

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

*JEREMIAH'S JERUSALEM.**Circa 625-586 B.C.*

THE ministry of Jeremiah to Jerusalem covered as long and as critical a period of the City's history as did that of Isaiah and was exercised upon the same wide complex of affairs: the ethics, the worship, and the politics of her people. Isaiah and Jeremiah scourged the same vices, and enforced the same principles of righteousness. Both inveighed against prevalent idolatries; both wrought with reforming kings, who not only sought to extirpate the idols, but, for the further security of a pure faith, took measures to concentrate the national worship upon the Temple. As for politics, Jeremiah, as well as Isaiah, had to fight a party which intrigued for alliance with Egypt, to confront the armies of a northern empire, and to live with his city through the terrors of a siege.

In spite, however, of this outward resemblance, the respective attitudes of the two prophets towards Jerusalem were distinguished by inherent differences, which are perceptible even in the ethical tempers of their ministries, while in the political issues they become so wide as almost to appear irreconcilable. Ethically, Jeremiah was more rigorous and hopeless than Isaiah. The evil reign of Manasseh had come between and revealed the incorrigible bias of the people to idolatry and immorality. The efforts of Hezekiah to purify and concentrate the national worship did not succeed, and Isaiah was therefore spared the duty of criticising the popular effects of such measures. But Jeremiah lived through a reform and a centralization of the worship only to be confronted by their moral failure and their many abuses. In other words, while the one prophet led up to Deuteronomy, the ministry of the other

was compelled to lead away from Deuteronomy. Isaiah had interpreted to Jerusalem God's purpose in her selection by David and throughout her history since. It had been God's will to make Jerusalem *the City of Righteousness*; and even though she had failed of that ideal, she was still His dwelling, whose eternal throne the prophet saw behind the altar of her Temple; she was still, in a shaken and distracted world, the only refuge of His Remnant. Upon the faith roused by such visions, Isaiah, almost alone, carried the City inviolate through the Assyrian invasion; and her deliverance in 701 set God's signature to the interpretation which he had given of her history. But Jeremiah saw no visions of the unique sacredness of Jerusalem. His inaugural sacraments were provided not in the Temple, but in the open air of the country, to which he belonged: in a blossoming almond twig, and a boiling caldron with its face to the fateful north, out of whose smoke came actual, vivid heathen to set their thrones in the gates of Jerusalem. Hezekiah's efforts to translate Isaiah's ideals for the City into fact had failed, in spite of the miraculous attestation of her inviolableness, and had been succeeded by the relapse into the idolatries of Manasseh. Josiah's efforts, though more thorough and for a time successful, effected only a formal and unethical fulfilment of the prophetic ideals. Therefore where Isaiah had travailed with the hearts of his generation in order to prove that the City was sacred and impregnable to all the forces of the world; Jeremiah was compelled to contend with that superstition of her security, to which the faith of his great predecessor had been perverted by her people, and to proclaim as doomed to destruction what Isaiah had triumphantly saved. Isaiah inspired her timid king to defy the northern foes and tell them that God would turn them back before they touched her walls. Jeremiah had to scorn the immoral confidence of her citizens

in her invincibility, and to call the prophets false who predicted that she would survive.

It was not, however, only ethical reasons or disappointment with the effects of reform, which thus drove Jeremiah into an attitude towards Jerusalem so antithetic to that of Isaiah. The political situation had also changed. By Jeremiah's time Jerusalem was no longer that indispensable fortress of God's Remnant which the statemanship of Isaiah had seen her to be in the Assyrian world of his day. The empire, which now threatened Judah, bore a different policy to the victims of its sword. Conquest by Assyria had meant national annihilation. Northern Israel had not survived it, and we may be sure that if Jerusalem had fallen to Sennacherib in 701 Judah must have perished with her sister. But, with political insight equal to Isaiah's, Jeremiah perceived the wide difference of the Babylonian policy. This also meant exile for the peoples, whom its armies had conquered, but it did not involve their utter destruction. A nation uprooted from their own land might live still and even flourish when replanted in the soil of Babylonia, and surrounded by a political climate, which—we do not exactly know why—was more favourable to their survival than the Assyrian had been. So Jeremiah neither travailed for, nor predicted, the inviolableness of Jerusalem, but on the contrary counselled her surrender to the Chaldeans, advised her banished people to adapt themselves to their servitude, and foresaw with hopefulness their long residence in a foreign land.

All these are reasons why, while the watchword of Isaiah's ministry was the Remnant, secure upon their immovable City, that of Jeremiah's was the Return, after the City had been *wiped as a dish* and her people scattered among the nations.

I have hinted that one difference between the two

prophets was that of their local origins ; and the emphasis of this also must be put into our contrast. Isaiah was Isaiah of Jerusalem. The City was his platform, and the scenery of all his visions. He moved about her a free and commanding figure, sure of his influence upon her rulers, and with an imagination never more burning than when exercised upon her Temple and her walls. But Jeremiah was a countryman, whose earliest landscapes were the desert hills and stony fields of Benjamin with their agricultural shrines ; who found his first sacraments, as has been said, in the simple phenomena of rural life ; and whose youthful ears were filled, not like Isaiah's with the merrymaking of the crowds of *the jubilant City*, but with the cry of the defenceless villages. When at last Jeremiah came to the capital it was to see the Temple of Isaiah's vision turned into a fetish by the people ; it was to be treated as a traitor by her rulers ; it was to find in her his repeated prison. And even when the siege was close about the City, and the prophet himself shut up in the court of the guard, his hope was still anchored in the country. His pledge for the future of the nation he gave neither in the Temple nor in anything else of which Jerusalem boasted, but in the purchase from his uncle of one of the family fields in Anathoth : for his heart was set not upon the survival of civic or priestly glory, but on the restoration of agriculture throughout the land that was now desolate and in the hands of the foe.¹ We must count it one not only of the most pathetic but of the most significant episodes in this country-prophet's career that he should stake his hope upon those derelict acres. It was there, forty winters before, he had seen the almond tree flourishing, and knew that God was awake.²

Conformably to the lines of sympathy and experience,

¹ Ch. xxxii., especially verses 15, 41, 43 ff. (probably a later commentary on the episode), contrasted with 29 and 31.

² Ch. i. 11, 12.

which we have traced, the details of Jeremiah's treatment of Jerusalem arrange themselves as follows. Our only difficulties with regard to them are those which haunt the biographer of Jeremiah throughout especially the earlier portion of his life : the absence from the several oracles of dates and other means of fixing their chronological order, and the intrusion of so many titles, glosses and other later matter. Still, we can often mark whether an oracle was uttered before or after the prophet left Anathoth for Jerusalem ; whether an oracle implies the existence of the rural shrines or the effects of the Deuteronomic legislation ; whether the battle of Megiddo was past ; and whether the battle of Carchemish had been fought, that gave to the Babylonians the supremacy of Western Asia and to Jeremiah himself the summit from which the course of events was at last clear to him. From the latter date, 604 B.C., when he dictated his earlier oracles to Baruch, and Baruch began to write his narratives, the exact years are either stated (not, however, always correctly) or clearly betrayed.

I. THE EARLY ORACLES OF JEREMIAH.

In what are apparently some of the earliest oracles of Jeremiah, now found in chapters ii.-iv.,¹ the prophet is engaged with the nation as a whole : her first loyalty to her God, her apostasy increasing from her entrance upon the Promised Land, and her present incredible misunderstanding of His ways with her. The name of Jerusalem either by itself or as preceding the rest of the land appears, almost exclusively, in such passages as (for other reasons) may be assigned to a later date.² It is the whole Israel or

¹ Erbt's arguments for a later date for chap. ii. (pp. 129, 235 ff.) are hardly sufficient.

² E.g., in the title ii. 2a, which is not found in the LXX., while the original oracle begins with 2b (*I remember the true love of thy youth, etc.*), and it is clearly not Jerusalem but the nation as a whole which is addressed (this against Erbt's *Jer. u. seine Zeit*, 128 f.) ; iii. 14-18, a passage which

Judah with which these early oracles deal.¹ If Jerusalem is mentioned it is as second to Judah,² or as the strongest of the fenced cities of the land,³ or as the public centre at which it was most natural to proclaim the message of the coming disaster.⁴ Throughout, the young Jeremiah has the unprotected villages on his heart and the interests of all *the townships of Judah*.⁵ The first outbreak of his anxiety for Jerusalem alone occurs at the end of this collection of oracles in one of the songs which has been reasonably assigned to the Scythian invasion (about 625): *the voice of the daughter of Sion gasping for breath, Woe is me, for it faileth, my life is the murderers*.⁶

There are other oracles farther on in the Book, which are apparently as early as those in chapters ii.-iv., and here again the interest of the prophet is for all the townships of Judah,⁷ and the whole country,⁸ on which Jerusalem is conspicuous as the capital, but by no means of unique sacredness, for he names her as second to the country,⁹ as equally involved in the horrors of the impending invasion,¹⁰ and as certain of siege and destruction if her inhabitants do not repent.¹¹

plainly implies the exile; iv. 14, which I think Duhm is right in regarding as an interpolation, for it breaks the connexion and weakens the emphasis of the context.

¹ Addressed by name ii. 14, 28, 31; iii. 6-13 (this passage may not all be from Jeremiah), 20, 23; iv. 1; and implied elsewhere.

² *Men of Judah and Jerusalem*, iv. 3; *men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem*, iv. 4; *Declare in Judah and publish in Jerusalem*, iv. 5; *this people and Jerusalem*, iv. 11a (it is doubtful if the clause be original).

³ *Let us go into the fenced cities. Set up a standard towards Sion*, iv. 5, 6.

⁴ iv. 16. Even here Duhm elides the words *publish against Jerusalem*.

⁵ E.g. iv. 16. ⁶ iv. 31.

⁷ E.g. v. 17, x. 19-22 (apparently from the Scythian period).

⁸ xiv. 17, 18, xvii. 1-4 (probably from the Scythian period).

⁹ xi. 2, 6, 9, 12, 13, the account of the part assigned to Jeremiah in the promulgation of Deuteronomy. xiv. 2 ff.; 19 (denied to Jeremiah by both Duhm and Erbt).

¹⁰ vi. 23, ix. 16-21.

¹¹ vi. 1-8. But this passage, in which Jerusalem alone is dealt with

To sum up—what Jeremiah has before him in these earlier oracles is the whole land of Judah, with its many shrines rank with idolatry, its rural landscapes and figures, its villages defenceless to the foe, and Jerusalem merely as the strongest, and most wicked, of its cities, to which the country folk flee before the invader, and which, as the climax of all, must fall before him. The passages of which Jerusalem forms the sole or the predominant subject are of later date.

II. AFTER THE INSTITUTION OF THE DEUTERONOMIC REFORMS.

In Chapter V. Jeremiah brings a searching indictment against all classes of the City's population. Duhm has imagined that the oracle marks Jeremiah's removal from Anathoth to Jerusalem, and that this therefore took place before the centralization of the national worship in the Temple in 620. But he forgets how close Anathoth lay to the capital and how familiar Jeremiah must have been with the citizens even before he became one of them. More probably the prophet's final migration to Jerusalem took place when the rural shrines, of which Anathoth was one, were abolished, and he and others of their priests were brought by Josiah to the Temple. However that may be, the effects of the centralization of the worship become very evident in the records of Jeremiah's activity as a prophet. After 620 he is able to address the whole manhood of the nation in the Temple Courts, as, obedient to Deuteronomy, they gather to the national festivals or fasts. For such addresses we are without any dates during the reign of Josiah. Hitzig, Keil and others have assigned

is more probably from a later period in the prophet's career, when either the Egyptians or the Babylonians were approaching, for the Scythians did not make such regular sieges as the one it describes. See below under III. and IV.

to the reign of Josiah chapter vii. 1-15, a passage which contains a speech by Jeremiah to *all Judah*¹ assembled in the Temple; distinguishing it from an address to *all the cities of Judah which are come to worship in Jahweh's house*, chapter xxvi. 1 ff., dated *in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim*. These two accounts, however, seem to refer to the same event. In any case the periodical gatherings in the Temple of all the men of Judah, which are enjoined by Deuteronomy, had become by the end of Josiah's reign so firmly established that they survived through the reign of his very differently minded successor; and Jeremiah used these gatherings in order to reach the national conscience. *Stand in the court of the house of Jahweh and speak to all the cities of Judah which are come to worship in the house of Jahweh.*² And again, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when the prophet dictated his oracles to Baruch, he ordered him to read the roll of them *in the ears of the people in the house of Jahweh on a Fast-day, and also in the ears of all Judah who are come in from their cities.*³ The City in fact has become the *auditorium* of the nation. Yet even so, it is only because the nation gathers together upon the courts of her Temple that the prophet's activity is confined to her. In other words, he concentrates his teaching upon Jerusalem for practical and not for doctrinal reasons; and neither he himself nor his biographer, Baruch, give her any precedence (with perhaps one exception⁴) before the

¹ vii. 2. The shorter LXX. text is here to be preferred.

² xxvi. 2. The parallel passage in vii. 2 runs thus in the Hebrew text: *Stand in the gate of the house of Jahweh and proclaim there this word, and say, Harken to the word of Jahweh, all Judah—ye that are entering by these gates to worship Jahweh; for which the LXX. has only Hear the word of Jahweh, all Judah.*

³ xxxvi. 6. Compare xxv. 1 f., where it is said that in the fourth year of Jehoiakim Jeremiah *spake with all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

⁴ ix. 11 [Heb. 10]. *I will make Jerusalem heaps. . . and the cities of Judah a desolation.* The date of this verse and even its origin from Jeremiah himself is uncertain.

rest of the land. In the passages just quoted from xxv. and xxxvi., in chapter xiii., if this be genuine,¹ in chapter xiv., the Great Drought, and in the Parable of the Potter (chapter xviii.) and the Symbol of the Potter's Vessel (chapter xix.) the precedence of the Land to the City is constant, in spite of the fact that the national worship has already been concentrated in the City.²

Jeremiah's sermon, recorded in chapter vii. 1-15,³ reflects another result of the centralization of the worship: the popular perversion of the Deuteronomic insistence on the unique sacredness of Jerusalem. By the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim,⁴ and in all probability before this and during the reign of Josiah, the people had come to regard the Temple as a fetish. *Put not*, he says to the crowds assembled from all Judah in the Temple courts, *put not your faith in false words*: "*The Temple of Jahweh, the Temple of Jahweh, the Temple of Jahweh, there they are.*"⁵ He turns his fellow-countrymen to the amendment of their ways. If they do justice between man and man, cease to oppress the orphan and widow and to shed innocent blood *in this place* and to go after other gods; then God will dwell with them in the place which He gave to their fathers. *Lo, ye are trusting to false words that profit nothing! Is it possible? Ye steal,*

¹ A difficult question, but on the whole Erbt's defence of it against Duhm seems to me strong.

² xiii. 9, 13; xiv. 2, 19; xviii. 11; xix. 7, 11; cf. xxv. 1, 18.

³ Duhm regards this passage as the work of a later expander of some genuine ideas of Jeremiah, obtained through Baruch's biography: "great thoughts, weakly elaborated." Duhm's view is governed by his quite unsubstantial theory that we have no genuine prose discourses from Jeremiah. Disallow this theory and there remains no objection to the substantial authenticity of ch. vii. The ideas are certainly Jeremiah's, and there is no improbability in his having expressed them in the then current and very infectious style of Deuteronomy.

⁴ Cf. with vii. 1-15 the date in xxvi. 1.

⁵ Literally "*those.*" Cf. our Lord's words, Matt. xxiv. 1 and 2.

murder, commit adultery, perjure yourselves, sacrifice to Baal and go after other gods whom ye have not known, and then ye come in and stand before Me in this House, which is called by My Name, and say, "We have saved ourselves!"—in order to do all these abominations! Has this House become a den of thieves? ¹

The ecclesiastical ideals of Deuteronomy had been fulfilled, only to become a superstitious substitute for its ethical demands. The hard hearts of the people have made their obedience to its programme of ritual an atonement for their evil lives; and impiously congratulated their blood-stained and lustful hearts that they are as safe behind the sacred walls as the pure heart of Isaiah had known itself to be. To all that kind of sham there was but one end—the destruction of the abused sanctuary. For this there was a precedent. *Go now to my sacred place ² which was in Shilo, where at the first I caused My Name to dwell, and see what I have done to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. So now, because ye have done all these deeds (although I spoke to you in time, but ye hearkened not, and although I called you, and ye did not answer), I will do to the House which is called by My Name, in which ye put your trust, and to the sacred place which I gave to you and to your fathers, just as I have done to Shilo, and I will cast you out from My Presence just as I cast out all your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim.*

We must not neglect to notice that on this occasion Jeremiah addressed himself not to the nation as a unit, as he had done in his earlier discourses and as the Book of Deuteronomy generally takes the nation, but to the separate individuals who compose it. This is clear from the parallel account in chapter xxvi. 3: *peradventure they will hear and turn, every man from his evil way*; and is in accordance with

¹ Cf. Mark xi. 15.

² מִקְדָּשׁ here in the same sense as the Arabic Makam.

the increasing individualism of Jeremiah's ethics, when the failure of the national system of Deuteronomy became apparent and the collapse of the nation grew more certain.

Jeremiah's prediction of the destruction of the Temple in which the people trusted was addressed to practically the whole nation gathered to a Temple festival.¹ At its close the Temple prophets and priests² laid hold on him with the words, *Thou shalt verily die*. To them it was the sheerest sacrilege to say a word against either the Temple or the City. But the matter, being public, *for all the people were gathered to Jeremiah in the Temple*,³ the news of it speedily reached the nobles of Judah, and they came up at once from the palace to the Temple and took their seats *in the opening of the new gate of Jahweh*.⁴ The prophets and priests then formally accused Jeremiah before the nobles and the people of a capital crime in threatening *this City*.⁴ Jeremiah made a calm and dignified reply: Jahweh had sent him to prophesy against the Temple and the City; but there was still time to move God to relent if they amended their ways. As for himself he was in their hands, let them do what seemed good to them, only they must know that if they killed him they would bring the guilt of innocent blood upon themselves and the City, for in truth it was Jahweh who had sent him. The nobles and all the people then said he was not guilty of a capital crime, for he had spoken to them in the name of Jahweh; and some of the oldest of the men present testified to the assemblage that when Micah the Morasthite had proclaimed a destruction of the City and Temple, Hezekiah and the men of

¹ xxvi. 7.

² Verse 8. Omit the words *and all the people*, which have been wrongly repeated from verse 7.

³ Verse 9. But this clause really belongs to the following verse, and explains how the report quickly reached the nobles in the palace.

⁴ Verse 11. *The people* were therefore not among his accusers.

Judah instead of putting him to death had feared God and He had averted the disaster. This precedent prevailed with the people, and Jeremiah escaped. The king, who was absent on the occasion—it is remarkable that neither now nor in the events related in chapter xxxvi. is Jehoiakim present in the Temple—pursued even to Egypt another prophet who spoke as Jeremiah had done, and put him to death.

A short oracle by Jeremiah, chapter viii. 18–23, of very uncertain date,¹ quotes from the lips of the people an echo of the same superstitious perversion of Isaiah's belief in the unique sacredness of the Temple. Under some military disaster, imminent or actual, Jeremiah hears from the land far and wide, the perplexed cry: *Is there no Jahweh in Sion, is her King not in her?* Immediately the voice of God replies through him that He is offended and wearied by their much idolatry. This oracle, in its quotation from the lips of the people of what might have been the very words of Isaiah, is an instructive proof of how the pure, ethical faith of one generation may become the desperate fetish of the next.

III. OTHER ORACLES IN THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM.

The people's relapse into idolatry after the collapse of the Deuteronomic ideals in the disaster at Megiddo (608 or 607 B.C.) confirmed Jeremiah in his belief in the inevitableness of the destruction of Jerusalem. The battle of Carchemish in 604 or 603, in which Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon defeated Necho of Egypt, showed him clearly from what quarter that destruction could come. In the fact of the Potter at his wheel, changing his first plans for a lump of clay, as he finds it under his hand unsuitable to them,

¹ The various opinions of modern critics as to the date of the oracle are sufficient proof of the impossibility of assigning it with certainty to any of the main divisions of Jeremiah's career. In E.V. it is viii. 18, ix. 1.

chapter xviii. 1 ff.,¹ Jeremiah sees an illustration of how God may change His first purposes for Israel. Chapter xix., the account of how Jeremiah broke a potter's jar at the Gate Harsith, concentrates this lesson upon Jerusalem and the Temple.² The prophets of Jerusalem, now the religious centre of the land, are themselves immoral and the source of all the national sin.³ Therefore, Jeremiah is certain of her fall: *For who will pity thee, O Jerusalem? Or who shall bemoan thee? Or who shall turn to ask of thy welfare? Thou hast rejected Me, thou art gone back; so I have stretched out My hand against thee, and destroyed thee: I am weary with relenting.*⁴

From this time then, about 604 or 603 B.C., Jeremiah was certain of the fall of the City, which less than a century before Isaiah had so triumphantly saved. Nor had he any doubt of the quarter from which her executioner was to come. The battle of Carchemish left Nebuchadrezzar, the Chaldean, master of Western Asia.

From the want of a date it is impossible to say whether an oracle with so early a position in the Book as chapter vi. 1 ff., arose from this time: it describes enemies as besieging the City, who are certainly not the Scythians, for these appear not to have cast mounts or ramps against fortified places, but when they attacked them did so by "rushing" the walls. But the kind of siege described suited the Egyptians as well as the Babylonians; and the oracle is as dateable from the years immediately after Megiddo when

¹ Undated, but most probably from the reign of Jehoiakim.

² Also undated. Some place it in Jehoiakim's, some in Zedekiah's, reign. Duhm's objections to the authenticity of this narrative are arbitrary.

³ xxiii. 13-15. An oracle certainly to be dated after the centralization of the religion in Jerusalem, and probably in the reign of Jehoiakim, though some place it in Zedekiah's. Even Duhm admits this oracle to be by Jeremiah.

⁴ xv. 5-6.

Necho had Palestine in his power as from those after Carchemish when he had yielded this sovereignty to Nebuchadrezzar. But if, as I think reasonable, we are to allow that there are any genuine elements in chapter xxv. 1-14,¹ we have among them a distinct statement that Jerusalem shall fall to the king of Babylon. Jehoiakim seemed to have turned the edge of this sentence upon his capital by submission to Nebuchadrezzar, and remained his vassal for three years. Then he rebelled, and Judah was invaded by a Babylonian army aided by troops of Aram, Ammon and Moab. The country people and even such nomads from the desert as were in alliance with Judah, like the Rechabites, flocked for refuge to Jerusalem: an instructive illustration of how the population of the City was always increased upon the threats of invasion.² What happened to Jehoiakim himself is uncertain: from the Book of Kings³ we may infer that he died a natural death, while the statement in Chronicles⁴ that he was taken by the Babylonians and carried into exile, is difficult to reconcile with the fact that three months later Jerusalem, under Jeconiah, was besieged by Nebuchadrezzar himself, and almost immediately surrendered. The king, the royal family, and the court, with the flower of the population,⁵ were carried into Babylonia; and a further respite granted to Jerusalem herself under Mattaniah or Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadrezzar placed on the throne as his vassal.

IV. UNDER ZEDEKIAH.

To these events we have no reference by Jeremiah himself

¹ Cf. Giesebrecht on this passage.

² xxxv. : this chapter is dated in Jehoiakim's reign (verse 1). Many transfer it to Zedekiah's reign, 588-87. It is possible that the text gives a wrong date, like ch. xxvii. 1. But 2 Kings xxiv. 1 ff. describes a Chaldean invasion of Judah in Jehoiakim's days.

³ 2 Kings xxiv. 6.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6; cf. Daniel i. 2; Jos. x. *Antt.* vi. 3.

⁵ Jeremiah xxiv. 1.

beyond a short elegy upon the exiled Jeconiah. Perhaps, as Erbt suggests,¹ till they were over, the prophet remained hidden outside Jerusalem. This suggestion is confirmed by the fact that he escaped the deportation of the notables of the City to Babylonia.

Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadrezzar installed in place of Jeconiah, was master neither of his throne nor of himself. A vassal, in the hand of his powerful lord, yet constantly goaded to revolt by his neighbours and a restless faction of his own subjects; deprived of the strongest of his people and dependent upon a council of inexperienced upstarts, yet tempted to rebel by the strength of his walls and the popular belief in their inviolableness; sensitive, if only from superstition, to the one high influence left him, yet urged in a contrary direction by prophets who appealed to the same God as Jeremiah did—the last king of Judah is one of the most pathetic figures even in her history and forms a dramatic centre for its closing tragedy.

During the first years of his reign there was nothing for Zedekiah and his people but to remain submissive to their Babylonian lord. This was in agreement with the convictions of Jeremiah, and therefore these years bring us no record of action by him, unless we are to assign to them any of those denunciations of idolatry which he is usually supposed to have published under Jehoiakim. As in the time of Manasseh, the servitude to a heathen Empire involved the admission to the national sanctuary of the gods of that Empire. Ezekiel² gives us a picture of the Babylonian idolatry which invaded the Temple under Zedekiah, and to which it is possible that some of Jeremiah's descriptions of the worship of *the host of heaven* may refer. Ezekiel also describes Jerusalem as full of moral wrong and the stupid

¹ p. 19.

² Ch. viii.

pride of the baser people left to her. They, forsooth, were Jahweh's true remnant, because they alone were spared to the City!¹ They had usurped the offices and the estates of their exiled countrymen; and were full of the arrogance of the upstart and of those who, having been saved only because of their inferiority, impute their salvation with equal folly either to their own merits or to the special favour of Heaven. Their self-confidence grew, till it inevitably turned upon its patron, and, fortified by proposals from others of his vassals, began to intrigue against Nebuchadrezzar.

It is at this point that the record of Jeremiah's public ministry is resumed. Ambassadors having arrived from Moab and Ammon, Tyre and Sidon—perhaps in the fourth year of Zedekiah, that is 593,²—Jeremiah was directed to meet their proposals for common revolt against Babylon by making yokes for himself and them, as symbols that the Babylonian yoke would not be broken. But the party of revolt had also its prophets who spake in the name of Jahweh, and we can easily understand how sincerely these men felt the truth of their message. Jahweh was Judah's God, who had already delivered her from an invader as powerful as the Babylonian. In affirming that He would do so once more these prophets were not only inflamed by a fanatic

¹ Ch. xi. 15; cf. Jeremiah xxiv.

² Jeremiah xxvii., xxviii., xxvii. 1, which fixes the date of these events in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, is both a late addition (which the LXX. Version is still without) and a false one: as even our English Revisers allow themselves to affirm, substituting on the margin the name of Zedekiah for that of Jehoiakim, and appealing to verses 3, 12, 20, and xxviii. 1. Chaps. xxvii.—xxix. form a group by themselves, being distinguished by certain literary characteristics from the rest of the Book of Jeremiah. But xxvii. also differs much from xxviii.; it is more diffuse, and its Hebrew text contains many additions, whose style no less than their absence from the Greek version prove them to be late. In xxvii., too, Jeremiah is introduced in the first person, while in xxviii. he appears in the third. In the text above use is mainly made of xxviii. The date suggested for the events of which both chapters treat, the 4th year of Zedekiah, is by no means certain.

patriotism and a mere military confidence in the nation's Divine leader. No doubt they desired as much as Jeremiah himself did to banish from Jahweh's Temple the foreign gods and their impure rites. Thus it was a very plausible opposition with which Jeremiah was confronted, and the way in which he dealt with it, not quite sure at first whether it might not be genuinely inspired of Jahweh, forms one of the most interesting episodes in the whole history of prophecy. Only observe how, unlike his contemporary Ezekiel, he is utterly indifferent to the part that the question of the Temple plays in the controversy. This is to be solved, he feels, by no dogmas connected with the Temple or the Law, but upon principles which are purely ethical and political.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

(To be continued.)