

may have indicated in a rough and hurried way the relation of the miracles to the mysterious and variously manifested personality we call the Christ. In conclusion, it may be enough to remark that, if we are right in our interpretation of this relation, it ought to shed some light on the once celebrated controversy as to the comparative value of the internal and external evidences. The miracles are no more external to the system of Jesus than his speech. Both are rooted in his personality, express his thought, reveal his spirit, manifest the inner and essential qualities of his heart and mind. Without either we should be without true and sufficient knowledge of his marvellous Person. His words exhibit the ideal, his works the real; the former explain Divine benevolence and human obedience, but the latter shew Divine beneficence curing human misery, creating human happiness. What blossoms in the flower was contained in the seed; what was evolved in the history was involved in the Person of Christ. The sign to the sense is a symbol of the spirit, and miracles are but means by which the hidden and internal qualities of Christ become manifest and real to man.

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*SHORT PAPERS UPON THE PROPHET
JEREMIAH.*

NO. 6.—THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM, AND THE FLIGHT
INTO EGYPT.

ONE period of Jeremiah's life still remains for our consideration, and in it we shall find him a true patriot, faithful to his king, his country, and his God; but his old fate still attends him. Cassandra-like, he speaks to

unwilling ears. None heed his warnings, and at length he passes away. There is no certain record of his death, but the want of order evident in his prophecies, and the existence of a different arrangement and of important variations in the Septuagint Version, make the tradition not improbable that he met with a violent death, and closed his labours, not unfittingly, with the crown of martyrdom.

Most interesting is the contrast between the king and the prophet during the long siege of Jerusalem. Zedekiah seems to have been a well-meaning man. None of the vices which disgraced Jehoiakim are attributed to him; and his respect for Jeremiah, and his wish to obey him, are manifest in all his conduct. But he was feeble and irresolute, and entirely destitute of real earnest zeal for Jehovah. There was nothing in him to make him ready to suffer in the cause of right and truth. And so he went with the stream, and brought upon himself, by want of purpose and steadfastness, greater sufferings than he would have incurred by a more manly course.

Doubtless he had fallen upon evil days, when nothing but a will of stern determination could have maintained the full authority of the crown. It is one of the worst effects of war that it weakens the influence of all those whose power depends upon custom and law, and substitutes for them the fierce energy of men of physical vigour, whose bodily strength and violent passions are sure to come to the front when all the restraining influences of order and of constitutional government have ceased to regulate society. So in the first Chapter of the Book of Isaiah, where the state of things in Hezekiah's days immediately after the invasion of Sen-

nacherib is vividly portrayed, the prophet describes Jerusalem as "full of murderers," and her "princes as rebellious and companions of thieves." Even worse was the state of things in Zedekiah's time. In the general distress caused by the Chaldæan invasions it was easy for military adventurers to enlist under their banners troops of lawless men; and by such persons all power seems to have been usurped, and after Zedekiah's death these captains completed the ruin of their country.

A man of strong will and great mental vigour might have curbed these rough soldiers, who had their merits, but who, when left to themselves, used their strength only for their own private ends. Zedekiah had only good intentions, and those of the feeblest kind; and so during the siege of Jerusalem we see in him the picture of one hopelessly at fault, and incapable of making any sustained effort to control the course of affairs. Yet so impressed was he with Jeremiah's energy and firmness, and so convinced was he of the righteousness of his cause, that at least he did what he could for his preservation. He even attempted more. When, at the beginning of his ninth year, news came that the Chaldæan army had started on its march against Jerusalem, a wave of deeper and more subdued thought swept over the city; and the king tried to use this more manageable state of feeling for a good purpose. The wealthy people had taken advantage of the general distress to reduce their brethren to slavery. Many, doubtless, had perforce parted with their liberty to obtain food for themselves and their children. And when the great landowners crowded into the city, to seek protection behind its fortifications, we may well

believe that the priests and better-disposed citizens of Jerusalem beheld with indignation the gangs of male and female slaves who formed their retinue. And not religion only, but patriotism, demanded that these injured people should be set free. Their large numbers would make their presence a difficulty and a danger, while, if manumitted and well treated, they would become a valuable addition to the forces available for the city's defence. Zedekiah therefore made a covenant with the princes, and issued a general proclamation of liberty (Chap. xxxiv. 8, 9). Alas! in the summer of that same year, Pharaoh-Hophra left Egypt at the head of a great force, apparently for the purpose of relieving Jerusalem (Chap. xxxvii. 5). The Chaldæan army for a brief season raised the siege; and, with inconceivable meanness and folly, the princes withdrew the precious boon, and placed the foul yoke again upon the necks of men as free-born as themselves. The act was committed in violation of the king's wishes and commands, and was reprovèd by the prophet with becoming severity. But what can we think of a king who allowed himself thus to become a mere puppet in the hands of others? Justly God withdrew the promise given to him in Chapter xxxiv. 3-5, and included Zedekiah in the general denunciation of punishment pronounced in Verses 17-21. He had allowed himself to be terrified into annulling a righteous decree, and must therefore share the fate of those to whose act he had consented.

Among these fierce captains the position of Jeremiah daily became more trying. In their view he was an unpatriotic traitor, who weakened the hands of the men of war. Their sole chance, no doubt they argued,

lay in the stubbornness of their defence, and prophets had always before encouraged Israel to trust to the very last in their Jehovah. Had not mighty hosts often been routed by the valour of a few? Was not their history full of glorious instances of deliverance wrought by valiant and self-reliant men? What was the meaning of this new tame lesson of submission? Why did he bid them "go forth," and yield themselves to the king of Babylon? And how dare he call Nebuchadnezzar "the servant," *i.e.*, the vizier of Jehovah? The earnest and really religious men, who in old times would have been the very centre of resistance, and have fought like lions in the field, were now unnerved, and Jeremiah's teaching was the cause. He spoke the truth, but they looked only at expediency. And soon the opportunity came for venting their displeasure, and gladly they took advantage of it.

In the temporary lull of matters which followed upon the departure of the Chaldæan army, for the purpose of driving back the Egyptian king, Jeremiah went forth one day on a visit to his native city, Anathoth. He went thither in the company of many others, "in the midst of the people" (Chap. xxxvii. 12); and his purpose was an intelligible one, namely, to obtain a supply of provisions. For the words "to separate himself thence" really mean "to receive thence his share," doubtless in some division of the produce of the priests' lands to which he was entitled. But the bare fact that he was attempting to leave Jerusalem was enough for the captains. We have ourselves seen how unreasonable even well-disposed people become in time of siege. Everybody is a spy and a traitor to their excited imaginations. How much more then would suspicion

rest upon one known to have friendly feelings towards the besiegers. At such times there is no orderly trial, and the prophet might congratulate himself that he was not at once put to death. As it was, he was thrust into one of those underground excavations, with arched roofs, and rude pillars for their support, of which Captain Warren has discovered several in the recent researches made at Jerusalem. One of these, connected with the official residence of Jonathan, the secretary of state, was filled with cells, and used as a public prison (Chap. xxxvii. 15, 16). And here Jeremiah remained "for many days," the Hebrew expression for a period of long but indefinite duration.

From this miserable prison he was at length delivered, for Zedekiah clung to the remembrance of him; and when the Chaldæans pressed the siege, and things began to look dark and ominous, he had him secretly brought to a room in the royal palace, and there he asked him for some tidings from God. He heard the same hopeless answer, that he must fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. But it raised no anger, for it spake only Zedekiah's own convictions; and he respected the prophet's truthfulness, and gave him henceforward roomy quarters in the court of the guard, and a daily supply of food (Chap. xxxvii. 21). And here Jeremiah did encourage the people, not with false hopes of successful warfare, however, but with a prospect of better things to come. For to this period belongs the cheerful prophecy contained in Chapters xxx.-xxxiii.

For such distant prospects the captains had no appetite, and as the defence daily grew more hopeless, they became indignant that Jeremiah should be in

quarters which brought him into daily contact with the soldiery, and clamoured for his death. Weak as usual, Zedekiah gave way, but with words which shewed his displeasure, "The king is not he that can do any thing against you" (Chap. xxxviii. 5). It was a confession that the royal authority was gone, and that all power rested with the prætorian guard. But what cared they for plaintive words? Now, every house in Jerusalem had its cistern for collecting and storing up water during the rainy season. Into one of these, still damp, and with its bottom choked with fetid mire, they let down the prophet, unwilling actually to shed his blood, but determined that he should perish miserably. But a negro eunuch did that which the king could not do. Bending the king's pliant mind the other way, he obtained from him thirty men, enough to overpower all resistance, and with them he rescued the prophet from his evil plight: and the princes meddled with him no more.

A painful picture follows of the poor king's utter irresolution. He arranges for a secret meeting with Jeremiah; and the prophet, truthful and straightforward as ever, repeats his old lesson of the necessity of submission. Even yet at the last hour he might save his own life, and the lives of his children, and rescue the city and temple from the flames. And as ridicule will often prevail with people too feeble to listen to reason and argument, the prophet tells him that ere long the women will deride his weakness with the satirical song:—

Thy friends have urged thee on, and prevailed upon thee :
Thy feet are stuck in the mire ; they have turned back.*

* Jer. xxxviii. 22.

Zedekiah felt all the truth of these words. The captains were thus forcing him on, and would leave him in the lurch; but like some wounded animal, powerless to extract the arrow that is rankling in its side, the king can only hide himself away, and leave matters to take their own course. And so he bids Jeremiah keep their conversation secret, and sadly feels that he has not the courage to do the one act that would save himself and his country.

A few days afterwards, he was captured in the plain of Jericho, and carried to Riblah in the land of Hamath, on the northern boundary of Palestine, to receive his sentence from Nebuchadnezzar's own mouth. It was ruthless enough. His sons and the princes of Judah were slaughtered in his presence, and then his own eyes were put out, that no happier vision might efface the remembrance of the last sad spectacle on which he had gazed. Finally he was carried to Babylon, and there immured in a prison, which, from the word used in the Hebrew (Chap. lii. 11), was a place of severer treatment than that in which Jehoiachin was still confined.

And Jeremiah's own fate was at first painful enough. He was dragged in chains to Ramah, about five miles distant from Jerusalem, and with other prisoners of war paraded there before the Chaldæan generals, whose business it was to select such as seemed fit to be carried as settlers to Babylon, while the rest were left either to be the spoil of war for the soldiery, or be put to death. But he is there recognized, and the choice given him, either of spending the rest of his life in honour at Babylon, or of casting in his lot with Gedaliah, who had just been appointed governor of the conquered

land. Now there was much to suggest to Jeremiah the desirableness of the former course. The exiles at Babylon were now the true Church. Everything in the future depended upon their piety : and how could the prophet be better employed than in building them up in the faith ? And what happiness might he not look for under the fostering protection of Daniel, who was now fast rising into power ? Like a true patriot, he chose the other course. Gedaliah was the son of his old protector, Ahikam, and the grandson of Shaphan, the friend of his own revered father, the high priest Hilkiah. His government gave the land its last chance. The wretched remnant of the Jews would feel confidence in him, and Jeremiah felt bound to give him the full weight of his support. If all went well for a few months, there might soon be in the lands now ravaged by war a small but prosperous and well-regulated community. It was not so to be. The land was to keep its Sabbaths : the sword was to devour the last remains of the condemned and sinful race. And so a conspiracy was formed against the good and trusting Gedaliah, and before two months had passed he was basely murdered by Ishmael, a prince of the blood royal, who preferred the utter ruin of his country to the chance of seeing it revive under the just rule of one not of the kingly stock.

It is very possible that this violent act of Ishmael contributed to that virtual dethronement of the house of David which took place at Babylon. For though we find Zerubbabel treated with the utmost respect after the return from exile, yet he was never entrusted with real power. To the remnant of the Jews at the time it was utter ruin. All sense of security was de-

stroyed. There was no one to take Gedaliah's place, and a panic prevailed everywhere, and not without reason; for who could tell how severely the Chaldæans might avenge the murder of their deputy? The captains, at whose head was Johanan, the son of Kareah, an able, but unscrupulous man, who had foreseen and warned Gedaliah of Ishmael's treachery, and asked leave to put him quietly out of the way (Chap. xl. 14, 15), had no policy but one of self-preservation. They consulted indeed the prophet, and he solemnly assured them that if they remained in Judæa there would be peace for them and security, while in Egypt there would be famine only and pestilence and the sword. Worldly policy told them the contrary. As valiant soldiers, their services would be prized by Pharaoh. War between him and Nebuchadnezzar was inevitable. A powerful body of brave Jewish swordsmen would be sure of high pay and promotion, and permanent settlement. And so they set the prophet's warning at defiance, and went down into Egypt, and left their country a prey to utter anarchy. Every one who could drag himself after them followed their example, and Judæa was denuded of its last inhabitant. But they did not find in Pharaoh the friend they had expected, and want and misery soon wasted their ranks. The fate which Jeremiah had predicted overtook them, and the Jews who subsequently peopled Egypt in such large numbers were the descendants, not of these fugitives, but of settlers invited thither by Alexander and the Ptolemies.

In Chapters xliii. and xliv. we find Jeremiah, who had been dragged to Tahpanhes by the captains, pursuing there the same straightforward course, warning

the people in earnest terms of the sure consequences of their persistence in sin, but met by steady resistance and obloquy on their part. The same insensate idolatry of the powers of nature, which in old times had fascinated them in Judæa (Chap. vii. 18), still exercised over them its baleful influence (Chap. xlv. 17). The pure, spiritual, truth-loving worship of Jehovah had no attractions for a sensual people: in its stead they gave their hearts to the Queen of Heaven, that is, the moon, whose soft radiance was the symbol of voluptuous and wanton rites. The women seem to have devoted themselves to this lewd service with fanatical zeal, while their husbands looked on with indifference, and seem to have lost all sense of religion for themselves. And thus the record of Jeremiah's life closes with a stern and earnest rebuke of their persistence in evil-doing; and an early Christian tradition, recorded by Tertullian and Jerome, tells us that at Tahpanhes he met with a martyr's fate. For the Jews, irritated by his constant protests against their misdoings, and his unflinching denunciations of evil, rose up against him, and stoned him to death.

Taken all in all, no nobler character than that of Jeremiah meets us in the Old Testament, nor one more worthy to be a type of Christ. At the cost of the most intense personal suffering, with his heart ever rent with the deepest anguish, he steadily persisted in the path of duty. Borne up by no hopes, with no spirit-stirring call to manly resistance on his lips, the bearer of a message of despair, like Dante, broken-hearted at the sure vision of his country's ruin, he never flinched from the performance of a task which brought him nothing but contumely and suffering, made

only the more painful by his own sensitive nature. True, that in the extreme distance there was the faint dawning of a better future. True, that his sufferings did save the Church, and give it new life. But this light was far away, and obscured by too thick clouds of murky darkness for any ray of it to gladden his own sad soul. Yet he fainted not. In weakness he was made strong; and the promise was fulfilled, with which he had entered upon his ministry, that God would "make him to be a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls; and that none should prevail against him" (Chap. i. 18, 19).

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BIBLICAL NOTES.

JOSHUA iv. 9.—On first reading the Biblical Note on this passage contributed by Mr. Shalders to THE EXPOSITOR for August, I was strongly inclined to think that he had made a discovery of some value, and had removed a stumbling-block which has led Rosenmüller and other critics to doubt the genuineness of this Verse. But a subsequent study of the passage has convinced me that this ingenious interpretation is hardly tenable; and as I am sure that Mr. Shalders, like myself, only desires to arrive at the truth, he will, I know, pardon me if I state my reasons for dissenting from his view, and for holding to the received Version. They are these.

1. The grammar of the passage appears to me (but I am open to correction) to be entirely at variance with the proposed rendering. Mr. Shalders says, "The literal translation of the Verse is as follows: 'And the twelve stones Joshua raised in the midst of Jordan from under the place where stood (*lit.* the station of) the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant.'" Now I submit, with all deference and respect, that this is *not* the literal translation, and that the literal translation *is*—precisely that of the Authorized Version. For, in the first place, the definite article ("*the* twelve stones") is wanting in the Original. The Original says simply, "And twelve stones set up Joshua;" that is, obviously, "twelve *other* stones," as both the LXX. and the Vulgate understand it—the former having here *kai*