The Significant Contributions of Jeremiah to Religious Thought

In this paper for Pritchard's course on the Old Testament, King examines Jeremiah's contributions to religious thought, particularly his New Covenant, his argument against "artificial worship," and his conception of personal religion. King interprets Jeremiah's spirituality as a form of "public pietism," which emphasizes the social responsibility of the prophet, his public exposure, and the extreme isolation in which he experiences the transforming encounter with the divine. King concludes by summarizing Jeremiah's message for contemporary Christianity: "the worst disservice that we as individuals or churches can do is to become sponsors and supporters of the status quo." Pritchard gave King a B+ and commented at the end: "You have made good use of the commentaries available to you and have written with enthusiasm in a convincing manner!"

The peculiar importance of Jeremiah, both as a man and as an actor in an unique tragedy, is visible throughout his writings. The personality of Jeremiah is one of the most fascinating studies in Old Testament history. There is no other of the sacred authors who has taken us with such intimacy into his life, both public and private. We not only get the kernal of his discourses, but we are able to dwell with him in his moments of disillusionment; we are aware of the "inner conflict between his desire for inconspicuous retirement and his devotion to truth and civil duty;" we hear him as he secretly talks with God. His life and character are full of surprises which stimulate thought on great moral and religious problems. From this we must not conclude that the Book of Jeremiah is infallible. That the book which bears his name is not orderly arranged, that many dates are not exact, are all obvious facts to the serious student. But we should marvel in the fact that so much authentic material about the life and times of this great character has survived.

Jeremiah came to prophesy at a time which was ripe for a mighty appeal to be made to the masses and

---

1. Pritchard asked in the margin, "What is a 'sacred author'?"
2. Pritchard replaced "all" with "both."
24 Nov 1948

to take advantage of the new spirit of the time that had taken hold of Judah. He saw that the wind of pride and evil had become the whirlwind of spiritual desolation. He saw Judah and the moral and spiritual degeneracy into which she had sunk. Isaiah and Micah had raised their voices and gave a tremendous impetus to the revival work of Hezekiah. Zephaniah had done likewise at the beginning of Josiah's reign, and a little before his time. The time had come for another voice to be raised, to sound the note of warning to Judah. It was this great prophet that appeared at the capital and the Temple, whose message sprang from a heart touched with the deepest tenderness. Such was the prophet Jeremiah—such potency, such persuasion, such pleading in pointing out to Judah the way of escape from impending doom.

The Life and Times
of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was born of priestly parentage, toward the middle of the seventh century, in the little town of Anathoth. He prophesied under Josiah and his sons from the year 626 to the fall of Jerusalem in B.C. 587 (1:2f). He was contemporary with four of the minor prophets, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Daniel.3

As stated above, Jeremiah possessed a dynamic personality. "The Book of Jeremiah," says A. B. Davidson, "does not so much teach religious truths as present a religious personality. Prophecy had already taught its truths; its last effort was to reveal itself in a life."* Jeremiah was above everything a hero of the inner life. His inner experiences can be traced throughout the Book. He was in perpetual pain because of the stubbornness of his people (8:18, 21, 22; 15:18), and their tragedy caused his tears to flow day and night (9:1; 10:19). He loved his people with his whole heart (8:18-22; 14:20, 21). This deep love for his own people expressed itself at times in impatience with them, and a desire to escape from them (4:31; 8:21, 22; 9:12). Amid the bewildering changes of his time, Jeremiah was made to realize that he had been marked from his mother's womb for a great errand

---

3. Pritchard underlined "Daniel" and wrote a question mark in the margin.
and yet this errand becomes his shame and torture (cf. 1:5 with 15:10; 20:14ff.). Because Jeremiah possessed this mild and peculiarly sensitive disposition, many came to call him "the weeping prophet." It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that he was lacking in courage. A careful study of the facts will show that he was one of the bravest men in Judah.

What were the conditions of the world during the life of Jeremiah? Stated briefly, the most important events which occurred within the life of Jeremiah were these: (1) An invasion by the Scythians (ca. 626 B.C.). (2) The discovery of the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy) in the Temple, and resulting reforms by King Josiah (ca. 621 B.C.). (3) The overthrow of the Assyrians by the Chaldeans (Babylonians), in 612 B.C. (4) Immediately after the fall of Assyria, the armies of Egypt invaded Judah, defeating King Josiah (ca. 608 B.C.). (5) The contest for world supremacy between the Babylonians and the Egyptians. In 605 B.C. the Egyptians were defeated at the battle of Carchemish. Then comes the reign of Nebuchadrezzar. (6) The first attack of Jerusalem in 598 B.C. The entire city falls in 587 B.C. 5

Such were the conditions that characterized the times of Jeremiah. Only through gaining a thorough knowledge of these moving events will we be able to understand the prophecies of Jeremiah, for prophecies spring out of immediate occasions. The situations they deal with, the personal moods, attitudes and temptations they are meant to meet, are always contemporary.

In this paper there is an attempt to present Jeremiah's contributions to religious thought. In order to keep the study within reasonable limits it has been necessary to confine the analysis to what appears to be the most important points. In this respect I will present three contributions. (1) Prophecies against Unreal Worship. (2) The New Covenant. (3) Personal religion.

The New Covenant

An important element in the teaching of Jeremiah is the establishment of a New Covenant. This

5. This list follows that of Raymond C. Knox, *Knowing the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 97–98.
prophecy immediately impresses us by the wonderful spirituality of its tone, and by its evangelical character. Dr. Driver laconically states: “By his conception of the New Covenant, Jeremiah surpasses in spirituality and profundity of insight every other prophet of the Old Testament.”

Many recent writers have been reluctant to admit that this prophecy came from Jeremiah. They have raised many critical questions which demand attention. One great objection is brought out by Duhn. He argues that the passage is in prose and a style characteristic of the late expanders of the Book. Of course an outstanding scholar like Skinner has given profound arguments to the contrary. Even Pfeiffer does not accept the Duhn theory. In this study time will not permit me to discuss the details of this argument either pro or con, but only to say that if the prophecy did not come directly from the mouth of Jeremiah it came through the memory of a reporter of the Prophet, Baruch or another. Therefore, we may still be justified in listing this prophecy as a major contribution of Jeremiah to religious thought.

Jeremiah realized that the covenant made at Mount Sinai had failed to accomplish its purpose. He saw that Israel had become apostate; “they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the stubbornness of their evil heart” (11:8; 31:32). This was due to a serious defect inherent in the Old Covenant. Instead of being a spiritual asset it was a snare and a delusion. Instead of leading men to their knees it filled them with foolish presumption, until he strikes out at the priest and scribe and law. (8:8). This rebellion against the Old Covenant came to its climax and crown, when in his later activities the prophet brought forth that noblest of all spiritual conceptions, the New Covenant. The shortcomings of the Old Covenant would be removed in the new. “I will put my law in their inner parts and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother.


saying, know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin will I remember no more." (31:31ff). In every respect the New Covenant will differ from the Old. The law written upon stone is to be replaced by the law written in the heart. As stated by Dr. Matthews, "this law written in the heart required no Torah, canonized by an emotionally conditioned populace and then easily subverted by legalism. Nor were manuals of worship, altars, and a Temple, that so often become ends in themselves, required to aid the spirit of man in communing with his Maker. Nor was residence in the Holy Land essential to the highest religious life. True religion was not rooted in the soil of Palestine, but in the hearts of men and women."* The law written in the heart will become an inseparable part of man's moral being. Principles would take the place of external ordinances. Such principles as truth, and justice, and purity, love to God and love to man, would be enshrined in the hearts of men. This, said Jeremiah, would lead to an ideal state, in which the sins of the people would be forgiven. The children of the New Covenant would be the sons of God, no longer subject to external laws of the state, but ruled by impulses to good, acting upon the heart as a principle which grows from within.

Such was the New Covenant which Jeremiah was the first to conceive. Let us briefly list the positive features of the religious relationship established by the New Covenant. (1) Inwardness: "I will put my law in their inner parts;" (2) Individualism: "all shall know Me;" (3) Forgiveness of sins: "their sins I will remember no more."† All of this states one central truth, the inwardness of true religion. It is this inwardness of true religion which causes men to do the will of God spontaneously from inward inclination rather than from commands of an external law. No one can deny the fact that this prophecy, although rather idealistic, is one of the profoundest anticipations in all the Old Testament. "Liberating religion from all externals, at the same time the New Covenant strengthened and democratized it by placing responsibilities squarely on the shoulder of the individual, and purified and deepened it by making it a matter of conscience. The New Covenant, the law written in the heart, was one of the great visions of religion."‡


† Skinner, op. cit., p. 329.

‡ Matthews, op. cit., p. 165.
Another line which can be added to the column of Jeremiah's contributions to religious thought is his stand against artificial worship. This attack was started against the Temple. As we know the Deuteronomic reformation culminated in the centralization of national worship in the Temple at Jerusalem. This Temple was the pivot of the nation's religion. It was a national institution, linked intimately with the fortunes of the race. In the course of years elaborate ceremonies were enacted, and the priests prescribed sacrifices, and the smoke of burnt-offerings rose high from the altar. The Temple was the apple of the people's eye. To criticise it was to set aflame the fires of both religion and patriotism. And this was the very thing that Jeremiah did. He saw that the Temple had been relegated to a position of empty formalism which substituted a superficial reverence for the doing of Yahweh's will. He saw that sacrificial offerings were taking the place of sacrificial living. All of these conditions led Jeremiah to cry out against the evils of the Temple and sacrifice. All of this is found in the sermon which Jeremiah preached in the Temple (7).

"The primary purpose of this address was to utter a strong polemic against the Temple and the worship there. Anything which Jeremiah may have added about the future fate of the people was subsidiary to this leading aim." For the moment let us look into the assumptions growing out of this address.

In the first place, Jeremiah declares that public religion is an organized hypocrisy. In it religion was divorced from morality. He saw that the Temple was worse than a false defense, for it was given to aiding

* Adam C. Welch, Jeremiah His Times and His Work, (London: Oxford University Press, 1928) p. 137

8. T. Crouther Gordon, The Rebel Prophet: Studies in the Personality of Jeremiah (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), p. 105: "[The Temple] was the centre and pivot of the nation's religion. . . . It was a national institution, linked intimately with the fortunes of the race, for since the day when Solomon consecrated it, kings had risen and fallen under its shadow. . . . In the course of centuries an elaborate liturgical ceremony came to be enacted there, and the priests prescribed sacrifices, and the smoke of burnt-offerings rose high from the altar. . . . The Temple was the apple of the people's eye. To touch it was to set aflame the fires of both religion and patriotism. And this was just the very thing that the prophet did."

9. John Skinner, Prophecy and Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 175: "In the first place, Jeremiah declares that the public religion, the religion of which the Temple is the centre and symbol is an organized hypocrisy. In it religion was divorced from morality as completely as in the earlier days when worship was accompanied by flagrant immoralities."
the evils of the day.\textsuperscript{10} It had become in Yahweh's eyes, a cave for robbers to shelter themselves in.\textsuperscript{11} Men stole, murdered, played the fool, and broke their promises, only to run under the shadow of the Temple for protection.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{quote}
Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit.
Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely,
And burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;
And come and stand before me in my house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations (7:8–10).
\end{quote}

Here one can see the profound convictions of a striving prophet. He deals with a problem that is a danger of all religions. It states the important truth that ritual is never to be used as an end within itself, but only as a means to an end.\textsuperscript{13} It would be unfair to say to say that the functionaries of the Temple deliberately meant to inculcate evil or immorality, but they drifted into the belief that the Temple was more important than the distinction of good and evil, the sacrifices more vital than sin. It therefore took the fortitude and mind of Jeremiah to expose these pressing faults.

All of this would seem to throw the fault on the Deuteronomists, but not rightly so. The Deuteronomists had no intention to bring about this state of things. They set out to organize religion, and we must admit that it brought about considerable external success. The Deuteronomists, however, failed to see that religion is not something which can be organized, rather it is a spontaneous outflow from men's contact with a divine spirit. As soon as an external compulsion is attempted it leads inevitably to hypocrisy. This

\begin{flushright}
24 Nov 1948
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{10} Gordon, Rebel Prophet, p. 107: "The Temple was worse than a false defence, for as the prophet goes on to make plain, it was given to aiding and abetting the evils of the day."
\textsuperscript{11} Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 175: "[The Temple] might have been the place where Yahwe's gracious presence was experienced if they had hallowed His name by lives lived in piety and righteousness; but used as they use it it has become even in Yahwe's eyes a cave for robbers to shelter themselves in."
\textsuperscript{12} Gordon, Rebel Prophet, pp. 107–108: "Men stole, murdered, played the fool, and broke their promises, only to run under the shadow of the Temple for protection."
\textsuperscript{13} King used similar language in "Ritual," 24 September 1947–31 January 1948, p. 140 in this volume: "ritual is looked upon as an end within itself rather than a means to an end."
is the marked difference between the reformers and Jeremiah. The former were content to see crowds observe the ritual, even if their lives did not make the mark. Jeremiah cared nothing about external ritual if it did not produce internal change.*

In the second place, Jeremiah announces that since the Temple has become the symbol of a false religion God is about to make an end to it. At this point Jeremiah again went contrary to tradition, for those on the traditional side claimed that with the Temple in their midst the Hebrews could stand inviolable against the world.14 Even Isaiah had proclaimed in the previous century that God would not allow the Temple to be desecrated. The Deuteronomists believed the same. Against all of the spiritual orthodoxy Jeremiah argues to the contrary. The very first point of his speech is:

"Trust ye not in lying words, saying, the Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these. (7:4).15

The Temple might have been the bulwark of the nation in past days, but times are changed, and the only thing that could save it now was to thoroughly improve both methods and practices, to see strict justice present, to prevent the exploitation of strangers, the orphan and the widow, and to avoid the murder of the innocent. Only on these conditions would they survive and retain their land (7:5, 6, 7).16 With history on his side the prophet points to the remains of Shiloh, and pronounced the doom of the Temple to be as certain as the fate that had overtaken the old sanctuary.

"But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now because you have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking,

---


14. Pritchard corrected "the Hebrews" to "Israel."
16. Gordon, Rebel Prophet, p. 107: "The Temple may have been the bulwark of the nation in past days, but times are changed, and the only things that can save it now are to thoroughly improve both methods and practices, to see strict justice done as man to man, to prevent the exploitation of the stranger, the orphan and the widow, and to avoid the murder of the innocent. Only on this condition would the people survive and retain their land (vii. 5, 6)."
but ye heard not and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. (7:12-14)

**Personal Religion**

Important as are his other contributions to the body of religious truth, Jeremiah's teaching on Personal Religion is of greatest permanent value. With Jeremiah religion is an immediate, personal relationship between Jehovah and the individual soul; it means obedience and devotion of the individual to his God. "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah: and they shall be my people and I will be their God; and they shall return unto me with the whole heart" (24:7). Here Jeremiah passes beyond his predecessors in the direction of the teaching of Jesus. Through his inner struggles, Jeremiah was able to experience a more personal and more tempestuous relation with his God.

This idea of personal religion is expressed nowhere greater than in the life of Jeremiah. Despised and rejected by men he clung the more tenaciously to Jehovah and His will. He was sustained by that fellowship with Heaven which made his "inner resistance superior to every outward pressure." On the one hand we hear him cry,

"I am become a laughing stock all the day, every one mocketh me. The word of Yahweh is made to me a reproach and a derision all the day." (20:7f).

Again he cries,

"Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth." (15:10).

On the other hand we hear Jeremiah saying that he is sustained by his life with God. "I am with thee saith Yahweh, to deliver thee." With this promise Jeremiah began his ministry, and he has left us the record of how it became fulfilled. It is probable that Jeremiah himself wrote down from time to time the account of his intercourse with God; or else he dictated it to Baruch.

That Jeremiah stood alone is in a real sense correct. In many instances he could cry with Elijah, "I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away" (1
The prophet had literally nothing left but God. To God therefore he went for companionship, relief, encouragement, assurance and all that was needed to go on. “Out of the Hebrew prophet, there is created in Jeremiah a new spiritual type—the Old Testament saint: the man who, when flesh and heart fail, finds in God the strength of his heart and his portion forever.”* It remains for us to sketch briefly the outstanding features of this type of personal religion, as exhibited in Jeremiah.

First, his religion is marked by its strong individualism. In the case of Jeremiah this is naturally accounted for by the peculiar circumstances of his life; it was through such experiences that Jeremiah had to move from the realm of national religion to that of personal religion.† Throughout the “Confessions”* we can see that Jeremiah felt himself absolutely cut off from religious fellowship with men. The bond between him and his nation was broken, therefore he threw his all on Yahweh. When he couldn't understand certain problems facing society he went to Yahweh. Listen as he cries to Yahweh:

“Righteous art thou, O Yahweh, when I contend with thee; Yet would I reason the cause with thee: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are they at ease that deal very treacherously? Thou art near in their mouth and far from their heart.” (12:1f)

Over against their treachery Jeremiah sets his own integrity.

“But thou, O Yahweh, knowest me; thou seest me, and triest my heart towards thee.” (12:3)

---

17. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 219: “With greater truth than Elijah he could have said ‘I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away’ (1 Kings xix. 10, 14).”
18. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 223: “It remains for us to sketch briefly the outstanding features of this type of piety, as exhibited in Jeremiah. Its first and most obvious characteristic is its strongly marked individualism. In the case of Jeremiah this is naturally accounted for by the peculiar circumstances of his life; and it may be that only an altogether exceptional experience like his could have found a path from the national and prophetic religion of ancient Israel to the personal religion of the later Jewish Church and Christianity.”
19. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 223: “in writing the ‘Confessions’ he felt himself absolutely cut off from religious fellowship with men. The bond between him and his nation was broken.”
In this we can see that tone of sincerity which sounds throughout Jeremiah's life. We can see the purity of one who always lives intimately with God. Finally we see Jeremiah as he reaches complete trust and harmony with his God; Yahweh is his "hope" (17:14) and his strong protector against his persecutors (17:11). Having completely overcome his despair, Jeremiah found his deepest joy in the world of Yahweh (15:16) and became, as Yahweh had said at the time of his call (1:18), a wall of brass capable of resisting all attack (15:20).

Second, out of Jeremiah's piety grows a trust in the unerring righteousness of God. It was this trust in the unerring righteousness of God that was the basis of his personal religion. He saw Yahweh as the Righteous Judge, the all-seeing Searcher of hearts, who gives to every man according to his deeds (17:10; 12:1; 12:3; 20:12). Jeremiah came to this conception of God because of the divine working within him. It was the eye of Yahweh that was forever searching the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jeremiah's great moral sincerity grew out of his realization of the omniscience and righteousness of God.

Third, Jeremiah is original in his exercise of prayer. Jeremiah "is the father of true prayer, in which the wretched soul expresses both its subhuman misery and its superhuman confidence. . . . The Psalms would not have been composed without Jeremiah." How far the other prophets went in the realm of prayer we do not know. Some scholars hold that the prophetic revelation always came in answer to prayer. Of course, as Skinner reminds us, this is mainly a generalization from the case of Jeremiah which may or may not be legitimate.† We may conclude in this in-

---


† Skinner, op. cit., p. 254.

20. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 225: "The basis of Jeremiah's personal religion is his trust in the unerring righteousness of God . . . Yahweh was to him the Righteous Judge, the all-seeing Searcher of hearts, who gives to every man according to his deeds (xvii. 9, xii. 3, xx. 12). This conception of God is a reflexion of the process by which he experienced the divine working within him . . . to Jeremiah it is the eye of Yahweh searching the thoughts and intents of the heart, and bringing to light things hidden from himself."

21. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, pp. 225–226: "Now this note of moral sincerity, springing from a vivid realisation of the omniscience and righteousness of God, is one that is repeatedly struck in the meditations and prayers of the Psalter."

22. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 227: "Jeremiah is original above all in the exercise of prayer."

23. Pritchard commented above King's footnote: "This is Wellhausen as quoted in Pfeiffer."
stance, as in many others, that Jeremiah’s experience was unique. He prays for healing:

“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved; For thou art my praise.” (17:14).

Again he prays for help against his adversaries.

“Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let me not be confounded; Let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: Bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.” (17:18).

But to Jeremiah prayer was more than petition. It was no escape from the harsh realities of life. It was an “intimate converse with God, in which his inner life is laid bare, with its perplexities and struggles and temptations.”* It is such a prayer that contains the assurance of an answer. In one of the most touching passages of his “Confessions,” Jeremiah becomes aware of the answer which solves all of his internal problems.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord, if thou return, then will I bring thee again, and then shall stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, Thou shalt be as my mouth; let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.” (15:19, 20, 21).25

Jeremiah, throughout all his doubts and difficulties, was able to be carried forward by the secret as-

---

24. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 227: “How far the older prophets were men of prayer is a question which we have slight means of answering. The theory of Oehler, Riehm, Giesebrecht and others, that the prophetic revelation always came in answer to prayer, is mainly a generalisation from the case of Jeremiah, which may or may not be legitimate. We may suspect that in this respect, as in so many others, Jeremiah’s experience was sui generis.”

25. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 214: “Now such prayer contains in itself the assurance of its answer; and in one striking passage, which we must regard as the climax of the ‘Confessions,’ Jeremiah comes to clear consciousness of the answer which solves the problem of his personal relation to God.” After this sentence Skinner quotes Jeremiah 15:19ff.
surance that this business was not his business but God's business, and this alone supported him under the most pressing perplexities and loneliness.\textsuperscript{26} All of this leads us to conclude that Jeremiah was the First of the Mystics. He was the mystic of the mystics. In Jeremiah "is mysticism pure and simple, mysticism in its finest and clearest form. It is neither the religion which is taught, nor the religion which is caught. It is the mystic's inmost and intense communion with the Divine."\textsuperscript{*} This helps us to understand why Jeremiah took certain stands in life. His communion with God, which was for him the biggest single fact in life, led him to inevitably to the undermining of ecclesiastical religion. The Temple he slashes with scorn and ridicule (7:9).\textsuperscript{27} In another passage he scorns the magical properties of the Ark (3:16). He stings with sweeping criticism the priests who were suppose to be the mediators between God and man. At one time he even challenges the validity of the Scriptures (8:8).\textsuperscript{28} But amid all of that Jeremiah proved that God can be found.

In all of this discussion of personal religion, we have only dealt with the life of Jeremiah and his relationship to God. But what about other individuals? One might well ask the question, did Jeremiah ever reach the point of believing that all individuals could have personal relations with God as he did? The answer is yes. He concluded this from his own experiences. He perceived that what religion was to him it must be to all men—the response of the heart to the voice of God.\textsuperscript{29} It was this thought that was continu-


\textsuperscript{26} Gordon, \textit{Rebel Prophet}, p. 224: "And yet, throughout all his doubts and difficulties the prophet was carried forward by the secret assurance that this business was not his business but God's business, and this alone supported him under the most pressing perplexities and loneliness."

\textsuperscript{27} Pritchard underlined "scone" and wrote a question mark in the margin.

\textsuperscript{28} Gordon, \textit{Rebel Prophet}, p. 219: "His direct communion with God, which was for him the biggest single fact in his life, led him to the inevitable corollary of minimising the utility of material aids, and in the most logical and understandable fashion he sets about the undermining of ecclesiastical religion. The Temple he slashes with his scorn and ridicule, . . . (vii. 9–10). In another passage, if it is not post-exilic, he scorns the magical properties of the Ark, and promises that men shall come to be so personally in communion with God that the Ark shall never cross their minds (iii. 16). The priests, who pose as the intermediaries between Jehovah and His people, Jeremiah stings with his sweeping criticisms. He even challenges the validity of the Scriptures, which even the most simple-minded were willing to revere (viii. 8)."

\textsuperscript{29} Skinner, \textit{Prophecy and Religion}, p. 334: "Something of this Jeremiah had learned in his own life; and if he saw but dimly, he perceived that what religion was to him it must be to all men—the response of the heart to the voice of God within."
ally touching the balloon of nationality until finally it burst. This was a supreme contribution, for it shifted the center of gravity in Judaism from the nation to the individual.30

Conclusion

We must conclude that Jeremiah left certain ineffaceable contributions to religious thought which are still relevant to our contemporary culture. He stepped on the religious stage sounding the trumpet for a new idea of God, and the signal for another forward march of the soul.31 He had seized on a great and revolutionary truth, and with that truth, like a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, went ahead of his times. In many instances the picture drawn by Jeremiah is an idealistic one, and an ideal which has not yet been realized—the New Covenant for example. But the ideal is there; it at least serves as a standard by which we may measure ourselves, a goal which we may all strive to attain.

Again Jeremiah is a shining example of the truth that religion should never sanction the status quo. This more than anything else should be inculcated into the minds of modern religionists, for the worst disservice that we as individuals or churches can do to Christianity is to become sponsors and supporters of the status quo. How often has religion gone down, chained to a status quo it allied itself with. Durkheim and other sociologists rejoice to find in each religion simply the reflection of the State's opinion of itself foisted upon the divine, and along this they agree that no advancement can be looked for in spiritual affairs.32 Therefore, we must admit that men like Jeremiah are valuable to any religion. Religion, in a sense, through men like Jeremiah, provides for its

30. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 515: “Just as the ‘Confessions’ are the part of Jeremiah's book which had the most profound literary influence, so they also disclose the chief contribution of the prophet to religious growth, namely, the shift of the center of gravity in Judaism from the nation to the individual, from external acts to an attitude of mind.”
31. Gordon, *Rebel Prophet*, p. 93: “And yet, as each rebel stepped upon the religious stage, it was but the trumpet for a new idea of God, the signal for another forward march of the soul, for without the spiritual rebel the soul of man would sicken and die.”
32. Pritchard wrote a question mark at the end of this sentence and asked at the bottom of the page, “In?” Gordon, *Rebel Prophet*, p. 93: “Durkheim and his confreres rejoice to find in each religion simply the reflection of the State's opinion of itself, foisted upon the Divine, and along this line they agree that no advancement can be looked for in spiritual affairs.”
own advancement, and carries within it the promise of progress and renewed power. But what is society's reaction to such men? It has reacted, and always will re-act, in the only way open to it. It destroys such men. Jeremiah died a martyr.

It is obvious that if we judge Jeremiah by the ordinary standards of the world, his work was a failure. He was lightly esteemed in life. He became the supreme example of what Deutero-Isaiah called the suffering servant. He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But in after years his unheeded prophecies became the favourite book of the scattered Hebrew race. Many of the Psalms, as we saw above, re-echo his words, and depict scenes such as only Jeremiah could have passed through. It is for these reasons that Jeremiah came to be regarded as the greatest of them all (Matt. 16:14; John 1:21).

THDS. MLKP-MBU: Box 115, folder 17.

33. Gordon, Rebel Prophet, p. 94: "Religion, in a sense, through the prophet, provides for its own advancement, and carries within it the promise of progress and renewed power."
34. Pritchard wrote an "X" after "martyr" and commented in the margin, "not literally."
35. This sentence is an allusion to Isaiah 53:3. "He is despised and rejected by men, / A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

“The Ethics of Late Judaism as Evidenced in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs”

[30 November 1948–16 February 1949]
[Chester, Pa.]

This paper was written for Morton Scott Enslin’s course on the history and literature of the New Testament, which exposed King to biblical criticism. In observing that “many of the works of this period [late Judaism] were infinitely more valuable than those that received canonicity,” King challenges the wisdom of canonical decisions and argues that many of the great ethical principles normally associated with the New Testament actually had their origins in late Judaism. He