THE ALPHABETIC POEM IN NAHUM.

THE Old Testament contains a number of acrostic poems. The two laws of such acrostics are that the initial letters of the several sections should follow the order of the alphabet, and that the sections or stanzas devoted to each letter should be of (at least approximately) the same length. Different poems differ in the length of the stanza, but within the same poem the length must be the same. Thus in Psalm cxix. the length of each stanza is sixteen lines,[1] in Psalm xxxvii. four, in Lamentations cc. i., ii., iii.[2] three long ("ḳinah"[3]) lines, in Lamentations c. iv. two "ḳinah" lines, in Psalms xxv., xxxiv., cxlv. two lines, in Psalms cxi., cxii. one line. Slight deviations from each of these two laws occur in the present text of the poems. In some cases the deviation is clearly due to textual corruption. As a generally recognised instance the absence of the line beginning with ע in Psalm xxxvii. may be cited. Whether the absence of the ו verse in Psalm xxv., of the ל verse in Psalm cxlv., or the fact that in Psalm xxv. only a single line is devoted to נ be original or the result of transcriptional error cannot be said with certainty. But even if the originality of the irregularities in question be admitted, the few exceptions simply serve to prove the two general laws already stated.

The case is different with Psalms ix. and x., which constituted originally, as they still do in the Septuagint, a

[1] In this example every other line within each stanza begins with the same letter. The verse in English most frequently contains two lines of the original; but as it sometimes contains more, sometimes less, the relation between different acrostics can only be satisfactorily described by reckoning lines. The English reader will find the structure of the acrostic Psalms indicated by marginal letters in the recently issued English translation of the Book of Psalms (*Sacred Books of the Old Testament*) by Wellhausen and Furness.

[2] In Lamentations c. iii. each of the three lines of the several stanzas begins with the same letter.

[3] Cf. Driver, *Introduction*,[6] pp. 457 f.

single poem. It is now generally admitted that the succession of certain letters at fixed intervals is not accidental; in other words, that this poem is based on an acrostic. The facts are these: the first three and the last four letters of the Hebrew alphabet form the initial letters in regular succession of four-lined stanzas (Psalm ix. 1–6 [Heb. *vv.* 2–7], א-ג; x. 12–18, ק-ת). In addition to these seven sections we find the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th letters (ז-י) following one another in ix. 11–17 (Heb. *vv.* 12–18); the ו and ט verses are of four, the ח verse of five lines.

It is a matter of more recent observation and, at least in England, of much less general recognition that the book of Nahum, like Psalms ix., x., contains in whole or in part a mutilated acrostic. Following up earlier suggestions by a German pastor of the name of Frohnmeyer and Franz Delitzsch, Bickell[1] and Gunkel[2] have ventured to reconstruct out of Nahum i. 1–ii. 3 a complete acrostic in which each stanza consists of two lines; and Nowack, in his excellent commentary on the Minor Prophets published last year, has indicated the structure of the poem in his translation, and defended the requisite emendations in his notes. Three of the leading Old Testament scholars in our own country have recently had occasion to refer to the subject. It has received at once the fullest and the most sceptical discussion from Dr. Davidson,[3] who appears to doubt the existence of any intentional alphabetic arrangement in Nahum c. i., and certainly discountenances any attempt to restore the latent acrostic, if such exist. Dr. Driver's judgment is expressed as follows in the last

[1] In the *Zeitschr. d. deutschen morgenländischen Gesellsch.*, 1880, pp. 559 f.; *Carmina Vet. Test. metrice* (1882), p. 212 f.; and *Beiträge zur sem. Metrik* in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Vienna Academy (Phil. Hist. Series), vol. 131, Abhandlung V. (1890).

[2] In the *Zeitschr. für AT. Wissenschaft*, 1893, pp. 223–244, and *Schöpfung und Chaos* (1895), pp. 102 f.

[3] *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Camb. Bible for Schools), 1896, pp. 18–20.

edition of his *Introduction*: "In Nahum i. 2–ii. 2 . . . traces of an acrostich . . . seem to be discernible." In a subsequent review of Nowack's commentary he has expressed himself somewhat more fully, but not more approvingly. After admitting that "undoubtedly there are traces of an alphabetic arrangement in the successive half verses," he expresses great doubt "whether this was ever intended to be carried systematically through, or whether it is due to anything more than the fact that the author allowed himself here and there, perhaps half accidentally, to follow the alphabetical order."[1] Dr. G. A. Smith,[2] while agreeing with the two scholars whose views have been just cited that much of the reconstruction of Bickell and Gunkel is arbitrary, quite decisively admits that the traces of an acrostic are real. To cite his own words: "The text of chapters i.–ii. 4 has been badly mauled, and is clamant for reconstruction of some kind. As it lies, there are traces of an alphabetical arrangement as far as the beginning of ver. 9" (p. 82). At the same time Dr. Smith minimizes, as it appears to me, the force of the evidence and fails to take full account of what he himself admits.

Under these circumstances a fresh discussion of the subject will hardly be considered uncalled for. It may be true of the last part of the poem that the restoration of the acrostic "can never be more than an academic exercise" (Davidson); but the establishment of the fact, if fact it be, that parts or the whole of a regularly and consciously constructed acrostic poem lie latent in the book of Nahum cannot remain without effect on the exegesis of the passage and on certain not unimportant critical problems.

Where too much is attempted it frequently happens

[1] *Expository Times*, Dec., 1897, p. 119. Compare also *Introd.*,[6] p. xxi.

[2] *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, vol. ii. (1898), pp. 81–84.

that too little gains recognition. Both Bickell and Gunkel have attempted to reconstruct an entire acrostic. Much of the detail is of necessity uncertain. The consequence is that, as we have seen, it is still doubted whether the chapter contains even any fragments of an acrostic. We must therefore distinguish between the proof that Nahum contains traces of an acrostic which, when the evidence is duly presented, is cogent and certain details of reconstruction, which are requisite if an entire acrostic is to be restored but for which the evidence is in one or two cases strong, in many slight, and in some nil.

The proof that Nahum contains at least parts of an acrostic must be based on the phenomena presented by the Hebrew text and the versions of the first nine verses of chapter i. Any one who is unconvinced by these will remain unconvinced by the much less conspicuous and significant phenomena of the following verses. The influence of the two laws of the acrostic — alphabetical succession of initial letters and equal lengths of the several verses or sections—can best be made clear to those unfamiliar with Hebrew by a translation arranged in parallel lines. Variations from the Hebrew consonantal text are printed in italics. The initial letters are printed on the left hand together with a numeral indicating the position of the letter in the Hebrew alphabet; and these are inserted in brackets when they are only gained by rearrangement of the order of words or lines. For convenience of reference in the subsequent discussion, the number of the lines of the translation are placed on the right hand.

1. א A God jealous and avenging is Yahwè,
Yahwè taketh vengeance and is full of wrath;
[Yahwè taketh vengeance on his adversaries,
and retaineth anger for his enemies.
Yahwè is longsuffering and great in strength, 5
but [1] Yahwè will not wholly acquit.]

[1] I follow the Syriac in connecting Yahwè with this line; cf. LXX. as

2. ב In whirlwind and storm is his way,
and clouds are the dust of his feet.
3. ג He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up,
and parcheth all the rivers.
(4. ד) Bashan and Carmel *languish*,[1]
and the growth of Lebanon withers.
5. ה Mountains quake because of him,
and *all* the hills melt.
6. ו So the earth becomes desolate[2] before him,
the world and all that dwell therein.
(7. ז) Before his indignation who can stand?
and who can endure the heat of his anger?
8. ח His wrath pours out like fire,
and rocks are *kindled*[3] by him.
9. ט Good is Yahwè to *those who wait for him*,[4]
a stronghold in the day of distress.
(10. י) He knoweth those who trust in him,
and in the overflowing flood *delivers them*.[5]
(11. כ) An utter end he maketh of them that rise against him,
and he *thrusts*[6] his enemies into the darkness.
(12. ל) *Not twice does he take vengeance on his adversaries,*[7]
an utter end he maketh.
(13. מ) *Why do ye plan against Yahwè?*[8]

punctuated in Swete's edition. MT., and consequently E.V., connect it with the following line.

[1] See below.

[2] Point ותשא (the word used of desolate cities in Isa. vi. 11) instead of ותשא. The R.V. rendering of the latter word is hazardous. In favour of the emendation, cf. Targ. וחרובת. Vg. *contremuit* is at least no support of MT.

[3] MT. נתצו means "are thrown down," not "are broken asunder" (R.V.); by a transposition of the second and third letters we get נצתו = are kindled.

[4] LXX. *τοῖς ὑπομένουσιν αὐτόν* = לקויו (cf. *e.g.* Isa. xlix. 23). It has sometimes been supposed that לקויו is a simple misreading of למעוז (Hebrew text) or *vice versâ*. But this is unlikely. The individual letters are not very similar. More probably the present Hebrew and Greek texts have each arisen by the intentional or accidental omission of one of the two words. The Targum is too free to afford convincing evidence. But their translation would be easily explained by the text assumed above. It runs thus: "Good is Yahwè to Israel that they may stay themselves upon him in time of distress"—Israel = לקויו; that they may stay themselves upon him = למעוז.

[5] Supply יצילם.

[6] Reading יהדף for ירדף; cf. Job xviii. 18.

[7] Reading יקום and בצריו for תקום and צרה, after LXX. *ἐκδικήσει, ἐν θλίψει.*

[8] The *order* of these lines is different in MT. Otherwise the text is unchanged.

The foregoing translation represents to the eye the original structure of the poem, which is quite obscured by the unoriginal and, indeed, very late verse division found in E.V. The fact that any of the alphabetic letters occurs in the middle of a *verse* is a matter of entire indifference to our argument. The question is, How frequently and with what regularity do they occur at the beginning of *lines*? The main and indisputable facts can be seen by a glance at the marginal letters accompanying the translation. Before discussing some of the more ambiguous phenomena it will be well to point out that the lines are, for Hebrew poetry, remarkably regular in length. The case for the reality of metre in Hebrew poetry does not appear to me to be made out. But there is no question that in many poems the lines consist of approximately the same number of words. This is the case with the present passage. The regular length of the line is three or four independent words. In one case only (l. 14) the number of words is only two.[1] In line 5, which, as we shall see below, is probably part of a gloss, the number is five. Unless the emendations adopted in lines 21, 24 be accepted, two other lines also extended to five words.[2] The effect of the emendations is in each case to make out of a single line of five words two lines of three words (ll. 21, 22; 24, 25). With the exceptions mentioned the emendations adopted do not affect the length of the lines. Even in the Hebrew text as it stands, out of twenty-seven lines all but four consist either of three or four independent words. A great tendency to approximate regularity of length must therefore be admitted.

[1] *i.e.* in the Hebrew text. In the translation I have adopted Gunkel's suggestion. He inserts כל before הגבעות (cf. Ps. cxlviii. 9; Jer. iv. 24; Amos ix. 13).

[2] The dissimilarity in length of these lines to the others appears in Prof. Smith's translation, *Book of the Twelve*, II. p. 93, 4th and 2nd line from bottom.

Turning now to the occurrence and position of the acrostic letters, it will again be well to proceed from the certain to the uncertain.

As the Hebrew text stands apart from any, even the slightest emendation, the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 8th, and 9th letters of the Hebrew alphabet stand at the beginning of the 7th, 9th, 13th, 15th, 19th, and 21st lines respectively; in other words, they stand separated from one another by precisely the same *constant* interval which would separate them in an acrostic poem so constructed that two lines should be given to each successive letter; actual instances of similarly constructed and virtually unmutilated poems are, as we have seen, Psalms xxv., xxxiv., cxlv., and Proverbs xxxi. 10–31. This single fact, when duly considered, appears to me to necessitate the conclusion that we have in this passage the result of fully conscious design, and in these lines, as in those that intervene, parts of an acrostic. Previous English presentations of this subject, so far as known to me, have not brought into sufficient relief the evidence of the influence on this passage of *both* laws of the acrostic—the occurrence of the letters of the alphabet in regular succession *at regular intervals.* That the occurrence of the six letters just referred to in alphabetical order at fixed intervals is due to mere accident or even to half-conscious design, appears to me in the highest degree improbable.

In the Hebrew text as it now stands the 11th and 17th lines do not begin with ד and ז respectively, as they should do if they formed part of an acrostic. Nor, again, does the 23rd line begin with ט, as it should do if the acrostic or the fragment thereof extended so far. Is there anything apart from the acrostic theory which suggests that at these points the Hebrew text is corrupt? Or failing that, can the acrostic theory be satisfied by simple and probable conjectural emendation? If this should be so, the evidence

of the uncorrected Hebrew text, in itself so strong as to be almost irresistible, receives some further support.

In the case of what should be the *daleth* verse (ll. 11, 12), but which in our present text begins with an *aleph*, the versions are certainly interesting and suggestive. In the two parallel lines (11, 12) the Hebrew text has the same verb (אמלל); in *all* the early versions (LXX., Syr., Targ., Vulg.), the verbs in the two lines are different.[1] Thus the double occurrence of the same word in the two parallel lines is on grounds of textual criticism open to grave suspicion.[2] On the same grounds, however, it must be admitted that all these versions read אמלל with initial *aleph* at the beginning of the former of the two lines,[3] where the acrostic requires a word beginning with *daleth*. This is a fact which ought to be frankly faced and duly considered in deciding to what extent Nahum c. 1 preserves an acrostic poem. But it must be noted further that the verbs used by the LXX. and Syriac versions in the second line of the same parallel (l. 12 in the above translation) never occur elsewhere as translations of אמלל, although in each of these versions several equivalents of אמלל are found[4] one of which might have been

[1] LXX., ὀλιγώθη . . ἐξέλιπεν; Syr., ܐܠܦ . . ܒܥܐ; Targ., נתרו . . צדי; Vulg., "Infirmatus est . . elanguit." This cannot well be attributed to a mere desire for variation, for just below, in lines 17, 18, both Syr. and LXX. translate *different* Hebrew words by the same Greek (ὀργή) or Syriac (ܟܨܦܐ).

[2] I question whether the mere fact of the repetition of the same word in the second line could reasonably be regarded as suspicious. There are too many similar instances in our present Hebrew text for it to be safely assumed that a Hebrew poet never used the same verb in two parallel lines.

[3] In each case the words, used by the versions in this place, occur elsewhere as translations of אמלל: thus ὀλιγοῦν in Joel i. 10, 12; ܐܠܦ in the Pesch. of Isaiah xxiv. 4, 7, Jeremiah xv. 9, Hosea iv. 3; צדי (in the Targums as printed in Walton's Polyglot) in Isaiah xix. 8, xxiv. 4, Jeremiah xv. 9 (cf. 1 Sam. ii. 5; and the Pesch. use of ܒܥܐ in 1 Sam. ii. 5, Jer. xiv. 2, Lam. ii. 8); *infirmatus* (or *infirmus*) *est* in the Vulgate of 1 Samuel ii. 5, Isaiah xxiv. 4 (*bis*), 7, Jeremiah xv. 9, Hosea iv. 3, Psalm vi. 3.

[4] In addition to the words mentioned in the last note, the LXX uses ἀσθενής

used had the translators merely desired variant renderings in the two lines of the same verb.

It is, therefore, improbable that אמלל stood in the Hebrew text of line 12 at the times when the LXX. and Syriac versions were made.[1] On the other hand there is reason for believing that the actual reading of the Hebrew text which lay before at least the Greek translators was דלל (dālal). For (1) this verb is translated by the same Greek word that is found in line 12 in Isaiah xxxviii. 14, and probably also in Isaiah xix. 6; compare also Isaiah xvii. 4; (2) the two final letters of דלל are the same as of אמלל; this would have facilitated an accidental copying of the verb of the previous line. The chief question that remains is whether the verb דלל would be appropriate. Certainly there is no other instance of its being used of foliage, but in Isaiah xxxviii. 14 it is used of languishing eyes, in Isaiah xvii. 4 (Niphal) of the glory of Jacob, and in Post-Biblical Hebrew (Hiphil) of thinning out vines or olives.[2]

But beyond this not unimportant suggestion the versions do not help us. Already when they were made lines 11, 17, 23 began with other letters than those required by the acrostic. In line 23, however, the initial word is וידע; the acrostic is at once satisfied by the simple omission of ו, which leaves ידע. That ו was constantly added through

(or verb) Psalm vi. 3, Lamentations ii. 8, 1 Samuel ii. 5; πενθεῖν Isaiah xvi. 8, xix. 8, xxiv. 4, 7, xxxiii. 9 (?); κενοῦσθαι Jeremiah xiv. 2, xv. 9; μικρύνεσθαι Hosea iv. 3; and the Syriac uses ⟨ 1 Samuel ii. 5, Jeremiah xiv. 2, Lamentations ii. 8 (cf. also the usage of צרי in the Targ.—see preceding note); ⟨ Psalm vi. 3 and (Ethpeel of verb) Isaiah xix. 8; ⟨ Joel i. 10, 12, Isaiah xvi. 8.

[1] It is less improbable that the Targ. and Vulg. read אמלל here as well as in the preceding line, though of course the difference in the translations still constitutes a considerable presumption against identity in the original. But both words used in Targ. and Vulg. also appear elsewhere as translations of אמלל. On צרי and *infirmatus est*, see preceding note; for נתר cf. Joel i. 10, 12, and for *elanguit* Joel i. 10, 12, Isaiah xxxiii. 9.

[2] See *Peah* iii. 3, vii. 5: *Shebi'ith* iv. 4.

dittography or overlooked before another ו or י, with which latter letter it is frequently confused, becomes clear from a comparison of the LXX. and Hebrew texts. In assuming then that the ו at the beginning of line 23 is intrusive, we are simply assuming what we know for certain frequently happened in similar cases.

The recovery of the initial ד and ז require us to assume two [1] cases of transposition of words in the course of the transcription of the Hebrew text prior to the Greek translation. Once again no one questions that transpositions have taken place in the course of transcription. That the three initial letters wanting in the present text reappear by means of such comparatively simple emendations, thus giving us nine successive letters of the alphabet as initial letters at remarkably constant intervals turns a prior great probability into virtual certainty.

If then the case is made out that lines 7–24 are nine successive stanzas of an acrostic poem which has suffered in three cases at the beginning of lines, and at least three or four times elsewhere from transcriptional error, how much may we infer with regard to the rest of this poem, of which at least this considerable fragment has survived without serious mutilation? Is the rest of the poem to be found in the remainder of the passage? Has it also suffered merely from the chances and accidents of transcription? Or has it been in parts obliterated, in parts interpolated?

That it has received some interpolation no one will question. The prophetic formula, "Thus saith Yahwè"

[1] In lines 11, 12 we must assume that the verbs of the two lines became transposed and that the original Hebrew ran דלל בשן וכרמל ופרח לבנון אמלל. In line 17 the fourth word of the line (לפניו) became transposed (having lost its final letter) to the beginning; for the present text לפני זעמו מי יעמד read therefore זעמו מי יעמד לפניו. The sense remains the same, but the Hebrew becomes more idiomatic; cf. Driver, *Tenses*, §§ 196f.

(*v.* 12), never formed part of an acrostic poem; and its presence can hardly help suggesting that the latter part of the poem, even if it survive in the main, has been to some extent recast by the inserter of these words. We have then to reckon with the probability of intentional as well as transcriptional changes in such parts of the poem as may be discovered after these words.

As it is the purpose of the present article to distinguish what is certain or very probable from details which are uncertain and only gain what varying degrees of probability they may severally possess in the light of that which is more certain, it will be sufficient from this point on to make brief notes on some of the more uncertain details and some of the questions which a careful study of Nahum i. 1–ii. 3 must necessarily raise.

(1) In the translation I have ventured to indicate the acrostic letters of the next three stanzes to those already discussed. Their restoration involves greater assumptions than did the restoration of the initial ד, ז, and י. But the emendation which gives the כ stanza (ll. 25, 26) seems to me very probable, and the transposition that places the ל stanza (ll. 27, 28) in its right place and gives us a first line of the מ stanza (l. 29) probable. The כ stanza immediately appears if we assume that a single word (יצילם = he delivers them) has dropped out after the words "with an overflowing flood." Not only so; the same emendation gives us two parallel lines of three words each instead of a single line of five words—a length which we have seen above in itself raises suspicion. The ל stanza and the first line of the מ stanza reappear on a mere rearrangement of lines. Lines 27, 28, 29 in the above translation stand in the Hebrew text in the order 29, 28, 27. On exegetical grounds the rearrangement appears to me an improvement, and thus far gains independent support.[1] But, of course,

[1] The translation adopted by Dr. G. A. Smith and Prof. Nowack of line 29,

the main reason for all the emendations referred to in this paragraph is the prior conclusion that the previous verses are parts of an acrostic.

(2) From the first line of the מ stanza onwards the acrostic can only be restored by much more radical alterations, and any particular suggestion can be regarded as little more than a possibility. At the same time the general fact that at least parts of the remainder of the poem lie embedded in the following verses appears probable. It is just in this part of the passage that the text is frequently so corrupt as to be unintelligible. It is, for instance, difficult to believe that any one can seriously consider *v.* 10 in its present form to have been written by an intelligent Hebrew.[1] Of details, the most probable appears to me that the ס stanza began with the סירים of *v.* 10. In *v.* 12 the sense almost requires us to omit the ו of ועִנִּתִךְ, so that we may translate "I have afflicted thee, but will afflict thee no more"; עִנִּתִךְ might then be considered the commencement of the ע stanza. Transpositions and omissions can seldom be dismissed as impossible; for apart from any acrostic theory it is very difficult to believe that the sudden transitions from Judah to Nineveh (?) as the person addressed in i. 8–15 (Heb i. 8—ii. 1) is original. Prof. G. A. Smith, who never suffers himself to be controlled by the acrostic theory, nevertheless finds it necessary to "disentangle" i. 13, ii. 1–3, from the rest, and print these verses by themselves as an address to Judah. The same writer's question, "If this passage was originally alphabetic, that is, furnished with so fixed and easily recognised a

"What think ye of Yahwè?" is, to say the least, hazardous—more especially if with the former scholar we regard *v.* 11 as genuine. Partly on this ground, partly on others, I am not inclined to follow Prof. Nowack in transposing lines 3, 5, 4 so that they follow line 29, and form the answer to the question.

[1] "These [? *read* there] are parts of Nahum i. (as *vv.* 10–12) in which the text is desperately corrupt" (Driver, *Expos. Times*, p. 119 footnote). Cf. also Davidson's notes on i. 10, 12, 15.

frame, why has it so fallen to pieces?" (p. 83) would be more to the point, if we had not the parallel case of a mutilated acrostic in Ps. ix., x. And again, why should Dr. Smith put such a question when he has admitted that a passage written in the easily recognisable "Qinah or elegiac measure" "has suffered sadly both by dilapidation and rebuilding" (p. 61 on Zeph. ii. 4–15)? The fact that particular suggestions are inconclusive does not render it impossible or even improbable that the alphabetic arrangement which extends to *v.* 9 extended further. It simply leaves the matter uncertain.

(3) The first line of the translation begins in the Hebrew, as it should do, with an *aleph*; it and the following line constituted the first stanza of the poem. But as the stanza must not exceed two lines, lines 3–6 cannot be original—at least in their present position. I have little doubt myself that Gunkel is right in regarding them as a gloss intended to limit explicitly the absolute assertion of the preceding lines.[1] It is worth noticing that line 5 is suspiciously long, consisting as it does of five words.

(4) Lines 1, 2 and 7–29 thus constitute the first 25 lines or the first $12\frac{1}{2}$ stanzas of an acrostic poem of 44 lines or 22 stanzas; some of the remaining 19 lines may survive mutilated and in disorder in chapters i. 10–ii. 3. The translation as given above (with the omission of ll. 3–6) in all probability approximates very closely to the sense and form of the first half of the original poem.

(5) Nahum i. 1–ii. 3 is at most only in part the work of the prophet Nahum. The main alternatives are these: (*a*) Nahum recast and in places expanded an existing acrostic poem. (*b*) Nahum composed an acrostic poem which has suffered much in transcription and has been in places

[1] "This is not obvious, and would hardly have been alleged apart from the needs of the alphabetic scheme" (G. A. Smith, p. 83). Perfectly true; but if the alphabetical scheme in parts be independently proved a reality, the view of *v.* 1 taken above, though not immediately obvious, becomes the most probable.

expanded by some subsequent editor. (*c*) Some fragments of Nahum (? part of i. 11, ii. 3) have been combined with parts of an acrostic poem. (*d*) An acrostic poem which, either before or after, suffered transcriptional corruption and interpolation has been incorporated in the book of Nahum by an editor, just as a short Psalm (Isa. xii.) was incorporated in a book of Isaiah, and a longer Psalm in the book of Habakkuk (c. iii.). Alternative (*a*) is very improbable; nor is (*b*) likely. But if either of these be adopted, this poem would be the earliest Hebrew acrostic of certain date, the next earliest being chapters i.–iv. of Lamentations.

(6) In view of the doubt that attaches to the chapter, evidence for the date of Nahum drawn from chapters ii. and iii. should be allowed to outweigh any counter evidence in chapter i. The effect of this is to strengthen the strong arguments which have induced recent writers[1] to assign the prophecy to the year 608 rather than *circa* 660 or 623.

The present article contains, I am well aware, comparatively few details that will be new to those who are acquainted with the German discussions to which I have referred, and to which I have throughout been greatly indebted, although I hope that my suggestion, based as it is on the evidence of the LXX., that the verb of the *daleth* stanza is דלל, rather than דצק (Bick.), or דאב (Gunkel, Nowack) may find acceptance. But I shall have achieved my purpose if I have succeeded in proving that it must henceforth be accepted as a fixed point for the criticism and interpretation of Nahum that the position of certain initial letters in the first chapter is not fortuitous, but the result of a fully conscious design; and, therefore, that this chapter contains at least considerable parts of an acrostic poem.

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[1] Davidson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, pp. 13–18; G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, II. pp. 85–88. Cf. Driver, *Introduction*, p. 335f.