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The Identity of the "I" in the "Confessions" of Jeremiah

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THE IDENTITY OF THE "I"

IN THE "CONFESSIONS" OF JEREMIAH

A Thesis

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Master of Theology

by

David H. Thiele

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Affirmation and Disclaimer

This thesis represents original work. It has not been submitted to any other academic institution. Appropriate recognition has been given for the contribution of other scholars.

D.H. Thiele (signature)   28/6/98

D.H. Thiele   Date

Preface

The confessions of Jeremiah have been of particular

interest to me since I commenced teaching a class on the

Old Testament prophets in 1992. I consider myself very

fortunate to have had the opportunity to study them at

considerable depth in the preparation of this thesis.

The chief tools used in my study have been the

biblical texts themselves. For a Hebrew text I have used

<u>Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia</u>.[1] The Rahlfs edition of

the Septuagint has been used.[2] English translations have

been provided by the New Revised Standard Version unless

otherwise noted.[3]

The production of a thesis like this is never a

solitary activity and thanks must be given to many people

who assisted me in many ways. First, I wish to thank the

South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist

Church for their sponsorship of my studies. Without such

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[1]K. Elliger, and W. Rudolph (eds.) <u>Biblia Hebraica
Stuttgartensia</u> (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft,
1967-77).

[2]A. Rahlfs, (ed), <u>Septuaginta</u> (Stuttgart: Deutsche
Biblestiftung, 1935).

[3]<u>The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version</u>
(Division of Christian Education of the National Council
of the Churches of Christ in the United States of
America, 1989).

<u>Fonts</u>

This thesis utilises both Greek and Hebrew fonts. A chart of the Hebrew font used is provided below and a chart of the Greek font follows on the next page.

<u>Hebrew Consonants</u>

Aleph	א
Bet	בּ ב
Gimel	גּ ג
Dalet	דּ ד
He	ה
Vav	ו
Zayin	ז
Het	ח
Tet	ט
Yod	י
Kaph	כּ כ
(final)	ך
Lamed	ל
Mem	מ
(final)	ם
Nun	נ
(final)	ן
Samak	ס
Ayin	ע
Pe	פּ פ
(final)	ף
Sade	צ
(final)	ץ
Qoph	ק
Resh	ר
Sin/Shin	שׂ שׁ
Tav	ת

<u>Hebrew Vowels</u> (with Lamed)

Patah	לַ
Qames	לָ
Segol	לֶ
Sere	לֵ
Sere-Yod	לֵי
Hireq	לִ
Hireq Yod	לִי
Qames Hatup	לָ
Holem	לֹ
Holem-Vav	לוֹ
Qibbus	לֻ
Sureq	לוּ

<u>Hebrew Shevas</u>

Simple (with Lamed)	לְ
Hatep Patah (with Aleph)	אֲ
Hatep Segoh (with Aleph)	אֱ
Hatep Qames Hatep (with Aleph)	אֳ

Greek Font

Alpha	A	α
Beta	B	B
Gamma	Γ	γ
Delta	Δ	δ
Epsilon	E	ϵ
Zeta	Z	ζ
Eta	H	η
Theta	Θ	θ
Iota	I	ι
Kappa	K	κ
Lambda	Λ	λ
Mu	M	μ
Nu	N	ν
Xi	Ξ	ξ
Omicron	O	o
Pi	Π	π
Rho	P	ρ
Sigma	Σ	σ, ς
Tau	T	τ
Upsilon	Υ	υ
Phi	Φ	ϕ
Chi	X	χ
Psi	Ψ	ψ
Omega	Ω	ω

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D.N. Freedman
AJBI	Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Language and Literature
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BASOR	Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research
BHS	Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia
Bib	Biblica
BibSac	Bibliatheca Sacra
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentlich Wissenschaft
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
EB	Encyclopedia Biblica
ExT	Expository Times
GUOST	Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society
HAR	Hebrew Annual Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IB	*Interpreter's Bible*, ed. G.A. Buttrick
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G.A. Buttrick
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
Int	Interpretation
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LXX	Septuagint
NCB	New Century Bible
NIB	*New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. L.E. Keck
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament

NRSV	Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
RevExp	Review and Expositor
RSV	Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEAJT	South East Asian Journal of Theology
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
TDNT	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u>, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich
TDOT	<u>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</u>, ed. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
TynBul	Tyndale Bulletin
USQR	Union Seminary Quarterly Review
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ	Westminster Theological Journal
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentlich Wissenschaft
ZTK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

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Introduction

The book of Jeremiah contains a great many puzzles
and has attracted much scholarly attention in the last
two hundred years.[1] Near to the heart of much of the
study of the book of Jeremiah lie discussions regarding
the so-called "confessions" of Jeremiah.[2] Many of the

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[1]Amongst these puzzles are text critical problems,
the relationship of poetic and prose sections (source
criticism), continuity of the Jeremaic tradition,
relationship of Jeremiah to the Deuteronomic reform, date
of Jeremiah's call, identity of the "foe from the North",
structure of the book (rhetorical criticism), and
relationship between the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah
and the production of the book of Jeremiah (L.G. Perdue,
"Jeremiah in Modern Research: Approaches and Issues", A
Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies,
edited by L.G. Perdue and B.W. Kovacs [Winona Lake, Ind.:
Eisenbrauns, 1984], 1-32).

[2]Scholars remain divided as to the exact
delimitations and the number of the confessions. Four
doctoral dissertations done in major American
universities illustrate the diversity of thinking.
D.M. Wimmer includes Jer 17:12-13 in his fourth
confessions out of a total of six ("Prophetic Experience
in the Confessions of Jeremiah", Unpublished Ph.D.
Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1973, 235). By
contrast, W.V. Chambers begins his fourth confessions out
of a total of seven with Jer 17:14 ("The Confessions of
Jeremiah: A Study of Prophetic Ambivalence", Unpublished
Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1972, 69).
K.M. O'Connor counts only five confessions by reading Jer
11:18-12:6 as one confession (The Confessions of
Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1-25,
SBLDS 94 [Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1988], 15-26). She
also disagrees with many other scholars by not including
Jer 20:14-18 as part of the confessions (O'Connor,
Confessions, 75-80). A.R. Diamond counts eight

issues in the book generally come to specific focus in

the confessions.[3]

Critical study of Jeremiah finds its real starting

point in the work of G.H.A. Ewald[4] who relied heavily on

the "dialogues" in Jeremiah--and especially that material

which is now generally referred to as the confessions.

The term "confessions" (Konfessionen) was first used for

this material in 1902.[5] The isolation of this material

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confessions by separating 11:18-23 from 12:1-6 and
including 20:14-18 but separating it from 20:7-13. (The
Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic
Drama JSOTSS 45, [Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1987], 21-51,
101-21).
    Despite the appearance of confusion scholars are
agreed on a core of material in the confessions.
Disputes are at the margins. As part of the delimitation
of the this thesis Diamond's listing of the confessions
is accepted as a starting point. His list is very much
within the mainstream except for his separation of Jer
20:7-18 into two confessions. This separation is likely
to have no impact on the outcome of our investigation.

    [3]For example, text critical issues relating to the
confessions are explored by A.R. Diamond, "Jeremiah's
Confessions in the LXX and the MT: A Witness to
Developing Canonical Function?" VT, 40 (1990), 33-50; the
relationship of the confessions to Deuteronomic theology
is explored by E. Gerstenberger ("Jeremiah's Complaints:
Observations on Jeremiah 15:10-21", JBL 82 (1963), 393-
408) and the confessions are studied from the perspective
of rhetorical criticism by O'Connor (Confessions,
passim).

    [4]G.H.A. Ewald Die Propheten des Alten Bundes, I
(Stuttgart, Calwer Verlag, 1840), 23. The work of Ewald
and other scholars of the earlier period is conveniently
summarised in Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience", 13-56.

    [5]W. Erbt, Jeremiah und seine Zeit (Göttingen:
Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1902), 167. See, Wimmer,
"Prophetic Experience", 14.

was confirmed by W. Baumgartner in 1917 on form-critical grounds.[6]

The language of the confessions appears intensely personal. Whenever the confessions are studied the significance of this personal language must be assessed or assumptions must be made regarding it.[7]

In the earliest period it was generally thought that the confessions gave insight into the personality and thinking of Jeremiah. With this view the confessions were included in the book of Jeremiah out of biographical interest. This psychologising approach is given its classic expressions by J. Skinner.[8] It can be summarised in the oft-quoted words of another British scholar, A.B. Davidson:

> The book of Jer 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. But though the truths in Jeremiah are
> old, they all appear in him with an impress of
> personality which gives them novelty. He is
> not to be read for doctrines in their general
> form on God and the people, but for the *nuances*
> which his mind gives them. Though he might not

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[6]W. Baumgartner, Jeremiah's Poems of Lament, Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship, trans. D.E. Orton (Almond, Sheffield, 1988), *passim*.

[7]An analysis of the personal language of Jeremiah is the intention of T. Polk, The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of Self, JSOTSS 32 (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1984).

[8]J. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 201-30.

be aware of it, we can perceive that all his
thoughts are coloured by the religious relation
to God of which he was himself conscious.[9]

The majority of scholars in this period affirmed that the

confessions were authentic expressions of the individual

piety of Jeremiah and provided a window through which his

own intense spiritual struggles could be observed.[10]   The

alternative view that saw them as later additions to the

Jeremiac corpus was very much in the minority.[11]

The easy identification of the confessions with the

inner psychological world of Jeremiah began to unravel

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[9]A.B. Davidson, "Jeremiah the Prophet," A Dictionary
of the Bible, ed James Hastings (New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1911) 2: 576.

[10]Wimmer's survey shows this position was assumed by
such scholars as: Ewald, Die Propheten, 1:23; 2: 69-70;
Julius Wellhausen, Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte
(Berlin: Reimer, 1895), 140-41); C.H. Cornill, Einleitung
in das Alte Testament (Freiburg: Mohr, 1892), 156;
("Prophetic Experience", 14-16).   Others who might have
easily been added to this list include H. Gunkel, The
Psalms: A Form Critical Introduction, Facet Books:
Biblical Series 19 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 36 and
A.S. Peake, Jeremiah and Lamentations, Century Bible
(Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1910), 1:29.

[11]From the earliest period, Wimmer lists only
Nathaniel Schmidt ("Jeremiah", EB [London: A & C Black,
1901], 2388) as holding to this view ("Prophetic
Experience", 20).
      The difficulty in this position, of course, is that
a significant amount of material has be disregarded
because it clearly has personal reference to Jeremiah and
his situation (eg reference to Anathoth).   It is very
easy for a scholar to argue in a circle--deleting that
which does not fit his theory in an attempt to establish
his theory.

with the form-critical work of Baumgartner in 1917.[12]

His conclusion was that the confessions were written in

the *Gattung* of "individual laments" as found in the book

of Psalms.[13] The thoroughness of Baumgartner's analysis

has convinced most subsequent scholars of the correctness

of his position. There have been attempts to reclassify

the confessions as "lawsuits".[14] These attempts have

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[12]Baumgartner, Poems, *passim*. Although the English translation did not appear until 1988 this work was originally written in German in 1917.

[13]Baumgartner, Poems, 89-99.

[14]S.H. Blank, "The Confessions of Jeremiah and the Meaning of Prayer", HUCA 21 (1948), 331-54; D.H. Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience", idem, "The Sociology of Knowledge and the 'Confessions of Jeremiah'", SBL 1978 Seminar Papers, ed. P. Achtemeier (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1978), 393-406.
    Significantly Blank does not see it as necessary to try and distinguish sharply between the confessions and the cultic laments. Rather he sees these laments as being the product of the judicial functions of the sanctuary. In a similar way Wimmer sees elements of the lament mixed in with the "rib-gattung" (399). W.L. Holladay entitles one of his essays on the Confessions "Jeremiah's Lawsuit With God: A Study in Suffering and Meaning", (Int 17 [1963], 280-301). Yet he explicitly categorises the confessions as "laments" (Jeremiah, Hermeneia, [Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress, 1986], 1: 358-60).

been criticised by Diamond[15] and are generally considered

unsuccessful.[16]

G. von Rad's 1936 article, while accepting the

dominant psycho-biographical understanding of the

confessions, saw closer links between them and the

ministry and message of Jeremiah than had generally been

noted.[17] Most other scholars of the period simply assumed

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[15]Diamond, Prophetic Drama, 24, 38 and throughout.
Diamond admits the presence of some (limited) legal
terminology in the confessions but points out that the
individual lament Psalms also contain legal language (p.
24)!
Diamond is dismissive of F. Ahuis' suggestion that
the confessions form a special *Gattung* of "prophetic
laments", although he accepts that a prophet was
especially susceptible to opposition at two points: the
moment of actual delivery of the message and at the time
of any apparent delay in the fulfilment of the oracle
(pp. 30,31).

[16]However, it must be pointed out that a thorough
form-critical study of the confessions as "lawsuits" has
not been done. The rejection of the "lawsuit" *Gattung*
for the confessions tends to be more an unexamined
assumption rather than a vigorously argued position.

[17]G. von Rad, "The Confessions of Jeremiah", A
Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies, ed
L.G. Perdue and B.W. Kovacs (Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake,
Ind.: 1984), 339-348. The implications of von Rad's
position have been systematically developed in two
unpublished doctoral dissertations which sought to
integrate the confessions into the "prophetic" rather
than just "human" aspects of Jeremiah's existence,
(Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience", *passim* and Chambers,
"Prophetic Ambivalence", *passim*).
Polk's work--although much later then that of von
Rad, Chambers or Wimmer--notes the relationship of the
confessions to the prophetic role of Jeremiah. However,
Polk is not thinking of Jeremiah as a historical figure
but as a literary one (Prophetic Persona, 8-18). Some of
Polk's conclusions regarding the confessions parallel my
own. However, the scope and methodology of our studies
differ.

Jeremiah chose to express his inner struggle in the stylised language of the cultus.[18]

A new phase in the study of the confessions began in 1963 with the publication of G. Reventlow's <u>Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia</u>.[19] Reventlow argued that the confessions were laments and that this *Gattung* was "locked" into the cultus. He postulated mediation as a specific prophetic function. His conclusion was that the laments were corporate in reference and cultic in provenance. Thus although the confessions were authentic--in the sense that they came from Jeremiah--one could learn no more about Jeremiah from reading them than one could learn about a Catholic priest by listening to him recite the Mass.[20]

Reventlow must be credited with taking Baumgartner's findings seriously and working out their implications thoroughly. He highlights the difficulties in postulating that Jeremiah used cultic *Gattungen* to

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[18]Diamond, <u>Prophetic Drama</u>, 12.

[19]H.G. Reventlow, <u>Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia</u> (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963).

[20]D. Jobling, "The Quest of the Historical Jeremiah: Hermeneutical Implications of Recent Literature", <u>Prophet to the Nation</u>, 287. Jobling refers to Reventlow's position as "thorough-going liturgiology" (286).

express his deepest personal anguish.[21] However, his own

position is extreme and has not won adherents.

It is not true that *Gattungen* were "locked" into

their original settings. Prophets used a multitude of

Gattungen from a variety of sources to convey their

messages.[22] J. Berridge, V. Bredenkamp, and, more

systematically, J. Bright subjected Reventlow's thesis to

searching and compelling critique.[23] Bright turns some of

Reventlow's arguments on their head. For example, he

asks why "confession"-type material only occurs in the

book of Jeremiah if it reflects an integral aspect of the

prophetic role.[24] He highlights various expressions

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[21]Diamond, <u>Prophetic Drama</u>, 13.

[22]G. Fohrer, "Remarks on Modern Interpretation of the Prophets", <u>JBL</u> 80 (1961), 309-12.

[23] J.M. Berridge, <u>Prophet, People and the Word of Yahweh: an Examination of Form and Content in the Proclamation of the Prophet Jeremiah</u> (Evz-Verlag, Zurich: 1970), 114-169; V. Bredenkamp, "The Concept of Communion with God in the Old Testament with Special Reference to the Individual Laments in the Psalms and the 'Confessions' of Jeremiah", (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1970), *passim*; J. Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints: Liturgy, or Expressions of Personal Distress?", <u>Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwenne Hendon Davis</u>, ed. J.I. Durham and J.R. Porter, new corrected edition (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983), 189-214.
W. McKane also critiques Reventlow's approach-- although on a much smaller scale. His case study is Reventlow's exegesis of Jeremiah 12:1-5 (W. McKane, "The Interpretation of Jeremiah xii.1-5", <u>GUOST</u> 20 [1963-64], 38-48).

[24]Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints", 196.

within the confessions that are impossible to understand

corporately or in a liturgical sense.[25] Most telling is

his analysis of three confessions that Reventlow does not

discuss (Jer 18:18-23; 20:7-13; 20:14-18).[26]

Reventlow succeeded in overturning the scholarly

consensus regarding the confessions that existed in 1963.

Some have continued to follow an essentially biographical

approach.[27] (However, there does seem to be general

acceptance of the fact that we do not have access to

sufficient information to be able to provide

psychological interpretations of the data).[28] On the

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[25]Bright argues that (a) the unanswered accusation found in 15:18b and 20:14-18 could "never" be found in a liturgical text ("Jeremiah's Complaints", 205); (b) יָבֹא נָא ("Let it come"), (17:15) must refer to the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophetic oracles (op. cit., 206); (c) that 12:6 certainly refers to Jeremiah and should not be excised, as done by Reventlow, because without it verse 5 is atypically obscure (op. cit., 207-08); and (d) that פָּתָה ("enticed"), (20:7a) is "unthinkable in a liturgical text" (op. cit., 212).

Bright's objections, while generally cogent, may be somewhat overstated. Wimmer points out that Jeremiah 20:7-13 has, in fact, been incorporated into the Roman Catholic liturgy (Wimmer "Prophetic Experience", 36).

[26]Bright, "Jeremiah's Confessions", 211-14.

[27]Holladay is the perhaps the best--but not the only--example of this (Jeremiah, 1: 358-61). Robert Carroll, who is certainly no friend of the personal view, admits that it is the most obvious reading of the text and that it will continue to have supporters as long as the book has readers! (Jeremiah: A Commentary, OTL [London: SCM, 1986], 55-64.)

[28]See, for example, the comments of D.J.A. Clines and D.M. Gunn, "Form, Occasion and Redaction in Jeremiah 20", ZAW 88 (1976), 390-91.

Certainly views--largely based on the confessions--

other hand, scholars like R.P. Carroll locate the

confessions in the exilic or post-exilic communities and

virtually sever the link between them and the "historical

Jeremiah"--if indeed, he existed.[29] These scholars appear

to have been working out the implications of Reventlow's

study in the context of the synagogue rather than the

temple.[30]

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which describe Jeremiah as "weak", "vacillating" and
"indecisive" are very much out of favour today. (Such
view are attributed by Chambers to scholars in the first
third of this century such as H. Gunkel, P. Volz and B.
Duhm. "Prophetic Ambivalence", 10).
     More recently, J.L. Mihelic has gone so far in the
opposite direction as to draw a contrast between the
passivity of Isaiah in accepting his prophetic calling
and the open refusal of Jeremiah ("Dialogue With God",
Int, 14 [1960], 44 cf S.M. Fettke, Messages to a Nation
in Crisis, [New York: University Press of America, 1982],
2-4; J.P. Hyatt, "Introduction and Exegeis of Jeremiah",
IB 5: 783, [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1956]).

     [29]R.P. Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of
Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah (SCM, London: 1981),
107-35. Carroll's position is supported by P.R. Ackroyd,
"The Book of Jeremiah--Some Recent Studies", JSOT 28
(1984), 47-59; and R.M. Patterson, "Re-Interpretation in
the Book of Jeremiah", JSOT 28 (1984), 37-46.
Essentially Carroll regards the confessions as the
products of the exilic synagogues.
     One might compare the way G.E. Nicholson sees the
prose sermons of the book as likewise being products of
the exilic synagogues [Preaching to the Exiles (Oxford:
Blackwell, 1970), passim]. The significant difference
between the two treatments is that modern scholarship has
generally not regarded the prose sections as being
authentic works of Jeremiah whereas (as we have seen) the
confessions have been closely linked to the historical
prophet.

     [30]Diamond, Prophetic Drama, 14. Holladay's words are
relevant here: "But Reventlow's study is a reminder that
the confessions were preserved not because of any
biographical concern for Jrm's psychology but because Jrm
spoke for his people in their corporate agony

Thus the issue of the identity of the "I" of the confessions (which appears without any antecedents) seems to have gone through four (overlapping) phases:

1. the "I" is the individual Jeremiah, conceived of as a pious individual whose faith is under enormous stress (Baumgartner, Skinner, Holladay, et al);

2. the "I" is conceived of as the individual Jeremiah but the confessions are seen as having an integral, rather than incidental, relationship to his prophetic role (von Rad, Wimmer, Chamers);

3. the "I" is Jeremiah as representative cultic figure revealing no individuality at all (Reventlow);

4. the "I" is a purely literary device which represents the nation of Israel in a literary and not cultic setting (Carroll).

The first three positions are bound together by a common acceptance of the authenticity of the confessions. Carroll's view denies the necessity or possibility of determining their authenticity. The situation is thus

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(particularly in the exile) and because Jrm's words became useful in the people's worship of God" (Jeremiah, 1: 359). R.P. Carroll would substitute the word "produced" for "preserved" but would otherwise agree totally with this statement (Jeremiah, OTG, [Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1989], 46-49).

similar to some of the discussions relating to the

"historical Jesus".[31] The logic of the radical position

in both cases is simple and powerful: We *know* the

gospels/book of Jeremiah had relevance to those who

produced them. Therefore the burden of proof falls on

those who wish to argue that any particular incident also

had relevance in the context of the historical

Jesus/Jeremiah.[32]

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[31]This comparison is self-consciously made by some proponents of the more sceptical newer understanding of Jeremiah (eg Jobling, "Historical Jeremiah", 285-97; Carroll, Chaos to Covenant, 5-30).
    The aptness of the analogy is open to question, however. The pre-conditions for the emergence of a "Jeremiah of faith" (analogous to the "Jesus of faith" found in the gospels simply do not exist (P.C. Craigie, P.H. Kelley, J.F. Drinkard, Jr, Jeremiah 1-25 WBC 26 [Waco: Tex.: Word, 1991], xxxviii-xxxix).

[32]H.K. Macarther lists the following scholars as taking essentially this position with regard to the gospels: R. Bultmann, H. Conzelmann, E. Käsemann, J.M. Robinson, G. Ebeling, R.H. Fuller, and N. Perrin ("The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research", ExT 82, [1971], 116-17). The conclusion of Carroll and Jobling on Jeremiah is similar to that reached by these scholars on the Gospels. However, the methodology is different. Scepticism regarding the historicity of the Gospels was based primarily on form and redaction criticism. Carroll is using the newer literary approaches.
    The date of the production of Jeremiah is a crucial issue in this new view of the book (as it is in studies of the "historical Jesus"). Thus Carroll and Nicholson are at pains to deny the most obvious reading of Jeremiah 36 which suggests that the book was produced during the life time (and under the supervision) of Jeremiah (Carroll, Chaos to Covenant, 36; Nicholson, Preaching, 39-57). If they are incorrect in their re-reading of this chapter the context of the book of Jeremiah and the context of the prophet Jeremiah overlap--at least partially. No-one suggests that Jeremiah 36 refers to the production of the complete book! However, it is possible to argue that the core of the book was

The situation with the gospels--viz, the
resurrection, the birth of the church, the emergence of a
corpus of nearly contemporary Christian literature--has
allowed scholars to develop criteria for determining what
is authentic to the life of Jesus.[33] However, such is not
the case with Jeremiah. One is left to rely entirely on
subjectivity in choosing what may be known of the
"historical Jeremiah".[34]

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essentially completed by Jeremiah and/or Baruch. See
W.L. Holladay, Jeremiah, Hermeneia, (Mineapolis, Minn.:
Fortress, 1989), 2: 16; J. Bright, Jeremiah, AB 21
(Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), LXIX-LXXVIII; J.A.
Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, NICOT, (Grand Rapids,
Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 33-34; O. Eissfeldt, The Old
Testament: An Introduction, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,
1965), 355.

[33]N. Perrin lists the following criteria:
dissimilarity (which he considers to be "fundamental");
coherence; and, multiple attestation (Rediscovering the
Teaching of Jesus [New York: Harper and Row, 1976], 39-
49).
     The validity of these criteria is not universally
acknowledged (see for example S.C. Goetz and C.L.
Blomberg, "The Burden of Proof", JSNT 11 [1981], 39-63).
Thus both "minimalist" and "maximalist" approaches are
taken in reconstructing what can be known about the life
of Christ. For this terminology see In Search for the
Historical Jesus, edited by H.K. McArthur (London: SPCK,
1970), xii.

[34]I am aware of no attempt to develop criteria for
authenticity in Jeremiah. This is because the more
sceptical approach to Jeremiah is not concerned with
historical questions but with literary ones. The failure
to be concerned with history may prove to be the Achilles
heel of the synchronic approaches.
     It is now being recognized that synchronic and
diachronic approaches to the Bible may have a
complementary and not mutually exclusive relationship.
In this regard the volume Synchronic or Diachronic? A
Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis, edited J.C.
de Moor (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995) is especially

Is there any way beyond this impasse? Is there any

way of ascertaining whether the confessions have

individual or corporate reference? Two avenues can be

explored. One utilises the methodology of form criticism

and the other a modified source criticism.[35]

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enlightening. The contribution by R.P. Carroll,
("Synchronic Decontructions of Jeremiah: Diachrony to the
Rescue?", 39-51) is particularly relevant as far as
Jeremiah studies are concerned.
     The following comment by M. Floyd is also highly
relevant: "Nowadays it is commonly asserted that such
concern for the text's final form is born of literary as
opposed to historical concerns. Here we have an
illustration, however, of just how specious this
dichotomization may be. In the case of the two texts
considered above [Hab 1:2-17; Jer 15:10-18], it is
precisely their final form that must be defined in terms
of historical eventuality. As complaints about the
fulfillment of oracles, both texts presuppose that a
prophecy proclaimed in one historical situation has to be
probed in order to discover the conditions of its ongoing
applicability in another historical situation. Full
appreciation and comprehension of these texts' final form
thus invite, if they do not actually require, historical
investigation. Conversely, historical investigation must
proceed on the baisis of an analysis of the text's final
form, if it is to be well founded ("Prophetic Complaints
about the Fulfillment of Oracles in Habakkuk 1:2-17 and
Jeremiah 15:10-18" JBL 110 [1991], 417-18).

     [35]It is ironic that form criticism--a major tool used
by "minimalist" New Testament scholars to cast doubt on
the authenticity of much of the gospel account--is here
suggested as a means of establishing confidence in the
authenticity of the confessions.

First, the *gattung*[36] of the confessions needs to be studied further. Are the confessions laments or are they lawsuits? Work has been done in this area.[37] However, the work done has not gone far enough. The question remains: how does Jeremiah use these *Gattungen* elsewhere-

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[36]The term *Gattung* properly applies to the oral stage of the production of Old (and New) Testament and only in a secondary sense can it be applied to the written form. A *Gattung* may be defined as "a *conventional pattern, recognizable by certain formal criteria* (style, shape, tone, particular syntactic or ever grammatical structures, recurring formulaic patterns), which is *used in a particular society in social contexts which are governed by certain formal conventions*", (J. Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study, [London: Dartman, Longman and Todd, 1984], 32 [emphasis original]).

Providing an exact English translation of the term is difficult. The usual translation is "form" which is unacceptably vague. Barton suggests that "genre" is probably the best English equivalent. However, its suitability is limited by the fact that in English "genre" is typically used for *literary* types and only in very unusual cases is it applied to *oral* types (Ibid., 31). None-the-less G.M. Tucker consistently uses "genre" in his introduction to form criticism, (Form Criticism of the Old Testament, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971], *passim*). In this thesis, the term is generally left untranslated.

[37]Especially Baumgartner's study of the lament *Gattung* in relation to the confessions. Significantly less attention has been paid to the suggestion that the confessions are lawsuits.

Wimmer has championed the interpretation of the confessions as lawsuits--but even he did not attempt to show that the confessions followed a specific lawsuit *gattung*. Rather he took the view that they were examples of a more general "rib-pattern" which was multifaceted in its specific manifestations ("Prophetic Experience", 104-12). In taking this approach Wimmer largely follows B. Gemser, "The *Rib-* or Controversy-Pattern in Hebrew Mentality", Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Presented to Professor Harold Henry Rowley, VTSup 3, ed. M. Noth and D.W. Thomas. Leiden. E.J. Brill: 1960, 134-35. ("Prophetic Experience", 104-05).

-individualistically or corporately? If the confessions
are in a *Gattung* that Jeremiah elsewhere uses only
individualistically it is unlikely that they should be
understood corporately.

Secondly, the insights of source criticism in
Jeremiah need to be further utilised. Since S.
Mowinckel's work in 1914 it has been common to speak of
three main sources in Jeremiah: A--poetic oracles
generally regarded as being authentic to Jeremiah; B--
"biographical" material relating to Jeremiah's life; and,
C--prose sermons. There is debate over the degree of
continuity between the prose and poetic sections of the
book and over the authenticity of the prose.[38]
Nevertheless, Mowinckel's "three source" theory
"continues to hold scholarship in thrall".[39] The exact

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[38]S. Mowinckel, <u>Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremiah</u>,
(Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914), *passim*. A more easily
accessible pioneer work which independently came to
similar conclusions to Mowinckel is T.H. Robinson,
"Baruch's Roll", <u>ZAW</u> 1 (1924), 209-221.
    In more recent times the emphasis of some scholars
has moved to the degree of continuity of tradition
between the prose and poetic sections of the books (eg,
T.R. Hobbs, "Some Remarks on the Composition and
Structure of the Book of Jeremiah", <u>Prophet to the
Nations</u>, 175-91; W.L. Holladay, "Prototype and Copies: A
New Approach to the Poetry-Prose Problem of the Book of
Jeremiah", <u>JBL</u>, 79 [1960], 351-67; *Idem*, "A Fresh Look
at `Source B' and `Source C' in Jeremiah", <u>Prophet to the
Nations</u>, 213-28); and, Overholt, "Continuity", 457-462).

[39]W. Brueggemann, "The 'Baruch Connection':
Reflections on Jer 43:1-7", <u>JBL</u> 113 (1994), 405 cf M.J.
Williams, "An Investigation of the Legitimacy of Source
Distinctions for the Prose Material in Jeremiah", <u>JBL</u> 112
(1993), 193-94. At least, most scholars would agree that

nature of the prose sections of the book is open to

considerable debate.[40] However, such debates do not have

to be fully answered in order for us to examine this

material in relation to the confessions.

If the confessions are exilic (or post-exilic)

creations one could expect that they would have more in

common, theologically and linguistically, with the prose

material of the book than with the poetic sections. Is

this in fact the case? It must be acknowledged that the

confessions provide a very small sample of material.

However, the sample (47 verses) is larger than some Old

Testament books.[41] Making the comparisons here proposed

may be difficult but it is not impossible.[42]

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the poetic sections of the book are more likely than the
prose to go back to the prophet Jeremiah. For example,
T.W. Overholt, "Remarks on the Continuity of the Jeremiah
Tradition", JBL 91 (1972), 457-58; J. Bright, "The Date
of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah", Prophet to the
Nations, 193-94; J.R. Lundbom, "Jeremiah, Book of," ABD,
edited by D.N. Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday,
1992), 3: 709; J. Muilenburg, "Jeremiah the Prophet,"
IDB, 2: 824 (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1962);
Thompson, Jeremiah, 35.
    R.P. Carroll regards this position as being based on
assumptions rather than evidence (Jeremiah, OTG,
Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1989, 37).

[40]They are regarded as being either authentic to
Jeremiah (so Thompson, Jeremiah, 46-47); the later
product of his disciples (so Bright, "Prose Sermons",
205-06); or, the later product of the Deuteronomists (so
Nicholson, Preaching, passim).

[41]For example, Haggai and Nahum. The confessions
(taken as a whole) are only slightly shorter than
Habakkuk or Zephaniah.

[42]This type of approach is not unprecedented.

Once these two basic tasks are completed one task
remains. The question of the function of the confessions
in the book of Jeremiah must be addressed.[43] The problem
for many diachronic approaches is to describe how
essentially private documents may have been incorporated
into the public book of Jeremiah?[44] Is their role and

Compare the efforts of A.G. Auld to trace the
development of the concept of "prophet" in ancient Israel
by examining the usage of the word in the poetic sections
of Jeremiah, the prose sections of Jeremiah shared by the
LXX and MT, and the prose sections unique to the MT
("Prophets Through the Looking Glass: Between Writings
and Moses," JSOT 27 [1983], 6). Auld's article provoked
responses by R.P. Carroll, H.G.M. Williamson and later,
T.W. Overholt and H.M. Barstard. Only Carroll was
positive in his response but none of the three challenged
the legitimacy of searching for development in Jeremiah
in the way Auld had attempted (R.P. Carroll, "Prophets
not Poets: A Response to 'Prophets Through the Looking
Glass'," JSOT 27 [1983], 25-31; H.G.M. Williamson, "A
Response to A.G. Auld," JSOT 27 [1983], 33-39; T.W.
Overholt, "Prophecy in History: The Social Reality of
Intermediation," JSOT 48 [1990], 3-29; H.M. Barstad, "No
Prophets? Recent Developments in Biblical Prophetic
Research and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy". JSOT 57
[1993], 39-60 cf B. Vawter, "Were the Prophets nabi's?"
Bib 66 [1985], 206-19). Auld responded to his critics in
"Prophets Through the Looking Glass: A Response", JSOT 27
(1983), 41-44 and "Prophets in Books: A Rejoiner", JSOT
48 (1990), 31-32.
    Though the type of approach is not unprecedented,
the comprehensive attempt to analyse the theology of the
two blocks of material in Jeremiah and to compare the
results with the confessions has not been undertaken.

[43]M.S. Smith points out that scholars have been much
better at isolating the confessions then in reintegrating
them into the book again (The Laments of Jeremiah and
Their Contexts: A Literary and Redactional Study of
Jeremiah 11-20, SBLMS 42 [Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars. 1990],
xiii).

[44]Reventlow solves this problem by insisting that the
confessions were public (cultic) proclamations from the
beginning (Liturgie, 205-57). This position has not won

function in the book different to their role and function
in the life of Jeremiah?

Any study of the book of Jeremiah is complicated by
text-critical issues. As part of the delimitation of
this study we will focus primarily on the MT and utilize
the LXX only as the need arises.[45]

This thesis consists of six chapters. The present
chapter gives a history of research into the "I" of the
confessions and an outline of the approach to be taken in
the thesis. Chapter six gives a final summary and
conclusion. The main body of the thesis is found in
chapters two to five.

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support. There other scholars that argue that the
confessions were essentially public utterances are Wimmer
("Prophetic Experience", 74-82); Berridge (Word of
Yahweh, 157); and N. Ittmann (H.E. von Waldow, "Review of
Die Konfessionen Jeremias: Ihre Bedeutung für die
Verkündigung des Propheten, by N. Ittmann, WMANT 54
[Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981", JBL 102 [1983],
473-75). This position would seem to be in a clear
minority, however.
    A similar problem exists with the book of Psalms
although in not such an acute form.

[45]One might compare Floyd's suggestion (with
reference to Jer 15:10-18) that in view of the wide
ranging textual discrepancies "the MT and the LXX of
Jeremiah have to be regarded not merely as manifestations
of textual variance but as virtually distinct
compositions" ("Prophetic Complaints", 408). Floyd also
concentrates his attention on the MT.
    Also relevant to this issue is D.L. Christensen's
conclusion that it is impossible to get behind the MT and
LXX to the autograph of Jeremiah. In his view these two
text traditions represent the "living tradition of
Jeremiah" reduced to written form in different
communities at different times ("In Quest of the
Autograph of the Book of Jeremiah: A Study of Jeremiah 25
in Relation to Jeremiah 46-51", JETS 33 [1990], 145-53).

In the second chapter the confessions are analysed
from the point of view of the lawsuit *Gattung*.
Jeremiah's use elsewhere of this *Gattung* is examined with
a view to determine both his familiarity with it and
whether it primarily has a corporate or individualistic
reference. This analysis shows that Jeremiah is familiar
with the lawsuit *Gattung* which he uses with corporate
reference. However, the confessions do not fit into this
Gattung.

The third chapter analyses the confessions in terms
of the individual lament *Gattung*. Jeremiah's use
elsewhere of this *Gattung* is examined as is the question
of whether it primarily has a corporate or
individualistic reference in his work. This analysis
shows that the confessions are best understood as
individual laments. Furthermore, Jeremiah elsewhere uses
this *Gattung* with individualistic reference.

In the fourth chapter the theology and linguistic
characteristics of the poetic oracles and the prose
sermons will be separately analysed. Each will then be
compared with the theology and linguistic characteristics
of the confessions taken as a whole.

The aim of the chapter is to discover whether the
confessions lie closest, theologically and
linguistically, to the material most likely to come from
Jeremiah or to the material least likely to have come

from him. If they are closer to the poetic oracles their "I" is most likely to be individualistic--Jeremiah himself. On the other hand if they are closer to the prose sermons the "I" is more likely to represent Israel and thus be a literary device. Analysis along these lines indicates that the poetic oracles are likely to arise from the ministry of Jeremiah and the prose sermons are more likely to have an exilic setting. The confessions are more closely related to the poetic material than to the prose.

Chapter five will look at the role and function of the confessions in the book of Jeremiah with a view of ascertaining reasons for the inclusion of this material in the book. This analysis shows that the confessions function in a more corporate way in their final setting in the book. Jeremiah becomes a representative figure and a paradigm. The juridical features of the confessions receive added emphasis and the confessions become an integral part of the explanation of the exile.

Two appendices are attached to the thesis. The first outlines the distribution of vocabulary in the confessions. The second surveys work that has been done in the book of Psalms relevant to the study of Jeremiah's confessions. It will look specifically at the identity of the "I" and the significance of judicial language in the Psalms.

The *Gattung* of the "Confessions" of Jeremiah: Lawsuits

Introduction

In order to determine the nature of the "I" of the confessions it is important to establish their *Gattung* and to discover how Jeremiah elsewhere uses that *Gattung*. Considerable work has been done on the first part of this task but less on the latter.

The dominant position regarding the *Gattung* of the confessions is that they are "laments of the individual".[1] A minority position is that they are "lawsuits"--even if somewhat tinged with "lament" features.[2] Other scholars see them as a hybrid of both *Gattungen* or as belonging to a unique *Gattung* of their own.[3]

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[1]Baumgartner, Jeremiah's Poems, passim; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:359-60; Berridge, Word of Yahweh, 114-83; Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 278; W. McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark) 1: xcii-xcvii; O'Connor, Confessions, 3; Smith, Laments, xiii; J.G. McConville, Judgement and Promise: An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah (Apollos, Leicester: 1993), 63; K. Koch, The Prophets (London: SCM, 1983), 2: 38.

[2]Blank, "Confessions of Jeremiah", 331-54; Wimmer, "'Confessions of Jeremiah'", 393-406; Holladay, "Jeremiah's Lawsuit With God", 280-301; Gemser, "The Rib-Pattern," 134-35.

[3]For example, F. Ahuis understands the confessions to reflect various elements of specifically "prophetic laments" (See J.M. Berridge, "Review of Der klagende Gerichtsprophet: Studien zur Klage in der Überlieferung

Choosing between these options involves three steps:
1. outlining the features of the given *Gattung*; 2.
determining the use of the given *Gattung* elsewhere in the
book of Jeremiah--especially in the poetic parts of the
book;[4] 3. comparing each confession with the *Gattung*.

With regard to step three a word of caution is
necessary: it is unlikely and unnecessary for the
confessions to fit perfectly into any *Gattung*.[5] Literary

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von den alttestamentlichen Gerischtspropheten, by
Ferdinand Ahuis, Calwer Theologische Monographen, A 12
[Stuttgart: Calwer, 1982", *JBL* 103 (1984), 452-53. N.
Ittman departs from the usual understandings of the
Gattung of the confessions by denying that they exibit
any unity of *Gattung,* (J.M. Berridge, "Review of *Die
Konfessionen Jeremias: Ihre Bedeutung für die
Verkündigung des Propheten*, by N. Ittmann, WMANT 54
[Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener-Verlag, 1981]", *CBQ* 45
[1983], 106-8; c.f., Diamond, *Prophetic Drama*, 22, 199).
     Neither of these possibilities should be rejected
without careful examination because Jeremiah does not
always confine himself to established *Gattungen*.
(Berridge, Word of Yahweh, 18).

[4]The poetic sections of Jeremiah are especially
important for comparison purposes because the confessions
are written in poetry (with occasional prose glosses) and
because the dominant view among scholars is that the
poetic sections of the book are the parts that are most
likely to have originated with the "historical Jeremiah".
(See above, chapter 1, pp. 13,14).

[5]Dennis McCarthy observes that "pure form is an
abstraction and its discussion is fruitless" (*Treaty and
Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental
Documents and in the Old Testament*, Analectia Biblica 21,
[Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute: 1963], 9).
Insistence on the need for a perfect fit to the pure
Gattung pattern leads to what R.R. Wilson calls
"overspecification". When this happens every passage
that deviates in some way from the pure *Gattung* is
assigned to a new generic type causing "a proliferation
of genres, some of which depend on very meagre evidence."
See, R.R. Wilson, "Form-Critical Investigations of the

Gattungen are being adapted and utilised by the prophets

in new settings from that in which they originally

served.[6] Kirsten Nielsen goes so far as to distinguish

between the "formal" *Sitz im Leben* and the "actual" *Sitz*

im Leben of various *Gattungen*. By the former she means

the setting in which the *Gattung* originally developed; by

Prophetic Literature: The Present Situation", <u>Society of
Biblical Literature 1973 Seminar Papers</u>, edited by G.
MacRae, (Cambridge, Mass.: Society of Biblical
Literature, 1973), 1: 113.
       John Berridge has shown that Jeremiah is
particularly adept at modifying and individualising the
various traditional *gattungen* that he uses. Indeed, this
is a central thesis in his book, <u>Prophet, People and the
Word of Yahweh</u>.
       Thus the criticism of Jack Lundbom, (<u>Jeremiah: A
Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric</u>, SBLDS 18, [Missoula,
Mont.: Scholars, 1975], 9-13) that form criticism is an
inadequate tool for use in studying Jeremiah because the
Gattungen are not fully present, is unfair. He has
faulted form criticism for not being able to do something
that it does not claim to be able to do and never
intended to do.

       [6]According to G. Fohrer, failure to recognise this
fact "leads to absurd conclusions" ("Modern
Interpretation," 311). Gemser, describes such an
approach as "hermeneutic `transubstantiation' or
substantializing of metaphor into reality" ("*Rib-
Pattern*", 128).
       This point highlights the crucial weakness in
Reventlow's thesis that the confessions should be read
not as Jeremiah's personal experience but as examples of
stereotypical temple liturgy as befitted their *Gattung,*
(<u>Liturgie</u>, 205-57). He is attacked on methodological
grounds by Berridge (<u>Word of Yahweh</u>, 18-19).
       Whatever, the confessions are they certainly cannot
be understood in terms of Jeremiah literally taking God
to a law court--which is generally regarded as the
original setting of the lawsuit *Gattung*. The compelling
criticisms of Reventlow's thesis made by J. Bright and
J.M. Berridge make it unlikely that the confessions were
originally uttered in a temple cultic liturgy. See, J.
Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints", 189-214; Berridge, <u>Word
of Yahweh</u>, 114-169.

the latter the setting in which the prophet utilised the
Gattung in his proclamation and ministry.[7] With this
distinction in mind consideration will now be given to
the position that the confessions should be understood as
examples of the law-suit *Gattung*.

What is the "Lawsuit" *Gattung*?[8]

Establishing a *Gattung* is a notoriously difficult
undertaking. No generally accepted definition exists.[9]

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[7]K. Nielsen, Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An
Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rîb-Pattern),
JSOTSS 9 (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1978), 2-4. James
Limburg found Nielsen's use of these terms "awkward"
("Review of Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An
Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rîb-Pattern), by
K. Nielsen, JSOTSS 9 [Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1978]", CBQ
41 [1979], 635). However she has highlighted a vital
(and often overlooked) distinction.

[8]The argument of Michael de Roche that "the terms
`prophetic lawsuit' and `covenant lawsuit' should be
abandoned" need not detain us here. His argument is not
that the *Gattung* usually designated as a lawsuit does not
exist. Rather, he is denying that it can formally be
described as a lawsuit when Yahweh plays the roles of
both plaintiff and judge, ("Yahweh's *Rîb* Against Israel:
A Reassessment of the So-Called `Prophetic Lawsuit' in
the Pre-exilic Prophets," JBL 102 [1983], 563-74).
    D.R. Daniels suggests that the "covenant lawsuit"
Gattung does not exist and that all examples of it can be
better understood as examples of other established
Gattungen, including "prophecy (of disaster)" and
"priestly torah" ("Is There a `Prophetic Lawsuit' Genre",
ZAW 99 [1987], 339-60.) However, A. Schoors gives the
matter a thorough analysis and concludes that covenant
lawsuit "is a real genre, with its proper style, *topoi*,
and terminology and with well-defined subgenres" (I Am
God Your Saviour: A Form-Critical Study of the Main
Genres in Is. XL-LV, VTSup 24, [Leiden, E.J. Brill:
1973], 185.)

[9]Daniels, "Prophetic Lawsuit", 340

Gattung is usually "established" by analysing the complex

interplay of structure, content and setting.[10] These are

the factors that will now be examined.

The Structure of the "Pure" Lawsuit *Gattung*

The use of form criticism as a tool in Old Testament

studies goes back to the work of Herman Gunkel. His

description of the lawsuit *Gattung* is summarised by

Herbert Huffmon as outlined, below:

I.   A description of the scene of judgement
II. The speech of the plaintiff
     A.   Heaven and earth are appointed judges
     B.   Summons to the defendant or judges
     C.   Address in the second person to the defendant
          1.   Accusation in question and answer form to
               the defendant
          2.   Refutation of the defendant's possible
               arguments
          3.   Specific indictment.[11]

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[10]R. Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism
Reconsidered", Int 27 (1973), 435-68. McCarthy
highlights the dangers of attempting to determine *Gattung*
solely on the basis of structure by pointing out that all
written documents follow the structural form of
"Introduction, Body and Conclusion!" (Treaty and
Covenant, 9.)

[11]H.B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the
Prophets", JBL 78 (1959), 285. Huffmon outlines an
alternative form which is irrelevant to our purposes
because it is based almost exclusively on Ps 82
("Lawsuit", 286 cf G.E. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A
Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32", Israel's
Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg,
edited by B.W. Anderson and W. Harrelson [New York:
Harper and Row, 1962], 43).

The Content of the Lawsuit *Gattung*

Gemser and McKenzie suggest a number of terms that are typical of a lawsuit.[12]

The most important of these is רִיב. The exact provenance of the term רִיב is disputed. Gunkel (and many subsequent scholars) have seen the term as originating in secular law courts.[13] Other scholars have argued for a cultic setting.[14] More recently, an original setting in international treaty forms has been proposed.[15] The conclusion of Kirsten Nielsen appears to be correct: there is a basic lawsuit pattern which has been adapted

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[12]Gemser, "Rib-Pattern", 122-25. See also D.A. McKenzie, "Judicial Procedure at the Town Gate", <u>VT</u> 14 (1964), 100-04.

[13]Daniels, "Prophetic Lawsuit", 339-40. Arguably, "secular" is an inappropriate word to use for any aspect of the integrated ancient Israelite world. It is used here in a way analogous to R. E. Clement's distinction between "cultic" (ie, an integral part of the cult proper) and "non-cultic" (ie, an aspect of society and/or culture which functions outside of the cult as such). See, R.E. Clements, <u>Prophecy and Covenant</u>, SBT 43, (London: SCM, 1965), 32. Such "secular" lawsuits were traditionally conducted at the city gate, although in the monarchical period the Royal court became the venue for some suits. For a description of legal proceedings at the city gate see, McKenzie, "Judicial Procedure", 100-04.

[14]E. Würthwein, "Amos Studien", <u>ZAW</u>, 62 (1950), 10-52.

[15]Huffmon, "Covenant Lawsuit", 289-95; Wright, "Lawsuit of God", 53; J. Harvey, "Le `Rib-Pattern': Requisitorire prophetiques sur la rupture de l'Alliance", <u>Biblica</u> 43 (1962), 172-96; D.R. Hillers, <u>Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets</u>, Biblica et Orientalia 16 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 5.

to international treaty matters and local disputes and, hypothetically to cultic lawsuits. It is thus futile to try and choose one original setting from among these three options.[16]

Similar diversity of opinion exists with regard to the meaning of the term. The Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon gives the basic meaning of the verb as "strive, contend" and of the noun as "strife, dispute".[17] Other scholars have a much narrower understanding of the word's meaning (e.g., accusation, allegation, litigation) specifically tied in with a judicial setting.[18]

The other key words suggested by Gemser and McKenzie include: מִשְׁפָּט, ("judgement"), שָׁפַט,[19] ("judge, govern, judgement"), עֵד, ("witness"), צַדִּיק, ("righteous, just"),

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[16]Nielsen, _Prosecutor and Judge_, 40.

[17]F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, _A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament_ (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907; corrected reprint, 1977), s.v. רִיב.

[18]J. Limburg, "The Root ריב and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches," _JBL_ 88 (1969), 292. Eiji Suganuma sees a distict turning point from a more general understanding of the word (eg "expostulate") to a more specific meaning (eg "accuse) with the publication of J. Begrich's _Studien zu Deuterojesaja_ (BWANT 4) in 1938 ("The Covenant _Rib_ Form in Jeremiah Chapter 2--A Form-Critical Study", _Journal of the College of Dairy Agriculture_ 4 (1972), 123-25.

[19]The primary meaning of שׁפט is clearly judicial. It "included all the actions which accompanied a primitive lawsuit. (J. van der Ploeg, "Shaphat et Mishpat", _OTS_, 2 [1945], 146 as cited in McKenzie, "Judicial Procedure", 101.

הָרְשָׁע, ("the guilty"), רָשָׁע, ("wicked, criminal"), אָשֵׁם,
("guilty").[20]

The Function of a Lawsuit

The function of a lawsuit is the resolution of
conflict between two parties with the arbitration of a
third. McKenzie put it this way: "A lawsuit took place
when two disputants presented themselves before the
competent authority, each one to claim his right".[21] In
the Old Testament when God is a party to a lawsuit he
generally plays the roles of "prosecutor and judge".[22]
This is due to the nature of Israel's covenant and her
monotheistic faith.[23] If the confessions of Jeremiah are

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[20]Gemser, "Rib-Pattern", 123; McKenzie, "Judicial
Procedure", 101-02.

[21]McKenzie, "Judicial Procedure", 101.

[22]The role of prosecutor can be assumed by the
prophet standing as Yahweh's representative. The role of
judge may be taken by others. For example, in the "song
of the vineyard" of Isaiah 5 the men of Israel are called
to judge (Isa 5:3). However, the actual judgement is
rendered by Yahweh (Isa 5:5-7). Furthermore, this
passage can scarcely be considered as a lawsuit: songs
are not a typical feature of legal proceedings. Nor is
it usual for the accused to be asked to pass judgement on
himself. R.E. Clement observes that the songs "prophetic
form is not entirely clear and has occasioned
considerable discussion (Isaiah 1-39, New Century Bible
[Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987], 56). He concludes
that it should be regarded as a parable which utilizes a
love song (p. 57).

[23]Wright, "Lawsuit of God", 46-47; Huffmon, "Covenant
Lawsuit", 293; Nielsen, Prosecutor and Judge, 74-83. de
Roche uses this as a major argument for abandoning the
designation "lawsuit". He insists that a lawsuit must
have three key figures: a plaintiff, a defendant and a

to be considered "lawsuits", then Yahweh plays the role

of defendant in them!

Does Jeremiah Use the Lawsuit *Gattung*?

Since רִיב is the most important term in lawsuits we

will examine those passages in Jeremiah where this word

occurs.[24] This root occurs thirteen times in nine verses

in Jeremiah.[25] Of these thirteen occurrences six are

nouns.[26] The four uses of the word in the confessions will

be dealt with in the next section. The examination of

the remaining nine passages begins with Jer 2:4-13.

Jeremiah 2:4-13

It is widely recognised that one of the clearest

examples of the lawsuit *Gattung* occurs in Jeremiah 2:4-

judge. (See, de Roche, "Yahweh's *Rîb*", 569-72).

[24]Using רִיב as our key generic indicator safeguards us from overgeneralising the *Gattung*. As R. North points out Jeremiah contains a number of Yahweh's indictments against Israel which are lacking the word רִיב "or other courtroom trappings" ("Angel-Prophet or Satan-Prophet?", ZAW 82 [1970], 54.)

[25]Jer 2:9 (two times); 2:29; 11:20; 12:1; 15:10; 20:12; 25:31; 50:34 (three times); 51:36 (two times).

[26]Jer 11:20; 15:10; 20:12; 25:31; 50:34 (one); 51:36 (one).

13.[27] Evidence derived from structure content and function support this identification.

Structure

The structure of the passage may be outlined as follows:

1. Summons to Accused (v. 4)
2. Address to the defendant in second person. (v. 5-11)
   a. Accusation in question and answer form. (v. 5)
   b. Refutation of possible defence arguments (v. 6-8)
   c. Appeal to the heavens (to be appalled) (v. [9-11]-12).
   d. Reiteration of Accusation (v. 13)

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[27]Harvey, "*Rîb*-Pattern", 188; Huffmon, "Covenant Lawsuit", 287-89; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 73-75; Thompson, Jeremiah, 159; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 25-28.

McKane does not describe the passage as a lawsuit but his discussion of it is replete with judicial language, eg the titles and subtitles in his discussion include, "The Case Against Israel", "The First Count of the Indictment", "Yahweh Presses His Charges Against Israel" (Jeremiah 1: 30-33). Surprisingly, Nielsen does not include this passage in her otherwise comprehensive survey of the lawsuit *Gattung*. (Prosecutor and Judge, *passim*).

Suganuma argues that the whole of Jer 2 is in the form of a lawsuit ("Covenant *Rib* Form", 125-128). However, he also agrees with Bright (Jeremiah, 18) that the chapter is a collection of originally independent poems which have the *rib* theme in common ("Covenant *Rib* Form", 127). Thus correct procedure would appear to be to examine the smaller units for the lawsuit *Gattung*.

Daniels lists this passage as one that is usually seen as a lawsuit, although he regards it as a "prophecy" (of disaster), ("Prophetic Lawsuit", 343-45). Carroll denies that this passage is a "lawsuit". He argues that there are no grounds for introducing the notion of the covenant (which he evidently regards as a prerequisite for a lawsuit) into the text, (Jeremiah, 123).

Huffmon admits that the lawsuit components are somewhat out of order in this passage.[28] There is no description of the judgement scene. However, all the elements of the prosecutor's speech are present. The parallels are clearly sufficient to warrant the conclusion that Jeremiah 2:4-13 is structured as a lawsuit.

Content

Most of the typical lawsuit vocabulary is missing.[29] However, רִיב occurs twice in verbal form in verse 9.[30] In the context of the passage the word indicates "the unfolding of a charge against Israel"[31]. Carroll suggests the word should here be translated "quarrel".[32] However, the NRSV's "accuse" would appear to be more correct.[33]

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[28]Huffmon, "Covenant Lawsuit", 288.

[29]The word אָשֵׁם ("were held guilty") occurs in the immediate context of this pericope (Jer 2:3) but it does not affirm Israel's guilt. Rather, as God outlines his graciousness to Israel he points out that he held all who harmed her, as guilty!

[30]In both cases it is a Qal imperfect.

[31]McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 33.

[32]Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 123.

[33]cf Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:90. Limburg suggests that "make a complaint against" is the correct translation in this setting. See, Limburg, "Root רִיב", 301.
    There are four interrelated strands of evidence supporting a translation of רִיב by a legal term:
        1. The context in which the word is embedded is structured in the form of a lawsuit (see previous section;
        2. The parallel with verse 5 suggests that two public actions by God are in view: the exodus/conquest in verse 5 and a lawsuit which

The use of רִיב suggests that a lawsuit *Gattung* is indeed

being employed.[34]

Function

The function of the passage fits with a lawsuit

Gattung. Verse 4 indicates that Israel has found fault

with God. Her unreasonableness in so doing is outlined

in verses 5-8. Specific countercharges are brought in

verses 10-11, 13. The dispute is "public" (v. 12--the

appeal to the heavens).

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will culminate a verdict of expulsion from the land in verse 9 (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 89-90);

3. The use of עד ("once more") to introduce verse 9 may point to God's previous lawsuit against the Northern kingdom which culminated in the fall of Samaria (thus Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 89). The alternative view which sees the presence of the word in this passage as evidence that it has been reworded to fit a second occasion in Jeremiah's ministry flounders on the fact that the text (בְּנֵי בְנֵיכֶם, "your children's children") clearly refers to "'descendants' and not 'the next generation'" (McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 33);

4. The passage contains echos of the decalogue (covenant law) which increases it jucical tone. The word תּוֹרָה ("law") is used in verse 8. References of serving other gods (v. 11, 13) as well as worshiping idols (v. 5, 11) point to the first two commandments. The declaration that God's רִיב extends across generations echos the declaration found in the decalogue that punishment for breaking the commandments will be extended even "to the third and fourth generation" (Ex 20:5; Deut 5:9), (Jones, Jeremiah, 84). Significantly, in the decalogue this declaration is attached to the prohibition against idolatry.

[34]Compare the comments of Thompson who seems to base his conclusion exclusively on this argument: "The root of the verb is רִיב. The use of this verb suggests that ch. 2 may contain a hidden covenant lawsuit." (Jeremiah, 169.)

Assessment

The structure, content and fuction of Jer 2:4-13 is clearly suggestive of the lawsuit *Gattung*. The writer has not followed the pattern slavishly but he has used it as his primary model.

Jeremiah 2:29

Jeremiah 2:29 stands at the beginning of a pericope variously understood to conclude with verses 32 or 37.[35] The thought of the verse is that Israel has made an unjustified רִיב against Yahweh, who, in reality has ground for complaint against Israel.[36] Discussion of this verse is complicated by the difference manifest here between the MT and the LXX. The opening line in the LXX is longer: ἵνα τί λαλεῖτε πρός με; ("Why do you speak to me?").[37] This reading implies an underlying Hebrew text with תְּדַבְּרוּ

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[35]Carroll (Jeremiah, OTL, 136), Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard (Jeremiah 1-25, 39) and Bright (Jeremiah, 18) agree that verse 32 concludes this pericope. McKane (Jeremiah, 1: 49-53) and Thompson (Jeremiah, 181-82) extend the pericope to verse 37. The grammatical change in number from second masculine plural (vvs. 29-32) to second feminine singular (vvs. 33-37) suggest that there are two originally independent pericopes here although it is possible that "the more general plural has become pointed as a second singular", (Thompson, Jeremiah, 184).

[36]The complaint is brought before Yahweh and concerns him. He is both accused and judge, (Limburg, "רִיב", 302).

[37]Holladay's translation, (Jeremiah, 1: 55).

("you speak") rather than the MT's תָרִיבוּ ("do you

complain").[38]

The structure of the entire pericope suggests a

juridical setting:

> A. Introductory question: Israel's suit with God
>   (v. 29)
> B. Defence speech by God (v. 30-31)
>   1. his vain attempts to restore Israel
>   (v. 30)
>   2. request for evidence of his fault (v. 31)
> C. Countercharge against Israel (v. 32)

Thus the pericope suggests a *Sitz im Leben* of the

courtroom, although it is not in a lawsuit *Gattung* as

described above.[39] Verses 33-37 also develop the theme of

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[38]Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard <u>Jeremiah 1-25</u>, 40.
Reversion of the LXX to the underlying Hebrew is an
inexact science and any reconstructions must remain
hypothetical. For a treatment of the risks and
limitations inherent in the procedure see S. Soderlund,
<u>The Greek Text of Jeremiah: A Revised Hypothesis</u>, JSOTSS
47, (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1985), 197.
The question of which reading is the more correct is
difficult to decide. Holladay considers the variation to
have arisen through haplography and restores the LXX
reading in addition to the MT reading, leading to his
translation: "Why do you speak against me, why argue with
me?" (<u>Jeremiah</u> 1: 55). On the other hand, McKane regards
this as an "unnatural" argument and accepts the LXX
reading as original (<u>Jeremiah</u> 1: 50).   However, most
commentators appear to accept the MT reading (See, for
example, Thompson, <u>Jeremiah</u>, 181-82; Craigie, Kelley,
Drinkard, <u>Jeremiah 1-25</u>, 40; Carroll, <u>Jeremiah</u>, OTL, 136-
37).

[39]See above, p. 23. Carroll suggests that the
passage has a closer relationship with the community
lament than with the lawsuit (<u>Jeremiah</u>, OTL, 137).
However, his suggestion is not likely.

God's accusation of Israel.[40] Nevertheless, the joining

of the two passages appears to be secondary.[41] There are

numerous points of contact between the first half of this

passage (vvs. 29-32) and Jer 2:4-13 leading Craigie to

suggest that they are surviving fragments of an original

oracle that was much larger.[42] When Yahweh presents his

suit against Israel in Jer 2:4-13, Israel considers

filing a countersuit against God (Jer 2:29).[43] The rest

of the passage outlines the groundlessness of such an

action and reaffirms the rightness of God's action.[44]

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[40]This pericope contains other juridical language--
particularly וְמִשְׁפָּט ("bringing to judgement")in verse 35--
which is "virtually identical with רִיב אֶל ["complain
against"]" in verse 29, (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 111).
Actually, "the entire chapter is dominated by this theme"
(Thompson, Jeremiah, 159). The legal language and
imagery is no doubt used "to create insight and self-
awareness" among the people (Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard,
Jeremiah 1-25, 46).

[41]Bright, Jeremiah, 18.

[42]Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 40. The
connections between the two passages are grammatical (use
of second person suffixes), lexical (both use רִיב and מִדְבָּר
["wilderness"]) and thematic (both are concerned with the
breakdown of the covenant relationship between Israel and
Yahweh).

[43]The very proposal of a countersuit constitutes a
rebellion (c.f., פְּשַׁעְתֶּם ["rebelled"], v. 29) against God--
which is the essence of God's suit against Israel!

[44]Bright, Jeremiah, 16.

Jeremiah 25:31

The pericope of which this verse forms part does not
fit the lawsuit *Gattung*.[45] Rather it is a prophetic
announcement of a coming lawsuit.[46] This passage does not
demonstrate Jeremiah's use of the lawsuit *Gattung*, but it
suggests his familiarity with it.

Jeremiah 50:34

The last two uses Jeremiah makes of רִיב (outside the
confessions) are both found in the oracle against
Babylon. Oracles against the nations are a common
feature of the pre-exilic prophetic books.[47] Indeed, they

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[45]The precise limits of the pericope are disputed by
scholars. Holladay sees it as stretching from verse 30
to verse 38 (Jeremiah, 1:678). McKane concurs but
insists on the secondary nature of verse 33 (Jeremiah,
1:651). Thompson supports this view--although he only
concedes the possibility that verse 33 is a gloss
(Jeremiah, 518-20). Hyatt also concurs--although he feels
that verses 32 and 33 are secondary ("Jeremiah", 1004).
Bright sees verse 30 and 31 as forming a separate poem
(Jeremiah, 164). Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard agree with
Bright's assessment (Jeremiah 1-25, 372-76).

[46]Carroll translates רִיב as "quarrel" and argues that
there is "no necessary connection with a covenant
lawsuit" (Jeremiah, OTL, 505). However, the presence of
נִשְׁפָּט ("entering into judgement")in the same verse suggest
otherwise. McKane's comments summarise the situation
well: "Yahweh stentorian summons reaches to the ends of
the earth: he has allegations to make against the nations
and he summons them to court in order that he may bring
forward evidence which will establish their guilt..."
(Jeremiah 1: 649-50).

[47]Gene Tucker refers to their "ubiquity in the
prophetic books" but observes that they have not
generated a corresponding amount of scholarly attention
("Prophecy and Prophetic Literature", The Hebrew Bible
and its Modern Interpreters, ed. D.A. Knight and G.M.

are considered by some scholars to be one of the oldest

forms of prophetic writing.[48] Thomas G. Smothers

considers that they are written in the form of covenant

lawsuits (at least in Jeremiah).[49]

Anyone studying Jeremiah's oracles against the

nations is immediately confronted with an array of

intractable problems.[50] A detailed study of this material

would take us far from our immediate concerns. We must

suffice with addressing the question of the *Gattung* of

the oracle against Babylon.

Tucker [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 340).

[48]For example, R.E. Clements, <u>Jeremiah</u>, (Atlanta Ga.:
John Knox, 1988), 260. Herman Gunkel considers the
oracles against the nations to be the sole original (non-
borrowed) prophetic *Gattung*, ("Israelite Prophecy from
the Time of Amos", <u>Twentieth Century Theology in the
Making: Vol. 1: Themes of Biblical Theology</u>, ed J.
Pelikan [New York: Harper and Row, 1969], 48-75). This
view is extensively critiqued by C. Westermann, <u>Basic
Forms of Prophetic Speech</u> (Louisville, Ken.:
Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 24-27. However, the fact
that there are parallels among the prophetic documents
from Mari may support Gunkel's conclusion. See,
Carroll, <u>Jeremiah</u>, OTL, 751.

[49]T.G. Smothers, "A Lawsuit Against the Nations:
Reflections on the Oracles Against the Nations in
Jeremiah", <u>RevExp</u> 85 (1988), 545-54. It should be noted
that neither Nielsen or Huffmon deal with these oracles
in their examination of the lawsuit *Gattung*.

[50]For example, the placement of the oracles
constitutes one of the key text-critical problems of the
book of Jeremiah. Furthermore the unity of the
collection is frequently challenged. The relationship of
the oracle against Babylon in particular to the rest of
Jeremiah is also a vexing problem (Holladay, <u>Jeremiah</u>, 2:
312-14).

The oracle against Babylon is by far the longest of Jeremiah's oracles against the nations.[51] Considerable divergence is found in discussions of the unity and structure of this material.[52] However, the majority of scholars agree that Jer 50:33-34 forms a discrete unit.[53] The question of the authenticity of the passage (and the oracle against Babylon generally) is also vigorously

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[51]Duane L. Christensen points out that it takes up 110 verses in the MT whereas all the rest of Jeremiah's oracles against the nations take up only 121 verses (Transformations of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 3 [Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1975], 249).

[52]It is generally acknowledged that the oracle consists of a series of poems which were originally independent. A good survey of the discussion can be found in G.L. Keown, P.J. Scalise and T.G. Smothers, Jeremiah 26-52, Word Biblical Commentary 27 (Dallas, Tex., Word: 1995), 357-364.

[53]Keown, Scalise, Smothers, Jeremiah 26-52, 361; Christensen, War Oracle, 258; Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 830; Thompson, Jeremiah, 743; D.R. Jones, Jeremiah, New Century Bible (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1992), 522; K.T. Aitken, "The Oracles Against Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51: Structure and Perspectives", TynBul 35 (1984), 40. A significant minority position is that a new unit begins with verse 34 (although there is no unity regarding the proposed end of the unit). This position is taken by Bright, Jeremiah, 350-51, who sees the unit as consisting of Jer 50:34-40 and Holladay, Jeremiah 2: 414, who extends that unit to verse 44. The majority position appears to be correct as verses 33 and 34 are bound together by "contrastive repetition and play on the root חזק ["strong"]" (Aitken, "Oracle Against Babylon", 42). Jones tentatively suggests that these verses may form a prose island in a sea of poetry (Jones, Jeremiah, 522). None of this speculation negates the possibility of these two verses being closely associated with the unit which follows, and indeed this link is affirmed by some scholars who see them as a unit, (eg Aitken, and Christensen).

debated.[54] However, Holladay's recent thorough analysis

favours the authenticity of some eighty percent of the

oracle, including verses 33-40.[55]

Neither Jer 50:33-34 nor the longer poetic passage

it introduces (Jer 50:33-40) is structurally a lawsuit

Gattung. Apart from the use of the root רִיב three times,

in differing forms, in verse 34 (רִיב יָרִיב אֶת־רִיבָם, "He will

surely plead their cause") the passage is not typified by

the vocabulary of a lawsuit.[56] However, the use of גֹּאֲלָם

("Their Redeemer") does suggest a legal background to the

passage.[57] Rather than describing a lawsuit, these verses

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[54]Even Bright who is generally quite conservative in
his judgements concludes that the oracle against Babylon
(Jer 50-51) consists mainly of originally anonymous poems
(Jeremiah, 359).

[55]Holladay, Jeremiah, 2:402-411, especially 404.
Similar conclusions are reached by Christensen, War
Oracle, 276-279.

[56]The three-fold use of רִיב, however, is "legal
terminology" (W. McKane, A Critical and Exegetical
Commentary on Jeremiah [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996],
2: 1285). W. Brueggemann also recognises the judicial
background of this verse: "The Redeemer goes to court to
secure the right of the one illicitly held captive,"
(Jeremiah 26-52: To Build, To Plant, International
Theological Commentary [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans,
1991], 267). Nicholson links this passage back to the
lawsuit in Jer 2 and notes that "the imagery is of a
strong and successful counsel for the defence in a court
case", (E.W. Nicholson, Jeremiah 26-52, Cambridge Bible
Commentary on the New English Bible [Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1975], 209-10).

[57]With specific reference to Jer 50:34, McKane
declares that "however that word [גאל, redeemer] is
translated the function assigned to him is that of
fighting their case as an advocate would in a law-court"
(Jeremiah, 2: 1285). He goes so far as to suggest that

assure Israel of a victorious outcome and the following

verses (vv. 35-40) summarise the verdict that issues from

the suit.

Jeremiah 50:34, like Jer 2:29 and 25:31, does not

demonstrate Jeremiah's use of the lawsuit *Gattung* but

does suggest his familiarity with it. We may now examine

גֹּאֵל should here be translated "advocate" (p. 1286).
    Numerous other scholars have recognised the
responsibility of the גֹּאֵל ("redeemer") to ensure that מִשְׁפָּט
("justice") was maintained or restored for people in his
care. H. Ringgren describes the גֹּאֵל as "a man's brother,
uncle, cousin, or some other kinsman who is responsible
for standing up for him and maintaining his rights" (H.
Ringgren, "גָּאַל ga'al; גֹּאֵל go'el; גְּאֻלָּה gᵉ'ullah", TDOT ed G.J.
Botterweck and H. Ringgren [Grand Rapids, Mich. Eerdmans:
1975], 2: 351). A specific "legal" role for the גֹּאֵל was
that of "blood avenger" (R.C. Denton, "Redeem, Redeemer,
Redemption", IDB ed. G.A. Buttrick, [Nashville, Tenn.,
Abingdon: 1965], 2: 22).
    There is neither legislation nor narrative dealing
with the role of the גֹּאֵל ("redeemer") in lawsuits but in a
number of places the term is metaphorically applied to
Yahweh in legal contexts. J. Unterman declares the "God
redeems (*g'l*) by prosecuting (Heb *ryb*) enemies ..." (J.
Unterman, "Redemption [OT]", ABD 5: 652 [New York:
Doubleday, 1992)]; cf D.J.A. Clines, Job 1-20, Word
Biblical Commentary 17, [Dallas, Tex., Word: 1989], 459).
    In Prov 23:11 Yahweh is declared to be the גֹּאֵל of
the fatherless and widows who pleads their cause (רִיב) and
in Job 19:25, Job expresses confidence that his גֹּאֵל
("redeemer") is alive and clearly anticipates his help in
a lawsuit to establish his own innocence, (Ringgren,
"גֹּאֵל", 353,355). גֹּאֵל ("redeemer") is also associated with
רִיב in Lam 3:58 and Ps 119:154. H-J. Kraus' comments on
the latter passage are informative: "Typical forms of a
lament are determinative in vv. 153ff. The petitioner is
involved in a court case (v. 154) against the ungodly and
is sure of Yahweh's help (vv, 155f.). Self-description
and a solemn affirmation of love for Yahweh's Torah are
the sure foundation for the petition advanced in v.
159b." (Psalms 60-150: A Commentary [Minneapolis, Min.,
Augsburg: 1989], 419).
    Thus the use of גֹּאֵל ("redeemer") as evidence of a law
suit background for Jer 50:34 is justified.

the other pericope using רִיב in the oracle against

Babylon--Jeremiah 51:36.

Jeremiah 51:36

The precise limits of the pericope of which Jer

51:36 is part are disputed. However the majority view

seems to be that this verse forms a unit with the next

verse (v. 37), a unit which in turn is part of a larger

"cluster" found in verses 34 to 44.[58]

Neither the smaller unit (vv. 36-37) nor the larger

cluster (vv. 34-44) is structured as a lawsuit. However,

there are clearly elements of legal process alluded to

throughout the cluster. Verse 34 is a statement of

accusation against Babylon.[59] Verse 35 presents an appeal

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[58]Aitken, "Oracles Against Babylon", 50; Keown,
Scalise, Smothers, Jeremiah 26-52, 361; Carroll,
Jeremiah, OTL, 847, Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 414.
Dissenters from this view include Christensen who sees
verses 36-40 as a discrete sub-unit of a section
stretching from verses 25-40 (War Oracle, 270-71). C.L.
Feinberg makes no attempt to subdivide the unit
stretching from verse 34-44, ("Jeremiah", The Expositor's
Bible Commentary, edited by F.E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids,
Mich.: Zondervan, 1986], 683-84). Jones sees verses 34-
40 as a unit, (Jeremiah, 523).

[59]Brueggemann adopts legal categories to express the
meaning of the cluster. He describes Jer 50:34-35 as an
"indictment", which "constitutes a lament concerning
Babylon's maltreatment of Jerusalem". Nebuchadnezzar is
the "perpetrator" who has incurred "bloodguilt". He
describes verses 36 to 40 as the "juridical sentence".
(To Built, To Plant, 275-276). In using such language,
Brueggemann seems to have appropriately translated the
meaning intended by Jeremiah into modern idiom.

to the judge for vindication and vengeance.[60] Verse 36
contains the Lord's assurance that he will defend Israel
in this case (בְיר) and that vengeance will be effected in
the manner described in verses 36b-44. Thus we may
conclude that while Jeremiah has not used the lawsuit
Gattung here he does show familiarity with it.

Evaluation

Jeremiah's clearest use of the lawsuit *gattung* is
Jer 2:4-13. There are no other explicit uses of the
Gattung in the book of Jeremiah. However, legal
processes are at the heart of many other passages in the
book.[61] It is significant that Jer 2:4-13 clearly has
corporate reference. So do *all* the other passages that
appear to show legal processes as part of their
background.

It is clear that Jeremiah was familiar with the law
and legal process. It is therefore not unlikely that he
may have used the lawsuit *Gattung* in writing his
"confessions". If he did so a corporate interpretation

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[60]The appeal is couched in legal language similar to
Lev 20:9-27. See, Keown, Scalise and Smothers, <u>Jeremiah
26-52</u>, 371.

[61]The role the legal processes play varies from
passage to passage: Jer 2:29-32 deals with the
groundlessness of Israel's proposed countersuit against
God; Jer 25:31 announces a coming lawsuit; and Jer 25:31-
34 assures Israel of victory in her suit against Babylon.
Only in Jer 51:34-44 is the judicial background more
general.

would certainly be appropriate for these passages. The question of whether or not the confessions are lawsuits will now be addressed.

Are the Confessions "Lawsuits"?

Almost half of the uses Jeremiah makes of the word רִיב are found in the confessions. This fact, along with the writer's obvious familiarity with legal process suggests that the confessions may be examples of the lawsuit *Gattung*. The only way to establish whether this is in fact correct is to examine each of the confessions and to compare each of them with the lawsuit *Gattung*.

Jeremiah 11:18-23[62]

Like so much of Jeremiah this pericope is not structured as a lawsuit but clearly has a legal background. Verse 19 contains an accusation against the opponents of Jeremiah.[63] This fact is made especially

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[62]This confession (along with several other confessions) has been the subject of frequent attempted reconstructions and textual re-orderings which are summarised in O'Conner, Confessions, 12-15. However, two recent studies of the confessions have persuasively argued against such hypothetical reconstructions in any of the confessions (See O'Conner, Confessions, 15-23; Diamond, Prophetic Drama, 22-28). Other recent commentaries (eg McKane, Holladay, Carroll) and monographs (eg Smith, Laments) have manifest a strong disinclination to rearrange the text. Consequently, the text as it reads is here regarded as essentially correct.

[63]W. Brueggemann, Jeremiah 1-25: To Pluck Up, To Tear Down, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich., Eerdmans: 1988), 110.

clear by the heavy use of legal terminology in verse 20[64]-
-שָׁפַט ("judge"), צֶדֶק ("righteously"), נְקָמָה ("retribution"),[65]
רִיב ("my cause").[66] This verse serves as Jeremiah's

petition or appeal to the court.[67] Verses 21-23 serve as

the promise[68] of a favourable verdict from the court with

a two-fold use of the root פקד ("punish, punishment").[69]

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[64]Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 111. Commenting
on the vocabulary, McKane declares that the "forensic
character of the entire representation is clear."
However, he omits נְקָמָה ("your retribution") from his list
of "forensic" words, (Jeremiah 1: 258).

[65]Jones points out that vengeance "is quite simply
the satisfaction of strict justice" (Jeremiah, 188).

[66]O'Conner's comments are relevant to our
investigation: "Jeremiah's petition for vengeance (אֶרְאֶה
נִקְמָתְךָ, ["let me see your retribution"]) upon his enemies is
expressed in lawsuit language, (Confessions, 16 [emphasis
added]; cf Jones, Jeremiah, 189).

[67]Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 110.

[68]Brueggemann goes further than this when he writes,
"The divine response indicates that the court of Yahweh
has [emphasis added] heard and accepted the claim of the
speaker as a righteous one. The response of Yahweh is a
court verdict". He goes one to describe the content of
verses 22-23 as the "sentence" (Pluck Up, Tear Down,
111).

[69]Carroll stresses the Deuternomic character of these
verses (Jeremiah, OTL, 281). Blank suggests that the
background in the law code for this passage is Deut
19:16-19, which specifies that false witnesses should
suffer the same fate as they had intended for the
accused, ("Confessions", 333). This position is rejected
by Diamond who argues that the two passages "sustain no
material connections" beyond "the common sharing of the
general principle of lex talionis. Their immediate
connection is remote", (Diamond, Prophetic Drama, 24).
    Brueggemann points out that the background for the
sentence is the "covenant curses". (Pluck Up, Tear Down,
112. The general nature of these curses (see Deut 28)
makes it difficult to assess the significance of such

Thus although this pericope is not structurally a lawsuit *Gattung*, it is remarkably legal in content.

Jeremiah 12:1-6

The legal background of the second confession is clearer than that of the first.[70] The opening verse explicitly evokes images of the law court.[71] Jeremiah declares his intention of bringing his "charge" (רִיב) against God.[72] He acknowledges the righteousness (צַדִּיק) of God[73] but is concerned about the prosperity of the guilty (רְשָׁעִים) and wishes to discuss מִשְׁפָּטִים ("my case", lit. "judgements") with God.[74] The charge is developed in

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apparant parallels. For example Hillers sees the parallels as very significant (Treaty-Curses, passim). However, R.E. Clements is much more cautious in his evaluation (Prophecy and Tradition, [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975], 16-17).

[70]Even Carroll refers to "forensic as well as lament overtones", (Jeremiah, OTL, 284).

[71]McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 261.

[72]He also acknowledges the hopelessness of winning such a case against God, (Bright, Jeremiah, 86).

[73]Cf שְׁפֹט צֶדֶק ("judge righteously") in Jer 11:20.

[74]Brueggemann comments: "This complaint is a serious suit filed by a righteous petitioner to a righteous judge. The two of them, so the poem claims, should agree about the accused wicked, who surely must be judged" (Puck Up, Tear Down, 113).
Baumgartner and McKane point out that the phrase אֶת דבר משפטים ("I will utter my judgements against them"; "I who speak in judgement against them") is elsewhere used by Jeremiah (1:16; 4:12) to refer to the activities of God as judge, (Poems, 65; Jeremiah 1: 261). Here the phrase is used against God.

detail in verses 2-4.[75] Verses 5-6 portray the dismissal

of the charges by the judge.[76]

It is difficult to see that Jer 12:1-6 fits formally

into the lawsuit *Gattung*. However, it seems that

fragments of this *Gattung* have been woven together in a

new and creative way.

Jeremiah 15:10-14[77]

The third lament contains little evidence of a

lawsuit background for the confessions.[78] Verse 10 begins

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[75]McKane points out the close affinities of Jer 12:3 with Jer 11:20, the verse in the first confession with the heaviest concentration of legal language and imagery (Jeremiah, 1:254). Brueggemann describes Jer 12:4 as being "in the form of a complaint, designed to support the charge of guilt already asserted" (Pluck Up, Tear Down, 113).

[76]Note McKane's helpful comment: "Jeremiah earns no sympathy from Yahweh and is advised that the apparent unevenness of Yahweh's justice, of which he has complained, is no more than a pin-prick in comparison with the strains and pressures which he will have to withstand in the future", (Jeremiah, 1: 263).

[77]The text of this passage is badly preserved in places which has encouraged a plethora of competing hypothetical reconstructions. Carroll's comments are very wise: "Such a wide divergency of opinion on how the text should be translated must encourage the exegete to be modest in advocating any particular line of interpretation", (Jeremiah, OTL, 325).

[78]In the opening half verse there are two words which may have some legal background, viz., רִיב and מָדוֹן ("contention"). Bright declares that both words indicate that "Jeremiah is like one who is perpetually at law with his people", (Jeremiah, 109; cf Feinberg, "Jeremiah", 475). However, this line of thought is not developed in this confession. Furthermore, Bright's linguistic evidence is disputed (see footnote 81, below).

with a clear lament formula: אוֹי־לִי ("Woe is me").[79] There

is no explicit charge, although verse 10b does contain an

assertion of innocence, which would have been appropriate

if Jeremiah had been defending himself in court.[80]

However, a legal defence does not appear to be in view in

this context.[81] Yahweh immediately responds to Jeremiah

with a declaration of his involvement with Jeremiah (and

Israel).[82] This response (verses 11-14) is devoid of

legal language.[83]

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[79]Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, <u>Jeremiah 1-25</u>, 209.

[80]In all the previously noted passages that appear to
have been influenced by lawsuits, the prosecution of the
lawsuit has been in focus--not the defence.

[81]The word רִיב does occur in verse 10 in the phrase
"man of strife" (אִישׁ רִיב), but the overall context does not
suggest that a lawsuit is in view. Rather רִיב, here seems
to point to confrontation of a more general kind.
Holladay points out that רִיב is here parallelled by מָדוֹן
("contention") and that מָדוֹן "is never used forensically"
(<u>Jeremiah</u>, 1: 452).
     Brueggemann suggests that רִיב might best be
translated "litigation" in this context (<u>Pluck Up, Tear
Down</u>, 137). Reventlow agrees that רִיב and מָדוֹן originally
had a forensic meaning but insists that they later became
stylised elements of the individual lament and in this
passage illustrate how elements from the individual
lament were pressed into the service of the collective
laments, (Reventlow, <u>Liturgie</u>, 210-11). Clearly,
Reventlow here assumes what he needs to prove.

[82]Reventlow, <u>Liturgie</u>, 210.

[83]Clements suggests that verses 13-14 are later
editorial additions and do not represent God's original
response to Jeremiah (<u>Jeremiah</u>, 98).

Jeremiah 15:15-21

With the fourth confession a juridical background

becomes evident again. Verse 15a contains a call for

retribution (נקם), i.e., for a verdict by the judge being

appropriately executed on the guilty.[84] Verse 15b

contains a veiled accusation against God, which is

followed by the declaration of Jeremiah's innocence

(verses 16-17). This "court-speech" ends with an

unveiled and pointed accusation against God (verse 18b).[85]

The specific charge laid against God concerns his failure

to keep the promises made in connection with Jeremiah's

call.[86]

The fourth confession ends with a response by God

(verses 19-21). This response is not couched in

courtroom language. Indeed, the specific accusations

made by Jeremiah are ignored. Rather, he is warned and

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[84]In the Old Testament "vengeance" must be understood
in terms of normal legal process, (See, G.E. Mendenhall,
"The 'Vengeance' of Yahweh", The Tenth Generation
[Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1973], 69-104).
Numerous writers on Jeremiah agree with this assessment,
and suggest that Jeremiah is motivated by a concern for
God's honour, (eg, Bright, "A Prophetic Lament and its
Answer: Jeremiah 15:10-21" Prophet to the Nations, 328-
29; Baumgartner, Poems, 47-48). On the other hand,
McKane stresses on the personal nature of the vengeance
that Jeremiah is calling for (Jeremiah 1: 351).

[85]Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 140. Clements
observations are acute: "There is no hint of passive
submission nor any suggestion that having done all he
could do Jeremiah was prepared to leave the outcome to
the will of God, (Jeremiah, 99).

[86]McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 351.

rebuked for bringing the charges in the first place

(verse 19).[87] Finally, God reiterates the promises that

Jeremiah is accusing him of breaching (verses 20-21; cf

Jer 1:8, 17-19).[88]

Jeremiah 17:14-18

Judicial language is absent from this passage.

Neither the elements of petition (verses 14,16) or self-

justification (verse 16) appear to be addressed to a

judge. It is clear that the confession is occasioned by

opposition that Jeremiah is experiencing (verses 15, 18)

but there is no indication that the conflict is being

resolved through any sort of court procedure.[89]

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[87]Clements, Jeremiah, 100; E.W. Nicholson, Jeremiah
1-25, Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 141,
Bright, Jeremiah, 112. Baumgartner suggests that the
sharpness of Yahweh's response in verse 19 alludes to the
sharpness of the indictment in verse 18 (Baumgartner,
51).

[88]H.H. Rowley, "The Early Prophecies of Jeremiah in
their Setting", A Prophet to the Nations, 51-53; M. C.-C.
Wang, "A Theology of Frustration--An Interpretation of
Jeremiah's Confessions", SEAJT 15 (1974), 37-38.

[89]Brueggemann suggests that this confession is
perhaps linked to the "harsh lawsuit speech of 17:1-4".
That pericope announced a catastrophic future. The
reasons for this announcement are explicated in Jer 17:5-
13, a passage which gives rise to the passionate prayer
found in the confession which follows in verse 14 to 18,
(Pluck Up, Tear Down, 156). In arguing this way
Brueggemann is focusing on the final redaction of the
text and not uncovering for us the original occasion,
meaning or function of the fifth confession.
     Wimmer who argues that all the confessions are
lawsuits, can only do so with regard to this confession
by insisting that it starts in verse 12 ("Prophetic

Jeremiah 18:18-23

The sixth confession is in many ways similar to the

fifth. Again, judicial language is absent from a

pericope occasioned by conflict. However, Jer 18:18-23

lends itself more readily than Jer 17:14-18 to an

interpretation highlighting a judicial background. Verse

18 outlines the actions of Jeremiah's opponents.[90] This

outline prepares the way for an appeal for justice to be

accorded him (verse 19).[91] This appeal is supported by

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Experience", 235-37). It may be more plausible to argue
that the confession has been redactionally placed after
verses 12-13 in order to heighten the judicial feeling of
a passage which spoke powerfully to the needs of
corporate Israel in the exilic period. This issue is
discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

[90]The phrase וְנַכֵּהוּ בַלָּשׁוֹן ("lay charges against him") in
verse 18 may suggest formally laying suit against
Jeremiah in court, (Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down,
164; Jones, Jeremiah, 263). This understanding can be
harmonised with both the MT and LXX rendering of the next
clause. The MT declares וְאַל־נַקְשִׁיבָה אֶל־כָּל־דְּבָרָיו ("and let us not
heed any of his words") suggesting charges were being
laid because of the complete rejection of Jeremiah's
message. The LXX reads δεῦτε καὶ πατάξωμεν αὐτὸν ἐν γλώσσῃ καὶ
ἀκουσόμεθα πάντας τοὺς λόγους αὐτοῦ ("Come, and let us strike
him with the tongue, and we will hear all his words")
perhaps suggesting that Jeremiah's accusers were
listening to him carefully--in order to gain evidence to
use against him, (Nicholson, Jeremiah 1-25, 159).

[91]The root רִיב is again used, but its import in this
setting is disputed. Brueggemann declares it to be the
language of the court, (Pluck Up, Tear Down, 166).
However, McKane insists that Jeremiah "is not here
constructing a legal argument with a view to establishing
his innocence" (Jeremiah, 1:438).
        The issue is complicated by slight textual
differences between the MT and the LXX. The MT וּשְׁמַע לְקוֹל יְרִיבָי
favours the translation "to what my adversaries say",
whereas the LXX καὶ εἰσάκουσον τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ δικαιώματός μου--the

assertions of his own innocence (verse 20) and an appeal

for the punishment of his opponents (verses 21-23).[92]

Thus, there may be a judicial background to this passage.

However, given the paucity of judicial language, one

cannot be certain.

Jeremiah 20:7-13

Jer 20:7-13 may be divided into two parts: vss 7-10

and vss. 11-13. The first part of the seventh confession

(Jer 7-10) forms a single prolonged accusation against

God.[93] The language Jeremiah uses is bold. Indeed, it

borders on the blasphemous. He utilises words that are

otherwise used to signify seduction (פָּתָה, "entice") and

Vorlage appears to have read וּשְׁמַע לְקוֹל רִיבִי--supports the
translation "to my plea/case". The LXX reading is more
favourable to a juridical setting but the MT reading does
not exclude it. Bright adopts the LXX reading, arguing
that it "yields a slightly better parallelism" (Jeremiah,
123).

[92]Again the punishments are derived from the
"covenant curses", (Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down,
165).

[93]Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 174.

rape (חָזַק, "overpower").[94] Thus a judicial background is

possible for this material.[95]

The last half of the seventh confession (Jer 20:11-

13) is an affirmation of Jeremiah's confidence in God.[96]

It seems devoid of any judicial material beyond a call

for God to exact retribution on Jeremiah's enemies.[97]

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[94]פָּתָה ("entice") is used to signify seduction in Ex
22:15 and חָזַק is used to signify rape in Deut 22:25-27; II
Sam 13:11). Some scholars stress the sexual nature of
Jeremiah's vocabulary, arguing that he is using an
especially powerful metaphor (e.g. A. Hershel, The
Prophets [New York: Harper and Row, 1962], 113-14; J.L
Crenshaw, A Whirlpool of Torment, OBT 12 [Philadelphia:
Fortress, 1984], 38-40; McKane, Jeremiah 1: 470;
Berridge, Word of Yahweh, 151-55).
Others deny any sexual reference and insist that
Jeremiah is using the words with an extended meaning
(D.J.A. Clines and D.M. Gunn, "'You Tried to Persuade Me'
and 'Violence! Outrage!' in Jeremiah 20:7-8", VT 38
[1978], 21-23). Still others insist that Jeremiah is
deliberately using ambiguous wording with both extended
and sexual reference (E.D. Lewin, "Arguing for Authority:
A Rhetorical Study of Jeremiah 1:4-19 and 20:7-18", JSOT
32 [1985], 113). Jones points out that the most
significant usage of פָּתָה ("entice") is with reference to
the deception created by a lying spirit in false prophets
(I Kings 22:20-22; Ez 14:9), (Jones, Jeremiah, 272).

[95]McKane describes חָזַק ("overpower") as "legal
vocabulary" (Jeremiah 1: 470).

[96]The disjunction between the content of the two
sections is very marked, bordering on contradiction,
(Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 175).

[97]There are also echoes of the call narrative of Jer
1:17-19, (Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 175). This
is a significant point because the charge made by
Jeremiah in other confessions is that God has not kept
the promises he made when he called him.

Jeremiah 20:14-18

The eighth and final confession is different from
all the others in that it begins with a self-imprecation
(v. 14). This self-imprecation quickly broadens into a
curse on the messenger that announced Jeremiah's birth,
before the passage returns to the theme of the self-curse
in the form of a question (vv. 15-17). Judicial language
and structure appear to be absent.[98]

Conclusion

It is clear that the confessions of Jeremiah are not
lawsuits as such. However, that they have been strongly
influenced by judicial process is evident from both their
structure and their vocabulary. The influence is not
evenly spread throughout the confessions, being
especially concentrated in Jer 11:18-12:6 and 15:15-21,
but virtually absent from Jer 15:10-14; 17:14-18; 18:18-
23; and 20:7-18. The confessions which most strongly
reflect a judicial background are those where the
activities of Jeremiah's opponents are most prominent.
In these confessions the opponents form a third corporate
party.

Certainly, the judicial contribution to most of the
confessions is on a lesser level to that evident in other

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[98]The only real parallel in the Old Testament to this
remarkable outburst is Job 3:3-12, (Nicholson, Jeremiah
1-25, 171).

parts of Jeremiah.[99] Accordingly, their judicial

background cannot be used as evidence of a corporate

understanding of the "I" of the confessions. The

question remains as to whether they are laments of the

individual, and as to what such a classification may

suggest about the identity of the 'I' within them?"[100]

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[99]In most of the other passages interest in legal
proceedings is focal. In the three relevant confessions
the legal sphere provides valuable background without
taking centre stage.

[100]Reventlow postulated that they were community
laments but this position is thoroughly untenable, as
shown by the thorough going rebuttals by Bright, Berridge
and McKane (See references in Chapter 1, footnote 21).

The *Gattung* of the Confessions: Individual Laments

Introduction

Far more scholarly work has been done on the lament *Gattung* then on the lawsuit *Gattung*[1]. Walter Baumgartner has examined Jeremiah's use of the lament *Gattung* in an unsurpassed study.[2] Thus it is not necessary to discuss this issue in as much detail as it has been to discuss the issue of the lawsuit *Gattung*. However, the question of the corporality or individuality of the reference of Jeremiah's laments still needs to be addressed in a systematic way.

What is the "Individual Lament" *Gattung*?[3]

Tremper Longman III identifies the following elements in laments: 1. invocation; 2. plea to God for

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[1]For example, a recent evangelical work on Biblical *Gattungen* contained a chapter on laments but none on lawsuits, (D.B. Sandy and R.L. Giese, Jr., Cracking Old Testament Codes [Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman, 1995]).

[2]Baumgartner, Poems, *passim*.

[3]The distinction between "individual" and "communal" laments cannot be absolutised. Many scholars consider that at least some of the "individual" laments in the Psalms are really national laments with the "I" being a representative figure for the entire nation (Jones, Jeremiah, 186). However, there is clearly a greater scope for interpretation in the case of most individual laments.

help; 3. complaints;[4] 4. confession of sin or assertion of

innocence; 5. curse upon enemies; 6. confidence in God's

response; 7. hymn or blessing.[5] The mood of laments is

melancholic although there is often an abrupt change to

praise and confidence before the lament finishes.[6] The

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[4]The complaint is the central feature of the lament *Gattung*. It must occur in all examples of it. Other elements are more optional. Baumgartner suggests that the "main part" or "corpus" of the lament consists of the "lament" (ie, the complaint) and the "petition" (Poems, 21). He further declares, "*After the lament*, the petition is the most important part of the song. (Poems, 29, emphasis added).

[5]Tremper Longman III, "Lament", Codes, 199-200 cf E. Gerstenberger, "Psalms", Old Testament Form Criticism, ed. J.H. Hayes (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 1974), 200; Baumgartner, Poems, 19-40; A. Weiser, The Psalms, Old Testament Library, London: SCM, 1962, 67; W.H. Bellinger, Jr, Psalmody and Prophecy, JSOTSS 27 (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1984), 22-24.
This structural analysis of the lament *Gattung* goes back to the work of H. Gunkel (Psalms, *passim*). Gerstenberger, acknowledges the need for "minor corrections" to Gunkel's structural analysis but points out that it is foundational to the work of scholars as diverse as H.-J. Kraus, G. Widengren, S. Mowinckel, C. Westermann, L. Sabourin, A. Deissler and J.W. Weavers ("Psalms", 201).

[6]The abrupt mood change has provoked considerable discussion with numerous attempts being made to explain it (with meagre success). The lack of evidence means that any explanation is bound to be hypothetical.
From the earliest form critical studies it has been suggested that the laments preserved in the Psalms actually bracketed a priestly oracle of response in the temple setting. This posited response is not recorded in the Psalm, which generally contains only the petitioner's words. This view is given classic expressions by J. Begrich, ("Das priesterliche Heilsorakel", ZAW 52 [1934], 81-92) and has more recently been defended by Bellinger (Psalmody, 78-82). Floyd acknowledges the plausibility of this proposal but also highlights its crucial weakness: "there are actually no clear-cut examples of oracular responses to individual complaints--only

laments are usually written in poetry and many (but not all) are characterised by a distinctive meter, called the qinah.[7] The laments express complaints against enemies, the lamenter himself and/or God.[8]

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alledged derivative adaptations of this convention", ("Prophetic Complaints", 401-02). The weakness of this proposal is that not one example of such a priestly oracle can be produced. Its very existence is hypothetical.

J.W. Wevers' view is similar. He posits that the power of the invocation of God's name by the worshipper was sufficient to inspire confidence without any response from the priest ("A Study in the Form Criticism of Individual Complaint Psalms", VT 6 [1956], 86-87).

Other scholars have suggested that the change of mood may be accounted for by positing the merging of originally independent Psalms (e.g., Weiser, Psalms, 70,80). Such a view may be likely in some cases but is scarcely adequate for a general explanation.

A good summary of the issues involved and the variety of hypotheses suggested is given in T.W. Cartledge, "Conditional Vows in the Psalms of Lament: A New Approach to an Old Problem", in The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honour of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., JSOTSS 58, ed. K.G. Hoglund, E.F. Huwiler, J.T. Glass, and R.W. Lee (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1987), 77-94. Cartledge's own view that the element of praise was actually intended as a motivation for God to act--would seem to be no stronger then others that have been proposed.

[7]The meter of the qinah is 3:2. Material written in this form was intended to be sung, especially as dirges. Such material not only contains a distinctive meter but is also characterized by syntactical perculiarities: e.g. the verb does not stand at the beginning of the sentence, (W. R. Garr, "The Qinah: A Study of Poetic Meter, Syntax and Style", ZAW 95 [1983], 54-75). H.W. Robinson suggests that this metrical form is "far and away the favourite metre of Jeremiah (The Cross in the Old Testament [London: SCM, 1955], 135).

[8]Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 278-79.

Does Jeremiah Use the Individual Lament *Gattung*?

It is universally accepted that Jeremiah makes

extensive use of the lament.[9] Baumgartner lists the

following passages as being influenced by the lament

Gattung in Jeremiah: 4:19-21;[10] 8:18-9:1; 13:17; 14:17-

18;[11] 23:9;[12] and 45:3.[13] Scholars have generally accepted

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[9]In none of the examples examined below is the lament *Gattung* reproduced in full. Rather Jeremiah appears to incorporate fragments of the *Gattung*--particularly the complaint.

[10]Recent scholars have often extended this pericope to 4:22 which is best understood as Yahweh's response to the lament (eg Brueggemann, Pluck Up, 54-56; McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 102-06; Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 166-67; and, Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 78-80). Jones thinks the passage should be interpreted in conjunction with 4:23-26, although he acknowledges that this passage may have originally been a separate unit of material, (Jeremiah, 115).
Regardless of the exact delimitations of the pericope, Jer 4:19-21 is especially important to our study. Some scholars list it as one of the confessions (eg, Thompson, Jeremiah, 227; and, more tentatively, Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 78). However, this classification is not helpful. The confessions are laments putatively dealing with the failure of the people to respond positively to Jeremiah. This lament is a reaction to the threatened invasion of the land.

[11]Although the structure and unity of Jeremiah 14-15 is variously understood, Jer 14:17-18 is generally thought to form a discrete unit or sub-unit, (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 423, Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 315-16, Bright, Jeremiah, 103). Jones and Brueggemann disent from this opinion and sees verses 17-22 as forming a unit (Jeremiah, 211; Pluck Up, Tear Down, 132-35). McKane extends it further--to Jer 15:4 (Jeremiah, 1: 328-29). There is however unanimity in seeing verse 17 as the start of a new unity or sub-unit.

[12]McKane is not persuaded by Baumgartner's suggestion that Jer 23:9 is comparable to Jer 4:19, (Jeremiah, 1:

Baumgartner's list. Mark Smith points out that there are

a number of divine laments recorded in Jeremiah (12:7-12;

15:5-9; 9:9).[14] The degree of individuality or

corporality in these lament passages is vital to our

discussion.

Jeremiah 4:19-21

This passage is certainly individualistic in style.

Singular verbs and nouns with singular pronominal

suffixes predominate. But who is the speaker? The

predominant view is that it is Jeremiah himself.[15]

However, Carroll suggests the land of Judah or the city

of Jerusalem as the most likely "speaker".[16] Such a

reading seems forced.[17] Verse 20 is especially difficult

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568).

[13]Baumgartner, Poems, 83-86.

[14]M.S. Smith, "Jeremiah 9:9--A Divine Lament", VT 37
(1987), 97-99. These passages do not need to be studied
in detail here because a divine lament is by its very
nature individualistic in reference.

[15]Holladay, Jeremiah 1: 19; Craigie, Kelley,
Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 79; Thompson, Jeremiah, 228;
Brueggemann, Pluck Up, 54; McKane, Jeremiah, 104; Bright,
Jeremiah, 34; Polk, Prophetic Persona, 49-53; Berridge,
Word of Yahweh, 169-70.

[16]Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 167.

[17]Carroll declares that "If the hypothesis behind
Reventlow's [interpretation] is not accepted, then the
case for making Jeremiah the speaker here is much
weakened" (p. 167). However, one does not need to accept
Reventlow's thesis of Jeremiah as a cultic prophet in
order to accept that he had a role as an intercessor in
Israel. The fact that he is repeatedly commanded not to
intercede (Jer 7:6; 11:14; 14:11) presupposes this role.

to fit into this view.[18] Would the city of Jerusalem

speak of "my tents"?[19] Would the land itself declare that

His double allusion to Moses and Samuel points in the
same direction (Jer 15:1; 18:20). Zedekiah and the
assassins of Gedaliah clear regard intercession as part
of Jeremiah's role because they ask him to intercede for
them (Jer 37:3 cf 21:2; 42:1-3), (Barstad, "No
Prophets?", 56).
        Even if one accepts Carroll's sceptical conclusions
regarding the possibility of uncovering the historical
Jeremiah, it is clear that the editors of the book
portrayed him as one who was expected to act as an
intercessor and who did, in fact, do so on occasions.
S.E. Balentine--who rejects the notion of intercession as
a characteristic feature of prophetic ministry--admits
that evidence for intercession is strongest in the case
of Jeremiah ("The Prophet as Intercessor: A
Reassessment", JBL 103 [1984], 161-73).

[18]שֶׁבֶר עַל־שֶׁבֶר נִקְרָא כִּי שֻׁדְּדָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ פִּתְאֹם שֻׁדְּדוּ אֹהָלַי רֶגַע יְרִיעֹתָי ("Disaster
overtakes disaster, the whole land is laid waste.
Suddenly my tents are destroyed, my curtains in a
moment"). Holladay suggests that this verse actually
contains a citation of the panicked shouts of refugees
(Jeremiah, 1: 147).

[19]Jones suggests that this reference is perhaps an
allusion to Jeremiah's own simplicity of lifestyle
(Jeremiah, 115). However, this interpretation remains
very uncertain. It is strengthened if we accept the LXX
singular reading, ἡ σκηνή ("the tent", from אָהֳלִי, "my
tent"), rather than the MT plural, אֹהָלַי ("my tents").
Holladay accepts the LXX reading but understands the
"tent" to be a metaphoric reference to the temple rather
than to Jeremiah's abode (Jeremiah 1: 143). His position
is supported by F.K. Kumaki, "A New Look at Jer 4,19-22
and 10:19-21", AJBI 8 (1982), 113-22.

"the whole land is laid waste"?[20] Nevertheless Jeremiah

may speak here to some extent in a representative role.[21]

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1[Heb 8:23][22]

The situation in Jer 8:19-9:1 [Heb 8:23] is more

complicated than in Jer 4:19-21. Once again first person

singular verbs predominate and first person singular

pronominal suffixes are common. However, the speaker

changes throughout the passage. Verse 19b is clearly

attributed to God[23]; verses 19a,20 by the people;[24] and the

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[20]It is interesting to notice the conclusion that
R.P. Carroll draws in another setting using the same
logic as we are using to identify the speaker in the
Jeremaic laments. In dealing with the question of the
identify of the speaker in Jer 5:1-6 Carroll raises two
possible answers: Jeremiah or Yahweh. While assessing
the first possibility he makes the following revealing
comment: "This interpretation however does not account
for the phrase in verse 1 'that I may pardon her.' In
some views of prophecy the prophet may speak as or for
God (cf Ex. iv 16), but *such an explanation will not
serve here. In verse 3 the speaker refers to Yahweh in
the second person, so must be distinguished from Yahweh.
If the speaker of verse 3 is the prophet, then the person
speaking in verse 1 is not*" ("Theodicy and the Community:
The Text and Subtext of Jeremiah V 1-6", Prophets,
Worship and Theodicy, OTS 23, [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984],
21 [emphasis added]).

[21]Jones, Jeremiah, 115.

[22]Jones and Holladay begin this passage with verse 14
(Jeremiah, 161-164; Jeremiah, 1: 287-295).

[23]This divine speech has provoked considerable
discussion. Baumgartner affirms that it fits into the
structure of the Lament as the divine answer (Poems, 84).
Holladay thinks the verse is original on stylistic and
linguistic grounds ("The So-Called 'Deuteronomic Gloss'
of Jer viii:19b" VT 12 (1962), 494-98. McKane is
unpersuaded by such arguments and regards this material
as a secondary Deuteronomic addition (Jeremiah, 1: 194).

rest by a single individual, presumably Jeremiah.[25] Once

again, Carroll suggests the "speaker" is the city or

community.[26] However, certain stylistic features make

this suggestion unlikely. If the individual speaker

(8:19a) represents the city/community why do we find them

speaking for themselves in verse 20? Why is the speaker

distinguished from the people in verse 21?. The whole

pericope is bound together by the theme of "my poor

people" (8:19; 21; 22; 9:1).

Jeremiah 13:17

Baumgartner refers to Jer 13:17 as a "short song".[27]

Recent scholars have tended to treat it in connection

An earlier scholar with the same view as McKane is Hyatt
("Jeremiah", 887).

[24]McKane argues that these verses have their
background in the Autumn New Year Festival (McKane
Jeremiah 1: 194). Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard concur
(Jeremiah 1-25, 139-40). Holladay argues they are from a
communal lament (Jeremiah 1: 290).

[25]Jones points out that sometimes in the lament
Jeremiah identifies himself with the people and at other
times he identifies with the grief of God to such an
extent that identifying the speaker with certainty is
often impossible (Jeremiah, 162). Holladay concurs that
"the specification of speaker is not in every instance
easy". His own understanding is that Jeremiah speaks in
8:19aα,21, 22b; 9:1; the people speak in 8:19aβ, 20;
and, Yahweh speaks in 19b, 22a (Jeremiah, 1: 289).

[26]However, he acknowledges that this is a
metaphorical understanding. "In reality somebody has to
do the speaking". (Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 235). His
point is that the grief being expressed is corporate and
not merely individualistic.

[27]Baumgartner, "Poems", 84.

with the preceding two verses.[28] Clearly a verse of this

size can be no more than a fragment of a lament.

Jeremiah 13:17 abounds with difficulties. In

addition to a number of text variants between the MT and

the LXX, various scholars have proposed conjectural

emendations of the text.[29] Grammatical difficulties

further complicate the issue. Is בְּמִסְתָּרִים[30] ("in secret") to

be taken with לֹא תִשְׁמָעֶהָ ("you will not listen"), (so

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[28]Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 299-300; Holladay, Jeremiah
1:405-07; Jones, Jeremiah, 199-200; Thompson, Jeremiah,
368-70; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 192;
McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 298-302; Nicholson, Jeremiah, 1:
124-25. Brueggemann sees a single pericope extending
from verse 15 to verse 19 (To Pluck Up, 124-26).

[29]For a summary of the textual difficulties see
Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 405. Particularly significant is
the choice between the MT's נִשְׁבָּה ("has been taken
captive") and the LXX's συνετριβη ("was broken")--
presumably translated from נִשְׁבַּר ("was broken"). The
reading chosen effects the perspective of the verse.
Carroll notes that "the shift [in the verse] between G
[ie LXX] and MT is from a communal response to an
individual reaction", (Jeremiah, OTL, 300). However,
Thompson points out that even if נִשְׁבַּר ("was broken") is
accepted as the correct reading, the authenticity of the
passage is not necessarily compromised. Jeremiah did
work and prophesy after some of his countrymen had been
taken to Babylon (Jeremiah, 369-70).
    Jones argues that נִשְׁבָּה ("has been taken captive")
should be understood as a prophetic perfect and
understood in the sense of "will be taken captive",
(Jones, Jeremiah, 199). In the same way נִשְׁבַּר ("was
broken") can be understood as a prophetic perfect which
would be translated "will be taken broken" (Holladay,
Jeremiah, 1: 405).

[30]The BHS editors suggest the conjectural emendation
בְּמִסְרָרִים ("in rebellion") for the MT's בְּמִסְתָּרִים ("in secret"),
(BHS, textual apparatus on Jer 13:17; c.f., Holladay,
Jeremiah, 1: 405).

Holladay)[31] or with תִּבְכֶּה־נַפְשִׁי ("my soul will weep"), (so

NRSV)[32]? Fortunately, all these problems do not need to

be solved for the purpose of this study. It is

sufficient to note the distinction that is drawn within

the text between the speaker and the people as a whole,

identified in the third person as "the LORD's flock."

The natural reading of this lament is that it is uttered

by an individual.

Jeremiah 14:17-18[33]

Jeremiah 14:17-18 is set in the context of the

aftermath of invasion. The speaker is explicitly

contrasted with "my people",[34] "men", "prophet and

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[31]Holladay's translation reads "But if in rebellion you do not hear it, my soul will weep in the presence of pride", (Jeremiah 1: 405).

[32]The NRSV translation reads: "But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride".

[33]Nicholson (Jeremiah, 1: 133-35), McKane (Jeremiah, 1: 328-36) and Thompson (Jeremiah, 384-88) extend this pericope to Jer 5:4, but Jones (Jeremiah, 211-14) and Brueggemann (To Pluck Up, 133) only to Jer 4:22. McKane notes that the longer passage forms a communal lament but feels that "Verses 17-18 will not pass for a constituent part of a communal lament. They may have been pressed into service in order to provide a description of distress which triggers the appeal to Yahweh in vv. 19ff., but this is not their original function. They describe the grief awakened in the prophet ..." (Jeremiah, 1: 331). Significantly, Baumgartner sees two communal laments in this same chapter of Jeremiah, viz 14:2-10 and 14:19-5:2 (Poems, 88).

[34]The full phrase here is בְּתוּלַת בַּת־עַמִּי. The LXX does not translate the word בְּתוּלָה ("virgin"). The NRSV translates the phrase "the virgin daughter--my people" understanding the two nouns to be in apposition. By contrast the RSV translates "the virgin daughter of my people". The RSV

priest", "city" and "field". Given this intense

disjunction between speaker and people, a corporate

understanding of this passage is unlikely.[35]

Jeremiah 23:9

Jeremiah 23:9 is generally seen as the beginning of

a pericope which ends in verse 12.[36] However, there

appears to be a change in speaker between verse 9 and

verses 10-12.[37] The pericope is linked thematically to

the material which follows it.[38] Holladay suggests that

the entire section may have originally been appended to a

collection of confessions.[39] Unfortunately, the fragment

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rendering is grammatically more likely, but the NRSV
captures the contextual meaning better. The focus of the
passage is on the entire population of the city.

[35]Jones suggests a degree of representativeness on
Jeremiah's part. However, he views the passage as part
of a longer pericope which is in fact communal in
reference (Jeremiah, 211). Carroll is conspicuously
silent as to the identity of the speaker in this passage
(Jeremiah, OTL, 316).

[36]Thompson, Jeremiah, 492-94; Brueggemann, To Pluck
Up, 201-02; Jones, Jeremiah, 304-06; McKane, Jeremiah, 1:
567-73; Nicholson, Jeremiah, 1: 193-94; Craigie, Kelley,
Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 334-37; Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL,
451-54; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 624-29.

[37]Verse 9 ends with a reference to the words of
Yahweh which forms an introduction to the following
verses (Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 335);
verses 11 and 12 end with a declaration that what has
proceeded was spoken by Yahweh.

[38]Jer 23:9-40 focuses on the issue of false prophets.

[39]Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 624 cf Craigie, Kelley,
Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 335.

of individual lament found in verse 9 is so small that it

is difficult to come to any firm conclusions about it.[40]

Jeremiah 45:3

Jeremiah 45:3 is at the heart of the "confession of

Baruch" (Jer 45:1-5).[41] As such it is extraordinarily

significant for any discussion of the confessions of

Jeremiah.[42] Verses 1 and 2 provide an introduction; verse

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[40]Carroll observes that Jer 23:9 cannot be referred
to any historical occasions and that the links between it
and the confessions are too general to allow any easy
identification of speakers. He leaves open the question
of whether the speaker is an individual or a figure
representing the community (Jeremiah, OTL, 452).
   The relationship of verses 10-12 to verse 9 also
remains problematical. If verse 9 is voiced by an
individual, verses 10-12 provide the speaker with an
explanation for his predicament. However, if verse 9 is
uttered by a representative figure, the divine response
forms a repudiation of his complaints. Unfortunately, it
cannot even be ascertained if the connection between
verse 9 and verses 10-12 is original or redactional.

[41]Keown, Scalise, Smothers, Jeremiah 26-52, 271.
P.A.H. de Boer sagely observes that "the number of
problems in Jeremiah 45 is inversely proportional to the
brevity of the chapter" ("Jeremiah 45, Verse 5", Symbolae
Biblicae et Mesopotamicae Francisco Mario Theodoro de
Liagre Böhl Dedicatae, ed. M.A. Beek, A.A. Kampman, C.
Nijland and J. Ryckmans [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973], 31).
Fortunately, not many of them have to be dealt with in
this study.

[42]Keown, Scalise, Smothers, Jeremiah 26-45, 273;
Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 308.
   It is noteworthy that God's response to Baruch
starts with a reaffirmation of the themes present in the
call of Jeremiah (Jer 45:4 cf 1:10). The call of
Jeremiah is recognised as foundational to any study of
the confessions of Jeremiah.
   It is also noteworthy that God's promise to Baruch
parallels the promise given to Jeremiah in the prose
tradition (Jer 45:5 cf 39:18).
   The content of the Baruch's lament both thematically

3 gives Baruch's lament, which is not originally

addressed to Yahweh but presumably to Jeremiah;[43] and,

verses 4 and 5 provide Yahweh's response. There are few

text critical problems in the pericope.

The identity and role of Baruch are of vital

importance for this study. The Baruch confession is

explicitly linked to chapter 36 by the dating in verse

1.[44] Some scholars suggest that verse 3 reflects the

trauma of Baruch in light of the finality and certainty

of judgement expressed in the second scroll.[45] Chapters

36 and 45 would thus form an inclusio of sorts for the

"Baruch document" (Jer 36-45).[46] Others scholars have

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and linguistically parallels that of Jeremiah's
confessions. For example, the cry, "Woe is me", is found
in both (Jer 45:3; cf. Jer 15:10) as are the themes of
Yahweh bringing ceaseless pain to his servant (Jer 45:3;
cf. Jer 15:18; 20:7).

[43]Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 309.

[44]J.R. Lundbom, "Baruch, Seraiah and Expanded
Colophons in the Book of Jeremiah", JSOT (1986), 100.

[45]Keown, Scalise, Smothers, Jeremiah 26-52, 272;
Thompson, Jeremiah, 683; A. van Selms, "Telescoped
Discussion as a Literary Device in Jeremiah", VT, 26
(1976), 99-103. Holladay suggests that one of the prime
differences between the first and second scroll is that
the possibility of judgement in the first had hardened
into the certainty of judgement in the second ("The
Identity of the Two Scrolls of Jeremiah", VT 30 [1980],
465-66.) Of course, it is impossible to do more than
speculate about the state of Baruch's mind and the
reasons for it (Bright, Jeremiah, 185-86).

[46]Bright thinks that chapter 45 originally adjoined
chapter 36 and relocates it there in his commentary
(Jeremiah, 176-86). However, in so doing he is confusing
the issue of the historical timing of the event and that
of the incorporation of the pericope recording the

regarded the date in Jer 45:1 as secondary and have

suggested that the pericope comes from the end of

Jeremiah's ministry--possibly even from his deathbed.[47]

It has been suggested that chapter 45 was originally a

colophon at the end of an early edition of the book of

Jeremiah.[48]

An alternative view links Baruch's confession with

the account given in Jer 44 in which Baruch is accused of

having unduly influenced Jeremiah. Brueggemann suggests

that Baruch may be representative of those who took a

pro-Babylonian position.[49] Jones suggests that the

placement of the pericope speaks to the fate of the Jews

who had fled to Egypt.[50] However, the links in Jer 45:1

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incident into the book (McKane, Jeremiah, 2: 1103).

Carroll points out that chapter 45 also has thematic parallels with chapter 1, especially verse 10 which contains the four main verbs of Jer 45:4. Thus a type of inclusio is formed around a larger block of material (Jeremiah, OTL, 747; cf. Lundbom, "Colophon", 101). The same verb cluster recurs elsewhere in Jeremiah, viz 12:14-17; 18:7-9; 24:6; 31:21; 31:38,40; 42:10, suggesting its thematic importance in the book. See, M.A. Taylor, "Jeremiah 45: The Problem of Placement", JSOT 37 (1987), 90-91.

[47]Skinner, Prophecy, 346; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 1101-02. This position is unlikely: It faces the difficulty of explaining the origin of the date in verse 1. There is no sign in verses 4 and 5 that the "predicted" destruction has already occurred (Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 308).

[48]Lundbom, "Colophons", 99-101. The passage comes at the end of the book in the LXX.

[49]Brueggemann, To Build, To Plant, 205.

[50]Jones, Jeremiah, 482. See also Carroll Jeremiah, OTL, 745-50.

to Jer 36 should be taken seriously.[51] Originally, the

pericope dealt with Baruch in the setting of his writing

of the scrolls in chapter 36. It is the later

redactional arrangement of material that makes Baruch

into a representative figure here.[52]

Results

This survey of Jeremiah's use of individual laments

outside of the confessions shows that Jeremiah was

familiar with the *Gattung*--although in no case does he

utilise the complete *Gattung*. Of the six passages

examined four explicitly make a contrast between the

speaker and the people as a whole (Jer 4:19-21; 8:18-

9:1[Heb 8:23]; 13:17; 14:17-18). This fact strongly

suggests that the speaker should be understood in a

genuinely individualistic way and not as a representative

figure. Of the two final passages, the first (Jer 23:9)

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[51]There are no good grounds for regarding the date as
secondary. It is interesting to note the structural and
functional parallels between Jer 36 and 45 which are
highlighted by R.D. Patterson ("Of Bookends, Hinges, and
Hooks: Literary Clues to the Arrangement of Jeremiah's
Prophecies", WTJ 51 [1989], 118-19). He argues that both
chapters form a "bookend" which signals the close of a
major section of material (Jer 25-35 and Jer 37-45,
respectively) while at the same time forming a "hinge"
between the block of material which they close and the
block which follows (Jer 37-45 and 46-51, respectively).

[52]Carroll draws attention not only to the parallels
in content between Jer 45 and Jer 39:15-19, dealing with
Ebed-Melech, he also suggests that the placement of both
pericopes ("technically out of place") after accounts of
great destruction suggests a similar function for both
pericopes in the book as a whole, (Jeremiah, OTL, 748).

is too short and the redactional questions too
intractable to be able to come to any definite
conclusions. The second (Jer 45:3) clearly points to an
individual and takes on a representative character only
because of its redactional placement within the book as a
whole. The individual speaker in the first five
instances appears to be Jeremiah; in the last it is
Baruch.

Are the Confessions Laments?

Baumgartner argues that five passages from the
confessions (11:18-20, 21-23; 15:15-21; 17:12-18; 18:18-
23; 20:10-13) are laments.[53] He further argues that an
additional four passages (12:1-6; 15:10-12; 20:7-9;
20:14-18) are "related" to the songs of lament.[54] It is
difficult to dispute these conclusions--although none of
the confessions have all the lament elements.[55] The
evidence that each of the confessions is an individual
lament will now be summarised.

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[53]Baumgartner, Poems, 41-62.

[54]Ibid., 63-78.

[55]K.M. O'Connor points out that few scholars would
agree with Baumgartner on an array of issues such as the
exact delimitations of the confessional units and the
sole sufficiency of form criticism as a tool to uncover
their meaning, ("Review of Jeremiah's Poems of Lament, by
W. Baumgartner, Historic Texts and Interpreters in
Biblical Scholarship [Sheffield: Almond, 1988]," CBQ 52
[1990], 710).

Jeremiah 11:18-23

Jeremiah 11:18-23 contains the following elements of
an individual lament: plea (11:20);[56] complaint (11:18b-
19);[57] and, confidence in being heard (11:21-23).[58] The
Gattung is not only incomplete but in disorder as well.
In addition to these structural elements Baumgartner
lists numerous linguistic and thematic parallels between
this confession and the individual laments of the
Psalms.[59]

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[56]The expression בֹּחֵן כְּלָיוֹת וָלֵב ("who try the heart and the
mind") occurs only in the confessions and in Ps 7:10 and
26:2 (G.P. Couturier, "Jeremiah", Jerome Biblical
Commentary, ed. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer and R.E. Murphy
[London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1970], 315). Both Psalms are
individual laments (L. Sabourin, The Psalms: Their Origin
and Meaning [New York: Alba House, 1974], 215)--although
S.J.L. Croft sees the petitioner in both as a
representative royal figure (The Identity of the
Individual in the Psalms, JSOTSS 44 [Sheffield:
JSOTPress, 1987], 90-91; 94-95).

[57]Some commentators regard these verses as being
written in prose (eg McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 253-56).
Others feel that they are in poetic form (eg Jones,
Jeremiah, 186). The lament *Gattung* would generally be
written in poetry.

[58]These verses do not express the worshipper's
confidence, as would normally be expected in an
individual lament. Rather they express the direct
response of Yahweh to Jeremiah assuring him that he has
been heard. (O'Connor refers to these verses as an
"oracle of assurance", [Confessions, 24-25]). They thus
serve a purpose comparable to the declaration of
confidence in a pure lament.

[59]The image of the lamb, the "poignant self-
description", the allusion of the secret plans of
enemies, the "verbatim citation of the evil plan", the
alternation between "and I" and "and Yahweh" to introduce
a new thought, as well as the hope in the divine judge
who is not deceived by appearances and who executes

The final section of the confession certainly points
to an individual lamenter, and indeed, identifies him as
Jeremiah.[60] Carroll argues that this prose piece is
secondary. By means of its insertion in the text, the
lament which originally referred to the nation is
concretised to Jeremiah.[61] However, such a development is

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justice faithfully are specifically mentioned by
Baumgartner, (Baumgartner, Poems, 43-45).

[60]Baumgartner--while accepting the authenticity of
this section--denies that it is organically connected
with what precedes it and declares that it "does not
belong to the 'poems of lament' at all" (Poems, 45-46).
Others stress the secondary nature of this material,
often perceiving a contradiction between Jeremiah's
ignorance of the plot against him in verse 19 with his
clear knowledge of it in verse 21 (Carroll, Jeremiah,
OTL, 280-82 cf Jones, Jeremiah, 186). Early scholars
often resorted to rearranging the text to ease the
difficulties (H.H. Rowley, "The Text and Interpreation of
Jer 11:18-12:6", AJSL 17 [1926], 220; Couturier,
"Jeremiah", 313; Paterson, "Jeremiah", 547; Hyatt,
"Jeremiah", 912; Bright, Jeremiah, 89). So conservative
a scholar as Thompson allows for the possibility of
textual disturbance (Jeremiah, 349).
However, none of these arguments are compelling.
Verses 19 and 21 should not be related to one another in
terms of contradiction but in terms of development: in
the past Jeremiah did not know of his enemies' plot but
now it has been revealed to him (Craigie, Kelley,
Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 178; Wimmer, "Prophetic
Experience", 136; cf McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 258--"The
threat of v. 21 follows naturally on the revelation [v.
19] that Jeremiah's enemies have designs on his life and
are set on his destruction"). A.S. Peake suggested a
different kind of progression, from thwarted secret
plotting to open threatening by the Jeremiah enemies in
Anathoth (Jeremiah, 183 cf Chambers, "Prophetic
Ambivalence", 44).

[61]Carroll, Jeremiah, 280-81. His essential argument
is that this postscript functions analogously to the
secondary headings לְדָוִד ("of David") in the Psalms. The
analogy may be valid.
However, it must be recognised that this prose

unlikely. It is easier to envisage how a confession with
an original life setting in the suffering of Jeremiah
could come to be applied to the suffering of the nation
in the exile than vice versa.[62] Other evidence of the
degree of corporality is more problematical. The
lamenter is clearly distinguished from his enemies but no
clear indication is give (until verse 21) that his
opponents are fellow Israelites. Likewise, the images of
"sheep" and "tree" are capable of both corporate and
individual reference.[63]

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section is considerably more elaborate than the Psalm
headings. Furthermore, it is widely recognized that the
Psalmonic לְדָוִד does not necessarily mean "by David". It
may carry the sense of "for the use of the Davidic King
[in the cultus]" or "dedicated to David". It is
therefore unneccessary to assume that it must always be
secondary (P.C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, WBC 19, [Waco,
Tex.: Word, 1973], 33-35 cf S. Mowinckel, The Psalms in
Israel's Worship [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967], 1: 77-
78; Weiser, Psalms, 95-97; A.A. Anderson, Psalms (1-72),
NCB, [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981], 43-45; W.S.
McCullough, "The Book of Psalms: Introduction", IB edited
by G.A. Buttrick [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1955], 8;
J. Limburg, "Psalms, Book of", ABD, edited by D.N.
Freedman, [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992], 5: 528).

[62]See the discussion of the meaning of the
confessions in their context in the book of Jeremiah in
chapter 5, below.

[63]Carroll points out that the tree imagery is
elsewhere used of the nation's destruction and that this
makes this confession look like "a lament for what is
about to happen to the people". He adds that the
communal use of "I" has already occurred in Jer 4:19-20;
8:18-9:1: 10:23-24, (Jeremiah, OTL, 276). This argument
is not compelling. The image can also have an individual
reference. Although the book of Jeremiah often uses such
imagery corporately (Jer 8:13; 11:16; but see Jer 17:7-
8), it is frequently used in Psalms with an
individualistic meaning (eg Ps 1:3; 37:35; 52:8).

Jeremiah 12:1-6

The elements of a lament found in Jer 12:1-6 are:

invocation (12:1a); complaint (12:1b,2,4);[64] confessions-

assertion (12:3a); curse on enemies (12:3b);[65] and,

With regard to the sheep imagery, even Baumgartner points to examples in communal laments in the Psalms (Poems, 43). However, he notes that the use of the image in the confessions is different to that in such laments, stressing as it does the animal's "trust and innocence" (Ibid., 43). Similarly, C.F. Keil here translates כְּבֶשׂ אַלּוּף as "a tame pet-lamb" ("The Prophecies of Jeremiah", Commentary on the Old Testament, by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980], 8: 218)

[64]Jones points out that the questions "How long?" is frequently found in the laments (Jeremiah, 190, 116, citing Ps 74:10; 79:5; 90:13; 94:3). However, Baumgartner points out that another aspect of the confession is atypical of this Gattung: in the individual laments of the Psalms the question "Why" is always asked with לְמָה and not מַדּוּעַ as here (Poems, 27).

[65]This couplet is actually a prayer for God to destroy the enemies. However a curse could be given in the form of a prayer (S.H. Blank, "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath," HUCA 23/1 [1950/51], 82-83. In any case--ancient belief in the power of the spoken word not withstanding (Blank, "Curse", 78; S. Gevirtz, "Curse", IDB edited by G.A. Buttrick [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1962], 1: 750)-- a curse was not seen as something independent of Yahweh (W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, OTL [London: SCM, 1961], 1: 173-74; Blank, "Curse", 95). Several lament contain curses in the form of prayer (eg Ps 5:10; 7:9; 31:17b-18; 35:26; 39:11).
Reventlow sees this couplet as significant evidence for his thesis. Jeremiah, he asserts, was not calling for personal revenge, but prayed for the community in need using standard cultic liturgical Gattungen (Reventlow, Liturgie, 246-48, as cited in McKane, "Interpretation", 43). However, it is not necessary to interpret the couplet collectively in order to harmonise its call for vengeance with Jeremiah's status as Yahweh's messenger. Holladay declares "The prayer of Jerm's is not so much an expression of his own vengeance as his wish that Yahweh exercise his sovereignty over those who

confidence in being heard (12:5,6).[66] The *Gattung* is thus

incomplete and in some disarray.

Indications of the individuality of the speaker are

somewhat more evident here than in the first confession

(Jer 11:18-23). Reference is made to family (Jer 12:6).[67]

The speaker is distinguished from the "guilty" and the

"treacherous", (Jer 12:1), who are clearly Israelites.

This is the implication of Jeremiah's declaration to

Yahweh that "you are near in their mouths yet far from

challenge that sovereignty" (Jeremiah, 1: 378).

[66]Strictly speaking, this element is replaced by the
divine answer itself. However, the answer is not the
type of answer that characterises laments. There are no
comforting words of assurance that might lead Jeremiah to
praise and thanksgiving. Rather the answer consists of
reprimands and warnings (Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear
Down, 114). Jones suggests that Jeremiah has adapted an
already existing lament in verses 1-4 and further
individualised it by adding verses 5-6 (Jeremiah, 187).
Verse 5 may have been originally derived from proverbial
wisdom (p. 190).

[67]There is considerable discussion regarding verse 6.
It is often affirmed that it is either a secondary
addition to the confession (eg Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:
380; O'Connor, Confessions, 22)or that the material in
Jer 11:18-12:6 has suffered severe textual dislocation
and verse 6 has been misplaced (eg Rowley, "Text", 221).
Others see the confession as exhibiting an organic unity
(eg Diamond, Prophetic Drama, 40).
    Textual rearrangement is generally rejected today
but the question of the redactional nature of verse 6 is
more difficult to answer. Certainly, the verse adds
little that is new to the confession, beyond making
explicit what is implicit in verse 5. The reference to
"family" directly parallels the reference to the "people
of Anathoth" in 11:23. However, this association depends
entirely on the redactional linking of the two
confessions which were originally independent of one
another.

their hearts" (Jer 12:2).[68] The "guilty" and

"treacherous" are presumably the same people who cause

the "land [of Israel]" to suffer by their wickedness

(12:4).

Jeremiah 15:10-14[69]

The elements of a lament evidenced in Jer 15:10-14

are complaint and confessions-assertion. Indications of

the individuality of the lamenter are evident. He refers

to his "mother"[70] and speaks of the individual activities

of lending and borrowing (15:10). He is distinguished

from "them" (15:10)--an anonymous term, but one which

suggests Israelites.[71]

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[68]McKane speaks of their "profession of faith" which
is defective because of a "lack of underlying reality
beneath their words" ("Interpretation", 42).

[69]Brueggemann lists this passage as a prose unit
(Pluck Up, Tear Down, 137). However, McKane appears to
regard it as poetic, (Jeremiah 1: 343-34).

[70]Carroll understands the reference to "mother" as
possibly indicating a communal lament, with Jerusalem as
the "mother" of the nation, (Jeremiah, OTL, 326). While
this interpretation is possible, the reference is capable
of being read in a more literal way which better
accommodates other feature of the context (e.g., the
reference to being born).

[71]It is difficult to read the text so that the
opponents of verse 10 are identified with the clearly
foreign enemies of verse 14.
     It must be acknowledged that distinguishing between
the lamenter and other Israelites does not *necessarily*
indicate that the lamenter is an individual. He may in
fact represent a group within Israel as distinguished
from other groups. This would not appear to be the
situation here.

It must be acknowledged that this confession

contains marked evidence for a corporate reading. The

reference to "iron from the North" (15:12), although

subject to numerous interpretations,[72] certainly reminds

the reader of the enemy from the North, the invading

Babylonians.[73] Likewise, verses 13 and 14 appear to have

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[72]The symbol of "iron from the North" is variously
thought to refer to a) the especially strong iron from
Chalybes mentioned by Virgil in I Georg 5:58
(Baumgartner, Poems, 73); b) the region the Israel
generally imported iron from (F.W. Winnett, "Iron", IDB
[Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon] 2: 725; c) the people of
Israel in opposition to Jeremiah (Peake, Jeremiah, 1:
211; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 940); d) Jeremiah and his
prophetic ministry (Diamond, Confessions, 61; J.
Muilenburg, "A Confession of Jeremiah", USQR 4 [1949],
17); e) the "foe from the North" (Keil, Jeremiah, 261-62;
O'Connor, Confessions, 35-36; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard,
Jeremiah 1-25, 210; Jones, Jeremiah, 221; Wimmer,
"Prophetic Experience", 199; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 455;
Thompson, Jeremiah, 393: McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 348-49;
Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 138; Floyd, "Prophetic
Complaints", 413). Others things that the whole section
should be excised from the text (Bright, Jeremiah, 109-
10; Couturier, "Jeremiah", 315).
    Interpretation of the the phrase is complicated by
the textual and syntactical difficulties which abound in
the verse as a whole. (A good summary of the
difficulties is found in Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:447, 455).
Wimmer approvingly cites R.A. Condamin to the effect that
Jer 15:11-12 are the most difficult verses in the entire
book. Skinner and Couturier more bluntly declare the
verse to be "untranslatable" (Prophecy and Religion, 204;
"Jeremiah", 315).
    Not suprisingly this passage has suffered from
numerous attempts at rearrangement and conjectural
emendation--which again highlights its obscurity and
difficulty. A good survey (and critique) of these
attempts is found in O'Connor, Confessions, 28-39.

[73]The view of earlier scholars that the "foe from the
North" originally refered to the Scythians in Jeremiah's
early proclamations and was latter reapplied to the
Babylonians (H. Cazelles, "Zephaniah, Jeremiah and the
Scythians in Palestine," Prophet to the Nations, 144-49;

numerous corporate references.[74] However, many scholars

regard verses 12 to 14 as secondary intrusions.[75]

Rowley, "Early Prophecies", 39-49; Peake, Jeremiah, 10-
11; Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, 38-44; Davidson,
"Jeremiah", 570; cf Patterson, "Jeremiah", 542) has now
been decisively rebutted (R.F. Vaggione, "Over All Asia?
The Extent of the Scythian Domination in Herodotus," JBL
92 [1973], 523-30).
     Today those who understand the "foe" historically
generally understand it to be Babylon (eg Bright,
Jeremiah, lxxi-lxxxii; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 43; McKane,
Jeremiah, 1: 18-21; Brueggemann, Pluck Up, Tear Down, 27;
Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 106; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 779),
although some suggest Jeremiah had a variety of
unspecified enemies in mind (eg Craigie, Kelley,
Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 17). Others understand the foe
"mythically" (eg B.S. Childs, "The Enemy From the North
and the Chaos Tradition," Prophet to the Nations, 151-61
cf Berridge, Word of Yahweh, 70-71). D.J. Reimer
suggests that צָפוֹן ("north") should be taken as a reference
to the mountain of God, rather than a direction, and
interprets the foe as the "foe sent by God" ("The 'Foe'
From the 'North' in Jeremiah," ZAW 101 [1989], 230-32).

     [74]Note the references to "wealth" and "treasure"
being taken as "plunder"; to sins being committed
"throughout all your territory"; and to the lamenter
serving his enemies in a foreign land as the result of
Yahweh kindling an everlasting fire (cf Jer 17:27).
Floyd observes that "If we imagine the addressee to be
Jeremiah himself, then we must also imagine that Yahweh
is responding to his mournful outcry in v. 10 with a
promise to send in a whole host of foreign thugs just to
beat him up" ("Prophetic Complaints", 412). Even such a
conservative source as the Seventh-day Adventist Bible
Commentary suggests that Jeremiah is a representative
figure in these verses. [E. Hilgert, W.G. Wirth, W.F.
Specht], "Jeremiah", Seventh-day Adventist Bible
Commentary, ed F.D. Nichols (Washington, DC: Review and
Herald, 1955), 4: 417. (The material on Jeremiah 11-45
was written by Wirth).

     [75]Holladay declares that "almost all commentators
since [Ferdinand] Hitzig [1866] have excised them [vvs
13, 14]", (Jeremiah, 1: 455). Baumgartner, Berridge and
Lundbom delete the verses and continue to regard the rest
of Jeremiah 15:10-21 as two separate confessions (Poems,
46-51, 71-73; Word of Yahweh, 114; Jeremiah, 28).
However, most of the other scholars who excise the verses

Jeremiah 15:15-21

The elements of an individual lament found in this pericope are: invocation (15:15a); plea (15:15b); complaint 15:18; confession-assertion (15:15c-17); and confidence in being heard (15:19-21).[76]

There are several indicators that the lamenter did not represent the nation as a whole. He is distinguished from the "merrymakers" (15:17), and it is difficult to understand them as being anything other than a group within Israel. Furthermore, he is distinguished from "this people" (Israel) to whom he is to speak (15:20). The "wicked" and the "ruthless" (15:21) taken in isolation could refer to Gentiles or Israelites but in the context of verse 20 would clearly seem to refer to a group within Israel.

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see a single confession in the remaining material (Bright, Jeremiah, 109-10; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 941).

Scholars give two reasons for excising verses 13 and 14: they do not harmonise thematically with their context (Jer 15:10-12,15-20), and they are closely related in content and structure to Jer 17:3-4 (and are often rewarded as a misplaced corruption of that passage).

A significant minority of recent scholars, while noting the strengths of the arguments for excising the verses, defend their authenticity (e.g., O'Connor Confessions, 33; Jones, Jeremiah, 219; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 210; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 455).

[76]The final section is actually a divine answer rather than a human affirmation of confidence. However, it may serve the same purpose form-critically (Jones, Jeremiah, 222).

Nothing in this confession necessarily points to an individual (as opposed to a group) within Israel as the lamenter. Furthermore, there is some evidence of community reference. The image of the incurable wound is elsewhere used for the devastation of the community (10:19;[77] 30:12). This leads Carroll to suggest that this confession is an "individual lament for the community".[78]

Jeremiah 17:14-18

The lament elements found in Jer 17:14-18 are plea (17:14, 16-18) and complaint (17:15). Even Wimmer--the most prominent proponent of the thesis that the confessions are lawsuits--declares that "This lament [Jer

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[77]Thompson suggests that Jer 10:19-21 is a lament of Jeremiah as a representative figure utterly identifying himself with the suffering of the people (Jeremiah, 335 cf Berridge, Word of Yahweh, 176; McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 230; Bright, Jeremiah, 73; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 163). Carroll suggests the lament is uttered by a personified Jerusalem (Jeremiah, OTL, 261, cf Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 901; Jones, Jeremiah, 180). The use of הָרֹעִים ("the shepherds") in verse 21 with the meaning "rulers" (Bright, Jeremiah, 72) may suggest that the lament is put in the mouth of the king (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 342).

There are subtle textual variations between the MT and LXX in this pericope which touch upon the question of the speaker. In verse 20a the MT reads אָהֳלִי שֻׁדָּד וְכָל־מֵיתָרַי נִתָּקוּ ("My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken") while the LXX has ἡ σκηνή σου ἐταλαιπώρησεν ὤλετο, καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ δέρρεις σου διεσπάσθησαν ("Your tent is severly damaged, and all your curtains have been torn"). Thus the LXX differentiates between Jeremiah and the people in a way that the MT does not. However, the LXX does not maintain the differentiation throughout the rest of the verse and its reading of the first line must be regarded as secondary (McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 231).

[78]Carroll, Jeremiah, 331.

17:12-18] uses the ancient and common *Gattung* of the
lament of the individual as modified by the cosmic hymns
where God is judge".[79] The lamenter is distinguished from
those who say "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it
come" (17:15). Such mockers must refer to a group within
Israel.[80] He calls himself a "shepherd" in the following
verse. An individual reference is highly probable. The
same is true of his assertion that he had not "desired
the fatal day" (17:16; cf. "day of disaster" in 17:18).
Under what circumstances would Israel (or even a group
within it) have ever desired national catastrophe?

Jeremiah 18:18-23

The lament elements found in Jer 18:18-23 are plea
(18:19), complaint (18:20), and curse (18:21-23). The
lament qualities of this confession are particularly
strong. Jones comments that it is "in all respects in
the style of the laments of the Psalter, often echoing

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[79]Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience", 259.

[80]The identity of the "they" in this verse is subject
to two possible interpretations. They are usually
regarded as the opponents of the lamenter who are
expressing blasphemous scepticism (Baumgartner, Poems,
54; Peake, Jeremiah, 224; Jones, Jeremiah, 246; Craigie,
Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 236; McKane, Jeremiah,
1: 409; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 505; Berridge, Word of
Yahweh, 138; Thompson, Jeremiah, 425; Bright, "Jeremiah's
Complaints", 206-07). However, it is possible--although
unlikely--that they are part of the lamenter's "support
group" (Carroll, Jeremiah, 362-63).

the phrases as well as the sentiment of these Psalms".[90]

The clearest indication of an individual reference in the

passage is found in verse 18, where the lamenter's

opponents clearly distinguish him from other influential

groups within Israel (prophets, priests, wise men). It

must be admitted that this fact demonstrates no more than

that the lamenter did not represent the entire nation.

It leaves open the possibility that he represents a

specific group within the nation--although the identity

of such a group is difficult to imagine. Similarly,

verses 20-23 distinguish the lamenter from others in

Israel--without necessarily showing the lamenter to be an

individual rather than a factional group within the

nation.[91]

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[90]Jones, Jeremiah, 263-64 cf Carroll, Jeremiah, 381.
The specific verbal parallels with various individual
laments that he lists (using the RSV) are
1.   "Give heed to me, O LORD";
2.   "my plea";
3.   "Is evil a recompense for good?";
4.   "I stood before thee";
5.   "deliver up their children to famine
     ... let their wives becomes childless
     and widowed";
6.   "marauder";
7.   "they have dug a pit for me";
8.   "yet, thou, O LORD, knowest";
9.   "forgive"; and,
10. "nor blot out their sins".

[91]T.W. Overholt, takes a more definite stance: "The
'I' of 18:20 *must* refer to a single individual who
interceded with God on behalf of a larger group, with
which he now finds himself in conflict ("Jeremiah",
Harper's Bible Commentary, ed. J.L. Mays [San Francisco,
Cal.: Harper and Row, 1988], 619). This is certainly the
most natural reading of the passage.

Jeremiah 20:7-13[92]

The elements of the lament *Gattung* found in this

pericope are plea (20:12), complaint (20:7-10),

confession-assertion (20:11),[93] and confidence in being

heard (20:13).[94] The only explicit indicator of

individual reference is the mention of the lamenter's

"close friends" (20:10). However, it is difficult to

imagine a corporate setting for several of the other

comments. When did God entice and overpower Israel

(20:7)? When did Israel proclaim "violence and

destruction" (20:8)? And when did she unsuccessfully

resolve to stop such proclamation (20:9)?

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[92]J. Magonet argues that any generic analysis of Jer
20:7-13 as a lament is misleading ("Jeremiah's Last
Confessions: Structure, Image and Ambiguity", <u>HAR</u> 11
[1987], 303-11). However, his tightly argued position is
damaged if פתה ("entice") and חזק ("overpower"), (Jer 20:7)
do not mean "seduction" and "rape" (see our discussion of
Jer 20:7-13 in chapter 2, above). Acceptance of the
dubious sexual reference leads Magonet to make almost
allegorical exegesis, suggesting that the "rape" of
Jeremiah results in his "pregnacy" with the word of God--
which he cannot prevent from being "born" ("Last
Confession", 310-11). This reading may be possible but
it is less likely than the more prosaic alternatives.

[93]This verse is formally an assertion of confidence
in God rather than an assertion of Jeremiah's innocence.
However, Jeremiah's confidence that God is for him is
implicitly based on his confidence that he is innocent
before God.

[94]The positive note found in this verse seems
discordant to modern ears but is typical of the laments
generally, (Jones, <u>Jeremiah</u>, 275).

Jeremiah 20:14-18

The lament features of this passage are plea (20:16)

and complaint (20:14-15, 17-18).[95] The individual

reference in this passage is very strong. Mention of

"mother" and "day of birth" (20:14), as well as "father"

(20:15) and "womb" (20:17-18), are extremely difficult to

interpret corporately.[96] The allusion to Sodom and

Gommorah (20:16a) *may* suggest a corporate reference.[97]

However, even this is part of a curse on an individual--

the messanger who announced Jeremiah's birth.[98]

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[95]These verses do not so much form a "complaint" as a
"self-curse". For this reason O'Connor feels that they
do not belong in the confessions at all (O'Connor,
Confessions, 80). Most scholars do not accept this
position although there is openness to the suggestion
that the final confession is not written in the lament
genre (Baumgartner, Poems, 77; Clines and Gunn, "Jeremiah
20", 393; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 277).
However, Holladay points out that there are laments (eg
Ps 22:7-11; 71:6 cf 51:7) that focus on the lamenters
life from birth onwards, (Jeremiah, 1: 564).

[96]Clines and Gunn point out that the individualising
features of this pericope are so strong that features
which could be interpreted collectively *must* be
understood individualistically. Thus בשׁת ("shame") is
generally used of the people's shameful behaviour, the
shameful objects of non-Yahwistic worship, or the
shameful fate of the people. It is never elsewhere used
of the subjective shame of the prophet. Nevertheless,
"the curse of v. 14-18 must surely express the prophet's
personal experience of despair" ("Jeremiah 20", 406).
However, they also insist that the passage goes beyond
biography.

[97]Magonet, "Last Confession", 314.

[98]Magonet argues that וְשָׁמַע זְעָקָה בַּבֹּקֶר וּתְרוּעָה בְּעֵת צָהֳרָיִם ("let him
hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon") in Jer
20:16b has an individualistic reference in view of

Conclusion

The confessions all contain various elements of the individual lament *Gattung*. The complaint is the constant feature in all of them. Just as Jeremiah's individual laments outside the confessions generally have individualistic reference, so most of the laments clearly contain individualistic features. In two cases, the evidence for individualistic reference in the laments is ambiguous and weak (15:15-21 and 18:18-23). However, even here, it is clear that the lamenter does not represent the entire nation. Given Jeremiah's use of the individual lament *Gattung* throughout the book (within the confessions and without) it is highly probable that an individual reference should be seen in these two confessions as well.

It must be admitted that there are some clear corporate references in the confessions (e.g., Jer 15:10-14) and other references that may be corporate (e.g., Jer 15:15-21; 18:18-23). Thus, although the original

Jeremiah's comments elsewhere--cf Jer 4:19-22, ("Final Confession", 314). However, this clearly refers to the time of the capture of Jerusalem (cf the allusion to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah in Jer 16:a). Thus the individual refered to is a representative figure, as Magonet himself acknowledges ("Final Confession", 314). Significantly Jer 4:19-22 also gives a reaction to the fall of the city and is thus also "representative" in nature (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 159-64; Kumaki, "New Look", 113-22).

individual reference is generally clear, there is some ambiguity in the text as it now stands.

Any understanding of the confessions which posits the speaker as a figure representing Israel as a whole is ruled out by the evidence. If the speaker is a corporate figure, he must represent a group within Israel. In such a scenario, the confessions would be regarded as exilic or post-exilic productions. Is there in fact any evidence to indicate whether their "life setting" is the time of Jeremiah or a latter period? It is this question which will be addressed next.

Theological Development in the Confessions

Introduction

The competing views regarding the "I" of the

confessions revolve around one basic issue: when were the

confessions composed? Were they composed in the time of

Jeremiah or were they composed in the exilic/post-exilic

period? The first option would suggest an

individualistic reference while the last two would

suggest a corporate reference.

One means of testing the date of the composition of

the confessions is to compare them with the material in

the rest of Jeremiah. Specifically theological

developments, and linguistic changes may indicate a shift

in the time of composition between blocks of material.

It is generally agreed that the poetic oracles of

Jeremiah[1] (Mowinckel's A-source) are basically authentic

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[1]The distinction between poetry and prose should not
be absolutised. Even in English some poetry is more
"prosaic" than others and some prose is more "poetic"
than others. (See F. Landy, "Poetics and Parallelism:
Some Comments on James Kugel's *The Idea of Biblical
Poetry*," JSOT 28 [1984], 67-68; R. Alter, The Art of
Biblical Poetry, [New York: HarperCollins, 1985], 6-7).
James Kugel argues that the distinction is utterly
foreign to the Old Testament and that it should be
abandoned (The Idea of Biblical Poetry [New Haven: Yale
University Press, 1981], 59-95). Certainly, he is able
to demonstrate the presence of "parallelism"--generally
regarded as the *sine qua non*--of "biblical poetry" in the

to Jeremiah.[2] The origin of Jeremiah's prose sermons[3]

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prose sermons of Jeremiah (Ibid., 77-80). His work, on
the whole has been well accepted but his rejection of the
poetry/prose distinction has generally been felt to be
overstated (see Reviews by W.R. Bodine, BibSac 140
[1983], 277-78; R.C. Culley, CBQ 45 [1983], 288-90; S.A.
Geller, JBL 102 [1983], 625-26; L.G. Perdue, JAAR 50
[1982] 622-23; W.G.E. Watson, Bib 64 [1983], 134-36, and
at greater length, JSOT 28 [1984], 89-98; P.D. Miller,
Jr., JSOT, 28 [1984], 99-106). Kugel, himself admitts
that his view may appear "perverse" (Idea, 85).
     It seems that there is a core of material that is
generally accepted as being poetic surrounded by material
that is subject to more dispute. The delimitation of the
common core of material in Jeremiah can easily be
established by comparing the NRSV with the translations
made in the commentaries of William Holladay and John
Bright. The following verses are regarded as prose in
the NRSV but rendered as poetry by at least one of the
commentators: 1:11-19; 3:15-18, 24-25; 4:9-12; 9:23-24;
11:15-16, 22b-23; 12:14b; 14:13b; 15:10-14; 16:21-17:4;
20:4a, 6; 21:11; 23:5-6, 16-17, 28-29; 25:33; 31:24, 33b-
34; 46:1-2; 47:1; 48:12, 25, 37; 49:18b-19, 21-22, 35-
36a; 50:3-10, 17a, 19-20, 28-30, 33-34, 39-40, 44-46;
51:11, 28, 46, 49-57. Conversely, the following passages
are regarded by the NRSV as being poetic but are regarded
as prosaic by at lease one of the commentators: 26:18b;
31:35-37; 33:11b; 43:11b; 46:13; 47:1; 48:47; 51:28, 46.
Thus of the 1364 verses of the book of Jeremiah (MT) only
106 are subject to dispute as to their status as poetry
or prose. This is a mere 7.8 percent
     A number of disputed passages are theologically
insignificant and thus irrelevant for our discussion in
this chapter. The methodology adopted here is to
initially accept the poetry/prose divisions encapsulated
in the NRSV and note the relevant areas of dispute as
they occur.
     Comparing the older views of Bright with the newer
views of Holladay and the NRSV shows that over the last
40 years the classification of most verses in Jeremiah
has not changed.

     [2]For example, Overholt, "Continuity," 457-58; Bright,
"Prose Sermons," 193-94; J.R. Lundbom, "Jeremiah, Book
of," ABD, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, ed. D.N. Freedman,
Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992 3: 709; Muilenburg,
"Jeremiah", 824; Thompson, Jeremiah., 35. Carroll
regards this agreement as being based on assumptions
rather than evidence, (Jeremiah, OTG, 37). See
discussion on pages 14 and 15, above.

(Mowinckel's C-source) is more hotly disputed.[4] The

relationship between the two blocks of material is

complex.[5] However, if a time gap exists between the

composition of both blocks the relationship of the

theology of each should be open to analysis. Some

differences would be expected.[6] This development will be

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[3]Bright has demonstrated a consistency of style and vocabulary throughout the prose sermons suggestive of a single source, ("Prose Sermons", 195).

[4]It is regarded as being either authentic to Jeremiah (so Thompson, Jeremiah, 46-47), the later product of his disciples (so Bright, "Prose Sermons", 205-06) or the later product of the Deuteronomists (so Nicholson, Preaching, passim).

[5]Hobbs, "Composition", passim, Holladay, "Prototype and Copy", passim; idem, "Fresh Look", passim; Overholt, "Continuity", passim; W. McKane, "Relation Between Poetry and Prose in the Book of Jeremiah with Special Reference to Jeremiah 3:6-11 and 12:14-17", Prophet to the Nations, 269-84.

[6]It is obviously not true that documents written at different times must reflect development of ideas. However, if the trauma of the fall of Jerusalem stands between the A-source and the C-source, a development in thinking would be expected. A similar development in thinking is evident in the book of Ezekiel. Leslie Allen notes that "The fall of Jerusalem changed the nature of Ezekiel's prophesying from national judgement to salvation", (Ezekiel 1-19, WBC 28 [Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1994], xxxi). Moshe Greenberg notes these major blocks of material but points out that prophecies of salvation are not found exclusively in the material dating from after the fall of Jerusalem, (Ezekiel 1-20, AB 22 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 4-6). Thus failure to find theological development in Jeremiah would be evidence that both the prose and poetic material originated at the same time.
What I am suggesting here is somewhat related to the "criterion of dissimilarity" in historical Jesus research, (cf. the discussion on pages 10-12, above). The chief difference is that in historical Jesus research the criterion suggests that what Jesus taught was

analysed and used as a control to examine the development

of theological ideas in the confessions.[7]

The Theology of Jeremiah's Poetic Oracles

The oracles clearly portray Yahweh as the Lord of

history. He overrules not only in the affairs of nations

but also in the lives of individuals. Thus a doctrine of

providence can be seen particularly in the call dialogue

(Jer 1:4-10). Jeremiah is told that he was chosen for

his task before he was born and that God will empower

him. Thus Jeremiah is pictured as holding to a doctrine

of personal election and not simply national election.

He is commissioned to go fearlessly and promised that God

will protect him. Accordingly, the same conditions of

obedience that the Deuteronomists hold out for Israel's

blessing, and which Jeremiah elsewhere endorses, are here

individualised with reference to Jeremiah himself.

The poetic oracles stress the power and authority of

God's prophetic word (Jer 1:10). Jeremiah's words are

God's words (Jer 6:11) and they are to be instrumental in

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different both to what preceded it and what followed it.
In the context of Jeremiah we would affirm only that the
destruction of Jerusalem/exile formed a turning point in
Israel's life and thinking. What preceded it could be
expected to differ from what followed it--at least in
degree.

[7]It may be objected that the confessions are too
small a block of material to be analysed in this way.
But at forty-seven verses the confessions are longer than
books like Haggai and Nahum and almost as long as
Habakkuk and Zephaniah.

plucking up and pulling down nations as well as planting

and building them. He thus becomes the "tester" and

"refiner" of Israel (6:27-30).

God's power over nature is emphasised throughout the

poetic oracles (Jer 10:12-13; 31:35). He is the creator

(Jer 10:16), he places the limits on the sea--the ancient

Hebrew symbol for chaos (Jer 5:22 cf Job 26:12-14; Ps

74:13-17; 89:9-11; Isa 17:12-14; 51:9,10; 27:1),[8] and it

is he who controls the seasons (Jer 5:24; 14:22).

The traditions regarding the exodus and conquest are

important in the oracles (Jer 2:6,7; 3:19). Jeremiah

believes in Israel's national election (Jer 14:21). The

nation is God's holy nation and subject to his specific

watchcare (Jer 2:3) The wilderness wanderings are seen as

the "golden age" of Israel's relationship with God (Jer

2:2).[9]

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[8]A good discussion of water as a chaos symbol in the
Old Testament and in earlier Caananite literature is
found in J.J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book
of Daniel, Harvard Semitic Mongraphs 16 (Missoula, Mont.:
Scholars, 1977), 96-99.

[9]This point is disputed by M.V. Fox, who insists that
Jeremiah does not speak of Israel's loyalty to God in the
wilderness but rather of God's love to Israel in the
wilderness ("Jeremiah 2:2 and the 'Desert Ideal'", CBQ 35
[1973], 441-50). Fox's position is subjected to
searching critique by M. deRoche, "Jeremiah 2:2-3 and
Israel's Love for God during the Wilderness Wanderings",
CBQ 45 (1983), 364-76.
On a slightly different tack R.M. Paterson suggests
that Jeremiah's depiction of Israel in the wilderness
highlights only that Israel was free of Baal worship at
that time ("Repentance or Judgment: The Construction and
Purpose of Jeremiah 2-6", ExT 96 [1984-85], 200).

The state of Israel in Jeremiah's day was one of long standing and widespread apostasy (Jer 3:21; 5:1-2, 7, 11; 6:7a, 10). The problem had begun "long ago" (Jer 2:20) in the time of the nation's "ancestors" (Jer 2:4). God is blameless for this state of affairs (Jer 2:31). He had remained faithful to the covenant and blessed Israel abundantly (Jer 5:7b). However, Israel had been defiantly rebellious (Jer 2:20, 29; 5:22a, 23; 6:16b-17, 28; 15:5-6a; 22:21) and the Israelites have "perverted their way" (Jer 3:21). They still refuse to repent (Jer 8:4-7), despite God's attempts to bring them back to him (Jer 2:30; 5:3). This refusal has led to a situation where the dissolution of the covenant is inevitable (Jer 12:7-8a). The imagery of marriage and divorce is used to depict this dissolution (Jer 3:1).

There is a practical atheism with regard to Yahweh (Jer 5:12, 6:10b) which infects not only the poorer classes (Jer 5:4) but also the spiritual leaders of the nation: priests, prophets and wisemen (Jer 5:13-14, 30-31; 6:13b-14; 8:8-11; 23:11, 18, 21-22), along with rulers (Jer 2:8, 26-27; 5:5).[10] Therefore, to the extent

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[10]This practical atheism causes Jeremiah to speak in such a way that he appears to utterly reject the Yahwistic cultus (Jer 6:30). However, his rejection of the cultus is not absolute. For example, he foresees a time when a reunited Israel will worship God on Mt. Zion, i.e., at the temple (Jer 31:6). Bright notes that "like all prophets, he decided that God's demands could be met, and the covenant bond maintained, through sacrifice and cultic observance alone; and for this reason he declared

that Yahweh is worshiped he is misrepresented.[11]   Other

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that God was displeased with--nay rejected--the lavish
cultus that an unrepentant people brought to him (e.g.,
6:16-21). But this is far from a rejection of the cult
as such. Not even such a passage as 7:21-26 can be
driven so far. Here (v. 22) it might seem that Jeremiah
is saying that God never instituted the sacrificial
system at all, and that sacrifice had no place in
Israel's religion in the earliest period. But the point
lies in the balance between this verse and v. 23. The
words, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you
shall be my people,' are the formula of covenant.
Jeremiah is not rejecting the cult as illegitimate in
itself; he is saying that God's essential demands never
had to do with ritual matters, but with obedience to the
covenant stipulations, (Covenant and Promise,
[Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster, 1976], 162).

     [11]Jer 2:27a is usually understood to refer to Baal
and Asherah, but S.M. Olyan has argued that the reference
is actually to Yahweh and Asherah, (S.M. Olyan, "The
Cultic Confessions of Jeremiah 2:27a," ZAW 99 [1987],
254-59). This view develops from archaeological evidence
uncovered at Kuntillet 'Ajrud that there was a belief in
Israel that Yahweh had a consort. This evidence and its
implications for Biblical studies are discussed in Z.
Meshel, "Did Yahweh Have a Consort?" BAR 5 (Mar-Apr
1979), 24-34; J.A. Emerton, "New Light on Israelite
Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from
Kuntillet 'Ajrud," ZAW 94 (1982), 2-20; W.G. Dever,
"Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet
'Ajrud", BASOR 255 (1984), 21-37; A. Lemaire, "Who or
What was Yahweh's Asherah?" BAR 10 (Nov-Dec 1984), 42-51;
R. Hestron, "The Lachish Ewer and the Asherah," IEJ 37
(1987), 212-23; Idem, "Understanding Asherah," BAR 17
(Sep-Oct 1991), 50-59; J.G. Taylor, "Was Yahweh Worshiped
as the Sun?" BAR, 20 (May-June 1994), 53-61, 90-91; D.N.
Freedman, "Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah", Divine
Commitment and Human Obligation, 2 volumes [Grand Rapids,
Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997], 1: 403-08; A.D.H. Mayes,
"Juntillet 'Ajrud and the History of Israelite Religion",
Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation, edited by J.R.
Bartlett, [London: Routledge, 1997], 51-66).
     The material from Kuntillet 'Ajrud comes from the
late 9th/early 8th century, and thus predates Jeremiah.
However, religious communities are notoriously
conservative, and it is possible that the attitudes
reflected in Kuntillet 'Ajrud persisted until the time of
Jeremiah.

gods are also worshiped. Baal is specifically mentioned (Jer 2:8), but there are indications that Egyptian and Mesopotamian gods are also worshiped (Jer 2:18 cf 2:13). Such a national transfer of allegiance in religious devotion is unprecedented (Jer 2:9-11, 32; 18:13-16).

Jeremiah repudiates the false gods and mocks and derides those who worship them (Jer 10:2-5, 8-9, 14-15; 16:19b-20). He describes the false gods as "worthless" (Jer 2:4, 8) and as having defiled the land and made "my heritage an abomination" (Jer 2:7). They are "cracked cisterns" in contrast to Yahweh--who alone is God (Jer 10:6-7, 10)--is "the fountain of living water" (Jer 2:13; 17:12-13). Despite the fact that Baal is worshiped as a fertility God, drought prevailed (Jer 3:3; 14:2-6; 23:10).

The worship of false gods has serious moral and social consequences. These are suggested by the strong sexual imagery employed (Jer 2:20-25, 33; 3:1-2, 23; 5:7-8; 8:12; 9:2; 13:27; 23:10; 23:14). However, it is possible that this imagery is symbolic for apostasy rather then a literal description of Israel's immorality (Jer 3:20).[12] The "poor" are oppressed (Jer 2:34; 22:13).

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[12]Koch, The Prophets, 2: 22. The likelihood of Koch's position is perhaps weakened by Jer 23:13-14 which seems to draw a contrast between the sin of Samaria's prophets (prophesying by Baal) and "a more shocking thing" done by the prophets of Jerusalem (adultery, lies, and strengthening the hands of evildoers). It is possible that נאף ("adultery") is used here as a symbol of

"Greed" is a dominating motivation for people's actions (Jer 6:13a; 8:10; 17:11; 22:17), and the rich are castigated for being "treacherous" (Jer 5:26-27). Justice is perverted. Indeed, it is non-existent for the poor (Jer 5:28; 9:6a; 22:15-16).[13] "Violence" is commonplace (Jer 6:7b; 22:17) and the nation is characterised by falsity and "evil" (Jer 9:3-6; 8).

In Deuteronomic style, apostasy from Yahweh is portrayed as inevitably resulting in disaster for Israel (Jer 4:3b-4, 18, 22, 28; 5:6c, 9, 29; 6:6b, 8a, 10-11, 18-19; 8:19b; 9:7, 9; 10:21; 12:8b; 13:15-17, 22; 13:25-27; 14:10; 15:6b; 21:12b-14; 22:20b-23; 23:19-20; 30:15b).[14] Jerusalem would be at the mercy of military enemies from the North (Jer 4:5-7; 5:15; 6:1, 22-25;

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false worship rather than an indicator of immorality (Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 340, Berridge, Word of Yahweh, 13, Jones, Jeremiah, 307). However, if apostasy is meant, "the contrast with Samaria's prophets would lose its point" (Bright, Jeremiah, 151-52; c.f., Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 631, McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 574).

[13]This perversion of justice goes all the way through society to the king, who is admonished to "execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed" (Jer 21:12a).
Interestingly, although Jeremiah refers to the apostasy of Israel beginning long ago in the time of the ancestors (Jer 2:5; 14:20), he can still declare that in early times justice and righteousness did prevail among the people (Jer 22:15b-16). This contrast suggests a certain lack of systematic structure in Jeremiah's thinking.

[14]Jeremiah has an element of individualisation here as well. He specifically declares that the false prophets would be punished for their failure to serve Yahweh appropriately (Jer 6:15; 8:13; 23:12-15).

10:22; 13:20-21; 18:17; 22:7), symbolised both by wild animals (Jer 5:6; 8:17; 12:9) and by shepherds pasturing their flocks in the finest pastures (Jer 6:2-3; 12:10), who would besiege her (Jer 4:15-17; 6:3-6) and plunder her (Jer 2:15-17; 4:20-21; 8:10a; 12:11-12; 25:37-38; 26:18). Terror would come upon the people (Jer 8:15; 14:19; 15:8; 30:5) and the end result would be devastation and depopulation for Jerusalem and Judah (Jer 4:29; 5:10, 16-17; 6:8b, 12, 21; 8:14, 16; 9:10-11, 21-22; 10:17-20; 18-19; 13:24; 14:18; 15:2, 7-9; 22:6b; 25:34-35). Even the king would be included (Jer 22:18-19; 28-30). The grief of the survivors would be almost indescribable (Jer 9:17-22; 14:17-18; 22:10; 25:36; 30:6-7, 12-15a; 31:15).

Jeremiah's language sometimes suggests that it is not a human foe that is coming against Jerusalem but Yahweh himself (Jer 4:13; 13:26; 15:6b-8; 21:13-14; 22:6B; 25:30, 36; 30:23-24). His language is almost apocalyptic as he struggles to express the extent of the disaster (Jer 4:23-26; 25:30-32).

Israel is called upon to mourn the coming catastrophe (Jer 4:8; 6:26; 9:10), in which the false gods, worshipped with such zeal, will prove powerless (Jer 2:28; 4:30-31). Obedience and covenant faithfulness are seen as the only path to blessedness (Jer 12:13). Jeremiah calls for more than outward conformity. He

urges Israel to circumcise their hearts (Jer 4:4 cf 17:9-10).

God is portrayed as a loving and gracious God who has deep feelings for his people (Jer 3:12; 8:18-22; 9:1; 22:6). There are assurances of God's willingness to forgive the nation, if only it will return to him (Jer 3:22; 4:14). There are invitations for Israel to repent (Jer 6:16), although in other places the impossibility of Israel repenting is stressed (Jer 13:23).[15] Among the predictions of doom for Israel there are also promises of restoration (Jer 3:14, 22b, 23b; 5:10b; 6:9; 30:10-11, 17-20a, 21; 31:2-14, 16-22, 23b, 25) and assurances that safe refuge can only be found in Yahweh (Jer 16:19; 17:5-8).[16] The clearest promise of restoration is seen in the prediction of a new covenant relationship between the

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[15]Many scholars suggest a development in Jeremiah's thought, with the passages allowing for the possibility of repentance dated early in his ministry and those stressing the inevitability of punishment dated later (eg, Bright, Jeremiah, cii; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 5; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 780; T.M. Raitt, A Theology of Exile [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 35-45). These authors see the decisive moment coming with the destruction of the Baruch scroll by Jehoiakim (Jer 36), except for Raitt who suggests that the capture of Jerusalem provides the dividing line between the two phases of ministry (Theology, 44).

[16]Jeremiah gives the distinctive title "Hope of Israel" to Yahweh in 14:8 and 17:13. In the prose material the similar phrase "hope of their ancestors" is used (50:7).

renewed nation and Yahweh (Jer 31:31).[17] From this

perspective, the election of Israel appears to be certain

(Jer 31:35-37). The promise of God to Abraham that the

nations would be blessed through Israel may still be

fulfilled, if Israel repents and returns to the Lord (Jer

4:1,2). The promised blessing encompasses all Israel,

including the ten northern tribes (Jer 31:9, 18-20;

51:5).[18]

Connected to the oracles of hope for Israel are

oracles of doom for Israel's enemies (Jer 30:16, 20b;

46:3-24; 27-28; 47:2-48:9; 11; 14-20; 28-33; 40-49:11;

14-16; 23-33; 50:2, 11-16; 21-27, 31-32, 35-38, 41-43;

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[17]The dating, unity, authenticity and interpretation of the "Book of Consolation" (Jer 30-33) are vigorously discussed with scholars reaching a wide range of conclusions. The "new covenant" pericope is accepted as authentic by H.D. Potter, "The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34", VT 33 (1983), 347-57; Patterson, "Jeremiah", 556; Jones, Jeremiah, 400; Bright, Jeremiah, 287; Thompson, Jeremiah, 580; Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 197; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 1037.

[18]Some scholars (eg Bright, Jeremiah, 285; Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 156-59; Koch, Prophets, 2:16) have seen in these references to the northern tribes evidence that Jeremiah, at some stage, engaged in a ministry in the north, or at least to the people of the north. This hypothesis is not strictly necessary. Jeremiah's theology is firmly based in the Mosaic covenant which encompassed all twelve tribes. This fact is sufficient to account for his references to Ephraim (Jones, Jeremiah, 374-77; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 1022-23).
Jeremiah still sometimes uses the title "Israel" with reference to the territory and tribes of the former northern kingdom. For example, in Jer 23:13 "Israel" clearly stands in parallelism with "Samaria".

51:1-23; 25-58).[19]   Jeremiah prays for their destruction

(Jer 10:23-25) and is later assured that it will take

place.

Jeremiah is portrayed as one who feels deeply for

his wayward people and intercedes for them (Jer 14:7-9,

20-22).   However, Yahweh rejects Jeremiah's pleas and

forbids him to continue his intercession (Jer 14:10).

The theological themes of the oracles can be

summarised in the following list:

1.   Individual election;

2.   God's power manifest in the prophetic word and

in nature;

3.   The exodus traditions;

4.   The longstanding defiant apostasy of Israel

(syncretistic worship and idolatry) with

resultant moral and social decline;

5.   Disasters would inevitably follow from apostasy

(in harmony with deuteronomistic views);

6.   The love of God for Israel; and

7.   The promise of Israel's restoration and the

punishment of her enemies

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[19]The authenticity and unity of the oracles against
the nations are hotly disputed, in debates which are
intensified by the textual issues which are especially
acute for this section of the book (Craigie, Kelley,
Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, xlii).   However, it appears that
a solid core of material in the oracles is Jeremaic
(e.g., see, Bright, Jeremiah, 299-362; Holladay,
Jeremiah, 2: 313.; Eissfeldt, Introduction, 362-64).

A comparison must now be made between the theology of the poetic oracles and the theology of the prose sermons. Caution must be exercised here that conclusions not be based on the absence of certain themes. There may be a number of circumstantial reasons why certain themes may be absent. Conclusions regarding theological development can only be validly drawn when a theme is found in both sections but is formulated differently.

The Theology of the Prose Sermons

Like the oracles, the prose sermons stress the exodus traditions (Jer 11:4;[20] 34:13).[21] Central to these traditions is the Mosaic covenant (Jer 11:3; 34:13). Obedience to the covenant commands is the condition of God giving Israel the land of Canaan (Jer 11:4-5).[22]

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[20]The distinctive image of Egypt as כּוּר הַבַּרְזֶל ("iron smelter") is picked up from Deut 4:20. The expression is elsewhere used only once (I King 8:21). There the allusion is also to the exodus.

[21]The vehemence with which Jeremiah rejects the proposal (made after the assassination of Gedaliah) that safety might be found in Egypt (Jer 42:8-22) may derive from his conviction that God's grace is most clearly experienced in coming out of Egypt, ie, the Exodus, (Brueggemann, "'Baruch Connection', 410; Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 720). Bright prefers to link this vehemence to Jeremiah's unshakeable faith in the restoration of Israel to Palestine at the end of the exile, that is, to a new Exodus (Jeremiah, 257). What is beyond dispute is that this motif, which may be implicit in Jeremiah, is explicitly stated in Deut 17:16.

[22]"Mosaic" legislation regarding the Sabbath year is actually cited by Jeremiah (Jer 34:14 cf Ex 21:2-11; Deut 15:1,12). Failure to observe this law is a factor in the covenant curses falling on Israel (e.g., Jer 34:17-18).

However, throughout its history, Israel had not obeyed (Jer 11:6-8) and had therefore suffered the covenant curses (Jer 11:8; 22:8-9).

The theology of Jeremiah's prose sermons is distinguished from the Deuteronomic theology of the oracles by its attitude to the temple, which is said to have become a den of thieves (Jer 7:11). Jeremiah is

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The language of disaster here is general but its identification with the covenant curses is explicitly made by the covenant party that broke the stipulations of the covenant in a self-imprecation (Holladay, Jeremiah, 2:242-43; Brueggemann, To Build, To Plant, 110-11; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 1058; Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 650; Jones, Jeremiah, 426; Keown, Scalise, Smothers, Jeremiah 26-52, 189; McKane, Jeremiah 2: 882).

The text of Jeremiah 34:18 is problematical and open to varied translations and interpretations. The LXX and MT differ substantially. The covenantal cutting of a calf disappears in the LXX only to be replaced by a reference to the golden calf of the exodus (see McKane, Jeremiah, 2: 873). However, the MT is generally regarded as superior at this point. McKane comments that "it is clear that the Sept. has no text-critical value [at this point]" (Jeremiah 2: 873).

The meaning of the cutting of an animal in connection with covenant making is also problematical. A number of competing proposals as to its meaning have been made (see McCarthy, Covenant and Treaty, 54-57 and G.F. Hasel, "The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15," JSOT, 19 (1981), 61-64 for a survey of the options). Scholars who accept that the rite is a self-imprecation or self-curse include Thompson, Jeremiah, 613; Jones, Jeremiah, 426; M. Weinfield, "בְּרִית beʳrith", TDOT, ed. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 2: 262; McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, 54-57.

Hillers has traced the ancient near eastern treaty background of the covenant curses (Treaty-Curses, passim). His work has been criticised because of the general nature of the covenant curses (eg by, Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, 16-17). However, Jeremiah (despite the difficulties in this passage) appears to lend support to Hillers' position.

insistent that the temple is not inviolable (Jer 7:4 cf

27:18-22) and uses the fate of Shiloh as supporting

evidence (Jer 7:12-14; 26:6).[23] God would only dwell

there "forever" if "you truly act justly one with

another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and

the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if

you do not go after other gods to your hurt" (Jer 7:5-7).

In Jer 7:5-7, the same concerns for social justice

and religious purity which are so important in the

oracles are summarised. The sins of Israel are

collectively described as "not walk[ing] in the law that

I have set before you" (Jer 26:4) and are more generally

catalogued in terms of specific infringements of the

Decalogue--theft, murder (19:4), adultery, false

swearing, idol worship (Jer 7:9), and especially, sabbath

desecration (Jer 17:19-27).[24] The demands that God places

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[23]The Deuteronomists put a great deal of importance
on the temple. They insisted that the cultus be
centralised there, and it became the geographical locus
of their theology. This is clearly shown by the
centralising legislation of Deuteronomy (e.g,. 18:6-8)
and the Deuteronomic account of Josiah's reform (II Kings
23) which stresses the closure and defilement of non-
Jerusalem cultic centres.

[24]Jer 17:19-27 is widely regarded as an exilic (or
even post-exilic) addition to the book--precisely because
of the attitude it manifests towards Sabbath keeping(see
Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 958-59; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 509;
Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 368-69; McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 416-
19; Jones, Jeremiah, 248-49; Nicholson, Preaching, 65-66;
Bright, Jeremiah, 120). However, the authenticity of the
passage is defended by N-E. A. Andreasen, The Old
Testament Sabbath: A Tradition-Historical Investigation,
SBLDS 7, Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1972, 31-34; Thompson,

on Israel are catalogued in terms of "act[ing] with

justice and righteousness and deliver[ing] from the hand

of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed", and of

"do[ing] no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan,

and the widow, or shed[ing] innocent blood in this place"

(Jer 22:3).

The prose sermons can speak violently against the

cultus in its totality, although such denunciations are

always set in the context of syncretism and moral

indifference, as is the case in the oracles (e.g., Jer

7:21-22). However, it is plain that the prose sermons do

not seek only for outward conformity to a pure cult, but

for an inward renewal and spiritual religion (Jer 9:25;

c.f., 11:15). God desires his laws to be written on the

heart (Jer 31:33), but currently Israel has her sins

inscribed there instead (Jer 17:1). The people are

uncircumcised in heart and are therefore grouped with the

uncircumcised nations around about (Jer 9:26).[25] This

emphasis corresponds exactly with that found in the

poetic oracles (Jer 4:4, 17:9-10).

Jeremiah, 427-28; Craigie, Jeremiah, 1: 239).

[25]When Jeremiah is given the cup of the Lord's wrath
to give "to all the nations to whom I send you" (Jer
25:15), he presents it first to "Jerusalem and all the
towns of Judah" (Jer 25:18)! Only then does he pass it
on to Egypt, and Israel's other enemies (Jer 25:19-26).
The unavoidable penalty about to befall them is that they
would "fall and rise no more" (Jer 25:27).

Like the oracles, the prose sermons stress the apostasy of Israel.[26] Other gods are being worshipped (Jer 11:13; 16:18; 17:2; 32:35; 35:15; 44:3)--even in the temple (Jer 32:34). The worship of the "queen of heaven" is specifically mentioned as being widespread (Jer 7:17-18; 44:17), along with that of Baal (Jer 9:14; 19:5). Another specific example of false worship that is mentioned is that Israel practised human sacrifice (Jer 7:30-31; 32:35).[27]

The failure of Israel goes back to the "fathers" (Jer 7:22-24; 9:14; 11:10; 16:11; 34:14).[28] This apostasy of the fathers culminates with Manassah (Jer 15:4).[29]

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[26]Idolatry is listed as one of the specific causes of the exile (Jer 44:21-22).

[27]K. Koch suggests that this was due to an overliteralistic adoption of Mesopotamian religious customs. In Mesopotamia the children were not literally burnt in the fire but in Israel they were (Prophets, 2: 49).

[28]Jeremiah 32:30 (cf 31:13) uses a different image. It declares that Israel had been in apostasy since her "youth"--presumably an allusion to the exodus (see, Bright, Jeremiah, 295-96). In this way, Jeremiah castigates the entire history of the nation as being characterised by apostasy and failure.
The image of Israel's "youth" is used to make the same point in 3:25--which is written in prose. The poetic oracles also use the imagery in Jer 2:2; 3:4 without stressing the apostate nature of Israel at that time.

[29]Interestingly, Jeremiah accuses his contemporaries of worshipping gods (specifically the "Queen of heaven", v. 17) that were unknown even to their ancestors (Jer 44:3)--presumably an allusion to the Assyrian/Babylonian cult. J. Gray suggests that the "Queen of heaven" may refer to "the cult of the goddess Ishtar [which] may have been introduced from Mesopotamia under Manassah" ("Queen

However, in the oracles the failure of the fathers is not

always described as false worship. Rather their problem

is said to be that they "did not obey or incline their

ear" but "walked in their own counsels, and look backward

rather than forward" (Jer 7:24 cf 13:10-11; 29:19; 32:33;

35:15).[30] Thus failure to heed the prophets is held up as

the major example of their sin (Jer 7:25).[31] However, the

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of Heaven", IDB, ed. G.A. Buttrick, [Nashville, Tenn.:
Abingdon, 1962], 3: 975 cf Thompson, Jeremiah, 679).
    Carroll points to the inconsistency of Jeremiah
claiming that Israel was in apostasy throughout her
history--always worshipping gods she did not know
(Jeremiah, OTL, 729). However, יָדַע ("know") can have the
meaning of "to make a covenant with" (Holladay, Jeremiah,
1: 245; J. Bergman and G.J.Botterweck, "יָדַע yada';", TDOT,
ed. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren [Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Eerdmans, 1986], 468; c.f., H.B. Huffmon, "The Treaty
Background of yada", BASOR, 118 [1966], 31-37; idem and
S.B. Parker, "A Further Note on the Treaty Background of
Hebrew yada", BASOR, 184 [1966], 36-38). The
inconsistency seen by Carroll vanishes if the text is
read "other gods with which neither you nor your fathers
made a covenant".
    It is interesting that the idolatry persisted in
Egypt among those who fled there after the murder of
Gedaliah. Jeremiah continued to warn of the dire
consequences it would surely bring in its trail (Jer
44:2-30).

    [30]To "turn backward rather than forward" in Jer 7
suggests Israel had turned its back on God and became
"worse instead of better" (Bright, Jeremiah, 54). The
phrase is unique here in the Old Testament, although it
is similar in intent to Jer 2:27 (Holladay, Jeremiah 1:
262). Seeing that Jer 2:27 is set in the context of a
discussion of the exodus from Egypt, one wonders if
Jeremiah is not subtlely suggesting that Israel has been
heading back to Egypt (Babylon) ever since the original
liberation. Jeremiah stresses that this refusal to heed
the prophets had been persistent in contrast to the
faithfulness of the Rechabites (Jer 35:14, 16).

    [31]C.f., 29:19; 32:33; 35:15. Jeremiah insists that
like himself, these early prophets all proclaimed a

sins of Jeremiah's contemporaries were "worse" (Jer 7:26)

because "you are, every one of you, following your

stubborn evil will, refusing to listen to me" (Jer 16:12

cf 25:4,7).[32] The wilfulness of this refusal to follow

Yahweh is stressed (Jer 18:12; 25:7).

The sure penalty for Israel's sins is that she will

be "cast out of my sight"--just as the northern kingdom

had been (Jer 7:15; 9:12-13, 15; 11:11, 17; 17:3-4;

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message of warning and doom and not a sunny message of
assurance (Jer 28:8-9). A problem that is given special
attention in Jeremiah and especially in the prose sermons
is that of "false prophets" (Jer 14:13-15a; 23:14-17).
They made it more difficult for the people to follow the
word and way of God by proclaiming a different word--a
word of assurance rather than doom (Jer 23:17,25; 27:16-
17; 29:31). Their false prophecy is paralleled with the
earlier apostasy of Israel into Baalism (Jer 23:26-27).
The false prophets are grouped with the pagan prophets,
diviners, dreamers, soothsayers, and sorcerers who are
giving similarly optimistic messages in the face of the
Babylonian threat in neighbouring countries (Jer 27:9-
10). Just as in the poetry the false prophets are
designated as destined for punishment (Jer 14:15b-16;
17:26, 29-32, 34; 29:20-23, 32). The fact that God is
fully knowledgable about their activities and teachings
is stressed (Jer 23:23-24; 29:23).
    The "false prophets" might be included among the
"shepherds" who "destroy and scatter the sheep of my
pasture" (Jer 23:1-2). The comment of Carroll on this
last passage is apposite: "In the context of the royal
cycle a statement about shepherds may be taken to refer
to the community's kings, but the term is broader than
that and includes all the ruling elements charged with
the oversight of the people" (Jeremiah, OTL, 444).

    [32]In the prose sections at least, "The key to the
disaster is the community's attitude to Jeremiah,
especially the failure of the kings to respond to his
preaching" (Carroll, Chaos to Covenant, 27). Carroll
applies this comment to the entire book but he appears to
overlook the substantial differences between the prose
and poetic sections at this point.

22:24-26; 23:33-40).[33] God's wrath poured out on Israel

(Jer 25:28-29; 33:5) will leave it defeated in battle

(Jer 21:4-5; 29:17-18) and utterly devastated (Jer 7:21;

11:16; 13:9, 12-14; 16:16-17; 22:5; 25:9-11; 32:28, 36).[34]

Jerusalem would be captured (Jer 37:8) after a terrible

siege during which the population would be reduced to

eating their own children (Jer 19:9; c.f., 29:17-18;

34:17).[35] There would be widespread slaughter (Jer 7:32-

34; 15:3-4a; 19:6; 33:5; 34:17)[36] and the dead would lie

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[33]When Jeremiah declares that God is "going to bring
on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem every disaster that I
[God] have pronounced against them" (Jer 35:17), he may
be alluding to the covenant curses rather than simply to
the repeated messages of doom from the prophets.
However, Jeremiah uses very similar language in apparent
reference to the contents of his first scroll in 36:31
(McKane, Jeremiah, 2: 921; Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 261).
    Not only will the nation in general be cast out, so
will the city of Jerusalem (Jer 32:31). Like the nation,
Jerusalem had provoked God's wrath since its foundation
and God had hidden his "face from this city" (Jer 33:5).
Jeremiah elsewhere declares that the depopulation of the
city will be total, both for animals and humans (Jer
33:10, 12; 36:29).

[34]The nature of the devastation is specified to some
degree: the city would be burnt with fire (Jer 21:10;
34:2; 37:8, 10; 37:18, 23). Surrender of the city would
spare it this fate (Jer 37:17). Otherwise, its fate was
inevitable. Jeremiah records the fulfilment of this
prophecy in Jer 39:8.

[35]Jeremiah stresses the inevitability of Jerusalem's
capture by declaring that even if Judah reduced the
Babylonian army to just wounded men, the city would still
fall to the Babylonians (Jer 37:10).

[36]See also Jer 16:1-9 which stresses the widespread
nature of the slaughter through Jeremiah's decision not
to marry, have children, or join in mourning rituals. In
the not too far distant future the children would die and
the there would be no one to mourn for them (c.f., Jer
25:10).

unburied under the sun, moon and stars which they had

worshiped (Jer 8:1-3; 16:4,6; 19:7).[37]

The gods worshiped in preference to Yahweh will

finally prove useless (Jer 11:11; 28:29) as Yahweh will

actively fight against Israel (Jer 21:6-7; 28:28). The

survivors will be cast out of the land of Israel (Jer

16:13), scattered among the nations (Jer 9:16; 16:9;

29:18),[38] where they will be mocked (Jer 29:18) as they

serve the foreign gods continually (Jer 16:13)[39]. The

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[37]The imagery is echoed in Jeremiah's picture of the aftermath of the judgement "against all the inhabitants of the earth" (Jer 25:30-31). At that time, "Those slain by the LORD on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented or gathered, or buried; they shall become dung on the surface of the ground." (Jer 25:33).

[38]The symbolic action of Jer 13:1-7 declares the site of the dispersion to be "the Euphrates". R.P. Carroll argues that this particular passage only makes sense as a literary construction and not as an historical account (Jeremiah, OTG, 60-62). However, Bright insists on the likelihood that Jeremiah literally carried out the action as described, except that he probably went to Parah (near Anathoth) instead of to the Euphrates. The two words are spelled similarly in Hebrew--פְּרָת ("Euphrates") and פָּרָה ("Parah"). In fact, the phrases "to the Euphrates" and "to Parah" are spelled identically in unpointed Hebrew--פרתה (Jeremiah, 96). Bright has support from Aquila's translation which reads εἰς Παραν (Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 188).
    Elsewhere the destination of the exiles is designated as the "north" (Jer 25:9). Significantly, the final punishment that falls on Babylon is also described as coming from the "north" (Jer 50:3, 9).

[39]Jeremiah is not suggesting that Israel would practice her idolatry in exile. In fact, the exile was meant to renew Israel's knowledge of Yahweh (Jer 16:21). Rather, the king of Babylon understood himself as the servant of his gods. Therefore serving him was in a sense serving his gods (c.f., Jer 5:19; Holladay,

invading enemy is identified as the Chaldeans (Jer 33:5)

or Babylonians (Jer 34:2). Zedekiah and his circle will

be treated mercilessly by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 21:9; 34:3-

5, 21) and Jehoiakim will be killed (Jer 36:30). The end

result will be "everlasting disgrace and perpetual shame

which shall not be forgotten" (Jer 23:40).

In the prose sermons as in the poetic oracles,

Jeremiah is forbidden to intercede for the nation whose

doom is certain (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11-12). Neither

wisdom, might nor wealth would provide any security (Jer

9:23). However, their doom is conditional on their

actions. Repentance could turn it away (Jer 18:1-11;

25:5-6; 26:3, 13).[40] Furthermore the people are urged to

leave Jerusalem before judgements fall upon it (Jer

21:8,9). Those who stay in the city are embracing death,

whereas those who go out and surrender to the Babylonians

will live (Jer 21:9).

In the prose sermons the kings of Judah are

subjected to hostile treatment.[41] The kings begin a list-

Jeremiah 1: 191; Carroll, Jeremiah, 186).

[40]Indeed, if Israel were to obey God Jerusalem would
rule over kings rather than being conquered by them (Jer
22:4).

[41]The only Judean King in Jeremiah's time to escape
criticism and condemnation is Josiah. This fact has led
scholars to puzzle about the exact relationship of
Jeremiah to Josiah's reform.
The persistent attempts of William Holladay to cut
the Gordian knot by interpreting the "thirteenth year of
his [Josiah's] reign" (Jer 1:1) as the year of Jeremiah's

-which includes officials, priests, prophets and

citizens--of those who have provoked the wrath of Yahweh

(Jer 32:32). Manasseh is identified as the instigator of

the final phase of the nation's apostasy (Jer 15:4). A

merciless treatment at the hands of the Babylonians is

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birth and not his prophetic call must be judged as a
failure ("The Background of Jeremiah's Self-
Understanding: Moses, Samuel and Psalm 22", Prophet to
the Nations, 317-23; idem, "Jeremiah and Moses: Further
Observations", JBL 85 [1066], 17-21; idem, "The Years of
Jeremiah's Preaching", Interpretation 37 [1983], 146;
idem, "A Proposal for Reflections in the Book of Jeremiah
of the Seven-Year Recitation of the Law in Deuteronomy
(Deut. 31:10-13", Das Deuteronomium, Bibliotheca
Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 68, Ed N. Lohfink
[Leuven: University Press, 1985], 327; idem, Jeremiah, 1:
1-2). It is explicitly contradicted by the prose
declaration, "For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth
year of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah to this day, the
word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken
persistently to you, but you have not listened" (Jer
25:3).
    Holladay's views on this issue have generally been
rejected (see Thompson, Jeremiah, 50-56; Bright,
Jeremiah, LXXXVII; McKane, Jeremiah, 1:1-5; Craigie,
Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 3). Wang sees
Holladay's programatic essays on the topic as being
"substantially correct" but nevertheless rejects
Holladay's proposed lower chronology, listing five major
weaknesses in Holladay's argument ("Frustration", 38-39).
Even J.R. Lundbom, Holladay's one-time student, rejects
his teacher's views at this point--although he clearly
senses the strength of Holladay's arguments and resolves
the difficulties by attempting to distinguish between the
call and the commissioning of the prophet ("Jeremiah
15:15-21 and the Call of Jeremiah", SJOT, 9 (1995), 143-
155).
    An earlier scholar with views similar to those of
Holladay is J.P. Hyatt ("Jeremiah", 779-780; idem, "The
Beginning of Jeremiah's Prophecy", Prophet to the
Nations, 63-72). Another earlier scholar who attempts to
drastically amend the traditional chronology of
Jeremiah's life (albeit in a different way) is C.F.
Whitely ("The Date of Jeremiah's Call," Prophet to the
Nations, 73-87). However, the generally held consensus
view appears to be impervious to all attacks.

predicted for Zedekiah (Jer 21:9; Jer 34:3-5, 21; 37:17),

his wives and his children (Jer 37:23)[42]. This same king

and his circle of advisors are compared with a basket of

rotten figs (Jer 24:8) and Jeremiah is emphatic that they

will have no part in Israel's glorious future (Jer 24:8-

10).[43] Jehoiachin (Coniah) will die in captivity (Jer

22:24-26). The kings are generally regarded as shepherds

who have plundered and destroyed the flock rather than

having protected it (Jer 23:1-2). The exile will bring a

(temporary) hiatus in the Davidic dynasty (Jer 36:30).

During Jeremiah's lifetime, God's servant is to be

"Nebuchadnezzar", not the Davidic King in Jerusalem (Jer

27:6; 43:10). Failure to submit to Nebuchadnezzar is

therefore to invite the punishment of God (Jer 27:8).[44]

However, in the future God will act as a shepherd in

bringing the remnant of Israel back from Babylon (Jer

23:3).

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[42]Jeremiah records the fulfilment of these predictions in 39:5-8.

[43]However, surrender to the Babylonians could spare Zedekiah the worst of his fate (Jer 37:17).

[44]The punishments specified are based on the Deuteronomic covenant curses--sword, famine, pestilence, destruction (Jer 27:8,13; 32:36 cf Deut 28:15-68). Those nations that submitted would not be driven into exile (Jer 27:11). Thus, exile--another covenant curse (Deut 28:64-65) was another punishment for resistance. The application of this explicitly covenant language to the relationship of the nations to Nebuchadnezzar suggests the extent to which he had truly replaced the Davidic king (established by covenant) as God's servant.

Throughout the sermons Yahweh is described as loving, just and righteous (Jer 9:24). He is the revealer of secrets to those who call on him (Jer 33:3). He has a long history with Israel. Thus the exodus traditions are important in the prose sermons as they are in the oracles (Jer 7:25).

As with the poetic oracles, the prose sermons contain promises for the future of Israel and the punishment of her enemies (Jer 12:14-15; 25:15-29, 33; 29:11; 30:3, 8; 33:6-13).[45] The exile in Babylon will be for seventy years, not forever (Jer 25:11; 29:10); but the punishment meted out to Babylon will see her become an "eternal waste" (Jer 25:12 c.f., 50:3; 51:62-63).[46] A "remnant" of the flock will be brought back from Babylon;[47] the land of Palestine will be "sown" (זָרַע) with

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[45]God's authority over the nations--and, consequently, his ability to assure Israel of the certainty of her future restoration--is anchored in his creatorship of the world to which Jeremiah makes passing reference (Jer 27:5; 33:2).
Prose sayings declare the defeat of Egypt, (Jer 46:25-26), Moab (Jer 48:12, 21-27, 34-39), Edom, (Jer 49:12, 17-22), Elam (Jer 49:34-39) and Babylon (Jer 50:3, 8-10, 17-20, 28-30, 33-34, 39, 44-46; 51:24).

[46]Yahweh's punishment of Babylon, like his use of Babylon to punish Israel, stresses the fact that Yahweh is Lord over the whole earth, not just over Israel. This theme is developed in greater detail in Second Isaiah.

[47]Similar imagery is elsewhere used when Israel is described as a "lost sheep" attacked and devoured by any wild animals that chance upon her (Jer 50:6-7).

people and animals (Jer 31:27; 32:41; 33:10-11, 13);[48]

Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Jer 33:7), enlarged (Jer

31:38-40), "healed" (רָפָא) and restored to prosperity (Jer

33:6) and security (Jer 33:16). The cleansed city would

be renamed יְהוָה צִדְקֵנוּ ("The LORD is our righteousness"), (Jer

33:16).[49]

The future of Israel lies with those who would be

exiled in Babylon and not with those who will remain in

Palestine.[50] The exiles will bring the temple vessels

with them when they return to Jerusalem and the temple

services recommence (Jer 27:22; 33:18).

The restored nation will be given faithful shepherds

(Jer 23:3-4)--specifically, the "righteous branch" of

David (Jer 23:5; 30:8; 33:13), who will be the foundation

of a renewed Davidic Covenant (Jer 33:17).[51] A future

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[48]Jeremiah emphasises this fact by legally purchasing
a field on the eve of Jerusalem's destruction (Jer 32:6-
14 cf 32:44).

[49]This name is, as Carroll observes "a pun on
Zedekiah's name"--צִדְקִיָּהוּ (Jeremiah, OTL, 637). As such it
reflects the rejection of the kings of Jeremiah's time--
even in the context of affirming a future role for the
Davidic dynasty. The fulfilment of the promises God had
made to Israel (v. 14) is immediately elaborated with a
reference to the Davidic branch (v. 15). The "promises"
thus refer primarily to the Davidic covenant.

[50]Jeremiah emphatically makes this point with his
illustration about the two baskets of figs--one good, one
bad. The bad figs represent those who would remain in
the land; the good figs those who would go into exile
(Jer 24:1-10).

[51]The Davidic covenant is considered to be as
permanent as the cycle of day and night (Jer 33:20-22).
Jeremiah links the Davidic dynasty as closely as possible

Israel is envisaged that is purged of her idolatry (Jer

12:16-17), cleansed of her guilt (Jer 33:8) and has "a

heart to know that I am the Lord" (Jer 24:7) is

envisaged. It will be an Israel who will fear Yahweh

(Jer 33:9) will and pray to him, rather than to the Baals

(Jer 29:12,13). The people will return from the north in

a new exodus (Jer 16:14-15)--the glory of which will

utterly eclipse the memory of the exodus from Egypt.

Their new relationship with God is described in terms of

a "new covenant" (Jer 31:31-34).[52]

The theological themes of the prose sermons can be

summarised in the following list:

1. Exodus and covenant traditions;

2. The violability of the temple;

3. The importance of social justice and ethical

    behaviour, as summarised in the decalogue;

4. The importance of sabbath keeping;

5. The inadequacy of a syncretistic cult;

6. The need of "heart" religion;

7. The longstanding apostasy of Israel--especially

    with regard to idolatry;

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to the levitical priesthood at the temple (Jer 33:17-22).
The perpetual covenant with David is seen as an evidence
of the election of the people of Israel (Jer 33:23-26).
Thus the Siniatic and Davidic covenants are bound
together.

[52]Covenantal language is also used for this
experience in Jer 24:7 (cf Jer 31:1; 32:38-40).

8.   The failure of Israel to heed the prophets--
     culminating in the rejection of Jeremiah
     himself;

9.   The inevitable punishment of Jerusalem and the
     nation as a whole--which repentance could have
     averted and which surrender could mitigate;

10. The permanence of the Davidic covenant, which
     is linked closely with the Siniatic. The
     permanence of the covenant is affirmed in spite
     of the manifest hostility of Jeremiah towards
     the last Davidic kings;

11. The loving character of God;

12. The future restoration of Judah (and of Israel
     as a whole);

13. The future overthrow of Israel's enemies--
     especially Babylon.

There is obviously a considerable body of material
in common between the oracles and the sermons. Both
stress the Exodus traditions; both stress the
longstanding apostasy of Israel, especially in regard to
idolatry; both stress the appalling social conditions
that prevail in Jeremiah's day.

The differences between the two blocks of material
are more revealing than the similarities. In the
sermons, the note of individual election is missing. The
emphasis is purely corporate. However, the themes of

Israel's failure to heed the prophets and of false
prophets are much more prominent than in the poetic
oracles. The delineation of the moral evils in Israel
(in terms of the decalogue) is much more detailed than in
the oracles. The inclusion of sabbath-breaking among the
sins that would cause the captivity has no "prototype" in
the oracles. Hostility towards the kings is much more
evident in the prose. Paradoxically, the emphasis on the
eternal duration of the Davidic covenant and its link
with the Siniatic covenant (eg the insistence that there
will always be a Davidic king on the throne and a levite
in the sanctuary) is also much stronger in the sermons.
Descriptions of the fate of Jerusalem appear to be more
intense.

How can such differences best be accounted for? The
most obvious answer is the trauma of the exile is
anticipated in the oracles and reflected in the sermons.
In the light of the exile concerns about the individual
might well be expected to be swallowed up in concern for
the nation.[53] Similarly, the fact of the exile vindicates

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[53]Individuality is not totally swallowed up in the
Jeremiac prose traditions. There are reference to
specific individuals suffering a specific fate because of
their sins in the prose accounts (eg Hannaniah--28:15-17;
Shemaiah--29:30-32; and, Zedekiah--34:3-5). However,
such individualisation is absent from the prose sermons.
    With our explanation of this phenomenon we are
handling a two-edged sword. Although it is possible for
the catastrophe of the exile to lead to a reduction in
individualisation it is equally possible that with the
complete ruination of the nation there would have been an

the rejected message of Jeremiah. It is easy to see how,

in Jeremiac circles, the theme of the apostasy of Israel

may well have been focused on their failure to heed the

prophets. The moral evils delineated in the sermons are

just the evils the community of Jews in exile would have

been wrestling with. Sabbath keeping would have received

increased emphasis among the exiles as a means of

maintaining corporate identity in the face of pressures

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increased concern for the individual. It is often felt
that Ezekiel 18 reflects just such an increased
individualisation (G. Fohrer, Introduction to the Old
Testament, [London: SPCK, 1968], 417; J.W. Wevers,
Ezekiel, NCB [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969], 108;
Eichrodt, Theology, 1: 376; G. von Rad, The Message of
the Prophets [London: SCM, 1968], 199; B. Vawter and L.J.
Hoppe, A New Hope, ITC, [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans,
1991], 99).
        However, it is important not to overstress the
individualism of Ezekiel. Wevers summarises Ezekiel's
general understanding of corporate responsibility very
adequately: "The exiles do take corporate responsibility
as is indicated by his use elsewhere of the term
'rebellious house', eg 17:12. Jerusalem will be
completely destroyed and no regard for the righteous in
it (such as Jeremiah) will save it (cf Gen 18:22-33).
Usually no provision is made for their escape in the
general destruction, though in the vision of the
departing glory the scribal messenger does mark the
righteous, 9:4-6," (Wevers, Ezekiel, 108). Wevers sees
chapter 18 as being inconsistent with this general
teaching. However, it must be understood that the
function of the message of chapter 18 is to stress the
corporate responsibility of Ezekiel's generation (and not
simply the "fathers") for the exile (see, P. Joyce,
Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel, JSOTSS
51 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], 33-60;
J.S. Kaminsky, Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew
Bible, JSOTSS 196 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,
1995], 155-178; C.R. Briggs, The Book of Ezekiel,
[London: Epworth, 1996], 54; H. McKeating, Ezekiel, Old
Testament Guides, [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,
1993], 83-85; B. Lindars, "Ezekiel and Individual
Responsibility", VT 15 [1965], 452-67).

to fully assimilate. Hostility to the Davidic kings who
led the nation to disaster would be intense. However,
hopes for restoration would have centred on the temple
and monarchy--both of which had been taken from the
nation. Obviously, memories of the siege and capture of
Jerusalem would have been vivid among the exiles.

Thus the hypothesis that the prose sermons are
"snapshots" of the Jeremaic tradition from an exilic
perspective seems to be confirmed by our analysis of the
theological development between the prose and the poetic
oracles. It is now necessary to see which body of
tradition the confessions lie closest to.

The Theology of the Confessions

Establishing the theology of the confessions is a
difficult task, given the limited amount of material
involved and the nature of that material. The main issue
in the confessions is that of "theodicy". Their tone is
often disillusioned and dispirited. It is important to
understand not only the theology of the confessions
(i.e., the theology they express) but also their "anti-
theology" (i.e., the theology that they are reacting
against in disillusionment).

In the confessions, God is portrayed as a one who
enters into relationships with individuals (Jer 11:18).

He intervenes--for good (Jer 15:11)[54]--and reveals secret

plots (Jer 11:18) which cannot be hidden from him (Jer

18:23). He commissions and re-commissions (Jer 15:19).

The privilege offered to Jeremiah is that he can be God's

"mouth" (Jer 15:19). He expects that God will judge

righteously and execute retribution against the wicked

(Jer 11:20; 17:18; 20:12).[55] However, a crisis of faith

exists because the wicked[56] prosper (Jer 12:1). This

crisis leads Jeremiah to call passionately for justice

and punishment to be executed upon his enemies (Jer 12:3;

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[54]However, the compassion of God is a source of
concern to Jeremiah in Jer 15:15b rather than a source of
comfort, (Floyd, "Prophetic Complaints", 414).

[55]The punishment of Jeremiah's enemies is
specifically described in terms of the exile: death by
sword and famine leading to total extermination (Jer
11:22-23).

[56]The "wicked" in this context are clearly
Israelites, who nominally serve God but are actually far
from him (Jer 12:2). As far as Jeremiah is concerned
they are guilty of a practical atheism (Jer 12:4b).
    Those who are aligned against Jeremiah include the
spiritual leaders of the people--priests, wisemen, and
[cultic] prophets (Jer 18:18)--as well as the "people of
Anathoth" (Jer 11:21), Jeremiah's own kinsmen (Jer 12:6).
He also finds himself opposed by "my close friends" (Jer
20:10).
    That the crisis is a crisis of faith is evident from
Jeremiah's telling admission that "You will be right, O
LORD, when I lay charges against you" (Jer 12:1).
Jeremiah knows his affirmations about God are true even
though they do not seem to be confirmed by his own
personal experience. Similar affirmations of faith are
made in the final confession where Jeremiah expresses
confidence in the LORD as a "dread warrior" who will make
his enemies stumble (Jer 20:11) and affirms that God "has
delivered the life of the needy from the hands of
evildoers" (Jer 20:13).

15:15; 18:18-19, 21-22a, 23). Not only so, Jeremiah can

describe God as a "deceitful brook" (Jer 15:18) and as

one who has "enticed" and "overpowered" him (Jer 20:7).

The defencelessness and utter social rejection faced

by Jeremiah are stressed (Jer 11:19, 21; 18:20a, 22b;

20:7b).[57] His vunerability leads to despair over his own

existence (Jer 15:10; 20:14-18[58]). There are passionate

defences of his own innocence (Jer 12:3; 15:10,[59] 17;

18:20b).[60] Foremost among Jeremiah's virtues is his

enthusiasm for God and his word (Jer 15:16; 17:16;

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[57]The death of Jeremiah is plotted by his enemies. Because he is childless (Jer 16:2) such a plot would destroy the memory of his name (Jer 11:19). The rejection of Jeremiah comes about in part because of an apparent delay in the fulfilment of his predictions (Jer 17:15), (Floyd, "Prophetic Complaints", 414-15).

[58]Jer 20:14-18 is generally regarded as part of the final confession (so Diamond, Confessions, 114-21; Baumgartner, Lament, 76-79; Bright, Jeremiah, 134). However, O'Connor argues that it should not be so regarded on rhetorical grounds, (O'Connor, Confessions, 75-80).

[59]It is a matter of conjecture among scholars as to whether the declaration "I have not lent, nor have I borrowed", should be understood in terms of normal social interaction (so Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 939; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah, 209; McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 346; Thompson, Jeremiah, 392) or in terms of "entrance liturgies" of the temple (so Jones, Jeremiah, 220-21). However, neither interpretation makes any material difference to the overall meaning of the passage.

[60]However, Jeremiah's innocence is not absolute. God himself urges him to repent in Jer 15:19.

20:9).[61] Proclamation of God's message is the source of

Jeremiah's pain (Jer 15:15; 20:8).[62]

There is an awareness that not just Jeremiah but the

entire land is suffering because of the sins of the

wicked (Jer 12:4). Indeed, God has "abandoned" (עָזַב) his

"house" (בַּיִת) and his "heritage" (נַחֲלָה) (Jer 12:7) and

"hates" (שָׂנֵא) it (Jer 12:8). The fire of God's anger will

burn "forever" (עַד־עוֹלָם)[63] (Jer 15:14)--a statement which

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[61]It is difficult to determine whether the "words"
which Jeremiah ate with such relish (Jer 15:16) refer to
his prophetic call/message (so Jones, Jeremiah, 224;
Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 210; Hyatt,
"Jeremiah", 942; Thompson, Jeremiah, 396; McKane,
Jeremiah, 1:352-53; Baumgartner, Lament, 36), or to the
book of Deuteronomy and/or other earlier prophetic and
psalmic works (so Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 458; Diamond,
Confessions, 76 cf Berridge, Word of Yahweh, 119-20).
However, the parallels with the call of Ezekiel (Ez 2:8-
3:3) make the former interpretation more likely.
    The interpretation of Jer 15:16 is complicated by a
major textual variation between the MT and LXX, which
reads "I bear the reproach of those who despise thy
words. Destroy them and thy words will become the joy
and delight of my heart" (cf NEB). The underlying Hebrew
Vorlage would appear to differ only slightly from the MT.
(Hyatt lists only two specific variants: מִמְאַסֵי ["from those
who despise"] for נִמְצְאוּ ["were found"] and כַּלֵּם ["consume
them"] for וָאֹכְלֵם ["and I ate them"]). The LXX reading is
accepted as superior by some scholars (e.g., Hyatt,
"Jeremiah", 942; Baumgartner, Lament, 46-47), while the
MT is favoured by others (e.g., Jones, Jeremiah, 224;
Bright, Jeremiah, 106; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 458).
Fortunately, resolution of this question does not
materially affect the reading of the passage in its
entirety.

[62]His faithful proclamation not withstanding,
Jeremiah insists that he has not wanted the disastrous
events which he has predicted to come to pass (Jer 17:16)

[63]This reading is textually uncertain. BHS reads
עֲלֵיכֶם ("over you") but some manuscripts read עַד־עוֹלָם
("forever"). A few manuscripts have a mixed text,

seems to indicate the total rejection of Israel. The

people will be given into the hands of enemies--clearly

the Babylonians[64]--because of their rebellion (Jer 12:7-

8).[65] The people will serve as slaves in a foreign land

(Jer 15:14) and their wealth will be plunder (Jer 15:13).

Jeremiah calls to God for deliverance and "healing"

(√רפא) (Jer 17:14), but receives no word of comfort in

response to his demand for justice. Indeed, God has

become a "terror" (חַת) to Jeremiah rather than a refuge

(Jer 17:17), and he is assured things will get worse (Jer

12:5). The same promises that have already proven to be

inadequate are reiterated (Jer 15:20-21; c.f., Jer 1:18-

19)

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reading either עֲלֵיכֶם עַד־עוֹלָם ("over you forever") or עַד־עֲלֵיכֶם
("continuously over you"), (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 447).
Since Jer 15:13-14 is very similar to Jer 17:3-4, (see
above, chapter 3, footnote 75) Holladay understands the
reading עַד־עוֹלָם to be a corruption from that passage
(Ibid.; c.f., Diamond, Prophetic Drama, 52; Wimmer,
Prophetic Experience, 188, 190). However, עַד־עוֹלָם is the
reading prefered by Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard (Jeremiah
1-25, 207), McKane, (Jeremiah 1-25, 344), Carroll,
(Jeremiah, OTL, 328), Thompson, (Jeremiah, 391),
Chambers, (Prophetic Ambivalence, 59), Gerstenberger,
("Jeremiah's Complaints", 395).

[64]The reference to the "iron of the north" (Jer
15:12) is one of the most obscure in the entire book.
However, the early references to the "enemy from the
north" make it highly likely that here the reference is
also to the Babylonians (see O'Connor, Confessions, 35-
36; McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 348-49; Thompson, Jeremiah, 393;
Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 210 cf
Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 455).

[65]This divine giving into the hands of the enemy is
symbolised graphically by the divine call to the wild
animals to come and devour Israel (Jer 12:9).

The theological themes of the confessions can be summarised as follows:

1.   individual election;

2.   the loving, gracious, just character of God (although his character is constantly challenged and debated);

3.   the genuineness of Jeremiah's ministry;

4.   the rejection of Jeremiah and the resultant rejection of Israel by God; and,

5.   the inscrutability of God in the face of the suffering of God's people.

A number of key themes in both the poetry and prose are totally absent from the confessions (e.g., the exodus and Sinai covenant traditions) while others are common to the confessions and to both the prose and the poetry (e.g., the validity of Jeremiah's ministry). However, the theology of the confessions is clearly more closely connected with that of the poetry than with the prose of Jeremiah. This is seen particularly in regard to the emphasis on individual election.[66]

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[66]The theme of individual election is found especially in connection with the "call narrative"--especially Jer 1:5 (Skinner, Prophecy and Society, 27). William Holladay, in particular has made much of the parallels between Jeremiah and Moses and Samuel at this point ("The Background of Jeremiah's Self-Understanding: Moses, Samuel and Psalm 22", Prophet to the Nations, 313-24; idem, Jeremiah and Moses: Further Observations", JBL 85 (1966), 17-17) A different analysis of the relevance of these parallels is given by C.R. Seitz, ("The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah", ZAW 101

Of the seven theological themes in the oracles one
is clearly reflected in the confessions (individual
election). Four others are assumed and become the basis
for Jeremiah's complaints (the love of God; the power of
God revealed in the prophetic word [but not nature]; the
apostasy of Israel; and the disastrous consequences of
the national apostasy). The remaining two (the exodus
tradition; the promise of national restitution) are not
touched upon throughout the confessions. These facts do
not mean that the confessions develop each of the themes
in exactly the same way as do the oracles, nor would such
and exact correspondence be expected.

By way of contrast, none of the thirteen theological
themes isolated in the sermons is clearly reflected in
the confessions. Ten of these themes (Exodus tradition;
violability of the temple; importance of decalogue;
sabbath-keeping; inadequacy of syncretism; need for heart
religion; inevitability of punishment; Davidic covenant;
future restoration; and, the overthrow of Israel's
enemies) are totally missing from the confessions. The
remaining three (Israel's apostasy; Israel's rejection of
the prophets; and the character of God) are assumed. It

[1989], 3-27).
    Connections between the call narrative and the
confessions have long been noticed (eg Keil, "Jeremiah",
18; Skinner, Prophecy and Society, 210 cf Bright,
"Prophet's Lament", 335-37; Lundbom, "Call of Jeremiah",
143-55).

is important to realise that two of these themes are also

evident in the oracles. Themes common to the oracles,

the prose sermons and the confessions cannot be used to

demonstrate a special relationship between the

confessions and either the prose or the poetry.

The Evidence from Vocabulary

The conclusions drawn from the theological

differences evident between the proaic and poetic

sections of Jeremiah are supported by an analysis of the

book's vocabulary.[67] A survey of some 250 major words

used in the confessions reveals some valuable data.[68] A

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[67]Any exploration into vocabulary distribution is
fraught with dangers and difficulties. Deciding which
vocabulary to study is a complex task in its own right.
In the context of Jeremiah, the following questions
arise: "Are words which are common in the confessions but
rare in the rest of Jeremiah significant for our study?
Are words which are rare in the confessions but common in
the rest of Jeremiah more important?" And "are words
which are common in both the confessions and the
individual laments of the Psalms important?"
     It must also be kept in mind that the real unit of
meaning is not the "word" but the sentence (J. Barr, The
Semantics of Biblical Language [London: SCM, 1961], 233-
38). It is possible for a single word to be used with
different meanings in different contexts.
     A specific difficulty arises in the context of our
examination of the poetry and prose of Jeremiah. It may
be possible that distinctively "poetic" vocabulary was
deliberately copied by the writers, editors and
collectors of the prose (or the final editors of entire
book).
     As a result of these difficulties our conclusions
here are likely to be minimalist rather than maximalist.
The evidence can only be used when it is overwhelmingly
clear.

[68]See Appendix One. Given the textual difficulties
in Jeremiah, it is not possible to go beyond an

total of forty-seven words are used more than twice in

the confessions. In addition twenty-four words from the

confessions are not used in the Psalms, although they are

used elsewhere in Jeremiah. They are thus not part of a

stereotypical lament formulation but are part of the

language of the book. A considerable amount of

vocabulary in the confessions proves to be common to both

the prose and poetry sections of Jeremiah.

Two groups of words stand out as particularly

prominent in the confessions: legal words (eg רִיב

["contend, dispute"], צֶדֶק ["righteous, righteousness"],

צַדִּיק ["just, righteous"]) and words referring to the spoken

word (eg דָּבָר ["word"], דִּבֶּר ["speak"], אָמַר ["say"], נָבָא

["announce, prophecy"]).[69] Legal words are relatively

common in the individual laments of the Psalms and may be

regarded as examples of typical vocabulary for this

Gattung.[70] Reference to the spoken word may be more

reflective of prophetic activity.[71]

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approximate survey of the vocabulary of the confessions.

[69]In this connection one should also note the
expressions כְּפִי תִהְיֶה ("you shall serve as my mouth") in Jer
15:19.

[70]For attempts at explanation as to why these words
should be typical of the lament *Gattung*, see Appendix
Two.

[71]Overholt, "Jeremiah", 619. Too rigid a line should
not be drawn between cultic and prophetic activity. The
role of prophetic activity within the cult has been
emphasised by scholars such as A.R. Johnson, (The Cultic
Prophet in Ancient Israel [Cardiff: University of Wales

Vocabulary which highlights the spoken word seems to be fairly evenly distributed between the poetic and prosaic sections of Jeremiah and is consequently of little help in our present quest. The situation, however, is different with regard to the judicial vocabulary used in the confessions. Several judicial words occur exclusively or predominantly in the poetic sections of the book. These include רִיב (in nounal and verbal forms);[72] שָׁפַט ("judge, govern");[73] צֶדֶק ("rightness,

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Press, 1962], *passim*) and J. Eaton, (<u>Vision in Worship</u> [London: SPCK, 1981], *passim*). However, as Baumgartner points out there are elements in the confessions which are not reflected in the (cultic) laments in Psalms (<u>Poems</u>, 80-83).

[72]Of the eleven verses which contain this root, nine are unanimously regarded as being written in poetry by Bright, Holladay and the NRSV translators. Jer 15:10 and 50:34 are regarded as prose in the NRSV. However, both Bright (<u>Jeremiah</u>, 106, 344) and Holladay (<u>Jeremiah</u>, 1: 445; 2: 398-99) take these verses to be poetry. McKane concurs with the view of these scholars (<u>Jeremiah</u>, 1: 343; 2: 1284).

[73]מִשְׁפָּט ("judgement, justice"), however, is found in both prose and poetry in equal proportions.

righteousness");[74] צַדִּיק ("just, righteous");[75] and, רָשָׁע

("wickedness, act wickedly").[76]

This use of judicial terms suggests that Jeremiah

was familiar with legal language and used it extensively.

Such legal language is admittedly common in the

individual laments of the Psalms but it is not a feature

of the later reworking of the Jeremaic traditions

reflected in the prose of the book.

Outside the two groupings of vocabulary in the

confessions mentioned above (spoken word and judicial

language) the same pattern can often be discerned.[77] For

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[74]Of the six verses that use this word in Jeremiah
only Jer 33:16 is taken as prose by all three of my
sources (Bright, Holladay, NRSV). Jeremiah 23:6 and 50:7
are treated as prose in the NRSV. With regard to Jer
50:7--but not Jer 23:6 the NRSV is supported by
McKane(Jeremiah, 1: 559; 2: 1251). If both these verses
are in fact written in prose, צֶדֶק ("rightness,
righteousness") should be deleted from this list.

[75]צַדִּיק ("just, righteous") only occurs once outside
the confessions (Jer 23:5) and twice in the confessions
(Jer 12:1; 20:12). The single non-confessional usage is
considered prose by the NRSV (supported by McKane,
Jeremiah, 1: 559). If this is correct צַדִּיק ("just,
righteous") should be deleted from this list.

[76]רָשָׁע ("wickedness, act wickedly") is not necessarily
a legal term but it is the antithesis of צֶדֶק ("rightness,
righteousness"), (G.H. Livingston, "רָשָׁע (rasha') be
wicked, act wickedly", Theological Wordbook of the Old
Testament, ed. R.L. Harris, G.L. Archer, and B.K. Walke
[Chicago: Moody, 1980], 2: 864) and can be used with the
sense of "criminal" (J. Greenberg, "Crimes and
Punishment", IDB, ed. G.A. Buttrick [Nashville, Tenn.:
Abingdon, 1962], 1: 735).

[77]Although a comprehensive survey of judicial
language found in the confessions has been attempted, no
claim to comprehensiveness can be made here. Some words
clearly occur more frequently in the poetry than in the

example שָׂחַק ("laugh") and אַלּוּף ("chief") only occur in

Jeremiah's poetry. The words חָזַק ("grow firm, strong,

strengthen") and יָכֹל ("be able, have power, prevail,

endure") occur predominantly in the poetry.[78] The phrase

מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב ("terror on every side") is used five times in

Jeremiah (6:25; 20:3,10; 46:5; 49:29).[79] Of these texts

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prose. This fact supports the conclusions drawn from the
comprehensive survey of judicial language. However, it
cannot be used as independent evidence, the possibility
that other words occur more often in the prose than the
poetry cannot be disallowed.

[78]The case of חָזַק ("grow firm, strong, strengthen") is
particularly impressive. The word occurs in fifteen
verses in Jeremiah. Of these one is in the confessions
(Jer 20:7) and only two (Jer 31:32; 52:6) are considered
to be prose by all my sources. Two more (Jer 50:33-34)
are treated as prose in the NRSV. (The NRSV is not
suppported by McKane in either case, Jeremiah, 2: 1284).
The uses of חָזַק ("grow firm, strong, strengthen") is still
overwhelmingly in the poetic sections of Jeremiah.
     The use of יָכֹל ("to be able") is less decisive. It
is found in five confessional verses (15:20; 20:7,9-11).
Outside the confessions, it is used six times in the
prose sections and nine times in the poetic oracles
(i.e., fifty percent more often). However, the NRSV
translates Jer 1:19 as prose--and is supported by McKane
(Jeremiah, 1: 22). If this is correct, the distribution
between poetry and prose is almost even.

[79]This phrase occurs outside of Jeremiah in Ps 31:14
and Lam 2:22. Jeremiah is often thought to have coined
the prase (eg W.L. Holladay, "The Covenant with the
Patriarchs Overturned: Jeremiah's Intention in 'Terror on
Every Side' [Jer 20:1-6]", JBL 91 [1972], 307) although
others see it as a conventional phrase (eg H.-J. Kraus,
Psalms 1-59: A Commentary, [Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg,
1988], 364). Its significane in Jeremiah--especially in
chapter 20--has generated considerable discussion.
     Upon his release from prison Jeremiah declares that
the name of the priest Pashur has been changed to מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב
("Terror-all-around"). It is generally accepted that
there is some connection between his old and new names
(conra Keil, "Jeremiah", 744-45 cf Hyatt, "Jeremiah",
970)--although the nature of the connection is not

only Jer 20:3 is clearly prosaic.[80] However, its

placement in juxtaposition with the seventh confession

raises the possibility that it was taken over by the

editor/writer of Jer 20:1-6 in deliberate imitation of

the poetry of the seventh confession.

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readily apparent (Bright, Jeremiah, 132).

A.M. Honeyman suggests that the usual translation "terror all around" is not appropriate in this context which is not about "encompassing terror" but on punishment of the Pashur and his supporters. The cause of terror would be the overwhelming enemy and not the priest ("Magor Mis-sabib and Jeremiah's Pun", VT 4 (1954), 424). He suggests that, although מָגוֹר means "terror" normally, it never has that meaning when used in conjunction with מִסָּבִיב ("all around, on every side"). Rather in this context it has the connotation of "destruction" ("Jeremiah's Pun", 425).

Holladay suggests that מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב actually has a multiplicity of meanings and should be left untranslated (Jeremiah, 1: 543 cf "Jeremiah's Intention", 307-17). Thus he proposes that מָגוֹר has the connotations of "terror", "enmity" and "sojourning in exile" and that מִסָּבִיב should be understood notionally: "from every point of view" (Jeremiah 1: 542; "Jeremiah's Intention", 306-07). As such it is a reversal of the meaning of Pashur derived from a putative Aramaic etymology "fruitful on every side". Thus it signals the cancellation of the promises of the covenant. Holladay's position is largely supported by D.L. Christensen, "'Terror on Every Side' in Jeremiah", JBL 92 (1973), 498-502. Carroll on the other hand regards Holladay's position as "over-sophisticated" (Jeremiah, OTL, 391). Jones is likewise unconvinced and prefers the usual translation "terror [or 'horror'] on every side". He declares attempts to find word plays here--presumably he is refering to Holladay--as "esoteric mumbo-jumbo" (Jeremiah, 270). McKane is also dismissive of this view (Jeremiah, 1: 463)

[80]All three of my sources are unanimous regarding these verses: Jer 20:3 is regarded as prose; the others as poetic.

Conclusion

The overall picture of the theological development of the book of Jeremiah confirms that its poetry is more likely to have originated with Jeremiah than is its prose. The confessional material taken as a whole has more theological links with the poetry than with the prose. This suggests that the confessions have their origin with the prophet Jeremiah and that consequently their "I" should be understood in an individualistic way.

This conclusion is confirmed by an analysis of the vocabulary used in the confessions. Of the two clear blocks of vocabulary discernible in the confessions one (spoken word) is elsewhere equally distributed between the poetry and the prose, but the other (judicial language) is used far more frequently in the poetry then the prose. The same pattern holds true for a number of other key words and phrases in the confessions, although their use has not been explored comprehensively. This fact confirms an origin for the confessions in the life time of Jeremiah and not in a later period. Since a corporate understanding of the confessions is predicated on their exilic or post-exilic origins, the linguistic data also confirms that their "I" should be understood individualistically.

Our conclusions thus far support a life setting of the confessions in the life and experience of Jeremiah

himself. That fact inevitably raises the question of how and why they were included in the book of Jeremiah. It is to the question of their role in Jeremiah that this study now turns.

The Confessions in Context

Thus far the confessions have been examined in relative isolation. Their *Gattung* has been studied and its use has been compared with the use of the *Gattung* elsewhere in Jeremiah. The theology of the confessions has been compared with that of other blocks of material in Jeremiah. However, in both the study of *Guttang* and theology, the concern in this thesis has been with the confessions as a discrete unit of material.

Attention has been given to the original meaning of the confessions. Now attention must be given to their role and function in the book of Jeremiah as a whole. What redactional meaning do they have? Is the redactional meaning the same as original meaning? Is the degree of individuality in them unchanged?

The confessions were open to redaction on three levels:[1] within the individual confessions themselves; in the arrangement of the confessions in relation to one-

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[1]It should be pointed out that even if all the material in the book of Jeremiah is authentic, and even if the book was edited by Jeremiah and/or Baruch a process of redaction may still have taken place. Inevitably, the very act of selecting material and placing in its present order reflected concerns apposite to a time when Jeremiah's prophecies had largely been fulfilled (J.G. McConville, "Jeremiah: Prophet and Book", TynBul 42 [1991], 92-95).

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another;[2] and, in the placement of the confessions in the

context of the other material in Jeremiah.[3] We must also

reckon with the possibility of layers of redactional

context--especially if we take McKane's proposal of

"rolling corpus" seriously.[4] It is possible that the

confessions were given a certain redactional meaning when

incorporated into blocks of material, but this meaning

was modified as those blocks were themselves incorporated

into larger units (ultimately the book in its final

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[2]Beyond recognising that the first three [four on
Diamond's counting] confessions (as they now stand)
receive a divine response; while the last three [four on
Diamond's counting] do not, S. Blank denies any
significance to the ordering of the confessions ("The
Prophet as Paradigm", Essays in Old Testament Ethics: J.
Philip Hyatt, in Memorium, edited by J.L. Crenshaw and
L.T. Willis, [New York: KTAV, 1974], 125-26). He may be
overly pessimistic at this point.

[3]The tentative nature of any reconstruction is
highlighted by the diversity of opinion among scholars on
these matters. For example, Holladay argues that the
confessions as they now stand reflect their original
chronological order (Jeremiah, 1: 361). However, Smith
denies this assertion, declaring, "the arrangement of the
laments is secondary" (Laments, 2). The question would
appear to be beyond resolution because clear evidence for
either position is lacking.

[4]McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 1-lxxxxiii. Unfortunately, as
W. Brueggemann points out, McKane never develops this
stimulating idea to any great extent ("'Baruch
Connection'", 406).

form).[5] Unfortunately, the identification of the blocks

of material in Jeremiah 10-20 is hotly disputed.[6]

The procedure adopted here involves examining of the

role and function of the confessions in isolation, then

examining their role and function in their final context.[7]

The final redaction of the confessions in Jeremiah

reveals a strengthening of legal emphasis; an increased

representative role for Jeremiah; a greater paradigmatic

function for the confessions; and, a new explanatory

function for the confessions. Each of these issues has

ramifications for the degree of corporality of the "I" of

the confessions and will be examined in turn.

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[5]This creates the further possibility that the
redactional meaning of the confessions differs in the MT
and the LXX (A.R. Diamond, "Jeremiah's Confessions", 33-
50).

[6]Smith points out that scholars use a variety of
approaches in their analysis of this section of the book
of Jeremiah. Some (eg McKane) decline to offer any unit
divisions; others (eg Holladay) use thematic criteria.
Still others (eg Carrol, Diamond, O'Connor) use
structural criteria (Laments, 31-32). Our analysis
follows the approach of McKane which Smith observes, "may
represent the better part of wisdom". He adds, "there
are numerous difficulties involved in delimiting the
units within chapters 11-20" (Laments, 32).

[7]Limitations of time and space mean that no attempt
will be made to trace any extended hypothetical history
of redaction with related development in the role and
function of the confessions.

The Role and Function of the Confessions

In his review of A.R. Diamond's dissertation on the confessions, L. Stulman makes the wide ranging assertion that:

> the confessions, in my opinion, are far too
> diverse and complex to be subsumed under a
> single rubric or literary function, and
> D[iamond]'s very fine contextual analysis does
> as much at times to disprove his thesis as to
> prove it. Several poems, for example, depict
> Jeremiah as a paradigm of the suffering servant
> (suffering thereafter need not be looked upon
> as shameful but rather as a consequence of
> obedience to Yahweh); others serve as a defence
> of Jeremiah's prophetic integrity ...; still
> others are apparently intended to shatter
> popular notions regarding the Zion-temple cult.
> All of these motifs seems [sic] to *stand on
> their own without any direct dependence upon
> the theodicy theme.*[8]

Stulman's views are overstated. There does not seem to be any evidence that the confessions were attempting to counter popular notions regarding the "Zion-temple cult".[9] Likewise, the confessions--in and of themselves--do not depict Jeremiah as a "suffering servant".[10]

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[8]L. Stulman, "Review of The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic Drama, by A.R. Diamond, JSOTSS 45 (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1987)", CBQ 51 (1989), 317-18, emphasis original.

[9]Smith, Laments, 27

[10]H.G. May draws attention to parallels between the "servant songs" and the confessions which he proposes can be explained in terms of a common dependence on the individual lament Gattung ("The Righteous Servant in Second Isaiah's Songs", ZAW 66 [1954], 236-44). However, it does not necessarily follow that Jeremiah and the author of the servant songs used that Gattung with an identical intention in mind.

The theme that stands out clearly within the
confessions is that of Jeremiah's prophetic legitimacy.
This fact can be demonstrated in a number of different
ways. It is significant that the closest parallels to
the confessions in the book of Jeremiah are found in the
account of Jeremiah's call (Jer 1:4-18).[11] Throughout the

The position of A.H.J. Gunneweg should also be noted
here. He argues that the purpose of the confessions is
to portray Jeremiah as the exemplar of the righteous
sufferer ("Konfession oder Interpretation im
Jeremiabuch", ZTK 67 [1970], 395-416). This would make
the Jeremiah of the confessions at least partially
parallel to the Isaian "Suffering Servant"--who is
clearly a righteous figure who suffers meaningfully (Isa
53:4-6). Interestingly, C.R. North lists B. Duhm and K.
Holzhey as scholars who "saw in the Servant a type of
the suffering righteous man and of the people in its
ideal calling" and observes that the same theme is found
in the meditation on fourth servant song found in Wisdom
of Solomon 5:1-7 (The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah
[London: Oxford University Press, 1948], 4,8). Such a
position is very similar to that of Gunneweg on the
Confessions.

However, Gunneweg's entire position on the
confessions has been sujected to rigorous critique
(Clines and Gunn, "Jeremiah 20", 400-01). We would add
one further criticism: in seeing the Jeremiah of the
confessions as the exemplar of the righteous sufferer
Gunneweg has confused the teaching of the confessions as
such with later reflections on them by others (cf Polk,
Prophetic Persona, 128-30). In this Blank's comments are
suggestive: "Putting on the record his confessions,
Jeremiah set in motion the process by which he became a
paradigm". He further suggests that this process
continues in the production of the servant songs
("Paradigm", 126-27).

[11]The parallels are so strong that J.L. Mihelic,
includes the call passage (Jer 1:4-19) in his list of
confessions ("Dialogue with God", 43). This
classification is not helpful. The account of the call
is clearly different from the confessions (Holladay,
Jeremiah, 1: 358), but it does highlight the
relationship.

E.D. Lewin argues that the function of the call

confessions, Jeremiah faces opposition, apparently from

other prophets as much as anyone else (Jer 18:18 cf 2:8;

5:30).[12] The words of his opponents echo his own.[13]

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account is to affirm the legitimacy of Jeremiah's
ministry. In other words this account was proclaimed
publicly at some stage ("Arguing for Authority", 108).

[12]Jer 18:18 lists three specific classes of people
that Jeremiah appears to have clashed with: prophets,
priests and wise men. These clashes lead to plots
against Jeremiah. Holladay argues that the connection
between this verse and the rest of the confession is
original and not secondary. He concludes that the
plotters refered to in verse 18 are, in fact, the
optimistic prophets refered to in the rest of the unit
(Jeremiah, 1: 528-30 cf Baumgartner, Poems, 56-59).
     An alternative explaination is offered by McKane who
regards the connection between verse 18 (prose) and
verses 19-23 (poetry) as secondary (Jeremiah, 1: 437 cf
Jones, Jeremiah, 260; Diamond, Prophetic Drama, 91;
O'Connor, Confessions, 55-57; Wimmer, "Prophetic
Experience", 270-76). The opponents in verse 18 are thus
unspecified ("they") and not to be limited to the
optimistic prophets. Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard
suggest the plotters are "the people as a whole"
(Jeremiah 1-25, 253).

[13]Magonet, "Last Confession", 309. M. Fishbane makes
the same point specifically with regard to Jer 20:8,10--
חָמָס וָשֹׁד ("violence and destruction") is a cry against the
violence in his society (6:7) now transformed to express
the violence used against the prophet, perhaps even by
God. The mocking מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב ("terror all around") used
against him is Jeremiah's own phrase of warning used
against Pashhur earlier in the chapter (20:3) and
elsewhere in the Book (6:2; 46:5; 49:29). The verbs פָּתָה
("entice") and יָכֹל ("to be able") which he used of God's
power over him express the desire of his enemies to
overcome the prophet. The נְקָמָה ("your retribution") which
is seen below (v. 12) and elsewhere (17:10) as a divine
prerogative (Ps 94:1) is here the expressed wish of his
enemies against him" (Text and Texture: Close Readings of
Selected Biblical Texts [New York: Schocken, 1979], 98-
99).

There are allusions to his prophetic messages

sprinkled through the confessions. Although his

opponents reject his message (Jer 11:21) and seek to

silence his voice (Jer 11:19; 18:20, 23a),[14] Jeremiah

affirms that he has been faithful to his calling (Jer

15:16)[15] and lived worthily of it (Jer 15:10, 17;[16] 17:16).

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[14]Smith interprets עֵץ ("tree") Jer 11:19 as Jeremiah
and בְּלַחְמוֹ ("with its fruit") as his message (Laments, 4).
The later expression is the more difficult of the two.
Holladay proposes repointing it to לְחֻמֵּ ("his opponents")
which moves the focus from Jeremiah's message to his
opposition (Jeremiah, 1: 372-73). Numerous other
attempts have been made by translators (from the LXX
onwards) and scholars to render the expression meaninful.
A convenient summary is provided by McKane, (Jeremiah, 1:
256-58). Perhaps the best solution is that of McKane who
proposes a repointing to בְּלֵחֹמ, giving rise to the
translation: "Let us cut down the tree while the sap is
in it" (Jeremiah, 1: 258). The focus would than appear
to remain on Jeremiah rather than move to his message.

[15]J. Lundbom lists five important evidences that Jer
15:16-20 refer to Jeremiah's prophetic call:
1.   Jeremiah's eating of God's words (Jer 15:16) is
      reminiscent of Ezekiel's call (Ez 3:1);
2.   Jeremiah was given God's name, signifying
      ownership;
3.   Jeremiah's social isolation (Jer 15:17) recalls
      Ezekiel's reaction to his call (Ez 3:15);
4.   Jeremiah experiences God's "hand" on him (Jer
      15:17) just as Ezekiel did at his call (Ez
      3:14);
5.   In Jer 15:19 the phrase "you will be my mouth"
      echoes the account of the call (Jer 1:9) and
      the promises of Jer 15:20 summarise the
      promises given at the time of Jeremiah's call
      (Jer 1:18-19). ("Jeremiah 15:15-21 and the Call
      of Jeremiah", SJOT 9 (1995), 147-48.
For a discussion of some of the problems relating to
verse 16 (which is vital to Lundbom's argumentation), see
above, chapter 4 footnote 67).

[16]The phrase מִפְּנֵי יָדְךָ ("under the weight of your hand")
refers to the prophetic call, or perhaps more generally
to "prophetic inspiration" (McKane, Jeremiah, 1:354-55;

However, in cursing the day of his birth he attempts to repudiate his call (Jer 20:14-18; 15:18),[17] which he sees as the cause of his pain (Jer 20:7-8). Possible allusions to Moses in the confessions highlight the theme of prophetic legitimisation.[18] The divine response to

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Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:460).

[17]For details of what is implied in such a curse see, T. Jacobsen and K. Nielsen, "Cursing the Day", SJOT 6 (1992), 187-204.
Jeremiah is pictured as having been called from birth (G.V. Smith, "The Use of Quotations in Jeremiah 15:11-14", VT 29 [1979], 230 cf Holladay, Jeremiah 1: 563). Lewin denies that Jeremiah is repudiating his ministry and suggests that he is simply describing what being a true prophet of God entails in his time ("Arguing for Authority", 116-17). This approach certainly ties the passage into the overall theme of prophetic legitimisation. Wang goes further and denies any connection between Jer 20:14-17 and Jeremiah's call ("Frustration", 39).
There are certainly difficulties in the traditional understanding of Jer 20:14-18. The centrality of the "messenger" is crucial in this regard and a number of proposals have been made made in an attempt to alieviate the difficulty. Holladay conveniently summarizes them (Jeremiah, 1: 560-66).
However, if Lewin has correctly understood Jeremiah's intention, the prophet uses extremely strong language to make his point. Jones notes that he has used "*the strongest possible terms* to express the truth that he did not wish to deliver the terrible message that was given to him" (Jeremiah, 272).
Furthermore, it is difficult to construe Jer 15:18 (despite a textual variant in the LXX) as anything other than a virtual repudiation of Jeremiah's prophetic calling (Bright, "Prophet's Lament", 330). It is followed by a call for him to repent (שוב, "turn back") and a reissuing of the promises first given to him at his call (Jer 15: 19-21 cf 1:18-19).

[18]According to J.E. Levenson, the call of Moses is echoed in Jer 20:9 where fire and the word of God are connected ("Some Unnoticed Connotations in Jeremiah 20:9", CBQ 46, [1984], 225). Wimmer draws attention to the fact that Moses "sits alone" (Ex 18:14) just as

Jeremiah's laments alludes to his prophetic call and re-

issues that call (Jer 15:19-21 cf 15:11).[19]

It is clear that the primary function of the

confessions was originally to defend the integrity of

Jeremiah's prophetic vocation. This fact suggests that,

contrary to common opinion, the confessions may have been

Jeremiah does in Jer 15:17 ("Prophetic Experience", 218).

[19]The phrase אִם־לֹוא הִפְגַּעְתִּי בְךָ בְּעֵת רָעָה ("surely I have imposed
enemies on you in a time of trouble") may allude to
Jeremiah's prophetic call. Unfortunately, the contextual
setting is subject to a range of textual, syntactical and
interpretive difficulties that certainty is impossible
here (Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 327).
The MT makes God the speaker in verse 11 (אָמַר יְהוָה,
"Yahweh said"). However in the LXX the speaker is
Jeremiah (γένοιτο δέσποτα, "Be it so, Lord" from אָמַר יְהוָה).
Many commentators accept the LXX (eg Muilenburg,
"Confession", 15; Bright, Jeremiah, 109; Hyatt,
"Jeremiah", 939-40, Patterson, "Jeremiah", 548, Jones,
Jeremiah, 221) but Holladay accepts the MT--although he
concedes that the text is corrupt (Jeremiah, 1: 446 cf
Carroll, Jeremiah, 327).
The meaning of the verb פגע in this context is
disputed. Its basic meaning is "to meet, encounter,
reach" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, Lexicon, 803). However,
such an enounter could be hostile or friendly. It could
lead one to entreat. Thus a variety of translations are
offered: "intervened" (NRSV; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:447);
"those who survive" (McKane, Jeremiah 1:343); "inflicted
you" (Diamond, Confessions, 52), "rendered suppliant"
(Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience"); "entreated you"
(Muilenburg, "Confession", 15; O'Connor, Confessions,
27).
On Holladay's reading of the verse אִם־לֹוא הִפְגַּעְתִּי בְךָ בְּעֵת רָעָה
is seen as parallel to אִם־לֹא שֵׁרִותִךָ לְטֹוב. He translated this
phrase "I swear, 'I have armoured you'" As such it would
prepare the way for the reference to "iron and bronze"
(echoing the call narrative, 1:18) in the following
verse. Thus verse 11 may refer to the trials of
prophetic ministry and God's provision to meet them
(Jeremiah, 1:453-54).

uttered publicly.[20] It follows in the original setting of

the confessions that the "I" was clearly and exclusively

individualistic, applying to Jeremiah himself.

The theme of prophetic legitimisation is still quite

clear in the finally redacted form of the confessions,[21]

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[20]So J.L. Berquist, "Prophetic Legitimation in
Jeremiah", VT 39 (1989), 135-37 cf Berridge, Word of
Yahweh, 157; Wimmer, "Confessions", 71-77. O'Connor
suggests that the "public" utterance may have been
limited to Jeremiah's "support group" (Confessions, 96).
(On the role and necessity of a "support group" in
relation to prophetic activity see R.R. Wilson, Prophecy
and Society in Ancient Israel [Philadelphia: Fortress,
1980], 28-32; 51-62; 76-83).
More typically Blank describes public utterance of
the confessions by Jeremiah as "improbable" ("Paradigm",
122; cf Muilenburg, "Confession", 16). It should be
remembered that it would not be at all difficult to
compile a sizeable list of "improbable" things which the
prophets are portrayed as doing. For example, is the
public proclamation of the confessions any more
improbable than Ezekiel acting out some of his dramatic
parables? Ironically, Blank sees these acted parables as
analogous to the publication of the confessions
("Paradigm", 124).

[21]A good introduction to this theme is found in
Berquist, "Prophetic Legitimation", 129-39. The
following points should be noted in particular. It is
recognised by a number of scholars that the call account
and the final confessions form an inclusio around a major
block of material (Lundbom, Jeremiah, 48; Lewin, "Arguing
for Authority", 106). This inclusio effect emphasises
the theme of prophetic legitimisation within that
section.
It should also be noted that the veiled possible
allusions to the call of Moses in the confessions are
matched by much clearer allusions outside the confessions
(eg Jer 15:1). The issue here is not primarily prophetic
legitimisation, but the futility of intercession.
However, the effective placement of Jeremiah in the
company of Moses and Samuel also serves to indicate that
his ministry is as legitimate as theirs. Seitz suggests
that a key theological concern in the prohibition against
intercession given to Jeremiah, his confessions and the
direct connection with Moses in Jer 15:1 is to show that

but it has been overlayed with other meanings and
emphases.

The Confessions in Context

Greater Explanatory Function

The position and final redaction of the confessions
helps to provide an explanation of the exile as part of
the development of this topic within the book of
Jeremiah. One of the themes of the book is that Israel
had been faithless and had not heeded the voice of God
heard through the prophets. The clearest example of this
is the rejection of Jeremiah, as explicitly stated in Jer
16:10-12.[22]

he is part of the succession of of true prophets
envisaged by the Deuteronomists ("Canonical Shape", 5-
12).

As Smith points out, the word שֵׁם ("name") helps tie
the unit Jer 13-15 together. In this section Jeremiah
(Jer 15:16), the people (Jer 14:9), and the false
prophets (Jer 14:14) all lay claim to the divine name.
The focus on prophetic integrity and efficacy is made
even sharper by explicit reference to it in Jer 14:17-19;
15:18 (Smith, Laments, 51). A similar phenomena occurs
in chapter 20 with the juxtaposing of מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב ("terror is
all around") in the confession (Jer 20:10) and in the
conflict story which precedes it (Jer 20:3).

There are also incidental hostile notes regarding
the [false] prophets scattered throughout Jer 10-20 (eg
Jer 13:13; 14:18).

[22]The clear antecedent of the charge that "they have
not listened to me" (16:12) is the failure of Israel to
listen to Jeremiah depicted in 15:19. The reference to
God's words in 15:16 also seems to be relevant here.

The same theme of Israel's faithlessness can be seen in the first two confessions. In the preceding block of material, God complains that

> they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of an evil will. So I brought upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do, but they did not (Jer 11:8).

This complaint is followed by an affirmation that Israel's doom was certain (Jer 11:15), followed by an example of Israel's rejection of God's word (in the first confession, especially verse 21). The second confession is immediately followed by God's statement of his intention to forsake Israel (Jer 12:7). The reason is again Israel's failure to "listen" (Jer 12:17; c.f., 13:10). The confessions thus fit into their redactional context here as examples of the sins of Israel which led inevitably to the exile.[23]

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[23]Jer 12:4, which is notably obscure and is often regarded as being secondary, or, at least misplaced, (Peake, Jeremiah, 1: 186; Bright, Jeremiah, 87; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 916; Rowley, "Interpretation", 221)--seems to make the same point: the land suffers because of the wickedness of the people living in it. However, Jeremiah is not concerned with wickedness in general, but specifically with the people's wickedness in rejecting him and his divine message (Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 180, 192). How does the land suffer? The verse itself suggests drought; the wider context suggests exile.

The transition from drought to exile is a feature of the sixth confession (Jer 18:21-22) and other parts of Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 14, especially verses 1-11). Martin Kessler points out that the structure of 14:8-9 emphasises "Yahweh's seeming absence"--a prominent theme in the confessions ("From Drought to Exile: A Morphological Study of Jer 14:1-15:4", Society of

The redactional setting of Jer 17:14-18 should also be noted. The chapter begins with a threat of exile (Jer 17:1-4). This threat is followed by a lengthy Deuteronomically flavoured explanation that trusting God leads to blessing, but rejecting him results in curses (Jer 17:5-13; c.f., Deut 28:1-68).[24] This section closes

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Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 1972, 2: 506). A number of other features of this chapter also echo the confessions: Yahweh as a "mighty warrior" (14:9 cf 20:11); the abiding knowledge of prophets and priests (14:18 cf 18:18); the lack of healing (14:19 cf 15:18; 17:14); the theme of "terror" (14:19 cf 17:17; 20:10); and, people being called by God's name (14:9 cf 15:16).

Of course, it needs to be recognised that this concentration of ideas in chapter 14 may be as much a result of redactional activity as is the proximity of this material to the confessions. The chapter is made up of material produced in disparate *Gattungen* and posssibly on disparate occasions (Skinner, Prophecy, 128; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 929; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 199-200; Bright, Jeremiah, 103; contra Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 422).

[24]The parallels with Deuteronomy are noted by Jones, Jeremiah, 240. Others have stressed the parallels with the more strongly individualized wisdom literature (eg Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 352).

Holladay includes 17:5-8 to his list of confessions (Jeremiah, 1: 3-8 cf Thompson, Jeremiah, 419). This view has not won much support. (Hyatt points out that the poem's viewpoint is quite at variance with Jeremiah's own experience ["Jeremiah", 951-52] cf Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL 353). More commonly, the passage is regarded as a late addition to Jeremiah which is largely based on Ps 1 (eg Bright, Jeremiah, 119 cf Jones, Jeremiah, 241, and, Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 951 who argue for dependency of Ps 1 on Jer 17). However, a pre-occupation with sources and "authenticity" hinders an appreciation of the meaning of the passage in its final context.

An allusion to international alliances has commonly been seen in the phrase "trust[ing] in mere mortals" (Peake, Jeremiah, 1: 222; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 952; Holladay, Jeremiah, 491-92; Jones, Jeremiah, 240). The precise nature of the curse is not specified but the context (Jer 17:4) suggests a reference to the exile

with a hymnic declaration that all who forsake Yahweh

will be "put to shame" (Jer 17:13). It is followed

immediately by the confessional material (Jer 17:14-18),

which climaxes with Jeremiah pleading with God to "let my

persecutors be shamed" (Jer 17:18). The chapter then

closes with another warning about the exile revolving

around the issue of Sabbath breaking (Jer 17:19-27).[25]

The clear implication of the final context is that the

"shame" Jeremiah speaks of is that of the exile. It

comes about because Israel has neither "heard" nor

"obeyed" God.[26] Her failure to hear is illustrated in her

attitude to Jeremiah; her failure to obey in her attitude

to the Sabbath.

The pattern is essentially the same with regard to

Jer 18:18-23. This confession is bracketed by reference

to Judah and Jerusalem becoming a "horror". In Jer

18:16, it has been made a horror by the abomination of

(Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 226-27). The
reference to "an uninhabited salt land" in verse 6 may
also be evocative of the exile. Similarly, the use of
עַרְעָר (ususally translated "shrub" or "juniper") may carry
connotation of "destitution" and be evocative of the
exile (McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 387-88).

[25]For the divergent opinions regarding the dating and
authenticity of Jer 17:19-27 see above chapter 4,
footnote 27.

[26]In Hebrew idiom the idea of "obeying" is often
inherent in "hearing" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, Lexicon,
s.v. שָׁמַע; G. Kittel, "ἀκούω, ἀκοή, εἰς-, ἐπ-, παρακούω, παρακοή,
ὑπακούω, ὑπακοή, ὑπήκοος", TDNT, edited by G. Kittel and G.
Friedrich [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964-76], 1:
217-219).

idolatry; in Jer 19:7-9 it will be made an abomination by the ravages of siege and capture. The reason is clearly stated: Israel has failed to follow God's word (Jer 18:12; 19:4). This theme is then illustrated in the confession (Jer 18:18). In response to this rejection, Jeremiah prays for the destruction of his enemies in language reminiscent of the description he gives of the destruction of those who reject God (Jer 18:21-22; c.f., 19:6-9).

In a similar way, the final two confessions (Jer 20:7-18) are bracketed with explicit descriptions of the horror of exile and captivity (Jer 20:4-6; 21:3-10). The confessions are linked to the context by the use of "מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב" ("terror all around")[27] as a name for Passhur (Jer 20:3) and is a summary of Jeremiah's preaching (Jer 20:10).[28] His message is rejected because it is a message of doom (Jer 20:8-10), but it is the acceptance of that message which holds the only hope of escaping the impending doom (Jer 21:8-10).

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[27]For a discussion of issues relating to this expression see above, chapter 4, footnote 86.

[28]Bright suggests the expression was used as a derisive nickname for Jeremiah derived from the content of his preaching (Jeremiah, 132-33).
    One might compare Floyd's suggestion that Jer 15:13-14 (often regarded as a misplaced doublet of 17:3-4) is actually a deliberate "precis of the revelation that Jeremiah has received and proclaimed" ("Prophetic Complaints", 412).

It is significant to note that the confessions are interwoven with pericopes in which Jeremiah is commanded not to intercede for the people (11:14-17; 14:11-12; 15:1 cf 7:16).[29] Thus the theme of his rejection is juxtaposed with the theme of the people's irrevocable rejection by God.

Jeremiah as Paradigm

The completion of the book of Jeremiah during (or after) the exile[30] meant that the finished product initially spoke to people who were suffering and to whom God would have appeared to be distant.[31] The experiences of Jeremiah which are reflected in the confessions speak powerfully to such people. That such a reading of the confessions was intended by the final editors of the book is indicated by a number of crucial placements.

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[29]"It is worth noting that the several passages reflecting this same theme [prohibition against intercession] are gathered together in one restricted section of the book, and that they occupy roughly the same location as the laments of the prophet (chs. 11-20)", (Seitz, "Canonical Shape", 8).

[30]Regardless of the process whereby the book of Jeremiah was produced, it clearly was not *completed* until the exilic or post-exilic period. The events described in Jeremiah 52 clearly took place long after Jeremiah's demise. This fact is conceded even by those who give Jeremiah and Baruch a significant role in the production of the book (Holladay, Jeremiah, 2: 439).

[31]For the feelings of desolation experienced by the exiles see especially Psalm 137. Even a cursory glance at Ezra indicates the Jews in Palestine in the early post-exilic period were dispirited and discouraged.

The paradigmatic nature of the confessions in their redactional context is illustrated by the first two confessions. In the first confession, Jeremiah is referred to by the image of a tree (11:19).[32] This simple image is given deeper significance when the wider context is taken into account: God describes Israel as a tree laden with olives (11:16). What Jeremiah's enemies propose to do to him God is going to do to the entire nation.

Blank draws attention to the fact that in the middle of the confessions there occurs a passage in which Jeremiah is clearly described in paradigmatic terms--Jer 16:1-10.[33] This passage picks up the "mother" imagery which Holladay and O'Connor highlight in Jeremiah 14-15.[34]

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[32]The contrast between Jeremiah and his opponents is highlighted by the juxtaposing of the first two confessions. In the second confession it is the opponents who are described (although not named) as trees laden with fruit.

[33]Blank, "Paradigm", 123. In terms of the paradigm, what Jeremiah experiences now, Israel will experience later. It should be noted that Blank does not primarily argue his case from redactional evidence but from psychological probability. He suggests that the paradigmatic nature of the confessions may have become evident to Jeremiah himself who subsequently authorised their publication ("Paradigm", 124-25). The events surrounding the confession of Baruch are suggested as a likely catalyst for this development. It must be stressed that the paradigmatic nature of the confessions in their redactional context does not depend on such hypothetical reconstructions.

[34]Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 422; O'Connor, Confessions, 107).

Smith goes further and links this "mother" imagery to

other feminine imagery in chapters 13-15.[35] The presence

of mother imagery in this context (Jer 13:21; 15:7-9)

resonates with the reference to Jeremiah's mother in the

confessional material (15:10-14). Indeed, in the

context, the fate of the city and people is parallel to

the fate that Jeremiah himself is already experiencing.[36]

The logic of the paradigmatic role of the

confessions in their final redactional setting becomes

even more apparent if the proposals of Patterson

regarding the structure of the book are accepted.[37] He

suggests that the structure of the book grows out of the

twofold nature of the call of Jeremiah to be a prophet:

first to the nations (Jer 1:4-12), and second to his own

nation (Jer 1:13-19).[38] These two themes are then

developed in inverse order in the two major blocks of

material in the book (Jer 2-24; 25-51). Thus the

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[35]Smith, Laments, 51-52. These female images include
the hypothetical title הָרְבָּה--emended to the feminine form
from the MT's הָרְב ("great")--(Jer 13:9); the symbolic use
of "prostitute" (Jer 13:22, 26-27); Jerusalem's
lamentation (Jer 14:2); and, the phrase בְּתוּלַת בַּת־עַמִּי ("virgin
daughter" (Jer 14:17).

[36]Smith, Laments, 52. Smith actually uses the word
"paradigmatic" to describe Jeremiah's role in the
extended unit.

[37]Patterson, "Literary Clues", 109-31. Acceptance of
Patterson's views regarding the authorship of Jeremiah--
that the entire book (poetry and prose) has its origin in
Jeremiah or Baruch--is not inherent in acceptance of his
view of structure.

[38]Patterson, "Literary Clues", 113-14.

confessions form an integral part of the proclamation concerned with Judah. Their inclusion in such a setting certainly suggests a paradigmatic role for them.[39]

The "I" at this point remains the individual Jeremiah and yet the focus is not on him as much as it is on the community. Jeremiah is important because he is a model for Israel in crisis.[40]

Heightening of Judicial Emphasis

We have already noted that Jeremiah's use of the law suit *Gattung* always has a corporate reference.[41] The editing of the confessions heightens their judicial flavouring and by implication increases the degree of their corporality. This is especially evident in the placement of Jer 12:1-6 immediately after Jer 11:18-23. Wimmer points out that this sequence creates the impression of an "appeal" after a verdict has been

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[39]It must also be recognised that as attractive as Patterson's proposed structure is, other scholars present quite different proposals for structuring the book. For an alternative view, see A. Rofé, "The Arrangement of the Book of Jeremiah", ZAW 101 (1989), 390-98. P. House proposes yet another structure based on an analysis of plot ("Plot, Prophecy and Jeremiah", JETS 36 [1993], 297-306).

[40]Blank, "Paradigm", 111-130.

[41]See Chapter 2, above.

rendered.[42]   However, he does not recognise that the

sequencing is secondary.[43]

Another area where redaction has served to heighten

the judicial emphasis is the placement of 17:12-13

immediately before the fifth confession.[44]   Here the

effect is more subtle.[45]   However, verse 12-13 are

variously described as a "doxology of judgment"[46] or a

"judgment oracle".[47]   The juxtaposing of the two units

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[42]Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience", 174-78.

[43]Smith, Laments, 43.

[44]A number of scholars think that Jer 17:12-18 should
be treated as a single unit (Baumgartner, Poems, 53;
Berridge, Prophet, 160; Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience",
235-237; Jones, Jeremiah, 243-46; Polk, Persona, 133;).
However, most divide the passage into (at least) two
units (Chambers, "Prophetic Ambiguity", 69-70; O'Connor,
Confessions, 46-48; Bright, Jeremiah, 111; McKane,
Jeremiah, 1: 402-05; Carroll, Jeremiah, 361; Holladay,
Jeremiah, 1: 501-02; Nicholson, Jeremiah, 1: 155-59;
Thompson, Jeremiah, 423-26; Brueggemann, Pluck Up, 154-
58; Overholt, "Jeremiah", 623; Counturier, "Jeremiah",
316-17; Diamond, Confessions, 80-81; Lundbom, Jeremiah,
88; Feinberg, "Jeremiah", 485-88; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 954-
56; Smith, Laments, 15-18).
   The crucial argument for separating verses 12-13
from 14-18 is the shift from first person plural in the
earlier block to first person singular in the latter
(Diamond, Confessions, 80).   Verses 5-8 (and possibly vvs
9-10) appear to have more in common thematically with the
confession than with vvs. 12-13 (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:
501).

[45]The majority of people who read the two units in
close conjunction still regard the confession as an
individual lament.   Even Wimmer acknowledges that "the
judicial component may be barely obvious at first"
("Prophetic Experience", 237).

[46]Brueggemann, "Pluck Up, 154.

[47]Diamond, Confessions, 166-67.

means that Jeremiah's confession is introduced by a

pericope which focuses attention on the elevated throne

of God--his judgement seat.[48] The overall effect is to

make the confession into a lament before an incorruptible

judge.

The effect of this juxtaposition on the "I" of this

confession is less subtle. There is a clear corporate

reference in verses 12-13, with the clearest Psalmonic

parallel for such an introduction being in the community

lament Psalm 80.[49] This parallel confirms the overall

tendency of Jeremiah to use "lawsuits" corporately.

Jeremiah as a Representative Figure[50]

The representative role of Jeremiah is heightened by

the editing of the confessions themselves. The placement

of Jer 15:13-14 between vss. 10-12 and vss. 15-21

clearly indicates a representative role. Of course, if

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[48]Wimmer traces this theme throughout the Psalms
("Prophetic Experience", 237-38). He further points out
that such an introductory focus is characteristic of
earlier Sumerian invocations--which clearly had a
judicial focus (Ibid. 236; c.f., Baumgartner, Poems, 53).

[49]Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 500 cf Carroll, Jeremiah,
358.

[50]The concepts of Jeremiah as a "paradigm" and as a
"representative figure" obviously overlap. The most
significant difference is that the concept of paradigm
suggests the idea of a model to be copied, whereas a
representative figure stands in the place of another
person or group (The Macquarie Encyclopedia Dictionary,
edited by A. Delbridge, Sydney: Macquarie Library, 1992,
685, 806).

verses 13-14 are taken as original to this setting in the confession,[51] the representative nature of Jeremiah is inherent in the confession. However, it is reinforced by the repetition of the major ideas contained in Jer 17:3-4. What happens to Jeremiah is a "type" of Israel's fate.[52]

God's response to Jeremiah's third confession in Jer 15:11 hinges on the word "enemies"--just as Jeremiah's complaint focuses on his opponents. The enemies are immediately associated with national enemies by the use

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[51]So Reventlow, Liturgie, 210-12; Wimmer, "Prophetic Experience", 194-96; Thompson, Jeremiah, 393-94 cf Jones, Jeremiah, 219-20, who considers the redactional unity of the passage impossible to unpick. However most commentators see these verses as secondary in this context, even if authentic to Jeremiah (eg Peake, Jeremiah, 1: 211; Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 941; Nicholson, Jeremiah, 1: 138; Baumgartner, Poems, 46-51, 71-73; O'Connor, Confessions, 37; McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 345; Patterson, "Jeremiah", 548; Bright, Jeremiah, 109-10; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1:449). The arguments they adduce for such a position are powerful. These are listed by O'Connor as: a) Verses 13-14 do not fit into the context of the confession, addressing first the people (v. 13) and then the prophet (v. 14); b) the verses function in a similar way to redactional additions to earlier confessions--explaining and expanding the previous verse; c) the verses contradict verse 15 in which Jeremiah prays for God's vengeance promised in verse 14.

[52]It can also be noted that Jeremiah's reference to God as a "waters that fail" (Jer 15:18) echoes the description of the Israelite leaders failure to find water during the drought (Jer 14:3). The drought is a punishment for the nation's sins (Jer 14:7). Once again Jeremiah seems to be experiencing something of the nation's punishment as a paradigm.

of the word בַּרְזֶל ("iron") in verse 12.[53] The clear

implication is that verses 13-14 refer to the Babylonian

exile. If such is the case, Israel is being addressed,

and not Jeremiah. He was never an exile *in Babylon*.

The representative nature of Jer 15:13-14 is

reinforced by the material that is placed between the

fourth confession and Jer 17:3-4. Chapter 16 opens with

two acted parables: Jeremiah's failure to marry (Jer

16:1-4) and his failure to engage in mourning rituals

(Jer 16:5-9). In both of these acted parables Jeremiah

represents the nation's future.[54]

To these parables is appended an explanation, (Jer

16:10-13) which was probably originally an independent

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[53]The theme of the foe from the North is important in
Jeremiah. References are made to it within the
redactional context of the confessions (Jer 13:20 cf
16:15). This theme has generated a great deal of
discussion. (See, above, chapter 3, footnote 69).

[54]At this point the distinction between
"representative" and "paradigm" is admittedly becoming
blurred. However, "representative" is suggested here by
the use of the term "parable".

piece.[55] In it the thought of Israel serving in a land

they have not known is repeated.[56]

Chapter 16 ends with a collection of material

referring to the restoration of Israel (verses 14-21).

This material picks up an important theme from Jer 15:13-

14--the land. Israel has been scattered to a land she

does not know (Jer 15:13; c.f., 16:13; 17:3-4) but the

people are now promised a return to "their own land"

(16:14), which God calls "my land" (16:18).[57]

This section not only picks up a key theme from the

redactional addition to the confessions, it is replete

with echoes of the third and fourth confessions

themselves. Thus צָפוֹן ("north") in Jer 16:15 echoes (and

explains) the usage in Jer 15:12. The description of God

as Israel's עֹז ("strength"), מָעוֹז ("stronghold"), and מָנוֹס

("refuge") (Jer 16:19) reflects his promises to Jeremiah

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[55]The acted parables are generally regarded as authentic to Jeremiah (eg Bright, Jeremiah, 112; Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 468; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 216) but verses 10-13 have often been labelled Deuteronomic (Hyatt, "Jeremiah", 946; Carroll, Jeremiah, 342; Jones, Jeremiah, 232; McKane, Jeremiah, 1: 369). Furthermore, Holladay points to the absence of shared vocabulary between the two sections as evidence of their redactional juxtaposing (Jeremiah, 1: 467).

[56]Both Jer 15:14 and 17:4 (cf 5:19) speak of serving "your enemies", whereas 16:13 refers to serving "other gods". However, the meaning of the two phrases is closely related. The chief servant of the Babylonian gods was the king, who was also the leader of Israel's enemies (Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 190-91).

[57]In the fourth confession it is Jeremiah (not the land) which is "called by your [ie God's] name.

(Jer 15:20-21). The theme of Israel's restoration in the entire section develops the theme of God taking Jeremiah "back" (Jer 15:19). The nations will be "taught" by Israel's restoration (Jer 17:21), just as Israel will be taught by "God's mouth" upon Jeremiah's return to his task (15:19). The promise to punish Babylon (16:17-18) echoes Jeremiah's petition that his opponents be punished (15:15).[58]

By the addition of Jer 15:13-14 to the third confession and by the placement of the confessional material in close relationship with Jer 16:1-17:4, the significance of the confessions has been changed. Jeremiah is still clearly visible, but once again the focus has subtlely moved from him to the community which he represents.

Conclusion

The confessions of Jeremiah grew out of his individual experience as a prophet to recalcitrant Israel. They were a crucial feature in his attempts to establish his credentials with the people. However, by

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[58]It may be objected that the lament of Jeremiah--the essence of his confession--is not developed in the redactional setting. This point has to be conceded. However, the clear evidence that Jeremiah here serves as a representative character implies that his lamentation was representative also. For clear evidence that the exilic community did in fact lament their fate as Jeremiah did see Ps 137.

the time the book of Jeremiah was compiled/written

(during or after the exile), that battle had been won.

Through a redactional process which impacted on the

confessions in three ways (within the text, in the

ordering of the confessional units, and in the placement

of material in proximity to the confessions), the focus

of the confessions was changed. More attention is now

drawn to the culpability of the nation in rejecting

Jeremiah than to his attempts at defending his prophetic

integrity. The nation's attitude to Jeremiah,

illustrated in the confessions, is seen as the

culmination of their failure to listen to God's word, a

failure which ultimately leads to their exile in Babylon.

Jeremiah is transformed into both a paradigmatic and

representative figure. The judicial atmosphere (which in

Jeremiah has corporate overtones) is subtly heightened.

The fact of Jeremiah's individualist confessions

being put to more corporate use should neither surprise

nor disturb us. An analogous process can be seen with

regard to the book of Psalms. Numerous royal Psalms have

been democratised and used by common people.[59] This

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[59]Thus, while there is no absolute consensus
regarding the original function of Psalm 23, Croft lists
the following evidence for it being a royal Psalm: a.
evidence of royal style ("my shepherd", verse 1); b.
evidence of a special relationship between the Psalmist
and God; c. the victory banquet in the presence of the
king; and, d. annointing with oil (Identity, 130 cf J.H.
Eaton, Kingship in the Psalms, Studies in Biblical
Theology, Second Series 32 [London: SCM, 1976], 36-38)

process is thought to have begun possibly even before the

book of Psalms was completed.[60] An analogous trend--but

in the opposite direction--is seen with the confessions.

In their case, an originally individualist composition is

given a more corporate reference.[61]

Anderson regards the suggestion as "plausible" (Psalms 1-72, 196).

If Croft and Eaton are correct, this Psalm provides a good illustration of the democratization of the Royal Psalms for no other psalm has established itself in the affections and devotions of ordinary people (Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 208 cf E. Gerstenberger, Psalms [Part 1], FOTL 14 [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991], 114).

[60]Thus while Anderson considers it "plausible" that Ps 23 was originally a royal Psalm, he is adament that "it would not apply to its application in the post-Exilic community" (Psalms 1-72, 196). He further argues that the Psalms collection was not finalized in its present form until "the end of the third century BC" (page 28).

[61]Bellinger's comments, although made with the Psalms in view are equally relevant here: "A Psalm written for an individual's use could have been modified through the years to make it more applicable to the community in a changed situation" (Psalmody, 25).

Summary and Conclusion

The approach taken to the question of the "I" of the
confessions in this thesis has begun with the tools
provided by form criticism and finished by looking at the
final redaction of Jeremiah (especially chapters 10-21).
In so doing an attempt has been made to ascertain whether
the "I" in the confessions is a specific individual,
viz., the prophet Jeremiah, or a representative depiction
of the nation of Israel, of or a group within the nation.

This approach has been historical rather then
theological. Our argument has been cumulative and our
conclusions can be summarised as follows:

1. Jeremiah is familiar with the lawsuit *Gattung* and
it is used throughout the book. Its use is always
corporate in reference. The confessions do not fit this
Gattung form-critically, despite the attempts of Wimmer
to show otherwise.

2. Jeremiah is familiar with the individual lament
Gattung. His usage of this *Gattung* generally has a clear
individualistic reference. Those interpreters who see
the confessions corporately attempt to understand the
laments in a similar way (e.g., Robert Carroll).
However, in the individual laments there is generally a

clear distinction drawn between the lamenter and other

Israelites. The most likely reading of the laments is

that they have an individual reference. The only

exception to this pattern is those laments which are so

small that it is impossible to determine anything about

the identity of the lamenter (e.g., Jer 23:9). No

individual lament in Jeremiah has a clear corporate

reference.

Exactly the same pattern is seen with the

confessions. Many of them contain a clear

differentiation between the speaker and other Israelites.

None of them has a clear corporate reference, although

some appear to have corporate elements.

3. A theological analysis of the poetry and prose of

Jeremiah shows that the prose appears to reflect the

situation of the exile more than the poetry does.

However, the confessions have more points of contact with

the poetry then with the prose. This pattern is

confirmed by an analysis of vocabulary distribution.

These facts suggest an individualistic reference for the

confessions, since a corporate reference would be more

likely in a work of exilic origin.

4. The confessions originally functioned as a means

of prophetic legitimisation for Jeremiah. This fact

suggests that they were public utterances made by the

prophet during his life-time. However, this function is

not the only one they serve in the final redaction of the book of Jeremiah. The emphasis and focus of the confessions could be changed by three types of redaction: within the confessions, in the ordering of the confessions, and in the placement of the confessions in regard to other material.

The redaction of the confessions shows an increased concern to use them to explain the exile; to portray Jeremiah as a paradigmatic and representative figure; and to heighten their judicial "feel". The effect of this redaction is to move the focus from the individual Jeremiah to the community. Thus there is a increase in the corporate focus of the material.

In conclusion the material that was originally exclusively individualistic has been overlayed by corporate overtones in the process of redaction, so that today both individual and corporate features are readily discernible.

Appendix 1

VOCABULARY DISTRIBUTION IN THE CONFESSIONS

This appendix began as a series of working documents in the study of the confessions. It consists of four charts. The first chart shows the distribution of all the main words in the confessions. It consists of twelve columns. The first lists the words in the order in which new vocabulary is used in the confessions. Columns two to nine give the verse(s) containing the word spread while also indicating which block of confession material it comes from. Column ten gives the total number of times the word is used in the confessions; column eleven the total number of times it is used in Jeremiah; and, column twelve the total number of times it is used in Psalms.

In producing the chart some text variants and conjectural emendations in the confessions have been noted. No account has been taken of textual variants and conjectural emendations in the rest of the book of Jeremiah or in the book of Psalms. As a general rule particles, conjunctives, personal names, and pronouns have been left out of this chart. Hence, despite the

size of the chart, no claim can be made for its total

accuracy or comprehensiveness. It is a working document

designed to give an overview, no more. The vocabulary

distribution for the books of Jeremiah and Psalms were

worked out using The Vocabulary of the Old Testament by

F.I. Anderson and A.D. Forbes (where possible);[1]

Lisowsky's Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament and

Mendelkern's Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae

atque Chaldaicae have also been used.[2]

The second chart summarise the key data from chart

1. The items of vocabulary used more than twice in the

confessions are listed in the first column. The second

column gives the total number of times the word is used

in the confessions; the third column gives the number of

confessional blocks it is found in; and, the fourth

column gives the total number of times the word is used

in Jeremiah.

The third chart lists those words which are used in

the confessions, but are not found elsewhere in Jeremiah.

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[1]F.I. Anderson and A.D. Forbes, The Vocabulary of the
Old Testament (Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico,
Roma: 1992). Due to difference in lemmatization it was
not possible to use this book for totalling up the use of
verbs. It was also no help in getting totals for any
word that occurs less than forty times in the Old
Testament.

[2]G. Lisowsky, Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten
Testament (Stuttgart, Wüttembergische Bibelstalt: 1958);
S. Mandelkern, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae
atque Chaldaicae (Graz, Akademische Druck- U.
Verlagsanstalt: 1955).

This column indicates the distinctive confession vocabulary. The fourth chart gives the words used in the confessions and elsewhere in Jeremiah, but not in Psalms.

The form of the Hebrew words in all the charts is that which is found in the Brown, Driver and Briggs lexicon. Following the style of that lexicon, hypothetical forms are enclosed in square brackets

Chart 1: Vocabulary Distribution in the Confessions

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	11:18-23	12:1-6	15:10-14	15:15-21	17:14-18	18:18-23	20:7-13	20:14-18			
אָב		12:6							2	63	19
אָמַר						18:18		20:15	1	23	26
אֱלֹהִים									1	5	23
אֶל		12:4					20:13		1	5	0
[אֵיכָה]									1	1	4
אֵל			15:10		17:16				1	8	1
[אֶרֶץ]									1	1	0
נֶפֶשׁ			15:13		17:16[3]				1	11	2
אֵת		12:6							1	16	7
חֲמָתֹו		12:4							1	10	5
אָב			15:11,14						2	19	74
אִישׁ			15:10 x 2[4]					20:15,16	4	114	39
נָקַב				15:18					1	1	0

[3]The LXX reads ἐκοπίασα ("wearied").

[4]The first occurance of שׁיא ("man") is absent in some Hebrew manuscripts. The shorter reading is reflected in the LXX and Symmachus.

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Hebrew	Ch. 11–12	Ch. 15	Ch. 17–18	Ch. 20			
אָלַל	11:19	15:16[5]	18:21		1	38	26
אֱלֹהִים	[12:4][6]	15:16			1	3	238
אַלְמָנָה					1	3	2
אַלְמָנֻת		15:10			1	5	5
אִם	12:6			20:14,17	3	9	12
אָמֵן	12:4	15:11[7]	18:18	20:15	2	4	15
אָמַר	11:21 x 2	15:19	18:21	20:9	11	515	101
אֱנוֹשׁ	11:21,23		17:15	18:21 [20:16][9]	4	48	19
[אֵיפֹה]	11:22[8]	15:18		20:10	2	5	0
[אֱנוֹשׁ]		15:15	18:23		3	24	35
אַף		15:14	17:16[10]	20:14,15	1	6	1

[5] The LXX reads συντέλεσον ("consume") translating בָּלַע ("eat") rather then the MT's אָכַלְתִּי ("and I ate").

[6] Absent in the MT. However the LXX reads ὁ θεὸς ("God").

[7] The LXX reads γένοιτο ("So be it") translating אָמֵן ("truly") rather then the MT's אָמַר ("say").

[8] Absent in the LXX.

[9] Absent from the MT but implied in the LXX reading ἐν θυμῷ ("in anger").

[10] The LXX reads ἄνθρωπον ("man") translating אֱנוֹשׁ ("man") rather then the MT's אֵיד ("fatal", lit. "disaster").

Lemma	11:	12:	15:	15:15	17:	18:	20:	20:			
[אֹרֶךְ]				15:15[11]			20:10,12[12]		1	1	3
עָרַץ		12:4,5	15:10,14			18:21	20:9		6	271	190
אָשַׁם			15:14						2	39	28
נָשָׁה									1	22	0
[עֵת]		12:1,6							2	9	5
עֵדָה		12:1		15:17					1	9	5
יָדַע									1	2	1
תּוֹכַחַת		12:4							1	18	11
נָקָה			15:13		17:15,18	18:22	20:11		3	210	78
נָקַם					17:18 x 2				3	23	33
כֵּן									1	5	0
תּוֹחֶלֶת	11:22	12:3		18:21		18:21			2	9	3
כֹּה	11:20	12:5					20:12[13]		3	6	9
מְעַט		12:6							1	16	44
מִן						18:22			2	146	53
[עָנָה]	11:22			15:20		18:21	20:9		3	225	104
[נָצַל]								20:15	1	6	11
פָּקַד									1	3	1
שָׁקַד								20:16	1	2	18
[קָשֶׁה]	11:21								1	22	27

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[11] The LXX reads μακροθυμιαν ("long-suffering"). This reading lends support to the BHS editor's suggested repointing of לְאֹרֶךְ ("slow") to לְאֹרֶךְ ("length").

[12] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

[13] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

[בְרֶל]	11:22		15:12 x 2[14]		20:14	1	4	69
בְּרֶל		12:5			20:15	2	8	5
[מְשֶׁר]					20:18	1	1	3
מֵשֶׁה						1	6	7
מַה						1	41	12
אֵשׁ				20:11		1	7	2
בְּרָה				20:12[15]		1	19	12
עֵצֶה	11:20					2	24	3
יָדָה			15:13	18:22		1	4	5
יהוה						1	1	2
הָרָה		12:1, 6		20:10		1	1	1
[כְבֵר]			15:16 x 2 17:15	18:20		5	115	55
יָרֵד		12:1		18:18 x 2 20:8[16],9		6	205	69
דֶרֶךְ				20:8		1	57	66

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[14] The second occurance of בְּרֶל ("iron") in this verse is absent in the LXX.

[15] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apperatus, on Jer 20:12).

[16] The LXX reads πικρῷ λόγῳ μου ("my bitter speech").

Hebrew	11	15	12	18	20	20			
הָיָה	11:23	15:18[17,19]	12:2[19]	18:21 x 2	20:7,8	20:14	13	264	104
הָיָה				18:23	20:9	20:16[18,17]	3	69	25
[יִהְיֶה]				18:18 x 2	20:13		1	13	84
וַהְיִי						20:16	1	6	10
הֱיֵה			12:3	18:21			1	3	8
הָיְתָה						20:17	1	3	0
הָיֹה							1	2	1
רֹב	11:19	15:15		18:20	20:9	20:15	3	16	54
רַב							1	2	0
[יִרְבֶּה]		15:19					1	1	0
רָם		15:17[20]					1	3	4
רָעַק				18:22	20:8[21]	20:16	1	8	5
נֶחֱשָׁב							2	6	0

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[17] Some scholars suggest emending הָיָה ("is") to הוֹי ("alas"), (e.g., BHS margin; c.f., Bright, Jeremiah, 106).

[18] The LXX reads ἔστω ("Let be ...") translating יְהִי rather then the MT's הָיָה ("and shall be"). The BHS editors suggest a conjectural emendation to הָיָה.

[19] The LXX reads ἐτεκνοποίησαν ("they have fathered children") apparently translating יָלְדוּ ("they fathered") instead of the MT's יִלְכוּ ("they grow"). Some modern scholars conjecturally emend the text to יִרְבוּ ("they are fresh") (see Carroll, Jeremiah, OTL, 283).

[20] The LXX reads πικρίας ("bitterness").

[21] The LXX reads γελάσομαι ("I will laugh").

Word	11:x	12:x	15:x	15:x	17:x	18:x	20:x			
חֹזֶה				15:20			20:7	1	13	2
זֶה			15:13			18:23		1	15	5
אַחַת			15:13					2	13	13
לָהּ						18:18		1	32	20
הֵם						18:20		1	11	2
אַתָּה							20:8	1	17	12
קוּם								1	4	14
חֹבָה	11:22					18:21 x 2		3	71	18
חֹרָה		12:5						1	2	5
שֶׁקֶר				15:15			20:8	2	12	20
שׁוּב	11:19					18:18		2	12	17
[תַּחַת]					17:18 x 2			2	18	0
[מַטֶּה]	11:19							1	20	1
תּוֹרָה		12:3²²						1	1	1
טוֹב		12:6	15:11			18:20 x 2		4	37	69
מַעַן						18:22		1	7	5
[בֵּן]	11:19							1	2	6
שַׁעַר		12:4						1	4	4
עִיר							20:18	1	4	4
צַד	11:21		15:17,21			18:21	20:13	5	117	94
רֶגֶל	11:18 x 2 12:3 11:19		15:15²³		17:16	18:23		8	77	97

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²²Absent in the LXX.

²³Absent in the LXX.

	11:	12:	15:	15:	17:	18:	20:			
יְהוָה	11:18,20 / 11:21 x 2 / 11:22[26]	12:1,3[24]	15:11	15:15 / 15:16 / 15:19,20	17:14 / 17:15 / 17:16-18	18:19 / 18:23	20:7,8 / 20:11,12[25] / 20:13 x 2	23	726	695
יוֹם		12:3		17:16-18			20:7,8 / 20:14 x 2 / 20:18	8	137	115
לֵב			15:10	15:20			20:7,9-11[27]	5	15	10
צָר						18:18 x 2	20:14 x 2 / 20:15 / 20:18	6	20	9
נָצַל			15:14	15:19				2	70	35
[עֵקֶב]								1	2	0
צֶדֶק				15:19	17:14 x 2	18:19		1	1	4
[דֶּרֶךְ]								1	1	1
נֶפֶשׁ		12:4		15:17 / 15:20				2	154	66
[עָשָׂה]								3	19	56
קָרָא								1	1	1
כָּשַׁל								1	1	0
סָתַר	11:19			15:18		18:18	20:9 *	1	41	5
[כְּלִי]								1	4	2

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[24] Some scholars suggest omitting on metrical grounds, but without textual support (Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 175).

[25] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apperatus, on Jer 20:12).

[26] Absent in the LXX.

[27] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition in verse 12, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

	11	12	15	15	17	18	20			
קָרָה	11:20	12:2					20:18	1	13	21
[קִרְיָה]						18:23	20:12²⁸	3	4	5
מִקְרֶה						18:20²⁹,²²	20:11	1	3	7
קָרֶה?			15:21					1	5	21
קָרָא								1	1	3
קָרָה?								2	2	6
קָרָה	11:19					18:23	20:11³⁰	1	27	13
קָשַׁר?						18:18		2	11	7
לֹא	11:19 x 2 / 11:21, 23	12:4	15:10,11 / 15:13³¹,14	15:17-19	17:16		20:9 x 2 20:16,17 / 20:11³⁰ x 2	20	514	337
[אֵת?]		12:5					20:9	2	5	1
לֵב	11:20	12:3					20:9³²,12³³	5	57	102

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²⁸The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

²⁹The LXX reads συνελάλησαν ("they have spoken") translating דִּבֵּר ("speak") rather then the MT's כָּרָה ("dug").

³⁰The LXX reads νοῆσαι ("perceive") translating הִשְׂכִּיל ("act wisely, prudently") rather then the MT's כָשַׁל? ("stumble").

³¹Absent in the LXX.

³²Absent in the LXX.

³³The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

Hebrew	11	12	15	17	18	20			
לָכֵן			15:16				1	8	35
[לָהֶם]			15:20				1	16	5
עֲלֵיהֶם	11:19[34]						1	9	19
לְךָ					18:22		1	21	3
[לְךָ]						20:7	1	1	4
לְךָ			15:15[35]			20:10	2	65	13
לְּךָ					18:18		1	6	35
מָצָא						20:11	1	16	35
[מָצָא]			15:18[36]			20:10[37]	1	10	2
קָרָא							1	6	1
קָרָא							1	1	1
מֶרְחָב			15:10	17:16			?	16	0
מֹצֵאת		12:1		17:17			1	1	6
מַה	11:21				18:21,23	20:17	4	45	15
עֵצָה	11:22 x 2				18:23		2	11	19
עֵצָה							1	1	6
פְּרִי			15:13				1	1	1
מְקוֹמָה							1	1	12

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[34] In this verse the word פְּרִי ("fruit") is sometimes conjecturally amended to [מרה] ("sap"), (e.g., Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, Jeremiah 1-25, 175). The BHS editors regard this emendation as "probable" (see BHS textual apparatus on Jer 11:19).

[35] Absent in the LXX.

[36] The LXX reads πόθεν ("whence? wherefore?") translating [מאן] rather then the MT's מנה.

[37] The LXX reads πολλῶν συναθροιζομένων ("many gathering around").

Form							count	count	count
מחשבת	11:19					18:18	2	12	6
מחשבה		17:17					1	2	1
מות			15:18				1	29	50
מעטה			15:18				1	10	1
קלא[38]			15:17				1	18	22
קלא[39]	12:6[40]						1	7	6
מחמטה						18:21	1	24	10
[כלמ] 11:18							1	17	5
מצא				15:16[41]			1	26	16
מעטה					17:18		1	3	0
מעשהו	12:1						1	32	65
אנש]			15:20				1	176	2
[בנ] 11:21							1	40	0
בנא							1	5	0
[ערב]						18:18	2	27	19
[ערב]			20:10 x 2[42]			18:21	1	1	3
[חמס]				20:16			1	14	12

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[38]Verbal form.

[39]Adjectival form.

[40]Some scholars conjecturally emend to כֵּלָה ("complete, finish"). The editors of BHS regard this emendation as "probable" (BHS text apparatus, on Jer 12:6).

[41]The LXX reads ὑπὸ τῶν ἀθετούντων ("from the ones who despise") translating מבגדי ("from those who despise") rather then the MT's נבצרה ("were found").

[42]The LXX reads ἐπισύστητε καὶ ἐπισυστῶμεν ("conspire and let us conspire").

Lemma	11:x	12:x	15:x	17:16	18:x	20:x			
מַרְאֶה			15:12			20:7	2	14	1
נָתַן		12:2	15:20		18:18		1	16	6
[נָתַן]						20:13	2	29	14
נָתַן				17:16			1	1	0
שֶׁמֶשׁ	11:21		15:18		18:20	20:13	3	10	1
נָשָׂא			15:20,21				1	3	17
[נצל]			15:15				3	10	45
[נקם]							1	7	3
נִקְמָתְךָ	11:20		15:15		18:21	20:10,12[43]	3	11	5
מָצָא							1	6	1
עֹשֶׂה							2	2	1
עָוֹן			15:10 x 2			20:10	3	148	189
[עון]		12:3[45]	15:13				1	7	2
נָשָׁה[44]			15:20						
זֶה							1	26	13
סוּר		12:5	15:17				1	4	6
כוסים[46]		12:4					1	15	5
[כסה]							1	1	0
עֶבֶד			15:14			20:11	1	3	1
שָׁלוֹם						20:17	2	35	143

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[43] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

[44] With the sense of "lend, become a creditor" and not with the sense "to forget".

[45] Absent in the LXX.

[46] With the sense of "horse" and not with the sense of "swallow, swift".

Word						#		
קֹר						1	24	31
עָרֶה	12:4			18:23		1	9	4
עָרֹד					20:16	1	137	21
[עָרִיד]		15:17[47]				1	4	6
עַם		15:20		18:15		2	165	120
עָמַד		15:19		18:20	20:18	2	28	32
אָצַל				18:18,23		1	1	13
עֲצָרָה					20:9	2	8	11
עֹצֶם					20:9[48]	1	7	15
עָצַר					20:11	1	4	1
עָרִיץ		15:21		18:23		2	2	3
עָשׁוּב	12:4					1	2	7
עָשׂוּת	12:2,5					3	152	104
פָּגַע		15:11				1	4	0
פָּדָה		15:21		18:22		1	2	14
פֶּה	12:2	15:19				2	28	67
פֹּה						1	3	9
פֹּעַל		15:17,19	17:16	18:20,23 x 2		6	128	133
פָּעַר		15:15				2	39	7
פְּרִידָה	11:22					1	9	1
פָּרַד	11:23	12:2				1	11	11

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[47] The LXX reads εὐλαβούμην ("I was cautious").

[48] The LXX reads φλέγον ("flaming").

Word	References					
פֶּתִי[49]	20:7 x 2		3	3	1
	20:10		1	5	2
פֶּתָאֹם	18:22		1	18	17
אָרַח	12:3[50]	15:16	20:12[52]	4	88	23
נָקָא	11:20,22[51]			1	6	49
צֶדֶק	11:20	12:1	20:12[53]	2	3	52
צַדִּיק	12:1			1	3	3
[אֶצְדָּק]	12:1	20:16		1	7	4
[צִדְקָתֶךָ]		20:10[54]		1	1	2
עֶלֶץ	[15:11][55]			1	25	3
אֵלֶף	15:12			1	8	24
חָרָה	15:11					

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[49]With the sense of "be simple" and not with the sense of "be spaceous, wide, open".

[50]Absent in the LXX.

[51]Absent in the LXX.

[52]The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

[53]The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

[54]The LXX reads ἐπίνοιαν ("intention").

[55]Absent in the MT but supported by the Peshitta.

Lexeme	Jer 11–12	Jer 15	Jer 17	Jer 18	Jer 20			
קִרְבָּה		15:14		18:19	20:17	1	4	3
[קרבה]	12:3					1	2	0
קָדוֹשׁ		15:10				1	9	0
קוֹל	12:2					1	79	59
[קלי]						1	1	2
סֵפֶר		15:16			20:8	1	1	2
קָרָא	12:6[56]				20:8	3	63	56
קֹרֵא	12:2			18:18,19		1	5	9
[קשׁר]						2	8	8
רְאֵה	11:18	15:11?			20:12 x 2[58]	8	70	96
רֹן	11:20				20:10	1	41	61
רעה	12:4			18:22		1	5	31
רפה						1	1	0
רדיה	12:5				20:11	3	6	21
רִיב	12:5	15:15	17:18			1	6	5
חמם					20:17 x 2 / 20:18	3	4	3
חזק	12:2					1	8	7

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[56] Some scholars conjecturally emend the text to קָשְׁרוּ ("they conspired"). The BHS editors regard this emendation as "probable" (BSH textual apparatus, on Jer 12:6). The LXX reads ἐπισυνήχθησαν which partially supports the proposed amendment.

[57] Absent in the LXX.

[58] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

רִיב[59]	12:1					20:12[61]	1	7	6
רִיב[60]		11:20	15:10				3	6	7
רַע		11:23	15:11	15:21	17:17,18	18:20	7	123	64
רָעָה	12:4	11:22				18:21	2	33	2
רָעַע					17:16[62],18	18:20?	3	28	8
[רָעַע][63]			15:12[64]			20:13	2	13	14
							3	12	6
			15:18		17:14 x 2		1	28	82
שָׂכַל	12:1		15:17			20:7	1	27	10
שֶׁקֶר						20:11	1	3	5
שֶׁקֶר	12:4						1	4	1
שָׁוָה							1	5	25
שֶׁמַע/שָׁמַע						20:15 x 2	2	6	52

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[59] Used as a verb.

[60] Used as a noun.

[61] The BHS editors consider this to be an addition here, derived from its proper setting in Jer 11:20 (BHS textual apparatus, on Jer 20:12).

[62] The LXX reads κατακολουθῶν ("following"). Symmachus and Aquila read ἀπὸ κακίας ("from evil") translating מֵרָעָה ("from evil") rather then the MT's מֵרֹעֶה ("from a shepherd").

[63] With the meaning of "break" in Jer 15:12 and "to be evil, bad" in Jer 20:13. Symmachus has the meaning "to be evil, bad" in both verses.

[64] Some manuscripts read יֵדַע ("know") which is the basis of the LXX and Theodotian reading, γνωσθήσεται ("be known").

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שֶׁקֶם	15:16	17:16		1	7	13
שֶׁמֶן				1	1	28
שִׁאוֹן	15:16	17:16		1	7	5
שֶׁאֱרִית 11:23				1	24	1
שֶׁבֶר		17:18		1	28	20
שִׁבָּרוֹן		17:18		1	1	0
שׁוּב	15:19 x 3			4	113	71
שׁוֹא			18:20	1	3	1
שׁוּחָה			18:20[65], 22[66]	2	3	0
[שׁחֵת] 11:19[67]			18:22	1	19	3
שַׁחַת				1	1	2
[שְׁעִי][68]			20:13	1	1	26
[שְׁעִי]			18:21	1	1	0
שׁכֵב			20:11	1	13	31
[שׁלה]	12:1			1	1	1
שׁלוֹם	12:5		20:10	2	31	27
[שׁלח]			18:20	1	7	16
שָׁם	11:21	15:16	20:9	3	55	109

[65] The LXX reads ῥήματα ("words") translating שְׁעָה ("concern, occupation of thought") rather then the MT's שׁוּחָה ("pit"), (so Holladay, _Jeremiah_, 1: 527).

[66] The qere reads שׁוּחָה ("pit"). The LXX reads λόγον ("word") translating שְׁעָה ("concern, occupation of thought") rather than the MT's שׁוּחָה ("pit"), (so Holladay, _Jeremiah_, 1: 527).

[67] The LXX here reads ἐμβάλωμεν ("let us put in") reading נַשְׁלִיכָה ("fall off, drop off") for the MT's נַשְׁחִיתָה ("let us destroy").

[68] As a verb rather than as a noun.

שָׁמַע		18:19,22	20:10	4	184	79
שְׁמַע	11:23		20:10	1	13	70
שָׁעָה	11:20			1	44	16
מִשְׁפָּט				1	4	32
[שָׁעַר]	12:2			1	1	0
[שָׁרַשׁ]		15:11[69]		1	1	2
שַׁעַר		17:14[70]	20:16	1	6	30
שַׁעֲרָה			20:16	1	3	5

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[69]The editors of BHS acknowledge that the text is corrupted at this point. Several text variants exist. Some (e.g., שֵׁרִותִךָ ["I have 'enemied' you"] and שֵׁרִיתִיךָ ["I have served you"]) are forms of שׁרה ("let loose"). Another variant is שְׁאֵרִיתְךָ ("it shall be well with your remnant"). The LXX reads κατευθυνόντων ("their prosperity"). Recent scholars conjecturally emend the text to שֵׁרַתִּיךָ ("I have served you"), (so Bright, Jeremiah, 109).

[70]Some scholars conjecturally emend תְּהִלָּתִי ("my praise") to תִּקְוָתִי ("my hope"), (e.g., Holladay, Jeremiah, 1: 504; BHS textual apparatus).

Chart 2: "Typical" Vocabulary in the Confessions

יְהוָה[71]	23	8	726
לֹא	20	8	514
הָיָה	13	5	264
אָמַר	11[72]	8	515
יָדַע	8	7	77
יוֹם	8	4	137
רָאָה	8?	5	70
רַע	7	6	123
אֶרֶץ	6	3	271
דָּבָר	6	4	205
יָלַד	6	3	20
פָּנִים	6	3	128
[דָּבַר]	5	3	115
יָד	5	4	117
יָכֹל	5	2	15
לֵב	5	3	57
אֱנוֹשׁ	4	3	48
אִישׁ	4	2	114
טוֹב	4	3	37
מָוֶת	4	12	45
עָבָא	4	4	88
שָׁמַע	4	3	148
שׁוּב	4	2	113
אַף	3	3	24
אִם	3	2	9
בָּחַן	3	3	6

[71]By contrast אֱלֹהִים ("God") only occurs once in the confessions (in conjunction with יהוה ["Yahweh"]) and only three times in the entire book of Jeremiah. However, in the book of Psalms, although יהוה ("Yahweh") occurs almost as frequently as in Jeremiah (695 times), אֱלֹהִים ("God") is used much more often (238 times).

[72]The subject of this verb in the confessions shows an interesting pattern. Although the confessions are basically laments of Jeremiah, he is the subject only once (Jer 20:9). Of the remaining ten instances, the subject is Jeremiah's enemies (Jer 11:21; 17:15; 18:18) or the people of Israel generally (Jer 12:4) five times; God four times (Jer 11:21; 15:11,19); and a human messanger once (Jer 20:15).

בֵּן	3	3	225
בּוֹשׁ	3	2	210
זָכַר	3	3	16
חָרַב	3	2	71
יָלַךְ	3	2	69
[יָשַׁע]	3	2	19
[כָּלְיָה]	3	3	4
[נָעַל]	3	2	10
נָתַן	3	3	148
נֶפֶשׁ	3	3	10
נְקָמָה	3	2	11
עָשָׂה	3	2	152
פָּתָה	3	1	3
קָרָא	3	3	63
רָעָה	3	2	28
רָדַף	3	3	6
רָפָא	3	2	12
רָחַם	3	1	4
רִיב[73]	3	3	6
שֵׁם	3	3	55

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[73]Taken as a noun.

Chart 3: Distinctive Vocabulary in the Confessions

אָנָה
[אוּץ]
אָכַל
[אָרַךְ]
[בָּשַׂר]
גְּדוּד
דִּבָּה
[זָלַל]
מִבְחָה
[יָקַד]
[יָרִיב]
כָּרָה
כְּאֵב
כֶּבֶשׂ
כָּפַר
[לָעַג]
מָחָה
מַחְסֶה
מָדוֹן
מוֹצָא
מְחִיר
נֵצֶר
נֹכַח
עָמָל
עָרִיץ
פָּתָה
צֶלַע
[קָלַל]
[קָלֶם]
רַגְלִי
שָׂפָה
[שָׁכוּל]
[שָׁלָה]
[שָׁרָה]
[שָׁרַשׁ]
שִׁבָּרוֹן
[שִׁיר]
שִׂיחָה

Chart 4: Non-Psalmic Vocabulary in the Confessions

אָבֵל
אוּץ
אָכְזָב
[אָנַשׁ]
בֵּן
הֲרֵגָה
זָכָר
[צָלַל] [74]
זְעָקָה
חָתַת
[יָקַד]
כָּבַשׁ
מִשְׁנֶה
[נָבָא]
נָבִיא
נוּחַ
פֶּגַע
[קָדַח]
קֹרֶשׁ
רַגְלִי
[שָׁכוּל]
שִׁבָּרוֹן
שׁוּחָה

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[74]Suprisingly, this is the only word on this list which is used only in the final confession. The last confession, unlike the others, is not in the form of an individual lament, but is a self-curse. This change of form is one factor leading O'Connor to deny this block of material a place in the confessions (Confessions, 75-80). It would be expected that this confession would contain considerable vocabulary not found in the Psalms. However, such is not the case.

Appendix 2

A NOTE ON THE RELEVANT ISSUES IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Two specific issues that we have noted in our study of the confessions have also elucidated comment by students of the book of Psalms: the role and significance of judicial language and the identity of the "I". These two issues are intertwined and inseparable. However, for the sake of clarity they will be dealt with separately here. No attempt is made to be comprehensive. However, this survey will attempt to summarise the major ways in which these issues have been dealt with in the Psalms.

The Identify of the "I" in Psalms

In pre-critical times, the "I" of the Psalms was universally regarded as King David, the putative author of most of the Psalms. In the earliest period of historical criticism a comprehensively collective view was widely adopted.[1] Under the influence of Gunkel and others a more individualistic view was again adopted.[2]

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[1]See for example, R. Smend, "Über das Ich der Psalmen", ZAW 8 (1888), 49-147.

[2]Gunkel and Begrich declare the corporate view to be "a final vestige of the allegorical sense previously

Since Gunkel's time there has been a fresh reaction against a strongly individualistic position. H. Wheeler Robinson has attempted to explain the "I" in terms of "corporate personality".[3] S. Mowinckel, in the process of defending a cultic setting for the Psalms, suggests that "the 'I' [of the Psalms] is very often the king or another cultic representive of the congregation".[4] The position of A.R. Johnson and J.H. Eaton is that the "I"

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applied everywhere to Holy Scripture" (Einleitung in die Psalmen, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933, 175 as quoted and translated in H.W. Robinson, Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1964], 38). For similar--although not so strongly stated--conclusions see Eissfeldt, Old Testament, 115.
    Gunkel admits the possibility of a corporate interpretation under specific circumstances, viz, where intense suffering is being experienced and where the poet explicitly indicates a corporate meaning, or where the plain sense of the passage demands it. Otherwise "the explanation of the "I" as the poet himself is the preferable one; indeed it is the natural and self-evident explanation" (H. Gunkel, The Psalms: A Form Critical Introduction, Facet Books, [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967], 15).

    [3]Robinson, Corporate Personality, 37-39. The concept of "corporate personality" has recently come under sustained attack (e.g., J.R. Porter, "Legal Aspects of Corporate Personality", VT 15 [1965], 361-80; J.W. Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Reconsideration", JTS, 21 [1970], 1-16). The criticisms of Porter and Rogerson have some validity, but are somewhat overstated (Kaminsky, Corporate Responsibility, passim).

    [4]Mowinckel, Psalms, 1: 46. However, in the same context Mowinckel protested against the view that the "I" should always by understood collectively in the Psalms.

is virtually always the king as the representative of the nation as a whole.[5]

A more nuanced position is adopted by S. Croft in the most recent monograph published on the issue.[6] Croft argues for fluidity in understanding the identity of the "I". (It is in various Psalms the king, a cultic official, or a private individual).[7] Johnson's theory of royal sacral drama is rejected, but Croft does see a role for the king in Israel's cultus that is essentially in the tradition represented by Eaton and Johnson. Certainly, he sees a greater number of royal Psalms than did Gunkel.[8]

Clearly, on all but a corporate reading of all the "I" Psalms, there is room for either a corporate or individualistic interpretation of Jeremiah's laments. It may be thought that the confessions would have linguistic and thematic connections to a certain sub-group within

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[5]A.R. Johnson, _Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel_ (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1962), _passim;_ Eaton, _Kingship, passim._

[6]Croft, _Identity, passim._

[7]Croft, _Individual,_ 179-81.

[8]Gunkel saw a total of 10 royal psalms: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, 144:1-11 (_Psalms,_ 23). Croft extends this list considerably: 2, 3, 5, 7, 9-10, 16, 17, 18, 20 (mixed type), 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 31, 38, 40, 44, 45 (mixed type), 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 69, 71, 72, 89, 92, 94, 101, 108, 110 (mixed type), 116, 118, 132, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144--a total (including mixed types of 47 (_Identity,_ 73-132; 179-81).

the laments in the Psalms, connections which might provide an interpretive key. Such does not appear to be the case. The psalm which appears to have the greatest shared vocabulary with the confessions is Psalm 35, a psalm which Croft classifies as a genuine individual prayer.[9] However, this common vocabulary does not form a pattern with other genuine individual laments (as opposed to community laments in individual form). Thus, unless one wishes to defend the unlikely thesis that Jeremiah modelled his confessions on Psalm 35, the concentration of confessional language they share must be regarded as coincidental[10]

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[9]Croft, Identity, 42, 142. So also Weiser, (Psalms, 302); C. Westermann (The Psalms: Structure, Content and Message, [Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1980], 53); Kraus, (Psalms 1-59, 394); Gerstenberger, (Psalms, 153); and Fohrer (Introduction, 287). However, the individual interpretation of Psalm 36 is not universally shared. Mowinckel understands the Psalm to be a community lament and identifies the "I" with the king (Psalms, 1: 219; so also Eaton, Kingship, 41-42; Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 285). W.R. Taylor suggests that the Psalm is a composite work with different sections reflecting different situations and (probably) different authors ("The Book of Psalms: Exegesis Psalms 1-71, 93, 95-96, 100, 120-138, 140-150", IB, edited by G.A. Buttrick [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1955], 4: 181-82). Anderson (Psalms, 275-76) does not venture an opinion as to the identity of the "I" of this Psalm.
    J.C. McCann's comments are apposite: "The very presence of such different proposals is sufficient indication that the language and imagery of Psalm 35 are open-ended enough to be applicable to a variety of circumstances" ("The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections", New Interpreter's Bible, ed L.E. Keck [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1996], 4: 819).

[10]William Holladay, while acknowledging that the dating of the psalm is uncertain, argues that the

Judicial Language in the Psalm Laments

Any interpretation of the judicial language of the

Psalms is largely determined by the student's

understanding of the indentity of the "I" of the Psalms

and of the identity of the enemies. The judicial

language has often been understood in metaphorical ways.[11]

However, some specific proposals have been made in which

this language is regarded as having literal reference.

Hans Schmidt has argued that the judicial language

arose in the setting of a formal cultic judicial

procedure during which the accused prayed to God against

their accusers.[12] If God's response, mediated through the

priests, was positive and the accusation was dismissed,

the petitioners might add a prayer of praise to the

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language of Ps 35 is archaic and that Jeremiah drew on it
both in the confessions and elsewhere (Jeremiah, 2: 67).
    However this must remain problematical. Dating most
of the Psalms is extremely difficult--and this Psalm is
not an exception. Obviously, those scholars who see the
King as the petitioner see the Psalm as pre-exilic (see
previous footnote). This position is also accepted by
Gerstenberger, (Psalms, 153). However, Anderson suggests
an early post-exilic date, (Psalms 1-72, 276). Others,
like Fohrer, are not prepared to suggest a date at all
(Introduction, 287).

[11]E.g., Anderson, Psalms (1-72), 427, commenting on
Ps 57.

[12]H. Schmidt, Das Gebet des Angeklagten im Alten
Testament, BZAW 49 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928), passim.
Schmidt's proposal did not take in all of the individual
laments. In fact he attempted to illustrate his proposed
judicial procedure with "some twenty of the laments"
(Eaton, Kingship, 6).

petition.[13] Schmidt's argument is based on a number of

prose texts (I Kgs 8:31-32; Deut 17:8f; 21:1-8; Exod

22:6f; Num 5:11f). However, as Eaton points out, these

texts are of a diverse nature and none of them refer to

the singing of a psalm. He also observes that Schmidt

deals arbitrarily with some of the Psalms. He concludes

that the theory "is not firmly grounded either in the

prose texts or the Psalms".[14]

L. Delekat uses the institution of asylum as the

foundation for his reconstruction. He proposed that

asylum seekers would write psalms of petition on the

outer walls of the temple. If they were granted the

asylum they sought, they would add a word of thanksgiving

to their petition.[15]

Brevard Childs observes that Delekat has provided a

plausible exegesis of the Psalms in terms of lament

without first demonstrating that this is the context in

which they should be interpreted.[16] J. Creach notes that

the language of the Psalms and the legal language of

asylum do not overlap sufficiently to support Delekat's

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[13]Schmidt, Das Gebet, *passim*.

[14]Eaton, Kingship, 6.

[15]L. Delekat, Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), *passim*.

[16]B.S. Childs, "Review of Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum by L. Delekat, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967)", JBL 88 (1969), 104-05.

view.[17] R.E. Clements argues that the Psalms can only be read autobiographically if the typical and metaphorical nature of their language is ignored.[18] Mowinckel argues that "the Psalms are--with very few exceptions--real cult psalms, made for cultic use".[19]

Delekat has provoked W. Beyerlin to re-examine the issue of the judicial language of the Psalms.[20] Rejecting the views of both Schmidt and Delekat, Beyerlin suggested that there are eleven Psalms which are indicative of a cultic institution, which he interprets in terms of "a cultic judgment of God at the Yahweh sanctuary to which the oppressed could turn as a type of last court of

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[17]J.F.D. Creach, Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter, JSOTSS 217 (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1996), 60-61.

[18]R.E. Clements, "Review of Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum by L. Delekat, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967)", JSS 14 (1969), 270-71.

[19]Mowinckel, Psalms, 1: 30. However, it must be acknowledged that most commentators take at least some of the language of the Psalms to be literal. Indeed, the different perspective on the meaning of individual psalms generally comes about because of a different understanding of the balance between literal and metaphorical elements (See McCann, "Psalms", 818). Even with this caveat in mind Delekat's views can still be described as "extreme" and his overliteralistic reading of the Psalmic language as "beyond any possible credibility" (Bellinger, Psalmody, 100).

[20]W. Beyerlin, Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge, FRLANT 99 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), p. 15.

appeal".[21] This proposal is supported by many of the same

prose texts used by Schmidt and ultimately it suffers

from the same telling criticism: neither the prose nor

the psalmonic passages actually points to the institution

being posited.[22] In the final analysis, the Psalms which

Beyerlin posits as evidence for the cultic judgement he

enisages easily allow for other interpretations.[23]

Recently, the positions of Schmidt and Beyerlin have

been refined by W.H. Bellinger, Jr.[24] He suggests that

the "falsely accused" are actually the object of

malicious gossip.[25] However, such a matter is difficult

to address adequately solely through legal procedure.[26]

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[21]G.F. Hasel, "Review of Die Rettung der Bedrängtenin den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zuammenhänge untersucht, by W. Beyerlin, FRLANT 99 (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970)", JBL 89 (1970), 470-72.

[22]J.H. Eaton, "Review of Die Rettung der Bedrängtenin den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zuammenhänge untersucht, by W. Beyerlin, FRLANT 99 (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970)", JTS n.s. (1971), 179-80; idem, Kingship, 9.

[23]Hasel, "Review", 472.

[24]W.H. Bellinger, Jr., "Psalms of the Falsely Accused: A Reassessment", Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers, Vol 25, ed. K.H. Richards (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1986), 463-69.

[25]Such gossip would be taken more serious in ancient Israel than in the contemporary Western world because of the power perceived to be inherent in the spoken word, (J.N. Sanders, "Word, the", IDB, edited by G.A. Buttrick [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1962], 4: 869).

[26]Bellinger points out that the Old Testament itself recognises that not all situations that arise in society can be dealt with through legal proceedings (i.e.,

He therefore suggests that the victim made appeal direct to God. Accordingly, the setting for these Psalms is not judicial but cultic.

Bellinger acknowledges that any proposed *Sitz im Leben* for the Psalms must be tentatively made.[27] However, his proposal is attractive. If valid it would go a long way towards answering one of the most searching criticisms of the individual interpretation of the confessions: How could Jeremiah use such stylised typical language to vent his own personal (unique) feelings? Since malicious gossip clearly appears to be in the background of some of the confessions (11:19; 15:10, 15b; 20:8b, 10), it would not be unnatural for Jeremiah to use the language of Psalms composed with precisely such a situation in mind.

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through the evaluation of evidence). He cites "trial by ordeal" as one alternative procedure. The Old Testament also gives evidence that malicious gossip was a problem in ancient Israelite society ("Psalms", 467).

[27]Bellinger, "Falsely Accused", 469.

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