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JEREMIAH AND FEELINGS:  
A NON-IDENTITY CRISIS

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary in  
candidacy for the degree of Master of Theology

Biblical Division  
Department of Old Testament

By Brenda Kronemeijer-Heyink  
May 2013



CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

3233 Burton SE • Grand Rapids, Michigan • 49546-4301

800 388-6034 fax: 616 957-8621 info@calvinseminary.edu

www.calvinseminary.edu

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**THESIS APPROVAL**

This thesis entitled

"Jeremiah and Feelings: A Non-Identity Crisis."

written by

BRENDA KRONEMEIJER-HEYINK

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the requirements for the degree of

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upon the recommendation of the following readers:

Prof. Michael Williams, Supervisor

Prof. Arie Leder.

  
Prof. Mariano Avila, Th. M. Director

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## ABSTRACT

As indicated by Jeremiah's title, "the weeping prophet," the book of Jeremiah is full of a wide range of feelings. The agent of these feelings is not only Jeremiah, but also his community (the people of Judah) and the LORD. These feelings expressed in the book can be seen as part of the prophetic message. In fact, Jeremiah's feelings are not only his own but are also representative of his community and the LORD. This representational nature of Jeremiah's feelings is hinted at through the ambiguity of the emotional agent, is shown in the paralleled feelings and incitements thereof for different agents, is displayed through literary means, and is even stated explicitly in the text. These feelings are an integral part of Jeremiah's prophetic task, in which he represents himself, his community, and the LORD. Responses are given to those who see Jeremiah's feelings as solely his own or regard Jeremiah's feelings as only being representative of those of the community or those of the LORD. Furthermore, this understanding of the representative nature of feelings as an essential part of the prophetic task is evaluated against the understanding of prophecy expressed by both Calvin and Brueggemann. Calvin's understanding of prophecy as having a teaching function and Brueggemann's understanding of prophecy as reinterpreting reality allow room for feelings in the prophetic task, and both understandings challenge and confirm the understanding of feelings as being prophetically representative. A fuller understanding of this multifaceted representational task is confirmed in and elucidated by the other prophetic literature. Furthermore, this understanding of the prophetic task provides insight into aspects of the incarnation and the derivative task of the church.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Feelings overwhelm the prophetic books.<sup>1</sup> These feelings are presented in the text of Jeremiah and the other prophets in various ways, including being expressed by the prophet in his own words and evidenced in narrative descriptions of his actions. This extensive evidence of feelings in the book of Jeremiah raises questions concerning how feelings might be a part of the prophetic task itself. Jeremiah<sup>2</sup> is often called “the weeping prophet,” so it is appropriate that a study of the role of feelings in the prophetic task focuses on the book of Jeremiah, where a wide range of feelings are communicated. This study will discuss how feelings can be understood in terms of the prophetic task. It will be shown that the feelings expressed by Jeremiah are representative of his own feelings, those of the LORD, *and* those of the people of Israel, an understanding of the prophetic task that is both challenged and confirmed by the works of Calvin and Brueggemann. From there, this study will touch briefly on the feelings presented in other prophetic books, compiling further data on those feelings and taking insights from the book of Jeremiah to help understand these other prophets and their writings.<sup>3</sup> This study will conclude with a consideration of the implications for the role of feelings in the execution of the prophetic task by the people of God today.

<sup>1</sup> Feelings encompass both emotions and affections. The term feelings does not indicate any agency or lack thereof, whereas emotions and affections are defined in light of the degree of agency. Emotions are considered to be feelings that are not a conscious choice of the agent. Affections always include a conscious choice. See the full discussion that follows in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> According to the text of Jeremiah, Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Jeremiah began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josiah, continued prophesying while Jehoahaz, Jehoiachim, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah reigned in Judah, and stopped sometime after the fall of Jerusalem and the ruling of Gedaliah. Following the text he would thus have been known from 628-585 BC.

<sup>3</sup> The prophets discussed primarily in this paper are the latter prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 (minor prophets). The prophets found outside of the books of the latter prophets, such as Elijah, Nathan, and Daniel, have generally been ignored mostly on account of the difference in genre of the books.

### Feelings, Emotions, or Affections?

Before discussing further feelings and any relation of feelings to the prophetic task, it is helpful to clarify what is meant by the term “feelings,” especially in regard to the related terms “emotions” and “affections.” Through both experiencing one’s own feelings and witnessing the emotions of others, one has a sense that often there is at least some control over how and what one feels. This sense is captured by Thomas Renz, as he addresses the rhetorics of the book of Ezekiel. According to Renz, “there is always a cognitive element in human emotions.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, when one is overwhelmed by certain feelings, this cognitive element seems to be lacking, raising a question of whether feelings can exist outside of our cognitive control. Feelings and emotions clearly relate to events or situations, and there are occasions when feelings are less of a conscious choice (i.e., more of a “gut reaction”). Unraveling how all of these elements of feelings and emotions fit together makes the question of their role in the prophetic task even more complicated.<sup>5</sup>

Because part of the problem of understanding the role of emotions and feelings has to do with how the words themselves are understood, it is helpful to look at several dictionary entries in order to unravel some of the semantic difficulties involved with the terms. The *American Heritage Dictionary* contains the following entries related to “feeling:” “6. an emotion or

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 144.

<sup>5</sup> Polk highlights further the complications: “The language of causality can obscure the relations between emotions, their objects, and their grounds, assimilating what are (often with respect to ‘objects’, always in the case of ‘grounds’) only thoughts about events, states of affairs, and things to the actual events, states of affairs, and things themselves. . . . Emotions like fear, however – unlike more-or-less objectless states, such as manic depression and free-floating anxiety – are not satisfactorily accounted for in term of physiological mechanisms. Ordinarily, when people ask about causes of emotions, they are actually asking about reasons and have in mind cognitive matters on which the emotions are grounded, i.e. beliefs, evaluations, conjectures, doubts, and other sorts of thoughts.” Timothy Polk, *The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 33-34.

emotional perception or attitude; 7. capacity for emotion, esp. compassion; 8. a sentiment; attitude; opinion.”<sup>6</sup> An “emotion” is defined as

1. A mental state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort and is often accompanied by physiological changes; a feeling: *the emotions of joy, sorrow, reverence, hate, and love*. 2. A state of mental agitation or disturbance: *spoke unsteadily in a voice that betrayed his emotion*.<sup>7</sup>

“Affection,” on the other hand, is defined as:

1. tender feeling toward another; fondness... 2. Feeling or emotion. Often used in the plural: *an unbalanced state of affections*. 3. A disposition to feel, do, or say; a propensity.”<sup>8</sup>

The above definitions demonstrate that, although there is some perceived distinction between “feeling,” “emotion,” and “affections,” there is much semantic overlap. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also tends toward a semantic overlap in its definitions. The definitions of “feeling” include the following:

4. a. The condition of being emotionally affected; an instance of this; an emotion. Often specialized by *of* with *fear, hope*, etc. b. *pl.* in collective sense. Emotions, susceptibilities, sympathies. 5. Capacity or readiness to feel; susceptibility to the higher and more refined emotions; *esp.* sensibility or tenderness for the sufferings of others. *good feeling*: kindly and equitable spirit. 6. Pleasurable or painful consciousness, emotional appreciation or sense (*of* one’s own condition or some external fact).<sup>9</sup>

As can be seen above, feelings are still defined in terms of emotions. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* does differentiate more between “emotions” and “affections.” “Emotion” is

*fig.* Any agitation or disturbance of mind, feeling, passion; any vehement or excited mental state. . . . [*Psychology*. A mental ‘feeling’ or ‘affection’ (*e.g.* of pleasure or pain, desire or aversion, surprise, hope or fear, etc.), as distinguished from cognitive or volitional states of consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Feelings,” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed.; Houghton Mifflin, 2004), n.p. [cited 10 April 2007]. Online: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/feelings>.

<sup>7</sup> “Emotions,” *American Heritage Dictionary*, n.p. [cited 20 Feb 2007]. Online: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/emotions>.

<sup>8</sup> “Affections,” *American Heritage Dictionary*, n.p. [cited 20 Feb 2007]. Online: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/affections>.

<sup>9</sup> “Feeling,” *Oxford English Dictionary* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), n.p. [cited 10 April 2007]. Online: <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50083262?>.

On the other hand, the definitions of “affection” related to feelings are

[1a] An affecting or moving of the mind in any way; a mental state brought about by any influence; an emotion or feeling. . . . b. The representation of feeling or emotion.<sup>11</sup>

These definitions again illustrate that although some distinction between the terms is made in the literature regarding conscious choice over a feeling, there is semantic overlap between each of the terms.<sup>12</sup>

Although the distinctions between the terms are limited, the definitions suggest that emotions are less a conscious choice of the agent and affections are more of a conscious choice. To illustrate this distinction, one could say that, following the Reformed understanding of the sovereignty of God, the LORD cannot be the agent of emotions.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the LORD can be the agent of affections in the Bible, as can be vividly seen in the book of Jeremiah, which uses feeling words in relation to God. He has anger, weariness, sorrow, and joy.<sup>14</sup> What makes God unique in terms of feelings is his constant control over what feelings he has and manifests;

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<sup>10</sup> “Emotion,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p. [cited 10 April 2007]. Online: <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50074104?>.

<sup>11</sup> “Affection,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p. [cited 10 April 2007]. Online: <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50003764?>.

<sup>12</sup> From these definitions of affections and emotions, it can be seen that Renz uses the term emotions in a way that would be defined here as affections, due to the cognitive element in them. The challenge presented by semantics can be seen further by looking at a quote from Renz: “Trying to establish what distinguishes emotions from bodily states which are not categorised as emotions, Rom Harré and Grant Gillett argue: ‘Feelings and displays are connected with emotions, or are to be taken as emotional, when they accomplish two things: they are embodied expressions of judgments, and, in many cases, though not in all, they are also ways of accomplishing social acts.’ [Harré and Gillette, *The Discursive Mind* (London: Sage, 1994), 146]. They then point out that all emotions involve (value) judgements.” Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 144. This definition of emotions given by Harré and Gillette is clearly not the same as the understanding of the term ‘emotions’ given in this paper. Instead, this paper argues that *affections* would be more likely a value judgement, on account of their being an active choice of the agent.

<sup>13</sup> This is illustrated well by the following quote from Talstra: “Does the recognition of emotions in God, not the ‘classical’ ones of wrath and mercy, but such emotions as disappointment and pain, imply that God is seen caught in a failing strategy and thus is losing control?” Eep Talstra, “Exile and Pain: a Chapter from the Story of God’s Emotions” in *Exile and Suffering* (ed. Bob Becking and Dirk Human; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 173. Such a possibility is, at least in Talstra’s words, something he has been taught as being theologically impossible within the Reformed tradition.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the LORD speaks of his anger in Jer 17:4. Further references to the many feelings present in the chapter – and their agent – are given at the end of this chapter.

feelings are simply another area over which he is sovereign.<sup>15</sup> Because the term “affections” conveys more of a sense of choice over what one feels, this term is a better description of the feelings that the LORD manifests in the text. The feelings of humans, on the other hand, are often affected by elements outside themselves and are not always the result of an active choice. In the book of Jeremiah, this can be seen in the weariness of both Baruch<sup>16</sup> and Jeremiah,<sup>17</sup> which is closely connected to groaning and pain.<sup>18</sup> A clearer example is that of the people of Judah who will be forced into sadness and lamenting because of their circumstances (Jer 6:24-26), and their joy will be banished from them (Jer 25:10). The term emotions is thus a more fitting description for many of the feelings that people experience.

Making the discussion of feelings even more complicated is the reality that the expressing of feelings can have an (emotive) effect on others. In discussing the place of feelings in the prophetic task, this is important to keep in mind, as prophecy, by its nature, expects an audience. Renz, in his discussion on the rhetorical effect of the book of Ezekiel, points out the specific rhetorical effect of the use of feelings: in Ezekiel,

The use of emotive language is not only useful for engaging the readers fully and for making the discourse more memorable, but also affects directly the attitude towards Jerusalem, Yahweh, and the prophet (to cite only the most important), which the readers are supposed to have. It is of course impossible to list here all the elements in the book of Ezekiel which are designed to stimulate an emotional reaction in the audience.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This control is shown especially with anger: “The passionate nature of Yahweh is always wedded to His rationality. . . . The motive clauses and the logical procedure with which His wrath was described opposes the charge of capriciousness.” Bruce Edward Baloiian, *Anger in the Old Testament* (American University Studies Series VII Theology and Religion; 99; New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 157.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jeremiah 45:3

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jeremiah 6:11 and 20:9.

<sup>18</sup> The relationship between weariness and groaning, sorrow and pain itself illustrates the complex nature of the feelings. Is groaning itself a cause of the weariness or a result of it? I would argue that the text suggests more that the weariness is on account of the groaning; this corresponds to the situation, as there is much in the text that would give rise to groaning, not least of which is pain that Baruch has been feeling (45:3). Nonetheless, the feelings do tend to blend together with the cause of each not always clearly indicated.

<sup>19</sup> Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 145.

When addressing the prophetic task, it is thus helpful to focus also on the role feelings have in eliciting a response from an expected audience.

The terms for feelings, emotions and affections are often used interchangeably in common language; after all, emotions and affections both have feelings as a synonym. This thesis makes the following distinction between the terms: feelings encompass both emotions and affections and give no indication of the will/choice of the agent. Emotions encompass those feelings that are not a conscious choice of the agent. Affections always include a conscious choice.<sup>20</sup> Yet, in everyday life such a sharp distinction is not necessarily present, leaving some ambiguity still in the definition.<sup>21</sup> The distance between today's reader and the text also increases the ambiguity in this study, as the causes of many of the feelings are not explicitly stated, and there is not always clear indication of how much the feelings are a cognitive choice. The ambiguity is only increased by the reality that these words are used with different semantic variations in the sources quoted and used in this thesis. Yet, a distinction regarding the choice one has in one's own feelings has nonetheless been taken here in this thesis as an attempt to prevent further semantic difficulties as the topic is studied more closely.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> According to this definition, the LORD can thus have affections, but not emotions. Humans can have both emotions and affections.

<sup>21</sup> After all, how much choice is necessary before a feeling is an active choice? Does the lack of expression of a feeling indicate an active choice? Or does an emotion become an affection when it is actively expressed? These questions indicate that the distinction between emotion and affection is not always clear. Although it is not possible here to enter into a more detailed discussion of how emotions and affections overlap, it is helpful to remember that feelings, despite the clarification given here, tend to become muddled even, and especially, when they are placed in the cognitive realm.

<sup>22</sup> Despite my attempts to minimize misunderstanding due to semantics, the reader of this thesis should be aware of the potential semantic confusion that may arise on account of quotations in the text, as those quoted do not necessarily have the same semantic understanding of the terms.

### State of the Problem: Feelings and The Prophetic Task

Feelings are very much a part of the prophetic books:<sup>23</sup> in the words of the message itself, in the conveying of the message and in the narrative texts related to the prophet. Nonetheless, the place of these feelings within the prophetic task is difficult to determine. In understanding prophecy, feelings tend toward being seen in two different ways: as either completely encompassing the prophetic task or as an aspect that is possible to ignore, except perhaps as further insight into the person of the prophet. A balanced perspective on the role of feelings in the prophetic task has been fairly uncommon.

Discussion concerning the book of Jeremiah in past years has focused on the organization of the book and the historicity and/or the redactor of certain parts of the book.<sup>24</sup> Three major commentaries<sup>25</sup> written in the late 1980s all reflect the focus of these concerns, even if they have somewhat different emphases and different focuses in methodology. James Ward points out the different underlying assumptions of these texts:

At one end stands William Holladay, who treats both poetry and prose as reliable representations of the words and deeds of Jeremiah. At the other end stands Robert Carroll, who regards the prose as the work of postexilic deuteronomic writers and the poetry as the work of anonymous prophets of the exilic period. In Carroll's view, both the story and the persona of Jeremiah are creations of the prose writers. William McKane stands between these two extreme positions. He, too, attributes the prose to exilic deuteronomic writers, but treats the poetry as substantially originating from Jeremiah. If

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<sup>23</sup> This is exemplified by the following list of all of the verses in the book of Jeremiah that use words that relate to feelings: 2:12,26,35,36; 3:3,21; 4:4,8,9,19, 26,31; 5:3; 6:7,11,15,23,24,26; 7:18-19,20,29,34; 8:9,12,18,19; 9:1,2,5,10,18,19,20-21; 10:10,19,24-25; 11:17; 12:5,11,13,15; 13:14,17; 14:3-4,8,17; 15:6,9,11,14-15,16,17,18; 16:4,5,6,9,19; 17:4,13,18; 18:16,20,23; 19:8; 20:9,11,18; 21:5,7,12; 22:10,18,22; 23:19-20; 25:6-7,10,15,33,34,36,37-38; 26:19; 30:7,12,14,15,17,18,20,23-24; 31:7,9,12,13,15,16,19,20; 32:29-30,31,32,37; 33:5,9,10,11,26; 34:5; 36:7; 37:15; 41:6; 42:12,18; 44:3,6,8; 45:3; 46:24; 47:2; 48:1,5,13,20,30,31,32,33,38,39; 49:3,17,20,23,24,37; 50:2,4,12,13,25,42,43,45; 51:8,17,45,47,48,51; 52:3.

<sup>24</sup> Leo G. Perdue, "Jeremiah in Modern Research: Approaches and Issues," in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* (ed. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 1-32.

<sup>25</sup> Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading* (New York: Pilgrim, 1990), and William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (ICC, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986).

Holladay is correct, the message of the book was created for a preexilic audience in the kingdom of Judah; if Carroll is correct, it was created for a Jewish audience in the diaspora.<sup>26</sup>

Even amidst these different perspectives on the historicity of Jeremiah, the essential question asked by the majority of the works has concerned the source of the words. Furthermore, there have been attempts to discern layers in the book,<sup>27</sup> in particular that of a minority voice, as illustrated well by Carolyn Sharp in her book, *Prophecy and Ideology*.<sup>28</sup> In more recent times, methodological perspectives have shifted from this focus on source to a focus on rhetorical elements or theological ideas, such as exile.<sup>29</sup> As well, ideologically centered forms of critique have also been part of current research.<sup>30</sup> It is only more recently that certain *Interpretation* journal articles focus on the person of Jeremiah and thus implicitly on the place that feelings might have as part of his prophetic task.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the focus on the theological aspect of the prophetic task and the specific role of feelings still remains fairly limited.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, when a focus on feelings is actually made, these feelings are often considered irrelevant to the prophetic task. An illustration of the manner in which feelings found in the book of Jeremiah have been misrepresented can be found in interpretations of his

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<sup>26</sup> James Ward, *Thus Says the Lord: The Message of the Prophets* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 120.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Walter Brueggemann, "An Ending that does not End" in *Like Fire in the Bones: Listening for the Prophetic Word in Jeremiah* (ed. Patrick D. Miller; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006): 86-98.

<sup>28</sup> Carolyn J. Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah: Struggles for Authority in the Deutero-Jeremianic Prose* (OTS; London: T & T Clark, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Walter Brueggemann, "A Shattered Transcendence: Exile and Restoration," in *Like Fire in the Bones*, 116-31.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Athalya Brenner, "Pornoprophetics Revisited: Some Additional Reflections" *JSOT* 21 (1996): 63-86 and Stuart MacWilliam, "Queering Jeremiah," *BibInt* 10.4 (2002), 384-404.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. A. R. Pete Diamond, "Interlocutions: The Poetics of Voice in the Figuration of YHWH and His Oracular Agent, Jeremiah," *Int* 62.1 (Jan 2008): 48-65 and Kathleen M. O'Connor, "Lamenting Back to Life," *Int* 62.2 (2008):34-47.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) is an example of a commentary that has moved away from the assumptions of redaction to focus more on a theological understanding of the text. As well, Polk's work, , which focuses on the prophetic persona, is a significant shift to a focus on the theological understanding of the prophetic task.

“Confessions.”<sup>33</sup> For a long time, the Confessions were looked at in isolation from the rest of the book,<sup>34</sup> and their purpose was perceived to be only to give insight into the person of the prophet and/or encourage those who identified with Jeremiah’s situation.<sup>35</sup> When they have been connected to the rest of the book, this is done with the purpose of determining which specific incident in the life of Jeremiah was the context for each Confession. This is confirmed by Bright, who in 1970 noted, “It has remained wellnigh the consensus among scholars that the Confessions do in some way relate to specific experiences in the life of the prophet.”<sup>36</sup> Reventlow’s understanding of the Confessions as being representative of the community<sup>37</sup> challenged the focus on their being only about Jeremiah, but a solely communal understanding is also problematic.<sup>38</sup> Little consensus has been reached on exactly how to interpret the Confessions,

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<sup>33</sup> The Confessions of Jeremiah are generally considered not to be more than the following: Jer 11:18-23; 12:1-6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-13; 14-18. Diamond notes that although a few people regard a few sections in the first ten chapters of the book as also belonging to the Confessions, this framing of the Confessions has the widest consensus. A. R. Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 192 n. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Kathleen M. O’Connor, *The Confessions of Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1-25* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 97.

<sup>35</sup> O’Connor, *Confessions*, 82. This understanding of the feelings as giving insight into the prophet was not limited only to the work on the Confessions, as Skinner’s work on the book of Jeremiah attests. John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

<sup>36</sup> John Bright, “Jeremiah’s Complaints: Liturgy, or Expressions of Personal Distress?” in *Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies* (ed. John I. Durham and J.R. Porter; London: SCM Press, 1970), 190. Later, Bright argues that “none of the Jeremiah’s laments can be related to any one of the above incidents [a list of persecutions]. But they may with confidence be regarded as expressing his reaction to persecution of this sort.” John Bright, “A Prophet’s Lament and Its Answer: Jeremiah 15:10-21,” *Int* 28.1 (1974): 61.

<sup>37</sup> Reventlow understands the Confessions “as liturgical pieces uttered in the context of the cult. As such, they reveal nothing of the prophet as a person: the ‘I’ is in each case collective. In these pieces the prophet speaks in the name of the people, or the ‘righteous’ segment of them, in his official capacity as cultic mediator, laying their plaints and positions before God and interceding for them. The Confessions are thus as much a part of the prophet’s public ministry as is the proclamation for the word itself. Indeed, says Reventlow, if this is not so it is hard to see why they should have been included in the book at all, since the prophetic books otherwise display little or no interest in the prophet as a person: ‘the preached word represents the sole principle of selection for the transmission of prophetic material.’” Bright, “Jeremiah’s Complaints,” 192 quoting Henning Graf Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremiah* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1963), 14 f.

underscoring the difficulty in understanding the place of very personal and emotional elements in the prophetic task.

Even looking at definitions of prophecy provides little help in understanding how feelings fit into the prophetic task. The classic nineteenth-century definition of prophecy is one of the few that even highlights potential feelings, but it highlights one feeling to the exclusion of everything else. This definition sees prophecy as primarily an ecstatic experience of the prophet.<sup>39</sup> The Brown-Driver-Briggs dictionary translates נְבִיא (*nb* 'prophecy'), as "religious ecstasy with or without song and music."<sup>40</sup> As such, prophesying could be seen as being overwhelmed by one specific emotion, without any rational element or cognitive choice. Even the emotion experienced is warped: ecstasy is defined as a form of happiness,<sup>41</sup> but it is a happiness that is

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<sup>38</sup> One of the largest difficulties with Reventlow's understanding concerns appropriating the text for a communal context. In the case of Jer 15, for example, the words of Jeremiah that include cursing his mother and calling the LORD deceitful do not appear appropriate for cultic worship.

<sup>39</sup> Zimmerli's understanding of prophecy follows this to some degree: prophecy according to Zimmerli is "the communication of the word under the impress of the mysterious, direct seizure and call by Yahweh." Walther Zimmerli, "The Fruit of the Tribulation of the Prophet," (trans. Leo G. Perdue) in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* (ed. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 349.

<sup>40</sup> נְבִיא "*nb*," *BDB*: 612. The full quote is actually: "in oldest forms, religious ecstasy with or without song and music; later, essentially religious instruction, with occasional predictions." This indicates that there is a change in the use of the term, but does not deny that in previous usage the ecstatic state was very much a part of an understanding of prophesying. The *KBL* also confirms an ecstatic state as a key element of prophecy. The definition given there is: "*be in prophetic ecstasy, behave as (ecstatic) prophet.*" נְבִיא "*nb*," *KBL*: 586.

<sup>41</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "ecstasy" as: "1. The state of being 'beside oneself', thrown into a frenzy or a stupor, with anxiety, astonishment, fear, or passion. . . . 3. a. Used by mystical writers as the technical name for the state of rapture in which the body was supposed to become incapable of sensation, while the soul was engaged in the contemplation of divine things. b. The state of trance supposed to be a concomitant of prophetic inspiration; hence, Poetic frenzy or rapture. . . . 4. a. An exalted state of feeling which engrosses the mind to the exclusion of thought; rapture, transport. Now chiefly, intense or rapturous delight." *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p. [cited 30 March 2012]. Online: <http://www.oed.com/>.

pervverted.<sup>42</sup> Besides this, evidence of prophetic ecstasy is noticeably absent in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>43</sup>

Outside of references to ecstasy, most understandings of prophecy do not include any reference to feelings. Feelings are often seen to be something personal, and prophets have a very public function. Furthermore, our knowledge about prophets is primarily based on written descriptions of the words to be spoken with limited information about the prophet as an individual. Even in the places in the text where personal information is given about a prophet, the individual person is overshadowed by his role as prophet.<sup>44</sup> One might then conclude that there would be little reason for descriptions of feelings experienced by the prophet to be present in the text and less reason for their being mentioned in an understanding of the prophetic task. Definitions of prophecy tend instead towards describing what the prophet does, most notably centered on the words that the prophet proclaims, highlighting foretelling the future and/or doing justice. As Brueggemann puts it:

It is conventional among more conservative Christian interpreters to understand “prophetic” as an exercise in *prediction*, in foretelling the future, that in Christian interpretation characteristically moves to the anticipation of Jesus. Conversely, more liberal Christian interpretation tends to understand “prophetic” in terms of a passionate engagement for *justice in society*. Neither of these inclinations, however, will help us much in understanding the nomenclature for this material that is termed “prophetic.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Lössl clarifies what ecstasy refers to, including the more negative aspects: “Now ecstasis meant that the prophet spoke God’s words rather than his own (1 Samuel 10:10-11; 19:23-24), but it could also create the impression of madness (2 Kings 9:11; Jeremiah 29:26).” Josef Lössl, “Poets, Prophets, Critics, and Exegetes in Classical and Biblical Antiquity and Early Christianity,” *JLARC* 1 (2007): 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> The only incident that might be considered ecstasy is found in Jer 20:7-9 where Jeremiah speaks of being overwhelmed by the word of the Lord and his need to speak it; yet, this incident is certainly not in the same category as the ecstasy conveyed by Saul in 1 Sam 19.

<sup>44</sup> Despite a desire for gender-inclusiveness in this paper, the masculine pronoun will be used in the description of the Old Testament prophets. This reflects the reality that all of the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament are male.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 102. Petersen also finds it problematic that prophecy is often considered primarily to be merely foretelling: “The word *prophet* derives from the Greek noun *prophetes*, which means, primarily ‘to foresee.’ To understand prophets in the Old Testament in this sense is unfortunate and misleading for at least two reasons. First, the notion of seeing into the future, of

Even the understanding of prediction is problematic in an understanding of the prophetic task, as the prophets foretold only the consequences that the LORD had promised them (cf. Deut 29-31). Kohn puts this well: “The second section of the Hebrew Bible – the Prophets – recounts ‘reality.’ The Latter Prophets in particular ‘expound a consistent interpretation of the events that befell Israel from the viewpoint of God, with warnings and consolations related to this interpretation.’”<sup>46</sup> Through looking back at the law, the prophets could interpret reality.

As interesting and varied as these understandings of prophecy are, they do not provide much assistance in understanding the place of the feelings in terms of the prophetic task. Moreover, they also seem to ignore much else that is present in prophetic literature, such as the narratives, the words of hope, and the repetitive warnings. In this way, these descriptions of prophecy are unable to address all the facets of Old Testament prophetic literature.

Several other sources provide more specific understandings of prophecy that allow room for feelings, although it is still questionable whether they provide a more comprehensive understanding of the different aspects of Old Testament prophetic literature. In their *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, Soulen and Soulen define prophecy as “an utterance, whether originally oral or written of a prophet (Gk: *prophetes*, lit.: ‘one who speaks for another’). In biblical tradition, a prophet (Heb: *nabi*’) was one who proclaimed the will or mind of God.”<sup>47</sup> In Hill’s and Walton’s *A Survey of the Old Testament*, a prophet is defined as “the mouthpiece of God, conveying God’s opinions, reactions, intentions, and very words. In short, God’s agenda, or

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predicting what will happen, is only one small facet of what Israel’s prophets were about. To be sure, Israel’s prophets could and did speak about the future, but they also addressed the present and referred to the past.” David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 5.

<sup>46</sup> Risa Levitt Kohn, “A Prophet like Moses? Rethinking Ezekiel’s Relationship to the Torah,” *ZAW* 114.2 (2002): 243. She footnotes Moshe Greenberg, “Establishing a Moral Order,” *BR* 7 (1991), 42.

<sup>47</sup> Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, “Prophecy,” *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 142.

program, is announced through the words of the prophets.”<sup>48</sup> Both of these definitions focus only on the words of the prophet without acknowledging other avenues by which he might convey the divine message. Although the words conveyed can be seen to take up a significant part of prophecy, the exact nature of prophecy remains vague, as does the place of feelings in that prophecy. It is thus difficult to find an understanding of prophecy that encapsulates the diversity found in the prophetic texts, including addressing the place of feelings.

In his introduction to ancient Near Eastern thought, Walton<sup>49</sup> recognizes the less rational element of prophecy. He argues that, in some cases in the ancient Near East, the reception of the divine message was through less rational means, such as through dreams and divination. This non-rational element appears to allow greater space for the feelings. Yet, according to Walton, prophecy in Israel was fairly different from that in the ancient Near East, as its purpose was “revealing God” and usually involved judgment and only hope in the long term. It was in support of God, which generally meant punishment for the people. It involved calling people back to the covenant, and not just back to rituals.<sup>50</sup> Walton does not deny the possibility that feelings are part of the prophetic message; yet, his focus is clearly on the role of prophets as covenant enforcers and as interpreters of reality, concepts touched upon in Kohn’s understanding but also more clearly outlined and identified by Calvin and Brueggemann.

Calvin’s understanding of prophecy is given in the introduction to his commentary on Isaiah. His understanding does not focus on feelings, but neither does he focus *per se* on the words, such as other definitions tend to do. His focus is more ideological. He identifies the purpose of prophecy as a re-interpretation of the law (Torah):

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<sup>48</sup> Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 309.

<sup>49</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 239-74.

<sup>50</sup> Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 252.

What then was the purpose of prophecy? Truly, it was to explain the law more and more fully, and also to fit it to the immediate need of the people. Since, then, the prophets do not invent any new teaching, but are faithful interpreters of the law, God is not combining here two separate commands. He wishes his law and his prophets to be heard simultaneously. The majesty of the law does not lessen the authority of the prophets. For the prophets uphold the law; they in no way subtract anything from it.<sup>51</sup>

To put it more succinctly, Calvin understands that prophets explained “the teaching of the law more extensively than was done in the law itself and interpreted more fully what the two tables covered in few words; and they made clear what the Lord particularly required at the moment.”<sup>52</sup> Even though this definition does not include a specific place for feelings, this classic understanding of prophecy does not by definition exclude feelings from the prophetic task. Considering Calvin’s importance in the Reformed tradition, this thesis will briefly explore in Chapter 4 the role that feelings have in his understanding of prophecy.

Brueggemann’s understanding of prophecy allows more space to see how feelings might have a role. One area where Brueggemann overlaps with Calvin is in his emphasis on how prophecy fits with the past of Israel, and the need to bring the listeners’ attention back to their relationship to God. Brueggemann sees prophecy as “the capacity to reconstrue all of lived reality—including the history of Israel and the power relations of the known world of the ancient Near East—according to the equally palpable reality (in this reading) of the rule of YHWH.”<sup>53</sup> This definition provides a much broader perspective on prophecy than that of Calvin, but it remains fairly vague with regard to how the prophetic message is communicated. Like with the

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<sup>51</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin: Commentaries* (ed. Joseph Haroutunian; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1979) 82. Courtesy of the Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Online: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries*, 325. This is originally taken from the *Introduction to the Commentary on Isaiah*. Further from the *Introduction to the Commentary on Isaiah*, he notes “It is usual to cover many subjects in discussing the office of the prophet. But no summary (or explanation) of it pleases me better than one which relates the prophets to the law from which they drew their teaching as brooks flow from their source. Since the prophets set the law as the rule for themselves and copied it, they may properly be called and counted its interpreters. There is no separation between the two.” Calvin, *Commentaries*, 324.

<sup>53</sup> Brueggemann, *Introduction*, 103.

definition of Calvin, there is room in this understanding for feelings to be part of the prophetic message, but there is no sense that the feelings are a *necessary* part of the message being presented. Due to Brueggemann's importance in Old Testament studies, it is worth fleshing out briefly how he understands feelings are able to give expression to the reconstruction of reality. This will also be done in Chapter 4.

The last area explored by this thesis with regard to the role of feelings within the prophetic task is a focus on the prophet as representative or intermediary.<sup>54</sup> Petersen argues that prophets “functioned as intermediaries between the human and the divine worlds. They could represent humans to God (Amos 7:2) or God to humans (Amos 5:4). . . .”<sup>55</sup> From this vantage point, we see that the prophetic task can be understood to be more than just speaking God's words: it involves representing both God and the people, more specifically the community of which he is a part (e.g., Jer 1:26 refers to the community as *his* community). This definition thus allows a place for feelings, emotions, and affections in the prophetic task, as his feelings, alongside of his words and actions, can express the representation. The works of von Rad, McConville, and Williams express more clearly how feelings might be part of this representation.<sup>56</sup> According to von Rad, “The prophet is not only a mouthpiece of God, but also a suffering servant whose entire life is involved in the prophetic task.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, Jeremiah's whole life, including his feelings of suffering, are involved in the prophetic task.

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<sup>54</sup> The varied definitions from Brueggemann and Calvin provide a helpful standard against which the understanding of the prophetic task as being representative can be looked at.

<sup>55</sup> Petersen, *Prophetic Literature*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Gerhard von Rad, “The Confessions of Jeremiah” (trans. Anne Winston and Gary Lance Johnson) in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* (ed. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 339-47; J. Gordon McConville, *Judgment and Promise: An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993), and Michael J. Williams, *The Prophet and His Message: Reading Old Testament Prophecy Today* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> von Rad, “Confessions,” as summarized by Perdue. Perdue, “Jeremiah,” 26.

Nonetheless, even if one agrees with the argument that feelings are an important element in the representative nature of the prophetic task, the manifestation of the prophetic nature is not agreed upon. In other words, there is no agreement on the exact manner in which the feelings expressed by the prophet are seen to be representative nor who exactly the feelings represent. For example, even as much as von Rad would argue that Jeremiah's "entire life is involved in the prophetic task," he also argues that the Confessions, sections of the text which display many of Jeremiah's feelings, bear witness only to "his inner doubts, his suffering and his despair."<sup>58</sup> The question of how much the feelings mentioned in the text belong to Jeremiah himself, the people of Israel (and Jeremiah's relation to them), and/or God (and Jeremiah's relation to him) and, at the same time, how much the feelings are inherently part of the prophetic task is difficult to determine. Some scholars argue that the feelings displayed by Jeremiah are little more than textual insights into Jeremiah's personality. Others understand the feelings as being representative of more than Jeremiah's own feelings, though there is disagreement over whether the feelings also represent those of God, those of the people of Israel, or both.<sup>59</sup> Heschel, for example, notes how the prophetic task takes over the entire life of the prophet, highlighting how the prophet is filled with divine pathos.<sup>60</sup> While some see the feelings as primarily those of God that Jeremiah is manifesting to the people of Israel, still others see Jeremiah's feelings as primarily reflective of the feelings of the people of Israel.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> von Rad, "Confessions," 341.

<sup>59</sup> cf. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 149 and Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, *The Divine Passion: Reflections on the Prophets* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1988), 18.

<sup>60</sup> Heschel's understanding of divine pathos reaffirms the understanding of the LORD having affections as opposed to emotions: "the divine pathos is not conceived of as an essential attribute of God, as something objective, as a finality with which man is confronted, but as an expression of God's will; it is a functional rather than a substantial reality; not an attribute, not an unchangeable quality, not an absolute content of divine Being, but rather a situation or the personal implication in His acts. It is not a passion, an unreasoned emotion, but an act formed with intention, rooted in decision and determination; not an attitude taken arbitrarily." Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 231.

<sup>61</sup> For example, Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah* (Nashville,: Abingdon, 2005), 17.

It is difficult to reconcile how Jeremiah's feelings can be both representative of God and the people of Israel, while also being his own. Some argue that although Jeremiah's feelings can be seen as his own as well as representative of the people of Israel, he cannot be fully representative of God due to Jeremiah's suffering under God's hand, among other reasons.<sup>62</sup> It is thus a challenge to reconcile how Jeremiah's feelings can be representative of God and the people of Israel while also being a response to the actions of God and/or the people of Israel. In allowing a place for all these representative elements, Williams provides probably the most explicit explanation of how the feelings might be part of the prophetic task – a prophetic task where Jeremiah is accountable not only to the LORD but also to the people. He argues that the prophetic task:

involves the prophet's words, behavior, affections—indeed everything about the prophet as a human being. This perspective of the essential prophetic task that will shape all of our subsequent considerations of his individual, specific actions is that the prophet is fundamentally *a representative*. He represents God, the community of which he is a part, and, of course, himself in ways that are unique to this special office he occupies.<sup>63</sup>

One task of this thesis will be to evaluate the effectiveness of Williams's claim with regard to the feelings presented in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>64</sup> This thesis will show that the feelings of Jeremiah found in the biblical text represent not only his own individual feelings but also those of the LORD and the people of Israel; this understanding of the feelings provides the most helpful means to understand the feelings in the prophetic task. When the feelings presented by Jeremiah do not correspond to those of the people of Israel, Jeremiah's feelings have a parenetic function (i.e., they show the people how they ought to feel).

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<sup>62</sup> “The prophet suffered because of his task and his lonely situation, he suffered on behalf of the people, and on behalf of God. Yet the prophet cannot be completely identified with God's suffering, for he suffers under God's hand as well.” Hetty Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah in Prophetic Tradition: An Examination of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 233.

<sup>63</sup> Williams, *The Prophet and His Message*, 71.

<sup>64</sup> This claim is presented in various places in Williams's book: pages 83-86, 94-97, 100-04.

The question asked here is how feelings are part of the prophetic task, both in terms of how feelings relate to prophecy in general and in terms of whose feelings are being represented at which time and to what prophetic effect. The limited work on the representational nature of the feelings and the relation of the feelings to the prophetic task indicate that this dimension of the prophetic task is crying out for attention.

### **Methodology of this Thesis**

This thesis, with its focus on further understanding the prophetic task, is biblical-theological in nature.<sup>65</sup> The biblical-theological nature of the prophetic task and the place of feelings within that is determined through a systematization of what is found in the text.<sup>66</sup> Critical questions that focus more on historical, textual, genre, and/or redactional issues in the text will be generally ignored in light of the limited nature of this study.<sup>67</sup> The textual study will be topological in nature, focusing on terms and actions that could be considered to be associated with feelings. These terms and actions will be listed from the text, and, at the same time, the repetitions in the

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<sup>65</sup> Soulen and Soulen regard biblical theology as a term that can be used “to refer to works that undertake the purely descriptive task of explaining what the the Bible, or some portion thereof, says about God and reality in relation to God (humankind, Israel, Christ, the church, etc.) as this was likely to have been understood within the texts’ original historical, cultural, literary, etc. settings.” Furthermore, “the term may also be used to refer to works that undertake the essentially prescriptive task of interpreting what the biblical texts mean on these same topics for contemporary faith.” “Biblical Theology,” Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook*, 23. At the end of the eighteenth century, Gabler is considered to have first introduced the concept of biblical theology, arguing for a strong distinction between biblical theology and systematic/practical theology, while also moving away from the strong focus on historical criticism of that time. As can be seen with the definition given by Soulen and Soulen, the general understanding of biblical theology today is still not clear, encompassing both the meaning of the text in its historical context and its meaning for today. In general, the division between biblical theology and systematic/practical theology is less evident, although the movement away from historical criticism through focusing on the biblical text in its final form has remained. Cf. Charles H. H. Scobie, “The Challenge of Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 42.1 (1991): 31-61.

<sup>66</sup> The text referred to here is primarily the final form of the Masoretic text of Jeremiah.

<sup>67</sup> In this way, this thesis will be focusing primarily on the text itself and the interpreter of the text, with an acknowledgement of the historical receiver, and generally ignoring the source of the text and the editor/author of the text. These different distinctions are given by Soulen and Soulen in their overview and diagram of biblical interpretation. Soulen and Soulen, *Handbook*, 233-35. This overview provides a helpful means of understanding what questions different methodologies are asking of the text.

feelings and the manner in which the feelings are placed in the text will be analyzed. This close reading of the text indicates that a rhetorical analysis<sup>68</sup> also plays a substantial role in this analysis. Furthermore, this thesis will also draw attention to how the reader understands the text. The manner of doing this is not from a reader-response critical perspective, where there is a stronger focus on allowing the reader to have the final say on the meaning of the text, but instead the interpretation of the text is done within the guidelines of Reformed theology.<sup>69</sup> The result of the study will be an analysis of the place of feelings within the biblical-theological concept of the prophetic task.

As already hinted at, this thesis approaches the text and theology from a Reformed perspective and is written in a Reformed context.<sup>70</sup> This approach implies a high view of

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<sup>68</sup> Soulen and Soulen define rhetorical analysis as: “that specific form of inquiry that is concerned with the rhetorical structure of a text, that is, with rhetoric as the art of composition.” Soulen and Soulen, “Rhetorical Analysis,” *Handbook*, 63. This paying attention to the literary techniques in the composition means that this kind of analysis is closely related to one of the current understandings of literary criticism (as given by Soulen and Soulen): “any attempt to understand biblical literature in a manner that parallels the interests and theories of modern literary critics and theorists generally.” Soulen and Soulen, “Literary Criticism,” *Handbook*, 105. They note that this understanding is opposed to other understandings of this term that lean more towards source criticism or authorial intention.

<sup>69</sup> Reformed theology has as its basis the three creeds of the Christian church (Apostles’, Athanasian, and Nicene), as well as the Confessions (also known as the three forms of unity: Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort). More information about these confessions and creeds, as well as specific statements regarding how Reformed theology has been related to various issues in the context of the Christian Reformed Church, can be found at the denominational website: <http://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs>. Michael James Williams’s book, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) also provides guidelines for how to read the Bible within the Reformed tradition.

<sup>70</sup> This thesis assumes that acknowledging one’s assumptions when approaching a text is more helpful than pretending that one can be neutral and without assumptions. This corresponds to current trends in Biblical Criticism, of which Soulen and Soulen say: “The goal of applying neutral criteria of judgment to the Bible has largely given way to the goal of becoming critically aware of the premises (methodological, philosophical, cultural, and theological) that the interpreter brings to the study of the text.” Soulen and Soulen, “Biblical Criticism,” *Handbook*, 22. Although everyone tries to approach the text critically, I would argue that no pure objective method is possible; “Postmodernism has given wider currency to the insight that it is impossible to be *voraussetzungslos* [without presuppositions].” Al Wolters, “Confessional Criticism and the Night Visions of Zechariah” in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene and Karl Möller; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 91. Some sort of assumptions need to be made in order to provide a starting point; Collins notes that “Every conversation must take some things as given if there is to be any hope of communication at all.” John J. Collins, “Historical Criticism and the State of Biblical Theology,” *ChrCent* 110.22 (July 28-August 4, 1993), 746.

Scripture and an assumption of its relevance for the life of the church. As a confessing Reformed Christian, I accept “the belief that the Bible is indeed the Word of God and that in it the Lord intends to teach us truths.”<sup>71</sup> This would correspond with the features of “traditional biblical commentary” as described by Plantinga:

First, Scripture is taken to be a wholly authoritative and trustworthy guide to faith and morals; it is authoritative and trustworthy, because it is a revelation from God, a matter of God’s speaking to us. . . . Secondly, an assumption of the enterprise is that the principal author of the Bible — the entire Bible — is God himself. . . . This impels us to treat the whole more like a unified communication than a miscellany of ancient books. . . . [Thirdly] that the principal author of the Bible is God himself means that one cannot always determine the meaning of a given passage by discovering what the human author had in mind.<sup>72</sup>

This way of looking at the text can be subsumed under the concept of *Sachexegese*, which argues that

A thorough exegesis requires that the biblical text be interpreted in a manner consistent with the Bible’s own central concerns, which are finally theological in nature. A Biblical Criticism that stops short of theological engagement with the Bible’s subject matter is *less*, not *more*, “objective” or “critical” than *Sachexegese*, because it interprets the Bible from a viewpoint that is in the end external to the Bible’s own concerns, and hence arbitrary.<sup>73</sup>

This thesis thus attempts to take the Bible seriously on its own terms. My critical analysis of the text, done within my confessional standpoint, can also be called “Confessional criticism.”

Wolters clarifies: “By ‘confessional’ I mean ‘rooted in the classical Christian confession of Scripture as the Word of God.’ . . . By ‘criticism’ I mean simply ‘scholarly analysis.’”<sup>74</sup> The

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<sup>71</sup> Alvin Plantinga, “Two (or More) Kinds of Scripture Scholarship,” *Modern Theology* 14.2 (April 1998): 247. With regard to the book of Jeremiah, this means that the biographical information (ch 36-45) about Jeremiah and the Confessions “are not introduced for biographical purposes; they are intended to reflect the nature of the Word which Jeremiah brings. He not only speaks the Word of God; he embodies it.” Fretheim, *Suffering*, 156.

<sup>72</sup> Plantinga, “Two Kinds,” 248-49.

<sup>73</sup> Soulen and Soulen, “*Sachexegese*,” *Handbook*, 166. Unless otherwise noted, the italicization of a citation has been made by the author of the quote.

<sup>74</sup> Wolters, “Confessional Criticism,” 91. Another way of putting it would also be to call this exegesis, which is defined broadly as: “the careful, methodologically self-aware study of a text undertaken in order to produce an accurate and useful interpretation thereof.” (Soulen and Soulen, “Exegesis; Exegetical Method; Exegetical Tools,” *Handbook*, 57). It should be noted that finding meaning for the

perspective given above and argued in this thesis is in keeping with the Bible's own claims that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17).<sup>75</sup> Reformed Christians would interpret this text as arguing that the relevance of the Bible extends also to today. Thus the biblical text has something to say to the average person reading the text today. The questions of why this discussion on the role of feelings in the prophetic task matters to the church fit under the category of postcritical biblical interpretation.<sup>76</sup>

In seeking the relevance of feelings and the prophetic task for today's reader, it is helpful to elaborate on the connection of the prophetic task given in the book of Jeremiah to today's readers. In some Reformed circles, for example, it is not unusual to hear talk of a believer's prophetic task, or, what sounds more natural, how the believer is to be a prophet.<sup>77</sup> This concept comes not only from the talk of prophecy held in Paul's letters (1 Cor 12:28-29 and Eph 4:11), it comes also from Christ's role as prophet<sup>78</sup> in Luke 4:16-30 where he implicitly proclaims himself

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average reader could be seen as more exposition than exegesis. Soulen and Soulen note the difficulties found in this distinction: "there is strong opposition to this distinction [exegesis separate from exposition] on the grounds that an understanding of the original meaning of a text cannot be completely separated from an understanding of its contemporary significance, and vice versa." (Soulen and Soulen, "Exposition," *Handbook*, 58).

<sup>75</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the biblical texts quoted in this thesis are all from the NIV.

<sup>76</sup> According to Soulen and Soulen, postcritical biblical interpretation sees that "the inadequacy of critical methodologies lies rather in the fact that they often willingly bracket out questions of ultimate meaning and too often devolve into interminable scholastic debates about the methodological legitimacy or adequacy of this or that approach. Questions of ultimacy receive scant hearing. . . . Postcritical biblical interpretation holds that the aim of interpretation "is never a mere matter of handling text and the relationships between texts. It is above all a matter of being in the presence and open to the handling of the One who, in some sense, is the final 'author' of the message" (Trevor Hart). The postcritical approach to the Bible thus presupposes a threefold relation between word (text), community of interpretation, and God." (Soulen and Soulen, "Postcritical Biblical Interpretation," *Handbook*, 139-40.)

<sup>77</sup> The second half of Williams's *The Prophet and His Message* also outlines how the prophetic task of Jeremiah is applicable to the Christian church today.

<sup>78</sup> This connection of Christ as prophet proclaiming God's word can be seen in Heb 1:1-2. Christ's call to proclaim the Word was shown also in his quoting of Isa 61:1-3.

a prophet.<sup>79</sup> The believer is called to imitate Christ,<sup>80</sup> and so necessarily has a prophetic task as well. The call on the believer to be a prophet is further clarified and emphasized through the writings of theologians honoured in the Reformed tradition. Calvin notes that Christ was appointed prophet, priest, and king.<sup>81</sup> Luther also talks about Christ's office as prophet. In Luther's small catechism he notes that "Christ was anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King."<sup>82</sup> The Heidelberg Catechism, in Lord's Day 12, states that Christ "has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance."<sup>83</sup> The Catechism clarifies further that Christ is also our only high priest and our eternal king. The second part of the Lord's Day highlights that those who are called Christians are by faith a member of Christ and share in his anointing.<sup>84</sup> In this way,

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<sup>79</sup> Luke 4:16-30 is "16 [Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' . . . 24 'Truly I tell you,' he continued, 'no prophet is accepted in his hometown.'"

The indication in Matt 16:14 that Jesus was seen as a reincarnation of Jeremiah only confirms this idea.

<sup>80</sup> For example, 2 Cor 5:20 states: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." Furthermore, Rom 8:29 argues that "those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family."

<sup>81</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. Henry Beveridge), Book 2, Chapter 15, Section 1. Accessed on 6 Sept 2011 via Christian Classics Ethereal Library, online at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iv.xvi.html>. Calvin also highlights how the name Christ points to his being anointed, a trait inherent of prophets (as well as kings and priests).

<sup>82</sup> Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*, Question and answer 125. Cited 27 October 2009. Online: <http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar42.htm>.

<sup>83</sup> *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 31. Cited 20 June 2012. Online: <http://www.rcchurches.net/resources/creeds/HeidelbergCatechism/ld12.html>. The following biblical references are given as validation for the teaching of the catechism: with regard to the anointing - Luke 3:21-22; 4:14-19 (Isa 61:1); Heb 1:9 (Ps. 45:7); prophet and teacher - Acts 3:22 (Deut 18:15); and revealing the counsel and will of God - John 1:18; 15:15.

<sup>84</sup> *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 32. The biblical references given for this are: 1 Cor 12:12-27; Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27.

Christians are called to follow in Christ's footsteps in fulfilling the prophetic task. Berkhof, a well-known Reformed theologian, also notes, "As prophet [Christ] represents God with man; as Priest He represents man in the presence of God, and as King He exercises dominion and restores the original dominion of man."<sup>85</sup>

Although much more can be said about the relevance of the prophetic task for today's reader of the text, and more specifically Christian readers, this short introduction gives some of the assumptions involved in this thesis and provides a basis for the discussion that follows here below.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

This introduction has shown that scholarly work has produced an understanding of the prophetic task that tends to ignore feelings. Feelings are often dismissed as merely extraneous components, redactions to the original text and/or as providing fascinating, but ultimately superfluous, insight into the psychological state of the prophet. Even those who understand the feelings as having relevance to the book are not in agreement over whose feelings are being represented by the feelings expressed in the text by Jeremiah.

Chapter 2 will list the feelings that are textually evident in the entire book of Jeremiah. The range of feelings displayed include, anger, sadness, weariness, compassion, and joy. The agent and incitement for these feelings, as well as the historical situation(s) in which they arise will then be given. The listed feelings represent those manifested by God, the people of Judah, and Jeremiah. Looking at parallels between the feelings and the ambiguity of the emotional agent will round off the chapter.

Chapter 3 will show that the prophet's feelings are not only his own, but are also representative of the feelings of the people of Israel and God. First, an example is given of how

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<sup>85</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 357.

the representational nature of Jeremiah's feelings is stated explicitly in the text. Following this, the question of whom Jeremiah's feelings represent is addressed. Recent scholarship is moving away from focusing on the feelings as being solely those of Jeremiah in order to show how the feelings are also representative of those of God or the community. Yet, the focus is more towards the feelings being representative of those of one single group rather than seeing how Jeremiah's feelings are still his own while also simultaneously being representative of those of the community *and* those of God. Therefore, this chapter will also respond to those arguing that Jeremiah's feelings are representative of only one agent, showing that a more comprehensive understanding of the prophet as representative does justice to the text and the secondary literature, while also providing an explanation for the role of the prophet's feelings.

Chapter 4 addresses potential shortcomings in seeing feelings as part of the representational nature of the prophetic task. This will be done through looking at the role of feelings in both Brueggemann's and Calvin's understandings of the prophetic task. The purpose of the feelings as having a teaching function is especially highlighted.

Chapter 5 will demonstrate how the representational nature of Jeremiah's feelings provides a deeper insight into the prophetic task by looking briefly at how actions and words are also part of the representational nature of the prophetic task. The significant role that prophetic feelings play in the prophetic task will then be corroborated and elucidated by an examination of other prophets.

Chapter 6 concludes by indicating how the representative nature of Jeremiah's feelings provides insight into God and his relationship with his people. This fuller understanding of feelings as part of the prophetic task is applied to a grounding and reevaluation of the church's contemporary prophetic task.

## CHAPTER TWO: TEXTUALLY EVIDENT FEELINGS

A multitude of feelings are present in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah's reputation as "the weeping prophet" is well-known, but the weeping in the book is only a small part of the overwhelming amount of feelings manifested in the book. The feelings are evidenced in words, actions, and descriptions. Moreover, the feelings are evident not only in the life of Jeremiah but are also manifested by other actors in the text, most notably the LORD and the people of Judah. As well, a wide range of feelings appear in the text, including sorrow, anger, joy, humiliation, and anguish. Furthermore, the text stirs up various feelings within the reader during the hearing and/or reading of the text. This chapter will catalog the feelings that are evidenced in the Masoretic Text of the book of Jeremiah and give possible reasons and/or incitements for these feelings. Further, the connections between the feelings and the agents will be listed, including some of the different rhetorical means that are used to show the connection between the feelings of the agents.

### Feelings Evidenced in the Book of Jeremiah

Although there is a limited understanding of how feelings might relate to Jeremiah's prophetic task, a plethora of feelings are evidenced in the book of Jeremiah. The following chart lists most of the textual references for words explicitly related to feelings in the text.

**Table 2.1: Feelings in the Book of Jeremiah**

Feeling	Hebrew (root form)	Verse References
wrath/insolence <sup>1</sup>	עברה (ʿbrh)	Jeremiah 7:29; 48:30

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<sup>1</sup> Baloian's *Anger in the Old Testament* was helpful in pointing out references concerning all of the terms related to anger.

Feeling	Hebrew (root form)	Verse References
anger/wrath	חמה (ḥmh)	Jeremiah 4:4; 6:11; 7:20; 10:25; 18:20; 21:5,12; 23:19; 25:15; 30:23; 32:31,37; 33:5; 36:7; 42:18; 44:6;
anger	אָד (+ חרוֹן) (ʿp + ḥrwn)	Jeremiah 2:35; 4:8, 26; 7:20; 10:24; 12:13; 15:14-15; 17:4; 18:23; 21:5; 23:20; 25:37-38; 30:24; 32:31,37; 33:5; 36:7; 42:18; 44:6; 49:37; 51:45; 52:3. <sup>2</sup>
anger/wrath	מקצַפ (mqsp)	Jeremiah 10:10; 21:5; 32:37; 37:15; <sup>3</sup> 50:13
to anger <sup>4</sup>	כעס (k`s)	Jeremiah 7:18-19; 8:19; 11:17; 25:6-7; 32:29-30,32; 44:3,8
indignation	זעם (z`m)	Jeremiah 10:10; 15:17; 50:25
to be sick/weary <sup>5</sup>	חלה (ḥlh)	Jeremiah 4:31; 5:3; 10:19; 12:13; 14:17; 26:19; 30:12
weary	לאה (l`h)	Jeremiah 6:11, 9:5(4); <sup>6</sup> 12:5, 15:6; 20:9
distress/anguish	צרה (ṣrh)	Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; 14:8; 15:11; 16:19; 30:7; 49:24; 50:43
anguish	מעה (m`h)	Jeremiah 4:19 (twice); 30:20
to be ashamed	יבשׁ (ybš)	Jeremiah 2:26,36; 6:15; 8:9,12; 9:19(18); 12:13; 14:3-4; 15:9; 17:13,18; 20:11; 22:22; 31:19; 46:24; 48:1,13,20,39; 49:23; 50:2,12; 51:17,47,51
to be humiliated	כלם (klm)	Jeremiah 3:3; 6:15; 8:12; 14:3; 22:22; 31:19
to have compassion	רחם (rḥm)	Jeremiah 6:23; 12:15; 13:14; 21:7; 30:18; 31:20 (twice); 33:26; 42:12; 50:42

<sup>2</sup> Although most of the occurrences of אָד (ʿp) have to do with anger, a few, like 2:35, have to do with turning one's face away. Those references that specifically speak of anger burning (אָד + חרוֹן [ʿp + ḥrwn]) are the following: 4:8, 26; 12:13; 25:37, 38 (twice); 30:24; 49:37; 51:45.

<sup>3</sup> This is actually a verbal form of anger, while the rest are not acting as verbs in the sentences. It is unique in that the anger expressed is by the individuals who attack Jeremiah instead of being expressed by the LORD.

<sup>4</sup> Most forms of the verb are in the *hip'il* infinitive construct form with a first common singular pronominal suffix.

<sup>5</sup> Although not all cases of weariness and humiliation are related to feelings (e.g., 12:13 is merely talking about the weariness involved in doing hard labour), these emotion laden words often convey a sense of sadness.

<sup>6</sup> The verse references are from the English text, which differs from the Masoretic numbering by one verse for ch. 9. The different numbering for the Hebrew verses is placed in brackets.

Feeling	Hebrew (root form)	Verse References
rejoicing — noun	ששון (śśwn)	Jeremiah 7:34; 15:16; 16:9; 25:10; 31:13; 33:9, 11 <sup>7</sup>
joy — noun	שמחה (śmḥh)	Jeremiah 7:34; 15:16; 16:9; 25:10; 31:7; 33:11; 48:33 <sup>8</sup>
Voice [sound] of joy and rejoicing (phrase)	קול ששון וקול שמחה (qwl śśwn wqwl śmḥh)	Jeremiah 16:9; 25:10; 33:10
to sing for joy;	רנן (rnn)	Jeremiah 31:7, 12; 51:48
sorrow/grief	יגון (ygwn)	Jeremiah 8:18; 20:18; 31:13; <sup>9</sup> 45:3
lamentation	קינה (qynh)	Jeremiah 7:29; 9:10(9), 20-21(19-20)
wailing	נהי (nhy)	Jeremiah 9:10(9), 18(17), 19(18), 20(19); 31:15
to weep	בכה (bkh)	Jeremiah 9:1 (8:23), 13:17, 22:10, 41:6, 50:4
weeping	בכי (bky)	Jeremiah 3:21; 9:10(9); 31:9, <sup>10</sup> 15, 16; 48:5 (twice); 48:32
to cry (out)	זעק (z`q)	Jeremiah 48:20, 31
wail	ילל (yll)	Jeremiah 4:8; 25:34, 36; <sup>11</sup> 47:2; 48:20, 31, 39; 49:3; 51:8
to lament	ספד (spd)	Jeremiah 4:8; 16:4, 5, 6; 22:18 (twice); 25:33; 34:5; 49:3 <sup>12</sup>
lament	מספד (mspd)	Jeremiah 6:26; 48:38
pain	כאב (k`b)	Jeremiah 15:18
pain, sorrow	מכאב (mk`b)	Jeremiah 30:15; 45:3; 51:8
wound	מכה (mkkh)	Jeremiah 6:7; 10:19; 14:17; 15:18; 19:8; 30:12, 14, 17; 49:17; 50:13

<sup>7</sup> About half the references refer to rejoicing being forbidden or taken away (7:34; 16:9; 25:10).

<sup>8</sup> As with the references to rejoicing, about half the references refer to joy being forbidden or taken away (7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 48:33).

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah 31:13 speaks of sorrow going away (and being replaced by joy).

<sup>10</sup> The weeping in 31:9 is more a sign of joy than sorrow.

<sup>11</sup> In 25:36, ילל (yll) is found in the noun form.

<sup>12</sup> The verb ספד (spd) is most often found in the negative (16:4, 5, 6; 22:18; 25:33).

Feeling	Hebrew (root form)	Verse References
be astonished, appalled ( <i>qal</i> ), desolate ( <i>niphal</i> , <i>hip'il</i> )	שׁמם (shmm)	Jeremiah 2:12; 4:9; 10:25; 49:20; 50:45; <sup>13</sup> 12:11; 33:10; <sup>14</sup> 18:16; 19:8; 49:17; 50:13
tears	דמעה (dm`h)	Jeremiah 9:2(1), 19(18); 13:17; 14:17; 31:16

The above list illustrates the significant number of feelings and words associated with feelings that are evidenced in the book of Jeremiah.

As much as this chart of words related to feelings is helpful for getting a picture of feelings in the text, feelings are found in the text not simply on the basis of what vocabulary has been used, but also evidenced at a higher syntactical level through such things as events or responses present in the text. In other words, feelings can be indicated by more than simply through a word with a semantic connotation of feeling.<sup>15</sup> In the book of Jeremiah, this can be seen in several places. The Confessions of Jeremiah are known for their anguish and sadness, illustrated by the many references to pain and anguish within the Confessions. Focusing only on the words related to feelings can distract one from the sphere of sadness that permeates the whole section, something that is carried over well in the alternative name given to the Confessions: the Laments of Jeremiah. The very name of the Book of Comfort<sup>16</sup> points to the fact that this section is expected to give comfort to those who hear/read it. The sections that focus on judgment have much to do with anger, wrath, and even disappointment. Although feeling-words provide very clear indications of where feelings are evident in the text, looking for evidence of feelings in

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<sup>13</sup> The use of the *hip'il* in 10:25; 49:20 and 50:45 gives the verbal form the sense of being desolate, and thus, even though desolation would most likely have an emotional response, this reference will not be used in the text, as it is not directly linked to a specific feeling.

<sup>14</sup> Similar to 10:25, the use of the *niphal* verbal form in 12:11 and 33:10 gives the verbs a sense of desolation as opposed to one of astonishment, and these references will not be used further in this text.

<sup>15</sup> Poetry, for instance, illustrates this phenomenon well.

<sup>16</sup> This includes Jer 30-31 and according to some sources, it also includes Jer 32-33.

larger units of the text helps the reader more fully comprehend the complex place of feelings within prophecy. Even how the text draws an emotional response from the reader is part of the complexity of the role that feelings have in both the text and prophecy in general.

### **Relation between Feelings**

Feelings are often related to each other. Consequently, the mention of one feeling-word in the text is often marked by the mention of another. This relationship of feelings can often be quite complex, as Polk indicates:

[Jeremiah's] praise can also include, and qualify, reproach. . . . His joy can exist side-by-side with a near- despair, and . . . his anguish consists of grief, fear, and anger compounded. . . . He fears for himself and for and with the people—and this while sharing God's anger toward the people, or even while being angry at God. Such emotional complexity is of course profoundly realistic, and typically human.<sup>17</sup>

Jeremiah's "emotional complexity" suggests that feelings that appear in the text cannot always be separated from other feelings. This complexity suggests the need for a fuller dimension to an understanding of feelings as part of the prophetic task, and it also suggests that there is a corresponding complexity for the explanation of the feelings evident in the book.<sup>18</sup>

From a rhetorical perspective, the mentioning of several feelings together can be seen as a means of emphasis. Although there are occasions where feelings seem to be in conflict with each other, there are occasions where the multiple mentioning of feelings reinforces a certain feeling. Through expressing a certain feeling alongside an elaboration of what the feeling is not, the feeling receives double attention and is thus emphasized. For example, rejoicing and joy in the text are usually coupled with a promise of turning from weeping and wailing, as if to illustrate

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<sup>17</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 170.

<sup>18</sup> Although redaction is a possible explanation for the complexity of the feelings found in the text, there is not enough room in this thesis to explore that possibility further. Instead, the focus of this study is the final form of the Masoretic text. Although it is quite likely that redaction occurred in the book of Jeremiah (the significant differences between the Masoretic and Septuagint text of Jeremiah seem to point to this), the assumption made in this thesis is that there is a certain level of unity and reliability in the Masoretic text alongside a certain degree of reliability in the one God has chosen as prophet.

strongly how different the forthcoming change will be. In other cases, the combination of feelings emphasizes certain characteristics about a participant or situation. This is especially found in the juxtaposition of anger and sadness.<sup>19</sup>

Anger and sadness are often coupled in the book of Jeremiah, and both are mentioned quite frequently. The sadness connected to the anger seems to point to God's anger not being separate from compassion, which is a concept confirmed by the Reformed understanding of God as being gracious and compassionate (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 105).<sup>20</sup> This example of anger and sadness, along with that of rejoicing and wailing, thus illustrates how connections between feelings give fuller insight into the text and the participants in the text.

### **Incitements of Feelings**

With regard to the incitements of the feelings, the confusion is at a different level than the confusion amongst the various agents in the text. At times the text itself identifies the specific causes of the feelings, such as the LORD's anger on account of sin. Yet, at other times, it is not exactly clear what the exact causes of the feelings are. Sometimes the most likely cause is fairly obvious: the text's depiction of the situation<sup>21</sup> has a significant effect on the participants in the book of Jeremiah,<sup>22</sup> and thus it can be seen as a general cause for much of the distress. Jeremiah

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<sup>19</sup> The LORD's anger often brings with it sadness on the part of the people. Sadness is either the desired result of the anger (e.g., a sign of remorse and repentance) as in 4:8. In other cases, the sadness is a consequence of the anger, as in 8:18-19. Still later in the book, the LORD's anger causes there to be no mourning or lamenting for those who have died, a harsh punishment (25:33-38).

<sup>20</sup> This understanding of God as compassionate and slow to anger is also confirmed by Brueggemann's emphasis on Ex 34:6-7 being a key understanding of the Old Testament. Cf. Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (ed. Patrick D. Miller; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 45-48.

<sup>21</sup> The situation referred to here is that which is depicted in the text. It is assumed that this is connected to a specific historical reality, although it is difficult to know how much of the actual history has been left out. This thesis does not attempt to determine the historical situation but instead focuses primarily on the (historical) situation as it is presented in the text.

<sup>22</sup> The book of Jeremiah, as well as the books of Kings and Chronicles, provides an account of the situation in which the book of Jeremiah claims to have occurred. Besides the book's recounting of the

would have experienced the stress of the imminent exile alongside of the people of Judah; furthermore, in speaking the word of the LORD to the people, he was also ignored, scorned, imprisoned and considered a traitor.

Despite the obvious challenges inherent in this difficult situation, the text often does not explicitly indicate what the causes of the feelings are. In situations where the text is not clear, it is best not to speculate too much. Although it might seem obvious to connect some of the words of pain and despair in the Confessions to the likely traumatic situation of Jeremiah being placed in the pit where he felt he would die (Jer 37),<sup>23</sup> doing so can cause one to read into the text and thus make unnecessary connections or miss other connections between characters in the text and feelings.

In discussing how the feelings relate to each other, it is not always obvious what significance, if any, is found in the sharing of specific feelings by different agents. More than one agent sharing a feeling does not necessarily imply a relationship.<sup>24</sup> Some stronger link needs to be

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personal situation of Jeremiah as a prophet, it focuses on the siege and fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's ministry occurs as the Babylonians are at the gates about to conquer the people. Israel (the Northern Kingdom) had been exiled to Assyria about a century before. In the time following, Judah had been paying tribute to the Assyrian king, holding onto its independence only tentatively. The hope of independence returned again when Assyria weakened and fell to Babylon. Yet Babylon became a new power and a new problem at Judah's doors. The book of Jeremiah encompasses the years of Babylon's attack and conquest on Judah (cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 9-11). The people could see that exile was imminent and were being told by Jeremiah that this was a consequence of their disregard for God's law. Following the deuteronomic curses for disobedience, the exile of the people is the result of the LORD's punishing the ones He loved who had turned away from Him. It is Jeremiah's calling to tell the people again and again about the LORD's anger towards the people and their disobedience. Clearly, Judah deserves the wrath of the LORD. Yet, the LORD punishes the people with reluctance. He has relented often, so much so that he has grown tired of doing so (15:6) for it seems to do no good. It is then in this context that the book of Jeremiah takes place.

<sup>23</sup> This way of looking at the text is confirmed by Parke-Taylor's understanding of the historical placement of the Confessions: "The Confessions do not refer to specific events in the life of Jeremiah, but represent in general his struggles with vocation and his reaction to persecution by his enemies." Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah: Doublets and Recurring Phrases* (SBLMS 51; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 31.

<sup>24</sup> An example from everyday life can illustrate this. Someone sitting in classroom is sad, and the person sitting next to him is also sad. Although they are both sad, it does not guarantee that there is any relationship in the sadness, even if the two are now in close proximity to each other. The first might have failed a Hebrew quiz while the second might have run over a squirrel that morning. If the second were sad

shown before a relationship can be established. The following is the listing of the feelings, including similarities in incitements and repetition of specific phrases, which suggest literary intention of a relation between certain feelings.

### Anger and Wrath

The most prevalent feeling in the book of Jeremiah is anger. Some form of anger appears approximately fifty times throughout the text (see Table 2.1). The agent of the anger is primarily the LORD.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes the LORD is expressing his own anger, and sometimes others are simply referring to his anger.<sup>26</sup> The direction and cause of the anger change slightly throughout the book, starting with anger focused mainly at Judah and progressing to all peoples because of their rebellion and/or oppression.<sup>27</sup> Neither Jeremiah nor the people of Judah parallel this anger in any way. The people of Israel appear in the text to be somewhat oblivious to both their sin and the coming destruction. Thus, it stands to reason that they would express no anger at the coming destruction. Furthermore, the text makes it clear that Israel deserves the wrath of the LORD, and thus has no right to be angry. At the same time, the anger presented by the LORD is a strong affection. As Baloian describes it, “When Yahweh is angry it does speak of His emotion, but such passion in God is not presented as mere feeling. The presence of divine anger is usually synonymous with His terrible judgment in the world.”<sup>28</sup> The anger of the LORD is directly

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for having to fail too many people on a Hebrew quiz then a relation could be made but it is the mirroring of other elements alongside of the mirroring of the feeling that points to the connection and not merely the mirrored feeling.

<sup>25</sup> The one incident that is human anger is 37:15 (the officials are angry with Jeremiah), as mentioned in the footnote from Table 2.1 that is related to anger. The Confessions of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 15) do, nonetheless, convey at times a sense of anger — or at least a complaint — against God.

<sup>26</sup> It is primarily the LORD talking about his anger, although others in the text do speak about it occasionally. For example, in 2:35 the LORD is quoting how the house of Jacob talks about his anger. In 7:20 and 21:5, it is the LORD speaking about his anger, and in 10:24, Jeremiah asks the LORD not to punish him in his anger.

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed overview of anger in Jeremiah, see Baloian, *Anger*.

<sup>28</sup> Baloian, *Anger*, 156.

related to his response to the actions of Israel. The judgment itself, and thus indirectly the anger, were foretold (cf. Deut 29-31 and the prophetic books themselves).

Whereas there is no indication of anger from the people of Israel, the text does suggest anger on the part of Jeremiah despite his not using any specific anger words. As shown in the Confessions, Jeremiah is clearly unhappy with his lot as prophet (cf. Jer 20). He accuses the LORD of having deceived him (15:18; 20:7), and he curses his birth (15:10; 20:14-18). Such actions are a sign of deep anger and frustration with his lot (i.e., deep-seated emotions); nonetheless, Jeremiah never uses explicit words of anger in addressing God. This seems to suggest that Jeremiah, at least in the recorded text, has some control with regard to what he does with his emotions. It is possible that because Jeremiah belongs to the people of Israel that he might have been denied a more explicit expression of anger in the text. The only anger he does express is regarding his role as prophet, yet such anger is only indirectly connected to the anger of the LORD, as the sin of the people is not the source of Jeremiah's anger but instead his role as prophet that has been necessitated by their sin. Furthermore, as one of the people, Jeremiah is also implicitly guilty.<sup>29</sup> Any claim that Jeremiah might make on being angry at the inappropriate actions of Israel is nullified by his being one of Israel. Although there is not enough information given in the text to prove this speculative idea, the possibility that Jeremiah might be denied (or given) feelings as a result of his relationship to the people of Israel is one that will be explored more later in the thesis. The only thing we can now definitively say about the text with regard to anger is that the book of Jeremiah reserves words of anger almost exclusively for the LORD.

The LORD's anger has definite consequences. The exile of the people of Judah is the direct result of the LORD's punishing the ones he loved who had turned away from him. Before the people go into exile, Jeremiah is called to warn people about the consequences of the

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<sup>29</sup> See the comments made on Jer 15 later in this thesis.

LORD's anger towards them and their disobedience.<sup>30</sup> As the book of Jeremiah focuses primarily on the exile and how the people deserve this, the anger related to this can overshadow the book to the point that the book is sometimes seen as being primarily about wrath. Heschel notes that this is only a partial understanding:

Utterances denoting the wrath of God, the intent and threat of destruction, are found more frequently and expressed more strongly in Jeremiah than in any other prophet. For this reason, Jeremiah has often been called a prophet of wrath. However, it would be more significant to say that Jeremiah lived in an age of wrath. His contemporaries had no understanding of the portent of their times, of the way in which God was present at the time. . . . To Jeremiah this time was an emergency, one instant away from a cataclysmic event.<sup>31</sup>

The wrath spoken of in the book points more to the disobedience of the people of Judah than to how wrathful the LORD is. The people of Judah had sinned so often that they clearly deserve punishment; yet, the LORD punishes his people with reluctance. He has relented often, so much so that he has grown tired of doing so (15:6) for it seems to do no good.<sup>32</sup> Only exile seems to be the means by which the LORD might bring his people back to him. The anger felt by the LORD is the result of an active choice: "the passionate nature of Yahweh is always wedded to His rationality. . . . The motive clauses and the logical procedure with which His wrath was described opposes the charge of capriciousness."<sup>33</sup> The LORD's anger is very much an affection.

There is no literary parallel of anger/wrath with the prophetic agent. Yet, anger still points to a connection between the agents and feelings. The indignation of Jeremiah given in Jeremiah 15:17 is a feeling mirroring that which the LORD has for the nations (10:10) and for Babylon (50:25). It is a feeling that is more complicated, as Jeremiah accuses the LORD of having filled him with this indignation, which is a point that will be addressed later. Jeremiah being filled with

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<sup>30</sup> See Table 2.1 for verse references.

<sup>31</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 106.

<sup>32</sup> The close link between sadness and anger mentioned earlier only confirms the understanding of the LORD punishing the people reluctantly, despite his anger at their sinfulness.

<sup>33</sup> Baloian, *Anger*, 157.

indignation makes the link between participants stronger and raises questions about how much control Jeremiah has over his feelings.

### Weariness

The feelings related to weariness are expressed by the people of Judah, Jeremiah, and the LORD. For each participant, the cause of weariness appears different. The LORD is weary of relenting in punishing his people (15:6). Jeremiah's weariness comes from being overwhelmed with his task as a prophet — he speaks of being weary of holding in the word of the LORD (20:9). The text indicates that the people of Judah lack the proper weariness that their disobedience to God should bring them (5:3).

The common thread in all the weariness is the use of the same word, *ל'ח* (*l'h*), and the source of weariness, which is disobedience to the LORD.<sup>34</sup> However, as the consequences of this disobedience affect each of the agents differently, the feeling of weariness only incidentally points to a representational relation between the agents. In other words, Jeremiah's weariness, which is caused by the lack of weariness that the people of Judah ought to be feeling, provides only a weak connection between the agents of the feeling(s).

### Astonishment

Although astonishment might not necessarily be considered a feeling, it is, nonetheless, an expression that is emotionally charged. Astonishment appears to be less of an affection and more of an emotion, and thus its use by different agents would appear to give further insight into potential relationships between the agents. Yet, the first reference to astonishment (2:12) already

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<sup>34</sup> More specifically, the LORD is weary of repenting from punishing the people (15:6) for their actions do not confirm a genuine repentance. Jeremiah is weary from his fruitless efforts in the prophetic task (12:1) of bringing forth the word (20:9) and wrath (6:11) of the LORD to the people who do not heed his message. The people ought to be weary from disobeying the LORD (5:3), and the surrounding nations weary themselves from sinning (9:5).

puts this theory into question: the heavens are called to be astonished on account of what God's people have done (i.e., changing gods). The call itself presents an invitation to be actively involved in a feeling, suggesting that astonishment here fits more with the qualities of an affection than an emotion. The astonishment continues in terms of destruction that occurs: the prophets, presumably false prophets, will be astounded by what the fierce anger of the LORD will do (4:9). Those passing by are expected to be astonished as they pass by the desolation that was the land of Israel (18:16; 19:8); the city has become an object of hissing. The exact same thing will happen to both Edom (49:17) and Babylon (50:13).

Although the idea of astonishment is helpful for looking at peripheral elements of feelings, there are limited parallels in this text. Those being astonished are the passers-by in seeing the devastation, the heavens, and the prophets. Although this illustrates how non-active participants in the text, from the other nations even to the reader of the text today, can be involved in the feelings found in the text, it does not help in terms of looking at the representative nature of the prophetic task. Astonishment is thus at most relevant to a secondary degree.

#### Shame and Humiliation

Shame and humiliation are closely connected to the disobedience of Israel. The references to these feelings in the book of Jeremiah relate only to the people of Judah and the foreign nations. At the beginning of the book, it is the shame of Judah<sup>35</sup> that is focused upon (both their lack of shame [8:12] and their future shame [9:18]). At the end of the book, in the oracles against the nations, shame and humiliation are foretold for the nations. These feelings of shame and humiliation primarily anticipate the feelings that both the people of Judah and the other nations will experience when they are defeated by other nations.

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<sup>35</sup> This shame is also shared by different groups among the people of Judah (e.g., mothers of many, those calling themselves wise, and farmers).

Both Jeremiah and the LORD declare that the people of Judah should feel shame: Jeremiah calls for the shaming of his persecutors (17:18), and the LORD tells the people of Judah that they ought to repent and be ashamed (31:19). All of the agents in the text are thus involved in shame, although in very different ways. Yet, even though there are quite a number of instances of the Hebrew terms *יבשׁ* (*ybs̄*) and *כלם* (*klm*), the distinct lack of specific parallels between Jeremiah and another agent causes these terms to be of limited help in showing how shame fits in the representational notion of the agents. The call on the people to feel shame, which both Jeremiah and the LORD make, is a call to a certain type of affection. Yet, this is also a call to the way things should be, as opposed to the actual situation as depicted in the book of Jeremiah. On account of this, it is not immediately obvious how this feeling of shame might fit into the prophetic task, especially in terms of the representative nature of the prophetic task.<sup>36</sup> Shame is an appropriate response to having broken the law, something which Calvin's understanding of prophecy as reinterpreting the law might focus on. A lack of shame is, as Brueggemann might put it, misinterpretation of reality, as it indicates denial of guilt in turning against the law of God.

#### Sorrow and Grief

Alongside of whatever implicit sorrow is found in the text (e.g., sorrow related to shame and/or weariness), the text contains a significant number of explicit references to sorrow. The book of Jeremiah speaks of great sorrow and sadness felt by every agent. Bratcher notes the depth of the sadness, as it appears in Jeremiah 8:18-9:1: "The despair and grief is clear in the jumble of emotive words and the striking metaphors associated with weeping (cf. 9:10, 17-22). They intend

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<sup>36</sup> The call to shame is more of a command than an actual depiction of how it might be. As such, Jeremiah does not represent what the people ought to be doing, but instead tells them what they ought to be doing.

to communicate profound anguish and sorrow.”<sup>37</sup> Gench puts it slightly differently, but nonetheless argues for the deep grief found in the text: “There are few passages in the Bible that express grief as pointedly and passionately as Jer 8 and 9. ‘My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick,’ says the prophet (or God, or both).”<sup>38</sup> Both Jeremiah (cf. 20:18) and Baruch (cf. 45:2) bear the sadness over bearing a prophetic message, suggesting that sorrow is not only part of Jeremiah’s experience as a person and/or prophet but that sorrow is also a part of the experience of all those closely involved in prophecy.

Several other occurrences of sorrow in the text include the prediction of the people’s mourning the coming disaster and the command of Jeremiah not to mourn. The text in Jeremiah 16 speaks of a lack of mourning and lamenting for those who die. In the midst of this, Jeremiah is commanded by the LORD not to lament (ספד *spd*) because of the lack of peace in the land (16:5). The text makes a distinct connection between Jeremiah’s not lamenting and the future lamenting in the land: the subsequent verses mention that many will die and not be buried, and they will be neither lamented (16:6) nor comforted nor consoled (16:7). In relation to this lack of mourning for those who die, many other texts point to there being much sorrow in the coming time of exile. Most of the references to grief, sadness, and anguish refer to the anticipated feelings of the people of Judah as they experience the inevitability of the exile.

Furthermore, the LORD shows grief by weeping for Moab (48:31). Ironically, even though the LORD chooses to mourn over Moab, there is no explicit indication of his mourning over his chosen people; considering all of the feelings given in the text, this lack must cause some surprise to the reader. It could be a rhetorical lack: If the LORD mourns and wails for the people

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<sup>37</sup> Dennis Bratcher, “The Voice/ CRI Biblical and Theological Resources for Growing Christians; 17th Sunday after Pentecost; Commentary on the Texts; Jeremiah 8:18-9:1,” no pages [cited 12 May 2006]. Online: <http://www.criovoice.org/lectionary/YearC/Cproper20ot.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Roger J. Gench, “Jeremiah 8:18-9:3” *Int* 62.1 (Jan 2008):74.

of Moab who receive judgment (48:31), how much more does he not mourn for the suffering of his own people, his chosen ones? Yet, it could also be an intentional lack: The LORD's sense of weariness over the people's refusal to relent (15:6) could be displayed through a neglect in mentioning the LORD's weeping for his chosen ones. A study of the word tears (דמעה *dm`h*) in the text gives a stronger basis for these explanations. While the word "tears" often occurs within a reference to weeping or wailing in the text (e.g., 9:2[1], 19 [18]; 13:17; 31:16), Jeremiah 14:17<sup>39</sup> does not make this connection. Yet, it is just this text that suggests a certain level of mourning for Israel. Even if mourning is not explicitly mentioned, there is nonetheless sorrow on account of the punishment that the LORD is forced to place upon his people. The LORD's concern for his people is shown even more by the LORD's promise as the people go into exile: in the midst of this coming anguish, the LORD will still be their deliverer in times of anguish (15:11).

The examples above indicate that the grief of Jeremiah is closely related to that of the other agents in the text. This suggests that Jeremiah's grief is more than merely a reflection of his own feelings. McConville notes how Jeremiah's pain relates to that of the people: "Jeremiah's distress is of a piece with the message. He feels already the pain that will come upon the people, in a way that proves his identification with them."<sup>40</sup> Rosenberg goes even further in discussing how Jeremiah's sorrow is a mirroring of the grief of the LORD.<sup>41</sup> Rosenberg notes that the "mingling of divine and prophetic persona (punctuated only occasionally by first-person markers

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<sup>39</sup> Jeremiah 14:17 says "Speak this word to them: 'Let my eyes overflow with tears night and day without ceasing; for the Virgin Daughter, my people, has suffered a grievous wound, a crushing blow.'"

<sup>40</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 61.

<sup>41</sup> Bratcher also concurs with this, pointing out that "in chapter 9 the judgement of God (v. 11) is clearly linked with grieving (vv. 10, 17). This suggests that it is not Jeremiah alone who grieves at the plight of these people, but that Jeremiah is reflecting the grief of God." Bratcher, "Commentary," n.p., Bratcher argues that this is similar to the concept of "divine pathos" that Fretheim refers to frequently in his book, *Suffering*.

such as ‘and the Lord said to me’) is frequent in Jeremiah and illustrates the extent to which God’s sorrow and the prophet’s suffering are seen as two sides of the same coin.”<sup>42</sup> The use of sorrow in the life of the prophet, including the actions of weeping, wailing, and lamenting, shows a significant relationship between the different agents, and furthermore, it suggests a mirroring of one agent’s feelings by another. A discussion of sorrow is thus important to further unravel the place of the feelings in the prophetic task.

### Pain and Wounds

Closely related to sorrow are the potential causes of sorrow, such as pain and wounds. Although a wound is certainly not a word that would fall under the category of feeling, it is nonetheless closely related to a feeling, of which pain is only one potential result. The word wound (מכה *mkh*) is mentioned several times in Jeremiah, most often with respect to the wound that Jerusalem and/or the people of Israel will experience (14:17; 19:8; 30:12,<sup>43</sup> 15, 17). Babylon will be wounded on account of her role (and delight therein) in pillaging Israel (50:13). Edom also will be wounded on account of the arrogance of her heart (49:17). In other cases, it refers to the violence and sickness that is part of Jerusalem (6:7). In response to this wickedness, the LORD feels a pain that is like a wound (10:19). Yet, despite this pain the LORD promises to heal the wound that He brought upon the people and restore them to health (30:17). Jeremiah is also wounded and full of pain on account of his role as a prophet, more specifically on account of

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<sup>42</sup> Joel Rosenberg, “Jeremiah and Ezekiel” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1987), 186.

<sup>43</sup> In some cases, the wound is ambiguous: Jeremiah 30:12 seems to suggest that the wound could be either the devastation or the wickedness of Jerusalem. Yet, the verses following suggest that the LORD had struck them, suggesting that the wound being spoken of here has to do with the LORD’s punishment on account of evil done and not the wickedness itself.

God's being to Him like a deceptive brook (15:18). This last reference uses a form of the word "pain" (כאב *k'b*) that is used only once in the text of Jeremiah.

The closely related term for pain (מכאב *mk'b*) generally appears in connection with wounds. Israel feels pain on account of her wound brought upon her by the LORD (30:15), and Babylon also experiences pain on account of her wounds (51:8). The pain experienced by Babylon demands a response of compassion: a command to wail, with the hopes that she might be healed. Pain is also felt by Baruch, to which sorrow, as mentioned previously, was added.

This use of the word pain indicates that there is a relationship between the pain felt by the prophet and the people. However, the pain felt by the prophet is something that occurs now whereas the pain and wound of the people is something that yet is to happen. This disparity, and the possibility that Jeremiah's feelings have a teaching and/or parenetic function, will be addressed later in this thesis.

### Compassion

Feelings of compassion are felt primarily by the LORD. Although the text mentions the word "compassion" (רחם *rhm*) in connection with the kingdoms of the North, it is used there with a negative (6:23; 50:12). This is also true in relation to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who will have no compassion on Zedekiah and the servants of the people (21:7). Although the LORD can choose not to show compassion, as when he chooses not to allow his compassion to keep him from destroying Judah (13:14), most of the time the LORD does show his great compassion. This is highlighted especially in the Book of Consolation, in which the LORD promises to restore the people of Judah and have compassion on them. Outside of the Book of Consolation, the LORD

also promises compassion, upon condition of following his will. This compassion is extended not only to the remnant (42:12) but to all peoples (12:15).

Although the compassion shown by the LORD influences our understanding of other feelings manifested by the LORD, the lack of specific parallels between Jeremiah and another agent causes these terms to be of little help in showing the representational character of the agents. Furthermore, as it is not a feeling experienced by Jeremiah, it is difficult to show how the text indicates that compassion is part of the prophetic task, even though the reader might hope for compassion as the prophet fulfills his role.

#### Rejoicing and Joy

Rejoicing and joy are not dominant feelings in the book of Jeremiah. Indeed, in the limited times that joy is mentioned, it is most often described as being taken away on account of the coming exile (7:34, 16:8, 25:10). Feelings of rejoicing belong to the LORD, Jeremiah, and the people of Judah. When discussing joy in relation to Judah, the text points to loss of joy because of the exile (7:34, 16:9). Joy is taken away not only from Judah but also from Moab (48:33). In a few instances, rejoicing and sadness are mixed together. A loss of joy is clearly the beginning of sadness, and many of the texts which speak of a gain (or loss) of joy have a corresponding loss (or gain) in lament and sadness. This juxtaposition of joy and weeping have the rhetorical effect of providing emphasis.

Yet the text also speaks of joy being once again restored. The people of Judah will be a source of joy to the LORD (33:9), and the people of Judah will no longer sorrow (31:13) but will once again rejoice (31:13; 33:11). Their joy will be like that of a bride and bridegroom. As can be seen by the examples just given, many of the references for joy and rejoicing are found within

the book of Consolation, a detail that should not come as a surprise since one would expect joy and rejoicing to be the natural result of the compassion the LORD will show.

There are even instances where the weeping is not merely a replacement of joy, but actually in itself a prelude to joy. The weeping of Rachel over her children found in 31:15 is in the text immediately followed by a promise that it will stop since they shall come back to their own country from the land of the enemy. A declaration from the LORD makes it known that there is hope for your future (31:16-17). Additionally, the weeping in 31:9 is positive, for it is weeping and consolations attendant with the return of the people of Judah who will be led by brooks of water.

All of these uses of joy and rejoicing, especially those related to the repeated phrase of joy and rejoicing like that of a bride and bridegroom (16:9, 25:10, 33:10), seem to point more to the intensity of the feelings and less to any representational nature of the prophet. The interrelation between the agents is seen in God's words being a joy to Jeremiah (15:16) and the city being a source of joy to the LORD (33:9) but this does not point to any parallel between the feelings.

### ***Excursus: The Prophetic Task and Suffering***

Suffering is directly linked to many feelings, although it is not itself a feeling. Nonetheless, it is something that Jeremiah frequently experiences alongside of the people of Israel. Further clarifying how the role of suffering can be representative helps to see how the representative aspect of the prophetic task can be further related to and shown through feelings. In the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah identifies with the people of Israel in suffering. Both Jeremiah and the people of Judah feel that their suffering is unjust. The people felt that they were suffering on account of the sins of their fathers (cf. Jer. 18), and Jeremiah felt that his calling as a prophet brought undesired consequences (cf. Jer 15). As part of Jeremiah's prophetic calling, he was persecuted

and was forced to live out the punishments that God was meting out against the people of Judah. The punishments were a direct result of the people of Judah not living out their calling as God's chosen people (e.g., following God's commands). In Jeremiah's complaints in the Confessions (specifically 15:10-12; 20:7-12), Jeremiah's "fractiousness is not a thing in itself. It too corresponds to something in the life of Judah, namely her reluctance to shoulder the responsibility of her own 'vocation' as the elect of YHWH."<sup>44</sup>

Although guilt does play a role in suffering, Jeremiah is suffering as one who is both innocent and guilty. Ward's analysis of the Confessions points out the element of innocent suffering on Jeremiah's part:

What Jeremiah suffers as a result of his vocation is the embodiment of what the complaint psalms express: he is the righteous sufferer. However, Jeremiah is not a private individual here, suffering because of his personal fidelity to God. Rather, as a prophet of disaster, he suffers because he is already experiencing the suffering that he believes God will bring upon the people. The calamity is fulfilled in Jeremiah's life, so it must be experienced by people. . . . Jeremiah shares the disaster with the people and he suffers with them. His life is prophecy fulfilled.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, it would be too simple to think that the calls to repent are not also directed at Jeremiah (cf. 15:19). Even as much as Jeremiah suffers innocently on account of the sins of Judah, he remains human and is thus not exempt from sinfulness. Von Rad highlights the guilt in Jeremiah's complaint about being a prophet: "What was 'worthlessness' and 'not precious' in the eyes of God was the fact that Jeremiah could take pleasure initially in his prophetic office, but was ready to cast it aside when it led him into complications and suffering."<sup>46</sup> Jeremiah's complicity is shown explicitly in the text through the LORD's response to his complaint in Jeremiah 15. When the LORD calls for repentance, it is Jeremiah to whom he is here speaking and not the people of

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<sup>44</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 73.

<sup>45</sup> Ward, *Thus Says the Lord*, 133. He attributes these insights to A. H. J. Gunneweg, "Konfession oder Interpretation im Jeremiabuch," *ZTK* 67 (1970): 395-416.

<sup>46</sup> von Rad, "Confessions," 340-41.

Israel.<sup>47</sup> Jeremiah is the one called to return to God and once more be the LORD's mouthpiece.

On the other hand, this command to repent does not correspond well with the rest of the book. As

O'Connor points out,

Nowhere does the book identify Jeremiah among those who need to repent, but across the book, the people of Judah, its kings, priests, prophets, and ordinary people, are named sinners and repeatedly called to repentance. When God replies to Jeremiah's confession by urging him to "return" that God may return to him, Jeremiah is a stand-in for the whole people. If, like Jeremiah, they turn to God, then they will survive and their relationship with God will be restored.<sup>48</sup>

The call to repent and the question of Jeremiah's culpability do not diminish the suffering that Jeremiah had to go through; Jeremiah, whether guilty or not, is closely linked to the people of Israel. Jeremiah's suffering fits within the suffering that the people of Israel have brought upon themselves with their own sinfulness.

Not only is Jeremiah's suffering representative of that of the people, his suffering is also representative of the suffering of the LORD. McConville highlights how the suffering that Jeremiah undergoes as a result of the people's response to him mirrors that of the LORD:

YHWH's anger is anguished because he loves Judah. They are his heritage, 'the beloved of my soul' (12:7). Similarly Jeremiah is deeply attached to 'his' people (notice his 'mourning' for them because of their suffering, 8:18-21), yet also expresses anger because of their sin (15:17). The analogy between the prophet and his God extends further, however, to register the scorn felt by the people for YHWH.<sup>49</sup>

The people of Judah respond to Jeremiah in the same way that they respond to the LORD.

Fretheim notes that there are "decisive parallels between prophet and God, both in the fact that they were rejected and in the way in which they responded to that rejection."<sup>50</sup> He notes further

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<sup>47</sup> The Word Biblical Commentary says rather harshly that it is Jeremiah's sin to which the LORD is responding: "God's response indicated that if anyone had failed it was the prophet himself. He needed to repent or his call to be a prophet would be invalidated." (Peter C. Craigie, Page Kelley, and Joel Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 212). Lalleman-de Winkel also notes that "[the prophet] sometimes utters words which need correction (Jer. 15:18b)." *Jeremiah*, 233.

<sup>48</sup> O'Connor, "Lamenting," 44.

<sup>49</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 66.

<sup>50</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 155.

that “as the people have rejected God, so have they rejected the prophet; as God responds, so does the prophet: they both complain against the accusations of the people; they both protest the charges that are brought; they both use “Why?” and “How long?” questions; they both move to a statement regarding the end such people deserve.”<sup>51</sup>

Besides this suffering, Jeremiah suffers simply on account of the intermediary role that he has as prophet. Jeremiah “suffers as a representative of God and of the people. He bears with body and soul the burden of the broken relationship between God and His people, and this is God’s suffering as well.”<sup>52</sup> Yet, the question is then whether Jeremiah can represent both the people and the LORD in suffering. Fretheim questions this:

The purpose of the prophet’s mourning is not to hold up before God the distress of the people; it is to portray in living and personal fashion before the people the anguish of God. When it is anticipatory of the judgment which is to fall, it serves as a last-ditch vehicle for startling the people into repentance and avoidance of what is surely coming . . . because God sees that disaster is almost inevitable, such divine anguish is in fact lamentation. This lamentation of God and prophet then continues out beyond the times and places of judgment and enters into the actual sufferings of the people.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time that Fretheim questions the prophet as representing the distress of the people, he notes that the anguish of God is closely related to his entering into the sufferings of the people. Thus through representing the LORD’s suffering, Jeremiah is indirectly entering into the suffering of the people. Before verifying this claim further and looking more closely at how Jeremiah’s feelings represent his own feelings, as well as of those of the people and the LORD, we turn to various ways in which the text links the agents and their feelings.

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<sup>51</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 158.

<sup>52</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah*, 230.

<sup>53</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 162.

### Textual Elements Showing Connections between Agents

Besides connections between the words used for certain feelings and the incitement of the feelings, a connection between the feelings of Jeremiah and the other agents can be shown through rhetorical means. The potential rhetorical effect of feelings has already been mentioned: Both the repetition of words and the inclusion of antonyms emphasize the feelings in the text, whereas the neglect of expected feeling words raises questions for the reader (e.g., the LORD's lack of weeping over Judah). Yet, there are also other means in which the rhetorical aspects of the text point to the feelings as having a greater purpose than simply presenting emotional information about the individual participants. The text makes it clear that Jeremiah identifies himself with the people of Israel, and the events and feelings in his life mirror similar feelings and/or anticipated events for both the people of Israel and the LORD.

One of the ways in which the text rhetorically allows the reader to connect the feelings between the agents is through the use of ambiguity. The text of Jeremiah is not always clear about who is speaking and to whom.<sup>54</sup> Korpel highlights how the reader needs thus to be careful when reading the text: "What this easy switching between first and third person means, however, is that in prophetic texts one cannot automatically assume that the prophet is speaking when God is described in the third person. What further confounds the reader is that a prophet may identify himself with his people while using the first person singular."<sup>55</sup> Although one needs to be careful in not making assumptions about who is speaking, Korpel also highlights some of the difficulties in determining the speaker: God speaks in the third person, and the prophet identifies with the people of Israel. The ambiguity of the agent of the feelings implicitly allows the reader to

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<sup>54</sup> Fretheim argues that this holds true for prophetic writings in general: "It is often very difficult, if not impossible, to sort out explicit divine speech from prophetic speech; pronominal references do at times seem to be interchanged, particularly in Jeremiah." Fretheim, *Suffering*, 150. However, the ambiguity of the agent does seem to be especially prominent in the book of Jeremiah.

<sup>55</sup> Marjo C. A. Korpel, "Who is Speaking in Jeremiah 4:19-22? The Contribution of Unit Delimitation to an Old Problem" *VT* 59.1 (2009): 89.

identify the feelings with multiple participants on the text, although the reader might also intuitively assign the feelings to whomever he/she prefers. Polk argues that the ambiguous nature of the text does help bring forth the message:

Because the texts are poetic and metaphoric, they also exhibit a high degree of what can be called a functional, or deliberate, ambiguity. Obviously, what is meant by “ambiguity” is not hopeless obscurity or the absence of sense but rather a superfluity of sense, multiplicity of meaning, polysemousness. And by “functional” it is meant that the polysemous condition fits into a larger pattern; the multiple meanings are related, and there is a point to their relatedness. . . . [Verbal and speaker ambiguities] were fundamentally related to the prophet’s identity as mediator between God and people. They served in each case to emphasize that identity and suggest its implications. Ultimately, the literary ambiguities contributed to the book’s depiction of the prophet as a theological paradigm.<sup>56</sup>

The text as it is now makes it difficult for the reader to differentiate too strongly between the participants in the text; the text thus allows the reader to mix together the feelings of the different agents.

Jeremiah and the LORD are the participants for which the text most often presents confusion. The text often does not clearly identify when one participant changes to the other. Lalleman-de Winkel confirms this and gives a possible explanation: “It is sometimes hard to know whether the prophet or God is speaking about his suffering. They are probably so much interrelated that a choice is not necessary.”<sup>57</sup> Fretheim argues that this ambiguity is directly related to a sharing of feelings. He notes, “The suffering of prophet and God are so interconnected that it is difficult to sort out who is speaking in many texts. Nor should one try to make too sharp a distinction. As if with one voice, prophet and God express their anguish over the suffering of the people.”<sup>58</sup> Korpel also concurs with this, noting that “In prophetic texts the divine speaker and his human messenger seem to merge.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 165-66.

<sup>57</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah*, 230. She references specifically 4:19 and 8:18-9:2.

<sup>58</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 160.

<sup>59</sup> Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 88.

***Excursus: Who is speaking in Jeremiah 4:19-21, 8:18-9:2, and 10:19-20?***

Jeremiah 4:19-21<sup>60</sup> is one text in which there is ambiguity concerning whether the agent of the feelings is the LORD or Jeremiah. The LORD is speaking in verse 22, as he brings up that the people of Judah do not know him. The previous verses could also be his speech, and the tents would symbolize the temple. However, the anguish in verse 19 sounds more like an emotion caused as a reaction to the alarm of war and is thus not an expected affection belonging to the LORD, even if the LORD is the one speaking in verse 18. Thus, the one speaking in verse 19 is most likely Jeremiah,<sup>61</sup> with the tents being symbolic of the property of the people of Israel and the anguish belonging to those facing coming disaster.

Korpel, however, argues that the speaker of verses 19-21 is actually Zion. In her article on who is speaking in Jeremiah 4:19-22, she highlights the various scholarly arguments<sup>62</sup> before indicating how textual markings help to make the speaker less ambiguous. She argues that the speaker of verses 19-21 is Zion, based on the coherence of the text of Jeremiah 4:9-18 and the link of concatenation: lbk (4:18aC) || lby (4:19aA, 19aB).<sup>63</sup> She goes on to argue that verse 22 is

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<sup>60</sup> Jeremiah 4:18-22 states “18 “Your own conduct and actions have brought this on you. This is your punishment. How bitter it is! How it pierces to the heart!” 19 Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent. For I have heard the sound of the trumpet; I have heard the battle cry. 20 Disaster follows disaster; the whole land lies in ruins. In an instant my tents are destroyed, my shelter in a moment. 21 How long must I see the battle standard and hear the sound of the trumpet? 22 “My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.””

<sup>61</sup> As the tents would refer to the property of all of the people of Judah, the reference could refer to the people of Judah. However, it is more likely to refer only to Jeremiah than his community inasmuch as he is the one who had been talking previously in the text. Jeremiah is simply identifying himself as one of the people of Israel.

<sup>62</sup> Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 92-93. She notes that “several authors have defended the view that in Jer 4:19-21 the person lamenting is Zion or Judah.” She gives the examples of F. Giesebrecht, P. Volz, F. Nötscher, Carroll F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp. Furthermore, “Christl Maier, on the basis of comparison with Jer 10:20, suggests that it is Zion who is weeping here [Ch. Maier, “Die Klage der Tochter Zion’, *BThZ* 15 (1998): 176-189].” Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 93.

<sup>63</sup> Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 97. More specifically, with regard to the structure of Jeremiah 4, it appears that “Jer 4:19-22 is part of a larger composition (canto) that starts at 4:9 and ends at 4:31. This

the beginning of a new unit, as “both the phrase *wty l’yd’w* in v. 22 and the fourfold *r’yty* of vv. 23-26 can hardly have been spoken by anyone else but God.”<sup>64</sup> The verses are then divided into the former being the words of Jeremiah or Zion and the latter being those of the LORD.

In Jeremiah 4, the personal pronoun spilling over into all of the verses causes the identification of the participants, most especially the “I” figure, to be not entirely obvious. Ward explains the problem of identification:

The obvious conclusion would be to take the “I” of the two parts as one and the same, were it not for the vivid pathos described in the first part. Commentators therefore have concluded that the prophet was speaking for himself here, but it seems to me that there is an intentional confusion of speakers. The prophet is not conveying his own private response to the tragedy of Judah, but the response of a messenger of YHWH—one who is YHWH’s mouth. It is not too much to say that in his mind, his own pathos is also the pathos of God.<sup>65</sup>

Ward’s comments here illustrate how the ambiguity can be an effective part of the prophetic message: Through the ambiguity, Jeremiah is able to speak for God. Even if Jeremiah is the speaker of verses 19-21, it is not completely clear that his anguish is his alone.<sup>66</sup> The ambiguity

canto consists of a diptych of two sub-cantos which from a structural point of view mirror each other [Namely 2+3 | 2+3 || 3+2 | 3+2 strophes ] if—in accordance with ancient manuscripts of the Septuagint and the Vulgate—v. 22 is indeed seen as a separate unit, a later addition which was possibly meant to explain that the disasters bemoaned in w. 19-21 were fully deserved. In this case unit delimitation criticism supports redaction criticism.” Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 98.

<sup>64</sup> Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 97. The possibility of v. 22 being a later addition only confirms her position: “If v. 22 is a later addition, the possibility that YHWH is the speaker of w. 19-21 becomes less likely. As we have seen, many commentators doubt the originality of v. 22 and the connection with the previous verse seems to be rather loose. McKane states that despite the use of *ky* there is no intrinsic or original connection between it and the lament in w. 19-21 [McKane, *Jeremiah*, p. 105. ].” Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 97.

<sup>65</sup> Ward, *Thus Says the Lord*, 131.

<sup>66</sup> Although Korpel argues that the speaker in vv. 19-21 is most likely Zion, she does note that an argument for the words being from God does result in some intriguing conclusions: “Most intriguing is the view of Jimmy Roberts who states that the weeping figure in the Book of Jeremiah is ‘better understood as the figure of God’. This would emphasise ‘God’s passionate involvement in the fate of his people’. [J. J. M. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God in Jeremiah and its Background in the Lament Tradition of the Ancient Near East,” *OTEs* 5 (1992), pp. 361-374 (361).] Roberts’ argument is that the prophet makes significant use of the public lament traditions of the ancient Near East, e.g. in Jer 14:7-9 and Jer 9:16-19 where skilled mourning women are summoned to lead and teach the laments. ... That God could be physically compassionate with his people also occurs in Hos 11:8, where God complains, ‘My heart recoils within me, my organs of heat are aroused’ and in Isa 42:14 where he utters cries of anguish like a woman in travail.” Korpel, “Jeremiah 4:19-22,” 92.

allows the anguish still to be that of the LORD, a connection not necessarily expected by the reader even though the cause for such anguish is given in verse 22.

Jeremiah 8:18-9:2 [9:1]<sup>67</sup> is another example that many give to show the ambiguity of which participant is being referred to in the text. With the question of who has provoked him to anger, the LORD is clearly speaking in verses 17 and 19c, but it is unclear whether he is also speaking in verses 18-19a. In 8:18 the speaker bemoans a heart that is faint and full of sorrow, an emotional state that suggests that Jeremiah is speaking as opposed to the LORD. Yet, the ambiguity of verses 18-19 couples the sorrow of Jeremiah with the people's denying the LORD, an action that clearly causes the LORD pain and sorrow. Alongside of Jeremiah and the LORD, one cannot forget the participation of the people of Judah in this section. Fretheim highlights the ambiguity of the voices in this text, suggesting that this cacophony helps in portraying the message:

It seems best to understand the mourning of God and prophet as so symbiotic that in everything we hear the anguish of both. The admixture of speakers, including the people, seems to portray a cacophony of mourning. All involved are caught up in expressing their dismay over what has happened. At the least, Jeremiah's mourning is an embodiment of the anguish of God, showing forth to the people the genuine pain God feels over the hurt that his people are experiencing.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Jeremiah 8:18-9:2 states "18 You who are my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me. 19 Listen to the cry of my people from a land far away: 'Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King no longer there?' "Why have they aroused my anger with their images, with their worthless foreign idols?" 20 "The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved." 21 Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. 22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people? 9:1 Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people. 2 Oh, that I had in the desert a lodging place for travelers, so that I might leave my people and go away from them; for they are all adulterers, a crowd of unfaithful people." In the Masoretic text, as noted previously, the verse numbering for this chapter is slightly different, with 9:1 in the English versions being labeled as 8:23 in the Masoretic text, 9:2 as 9:1 and so on.

<sup>68</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 161.

The ambiguity points to a fading of the boundaries between the feelings of the LORD and Jeremiah. This very clearly formulated grief, as previously highlighted in the section on grief, then becomes implicitly identified with both Jeremiah and the LORD.

Another section that shows further the ambiguity between the feelings of Jeremiah and the people of Judah is Jeremiah 10:19-20.<sup>69</sup> It is questionable who is speaking here, Jeremiah or the people of Judah. According to Polk, more commentators claim that the people of Judah are speaking in these verses.<sup>70</sup> Since verse 18 speaks of the destruction coming on the people of Judah, the people would be the most logical recipients of this message of destruction, and they are thus the ones most likely to respond. Since verse 21 refers to the people of Judah in the third person as “my people,” it is unlikely that the people of Judah are speaking here. Furthermore, the placement of the first person singular possessive pronoun suggests instead a completely different speaker: one who has a claim on the people of Judah, a claim held primarily by God. Yet, it does not appear that the LORD is speaking, which implies that Jeremiah has taken over that claim. Moreover, it is fairly clear that Jeremiah is speaking in verse 23, so he could easily be the one speaking in verses 19-20. The agent of the grief felt in verses 19-20 remains somewhat ambiguous, blurring the distinction between the feelings of Jeremiah and the people of Israel. In the midst of this blurring, the step towards seeing a representational nature to the feelings is easier to make.

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<sup>69</sup> Jeremiah 10:18-21 is “18 For this is what the LORD says: “At this time I will hurl out those who live in this land; I will bring distress on them so that they may be captured.” 19 Woe to me because of my injury! My wound is incurable! Yet I said to myself, “This is my sickness, and I must endure it.” 20 My tent is destroyed; all its ropes are snapped. My children are gone from me and are no more; no one is left now to pitch my tent or to set up my shelter. 21 The shepherds are senseless and do not inquire of the LORD; so they do not prosper and all their flock is scattered.”

<sup>70</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 61.

### Ambiguity as a Help to Understanding Feelings as Being Representative

The above examples indicate that there are a number of specific places in the book of Jeremiah in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine who is speaking in the text and thus to whom the feelings belong. The frequent shifting of pronominal forms throughout the book, a phenomenon studied in Glanz's dissertation,<sup>71</sup> does not help the ambiguity in determining to whom the feelings belong. The fact that it is not always obvious to whom the feeling(s) belong suggests the possibility that it is not always important for the reader to be able to identify this. Not only that, it suggests that the feelings of one agent have become so much a part of the feelings of another that one can no longer fully separate them. As Fretheim argues:

God cannot be separated from the word which he gives. In giving the word in such a way that it passes over into the very being of the prophet, God must be said to go with that word, so that in some sense God is *absorbed into* the very life of the prophet. The prophet becomes a vehicle of divine immanence. The prophet/God ambiguity of subject in many of Jeremiah's speeches is but one indication of the effects of this fact.<sup>72</sup>

This rhetorical technique thus allows the reader to see a potential representative function in the feelings of Jeremiah as expressed through himself or others in the text.

### Other Means in Which the Feelings Have a Rhetorical Effect, including Identifying One Participant with Another

A closely related textual means of showing the connections between the feelings of the agents is through the identification of one participant with another. Jeremiah 6:24-27<sup>73</sup> illustrates the identification of Jeremiah with both the LORD and the people. In verse 26 Jeremiah includes

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<sup>71</sup> Oliver Glanz, "Who Is Speaking? Who Is Addressed?" PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 153.

<sup>73</sup> Jeremiah 6:24-27 is "24 We have heard reports about them, and our hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped us, pain like that of a woman in labor. 25 Do not go out to the fields or walk on the roads, for the enemy has a sword, and there is terror on every side. 26 Put on sackcloth, my people, and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter wailing as for an only son, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us. 27 'I have made you a tester of metals and my people the ore, that you may observe and test their ways.'"

himself in the coming disaster and refers to Judah as “my people.” By referring to the people of Judah as “my people” like the LORD often does, Jeremiah parallels himself with the LORD. By including himself in the disaster, Jeremiah identifies himself with the people. Jeremiah’s identification with other participants in the text shows the strong connection between Jeremiah and both the LORD and the people of Israel. Such a strong connection has implications at the level of feelings, and the reader can expect that Jeremiah would share in the feelings of those with whom he identifies. This identification thus decreases the distance between seeing Jeremiah as merely sharing in the feelings of other participants in the text and seeing how Jeremiah’s feelings can be representative.

Another rhetorical element in the text regards lamenting and sorrow, in particular the command found in chapter 16 where Jeremiah is forbidden to lament (ספד *spd*). In this section, there is a direct correlation set up between the events that happen to the people of Israel and the feelings that Jeremiah is able to express. Prior to the command given to Jeremiah, there is the prediction that there will be a lack of lamenting when the people of Israel die (16:3-4). The reason given for the command not to lament is the lack of peace in the land (16:5). The text maintains that many will die and not be buried, and they will be neither lamented (16:6) nor comforted nor consoled (16:7); the reader intuitively connects these dramatic events to the lack of peace in the land. Thus, there is a direct connection between the results of the lack of peace felt by the people and the command to Jeremiah that has been made on account of there being no peace.

The command given to Jeremiah forbidding him from mourning is followed immediately by a command also not to participate in feasting for there will be no feasting in the land (16:8-9). The text thus clearly marks a direct relation between the circumstances of the people of Israel

and the expression of Jeremiah's feelings. This clearly shows that the feelings of one agent are in some cases directly related to what is happening to another agent.

One final rhetorical device used here is the use of feelings to heighten the effect of the text on the hearer. This involves not only the original audience of the text but also today's reader (hearer) of the text. This is done in a number of different ways. Polk highlights that

Through his prophet God speaks to his people in a highly impassioned way. One index of the passion is the variety of speech forms. Here are pleading, promising, commanding, and threatening-different language games but all bearing a family resemblance that permits their being gathered into a coherent effort of argument and persuasion. One musters impassioned argument (one combines plea, promise, command, and threat) when something of utmost value and importance is at stake. What is at stake, it will become evident, is the 'self', the self of Jeremiah, the many selves of Judah and Jerusalem, and ultimately the selves of the book's readers.<sup>74</sup>

The multiplicity of feelings shown in the book is part of this effort of persuasion to convince the one hearing the text to return to the LORD; not only the people of Israel are addressed but all those hearing the text. Another obvious involvement of the hearer in the text is the use of the second person plural. For readers today who are far removed from the situation, this use of the second person does not necessarily register as being directed to us. Translations have the unfortunate tendency of tidying up the text so that different forms of pronouns referring to the same participant are made to conform to each other, which makes fewer abrupt switches to the second person, and thus the reader is less surprised by sudden turnings in the text directed towards "you." An example of this is found in Jeremiah 21:11-14, which switches its verbal forms and pronouns from second masculine plural to third masculine plural to second feminine singular to second masculine plural to third feminine singular.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, the use of the

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<sup>74</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> This example is taken from the *lekenpraatje* presented at the beginning of Oliver Glanz's Ph.D. Defense, held on 9 December 2010 at the VU University (Amsterdam). His translation given there illustrates the problem: "12 Thus says the Lord: Execute (2plM) justice in the morning, and deliver (2plM) from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed, or else my wrath will go forth like fire, and burn, with no one to quench it, because of their (3plM) evil doings. 13. See, I am against you (2sgF), O inhabitant of the valley, O rock of the plain, says the Lord; who are saying (plM): Who can come down

second person form in the text necessarily involves the reader in the text, as the text is directed towards “you.”

There is naturally some distance between the reader today and the writing of the text, and the accusations made in the text relate to an entirely different historical situation. Yet, whereas the accusations can pass by the reader as being set in a completely different context, the words can still manifest emotional reactions: reactions of despair, shock, annoyance, gladness, and more. All of these hinder the onslaught of indifference. Although this does not immediately connect to the representative nature of prophecy, the effect given by the text is too important to ignore. The text itself is part of the act of prophecy, both then and today, and it desires a response from the audience of the text (listener+ reader). Furthermore, the text and the feelings it brings to the surface can be an important part of understanding how the prophetic task illustrated by Jeremiah can be translated to readers today.

Even as much as these discussions on suffering and rhetorical effects of the text have given a glimpse into how Jeremiah’s feelings could be representative of those both of the LORD and of the people of Israel, there are still many questions to be answered. The most significant question is whether the representation that has been suggested above with regard to suffering actually can apply to various feelings in the book of Jeremiah.

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against us, and who can enter our places of refuge? 14 I will punish you (2plM) according to the fruit of your (2plM) doings, says the Lord . I will kindle a fire in her (3sgF) forest, and it shall devour all that is around her (3sgF).” The NIV translates the text as follows, with the occasions where the pronoun does not reflect what is written in the Hebrew underlined: “12 This is what the LORD says to you, house of David: ‘Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done— burn with no one to quench it. 13 I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau, declares the LORD — you who say, “Who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge?” 14 I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in your forests that will consume everything around you.””

### Conclusion

Thus, there is significant textual evidence indicating that feelings are an important part of the book of Jeremiah and part of the prophetic task. As Polk puts it,

The prophet's speech deals with matters 'at the inmost center of personal existence'. Through it he expresses and performs 'praise, sorrow, contrition, anguish, hope, and joy'. But the matter is more complex, for we have seen that his praise can also include, and qualify, reproach, that his joy can exist side-by-side with a near-despair, and that his anguish consists of grief, fear, and anger compounded. Moreover, these smaller elements proved complex also: Jeremiah grieves, for example, for himself over against both God and people; he grieves for and with his people over against God; and he grieves with God over his people. Similarly, he fears for himself and for and with the people – and this while sharing God's anger toward the people, or even while being angry at God. Such emotional complexity is of course profoundly realistic, and typically human. And by being oriented at every point to God and his action it can be theologically paradigmatic.<sup>76</sup>

As we have seen, most of the feelings have a range of different agents, with the exception of anger whose domain is primarily the LORD's. Although a number of feelings do not show a parallel between the agents, the references related to sorrow point to a significant relationship between the different agents of the feelings. At the least, all of the feelings show a connection to the other agents. The other agents are not immune to the feelings that Jeremiah feels nor is Jeremiah immune to the feelings of the other participants in the text. It has also been shown that feelings expressed by Jeremiah are also shared by the people of Israel and the LORD. Jeremiah's sorrow, sadness, lamenting, anguish and weariness are paralleled by both the LORD and the people of Israel. Jeremiah's lack of joy and sorrow point to Israel's lack of appropriate emotional responses. At the same time, Jeremiah is part of this people of Israel, and he also shares their troubles. This creates a certain level of complexity to understanding the feelings.

The complexity of the feelings presented in the book, including the fact that quite a number of texts are ambiguous about who the agent of the feeling is, suggests that the relationship between the agents does not have closed boundaries. Other rhetorical features in the

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<sup>76</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 170.

text, such as identification of one participant with another and the frequent switching of pronouns only confirm the complexity of the feelings in the text and the role that they take in Jeremiah fulfilling his prophetic task.

The frequency with which feelings are mentioned in the book suggests that the feelings have an influential role in the prophecy of Jeremiah. Yet, the question remains of exactly what role Jeremiah's feelings play in his prophetic task. The evidence above suggests that Jeremiah's feelings can be representative of the people of Israel and the LORD, as well as being his own. Because the LORD and the people of Israel are in conflict during most of the book of Jeremiah, it seems unlikely that Jeremiah could represent two conflicting entities. Carroll especially raises important questions concerning how Jeremiah's feelings can be his own while also being shared and representative of the LORD and/or the people of Judah. The next chapter will explicate how Jeremiah's feelings are representative of both the LORD *and* the people of Israel, as well as remaining also his own.

### CHAPTER THREE: JEREMIAH'S FEELINGS AS REPRESENTATIVE OF SELF, THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND THE LORD

The previous chapter illustrated the complexity of the feelings presented in the book of Jeremiah. It became obvious that the feelings in the book are not simply limited to Jeremiah's own personal feelings. The significant number of feelings mentioned in this prophetic book implies that the feelings have at least some influence on the prophetic task and perhaps even a significant role in it. The last chapter showed that paralleled feelings exist between different agents. This parallel suggests that Jeremiah's feelings can be representative of not only his own feelings, but are shared by others, most significantly by the people of Israel and the LORD. Moreover, through the use of rhetorical means, the text also links the feelings of the agents. Furthermore, explicit statements in the text regarding wrath indicate that the feelings are not merely representative of Jeremiah's own feelings. In this chapter, I will explain how Jeremiah's feelings are part of the prophetic role and how these feelings are his own, those of the people of Israel, and/or those of the LORD. Chapter 4 will then build on the conclusions made here and address whether understanding the prophetic task in other ways, such as that of Calvin and Brueggemann, provides an even fuller understanding of the role of feelings in the prophetic task.

#### **Explicit Mention of the Representative Nature of Jeremiah's Feelings**

Besides the parallels in feelings and agencies, the text explicitly states that Jeremiah's feelings are not only his own. This was demonstrated earlier by the reference to the LORD's commands for Jeremiah to deny himself several emotions, but it is more explicitly expressed in Jeremiah 6:9-11,<sup>1</sup> where Jeremiah bemoans that he is full of the LORD's wrath.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 6:9-11 says "9 This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Let them glean the remnant of Israel as thoroughly as a vine; pass your hand over the branches again, like one gathering grapes.' 10 To

The depth to which Jeremiah has taken on the wrath of the LORD is such that Jeremiah is overwhelmed by it. The wrath is so much that Jeremiah asks that he not have to carry this burden anymore, but that the LORD would himself pour it out on those to whom it is directed. As von Rad notes, “Yahweh has filled him with anger. . . . Like one who has been implanted with a foreign object, the prophet speaks of the anger, whose container and agent he now must be. He has relinquished the freedom of his natural emotions; now he must rebuke and threaten.”<sup>2</sup> Although von Rad goes further than I would in suggesting that Jeremiah is more of a vessel than an active participant in terms of the wrath of the LORD, he illustrates well the all-encompassing nature of the wrath of the LORD that has come over Jeremiah. Even though the anger was directed from the LORD towards the people, Jeremiah is caught in the middle of the anger. The wrath that Jeremiah asks not to carry are not primarily his own personal feelings but instead something that has been placed upon him by the LORD. This anger makes it explicit that the feelings that Jeremiah expresses are representative of the LORD’s feelings. This understanding is confirmed by and expanded through Jeremiah’s accusation in Jeremiah 15:17-18<sup>3</sup> that the LORD’s hand on him made him sit alone, and the LORD had filled him with indignation.

### **Jeremiah’s Feelings as Being Three-fold Representative**

The textual evidence suggests that the feelings recorded in the book of Jeremiah expressed by Jeremiah are, at times, the result of his prophetic task. Furthermore, Jeremiah’s sorrow, sadness,

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whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. 11 But I am full of the wrath of the LORD, and I cannot hold it in. ‘Pour it out on the children in the street and on the young men gathered together; both husband and wife will be caught in it, and the old, those weighed down with years.’”

<sup>2</sup> von Rad, “Confessions,” 340.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 15:17-18 states “17 I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. 18 Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails.”

lamenting, anguish and weariness mirror both that of the LORD and the people of Israel. Yet, at the same time, his feelings are at times the exact opposite of those of the people, suggesting either a lack of representative function or another way of looking at the representative nature of the prophetic task.<sup>4</sup> The role of feelings in the prophetic task, and the representative nature of those feelings, is further complicated by Jeremiah's being one of the people of Israel who is able to identify with those to whom the message of the LORD is directed. Furthermore, through ambiguity, identification and explicit elucidation, the text allows the reader to draw a connection between the feelings of Jeremiah and those of the community and the LORD, as was shown in the previous chapter. This connection will now be made more explicit: showing that at differing times and in differing situations Jeremiah's feelings are representative of his own feelings, those of the people of the LORD, and/or the LORD.

Before showing that Jeremiah's feelings are explicitly representative of other participants in the text, a final question remains. Are Jeremiah's feelings *always* representative of the people of Israel and the LORD, while also remaining his own feelings? Because the people of Israel and the LORD are in conflict during most of the book of Jeremiah, the possibility of Jeremiah representing two conflicting parties seems impossible. Carroll clearly identifies this problem:

A case can be made out for Jeremiah as representative from parts of the text, but most definitely not from *all* the text taken together. Among exegetes who see elements of his representativeness in the text there is often a deeply inconsistent reading of the poems of opposition which fails to see in the hostility and divisiveness of the speaker a refusal to be identified with the whole community. "Jeremiah as representative" is only *one* strand in the book and not a comprehensive understanding of the tradition which can be applied throughout it. . . . Much of the secondary literature does not pay sufficient attention to the linguistic nuances of the poems which bemoan the fate of the community, because of its concern to attribute everything to Jeremiah as spokesman. . . . The one who prays for the destruction of the people (e.g., 6.11; 11.20; 12.3b; 15.15; 17.18; 18.21-23; 20.12) can

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<sup>4</sup> As will be brought up later in this thesis, an alternative way of looking at the representative function is seeing Jeremiah's feelings as having a teaching function through presenting what will and/or ought to be, as illustrated by the LORD's command that he not rejoice because there *would be* no rejoicing (16:8-9).

hardly *also* be the one who stands as their representative before Yahweh (e.g., 10.23-25; 42.1-6; cf. 18.20?).<sup>5</sup>

Carroll raises important questions concerning how Jeremiah's feelings can be his own while also representing those of two conflicting parties. It would seem to be nearly impossible to prove that feelings can represent two conflicting parties, who simultaneously express conflicting feelings. Nonetheless, despite this conflict in feelings, it is possible to show that the feelings expressed by Jeremiah can be representative of both parties at the same time, albeit representative of feelings that express a dynamic relationship between the conflicting parties and/or the feelings that one party desires from the other. These ideas will be returned to at the end of this chapter.

Different authors have argued for the representational nature of Jeremiah's feelings, although only a few have gone so far as to argue that Jeremiah is representative of himself, the people of Israel, *and* the LORD. As highlighted earlier, along with von Rad and McConville, Williams has argued for this fuller dimension of the prophetic task:

[The description of a prophet includes] the prophetic responsibility to communicate faithfully the message received from the Lord, as well as the responsibility the prophet bears to the community of which he is a member. It involves the prophet's words, behavior, affections—indeed everything about the prophet as a human being. This perspective of the essential prophetic task that will shape all of our subsequent considerations of his individual, specific actions is that the prophet is fundamentally *a representative*. He represents God, the community of which he is a part, and, of course, himself in ways that are unique to this special office he occupies.<sup>6</sup>

The following discussion will show how Jeremiah's feelings are representative and also address how Jeremiah's feelings can be representative of himself, the people of Israel, and/or the LORD *at the same time*.

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<sup>5</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 89.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, *The Prophet and His Message*, 71. Unless otherwise noted, the emphases in the texts are not mine but are from the author of the quote.

### The Feelings of Jeremiah as Representative of Self

Amidst the numerous references to feelings, it is hard not to notice the “personal” aspect of the text of Jeremiah. That Jeremiah’s feelings are his his own actually seems too obvious even to need mentioning. The reader is, after all, most likely to assume that the feelings expressed by Jeremiah are expressions of *his own* feelings. The questions raised by Jeremiah’s feelings rarely focus on whether they authentically belong to Jeremiah; instead, questions focus more on what the feelings reveal about Jeremiah. For example, the introduction to the book of Jeremiah in the *NIV Study Bible* illustrates the assumption that the feelings belong (solely) to Jeremiah, highlighting the many references to Jeremiah’s feelings and suggesting the reason for these:

Given to self-analysis and self-criticism (10:24), Jeremiah has revealed a great deal about his character and personality. . . . In his “confessions” (11:18-23; 12:1-4; 15:10-21; 17:12-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18) he laid bare the deep struggles of his inmost being, sometimes making startlingly honest statements about his feelings toward God (12:1; 15:18). . . . Jeremiah, so often characterized by anguish of spirit (4:19; 9:1; 10:19-20; 23:9), has justly been called the “weeping prophet.”<sup>7</sup>

In this description, the feelings are identified as illustrating Jeremiah’s personal struggle. This explanation, in identifying a reason for Jeremiah’s feelings, explicitly identifies them as being Jeremiah’s *own* feelings. Polk gives a slightly different explanation for the feelings that Jeremiah expresses, but nonetheless still argues that Jeremiah’s feelings must necessarily belong to himself: “Principal among the uses of ‘I’ in Jeremiah, it will be seen, is the expression of emotion. . . . Emotion language not only attests a self, it is constitutive of the self. People become selves as they use such language, for using the language is essential to the exercise and development of the capacities for feeling, thought, and action which give the self definition and substance.”<sup>8</sup> The feelings are very much a part of who Jeremiah is. In the western world of today, feelings are considered a necessary part of being a healthy person. Given the large focus on

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<sup>7</sup> “Jeremiah: Introduction,” *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 1108.

<sup>8</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 24.

feelings in psychology and the substantial amounts of money paid to “get in touch with one’s feelings,” feelings are understood to be part of what it means to be human. Polk would claim that central to a person’s having feelings is also having control over those feelings (i.e., to have affections): “It is no small thing to observe that it is people’s nature as intentional agents that defines in a fundamental way their personhood, while making them the inscrutably complex, interesting, and creative creatures they are, or can be.”<sup>9</sup> The distinction made between emotions and affections at the beginning of this thesis implicitly argues for the necessity of control over feelings: Without control, there can be no affections. In what follows, I present arguments for regarding the feelings of Jeremiah as primarily his own, as well as responses to those who reject this view.

Jeremiah’s feelings mentioned in the text can justifiably be seen as belonging to Jeremiah. Based on the circumstances in his life presented in the text,<sup>10</sup> one would expect that Jeremiah would personally be feeling much sorrow and turmoil. Although the time awaiting imminent exile depicted in the text would have been difficult for the people of Judah, it was an even more difficult time for Jeremiah. Not only was he experiencing the turmoil of losing his country, but in speaking the word of the LORD he was also ignored, scorned, imprisoned, and considered a traitor by the people of Israel<sup>11</sup> – even his own family was against him.<sup>12</sup> As Stacey notes, Jeremiah

lived through the most critical decades in Old Testament history; he was witness to the Josianic reform and the promulgation of the Deuteronomic ideal, but also to the final follies of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, which led to the ruin of the chosen city, the sack of the temple, the spoliation of the promised land and the captivity of the covenant people.

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<sup>9</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 38.

<sup>10</sup> A detailed explanation of the circumstances was given in Chapter 2 in the section regarding incitements for the feelings. The excursus on suffering in Chapter 2 also highlights the difficulties.

<sup>11</sup> Instances of these are shown especially in chs. 26, 37, and 38.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Jeremiah 12:5-6.

Jeremiah bore the tragedy within his own person. He was an unwilling prophet, unable to escape from his vocation and its penalties, and deeply involved in his message.<sup>13</sup>

One would expect Jeremiah to have experienced significant emotional turmoil, and thus it is not surprising that emotional turmoil is present in the text. This turmoil presents itself in numerous ways, of which the Confessions seem to provide the most material with regard to the feelings. According to Carroll, Skinner argues that the Confessions “lay bare the inmost secrets of the prophet’s life, his fighting without and fears within, his mental conflict with adversity and doubt and temptation, and the reaction of his whole nature on a world that threatened to crush him and a task whose difficulty overwhelmed him.”<sup>14</sup> O’Connor notes that

the confessions seem only to concern Jeremiah’s struggles with his prophetic vocation. His prayers resemble biographical accounts of his painful life scattered across the book. Because they center on suffering arising from his prophetic role, they appear to concern him alone. His confessions scold God about a host of difficulties he has with his calling and the ways he suffers unjustly because of it.<sup>15</sup>

Diamond concurs with this, noting that the Confessions were often “taken as primary sources of psychological and biographical data for the construction of a ‘life’ of the prophet. They are the private prayers and musing of Jeremiah in which are recorded his inner spiritual struggles occasioned by the hardships of his prophetic office.”<sup>16</sup> The circumstances of the book and the words given to Jeremiah in the Confessions seem to point to Jeremiah’s feelings being his own.

Although it might seem obvious that Jeremiah’s feelings are truly his own, it is also important to show that Jeremiah’s feelings are not the result of pretense or of his being taken

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<sup>13</sup> David Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1990), 129.

<sup>14</sup> Robert P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 107. Skinner tends to see the Confessions as biographical data only. Carroll renders Skinner’s thoughts as little more than moralistic, in the sense of a call to “be like Jeremiah.” Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*.

<sup>15</sup> O’Connor, “Lamenting,” 37.

<sup>16</sup> Diamond, *Confessions*, 11-12.

over by some force against his own will. After all, the nineteenth-century view of prophecy, which regards it as being an ecstatic experience, seems to suggest that a prophet's feelings are not his own but are a result of his being taken over by some kind of "ecstatic spirit." Jeremiah's claim that he was full of the LORD's wrath (6:11) suggests that this being overtaken by a feeling might be possible.<sup>17</sup> However, based on both the actual circumstances in the text — circumstances that one would expect to cause an emotional response — and based on the significant range and frequency of emotions displayed in the text, it is nearly impossible that Jeremiah's feelings have been imposed on him or that he is merely a puppet acting out feelings that have been imposed on him. As Petersen notes:

The level of intensity has moved beyond that of ritual acting; with engrossed acting, the ego is fully integrated in the role performance. The prophet is not speaking "as if," i.e., as if he were Yahweh himself; hence the activity may not be classified as classic hypnotic role taking. Further, the prophet's behavior does not involve the loss of voluntary action, thus preventing the action from being termed ecstatic.<sup>18</sup>

Jeremiah's embodiment is not merely acting from a script nor the result of his being used like a puppet, as the intensity level of emotions displayed in the text requires a certain level of authenticity. This comes out even in the judgment speeches that Jeremiah proclaims. As Zimmerli notes, "One recognizes in Jeremiah's speeches of judgment, speeches which are unquestionably the prophet's own, that a very deep-seated feeling may issue forth from his own personal experience."<sup>19</sup> Even as much as there is outside influence on the prophet's feelings, the feelings are still his own.

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<sup>17</sup> Von Rad's description of the wrath of the LORD (as noted earlier) also suggests this possibility: "Yahweh has filled him with anger. . . . Like one who has been implanted with a foreign object, the prophet speaks of the anger, whose container and agent he now must be. He has relinquished the freedom of his natural emotions; now he must rebuke and threaten." von Rad, "Confessions," 340.

<sup>18</sup> David L. Peterson, "Ecstasy and Role Enactment," in *The Place is Too Small for Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (ed. Robert P. Gordon; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 286.

<sup>19</sup> Zimmerli, "Fruit," 359.

Yet, if the feelings in the text really are Jeremiah's feelings, what are they doing in the biblical prophetic text? This question, as noted previously, has actually been more pressing than the question of the authenticity of Jeremiah's feelings,<sup>20</sup> and the answer to this question has been varied. Many consider the feelings to be (simply) insight into Jeremiah's personal situation.

Discussions regarding the Confessions, which convey a significant amount of feelings, illustrate the discussion well. Von Rad and Koch both speak significantly about the place of the feelings.

Von Rad notes how the focus has been on the individual feelings of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah does not speak of God; on the contrary, he speaks of himself and the agitation in his soul. . . . Why shouldn't Jeremiah speak to us once apart from his prophetic office—off the record, so to speak? Would we then have, consequently, a purely human piety that at one time pours itself out apart from the pressure of his prophetic calling, from beginning to end, so to speak, the *homo religiosus*? Those who know the direction of Jeremiah interpretations over the last fifty years, know with what preference and respect the interpreters followed this path.<sup>21</sup>

Von Rad explicitly suggests that Jeremiah's feelings have nothing to do with the prophetic task; in fact, the expression of his feelings almost goes against his prophetic role. Further, Bright highlights Jeremiah as being a weak mortal:

Jeremiah does not reveal himself to us in his "confessions" as an exemplary person. He neither loved his enemies nor forgave them, but rather called upon his God with vehemence to punish them, and to do so quickly. His faith was neither serene nor unshakeable; on the contrary, there were times when it crumbled beneath him and spilled him into the pit of despair. He addressed his God with utter honesty, yes; but it was an honesty that at times trod perilously close to blasphemy.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> In questioning the purpose of the feelings in the book, one can also question the authenticity of the texts themselves. These questions are especially noticeable in the Confessions, which are unique to Jeremiah. Perdue notes that "the recognition that these confessions are couched in the form of the individual lament has raised serious questions about whether they are indeed either the prophet's own creation or expressive of his psychology and life." Perdue, "Jeremiah," 25. Yet, von Rad argues that uniqueness does not raise questions about the validity of the text's authenticity: "Although the confessions strike us as an almost foreign element, nevertheless, they cannot be denied to him." von Rad, "Confessions," 339 n 1. Even if one understands the Confessions as not being originally from the prophet of Jeremiah, a conclusion that is in itself debatable, the reader of the text today still faces these feelings in the text. The question still remains regarding the role of the feelings in the text.

<sup>21</sup> von Rad, "Confessions," 345.

<sup>22</sup> Bright, "A Prophet's Lament," 69.

Even in the texts outside of the Confessions, the feelings are seen as being separate and irrelevant to the prophetic task. According to Koch, “The prophets discover that they too are rooted in the situation, and they confide to the written scroll their private temptations and their consolations—Jeremiah especially.”<sup>23</sup> However, the depth of Jeremiah’s feelings, while indicating that they are his own personal feelings, does not preclude his feelings from being part of his prophetic task.

Others do not express so directly a disconnect between Jeremiah’s feelings and his prophetic role, although the feelings are generally considered as providing more insight into Jeremiah as a person than Jeremiah in his role as prophet. Koch notes: “For the first time in the literature of the world, the voice of an individual is heard (some years before the Greek Sappho), the voice, moreover, of an individual tormented by boundless suffering.”<sup>24</sup> Carroll notes how the Confessions “are read as autobiographical utterances of the prophet Jeremiah and treated as representations of his innermost thoughts and prayers.”<sup>25</sup> As fascinating a person as Jeremiah is, insight into a single person, even one following God faithfully is a limited way of understanding the text. Seeing the feelings as only giving insight into the person of the prophet would be considered problematic from a Reformed perspective, as it to some degree questions the validity of the text for conveying (and being) the Word of God. Jeremiah, no matter how important a role he plays in the text, is not the point of the text: The word transmitted by God is. In light of that, insight into Jeremiah’s character is of minimal relevance. Furthermore, it can lead towards approaching the text primarily to psychoanalyze the characters or see Jeremiah as merely a “good example” to be learned from and followed.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Klaus Koch, *The Prophets* (trans. Margaret Kohl; 2 vol. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 2:14.

<sup>24</sup> Koch, *Prophets*, 2:39.

<sup>25</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 46.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Evans describes Jeremiah’s feelings as those of a sensitive person used by God who also found solace in God; the words in the text give insight into his character. She sees the text as giving

A second argument against seeing Jeremiah's feelings as merely his own is the absence of expressions of feelings where one might expect them. Considering the suffering and difficult times attending Jeremiah's capture and torment in Jeremiah 26, 37, and 38, one would expect more mention of feelings there or that elsewhere in the book a clear link would have been made between Jeremiah's feelings and these incidents. But the feelings were only included at certain times and places in the text, suggesting that their inclusion is intended to do more than simply give insight into Jeremiah's own feelings related to a specific time and situation.

The feelings are thus a meaningful part of the text and the word of God passed on to the reader today. The feelings thus likely have a role in the prophetic task. Bright highlights how Reventlow raises a similar thought with regard to the Confessions, "It is difficult to see why [the Confessions] should have been included in the book if they do not in some way relate to the prophet's public ministry, since the collectors of the prophetic books were interested only in the preached word, and not in the prophet's personal feelings."<sup>27</sup> Jeremiah's feelings are an essential part of his personhood and are thus something that he also takes with him as he fulfills his prophetic task. As Evans notes, "Jeremiah shows us that even in despair it is possible to serve God faithfully and well."<sup>28</sup> Even Jeremiah's turning to God in the midst of all his suffering and emotions highlights further a prophetic truth: "No other prophet in the Hebrew Bible has a more intimate or passionate relationship with God than Jeremiah. It is this relationship that keeps him

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insight into Jeremiah being totally honest with God, as well as showing the agony that has been part of much of his life. Mary Evans, *Prophets of the Lord* (London: Paternoster, 1992), 163-64. Hamerton-Kelly's words are another example of this tendency of seeing the feelings in Jeremiah as an encouragement for us to be like Jeremiah: "We have at different times felt the joy of God's words in our hearts and also the loneliness and despair that brings us to the awful moment when we accuse God of letting us down, of being untrustworthy like a desert stream that fails to flow just when the thirsty traveler is most in need of water." Hamerton-Kelly, *Divine Passion*, 67.

<sup>27</sup> Reventlow, *Liturgie*, 208, quoted in Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints," 195-96.

<sup>28</sup> Evans, *Prophets*, 180.

going and keeps him alive.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, the prophetic nature of Jeremiah’s feelings is more than that. Jeremiah continues to be his own person even as he is acting in his role as a prophet. His feelings remain his own even as they are also part of the prophetic task. Von Rad notes: “Jeremiah certainly does not speak off the record; on the contrary, he speaks out of the midst of his prophetic office. It is not true that we have, in reality, prophetic testimony and more general religious statements by Jeremiah side by side; rather the confessions come directly out of the center of his prophetic existence.”<sup>30</sup> A change in the way the feelings have more recently been approached in studies on the prophets confirms this. Zimmerli highlights how “more recent investigations . . . have maintained that the confessions, placed in the prophet’s mouth, are not the immediate expressions of his own suffering, but rather exemplary expressions that are about prophetic suffering.”<sup>31</sup> Diamond also notes the shift to regarding Jeremiah’s feelings as being related to his prophetic task:

For the traditional approach to the confessions which viewed the texts as psychological and spiritual transcripts, the primary interpretative context was clear – i.e. Jeremiah’s inner life. While initially this focus was described in relation to Jeremiah’s person apart from, or over against, his prophetic office, subsequently and increasingly these witnesses to Jeremiah’s inner life were viewed as constituent parts and reflections of the prophetic office and experience.<sup>32</sup>

The feelings have not only an important role in Jeremiah’s personal life, they are also an important aspect of Jeremiah’s prophetic task. Jeremiah’s feelings are fully his own while also being part of his prophetic task, and in that role, frequently representative of another agent.

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<sup>29</sup> Mordecai Schreiber and Michael Lerner, “Was Jeremiah a Failure? Rethinking Jeremiah.” *Tikkun* (5 Aug 2011), n.p. [cited 12 March 2012]. Online: <http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/was-jeremiah-a-failure>. O’Connor’s article, “Lamenting,” highlights this relationship as well.

<sup>30</sup> von Rad, “Confessions,” 345.

<sup>31</sup> Zimmerli, “Fruit,” 358. See also Bright’s “Jeremiah’s Complaints.”

<sup>32</sup> Diamond, *Confessions*, 15.

### **The Feelings of Jeremiah as Representative of the LORD's Affections**

As a prophet of the LORD, Jeremiah represents the LORD. At the least, the representation is done through the prophet's passing on to the people the messages that he receives from the LORD. Although this message is often considered to be primarily words, feelings are also part of how the message is conveyed. As shown in the previous chapter, the prophet mirrors the LORD's feelings, most notably in the areas of sorrow and suffering. In what follows, I present arguments for regarding the feelings of Jeremiah as representative of those of the Lord, as well as responses to those who reject this view.

The people hear the Lord's message to them by means of Jeremiah fulfilling his prophetic task. Jeremiah's representation of the LORD and His message was accomplished by more than merely words; it involved all of his life: "God is seen to be present not only in what the prophet has to say, but in the word as embodied in the prophet's life. To hear and see the prophet was to hear and see God."<sup>33</sup> The step from the prophet representing the LORD in his words to his representing the LORD in his whole life, including his feelings, is not a difficult one to make. As noted previously, feelings are considered to be part of what it means to be human, and a task that involves one's whole being would mean that feelings would intuitively be part of the message that Jeremiah proclaimed – and the message that was heard. As shown in the previous section, Jeremiah's feelings often parallel those of the LORD; exactly how Jeremiah's feelings are representative of the feelings and message of the LORD is conveyed in differing ways.

Jeremiah conveys the feelings that the LORD would be expected to feel in response to Israel's reaction to the prophetic message. The people of Israel responded quite negatively to the message, bringing pain to both Jeremiah and the LORD. Hamerton-Kelly captures this well:

The prophet is not the champion of an abstract ideal; rather as representative of the living God who cares, the prophet understands the hurt and disappointment that God feels when

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<sup>33</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 149-50.

his children reject him and act self-destructively. . . . The prophet, with a heightened sensitivity to God, participates in the divine agony; where God is rejected the prophet is rejected, and he feels in his human loneliness something of the desolation of God—always on the margin, never in the text, even though he wrote the text. The prophet feels God’s loss of his children, the estrangement that God’s loving heart yearns to overcome.<sup>34</sup>

Jeremiah’s representation of the LORD is not limited only to his presenting the message of the LORD; this representation is also carried out through transference of the perception that the people have of the LORD. Through acting as the LORD’s representative, Jeremiah is set up to be the recipient of some of the reactions of the people to the LORD. Mottu highlights that the LORD suffers when the prophet who represents him suffers.<sup>35</sup> Stulman also notes how the suffering of the prophet represents God’s own suffering:

God’s suffering love surfaces most forcefully in the anguish of Jeremiah. The rejection of the prophet is clearly a repudiation of the God he represents. The ostracism and ridicule of Jeremiah betray the community’s renunciation of God. Moreover, the prophet’s screams of pain reveals the pathos and suffering of God. We encounter the convergence of divine and human suffering in the confessions of Jeremiah to such a degree that it is difficult in places to discern whether God or Jeremiah is speaking. . . . With intentional ambiguity, the text unites the prophet’s sorrow with God’s sorrow. The two now merge.<sup>36</sup>

As the people frequently treat Jeremiah as they do the LORD, a certain degree of correlation is not surprising between the feelings that both Jeremiah and the LORD have in response to the reactions of the people of Israel.

One argument against the view that Jeremiah’s feelings represent the LORD’s is the claim that Jeremiah’s feelings only manifest his humanity and are thus related neither to the prophetic task nor to the feelings of the LORD. This was shown, in the previous section, to be a false dichotomy. Carroll adds another dimension to the discussion. In dismissing Jeremiah’s feelings

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<sup>34</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, *Divine Passion*, 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Mottu, *Les “confessions” de Jérémie: une protestation contre la souffrance* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1985), 89.

<sup>36</sup> Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 25.

from being part of his prophetic role, Carroll argues that Jeremiah is merely a product of his culture:

It is very easy for exegetes naively to assume that the voice of Jeremiah simply represents the divine word untouched by human intrigue and politics. The divine word as spoken by human beings is always some *particular* individual's word and reflects the cultural, social, and historical context of that person's existence. There are no *unmediated* divine words which bypass the consciousness or circumstances of the human speaker; all such words are the products of human culture and tend to reinforce the values of the people speaking them.<sup>37</sup>

Carroll's comment reveals an assumption that culture hinders instead of enhances the bringing forth of the message of the LORD. Such an assumption is made thoroughly questionable by the incarnation of Christ: an incarnation as a human into a specific culture. Carroll and others who focus primarily on Jeremiah's feelings as only human have set up a false dichotomy between Jeremiah's feelings being his own and being those of the LORD.

Despite how logical it may seem, the question still remains of whether Jeremiah's feelings truly mirror those of the LORD. The mirroring of the pain that both Jeremiah and the LORD feel is one way this occurs. As Hamerton-Kelly points out further: "It is an astonishing notion that our injustice can cause God pain; nevertheless the prophets reveal quite insistently that it does. For God is filled with compassion for his creatures, and the prophet is filled with sympathy for God."<sup>38</sup> Zimmerli also notes how the text highlights how Jeremiah's feelings not only mirror the LORD's but also give more insight into God:

In the redactional placement of the passion narrative of Jer. 37-44, and in regard to the framework of 11:21-12:6, the impression is made that prophetic suffering provides a deep insight into the nature of Yahweh. In the background of the prophetic commission to proclaim judgment and its resultant suffering which may issue forth in a harsh attack against God, stands Yahweh's own suffering.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 103.

<sup>38</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, *Divine Passion*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Zimmerli, "Fruit," 361.

In this way, it can be seen that the text itself points to Jeremiah's feelings as being representative of the LORD's.

The fact that Jeremiah's feelings are representative of the LORD's is shown in various places of the book. In discussing chapter 45 and its preceding chapters, Zimmerli argues:

The suffering of the prophet and his companion is only to be understood as the pale reflection of the comprehensive suffering of Yahweh. The deeper lying and more proper understanding of the suffering of the prophet is indicated by the framework of the narrative of Jeremiah 37-44 in which the prophet is the human figure whose suffering is reported. . . . What is intended in this narrative is the inner, human reflection of the much greater suffering of Yahweh himself. The history of divine suffering, expressed in Yahweh's dealing with his people and in the suffering of the prophet, becomes the hermeneutical key for understanding the tribulation of the prophet.<sup>40</sup>

The events of Jeremiah's personal life are significantly overshadowed by the Word from the LORD that he brings; the events are overshadowed so greatly that they themselves, including his feelings, become part of that Word. That Jeremiah's own personal feelings are not given in the text of Jeremiah 37-44 where it is obvious that Jeremiah is suffering greatly pushes the reader to look beyond the agony that Jeremiah might have suffered; instead, the reader is encouraged to focus on how what is portrayed in the text is the word of the LORD. Furthermore, an attentive reader would then wonder about the purpose of the feelings expressed earlier in the book when Jeremiah's personal situation was less drastic.

The oracles against the nations are another place in the text where Jeremiah's feelings reflect the feelings of the LORD. Ward argues: "It seems likely that the passion expressed in these oracles—grief, indignation, anger—is not only Jeremiah's but God's as well. It is a divine pathos that expresses itself through the chosen messenger, one whose existence is so closely bound to the word of God that his whole life is shaped by his calling (1:5)."<sup>41</sup> Besides the indignation and anger reflected by Jeremiah, he also reflects the LORD's feelings of agony and

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<sup>40</sup> Zimmerli, "Fruit," 357-58.

<sup>41</sup> Ward, *Thus Says the Lord*, 132.

compassion over the coming suffering of the people of Israel. Hamerton-Kelly argues that “The prophet expresses God’s view of the world. He experiences God’s presence so vividly that he sees with God’s eyes and feels with God’s heart. The prophet represents God’s compassion for humanity, and that is why he agonizes over the plight of little people.”<sup>42</sup> In this way, Jeremiah expresses a wide range of the feelings of the LORD to the people (e.g., anger, grief, and compassion). As Ward puts it,

Viewing God through the eyes of Jeremiah, the chastened prophet, the people were enabled to discern the truth about the ways of God: the life God gives and sustains, the vocation of service God offers, and the personal flourishing God makes possible within the community of righteousness and faith. . . . In this way he became the reconciled reconciler of God and Israel, an authentic intercessor.<sup>43</sup>

The feelings expressed by Jeremiah allow the people to more fully comprehend the word of the LORD. Heschel puts this in a slightly different way:

An analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a *sympathy with the divine pathos*, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet’s reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. . . . The emotional experience of the prophet becomes the focal point for the prophet’s understanding of God. He lives not only his personal life, but also the life of God. The prophet hears God’s voice and feels His heart. He tries to impart the pathos of the message together with its logos.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, “to be a true prophet is to be willing to stand in the same tension-filled situation as God himself and to endure weariness as long as God does.”<sup>45</sup> Jeremiah does this by embodying the feelings of the LORD.

One potential counterargument against the view that Jeremiah’s feelings represent the LORD’s consists of the times when Jeremiah’s feelings do not mirror those of the LORD. After

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<sup>42</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, *Divine Passion*, 16-17.

<sup>43</sup> Ward, *Thus Says the Lord*, 139.

<sup>44</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 26. Although it would have been helpful to look further into Heschel’s understanding of *divine pathos* and the prophetic task, such an exploration will have to be addressed by another at a different time.

<sup>45</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 159.

all, how can representation occur when the feelings do not correspond? For example, Jeremiah's feelings of frustration with the LORD, expressed in the Confessions of Jeremiah 15 and 20, do not appear in any way to represent the LORD's feelings. Instead, these feelings of frustration seem to be those of Jeremiah alone. A simple solution is to say that, at times, the text allows Jeremiah's feelings not to represent the LORD; these times could then be moments when, as von Rad would say, Jeremiah is acting outside of his prophetic task. It would then be the task of the reader to determine when those times exist. Yet, such a solution raises questions about how one ought to read the text: Can one simply consider some of the feelings of Jeremiah as acting outside of the prophetic task, as von Rad might claim?

Furthermore, the questions raised by Jeremiah's feelings differing from the LORD's feelings make it difficult to argue that Jeremiah's feelings are a necessary part of the prophetic task. Understanding Jeremiah's feelings as being representative not only of himself but also those of the people of Israel is a partial means of clarifying the problem. On the occasions when Jeremiah's feelings differ from the LORD's, they mirror (and thus represent) those of the people of the Israel. This possibility will be addressed later. Another way of looking at the situation is to see that the feelings of both the LORD and Jeremiah are more complicated than expected. A look again at the Confessions illustrates how even Jeremiah's frustration and anger in the Confessions can be representative of the LORD. Whereas the Confessions highlighted Jeremiah's own personal feelings, they also can be seen as expressing the LORD's feelings. Smith notes how the Confessions further clarify Jeremiah's identification with the LORD's feelings: "The laments in context ... present Jeremiah's special identification with Yahweh as sign and symbol of Israel's relationship with Yahweh."<sup>46</sup> Further, as Fretheim puts it, the Confessions "are not to be

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<sup>46</sup> Mark S. Smith, *Laments of Jeremiah and Their Contexts: A Literary and Redactional Study of Jeremiah 11-20* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), xx.

understood as laments representative of the people, but rather, reflective of the life of God.”<sup>47</sup>

Even Jeremiah’s torment and confusion expressed in the Confessions is capable of pointing to the LORD. Mottu argues that in the Confessions it can be seen that God is at war with himself: “Dieu est un lutte avec lui-même.”<sup>48</sup> Jeremiah’s own struggle only mirrors this frustration and agony that are related to the necessity of Jeremiah’s prophetic task. In this way, Jeremiah’s feelings do not so much oppose those of the LORD as they present a side of the LORD that is expressed less explicitly in the text.

Even when it can be shown that Jeremiah’s feelings mirror those of the LORD, the relevance of this for the prophetic task is not immediately clear. When discussing preaching the text of Jeremiah, Achtemeier acknowledges that Jeremiah’s feelings can be preached as long as this does not distract from the real point of the book, which is the LORD:

Certainly Jeremiah himself, in his struggles with God, is the legitimate subject of a sermon. Otherwise his “confessions” and his biography would not have been preserved in the canon. But this is not the only manner in which the preacher should utilize the Jeremic materials, for the central subject of Jeremiah’s book is much larger than the prophet. God is the main subject, and God’s words and God’s actions are finally all-important. The prophet himself has value for us only as he witnesses to his Lord and only as he carries out the tasks assigned to him by that Lord.<sup>49</sup>

Achtemeier sees little connection between the method in which Jeremiah presents the message and his revealing who the LORD is. Her understanding thus tends toward a primarily moralistic understanding of the prophet – one can learn from him as a person, including his feelings, but the feelings have further little significance. More importantly, her inability to see a connection causes her to limit the prophet’s feelings to being simply something that the reader today can use as support for his/her struggles with God. In this way she misses how the feelings involved in the

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<sup>47</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 157.

<sup>48</sup> Mottu, *confessions*, 90.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Jeremiah* (Knox Preaching Guides; Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 5.

struggles themselves are part of the prophetic message and give a fuller understanding of God and what his message for people today is.<sup>50</sup>

That Jeremiah's feelings reflect the LORD's feelings enhances the message that Jeremiah is proclaiming. Furthermore, these feelings temper the message of judgment that Jeremiah is proclaiming. The LORD's agony in the midst of the anger makes it obvious that the LORD does not in any way delight in the punishment that He is imposing on the people of Israel. McConville argues:

The validity of the proclamation depends precisely on the reality of the experience of the prophet. When Jeremiah expresses his own anguish, and we realize with a jolt that he is pointing more profoundly to a suffering of YHWH's (as in 4:19--22 and 8:22-9:2), the effect depends on the reality of the suffering of the human being who makes an impact—directly or indirectly—on the senses and compassion of his hearers or readers.<sup>51</sup>

Through representing the LORD's feelings, Jeremiah presents a stronger message: a message of judgment amidst love and concern for the people. The strength of the message makes it a message that demands to be heard.

Despite all this evidence, there is still not enough to say that the feelings necessarily represent the feelings of the LORD. That Jeremiah's feelings sometimes functioned as representing the feelings of the LORD to the people of Israel has been shown without any doubt. Some disconnect still exists when Jeremiah's feelings are opposite to what one would expect the LORD to be feeling; yet, this disconnect does not deny the importance of the feelings in the prophetic task. It simply indicates that the means in which Jeremiah's feelings are representative is complicated.

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<sup>50</sup> Despite my disappointment in Achtemeier's moralizing Jeremiah's feelings and limiting their role in the text, she does do a good job of addressing how the text is relevant to the reader today. This thesis will also discuss the relevance of the feelings in the prophetic task for the reader today, but not until Chapter 6.

<sup>51</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 67. He acknowledges that some of his insights come from Polk.

### **The Feelings of Jeremiah as Representative of the People of Israel**

As shown in the previous chapter, there is a complicated correspondence between Jeremiah's feelings and those of the people of Israel. Jeremiah's feelings at times mirror those of the community, while at other times they are in sharp contrast to those feelings. In what follows, I present arguments for regarding the feelings of Jeremiah as representative of those of the people of Israel, as well as responses to those who reject this view. In general, the arguments against the view that Jeremiah's feelings are representative of those of the people of Israel are generally due to the perceived disconnect between Jeremiah's feelings and those of the people of Israel. This disconnect certainly raises questions about Jeremiah being a representative; yet, a more nuanced understanding of Jeremiah as representative provides a means for resolving the difficulty.

To begin with, Jeremiah's feelings are representative of those of the people because he is one of the people of Israel. Even though Jeremiah as a prophet has a unique relationship with the LORD, and thus his experiences are arguably different than those of the rest of the people of Israel, he is nonetheless still an Israelite. As one of the people of Israel, Jeremiah is also affected by the judgment being meted out on the people. Although Jeremiah knew the LORD's plans and what the outcome of the siege would be, he was not immune to the hardship involved in such a siege. In fact, the hardship he faced was worse, as he was persecuted by the people of Israel due to their sense of his betrayal of them (26:7-11; 43:1-2). Things did not necessarily improve after the siege: The Babylonians released him from his captivity under the Israelites and invited him to come to Babylon where he would be looked after (40:1-6). Such an offer from the Babylonians could only be perceived as a confirmation of the claim (37:13) that he supported the Babylonians. Finally, the coming exile would be for Jeremiah, alongside of the people of Israel, an exile from his homeland and, more so, an exile from the presence of God in the land. Thus it can be seen that when the people suffer, Jeremiah also suffers.

Jeremiah's feelings as being representative of those of the people of Israel are illustrated by a number of texts. O'Connor highlights that Jeremiah's "repeated captivities (20:1-6; 26:1-24; 37:11-21; 38:1-6) and escapes from death (26:24; 36:19; 37:21; 38:7-13; 39:11-14), attacks upon him (11:18-19, 21-23; 20:1-6; 26:1-24), and his own exile (chs. 42-44x) parallel the people's historical sufferings from military invasions, captivity, and exile. His celibacy points to the end of domestic life in the land (16:1-4)."<sup>52</sup> The Confessions further illustrate the connections between the feelings of the people of Israel and those of Jeremiah. Even as many understand the Confessions to be expressions of Jeremiah's own feelings, others see the communal element found in these words. Reventlow argues for a corporate identity found in the laments.<sup>53</sup> He can see no purpose for the Confessions in the book besides their having a corporate function; without this corporate function, there would be no reason for these texts to be found in the biblical text. One such corporate function is that the words expressed by Jeremiah in the Confessions by Jeremiah provide an example of how the people can live through the challenges in the midst of the suffering. As O'Connor puts it, "When Jeremiah suffers because his people reject him and his word, his pain parallels and gives expression to the destruction of Judah. His battles with God mirror the people's doubt and so provide a model of survival for the broken community of faith."<sup>54</sup>

Not everyone, however, agrees with the necessity of the corporate nature of the Confessions. Koch, for instance, dismisses Reventlow's idea of Jeremiah as cultic mediator and corporate personality: "The way in which Jeremiah is overwhelmed by the pressure of the divine

<sup>52</sup> Kathleen M. O'Connor, "The Prophet Jeremiah and Exclusive Loyalty to God," *Int* 59.2 (Apr 2005): 137.

<sup>53</sup> As noted earlier, Reventlow interprets the Confessions as revealing "nothing of the prophet as a person: the 'I' is in each case collective. In these pieces the prophet speaks in the name of the people, or the 'righteous' segment of them, in his official capacity as cultic mediator, laying their plaints and positions before God and interceding for them." Reventlow, *Liturgie*, 14-15, quoted in Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints," 192.

<sup>54</sup> O'Connor, "Lamenting," 37.

*dabar*, and also his increasing loneliness, are elements so individually coloured that it is hard to postulate a collective context.”<sup>55</sup> According to Koch, Jeremiah is speaking only on behalf of himself; the Confessions are the voice of a “man crushed between his religious role and his personal inclinations.”<sup>56</sup> However, the response of the LORD to Jeremiah’s Confessions raises questions about how much they are only his personal response. As McKane puts it:

Since Jeremiah does not receive much of an answer ([ch.15] vv. 11-12) to his intensely felt private anguish, there is some justification for Reventlow’s contention that the whole must be interpreted as having a public rather than a private and personal significance; as dealing with a crisis in the life of the community rather than a tumult in the prophet’s soul. Reventlow’s way should not be followed, but it should be recognized that there are difficulties in whatever direction one seeks a solution.<sup>57</sup>

The lack of direct response given to Jeremiah’s anguish does seem to suggest that it is not only his personal feelings being expressed. The objection raised by Koch about Jeremiah being a crushed man can be easily rejected: The book’s depiction of Jeremiah’s perseverance in his prophetic task in spite of significant opposition does not support this claim. Even as much as Jeremiah’s struggles as a prophet are highlighted in the text, this does not validate Koch’s dismissal of the communal nature of Jeremiah’s experience. Jeremiah’s struggle with his task as a prophet makes him not less of a representative of the people of Israel but more. The people of

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<sup>55</sup> Koch, *Prophets*, 2:44.

<sup>56</sup> Koch, *Prophets*, 2:44.

<sup>57</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah*, 349.

Israel struggled with their witness<sup>58</sup> as the “people of God” to such an extent that they stopped living out their calling to be a light to the nations.<sup>59</sup>

Others who argue against Jeremiah’s feelings as being representative of those of the people of Israel do so by claiming that Jeremiah’s feelings are representative only of the LORD’s. For example, in speaking of Jeremiah’s prophetic task, Fretheim argues that the parallel points to Jeremiah as a representative of the LORD and not as a representative of the people:

It is true that Jeremiah’s mourning parallels that of the people (e.g., 4:31), but so does God’s. Thus, both God and prophet enter into the mourning of the people. In taking this approach, the prophet’s mourning becomes a Word of *God* to the people and not a word of the people to God. In and through the prophet, the people should be able to see how God has entered into the anguish of their situation and made it his very own.<sup>60</sup>

Although Fretheim focuses on Jeremiah’s mourning mirroring that of the LORD, he does so by first pointing out that both mirror the mourning of the people. In this way, Fretheim highlights that the feelings of all three agents are in sync. Even if Jeremiah’s mourning parallels that of God, this does not exclude Jeremiah’s solidarity with the people of Israel in mourning. Fretheim

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<sup>58</sup> Israel’s witness to the nations is mentioned explicitly in Isa. 44:8 and implicitly in Isa. 55:4. Furthermore, Israel’s witness to the nations is shown throughout the biblical narrative. It is first touched upon in Genesis 12:1-3 where it highlights how Abraham is blessed so that all people might be blessed through him and his descendents. Exodus 32:11-15 further illustrates how the nations know the LORD through his interactions with the people. In Ex 32:12, Moses implores the LORD not to destroy Israel so that the Egyptians might not say “‘It was with evil intent that [the LORD] brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?’” The books of Joshua and Judges further highlight how the LORD showed his great power through the Israelite conquests. At the same time, whenever Israel turned away from the LORD, they were punished by the other nations. Ezekiel 36:20 also points out how other nations knew the LORD through Israel, for Israel had profaned his holy name. The LORD would “sanctify [his] great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you [Israel] have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes.” (Ezek 36:23). The people of the LORD were the means in which other nations knew the LORD.

<sup>59</sup> The calling of the people of Israel to be a light to the nations is given most strongly in Isaiah, especially the servant songs of Isaiah 42 and 49. The quotation and interpretation of Isa 49:6 in Acts 13:47 indicates more closely how the nations were also destined to know the good news.

<sup>60</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 160. Fretheim argues that there are “decisive parallels between prophet and God, both in the fact that they were rejected and in the way in which they responded to that rejection. Moreover, the dual focus of God’s suffering in this respect is paralleled in the prophets: the past/present reference with its focus on suffering because of rejection, and the present/future reference with its suffering because of the tension as to what to do with respect to the future.” Fretheim, *Suffering*, 155.

sees Jeremiah as representing both himself and the LORD, but nevertheless regards representing the LORD and the people of Israel as mutually exclusive:

It is certainly true that the prophet is not simply the reflex of God, as if he never had anything of his own to say or do. The prophet is a distinct personality from God, subject to all the foibles and flaws of any human being. But, as we turn to the suffering of the prophet, it is wise to remember that it is as a servant of God that he suffers. The suffering emerges because of the service undertaken; hence the prophet is not the suffering representative of the people, but one who embodies the suffering of God.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, according to Fretheim, Jeremiah only suffers as a representative of God. Yet, why couldn't Jeremiah's suffering in the role of a prophet also occur as a representative of the people of Israel? Fretheim sets up a false dichotomy in arguing that Jeremiah can have his own feelings and still be the LORD's representative but he cannot have his own feelings and those of the people of Israel.

One of the significant difficulties in understanding Jeremiah's feelings as representative of the people of Israel concerns reconciling the occasions when Jeremiah's feelings conflict with those of the people of Israel. This conflict of feelings is made even more obvious through the LORD's explicit commands in Jeremiah 16 in which Jeremiah is commanded not to act out the same feelings as that the people of Israel. How can Jeremiah represent the people when he is expressly denied feeling the same as them? This challenge to the prophetic task is expressed well by Carroll: "If Jeremiah is understood as being the people's representative, how can he also be viewed as the opponent of the community? Many of the poems are too critical of the nation to be regarded as expressions of the people's representative."<sup>62</sup> This conflict, in which Jeremiah is denied sharing in the feelings of the people alongside of his being commanded to reprimand the community (and their feelings), makes it difficult to reconcile Jeremiah's feelings as being both his own while also being representative of the people of Israel. For example, O'Connor in her

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<sup>61</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 154.

<sup>62</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 88.

work on the Confessions cannot see the feelings expressed in the Confessions as being more than merely those of Jeremiah: “The ‘I’ of these poems must be understood as the personal voice of Jeremiah and can in no way be interpreted to represent the voice of the community. The referent of the ‘I’ is the specific person of the prophet, who, in no sense, stands for the people in the confessions.”<sup>63</sup> For O’Connor there can be no middle ground: Jeremiah’s condemnation of the people’s disobedience means Jeremiah’s feelings can not be representative of those of the people. Yet, this does not make it impossible for Jeremiah to be representative; various explanations can be given to explain this. First, I will present Carroll’s arguments for how Jeremiah can be representative of both the people and the LORD. After this, I will present an alternative perspective.

Jeremiah’s feelings continue to represent those of the people of Israel despite his being at times alienated from the people. He participates in Israel’s downfall in the exile even though he is at the same time cut off from the people of Israel<sup>64</sup> and forbidden from participating in regular aspects of community life. Carroll’s understanding of the significant redaction in the text answers how Jeremiah can still be a representative of the people of Israel despite his alienation from them. As Carroll puts it,

Part of the difficulty of reading the book today is the problem of reconciling all these contrary voices as the representations of just one voice. We know that one person cannot assume so many contradictory positions or represent so multiple a set of disparate values, especially when many of these issues belong to a wide spectrum of time and place. In reading the book of Jeremiah as a concatenation of many distinct voices we interpret it as other than the production of one voice. The theopolitics of the book militate against the fictional representation of it as the *single* voice of Jeremiah the prophet.<sup>65</sup>

According to Carroll, the presentation of Jeremiah given in the text does not point to the person of Jeremiah but only to a redactional element in the text. As was noted earlier, Carroll argues that

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<sup>63</sup> O’Connor, *Confessions*, 92.

<sup>64</sup> cf. Fretheim, *Suffering*, 157.

<sup>65</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 106.

“‘Jeremiah as representative’ is only one strand in the book and not a comprehensive understanding of the tradition which can be applied throughout it.”<sup>66</sup> For Carroll, Jeremiah cannot be a representative if he is opposed to the people of Israel. He proposes that the mixed evidence that does present Jeremiah’s feelings as representative of the people of Israel is a result of redaction criticism. The problem is in “the way we read the text: it is unnecessary to insist that every poem or narrative must be an expression of Jeremiah’s just because at some stage in the book’s history it has been edited that way and has had 1.1-3 affixed to it.”<sup>67</sup> Thus Carroll explains the conflict between Jeremiah’s feelings and those of the people as being the result of redaction.<sup>68</sup>

Without addressing the validity of any claims of redaction, the reader of the text today is still left with the challenge of understanding the different nuances of how Jeremiah’s feelings as presented in the received text relate both to his role as a prophet and his relationship to the people of Israel. In the final form of the text, as Carroll himself argues, the many seemingly contradictory feelings of Jeremiah are clearly present: Jeremiah assumes “many contradictory positions [and] represent[s] so multiple a set of disparate values.”<sup>69</sup> Although Carroll considers this illogical, the final version of the text presents a picture of Jeremiah whose feelings can be representative of himself and the people, even if at times these seem to work against each other. In this way, the representative nature found in the text is not in any way diminished by the possibility that later generations might have edited the text. As O’Connor notes:

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<sup>66</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 89.

<sup>67</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 88.

<sup>68</sup> Others go even further in claiming redaction in the Confessions. Diamond, for example, sees the Confessions as “total editorial compositions placed in Jeremiah’s mouth, interpreting him in light of the religious needs of the traditionists’ community. In contrast to Reventlow who saw in the confessions the historical prophet presenting the petitions of the community, this approach sees the interpretation of the prophetic person by the community in terms of its traditional piety and liturgical forms.” Diamond, *Confessions*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 106.

Although first-person laments appear to be completely personal, they are liturgical prayers that carry the weight of the community's life, its history of worship, and its self-expression in times of sorrow and loss. This suggests that Jeremiah's confessions are not merely the personal testimony of the prophet; they also manifest the spiritual predicament of the people who live on after the invasions.<sup>70</sup>

In this way, the text becomes a living word, with Jeremiah's feelings having an effect on the people of his own day, as well as those reading and hearing the text in later generations. Such an understanding of the text reflects well the use of personal pronouns found in the text so that it speaks to us. It also illustrates another way in which the text is useful for teaching (2 Tim 3:16-17), as it is applied and lived out by every generation.

The above evidence has shown that Jeremiah's feelings are representative of those of the people of Israel, but it is also obvious that this representation can hardly be simple. After all, Jeremiah "suffers with, on behalf of, and because of his community."<sup>71</sup> His connection to the people of Israel is both as one who shares in the feelings of the community of Israel while also being at times the victim of their misguided feelings. After all, Jeremiah suffers because of the people's refusal to listen to his sharing the Word of the LORD.<sup>72</sup> Jeremiah's representation cannot be seen as simply a mirror of how the people of Israel are actually feeling because he is at time an opponent of the people, condemning their actions, and at times times, he is very much a participant in events along with the people of Israel. Jeremiah also illustrates to the people the suffering that they will feel with the coming exile. His feelings of deep sadness over their lack of repentance and the coming exile (13:17) show how the LORD feels with the response to the people. In this way, the people can tangibly grasp the LORD's sadness over this punishment,

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<sup>70</sup> O'Connor, "Lamenting," 36.

<sup>71</sup> Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 17.

<sup>72</sup> Jeremiah is placed in a cistern because the officials claim that his words are discouraging the soldiers (38:1-6).

even though they themselves are not feeling the sadness. In each of these ways, Jeremiah brings forth the Word of the LORD.

Through sharing in the feelings of the people, Jeremiah gives more validity to his message. As much as he is God's representative and the one telling the people of all that they have done wrong, he is not simply an outsider. Through the sharing of feelings, a connection at an intimate level, he is able to be in solidarity with people. O'Connor highlights that the Confessions establish "Jeremiah as one who suffers like the community. It crystallizes in one anguished voice experiences of grief that lie dormant or denied among survivors. . . . The turbulence of this inner life functions publicly to embrace the doubts, fear, and rage of the community."<sup>73</sup> While O'Connor highlights the timeless solidarity, Stulman points out the immediate solidarity between Jeremiah and the people of Judah:

The prophet's life is thoroughly connected to the people of Judah. Accordingly, he never addresses his countrymen in a detached and dispassionate manner, as if one could separate the message from the messenger. The prophet participates fully in the death of Judah's world. He suffers with, on behalf of, and because of his community. Jeremiah's very life and destiny are consociated with Judah's: God calls both prophet and people (Jer 1-2), both suffer the shattering death of their world, and both survive the desolation. In this way, the persona of Jeremiah reflects the nation's descent into utter hopelessness in Jer 1-25 as well as its emergence as a wounded survivor in Jer 26-52.<sup>74</sup>

Jeremiah's feelings throughout the book illustrate his suffering with, on behalf of, and because of the people of Israel. Through this he is better able to present the prophetic message.

The act of reconciling the disagreement between Jeremiah's feelings and those of the people is part of understanding the prophetic task. It is part of Jeremiah's prophetic task that he not act as the people. To understand this, it is helpful to recognize that Jeremiah's message includes showing the people how they ought to feel. As O'Connor puts it,

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<sup>73</sup> Kathleen M. O'Connor, "Jeremiah as Ideal Survivor" *Journal for Preachers* 28.2 (Lent 2005):21.

<sup>74</sup> Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 17.

Jeremiah symbolizes what his community ought to be. His behavior shows them how they must behave if they are to endure the present suffering and reconstitute themselves as God's covenant community in the future. Like them, he is wounded, but he is also the ideal survivor who, even as he opposes his people and is opposed by them, exhibits virtues they must practice to regain their life together. They should relate to God in the same manner he does.<sup>75</sup>

Jeremiah condemns the lack of remorse that the people of Israel ought to be feeling on account of their disobedience. He proclaims through his suffering and his words the suffering that will come on all of them as a result of this disobedience. Furthermore, "Jeremiah, as a representative of Judah, is made to carry hope for the nation in his own person."<sup>76</sup> In this way Jeremiah's feelings show more fully than words alone the message of God to the people of Israel.

The lack of correspondence between Jeremiah's feelings and those of the people of Israel is not due to any disobedience on Jeremiah's part with regard to following his prophetic calling and listening to the word of the LORD. Instead, the problem lies with the people not listening to the word of the LORD. The people of Israel ought to have been, through their following the Law, showing the surrounding nations about the LORD and thus allow them to be more able to be blessed by the LORD (cf. Gen 12:1-3; Gen 18, Deut 4:5-8). Yet, it is clear that the people have problems even following the commands of the LORD, let alone be concerned with whether the surrounding nations were aware of the LORD and his word. The LORD had much to teach his people through his prophet Jeremiah. The idea of the prophet's use of feelings as a corrective to the people's lack of understanding of their own (prophetic) calling will be explored further in the next sections, as this parenetic function fits well with the understandings of prophecy given by Calvin and Brueggemann.

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<sup>75</sup> O'Connor, "Prophet Jeremiah," 138. Elsewhere she says something similar: "Yet God is with Jeremiah, and he with God in painful wrangling and dramatic arguments. Like Jeremiah, the survivors should be utterly and completely given over to God. This is their only hope, their only security, and the only way forward. If the people cling to God with the tenacity and daring of the prophet, then their relationship with God will be rekindled and they will be reconstituted as a community of God's covenanted people." O'Connor, "Ideal Survivor," 23.

<sup>76</sup> McConville, *Judgement*, 74.

At certain times, Jeremiah's feelings reflect more what the people ought to be feeling than what they actually are feeling. Jeremiah thus has a partial parenetic function in his representing the feelings of the people of Israel. In him, the people see how they ought to be mournful for their sins. The people ought to be mirroring the feelings of sadness that Jeremiah shows them and then turn in remorse and repentance to the LORD. Furthermore, Jeremiah shows the people how to repent: In Jeremiah 15:19 Jeremiah is called to repent, a call to action that applies partially to him and even more so to the people of Israel. In this passage, the representative role of Jeremiah is made more clear. Regarding this passage, McConville argues that Polk understands that "Jeremiah's representative role, far from being diminished, is actually expanded; if he cannot represent the people by interceding, he will now represent them with his life, 'both in what he suffers and in what he is promised.'" <sup>77</sup> When discussing Jeremiah 15 specifically, Carroll notes: "The community's wound is incurable, so the prophet's wound is incurable. Standing for the community, the prophet assumes the role of the people."<sup>78</sup> In his role as one standing in for the community, "the prophet is invited to return to Yahweh, so hope is held out to the exiled community."<sup>79</sup> In this way, the call for Jeremiah to return to the LORD – a call that does not entirely correspond to the actions and high view of Jeremiah given in the rest of the book – is also a call for the people of Israel to return to the LORD. The need for the people to return to the LORD is well documented in the text itself and can thus help the reader better comprehend the disconnect with regard to the need for Jeremiah to repent. Jeremiah shares the feelings of the people but also some of the guilt that brings those feelings. To the degree that he is guilty, he represents the people and cannot represent the LORD. Yet, he bears innocently their feelings, as well: "The prophet so participates in the story of God for his people that he also bears the burden

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<sup>77</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 72 quoting Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 101-2.

<sup>78</sup> Carroll, *Chaos*, 119.

<sup>79</sup> Carroll, *Chaos*, 120.

of their sins.”<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the people of Israel can know better the grace of the LORD by the LORD’s dealing with Jeremiah and have hope for their own restoration. As such, Jeremiah is both in solidarity with the people of Israel and against them, but in all these ways, his feelings are still representative of those of the people of Israel.

The denial of certain feelings and events to Jeremiah provides another complex parallel between the feelings and agents. The text indicates that Jeremiah’s being denied feasting and mourning is intended as a message to the people, and he is specifically told to relay this to the people when they question him about it. Jeremiah is commanded not to marry since the children born in this land, alongside of their parents, will “die of deadly diseases. They will not be mourned or buried but will be like dung lying on the ground. They will perish by sword and famine, and their dead bodies will become food for the birds and the wild animals” (16:4). Jeremiah is also commanded the following by the LORD: “Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy, because I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people” (16:5). The consequence of this withdrawal of blessing is that many will die who will be neither buried nor mourned, and those mourning will not be comforted with food or consoled with a drink (16:6-7). Finally, Jeremiah is commanded not to “enter a house where there is feasting and sit down to eat and drink” (16:8) as the LORD will bring (in Jeremiah’s time) “an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in this place” (16:9). Jeremiah is forbidden to mourn (16:5), as a means of illustrating the great devastation that will be coming on the people. When disaster comes, there will be no one to comfort or console those who have lost loved ones. Jeremiah’s lack of expected feelings would have been noticed by those around them, as they broke with societal norms. This break from norms gives an unsettled feeling to those who notice it. As Stacey notes, “If

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<sup>80</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 163. In this lack of guilt, Jeremiah represents the LORD.

traditional customs break down, security is gone. In this case Jeremiah's action reveals a condition that, by Yahweh's word, is already in being, though not recognized by all. Yahweh has acted, security has disappeared, and Jeremiah's actions proclaim that fact."<sup>81</sup> Jeremiah's inappropriate feelings bring a message, for "the scandalized reaction of those who observed Jeremiah's behavior becomes part of the drama too, for their sense of outrage prefigures the shock that will come upon Israel when these solemn duties have to be abandoned altogether."<sup>82</sup> This psychological element highlights the role of the text for the one hearing it. The reader of the text responds to the text with disappointment, annoyance, frustration, anger, sadness, and/or joy. This invites the reader to respond further and choose whether or not to follow Jeremiah's feelings and his living out the Word of God.

### **Jeremiah's Feelings are his Own and also Represent those of the People of Israel and the LORD**

The previous sections illustrate that Jeremiah's feelings are his own and also represent those of the people of Israel and the LORD. The sheer frequency of the examples that show the sharing of the feelings indicate that this is not coincidence. The textual evidence and the secondary literature point to Jeremiah's feelings as being representative.

Understanding Jeremiah's feelings as being his own while also representing those of the LORD and the people of Israel has been shown to be complicated. Not only is there the challenge of seeing Jeremiah's feelings as representing those of the people of Israel in both solidarity and opposition, there is also the challenge with regard to how his feelings can represent those of different agents at the same time. As the arguments above have shown, it is often assumed that, in being a representative of the LORD, Jeremiah cannot also be representing himself and vice

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<sup>81</sup> Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 141.

<sup>82</sup> Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 141-42.

versa. The possibility that Jeremiah's feelings can represent those of more than one agent can be glimpsed in the few times, mainly during sorrow and anguish, when Jeremiah's feelings, the feelings of the people of Israel, and the LORD's all coincide. O'Connor explains how this is possible:

The book depicts Jeremiah first as one with a unique calling as God's spokesperson, set over against his people. At the same time, it presents the account of Jeremiah's life as emblematic of the fate of the nation. . . . His prophetic vocation reaches in two symbolic directions. On the one hand, the prophet suffers because his vocation is to speak words of judgment to a community utterly unwilling to listen. Their failure to heed him is one of the principal reasons they are in their present predicament. On the other hand, he suffers in ways that echo the fate of that same community, so that his life embodies their pain, mirrors it back to them, and offers them an example of how to survive it.<sup>83</sup>

Jeremiah's prophetic task causes him to suffer with the people but also on account of the people as he proclaims the word of the LORD to them. In this way, Jeremiah represents the LORD while also representing the people of Israel, albeit not always simultaneously on account of the people being far from who the LORD has called them to be.

When talking about Jeremiah as a representative, one runs the risk of assuming that Jeremiah stops also being himself. This is the reason that so much emphasis was put on Jeremiah's feelings being truly his own. Jeremiah being taken over by feelings was one of the problematic elements of the nineteenth-century understanding of prophecy as an ecstatic experience: The prophet loses himself in prophesying. McKane argues for Jeremiah not losing himself in the act of representing the people of Israel: "Even though we may allow that there is a total identification of Jeremiah with his community, this does not lead to the distinction between Jeremiah as a private individual and Jeremiah as a representative, communal intercessor."<sup>84</sup> Polk notes something similar: "To the extent that we find significant signposts in the text indicating the prophet's own voice, there we shall have reason to believe that Jeremiah's 'I' has an

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<sup>83</sup>O'Connor, "Prophet Jeremiah," 137.

<sup>84</sup>McKane, *Jeremiah*, xciii.

individuality that the text does not wish utterly dissolved at the outset into the ‘we’ of the community.”<sup>85</sup> Jeremiah is an individual who is an active member of a community. His feelings are both his own as an individual as well as reflecting those of the people of Israel – the community of which he is a part. When discussing how the prophet is an intercessor, Robinson further explains how Jeremiah is both an individual and one with the nation:

[Jeremiah] temporarily becomes the nation, and makes its needs articulate. The profound sympathy of the prophet with the people, whose doom he may have to foretell owes not a little to this corporate identity—“for the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt.” [Jer 8:21] The principles of prophet “symbolism” enabled a prophet to see the corporate significance of the individual.... The principles of vicarious suffering which they exemplify and articulate is itself an application of social solidarity, in which it may be said to be latent. In truth, the higher purpose of any group is always expressed by a minority within it, sometimes a minority of one. Yet the one or two remain the representatives of the group for the time being.<sup>86</sup>

Jeremiah is representative of the people of Israel, and his feelings are representative of those of the people of Israel. Though Jeremiah’s feelings are representative of the community, his feelings are not any less also his own. The Confessions have illustrated how the very personal feelings they evidence are not only those of Jeremiah; instead Jeremiah’s feelings are representative of the feelings of both the people and the LORD. As Ward puts it, Jeremiah “internalized the suffering of Israel, and in a bold assertion of identification, the suffering of God. The resulting struggle of the heart is described in a series of personal laments that are unique in the prophetic literature.”<sup>87</sup>

Yet, at times Jeremiah’s feelings do not at the same time represent both the feelings of the LORD and those of the the people of Israel.<sup>88</sup> It is at these times that there is a misalignment with

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<sup>85</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 59.

<sup>86</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), 36.

<sup>87</sup> Ward, *Thus Says the Lord*, 119.

<sup>88</sup> For example, the command given to Jeremiah not to rejoice when the people rejoice illustrates how Jeremiah’s feelings differ from those of the people (Jer 16).

the LORD's will. When Jeremiah's feelings mirror those of the LORD and not those of the people, Jeremiah is opposing the people of Israel and teaching them how they ought to feel. When Jeremiah's feelings mirror those of the people of Israel but not those of the LORD he is representing the people of Israel's feelings and not those of the LORD at that time. As the feelings of Israel and the LORD do not always correspond, it is impossible for Jeremiah's feelings at all times to represent both those of the LORD and those of the people. These distinctions then explain how Jeremiah's feelings can be (generally) representative of both the people of Israel and the LORD while they are opposed to each other.

The importance of Jeremiah's feelings as representative of himself while also of others has been highlighted by others. O'Connor indicates how von Rad understands Jeremiah's representation as part of his prophetic task:

When Jeremiah spoke as an individual, he also spoke as a prophet. Thus his personal words also function prophetically. They introduce a new conception of the prophetic office in which the suffering man and the prophet are united so that the prophet witnesses to God even in his broken humanity. For von Rad, Jeremiah's brokenness revealed in the confessions also expresses the need for healing of all the people of Israel. At the same time, the confessions testify to the austerity of God's anger against this people. The result of this view is that, on one level, the "I" of the confessions is the personal voice of the man Jeremiah and, on a second, symbolic level, the "I" acquires the added voice of the community of Israel.<sup>89</sup>

McConville phrases the representational nature of Jeremiah in terms of identification: "The prophet's identification with the people, however, is inseparable from his identification with the will of YHWH, which condemns the people's sin."<sup>90</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel puts it slightly differently: "Through his speaking in the first-person the prophet 'enacts a prophetic identity of identification with both God and people.' He represents one party to the other. This results in a lot of tension by which his life becomes a paradigm for the situation of God and his people."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> O'Connor, *Confessions*, 84.

<sup>90</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 62.

<sup>91</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah*, 45. She footnotes Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 125.

Although none of these explanations goes quite so far as Williams in explicitly stating that Jeremiah's feelings are his own while also representing those of the people of Israel and the LORD,<sup>92</sup> each indicates the importance of Jeremiah's feelings being representative in terms of the prophetic task.

Having now shown that Jeremiah's feelings are representative of Jeremiah's own feelings, those of the people of Israel, and those of the LORD, the next question is whether the representative nature of the prophetic task is the best and only manner of understanding how the feelings play a role in the prophetic task. The disconnect at times between the feelings of Jeremiah and those of the LORD causes there to be difficulties in the application of this understanding of the feelings in the prophetic task. Understanding that feelings also have a paranetic function helps decrease some of the difficulties in understanding the divergence in the feelings of the different agents. Yet, this explanation is still somewhat inadequate. On account of the misalignment of feelings at times, and the suggestion given above that perhaps even this misalignment is part of the prophetic task, the next chapter will ask if perhaps the feelings might be understood differently in terms of the prophetic task. The discussion of feelings above pointed already to the presence of appropriate punishment for law breaking, a concept that fits well with Calvin's understanding of prophecy, which is that prophecy is a reinterpretation of the law. The possibility that Jeremiah brings to the forefront the feelings that ought to be felt as a result of disobedience, such as shame and humiliation, is suggested by Brueggemann's understanding of prophecy, which sees prophecy as a reinterpretation of reality. The understandings of the

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<sup>92</sup> As noted at the beginning, "[The description of a prophet includes] the prophetic responsibility to communicate faithfully the message received from the Lord, as well as the responsibility the prophet bears to the community of which he is a member. It involves the prophet's words, behavior, affections—indeed everything about the prophet as a human being. This perspective of the essential prophetic task that will shape all of our subsequent considerations of his individual, specific actions is that the prophet is fundamentally *a representative*. He represents God, the community of which he is a part, and, of course, himself in ways that are unique to this special office he occupies." Williams, *The Prophet and His Message*, 71.

prophetic task as seen by Calvin and Brueggemann, alongside the understanding of the representative nature of the feelings, have the potential of bringing a fuller dimension into understanding how the feelings relate to the prophetic task. This possibility will be explored further in the next chapter.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: THE REPRESENTATIVE NATURE OF THE PROPHETIC TASK BOTH CONFIRMED AND CHALLENGED BY THE WORKS OF CALVIN AND BRUEGGEMANN

The last few chapters have shown that Jeremiah's feelings are his own while also representing those of the LORD and the people of Israel. This both challenges and expands the understandings of the prophetic task as shown in the introduction.<sup>1</sup> Following Hill's definition, Jeremiah was truly one who "came with a message from God, and his job was to communicate that message."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, this thesis has challenged an overly simplistic understanding of prophecy as only conveying a message in words. Instead, Jeremiah communicated the message of the LORD with his whole being, including his feelings. This understanding of the role of feelings in the prophetic task will be further examined in light of the definitions of prophecy given by Brueggemann and Calvin. We begin first with Calvin and then follow with Brueggemann.

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<sup>1</sup> To refresh, the common understandings of prophecy given at the beginning of this paper at the end of Chapter 1 were generally limited to foretelling the future, an ecstatic event, and/or doing justice. Hill and Walton define a prophet as "the mouthpiece of God, conveying God's opinions, reactions, intentions, and very words." Hill and Walton, *Survey*, 309. Brueggemann defines prophecy as slightly broader: "[prophecy is] the capacity to reconstrue all of lived reality . . . according to the [reality] . . . of the rule of YHWH." Brueggemann, *Introduction*, 103. According to Petersen, prophets "functioned as intermediaries between the human and the divine worlds." Petersen, *Prophetic Literature*, 7. Petersen goes beyond most exegetes in acknowledging that prophets act as representatives of the people to God and God to the people, but none of the above definitions gives any attention to how and whether the feelings are of significance to the prophetic task.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Walton, *Survey*, 313.

### Calvin

Calvin understood prophecy as being a presentation and reinterpretation of the law.<sup>3</sup> This understanding of the prophetic task as being inextricably connected to the law has been supported by others in recent times. Maier, Jassen and Schreiber all explain<sup>4</sup> how Jeremiah would be considered a teacher of Torah. According to Maier, “The portrait of Jeremiah as a teacher of Torah strengthens his significance as a true prophet. . . . Jeremiah teaches the law by applying it to particular situations.”<sup>5</sup> Jassen notes that

The classical prophets are often portrayed as emphasizing the importance of various elements of the law (particularly idolatry and social justice) and exhorting Israel to its proper observance. In this capacity, the prophets neither reveal new law nor reconfigure pentateuchal law, but merely enforce its observance. At the same time, the classical prophets also appear as independent lawgivers.<sup>6</sup>

Schreiber highlights the ways in which Jeremiah explicates the ten commandments. This starts “with his early prophecies, when the young Jeremiah makes an impassioned plea about the oneness of God and the exodus from Egypt, echoing the first commandment, ‘I am Adonai your God who took you out of the land of Egypt.’”<sup>7</sup>

Although Calvin’s understanding of the prophetic task has been confirmed by others, his understanding of prophecy does not appear to focus much on feelings. This is not entirely

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<sup>3</sup> To reiterate a previous quote, Calvin holds that the purpose of prophecy “was to explain the law more and more fully, and also to fit it to the immediate need of the people.” Calvin, *Commentaries*, 82. This includes then a reinterpretation of the law: Calvin understands that prophets explained “the teaching of the law more extensively than was done in the law itself and interpreted more fully what the two tables covered in few words.” Calvin, *Commentaries*, 325.

<sup>4</sup> Christl M. Maier, “Jeremiah as Teacher of Torah,” *Int* 62.1 (2008):24ff. Alex P. Jassen, “The Presentation of the Ancient Prophets as Lawgivers at Qumran,” *JBL* 127.2(2008):312. Even Petersen highlights aspects of Torah in her understanding of prophecy: “prophecy becomes part of Torah, though still subordinate to it. Prophetic literature may consequently be understood as an exposition or admonition based on Torah, rather than an independent word of the deity.” Petersen, *Prophetic Literature*, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Maier, “Jeremiah,” 31.

<sup>6</sup> Jassen, “Presentation,” 312.

<sup>7</sup> Mordecai Schreiber, “Jeremiah as the First Teacher of the Torah,” *CCAR* 55.3 (Summer 2008): 15. He explains the rest of the commandments in the next few pages. Cf. Jeremiah 7:9-10 for the second half of the law.

surprising, as he focuses on the link between prophecy and the law, and law does not immediately seem to be associated with feelings. Law might elicit feelings, such as negative feelings regarding how restrictive law is seen to be or the positive words of joy found in Psalm 119's song of praise to the Law, but the Old Testament law does not dictate much regarding the use of feelings. Nonetheless, the consequences given at the end of Deuteronomy for not following the law do indicate how feelings are indirectly connected to the law: Disobedience would cause much grief and pain for the people. This is confirmed by Gench's understanding of the people's grief:

The source of their grief is clear. The people are sick (8:22). They have assumed that God was their patron (8:19) and made fickle allegiances designed to enhance their own political destiny (chs. 36-39). They have forgotten the poor and the outcast in their midst (7:5-7; 8:10; 22:16-17). They have abused the resources of the earth that were given to them for the flourishing of all the peoples of the land. They have, in other words, abandoned their covenant with the God who brought them out of slavery into a land of abundance in order that they might be a light to all nations (2:4-7; 3:17).<sup>8</sup>

Turning away from God is a source of pain and grief for the people, even if they are not yet fully aware of the consequences of their sin. In looking further at the role of the feelings in Calvin's understanding of prophecy, the important role of law in prophecy will be highlighted but the focus will be primarily upon what Calvin has to say in his commentaries on Jeremiah with regard to the role of feelings in this prophetic book, including if and what type of representational function they have.

Calvin highlights that Jeremiah began his prophecy during the reign of Josiah, when "the state of things was very confused: the Book of the Law was unknown."<sup>9</sup> In light of this, Jeremiah's task as a prophet would very much be to bring the law (and word of the LORD) to the

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<sup>8</sup> Gench, "Jeremiah 8:18-9:3," 74.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations* (trans. and ed. John Owen; 5 vols; Christian Classics Ethereal Library: Grand Rapids; cited 3 April 2012). Online <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom17> ; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom18>; . . . [calcom19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom19); . . . [calcom20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom20); <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom21>, 1:23.

people of Israel. This law had been made blatantly obvious to them, as Calvin points out in his commentary on 44:3,6:

God had *sent* them Prophets who stretched forth their hands to them to draw them from their errors. For had they never been warned, their condemnation would have been just; for God had once shewn to them by his Law what was right. The teaching, then, of the Law ought to have been sufficient for all ages. But when God had never *ceased* to send Prophets, one after another, it was a sign of hopeless obstinacy to reject so many and so constant warnings.<sup>10</sup>

The people thus ought to have known better. It was Jeremiah's task as a prophet to deliver this truth to the people, despite the hardships it might cost him.<sup>11</sup> Despite all of Jeremiah's efforts, his work was in vain. Because the people were so corrupt, they were unaware of their sinfulness, as Calvin says in his commentary on 6:15: "In their very shame, they knew not what it was to be touched by any shamefacedness."<sup>12</sup> This task of proclaiming the Law to the people was very much using the spoken word: "That the Jews then might know that they were chastised by God's hand and by his just vengeance, it was necessary that this should have been declared to them"<sup>13</sup> Amidst this task, Jeremiah would endure many difficulties, which would give raise to a significant amount of emotions. How then does Calvin understand the role of the feelings in the midst of this? When one reviews Calvin's comments on all the references to feelings given in Chapter 2 above, the following are the things that can be noticed in terms of Calvin's understanding of the place of the feelings in the prophetic task.

Calvin's focus on the different feelings found in the text is primarily on their rhetorical function. The feelings are regarded as part of the means by which Jeremiah proclaimed the law to

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<sup>10</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:578-79.

<sup>11</sup> In his commentary on 5:19: "In these words is briefly comprehended the duty of a true Prophet, even to turn his eyes from men, to heed neither favor nor hatred, but to fix his attention only on the truth, not only to approve of what is right, but also to defend it at the peril of his life, and further, not to spare vices, but freely to reprove them." Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:309.

<sup>12</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 1:359.

<sup>13</sup> Commentary on 15:14-15. Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:289.

the people. As the commentary on 25:37-38 points out: “the Prophet used [both] indignation and wrath in order that he might fill the wicked with more terror; for as they were obstinate in their wickedness, so they were not moved except God doubled his strokes and set forth the extremity of his wrath.”<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah also rejected the people at times, turning abruptly from his talking to them to talking to the LORD: “Had [the Prophet] spoken calmly and in uniform order to the people, his address would have been less forcible, than by speaking to them as it were angrily and by severely reproofing them, and then immediately by turning from them and addressing God as though bidding adieu to men.”<sup>15</sup> The feelings presented in the text are about the message being more effectively understood by the one hearing the text. For example, in discussing 31:7, Calvin notes that Jeremiah uses feelings as part of helping Israel experience the message: In order “that his doctrine might more effectually enter into their hearts, he exhorts them to rejoice, to shout for joy, and to sing; and not only them, but also strangers.”<sup>16</sup>

Jeremiah’s feelings are thus seen as a part of conveying the prophetic message. With regard to 15:19, Calvin argues: “Had then the Prophet only performed the duties of his office, the ungodly might have derided his insensibility, but he wished to set forth his own infirmity, his sorrows, his fears, and his anxieties, that he might thus lead the Jews to view things aright.”<sup>17</sup> Further, Calvin notes that “The Prophet at the same time shows with what feelings he exercised his prophetic office.”<sup>18</sup> However, Calvin clearly distinguishes between Jeremiah’s feelings representing those of himself and those of the LORD. When Jeremiah is filled with the Spirit, his

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<sup>14</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 3:326.

<sup>15</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:291. Similarly, Calvin notes with regard to 9:1 that “doubtless the Prophet had no delight in such comparisons, as though he wished rhetorically to embellish his discourse; but as he saw that their hearts were inflexible, and that a common way of speaking would be despised, or would have no weight and authority, he was constrained to use such similitudes.” Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 1:492.

<sup>16</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:68.

<sup>17</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:306.

<sup>18</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:188-89.

feelings are from the LORD. However, Jeremiah sometimes falls prey to his own emotions, which is problematic in his working out the prophetic task.<sup>19</sup> In this way the feelings that Jeremiah expresses are seen as being both his own and yet not entirely his own. In his commentary on 6:11, Calvin notes the following with regard to Jeremiah's declaration that he was "full of the indignation of God:"

He speaks here no doubt according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as though he said, that he did not announce what his own mind suggested, but what was dictated by the Spirit of God. This indignation is, in short, to be applied to what was taught. . . . He says, that *he was wearied with restraint*; as though he said, that so great was the impulse of God's wrath, that it could not be withheld from breaking out into vehemence. And hence we learn, as I have said, that the Prophet declares no other thing than that he was not moved by his own indignation, or by any feeling of his own nature, but that he of necessity followed where he was led by the hidden influence of God's Spirit, lest what he taught might be despised.<sup>20</sup>

Jeremiah's own feelings have been somewhat repressed and have been, to a certain degree, replaced by feelings superimposed on him by the LORD. Calvin explicitly states this in his commentary on 18:23: "The feelings of the flesh were wholly subdued, or at least brought under subjection; and farther, he pleaded not a private cause."<sup>21</sup> In his text regarding 15:17, Calvin argues that as Jeremiah, "had been inflamed with zeal for God, we cannot really execute the commission given to us unless we be fired with indignation, that is, unless zeal for God burns inwardly, for the prophetic office requires such a fervor."<sup>22</sup> Calvin conveys that Jeremiah loses a part of himself in the midst of the prophetic office; yet, Jeremiah was not merely a puppet in the

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Calvin's commentary on 15:18. The Prophet "was not wholly exempt from sorrow and fear and other feelings of the flesh. For we must always distinguish, when we speak of the prophets and the apostles, between the truth, which was pure, free from every imperfection, and their own persons, as they commonly say, or themselves. Nor were, they so perfectly renewed but that some remnant of the flesh still continued in them. So then Jeremiah was in himself disturbed with anxiety and fear, and affected with weariness, and wished to shake off the burden which he felt so heavy on his shoulders. He was then subject to these feelings, that is, as to himself; yet his doctrine was free from every defect, for the Holy Spirit guided his mind, his thoughts, and his tongue, so that there was in it nothing human." Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:303.

<sup>20</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 1:352.

<sup>21</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:454.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:302.

midst of this. In his commentary on 4:19, Calvin argues that Jeremiah “spoke in earnest because he saw God’s vengeance as though it were already made evident. And this availed not a little to gain credit to what he had stated, so that the Jews might know that he did not speak of himself, nor act a part as players do on the stage.”<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah’s feelings remained still his own, as well as being part of the prophetic message. Calvin notes that “the Prophets never uttered a word but as the Spirit guided their tongues, and then that they had no regard to themselves, and, thirdly, that they were so calm and composed in their ardor that they were not, guilty of excess.”<sup>24</sup> Calvin clearly points out that the feelings themselves were part of the prophetic message being conveyed to the people, affections that were purposely conveyed in an orderly manner.

Calvin found individual feelings at times problematic. For example, he highlights how Baruch is at fault with regard to his feelings. Although Calvin does note that some would argue that Baruch’s sorrow was a response to the judgment,<sup>25</sup> Calvin personally believes that the fear was more likely related to his own personal safety.<sup>26</sup> Thus Calvin finds Baruch’s feelings to be inappropriate: “There is an implied reproach in this complaint; for it is the same thing as though he called in question God’s justice, and charged him with too much severity.”<sup>27</sup> Since Calvin sees emotions as often being excessive and inappropriate, this raises questions about how one’s emotions can be part of the prophetic task. Calvin warns his listeners to “check our feelings, that they may not break out thus unreasonably. . . . And should it happen at any time to us to feel such emotions within us, let not such a temptation discourage us; but as far as we can and as God

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<sup>23</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 1:241.

<sup>24</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:396.

<sup>25</sup> Calvin: “For there is no doubt but that [Baruch] regarded his country with becoming devotion, and that he was solicitous concerning the worship of God, and for the safety of the people whom God had chosen out of all nations, and adopted.” Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:621-22.

<sup>26</sup> Calvin: “Baruch, as he feared for his life, was affected with too much grief, so that he wished to be freed from all trouble, and that God was offended with this extreme fear, and gave a command to his Prophet to reprove Baruch, as he deserved.” Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:622.

<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:632.

gives us grace, let us strive to resist it, until the firmness of our faith at length gains the ascendancy, as we see was the case with Jeremiah.”<sup>28</sup> The dangers of not keeping one’s emotions reigned in can be seen with regard to the oppressors of Jeremiah in 37:15: “Here we may notice how much opposed is wrath to just and peaceable decisions; for if we wish to be right and equitable judges, self-government is especially necessary. When, therefore, our minds are inflamed with anger or wrath, it is impossible that any rectitude or humanity should prevail.”<sup>29</sup>

Yet feelings can also be positive, as Calvin notes with regard to Jeremiah:

[Jeremiah] seems here to have been more angry than he ought to have been, for revenge is a passion unbecoming the children of God. How was it, then, that the Prophet was so indignant against the people that he desired revenge? . . . It is certain that the Prophet had no regard to himself when he thus spoke; but he dismissed every regard for himself, and had regard only to the cause of God. . . . He was in a manner freed from the influence of human feelings, and had put off whatever might have disturbed him and led him away from moderation.<sup>30</sup>

The distinction between affections and emotions, which was made already at the beginning, might help in understanding how feelings can be positive in certain situations and negative in others. Acting out one’s emotions, without questioning how and if this reflects the will of God, is clearly wrong; instead, one’s affections ought to be used positively as part of the prophetic message.<sup>31</sup>

Calvin highlights the feelings of the LORD in the text as being a way that he more effectively displays his message. For example, the words of the LORD in 31:20, “Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him” are understood by Calvin in the following way:

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Commentary on 20:18 Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 3:49.

<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:401.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:291-92.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Calvin’s Commentary on 12:5: The Prophet was not “carried away by blind zeal when he disputed with God, but that he thus spoke through a divine fervor: he was indeed influenced by God, in order that he might by this mode of speaking more fully rouse an obstinate people.” Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:132.

Here God ascribes to himself human feelings; for the bowels are moved and make a noise under immoderate grief; and we sigh and groan deeply, when we are pressed down by great sorrow. So also when God expresses the feelings of a tender father, he says that his bowels made a noise, because he wished to receive his people again into favor. This, indeed, does not properly belong to God; but as he could not otherwise express the greatness of his love towards us, he thus speaks in condescension to our capacities.<sup>32</sup>

The feelings of the LORD depicted in the text are to raise the awareness of the people to their sinfulness in breaking the law. Therefore, although Calvin understands that Jeremiah's feelings ought to be very much directed by the LORD and Jeremiah can express the LORD's feelings to the people, there is no indication that Calvin believes that the prophet represents the LORD.

Although Calvin does not show how Jeremiah represents the LORD, he does illustrate how Jeremiah, even sometimes with his feelings, represents the people of Israel and others. In chapter 48, Calvin highlights Jeremiah's representational nature. With regard to Moab, he notes that "The Prophet still speaks in the person of others, and according to their feelings and not his own."<sup>33</sup> Further in his commentary on chapter 48, Calvin explains that the Prophet "might represent to the life the ruin of Moab, he mentions their howling, crying, and complaints. He then says, I will howl, cry aloud, and with a trembling voice complain, as those who are grievously oppressed with evils. . . . Thus the Prophet assumes the character of such persons, in order that he might more fully set forth the extreme calamity of that nation."<sup>34</sup> Jeremiah not only represents the people of Moab in the text, but also the people of God. Calvin notes that Jeremiah "personated the whole community, and thus reprov'd them [in 10:24,25] for their insensibility, because they were not more attentive to the approaching judgment of God. In short, the Prophet here teaches them how they must all have felt, were they not wholly blinded."<sup>35</sup> Just prior to this Calvin notes that

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<sup>32</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:110.

<sup>33</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 5:52.

<sup>34</sup> Commentary on 48:31. Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 5:41.

<sup>35</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:60.

[Jeremiah] did not grieve on his own account; but, as I have said, he represents the grief which the whole people ought to have felt, which yet they did not feel at all. As then they were so stupid, and proudly derided God and his threatenings, the Prophet shews to them, as it were in a mirror, what grievous and bitter lamentation awaited them. We must then bear in mind that the Prophet speaks not here according to the feeling which the people had, for they were so stupified that they felt nothing; but that he speaks of what they ought to have felt.<sup>36</sup>

In this way, the prophet's representation has a parenetic function, teaching the people how they ought to feel.<sup>37</sup> It is not surprising, considering Calvin's understanding of the prophet as a teacher/conveyer of the law that the feelings would also be part of this teaching function. Yet, Jeremiah is not merely a teacher, as Calvin points out in his commentary on 6:29, "In this place the Prophet no doubt denounces a final judgment, and is a herald of lamentation, because the prevailing impiety was irreclaimable. He does not then perform here the duty of a teacher, but in a hostile manner denounces ruin."<sup>38</sup> Jeremiah's teaching is part of his prophetic task.

One final point worth mentioning is Calvin's focus on applying the text to the contemporary situation of his own day. For example, the prayers that close each lesson give an immediate application of the texts to today. Calvin believed that the text ought to be applied: "We may hence gather a profitable instruction. Let it in the first place be observed, that nothing is so displeasing to God as this headstrong presumption, that is, when we seek to appear innocent, while our own conscience condemns us."<sup>39</sup> He discusses how and if we might pray that wrath be poured on our enemies.<sup>40</sup> With regard to the feelings, he highlights in his commentary

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<sup>36</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:46.

<sup>37</sup> Another example is on his commentary on 8:21 "[the Prophet] says at last, that he was *astonished*. The astonishment with which he was seized he no doubt sets down as being the opposite of the people's torpor and insensibility, for they had no fear for themselves." Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 1:489.

<sup>38</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 1:435.

<sup>39</sup> Commentary on Jeremiah 2:35. Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 1:147.

<sup>40</sup> Calvin argues that "When we pray for any evil on the wicked, we ought not to act on private grounds; for he who has a regard to himself, will ever be led away by too strong an impulse; and even when our prayers are calmly and rightly formed, we are yet ever wrong, when we consult our private advantages or redress our own injuries. . . . But as God bids us to suspend our judgment, inasmuch as we cannot surely know what will take place tomorrow, we ought not to imitate indiscriminately the Prophet in praying God to

on 31:7 that “joy ought not to render us secure, so as to make faith idle, but it ought rather to stimulate us to prayer.”<sup>41</sup> With regard to despair, he highlights that Jeremiah 21:12, which talks about the punishment that Judah deserves, “reminds us that we ought not to rush headlong into despair when some great evil is suspended over us, and when God shews that we cannot wholly escape punishment. For there is nothing more unreasonable than that the fear by which God restores us to himself should be the cause of despair.”<sup>42</sup>

Although Calvin highlights the rhetorical effectiveness of feelings, including even seeing in them at times a representative role, he generally considers the feelings as problematic and needing to be avoided: e.g., “Let us learn to check our feelings, that they may not break out thus unreasonably . . . should it happen at any time to us to feel such emotions within us, let not such a temptation discourage us; but as far as we can and as God gives us grace, let us strive to resist it.”<sup>43</sup> As such, Calvin’s commentary is helpful for seeing another perspective on the role of feelings and for helping us understand how the feelings are potentially part of Jeremiah’s prophetic teaching. Ultimately, however, Calvin’s understanding is inadequate with regard to the role of the feelings for the Christian today, especially on account of his overall disdain for feelings.

### **Brueggemann**

The concept of prophecy as “the capacity to reconstrue all of lived reality,” an understanding of prophecy that Brueggemann holds, seems to correspond well to an understanding of the prophet

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destroy and scatter ungodly men of whom we despair; for, as it has been stated, we are not certain what has been decreed in heaven. In short, whosoever is disposed, after the example of Jeremiah, to pray for a curse on his enemies, must be ruled by the same spirit.” Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:449.

<sup>41</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:69.

<sup>42</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 3:67.

<sup>43</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 3:49.

as having a parenetic function. Yet, just as the representative nature of the prophetic task is problematic on the occasions when Jeremiah differs significantly from either the LORD or the people in his feelings, difficulties also occur in this understanding presented by Brueggemann when Jeremiah's feelings are the *same* as those of the people. In these cases, Jeremiah cannot be presenting another reality. The correspondence and conflict between the different feelings and those feeling them remains problematic. Furthermore, understanding prophecy as presenting a different reality also creates problem in terms of feelings, as this understanding does not require any inclusion of the feelings in the presentation, even if the understanding does not explicitly exclude them.<sup>44</sup>

First it should be noted that the reality that Brueggemann sees being construed is closely connected to the Torah and law. As Brueggemann himself puts it, "The literature of the prophetic canon, in very different circumstances and in very different modes, seeks to do in parallel fashion what the Torah seeks to do, namely, to imagine, articulate, and evoke a world ordered by and responsive to YHWH, the creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of Israel's covenant."<sup>45</sup> In this way, Brueggemann agrees to some degree with the understanding of Calvin. Yet, he goes further, giving room in his understanding not only for the prophet to have a teaching function but also other functions, such as being an example or a non-conformist. For example, Jeremiah's mourning was a breaking with societal norms because normally the dead deserved to be mourned. Yet, by refusing to participate in these ostentious norms, as Calvin would put it, Jeremiah presents a different picture. As Stacey puts it, "If traditional customs break down, security is gone. In this case Jeremiah's action reveals a condition that, by Yahweh's word, is

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<sup>44</sup> However, the feelings can be implicitly excluded since the focus is on something else: e.g., "The only thing that matters about the prophetic word is relevance" (Patrick D. Miller, foreword to Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones*, ix).

<sup>45</sup> Brueggemann, *Introduction*, 102.

already in being, though not recognized by all. Yahweh has acted, security has disappeared, and Jeremiah's actions proclaim that fact."<sup>46</sup> Schreiber also highlights how Jeremiah is actively engaged in presenting a different reality to the people of Israel: "The prophet is dedicated to changing people's habits, and awakening their better nature."<sup>47</sup> The prophet is thus seen as one who presents a different picture of how the people of Israel ought to be relating to the LORD.

The understanding of Brueggemann, especially in its explanation for the conflicting feelings present amongst the participants, can add to the understanding of the prophetic task given in this paper thus far. In fact, the misalignment of the feelings of Jeremiah with those of the people are given an even stronger focus with this understanding. Jeremiah contrasts the reality of what is with that of what should be. This understanding is possible if one sees the prophet's feelings as being representative, but it is a more obvious connection to make when the prophet is seen as the one not simply representing and/or mirroring the current situation but as one who is showing the standard of how it ought to be, irrelevant of how the people are acting. Yet, this is still a limited understanding of the prophetic role. What about the prophet's feelings in response to the LORD, especially feelings that appear to strongly contradict what one expects of a prophet, a phenomenon that Calvin suggests frequently occurs? Brueggemann's understanding of the prophetic task has no answer for that and is thus ultimately an inadequate means for describing how the feelings can function within the prophetic task.

Furthermore, the understanding of Brueggemann with regard to the feelings present in the text can be seen to be problematic, as shown by Talstra's critique of Brueggemann's theology with regard to pain and suffering. With regard to the divine dilemma between wrath and mercy, Talstra argues that "Brueggemann describes the conflicting experiences of liberation and exile as

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<sup>46</sup> Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 141.

<sup>47</sup> Schreiber and Lerner, "Was Jeremiah a Failure?," n.p.

well as of divine wrath and mercy as Israel's experience of ambiguity in the character of God."<sup>48</sup>

This understanding of God creates both advantages but also strong disadvantages:

Brueggemann strongly emphasises the idiom of the Bible in general as "speech about God."<sup>49</sup> In his view this means that "Yahweh lives in, with and under this speech" and that we, as its readers, should feel free to continue to speak that critical language. The advantage is that Brueggemann is able to make general statements about God as a literary character, such as: 'God has passion' or 'Israel has to live with the problematic character of God'. But if one considers his statement that 'God lives in this speech', this theology also has its limitations: the language should do the work. God can not go beyond being a character in the plot of the biblical texts.<sup>50</sup>

In this way, Brueggemann creates a picture of a text that is not dealing with *real* feelings, but instead feelings that have been superimposed on a text whenever it is most functional to do so. What is presented is disengaged from the prophet himself and is instead something that is more related to the authors of the text alongside of the reader/hearer of the text. This prevents discussion on how the feelings of the prophet himself might actually have had an effect on those who heard the prophetic word, and one cannot fully answer the question of how the feelings are part of the prophetic task.

Although Brueggemann's understanding of the reality in the text creates difficulties, his understanding of prophecy as a reinterpretation of reality still helps create a fuller understanding of the feelings in the prophetic task. The misalignment of the feelings of Jeremiah against those of the people, a phenomenon that seems to be far from any kind of representation, is much better explained by arguing that Jeremiah was presenting how things ought to be to the Israelites. However, as it has been shown that Jeremiah's feelings often correspond with those of the people of Israel and thus cannot be presenting a different reality, the understanding of Brueggemann provides challenges in explaining this disconnect. After all, when Jeremiah's feelings go against those of the LORD or when there is complaint, such as that of Baruch so extensively presented

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 317-24 in Talstra, "Exile and Pain," 170.

<sup>49</sup> Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 713 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Talstra, "Exile and Pain," 177.

by Calvin, an understanding of the prophetic task as being a reinterpretation of reality is inadequate. Furthermore, such an understanding does not address well the role of feelings in the text.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the positive elements of Brueggemann's understanding of prophecy can be incorporated into an understanding of the prophetic task as representational. Seeing Jeremiah's representation as showing how one ought to feel (a different reality) can also be included in the working definition of the representative nature of the prophetic task used by this paper.

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<sup>51</sup> Brueggemann's commentaries, like those of Calvin, are certain to provide more information with regard to his understanding to the feelings; however, despite his works being likely more nuanced and capable of showing better the role of feelings in the prophetic task, they will not be discussed further in this paper on account of a lack of space. This is an area that could use further research.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONFIRMATION AND ELUCIDATION FROM OTHER PROPHETS

The previous chapters have shown that Jeremiah communicated the message of the LORD with his whole being, including his feelings. This chapter will show briefly how Jeremiah's words and actions also play a role in the representative nature of the prophetic task. Moreover, the essential nature of the prophet's feelings within the prophetic task will be confirmed and elucidated by an examination of other prophets.

### **The Prophet as Representative**

A definition of the prophetic task that focuses on the representative nature of the prophet implicitly suggests that the representation is all-encompassing. Jeremiah's representation is done with all facets of his being, including the feelings, as has been shown above. This suggests that the prophet's representation is accomplished not only through his feelings, but also through words and actions. As Williams puts it, "[the prophetic task] involves the prophet's words, behavior, affections—indeed everything about the prophet as a human being."<sup>1</sup> Polk says it in a slightly different way:

[Jeremiah] becomes who he is by word, deed, and what he suffers, and both the process of the becoming and the product at given points along the way signify and interpret things beyond himself. It was said that Jeremiah's life interprets his message. He is a metaphor for God's word. Through him we see into God's pathos and purpose and into the plight and destiny of the people.<sup>2</sup>

The prophet's message is brought forth in a variety of ways. Up to this point, the focus has been on the feelings; nonetheless, the prophet also proclaims the prophetic message as representative through words and actions, as the following indicates.

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, *The Prophet and His Message*, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 170-71.

### Through Words<sup>3</sup>

The role of words and speaking in the prophetic task appears obvious from the definitions of prophecy given at the beginning of this thesis, as well as from most of the definitions of prophecy, which focus specifically on words and speaking.<sup>4</sup> Words are the means by which the biblical prophets are known to people today. Yet, it is not always entirely clear who has written the words nor who is being represented by the words. After all, the use of words to convey a message does not necessarily imply that these words are representative of Jeremiah himself, as well as of the people and the LORD. With regard to Jeremiah representing himself, when Jeremiah is the one speaking, one implicitly assumes that the words given in the text are his own or are, at the least, the words that those who have written the text have intentionally placed in his mouth.<sup>5</sup> Yet, by virtue of the nature of the biblical text and Jeremiah's prophetic office, these words are also clearly those of the LORD. Jeremiah's words are framed by the phrases of כה יהוה (thus says the LORD) and נאם יהוה (declaration of the LORD). Thus, when he is speaking, Jeremiah is speaking as representative of the LORD. Yet, sometimes when he speaks, he is speaking for himself. This is most obvious when Jeremiah is speaking in response to the LORD, as in the Confessions (e.g., Jeremiah 15:16). In this way, Jeremiah can be representative

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<sup>3</sup> Williams, in *The Prophet and His Message*, explains further how the prophet through words represents himself (98-99), God (74-80), and his community (88-90).

<sup>4</sup> As Soulen and Soulen note in their definition of prophecy, the Greek, *prophētēs*, literally means "one who speaks for another." The full definition, as given in ch. 1, was "[prophecy] is an utterance, whether originally oral or written of a prophet (Gk: *prophetes*, lit.: 'one who speaks for another'). In biblical tradition, a prophet (Heb: *nabi*') was one who proclaimed the will or mind of God." Soulen and Soulen, "Prophecy," *Handbook*, 142.

<sup>5</sup> The only means by which Jeremiah's words would not be his own is in the case that Jeremiah has been possessed. Despite the use of "ecstatic" in the definition of prophecy given above, the Old Testament does not give any indication that prophets are possessed or that what they say can be understood as being not their own voice.

of both himself and the LORD; yet, like with the feelings, Jeremiah does not always represent both at the same time.

Jeremiah's words also represent the people of Israel. As seen earlier, Jeremiah appears at times to express the feelings and voice of the people. For example, this can be seen in Reventlow's understanding of the Confessions as being "liturgical pieces in the context of the cult," spoken "in the name of the people."<sup>6</sup> Yet, Jeremiah's condemnation of the people's disobedience makes it difficult to understand Jeremiah's words as also being representative of those of the people. However, Jeremiah speaking against the people is not an indication of a lack of representation. It merely indicates that Jeremiah's words do not always represent the current actions and words of the people. Like with the feelings, Jeremiah's words sometimes indicate how the people ought to be responding and what they ought to be saying.<sup>7</sup>

One final question regarding how words are part of the representative nature of the prophetic text relates to the concept that the final form of the text contains multiple voices. As mentioned earlier, Carroll argues that "one person cannot assume so many contradictory positions or represent so multiple a set of disparate values. . . . The theopolitics of the book militate against the fictional representation of it as the *single* voice of Jeremiah the prophet."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Reventlow, *Liturgie*, 14-15, quoted in Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints," 192.

<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy to observe that the LORD's words to Jeremiah also include the people. In Jeremiah 15, the LORD asks things of Jeremiah that are indirectly also a request of the people. The LORD calls Jeremiah to repent in 15:19 and in so doing, Jeremiah would be an example to the people.

<sup>8</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 106. With regard to the Confessions, Carroll specifically says "No interpretation of the confessions can dogmatically insist on only one strand of meaning being taken from the material, but the liturgical nature of the poems should warn against using the poems too precipitately to reconstruct a biographical account of the life of Jeremiah. Too many factors and features are at work in the poem to facilitate such an approach, and the only adequate interpretative method is to develop a multiplex hermeneutic of the confessions." Carroll, *Chaos*, 130. Elsewhere he says "It is very difficult to determine whether only one level of representation is present in the text or many levels portray prophet, community and exilic elements. This polyvalent material therefore allows a wide latitude of interpretation: it is the outpouring of Jeremiah's own confessions, it is the redactors' shaping of those confessions, it is the community's response to the tragedy, it is the laments of various sixth-century groups, it is a later presentation of the community's responses to grief under the image of the prophet, or it is even a theologization of the divine suffering brought about by the destruction of the people. It would be foolish to

Yet, within Carroll's claim that such a representation is physically impossible, he implicitly acknowledges that the text as we now have it presents a Jeremiah who is capable of representing several different voices at one time. In doing so, he further illustrates how the words of the person of Jeremiah presented in the biblical text appear to represent not only himself but also God and the community of Israel.

### Through Actions<sup>9</sup>

An understanding of the prophet as representative also includes the actions of the prophet. The presence of narratives in the prophetic books accentuates the fact that the prophetic task is more than merely words. Evans, in talking about prophets, notes that "in the Old Testament a prophet is somebody who is called by God to perform a task or a set of tasks for him, and in particular to deliver a message from him."<sup>10</sup> Although this definition tends toward separating the message from the actions, Evans acknowledges that actions are very much a part of the prophet's task, for the prophets were responsible "by the way they lived out their own lives to show what it meant to be in relationship with God."<sup>11</sup> The prophet actively conveys his message in various ways:

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insist that only one meaning should be drawn from the material; the language is too formal and, as with so much poetry, too ambiguous to be on solid ground if only one interpretation is taken." Carroll, *Chaos*, 260-61.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, in *The Prophet and His Message* explains further how the prophet through actions represents himself (99-100), God (80-83), and his community (90-94).

<sup>10</sup> Evans, *Prophets*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> The quote in its entirety shows even more the focus on the message being more than words and the tendency to separate the tasks of the prophet from the message: "Nor should we see a prophet's work as consisting only of bringing messages from God, whether proclamations of judgment or of hope, or lessons about what God was like and what were his particular requirements of Israel at that time. They were also responsible to pray for the people, and by the way they lived out their own lives to it meant to be in relationship with God." Evans, *Prophets*, 19-20. The tension between words and tasks in bringing the message that Evans creates is most likely unintentional, though, inasmuch as she also points out that visions and symbolic actions are among the ways in which the prophet gets his message across Evans, *Prophets*, 24-29.

through visions, symbolic actions, parables and illustrations, laments and hymns.<sup>12</sup> Fretheim also highlights how the prophet embodied the message through his actions:

God calls the prophet to take the word received and embody that word from the moment of the call onward. The prophet, in effect, is called to function as an ongoing theophany. In the prophet we see a development from the more transient messenger of God to a more extended appearance of the Word of God in human form. One can thus now speak, not only of the participation of God in the appearance of the human, but also in the *history* of the human. The story of God is lived out in the story of the prophet.<sup>13</sup>

The prophet and his actions are thus subsumed to the word of God. The embodiment of the message in the prophet's actions pointed to God's direct involvement in history<sup>14</sup> and, from a New Testament perspective, points forward to the incarnation of Christ.

Actions are a powerful means of proclaiming a message. Fontaine argues that along with being a visual aid to the message, the actions in that culture would have been seen as having power on their own: "Prophets would carry out unusual or unexpected acts that became 'visual aids' illustrating their messages. In all likelihood, such behavior was influenced by both the concepts underlying 'sympathetic magic' and the belief that words, like actions, had magical power to create the very thing to which they referred."<sup>15</sup> Although it is unlikely today that anyone would argue for any kind of sympathetic magic in actions, this does not negate how effective actions can be with regard to the prophetic message then or today. Nonetheless, actions today can sometimes be seen as little more than visual aids, and thus actions are to a great extent separated from the message. Such a tendency was not true of Jeremiah's time. As Schüngel-Straumann puts it:

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<sup>12</sup> Evans, *Prophets*, 24-29.

<sup>13</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 151-52.

<sup>14</sup> God's direct involvement in the lives of his people is mentioned frequently in the Psalms, such as Psalm 22:19-26.

<sup>15</sup> Carole R. Fontaine, "Hosea," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB8; ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 51.

Biblical andromorphisms or gynomorphisms are often difficult to understand today. Is such a language of imagery perhaps provisional, and should it be recast into abstract and intellectual forms as quickly as possible? By no means! . . . The more concrete the images, the greater their power. The more abstract and intellectual an image of God becomes, the less effective it is; it pales and often no longer speaks to human beings. Against all types of one-sided spiritualization, we should cling to this graphic, drastic way of speaking, because the images say more thus than when they are dissolved into concepts.<sup>16</sup>

As the prophet acted out his message, those who heard and saw it would experience and know the message more fully. This allowed the message not only to be heard but also seen and experienced. The saying “actions speak louder than words” emphasizes further how the actions of the prophet would further validate the message being spoken by the prophet. Through Jeremiah’s repenting and listening to God, in his being punished and imprisoned, the people are confronted with a message that has a direct effect on the messenger’s life.

Jeremiah’s prophetic actions are illustrated in numerous places in the book of Jeremiah. This paper has already noted actions, such as weeping, that are associated with feelings. On top of this, there are Jeremiah’s sign-acts: e.g., his burying the linen belt (Jer 13), his visit to the potter (Jer 18), and his being imprisoned (Jer 37).<sup>17</sup> These actions contribute to the prophetic message in various ways. The specific commands that the LORD gives with regard to Jeremiah not mourning or feasting in Jeremiah 16 illustrate further how the way that Jeremiah acts is considered relevant for expressing his prophetic message. Even Jeremiah’s obedience is one of the actions that provides an example to the people. After all, obedience

issues necessarily out of the proper fear of God, and such obedience is a matter of the whole person. It is a catena of emotions, attitudes, thoughts, purposes, and concrete actions, all of which are things people ‘do’ and in which the psycho-physical unity of the

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<sup>16</sup> Helen Schüngel-Straumann, “God as Mother in Hosea 11,” in *A Feminist Companion* (ed. Brenner), 216.

<sup>17</sup> Rosenberg gives specific examples of how Jeremiah acts out the prophetic message: “Jeremiah is called upon to act out mimetically some aspect of the nations fate: standing at the Temple gate (7:2), wearing and destroying a loincloth (13:1-7), refraining from marriage (16:1-4), witnessing a potter at his wheel (18:1-4), smashing a potter’s jug (19:1-12), holding forth a winecup of wrath (25:15-17), attaching a yoke to his neck with thongs (27:1-4), and so on.” Rosenberg, “Jeremiah,” 187.

human being remains indissoluble. Yet while this obedient understanding (seeing, hearing, and having heart) are activities people can do, they are also, as suggested above, things they can avoid doing.<sup>18</sup>

In all of the actions, Jeremiah is personally involved. Nonetheless, at times, the actions symbolize what God will do (e.g., the linen belt<sup>19</sup>) or what will happen to the people (e.g., Jeremiah's imprisonment).

Jeremiah's representation of the prophetic message through actions and as a representative of himself, the people of Israel and the LORD is not always easy to illustrate. The assumption is made that, just as Jeremiah was not a sort of puppet in what he was speaking, he was also not a puppet who was merely acting out the actions of another. The LORD's commanding of Jeremiah to do something is further indication of Jeremiah's free will in completing these actions: If he could be simply overpowered, there would be no need for a command. The complexity of the prophetic person and prophetic task is explained by Polk: "It is no small thing to observe that it is people's nature as *intentional agents* that defines in a fundamental way their personhood, while making them the inscrutably complex, interesting, and creative creatures they are, or can be. People come to be who they are through their actions, and by their actions they are known – to the extent that these actions can be understood."<sup>20</sup> At the same time that Jeremiah's actions highlight the person of Jeremiah, they are also at times representative of the LORD, as illustrated earlier (e.g., in Jer 13 Jeremiah acts out, through the linen cloth, how the sins of the people will destroy them).

Furthermore, just as with feelings, Jeremiah acts out how the people of Israel ought to act. As mentioned earlier, Jeremiah's struggle with his task as a prophet mirrors the struggle that

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<sup>18</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 44.

<sup>19</sup> The sign-acts in which Jeremiah is not himself acting – just conveying an action – are not any less a part of the prophetic message. They are, however, less representative.

<sup>20</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 38.

Israel had with their prophetic calling<sup>21</sup> as the “people of God.” Furthermore, the manner in which the LORD deals with Jeremiah presents a picture of hope to the Israelites: The people of Israel can know better the grace of the LORD by the LORD’s dealing with Jeremiah and have hope for their own restoration. This was seen explicitly in the call to repent in 15:19<sup>22</sup> — a command that is given immediately to Jeremiah, but which logically fits at least as well, if not better, with the people of Israel. As Reventlow would argue, 15:19-21 “is not a private rebuke to Jeremiah, but a word that is proclaimed to the people. It rejects... their protestations of innocence and their complaints, as ‘worthless’: prophet and people alike must repent.”<sup>23</sup> In this, Jeremiah is an example to the people.

The effectiveness of Jeremiah’s teaching the people how to act lies not only in Jeremiah’s exemplary actions but also in Jeremiah’s explicitly pointing out the purpose of his actions. The prophetic task that he carries out through his actions is accomplished not only by others noticing his activities, but also by the specific command to communicate to the people what the LORD had prohibited him from doing. Jeremiah 16 indicates that the people will question Jeremiah’s actions and the disaster, and they will inquire about the disaster and what they have done to deserve this. Jeremiah is then commanded to remind them that they have forsaken the LORD and turned to other gods (16:10-13).

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Gen 12:1-3, Isaiah 42 and 49.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah 15:19-21 says “Therefore this is what the LORD says: ‘If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.’”

<sup>23</sup> Bright, “Jeremiah’s Complaints,” 199 giving Reventlow’s understanding (*Liturgie*, 210-18). Brueggemann concurs: “What Jeremiah experiences of Yahweh is exactly how Judah must face Yahweh. The expected assurance for Judah is also rigorous demand.” Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 148.

Finally, that the actions are part of the prophetic task requires also a response from the one hearing the prophetic text. This is true not only of the people of Israel but also of people today. The work of Brueggemann illustrates this well. As Miller notes, “The prophets were messengers – in their lives, their words, their actions. So is Brueggemann as he invites us to hear afresh the ancient word so agonistically announced by this prophet from Anathoth, not in order to understand the prophet better but to hear and respond to the one who spoke through him.”<sup>24</sup> Further implications that the prophetic task has for today will be looked at later in the section of the prophetic task of the contemporary church.

### **Confirmation and Elucidation from Other Prophets**

This thesis has shown how Jeremiah represents himself, the LORD, and the people of Israel through his words, actions, and especially feelings. The relation of Jeremiah’s feelings with those of the people of Israel has been shown to be complex. Jeremiah identifies with the people of Israel while also separating himself from them. Sometimes his feelings were seen to mirror the people of Israel’s feelings exactly, whereas at other times his feelings were obviously different and showing how the people ought to feel. For example, Jeremiah’s being denied participation in feasting (16:8) points to the misery that Judah would experience: “Lonely and miserable, Jeremiah is to represent in himself the woes of the Israelites of the future. Notions of solidarity cannot be avoided here. Jeremiah often protested his own deep involvement in Israel’s fate (11.14; 17.16; 18.20; 28.5f) . . . He sees himself as the one on whose head the future sorrows break, the one through whom the coming agony first shows itself in history.”<sup>25</sup> In this way, Jeremiah’s feelings anticipate what the people of Israel would experience. Jeremiah’s feelings can be seen as an extension of the embodied actions used to proclaim the message more fully.

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<sup>24</sup> Miller, foreword to Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones*, ix.

<sup>25</sup> Stacey, *Prophetic Drama*, 143.

Yet, his feelings also communicate the prophetic message in a way that is not completely conveyed by words and actions alone. Feelings are not only part of the prophetic message of Jeremiah but can be shown to be an essential part of the prophetic task of all prophets.

Having established the significant role of feelings as part of the representative nature of the prophetic task, we turn now to the question of how other prophets both confirm and elucidate this manner of looking at the prophetic task. The other Old Testament prophetic books illustrate how the feelings are part of the prophetic task, both in terms of representing the LORD and the people, but also in terms of pointing to how things ought to be when the feelings (or behaviour) of the people diverges from what is expected from a people who should follow the law. The use of feelings by other prophets confirms that feelings are part of the prophetic task in general. Moreover, a fuller appreciation of feelings as part of the prophetic task elucidates the significance of the feelings evidenced in other prophetic literature.

The feelings presented in each prophetic book and by each prophet vary. Nonetheless, in all these cases, it can be shown that the feelings provide a fuller dimension to an understanding of the prophetic task. Just as the types of actions and words used by each of the prophets to proclaim their message are unique to each of them, in the same way the feelings used by each to proclaim their message are unique to them.<sup>26</sup> This is highlighted by Evans who notes that the tremendous variety of prophets' means of speaking

does not mean that the prophets were simply isolated individualists speaking of their own accord and with no real connection between them. In fact the prophets were very conscious that they were part of a long and consistent tradition. . . . They see themselves

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<sup>26</sup> The tremendous variety in which this is done invalidates Bright's claim that because the Confessions of Jeremiah are not found in the other prophetic books, they are irrelevant to Jeremiah's prophetic message: "If these complaints represent the prophet as he discharged one of his official functions—a function, so Reventlow argues, that was a part of the prophetic office generally—then why do we not find similar pieces in every prophetic book? One would expect to do so if all the prophets discharged a similar function." Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints," 196. Even though the Confessions are unique to Jeremiah, feelings are not unique to him. The Confessions are simply one of the unique ways in which Jeremiah uses his own feelings as part of his prophetic task.

as recalling Israel to the truth which the nation should already have known and understood; as bringing not a new message but rather a new awareness of the reality of God's involvement in everyday life and of the importance of their relationship with him (Micah 6:8). Nor should we see a prophet's work as consisting only of bringing messages from God, whether proclamations of judgment or of hope, or lessons about what God was like and what were his particular requirements of Israel at that time. They were also responsible to pray for the people, and by the way they lived out their own lives to show what it meant to be in relationship with God.<sup>27</sup>

In this way, the prophets conveyed truth and proclaimed the word of God in all that they did.

Although feelings are indeed mentioned infrequently in other prophetic books, when they are present, they do suggest that the feelings have a role in the prophetic task. The following shows some of the ways in which the other prophets communicate their prophetic messages using their feelings.

For all of the prophets, the whole of their lives, including their feelings, was part of the message that was proclaimed. Lalleman-de Winkel notes how the prophet's whole life, including suffering, was part of the message brought forth by both Hosea and Jeremiah:

In Hosea's life the message was shown in the failure of his marriage, which illustrated the people's unfaithfulness, and the taking back of his wife. Through these events Hosea participated in the message he had to bring. His life illustrated and incorporated his message and hinted at the suffering of God. Jeremiah stands in the same tradition: his life highlights his message, and suffering was an important issue in it. This suffering has different aspects: Jeremiah suffers as a prophet, God suffers, and the people suffer. . . . Jeremiah suffered as a prophet, yet his prophetic life cannot be separated from his personal life. They are one, and through his whole life the desperate situation of the people is highlighted. At the same time, Jeremiah utters a deep sorrow for the sake of the people which is close to God's suffering as well. . . . Jeremiah's sufferings are intensified and this corresponds with the desperate situation of the people. Yet it is not the end. In the Confessions promises of God's help are made and in the narrative passage of Jer.32 hope is expressed through the life of the prophet again. Jeremiah was in his historical situation a paradigm of his message.<sup>28</sup>

Both Jeremiah and Hosea proclaim the message of God through their whole life, including their suffering. Although the measuring of suffering is less obvious in the other prophetic books, the

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<sup>27</sup> Evans, *Prophets*, 19-20.

<sup>28</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah*, 238.

other prophets also proclaim the message of God through their whole lives, including via suffering and feelings.

Various authors highlight the representative nature of the prophetic task. Robinson notes that the prophet is a corporate representative, one among a long line of representatives of the people of Israel. The patriarchs, monarchy, and priests have all acted as representatives of the people. Using references from various prophets, Robinson explains:

The prophet owes his peculiar place as an intercessor with God, [e.g., Amos 7:2,5] to the fact that he temporarily becomes the nation, and makes its needs articulate. . . . Hosea's relation to Gomer is not merely a private and personal affair made into a dramatic analogy; Gomer in both her sin and her anticipated repentance is the nation of which she is an actual sample and an epitomizing and representative unit.<sup>29</sup>

The understanding of Reventlow that the prophetic is a cultic mediator has already been touched upon. He argues that the prophet is “one who discharged an official cultic function, that of mediator (*Mittler*) between God and people. By its very nature, his office was a two-sided one; it was his task to bring the divine word to the people and, equally, to present their complaints and prayers before God as their official intercessor.”<sup>30</sup> Although Reventlow writes this in the context of the book of Jeremiah, his understanding applies for all prophets. Whereas Robinson and Reventlow highlight the role of the prophets in representing the people to the LORD, others highlight further how the prophets in general acted as representatives of God. Fretheim notes:

Though the meaning of the divine council is problematic, the fact that the prophets are said to be a part of this council indicates something of the intimate relationship with God. The prophet was somehow drawn up into the presence of God; even more, the prophet was in some sense admitted into the history of God. The prophet becomes a party to the divine story; the heart and mind of God pass over into that of the prophet to such an extent that the prophet becomes a veritable embodiment of God.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Robinson, *Corporate Personality*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Bright, “Jeremiah’s Complaints,” 191.

<sup>31</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 150.

Talstra also highlights how the prophets directly present the feelings of God to the people of Israel. He illustrates how Ezekiel and Isaiah vary in their means of expressing feelings and the significance of these for the people: “In Ezekiel, God—by the speech of the prophet addressing Israel—expresses his feelings about the situation of destruction and deportation they all have to face. The Isaiah texts, however, are part of a prayer expressed in a liturgical context. Israel, being fully aware of God’s emotions, addresses God about past and present and—possibly—a future.”<sup>32</sup> In this way, it can be seen that, just as with Jeremiah, various authors highlight how the feelings displayed by the other prophets are at times reflecting those of the LORD and at times those of the people of Israel.

Ezekiel is one of the prophets who illustrates well the representative nature of the prophetic task. In the book of Ezekiel, feelings are present in the text at many different levels. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, also presents the message through his actions, as indicated by Ezekiel 12:1-16 where Ezekiel acts out the events ahead of time.<sup>33</sup> Further, like Jeremiah, Ezekiel’s suffering is part of the message. As Koch puts it, “We find an almost tragic feature in the suffering that is the maker of both present and future; the people who are affected are to be lamented as well as indicted. Compassion is evident. The prophets discover that they too are rooted in the situation, and they confide to the written scroll their private temptations and their consolations – Jeremiah especially, but Ezekiel too.”<sup>34</sup> The suffering for Ezekiel also extends to the death of his wife (cf. Ezek 24:15-27). Upon her death, Ezekiel is forbidden to mourn; yet, one could hardly expect a lack of emotional response on the part of Ezekiel. Renz highlights that “what was forbidden to both the prophet and the community as a reaction to their bereavement was mourning, that is customary expressions of grief, not grief itself. . . . The text does not

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<sup>32</sup> Talstra, “Exile and Pain,” 174.

<sup>33</sup> cf. Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 151.

<sup>34</sup> Koch, *Prophets*, 2:14.

describe the reaction to bereavement in terms of a lack of emotional response.”<sup>35</sup> The feelings expressed by Ezekiel are part of the prophetic message and thus he is not allowed to display his emotions freely; yet, by purposely not showing sorrow (i.e., displaying the affection of non-sorrow), Ezekiel is presenting a clear message to the people. Ezekiel 24:24<sup>36</sup> also indicates that Ezekiel would be an object lesson to the people: “One of the key questions regarding the meaning of this passage is in what sense the prophet is “a sign” (מופת) for the community. There are two alternatives: The majority of scholars believes that the prophet *presaged* how the community *would* react to the fall of Jerusalem, a minority believes that the prophet *signified* how the community *should* react to the fall of Jerusalem.”<sup>37</sup> However one understands the text, Ezekiel’s feelings mirror those of the community, whether or not the community’s feelings of sorrow are affections or emotions. This teaching function mirrors that shown by Jeremiah. Through his role as a prophet, his grief or lack thereof acts as a wake-up call, and thus his feelings have a parnetic function.

Many of the other prophetic books give evidence that the feelings of the prophet are representative. There is, for example, “Jonah who, ‘angry’ because of the outcome of his preaching in Nineveh (4.1), launches bitter complaint against God, including the wish (4-3, 8) that he might die.”<sup>38</sup> As much as Jonah’s anger is his own, the ending of the book<sup>39</sup> shows that Jonah’s own personal feelings are hardly the point of the book. Jonah’s anger over the

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<sup>35</sup> Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 155.

<sup>36</sup> Ezekiel 24:24 says “Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.”

<sup>37</sup> Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 150-51.

<sup>38</sup> Bright, “Jeremiah’s Complaints,” 196-97.

<sup>39</sup> Jonah 4:9-11 says “9 But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” “It is,” he said. “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.” 10 But the LORD said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?””

repentance of Nineveh mirrors Israel's anger with regard to God having mercy on any people other than themselves. The absurdity of his anger challenges the reader to see not only the absurdity of anger over the mercy of God, but also to move from anger (or whatever other feeling might be present; e.g., disinterest) towards compassion.

Elijah is another prophet who utilizes feelings in his prophetic task. Bright notes the close parallel to Jeremiah in 1 Kings 19:

Fleeing from Jezebel's wrath, Elijah first falls exhausted under a tree in the desert and (v. 4) prays that he might die; he then goes on to Horeb where, in a cave, he utters lament (vv. 10, 14). In this lament he protests his own faithfulness (as frequently in the Pss. Lam.), bewails the nation's apostasy and the fate of the prophets, and (cf. Jer 15.16f.) his own isolation ("I, even I only, am left"). . . . He utters a personal lament regarding his plight, a plight that he is in because of his faithfulness to his calling.<sup>40</sup>

Elijah's feelings here can be understood to be his own while also being representative of those of the people of God. His despair mirrors the feelings that one would expect of the people of Israel who are still serving the LORD. They seem to be alone while surrounded by so many who seem to be against the LORD. Yet, the LORD also gently reprimands this despair. The LORD has not left Elijah alone and without help nor has he left his people alone and without help. The LORD has set apart Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha to be the means through which everyone might see that the LORD has not left his people. Thus any despair that the people of God might feel in being alone is challenged. That God has promised help and hope is what ought to be reflected in the affections of the people.

The prophet's feelings as representative of the LORD's feelings is also shown in the book of Hosea. Whereas Gomer is representative of the people of Israel, Hosea is representative of the LORD. Through his marriage to Gomer, Hosea shows symbolically the relationship between the LORD and his unfaithful people. Hosea's feelings represent the LORD's compassion while also his anger at his people's turning away from him. Fontaine summarizes Heschel's understanding

<sup>40</sup> Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints," 197.

of this: “Hosea—perhaps because of his own experiences—has intuited the ‘dramatic tension’ existing between God’s burning anger and intense compassion for the people. Such passages as 1.34-8 [sic] and 11.1-9 resound with a divine fury at betrayal, which is, nevertheless, held in check by an unquenchable love.”<sup>41</sup> Fisch also notes how the book of Hosea displays the feelings of the LORD: “Hosea more than any other book of the Bible . . . gives us God’s side of the relationship. It is dominated by the first-person mode of addresses. God himself cries out, cajoles, reprimands, mourns and debates with himself. . . . Hosea gives us fundamentally ‘the prophet’s reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos,’ as that pathos is directed toward man.”<sup>42</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, however, questions whether Hosea’s suffering is really part of his prophetic task. Whereas Jeremiah “suffered because of his task and his lonely situation, he suffered on behalf of the people, and on behalf of God,”<sup>43</sup> Hosea’s suffering is that “of a husband who was left by his beloved.”<sup>44</sup> She thus argues that Jeremiah was “a prophet in whose life in that specific period of Israel’s history, judgment and hope became visible. And in that respect he is unique.”<sup>45</sup> Yet, Hosea’s feelings of suffering over unfaithfulness are no less representative of the LORD than Jeremiah’s feelings of sorrow over the need for punishment of the people of Israel for their disobedience. Although Hosea and Jeremiah each have specific messages and means of conveying the message that is distinct for each, each still acts as the LORD’s representative conveying his feelings as part of the message. Thus it can be seen that the feelings

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<sup>41</sup> Fontaine, “Hosea,” 57-58.

<sup>42</sup> H. Fisch, “Hosea: A Poetics of Violence,” in *Poetry with a Purpose* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 141, quoted in Naomi Graetz “God Is to Israel as Husband Is to Wife: The Metaphoric Battering of Hosea’s Wife,” in *A Feminist Companion* (ed. Brenner), 128. All quotations and breaks are in the original text.

<sup>43</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah*, 233.

<sup>44</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah*, 233.

<sup>45</sup> Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah*, 233.

expressed by the prophet represent those of himself, those of the people of Israel, and those of the LORD.

The emotional element of the texts in terms of the reader of the message has been illustrated by the example of Jonah given above but is illustrated in other prophetic books as well. This can be seen in the texts of Ezekiel 16 and 23. These texts' shocking description of Israel's behaviour – anyone reading this from the pulpit would blush – require a certain degree of response from the reader. Renz highlights the effect that these texts were designed to have:

Since the exilic community was not prepared to judge the cultic and political behaviour of Jerusalem, chapters like [Ezekiel] 16 and 23 are designed to arouse in the readers an anger over Israel's disloyalty by portraying it as the disloyalty of a spouse, that is, a variety of unfaithfulness which is more easily and more strongly condemned than political or cultic unfaithfulness. . . . Thus emotive language is used to bring about the response expected from the readership.<sup>46</sup>

Although the emotive response from a reader today is somewhat different today than then, most notably on account of a lack of identification with Israel's disloyalty, the shocking nature of the text illustrates the means by which feelings can be an effective part of the prophetic message.

The prophets' message is thus brought forward through the feelings expressed by them in the text, alongside of their words and actions. The examples given above of Jonah, Elijah, Ezekiel, and Hosea show that each prophet does this in a unique way in order to present the message of the LORD to the people of Israel.

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<sup>46</sup> Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, 147.

## CHAPTER SIX: SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CHURCH

That Jeremiah's feelings are fully his own while also representing those of the people of Israel and of the LORD has significance for the church. It helps us better understand God, as well as the necessity and function of Christ's incarnation. It also has practical implications for the church's contemporary calling as a prophetic people. It demands a participation in and connection to our communities, both within the church and outside of it. Furthermore, it provides a means to proclaim the gospel that is fuller than words alone.

Before looking more closely at the practical implications of this understanding of the prophetic task, it is helpful to remember again the relevance of the texts that have been studied here. The relevance of the text of Jeremiah and the prophetic task proclaimed there has been advocated by many. As Brueggemann puts it, "The longer I have worked on Jeremiah traditions, the more I have been struck by the incredible contemporaneity of those materials. Of course the text stands at a distance from us, and that distance must be taken seriously. But once that distance is acknowledged, much of the text sounds as though it had been written about our time and place."<sup>1</sup> Schreiber, a Jewish scholar, confirms this: "The message of Jeremiah is as urgent today as it was twenty-six centuries ago. And as Jeremiah himself would have acknowledged, it is up to people, all people, to effect change."<sup>2</sup> Not only is the message relevant for today, it is a call to action for Christians today.

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<sup>1</sup> Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones*, xii.

<sup>2</sup> Schreiber, "Was Jeremiah a Failure?", n.p.

### Fuller Understanding of God

Jeremiah's representation of the LORD through feelings allows the recipients of his message to have a fuller understanding of God—as he is revealed in the Old Testament and further revealed in the New Testament.

#### God as Revealed in the Old Testament

In his representation of the LORD, Jeremiah shows God's feelings toward the people of Israel and their actions. The previous chapters have indicated the range and extent of the LORD's feelings, illustrating that God's feelings are more than simply anger and wrath at his people's turning away from him. Instead, as Voiland puts it, in the Old Testament,

God pursues his chosen people; they reject him and turn to less worthy loves; he keeps loving them anyway. Time after time, he does whatever it takes to win his loved ones back. . . . Jeremiah recounts the way God aches over our rejection of his love: "They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife" (Jeremiah 31:32). If anyone has felt the sting of rejection, it's God.<sup>3</sup>

In all of these feelings, the prophets show God's deep love for his people. Even as God is deeply angry at their sinful ways, this anger is mixed with pain and sadness. As Hamerton-Kelly puts it, "It is an astonishing notion that our injustice can cause God pain; nevertheless the prophets reveal quite insistently that it does. For God is filled with compassion for his creatures."<sup>4</sup>

Although one might question how much God's sovereignty allows him to be affected by human actions, the text does indicate that God responds both in anger and sadness to the actions of his people. By showing the feelings of God to the people of Israel, Jeremiah brings forth a message of compassion and hope in the midst of proclaiming exile. An understanding of prophecy as being related to law also helps illustrate the compassion of God. Despite the end of Deuteronomy

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<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Voiland, "The Sacredness of a Broken Heart," *Christian Singles Today*, n. p. [cited 7 January 2009]. Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/singles/newsletter/2009/mind0304.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, *Divine Passion*, 20.

clearly pointing out the punishment that Israel deserves if they turn away from God, the LORD has compassionately given the people numerous chances to return and repent. The prophets, in the reinterpretation of the law, indicate that God does not desire sacrifices, but instead desires hearts that are turned towards Him and full of justice (Mic 6:6-8). God desires not to punish his people but to have them turn towards him, using exile if nothing else works. Ultimately, God promises a new heart to his people (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-27).

The book of Jeremiah also shows that God, as he is revealed in the Old Testament, is not any less loving than God as he is revealed in the New Testament. Some people see the Old Testament God as being harsh and distant, concerned with law and judgment.<sup>5</sup> If God is understood in this way, then Jesus is very different from this Old Testament God. However, such an understanding is not a good reading of the text:

[Jeremiah 8 and many other passages in the Old Testament] clearly reveal a depth to the character of God in the Old Testament that goes far beyond anger and judgement. Here we see a picture of God that is very close to what we see of the same God revealed in Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus sat on the hillside outside Jerusalem just a few days before the people of that city would kill him and wept over the city, here God weeps with the prophet at the failure of his people. We have in this reading, not just a glimpse into the broken heart of Jeremiah, but a glimpse into the broken heart of God!<sup>6</sup>

Others proclaim similar understandings of how the God revealed in the Old Testament is closely connected to the God revealed in the New Testament: “From our perspective we need to understand that all of God’s dealings with Israel in the Old Testament are expressions of grace that function as ‘shadows’ of something greater to come. But as we look back we see that God

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<sup>5</sup> Bratcher points out that many people “see the Old Testament, and the God portrayed there, as all about law and obedience and violation and judgement. That God, they assume, is always angry, ready to kill people without much provocation.” Bratcher, “Commentary,” n.p.. Although this understanding is in some ways a caricature, it is a well-known complaint that many Christians and churches derive their theology primarily from the New Testament. Even the list of reading sermons available on the Christian Reformed Church website confirms this: 97 sermons based on the Old Testament in comparison to 160 sermons on the New Testament. *Christian Reformed Church Devotion: Reading Sermons* [cited 18 July 2012]. Online [http://www.crcna.org/pages/reading\\_sermons.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/reading_sermons.cfm).

<sup>6</sup> Bratcher, “Commentary,” n.p.

allows this shadow to fade so that the full light of the gospel may be revealed in its place.”<sup>7</sup> As Isaiah 54:7-10<sup>8</sup> indicates, the LORD of the Old Testament has compassion on his people in light of the covenant he had made with them. God as revealed in the Old Testament is the same gracious, compassionate God as revealed in the New Testament.

### Fuller Understanding of Christ

Seeing the feelings as being representational in the prophetic task helps bring forth a fuller understanding of Christ. As noted at the beginning of this thesis, Reformed theology understands that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophets. He is both the ultimate prophet as well as the one to whom the prophets were pointing.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Matt Capps, “Biblical Theology – Part 11: The Postexilic Prophets,” *Matt Capps Blog* (14 April 2010), n.p. [cited 14 March 2012]. Online <http://mattcapps.wordpress.com/2010/04/14/biblical-theology-part-11-the-postexilic-prophets/>

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 54:7-10 states “‘7 For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. 8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,’ says the LORD your Redeemer. 9 ‘To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,’ says the LORD, who has compassion on you.”

<sup>9</sup> A further explanation of the biblical basis for this is illustrated by Capps who prepared this explanation for a Baptist context: “Jesus is the true prophet heralding God’s kingdom. [Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:16-21; Hebrews 1:1-2. ] Not only does Jesus proclaim God’s prophetic word, He is God’s Word. [John 1:1-3, 14-18; 14:16. ] Jesus is greater in than the Old Testament prophets because He is not a mere messenger sent to God’s people, He is God himself, come in the flesh. While Jesus is a prophet, He is more than that, He is the one to whom the Old Testament prophets pointed to. Remember, it was Christ who proclaimed to the disciples: ‘And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.’ [Luke 24:27. Also see Acts 3:18, 10:43, 26:22; Romans 1:2; 1 Peter 1:10. ] So, while the Old Testament prophets were messengers who declared ‘thus says the Lord’, Jesus had the authority to declare ‘But I say to you.’ [Matthew 5:28, 32, 34, 44. ] The life and work of Jesus in revealing God’s redemptive purposes is the climax to the prophetic office of the Old Testament. Just as we read in the book of Hebrews: ‘Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.’ [Hebrews 1:1-2.]” Capps, “Biblical Theology,” n.p. Furthermore, that Luke 24:44 and the entire gospel of John, which focus on how the Old Testament and, more specifically, the Torah, are fulfilled through Jesus provides further explanation.

A direct link between Jesus and Jeremiah can be made in several different ways. Peter, in the gospel of Matthew, informed Jesus that people considered him to be Jeremiah, which suggests that Jesus resembled the people's understanding of the prophet (Matt 16:14). Further parallels between Jesus and Jeremiah are given by Whitters, in his article "Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah."<sup>10</sup> In Whitters's paralleled list of events in the lives of Jeremiah and Jesus, one of the parallels he gives is that "Jeremiah laments the fate of his people and suffers the rejection of his people."<sup>11</sup> In addition, quotations from the book of Jeremiah used by Jesus or found in the gospels further collaborate the link between the person of Jeremiah and Christ (e.g., Matt 2:17-18 — Rachel weeping over her children).

A better understanding of the representational nature of the prophetic task elucidates the incarnation of Christ. McConville highlights the connection between Jeremiah and the incarnation of Christ: "There is an incarnational aspect to [Jeremiah's] role, by which he embodies both the experience of his community and that of YHWH, yet without ever ceasing to be an individual personality."<sup>12</sup> Fretheim points out that the prophet

embodies the Word of God; as a person the prophet becomes the Word of God. Von Rad warns against taking these passages "in too spiritual a way. . . . The entry of the message into their physical life brought about an important change in the self-understanding of these later prophets. (We may ask whether the entry of the word into a prophet's bodily life is not meant to approximate what the writer of the Fourth Gospel says about the word becoming flesh)."<sup>13</sup>

Through the representational nature of the prophetic task, Jeremiah anticipated the full incarnation of Christ. Yet, Jeremiah is merely a precursor of Christ, an imperfect one at that, as

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<sup>10</sup> Mark F. Whitters, "Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah" *CBQ* 68.2 (2006): 229-47.

<sup>11</sup> Whitters, "Jesus," 232. Cf. Matt 23:37 (mourning for Jerusalem) and Matt 27 (rejection).

<sup>12</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 76.

<sup>13</sup> Fretheim, *Suffering*, 152-53. He quotes Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (Louisville: John Knox, 1965), 91-92. He goes further to say "as the one who embodies the Word of God in the world, none of Jeremiah's words preserved to us is solely his own. The lamenting Jeremiah mirrors before the people the lamenting God." Fretheim, *Suffering*, 158.

both Rogerson and von Rad point out. Rogerson highlights the unwillingness of Jeremiah:

“Jeremiah stands in this position unwilling. Christ, who also occupied this position, did so willingly, even though he also wished not to have to drink the cup of the pain of reconciling God’s majesty and human disobedience.”<sup>14</sup> Von Rad notes how Jeremiah was rebellious and had

reached the limit of his intercessory office. Furthermore, he is not “perfect” in the sense of the Letter of Hebrews, and therefore Jeremiah is only an indication of the One To Come who teaches us to perceive the intercessory role of Christ in its depth. What is depicted in the suffering which results from his intercessory office – being taken out of the joyful community of men, to the final journey into the night of “godforsakenness” – is a foreshadowing and an example of a future, perfect Intercessory Role.”<sup>15</sup>

Jeremiah’s representation of the people of Israel and God is faulty, although his bringing forth the Word of God did anticipate the Word of God becoming flesh.

Understanding how Jeremiah anticipated Christ’s incarnation allows us to understand Christ’s incarnation better. Christ was fully human and fully God. In spite of the various means and measures in which God revealed himself in the Old Testament, God in human form is a message made much clearer.<sup>16</sup> His actions and feelings show us God in a way that mere words cannot. Von Rad highlights how Jeremiah in his combining his priestly descent with his prophetic calling did something new:

The prophet not only becomes a witness of God through the strength of his charisma, but also in his humanity; but not as the one who triumphs over the sins of mankind, not as one overcoming, but as a messenger of God to mankind breaking under the strain. Hence, Jeremiah’s life here becomes a forceful witness, his suffering soul and his life ebbing away in God’s service become a testimony of God. The priestly office is introduced alongside the prophetic office. That is why Jeremiah is not only the end of a line, but also a beginning and with him an actual new chapter unfolds in the anticipation of Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Rogerson, “Jeremiah” in *Prophets and Poets* (ed. Grace Emerson; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 112.

<sup>15</sup> von Rad, “Confessions,” 347.

<sup>16</sup> As C. S. Lewis put it: “The world which would not know Him as present everywhere was saved by His becoming *local*. C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 228. Hebrews 1:1-2 also points out that while in the past God had spoken through the prophets, he now spoke through his Son.

<sup>17</sup> von Rad, “Confessions,” 346.

Being fully human, Christ shared in our sufferings and our challenges. Being fully human, he is fully our representative to God. In his death, he has taken on the ultimate representation by paying for the sins of humankind.

### **Fuller Understanding of the Church's Contemporary Prophetic Task**

A fuller understanding of the prophetic task and of the incarnation of Christ has implications for the Church's contemporary prophetic task. God has spoken through his prophets in the Old Testament and Christ has carried on the prophetic task.<sup>18</sup> Because Christ perfectly fulfills the prophetic office and "those God foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Rom 8:29), the Church carries on Christ's prophetic task.<sup>19</sup> As noted at the beginning of this thesis, the Heidelberg Catechism states that Christ "has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet."<sup>20</sup> Those who are called Christians are by faith a member of Christ and share in his anointing.<sup>21</sup> In this way, Christians are called to follow in Christ's footsteps in fulfilling the prophetic task. What has been shown regarding the prophetic task in Jeremiah and clarified in Christ should inform one's Christian living.<sup>22</sup> Thus feelings should be a part of the

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hebrews 1:1-2.

<sup>19</sup> As Grudem puts it, "Jesus was not merely a messenger of revelation from God (like all the other prophets), but was himself the source of revelation from God. Rather than saying, as all the Old Testament prophets did, 'Thus says the Lord,' Jesus could begin divinely authoritative teaching with the amazing statement, 'But I say unto you' (Matthew 5:22)." Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan and InterVarsity Press: Grand Rapids, 1994), 625-26.

<sup>20</sup> *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 31. The following biblical references are given as validation for the teaching of the catechism: with regard to the anointing - Luke 3:21-22; 4:14-19 (Isa 61:1); Heb 1:9 (Ps 45:7); prophet and teacher - Acts 3:22 (Deut 18:15); and revealing the counsel and will of God - John 1:18; 15:15.

<sup>21</sup> *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 32. The biblical references given for this are: 1 Cor 12:12-27; Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27.

<sup>22</sup> As Achtemeier puts it: "Because Judah's heart is uncircumcised and her sin written with a point of diamond upon it, God decides that he will change the hearts of his people, erasing their sin and writing his words on their hearts instead, in an interior covenant. And it is this decision that the Lord effects through all of the rest of biblical history, finally shining in our hearts to give the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus the book of Jeremiah is the crucial bridge to the NT and finds the beginning of its fulfillment in that upper room, when Jesus of Nazareth gives the cup of the new covenant to this disciples. No book leads

life of a Christian, including his/her prophetic task. Furthermore, part of the prophetic task of the church is to present a different reality: to show others the appropriate feelings and responses one ought to have as response to and as herald of the message of the LORD. The following gives an indication of how this study on the role of feelings in the prophetic task helps the church better understand and fulfill her own prophetic task.

First, this study validates and provides direction for feelings. In the world of today, even and especially in Christian circles, there are many questions with regard to the use and validity of feelings. An online discussion on the role of feelings in faith held a few years ago amongst people likely to be found in Christian Reformed Churches provides a good example of the various questions raised with regard to feelings.<sup>23</sup> The question raised by “Think Christian” explicitly asked whether (and when) we can trust our feelings. After all, “the heart is deceptive” (7 April 2010), suggesting that feelings themselves are more problematic than helpful. The consensus seemed to be that feelings are generally negative – something that distracts one from being a mature Christian. Dave P. noted that “Feelings (the passions) are undependable and subject to turbulence” (8 April 2010).<sup>24</sup> Mary R. wrote: “As we mature and become more grounded in the Word, our faith becomes based in the Word, not in our feelings.” Yet, there is also a sense that feelings should also be a healthy part of the mature Christian experience. Vijay

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more surely into the theology of Paul and of the Gospels than does this prophetic work.” Achtemeier, *Jeremiah*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> “Quick Thought: Faith and Feelings,” discussion led by Jerod Clark. 7 April, 2010. Online at <http://www.thinkchristian.net/index.php/2010/04/07/quick-thought-faith-and-feelings/>. Accessed 20 April 2010. In March 2012, the blog entry was no longer available, although the discussion can still be found on the Facebook page of Think Christian (<http://www.facebook.com/thinkchristian>) under the discussion from 6 April 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Mary R gave a classic example of how feelings are seen as evil: she tells of a man who “followed his feelings” and left his wife, noted that “FINALLY he regained his senses and ended the sinful relationship and returned to the wife of his youth. My point? He was operating in response to his feelings, not in response to what scripture says, and what Jesus desires. We Americans are very much in tune with what makes us happy, whether or not that thing-person-event is in tune with [sic] obedience to Jesus Christ” (7 April 2010). “Quick Thought”, n.p. This example also illustrates how feelings are given the blame for one’s actions or choices.

B. wrote: “Our faith in Christ should impact the way we feel. If its [*sic*] does not, then there is something wrong with our faith” (8 April 2010). Carlos T. wrote: “Feelings play a very important part in our faith. We should reflect on what we believe and what we experience. Being a Christian involves so much more than just asking our Lord for something” (7 April 2010). These last responses reflect a hopeful turn towards feelings being seen as a positive aspect of one’s Christian life.<sup>25</sup>

Other sources confirm that feelings are still seen as problematic amongst Christians. Stanton L. Jones comments on the negative view concerning feelings: “‘Emotion is to be subdued, because it expresses the passionate, irrational sin nature’—such deficient, unbiblical views of emotion have distorted pastoral guidance of God’s people. They have also led to inaccurate translations and biblical interpretations.”<sup>26</sup> Commenting on the book, *Faithful Feelings*, Jones notes how feelings ought to be seen:

Emotions are more than cognitions, but they must involve rational thinking. Only with this view can we properly understand Scriptures that teach us that emotion is central to life in Christ, that certain emotions are righteous or sinful, and that we must manifest righteous emotion and dispense with sinful emotion. When viewed rightly, says Elliott, president of Oasis International, “Emotion is free to play a prominent and influential role in theology and the Christian faith.”<sup>27</sup>

The feelings illustrated by the prophets confirm this understanding. They were a significant part of the Old Testament prophets’ task, and they are very much a part of the life of Christ.<sup>28</sup> Their necessity as part of the Christian life is thus hard to deny. Yet, even when this necessity is

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<sup>25</sup> Such a positive turn is also reflected in the spiritual classic, *Celebration of Discipline*: “Feelings are a legitimate part of the human personality and should be employed in worship.” Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (rev. ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 168.

<sup>26</sup> Stanton L. Jones, “Godly Emotion” (review of Matthew Z. Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*), n.p. [cited 10 March 2007]. Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/march/36.80.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, “Godly Emotion,” n.p.

<sup>28</sup> The Gospels present numerous occasions where Christ is weary or angry.

grasped, our perspective today on feelings often becomes out of balance. Joy and hope are often seen as goals instead of being by-products of following Christ faithfully. Bratcher highlights this:

Jesus said, “I have come that you might have life.” And then he goes on to talk of losing one’s life for others. . . . The real joy comes through the sharing, through the suffering, through the bearing of other’s burdens, through the weeping. . . . Where there is weeping, someone has realized that even in the death of the worst among us, God himself bears the pain, and weeps. If we have no joy, no real joy in Christian living, perhaps we have not yet learned to weep, to care, to love.”<sup>29</sup>

Western society tends to focus on one’s own personal happiness instead of being concerned about those around us. This is a significant, and incorrect, shift away from the direction and purpose of feelings presented by Jeremiah.

The prophetic use of feelings as evidenced by Jeremiah (and other prophets) has much to teach us in re-ordering our feelings to be part of our Christian task. Jeremiah’s use of feelings gives insight into how feelings might be part of the Church’s successful execution of its contemporary prophetic task. In his descriptions of the Confessions, where Jeremiah accuses God of injustice, Stulman argues for the benefit of seeing the complicated nature of Jeremiah not receiving immediate help or even not repenting: “Such understandings reflect a rugged spirituality that is comfortable with raw emotion, astonishing boldness, ethical uncertainty, and intense displays of public grief.”<sup>30</sup>

On the occasions that feelings in the prophetic books are seen positively, there is a tendency towards moralizing. For example, when talking about the sorrow involved with prophecy, Evans notes that this sorrow could be endured with God’s help: “Jeremiah shows us that even in despair it is possible to serve God faithfully and well and that when people do this God provides help to endure (if not ways to escape from) situations in which it would be easy to

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<sup>29</sup> Bratcher, “Commentary,” n.p.

<sup>30</sup> Louis Stulman, “Jeremiah as a Messenger of Hope in Crisis.” *Int* 62.2 (2008):16.

despair.”<sup>31</sup> She thus argues that the sorrow that the prophets endured provides a moral lesson for the reader. However, the lesson to be learned from the prophet’s sorrow is more than an encouragement to serve despite despair. The sorrow in being a prophet points to a much deeper theological insight into the heart of God and the task of the prophet. Hamerton-Kelly also highlights what we can learn from Jeremiah’s example: “We have at different times felt the joy of God’s words in our hearts and also the loneliness and despair that brings us to the awful moment when we accuse God of letting us down, of being untrustworthy like a desert stream that fails to flow just when the thirsty traveler is most in need of water.”<sup>32</sup> In this way, Jeremiah as an example gives us guidance in our Christian life. Polk highlights this further: “In learning how Jeremiah uses the language of the heart, one learns what prayer is – and perhaps how to pray. And in identifying the dimensions of the prophet’s struggle, one gains a new command of the concept ‘obedience’ – and maybe begins a struggle to obey.”<sup>33</sup> Yet, as much as Jeremiah provides an example of how to deal with suffering and how to pray, there is more to it than this. Jeremiah’s feelings ought to serve as more than an encouragement. They are to be an active part of the prophetic task.

The experience of Jeremiah provides encouragement, comfort, assurance and a parenetic function, as well as being a call to action for Christians today. Diamond argues that in Jeremiah 20,

the prophet is set forward as an exemplary pious-righteous man, as an exemplary Israelite and follower of Yahweh, and finally as a model of obedient suffering. This theme has a particular paranetic focus, providing encouragement, comfort, and assurance of vindication in face of the suffering, hardship, and opposition entailed in the service of Yahweh. In the face of such undeserved suffering, continued loyalty is enjoined,

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<sup>31</sup> Evans, *Prophets*, 180.

<sup>32</sup> Hamerton-Kelly, *Divine Passion*, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 173-74.

accepting the struggle as a divine test or trial (20.12a) in the prospect of divine succour (20.13).<sup>34</sup>

The presence of the feelings in the text calls for a response. The feelings shown by Jeremiah call us to participation. Jeremiah's example is not simply for encouragement but to illustrate how Jeremiah himself fulfilled his prophetic task so that we might also know how to fulfill the prophetic task of the church today. Polk touches upon this in seeing Jeremiah as having a parenetic function:

The paradigm instructs, not of course by laying out a set of rules as dogma and doctrine, but by presenting a ruled and ordered life that summons the reader to assemble him or herself analogously. Thus, reconstituting the picture of a self-in-progress, the reader may find how it is he constitutes himself—and how he might. In learning how Jeremiah uses the language of the heart, one learns what prayer is—and perhaps how to pray. And in identifying the dimensions of the prophet's struggle, one gains a new command of the concept "obedience"—and maybe begins a struggle to obey.<sup>35</sup>

The feelings found in Jeremiah have much to teach us about the practicalities of the contemporary prophetic task.

It can thus be seen that Jeremiah's fulfillment of his prophetic task has implications for us today. Yet, there remains the question of how exactly one applies the text to today's context. The Confessions and the whole book of Jeremiah are not immediately transferable. They are from a specific time and place. As O'Connor highlights, the Confessions are about Jeremiah's "unique credentials as prophet, and so their meaning cannot be shifted to another individual or community. The emotional turbulence reported in the confessions is not the expression of universal suffering but is the specific suffering of the unwilling prophet."<sup>36</sup> Later in her career, O'Connor still does not dismiss the historical context of the text, but notes that she has recognized more fully how the text speaks to today: "When I wrote my dissertation, I thought the

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<sup>34</sup> Diamond, *Confessions*, 187.

<sup>35</sup> Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 173-74.

<sup>36</sup> O'Connor, *Confessions*, 159.

confessions belonged to Jeremiah alone as prayers about vocational meltdown. Now I have a more complex perception of them. They are also prayers for people mired in loss.”<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, she highlights that the prayers are ideal for Christians today. As O’Connor notes, the genre of the Confessions is such that “His prayers use disconcerting first-person language characteristic of lament psalms. That means these are liturgical pieces, suited for public performance, available for communal prayer and specifically suited to survivors of trauma and disaster.”<sup>38</sup> As much as I agree that the text speaks to people today, at the same time, one ought not to forget the caution found in O’Connor’s dissertation: The text has been written to specific people at a specific time in history, which means that one ought to take into account the specific historical context that is different from today. Making the step from Jeremiah’s contemporary context to today in order to apply these words to today is not always straightforward. As Wolters notes,

It is necessary, of course, to distinguish between what a text *meant* for its original audience and what it *means* for believers today. That is why it is important to presuppose the redemptive-historical level of interpretation, which alerts the reader to different stages in the unfolding history of redemption. Nevertheless, the past and present meaning of the text are intimately conjoined: the Word of God to the post-exilic Jewish community is simultaneously the Word of God to the community of faith today.<sup>39</sup>

As much as the reader can and should be able to apply the message to him/herself, this does not mean that the actions of the prophets should be copied by the reader or that the words spoken in the text transfer cleanly to readers.<sup>40</sup> The actions and words in the text need to be considered in

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<sup>37</sup> O’Connor, “Lamenting,” 34.

<sup>38</sup> O’Connor, “Ideal Survivor,” 21. In this way, O’Connor sees the Confessions in a very representative way, as a part of Jeremiah’s prophetic message. As she notes, Jeremiah “is the ideal wounded survivor, the personal embodiment of the fate of his people and their possible future. His life provides them with a visible representation of their experience. . . His prayers show them how to live with God in the midst of their anger, loss, and sense of betrayal.” O’Connor, “Ideal Survivor,” 22.

<sup>39</sup> Wolters, “Confessional Criticism,” 103.

<sup>40</sup> For example, the words of vengeance should not be transferred simplistically to the context of today as the historical situation is different. In this way, the words of a recent pastor cursing his enemies are shown to be problematic. This would then prevent the incident of Wiley Drake cursing those against him, as happened recently. See Dave McKibben, “Buena Park pastor asks followers to pray for the death of his

terms of their historical situation and the historical situation of the reader today. Furthermore, Christ has ultimately fulfilled the prophetic task, which indicates further the necessity of Christians carrying out the prophetic task today. Not because we are being called to conform to Jeremiah or any of the other prophets, but because Christians are called to conform to Christ. The examples given before are helpful, but not mandatory examples. On account of Christ's fulfilling the prophetic office, we have warrant for carrying out the prophetic tasks as has been shown by the prophets. In this way, we act out our calling to be conformed to Christ (and not to Jeremiah).

Understanding Jeremiah's feelings as being representative gives us a picture of how we ought to be using our feelings as part of the contemporary prophetic task. The feelings are not merely optional but are an essential part of presenting the full word of God. For example, Bratcher highlights the feelings involved in our response to any dismissals of our message of hope and repentance:

When our message is proclaimed and ignored, when we see the sin, the rejection of God and the unfaithfulness around us, do we weep with God? . . . Does God weep through us? This is not the superficial shedding of a tear because of a sad story that stirs our emotions, but like Jeremiah, a lifestyle of weeping that involves the very center of our being, who we are as God's people. . . . Do we weep for our neighbors, friends, co-workers, leaders, anyone who is heedless of the consequences of rejection of God, whether it be by wickedness or by superficial religion?<sup>41</sup>

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critics." *Los Angeles Times*, n.p. [cited 25 Aug. 2007]. Online: <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/politics/cal/la-me-drake16.1aug16,1,914198.story?coll=la-news-politics-california&ctrack=1&cset=true>. Furthermore, cursing one's mother and calling the LORD deceptive are not actions that are considered liturgically appropriate. Bright argues that calling the LORD a deceitful brook "is no less than an accusation against God. Such an accusation is unthinkable in a liturgy: it would be today, and it was then." Bright, "Jeremiah's Complaints," 205. Polk also highlights the problems with interpreting the text for today when speaking of the curse of Jeremiah 17:18: "The concept 'imitation', which is clearly relevant to exegesis of the text's depiction of its main persona, invites the problem by its very nature, for it is inherently a highly existential, reader-involving concept. Having unleashed such a concept, or image, the intentionality of the text cannot be restricted to that of its authors and to one historical moment and milieu. The problem is therefore not really extrinsic to the text and the text's exegesis, though it permits no once-and-for-all solution. It is part of its burden that the text simply indicates that the persona is to be imitated, primarily in his trust, but without indicating in every respect how. It is left to the reader of every age to assess, in light of the fullest witness available, to what extent and in what manner vengeful anger toward the oppressor is congruent with trust in Yhwh." Polk, *Prophetic Persona*, 151.

<sup>41</sup> Bratcher, "Commentary," n.p.

Bratcher goes on further to point out that weeping for those who are lost is a pattern of the Christian life. Jesus wept. Paul wept. As Christians, we should be weeping for those who are turning away from God and thus turning away from God's grace and love. Yet, the representative nature of the prophetic task is more than disappointment on account of a negative reception of the gospel. The prophetic use of feelings ought to encompass our entire Christian life and task.

Simply presenting feelings representing God, oneself and various communities is a way for individuals and the church as a whole to live out the prophetic role of the church. Before explaining further how that works, it is helpful to understand exactly who the people/community are which would be represented by the feelings.

### ***Excursus: Which Community?***

The community that Jeremiah represents – the people of Israel – does not directly transfer to the communities that Christians are called to represent.<sup>42</sup> As noted previously, the book of Jeremiah was written in a specific historical situation, which is very different from today. In the book of Jeremiah, it is clear that it is the people of Israel whom Jeremiah represents and that the people of Israel are also those to whom Jeremiah's message is presented. Thus the ones being represented and the ones receiving the message *appear* to be the same. Today, on the other hand, the people of God are not located in a specific geographic place, making it difficult to isolate the people of God. This inability to isolate Christians from non-Christians seems to make the representation of the message complicated and quite different than the example presented in the prophetic books. Yet, a closer look at the biblical text allows one to realize that this apparent dichotomy does not actually exist. For example, in the New Testament times, many Christians

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<sup>42</sup> Williams discusses the transference of the prophetic task to the church today in chapter 6 of *The Prophet and His Message*.

lived in the diaspora,<sup>43</sup> which means that the people of God were often minorities and representation would occur in the presence of those who were not part of this community. Even in the Old Testament, the prophetic message was directed not only to the Jews but also to other peoples. This can be seen clearly in two of the minor prophets: Obadiah and Nahum condemn two other people groups (Edomites and Assyrians, respectively). The people groups surrounding Israel would have been aware of the messages proclaimed by the prophets. If they were not immediately aware, then they certainly became aware later at the time of exile and the movement of peoples. Besides this, the feelings shown in the text do not exclude other people groups. For example, the book of Jeremiah indicates that the LORD weeps for Moab (48:31). Moreover, the punishment and judgment that Jeremiah proclaims will also be brought upon the lands surrounding Israel, as indicated by the oracles against the nations. Lastly, the message of hope is also not confined to the people of Israel. The message proclaimed to Israel of a new future is also a promise that we see given to all people, as Calvin proclaims in his commentary on part of the book of Consolation (31:7): “For though it will presently appear that their joy was not in common with the unbelieving, the Prophet yet seems to address his words on purpose to aliens, that the Jews themselves might become ashamed for not embracing the promise offered to them.”<sup>44</sup> Even in Jeremiah’s time, the message of the prophet was not directed only to the people. Instead, it was a call to repentance and message of hope to all peoples (12:15): “God here promises pardon and salvation to alien nations, provided they repented, and that he did this, that he might more fully confirm his promises to his elect people. . . . God declares that he would draw forth his own elect from these nations; and then he adds, that he would proceed still further,

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<sup>43</sup> This is indicated in the first sentence of the letter to James, which is written to the twelve tribes in the dispersion (*diaspora*). 1 Peter also begins with the words that it is written to “the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood.” Thus the people of God were not all in one place.

<sup>44</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:68.

that he would even receive into favor those who had been previously his enemies.”<sup>45</sup> The message was thus directed not only to the people of Israel but also to the surrounding nations, indicating that the movement to today of the prophetic task and the community being represented is less between an enclosed and non-enclosed community but to a community in a different historical situation.

In the Old Testament, the word of the LORD was conveyed differently than today. The law was conveyed to the people via the teachers of the Torah. When the priests and kings did not teach the law, the prophets would then be the ones to proclaim the Torah and tell people to turn back to the Law. Today, the Spirit has come and the word of God comes to people through the word of God and church tradition.<sup>46</sup> In the Old Testament, the community was continually called to repent and turn back to their God. This message was primarily directed to the people of Israel who knew the Torah best, but this is not to say that those outside of the people of God were not aware of Jeremiah’s message, nor is the call to repentance not for them.<sup>47</sup> It is simply that the people of God were being called to task for the willful neglect of the Torah, which they knew. The most obvious correspondence for the people of God in Jeremiah’s time is thus the people of God (Christians) in our time.<sup>48</sup> It is not that the word of God has nothing to say to non-Christians, it is simply that the claims made by the Bible are directed specifically to Christians. Furthermore,

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<sup>45</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 2:159.

<sup>46</sup> In the Reformed tradition, the emphasis is clearly laid on the Bible with church tradition providing a helpful means to interpret the text (i.e., through systematic theology).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jer 18: 7-8.

<sup>48</sup> The direct link can be seen through the term Israel of God, as found in Gal 6:16. Furthermore, Rom 15:7-12 clearly indicates that Christ and the gospel is for the Gentiles. Romans 15:8-12 states “ 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name”; 10 and again he says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”; 11 and again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him”; 12 and again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.” Cf. 2 Sam 22:50 and Psalm 18:49; Deut 32:43; Psalm 117:11; and Isa 11:10 (Septuagint).

it is Christians who regularly participate in activities, such as Bible reading, prayer and worship that would open them up to hearing and experiencing the word of God in the same way that the people of Israel would have had the word of God more available to them through the priests and prophets.<sup>49</sup>

As Christians help other Christians and non-Christians understand the word of the LORD, they are called to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15). Exactly how Christians today can fulfill their prophetic task in the community of which they are a part, both to Christians and non-Christians, will be addressed in the next section. Before doing so, we will look briefly at whether the understanding of the prophetic task by either Calvin or Brueggemann has anything directly to add in terms of illustrating how feelings are a necessary part of the fulfillment of the prophetic task today. Calvin's understanding of prophecy seems to suggest that feelings could be a part of redefining Torah and the word of God for today, and Brueggemann's understanding of the prophetic task as redefining reality also seems to speak to people today.

#### Calvin: Feelings Validated but not as Part of the Prophetic Task for Today

Although this thesis has assumed that the church has a prophetic task for today, Calvin's understanding of the prophetic task adds another dimension to this. An understanding of prophecy as a reinterpretation of the law seems to suggest that all those who exegete the Biblical text would be considered prophets. Yet, Paul's claim that Christians are free from the law (Torah) challenges that idea significantly. Being free from the law changes how one ought to

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<sup>49</sup> The availability of the word to the people of the LORD remains constant even though the means in which that word is presented has changed. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests and kings were the means for presenting the word, whereas in the New Testament the tasks are different: teachers, prophets, evangelists, and pastors (Eph 4:11-13).

interpret the law. Calvin notes that the traditional understanding of prophetic is no longer valid.

He argues that

Those who preside over the government of the Church, according to the institution of Christ, are named by Paul, first, *Apostles*; secondly, *Prophets*; thirdly, *Evangelists*; fourthly, *Pastors*; and, lastly, *Teachers* (Eph 4:11). Of these, only the two last have an ordinary office in the Church. The Lord raised up the other three at the beginning of his kingdom, and still occasionally raises them up when the necessity of the times requires. . . . By *Prophets*, he means not all interpreters of the divine will, but those who excelled by special revelation; none such now exist, or they are less manifest.<sup>50</sup>

According to Calvin's understanding of prophets, the existence of individual prophets today would be extraordinary and unlikely. Both Romans 12<sup>51</sup> and 1 Corinthians 12<sup>52</sup> assume the presence of the gift of prophecy, although some, like Calvin, would argue that this gift was limited to New Testament times. Yet, in either situation, the presence or lack of individual prophets today does not deny the existence of a prophetic task for the church today, including using one's feelings well to show others the word of God.

With regard to understanding a prophetic task for the church today, Calvin, as has already been shown, understood the text as being of significant relevance to the reader of his day. He would argue that there is much wisdom to be learned with regard to the feelings as illustrated by

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<sup>50</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 4, Chapter 3, section 4.

<sup>51</sup> Romans 12:4-8 says "For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness."

<sup>52</sup> 1 Corinthians 12 says "4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. . . . 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way."

Jeremiah, as proclaimed further in the New Testament, and as ought to be lived out in the world today. In his commentary on 34:5, Calvin points to the New Testament context: “Paul . . . does not condemn sorrow altogether, but only requires it to be moderate, so that we may shew what influence the hope of resurrection has over us.”<sup>53</sup> In this example, we can see an obvious application for today: a moderation of one’s feelings so as not to overpower the message of the gospel. Calvin’s words are wise; whatever role feelings have in the prophetic task, it is always part of conveying the message of God. Feelings that contradict the message are as problematic as a lack of feelings in presenting the message. As feelings are an essential part of being human, a lack of feelings as part of the message questions the depth and authenticity of the message.

#### Brueggemann: Feelings as Showing a Different Reality for Today

In Chapter 4, it was seen that while Brueggemann’s understanding of prophecy as presenting a different reality provided a helpful means for understanding the occasions when the feelings of the prophet differed from those of the people of Israel, it was difficult to reconcile his view when the prophet’s feelings coincided with those of the people. A similar problem arises in applying Brueggemann’s understanding to today. On the occasions when the people of God and/or those in the world around Christians express inappropriate feelings both in response to God and each other, a perception of prophecy as presenting a different reality is helpful. On those occasions Christians would be the ones presenting to others how one ought to respond. Yet, what happens when some, Christians and/or non-Christians, are responding appropriately and others not? In this case, Christians seem to be proclaiming an anti-prophetic message! An example of this is appropriate rage with regard to social injustice, something that more “heavenly-minded” Christians often do not respond to with any kind of action. Yet, the prophets clearly indicate

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<sup>53</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 4:289.

God's anger with regard to corruption and rich taking advantage of the poor (cf. Amos 5).

Ironically enough, non-Christian organisations like Amnesty International and Avaaz often do more in expressing outrage about injustice than many Christian organisations. In these situations, the church is anything but prophetic in its proclaiming a different reality. Yet, even in this example, certain Christians are a prophetic voice in encouraging others toward more compassion for and empathy with those who are poor and suffering injustice. At the same time, Christians should be encouraging appropriate shame and repentance among those creating injustice.

Furthermore, Christians can certainly hold other Christians accountable for their actions in society, but it is much more difficult for Christians to hold non-Christians accountable.

Christians can proclaim that there is a way the world ought to be (shalom as Neal Plantinga would put it in his book, *Not the Way it's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*) or that there's a natural law (as C.S. Lewis argues in the *Glory of Man*), but following the example of the prophets and the letters to the early church, Christians cannot simply dictate how non-Christians ought to live. At the same time, Christians can learn from organisations and non-Christians who have intuitively grasped the natural order of justice better than Christians have. In this way, Christians are reaffirming the feelings being used prophetically as part of restoring more shalom in the world. Although the appropriate use of feelings by Christians proclaims a prophetic message, it is not ultimately a message that, as Brueggemann would argue, presents a different reality. The understanding of Brueggemann is thus inadequate in illustrating well how the feelings can be part of the prophetic message of the church today.

#### Expressing Feelings Today as Part of the Prophetic Task

There are many practical means in which the feelings can be used today as part of the prophetic task of the church, as has already been hinted at. The church's view of marriage as more than

merely two people who feel in love, but instead a commitment and choice (affection) to love another, is one simple way.<sup>54</sup> The example given above with regard to injustice is another very practical example of showing God's message of justice and concern for all peoples.

The book of Jeremiah and the prophets have illustrated well how the feelings represent the LORD, the people of God and oneself. Yet, Jeremiah is more than an example and also more than an encouragement. The book of Jeremiah is also a call to be actively involved in the prophetic task today. Christians are called to represent the feelings of the people of God to the LORD and vice versa. For Jeremiah, his community was the people of Judah, the remnant of Israel, the people of God. As the church is called the Israel of God,<sup>55</sup> our prophetic community is the church. After all, should not the church be a model for unbelievers with regard to what ought to be (and can be) in Christ? We are to be active participants in this community, close enough to others that we are aware of their feelings and they of ours. In this way, we might follow our prophetic calling to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn (Rom 12:15). In this way, we can both represent God's sorrow over pain that has happened and at the same time bring the sorrow of others before God and intercede for others.

The representative nature of the prophetic task does not ignore those who are not part of the church. The Old Testament clearly indicates that the prophetic task does not mean ignoring or condemning those outside of the people of God. Jeremiah 12:15<sup>56</sup> promises compassion on any and all who turn to God. Jeremiah's message in the Oracles against the Nations contains sadness that these people, too, might have turned away from God. Furthermore, the prophetic message of the Old Testament is not limited only to the people of Israel. This is shown in the words that

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<sup>54</sup> Calvin would also appreciate this example as the commitment to marriage suggests a suppression of following one's feelings of not "being in love" or "falling in love" with another.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Galatians 6:16.

<sup>56</sup> Jeremiah 12:15 says "But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to their own inheritance and their own country."

Jeremiah speaks but also in the (prophetic) calling of the nation itself. The people of Israel were to live in such a way that they might be a message of God to all peoples (cf. Deut 4:5-8).<sup>57</sup> In the same way, the witness of the Church is a proclamation to the world around us. As the body of Christ, our lives as individual Christians represent God to others in all facets of our being. We also represent to them how people ought to be feeling in response to God. In this way, we also follow the great commandment truly to love one's neighbor, who has become close enough for us to experience the emotional turmoil and joy involved in loving. Feelings are part of a deep concern for others and involvement in their lives.

These very practical examples illustrate how the church can live out its prophetic task in a postmodern world. Although the word authenticity is not quite the buzz-word today as it was a number of years ago, one's message today needs to be much more than words. Included in this is the need for Christians to be authentically themselves. This includes Christians appropriately expressing their own feelings. Christians ought to be showing joy and sorrow in their lives. Through presenting a picture of the Christian life that reflects the complicated reality of living as a redeemed, but sinful, person in a broken world, those who do not know the gospel can hopefully become interested in a way of living that speaks to the reality of today.

Looking closely at the life of Jeremiah, it would be impossible not to see how overwhelming this prophetic calling is. Christ's experience shows it as even more painful and overwhelming. However, as much as the prophetic task is overwhelming, it is also life to the fullest. God has promised to be a deliverer in times of anguish (Jer 15:11) and he has promised to

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<sup>57</sup> Deuteronomy 4:5-8 says "5 See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. 6 You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" 7 For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? 8 And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?" Cf. also Gen 12:1-3; Psalm 96.

be with us (Matt 28:20). As we go forward in our Christian prophetic task, we do well to remember the words of Nehemiah that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10).

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated that Jeremiah's feelings are not only his own but also represent both those of God and his people. It has demonstrated that, as McConville succinctly states: "The figure of Jeremiah . . . [is] very complex. At once, he represents the people, he represents YHWH, and he remains himself."<sup>1</sup> Through evidence given from the biblical text and dialoguing with secondary literature, this thesis has fleshed out Williams's claim:

[The description of a prophet includes] the prophetic responsibility to communicate faithfully the message received from the Lord, as well as the responsibility the prophet bears to the community of which he is a member. It involves the prophet's words, behavior, affections—indeed everything about the prophet as a human being. This perspective of the essential prophetic task that will shape all of our subsequent considerations of his individual, specific actions is that the prophet is fundamentally *a representative*. He represents God, the community of which he is a part, and, of course, himself in way that are unique to this special office he occupies.<sup>2</sup>

This representational nature of the feelings is part of the prophetic task and is elucidated and confirmed by other prophets. Furthermore, it provides a fuller understanding of God and a call for the use of feelings as part of Christian witness.

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<sup>1</sup> McConville, *Judgment*, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, *The Prophet and His Message*, 71.

## AFTERWORD

When I wrote the first draft of this thesis, the relevance of the topic was obvious amidst my first year of living in an intentional Christian (new monastic) community (Oudezijds 100).<sup>1</sup> It is one thing to act out one's prophetic task in abstraction and another to do so constantly dwelling amongst people of various degrees of stability who do not always share in that same prophetic calling. It is clearly obvious that living out one's prophetic task daily is both a challenge and a blessing. In the context of Oudezijds 100, feelings play a role in the prophetic task in very clear ways. This is partially done through displaying the joy of fellowship and celebration amidst a world that is trying to proclaim that what is valued and sold in Amsterdam's Red Light District is a source of joy and truth. It is also done by inviting others to participate fully in the life of community and experience the joys and sufferings in others' lives. By doing this together, we become all too aware of the fallen humanness in all people, but we also have the opportunity to represent God to each other. In writing this thesis, I have been given the language to explain why living here matters so much to me. It is also providing me with a better understanding of how such a community can further help me in fulfilling the contemporary prophetic task. The participation in Christian community has also shown me that along with the overwhelming aspects of the prophetic task, there is much grace and joy mixed in with the sadness. Joy is found in seeing how a single mother rejected by her strict Christian parents is learning to believe more and more that she and her children are truly loved and appreciated. The laughter is found in watching a blind man shiver when someone anointed his feet with oil after washing them. The grace is found in people being willing to reconcile relationships. The comfort is found in having

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<sup>1</sup> The website for the community is <http://www.oudezijds100.nl>.

people watch out for you when you are sick. The delight is found in having dozens of people around with whom to celebrate feasts and holidays properly! In these ways, I have been a recipient of others' fulfilling their prophetic task in representing God to me. Certainly, I have discovered that the prophetic task is overwhelming but I also experienced the joy and laughter and grace that makes it worth pursuing this life to the fullest.

Several years after having originally written that, this thesis is finally finished, and while I still delight in being able to fulfill my prophetic calling through actively participating in the same intentional Christian community, that aspect of feelings has become normalized. What now startles me is how often a discussion of feelings comes up in the world around me. Even though I have spent more than five years thinking about prophets and the role of feelings, I keep being surprised by how often the topics of feelings and faith are brought together. For example, in response to the CRC Synod of 2012, CRC Interim Executive Director Joel Boot wrote an article about his feelings in response to Synod.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Society of Biblical Literature conference in Chicago (November 2012) had an entire session was focused on feelings. Upon mentioning my interest, David Sytsma, a church history doctoral student, noted how he had also been thinking recently about the role of feelings and promptly sent me a list of articles. Even in the most unexpected places, faith and feelings come up, such as in the hygiene museum in Dresden. Passions were seen as potentially dangerous and overwhelming, while still being an

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<sup>2</sup> Joel Boot, "Synod Feelings," at *The Network*. 21 August 2012. n.p. [cited 12 June 2013]. Online at <http://network.crcna.org/content/synod/synod-feelings-joel-boot>.

essential and important part of life.<sup>3</sup> This temporary exhibition was well attended, indicating that many are interested in the role of feelings today, including God's role.

This focus on the feelings gives me the sense that there is much more to said about this topic. Thus, it does not *feel* that I am yet done with this topic, even if the thesis is finally, thankfully, finished. Yet, when and how I will continue working in the area of feelings is yet to be determined. Until then I will continue amidst the joys and sorrows found in working out of my prophetic calling.

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<sup>3</sup> Numerous citations from historical figures reaffirmed this. There it was noted that Voltaire said passions were "like the wind that blows the sails of a ship. . . sometimes the wind capsizes a ship but without wind, a ship could not sail." cf. Voltaire, *Zadig*, 1747. Further mentioned was Chrysostom who, in *On the Priesthood*, "not only warned against anger and envy, but also against pleasure and sadness. A person who is 'caught by such wild beasts is enslaved by them.'" Finally, Pope Benedict XVI's words in *God is love* (1927) even highlighted God's role in passions: "the passionate love of God for His people – for humanity is . . . so great that He becomes human Himself, follows Man even to the point of death, and in this way reconciles justice and love."

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