

distinguished French orientalist has described the Assyrian policies in the following rather extreme language:

Assyria was the nest of the bird of prey whence, during nearly ten centuries, set forth the most terrible expeditions which have ever flooded the world with blood. Asshur was its god, plunder its morality, material pleasure its ideal, cruelty and terror its means. No people was ever more abject than those of Asshur; no sovereigns were ever more despotic, more covetous, more vindictive, more pitiless, more proud of their crimes. Assyria sums up in itself all the vices. Aside from bravery, it offers not a single virtue. One must leaf over the whole of the world's history to find here and there, in the most troubled periods, public crimes whose frightfulness may be compared with the horrors daily committed by the men of Nineveh in the name of their god. The Assyrian is not an artist, not a man of literature, not a lawgiver; he is a parasite, basing his organization of pillage on a formidable military power.†

On various occasions prior to Isaiah's time, the Assyrian armies had marched out beyond their borders, attacking, ravaging, pillaging, and destroying the country far and near. Assyria was the first nation to introduce a policy of calculated frightfulness in order to fill its opponents with fear and thus force them to submit to its yoke. In Isaiah's day the power of the Assyrians had grown far greater than ever before, and it appeared that nothing was able to withstand their attack. Isaiah pauses in the midst of his denunciation of the wickedness of the Israelites and his promise of blessing and comfort to the righteous among them, to examine the fateful question: What is the attitude of God toward this great hostile power? Did the Assyrian power come into existence despite the Lord's will? Is it something which God could not help? Is it, rather, something which God, in His inscrutable wisdom, has permitted? Isaiah's answer to the problem takes in a wide sweeping view of history, and envisions the greatness of God in a way hardly to be paralleled in ancient non-Biblical

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†De Morgan, *Premieres Civilisations*, 1909, 340 f., quoted in Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, New York, 1923.