8-1967

Israel: A Dividing Nation

James C. McCommas Jr.
Ouachita Baptist University

Recommended Citation

ISRAEL: A DIVIDING NATION

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of the Graduate School

Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

James C. McCommas, Jr.

August 1967

ISRAEL: A DIVIDING NATION

by

James C. McCommas, Jr.

APPROVED:

Major Professor

Dean of the Graduate School

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United Monarchy of Israel divided into two independent states, Israel and Judah, when Rehoboam was acclaimed king after Solomon's death (922).[1] Widespread disagreement exists among Old Testament scholars about _when_ the separation occurred and multifarious divergence of opinion also exists about _why_ it happened.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors, major and minor, which led to the division of Israel. Such scholars as Bright,[2] Orlinsky,[3] and Rowley[4] feel that the split occurred because Rehoboam (Solomon's son) was weak, refused to ease the burdens placed on the people by his father and failed to accept advice from

---

[1]For the date of the division, which is variously placed, this study uses the chronology of W. F. Albright found in the _Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research_, (1945), pp. 16-22.

[2]John Bright, _A History of Israel_ (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1959), pp. 210-11.

[3]Harry M. Orlinsky, _Ancient Israel_ (New York: Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 88.

[4]H. H. Rowley, _The Faith of Israel_ (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1961), p. 107.

his wisest counselors. Other writers ignore Rehoboam in discussing causes for the separation. They place the blame on Solomon for slavery, heavy taxation, civil strife and heavy costs of governmental luxury.[5] At least one man, Robinson, stresses that there never had been a united kingdom.[6] Disagreements, these and others, point to the complexity of the problem.

To state and support with research all of the theories concerning the splitting of the kingdom is impossible. The major reason for the impossibility is that the Old Testament itself is not presented as continuous, unfragmented history. Several of the events in Israel's history important to this study are presented in an equivocal or ambivalent way by the writers of the Biblical text. For example, there is this kind of problem in the selection of Saul by Samuel (I Samuel 9:1-10, 16; I Samuel 10:17-27; and, I Samuel 11).[7] As far as this study is concerned, another example--perhaps more important--is the problem arising in connection with the two-covenant theory. Scholars believe that Judah had one covenant and that

---

[5]Louis Finkelstein (ed.), The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 28.

[6]H. Wheeler Robinson, The History of Israel: Its Facts and Factors (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, 1938), p. 73.

[7]Murray Lee Newman, Jr., The People of the Covenant (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 128-29.

Israel had another.[8] The study becomes even more intricate
in that reasons for the kingdom's dividing have bases in such
things as religious beliefs, personalities of the kings,
military struggles, social conditions, jealousies, sins, and
in Yahweh's reaction to each.

Importance of the study. The initiation of interest
which led to this study came as a result of extensive reading
for an Old Testament seminar. It was noticed that not many
writers explore much beyond the fact that Israel became op-
pressed and divided. Few writers show elaborate motives be-
hind the division. Almost every source examined settled on
some rather vague generalization, or on a limited number of
time-honored reasons for the split. As an effort to under-
stand more exactly this important fact in Old Testament histo-
ry, this study takes shape. The presupposition is that the
study is significant in its own right, but it is also hoped
that it will assist in New Testament interpretation which
often refers back to this happening in Israel's early history.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Israel. Throughout this study the term "Israel" will
designate both a race and a nation. The people were called

---

[8]Ibid., pp. 149-51.

by God to serve his purposes. However, people--just people--could not accomplish God's purpose without being united. A nation had to be formed.[9]

Hebrew. The term "Hebrew" is used to designate any Israelite following the worship of Yahweh. This includes the people of Israel before the division, people of the Northern Kingdom Israel after the division and people of the Southern Kingdom Judah. The term "Jew" did not appear until the start of Judaism during the intertestamental period.[10]

Division. This term refers to the toppling of a one-king monarchy and the setting up of separate kings for Israel and Judah. In a sense, even during the one-king monarchy, Israel was already geographically divided; therefore, the term "division" needs to be used in this narrow sense.[11]

Charisma. The term "charisma" is given to people who possess outstanding qualities of leadership, such as military heroes and men of great wisdom.[12] This term also denotes

---

[9]E. A. Speiser, "'People' and 'Nation' of Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXIX (June, 1960), 157-63.

[10]Bright, op. cit., p. 323.

[11]Robinson, loc. cit.

[12]Norman K. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), p. 541.

their having special spiritual power--in the case of Biblical characters--coming from God. Examples are prophets, judges; and, in reference to this study, kings.

Amphictyony. A tribal confederacy somewhat like the tribal federations found in ancient Greece, where sometimes six and sometimes twelve tribes were loosely bound together on the basis of a common religious obligation.[13] In this study the twelve tribes are an amphictyony grouped together by virtue of their worship of Yahweh as protection against foreign influences.

Judah. As used in this study, "Judah" refers to the two tribes composing the southern part of the kingdom. These tribes are Judah and Simeon.

Yahweh. The term is a distinctive name for the God of Israel. It is translated "Lord" in the RSV and "Jehovah" in ERV and ASV. The term originated with the J writer.[14]

III. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is delimited primarily to the span of years between 1050-922 B.C. However, since the kingdom did not

---

[13]Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall., 1957), p. 88.

[14]Gottwald, op. cit., p. 551.

just divide overnight, an historical background before 1050 B.C. has to be considered since that period contains data pertinent to the problem under study.

All references to the Bible, unless otherwise shown, are to the King James Version. This version is used because key sources consulted in research materials quoted this text.

The historical method of interpretation is used to develop this study. Rudolf Kittel, among other Old Testament scholars, questions the value of historical criticism as a method of research.[15] However, as Chesnut inquires:

> If the present loss of confidence in historical method as a means for studying religious literature is as general as some writers suppose, and if the grave doubts about the adequacy of that method are either justified or are, at least actually in vogue, what is being offered as a substitute?[16]

The presupposition here is that an historical understanding of the Old Testament facts is basic and important.[17]

No attempt is made to carry this study beyond the dividing of the kingdom. To interpret extensively the significance of the division in the continuing history of the Hebrew people would make another complicated topic for research.

[15]James Muilenburg, "Old Testament Scholarship: Fifty Years in Retrospect," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXVIII (April, 1960), 175.

[16]J. Stanley Chesnut, "Problems in Teaching the Old Testament," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXVII (April, 1959), 284.

[17]Ibid.

All research data used are limited to those available in English. Hebrew and German sources are important for more scholarly studies, but for this one abundant works in English are available. Fortunately, many of the very best foreign sources have been translated.

IV. THE SOURCE AND TREATMENT OF DATA

The source of data. The material investigated includes books, periodicals, journals, indices, encyclopedias, and Biblical encyclopedias available in Riley Library at Ouachita Baptist University, or through this library's inter-library loan service. Periodical and journal indices have been searched, as far back as this library's files permit.

Treatment of data. Chapter I is the "Introduction"; Chapter II deals with "Diversity Before Division"; Chapter III is about "Unity Before Division"; Chapter IV is "David's Paradoxical Kingdom"; Chapter V is "Solomon's Grand, but Discontent, Monarchy"; and Chapter VI, the conclusion, is "And Then There Were Two Kingdoms." As stated in the delimitation section, the historical method is used in the presentation of research data.

CHAPTER II

DIVERSITY BEFORE DIVISION

The beginning of the people called "Israel" was with a Shemite group which probably originated near the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. These people migrated north to a crescent between Arphaxad and the plains of Haran. Abraham, considered the first Hebrew,[1] answered the call of God and started out on his mission. He arrived in the land of Canaan as a "stranger and sojourner" (Genesis 23:4) there. His being this pointed out that he and his people were aloof, or separate, from the world into which they went.[2]

Israel as a nationality came prior to Israel as a kingdom. The beginning of Israel as a nationality was at Sinai where a loose form of eldership was established. At that time, the type of leadership was sufficient to handle most problems, both during peace and war. The real bond that held the people together, both politically and religiously, was the covenant they had with Yahweh.

----

[1] Norman K. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), p. 85.

[2] W. J. Pythian-Adams, "Shadow and Substance: The Meaning of Sacred History," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, I (October, 1947), 420.

[3] "Kingship in Israel," Samuel Macauley Jackson, editor New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, VI, 341.

According to Freedman, the Bible shows two distinct types of covenants. He calls the first a covenant of human obligation. In it, God imposes terms on his people. In the other type, which Freedman calls the covenant of divine commitment, God imposes certain terms on himself. In both types of covenant relationship, God and the people are understood to be unequal with each other. Since God is vastly superior, the initiative for the covenant rests with him. The covenant relationship, understood in this two-fold sense, set the Israelite apart, i.e. made him a unique or peculiar person-- different from the pagan.[4]

The covenant of human obligation is illustrated in the relationship which the Israelites formed with God at Mount Sinai/Horeb (Exodus 19-20). Renewals were essential to this type of covenant. Such renewals occurred on the plain of Moab, at Shechem, and in the times of Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

God's promise to Abraham, found in Genesis 15, is the main example of the divine-commitment type of covenant; however, other examples of it are made to Isaac and Jacob, to the Fathers, to Noah, to Phinehas the high priest, and to the royal house of David.

---

[4]David Noel Freedman, "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: The Covenant Theme," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, XVIII (October, 1964), 420.

Freedman stresses that the nation itself was destroyed because the people of Israel failed to honor their human obligations within the covenant terms. Despite their constant violation of their covenant with Yahweh, and even after the fall of their nation (which came mainly as a result of their breaking their vow to Yahweh in the covenant relationship), the nation still felt that God would honor the divine-commitment covenant that he had made with them (II Samuel 23:5).[5]

The two covenants had one thing in common: they existed for a theocratic-centered nation. In such a nation all authority remained with God who made his will known through prophecy. In the theocratic organization the thing that was emphasized was that there God was king. No earthly king was needed.[6]

From the time when God called Abraham and began Israel as a nation, the Hebrews--as a uniquely-selected people--were to be God's people. As such, they were to be dedicated to serving him by a new and devoted way of life. As a people set apart, they were to be the people through whom God would work his continuous plan into history (Exodus 33:16-17). If,

---

[5]Ibid., p. 421.

[6]"Kingship in Israel," op. cit., p. 341; and, George Barton, The Religion of Ancient Israel (New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1961), pp. 67-68.

as he intended, they would be a theocratic nationality governed solely by him, they would fulfil their purpose. If, on the other hand, they failed their calling as a nation it would be accounted for by their failure to recognize him as their king.[7]

Not all who entered Canaan as Israelites were the direct descendents of Abraham.[8] Neither were those individuals, of indeterminate origins, who had been absorbed (some as converts) during the wanderings in the wilderness fully aware of the covenant relationship which the nucleus of this nation had established with God. Even in the taking of Canaan, not all of the "natives" were killed. Many who fought against Israel's entry eventually became part of Israel. Those peoples, like those picked up in the desert, posed a problem later. Although they joined with the dedicated core of the nation, both politically and religiously, their pagan notions remained to make the entire nation weaker and more vulnerable to corrupting influences.[9]

---

[7]John Murdoch MacInnis, "The Fulfillment of Promise," The Biblical Review, XV (January, 1930), 63.

[8]John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1959), pp. 121-22.

[9]John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), p. 25.

Moses, in the covenant relationship with God, had been given laws for regulating both the religious and civil life of the nation. Along with these laws, God also gave the Israelites a specific task at Sinai; they were to conquer the land of Canaan. Added to this assignment was a promise on God's part that he would be with them in their holy war of aggression against Canaan (Deuteronomy 11:31-12:32 and 20:1-4).[10] He made the promise of his presence among them concrete and visual by giving them the Ark of the Covenant to symbolize that presence. Israel, at that time, was eager to prove her gratitude to God and to demonstrate her faithfulness in living the covenant way of life. This enthusiasm died later when she repeatedly failed to meet her part of the bargain with God. She failed to fulfill the covenant obligation both because of the foreigners she absorbed as she came into Canaan and because, as she conquered, she set up a tribal organization.

At this time in Israel's history, there was no form of central government. The tribes met at Shechem and sealed a pact of unity based on a common religion. The structure of this unity was similar to that established by Greek cities

---

[10]William Hendriksen, Bible Survey (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), p. 95.

and called amphictyonies, where the sanctuary was the unity of the organizational structure. In the tribal organization, individual tribes were conscious of a bond with the other tribes only because of a central worship and a common name, Israel.[11]

Concurrent with the twelve-tribe division was a six-tribe amphictyony which operated in southern Palestine. Newman gives a detailed and extended description of the amphictyony:

> Although Judah and Simeon were members of the twelve-tribe amphictyony centering at Shechem, it seems likely that at the same time they were also part of a six-tribe amphictyony which was organized at Hebron in this period. This confederation was comprised of Judah and Simeon (also members of the twelve-tribe amphictyony), as well as Caleb, Othniel, Kenites (Cain), and Jerahmeel. The fact that the twelve-tribe amphictyony was rather loosely organized and left the individual tribes a great deal of freedom would explain why this smaller amphictyony could exist along with the larger one. The continuing existence of this six-tribe confederation with its special theological and cultic concerns would also seem to explain why Judah always appears only partially committed to the larger group.[12]

The Israel of the early days in Palestine can in no way be compared with any other nation.[13] While in the wilder-

---

[11]Roland DeVaux, _Ancient Israel_, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), pp. 92-93.

[12]Murray Newman, Jr., _The People of the Covenant_ (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 111-112.

[13]John Bright, _The Kingdom of God_, _op. cit._, pp. 31-32.

14

ness, only enough unity was maintained to give adequate mo-
bility and to provide safety for the group. Once in the
promised land and settled down to a life within the tribal
organizations, her principal bond of unity centered in her
common worship. The unity or central authority of the wilder-
ness days gave way to a different type of unity within the
tribe; however, both were based on the religious practices
held in common by the people. Blood ties created an added
solidarity within tribes. The honor or dishonor of any group
or family within a tribe affected the entire tribe. A family,
or tribe, was honored or dishonored by the acting of its
head.[14]

Religious impurities flowed into each of the tribes.
As in the wilderness period, people were added to Israel when
the Hebrews began to marry the natives of Canaan. With the
"new blood" came diverse religious backgrounds and practices
which at first disrupted religious unity, but which after a
while merged with Yahweh worship. Often the amalgamation was
subtle and hardly detectable--even the Hebrews themselves
could not tell the difference between what once had been and
what now was their Yahweh worship. Not only did this blend-
ing with outsiders cause modification of their worship, but

[14]DeVaux, op. cit. pp. 4-12.

it also caused their social customs and political ideas to change. Here too, the change was so succinct that the "purer" stock of the people did not consider that the modification was, in any sense, dangerous. The people were weakened because they were basically insensitive. This identification with the foreign element--whether by taking converts, subduing a subjugated people by absorbing them into one's own group, or intermarriage--may account for the loss of physical courage which later subjected the tribes to foes like the Midianites, Amalekites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines (Judges 3).[15] Relief from these enemies was brought about by a few strong, inspired heroes who aroused the people to resist their enemies, or more specifically to resist any enemy of God.[16]

The heroes who served as the dedicated ones, acting in the interest of Yahweh and interpreting his will for a people nearly too weak to ward off their enemies, were the judges. Unlike kings (later), who passed on their office from father to son, each new judge was selected by God and endowed with God's spirit (Judges 3:10 and 14:6).[17] Under the direction

---

[15]"The History of Israel," Samuel Macauley Jackson, editor New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, VI, 51.

[16]John Bright, The Kingdom of God, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

[17]Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 105.

of these men of courage and strength, armies were rallied
from the tribes and enemies of the moment were dealt with.
Judges gained tremendous prestige from war victories, but
were not in any sense accorded the role of king of the peo-
ple.[18] Almost always, along with the task of defeating an
enemy, the judge was to call the people back to trust and
obedience to the God of Moses and Joshua.[19]

It was during the period of the judges that Gideon
was offered the role of king, just after he had led in the
defeat of one of Israel's enemies. The people said to Gideon,
"Rule over us, you and your grandson also; for you have de-
livered us out of the hand of Midian." Gideon, however, de-
clined the appeal. His answer was, "I will not rule over you,
and my son will not rule over you; Yahweh will rule over you."
(Judges 8:22-23). Gideon remembered the theocratic responsi-
bility of Israel.[20] The events which followed, however,
proved that a man cannot always speak for his son even if he
can speak for himself. Abimeleck, Gideon's son, asserted him-
self king at Shechem for a period of three years after his
father's death. Some woman dropped a rock on Abimeleck's head

---

[18]John Bright, The Kingdom of God, loc. cit.

[19]"The History of Israel," New Schaff-Herzog Religious
Encyclopedia, loc. cit.

[20]Newman, op. cit. pp. 127-28.

as he approached a fortified city, and thus ended Israel's
only active attempt to establish herself a king during the
period of the judges (Judges 9).[21] Concerning the idea of
appointing judges, Albright says that Samuel attempted to
establish a succession of judges through his sons, but that
his attempt failed. The people still were interested only
in charismatic leadership, and this only during periods of
crisis.[22]

During the period of the last judge, Samuel, the
threat from the Philistines grew greater and greater (I Sam-
uel 4). The decisive blow from this enemy came around 1050
B.C. At that time, the Philistines had complete victory over
Israel. The ark was captured, Hophni and Phinehas--priests
of the ark--were killed, Shiloh was left in ruins, and Israel's
military forces were defeated and scattered. Spiritually and
also physically, Israel was completely humiliated. Charisma
had failed and the people of Yahweh were crushed.[23] The bond
that had united the tribes of Israel was broken, because the

[21]Samuel J. Shultz, The Old Testament Speaks (New York:
Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 109.

[22]William Foxwell Albright, The Biblical Period from
Abraham to Ezra (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1949),
p. 47.

[23]John Bright, The Kingdom of God, op. cit., pp. 33-
34.

religious shrine was gone. The Philistines had triumphed so thoroughly in overcoming Israel that it looked as if Israel's national identity was exterminated forever.[24]

Because they feared that they would become slaves, as a subjugated nationality, the Israelitish people sought for any way out of their trouble. They saw other nations with kings and observed that these nations grew in wealth and military might. Perhaps an earthly king would be the answer to their trouble. At first the people, or some of them, thought that Samuel would make them a good, earthly king. However, Samuel was old, and his sons were not obedient to God. The people, therefore, went to Samuel and asked him to select and anoint them a king so that they could be like other nations around them (I Samuel 8:5). That she was not intended to be like them, but was to remain different, Israel forgot in this time of loss of pride. Beek believes that it must have been her pride, as much as any other factor, that caused Israel to want a king.[25] Another thing which may have caused the people to ask for this type of political structure was that they were relaxing their covenant bond with Yahweh. They found themselves too dispirited to honor the human-responsibility condition of the covenant.

---

[24]F. F. Bruce, Israel and the Nations (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 22-23.

[25]M. A. Beek, Concise History of Israel (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957), pp. 62-63.

At their request for a king, Samuel, at first, discouraged the people by trying to point out that kingship was a Canaanite institution rather than an Israelitish one, sanctioned by God. Samuel finally acquiesced but only did so after Yahweh's own divine intervention in support of the request of the people (I Samuel 8).[26] Samuel was assured, after a while, that it really was God's will to anoint a king over Israel. He gave in to the peoples' rejection of their theocracy (as God also had "given in" in the sense that, before he would violate their right of individual freedom to make choices for themselves, he let them have an earthly king). This is an excellent proof of his unwillingness to violate man's freedom, even when he knew man's use of it would not be best. Afterwards, when Samuel had God's approval, he sought out a man to be Israel's first king.[27]

---

[26]Shultz, op. cit., pp. 121-22.

[27]Charles F. Pfeiffer, Ancient Israel: From Patriarchal to Roman Times (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), pp. 29-31.

CHAPTER III

UNITY BEFORE DIVISION

The scriptures give three different accounts of the selection of Saul as the first king of Israel.[1] Probably the latest account is found in I Samuel 10:17-27. In this story all of the people of Israel were called to Mizpah where Samuel conducted a lot to select Saul. This account goes along with the story found in I Samuel 8 and 12, where Yahweh permitted the kingship, at the people's insistence, but where the scriptures also give a strong impression that he preferred that Israel maintain the theocratic-covenant relationship (without an earthly king), as described in Chapter II of this paper. That there was theological opposition to the kingship is further attested to by the fact that Samuel was so reluctant to anoint a king.[2]

One of the most popular accounts of Saul's selection by Samuel is the one found in I Samuel 9:1-10 and 9:16. Here is the story of a young man's search for some asses that his father had lost. Saul and one of his father's servants traveled far (probably on foot) looking for the animals, but

_____

[1]John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1959), pp. 166-67.

[2]Murray Lee Newman, Jr., The People of the Covenant (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 128.

they did not find them. Saul was just about ready to go back home without them when the servant with him proposed that since they were now at Ramah--near Samuel's home, they might ask him what had happened to the asses. One commentary on Saul's seeking Samuel as seer says that "He came to him as a fortuneteller, rather than as a prophet."[3] This fact may be more interesting than accurate; however, irrespective of the reason Saul went to Samuel, he did go; and, when he went, Samuel anointed Saul as "prince" over the people of Israel. In this particular account Samuel seems happy to anoint Saul because he feels that such a move was the will of God and that Yahweh selected this particular man for king.[4]

A third account of Saul's becoming king is found in I Samuel 11, and many scholars believe that this account is probably the most authentic.[5] This story is slanted to throw a rather dramatic emphasis on Saul as the charismatic leader of the people, who, after he defeated the Ammonites, gained the love and respect of all Israel. This account also stresses the fact that it was because Saul was a man filled with the spirit of Yahweh that he could defeat the enemy.

---

[3]Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 294.

[4]Newman, loc. cit.

[5]Newman, op. cit., pp. 132-33.

Here, in the crowd's view, was a man on whom Yahweh had smiled by giving him a military victory; therefore, here was a man fit to be king. The crowd almost pushed Saul to Gilgal to make him king before Yahweh (I Samuel 11:15).[6]

About the only conclusion that can be drawn from three accounts with such differing emphases is that Samuel did have some part in the selecting and anointing of Saul. The thing that is really difficult to tell from the three accounts is what Samuel's personal attitude toward this move was.[7] It is fairly certain that Samuel, like so many of the people, did see some need for a king--or for someone more immanently connected with the nation than the rather trans- cendent one, God, whom the people worshipped.[8] Whether he did or not, the threat of the Philistines, the plea of the people, the charismatic ability of Saul, and perhaps the approval of Yahweh, all worked together to the end that Samuel anointed Saul as prince of Israel. Gottwald makes it clear that Saul was really, by function, more nearly the last judge than the first king of Israel. He also diminishes Saul's role by pointing out that the setting up of Saul was

---

[6]Newman, op. cit., p. 128.

[7]Newman, op. cit., pp. 132-33.

[8]Charles F. Pfeiffer, Ancient Israel: From Patriar- chal to Roman Times (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), pp. 29-31.

an emergency measure which very well might be reconsidered when the emergency ended.[9]

Scholars, several of them--including Albright[10] and Newman,[11] make a strong point of the fact that nagid, the word used to show Saul's newly anointed role, means "leader" or "prince" and is not the word melek which is the one trans-lated as "king." These men belong to a large group of Old Testament interpreters who look on Saul's mission as one geared to the transitional period between the charismatic leaders and the kings, with no descriptive title to ade-quately designate that role.[12]

Although the confused opinions stated exist concern-ing whether Israel needed a king, and more conjectures exist concerning whether Samuel did or did not like her having one, the facts are (1) that she got Saul, a man who has tradition-ally been called her first king; and, (2) that given the con-dition of the nation at the time he was anointed, he was cer-tainly a logical--perhaps fortunate--choice. It was fortu-nate in at least one sense: Saul's tribe, Benjamin, was a

---

[9]Norman K. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), p. 184.

[10]W. F. Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 48.

[11]Newman, op. cit., pp. 128-33.

[12]Bright, op. cit., p. 169.

small tribe and was centrally located with respect to the other tribes. His coming from a rather insignificant tribe meant that the two most powerfully competitive tribes-- Ephraim (in the north) and Judah (in the south)--did not come to a split over the selection. Since this was a time when the federation of tribes was passing and when Israel was becoming unified even more than in the past, the transformation to the monarchial type of government achieved a real implementing in Saul's being selected.[13]

Just as there are many reservations to calling Saul the first "king" of Israel because of the anointed role he filled, there are some people who do not want to call him king because, they claim, he did not know how to be a king. These people (Gottwald, Bright, Anderson, and Albright) say that he did not even try to fill that office. He was, rather, a charismatic leader whose major and, perhaps, sole responsibility was to lead the war against the Philistines. As military leader he carried a kind of honorary kingly title, probably because nations around the Israelites had "kings" who waged wars.[14] Though Saul was king in name, he was still not to be like other kings of the nations around Israel, as the following quote shows:

---

[13]Pfeiffer, loc. cit.

[14]John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), pp. 34-35.

The position of the king was from the first not that of an Oriental despot with unlimited power. The law of the kingdom was naturally not a mere embodiment of popular law and custom, but arose out of the religious situation of the Hebrews. The king was to be an Israelite, was not to multiply wives or wealth or horses (as evidence of his own glory). Further he was to regard the torah, written and prophetic, as his guide. In war he was the leader, and in peace the chief authority in justice. As judge he was to be humble in mind, giving access to those who sought his relief; his responsibility to Yahweh was urged by the prophets. As Yahweh had made free choice of the king, so he might reject and displace him. The succession was hereditary, but the power of appointment of a successor was in the reigning king, with the mothers of the various princes exercising influence behind the throne. Often the succession was otherwise determined-- by the nobility, the priesthood, and indeed the people.[15]

Since Israel was beset with enemies, Saul's duties were the war duties of calling up an army. The tribes were eager to give him this authority against the Philistines. How many of the other privileges of the title they had in mind to give him is uncertain. Also, it is not known for what duration of time he was appointed--perhaps just until the military threat was put down, or maybe for life. That this particular kingship was conceived of as a dynasty situation where son would follow father in unlikely.[16] Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, did reign in Mahauaim for a short period; however, it is almost certain that he reigned because strong

---

[15]"Kingship in Israel," Samuel Macauley Jackson, editor New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, VI, 341.

[16]Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1946), p. 126.

man Abner, by pure might, made and kept him king (II Samuel
2:8-9). There is no indication that God, Samuel, or the
people put him into office.[17]

Saul, although king, made as few changes in the exist-
ing order as possible. He did not alter internal Israel, nor
did he make an attempt to create a state. Had he been inter-
ested in building an empire to preside over, he would have
created administrative machinery, levied taxes, and built an
elaborate court. He did not effect one such change. About
all he did was to gather a small bodyguard of soldiers,
appoint one general, and select one armour-bearer. These
actions were the extent of his kingly acts.[18] It is possi-
ble that Saul still looked on God as king of the people in
actual fact and himself as sort of a military right hand for
God.[19] If this were true, then new rules and regulations he
could have put into effect would have been deemed unwise.
Albright's description of Saul's kingdom as one of rustic
simplicity, claiming only a small standing army as its
uniqueness, is probably the most accurate picture of the
reign of Saul.[20]

---

[17]Newman, op. cit., pp. 133-34.

[18]Bright, The Kingdom of God, loc. cit.

[19]Jackson, op. cit., pp. 341-42.

[20]Albright, op. cit., p. 50.

Saul, as king, had problems in abundance. These can be studied under the headings of "theological" problems and "personal" problems. About the best way to understand his theological problems is to begin by closely looking at his relationship with Samuel (God's spokesman) with regard to three incidents. His personal problems, on the other hand, are probably most vividly seen as he related himself to David.

Because they are harder to interpret, and because they certainly had more relevance in the overall picture of Saul as king, his relationship to Samuel will be examined first. Of significance here is Saul's attempt to gain control of the priesthood by moving the Elides to Nob (I Samuel 21 and 22). (Ironically, Saul later had all of them killed for being loyal to David rather than to him). Samuel, although he may or may not have liked the idea of having a king, felt that if there was to be one the rulership of Israel should be dual. He should continue to control the people's religious life: Saul should be limited to controlling their civic life. He considered Saul's moving the priesthood to Nob a violation of this understanding.[21]

In a second intrusion on Samuel's rights, Saul himself offered a sacrifice rather than waiting until Samuel came to

---

[21]Ibid., pp. 49-50.

do it (I Samuel 13:8-10). Third, and perhaps most important,
Samuel felt that Saul had broken the law relating to cherem
during a battle with the Amalekites.[22] He broke the rules
by deciding, on his own, to spare Agag (I Samuel 15:9-11).
This was counter to the instruction he had received from Yah-
weh via Samuel. A permanent split in the Saul-Samuel relation-
ship existed after this third violation. As a result, Samuel
turned against Saul and said that Yahweh also rejected him
(I Samuel 16:14).[23]

Saul's religious problems were a constant source of
worry for him and a continuing determent to his success as
ruler of Israel. His "church-state" controversy may have
come about because, as has been suggested, Saul wanted to be
head of both areas of operation. If he had such a desire,
Yahweh's covenant had been violated. The covenant had said
that God himself would be the king of the people.

At this point, it would be satisfying to know what
Saul's personal religious convictions actually were and what
his intention was regarding the theocratic, covenant rela-
tionship with Yahweh. Scholars do not agree. In fact, eval-
uations of Saul's concept of God vary more than any other

---

[22]Pinchas Woolman-Tsamir (ed.), The Graphic History of
the Jewish Heritage (New York: Shengold Publishers, Inc.,
1963), p. 129.

[23]Newman, op. cit., pp. 134-35.

point in Sauline scholarship. Concerning his concept, Anderson says that Saul believed that God led battles and that they were won or lost, depending on God's pleasure with the winner or his displeasure against the loser.[24] Milman says that Saul was a deeply religious man who tried to serve Yahweh by depending upon him. The fact has to be recognized, however, that Saul's frustrations often caused him to be capricious and vacillating--at one time so devout that he was willing to sacrifice his son for Yahweh and, at another time, killing all the priests of God.[25] In direct contrast to the men who see Saul as basically well-meaning is Hendriksen who views Saul's religion as outward show with almost no inner obedience.[26] Whatever conclusion may be drawn from looking at Saul's religious consciousness, it must be an inconclusive, ambiguous one.

One relationship, however, is clear-cut and definite--i.e., the Saul-David relationship. This relationship began early in Saul's reign when David became his armour-bearer and personal musician. The schism between the two did not occur as long as David was definitely in a subsidiary role to Saul;

---

[24]Anderson, op. cit. pp. 128-29.

[25]Henry Hart Milman, The History of the Jews (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1863), I, 228-29.

[26]William Hendriksen, Bible Survey (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), p.101.

however, David's charm and outstanding military ability soon
had him praised above Saul, among the people. Saul's per-
sonal weakness in the face of the jealousy which he let to-
tally possess him is unquestioned. His personal "gripe"
against David became the dominating, perhaps only, motiva-
tion in Saul's late life. He felt he must destroy this man.[27]

Saul was unsuccessful in relating himself to causes
and people who were significant to him, and yet it must have
been a source of worry to him that this was the case. At
times Saul realized that he had failed in several important
ways. He failed to relate himself to God properly (I Samuel
13:11-15). He alienated Samuel by disregarding his advice
but later discovered he needed the advice of this man (I Sam-
uel 28:11-15). He fluctuated in affection toward Jonathan,
his son (I Samuel 18:1-2). Once David had been Saul's com-
rade; however, because Saul let hate and revenge corrupt this
relationship, he failed here too. He knew that his frantic
chasing of David was foolish (I Samuel 26: 21). In these
actions Saul looks irrational. Even as he related himself
to the people as a whole, he could detect--late in his reign--
that what he had accomplished in war (particularly against the
Philistines) would not last (I Samuel 28:19). These facts

---

[27]Bright, A History of Israel, op. cit., p. 172.

were enough to cause the terrible "personal" problem of mental disintegration which most scholars agree was basic in leading to the man's final ruin.[28] The nature of this mental decay and the fact that it was indeed tragic is attested to by both secular[29] and sacred authority.

That Saul could not cope with the complexity of his life in any rational ways follows from his being the shy, sensitive, passion-controlled person that he was. His awareness that he needed his ruffled feelings soothed and his eagerness to keep David in employ show that the man knew about his own instability and was making an effort to steady it. Bright makes it clear that his mind was never able to control itself and that the result was madness as events continued to complicate his late life.

> Saul was a tragic figure. Of splendid appearance (I Samuel 9:2; 10:23), modest (ch. 9:21), at his best magnanimous and willing to confess his faults (chs. 11: 12f.; 24:16-18); always fiercely courageous, there was nevertheless in him an emotional instability that was to be his undoing. Always of a volatile temperament capable

---

[28]Isaac Landman (ed.), The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Co., Inc., 1943), IX, 382-83.

[29]Saul's turbulent life offered a rare opportunity for dramatic and artistic exposition. Rembrant, Holbein and, in modern times Epstein, have made him their subject. A number of tragedies have been written about him, as well as some of the best verses of Byron. In music the outstanding creation has been Handel's oratorio Saul. Ibid., p. 383.

of frenzies of excitement (chs. 10:9-13; 11:6f.), it ap-
pears that as pressure was put on him he became increas-
ingly disturbed in mind, swinging like a pendulum between
moments of lucidity and black moods in which, incapable
of intelligent action, he indulged in behavior calculated
to alienate even those closest to him. Before the end
Saul was probably no longer quite sane.[30]

It was a mentally deranged Saul who--late in his reign--
lost sight of the fact that he was to be defending his country
against the Philistines (in what became his final military en-
gagement) and who irrationally pursued David to kill him.
David had defected from Israel. David had joined the Philis-
tines. To the demented mind of Saul (and, perhaps to saner
minds also) this turncoat act was fuel on an already flaming
hatred. Not only had David joined with the Philistines, but
when he left Israel's ranks many men left with him (I Samuel
22:1-2). The Philistines were mightily encouraged because,
now, they saw their chance to move in on Saul and end Israel
as a nation.[31]

In desperation for himself, and possibly also for the
nation, Saul tried to contact the "dead" Samuel through a
spiritualistic woman at Endor.[32] She called Samuel forth

---

[30]Bright, A History of Israel, op. cit., p. 173.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Samuel J. Schultz, The Old Testament Speaks (New
York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), pp. 125-26.

from Sheol, and Samuel told Saul that both he and his sons would die on the next day because of his sins against Yahweh;[33] and, true to the prediction, the battle the next day was a total defeat for Israel (I Samuel 28:7-25 and I Samuel 31:7). Once again the Philistines controlled Israel and ran throughout the land. In the battle, Saul's three sons were killed and Saul was wounded. In a last loss of self-control, Saul took his own life by falling on his sword.[34]

Saul's "glory", if it may be called that, was like a meteor flashing across the sky for a moment, then burning out. Even if he had been chosen by God, he failed because he did not realize that obedience in following God step by step was also his responsibility.[35] Despite his failing, his memory lived as a "great man" of grandeur who commanded respect.[36]

It is true that at the end of his reign the threat from the Philistines was as great as at the beginning (maybe worse); yet, Saul accomplished at least one thing--he paved the way for the speedy consolidation of the nation under David. Saul's failure and Israel's failure (which definitely

---

[33]Gottwald, op. cit., pp. 189-90.

[34]Schultz, op. cit., p. 126.

[35]Hendriksen, op. cit., p. 97.

[36]Newman, op. cit., p. 128.

were inextricably interwoven) underscored the necessity for a deliverer.[37]

---

[37] Hendriksen, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 99.

CHAPTER IV

DAVID'S PARADOXICAL KINGDOM

Saul and David met each other because, in being re-
jected by Samuel as Yahweh's true representative, Saul was
depressed. David was an excellent harpist whom Saul employed
to dispel the gloom from his mind. There was tremendous
irony in connection with David's coming into Saul's court:
at this time, David had already been anointed Saul's replace-
ment by Samuel.[1] Saul was not aware of the fact that he was,
in effect, providing a court atmosphere where his successor
could develop skill and requisites he would need as the
demented king's replacement. He, of course, knew that his
new musician was a pretty good military man. Saul had recog-
nized this by making David his own personal armour-bearer.
Ironically, again, Saul--as the most celebrated military
leader of his day--could not have guessed that David would be
keen competition for him in this area. After the Philistine
encounters, Saul elevated David to commander of his royal
army. As David's popularity grew and as Saul's diminished,
Saul grew increasingly jealous of this man whose early devel-
opment he had been so eager to encourage (I Samuel 18:7-12).

---

[1]F. F. Bruce, _Israel and the Nations_ (Grand Rapids:
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1936), p. 26.

David had to flee from Saul. In doing so, he went to Philistia where he gathered together a small personal army and lived as a Robin Hood type bandit. Apparently some of Saul's enemies fled with David. Both these men and David were not only received by the Philistia king but were given a town, Ziklag, where David became a feudal lord. He made raids on surrounding cities and sent the booty back to his friends in Judah (I Samuel 31:26-31). He remained in Philistia until Saul's death.[2]

Some of Saul's followers escaped to Transjordan after their king's reign ended with an Israelite-Philistine encounter (II Samuel 2:8-9). These escapees hurriedly made Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, king of their refugee government, which was out of reach of the Philistines.[3] The only authority Ish-bosheth had was through the strong, military general--Abner--whom he had inherited from his father. Despite this new king's claim to be ruler over all of Israel, he was king in name only. At this time the principle of heredity was not recognized in Israel; however, Ish-bosheth did not claim the loyalty of many people. His kingdom subjects were Abner and a few loyal Saulides.[4] Other Israelites were ready for some

---

[2]John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1946), pp. 173-74.

[3]Bruce, op. cit., p. 28.

[4]Bright, op. cit., p. 175.

other king. It was time for David to make his move.

When David got the news of Saul's death, he rapidly made all the right moves to become Saul's recognized successor. As soon as David got Yahweh's approval for his project (II Samuel 2:1-4), he moved his family, personal army, and friends to Hebron. When he arrived there, the men of Judah-- just as he had expected and planned that they would--came to him and crowned him king over Judah before Yahweh.[5]

While king of Judah, David maintained peace with the Philistines and it is likely that they were content that Israel was divided.[6] They thought of David as no more than the vassal king of the south. The people of Judah also were content with their king: he kept peace with the Philistines (and other enemies) and they felt secure with David as their king.

At this particular time in Judah's history her kingdom included not only the tribe of her name but tribal fragments of Simeonites, Calebites, Athuilites, Jerahmeelites and Kenites--enough people for her to be considered a state and emerge as a sizeable and separate entity within the Israel that Ish-bosheth had claimed as king. Ish-bosheth's claim

---

[5]Murray Lee Newman, Jr., The People of the Covenant (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 153.

[6]Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946), p. 134.

was ignored. David remained king of Judah for seven and a
half years before he expanded his kingship into all of Israel.

Several Biblical scholars feel that David was much more
than a country boy who, by sheer accident, became Israel's
greatest king.[7] These men indicate that David had shrewdly
planned every move he would make to take him to the throne of
Israel. The following direct references support this point
of view:

> Everything that he does is politically correct, seemingly
> calculated, and cunningly designed to place him on Israel's
> throne. And although it is made clear that the Lord is
> with David (II Samuel 5:10), the reader cannot help feel-
> ing that it is largely David's ambition and sagacity which
> account for his success.[8]

> The methods used by David show that he was a shrewd
> politician who stopped at nothing to achieve his political
> ambitions.[9]

> We are not given any details regarding the process by
> which David was elected king over the 'house of Judah' but
> we shall not be far wrong if we assume that David himself
> played a part in persuading the southern tribes to make
> this move.[10]

> After the death of Ish-bosheth, Saul's son (II Samuel
> 4), David became king of Israel, i.e., the northern tribes,

---

[7]Bright, op. cit., 175-76.

[8]Paul and Elizabeth Achtemeier, The Old Testament Roots
of our Faith (London: S. P. C. K., 1964), p. 91.

[9]Anderson, loc. cit.

[10]Martin Noth, The History of Israel (New York: Harper
and Brothers, 1960), p. 182.

too. This event was preceded by a series of moves on David's part to ingratiate himself with the people of the North (II Samuel 1-4).[11]

Nor must we discount the sagacity with which David consciously set out to inherit the claims of Saul. He had married Saul's daughter, and when he became king in Hebron, he demanded her return, although it is apparent that they did not greatly care for each other. And although he scrupulously refused to harm Saul and publicly honored his memory, he nevertheless ordered the execution of Saul's surviving male issue save for Jonathan's son, the lame Mephibosheth, whom he made a pensioner of his court. Whatever David's motives actually were, the house of Saul could only regard this as ruthless political cynicism. Suffice it to say David represented a shift from the old order. He was a charismatic who, aided by his personal soldiery and his political acumen, was acclaimed king in a considered election.[12]

In addition to David's own personal initiative in becoming king, there were other factors contributing to his success in being crowned. Perhaps the most important was that David did fill, as Bright suggested above, the old charismatic requirements--used during the period of the judges and in the selecting of Saul. David was loved, admired as a military leader, and was approved by Yahweh. He was the obvious choice for the new king of the nation, for all the old reasons.[13]

---

[11]Newman, op. cit. p. 154.

[12]John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), p. 36.

[13]W. F. Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1949), pp. 50-51.

David's personal army has to be considered important when reasons for his becoming king are discussed. Some of the writers hint that the reason Judah made David king was at least partially because he had his troops with him when he went to Hebron. The implication is that David used the army as a strong arm to reinforce his own kingship plan. With the Philistines in control of most of northern Israel--again a threat to the very existence of Israel--David's army was a real asset.

David's plans to take over in the south had been successful. Having been made king of Judah, his plan could expand. But first, he must take care of Ish-bosheth. Israel certainly did not need two kings. The forces of Ish-bosheth, under Abner, and the forces of David, under Joab, met at Gibeon: the victory was David's. Abner joined forces with David (II Samuel 3:12-21). With the death of Ish-bosheth, little remained in David's way to the throne over all of Israel.[14] At least one obstacle remained: he must find a way to break up tribal elements that were so strongly independent.

In David's day, the tribes of Israel and Judah had not really become united and there was not yet a deeply rooted idea of kingship. Families and tribes still strove to main-

---

[14]Charles F. Pfeiffer, _Ancient Israel: From Patriarchal to Roman Times_ (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), pp. 31-35.

tain their independence and were jealous of other families
and tribes' gaining the upper hand in any kind of competi-
tion. It took an external threat, like war with a nation out-
side Israel, to get the tribes to join their forces in support
of any common cause. David would have to use all his tact,
diplomacy, valor, and charisma to gain control over the tribes.
As he did this, David's plan began to unfold again.[15]

Because no one was left to claim the throne of Israel
(after Ish-bosheth's death) and because David was making an
enviable record for himself as king in the south, the elders
of Israel--thinking that they too would be honored by such a
king--came to David at Hebron and requested him to become
their king too. David did not decline, and after making a
covenant with Yahweh (II Samuel 5:1-5), was anointed king over
all of Israel.[16]

Once king over all of Israel, David was faced with the
big problem of consolidating his kingdoms into a unity. This
was particularly difficult in light of the independent tribal
feelings already alluded to. However, in this direction he
made one of the most brilliant moves of his career in select-
ing Jerusalem as the seat of his throne. There are at least

---

[15]M. A. Beek, Concise History of Israel (New York: Har-
per & Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 72.

[16]Newman, op. cit., p. 141.

two reasons why this was a good selection: Jerusalem was centrally located between Israel and Judah, and it belonged to none of the tribes. His own mercenaries captured it and made it David's city. As a matter of fact, the city was known as "The City of David" (II Samuel 5:7).[17] For Israel to be ruled from this city, which was not formerly a part of Israel, was certainly a switch from the old way of doing things.[18]

After being captured by David, Jerusalem remained a royal city and was, for all practical purposes, outside the amphictyonic tribal system. Its allegiance was to the king who ruled over its city-state territory and its inhabitants. The implication is that when David captured the city he continued the city-state system of government that the Jebusites had had. In moving his household, officials, and mercenaries into the city he did not rennovate the city's structure when he first arrived there.[19]

Having established Israel a political capital at Jerusalem and being convinced that the people of Israel, who as God's people, placed supreme importance on religious beliefs, David wanted to centralize their religious life by also

---

[17]W. F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 138.

[18]Bright, A History of Israel, op. cit., p. 179.

[19]John H. Hayes, "The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXII, part IV (December, 1963), 419-26.

making Jerusalem its focal point. This would make Jerusalem the political and religious capital that David needed.

At the time of David's effort to unify the nation, the first eight books of the Old Testament were available for him to use as a guide for structuring his kingdom. Apparently these books taught David to have great respect for the laws of Yahweh, and for his claim on the people of Israel. Especially was the continuing of their deep respect for Yahweh's symbolic presence with the people important to David. For this reason, David wanted to move the ark to Jerusalem.[20]

David brought the ark to Jerusalem and housed it in a tent--the tent of meeting brought to Jerusalem from Hebron. The action had an highly symbolic significance: the J covenant tradition had been attached to the tent of meeting, just as the E covenant had been attached to the ark. Theologically this suggested that as the ark was being covered by the tent, so the covenant theology of the north was superseded by that of the **south**. It also meant that, at this time, the general theological position represented by the J legend became official in Jerusalem.[21] This meant that David had established Judah's theological views above Israel's.

---

[20]William Hendriksen, Bible Survey (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), p. 100.

[21]Newman, op. cit., p. 161.

David soon decided that the ark should be housed in a grander, more permanent abiding place. He wanted to build a house of worship for the ark, but was deterred from this action by Nathan's advice (II Samuel 7:1-17). Nathan blocked David from building such a house, but he did say that David's son would build it. This prophecy was important in that it took care of David's ambition to see that God had a house; however, it was more important because it was God's promise to David that he would have a son who would be king--in fact, it meant the establishing of the Davidic lineage.[22]

Despite bringing the ark into Jerusalem, David further desired to unify religion under his control by bringing the remaining priests of the house of Eli (with Abiathar as chief) to Jerusalem and attaching them to the royal court. Symbolically this was, in effect, circling his new crown with an old halo (the religion of the past). The implication of the symbolism was obvious: the crown's theology was to encourage the people to believe that Yahweh had made a special covenant with the house of David. After this time, it came to be believed that Yahweh would certainly be in favor of any king who was a son of David.[23]

---

[22]Samuel J. Schultz, The Old Testament Speaks (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 132.

[23]Anderson, op. cit., p. 138.

Having done so well at welding civic and theological diversities, David needed to turn his attention to the Philistines who were still in control of most of northern Israel. The good relationship between David and the Philistines had existed only when the Philistines had believed that David-- as king of Judah--was too weak to be a threat to them. Now, however, since David was king over all Israel (except what they held), the Philistines decided to move against him (II Samuel 5:17-25). David defeated the Philistines, driving them out of Israel to the extent that they never were a serious threat to Israel again.[24]

With the courage that comes from winning still in effect, David also waged successful wars against Moab, Ammon, Edom, Amalek, and Syria. The over-all result of these wars was that Israel was unified against her enemies and that David's kingship now extended over Judah, Israel, Jerusalem, and Ammon.[25] Because the tribes had been acting as a unit against the enemy, rather than as independent units, David thought this the perfect time to reorganize or supersede the tribal structure. As usual, David's timing was excellent.

David's early kingdom had been organized according to the old tribal division expressed by the authority of the

---

[24]Schultz, op. cit., p. 134.

[25]Newman, op. cit., p. 159.

elders, but the new one that he set up was a bureaucracy built on Egyptian models. In it the military was organized into two groups consisting of David's personal army, commanded by Benaiah, and the militia of the tribes, led by Joab. These two parts of the military were important because they represented two discordant elements in his structure which were unified only in loyalty to David (II Samuel 8:16-18). His personality breached obvious discord; however, to suppose that a real fusion of the military--or of the kingdom diversity itself--was affected by David's imposed bureaucracy is incorrect. Division still existed between north and south, if only in the consciousness (for the most part, unexpressed at this time) of the people.[26]

The actions of David to consolidate the kingdom were not only social actions, but many were related to his personal life. Newman says that David even used his marriages to help him to gain control over kingdom diversity.[27] He took for his wife, Michal, Saul's daughter, and had her brought to Jerusalem (II Samuel 3:13-16). This marriage was never characterized as a deep love relationship. It appears to have been a marriage of convenience for David. No children issued from the marriage.

---

[26]Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, A Concise History of Israel (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 36.

[27]Newman, op. cit., p. 157.

David's empire looked greater, comparatively, because other nations around Israel were not--during his day--in a position to prevent his growth or able to equal it in their own territories. Egypt's greatness was in a definite decline during David's reign. The Philistines who were a real power in Saul's day had been defeated by David. The Hittitie empire had come to an end. Mesopotamia was feeble, and Babylonia was dead.[28]

The elaborate consolidation program needed one final action--for David to organize his own court. The organization consisted of a commander of the Israelite levies (Joab), commander of the foreign mercenary, the royal herald, the royal secretary, the two chief priests (Zadok and Abiathar), and an officer over the corvee or forced labor projects (II Samuel 8:15-18 and 20:23-26). David, for the most part, left judicial matters to be handled locally as before. While David's court was not a picture of luxury, it was hardly the rustic one that Saul's had been.[29]

Even after David had completed his major consolidation moves, his reign was rarely free of problems. As mentioned earlier, David had combined two covenant beliefs into one and had substituted a royal dynasty for a priestly one.

---

[28]Newman, op. cit., pp. 157-158.

[29]Bright, A History of Israel, op. cit., pp. 184-86.

As a result, Judah felt that she was superior since her cove-
nant became the royally accepted one. Northern Israel, how-
ever continued to smart under the preference shown Judah's
covenant.

David's religious problems were not just those of his
kingdom--some of the worst of them were very personal ones.
The result of David's sin with Bath-sheba and his murder of
Uriah was serious. Those two sins not only affected him but
also had bearing on his control of his own sons. How could
a father discipline his children when he lived in the con-
stant awareness that he had sinned worse, or as badly, as
they? So, when David's son Amnon raped Tamar, David was very
angry, but he took no action to reprimand the son probably
because of his own sex transgression (II Samuel 11:2-5).
Tamar's brother, Absalom, did not feel restricted about acting
at all: he murdered Amnon. Once again, David did nothing,
because he also had a murder on his head.

When Absalom fled, David merely longed for his return
and finally welcomed the murderer home. And, even when
Absalom revolted against David in an effort to take over his
father's throne, David was not able to punish him as justice
would have demanded. He was concerned, rather, with sparing
his life. So weak was David in ruling over his sons that he
received a rebuke from Joab because of his leniency (II Sam-
uel 19:1-8). Joab knew that David's refusal to deal with his

own sons was the result of his almost intolerable burden of personal guilt.[30]

Oppressed with guilt, David went to Nathan and, by a round-about identification of himself as a transgressor of God's law, confessed his sins. The story of Nathan's using an indirect method of analysis on David--thus forcing him to pass sentence upon himself for the sin--is a well-known one (II Samuel 12:1-13). Yahweh's forgiveness of David is hard to understand only in light of his rejection of Saul for wrongs not nearly so great.[31]

One problem that David created for himself came when his curiosity and pride combined to cause him to take stock of Israel's might by taking a census of the entire land (II Samuel 24:1-4). Some of the tribes rose up against him, feeling that the census was more of an encroachment upon their divinely-given freedom.[32] God certainly must have been in sympathy with the people's point of view. At any rate, he punished David for taking the census by sending a plague that killed 70,000 people in one day.[33] To the people, the census underscored that they owed their allegiance to a king, rather

---

[30]Achtemeier, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

[31]Norman K. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), p. 198.

[32]Beek, op. cit., p. 75.

[33]H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1956), pp. 67, 107.

than to the tribe. This, once realized, they resented. The census brought their added aggravation in that its results were used for military conscription, taxation, and forced labor.[34]

The Saulides never were convinced for long that David had not cheated them out of the throne. Added to this, most of the Saulides fought the idea of dynastic succession (II Samuel 16:5-8). They did not prove a problem to David as long in duration as the others mentioned; but, in intensity, they were worrisome. This group grew smaller and their voice grew weaker as David's reign continued.[35]

The ease with which the two sons of David and Sheba gathered followers in various attempts to take the throne from David continued to prove that there remained throughout David's reign a religious diversity and strong tribal loyalties (II Samuel 15:7-12; II Samuel 20:1-2 and I Kings 1: 5-6). Given any cause, these would flare up and express themselves in opposition to the king. That the north and south actually remained independent units, despite the facade of unity, is evident to almost everyone who writes Israel's history.

---

[34]Anderson, op. cit., p. 139.

[35]Bright, A History of Israel, op. cit., p. 187.

Critics are agreed that one of the worst problems that David faced was the one connected with selecting his successor. The revolt of Absalom was probably possible only in a society where the charismatic principle of leadership was still dominant and where an accepted dynastic principle had not yet taken root. Around Absalom had gathered all the dissatisfied elements of Israel when he decided to rebel against David. The group was a large one. It included early friends and relatives of David who were bitter because he had not given them choice positions at court; members or sympathizers to the house of Saul; non-Judahite Israelites who disliked the most favored place of Judah in David's consolidated orientation of the state (II Samuel 15:1-12).

Even as David lay dying, an insurrection broke out and an attempt was made to displace the palace favorite, Solomon, by the fourth son of the king, Adonijah (I Kings 1:1-18). Although the attempt to crown Adonijah proved abortive, the rebellion proved an omen for the future unity of Israel.[36]

Because of the attempt by Adonijah and also because Nathan, Zadok, Benaiah, and Bathsheba encouraged him to do so, David ordered Solomon's immediate crowning. Once again, in this decision of the king, the presence of David's private

_____

[36]Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra, op. cit., p. 190.

army carried David's plan into operation. Though the people cheered, Solomon did not have the popular support of the old charismatic element in being selected the nation's king. That pattern was now broken.[37]

The people must have permitted Solomon's crowning because they had been taught they would need an heir of David's to hold together any unity he had caused. This was a strange reason for selecting a man who had formerly been chosen because of the observable presence of Yahweh's spirit in his life. Begun, then, was a leader-selection principle which yielded the kingship to the anointed son of an anointed king.[38]

David was Israel's paradoxical leader in the sense that he was both loved and hated, ruthless and aspiring, determined to win, yet conscience-striken and devout, and a Yahweh devotee who had almost too much personal ambition. In the court historian's frank appraisal, David's career poses the tormenting question that Israel never escaped and never answered: how is Israel to be the people of God and yet hold her own in history? Can there be theocracy without autocracy, covenant theology without royal authority, religious vitality without political power?[39]

---

[37]Bright, A History of Israel, op. cit. p. 190.

[38]Bright, The Kingdom of God., op. cit., p. 40.

[39]Gottwald, op. cit., p. 202.

SOLOMON'S GRAND, BUT DISCONTENT, MONARCHY

Solomon's ascension to the throne of Israel was not
without opposition, as was shown in Chapter IV. Also in that
chapter, David's refusal to discipline his sons was dis-
cussed. That he had refused to do so caused Solomon all kinds
of problems in getting the throne. David, at the end of his
own days, had warned Solomon that there were enemies who would
be a threat to the new king (I Kings 2:1-6 and 2:8-9). Solo-
mon soon discovered that this warning was accurate, because
it fell his lot to rid the kingdom of several "family" fac-
tions that had been stirred up during David's kingship.[1]

After the public gathering at which Solomon was offi-
cially crowned, and at which David charged the people to ac-
cept him as the king of God's choice and yield responsibility
to him as such, Solomon began to get rid of the factions he
knew might challenge his kingship. David had said that he
would need to remove Joab and Shimei. These two had rebelled
against David, but David had not punished them. He had left
this for Solomon to do, and Solomon had the two killed. To
eliminate enemies did not seem to bother Solomon: he had his

---

[1]Samuel J. Shultz, The Old Testament Speaks (New York:
Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 143.

brother, Adonijah, killed (I Kings 2:24-25) and banished his
father's high priest, Abiathar, to Anathoth (I Kings 2:26).
After this it is said that the kingdom was established in
the hands of Solomon (I Kings 2:46).

At the time that Solomon came to the throne there is
no record of his having made a covenant with the northern
tribes as David had done. He knew that the covenant David
had made had in some sense placed limits on David's sover-
eignty over the tribes (II Samuel 5:3); and, at the very out-
set, Solomon wanted to remove that which would limit or re-
strict his power over Israel.[2]

Solomon fell heir to a kingdom that had been formed
and organized around the personal leadership of David. He
had to reorganize the kingdom when he came to the throne.
His first step was to divide the kingdom into twelve pro-
vinces. He did this for two reasons: he wanted to weaken the
old twelve-tribe amphictyony (and this was the reason the
twelve new districts of the government did not follow old
tribal lines); and he wanted to come up with an organization
that would make for a more effective taxing of the people.
Doubtless, he hoped that individual loyalties would switch
to him and the crown if he broke up the old, tribal community;

_____

[2]"The History of Israel," The New Schaff-Herzog Reli-
gious Encyclopedia, VI, 52.

and, this move did force the people to recognize that there was a new kind of duty expected of them. It did not, however, convince them that the new demand was just. Solomon must have had some doubts about the loyalty of the people, because he quickly placed governors (whom he felt to be loyal to the crown) over each of the new districts he had created. In two remote districts he even selected sons-in-law as his governors (I Kings 3:7-19).[3]

Within the new districts the people were subjected to military conscription. This meant an end to the former practice of levies of Israel where the army was an amalgamation of twelve smaller tribal armies. The amphictyonic order was broken and the effective basis of social obligation was no longer the Yahweh covenant, but the state.[4]

It is not certain why Solomon's twelve-district reorganization did not include Judah;[5] however, it is certain that this exclusion caused extreme and violent jealousies, existing between north and south, to come to the surface. The northern tribes already considered that they had been mistreated by David's preference for Judah. The new king,

---

[3]William Foxwell Albright, Archeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 140.

[4]John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1959), p. 202.

[5]Charles F. Pfeiffer, Ancient Israel: From Patriarchal to Roman Times (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), pp. 35-37.

David's son, was apparently going to continue the same favor-
itism. Judah was exempt from taxation. Judah was exempt
from military conscription. Judah was exempt from forced
labor. The anger of the north became acute (I kings 4).[6]

Completing the district reorganizations, Solomon turn-
ed to finding a way to centralize his control over the entire
scope of domestic affairs. It was a time of comparative
peace for the nation, thanks to David who had taken care of
Israel's primary enemy. Apparently Solomon was not nearly as
interested in extending the physical boundaries of the king-
dom as David had been. Despite this, however, it is ironical
that he left the kingdom even smaller than it was when he be-
gan his rule. To say that it was smaller is not to say that
it was less powerful. His primary loss of territory was
Damascus and a small portion of Edom (I Kings 11:15-25). With
the military strength he had, he could have retaken these
losses if he had desired to do so. For some inexplicable
reason, he lost the territory and did not seem to care about
it.

About the only explanation given for Solomon's having
a powerful and impressive army and not using it aggressively
is that he was interested only in using it as a warning to

---

[6]H. J. Flanders, Jr., R. W. Crapps, and D. A. Smith,
People of the Covenant (New York: The Roland Press, 1963), p.
242.

any potential aggressors. Few enemies, if any, had the cour-
age to come against it. It consisted mainly of chariotry--
including 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses. In that day, it
was probably the most formidable military power in the world.
In addition to developing and maintaining a standing army,
Solomon fortified a number of cities throughout Israel, thus
protecting the nation's borders from all sides.[7]

As Solomon's reorganized nation grew, so did the glory
of Solomon's court and capital city. At court, Solomon had
seven hundred wives, three hundred concubines, plus a court
full of children. One of his wives was the daughter of the
Egyptian Pharaoh (I Kings 3:1 and 11:1-3). Just for an idea
of the sumptuousness of his family's life: three hundred
bushels of flour, seven hundred bushels of meal, ten fattened
cattle, twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, plus
other animals and fowl were used daily in the court kitchen.[8]

Not only were the army and court on a grandiose scale,
the city of David itself was made one of the most beautiful
cities of the time. The main reason for this was that Solo-
mon spent twenty years on an ambitious building program for
the city.

---

[7]William Foxwell Albright, The Biblical Period from
Abraham to Ezra (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1949),
pp. 53-54.

[8]Shultz, op. cit., p. 144.

The Temple, the most talked about and important enter-
prise in his building program, was completed in seven years.
It was both appreciated and hated by the people of Israel.
Those who appreciated it did so because it was Yahweh's house
and a center for Yahweh worship; and, those who hated it did
so because it was built by Phoenician architects and looked
like pagan temples of nations around Israel.[9] Some detested
the Temple because it violated their past religious practices
centered around the ark in the tent--symbolizing that God's
presence with them needed no permanent house. These went
further to object that to build a permanent structure would
be a violation of what God had intended for them. It took
many years for the Temple, which was originally Solomon's own
shrine,[10] to become a focus of Israelitish affection.

In addition to the Temple, Solomon built a complex of
buildings consisting of government buildings, the king's
palace, and a palace for his Egyptian queen. This complex
took six years longer to build than the Temple took, and its
complexity and beauty overshadowed that of the Temple.[11] The
king, along with this program, also extended the walls north-

---

[9]Bright, op. cit., p. 196.

[10]Ibid., p. 197.

[11]Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testa-
ment (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 148.

ward so that the Temple and other buildings would be included inside the city of Zion.

Solomon himself dedicated the Temple (I Kings 8:12-66). It was the most significant event in the history of the people of Israel since Sinai. God's presence had hovered over the tabernacle in the pillar of cloud then, and here too the glory of God was significantly visible. This was indeed, the people thought, the divinely-confirmed kingdom that Moses had antici-pated would be established (cf. Deuteronomy 17:14-20).[12]

During Solomon's reign the nation grew so much in grand-eur and in economic prosperity that it is referred to as the "Golden Age" of Israel's history. The economic boom of the nation was phenomenal. Agricultural production increased be-cause iron was available for making better plows possible. Foreign markets brought Israel's trade to an all-time high. Businessmen became prosperous, so prosperous that class con-sciousness developed.[13]

Solomon developed great foreign trade routes both by land and by sea. The use of the camel greatly facilitated land transportation through desert areas. Solomon's control of Zobah, Damascus, Ammon, Moab, and Edom gave him a monopoly

---

[12]Shultz, op. cit., p. 148.

[13]Harry M. Orlinsky, Ancient Israel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), pp. 87-88.

over the caravan routes between Arabia and the north. The selling and buying of horses alone was the source of a large profit to Solomon. He also built chariot factories and developed a large scale business for them (I Kings 10:28-29).[14] His commercial enterprises were so far-flung that he constructed ships on the Gulf of Aqaba for trade routes to the seaports of the world. He engaged in copper mining in an extensive way and had big markets for copper in Tyre, Spain, Arabia, and Ethiopia. From these places his ships returned with gold, silver, ivory, and monkies. He exchanged copper with Tyre for timber to use in all of his building projects.[15]

In order to develop his vast commercial enterprises Solomon had to make agreements and contracts with several foreign countries. Often his contract had to be sealed with an assurance of good will; this accounts for at least one reason why Solomon had so many wives (I Kings 3:1 and 9:16). His trade contracts filled the king's treasury with wealth in amounts that not only astounded the people of Israel but also impressed other world powers.

Added to the "Golden Age" of his wealth, luxury, pomp, and power, the man himself possessed great wisdom (of a cer-

---

[14]Pfeiffer, loc. cit.

[15]Shultz, op. cit., 150.

tain type). In answer to God's offer, Solomon requested the
wisdom to rule his people--and requested this in preference
to wealth and honor (I Kings 3:3-15). Writers do not agree
about the nature of Solomon's wisdom. At least, there are
the two views expressed below:

> Solomon would never have been noted for wisdom, if he had
> been no more than a typical Oriental despot. We shall be
> much nearer the truth if we read his reign as a deter-
> mined effort to exalt Yahweh above the gods of all the
> nations of the world. To say this is not to deny a pro-
> bable admixture of purely personal and selfish ambition.
> But earthly greatness is not something to be enjoyed, it
> is something to be used. In the natural order of things,
> material power is the most obvious and apparently the
> most effective instrument for securing one's purpose.
> Why should Solomon think otherwise? If Israel, in the
> name of God, was to possess 'all the kingdoms of the world
> and the glory of them,' how else could this be done but
> by might and magnificence of empire? An immense reservoir
> of wealth, a formidable army, composed largely of panzer
> columns of chariotry, and behind these a capital, above
> whose gleaming roofs the house of Yahweh shone out in
> supreme majesty: this was a program which wisdom itself
> dictated.[16]

> The legendary story in I Kings 3:3-15 describes Solomon
> at the outset of his career as choosing God's gift of an
> understanding heart to judge (that is, to rule) his people
> rather than riches and honor. But the actual facts of his
> administration show that he lacked the common touch that
> would have turned this pious dream into reality. Ambiti-
> ous and selfish by nature, his lavish court in Jerusalem
> was a hall of mirrors that reflected the glory and repu-
> tation of the great king of Israel. The law in Deuter-
> onomy 27:14-20 must have been composed with Solomon in
> mind.[17]

---

[16]W. J. Phythian-Adams, "Shadow and Substance: The Mean-
ing of Sacred History," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and
Theology, I (October, 1947), 419-35.

[17]Anderson, op. cit., p. 145.

Almost all of Solomon's fineries required financing; and, despite his being rich beyond imagination, the cost of his army, court, government, and building program--this "Golden Age" of Solomon's--resulted in a great economic burden for many of Israel's people. Not only were his projects expensive as far as initial cost was concerned, but their upkeep took lots of money. Indeed, the whole structure he had erected was elaborate and expensive. Paid officials absorbed funds from Jerusalem and throughout the kingdom. The army demanded food and supplies for the men and also food and equipment for the horses. Armies were stationed in strategic cities throughout the realm. To put it briefly: the spending exceeded the income of the nation.

The king had to try to meet the expenses. It is likely, even, that the profits from many of Solomon's own enterprises went toward meeting kingdom expenses. On his own, however, he could not make a dent in maintaining the costs of his plush environment. By effort, he expanded trade profits; and, he added a toll on all materials shipped through his territories. These measures helped, but not nearly enough.[18] Additional sources of revenue had to be found and utilized.

To provide the extra sources of needed revenue, Solomon took two additional steps--both of which caused as much unrest

---

[18]Murray Newman, Jr., The People of the Covenant (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 173.

in the nation and hate for the crown as any other moves that
Solomon made. The first step was to impose heavy taxes on
the people, plus requiring each of the twelve districts to
provide food for his court during one month out of every year
(I Kings 4:19-27). For some of the smaller districts this
became an almost impossible financial burden. The results of
having to pay taxes--something new for the Israelites--caused
a great unrest and an even stronger desire on their part to
return to the old tribal system where freedom was the key
word.[19]

To the taxes Solomon added an even greater blow to the
proud, freedom-loving Israelite in the form of the corvee.
At first Solomon had used only the Canaanites as labor for
his building projects at home and for the timber cutting and
hauling from Tyre. Thousands of Canaanites were pressed into
slave labor. As expenses mounted and as Solomon grew desper-
ate to complete building programs, he pressed his own people
into labor corvees; thus, he made slaves out of Yahweh's own
people. It is estimated that thirty thousand Israelites were
sent to Lebanon to cut timber, eighty thousand were put to
work in the stone quarries, and seventy thousand toiled as
burden-bearers (I Kings 5:13-18). Thus, Solomon's economic

---

[19]Bright, op. cit., p. 174.

prosperity and grandiose glory were at the expense of the life and liberty of the Israelites.[20]

Solomon went still further to try to maintain his "Golden Age." Great moneys had passed through his hands, but they had been spent as fast as they were received. As a result, the materialistic king, who constantly spent more than he had to spend, was finally driven to cede twenty Galilean towns over to Hiram, king of Tyre, in return for gold he needed (I Kings 9:11).[21] Superficially opulent, the boom prosperity of Solomon was short and was shared only by the Jerusalem nobility and upper classes from the larger cities. The agricultural base of the land was depleted through overshipment of crops to Phoenicia, the requisitioning of supplies for the court, and the draining off of farm manpower for the labor corvee. Although Solomon had unquestionably brought Israel to a pinnacle of greatness, it proved an abortive achievement. Surrounding the plenty of the court was the want of the populace.[22]

Solomon had been crowned king of a strong country and had begun his rule in a blaze of glory; but, as time passed,

---

[20]Anderson, op. cit., p. 150.

[21]Norman K. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), p. 205.

[22]Ibid., p. 206.

Israel began a decline politically, economically, and religiously that Solomon could not halt.

One of the early moves of Solomon that can be directly related to his decline was the exiling of Abiathar who had been David's continuing contact with northern covenant theology (I Kings 2: 26-27). Solomon did away with this communication with the north.[23] This act contributed **directly** to the dividing of the kingdom, as will be pointed out in Chapter VI of this paper. As Solomon continued his years as king, the theological stress more and more became centered around the concept of Davidic dynasty and the divine rights of kings; and less and less on the covenant concept of old Sinai (II Samuel 7:11, 16). To some people the almost total switch was intolerable.[24]

The northern tribes found all kinds of things to resent in their king (a Judah sympathizer)[25]--taxes, forced labor, and Southern covenant (I Kings 12:4). The thing that they resented most, however, was Solomon's religious laxity and apparent falling away from Yahweh. Writers attribute

---

[23]Newman, op. cit., pp. 168, 175.

[24]Bright, op. cit., p. 207.

[25]John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), pp. 48-49. Cf. "How far Solomon's favoritism to his own household, to Jerusalem, and to Judah, may have carried him is not clear, but a feeling of profound alienation from the house of David was abroad in the north."

much of the blame at this point to his many wives (I Kings
11:1-10) who turned Solomon to pagan gods along with his own
Yahweh worship.[26]   Three times during the year Solomon faith-
fully celebrated the festivals of Jehovah, but the licentious
worship of Baal and Ashtaroth, of Moloch and Chemosh, found
their ways even into the Holy City, and their hideous orgies
were enacted "hard by the oracles of God" (I Kings 11:5-8).[27]

Several men became convinced that they could do a
better job than Solomon was doing as king. So, just as was
true in David's last days, these men made their plays for the
throne (I Kings 11:14-25). Hadad, an Edomite who had been in
Egypt returned to his native country and sparked a rebellion
against Solomon. Rezon, an Aramalan chief, seized Damascus
and severed ties with Israel.[28] And finally, Jeroboam, one
of the high officials under Solomon, became the center of a
revolt against the king. Although he was temporarily forced
to flee to Egypt, he sat in exile--waiting and ready--eager
to return when called upon by his northern countrymen.[29]

---

[26]Abraham Malamet, "The Kingdom of David and Solomon
in Its Contact with Egypt and Aram Naharaim," The Biblical
Archaeologist Reader, II (n.d.), 88.

[27]George Frederick Maclear, A Class-Book of Old Testa-
ment History (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953), p. 363.

[28]Pfeiffer, loc. cit.

[29]Frank Knight Sanders, History of the Hebrews (New
York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1914), p. 117.

The northern element did not wait long, but God acted
even faster to remove Solomon. Jeroboam's quick flight out
of the country had happened just after a prophet (Ahijah) had
told Jeroboam that if he obeyed the laws of God, God would
give him the rulership over ten tribes of Israel (I Kings 11:
26-39).[30]

Perhaps the best evidence of Solomon's despotism is to
be seen in the ominous fact that there were no prophets dur-
ing his reign. The bold, free voice of the prophet had died.
No Samuel, Nathan, or Ahijah gave keen insight or direction
to the national conscience or to the king, as they had done
in the days of Saul and David. Under Solomon there was no
place for such a wholesome corrective. Men spoke in whispers
under his despotism. Moral strength and spiritual religion
all but died in Solomon's day.[31] Solomon sinned grossly, but
never repented. He was never a religious man. His life was
filled up with this world and its things. His wisdom was the
wisdom that knows how to cope with world problems, but does
not know how to lead a people to God. Solomon more than justi-
fied Samuel's expressed fears about Israel's craze for an

---

[30]Maclear, op. cit., p. 365.

[31]L. O. Lineberger, "Solomon: The Prodigal Prince,"
Review and Expositor, XXV (October, 1928), 434.

earthly king (I Kings 12:4).[32] He found the people fairly
free, but then he enslaved them; he found them happy, and
left them discontent because of the luxury he had bought at
their expense; he found them devoted to one God, and he left
them going after several heathen deities.[33]

As a matter of fact, the portraits of David and Solo-
mon--father and son--present a study in contrasts. David
went to the throne the hard way--up from the shepherd's field
and the warrior's rough life. His greatness was that he never
rose so high as to be cut off from the common soil that had
nourished him in his youth. Solomon, on the other hand, was
"born to the purple,"[34] and never knew anything but the shel-
tered, extravagant life a king's palace afforded. Solomon's
rule lacked the common touch. He was ambitious and selfish
by nature, and his splendor was to reflect his own glory.[35]

Solomon's reign ended in the division of the kingdom.
God had allowed men, with their God-given free will, to have
what they asked--a king. Now God had to destroy the corrupt
misuse of that freedom by bringing his people back to him-
self. Solomon's flaws have to be balanced with his accom-

---

[32]Bright, op. cit., p. 205.

[33]Lineberger, op. cit., p. 435.

[34]Anderson, op. cit., 145.

[35]Ibid.

plishments in order to evaluate just how much of the kingdom

split could, later, be attributed to him. Gottwald's summary

is helpful:

> The fabulous attainments of Solomon awed his people but
> also developed a deep resentment, especially among the
> northern tribes who suffered the brunt of the abuse of
> his power. The tribal covenant into which David had en-
> tered at Hebron was virtually ignored by Solomon; in fact,
> it may be more than accident that no mention is made of
> Solomon confirming it at his accession. So while he was
> remembered for 'all his glory' and for his supposed piety,
> already in his lifetime there was a smoldering hatred for
> the heavy hand that he laid upon his subjects. It would
> have been one thing had severe measures been necessitated
> by a national crisis to which the whole people lent their
> sacrificial energies, but they were so patently for the
> enhancement of the king's pleasures that it did not take
> long for the people to 'see through' Solomon. The dislike
> of his people was more than distaste felt for a strong
> personality; it was rather an intuitive recognition that
> the welfare of his subjects never really lay close to the
> heart of Solomon as it did with Saul and the younger
> David. Outwardly magnificent, his rule was inwardly weak
> and no small part of the political decay of Israel must
> be charged to Solomon.[36]

---

[36]Gottwald, op. cit., p. 211.

CHAPTER VI

AND THEN THERE WERE TWO KINGDOMS

The most obvious reason for the final split of the
kingdom at Solomon's death, a reason shown to run throughout
her historical record, was that Israel had been a united
kingdom only in a nominal sense as she became so under strong
leadership. The union, a surface one, constantly had within
it factions frictional enough to cause its disruption. Divi-
sive factors had been present even before the tribes, led by
Joshua, entered Canaan from the Transjordan. A major segment
of Judah had already come into the land from the south, and
Judah had formed an amphictyonic structure of her own at Heb-
ron prior to the creation of the twelve-tribe amphictyony at
Shechem. For many years, jealousy and a striving for suprem-
acy existed between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah. For
example, Judah separately acclaimed David king and later sup-
ported the Absalom rebellion. Both Ephraim and Judah were
accustomed to action independently of each other.

The attempted dominance of Judah in the south and
Ephraim in the north inevitably led to antagonism between the
two which grew until it was a major factor in the final split
of the kingdom. Solomon's partiality in showing preference
to Judah by not including it in his twelve districts (set up,
as explained earlier, to weaken tribal loyalties, to get

forced labor, and to levy taxes, etc.) was one of the final
acts in the jelification of the two sides.

Another reason that the kingdom is said never to have
been united is that the prophets--Samuel, Nathan, and Ahijah--
all had problems with their respective monarch. Each felt
that the king had somewhat diminished God's rule in order to
replace it with his own. In one of the three accounts of the
selection of Saul, Samuel was strong in his conviction that
Israel should not have a king (I Samuel 10:17-27 and I Samuel
8 and 12). Nathan spent much time trying to keep David seek-
ing and following God's will. Solomon seemed to ignore the
prophets completely (I Kings 11:9-13). It was the prophet
Ahijah, however, who actually received and announced God's
word that the kingdom would split because of the sins of the
king.

The people themselves never became united and eager to
follow a king. They loved their tribal system and maintained
it as long as they could. Part of the code of honor in the
tribe was loyalty to it as a unit. Solomon tried to crush
tribal independence by reorganizing the kingdom. This effort
on his part to force subjection to the crown worked only to
gain lip-service to it. Real loyalty was to the freedom pos-
sible in the old tribal organization.

It is true that the primary complaint voiced by the
people--particularly of the northern part of the kingdom--to

Rehoboam was to ease their tax, labor, and conscription burdens. Had he honored their plea the kingdom probably would not have split at that time. However, acting against the advice of some of his oldest counselors, Rehoboam refused to alleviate the burdens of the people. Instead, he promised to make their bondage even more oppressive. The northern part of the kingdom revolted (I Kings 12:1-16).

The revolt, brought to a peak by their being mistreated, was the outgrowth of a discontent older and more complicated than Rehoboam's ordering the Israelites to pay higher taxes or to work longer hours. The people were tired of the slavery they had experienced under the monarchy. Ahijah's prophecy had permitted them to visualize themselves as ten northern tribes operating separately from the southern tribes; and, best of all, operating free of all yokes (I Kings 11:26-40).

In each king's reign, the north and the south vied for power and recognition. The three kings, especially David and Solomon, treated Judah with favoritism. None of the tribes objected to having a king (as they proved by continuing to have kings after the division), but the north objected to being overrun (I Kings 12:4). The kings had tried, rather unnaturally, to blend discordant elements into a unity. Their attempts were not successful.

The second dominant cause for the kingdom's division was that God's hand moved in it in order that he might lead

his people to their assigned place in history. When God first called Abraham and through him founded the Israelitish people, he gave instructions to keep the race pure and to stand apart from other races and religions (Genesis 12:10-20; 20; 24; and, 28-30). Yahweh also instructed them how to lead a spiritual life to the extent that they would be willing and happy to submit to the reign of God in their lives (Exodus 33:16-17).

Their way of life was to be organized around their religion, and their religion was to be theocratically oriented. God was to be their king. Later in Israelite history, when the people had asked for and had gotten earthly kings, the people moved God to the very periphery of their lives. By the time of Solomon's death, human royalty had replaced heavenly royalty to such an extent that God could no longer be considered the "king" of the people.

The people not only slipped away from their devotion to the theocracy as originally established, but they also violated their part of the covenant relationship with Yahweh. At the time when the division of the nation occurred, and even before that time, the people had been warned that the destruction of the nation would be the inescapable consequence of defiance of divine sovereignty, or of persistent violation of the terms of the covenant with God (I Samuel 12:13-15 and I Kings 11:9-11). The Israelites did not listen to the

prophets--or, listening, did not heed them. Despite breaking their contract with God, they remained convinced that God's promises to bless their descendants had not been annulled. Those promises would be actualized (II Samuel 23:5).

An example of this kind of thinking is seen when David wanted to build the Temple (II Samuel 7:1-17). God said "No" to the idea. Speaking through Nathan, God made it clear why the negative answer was given. By building God a building, the Israelites were trying to tie him down--in a sense trying to force his presence to reside with them. The people liked this kind of one-way obligation. They had not honored their obligations to God, but they expected him to honor his to them. God desired obedience from them. The substitute they offered him was burnt offering sacrifices. These were easier to give than obedience was. This must have been the reason that God said "No" to the building of the Temple.

Israel was not allowed to identify a human kingdom with the kingdom of God, for Yahweh alone was king. Kings like David and Solomon quite often forgot this truth in their driving ambition to make the nation great, or themselves great, in the eyes of the world. Prophets often reminded the kings that Israel's purpose in history was not to become great as a worldly kingdom, but rather to be the people of a unique covenant relationship. Prophetic criticism, working on a principle identical with the New Testament one that people

must be humbled in order to be exhalted, urged that the nation had to fall in order to be reborn.

In spite of the covenants, in spite of the theocracy, in spite of God's promise to be with the people, at the sign of danger from the Philistines, the people asked for a human king. Their asking seems to have ignored the fact that God had promised to be with them in a way sufficient to handle any action they became involved with. Their turning to an earthly king illustrated one of the weaknesses of their nature: they had rather be led by the known and visible than the remote and abstract.

Just exactly what part God played in Israel's having a human king is one of the most difficult parts of her history to understand. For example, three accounts are given concerning Saul's selection as king (I Samuel 9:1-10; I Samuel 10:17-27 and I Samuel 11). One says that Yahweh initiated the idea of their having a king while another says that their anointing of a king was, in some sense, because of their rejection of Yahweh. Probably the most authentic account is the one in the eleventh chapter of I Samuel. In this account, Yahweh's spirit rushed on Saul (I Samuel 11:6) and made him victorious in battle. The people, having discovered another charismatic leader, went to Gilgal and made Saul king before Yahweh (I Samuel 11:15).

Because of the ambiguity of the scriptures, it is not
possible to state with certainty that God did or did not want
Israel to have an earthly kingdom with a human king. It is
also just as impossible to state that God selected Saul as
the first "king." He may have been appointed "leader" or
"prince" rather than "king." Hebrew scholars disagree about
how to translate the word used to indicate Saul's office.

The kings' personal lives caused a breach between them-
selves and God. Often, too, their personal iniquities caused
the people of the nation to be discontented with them. In
Saul's case, a religious indiscretion caused him to move the
Elides to Nob near his capital and later have them killed when
he believed that they had helped David to escape (I Samuel 21
and 22). At another time, Saul tampered with religion again
by usurping Samuel's role in offering sacrifices (I Samuel
13:8-15). Finally, he disobeyed God in not carrying out all
of God's instructions in a war with the Amalekites (I Samuel
15). As a result of Saul's sins, God's spirit left him and
Yahweh rejected him (I Samuel 16:14).

David, like Saul, brought the priesthood to his capital
city. Not only did he bring the house of Eli to Jerusalem, he
made them members of his court--interpreted in this paper as
his effort to cover his newly established throne with the old,
traditional, accepted, religion of the past--in order to estab-
lish himself as controller of the priesthood.

The sins of David, again like those of Saul, brought punishment to his subjects and brought misery into his own late life. The Bath-sheba adultery and Uriah murder (II Samuel 11) broke in on his effectiveness in other relationships. His sons, whom he refused to discipline because of his own guilt complex, disappointed him. After he took a census of the people of Israel, God sent a one-day plague that killed seventy thousand of his subjects (II Samuel 24). Here, a big group died because of David's sin.

Solomon's reign began with the murders of Joab and Shimei (I Kings 2:5-9). As soon as it was safe to do so, Solomon also tried to bring the nation's religion under his dominion. He got rid of Abiathar the high priest in his effort to become both the political and religious head of Israel. After he banished Abiathar, prophetic voices were silent during the reign of Solomon until, at the end of it-- timed as if to indicate that God would be silenced no long- er--the prophet Ahijah arose and spoke God's will. And when God spoke via Ahijah, he did not send his message to Solomon-- who, as he had grown older, had turned almost completely from God to the gods of his wives--he sent his message to Jeroboam.

Ahijah's message was that Jeroboam would be given ten tribes to reign over. GOD HIMSELF BROKE UP THE KINGDOM AT THE END OF SOLOMON'S REIGN (I Kings 11:26-39). God divided the kingdom in order to try again to gain control over his own

people. Against God's wishes the people had: turned to other religions, become as other nations, substituted acts of devotion (burnt offerings) for obedience to Yahweh, placed higher premiums on social and political accomplishments than on the religious, and looked to earthly kings rather than to the Heavenly King for leadership. God's promise to be with and bless them was either ignored or forgotten in light of its being conditioned on the peoples' obedience. Not even Israel's kings obeyed him. As God must, in order to act consistently with his own nature, he punished their disobedience. He destroyed the unified kingdom.

The conclusion of this study is complicated by paradox: the kingdom divided because, in the sense developed within the chapters of this paper, it never was unified; and, it divided because--for the reasons outlined throughout this paper--God chose to divide it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

Achtemeier, Paul and Elizabeth. The Old Testament Roots of Our Faith. London: S. P. C. K., 1964.

Adams, J. McKee. Biblical Backgrounds. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1965.

Albright, W. F. Archaeology and the Religion of Israel. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956.

_____. The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1949.

_____. From the Stone Age to Christianity. Second edition. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957.

Anderson, Bernhard W. The Old Testament and Christian Faith. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1946.

_____. Understanding the Old Testament. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957.

Baab, Otto J. The Theology of the Old Testament. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1949.

Barton, George. The Religion of Ancient Israel. New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1961.

Beek, M. A. Concise History of Israel. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957.

Bright, John. A History of Israel. Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1959.

_____. The Kingdom of God. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953.

Bruce, F. F. Israel and the Nations. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963.

Burrows, Millar. An Outline of Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1956.

DeVaux, Ronald. Ancient Israel. Trans. John McHugh. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961.

Ehrlich, Ernst Ludwig. A Concise History of Israel. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962.

Finkelstein, Lois (ed.). The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949.

Flanders, H. J., R. W. Crapps, and D. A. Smith. People of the Covenant: An Introduction to the Old Testament. New York: Ronald Press, 1963.

Gottwald, Norman K. A Light to the Nations. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959.

Hahn, H. F. The Old Testament in Modern Research. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1956.

Hendriksen, William. Bible Survey. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957.

Henry, Matthew. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961.

Hyatt, J. Philip. The Heritage of Biblical Faith. Saint Louis: The Bethany Press, 1964.

Jacob, Edmond. Theology of the Old Testament. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958.

James, F. Personalities of the Old Testament. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939.

Johnson, Christopher (ed.). History of the Nations. New York: P. F. Collier and Son Company, 1907.

Kent, Charles Foster. The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

Kitto, John. Palestine. New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1899.

Macarthur, John Robertson. Biblical Literature and Its Background. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936.

Maclear, George Frederick. A Class-Book of Old Testament History. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953.

Meeks, T. J. Hebrew Origins. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950.

Milman, Henry Hart. The History of the Jews. 3 vols. London: J. M. Dent & Company, 1863.

Newman, Murray Lee. The People of the Covenant. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

Noth, Martin. The History of Israel. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960.

Oesterley, W. E. and Theodore H. Robinson. A History of Israel. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932.

Orlinsky, Harry M. Ancient Israel. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954.

Owen, G. Frederick. Abraham to the Middle-East Crisis. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957.

Pedersen, J. Israel, Its Life and Culture. 4 vols. Coppenhagen: P. Branner, 1926-1940.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. Ancient Israel: From Patriarchal to Roman Times. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965.

_____. Ras Shamra and the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962.

Rappoport, Angelo S. History of Palestine. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1931.

Robinson, H. Wheeler. The History of Israel. London: General Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1938.

Rowley, H. H. The Faith of Israel. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1961.

_____. (ed.). The Old Testament and Modern Study. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.

Sanders, Frank Knight. History of the Hebrews. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914.

Schofield, J. N. The Historical Background of the Bible. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1938.

Shultz, Samuel J. The Old Testament Speaks. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960.

Thompson, John A. The Bible and Archaeology. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962.

Vriezen, Theodorus. An Outline of Old Testament Theology. Newton: Charles T. Branford Co., 1960.

Wegener, G. S. 6,000 Years of the Bible. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963.

Welch, A. C. Kings and Prophets of Israel. London: Lutterworth Press, 1952.

Williams, Walter G. Archaeology in Biblical Research. New York: Abingdon Press, 1965.

Wilson, J. A. The Burden of Egypt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Woolman-Tsamir, Pinchas (ed.). The Graphic History of the Jewish Heritage. New York: Shengold Publishers, Inc., 1963.

Wright, G. Ernest. Biblical Archaeology. London: General Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1957.

_____. The Old Testament Against Its Environment. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1950.

B. PERIODICALS

Bright, John. "I and II Samuel," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, V (October, 1951), 450-461.

Chesnut, J. Stanley. "Problems in Teaching the Old Testament," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXVII (April, 1959), 284-290.

Davies, G. Henton. "The Clues of the Kingdom in the Bible," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, XIV (April, 1960), 155-160.

Freedman, David Noel. "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: The Covenant Theme," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, XVIII (October, 1964), 419-431.

Harrelson, W. "Worship in Early Israel," Bible Research, III (January, 1958), 1-14.

Hayes, John H. "The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXII (December, 1963), 419-426.

Irwin, W. A. "Fifty Years of Old Testament Scholarship," Journal of Biblical Literature, XX (May, 1901), 27-29.

Kirk, H. E. "Secondary Strains of Life-Sermon on David's Fall," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, III (April, 1949), 164-169.

Lineberger, L. O. "Solomon: The Prodigal Prince," Review and Expositor, XXV (October, 1928), 434-438.

MacInnis, John Murdoch. "The Fulfillment of Promise," The Biblical Review, XV (January, 1930), 59-78.

Malamat, Abraham. "The Kingdom of David and Solomon in Its Contact with Egypt and Aram Naharaim," The Biblical Archaeologist Reader, II (July, 1961), 88.

Moncure, John. "The Lost Ten Tribes of Israel," Review and Expositor, XXIV (July, 1927), 321-323.

Muilenburg, James. "Old Testament Scholarship: Fifty Years in Retrospect," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXVIII (April, 1960), 175.

Pythian-Adams, W. J. "Shadow and Substance: The Meaning of Sacred History," Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, I (October, 1947), 419-435.

Rice, G. "Egypt, the Desert, and Canaan," Journal of Religious Thought, XVIII (May, 1961), 23.

Speiser, E. A. "'People' and 'Nation' of Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXIX (June, 1960), 157-163.

Wright, G. E. "Stevens' Reconstruction of the Solomonic Temple," Biblical Archaeology, XVIII (May, 1955), 41-44.

C. ENCYCLOPEDIA AND DICTIONARY ARTICLES

"David," New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, III, 361.

"The History of Israel," New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, VI, 49-52.

"Kings, Books of," New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, VI, 341.

"Kingship in Israel," New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, VI, 341-342.

Landmann, Isaac (ed.). The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia IX, 382-383.

ISRAEL: A DIVIDING NATION

An Abstract of a Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of the Graduate School
Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

James C. McCommas, Jr.

August 1967

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons, major and minor, for the division of the Kingdom of Israel into Israel and Judah. There seems to be a lack of unity among Biblical scholars on this subject. While many of the scholars feel that Rehoboam was weak and refused to ease the burdens of the people, thus causing the split, others feel that Solomon was the cause of the division because of his heavy tax burden, forced labor, and subscription. A few even state that there never was a united kingdom.

The Bible itself is not clear, in many instances, in its historical dealings with the happenings of the people of Israel. As an example, three different accounts of the selection and crowning of Saul as the first king of Israel are presented. The study becomes even more intricate with such things as religious beliefs, personalities of the kings, military struggles, breaking of the covenant relationship, social conditions, jealousies, and sins all having their part in causing the division. A very major factor in the division was Yahweh's reaction to the people in their relationship with him.

The material investigated included books, periodicals, journals, indices, encyclopedias, and Biblical encyclopedias available in Riley Library at Ouachita Baptist University. Periodicals and journals were examined as far back as this library's holdings permitted. An exegetical study was not intended, therefore, English translations were adequate.

The historical method of research was used in the development of the paper. Scholars have questions about this method but, until a better one is developed to replace it, it will remain the accepted one for the type of data presented here.

The conclusions of this study are based on the history of this nation from the time God called Abraham--and, through him started the people called "Israel"--to the split of the kingdom at Solomon's death. No attempt will be made to go beyond the split of the nation. As a result of this study, three major reasons and many minor ones were discovered as responsible for the split.

The first major reason to emerge was that Israel, as a kingdom, never really was united. Even before the first king was anointed the jealousy between the north and south was evident. Unity was brought at first by the threat of foreign powers which could no longer be handled by an amphictyonic system. The people asked for and received an earthly kingdom with an earthly king. All through the reign of Saul, David, and Solomon it was either the threat of enemies--as was the case with Saul--or the personal ability of the king--as was the case with David and Solomon, that held the kingdom together. Tribal loyalties remained, jealousies grew between the north and the south, and finally the division came. It returned the people back to tribal divisions.

A second major factor in the division of the kingdom was the revolt of the ten northern tribes when Rehoboam refused to ease the heavy burdens Solomon had put on them. The people of the north asked for relief from heavy taxes, forced labor, and military subscription and were refused by the new king, Solomon's son. The northern people pulled away and crowned Jeroboam king of the northern tribes.

The third and the most important factor in causing the breaking apart of the kingdom was God's decision for it to happen. The growing lack of obedience on the part of the people of Israel made it impossible for them to continue as God's chosen people. The kings gradually listened less and less to God and depended more and more on their own ability and wisdom. The people turned from God as Heavenly King to their earthly kings. God, trying to reclaim the obedience of the people, divided them.