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parochial organizations be made as complete as possible, and be systematically worked; let the gospel be preached in the open air, in our courts and lanes, in our highways and byways; but by all means let us enlist the co-operation of the great army of Christian working-men. Let us establish services in which they can assist, and which the poorest and most ignorant can understand and appreciate. Then, I believe, with the blessing of God, will the masses be reached and the kingdom of Christ advanced.

J. E. BLAKENEY.



#### ART. VI.—THE PROPHET JEREMIAH, AND HIS WRITINGS.

THE name of Jeremiah stands, if not highest, yet dearest to his race in the honoured list of their ancient prophets. His voice rises from amidst the ruins of Jerusalem in its first terrible overthrow by the Chaldaean, bewailing the sorrows of his countrymen led off into captivity, but in the midst of his bitter grief cheering them with the promise of a joyful return after the purifying exile of seventy years. In his lifetime the stern censor of his contemporaries, he had to bear the opposition and ill-treatment inevitably allotted to all true and earnest reformers; but with his death there came the usual reaction. Persecuted while alive, he was ere long almost worshipped when gone. The justice of his rebukes was admitted by the sons of those who had resented them; his tender patriotism was recognised; his yearning solicitude for the future restoration of his people seemed to point him out as still, from a higher sphere, their guardian and friend. Legends respecting him multiplied apace. He had hidden away the ark in security till the days of the Messiah. He would return as the herald of the Anointed of God. He was the patron-saint of the nation.

The prophet was born in the village of Anathoth, three miles north of Jerusalem—a spot belonging to the priests, as part of the Church lands—and being a child of a priest, was consequently by birth a priest himself. His father's name was Hilkiah, and it may be that he was thus the son of the high-priest under Josiah, so famous as the counsellor and friend of that famous king. The respect which the prophet as a rule received from the princes and kings of Judah—the contrast between his treatment and that of his contemporary Urijah, who was put to death for uttering the same opinions as those ceaselessly advanced by Jeremiah, and the fact that Baruch

the brother of Seraiah, a high official of Zedekiah's court, willingly acted as his copyist, seem to make this probable. If he were really thus of high birth, the best society of Jerusalem would be open to him, and his prospects in life would be exceptionally bright. But worldly attractions had no weight with his pure and disinterested spirit. The loss of all things, and the endurance of a life of trouble, were accepted as the natural accompaniments of fidelity to his mission.

The influences that formed the character of the future prophet are unknown. That he was of priestly blood must have been a great advantage, however, for it would secure him a good education, including, or rather consisting in, a thorough acquaintance with the sacred books of his people. All the culture and religious worth of the capital, moreover, would be within his reach, for Hilkiah the high-priest, if he were the lad's father, was not only the head of the Church, but a sincere worshipper of Jehovah. From the gentle height on which his native village stood, the very landscape would excite and feed religious impressions in a thoughtful mind. The grey hills of Benjamin, Nob, Gibea of Saul, Mizpeh, Gibeon, Ramah, and Geba, rose in a half-circle to the west and north-west, at different points. The chasm of the Jordan and the mountains of Gilead were visible on the east, while, as the eye turned southward, it rested on the purple hills of Moab, and the blue waters of the Dead Sea at their feet. We do not know the name of Jeremiah's mother, but she may well have helped to mould the character of her boy, by repeating to him the famous stories with which these localities were associated: stories of the greatness of Jehovah, His loving care of Israel, and the mighty deliverances He had wrought on its behalf.

The state of Judea in the boyhood and youth of Jeremiah were well fitted to make him thoughtful as he grew older. As a child he saw the culmination of heathenism under Manasseh, when an image of Baal was worshipped in the Temple, and the foul worship of a symbol of Ashtaroth stood under the trees in the Temple courts. He must have known the lewdness of the feasts and ritual of these foreign idols, and the neglect of all homage to Jehovah. Perhaps he saw the closing years of the persecution of those still faithful to the religion of their fathers. Manasseh's deportation to Babylon, and his return as a humble penitent, must have occurred in his early years. The reign of Amon had then followed—with its revival of idolatry, perhaps in spite of the king's efforts, for he was murdered, it may be for opposing the heathen party, within two years. As a sign of the times, Jeremiah would remember that this king actually bore the name of an Egyptian god—the only Jewish sovereign who was ever thus dishonoured. He

may have seen children offered to Moloch in the valley of Hinnom, under the very walls of Jerusalem, amidst all the horrors of such an awful fanaticism. If he visited friends in different parts of the country, he would notice different local gods in every town or district ; for there were as many different idols as there were cities. The morality of the day was such as this condition of affairs induced. It seemed vain to look for an upright or honest man : small and great appeared bent only on making money : prophet and priest were alike corrupt.<sup>1</sup>

An outward reformation begun by Josiah, and continued till long after the prophet had entered on his high office, changed the surface of things for a time. Idolatry was forcibly abolished ; the Temple services restored ; a great pass-over held ; the nation once more pledged to Jehovah by a solemn covenant ; and the long-lost Book of the Law accepted by them as their rule of public and private life. But he evidently had little faith in a religious revolution carried out by authority, for his name is not even mentioned in connection with it. In his eyes the change was only superficial ; the corruption as profound as ever.

Nor were the foreign relations of the feeble Jewish state more encouraging. Not larger than an English county, it was perfectly helpless in the fierce political struggles between the great powers on the Euphrates and the Nile. Esarhaddon had removed Manasseh, and had thus shown the ease with which Assyria could crush the kingdom if it chose. Egypt had been subdued by the same monarch, and put under Assyrian governors. Assurbanipal, his son, had a second time trampled under foot the might of the Pharaohs, but the fierce rebellions in his empire, and especially the struggles which led ultimately to the rise of Babylon, had so weakened Nineveh that the death of the great warrior was the signal for its final overthrow. That this tremendous result was for a time delayed had been due to a cause no one could have foreseen—an irruption of barbarian tribes from the plains of Southern Russia. Before the terrible hordes of the Scythians the hosts bent on crushing Assyria had to retreat, contenting themselves with a struggle for their own existence. All Western Asia had suffered from this overflowing scourge, but it had spent itself, after desolating great part of the immense regions between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean. Attempting the invasion of Egypt, it was forced to draw back, and from that moment continued its retreat till it

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<sup>1</sup> *Jer. ii. 28 ; xi. 13 ; v. 1-5 ; vi. 13.*

had finally vanished into the regions from which it had first issued.

The mortal struggle between Nineveh and its antagonists now burst out afresh. The Medes, aided by the still subordinate Persian tribes and a host of obscure allies, assailed it from the East. Egypt, now under Pharaoh Necho, determined to have a share of its vast territories on the west. From this world-conflagration a new political era emerged. Babylon, in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as the successor of his father, rose to supreme power. Egypt was hurled back to the Nile, and then, again, humbled and broken into petty sovereignties.

In such a general breaking up of the great kingdoms of the age, it was natural that, in helplessly dependent states like Judea, opposite opinions should be formed as to the final result. Assyria having fallen, and Pharaoh Necho, like his predecessor Psammetichus I., showing himself at once warlike and able, the weight of confidence in higher Jewish society inclined towards the Nile. A strong party believed that the future belonged to Egypt, and urged on the king at Jerusalem a close alliance with that country. To the keener eyes of the prophets, however, aided as they were by divine illumination, the sceptre of the world was seen to be passing into the hands of Babylon; and the earnest assertion of this belief, so contrary to that of the great Egyptian faction in the capital, placed Jeremiah in the position of their irreconcilable opponents, and drew on him a lifelong persecution.

The formal "call" of the prophet to his great office took place on the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, apparently without any outward accompaniment of a vision such as marked that of Isaiah or of Ezekiel. Though still a young man, he had doubtless pondered the interests of religion in every aspect, personal, social, and national. It is possible that his mind may have been turned specially into a theological channel by a formal training in one of the schools of the prophets at Ramah, Bethel, Jericho, Gilgal, or elsewhere; but the great impulse which the discovery of the Book of the Law must have given him did not come till some years after he had publicly entered on his office. It is certain, however, that to be summoned to the official service of Jehovah as a prophet, was only possible when the mind and heart intensely sympathized with the Divine Will. Religious enthusiasm, which dominated all the natural powers, can alone explain the ecstasies of prophetic inspiration. The influence from without was only an exaltation for the time of the habitual spiritual condition. The fire from heaven fell on a heart ready to burst into a divine glow. The shrinking modesty with which Jeremiah drew back from the dignity of a speaker for God is

itself evidence of an appreciation of the stupendous responsibility of such an office, possible only to a deeply religious soul.

Eighteen years passed from the time of the prophet's consecration to his high duties, and the death of King Josiah. During that long period, the staple of his preaching was the necessity for hearty moral reform if the favour of Jehovah was to be preserved to the nation. The worship of Baal and Astarte, with the sensual abominations of which it was the centre, were denounced in every form of earnest oratory. That he stood well-nigh alone was of no moment to the faithful preacher. He refused to be silent. Public sin, however popular, was the object of his unsparing and stern exposure. Nor did the restoration of the Temple, or the celebration of the Passover, with its formal renewal of the national covenant with Jehovah, divert his mind from the fact that these were only external reforms. What was wanted, he cried, was not the worship of the outward act, but the regeneration of the spirit. The newly-found Book of the Law had threatened a terrible judgment on the nation, if it were unfaithful to God; and that calamity, the prophet ceaselessly told his countrymen, must come on them if they did not repent and thoroughly amend their ways. He had no fixed place for his ministrations. The courts of the Temple, the streets, the open space at the city gate—any place where men congregated served for his preaching stations. His work, indeed, was mainly done in the open air—a lesson to us to-day. The earliest morning heard his voice, and, in spite of daily reproach and derision, he continually returned to his self-sacrificing task. No class escaped him—the priests, of whom he was one, as little as others. Forgetting the sacredness of their calling, they even went beyond others in their hostility, and tried to kill him.<sup>1</sup> Never was a more forlorn hope than that of Jeremiah's ministry. Jeers, hatred, treachery, almost made him despair and leave things to take their course.<sup>2</sup> His heart was crushed by the well-nigh universal aversion he incurred, for, beyond most, he was a man of tender heart and easily-touched feelings.

The specially political aspect of Jeremiah's preaching dates from the closing years of Josiah, when the vigour of Pharaoh Necho on the one hand, and of the young Nebuchadnezzar, the general for his father Nabopolassar, on the other, raised the question whether Judah should seek an alliance on the Nile or at Babylon. The prophet earnestly urged the latter course, and fiercely pronounced against Egypt. Neutrality seems to have been his idea, though Josiah, not contented with this,

<sup>1</sup> *Jer. xi. 21.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid., xv. 10.*

and seeking, in his enthusiasm, to oppose the Pharaoh, perished at Megiddo, a catastrophe that was the beginning of the final ruin of Judah.

Sorely troubled times followed the death of Josiah. Jehoahaz, his son and successor, was allowed to reign only three months, his election by the people in their ancient manner having excited the displeasure of Necho, now lord-paramount of Judah. Carried off to Egypt, he lingered there till death, lamented by his people. "Weep sore for him," cried Jeremiah, "that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country."<sup>1</sup>

Jehoiakim, an elder brother of the banished prince, who was nominated to his place by the king of Egypt, played an important part in the fortunes of the sinking land. The heathen party was once more in the ascendant, and with its impiety other evils went hand in hand. Forgetting the poverty of the little state, Jehoiakim sought to emulate the glory of a great king. Palaces on the grandest scale were built by him, at the cost of intolerable taxation in money and labour on the part of his people. Such a course met with the most undaunted opposition from Jeremiah. "Woe to him," he calls aloud, in one of his discourses, "that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work: that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion"<sup>2</sup> Such fearlessness towards even the king, was in keeping with his bearing towards all classes, in the utterance of disagreeable truth, exposing their sins. The priests and false prophets especially were exasperated at his biting words, and sought to have him put to death, on pretence that the opposition he gave to an Egyptian alliance was disloyalty to the State; but the judges, who had probably been appointed in the time of Josiah, threw out the charge.

Two years followed, during which Jeremiah was ceaselessly before the people as a preacher of righteousness, and an opponent of the league with Pharaoh. Babylon, he said, would assuredly prevail; and Judah would be broken in pieces by its hosts if it did not repent, as a potter's vessel, thrown by him on the ground as he spoke, was shattered to pieces.<sup>3</sup> The first violence shown the prophet followed this vivid prediction of the ruin of the state,<sup>4</sup> but his words were soon vindicated in part by the destruction of Pharaoh's army at Carchemish by Nebuchadnezzar, who forthwith pressed forward to Palestine

<sup>1</sup> *Jer. xxii. 10.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid., xviii., xix.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid., xxii. 13, 14.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid., xx. 2 et seq.*

on his way to the Nile, and carried off a number of citizens to Babylon, with a large proportion of the vessels and treasures of the Temple.<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah had fled from Jerusalem some time before this, but returned a year after the withdrawal of the Chaldeans. Once more before his countrymen, his bearing was marked by the same calm fidelity as in past years. Causing Baruch, his secretary, to write out a copy of all his deliverances respecting Judah, and read them at a great public feast, Jehoiakim summoned the offender to appear at the palace. The terrible threats of the prophet were more, however, than he could brook, and snatching the roll he burned it piece by piece in the brasier then alight in the room. Jeremiah and Baruch had once more to flee; this time apparently to Babylon.<sup>2</sup> The king received no more warnings; his doom was approaching. Three years later he lay a dishonoured corpse outside the gates, slain apparently in some fray with bands from other parts of Palestine, sent by the Chaldean Sultan.

Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, son and successor of Jehoiakim, had reigned only three months when Jerusalem was forced to yield to Nebuchadnezzar, who carried off the young prince, with the best of the people and all the treasure he could gather, to Babylon, and set up the last king of Judah, Zedekiah. Well meaning but weak, this unhappy man was the plaything of the different factions into which the little state was torn. In vain Jeremiah warned him against offending Chaldea. His chief men supported Egypt, and he had not resolution enough to oppose them. The end was inevitable. After eleven years of shame and humiliation, during which the prophet had suffered much, Jerusalem was once more taken by Nebuchadnezzar; Zedekiah blinded and led off to Babylon; his sons slain before him; his city burned; all the prisoners taken by the enemy carried off to Babylon, and Judah left desolate. The resistance had been brave, and the punishment was in proportion severe. During the siege Jeremiah had suffered the most cruel treatment. Shut up at one time in a subterranean dungeon under the Temple grounds, at another he was cast into a huge rain-cistern, dug out in the ground, and would have died there but for timely interference. Detention in the barrack-court of the king's guard was the least he had to endure.

After the siege it was the prophet's intention to stay in Judah and do what he could towards building up some kind of community to perpetuate the nation. The murder of Gedaliah, the governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, was, however, fatal

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7; Dan. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xiii.

to this plan. In their terror a great number of the Jews still left in the country fled to Egypt, and forcibly took Jeremiah with them. From that time he vanishes from history, excepting in two brief notices of his foretelling the erection of Nebuchadnezzar's throne at the entry of Pharaoh's palace at Tahpanhes, on the Delta, when the Jewish colony was settled, and of his dying protest against the idolatry of his countrymen at a great heathen feast which he attended. He is said to have been stoned to death for this or a similar attempt to turn the transgressors from their evil ways.

The style of Jeremiah was suited to the times. Glowing appeals like those of Isaiah or Micah would have been out of place when almost all hope of national repentance was lost. Living in an age when the cup of his people's iniquity was nearly full, the later prophet was required rather to warn and denounce, if, by any possibility, the doom impending over Judah might be averted. The deep shadow thus hanging over his beloved country filled his soul with a touching sorrow which runs like a deep sigh through all his utterances. Gifted with genius capable of lofty flights, he seldom gives the reins to it, contenting himself with plain and forcible addresses, as free as possible from poetical flights, which might have diverted his audiences from the stern facts of their position.

Gentle, sensitive, and yielding, Jeremiah seemed ill-fitted for the office of a true prophet in such times. He might count on bitter mockery and insult. Misapprehension was certain to follow his attempts to bend his countrymen from their chosen courses, for the grounds he advanced seemed unpatriotic and harsh. Yearning for peace and love, averse by nature from strife and controversy, he was yet forced by his office to put himself in antagonism to his generation, till the opposition he raised made him long for a home in the wilderness, to be away from the strife of tongues.

But with all his tenderness, Jeremiah was a man of the rarest courage. No difficulties moved him. He was ready to dare the fury of the king or the nobles, or the madness of the people, with equal calmness. In private he might regret that he had ever been born, but in public he was always a hero.

The limits of an article force me to omit many details of the greatest interest. Modern criticism has disturbed the waters of life less as they flow through the channel of Jeremiah's inspiration than in some other parts of the Ancient Scriptures. But it would be a hopeless and wretched task to follow the destructives in their airy speculations and bold assertions, nor would the readers of a magazine like this thank me for weary-

ing them with an essay on a subject so inevitably dry. May I be pardoned if I refer my readers to my "Hours with the Bible," in the fifth volume of which they will find not only a full picture of the man and his times, but a translation of his prophecies inserted in the narrative at the proper historical date of each.

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE.

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## Correspondence.

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### THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH.

*To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN.*

SIR,

I feel obliged to Archdeacon Perowne for directing my attention to some statements in a paper of which as a whole he seems to approve, but these portions of which he thinks not worded so exactly as they might be, and needing explanation. They relate to one of the most abstruse and difficult points in theology—the Divine Presence in the Church; perhaps in itself unfathomable, but full also of exegetical difficulties. An attempt at too great brevity in the paper alluded to has probably produced some obscurity (*brevis esse laboro*, etc.); but, however full the discussion may be, it may fail of having satisfactorily solved the problem. A writer must at last fall back on Bramhall's profession, "It is not impossible that some unwilling error may have escaped me, but certainly I am most free from the wilful love of error. In questions of inferior nature, Christ regards a charitable intention more than a right opinion." As the subject is of general interest, I propose to make some observations upon it; which I hope, too, may lend greater precision to the statements in the paper. I wish it, however, to be understood, that I rather seek to elicit the opinions of others than to impose one of my own.

The first thing will be to state the bare elements of the problem as they lie on the surface of Scripture.

I. It will not, I presume, be questioned that, as the paper has it, "Christ the incarnate Son" is, in a very real sense, "no longer upon earth, but has passed into the heavens." He Himself explicitly announced His impending departure to His disciples: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2); "Now I go My way to Him that sent Me" (*ibid.*, xvi. 5); "I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more" (*ibid.*, 10); and, what is sometimes not sufficiently noted, this His departure was actually the condition of a greater blessing. Not the presence of the incarnate Son on earth, but His absence, insured the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you" (John xvi. 7). And we read in Acts i. that Christ did actually thus depart.

II. Yet the same incarnate Son promises or announces, surely in some important sense, His continual presence in and with the Church. "I

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<sup>1</sup> Even Dean Alford on Matt. xxviii. 20 can say "The presence of the Spirit is the effect of the presence of Christ;" of the absence, Christ Himself says.