestic, dignified impression which a person or thing creates; and here it would seem to be used with reference to leaders and men alike, just as we might speak of a troop of soldiers as a *fine* set of men.

they stumble. Most probably the word *not* has accidentally fallen out before this verb, and should be inserted. Without such an insertion *they stumble* is referred by many to the defenders, who, being suddenly called out and badly disciplined, stumble against each other as they hasten to the defence. But the reference seems to be clearly to the

make haste to the wall thereof, and the mantelet is prepared.
 6 The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved.

attacking forces; and if the traditional reading is correct, we must suppose that the assailants stumbled along in their eager haste to deliver the assault.

the wall thereof. The traditional text is vocalized so as to give "her wall," but some Hebrew mss have the undoubtedly correct vocalization "to the wall"; the wall is, of course, that of Assyria's capital.

the mantelet is prepared. The term here used is technical, and the meaning uncertain. But what is intended is most likely the battering-ram, in which case it would be so called from the shelter it afforded to the assailants. "The ram was brought to bear upon the wall of the besieged city by a movable tower, in the shelter of which the ram could be effectively and safely worked.... These movable towers were by no means uniform, but varied both in size and height. Sometimes they were surmounted by towers from which the attacking forces could shower their arrows upon the beleaguered army with impunity, at other times they were quite low" (Handcock, *Mesopotamian Archaeology*, p. 359). Those who think that the verse refers to the defenders have seen in the term a body of soldiers told off for defence, or some kind of engine used in defence, or some kind of breastwork, composed of the interwoven branches of trees erected between the towers on the walls. But the verse as a whole is best taken as referring to the besiegers: if the defenders were in the writer's mind, we should expect Assyria to be addressed directly in the second person (cf. ii. 1).

6. *The gates of the rivers.* What the prophet intended exactly is not certain. He may have meant either the gates which opened out on the rivers or canals—and as a matter of fact we know that five of Nineveh's fifteen gates opened out on to the Tigris, three on to the canal on the north and seven on to the moats and streams which protected the east and south (cf. King, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets*, Pt. xxvi. p. 19); or else the sluice-gates which regulated the flow of the rivers and canals, and protected the city from inundation. Or it may be, as Davidson and Driver suggest, that he actually intends the gates at the points where the Husur and the canal pass through the city wall. Of these views the first is the most probable; for it is not likely that he had such exact knowledge as to say how the rivers or canals were planned and regulated, or where precisely the Husur entered the city wall. Probably all that he knew was that the city was surrounded by a wall and the wall by moats or rivers and that access and egress were provided for by a sufficient number of gates. Accordingly, when the prophet represents these as forced open, what he wishes to imply is that the last defences had been captured and that the capital lay henceforth at the mercy of the enemy.

is dissolved. I.e. is flooded. For this meaning of the Hebrew verb cf. Ps. lxx. 10 (Heb.). Or the meaning may be "is melted away," i.e. through fear (cf. Ex. xv. 15; Jos. ii. 9, 24); the inhabitants of the palace realize the hopelessness of the situation, after the river gates have been

7 ¹And Huzzab is uncovered, she is carried away, and her handmaids ²mourn as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their ³breasts. 8 But Nineveh hath been ⁴from of old like a pool of

¹ Or, *And it is decreed; she is uncovered, &c.*

² Or, *lead her*

³ Heb. *hearts.*

⁴ Or, *from the days that she hath been*

opened. But the former interpretation seems preferable, for it is suggested by the parallel line.

7. *And Huzzab is uncovered.* This has been variously explained. (1) The opening word has been taken as a proper name of the queen, or as a designation of her, "And Huzzab," etc.; but no such name or designation is known to Assyriologists. Or (2) it is taken as a part of a verb (*nātsabh*) and rendered: "*it is determined; she* (i.e. Nineveh) *will be uncovered,*" etc. But this meaning for *nātsabh*, even if it offered a suitable interpretation for the verse, cannot be substantiated. (3) Hitzig punctuated *hatstsābh*, "the lizard," understanding it as a designation of Nineveh, because of the holes which the lizard makes like storeys, rendering it difficult to be found or brought out. But this noun is elsewhere masculine and such a designation would certainly be strange; and the same may be said of Knabenbauer's proposal to read *hatstsēbhī*, "the beauty" (i.e. Nineveh), a word which is elsewhere masculine. (4) Davidson proposes to render "lady," supposing the word, while properly signifying "a lady's litter," came to mean "the lady." (5) Marti suggests *hashshēghāl*, "the queen": this, however, would shorten the line, whereas the rhythm seems to suggest that at least two words have fallen out of the text. We conjecture that the word in question is a corruption of *hatsē'āh*, "is brought forth"; and that this may have been followed by the words *bath hashshēghāl*, "the daughter of the queen is brought forth," i.e. as a captive; cf. Jer. xxxviii. 22.

uncovered. I.e. dishonoured, cf. iii. 5; Hos. ii. 10 (12), etc.

carried away. Or *taken off.* Ruben (*The Academy*, 1896) has suggested the consonants H'TLH, "the Lady," for the Hebrew H'LTN, for which he compares the Assyrian *etellu*, "great, exalted"; while the preceding verb "is uncovered" he thinks is akin to the Assyrian *galatu* and to be rendered "is frightened," understanding the opening word as a proper name, viz. *Tsab*.

her handmaids. I.e. her personal attendants.

mourn as with the voice, etc. Cf. Is. xxxviii. 14, lix. 11. On an inscriptional fragment referring to the siege of Erech the maidens are spoken of as cooing like doves (Jeremias).

tabering upon their breasts. As a sign of grief; cf. (perhaps) Is. xxxii. 12; also Lk. xviii. 13. To *taber* is to "drum" (or "beat").

8. *But Nineveh, etc.* It has been usual to see here an allusion to the peoples and wealth that had been gathered into Nineveh like water into a pool or reservoir; but most probably we have, after emending the following words (see below), a reference to the rapid flight of Nineveh's population which the prophet compares to water rapidly flowing out of a tank or pool.

from of old, etc. The Hebrew is peculiar; it is just possible to render

water: yet they flee away; Stand, stand, *they cry*; but none¹ looketh back. 9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store, the² glory of all pleasant furniture. 10 She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart

¹ Or, *causeth them to turn*

² Or, *wealth*

it "hath been, since the days she was, like a pool of waters, but they (i.e. the waters) flee away." But the text must be in error; not only is the participial form *nāsīm* unexpected, but "since the days she was" (i.e. during her whole history) is not a very likely statement for the prophet to have made, even if it were strictly accurate. The LXX reads "her waters" for "since the days she was," and this reading is accepted by Marti, Kent, and others, who connect it with "flee away," namely, "whose waters flee away." Wellhausen, Nowack, Driver, Van Hoonacker cancel "from the days of" as a dittograph, Wellhausen and Nowack being of the opinion that some clause has fallen out of the text to which "and (or while) they flee" refers, Driver and Van Hoonacker, on the other hand, reading simply "But Nineveh is like a pool of waters fleeing away." Of these suggestions, that of Marti is, on account of its conciseness, the most attractive and most in agreement with Nahum's style. It may be doubted, however, whether it is not a little too concise; and it fails to offer a quite satisfactory account of the Hebrew text; moreover, "whose waters" seems to desiderate some further descriptive attribute besides "flee away"; for this reason we suggest that the clause read "whose waters roar as they flee" (for this verb used with reference to waters, cf. Ps. civ. 7).

Stand, stand. Either this is the cry of the leaders as they endeavour in vain to get the people to make a stand against their assailants; or, as seems better, the words come from the prophet, who ironically bids the Ninevites stand as he portrays them in imagination falling back before the enemy, cf. *ver.* 1 and *ver.* 10. Budde, followed by some others, inserts "they say" after the second "stand." But such an insertion appears unnecessary.

but none looketh back. Cf. Jer. xlvi. 5.

9. *Take ye the spoil.* The prophet pictures himself as an interested spectator, and urges on the enemy to plunder the wealth and treasures of the capital.

store. Lit. *preparation*; then, "what is prepared," "stores," etc.

the glory of all. Literally, *consisting of all*, etc. This, if correct, depends on the preceding "there is none end of." But the construction is clumsy, and there is little doubt that for *the glory* (= the abundance) we should read *Lade yourselves with*, a letter having dropped out after the final letter of the preceding word; cf. the LXX βεβάρηται. The word "all" is probably a dittograph; its omission would improve the metre.

10. The work of plundering done, Nineveh, the one opulent city, becomes an utter desolation. Despair and anguish are to be seen everywhere.

She is empty, etc. The prophet sums up in a series of exclamations

melteth, and the knees smite together, and anguish is in all loins, and the faces of them all are waxed pale. 11 Where is the den of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion ¹and the lioness walked, the lion's whelp, and none made

¹ Or, even *the old lion*

the sight of desolation and terror that meets the eye. The three words in the Hebrew form a paronomasia, which cannot very well be reproduced in English.

melteth. Strictly *melting*; i.e. despondent, despairing, cf. Deut. xx. 8; 2 Sam. xvii. 10; Is. xiii. 7.

the knees smite together. Literally, "a tottering of knees"; cf. Dan. v. 6.

anguish. Literally *writhing*; the root is used of a woman in travail, cf. Is. xxi. 3; Ezek. xxx. 4, 9.

are waxed pale. Literally *gather whiteness* (so most probably), cf. Joel ii. 6. The exact meaning of the term *pārūr*, however, is disputed. Many think that its literal meaning is *redness*, so that the phrase means "gather redness"; but the face of a person does not become red but white in the case of sudden alarm or dismay. Others propose "withdraw beauty, colour," and so "turn pale"; but the objection to this is that the verb does not mean "withdraw" but "gather." It seems best to connect the word with the root *pār* which no doubt originally signified "be dazzling," "be resplendent," and to understand it to denote "whiteness." Is. xiii. 8 is no objection to this view, for the flame of a fiercely blazing fire is not red but white.

11, 12. Having completed his description of the fall and sack of Nineveh, the prophet addresses Assyria, and, under the imagery of a lion's den, asks her what has become of her capital, which she was wont to enrich with the plunder of the peoples whom she had cruelly and rapaciously spoiled and destroyed. The imagery may very possibly have been suggested by the prominent position which the lion occupied in the artistic representations of Assyria; but the representation of Israel's foes as lions is common in O.T. (cf. Jer. iv. 7, v. 6, l. 17; Ps. xxii. 21), just as Assyria was accustomed to typify her enemies by the lion.

feeding place. The Hebrew means "a pasture ground was it for the young lions." This is unsuitable; and should be replaced by *the cave of the young lions*. This emendation not only restores the metre of the verse, which appears to be written in the so-called *kinā* measure, but improves the present prosaic text.

where the lion, etc. The Hebrew in strictness means "*whither went the lion, the lioness, the lion's whelp,*" etc., and this is clumsy. The LXX for the lioness has (*where the lion*) *went to enter* (*lābhō' for lābhī*). The words "the lion's whelp" are in all probability, along with the "it" of the preceding clause, a marginal gloss ("it is a lion's whelp") on *gōrōthāw* (ver. 13), which is a rare word.

them afraid? 12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin. 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.

12. *The lion did tear.* The verse takes up again the subject of *ver. 11b* and states what its general practice was. The reference is to the brutality and lust for plunder which the Assyrians displayed in their campaigns, and through which the resources of their capital and country were enriched.

13. This rounds off the preceding verses, giving the reason why in the future no trace of this "lion among nations" will survive. Jehovah has announced His intention to consume its territory and destroy its posterity, so that its officials will no longer be heard of in the land.

Behold, I am against. Cf. iii. 5. The phrase is common in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, cf. Jer. xxi. 13, l. 31; Ezek. xiii. 8, 20, xxi. 3 (8), xxxiv. 10.

against thee. The pronoun in the Hebrew is feminine and refers to Nineveh, but all the suffixes in the verse should be changed to the masculine, referring to Assyria.

her chariots. This Keil explains as standing, by synecdoché, for the whole of the apparatus for war. But the third person comes in very awkwardly, while an explicit reference to Assyria's war-equipment is out of place in the immediate context, where the figure of the lion is clearly continued from the preceding verses. The LXX reads "thy multitude" which has been adopted by some; but this is too colourless a term to stand parallel to "thy young lions." It is better to read with most moderns "thy lair," i.e. thy land.

in the smoke. Or better, *in smoke*, i.e. so that it vanishes in smoke: cf. Ps. xxxvii. 20. Fire and sword are to be the means by which Jehovah will accomplish His purpose.

the sword shall devour thy young lions. In other words, Assyria will have no posterity to continue her name (cf. i. 14). The younger generation, like the land they inhabit, will be utterly destroyed. The term "young lions" has been taken as figurative for warriors; but the above explanation seems to be the more natural.

thy prey. This, if the text is correct, will mean the booty and tribute taken or exacted from the vanquished nations. But better, *thy plunderers* (a very slight alteration), as the parallel, *thy messengers* suggests.

thy messengers. I.e. the officials who were sent to exact tribute, demand submission, and, in general, to supervise affairs in the provinces or dependencies. Cf. 2 Kg. xviii. 17 ff., xix. 9 ff., 23.

CHAPTER III.

III. 1 Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departeth not. **2** The noise of the whip, and the noise

III. 1-19. The third main section. A further denunciation of Nineveh and a picture of the complete disaster that is to overtake her.

1-7. Nineveh is apostrophized. In a series of short, exclamatory utterances the prophet taunts her with her acts of bloodshed, deceit, and robbery; pictures the onrush of the assailing forces and the terrible carnage that follows, and points out the reason why she has rightly merited her fate. She has exercised the treachery of a harlot to the ruin of smaller states; therefore Jehovah is against her and will mete out to her the harlot's treatment; she must be reduced before the nations to a state of utter ignominy and ruin, an object of mockery to all, an object of pity to none.

1. *Woe to. Better, Ah! (or Ha!), the, etc.* Uttered partly in threat, partly in taunt and scorn; cf. Hab. ii. 6, 9, 12, 15.

the bloody city. Lit. *city of acts of bloodshed.* How richly Assyria deserved this title is seen from the monuments. Maspero thus describes her barbarous butchery at the fall of Babylon in 648 B.C.: "Ashurbanipal pursued the fugitives, and, having captured nearly all of them, vented on them the full fury of his vengeance. He caused the tongues of the soldiers to be torn out, and then had them clubbed to death. He massacred the common folk in front of the great winged bulls which had already witnessed a similar butchery half a century before, under his grandfather Sennacherib; the corpses of his victims remained long unburied, a prey to all unclean beasts and birds" (*The Passing of the Empires*, p. 423).

it is all full of lies, etc. Lit. "*all of her is lying, of rapine full.*" The reference is, no doubt, to such vain promises and representations as she made to the weaker states in order to induce them to submit. Cf. 2 Kg. xviii. 31 f. The verse is variously punctuated by different critics. Some connect the words "*all of her*" not only with "lying" but with what follows, viz. "*all of her is filled with lying and rapine*"; but it seems better to connect "*all of her*" simply with "lying" and treat "*of rapine full*" as a separate clause parallel to "*the prey departeth not,*" just as "*all of her is lying*" is parallel to "*the bloody city.*"

the prey, etc. Or "the act of preying ceases not"—a statement which, as commentators have pointed out, is amply corroborated by the Assyrian records. Marti urges that we miss a clause parallel to this, and suggests that "and there is no end to the booty" may have accidentally fallen out of the text. But the suggestion is unnecessary if we adopt the division of the clauses advocated above: notice that "of rapine full" forms an admirable parallel to the present clause.

2 f. In a succession of short, ejaculatory utterances Nahum graphically depicts the telling onset of the assailing forces; the rapid advance

of the rattling of wheels; and prancing horses, and jumping chariots; 3 the horseman¹ mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear; and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of carcasses: and there is none end of the corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: 4 because of the multitude of the whore-

¹ Or, *charging*

of the charioteers, the crack of the whips, and the jolting cars, the galloping horses and prancing horsemen, the flash of steel and heaped-up slain—all pass before the mental eye in quick succession.

prancing horses. Or *horses at gallop*. The word *dākar* occurs only here, though it is probably to be restored in Judg. v. 22 (see Burney).

jumping. Namely, as they dash forward over the uneven ground; cf. Joel ii. 5.

3. *the horseman mounting.* Better, *the prancing horseman*; literally, *the horseman causing (the horse) to go up*, i.e. to rear or prance: cf. Jer. xlvi. 9, li. 27. This is the most probable explanation of the participle. The rendering "the horseman charging," lit. *bringing up (the horse)*, viz. to the charge, is not so probable in view of the passages in Jeremiah, especially the first where the verb is parallel to "rage."

and the flashing. Lit. *and the flame of*: cf. Job xxxix. 23.

the glittering. Lit. *the lightning of*: cf. Deut. xxxii. 41; Hab. iii. 11, etc.

and a multitude of slain. Stating the effect of the onslaught. The ground is strewn with dead.

stumble upon their corpses. The subject is either the assailants ("they stumble") who, as they pursue the fugitives, stumble over the dead, or else—and perhaps more probably—it is indefinite ("men stumble"). The traditional text has *their*, and this, if correct, must be understood to refer to the inhabitants included under the term "city" (*ver.* 1), but there is little doubt that it has come into the text through dittography. J. P. Smith and others regard the line as a gloss, Smith remarking that it is not necessary to the poetic form of the verse and introduces a verb for the first and only time into a series of ejaculatory phrases (*ICC.* p. 337). But there is no reason why Nahum should not have introduced a verb in his description; moreover, a clause parallel to *there is none end of the corpses* is certainly desiderated; nor can it be said that the presence of the line interferes with the poetic form of the verse, for what we seem to have in *vv.* 1-3 is a series of lines with two beats each.

4. This states the reason for Nineveh's overthrow. Just as a harlot by her blandishments and charms entices victims to their ruin, so Assyria by her display of power and fair-seeming proposals has attracted weaker states to forfeit their independence only to enhance thereby her own resources. Compare the case of Ahaz.

doms of the well favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. 5 Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will discover thy skirts ¹upon thy face; and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

¹ Or, *before*

the well favoured harlot. Lit. *the harlot fair in grace*, cf. Prov. xi. 16, xxxi. 30. Duhm omits on metrical grounds "harlot" as a dittograph, and in all probability rightly, for the second half of the verse exhibits the *kīnā* measure and it is probable that the first half did the same. It is perhaps the accidental addition of a scribe.

mistress of witchcrafts. Cf. 2 Kg. ix. 22. We need not suppose that the figure of the harlot is supplemented by that of the sorceress. The sorceries are probably those which the harlot is conceived of as practising in pursuance of her trade. The reference is to the subtle seductive influence which Assyria exercised upon the smaller states.

selleth nations. Namely, into bondage to herself; cf. Deut. xxxii. 30; Is. i. 1. The expression is employed somewhat loosely; for it is not very natural to think of Nineveh as *selling* the nations *to herself*. But perhaps the reference is to the way in which Assyria was ready to desert a smaller state in order to gain or retain friendly relations with a more powerful one.

families. Lit. *clans*; for this wider use of the Hebrew term see Gen. xii. 3; xxviii. 14; Am. iii. 2, etc.

5. This introduces Jehovah's sentence upon her. As she has played the harlot's part, so will she receive in return the harlot's treatment.

Behold, I am, etc. A second formal announcement of Jehovah's intention to punish Nineveh, cf. ii. 13.

and I will discover, etc. I.e. "uncover," this seemingly being the punishment for the harlot or adulteress: cf. Hos. ii. 4, 5 (Heb.); Jer. xiii. 26; Ezek. xvi. 37 ff. It is a custom found among other nations; cf. Tacitus, *Germ.* §§ 18, 19 (cited from Harper, *Amos and Hosea*).

upon thy face. Better, *before thy face*, so that thou wilt be sensible of what is being done and be ashamed. Some would understand the words literally (with the R.V.) *upon* or *over thy face*, i.e. "so that the train when lifted up is drawn over the face." Duhm omits them as having been added from Jer. xiii. 26, and similarly the preceding "hosts," as taken over from ii. 13. The line would then correspond to the *kīnā* measure.

shew the nations. The nations that have been humiliated will be rewarded by seeing their oppressor in turn humiliated at the hands of the conqueror.

6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. 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? 8 Art thou better than

6. *abominable filth*. Lit. *detestable things*; the plural is probably intensive, the force of which may be brought out in English by *all that is detestable*. The expression, however, has been understood in the sense of "filth," "dirt," but this is probably to narrow unduly the meaning of the Hebrew. The Hebrew term is usually applied to idols, cf. Deut. xxix. 17 (16); Jer. iv. 1, etc. The allusion is no doubt to the rough and ignominious treatment meted out to harlots or adulteresses.

make thee vile. Or *treat...with contumely*: cf. (in the Hebrew) Deut. xxxii. 15; Mic. vii. 6.

as a gazingstock. Cf. Ezek. xxviii. 17 and the Mesha Inscription, lines 11, 12: "And I slew all the people [from] the city, a gazingstock unto Chemosh and unto Moab" (*EB*. col. 3045,6). The particle of comparison, *as*, probably has come into the text through dittography.

7. *flee from thee*. Viz. in horror and disgust. Cf. Ps. xxxi. 12.

is laid waste. Cf. (in the Hebrew) Jer. iv. 20, x. 20, etc.

who will bemoan her? Implying a negative answer. None will be found to lament Nineveh's fate. Cf. Is. li. 19; Jer. xv. 5; also Job ii. 11. For the Hebrew "her" some versions and several Hebrew MSS read "thee"; but this and the following clauses are best understood as what those who witness Nineveh's fate say, when they turn in aversion from her.

for thee. The LXX reads "for her," and there can be little doubt that this reading is correct, for the change of person is awkward; in both cases we must read either the third person or else the second; the former, as we have seen, is the more probable.

8-12. These verses form a taunt-song, in which Nineveh is asked whether she is in reality any better circumstanced than Thebes, who, in spite of natural defences and auxiliary forces, went into exile; and in which she is reminded that she, too, is now overtaken by calamity, and is seen to seek refuge from the enemy. The justification for the taunt is given in *ver.* 13, where it is pointed out that her fortresses in the land are falling into the hands of the enemy; the defenders of them are no better than women.

8. *Art thou better*. I.e. better placed and more secure. Davidson's rendering: "shall it be (go) better with thee," i.e. shalt thou have a better fate, would require "with thee" to be expressed (cf. Gen. xii. 13, xl. 14, etc.) and the third and not the second person of the verb. Wellhausen, on the ground of this rhetorical question, thinks that Nahum cannot have had in mind the fall of Thebes at the hand of the Assyrian, as Nineveh might have reasonably replied to the question:

No-amon, that was situate among the ¹rivers, that had the

¹ Or, *canals* See Ex. vii. 19.

“Certainly, for No of Amon itself fell before me.” But this argument rests on a misunderstanding of the question. The point of it is not whether Nineveh (as representing Assyria) is better than Thebes (as representing Egypt) but whether Nineveh’s strength of natural position is, after all, better than was that of Thebes.

No-amon. Better, *No of Amon*; i.e. Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt, the *Διόσπολις* of the Greeks. The city proper lay on the eastern bank of the Nile about 440 miles south of Memphis and about 140 miles north of Syene (Assuan), which marks the first cataract of the Nile, and consisted of two towns now represented by Karnak and Luxor. Connected with these two towns were suburbs both on the eastern and western banks of the river, the latter bank marking also the site of the necropolis as well as the sites of many temples and several palaces. *No* represents the Egyptian *Nt*, “city,” and *Nō ’āmōn* meant accordingly “the city of (the god) Amon.” It was also known as “the city” *par excellence* (cf. Ezek. xxx. 14, 15, 16), and often, too, as “the Southern city” (cf. *DB.* iii. 555). Though of high antiquity “its greatness begins with the rise of the New Empire. After the expulsion of the Hyksos, the eighteenth dynasty adorned it with temples and palaces which found no equal in antiquity, and, even in ruins, claim our highest admiration. The nineteenth and twentieth dynasties added to its splendour...The succeeding dynasties neglected Thebes; but it was still the largest city of Upper Egypt” (*EB.* col. 3428). The city was captured and sacked by the Assyrian forces in 661 B.C. (cf. p. 83), and it is to this event that Nahum alludes. Nineveh, at any rate, should know that strength of natural position is not everything, since it was before her own forces that Thebes fell.

among the rivers. I.e. (strictly) the branches or canals of the Nile. Just opposite Thebes the Nile branches into two portions enclosing an island but, as Driver points out, it is doubtful whether Nahum was aware of this. Most probably he uses the plural “rivers” simply as a characteristic designation of the Nile; cf. Is. vii. 18. J. P. Smith regards it as a “plural of majesty.”

that had the waters round about her. These words should probably be omitted as a gloss on the following clause; they come in somewhat disjointedly and interrupt the rhythmic flow of the verse. By the deletion of this clause the description given of Thebes would not go beyond the fact that it lay by the river and was protected by it; if the clause is retained, then it may be supposed either that the prophet’s representation was modelled after “most Delta-cities, i.e. situated on the plain or an artificial mound, surrounded by canals” (*EB.* col. 3427); or possibly that he has in mind the season of inundation.

waters round about her; whose rampart was ¹the sea, and her wall ²was of the sea? 9 Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

¹ That is, the Nile.

² Some ancient versions have, *was the waters*.

whose rampart was the sea. The Hebrew, strictly speaking, can only be rendered "which was a rampart of the sea"; but there can be little doubt that the original reading was *whose rampart was the sea*. By the *sea* is meant the Nile; cf. Is. xviii. 2, xix. 5. The Arabs still designate it *El-bahr*, "the sea."

her wall was of the sea. The Vulgate has *whose wall was waters*, and this is followed by Wellhausen and many moderns. The LXX has *and her wall water*, which is adopted by Davidson and J. P. Smith. The Hebrew means that her wall was constituted by the sea, but the alternative vocalization obviates the repetition of the term "sea," and produces an easier sentence.

9. *Ethiopia.* Literally *Cush*, which extended southwards from the first cataract. About 712 B.C. Sabako conquered Egypt and established the Ethiopian or twenty-fifth dynasty, with its capital at Napata. It was during this dynasty that the intrigues with Syria against Assyria were set on foot which led to the invasion of Egypt. In 670 Esarhaddon defeated Tirhakah (668-663) and made it an Assyrian province. Three revolts followed, in the last of which Tanut-amon (who succeeded Tirhakah about 663), on the capture of Memphis, fell back on Thebes, which, however, he abandoned on the approach of the Assyrian forces, with the result that the city was sacked. In the light of these events the reference to Cush and Egypt becomes clear. No of Amon could count not only on Cush, to whom it then belonged, but on Egypt proper which at that time was dominated by Cush.

Put. What region is intended is uncertain. In Jer. xlv. 9; Ezek. xxx. 5 it is mentioned among the auxiliaries of Egypt, and always in connection with either Lud or Cush. In Gen. x. 6 Put is represented as the son of Ham along with Cush, Mizraim, and Canaan. The LXX, except in the present passage (where it has *Αἰθιοπία*), renders it in the Prophets by *Libyans*, and many think that Put represented a Libyan people who dwelt west of Libya proper. Others identify Put with *Punt* of the Egyptian inscriptions: this country is said to have "comprised the whole African coast of the Red Sea from the desert East of Upper Egypt to the modern Somali country" (*DB.* iv. 177). The second of these views seems the most probable, though we have no evidence that Egypt ever secured mercenaries from *Punt*.

Lubim. I.e. the Libyans who dwelt west of Egypt. Another reading is *Ludim* (cf. Jer. xlv. 9; Ezek. xxx. 5), which is accepted by Winckler (cf. also *EB.* col. 2827). The Ludim are usually regarded as a Libyan people dwelling on the west of Egypt, but Winckler regards them as Lydians and thinks of the Carian and Lydian mercenaries who formed part of the armies of Psammetichus, Hophra and Amasis.

thy helpers. The LXX substitutes *her helpers* (followed by many critics). The prophet is still referring to No of Amon.

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 honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11 Thou also shalt be drunken, thou shalt be hid; thou also shalt seek ¹a strong hold because of the enemy.

¹ Or, a defence against

10. *Yet was she.* I.e., in spite of her defences and the different and numerous forces that fought for her, she was, etc.

carried away. The account of the capture and plundering of Thebes has been preserved in the annals of Ashurbanipal. "Silver, gold, precious stones, the goods of his (Tandamani's) palace, all that was there, many-coloured raiment, rich garments, fine horses, people male and female, two lofty obelisks, made of shining *zahalu*-stone, in weight 2500 talents, which stood before the gate of the temple, I removed from their place and took them to Assyria. Heavy spoils without number I carried away from Thebes," etc.

dashed in pieces. For this barbarous custom, cf. Hos. xiv. 1 (iii. 16); Is. xiii. 16; 2 Kg. viii. 12.

at the top of all the streets. Where there was more room for carrying out the act, the streets in an oriental city being narrow: cf. Is. li. 20; Lam. ii. 19, iv. 1.

lots for her honourable men, etc. The nobles were distributed among the captors by lot. For the practice, cf. Joel iii. (iv.) 3; Ob. 11. The LXX reads πάντα τὰ ἔνδοξα, inserting *all*, and this reading is favoured by the rhythm.

bound in chains. Cf. Is. xlv. 14; Jer. xl. 1, 4; Ps. cxlix. 8.

11. Nineveh is no better off than Thebes.

be drunken. I.e. stagger helplessly under the calamity that is befalling thee: for the figure, cf. Jer. xxv. 27, li. 7; Is. li. 21, 22; Hab. ii. 15.

be hid. This should perhaps be replaced by *be covered*, fig. for "be powerless," "prostrate," cf. Am. viii. 13; Is. li. 20; Jon. iv. 8 (*na'ālāphāk* for *na'ālāmāk*). The existing text, if correct, might be understood to be figurative for "vanish away," "disappear"; but this would scarcely be suitable to the present context (cf. following clause). Many think, however, that *ālam* is here equivalent in meaning to *ālaph*, "cover," which is used in the sense of "faint" (cf. passages just cited); but *ālam* does not mean "to cover" (i.e. enwrap) but "to hide," "conceal"; and there is no reason to believe that it was ever used in the secondary sense of "to faint."

shalt seek a strong hold. Are the tenses in this verse Futures or Presents? The usual view is that they are Futures; but they might quite well be construed as Presents; and, as in all probability Nineveh was already being assailed when Nahum prophesied, it would appear to be much better to regard them as Presents. In this case there may very well be in "dost seek a stronghold" an allusion to the help which the Scythians

12 All thy fortresses shall be *like* fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. 13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire hath devoured thy

afforded Nineveh in 625. Not that the prophet wrote after the Scythians had already effected Nineveh's deliverance, but when they set out to her aid and their forces were hastening back from Palestine.

12. Nineveh's fortresses prove useless; they fall as easily before the assailing forces as early figs do when the tree is shaken.

fortresses. Probably those guarding the approaches to the capital. Some, however, think that the fortifications of Nineveh are intended.

with. This is the reading of the traditional text, but both the parallelism and the rhythm suggest a noun rather than a preposition. Perhaps we should read *thy cities*, i.e. the fortified cities protecting the approaches to Nineveh. Marti and others, however, read "thy people" for "*with*" (i.e. "thy people are firstripe figs"); but (a) "thy people" (= defenders) is not a very exact parallel to "fortresses"; (b) the reference to Nineveh's defenders is clearly made in *ver.* 13, and therefore we should not expect that reference to be anticipated here; and (c) a mention of the defenders would not be very applicable to the figure, according to which the ease with which the fortresses fall is compared to the ease with which figs fall when the tree is shaken.

the firstripe figs. The early figs, which ripen at the end of May or the beginning of June, were regarded as a great delicacy; cf. Is. xxviii. 4. In Jer. xxiv. 2 the good figs, which represent the better class of Judæans, are compared to early figs. In their mention here there may be, therefore, a side allusion to the esteem in which Nineveh's fortresses were held.

13. Her defenders are as women before the enemy, into whose power the passes which lead to the capital fall and by whom the forts are burned.

thy people. I.e. defenders. Cf. Num. xx. 20, xxi. 23.

in the midst of thee. I.e. not merely in the capital itself but in its neighbourhood.

are women. Cf. Is. xix. 16; Jer. l. 37, li. 30; also Herod. viii. 88.

the gates of thy land. I.e. the fortified approaches and mountain-passes leading to the capital. Compare such expressions as the "Caspian Gates," the "Caucasian Gates," etc. (Driver).

are set wide open. The Adverb. Infin., rendered by *wide*, should be cancelled as a scribal error; the metre suggests a line of three beats rather than of four, as the present text appears to have.

the fire hath devoured thy bars. I.e. either the actual bars of the fort-gates guarding the approaches and defiles, or the forts themselves. But the line is almost certainly not original. It is rhythmically suspicious; and destroys the effect of the preceding lines, which are intended to suggest that no sooner have the enemy appeared at the gates than the defenders surrender, whereas "fire hath devoured thy bars" suggests rather that the fortresses were taken by storm. Moreover *ver.* 15 has *the*

bars. 14 Draw thee water for the siege, strengthen thy fortresses; go into the clay, and tread the mortar, ¹ make strong the brickkiln. 15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall devour thee like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the

¹ Or, lay hold of the brickmould

fire shall devour thee. The tenses of the verbs support the view that the land and neighbourhood of Nineveh had already been successfully invaded. Some, however, regard them as "prophetic" Perfects.

14-15a. The prophet ironically urges Nineveh to prepare for the siege, knowing that all her efforts will only prove in vain, and she will be consumed by fire.

14. *water for the siege.* Billerbeck suggests that the reference is to boiling water poured out on the heads of the besiegers; but the evidence for this practice is not clear, and it seems more natural to think of such water as would be needed to meet the necessities of the beleaguered inhabitants when their ordinary means of supply were cut off.

strengthen. I.e. either *repair* (cf. 2 Kg. xii. 7 ff.; Neh. iii. 19) or else in the sense of seeing that they are made doubly strong.

fortresses. Perhaps better, *fortifications*, namely, those of the capital. *go into the clay.* Namely, in order to make bricks for repairs or for the construction of additional defence works.

make strong the brickkiln. Better, as in the margin, *lay hold of the brickmould.* On the celebrated representation of brick-making to be found at Thebes we see "the labourers hoeing the ground with the wooden Egyptian hoe, carrying the black earth in baskets to a clean place, moistening it with water taken from shallow ponds, and kneading it with their feet. The wooden moulding-frame is filled with material of the right consistency, and emptied on the ground; then the square heaps of mud, placed in rows side by side, are left to dry" (quoted with slight omissions from *EB.* col. 609). In Babylonia burnt, as well as sun-dried, bricks were largely in use owing to the dampness of the climate. In Egypt and Palestine burnt bricks date from the Roman period. *Malbēn* does not mean "brickkiln" but "brickmould"; cf. Driver, *NHTS*², pp. 294 ff.

15a. Her preparations will be futile; she will be consumed by fire and destroyed by the sword.

There. I.e. within the walls and fortifications.

shall the fire devour. As a matter of fact the capital was set on fire, as the buildings unearthed at Kuyunjik, and the blistered tablets belonging to Ashurbanipal's library, show.

thee. I.e. thy inhabitants.

like the cankerworm. Or, *like the young locust.* The prophet here compares the enemies of Nineveh to the young locust (see on 15b), whereas immediately afterwards he applies the same comparison to the Ninevites themselves.

15b. *make thyself many.* Literally, *make thyself heavy.* The reference

cankerworm, make thyself many as the locust. 16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm

is not, as is commonly thought, to the massing of defenders within Nineveh, but to the presence of a large portion of her population throughout her dominions and elsewhere for trade (cf. *ver.* 16) and other purposes. Just as the prophet has ironically bidden Nineveh prepare for siege only to meet disaster and be completely destroyed, so he ironically bids her in these verses to multiply her traders and officials only to discover that their disappearance will be as sudden and as complete as that of the locusts, seen one day and gone the next. In other words, not only the capital but the population that represent her in the land will cease to exist. It is probable that at the time when the prophet wrote Nineveh's trade was fast declining, and her merchants and other classes of her population were a less frequent sight in the provinces than they used to be; if so, his words will be a sarcastic allusion to it.

cankerworm. We have no exact English equivalent for the Heb. *yelek*, which most probably means literally "lapper," "licker" (cf. *lākaḥ*, "lap," "lick"), and denotes the locust in the pupa-stage "in which their wings are partially developed, but enclosed as yet in membranous cases: in this stage they advance by walking rather than by hopping" (Driver, *Joel and Amos*, p. 85).

16. *Thou hast multiplied.* Probably read, with most moderns, *Multiply*. The correction is suggested by the preceding imperatives.

thy merchants. Next to conquest, Nineveh relied on her trade as a source of wealth and power. Though her traders multiply beyond all reckoning, yet no sooner will she have fallen than they will have vanished and gone.

above the stars of heaven. I.e. beyond all reckoning: cf. Gen. xv. 5; Ex. xxxii. 13.

the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away. The writer clearly intends to say that Nineveh, with her merchant and other folk that swarm in the land, will vanish away as completely as the young locust flies away. But as the text stands, we miss any explicit indication of what will be the fate awaiting Nineveh and her vast trading population. The following clause, "the young locust...flieth away," can scarcely be said to give this. It is not only introduced very abruptly, but to suppose that the prophet left it to be inferred that Nineveh's merchants would wholly disappear by simply stating that it was the custom of the young locust to cast its sheaths (see below) and fly off is very unlikely. He would almost certainly have expressed himself more clearly, especially as this was the main point which he intended to enforce. It is not improbable that a clause has fallen out, and that the verse should end with *Thou shalt vanish like the cankerworm, which strippeth and flieth away.*

¹spoileth, and flieth away. 17 Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy

¹ Or, *spreadeth himself*

spoileth. Some have given to the Hebrew verb *pāshat* the meaning "spoil" or "make a raid," and it has been taken to refer either to Nineveh who, having plundered others, will now herself be forced to fly away, or to the innumerable army of the enemy who will plunder everything and then hurry away with its booty. But, as Driver points out, the meaning "spoileth" is borne only by the causative conjugation, and "maketh a raid" is used only in connection with an army or marauding band. It is true that *pāshat* is found only here in connection with the locust; but it is found fairly often in the sense of "putting off" a garment, and might therefore be used of the locusts casting the sheaths which enclosed their wings. Nineveh's traders will disappear as the locusts do, when they have shed their wing-cases.

17. As Nineveh's merchants will vanish from the land like the young locust which strips itself and flies away, so her officials will be like the locusts which, on a cold day, camp in the stone walls, but with the warmth of the sun are seen no more.

Thy crowned. What class of officials is intended is quite uncertain: the word *minzār* occurs only here; the parallel word leads us to suppose that it is most probably a Hebraized form of some technical Assyrian term. Zimmern connects it with the Assyrian *manzaru*, and renders "watchers"; while Haupt compares the Assyrian *nazaru*, "curse," and renders "exorcists." But neither explanation can be pronounced certain. Those who adhere to a Hebrew derivation for the word render either "consecrated ones" (*nāzar* "to consecrate," "separate"), i.e. princes, or "crowned ones" (cf. *nōzer* "crown," "diadem"). Duhm renders "revenue-officers"; and in view of the parallel term, it is not unlikely that the word, whatever its derivation may be, was intended to designate some such class of persons. It is possible, of course, that the text may be corrupt.

thy marshals. The word *taphsar* occurs again only in Jer. li. 27. Its meaning is uncertain; but there is little doubt that it is equivalent to the Assyrian *dupsarru* or *dupsharru*, which means a "tablet-writer," "scribe." And this rendering has been retained here by some; for example by Jeremias, who remarks that in Ashurbanipal's time they were naturally the most distinguished at the court of Nineveh. But in Jer. li. 27 it certainly has a wider use than this and evidently denotes some high military official; and it is probable that its sense here is similar. We may perhaps think of the Assyrian overseers who resided in the different provinces, mustered the forces, and saw in general to the interests of the empire; in this case they would be called "scribes" because their office necessitated the ability to write. In Hebrew *sōtēr* (originally "scribe") and *shōphēr* are used similarly, cf. Ex. v. 6, 10; 2 Kg. xxv. 19; Is. xxxiii. 18. It is not necessary to suppose that the prophet has in mind officials

¹marshals as the swarms of grasshoppers, which camp in the
²hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away,
 and their place is not known where they are. 18 Thy shepherds

¹ Or, *scribes*

² Or, *walls*

in *Nineveh*; rather, he is thinking of those in the provinces who with her will vanish from the land (*v. supra*). It should be noticed that the point of comparison with the locusts lies mainly not in their numbers but in the suddenness and completeness with which they disappear, as the rest of the verse shows. We need not think therefore of a *very* numerous class of persons, as some would suppose.

as the swarms of grasshoppers. Better, as grasshoppers (one word being omitted). The term perhaps denotes the locust in the larval stage. In the Hebrew the word has accidentally been written twice; hence the rendering "swarms of" in the R.V. In the larval stage the locusts "have no wings, but are capable of hopping about; and advancing in compact bodies they begin almost immediately their destructive operations" (Driver, *op. cit.* p. 85; cf. also p. 87).

which camp, etc. This is a characteristic of the locust. Cf. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, pp. 418 f. (the one-volume edition): "In the evenings, as soon as the air became cool, at Beih they literally camped in the hedges and loose stone walls, covering them over like a swarm of bees settled on a bush. There they remained until the next day's sun waxed warm, when they again commenced their march."

The disappearance of Nineveh's officials will be no less sudden than that of the locust; though they are seen everywhere throughout her provinces and dependencies, and their presence therefore might seem to assure the permanency of her position, yet no sooner will she be threatened than they will vanish from the land.

hedges. I.e. stone fences such as surround fields.

in the cold day. Literally, in a day of coldness: cf. Prov. xxv. 20.

they flee away. Literally, *it fleeth away*. But perhaps better (assuming the loss of a word), *they flee quite away*. The two-beat rhythm suggests that *nōdhadh* should be vocalized as *nōdhēdh* (Infinitive absolute) and that *nōdhēdhu* has fallen out.

their place. Namely, whither they have flown. If we adopt the reading suggested above, then we should read here *mēkōmām* for *mēkōmō*.

where they are. This addition is tautological, and is most probably a corruption: see following note.

18, 19. A closing dirge on Nineveh's fall.

18. *Thy shepherds*, etc. Duhm and J. P. Smith, omitting *where they are* at the end of the preceding verse, would begin this with *How thy shepherds*, etc. The LXX has *οὐαὶ αὐροῖς*.

shepherds. I.e. leaders and rulers, cf. Mic. v. 5 (4); Jer. ii. 8, iii. 15; Ezek. xxxiv. 2, etc. The address "*O king of Assyria*" is probably to be regarded as a gloss: it spoils the *kīnā* measure. Moreover, the suffixes

slumber, O king of Assyria: thy worthies are at rest: thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there is none to gather them. 19 There is no assuaging of thy hurt; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee clap the hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

of the second person in the preceding verses have referred to Nineveh, and it is much more natural to speak of Nineveh's leaders than it is to speak of the king of Assyria's. Omitting these words, the pron. suffixes throughout the verses will refer to Nineveh and should (in the Hebrew) be pointed as feminine.

slumber. I.e. in death, cf. Ps. lxxvi. 6: others less probably take it as a figurative expression for carelessness and inactivity.

thy worthies. Or, *thy majestic ones*; here a synonym for *rulers*: cf. ii. 5 (6).

are at rest. The Hebrew means *dwell* (the R. V. rendering cannot be justified), and the verb (in view of the parallelism) should be replaced by *sleep*. So Wellhausen and most moderns: the change is easy.

thy people are scattered. The people are scattered as a flock without a shepherd: cf. Num. xxvii. 17; 1 Kg. xxii. 17; Ezek. xxxiv. 6. The term "people," as the figure shows, is used quite generally and is not to be restricted to "defenders."

19. Nineveh's fall is irreparable. She will collapse amid the general exultation of those whom she has oppressed.

assuaging. The Hebrew word *cēhāk* must be replaced by *gēhāk* (Prov. xvii. 22), for the former means "dimness" (cf. the adjective *cēhāk* signifying "dim," which is used with reference to the eyes (1 Sam. iii. 2), to a burning-wick (Is. xlii. 3), and also to the colour of a plague-spot (Lev. xiii. 6, etc.)), and could scarcely be used in the sense of "alleviation."

hurt. Strictly "breaking," "breach": cf. Is. xxx. 26 (cf. 14); Jer. viii. 21, x. 19, xiv. 17, etc.

grievous. Literally, *made sick*: cf. Jer. x. 19, xiv. 17, xxx. 12.

the bruit of thee. I.e. the report of thy fall.

clap the hands. Namely, in exultation, cf. Ps. xlvii. 2 (1). For the thought, cf. Ezek. xxv. 6.

upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed. I.e. who has not suffered injury or harm from thee? Marti, J. P. Smith, and others regard the clause as a prosaic addition; but it conforms to the rhythm of the preceding lines and rounds off the verse well.

TRANSLATION

NAHUM

The following translation is made from an emended text. Lines or verses that are inserted or transposed are enclosed between *pointed* brackets. Where lines or clauses are omitted, their position is marked by *square* brackets. Where emendations of one or more words have been adopted, they are placed between asterisks. The numeration of the verses follows the Hebrew.

The Sources from which the various parts of the book proceed are indicated by letters in the margin.

E = Editor
N = Nahum
R¹ = First Reviser
R² = Second Reviser
R³ = Third Reviser

I

1 E Nineveh's sentence. R³ The book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite.

2 R³ (*Aleph*) A jealous God [] is Yahweh,
Avenging [] and full of wrath.

(*Nun*) Avenging is Yahweh towards His adversaries,
And relentless towards His enemies.

3 [] (*Beth*) In storm-wind and whirlwind is His way,
And clouds are the dust of His feet.

4 (*Gimel*) He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry,
And all the rivers He drieth up.

(*Daleth*) Bashan and Carmel *pine*,
And the sprout of Lebanon languisheth.

5 (*He*) *The* mountains quake at Him,
And (all) the hills melt.

(*Waw*) And the earth *is desolated* at His presence,
And the world and all that dwell therein.

6 Before (*Zayin*) His indignation who can stand?
And who can stand up against the fierceness of His anger?

(*Kheth*) His wrath is poured out like fire,
And the rocks are torn down because of Him.

7a (*Teth*) Good is Yahweh [] in the day of trouble,
8a And in the overflowing flood (He will help) [].

7b (*Yodh*) [] He knoweth those who seek refuge in Him,
8b But His enemies darkness pursueth.

10 (*Caph*) *Like a thicket* of thorns [] are they consumed,
(And) as dry stubble *from before fire*.

9 N How dost *thou* devise (wickedness) against Yahweh—
"An utter end *will I* make (of His place),
Trouble shall not rise up twice"?

- 13 Behold, thy people
 Are women in thy midst;
 To thy enemy are opened []
 The gates of thy land [].
- 14 Draw water for the siege!
 Strengthen thy fortifications!
 Get into the mud,
 And trample the clay!
 Take hold of the brick-mould!
 (*Set in place*) (thy bars)!
- 15a [] Let fire consume thee,
 The sword destroy thee []!
- 15b Make *thyselves* numerous as the young-locust!
 Make thyselves numerous as the locust-swarm!
- 16 *Multiply* thy traders
 More than the stars of heaven!
 (Thou shalt vanish like) the young-locust,
 Which strippeth and flieth away.
- 17 Thy officials (?) are as the locust-swarm,
 And overseers (?) as [] grasshoppers,
 Which camp on the walls
 On a cold day;
 The sun riseth
 And (they flee) *quite* away,
 And *their* place is not known [].
- 18 (How) do thy shepherds slumber [],
 Thy majestic ones *sleep*!
 Thy people are *scattered* upon the mountains,
 With none to gather them.
- 19 There is no *healing* for thy wound,
 Thy stroke is grievous.
 All who hear thy report
 Clap hands at thee;
 For upon whom hath there not passed
 Thy evil continually?

HABAKKUK

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE book of *Habakkuk*, though one of the shortest in the O.T., is unusually obscure. Even the actual form of the prophet's name is somewhat uncertain. No reference to his life occurs in the Historical books; and though statements are made about him in the Apocrypha and in later writings, most of these are clearly fanciful legends¹. The date of his activity and the circumstances in which he prophesied can only be inferred from the contents of the work that is ascribed to him. Of those contents some are not at once easy to harmonize with the rest, so that recourse has been had to the hypothesis of some dislocation in the order of certain parts, or of a separate origin for them. Finally, several short passages are so difficult to understand that they appear to be seriously corrupt.

The name *Habakkuk*, if of Hebrew origin, seems to mean "embrace," from the root *hābhak*, "to clasp." Although St Jerome explains that the prophet was so called either because of his love for the Lord, or because he wrestled with God, it is a plausible suggestion of Davidson's that the name is really an abstract noun, used in the concrete sense of an object that is embraced, and so means "darling" (just as the word *'āsaphsūph*, from the root *'āsaph*, "to collect," signifies "a rabble"). The analogy of this word, indeed, and others of similar formation would lead us to expect the name to have the form *Habakkuk*, and not *Habakkuk*. On the other hand, the LXX represents it by *'Αμβακούμ* not only in the heading

¹ Thus in *Bel and the Dragon* (according to Theodotion's version) it is recounted that when Habakkuk at his home in Judæa was preparing pottage for his reapers, he was bidden by an angel to carry it to Daniel in the lions' den; and when he pleaded that he knew neither Babylon nor the situation of the den, the angel lifted him up by the hair and transported him thither by the blast of his breath; and after he had given the food to Daniel, he was at once taken back to his own place. The LXX codex 87 represents *Bel and the Dragon* as extracted from the prophecy of Habakkuk, the son of Joshua, of the tribe of Levi. Pseudo-Epiphanius (*de Vit. Prop.*) and some other writers relate that at the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar, he fled to Ostracine (in Egypt), and did not return until the Babylonian forces had left Jerusalem; and that he died at home two years before the Return from the Exile, and was buried at Keilah.

of the present book, but also in *Bel and the Dragon*, ver. 33. This has suggested that the name is not really a derivative from the Hebrew *hābhak* but comes from the Assyrian *hambakūku*, which denotes some kind of plant. Personal names offering a parallel to such a derivation occur in various ancient languages, as well as in modern: among such appellations are some which reproduce the names of flowers (e.g. the Hebrew *Shushān*, *Shōshannah*, "Lily" (whence the English *Susan*), and the Greek ῥόδον (*Rose*): cf. likewise the Latin *Flora*, *Floronia*), whilst there are others which are etymologically connected with the names of vegetables (e.g. *Cicero*, *Fabius*, *Lentulus*, which are derived respectively from *cicer*, "a chick-pea," *faba*, "a bean," and *lens*, "a lentil").

The uncertainty attaching to the true form and derivation of the prophet's name extends in some measure to the field of his labours and the time when he lived. As has been said, he is not mentioned elsewhere in the O.T.; and though, from the references made in his book to the *Chaldeans*, it is a natural conclusion that he belonged to Judah and lived at the end of the seventh century or in the first half of the sixth, yet there is so much difficulty surrounding the passage in which this name occurs (i. 5-11) that it has been seriously contended that the book, in whole or in part, belongs to a period quite late in the post-exilic age.

The allusion to the *Chaldeans*, indeed, at first sight seems conclusive as to the prophet's place and time, but on further examination it is not so convincing as might be expected; for the relation of the passage in which it is found to the rest of the book is perplexing. In it there is predicted an invasion by this people, designed to inflict chastisement for violence prevailing (it would seem) amongst the prophet's own countrymen. The identity, however, of the offenders whose sins the onslaught of the *Chaldeans* is intended to punish, is left obscure. By no single word is it definitely indicated whether they are the Jewish people, or some foreign nation from whose oppression the Jews themselves have suffered. Moreover, the sequel of the predictive passage portraying the *Chaldeans* seems to imply, by the similarity of its language to that which describes the violence meriting vengeance, that they themselves are the tyrants whose outrages the prophet bewails. Again, it cannot be said that the correctness of the name designating the insatiable power that aims at universal dominion is placed beyond dispute by the immediate context. For though in connection with the name *Chaldeans* there are no textual variants of importance (the LXX codices A and Q merely adding to the name the words τοὺς μαχητάς), there is a feature in the account of them which seems inappropriate to the people usually denoted by this name.

That feature is the statement that their advance is *eastward* (if the Hebrew word is given the sense most natural in the context), whereas any movement of the Chaldeans directed against Judah, or against a power dominating Judah, would broadly be *westward*. In these circumstances it will be useful to review very summarily the relations of the chief peoples in the vicinity of Palestine, both towards Judah and towards one another (during the centuries within which the origin of the book, so far as can be judged, must fall), in order that a decision may be made between the various hypotheses constructed to harmonize the conflicting *data* presented by the contents.

Of the several formidable powers which from time to time during the period of the later Hebrew monarchy overran the smaller states of Western Asia, the first was *Assyria*. This nation had penetrated as far as the Mediterranean in the time of Ashur-nasir-pal (884-859), but it was not until the reign of his successor Shalmaneser III (859-824) that it came in contact with the Hebrew peoples. An effort to stay its westward advance was made by Damascus; and a confederation, headed by that city and including the kingdom of Ephraim under Ahab, encountered Shalmaneser at Karkar (north-west of Hamath) in 853, and there sustained a defeat. It is not surprising that Jehu, who conspired against, and killed, Ahab's son Jehoram, should have adopted a different policy, and have sought the favour of Assyria by the payment of tribute. Assyrian pressure, however, on the Palestinian states varied with the ability of successive Assyrian rulers. It was not until the accession, in 745, of Tiglath Pileser III, that an attempt was made by an Assyrian king to secure a real control over Southern Palestine. To him tribute was paid by the kingdom of Ephraim under Menahem; but subsequently resistance to Assyria was again offered by Rezon¹, king of Damascus, who made alliance with Pekah (the murderer of Menahem's son Pekahiah) with a view to forming a coalition against the common foe. In Ephraim there were probably two parties, one favouring good relations with the Assyrians, and the other relying upon Egypt for help against them (cf. Hos. vii. 11); and Pekah's seizure of the throne meant the temporary predominance of the anti-Assyrian faction. Rezon and Pekah tried to bring Ahaz of Judah into this coalition, but the effort was unsuccessful. Ahaz appealed for aid to Tiglath Pileser, and the latter both destroyed Damascus and devastated the northern parts of the Ephraimite kingdom. The capital of the latter country fell when Hoshea, who succeeded Pekah, intrigued

¹ In 2 Kg. xv. 37, etc. (Heb.), *Rezin*.

with Egypt; for Samaria, after being besieged by Shalmaneser, was captured by his successor Sargon in 722; nor was it long before Judah was attacked. Hezekiah, the contemporary of Hoshea, by receiving overtures from the Chaldean prince Merodach Baladan, caused Sennacherib, the successor of Sargon, to invade Judah. A large number of towns were taken, and much loot was carried off, but Jerusalem itself escaped capture. The domination of Southern Palestine by the Assyrians exposed the north-east frontier of Egypt; and Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, Sennacherib's successors, were enabled to advance into that country; and by Ashurbanipal the city of Thebes (No-Amon)¹ was sacked and destroyed (cf. Nah. iii. 8).

But after the death of Ashurbanipal in 626, the power of Assyria rapidly declined, whilst that of Egypt revived under Psammetichus (Psamtik). So quickly did the strength of the former state decay that within fourteen years after the decease of Ashurbanipal, its capital fell before the combined forces of the Medians, Babylonians and Scythians (in 612). Its empire, indeed, survived the destruction of Nineveh, for a new capital was established at Harran, in Mesopotamia, which in turn became the object of attacks. The success of Assyria's enemies caused the Egyptian king Necho, son of Psammetichus, to adopt a change of policy, and he prepared an expedition to assist the Assyrians in Harran². Danger for Judah then began to threaten from the south-west; and the tide of invasion which had long flowed across Palestine from the north-east now set in the opposite direction. Naturally enough, the contemporary king of Judah, Josiah, had no wish to see his hope of independence for his own country frustrated by the advance of Egyptian forces to support the failing Assyrian power; and he accordingly encountered Necho at Megiddo, but received his death-wound in the battle. The Egyptian king continued his march towards the Euphrates, but when he arrived at Carchemish, on that river, he was met by the Babylonians, and being defeated had to withdraw to his own country.

The capture of Nineveh had been accomplished chiefly by the Medes, but both the Scythians and the Babylonians had co-operated with them; and it is now desirable to summarize briefly the relations of *Babylon* with Judah. At the time of the fall of Nineveh the Babylonians were ruled by a dynasty of Chaldean origin. The Chaldeans (*Kaldû*), who were

¹ Strictly, *No of Amon* (see p. 127).

² The statement in 2 Kg. xxiii. 29 that the king of Egypt went up *against* the king of Assyria must be an error: his march was really directed against the Medes and Babylonians. See Gadd, *The Fall of Nineveh*, pp. 15, 16.

called by the Hebrews *Chasdim* (*Kasdim*), came from the marshy lands near the Persian Gulf, and consisted of five tribes. Under the abler Assyrian kings the city of Babylon had generally been included in the Assyrian dominions; but the Chaldean princes made repeated efforts to become masters of it, and at intervals succeeded in doing so. The most prominent of them was Merodach Baladan, with whom Hezekiah of Judah had had some negotiations (see Is. xxxix. ; 2 Kg. xx. 12-19), with a view to getting support, in case he rose against Assyria. The Chaldeans in their wars with the latter country experienced varied fortune, but the city of Babylon remained an Assyrian possession until after the death of Ashurbanipal. Then, when the Assyrian empire was ruled by inferior sovereigns, it could not cope with the attacks made upon it; and finally when the Chaldean Nabopolassar, who by this time had become king of Babylon, allied himself with Cyaxares the Mede, the confederates, together with the Scythians, assailed Nineveh and captured it in 612. Seven years later Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadrezzar, defeated the Egyptian Necho (as related) at Carchemish; and followed up this success by advancing into Palestine, and assuming authority over Judah, where king Jehoiakim, who had been raised to the throne by Necho (see below), was allowed to retain rule as a vassal of Babylon. For a few years he paid tribute; but he eventually revolted; and in consequence of his rebellion, the country was devastated by bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. His successor Jehoiachin was suffered to reign only a few months. Then Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadrezzar himself, and speedily taken. The king was deported to Babylon with a considerable body of his subjects; but the country for a while was permitted to enjoy a qualified independence under Zedekiah, the uncle of Jehoiachin. Complicity, however, in a coalition of neighbouring subject-states to throw off the Chaldean suzerainty brought about a second siege, and the final capture, of Jerusalem. Zedekiah was taken prisoner, blinded, and carried to Babylon; the treasures of his capital became the spoil of the conquerors; and a large body of the people of Judah were carried into captivity.

To narrate next the history of *Egypt's* intervention in the affairs of Judah it is necessary to return to the reign of Josiah. After Megiddo Josiah's son Jehoahaz was made king by the people, but he was deposed and taken to Egypt by Necho, who replaced him by his brother Eliakim (changing the latter's name to Jehoiakim), and imposed tribute upon the country. But Egyptian control of Judah was brought to an end by the result of the battle of Carchemish. Necho had to retreat, and Jehoiakim

became subject to his conqueror Nebuchadrezzar. Necho was succeeded by his son Psammetichus, and the latter by Hophra (or Apries). Hophra made a final attempt to dispute the possession of Palestine with the Babylonians, and supported Zedekiah of Judah in his revolt against Nebuchadrezzar. He proved an incapable ally; and all that he really did to help the Jews was to settle in Egypt, after the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king, a small body of refugees who had to leave their native land in consequence of the murder of the governor appointed by Nebuchadrezzar.

The suppression of Jewish liberty by foreign powers lasted for more than four centuries, and it was not until the time of the Maccabees that the Hebrew people regained for a short while their independence under native rulers. But the domination of the country by the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) did not exceed half a century. In 538 Babylon was subjugated by the *Persians* under Cyrus, prince of Anshan (a part of Elam). The Persians had previously absorbed the empire of the Medes, who (as has been related) had, in conjunction with the Babylonians, destroyed Nineveh. Cyrus, on taking possession of Babylon, granted to those of the Jewish exiles who wished to return to their own country leave to do so, though Judæa, with the rest of the Babylonian provinces, passed under Persian rule. The Persian empire survived until it was overthrown by the *Greeks* under Alexander in the first half of the fourth century B.C. After Alexander's death and the division of his dominions between his generals, Judæa came alternately under the control of the Greek rulers of Egypt and of Syria. It enjoyed for a short period freedom under the Maccabees; but these did not retain power for long, and in 63 the land and its people became included in the empire of Rome.

The preceding sketch of events should help to indicate where the contents of the book of Habakkuk find their most appropriate historical setting. It will be seen that the Chaldeans overthrew successively (a) the Assyrian, (b) the Egyptian, (c) the Jewish, nations; whilst they themselves succumbed to the Persians, who in turn fell before the Greeks. In determining who are the people of whose outrages the prophet complains to Jehovah, and who are the people whose eventual downfall is predicted, there are several alternatives possible. Among the factors that have to be considered in choosing between them are the direction of the movements of the above-named powers in regard to Judah, the duration of their predominance over the Jewish people, and the character of their treatment of a subject population. Now, firstly,

it will be observed that the Chaldean advance, either against Judah or against Egypt, may be described in broad terms as being made from east to west, whereas in the description of their onward course in i. 9 the natural meaning of the verse is that the direction of their progress was *eastward* (cf. the rendering given in the R.V., first mg.). Accordingly, if the normal sense of the Hebrew word, in its context, be retained, it must be concluded that the word *Chasdim* (*Kasdim*) is corrupt, and the passage really has reference to some other nation whose march upon Judah might be defined as towards the east. In the second place, as regards the length of time during which Judah suffered oppression from one or other of the three peoples that successively invaded it in the seventh and sixth centuries, the period during which the Egyptians occupied the country and regulated its government was comparatively brief, comprising seemingly not more than a few years, from the end of Josiah's reign (607) to the battle of Carchemish (605). The periods of Assyrian and Babylonian domination were much longer. Not only did Sennacherib at the end of the eighth century inflict much loss on Judah, but his successor Esarhaddon (681-669) received tribute from Manasseh, whilst Ashurbanipal (669-626) must have kept a firm hold of the country as an essential condition of his successful invasion of Egypt; and the reigns of the two last-named Assyrian sovereigns covered together more than half a century. Chaldean control of Judah lasted as long as, or even longer than, this, according as the length of it is computed from the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 or from the deportation of Jehoiachin ten years earlier. Thirdly, there is no reason to doubt that the treatment of the Jews both by the Assyrians and by the Chaldeans was harsh; and that if Habakkuk in his complaints has either the one or the other of these peoples in view, the poignancy of his distress is amply explained. The rule of the Persians, who put an end to the Chaldean empire, extended over more than two centuries, and was only brought to a termination by Alexander's invasion of Persia. Their treatment of the Jews seems to have been lenient, except during the reign of Artaxerxes Ochus (358-337); and it is not likely that the book of Habakkuk contains any reference to them. But that the work dates from near the end of the Persian period, and alludes to the Greeks, has been strenuously maintained, and the grounds upon which this view is based will come under further discussion in the next section.

§ 2. THE STRUCTURE AND DATE OF THE BOOK

The book of *Habakkuk* is eighth in order among the twelve books that constitute the collection of the Minor Prophets, having its place between *Nahum* and *Zephaniah*. Unlike a number of the prophetic writings, the work affords, in the heading prefixed to it, no indication of the time when it originated. Nor can any confident conclusion be deduced from its position among the twelve¹ as a clue to its approximate date. There is a rough agreement, indeed, between the succession of the individual books, as arranged in the collection, and the chronological order of the prophets whose names they bear; but in the case of several the internal evidence makes it tolerably clear not only that the age in which they were composed was later than that suggested by the place in which they appear (e.g. *Joel* and *Jonah*), but also that they are of composite structure and authorship (e.g. *Micah* and *Zechariah*). Accordingly, no argument respecting the date of *Habakkuk* can be securely based upon the particular arrangement of it in relation to the other prophetic writings with which it is grouped.

Nevertheless, though undated, it appears, at first sight, to contain plain evidence of the time (within a few years) at which it was written. This will be seen from a consideration of its contents. It consists of two principal parts, (I) chapters i., ii., (II) chapter iii. These are not only distinct in character (the first being entitled a *burden* or an *oracle*, and resembling in matter and manner other prophetic compositions, whilst the second is a psalm), but they are also separately ascribed to Habakkuk, so that they seem to be in some measure independent of one another; though whether this *prima facie* impression is true will be considered later. Of these two principal parts the first itself falls into several subdivisions. These subdivisions are: (a) An address (i. 2-4) from the prophet to God in which complaint is made of the prevalence of violence and wrongdoing; and distressed surprise is voiced that such evils should be tolerated by Jehovah. (b) An announcement (i. 5-11) of the advance, at the Divine behest, of formidable foes, insatiable and irresistible, who apparently are the agents designed to inflict vengeance upon those who are responsible for the wickedness which has excited the prophet's remonstrances. These foes are the Chaldeans, the date of whose first invasion of Palestine is known from

¹ *Zephaniah* was written about 626 B.C. (see p. 8); *Nahum* either about 625 (p. 84), or, as the present writer thinks, shortly before 612 B.C.

the Second Book of Kings (see 2 Kg. xxiv. 10). (c) A renewed complaint (i. 12-17) to God from the prophet, who, though recognizing that this ruthless enemy may be an agent of Jehovah for a moral end—the infliction of the chastisement due for national sins—yet cannot understand how a people of such unconscionable rapacity should be employed by a Holy God to castigate another nation which, whatever its faults, is more righteous than its chastisers. (d) An answer (ii. 1-4) from God to the prophet (which he is ordered to put on record), declaring that the righteous, through steadfastness under affliction, shall survive his troubles. (e) A comment upon God's reply and a series of denunciations, five in number (ii. 5-19 (20)), directed against the authors of the widespread ravage and destruction that have evoked the prophet's protest. The second main division of the book consists, as has been said, of a psalm or ode, the greater part of which (iii. 2-16) describes the approach of the Almighty to disperse certain assailants of His people, but of which the conclusion (iii. 17-19), asserting the poet's confidence in God, seems to imply circumstances of adversity differing from those presupposed in the earlier portion of the poem.

An examination of the several subdivisions of the first two chapters leads, at first, to the inference that they relate to *two* successive situations. The section marked (a), consisting of i. 2-4, is an expostulation with God for being unconcerned at the prevalence of iniquity; and is followed by section (b), comprising i. 5-11, which announces the imminence of vengeance through the agency of an enemy of unbridled ambition, invincible strength, and overwhelming pride. The analogy of many other prophetic writings (e.g. Is. v., xxviii. 7-22, xxx. 1-17; Jer. xi. 9-23; Am. ii. 4-16) which first describe, or allude to, the prevalence of national wickedness, and then go on to predict the certainty of chastisement, suggests that the evils which have caused Habakkuk such acute distress are evils rampant among his compatriots (the prevalence of strife and contention, the paralysis of religious instruction, and the perversion of justice being features of internal corruption rather than of subjection beneath foreign rule), and that the invasion which he predicts is to be launched against his own country of Judah as a punishment for its sins. The violence that is the theme of his complaint has been protracted, producing in him the impatience with which he asks Jehovah why He allows it to last so long. The fact that the destined avengers of such moral evil are the Chaldeans, whose advance against the guilty is still in the future (though in the near future), points to the reign of Jehoiakim (607-597), whose rule is characterized

in unfavourable terms by the author of 2 Kings, and during whose sovereignty the Chaldeans for the first time raided Judah. The prophet was perhaps led to foresee in this people the chastisers of his countrymen by the fact that in 605 they defeated the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish; and appeared likely to follow up their victory by an advance westward. Section (*b*), in which the Chaldean invasion is predicted, is succeeded by section (*c*); and in verses i. 12-17, included in the latter, the remonstrating tone of section (*a*) recurs. But the grounds of the prophet's complaint here are manifestly offences against justice and humanity which have been committed by *the Chaldeans themselves*, and have lasted for a considerable space of time. The violence of which they have been guilty is represented as extending to mankind in general, though it is the wrongs of his own people that doubtless stimulate most forcibly his indignation against the oppressors. The Chaldean king Nebuchadrezzar entered Jerusalem in 597, and took captive king Jehoiachin; whilst ten years later he put an end to the Judæan kingdom altogether, and deported a large part of the population to Babylon. It would seem, then, that this section was probably written after 597 and possibly after (though not long after) 587. The subsequent sections (*d*) and (*e*) are closely attached to (*c*): the first describes the prophet's attitude of expectancy, as he awaits the response of God to his expostulation, and the oracle that is eventually granted to him; whilst the second gives expression to the feelings evoked by his anticipation (consequent upon Jehovah's reply) of the fate that is to befall the tyrant nation. It will be clear from this that, on the assumption that the wickedness complained of in (*a*) is committed by Judah, of which the Chaldean invasion predicted in (*b*) is the nemesis, the sections (*c*), (*d*) and (*e*) must be separated from the preceding two by an interval of several (perhaps a score of) years.

But doubt concerning the correctness of such an assumption is occasioned by various facts. In the first place, some of the terms employed to describe the causes of the prophet's expostulation in (*a*) are identical with some of those used in connection with the conduct of the Chaldeans in (*c*). In both sections complaint is made concerning the prevalence of *perverseness* (better, *oppression*) (*vv.* 3 and 13) and of *violence* (*vv.* 3 and 9); and in both there occur allusions to the wrongs inflicted by the *wicked* upon the righteous (*vv.* 4¹ and 13). This close similarity of language in the two sections (*a*) and (*c*) seems unnatural,

¹ But see note on *ver.* 4.

if they have reference to two different occasions of distress. Secondly, if section (a) relates to the sins of Judah, which provoked God to punish them by a foreign invasion, so short an account seems inadequate: there might have been expected a fuller denunciation of the nation's offences than is here compressed into the three short verses i. 2-4. In the next place, there is no explicit indication of any interval having occurred between the complaint contained in i. 2-4 and that which begins at i. 12; or that the situation implied in i. 2-4 has been replaced by a different situation, evoking from the prophet a second expostulation similar in language to the earlier one, but based upon dissimilar grounds, domestic troubles having been succeeded by external oppression. There is nothing to show that there is any transition in the prophet's mind from thoughts about internal disorders, caused by his own countrymen, to thoughts concerning violence perpetrated by foreign conquerors. And fourthly, the oracle contained in i. 5-11 is not prefaced by any introduction, such as, in ii. 2, 3, is prefixed to the Lord's response to the prophet, which is contained in ii. 4. The former begins abruptly, and it is not explained against whom the Chaldeans are being raised up (as is the case with parallel announcements such as those in Is. i. 3, v. 25; Jer. vi. 22, 23; Am. vi. 14). On the other hand, the natural impression produced by ii. 2, 3 is that the oracle which follows in ii. 4 is the answer granted to *all* the prophet's remonstrances comprised in the preceding part of the book. These facts are serious enough to have caused numerous scholars to hold that the *prima facie* conclusion that the evils deplored by the prophet in i. 2-4 are committed by the Judæans is erroneous; and that all the ills complained of consist of the outrages and violence inseparable from the uncontrolled lust for conquest and spoliation marking the Chaldeans. The terms used are, for the most part, as applicable to the consequences of foreign oppression as to the results of domestic anarchy; and if there are any which, at first sight, appear less appropriate to the former than to the latter, the impression does not survive careful scrutiny (see on i. 4). The considerations just noticed have not, indeed, carried universal conviction. Thus Driver, though alive to the difficulties attaching to the *prima facie* interpretation of i. 2-4, retains the view that the impatient appeal in this passage refers to disorders within Judah; and that the prophecy in vv. 5-11 is its natural sequel, announcing the coming of the formidable foe that is to inflict the merited punishment. The plaint and the prediction he considers to have been uttered by Habakkuk some years before the next section, vv. 12-17; and he thinks that the latter

expresses the perplexity which the prophet felt afterwards, when the character of the Chaldeans had become more fully known to him. Davidson holds that the real subject of the book is the destruction of the Chaldeans, and that i. 5-11 is, in reality, not an *actual prophecy* of the raising up of that people but only a prophecy in form: "it is a reference to the past, an explanation merely of their presence and meaning as instruments of Jehovah"; but he believes that to this the section i. 2-4 is prefixed to account for God's employment of them for the punishment of Judah by reference to the corruption prevailing there.

On the other hand, those scholars who are dissatisfied with such explanations as these, and feel driven by the considerations enumerated above to infer that in i. 2-4, as well as in 12-17, the misconduct arraigned is that of some foreign power (the Chaldeans or another) and not of certain classes of people within Judah itself, are also confronted with a difficulty. They have to account for the interpolation, between the above-mentioned sections i. 2-4 and 12-17 (both referring to Chaldean tyranny), of the section 5-11, foretelling the invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans as an event still in the future. The section *vv.* 5-11, as it stands now, follows a passage which, on the hypothesis supported by the scholars here referred to, presupposes that the Chaldean invasion has been for long an accomplished fact, and is succeeded by a passage which implies the same.

The suggested solutions of this difficulty pursue various lines.

(1) One view, maintained by Wellhausen and Nowack, resorts to the expedient of omitting the awkward passage i. 5-11 as an independent oracle (composed by another writer than Habakkuk and dating from about 610), which has been inserted (inappropriately) in the place which it now occupies. The date here assigned to this intrusive section seems rather too early (whether its author was Habakkuk or some other prophet), since it is more likely to have originated shortly after, rather than shortly before, the battle of Carchemish (605). If Habakkuk is regarded as the writer of the rest of chapters i. and ii. (some small insertions excepted) after i. 5-11 has been separated, a wide interval is left for conjecture about the date of these sections, which have in view the actual domination exercised by the Chaldeans over Judah. This (as has been seen, p. 147), lasted for 50 or 60 years. A very early date within this period appears improbable, since the prophet's experience of the tyranny of which complaint is made so bitterly seems to have been lengthy (i. 2); and though an early date has been defended by the supposition that the prophet includes the subordination of Judah to a

prior conqueror, like the king of Egypt, there is nothing in the book itself that points to a *succession* of subjugations (instead of one only). Wellhausen, however, assigns the first two chapters (with the omission of i. 5–11) to about 590. This theory, that i. 5–11 is an insertion in its present context, is exposed to the serious objection that, when the section in question is withdrawn, there is nothing to indicate who the people are whose maltreatment of Judah and other nations causes the prophet to address God in remonstrance. Apart from this section, the oppressors are left altogether unidentified. Moreover, the omission of *vv.* 5–11 brings *ver.* 13 into too close contiguity to *ver.* 4, the purport of which it virtually repeats. It may be added that i. 5–11 by no means presents the appearance of an independent oracle, for there is in it no mention of the offenders against whom the Chaldeans, whose advance is predicted, are about to be launched (though the Alexandrine Codex of the LXX after ἐξέγειρω inserts ἐφ' ὑμᾶς).

(2) A second expedient, which is not exposed to the first of these objections, is that of Van Hoonacker. This critic resorts to transposition, and removes the section i. 5–11 (which he retains for Habakkuk) from its present place to the beginning of the book, so that i. 2–4 is followed at once by i. 12–17, these sections containing the remonstrances elicited from the prophet by Jehovah's announcement in i. 5–11, with which the book opens¹. This theory has the advantage of bringing to the front the name of the oppressing power, whilst (like the previous theory) it renders continuous the passages in which the prophet expostulates with the Almighty for allowing His people to suffer so long from an inhuman foe. The present position of the section i. 5–11 is accounted for by the hypothesis that the material upon which the passage was originally written had become mutilated or damaged, and so it had been copied in the margin of a succeeding passage; and that, when a fresh copy was made, it was inserted by error in a wrong position. It is suggested that the prophecy was composed during the interval between the defeat of the Egyptian Necho by the Chaldean Nebuchadrezzar at Carchemish (605) and the time when king Jehoiachin became tributary to the Chaldeans, about 600².

This view represents the prophecy as beginning extremely abruptly. There is no prefatory *Thus saith the Lord*, and no reference to the reasons

¹ Van Hoonacker, in thinking that the original place of i. 5–11 was the beginning of the book, was anticipated by Giesebrecht.

² In dating the prophecy before the exile Van Hoonacker departs from Giesebrecht, who regarded it as post-exilic.

leading the Almighty to send such an infliction upon His own peculiar people together with other nations. The raising up of enemies so fierce and aggressive requires an explanation, which, on this theory, is not supplied. Moreover, it is difficult to suppose that i. 5-11 can really date from the same period as the other two sections in chapter i.; for obviously the prophet when announcing the Chaldean invasion as designed by Jehovah, must, at the time, have recognized it to be deserved: only at a late date, when experience of the invaders' outrages made the use of them by a Holy God inexplicable, is the prophet's expostulation intelligible.

(3) The device of transposition is also employed by Budde. Like the scholars last-mentioned, he supposes that in ch. i. the passages 2-4 and 12-17 are continuous, but he considers that the power whose excesses evoke Habakkuk's appeal to God is *Assyria*, not Chaldea, and that the latter is the destined instrument for bringing retribution upon the former. To the prophet's appeal in i. 2-4, 12-17 Jehovah replies in ii. 1-4, declaring that the righteous, who are crushed beneath the Assyrians' tyranny, will, through their steadfastness, survive in spite of the tribulation experienced. The sequel of ii. 1-4 the critic then finds in i. 5-11, which he accordingly places after ii. 1-4, so that Jehovah's announcement about the Chaldeans reaches the prophet after he has placed himself in readiness to hear it. To i. 5-11, transposed in the way just explained, succeeds ii. 5-20, in which the outrages inflicted by the Assyrians upon mankind at large are denounced, and the nemesis awaiting them is anticipated. By Budde the composition of the prophecy is assigned to *circ.* 615, near the middle of Josiah's reign, when the religious reformation in Judah, undertaken by that king, had been accomplished. In consequence of this reformation, the people of Judah could feel conscious of having attained to a high level of spiritual religion, and could with some reason think of themselves as righteous in comparison with other peoples; and Budde holds that the book possesses peculiar value as the solitary expression of this mental attitude to be found among the prophetic writings that have come down to us¹. In Budde's view the prophet expected from the Chaldeans (the avengers of Judah through their overthrow of Assyria) the boon of freedom and prosperity for his countrymen. The actual result, however, was quite different; and the Chaldeans proved to be the destroyers of the Jewish state. As a consequence, it became impossible for those who had

¹ *Enc. Bib.* col. 1926.

witnessed, or had experienced, the loss of their national independence to understand how such a people as the Chaldeans could ever have been regarded as Jehovah's instruments for punishing their country's earlier foes. Accordingly, the prophecy which had been so sadly falsified could not, in the exilic or post-exilic age, escape alteration. By displacement of the passage now found in i. 5-11 and by other editorial changes the prophecy was so transformed as to be capable of being interpreted of the fall of the Chaldean empire itself, after it had served as the Divine agency for the chastisement of the sins of Judah. This transformation is assumed to have taken place shortly before the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus in 538.

Against both of the distinctive features of Budde's theory, ingenious though it is, weighty objections can be urged. If the nation that aggrandized itself without limit at the expense of its neighbours was Assyria, it is strange that this identification is nowhere indicated (contrast Is. x. 5, 24, xiv. 25) (though Budde conjecturally finds the name of Assyria concealed in i. 11, where he replaces *wš 'āshēm* by *'āshūr*—*Then he sweepeth by like a wind and passeth on, Ashur, who has made his strength his God*). The absence, however, from the passage of any mention of Assyria is not perhaps a fatal objection; and Peake compares the omission in Is. i. of the name of the power whose ravages are there described. In the next place, in the reign of Josiah, to which period Budde assigns the prophecy, it is improbable that the burden of Assyrian oppression was acutely felt in Palestine. The last of the powerful Assyrian sovereigns was Ashurbanipal, who died in 626; and after his death the empire on the Tigris rapidly decayed. The extension of Josiah's authority over the province of Samaria (implied in 2 Kg. xxiii. 15-20) is evidence of the waning of Assyrian rule in the West; and some years before Josiah's death, Nineveh was taken by the Medes in 612 (see p. 145). Thirdly, though the Median king Cyaxares, when he attacked Nineveh, found an ally in the Chaldean king Nabopolassar¹, it is not likely that the latter and his people played so prominent a part in the destruction of Nineveh as Budde's theory represents: on the contrary, no mention of their participation occurs in the account of the fall of that city given by Herodotus (i. 106, 185). Fourthly, whereas, according to that theory, the nation that is described in i. 16 as worshipping its own power is the Assyrian, the nation that is similarly portrayed in i. 11 is the Chaldean, though it is eminently improbable

¹ See Gadd, *The Fall of Nineveh*, p. 14.

that two different nations should be invested by the prophet with the same characteristics. Fifthly, the insertion of i. 5-11 after ii. 4 separates the latter verse from the following verse ii. 5, whereas, notwithstanding the corruption which the first clause of *ver.* 5 has undergone, the opening words rendered in the R.V. by *Yea, moreover* (though better translated by *Much more*) make it almost certain that the two verses 4 and 5 are closely connected.

(4) By G. A. Smith, who accepts Budde's view, a modification is introduced into it through the suggestion that the tyrant whose violence is denounced, and whose destruction at the hands of the Chaldeans is predicted, is not Assyria but *Egypt*. This is so far an improvement that it meets the difficulty occasioned by the decline of Assyrian power in the last quarter of the seventh century, and finds support in the activity of Egypt, whose king Necho, immediately after the destruction of Nineveh by Cyaxares, marched through Palestine and defeated and killed Josiah (who opposed his advance) at the battle of Megiddo (2 Kg. xxiii. 29), but himself met with defeat from the Chaldean Nebuchadrezzar at Carchemish in 605. In addition, this theory accounts admirably for the intense feeling manifested in Habakkuk's expostulation with Jehovah, for Josiah had effected a great religious reform, so that his death at the hands of the Egyptians and the subjugation of the country by the latter were all the more unintelligible if Jehovah really cared for justice. But some of the difficulties which attach to Budde's theory G. A. Smith's modification of it fails to remove, so that it cannot be regarded as an adequate solution of the problem.

(5) Marti handles the first two chapters of the book in more drastic fashion than any of the commentators hitherto mentioned, and breaks up the contents into three parts of diverse date and authorship. (*a*) A disintegrated psalm, of which the detached portions occur in i. 2-4, 12*a*, 13, ii. 1-4; and which has in view internal conditions prevailing in the Jewish community. No precise date is suggested for it; but since it gives expression to the perplexity occasioned by the fact that the ungodly so often experience prosperity, whilst the pious meet with misfortune, and since the question why God allows such conditions to prevail did not (it is thought) become a burning question until after the Exile, the origin of the section is assigned to some period between the fifth and the second century. The disintegration of the psalm is explained as due to its having been written on the margin of the manuscript containing the earlier portion of the book mentioned below, and then introduced piecemeal into the text. (*b*) A prophecy contained in

i. 5-10, 14-16 (17), which announces the coming of the Chaldeans to execute Divine vengeance upon Judah. This is naturally considered to be pre-exilic in origin, and dated just after the battle of Carchemish (a conclusion which, as regards i. 5-10 (or 11), is on every ground probable). (c) A series of denunciations, comprised in ii. 5-19, and directed against a nation of unbounded ambition and greed, which subjugates and despoils all peoples. The nation that is the object of these denunciations is clearly the Chaldean, but it is considered impossible that all such can proceed from an author who (like the writer of *vv.* 5-10) regarded that race as the instrument of God's chastisement of Judah; whilst the fact that its overthrow is eagerly anticipated is judged to point to *circa.* 540 (when the Chaldean empire was tottering to its fall) as the probable date of its composition. The two short passages i. 11, 12*b* are held to be additions, inserted with the view of harmonizing the conflicting estimates formed of the Chaldeans.

If this analysis is correct, the only section of the book with which Habakkuk's name can be with any plausibility connected is i. 5-10, 14-16 (17). But it is difficult to believe that the grounds of such a thoroughgoing partition of the work are adequate. The inconsistency between the fortunes of peoples and their deservings must have impressed some thoughtful minds amongst the Hebrews previous to the fifth century; so that to place the origin of the so-called psalm at so late a period must be justified by better reasons than those urged by Marti, if his conclusion about i. 2-4, 12*a*, 13, ii. 1-4 is to carry conviction. Next, the disintegration of an original whole into a group of fragments, distributed here and there over two chapters, is highly improbable. Finally, the analysis cuts asunder ii. 4 and ii. 5, and attributes them to authors widely separated in point of time; whereas (as has been already said) the verses in question appear to be closely united.

(6) Stonehouse neither excises nor transposes the section i. 5-11, but resorts to emendation. Holding that the violence which the prophet deplors in i. 2-4 is perpetrated by foreign enemies, and that there is no reason for doubting that these enemies are the Chaldeans, he stresses the fact that in i. 4 Jehovah's "instruction" (which, in prophetic writings, is the usual sense of the Hebrew word rendered in the R.V. by *the law*) is represented as paralyzed *in consequence of* this hostile violence. Accordingly, he is led to regard the Divine "instruction" of which the prophet speaks as meaning in this context the political guidance which Jehovah, through His prophet, offered to the Jewish nation, and which consisted in the counsel that they should place their

hope of safety in Himself alone (cf. Is. vii. 4-9, viii. 16, 17, xxx. 15), instead of in some political expedient; and he considers that the failure of such counsel was due to the fact that the majority of the people, owing to their fear of the Chaldeans, were in favour of adopting a foreign policy that showed want of faith in Jehovah, so that the state was rent by strife and contention. But since this view assumes that the Chaldeans at the time were *already* committing outrages upon neighbouring nations, Stonehouse concludes that there is some textual corruption in i. 5 (where it is implied that the Chaldean advance is yet in the future), and he replaces the present text by *The peoples have seen and beheld, They tarry and are astonished, For a work is being done in their days— They would not believe, were it told them. For lo! the Chaldeans, that fierce and hasty nation, etc.* These verses, therefore, become a continuation of the prophet's preceding expostulation in vv. 2-4; and contain, not a prediction of an impending Chaldean invasion, but a picture of the national trouble and mischief which is already being caused by that people; and the prophet's remonstrance is carried further in vv. 12-17. The date of the prophecy is fixed for 604 or 603, when Nebuchadrezzar, shortly after the battle of Carchemish, penetrated into Judah.

(7) Quite a different view of these chapters is taken by Duhm, who is followed by Sellin. The latter in his Commentary (in which he departs from the opinion expressed in an earlier work¹) does not, like Marti, regard the book as constructed out of a number of independent compositions of different dates, but deems it a unity; and considers that though there are comprised in it six separate poems (viz. (a) i. 2-4, (b) i. 5-11², (c) i. 12-17, (d) ii. 1-5, (e) ii. 6-20³, (f) iii. 2-16), they are all closely connected. He attributes the work to the fourth century, believing that it is directed against Alexander and his Greeks, who overthrew the Persian empire in the battles of Issus (333) and Arbela or Gaugamela (331), and afterwards advanced into Palestine. He thinks that the alarm inspired among the nations by Jehovah's announcement in i. 5-11 is unnatural, if it is the mention of the Chaldeans that occasions it (for with this people the Jews and other adjoining nations were familiar enough), but is perfectly intelligible if the Greeks are in the writer's mind; and he holds that the description of the tyrant-power, whose ambition it is to conquer all the world, and whose

¹ *An Introduction to the O.T.*, translated by W. Montgomery.

² Sellin holds that i. 5-10 (11) is by no means the answer to the complaint in i. 2-4 but is a distinct poem.

³ In (e) it is supposed that there are some small interpolations.

impetuous and rapid movements are especially emphasized, is peculiarly appropriate to Alexander. He also discovers in the reference (in ii. 3) to the "end," to which the prophet's Vision is said to be hastening, an apocalyptic element, which has its parallel in the book of Daniel (see viii. 17, 19, xi. 27, 35, 40); and he regards the book of Habakkuk as standing on the border line between the last of the strictly "prophetic" writings and an apocalyptic work like *Daniel*. The most solid ground, however, for the conclusion that the Greeks, and not the Chaldeans, are in the mind of the author is to be found in i. 9. The Hebrew *kādhīmāh*, occurring there, is translated in the R.V. by *as the east wind*; but its most natural rendering is *towards the east*, a direction unsuitable for designating an advance upon Palestine by the Chaldeans (hence the substitution in the R.V. margin of *forwards* for the more literal rendering) but not out of keeping with an invasion of Asia by the Greeks. As, however, the appellation of the invaders in the original text is *Chasdim* (*Kasdim*), "Chaldeans," it becomes necessary for the supporters of this theory to get rid of the term, which they replace by *Kittim*, a name (originally derived from the Cyprian town of *Κίτιον*) which is applied to the Greeks in 1 Macc. i. 1, viii. 5. They also substitute in ii. 5 for the words rendered by *wine is a treacherous dealer* the emendation *the treacherous Greek* (the difference in the original not being great). The theophany in chapter iii. 2-16, which so many critics separate from the preceding chapters, is explained as depicting imaginatively Jehovah's advance against the aggressors; and the whole book is thus regarded as proceeding from one period and one hand (save for some small additions, ii. 6*a*, 13*a*, 14, 18-20, iii. 1, 2*b* β , 14*b*, 17-19).

In regard to this daring theory, the difficulty presented by the word *kādhīmāh* in connection with the Chaldeans does not seem great enough to justify the alteration of the name *Chasdim* (*Kasdim*) into *Kittim* in the sense of "Greeks," since the rendering *forwards*, though without parallel, appears sufficiently defensible (see note). There is no evidence that the advance of Alexander into Palestine inflicted much injury upon the Jewish community; nor is it likely that the prospective supersession of the Persian empire by a Greek empire would cause in the Jews any overwhelming fear. The indignation which inspires the prophet's language clearly reflects bitter experiences which his country, in common with other peoples, had endured; and the prostration of Judah beneath the Chaldeans early in the sixth century most readily explains the passionate tone of the book. Accordingly, the assignment of the prophecy to the fourth century seems arbitrary, and the supporters of the view here

criticized can only account for the occurrence of *Chasdim* in the text by the hypothesis that some copyist substituted the word at a time when Alexander's invasion could be looked back upon as an unimportant episode in Jewish history, whilst the name of the Chaldeans remained deeply imprinted on the national memory as that of the destroyers of Jerusalem and its temple.

It is unnecessary to pass under review other interpretations of the book¹ which are even more precarious; for a fairly satisfactory solution of the problem presented by the first two chapters appears attainable without recourse to omission, partition, transposition, or violent textual emendations. On the presupposition that both in i. 2-4 and in i. 12 f. the evils of which the prophet complains are the result of foreign aggression and not of internal disorder, and that the foreign oppressor can be none other than the Chaldeans named in i. 6, the problem that arises is (as has been said) how to account for the presence, in the midst of passages which have in view a protracted experience of violence already inflicted by the Chaldeans, a section which predicts their coming. This latter section must be anterior in date to its context on either side; and the simplest solution of its occurrence in its present position is to regard it as *quoted* by Habakkuk from some earlier prophecy delivered (probably by himself, though the question whether it is his or another's is not important) just after 605. He may be considered to have introduced it into his later utterance, which occupies the rest of the first two chapters of the book, because it depicted vividly the character of the nation (animated, as it was, by a limitless lust of dominion, and disposed to deify its own prowess) under whose feet his countrymen had been trodden down, and whose continued violence and injustice in the pursuit of its aims he marvelled that God could tolerate. That the inserted passage is a fragment from a larger whole is suggested by the abruptness with which it begins: there is no introductory formula indicating that it is an oracle from Jehovah, and there is no reference to Judah, or to the offences committed by it which have decided the Lord to send upon His people such a chastisement. If the earlier prophecy is dated about 605, the origin of the later prophecy into which it has been introduced must be put at some period when Judah had had considerable experience of Chaldean rule; and though any exact date

¹ Accounts of several will be found in Stonehouse, *Hab.* pp. 73, 78, 91, 94, etc.; Peake, *The Problem of Suffering*, pp. 150-171; Driver, *Introd. to the Literature of the O.T.*⁹ pp. 337-340.

is unascertainable, the reign of Zedekiah (597-587) may define the limits within which it should be confined. There is no clear allusion to the conditions of the Exile, so that a date after 587 seems unlikely, though the possibility that it was written shortly after the capture of Jerusalem cannot be excluded. That the first two chapters form a substantial unity is an impression derived from the close interrelation of the several parts; the taunt-songs, for instance, in ch. ii. are for the most part only comprehensible as the sequel of what has preceded. The principal exception is the last (ii. 18-19), which is of a tenor less relevant than the rest to the particular nation which is the subject of the prophet's animadversions (see note *ad loc.*); and the genuineness of ii. 12-14 also is not altogether above suspicion.

Chapter iii., unlike the preceding chapters, is a lyrical composition; and both the heading and the body of the ode contain musical directions, which point to the conclusion that it once formed part of a book of psalms, used probably in the service of the Second Temple. It is designated *A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet*; but whether the ascription of it to the prophet rests upon a tradition of any value is uncertain, for the attribution in the LXX (though not in the Hebrew) of Psalms cxlv.-cxlviii. to Haggai and Zechariah suggests that the authorship of such compositions was sometimes referred to various prominent characters in the national history merely on the strength of some real or fancied appropriateness.

In both chapters i., ii., taken together, and in chapter iii. the situation implied is one of national trouble; and whilst in chapter ii. ultimate relief from it is predicted, in chapter iii. there is a like anticipation of a rescue, though closer at hand. There is thus some amount of common ground between the two main divisions of the book. This, however, is accompanied by various differences. In the poem the attitude displayed towards God is not the same as in the earlier portion of the work. In the first two chapters the prophetic writer enters into a dialogue with the Deity, remonstrating with Him concerning His dealings with His people, and awaiting an answer to his complaints, which is duly received, and is of an encouraging tenor; but here the tone is prayerful and supplicating. In chapter iii. the national occasion of the peril that causes the poet to address an appeal to God (*ver.* 2), to which the Almighty responds by a manifestation of His power (*vv.* 3-16), is quite obscure. So far as this obscurity is due to the figurative language employed, it does not require much explanation. In a lyrical work some latitude must be allowed to the author, who may legitimately present

matter-of-fact experiences under symbolic forms; and the difficulty of adjusting the poem to the contents of the first two chapters need not be decisive against its having the same situation in view, or being the production of Habakkuk. Moreover, the employment of the term *the wicked* in *ver.* 13 corresponds to the use of the same expression in i. 4, 13. Yet Van Hoonacker exaggerates when he declares that a denial of a common origin to all three chapters is gratuitous. The impression created by the poem is that the calamity from which God is represented as approaching to rescue His people is not one which the writer's countrymen have been suffering for a long time (as is the case with chapters i., ii.), but one which is imminent, though not as yet actually present: the language of *ver.* 16 (though its import is not beyond dispute) suggests that a formidable enemy is invading, but is not in effective occupation of, the land. In *ver.* 14 the phrase *Their* (the foe's) *rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly* (if the text is not hopelessly corrupt) points to a covert or treacherous assault, whereas the Chaldeans in the preceding chapters are represented as achieving their conquests by sheer impetuosity and forcefulness. Moreover, in *ver.* 13, though the term *thine anointed* admits of being understood as an allusion to a national sovereign, like Jehoiakim or Zedekiah, yet, in view of the occurrence, in the parallel clause, of *thy people*, it more probably denotes the community rather than an individual ruler. If this is so, the poem is more likely to be post-exilic than pre-exilic in origin, though there is nothing in the diction "which would definitely suggest a late date¹." Marti, who holds that the reference is to an individual, supposes it to allude to one of the Maccabæan princes who were at the head of the Jewish people in the second century B.C.; whilst Sellin takes it to refer to the Jewish High Priest in the time of Alexander.

If the considerations here advanced are unfavourable to Habakkuk's authorship, and the poem is the production of another writer, it must have been transferred by an editor from some collection containing it, with the design of rounding off the prophecy by a graphic picture of the deliverance of the righteous, of which assurance is given in ii. 3. If so, then ii. 20 was perhaps added at the close of that chapter to form a transition to the appended ode.

The continuity of the poem is broken between verses 16 and 17, for whereas the major part describes a theophany, in which God, in answer to the poet's prayer, comes, screened by a storm-cloud, to deliver His

¹ See Stonehouse, p. 128 (note).

people from an actual or impending onslaught upon them by a human enemy, the last three verses express trust in God that He will give relief from distress occasioned by drought, with a consequent failure of the fruits of the earth, and destruction of domestic cattle. Thus the experiences evoking the last three verses seem distinct from the circumstances in which the earlier part of the poem originated. This difference between *vv.* 17-19 and the rest of the ode suggests that the concluding three verses may be a substitute for the original ending, which had been lost. If *ver.* 17 were omitted as intrusive, no doubt *vv.* 18 and 19 would harmonize better with the residue of the psalm. But the second of these verses can be quite easily understood to mean that the community, though weakened by physical calamity, is confident that Jehovah will restore it once more to its former strength; so that there is no sufficient ground for doubting that the three verses go together, and the reasons for suspecting that they are no integral part of the original poem hold good.

In many passages the text seems to have been badly preserved. Here and there clauses appear to have been lost, while elsewhere there are interpolations; in one place there is ground for suspecting that the order of the verses has been disarranged; and of one or two words the meaning is uncertain. The defective state of the text, however, cannot conceal the vigour and impressiveness of the poetry; and the ode is one of the finest lyrics in the O.T.

§ 3. THE LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS INTEREST OF THE BOOK

The book of Habakkuk, in spite of its limited extent, presents a combination of rather remarkable literary features. It comprises both a prophecy and a psalm, each of which displays striking qualities. The first is conspicuous for the variety of its contents. In part, it is a dialogue between the prophet and Jehovah, the prophet's address to God being an utterance of intense emotion, whilst the Lord's reply (so far as the corruption of the text admits of a judgement) is marked by oracular brevity. The prophet's remonstrance with which the book opens is interrupted by a prediction of an invasion impending from an irresistible foe, whose character is delineated with bold and graphic strokes, each trait being vividly characterized, and the impression of the whole being heightened by the terseness of the diction employed. The Divine oracle, with which a response is returned to the complaint of the prophet, is followed by a succession of taunt-songs, which exhibit, for the most part, the like effectiveness of language: where this is less apparent, there are reasons for suspecting expansion by a later and

inferior hand. The psalm with which the book concludes is a lyric distinguished by deep religious feeling and exceptional poetic art; and the presence in it of these qualities renders it the more regrettable that some of the verses appear to be seriously injured by textual corruption. The poem shows lofty imagination; and its construction manifests dramatic skill of no mean order. It utilizes primitive conceptions of Jehovah's presence in, and command of, the forces of nature; whilst at the same time it is plain that in the thought of the poet storm and tempest are only symbols of the Divine attributes—visible tokens of an activity which is essentially spiritual.

But the literary interest of the book is surpassed by the religious. The prophet, like others of his class, is confronted with the problem of calamitous experiences undergone by a number of peoples at the hands of a ruthless oppressor. The sufferers include his own countrymen, a race believed to have a more intimate acquaintance with, and to enjoy in a higher degree the favour of, the true God than had been granted to the rest of the world, and for whom, consequently, there might reasonably be expected protection and security from heathen aggression. Instead of this, both Israel and its neighbours have been long subjected to maltreatment by an enemy whose ambition for conquest and dominion is boundless, and who, by the celerity of his movements and the power of his arms, has obtained mastery over all weaker nations within his reach. The situation is one which had occupied the thoughts of several of the writing prophets; and they surveyed it from various angles, though their conclusions, as a rule, did not greatly differ. But Habakkuk, in his outlook, is distinguished from the majority of his fellow-prophets in two respects. In the first place, he is a man whose sympathies are more than ordinarily comprehensive. His protests to God against the success enjoyed by the violent are evoked not only by the wrongs which his own compatriots have sustained, but also by the outrages inflicted upon the rights of the nations collectively. The victims of the aggressive and arrogant world-conqueror are all relatively more righteous than he, who treats the rest of mankind as a fisherman treats fishes, drawing them away from the places where they abide and disposing of them in rapid succession. This sympathetic attitude towards the human race at large no doubt had its roots in the monotheism which, since the eighth century, had been one of the deepest convictions of the Hebrew prophetic consciousness, and the implications of which were apprehended by Habakkuk. For if Jehovah was the only existing God, it followed that all peoples must be objects of His care; and consequently His seeming tolerance

of injustice and wrong, inflicted by some one nation upon its neighbours, naturally became to a religious and reflective mind a source of painful surprise. The broad humanity of Habakkuk's outlook is not exclusively confined to him among the prophetic writers; but it is so prominent a feature in his book as to merit particular notice. And secondly, the writer of the work is exceptional in not tracing in the same degree as most other prophets the calamities sustained by his countrymen to national offences. In his utterances there is scarcely so much acknowledgement of Judah's sin as appears in Is. xl. 2, or in Zech. i. 15, though the writers of both these passages feel that their nation had suffered punishment much in excess of its deservings. Although in one place Habakkuk recognizes that the foe who has been allowed to distress and humiliate both the Judæans and others may have been commissioned by God to correct their offences, yet in comparison with the oppressor they are innocent. If a penalty had been provoked by national transgressions, the fact is almost entirely lost sight of, in view of the grievousness of the suffering undergone; and the bewilderment felt is, in consequence, profound.

Habakkuk is thus deeply impressed by the apparent injustice which God allows to prevail in the world; and he cannot at first discover any sufficient explanation of it. It is not until he has taken his stand upon his watch-tower, not until (if we may so interpret his language) he has in solitude and quietness exercised his intellectual and spiritual faculties upon the problem, seeking a solution by meditation concerning the nature of God and of man, the quality of righteousness, and the value which it has for God, that enlightenment comes to him, and he reaches the conclusion that unfailing adherence to uprightness carries with it an assurance of ultimate well-being, and that there is inherent in right dealing an element of permanence which is absent from evil-doing. But when it is declared that the upright shall live by his steadfastness, there must not be read into the words more than the level of religious belief then attained allows. For in the first place, though the expression *the righteous* (ii. 4) is in the singular, it can scarcely be doubted that by it is meant the collective Judæan nation and such others as had been innocent sufferers from tyranny, just as by the singular pronouns in *vv.* 10, 16, 17 of the same ch. the Chaldean people are designated. And secondly, the life which loyalty to righteousness will ensure signifies national survival, and a recovery of national prosperity, in contrast to a destiny of eventual disaster awaiting a race which enriches and exalts itself at the expense of its neighbours. It is in the final preservation of a

community faithful to moral principles, and in the ultimate overthrow of a tyrant people—an overthrow all the more acutely felt through contrast with the success previously enjoyed—that the justice of God is expected to be manifested.

But though Habakkuk finds comfort in a view of Divine providence which is not uniformly verified in this world by the evidence forthcoming from the actual fortunes of nations and peoples, and still less from the experiences of individuals (for these experiences constitute the moral problem which so persistently harasses the minds of men, and do not supply the material for solving it), yet the actual words in which a reply is returned to the prophet's perplexities are suggestive of the true solution, namely, that righteousness has a value, reckoned in terms of *life*, which is incommensurate with mere external happiness; and that a consciousness of it can counterbalance, and render bearable, outward conditions of misery and wretchedness. It is upon spiritual values that we must believe human well-being in the last resort to depend. It is only with the attainment of intellectual and moral ends, having a worth in the sight of an eternal God, that the highest faculties in us are satisfied; and it is only through arduous experiences that these faculties, the exercise of which constitutes life in the truest sense, are developed.

At the same time there is in human nature a conviction that Divine justice cannot be fully realized unless, within the sphere of God's sovereignty, righteousness is somehow vindicated in outward, and not merely in inward, experience. The history of Hebrew religious thought shows how this demand of the moral consciousness was met. It does not fall within the scope of this commentary to trace in detail the course of speculation followed by Hebrew thinkers in the endeavour to relieve the difficulties occasioned by the entrance of so much evil into a universe believed to have been created, and to be ruled, by a righteous and beneficent God; but it may not be deemed altogether irrelevant to note very briefly the direction in which they turned for satisfaction. The problem of evil asserts itself in two forms. One is the presence, in the world, of so much physical hardship, and the occurrence of so many catastrophes, originating in natural causes, which happen alike to the virtuous and the vicious. The other is the suffering inflicted on the innocent by the self-seeking and the evil-minded for the gratification of their own desires. The defects of nature, as measured by the discomforts and the disasters to which human life is perpetually exposed, were accounted for by the familiar story of Eden and the Fall; the ills arising from niggard soils and inclement seasons, which can be mitigated only

by incessant labour, were explained by Jehovah's curse imprecated upon the ground in consequence of the disobedience of the first-created man and woman. Hence it was only to be expected that when the Hebrews' staunch faith in God led them to look forward to conditions of future felicity, in which Divine favour was some day to place them, a transformation of their physical surroundings filled their imaginations (cf. Is. xxxv. 1, 2, lv. 13). But the Hebrew intellect was not given to much speculation upon the problem of evil at large. What chiefly occupied it was the people's experience of calamity undergone at the hands of foes in the course of the national history, and the question how best to reconcile such experience with the character of the God who was worshipped. For a long period it was the fortunes of the community, rather than of the individual members of it, that monopolized attention: so long as every nation served a god or gods of its own, national successes or adversities could be ascribed to the superiority or inferiority of one god, or one group of gods, to another. Or if a sense of religious loyalty and devotion kept the Hebrews from acknowledging any defect of power in their national deity Jehovah, they ascribed their misfortunes to His indignation at the offences which they had committed and which caused Him to leave them at the mercy of their enemies. If it was not always easy to discern the occasion of the Divine wrath in the conduct of the generation that suffered under it, the solidarity subsisting between one generation and the next enabled them to explain the tribulation that befell them as the consequence of the sins of their fathers or forefathers (cf. 2 Kg. x. 10, xxiv. 3). It was not until a growing sense of individual rights and responsibilities led to the demand that every generation, and every person in it, should be answerable for none but the offences which each had committed, that the perplexity created by the discrepancy between human experiences and deservings became acute, and the traditional explanations which had previously seemed to justify Jehovah's ways failed to satisfy (see Jer. xxxi. 29; Ezek. xviii. 2, 3).

For unlike the life of the community, the individual life seldom lasts much beyond threescore years and ten. A society, indeed, whether large or small, endures; and past losses can be repaired, and the shame of past degradations be wiped out, by the experience of better fortune at a later time. But the individuals who have sustained in person the past adversities may have no share in the subsequent compensation: this may not occur until after they have descended into the grave. Consequently, when once *individual* deserts became among Hebrew thinkers the subject of reflection and concern, Divine justice was bound to be questioned and

doubted, so long as this life was regarded as the sole sphere of recompense and retribution. It was only when hope penetrated beyond death, and anticipated the survival of conscious life after the material body had turned to dust, that faith in God regained stability. Such an extended outlook was rendered possible through the retention by the Hebrews of the traditional belief in *Sheol*, the universal abode of the departed. The persuasion that there the human spirit survived the dissolution of the bodily frame ultimately enabled religious faith to reach a higher level: from that unseen world it was felt to be possible for the righteous to be rescued by God, and at the last to receive from Him the vindication that had been withheld here. The earliest expression of a hope triumphant over the prospect of death is perhaps found in the poem of Job. There the patriarch is represented as expressing his conviction that, after corruption had destroyed his body, he would, as a disembodied spirit, find God no longer estranged from him but appearing as the asserter of his uprightness, which, in consequence of his misfortunes, had been aspersed by his friends (see xix. 25-27). Further than this, however, the poet's vision into the future beyond death does not extend. On the other hand, in certain of the Psalms the hopefulness of their writers, though still vague, is more buoyant than that which obtains utterance in Job (see Ps. xvii. 15, lxxiii. 24). Elsewhere, the belief that righteousness and unrighteousness are not fated finally to share a common lot in Sheol (in spite of the pessimism of such a thinker as the author of Ecclesiastes, see ix. 2), but that the lives of the just and the unjust will have a dissimilar issue—in short, that character is eternal destiny—is more definitely affirmed¹. Speculation followed one of two lines. The writer of the book of Wisdom expected the souls of the righteous to enjoy immortality in the presence of God, where no torment would touch them (see iii. 1-9). On the other hand, the author of the book of Daniel during the persecution of the Jews by the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) anticipated for those who died for their religion and for those who proved recreant a bodily resurrection from the dust unto everlasting life and everlasting contempt respectively. It was this last somewhat materialistic idea of a second life, rather than the more spiritual conception entertained by the writer of Wisdom, that eventually became predominant among the Palestinian Jews; and though it was rejected by the Sadducees (Acts xxiii. 8), it found acceptance among their rivals the Pharisees.

¹ On Is. xxvi. 19 see the Commentary on Isaiah in this series.

HABAKKUK

CHAPTER I

I. 1 THE ¹burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

¹ Or, *oracle*

I. 1. This verse, supplying a title to the book, was probably, in combination with similar headings, prefixed to other prophetic writings or parts of them (see Is. (i. 1, ii. 1, xiii. 1), Jer., Hos., Joel, Am., Obad., Micah, etc.), the work of an editor.

The burden. The Hebrew word is used of (1) a material *load* carried by men (Jer. xvii. 21, 22) or placed on the back of an animal (Ex. xxiii. 5; 2 Kg. v. 17), and (2) an *utterance*, especially a prophetic oracle from Jehovah (Is. xiv. 28; Ezek. xii. 10). It is most natural to suppose that the second meaning is derived from the notion that an oracular or other saying was *taken upon* the tongue, since the kindred verb is employed of "taking up" a word (Am. v. 1), a parable or taunt-song (Is. xiv. 4; Hab. ii. 6), a lamentation (Jer. ix. 10), a reproach (Ps. xv. 3), or even a series of proverbs; and the LXX, Th., and Sym. all translate it by *λήμμα*, whilst Aq. renders it by *ἀρμα*. It is possible, however, that the idea behind the usage is that the speaker's voice is *lifted up* when an announcement has to be made impressively (cf. the employment of the corresponding verb (*nās'ā*) in connection with "voice," whether the substantive is expressed or understood, see Gen. xxi. 16; Jud. ii. 4; Num. xiv. 1; Is. iii. 7, xlii. 2, 11). But since most of the prophetic oracles to which the term is applied are of a boding or ominous character (Is. xiii. 1, xiv. 28, xv. 1; Nah. i. 1; 2 Kg. ix. 25), the expression seems to have acquired, at least popularly, the signification of burdensomeness, as though the import of the oracle were a grievous load imposed on the individual or people concerning whom it was employed (cf. Jer. xxiii. 30-33; Lam. ii. 14; 2 Ch. xxiv. 27). In keeping with this the Vulg. renders it by *onus*. In Zech. ix. 1, xii. 1 there occurs the combination *The burden (or oracle) of the word of the LORD*.

Habakkuk. On the possible derivation of the name see p. 141.
the prophet. Amongst the writing prophets only Habakkuk, Haggai and Zechariah have this title appended to their names (though it is attached also to the names of Gad, Nathan, Elisha, etc. in the Historical books). The primary significance of the Hebrew word (*nābī*), which is rendered by *prophet*, is disputed: it may be connected with a root existing in Arabic and signifying "to announce," and so may describe one who claims to convey Divine communications; or it may be akin to a different root (occurring not only in Arabic but also in Hebrew) meaning "to bubble up," and so may designate one whose speech overflows under the influence of religious rapture or excitement (cf. Ps. xlv. 1, though the verb there used is different). In favour of the first

derivation are the facts that the Hebrew word is employed to denote a man who acts as spokesman for a fellow-man (see Ex. vii. 1, and cf. iv. 16; Jer. xv. 19), and that the Babylonian god Nabu or Nebo (apparently bearing a name cognate with the Hebrew term) was the interpreter of the other Babylonian divinities (just as Apollo amongst the Greeks was regarded as the prophet of Zeus (see Æschylus, *Eum.* 19, Διὸς προφήτης ἐστὶ Λοξίας παρρός). On the other hand, it may be urged in support of the second etymology that the Hebrew prophets in early times, especially when gathered in groups, were marked by ebullitions of ecstatic speech (see 1 Sam. x. 5-13), and were liable at all periods to be deemed mad (2 Kg. ix. 11; Hos. ix. 7; Jer. xxix. 26)¹.

did see. This word, in its literal sense of visual perception, is appropriate to the religious experiences of only some among the prophets, for not all, when receiving revelations from the Lord, were conscious of seeing "visions." But language suitable to experiences appealing not merely to the sense of sight but also to the sense of hearing was retained when the channels of revelation were commonly not the sensory organs but the faculties of reflection and spiritual intuition (cf. Is. xiii. 1). The verb "to see" can be used in the sense of "experience" (Job xxiv. 1); and a synonymous verb can mean "to feel" (Is. xlv. 16). Here, however, if ch. iii., with its vision of a theophany, proceeds from Habakkuk (but see p. 161), the term *saw* has some appropriateness (cf. Is. vi. 1 f.; Am. ix. 1).

2-17. An expostulation from the prophet, speaking as the representative of his countrymen in the midst of bitter and humiliating experiences, and inquiring why the Lord allows for so long the prevalence of brutal oppression inflicted by the rapacious Chaldeans.

The remonstrance (to which an answer is returned in ii. 4) falls into three parts: (a) *vv.* 2-4, (b) *vv.* 5-11, (c) *vv.* 12-17. In (a) the prophet asks why the Lord disregards so persistently the appeal of those who suffer from protracted violence. In (b) he quotes an earlier prophecy, depicting the character of the Chaldeans, their sweeping and irresistible advance, and their haughty self-sufficiency. In (c) he renews the expostulation of *vv.* 2-4, and expresses the surprise and distress occasioned by the fact that the Lord, in using human agents for the correction of offenders, employs a people morally worse than those whom they are commissioned to chastise.

The connection between these three sections has been discussed in the Introduction; see pp. 149 f.

The metre of this section seems to be as follows :

vv. 2, 3, four pentameters.

ver. 4, two trimeters and two tetrameters.

ver. 5, four trimeters.

vv. 6-10, a series of trimeters.

ver. 11, two tetrameters.

ver. 12, two tetrameters and two trimeters.

ver. 13, four tetrameters.

ver. 14, tetrameter and trimeter.

ver. 15, two pentameters (3:2 and 2:3).

ver. 16, two pentameters.

ver. 17, probably two tetrameters.

¹ See W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 390; Hastings, *DB.* iv. p. 108; Davidson, *O.T. Prophecy*, pp. 84 ff.; T. Robinson, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, pp. 18 f.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save. 3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and ¹look upon perverseness? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there is strife, and contention

¹ Or, *cause me to look*

2. *how long...cry.* Better, *how long* (cf. Ps. xiii. 1) *have I cried* for help. For the verb, implying an appeal for aid, see Ps. xviii. 6, 41, xxii. 24; Job xix. 7*b*. It is apparent that the period of distress has already been protracted.

wilt not hear. Better, *dost not hear* with sympathy: cf. (affirmatively) Mic. vii. 7 and (negatively) Ps. lxxvi. 18.

I cry...of violence. Better, *I call out unto thee*, "Violence" (this being the word which the prophet utters aloud): cf. Jer. xx. 8; Hos. viii. 2; Job xix. 7. The verb here used is not the same as that occurring in the previous clause but that which is found in Mic. iii. 4; Prov. i. 28; Hos. viii. 2, etc. Violence is again the subject of the prophet's complaint in *ver.* 9, ii. 8, 17.

wilt not save. Better, *dost not deliver*: cf. Ps. xviii. 41.

3. *shew me.* Better, *occasion me to see*, by causing the evil conditions which prevail all around me.

iniquity. Better, *trouble*. The term, recurring in *ver.* 13, here implies unhappiness produced not through natural causes but by human oppressors: cf. Prov. vi. 12; Is. xxxi. 2; Job xxxi. 3, xxxiv. 8.

look upon. I.e. "behold with indifference"; cf. *ver.* 13. The rendering in the R.V. text is more probable than that in the mg.; the causative sense adopted in the latter, though favoured by the parallel clause, is not found elsewhere. The Syr. and O.L. (*ut viderem*) imply *why do I* (i.e. why have I to) *look upon...?* and this reading (which has the first person instead of the second) is preferred by Marti; but it is *Jehovah's* unconcern about what is happening that causes the prophet so much distress, and this is brought out more clearly by the traditional Hebrew text.

perverseness. Better, *mischief* (Job iv. 8 mg.; Ps. x. 7, lv. 10).

for spoiling...before me. Perhaps better, *pillage and violence are before me*, since the conjunction rendered by *for* is not recognized by the LXX. The two words *pillage* (or *destruction*, see Is. xiii. 6; Job v. 21; Hos. vii. 13) and *violence* occur together in Jer. vi. 7, xx. 8; Ezek. xlv. 9.

and there is...riseth up. Civil disorder is allowed to become rampant, the dominant foreigners being indifferent to the well-being of the conquered population. But the text is not without its difficulties. The rendering *riseth up* has been questioned (though support for it is afforded by Hos. xiii. 1; Nah. i. 5; Ps. lxxxix. 9), and the Syriac has the verb in the first person. Nowack, thinking it unnatural to represent strife and contention as the consequence of the enemy's tyranny, regards the clause as the addition of a reader who erroneously took the preceding passage to refer to evils caused by domestic conditions. But the true text cannot be determined without consideration of the metre.

riseth up. 4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgement
 1doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about

¹ Or, *goeth not forth unto victory*

Verses 2-3 *a* are written in pentameters, but Sellin supposes that at this point the pentameters are exchanged for trimeters, and makes 3*b* a trimeter couplet by omitting *there is*; he then adopts the reading of the Syriac and renders the final clause, *why must I endure* (silently) *strife and contention?* maintaining that the change produces a better parallel to the preceding clause. But it is unlikely that the change from pentameters to trimeters would take place until the end of the verse; and probably both the verbs should be omitted in the last clause as supplements: 3*b* will then be reduced to *pillage and violence are before me, strife and contention* (constituting the required pentameter).

4. *the law*. The term strictly means the religious and moral *instruction*¹ or *direction* imparted to the people by Jehovah through His intermediaries the priests (Zeph. iii. 4; Dt. xxxiii. 10; Mal. ii. 7) and the prophets (Is. xxx. 9, 10), these two classes representing respectively the conservative and the progressive elements in Hebrew religion.

is slacked. Better, *is numbed* (or *paralyzed*): the word is used in Gen. xlv. 26 of the failing of the heart; cf. also Ps. lxxvii. 3 mg. In consequence of the prevailing violence and disorder, the principles of religion and morality, of which Jehovah was the ultimate source, could not be asserted as they should be. The LXX has *διεσκέδασται* and the O.L. *disiecta est*—*is frustrated* (cf. Ps. cxix. 126, xxxiii. 10); and some scholars needlessly substitute this verb here (replacing *tāphūgh* by *tūphar*).

judgement. The word probably means the decisions of the nation's religious teachers, which, under the conditions of heathen domination, are either not delivered at all, or else are inoperative.

never. The Hebrew expression admits of being rendered (*doth*) *not (go forth) unto victory* (literally, *pre-eminence*): see mg. and cf. Is. xxv. 8, A.V. But the more ordinary signification *never* (as in Is. xiii. 20; Ps. x. 11) is here preferable.

go forth. Or, *make way*. For the verb used thus of the issuing and enforcement of decisions cf. Ps. xvii. 2.

By some scholars the words rendered *law* and *judgement* are understood in this passage to mean, in a general sense, the knowledge of God's truth and the justice which He requires from mankind, as in Is. xlii. 3, 4. See also *Introd.* p. 157.

the wicked. In the Hebrew the article is absent before this word, whereas it occurs before the following *righteous*; and as this irregularity is rarely found, it has been proposed by Stonehouse to substitute *wickedness* (a difference of vocalization only).

compass about. The verb, when used literally, connotes envelopment

¹ Hence *lore*, from the Anglo-Saxon *lar*, "teaching," would be a better equivalent than *law*.

the righteous; therefore judgement goeth forth perverted. 5 Behold ye among the nations, and regard, and wonder marvellously:

by hostile forces (Jud. xx. 43; Ps. xxii. 12 (13)); but here probably implies the imposition of restrictions, and the suppression of all independence. The LXX has *καταδυναστεύει* (*subdueth*, as in 2 Sam. viii. 11; Neh. v. 5); the O.L. *per potentiam deprimit*; and the Vulg. *provalet adversus*.

the righteous. Cf. *ver.* 13. Judah in particular could be so regarded, as knowing and worshipping the true God; cf. Num. xxiii. 10; Is. xxiv. 16.

5-11. In these verses the prophet is no longer (as in *vv.* 2-4) the representative of his subjugated countrymen addressing Jehovah, but the spokesman of Jehovah. Through the prophet the Lord announces His despatch of the Chaldeans, and describes their ambition, their violence, the celerity of their movements, their irresistible onset, and their deification of their own might.

The section appears to be a *quotation* from an earlier prophecy (perhaps delivered by Habakkuk himself, at a time when the Chaldeans as a formidable power were looming on the political horizon, and when the prophet foresaw in them the most likely agents for the infliction upon Judah of the penalty deserved by its sins). But though the passage was no longer a prediction (for it had been verified since it was first uttered), it contained a description of the character of the Chaldeans that could be utilized afresh to accentuate the brutality of the nation that had obtained a mastery over Judah, and so give force to the prophet's remonstrance to the Almighty for surrendering His people so long into their hands. The quotation introduces the name of the oppressors, who otherwise are left undesignated.

5. *Behold ye among the nations.* The offending classes in Judah to whom the words were originally addressed are bidden to observe the movements occurring among the surrounding peoples, and their threatening significance. Commotions among the greater powers of the East were always menacing to the smaller nations in Palestine, and the power that promised to prove superior to the rest was the one which God might be supposed to be setting in motion for His own purposes. The reading *among the nations* is not quite certain, for the LXX (supported by the Syriac) has *οἱ καταφρονῆται* (cf. Acts xiii. 41), which is used in ii. 5 to represent a Hebrew term commonly rendered in the R.V. by *treacherous dealers* (though the verb generally employed by the LXX to translate it is *ἀθερώ* or some derivative from this verb). If the LXX reading be adopted, the treacherous dealers addressed are the offenders in Judah, whose wickedness has provoked the approaching chastisement. But the traditional Hebrew text probably preserves the true reading; the LXX and Syriac may (as Sellin thinks) have been influenced by *ver.* 13.

wonder marvellously. The political movements to which the prophet calls attention ought to excite the terrified surprise of those who have hitherto entertained no fear of a judgement in store for them.

for ¹I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. 6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation; which march through the breadth of the earth, to

¹ Or, *one worketh*

I work. The Hebrew has merely a participle, *working*, which, if it is the genuine reading, must mean (as in the mg.) *one* (i.e. Jehovah) *worketh*. But this would naturally imply that here the prophet is the speaker, whereas in reality the Lord is speaking. The LXX has ἐγὼ ἐργάζομαι, and though an instance of the omission of the *first* person with the participle occurs in the traditional text of Zech. ix. 12, probably the pronoun *I* should be inserted here. Symmachus, however, has ἔργον ἐργασθήσεται; and the Vulg., which has *opus factum est*, also implies a passive, instead of an active, participle. The verb *to work* and the noun *work* are often used in connection with the Divine achievements, see iii. 2; Is. v. 12; Ps. xlv. 1 (2), xlv. 9.

which...told you. Better, *which ye would not believe if it were* (merely) *told you*, though bitter experience will soon compel belief.

6. *I raise up.* I.e. I am about to bring on the scene: cf. Am. vi. 14; Jer. v. 15. The terms in which the Chaldeans' advance is here spoken of (without special mention of Judah) imply that they are launched on a career of conquest against the neighbouring nations at large, and will take Judah, as it were, in their stride. But some MSS of the LXX add after ἐξεγείρω the words ἐφ' ἑμᾶς. For the vigour of the whole passage (vv. 6-11) cf. Is. v. 26-29.

the Chaldeans. The English word, from the Greek Χαλδαῖοι, is nearer the name used in the Assyrian inscriptions—*Kaldû*—than the Hebrew *Chasdim* (*Kasdim*). The people designated were not identical with the Babylonians, but became associated with them in the time of Nabopolassar (circ. 625), and attained a dominant position in the Babylonian empire (see *Introd.* p. 144). Duhm and Sellin, influenced by the difficulty presented by *ver.* 9 (see note), think that the people here referred to are the Greeks of the time of Alexander; and replace *Kasdim* by *Kittim*, a name originally denoting the Cypriots (from *Κίτιον*, the chief town of ancient Cyprus) but afterwards used at different times for both the Greeks (1 Macc. i. 1, viii. 5) and the Romans (Dan. xi. 30). The *Kittim* are connected in Gen. x. 4 with *Javan* (the Ionian Greeks); whilst in Jer. ii. 10; Ezek. xxxvii. 6 *the coastlands of Kittim* is a designation of the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard. The reasons for and against this view are considered on pp. 158 f.

bitter. I.e. irascible and truculent (cf. Jud. xviii. 25; 2 Sam. xvii. 8), though the word is also used of the depressed and desperate (Prov. xxxi. 6; Job iii. 20).

hasty. I.e. impetuous, the term being employed of the rash and precipitate in Is. xxxii. 4, and of the timid in Is. xxxv. 4 (mg.).

through the breadth. Literally, *according to the breadths* (or *expanses*); cf. Gen. xiii. 17 (where the R.V. *in* represents the same preposition). The Chaldeans (it is implied) set no bounds to their conquests and depredations.

possess dwelling places that are not theirs. 7¹ They are terrible and dreadful: their judgement and their dignity proceed from themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen² spread themselves: yea, their horsemen come from far; they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour. 9 They come all of them for violence;

¹ Heb. *He*, and so in *vv.* 8, 9.

² Or, *bear themselves proudly*

that are not theirs. Habakkuk's authorship of the section *vv.* 5-11 is favoured by the recurrence of this phrase in *ii.* 6.

7. *terrible.* The Hebrew adjective is a rare one, though occurring in *Cant.* *vi.* 4, 10; but the corresponding substantive (*terror*) is common.

their judgement...themselves. Their decisions are governed by no consideration other than their own desires; they pay no regard to accepted duties; they admit no responsibility to any Divine power; and they hold themselves indebted for their pre-eminence to nothing but their own prowess. If the clause is to harmonize with the adjoining trimeters, one word should be omitted: probably the verb is a superfluous supplement.

8*a.* *Their horses, etc.* Their horses' qualities of speed and keenness surpass those of the swiftest and fiercest beasts of prey, and enable them to advance with the utmost expedition. For the comparisons see *Jer.* *iv.* 13, *v.* 6, *xlvi.* 40, *xlix.* 22; *Zeph.* *iii.* 3. The hunger of predatory creatures is elsewhere represented as at its height in the evening: cf. *Horace, Epodes, xvi.* 51, *Vespertinus circumgemit ursus ovile.*

8*b, 9a.* *and their horsemen, etc.* If the text is substantially sound, the balance of the clauses here is best secured by a change of punctuation and the omission of the conjunction rendered by *yea* (a dittograph of the final letter of the preceding word). The translation will then be: *and their horsemen, their horsemen gallop (or prance about); they come from afar, they fly; as a vulture that hasteth to devour, they come all of them for violence.* The verb which the R.V. translates by *spread themselves* is used elsewhere of the gambolling of young cattle (*Jer.* *i.* 11; *Mal.* *iv.* 2). For the comparison to a vulture or eagle see *Dt.* *xxviii.* 49; *Lam.* *iv.* 19; *Job.* *ix.* 26. The Hebrew word rendered in the R.V. by *eagle* includes the vulture (see *Mic.* *i.* 16, and cf. *áerós* in *Mt.* *xxiv.* 28).

The text, however, is not above suspicion since in the *LXX* *their horsemen* is expressed only once, and the word rendered in the R.V. by *spread themselves* closely resembles the word for *horsemen* (only lacking one of the consonants). Hence many scholars think that the Hebrew text has suffered from dittography more extensively than is implied above, and reduce 8*b* to: *they come from afar, they fly, like a vulture that hasteth to devour.* But these omissions destroy the balance of the clauses in *ver.* 9 (where *their* should begin with a capital letter).

for violence. The point of comparison between the Chaldeans and the vultures is not confined to their speed: like those birds they haste to tear and rend.

¹their faces are set eagerly ²as the east wind; and they gather captives as the sand. 10 ³Yea, he scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him: he derideth every strong hold; for he heapeth up dust, and taketh it. 11 ⁴Then shall he sweep by as a wind,

¹ Heb. *the eagerness* (or *assembling*) *of their faces* is &c.

² Or, *towards the east* Or, *forwards* ³ Or, *And they scoff* &c.

⁴ Or, *Then shall the wind sweep by, and he shall pass away*

9b. *their faces are set eagerly.* Alternative possible meanings of the obscure Hebrew expression here used (of the two nouns constituting it one—*mēghammath*—does not occur elsewhere) are given in the R.V. mg. The first—*the eagerness* (or *the strain*) *of their faces*—assumes that it is derived from a Hebrew root signifying “to swallow,” which is used in a literal sense in Gen. xxiv. 17 (Hebrew) and with a figurative meaning in Job xxxix. 24. The second—*the assembling of their faces*—presupposes a connection with an Arabic root signifying “to be abundant.” Of the Greek versions the most intelligible is that of Symmachus, which has ἡ πρόσοψις τοῦ προσώπου αὐτῶν, which favours the first of the two alternatives.

as the east wind. This translation is doubtful, since in the Hebrew there is no particle of comparison (though Is. xxi. 8 and Job xxiv. 5 show that it can be dispensed with); and in the absence of it the natural sense of the Hebrew term is *towards the east* (see the first mg. and cf. Ezek. xi. 1, xlvii. 1). This, however, is unsuitable for describing the direction of the Chaldeans' advance towards Palestine, which lay west of Babylonia. But since among the Hebrews that side of a building which faced east was usually regarded as the front of it, the expression *towards the east* may merely mean *forwards* (see the second mg.), though it does not actually occur elsewhere in this sense. Probably, in view of the context, the best translation is: *The strain of their faces is ever forward*, i.e. they never swerve from the goal which they have in view. Duhm and Sellin find in *towards the east* (which, as has been said, is the natural sense of the word here) a basis for their view that the prophecy refers to the invasion of the East by Alexander, in the first half of the fourth century (cf. Dan. viii. 5). Stonehouse emends the text with some violence, and gets the sense: *yea, he* (the Chaldean) *turns west and east* (i.e. in all directions).

as the sand. A common simile for a countless number (cf. Hos. i. 10; Gen. xxii. 17; Jos. xi. 4, etc.).

10. *Yea, he scoffeth*, etc. The pronoun in the original is emphatic: *Yea, it is he that scoffeth*, etc. The Chaldean makes light of all opponents and every obstacle.

he heapeth up dust, etc. The expression is designed to accentuate the ease with which the invader captured fortresses by the customary method of piling earth against the walls in such a way that it formed an inclined plane, up which an attacking party could reach the summit of the fortifications: cf. 2 Sam. xx. 15; Ezek. xxvi. 8.

11. *Then shall he...pass over.* The general sense is fairly clear: if

and shall ¹pass over, and be guilty: *even* he whose might is his god. 12 Art not thou from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine

¹ Or, *transgress*

the Chaldean in his advance is arrested for a moment by a stronghold lying in his path, yet, after its speedy capture, he rushes forward again with a hurricane's violence. But the translation in detail is doubtful, since some of the words are ambiguous in meaning. Thus the noun translated in the R.V. by *wind* can also signify *mind* or *purpose* (Is. xxix. 24); the verb rendered *sweepeth* by may likewise mean *changeth* (Is. xxiv. 5); whilst, as the mg. indicates, the last verb admits of the translation *transgresseth* (Ps. xvii. 3). Hence for the R.V. (which would be a little clearer if replaced by *Then he sweepeth by* (Prov. x. 25; Is. viii. 8, xxi. 1) like *a wind, and passeth on*) there are the following alternatives: (a) *Then he changeth his purpose and passeth on* (i.e. alters the direction of his movements); (b) *Then he changeth...and transgresseth* (i.e. overpasses the limits of Jehovah's mandate).

and be guilty...his god. The R.V., in dividing the verse after *be guilty*, follows the Hebrew punctuation; but a much better division is secured by the transfer of the word *be guilty* to the next clause, so that it runs, *but guilty is he whose strength is his god*, i.e. one who deifies his own prowess incurs moral guilt. The sense, however, is improved by a slight emendation of the text (*wē'āshēm* being replaced by *wayyāsem*), which yields the sense, *and he maketh this his strength his god*, or *and this one—he maketh his strength his god*.

12-17. This section is a continuation of the section *vv.* 2-4, the sequence being interrupted by the quotation from an earlier oracle contained in *vv.* 5-11.

12. *Art not thou*, etc. The opening question should end at *LORD*, and be rendered, *Art not thou from everlasting, O Jehovah?* The prophet recalls to the mind of God His unchangeableness throughout the past, this suggesting that He will remain equally changeless in the future, so that He has infinite resources for dealing with the impious oppressors, whose existence is transient.

my God, etc. Better, (with a slight change of vocalization) *My Holy God* (cf. LXX B ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἅγιός μου), *we shall not die*. The words of the prophet, speaking for his countrymen, are not so much an assertion as a hope and an aspiration. According to the Jewish commentator Rashi, this was one of a number of corrections introduced into the text by the Scribes, the original reading being *Thou diest not*. It must be supposed that the mere verbal association of the word *die* with God, who was sundered from all the weaknesses and imperfections characterizing humanity, was regarded as objectionable, and was consequently altered. (See *J.T.S.*, April 1900, pp. 387-414.) But the prophet's argument seems to require the present text, which is supported by the LXX and Symmachus. Since Jehovah is Israel's Holy One, He is a guarantee against the people's annihilation at the hands of the Chaldeans.

Holy One? ¹we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained him for judgement; and thou, O ²Rock, hast established him for correction. 13 Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than

¹ According to an ancient Jewish tradition, *thou diest not*. ² See Deut. xxxii. 4.

thou hast ordained, etc. The thought crosses the prophet's mind that the oppressors are Jehovah's authorized agents to inflict a judgement upon His people, to correct some shortcomings. But he cannot entertain such a conclusion for more than a moment, since, under the merciless treatment to which Judah and other peoples have been subjected, not correction but extinction is in prospect, and the Chaldeans are too inhuman to be regarded as discharging, in what they did, nothing but Jehovah's orders.

O Rock. This title is applied to Jehovah in Dt. xxxii. 4, 15, etc., 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, the idea conveyed by it being that He is His people's steadfast support (cf. Ps. xviii. 31, and the personal name *Zurishaddai*, "The Almighty is my rock," in Num. i. 6, ii. 12).

13. The fact that God by His nature is antagonistic to all that is evil (Ps. v. 4, 5) renders incomprehensible the unconcern with which He appears to view the outrages of the Chaldeans upon the rights of those who are their moral superiors. The remonstrance here is a repetition of that in *ver.* 3.

look on. I.e. with indifference.

perverseness. Better, *mischief*, as in *ver.* 3.

them that deal treacherously. The phrase is common in Isaiah in connection with another inhuman power (the Assyrians), who likewise treated mankind barbarously, and equally robbed them of their rights (Is. xxi. 2, xxxiii. 1). Budde considers that it is really the Assyrians whom the writer here has in mind (*Introd.* pp. 154 f.).

and holdest thy peace. Cf. Is. xlii. 14; Ps. l. 21. The balance of the clauses would be better conserved by the transposition of this expression (a single word in the Hebrew) to the preceding clause, and the translation *wherefore lookest thou silently upon them that deal treacherously*.

the wicked. I.e. the Chaldeans. The denotation of the word here seems to determine the reference of the same word in *ver.* 4.

swalloweth up. For the figure of speech cf. Is. xlix. 19; Ps. xxxv. 25; Lam. ii. 16. Plautus similarly uses *animam alicuius exsorbere*.

the man...than he. The expression, as it stands, includes all the nations that are the victims of Chaldean aggression, though the people more particularly in the prophet's mind are doubtless his own countrymen. Israel is termed *the righteous* in Is. xxiv. 16: cf. also the epithet *Jeshurun*, "the upright," or "the straightforward," in Dt. xxxii. 15 ("designating Israel under its ideal character"). The LXX concludes the

he; 14 and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? 15 He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. 16 Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his meat ¹plenteous.

¹ Heb. *fat*.

sentence with τὸν δίκαιον merely, but Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus all have τὸν δικαιοτέρον αὐτοῦ.

14. *and makest*, etc. Perhaps better, *so that thou hast made*, etc. (this being the consequence resulting from Jehovah's indifference to the tyranny of the wicked over the righteous). In the last resort God, by instituting conditions which allowed men to become, like fish, a prey to the strong and the cunning, might be considered responsible for the evil which was perpetrated: cf. Job ix. 24.

creeping things. The term is, in strictness, inclusive of both land and water reptiles (see Gen. i. 26, vi. 7; 1 Kg. iv. 33); but here it denotes especially small marine creatures (Ps. civ. 25).

that have no ruler. I.e. that lack all organization for self-protection (cf. Prov. vi. 7, xxx. 27).

15. *angle*. An archaism for *hook*. For the metaphor here used cf. Jer. xvi. 16.

catcheth. Literally, *sweepeth along* (Prov. xxi. 7).

drag. This is a more capacious receptacle than the net, just as the latter can catch more fish than a single hook. Perhaps in the context *trawl* is the best English equivalent, though the Hebrew word (which occurs only here) seems to come from a root meaning "to fall," so that the derivatives denoting nets are more appropriate to hunting than to fishing (see Ps. cxli. 10; Is. li. 20). The Greek word employed here by the LXX—σαγήνη—is the origin of the English *seine*. The derivative verb σαγήνω is used in Hdt. iii. 149, vi. 31 to describe a method of clearing an island of all its inhabitants. This was adopted by the Persians, who advanced across a conquered island in a *cordon* extending from coast to coast.

rejoiceth. The invader's delight in the comprehensiveness of his conquests is not clouded by any sense of insecurity, or any fear of a Nemesis.

16. *he sacrificeth unto his net*, etc. This is obviously only a figure of speech expressive of the fact that the Chaldeans deified their own prowess and recognized no other god (cf. *ver.* 11). In reality, the Chaldeans were pious worshippers of the gods Marduk, Nebo, and others (Is. xlvi. 1).

his portion. I.e. his acquisitions.

meat. An archaism for *food* in general (including cereals as well as flesh; see iii. 17; Gen. i. 29).

plenteous. Perhaps better, *rich*, since the word is especially used to

17 Shall he therefore empty his net, and not spare to slay the nations continually?

denote "fatlings." (A grammatical irregularity observable in the Hebrew is doubtless due to an accidental repetition of the initial letter of the next word.)

17. *Shall he therefore*, etc. I.e. Is this success, in which he finds such satisfaction, to be continued without cessation? If the Chaldean empties his net, he does so, of course, only with a view to re-filling it. The clauses of the verse would be better balanced if the conjunction *and* (which, in the Hebrew, duplicates the final letter of the preceding word) were omitted, and the word *continually* were incorporated in the first clause: the translation would then be, *Shall he therefore empty his net continually, to slay the nations unsparingly?* But there is some reason for suspecting in the text more serious corruption. The expressions here combined are not properly congruous: *empty his net* is a figure of speech, whereas *slay the nations* is used in its literal meaning. Hence (in spite of a similar combination in Nah. ii. 13) certain scholars favour more extensive, though still slight, emendations. The verb that means "to empty" also signifies "to draw" (or "unsheath") a sword (Ex. xv. 9; Lev. xxvi. 33; Ezek. v. 2, 12); and the words for "net" (*herem*) and "sword" (*herebh*) differ only by a single consonant, whilst Codex 86 of the LXX actually reads in the mg. *μάχαρavan αὐροῦ*, so that, if the first of these two nouns is replaced by the second, the resultant text will be, *Shall he therefore unsheath his sword continually, to slay the nations unsparingly?*

CHAPTER II

II. 1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the ¹tower,

¹ Or, *fortress*

II. 1-4. The prophet's resolve to await from Jehovah an explanation of the experiences that bewilder him; and Jehovah's reply to him.

The metre is difficult to determine with confidence, but the following scheme is perhaps correct:

ver. 1, two dimeters and two trimeters.

vv. 2, 3, six tetrameters.

ver. 4, tetrameter and trimeter.

1. The opening words of the prophet's soliloquy admit of being taken literally, for the term rendered *watch* may mean a post that has to be guarded, though it ordinarily connotes the function of keeping watch and ward; whilst that translated *tower* signifies a fortification or rampart. Accordingly the passage may be interpreted of a retreat to some solitary position where the speaker can stay until he receives the desired communication from God: cf. the retirement of Moses (Ex. xxxiii. 21),

and will look forth to see what he will speak ¹with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. 2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon

¹ Or, *by*

of Balaam (Num. xxiii. 4), and of Elijah (1 Kg. xix. 11). But most likely it should be understood metaphorically of the abstraction of the prophet's thoughts from all external matters, and the concentration of his mind upon God, in the hope that spiritual enlightenment may be granted to him.

From the verb here rendered by *look forth* (or *look out*) comes a term often used to denote a prophet, and translated in the R.V. by *watchman* (Is. xxi. 6; Jer. vi. 17; Ezek. iii. 17); and mention of *the tower* may have been introduced merely to give to "the watchman" an appropriate environment. On the other hand, G. A. Smith thinks that the metaphors are not to be passed over, as though they were merely meant for literary effect. "Through the chosen words there breathes a noble sense of responsibility. The prophet feels he has a post to hold, a rampart to guard. He knows the heritage of truth, won by the great minds of the past; and in a world seething with disorder he will take his stand upon that, and see what more his God will send him."

Speak with me. The Hebrew preposition here used seems to signify either *by means of* (see mg. and cf. Hos. i. 2) or *in* (as in Num. xii. 2 (though see G. B. Gray *ad loc.*); 2 Sam. xxiii. 2). If the latter is the idea intended to be conveyed (cf. the LXX, *τί λαλήσει ἐν ἐμοί*), it suggests the inward channels of reflection and spiritual intuition through which the Divine revelation was expected to reach the prophet (cf. Gal. i. 16; Heb. i. 1).

What I shall answer. This rendering is inconsistent with the context, which implies that a response to the prophet's complaint about the Divine ruling of events is awaited from the Lord Himself. If the text is sound, the translation must be, *what* (reply) *I shall bring back*. But this suggests that the prophet had received from the people a commission to inquire of God; and about such nothing has previously been said. Accordingly the verb should probably be emended (by a slight change) to *what he will answer*.

Complaint. Better, *reproach* or *plea* (Ps. xxxviii. 14 (15); Prov. i. 23).

2. *Write the vision.* Since the revelation is designed not only for the comfort of the prophet himself, but also for that of all who share his perplexity, and since the verification of it may not appear until after a considerable interval, it is to be written down in order that it may be publicly known, and may be preserved until its truth is put to the proof by the issue of events: cf. Is. viii. 16, xxx. 8.

Make it plain. The Hebrew verb is similarly used, in a literal sense (of inscribing in plain characters) in Dt. xxvii. 8, and figuratively (of expounding clearly) in Dt. i. 5.

tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it ¹hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. 4 Behold, his soul is puffed up,

¹ Heb. *panteth*.

tables. Better, *tablets*. (The Hebrew has *the tablets*, the article merely implying that they were the materials necessary for writing (cf. Num. v. 23, where the Hebrew has *the book*.) The word thus translated is used of the stones on which the Decalogue was inscribed (Ex. xxiv. 12), of the wooden planks of which a ship is constructed (Ezek. xxvii. 5), and of plates of metal (1 Kg. vii. 36). The fact that the plural number is employed has been taken by some to imply that the oracle was much more extensive than the brief utterance included in *ver.* 4 only; and perhaps embraced even the substance of the rest of the book, from ii. 4 to the end. But the LXX has the singular (*πυξίον*, a tablet of boxwood), and this may be the original reading; cf. Is. xxx. 8.

that he may run, etc. I.e. that any person seeking to read at a later date what is written down may do so rapidly, without having to pause to decipher the characters through their lack of clearness. Keble, when composing the hymn beginning "There is a book who runs may read," took his language from this passage.

readeth it. Literally, *readeth in it*; cf. Jer. xxxvi. 6, 10; Neh. viii. 8.

3. *the vision is yet for*, etc. The fulfilment of the vision is not to be immediate (cf. Ezek. xii. 27), but will come in the future, at a definite time fixed by God, and hence its purport must be put on record; cf. Dan. viii. 19, x. 14, xi. 27, 35, xii. 4, 9.

hasteth. Literally, *panteth* or *puffeth*, like a runner speeding towards his goal. The limit set for the realization of the oracle about to be imparted may be distant, but it will unfailingly be reached, and will not disappoint those who endure with patience the interval of waiting.

and shall not lie. The phrase is similarly used in Is. lviii. 11 (Heb.) of something that does not fail to answer expectations.

tarry. I.e. *loiter* or *be late*; cf. Jud. v. 28; 2 Sam. xx. 5; Dan. ix. 9.

will surely come. I.e. will certainly be realized. The word is similarly employed in Dt. xviii. 22; 1 Sam. ix. 6; Jer. xxviii. 9.

delay. I.e. lag behind the moment defined for its fulfilment (cf. Is. xlvi. 13 *tarry*; Dan. ix. 19 *defer*). The last two clauses of this verse are rendered by the LXX *ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἤξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίσῃ*, and this translation (in the form of *ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, ὃ ἐρχόμενος ἤξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει*) is quoted in Heb. x. 37.

4. This verse probably contains the oracle which the prophet receives. In it a distinction is drawn between two types of persons (representing peoples); and it is natural to expect the description of

it is not ¹upright in him: but the just shall live ²by his faith.

¹ Or, *straight*

² Or, *in his faithfulness*

their characters to be accompanied by a prediction of their respective fates. But in the first half of the verse there is no antecedent expressed, to which the pronouns *his* and *him* can relate; and if they are understood to refer to the Chaldean, or any like him, the statement only portrays his disposition and reveals nothing about his destiny. If, by the omission of a letter, the passage is translated, *Behold, he is puffed up* (with the implication that pride must end in discomfiture) *whose soul is not upright in him*, more meaning is read into the first clause than can be fairly extracted from it. The emendation of Wellhausen, *As for the unrighteous* ('*uppēlāk* being replaced by *hā'awwāl*: for which see Zeph. iii. 5; Job xviii. 21, xxvii. 7), *his soul is not upright in him*, likewise leaves undefined the *fate* of the unrighteous. The easiest correction, which involves, besides the omission of one letter, the transposition of two others, yields the rendering *Behold, he collapseth* ('*uppēlāk* being replaced by '*ullaph*', a verb occurring, in the sense of *to faint*, in Is. li. 20) *whose soul is not upright in him*. The LXX has ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, οὐκ εἶδοκέ ηἰ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ. *If one draws back* (i.e. does not wait patiently for God's vindication of him), *my soul hath no pleasure in him* (cf. Ps. cxlix. 4); but the words must then have in view mistrustful Judæans, not the Chaldeans (as the context requires). Sellin adopts in part the reading of the LXX, and emends the text to *As for the puffed-up* (*hannē'āphāl*), *my soul hath no pleasure in him*, which affords a suitable sense.

the just. Better, *the righteous* (represented by the people of Judah) as in i. 4, 13.

shall live. I.e. shall survive and outlast the man of opposite character, like the Chaldean, who disregards the dictates of honesty and humanity. For life as the promised reward of righteousness cf. Prov. viii. 35, ix. 11, x. 16 f. Compare also what Tennyson writes of Virtue—"Give her the wages of going on, and not to die."

by his faith. Better, *by his steadfastness*, i.e. by his unswerving adherence to the principles of morality, the value of which will eventually be vindicated. The word rendered *steadfastness* is used primarily of physical steadiness (Ex. xvii. 12), and secondarily of honest and trustworthy conduct alike in public and private relations (2 Kg. xii. 15; 2 Ch. xix. 9; Prov. xii. 22, xxviii. 20; Is. xi. 5; Jer. v. 1, etc.). The LXX gives a different turn to the declaration—ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως μου ζήσεται, and the Old Latin has the same reading—*iustus autem ex fide mea vivit*; but the Vulgate follows the traditional Hebrew text with *ex fide sua*, and Aquila and Symmachus have respectively ἐν πίστει αὐτοῦ and τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πίστει.

St Paul, in Rom. i. 17, Gal. iii. 11, quotes this verse, as it is translated in the LXX, but omits *μου* and gives to the Greek rendering *πίστις* a distinctive shade of meaning: cf. also Heb. x. 38, where

5 ¹Yea, moreover, wine is a treacherous dealer, a haughty man,

¹ Or, *And also because his wine...he is a haughty man*

vv. 3b, 4 are quoted with some modification and change of order— δ δὲ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, καὶ ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἢ ψυχῆ μου ἐν αὐτῷ.

5. The relation of this verse to the preceding is not quite clear. But probably the oracle from Jehovah is restricted to *ver.* 4, which defines in a general aphorism the different fortunes of two classes of people; and from it the prophet in the present verse describes the Chaldean (who is an extreme instance of one of the classes), afterwards proceeding in *vv.* 6–20 to anticipate the fate in store for him. Unfortunately the beginning of the verse seems to have undergone serious corruption.

In consequence of the difficulty of the text the metre cannot be determined with any confidence. Probably it consists of a pair of trimeters, followed by a pair of tetrameters, and these again by a pair of trimeters, but no certainty is attainable.

Yea, moreover. If an attempt is to be made to translate the existing Hebrew text, the most obvious rendering is, *Yea (or And) moreover, because wine (Hebrew hayyayin) is a treacherous dealer, he (the Chaldean) is a haughty man and one that keepeth not at home* (i.e. encroaches on the possessions of others). In this rendering the Hebrew particles, with which the sentence begins (*wē'aph cī*), are not taken in combination but are construed separately; and if the interpretation is correct, it must be supposed that the prophet alludes to a further evil trait in the Chaldean's character, namely, drunkenness; and by it accounts for his insolence and aggressiveness. But in what precedes and follows there is nothing to suggest that intemperance was a vice of the Chaldeans, nor is the habit of intemperance calculated to render successful the military enterprises of those who are enslaved by it. Hence the passage seems to need emendation; but whilst some critics treat the initial particles as corrupt, others regard them as required by the argument, linking *ver.* 5 with the preceding (so that these two verses could never have been separated by i. 5–11, see p. 156).

(i) Davidson replaces *wē'aph cī hayyayin* by *wē'aph cayyayin*, *And moreover like wine is the treacherous dealer, a man that is proud and restless*; i.e. the conduct of the treacherous dealer is like that which wine produces.

(ii) Bredenkamp and others substitute *wē'ephes cē'ayin* (cf. Is. xli. 12, 29), *And the treacherous dealer is nothing, as a thing of nought.*

(iii) Wellhausen omits the two particles, and replaces the word for *wine* by *Ha!* (or *Ah!*), assimilating the form of the verse to the denunciations in *vv.* 6b–8, 9–11, 12–14, 15–17, *Ha! the treacherous dealer, a proud man and that keepeth not at home.* He also suggests, however, the replacement of the imperfect of *nāwāh* (rendered in the R.V. by *keep at home*) by the imperfect of *rāwāh* (“to be saturated,” “to have one's fill”), and so gets for the conclusion of the sentence, *and is not satisfied.*

and ¹that keepeth not at home; who enlargeth his desire as ²hell, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto

¹ Or, *he shall not abide*

² Heb. *Sheol*.

But it is unlikely that this verse constitutes the first of the series of denunciations, for the series obviously begins at *ver.* 6; whilst the particles which Wellhausen excises are probably original, and should be taken together in the sense of *And how much more* (1 Sam. xxiii. 3; 2 Sam. xvi. 11; Job iv. 18, 19).

(iv) Sellin, rightly retaining the initial particles, changes *hayyayin* to *yēwānī* (cf. Joel iv. 6), omits the conjunction *and* (before *that keepeth not at home*) as arising from the last letter of the preceding word, and regards *nāwāh* as related to the root *nā'āh*, "to be comely," rendering, *And how much more the treacherous Greek, a haughty man, shall not be acceptable*. As an alternative to the last verb he suggests *yinnākeh*, *shall not be held innocent* (or *shall not go unpunished*), comparing Prov. xi. 21, xvi. 5, xvii. 5, xxviii. 20.

But a slighter textual change would be the replacement of *hayyayin* by *yōneh* (cf. Zeph. iii. 1), together with the omission of the conjunction before *that keepeth not at home*: the translation will then be, *How much more shall a tyrant, a treacherous dealer, a haughty man* (Prov. xxi. 24), *not abide* (see *mg.*). The verb *nāwāh*, which occurs only here, seems to mean primarily *to dwell as a shepherd*, and secondarily *to dwell undisturbed*, cf. the use of *yāshēbh* in Mic. v. 4 (= Heb. v. 3). Symmachus for this word seems to have οὐκ ἐπράγησε or οὐκ ἐπόρησε. The connection of the verse with the preceding context appears to be: "If he whose character is the antithesis of the righteous has, in general, no permanence (for this must be the import of 4*a*, even though the actual text cannot be restored with confidence), how much more certainly shall a speedy collapse be in store for a tyrant, who in his unconscionable ambition invades the possessions of all his neighbours to augment his own!" The LXX, which disregards *'aph cī*, represents the rest of the clause by ὁ δὲ κατούμενος (*the conceited man*) καταφρονητής· οὐδὲν μὴ περάνη (*he will accomplish nothing*): the translators (as Stonehouse observes) seem to have read some form of the verb *hūn* (cf. Dt. i. 41, *mg.*) in place of *hayyayin*. The Vatican ms has no equivalent for *a haughty man*, but several other codices insert ἀνὴρ ἀλάζων. The Old Latin has *Ille vero qui præsumit et contumax est, vir sui iactans, nihil omnino perficiet*.

who enlargeth his desire, etc. I.e. who is as insatiable as the Nether World (*Hades*), which gathers all mankind into itself (cf. Is. v. 14, Prov. xxvii. 20, xxx. 15-16). By *desire* is meant "appetite" (cf. Prov. xxiii. 2; Eccles. ii. 24 Heb., iv. 8 Heb., vi. 2 Heb.).

gathereth...heapeth. I.e. collects them as acquisitions.

The gist of the Divine oracle in *ver.* 4 and the prophet's comment upon it here is (as G. A. Smith expresses it) "Tyranny is suicide." It has no quality of endurance, but brings about its own destruction, the oppressor

him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples. 6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting ¹proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not

¹ Or, *riddle*

falling a victim to those whom he has oppressed. In the passage that follows (*vv.* 6-17 (19)), the truth thus concisely asserted is expanded.

6-20. A series of apostrophes addressed to the Chaldeans, denouncing various features in their career and character, and anticipating for them a fitting retribution. As the text stands, the denunciations are five; but there are reasons for suspecting the genuineness of the fifth and even of the third (see notes).

6*a.* *all these.* I.e. all whom he has robbed of their rightful possessions.

take up. I.e. on the tongue; cf. Num. xxiii. 7, 18; Job xxvii. 1, and see note on i. 1.

a parable. The Hebrew word comes from a root connoting resemblance; and this root-meaning can be traced in the application of the term both to sayings which involve a similitude or a comparison (Ezek. xvii. 2, xxiv. 3), and to compositions which are arranged in parallel clauses (such as proverbs, consisting of couplets, chiefly antithetical, like those in Prov. x. 1 f.). But in usage the term was not confined to such as these (see 1 Sam. x. 12, xxiv. 13, 14); and it was specially applied to derivative poems over the downfall (actual or anticipated) of an enemy (cf. Is. xiv. 4; Mic. ii. 4): see Gray, *Num.* pp. 344-5. Here the enemy's overthrow is still in the future, and the passage that follows (6*b*-19) is really a prophecy.

a taunting proverb. Better, *a satire, even enigmas.* The first word comes from a root meaning "to scorn," and so presumably signifies a derisive speech or poem (Prov. i. 6). The second denotes figurative sayings and comparisons which are obscure and perplexing; and is applied to allegories and riddles (see Ezek. xvii. 2; Jud. xiv. 12; cf. also Ps. xlix. 4 (*dark sayings*), lxxviii. 2). Here the term seems to imply that the parable and satire will be to the Chaldean unintelligible in its meaning and reference: he will not be able to understand that it has any significance for himself.

and say. Lit. *and one shall say*, but the LXX has the plural—καὶ ἐποῦσιν, and this suits the context best.

6*b*-8. The first denunciation.

The metre consists of trimeters, the opening interjection being apparently *extra metrum* in all cases. In *ver.* 7*a* the balance of the clauses is irregular—4:2 instead of 3:3; whilst in 7*b* the first line of the couplet lacks a second, of which only a fragment survives at the beginning of 8*a*. 8*b* appears to include a tetrameter and trimeter, but may be a prosaic addition.

6*b.* *Woe to him that, etc.* Better, *Ha! he that, etc.*: cf. Nah. iii. 1; Is. v. 8, 11, etc. The rendering of the R.V. corresponds to a different exclamation, occurring in 1 Sam. iv. 8; Is. vi. 5, etc. The LXX rightly has ὦ, though Symmachus has οὐαί.

that which is not his. The Hebrew phrase is ambiguous, and illustrates

his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges! 7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall ¹bite thee, and awake that shall ²vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? 8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence

¹ Or, exact usury of thee

² Or, toss thee to and fro

the enigmatical character of the address, for the words can mean both "that which does not belong to him," and "that which will not be a (permanent) possession for himself."

how long? I.e. how long will such conduct be permitted by God to last? *ladeth himself*, etc. Literally, *maketh pledges heavy upon himself*. The Chaldean is likened to a usurer, who lends money at exorbitant interest, and takes from borrowers pledges which are more numerous than are needed for security; and which will eventually be forcibly reclaimed by those who have been wrongfully dispossessed of them (cf. Job xx. 10, 15). Among the Hebrews there was a strong prejudice against the taking of any usury: see Ex. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 36; Neh. v. 1-13; Ps. xv. 5. The conditions, however, which prevailed amongst them were very unlike those subsisting in modern states, where the accumulation of capital (encouraged by the payment of interest for the use of it) is essential for the furtherance of industrial enterprises. By the Hebrews, a pastoral and agricultural people, accumulated gains, if not lent to those in need, were merely hoarded.

7. *that shall bite thee*. The participle of the Hebrew verb *to bite* (Gen. xlix. 17; Num. xxi. 8, 9) is also used to designate debtors to whom money had been lent, and who perhaps were thought of as biting off (i.e. deducting) part of the principal which they had received as a loan (and which they had eventually to repay in full) in order to discharge the interest demanded for it in the interim. This double sense of the word here employed also illustrates the enigmatical character of many of the terms occurring in this section.

vex thee. Literally, *shake thee violently* (as a wind shakes trees), or *scare thee*, to make thee disgorge. The verb here used is the causative form of one that occurs in Esth. v. 9 (mg.); Eccles. xii. 3 (*tremble*).

and thou...unto them. The couplet of which this line forms part is defective; and the missing line has been ingeniously restored by Duhm who, after *thou* in 8a, inserts a verb (*shōshēthāmō*). The couplet, thus completed, will be, *and thou shalt be for booties for them, because thou hast taken booty from them*.

8. *thou hast spoiled*, etc. The Chaldeans will be requited on the principle of Measure for Measure.

all the remnant, etc. I.e. all other peoples, see *ver.* 5.

because of men's blood, etc. This clause is repeated in *ver.* 17b, where it is more in place. Here in the preceding context it is not the Chaldean's lust for bloodshed, but his insatiable greed, that is in the writer's mind: hence the clause has been suspected of being intrusive.

done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.

9 Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil! 10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. 11 For the

the land...the city. The singular stands representatively for the many countries and their capitals which have been pillaged and destroyed (cf. Jer. xlvi. 8b).

9-11. The second denunciation. What is here condemned is the selfish motive prompting the Chaldeans' depredations.

The metre consists, as in the previous verses, of trimeters, but there is some irregularity in *ver.* 9 (probably occasioned by textual corruption) and at the end of *ver.* 10.

9. *an evil gain.* The epithet is superfluous, in its present connection, since the substantive itself implies ill-gotten gain (Prov. i. 19, xv. 27); and since there are in the verse only three clauses where four might be expected, it has been suggested that two clauses have been accidentally merged into one, and that the word *evil* is all that survives of the second. If so, the first couplet perhaps was: *Ha! he that getteth (unjust) gain for himself, that treasureth evil for his house.* In the Hebrew for this, a scribal error might easily occur, resulting in the present text. The ruler of the Chaldeans seems here to be in the writer's mind, so that *his house* denotes his dynasty.

that he may set his nest, etc. The metaphor is drawn from birds which, like the eagle or vulture, build their nests on inaccessible crags, where they are likely to be safe from marauders (cf. Ob. 4 (= Jer. xlix. 16); Num. xxiv. 21). The figure of speech may signify the attainment of such a height of power as would ensure security against reverses. But *ver.* 11 suggests that what the writer has in mind is the building of a fortified citadel or palace constructed by forced labour (cf. Jer. xxii. 13-17, of a Jewish king).

the hand of evil. Better, *the grasp of evil* (cf. Job viii. 4), i.e. the Nemesis which for his robberies he has deserved.

10. *consulted.* Better, *devised* (cf. Mic. vi. 5). The ignominious downfall of his house is not, of course, the aim, but would be the consequence, of his policy. For the Hebrew idiom, which expresses a result as a purpose, cf. Hos. viii. 4, etc.

by cutting off. Better, if the text is sound, *even the cutting off of*, the expression explaining the nature of the misdeeds that will eventually bring shame as their issue. But the LXX and Vulgate both have the second person—*thou hast cut off.*

and hast sinned against thy soul. Better, *and that, forfeiting* (literally, *missing*) *thy life*: the extermination of other peoples will bring condign retribution upon him who is guilty of it. For the use of *and* in the sense of *and that*, cf. 2 Sam. xiii. 20 (Heb.); Is. xxxvii. 11. The phrase (which is not the same as that occurring in Num. xvi. 31 (Heb. xvii. 3)) overloads the line, and is perhaps the comment of a reader. Cf. Mk. viii. 46.

11. *For the stone,* etc. The Chaldeans, like the Assyrians, stripped

stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! 13 Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that

subjugated territories of the stone and timber contained in them, in order to construct or decorate their own palaces and houses; and the very materials of these are here represented as protesting against the rapacity by which they were procured.

shall cry out. For the metaphor cf. Lk. xix. 40.

the beam. The Hebrew term, derived from a root meaning "to fasten," seems to signify a *tie-beam*. Symmachus has σύνδεσμος οἰκοδομῆς ξύλινος, and similarly Theodotion has σύνδεσμος (or ἐνδεσμος) ξύλου.

the timber. I.e. the woodwork (perhaps of the roof).

12-14. This, the third denunciation, is directed against those who build or beautify their cities at terrible cost to subject populations, subdued in bloody wars and compelled to toil as slaves in rearing buildings for their conquerors (cf. Ex. i. 11). Those who pursue such a policy are bound to fail in a world where God's designs include something better than the permanent success of cruelty and wrong.

The passage expands and clarifies the idea contained in *vv.* 9-11, and has been regarded as an editor's commentary on the verses immediately preceding. The reasons are two. The first is the number of parallels which it offers to certain passages in Mic., Jer., and Is., that are held by some critics to be of later date than the book of Habakkuk (cf. *ver.* 12 with Mic. iii. 10; *ver.* 13 with Jer. li. 58*b*; *ver.* 14 with Is. xi. 9*b*). But there are no sufficient grounds for denying to Micah and Isaiah the passages in question, so that, as these two prophets wrote in the eighth century or the beginning of the seventh, there is no serious difficulty in the way of concluding that Habakkuk, at the end of the seventh or beginning of the sixth, may have borrowed from them. Conversely *ver.* 13 may have been borrowed from Habakkuk by the author of Jer. li. 58*b*, for the latter verse has some appearance of being an addition, appended from extraneous sources, to li. 58*a*. The second reason is the absence here of any address (in the second person) to the Chaldean, such as appears in *vv.* 6*b*-8, 9-11 and 15-17. This difference is of some weight.

These verses consist, like the foregoing, mainly of trimeters; but there is some irregularity in *ver.* 13; whilst the quotation in *ver.* 14 has been expanded and the metre consequently impaired.

13. *Behold, is it not, etc.* For the schemes of such unscrupulous oppressors the Lord has ordained a disappointing issue, which will mock their efforts. (The rather peculiar order in the Hebrew of the opening words can be paralleled by 2 Ch. xxv. 26.) But the text is not quite certain, for the LXX has οὐ ταῦτα ἐστὶν παρὰ Κυρίου (due to a difference of vocalization), the pronoun ταῦτα referring to the quotation that follows. The parallel in Jer. li. 58*b* exhibits some variation in the order of the words, the borrower seemingly quoting from memory.

the peoples labour for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? 14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that¹ addest thy² venom *thereto*, and makest him drunken also,

¹ Or, *pour*est

² Or, *fury*

14. *For the earth*, etc. This verse explains why the designs of purely self-seeking conquerors are bound to miscarry. Jehovah, who controls all human fortunes, has in view a different end, namely, the diffusion of a knowledge of His glory, which consists in the beauty of His spiritual and moral nature, and which will be manifested in the ultimate vindication of the righteous (Judah) and the confusion of the wicked (the Chaldeans): cf. Is. lxvi. 18, 19; Ezek. xxviii. 22. The metre of the original (Is. xi. 9) from which the quotation is taken has been spoiled by the interpolation of the words *of the glory* between *knowledge* and *of the LORD*.

as the waters, etc. Strictly, *like the waters* (which) *cover over* (the bed of) *the sea*.

15-17. The fourth denunciation condemns the brutal satisfaction derived by the tyrant from the state of prostration and degradation to which he reduces all who are weaker than himself, and the havoc which he has caused in nature by the destruction of animal life and of vegetation.

The metrical scheme, as before, is, no doubt, a series of trimeter couplets; but in *ver.* 15 the metre has been disturbed by textual corruption, and in *ver.* 16 *b* the couplet seems to be of the form 4 : 2 (instead of 3 : 3).

15. *Woe unto him that giveth*, etc. Duhm and Sellin take the language of this passage literally, and in accordance with their view of the date of the book suppose that the writer refers to the scenes of intoxication which sometimes disgraced Alexander and his suite¹. But most critics consider that what is in mind is the Chaldean's pride of power, and the humiliation and helplessness to which he loves to reduce his victims. These are represented figuratively as being made intoxicated, in order to afford gratification to their conqueror by exposing their nakedness: in requital he will experience the same ignominy (cf. Nah. iii. 11).

that addest thy venom. Of the Hebrew verb the R. V. offers two alternative renderings: the first may be justified as an extension of the root-meaning "to attach" or (in a passive or reflexive sense) "to join" or "cleave to" (Is. xiv. 1; 1 Sam. xxvi. 19), but the second finds little support in Hebrew. The noun means both *venom* (or *poison*, Ps. lviii. 4)

¹ Grote (*Hist. Greece*, vol. xii. p. 10) refers to Alexander's "indulgence in the banquet and in wine-drinking, to which he was always addicted when leisure allowed."

that thou mayest look on their nakedness! 16 Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and ¹be as one uncircumcised: the cup of the LORD's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and foul

¹ Or, *let thy foreskin be uncovered*

and *fury* (Nah. i. 6). But the text has probably undergone some corruption. Of the participle translated *that addest* the final letter is identical with the initial letter of the following substantive; whilst for the possessive adjective of the 2nd person prefixed to the latter there should doubtless be substituted that of the 3rd person (Symmachus has *θυμὸν ἐαυτοῦ* and the Vulgate *fel suum*). Thus there is much to favour the emendation, *Ha! he that giveth his neighbour drink from the bowl of his fury* (*mēsappēah* being replaced by *missaph*, Zech. xii. 2). But Duham and Sellin, supposing (as has been said) that actual orgies of intoxication are in the writer's thoughts, emend the passage further and vocalizing differently the word rendered *fury* so as to convert it into a term meaning *water-skin* or *wine-skin* (Gen. xxi. 15, 19) and prefixing the preposition signifying *out of*, obtain the translation, *Ha! he that giveth his neighbour drink out of his bowl, out of his (wine-)skin, yea, that maketh him drunken also*. This emendation greatly improves the metre, and adoption of it need not involve acceptance of their theory concerning the date of the prophecy, or their literal interpretation of the language here employed.

that thou mayest look. Better, *in order to look*. (The Hebrew construction is as suitable to the 3rd person as to the 2nd.)

their nakedness. I.e. their national humiliation. For the plural *their* the Codex Marchalianus of the LXX has *αὐτοῦ*.

16. *Thou art filled*, etc. The prophet has in view the degradation which in the future will befall the Chaldean, instead of the glory which he anticipates; and to stress the certainty of such an issue, he represents it as having occurred already.

drink thou also, etc. He will drain from Jehovah's cup (Is. li. 17; Jer. xxv. 15 f.; Lam. iv. 21; Mk. x. 38, etc.) a draught like that which he has forced upon his neighbours, and will be reduced to the same helpless condition.

be as one uncircumcised. Perhaps better, *shew thyself uncircumcised*, and so become an object of contempt. For the scorn entertained by the Hebrews for those who were not circumcised like themselves cf. Jud. xiv. 3, xv. 18; 1 Sam. xvii. 26, xxxi. 4. The traditional Hebrew text is supported by the parallelism; but the LXX, which has *σαλεύθητι*, implies a different verb meaning *stagger* (as a consequence of intoxication, cf. Is. li. 17, 22; Jer. xxv. 15, 16; Ps. lx. 3); and by some critics this is preferred. Aquila has *καρῶθητι*, *be stupefied* (from *κάρος*, the heavy sleep that follows a drunken debauch).

shall be turned. Perhaps better, *shall come round in turn*. The words of the LORD's right hand overload the clause, and it has been suggested that they come from Jer. xxv. 15, 17.

shame shall be upon thy glory. 17 For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, ¹which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.

¹ According to many ancient versions, *shall make thee afraid*.

17. The violence and destruction wrought by the Chaldeans were not limited to mankind and their works, but extended to physical nature: the forests of Lebanon were felled to provide them with timber (cf. Is. xiv. 8), and the animals that abounded there (Is. xl. 16) were hunted and killed. In some of this havoc the Chaldeans had predecessors in the Assyrians (Is. xxxvii. 24).

the violence...cover thee. A concise phrase for "shame because of thy violence shall cover thee": cf. Ob. 10; Jer. iii. 25.

which made them afraid. This, in the present context, yields little sense: the LXX (πτοῦσαι σε) and some other versions have, more appropriately, *shall make thee afraid*. The Chaldeans, when the hour of retribution comes, will recall the wanton destruction which they have caused, and the memory of it will terrify them with thoughts of the Nemesis awaiting them.

because of men's blood. See *ver.* 8. This clause seems to connect not with 17*a* but with 16*b* ("shame shall cover thee because of men's blood," etc.).

18, 19. This, the fifth denunciation, enlarges upon the folly of idol-worship, since idols, lacking speech and breath, are incapable of aiding their worshippers.

The section differs both in subject-matter and in form from the preceding passage 6*b*–17, and the divergence justly raises suspicion of its authenticity. (*a*) Previously the Chaldeans have been denounced for a rapaciousness that marked them in a peculiar degree; whereas, though the manufacture and adoration of idols were conspicuous features of Babylon (Is. xxi. 9, xl. 19*f.*, xli. 6, 7, xlv. 9–20; Jer. x. 2–9, l. 38), they were not specially distinctive of its people; and the irreligion ascribed to them by Habakkuk (i. 11, 16) renders it improbable that he would credit them with any trust in supernatural powers, real or imaginary. (*b*) The exclamation with which the previous sections open here appears at the beginning of the second, not of the first, verse. This, however, may be due to an accidental transposition of the verses: certainly the sequence of thought seems to require *ver.* 19 (a description of the practice of idolatry) to precede *ver.* 18 (an exposure of its folly).

The metre varies in the two verses, for whereas *ver.* 18 consisted originally of trimeter couplets (though insertions have impaired their regularity), *ver.* 19 appears to be written in tetrameters (though the balance of the clauses in the traditional text has been disturbed).

18 What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and the teacher of lies, that the maker of ¹his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?
 19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is laid over with gold

¹ Or, *its*

18. *What profiteth*, etc. This verse (as has been said) is probably the sequel of *ver.* 19. The valuelessness of idols as a means of help in time of need is often accentuated in language such as is used here, see 1 Sam. xii. 21; Is. xliv. 9, 10, lix. 12, etc.; Jer. ii. 11, xvi. 19.

the maker. Better, *the fashioner* (literally, *the moulder*, though the Hebrew term is employed (in Is. xliv. 9, 10, 12) of a "graver").

the teacher of lies. By this is meant not an idolatrous priest but the idol itself, to which were attributed the delusive oracles communicated by the priest to the worshippers: cf. Zech. x. 2 (where the *teraphim* (images of human shape) are represented as "speaking vanity" (i.e. unreality)). In Gen. xii. 6 reference is made to a terebinth styled *the teacher* (or *instructor*), as being the source of oracular utterances, such being perhaps suggested by the rustling of the leaves (cf. Hom. *Od.* xiv. 327, τὸν δ' ἐς Δαδώνην φάτο βήμεναι, ὄφρα θεοῖο Ἐκ δρυὸς ὑψι-κόμοιο Διὸς βουλὴν ἑπακοῦσαι).

the maker of his work. More literally, *the moulder of his mould*, the latter noun denoting primarily something fashioned from clay or other plastic material (cf. Is. xxix. 16), though used figuratively of the conceptions and purposes of the mind (Gen. vi. 5). But the line is too long for the couplet, and probably one of the two nouns should be omitted, the true reading being *its moulder* or *fashioner* (as suggested by Nowack), and the pronoun referring to "the teacher of lies," i.e. the image.

to make dumb idols. The Hebrew noun here used seems to mean "non-entities," and occurs frequently in Isaiah, see ii. 8, 18, 20, etc. For the epithet *dumb* applied to idols cf. 1 Cor. xii. 2. The clause is metrically redundant, and may be an addition to the original text.

19. *Awake*. I.e. to listen to petitions from the worshippers: cf. the reproach addressed by Elijah to the prophets of Baal (1 Kg. xviii. 27), though the same appeal is made in the Psalms more than once to Jehovah (Ps. xxxv. 23, xliv. 23). A Babylonian inscription represents a worshipper of Bel as crying, "How long will the lord who sleeps still sleep? The lord who sleeps—how long will he sleep?" (*The Psalmists*, ed. by D. C. Simpson, p. 132).

Arise. Cf. Jer. ii. 28. This imperative, like the preceding, is probably addressed to the wood and not to the stone, for the balance of the clauses is only secured if the couplet is translated and arranged thus—*Ha! he that saith to a stock, Awake, arise! Of a dumb stone, It shall teach.*

laid over with gold. Literally, *grasped in gold*, the verb primarily meaning "to lay hold of, seize" (cf. Esther i. 6 Heb.). For the use of precious metals in the construction of idols see Hos. viii. 4; Is. xl. 19.

and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. 20 But the LORD is in his holy temple: ¹let all the earth keep silence before him.

¹ Heb. *be silent before him, all the earth.*

there is no breath, etc. The like reflection is found in Jer. x. 4, 5, 14; Ps. cxv. 6, cxxxv. 17; Dt. iv. 28.

20. In contrast to the lifeless idols Jehovah from His celestial temple rules the world, the inhabitants of which are bidden to maintain reverential silence before Him, awaiting His intervention. This verse serves to lead up to the theophany described in ch. iii., and (if the latter is not the work of Habakkuk) may be the addition of an editor, designed to connect the two chapters.

his holy temple. Cf. Mic. i. 2. Heaven is conceived to be Jehovah's abode, as in Ps. xi. 4.

keep silence. Literally, *Hush!* cf. Zeph. i. 7; Zech. ii. 13 (= Heb. 17); Am. vi. 10; Neh. viii. 11.

CHAPTER III

The Psalm contained in this chapter begins with an appeal to Jehovah to repeat, in the defence of His imperilled people, what He had achieved in earlier times; and proceeds to describe a theophany, in which Jehovah is seen advancing, amid all the terrors of lightning and hurricane, to repel a host of assailants. Three concluding verses, apparently of different origin and composed in a period of scarcity, express confidence in Jehovah as a source of deliverance under such conditions.

The main portion of the psalm has been held by some to depict a past occasion of Divine intervention, such as the Exodus, the rescue which was then achieved by Jehovah for His people constituting a ground of hope that a like rescue would be again granted in a like emergency. But though the tradition of the Exodus probably influenced the thoughts of the poet, and stimulated him to pray for a repetition of that mercy (*ver.* 2), the theophany that forms the subject of the succeeding verses (*ver.* 3-16) is doubtless no occasion in the past which he recalls, but an event in the near future which he anticipates; and it is described as actually witnessed, probably in mental vision. It has been argued, indeed, that some remote occurrence must really be in view, since otherwise God would not be represented as coming from Teman and Paran, such a localization of the Deity in the mountainous district within or near Edom being unnatural in the seventh or some later century. But the imagination of even a late poet might be inspired by the traditions, or the written compositions, of a bygone day, and his language moulded by the diction of such; and the present ode is certainly influenced by poems like those in Jud. v. and Deut. xxxiii. (cf. also Ps. lxxviii. 7 ff., lxxvii. 16 f., though the date of these is doubtful). The power to deliver, which God had demonstrated on an earlier occasion, is made the subject of a prayer that it may be exhibited once more in similar circumstances of national danger.

The poem, by its position, forms a fitting conclusion to the book; and, so far as *ver.* 2-16 are concerned, describes in vigorous and graphic terms the overthrow of an enemy of God's people. If it is not the production of Habakkuk, the

editor who extracted it from one of the Temple Psalters and placed it here was endued with a fine dramatic sense; for the prediction of destruction in store for the Chaldeans, with which ch. ii. concludes (*vv.* 4-19), if it had been left to itself, would have constituted a comparatively unimpressive ending for the book. Some commentators have gone so far as to suppose that just as in ii. 1-4 there is recounted what Habakkuk on his watch-tower *heard*, so here is depicted what he *saw*. But though it is improbable that the poem was really composed with any such object in view, it can scarcely be denied that it rounds off the prophecy most happily; and it is the more to be regretted that the last three verses, which are out of keeping with the sixteen that precede, should rather impair the climax. Nevertheless, in spite of the appropriateness (in a broad sense) of the chapter to what has gone before, it is far from certain that the situation implied in ch. i., ii. is really preserved here. There (as has been remarked already) it is implied that the prophet's countrymen have long sustained the tyranny of an insatiable foe; but here the enemy seems to be an invader who has not yet fully accomplished his aggressive designs. The discrepancy between the conditions presupposed in *vv.* 17-19 and those implied in the earlier verses has just been noticed; and probably the last three verses are an addition, taking the place of the original ending, which had perhaps been accidentally destroyed.

The date and authorship of the main part of the poem have been discussed in the Introduction, but no certain decision is possible. The composition, though not called a psalm, obviously must once have been contained in a collection or psalms, for both the heading at the beginning, and the subscription at the close contain terms similar to those which are found in the headings prefixed to several psalms in the Canonical Psalter; whilst the direction *Selah*, used three times in the poem, is also of frequent occurrence in the Psalter. But if it was once comprised in an earlier collection (cf. the psalm contained in Is. xxxviii. 10-20), no duplicate of it exists in the present collection as is the case with the psalm found in 2 Sam. xxii., which finds a place in the canonical book of Psalms as Ps. xviii.

The metre consists of parallel couplets or distichs, arranged in groups of two or three: such groups may be regarded as stanzas or strophes. If the last three verses are severed from the rest as being a later supplement, the stanzas appear to number eleven. The individual lines are mostly trimeters: where occasional tetrameters occur, the text has probably undergone some corruption. A few of the stanzas are at present defective (see *vv.* 4 *b*, 8 *a*) or else contain redundant lines (see *vv.* 2 *b*, 9 *a*): the latter are presumably insertions due to an editor or reader.

III. 1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to Shigionoth.

III. 1. A prayer. This description of the poem that follows finds its justification in *ver.* 2, where the poet entreats from Jehovah a repetition of the work He had accomplished for His people in ancient days. The same title is prefixed to several psalms in the Canonical Psalter—xvii., xc., cii., cxlii.; see also Ps. lxxii. 20.

the prophet. The addition of this title to Habakkuk's name here makes it plain that the psalm, whoever was its real author, had already become associated with the writer from whom the earlier part of the book proceeded, before its transfer from the collection in which it was once comprised.

set to Shigionoth. The Hebrew preposition translated *set to* appears to mean *in accordance with*; and is employed in the Psalter in connection with terms designating (1) the melody to be used with a particular

2 O LORD, I have heard ¹the report of thee, and ²am afraid:
 O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years,
 In the midst of the years make it known;

¹ Or, *thy fame*

² Or, *was*

psalm—see Ps. viii. (“to be sung to a vintage melody”), xxii., xlv., lvi., lxix., lxxx. (“to be sung to the melodies” of certain familiar songs of which the names are given); (2) the kind of voice required for the singing of a particular psalm—see Ps. xlv. (soprano or falsetto), vi., xii. (bass). Here, *in accordance with Shigionoth* seems to signify that this psalm should be sung to a particular class of melodies, though their nature is obscure. The singular *Shiggāiōn* is applied, as a description, to Ps. vii. The root from which the term is derived means “to stray” in a literal sense (Ezek. xxxiv. 6) and “to err” in a moral sense (1 Sam. xxvi. 21); and is also used to denote the reeling of the drunken (Is. xxviii. 2; Prov. xx. 1) and the intoxication of love (Prov. v. 19). It might be expected from this that Ps. vii., just mentioned, would be marked by striking fluctuations of tone or spirit, but such are not a prominent feature of it. In the case of the present psalm a change of mood in the course of it is perhaps more easily traceable, and such change might be accompanied by a modification of the chant or melody. Sellin thinks that the word means *the song of the ecstatic* (comparing the term *mēshugga*’, applied in contempt to a prophet in Hos. ix. 7). It has also been brought into connection with an Assyrian word *shēgū*, designating certain Babylonian penitential psalms, but capable of extension to the prayers of anyone in grief. The LXX here has φῶδῆ, but in Ps. vii. ψαλμός; Aquila and Symmachus have ἀγνοήματα, Theodotion has ἐκουσιασμοί (thought to be a scribal error for ἀκουσιασμοί), and the Vulgate *ignorantiae*.

2. *I have heard.* The poet, addressing God, speaks as representing his collective countrymen (see *ver.* 14).

the report of thee. The genitive is objective—“that which is reported concerning thee” (Gen. xxix. 13; Num. xiv. 15; Dt. ii. 25; 1 Kg. x. 1, etc.), namely, Thy great achievements in defence of Thy People, such as those in the time of Moses, or in the time of Deborah and Barak.

and am afraid. This, if the true reading, implies that memories of past occasions when God’s power was impressively shown, though conducive of hope, were also calculated to create awe: cf. *ver.* 16 and Ex. xiv. 31. But it is probable that emendation is required; see below.

revive. The verb is here used in the sense of “repeat,” “reproduce”; cf. the employment of it in connection with the rebuilding of a city (1 Ch. xi. 8; Neh. iv. 2 (= Heb. iii. 34)).

thy work. The term is often applied to God’s interposition in human history, sometimes to punish (cf. i. 5), sometimes to rescue or preserve (cf. Ps. xlv. 1 (2), lxxvii. 12 (13); Dt. xi. 7; Jud. ii. 7).

in the midst of the years. Literally, *in the midst of years*. The expression is difficult to interpret, but possibly means “in the midst of a protracted period (of trouble).”

make it known. Cf. Ps. xc. 16. If the text is sound, the unexpressed

In wrath remember mercy.

object of the verb is "thy work"; but as the LXX has the passive voice (*γνωσθήσῃ* and *ἀναδειχθήσῃ*), probably the verb should be vocalized differently and rendered *make thyself known* by exerting Thy power: cf. Ex. vi. 3; Ps. ix. 16, xlviii. 3; Is. xix. 21; Ezek. xx. 9.

In wrath, etc. The word rendered *wrath* means literally *agitation* or *turmoil*, whether in nature (cf. Job xxxvii. 2, *noise*) or in human hearts (cf. Is. xiv. 3, *trouble*; Job iii. 26, xiv. 1, etc.). The purport of the clause is not quite clear; but it appears to be an entreaty to God that when He comes in His might to intervene, He will not suffer His destructive agencies to range indiscriminately, so as to cause the righteous as well as the wicked to perish in the turmoil.

In the Hebrew text of this verse there is a lack of symmetry and balance. The LXX has a more extensive text, which in places appears to be a conflation of alternative renderings of an original which in some respects varied from the traditional Hebrew text. The first two lines are as follows:

κύριε, εἰσακήκοα τὴν ἀκοήν σου, καὶ ἐφοβήθην·
κατενόησα τὰ ἔργα σου, καὶ ἐξέστην.

As the Hebrew verbs for "to be afraid" and "to see" closely resemble one another, it is not unlikely that the two Greek verbs *ἐφοβήθην* and *κατενόησα* really represent a single Hebrew verb meaning "to see," which in certain copies had become corrupted, and that the different readings thus originating had afterwards been expanded. If so, a plausible reconstruction of the first two couplets is:

O Lord, I have heard the report of thee,
I have seen, O Lord, thy work;
In the midst of years revive it,
In the midst of years make thyself known.

In this reconstruction the line *In turmoil remember mercy*, which is outside the quatrain, is omitted as being possibly the insertion of a reader. On the other hand, both Van Hoonacker and Stonehouse regard the duplication of the words *In the midst of years* as inelegant and not likely to be original, and would retain the phrase only once, whilst including in the quatrain the line *In turmoil remember mercy*¹. But for such repetition there are not lacking parallels, see Jud. v. 4, 7, 11, etc.

3-16. To the petition in *ver. 2* the prophet receives a response in the form of a theophany, and the petition passes into a description of it, at least from *ver. 2* to *ver. 7*. God is conceived as being present in a storm-cloud (cf. Ps. xviii. 7-15, l. 3), moving northward from the mountainous region situated to the south of Judah (a quarter recalling memories of Sinai or Horeb); and the lightning that darts from the cloud, and the deluge of rain that descends from it, are regarded as tokens of His wrath against His people's adversaries. The past tenses which

¹ For the third line Van Hoonacker prefers *In the midst of years revive it*; whilst Stonehouse favours *In the midst of years make thyself known*.

3 God ¹came from Teman,
And the Holy One from mount Paran.

[Selah

¹ Or, *cometh* (and similarly to the end of ver. 15)

are used in the R.V. are best replaced, at any rate in most cases, by present tenses (as suggested in the R.V. mg.).

3. *God came from Teman*, etc. This first couplet appears to be modelled on Dt. xxxiii. 2. The Hebrew word for *God* (*Eloah*), employed here, as in i. 11, is a singular, the usual term being a plural (*Elohim*), and recurs in Dt. xxxii. 15, 17, etc.; Ps. xviii. 31 (32), l. 22; Prov. xxx. 5. The passages in which it occurs do not favour the conclusion that it is an ancient form: it may well be a late analogical formation from the plural.

Teman. This word, as a common noun, means *the South* (Job xxxix. 26), and *from Teman* is here translated in the Greek codices 62, 86, 147, by ἀπὸ Λιβῶς; whilst Theodotion has ἀπὸ νοτίου (or νότου), and the Vulgate *ab Austro*; but in the present passage it is really a proper name denoting a district in the N. or N.W. of Edom (of which in poetical passages it is often treated as the equivalent (Am. i. 12; Ob. 9; Ezek. xxv. 13)). This region was seemingly so called by the Hebrews because it lay to the south of their own land of Judah (other localities that have owed, or still owe, their names to their situation relatively to those who bestowed such names are *Hesperia*, *Anatolia*, *The Levant*). In Gen. xxxvi. 11 *Teman* figures among the descendants of Esau.

the Holy One. Jehovah, who is frequently styled *the Holy One of Israel* (Is. i. 4, v. 19, etc.), is here called *the Holy One*, as by a proper name: cf. Is. xl. 25; Job vi. 10.

mount Paran. I.e. the mountainous district (*highland*) of Paran, the hilly region stretching along the western border of the Ælanitic gulf (the Gulf of Akaba) as far as Elath (cf. Gen. xxi. 21; Num. xii. 16; Dt. xxxiii. 2). The poet presumably here thinks of God as coming from His sanctuary in Sinai or Horeb, names which are probably two appellations for a single mountain, situated near Edom (cf. Jud. v. 4). The conception is a survival of an ancient mode of thought into which the poet projects himself, though both he and his contemporaries doubtless in reality imagined Jehovah to have His earthly abode in Jerusalem.

Selah. The term appears to mean *Uplift*, and to be a direction to raise the voice in praise. The use of it occurs in thirty-nine psalms, and in several of these more than once, whilst it is also found in two of the *Psalms of Solomon*. Its presence at a particular place in a psalm is thought to indicate the point where the psalm, if it were deemed desirable, might be abbreviated or interrupted. A portion of a psalm might be read or sung, and then the worshippers might be directed to uplift their voices in benediction of the Lord. The LXX translates it by διάψαλμα (*interlude*), Aquila by ἀεί, Symmachus by εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, and Theodotion by εἰς τέλος; but these last terms are conjectured to denote the Benediction itself (represented by its concluding word), which was uttered at the place marked by *Selah*. See further, Briggs, *Psalms*, i. pp. lxxxiv-lxxxviii.

- His glory covered the heavens,
 And the earth was full of his praise.
 4 And *his* brightness was as the light;
 He had ¹rays *coming forth* ²from his hand:
 And there was the hiding of his power.
 5 Before him went the pestilence,

¹ Heb. *horns*.² Or, *at his side*

His glory. Perhaps better, *His grandeur*, an allusion to the lightning flashing from the storm-cloud.

his praise. If the Hebrew substantive here used is that which ordinarily signifies *praise*, the meaning conveyed must be *His praise-worthiness* (cf. the sense of *ἔρανος* in Phil. iv. 8), i.e. the quality of Power, which evokes wonder and awe from those who witness its manifestation in the storm (cf. Ex. xv. 11). But it agrees better with the context to suppose that the noun employed in the present passage comes from a different root signifying "to shine" (occurring in Job xxix. 3, xxxi. 26, etc.), and that it here means *radiance* or *splendour*. To explain the line (as Van Hoonacker does) to mean that the inhabitants of the earth are filled with sentiments of praise and adoration ignores the parallelism.

4. *And his brightness...light.* In the Hebrew there is a grammatical irregularity (the subject being masculine and the verb feminine) and so Duhm proposes to replace *was* (*tihyeh*) by *under him* (*tahath*): the translation will then be, *And brightness like the light is under him* (cf. Ex. xxiv. 10). The emendation affords a good antithesis to *his hand* (or *side*) in the next line. In any case, the general import of the line is that the brilliance of the lightning rivals the light of the sun (see Job xxxi. 26 mg.).

rays. These (in the Hebrew *two horns*) cannot be the sun's rays, rising above the horizon, or issuing from behind a cloud; for this line ought to form a parallel to the preceding, where the brightness which is compared to the sun's light cannot itself be that of the solar beams. The reference must be to the lightning-flashes darting on either hand from the thunder-cloud (cf. Ps. xviii. 12; Dt. xxxiii. 2, where *fiery law* should probably be *burning fire*).

And there was, etc. The couplet of which this line forms part is defective, lacking one of its components. The missing line probably preceded the present, and contained some noun to which the adverb *there* refers. A satisfactory, though, of course, conjectural, first line would be—*He maketh darkness his covering* (*'āsāh* (or *shāth*) *hōshech sithro*, cf. Ps. xviii. 11, 12a), to which an appropriate sequence is furnished by *And the hiding place of his power is there*.

5. *Before him, etc.* Jehovah, in His expedition against the foe, is represented as accompanied by formidable attendants—Pestilence and Fever—which are personified as His advance-guards and His rear-guards

And ¹fiery bolts went forth at his feet.

6 He stood, and ²measured the earth;
He beheld, and drove asunder the nations:
And the eternal mountains were scattered,
The everlasting hills did bow;

³His goings were *as* of old.

¹ Or, *burning coals*

² Or, *shook*

³ Or, *His ways are everlasting*

(similarly in Homer, Δαίμος and Φόβος attend Athene and Ares, *Il.* iv. 440, xv. 119). The word *resheph*, rendered in the R.V. by *fiery bolts*, is used of flame in Job v. 7; Ps. lxxviii. 48; but it is also employed to denote the fiery glow of fever (Dt. xxxii. 24). Both pestilence and fever seem to have been regarded as caused by missiles hurled by God (just as the plagues which ravaged the Greek host before Troy were attributed to the arrows of Apollo, Homer, *Il.* i. 50); and disease is associated with arrows in Ps. xci. 5, 6. The Phœnicians worshipped a Fire-god Resheph, who was probably considered by them to be the source of the bolts which occasioned such maladies as were attended by inflammation or feverish symptoms. See Driver, *Deut.* p. 367.

went forth. The verb is especially used of marching forth to war; see Jud. ii. 15; 1 Sam. viii. 20, xvii. 20.

at his feet. Literally, *according to his feet*, i.e. following wherever He goes; cf. Gen. xxx. 30; 1 Sam. xxv. 42 (Heb.).

6. *measured.* This, if the reading is sound, must mean *scanned* or *surveyed* with His eyes. But the LXX's ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ, and the parallel *driveth asunder* (or *maketh to start*) in the next line, suggest a different verb, implying some violent effect produced upon the world when God stands up: a plausible emendation conveying this idea is *maketh to tremble* (*wayēmōdhedh* being replaced by *wayyamē'ēdh*, cf. Ps. lxix. 23 (24)).

drove asunder. Better, *maketh to start* (or *leap*) in terror by His mere look.

eternal. Driver suggests, as a better equivalent, *ancient*.

were scattered. Better, *are shattered* (or *are dashed in pieces*): cf. Jer. xxiii. 29. The writer has in mind the effects of lightning and deluges of rain, which he depicts rhetorically.

everlasting. Or (as Driver suggests), *primæval*. For the epithets here applied to the mountains and hills cf. Gen. xlix. 26; Dt. xxxiii. 15.

did bow. Better, *sink* (or *subside*). The language describes landslides, or the opening of fissures in the ground.

His goings, etc. The word rendered *goings* elsewhere means (a) *movements* (Ps. lxxviii. 24 (25)), (b) *travelling companies* or *caravans* (Job vi. 19); and Driver explains the phrase to mean that Jehovah's progress is as it had been of old, when He came forth at the Exodus for the deliverance of His people. It is possible, however, that the term has a concrete sense, and that the clause should be rendered *They* (the mountain ridges)

7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction:

The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

are everlasting pathways for him. The line is isolated, and is either the addition of a copyist, or else is part of a couplet of which one line is missing. Certain codices of the LXX, previously cited, here have two lines: αἱ ὁδοὶ αἱ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀλλοιωθήσονται· αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα σεισθήσεται ἡ οἰκουμένη.

7. *I saw*, etc. Jehovah, in His course from Teman and Paran, is imagined to be traversing regions where certain nomad Arabian tribes had their abode; and this verse describes the effect upon them of His approach.

Cushan. The name does not occur elsewhere except in the compound personal name *Cushan-rishathaim* (Jud. iii. 8, 10); but Moses, when in the wilderness, married a Cushite woman, who would naturally be of Arab stock (Num. xii. 1), and the name *Cushan* bears to *Cush* the same relation as *Lotan* does to *Lot*, or *Kenan* to *Kain*. The LXX has Αἰθίοπων, but the name *Cush*, though applied in Gen. x. 6 to a stock descended from Ham, was also used seemingly to denote the ancestor of some of the posterity of Shem (Gen. x. 7 compared with x. 28, 29). Probably two distinct names were blended by the Hebrews into one. There appears to have been an African people styled by the Egyptians *Kash* or *Kesh*, and also an Asiatic people called by the Babylonians *Kasshu* (the Κοσσαῖοι of Strabo, xi. 13, 6), and the Hebrews apparently used for both the name *Cush* or *Kush*, so that confusion occurred.

in affliction. Literally, *under affliction* (conceived as a burden, cf. Prov. xxx. 21 mg.).

The curtains. I.e. the tent-cloths; cf. Is. liv. 2; Jer. iv. 20, x. 20.

Midian. The Midianites are mentioned in connection with various localities, as a roving people might be expected to be; but the districts which were more especially their camping-grounds lay along the east shore of the Gulf of Akaba (see Ex. iii. 1; 1 Kg. xi. 18). They thus appear to have been a north Arabian tribe.

This couplet consists of two tetrameters, and the irregularity of such in a series of trimeters, and the fact that *I have seen...in affliction* is not a very good parallel to *tremble*, have suggested that the lines have undergone some expansion and corruption. A plausible emendation is, *Thou dost make afraid the tents of Cushan; The tents of Midian do tremble* (rā'ithi being replaced by yērēthā and the superfluous *land of* (which is absent from the LXX codices 23, 62, 86, 147) being omitted). The first two words of the verse, which the R.V. renders *in affliction*, are probably a gloss which has been corrupted; but the original form and sense are obscure. Van Hoonacker suggests that it meant *in requital of wickedness* (cf. 2 Sam. xvi. 12 Heb.), whilst Sellin thinks its import to have been *On* (i.e. the Egyptian town called by the Greeks *Heliopolis*, cf. Gen. xli. 45) *is dismayed*, the glossator taking *Cushan* to refer to Egypt, and the original vocalization being tēhath'Ōn instead of tahath'āwen.

- 8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers?
 Was thine anger against the rivers,
 Or thy wrath against the sea,
 That thou didst ride upon thine horses,
 Upon thy chariots of salvation?
 9 Thy bow was made quite bare ;

8. In this verse the poet asks Jehovah whether the storm, viewed as a manifestation of His anger, can really be directed against the physical world, which appears to suffer under it.

In consequence of the inappropriateness of *ver.* 15 to its present context (see note), it has been suggested that it should be transposed and placed before the present verse. A common feature of the two verses is the allusion to Jehovah's *horses*.

Was the LORD...the rivers. The first two lines of this verse are tautological, and it contains five lines (instead of four or six), whilst in the first line the construction of the Hebrew is irregular; so there is almost certainly some textual corruption. It has been proposed to reduce, by omissions, the five lines to four, and to read, *Is it against the rivers that thine anger is hot? Or is thy wrath against the sea?* But since reference has been made to the effect produced by the tempest upon the mountains (*ver.* 6) as well as (if the transposition of *ver.* 15 is justified) upon the waters, it is possible that expansion, and not compression, is needed. If, with Grätz, the words *against the rivers* in the first line be replaced by *against the mountains* (the difference in the Hebrew turns on the presence or absence of a single letter), and a parallel line is assumed to have been lost, the first two couplets might be: *Is Jehovah's anger hot against the mountains? Or is thy indignation against the hills? Is thine anger against the rivers? Or thy wrath against the sea?*

Upon thy chariots of salvation. Perhaps better, *Upon thy chariots in deliverance* (or *in victory*): for the rendering cf. Ps. iii. 8 mg., and for the construction see Ps. xxxv. 19. The horses and chariots of Jehovah upon which He rides are the storm-clouds and the hurricane: cf. Ps. xviii. 10, lxviii. 33, civ. 3; Is. xix. 1; Dt. xxxiii. 26. Similarly of the Babylonian god Marduk it is said that "he drove the chariots of the storm, the irresistible, the terrible" (*The Psalms*, ed. D. C. Simpson, p. 151). As the last line of the couplet consists of only two words (instead of three), possibly a verb has been lost.

9. *Thy bow was made quite bare.* The general sense is clear, namely, that the bow was made ready for action by being stripped of the case (called in Greek γαρπρός) in which it was kept until needed; but since the LXX and Vulgate have the verb in the second person, the right reading is perhaps, *Thou makest thy bow quite bare.* For Jehovah's *bow*, from which He discharges His arrows (the lightnings), see Ps. vii. 12; Lam. ii. 4, etc. In Babylonian inscriptions the god Marduk is similarly represented as armed with a bow—"He hung the bow and quiver at his

¹The oaths to the tribes were a *sure* word. [Selah

Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw thee, and ²were afraid;

¹ Or, *Sworn were the chastisements* (Heb. *rods*) of thy word

² Or, *were in pain*

right hand," and he bare "bow and arrows and weapons of war" (*op. cit.* p. 151).

The oaths...word. This line of the verse consists of the normal three words—*shēbhūōth mattōth 'omer*. The first and third signify *oaths* (or *sworn*) and *word* respectively, whilst the second, besides meaning *tribes*, admits of the rendering *rods* or perhaps *shafts* (cf. *ver.* 14, note). But the meanings extracted from them by the R. V. (text and mg.) are both forced, and irrelevant to the context; and if the line is an integral part of the poem, recourse must be had to emendation. The LXX cursives 62, 86, 147 have ἐχόρτσας βολίδας τῆς φαρέτρας αὐτῆς; and if the pronoun of the third person be replaced by that of the second, the original line may have been: *Thou dost fill to the full* (*sibba'tā*) *with shafts thy quiver* (*ashpā-thechā*), i.e. for discharging at the enemy. This accords well enough with the preceding context, though the corruption of the last word into *'omer* is very unlikely. If the emendation be adopted, a line parallel in sense to the last in the verse must be missing, since there are only three lines instead of the required four. But preferable to the retention and emendation of this line is the rejection of it as an insertion. Van Hoonacker, vocalizing *'omer* as *'āmar*, takes the clause to be a comment upon the term *bow*, translating it, *he* (or *it*) *means sworn tribes* (i.e. the tribes of Israel confederated by an oath); and supposes it to have originated with some reader who had in mind Zech. ix. 13 (where God is represented as using Judah as His bow). But with much greater plausibility H. St J. Thackeray has suggested that the three words constituting the line are only catch-words, introduced as clues to enable a reader to find certain Lessons used in the Synagogue services. The First Lesson (called the *Parāshāh*) was taken from the Law, and the Second (the *Haphtārah*) was chosen from the Prophets. In the Synagogue Lectionary part of this chapter formed the Second Lesson for the Feast of Weeks, and corresponding to it were three from the Law, one being used each year in a triennial cycle of Lessons. These Lessons (it is believed) were indicated by the three words forming the second line of this verse, for the first of them, differently vocalized, can be read *Weeks* (*shābhūōth*) and so can designate Deut. xvi. 9-12, whilst the second and third, *Rods* and *Word*, refer respectively to Num. xvii. 1-9 and Gen. xii. 1-8. (See H. St John Thackeray, *The LXX and Jewish Worship*, p. 51.)

Thou didst cleave, etc. Better, *Thou dost cleave* (or *scoop*) *the earth into rivers* for the construction cf. 1 Kg. xi. 30), i.e. the deluges of rain, accompanying the thunder-storm, fill the dry torrent-beds, cut fresh channels, and cause the underground springs to overflow: cf. Ps. lxxviii. 16.

10. *The mountains...afraid.* Better, *The mountains see thee* (exerting thy power) *and writhe*. The mountain ridges are personified, and their

The tempest of waters passed by:
 The deep uttered his voice,
 And lifted up his hands on high.

- 11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation;
 At the light of thine arrows as they went,
 At the shining of thy glittering spear.

quivering and rocking, as the thunder crashes among them, is described in language appropriate to human sufferers. For the effect of God's approach as here depicted cf. Ps. xviii. 7, lxviii. 8, xcvi. 5, civ. 32. In the Babylonian inscriptions a poet declares concerning the god Adad, "When Adad is angry, the earth shakes before him; great mountains are cast down before him" (*The Psalms*, p. 152).

passed by. Better, *passeth on* in its course. Nowack and Marti, in view of the similar passage in Ps. lxvii. 17 (which they regard as the original of this), propose to read *The clouds flood forth waters* (*zôrēmū mayim 'ābhōth* for *zerem mayim 'ābhar*).

The deep. The Hebrew term (*tēhōm*, LXX ἡ ἄβυσσος) properly denotes the primæval ocean under the earth (Gen. i. 2), corresponding to the Babylonian *Tiāmat*, the female monster personifying the chaos of waters existing prior to the creation of the orderly world (cf. Ps. civ. 6). Here, however, it is seemingly used of the waters of the Red Sea, just as it is employed, in Ezek. xxvi. 19, of those of the Mediterranean.

uttered his voice, etc. The roar of the sea, and its up-tossed waves, are likened to the cries and gestures of a man in anguish.

on high. The word thus rendered is unusual, and it has been proposed to read (the difference in Hebrew is slight) *And the sea lifteth up his hands*.

11. In this verse the quatrain is defective; and in the first line two lines have been fused together, for there is no conjunction between the words for *sun* and *moon*, and the verb is in the masculine singular (agreeing with *moon*). This suggests that some words have been lost, which, with *the sun*, composed the first line. The Greek mss cited on *ver.* 9 have two lines—*φῶς τὸ λαμπρὸν τοῦ ἡλίου ἐπέσχεν, τὸ δὲ φέγγος τῆς σελήνης ἐστάθη*; and the original represented by the first of these may have signified, *The sun withdraweth its light*. But a more plausible conjecture (since it accounts for the disappearance of the missing words) is that the original line was, *The sun forgetteth his rising*; for the resemblance subsisting between the two Hebrew words here supplied (*nāshēthāh* and *nāzērah*) and the neighbouring words *lifteth up* (*nāsā'*, *ver.* 10) and *moon* (*yārēah*) may have occasioned the omission of the former pair. Either of these emendations furnishes an appropriate parallel to *The moon standeth still in her habitation*. (In Ps. xix. 4 the sun is similarly represented as having a *tent*.) The import of the two lines, prosaically expressed, is that the luminaries do not shine because the sky is obscured by storm-clouds.

At the light, etc. The rendering of the R.V. implies that the absence

- 12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation,
 Thou didst thresh the nations in anger.
- 13 Thou ¹wentest forth for the salvation of thy people,
²For the salvation of thine anointed;
³Thou ⁴woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked,
 Laying bare the foundation even unto the neck. [Selah]

¹ Or, art come² Or, For salvation (or victory) with thine anointed³ Or, Thou didst smite off the head from the house &c.⁴ Or, hast wounded

of the sun and moon was due to fear of the lightnings. But perhaps a preferable translation is, *For light* (LXX εἰς φῶς) *thine arrows go abroad, For brightness* (LXX εἰς φέγγος) *the lightning of thy spear*, the meaning being that, though the sun and moon are obscured by the clouds, the brilliance of the lightning-flashes is a sufficient substitute (cf. *ver.* 4). For the metaphorical use of *lightning* in connection with the glancing of a weapon, cf. Deut. xxxii. 41 mg.; Nah. iii. 3 (Heb.); Job xx. 25 (Heb.); Ezek. xxi. 15, and Hom. *Il.* xi. 83, χαλκοῦ στεροπήν.

12. *Thou didst march through.* Better, *Thou marchest* (or *stridest*) *over*: cf. Jud. v. 4; Ps. lxxviii. 7.

the land. Better, *the earth* (as the parallel line and the context suggest).

didst thresh. Literally, *dost trample* (Job xxxix. 15), since the threshing of corn was sometimes effected by driving oxen over it, as it lay on the floor, until the grain became separated from the chaff (Deut. xxv. 4). For the figurative use of the verb cf. Mic. iv. 13; Is. xli. 15; 2 Kg. xiii. 7.

13. This verse gives the answer to the question asked in *ver.* 8. The Lord's anger, which finds reflection in the fury of the storm, is directed not against the physical world but against the enemies of His people (whom He comes to deliver).

Thou wentest forth. Better, *Thou goest forth* in a campaign.

For the salvation. Better, *To save* (the correction being required by the Hebrew construction): the LXX and Symmachus both have τοῦ σώσαι.

thine anointed. This may designate (a) a king of Judah (cf. Lam. iv. 20); (b) the collective Judæan people (cf. Ps. xxviii. 8, lxxxiv. 9 (10), lxxxix. 38, 51); (c) the High Priest (cf. Dan. ix. 26). If the poem is pre-exilic in origin, the first identification is the most probable; if post-exilic, the second.

Thou woundedst, etc. In this and the next line there is some incongruity between certain of the terms used. The word *foundation* is only appropriate to a building (in a literal or a figurative sense), the summit of which (denoted by *the head*) God is about to shatter. On the other hand, *the neck* suggests that *the head* is to be understood of a person (in an individual or a representative sense) who is to be utterly destroyed. The difficulty of the passage is further increased by the fact that the metre is irregular. Both import and metre are improved if the couplet is

14 Thou ¹didst pierce with his own staves the head of his
²warriors:

They came as a whirlwind to scatter me:

Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.

¹ Or, *hast pierced*

² Or, *hordes* Or, *villages*

corrected so as to yield the rendering, *Thou smitest the house of the wicked, Thou layest bare the foundation unto the rock* (i.e. the ground beneath the structure): the difference between the Hebrew words for *neck* and *rock* is inconsiderable. If the poem is not by Habakkuk, it is impossible to conjecture who was originally meant by *the wicked*; but whoever attached the ode to the preceding part of the book must have intended the term to be understood of the Chaldeans (cf. i. 4, 13).

14. *with his own staves*. The present Hebrew text suggests that the enemies of the Jews, in a spirit of infatuation occasioned by God, turn their weapons against one another (cf. 2 Ch. xx. 1-30; Zech. xiv. 13); but there is nothing in the context to support this, and the Greek cursives previously cited favour the correction *with thy staves*. The word rendered *staves* denotes elsewhere an implement or weapon for inflicting a beating (Is. ix. 4, xiv. 5), not a stab; but see *ver.* 9.

the head of his warriors. The metre would be better preserved if the word (*of*) *his warriors* were transferred to the next line, and this line were reduced to *Thou dost pierce with thy staves his head*.

his warriors, etc. If the Hebrew substantive is rightly translated in the R. V. (following the Vulgate *bellatores*), the second line of the couplet will be, *His warriors storm along to scatter me*. The LXX translates it by *δυνασταί*, perhaps in the sense of "leaders." But the correctness of such renderings is doubtful, since with the Hebrew terms here used (*perez* or *pārāz*) three other words seem closely allied, namely, *pērāzāh*, *pērāzī*, and *pērāzōn*, meaning respectively *open country* (Ezek. xxxviii. 11; Zech. ii. 8 = Heb. ii. 4), *hamlet-dwellers* (Deut. iii. 5; 1 Sam. vi. 18), and *peasantry* (Jud. v. 7). Possibly, therefore, *perez* denotes unorganized *hordes* (cf. *mg.*).

Their rejoicing, etc. This line is not only difficult in itself, for the expression *Their rejoicing was as to devour*, instead of *was to devour*, is unnatural (the metaphorical sense of *devour* is not rare, see Prov. xxx. 14; Ps. xxvii. 2, etc.), but also lacks a second line (completing the couplet). Various emendations have been proposed for improving and supplementing it; but any correction must be purely conjectural. Of the suggestions offered Marti's *'ālāh tšēbhā'am* (*their host comes up*) for *'ālātsūthām* (*their rejoicing*) seems to deserve consideration; whilst it may be suggested that the particle *cēmō* (*as*) should be replaced by *cē mayim* (*like waters*): the couplet thus restored will then be, *Their host comes up like water, To devour the poor secretly* (or *in a secret place*, cf. Ps. lxiv. 4). For the comparison of an advancing host to an advancing tide cf. Is. viii. 7, xvii. 12, 13. By *the poor* (better, *the afflicted*) are

15 Thou ¹didst tread the sea with thine horses,
The ²heap of mighty waters.

16 I heard, and my belly trembled,
My lips quivered at the voice;
Rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in my
place:

¹ Or, *hast trodden*

² Or, *surge*

meant the Jewish people, suffering from the oppression of some powerful adversary (cf. Is. xiv. 32, xxvi. 6).

15. *heap*. Of the two alternative renderings given in the R.V. text and mg., the latter is the better. But the LXX cursives 23, 62, 86, 147 have a verb, ἐραπάχθη τὰ ἰξάλισα ὑδάτα τῆς ἀβύσσου; and it has been plausibly proposed to replace the present text by *surge* (or *foam*) *do the mighty waters* (cf. Ps. xlvi. 3, *be troubled*). The expression describes the effect produced upon the sea by Jehovah's movements over it.

This verse appears to be out of place, for the poet has finished his description of Jehovah's advance, and has explained the purpose of the same (*ver.* 13), and the encounter with the foe (*ver.* 14): it should probably be arranged after *ver.* 7 (see p. 202). Stonehouse, however, seeks to justify the retention of it in its present position by changing *bayyām* (*on the sea*) to *bām* (*on them*, the foes of *ver.* 14), and by prefixing to the noun *surge* a letter (*ce*) similar to the final consonant of the preceding word (the resemblance would explain its loss): he then translates, *Thou didst* (*dost*) *tread them with thine horses, Like the surging of many waters.*

16. The account of the theophany ends at *ver.* 15, and the first half of the present verse, which should consist of two couplets, gives utterance to the feelings of the poet who witnesses it. In spite of the fact that Jehovah's march is directed against His people's enemies, the scene, displaying as it does the Divine power, overawes and terrifies the spectator of it (cf. Ex. xv. 15; Is. xxi. 3). By the Hebrews the seat of the feelings was conceived otherwise than by ourselves, and the effects of emotion were described in phrases not the same as ours. Thus in the present passage *belly* corresponds to our *bosom* (cf. Job xv. 35)¹: the *lips* include what is covered by them (so that the quivering of the lips is equivalent to the chattering of the teeth); the term *voice* describes the pealing thunder (Job xxxvii. 4); and *rottenness* in the bones denotes physical collapse (such as is apt to follow extreme mental distress (Prov. xiv. 30;

¹ The use in Hebrew of *beten*, "belly," for the seat of the feelings or intentions, or for the feelings and intentions themselves, finds an interesting parallel in the employment by sixteenth-century English writers of the word *stomach* in the same sense. In the *Paston Letters* occurs the phrase "I have doon my devoyr to know my lady Walgraves stomacke" (quoted by Weekley, *More Words Ancient and Modern*, p. 102).

That I should rest ¹in the day of trouble,
²When it cometh up against the people ³which invadeth
 him in troops.

¹ Or, waiting for

² Or, When he that shall invade them in troops cometh up against the people

³ Or, to invade them

Jer. xxiii. 9)). The second couplet is not quite complete, the second line being a word short; and since the first word in the next line yields very poor sense where it occurs, it has been suggested that it should be slightly emended (*yirgēzu 'ashūrai* being substituted for *'ergāz 'āsher*) and transposed to the end of the previous line, where *in my place* should be changed to *underneath me* (the literal sense of the Hebrew word). The quatrain, idiomatically rendered, will then be, *I hear, and my bosom throbbeth, My teeth chatter at the thunder-peal, My bodily strength collapseth, And my steps totter under me.*

That I should rest, etc. This part of the verse is exceedingly obscure. If the introductory *that* be transferred to the previous line (see above), the opening words become an affirmation, asserting the speaker's confidence (in spite of his agitation) that deliverance will not fail to reach him. There are, however, several difficulties and uncertainties in detail. (a) The phrase translated *in the day of trouble* may mean *for the day of trouble*; (b) the *trouble* may be in store either for Judah or for its enemies; (c) the pronoun *him* has no antecedent to which it can with confidence be referred. If, instead of *him*, there be substituted *me* (a correction confirmed by the LXX), the translation, involving a minimum of textual change, is, *I will wait patiently for the day of trouble* (i.e. of Nemesis), *when it cometh up against the people that troopeth upon me.* (For the use of the verb *to come up* (*'ālāh*) in connection with a *day* cf. the employment of the same verb to describe the rising of the sun, 1 Sam. ix. 26 (Heb.); and for the verb *to troop upon* cf. Gen. xlix. 19; Ps. xciv. 21 (Heb.)). But if it is felt that there is not sufficient justification for the rendering *I will wait* (patiently) *for*, the alternative is to omit, with Marti, the preposition before *the people* (it may be due to the occurrence of the same letter at the beginning of the preceding word), and to translate, *I will rest* (i.e. lay aside fear) *in the day of trouble* (i.e. in the day of distress threatening Israel from its enemies) *when the people that troopeth upon me cometh up.*

17-19. At the conclusion of *ver.* 16 the situation presumed in *vv.* 2-16 is replaced by another which is almost certainly different. In the previous fifteen verses the calamity from which deliverance is entreated (*ver.* 2) is invasion by a human foe (*vv.* 14, 16), whereas here it is the destruction of vegetation and consequent scarcity, due to some natural cause, such as drought (for there is nothing to suggest that the loss of crops and cattle is occasioned by the depredations of an invading army); and hence the lack of connection between the foregoing verses and these favours the inference that the latter are an addition derived from an

- 17 For though the fig tree shall not blossom,
 Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
 The labour of the olive shall fail,
 And the fields shall yield no meat;
 The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
 And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
- 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
 I will joy in the God of my salvation.
- 19 Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,
 And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
 And will make me to walk upon mine high places.

extraneous source and subjoined to the earlier poem, which may have seemed to lack a proper conclusion.

The metre of the passage consists mainly of trimeters, varied by occasional dimeters.

17. *For though*. Better, *Though* (without the conjunction), as in Ex. xiii. 17; Jer. xlix. 16*b*; Hos. xiii. 15.

shall not blossom. The verb means literally *to bud*. The LXX, however, has *bear fruit*, which is favoured by the parallel clause. This and the other verbs in the verse are best translated by present tenses.

fruit. Better, *increase* (Lev. xxvi. 4).

The labour. Better, *The yield*.

fail. The verb means literally *to deceive, disappoint*; and occurs in this sense in Hos. ix. 2.

the fields. I.e. the cornfields (Is. xvi. 8, where the plural noun is followed, as here, by a verb in the singular). The LXX cursives 27, 62, 86, 147 have ἡ γῆ.

shall yield. Better, *produce*.

meat. Better, *food* (cf. LXX βρωσῶν), the term including cereals as well as flesh.

18. *I will rejoice*, etc. The speaker, representing his countrymen, expresses the cheerful confidence, which, in spite of the pressure of adversity, they still repose in Jehovah. (In the Hebrew the pronoun is emphatic.) The language finds a parallel in Ps. xiii. 5.

the God of my salvation. The same or a corresponding phrase occurs in Ps. xviii. 46, xxv. 5; Is. xvii. 10; Mic. vii. 7.

19. *the Lord is my strength*. An equivalent declaration occurs in Ps. xviii. 32 (where *might* represents the same word as *strength* does here).

like hinds' feet. The agility and speed of a hind were in ancient times useful qualities for a warrior to possess (cf. Ps. xviii. 33). The "compendious" comparison (literally, *like hinds*) can be illustrated by Is. xxix. 4 (Heb.) lxiii. 2 (Heb.); Jer. l. 9 (Heb.).

make me to walk. Better, *make me to tread*, the word used being the causative form of the verb occurring in *ver.* 15.

upon mine high places. I.e. (if the text is sound) the hills of Judah:

For the Chief Musician, on my stringed instruments.

cf. Ps. xviii. 33. The implication of the passage probably is that God will yet enable His people, in spite of their present distress and weakness, to traverse their own country securely, unmolested by their enemies. But the possessive adjective is absent from the LXX, and may be an accidental duplication of the initial letter of the next word: if so, the import of the passage is that God's people will gain the upper hand over their foes. The LXX cursives, cited above, take the expression figuratively in this sense, substituting for it ἐπὶ τοὺς τραχήλους τῶν ἐχθρῶν μου.

For the Chief Musician. Better, *Belonging to the Director* (of the Temple Music). The phrase, which occurs in the title of fifty-four psalms (Pss. v., vi., viii., ix., etc.), seems to imply that the compositions to which it is prefixed formed part of a collection of poetical writings used in the services of the Second Temple, and distinguished as that of the Superintendent of the Choir (who was perhaps also leader of the orchestra, 1 Ch. xv. 21), in contrast to other collections that were entitled *David's*, *Asaph's*, etc. But the word here translated *Director* was not confined to an official in charge of the Temple Choir; see 1 Ch. xxiii. 4; 2 Ch. ii. 2; Ezra iii. 8, 9, where it is applied to persons entrusted with the oversight of various undertakings.

on my stringed instruments. The possessive adjective, if a genuine part of the text, must refer to the collective people, constituting the worshippers in the Temple (cf. Is. xxxix. 20, *my songs*). But the analogy of the corresponding phrase in the heading of several psalms (iv., vi., liv., lv., etc.) suggests that the true reading is *upon stringed instruments*. The instruments used in the Temple services included strings (lyres, harps), wind instruments (pipes, horns, trumpets) and percussion instruments (drums, timbrels): see *EB.* col. 1927.

In the Psalter information about a particular psalm is regularly furnished in a *superscription*. The occurrence of a *subscription* is quite exceptional; and it is most probable that where such is found, as is the case here, it really belongs to the psalm which, in the collection from which there has been borrowing, followed next (where it would occupy the customary place at the beginning of the poem).

TRANSLATION

HABAKKUK

The following translation is made from an emended text. Lines or verses that are inserted or transposed are enclosed between *pointed* brackets. Where lines or clauses are omitted, their position is marked by *square* brackets. Where emendations of one or more words have been adopted, they are placed between asterisks.

The Sources from which the various parts of the book proceed are indicated by letters in the margin.

E = Editor
H = Habakkuk
Q = Quotation from an earlier prophecy
S = Supplemental
Ps¹ = First Psalmist
Ps² = Second Psalmist

I

- E 1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.
H 2 How long, O Jehovah, have I cried, and thou hearest not?
I call out to thee, "Violence," and thou deliverest not.
3 Why causest thou me to see trouble? and lookest upon mischief?
[] Destruction and violence are before me; [] strife and contention [].
4 Therefore instruction is paralyzed, and judgement never issueth:
Because *wickedness* envelopeth the righteous, therefore judgement issueth perverted.
Q 5 See ye among the nations, and look, and be astounded with wonder:
For (I) work a work in your days, which ye would not believe if it were told you.
6 For behold I raise up the Chaldeans,
That fierce and impetuous nation;
That go through the expanses of the earth,
To take possessions not their own.
7 Terrible and dreadful are they;
From themselves proceed their decisions and dignity.
8 And their horses are swifter than leopards,
And are keener than evening wolves:
Their horsemen, their horsemen gallop,
They come from afar, they fly;
Like a vulture hasting to devour,
9 All of them come for violence.
The straining of their faces is forward;
And they gather captives like the sand.

- 10 And it is they that scoff at kings,
And potentates are a laughing-stock to them;
And it is they that laugh at every fortress,
And they heap up dust and take it.
- 11 Then they sweep by like a wind and pass on,
And they make this their strength their god.
- H 12 Art not thou from everlasting, O Jehovah?
My Holy God, we shall not die.
O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgement,
And, O Rock, thou hast established him for correction.
- 13 Thou art too pure of eyes to see evil,
And thou canst not look upon mischief.
Why lookest thou upon the treacherous in silence,
When the wicked swalloweth him that is more righteous than he?
- 14 And makest mankind like the fishes of the sea,
And like crawling things that have no ruler over them?
- 15 All of them he draweth up with his hook,
And sweepeth them with his net,
And gathereth them in his trawl;
Therefore he is glad and rejoiceth.
- 16 Therefore he sacrificeth to his net,
And burneth incense to his trawl;
For by these his portion is fat,
And his food is rich.
- 17 Shall he therefore *unsheath his sword* continually,
To slay nations without sparing?

II

- 1 Upon my post I will stand;
And will station myself upon a tower;
And I will look out to see what he will speak by me,
And what *he will respond* concerning my plea.
- 2 And Jehovah answered me and said:
Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets,
That he that readeth therein may do so fluently.
- 3 For the vision is still for the appointed time,
And it panteth towards the end, and will not fail.
If it lingereth, wait for it;
For it will surely come, it will not loiter.
- 4 "Behold *he collapseth* whose soul is not upright in him;
But the righteous by his steadfastness shall live."
- 5 And much more *a tyrant*, a treacherous dealer,
A haughty man, shall fail to abide;
Who enlargeth, like Hades, his appetite,
And like Death is he, and hath not enough.
And he gathereth to himself all the nations,
And collecteth to himself all the peoples.

- 6 Shall not all these take up against him a taunt-song,
 A satire, even enigmatic sayings, about him?
 And they shall say:
 Ha! He that multiplieth what is not his—how long?
 And ladeth himself with a load of pledges.
- 7 Shall not biters of thee rise up suddenly,
 And shall not shakers of thee awake?
 And thou shalt be for spoil to them
 (Because them thou hast despoiled.)
- 8 For thou hast plundered many nations,
 And all the residue of the peoples shall plunder thee;
 S? Because of the blood of men, and violence done to the
 earth,
 To the city, and to all that dwell therein.
- H 9 Ha! He that acquireth ill-gotten gain (for himself),
 (That treasureth) evil for his house,
 To place his nest on high,
 To deliver himself from the grasp of evil.
- 10 Thou hast devised shame for thy house,
 *Thou hast cut off * many peoples. []
- 11 For the stone from the wall shall call out,
 And the beam from the timber-work shall answer it.
- S? 12 Ha! He that buildeth a town by bloodshed,
 And constructeth a city by iniquity.
- 13 Is not *this* from Jehovah of Hosts?—
 The peoples shall labour for the fire,
 And the populations shall toil for nought;
- 14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory
 of Jehovah,
 Like the waters that cover the sea.
- H 15 Ha! He that causeth his neighbour to drink *from his bowl*,
 From his wine-skin, and moreover maketh him drunk,
 In order to look upon their nakedness,
 ()
- 16 Thou art sated with shame instead of glory;
 Thou, too, must drink and show thyself uncircumcised.
 The cup [] must come round to thee;
 And shame shall be upon thy glory.
- 17 For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee,
 And the destruction of the beasts *shall scare thee*;
 Because of the blood of men, and violence done to the earth,
 To the city and to all that dwell therein.
- S (19 Ha! He that saith to a stock, "Awake, arise!"
 Of a dumb stone, "This shall teach."
 Behold it is encased in gold and silver,
 But there is no breath at all within it.
- 18) What doth a graven image profit,
 That its fashioner graveth it?

- The molten image and the teacher of lies,
That *its fashioner* trusteth in it? []
E 20 But Jehovah is in his holy temple:
Keep silence before him, all the earth.

III

- E 1 The prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. To the accompaniment
of changing melodies.
- Ps¹ 2 Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee,
I have seen, Jehovah, thy work;
In the midst of years revive it,
In the midst of years *make thyself known*.
[]
- 3 God cometh from Teman,
And the Holy One from the highland of Paran:
His splendour covereth the heavens,
And his radiance filleth the earth.
- 4 Brightness like the light *is under him*,
He hath rays at his side;
(He maketh darkness his covering),
And the hiding-place of his power is there.
- 5 Before him goeth Pestilence,
And Fever-heat followeth at his heels:
He standeth, and shaketh the earth;
He looketh, and startleth the nations.
- 6 The ancient mountains are shattered;
The primæval hills sink down.
- 7 *Thou affrightest the tents of Cushan*;
The curtains of Midian tremble.
- (15) Thou treadest the sea with thy horses,
The mighty waters foam.
- 8 Is Jehovah incensed against *the mountains*
(Hath he indignation against the hills?)
Is thy anger against the rivers?
Is thy wrath against the sea?
That thou ridest upon thy horses,
In thy chariots in triumph?
- 9 Thy bow is stripped quite bare;
[]
Into rivers thou cleavest the earth:
- 10 The mountains see thee, and writhe;
The clouds pour forth waters:
The deep uttereth its voice;
The sea uplifteth its hands.
- 11 The sun (forgetteth its rising);
The moon standeth still in its habitation:

- For light do thy arrows go abroad;
For brightness the lightning of thy spear.
- 12 In indignation thou marchest over the earth;
In anger thou threshest the nations:
- 13 Thou goest forth for the deliverance of thy people,
To deliver thine anointed.
- 14 Thou smitest [] the house of the wicked;
Thou layest bare the foundation unto *the rock*.
Thou piercest with *thy* staves his head;
His hordes storm along to scatter me.
Their host cometh up like waters
To devour the poor secretly.
- 16 I hear, and my belly trembleth;
At the thunder-peal my lips tingle:
Rottenness entereth into my bones;
My steps tremble under me.
I will rest in the day of trouble,
When the people cometh up that troopeth upon me.
- Ps^s 17 Though the fig tree doth not bear fruit;
And there is no increase in the vines:
The yield of the olives faileth;
And the fields produce not food:
The flock is cut off from the fold;
And there are no cattle in the stalls:
- 18 Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah;
I will joy in the God of my deliverance.
- 19 Jehovah the Lord is my strength;
And hath made my feet like hinds',
And he enableth me to tread upon *high places*.
The Director's: *On stringed instruments*.

vv. 17-19. These verses are incorporated in a poem (by A. L. Barbauld) commencing, "Praise to God, immortal praise":

"Yet should rising whirlwinds tear
From its stem the ripening ear;
Should the fig-tree's blasted shoot
Drop her green untimely fruit;
Should the vine put forth no more,
Nor the olive yield her store;
Though the sickening flocks should fall,
And the herds desert the stall;

Yet to Thee my soul should raise
Grateful vows and solemn praise,
And when every blessing's flown,
Love Thee for Thyself alone."

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