The Omrides are remembered with disdain in the Old Testament. Little mention is made of the prosperity and wealth which Israel enjoyed during their day. The reader is told, instead, of their persecution of the Yahwistic prophets, their injustice to Naboth, and their Baalistic leanings. The biblical verdict upon this dynasty is presented most clearly in the account of Naboth’s murder, 1 Kings xxii, and the account of Jehu’s rebellion, 2 Kings ix 1-x 27.

The second of these accounts attempts to justify Jehu’s slaughter of the Omrides by calling attention to the fact that the prophets had predicted their terrible fate. It further implies that the prophets had made their attacks upon the royal family because of its Baalistic leanings, and that the chief purpose and result of Jehu’s massacre in Jezreel was to replace the Baalistic dynasty with a Yahwistic one 1). It should be noted, however, that the names which Omri and Ahab chose for their children (Athaliah, Ahaziah, Jehoram) are compounded with Yahweh and thus do not suggest a preference for Baalism 2). Nor did Baalism come to a sudden end when Jehu ascended the throne. It is evident from the Samaria Ostraca that names compounded with Baal were common in Israel as late as the reign of Jeroboam II 3). Indeed, if, as the author of the account of Jehu’s rebellion implies, the matter of Israel’s official religion or the personal religious leanings of the Omrides were all that was involved, the massacre in Jezreel would not appear as Yahwism’s moment of victory over Baalism, but its moment of revenge. Jehoram had already “put away

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1) Cf. esp. 2 Kings x 18-27.
2) The age of Ahaziah of Judah, the son of Athaliah, at his accession to the throne is evidence that Athaliah was the daughter of Omri (2 Kings viii 26; 2 Chron. xxii 2) rather than his granddaughter (2 Kings viii 18; 2 Chron. xxi 6). Cf. H. T. Katzenstein, “Who were the Parents of Athaliah?” Israel Exploration Journal V, no. 3, 1955, pp. 194-197.
the pillar of Baal" which Ahab had made before Jehu's rebellion 1).

Another apparent contradiction in the sources concerns the identity of the king in whose reign Naboth was murdered. It is explained in 1 Kings xxi that Jezebel conspired with the elders and nobles of Jezreel to bring about Naboth's death while Ahab was still on the throne. But the account of Jehu's rebellion, which makes only a passing reference to the event, tells us that when Jehu killed Jehoram he issued the following order to Bidkar his aide.

Take him up; cast him on the plot of ground of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember I and you riding side by side behind Ahab his father, Yahweh raised this threat against him: surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and his sons—the oracle of Yahweh—I will repay you on this plot of ground—the oracle of Yahweh. So now take him up; cast him on the plot of ground in accordance with the word of Yahweh. (vss. ix 25-26)

Besides the textual and translation problems involved in this passage 2) verse 26a implies, by use of the word וַתַּזְכָּר, that the Naboth affair took place the day before Jehoram's death rather than during Ahab's reign 3).

Due to the apparent clarity of 1 Kings xxi on the one hand, and to the fragmentary and confusing nature of the reference to Naboth's murder in the account of Jehu's rebellion on the other, the former has often been taken at face value and the latter disregarded in attempts to reconstruct the Naboth affair 4). It will be the first purpose of this paper, however, to show that these two narratives reflect quite a different scene for the murder and that the brief reference in the account of Jehu's rebellion, regardless of its textual difficulties, is probably the most accurate of the two. It will then be argued, largely on the basis of the reevaluation of the Naboth affair, that it

1) 2 Kings iii 2.

2) Note, for example, the unusual situation in verse 25b of the Hebrew text where a singular imperative is followed by a plural participle. The phrase וַתַּזְכָּר is even more problematic. Why does it occur twice in the same sentence? How should it be translated in this context? And, depending upon one's interpretation of the phrase, is the statement, "Surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and his sons... I will repay you on this plot of ground..." Jehu's own observation and statement of purpose, or is he quoting "The word of the Lord?"

3) This word appears four times elsewhere in the Old Testament (Gen. xix 34, xxxi 29, 42, Job iii 3). In each case it can only mean "the day before" or "the night before". Cf. S. Mandelkern, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae: Hebraicae Atque Chaldaeae, Berlin 1937, pp. 129-130.