

Jeremiah — God's Great "Against"

For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls **AGAINST the whole land, AGAINST the kings of Judah, AGAINST the princes thereof, AGAINST the priests thereof, and AGAINST the people of the land. And they shall fight AGAINST thee; and they shall not prevail AGAINST thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.**

Seven "AGAINSTS" on the first page of the Book of Jeremiah! And the score was five to two in favor of Jeremiah. He was to be in a fivefold manner **against** the whole international setup of his day. He was God's judge and jury and prosecuting attorney, all in one. His was the infallible and merciless Voice of Doom. For forty ever worsening years the tenderest heart that beat in any human bosom of his times became Heaven's Censor of the world of the "Fertile Crescent", the lands with rivers—Egypt and its Nile, Israel and its Jordan, Damascus and the proud streams of melted snow, and the nations of the great valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates.

HOW THOROUGHLY JEREMIAH KNEW HIS LAND. He names 117 places on his prophetic horizon. He mentions the following, the number in the parenthesis being the number of times he refers to it: Abarim, Ai (2), Anathoth (7), Arabah, Arabia, Ararat, Arnon, Arpad (2), Aroer, Ashdod, Askelon (3), Askenaz, Azekah, Babylon (129), Bashan (2), Bekamai, Ben-hinnom Valley, the land of Benjamin, Beshemesh, Bethacurem, Bethdiblathaim, **B e t h e l**, Bethgamul, Bethlehem, Bethmean, Bozrah (5), Buz, Caphtor, Carchemish, Carmel (2), Chaldea or Land of Chaldeans (many times), Chemosh (2), Cush, Damascus (7), Dedan (3), Dibon (2), Dan (2), Edom, Eglath, Egypt (56), Ekron, Elam (9), Elealah, Ephraim (4), Euphrates (7), Gareb, Gaza (3), Gibeon (2), Gilead (4), Goah, Gomorrah (4), Hamath (3), tower of Hanel, Hazor (4), Heshbon (7), Hinnom (3), Holon, Horanaim (4), Land of Israel (many), Jahez, Jahzah, Jazer, Jericho, Jerusalem (89), Jordan River, Jungle of the Jordan (2), Land of Judah, Kedar (5), Kerioth (4), the Kidron, Kirithaim (2), Kirheres (2), Kirjath-jearim, Lachish, Lenanon (4), Luhith, Media (3), Mephaath, Merathaim, Migdon (2), Mini, Misgab, Mizpah (15), Moab (51), Nebo (2), Negeb (2), Nile (2), Nimrim, No, Noph (3), the North Country (3), Pathros (2), Pekod, Put, Rabbah, Ramah (2), Red Sea (2), Riblah, Samaria (2), Schechem, Sheba, Shephelah, She-

shach (2), Shiloh, Sidon (2), Sihon (2), Sodom (4), Tabor (2), Tahpanes (6), Tapheth (8), Tarshish, Teman (6), Tyre, Uphaz, Uz, Zimri, Zoar. And he mentions these gates of the city of Jerusalem: Peoples', Potherd, Benjamin (3), New (2), Corner, Horse. This man's heart knew his city like the palm of his hand, and he knew it in relation to the civil and religious world of the nations on its near and far horizon.

HOW INTIMATELY JEREMIAH KNEW HIS PEOPLE, FROM THE HIGHEST TO THE LOWEST! And sometimes the highest were the lowest. The personnel of the book includes Baruch, mentioned 23 times, in Ch. 36 sixteen times, all of chapters 43 and 45), Ahikam, Ahab, Azariah, Amon, Coniah, Delaiah, Ebedmelech, El Hasah, Elishama, El Nathan, Gedaliah, Gemariah, Hanameel, Hananiah, Hamutal, Hanan, Hilkiyah, Ishmael, Irijah, another Jeremiah (there are eight in the Old Testament), Johanan, Jonadab, Joazaniah, Jehudi, Jucah, Kareah, Mattan, Maaseiah, Micah, Micaiah, Nethaniah, Nebuzaradan, Pas-hur, Seraiah, Shemaiah, Zephaniah, and incidental mention of 37 other people by names, besides eight kings, Hezekiah (then deceased), Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, Jeconiah, Nebuchadrezzar, Evil Merodach, Pharaoh-hophra. These are live people to Jeremiah, the men who made history in his day in his own land and over the Near East. These widespread geographical and personal contacts, associations, and judgments from on high, in Jeremiah's prophetic responsibilities and mission, show him the man of his times for his personal and prophetic message, as we find it our Book of Jeremiah.

These hundreds of personal and geographical references of Jeremiah to his environment show how intimately and accurately his prophesying is related to life. In all this he figured for morals and revealed truth in all the deep emotions of his soul.

OUR JEREMIAH IS A SET OF BOOKS, INSEPARABLY CONFUSED. In Fred M. Wood's

"Fire in My Bones", p. 9, we read: "For all its readers the roll of Jeremiah is a hopeless jigsaw puzzle of prophetic discourses, biographical material, and historical narratives arranged without much, if any, plan of chronological sequence". Dr. Clyde Francisco, in his excellent little book on the prophet, p. 13, divides the book into seven parts: I. The Earlier Prophecies of Jeremiah (chaps. 1-6, delivered primarily before 622 B.C.) II. False and True Wisdom (8:4 to 10:25) III. Pessimistic Messages (chaps. 11-20) IV. Polemics Against Kings and Prophets (chaps. 22-29) V. Passages of Hope (chaps. 30-33) VI. Historical Section, chronologically arranged from the siege of Jerusalem through the flight into Egypt (chaps. 37-44) VII. Foreign Prophecies (chaps. 46-51).

Yet you see there a gap between sections I and II, where we are told that the prophet's Temple Sermon has been inserted. Between III and IV appears Jeremiah's advice during the siege of Jerusalem (chap. 21). Between V and VI are set three narratives about Israel's reception of the Word of God. Between VI and VII is the great counsel of unselfish wisdom, from Jeremiah to his secretary, Baruch. And a historical appendix is added as the final chapter. Wherefore the author concludes: "Seen in this light, the book of Jeremiah is definitely carefully put together. It is the attempt to arrange it chronologically that produces confusion."

WE DO WELL TO REMIND OURSELVES HOW PROPHECY WAS PRESERVED. A man did not sit down and write a book and then have it printed. There was, of course, no printing and really no books as we think of books. The prophet, historian or poet—Jeremiah was all three—took a scroll of hide or papyrus or parchment and wrote his message as far as it would hold it. Sometimes there would be many scrolls. You can see how easy it would be for them to be read, copied or translated now in one order, now in another. Jeremiah's writings are even more complicated, for his first scroll or scrolls fell into hostile hands which cut the writing to bits and burned them in the winter fire. So Baruch, his secretary, rewrote the message, from memory, while Jeremiah was imprisoned. Whether his own point of view colors the original thought of Jeremiah in some copying of the message is a matter of opinion. You can take the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible and see what portions of the book the authors judge to have been composed originally: 1, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign; 2, those dated from its thirteenth to the thirty first years; 3, none in the reign of three months of Jehoahaz; 4, those of the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign of eleven years, and those in the fourth year and those after the fourth year; 5, the writings in Jehoiachin's reign of three months; 6, those in each of the six periods of Zedekiah's reign; 7, what was written in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem; 8, in Egypt, several sections of the book; 9, un-

dated sections, but not always entirely without indication of time; 10, the appendix of Chapter 52. Certainly all this confusion need not be poured out in the ears of a class. It may help you to look and see the occasion of a writing, as you study it for your own edification or interpretation.

WHO WAS JEREMIAH? He was from one of the three God-chosen groups of the Jewish theocracy, when it functioned properly. God himself was to choose first the kings of Israel (now Judah alone), secondly, the priests out of a whole tribe devoted to the temple worship and the religious life and leadership of the nation in the line of its worship, and of that same tribe also the Levites, their associates and assistants; and, thirdly, the prophets, God's chosen spokesmen by special revelation. Now Jeremiah, like John the Baptist, was of the two sacred classes and callings, Levites and prophets, one a tribal position, the other personal. A Levite prophet would sustain the temple worship in its fullest meaning and power in the national life, and would deliver the special revelations given to him.

The priests came from certain families of the tribe of Levi. But the rest of the tribe had duties in the care of the temple, in the great choirs that sang, and much else in the leadership of the nation in the sole center of worship and national religion. Since God chose one whole tribe for his Old Testament ministry, he demanded that their tribal inheritance be in special cities, located about over the nation. These were their property, their homes. But for their support the tithes were given. The temple area was 35 acres, full of buildings, courts and wonderful exterior porches. In it there was a vast storehouse of the tithes the people brought there, as part of their worship. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house", is very literal, in its meaning. It is a high-handed perversion of Scripture to make that storehouse a church treasury. There was no Old Testament Church. This was where the Jew brought the tithe whereby the Old Testament ministry, the Levite tribe, was fed and maintained. The people brought not only "meat in mine house", but Jesus commended the Scribes and Pharisees because they tithed "mint and anise and cummin". These were flavorings to season food with. It is just as natural to tithe the garden leaves used for seasoning the meat as it is to tithe the meat. Do both, said Jesus, and don't leave the weightier matters of your Old Testament Law undone, oh! Israel!

Now Anathoth was one of the Levite cities. So there Jeremiah had his home, three miles from Jerusalem. His very life was in the temple, and yet he was apart from it and could see the conduct of his people within and without its sacred precincts. This book portrays that life. No man knew it better. No man could be more eager for that life to be main-

tained in full national vigor and devotion. In Jeremiah the ideals of the public worship (the externals) and the private character and inner experience (the inner realities of grace), in unison, had their advocate and realization in his holy example. He wanted his tiny people to be a nation of Jeremiahs, in so far as devotion to their God in his own chosen way was concerned.

"TINY PEOPLE", DID I SAY? That's what the the "Westminster Historical Atlas", p. 37, says namely, that Central Palestine, which is Jeremiah's Land of Judah, for the most part, and some territory north of there, "is about eighty miles long and has between the Mediterranean and the Jordan an average width of fifty miles. Its total area is thus about 4,000 square miles", or about one tenth as big as Kentucky. How tiny indeed that nation, when you could put ten of them in Kentucky. And Jeremiah saw that tiny State go down, first to about the proportions of Lexington (without its historic meaning) and then that was cut in half and finally that little half ran off with Jeremiah down to Egypt, against his will. Was national tradedy ever more agonizing? We have from Jeremiah's pen his messages from God for every stage of that downward trend, as it came from the heights to the depths.

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH IS SUPREMELY A PROTEST THROUGH LONG YEARS AGAINST A CONSTANT REPETITION OF DOUBLE ADULTERY. This **double adultery** was the constant and general habit of illicit sexual self-indulgence and the infidelity to the marriage vows of Israel to God as her husband. This is the theme. And it had been the theme of all prophets to the nation. Sexually speaking, the "Holy Land" had been the most sensual of all lands ever since it was known to history. It is a land of hills and some mountains. On these hills the earlier inhabitants, before Israel, had built centers of idolatry. Each consisted of the vast image of a woman, covered with protruding breasts, provocative of lust. She was the goddess. Her priestesses were harlots. The religion consisted in adultery. These were the vilest people that ever lived. God ordered them destroyed unanimously, root and branch. Israel didn't, couldn't, wouldn't. The result was that she became like them. Some local inhabitant, maybe a slave who had been spared from the former population, would say, in time of drouth: "On yonder hill a goddess is accustomed to our worship. She is said to give or withhold rain, according to the reverence paid her." Then the farmer would go up to try and get relief from drouth. He became initiated in a religion that consisted solely, entirely and continually of adultery. This was the religion of the hills.

The prophet makes the accusation plainly and directly. His very first word "in the ears of Jerusalem" is to remind her of her "espousals . . . Israel

was holiness unto the Lord", in those days of commitment as the nation was redeemed from Egyptian bondage and married to God their Redeemer in the pilgrimage of the Arabian desert, 2:2,3. Yet now "upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest playing the harlot", v. 20. This tiny people, who lived in and around Solomon's great and beautiful temple, one of the wonders of the world for all time, are compared then to "a wild ass, used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they will find her." The Holy People of the Holy Land are like this mere beast of burden, when under the added burden of its beastly lust, v. 24.

And he uses another illustration, without details. None are needed. "Thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways", v. 23. And this is explained as a bride's faithless lust: "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go", v. 25. It was local idolatry: "for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah", v. 28. This theme of the initial denunciation is repeated often enough, but it is presupposed far more often in the prophet's sad laments and his impassioned pleas to the harlot people to return to God from their literal and spiritual whoredoms. Ugly word that! Yet the prophet hurls the insult, the indictment, the taunt against his tiny people of God's sole and beautiful temple, in a land that had its very existence and perpetuity because of that temple and its meaning to Israel and the world.

There is a certain delicacy in Jeremiah. He complains of this in every message to the people, without renewing the ugly charge of **whoredom** but one more time, openly: "For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil . . . I have seen thy adulteries, and they neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the field. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem!", 13,22, 23, 27. Yet this is what the prophet has in mind, in incessant complaints against all elements of the population, kings, princes of the people, priests, false prophets and the masses. It is a forty years long lament, an expression of deep indignation.

YET JEREMIAH'S COMPLAINT HAS AN ADDED FEATURE. Judah's double adultery is robed in hypocrisy. For she feigned a great reformation, under good King Josaih. But her double adultery is endlessly practiced under cover of the vilest hypocrisy. She feigned devotion to the one true God and his prescribed worship and moral life, portrayed, practiced and given meaning to in all life by the temple in her midst. This above all else provokes the prophet's loathing. I am not disposed to follow the thankless task of putting all Jeremiah's com-

plaints against his people in a chronological row. Each time he pours out this one ceaseless and almost unvaried lament over marital infidelity on the part of the people who were married to their God and broke their vows in literal and spiritual adultery world without end.

LET ME BEG OF YOU TWO THINGS. 1. If you are going to teach Jeremiah, don't apply his words to the United States. That would be a vile and lying pessimism. If the moral and political condition of the American public today had been that of Judah in Jeremiah's day, he would have been beside himself with joy. We have in part of our ministry today a band of professional pessimists. They don't believe the gospel. They have given up faith in their Bible. They are socialists and think the "kingdom of God" means socialism. So they preach a set of lies of pessimism against our people, thinking to promote the only kind of socialism which can give a "kingdom", namely the socialism of communism. I heard one preach when I first came home from Brazil. Such men have a hypocritical air of false humility. They sound out all their denunciations with the verbs in the first person plural. He said "We do" this and "We do" that till I said to myself: "We means you AND I. If all these things you have said about yourself are true, or even half of them, then you are the vilest scoundrel out of hell. I'll never hear you preach again, if I live a thousand years." They think that by saying "WE", in their pessimistic denunciations, they are by that showing humility. They are merely showing themselves hypocrites. Don't imitate their lying folly.

2. Don't pretend you are a prophet. Great emphasis will be given by the above type of preachers to Jeremiah; and his Jeremiads will be poured out under the pretense that we need prophets today and Old Testament prophets. Old Testament prophets lived in a God-made theocracy, largely nullified by the depravity of the Jews. That theocracy did not pass John the Baptist. "The Law and the Prophets were UNTIL JOHN", said Jesus, Luke 16:16. Let them stay in their place. "Not an inch this side of John the Baptist, Jeremiah. You have no place in the New Testament era. The present kingdom of God is made up of the twice-born believers in Jesus the Savior, Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6; 11:2, 7, 26; Gal. 6:16. Your kingdom of God was Judah. You had a true prophet's glimpse of Israel's resurrection as a kingdom, with the further gift to humanity of Jesus the Savior and the New Testament. But forty years after the Savior's death, that Israel died under the heel of Rome, in 70 A.D. It exists no more. You, Jeremiah, were of that era of THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS. Your book, Jeremiah, was just as much the Mosaic Law and its defense and propaganda, together with the defense of the great temple that carried out its worship and sacrificial hope, as

was the book of Leviticus. You were part and parcel of the Leviticus regime. UNTIL JOHN, then, Jeremiah! Not an inch further. On your tombstone, Jeremiah, your Savior, through the New Covenant that you believed in and announced, has written your epitaph. Here it is: JEREMIAH UNTIL JOHN."

Perhaps the greatest theologian this continent ever produced was Princeton's great scholar, Benjamin Warfield. His definition of the word **prophet** is: "AN ORGAN OF REVELATION". As the eye is the organ of sight, as the ear is the organ of hearing, as the hand is an organ of touch, so God's prophets have been the organs of revelation of his will and his truth. The Old Testament prophets were a unit with the Law and its application, in the theocracy of which they were a part. The New Testament prophets were organs of revelation of the New Covenant fulfilled in Jesus. They gave us the New Testament and its revelations of truth, salvation and the will of God for this era. When the New Testament was completed, we have had no need of further prophets. I have been a minister fifty five years. I never had a revelation of truth in that whole time, and I don't know any of my colleagues who have. We don't need any, don't want any. We are preaching the New Testament. From that comes our Baptist life and Baptist churches. B. H. Carroll used to say: "Baptists believe that the New Testament is the law of Christianity. Baptists believe that the New Testament is all the law of Christianity. Baptists believe that the New Testament will always be all the law of Christianity". We want no other. My brother, don't pretend that you are a prophet. If that fool idea ever enters your brain, just say to your brain: "Brain of mine, we are pretending to be a prophet. That means one through whom God reveals truth. Now, brain of mine, if you have received any revelation of truth beyond what is already revealed in the Bible, you just spit it out and let's look at it. I want to examine this pretended truth we have added to the revelations of Holy Scripture before I make any such claim. For, brain of mine, if you and I pretend to be of the prophetic order but have nothing to show for it, then one thing is sure. The kind of prophets we are is FALSE PROPHETS. And that I don't want to be." The United States is no theocracy. It doesn't need any prophets except those in its Bible and they are not the law of the land. The truths of that Bible are a reality in the hearts of the citizens who receive and believe them and apply them to life. But these are not government functions. Let us not be cursed with any false prophets in our day, attempting to make the Bible their excuse for invading our democracy with their own false prophecy. Christians can do better than that.

FINALLY, WHAT HAS JEREMIAH MEANT

TO ME, IN MY OWN EXPERIENCE? There are such a multitude of things one would like to write about in connection with Jeremiah! But you can't put them in a letter. And YOU cannot put them in your teaching of a brief study with a class. Don't try it. Commentaries are for that, and a lot of good ones are on sale in our Baptist Book Stores. I skip much I would like to say, in order to tell you, in a sort of experience meeting, what Jeremiah has meant in my own life, ministry and message.

1. On July 29, 1906, my brother preached my ordination sermon, in Murray, Ky., from the text: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." (Jer. 45:5). It was a high and holy hour. So far as I know my heart, I have never disobeyed that text that initiated my official ministry among men. I do not want to. It was my great privilege, on some of my furloughs from my mission work in Brazil, as we functioned together in the "retreats" of Dr. Walt N. Johnson, to know that great educator and missionary, Dr. E. M. Poteat. I had admired him from a distance, as he presided over Furman University. In 1906, in the city of Chattanooga, as I attended my second Southern Baptist Convention, I heard him preach the greatest sermon I ever listened to. It was on, "The Scars Of Calvary", text: "I saw a Lamb as it had been slain." "Why are the scars of the crucified Savior on display in heaven?" he asked. And the answer was threefold. "1. They identify the historical continuity of the living Jesus. 2. They are the receipt for the price paid for our redemption. 3. They show heaven's first law of life, the law of sacrifice." Oh! My soul! What preaching. I am still under its sway.

And in blessed Walt Johnson's Retreat, a lot of us preachers sat in a circle in rocking chairs and looked each other in the face and talked, all day, Poteat taking out time the last thing in the morning each day to give an exposition of the Book of Acts. One day he told this. He was the candidate of his literary society for president of the student body. He and the Pres. of the society thought, late the night before the election, that they would win the next day. He had promised his mother to read a chapter in the Bible every night before he went to bed. That night he read Romans Twelve. When he came to verse 10, he stopped. "In honor preferring one another". He thought on that. Then he went to the Pres. of his Literary Society and asked him to go to all whose votes had been promised him and say that he was requesting them to vote for the other man. "Since then", he told us, "I have never sought for any place for myself. And you don't need to worry. Your brethren will put you in places of service far above your deserts." I add my testimony to that. He was then home from being a missionary to China without studying the language. He lectured in English on Christianity to the advanced students of the University of Shanghai. God has better places

for all his servants than their own ambitions could ever achieve.

2. Soon after my ordination, I heard a great sermon by J. M. Burgess, of Blandville, Ky., before an Association, I believe. It was from Jer. 2:36, "Why gaddest thou about to change thy ways?" I didn't agree with all of it—still don't. But I wish every Baptist Association and Convention in the world could hear such a sermon. The habit of imitating what others do, adopting the new doctrinal, religious and ecclesiastical styles that are abroad in the land, is the greatest highway to apostasy from truth and the will of God that is to be found in the world today. My prayers go out for Billy Graham, whom I frequently hear with joy. He went "gadding" over to the vast **World Council of Neo-Catholicism**, recently met in India, as an "Observer." Why? Will he want to change our New Testament ways, according to that terrible apostasy he saw and heard functioning there? Why would he honor such an apostasy with his presence? It is a calamity.

3 In one of my postgraduate Greek classes in the Seminary in Recife, Brazil, a bit after 1920, I taught the Greek Jeremiah, as found in the Septuagint. I have the notes of it still. It was the "Jeremiah" they had when the Hebrew text then current was, for the first time, translated into a foreign language. Evidently it was the translation of an earlier, or at least a different, text from what we have now. It throws light on the confusion as to the text down the ages since it was written, cut up, rewritten and perhaps later revised. Someone has estimated that the Greek Jeremiah is a fifth shorter than the Hebrew version, perhaps 1000 words being missing. Also the order of the chapters is very different.

4. In the country churches, in the days of my youth, a text from Jeremiah was often the beginning of a protracted meeting, and sometimes of a great revival. It was Jer. 4:3, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." There is a time when farmers feel that the winter is over and the soil is ready for plowing. Then will come the seedtime, that will give the best harvest. The spiritual preachers looked for that time, not in the Spring, but in the Summer or Fall, when they held their protracted meetings. But they used this text as testifying their own spiritual insight into the readiness of the people for a revival, just as farmers, in the Spring, recognize the proper time for sowing.

5. While in special studies in Princeton I heard a man preach—I forget his name—once in Princeton and once in either Washington or New York. He preached identically the same sermon, from Jer. 12:5, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, how then wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" And he used the phrase

that since then has become so common: "Cheer up, Jeremiah, the worst is yet to come!"

6. Many a country preacher has also preached from Jer. 6:16, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." Of course, there is no merit in any "ways" just because they happen to be old. But when they are old enough to be the ways the Holy Spirit laid down in the New Testament for life, obedience and spirituality in the churches, then is Jeremiah's inspired counsel accurately applied.

7. There is one great utterance of Jeremiah that looms large in the New Testament, perhaps the origin of its very name, THE NEW COVENANT. It is his foresight which promised the New Covenant, so utterly different from the Old Covenant of works about which he was so concerned in his exhortations to Judah. As I used to teach the Epistle to the Hebrews to my Greek classes in Brazil, the place of Jeremiah in the Epistle came home to me most vividly and I felt our great debt to the prophet. Jeremiah is not quoted much in the New Testament, only three times by name. But Jeremiah gives us most of Chapter 8 of Hebrews. Our Savior is declared to have "obtained a more excellent ministry . . . he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises". Then he quotes Jeremiah, for five verses, taken from Jer. 31:31, ff. And this is the conclusion: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." That is what the author says about our Old Testament. "Antiquated and obsolete" is the translation of the Berkeley Version. "Antiquated and decrepid", says Schonfield: "antiquated and aged", is Moffatt's rendering.

Now I have met people who protested against the words "Old Testament" and wanted to change them for "The Ancient Testament", thereby giving honor to what Hebrews repudiates, on the theory that men honor more that which is ancient. The Pedobaptist Protestants and Medieval Catholicism, united Church and State regimes, went back to the Old Testament for their priests, their altars, their infant baptism, their sprinkling or pouring instead of real baptism, and all their other major apostasies from New Testament Christianity. Such people are in the religion that was UNTIL JOHN. They are "has-beens". They want to justify their Old Testament So-called 'Church', its so-called baptism, some of them their priests, etc. You never find PRIESTS mentioned anywhere in the New Testament as officers of a New Testament church. So they abandon Christ, the Apostles, and the New Testament which they gave us as the norm of obedient Christianity forever. And they sink back into the very evils that brought Israel to destruction and Judah to the ob-

scene depths of infamy of which Jeremiah complains.

Now some of these people say to me: "It is not really the OLD Testament. It is the Ancient Testament, honored for its age". No. That is a false and wicked perversion of the Bible. The Epistle to the Hebrews, some of whom would have liked for this lie to be so, calls the first 66 books of our Bible, "old, decaying, antiquated", even for Jews. And, for Gentiles, Paul said: "Ye are not under the law" (Rom. 6:14); "Christ is **the end of the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth", (Rom. 10:4). It is a **has-been** regime. If you started observing its vast and cumbersome ceremonialism, you would be turned out of any Baptist church on earth. If **you** killed your son for picking up a few sticks on Saturday, we'd send you to the electric chair. And it would be too good for you! If you practiced polygamy, as people were **obliged** to do in Israel, you'd go to jail, even in Utah. Humanity has outgrown the Law of Moses morally. Thank God! To go back to it would be a horrible moral lapse of civilization, just as that law itself was an advance on the current civilization of its times. Jesus refused to approve death for adultery. There were too many death penalties, as is always the case of law in a backward moral age. Thank God that such a somber and impossible regime is forever past!

Jeremiah foresaw the day of a dead Law, and a time when the most precious thing in that Law regime, the ark of the Covenant, would forever disappear and **would not even be missed** (Jer. 3:16). "In those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord'. It shall no more come to mind, because they will not remember it or miss it," Jer. 3:16, Berkeley Version. Hallelujah! It is gone forever and even the Jews don't even miss it. The synagogues, democratic institutions that arose spontaneously in their captivity and are very much like our democratic New Testament churches, are in all lands. But there is no roped off space called the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies and no human being even misses it. That Jeremiah prophesied, however much it was against his own feelings. **God said that**, not merely Jeremiah! We are in a new era and our people hardly even recall that such an era as Jeremiah's temple regime ever existed. Thank God it is dead forevermore. In the place of that "ANTIQUATED AND OBSOLETE" LEGALISM, we are of the gospel of grace, and our Savior has said: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall MAKE YOU FREE", John 8:31, 32. In foreseeing that day, Jeremiah rose to his greatest heights as a prophet. We live in that divine regime that he foresaw and that Jesus Christ has made real in our experience and life.

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41 years Southern Baptist
Missionary in Brazil

W.C.T.