A character study of David, son of Jesse

Wirey, Carl Otto

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A CHARACTER STUDY OF DAVID, SON OF JESSE

by

Carl Otto Wirey
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INTRODUCTION

The Object of this Thesis

It is with much interest and enthusiasm that I choose to write a thesis concerning a character so great as David, Son of Jesse. Much has already been written in regard to his life in all its diversified interests. By common consent David is one of the most, if not the most, fascinating figure in history. He stands out as a child of genius, ample in faculty, fertile in resource, and rich in all those qualities that stir admiration and evoke love. His life story is full of contrasts, honors, misfortunes, sufferings and victories. David was a man of his own time, and must be judged accordingly by the standards of his day. If this be done there is little danger in holding up an imperfect character as a present day model, and in this procedure the true estimate of the real David is gained.

Many authors have written of David the King; of David the Poet; of David the Shepherd; of David the Warrior; of David the Statesman; of David the Saint; and of David the Sinner. It is also my object, however, to write of David, but of David the man. He was endowed with almost every virtue that makes a man beloved, yet one whose memory will be forever stained by defects. Let us look into the development of a career that could hardly have been more varied. Indeed, few have had so varied a career as he: Shepherd and Monarch; Poet and Soldier; Champion of the people and outlaw in the caves of Judah; beloved by Jonathan and persecuted by Saul; Vanquishing the Philistines one day and accompanying them into battle on another.
Here we find, at once, it is considerably easier to state facts about one's life than to form a correct opinion of an individual. Indeed to suggest an opinion of his character which will be generally accepted is impossible. That is why of the character of David the most opposite estimates have been formed. This is especially true of a secular hero whom poetry and history have immortalized. A complex character? Yes. Who ever loved or hated with more intensity than David? On one hand he is extolled as a saint, while on the other few men have stooped so low or committed worse crimes. The character of David will no doubt remain, like that of everyone, an insoluble enigma. A person can best be judged by his motives rather than his actions, and even then one's true motives may be unknown to himself.

If we then think of David in relation to his own day, we must agree with W. R. Smith who says, accordingly: "David is not to be condemned for failing to subdue the sensuality which was the chief stain on his character, but should rather be judged by his habitual recognition of a generous standard of conduct, by the undoubted purity and lofty justice of an administration which was never stained by selfish consideration or motives of personal rancour, and finally by the calm courage which enabled him to hold an even and noble course in the face of dangers and treachery." (1)

David was not the man history proves him to be because of the age in which he lived, but because of certain characteristics imbedded in his very life. Ewald says, "We find the very foundations of David's character to be laid in a peculiarly firm and unshaken trust in Jehovah. He was by no means a prophet, and assumes no

priestly character; but no layman in his day could have lived in the high religion more sympathetically or devotedly than David." (1) Thus, it is he who furnishes us with a glorious example of what the old religion did toward the noble elevation of character.

(1) Ewald, History of Israel, Vol. 3, p. 58
CHAPTER I

Sources for the Study of the Character of David

A prerequisite for the writing of a paper, thesis, or dissertation is the location of sources. For this study the sources will necessarily be Biblical, the reason being that there are no independent accounts of David's life outside the Biblical narratives. The available sources here to be considered in this character study are found in the Books of Samuel; chapters one to two in the Book of Kings; chapters ten to twenty-nine in the first Book of Chronicles; the Davidic Psalms (if any), and perhaps a few references from other sections of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments.

The first sources, then, are those in the Books of Samuel. One authority says that, "the Books of Samuel contain the history of the kingdom of God in Israel, from the termination of the age of the Judges to the close of the reign of David and embrace a period of about one hundred and twenty-five years, and the date about 1140-1015 B.C." (1)

This period is one of the most important in the History of Israel. It is in this period that she emerges from the condition of national disintegration and anarchy as described in the Book of Judges, from a tribal form of government to that of a settled monarchy. In the first chapters Saul makes an effort to cement the people together into a monarchy, but his effort ends in disaster. It is mainly this failure that paves the way for David's success.

According to Kent, "the Book of First Samuel claims to be

(1) Keil-Delitzsch: Biblical Commentary, Vol. 9, p. 2
and clearly is a compilation of material gleaned from earlier sources and arranged by a later editor. (1) It seems to be a compilation after the form of the two documents found in the Hexateuch where J and E have been united to make one composite whole. These two narratives taken together form the main bulk of the history. (2) The extracts from the oldest sources are found in Chapters 9:1-10:16; 13:1-7a; 13:15b-14:46, and form a connected unit in themselves. The narratives found in Samuel confront the student with many difficulties due largely to the composite character and to the corrupt state of the text. "The existence of 'doublets', that is, two accounts of the same event, in the story of David is sufficient to show that in the Books of Samuel different documents have been pieced together. All the doublets are limited to the first Book of Samuel, however, and from the ninth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel to the end of the twentieth chapter, we have a continuous narrative, which is brought to a close in the first two chapters of the first Book of Kings." (3)

The opening chapters of First Samuel (4) concern the history of Samuel and the kingship of Saul. With the sixteenth chapter our study in the history of David begins. This section introduces the youthful David already "a mighty man of valor, and a man of war and prudent in speech" (5) to the Court of Saul where he becomes his armor-bearer. Likewise in chapters 17:1-18:5 we have a story of David's victory over Goliath and a subsequent introduction

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(1) Kent: History of the Hebrew People, p. 101-102
(2) Hastings, James: H.B.D., Vol. 4, p. 383-384
(3) New International Ency., Vol. 6, 2nd. ed., p. 521
(4) I Samuel, chapters 1-15
(5) I Samuel, 16:18
to Saul. Saul, according to this passage is wholly unacquainted with David. Another reference is made also to the slaying of Goliath in Second Samuel. (1) Who killed Goliath can never be absolutely determined. These stories, however, may be only romances as some would have us believe. (2) At least the memory of the act was kept alive among the kinsman of David, until at last it found its way into prophetic history which is our greatest source for this period. Surely there must have been some deed or deeds performed by young David to win the reputation of "a mighty man of valor" which he bore when he was introduced to the court of Saul (3).

Chapters 18 to 20, Kent tells us, are so lacking in unity that it is impossible to reconcile perfectly the testimony of their different sections; they are composed from the older and later records of David's deeds. (4) The rest of the book of First Samuel for the most part belongs to the original David-Narratives. Only in a very few places is there evidence of an editor's hand.

The older David narratives form the main source for the Book of Second Samuel. The material of the opening chapters is all systematically arranged. "From a literary point of view the older source in the history of David is unsurpassed. It has in perfection all the qualities that distinguish the best Hebrew prose such as are conspicuous in the Judean authors of the Patriarchal stories of Genesis. Its historical value is also very high. The account of David's later years in Second Samuel 9-20, Second Kings 1-2, bear all the marks of contemporary origin. It comes from one who not

(1) II Samuel, 21:19, (cf. I Samuel 17:7)
(2) The New International Ency., Vol. 6, Ed. 2, p. 521
(3) Kent, History of the Hebrew People, p. 101
(4) Ibid, p. 102
only knew the large political events of the reign, but was intimately informed about the life of the court, the scandals, crimes, and intrigues in the King's household which clouded his glorious career." (1)

Chapters 1-7 of II Samuel record the successive steps by which David came to the throne of all Israel, his capture of Jerusalem and the transference of the ark. Chapter 8 epitomizes his public acts, bringing his history to a close, and anticipating events which are presented in great detail.

According to I:5-16 a messenger confesses to have slain Saul and at David's command paid the penalty with his own life -- probably from a later narrative, because the context is clear without it. While First Samuel 31:5 definitely states that Saul fell by his own hand. The words of David, "When one told me saying, Behold Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took him and slew him in Ziklag" (2) indicate clearly that David was ignorant of the event of the previous account. It is probable, also, that David desired to rear a temple to Jehovah, but the language and religious spirit of Chapter seven is plainly Deuteronomic; it belongs, therefore, in the same class with the sections in Judges and First Samuel.

The second main division of the book, Chapters 9-20, recounts in greater detail the events of David's private and court life, giving evidence of coming from different hands than other narratives, and characterized by freedom of later insertions. The

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(1) Moore, George Foote: Lit. of Old Testament, p. 94
(2) II Samuel, 4:10
remainder of the book, Chapters 21-24, constitute an appendix, including extracts from old records which treat of the reign of David, loosely bound together, two sections closely related 21:1-14, 24:1-15, probably separated by insertion. Another striking example of a later insertion is found between 21:15-22 and 23:8-39, both passages recording the names and deeds of David's heroes. The poetical material thus introduced in the passage 22:1-23:7, is assigned to David, but like Hannah's song of First Samuel, (1) its language and thought suggests a much later period than the United Kingdom.

The history of David is concluded and that of Solomon is introduced in First Kings, Chapters one and two. These chapters are closely related to the extracts from David's family history, preserved in II Samuel 9-20, and show little trace of editorial revision. (2)

The author of Kings regularly names his sources; the author of Samuel does this only once, (II Samuel 1:18). But it is probable that the author had recourse to the official records spoken of in I Chronicles 29:29. The book of II Samuel also contains David's Psalm of Thanksgiving and the "Last words of David." (3) The time of composition was after David's death (4), after the separation of the Kingdom, but before the downfall of Judah. (5) Many Rabbis make Jeremiah to be the author, but in truth neither author nor definite data can be assigned to it. (6)

(1) I Samuel 2:11
(2) Kent, History of the Hebrew People, p. 109
(3) II Samuel, 22:1-7
(4) II Samuel, 5:5
(5) I Samuel, 27:6
(6) Schaff and Herzog, The Books of Samuel, by V. Orelli, pp. 2106-7
The next important source is that found in the Book of First Chronicles, Chapters 10-39 inclusive. Nearly all that is weakly human and much that is fresh and courageous in his character seems to have disappeared from the life story of David as here depicted. The reader will look in vain in these chapters for more than passing reference to David's boyhood, (1) his combat with Goliath, (2) and his wild outlaw life, (3) or his intimate domestic life. His career, moreover, at Saul's court is entirely omitted. "In I and II Samuel, David lives before us not only as the recipient of Messianic promises, but chiefly as the intrepid youngster, the slayer of Goliath, the patient harpist to the king, who is fast losing his reason and secretly seeking David's life, the outlaw chieftain who here refuses to take Saul's life, the composer of at least one secular lyric of outstanding merit, the faithful friend of Jonathan, the passionate lover of Bathsheba, the too indulgent father, at once the victor over the Philistines and Jebusites and the barbaric conqueror of trans-Jordanic lands -- and yet a signal failure as the administrator of justice and as a unifying figure in his people's life in times of peace." (4)

It seems that the main object of the writer of Chronicles was not so much to retell the story of Israel, as to select from the rich historical stores at his command, those portions which related more particularly to the history of worship in order to demonstrate

(1) I Chronicles, 17:1
(2) I Chronicles, 18:2
(3) I Chronicles, 12:1-23
(4) Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 442, Prof. D. C. Simpson
to his compatriots how precious his legacy was, and how fundamental
to the existence and prosperity of the new state arising from the
ashes of the old. The book came into the canon because of its
important additions to history. (1)

No doubt but that the Chronicler had access to other
sources of information which were not old records and which merely
reflected the traditions of his own time; quite often, possibly,
reflecting not only the traditions of his day, but probably adding
occasionally his own thought of what David ought to have been and
ought to have done. (2)

The Chronicles give information that is nowhere else
available. They give an enlargement of the narrative by the addition
of new facts, drawn from sources that we evidently do not have. These
are sometimes minute and less important than curious, while at other
times they are striking events in the civil or religious history, and
it is surprising that the earlier historians should have passed over
them. (3) For instance, the solemn address of David commending
Solomon as his successor (the address is discussed in a later
chapter) (4) to the assembled notables and general congregation of
the people of Israel. (5)

The history such as that of Chronicles has been called
'Ecclesiastical', and that of Samuel and Kings 'Political'. In the
mind of the writer of Chronicles, the religious establishment is of

(1) Schaff-Herzog, Vol. 1, p. 468, A. Dillman, The I and II Books of
Chronicles
(2) Ibid, p. 442
(3) The Bible Commentary, p. 163
(4) Chapter III, p. 74 of this thesis
(5) See I Chronicles, 28; 29:1-20
primary importance, the state secondary. The service which the
Chronicler rendered to his generation is invaluable, since he presented
history to them in a modern light. The care with which he handles
the genealogical records reveals a mind in which a great reverence
for the past unites with an earnest appreciation of the religious
experience of the present. All that he wrote was in harmony with
Hebrew thought of his day, and his statements and figures were as
accurate as the sources and the environs permitted. Even today,
Chronicles not only has a priceless religious value, but remains as
a reliable record of the position of religion in the Hebrew community,
three centuries B.C. (1)

As an illustration of the genealogical character of
Chronicles in the history of official persons, and to put on record
names of those who played any important role in the history of David,
are shown in the following references of that period, namely, chapters
eleven to twenty seven. (2)

I Chronicles XI: 26-47 contains a list of David's valiant men.
I Chronicles XII, 1-14--those who came to David from Ziklag.
I Chronicles XIV, 7-27--David's sons.
I Chronicles XV, 5-10--David's chief officials.
I Chronicles XV, 17-24--David's chief Levites.
I Chronicles XIX, 15-17--David's principle state officers.
I Chronicles XXIV, 7-18--the heads of the priestly courses
I Chronicles XXV, 9-31--heads of music courses.
I Chronicles XXVI, 14-19--the Temple porters.
I Chronicles XXVII, 2-18--Captains of David's bodyguard.
I Chronicles XXVII, 16-22--heads of the tribes of Israel.
I Chronicles XXVII, 25-31--David's stewards and bailiffs.

To the modern student Chronicles is an invaluable
guide to the correct and reverent criticism of the rest of the Old

(1) The New Century Bible, Chronicles, Introd. p. 26
(2) The Bible Commentary, Chronicles, p. 167
Testament. "This work should be studied as an interpreter of Jewish faith in an age when the voice of prophecy was dying and men had little religious light save the long-looked expectation of the Messiah, whose advent still lay three centuries ahead." (1)

It is only logical that the reader of Chronicles today, instead of criticizing the old Chronicler for his one-sided view of history, ought to take a saine view of the work and regard it as a study of the origin and subsequent development of the Temple, its ministers and its part of Jewish life, among his own studies of the origin of Judaism as the parent of Christianity. (2)

The last of the sources is the Book of Psalms. One writer says, "In the Book of Psalms we meet the religion of Israel at its greatest depth and its most passionate intensity. The Psalmist fell heir to the profound insights and spiritual experiences of the prophets. These latter were Israel's intellectual and spiritual pioneers, blazing new paths to God and clearing new trails for human feet. The Psalmist largely found ready at hand these insights. They took them up, lived their way into them experimentally, applied them to the life of individuals and of the community and linked them to the religious worship that centered in the Temple, all the while both deepening and intensifying them." (3)

The most important question in connection with the Book of Psalms is that of its relation to the life of David. Can the origin of the Psalter be carried to the time of David? Did David

(1) The New Century Bible, I and II Chronicles, p. 26
(2) Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 446
(3) Leslie, E. A., Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 509
write the psalms or were they merely attributed to him for some reason? Could the Jewish Church have been mistaken in regarding David as the most eminent religious poet of their nation and assuming the foundation of the Psalter to him? If only these questions could be answered satisfactorily many of our troubles would be over, or at least minimized, in regard to the poetic genius of the Psalmist. That David was a gifted poet is proved by his noble elegy over Saul and Jonathan (1) and his lament for Abner (2). Although these poems are not directly religious, they show that the warrior King was capable of the tenderest feelings. Now, we ask how it is that David was called the 'Sweet Psalmist of Israel', and likewise why so many psalms were attributed to him, unless he really wrote some? The incorporation of the Psalm of Thanksgiving in the Book of Second Samuel (3) as a specimen of David's poetry illustrating his character and genius is evidence in favor of regarding him as a writer of psalms. On the other hand we find that both music and poetry had already reached a high degree of development, for example in Exodus XV, the 'Song of Miriam', or in Judges V, the 'Song of Deborah'.

However, with David a new era of religious poetry commenced, and also took on a personal content.

The superscriptions of many of the psalms take the form of a plain historical notice, as in psalm III, "When David fled from the face of Absalom his son". About fourteen others

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(1) II Samuel 1:19-27
(2) II Samuel 3:33-34
(3) II Samuel 22:1-23:7
have occasions expressed in titles, all referring to events in the life of David. In the life of David, as well as in his reign, the writer of the Psalms found a rich field of experiences from which to draw. Because David's character was so complex the writer of the Psalms has written into many of them the life situations of his day, but there is little if any trace that the author was David. The foremost modern scholars do not regard David as the author of the Psalter. However, they do not say that many of the psalms could not have been written in honor of Israel's greatest king and dedicated to him.

Cheyne says, concerning David and the psalms, "It has often been asserted that the David of the psalms is an entirely different character from the David of history. The devout singer and the rough warrior cannot be the same person. But a great nature is necessarily many-sided; and in early ages it is possible that traits of character, which to us seem irreconcilable may co-exist in the same individual". (1) In this respect the character of Charles the Great furnishes an interesting parallel. Charles was a conqueror, a legislator, a founder of a social order, and a restorer of religion, yet his wars were ferocious and his policy after conquests unsparing. Though there was much of earnestness and intelligence in his religion, it did not have depth enough to exclude that waywardness and inconsistency of moral principle, and that incapacity to control passion, which belonged to the time.

Not a few of the psalms illustrate and are illustrated by the history of David's life, in which is found abundant traces of the religious side of his character. Some of these traits are:

(1) Cheyne, T. K., Origin of the Psalter, p. 211
confidence, patience, a simple faith, hope, and penitence.

The Psalms throw a great deal of light upon David's inner life. Here the value of the psalms cannot be over-estimated. The notion of history, it is true, leave no doubt in our minds as to the reality of his faith and the depth and sincerity of his piety. However, the psalms carry us farther. In them is reflected the true man with his heart laid open to the communion of God in deep humiliation of his repentance, in the invincible strength of his faith, and in that cleaving to God in which he surpassed all others.

"In the Psalms", Perowne says, "we see the character of David, which was no common one, a character with all the strength of man, yet with all the tenderness of woman. He was naturally brave, his courage was heightened and confirmed by his faith in God which never forsook him. He was naturally warm-hearted and affectionate as shown in his love for his parents, Michal, Absalom, and Jonathan. On the other hand, when stung by an act of wrong or injustice, of which his sense was keen, he could flash out into strong words and strong deeds. He could hate with the same fervor that he loved, yet be ever ready to forgive. He could exercise a prudent self control, if he was occasionally impetuous. His true courtesy, his chivalrous generosity to his foes, his rare delicacy and his rare self denial, are all traits which present themselves most forcibly as we read his history. He is the truest of heroes in the genuine elevation of his character, no less than in the ordinary events of his life." (1)

In the different psalms we find many traits which might

very easily be applied to the life of David, as for instance in the third psalm, an undaunted courage (verses 5, 6), strong convictions (verse 7), a generous prayer (verse 8). So in the fifth psalm what burning words of indignation (verse 10)! In the seventh what a keen sense of injury, what a lofty chivalrous spirit (verses 3-5)! In the fifteenth what a noble figure of stainless honor, of the integrity which can stand both before God and before man! In the sixteenth (verses 8-11), seventeenth (verses 8-15), eighteenth (verses 1-2) what deep personal affection toward God!

The Book of Psalms, then, serve a purpose as a means of interpreting some phases of the life and time of David. But to say that David was the author of one of the psalms, much less the seventy attributed to him, is taking considerable for granted. In any case there is only a slight trace that suggests Davidic authorship, with little or no authority, except for the historical reference in the title. Gray has stated the matter accurately when he says, "There are psalms in the Psalter of which, if we may remove certain parts as later interpolations, a residuum remains of which it would be unjustifiable to assert that it was not written by David." (1)

Other references concerning David and his life than those mentioned in the above sources are to be found in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament as early as Ezekiel, David became the ruler who was to govern the restored people of Israel, (Ezekiel, 24:23-24; 37:24). If there were to be a ruling house it must be the Davidic dynasty; it did not occur to the Jews

(1) Gray, G. B., Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 139
to think of any other solution. Prophecies connected with the life of David are found in the following references: Isaiah 9:7; 22:22; 55:3; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11; are the most important ones. In the New Testament David is mentioned as the progenitor of Christ in the following passages: Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 21:9; Luke 1:32; John 7:42; Acts 2:25; 13:22; 15:15; Romans 1:3; II Timothy 2:8; Revelation 5:5; 22:16; thus we see the person of David as an important character in the religious history of the world.
CHAPTER II

Character Elements in David as Revealed in the Historical Development of his Career before his Kingship

Before making a study of the character of an individual it is necessary that he be introduced to us more or less formally.

The situation which brings our hero, David, into the light and to our attention centers around the decline of Saul's leadership and his final rejection by the Lord. Saul had utterly failed to carry out the Lord's command, given through Samuel for the entire destruction of the Amalekites. Though not told the reason, we surmise that it was to be an example to other tribes that were harming the chosen people. Saul kept for himself the best of the flocks and spared the life of the Amalekite king, Agag. On his return he reported to Samuel a complete annihilation of the Amalekites, but the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle betrayed the king and he admitted his guilt. He made a confession, but sought to palliate it by blaming his subjects. (1) In this connection, Dr. Charles E. Jefferson once said, "In Saul's defense of his sin we possess a study of conscience unsurpassed in the literature of the world." (2)

Samuel interceded for Saul all, (3) but could not avail. Saul bitterly repented and confessed: "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah", and even "worshipped

(1) I Samuel 15:15, 21, 24
(2) From notes on a sermon heard in King's Chapel, Fall of 1932
(3) I Samuel 15:11
Jehovah" (1), but it was too late. He had lost his right to reign. Therefore the Lord spoke to Samuel, saying, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons." (2) It was a dangerous errand and Samuel realized it, for he said, "Saul will kill me if he know it". However, God condescended to Samuel's fears and provided an excuse for his going to Bethlehem. Samuel was to take a heifer and say that he had come to sacrifice it. It would, in this case, necessarily be a peace offering, since we know from the sacrificial system that only a male was used for burnt offerings, and a cow used for peace offering. Samuel accepted the task with Jehovah's guidance.

On this occasion we not only get a glimpse of David but are admitted to the whole family circle. "There was a practice once a year, in Bethlehem, probably at the first new moon of the year, of holding a sacrificial feast, at which Jesse as the chief proprietor of the place would preside (3) with the elders of the town. At this or such like feasts (4) suddenly appeared the great prophet Samuel, driving a heifer before him and having in his hand a horn of consecrated oil of the Tabernacle." (5) The elders of the town were terrified at this apparition, but were reassured by the august visitor that it was a peaceful mission. Samuel bade those present,

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(1) See verses 24, 30, 31
(2) I Samuel 16:1
(3) I Samuel 20:6
(4) I Samuel 16:1
including the sons of Jesse, to sanctify themselves and join with him in the sacrifice.

During the gathering for the sacrifice, as the sons of Jesse came in, Samuel sat ready to make the choice for king and to anoint him, as the Lord had directed. The first-born son appeared, a man of great strength, tall, handsome, and warrior type. Surely, Samuel though, Jehovah had destined him to be His anointed. However, Samuel was discouraged in this thought for the Lord said unto him, "Look not upon his countenance or his stature. Man looketh at the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." (1) It was the same with the next six brothers, and the Lord had not spoken favorably. This experience gave rise to the questioning of Jesse, "Are all thy children here?" Jesse replied, "All but the youngest, who keepeth the sheep". (2) Samuel requested his presence or the feast could not go on. In due time David came. "When he arrived Samuel was struck by his uncommonly handsome appearance, especially the freshness of complexion, unusual in that country, and by the singular fire and beauty of his eyes. The divine choice was at once intimated to him. "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." (3) The choice and anointing were probably done after the sacrifice and in Jesse's house. We know that there was a considerable interval between the time the sacrifice was made and the feast, for the available portions of the animal had to be prepared for food and cooked or roasted. It was during this interval that Samuel made the

(1) I Samuel 17:24
(2) I Samuel 16:11
(3) Kitto, History of the Bible, p. 286
acquaintance.

After the anointing of David the spirit of the Lord came upon him. "A spirit of prudence to behave himself wisely upon all occasions; with a spirit of courage, so that he durst grapple with a lion and a bear; and the spirit of prophecy, in which he was afterwards very eminent. In short, a spirit fit for a prince."

(1) David then went back to his flocks to think and to ponder in his heart the meaning of his commission. His behavior from that time on gained in genius, in power of all kinds, both secular and religious, and in all the marks of true God-like character.

The Bible narratives in the Book of I Samuel bring to the reader's attention two accounts of David's introduction to the court of Saul. In the first and earliest account (2) Saul's rapid decline in leadership and his constant harassment by the Philistines so irritated and vexed the king that at times he was completely overcome by spells of melancholia. Saul had lost confidence in himself. His advisers suggested that a harper be found to soothe him during the paroxysms of his increasing mental trouble.

Immediately someone suggested David of Bethlehem, a youth of equal strength and skill in fighting, eloquent in speech, very handsome and full of the spirit of Jehovah. David accepted the invitation extended to him and went to the court of Saul. Here he found such grace and favor with Saul that he became a constant companion to the king. Later we find David in the camp and close to the person

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(2) I Samuel 16:14-23
of Saul. When all were afraid to face the Philistine Champion, David volunteered to accept the challenge, and so sprang at once from the position of a mere apprentice in arms to that of a celebrated warrior.

The second account has to do with David who as a youth is sent by his father on an errand to the camp to carry supplies to his brothers. He was also entrusted with a small gift to the captain of their regiment; but he had no such gift for Saul, neither did he present himself at headquarters. He was treated with coolness by the elder brothers who stood well at court. Evidently he was unknown to Saul and Abner. Shortly after his arrival he heard the challenge of the Philistine for a combat with Gehath. When no response came from the Israelites, David offered to fight the giant. He was finally permitted to do so, and was victorious and welcomed into the court of Saul.

The question naturally arises as to which account is the more authentic. Smith tells us (1) that in the Septuagint version XVII:12-31, 41, 50, and also the verses from XVII: 55 to XVII:5 inclusive are omitted, and when these are removed we get a far more consistent account of the matter. It is the verses omitted that give us the second account. It is needless to say that the second account is inconsistent with that which the text of the Septuagint offers. Any attempt to reconcile the two would be inadequate. However, there are only two alternatives before us. It becomes now an either - or proposition. We must recognize the Septuagint as the true text, and the fact that the additions of the

(1) Smith, W. Robertson, Old Testament in the Jewish Church, p. 120
Hebrew are fragments of some lost history of David which got in the
Hebrew text by accident, or that the shorter text is due to a deliberate
omission. But since verse 32 follows more closely and logically verse
11 than does verse 12, and since verses 12-31 are complete within
themselves, we see that verses 1-11 of Chapter XVII are part of a
history of public affairs, while verses 12-31 form part of a biography
of David, and following this section the history of public affairs
is resumed. It all points to the fact that the narrative of verses
12-31 is foreign to the main narrative of the Book of Samuel. Thus
we must conclude that the first mentioned introduction is the more
authentic account.

The close connection of the Greek and less familiar
Hebrew version of David's victory with the preceding and following
extracts from the early Judean David stories strongly favors the
conclusion that it is the earlier and more authentic account of the
event. Hence, there is good historical ground for believing that
Goliath was slain by the hand of Saul's valiant armor-bearer, David. (1)

Along with any accomplishment there are obvious results.

As a result of the heroic achievement David suddenly leaped into
national prominence and popularity. However, it has been said that
popularity breeds contempt. The slaughter of Goliath gave final
victory to the Israelites. So great was the achievement that when
the warriors returned women came out and sang a song of triumph:

Saul has slain his thousands
And David has slain his ten-thousands

(1) Kent, C. F., Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 91
In that song David was exalted above Israel's King. Immediately jealousy arose between Saul and David. The kingship was not well established. Saul, therefore, must prove himself the strongest of men in order to hold his position. But now in the eyes of the tribe of Judah, Saul's military achievements receded into the background in favor of David. Also David was endowed with a unique personal charm.

David gave Saul no grounds for being jealous of him, but Saul felt that the new hero had nothing else to gain but the kingdom. What else could he take? Saul's jealousy grew into dislike and hatred and he planned to get rid of David. One day as David played for the king, he seized a spear and threw it at the harpist with intent to kill, but he failed. David was dismissed from personal service of the king and placed in command of a thousand men. It seems likely that the king expected that the inexperience of youth might lead David into such errors in this responsibility as would either give him occasion to act against him or would seriously damage his character with the people. But if such were his views, they were grievously disappointed. In his public station David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, for Jehovah was with him; and the opportunity which was given him only served to evince his talents for business and his attention to it, and, consequently to increase and establish that popularity among the people which his character and exploits had already won. (1)

We now turn to the noble friendship of Jonathan and David shown in relief against a dark background of intrigue, rivalry,

(1) Kitto, John, History of the Bible, p. 290
and bloodshed, which to a great extent characterized the period. The friendship was unique because of the two characters who figured in it. There is reason why Jonathan, like his father, might have looked with suspicion upon David's rapid rise to popularity. However, the remarkable thing about it is that David placed his trust and life in the keeping of the son of Saul.

Also about this time as David continued to be victorious over the Philistines, the king learned that Michal, his youngest daughter, had fallen in love with the hero, following the example of her brother Jonathan. Saul's crafty mind saw an opportunity to foil his rival. He promised Michal to David. However, in the East the husband is expected in some way to purchase his bride by a payment to her father. If one cannot pay this in money, he must do it by his services, the father setting the exploit. When David declared that he was too poor to pay the price Saul quickly sprung the trap by telling him that he could have Michal for the slaying of one hundred Philistines and presenting their foreskins as proof. David was always doing better than Saul expected of him, and quite the opposite as well, Saul figured that David would surely be killed. Instead, David returned with two hundred foreskins as proof. "And so, instead of obtaining his object of having David destroyed by the dangers of war, he is compelled to give David the fair Michal and has to bear the additional vexation of seeing him loved by Michal, as well as by the people." (1)

In some subsequent actions against the Philistines, with whom a desultory warfare was still carried on, David displayed

(1) Ewald, Heinrich, The History of Israel, Vol. III, p. 75
great courage and military skill, which increased his favor with the people and in the same proportion the animosity of Saul. His hate became so ungovernable that he could no longer confine the dark secrets to his own bosom, or limit himself to underhand attempts against the life of Jesse's son. Therefore he could not refrain from calling upon his son Jonathan and his courtiers, charging them to take any favorable opportunity of putting David to death. 'Saul did not know at this time of the strong love of Jonathan for David or the degree to which it had been carried. He did not know that his noble princely son had risen above all selfishness, envy, or pride and loved David even "as his own soul". (1) Jonathan saw in the son of Jesse the great strength of character back of his success which Saul, because of his selfishness and fear of David, could not see. (2)

In the present instance Jonathan could not betray his friend, David, although it was his father's direct command. Neither could he act to the prejudice of his father, which would in reality be advising David to flee and by so doing deprive his father of his kingdom's firmest and strongest support. It did not take Jonathan long to decide that he would protect David regardless of the consequences, for he saw in the young hero a congenial soul and a true man. He was attracted by his piety, his patriotism, and his courage. He, therefore, advised David to conceal himself on the following day in a corner of a certain field to which he proposed to come accompanied by his father, and to talk over the things concerning David so that

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(1) I Samuel 18:1
(2) Kitto, John, History of the Bible, pp. 290-291
David could hear the news for himself.

On the next day Jonathan presented himself to his father in the open field and interceded in David's behalf by speaking of his virtues and the great services David had rendered, and begged Saul not to shed innocent blood. Saul could not withstand the truth of these representations and took a solemn oath to make no further attempts against David's life. Then Jonathan brought his friend back to the court and David performed his duties as before. (1)

However, as soon as David returned from a fresh campaign against the Philistines in which he won important victories, Saul forgot his promise to Jonathan, and jealousy and envy took possession of the king. One evening as David sat beside the king and played upon the harp, Saul, in another fit of rage attempted to take David's life. David avoided the blow and retired to his own dwelling, which is thought to have been in the lower town. Saul, in his determination, sent messengers to his house to inquire about him. David's wife, Michal, daughter of Saul, advised him to go into the country for safety and devised a means of escape. David evidently thought this to be a cowardly act, but it was a matter of life and death with him for he would have been deprived of his life had he returned to the court. The king's messengers watched the house to prevent his escape during the night, and planned to make his arrest in the morning.

Michal let David down through a window in a basket

(1) I Samuel 18:30-19:7
during the night and placed in his bed the image of the household
god, her teraphim, shaped like a human figure. She spread over its
head a goat's hair flynet, which was much used by people in hot coun-
tries to cover the face while in bed, and over the figure she placed
a loose mantle, a part of David's ordinary attire. When the officers
arrived in the early morning the crafty little wife cautiously announced
that he was sick. But when Saul heard it he roughly bade his messen-
gers bring David, bed and all. To their astonishment they discovered
the image. When questioned Michal declared that her husband threatened
her with death unless she connived at his escape.

David now became a hunted fugitive. This period of
his life, difficult and perilous though it was, was invaluable to
David. It consolidated his character and enlarged his resources.
It built up for him the strong nucleus of an army. It taught him
king-craft and made him a popular hero. Best of all it tested and
proved his faith in God so that it became as adamant.

David had now escaped the hand of Saul, but where
could he go; that was his foremost thought. He could not go to his
father's house and involve his father in the trouble that threatened
him, nor could he go to the surrounding nations that hated him as
intensely as did Saul. We can only surmise the feeling that David
had at the prospect of leaving his home and wife and, like the old
patriarch Abraham, going forth and not knowing whither he went.
He evidently wept bitterly at the thought of becoming a homeless
wanderer, a fugitive in his native land. Fleeing from his home in
the darkness and cut off from every resource, David turned his foot-
steps toward Samuel and came to Ramah, where he took refuge with him at a prophetic school. (1) Three times Saul sent messengers to capture him, but each time they were overcome by the sacred minstrel of the prophets; when the messengers did not return Saul went in person, and likewise was so filled with prophetic frenzy that he stripped off his clothes and lay naked all night.

Grave doubts, however, have been raised against this narrative says one writer, who gives a reason for his attitude. He says, "For a Judean like David, flight southward was more natural from Gibeah than northward to Ramah; the connection between Samuel and the prophets is not that presented by the older history of Saul and Samuel, where indeed there is another explanation given to the proverb: Is Saul among the prophets? The present narrative can hardly be by the author of chapter fifteen (2) who implies that Saul and Samuel did not meet again. The conception of the prophetic school as here described is probably later than the time of David; and we must regard it as at least doubtful whether David had any dealings with Samuel." (3)

If this narrative be rejected as coming from a later origin, and this we shall do, then the first place visited by David in his flight was the priestly city of Nob, the seat of the Tabernacle, which was due north of Jerusalem. David visited Nob for two reasons. In the first place it was to obtain an interview with the high priest, and in the second place to obtain food and weapons. He

(1) Kitto, John, History of the Bible, p. 292
(2) I Samuel 15:35
appealed to Ahimelech, the head of the priests of Eli's family, on pretext of a secret mission from Saul and obtained, through him an answer from the oracle, some of the consecrated loaves, and the dedicated sword of Goliath, which was the only available weapon.

Smith tells that this incident was of double importance in David's career. First, it established a connection between him and the only survivor from the massacre in which David's visit involved the house of Ahimelech. Secondly, from Ahimelech's surrender of the consecrated bread to David's hunger our Lord drew the inference of the superiority of the moral to the ceremonial law, which is the only allusion made to David's life in the New Testament. (1) It is also commemorated by the traditional title of Psalm 52." (2)

Thus provided with food and a weapon David departed, but the proceeding, harmless enough in itself, had been witnessed by a person who afterward maliciously distorted it according to Ewald, Doeg, the Edomite. He seems to have gone over to Saul during the wars with Edom, and Saul had made him chief overseer of his flocks. He had adopted the Jahveh religion and may have been then staying at the Sanctuary for the performance of some vow. (3)

The visit to Nob was followed by important consequences. Shortly afterward, while Saul was holding court at Gibeah he complained concerning some of his followers, the Benjamites, because of their ingratitude in taking part against him with his own son and David. At this point the Edomite, Doeg, the chief herdsman of Saul, or rather

(1) Matthew, 12:13; Mark, 2:25; Luke, 6:3, 4
(3) Ewald, History of Israel, Vol. III, p. 83
the mightiest of his runners (1) declared that he had seen David at Nob when Ahimelech supplied him with food and weapons. Saul, at once suspecting Ahimelech summoned him and the priests of his family, and refusing to accept their denial ordered the guards to put them to death. The guards hesitated, but Doeg carried out the king's orders. Eighty-five priests were slain, and the city of Nob completely destroyed. Only one man of Elí's family escaped, namely, Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, who fled to David. David, feeling that the disaster was in a measure due to himself, promised him protection.

After his visit to Nob and his identification by the Edomite, Doeg, David surmised what would happen. For immediate safety David was compelled to return to his old enemies, the Philistines, where he found shelter with Achish, the king of Gath. But he was soon recognized as the slayer of Goliath, and it was only by feigning madness that he saved his life. Concealing the brightest intellect of his age under a cloak of lunacy, he frothed at the mouth and drummed frantically on the city walls. When Achish saw his behavior he remarked that he had fools enough already in his service and dismissed David as useless and imbecile, and David was once more free and homeless. Meanwhile, this tarrying in Philistia was another instrument in his training, for it nurtured that largeness of sympathy which he needed when he became king of Israel.

David was then an outcast from both nations. Israel and Philistia were alike closed against him. There was no resource but that of an independent outlaw. He first betook himself to the

cave of Adullam (1), near the old Canaanite city of the same name. Here the wild character of the country afforded him a hiding place. He was among his own tribesmen, and was located on the extremity of Judah where Saul's influence was least felt. Here his immediate family came to him, their former home made unsafe by Saul's revenge. Among them came the brave sons of Zeruiah, David's sister. Others who came were the impoverished, the debtors, and the discontented. Soon David had an army of four hundred. He was now among the lowest of those he would later govern. It is to David's lasting honor that the land of Israel was not plunged into a civil war. His men increased in numbers daily, as did their devotion to David. David's self-restraint was the only thing that stood between Saul and the loss of his throne as well as his life.

One day, while David was in the cave of Adullam, in a fit of homesickness he expressed his desire for a draught of water from the well he remembered by the gate of his native village, Bethlehem. Immediately upon hearing David express his desire, three of his most devoted warriors sped away to Bethlehem. They broke through the Philistine forces, which surrounded Bethlehem, and obtained the coveted water. When they returned to present it to their beloved leader he would not touch it because the three men had risked their lives in the gratification of his desire. He poured the precious water on the ground as a libation of thankfulness to God for such courage and devotion (2). Pure chivalry and pure religion there

(1) I Samuel 22:1
(2) II Samuel 23:16
formed an absolute union.

Another act of David's was that of the kindness shown his parents. The insecurity of David's position rendered him anxious for their safety. He placed them under the protection of the King of Moab (1), a step which may perhaps be explained by reference to the Book of Ruth, the Moabitess. Could David have been more truly and more fully the man after God's own heart than when he came out of his stronghold and risked his own life and liberty in order to secure the peace and comfort of his imperilled parents?

Shortly after this David was advised by the prophet, Gad, to move from his stronghold to the forest of Hareth, but he was certainly in or near Adullam when we hear of him again. News had then reached David that the Philistines were besieging Keilah about four or five miles to the southeast. David did his good turn by marching down and driving the Philistines away from Keilah, taking from them rich spoil and settling there. Saul heard the news with joy. If his enemy were once in a city, even were it walled, he could beleaguer him and must eventually get him into his hands. Accordingly he summoned the army of Israel and determined to lay siege to Keilah (2).

David, however, had reason to fear being delivered up to Saul by the inhabitants and so, again directed by divine counsels, he left Keilah and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph and Maon. Saul constantly pursued him, but God

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(1) I Samuel 22:3  
(2) Kittel, R., History of Hebrews, p. 127
delivered him. While David was in the wilderness of Ziph, Jonathan secretly met him, and the two friends renewed their covenant before God. Every movement of David was reported to Saul, who pursued him far south of the Holy Land, but a sudden raid of the Philistines called him home. No sooner had Saul conquered them than he renewed the pursuit of David. At En-gedi David suddenly found Saul at his mercy. His followers urged him to strike on the grounds that Saul was the Lord's anointed and the Lord alone would discrown him. David spared his life, but cut away a piece from Saul's skirt to prove that he had had his life in his hands. (1)

After this experience Saul became mortified at David's forbearance, confessed his folly and returned home. David then resumed his life in the wilderness of Maon.

The one big problem and an exceedingly difficult one which confronted David was that of supporting some six hundred restless warriors in a very thickly settled and unproductive borderland of southern Judah. Often they made attacks on some hostile Arab tribe and were able to get supplies. In other cases David and his men would protect the shepherds or villagers from attacks for which they would receive pay, which was an unwritten law of the borderland. Otherwise they depended upon the gifts of friendly neighboring clans. Another well-established law was that especially at the annual festivals those who had possessions should share with those who had not. (2)

(1) I Samuel 24:4
(2) Kent, C. F., Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 107
In the vicinity of Hebron there lived a very wealthy man. He belonged to the tribe of Caleb, and his name was Nabal. Nabal had great possessions, and was celebrating the feast of the Sheep Shearing with his men at Carmel. David, as a natural protector by having his camp in the wilderness of Maon, had a right to demand supplies for his men from the rich man, Nabal. Therefore, David sent ten of his men to congratulate Nabal and to ask the favor. Luck was against them, for Nabal was a churlish fellow, and turned them away with some insulting remarks concerning David. When the messengers returned with their report, David resolved to avenge the insult. With four hundred men he decided to surprise and destroy everything the following night. Fortunately, Nabal's discreet and beautiful wife, Abigail, who possessed much personal charm and tact, from one of the servants received timely notice of all that had happened. Toward evening, when Nabal had surrendered himself to the most careless revelry and was hopelessly drunk, Abigail collected, without his knowledge, a suitable present of all kinds of provisions and sent it forward to meet the advancing forces of David. She then followed it in person. Upon meeting David and his men she interceded in her husband's behalf and persuaded David that he was not worth the effort of making the revenge. Her gift and wise counsel evidently not only placated David but won his heart.

Abigail's motive for her action is in the narrative. She recognized how much her husband had been benefited by David, for she had been told much concerning him and evidently knew something
about his character. She realized that the insult inflicted upon
David by her husband would bring disaster to Nabal’s possessions.
Conscious of her beauty she felt that it might have some influence
upon David, and she knew that if she could win his friendship all
would be saved. Without a word to her drunken husband she
secretly prepared for David an abundance of good things, more than
David had hoped for, and hastened to meet the approaching army.
Her tactfulness, her beautiful and prudent words, one of the most
eloquent speeches in all literature, urging David not to regard her
foolish husband nor stain his hands with blood, so won David that he
desisted from his vengeful purpose.

David accepted the gifts of Abigail and bade her
return to her home. When she arrived, Nabal was told how he and all
his possessions had been saved through her appeal to David. It was
at this point that Nabal realized what he had done and what lay back
of the insult to David’s men. He had forgotten that David could
hate as intensely as he loved and that he was the most fearless
warrior in Judah. When he heard Abigail’s story his weakened heart
and shattered nerves could not stand the strain. He suffered a stroke
of apoplexy from which he died ten days later. Almost immediately
after the days of mourning were over David sent a messenger asking
the hand of Abigail in marriage, and she accepted the proposal and
became David’s wife. The union brought to the outlaw chief not
only rich possessions in flocks, but also the support of the strong
tribe of Caleb.

Again Saul, at the suggestion of the Ziphites, sought
David. When Saul was in the immediate neighborhood David, with a companion, went into the camp at night while a deep sleep was over the entire army. He refused to let Abishai, his companion, slay Saul. As proof that he could have taken Saul's life, he carried away the king's spear and cruse of water. When he was at a safe distance from the camp he called to Abner and reproved him for neglect of his duty. Saul recognized the voice of David and called to him, but with David's expostulation confessed his wrong and each went on his way. In the narrative of I Samuel, Smith believes that the second account of David's magnanimity toward Saul is a parallel of the one recorded in Chapter twenty-four. Also this agrees with the fact that the Ziphites are active in both. Budde assigns this present account to E, the other (Chapter twenty-four) to J. (1)

Professor Smith believes that since the present one seems to be nearer the event it must belong to the older of the two documents.

After the hair-breadth escapes of David and the close pursuit of Saul, David came to the conclusion that it was not safe either for himself or his men to remain longer on Hebrew soil. He, too, was betrayed by the very men he had aided, the Ziphites. As a means of escape he resorted to Achish, king of Gath, who received him. David, not satisfied with the life in the capitol, begged for a town which he might hold as an outpost. King Achish granted his request, and David moved his men and household effects to the town

(1) Smith, H. P., International Critical Commentary, p. 229
of Ziklag. There he carried on constant warfare with the Bedowin or the Amalekites. David left the impression that he was making raids on the Judahite clans, but as a matter of fact he captured a Bedowin camp, slew all of the captives, and turned the spoils over to the king.

The course of events soon placed David in a most trying situation. In all situations, however, the same regal qualities shone out: trust in God, love for man, courage for the right, decisiveness, alertness and perseverance. The confidence of the Philistines involved him in an almost impossible dilemma. As a body guard of Achish he was commanded to join the Philistine army in its march against Saul, but David's diplomacy proved equal to the test. It is difficult to determine what course he would have followed on the actual battlefield. (1)

When the Philistine troops were mustered the attention of the chiefs was drawn to David and his band. They inquired of Achish why he was there, and received assurance of his fidelity. But they regarded his presence as a danger so that David, in spite of his protestation of fidelity, was sent away. Returning home he found that the Amalekites had taken revenge for his former incursions by attacking the undefended Ziklag, capturing the inhabitants, carrying them away as slaves, and burning the town. (2) Following the command of the Divine Oracle, David and his men were soon in hot pursuit. About evening time they made a sudden attack which quickly scattered

(1) Kent, C. F., Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 113
(2) Smith, H. P., International Critical Commentary, p. 243
the robbers and left David in possession, not only of his own possessions, but also of a large amount of other booty. On returning, some of the men wanted to keep all the booty for the company, but David contended that it should be divided between them and those left behind with the baggage. (1) The precedent, which he established in dividing the spoil, became a binding law. The distribution of that part of the Amalekite spoil which fell to him reveals clearly his ambition. David used the booty at his disposal to win the hearts of Judah. Presents were sent to all the southern chieftains.

The Philistines' vast army once more broke with a sudden eruption into the kingdom of Saul. He immediately gathered together his forces and moved forward to meet them. He found them camped on the great plains of Esdraelon and pitched his camp on Mount Gilboa. The enemy had chosen the plain because of the great number of chariots and masses of cavalry. As Saul looked down on the vast army he lost all courage and his heart trembled exceedingly. It was not so much the sight of the army as the fact that Saul had lost all confidence in God and in himself. Perplexed and terrified he knew not which way to turn. He tried to pray, but received no answer. He could not consult the Divine Oracle, for he had slain all except one of the family of the high priest; only Abither, who took the Oracle, remained, and he was a fugitive with David. Saul could not consult Samuel, for he was dead.

Saul felt that he could not go into the battle without

(1) I Samuel 30:21-25
some supernatural support. He remembered a woman who lived at Endor and who had a reputation of being able to communicate with the dead. Saul, in company with two other men, consulted the witch at Endor who called upon Samuel. (1) The answer, the narrative tells us, that Samuel gave was that Saul's kingdom would be taken from him and given to David; that his army would be defeated on the morrow, and he with his sons would die; and that all this had been brought upon him because of his disobedience to Jehovah.

Saul was then in a desperate condition. However, had he not lost the battle before he went into it he might have won, for he had by far the best location. But the troops shared the hopelessness of their king and were soon put to rout. Saul and his sons, unable to escape, were hemmed in at the foot of Mount Gilboa. Jonathan and his two brothers died fighting, and Saul, badly wounded, fell on his sword to escape capture. (2) Israel had been overwhelmingly defeated.

In the first chapter of II Samuel a different version of Saul's death is recorded and says that Saul was slain by an Amalekite. This story cannot be reconciled with the true narrative of I Samuel XXXI. It is quite clear that the Amalekite was one who had come to strip the slain after the battle and had the luck of finding Saul with crown and bracelet. Perhaps with the idea of a reward he invented a story with what he had heard, and started off to tell David that Saul was dead, and moreover to that he had

(1) I Samuel 28:12
(2) I Samuel 31:5
slain him. David's temper was hasty, and the fact that the messenger was an Amalekite did not check or calm it. Whether or not David believed the confession we do not know, but the Amalekite lost his life for the slaying of the king's anointed.

When the news of the disaster reached David at Ziklag he and his followers joined in the universal lamentation. There is good ground for believing that the author of the noble song was David. (1) "The detailed reference in the song fit well the lips of David. The genuine pathos and sorrow, especially over the death of the beloved Jonathan, all point to David as the author. The artistic beauty of the poem is unsurpassed. In the first stanza the nation is called to join in the lamentation, in the second the cruel exultation of the Philistines is viewed with horror, and in the third nature, and especially the Mountains of Gilboa, the scene of the battle, are called upon to join in the lamentation. In the next two stanzas the courage, the prowess, and the virtue of Saul and Jonathan are powerfully presented. The culmination of the poem is reached in the pathetic stanza in which David protests his deep love for Jonathan and voices his own bitter sorrow." (2)

(1) II Samuel 1:17-27
(2) Kent, C. F., Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 119
CHAPTER III
Character Elements in David as Revealed in the Historical Development
of His Career after His Kingship

Now that Saul was dead and the Philistines masters of
Central Canaan, the Judeans were only too glad to call their tribeman
and champion to be king. But where would he live? Ziklag was in
ruins and he could not live there. The death of Saul allowed him
to return to Judah, and glad enough he was to do so. But even in
his eagerness he wanted to consult the Oracle of God and then choose
the city which it pointed out to him, the ancient city of Hebron.
There David reigned for seven and one half years. However, the part
of the country over which David was made king was only the southern
portion of the tribe of Judah. This tribe would hardly recognize
the weak rule of Saul's son Ishbosheth, and doubtless they were proud
of their fellow tribesman, David. The Philistines regarded David as
their vassal and were not willing that he govern Judah without
allegiance to them. Moreover, they held the central portion of the
country, cutting off from Judah the region where Ishbosheth ruled,
so that Judah could hardly submit itself to Saul's son if it so
desired.

Ishbosheth, the only surviving son of Saul, became king
over North Israel. He did not inherit his father's strong character,
and his life made very little impression. The chief support of his
throne was Abner, Saul's general. In the war carried on between
the two Israelitish powers, David was the gainer. (1)

(1) Smith, H. P., International Critical Commentary, p. 267
The conflict between Abner and David resulted in strengthening the house of David and weakening the house of Saul. Seemingly it took the talents of Abner to hold the kingdom of Ishbosheth together. The prestige of David rapidly increased among the people, and his reign at Hebron was a prosperous one. He increased his wives to six, to all of whom sons were born at Hebron. "In this small kingdom his good and prosperous government, together with the knowledge that he had been divinely appointed to reign over all Israel, appears insensibly to have inclined the other tribes toward him by which, more even than by war, his cause gathered that strength which that of Ishbosheth lost." (1)

After Abner, who had put Ishbosheth on the throne of Israel, had established Ishbosheth's powers, he turned his army to Gibeon where he met Joab in charge of David's troops. In this combat Abner was defeated. One of the incidents of the battle was that in which Asahel, the younger brother of Joab, and whose ambition was content with no less a prey than Abner himself, was slain. Asahel was a swift runner and soon overtook Abner in his retreat. Abner recognized him and begged him to turn back lest he have to kill him, but Asahel did not heed his words. Wishing to avoid a feud with Joab, an obstacle in making favorable terms with David on the fall of Saul's house, Abner again begged him to turn aside, but Asahel pursued and was killed by him.

Shortly afterward Abner opened negotiations with David to transfer the whole kingdom to him as the result of a break

(1) Kitto, John, History of the Bible, p. 307
over a personal matter between Abner and Ishbosheth. Overjoyed as David must have been, he did not lose his masterful grip on himself and the situation. He demanded that Michal, his first wife, whom Saul had given to another man when he quarreled with David, should be returned to him before any other business would be discussed. In this way he secured for himself, as Saul's son-in-law, a certain title to the leadership of all Israel. Michal was restored to David through an order issued by Ishbosheth. Then Abner proposed to the elders of the northern tribes that they transfer their loyalty, and he came to David to report progress and David promised to reward him generously for his services.

But Joab was yet to be reckoned with. When he heard of all the royal favor that had been heaped upon his rival, smarting with jealousy and stirred with the thought of revenge for Abner's killing of his brother at Gibeon, he sent word for Abner to return to Hebron and then treacherously slew him. By the most skilful acting, David convinced everybody that he had no hand in the murder.

With their strong man dead, the northern elders realized that the rule of Ishbosheth was near an end. Two of Ishbosheth's captains, however, hastened by assassinating him and bringing his head to David. They hoped that David would reward them, but as a warning that he did not accept that kind of service he hanged them by the pool of Hebron. (1)

After the death of Ishbosheth there was no further

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member of Saul's house around whom the people could rally, and they naturally turned to David. All the tribes sent bodies of warriors, 280,000 in all, and a great assembly met at Hebron. The elders of the people were the spokesmen and, addressing David, they declared that even when Saul was king it was David who was the real shepherd of the people. Moreover, God himself had chosen David to be their king, and they were only accepting loyally His selection. David, then, was publicly anointed king over all Israel, making a league or covenant with the people. "This was probably a solemn contract in which the king on the one hand engaged to rule according to the laws, and the people on the other hand, promised him their allegiance. Some kind of charter defining the king's rights was in existence (1) and later on we find the people demanding some limitation (2) of these rights." (3) Samuel had told the people the manner of the kingdom. He laid down the principles and limitation of the kingly power. He instituted a limited monarchy with a written constitution. However, "the Israelitish monarchy was not an absolute or irresponsible despotism." (4)

The capture of the strong fortress of Jebus (Jerusalem) appears to have followed soon after David's victory over the Philistines. This fortress was so strong that it had remained in possession of the Canaanites until David sought a capital midway between the north and south. It had an important advantage, also, because it had belonged to neither the north nor

(1) I Samuel 10:25
(2) I Kings 12:2
(3) Kirkpatrick, Cambridge Bible, p. 81
(4) Ibid., p. 81
south and had now been conquered by the united forces, making it
common ground. "Political, civil, and military considerations
pointed to Jerusalem as the most suitable capital for the
united kingdom." (1)

Having made himself master of Jerusalem, David perfected
the organization of his nation. He had shown from the beginning of
his career unusual skill in organization. He vanquished the Philist-
ines, secured a long period of rest from war, formed an alliance
with the king of Tyre, and erected a palace for himself in Zion.
Like Gideon before him, David evidently desired to make his new
capital the central seat of worship for all Israel. The ark, the
most sacred national treasure, was still at Kirjath-jearim, where
it had been left after its surrender by the Philistines. The bringing
of the ark to Jerusalem and its proper enshrinement in the tabernacle
or temple with periodic pilgrimages to it would inevitably unite the
tribes and help to consolidate the kingdom. David profoundly believed
that this stronghold among the hills was the place in which Jehovah
had chosen to record his name. All his ideals were theocratic. He
thought that the national government and the national religion must
be united so that each would become a part of the other. In this
section of the narrative we at once have an illustration of David's
piety and of his political sagacity. The parallel account in I
Chronicles (2) gives a more extensive description of details -- how,
doubtless acting by divine direction, David erected on Mount Zion
for the reception of the ark a new tabernacle, while the other

(1) Kent, C. F., Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 132
(2) 1 Chronicles 13:15:16
tabernacle remained at Gibeon four or five miles away. The depositing of the ark was a great political and religious event. It has been claimed that the twenty-fourth Psalm was written for the occasion.

One accident marred the joy in the transferring of the ark. In the course of the journey, just as they reached one of those open spaces common in that region where the rock had been swept clean for a threshing floor, the oxen probably slipped and the cart upon which the ark was carried was shaken. Uzzah, one of the followers, evidently with no thought of what he was doing, took hold of the ark to steady it and was instantly killed in an outburst of divine wrath. It was essentially the sin of irreverence for which Uzzah was punished. The disaster had a terrible effect upon David. He was terror-stricken and cried, "How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" (1) implying that if God punished so fearfully so slight a transgression, he himself would not dare assume further responsibility for it. The narrative reads as if David resented the judgment which God had inflicted, and in somewhat of a petulant spirit David abandoned the enterprise because he found God too hard to please. The ark was taken to the house of Obed-edom and left. So piously did Obed-edom care for it, as he was one of the family divinely appointed to care for it, that the Lord blessed Obed-edom and his household. Probably he increased in riches and children, but we are not told in what way the Lord blessed him. At any rate the ark paid well its entertainment.

(1) II Samuel 6:9
In three months’ time David recovered from his peevishness, and when he saw the prosperity the ark had brought to Obed-edom he longed for the same blessings for himself and his kingdom. This time the ark was carried on the shoulders of the Levites. As the procession moved into the city, David clad only in a linen ephod, leaped and danced before the Lord. This act was severely criticized by Michal as being unkingly conduct. After great ceremony the ark was installed in the tent on Mount Zion.

When David had peace after his wars he decided it was discourteous to Jehovah to have the sacred ark kept in a tent while he lived in a fine new palace. David proposed to build a splendid temple for Jehovah. The proposition was approved by Nathan, the prophet. However, that very night the Lord spoke to Nathan and told him to forbid David the present building of the temple, but to console David by promising that his descendants should always reign and that his son should build the temple. Two reasons for David’s being forbidden might be advanced. One is that God had hitherto been satisfied with the tabernacle and had manifested himself there. A finer edifice might easily corrupt the spiritual simplicity of the Hebrew religion and introduce idolatries. A further reason might be that David had been a man of war, and the temple building could best be done by a man of peace.

David was greatly disappointed that he was not permitted to build the temple, but was almost overjoyed by the covenant which Jehovah made with him that his descendants should always reign, for hitherto no one person, and only vaguely a single tribe,
had been singled out as supreme by Jehovah.

David is spoken of many times as a conqueror, and rightly so, for he had won many honors on the battlefield. "David realized that the peace which he counted for his people lay only in the reducing to helplessness their ring of foes." (1) His predecessor had attempted such a program, but was unable to carry it out. Now David, who was able to command a greater loyalty, and who was in every case a greater general, lead his mighty men to victory in the subduing of his enemies. His first victory was the capture of Gath, the head of the Philistine league of cities. Then he turned to Moab. There, not only did he capture the entire army, but he put to death two out of every three. Later prophets, like Amos, condemned the barbarous cruelty with which David treated the captured peoples. Next was Ammon. Previous to the chastisement of Ammon, David sent a delegation to the young king to express his sympathy on the death of his father. The Ammonite king grew suspicious of David's motives and chose to insult the men. Knowing that a procedure of this nature would bring war, he hired his Aramean neighbors to join him in conquering David before he became too powerful. David then drafted every available man and sent the army in command of Joab to subdue Ammon. Joab displayed his army tactics by routing the Arameans and causing the Ammonites to take refuge in the capital city, Rabbath. By this time it was too late to conduct a siege, so Joab and his men returned to Jerusalem till spring. He then returned to complete his conquest.

(1) Bailey and Kent, History of Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 104
He took the lower city by cutting off the water supply, and then sent for David to make the final capture.

In rapid succession the remaining camps of the enemies were invaded: the Arameans, who helped Ammon, were subdued; then Edom and their Bedowin neighbors, the Amalekites; thus completing the circle. All of David's enemies were then subdued.

We now come to the homogeneous and continuous narrative of David's experience from the time when he was firmly settled on the throne until near the close of his life.

As soon as David's pressing wars were over and his power established and he had leisure to look into the domestic affairs of his kingdom, his loving, grateful nature led him to inquire after the family of his friend, Jonathan. This action, however, was quite contrary to the Oriental custom. The usual procedure of a king upon his accession to the throne would be to exterminate the family of his predecessor. David's friendship for Jonathan, no doubt, caused him to follow a different course. He ascertained through Ziba, once steward for Saul, that a son of Jonathan named Meribaal still survived. This son was a cripple, having received an injury to both legs when his nurse let him fall in the hurried flight of Saul's household after the defeat of Gilboa. David sent for Meribaal, and Meribaal, in somewhat nervous condition from obeying the court summons, and in answer to David's promises of protection and favor replied, "What is thy servant that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" (1) As a pledge of sincerity of his promises the king restored to Jonathan's

(1) II Samuel 9:8
son all the personal estates of Saul, Ziba being appointed to administer these for the benefits of Meri-baal. Also, Meri-baal received a special invitation to eat at the king's table every day. (1) David spared also Jonathan's grandson. Contrary to all custom the house of Saul was allowed to grow and prosper in the land. (2) David's generosity and his loyalty to Jonathan cannot be questioned. However, there is another side of David's life as we shall see.

As has been previously mentioned, when Nahash, king of Ammon, died and his son, Hanun ascended the throne, David, realizing what Nahash had done for him sent an embassy to condole with Hanun concerning his father. Their reception, as has been pointed out, was anything but agreeable and was naturally followed by war. It was during the war with the Ammonites that David committed a sin that darkened his entire subsequent career. During the siege of the Ammonite capital, Joab had charge of the army while David stayed in Jerusalem. "One afternoon, towards evening, David walked upon the roof of his palace after taking his mid-day rest, and saw from the roof a woman bathing in the uncovered court of a neighboring house where there was a spring with a pool of water, such as are still frequent in the East." (3) She was beautiful to look upon, and David was not satisfied with one look or even two, for her outward charms excited sensual desires. David sent a messenger to inquire about her, and the messenger brought back news that she was the wife

(1) II Samuel 9:13
(2) I Chronicles 8:34-40
(3) Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on Books of Samuel, p. 383
of Uriah, the Hittite, one of the foreigners in David's service. The fact that she was married did not stifle the sensual desires, so David sent for her and gratified his passion. There is nothing in the narratives which intimates force or violence, but apparently Bath-sheba went directly to David at his request and consequently she is not free from blame. When she discovered she was with child she sent word to David. It was necessary for him to take steps to avert the consequences of the sin, inasmuch as the law required that both adulterer and adultress be put to death. (1)

David attempted to conceal the sin in this way: he sent to the army for Uriah that he might spend the night with his wife and afterwards be regarded as the father of the child. Uriah, a faithful soldier and loyal to the king, did not go to his home as David wished but slept at the gate with servants. Probably the affair did not remain a secret, for it seems Uriah's suspicions were aroused. When questioned, Uriah gave a very chivalrous answer. (2) David made a second attempt and invited Uriah to dine with him. During the evening David made him drink, hoping that he would forget his resolve and go to his home. But no such luck for David, because Uriah again slept at the gate. In the morning David sent Uriah back to the army carrying a letter to Joab. The letter carried word that Uriah be placed in a dangerous position where he would be slain. Joab carried out the orders and reported Uriah fallen in battle. When Bath-sheba heard that her husband was dead she mourned for him. After the period

(1) Leviticus 20:10
(2) II Samuel 11:10
of mourning was over, about seven days, (1) David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, after which she bore him a son (the one begotten in adultery). (2) The account of these two grievous sins on the part of David is followed by the assurance that "the thing which David had done displeased the Lord." (3)

The Lord left David almost a whole year in his sin before sending a prophet to rebuke him and announce the consequences. This the Lord did through Nathan, but not until the birth of Bathsheba's child that had been begotten in adultery. In order to insure the success of his mission in charging the king with his crime the prophet resorted to a parable, which led the king to condemn himself. The parable concerned a certain rich man who had many sheep and oxen, and a poor man who had but one little lamb, a pet in the house, as many Arabs have today. There came a traveler to the rich man, and the rich man hated to take one of his sheep to prepare a meal for his visitor who had come to his house; "and he took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that had come to him." (4) David was so enraged at this act of violence on the part of the rich man that in the heat of his anger he pronounced this sentence at once: "As the Lord liveth, the man who did this deserves to die; and the lamb should be restored four-fold" (5) to him. With all the greater shock did the words of the prophet, "Thou art the man!" come upon the King (6) with a combination of firmness and judgment. However,

(1) Genesis 1:10; I Samuel 31:13
(2) Smith, H. P., International Critical Commentary, p. 321
(3) II Samuel 11:27
(4) II Samuel 12:4
(5) II Samuel 12:5
(6) Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on Books of Samuel, p. 389
However, if in this matter Nathan shows himself great, Ewald thinks David to be no less so. "Though he had now fallen so low the cutting truth of the prophetic word shook him out of his hollow passion in which he had lived since he saw that woman, and roused him again to a consciousness of his own better self." (1) Very simply, but with a breaking heart, David said, "I have sinned against the Lord". (2) The prophet pronounced punishment that would come upon David. He should not himself be put to death, though both adultery and murder received that penalty at hand of the Hebrew law, but the child that Bath-sheba had borne to him was surely to die. But a far greater retribution followed David all his life. From that day his own house was the scene of horrible crimes, feuds, scandals and miseries of every kind, and the long interval after his repentance, between the birth of Solomon and David's death, is passed over in gloomy silence.

Although the prophet had said that Bath-sheba's child would die, David still had hopes that its life might be spared. He sought to save the child's life by continued fasting and earnest prayers, and with deep sorrow and contrition so continued through the week of the baby's sickness. David grieved so hard for the baby that attendants were afraid to tell him of its death. But to their astonishment when the child's death was announced David arose from the floor where he had been lying, washed and anointed himself, changed his apparel, went to the tabernacle and worshipped God, and

(1) Ewald, H., History of Israel, p. 167
(2) II Samuel 12:13
then broke his fast. With beautiful insight he said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Though God forgave him his heinous crime, yet it was the beginning of sorrow to David's house. The child he loved so passionately and whose death brought out the depth and tenderness of his parental feeling, was taken away from him. Then came the crime of Amnon and his murder by Absalom, and the exile of the latter from his home, as well we shall see in the following incidents.

The consequence of David's crime cropped out in the character and deeds of his own children. Amnon, his oldest son, was one of the pitiable products of the Oriental harem. He was ruled by the same uncontrollable passions that incriminated his father. Amnon's unprincipled cousin Jonadab, a very subtle man, was on hand to advise him how he could gratify his mad passion for his half sister Tamar, and full sister of Absalom. He did it by pretending he was sick, and when David visited him he asked David to send Tamar that she might give him some meat to eat and prepare it in his sight. David granted the request and Tamar went to his house. Then he carried out his plan that the cousin had instigated. He forced his sister in the gratification of his lust and then turned her from his home in shame. Amnon's brutality, even after the lapse of centuries, arouses the hot indignation of the reader. One's sympathy goes out to the desolate Tamar, and David's paternal weakness in neglecting his duty as a father stands clearly revealed. Many of the world's worst criminals are thus trained in a home where pure love is wanting,
or else where fond parents are too weak or selfish to teach an impartial justice, discipline and plain instruction, those vital lessons which must be learned if children are to resist successfully the inevitable temptations of life. (1)

David was very wroth, but did nothing in the way of punishing Amnon, probably because Amnon was the first born and heir to the throne. Since no action was taken, Absalom was left with a real grievance. Tamar was a full sister to Absalom. A revenge for a crime was taken up by the next closest kin according to Oriental custom, and perhaps Absalom's ambitions had much to do in strengthening his murderous purpose. The method which Absalom used was the same as his father's treacherous dealings with Uriah, and he proved himself a very apt pupil in the school of David and Joab. One writer tells us, "That this attractive but unscrupulous and ambitious man allowed two years to pass without showing that he bore any enmity to Amnon. When suspicion was thoroughly allayed, he invited the royal family to a feast on the occasion of the shearing of his sheep in Baal-Hazar. David himself refused to go, but at Absalom's special request he sent Amnon to represent him. When the feast was at its height Absalom's servants slew Amnon, and the rest of the king's sons fled. News was brought to David that the whole of the royal family had been put to the sword. The fact that the rumor obtained credit shows that Absalom's ambition was already known." (2) Fearing his father's wrath, Absalom took refuge with his maternal grandfather at Geshur where he remained three years. (3)

(1) Kent, Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 157-158
(2) Foakes-Jackson, F. J., Biblical History of the Hebrews, p. 177
(3) II Samuel 13
The court of David after Absalom's crime and flight became the scene of constant intrigues, of plots and counterplots. Joab, for reasons not recorded, thought it best that Absalom should return to Jerusalem. Evidently, at first Absalom had the secret approval of Joab, even though in later times he was unable to shake his loyalty to David. Absalom appealed to Joab, and the latter employed the services of a wise woman of Tekoa. The woman's pathetic story was how one of her sons had killed his brother and the family demanded justice. She begged the king to save her guilty son or she would be beheaded of both her sons. She won the promise of the king and freedom for her son, then reminded the king that their cases were very similar. Immediately David perceived that some one had sent the woman, and his suspicions fell upon Joab. "Absalom returned to Jerusalem, but was forbidden to approach his father. After two years he forced Joab to bring about a reconciliation by burning his fields of barley and David granted his son complete forgiveness." (1)

Although the revolt of Absalom, which so nearly ended in the overthrowing of David, is related in detail, it is not easily understood. David seemed by that time to have lost the vigor and resolution of his youth, his whole conduct being marked by feebleness in contrast to the energy and prudence displayed by him in the early days of his reign.

The Scripture gives the best explanation of Absalom's intrigue. It read, "Now later Absalom prepared a chariot and horses

(1) Foakes-Jackson, F. J., Biblical History of the Hebrews, p. 178
and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way which led to the gate, and every man, who had a suit to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to himself and say, Of what city are you? And when he replied, Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel Absalom said to him, Evidently your claims are good and right; but there is no man appointed by the king to hear you. Absalom said, moreover, O that someone would make me judge in the land, that to me might come every man who has any suit or cause, and I would give him justice! And whenever a man came near to do obeisance, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. And in this way Absalom did to all the Israelites who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." (1)

When Absalom had made his final preparations and the plot was ripe, he asked leave to go to Hebron to discharge a vow. At Hebron, the Judeans, who had never realized the removal of the Capitol to Jerusalem, saw opportunity of the return of their prestige and fell in with Absalom's plans. He had also sent spies into central and northern Israel to win a following and join the celebration as soon as Absalom was ready. Ahithophel, who perhaps had some deep cause for animosity against the king, was in command. Absalom was proclaimed King in Hebron, and without delay proceeded toward Jerusalem. (2)

The whole conspiracy against David was so well-planned, so surprising and so wide-spread, that he was forced to flee. David

(1) II Samuel 15:1-7
(2) Peritz, I. J., Old Testament History, p. 143
was accompanied by his court and protected by his faithful body-
guard. The priests Abiathar and Zadok accompanied, bearing the Ark.
But he bade them return it to the city, trusting his cause to Jehovah.
He also sent Hushai back that he might effect some plan and thereby
defeat the rebel. However, about this time the secret hate of the
house of Saul was discovered, and David learned through Ziba that the
man he had befriended, namely Meri-baal, had stayed in the Capitol,
hoping to profit by the rebellion and perhaps seize the throne.
Also a Benjaminite, Shimei, with bitter enmity in his heart for the
treatment of Saul's sons, pursued David, cursing and casting stones
at him.

Absalom took Jerusalem without opposition, and upon
the advice of Ahithophel, to show his absolute break with his father,
took public possession of David's harem. Now Ahithophel asked to
command twelve thousand men to pursue David and kill him. Had this
plan been effected immediately it is likely the rebellion would have
been a success, but the delay gave David time to strengthen his
forces. The delay was due to Hushai who played upon the fear and
vanity of Ahithophel. (1)

Upon his retreat after reaching Jordan, David found
himself among friends, the inhabitants of Gilead, who showed their
loyalty by bringing him provision. Also he found himself at the head
of an army commanded by three tried warriors, Joab, Abishai, and Ittai.
David wanted to command the forces in person, but his soldiers would
not permit him to risk his life. Finally, he consented to stay in

(1) Foakes-Jackson, C. J., Biblical History of the Hebrews, p. 180
Mahanaim with the reserves, but gave strict orders that Absalom was not to be injured.

Soon Absalom arrived with his army of undisciplined soldiers, commanded by Amasa, a kinsman of Joab. Absalom's army was no match for David's trained men, and they were forced to retreat into the wood of Ephraim. The Scriptures tell us that twenty thousand men were slain, "That the wood devoured more men that day than the sword devoured." (1) A few made their escape, one of whom was Absalom. In the flight which ensued Absalom's hair was caught in the branches of an oak and his mule ran from under him, leaving him suspended. In this defenceless condition and against the strictest order from the king, Joab killed him. The news of Absalom's death overbalanced the tidings of victory and left David heart-broken.

This passionate outburst of grief was due not only to the tenderness of affection, which was so striking a trait in David's character, but also to the bitterness of the thought that Absalom died in his sins, with no chance for repentance, and that this terrible catastrophe was the fruit and the punishment of his own crimes. The heart-broken cry, "Would God I had died for thee" (2) was not only the utterance of self-sacrificing love, but the confession that he himself deserved the punishment which fell upon another.

After the defeat of Absalom and David's partial recovery from the shock of his death, David sent Zadok and Abiathar to make arrangements for his return. He returned to triumph to Jerusalem

(1) II Samuel 18:8
(2) II Samuel 18:33
after rewarding those who had assisted him. But even now things did not look so good. The northern Israelites complained that the men of Judah had monopolized the kingdom. This developed until another revolt under Sheba, a Benjaminite, broke out. Amasa, in charge of the army in Joab's stead, was sent to suppress it, but Amasa was so dilatory that Abishai was dispatched to the same place. Joab, his brother, accompanied him, and when they approached Amasa Joab slew him as he did Abner. Joab then took command and drove Sheba into the city of Abel-Beth-Maachah. In order to prevent further trouble Sheba's head was thrown over the wall to Joab by the townsmen.

"Two further incidents in David's reign throw light upon his character and upon the current ideas about religion. The first was a famine which lasted three years, caused by a drought. David consulted the Oracle to find out why Jehovah was wroth, and the answer came that it was because of Saul's bloody house. The Israelites had taken no revenge for Saul's endeavor to kill the Gibeonites, contrary to the ancient treaty. (1) David accordingly took seven of Saul's descendants and allowed the Gibeonites to impale them as a sacrifice on their high place. With this gory sacrifice the Hebrews believed that Jehovah was appeased, for the October rains fell as usual." (2)

The second was a plague which came as a result of David's having taken a census of the people. The prophet, Gad, had propounded one of three things as a punishment. David repented and

(1) Joshua 9:15
(2) Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 116
chose three days of pestilence. This plague claimed the lives of seventy thousand men before it ceased. The Angel of the Lord was about to stretch his hand over Jerusalem and destroy it, when the Lord stayed the Angel’s hand and the city was saved. David, realizing what he had done, made intercession to God, who caused the plague in Israel to cease.

Now the great warrior king was at peace. The hairbreadth escapes of his flight from Saul; the miseries and bitterness of civil life; the wars with surrounding nations — all were past and over. David had been preserved through every danger; victory had accompanied his armies; he had been accepted as king of a united people; even Jehovah had promised a splendid future for his posterity. In this hour of his highest prosperity and happiness David composed the magnificent Hymn of Thanksgiving. (1)

At the age of seventy, David had grown old and feeble under the weight of his cares, troubles, and burdens, which had been very great. He had accomplished nearly all of his heart’s desires. In his last hours David gave Solomon some wise advice. He saw the possible dangers which threatened his young successor to the kingdom. He first urged him to keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments and his judgments, and his testimonies. (2) And then he bade him to execute justice on two criminals, Joab, his mighty general who had committed several murders, shedding the blood of war in peace and disobeying his king, and Shimei, who had cursed David in

(1) II Samuel Chapter 22
(2) I Kings 1:2-3
his flight from Absalom. This had been charged to David as a spirit of revenge in his dying hour. But not so. It was justice. It was to save life. It was to bring peace instead of civil war, which would surely have come and brought disastrous times if these criminals in high places and great power should be allowed to live. Thus ended David's life and reign.

The Death of David

David was seventy years of age when "he slept with his fathers". At that time certainly the period of human life was reduced to the present standard, for in recording his death at this age the historian says, "He died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honor." He was buried in a stately tomb, which, according to a touching custom still prevalent in the East, he had prepared for himself in that part of the city (on Mount Zion) which he had covered with buildings, and which was called after him, "the city of David". (1)

(1) Kitto, John, History of the Bible, p. 336
CHAPTER IV

Predominant Traits in the Character of David

In the many historical incidents of David's life and reign are to be found outstanding traits of character. It is the purpose of this chapter to list and discuss the traits more or less briefly and group them under certain heads. Not every writer would characterize David the same way. Some of the traits of character overlap, but there are a few predominant traits that may well serve as pegs upon which to hang many others. The qualities here discussed will necessarily cover his personal character and those traits discovered during his kingship.

1. Traits in the Personal Character of David

First, in Regard to his Personality:

The traditions concerning David agree that he was a very attractive person. He is introduced to us as a youth of a "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon." (1) His pleasing personality brought him success in gaining and holding the goodwill of others. There are incidents where this trait saved his life, as for instance on one occasion when the devoted fidelity of his friend Jonathan protected him from the hand of Saul, (2) and on another when the wifely courage of Michal aided him to escape the officers of Saul. (3) When he served Achish, king of Gath, he ingratiated himself so much with the

(1) I Samuel 16:12
(2) I Samuel 19:1-4
(3) I Samuel 19:12
king that despite appearances the king's confidence in him remained unshaken. As king, he maintained such a hold on Joab, rude and violent as the latter was, that he stood by David in every crisis. Even the mercenary soldier, Ittai, refused to leave David when his people revolted. One cannot help believing that David's crime in the Bath-sheba affair was intensified by the loyalty Uriah had for the person of his master. The acts and words of David recorded in Bible narratives help to account for the fascination he exercised over the minds of men.

Second, in regard to his Courage:

Doubtless the feature of his character which stood out most prominently in his earlier years, at any rate, was his boundless physical courage. There are no incidents where he shirked danger. He delighted in hairbreadth escapes. He was fond of gambling and liked to take risks. (1) A native indifference to the shedding of blood grew into a liking for it, a trait which lead to acts of extreme cruelty, such as the killing of all the males of the Edomites, killing two out of every three of the Joabites, and the taking of two hundred foreskins of the Philistines. (2) He, too, had need to be a brave man considering the type of men he ruled, yet he could rule them by gentleness as well as by force. All classes had the utmost confidence in his personal courage and soldierly qualities.

(1) I Samuel 18:25-27
(2) I Samuel 27:9, II Samuel 8:12, 16:7
Whether David possessed an equal degree of moral

courage is doubtful. If he had he would hardly have permitted the

execution of seven sons of Saul and that, too, at the cost of breaking

his plighted word. (1) He would not have stood in awe of his nephews,

sons of his sister Zerviah. He would have punished the rude and

violent Joab instead of weakly invoking an imprecation on his head. (2)

In many matters his natural sense of justice was blunted by the

superstitions of his day.

Third, in regard to his Affectionate Disposition:

The affectionate side of David's life called forth the

romantic aspect of his character. His lament over Jonathan well

expresses the intensity of their friendship. His passionate grief

over the sickness of Bath-sheba's child, and his sorrow at Absalom's

death show the deep tenderness in his nature. The fullest expression

of parental love and affliction are wrapped in the words of David

when he says, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son, Absalom! would God

I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (3) This same warm

and impulsive characteristic is displayed even in the story of his

sin. Although nothing can excuse David's crime, yet in the complete-

ness of his repentance is revealed the character of a tenderhearted

and generous man.

Fourth, in regard to his Chivalry:

David possessed what may be termed a chivalrous sense

(1) I Samuel 24:21
(2) I Samuel 24:29
(3) II Samuel 18:33
of honor. It gave an adventurous coloring to the early years of his life. Twice he spared the life of his enemy, Saul, both times taking proof that he could have slain him. On one occasion he cut off Saul's skirt, (1) and on another he took Saul's spear and cruse. (2) During the conversations between them David showed respect for Saul as the Anointed of Jehovah. In the distribution of the spoils of the Amalekites the same generous spirit was displayed, and the same chivalrous trait is shown in the graceful acknowledgment of the devotion of the men who risked their lives to bring David some water from the pool in Bethlehem for the gratification of his wish. He converted the water obtained at such a risk into a sacrifice to Jehovah more costly that the richest libation, calling it "the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives." (3)

Fifth, in regard to his Prudence:

From all indications David was more prudent than he was courageous. He is thus described to Saul. (4) Certainly he could not have had too much of prudence during the time he was in the court of Saul. It is displayed best in the fact that he made many friends and as few enemies as possible. He showed his foresight when he sent gifts to the Judean chiefs, gifts that were taken from his spoil, (5)

(1) I Samuel 24:4
(2) I Samuel 26:12
(3) II Samuel 23:16, 17
(4) I Samuel 16:18
(5) I Samuel 30: 26-31
when he commended the men of Jabesh-Gilead, (1) and in the reception of Abner. (2) Yet his constant looking into the future took away from the spontaneity of his virtue. Many times his gratitude was a keen sense of future favors. This seems to have been the case in his kindness to Merib-baal, (3) and also in his clemency to Shimei, which won for him the tribe of Benjamin. (4) He liked to obtain his ends by round-about ways. Perhaps nothing proves the genius of David better than the choice of Jerusalem as the Capitol of the country -- a choice which has endured after a lapse of 3000 years.

Sixth, in regard to his Hatred of Violence:

David was far ahead of his contemporaries in respect to law. His hatred of violent and lawless acts was apparent everywhere. In the story of the meeting with Abigail, David admired her for her prudence in saving him from yielding to the temptation to avenge Nabal's gross insults. He said, "Blessed be thy wisdom, and blessed by thou, which hast kept me this day from blood-guiltiness, and from avenging myself with mine own hand." (5) The same tendency is repeatedly manifested in his acts as king, and to this the belief of later ages that the rule of David was typical of a righteous government may doubtless be attributed.

Lastly, in regard to his Religion:

David was a devoted worshiper of the God of Israel.

(1) II Samuel 2:5-7
(2) II Samuel 3:20
(3) II Samuel Chapter 9; 19:24-30
(4) II Samuel 19:16-23
(5) I Samuel 25:33
He believed himself to be under the special protection of the God of Israel. For instance, he attacked the Philistines in the name of "The Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel." (1) The life of Saul was sacred in the eyes of David because he was "the Anointed of Jehovah". (2) He acknowledged that Jehovah sent Abigail to save him from blood-guiltiness. He strengthened himself in the Lord after the sacking of Ziklag. He was not ashamed to be known as a religious man, as evidenced by his dancing before the Ark on its way to the new Capitol. He acknowledged God as his staff, his rock, his fortress, his shield, his deliverer, and his friend, the One with whom he sought to commune, day or night, on the battlefield or in the palace. He believed, as he told Michal, that it was the Lord who chose him above her father, Saul. (3) He was moved to think of his living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remained in a tent. (4) When God offered him the choice of three evils for his sin in taking the census, David said, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great: and let us not fall into the hand of man". (5)

Although David was imbued with principles of true religion, it cannot be denied that he was not in some measure affected by the superstitions of his day. He felt that the famine would not cease until the anger of the Gibonites was appeased by the slaughter of Saul's sons, for Saul had committed a crime in violating the

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(1) I Samuel 17:45  
(2) I Samuel 24:10, 20:9  
(3) II Samuel 6:21  
(4) II Samuel 7:2  
(5) II Samuel 24:14
ancient treaty with Gibeon. From this incident we see the impossibility of judging David by a Christian or even a modern standard.

2. Traits in the Character of David as King. (1)

The Strategist:

Mention has already been made concerning David's foresight. When he became king of Israel he exercised the same power of being able to see and choose strategic positions. David was about thirty years old and very ambitious when he first took the responsibility as a vassal ruler at Hebron. The Philistines saw in David possibilities that, if developed, would be none too healthy for them. They would be able to tolerate him as a vassal, but for David to be king of United Israel literally spelled defeat for the Philistines. They hoped to curtail his power if possible, and proceeded to do so. David could do nothing but retire to his old stronghold of Adullam. (2) The Philistines broke through to the plain of Raphain, but David attacked them twice, the first time capturing their gods they had taken into battle, and the second time driving them out. David at once saw that the possession of a Capitol near the northern tribes would be an advantage. He necessarily wanted to avoid possible jealousies, so he chose an unconquered Israelitish city, the little fortress of Jerusalem (3) held by the Jebusites. David himself devised the method of capture by entering through the

(1) Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 102-110
(2) I Samuel 22:1
(3) II Samuel 5:6-10
water tunnel into the heart of the city. He captured it and renamed the city Davidsburg, and there built his royal residence. From this time the city of Jerusalem entered upon its career, one of the most significant cities of the world.

The Conqueror:

David desired peace for his people and knew that it lay only in the conquering of their foes. That, too, was Saul's policy, but he was unable to carry it out. Whereas Saul accomplished it only in part, David accomplished it in full. He did it first by capturing Gath, head of the Philistine league of cities; second, by capturing the whole army of Moab; third, by reducing the Ammonites to helplessness, even with the aid of the Arameans, who were routed, and took their capital, Rabbath. Then in rapid succession he broke the power of the Arameans, and finally Edom and their Bedowin neighbors, the Amalekites -- which completed the conquest. (1) He did not conquer the Phoenicians, but through friendship used the cunning workmen in his building program. Within a few years David had built up a little empire, and the Hebrews were on their way to world citizenship.

The Organizer:

From the beginning of his career David had shown unusual skill in organization. At Hebron he had established two orders of knighthood among his soldiers to inspire daring and loyalty.

(1) II Samuel 8:1-15
The lowest rank, called the "Order of the Thirty" (1) had as some of its outstanding members Abishai, Benaiah, the three mighty men who risked their lives to get David a drink, and Uriah, husband of Bath-sheba. The other, and most exalted company, was known as the "Order of the Three". (2) The members of this order were men of high distinction: first, Ishboal, second, Eleazar, and the last member, Shammah. It was David's military organization that formed the groundwork of his empire.

The Monarch:

David's success in war and in organization now caused him, in a measure, to forget his humble origin and the ideals of his people. Love of power grew with the exercise of power, and his wealth increased accordingly. Now he had become the Grand Monarch, and in this role he was also Chief Justice and Chief Priest. Jehoshaphat was appointed Prime Minister; Seraiah became his private secretary. He appointed two priests, Zadok and Ahimelech, to be in charge of the Ark, and another priest Ira as chaplin. (3) His labor head and overseer of the labor gang was Adoram.

Another indication of his growing ambition was the increase in his harem. At Hebron he had six wives. The number was increased to twenty or thirty during this period of prosperity. With such a leader to head the mighty empire there is no room to doubt the sincerity of the people in their belief that David was the greatest king Israel ever had had and their hope for another DAVID.

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(1) I Chronicles 11:15
(2) I Chronicles 11:20
(3) II Samuel 9:15-17
The Devotee:

One of the most far-reaching consequences of David's reign was his resolve to rescue the Sacred Ark from Philistine guardianship. This act was proof of David's loyalty and devotion to the God of Israel whose spirit had come to him in his earlier years. (1) The Ark was brought to the Capital with high ceremony, David himself leading the procession with music and dancing. David had no intention of making Jerusalem the center of all worship. There were already countless shrines of worship throughout the land which continued for hundreds of years. "That David wanted was to secure for himself the blessings that he felt sure would flow from his personal devotion to Jehovah, and he saw that this devotion to the nation's God would greatly increase the loyalty of all Israel to his dynasty. This act was the first of that long series which made Jerusalem the Holy City of the Jews, then of the Christians, then of the Moslems, the pivot about which so many of the wars and the great movements of history have turned." (2) From his youthful entrance into public life David had carried himself discreetly, and his public course had been a steady rise to a point of success and power that no Hebrew had heretofore attained. (3)

(1) I Samuel 16:13
(2) Bailey and Kent, History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 109
(3) Ibid., p. 110
SUMMARY

1. Review of the Sources (1)

I Samuel: Chapters XVI to XXXI

The adventures of David to the death of Saul — From his anointing by Samuel David becomes the leading character. He is sent to play to relieve Saul's melancholy, he slays Goliath, becomes the friend and companion in arms of Jonathan and the son-in-law of Saul. His fame as a warrior makes Saul jealous and David become a fugitive. His adventures in southern Judah, his hairbreadth escapes, his acts of generosity, and his rise from the position of an outlaw to that of the leader of a band of warriors under Philistine protection, are related with some detail. Finally Saul is defeated and killed with four of his sons on Mount Gilboa.

II Samuel:

The forty years' reign of David occupies this book, though a great part is devoted to several isolated instances. David prospers till his sin with Bathsheba, and then "the sword never departs from his house".

Chapters I to IV. The joint rule of David at Hebron and Ishboseth, son of Saul, at Mahanaim. Israel is divided into two kingdoms constantly at war, the larger part under Ishboseth and his able kinsman and general, Abner. David, assisted by Joab, increases in power, and Joab commences a blood-feud with Abner,

(1) Poake-Jackson, F. J., Biblical History of the Hebrews, p. xlv-xlv
who had killed his brother Asahel in battle. Abner renounces his allegiance to Ishbosheth and makes terms with David; but he is slain by Joab, Ishbosheth is murdered, and David is left the only king in Israel.

Chapters V to X. The prosperous period of the reign of David. David's first act as king of all Israel is to capture Jerusalem and to build a palace there with the aid of Hiram, King of Tyre. He conquers the Philistines and restores the Ark to Israel, placing it in his new Capital. He desires to build a temple, but is forbidden by Jehovah through the prophet Nathan. His wars are then recounted: Moab, Edom, Ammon, the Philistines and the Syrians are conquered and acknowledge him as suzerain. A chapter is devoted to the war with the Ammonites and their allies.

Chapters XI to XX. David's sin and its punishment -- During the Ammonite war David sees and loves Bath-sheba and procures her husband's death. As a punishment the sword is never to depart from his house, and the fulfillment of the prophecy is related at length. His favorite son Absalom murders his brother Amnon in revenge for his conduct to Tamar. Restored to favor, Absalom rebels against David and almost succeeds in dethroning him. He is in the end defeated and slain by Joab, who suppresses another rebellion led by the Benjamites, Sheba, the son of Bichri.

Chapters XXI to XXIV. Detached supplementary chapters -- The slaughter of Saul's sons to appease the injured Gibeonites is related, together with the exploits of some of David's
warriors in the Philistine war. Two poems of David follow this chapter, and next comes an enumeration of the chief champions of Israel. The book concludes with the numbering of the people and the purchase of the threshing floor of Araunah.

I Kings: The history of David is continued without any break, and we find him an aged man awaiting his death and prepared to nominate his successor.

Chapters I to II. The death of David and the accession of Solomon -- In David's extreme old age the succession became the subject of palace intrigue; Joab, the veteran commander of the army, and Abiathar the priest supporting Adonijah; and Benaiah, Nathan, and Zadok supporting Bath-sheba's son Solomon. Solomon is anointed king. David dies, and Solomon succeeds him as king of Israel.

I Chronicles: Chronicles is a revised history of Israel, written when the books of Samuel and Kings were, if not testually at least substantially, in their present form. All that seems unedifying, like the failings of David or Solomon, is omitted. Numerous works are quoted, but few references are cited. In this study we use only the last section of Book I, namely, Chapters XI to XXIX. This section gives the reign of David from his election to Hebron to his edifying end after the appointment of Solomon his successor. The materials of Chapters XI to XX are substantially the same as those recorded in the narratives of Samuel. Chapters XXI to XXIX are devoted to the preparation from the purchase of the threshing-floor of Araunah to the arrangement of the ministers of the sanctuary, and to David's discourses
Psalms: The important contribution of the Book of Psalms is its reflection of Davidic history. In the Psalms many incidents and life situations comparable to the time of David are portrayed so vividly as to make them seem to come from the hand of David himself. However, no careful student today makes David the author of even one psalm. The Psalms do throw considerable light on the inner life of David, and their value in this connection cannot be valued too highly. Many characteristic qualities are discernable in the Psalter, since the writers of the psalms had such a rich field of experience from which to draw. The Psalms are valuable, then, in the study of David's character, but contain no information that would link him with the founding of the Psalter.

There are but few references made directly to David in other parts of the Bible.

2. The Character of David:

In forming an estimate of David all the acts of his life must be taken into consideration, and no true picture can be obtained of him unless we are willing to recognize his human limitations. (1) David must be judged if we may, according to his own day. He cannot be judged by twentieth century methods, because he did

(1) Schmidt, Nat., New International Ency., p. 522
not live in the twentieth century. Therefore, to judge David aright it is necessary to take into account the circumstances of his life and of the age and country in which he lived. No character in all the Old Testament is as fully portrayed as that of David. Of no other person in all the Old Testament is so much recorded. In the books of Samuel not only his virtues but his failings and weaknesses are portrayed with astonishing fidelity. (1) With so much material it would appear easy to arrive at a just estimate of the great king's character.

The difficulty is that he has been so idealized by posterity that while feelings of reverence cause some to shrink from treating him historically, others, in order not to hold him up as a model for all ages, are prone to dwell upon the worst of his character.

"Fortunately, it is the object of the Sacred Record, as preserved in the books of Samuel, to give an idea of what manner of man David actually was. His faults are certainly not concealed, but it is not those which perplex the reader, but rather the difficulty of reconciling what the author or compiler considers to be David's virtues with modern standards of right and wrong." (2)

The character of David has been so naturally brought out in the incidents of his life that it is not necessary to describe them in detail. It is possible to group the outstanding merits, weaknesses, and contributions under four main heads. The first

(1) Kent, C. F., Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 180
(2) Foakes-Jackson, F. J., Biblical History of the Hebrews, p. 187
would naturally be his virtues: (1) He was brave: he fought with a lion and a bear; he faced Goliath unflinchingly; he was chivalrous; he led a band of mighty men and commanded their loyalty; his leadership in directing the destiny of the tribes of Israel shows his chivalrous character; he was magnanimous, as shown in the sparing of Saul’s life; he was patriotic, as seen in his loyalty to Israel even while he served as a Philistine vassal. (2) He genuinely loved his friends and was passionately loved by them: Jonathan loved him; Michal and the people loved him; his valiant soldiers risked their lives for him, and he was capable of returning their affection. (3) His tact, insight, excellent organizing ability, made him a successful king as well as an able leader. (4) He was ambitious for personal glory, and equally ambitious for his race and nation. (5) As a poet, patriot, warrior, and devoted worshipper of Jehovah he embodies the highest ideals of his age.

Secondly his faults: David’s faults are pictured as faithfully as his virtues. His faults were those peculiar to a versatile genius: (1) He had a lack of absolute truthfulness: lying to Achish may have been ascribed to warfare, but lying to Ahimelech cost the lives of eighty-five priests. (2) A failure to control his passions, shown in the Bath-sheba affair. David sinned grievously, and everyone should abhor his crime. And if he had continued unrepentant and repeated his sins he should be pilloried before all the ages. But this sin belonged to only one month or one year of David’s seventy years. No one can understand David, no God’s
dealings with him, who sees only his sin. (3) A selfish fondness for his children made him a weak father, as for example his refusing to punish Amnon for his insult upon Tamar, an act which brought worse grief and crime into his family. (4) His cruelty in warfare was marked against him: think of the two hundred foreskins with which David paid his dowry to Saul; think of the brutal killing of the Moabites, measuring them line upon line, and then killing two lines and leaving one; think of his killing off all of the males of the Edomites. Such cruelties were condemned two centuries later by the Hebrew prophet Amos (1:3-15) (5) Like many men of the world's history he developed rapidly and nobly in the face of hardship and opposition; he fell in the moment of prosperity and success. His life history is a tragedy because it failed to realize the purposes of his earlier years. These are some of the glaring faults which overshadow his virtues. (1) (footnote)

Thirdly, his religious qualities: (1) On no occasion did he undertake an important act without consulting a deity. (2) He acknowledged Jehovah as his God, and his dominant aim was to rule as Jehovah's representative. (3) It must not be forgotten that his conceptions of Jehovah and his obligations to him were those of his own age. (4) Again we see that his religion was conventional and superficial as over against the profound type. Even though religious, his zeal did not give him a very exalted idea of Jehovah, for he believed that Jehovah would kill a man for his attempt to steady the Ark, or that Jehovah would send a pestilence

(1) Kent, C. F., Founders and Rulers of United Israel, p. 180
to kill thousands of men because a king had taken a census, or that God would send a famine because Saul had slain the Gibeonites. (1) Our conclusion then must be that although David was a giant warrior, he was only a child in morals and religion.

Lastly, his work: It is hardly possible to overestimate what he did for the Hebrews. David's work was built well on the foundation Saul had laid. David was the founder of a National Monarchy. He found it small and left it finely organized as an empire. He freed the Hebrews from subjection to their enemies. He established a capital, organized the state and extended its boundaries to its extreme limits. He sustained his reputation as being a "mighty man of valor and a man of war". He found religion at a low ebb, and left it earnest, active, organized for work. But there was one great work on which he had set his heart which he could not accomplish, and that was the rearing of a temple worthy of the religion of the true God, which should hold up the name of the true God before the nations, and make permanent in his own nation the principles and teachings of the divine religion.

3. David's Contribution:

The historical importance of David cannot be rated too highly, as even those critics must admit who belittle his personal merits by ascribing his success to a series of extraordinary circumstances. We must remember that there are very few men in the world's history who have achieved as much as David. The molding

(1) Peritz, I. J., History of the Old Testament, p. 147
of Israel into a nation is exclusively David's work. Saul, before him, had earnestly endeavored to give political unity to Israel but had been unequal to the task. With the death of Saul everything was lost, and the condition of the people as hopeless as ever. David, in whom prudence and courage were happily combined, and who was as careful and cautious in the preparation of his plans as he was daring and energetic in their execution, followed up his success with a definite end in view and did not rest until he had reached his goal. David had a powerful influence over the people of his day, and that influence is still felt. David not only made Israel a nation, but elevated it to a pinnacle of glory. Israel itself had felt this, and therefore the return of a David has become the dream of its future and the object of its most ardent hopes.

The life and character of David makes its contribution for today as well. His life as the narrative gives it cannot be used as a model for this or future generations, yet the fine character traits of the man will forever be a challenge to mankind.


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