

The United Monarchy

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Introduction

In the Law of Moses provision was already made for government by kings. The king was to be a Hebrew, selected by God; he must not act like heathen kings who lived in luxury and took several wives. The Hebrew king would be the vicegerent of Yahweh, and so his first duty when raised to the throne would be to have a transcript of the Law of Moses made from the official copy kept by the priests in the Sanctuary; to keep this always with him; to read it frequently; to observe it and enforce it (Deuteronomy 17, 14-20).

The prophet Samuel was familiar with this passage of Holy Scripture and knew well its high ideal of the future monarchy; and yet he was displeased when the ancients of the tribes came to him to demand in the name of all the people a change of government: "*Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: make us a king to judge us, as all the nations have*" (1 Kings 8, 5). He had governed them well and wisely, and spent himself for their welfare. It wounded the old man's feelings now to hear that they wished to set him aside; and the blunt indictment of his sons whom he had appointed to assist him and to continue the system of government by Judges was hard to bear—all the harder, because it was true: "*they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and prevented judgment.*" (8, 3). In this perplexing situation the prophet wisely turned to God, and prayed for light.

The revelation which Samuel received in answer to his prayer pointed out a deeper significance in the demand of the Hebrews for a monarch: "*they have not rejected thee, but Me, that I should not reign over them*" (8, 7). They were moved by pride and ambition of worldly glory, not by a desire to fulfil their messianic destiny. They wanted a king to compete with the heathen nations about them, not to enforce the observance of the Law. However, since the demand was the unanimous voice of the people they would obtain their desire; but the king who would be given in answer to such a demand would not reach up to the ideal of Deuteronomy 17. Samuel, therefore, was first commanded to warn them of the folly of their petition: the new king would force their sons and daughters to become his soldiers and servants; he would seize their land for his courtiers and favourites; his retinue would be provided at the expense of the nation, and their vineyards and crops would be taxed in consequence; they would call on God (and call in vain) to be delivered from kingly rule. All this Samuel put before the ancients; but it had no effect whatever. They wanted a king; they must be like the other nations. Again Samuel sought the divine guidance, and this time the command of God was clear and absolute: "*Hearken to their voice, and make them a king*" (8, 22). Samuel then sent the delegates away, and awaited a further revelation.

The new monarch was Saul, the son of Cis (in Hebrew "Kish"), of the tribe of Benjamin; but he was chosen only to be rejected. He was succeeded by David, the real founder of the Hebrew monarchy; and David by his son, Solomon. These three reigns form the period of the united monarchy. On the

death of Solomon there was a schism in the kingdom—the northern tribes broke away from Juda and Benjamin and set up a kingdom for themselves.

The history of the united monarchy is found in 1 Kings 8-31; 2 Kings; 3 Kings 1-11; and in 1 Paralipomenon; 2 Paralipomenon 1-9. (The four *Books of Kings* are so called because they contain the history of the monarchy. 1 and 2 Kings are sometimes called 1 and 2 Samuel. They are written by an unknown prophet who used as sources the writings of Samuel, Gad and Nathan, and the records of the royal archives. The two *Books of Paralipomenon* (also called *Chronicles*) were written after the Babylonian Captivity probably by Esdras. The name comes from the Greek "paraleipomenon" which means "something omitted," because they supplement in many places the narrative of the Books of Kings. Nonetheless, their purpose was not to fill in the narrative; they are really a complete and independent history of the same period with special reference to the House of David. (R. Cornely, S.J.—*Compendium Introductionis*.) This period (1052-932 B.C.) is one of rapid movement and transition; full of incident. It saw the development of the Hebrews from a loosely united tribal people into a compact and highly organised nation playing its part in world politics.

Chapter I

Saul—The First King of Israel: 1052-1012 B.C.

(1 Kings 9-30; 1 Paralipomenon 8-10).—Saul with a servant left his native Gabaa to search for a flock of asses which had strayed from his father's lands. For three days he travelled without result; and he was about to return home when his servant reminded him that the prophet Samuel lived near. Saul went to consult the prophet about the asses which had strayed.

It had been revealed to Samuel on the previous day that Saul was the man whom God had chosen to be king. Samuel told Saul that the asses had been recovered, and then announced to him that he was to be king. The prophet also anointed him with consecrated oil—a symbol of Saul's appointment to the office of ruling. Saul returned home, but told no one of his new dignity.

Soon after Samuel called a great assembly of the people at Maspha to cast lots for a king. The lot fell to Saul; but Saul was not present. He was in hiding at home, afraid of the new dignity. Messengers were sent to fetch him to Maspha. He was a splendid type of manhood: "*a choice and goodly man, and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upwards he appeared above all the people*" (1 Kings 9, 2). A good physique was an essential quality in a king in ancient times. The assembly loudly acclaimed the new king; (That Saul reigned for forty years seems clear from Acts 13, 21 and Josephus—*Antiquities* 6, 14, 9. There is the famous text of 1 Kings 13, 1: "*Saul was a child of one year when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel.*" It is missing from the Septuagint version; and so some say that it is not genuine. Others explain it as meaning that Saul was innocent as a child for the first two years of his reign. A recent explanation is that whether the verse in question be genuine or not—that is to say, whether it was written by the inspired writer or added in later by mistake—the numbers were corrupted through Cabbalistic influences and originally it read: "Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for forty years over Israel." (*Biblica*, Vol. 7 (1926), pages 193-203). The Cabbalists were an heretical school of Jewish exegesis.) but amid the general enthusiasm there

were some few who through jealousy did not join in the popular approval; they brought no gifts to the new king; and they spoke of him with contempt. Saul was prudent enough to take no notice of these. Samuel formally proclaimed the constitution of the new kingdom and then dismissed the assembly. Saul modestly returned to Gabaa and resumed his former work in the fields. Before long an opportunity came for the new king to assert his authority and to show his mettle.

The Ammonite War

The Ammonites made war on Jabes Gâlaad, a Hebrew city of Trans-Jordan. Seeing themselves unable to hold their city the defenders asked for terms of surrender. Naas, the Ammonite king, proposed impossible conditions: not alone must they become subject to Ammonite rule and pay heavy tribute but all the men of the city were to have their right eyes plucked out. The ancients of Jabes Galaad asked for a delay of seven days and hurriedly sent secret messengers to notify Saul of their sorry plight. When the messengers arrived in Gabaa Saul was absent in the fields ploughing with a pair of oxen. The people of Gabaa heard the sad tale of the messengers and broke into loud lamentation. When Saul returned in the evening he found all the people weeping and he enquired the reason. At the thought of the insolence of the Ammonites he was filled with a supernatural zeal; he killed the two oxen which he was driving; cut the carcasses in pieces; and he sent the pieces by special couriers to the principal centres of the whole country, threatening all concerned that if they did not rally to him and Samuel against the Ammonite enemy their cattle would be killed similarly and cut in pieces. He then sent back the delegates who had come from Jabes Galaad with a message that by noon of the next day the city would have relief.

Saul's summons had immediate effect. The people were terrified at the threat to their stock, and every man capable of bearing arms came to Saul at Gabaa. Saul led the vast army against the Ammonites and inflicted on them a crushing defeat. After the battle the soldiers were full of enthusiasm for Saul, and a cry went up for the death of those who at his election had refused him allegiance. But Saul magnanimously refused to hear of vengeance on a day of national victory. Samuel used the prevailing enthusiasm for the king to call another general assembly at Galgal and again to proclaim the new kingdom. This done Samuel formally resigned his office of Judge, retaining only that of prophet. Henceforth the temporal charge of Israel was invested in the king.

The Philistine War

When next we hear of Saul his rule is well established, and he has a standing army of three thousand men—his son, Jonathan, sharing the command. In the interval the Philistines have again become a national menace. These were experts in the arts and crafts, and the Hebrews depended on them for the manufacture of implements of agriculture and weapons of war. Confident of their own superiority the Philistines now decided to crush the Hebrews. For a time they were successful. They overran Palestine as far east as Machmas, establishing garrisons as they went. The Hebrews were completely cowed; many of them were in hiding; and some had even fled the country and gone to Trans-Jordan. At this critical point Jonathan with the thousand soldiers under his command stormed and captured the Philistine fortress in Gabaa, and the glad news of his victory fired the Hebrews with hope and zest. King Saul went to Galgal and summoned the people to follow him in a national campaign against the dreaded Philistines.

Here Saul made his first error. Samuel had arranged to join the king at Galgal after seven days in order to offer sacrifices to God before the campaign. When the week elapsed Samuel had not

arrived. The fighting men were restless; large numbers were deserting; Saul became impatient, and contrary to the Law, himself offered the sacrificial victims. The sacrifice was only just ended when Samuel arrived. Saul went forth to greet him, but the prophet knew of Saul's transgression and reproached him with it. He also announced to Saul that God had now rejected him in favour of another: *"thy kingdom shall not continue"* (1 King 13, 14). Samuel returned to Gabaa; and Saul went forth to the war with only six hundred men.

Jonathan was a brave soldier and as clever as he was brave. The Philistine army had gone out in three divisions from Machmas to plunder the surrounding country, and Jonathan attacked the camp behind them, killing about twenty of the enemy. An earthquake at that very time favoured Jonathan by throwing the raiders into dire confusion. His sentries brought word to king Saul at Gabaa, and he promptly put himself at the head of his army and set out to attack the Philistines. The Philistines were defeated with terrible losses. As a result of this victory many of the Hebrews who had gone over to the enemy returned. Similarly those who were in hiding came and joined Saul. Saul now had a large army. He waged successful wars against the various tribes who were making trouble on the frontiers—the Syrians on the northeast; the Ammonites on the east; the Moabites on the southeast; the Edomites on the south. All through his reign the Philistine menace persisted. Saul carefully recruited his army and kept it at a high level of efficiency.

The Amalecite War

Samuel came to Saul commanding him by divine authority to exterminate the Amalecite people and to destroy completely all their property. Saul put himself at the head of his well equipped army, attacked and captured the capital city of the Amalecites; and the whole territory was soon conquered.

This victory, however, led to the final undoing of Saul. Pride and avarice seized him. He had a triumphal arch erected; and he led his army in a vainglorious march from Carmel to Galgal after the manner of conquering heathen kings. Arrived at Galgal he took on himself again to offer sacrifices although he was not a priest. Contrary to the express command of God he spared the life of the Amalecite king, Agag; and he kept for his own use the best of the flocks, clothing and ornaments of the vanquished.

Samuel came to Galgal while the sacrilegious ceremonial was taking place. He rebuked the king; foretold his final rejection; and with his own hand killed Agag. Then with mingled feelings of sorrow and indignation Samuel went to his home at Ramah. From that day until his death he never spoke to Saul again. Saul returned to Gabaa, and the remainder of his reign is full of tragedy—relieved only by the nobility of character and great exploits of the man who was destined to succeed him, namely David, the youngest son of Isai (or Jesse), a native of Bethlehem in the tribe of Juda. At the time of his election the new king, as yet little more than a boy, was shepherding his father's flocks.

David

David was a highly favoured youth. Fair hair and beautiful eyes gave him a handsome appearance. He was well built; abnormally strong and brave—on separate occasions he killed a lion and a bear which had attacked his sheep (1 Kings 17, 34-36). He was an accomplished harpist and a poet. Above all he was a pious youth—a man after God's own heart. Samuel anointed David king secretly in the house of Isai, and from that day the supernatural guidance with which Saul had been favoured

was given to David instead. Left to his own resources Saul rapidly went from bad to worse. Remorse and regret reduced him to a mental state in which he suffered alternately from melancholy and passionate outbursts of fury. The power of music over such a malady was well known to the ancients; and Saul's courtiers searched for a skilled musician to soothe the king. David was selected; and thus providentially he was introduced into the royal court.

Goliath

The Philistines invaded the country again; and Saul, forgetting for the time his personal griefs, led the Hebrew army to Socho, southwest of Jerusalem. A giant Philistine of Geth named Goliath came daily for forty days into the valley between the opposing armies; he jeered at the Hebrews and at their religion; and challenged any of them to single combat. Saul promised his eldest daughter in marriage and great riches to anyone who would fight Goliath; but the Hebrews were terrified of the massive Gethite—ten feet in height, clad in bronze helmet and armour, *"the staff of his spear like a weaver's beam"* (1 Kings 17, 7). Then David happened to come to Socho with food for his three brothers who were in Saul's army; and he proposed to fight Goliath. Saul at first had great misgivings; but finally he allowed the youth to try. Goliath was enraged at David's audacity in coming against him with only a shepherd's staff and sling. But before the giant had time to swoop down on him David flung a small stone from his sling with sure aim; embedded it in Goliath's skull; and felled the giant. Then David rushed on the prostrate form and beheaded him with his (the giant's) own sword. This dramatic turn of events threw the Philistines into panic; and they were defeated with great loss of men and booty.

David and Jonathan

David was now permanently attached to Saul's court through the influence of Jonathan with whom he had formed a close friendship, one of the great friendships of all history. David's prudence and affability soon won him general favour, while his victory over Goliath made him a national hero. Then Saul became envious of David and had him removed from the court. He also refused to give David his eldest daughter, Merob, in marriage, and gave him his second daughter, Michol, only on condition that David killed a hundred Philistines. The purpose in this was, of course, to endanger David's life. Time and again Saul attempted to kill David; and so bitter did his hatred become that David had to flee from place to place. Jonathan was powerless to save him, and the two friends parted forever with many tears. Once David came to Nobe where the Sanctuary was. He and his followers were weary and hungry; and the high-priest, Achimelech, having no other food at hand gave them the bread of proposition. (Twelve loaves placed on a special table in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary. This bread could be eaten only by priests. The exception here made for David is quoted by Our Divine Lord against the Pharisees in St. Matthew 12, 3-4.) David took the sword of Goliath also from the Sanctuary. Doeg, an Edomite proselyte and Saul's chief shepherd, happened to be at the Sanctuary; and he reported the incident. Saul commanded Doeg to kill the priests for having assisted David. Eighty-five priests (including Achimelech) were slain, and the city of Nobe was laid waste. One son of Achimelech named Abiathar escaped and later became high-priest. David had to send his parents to Moab for safety, (It will be remembered that Ruth, the grandmother of Isai (or Jesse), was a Moabitess: Ruth 4, 13-22.) and he himself took refuge with Achis, the Philistine king of Geth. In Geth Saul still pursued him, and he fled to Ziph; thence to Engaddi, near the Dead Sea—hunted *"as the partridge is hunted in the mountains"* (1 Kings 26, 20). By this time

he had with him six hundred followers; and they lived precariously by begging or plunder. They ended by making an alliance with Achis who gave them the town of Siceleg.

Death of Saul

Again the Philistines attacked the Hebrews; and by a cruel irony David was compelled by his alliance to march with the Philistine army against his own people. At the last moment, however, the Philistines, fearing treachery, sent him and his followers back to Siceleg. Before the battle Saul went to Endor to consult a woman necromancer. She called up Samuel from the dead; and the prophet rebuked Saul for his sins and foretold defeat for the Hebrew forces. On the slope of Mount Gelboe in Asdrelon Saul made his last desperate stand against the Philistines. It was a complete defeat for the Hebrews. Saul's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab, Melchisua, were slain in the fight; and he himself was pierced with several arrows. Seeing that he was about to fall into the enemy's hands for torture and certain death he implored his armour-bearer to kill him. The armour-bearer refused; so Saul fell on his own sword and took his own life.

Next day the Philistines stripped his corpse and hung his armour as a trophy in their temple of Astarte. His body and the bodies of his sons were hung in derision on the battlements of Bethsan. The men of Jabes Galaad came a day's march from beyond the Jordan; recovered the bodies; and brought them back for burial to Jabes Galaad. Later David transferred the remains to Saul's own city of Gabaa (2 Kings 21, 12-14).

Chapter II

David—The Royal Psalmist: 1012-972 B.C.

(2 Kings; 3 Kings 1, 1-2, 12; 1 Paralipomenon 11-29).—Word of the defeat and death of Saul was brought to David in Siceleg by an Amalecite mercenary who had fled from Gelboe. Although Saul had persecuted him so ruthlessly David was genuinely sorry for Saul's death. He mourned and fasted; and he composed for the occasion the most beautiful of all funeral odes: *"Consider, O Israel, for them that are dead,... how are the valiant fallen? Tell it not in Geth, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul... I grieve for thee, my brother Jonathan... As the mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee"* (2 Kings 1, 18-27). He also sent a message of thanks to the men of Jabes Galaad for their mercy to the dead king.

David then removed to Hebron; but his troubles were by no means ended. Isboseth, son of Saul, was set up as king by Abner, an officer in Saul's army. The pretender had a large following at first. Indeed, for seven years David was recognised as king only by his own tribe of Juda; and a civil war was fought to decide the succession. But Isboseth was no leader. His followers gradually melted away, and finally he was stabbed to death by two of his own officers. These brought his head to David in Hebron thinking that they would be rewarded; but David instead had them put to death for their treachery.

Now that David's rule was at last admitted by the whole nation his first step was to make the city of Jerusalem his capital. Situated on the border of Juda and Benjamin it was a central position, and its site on a group of hills made it a natural fortress. (*"Jerusalem, which is built as a city; which is compact together"* (Psalm 121, 3); *"Mountains are round about it"* (Psalm 124, 2).) It was in the

hands of the Jebusites (one of the ancient Chanaanite tribes); but David marched against it, and captured the fortress of Sion on the southeastern hill. This hill was thereafter known as "*the city of David*" (2 Kings 5, 9).

The Philistines were quick to grasp the full significance of this and the menace to their own power. They therefore resolved to attack without delay. But David defeated them in two battles in the valley of Raphaim, south of Jerusalem. This gave him a respite in which to establish his rule. The Ark of the Covenant had been at Cariathiarim since its return by the Philistines over seventy years before. David now transferred it to Sion with a grand procession amid great religious enthusiasm. He reorganised the levites and priests, and provided for order and regularity in the religious services. He also made provision for the administration of justice and for efficient government and control. It is interesting to note that among the officials appointed by David was "*the recorder*" (2 Kings 8, 16); i.e. chronicler or archivist. ("In Israel also, under the influence of Egyptian and Assyrian civilisation, the history of important events was committed to writing." *Histoire De L'ancien Testament*, Par. Mgr. J. B. Pelt. 7 ed. Paris, 1922. Vol. 2, page 293.)

When he had completed the religious and civil organisation of his kingdom and strengthened his army David prepared to free his country from the numerous enemies who were constantly menacing its security and peace. His success here was astounding. In a series of military campaigns he captured Geth, the Philistine capital, and reduced that whole nation to pay tribute; similarly the Moabites, the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Amalecites, and the Syrians. Thus all the tribes bordering on Palestine were under David's rule with the sole exception of the Phoenicians; and with the latter he made a commercial treaty. His rule extended from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean and from Egypt to Phoenicia.

David's Sin

It is easier to bear adversity than prosperity. At the height of his power and fame David committed a double crime which had grave consequences for him and for the nation. A year after his final victory over the Syrians David sent Joab, his commander-in-chief, with the army on an expedition against Rabbath Ammon. At this time David had several wives. Luxury, idleness and pride in his success had changed him from a humble, forgiving shepherd-boy into a haughty, selfish autocrat. He committed adultery with Bethsabee, the wife of Urias, an officer in his army absent at the siege of Rabbath Ammon. The king attempted to conceal his crime, but he could not succeed; so he resorted to the dire expedient of causing Urias to be slain. He then took Bethsabee as wife. Later their son, Solomon, succeeded David as king (St. Matthew 1, 6).

David remained hardened in his sin for a year, until God sent Nathan, the prophet, to rebuke him. Nathan's mission was not an easy one; but he was equal to the task. He introduced his message indirectly by reciting for the king a parable: A rich and powerful man with many flocks and herds wished to entertain a guest. He sent and took from a poor man, his neighbour, the only lamb which the latter had in his possession, and a pet with him and his family. David (never suspecting that he himself was intended) became indignant, and promised severe punishment for the cruel injustice. Thereupon, Nathan dramatically turned the parable against David: "*Thou art the man*" (2 Kings 12, 7); and continuing his divine message he explained in detail how the parable fitted David's conduct. He also foretold the evils which would follow from the king's sin to fill the remainder of his life with misery.

David's sin was a sin of weakness; not a sin of perversity. He was still good at heart. He admitted his guilt at once, and humbly confessed: "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" For this humble act of perfect repentance God pardoned him: "*And Nathan said to David: 'The Lord also hath taken away thy sin'*" (2 Kings 12, 13). Psalm 50, the confession of a humble and contrite heart, is David's act of contrition on this occasion. ("David's answer to Nathan: 'I have sinned against the Lord' (2 Kings 12, 13) may be regarded as expanded in this Psalm." *The Psalms. A Study of the Vulgate Psalter in the Light of the Hebrew Text.* By Right Rev. Monsignor Boylan, M.A., D.D., D.Litt., Dublin, 1926. Volume 1, page 186.) Saint Ambrose summarises well the whole matter of David's sin and repentance: "David sinned as kings are wont to do; but he did penance, he wept, he groaned, which kings are not wont to do." (*I Apologia Davidis*, 4.)

The vengeance foretold by the prophet fell heavily on David's house. Amnon, the eldest son of David, raped his half-sister, Tamar. Absalom, her full brother, murdered Amnon in revenge. David loved Amnon intensely, and his grief, therefore, was great in proportion. For three years Absalom was a fugitive with his father-in-law in Gessur. After that David relented to the extent of permitting Absalom to return to Jerusalem; but only after two years more did they become really reconciled. Even then the evil was not ended. Absalom made a great pretence of sorrow, but it was not a genuine sorrow; he was soon busy plotting for possession of his father's throne. He had inherited a great share of his father's genius and good looks. Latterly David had lost favour; and Absalom saw his opportunity of obtaining the kingship. He began by ingratiating himself with the people, especially with the malcontents among them. Then after four (In the text (2 Kings 15, 7) we have *forty* years, which is an impossible number: David reigned only forty years. It is probably a copyist's error for *four* which Josephus has in the same context: *Antiquities* 7, 9, 1.) years he asked his father to allow him to go to Hebron on the pretext that he wished to make a pilgrimage. It argues well for Absalom's cunning that David had no suspicion of his real motives. Arrived in Hebron Absalom rose in open revolt; proclaimed himself king; and marched on Jerusalem. David with his faithful adherents fled from the city on foot—across Wady Kedron, over Mount Olivet by Bahurim towards the desert.

Absalom entered the city with his army and at once made plans to pursue and murder his father. Chusai, one of David's followers, had returned to Jerusalem to act as spy in David's interest. He was able to foil Absalom's plan, and to send a message to David warning him of the danger in which he stood. At this David crossed the Jordan and took refuge in the city of Mahanaim where he was well received. Here he rallied his forces and prepared to suppress the revolt. David himself wished to lead the army to battle, but his followers would not allow it; they required him to remain in safety in the city. David's army in three divisions under Joab, Abisai and Ethai, routed Absalom's forces with terrible slaughter. Before the battle David's last request to his leaders was: "*Save me the boy Absalom*" (2 Kings 18, 5). It was not granted. The battle was fought near a forest, and after his defeat Absalom fled on a mule. As he passed under a large oak tree his head was caught in the branches, dragging him off the mule and leaving him suspended helplessly in mid-air. Joab heard of his plight and his whereabouts, and at once came after him and slew him. When David heard the result of the battle his first question was: "*Is the young man Absalom safe?*" (2 Kings 18, 29). His son's death caused him so much grief that the joy of victory was changed for him into sadness. David returned to Palestine, and at the Jordan he was met by a great concourse of the people of his own tribe of Juda. The other tribes, however, did not come in such numbers; so Seba, an Ephraimite, raised a fresh rebellion. Joab pursued him to Abela and laid siege to that city. In order

to save themselves the inhabitants of Abela seized and beheaded the rebel leader, and threw his head from the ramparts to Joab. This ended Seba's attempt on the monarchy.

David made another grievous mistake. Through vanity he ordered a census of the nation to be taken. But again he repented humbly. His sin was forgiven; but it had to be expiated. A plague decimated the nation. At the end of the plague the avenging angel of Yahweh was seen by David in Jerusalem sheathing his sword. By divine command David purchased the ground on which the angel had appeared to him, and built an altar there. It was the threshing-floor of Areuna, a Jebusite; situated on Mount Moriah—the scene according to tradition of Abraham's sacrifice, and the site later of Solomon's Temple. Sacrifices were then offered, and the plague ceased.

Death of King David

David had promised on oath to Bethsabee that their son, Solomon, would succeed him on the throne. Shortly before his death, however, when David was now old and feeble, another son named Adonias (his mother was Haggith) attempted to seize the kingship, and forestall his half-brother, Solomon. The attempt was frustrated by the intervention of Nathan, the prophet, and Bethsabee, Solomon's mother. Solomon was anointed king before David's death by Nathan, the prophet, and Sadoc, the high-priest, at Gihon outside the city; borne on David's mule in solemn procession; and publicly proclaimed and saluted as the new sovereign. Soon after this David died. He was the warrior-poet to the last—even in decrepit old age. His farewell address to the people is couched in glorious poetic language and full of fine religious sentiment; and in his final injunctions to the new king, Solomon, he passes without effort from exhortations to courage and zeal for the divine law to bid him take vengeance on certain enemies of their dynasty with whom David himself had not been able to deal. This strange combination of opposing sentiments must be read in the light of the period; the law of equal retribution was in full force—it had the sanction of Moses. On the same principle are explained the so-called "imprecatory psalms," i.e., those psalms which pray for vengeance. David died and was buried in his own city of Sion.

The Psalms

The military victories of King David and his success in organisation and diplomacy brought the Hebrew monarchy to its highest point of development. But David has another title to fame: as the sweet singer of Israel's sacred songs he has endeared himself to mankind forever:

"He sang of God, the mighty source
Of all things; the stupendous force
On which all strength depends;
From whose right arm, beneath whose eyes,
All period, power and enterprise
Commences, reigns and ends."

(*Christopher Smart—A Song to David.*)

The Psalter, or Book of Psalms is the inspired prayer-book of the Old Testament. Not all the Psalms were written by David; (The Psalter contains 150 psalms. David's name occurs in the *titles* of 73 of these in the Hebrew text; of 85 in the Vulgate text. Jewish and Christian tradition have always taken this to mean that David was the inspired author. Some modern critics deny this; but the Biblical Commission weighed their arguments and found them inconclusive; and so pronounced their theory *not proven*. DENZINGER-BANNWART. *Enchiridion Symbolorum* etc. 15 ed. Nos. 2129-2136.) but

the Book is justly called "The Davidic Psalter"—for David was the greatest of the psalmists; he composed half of the total content; he encouraged music and poetry; and he influenced the later psalmists. For religious depth and literary beauty; for variety of theme and keen insight into the human soul—the Psalms have no equal in literature: "Nature and grace have made David the true spokesman of humanity—praying, believing, hoping, loving." (Von Haneberg. *Revelation Biblique* (translated from the German). Paris, 1856. Part V; 2, 12.) These inspired hymns express every good sentiment, every pious emotion, every holy joy and sorrow of the human soul. Faith, hope, love; adoration and gratitude; humility and repentance; confidence and holy fear; petitions for man's multiple needs whether temporal or spiritual—all are expressed in the Psalms in incomparable language: "For all the duties mortals owe to God, for all conditions of human life—both private and public, for the various motions by which the mind of man is borne towards God, there suitable prayers are found." (*Psalterium ex Hebraeo Latinum*. Auctore Francisco Zorell, S.I. Rome, 1928. Pages vii-viii.)

After Abraham and Moses, David ranks third in importance among the great men of the Old Testament who shed renown on Israel and brought forward the divine plan of Redemption.

Chapter III

Solomon—The Wise Man: 972-932 B.C.

(*3 Kings* 2, 13-11, 43; *2 Paralipomenon* 1-9).—Solomon was the second son of David and Bethsabee; the first died in infancy. Solomon was born soon after his father's final victory over the Ammonites—whence his name (in Hebrew—"Shulomoh"—the man of peace). He was a child of great promise, and his education was entrusted to Nathan the prophet, who named him Yedidya ("Beloved of Yahweh"): "*because the Lord loved him*" (*2 Kings* 12, 25). He began to reign when he was about twenty years old; and he inherited a compact, well organised kingdom. (Saul, David and Solomon are all said to have reigned for forty years. The long arm of coincidence could scarcely reach so far as that; and the recurrence of this number *forty* leads to the suspicion that it is a round number, not an *exact* number. From comparison with Egyptian chronology it is probable that Solomon came to the throne in 972 B.C.; see No. 2 of this series, page 13. Josephus gives Solomon's reign as *eighty* years, his age as *ninety-four* (*Antiquities* 8, 7, 8); but that he came to the throne at fourteen is very unlikely.) He was a strange personality indeed—probably the most complex character in all history. His reign began with great brilliance and success; but it ended in gloom and failure.

At the beginning of his reign the new king went to Gabaon where the Tabernacle and the altar of holocausts of Moses were; and he had a thousand victims offered in sacrifice. His piety was pleasing to God, and the following night he had a vision in which God spoke to him: "*Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee*" (*3 Kings* 3, 5). In a very beautiful prayer Solomon first gave thanks to God for the divine favour shown to his father, David, and his own elevation to the kingship of the Hebrew people. Then pleading his youth and the great responsibility which he had assumed he asked God for wisdom and knowledge to fulfil his duties as monarch. God again commended him for this prayer because he had asked wisdom for the good of the people; and not riches, nor vengeance on enemies, nor a long life. What he asked was granted to him; and in addition riches and length of days were promised—but length of days on condition that he would

continue faithful in the observance of the divine law. Solomon returned to Jerusalem; and there again he had sacrifices offered before the Ark of the Covenant.

One example of the king's practical wisdom is recorded in 3 Kings 3, 16-27; it was told everywhere, and it made a deep impression on the people and won universal respect and awe for Solomon. Two women appeared before the king with an infant. The first stated her case. She lived in the same house with the second woman. The first woman gave birth to a child; and three days later the second woman also gave birth to a child—which child died soon after birth. The second woman stole the living child from the side of its sleeping mother by night and put the dead child in its place. When she (the plaintiff) awoke she found the dead child, and at once knew that it was not hers. The second woman denied the charge and claimed that the living child was hers. They appealed to the king for a decision. It was a difficult case to judge. There were no witnesses; the only evidence was the statements of the contending parties, which were in violent contradiction one with the other.

Solomon commanded that a sword should be brought, and with it the living child divided in two, and half given to each of the women. The first woman protested against this—she would prefer to lose her claim rather than see the child killed. The second woman, on the contrary, was willing to abide by the king's decision. This gave Solomon his clue; he knew then that the first woman was the mother, and he restored the child to her.

The Golden Age

Solomon had no foreign enemies, and he was able to apply his energies from the first to the internal affairs of his realm. Josaphat, the son of Ahilud, was reappointed recorder. Banaïas, the son of Joiada, who had been captain of the royal guard in David's reign was promoted to charge of the army instead of Joab whom Solomon put to death as David had directed. Two "scribes" or secretaries of state were appointed where David had only one. Azarias the son of Nathan was "*over them that were about the king*" (3 Kings 4, 5)—a new office which would correspond to prime minister. Another new officer, Adoniram, is described as "*over the tribute*" (3 Kings 4, 6). It was an unpopular office and Adoniram was slain in a revolt after Solomon's death (3 Kings 12, 18). Altogether eleven officials are mentioned where David had only six; and Solomon's officials have the title of *prince* (3 Kings 4, 4-6). In addition Solomon divided his kingdom into twelve *provinces* for purposes of administration, and over each province a governor was appointed. A chief function of the provincial governors was to provide supplies for the royal household. That the administration had become greatly complicated and the king's entourage enormously increased is clearly shown by the huge supplies required daily for the king. The subject countries paid their annual tribute faithfully; there was peace in the land of Israel; foreign trade brought a large revenue. Horses were introduced to replace the mules of the last reign, and a squadron of cavalry was added to the army. The success of his reign and the splendour of his court; his personal qualities of prudence and justice; his gifts as a poet, naturalist and moral philosopher carried the fame of the Hebrew king afar. (Solomon was the author of 3,000 parables and 1,005 poems (3 Kings 4, 32). Some of these parables are in the *Book of Proverbs* (THE CATHOLIC STUDENT'S "AIDS" TO THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE. By Hugh Pope, O.P., S.T.M., D.S. Scr. Volume II, new edition of 1930, page 232). Until the sixteenth century the *Book of Ecclesiastes* and the *Canticle of Canticles* were regarded as Solomon's. Modern authors question this, and place them after the Exile. The *Book of Job* was long considered to have been written in the time of Solomon (so R. Cornely, S.J., COMPENDIUM INTRODUCTIONIS, etc., page 320; and Doctor Pope, page 183); but the most recent work on Job

(THE BOOK OF JOB, Critical Text and Commentary. By Rev. Edward J. Kissane, D.D., L.S.S 1939, pages xlviil-1) puts the date of the composition of Job also later than the Exile. Psalms 71 and 126 have the name of Solomon in their titles, but it is probable that this does *not* mean authorship (Monsignor Boylan, THE PSALMS, etc.). The *Book of Wisdom* bears the name of Solomon, but this is a literary fiction; it seems to have been composed in Egypt and written in Greek long after the Exile (Hugh Pope, O.P., "AIDS"—Vol. II, pages 251-253).) He was soon on terms of perfect equality with the great emperors of the time; and he sought and obtained in marriage the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt. The Hebrews enjoyed a prosperity unique in their history: *"Juda and Israel were innumerable, as the sand of the sea in multitude: eating and drinking, and rejoicing... and Juda and Israel dwelt without any fear, everyone under his vine, and under his fig tree from Dan to Bethsabee, all the days of Solomon"* (3 Kings 4, 20-25).

The Temple of Solomon

David's work for centralising religious worship in one sanctuary (as required by Deuteronomy 12, 14) was not completed when he died. The Tabernacle was at Gabaon (1 Paralipomenon 16, 39), while the Ark of the Covenant was in Sion in a temporary tabernacle. David had in mind the project of building a temple to God on Mount Sion (2 Kings 7); but in a divine message conveyed to him by Nathan it was made known to him that not he, but his son and heir Solomon, would build the temple. David, however, had marked out and purchased a site; he had also set aside much gold and silver for the building.

The Hebrews knew nothing of engineering or architecture; but among those who sent messages of good will to Solomon on his accession was Hiram, King of Phoenicia. At once Solomon opened negotiations with him for a trade alliance—Hiram to supply timber and skilled craftsmen for the building of the temple; Solomon to pay him in wheat and olive oil. Solomon then imposed a levy of compulsory work on the whole country. Thirty thousand men were sent in three relays—ten thousand every month—to Mount Lebanon to fell cedar and fir trees under the direction of expert Tyrians. The trees were hauled to the sea at Tyre whence they were brought in rafts to Joppe (modern Jaffa); from there overland to Jerusalem. Eighty thousand men were put to quarry and dress stones in the royal quarries at Mount Bezetha, north of Sion. These also worked under the direction of Phoenician engineers from Byblos. Seventy thousand Chanaanites were employed in the difficult work of transport. Three thousand three hundred overseers were appointed to superintend. The work was begun in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, and it took seven and a half years to complete.

Before the Temple could be built much preliminary work was necessary on the site. Mount Moriah was levelled and sustaining walls for the foundations were built. For the foundations enormous blocks of stone were used: *"And the king commanded that they should bring great stones, costly (in the Hebrew: 'chosen') stones, for the foundation of the temple and should square them"* (3 Kings 5, 17).

After these elaborate preparations the dimensions of the Temple itself come as a disappointment. It was only about one hundred and five feet long by thirty-five feet broad and fifty-two feet high. These are the internal dimensions; that is to say, the thickness of the main walls (ten feet, according to Ezechiel 41, 5) is not included. The glory of Solomon's Temple was its gorgeous decoration and sumptuous gold furnishings rather than its size. The temple in ancient times was the dwelling place

of God—not a place of assembly for worshippers. The worshippers assembled in an open court in front of the temple; and there also the sacrifices were offered.

Solomon's Temple was built on the plan of the Tabernacle of Moses, but of larger proportions. This was sufficient to give it an Egyptian style, because the plan of the Tabernacle was revealed to Moses (Exodus 25-27) in terms of Egyptian architecture. Moreover, the Phoenicians who built it never developed any particular style of building; they were the merchants of the ancient world; and they borrowed their building models from the Assyrians and the Egyptians, mainly from the Egyptians. Solomon's Temple was a rectangular building lying east and west—the main entrance at the eastern end. Before the main entrance was a vestibule which ran the whole breadth of the Temple and formed a broad tower like the pylon of Egyptian temples. This was about eighteen feet in width, and a hundred feet high. (The text gives it as over two hundred feet (120 cubits—2 Paralipomenon 3, 4); but this figure would put it altogether out of proportion. Commentators think that it must be a copyist's error for *sixty*, which was the height of the tower in the second (Zorobabel's) Temple. CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA. *Temple of Jerusalem*; also LA BIBLE ET LES DECOUVERTES MODERNES, Volume 3, page 312.) Around the other three sides were built three stories of side chambers—ninety in all. Care was taken that the upper stories of these would not be supported by the Temple walls, but on independent supports built in recesses; and they were reached by means of winding stairs erected outside the Temple proper. In the side chambers were stored the archives, the public treasury, and the sacred vestments and vessels for divine worship. The whole building was in huge blocks of the red and white limestone of the locality which can take a polish like marble. The Temple was divided by a wall into two rooms. The inner room of these—that at the west end—was the *Debir*, or Holy of Holies. It measured thirty-five feet in length, breadth and height, and had no windows. The cherubim (angels in human form with wings) ten feet high, carved in wild olive wood overlaid with gold, extended the full breadth of the chamber—their outstretched wings covering the Propitiatory (the gold cover of the Ark of the Covenant). In the Ark were the two tables of the law; and near it in the inner sanctuary were kept a gold vessel containing manna and the rod of Aaron (Hebrews 9, 4). At the entrance to the Holy of Holies there were folding doors of cedar wood richly carved and finished with gold. These were always open but the entrance was completely covered by a rich curtain dyed in colours. In addition gold chains barred the entrance. The walls were covered with cedar wood carved in relief and overlaid with gold. Everything in the Holy of Holies, even the floor, was covered with gold; the hinges and the nails used in the doors were of gold.

The outer chamber of the Temple, the *Heikal* or Holy Place, was seventy feet long by thirty-five feet broad and fifty-two feet high. Lattice windows in the upper side-walls admitted air, but very little light. It was lighted by ten golden candelabra, richly ornamented and supporting gold lamps which burned olive oil. In front of the entrance to the Holy of Holies was the altar of incense, a rectangular chest of cedar wood, covered with plates of gold. In the Holy Place was also the golden table (or tables) for the loaves of proposition. The extinguishers, bowls, mortars, thuribles used in the Holy Place were all of wrought gold.

In front of the vestibule were erected two bronze pillars surmounted by ornamental capitals over twenty feet in circumference and forty feet high. These were modelled on the obelisks of Egypt. On the north, south and west sides of the building was "*the inner court*" (3 Kings 6, 36) open to the sky, paved with polished stone and fenced off by a low wall surmounted by a railing. Here directly in front of the entrance to the Temple was placed the bronze altar of holocausts—thirty-five feet long

and broad and eighteen feet high, with steps leading up to it from the eastern side. There was a huge bronze vessel containing water for the ritual washings of the priests before they officiated at the altar; and there were ten moveable vessels on wheels for washing the flesh of the victims offered in sacrifice. All the furnishings in this court were of bronze.

When the Temple was completed Solomon dedicated it with great solemnity. The priests, the ancients, the magistrates of the whole nation, and a great concourse of the people assembled in Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant was carried by priests to its new position in the Holy of Holies with a grand procession while levites played sacred music and sang "*the hymns of David*" (2 Paralipomenon 7, 6). Thousands of victims were offered in sacrifice. God signified His approval of the Temple, for miraculous fire consumed the sacrifices on the altar and a cloud (symbol of the divine presence) filled the Holy of Holies when the Ark was placed within. Another vision was granted to Solomon in which the Messianic promise was renewed. The ceremonies of the dedication lasted a full week, and the people returned to their homes much impressed by all that they had seen. Solomon made provision for regular sacrifices and public prayer in the new Temple.

"Solomon in All His Glory"

Solomon next built magnificent palaces in Sion for himself. There also were planned, erected and adorned for him by the Phoenicians. He surrounded the whole city of Jerusalem with protecting walls. He fortified Hazor on the northern frontiers of the country; Mageddo, the key to central Palestine; Gazer and the two Bethorons against the Philistines in the southwest. In the desert on the southern frontier he built and fortified the city of Palmira (or Thadmor); and he built a harbour at Asiongaber on the Elanitic Gulf (modern Gulf of Aqaba) from which his ships could sail to India. His fame was known in distant Ethiopia and the queen of that country (Saba) travelled to Jerusalem to hear his wisdom and to admire his Temple and palaces. When Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount spoke of the beauty of God's creation he compared it with Solomon: "*Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they labour not neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.*" (St. Matthew 6, 28-29).

The Downfall of Solomon

His immense wealth and power were Solomon's undoing in the end. He took several wives—heathen women from Moab, Edom, Ammon, Phoenicia and the Hittite empire. To please them he had temples and altars erected in the Holy City to Astarte and Chamos, the gods of Moab; and Moloch, the god of Ammon. He paid the penalty for his apostasy: troubles arose from within and without his kingdom. Adad, an Edomite king, who as a boy was expelled by David had now grown to manhood and married an Egyptian princess. He always bore a grudge against the house of David. He became king of Syria and harassed the Hebrew kingdom during the latter years of Solomon's reign. Within the kingdom Solomon's ever increasing taxation had created grave discontent. Jeroboam, of the tribe of Ephraim, a former favourite of Solomon who had put him in charge of the taxation for the tribes of Ephraim and Manasses, led the opposition of the northern tribes against the king. One day as Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem he met Ahias the prophet. Ahias was wearing a new cloak. He took off the cloak; cut it into twelve pieces; and told Jeroboam to take ten of them. This action of the prophet was a parable and a divine message, and Ahias explained its meaning: because of Solomon's sins his kingdom would be divided. The schism, however, would not take place in Solomon's lifetime on account of the great merits of his father, David. Moreover, because of the divine promises made to David God decreed that Solomon's son would reign over

two tribes—Juda and Benjamin: *"that there may remain a lamp for my servant David before me always in Jerusalem the city which I have chosen"* (3 Kings 11, 36).

Solomon died in Jerusalem and was buried in Sion.

Conclusion

This period is of the greatest interest for the progress of religion, and for the growth of Revelation.

1. The monarchy adds a new element to the typical character of the Chosen People: the kingdom of Israel is a type of the Kingdom of Heaven—the Church of Christ which the Messiah founded. The king is a type of Christ. The rejection of Saul, the first king, increases the importance of David, who was chosen to succeed him. More than any other personage in the Old Testament David is a type of Christ. To him was promised an eternal kingdom (1 Paralipomenon 7, 12); the Messiah is called *"the son of David"* (St. Matthew 1, 1); David brought the kingdom of Israel to its greatest extent. Again, the life of David (leaving out sin) resembled the life of Christ in many points: he was born in Bethlehem; *"poor and in labours from his youth"* (Psalm 87, 16); the victim of unjust persecution; betrayed by his own; victorious finally over all his enemies. The prophets speak of the Messiah simply as David, e.g. Jeremiah 30, 9; Ezechiel 37, 24.

2. The prophecies concerning the future Redeemer, hitherto rare and indefinite, are multiplied and clarified in the Psalms of David. "David beheld the Messiah from afar and sang of Him with unrivalled magnificence." (Bossuet. *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*. Part 2; chapter 14.) All the Psalms are messianic; (The Psalms are quoted in the New Testament a hundred and sixteen times.) but there are certain prophetic psalms where the Person (not a type or figure) of Christ is the subject; namely, psalms 2; 15; 21; 44; 71; 109. Of these again psalms 2; 15; 21; 109 are davidic. In Psalm 2 the Messiah is the Son of God; King in Sion and Ruler of the world. In Psalm 15 the Resurrection of Christ is foretold. In Psalm 21 the Messiah is depicted as suffering, derided, tortured; His garments are divided by his foes: *"a worm and not a man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people"* (Psalm 21, 7). In Psalm 109 He is lord of David; conqueror and judge of his enemies; and a priest forever—not after the Levitical manner but after the manner of Melchisedech. This psalm was quoted by Our Lord against the Pharisees (St. Matthew 22, 43-45).

3. The building of the Temple which became the dwelling of God made Jerusalem the City of God, the Holy City. Sion, where the Temple was built, gave its name to the whole city. It became a type of the Church and of the Kingdom of Heaven. The theme of many psalms is the House of God; the Courts of Jahwe; the holy mountain of Sion. Jerusalem with its glorious Temple fired the Hebrews with a deep religious patriotism which inspired some of their most plaintive and some of their fiercest hymns: *"For the stones thereof have pleased thy servants: and they shall have pity on the earth thereof"* (Psalm 101, 15); *"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember thee: If I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy"* (Psalm 136, 5-6).

Lastly, Jerusalem which in its subsequent history sustained no fewer than forty-four sieges (JERUSALEM *from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70*. By George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D. London, 1903. Volume 2, page 580.) and still survives as a city is typical in this of the Church concerning which Our Lord said: *"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence"* (St. Matthew 11, 12).
