

The Suffering of the Elect. Variations on a Theological Problem in Jer 15:10-21

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1. The image of Jeremiah and the 'Confessions'

Even a superficial survey of paintings which portray Jeremiah the prophet gives a good idea of the light in which he is commonly seen. Whether one turns to Michelangelo's fresco in the Sistine Chapel, to Rembrandt's canvas from 1630¹ or Chagall's lithograph from 1956 (opus 139),² one sees an old man with head in hand, bent down by an invisible but obviously heavy burden while his face is marked by deep wrinkles. He gives a very sad impression, and, were it not a bit impious, one therefore could easily call Jeremiah the 'Prophet of the Sad Countenance'.

Of course, this image of the lamenting prophet has something to do with the ascription of the book of Lamentations to Jeremiah according to LXX Thr 1:1.³ Yet the ancient translators must have had their reasons for suggesting this association. They must have had in mind an image of the man from Anathoth as a lamenting prophet. In this context the short notice in 2 Chr 35:25 is normally mentioned, according to which he sang a dirge for the dead king Josiah.⁴ But this answer only shifts the problem from Threni to the Chronicler. In any case, it is not unlikely that some clues for this image might be found within the Jeremianic

1 CALLAWAY regards this painting as a watershed of the Jeremiah-iconography, since it was the first to portray the prophet in a way that shifts 'the focus from external actions to inner life' (M.CH. CALLAWAY, *The Lamenting Prophet and the Modern Self: On the Origins of Contemporary Readings of Jeremiah*, in: J. KALTNER/L. STULMAN (Hg.), *Inspired Speech. Prophecy in the Ancient Near East. Essays in Honor of Herbert B. Huffmon*, JSOT.S 378, New York 2004, 48-71, 53). Looking at both pictures, this kind of quantum leap between Michelangelo and Rembrandt seems to me worth discussing, though.

2 Cf. U. GAUSS et al. (eds.), *Marc Chagall. Die Lithographien. La Collection Sorlier, Ostfildern-Ruit* 1998, 92.

3 Cf. M.CH. CALLAWAY, *Lamenting Prophet*, 51.

4 Cf. I. MEYER, *Die Klagelieder*, in: E. ZENGER et al., *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Stuttgart 62006, 478-483, 478.

tradition, and thus primarily in the Book of Jeremiah itself. Indeed, if one reads the book from its beginning, this characterisation of the prophet seems anything but far fetched. In chapters 1-20 we hear him complain again and again: about the pains he feels, about the fate Jerusalem has to endure, and, finally, about the persecution he has to suffer himself. This last theme comes especially to the fore in the five laments found in chapters 11 to 20. Since Wellhausen⁵ these have commonly been called the 'Confessions' of Jeremiah. It looks as if in these five prayers⁶ the prophet allows the reader a glimpse of his most personal feelings as well as his own piety. Therefore it is not surprising that scholars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries regarded them as the most important documents for reconstructing a biography of the prophet – and even today they must not be missing from any contribution to the 'life and work'-genre, be its orientation more edifying or more scholarly.⁷ However, it is in many ways highly questionable whether these prayers can offer any insight whatsoever into the historical prophet's psychic or religious condition. The fact that these texts are not independently accessible, but can only be grasped as part of the prophetic book, is simply ignored in such an approach. Regardless of whoever wrote them down at whatever time, he or she let them made a transition from the personal to the literary sphere. Having been put into writing these texts were meant to be read. Whether or not they had ever represented some actual experience of religious intimacy⁸ they did so no longer. Rather, they had become a work of art instead. As such they were – at what time soever – incorporated into the book which bears the name of their speaker, turning into words of the prophet but

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- 5 Cf. J. WELLHAUSEN, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*. Mit einem Nachwort von Rudolf Smend, Berlin/New York 102003, 140.
 - 6 The delimitation of the five units is a matter of debate. Although several pieces such as Jer 17:5-11, 12f. or some of the lamentations in Jer 2-10 might with some good reasons be regarded as belonging to the 'Confessions' in a wider sense (cf. H. BEZZEL, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias*. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie, BZAW 378, Berlin/New York 2007, 142-145.266-283), here the term shall be used more narrowly of Jer 11:18-12:6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18.
 - 7 Sometimes it is not easy to decide to which of the two groups a particular study aspires. For a few examples over the last decades the following may be mentioned: J. SKINNER, *Prophecy & Religion*. Studies in the Life of Jeremiah, Cambridge 1926; SH. BLANK, *Jeremiah*. Man and Prophet, Cincinatti 1961; K. SEYBOLD, *Der Prophet Jeremia*. Leben und Werk. Stuttgart u.a 1993; and, *mutatis mutandis*, J. KISS, *Die Klage Gottes und des Propheten*. Ihre Rolle in der Komposition und Redaktion von Jer 11-12, 14-15 und 18, WMANT 99, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003.
 - 8 Therefore it is not only an ahistorical but also an idle speculation as to whether the 'Confessions' may have been a part of a personal diary' (J. L. MIHELIC, *Dialogue with God*. A Study of Some of Jeremiah's Confessions, Interp. 14 (1960), 43-50, 43.

not strictly speaking prophetic words.⁹ And like any act of publishing, this one too was surely guided by some intention which lies beyond biographical interest.

What is more, the very genre of the texts should make one very cautious about reaching hasty conclusions concerning the situation of the speaker or the writer. As prayers they are naturally expressed in the topical language of the psalms and as such are highly metaphorical. Any attempts to find some proof for the 'hot oriental temper'¹⁰ of Jeremiah for example in the speaker's pleas for revenge (Jer 11:21-23; 12:3; 17:18; 18:21-23; 20:11) run the risk of ignoring this basic form-critical insight¹¹.

The relationship between the 'Confessions' and the psalms is taken more seriously by those exegetes who want to read them as expressions of the sentiments of a collective body. Basing himself on Robinson's idea of a corporate personality in the pre-exilic Judaeen society¹² it was Reventlow who argued that the (historical) prophet would have acted as a vicarious agent in cultic worship and would have put forth his laments not for his own sake but for the people.¹³ Although Reventlow was heavily criticised for his overall thesis, the idea of such a collective-representative interpretation of the prophetic prayers was broadly accepted, sometimes even in combination with an emphasis on their alleged 'liturgical nature'.¹⁴

The idea that Jeremiah would function as a vehicle for the pleas of others is also shared by a type of exegesis which one could call collective-exemplary. According to this school, the speaker of the 'Confes-

9 With this they seem to fit the Masoretic beginning of the book which heralds דברי ירמיהו (cf. Am 1:1) better than the Greek version which speaks of τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὃ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ Ἰερουσαλὴμ (cf. Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Mi 1:1; Zeph 1:1; W. MCKANE, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*. Vol. I, ICC, Edinburgh 1986, 2 f.).

10 'Unter seinem [scil. Jeremiah's] weichen Gemüt schlummert doch das heiße morgenländische Temperament; wehe, wenn dies einmal auflodert!' (W. BAUMGARTNER, *Die Klagegedichte des Jeremia*, BZAW 32, Gießen 1917, 32, on Jer 11:21-23).

11 It is BAUMGARTNER'S merit to have applied GUNKEL'S form-critical categories to the 'Confessions' – but this did not prevent him at all from reading them biographically and meditating on Jeremiah's personality which he saw deeply split between the private man and the prophet (cf. BAUMGARTNER, *Klagegedichte*, 77).

12 Cf. H.W. ROBINSON, *The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality*, in: P. VOLZ/F. STUMMER/J. HEMPEL (eds.), *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments*. Vorträge, gehalten auf der Internationalen Tagung Alttestamentlicher Forscher zu Göttingen vom 4.–10. September 1935, BZAW 66, Berlin 1936, 49–62, esp. 54–56.

13 Cf. H. GRAF REVENTLOW, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia*, Gütersloh 1963, 258–260.

14 R.P. CARROLL, *From Chaos to Covenant. Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, London 1981, 123; cf. id., *Jeremiah. A Commentary*, OTL, London 1986, 278.

sions' would be none other than the 'suffering righteous one' ('Leidender Gerechter') of the psalter.¹⁵ He would have served as a kind of role model for a postexilic pious group. Although this interpretation is mainly based on the psalm-like character of the texts with special reference to their topical language, this does not always prevent their exponents from taking questionable historicist shortcuts. These are similar to the ones which they themselves criticise the biographical-psychological readers of making, and with good reason. It happens, for example, when an attempt is made to reconstruct the theology of the assumed group's assumed enemies against whom Jeremiah the representative speaker is claimed to have been made uttering his curses some time in the Hellenistic era.¹⁶

Whether one dates the prayers to the 6th or to the 3rd century – the problem remains the same: The danger of succumbing to the illusion that the access to the small textual units on their own would be possible and of ignoring the fact that they are interwoven into a biblical book is immense. This is due to the heritage of the dominance of the form-critical method with its exaggerated claim that a *Sitz im Leben* could be determined not only for literary genres but for each individual text as well.

Criticism of such disregard for textual context is anything but new. As a consequence Polk turns his back on every kind of diachronic interpretation and moves toward a canonical approach.¹⁷ But as justified as it might be to doubt the well-known impasses and implicit vicious circles of a form-critically dominated exegesis, Polk's radical answer presents its own problems. One could argue that he replaces one construct, namely that of the 'smallest literary unit' with another, that of the 'canonical shape'. The book of Jeremiah which has at least two 'canonical shapes', the MT and the LXX-version,¹⁸ illustrates especially

15 'Jeremia ist der exemplarisch leidende Gerechte' (A.H.J. GUNNEWEG, *Konfession oder Interpretation im Jeremiabuch*, ZThK 67 (1970), 395-416, 399); cf. P. WELTEN, *Leiden und Leidenserfahrung im Buch Jeremia*, ZThK 74 (1977), 145; K.-F. POHLMANN, *Die Ferne Gottes. Studien zum Jeremiabuch*, BZAW 179, Berlin/New York 1989, 34; D.H. BAK, *Klagender Gott – Klagende Menschen. Studien zur Klage im Jeremiabuch*, BZAW 193, Berlin/New York 1990, 220.

16 Cf. K.-F. POHLMANN, *Die Ferne Gottes*, 63-99.

17 Cf. T. POLK, *The Prophetic Persona. Jeremiah and the Language of the Self*, JSOT.S 32, Sheffield 1984, for example 18.

18 The Jer-fragments of Qumran which probably belonged to six different scrolls shed new light on the relation between LXX and MT with 4QJer^a representing the proto-masoretic text quite exactly, whereas 4QJer^b provides evidence of a textual sequence in Jer 9:22-10:21 corresponding LXX (cf. DJD 15, 171f.). This may mean that as late as the 2nd century BCE at least two Hebrew versions of Jer could exist in parallel (cf., esp. for further literature on this issue, K. SCHMID, *Buchgestalten des Jeremiabuches*,

well that a 'final shape' of this book did not exist at any point of history nor does it today.¹⁹

Both extremes, the at least latent positivistic attitude of the former form criticism on the one hand as well as a canonical reading which only pretends to be able to take up a completely ahistorical position on the other, can be avoided in a redaction critical approach.²⁰ The starting point of the analysis should be the text within the context of its different ancient versions. However, from such a perspective of a 'historically inquisitive synchronic reading' (*'historisch fragende Synchronlesung'*)²¹ it should be asked whether the different voices perceptible in these texts can be identified with different stages of the book's growth. In this case, it may be possible to trace the succession of different 'final forms' of the book back into its history – a succession of forms which is still perpetuating itself in the book's modern receptions and translations.

By way of illustration we will take a closer look at the second and perhaps most complex 'Confession', Jer 15:10-21.

Untersuchungen zur Redaktions- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Jer 30–33 im Kontext des Buches, WMANT 72, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1996, 13-23). The consequences of this theory are manifold: Text-critically it challenges the widespread tendency to see Jer^{LXX} as the superior version or 'first edition' in general. Instead, redactional work should be assumed in *both* versions after the separation of the two (prevailing) streams of the tradition. In turn, this should make one hesitant about referring to the 'final' form of Jer.

- 19 Jerome's Vulgate which follows LXX for the sequence of the Biblical books but MT for the structure of Jer and for many text-critical details could be called a third canonical version – and, for example, Luther's translation a fourth one: He wants to follow the *veritas Hebraica*, but accepts the position of the later prophets from LXX and for his translation aligns himself with the church fathers. (For example, in Jer 15:19; 17:16 he takes Jerome's commentary directly into his translation; cf. H. BEZZEL, *Konfessionen*, 97.141).
- 20 Of course, speaking of a redaction-critical analysis of the 'Confessions' has been common for at least twenty years. Thus already A. R. DIAMOND, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context. Scenes of Prophetic Drama*, JSOT.S 45, Sheffield 1987, and K. O'CONNOR, *The Confessions of Jeremiah. Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1–25*, SBL.DS 94, Atlanta 1988. But on close inspection both studies appear to be based on the form-critical theorem of the small literary unit. They immediately start with the analysis of the laments themselves which for both authors are undoubtedly Jeremianic, and then, in a second step, try to explain how the surrounding material would have been written at a later stage. According to the understanding of redaction criticism as it is argued in the present essay, the exegete should take the opposite approach: start with the final form(s), deconstruct the literary history, and then reconstruct and explain the whole.
- 21 (O.H. STECK, *Die Prophetenbücher und ihr theologisches Zeugnis. Wege der Nachfrage und Fahrten zur Antwort*, Tübingen 1996, 22, emphasis by STECK).

2. Jer 15:10-21 within the framework of Jer 14-16

For a reader who follows the book's order and reads through chapter 13, the prophet's lament appears to be an appropriate part of the dialogical or triological dispute which illustrates in highly dramatic fashion the triangular relationship between YHWH, his people and their officials, and YHWH's prophet. In its twofold alternation between human speech towards God and divine answer, 15:10-21 look like a smaller mirror image²² of the so-called 'great liturgy' 14:1-15:4 (more precisely, 14:1-15:9).²³ In both cases there are two turns of a lament or plea,²⁴ followed by a reaction of YHWH.²⁵ But of course, the metaphor

22 Cf. G. FISCHER, *Jeremia 1-25*, HThK.AT, Freiburg im Breisgau 2005, 472. GITAY elucidates this observation using theatrical categories. The tension between the announcement of judgment and attempts to avert it would take place 'on two, parallel stages as in a theatre' (Y. GITAY, *Rhetorical Criticism and the Prophetic Discourse*, in: D. F. WATSON [ed.], *Persuasive Artistry. Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, JSNT.S 50, Sheffield 1991, 13-24, 16); cf. GERSTENBERGER who speaks of 'opposite but corresponding rôles in one drama' (E. GERSTENBERGER, *Jeremiah's Complaints. Observations on Jer 15:10-21*, JBL 82 [1963], 393-408, 401); see also the diagram in L. Stulman, *Jeremiah, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries*, Nashville 2005, 133.

23 BEUKEN and VAN GROL emphasise the close verbal links between 15:5-9 and 14:2-6 and argue therefore very convincingly that compositionally the verses 15:5-9 should not be separated from 14:1-15:4 (cf. W.A.M. BEUKEN/H.W.M. VAN GROL, *Jeremiah 14,1-15,9. A Situation of Distress and its Hermeneutics. Unity of Form – Dramatic Development*, in: P.-M. BOGAERT [ed.], *Le livre de Jérémie. Le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission*, BETHL 54, Leuven 1981, 297-342, 322).

24 Cf. Jer 14:7-9, 19-22 with 15:10, 15-18.

25 Cf. 14:10-12; 15:1-4 with 15:11-14, 19-21 – according to the masoretic reading. LXX takes at least 15:11 as words not of YHWH but of the prophet, giving no translation for the introductory אָמַר יְהוָה but starting with the address γένοιτο δέσποτα (cf. Vg. *fiat domine*), obviously understanding the first word as אָמַן. Both readings are problematic, as is the verse as a whole. Usually, 'ex more Hebraeorum יהוה אָמַר pertinere ad praecedentia' (J.D.MICHAELIS, *Observationes philologicae et criticae in Jeremiae vaticinia et Threnos*, Göttingen 1793, 132) – as well as אָמַן is normally used in a reflexive way (cf. H. WILDBERGER, *Art. אָמַן, mn, fest, sicher*, in: THAT 1 (1971), 177-209, 194; GERSTENBERGER, *Complaints*, 402, n. 36). However, both verdicts are not to be seen as absolute as it is often pretended. Talmon lends the existence of an 'introductory oath or assertion formula 'āmên' (SH. TALMON, *Amen as an Introductory Oath Formula*, *Textus 7* [1969], 124-129, 129) at least some plausibility, and except for the one instance of a divine speech being introduced simply with אָמַר יְהוָה (without כִּי, בְּה, אֲשֶׁר, or בְּאֲשֶׁר) in Jer 46:25 (which is text-critically highly difficult in itself, too), there is at least a well documented parenthetical use of the phrase (cf. H. BEZZEL, *Konfessionen*, 64, n. 25), and sometimes it is difficult to decide whether the formula refers to what precedes it or what follows. Whichever decision one may accept, even in the Septuagint YHWH should be seen as the speaker of at least 15:13-14.

of a reflecting mirror should not be forced, since the differences between the passages far outweigh their macrostructural similarity. In chapter 14 it is a group that makes an appeal to YHWH, whereas the supplicant of the 'Confession' is obviously alone in talking with God.

Nevertheless, a coherent and meaningful reading of the chapters 14-15 in their present form is possible, although not only the several changes of speaker could lead to the assumption that the passage has been worked over several times. Already the beginning of the prayer in 15:10 fits perfectly into its immediate context. In his outcry the speaker formally addresses his *mother* (אִי־לִי אִמִּי) and asks the despairing rhetorical question why he has been born. In the preceding verses 15:5-6, it is the personified *Lady Jerusalem* (2fs) for whom doom is announced by YHWH, followed by an oracle of judgment which again is directed to the people as a whole (3mp). This fittingly describes the grievous consequences of its sentence, which seems to have been executed already.²⁶ This is done with the help of imagery taken from the family sphere, what one might call 'female' images. The people is made childless (שָׁכַל, 15:7), the number of its widows is immense (עֲצֻמוֹ־לִי אֶלְמָנָתוֹ, 15:8), the 'spoiler at noonday' has come upon the mothers (עַל־אִם, 15:8). And in v. 9, in a kind of antithetic correspondance to the Hannah of 1 Sam 2:5b,²⁷ their common fate is subsumed under the image of the languishing woman who had once given birth to seven children. On the one hand this establishes a connection to the complaint about drought at the beginning of chapter 14 where, in 14:2, the 'gates of Judah' languish²⁸ and Jerusalem cries out. On the other hand, this imagery ties verses 15:7-9 more closely to the oracle of doom against the personified city of 15:5f. Last, and certainly not least, the use of the catchwords יֵלֶד and אִם also provides an effective transition to the 'Confession' 15. However, in this context of lamenting and lamented women, the outcry of 15:10 is at the same time irritating, even scandalous: The supplicant does not express solidarity with the crying mothers who have been made childless and barren, but on the contrary bemoans the fact of his own birth! Nevertheless, his lament may be read as a direct continuation of the community lament in chapter 14: According to 15:18, his wound is incurable (מִכְתִּי אֲנוּשָׁה), just as is that of the 'daughter of my people' in

26 The perfect tense is used here. Nevertheless, BEUKEN and VAN GROU want to find here 'an announcement of future judgment' (BEUKEN/VAN GROU, Jer 14, 321) referring to the *perfectum propheticum* – whose grammatical existence is a matter of debate itself and in my view rather doubtful.

27 Cf. 1 Sam 2:5b עֲקָרָה יָלְדָה שִׁבְעָה וּרְבַת בָּנִים אֲמַלְלָה ('the barren has born seven, but she who has many children has withered') with Jer 15:9 אֲמַלְלָה יֵלְדָה הַשִּׁבְעָה ('She who has born seven has withered').

28 אַבְלָה יְהוּדָה וְשַׁעֲרֶיהָ אֲמַלְלוּ.

14:17 (מכה נחלה מאד). With this line in mind, one is inclined to read the whole 'Confession' – as Reventlow did – as a kind of prophetic intercession in favour of the people, and thus as a revolt against the injunction of 15:1 (and 14:11). This impression is strengthened by the observation that in this wider context YHWH's second answer (15:19-21) looks like a conditional revision of his verdict in 15:1. Here, the 'standing before YHWH' has become useless even for such prominent intercessors as Samuel and Moses. In 15:19 the possibility is reopened (לפני תעמד) for Jeremiah under condition of his return.²⁹ Thus Jeremiah, the prophet like Moses,³⁰ outgrows a little his great antitype – even if nothing is said about the significance of this position before YHWH nor about his success as intermediary.

Following the divine answer, a new textual section begins with 16:1. Although the break between the two chapters is made clear by the use of the introductory formula (Wortereignisformel) ויהי דברייהוה,³¹ there is also a connection with the preceding 'Confession' to be seen. Introduced by a brief report in the 1st person singular, 16:1-9 assign three symbolic actions to the prophet all of which feature a peculiarity: They could be called the total opposite of a symbolic action, since the prophet is three times instructed NOT to do something but to leave it. 'You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons and daughters in this place' (16:2),³² 'you shall not enter a clubhouse'³³ (16:5),³⁴ and 'you

29 Cf. KISS, Klage Gottes, 115. However, this observation at the level of the final form does not necessarily imply that 15:1 is a later reaction to 15:19 or the entire 'Confession' (pace *ibid.*, 118).

30 Cf. Dtn 18:18; Jer 1:9.

31 It is worth noting that in LXX the transition between the chapters is made much smoother. The formula is missing and the reference to the divine speaker appears postpositioned and seen in connection with 16:2a as a parenthesis: καὶ σὺ μὴ λάβῃς γυναῖκα λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ. Thus the symbolic action is made a direct consequence of God's order to repent.

32 לא-תקח לך אשה ולא-יהיו לך בנים ובנות במקום הזה.

33 Since there is only one further bit of evidence for the *nomen rectum* (Am 6:7), the term מרחה בית is difficult to translate. Both the usage in Amos and the ancient versions of Jer 16:5 (LXX: θιάσος, Vg.: *domus convivii*), as well as extrabiblical sources allow for the assumption that a primary semantic connection with mourning (common in most of the modern translations) cannot be taken for granted (cf. H.-J. FABRY, Art. מרחה, *marzeah*, ThWAT 5 [1986], 11-15, 15; C. MAIER/E.M. DÖRRFUSS, 'Um mit ihnen zu sitzen, zu essen und zu trinken'. Am 6,7; Jer 16,5 und die Bedeutung von marzeah, ZAW 111 (1999), 45-57, 57; S. SCHORCH, Die Propheten und der Karneval: Marzeach – Maioumas – Maimuna, VT 53 (2003), 397-415, 412; O. LORETZ, Ugartisch-biblisch *mrzḥ* "Kultmahl, Kultverein" in Jer 16,5 und Am 6,7. Bemerkungen zur Geschichte des Totenkults in Israel, in: L. RUPPERT/P. WEIMAR/E. ZENGER (eds.),

shall not enter a house of feasting' (16:8).³⁵ Thus, one could speak rather of symbolic inaction. However, if read in a sequence after the 'Confession', one can hardly fail see in these three prohibitions the actualisation of what follows from the instructions which YHWH gives Jeremiah in 15:19-21. Thus, 16:1-9 illustrates what it means when the prophet is told: 'you must not return to them' (לֹא תָשׁוּב אֲלֵהֶם, 15:19). Obviously, it implies total exclusion of any form of social life, and thus complements the speaker's self-portrayal in 15:16f. There, he had underscored his absolute obedience by asserting that he never sat in the assembly of the merry-makers but had his joy in the word of YHWH.³⁶ Now any participation in joyful feasts is forbidden to him (16:9). With this he has to show that all these forms of common pleasure and 'the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness'³⁷ will come to an end soon. The connection created by the catchwords שמחה and ששון is striking.

Although the 'Confession' appears to be linked with its preceding context and even though the subsequent symbolic action ties in with the prophetic lament as well, the overall picture which is produced by reading chapters 14-16 in this way remains ambiguous. On the one hand the complaining prophet takes up the lament of Daughter Zion (14:17; 15:18) and thus acts as an intercessor – which in the form of 'standing before YHWH' is conceded to him anew in 15:19 as a revision of the verdict from 15:1. On the other hand, 16:1-9 make it quite clear what fulfilling the required condition ('if you return I will let you return', 15:19) will mean, namely the total absence of joy and happiness not only for the prophet (15:16) but also for the people, since the latter is definitely doomed (16:4, 6f., 9). Two questions arise at this point. First, whether Jeremiah's prayer in the 'Confession' is heard or not; and second, whether he really prays in favour of the people or actually against it.

It seems possible that disparate answers to both questions are provided yet at the level of the text itself, i.e. innerbiblically, and that these different perspectives on the prophet Jeremiah have something to do with the formation of chapters 14-16. In this respect the crucial point is whether the passage 15:10-21* is older than the composition of the 'great liturgy' and the threefold symbolic actions or whether it is a later brick in the architecture of this part of the book. While a detailed analy-

Künder des Wortes. Beiträge zur Theologie der Propheten. Josef Schreiner zum 60. Geburtstag, Würzburg 1982, 87-93, 89f.); but cf. also MCKANE, Jeremiah 1, 364f.

34 אֶל-תְּבוֹא בֵּית מְרוֹחַ.

35 וּבֵית-מִשְׁתֵּה לֹא-תָבוֹא.

36 Cf. 15:16: וַיְהִי דְבַרְךָ לִי לְשִׁשׁוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחַת לִבִּי.

37 קוֹל שִׁשׁוֹן וְקוֹל שִׂמְחָה.

sis of 14:1-15:9 and 16:1-9 cannot be carried out within the framework of this essay,³⁸ it seems appropriate to ask about the diachronic relation between the 'liturgy', the symbolic action and the 'Confession'.

For this purpose not only do the connections between 15:10-21 and its context have to be considered, but also the intertextual links will be taken into consideration which, as it were, bypass the prophetic prayer and tie 14:1-15:9* to 16:1-9. Several observations can be made.

I have argued above that the outcry of woe links 15:10 appropriately well to the verses that immediately precede with their prevailing female and maternal imagery. Apart from the harsh ironic barb of 15:10 in which the supplicant curses his birth while mothers who have become childless are weeping, the same could be said with regard to 16:2. Here the prophet is forbidden to get married so that he himself becomes a symbol of exactly those circumstances which are depicted in 15:8f. and which are further illustrated in 16:3f. In both cases the key root יל is being used.³⁹

Bridges also appear to be built to parts of the text which precede 15:5-9. Here we have the resumption of the motif of the personified Lady Jerusalem and its interpretation. According to 16:4, the victims of the punishment will not be buried but will be thrown to the birds and the beasts of the field – exactly as it was announced in 15:3 with

38 A solution to the complex character especially of chapter 14* is often sought by ascribing it to a redactor who would have combined several pieces of the Jeremianic tradition (cf. W. THIEL, Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25, WMANT 41, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1973, 180; G. WANKE, Jeremia. Teilband 1: Jer 1,1-25,14, ZBK 20.1, Zürich 1995, 140; M.E. BIDDLE, Polyphony and Symphony in Prophetic Literature. Rereading Jeremiah 7-20, SOTI 2, Macon (Georgia) 1996, 81f. BEUKEN and VAN GROEL even suggest 'that Jeremiah himself, possibly together with Baruch, had a hand in this composition' (BEUKEN/VAN GROEL, Jeremiah 14, 342). Instead, a redaction-critically informed assessment in terms of *Fortschreibungen* seems more plausible. The expansion of chapter 14* can be explained as a continuing chain of interpretation and reinterpretation which takes as its starting point the prophetic outcry of 14:17aβ-18a which had once been directly attached to 13:18, 19a (cf. CHR. LEVIN, Die Verheißung des Neuen Bundes in ihrem theologieggeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt, FRLANT 137, Göttingen 1985, 154, n. 22; *ibid.*, Das Wort Jahwes an Jeremia. Zur ältesten Redaktion der jeremianischen Sammlung, ZThK 101 (2004), 257-280, 264, n. 29; similarly K.-F. POHLMANN, Die Ferne Gottes, 129-132; see further, following both, but without a detailed delimitation of the verses in question, K. SCHMID, Buchgestalten, 330-334). From this archimedean point in 14:17aβ-18a the growth of the chapter might be explained by the gradual *Fortschreibungen* 13:20-22, 25-27; 15:5f. | 14:2-6 | 15:2b, 7-9a | 14:11-17a, 18b*; 15:1-2a, 3a, 9b* | 15:4b | 14:7-9, 19-22 (cf. H. BEZZEL, Konfessionen, 102-112).

39 Cf. 15:9 (אמללה לית) with the threefold specification of children, mothers and fathers in 16:3 as הילודים, הילדות, and המולדים.

virtually the same wording.⁴⁰ Parallels not only obtain with regard to the consequences of divine judgment but to the causes of death. In addition to the factors 'sword' and 'famine' which are all too familiar to every reader of the book of Jeremiah, in 16:4 'deadly diseases' are also mentioned. They are not expressed with the term דבר which is typical for the trias in Jer, but with the rare word תחלואים.⁴¹ The reader is thereby led directly to 14:18, where he not only finds the only other occurrence of this term in the entire book, but also the two other causes of death from 16:4.⁴² The latter verse thus reveals itself as related to the former. What the prophet was complaining about in 14:18 is announced again as something that will happen to the people. It is thus made definite.

The explanation for the symbolic injunctions in 16:5 refers back even farther to the larger section of 14:1-15:9. According to 16:5, Jeremiah is forbidden to go into a clubhouse (בית מרוח) and to mourn (נוד) with 'them'. Thus, the question addressed to Jerusalem in 15:5 who would bemoan her (מי ינוד לך) and who would ask about her wellbeing (לשלם), is answered – briefly, clearly, and in the negative: It will not be the prophet Jeremiah. In 16:5 the reason for this verdict is the withdrawal of YHWHs שלום, which in a plus in MT is additionally qualified by the terms 'steadfast love' (חסד) and 'mercy' (רחמים).⁴³ As to the state-

40 Cf. 15:3b: 'to the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and to destroy' (ואת עורף השמים ואחד בהמת הארץ לאכל ולהשחית) with 16:4: 'and their corpses shall be food for the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth' (והיתה נבלתם למאכל) (לעוף השמים ולבהמת). This parallel does not depend on whether MT or LXX is to be followed in 16:4; the latter offers a different word order and has no equivalent for נבלתם למאכל. The Hebrew reading obviously is geared to the comparable phrases 7:33; 19:7; 34:20.

41 Throughout the OT it is to be found only five times: Dtn 29:21; Jer 14:18; 16:4; Ps 103:3; 2 Chr 21:19.

42 Cf. 14:18: 'then behold, those slain by the sword [...] then behold, those sick with famine' (והנה חלואי רעב) (והנה חללי-חרב [...]) with 16:4: 'they shall die of deadly diseases [...] and by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed' (ממותי תחליאים ימתו) (ובחרב וברעב כילו [...]). Incidentally, this reference of the *whole* verse 16:4 to 14:18 is an argument against the popular literal-critical distinction between 16:4a and 16:4b (cf. THIEL, Redaktion I, 196). His criterion is that between both halves of the verse there should be a 'logical caesura' ('*logische Zäsur*', ibd.). This is not convincing to me. Nevertheless it is virtually the *opinio communis* to divide it as THIEL suggests (cf., among others, WANKE, Jeremiah 1, 103; CARROLL, Jeremiah, 338; J. SCHREINER, Jeremiah 1-25,14, NEB, Würzburg 1981, 103; C. MAIER, Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora. Soziale Gebote des Deuteronomium in Fortschreibungen des Jeremiabuches, FRLANT 196, Göttingen 2002, 125, n. 448).

43 For this word pair, cf. Ps 25:6; 40:12; 51:3; 69:17; 103:4. Since both words (and with them parts of 16:6) are lacking in LXX, they should be seen as very late explicative glosses (cf. H.-J. STIPP, Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jere-

ment itself, this corresponds to YHWH's being 'weary of relenting' (נלאיתי הנחם) which he had confessed in 15:6.

Furthermore, the redundant emphasis on the local designation 'at this place' which pervades the pericope (16:2, 3, 9) could be seen as referring back to the intercessory complaint against the false prophets of salvation in 14:13. Their foreknowledge that YHWH would bring lasting peace (שלום) to this place (במקום הזה) is purposefully thwarted by the drastic scenery of 16:1-9.

To sum up, the literary links between 16:1-9 and 14:1-15:9 relate in remarkable way to distinctly different elements of the 'great liturgy'. The mourning voice of the prophet of 14:18a is resumed as well as that of YHWH who in 15:7-9a looks back at the catastrophe which has already come about. YHWH's announcement of judgment in 15:3, motivated by his weariness of relenting according to 15:6, is also resumed. So too is Jeremiah's intercession in favour of the people, by putting blame on the false prophets in 14:13. Thus, in 16:1-9 several different Jeremianic 'voices'⁴⁴ constitute a harmonious choir. Expressed in redaction-critical terms, elements which belong to several different strata⁴⁵ are already understood as a textual amalgam.⁴⁶

In addition, the negative finding must not be neglected that there are no terminological or thematic connections between the symbolic actions according to 16:1-9 and those components of the text which are

miabuches. Textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte, OBO 136, Freiburg [Schweiz]/Göttingen 1994, 108). The bridge to 15:5 is not affected by this but is based on the use of שלום which is found in both versions.

44 For the concept of 'voices' cf. BIDDLE, Polyphony, *passim*.

45 Cf. above, n. 38.

46 Of course, the degree of this amalgamation depends on how one judges the redaction history of 16:1-9. Thiel, for instance, wants to keep a predeuteronomistic basis in 16:1-3a, 4a, 5-8, 9* which would have been elaborated by a few glosses only (cf. THIEL, Redaktion I, 201). MAIER on the other hand wants to make the following distinction: 16:5aα, 8* | 2, 3a, 4aα, 9 | 4aβ-5* | 6-7 (cf. MAIER, Lehrer, 126). In proposing this she takes as a starting point the command that Jeremiah shall not enter a מרת-*house* or a house of joy for which no reason is given at all. Thus, she deprives the symbolic action of one of the basic features of the genre (cf. G. FOHRER, Die Gattung der Berichte über symbolische Handlungen der Propheten [1952], in: id., Studien zur Alttestamentlichen Prophetie [1949-1965], BZAW 99, Berlin 1967, 92-112, 94; id., Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten. 2. überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage, AthANT 54, Zürich 1968, 35f.). But why should Jeremiah have been told not to enter a clubhouse? For this, MAIER offers no explanation. In fact, the symbolic action needs to be explained and interpreted theologically. Otherwise, it would be muted and incomprehensible. Therefore, LEVIN'S proposals seems more convincing. He sees the oldest part in 16:1-2, 9 which he calls an 'apophthegma' (cf. LEVIN, Verheißung, 169).

phrased as a lament of the people, 14:7-9, 19-22. The key terms נָעַן and הִטָּאת do not appear again until 16:10.

What follows then from this with regard to the 'Confession' and a diachronic analysis of its relation to the surrounding context? The observations of intertextual linkages between chapters 14-16 discussed so far can be summarised in two points:

First, 15:10-21 are certainly related in many ways both to what precedes and to what follows. Second, several lines which run from 14:1-9 to 16:1-9 are obscured by the twofold alternation of prophetic lament and divine answer in between. Without the 'Confession', there would be a consistent sequence of divine accusation, attempted prophetic intercession (subsequently prohibited), the assertion of God's wrath and its implication for the people and, finally, a command that the prophet illustrate the divine decision to bring judgment upon the people by means of symbolic actions. When 15:10-21 is included, things become more difficult. Now Jeremiah himself comes into view and the reader must ask what the lament is about and for whose benefit. Is this a continuation of his intercession or is he calling for a contrary intervention by YHWH? The distinct set of motifs that holds 14:1-16:9 together is not completely undermined by the 'Confession', but it is diverted in another direction. Now it is the consequences of a prophetic existence for the prophet himself rather than the causes and consequences of the all-embracing disaster which are in the spotlight. In view of 16:1-9, the stress is shifted from the level of interpretation to the level of the action itself, to the solitary and suffering prophet. Furthermore, 16:1-9 could be attached to 15:9 at least as smoothly as 15:10 can – and clearly better than to 15:21 as is the case now.

This compositional situation can best be explained by the assumption that 15:10-21 was inserted into its present context at a time when most of chapters 14-16 already existed. The several connections to the surrounding material pointed out above further suggest that this piece should not be seen as adopted from a separate and somewhat free floating tradition,⁴⁷ be it Jeremicanic or not, but that it was written for its specific contextual setting and directly into it.

However, the question of the meaning of the 'Confession' within its context remains open, and it is even more sharply accentuated by this redaction-critical hypothesis. Why should anyone have written this

47 Pace, among others, H.-J. HERMISSON, *Jahwes und Jeremias Rechtsstreit. Zum Thema der Konfessionen Jeremias* [1987], in: id., *Studien zu Prophetie und Weisheit. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, FAT 23, Tübingen 1998, 5-36, 34; H.W. JÜNGLING, *Ich mache dich zu einer ehernen Mauer. Literarkritische Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Jer 1,18-19 zu Jer 15,20-21*, Bib. 54 (1973), 1-24, 23.

poem if it made a coherent and understandable text darker and more ambiguous? To find an answer, a close look at the respective verses themselves is required.

3. Three lamenting Jeremiahs in Jer 15:10-21

An examination of the first few verses of the prayer makes it quite understandable why the exegetical guild is split up in the way it is about its interpretation. While it is obvious that the speaker of 15:10 must be a single person – at the literary level most likely the figure of the prophet –, it is difficult to say whom YHWH is addressing in his answer. In 15:11, he⁴⁸ addresses someone using the 2ms form, as it is in 15:13 and 15:14a. But in 15:14b the fire in his nose is kindled ‘against you’ (עליכם), a 2mp form. Furthermore, it is surprising that YHWH refers to his burning wrath (הא) while the supplicant of 15:15 pleads that God no longer hold it back. A common way to avoid this difficulty and together with it all the other problems which come along especially with 15:12, is to delete them, following Rudolph, and regard them simply as an ‘undue insertion from 17:1-4’.⁴⁹ This solution leads into a blind alley, however. No matter how difficult or even impossible a translation of 15:12 may be,⁵⁰ 15:12-14 are clearly documented by *all* the ancient versions – unlike 17:1-4 which is missing in the LXX. Therefore, it would always have been more plausible to see the literal dependence going in the opposite direction as that which Rudolph suggests. Not 15:12-14 have been taken over from chapter 17, but 17:1-4 are a very late exegetical insertion (*Einschreibung*) based on Jer 15.⁵¹ A second harmon-

48 Following MT, cf. n. 25.

49 ‘[E]in ungehöriger Einschub aus 17,1-4’ (W. RUDOLPH, *Jeremia*. 3., verbesserte Auflage, HAT 12, Tübingen 31968, 106).

50 According to DUHM, 15:12 is ‘total nonsense’ (‘heller Unsinn’) (B. DUHM, *Das Buch Jeremia*, KHC 11, Tübingen/Leipzig 1901, 134). Unfortunately, this could be said for the LXX-version as well as for the recensions of Aquila and Symmachus, for Vg. and Tjon. It looks as if this verse was untranslatable already in those days. Nevertheless, all versions attest to a very creative way of dealing with philological problems – as do the modern conjectures (cf. BEZZEL, *Konfessionen*, 70).

51 Cf. B. GOSSE, *Jérémie 17,1-5aa dans la rédaction massorétique du livre du Jérémie*, in: *EstB* 53 (1995), 165-180, 171; P.-M. BOGAERT, *Le livre de Jérémie en perspective: les deux rédactions antiques selon les travaux en cour*, *RB* 101 (1994), 363-406, 386f.; id., *Jérémie 17,1-4 TM, oracle contre ou sur Juda propre au texte long, annoncé(?) en 11,7-8.13 TM et en 15,12-14 TM*, in: Y. GOLDMAN/CHR. UEHLINGER, *La double transmission du texte biblique. Etudes d’histoire du texte offertes en hommage à Adrian Schenker*, OBO 179, Fribourg/Göttingen 2001, 59-74, 62. For a discussion of the problem and a redaction-critical interpretation of 17,1-4 cf. further BEZZEL, *Kon-*

ising option is to read 15:13f. as an indirect salvation oracle: According to this interpretation it is not Jeremiah but rather his opponents who are addressed.⁵² But other than 11:22f. no support can be found in the text for this view. Thus, it is clear that YHWH does answer Jeremiah – but at the same time addresses him as a plural group. This sounds strange, yet an explanation for this observation can be found if the topical language of 15:14 is traced back to its origins. It should not be a great surprise that the phrase ‘I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know’⁵³ sounds deuteronomistic. This formulaic expression is found in a slightly different form in Dtn 28. In Dtn 28:47f. it is a part of the curse that ‘you will serve your enemies’ (ועבדת־אי־בִיךָ) for lacking in joy in serving God. The motif of ‘not knowing’ is familiar from this chapter, too, even if it is here, in verse 64, combined with ‘other gods’: ‘There [i.e. in the diaspora] you shall serve other gods which you have not known’.⁵⁴ The punishment fits the crime, and this theme can be found elsewhere and with the same wording.⁵⁵ Deliberate sacrilege in freedom results, correspondingly, in forced sacrilege in captivity. In this spirit the curse was taken up in the book of Jeremiah (16:13), with the motif of ‘not knowing’ being transferred from the gods

fessionen, 71-85. Of course, even if one thinks that Jer 15 is dependent on Jer 17, one cannot avoid explaining the function of these verses in chapter 15, since conjuring them away would mean to exceed the limits of the text-critical method by far. For this objection against RUDOLPH cf. GERSTENBERGER, Complaints, 394; F.D. HUBMANN, Untersuchungen zu den Konfessionen Jer 11,18-12,6 und 15,10-21, FzB 30, Würzburg 1978, 209; R.M. PATERSON, Reinterpretation in the Book of Jeremiah, JSOT 28 (1984), 37-46, 41.43; H.-J. HERMISSON, Jeremias dritte Konfession (Jer 15,10-21), ZThK 96 (1999), 1-21, 4-8.

52 Cf. HUBMANN, Untersuchungen, 270; DIAMOND, Confessions 63, WANKE, Jeremia 1, 154.

53 Read with some Hebrew manuscripts and LXX והעבדת־ך as in 17:4. MT and in a way also Vg. read or interpret והעברתי. This variant can be explained as a combination of two ‘mistakes’: On the one hand, the ך was read as an ך. On the other hand, there is a haplography of the ך or the ך respectively – or one has to assume a *Vorlage* with defective writing. But this ‘misreading’ is shaped by intention as well. It can be seen as an interpretation with an emphasis on salvation: It is not the addressee who will have to serve the enemy, but the enemy will be made to pass away. However, Jerome wanted this to be seen a little bit different. For him, translating the preposition ך rather generously, the enemies will be brought *from* an unknown country (*et adducam inimicos tuos de terra qua nescis*).

54 ועבדת שם אלהים אחרים אשר לא־ידיעת.

55 Cf. Dtn 11:28; 13:3, 7, 14; 29:25; 32:17; Jer 7:9; 19:4; 44:3. The formula expands the more common one which speaks merely of serving ‘other gods’, cf. Dtn 7:4; 8:19; 11:16; 17:3; 28:14; 29:25; 30:17; 31:20; Jos 23:16; 24:2; 24:16; Judg 2:19; 10:13; 1 Sam 8:8; 26:19; 1 Kgs 9:6, 9; 2 Kgs 5:17; 17:35; 2 Chr 7:19, 22; Jer 11:10; 13:10; 16:11; 22:9; 25:6; 35:15; 44:3.

to the country.⁵⁶ According to 14:18, even priests and prophets have to 'go to a land that they do not know'.⁵⁷ From these two thoughts it is only a small step to the idea of serving one's enemies 'in a land that you do not know' (בארץ לא ידעת) in 15:14a.

But this intertextual relationship does not yet explain the role of the respective half-verse within the framework of the 'Confession'. Again, a look towards Dtn 28 will be helpful. The enslavement imposed in 28:47 is justified in the immediately preceding verse by the accusation of a lack of 'joy and goodness of the heart' (בשמחה ובטוב לבב) in serving YHWH.⁵⁸ This charge can be seen as a kind of counterpart to the affirmation in Jer 15:16, in which the speaker claims that his – indeed very special – service to God always meant 'joy and delight of my heart' (לששון ולשמחה ללבי). With 14a preceding, he not only bears witness to his own obedience, but, for a reader who knows Dtn 28 well, reacts to the word of judgment in Jer 15:14 respectively Dtn 28:48, as he tries to rebut its legal basis (Dtn 28:46).

As the plural suffix of 15:14b already indicated, this intertextual bond suggests that the addressees of Dtn 28 and Jer 15:14 are intended to be the same. Thus, the individual speaker, Jeremiah, is identified with a collective entity, i.e. the people as a whole. His lamentations become a continuation and extension of those of the people in 14:7-9, 19-22 – which presumably did not yet belong to the preconfessional matrix of chapters 14-16. The same collectivising tendency can also be seen in v. 13, which continues in a subtle way the combination of the double motifs of the foe and the drought as two forms of punishment which shape the preceding chapter. This verse then joins the group of ambivalent water metaphors in the book of Jeremiah.⁵⁹ The people receive an announcement of the plundering of all their treasures (אוצרות) – but YHWH's אוצרות also mean his 'storehouses.' From here he provides the

56 'And I will cast you out of this land into the land that you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, and there you will serve other gods (עליהארץ אשר לא ידעתם אתם ואבותיכם) (ועבדתם שם את אלהים אחרים), day and night, where I will not show you favour'. Dtn 28:64 and Jer 16:13 are the only two passages which contain the idea of serving other gods as a part of the punishment.

57 סחרו אל-ארץ ולא ידעו. In addition, the phrase also occurs in 22:28, where Konja's fate is bemoaned.

58 The intertextual connections between Dtn 28:47f. and the book of Jeremiah are manifold and obvious; cf. the 'iron yoke' of Dtn 28:48 with Jer 28:14, and the 'nation, whose language you will not understand' of Dtn 28:49 with Jer 5:15.

59 Cf., for example, Jer 2:13; Jer 14:8; 17:13; 50:7; see P.J.P. VAN HECKE, *Metaphorical Shifts in the Oracle against Babylon (Jer 50-51)*, SJOT 17 (2003), 68-88; E.K. HOLT, *The Fountain of Living Water and the Deceitful Brook. The Pool of Water Metaphors in the Book of Jeremiah (MT)*, in: P. VAN HECKE (Hg.), *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, BETHL 187, Leuven 2005, 99-117.

rain⁶⁰ – or holds it back with the consequence that there will be drought and emptiness of the human ‘barns’ (אצרות).⁶¹ The bemoaning of the drought according to 14:1-6 thus resonates in the subtext of 15:13, and with the concept of ‘sin’ (חטאת) being taken up, a factual and terminological connection to the collective lament of 14:7, 10, 20 is achieved.

What about the first half of verse 14? In this case, too, it is the rather unusual terminology which points toward Deuteronomy. The verbs ‘to burn’ and ‘to kindle’ occur in the Old Testament only nine times with קד⁶² and five times with קדה.⁶³ An almost word-for-word parallel to Jer 15:14b can be found in the song of Moses, in Dtn 32:22.⁶⁴ At first glance, this connection seems quite surprising. But it does reveal a certain inherent logic. In the following section (Dtn 32:34f.) one finds exactly the root-and-branch destruction by sword, famine, disease and fierce animals that is depicted in the immediate context of the ‘Confession’ (Jer 15:2-9). Finally, in both cases it is a sign for the universal character of the judgment that even children and sucklings are not spared: The people is ‘made childless’.⁶⁵ Thus, Jer 15:14b should be regarded as an addition from the song of Moses.⁶⁶ This then confers on the collectivising voice in the ‘Confession’ some further remarkable colouring. If the editor(s) responsible for Jer 15:14 already had the finished composition of Dtn 32 in view, then the oracle of doom in Jer 15:13f. would not only stand for a reminiscence of the fact that all these sentences would have been announced by Moses already, but it would at the same time point to a future turn to salvation: In Dtn 32, starting at v. 35, the final vengeance on the enemies is predicted. This is just as it is in the book of Jeremiah in its Masoretic final form with the oracles against the foreign nation at the end.

From this point, an attempt can be made to shed some light on the enigmatic and almost untranslatable verses 15:11f. Whatever verse 11

60 Cf. Dtn 28:12; Jer 10:13 || 51:16.

61 Cf. Joel 1:17; see also Hos 13:15.

62 Lev 6:2, 5, 6; Dtn 32:22; Jes 10:16; 30:14; 65:5; Jer 15:14; 17:4.

63 Dtn 32:22; Jes 50:11; 64:1; Jer 15:14; 17:4.

64 Cf. כִּי־אֵשׁ קִדְחָהּ בְּאַפִּי וְתִקְדַּד עַד־שְׂאוֹל תַּחֲתֶיךָ, ‘for a fire is kindled in my nose and it burns to the lowest sheol’ – in Jer 15:14 it burns ‘against you’: כִּי־אֵשׁ קִדְחָהּ בְּאַפִּי עֲלֵיכֶם תִּקְדַּד.

65 Cf. Piel Dtn 32:25 and Jer 15:7.

66 Cf. FISCHER, *Jeremia* 1-25, 506. See also W.L. HOLLADAY, *Jeremiah and Moses. Further Observations*, JBL 85 (1966), 17-27, 19, who operates with an early dating of the song of Moses that should have been known to the historical Jeremiah. The interrelation between the two texts was already seen by DUHM, who, however, described the relationship in reverse order (cf. DUHM, *Buch Jeremia*, 143).

may have meant originally,⁶⁷ what can be said is that some action of God, qualified as something 'good' (לֵטוֹב), is contrasted to something bad in the second half, a 'time of evil' (עַת רָעָה) and a 'time of distress' (עַת צָרָה). One of the few references for the latter expression is found in 14:8 with its appeal to YHWH as Israel's helper in need בַּעַת צָרָה. According to 15:11, YHWH himself brings about such a time, and therefore this verse can be understood as part of his dismissive answer to the people's supplication brought forward by Jeremiah.

Finally, 15:12 is even more complicated than v. 11. However, its similar collective orientation is maintained as well, simply because in the book of Jeremiah צַפּוֹן is not mentioned except in the context of the 'enemy from the North'.⁶⁸ This is naturally a threat not only for the prophet as an individual, but for the community as a whole. The meaning of the verse could be something like 'will iron and bronze (i.e. you, the people, cf. Jer 6:28) defy iron from the North (i.e. the enemy)?'⁶⁹

Thus, the entire first speech of YHWH in the 'Confession', 15:11-14, is pregnant with the idea of identifying the lamenting subject with the nation as a whole. Through these verses – as well as through those elements which add the collective note to chapter 14 (i.e. 14:7-9, 19-22) – the literary figure of the prophet is interpreted in a 'Reventlowian' way, i.e. as someone who is pleading not only for his sake, but for that of Israel. Bracketing 15:11-14 allows the reader at the same time to discover a good connecting point for the cumbersome יִדְעַת אַתָּה of v. 15. The reflexive character of this phrase confuses the reader of v. 15 in its final form. But it is no longer a problem when it is directly attached to v. 10. In this case it had originally referred to the declaration of in-

67 Cf. the discussion in BEZZEL, *Konfessionen*, 63-70. I would propose as a translation something like 'YHWH said: 'Surely, I have [released?] you for good; surely I have made the enemy meet you in a time of evil and in a time of distress''.

68 Cf. Jer 1:13, 14:15; 3:12, 18; 4:6; 6:1, 22; 10:22; 13:20; 16:15; 23:8; 25:9, 36; 31:8; 46:6, 10, 20, 24; 47:2; 50:3, 9, 41; 51:48. ROSHWALB, however, wants to understand צַפּוֹן not as the point of the compass but as an epithet of YHWH by which Jeremiah in 15:12 would be awarded steadfastness as 'iron from God' (E.H. ROSHWALB, *Build-Up and Climax in Jeremiah's Visions and Laments*, in: M. LUBETSKI u.a. (Hg.), *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World. A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, JSOT.S 273, Sheffield 1998, 111-135, 130). It is not easy to follow her surname theory, especially since her initial point is a respective interpretation of Jer 1:14, where she finds '[a] burning thornbush [...], and its appearance is like that of *Şaphonah* (that is, like that of God's countenance)' (ibid., 122, emphasis by ROSHWALB). Amazingly enough, she claims that no foe from the North was mentioned prior to Jer 19 (cf. ibid., 114) – without any reference to Jer 4:6; 6:1, 22; 13:20.

69 Cf. BEZZEL, *Konfessionen*, 119-121.

nocence, stating that YHWH (or the supplicant's mother) knew the speaker's irreproachable behaviour quite well.⁷⁰

Is there yet another trace of this collective-reading redaction of the 'Confession'? I would claim that there can indeed be found a further small addition indeed, namely the second half of v. 16.⁷¹ It could be ascribed to the same creative hearing of the prophet's voice which underlay v. 11-14. Here we have, in terms of the lament genre, another declaration of innocence. A twofold assertion of the speaker's willingness to internalise the divine word is followed by a causal כִּי-clause: 'for your name is called out over me, YHWH, God Zebaoth'.⁷² Admittedly, there are no obvious structural reasons which would justify the application of literary-critical principles, but an argument can be made that the content of the phrase does. It is well known that the calling out of God's name over something signifies special ownership and affiliation.⁷³ However, it can be observed that the idiom is never used of an individual. Instead, it is employed only in reference to a supra-individual entity: of Rabbat Ammon under siege (2 Sam 12:28), of Jerusalem (Jer 25:29; Dan 9:18f.), of the temple (1 Kgs 8:43 || 2 Chr 6:33; Jer 7:10, 11, 14, 30; 32:34; 34:15). There is even one single occurrence in reference to foreign nations (Am 9:12), but otherwise only to the one and special nation (Dtn 28:10; 2 Chr 7:14; Jes 63:19; and, finally, Jer 14:9). The last instance mentioned could be regarded as the key to Jer 15:16b: The prophet's lament is perceived as an extension of the people's supplication.⁷⁴ With this feature, it is perfectly in line with v. 11-14. The question of 15:5, viz., who would bemoan Jerusalem, is answered by the collective interpreting layer of 15:11-14, 16b: It is the

70 Cf. N. ITTMANN, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias. Ihre Bedeutung für die Verkündigung des Propheten*, WMANT 54, Neukirchen 1981, 48; further, following ITTMANN, HERMISSON, *Dritte Konfession*, 9. Neither author, however, takes v. 10 as a point of reference for the phrase but v. 11, which they want to read based on a conjectured LXX version as a prophetic declaration of innocence instead of a divine announcement of doom.

71 BULTMANN identifies the entire v. 16 as a 'scribal gloss' (CHR. BULTMANN, *A Prophet in Desperation? The Confessions of Jeremiah*, in: J.C. DE MOOR (Hg.), *The Elusive Prophet. The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist*, OTS 45, Leiden u.a. 2001, 83-93, 90). This estimation is mainly based on his interpretation of v. 16a, where he interprets the eating of the word of YHWH as a manifestation of Torah-oriented piety as in Ps 19:11; 119:103. For a different interpretation of the phrase, see below.

72 כִּי-נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלַי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת.

73 Cf., among others, A. WEISER, *Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia*, ATD 20/21, Göttingen 1960, 133.

74 Cf. KISS, *Klage Gottes*, 156.

prophet himself who pleads the city's case before YHWH and who eventually lets her and his voice melt into one.

This assumption of a redactional stratum which transformed the tone of the prayer in 15:10-21, and which can be identified and separated from its *Vorlage*, does not affect the observation that the piece in its final form(s) is a 'coherent literary unit'.⁷⁵ However, it is a unit which has a certain history and which owes its current form to more than one author.

Actually, further investigation suggests that there were more than two. It is noteworthy that, although the divine speech has already been effectively concluded with the closing formula נאם־יהוה in v. 20, it starts again in the following verse. The last verb (נצל) is resumed and specified. This looks like the kind of resumption (*Wiederaufnahme*) which often marks literary seams⁷⁶ – and this, presumably, is the case here, too.⁷⁷ Obviously it was not enough to know that the speaker would eventually be redeemed. It had to be made clear from whom he would be delivered. His adversaries, mentioned rather casually in v. 15 as 'my persecutors' (רדפי), are now specified as the 'evil ones' (רעים) and the 'tyrants' (עוצים). Thus groups come into view which can scarcely be equated with the 'men of Anathoth' of Jer 11. However, it should be mentioned at this point that it is precisely the act of salvation which in 20:13 gives the speaker his reason for praising YHWH.⁷⁸ What did the editor(s) imagine when they added (15:21) a reference to both these groups to God's promise (15:20)? The first term is rather less illustrative in this regard. Being 'evil' is in the nature of every kind of enemy and thus is open for a wide range of possible interpretations. The second group is slightly easier to specify. In the Psalter as well as in the field of wisdom literature the 'tyrant' is one of the antonyms of the 'righteous' (צדיק)⁷⁹ and sometimes occurs in synonymous parallelism with the

75 O'CONNOR, *Confessions*, 41; cf. DIAMOND, *Confessions*, 71f.

76 LXX omits the infinitive of נצל in 15:20, thus smoothing the gap between the two verses and creating a *lectio brevior sed infirmior*. For this phenomenon in general, see LEVIN, *Verheißung*, 71.

77 Pace F.D. HUBMANN, *Stationen einer Berufung. Die 'Konfessionen' Jeremias – eine Gesamtschau*, in: *ThPQ* 132 (1984), 25-39, 34, who wants to cite v. 20 and v. 21 on the same literal level, but separates them both from v. 19.

78 Cf. 15:21 הציל את־נפש אביון מיד מרעים with 20:13 מרעים מיד והצלתחך מיד רעים. For this reason, Ittmann argues that 15:21a was dependent on 20:13 as a 'short version' ('Kurzfassung', ITTMANN, *Konfessionen*, 49). This qualification is mainly based on his understanding of the basic layer of the 'Confessions' as autobiographical texts among which he counts 20:13, as well. However, I would suggest a reverse relationship, taking 20:13 as part of the collective-representative redaction (cf. BEZZEL, *Konfessionen*, 242-244).

79 Cf. B. KEDAR-KOPFSTEIN, Art. עריך, 'āraṣ, in: *ThWAT* 6 (1989), 402-405, 404.

‘wicked one’ (רשע).⁸⁰ Thus, by equating his ‘persecutors’ with the ‘evil ones’, the character of the speaker is transformed as well. He is now less Jeremiah the suffering prophet, but rather Jeremiah the suffering righteous one. From the speaker’s point of view, the affliction which he bemoans in the ‘Confession’ first and foremost has to be seen as a specific example of that incongruity of the divine world order which can be observed everywhere: The wicked prosper while the righteous wither (cf. Jer 12:1-6).

If it was possible to call the tendency of verses 15:11-14, 16b collective-representative in a ‘Reventlowian’ manner, the tendency behind 15:21 could be called collective-exemplary in a ‘Gunnewegian’ style. It can be discovered not only in the last verse of the prayer but also in the first one (15:10).⁸¹ Here, too, the topic is not the same as that treated in verses 15-20. While in v. 15-20 the main focus is on the relationship between the supplicant and the deity, in v. 10 (as in v. 21) the concern is with the supplicant’s adversaries. Corresponding to this is the observation that the speaker’s declaration of innocence does not broach the issue of suffering for YHWH’s sake (as v. 15 does), nor the obedient handling of the divine word (as v. 16a), but is a metaphor taken from the field of banking and finance.⁸² This Jeremiah does not bemoan his being a prophet, but rather the contradiction between his blameless behaviour and the negative consequences which are nevertheless emerging. He typifies this experience by using forensic terminology: To everybody he is a ‘man of strife and a man of contention’ (איש ריב ואיש מדון).⁸³

To sum up, two modifying *relectures* of the ‘Confession’ have been identified. The first one (15:10, 21) frames the elder corpus and has the purpose of making the lamenting prophetic voice that of the suffering righteous one. The second one makes the figure of Jeremiah blend with the weeping Lady Zion/Jerusalem and the (true) Israel as a whole. It

80 Cf. Jes 13:11; Ps 73:35; Job 15:20; 27:13.

81 It should be noted that BAUMGARTNER already counted 15:21 and 15:10 (together with 15:11f. read according to LXX) not among the ‘poems of lamentation’ (‘Klagegedichte’) but among the so-called ‘Job-poems’ (‘Hiobgedichte’, BAUMGARTNER, *Klagegedichte*, 61).

82 As RUDOLPH stated, no doubt correctly, this is a field where ‘possibly even a friendship goes to pieces quickly’ (‘auch eine Freundschaft unter Umständen rasch in die Brüche geht’, RUDOLPH, *Jeremia*³, 107).

83 The term מדון has its home clearly in wisdom literature. Of the 17 references in the OT, 14 can be found in Prov; one in Ps 80:7 – and except for Jer 15:10, the only other usage in a prophetic book is Hab 1:3b, also in the context of a lament about the prospering of the wicked.

does this by adding an oracle of doom in 15:11-14 and a small gloss in 15:16b.

While it is clear that both redactions transform the image of the lamenting Jeremiah in some collective way, it must be asked on what basis this development was possible. What could have been the motivation for writing the supposed primary layer of the 'Confession' into the context of chapters 14-16?

4. The suffering of the elect

Along with this question comes another which arises from some of the considerations addressed above. To support the hypothesis that verses 15:10-21 are a relatively late addition to the text (*Einschreibung*), one of the main arguments has been to highlight the smooth transition from 15:5-9 to 15:10. If, however, v. 10 (together with v. 21) is taken to belong to a later stage of redactional activity, a new – albeit older – connecting point for 15:15-20* needs to be found.

Such a link can in fact be identified and supported in at least two ways. First, the imperative 'visit me' (פקדני) in 15:15 picks up YHWH's announcement of 15:3: 'I will visit' (ויפקדתי). However, the difference between these passages should not be overlooked. While at the beginning of the chapter the root פקד implies a terrible threat, for the speaker of 15:15 it is something desirable, something he prays for with all his might. In the same way his appeal refers to 14:10 as well, together with the first imperative of the clause, 'remember me' (זכרני).⁸⁴ This intertextual connection sheds some light on the problem which causes the supplicant to complain in the first place: Obviously he is not complaining about the coming of the divine judgment with all its consequences as depicted in chapters 14-15, but, on the contrary, about its delay. For him, there can be salvation only if his intercession will *not* be heard, since only the coming of God's 'visitation' would rescue him from his 'persecutors' (v. 15).

Therefore, he pleads in v. 15 that YHWH should 'no longer be patient in his wrath' (אלילארך אפר).⁸⁵ In doing so, he begs for a suspension

84 Cf. 14:10: 'now he [sc. YHWH] will remember their iniquity and visit their sins' (עתה יזכר עונם ויפקד חטאתם) with 15:15: 'YHWH, remember me and visit me' (יהוה) (זכרני ופקדני).

85 Read with LXX the nominal vocalisation of ארך instead of MT's ארך which takes it as an adjective. The latter makes the link to the 'mercy-formula' ('Gnadenformel', H. SPIECKERMANN, 'Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr...' [1990], in: id., Gottes Liebe zu Israel. Studien zur Theologie des Alten Testaments, FAT 33, Tübingen 2001, 3-19, 4) even more obvious which describes YHWH as 'merciful and gracious, slow to

of some of God's main attributes as they are concentrated in the 'mercy-formula'. YHWH is addressed with a plea to act against his own nature! This sounds revolutionary, but, on the other hand, the prophet demands no more from God than God himself had declared a few verses earlier, in 15:6: 'I am weary of relenting!' (גַּלְאִיתִי הַנְּחָם). The Jeremiah of the 'Confession' is simply taking YHWH at his words – at those of 15:6.

This Jeremiah is obviously not suffering in spite of but because of God's mercy. As a prophet of doom, he appears to become the more unreliable the longer he is successful as a prophet of intercession. Basically, his suffering is grounded in his special call to be a prophet of YHWH. He has been chosen against his will (cf. Jer 1:6), and as far as it depends on him, he has obediently and joyfully fulfilled his part of the obligation. Whenever there were any words of God to be found, he 'ate them' (וְאָכַלְתִּם, 15:16). This metaphor exhibiting the willing reception of divine words is often taken in the sense of the pious praise of the Tora in Ps 19:11; 109:103. But in contrast to these passages, the focus in Jer 15:16 is not on a meditative reading and response which brings the divine word into the mouth of the speaker in a kind of ruminating way, but on their immediate absorption by the recipient. The image refers directly to Jeremiah's call. In Jer 1:9, he is designated as the prophet like Moses⁸⁶ since God himself puts his words into his mouth. Thus, the speaker of the 'Confession' ranges within the framework provided by this visionary scene and develops it further. Jeremiah ate what 'was found',⁸⁷ *ergo*, what he was fed by God in 1:9.⁸⁸ But obviously this food has turned out to be anything but joyful for its consumer. Though he

anger, and abounding in goodness and truth' (רָחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֵרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְיִרְבַּח-חֶסֶד) Ex 34:6) cf. Num 14:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17.

86 Cf. Dtn 18:18.

87 The disputed Nifal נִמְצָאָה could thus be explained as a kind of *passivum divinum*. Any speculation about a possible allusion to 2 Kgs 22 here, and about the question of whether the historic Jeremiah would have been a supporter of Josiah's reform programme, would then reveal itself as idle. Hence, HOLLADAY'S idea '[that] נִמְצָאָה in 15:16 refers to the finding of the scroll in the temple in 621' (HOLLADAY, Jeremiah and Moses, 23) in relation to which he wants to date the call of the prophet and even his 'crisis' (cf. also J. LUNDBOM, Jeremiah 15,15-21 and the Call of Jeremiah, SJOT 9 [1995], 143-155, 150f.; id., Jeremiah 1-20. A new Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AncB 21 A, New York 1999, 743), leads into a blind alley (cf. CHR. BULTMANN, Prophet in Desperation, 90, n. 28). The Nifal of נִמְצָאָה is not sufficient for claiming an intertextual connection to 2 Kgs, nor are the fictions of the story of the prophet's call and the finding of the scroll adequate grounds for reconstructing any particular episode in the historical Jeremiah's life.

88 'And YHWH put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and YHWH said to me: 'Behold, I have put my words into your mouth''; cf. T. E. FRETHEIM, Jeremiah, Macon 2002, 238.

has accepted it from YHWH's hand with delight, it is now this very hand that is weighing on him as a burden (15:17) since he is filled with indignation.

YHWH's part of the obligation, however, would have been to support his agent and save him (Jer 1:8, 18f.). What is asserted here is that Jeremiah would have been awarded the same special divine protection that once was granted to Zion⁸⁹ and the Davidic dynasty.⁹⁰ His designation as a 'bronze wall' (חֲמוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת) which would remain standing while the walls of the city would break under siege (1:18),⁹¹ had given him a kind of royal status.⁹² This is the lawsuit which the supplicant of the 'Confession' brings, and consequently, YHWH, the accused, refers to the same 'legal basis'. In his answer he renews his promise to protect and save the prophet, not in the form of a salvation oracle, but, oddly enough, with a 'thus' (לִכֵּן, 15:19) which is typical for an oracle of judgment. In addition, he connects to it the condition that even the prophet must return. YHWH thus changes seats: From the dock he moves to the bench, or, as Robert Carroll puts it: 'attack is the best method of defence, even for the deity'.⁹³ Yet, in the end the prophet will be redeemed. His persecutors (רֹדְפֵי) will stumble (cf. 15:15 with 20:11). Even if for the time being it is he who has to suffer vilification (חֲרָפָה, 15:15), they will have to bear everlasting shame (כְּלֹמֶת עוֹלָם, 20:11) then.

The constitutive reference of the 'Confession' to the call narrative has long been seen, and the 'sound of a second call'⁹⁴ long been heard. In my opinion, this reference also implies the answer to the question posed above. The diastasis between the prophet's special vocation on the one hand and his suffering on the other as it is depicted in the legends from Jer 20:1 onward, provoked the question of how these themes might be related. Thus, the literary figure of Jeremiah came to articulate this theological problem which he experienced with his own

89 Cf. Ps 46; 48.

90 Cf., irrespective of the question of its age, the Nathan prophecy 2 Sam 7.

91 Cf. W. WERNER, *Das Buch Jeremia. Kapitel 1-25*, NStK.AT 19/1, Stuttgart 1997, 41.

92 Cf. A. ALT, *Hic murus aheneus esto*, ZDMG 86 (1933), 33-48, 39f.; id., *Neues aus der Pharaonenzeit Palästinas*, PJ 32 (1936), 8-33, 10, n. 3; W. HERRMANN, *Jeremia*, BK 12. Lieferung 1, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986, 84 f.; id., *Die Herkunft der 'ehernen Mauer'*. Eine Miszelle zu Jeremia 1,18 und 15,20, in: M. OEMING/A. GRAUPNER (eds.), *Altes Testament und christliche Verkündigung. Festschrift für Antonius H. J. Gunneweg*, Stuttgart 1987, 344-352, 351.

93 R. CARROLL, *Jeremiah*, 334.

94 J. BRIGHT, *Jeremiah*, AncB 21, Garden City 1965, 112; cf. G. VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band II. Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels*, EETH 1, München 1960, 214.

body, and became the paradigmatic⁹⁵ suffering prophet of the 'Confessions'. This figure illustrates the problem of theodicy. The unique case of an artificial biography of a prophetic elect serves this purpose. Hence, this first interpretation of the prophet's persona could be called a biographical-theological one. However, it includes the particular aspect that it is based already on a βίος, which has itself acquired a highly interpretative character. Perhaps one could speak of a derivation of a derivation.

Having developed into a paradigmatic character, this Jeremiah and his prayer are open for further reinterpretation. Two redactional stages can be traced in the text. The first subsequent redactor adds the framework consisting of 15:10, 21. The lamenting prophet is thereby clothed with the garment of the suffering righteous one. The issue of the 'suffering of the elect' is broadened, and in some way, Jeremiah has come to serve as a role model. However, while the idea of a group of pious people identifying themselves with the pain of this redaction's literary prophet has gained wide currency, it does not seem altogether appropriate to me. How far can it be claimed that these people could have derived comfort from the figure of the suffering Jeremiah as WELTEN and others suggest?⁹⁶ This would imply that the prophet's sorrow would have acquired some kind of soteriological quality which would enable the concept of an *imitatio*. It is difficult to find evidence for this in the text.⁹⁷ I would rather claim that within this collective-exemplary reading the issue of identification works the other way round. Jeremiah the suffering elect is the subject of the identification, not its object. He identifies vicariously with the sorrow of the readers by giving it words

95 VON RAD already ascribed the suffering of the (historical) Jeremiah a 'paradigmatic meaning for all Israel' ('paradigmatische Bedeutung für ganz Israel', G. VON RAD, *Theologie II*, 216), similarly BLANK: '[H]e [sc. Jeremiah] made himself a paradigm' (SH. H. BLANK, *The Prophet as Paradigm*, in: J.L. CRENSHAW/J.T. WILLIS [eds.], *Essays in Old Testament Ethics*. J. Philipp Hyatt in Memoriam, New York 1974, 111-130, 113).

96 Cf. P. WELTEN, *Leiden*, 147; T. POLK, *The Prophetic Persona. Jeremiah and the Language of the Self*, JSOT.S 32, Sheffield 1984, 171. Stulman thinks that Jeremiah's 'suffering service [...] and utter trust become a model of faithful living' (L. STULMAN, *Jeremiah as a Polyphonic Response to Suffering*, in: J. KALTNER/L. STULMAN (eds.), *Inspired Speech. Prophecy in the Ancient Near East. Essays in Honor of Herbert B. Huffmon*, JSOT.S 378, New York 2004, 302-318, 310). This interpretation too easily flattens the typically prophetic features as well as the radical desperation which is articulated in 20:14-18 (which in STULMAN'S opinion is to be interpreted on the same level as the other 'Confessions').

97 '[E]s fehlt jede Märtyrerverherrlichung, aber auch jeder Gedanke an eine *Imitatio*' (G. VON RAD, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias* [1936], in: id., *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*. Band II, TB 48, München 1973, 234).

and addressing these words in the form of a lamenting accusation to YHWH.

In a subsequent *relecture*, another redactor moves towards a broadening of the image of Jeremiah yet a step further by adding 15:11-14, 16b to the prayer. Had Jeremiah once purposefully been cast as opposing the city and the nation,⁹⁸ he now acts as its mouthpiece. At this (final) stage of the textual development the 'suffering of the elect' means first and foremost the suffering of the chosen people, the (true) Israel. For these redactors, the 'uncurable wound' (מכה אנושה) which the speaker bemoans in 15:18, refers to the 'very grievous blow' (מכה נחלה מאד) which the prophet (or, according to 14:17a, YHWH) had lamented so vividly. It stood to reason to hear the voice of the mourned 'daughter of my people' herself (בת-עמי) speaking in the 1st person singular of 15:18. Her wound which had to be seen as the just punishment for her apostasy (cf. Jer 30:12) will in the end be cured by YHWH (cf. Jer 30:17),⁹⁹ and her 'persecutors', the foreign nations, will receive retribution as it is spelled out from chapter 46 (MT) onwards.

Together with the passages found in 14:7-9, 19-22, which bring the voice of the people into the pericope 'concerning the drought' (14:1), these verses shape the famous 'great liturgy' which in the end reaches from 14:1 to 15:21.

The end of the redactional process still leaves the interpretative process open. The Jeremiah of the 'Confession' is not simply to be identified with his latest manifestation. Even the collective-representative figure retains the characteristics of the biographic-theological one. This inherent 'multiplicity of meaning, polysemousness'¹⁰⁰ makes the prophetic figure available for the multifaceted interpretations it has undergone in the course of its reception and which continue to this day. The question of how election and suffering might be reconciled is still open.

98 Cf. Jer 1:18.

99 Cf. 30:12: 'Your bruise is incurable, your wound is severe' (אנוש לשברך נחלה מכתך) with 30:17: 'and I will heal your wounds' (וממכותיך ארפאך); cf. SCHMID, *Buchgestalten*, 344.

100 POLK, *Persona*, 166.