

VOLUME 11

THE BIBLE SERIES

A METAPHYSICAL
AND SYMBOLICAL
INTERPRETATION OF

The Bible

by

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I SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 15-20

The story of Samuel is indeed strange. It is the story of a man who is extremely devout, extremely good, and extremely kind. But oddly enough this kind man suddenly turned on Saul in spite of the fact that he had anointed him to be king of all Israel. There is a very interesting passage in 15:10-11 concerning this. Samuel realizes that Saul is not the man to be the king of Israel. The Bible says it this way: "Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments." Samuel is furious; not with Saul, but furious with God for making a mistake. But God made no mistake: it was Samuel's judgment that was wrong.

This episode is most revealing, for it shows us that Samuel still has not learned the very thing he accuses Saul of — he has not learned humility. Now Saul had violated the Lord's commandment. He was told to completely wipe out the Amalekites and slaughter all their cattle and sheep. But Saul did not do so. Instead he brought back the king as a captive and took the best part of the crops and cattle for himself. Samuel berated him: "Why didn't you obey me?" he asked. Saul made a few lame excuses. First he said his army insisted on it. Then he said that he wanted to sacrifice the first fruits before the Lord.

At this point Samuel became really angry and informed him that he was no longer the king of Israel. To Saul's plea that he only wanted to sacrifice before the Lord, Samuel replied: "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" (15:17). "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (15:22). But in his own way Samuel himself was just as egotistical; he was, as we would say today, a king-maker.

This incident brings up an interesting point. Many people are so very eager to make a sacrifice and yet they will not give up the things they are supposed to. It is so much easier, if you are a Jew, to fast on the Day of Atonement, or if you are a Catholic, to go to confession, than it is to rid yourself of resentment or jealousies. It is so much easier to salve your conscience by giving a contribution to a church than it is to make peace with your brother, isn't it? We see here that Samuel, too, wasn't quite able to forgive his brother and so he berated Saul. Poor unfortunate Saul! Here we have a man with very little spiritual understanding and development suddenly elevated to a position of power before he was ready to handle it. Then just as suddenly Samuel turned on him. What happened to him? He just continued on in his fumbling way for quite a few years.

In this section we come across another of the editorial errors in the Bible. The text says Saul ruled for two years but actually he ruled for twelve. The book of Samuel is the most contradictory book of the Old Testament because various strains of writing are incorporated in it. Furthermore, the editor of Deuteronomy, who had a great share in the composition of Samuel, very definitely did not like Saul and tried to eliminate him. He wanted to have the line of prophecy and kingship pass from Samuel straight to David. So this writer disregards Saul, although later writers are more fair and treat Saul as the historic figure he was.

(In fact the book of Samuel has many confusions. For instance, take Chapters 17 and 18. As mentioned previously, one of the discrepancies in I Samuel is Saul's meeting with David. In 16:14-23 David became Saul's court musician and armor bearer. Yet in 17:55 Saul asked Abner who the youth was who attacked Goliath.)

But I feel that we must be fair to Saul even though he was a difficult and eccentric man. He was a brave fighter and did lead the Israelites to many victories. True, he never freed them from their great enemies, the Philistines, but he did lead them and brought some form of union among most of the tribes. Then, tragically, he was taken ill. The Bible says that the Lord withdrew his spirit from him and an evil spirit entered.

In those days people believed in evil spirits, and it is extremely interesting to read about such a belief in the books of the Apocrypha - that is, the books that have been

eliminated from the canon of the Bible. In one of the books, the *Forgotten Books of Eden*, you will even find that the idea of physical healing was very widely practiced. Actually healing was practiced until well after the time of Jesus. The *Forgotten Books of Eden* also tells us that there was communication with people who had gone on; this was a prevalent belief and was not considered strange nor unnatural. Such practices, of course, have been very carefully deleted from the Bible literature and completely eliminated from the practice and teaching of theological Christianity.

But in Saul's day such beliefs were prevalent and he was supposed to have been affected by an evil spirit because he was erratic and unhappy, and at times would go into trance. Then a little shepherd boy, David, was brought to him. We can look at this incident and call it an act of God or we can call it Karma. Remember that prior to this Samuel was aware of the fact that the next king, the real king of Israel, would be a son of Jesse.

Now by this time the rift between Samuel and Saul had grown to tremendous proportions and when the Lord commanded Samuel to go to Jesse, he was very worried and said to the Lord: "How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me" (16:2). Here again we have an interesting sidelight; if Samuel was supposed to be a highly developed person, and he was, it would mean that he had tremendous spiritual power; therefore why should he be worried about what Saul could do? But the Bible text says that Samuel was afraid; so the Lord gave him an excuse for his visit. He was to take a heifer to Jesse and sacrifice it.

In the days of Samuel the thinking process we call rationalization was supposed to come from God. Today we have progressed at least to the extent that we know it comes from ourselves. But Samuel did as he thought the Lord commanded and he met the seven sons of Jesse; but the Lord said that none of these was the Anointed One. Then Samuel asked Jesse if these were all his children and Jesse said that his youngest son was tending the sheep.

In metaphysical symbolism, sheep are our thoughts and the shepherd is he who takes care of them; we are the shepherd of our own thoughts. ("The Lord is my Shepherd," Psalm 23.) In the Bible it is said like this: "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for he will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in.

And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (16:11-13). The anointing is the touching of the individual with oil which symbolizes that he has authority, that he is the deputy of God; he is the king. Symbolically it is bringing the mentality into line with the spiritual faculty.

After this episode the Bible states: "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (16:14).

One of the well-known remedies for the affliction of evil spirits was music. (You know it is only recently that we have come to the realization that music is a tremendous healing therapy for certain types of nervous disorders; but in ancient times it was a common practice.) David was skillful in playing the lyre and he was brought to Saul; to some degree, he was able to heal Saul and Saul loved him dearly.

In Chapter 17 we are suddenly told that the Philistines are massing their armies for battle. War was then a much more chivalrous thing than it is today, in spite of the fact that those who were defeated were likely to be beheaded. Also it was the custom for one man from each side to go out to battle and this two-man contest would decide which side won or lost. Actually, this method of warfare was practiced to save bloodshed; for both sides were much more interested in taking slaves, which was the penalty for the defeated side, than in killing off all the enemy.

In 17:4 a giant comes forth from the camp of the Philistines. We really are not quite sure whether this man was Goliath, for in II Samuel 21:19 we are told that Goliath was killed by Elhanan. At any rate, we do know he was a Philistine, a husky brute over nine feet tall. Anthropological writers mention certain tribes in which the average height of a man was 8 or 9 feet. Anyway the armor of this giant weighed over 200 pounds. And he came out and challenged the Israelites and insulted the God of Israel. The Jews looked at this monster and were terribly frightened, and the more frightened they became, the more he berated them. Every day he appeared on the scene and made his challenge.

In the meantime, David had been sent by his father to

bring food to his brothers who were in the army. David's older brother was very much annoyed at this but David was delighted to be there; being a young boy he was hoping to see a little excitement. His older brother chided him and told him to return home. Instead of doing so, David accepted the challenge of Goliath.

The Bible gives two versions of this encounter. The first version we have just discussed. In the second version David is with Saul when he tells the king he is going to challenge the giant. Saul gives David his personal armor. (This is somewhat strange, for Saul was a big man and it is odd that he ever thought his armor would fit the young boy, for David was only about 17 at the time.) David told the Philistine that he was going to accept his offer.

The story of how this boy killed Goliath is familiar to all of us. But again, the Bible has two versions as to how it was accomplished. In the first version David hit Goliath with a stone and crushed his skull causing his death. In the other version David only stunned the giant and then rushed over, grabbed Goliath's sword and cut off his head. Take your choice. But the main thing is that David accomplished the deed.

David followed a pattern, a pattern that was part of his Karmic life; he chose for himself when he was young a path of responsibility. He put himself in the position of doing the thing he thought he should do.

After the war with the Philistines is over, David and Saul return to the city and the women of the village greet them with singing and dancing. Suddenly in 18:7 come the fatal words: "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." From then on Saul became violently jealous. ("And it came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul." 18:10) Saul realized that this boy who had saved his nation for him was dangerous, and he was now determined to get rid of him. But how was he to do it? To execute his scheme he became a close friend of the boy. Also to complicate matters a strong bond of friendship has grown between Saul's son Jonathan and David.

Furthermore, Saul has promised to anyone who would challenge the Philistines that he would give his daughter in marriage. But he did not keep his word. Instead he did give his second daughter Michal to David. Saul thought that

possibly through her he could trap David. But Michal loved David and helped him to escape from her father, for by this time it was apparent that all was not well between him and Saul. But David always managed to land on his feet. We are told that everything that he did he did wisely, in the spirit of the Lord, for he was a very fine person and deeply religious.

We have in this story three very distinct types - two strong men and a weak one. Samuel was very strong and David was exceedingly strong; Saul was the weakling. (Incidentally, Samuel and Saul never met again after their argument; actually this broke Saul's heart and was the beginning of his rapid decline.) But these three men had one thing they shared in common, and that was a tremendous love for God. Each one manifested this love in his own way. Samuel was for the most part quite wonderful; he was a spiritual powerhouse, and he walked with God, although he did not do so to the extent that Moses did. Moses had magnificent control over himself and was much more intelligent than Samuel; Moses never fell into the traps that Samuel did. Samuel's difficulties were all of his own making. He treated for guidance but he was unable to distinguish just what that guidance was.

Furthermore Samuel, like most of us, had not yet reached the point where his own peculiarities of personality had been sufficiently worked out to enable him to be completely objective about another person. After all when you analyze it, just what was it that Saul did that was so terrible? His great sin was that he disobeyed Samuel. Samuel gave Saul directions believing fully that God had told him to do so. But regardless of whether God did or did not give these directions, Saul disobeyed and because of this disobedience Samuel cut him off. Samuel played God as far as Saul was concerned. Do you think Moses would have done this? or Jesus? How many times was Moses disobeyed? Did any leader ever have more trouble with his people than he did?

But here we have Samuel setting himself up as *the* spiritual authority, and the reason he got away with it was that nobody since the time of Moses had such great spiritual power. Samuel could look at a person and foretell what was going to happen. And it all came true. This was something that the Israelites had not experienced for several

hundred years, and so they thought Samuel was a great figure. He was undoubtedly, but he was not as great as he thought he was.

He was not sufficiently humble and was nearly as arrogant as Paul. Paul also thought he was beyond reproach, and if you didn't do things his way, God help you. But after Paul had his tremendous experience on the road to Damascus, you will find that though he remained dictatorial, he would suddenly realize he was being so and say: "Well, this is the way I think it is. I'm not sure, but I think so. This is the way I see it." But not Samuel. Samuel was never wrong; his word was law and because Saul did not completely obey him, Saul became his victim. Saul in turn, if you want to look at it from the psychological point of view, vented his fury on David. He didn't dare take it out on Samuel.

David of course was a completely normal boy; a completely healthy lad with a tremendous ability and a tremendous devotion to his God. This boy walked with God. Yet even David, David who is the "lover of God," a little later in his life was vulnerable. He fell in love with a married woman and because of his passion for her, placed her husband in the front line of battle where he was very conveniently killed. But as we will learn later, he more than atoned for it.

In Saul we have probably one of the weakest characters in the Bible to attain prominence. He was a frightened, jealous man and even resented the friendship between his son and David: that friendship should have been given to him, he felt. Another sign of his imbalance is given us when we are told that after a losing battle against the Philistines Saul took a vow for the whole army that no one should eat anything until they had won a victory. If he had been sensible, he would have had his army well fed so that they would have been stronger to fight the enemy. Finally after he did succeed in routing the Philistines he found out that his son Jonathan ate of the honey on the meadow without knowing about his father's edict; and Saul was prepared to sacrifice the life of his son for a vow that had been made for no logical reason. Only the people saved Jonathan, for they loved him and refused to let him die.

Saul was indeed a psychopathic character, one of the few real ones that we will come across in the Bible. He

was emotionally insecure, psychically open and completely unstable. Yet, in spite of his imbalance he did some wonderful things for Israel. He was able, to some degree, to hold the tribes together; he was the acknowledged king, although he was not particularly well loved, and he was feared because of his terrific strength and violent temper.

The territory of Saul's kingdom actually comprised only forty or fifty square miles and only three or four tribes of Israel resided in that area. Judah did not, but Saul must have been acceptable to them, for David was of that tribe. If this tribe had not liked Saul, I do not think that Jesse would have allowed his son to go to court; after all, this was some distance away and there could not have been much contact between the two territories. Also we must realize that the king of the Israelites was more of a captain than a monarch. Furthermore it was only in the later years of his reign that Saul became a tyrant and began to take more and more power to himself; then for the first time the Jews began to realize what a king really was. (When David and Solomon came to the throne, it was a different story.) But Saul, like all tyrants, finally collapsed in utter defeat.

The closer we examine this section of I Samuel the more we realize how its style of writing differs greatly from the previous chapters. We have left that part of the Bible in which the Deuteronomic version of the great laws were given and in which a great philosophy was taught us so beautifully. Instead, we are now in the midst of a fascinating tale – really a short novel – that has tremendous psychological overtones. It is my personal belief that this story is the ancestor of all the psychological novels that have ever been written.

And look at the cast of characters – Saul, Samuel, David! Did you ever read a more fascinating psychological study than Saul – a man who blows hot and blows cold; a man who has tremendous good in him and an equal amount of evil? A man who holds a position of great power, but who is completely incapable of maintaining a steady quiet line of thought. He only knows what he wants and he lives in terror of his own fears. Yet at the same time he is often stimulated by an idea of God, and then swings completely to the other side. He loves David, the man who saved his life and his country, but at the same time he hates him. He adores

his son Jonathan and yet tries to kill him. Here we are given a picture of a man slowly going insane.

Only few novelists have delineated so clearly a character of Saul's type. We can almost see his thought processes at work. He waits, he watches, he is crafty and wily, and then when he is overpowered by jealousy, envy and uncertainty, he becomes vicious.

In one sense he was the victim of Samuel — Samuel who represents one of the really strange paradoxes of the soul's growth. Louis Bromfield portrayed a similar character in *A Good Woman*. This book concerns a woman who in the eyes of the world was a wonderful mother but was devastating as far as her child was concerned. She did only what was "good" for him and almost destroyed his life.

Samuel was this type; he was also a good man, a very good man, and he achieved a state of spiritual development that was really tremendous. It was he who selected Saul to be king of the Israelites and yet it was he who was responsible for the breakdown of Saul. The question is then: if Samuel was working under the guidance of God, is it possible that God would choose such a man as Saul? The answer is that Saul was not chosen at God's direction; it was completely Samuel's idea. Samuel listened to the cry of the people. "Give us a captain," they said. "We need a captain, someone who can lead us into battle, for we have to learn how to fight all over again." So Samuel prayed to God and asked for guidance, but the course he took was not decided upon by God. I am certain, however, that Samuel was not conscious that it was his own idea.

But from Samuel we learn the great lesson that is probably the greatest stumbling block of everyone who ever tries to live by the laws of metaphysics. When we meditate about a certain problem and ask for an answer, who gives the advice, "I" or "me?" We ask, we claim guidance, we wait, and then something happens. We get an answer, act upon it and discover that it was the wrong course to take. This happens to almost everyone at some time or other. When it does happen, I think it is evidence of God's sense of humor. Otherwise, we would be tempted to use God as we would use a gambling device. But after we have made a few unpleasant mistakes, we learn to say: "Wait a minute, I want to be sure this is the right answer."

But I don't think Samuel waited. I don't think that he received guidance from God; I think his subconscious mind instructed him. When he became disappointed in Saul, he berated God all night: "How can you do this sort of thing? How can you be so wrong?" Samuel hadn't learned yet that *he* could be wrong, and unfortunately Saul was the victim of Samuel's wrong thinking.

Saul, who never had the quality of leadership, who was completely unstable emotionally, was forced into this position. His instability becomes very apparent as we watch his actions. In spite of the fact that he was able to hold the tribes together he never tried to unite them; he surrounded himself with men of his own tribe; the tribe of Benjamin. His court was not located in a permanent place but wherever he happened to be; he would select a sacred tree or shrine and hold court there.

He was not a king by nature and he never really became one during all the years of his reign. He was a man who was terrified of his position, and because he was forced into a position of power that he was incapable of handling, he broke under the pressure. Amazingly enough, he was able a few times to rise above his limitations, but for the most part, he was given to such fits of temper and to such feelings of hatred, that he even tried to murder his own son. By no stretch of the imagination can you call him a "balanced man."

On the other hand we are able to watch the growth of David the "hero" of the novel. But before we go into the details of his story, I would like you to notice an interesting little question concerning him.

You will remember that when we studied Genesis, we saw that Jacob always had the right answer on the tip of his tongue; he always knew how to get his own way. Only once or twice did he fall by the wayside, and then he always managed to dust himself off in a hurry; he was always a little bit quicker than the other fellow. But even though he grew tremendously he is never called the equal of Moses or Abraham. Now did you notice that whenever David is in a tight spot, he also is able to tell a quick lie? Yet he was called "the anointed of the Lord." Isn't this strange? Why did David make the grade, so to speak? Why did Jacob never really attain the heights that David attained? They were

both gentlemen of the same type. It makes one think, doesn't it? Remember Pilate asked: "What is truth?" It's a good question and a fascinating mystery, isn't it?

So we find that in spite of David's many shortcomings his great qualities emerged so beautifully. Take his friendship with Jonathan, it is a thing of beauty. Their pledge of friendship from the time they meet is a tremendous thing. Did you notice that this pledge was made three times? The first time Jonathan gave David his robe and his armor (18:4); the second time they exchanged vows and Jonathan said: "May the Lord be between me and thee" (20:42); the third time Jonathan gave David his hand and acknowledged him to be the future king of Israel (23:16-18). Do you know why this pledge was given three times? The meaning of the names gives us a clue. Jonathan means "the desire of the soul towards higher things" and David means "Divine Love." Now each avowal of their friendship is made after David's life has been endangered; each vow occurred after a crucial period in David's life. The pledges indicate that each time something happened, instead of being beaten by circumstances, David emerged stronger, more steadfast and more sure of his own power. This is why this pledge is reiterated three times.

Now one of the great philosophical question is: "What is time?" Let us take a look at the metaphysical concept of time. In each and everyone of us there is the Presence of God — perfect, eternal, ageless, all-wise, completely whole — and each one of us is manifesting it to some degree. Each and everyone of us at some time will have similar attributes. Why not now? Because we are so completely closed off (or we have been) from that which gives us Life that it does very little more than give us physical life. We have learned to live in the minutiae of life instead of at the apex of life. But the moment that you or I get to the point where we can completely transcend physical limitation, that moment we will become perfect.

Now because of our backgrounds, our racial beliefs, and because we have lived many times before, we bring back with us (in each incarnation) beliefs we have had in former lives. Thus we progress at a snail's pace and we accustom ourselves to the progression of earth time. We have invoked a Law of Growth, which is a very powerful law

from a metaphysical point of view, but it is a terribly slow process. However, each and everyone of us at any minute we choose to do so, can reach the spiritual perfection of a Jesus. But I know of no one who achieved it before Him and I know of no one who has done it since. No one has been able to break through this emotional and mental limitation to the point where they can so radiate the perfection that is within them that time ceases to exist.

We get near this state of timelessness in a rather distorted way when we sleep. In dreams we rapidly go from one place to another in space and backwards and forwards in time. But for the most part this free wheeling in time and space is done in the astral body. Some people can learn to go practically anywhere in the universe in the space of a few seconds. But I don't recommend it; it is very dangerous and can be very painful. As long as we are in the physical body, we are not only under the Law of Growth of the Soul but the Law of Growth of the Physical Plane. This law works at a slower pace and should not be tampered with. This law tells us that all things take place exactly when they are supposed to.

We know by now that the faculty of Discrimination is one of the most important gifts that we have. There is nothing more important than to properly distinguish "I" and "me". This was Samuel's weakness. He had not sufficiently developed it. Paul was not even aware of it. David understood it to a tremendous degree, and for most of his life, was guided by it.

You and I are seeking how to improve our own knowledge of it, and sometimes, even as Samuel, we mistake "me" for "I". How can we know? The Bible describes it as "a still, small voice". It contains a quiet and certainty that shushes words. But "me" is always accompanied with a little flutter of the emotions, - and will always answer in accordance with our particular wish. "I" will often give the answer we do not want to hear.

The shortest cut to discrimination is to meditate frequently on the text "Be still, and know that I Am God".

M. M.

I SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 21-31

But to return to David; when we first hear of him he was not spiritually mature, far from it. But all things as we just learned happen at their appointed time and David did grow; he became a great man. Long before his maturity there are indications of his greatness. For instance, when he is only in his early twenties he is being pursued by the man whose life and kingdom he had saved, being pursued by a man who had nothing against him except hatred and envy. Saul, not knowing that David and his men were hidden in a cave, wanders in. With no trouble at all David could have killed him and immediately have proclaimed himself king of Israel. Saul was not very popular with his people and David's men begged him to kill him. But David refused. Instead he cut off Saul's skirt and after the king had left the cave he ran after him and called to him and apologized for his own past actions! Then he showed Saul the skirt and said to him: "Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it" (24:11).

A man capable of such a tremendous act is certainly destined for greatness; and here in this gesture of David we are given proof that he was capable of reaching spiritual maturity.

In the preceding section we learned of David's generous action towards Saul, his mortal enemy. Few people in the world would have done such a thing. But it is by such gestures that we watch this boy grow until he achieves the stature of a great man; we watch him grow from a soul that is just beginning to develop to a soul that reaches a great degree of spiritual understanding. Yet in spite of that

great understanding and the ability to love greatly, few people consciously did as great a wrong as David.

You might ask: "Why do you say David is so wonderful if he can also do negative things?" I say he is wonderful for a very definite reason. I am more and more convinced that people have strange ideas about religious figures. Even though David had good intentions and was a seeker of God; even though he attained a great degree of spiritual unfoldment, it does not necessarily mean that he had achieved perfection. There is no character in the Bible, with the exception of Jesus, who is absolutely perfect. Remember Moses killed a man, Jacob had devious ways, Paul helped to have a man killed, Peter, whose great love for Jesus was tremendous, at the crucial hour became filled with terror and deserted Him, and David fell in love with a married woman and had her husband killed in battle.

All of these men are very great figures; the very fact that they are in the Bible proves that. But the Bible tells us their story in such a way that we are being told: "Look, the way is upward, but the path isn't always straight." Once in a while even the greatest figures stumble and fall. When this happened there was only one thing that they could do: they got up, dusted themselves off and continued. That is one reason why the Bible is such a human book. The people in its pages are human beings; each and everyone of them has his share of good and his share of evil. Some had more, some had less. David for the most part had less evil than most people and yet when he came to his great test he also fell. Let us never forget that the characters in the Bible are symbols of various states of the soul, and let us not be surprised that only one man - Jesus - has ever reached perfection.

As the story of David unfolds, we see him fleeing from Saul; Jonathan has told him that the king plans to have him killed. David goes unarmed to the priest Ahimelech and Ahimelech is very surprised to see him under such conditions. David tells him (Chapter 21) that he is on a secret mission and nobody knows about it and that his troops are waiting for him down the road. When David asks for food the priest tells him he has only the showbread. Ahimelech also asks him if he is sexually pure. David assures Ahimelech that he is (he was not) and the priest gave him enough bread for himself and his troops. But before he leaves he

is seen by an Edomite, a henchman of Saul's.

Then David goes to Gath and seeks refuge there. The servants of Achish, the king, become suspicious of him and David feigns madness. At that time lunatics were looked upon with awe; they were considered to be invested with familiar spirits and were held to be sacred. Nobody would do them any harm but nobody would live with them. So it was not surprising that the king of Gath won't allow David to stay with him. So David leaves and goes to a cave in the mountains. His followers, about six hundred men, join him there and when the Philistines attack a nearby town David routs them. Then comes the episode mentioned previously. David spares Saul's life (24:8-22) and the king embraces him and says "David, my son." However later Saul turns on David again.

Some of the ideas which were held during this period of civilization are particularly interesting. For instance, the new moon was worshipped by all pagan societies and it is interesting to see that the Jews also went along with this and many other ideas. For instance, David, when he was in danger of being caught by the King of Gath, pretended he was a lunatic. He knew that the kind of treatment he would receive by pretending to be insane would insure his safety, for it was believed that lunatics had prophetic powers, so they were treated with reverence and respect and were well cared for. (The origin of this belief is lost in antiquity but some of the ideas connected with it have stuck to us and come down through the race mind.)

Has the moon any effect on us? Statistics prove there is a higher percentage of crime committed at the time of the full moon. It seems that people are at their emotional height when the moon is in this phase. Why? We really don't know. Symbolically of course the moon represents the pituitary gland; the creative impulse. It is the source of our emotional stimulation. We see this outpictured in the physical world, for it is the moon that is responsible for the rhythm of the tide. And just as the moon controls the fluids of the earth, the pituitary gland controls the fluids in the body. Strange, isn't it? But it is true. (The word "lunatic" comes from luna - the moon.)

So it is not surprising to find that the people of David's era believed that the moon could control them. It is no wonder that at the time of the new moon they held

great sacrificial feasts and offered the firstborn of their flocks. Everything that was new was sacrificed to God and and His creative Energy, represented by the new moon. Rudolph Steiner and the Anthroposophical Movement have done work from the point of view of agriculture and do all their planting at the time of the new moon.

All of these ideas are not merely ignorant superstitions. There are some very amazing truths behind them, even though we have not as yet been able to incorporate them in our rapid twentieth century living. Most people think all of these things are old wives' tales, but many of them are not. Of course today it is silly to sacrifice a calf at the full of the moon. But there is no doubt that during this period of the moon's phase our glandular system is somewhat altered. So let us not be too smug when we encounter this worship of the moon as we go through the Bible. Most certainly David knew what he was doing when he pretended to be mad.

We also know that the Greeks believed in oracles. So did the Egyptians and the Hindus. These people believed the oracle would give them the answer to any question that they asked. In the time of the Bible, a few people outgrew this belief and got to the point where they found their answers within themselves. Let us recapitulate here the stages of man from the point of view of the soul. A man's spiritual growth is divided into three stages just as is his physical growth. The first is the period of infancy, the second that of adolescence and the third that of maturity. During the adolescent period of the soul, the person is at that point of development where he is psychically open and runs the danger of being controlled by outside forces. It is my belief that nearly every insane person is controlled by a discarnate entity. It is interesting to note that most insane persons are in perfect health. One of the great problems in mental institutions is the period of longevity of the inmates. And they are in wonderful health because they do not worry. They are completely at the behest of another mentality working through them. We can only think with our conscious mind and we know that the health of our body is affected by what we think about. The insane mind cannot think.

Now Saul was both psychically open and emotionally unstable when he found himself in the company of the wan-

dering priests. Many such groups of ecstatic priests went around knocking themselves into a trance by dancing. Whatever words they spoke when they were in trance were supposed to have come from God (actually it was some discarnate spirits speaking through them). Their words were considered words of wisdom. Do you think people have changed? Don't they still attend seances and believe that people who have gone on know the answers to everything?

Saul was the emotional type that believed in such things, and he soon found himself belonging to this group of prophesying priests. Their sessions must have been (and I am not joking) like a Holy Roller meeting. When people are completely swept into an emotional hysteria they can do anything. Have you ever watched a crowd become a mob? Decent human beings suddenly become animal-like and are capable of committing any act of madness or vengeance. Poor Saul did not have much emotional control to start with and it was easy for him to be swept into such a mood. He tore off his clothes, and completely nude, prophesied to the people around him.

This incident is very enlightening for during the initiation rites both the Egyptians and the ancient Greeks also made the candidates stand before them completely naked. There is nothing more embarrassing or devastating than having to face an audience completely exposed. The reason for such an ordeal was that the initiate had to strip himself completely - that is physically and psychologically. It was an act of self-abnegation before the higher powers. But why was a ritual, which obviously came from the surrounding pagan cultures, followed by the Israelites? It is most strange, for this kind of behavior has nothing to do with the worship of Yahweh as Moses taught it - it has nothing to do with the purity of Moses' worship. In fact it is not until David really became king that the purity of the original Mosaic concept began to return to the Jews.

There is also a very interesting description in chapter 23 which shows that even David, at this early stage of his development, believed that by such a strange contraption as the ephod he could talk to God. How many other such things the Israelites believed in nobody knows. We do know that (besides the ephod) they had the urim and thummin. (We discussed this in former lectures). We also know that they believed in psychism and certainly practiced

astrology in spite of its condemnation by Moses. And there is no doubt that they practiced many pagan forms of divination. From the time of Moses' death to the time of David, we find the Jews supposedly believing in Yahweh; but judging from the things that they really practiced, their religious belief must have been a complete hodge-podge of moral philosophy and pagan superstition.

At the same time we must not forget that David is a highly intelligent man, a man of great psychological insight. In Chapter 20 David asks Jonathan to sound out the mood of Saul. In Verse 7 David says: "If he (Saul) say thus, It is well: thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him."

Now this kind of thinking is not done by a man who is steeped in superstition or occult practices. David knew all things work together for good if you love and believe in God; he knew that between him and Jonathan there was a great bond of friendship and this friendship came from God. He knew that when you are up against God's will, it is greater than anything else. He knew that God will use any instrument - whether it is a man's hatred, as it was in the case of Saul, or whether it is the affection of a friend - to work out His divine plan. David is indeed a different sort of man than the highly emotional and psychically open Saul.

But remember as you read this fascinating story that the Bible is God's story - over and beyond everything else, the Bible is His story. And remember that all the actors that walk across the stage of Samuel symbolize various stages of development and spiritual maturity. The greatest of these in our present story is David, even if he too had human failings and like the people around him occasionally fell into the trap of less mature beliefs.

Another thing that makes this story so fascinating is that the tempo and style in which it is written are very different from the previous books we have studied. The story is told with such clarity that it is not difficult to understand, except perhaps for the obscurity of a few phrases and the strangeness of some of the customs.

Many people say: "How do you know these things really happened? There is no actual historical background to the Bible." That is not so; archaeology is bringing to light much that verifies the truth of most of the Bible as

history. But there is no denying that the editors of the Bible did occasionally make factual errors of a minor detail. The events told to us in the Bible actually occurred, but they were written of centuries after they occurred — having been transmitted by word of mouth for generations. It is no wonder then that some unimportant errors (or misinterpretations) should find their way into the Bible text. But these are unimportant compared to the body of truth given us in this tremendous Book.

In our study of I Samuel we have discovered that Saul was an extremely pathetic character. He was psychologically ill; today we would call him a schizoid. He was chosen to be king by Samuel, and sustained by him, but he was certainly not big enough for that position. Furthermore, Samuel, even though he was the most highly developed figure we have met since Moses, also had a few negative qualities. He had a great deal of pride and thought his word was law; and he never bothered to explain any of his actions or commands. He himself chose Saul to be king of Israel, although he believed he was told to do so by Divine advice. To Saul he commanded: "You must do things my way; you must do such a thing. . . ." If Saul did not explicitly obey him, Samuel berated him severely. When Samuel withdrew his favor from Saul and chose David to be the next king of Israel, this was naturally a great blow to Saul.

It is extremely interesting to look at these men from the point of view of their names. Saul is extremely unstable emotionally, isn't he? You certainly would not say that he was the type of man ever to be elevated to a position of power; but he was and he was crushed under the strain. Now we know that according to the Cabala, each name conveys to the initiate a certain pattern of definable characteristics. For instance, everyone named Thomas has certain characteristics in common; all Helens have certain qualities in common, etc. In the New Testament there is another Saul, a man who later became Paul, and one of the greatest figures in the Bible.

Do you notice any similarity between the two men — Saul of the Old Testament and Saul of the New Testament before he had his great experience on the road to Damascus? Wouldn't you say that the Saul of the New Testament was just as irrational, high-strung and emotionally unstable

as the Saul of the Old Testament? The Saul of the Old Testament hunted down his enemy (or his supposed enemy) David; and the Saul of the New Testament hunted down and persecuted anyone who believed in the new concept of the Messiah. Each of them certainly had a desire to kill. Then at approximately the same age (they were both in their mid-thirties) they both had an experience. Saul of the Old Testament lost the approval and support of Samuel and Saul of the New Testament found God. But in their youth the two men were very similar.

The difference in what happened to the two Sauls shows not only the spiritual evolution of the Bible but also the spiritual evolution and possibilities of the human soul. Saul of the Old Testament had the same spiritual potentiality as the other Saul; but it was the Saul of the New Testament who was "seized by God," so to speak – even though this meant a complete reversal of what he believed in.

Usually it is more difficult for an intellectual to give up his ideas than it is for the uninformed man. The uninformed man may often be stubborn about his beliefs, but he can change them; the intellectual, as a rule, will fight to the death to defend something he knows and believes in. Yet, the Saul of the New Testament had a great spiritual experience, and in spite of his tremendous intellectual knowledge and belief in a certain philosophy of life was able to accept a new concept of belief.

However, Saul of the Old Testament, once the challenge of spiritual growth was given to him, collapsed under it. The contrast between the two Sauls is a fascinating character study and I have often wondered why no one has ever written a book about it. I do not think the Saul of the Old Testament could have reached the spiritual height of the Saul of the New Testament, but he certainly didn't have to end as he did. Unfortunately, his position as king of the Israelites went to his head. He relied almost completely on Samuel's advice, although sometimes he took matters into his own hands and then tried to extricate himself by lying or making excuses. When Samuel realized the bad choice he had made, he withdrew his support and Saul's decline and fall as a leader began to take place.

You remember we discussed the fact that David and Saul settled their dispute and there was peace between them

for awhile. Then in 25:1 we read that: "David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran." He is accompanied by six hundred of his own tribe. There is not any difficulty with Saul, but we are more or less told that David is an outlaw. Saul's court was quite an unhealthy place for him. One day Saul would adore him and give him everything he wanted; the next day Saul would throw a spear at him and try to kill him. So David decided to leave. Can you blame him?

Also in Chapter 25 we are told that Samuel had died and was buried at Ramah. All Israel assembled and mourned for him. Later on in the same chapter beginning with verse 9 we find the very interesting story of Nabal and Abigail. You will recall that David was married to Michal, Saul's daughter, and that Saul rather arbitrarily took Michal away from David and gave her to someone else. While David and his band were living in the hills, they acted as unofficial protectors of the shepherds who took care of the large flocks of a very wealthy man, Nabal. When David needed food for his men, he sent several of them to Nabal to ask for food in exchange for this protection. Today we call this "protection money."

Nabal was an extremely unpleasant individual and replied that David was a person of no importance and that his men were only runaway slaves. When David heard this he was furious and he and four hundred of his men rode down from their stronghold to attack Nabal. One of the shepherds saw what was happening and told Abigail, Nabal's wife. She was not only a very beautiful woman but also a clever one and she realized that this was going to be an extremely awkward situation. So she promptly gathered together enough food to satisfy the hunger of the men. She sent the food on ahead meaning to arrive at David's camp after they had eaten. But her plans went awry, and she came upon David himself. It didn't matter, though, for David, like his son Solomon, always had an eye for a pretty face.

Abigail was also extremely shrewd and perceptive. She told David very cleverly that her husband was a fool and that he, David, would one day be king of Israel. David was appeased. When Abigail arrived home it was sheep-shearing time and this festival was always celebrated with

much drinking. Her husband became very drunk and had an apoplectic seizure; a few days later he had another stroke and died.

When David heard of Nabal's death, he sent his servants to Abigail with a proposal of marriage. As it was a common practice in those days for a widow to remarry soon after the death of her husband, David's haste in acquiring a beautiful and intelligent woman was quite proper. Abigail consented and became his wife and at the same time he also married Ahinoam. We will find, as we learn more about David, that he never did anything on a small scale.

Incidentally, when Abigail went to David and persuaded him not to attack Nabal, she told him that their meeting was an act of God and that the purpose of their meeting was to spare David further bloodshed. It is very lovely to see that the characters in this story believed, as I hope we all do in metaphysics, that outer events were evidence of God working through them. They believed that outer events, particularly when they were of a positive nature, were the work of God. They depended upon such things rather than the purely "miraculous."

In Chapter 26 we find that the enmity between David and Saul is at its height. When someone tells Saul that David is hiding in the hills, Saul sets out to capture him. David saw Saul and his 3000 men encamped below him, and with a few volunteers David stole into Saul's camp while the king and his men were sleeping. They crept into the king's tent and one of David's men said: "Now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee" (26:8). But David replied: "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" (26:9). But David did take Saul's spear which was stuck in the ground beside him as well as his cruse of water.

When they returned to the hills, David called down to Saul's camp and Saul recognized his voice. David told Saul that again he could have killed him, but that once more he desisted. Saul replied: "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt both do great things and shalt still prevail" (26:25). But even as Saul spoke to David, David realized the king was not to be trusted and really planned to kill him.

In those days, the most terrible thing that could hap-

pen to a man was to be exiled and die in a foreign land. This was on David's mind as he spoke to Saul. You will remember that I have mentioned previously that Yahweh was the God of the Hebrews and Baal the god of the Canaanites; each nation had its own God. Nor did the Israelites believe in an after life; they believed that after death they would go to a place called Sheol where they would be with their ancestors. (This Hebrew word is sometimes translated as "hell"; but this is not what the word represents.) The Jews also thought that if they did not die in their own country among their own people, they would be put into the Sheol of another nation's God. This was regarded as a terrible fate, and David's fear of this was very great. Nevertheless when he realized that his life was not safe as long as Saul was king of Israel, he went with his men and their families and lived among the Philistines. It certainly grieved David greatly to do this; but he had no alternative.

David, as we know, means "lover of God," yet he was not above telling a lie when it was convenient to do so. Nor did he hesitate to resort to devious tricks to gain his ends and he usually got away with them. But in spite of these all too human traits, he remained completely loyal to his God and his people. No, David was not a perfect human being, but he always had a great love and belief in God.

He had many opportunities to kill Saul but he never did so; and he was extremely careful never to shed the blood of an Israelite. But when it came to the Philistines he was unscrupulous. When he lived among them he said very beautifully and diplomatically to King Achish: "If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?" (27:5) He had an obvious reason for asking this: he was very much concerned that if his men and their families lived in close quarters with the Philistines, they would intermingle with them and be influenced by their concept of God. But there was also another reason why David asked for a town of his own: he could raid the southern towns and not be caught by the king. He did so and killed all the inhabitants of the surrounding villages. He wasn't a very grateful guest, was he?

Yet from the Israelite point of view his actions were perfectly justified, for he was fighting the enemy of his people.

In Chapter 28 we find that the Philistines have decided to make war on Saul. Saul is desperate; his courage has deserted him and he has completely lost contact with his God. In Verse 6 the Bible states: "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." Also in his short reign, Saul forbade the practice of any form of psychism, and now he found himself in a predicament. Where was he to turn for psychic advice?

The Philistines, meanwhile had encamped against him and the size of their army made him terribly afraid. He was desperately in need of guidance and he asked his servants to find him a woman who had "contact with familiar spirits." His servants said: "Behold, there is a woman that has a familiar spirit at Endor" (28:7). She is that famous figure of psychic history, the Witch of Endor. The Bible states that she conjured up the figure of Samuel and that he was seen only by Saul. This would indicate that the witch was a materializing medium; that is, she could materialize and project figures from the psychic plane, but that she could not necessarily see the figure herself. She was probably in a state of deep trance, and it was her own protoplasm that was built up and used by the discarnate entity. (In this case, Samuel) This is a very difficult thing to do and is rarely a genuine experience.

Saul received a message and it was a tragic one. Samuel told him that the battle would go against the Israelites and that by the next night Saul and his sons would be with him in Sheol. Saul fainted; he was revived, given food and then returned to camp.

The battle went against the Israelites. Saul was badly wounded and said to his armor bearer: "Thrust the sword through me," but the boy would not do it, so Saul flung himself on his sword and died. His three sons, including Jonathan, also died in battle, exactly as Samuel had predicted.

The Philistines took Saul's body, beheaded it, stripped off his armor and put it in the house of Ashtaroth. They fastened his body - and his sons' bodies also - to the wall of Bethshan. In the middle of the night a group of Jews stole in, took down the bodies of Saul and his sons, cremated them and fasted for seven days. Thus Saul came to a sorry end.

Is it ever right to lie? Certainly, the answer is "no". When a person lies, no matter how he rationalizes his reason for so doing, he does it because of fear.

Yet, here we see David lying and apparently getting away with it. But he really didn't. David had plenty of problems to handle, which would have gone far more easily for him had he not lied. And again, he used his judgment, rather than that of "I Am" — as he was sure there was only one way in which to insure his safety — and that was by pretending to be insane.

I have long since discovered that my human mind is completely conditioned by past experiences. Our minds are limited by what we call Logic. But God has greater wisdom and foresight than any of us. We train ourselves to turn the problem over to Him. It is Troward who says so simply —
 "Principle is not limited by Precedent"

M. M.

II SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 1-6

In the Bible it is rare to find a character who thinks for himself. Jacob and Joseph were men of this caliber. So was Moses. But Samuel was not; he was a "negative mystic"; that is, he relied completely on impressions that arose from his subconscious mind. If he had thought carefully and thoroughly, he would have known that God did not tell him to make Saul king. David had a good mind and used it. He certainly had a tremendous and magnificent faith. But the old primitive ideas which had nourished him were completely accepted by him. He never questioned or examined them.

When the Philistines decided to make war against Saul, King Achish forbade David and his troops to join them. Actually, it was not the king himself who refused David's assistance; it was the lords of the Philistines who said: "We dare not risk it; after all, this is the man of whom the Jews said, Saul killed his thousands and David his ten thousands. How do we know he might not turn against us?" The king apologized to David and sent him back.

When David returned he found that the Amalekites had raided his village. They had completely razed it and taken all the women and children captive. Then we see how loose a hold David had on his own men because they immediately began to revolt against him. David asked God whether he should pursue the Amalekites and God said "yes." He and six hundred men started out to pursue the Amalekites but when they reached the brook Besor two hundred of the men had to remain behind because they were exhausted. They met an Egyptian slave who had been left to die on the field by his master because he had been taken ill. David asked him which way the Amalekites had gone and he told him. David and his men overtook the Amalekites, defeated them and killed them. They recovered their possessions, including all their wives and children.

Then comes one of those very lovely incidents that are so typical of David – and shows that he represents a new beginning so far as humaneness is concerned. When he and his men returned with the booty, the two hundred who had remained behind demanded their share of it. The four hundred men with David refused to give the others any of the booty but David reprimanded them and said: "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike." (30:23-24).

From then on all the spoils that were won in war were shared by everyone in the tribe. David said this was Divine Law, and you must admit that whether it was or not, it was very advanced thinking for such a primitive time.

It is not difficult to like David, is it? His very faults endear him to us, for he had failings that we can understand and sympathize with. And his sense of justice and love of God make him one of the truly great figures of the Old Testament.

I would like to refresh your memory concerning the structure of this book. We learned when we studied I Samuel that I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings and II Kings are really one book but that this division into four sections makes the book easier to read and understand.

Actually Samuel, whose name enhances the first two books, does not have too much to do with the story. He disappears early in Book I, although he reappears in a dream just before the death of Saul. The book deals greatly with Saul, but it is David, one of the great figures of the Old Testament, who is really the hero of this section of the Bible. David appears in the first book of Samuel, completely dominates the second book of Samuel and part of I Kings.

We also found out that there are several versions of the same incidents in these books. This is due to the fact that the main concern of the early editors of the Bible – and there were several – was not to be "editorially correct" but to put over the idea that their version of the story was the true one.

For instance, we read in the last chapter of I Samuel that Saul committed suicide, yet in the first chapter of II

Samuel, we find that he was killed by an Amalekite. Then in the fourth chapter of II Samuel, David said he killed the Amalekite – although the Amalekite did not kill Saul – because the Amalekite thought he should receive a reward for bringing such good news (II Samuel 4:10).

Parts of the first and sixth chapters of II Samuel very definitely bear the stamp of the epic writers of Deuteronomy; and, also, as in Deuteronomy the Cabalistic pattern of numbers runs through the entire book. Too, there is reference to the book of Jasher, the most ancient book of Hebrew poetry; this is the dirge of David lamenting the death of Saul and Jonathan. But these discrepancies are not important. The important thing is to follow and understand the thread of the story as it unfolds, and it is a wonderful and thrilling story, isn't it?

In the preceding lectures we discovered that Samuel was one of the foremost prophets of the Old Testament; in fact he was the first real prophet. But Samuel sometimes took a few liberties with God that no one before or since has taken. In his zeal, he sometimes mistook the word of Samuel for the word of God, and when he got into difficulty – as he did with Saul – he blamed God for everything. Samuel, of course, couldn't make the mistake – only God could! And when Samuel realized that David was really the man destined to be king of the Israelites, he felt perfectly sure that he, Samuel, had found him.

Now the story of David is beautiful and fascinating. It is truly a Horatio Alger story – told, of course, in Biblical terms. A little shepherd boy, the youngest in his family, is chosen by a prophet to become the leader of his people. And, of course, the story of David and Goliath will be told as long as the human race survives. (In spite of the fact that in I Samuel there is another version of the slaying of Goliath, I believe it was David who was the hero of the occasion.)

II Samuel begins at a point where David once more has to flee for his life. He thinks Saul is still pursuing him. But Saul has been killed by the Philistines, and as our story opens an Amalekite comes to David and tells him what has happened.

The Amalekite's story is a little different from what we read in the last chapter of I Samuel. The Amalekite says that he was standing by Saul who was "sorely pressed." Saul asked him who he was, and after he told him, Saul

begged him to kill him. The Amalekite said he did so and he brought Saul's crown to David to prove that he had done so. Saul really had committed suicide; but the Amalekite, hoping to gain favor with David, embellished the story and said that he killed him rather than have him die at the hands of the Philistines. David had the Amalekite killed for slaying the "Lord's anointed."

We watch the unfolding of David's fascinating character. Saul was definitely a psychopathic case, there is no doubt of that; he was pathetic, he was incapable of becoming the man he wanted to be. But in David we have something else – David the young unsophisticated boy, the boy who was very religious and terribly good. He had great courage but he was completely naive and innocent; and he took his religion, in the beginning, very, very literally.

Here in this particular section, we have the revealing of David's character. Remember, Saul had made David's life pretty much a "hell on earth"; every time he did something wonderful for Saul, the king's jealousy was aroused and the boy had to run away. When David fell in love with Saul's daughter, Michal, and married her, Saul again had a violent outburst of temper and – on David's wedding night – David had to flee for his life. David didn't see his bride again until the incident in Chapter 6 of II Samuel.

Saul did all of these things to him, and more, and yet when David heard of Saul's death, he was incapable of holding a resentment. That is the thing that is so tremendous – he not only had an amazing religious feeling, but he was already so emotionally mature, he could not hold any resentment even though he knew what Saul was. Added to his understanding was his vital belief in his God, and he truly believed that Saul, right or wrong, was the "anointed of the Lord."

So whether or not the Amalekite killed Saul is unimportant. But the fact that the Amalekite could even conceive the idea that he might have killed Saul was enough for David to have the Amalekite killed. In other words – and this is a very interesting thing for us – for the first time in the Old Testament we meet someone who says: "It is not what you do that is so important; it is what you think that is important." It is a fabulous concept for a young man of those times to have, for remember, David at this time was not even thirty years old. But because of his love for

his God, David would not slay the Amalekite himself; he had him killed. The crime of murder was not on his head. He was not guilty but he had avenged the death of Saul and of his beloved friend Jonathan. To him this was justification of God, for he felt he was acting in the name of God. His sense of discrimination at this point and others which follow show he needed much more training!

The Jews had relapsed to the concept of a Yahweh who was the sort of God who would go out and do battle for them whenever they had to be rescued from any enemy. He was a God who punished them when they did wrong and He was a God who had to be appeased and had to be treated very carefully. David never forgot that, for that was the way he was taught. Don't forget that hundreds of years had passed since the days of Moses (not to speak of Joseph or Jacob) and by the time of David a great deal of superstition surrounded the belief in Yahweh. David was taking no chances. He did not want to affront the God he feared as well as loved. And he really did love Yahweh as far as he was capable of understanding Him; and he acted in accordance with his understanding.

The thing that mattered to David was not that Saul had made his life miserable and had driven him out of his country, or that Saul had taken his bride away from him, and had wanted to kill him – the thing that did matter was that Saul had been the anointed of the Lord. Therefore no one had the right to touch Saul, except from a motive of love. That was David's concept, and it is a fabulous one for anyone who lived at that time and for anyone who had David's upbringing.

Next we are given the very beautiful dirge David sings for Saul and Jonathan; it is one of the most beautiful examples of lyric poetry in the world. Oddly enough, as we read it we realize there is not much religious sentiment in it; it is an expression of grief for the death of two friends – "How the mighty are fallen" (1:19). This is the first example we have of a poem composed by David. He was not only a warrior, but a poet, singer and musician as well.

In Chapter 2 David is made the king of Judah and we learn that in those days the kings were elected. It was not a question of heredity; one could not inherit the throne. The only semblance of the divine right of kings had occurred about a hundred years before. Then if the man had married

the daughter of the king and the king died, the son-in-law would fall heir to the throne. But the practice had long since been discontinued and actually no one before David was ever really a king.

Remember that in I Samuel, Samuel had told David that he was to be the first *king* of Israel. David never forgot that, nor did he ever reveal what he had been told. But as we watch the growth of David, it becomes very interesting to speculate on what could have been in his mind when he asked for the return of his wife, Michal. Was he still in love with her or did he need her help in the preparation of becoming king of Israel? Was it a question of "shrewdness" or did he need Michal to make the "rough places plane and the crooked straight?" Or was it simply that he had never forgotten his first love?

We also know that when he asked for the return of Michal he had acquired six more wives and that he was the father of a good-sized progeny. Of course polygamy was then a common practice; a man's prestige was measured by the number of wives he had. The more his prestige grew, the more he added to his collection. So in this respect David was only following the mores of his time. But it is interesting to speculate on how he really felt deep inside himself.

But to return to Michal. She had married a man by the name of Phaltiel and was apparently very happy with him. When the order came from David and she was taken from her husband, Phaltiel followed her all the way to David's camp. Phaltiel returned home alone and broken-hearted. We do not know if Michal had felt any love for David when she had married him seven or eight years before; we do know she was very much in love with Phaltiel.

In David's time the rabbis said that the marriage between Michal and Phaltiel had never been consummated, but the historical records reveal it was just the opposite — David never lived with Michal. But the king of Israel had to be right. So the rabbis saw to it that everything was quite apparently "legally" correct. But regardless of this, Michal was not in love with David and we can only guess what his motives were. We do know, of course, that he was an incurable romanticist. We see that in his love affair with Bathsheba and in many of the Psalms he wrote. In fact, nobody could write the things he did (not even the dirge) unless he

was a romanticist. David could have been in love with Michal, he could have wanted to recapture the memory of the first love he had ever known; or he could very well have said to himself: "This is one way of solidifying the thing I want to do." This whole episode must remain purely within the realm of speculation.

During that period civil war broke out among the tribes of Israel because of the friction going on between the house of Saul and the house of David. Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, and rather a weakling, allied himself with Abner, the son of Ner, captain of Saul's army. Abner was an astute man, and actually ran the country. The name of Ishbosheth is interesting. Saul's son was originally given the name of Ishbaal; but it was changed to Ishoboseth. The reason for this was that during their sojourn in Canaan, the Jews had acquired many of the customs and words of the Canaanites. Baal was the pagan god of fertility and of phallic worship, and as the tribes of Israel began to return more and more to their original concept of Yahweh, they dropped the Canaanite "Baal" in all names where it was used and substituted the syllable "sheth." It is interesting to know that "sheth" means "shame." Poor little Ishbosheth was not a very strong personality and Abner pretty much ran things the way he wanted.

In Chapter 2 the men of Abner and the men of David have a battle at Gideon. Abner loses and comes to David, saying he wants to make a truce with the man who is destined to be king of Israel. The mystery remains how Abner knew this, for only David and Samuel knew of it. However, the truce is concluded and David is anointed king (II Samuel 5:4). There are a number of wars that took place after this but they are not very interesting; in fact this section is the least interesting part of David's life.

David captures Jerusalem and sets up his camp there. When the Ark of the Covenant is brought in he dances before it, and it is then that the episode with Michal takes place. The ritual of the Ark is still followed faithfully. No one is allowed to touch the Ark until he is purified and wears the proper phylacteries. We are told in Chapter 6 that "Uzzah put forth his hand to the Ark of God, and God smote him there for his error" (Verses 6-9). It is easy to reconstruct what happened - the Ark was driven by oxen and it is very possible that the animals slipped. Uzzah, one of the drivers of the cart, slipped, fell and struck his head

on the Ark. To touch the Ark was considered taboo. But when the man fell and probably crushed his head on the stone floor, it was thought that God had killed him. Don't forget that at this time the Jews still believed in the concept that God was also a God of vengeance.

Now we come to the episode of David's dancing and singing before the Ark. Again, this was part of the religious ritual and we must not lose sight of the fact that the Jews had intermingled with the Amalekites and the Canaanites and had absorbed many of their customs. In the Judaic ceremonies of that time, the celebrants had to wear the proper clothing to present themselves before God; if such clothing was unavailable, the celebrant had to be naked except for the cloth, the ephod, through which he could converse with God. David evidently did not have the proper clothing available, and so he danced in the nude. The idea of dancing in the nude before God is a very old one. This is the way the ancient Egyptians made the neophytes perform their initiation rites; so did the Greeks.

In David's case he wore no clothes because the proper clothing was not available, but in the case of the Greeks and the Egyptians it was different. They believed that clothing formed a barrier between you and your God. They also had a psychological reason for insisting that the neophyte be nude — the neophyte had to pass certain tests in the company of his peers stripped of everything but his soul.

Michal despised David for performing in what she considered an indecent manner. She also resented being taken away from her husband. When David returned to bless his household, Michal told him: "How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain shamelessly uncovereth himself (II Samuel 6:20).

David replied that the Lord had chosen him to be king of Israel and "therefore I will play before the Lord." Michal's attitude toward David's actions proved that she was intolerant of understanding any concept but the concept of formal religion. She was only interested in the outer form of worship and had no conception of the kind of real love that David had for God. Thus her attitude was the basis for the estrangement between them. Michal was punished for this attitude, for the last verse reads: "Therefore Michal had no child unto the day of her death."

Also in this section of II Samuel we begin to see the spiritual unfoldment of David. David had become the first king of all Israel; he had risen to a position where he was able to bring together the various tribes that had drifted apart since the time of Moses. Now, for the first time in their history the Jews began to function as a nation – that is, as a “nation” somewhat in the way we use the word today.

In one sense it is true, of course, that David accomplished this, but in another sense it is not; we could say that he was “used” by God for a specific purpose. David is unique in a positive way, whereas a man such as Adolph Hitler was unique in a negative way. David consciously gave himself to good; Hitler consciously gave himself to evil. It is in cases such as these that people are “pawns” of Good or “pawns” of Evil.

There will never be a situation that is not dominated by a strong figure – for instance, look at France today. Conversely, we cannot have a strong figure unless there is a situation to be dominated. Here in David we have an example of a metaphysical enigma – the Eternal Now – when the person and the situation meet on identical levels.

Today we are living through one of the stages in the evolution of the human race where the tide of that evolution is projecting itself to a higher peak. However, instead of any one leader as there have been for many of these peaks in history (the story of Moses is one of the great ones and the greatest of all, needless to say, was Jesus) we are now at the place where the individual motive, thought and effort of “men of good will” direct us.

If we trace the development of the human race down through history, we find that when an emergency has arisen a dominant personality stepped forward to meet it. In each crisis in history there has been a strong figure who guided and molded a nation – or who misruled and destroyed a nation. From a political point of view, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were as much pawns of God as Hitler and Stalin; if there had not been a Roosevelt or a Churchill, the entire world would have been controlled by a Hitler or a Stalin. As we study our Bible we will always find these forces in operation – sometimes in a positive and sometimes in a negative way. But today – the privilege and responsibility is ours.

Here in II Samuel we have the twelve tribes "chosen of God," as they believed. They had travelled a long way from the concept that brought them together. They had fought, quarreled and forgotten their God. They had become no more civilized than the neighboring nomadic tribes with whom they lived. But at this low point in their history, a man came forward, a man by the name of David. He was able to meet the situation, to guide it and control it; he was able to solidify the Jewish nation in spite of all the difficulties that had arisen in the past, the aggressions of hostile tribes, the internal bickerings of the tribes themselves – against all the so-called "sins." This man stood not only against his enemies but against his own people, and brought them slowly but surely into line. Nothing could ever deter him from his vision.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me", says the Second Commandment - and this became the paramount idea in David's mind. He knew that his problems were of his own making, and he always assumed full responsibility for himself.

His love of God was so great that he was literally incapable of holding resentment and hatred against anyone. Can we say as much for ourselves?

As we know, the name David means Love - and David himself demonstrated this in his attitude towards God as well as his fellow men, including Saul and his own son Absalom.

It was Augustine who said, "Love God, and do as you please." In other words, if we really love God, and we do that by putting him first in our minds and hearts, then we would be incapable of ever doing anything wrong.

David did not completely reach that stage - but neither have we.

M. M.

II SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 7-12

David surely is an example of humanity producing a situation – that is, reaching a peak and producing an individual capable of stepping forward and meeting that peak. It is interesting to study such great figures of history as they come and go on the scene. Usually, within a few generations of their passing, their contribution is apparently dissipated, the nation becomes flabby and disillusionment and lethargy became rampant. We have seen this happen today.

There will always be crests and there will always be troughs, but we will come through. Always at the psychological moment there has been the person who stepped forward and took command. Usually he was unconscious of the role he had to play, and he seemingly came forward of his own impetus.

To a person like David his role in history was an unpremeditated thing. It was something he probably had never dreamed of, and yet, as the forces that guide the world into certain stages of existence and events came into play, he was propelled forward to take command of the Jewish nation. This little shepherd boy became the king of Israel, and he left a mark that not only Judaism will never forget, but the whole world will never forget.

The same thing is happening today. We are being pushed into a wave of ascendancy again. Always remember that nothing ever happens by chance. Whether it is in our own lives or whether it is in the life of a nation, nothing ever happens by chance. That is the Divine Plan, and it will never change.

Sometimes it seems that these great men have failed; that their lives have been wasted. Often the men themselves have ended their lives in disappointment and felt: "What is the use of it all?" But their work lives on, their ideas take hold and grow. (Look at the United Nations to-

day, in spite of the history of the League of Nations and the scheming of the present-day Russians, it was the League of Nations that gave birth to the idea of the United Nations.)

Chapter 7 of II Samuel is interesting from several points of view. First of all, it deals with God's promise to David that his seed, his "house," will be perpetuated. There is also the prophecy of Nathan who is a much nicer and wiser character than Samuel. Now a very beautiful idea is told us here. David is conscience-stricken because he had built himself a palace but God has only a tent to live in. He decides to build a temple for God and Nathan approves. This was an interesting concept for those times for the Jews did not believe that God lived in the Ark of the Covenant or in the tabernacle; they believed that the Ark was the "meeting place," and when they were summoned there by Moses or Joshua or Samuel (or whoever it was) God came to the Ark to meet them.

However, God instructed Nathan to tell David that the building of a temple would be completely contrary to God's purpose. God is Infinite; He cannot be confined to a particular location. (This is a very beautiful passage but of course it also has a symbolic meaning, for the temple is really the human body. Jesus said: "I am the living temple." Paul said: "My body is the temple of the living God.") If we examine David's life as a whole, we will find that certain incidents in his life did not make him a fitting example of the temple of the living God. So he is told by God not to build the temple; God said that his son will build it. Who is the son? The Bible does not mention David's son, Solomon, by name; however, we will find later on that Solomon did build a temple. Solomon reverted to the idea that an actual man-made temple was meant and he built a magnificent one.

Actually, the idea of building a temple in which God may be worshipped is very fascinating. Moses never thought of it. He said: "We have an Ark of the Covenant where we can worship, where God will speak to us." David fostered the idea of a temple although even he did not originate it, for various judges before him thought that there should be a special sacred place where God should be worshipped. David prayed to God and asked Him what to do and His answer

came in the form of a personal contact. God cannot be confined in a place. Now whether David really understood the idea of the Son who would build the temple – for the Son is really the Presence within – or whether he thought it meant his physical son, we have no means of knowing.

In any case, David did not build the temple. Solomon did. The fact that David, in spite of his love of grandeur and wealth, never did so, gives me the impression that he did really understand what God told him.

Chapter 7 ends with the prophecy that David's seed is the eternal seed; (and remember David means Love); that his house will live on forever and from his loins will come the great king. This, of course, is the prophecy that tells of the coming of Jesus, for He came from that family strain. It is quite fascinating to see that the prophecies that were made were fulfilled centuries later. In fact, as we read further in the book we will see that some of the prophecies came to pass within the lifetime of David.

In Chapter 8 of II Samuel we have a very brief resume of David's military conquests as well as being told how he set up his governmental administration. We are told what men were appointed to various positions of responsibility. It is apparent that David was an excellent executive, for Israel flourished under his rule.

In Chapter 9 David sends for Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul. It was the custom of that time that when a new king ascended the throne, he immediately killed the family of the preceding king. So, when David sent for Mephibosheth, the crippled boy came to him in fear and trembling. It was most unusual for a king to say: "Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake; and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (9:7).

In this chapter we begin to see the depth of David's generosity and kindness, but more than that, we see the great love and respect he had for his God. David never forgot, in spite of all the terrible things Saul did to him or tried to do to him, that Saul had been the anointed of God. Nor did he forget the covenant he had made with Jonathan. For that reason he made Mephibosheth a member of his household and gave him all the land that had belonged to

Saul. This is one of the most unusual events in Jewish history and demonstrates David's great qualities. It is not without reason that he is one of the truly beloved figures of the Old Testament.

In Chapter 10 we have a perfect little drama. As the story opens, David had defeated the Ammonites and the Syrians; but he was keen in his appreciation of the Ammonites, for you remember it was they who saved him and gave him haven when Saul was pursuing him. Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had died and his son Hanun ruled. David sent a group of ambassadors on a good-will trip to Hanun, but the ministers of the king, probably thinking of David's successful conquests, informed Hanun that the Israelites had really come to spy on them. So the king was incited to do the visitors harm.

Now the most heinous thing you could do to a man in those days was to touch the hair on his face. The Ammonites subjected the ambassadors to having their beards shaved off and their clothes rent, "cut off in the middle." When David heard of it he sent an emissary to meet them and had the men remain at Jericho until their beards had grown. David, meanwhile, proceeded to avenge this insult and soundly thrashed the Ammonites; they kept their distance after that.

Chapter 11 concerns the famous story of Bathsheba. David was at Jerusalem "And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon" (11:2), and David fell in love with her. By this time David evidently had become a little bit drunk with power; he was the king and could do anything he wished. So (though he had many wives,) he promptly sent for her and made her his mistress.

Not long afterward Bathsheba sent word to David that she was with child. This turn of events was an unexpected complication and David promptly attempted to conceal what had happened. His first stratagem was to give Bathsheba's husband Uriah, who was away at war, an unexpected furlough. He sent for Uriah under the pretext of asking him for news of the war and then sent him home to spend the night. To flatter him further he sent him a gift. The next morning,

David found out much to his dismay that Uriah did not go home; he had stayed with the guards outside the palace gates. David questioned him about it and learned that Uriah was observing the law that when warriors were engaged in battle, *they were to abstain from marital relations with their wives.*

David's next trick was to invite Uriah to dinner and make him very drunk. But David was still unable to break down Uriah's resistance for Uriah's again stayed with the guards. David now became very worried; this could develop into a very embarrassing situation. So he sent Uriah back to war with a message to his faithful commander Joab to put Uriah where the fighting was thickest and so Uriah was killed. After a short period of mourning, David sent for Bathsheba and she was brought into his household as his wife.

Then comes one of the loveliest of all Biblical stories. A few days later Nathan the prophet came to David – the king of Israel was also the judge of the high court and decided all cases. Nathan told David about a rich man with many flocks and herds who took the one ewe lamb owned by a poor man. Nathan asked David what should be done. David said: "He should be punished." Then Nathan said to David: "Thou art the man" (12:7). Nathan prophesied that Bathsheba's child would not live. David is also told that he will not be abandoned by God but that which he has done secretly he will have done to him publicly. His own household, his wives and children, will rise up against him – all this he will see in his own lifetime. What he has tried to keep secret from Israel will be made public. But God will never punish David in the way he did Saul, for his understanding was far greater than Saul's, in spite of the great wrong he had committed.

Bathsheba's child is born and becomes very ill. David prays and fasts as was the custom, for he was very much in love with Bathsheba – and she with him – and he really wanted their child to live. When the child died the servants were afraid to tell him but when he saw them whispering together, he knew what had happened. The servants expected him to collapse, perhaps even become violent; instead he rose, changed his clothes and asked for food. The servants were mystified. They did not understand one of

the great things about David. He knew that the past is past; that there was nothing more he could do about it. He was a very remarkable man. We have not learned that lesson yet, have we?

David never referred to the incident again. He knew he had merited the punishment he had gotten, but he was not going to spend the rest of his life brooding over it or lamenting it. There was only one thing he could do, and that was to try to make amends. He knew that he must go forward, and of course he never repeated the wrong. He also knew he had to stop worrying about it, and he did. How many of us have this kind of courage, this kind of wisdom? Most of us live a life of guilt, of breast-bearing, of lamentation. Not David. He had learned his lesson, he knew the past cannot be altered, and that the way to break a pattern was to face the future and not live in the past.

Later on, he and Bathsheba had another child – and his name was Solomon.

I think you will agree that the more we learn about David the more we are able to appreciate what a tremendous person he was. He undoubtedly had one of the warmest personalities of any character in the Bible, and he had a faculty of inspiring love and loyalty in his people that was phenomenal. He had great sincerity and kindness, but more than that he had a trait that we seldom find in anyone – he never bore a grudge. There is not an episode in the entire story of David that indicates he ever tried to avenge himself. He did not live by the code of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life."

Moses had this same quality, but because he had to deal with a very primitive people, he could never make them understand the virtue of such kindness. In the days of Moses to be kind was interpreted as being weak. But although the Israelites had not progressed very far since the time of Moses, they did not resent this quality in David; in fact, they loved him for it. But every quality has both a positive and a negative aspect and David's capacity for kindness and love and understanding betrayed him in his relations with his own family. He was completely unable to discipline his children with the result that they were all extremely self-willed. Most of them turned out badly and he was heart-

broken; yet he was enough of a philosopher to admit: "This is punishment for my own wrong-doing." He never held his sons responsible.

The Body is the Temple of the Living God," said Paul some centuries later. Here we see the growth of human understanding, as Humanity climbs the spiral of Evolution.

No matter how magnificent a structure is, it is only symbolic of the real idea. Even David, with his great understanding, did not realize this. Nor, of course, did Solomon. But Paul understood it.

That is why, thru the process of daily meditation, training our minds and emotions, and living up to the highest we know, we see the body begin to change. By the time we make conscious contact with the Presence within, we have started to rebuild the body, which is the Temple of the Living God.

M. M.