

## LECTURE I.

### THE MAN AND THE BOOK.

IN this and the following lectures I attempt an account and estimate of the Prophet Jeremiah, of his life and teaching, and of the Book which contains them—but especially of the man himself, his personality and his tempers (there were more than one), his religious experience and its achievements, with the various high styles of their expression; as well as his influence on the subsequent religion of his people.

It has often been asserted that in Jeremiah's ministry more than in any other of the Old Covenant the personality of the Prophet was under God the dominant factor, and one has even said that 'his predecessors were the originators of great truths, which he transmuted into spiritual life.'<sup>1</sup> To avoid exaggeration here, we must keep in mind how large a part personality played in their teaching also, and from how deep in their lives their messages sprang. Even Amos was no mere *voice crying in the wilderness*. The discipline of the desert, the clear eye for ordinary facts and

<sup>1</sup>A. B. Davidson.

the sharp ear for sudden alarms which it breeds, along with the desert shepherd's horror of the extravagance and cruelties of civilisation — all these reveal to us the Man behind the Book, who had lived his truth before he uttered it. Hosea, again, tells the story of his outraged love as *the beginning of the Word of the Lord by him*. And it was the strength of Isaiah's character, which, unaided by other human factors, carried Judah, with the faith she enshrined, through the first great crisis of her history. Yet recognise, as we justly may, the personalities of these prophets in the nerve, the colour, the accent, and even the substance of their messages, we must feel the still greater significance of Jeremiah's temperament and other personal qualities both for his own teaching and for the teaching of those who came after him. Thanks to his loyal scribe, Baruch, we know more of the circumstances of his career, and thanks to his own frankness, we know more of his psychology than we do in the case of any of his predecessors. He has, too, poured out his soul to us by the most personal of all channels; the charm, passion and poignancy of his verse lifting him high among the poets of Israel.

So far as our materials enable us to judge no other prophet was more introspective or concerned about himself; and though it might be said that he carried this concern to a fault, yet

fault or none, the fact is that no prophet started so deeply from himself as Jeremiah did. His circumstances flung him in upon his feelings and convictions; he was constantly searching, doubting, confessing, and pleading for, himself. He asserted more strenuously than any except Job his individuality as against God, and he stood in more lonely opposition to his people.

Jeremiah was called to prophesy about the time that the religion of Israel was re-codified in Deuteronomy—the finest system of national religion which the world has seen, but only and exclusively national—and he was still comparatively young when that system collapsed for the time and the religion itself seemed about to perish with it. He lived to see the Law fail, the Nation dispersed, and the National Altar shattered; but he gathered their fire into his bosom and carried it not only unquenched but with a purer flame towards its everlasting future. We may say without exaggeration that what was henceforth finest in the religion of Israel had, however ancient its sources, been recast in the furnace of his spirit. With him the human unit in religion which had hitherto been mainly the nation was on the way to become the individual. Personal piety in later Israel largely grew out of his spiritual struggles.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A. B. Davidson. 'Without Jeremiah,' says Wellhausen, 'the Psalms could not have been composed.'

His forerunners, it is true, had insisted that religion was an affair not of national institutions nor of outward observance, but of the people's heart—by which heart they and their hearers must have understood the individual hearts composing it. But, in urging upon his generation repentance, faith and conversion to God, Jeremiah's language is more thorough and personal than that used by any previous prophet. The individual, as he leaves Jeremiah's hands, is more clearly the direct object of the Divine Interest and Grace, and the instrument of the Divine Will. The single soul is searched, defined and charged as never before in Israel.

But this sculpture of the individual out of the mass of the nation, this articulation of his immediate relation to God apart from Law, Temple and Race, achieved as it was by Jeremiah only through intense mental and physical agonies, opened to him the problem of the sufferings of the righteous. In his experience the individual realised his Self only to find that Self—its rights, the truths given it and its best service for God—baffled by the stupidity and injustice of those for whom it laboured and agonised. The mists of pain and failure bewildered the Prophet and to the last his work seemed in vain. Whether or not he himself was conscious of the solution of the problem, others reached it through him. There are grounds for believing that the Figure

of the Suffering Servant of the Lord, raised by the Great Prophet of the Exile, and the idea of the atoning and redemptive value of His sufferings were, in part at least, the results of meditation upon the spiritual loneliness on the one side, and upon the passionate identification of himself with the sorrows of his sinful people on the other, of this the likeliest to Christ of all the prophets.<sup>1</sup>

For our knowledge of this great life—there was none greater under the Old Covenant—we are dependent on that Book of our Scriptures, the Hebrew text of which bears the simple title ‘Jeremiah.’

The influence of the life and therefore the full stature of the man who lived it, stretches, as I have hinted, to the latest bounds of Hebrew history, and many writings and deeds were worshipfully assigned to him. Thus the Greek Version of the Old Testament ascribes Lamentations to Jeremiah, but the poems themselves do not claim to be, and obviously are not, from himself. He is twice quoted in II. Chronicles and once in Ezra, but these quotations may be reasonably interpreted as referring to prophecies contained in our book, which were therefore

<sup>1</sup> Cp. e.g. Jer. xi. 19, with Is. liii. 7; and see Grotius, ‘Annotata ad Vetus Testamentum,’ on Is. lii-liii; Cornill, ‘Das Buch Jeremia erklärt,’ pp. 11-12; John Skinner, ‘Prophecy and Religion,’ p. 351.

extant before the date of the Chronicler.<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiasticus XLIX. 6-7 reflects passages of our Book, and of Lamentations, as though equally Jeremiah's, and Daniel IX. 2 refers to Jeremiah XXV. 12. A paragraph in the Second Book of Maccabees, Ch. II. 1-8, contains, besides echoes of our Book of Jeremiah, references to other activities of the Prophet of which the sources and the value are unknown to us. But all these references, as well as the series of apocryphal and apocalyptic works to which the name either of Jeremiah himself or of Baruch, his scribe, has been attached,<sup>2</sup> only reveal the length of the shadow which the Prophet's figure cast down the ages, and con-

<sup>1</sup> II. Chron. xxxvi. 21 (with a reference to Lev. xxvi. 34, 35) and 22, 23, the latter repeated in Ezra i. 1-2. Duhm, indeed, but on insufficient grounds, thinks the former citation, because of its reference to Leviticus, cannot be from our Book of Jeremiah but is from a Midrash unknown to us; yet the chronicler's was the very spirit to associate a Levitical provision with Jer. xxix. 10; cp. xxv. 9-12. The other quotation Duhm refers to some part of Is. xl. ff. (xliv. 28?) as though this had at one time been attributed to Jeremiah.

<sup>2</sup> In the Apocrypha proper, (1) 'Baruch' to which is attached (2) 'The Epistle of Jeremy' warning the Jews of Babylon in general and conventional terms against idolatry. Apocalyptic writings, (3) 'Apocalypse of Baruch,' (4) (5) and (6) three other 'Apocalypses of Baruch,' (7) 'The Rest of the Words of Baruch,' or 'Paralipomena Jeremiæ,' (8) 'Prophecy of Jeremiah.' For particulars of these see 'Encyclopædia Biblica,' arts. 'Apocalyptic Literature' (R. H. Charles), and 'Apocrypha' (M. R. James).

tribute no verifiable facts to our knowledge of his career or of his spiritual experience.

For the actual life of Jeremiah, for the man as he was to himself and his contemporaries, for his origin, character, temper, struggles, growth and modes of expression, we have practically no materials beyond the Canonical Book to which his name is prefixed.<sup>1</sup>

Roughly classified the contents of the Book (after the extended title in Ch. I. 1-3) are as follows:—

1. A Prologue, Ch. I. 4-19, in which the Prophet tells the story of his call and describes the range of his mission as including both his own people and foreign nations. The year of his call was 627-6 B.C.

2. A large number of Oracles, dialogues between the Prophet and the Deity and symbolic actions by the Prophet issuing in Oracles, mostly introduced as by Jeremiah himself, but sometimes reported of him by another. Most of the Oracles are in verse; the style of the rest is not distinguishable by us from prose. They deal almost

<sup>1</sup> Following Hitzig, C. J. Ball ('The Prophecies of Jeremiah' in 'The Expositor's Bible,' 1890, pp. 10 ff.) refers Pss. xxiii, xxvi-xxviii to Jeremiah, and it is possible that in particular the personal experiences in Ps. xxvii are reflections of those of the prophet. But such experiences were so common in the history of the prophets and saints of Israel as to render the reference precarious.

exclusively with the Prophet's own people though there are some references to neighbouring tribes. The bulk of this class of the contents is found within Chs. II-XXV, which contain all the earlier oracles, i.e. those uttered by Jeremiah before the death of King Josiah in 608, but also several of his prophecies under Jehoiakim and even Şedekiah. More of the latter are found within Chs. XXVII-XXXV: all these, except XXVIII and part of XXXII, which are introduced by the Prophet himself, are reported by another.

3. A separate group of Oracles on Foreign Nations, Chs. XLVI-LI, reported to us as Jeremiah's.

4. A number of narratives of episodes in the Prophet's life from 608 onwards under Jehoiakim and Şedekiah to the end in Egypt, soon after 586; apparently by a contemporary and eyewitness who on good grounds is generally taken to be Baruch the Scribe: Chs. XXVI, XXXVI-XLV; but to the same source may be due much of Chs. XXVII-XXXV (see under 2).

5. Obvious expansions and additions throughout all the foregoing; and a historical appendix in Ch. LII, mainly an excerpt from II. Kings XXIV-XXV.

On the face of it, then, the Book is a compilation from several sources; and perhaps we ought to translate the opening clause of its title not as in our versions 'The Words of Jeremiah,' but

'The History of Jeremiah,' as has been legitimately done by some scholars since Kimchi.

What were the nuclei of this compilation? How did they originate? What proofs do they give of their value as historical documents? How did they come together? And what changes, if any, did they suffer before the compilation closed and the Book received its present form?

These questions must be answered, so far as possible, before we can give an account of the Prophet's life or an estimate of himself and his teaching. The rest of this lecture is an attempt to answer them—but in the opposite order to that in which I have just stated them. We shall work backward from the two ultimate forms in which the Book has come down to us. For these forms are two.

Besides the Hebrew text, from which the Authorised and Revised English Versions have been made, we possess a form of the Book in Greek, which is part of the Greek Version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. This is virtually another edition of the same work. The Hebrew text belongs to the Second or Prophetic Canon of the Jewish Scriptures, which was not closed till about 200 B.C., or more than 350 years after Jeremiah's death. The Greek Version was completed about the same time, and possibly earlier.

These two editions of the Book hold by far the

greatest part of their contents in common, yet they differ considerably in the amount and in the arrangement of their contents, and somewhat less in the dates and personal references which they apply to various passages. We have thus before us two largely independent witnesses who agree in the bulk of their testimony, and otherwise correct and supplement each other.

In size the Greek Book of Jeremiah is but seven-eighths of the Hebrew,<sup>1</sup> but conversely it contains some hundred words that the Hebrew lacks. Part of this small Greek surplus is due to the translators' expansion or paraphrase of briefer Hebrew originals, or consists of glosses that they found in the Hebrew MSS. from which they translated, or added of themselves; the rest is made up of what are probably original phrases but omitted from the Hebrew by the carelessness of copyists; yet none of these differences is of importance save where the Greek corrects an irregularity in the Hebrew metre, or yields sense when the Hebrew fails to do so.<sup>2</sup>

More instructive is the greater number of phrases and passages found in the Hebrew Book, and consequently in our English Versions, but absent from the Greek. Some, it is true, are merely

<sup>1</sup> It has been calculated that the Greek has 2700 words fewer than the Hebrew, i.e. about 120 verses or from four to five average chapters.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. ii. 19, 29; iii. 1; v. 4a; viii. 16, 21; xxxii. 12, etc.

formal—additions to a personal name of the title *king* or *prophet* or of the names of a father and grandfather, or the more frequent use of the divine title *of Hosts* with the personal Name of the Deity or of the phrase *Rede of the Lord*.<sup>1</sup> Also the Greek omits words which in the Hebrew are obviously mistakes of a copyist.<sup>2</sup> Again, a number of what are transparent glosses or marginal notes on the Hebrew text are lacking in the Greek, because the translator of the latter did not find them on the Hebrew manuscript from which he translated.<sup>3</sup> Some titles to sections of the Book, or portions of titles, absent from the Greek but found in our Hebrew text, are also later editorial additions.<sup>4</sup> Greater importance, however, attaches to those phrases that cannot be mere glosses and to the longer passages, wanting in the Greek but found in the Hebrew, many of which upon internal evidence must be regarded as late intrusions into the latter.<sup>5</sup> And occasionally a word or phrase

<sup>1</sup> *nē'um Yāhweh*: utterance or oracle of Jehovah.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the words *at his mouth*, xxxvi. 17; xxxviii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *Jerusalem* in viii. 5, and in xxxvi. 22 *the ninth month*.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. ii. 1-2; xxv. 1*b*; xxvii. 1; xlvii. 1; l. 1.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. viii. 10*aβ*-12; x. 6-8; xi. 7, 8; xvii. 1-4 (perhaps omitted by the Greek, because partly given already in xv. 13, 14); xxv. 18 *and a curse as at this day*; xxvii. 1, 7, 12*b*, 13, 14*a*, 17, 18*b*, clauses in 19, 20, the whole of 21, and 22*b*; xxix. 14, 16-20; xxx. 10, 11 (=xlvi. 27 f.), 15*a*, 22; xxxiii. 14-26; xxxix. 4-13; xlvi. 26; xlvii. 1 (except *to the Philistines*); xlviii. 45-47; lii, 28-30.

in the Hebrew, which spoils the rhythm or is irrelevant to the sense, is not found in the Greek.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, there is one great difference of arrangement. The group of Oracles on Foreign Nations which appear in the Hebrew as Chs. XLVI-LI are in the Greek placed between verses 13 and 15<sup>2</sup> of Ch. XXV, and are ranged in a different order—an obvious proof that at one time different editors felt free to deal with the arrangement of the compilation as well as to add to its contents.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E.g. i. 10, 17, 18; ii. 17, 19; vii. 28b; xii. 3; xiv. 4, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 14 is not found in the Greek.

<sup>3</sup> In his Schweich Lectures on 'The Septuagint and Jewish Worship' (for the British Academy, 1921) Mr. St. John Thackeray presents clear evidence from the different vocabularies in the Greek Version that this Version was the work of two translators, the division between whom is at Ch. xxix. verse 7. The dividing line cuts across the Greek arrangement of the chapters, which sets the Oracles on Foreign Nations in the centre of the Book. This shows that it was not the translators who placed them there, but that the translators found the arrangement in the Hebrew MS. from which they translated. Further, he thinks that the division of the Book into two parts was not made by the translators, but already existed in their Hebrew exemplar. For this the Hebrew text gives two evidences: (1) the titles of the Oracles, (2) the colophons appended to two of them. The titles are some long, some short. In the Hebrew order the Oracles with long titles are mixed up with those with short, but in the Greek order the six with long titles come together first and are followed by the five with short. There are two colophons—one to the Moab Oracle, the other to

Modern critics differ as to the comparative value of these two editions of the Book of Jeremiah, and there are strong advocates on either side.<sup>1</sup> But the prevailing opinion, and, to my view, the right one, is that no general judgment is possible, and that each case of difference between the two witnesses must be decided by itself.<sup>2</sup> With this, however, we have nothing at present to do. What concerns us now is the fact that the Greek is not the translation of the canonical Hebrew text, but that the two Books, the Babylon Oracle; but the Moab Oracle stands last in the Greek order and the Babylon Oracle last in the Hebrew order.

From all this two conclusions are drawn: (1) when the titles were inserted the chapters were arranged as in the Greek, which, therefore, was the original arrangement; (2) they afford Hebrew evidence for a break or interruption in the middle of the Oracles—the longer titles cease about the end of Part I of the Greek Version, which therefore follows a division of the Book into two parts that already existed in the Hebrew original from which it was made. The Hebrew editor who amplified the titles had apparently only Part I before him.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Graf ('Der Prophet J. erklärt,' 1862), George Douglas ('The Book of Jeremiah,' 1903) for the Hebrew; and Workman ('The Text of Jeremiah,' 1888) for the Greek. For a judicial comparison of the two editions, resulting much in favour of the Greek, see W. R. Smith, 'The O.T. in the Jewish Church,' Lectures IV and V.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Hebrew is qualitatively superior to the Greek, but quantitatively the Greek is nearer the original. This judgment is general, admitting many exceptions, and each passage has to be considered by itself.'—A. B. Davidson. Cp. Duhm, 'Das Buch Jer.,' p. xxii.

while sharing a common basis of wide extent, represent two different lines of compilation and editorial development which continued till at least 200 B.C. Between them they are the proof that, while our Bible was still being compiled, some measure of historical criticism and of editorial activity was at work on the material—and this not only along one line. We need not stop to discuss how far the fact justifies the exercise of criticism by the modern Church. For our present purpose it is enough to keep in mind that our Book of Jeremiah is the result of a long development through some centuries and on more than one line, though the two divergent movements started with, and carried down, a large body of material in common.

Moreover, this common material bears evidence of having already undergone similar treatment, *before* it passed out on those two lines of further development which resulted in the canonical Hebrew text and the Greek Version respectively. The signs of gradual compilation are everywhere upon the material which they share in common. Now and then a chronological order appears, and indeed there are traces of a purpose to pursue that order throughout. But this has been disturbed by cross-arrangements according to subject,<sup>1</sup> and by the intrusion of

<sup>1</sup> Oracles on the King, xxii. 1-xxiii. 8 and on the Prophets, xxiii. 9-40.

later oracles and episodes among earlier ones<sup>1</sup> or *vice versa*<sup>2</sup> as if their materials had come into the hands of the compilers or editors of the Book only gradually. Another proof of the gradual growth of those contents, which are common to the Hebrew and the Greek, is the fashion in which they tend to run away from the titles prefixed to them. Take the title to the whole Book,<sup>3</sup> Ch. I. 2, *Which was the Word of the Lord to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah, son of Amon, King of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.* This covers only the narrative of the Prophet's call in Ch. I, or at most a few of the Oracles in the following chapters. The supplementary title in verse 3—*It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, King of Judah, up to [the end of]<sup>4</sup> the eleventh year of Sedekiah, the son of Josiah, King of Judah, up to the exile of Jerusalem, in the fifth month*—is probably a later addition, added when the later Oracles of Jeremiah were attached to some collection of those which he had delivered under Josiah; but even then the title fails to cover those words in the Book which

<sup>1</sup> The Oracles under Jehoiakim, chs. vii-x, before those on the enforcement of Deuteronomy under Josiah xi. 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> The Oracle for Baruch, dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, 604 B.C., is not given till ch. xlv, a long way off from ch. xxxvi to which it belongs by date and subject, and only after chs. xl-xliv, the story of Jeremiah's life after the fall of Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> So far as it is common to the Hebrew and the Greek.

<sup>4</sup> *The end of* is wanting in the Greek.

Jeremiah spake after Jerusalem had gone into exile, and even after he had been hurried down into Egypt by a base remnant of his people.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the historical appendix to the Book carries the history it contains on to 561 B.C. at least.<sup>2</sup> Again there are passages, the subjects of which are irrelevant to their context, and which break the clear connection of the parts of the context between which they have intruded.<sup>3</sup> The shorter sentences, that also disturb the connection as they stand, appear to have been written originally as marginal notes which a later editor or copyist has incorporated in the text.<sup>4</sup> To this class, too, may belong those brief passages which appear twice, once in their natural connection in some later chapter and once out of their natural connection in some earlier chapter.<sup>5</sup> And again in VII. 1-28 and XXVI. 1-9 we have two accounts, apparently from different hands, of what may or may not be the same episode in Jeremiah's ministry.

<sup>1</sup> Chs. xl-xliv. And between them the title and its supplement ignore the Oracles which Jeremiah uttered under Josiah after the thirteenth year of the King, perhaps iii. 6-18, and certainly xi. 1-5, 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. lii.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. iii. 6-18; ix. 23-26 with x. 1-16; xxi. 11-12 with (probably) 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. ii. 26; v. 13; x. 11, the last written in Aramaic.

<sup>5</sup> Cp. xxiii. 7, 8 with xvi. 14, 15, and xxx. 23, 24 with xxiii. 19, 20.

These data clearly prove that not only from the time when the Hebrew and Greek editions of the Book started upon their separate lines of development, but from the very beginnings of the Book's history, the work of accumulation, arrangement and re-arrangement, with other editorial processes, had been busy upon it.

The next question is, have we any criteria by which to discriminate between the elements in the Book that belong either to Jeremiah himself or to his contemporaries and others that are due to editors or compilers between his death soon after 586 and the close of the Prophetic Canon in 200 B.C. ? The answer is that we have such criteria. All Oracles or Narratives in the Book, which (apart from obvious intrusions) imply that the Exile is well advanced or that the Return from Exile has already happened, or which reflect the circumstances of the later Exile and subsequent periods or the spirit of Israel and the teaching of her prophets and scribes in those periods, we may rule out of the material on which we can rely for our knowledge of Jeremiah's life and his teaching. Of such Exilic and post-Exilic contents there is a considerable, but not a preponderant, amount. These various items break into their context, their style and substance are not conformable to the style and substance of the Oracles, which (as we shall see) are reasonably attributed to Jeremiah, but they

so closely resemble those of other writings from the eve of the Return from Exile or from after the Return that they seem to be based on the latter. In any case they reflect the situation and feelings of Israel in Babylonia about 540 B.C. Some find place in our Book among the earlier Oracles of Jeremiah,<sup>1</sup> others in his later,<sup>2</sup> but the most in the group of Oracles on Foreign Nations.<sup>3</sup> And, finally, there are the long extracts from the Second Book of Kings, bringing, as I have said, the history down to at least 561.<sup>4</sup>

All these, then, we lay aside, so far as our search for Jeremiah himself and his doctrine is concerned,

<sup>1</sup>x. 1-16; xvii. 19-27 (on the Sabbath—unlike Jeremiah, who did not lay stress on single laws but very like post-exilic teaching, e.g. Neh. xiii and Is. lviii), possibly xxiii. 1-8; xxv. 12-14 (the obviously late *as at this day* in verse 18 and verse 26b are omitted by the Greek).

<sup>2</sup>Parts of xxx and xxxi, especially xxxi. 7-14, the spirit of which is so much that of the Eve of the Return from Exile and the style so akin to that of the Great Prophet of that Eve that some take it as dependent on his prophecies.

<sup>3</sup>xlvi-li, especially on Moab, xlvi. 40-47, which is based on the earlier prophecy, Is. xv-xvi; on Edom, xlix. 7-22, based on Obadiah; Elam, xlix. 34-39; and the long prophecy on Babylon, l. 1-58, which reflects like Is. xl. ff. the historical situation just before the Medes overthrew Babylon, and expresses an attitude towards the latter very different from Jeremiah's own fifty years earlier. The compiler, or an editor of the Book, has (li. 60) erred in attributing this long prophecy to Jeremiah. In all these there may be genuine nuclei.

<sup>4</sup>Ch. lii.

and we do so the more easily that they are largely devoid of the style and the spiritual value of his undoubted Oracles and Discourses. They are more or less diffuse and vagrant, while his are concise and to the point. They do not reveal, as his do, a man fresh from agonising debates with God upon the poverty of his qualifications for the mission to which God calls him, or upon the contents of that mission, or upon his own sufferings and rights; nor do they recount his adventures with his contemporaries. They are not the outpourings of a single soul but rather the expression of the feelings of a generation or of the doctrines of a school. We have in our Bible other and better utterances of the truths, questions, threats and hopes which they contain.

But once more—in what remains of the Book, what belongs to Jeremiah himself or to his time, we have again proofs of compilation from more sources than one. Some of this is in verse—among the finest in the Old Testament—some in prose orations; some in simple narrative. Some Oracles are introduced by the Prophet himself, and he utters them in the first person, some are reported of him by others. And any chronological or topical order lasts only through groups of prophecies or narratives. Fortunately, however, included among these are more than one account of how the writing of them and the collection of them came about.

In 604-603 B.C., twenty-one, or it may have been twenty-three, years after Jeremiah had begun to prophesy, the history of Western Asia rose to a crisis. Pharaoh Necho who had marched north to the Euphrates was defeated in a battle for empire by Nebuchadrezzar, son of the King of Babylon. From the turmoil of nations which filled the period Babylon emerged as that executioner of the Divine judgments on the world, whom Jeremiah since 627 or 625 had been describing generally as *out of the North*. His predictions were justified, and he was able to put a sharper edge on them. Henceforth in place of the *enemy from the North* Jeremiah could speak definitely of the *King of Babylon* and of his people *the Chaldeans*.

In Ch. XXV we read accordingly that in that year, 604-3, he delivered to the people of Jerusalem a summary of his previous oracles. He told them that the cup of the Lord's wrath was given into his hand; Judah and other nations, especially Egypt, must drink it and so stagger to their doom.

But a spoken and a summary discourse was not enough. Like Amos and Isaiah, Jeremiah was moved to commit his previous Oracles to writing. In Ch. XXXVI is a narrative presumably by an eyewitness of the transactions it recounts, and this most probably the scribe who was associated with the Prophet in these transactions. Jeremiah was commanded to *take a roll of a book and write on*

*it all the words which the Lord had spoken to him concerning Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> and Judah and all the nations from the day the Lord first spake to him, in the days of Josiah, even unto this day.* For this purpose he employed Baruch, the son of Neriah, afterwards designated the Scribe, and Baruch wrote on the Roll to his dictation. Being unable himself to enter the Temple he charged Baruch to go there and to read the Roll on a fast-day *in the ears of all the people of Judah who have come in from their cities.* Baruch found his opportunity in the following December, and read the Roll from the New Gate of the Temple to the multitude. This was reported to some of the princes in the Palace below, who sent for Baruch and had him read the Roll over to them. Divided between alarm at its contents and their duty to the king, they sent Jeremiah and Baruch into hiding while they made report to Jehoiakim. The king had the Roll read out once more to himself as he sat in his room in front of a lighted brasier, for it was winter. The reading incensed him, and as the reader finished each three or four columns he cut them up and threw them on the fire till the whole was consumed. But Jeremiah, in safe hiding with Baruch, took another Roll and dictated again the contents of the first; *and there were added besides unto them many like words.*

<sup>1</sup> So Greek, Hebrew has *Israel*.

The story has been questioned, but by very few, and on no grounds that are perceptible to common sense. One critic imagines that it ascribes miraculous power to the Prophet in 'its natural impression that the Prophet reproduces from memory and dictates all the words which the Lord has spoken to him.'<sup>1</sup> There is no trace of miracle in the story. It is a straight tale of credible transactions, very natural (as we have seen) at the crisis which the Prophet had reached. No improbability infects it, no reflection of a later time, no idealising as by a writer at a distance from the events he recounts. On the contrary it gives a number of details which only a contemporary could have supplied. Nor can we forget the power and accuracy of an Oriental's memory, especially at periods when writing was not a common practice.

There is, of course, more room for difference of opinion as to the contents of each of the successive Rolls, and as to how much of these contents is included in our Book of Jeremiah. But to such questions the most probable answer is as follows.

There cannot have been many of the Prophet's previous Oracles on the first Roll. This was read three times over in the same day and was probably limited to such Oracles as were sufficient for its

<sup>1</sup> N. Schmidt in the 'Encyclopædia Biblica.'

practical purpose of moving the people of Judah to repentance at a Fast, when their hearts would be most inclined that way. But when the first Roll was destroyed, the immediate occasion for which it was written was past, and the second Roll would naturally have a wider aim. It repeated the first, but in view of the additions to it seems to have been dictated with the purpose of giving a permanent form to *all* the fruits of Jeremiah's previous ministry. The battle of Carchemish had confirmed his predictions and put edge upon them. The destruction of the Jewish people was imminent and the Prophet's own life in danger. His enforced retirement along with Baruch lent him freedom to make a larger selection, if not the full tale, of his previous prophecies. Hence the phrase *there were added many words like those on the first Roll.*<sup>1</sup>

If such a Roll as the second existed in the care of Baruch then the use of it in the compilation of our Book of Jeremiah is extremely probable, and the probability is confirmed by some features of the Book. Among the Oracles which can be assigned

<sup>1</sup> Professor Schmidt, in the article already quoted, takes this to mean only that Jeremiah 'retouched under fresh provocation' the contents of the first Roll. This interpretation would imply that *words* means nouns, verbs, adjectives and so forth, whereas *words* can only carry the same sense as it carries in the rest of the Book, viz. *whole* Oracles or Discourses. Note the phrase *words like them*, viz. like *the words* or Oracles on the first Roll.

to Jeremiah's activity before the fourth year of Jehoiakim there is on the whole more fidelity to chronological order than in those which were delivered later, and while the former are nearly all given without narrative attached to them, and are reported as from Jeremiah himself in the first person, the latter for the most part are embedded in narratives, in which he appears in the third person.<sup>1</sup>

Further let us note that if some of the Oracles in the earlier part of the Book—after the account of the Prophet's call—are undated, while the dates of others are stated vaguely ; and again, if some, including the story of the call, appear to be tinged with reflections from experiences of the Prophet later than the early years of his career, then these two features support the belief that the Oracles were first reduced to writing at a distance from their composition and first delivery—a belief in harmony with the theory of their inclusion and preservation in the Prophet's *second* Roll.

Let us now turn to the biographical portions of the Book. We have proved the trustworthiness of Ch. XXXVI as the narrative of an eyewitness, in all probability Baruch the Scribe, who for the first time is introduced to us. But if Baruch wrote Ch. XXXVI it is certain that a great deal more of the biographical matter in the Book is from

<sup>1</sup> Cp. A. B. Davidson, 'Jeremiah,' in Hastings, 'B.D.,' ii. 522.

his hand. This is couched in the same style; it contains likewise details which a later writer could hardly have invented, and it is equally free from those efforts to idealise events and personalities, by which later writers betray their distance from the subjects of which they treat. It is true that, as an objector remarks, 'the Book does not contain a single line that claims to be written by Baruch.'<sup>1</sup> But this is evidence rather for, than against, Baruch's authorship. Most of the biographical portions of the Old Testament are anonymous. It was later ages that fixed names to Books as they have fixed Baruch's own to certain apocryphal works. Moreover, the suppression of his name by this scribe is in harmony with the modest manner in which he appears throughout, as though he had taken to heart Jeremiah's words to him: *Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. Only thy life will I give thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.*<sup>2</sup> But there is still more conclusive evidence. That Baruch had not been associated with Jeremiah before 603-4 is a fair inference from the fact that the Prophet had to dictate to him all his previous Oracles. Now it is striking that up to that year and the introduction of Baruch as Jeremiah's scribe, we have few narratives of the Prophet's experience and activity—being left in ignorance as to the greater part of his life under Josiah—and that these few narratives

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> xliv. 5.

—of his call, of his share in the propagation of Deuteronomy, of the plot of the men of Anathoth against him, of his symbolic action with his waist-cloth, and of his visit to the house of the Potter—are (except in the formal titles to some of them) told in the first person by Jeremiah himself,<sup>1</sup> while from 604-3 onwards the biographical narratives are much more numerous and, except in three of them,<sup>2</sup> the Prophet appears only in the third person. This coincidence of the first appearance of Baruch as the Prophet's associate with the start of a numerous series of narratives of the Prophet's life in which he appears in the third person can hardly be accidental.

Such, then, are the data which the Book of Jeremiah offers for the task of determining the origins and authenticity of its very diverse contents. After our survey of them, those of you who are ignorant of the course of recent criticism will not be surprised to learn that virtual agreement now exists on certain main lines, while great differences of opinion continue as to details—differences perhaps irreconcilable. It is agreed that the book is the result of a long and a slow growth, stretching far beyond Jeremiah's time,

<sup>1</sup> Chs. i., xi., 1-8, 18-xii. 6; xiii. 1-17; xviii. 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> Chs. xxiv., xxviii., xxxii (except for the introductory verses 1-5).

out of various sources ; and that these sources are in the main three :—

A. Collections of genuine Oracles and Discourses of Jeremiah—partly made by himself.

B. Narratives of his life and times by a contemporary writer or writers, the principal, if not the only, contributor to which is (in the opinion of most) the Scribe Baruch.

C. Exilic and Post-Exilic additions in various forms: long prophecies and narratives; shorter pieces included among the Prophet's own Oracles; and scattered titles, dates, notes and glosses.

Moreover, there is also general agreement as to which of these classes a very considerable number of the sections of the Book belong to. There is not, and cannot be, any doubt about the bulk of those which are apparently exilic or post-exilic. It is equally certain that a large number of the Oracles are Jeremiah's own, and that the most of the Narratives are from his time and trustworthy. But questions have been raised and are still receiving opposite answers as to whether or not some of the Oracles and Narratives have had their original matter coloured or expanded by later hands; or have even in whole been foisted upon the Prophet or his contemporary biographer from legendary sources.

Of these questions some, however they be answered, so little affect our estimates of the Prophet and his teaching that we may leave them

alone. But there are at least four of them on the answers to which does depend the accurate measure of the stature of Jeremiah as a man and a prophet, of the extent and variety of his gifts and interests, of the simplicity or complexity of his temperament, and of his growth, and of his teaching through his long ministry of over forty years.

These four questions are

- (1) The authenticity of the account of his call in Ch. I.
- (2) The authenticity of the account of his support of the promulgation of Deuteronomy, the Old Covenant, in Ch. XI.
- (3) The authenticity of his Oracle on the New Covenant in Ch. XXXI.
- (4) And an even larger question—Whether indeed any of the prose Oracles attributed to him in the Book are his, or whether we must confine ourselves to the passages in verse as alone his genuine deliverances?

The first three of these questions we may leave for discussion to their proper places in our survey of his ministry. The fourth is even more fundamental to our judgment both of the Book and of the Man; and I shall deal with it in the introduction to the next lecture on 'The Poet Jeremiah.'