

# Scripture

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## THE IDEAL KING OF JUDAH

At the outset of any adequate study of Old Testament Messianism, one is compelled to recognise that contemporary discussion of the subject has been drawn irrevocably into the sphere of comparative religion. The Messiah is the ideal Davidic king, the son of David, that is to say, in whom David's kingship is to achieve its final plenitude and permanency. That being the case, what does kingship as an institution really signify? The answers that have been suggested to this vital question over the past fifty years have usually been in terms of analogies drawn from the profane records of the Ancient Near East. What did kingship signify for Israel's older, greater and more cultured neighbours, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Canaanites, the Hittites? How far did Israel derive her ideal of kingship from these peoples, and how far did she modify and adapt that idea, so as to fit it into the framework of her own sacred traditions?

Our starting-point for the investigation of this question must be Israel's own consciousness of having been chosen by Yahweh, and of his choice having been made permanent and irrevocable by the covenant. The *singleness* of Yahweh and the *exclusiveness* of Israel's relationship with him lie at the very roots of Old Testament religion.<sup>1</sup> Israel herself at this early stage exists as an *amphictyony*, a loose confederation of tribes united by common origin and blood-ties, common traditions and a common tongue, but above all bound by the covenant to the exclusive worship of one God, Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> At the feast of covenant-renewal (originally celebrated at Shechem) the members of the confederation assemble at the covenant-shrine of the ark, to relive in cultic terms the history in which Yahweh first became their God and they became his people.<sup>3</sup> In this way the three great feasts of the Canaanite agricultural year acquire historical connotations for Israel,

<sup>1</sup> cf. M. Noth, 'Die sachlichen Voraussetzungen der vorexilischen Gesetze' in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, 1957, pp. 70-1

<sup>2</sup> cf. M. Noth, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels*, 1930 and R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, I, 1958, pp. 21, 143ff.

<sup>3</sup> cf. H.-J. Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes im Alten Testament*, 1957, p. 16, and also H. Grönbech, *The Culture of the Teutons*, II (Eng. trans.), 1931, p. 185: 'Step by step the occasional feasts led up to the annual cult-feasts, which constituted fixed points in existence, where life was regularly renewed and made into a future.'

and become the sacred moments at which she reactualises in the presence of her covenant-God the events of the exodus and of Sinai. As H.-J. Kraus puts it, 'The Sinai Covenant is rendered present and brought near in the "Today" of the community's cult.'<sup>1</sup> The community encounters the covenant-God anew and renews its response, the 'all-embracing response' of religion to the revelation of His holiness. This holiness of her covenant-God is the sole source for Israel of the strength and guidance, the elemental light and life she needs in order to thrust back her enemies, and to achieve security and prosperity, peace and fertility. These come to her as Yahweh's covenant blessings, epitomised in the two ideas of *ṣedaqah* and *šalôm*.<sup>2</sup>

The distinctive quality of the God of Israel is His justice, *ṣedaqah*,<sup>3</sup> which is initially revealed to Israel at Sinai in the form of *torah*, law. This law is preserved, promulgated and applied in particular cases by the judge.<sup>4</sup> The judges seem to have been foremost among the ancient leaders of Israel, guardians of tradition, leaders in war, arbitrators, and discoverers of wells, achieving their status either by family rank or by native ability or by feats of valour.<sup>5</sup> Together with the Levite,<sup>6</sup> it is

<sup>1</sup> H.-J. Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel*, 1954, p. 53. Also cf. M. Noth, *Gesammelte Studien*, pp. 214-15, on the inevitable 'cyclic' mentality which entered Israel from the Canaanite nature religion, when the *Ackerbaufeste* were taken over, though these were now interpreted as referring to Israel's own past.

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking this might be regarded as an anachronism. The expression *ṣedaqah* seems to have been adopted by the Israelites from the Canaanites at the time of the first kings (cf. H. Cazelles, 'A propos de quelques textes difficiles relatifs à la justice de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament,' *Revue Biblique*, 1951, p. 187). *Šlm* occurs repeatedly in the Ras-Shamra texts as the name of a Canaanite divinity (cf. C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook*, 1947, pp. 17, 12, 52) and variants of the same root occur in Akkadian divine names. It is particularly interesting to find H. Cazelles (art. cit., p. 186) referring to a divine name *šdqšlm*, in which both roots are combined—and particularly exasperating to find oneself unable to trace the reference!

<sup>3</sup> Most recent commentators emphasise that *ṣedaqah* signifies not an abstract norm but a personal relationship (*Gemeinschaftsverhältnis*); cf. G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1957, pp. 368ff., and especially H. Cazelles (art. cit., p. 175): '... non pas les vertus humaines d'équité et de respect du droit, mais l'effet d'une providence et d'un secours divin assurant la bonne marche et la paix dans les sociétés humaines... la bonne marche et l'harmonie du tout...'

<sup>4</sup> This is the function of the 'institutional' judge as distinct from the *charismatic* 'holy war' leader. It is the Deuteronomist school that has extended the designation 'judge' to this latter type as well, combining ancient lists of 'institutional' judges with tribal hero tales (*Stammesheldenerzählungen*) in the book of Judges (cf. M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 2nd ed., 1957, pp. 47ff.), because in fact the two distinct functions were sometimes combined in the one person, notably in the case of Jephthah (cf. Noth, *Amt und Berufung im alten Testament*, 1958, pp. 20-2). On the function of the 'institutional' type of judge to whom 'the law was entrusted,' and especially 'apodictic law,' cf. Kraus, *Gottesdienst*, pp. 64-5. He describes him as a 'covenant-mediator' (*Bundesmittler*).

<sup>5</sup> cf. Van der Ploeg, 'Les Chefs du Peuple d'Israel et leurs Titres,' in *Revue Biblique*, 1950, pp. 42-51

<sup>6</sup> On the function of the Levite in early Israelite society as preacher and in relation to the 'Holy War' tradition, cf. G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, 1953, especially pp. 66-7; cf. also M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, III, 1923,

the judge's function to see that the 'justice' of the covenant-God is reproduced in the lives of the people. He is, to that extent, an upholder of the covenant, a 'covenant-mediator.'

This 'institutional' type of judge must be distinguished from the *charismatic* type of judge or leader raised up by Yahweh in times of disaster or oppression to save Israel.<sup>1</sup> When any one tribe is attacked, all or most of the others send their menfolk to her defence as a matter of sacred duty. The army of the covenant people fights in the power of the covenant-God's holiness.<sup>2</sup> In such emergencies certain individuals (usually Yahweh's choice seems to have fallen on rather improbable ones) are suddenly seized by Yahweh's spirit and endowed with supernatural strength and skill to lead their fellow Israelites in a 'holy war,' to destroy the enemy of the moment, and to restore some part at least of the tribal confederation to a state of *šedaqah* and *šalôm*. The two blessings which the covenant-God by His very presence bestows on the confederation are now mediated to her through a charismatic chief. Here we encounter the charism of the Spirit in its most primitive form. It 'comes mightily' upon the subject concerned, possesses his physical faculties, 'changes him into another man,' and so uses him to destroy the enemies of Israel. Primarily therefore he is a warrior and leader in the holy war. But it seems probable that by extension the individual judge was considered 'inspired' in his administration of justice too for the rest of his life.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter his line quickly died out.

The charismatic judge was essentially a crisis figure.<sup>4</sup> He was raised up in moments of exceptional danger to deal with a specific enemy, whom he usually routed in one specific 'holy war.' But the attacks of the Philistines in the latter part of the period of Judges constituted a menace that was different in kind, more intense and far more sustained. To meet this new threat a new and more permanent form of leadership was needed. So it was that Saul, the charismatic

<sup>1</sup> cf. Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes im alten Testament*, pp. 25-6

<sup>2</sup> cf. G. von Rad, *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel*, 1951, and M. Noth, *Ant und Berufung*, p. 17

<sup>3</sup> cf. M. Noth, *Ant und Berufung im alten Testament*, pp. 21-2, on the combination of charismatic leadership with judging. However it must be pointed out that *thpt*, the Ugaritic equivalent of Hebrew *šopef* (judge) designates a warrior champion; cf. J. Gray, 'Texts from Ras Shamra,' in *Documents from Old Testament Times* (D. Winton-Thomas ed.), 1958, pp. 129, 131.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes im alten Testament*, p. 26

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pp. 185ff. ('chaplains,' directors of conscience, *guru* priests, etc.), and A. Neher, 'Fonction du Prophète dans la Société Hébraïque,' in *R.H.P.R.*, 1948-9, pp. 30-42 (esp. on 'levitisme, incarnation sociale définie du berith,' pp. 38ff.).

leader of the time, was raised to a leadership that was permanent and continuous, in response to a menace that had become endemic.

From this moment onwards throughout the period of the monarchy the problem for the king was how to reconcile the new institution vested in his person with the old 'amphictyonic' structure of Israel's society, as formulated in her sacred traditions.<sup>1</sup> Did those traditions, so jealously guarded as they were by the 'institutional' judges, admit of the possibility of kingship in any recognisable sense? It was Saul's failure to solve this problem, to achieve this vital reconciliation between the old and the new, that led ultimately to his downfall. When after his victory over the Amalekites he erected a trophy and kept the best of the spoil, he was arrogating to himself the prerogatives of a king in the profane sense, and so violating the tradition of the covenant. It was left to another king, more *faithful* as well as more adroit, to succeed where he had failed.<sup>2</sup>

Yet even David had his desperate moments, moments at which reactionaries or rebels, taking advantage of some temporary discontent among their fellow Israelites, would seek to overthrow the new monarchy and to re-establish the old amphictyonic constitution.

We have no part in David,  
No inheritance in the son of Jesse,  
Every man to his tent, O Israel! (2 Sam. 20:1 ; 1 Kg. 12:16)

This was the traditional rallying cry by which successive rebels incited the northern (and more conservative) faction to revolt. It was in effect an appeal to reject the new upstart monarchy, and to restore in their pristine integrity the ancient traditions of the amphictyony. The reactionaries failed and David succeeded; that in itself showed that 'Yahweh was with David,' just as David in his 'faithfulness' proved that he was 'with Yahweh.' Yet the anti-monarchist 'traditionalism' has left an indelible stamp on the pages of the Old Testament, and has made its own contribution, of permanent significance, to the total message.<sup>3</sup>

David succeeded where Saul had failed. Yahweh was with him, supporting him with strength and guidance and at the same time making events play into his hands in such a way that his kingship seemed not merely reconcilable with, but actually rooted in the traditions of the amphictyony. The ark, the shrine of the covenant-God's

<sup>1</sup> cf. Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel*, pp. 69ff.

<sup>2</sup> cf. *ibid.*, pp. 70-1. 'David attached to himself the ancient Israelite traditions by bringing the ark and the tabernacle of Yahweh to Jerusalem, and founding his kingdom on the basis of the sacral-cultic traditions of the amphictyony, which were derived from the ark and tabernacle.'

<sup>3</sup> cf. R. de Vaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-6, 152-3

presence, was the focal point in which those traditions were centred. As long as this shrine was in Ephraim, Ephraim was supreme among the twelve tribes. But when Shiloh was sacked the ark was captured by the Philistines. Ephraim had utterly betrayed her trust. And when the ark returned to Israelite territory it turned miraculously not northwards but southwards, and chose of its own accord a town of Judah as its temporary resting-place.

He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,  
 the tent which he pitched among men,  
 Moreover he refused the tent of Joseph,  
 And chose not the tribe of Ephraim,  
 But chose the tribe of Judah . . . (Ps. 78:67-8)

Some fifty years later, by his God-given strength and skill, David conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem. The significance of this victory must be appreciated. From the time of Joshua onwards, Jerusalem had been a cardinal point in the Canaanite resistance, holding out against all attacks, and to a very large extent cutting Judah off from her more powerful brethren in the north.<sup>1</sup> Now David brings his victorious career to a climax by entering this hitherto unconquered stronghold in triumph, at the head of the united armies of Judah and the north.<sup>2</sup> Adherents of the southern kingdom did not fail to interpret this and other victories of David as a final fulfilment, long delayed, of Yahweh's ancient promise to give the promised land to his people in its entirety.<sup>3</sup> Moreover its geographical situation on neutral territory between north and south made it ideally suitable as the capital of the new united kingdom.<sup>4</sup> But the seal was set on David's triumph when the ark, the shrine of the amphictyony, showed by a series of miracles that it had 'chosen' Jerusalem as its new and permanent home. By conducting the ark in triumph into the Jebusite city he had conquered, David made it the sacred city of the tribal amphictyony. At the same time he himself became the divinely appointed guardian of the shrine and upholder of the traditions of the amphictyony.<sup>5</sup>

It is plausible to suppose that the city which David had taken had been for many generations a Jebusite sacred city, and that its king had been a priest-king. Melchisedech, king of Salem, priest of El Elyon (Gen. 14:18f.), was such a priest-king. Abraham had acknowledged

<sup>1</sup> cf. D. Baldi, P. Lemaire, *Atlante Biblico*, 1955, pp. 100, 117

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam 5:6ff. R. de Vaux (*Les Livres de Samuel* BJ, Paris 1953, p. 153) notes that the conquest of Jerusalem took place *after* the conquests of the Philistines mentioned subsequently in the text.

<sup>3</sup> cf. G. von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose* ATD, 1956, pp. 21-2

<sup>4</sup> cf. A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, 1955, pp. 28-9

<sup>5</sup> cf. Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel*, pp. 70ff.

his priesthood by offering him tithes, and Melchisedek on his part had identified his god, El Elyon, with the God who had bestowed victory on Abraham. In the messianic psalm the heir of David is regarded as in some sense heir to the royal priesthood of Melchisedek. 'Thou art a priest for ever in the line of Melchisedek' (Ps. 110:4). It seems therefore that when he made this Jebusite sacred city the sacred city of the Israelite covenant-shrine, David, instead of abolishing Jebusite sacred institutions, adapted some of them to the true worship of Yahweh Sebaoth.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the names of two of David's sons, Solomon and Absalom, contain adapted forms of the primitive name of the city Salem,<sup>2</sup> and it has been suggested that Zadok, the non-Aaronic priest of David, may originally have been a Jebusite priest of the shrine, converted to Yahwism and allowed to retain his priesthood,<sup>3</sup> for the text ascribing Aaronic descent to Zadok in 1 Chron. 5:29-34; 6:35-8 may be referring to adoption rather than natural descent.<sup>4</sup> But in particular David may have adapted the old Jebusite tradition of priest-kingship and made it, in some mitigated sense, the expression of his own new role as guardian of the ark and upholder of the covenant. In this way elements in the Jebusite royal ideology may have been adopted by the Israelite king and so have become the expression of his kingship. But it is clear that the sacred nature of that kingship derived wholly from Yahweh of the covenant and not from the Jebusite traditions; they provided only the material expression of it.

Henceforward then, the king's function as charismatic mediator of Yahweh's *ṣedaqah* and *šalôm* could be restated in dramatic terms, taken over from the Jebusite cultic traditions. Cultic myths and sagas would have been found ready to hand, which had once been used to celebrate the conquest of chaos, darkness and death by the pagan god of fertility and life. Now they are used to express the ideal king's function in the Israelite community. Israel's Gentile foes are identified with the forces of death and darkness,<sup>5</sup> and the king becomes, under Yahweh, the all-conquering mediator of light and life, strength and fertility, 'the lamp of Israel' (2 Sam. 21:17), 'the breath of our nostrils' (Lam. 4:20), an '*elohîm* (supernatural being) of more than earthly power (Ps. 45:7). He is to 'judge the poor of the people, save the needy, and break in

<sup>1</sup> cf. A. R. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 29ff.

<sup>2</sup> cf. *ibid.*, p. 46, n. 2

<sup>3</sup> cf. *ibid.*, p. 46, n. 1

<sup>4</sup> For the difficulties involved in ascribing Aaronic descent to Zadok cf. R. de Vaux, *Les Livres de Samuel*, p. 166.

<sup>5</sup> cf. A. Bentzen, 'King Ideology—"Urmensch"—"Tronbestijgingsfeest"', in *Studia Theologica Lund*, III, ii, 1951-2, on Ps. 46:4, 7. The enemies of Ps. 46:7 are the chaos powers of v. 4, and consequently of Ps. 2, which are actualised in the 'nations.' The 'actual political' situation at the accession of a new king of which Mowinckel speaks is viewed as the threatening outbreak of the 'Flood' (p. 153).

pieces the rod of the oppressor' (Ps. 72:4, cf. 21:9-13), winning everlasting victory and peace. 'In his days the just shall flourish, abundance of *šalôm* to last while the moon endures' (Ps. 72:7). The ideal king is to be a source of fruitfulness in the natural order too. 'He shall come down like rain on mown grass, like showers that water the earth' (Ps. 71:6). In this sense, and to an extent which it is difficult to define, Israel seems to have drawn on the 'king ideology' of the Canaanites. It seems reasonable to suppose that it was at this stage in her history that she began to absorb this 'king ideology' into her own tradition.

It becomes inevitable at this point to refer to Mowinckel's brilliant, though precarious hypothesis, definitively restated for English readers a few years ago in his *He That Cometh*.<sup>1</sup> The theory is too well known to require more than a brief recapitulation here. Working mainly from the analogy of Babylonian kingship and the role assumed by the Babylonian king in the New Year *akitu* festival, Mowinckel visualises the Israelite king as playing a similar role in an (hypothetical) Israelite New Year feast, and so performing a similar function in Israelite society. This Israelite New Year festival would have been a ritual re-enactment of Yahweh's victory over the forces of chaos and death, and of His triumphant enthronement, by which creation was renewed, and fertility, prosperity and security were ensured for the coming year. Embodying in his own person, as he did, the life of the community as a whole, the king was at the same time most intimately associated (though never identified) with Yahweh Himself in this supreme creative moment of the festival. Through the cultic drama of the feast in which he played the leading part, the whole community actually experienced Yahweh's primordial victory and enthronement, and actually received through him, their king, the fruits of that victory in the form of *šedaqah* and *šalôm*, God-given harmony and justice, elemental life-force issuing in security, fertility, power over enemies and prosperity in every sphere of life. Mowinckel emphasises, however, certain radical modifications which this ritual pattern of renewal had to undergo before it could become in any sense an expression of Yahwistic religion. 'To the renewal of nature there has been added another element of increasing importance, the renewal of history. It is the divine acts of election and deliverance in the actual history of Israel which are relived in the festival,'<sup>2</sup> and again, 'What the king obtains in the cultic festival is not primarily new life and strength, but the renewal and confirmation of the covenant, which is based on Yahweh's election and faithfulness,

<sup>1</sup> Oxford 1956, index references under 'New Year Feast'; cf. also A. R. Johnson's excellent summary in *The Old Testament and Modern Study* (H. H. Rowley ed.), 1951.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mowinckel, op. cit., p. 82

and depends upon the king's religious and moral virtues and constancy.'<sup>1</sup>

It is certainly true that the great Israelite festivals seem to have included ritual and dramatic re-enactments of the past. The feasts of Passover and Tabernacles are obvious and explicit examples, and the triumphant entry of the ark into Jerusalem is another episode that seems to have been 're-actualised' in a commemorative feast. Mowinckel deduces this convincingly from the text of Ps. 132. 'The institution of the cult of Yahweh in Jerusalem, and the first entry of Yahweh and the ark into the city are here enacted. The king assumes the role not of Yahweh but of David. He appears at the head of the Israelite army, seeking the ark which had been lost in the conflict with the Philistines, and brings it up in triumph to Jerusalem to its place in the temple.'<sup>2</sup> To these and perhaps to certain other examples, Grönbech's words may reasonably be applied: 'The present re-enacting is as primary as the first acting; and the participants are not witnesses to the deed of some hero or god . . . but simply and literally the original heroes who send fateful deeds into the world.'<sup>3</sup> But none of the festivals involved in these examples amounts to a New Year feast according to the general Oriental pattern. For a festival of this sort in Israel there is no *historical* evidence. Moreover the *paleo-anthropological* evidence which Mowinckel attempts to deduce from the so-called 'enthronement psalms'<sup>4</sup> is almost certainly invalid. Gunkel had long ago advanced the most cogent arguments for ascribing a late date to this group of psalms, and in particular regarded their dependence upon Deutero-Isaiah as 'undeniable' (*unverkennbar*).<sup>5</sup> His arguments have never been adequately met, and recently they have been very forcibly restated by Feuillet,<sup>6</sup> Kraus<sup>7</sup> and Tournay.<sup>8</sup> These psalms must in effect belong to a period when the first temple no longer existed, and when a direct relation to its cult of the kind which Mowinckel visualises was no longer possible.

We must now turn to consider the actual process by which Saul

<sup>1</sup> S. Mowinckel, *op. cit.*, p. 82; cf. also the same author's *Religion und Kultus*, 1953, pp. 72-3.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, p. 83. Actually most commentators infer a 'cultic' re-enactment of this sort. cf. Cales, *Le Livre des Psaumes*, II, 1936, pp. 506-7, and especially A. Bentzen, 'Cultic Use of the Story of the Ark,' in *JBL.*, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> cf. V. Grönbech, *Culture of the Teutons*, II, 1931, p. 222

<sup>4</sup> Pss. 47, 93, 96-9; cf. 29, 68, 95, 100, 149. For refutations of Mowinckel's theory on this point cf. H.-J. Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel*, p. 97, and also (with particular reference to the expression 'YHWH mlk') Diethelm Michel, 'Studien zu den sogenannten Thronbesteigungspsalmen,' in *Vetus Testamentum*, 1956, pp. 40-68.

<sup>5</sup> cf. H. Gunkel-J. Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, pp. 80ff.

<sup>6</sup> in *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, March-April 1951, pp. 242-60, 352-63

<sup>7</sup> *Gottesdienst in Israel*, pp. 103ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Revue Biblique*, 1956, p. 130, and 1958, pp. 324-5

was inaugurated into kingship. It was extremely complex, and its complexity is not lessened by the fact that we have two divergent accounts of it.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier account Saul is 'recognised' as the elect of Yahweh by Samuel, the seer of Ramah, and then anointed. In the second he is chosen by Samuel the judge at Mizpah and then popularly acclaimed.<sup>2</sup> The inauguration of David is, if anything, rather more complicated. In his youth he is prophetically designated as king by Samuel and then privately anointed.<sup>3</sup> Long afterwards, when his prowess as a warrior leader has been established, he is anointed as king at Hebron on two separate occasions: first by the men of Judah,<sup>4</sup> secondly by all the elders of Israel.<sup>5</sup> It is essential therefore, in the case of these first two kings, carefully to distinguish between two separate inaugurations for each. The first comes from the God of Israel, and is charismatic, vocational and private. The second comes from the men of Israel, and is institutional, official and public. Both 'coronations' are conferred by the same rite, a rite borrowed from Israel's profane neighbours. When the men of Israel use it, they intend in effect to confer on David a position in the Israelite community analogous to that held by the king in pagan societies.<sup>6</sup> When Yahweh uses it through his prophet He elevates it into a sacramental, and by it bestows in a new and more permanent mode the ancient charism of the spirit. From whom then did the Israelites borrow the anointing rite? Noth emphasises that it is known neither from Egyptian nor from Mesopotamian records, but is referred to precisely in the Canaanite Tell-el-Amarna letters.<sup>7</sup> The Canaanite kingly, Adu-nirari reminds his overlord, Thutmoses III, of an occasion when 'Manhabi(r)ia the king of Egypt, thy grandfather, established (Taku) my (grandfather) as king in Nuhashshe, and set oil upon his head.'<sup>8</sup> Here, Noth maintains, the Pharaoh, in instituting a subordinate kingly, would have been condescending to the established Syrian-Palestinian coronation ritual. On the other hand, though the Pharaohs themselves were not anointed on their accession, they are known to have instituted their high officials by means of this rite.<sup>9</sup> Another, and possibly more remote origin for the rite may be the Hittite ceremonial.<sup>10</sup> For Hittite coronations involved first anointing with 'the fine oil of kingship,'

<sup>1</sup> (a) 1 Sam. 9:16, 10:10, 24, 11:5-11 (pro-monarchist), (b) 1 Sam. 8, 10:17-24, 12 (anti-monarchist). cf. R. de Vaux, *Les Livres de Samuel*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. 10:17-24. On the secondary and secular significance of the acclamation, cf. M. Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, 1950, p. 148, and H.-J. Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. 16: 12-13

<sup>4</sup> 2 Sam. 2:4

<sup>5</sup> 2 Sam. 5:3

<sup>6</sup> cf. 1 Sam. 8:19

<sup>7</sup> cf. M. Noth, *Amt und Berufung im Alten Testament*, pp. 14-15

<sup>8</sup> Cited by A. R. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 12, n. 3

<sup>9</sup> cf. R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, p. 161

<sup>10</sup> cf. M. Noth, *Amt und Berufung im Alten Testament*, p. 15

and then a solemn ritual summons to the kingship. Thereafter 'Anointed one' became one of the titles of the Hittite king.<sup>1</sup> Significantly too, in the Hittite ritual, it is not only the emperor who is anointed but, as Noth points out, the 'puppet king' (*Ersatzkönig*) as well.<sup>2</sup>

The legitimacy of interpreting Israelite kingship in terms of Mesopotamian 'king ideology' is thus seriously called in question. Was the Israelite king ever intended to be more than Yahweh's 'puppet king' or 'kinglet'? Was not kingship in Israel conceived of rather after the pattern of the 'kinglets' of Canaanite city-states in the Egyptian or Hittite empires? In so far as one can draw analogies from human institutions, was not the ideal relationship of the Israelite king to Yahweh that of a Canaanite 'kinglet' to his imperial overlord? A very few kings would have conformed to the ideal pattern, accepting the position of subordinate 'kinglet' in relation to Yahweh, and with loyal devotion using their authority to implement the terms of His covenant. Most kings would have arrogated to themselves in a greater or lesser degree kingship in the fuller and more profane sense, and to this extent conformed to the Mesopotamian pattern rather than to the Canaanite one, thus being false to the orthodox ideal. For though the subordinate position of the king in relation to his god is emphasised in Mesopotamian texts,<sup>3</sup> he is still a far more important figure than the Israelite king or the Canaanite 'kinglet.'

What was the significance of anointing itself? Oil was usually considered in some sense life-giving, and in the coronation anointing the king was thought to receive divine life-force into his own person.<sup>4</sup> In Israel, as we have seen, this divine life-force was the ancient charism of the spirit, bestowed in greater plenitude than in the days of the Judges. As a result the king was at this point separated from the rest of men, drawn into the sphere of holiness which pertained to the covenant-God, and made the mediating source of the elemental covenant blessing of *śedaqah* and *šalôm*. Henceforward the king 'belonged' to Yahweh the covenant-God in roughly the same sense that a sacred cult object, a sacred stone or altar, was conceived to belong to Him. These too were consecrated by anointing, and were

<sup>1</sup> cf. R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 161-2

<sup>2</sup> cf. M. Noth, *Amt und Berufung im Alten Testament*, p. 31, n. 29

<sup>3</sup> cf. S. Mowinkel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 33-4. The theory that the relationship between the Israelite king and Yahweh was roughly analogous to that between the Canaanite vassal 'kinglet' and the Hittite emperor is strengthened when we consider that the form of the Israelite covenant resembles most closely the 'Hittite suzerainty treaty' instituted between Hittite overlords and vassal 'kinglets.' cf. G. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 1955, esp. pp. 25ff.

<sup>4</sup> cf. M. Noth, *Amt und Berufung im Alten Testament*, pp. 15-16, and R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 160-4

pregnant with the divine life-force of Yahweh's presence and use. In a similar way and for a similar reason the anointed king was 'untouchable.'<sup>1</sup>

A further element of supreme theological significance is Yahweh's covenant with the house of David, originally promulgated in the oracle of Nathan (2 Sam. 7:8-16). It has only recently been realised how closely this oracle conforms in style, form and content to a certain type of Egyptian coronation text known as the *Königsnovelle*.<sup>2</sup> The *Königsnovelle* purports to predict in conventional Egyptian 'court style' an ideal programme for the new Pharaoh's future reign. It contains references to the king 'sitting in his palace,' forming a plan to build a new temple for the divinity, being received into divine sonship, and so having his reign confirmed and established 'everlastingly.' It will be apparent that Nathan's oracle, at least in what seems to have been its primitive form, follows the sequence of the *Königsnovelle* almost clause for clause, while at the same time modifying its elements radically so as to adapt it to existing Israelite theology. In particular 'divine sonship' in Israel is reduced to adoption. The king does not in any sense acquire a divine nature. Another document, closely related to the first in ancient Egyptian king ideology, is the 'royal protocol' or charter for the new king's reign.<sup>3</sup> This protocol contained the new names conferred on the Pharaoh at his accession, the affirmation of his divine sonship and of his power. It was conceived to have been written by the divinity himself, and was ceremonially handed to the new king at his coronation. It seems probable that the handing over of a similar sacred charter constituted an important element in the coronation ceremony in Judah too. The document referred to as 'edut' 'testament' (Ps. 89:40) or *berit* 'covenant' (Ps. 132:12) or *hoq* 'decree' (Ps. 2:7) appears to be such a charter, a renewal of that originally imparted to the house of David in the form of a prophetic oracle. It would have affirmed the king's adoption by Yahweh, promised him victory over his enemies 'to the ends of the earth' and a reign everlastingly glorious and secure, endowed with a plenitude of the covenant blessings. The later messianic psalms elaborate on these basic themes (cf. Pss. 2, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132). Thus Israelite prophets, priests and psalmists are inspired to draw on the stereotyped forms of Egyptian protocol in order to formulate the eternal decree of Yahweh's covenant

<sup>1</sup> cf. M. Noth, *Amt und Berufung im Alten Testament*, p. 16

<sup>2</sup> cf. G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I, 1957, pp. 48-9, referring to S. Herrmann, 'Die Königsnovelle in Ägypten u. Israel,' in *Wissenschaftl. Zeitschr. d. Karl-Marx-Univ.*, 1953-4, pp. 51ff.

<sup>3</sup> G. von Rad, 'Das jüdische Königsritual,' in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, 1958, pp. 208ff., and R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 159-60

with David's house. It has been plausibly suggested that the sacred names of Immanuel are 'protocol' names after the Egyptian pattern,<sup>1</sup> and that they recall Yahweh's original promise through Nathan: 'I will make thee a great name, like to the names of the great ones of the earth' (2 Sam. 7:9).

Successive members of the Davidic line would therefore have received at their accession a 'protocol' based on the oracle of Nathan. The terms of the protocol would no doubt have been enlarged upon by the minstrels and prophets attached to their respective courts. At each coronation it would have been foretold in more or less extravagant terms that Yahweh's promise was on the point of being fulfilled in the particular reign just beginning.<sup>2</sup> In this way what we are accustomed to think of as the Messianic ideal would have been formulated.<sup>3</sup> Disappointment followed disappointment as one after another of the historical figures around whom it grew up fell far short of the longed-for fulfilment. At last when the Davidic monarchy as an historic institution was engulfed and lost in the disaster of the exile, only the ideal remained. Yet it remained not as a nostalgic memory but rather as a living hope. The royal protocol given to David's line was Yahweh's promise. *And as sure as Yahweh was faithful, that promise would be fulfilled.* It was utterly unthinkable that Yahweh could fail. So it is that the Messianic ideal, so far from fading and dying out, was actually expanded and intensified after the disappearance of the monarchy, and occupied the religious thought of post-exilic Israel more and more. To be faithful to Yahweh, to trust to His promises, came to mean that attitude of expectation which is expressed in the New Testament formula 'waiting for the consolation of Israel.'

<sup>1</sup> cf. R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 165-6

<sup>2</sup> cf. *ibid.*, p. 169

<sup>3</sup> cf. S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, p. 125, where he defines eschatology as '... a doctrine or a complex of ideas about "the last things," which is more or less organically coherent and developed. Every eschatology includes in some form or other a dualistic conception of the course of history, and implies that the present state of things and the present world order will suddenly come to an end and be superseded by another of an essentially different kind. As a rule this new order has the character of a fresh beginning, a *restitutio in integrum*, a return to the origins, without the corruption which subsequently overtook and deformed the original creation. Eschatology also includes the thought that this drama has a universal, cosmic character. . . . It follows that this is not brought about by human or historical forces, or by any immanent evolutionary process. The transformation is definitely catastrophic in character, and is brought about by supernatural, divine, or demonic powers.' Against this background Mowinckel defines the Messiah as '... simply the king in this national and religious future kingdom which will one day be established by the miraculous intervention of Yahweh. . . . *The Messiah is the future, eschatological realization of the ideal of kingship*' (pp. 155-6). On this conception cf. de Vaux's just observations (RB, 1958, p. 106) to the effect that if one is to define the term 'messianism' so narrowly, and distinguish it so sharply from the 'future hope,' one ought logically to conclude that there is no messianism at all in the Old Testament.

When Israel was 'consoled' and raised to the world-wide supremacy which was her due, it would be through a son of David, repeating in *cosmic* and *eschatological* terms, the *historical* achievements of his ancestor.

Adherents of the 'History of Tradition' school (on whose work I have heavily relied in the course of this investigation) lay great and entirely justified emphasis on the essentially *complex* nature of Hebrew kingship.<sup>1</sup> One can see how important this is. So many disparate traditions converge upon the figure of the king; so many divergent functions accumulate about his person. As *guardian, upholder and 'mediator'* of the Covenant (*Bundesmittler*) he is heir to the ancient type of 'institutional' judge, although the significance of this function is transformed in the light of the historical precedent provided by Josiah, the model (at least according to the Deuteronomist tradition) of all 'covenant guardians.'<sup>2</sup> As *saviour of Israel* and conqueror of her enemies he stands directly in the line of the charismatic judges, the leaders in the holy war. Here the figure of David himself towers above all other warrior chiefs. As *guardian of the covenant-shrine and temple* he continues the tradition set by David and Solomon, and inherits, as part of the same tradition, the title of 'priest in the line of Melchisedech' and the elaborate and dramatic expressions of kingship that go with this. In this sphere he acquires a certain position in the cult and, according to the degree of his personal faithfulness to Yahweh's law, becomes a 'channel' of blessing or cursing to all Israel, both the people and the land. All prosperity depends on him, and on his inspired wisdom and righteousness. The prototype for this aspect of the king's functions is, of course, Solomon. Wonderful prosperity and fertility spread throughout the land as a result of his God-given wisdom. But above all, as *adopted son of God*, he is heir to that personal intimacy with Yahweh which David enjoyed. This is the chief gift promised to him in his royal protocol; he is to be a new David.

Contemporary discussion has perhaps been conducted too much in the sphere of comparative religion. There has been a tendency to talk too much about 'Hebrew kingship' and not enough about 'Hebrew kings.' At all events it is vital to recognise that *kingship meant different things at different periods to different groups within the Israelite society.*<sup>3</sup> Great tensions must have arisen between elements in the office which were ancient and proper to the covenant people, and other elements which were new and borrowed from pagan neighbours. One must take due cognisance of these facts before one can permit oneself any generalisations about 'Hebrew kingship' or 'king ideology.' The

<sup>1</sup> cf. M. Noth, 'Gott, König, Volk im Alten Testament,' in *Gesammelte Studien*, pp. 216ff.      <sup>2</sup> cf. Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel*, pp. 89-90

<sup>3</sup> cf. M. Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 216

Messianic ideal was evolved not in terms of an abstract ideological formula of kingship (there never was such a formula) but with reference to a concrete historical prototype—a king, David. It was the significance which later generations saw in the figures of David, and, to a lesser extent, of Solomon and Josiah, that determined, far more than any ideological considerations, the form of the Messianic hope.

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### THE MOST HIGH GOD OF GENESIS 14:18-20

Authors writing on Melchisedech generally remark on the mystery which surrounds this contemporary of Abraham. This is not surprising since his appearances in Holy Scripture are few, brief and mysterious, and apart from the little that we learn of him from the Bible we know nothing about him. His first appearance in the Biblical narrative is abrupt and dramatic (Gen. 14:18-20); he is a Canaanite priest-king of Salem, who comes forth to salute Abraham returning from his victory over the Oriental kings. Abraham receives his blessing and pays him tithes, thereby acknowledging the legitimacy of his priesthood despite the fact that Melchisedech is a Canaanite. Only twice more do we meet Melchisedech in the Bible: in Ps. 109 (110):4 and in the Epistle to the Hebrews 5-7, presented unexpectedly as type and figure of the supreme High Priest and King.

Various questions might be discussed about Melchisedech, but perhaps the most intriguing for Old Testament scholars is the title under which he worshipped God. In Gen. 14:18 we are told that 'he was a priest of Most High God' ('*El 'Elyon*'). Genesis obviously understands '*El 'Elyon*' as a title of the one true God. Yet Melchisedech did not belong to the clan of Abraham, nor did he, as far as we know, receive a special revelation from God, and consequently we should have expected him to have been a worshipper of some pagan deity, living as he was in a well-attested polytheistic environment. Moreover '*El 'Elyon*' as a title for God occurs only once more in the Old Testament, in Ps. 77 (78):35 and perhaps the author of it was influenced in his choice of that title by Gen. 14. Abraham, however, recognised Melchisedech as a priest of God; otherwise he would not have paid his respects to him. '*El 'Elyon*' therefore would appear to be '*El*', the name by which the patriarchs designated God, called here '*Elyon*', the Highest.