The third survey volume published by the British " Society for Old Testament Study " appeared between three and four years ago.[1] It gives an interesting and informing account of the literature which has appeared in this field during " the last thirty years ".[2] Representing, as it does, the critical viewpoint and proceeding, as it does, on the assumption that conservative scholarship can safely be ignored because its conclusions are " dogmatically reached ", it serves to show very clearly how much difference of opinion there is even among critical scholars who are " concerned only with the evidence, and the conclusions to which it might naturally lead ".[3]

Among the conclusions arrived at by the writers of these surveys, two are of special interest. The one has to do with the Massoretic Text in general; and we are told[4] that scholars to-day entertain a much greater respect for this text than was the case with the last generation or two of scholars, that the days of *ad libitum* emendation of the MT are now at an end, and that the MT is to be preferred in general to the LXX. The second has to do especially with the literary form of the Poetical and Prophetical Books;[5] and we are told that the efforts of the metricists in the past to secure regularity of metre by textual emendation were mistaken, that such regularity of metre is not

---

[1] *The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research.* Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study, edited by Professor H. H. Rowley of Manchester University, 1951. [See THE EVAN-GELICAL QUARTERLY, xxiv (1952), p. 3.]

[2] The earlier volumes were: *The People and the Book* (1925), edited by A. S. Peake; and *Record and Revelation* (1938), edited by H. Wheeler Robinson. The words, " last thirty years," indicate that this volume does not confine itself merely to the period since the second volume appeared.

[3] Cf. the Introduction by Rowley, p. xv. Such a statement should not be quoted without an accompanying word of protest. " Critical " scholars are quite as dogmatic as they claim of their opponents. Their rejection of the supernatural, for example, is no less dogmatic than they assert its acceptance to be.

[4] By Rowley (pp. xv, xxv f.), Albright (p. 25), D. W. Thomas (pp. 242–8).

[5] The attempt to treat the Prophets as poetic in form goes back to Bishop Lowth's *Isaiah* (1778), which was a development of his Oxford *Praelectiones* (1753). He claimed that all his predecessors had treated them as prose (p. 5). Nourse in his *Paragraph Bible* (1834) applied to the AV the general principles of Lowth and arranged the bulk of the Prophets, including even passages in Daniel, in poetical form. The metrical studies of Ley, Bickell, Sievers, Grimme, and others promoted interest in this subject; and many scholars (e.g., Rothstein) hailed metrics as an important aid in " correcting " the MT.

to be regarded as characteristic of Hebrew poetry.[1] This "conservative" trend is a welcome one. It would be more welcome if we could be at all sure that it will be permanent.[2]

A striking illustration of the new attitude to the MT is furnished by the recent study of the Book of Nahum by Alfred Haldar of the Scandinavian (Uppsala) School.[3] For fifty years every discussion of Nahum making the slightest claim to be regarded as scholarly or critical has had to deal more or less fully with the "alphabet poem" in chap. i.[4] Haldar does not even mention it. The relatively few textual emendations which he proposes for this chapter have no bearing on the "restoration" of its alphabetic form. In fact the nearest he comes to mentioning it is when he bluntly dismisses as unwarranted the attempt to treat verses 2b–3a as corrupt or displaced. Since these two lines have been a major stumbling-block in the path of the "Alphabetizers", such cavalier treatment is remarkable, to say the least; especially so since Haldar cannot be accused of ignorance of the fact that the presence of such a poem, or extensive traces of it, has been widely accepted in critical circles for half a century or more. This attitude may therefore justly be regarded as a noteworthy confirmation of the fact that when the MT is taken as it stands, the evidence in favour of the alleged alphabet poem is far from convincing, or to put it more strongly, is quite inadequate.[5] It is only necessary to examine the evidence to appreciate this fact.

[1] Op. cit., pp. xxvi f. (Rowley), p. 25 (Albright), p. 281 (Honeyman).

[2] It is a rather amazing fact that the "Traditio-historical" or, as it is often called, the "Scandinavian" School of Widengren, Engnell, Pedersen, Nyberg, Haldar, etc., while entertaining a high regard for the MT, nevertheless regards the bulk of the OT literature as post-exilic, and endeavours to impose a "Canaanite" cult pattern on the pre-exilic religion of Israel, a strange combination of conservatism with radicalism!

[3] *Studies in the Book of Nahum*, 1947.

[4] Moffatt, for example, in his *New Translation*, "reconstructs" the poem without indicating that it is alphabetical.

[5] Much of the textual criticism of recent years has had as its basic assumption, expressed or implied, the claim that the MT is "often desperately corrupt" (Moffatt), which has been regarded as giving the critic full liberty to edit it at will. Nahum i has been regarded as an especially clear example of such corruption, because so much and so drastic emendation is required to restore the original poem.

I. THE ALPHABET POEM AND THE MASSORETIC TEXT

1. The first five verses of the poem (2–6) form ten metrical lines (distichs). But of the ten only five give any clear evidence of alphabetic sequence. They are: 2a (*Aleph*), 4a (*Gimel*), 5a (*He*), 5b (*Waw*), 6b (*Heth*). The metre of the remaining eight verses of the chapter[1] is much less regular. Most of the verses may be regarded as forming single lines (distichs). But whether we regard them as single lines or, in the case of verses 11 and 14, divide them at the Athnah into double lines, there is only one of them which begins with an alphabetic letter in its proper sequence: viz. verse 7 (*Teth*). So it appears that in the 19 or more lines into which chap. i can be divided according to the MT, there are only six which give any clear indication of strict alphabetic sequence: viz. 5a and 5b, which give us *He* and *Waw*,[2] 6b and 7 which give us *Heth* and *Teth*, while *Gimel* (4a) may be said to stand in its proper sequence and *Aleph* (2a) naturally stands at the beginning.

2. The obvious changes which are required to augment the alphabetic structure are so very simple that it is hard to believe that a man who was capable of writing such a prophecy as the Book of Nahum sets before us would have failed to make them, if he had really intended to write such a poem. These changes are the following:

(*a*) The shifting of the YHWH with which verse 3b begins to the end of 3a or its deletion. The parallelism with verse 3a which also begins with YHWH favours the MT punctuation. But the change makes this line begin with *Beth* (*besûpah*),[3] which would be appropriate for the second line of an alphabet poem. Consequently on such an assumption the MT punctuation is somewhat difficult to account for.

(*b*) Verse 4a begins with *Aleph* (*'umlal*). In an alphabet poem it should begin with *Daleth*. Three or more words beginning with *Daleth* have been proposed. The only warrant for substituting any one of them must be found in the alphabetic

[1] The MT verse-division assigns 14 verses to chap. i, while the English assigns 15 to it. Here the Hebrew verse-division is followed.

[2] The *Waw* of 5b can hardly be regarded as significant. Verses 8, 12b, 14 also begin with *Waw*.

[3] But cf. Ps. xxv, where the *b* of the *Beth* line begins the 2nd word.

arrangement, against which is the obvious fact that it is absurd to suppose that a Hebrew prophet with the unusually extensive vocabulary which was clearly at the command of the writer of the Book of Nahum could not have discovered a suitable word beginning with *d* if he had wished to do so. There is no force in the claim that the line ought not to begin and end with the same word. For Nahum is fond of such repetitions.

(*c*) According to the alphabetic arrangement, verse 6a should begin with *Zayin*. Instead, it begins with *Lamedh*. But the second word in the line (*za'mô*) does begin with *Zayin*. So all that is needed is to make the simple sentence compound: " His anger, who can stand before it? " (cf. verse 3b)—a very simple change, but one which is so very simple, that it is hard to understand how Nahum could have failed to make it, or if Nahum had written it thus, how a copyist could have been so careless as to recast the sentence and in so doing obliterate the alphabetic feature.

3. The further changes which are required to complete the first ten lines (as far as *Yodh*) of the poem are, on the other hand, much more radical and for that reason also quite difficult to account for:

(*a*) The most serious difficulty is presented by verses 2b–3a. If the poem begins with verse 2a, as has been generally supposed,[1] the two lines which follow must be regarded either as misplaced or as an editorial gloss, introduced by someone who did not recognize the alphabetic structure of the poem. They cannot be made to fit into such a poem where they stand. Verse 2b is usually regarded as a misplaced *Nun* verse, and 3a as a further corruption. But how they came to stand where they do is an unsolved problem.

(*b*) The formation of the *Yodh* verse is difficult. If it is made to begin with verse 7b, then 7a, the *Teth* verse, has to be expanded, since 7b is needed to complete that verse as it stands. But such an expansion of verse 7b as " Knoweth (YHWH) those that trust in him; and with an overwhelming flood (he will deliver them) " has nothing to commend it except the fact that it forms a respectable *Yodh* line, and by appropriating the first two words of verse 8 makes it possible to use the third

[1] Duhm made the poem begin with verse 3a, but apparently had few followers.

word of that verse, which begins with *Kaph*, to start the *Kaph* line.

It is not necessary to discuss the remaining verses of the chapter in detail. The attempt, first made by Gunkel (1893), to discover and restore a complete alphabet poem extending into chap. ii, has been pretty generally abandoned.[1] Nowack, for example, following Gunkel, first attempted (1897) to restore the entire poem. But later (1903) he admitted that only the restoration of verses 2–8 can be regarded as generally agreed upon. As to the rest he declared that there were as many restorations of the poem as there were reconstructions of the text proposed by the critics,[2] a statement which is valid to-day, except that interest in the complete restoration of the poem seems to have decidedly abated, probably because the attempt has proved so futile.[3]

II. " NOT AN ALPHABET POEM OF THE ORDINARY KIND "

An alternative to the attempt to restore a complete alphabet poem by means of more or less radical textual emendation was offered by Professor Davis of Princeton in 1911.[4] He admitted that the passage under consideration is " poetic in character and alphabetic in form ". But he also held that we do not have here " an alphabetic psalm of the ordinary kind ". Instead, the poet " has allowed the consecutive sounds to introduce topics rather than verses and to follow each other singly or in groups throughout the stately oration ". Such an explanation of the structure of the poem has in its favour the fact that it recognizes and seeks to do justice to a definite alphabetic element or influence in the poem, without changing the MT;

[1] The extreme to which Gunkel was prepared to go is illustrated by his claim that verse 12, which he held to be the *Nun* line, must be very corrupt because there is not a single *Nun* in it! Gunkel claimed to have discovered in the word *shab* which commences ii. 3 the name of the author of the poem, *Shobi* or *Shobay*.

[2] Nowack, *Kleine Propheten* (1903), p. 251. But in his third edition he extended the restoration by two verses (2–10 instead of 2–8). In Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica* (1906), he did not carry the conjectural restoration beyond *Samekh* (10b). Cf. Procksch, in the 3rd edition of Kittel (1937).

[3] For Duhm's theory as to the origin of the poem and the reason for its " mutilated " condition see *Anmerkungen zu den Zwölf Propheten* (p. 62). It is the *reductio ad absurdum* of subjective criticism.

[4] Article " Nahum " in J. D. Davis, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 3rd edition.

and that it allows for a certain freedom of arrangement by recognizing that certain sounds may occur singly or in groups, and that the arrangement is topical as well as alphabetical. This may be taken to mean that while alphabetic sequence is clearly present, it is only one of several factors in the construction of the poem, all of which require recognition. On the other hand, it is to be noted that, while all the sounds of the alphabet are " heard " in the course of the poem, they are not always heard or heard distinctly where strict alphabetic sequence would clearly require it.[1] Thus, the sounds which are most clearly heard in i. 2 are not *Aleph* and *Beth*, but *Mem, Nun*, and *Qoph*, sounds all of which belong in the second half of the alphabet.

In referring to " topics " and to " groups of sounds ", Dr. Davis called attention to two features of the poem which the Alphabetizers have been inclined to overlook. The one is that with Nahum topics are more important than mere sounds. In the lines in which the alphabetic feature is most prominent, the phrasing simply expresses and develops the theme. Tempest and cloud, sea and rivers, Bashan, Carmel, Lebanon, mountains and hills, earth and inhabited earth form a natural sequence describing Jehovah's universal sovereignty over His whole creation. And this description is the appropriate preparation for the declaration of the wrath and anger of God against His enemies (verse 6) and, according to that love of startling antithesis which is so characteristic of Nahum, for the declaration of His goodness to those that trust in Him (verse 7). To what extent the prophet was influenced by alphabetic sequence in arranging his thoughts it would be hard to say, in view of the fact that he has failed to introduce it into lines where, as we have seen, it would have been simplicity itself to do so.

The other matter mentioned by Dr. Davis, the grouping of sounds, is of still greater importance, for the reason that it calls attention to the fact that with Nahum repetition, assonance, alliteration, and paronomasia are more important than mere alphabetic sequence.

---

[1] Thus *Daleth* occurs eight times in words in chap i, viz. verses 3 (twice), 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14; only in one case (verse 3) at the beginning of the word. *Pe* occurs nine times: verse 3 (twice), 4, 5, 6 (twice), 8, 9, 14; four times at the beginning of the phrase. Consequently *d* and *p* are both heard, but with little or no indication of alphabetic sequence or emphasis.

III. REPETITION, ASSONANCE, ALLITERATION, PARONOMASIA IN NAHUM

Unlike the alphabetic feature, these characteristics of Nahum's style are found in all parts of the book which bears his name:

(*a*) The same word is repeated several times in rather close connection: *nôqem* (i. 2, three times), *YHWH* (i. 2, three times), *'umlal* (i. 4b, twice), *ge'ôn* (ii. 3, twice), *bozzu* (ii. 10, twice), *qôl* (iii. 2, twice), *gam* (iii. 10, 11, four times), *yeleq* (iii. 15, 16, three times). Compare also the phrases: " who ... and who " (i. 6a), " a full end he will make " (i. 8a) and " a full end he has made " (i. 9a), " I have afflicted thee and not will I afflict thee " (i. 12), " feast thy feasts " (ii. 1a), " stand ye, stand ye " (ii. 9), " behold I am against thee saith Jehovah of hosts " (ii. 14; iii. 5), " corpse ... their corpse " (iii. 3), " shall devour thee ... shall devour thee " (iii. 15), " make thyself many ... make thyself many " (iii. 15). Consequently the *'umlal ...'umlal* of i. 4b has excellent warrant in the style of Nahum, and may be regarded as emphatic repetition.

(*b*) Nahum shows a decided fondness for words which have two adjacent consonants the same: *'anan* (i. 3), *'umlal* (i. 4), *hitmôgagu* (i. 5), *yôshebê bah* (i. 5), *baqaq* (ii. 3, two forms), *yithôlelu, yishtaqshequ*, and *yerôçeçu* (ii. 5), *sôkek* (ii. 6), *metôpepôt 'al libebêhen* (ii. 8), *mayim mîmê* (ii. 9), *halhalah* (ii. 11), *pa'rûr* (ii. 11), *zenûnê zônah* (iii. 4), *mamlekôt* (iii. 5), *yiddôd* and *shoddedah* (iii. 7), *mayim sabib* (iii. 8), *'olaléha* (iii. 10), *mê maçôr* and *tît* (iii. 14), *kôkebê* (iii. 16), *gôb gôbay* and *nôded* (iii. 17).

(*c*) Nahum also shows a liking for words which are quite similar in sound and sometimes in meaning: *nitteka* followed by *nitteçu* (i. 6b), *hoshek* (i. 8) followed by *tehashshebûn* (i. 9) and by *hôsheb* (i. 11), *naçôr meçûrah* (ii. 2), *merkabah meraqqedah* (iii. 2), *Nîneweh* followed by *yanûd* and *menahamîm* (iii. 7), *yerutteshu berôsh* followed by *ruttequ bazziqqîm* (iii. 10), *wenôdad welô' nôda'* (iii. 17). The most remarkable examples of alliteration are: *sîrîm sebûkîm ûkesob'am sebû'îm* (i. 10), four words beginning with *Samekh* and ending with *Mem*, three of which also have a *Beth*. Hardly less noteworthy is the combination *bûqah ûmebûqah ûmebullaqah* (ii. 11). Cf. Isa. xxiv, with which Nahum shows marked resemblances.

The above examples taken as a whole (for some are more impressive than others) serve to show that Nahum had a fine feeling for rhythm, alliteration, assonance, and word-play or paronomasia. And it is especially to be noted that while the alphabetic feature is restricted to a few verses in chap. i, these other features are found in all parts of the book, and may therefore be regarded as more characteristic of Nahum's style.

IV. SUDDEN TRANSITIONS

Another striking feature of Nahum's style is his fondness for sudden transition and rather startling antithesis:

(a) "Patient" (i. 3a) stands in sharp contrast to the thrice repeated "avenging", which precedes it. But the "great of strength" and "he will certainly not hold guiltless" which follow indicate clearly that patience may imply postponement but does not mean pardon.

(b) "Good" (i. 7) is immediately defined as applying to those who "trust" Jehovah; and the "with an overwhelming flood" which follows recalls verse 3b and makes the threat of vengeance more emphatic.

(c) Since Judah is mentioned by name first in ii. 1 (cf. ii. 3, where Jacob and Israel are mentioned) and Nineveh, aside from the heading, first in ii. 8, the pronouns in i. 8–ii. 3 must be carefully studied. Verses 8–12a refer to Nineveh and the Assyrians, either as spoken of or directly addressed. Verses 12b–13 of chap. i are addressed to Judah, ii. 1 to Nineveh, ii. 2 to Nineveh. Consequently, in this brief compass of eight verses, the "thou, thee, or thy" means first Nineveh, then Judah, then Nineveh, then Judah; and finally the first description of the siege is introduced with the words, "He that dasheth in pieces is come up against thee (Nineveh)". The contrast is most marked at verse 14, since Judah has just been promised deliverance from affliction.

(d) This feature also appears in the repetitive references to the destruction of Nineveh. Chap. i. 14 predicts its utter destruction, ii. 1 introduces a messenger bringing the news that the enemy-city has been destroyed and Judah is exhorted to rejoice with a sense of utter security. Then with ii. 2 there begins a vivid account of the assault and overthrow of the city, which has just been reported by the herald as already accomplished;

and this is followed in chap. iii by a dirge-like woe pronounced upon the city, which covers much the same ground though with different imagery. It is as if the prophet would make assurance doubly sure that the "city of blood" will really perish and that utterly.

(e) One of the most remarkable examples of sudden contrast in Nahum is near the end of the little book, the use of the word "locust". In iii. 15a the locust is used as a figure to describe the destruction which will be visited on Nineveh: "There shall fire devour thee, the sword shall cut thee off, it shall devour thee like a locust." Then with the thought of the countlessness of the locusts in mind, the prophet proceeds at once to apply it to Nineveh itself: "Make thyself many like the locust, make thyself many like the grasshopper." Useless! For the locust "flies away" and "flees away" and "its whereabouts is not known". So mighty Nineveh will utterly vanish from the earth. This use of the locust to describe both the enemies of Nineveh and then Nineveh herself is most impressive.

V. THE PARONOMASIA IN NAHUM i. 2

We have seen that the first and perhaps the most serious obstacle which confronts those who seek to discover a mutilated or imperfect alphabet poem in chap. i and to restore or complete it, consists of verses 2b and 3a, which simply cannot be harmonized with the view that a strictly regular alphabet poem begins with verse 2. Since, then, we have found that there are other characteristics of Nahum's style which are more marked and more pervasive than alphabetic sequence, it will be well to consider whether one or more of them can enable us to account for these lines which the advocates of the alphabetic arrangement have found so intractable.

The Book of Nahum bears the relatively brief heading, "The burden of Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite." Here briefly stated we have: (1) the nature of the prophecy, that it is a weighty, solemn, and threatening utterance, which was received as a prophetic vision, (2) that the subject of the vision is Nineveh, and (3) that the message is delivered by Nahum the Elkoshite. The form of the heading is unique in the sense that it is not exactly the same as any other found in the O.T., although it closely resembles some of them. The words "burden of" are used by Isaiah in introducing his

prophecies against the nations (cf. also Hab. i. 1; Zech. ix. 1, xii. 1; Mal. i. 1); and the mention of Nineveh is needed because Nineveh is not named in the body of the book until ii. 8 (cf. iii. 7). " Book of the vision " is a combination which does not occur elsewhere. It may call attention to the fact that the prophet at once recorded his vision, or that the vision came to him, as it were, pen in hand. It may be noted that the use of this word makes the heading consist of six words which form three rhythmic pairs: *massa' Nîneweh sēper hazôn Nahûm ha'Elqôshî*, an appropriate introduction to so poetic a book as Nahum.

Nahum describes himself simply as " the Elkoshite ". This was quite natural and proper.[1] In this case it is especially appropriate because of what immediately follows. The location of Elkosh and the meaning·of the name are alike uncertain, and need not now concern us. But to one who has made a careful study of Nahum's literary style, the thought might very naturally occur that the words " jealous God " (*'El qannô*) with which the prophecy commences are suggested by the *'Elqôshi* by which Nahum identifies himself. Without intending to suggest a serious etymology, we would point out that *Elqôshi* might easily suggest to Nahum the words *'El* (God) and *qasheh* (hard or severe). Cf. Isa. xix. 4; xxi. 2; xxvii. 1. Consequently *Elqôshi* might remind Nahum of the *'El qannô* (God is jealous), which appears in Josh. xxiv. 19, and in a slightly different form in Ex. xx. 5; xxxiv. 14; Deut. iv. 24; v. 9; vi. 15. For it is the jealousy of the God of Israel with respect to His people Israel which is responsible for the severity with which He is about to deal with her great enemy Nineveh. It is at least noteworthy that this is the only place in the entire book in which the word *'El* occurs. The Tetragram (*YHWH*) appears three times in the rest of verse 2 and twice in verse 3. It would have been easy to use *'El* again at the beginning of verse 3 or of verse 7. But we find it only here where *'El qannô* immediately follows *'Elqôshi*.

It is to be noted further that the word *nôqem* (avenging) occurs three times in this verse, and that neither it nor any other word from the same root appears elsewhere in Nahum. This would seem to make it quite possible, even probable, that in the word *nôqem* we have a word-play on the name Nahum, which the

[1] Cf. Ahijah the Shilonite, Elijah the Tishbite, Micah the Morashtite.

prophet has just announced as his own. That alliteration and word-play is intended is confirmed by the use of the word *nôter* (reserving) which makes the fourth word beginning with *n* in this one verse. That Nahum (comfort) should suggest by way of contrast *nôqem* (avenging) is not at all remarkable. For Nahum would naturally think of his name as suggesting comfort for his own people, which though sinful he knows to be God's people, and for whom the only comfort to be expected must be found in the overthrow of their powerful and deadly enemy. It is also to be noted that the name Nineveh itself has two *n*'s, which would both justify and suggest the punning connection between *Nahum* and *nôqem*. Furthermore the *naqqeh lo' yenaqqeh* (and he will certainly not treat as innocent) of verse 3a may be regarded as an echo of the three-fold *nôqem* of verse 2. It may also be noted that the *ba'al hêmah* at the end of 2a has the *Heth* and *Mem* of Nahum. At least this explanation will serve to account for the marked predominance of *Mem*, *Nun*, and *Qoph* at the beginning of an utterance, in which if alphabetic the emphasis would be placed on other letters of the alphabet.

If the examples of word-play or paronomasia which have just been cited stood alone in the Book of Nahum, it would be easy and natural to describe this explanation as fanciful if not fantastic. But when it is recalled that such or similar literary devices occur elsewhere and in all parts of Nahum, this solution may well be regarded as meriting careful consideration. If accepted, it solves the vexing problem of verse 2b, which must be regarded as an interpolation if a strict alphabet poem begins with 2a. It also indicates the correct understanding of verse 3 and of the alphabetic influence which appears in it and in several of the following lines. The *'El qannô* having been introduced in verse 3 and identified as Jehovah, verse 3 proceeds to describe Him as " long suffering ". It reads *YHWH 'erek 'appayim*. *YHWH* is the emphatic word and properly stands first. It is followed by two words each of which begins with Aleph. Similarly in 3b, *YHWH* is the emphatic word and this is brought out by the use of a compound nominal sentence (Jehovah—in whirlwind and tempest is his way). Here the second word begins with Beth (*besûpah*). Thus we have what may perhaps be regarded as the basis or beginning of an alphabetic arrangement, beginning with verse 3a instead of 2a. But it is to be noted that it begins as a decidedly minor and

secondary feature which never becomes dominant. In fact it may be regarded as quite uncertain just to what extent the thought of alphabetic sequence was present in the mind of the prophet. For while, as we have seen, he gives us a *Gimel*, a *He*, a *Waw*, a *Heth* and a *Teth* line, he makes no effort to give a complete sequence; and furthermore all of the sequences which are present can be regarded as quite as much topical as alphabetic, even more so. The language is not artificial or stilted. The ideas follow one another naturally and easily. All of which means, we believe, that, while alphabetic sequence influenced the construction of chap. i to some extent, it played a very minor rôle and was quickly dropped entirely. On the other hand repetition, alliteration, assonance and paronomasia figure prominently throughout the book.

It will be noted that the solution offered has this advantage over the strictly alphabetic that it does not require or resort to textual emendation. On the contrary it gives definite support to the view that the entire book comes to us from the pen of Nahum. It does this by connecting the heading closely and intimately with the discourse which it introduces and also by showing that the more noteworthy features of the utterance in chap. i are characteristic of the little book as a whole.

VI. PARONOMASIA IN THE PROPHETS

In view of the importance which the solution which has been offered attaches to the word-plays or puns on the words Nineveh, Nahum, and Elkoshite, it may be well to remind ourselves that such literary devices were not at all unworthy of the Hebrew prophet,[1] that as a matter of fact such word-plays are neither unusual nor unimportant in the Old Testament.[2] The fact that many Biblical names are significant is partly responsible for this. Such names are Isaac, Ishmael, Benjamin, Manasseh, Ephraim, which are all explained. The reason for the name may vary greatly. Ichabod and Benoni express despair or grief. The name Joseph expresses both gratitude

---

[1] That the prophets were not unmindful of the *sound* of their words is strikingly illustrated by Elisha's prophecy of plenty for the starving people of Samaria: " About the time of to-morrow three seahs of fine flour for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria " (*ka'et mahar se'ah solet besheqel wesatayim se'ôrîm besheqel besha'ar Shômerôn*), eight consecutive words beginning with a sibilant!

[2] Cf. I. M. Casanowicz, " Paronomasia in the O.T." in *JBL*, xii (1893), pp. 105-67.

---

and expectancy: " And she said, the LORD has taken away (*'asap*) my reproach; and she called his name Joseph, saying, May the LORD add (*yôsep*) to me another son ". Naomi (lovely, pleasant) expresses her disillusionment by the words: " Call me not Naomi, call me Marah (bitter) ", which suggests how conscious she was of the fact that her misfortunes in Moab seemed to give the lie to her name. If this was true of Naomi, how much more likely was it to be true of such a man as Elijah the Tishbite. All that we know about his parents is that they called him Elijah (my God is Jehovah). But we may well believe that his name exercised a powerful influence on his career. For " my God is Jehovah " was the master-influence in his life. It epitomized the mighty struggle of the Tishbite against Tyrian Baal; and it seems to find its echo in the words of the repentant multitude on Mt. Carmel, when they shouted, " Jehovah is God ". What more appropriate name could the great " evangelical prophet " have received than Isaiah (Jehovah is salvation, or, salvation of Jehovah)? " Save " and " salvation " are common and precious words in his prophecies (e.g. xii. 1–3). May we not well suppose that the giving of the name was, in some cases at least, a part of the Lord's preparation of His servant for the task which was to be his? The name Malachi (my messenger) seems to find its echo in the use of this word three times in Malachi's short prophecy.

Word-play can be quite effective and is calculated to impress itself upon the memory. The pun on " almond-tree " (*shaked*) and " watching " (*shôked*) in Jeremiah's inaugural vision (i. 11 f.), and Amos's play on the words " summer fruit " (*qayiç*) and " end " (*qêç*) are familiar examples. In Micah i there are a half-dozen or more word-plays on the names of towns, e.g. Gath, Lachish, Achzib, and Maresha. In Zeph. ii. 4 the names of four of the Philistine cities are similarly played upon. Cf. Gen. xv. 2, where a play on the name Damascus seems clearly intended; also the name Beth-aven (Hos. x. 5) which appears to be a minatory play on the name Beth-el (cf. Amos v. 5, where there is a play on both Gilgal and Bethel).

Zeph. iii. 1 seems to be carefully phrased to point out with startling impressiveness the appalling difference between what Jerusalem is and what she ought to be. Three words are used to describe the city, each of which can have a good meaning or

suggest one, but each of which actually has a bad one. *More'ah* apparently means " rebellious "; but it closely resembles and suggests " reverend " (to be feared, inspiring fear), used in a good sense. It might also come from a verb meaning " fat ". *Nig'alah* may be derived either from a root meaning " polluted " or, equally well, from one meaning " redeemed ". *Yonah* may mean " oppressing " (e.g., Jer. xlvi. 16). But in the O.T. its usual meaning is " dove " (cf. Ps. lxviii. 13). Were it not for the " Woe " at the beginning, every one of these descriptive epithets might be taken in a good sense. But the fearful indictment which follows makes it clear that they are all used in a bad sense: describing what the City of David is, while at the same time suggesting what she ought to be.

In view of such examples and of others which might be given, it is not only not remarkable, but even highly appropriate, that Nahum should begin his tremendous prophecy of woe on Nineveh, the " bloody city ", by playing on these words which through the providence of God had been written so large in his experience—Nahum, Nineveh, Elkosh.

Wayne, Pennsylvania.   OSWALD T. ALLIS.