THE

PRINCETON REVIEW.

JANUARY, 1855.

No. I.

ART. I.—*Remarks on the Studies and Discipline of the Preacher.*

THE habits of a young minister, in respect to mental culture, are very early formed, and hence no one can begin too soon to regulate his closet-practice by maxims derived from the true philosophy of mind, and the experience of successful scholars. Early introduction to active labour, in an extended field, partaking of a missionary and itinerant character, may, amidst much usefulness, spoil a man for life, in all that regards progress of erudition, and productiveness of the reasoning powers. Such a person may accomplish much in the way of direct and proximate good; but his fruit often dies with him, and he does little in stimulating, forming, and enriching the minds of others. On the other hand, a zealous young scholar, captivated with the intellectual or literary side of ministerial work, may addict himself to books in such a manner as to sink the preacher in the man of learning, and spend his days without any real sympathy with the affectionate duties of the working clergy. The due admixture of the contemplative with the active, of learning with labour, of private cultivation with public spirit, is a *juste milieu* which few attain, but which cannot be too earnestly recommended.

tone in dealing with so momentous a subject. We would only, in reply to all this, refer to the knowledge, or rather ignorance of God which men possess and ever have possessed, where they are not enlightened, directly or indirectly, by divine revelation; to the words of Paul, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made*, EVEN HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD;" to the words of Christ, TAKE THE YOKE AND LEARN OF ME; to the fact that Christ and he crucified is the "one central principle" of every tolerable system of Christian theology. These men seem to forget that whatever ideas may belong to the human mind, they are in it only potentially, until developed into activity and consciousness, by contact with the external world and objective truth in all the processes of training and culture; that if they carry the reaction from sensationalism so far as to disparage sources of light outside of the mind's own self-affirmations, they will prepare the way for a rebound to that excessively outward, sensational, and debasing system, from which philosophy has just emerged.

ART. VI.—**Nahum's Prophecy concerning Nineveh, explained and illustrated from Assyrian Monuments*, by Otto Strauss. Berlin and London. 1853. 8vo. pp. 136.

GERMAN commentators have been very unequal, and even capricous, in the amount of attention respectively devoted to the different books of Scripture. The influence of fashion has been as marked in this as in less important matters. A few of the more adventurous lead the way, while the general throng are content to follow in their footsteps. Some portions of the Bible have been examined with the most laborious minuteness. Not only every shade of reasonable or possible exposition, but every variety of extravagant and absurd conjecture has been

* Nahumi de Nino vaticinium explicavit, ex Assyriis Monumentis illustravit Otto Strauss.

in turn propounded, defended, and impugned; and publications representing every different opinion have accumulated without end, until the very mention of another upon the exhausted and worn-out theme awakens sensations of disgust and weariness. If a hasty opinion were to be formed respecting the forward state of Biblical exposition from these few themes so unsparingly elaborated, one might judge that little room remained for the profitable expenditure of additional toil, that further explorations were superfluous, and that all future students of the Scriptures would have to content themselves with working up into new forms and combinations the materials already fully furnished to their hands. But the labours of recent German commentators, of whom it is that we now speak, have been at the greatest remove from an even distribution over the whole available surface. In some neglected spots, and these not barren and unproductive, but promising the largest return to him who shall till them with patient diligence and skill, the fallow ground lies almost untouched by the ploughshare.

It is remarkable that so considerable and important a portion of the prophetic writings as the twelve small treatises from Hosea to Malachi, from time immemorial bound together and regarded as one volume, should not have attracted more attention, or have been subjected to a more careful scrutiny by the scholars and critics to whom we refer. This undue neglect is attributable in part, no doubt, to the inconsiderable size of these compositions taken individually. It cannot be because they are deficient in interest or importance. There are difficulties and obscurities enough to attract the highest exegetical talent and skill, and to afford ample scope for their exercise. There are passages of a sufficiently rare sublimity and beauty to call forth the enthusiasm of the admirers of genius; while the results to be developed possess not only the value which in every case belongs to the discovery, elucidation, or confirmation of the true meaning of the inspired word, but must of necessity enter as elements into the settlement of many of the most important questions of Old Testament investigation. It may be expected that light will thus be thrown upon obscure or doubtful points of the sacred history, a new insight will be

gained into the true idea of Scripture prophecy and the proper method of its interpretation, and a fuller conception will be arrived at of the system of truth unfolded under the former dispensation, and particularly of the doctrine of the Messiah in the increasing clearness of its successive announcements.

The Minor Prophets have of course had a place assigned them in the more comprehensive class of expositions, such as those of Rosenmüller, Umbreit, Ewald, the Exegetical Manual conducted by Hitzig and others, and (better than the preceding, though still upon a rationalistic basis,) the grammatical and critical commentary of Maurer, which come upon them in course, while going over the whole Old Testament, or large portions of it. But there has been a surprising deficiency of able monographs, or special commentaries devoted to these books for the detailed settlement of their exposition, and the full and minute discussion of all the questions relating to them. The volume of Hesselberg upon the Minor Prophets (1838) is too trifling in size, and altogether too feeble and insignificant to meet the wants of the case. That of Ackermann, (1830,) is interesting from its constant comparison of the Vulgate, Septuagint, and other ancient versions, and from the condensed statement which it presents of the views of the earlier Roman Catholic expositors, but it contains nothing in the way of new and independent investigation. This deficiency has, however, at length made itself felt, and there seems now a fair prospect of its being supplied. Credner led the way in his commentary on Joel, (1831,) a work to which cannot be denied the praise of acuteness, philological ability, and extensive research. It will long be prized as a storehouse of valuable materials by the future students of Joel, but it is sadly vitiated by the extravagance of its hypotheses, and by unworthy views of inspiration and of the character of the prophets. Where an interpreter has no higher idea of religion than as a weak delusion, nor of a prophet than as a crafty and managing demagogue, he is utterly destitute of that sympathy with the inspired oracles, which, in their case, as in that of every intellectual product, must be acknowledged to be a prime requisite to successful exposition. Nor can the smaller and more recent volume of

Meier (1841) upon the same prophet, be regarded as in any respect an advance upon his predecessor.

The commentary on Amos by Gustavus Baur* of Giessen, (1847,) exhibits no very decided proofs of ability or of original talent, but is nevertheless a useful compilation, presenting a convenient *resumé* of the views of previous expositors. This book is governed by a higher tone of religious sentiment than either of the preceding, though it is still far from what it ought to be. Baur has adopted his views of prophecy and of the prophets from Ewald, and the long dissertation upon this subject with which his book is prefaced, might as well have been superseded by a simple reference to the discussion of the latter, whose ideas he has borrowed without essential modification, certainly without improvement.

The commentary on Hosea by Simson, (1851,) the only publication of its author of whose existence we have any knowledge, is not only vastly in advance of the nearly worthless production of Stuck, (1828,) but is entitled to a distinguished place among the helps for the right understanding of this part of Scripture. Had its author been, what unfortunately he is not, a believer in divine inspiration in its true and orthodox sense, his exposition would have been nearly all that could have been desired. His high and enthusiastic admiration of Hosea's genius, and of the loftiness of his sentiments and aims, his respect even for his divine commission, which in a certain sense, involving nothing supernatural either in his call or his endowments he repeatedly asserts, prevent that belittleing of his subject, that suspicion of unworthy motives, that mangling of the book by the knife of an unsparing criticism, and that torturing of its sense by an ingeniously perverted exegesis, which are almost sure to be found in interpreters out of sympathy with that which they profess to expound. Far the larger portion of this commentary might be read without meeting with anything to betray the unsound theological tenets of its author. In a very few instances, and only where there is a concurrence of several ancient versions against the Hebrew, he departs from the generally received text. In almost every

* Not to be confounded with Bruno Bauer, infamous from his treatment of the Gospels, nor with the subtle and distinguished skeptic F. C. Baur, of Tübingen.

case he stoutly maintains its correctness, and evinces not only candour and ingenuousness, but uncommon skill and ability in the investigation even of the most perplexed passages. In a book containing so many difficulties and obscurities as Hosea, it is not, perhaps, to be expected that the views of any expositor will prove satisfactory upon every point. But even where the reader is disposed to dissent from Simson's own opinion, he is provided with the materials for making up an independent judgment in the history of interpretation, which is given in all disputed passages: and from this carefully digested statement of the principal views of commentators and translators, Jewish and Christian, ancient and modern, with the grounds upon which they respectively rest, he may intelligently make his own selection.

Caspari, as our readers know, has furnished valuable expositions, and of a decidedly evangelical cast, of Obadiah, (1842,) and of Micah (1851:) only the amazing diffuseness of the latter upon unimportant and subsidiary points, and its sadly confused arrangement, detract from its excellence, and from the comfort of using it. The commentary of his friend and former associate Delitzsch on Habakkuk, (1843,) stands in the very front rank of these monographs for ability, originality, and soundness of exposition. Two brothers of the name of Strauss, (unconnected in family or in views with David Frederic Strauss, of mythical notoriety,) possessing evangelical sentiments, very considerable learning, and a fair proportion of exegetical ability, have written, one the volume before us upon Nahum, and the other, (F. A. Strauss, scarcely the equal of his younger brother,) upon Zephaniah (1843.) A commentary upon this latter book was also promised by Delitzsch ten years ago, but has not yet made its appearance. Hengstenberg, besides commenting upon selected portions of the Minor Prophets, has, in his Christology, a second edition of which is now passing through the press, expounded Zechariah throughout. And a fresh exposition of at least the first part of this book, under the title of the Night Visions of Zechariah, is in course of publication, from the pen of Baumgarten, favourably known from his other productions, particularly his commentary on the Pentateuch, and his treatise on the Acts of the Apostles. We

took up his work on Zechariah with avidity, as there are few transatlantic scholars whose views we were more anxious to see upon this enigmatical portion of Scripture, but were disappointed to find its prolixity such as to make it almost unreadable.

Those parts of the Scripture which relate to Nineveh have of late gained additional interest from the astonishing discoveries recently made upon the site of this queen city of the ancient world. The exhumation of its palaces, with their sculptures and inscriptions, has set us face to face, as it were, with generations, every vestige of which had been supposed to have perished more than twenty centuries ago; and it has naturally awakened a fresh zeal in the examination of all sources, sacred and profane, whence anything could be gathered touching the civilization, the history and the fortunes of the Assyrian empire. And on the other hand, the students of the Scriptures are turning to these exhumations with equal interest, to discover what these records so marvellously snatched from destruction may contain newly to confirm or to elucidate the sacred volume. Strauss has devoted himself diligently to this side of his subject; and everything in the researches of modern times, no less than in the statements of ancient writers, which bears upon the interpretation or the verification of Nahum's prophecy, has been carefully gathered and compared. The names of Rich, Botta, Flandin, Layard, Rawlinson, Hincks, Bonomi, Vaux, and others well known from their researches or their publications upon Assyrian affairs, are of frequent occurrence in this volume. Several interesting coincidences are pointed out between the sculptured scenes found amid these ruins and the language of the prophet. Much more sparing use is made of the inscriptions, whose true reading and genuine sense must still be considered as in a great measure doubtful, although the marvellous advances already made toward their decipherment and interpretation give reason to hope that full success may yet crown the efforts put forth in that direction. And what results may then be developed for the restoration of the history of that long buried empire, and the corroboration of the exactness of scriptural statement, it is impossible now to conjecture. The caution observed by our author upon this

point, in the present incipiency of our knowledge upon this subject, is eminently judicious. It is hardly possible that the inscriptions still existing in Nineveh can be read without throwing some light upon its history, as its sculptures have already done upon its civilization and customs; especially if that chamber piled full of terra cotta tablets, upon which Mr. Layard was so fortunate as to light in a state of perfect preservation, should prove to be, as has been conjectured, but is almost too good to hope for, the treasure-house of records referred to in Ezra v. 17, in which all royal decrees were placed for safe-keeping. Enough has already been made out of the monuments to ascertain that they will in all probability furnish us with the names of monarchs hitherto unknown, with the succession of their reigns, and perhaps some of the prominent events in which they took part. In the very fragmentary and imperfect state in which Assyrian history has come down to us, any new accession will be welcome, especially if it shall teach us how existing gaps are to be filled up, or shall give any hint as to the proper manner of piecing together those scraps which are already possessed. As Nineveh was destroyed two hundred years before the father of Greek history took up his pen, and its very name was unheard by Xenophon, though he led the retreat of the ten thousand past its site, it is not surprising that the notices left of it are of the most brief and scanty description. The histories of the Assyrian Empire by Herodotus (if, as is most probable, he actually wrote what he is known to have projected) and by Ctesias, which if preserved would no doubt have yielded ample, and to a great extent reliable materials, have both been unfortunately lost. And the few scattered fragments which have been preserved rather add to the complexity of the subject by the difficulty of reconciliation and adjustment, than afford any clear and satisfactory information. Possibly the monuments may assist in clearing up what is now so dark and obscure; though we fear the too extravagant expectations of some of the learned and sanguine explorers are not destined to be realized. That these relics, which, numerous and deeply interesting as they are, considering the previous paucity of such remains, must yet be an inconsiderable fragment of the ancient city, and that

not carefully selected with a view to its historic worth but casually preserved from plunder, the conflagration and the tooth of time, should contain a full and connected history of the empire, is surely too much to anticipate. At any rate, in the present uncertainty which shrouds the subject, it is precarious to rely with any confidence upon assumed identifications of the monarchs of the monuments with the monarchs of history, or even upon the correctness of the periods to which the ruins have been by ingenious and plausible arguments referred.

It is casting no reproach upon the most brilliant of the intellectual achievements of modern times, to say that the secrets of the mysterious arrow-headed character have been as yet but imperfectly disclosed. The only matter of astonishment is that anything whatever has been made of them, and that the enigma has yielded at all, notwithstanding the patience, the ingenuity, and the learning brought to bear upon them. The Greek on the Rosetta stone furnished a key to the Egyptian hieroglyphics, without which they might never have been resolved. But here was no such aid as this. It had been known from the days of Peter della Valle that strange and unintelligible characters were cut upon the face of the rocks in many parts of the old Persian empire, which from the peculiar shape of their constituent elements received the name of arrow-headed, or cuneiform. Similar inscriptions were found in the ruins of Persepolis. What might be the contents of these inscriptions, in case they were significant, what the language in which they were written, what the power of the individual characters, whether ideographic, syllabic, or alphabetic, or what even might be the direction in which they were to be read, no one knew. A more hopeless task than that of deciphering and translating under such circumstances cannot well be imagined. It was undertaken, however, and has to a wonderful extent been accomplished. A careful comparison revealed the fact that all the cuneiform inscriptions, though bearing a general and marked similarity, were nevertheless not written in the same character: that there were, in fact, three plainly distinguishable kinds, differing greatly in the complexity and the respective number of their written signs. The whole three were frequently found in parallel columns

upon the same rock, and it was from this circumstance conjectured that such inscriptions were trilingual, bearing the same legend in three different tongues. This has now been discovered actually to be the case: the Persian monarchs, in order that these public records might be read more widely by the subjects of their empire, causing them to be inscribed in the three languages which then divided its territory among them, in the same manner as their cognate representatives do now. Just as the Persian, Arabic, and Turkish are intermingled at present, so were tongues in a measure corresponding to these in the age of Cyrus, and in all probability these indicate the languages contained in the Persian, Assyrian, and Median or Scythic inscriptions, as they have been respectively termed.

Numberless abortive attempts had been made by the most eminent scholars, but there was no actual progress in deciphering the character until the year 1800. A few preliminary steps had been doubtfully taken, but all was as dark and mysterious as ever. It was then the good fortune of a young German scholar, with no great pretensions to oriental learning, but ingenious, and of untiring patience, to start from a fortunate conjecture, and to work out by means of it one-third of the alphabet. The discoverer was George F. Grotefend, at that time studying at the university of Bonn, and whose death was announced a year since. He addressed himself to the examination of the simplest of the three kinds of cuneiform writing. From the circumstance that the arrow-heads of which it was composed were always inclined in one direction, it was inferred that that was the direction of the writing. Tychsen had pointed out the sign which marked the division between words; and since as many as eleven characters were sometimes found between two such signs, Grotefend concluded that they must each represent, not a syllable, but a simple alphabetic sound. A careful inspection of some Persepolitan legends which he had before him, showed the frequent repetition of certain formulæ, accompanied now by one, now by another word. The constant terms he conjectured from the ordinary structure of oriental inscriptions to be royal titles, and the variable to be the names of the monarchs. He selected two of these assumed names, which stood so related,

that he judged them to be those of father and son. They were of equal length, each composed of seven letters, and, though having some characters in common, of different initials. As these inscriptions were known to belong to the period of the Achæmenides, the verification of his conjecture depended upon his finding two princes of that line whose names would answer these conditions. Cyrus and Artaxerxes were rejected as of unsuitable length; Cyrus and Cambyses from the sameness of their initial. Darius and Xerxes were chosen; and by recurring to the original mode of spelling, as nearly as that could be determined, they were adapted to the corresponding words in the inscription. With the letters thus conjecturally fixed, he proceeded to spell out the words of the title, *eghre khshehioh*, which he discovered to mean "great king" in the Zend or old Persian language. Every new trial served but to verify the conjecture which he had made, and to show that he had hit upon the beginning of a true solution. Many years of indefatigable research on the part of many able scholars, among whom Lassen of Bonn particularly distinguished himself, were needed to develope the system thus initiated, to justify completely its results, and to apply the needed correction, until now the whole alphabet has been ascertained with a satisfactory degree of certainty, and the contents of the inscriptions can be pretty accurately made out.

The Persian inscription could now be read; but the other two kinds remained as dark and inexplicable as ever. The next step was to make use of the key afforded by the former to unlock the mysteries of the latter. The second species of the arrow-headed character was now attempted, fortunately the very same as that since dug from the mounds at Nineveh; for the minor diversities and the divisions to which these have led, need not here be referred to. This Assyrian species is greatly more complicated than the preceding, and even with the aid afforded by its previous solution, the investigation has been encumbered with the most formidable difficulties, such as must have been absolutely insurmountable without this aid. Instead of the forty characters of the first species, it numbers upwards of six hundred, and it is still in dispute to what extent these are to be regarded as syllables, abbreviations, or ideo-

graphs. The Persian character of the trilingual inscriptions, which was now intelligible, fixed the spelling of the proper names in the Assyrian character, and determined throughout the general sense of the legend. The great multitude of the written signs, and the confused and arbitrary way in which they have the appearance of being sometimes used, together with the absence of marks in this species to determine the end of words, greatly complicated the problem, and embarrassed its solution. The highest honour must here be awarded to Col. Rawlinson, who, during his connection with the British army in the East, devoted himself with enthusiastic zeal to the deciphering and interpretation of the cuneiform monuments. With few aids, and in ignorance of much that had been done in Europe toward their solution, he succeeded in working out an independent alphabet for the first or Persian species, differing in but a single letter from that developed by Lassen. By the aid of a telescope he copied the Behistun (*Βαγίστανον ὄρος* of Diodorus Siculus) inscription, the greatness of whose elevation upon the perpendicular face of a precipice had defied the attempts of all previous travellers to reach or to examine it. Its long trilingual legend gave a most important clue for the study of the second or Assyrian species. It cannot be denied that this is far from being wholly disentangled yet. The power of many of its characters is well defined, and the meaning of a considerable number of words may be regarded as settled with tolerable certainty. That no small measure of perplexity yet remains may be inferred from the statements of Rawlinson himself,* that many of the Assyrian signs sometimes represent phonetically a complete syllable, and sometimes are only of the sounds of which the syllable is composed—nay, that certain characters represent two entirely dissimilar sounds—sounds so dissimilar that neither can they be brought into relation with each other, nor, even supposing the sign properly to denote a syllable, which syllable on occasion may be compressed into its dominant sound, will the other power be found to enter at all into the full and original pronunciation, while on the other hand, great numbers of charac-

* See his Commentary on the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria, pp. 5, 6.

ters have accorded to them precisely the same sound. Such "inconvenient laxity" is almost if not quite inconsistent with the idea of intelligible writing, and will undoubtedly be regarded by most persons as indicating a defect in the explanation, and as showing that the *ultimatum* is not thus far reached. Patient ingenuity may yet show how all this is to be explained, and may bring certainty where there is still much darkness and doubt. It is not wonderful that a subject so perplexed is not to be unravelled at once. We shall wait with much interest for the finished results. Meanwhile, in the present chaos of conflicting interpretations, it cannot with fairness be asked of us to rely with any great confidence upon the identifications assumed as already made out, when doctors so widely disagree that the name of the builder of the Khorsabad palace, which Rawlinson read successively Arkot-sin and Sargina, was by De Saulcy made out to be Esarhaddon, by Grotefend, Nabopolassar, and by Luzzato, Chyniladanus.

Abandoning, therefore, the inscriptions, as unable for the present at least to furnish any reliable information, we are thrown for our knowledge of Assyrian history upon a few passages incidentally referring to it in ancient writers. It is with the utmost difficulty that these fragmentary accounts are put together into anything like a consistent unity. And it is worth observing how different is the course pursued by historians in their patient endeavours to reconcile these perplexed statements, from the method which those adopt in relation to the Scriptures who are forward to charge upon them falsehood or inconsistency, upon the first appearance of the slightest difficulty. What can be ascertained regarding the origin and growth of the Assyrian empire does not here concern us, but only its final catastrophe, as that alone comes within the survey of the prophet. That Nineveh was one of the greatest cities of ancient times, scarcely excepting Babylon itself, we learn from the statements made of its magnificence and extent, and it is in fact apparent from the ruins themselves. Of its fall, the following account is given by Ctesias.* "Arbaces, a Mede, a valiant and prudent man, and general of the forces

* Preserved in Diodorus Siculus ii. 2: the quotation is abridged from Bonomi, "Nineveh and its Palaces," pp. 64, 65.

which were sent every year out of Media to Nineveh, was stirred up by Belesis the governor of Babylon to overthrow the Assyrian empire. Hereupon Arbaces prevailed with the Medes to invade the Assyrian empire, and drew the Persians, in hopes of liberty, to join in the confederacy. Belesis in like manner persuaded the Babylonians to stand up for their liberties. He sent messengers into Arabia, and gained that prince for a confederate. Sardanapalus, being informed of the revolt, led forth the forces of the rest of the provinces against them; whereupon, a battle being fought, the rebels were totally routed, and with a great slaughter were forced to the mountains, seventy furlongs from Nineveh. A second and a third battle were fought with like success. While Sardanapalus was rejoicing at these victories, and feasting his army, Arbaces induced the Bactrians to revolt, fell suddenly upon the king's camp, and making a great slaughter of some, forced the rest into the city. Hereupon Sardanapalus committed the charge of the whole army to the queen's brother, and took upon himself the defence of the city. But the rebels twice defeated the king's forces, and the king being afterwards besieged, many of the nations revolted to the confederates, so that Sardanapalus now perceiving that the kingdom was like to be lost, sent post into all the provinces of the kingdom in order to raise soldiers, and to make all other preparations necessary to endure a siege. And he was the more encouraged to this, for that he was acquainted with an ancient prophecy that Nineveh could never be taken by force till the river became the city's enemy. The siege continued two years. The third year it happened that the river, overflowing with continual rains, came up into a part of the city and tore down the wall twenty furlongs in length. The king hereupon conceiving that the oracle was accomplished, in that the river was an apparent enemy to the city, utterly despaired; and therefore, that he might not fall into the hands of his enemies, he caused a huge pile of wood to be made in his palace court, and heaped together upon it all his gold, silver, and royal apparel, and enclosing his eunuchs and his concubines in an apartment within the pile, caused it to be set on fire, and burnt himself and them together; which when the revolters came to understand, they entered through

the breach in the walls and took the city, and clothed Arbaces with a royal robe, and committed to him the sole authority, proclaiming him king."

The account given by Herodotus is that Deioces, the first independent king of the Medes, succeeded in subduing several surrounding nations under the Median yoke. After a reign of fifty-three years, he was succeeded by his son Phraortes, who subjected the Persians, and who in the twenty-second year of his reign made an unsuccessful incursion into Assyria, in which he perished with the greater part of his army. He was succeeded by his son Cyaxares, who proceeded with all his forces to the attack of Nineveh, being equally desirous of avenging his father and becoming master of the city. He vanquished the Assyrians in battle, but when he was engaged in the siege of Nineveh, he was surprised by an army of Scythians, who beat him in a pitched battle, gaining not only the victory but the empire of Asia. After a space of twenty-eight years, however, the Medes recovered their possessions, after which they took Nineveh.

Scholars have been divided as to the best mode of reconciling these accounts. One method is to suppose that Herodotus and Ctesias record two different events, which took place at distinct periods. There must then have been two successive Assyrian empires; the first overthrown by Arbaces about 800 B. C.; after which Nineveh rose again to its former splendour, the various kings reigned who are named in Scripture, Pul, Tiglath-Pileser, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon, and it was finally destroyed a second time, two hundred years later, by another Mede, Cyaxares. On this hypothesis, Nahum must have lived in the interval between the first and the second captures of Nineveh, and consequently it can be the second only which he predicts.

Strauss gives his suffrage with those who follow the opposite method, and who endeavour to harmonize the statements as descriptive of the same event. The different names given to the persons engaged in it need create no difficulty in the mind of him who has observed the transformation of other oriental names by Greek writers. The remaining diversity is explained by assuming both accounts, which were drawn from wholly

different sources, to be partial, each needing to be supplied from the other. Upon this hypothesis, it will be correct to illustrate the fulfilment of the prophecy by the account of Ctesias as well as by that of Herodotus. This is accordingly the course which our author pursues.

The year of Nineveh's overthrow has been variously fixed between the extremes of B. C. 625 and 597. Strauss adopts the opinion that it took place B. C. 606, for the following reasons. 1. Alexander Polyhistor relates that Nabopolassar, being sent by the last king of Nineveh to oppose the Medes under Astyages, (the same with Cyaxares,) contracted an alliance with him, and that Nineveh was attacked and overthrown by their united forces. Now as according to the canon of Ptolemy, Nabopolassar was in authority from B. C. 625 to 604, the fall of Nineveh must be placed somewhere between these limits. In 605 or 4 he was compelled by increasing age and infirmity to give up his army into the hands of his son Nebuchadnezzar, and he died the same year. 2. The capture of Nineveh is named by Herodotus among the last of the enterprises of Cyaxares. It must have succeeded his war with the Lydians, the close of which is determined by an eclipse of the sun noted at the time to have been B. C. 610. And as according to Ctesias the siege of Nineveh lasted three years, it cannot have been concluded before 606.

After this time Nineveh never flourished again. Strabo mentions it only as a ruined city. Xenophon, who in his famous retreat passed directly by the spot where Nineveh had once stood, does not even mention its name, and seems to have had no suspicion of the vicinity of the site of that once mighty city; he speaks of that part of the ruin now known as the Birs Nimroud, under the name of Larissa. Lucian, in the second century of the Christian era, declares that it had utterly perished, and its very site was unknown.

The meaning of the name *Nahum* is "he who comforts or is comforted," and Hengstenberg makes upon it the remark that he was consecrated to the God of comfort, as Hosea to the God of help, and Micah to the incomparable God. He is called the Elkoshite, to designate, not the family from which he sprang, (an opinion mentioned by Jerome and Cyril, and

adopted by Epiphanius,) but his birth-place. This is not to be identified with Elkosh, in the vicinity of Nineveh, of which mention is first made in the middle of the sixteenth century, where the tomb of Nahum is exhibited to the credulous, but according to Jerome's explicit testimony, was a place in Galilee, still existing in his own day, and which had been pointed out to him. The opinion of Knobel and Hitzig that it was the same place with Capernaum, (which signifies "the town of Nahum,") seems to be without foundation. Of the life and actions of the prophet, nothing is known; the legends regarding him are not worth repeating.

Our author supposes Nahum to have prophesied in the reign of Manasseh, during the brief captivity of that monarch. His principal arguments are the following. The position of this book in the collection of Minor Prophets, after Micah, and before Habakkuk and Zephaniah, indicates that it belongs somewhere between the first part of the reign of Hezekiah and that of Josiah. Nahum borrows expressions from Joel, Micah, and Isaiah, and is himself quoted by Jeremiah. The allusions in the prophecy to Sennacherib's expedition, i. 9, 12, and death, i. 14, the insulting language of Rabshakeh, ii. 13, and the power of Assyria yet unbroken, i. 12, agree with this assumed date. That no gross sins nor apostasy from God is charged upon the people, is alleged to point to such a time of affliction and repentance as the captivity of Manasseh. And the words i. 13, "I will burst thy bonds," are taken to be an allusion to the future deliverance of the captive king. Where the data are so few and of such doubtful character, it would be presumptuous to speak with confidence. But we confess that this view is less attractive to us than that which has been commonly received from the days of Jerome, that the prophecy of Nahum was delivered in the reign of Hezekiah, perhaps shortly after the disastrous invasion of Sennacherib.

The first chapter opens with a majestic description of Jehovah in the attributes about to be displayed in Assyria's overthrow, which is followed by a declaration of his settled purpose to accomplish its complete destruction. The effects of God's presence upon external nature, as depicted verses 4, 5, are conceived to be, not the natural phenomena of a storm, a

drought, or an earthquake, described in exaggerated terms; nor symbols of the overthrow of kingdoms; nor expressions borrowed by anticipation from the final judgment, and wrought into this description of an antecedent judgment, because this is viewed as indissolubly linked with that, both being parts of one all-comprehensive display of God's punitive justice; nor simply imaginary, the inward affright of the guilty being reflected in the world around, which seems to them, in their terror, to be on the point of dissolution; but they belong to the vision of the prophet, to whose mind such scenes were actually presented, and they indicate the glory of the divine Being, and the absolute control over all objects of nature which is at every moment possessed by him, even when not thus terrifically exerted.

This jealous, avenging, almighty, and yet gracious God, shall make an utter end of the oppressor of his people. "Affliction shall not rise up the second time," by which is understood, agreeably to the hypothesis adopted of the date of the prophecy, that the carrying away of Manasseh in chains by the Assyrians was the last affliction that the people of God should experience from that quarter.

The 15th verse commences the second chapter in the Hebrew text. Messengers are seen in the distance, bearing the welcome intelligence of the destruction of Nineveh, which is then represented as actually taking place under the eyes of the prophet. "He that dasheth in pieces," is not the Messiah, though he bears a name somewhat resembling it, Micah ii. 13, but the instrument of Nineveh's overthrow, the Chaldeans and Medes, though they are not specifically named. On the approach of these formidable foes, the king of Nineveh is urged to the most strenuous measures of defence. Such measures would be necessary, for Jehovah had resolved upon his people's exaltation, and by consequence upon their oppressor's fall. For the Lord is returning to [or restoring] the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel. He shall come back with his grace and power to them whom he seemed temporarily to have forsaken, and shall vindicate to Jacob the possession of those prerogatives and advantages which belong to them as God's Israel, his true and elect people. He would do this

because they had been so mercilessly abused, and their vine branches (the whole people is the vine, its individual members the branches, though the literal reference to the products of the ground need not be excluded,) had been marred. The military preparations of the besieging army are now vividly depicted. The reddened shields and scarlet-clad soldiery are capable of illustration from ancient customs, but here specially betoken the coming slaughter, and the wrath of God, of which they are the instruments. The chariots flash with steel, as their metallic ornaments and the weapons which they carry glitter in the sun—not chariots armed with scythes, as their employment, according to the positive testimony of ancient writers and the negative testimony of the monuments, belongs to a later date. The firs or cypresses (lances of that material) are shaken both from the motion of the car and brandished by the warrior. They are first seen in the distance, v. 3; then follow, with insane, lightning-like speed, their approach and the onset, v. 4. The besieged king shall remember his nobles, by whom seem to be here intended, not so much satraps commanding distant provinces whose aid he shall expect, as those in the city upon whom he can rely in this urgent extremity, for its defence. His reliance is vain; they shall stumble. They hasten to the wall, and the engine has been prepared—such a war machine as is seen repeatedly upon the monuments, a sheltering roof, beneath which battering-rams are plied against the wall. The gates opening upon the river and the artificial channels connected with it shall be opened; whether they shall be left open through negligence, as in the case of Babylon, or forced open by the enemy in spite of the difficulty of approach, is not stated by the prophet nor recorded by history: and the occupants of the palace shall melt with fear. It will not be worth while to detail all the strange explanations which have been offered of this simple verse, (v. 6.) The opinion of Hitzig, in the first edition of his Commentary, that the gates of the rivers were sluices, and the submerging of the city and palace was a measure of defence analogous to the breaking of their dykes by the Dutch in modern times, is a sufficient specimen. Huzzab, in v. 7, has been explained in more than twenty different ways. It is not a proper noun, the name of the Assyrian

queen, but as in the margin of the English version, a verb:—"it is established," fixed by the divine purpose. What is decreed, follows: She, the city, personified as a queen, is ignominiously stripped of her clothing and led into captivity, while her attendant maidens, (who, if they have a distinct signification, and are not merely added to complete the image already suggested, are not inferior and dependent cities, but the women of Nineveh,) with voice and gesture lament her fate. Nineveh has all her days been a pool of water, an emblem not of her future desolation, but of the past abundance of her wealth and population. They shall flee away, *i. e.*, these waters which she has contained, her treasures and inhabitants, and no efforts can stop them. Then, with an assertion of her utter ruin, and an exclamation at its completeness, the chapter closes.

The third chapter does not describe a second capture of the city different from the former, but resumes the same topic, for the sake of assigning the causes of this destruction, which are found in the crimes of which Nineveh had been guilty. The whoredoms and witchcrafts charged upon her are those acts of intrigue and crafty policy by which, under pretence of alliance and friendship, she sought her own aggrandizement and inveigled other nations to their ruin.

To show how little reason Nineveh had to think herself secure, the example of No Ammon (Eng. ver. margin) is appealed to, a city no less powerful and strongly defended, but doomed to destruction. No Ammon is rendered by the Septuagint in this place, "the portion of Ammon," and in Ezek. xxx. 14–16, Diospolis. The Vulgate has in both places Alexandria, which is thus explained by Jerome in his Commentary, on the authority of his Hebrew teacher: "Non quod eo tempore Alexandria vocaretur, quippe quæ longo post tempore ab Alexandro M. Macedone nomen accepit; sed quia sub nomine primo [*i. e.* No] semper Ægypti metropolis fuerit et abundantissima populis." Its maritime location probably led to this conjecture. That No was a city of Egypt is plain from v. 9. There were two places in that country called Diospolis, one near Mendes in Lower Egypt, the other the famous Thebes of Upper Egypt, mentioned by Homer as the city of a hundred gates, and whose remains are the grandest of all the ruins of antiquity. Since

the time of Bochart there has been a general agreement among interpreters, that this last city is the one here intended. It is described as situated among the rivers, the Nile and its artificial branches or canals. The sea which composed its rampart and its wall, was also the Nile, the Hebrew word being in a few instances applied to rivers of large volume, *e. g.*, the Euphrates, Isa. xxi. 1, and perhaps as here to the Nile in Isa. xviii. 2, xix. 5. So that it is not necessary to translate with Ewald, "whose wall was a rampart from sea to sea," from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. The period of the capture of Thebes here referred to, and the agents in its accomplishment, are by no means certain. It has been attributed to the Assyrians under Shalmaneser, Sargon (which is, however, according to Strauss, but another name for the same monarch,) with an appeal to Isa. xx.; Sennacherib, on the authority of Josephus, Arch. x. 1, 4, who yet says nothing of the overthrow of Thebes, nor even of a victory of the Assyrians; and Esarhaddon, who, according to the more than doubtful authority of Abydenus, subdued Egypt and parts of Syria. It has also been attributed to the Ethiopians, who made themselves masters of Egypt about the close of the eighth century before Christ; to the civil disturbances among the Egyptians themselves in the seventh century; to an irruption of the Scythians mentioned by Herodotus; to the Carthaginians, inasmuch as it is said by Ammianus Marcellinus that the city Hecatompylos was once taken by them: and by Bochart, who reduces the age of Nahum's prophecy to correspond, it is identified with the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, foretold by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. As it is extremely hard for a German to confess ignorance, even where he has no data to guide him, Strauss maintains the view, adopted from Jerome, Cyril, Theodoret, and Cocceius, but which can only be justified by a plain necessity, that it is not a past but a future destruction by Cambyses which the prophet intended. The silence of the Theban monuments as to any previous sack of the city is regarded as conclusive that none had occurred. It is hard, on this hypothesis, to see why the fate of Thebes should be adduced as lending confirmation to that which had been denounced upon Nineveh.

As Thebes had fallen, so should she. How desperate soever

the efforts for her defence, however prodigious the numbers she enclosed, her destruction should be sudden, complete, and unlamented.

Every prophecy of the Scriptures had no doubt a special appropriateness to the times in which it was delivered. As a wise teacher of his people, God brought out from the stores of his infinite knowledge just those particular lessons which they each time needed for their instruction, their warning, and their encouragement. In his word, as in creation and providence, everything has its proper place and season. In the time of Nahum, for example, God's people specially needed to be informed that this great overshadowing power, by which they were oppressed, should not be suffered to destroy them, but should be itself destroyed. And yet, as this message was designed for the guidance and comfort of men in all ages, its lessons can never become obsolete. Whatever was written aforetime, as the apostle tells us, was written for our learning. While the Holy Spirit, who spake by the mouth of Nahum, had therefore specially in view the prophet's cotemporaries, he so framed his lessons as to adapt them to the wants of all coming time.

The predictions of this book and of other books of Scripture are not to be regarded as mere anticipations of certain portions of the world's history, which lose very much their interest and their value when that history has passed into actual occurrence, and can be gathered in all its details from others who were witnesses of the events. One prominent design of these disclosures regarding the fate of the great nations of the earth, is to teach the relation which God sustains to human history, and which, as our eyes are so much directed to the agency of second causes, we are prone to overlook or to forget. By thus foreshadowing events, however, which lie far beyond the reach of human sagacity to discover, which are yet in all the contingency of remote causation and of human liberty, God steps as it were visibly into the arena, and shows himself to be concerned in whatever takes place among men. Such predictions reveal that God rules in all the affairs of men: that while he was specially the God of Israel, he was likewise the Governor of all the nations of the earth; that he

controlled and conducted the fortunes of them all, even the most mighty and powerful, shaping their destinies as best pleased him, or best comported with his holy ends. They reveal that his government of the nations is a moral government, one of righteous retributions. It is the crimes of Nineveh, which, after a long seeming impunity, secure her overthrow. Her destruction is not an act of capricious sovereignty; it results not from the mere turning of fortune's unsteady wheel; it is the just reward of her iniquities. And they reveal the subordination of this universal and omnipotent moral government to the scheme of saving mercy. It is not barely in punishment of her own sins that Nineveh was to be overthrown, but to accomplish in this signal way the deliverance of his people, among whom God was preparing a salvation for the whole earth, and to avenge the wrongs committed against them. It was to evidence not only that he "will take vengeance on his adversaries," but also that "he is good; a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."

These three lessons of the universality of God's government, its retributive character, and its subordination to his scheme of grace, were important for the prophet's cotemporaries. They are equally true and important in all time; and they are conveyed even more powerfully and impressively to those who have not barely the prediction, but the record of its actual accomplishment. These teachings we have in the prophecy in common with those to whom it was first delivered. But in addition, it furnishes to us who live after the fulfilment an instance of divine foreknowledge, which clearly establishes the inspiration of the prophet, and by consequence, the heavenly origin of our religion. It gives additional value to the evidence of divine revelation derived from this source, when the prophecy in question is not symbolical nor figurative, but literal; and when its language is neither obscure nor doubtful, but plain and unambiguous, and its accomplishment is evident and striking. There is also the special advantage in this case that the events foretold are not such as took place in an obscure corner, but are prominent, notorious, and undeniable, concerning one of the grandest, most powerful, and most mag-

nificent cities of the ancient world. And the record of its fall is preserved, not in the Scriptures, not by Jewish writers, but by those who had no knowledge whatever of these predictions having been uttered, who had no suspicion of the service they were doing the religion of the Bible by the record they were making, and who cannot by possibility have been guilty of any collusion, with the view of producing a seeming correspondence between the event and the prophecy, if none actually existed. And now in the proof that there is in this book a real prophecy, which, as shown by heathen authors, and as they who visit the site of Nineveh at the present day can see with their own eyes, has been literally fulfilled; and that this prediction was uttered at such a time and under such circumstances as to preclude the possibility of its having been a so-called *vaticinium post eventum*, a shrewd conjecture based on known causes, or even a vague anticipation, or an enthusiastic rhapsody, there is a demonstration that this was a divinely communicated truth, and that he who uttered it was a prophet sent from God. And it is the more important to insist upon this class of the Christian evidences at the present day, because it has become the fashion with many to decry the external defences of religion, and upon this has followed the disposition to make of revelation only a subjective state, not an objective and supernatural communication.

In tracing the correspondence between a prophecy and its fulfilment, it is important to observe, both in this and in other cases, that what is presented in one picture in the prophecy, need not always occur at the same point of time in the history. The prophetic eye ranges over a long vista of the future, over a long train of events conspiring to one grand result, but which may yet require many years, or even centuries, for their accomplishment. Thus the subject of Nahum's prophecy is the fall of Nineveh. He depicts it as attacked by the overwhelming forces of its enemies, and leaves it utterly desolate and waste. Now it is no detraction from the truthfulness of the prophecy, nor from the exactness of its correspondence with the event, that its capture and sack by Cyaxares did not complete its desolation, but was only the first decisive step in its downward progress. From that fatal blow it never rallied,

but sunk gradually away until it became the perfectly irredeemable desolation which Xenophon beheld it two hundred years later, and which it has remained until this day. The vision of the prophet was not restricted to the condition of things at the conclusion of the siege of Cyaxares, but reached beyond to its ultimate result; and the desolation which succeeded is accordingly portrayed without any note being taken of the chronological interval which separated them.

Now, whatever diversity there may be among the authorities in Assyrian history as to many of its facts and dates, there can be no disagreement as to these points:—That Nineveh was one of the most magnificent and powerful cities of the ancient world; that it was suddenly and signally overthrown at a period when its wealth and power were at their height; that this was effected by an invasion of the Medes and Babylonians, somewhere about B. C. 600; and that the desolation of the city has been so complete that for ages its very site was unknown or disputed, and that all which now remain of its former grandeur are a few ruined mounds. That this corresponds precisely with the prophetic picture of Nineveh's utter hopeless destruction, in spite of her great wealth and power, and the multitudes of her population compared to swarms of locusts, is too plain for argument. It is also to be noted, that while the particular people is not mentioned which were to be the instrument of Nineveh's overthrow, that they may be partially at least intimated. In both the descriptions of the invading army given ii. 3, 4, and iii. 2, 3, almost exclusive mention is made of horsemen and of chariots. The destruction must have been effected, therefore, by some power, a main part of whose military strength lay in their cavalry. This was notoriously the case with Media, which was celebrated throughout the ancient world for the excellence and numbers of its horses.

We would, without doubt, be able to point out more minute coincidences between the prophecy and the accomplishment, if we only had more detailed and reliable accounts of the events as they actually took place. That the city should be pillaged, ii. 9, put to the sword, iii. 3, set on fire, iii. 15, and deserted of its population, who should either betake themselves

to flight, ii. 8, iii. 18, or be led into captivity, ii. 7, is plainly declared. And this is all confirmed by the historical records, or by existing monuments. If the account of Ctesias is to be received as describing the final capture of the city, i. 10, "while they are drunken as drunkards they shall be devoured as stubble," may be considered as predicting the advantage gained by their enemies at the time of the drunken revel of Sardanapalus. That the disastrous overflow of the Tigris during the siege is intimated, i. 8, is also possible, but not certain.

Fortunately, however, the most essential points are those which are undeniable. There is no need, in order to make out an irrefragable argument, of insisting upon anything more than the grand event itself. Even if the prophet had recorded more minutely the particulars of this event, they would have been of little service to us, so long as our historical accounts are so vague and general. We may be justified, perhaps, in regarding it as a part of the wise orderings in this matter, that just those things should be most distinctly announced by the prophet, which the historian was afterwards to preserve. Here, then, we have the prophet Nahum announcing, one hundred years before the event, not as a speculation, nor a venturesome conjecture, but as a certain fact, that Nineveh should be overthrown. She was then the mistress of Asia. No city could vie with her in wealth, in magnificence, in the number of her citizens, in the amount of her various and far-reaching trade, the extent of her dominion, or the power of her armies. Nothing could have been intrinsically more improbable. Were any one now to utter a similar prediction in regard to the great emporiums of the old world or the new, regarding London, Paris, or New York, it can easily be imagined with what incredulity it would be received, and with what crazy absurdity it would be charged.

If the prediction had, however, been left in this indefinite form, it would have included within its scope quite a range of possibilities. These the prophet farther narrows down. This overthrow was not to be effected by some great natural convulsion, such as an earthquake, nor the bursting out of a volcano, nor by the pestilential infection of the district. If Nineveh had perished, and yet had perished in some such way as this,

the prophecy would have remained unfulfilled. Its destruction must be effected by a hostile invasion—an invasion, too, of some people, a prominent arm of whose military should be their cavalry. This, as has been seen, was all effected precisely as predicted. But all this might have happened, and yet the city, in a few years, or at least in the course of ages, after its capture, might have recovered from the blow, and risen to its former superiority and renown. Or if not this, it might have continued to exist as an inferior or subject city in all time to come, or to say the least, a village. The probabilities were immensely against its utter extirpation. Yet it was predicted that "he should make an utter end of the place thereof," that "it should be empty, void, and waste," that insulting witnesses of its desolation should ask where it had been, and as Zephaniah (ii. 14) farther declares, that it should be tenanted by wild beasts. And now while Jerusalem still exists, and Damascus, and even small villages like Hebron still stand from the days of Abraham, in less than three hundred years after these words had passed the lips of the inspired prophet, Xenophon led the retreat of the Greeks over the site of Nineveh, and never mentions its name, nor seems to have suspected that this great city had ever been there. If any one can imagine that all these particulars came to pass by chance, he will only afford an evidence that there is no credulity equal to that of those who are resolved to disbelieve the Scriptures.

But again, there is here another argument for the divinity of our religion, of a different kind. Not only the correspondence of the event with the prophecy, but the occurrence of the event in itself considered, will supply an argument. The overthrow of Nineveh was grounded on its crimes, and on its oppression of God's people. Now if it be true in actual fact that every power, however mighty, which presumed to trample upon and to oppress God's people, has been successively dashed to pieces, it affords no mean evidence that they were truly under divine protection, and that their cause was avenged by an omnipotent arm. The fact that this was brought about by the agency of second causes, need not blind us to its having been effected by the providence of God. Had this occurred only in the case of Nineveh, it might have been thought a casual co-

incidence, or too slender at least to base an argument upon it. But when we see it repeated afresh in the instance of every oppressor since, in Babylon, Persia, Syria, Rome, not to mention minor and less prominent examples, the idea of chance is excluded; it is evidently a permanent law, whose only explanation can be found in the admission that Israel were really what they claimed to be, and what the Scriptures claim for them, the people of the living God.

There is only one more topic connected with this prophecy, to which reference shall now be made. It is the position which it holds in the scheme of Messianic announcement. We read, Rev. xix. 10, that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" that is to say, it was the office of prophecy to testify concerning Jesus, to make disclosures regarding the coming Saviour. Peter says, in his discourse to the people from the temple-porch, Acts iii. 24, "All the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days," *i. e.*, the days of Christ and of the gospel period. It is said of our Saviour, Luke xxiv. 27, that beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto Cleopas and his fellow-traveller in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. It is plain, therefore, that the Old Testament, from beginning to end, sustains a relation to Christ. This is true alike of its histories and of its prophecies; both are conditioned by the connection in which they stand with the scheme of grace and the coming salvation. The office of the Old Testament historian is not barely to record the events of the ancient world: his task is simply to trace the progress of God's scheme of mercy among lost men, and to point out the preparation made for its consummation in the person of the great Redeemer. Consequently he had to do, not with the dynasties of Egypt or of Assyria, the rise or revolutions of ancient empires, or the progress of civilization and the arts, but simply with the fortunes of the chosen people, of Abraham and his descendants, in the midst of whom the scheme of mercy was being prepared, and from amongst whom the coming Saviour was to arise. The history concerns itself with other nations only as they are implicated with or affect the history of Israel. And in tracing the history of Abra-

ham's descendants even, the sacred historian treats them with strict reference to God's plan of grace. When they cut themselves off from connection with this, he has no further concern with them. Hence Ishmael and his descendants are thrown aside, to pursue the history of Isaac; Esau is again left out of view, to follow the fortunes of Jacob: and when at a later period the ten tribes were cast off in their apostasy, the history restricts itself, in the sequel, to the kingdom of Judah.

Now, a relation is sustained by the prophecies of the Old Testament to God's gracious scheme of mercy, precisely similar to that apparent in the history. It is not given to the prophets to predict any future event whatever taken at random. The object is not barely to give a proof of supernatural prescience, but to prepare the people for the coming salvation, to train them to a constant expectancy of it, and clearer views regarding it. These lessons are of course varied by the particular emergencies of the people at different periods, and the special instruction which was in each instance timely and needful. But universally Christ and his salvation was the end toward which all was directed. In order to this, it was not necessary that the person of the Redeemer should in every instance be distinctly held up to view. This is the case in the majority of instances. Most of the prophets do speak positively and distinctly of the coming Messiah, and bring to view some of the characteristics of his person, or some of the attributes or events of his reign. But even where he is not explicitly referred to, he is impliedly. Nahum, if he does not predict positively the coming and the reign of Christ, does so, at least, negatively, and in a way which was specially appropriate to the times when his prophecy was uttered.

Former prophets had foretold the coming and the work of Christ. To prepare the people for his advent, however, it was needful that they should first be sifted by periods of severe chastisement and trial. They must by divine judgments be punished for their sins and their idolatries, to reclaim them to God's service. For this work of chastisement we are distinctly told the Assyrians were raised up; and when they thought to destroy, they transcended their commission. When Assyria

appeared as the enemy of the people of God, with her increasing sway and unchecked power, there was great danger that the pious portion of the people would give way to despondency, and suppose that now at length God had abandoned them for their sins, and would give them up to complete destruction, and that his scheme of mercy would be broken off in the midst. It was needful, therefore, to reassure them, to show them that this was not the case; that the covenant of grace was still sure in spite of their unfaithfulness; that God would punish them for their sins, but would not utterly destroy them; and that in pledge of his covenant care, in proof that "the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and that he knoweth them that trust in him," their oppressor should be destroyed, and they should be delivered. This great overgrown power, which had usurped to itself the mastery of the world, should not be permitted to retain its lawless ascendency. The dominion of this world belongs of right to the Lord, and to his Christ. Every attempt to place this sovereignty in other and ungodly hands, is a usurpation; and as such, must fall, in order to make way for him whose the sceptre and the diadem rightfully are. The crimes of Nineveh, and especially its hostile attitude to God's people, make it, for the time, the chief embodied form of opposition to the kingdom of God. It is, in the pinnacle of power to which it has attained, the concentration, the culminating point for the time being, of the kingdom of darkness on earth, its most powerful representative, its chief agent in obstructing the progress of the kingdom of God. But this kingdom of darkness must fall before the kingdom of light. The destruction of Nineveh, which has allied itself to the former, must consequently follow as one of the preparatory steps towards placing the sovereignty of the earth where it ought to be, and shall be, in the hands of Prince Immanuel.

While, therefore, the prophecy of Nahum is in form predictive only of the fall of Nineveh, it has a wider significance, and by reason of the principles which it involves, impliedly reveals the overthrow of every other form of opposition to the kingdom of God, and thus, negatively at least, announces that the kingdom of God shall be set up triumphantly and gloriously

over all the earth. If Nineveh must fall because it is allied to the kingdom of evil, because it is a usurpation of that sovereignty over the nations which belongs to Messiah alone, so every other form which that kingdom of evil may assume, and every subsequent usurpation must fall likewise, that Messiah's triumph may be complete. If Babylon rise upon the ruins of Nineveh, and practise the same oppressions, and show the same hostility to the people of God, then, while it is not written in so many words in the book of Nahum that Babylon too must be similarly destroyed; yet the spirit of the prophecy, and the reasons upon which it is based, require that it should, and that every obstacle should be completely removed out of the way which would obstruct Messiah's universal reign.

That it is legitimate to understand this prophecy in the extended sense which has now been given to it, that in predicting the utter overthrow of Nineveh it was the design of the Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of the prophet, virtually to predict, even though this was not expressed in so many words, the downfall of every opposing power and the erection of the kingdom of God over all the earth is, besides the considerations already adduced, still further apparent from a remarkable usage of the sacred writers, by which terms and expressions primarily descriptive of the fall of one hostile power are applied interchangeably to that of others, or by which one is made distinctly and in express terms the type of others. Thus Isaiah, speaking of the deliverance of Israel from the captivity of Babylon and from all future foes, announces to Jerusalem, the holy city, that there should no more come into her the uncircumcised and the unclean, and exclaims, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." When now Nahum adopts this very language from Isaiah, and applies it to the joy consequent upon the overthrow of Nineveh, it seems to be with the view of calling attention to the connection which really subsists between the two events, as in essence really one, of the same character, and referable to the same causes. And when still further the apostle Paul repeats this language, of the proclamation of the gospel, and of the setting up on earth of the

kingdom of God, he seems again to intimate an identity, an innate oneness between the message which announced the fall of those great persecuting powers, and the erection of that kingdom which was finally to supplant them.

So again nothing is more frequent than the prediction of one event under the symbol of a recurring of another past. Thus when it is said, Isaiah xi. 15, 16, that "the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry shod;" the meaning is not that the miracle of drying up the Red Sea and the Jordan should be in that precise form again repeated, but this miraculous deliverance from the oppression of Egypt stands as the type and pledge of deliverance from other future oppressions. Later, in the book of Revelation, when the language of the Old Testament prophets respecting the fall of Babylon is as it were re-enacted, the intention is to describe the overthrow of another power hostile to the kingdom of God, in spirit and character identical with the ancient Babylon, which shall be in reality the same thing revived, only in another form, a fresh manifestation of the same ungodly, persecuting power, and which is consequently doomed to the same destruction that befell its prototype.

Thus Nahum's predictions have a meaning for all time to come, so long as there remains aught in which the spirit of Nineveh survives—aught which has inherited its criminality and its hostility to God's people. The doom of Nineveh shall attach in substance, if not in form, to all its successors. And not until the last foe of God and of human salvation shall be finally destroyed, shall it in its full import be accomplished.