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Sacral Kingship—The Old Testament Background*

Arthur E. Cundall

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The subject of Divine or Sacral Kingship has been a dominant one in Old Testament studies during the past four decades. Its source is the stimulating research on the Psalter by such scholars as Gunkel, Mowinckel, Weiser, Kraus¹, encouraged by archaeological evidence which, some believe, reveals a common cult-pattern amongst the great civilisations of the Fertile Crescent. Undoubtedly there have been great gains from this line of enquiry, although imagination, always essential in the reconstruction of past events, has occasionally shaded over into speculation, supported by a dogmatic interpretation of texts which are admittedly difficult.² The greatest gain is that the Psalter is now viewed as the vivid expression of worship at the sanctuaries of Judah and Israel, and in particular, at the Jerusalem Temple. In second place of importance is the attempt to view the institution of the monarchy in Israel in the light of evidence from the surrounding nations, particularly with the aim of ascertaining the role of the king in the cultus.

There is, of course, no unanimity in these studies. Whilst most scholars would allow that the Autumn New Year Festival was the highlight of the cultic year throughout the period of the monarchy, and that it included the celebration of Yahweh's sovereignty, there is wide divergence on detail.

Many and varied answers have been given to the questions, both fundamental and peripheral, which have been raised, including: (i) a precise definition of sacral kingship; (ii) how God's *continuing* sovereignty can be celebrated in an annual re-enthronement ceremony; (iii) the antecedents, both Canaanite and Israelite, of the ceremony; (iv) the form and nature of the ceremony, including the place of the so-called 'Royal Psalms' (Pss. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132) and 'Accession Psalms' (Pss. 47, 93, 95-99). It would be an impertinence, as well as an impossibility, to attempt to cover the entire subject of sacral kingship, so we will confine ourselves to a general consideration of the Old Testament evidence concerning the Davidic king and his relationships with Yahweh, the nation and the cult. This, in our view is the indispensable background against which all theories must be set, especially those which

* This article is adapted from The Tyndale Old Testament Lecture, 1968.

¹ Two surveys which admirably cover the main literature of the period are: A. R. Johnson, 'The Psalms', in H. H. Rowley, ed., *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1951), 162-209; D. J. Clines, 'Psalm Research Since 1955', *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967), 103-126.

² Amongst the more important works (in English) on the subject are: A. Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, Lutterworth, London (1955); R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London (1961), 100-114; I. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East*, Almqvist and Wiksells, Uppsala (1943), 2nd ed. Blackwell, Oxford (1947); H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, University of Chicago (1948); S. H. Hooke, ed., *Myth and Ritual*, Oxford University Press, London (1933); ed., *The Labyrinth*, S.P.C.K., London (1935); *The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual* (Schweich Lectures for 1935), London (1938); ed., *Myth, Ritual and Kingship*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1958); A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff (1955); H. J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, Blackwell, Oxford (1966), 179-224; S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, Blackwell, Oxford (1956); *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols., Blackwell, Oxford (1962); M. Noth, 'God, King and Peoples', in *Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh (1966), 145-178; A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, S.C.M., London (1962), 23-52.

are largely dependent upon the observation of similarities in other ancient Near-Eastern sources, or which tend to rely upon a limited area of evidence (e.g. the Psalter).

I. YAHWEH, THE TRUE KING OF HIS PEOPLE, AND THE CONSEQUENTLY LIMITED ROLE OF THE HUMAN KING

The sovereignty of Yahweh, in both nature and history, is strikingly demonstrated in the Book of Psalms.³ The same theme could be as convincingly illustrated in the Former and Latter Prophets.⁴ So clear was this conception of Yahweh's control of every situation that it left little room for absolute kingship of the type which prevailed elsewhere in the Fertile Crescent.⁵ Just as Yahweh's nature was

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not to be compromised by likeness to any created thing (Ex. 20. 4ff), so His lordship was not to be shared with, or usurped by, any human ruler. The reply of Gideon to the men of Israel, 'I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you' (Jdg. 8. 23), indicates this belief that Yahweh was the real king of Israel.⁶ This attitude came into tension with the demand for a king which was precipitated by the political situation (i.e. the Philistine crisis) in the time of Samuel. Modern scholarship claims to be able to detect two variant accounts in 1 Samuel concerning the institution of the monarchy, the earlier source supporting it whilst the latter source, reflecting the opposition which arose in a later, disillusioned age, is antagonistic. This second source is held to be almost valueless so far as the actual inauguration of the monarchy is concerned.⁷

Yet it must surely be admitted that there was opposition to the monarchy from the beginning. Change is rarely welcomed by traditionalists, and the twelve-tribe confederacy, itself a witness to the nature of the divine rule in Israel, was firmly rooted in Hebrew tradition.⁸ As well as the opposition to the rule of Saul there was the otherwise inexplicably long period before the adoption of the monarchy in Israel.⁹ David's conciliatory gestures to the amphictyonic tradition, evidenced in the placing of the ark, its symbol *par excellence*, in the new national capital, were probably intended to conciliate this opposition party by linking the old with the new system of rule. But such an act would also place a limitation upon the

³ e.g. Pss. 2, 8, 9, 18, 21, 24, 29, etc.

⁴ e. g. Jdg. 5. 4f, 20, 31; 1 Sa. 2. 1-10; 2. Ki. 19, 15-28; Is. 2. 12-19; 7. 11; 10. 5-27; 40-55; Je. 25. 9; 27. 6; 43. 10; Am. 1. 2-2. 10; 9. 2-15, etc.

⁵ Other factors were, of course, involved, and I have noted some of these in 'Antecedents of the Monarchy in Ancient Israel', *Vox Evangelica* III (1964) 42-50 [now available on-line at http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol03/monarchy_cundall.pdf]. It seems almost incredible, in the light of the events of the Exodus and the Covenant at Sinai, together with such contemporary evidence as Jdg. 5, that scholars can speak of the late emergence of the view of Yahweh's kingship, or that such a view is impossible until He has a temple as His palace (e.g. Kraus, *op. cit.*, 203, 204).

⁶ For a discussion on the significance of this verse see G. Henton Davies, 'Judges viii. 22-23' in *VT*, xiii. 2 (1963), 151-157; Barnabas Lindars, 'Gideon and Kingship', *JTS*, xvi. 2 (1965), 315-326; A. E. Cundall, *Judges*, Tyndale Press, London (1968), 120, 121.

⁷ e.g. R. H. Pfeiffer, *The Books of the Old Testament*, A. & C. Black, London (1957), 136-138.

⁸ J. Bright, *op. cit.* 142-160; M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, A. & C. Black, London (1960), 85-138.

⁹ cf. the long-established Egyptian monarchy, the petty kings of the Canaanite city-states, and, even more relevant, the early adoption of the monarchy by the ethnically related kingdoms of Edom, Moab and Ammon. We can only assume that the monarchy, and the divine-king ideology associated with it in certain areas, was rejected as incompatible with Israel's traditions.

personal freedom of David. Although Jerusalem had been captured by David's men (2 Sa. 5. 6ff) and the new capital was, in a sense, his gift to the nation, the presence of the ark involved all Israel. It was a matter of consequence what David did in Jerusalem, particularly in cultic affairs; he was hardly free to assume a divine kingship, within a personally-held city state, without reference to Israel and its traditions. An illustration of this may be seen in the fact that Nathan, the representative of Israel's prophetic order and, in a sense, the successor of Samuel, was able to prevent David from carrying out his avowed intention to build a Temple himself in Jerusalem (2 Sa. 7). This meant that during the reign of David, a crucial period for the theory of sacral kingship, there was nothing in Jerusalem approximating to Canaanite-Syrian sacral architecture, but just the tent-shrine at Gihon (2 Sa. 6. 17 cf. 1 Ki. 1. 38f), which was probably regarded as the legitimate successor; to the central sanctuary of the Judges' period. David's deference, if not his subjection, to the prophetic representatives of the nation is further illustrated in the rebukes administered by Nathan and Gad (2 Sa. 12. 1-15; 24. 11-14).¹⁰

In the light of all this it is reasonable to assume that the Samuel narratives which view the appointment of a king with disfavour, faithfully reflect the opinions of a religiously-motivated opposition party. The historian, with more objectivity than is usually ascribed to him, has incorporated in his account the views for and against the monarchy.¹¹ The actions of the prophets Ahijah (1 Ki. 11. 29-39) and Shemaiah (1 Ki. 12. 21-24) probably indicate the presence of a similar prophetic group, disenchanted with the nature of Solomon's reign, at a later period.

The realisation of the kingship of Yahweh is essential to an understanding of the monarchy in Israel. From the outset it was a constitutional monarchy, without the absolute power of an Egyptian or, to a lesser extent, a Mesopotamian king. A degree of compromise is apparent. The word *nāgîd* ('leader') is used in connection with both Saul (1 Sa. 9. 16; 10. 1, 2) and David (1 Sa. 13. 14; 25. 30; 2 Sa. 5. 2; 6. 21), although the more usual *melek* by which the minor kings of Canaan were

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known, would be popularly used. The king is represented as the Lord's anointed (*masiah*), and as de Vaux has pointed out, in the ancient Near East it was usually the vassal kings who were anointed.¹² The king in Israel was Yahweh's subordinate or vassal, which brings into prominence the concept of the latter's supreme kingship. Moreover, whilst David was anointed by Samuel (1 Sa. 16. 13), he actually gained his kingdom through the free choice of the men of Judah (2 Sa. 2. 4) and the elders of Israel (2 Sa. 5. 1-3), the latter arrangement being safeguarded by a covenant. David himself nominated Solomon as his successor (1 Ki. 1. 30) the appointment being ratified by the priestly anointing and popular acclamation at

¹⁰ The same deference to the constituted religious authority, on the part of the Davidic kings, may also be indicated in Dt. 17. 18ff, and possibly, by the reference to the 'testimony' which Jehoash received at his coronation (2 Ki. 11. 12).

¹¹ The passages usually regarded as pro-monarchical are 1 Sa. 9. 1-10. 16, 27b; 11. 1-15; those against are 8; 10. 17-27a; 12. For details of a three source theory see N. H. Snaith, 'The Historical Books', *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, 97-99. Cf. also the comments of W. McKane, *I and II Samuel*, S.C.M., London (1963), 24-27.

¹² R. de Vaux in a verbal communication at the Summer Conference of the Society for Old Testament Study (1964); cf. 'The roi d'Israel, vassal de Yahve', in *Melanges Eugene Tisserant I, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano* (1964), 119-133; cf. also *Ancient Israel*, 104.

Gihon (1 Ki. 1. 38ff).¹³ In the next generation, whilst Rehoboam's acceptance in Judah appears unquestioned, the approval of the northern tribes was clearly an essential, and this was used by them as a bargaining point (1 Ki. 12. 1-4). The initiative of the people, expressed through their elders, is shown in these traditions of the early monarchy (cf. also 1 Sa. 11. 15; 12. 13; 1 Ki. 12. 20), which suggests that it was predominantly a political rather than a sacral institution. This was a heritage of the sturdy independence of the nation's past, and warns against the facile acceptance of any view which makes the king more than a man raised to a position of qualified leadership. The monarchy, when it was adopted, had distinctively Israelite features which left little scope for the wholesale adoption of an alien priest-king ideology.

There is some evidence that the person of the king was regarded as sacrosanct, although probably not because he was regarded as divine but because he was the Lord's anointed viceroy. David himself refused to strike his predecessor Saul, the Lord's anointed (1 Sa. 24. 6; 26. 9ff), and later he dealt severely with the Amalekite who claimed to have despatched him (2 Sa. 1. 13-16). We must also note the prohibition against cursing the ruler or king, an offence serious enough to be closely linked with blasphemy (Ex. 22. 28; 1 Ki. 21. 10). But the unceremonious treatment of Rehoboam by the northern tribes (1 Ki. 11. 16ff); Athaliah's slaughter of almost the entire royal line (2 Ki. 11. 1); the assassinations of Joash, Amaziah and Amon, all of the Davidic line (1 Ki. 13. 20; 14. 18f; 21. 23); and the similar treatment probably meted out to Jehoiakim during the Babylonian siege of 597 B.C. (2 Ki. 24. 6 cf. Je. 22. 18f; 36. 30), all occurred without any hint that the ruling representative of the Davidic dynasty was regarded as a sacred personality.

Nor is there any suggestion in the prophetic narratives that the king was more than a man who sometimes merited, and received, the prophetic rebuke. There is no deference to a king's divinity, nor, on the contrary, any condemnation of a king for claiming deity. It may, however, be apposite to note here that, in a taunt-song to an unnamed Babylonian king, his pretensions to divine kingship are mocked in such a way as to suggest the repudiation of the principle itself (Is. 14. 13f).

II. THE KING AND THE SPIRIT OF YAHWEH

The anointing of the king was traditionally associated with the coming of the Spirit upon him (1 Sa. 16. 13 cf. 2 Sa. 23. 1f). This connects closely with the Judges' Period, when the coming of the Spirit of the Lord equipped the judges for their mighty deeds (e.g. Jdg. 3. 10; 6. 34; 11. 29 etc.). The same charismatic anointing presumably equipped the judges for their specifically judicial functions, as in the case of Moses and the seventy elders (Nu. 11. 16f, 24f). It is scarcely surprising

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then that the Israelites looked for similar phenomena in their early kings. Saul gave clear evidence of his charismatic anointing when he delivered the citizens of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites (1 Sa. 11. 1-11, note especially v. 6). The withdrawal of his charismatic gift was virtually synonymous with his rejection as leader (1 Sa. 16. 1, 14). David's reputation was

¹³ The court-narrative (1 Sa. 9-20; 1 Ki. 1, 2) may be, in fact, a Succession-narrative, designed to support the legitimacy of Solomon's accession.

established by his many exploits (cf. 2 Sa. 5. 2a) and Solomon was distinguished, not by military prowess, but by the possession of exceptional wisdom, itself a gift from God (1 Ki. 3. 1-12, 28 etc.). The succession of dynasties in Israel after the Disruption, each of which was established by force, may suggest that the charismatic anointing, as well as the dynastic principle, remained a vital factor in the acceptance of a king in the northern kingdom. But in Judah, whilst the anointing of the king continued to be customary (e.g. 2 Ki. 11. 12), there is little evidence for the exercise of the more spectacular manifestations of the Spirit's possession, and not one of the kings is specifically credited with the possession of the Spirit of Yahweh. It is possible then, that in Judah the dynastic principle alone prevailed. It is possible that the ability of the king to dispense judgement and to maintain righteousness in every aspect of the national life, which the anointed king was expected to display, was conceived to be an endowment of the Spirit (Ps. 45. 4-7; 72. 1-4, 12ff; Je. 22. 13-17). But since few the Davidic kings displayed these qualities, they became essential components of the future hope centering upon a Messianic King.¹⁴

III. THE KING AND THE CULTUS

Before considering the place of the Davidic king in the cultus we must first note the impact of the figure of Moses upon the concept of the monarchy. Moses was a unique personality, whose historicity and achievements are more readily conceded today than in an earlier generation.¹⁵ Not only was he a great leader and lawgiver; he also exercised priestly functions (Ex. 17. 13; 24. 5-8; 29; 40. 29) and it may be conjectured that this would set a precedent for a priest-king once the monarch was established. This, however, does not appear to have been the case. The unique position and ministry of Moses did not become a precedent even for Joshua, his immediate successor. The narrative which recounts the 'ordination' of Josh makes clear his dependence in cultic affairs upon Eleazar the priest (Nu. 27. 18-2 indeed, this incident may serve as the prototype of the ideal relationship between king and priest in the later period, with each fulfilling a well-defined function.

We may also note briefly three instances where it was evidently believed that reigning king had exceeded his authority in intervening in cultic matters. Samuel and Saul were clearly in sharp antagonism on this subject, and Samuel repudiated Saul's right to offer sacrifice (1 Sa. 13. 8-15). Possibly Saul was endeavouring to establish his right to exercise cultic functions, as did the kings of other nations. Be this as it may, it would have been a reversal of the traditional attitude by David, who owed so much to Samuel, taken a major part in the cultus.

A similar motive to Saul's, coupled with a determination to counteract the powerful centripetal effect of Jerusalem, may have influenced Jeroboam I when he established his own priesthood in Israel, altered the date of the New Year Festival and officiated himself at the altar (1 Ki. 12. 26-33), actions which called forth a strong prophetic protest (1 Ki. 13. 1-6). Since the Disruption and the rule of Jeroboam I had been foretold by the Prophet Ahijah (1 Ki. 11. 29-39), it may be

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¹⁴ E.g. Isa. 9. 2-7; 11. 1-10 and possibly 32. 1-8, each of which may be in implicit contrast to the incompetent rule of Ahaz. See also Isa. 42. 1-4, etc.

¹⁵ E.g. J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, S.C.M. London (1960), 116, but cf. M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, 135f.

assumed that this protest was specifically against the assumption of cultic functions. Admittedly this instance does not connect directly with the Davidic dynasty, but since the prophet came from Judah, and since the narratives were edited and incorporated into a composite history of both kingdoms by a prophetic-priestly group in Judah it has a certain relevance.

The third instance concerns Uzziah, king of Judah from 783-742B.C. The bald statement of the historian in Kings that 'the Lord smote the king, so that he was a leper to the day of his death' (2 Ki. 15. 5) is amplified by the Chronicler, who notes that this punishment was because the king 'entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense' (2 Ch. 26. 16-21), in spite of the uncompromising rebuke of the priests whose authority and prerogatives were being usurped.

Accepting, for the moment, the historicity of this incident, it may be asked whether there was a change in the relationship between king and priest during the four centuries in which Davidic kings ruled. One of the weaknesses of the Myth and Ritual school is the tendency to see uniform patterns of behaviour, not only over a wide area, but over lengthy periods. This cannot be assumed. Monarchy reveals itself in different ways, in varying times in the several areas of the Fertile Crescent. Only in Egypt, where the chief priest was the ruling Pharaoh, who was believed to be the incarnation of the deity, was there a relatively stable manifestation of the monarchy. In Mesopotamia, where there was an amalgam of peoples, with considerable political changes over the centuries, there is no guarantee that the monarch was regarded in a uniform way.¹⁶

May we not detect similar changes in Judah? The parts played by David, and especially by Solomon, in the establishment of the national cultus must not be underestimated, but there is little evidence that the following kings exercised similar prerogatives. We cannot determine precisely the effects of the Disruption, but it must have been a blow to the policies of Rehoboam and his young hot-heads (1 Ki. 11. 8-11). Conversely it must have been an encouragement to the supporters of the more liberal Amphictyonic traditions, who, like the men of Israel (1 Ki. 12. 4), would wish to curb the absolutism of the king. It is not unreasonable to surmise that the influence of the Temple personnel increased with the diminution and impoverishment of the kingdom. Likewise, the important part played by the priest Jehoiada in the coronation of the young Jehoash (2 Ki. 11. 4-20, note especially v. 17) may have increased the power of the Jerusalem priests at the expense of that of the king, particularly after the unhappy interlude of Athaliah's reign. This reduced status of the king in cultic affairs would then be evidenced in the case of Uzziah, as noted. There is, therefore, considerable evidence to suggest that, far from there being a single view or manifestation of the monarchy in Judah, there were considerable variations in the period from 1000-587 B.C.

The reliability of each of the three instances noted above has been questioned,¹⁷ and it is frequently held that they are valueless except insofar as they reflect the antagonism to the monarchy which arose in prophetic-priestly circles. No doubt the final editing of the historical books was done by such a group in the early years of the Exile, and their work, is for didactic

¹⁶ Cf. M. Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays*, 155f. J. Bright (*op. cit.* 205) observes, 'There is no real evidence for the existence of any such single ritual pattern and theory of kingship throughout the ancient world, and much to the contrary'.

¹⁷ E.g. R. H. Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, 136f; J. Gray, *I and II Kings*, S.C.M., London (1964), 294-297; W. A. L. Elmslie, *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 3, Abingdon, New York (1954), 514.

purposes, selective, rather than exhaustive. But there is, no real evidence of opposition to the Davidic dynasty as such. Individual kings, as we have noted, come under condemnation, some of them by both historian and prophet, e.g. Jehoiakim (2 Ki. 23. 37; Je. 22. 13-19), whilst a general assessment of each king is made in the stereotyped introductory formula.

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But praise was never withheld when it was merited, and two of the later kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, received the unqualified commendation of the historian (2 Ki. 18. 5f; 23. 25). Josiah also gained the approbation of Jeremiah (Je. 22. 15f; cf. 2 Ch. 35. 25ff). Moreover, the two prophets who had most reason to condemn reigning monarchs, Isaiah and Jeremiah with regard to Ahaz and Jehoiakim respectively, both delivered oracles concerning the future hope to be brought about by a Davidic Messiah (Is. 11. 1-10; Je. 33. 14-26; cf. Ezk. 34. 23f; 37. 24f). In the case of Jeremiah, this was in spite of his forecast of the overthrow and captivity of the ruling house (Je. 22. 24-30). It is evident that popular Messianic hopes were attached to Jehoiakim (Je. 28. 4) and his elevation from prison by Evil-merodach (Amel-marduk) in 561 B.C. (2 Ki. 25. 27-30; Je. 52. 31-34) may have revived these. More important than these peripheral details, from our point of view, is the lack of hostility to the Davidic dynasty on the part of those whose views shaped both the final form of the past tradition and the future course of the nation. There is thus no valid reason to assume any distortion, through prejudice, of the relationship of the various kings to the cult and its officials.

IV. DAVID, SOLOMON AND JERUSALEM

Reference has already been made to the possibility that the monarchy changed in its nature and function after the Disruption. But what about the relationship of David and Solomon to the Jerusalem cultus? Full allowance must be made for the fact that it was David who made Israel a strong, independent nation, whilst Solomon gave it peace, prosperity and prestige. This was the golden age of the nation. Indubitably, the cultus shared in this development. The situation in Saul's reign, when Shiloh, the old central sanctuary, lay in ruins¹⁸, when the ark lay neglected at Kiriath-jearim (1 Sa. 6. 21), and when the ranks of the priesthood had been decimated by the king's vindictive action (1 Sa. 22. 11-19), was now completely transformed.

Fundamental to this discussion is the connection of the Temple-cultus with that of pre-Davidic Jerusalem. It is often accepted that David was greatly influenced by, even to the point of taking over, the Jebusite cultus, and that the role of the Davidic king was determined by this influence. This theory rests upon a three-fold foundation; First, that at least a portion of the Jebusite population remained in Jerusalem after its capture by David (Jdg. 1. 21¹⁹; 2 Sa. 24. 16-25). Secondly, El Elyon, the Most High God, noted in Genesis 14. 18ff as the god of Salem (note how the ancient name is preserved in Ps. 76. 2), to whom Abraham pays deference in the person of Melchizedek, figures in many of the psalms which have been associated with sacral kingship (e.g. Pss. 18. 13; 21. 7; 46. 4; 47. 2). Thirdly, Zadok, who is listed in the genealogies as a descendant of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron (1 Ch. 6. 1ff, 50ff.) appears, somewhat abruptly, alongside Abiathar as priest in the list of David's officials (2 Sa. 8. 17; 20. 25 cf.; 15. 24). Following Abiathar's championing of the ill-fated cause of Adonijah, Zadok, who supported the successful Solomon, remained as the chief-priest in

¹⁸ Probably after the twin defeats at Aphek (1 Sa. 4), cf. Je. 7. 14; 26. 6; Ps. 78. 60-64.

¹⁹ It is recognised that this reference is susceptible to various interpretation.

Jerusalem, his descendants thereafter filling the principal priestly offices. The connection of his name with that of *Melchizedek* and *Adoni-zedek*, another king of Jerusalem (Jos. 10. 1, etc.) has led to the surmise that this was the traditional name of the chief priest or priest-king of pre-Davidic Jerusalem. Zadok, in this view, was not an Israelite, but the leading cultic official of the Jebusite city²⁰.

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There are, however, grave objections to this hypothesis. David's animosity to the Jebusites, following their taunts, is clearly revealed (2 Sa. S. 6ff). Moreover, whilst the importance of the Abraham-Melchizedek encounter must not be minimised (cf. the reference in Psa. 110. 4) nor must the subsequent chequered relationship between Jebusite Jerusalem and the Israelites (Jos. 10. 1-27; Jdg. 1. 8). The linking of El Elyon with Jerusalem in particular, as the avenue whereby this name became known to Israel, is hazardous. The recognition of a 'most-high' god was widely diffused at this time. Moreover, the adoption by David of the Jebusite cultus, and the elevation of its priest above the native Israelite priesthood, appears as a tactless action in a period when David displayed remarkable diplomacy in his attempt to bring together the halves of his shattered kingdom. Historians are enthusiastically unanimous in their endorsement of his policies at this time. The bringing of the ark, the symbol of the amphictyony, to Jerusalem, a politically neutral enclave on the frontier between Judah and Israel, was a stroke of genius. It must have done much to heal the breach between North and South, and between the supporters of the old tradition and the advocates of the monarchy.²¹ Surely this would have been nullified if David had set aside the traditions of his own people, and snubbed the legitimate priesthood by a wholesale take-over of an alien cult-us! The suggestion of W. McKane, that Zadok, a Jebusite, 'was elevated to the position of joint high priest with Abiathar as an act of political sagacity and an attempt to assist the growing together of the conquerors and the conquered'²² appears as a much less likely aim than the effective reunification of Judah and Israel.

When the ark was brought to Jerusalem it was placed in a tent-shrine (1 Sa. 6. 17), not in the Jebusite temple. Similarly in David's plan to build an appropriate dwelling for the ark there is no indication that the existing Jebusite temple cultus had any place in his thinking. And when the Temple was eventually built, it was completely outside the walls of ancient Jerusalem, but within Solomon's extension of the city on the north-eastern hill.²³

Solomon's Temple was a royal chapel. There was no question of the exclusion of the public, although the danger of the national sanctuary being so intimately connected with the royal family is well illustrated in the clash between Amos and Amaziah, when a true prophet was silenced because of his outspokenness against the ruling house of Israel in what was called 'the king's sanctuary' (Am. 7. 7-13). The Jerusalem Temple was virtually the gift of David and Solomon to the nation, and the priesthood, in measure, owed its position to royal

²⁰ Cf. H. H. Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', *JBL* 58 (1939), 113-131; A. R. Johnson, *op. cit.*, 52 fn.

²¹ Cf. the comments of J. Bright, *op. cit.*, 178-180; M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, 189-191; F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations*, Paternoster Press (1963), 29-31.

²² W. McKane, *op. cit.*, 222 cf. C. E. Hauer Jr., 'Who was Zadok?' *JBL* LXXXII 1 (1963).. 89-94.

²³ The suggestion of Kraus (*op. cit.*, 186) that the site of the Temple 'was possibly the sacred area in Jerusalem even in the Jebusite period', which becomes a statement in the same paragraph... 'The house of God was situated at the holy place of the pre-Israelite cultic centre:' finds no support from archaeology. If the Old Testament is correct in identifying the site of the Temple as the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sa. 24: 16-25 cf. 1 Ch. 21. 15-22. 1), this would, of necessity, be outside the Jebusite city.

patronage. The Temple was adjacent to the palace, and not until the reign of Ahaz, when this weak king, rejecting the power of Yahweh, called in the shock-troops of Assyria (Is. 7), was the covered way connecting the palace and the Temple closed (2 Ki. 16. 18). This action signified the cessation of any effective relationship between Judah's God and Judah's king. The free-standing pillars in the vestibule of the Temple, Jachin and Boaz (1 Ki. 7. 21), are probably to be viewed as dynastic symbols, indicating the permanence of the Davidic dynasty, which would remain as long as God's house stood.²⁴ Solomon himself figured prominently in the opening ceremony, although there may be a significance in the fact that in the focal point of the service, the bringing of the ark into the holy place, the priests alone officiated (1 Ki. 8. 6-11). The advocates of sacral kingship point out that this dedication ceremony took place at the time of the New Year Festival (1 Ki. 8. 2), although

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the possibility that this was purely for convenience, as an occasion when the majority of the people would be present for the feast, must not be ruled out (cf. Ezra's great 'Law-reading' ceremony, Ne. 7. 73b ff). Solomon played a major part in this ceremony (e.g. 1 Ki. 8. 5, 62ff) and appears to have officiated similarly in the pre-Temple period (1 Ki. 3. 3f) and after the opening of the Temple (1 Ki. 9. 25; 10. 5). He seems to have fulfilled a much greater role in the cultus than his father David, who is noted as offering sacrifice on two special occasions (2 Sa. 6. 13; 24. 25). However, the verbs used of Solomon may indicate that he caused sacrifices to be offered, rather than that he officiated directly.

There is little evidence that priestly functions were performed by other Davidic kings. David's sons are listed as priests (2 Sa. 8. 18; they are not included in the list of 2 Sa. 20. 23-26) but there is no mention of them fulfilling any cultic function, and the meaning of priest may be limited here to 'minister of civic affairs', as suggested by the parallel reference in 1 Chronicles 18. 17.²⁵ De Vaux in a cautious summing up, notes that the occasions when a king offered sacrifice 'are all very special and exceptional', and holds he was 'not a priest in the strict sense' but simply the head of State, with certain prerogatives over the State religion.²⁶

V. THE MONARCHY AND THE TORAH

It has been observed that the Torah makes no mention of any king occupying a place in the national cultus.²⁷ To this it has been objected, by the proponents of sacral kingship, that this is hardly surprising, since the Torah reflects post-exilic, and therefore post-monarchic, legislation.²⁸ But since it is widely accepted that all strands of the Torah have their roots in the pre-exilic period,²⁹ it is at least worthy of note that no *hint* is given of any participation by a king or a ruler in the cultus. *If* the king occupied a prominent place in the pre-exilic cultus, and if the Pentateuch, in its present form, is completely post-exilic, then we can only admire

²⁴ W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore (1953), 139; for a full discussion see J. Gray, *op. cit.*, 174-176.

²⁵ Cf. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *II Samuel*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (1881), 112.

²⁶ R. de Vaux, *op. cit.*, 114.

²⁷ E.g. by W. S. McCullough, 'Israel's Kings, Sacral and Otherwise', *ET LXVIII*. 5 (1957), 144-148.

²⁸ E.g. by A. R. Johnson, 'Old Testament Exegesis, Imaginative and Unimaginative', *ET LXVIII* 6 (1957), 178-179.

²⁹ Cf. A. Weiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Darton, Longman & Todd (1961), 135-147. J. Bright (*op. cit.*, 197) conjectures that the sacrificial ritual of the Solomonic Temple 'must have been in all essentials that preserved for us in the Priestly Code'.

the absolute perfection with which every trace of the king's part in the cultus was excised. The reasonable alternative to this is that the sources of the Torah go back to the Mosaic, and therefore pre-monarchic period, and that these traditions, firmly fixed in Israel, assisted the movement which was opposed to the king playing a major part in the cult.³⁰

VI. CONCLUSION

It seems evident, therefore, that the concept of sacral kingship in connection with the Davidic line must be questioned, unless by sacral kingship we mean no more than the monarchy was not simply a political institution, but one provided with what Bright describes as 'theological and cultic undergirding.': There is no evidence that the king of Judah was regarded as divine and there is remarkably little evidence for the exercise of any regular priestly functions by the kings in the Jerusalem Temple. Any theory which postulates a major participation by the king in the cultus which is out of harmony with this evidence from the remainder of the Old Testament must be regarded with reserve.

There is, however, evidence of tension between the advocates of the monarchy and the champions of the older amphictyonic traditions, and possibly we may find in this the explanation of much that is utilised by the sacral-kingship school. The

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institution of the monarchy, particularly after the calamitous episode of Saul's reign, needed support, and possibly justification was also required for David's new national sanctuary at Jerusalem. This was given by the uncompromising prophetic oracles concerning the divine choice of both the Davidic line and Jerusalem (2 Sa. 7. 11b-17 cf. 23. 2-7; 1 Ki. 8. 15-26; Psa. 2. 6; 89. 1-4, 19-37; 132. 1-5, 11-18). It is against this background that the place of the king is stressed and in this context we may interpret the 'royal psalms' in which prayer is offered for the reigning representative of the Davidic line. Anointed at Yahweh's command (Pss. 2. 2; 18. 50; 20. 6), standing in close relationship to Him (2 Sa. 7. 14; Pss. 2. 7; 89. 26f), promised divine protection and universal domination (Pss. 2; 18; 21; 72; 144), the Davidic ruler was to secure for the nation the peace, justice and righteousness so conspicuously absent during the period of the judges (Pss. 45. 4.7; 72. 1-4, 12-14). The Davidic monarchy, in this view, was within the theocracy. All this accords with Israelite tradition, except that the charismatic anointing of the earlier period, which was of temporary duration and for a definite purpose, was now viewed as permanent in the Davidic kings.³¹

This does not preclude the possibility that, at the New Year Festival, there was a celebration of the renewal of the Davidic covenant, in which the reigning king participated. Yahweh's sovereignty, revealed in the historic events which were associated, in Israel, with the great festivals, may have been connected with this, the well-being of the covenant people being guaranteed in the continuation of the covenant with the royal line. The details of such an annual event cannot be fully considered here. There may well have been an adaptation of the language and cult forms of neighbouring countries, especially Phoenecia, with which David

³⁰ J. Bright, *op. cit.*, 204.

³¹ The restraint in the language used in addressing the Davidic king may be compared with the extravagant and subservient terms used in contacts with other kings of the Fertile Crescent, e.g. in the Tell el-Amarna texts (cf. J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Princetown University Press (1950), 483-490.) Again, this may suggest a qualification, or even a rejection, of the divine-king concept in Israel.

and Solomon had such strong links (2 Sa. 5. 11; 1 Ki. 5. 12; 9. 26f, etc.) and which played such a prominent part in the design, construction and equipment of the Temple (1 Ki. 5. 1-10; 7. 13f, 40-47).³² This is no more than could be expected within the cultural interchange of the Fertile Crescent. Even Yahweh Himself is described by epithets which were originally applied to the Canaanite deities (e.g. Dt. 33. 26; Ps. 68. 4, 33; Is. 19. 1), but this does not compromise the uniqueness of Israel's God. Nor is the nature of the monarchy in Israel (which differed from that in neighbouring countries because the view of Yahweh, and His covenant relationship to His chosen people, were so unique), compromised because of similarities with the monarchies of other nations. The 'borrowings', if we may term them such, were on a broad general level, and there is little support for a wholesale take-over of the Jebusite cultus, which, being an alien importation would probably have been disastrous to David's hopes of solving the dilemma of the relationship between the old and the new.

The general evidence of the Old Testament, therefore, falls short of what might genuinely be described as sacral kingship. The monarchy was a constitutional institution. The king had an important function to play as Yahweh's viceroy, concerned to preserve peace, justice and righteousness in the land. But this was limited, in Israel, by the prominent parts played by prophets and priests, by tenacious religious traditions, and above all, by the conception of the direct rule of Yahweh Himself.

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³² The links which we can trace are all with Tyre rather than with Jebusite Jerusalem.