

1 Chronicles

Meditations on the First Book of Chronicles

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Introduction

A superficial reader may well think that the books of Chronicles are the supplement of the books of Samuel and Kings. The Jews indeed have attributed this character to them since ancient times. Christians have done the same with regard to the three synoptic Gospels; they think that the Gospels of Mark and of Luke complete Matthew's account of the Lord's life. In reality the Chronicles, like these Gospels, present the thoughts of God from a completely new aspect. They present the kingship in a very important dimension, which these pages aim to bring out. In relation to this subject, one or two preliminary remarks will be useful.

We have insisted, in other Meditations, (Meditations on the Books of Samuel and Kings, by H. Rossier.) upon the prophetic origin and bearing of the books of Samuel and Kings. The Chronicles do not have the same character although, remarkably, we continually find in them the activity of the prophets. Even the Jews did not count them among the prophetic books, to which the majority of the books of history belong, but rather classified them among the "holy writings" headed by the Psalms.

All the historical books, to the end of Kings, recount the history of the people and of the kingdom, until their final ruin. They conclude with the captivity, first of Israel, then of Judah, and go no further than this period. In contrast, the Chronicles, with Ezra and Nehemiah as their immediate sequel, go much further. (Compare 2 Chron. 36: 22-23 with Ezra 1: 1-3). Moreover, the stamp of being composed later, after the return from the Babylonian captivity, is impressed on them throughout the text. In various portions of these books we find proof of their relatively recent date, a date after that of the book of Nehemiah. Thus we see in them that the genealogy of David's family does not end with Zerubbabel, the royal head of Judah returned from captivity, but continues past him to the fifth generation, consisting of Hodaviah and his brothers (1 Chron. 3: 19-24). Just so, we also meet (1 Chron. 3: 22) Shemaiah, the son of Shechaniah, of the third generation following Zerubbabel, who (if indeed this is the same person) returned from Babylon in Nehemiah 3: 29. Lastly, our book describes the Babylonian captivity as a historical event already in the distant past (1 Chron. 6: 15).

It would be easy to multiply citations to support the uncontested fact of the late date of the composition of Chronicles. We will limit ourselves to a few more comments confirming this: First, the omissions in the genealogies in the first nine chapters of our book are a valuable testimony to the time at which it was written. We know, in fact, that at the time of the return from Babylon, the genealogies of Judah and of Benjamin in many cases were insufficient, and that the members of the family of Levi who could not furnish them were excluded from the priesthood (Ezra 2: 62). Comparing 1 Chronicles 9 with Nehemiah 11 convinces us that certain genealogies in Chronicles contain numerous omissions, as might be expected with a people returned from captivity.

Moreover, from the very first chapter onward we find proof of the pronunciation of many names differing from their early pronunciation. It seems that a fair portion of these differences can be attributed to changes in dialect brought about by the captivity. All these elements stand in our book as proof of the disorder into which this guilty nation upon which God had pronounced Lo-Ammi had fallen.

Thus the Spirit of God is careful Himself to indicate the approximate date of these books to us.

The principal object of Chronicles will become clear as we progress in their study; however, it is necessary to insist upon this from the very beginning.

Chronicles give us the history of the kings of Judah, that is, of David's family; whereas in the books of Kings, we find the history of the sovereigns of Israel. Until the captivity of the ten tribes the

acts of the kings of Judah do not appear in the books of Kings except in relationship to the kingdom of Israel; then, once the history of the ten tribes has ended with their being carried away, the narrative in Kings carries on exclusively with the account of the careers of the last rulers of Judah.

But the most important suggestion for understanding Chronicles concerns the counsels of God. We must consider several aspects of this:

The Word views man in two ways: According to his responsibility, or according to the position which he occupies in the counsels of God, that is to say in His eternal purpose before time began, before there was any question of responsibility.

The Old Testament contains the history of responsible man, given by God Himself. This history shows that man has always come short of God's expectations of him; failure after failure finally brings him to the cross to which he nailed the Son of God. He for his part ends his history by open revolt against the One who had come to save him. But, at that same cross God for His part, also ends the history of man. He places all our responsibility on His Son, even making Him sin in our stead, so that His counsels of grace toward us might be fully accomplished.

Indeed, it is in the death of Christ that the counsels of God (the mystery of His will, hidden in Him from before all time) have become manifest. There the veil which separated the sinner from God was rent; there man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, saw a way opened to God. Jesus, raised from among the dead, has ascended to God's right hand and from there sending the Holy Spirit, in His own person has prepared a place for man in glory.

The counsels of God, the mystery of His will, are thus fulfilled in the Man Christ, whom God has established as center of all things; but they do not stop there. God gives Christ as Head a body, His complement — as Bridegroom a companion, His Assembly — a body which is His “fullness,” a companion, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.

These counsels of God could in no way be revealed before the cross. At most they were suggested in figure by Adam, type of Him who was to come, and Eve, his companion. Thus Christ not only is the object of the counsels of God, but in Christ we also have become the objects of these same counsels.

Man enters God's glory because man, in Christ, has perfectly glorified Him. The second Adam becomes head of a new race, holy and blameless before God, worthy of dwelling in eternal glory.

The Old Testament revealed nothing of this. And yet a part of God's counsels in relation to Christ comes to light there; doubtless not the highest part, but that concerning the dominion of the earth. This is why the epistle to the Ephesians (1 Chron. 1: 9-10) states that God has “made known to us the mystery of His will...to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.” God's counsel was not to establish the first Adam who had failed, but the Second Adam as Head of the creation, and that in virtue of His sufferings. It is because He was made a little lower than the angels that God has made “Him to rule over the works of [His] hands; [and has] put everything under His feet: sheep and oxen, all of and also the beasts of the field; the fowl of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, whatever passeth through the paths of the seas” (Ps. 8: 5-8). So it is with the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Christ — and this is the subject which Chronicles treats. Here it is not a question of a glorified Man, nor of Christ as the Center of all things, nor of the Head of the Church, nor of our union with Him, but of the Son of God, the Root and Offspring of David, establishing His kingdom upon earth and associating a willing people in His reign in the day of His power. He Himself is the object of these counsels and He will carry them out, whereas men to whom

dominion has been entrusted have completely fallen short of God's purpose.

In order to make these purposes concerning Christ's reign known before they would come to pass, God in the Old Testament has given us types of kingdom rule according to His counsels, through examples like David and Solomon. But how could such figures have absolute bearing when these men of God sinned so grievously during their careers? Their history belongs rather to that of responsible man and rule, as presented in the books of Samuel and Kings. Doubtless we see the grace of God at work throughout their history to discipline and restore them, and in spite of everything, to make these fallible men capable of representing Christ's character. God accomplishes this by forming them through trials. This is the subject of the books of Samuel and Kings. But in Chronicles it is not a matter of setting forth restoring grace remedying the faults of the believer placed under responsibility, but rather, a matter of giving us a preview of the counsels of God, and this, as much as possible, without confounding them with any elements which would obscure them.

This explains the character and general bearing of Chronicles. Here God gathers together the features of Christ's future reign in David and Solomon, for example, without however hiding from us the fact that David, even if only on account of two faults (for this book only mentions two), and Solomon, without a single fault of his being mentioned, could not personally be "He that should come," and that we must "look for another." Consequently, to achieve their purpose, the Chronicles must pass over all the serious sins of these two kings.

One may object that the books of Chronicles continue the history of the kings of Judah after Solomon and that in the subsequent accounts we do not find anything prefiguring the counsels of God concerning Christ's future reign. This observation is sound except for the fact that a godly king in Chronicles as well in Kings may be a representative of Christ. We must remember that God, in relating their history in Chronicles, establishes another fact: that His counsels have Christ as the Son of David by royal descent in view. At times David's line corrupted themselves terribly, but even then God is careful to emphasize wherever possible, what grace has produced in those who were to be the Messiah's stock. He does this even at a time when the kingship in Israel had already ceased to exist for over two centuries. The ways of grace are particularly evident in this book throughout the history of Solomon's successors. In accord with Chronicles' plan and purpose, all that grace produces in the hearts of even the most wicked kings, such as Manasseh for example, is brought to light, in order to show that grace toward man is the only means of fulfilling God's counsels concerning him.

Summing up, Chronicles does not present the history of responsible kingship, but of kingship according to God's counsels in grace, counsels that will not be completely fulfilled until the crown is set on Christ's head. Therefore Chronicles never fails to record God's ways in grace to remedy the faults of the kings who succeed one another upon the throne up until the appearance of the great King. This is also why the divine account silently passes over faults committed as much as possible. The Spirit of God, as we have said, omits David's serious sins and their consequences; He also omits those of Solomon.

To this can be added yet another characteristic feature. Chronicles says nothing at all about David's rejection and sufferings; it introduces us directly into the glories that follow these sufferings, evident proof that this book does not have, in relation to the work of Christ, the prophetic character of those which have preceded it.

If in Chronicles we find God's counsels concerning Christ in the types of David and Solomon, and God's ways in grace concerning the royal family in view of the appearance of the true King, let us not forget to mention that they contain these same counsels in relation to Judah as Messiah's people.

God shows that nothing will hinder the course of His eternal designs toward those who are their objects. Wherever evil rules, there God hastens to bring in good, so that, as a servant of God has expressed it, “we may always have the good which He has produced before our eyes instead of the evil produced by man”. Therefore He prepares everything in view of the full manifestation of the future glory of His Anointed.

It is all the more striking to find in Chronicles the picture of grace operating in the heart of man, for these books are written, as we have seen, after the final ruin of the people and of kingdom rule. But what consolation for the poor remnant, returned from Babylon in servitude and contempt, to find here their history written in these disastrous times by the Spirit of God Himself, and showing on every page that no unfaithfulness on part of the people could modify God's counsels nor alter the grace by which He would establish, in relation to His people, His eternal purposes in the person of Christ.

God's counsels concerning the kingship being the principal truth of this book, we find in it of necessity, on the one hand, all that is linked together with the priestly organization, and on the other hand, to the political organization of the people. Indeed, the kingdom according to God is characterized by divine order in both the religious and civil sphere.

The religious sphere naturally comes first in the organization of the kingdom according to the thoughts of God. Neither the people nor the kingship could subsist without the worship of Jehovah; without this, the nation fell to the level of the other nations and, like them, had to be destroyed. The people of Israel had no reason for existing unless through their religious service they would maintain their relationship to the God who had chosen them to be His own. From the moment Israel abandoned this relationship in order to give themselves up to idolatry, God also abandoned them, as we see in the history of the Judges and later of the Kings. Finally their transgressions became such that God pronounced His Lo-Ammi upon them.

So too it was with regard to the kingship. Responsible to lead and govern the people for God, it could not subsist without the worship of Jehovah and all that belonged thereto. Kingship and priesthood, the two pillars of Israel's relationship with God, could not be separated without causing the whole system to collapse; if one of the two should fail, complete ruin would be the result. Even before the establishment of the kingship, the indissoluble alliance between it and the priesthood was seen in Moses, king in Jeshurun, and Aaron, his brother; there was, however, this difference here, that once the kingship, properly speaking, was established, the priesthood was subordinated to it, because it had come short of its calling; henceforth the faithful priest must always walk before the Lord's Anointed (1 Sam. 2: 35). In God's counsels the kingship and the priesthood, government and religious service, must of necessity subsist together. Hence the immense importance of all that pertained to the service of the temple in the history of David and Solomon, as Chronicles presents them. And when afterwards we witness revivals at the time of the ruin of the kingship, in first place we always see the religious service reestablished, as for example in the history of Hezekiah and of Josiah.

The union of the civil and religious spheres is presented in Chronicles as types of its fulfillment in Christ in a future day. These two elements will be united in Him as the unshakable basis for the kingdom of God upon earth. Christ will be “a priest upon his throne” (Zech. 6: 13).

Note: Let us here note once and for all that since the accounts in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles agree in a general way, our meditations will only bear upon their points of divergence, as the features they have in common have already been considered in the preceding works.

1 Chronicles 1 - 1 Chronicles 9: 34

The Genealogies

As we approach the first chapters of this book, it seems helpful to insist upon the importance of genealogies for the people of Israel.

They were necessary because, since the promise of the inheritance of Canaan had been made to Abraham and his seed, this seed had to be registered, since it alone had the right to enter the promised land.

Having arrived in Canaan, the people needed their genealogies in order to divide the land among their tribes and fathers' houses.

They were likewise necessary in order to prevent the surrounding nations from mixing with the chosen people.

Finally, and above all, they were indispensable in view of Messiah's kingship, for His lineage must go back through the series of kings, to Judah "the lawgiver," and then from Judah to Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Noah, Adam and God!

The genealogies were also important in order to establish the succession of the Aaronic priesthood, destined to walk continually before the true King, Jehovah's Anointed.

This, in brief, is the value of the genealogies. Their usefulness was all the greater ever since the people, after having fallen under God's judgment, passed through a period of disorder during which it was difficult, often even impossible, to prove their descent, as we see in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Yet we should quickly note that if one wants to enter into the details of the subject before us, one must be very guarded in his conclusions, for Jewish genealogies present innumerable difficulties. First, very frequently those who are called the son of so-and-so are not necessarily his children at all, but his grandsons, or even his grandnephews. Then there are cases where the head of a clan is regarded as the father of a generation, all the generations between being omitted. There are cases where through the "right of redemption" a distant relative (see the Book of Ruth) becomes the head of an extinct family. There are those cases, very frequent during the captivity, where one family took a place in the inheritance of another family which had disappeared, without being related by direct descent to the head of that race. There are cases too where, the name of ancestors being missing, the name of the birthplace replaced, so to say, the name of the family head. There are cases, common among the Jews, where a person had more than one name (see, for example, these well-known names: Benjamin and Benoni, Reuel and Jethro, Solomon and Jedidiah, etc.). And lastly there are cases where an abridged genealogy was given, the names indicated being nothing more than a few pointers to establish the line of descent.

These facts explain why the enumeration of the same tribe, given at two different periods, displays very noticeable differences. This becomes even more complicated due to the fact that the genealogies contain intentional omissions or transpositions of names meant to emphasize the purpose of the Spirit of God, especially in the book which we are studying.

Added to these many difficulties are the following problems. Sometimes the genealogies of Chronicles contain names of very ancient origin, which we do not find elsewhere in the Old Testament. Many names are not those of individuals, but of clans or families. Others are genealogies which we

might term geographic, including, for want of other source material, the names of tribes, of districts, of cities. We have mentioned this fact in our study of Ezra 2. We find it again in 1 Chron. 2: 18-24, 25-33, 42-55; 1 Chron. 4: 1-23, 28-33; 1 Chron. 5: 11-17; 1 Chron. 7: 37-40, etc.

It would be easy to add other difficulties to this already long list. What has been said already should be sufficient to warn Christians who, when they attempt to study the genealogies, stumble over apparent contradictions at every step. Not that the subject in itself does not edify, as for that matter the entire Word of God does, but it is useless to enter upon it simply with one's own intelligence, as the rationalists have so often done. Moreover, we would hasten to point out that these are not the genealogies which the apostle warns us not to give heed to (1 Tim. 1: 4; Titus 3: 9); he was warning against a certain philosophical system that sought to establish endless degrees in a hierarchy of spirits.

As we approach this study we would again insist upon the important fact that after the captivity, due to negligence, indifference, or other causes innumerable gaps existed in the genealogies, and that on this account it was often impossible to recognize certain persons as composing part of Israel, unless at the given moment a divine declaration by the Urim and Thummim should intervene (Ezra 2: 63).

1 Chronicles 1

From Adam to the Twelve Tribes

The chapters we are about to study may at first glance seem devoid of interest. Nonetheless, we shall see that they are full of instruction; furthermore, from their onset they show us the character of the book of which they form the preface.

Indeed Chronicles, dealing with God's counsels and His ways of grace toward man, naturally begins with Adam. It then traces the line of man, chosen according to the counsels of grace, in contrast to the line of man according to the flesh. Man has become sinful; he fell at once after his beginning. Though God has purposes of grace toward him, it is yet an established fact that as a sinner in the first place he begets sons in his image, who have no connection with the divine counsels, sons who are the seed of a fallen and corrupted nature. If God in His mercy does not intervene, man can only beget evil. In these chapters we therefore find the line of the flesh first, and that of the Spirit second, for God does not beget until sinful man has first proven what his nature could produce. This is why the apostle in 1 Corinthians 15: 46 says: "But that which is spiritual was not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual." Now, that which is spiritual takes part, not of the nature of the first Adam, but of the nature of the Second.

God has ordained it so. The entire question of man's responsibility must be resolved, before the Man according to the counsels of grace would appear; and in fact grace could not be unfolded if it were not first shown into what depths man, left to himself, had fallen. This great truth is foundational to all Scripture, for all Scripture gives man's irremediable ruin as the basis for the gospel of grace.

Therefore it is appropriate that a book like this, which tells us of God's counsels toward man and — as we shall see — especially toward the kingship, show that these counsels proceed uniquely from God's free grace manifested when man, according to the line of the flesh, has proven that he is capable of nothing but evil.

Once it is a question of the genealogy of Christ in the Gospels, we see the line according to the flesh contained in these chapters disappearing completely in order to give place to the line through which, according to election of grace, God's counsels respecting His King are fulfilled. But from the

moment it is a question of grace, far from taking perfect men to constitute Christ's lineage, God chooses sinful men — often from among the worst of them — or sinful women, thereby demonstrating the freedom of His choice.

In Chronicles, it is a matter of man, and of the way in which in the course of his history God will realize His counsels in order to triumph in the person of Christ. We see too, as already mentioned, that the genealogy begins with Adam. Verses 1 to 4 agree with what is revealed in Genesis. Moreover, there are no gaps in this first chapter. As soon as we approach Israel's history in 1 Chronicles 2, gaps appear, for when Chronicles was written the genealogies of many members of this people remained undetermined since they could not be proven.

Let us say immediately that 1 Chronicles 9 brings us a little beyond the time of Nehemiah, and interrupts the royal genealogies eight generations before Messiah's coming. The Gospel of Matthew fills this gap revealing to us how, right through the ruin God Himself took care to preserve the genealogy of David's Son, His own Son, until His coming as son of Joseph and Mary. Thus Matthew 1 forms the natural continuation of 1 Chronicles 9.

In 1 Chronicles 1, our present subject, we find two series of names highlighted. The first (vv. 1-4) begins with Adam and ends with Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. The second (vv. 24-27) begins again at Shem and ends with Abraham. These two series form an uninterrupted chain, the point of departure being grace toward fallen man, and culminating in the promises made to Abraham and taken hold of by faith.

Having established this, we find Shem mentioned first in verse 4, although he is not the first-born, a fact which, moreover, is frequently repeated in the genealogies of Genesis before Abraham. But the genealogies of Japheth and of Ham are enumerated before his (vv. 5-16), as we see also in Genesis 10. In God's eyes, Shem, chosen by grace, has the preeminence, but in the natural order that which is spiritual is not first, as we have already pointed out. It is the same with regard to Abraham's offspring: "The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael" (v. 28); Isaac is named first, seen as first in God's thoughts, but Ishmael, the elder, is enumerated first (v. 29) as the seed according to the flesh. So with Isaac, the posterity of his son Esau is enumerated first (v. 35), as we have already seen with Ham and Ishmael.

One or two little secondary considerations will conclude our remarks on this chapter. Among the sons of Ham, Nimrod is simply mentioned as the who "began to be mighty on the earth." In Genesis 10: 9-12 we find the extent of his dominion in great detail. Genesis 10 deals with the distribution of the nations on the earth, and the developments found there would be useless for the aim of the book we are now considering. For the same reason the boundaries of the Canaanites in Genesis 10: 18-20 and those of the sons of Joktan (Gen. 10: 30-32) are passed over in complete silence here (cf. vv.16, 23).

In verse 32 the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine, are enumerated as we find them in Genesis 25: 1-4. They follow Ishmael's posterity (vv. 28-31) in our chapter so as to show that they also are part of the lineage according to the flesh. The genealogy of Ishmael himself is given according to Genesis 25: 12-15. As for Esau (vv. 35-42), his sons are mentioned in abbreviated form, without the names of their mothers and the numerous details given us in Genesis 26: 1-19.

The kings of Edom are enumerated next (vv. 43-54; cf. Gen. 36: 31-42). Violence characterizes this entire race, for not a single one of these kings has his son as successor.

We believe we must mention these details as characterizing the aim of the Spirit of God in this book. They are in no way, as rationalists claim, a very inexact or willfully altered compilation of other documents, but a selection out of earlier documents of that which is appropriate for the purpose God

has before Him.

Moreover, if this first chapter contains, as we have seen, the voluntary omission of certain details, it agrees completely with the genealogical lists of Genesis. We repeat that we do not find gaps here. These gaps begin to appear only when we get to the genealogies of the twelve tribes.

Once the lineage according to nature has been enumerated, the question is considered as closed forever.

Note: However later on we meet with the same principle in relation to the kingship, to the lineage of Saul, and to the priesthood.

God does not come back to it. He cannot in any way use the “natural man,” from henceforth left to himself, without connection or relationship to God, so that he may give place to a lineage according to the election of grace and according to the eternal counsels of God.

1 Chronicles 2

Judah in Relationship to the Kingship

At the beginning of this chapter, the names of the sons of Jacob, called Israel, are mentioned — not in order — with the aim, I think, of presenting them to us as being all, without distinction, objects of God's purposes in grace. Thus we find first of all Leah's children, then Rachel's children mentioned between Dan and Naphtali, the sons of Bilhah, and lastly Gad and Asher, the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid.

What we observe here gives opportunity to mention something that seems not yet to have drawn our attention.

Jacob's sons and the twelve tribes are enumerated, if I am not mistaken, twenty-two times in Scripture, and each time in a different order. It would take more space than is available to us to examine the reasons for this in detail. Besides here in verses 1 and 2 of our chapter, we find this enumeration three more times in 1 Chronicles. (See Appendix.)

Let us return to the subject of our chapter:

In Chronicles the accuracy of genealogies depends in large measure on the importance the Jews placed upon them during their captivity, and the disorder they reveal corresponds to the state of the Remnant as we find them in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Quite a number among the people and among the priesthood could not prove their genealogy. Though lacking heads, they could nonetheless be recognized by the names of their families, groups, and cities, which in this way became in essence a “moral person,” recognized as the stem of their ancestry (cf. Ezra 1 and here 1 Chron. 2: 50, 54-55; 1 Chron. 4: 4). In addition, the great disorder that came in explains, at least in part, why very distant descendants of the head of a clan were considered as his sons. (See for example, Shobal, the great-grandson of one of Judah's grandsons (cf. 1 Chron. 2: 50; 1 Chron. 4: 1). This same disorder also explains why we see a family head, whose name had not been previously mentioned, suddenly appearing and counted as the head of a clan (1 Chron. 8: 33).

Caleb's genealogy offers a striking example of this disorder and of how fragmentarily the genealogical registers were preserved. Caleb (who is not without purpose, I think, called Chelubai in v. 9) is the son of Hezron and the great-grandson of Judah. We find his genealogy in verses 18-20, and the

descendants of his two wives, Azubah and Ephrath. In verses 42-49 we again find descendants of this same Caleb by his concubines. He is called the brother of Jerahmeel (the son of Hezron, v.9). But at the very end of this enumeration we are suddenly brought into the presence of Achsah the daughter, as we know, of Caleb the son of Jephunneh (Josh. 15: 16). In verses 50-55, for the third time in this chapter, we meet the descendants of Caleb, the son of Hezron, through Hur, the first-born of Ephratah, a part of whose genealogy has already been given us in verse 20.

Finally, in 1 Chronicles 4: 13-15 we find the descendants of Caleb the son of Jephunneh and of his brother Kenaz. But here now, in this portion, this genealogy is truncated.

Must we conclude from all this that the text of Chronicles is a human and capricious compilation and that thus the historical value of this book is nil? This is what the rationalists assert, but thank God, their reason is always at fault when it attacks His Word. No enlightened Christian will deny that the genealogies of Chronicles are composed of fragments gathered up in the midst of general confusion, yet documents upon which God sets His seal of approval. So it is true that a number of passages in these genealogies are of very ancient origin, not mentioned in the other books of the Old Testament.

Caleb's fragmentary genealogy, which we have cited above, is very instructive in this regard. We know from a number of Scripture passages (Num. 13: 6; Num. 14: 30, 38; Num. 32: 12; Num. 34: 19; Deut. 1: 36; Josh. 14: 13) what favour Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, won from God by his perseverance, moral courage, faithfulness, and zeal to conquer a portion in the land of Canaan. The Lord's approval was upon him, whereas Caleb, the son of Hezron and of Judah, despite his numerous descendants, is not mentioned as the object of God's special favor. But if the fragmentary genealogies of Caleb the son of Judah are proof of the existing disorder, God puts these together fragments for a special purpose, and we find a deeper thought in them. Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, is the one whom God has particularly in view, as the Word teaches us; he is the one whom He introduces in so extraordinary a way into the genealogy of the son of Hezron (1 Chron. 2: 49). It is in view of him that this genealogy is inscribed next to that of David, as forming part of the tribe of Judah, from whence the royal race comes. But what connection does Caleb the son of Jephunneh, whose daughter was Achsah, have with Caleb the son of Hezron? Here we find a most interesting fact which has perhaps not been given sufficient attention. Caleb the son of Jephunneh was not originally of the people of Judah. In Numbers 32: 12 and Joshua 14: 6, 14 he is called Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. Likewise, Caleb's younger brother Othniel, to whom Caleb gave his daughter Achsah as wife, is called "the son of Kenaz" (Joshua 15: 17; Judges 1: 13; Judges 3: 9, 11). Now in Genesis 36: 11 we learn that Kenaz is an Edomite name. Hence the conclusion that at some point of time the family of Kenaz, and therefore the family of Caleb the son of Jephunneh, was incorporated into the tribes of Israel just as so many other foreigners, such as Jethro, Rahab, and Ruth, who in virtue of their faith became members of the people of God. This explains a characteristic phrase in Joshua 15: 13: "And to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a portion among the children of Judah according to the commandment of Jehovah to Joshua...that is, Hebron." And in Joshua 14: 14: "Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed Jehovah the God of Israel."

Thus Caleb, who by his origin really had no right of citizenship in Israel, received this right amidst Judah by virtue of his faith and was incorporated into the family of Caleb the son of Hezron, as it appears in 1 Chronicles 2: 49 and in the passages already cited in Joshua. The fragments preserved of the genealogy of Caleb the son of Hezron confirm the place that God assigned to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and this substitution is one of the important points the Spirit of God calls our attention to here.

To summarize, the name of Caleb is highlighted in this chapter. With this name is associated the thought of “virtue,” that is, of moral energy which in view of a goal to be attained enables the believer to surmount obstacles, separating him from every weight and the sin which so easily entangles him. 2 Peter 1: 5 says, “In your faith have also virtue.” Caleb is an example in this. With this name are associated characters of the same caliber as the son of Jephunneh: Othniel, Achsah (1 Chron. 4: 13; 1 Chron. 2: 49); Hur (1 Chron. 2: 19, 50; 1 Chron. 4: 1, 4); Jair (although this latter later lost everything that his energy had at first acquired, 1 Chron. 2: 22-23); the house of Rechab (1 Chron. 2: 55).

Other members of the family of Caleb the son of Hezron, while witnessing grace accorded to faith, are at the same time unfruitful, which is the result of ruin. Consider for example Seled, Jether, and Sheshan who died without sons (vv. 30, 32, 34).

Unfruitfulness especially characterizes the line of Jerahmeel. Although he was Hezron's eldest son (v. 9), he is once again in last place here (v. 25), and this fact agrees with what we have seen of the character of Chronicles in 1 Chronicles 1. The features of the natural man are just as transmissible as the features of a man of faith like Caleb, only these latter are so by grace. David's line does not descend from Jerahmeel, but from Ram, his younger brother (vv. 9-16).

1 Chronicles 3

The Family of David

In 1 Chronicles 2: 9-16 — in fact this is the main thrust of that chapter — we have met with the genealogy of David, descended from Judah, and going back through the ages down via Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Shem, and Noah to Adam. 1 Chronicles 3 presents the descendants of David until just a few generations before Christ. Here, this line of descent begins at Hebron, the place where the tribes first acknowledged the kingship of the son of Jesse. Chronicles passes over David's history and afflictions as the rejected king in complete silence. It sets forth David as the object of God's counsels regarding the kingship, counsels which will be fully accomplished in Christ, the Son of David. Yet, while omitting his sufferings, Chronicles shows us Hebron as the starting point of his glory. Hebron was above all the place of death, for it was there that the tombs of Sarah, Abraham, Jacob, and of the patriarchs were. From this same place Joseph, a type of Christ in rejection, went forth to seek his brothers. Hebron then became a city of refuge from the avenger of blood, prefiguring the cross which shelters a guilty people. Lastly, it was the principal dwelling place of the priests, the sons of Aaron, types of that priesthood which now makes Christ's death the focus of its praises. Therefore this place speaks in a striking way of the cross as the foundation of royal glory and as the basis for all our blessings. Caleb chose it as his residence. Caleb's career culminated at Hebron; David's career begins there.

But, we repeat, if Chronicles shows us, through incidents and in type, the death of Christ as the basis for all, these books dwell upon God's counsels concerning the kingship as their main subject.

Just as its head, for David was the lastborn of his father's house, so the family of David bears the evident mark of election according to grace (1 Chron. 3: 9). Amnon, the son according to the flesh, the shame of his father's house, comes first, only to be repudiated like all that springs forth from nature. In fact, all David's sons, without exception, are included between those two names Amnon and Tamar (vv. 1-9). Moreover, all the sons born before the kingdom's full establishment, at least all those whose history is recorded, undergo a common condemnation: Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah — corruption, rebellion, and pride which pretends to the throne and would supplant Solomon — all come under

judgment. One must reach the kingdom definitely established at Jerusalem, the place of free election according to grace (Ps. 132: 13), before being introduced to Solomon, after his father David the man of God's counsels. Once again, nature's order is of no value. Shimea, Shobab, and Nathan, mentioned first as sons of Bathsheba, disappear before Solomon, the youngest son. Likewise, all the other sons that come after him have no right to the kingship.

Verses 10 to 24 give us Solomon's direct descendants. The words "his son" which are constantly repeated down to Zedekiah accentuate the contrast between the descendants according to grace and those according to nature, as we have seen in the history of Edom (1 Chron. 1: 43-54).

From verse 15 onward, after faithful Josiah's reign, we find the kings at the time of Judah's final ruin; this series finally culminates with Zerubbabel returned from captivity but no longer bearing the title of king. After Zerubbabel, Chronicles records still five generations more to Hodaviah and his brothers. If the years of one of these were known, this would give us the approximate date when Chronicles was composed. The names corresponding to Hananiah, Shechaniah, Neariah, Elioenai, and Hodaviah are not to be found in the genealogy of Matthew 1. Some have supposed that the Babylonian rulers may have changed them (cf. Dan. 1: 6-7) in order to efface all traces of kingship from the spirit of the Jews, an assertion which, while not confirmed, could well be probable.

1 Chronicles 4

More About Judah; Jabez;

The Tribe of Simeon

Verses 1 through 23 take up the genealogy of Judah for the second time. Two names especially stand out in 1 Chronicles 2-4. First, that of David, for Judah's kingship is, as we have seen, the principal subject of Chronicles. Secondly, that of Caleb the son of Jephunneh who represents the energy and the perseverance of faith; Hur, who plays a prominent role in Israel's history (Ex. 17: 12; Ex. 24: 14), is a son of Caleb's (1 Chron. 2: 19, 50; 1 Chron. 4: 1, 4). Jabez (1 Chron. 4: 9-10) is of the same clan (1 Chron. 4: 9-10; 1 Chron. 2: 55).

Jabez' mother had borne him with sorrow and had named him Jabez: "Sorrow." She had herself experienced the consequences of sin. She acknowledged the curse that was its consequence for man, God's righteous sentence pronounced upon the woman whom the serpent had beguiled, for God had said: "I will greatly increase thy travail and thy pregnancy; with pain thou shalt bear children" (Gen. 3: 16). Jabez' mother accepted this sentence by faith. So little did she seek to escape from it, that she passed it on to her son by having him bear the name "Sorrow." On man's side all hope of happiness was lost through the fall and sorrow was his fatal portion.

Jabez began with this conviction; therefore he was "more honorable than his brethren." Then he "called on the God of Israel," knowing that he could only depend on the Lord to be delivered from the curse of sin. He knew, moreover, that this deliverance could be so absolute that he, Jabez, would be able to be without sorrow!

Jabez addresses four requests to God; if God grants them, they will become the proof of his complete deliverance.

This is the first request: "Oh that Thou wouldest richly bless me..." God had cursed man and the

earth from which he had been taken (Gen. 3: 17). He alone could annul this sentence and replace it with blessing, the first proof of the end of sorrow. He alone could change circumstances in such a way that the sinner, banished from His presence, might be brought to Him to enjoy His grace and unconditional promises. "I will bless thee", the Lord had said to Abraham. When all is in ruin Jabez' faith goes back to the counsels of grace and to the promises of God. Is not his history, related only in this book, well-suited to the general character of Chronicles? "And God brought about what he had requested." In our case likewise, God has abolished through Christ's sacrifice all the consequences of sin, so that we might be blessed in Him with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies.

His second request is this: "... and enlarge my coast." Here and there these genealogies highlight various individuals whose borders God extended in the promised land at a time when the mass of the people had failed to conquer their inheritance completely. Jair has already given evidence of this in 1 Chronicles 2. The names of Caleb, Achsah, and Othniel are likewise examples of this individual energy of faith, which finds its borders enlarged as it relies upon God. So it is with us: our spiritual borders expand in the heavenly sphere while we are upon earth. In order to attain to this we must recognize our irremediable ruin and the incapacity we have demonstrated to extend our borders ourselves, and must manifest humble dependence which relies upon the grace of God alone in order to possess them.

Third, Jabez says: "... and that Thy hand might be with me." He does not rely on his natural energy to enlarge his borders, but rather on the power of God. This is all the more striking since he came from a family noted for its energy.

Fourth and finally he says: "...and that thou wouldest keep me from evil." The evil that introduced sorrow into this world has not disappeared; it is ever present. Jabez knows this well, for he does not ask that it be removed, but he desires to be kept from the evil whose existence he sees. Here again, he recognizes that it is not his will, but the power of God alone that is able to keep him.

Absolute confidence in God's grace and power is the only way of obtaining these things. Jabez obtains them. How could sorrow still subsist in the heart of this man of God when all his requests had been granted? No doubt, sorrow has not disappeared from the earth any more than has the evil which caused it, but Jabez' heart, full of those excellent things which had been granted him, had no room for it.

* * * *

The people of God have yet other duties and other activities beside enlarging their borders as Jabez. Joab is "the father...of craftsmen" (v. 14). God has entrusted us with certain functions, humble but very useful in their place, to which we do well to pay attention without coveting higher things. We will thus be kept in humility. Among the sons of Shelah are found "byssus-workers," potters, and gardeners (vv. 21, 23). These were not noble occupations, but they owed their importance to the fact that these men "...dwelt with the king for his work." Although very humble, they were his fellow workers within the limits that his work assigned to them; on this account the king retained them around his person; theirs was the great privilege, coveted in vain by many nobles and princes, of dwelling near him.*

Note: The words "And these are ancient things" contradict the rather peculiar notion that this king was Nebuchadnezzar.

So it is with us too. Let us each fulfill our task; let us beware of coveting a high position among the people of God; let us rather be content with humble things. What our Lord asks is that we carry them out diligently. Let us be faithful in little things as long as we work together in His works. To say

nothing of a future reward, we will obtain the inestimable present advantage of “dwelling with the king” and of contemplating His face.

* * * *

In verses 24 through 43 we have the genealogies of the sons of Simeon. As a consequence of Simeon and Levi's sin, these two brothers were “divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel” (Gen. 49: 7). However, they differed from each other in that in grace the Lord used Levi's dispersion to give him priestly functions adapted to his position, whereas it was otherwise for Simeon who continued to bear the mark of God's judgment: “And his brethren had not many sons; neither did all their family multiply like to the sons of Judah” (v. 27). Simeon was small in number, partially enveloped in Judah's territory, open to enemy attacks on the south, and without definite borders. But we find here the truth already presented that when collective faith has failed the faith of a few, as previously the individual faith of a Caleb, inspires them to “enlarge their borders.” Many “mentioned by name were princes in their families; and their fathers' houses increased greatly” (v. 38). “They found fat and good pasture” where the sons of Ham had dwelt before (v. 40); they even went to “Mount Seir” (v. 42), occupied by Edom. The extent of their possessions depended neither on their numbers nor upon their power. Like Jabez, they bore the consequences of the curse pronounced upon them, but their extreme poverty which they could not deny impelled them to conquer that which God placed within their reach.

Notice that they obtained their blessings under the two reigns of grace in Judah: that of David (v. 31); and that of Hezekiah (v. 41), at a time when the state of the people was already drawing down upon themselves the approaching judgment through the king of Babylon. How all these details constantly bring us back to the great thought of this precious book! All that is according to nature ends in complete failure and is valueless before God; grace is the only thing we can count upon as we rest upon the counsels and election of grace which are established forever.

1 Chronicles 5

The Tribes Beyond Jordan

Here we find the genealogy of the two and a half tribes which had chosen their portion beyond Jordan: Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. But these tribes are not joined together on account of this circumstance alone; Reuben's place in the genealogy, as we have already seen, is determined by his sin. The birthright was his by right of birth, but it was taken from him (v. 1) and given to Joseph and his sons. As in all the rest of Scripture, Joseph is here a type of the Messiah rejected by his brethren, and subsequently receiving dominion over the nations. But our passage (vv. 1-2) explains why he does not come first here. His place is given to Judah, the stock of the kingship according to God's counsels: “Of him was the prince.” Once again we see here how Chronicles is consistent with its purpose to show the divine counsels as to the kingship. Yet, just as throughout in these chapters, the ways of the flesh are mentioned first (vv. 3-6), and they continue until the ten tribes are taken captive by Tilgath-Pilneser (cf. 2 Ki. 15: 29). It is true that Reuben's energy to enlarge his borders is emphasized (v. 10); but it is no longer the virtue we have seen in Caleb, springing from faith alone. The display of Reuben's activity has a purely human and earthly motive: “Their cattle were multiplied in the land of Gilead” (v. 9).

Gad (vv. 11-17) has greater spiritual distinction than Reuben. Like the latter, he also sought pasture land (v. 16), but he had still other interests. It is said of him: “All these were reckoned by genealogy in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel” (v. 17). Gad

had a true concern about his genealogy. Even though the result of his zeal was annulled by his being carried away captive, at least until Jotham and Jeroboam's day his position in Israel was clear and well established, showing his sincere desire to be part of God's people and, notwithstanding all, not to deny Judah, under Jotham the center of the kingship.

Another matter is mentioned in verses 18-22. These two and a half tribes "made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Naphish, and Nodab; and they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them; for they cried to God in the battle, and He was intreated of them, because they put their trust in Him" (vv. 19-20). God granted their prayers just as He had answered the prayer of a single man, Jabez. "They put their trust in Him"; the God of grace owed it to His own character to answer them, however guilty they might be with regard to the unity of the people of God. Thus, in spite of the ruin, grace always responds to faith, and this is one of the distinctive characteristics of the whole of these books of Chronicles. The flesh is condemned; the captivity is the consequence of its independence, but faith is answered, for God is not only a God of government who renders to man according to his responsibility, but also a God of grace who cannot deny His character. In verse 22 we read, "The war was of God." He had incited the difficulty so as to exercise the faith and confidence of His people, in order that He might then be able to answer them.

The half-tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan is next mentioned (vv. 23-26). Its territory, compared to that of the other tribes, was immense. In His grace God had prospered the men of Manasseh: "They were many" (v. 23). But the blessings which God's favor had secured for them turned them aside rather than drawing them closer to Him: "And they transgressed against the God of their fathers" (v. 25), and "the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-Pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, — unto this day." At the time Chronicles was composed, these tribes were in captivity in the places here mentioned. This passage, just as many others, could well be used to establish the date of our book.

1 Chronicles 6

The Tribe of Levi

In this chapter we find the genealogy of the priestly family and of the families of the Levites as well as their dwelling places.

The priestly genealogy forms the counterpart to the royal genealogy (1 Chron. 2 and 3), but it ends here at the captivity, without going beyond it as with the line of David (1 Chron. 3: 19-24).

In verse 1, according to the principle often mentioned, we first find the sons of Levi according to natural order or the order of birth: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari; then in verse 2, Kohath (and not Gershon) chosen by grace as the stock of the Aaronic priesthood. Aaron, not Moses, is mentioned first in verse 3: "Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam." The order of this enumeration corresponds to the contents of Chronicles which treats of Judah's kingship according to God's counsels, and of the priesthood in its relationship to the kingship. These three names, Aaron, Moses and Miriam, represent the priesthood, the law, and prophecy; but as soon as it is a question of the counsels of grace relative to the kingship, the law, Moses, gives place to the priesthood.

Aaron's sons are Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu were judged for their sin. And thus in the priestly family we again see that the history of the natural man comes first and then is

entirely set aside. After Nadab and Abihu come Eleazar and Ithamar: Eleazar, the priest according to the election of grace, Ithamar, the responsible priest, set aside in order to give place to the former.

Eleazar begets Phinehas, a man of energy, who like Caleb added virtue to his faith and was chosen by God to continue the priestly line. This line continues without interruption down to Azariah (v. 9), who “exercised the priesthood in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem” (v. 10). The line goes on from Azariah to Jehozadak, the last high priest mentioned in Chronicles. He “went away when Jehovah carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar” (v. 15). Ezra and Nehemiah give us information about the high priests who functioned after the return from captivity. Their line is interrupted about 330 years before Christ (Neh. 12: 10-11), just as the royal line of descent stops in 1 Chronicles 3 of , a few generations after Zerubbabel.

In verse 16, the Spirit of God again takes up the genealogy of the Levites, this time in the order of birth according to which their families had been established. The book of Numbers teaches us that their service consisted of carrying the tabernacle and its utensils through the wilderness. The most precious burden, including the ark, was entrusted to the Kohathites. But here we find that “after that the ark was in rest” David appointed men from among the three families of the Levites for “the service of song in the house of Jehovah.” “And they ministered before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting with singing, until Solomon had built the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem” (vv. 31-32).

In each of these three families one Levite stood out above the rest by reason of the gifts he had received from God: for the Kohathites, Heman; for the Gershonites, Asaph; for the Merarites, Ethan. The other Levites “were given for all the service of the tabernacle of the house of God” (v. 48).

The priesthood itself had a dual function. First of all, “Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt-offering, and on the altar of incense, for all the work of the most holy place.” Secondly, they made “atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded” (v. 49). Thus, the priesthood alone was called to portray the work of Christ as He is described in Hebrews 2: 17: “a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” The Levites on the other hand depicted service and praise in connection with this work.

In verses 54 to 81 we find enumerated the cities apportioned to the Levites, including the cities of refuge. These latter are not mentioned according to the order of their being hallowed, beginning with Kedesh and Shechem as in Joshua 20: 7-9, but according to the order of Joshua 21: 11-40, beginning with Hebron. Here again, Kohath comes first instead of Gershom (cf. v. 20), for it is a matter of the Lord's free choice: “theirs was the lot” (v. 54). Among them, the sons of Aaron received “Hebron in the land of Judah” as a city of refuge (vv. 55, 57). Thus the priesthood, issuing from Kohath, is here intimately united with the tribe of Judah and the place where the kingship was established, whereas the other members of the family of Kohath find their dwelling place in Ephraim and Manasseh. For this reason Judah and Ephraim (cf. v. 66) occupy a prominent place among the sons of Israel. Thus we see Judah and Joseph, who had the birthright, united through the Levitical priesthood dwelling in their midst. These three names, Judah, Joseph, and Levi, speak to us in a way still obscure of the Messiah's features as king, as first-born, and as high priest.

As we have said, the order of the cities of refuge corresponds to that of Joshua 21, being Hebron, Shechem, Golan in Bashan, Kedesh, Bezer, and Ramoth in Gilead.

1 Chronicles 7

Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Ephraim, Asher. The Daughters of Zelophehad

1 Chronicles 7 closes the genealogy of the tribes. The sons of Issachar come first. They “had many wives and sons” (v. 4). The numbering of the men of war begins with Issachar. In this tribe, the number of men of war continued to increase from the time of the establishment of the kingship. In David's time it was 22,600 men, then 36,000 men; and finally, because of their many wives, 87,000 men (v. 5). A second favorable trait of this tribe is that they took care of their genealogies, for we are told that all these men were registered by genealogy (v. 5). Finally, a third feature is mentioned only in connection with Issachar, Benjamin, and Asher: “valiant men of might,” fit to go out to war.

The tribe of Benjamin had the same features as those of Issachar: Care for their genealogies, and mighty men of valor, but this latter feature was outstanding in this little tribe, so intimately united to the kingdom of Judah at Jerusalem. Three times they are called by this name (vv. 7, 9, 11). This reminds us of Christ's character as waging war and conquering. Benjamin is the prophetic type of Him, and is so directly associated with the royal tribe of Judah that they are never separated from it. As Benjamin's antitype Christ comes up from Bozrah, his garments dyed with blood, to establish his reign (Isa. 63: 1-6). Benjamin is “fit for service for war” (v. 11). We shall see him appearing a second time under other circumstances.

Naphtali, Bilhah's son, does not seem to have shown any interest in his genealogy (v. 13). His descendants are scarcely mentioned, and still less, the number of his men of war.

Manasseh, that is to say, the half-tribe beyond the Jordan, comes next. Here, as elsewhere in these genealogies, women are referred to continually, one more proof that these genealogies were put together only after the captivity, amid the irregularities that characterized Israel's ruin. Through the female line of descent indicators could be established so as to retrace a genealogy, whereas a normal state of affairs would not have required such mentions. Thirteen women are alluded to in these few verses (vv. 14-19), including the five daughters of Zelophehad.

Some words concerning these latter would not be inappropriate. They are mentioned five times in the course of biblical history (Num. 26: 33; Num. 27: 1-11; Num. 36: 3-12; Joshua 17: 3-6; 1 Chron. 7: 15), proof of the important place they occupy in God's thoughts. Not one of their names is forgotten; they are Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah (Num. 26: 33). In Numbers 27 we notice several interesting details about them. First, they recognized that their abnormal condition was the result of their father's sin. Although “he was not in the band of them that banded themselves together against Jehovah in the band of Korah,” yet he “died in the wilderness,” and “died in his own sin,” and this was the reason why “he had no sons” (v. 3). Nonetheless his five daughters desire to perpetuate their father's name; as true daughters of Israel they value their genealogy and, consequently, their inheritance. The Lord waits to set their situation in order until they express this need before Him (cf. Num. 26: 33 with Num. 27: 2). He answers them when they stand “before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the tent of meeting” (Num. 27: 2), and when Moses “brought their cause before Jehovah” (v. 5). God says: “The daughters of Zelophehad speak right.” Wherever there is zeal to appropriate God's blessings and promises, an answer is sure. But the Lord gives them much more than they were asking. He conveys the inheritance of their father to them and adds a clause containing four articles to His law — these weak women are the occasion for this — which becomes “unto the children of Israel a statute of right.” “And unto the

children of Israel shalt thou speak,” says the Lord, “saying: (1) If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. (2) And if he have no daughter, ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. (3) And if he have no brethren, ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. (4) And if his father have no brethren, ye shall give his inheritance to his kinsman that is nearest to him in his family, and he shall possess it” (vv. 8-11). Besides the precepts set down in the law, God thus gives a special revelation in response to the desire expressed by some daughters of Israel. This desire had His approbation, and it was necessary in order for them to be able to enter into the possession of their inheritance.

In Numbers 27 the daughters of Zelophehad themselves had presented their petition before God, but in chapter 36 Manasseh, the entire tribe to which they belonged, inspired by the zeal of these women, pleads for them before Moses and the princes. The high priest who could intercede for them before the tent of meeting is not found here: Manasseh himself has turned intercessor in favor of the daughters of its people. The tribe is just as zealous to see its inheritance remain complete, without impairment, as the daughters of Zelophehad had been zealous to possess it. The Lord is pleased to acknowledge how right Manasseh's desire is. He declares: “The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well” (Num. 36: 5), just as in chapter 27 He had acknowledged that the daughters of Zelophehad had spoken well. God then gives a new revelation governing marriage in relation to the inheritance, for Manasseh was jealous to prevent even the least bit of the patrimony which he had conquered from being taken away from him. Some might otherwise have appropriated a portion of it to themselves by pleading the natural rights of marriage, an institution originally hallowed by God, but such a usurpation of rights could not be according to God's thoughts. After having given the sons of Joseph opportunity to express their desire — for if man is to receive an answer from God, his faith must ever be active — the Lord grants every liberty to the institution of marriage, giving it His full approval on condition that it take place within the bounds of the tribe (vv. 6-9).

Christians, is it not likewise with us with regard to marriage? Marriage must be within the bounds of the family of God, and within the realm of faith, else disorder will rapidly be introduced into the Assembly. It will lose the portion of her heavenly inheritance or see it diminished. This inheritance should not be impaired nor can it pass into other hands. Every individual alliance with those from without is a loss for the body as a whole, which, in the measure in which this takes place, is stymied in the enjoyment of at least a part of its inheritance.

This is the answer to Manasseh's request: “Every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance among the tribes of the children of Israel, shall be married to one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may possess every one the inheritance of his fathers, and the inheritance shall not pass from one tribe to another tribe; for each of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep to his inheritance” (vv. 8-9). Thus from a particular case God draws a general principle, which immediately becomes obligatory. Even so we recall the institution of the Supper, of the first day of the week, the collections, and a special case of discipline at Corinth, all of them becoming general obligations. “Even as Jehovah had commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad” (v. 10). They themselves regarded the revelation which had been given them and which answered to their particular need as a commandment of Jehovah.

In Joshua 17: 3-4, the daughters of Zelophehad present themselves before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua, the son of Nun, and before the princes. They had married their uncles' sons according to the Lord's directions (Num. 36: 11). Now they ask to receive their inheritance. “Jehovah commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren,” they say, relying on God's word alone. For them, this was enough to settle everything, even in a case that went beyond the usual order of the law.

Moreover, their faith and their confidence in Jehovah's commandment to Moses results in the same rule with regard to female descendants being adopted throughout all Manasseh, even beyond the Jordan. "The daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons" (v. 6). Thus the rule given to a few became the privilege of all.

This history is of deep interest to us. We should consider the privileges of our heavenly inheritance priceless. Let us not be checked by natural, apparently legitimate, considerations which would tend to hinder us from appropriating our blessings. Let us ask God insistently that these obstacles, if they exist, be removed. Do not think, sisters in Christ, that your enjoyment of heavenly things must be lessened by your position of seeming inferiority. Do not be satisfied until you have acquired the same portion of the inheritance as your brothers. To overcome in this, remember that this is a commandment of the Lord as to you. Your example will have a blessed effect on your sisters: it will inspire them to follow it and to rely upon the same promises. Whatever your humble condition may be, your inheritance is the same as that of your brothers. There is no doubt that you are not called to the same conflicts, to the role of mighty men of valor in battle, but you are called to the same possession as they: you have the same lot, the same heavenly blessings!

1 Chronicles 7: 20-28 speaks of the sons of Ephraim. Their history as a tribe begins and ends sadly, although such a notable place had been reserved for them in their relationship with the tribe of Levi (1 Chron. 6: 66-70). At the beginning (we do not know exactly when), they had stolen from the Philistines of Gath, an act which the Lord could in no way approve. Surely, stealing from the Canaanites in order to enrich themselves while leaving them still alive was not the same as destroying them. In Samuel 15 Saul did the very same thing. Here the men of Gath execute that judgment upon Ephraim which the latter had not executed upon them. "The men of Gath born in the land slew them, because they came down to take their cattle" (v. 21). Later, the accursed race of the Philistines of Gath falls beneath the blows of "mighty men of valor" of Benjamin (1 Chron. 8: 13). God commits the accomplishing of His plans to those more faithful than Ephraim, and those who should have been His instruments are deprived of this honor in a very humiliating way. The tribe that was the very least rose to be the greatest. This execution of punishment must take place, for God's decrees could not be annulled by man's unfaithfulness. The moral result of Ephraim's conduct was not long in waiting: "Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. And he went in to his wife; and she conceived, and bore a son; and he called his name Beriah [in evil], for he was born when calamity was in his house" (vv. 22-23). In this he was completely different from Jabez, for whom sorrow, the consequence of sin, became the starting point of his relationship with Jehovah. But the God who had blessed Joseph in his son Ephraim, according to the unchanging pattern of Chronicles, does not stop with the evil which this man had merited. The account given us ends with the name of Joshua, the type of Christ in the Spirit, leading His people to the conquest of their inheritance. So it is for God's people today. We must accept that it is by our own fault that evil is in the house, but we must never doubt for an instant that He who alone is worthy to enter Canaan will give us a possession in it. In Him we have the final word of our whole history!

Asher (vv. 30-40) is concerned about his genealogy, and the number of his men of war is given us along with that of Issachar and Benjamin. Like these latter, they are "mighty of valor."

We cannot emphasize often enough that the importance of the genealogies here is dependent upon the care taken by the families to preserve them during the captivity. Naphtali resembles the dried remnant of a plant that was once green and flourishing, whereas Issachar, Benjamin, and Asher keep intact the deposit that God had confided to them.

1 Chronicles 8

The Tribe of Benjamin in Relation to the Family of Saul

Here for the second time we find the genealogy of Benjamin (cf. 1 Chron. 7: 6-12), but with a very special purpose. It brings us to Saul and his family (v. 33), to the kingship according to the flesh, the ruin of which we shall see in 1 Chronicles 10, and which is to be replaced, according to Chronicles' unchanging pattern, by the kingship of David according to election of God and the counsels of grace. We have few comments to make about this chapter. That obscure passage, verses 6 and 7, seems to be an allusion to Judges 20: 43, if we are to read, according to the marginal note, "to Manukah."* We have already spoken of verse 13.

Note: According to the French translation of J. N. Darby, the words "at the resting-place" can also be read "to Manukah."

Benjamin's habitation at Jerusalem, that is to say, at the seat of the kingship, to which Benjamin was entitled according to his geographic situation, is mentioned in verses 28-32. From Benjamin came mighty men of valor, able to draw the bow, which still did not prevent Saul from succumbing to the weapon that was the strength of his tribe and should have been his own strength against his enemies. The sinful nature adorned with all its advantages perishes and cannot even for an instant resist God's judgment.

1 Chronicles 9: 1-34

The Ruin of the People and the Restoration of Judah and Benjamin. The Levites

1 Chronicles 8 has brought us to the kingship according to the flesh, whose ruin will be shown us in 1 Chronicles 10; whereas 1 Chronicles 9 shows us the final ruin of the people: "Judah was carried away to Babylon because of their transgression" (v. 1). We then find the restoration of a feeble remnant, mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, in order to await the promised Messiah at Jerusalem. This ninth chapter corresponds to chapter 11 of Nehemiah. Yet it differs significantly from Nehemiah 11, both with regard to the number of the sons of Judah and Benjamin who dwelt at Jerusalem, and with regard to their names. This chapter adds collateral branches. With regard to the priests and Levites, it is much closer to Nehemiah. Finally, it defines the functions of the doorkeepers of the temple very exactly. We learn also what Nehemiah does not reveal, that some of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh, probably left in the land of Canaan at the time of the captivity of their tribes, came to dwell at Jerusalem (v. 3) with the children of Judah and of Benjamin.

Let us note yet another detail. In verse 13 the priests are termed "able men for the work of the service of the house of God." Indeed the same strength is needed for the service of the house of God as for combat. These functions are very different in nature, but the same spiritual energy is necessary for both the one and the other.

In verses 17-23 we learn what the service, in part, of the Levites was. In these days of restoration they were doorkeepers at the gate of the temple, called "the king's gate." Formerly they had been "keepers of the thresholds of the tent and their fathers, set over the camp of Jehovah, were keepers of the entrance. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them formerly." Of him it was said:

“Jehovah was with him” (v. 20), and that says everything. David and Samuel had instituted the doorkeepers in their trust when the temple, called “the house of the tent” in verse 23, had not yet been built. But still more, these Levite doorkeepers were “over the chambers and over the treasuries of the house of God; for they stayed round about the house of God during the night, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them” (vv. 26-27). Finally, “part of them had the charge of the instruments of service, for by number they brought them in and by number they brought them out. Part of them also were appointed over the vessels, and over all the holy instruments, and over the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices” (vv. 28-29). Others were “in trust over the things that were made in the pans. And some of the sons of the Kohathites, their brethren, were over the loaves to be set in rows, to prepare them every sabbath.” Finally, there were “the singers” (vv. 31-33).

How many diverse functions these humble servants carried on! Modest functions, yes, but without them the entire order of the Lord's service would have been interrupted, or even discontinued! Let us think of this, and when the Lord confides a service to us, insignificant though it may appear to be, let us carry it out with zeal, reminding ourselves that it is necessary for the order of the house of God. Whatever may be our task, may we know “how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth” (1 Tim. 3: 15)!

THE KINGSHIP OF DAVID ACCORDING TO THE COUNSELS OF GOD

1 Chronicles 9: 35 - 27

1 Chronicles 9: 35 - 10

The Ruin of the Kingship According to the Flesh

The subject of the genealogies finishes with 1 Chronicles 9: 34. Verses 35 to 44 again take up the enumeration of Saul's family with a few differences that initiate us into the way in which the genealogies were composed. Thus, in this passage we find the ancestors of Ner back to Gibeon, whereas 1 Chronicles 8: 33-39 gives only the descendants of Ner and add to them those of Eshek, the brother of Azel. As ever, the Spirit of God who directed the composition of Chronicles has a particular purpose. In our passage here, it is first a matter of Saul's ancestors who according to their tribe's right dwelt at Jerusalem “beside their brethren” of Judah; then it is a matter of the direct line of descent from this king, avoiding the collateral branches which here have nothing to do with the purpose of this inspired book.

And so we reach 1 Chronicles 10 which begins with references to the accounts in the books of Samuel and Kings, but as we have so often said, with the purpose of bringing out the counsels of God concerning Judah's royal line, that royal line from which Christ would descend.

Here an observation must be made. God presents man's ruin from two aspects. On the one hand, He gives us man's history in detail, for it is a matter of proving through specifics the irremediable condition of sinful man, placed under responsibility. Only after He has shown that his condition is without remedy does God pronounce judgment upon him. On this account we are given the detailed historical narratives from Joshua to the end of Kings. In the New Testament, the epistle to the Romans presents an analogous character: man's state without the law and under the law is traced from the first

chapter until that “O wretched man that I am!” of Romans 7, the final experience of man's desperate state, even that of an awakened man, under the law but responsible before God to keep it.

On the other hand, when God presents the extent of His grace and the working out of His eternal counsels, He sets down at the very onset as being without remedy, man's definite ruin, without mentioning the trial through which He puts him in order to prove this condition to him. Such is the character of the book of Chronicles. The epistle to the Ephesians in the New Testament corresponds to this. Regarding sinful man's state this epistle has these words in Ephesians 2: 1 as its fundamental principle: “You, being dead in your offences and sins.”

Saul's history as recounted in the Chronicles is a striking example of this truth. After Saul's genealogy, we find only the account of his death, recounted almost word for word (1 Chron. 10: 1-12) from 1 Samuel 31. But the Spirit of God adds a very remarkable supplementary passage in verses 13-14: “And Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he committed against Jehovah, because of the word of Jehovah which he kept not, and also for having inquired of the spirit of Python, asking counsel of it; and he asked not counsel of Jehovah; therefore He slew him.” In this passage God explains the reason for His final judgment upon Saul, the same as that upon every sinful man: disobedience and departure from God. And remarkably, these are the very words we find again in Ephesians 2, the chapter that proclaims the sinner's condition of death: “sons of disobedience” and “without God in the world” (vv. 2, 12).

God had given Saul to Israel in the flesh according to their request, and this kingship could only end in complete failure. Henceforth God would act in accordance with the counsels of His sovereign grace: He “transferred the kingdom to David the son of Jesse” (v. 14).

1 Chronicles 11

Establishment of the Kingship According to God's Counsels

The end of the old man is the beginning of a new era. This truth is confirmed here. Without any preamble whatever, David's reign begins at Hebron. Saul, the king according to fallen nature, is dead, but that is not enough. David himself, the Lord's anointed, initiates his reign at Hebron, the place that so speaks of death. All that precedes Hebron (2 Sam. 1 - 2 Sam. 3), the gradual way in which David's reign is established, the long war between his house and that of Saul, the former growing stronger, the latter, weaker — all this is passed over in silence in Chronicles. At the very outset the Spirit of God announces the final establishment of David's reign.

A little characteristic phrase missing in the account in Samuel is added here in verse 3: “They anointed David king over Israel according to the word of Jehovah through Samuel.” The establishment of David's reign is here linked with God's unchangeable word and His counsels of grace.

In verses 4-9, which describe the capture of Jerusalem, we again find a noteworthy difference from the account in 2 Samuel 5: 6-9. Here there is not a word about “the lame and the blind hated of David's soul...!” and on the other hand, Joab, who is completely left out of the account in Samuel, here occupies the first place after David: “And David said, Whoever smites the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. And Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief” (v. 6). Here he is not the ambitious, vindictive man, but the man destined, according to God's counsels, to conquer the fortress of Zion for the king. It is even said of him in verse 8: “Joab renewed the rest of the city.” Not a word about his character, nor about his doings up to this moment. His struggle with Abner, his revenge upon

this noble captain, the murder he committed, are all passed over in silence, as well as David's pained expression: "And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me: Jehovah reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness!" (2 Sam. 3: 39). Would we not say, if we had only read the account of Chronicles, that Joab was an upright man without reproach? The truth is that here Joab is simply the instrument prepared to install the Lord's anointed, the king according to God's thoughts, at Jerusalem.

David's mighty men are enumerated at the beginning of this account (vv. 10-47), while they are enumerated at the end in 2 Samuel 23. Here they bring in the kingdom. They "showed themselves valiant with him in his kingdom, with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of Jehovah concerning Israel" (v. 10), so accomplishing the plans which God had before made known. They are then enumerated. Among the first three Shammah, although referred to, is not named. A few names mentioned in Samuel are omitted here and a great many are added. Thus our chapter refers to 81 mighty men (30 of them being recorded without being named); 2 Samuel 23 names 37 of them; there they are enumerated as supporters whom David needed to confirm his throne; in our present chapter they have only to acknowledge what God had done in establishing David as His anointed, and cannot do other than support a kingship come forth from the counsels of God Himself. Also they appear before us at the beginning of his reign.

Let us note an even more remarkable detail. Uriah the Hittite, who closes the list in 2 Samuel 23 in testimony against David's sin and fall, appears here as hidden among the other mighty men (v. 41). His name is not highlighted as the accuser of David and of that which was the shame of his kingdom. Likewise, everything pertaining to the terrible fall of the Lord's anointed is completely passed over in silence. Eliam also, the son of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 23: 34), whose father was so intimately associated with the consequences of David's sin, is omitted in our chapter.

The senseless attacks of rationalists against the books of Chronicles oblige us to insist upon all these details, for their general effect is the best refutation of those who see in the Chronicles only a wretched compilation made at a time much later than that which the book ascribes to itself, a compilation made without order, with falsified documents, full of invented names and screaming errors. Oh the folly of human reason when it ventures to judge God's thoughts and would replace them by its own imaginations!

1 Chronicles 12

The Kingship Recognized

Before recognizing David at Hebron (vv. 23-27), a few of the tribes — sad to say, the minority — had in part joined themselves to him while he was still the rejected king. The mistakes he made at this period of his history, the lack of faith which had prompted him to flee to Achish, the results that came upon him from this at the battle with the Philistines and his stay at Ziklag (see 1 Sam. 29, 30), are not mentioned in Chronicles. According to the principle of this book, divine grace covers a multitude of sins; whereas in the second book of Samuel and in the Psalms we see David turning from his wicked path and confessing his faults.

What we find in this chapter (vv. 1-22) is the faith of many, precious fruit of grace. This faith submits to the Lord's anointed, the king according to God's counsels, and acknowledges him at a time when the eye of flesh was not able to discern him in his lowly condition. It is the same today for believers. Our David has not yet received a visible kingdom, but those who acknowledge Him while He

is still the rejected king have a special place in the divine annals and are “more honorable than their brethren.” in like manner, men of Benjamin and Manasseh joined themselves to David at Ziklag (vv. 1, 9), and men of Gad, Judah, and Benjamin joined him in the stronghold in the wilderness (vv. 8, 16) before all the tribes hastened to him at Hebron.

In all these cases, whether it be at Ziklag, in the hold, or at Hebron, Benjamin is first (vv. 2,16,29) and does not miss a single opportunity to acknowledge its king. This was an act of faith all the more remarkable in that Benjamin and especially “the brethren of Saul” had every reason according to nature to hesitate and not to make a decision until after all the others. But their faith could vanquish obstacles, for it is associated with “virtue” (2 Peter 1: 5) and cannot be separated from it once called into action.

This little tribe of Benjamin, once nearly annihilated after their sin (Judges 20 — Judges 21), now holds a distinguished place in the testimony. As to them, God notes with approval (vv. 1-7), the fact that they were “of the brethren of Saul.” Theirs was the fervent faith of that first hour preceding the dawn of the kingdom. How can we fail to trace out this faith, for which the personal presence of David alone sufficed, at the very moment when according to man's judgment everything seemed to be lost forever for the Lord's anointed. Driven away by Saul, rejected by the Philistines, he had only Ziklag and even this place fell to the power of Amalek (1 Sam. 30)!

What a help these men would have been to the Philistines, enemies of God's people! But, on the other hand, what a help they would have been to Saul, these men “armed with bows, using both the right hand and the left with stones and with arrows on the bow!” (v.2). Saul's lack of archers to oppose against the Philistines was the immediate cause of his ruin. We are told that he was much terrified when he saw that he could not measure up to the Philistine archers. Nevertheless David did not use this unanticipated help against Saul. He let God Himself direct the circumstances and pronounce judgment in his favor and would in no way fight against His people. How often Christians are presented with similar occasions, Satan succeeding in engaging them in conflict with one another. If they do not learn then that “in quietness and confidence shall be your strength,” they will of necessity come into new difficulties.

The Gadites who joined David in the “stronghold” were “mighty men of valor, men fit for the service of war, armed with shield and spear; whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were swift as the gazelles upon the mountains” (v. 8). They could engage in hand to hand combat with the enemy, being vigorous and fleet as is proper in such a situation. These men of Gad, whom we have seen above so careful of their genealogy which joined them to God's people, are prompt to acknowledge this people's leader. The obstacles to joining him, though of another kind from those of Benjamin, did not stop them. The Jordan, on the other side of which they dwelt, was as insurmountable an obstacle as in the days when the people had arrived opposite Jericho. “These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it overflows all its banks” (v. 15). There was now no need of a miracle to allow them to pass over; they knew that the Jordan had had to yield before the people of God, and strong with the conviction of faith, they prevailed over this obstacle in order to join the one who drew them like a loving sovereign.

In verses 16 to 18, Benjamin appears for the second time but associated with Judah to go to David in “the stronghold.” Here they act not only in simple faith, but in the power of the Spirit of God. “And the Spirit came upon Amasai, the chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and with thee, thou son of Jesse: Peace, peace be to thee! and peace be to thy helpers! for thy God helps thee.” (v. 18). Love and admiration for the person of David animate these men. His personal merit and

the assurance that God is with him suffice them. By virtue of this devotion they receive a privileged place from the king: “And David received them, and made them chiefs of bands.”

Manasseh (vv. 19-22) displays neither the faith of Benjamin nor the energy of Gad nor the power of the Spirit as Judah and Benjamin. These men arrive at Ziklag at the last hour, before the battle; they are all strong and valiant; they share with David the not insignificant honor of being rejected by the Philistines.

Like them, let us hasten to gather around Christ while it is still the day of His rejection; let us hasten to acknowledge Him before all shall be obliged to submit to Him when He is manifested in his kingdom. His heart finds a special satisfaction in our voluntary submission in the day of his being disowned by the world. He loves to declare that they who cleave to Him will be His peculiar treasure in the day of His reign!

We have seen that each segment of the people served David with the various gifts that God had distributed among them. The company of those who do battle for the Lord today must do the same. There is not, as some would have us believe, a “Salvation Army” destined to spread the gospel throughout the world, although the gift of evangelist itself is a gift of prime importance. The Christian army is ordained to combat spiritual powers to defend the Lord's rights and not, as does the evangelist, to cause His grace to triumph by making it penetrate consciences. The little army which gathers around David does so as “helping him in the conflict” (v. 1), in order to introduce, through combat, the establishment of His kingdom. Now the kingdom of Christ is not the gospel. In this respect the people of Benjamin had great faith: they expected of David brilliant deeds and a glorious reign at a time when the Lord's anointed counted for nothing in the eyes of men.

Let us now follow David to Hebron (vv. 23-40), where he is no longer acknowledged by some, but by all the tribes.

The number of men from each tribe is noted. Each comes with his own special qualities to take his place in the king's army.

This reminds us of what is said of the body of Christ in Romans 12. “All the members have not the same office”; all have “different gifts”; they must use them according to the manifold grace of God and “as God has dealt to each a measure of faith.” Thus the Lord's army can work together for a common purpose, each exercising the function entrusted to him. Judah bears shield and spear; Simeon is mighty and valiant for the war; Levi is, as we have seen (1 Chron. 9: 13), for the service, for, although each took his place in the army (vv. 27-28) they were not called to combat. Benjamin, freed from the service of Saul, whose house they had once guarded (v. 29), had left this honorary post en masse, esteeming it as worthless, in order to occupy the true post of honor with David.

Faith alone had directed the first Benjaminites. The example they had given was followed by the rest of the tribe. This observation is not an unimportant one, for it is not every one's portion to display the same energy of faith through the Spirit. This is why Paul could say: “Walk thus as you have us for a model,” and to the Hebrews he could say: “Imitate their faith.”

Those of Manasseh had been “expressed by name” by their brethren “to come and make David king.” There was a full fellowship among all of them. Participating by their empathy in sending forth their brethren, they recognized those among them who were most capable of carrying out their commission.

The children of Issachar “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (v. 32), and this faculty was a precious benefit for the people of God. Have we not often proven that we

were lacking this wisdom to press on through the problems of these difficult days? More readily do we find Christians marked by brotherly love, like the half-tribe of Manasseh, or power, like the mighty men of valor in other tribes, but the spirit of “wise discretion” (2 Tim. 1: 7) is often wanting and we approach difficult situations without the discernment necessary. Moreover, times change, and we cannot act on one occasion as we would on another. Here the time had come to unite for a common action. Any other action, however plausible it might be, would have entailed fatal consequences. It was time to put aside all else, even legitimate considerations, to unite around David. It was not the time to make endless war against the remnant of Saul's house as Joab been doing; the time had come to own David alone as chief and center. One might invoke the respectable legitimacy of the son of Kish and of his successors, or perhaps the necessity of lying low and waiting for events to unfold; but no such consideration could be of any value. It was a matter of David: the moment had come; one banner alone had the right to wave before all eyes. The children of Issachar had understanding of the times: in giving their opinion, they themselves acted according to God's true purpose to unify the dispersed tribes with Jesse's son as center.

Were not the Christians at Rome to whom the apostle Paul addressed himself true children of Issachar? “This also,” he told them, “knowing the time, that now it is already time that we be aroused out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is near” (Rom. 13: 11-12). The day of our David's triumph is near at hand; night will soon give place to light; let us awake! Soon the morning star will rise, that star which is already shining in our hearts. Listen to the children of Issachar. If we lack their discernment, let us bear in mind that God has provided for our assistance the wisdom and the counsel of our brethren who understand what Israel ought to do — what is appropriate today for the people of God)! “All their brethren were at their bidding.” May we be like them and listen to those whom the Lord has qualified for counseling.

The children of Zebulun were prepared for battle. If battle would break out, they would not be taken by surprise. They had “all weapons of war.” Moreover, they were supportive of one another, keeping rank; none of them acted in an independent manner, for they realized that unity was their strength. And in addition they were “without double heart” — their affections were not divided. Is not a frequent cause of our defeats a heart wavering between the world and Christ, between our interests, our temporal advantages, and the unique service of David's Son?

Naphtali is a bit like Judah: they bear the spear, or rather the sword and shield, similarly to those men who had built the wall under Nehemiah.

Dan was “armed for war” rather than for battle like Zebulun. This infers that these men were ready to rally at the first call, once war had been declared.

Asher was familiar with strategy. The Asherites could “set themselves in battle array.”

The tribes beyond Jordan came last, as we have said, but even their position at a distance proved to their advantage. They had “all manner of weapons of war for battle.” If distance created difficulties for them in the matter of replacing their weapons, it provoked them to make careful provision.

That which characterized the tribes at this blessed period of their history is that all (v. 38) came to Hebron “with a perfect heart,” without guile, with a single purpose, and that all in Israel who were constrained by circumstances to remain behind “were of one heart to make David king.”

Lovely beginning! Blessed awakening! The fact of having but a single person, the Lord's anointed, before their eyes, was enough to produce this miracle. In this way all divisions can be prevented among God's people. The sovereign safeguard against division is to have Christ before the

eyes of faith.

The Spirit of God here delights to show us the effects of grace in the heart. While 2 Samuel 5: 1-3 treats this subject in three short verses, God is pleased to develop it here in all its fullness.

There is still more: brotherly love finds a rich occasion for exercise. “And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking; for their brethren had prepared for them; and those too that were near them, as far as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought food on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, provisions of meal, fig-cakes and raisin-cakes, and wine and oil, and oxen and sheep, abundantly; for there was joy in Israel” (vv. 39-40). Nothing was spared where it involved their brethren's well-being, and at the same time they showed their attachment to David. They indeed added love to brotherly love (2 Peter 1: 7). This harmony was undergirded by joy, the true motive for all devotion. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” Paul said to the Philippians, for he knew that in order to remedy the discord threatening them, joy must be the prime component in their hearts.

1 Chronicles 13

The Ark and the New Cart

The characteristic feature of this chapter is omitted in 2 Samuel 6. It is David's desire, once the kingdom had been established, to reunite the entire people not around himself but around the ark, the throne of God where the mercy seat was found. Here we see (vv. 1-2) with what care the king gathers Israel together, with the priests and Levites, to bring back the ark from Kirjath-jearim: he wants to have all the worshippers of the Lord for this, and he adds: “We inquired not of it in the days of Saul” (v. 3). How completely the ark had been forgotten under the preceding reign! From the time of its return from the hands of the Philistines, it surfaces only to demonstrate how little Saul had esteemed it (1 Sam. 14: 18-19).

In view of the great theme which is going to dominate the latter part of this book of Chronicles — the role of the priesthood in its relationship to the kingship — we need to be reminded here of the details of the ark's return and the mistake which David made. On this occasion we see David's ardent desire to find a place of rest for the throne of God, and how much he desired to find complete fellowship on part of the people in this. This desire was of God.

Nonetheless, whatever may be grace's designs, man shows himself weak to carry them out, and God takes care to reveal this to us here. If it were otherwise, we would find an infallible David in Chronicles, whereas God would rather show us His infallible counsels, brought to fruition in view of Christ of whom David is the type. And if God were not to mention any of David's failings here, it would be a dishonor to Christ, for He alone must appear as the Perfect Man, the King according to God's counsels.

However, God chooses an example of one of the less outstanding of David's errors for our instruction. He was filled with the desire to serve God and to associate the whole people with the glorification of His throne. Zion, the seat of the kingship according to God's counsels, in David's eyes was the only place for the ark to rest. All priestly service must have this ark as its center, and its presence was the sure basis for the kingdom's establishment according to God. David acknowledged these things and proclaimed them. Only one thing was lacking, insignificant in appearance but very serious in reality, and what a bitter experience that would instruct the king. The great outpouring of joy and praise accompanying the ark's return could not take the place of obedience to the Word of God.

The former was excellent, the latter both necessary and obligatory. David might have excused the manner in which he brought back the ark by the fact that the sons of Gershom and Merari also had wagons to transport the tabernacle through the wilderness, with the exception, of course, of the vessels of the sanctuary. And besides, God had not opposed the Philistines' method when they had returned the ark on a new cart, nor had He even manifested His displeasure to them. Doubtless the Philistines, idolaters and strangers to what the law prescribed, had acted according to their conscience without even a thought of disobeying the Word of God which they did not know; but never does faith act according to the light of conscience, and David should have known this: faith always obeys the Word of God and is not to be separated from it.

This lapse of memory and, more probably still, the lack of importance he accorded to every iota of the Scriptures had two serious consequences. The first was for Uzza, struck down because the oxen had broken loose, prompting an unconsidered, profane action on his part; the second was for David who lost all that had filled his heart just a few moments previously: confidence, joy, and praise, and saw these replaced by fear, recrimination, indignation against God, and bitterness.

But the king's failure and its consequences for his moral state in no way changed the fulfillment of God's counsels. The Lord had chosen Zion; He had desired it for His habitation, His rest forever, and, in spite of all, He accomplishes His purposes of grace. David witnesses the blessings granted to Obed-Edom, when this latter might have, like Uzza, drawn upon himself the Lord's wrath by the least fault. Thus the king learns by experience that the God who had just revealed Himself as judge, though He is a holy God, is a God of grace: a prime subject of Chronicles, but it is vital to understand that it is a great evil to have but little esteem for His Word.

Do Christians consider this when, in order to serve God, in their often very real zeal they resort to all sorts of human expedients, similar to a new cart, and when they without any scruple whatever violate scriptural precepts that are often far more clear and important than that the ark had to be borne upon the priests' shoulders? Like with David, the closer one is to God, the more one is exposed to judgment if one does not give heed to His will as expressed in His Word.

Let us therefore ever consult it for all things; let us become familiar with it in a spirit of dependence and prayer so that we may not act contrary to its directions. Only let us remember that the more we know it, the more too we shall be held responsible to conform to it in every point. God may tolerate ignorance, although this also is sin necessitating a sacrifice (Lev. 5: 17-19), but He does not tolerate disobedience from those whom He honors with His favors. Sooner or later He punishes disobedience.

1 Chronicles 14 - 16: 6

David's Victories

The Fruits of Grace in his Heart

His Association with the Levitical Family

Through David's fault opportunity had been furnished for grace to be manifested. These chapters show us this grace at work in the heart of the king producing that humility and obedience to the Word from which David had wandered in one point.

1 Chronicles 14: 1-7 corresponds to 2 Samuel 5: 10-15. There we see the nations, in the person of Hiram, acknowledging the supremacy of the Lord's anointed and seeking his favor. "And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him a house. And David perceived that Jehovah had established him king over Israel, for his kingdom was highly exalted, because of his people Israel" (1 Chron. 14: 1-2). God shows His servant David that He is accomplishing His counsels of grace toward him in establishing him as king over the people and in causing the nations to submit to him.

After Hiram's submission we find the victories over the Philistines (vv. 8-16; cf. 2 Sam. 5: 17-25), followed here in Chronicles by this characteristic remark: "And the fame of David went out into all lands; and Jehovah brought the fear of him upon all the nations" (v. 17). Thus the Lord Himself extended the king's dominion over the nations by victories which were entirely dependent on his obedience to the Word of God (vv. 10, 14), a lesson which he had learned by the "breach upon Uzza."

The complete list of David's offspring at Jerusalem is given us for the second time in this book (1 Chron. 3: 5-8; 1 Chron. 14: 3-7) (Elpelet and Nogah are not mentioned in 2 Sam. 5: 14-16). The purpose of this repetition is to show us that God's counsels concerning the kingship are being carried out at the very moment when the king is finding a place of rest at Zion for the ark of God.

The beginning of 1 Chronicles 15 (1 Chron. 15: 1-13) is quite remarkable: "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites, for them has Jehovah chosen to carry the ark of God, and to serve Him for ever" (v. 2). Then, speaking to the Levites: "Ye are the chief fathers of the Levites; hallow yourselves, ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of Jehovah the God of Israel to the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order" (vv. 12-13). These passages are missing in the second book of Samuel, and although Chronicles has, as an exception, recorded David's fault, it is in order to present us with this admirable confession which grace at last produces in him.

The passage from 1 Chronicles 15: 14 through 1 Chronicles 16: 6 is much more specific than 2 Sam. 6: 12-23. What is most striking is the order instituted by David in the levitical family concerning the return of the ark. According to God's thought expressed in 1 Samuel 2: 35, the priesthood is henceforth dependent upon the kingship. Everything is regulated by David. He himself is "clothed with a robe of byssus, and all the Levites that bore the ark" (v. 27). "David had upon him a linen ephod" (v. 27), as in former times Samuel the prophet (1 Sam. 2: 18). He offered "the burnt-offerings and the peace offerings" (1 Chron. 16: 2). His identification with the priesthood goes yet further, for like Melchizedek, "he blessed the people in the name of Jehovah" (1 Chron. 16: 2). Finally, as the true anointed of Jehovah, he satisfies the poor with bread (v. 3; Ps. 132: 15-17). Thus he manifests all the attributes of the Levite, the prophet, the Aaronic priest, and the eternal priest and king with which Christ, the Man according to God's counsels, shall be invested when He appears in His kingdom.

It is David who not only orders the Levites to carry the ark "as Moses had commanded according to the word of Jehovah" (1 Chron. 15: 15), but who also appoints singers, musicians, and "doorkeepers for the ark" whose very names are listed. Amid them all the name of Obed-edom, repeated four times (and twice more in 1 Chron. 16: 38), shines above all the others. He is doorkeeper for the tabernacle together with the sons of Merari; he is singer, doorkeeper for the ark, and musician. Obed-edom, witness and object of God's grace which had blessed his house and all that belonged to him (1 Chron. 13: 14) on account of the presence of the throne of God in his home, receives very special mention in this book of God's counsels in grace.

Note how often the name "God" is substituted in these chapters for the name "Jehovah" used in

the corresponding passages in 2 Samuel. Love and grace are related much more to the first of these names than to the second, which speaks rather of His righteousness, His holiness, and His faithfulness to His Word.

1 Chronicles 16: 7-43

The Song at the Kingship's Beginning

The Psalm of David contained in these verses corresponds to the leading thought of Chronicles and differs altogether from the song mentioned in 2 Samuel 22, which is none other than Psalm 18. This latter stands at the very end of David's history when "Jehovah had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." He celebrates the Lord's deliverances for the one who trusts in Him (v. 2), deliverances which began with Israel's exodus out of Egypt (vv. 7-15). Then he lays bare the principles of God's government toward His own: "With the gracious Thou dost show Thyself gracious; with the upright man Thou dost show Thyself upright; with the pure Thou dost show Thyself pure; and with the perverse Thou dost show Thyself contrary" (vv. 26-27); then these same principles toward their enemies (v. 28). This in no wise bars grace toward His beloved, for all that is good in their ways is dependent on their confidence in Him (v. 31). Finally, after all enemies have been conquered the Lord's anointed is established as head of the nations and strangers are subject to him (vv. 44, 48). Such, in a few words, is this magnificent Psalm 18 which we find in 2 Samuel 22 as the last prophetic hymn of David. It is followed in chapter 23 only by the king's last words, when he humbles himself for his conduct, acknowledges God's righteous government toward him but celebrates His grace which is as unchangeable as His promises and proclaims the coming of the righteous Ruler whom he, David, had proved incapable of representing upon earth.

The song of 1 Chronicles 16 is completely different. It is the hymn of the beginning of the kingship, proclaimed by the establishment of the ark in Zion: the ark as God's throne in the midst of His people at last being entered into its rest. Indeed, this song is intimately connected with the ark's return. "Then on that day", we are told, "David delivered first this psalm to give thanks to Jehovah through Asaph and his brethren." This psalm is termed "the first" to celebrate the Lord. Here the subject is not, as in Samuel, victory over the wicked, the responsibility of the saints, and God's government regarding them, but God's faithfulness to His promises, at last accomplished by the ark's return to Zion, after Israel had forfeited every right to keep it in their midst.

* * * *

But before continuing the examination of our chapter, I would like to digress with regard to its contents and that of the entire book which we are studying.

It is extremely important to notice that the ways of God in government, and His counsels of grace are two things that are entirely distinct.

God's counsels and the way they are to be fulfilled as to us exist from all eternity: they have been realized in Christ, the perfect Man whom God has exalted to His right hand, giving us the same blessings and the same glory as to Him. As for that which concerns us, the counsels of God are realized by pure grace. This grace is unchangeable, unvarying, and secure forever for those whom grace has saved through faith in Christ.

God's government is in contrast to His counsels. This government is associated with man's responsibility and exists from the beginning of his history. It was first manifested in Eden where man,

innocent but responsible, disobeyed and was driven from the garden and made subject to death. From that moment on, God's government continues to function toward man who is responsible to conduct himself in this world in a way conformable to the righteousness, holiness, and goodness of his Creator who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. On the other hand, doubtless, He makes His sun shine on the just and on the unjust, for He is a God of goodness who, rather than desiring the death of the sinner, leads him to repentance by His longsuffering and patience. Nonetheless it is true that men's wicked actions bring their own consequences, generally already here on earth for themselves, and often for their children to the third or fourth generation. But should they are not be judged on earth, the final word of God's judgment will be pronounced at the last judgment.

As for the elect, we must remember that by virtue of the fall and of the sin thenceforth inherent in their nature, not one — not a single one — is righteous. But God, by faith and through the Spirit who is its seal, communicates a new nature to them, a heart capable of loving, honoring and serving Him. They are the objects of grace and through faith in Christ become the objects of God's favor. This great fact answers to the counsels of God who from all eternity has sought to find His good pleasure in men through Christ. To obtain this result it was needful to conquer Satan who had begotten and summoned forth sin, abolish sin itself, and annul all its consequences. This is the result of Christ's work at the cross.

But the new nature he possesses in no wise dissolves this new man's responsibility. He must maintain the position of relationship with God and with Christ in which grace has placed him. Though still having the flesh, the old man, in him, he is responsible to conduct himself before God according to the new nature, not according to the old. The Holy Spirit, the power of new life, makes him capable of this. That is the reason for God's government toward His elect, His children. If they do good, they are the objects of God's favor here upon earth; if they do evil, of His judgment, and this judgment is all the more prompt and direct in that they are part of a redeemed people: Judgment begins from the house of God. As for the elect individually, this judgment which can touch them only on earth can have no other goal than their final restoration. As for the Church, as the body of Christ she is never judged, but the Church as the house of God can definitely be judged, and the Lord will come upon her as a thief.

There is only one case where judgment is definite and without mercy, namely where the world, the sinful man whether religious or not, sets himself against all the appeals of grace.

Besides the ways of God toward the redeemed, toward His house, and toward men, there is His more general government. God is interested in everything that harmonizes with the precepts of His righteousness and holiness. The man who honors his father and mother, or that young man in the Gospel, amiable although unconverted, prosper on earth. The upright man who does not wrong his neighbor reaps earthly advantages, for God's government operates upon earth although its seat is in heaven. In the new heavens and the new earth there will be no more throne, and consequently, no more government. This government, whether toward the saints, or with regard to the good and the evil is treated of in the books of Samuel and Kings; Chronicles treats rather of the counsels and election of grace. But Chronicles first establishes, whether in the case of natural descent or the case of Saul, the fact that the flesh cannot have part in these counsels. Hence, as we have already remarked, the faults of the elect are passed over in complete silence, except when they are necessary in order to show that God can even use them to accomplish His counsels of grace. Thus it was with the events that surrounded the return of the ark.

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Let us now return to look at our chapter. The Song recorded here (vv. 8-36) is composed of

fragments of three psalms. Verses 8-22 correspond to Psalm 105: 1-15; verses 23-33 correspond to Psalm 96: 1-12; and finally, verses 34-36 correspond to Psalm 106: 1, 47-48.

1. The first 15 verses of Psalm 105 are an appeal to celebrate the Lord because of His covenant “which He made with Abraham, and of His oath unto Isaac; and He confirmed it unto Jacob for a statute, unto Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance” (1 Chron. 16-18). This is a covenant of pure grace, God's faithfulness to His promises, in contrast to the covenant of Sinai, based on the people's responsibility. The passage cited ends with these words: “He suffered no man to oppress them, and reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not Mine anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm” (vv. 21-22). We do not find a single word about Israel's oppression by the nations as a result of their disobedience. All is free grace in this passage. This is all the more striking as the second part of Psalm 105, omitted here, cannot concur with the purpose that we have indicated. Indeed, in verses 16 to 22 of this psalm we see Joseph rejected by his brothers and sold as a slave, then established as ruler of the nations, bringing us back to Israel's history in responsibility. In verses 23-45 we find the deliverance from Egypt, the journey through the wilderness under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and finally, the people's entry into Canaan, “that they might keep His statutes, and observe His laws” — and we know what this regimen of law led to.

This first portion therefore entirely omits the history of the people in responsibility, in order to bring out grace and the promises made long before the law.

2. Verses 1-12 of Psalm 96 continue the call to Israel to celebrate the Lord among the nations, and the nations themselves are called upon to give Him glory and strength, to say everywhere: Jehovah reigns.

This section is remarkable for the omission of details that pertain to the theme of Christ's reign but do not pertain to the theme of David's reign. Thus 1 Chronicles 16: 23 omits the “new song” of Psalm 96: 1 which in the Word is always connected with a new scene, whether upon earth or in the heavens. But this condition will only be fulfilled under Christ's reign. Our verse 27 says, “Strength and gladness [are] in His place,” and in its verse 6 the psalm says, “Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.” This was not yet the beauty of Christ's reign, although it was the joy of David's reign at its commencement; also, at this time the sanctuary had not yet been built for the ark. In the same way, in verse 29 our chapter says, “Come before Him,” rather than “Come into His courts” (Ps. 96: 8), and this is again in relation to the transitory state of David's reign. Finally, the words of verse 33: “For He cometh to judge the earth,” replace the words of the psalm (v. 13): “For He cometh to judge the earth: He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples in His faithfulness.” Such a fullness of government could not correspond to David's reign.

3. The third section of our chapter (vv. 34-36) is a citation from Psalm 106: 1, 47-48. Its first verse, “Give ye thanks unto Jehovah; for He is good; for His loving-kindness endureth for ever” is very appropriate to the character of Chronicles and to the moment when David rendered his “first” psalm. This song will be sung during the millennium, but it could be sung at the dawn of the reign of David and of the reign of Solomon (2 Chron. 5: 13), at the moment when God in type fulfilled His counsels of grace with regard to the kingship. Our passage treats only of the establishment of the ark in Zion, and absolutely omits all the rest of the psalm, for the psalm contains the history of the people in responsibility and their complete failure in every circumstance through which they passed, whether in Egypt, in the wilderness, or in Canaan. This account would not have been in accord with the purpose of our book.

Finally, our verses 35 and 36, corresponding to the last two verses of Psalm 106 (vv. 47-48) look

ahead to the final accomplishment of all the blessings listed in our chapter. They will be completely realized only by Israel's deliverance from among the nations, a time yet future when this praise shall resound: "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity!" David's people rejoice in anticipation in this praise. "And all the people said, Amen! and praised Jehovah" (v. 36).

After this song, we find in verses 37-43 the provisional order of worship before the final establishment of the ark in Solomon's temple. Henceforth the ark of the covenant was placed in Zion, and this is, as we have seen, the prime point of the first book of Chronicles in relation to the kingship. The ark was placed "under curtains", in a tent which David had spread for it. The tabernacle in the wilderness with the brazen altar and the other vessels of the sanctuary was at Gibeon. There burnt-offerings were sacrificed morning and evening. Here David sets up the personnel who would carry out these two functions: at Gibeon, the offering of the sacrifices; at Jerusalem, praise before the ark. There, too, this song was to reverberate, which will endure as long as the Lord Himself: "Give thanks to Jehovah, because His loving-kindness endureth for ever" (v. 41). Among those who perform the service before the ark, Obed-edom has the first place, in the midst of so many Levites chosen by David. He was the witness and object of the blessings which the ark brought with it, the special witness of the counsels of grace.

This entire passage that treats of the service of the ark is omitted in the second book of Samuel.

1 Chronicles 17

David's Prayer

We have but few comments to make on this chapter, in view of the account in 2 Samuel 7. Nevertheless, in this chapter we find fresh proof of the conscious modifications (additions or omissions) made in view of the object the Spirit of God proposes in this book. Before noting them, let us again remind ourselves that Chronicles presents God's counsels and promises with regard to the kingship established in the house of David, counsels and promises which will be fully accomplished in Christ, "for whatever promises of God there are, in Him is the yea, and in Him the amen, for glory to God by us" (2 Cor. 1: 20).

In verse 1 of our chapter, the Spirit omits the words: "When Jehovah had given him rest round about from all his enemies," which do not fit in with our account of the kingdom established by the ark's return. Likewise in verse 10: "I will subdue all thine enemies" is in the future tense in contrast with "I have given thee rest from all thine enemies" which characterizes 2 Samuel 7: 11.

As we have already noticed previously, the name of Jehovah is usually replaced in this chapter by that of God.

In verse 11 "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons," directs our thoughts to Christ, the king according to God's counsels; whereas 2 Samuel 7: 12 "Thy seed...which shall proceed out of thy bowels" indicates Solomon, David's son.

Verse 13 is very remarkable. God says: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son," a passage which is cited in Hebrews 1: 5 in reference to Christ and concerning God's counsels regarding His Anointed. This same passage in 2 Samuel 7: 14 applies to the fallible and responsible king: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the sons of men," etc. This is what happened to David himself in the book of Samuel, whereas Chronicles mentions neither his failure nor the prolonged chastisement, the "rod of

men,” which was its consequence.

In verse 14 it says: “And I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be established for ever.” In 2 Samuel we read: “And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made firm for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (v. 16).

For the same reason we read (vv. 18-19): “What can David say more to thee for the glory of thy servant? thou indeed knowest thy servant. Jehovah, for thy servant's sake ...hast thou done all this greatness,” etc. This phrase “thy servant” carries our thoughts far beyond David, to the person of Christ. 2 Samuel 7: 21 is worded thus: “For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, to make thy servant know it.”

And finally in verse 27: “And now, let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may be before Thee for ever; for thou, Jehovah, hast blessed it, and it shall be blessed for ever”; whereas 2 Samuel 7: 29 says: “For thou, Lord Jehovah, hast spoken it; and with thy blessing shall the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.” The first of these passages refers to the unconditional promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12: 2); the second expresses a desire that could not be realized by the posterity of David, the responsible king, as he himself says in his last words: “Although my house be not so before God.” Nevertheless, trusting in the promises of grace, he immediately adds: “Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in every way and sure; for this is all my salvation, and every desire, although He make it not to grow” (2 Sam. 23: 5). Recognizing the ruin of his house under the rule of responsibility, he goes back to the eternal covenant, to “the sure mercies of David,” and this truth which is emphasized in Chronicles, in 2 Samuel sustains the king's heart when at the end of his career he must face the ruin of his house, the fruit of his own failure.

1 Chronicles 18-20

The Wars

Just as with 1 Chronicles 17, a few comments will suffice as to these chapters whose contents we have considered in detail in our Meditations on the Second Book of Samuel.

In the first place we find joined together here in a connected account David's wars and exploits just as they are narrated in 2 Samuel 8; 10 - 2 Samuel 11: 1; 2 Samuel 12: 26-31; and 2 Samuel 21: 18-22. The text is identical except for a few small details where the account in Chronicles augments that of Samuel.

Thus, these chapters present the warrior king, whereas the rest of the book unrolls before our eyes the peaceful portion of David's reign, completely occupied with the service of the ark and the preparations for the erection of the temple. Still, the military apparatus that fills David's reign in 2 Samuel cannot be passed over in silence in this book, for Chronicles treats of the kingship established, its relationship to the ark, then to the temple, and of the order of worship. Moreover, the account of David's victories is necessary in order to show us the manner in which the kingdom could be instituted, Israel delivered from their enemies, and peace, righteousness, and rule over the nations inaugurated by Solomon. These things could only be brought about through a conquering and triumphant king whose victories are presented to us in a block so as not to have to come back to them again, since they are not the subject of the book. Christ's dominion will be introduced in this same way at the end.

In the second place, Chronicles passes over the history of Mephibosheth recounted in 2 Samuel 9 in silence, and also Saul's crime in putting the Gibeonites to death (2 Samuel 21: 1-14). These

omissions are characteristic of the thought of our book. Everything that has to do with Saul and his house has come to an end at the beginning of our account. The natural man and his genealogy, the natural king, Saul, and his posterity, are mentioned first in order immediately to be forgotten, as we have seen. Such is the history of the old man and all that belongs to him. God cannot draw out His family from him. The new man alone, who follows as second in order, and the family of faith, are the objects of God's counsels. This new man begins with Christ, the First-born from among the dead, and ends with Christ, the heir of all things. When, as here, it is a matter of the royal race, Christ is the root and the offspring of David. The king according to nature, Saul, is dead and is no longer in question here — neither he nor his family — for in Chronicles death is pronounced from the onset on the old man.

In the books of Samuel and Kings, which instead of pronouncing this summary judgment follow man's history in responsibility until his final ruin, this history still does not in any way exclude the intervention of grace. Mephibosheth is a striking example of this, but that does not belong to the subject of Chronicles. There Saul is passed over and all that concerns his house is omitted. Even the tribe of Benjamin cannot rally to David except by first detaching themselves from Saul (1 Chron. 12: 1-7).

Thirdly, these chapters pass over David's crime in complete silence: the story of Bathsheba and Uriah, and the terrible consequences of corruption and revolt that these events brought to the king's house (2 Sam. 11: 2; 2 Sam. 12: 25; 2 Sam. 13 - 2 Sam. 20). Nothing is better suited to help us discern the Spirit of God's purpose in Chronicles. How can the king according to God's counsels, this David who represents Christ (though Chronicles is careful to show us on two occasions, by his failures, that he is but a feeble sketch of the divine portrait), be portrayed to us as a murderer?

On the other hand 2 Samuel, which presents us with a responsible David, in spite of that — and let us rather say on account of that — shows him to us as an object of God's inexhaustible grace. This same book, in order to depict the Savior in His humiliation and rejection, is compelled to record the faults which led David to be rejected by his people and dethroned by the usurper. Finally, this book employs these same circumstances to paint the picture of the precious favors which have been occasioned by the rejection of the Savior.

1 Chronicles 21

Numbering the People and Ornan's Threshing Floor

We now come to 1 Chronicles 21, so important with regard to the ways of grace toward Israel. As we have done on other occasions, let us try to note the very instructive differences between this chapter and chapter 24 of the Second Book of Samuel. There is much to be gained by minutely comparing the one with the other.

Let us first of all note that here the thought of numbering the people is the result of Satan's direct action against Israel, and not as in 2 Samuel, the result of the Lord's wrath. To this end, Satan inclines David's heart to sin so that he might bring God's counsels toward His people to naught. But God uses the very schemes of the enemy to accomplish His own purposes, in introducing David and Israel into His presence on a new footing, that of grace, substituted for the ordinances of the law. In 2 Samuel 24 we find another thought: David's heart is put to the test when the Lord was angry against Israel and judgment was ready to fall on the people. If David, who represented the people, had not allowed himself to be seduced, this judgment could have been avoided.

But it is marvelous to see here that had he resisted, the counsels of grace made manifest in Christ and His work could not have been proclaimed. We can therefore say that David's failure was necessary because through it God substituted the rule of grace, with the throne and the altar at Zion for its center, for the rule of law and responsibility, with the tabernacle for its center.

Not that this numbering was not most sinful, for by it David had sought his own glory instead of the Lord's glory. He had desired to know his own resources instead of relying upon those of God — the God who had raised up David, had taken him from the pastures, from the flocks, had made him prince over Israel, and had given him a name like the name of the great ones on earth! What more did David want? Alas! under Satan's instigation he wanted to make a name for himself and see what resources he could count on while excluding the Lord. If he had succeeded, he would have glorified himself and become independent of God. This is what made this fault so serious and so foolish for a believer like David. When he came to himself (v. 8) he confessed this sin which was nothing other than independence and human self-will.

Joab seeks to dissuade David from this decision: “Are they not all, my lord O king, my lord's servants? why does my lord require this thing? why should he become a trespass to Israel?” (v. 3). The role of this man, energetic and valiant but without scruples once an obstacle blocks his path, and above all cunning to claim and maintain the first place — this role, so condemnable in the books of Samuel and Kings, has disappeared in Chronicles. In 1 Chronicles 11: 5-6 Joab had been the instrument chosen by God to capture “Zion,” the city of David; through this exploit he had become chief and captain. Here we find him again, taking sides for God against David: “The king's word was abominable to Joab” (v. 6). Joab is therefore on the one hand the instrument for accomplishing God's purposes toward Jerusalem, and on the other hand the instrument to warn his master not to fall into sin lest he become “a trespass to Israel.” In Chronicles his entire role is reduced to these two episodes together with yet a third in 1 Chronicles 26: 28. He does not succeed, but his warnings make the king's failure even more serious and leave him without excuse. “But the king's word prevailed against Joab.” However, the latter does not fully complete his mission, for he did not number either Levi or Benjamin.

The difference between the figures of the census and those of 2 Samuel 24 seems to come from the fact that the latter does not count the standing army of 1 Chronicles 28 to which must be added also the captains of hundreds and the captains of thousands. Indeed, it was not the regular army that David wanted to number, for he knew its sum perfectly well, but he wanted to know in what measure Israel could be the force which he, David, would be able to use on occasion.

Let us now return to the truth already stated, that in order to manifest God's counsels toward the kingship it was indispensable that our book record David's failure. This failure brings out grace, but at the same time it shows the necessity of judgment, for it is only as righteousness and grace are in accord that the reign of peace can be ushered in.

Let us remember that at that time the Tabernacle, as a system established by God, had really come to an end. The ark, the symbol of God's presence in the midst of His people, had been carried into captivity, abandoned, and then brought back by God Himself to the fields of Jaar in view of the establishment of a new order of things. Lastly, it had been brought to Mount Zion by the kingship according to God, there to await the peaceful reign of Solomon who would build a house for the Lord. But, during this intermediate period the brazen altar, the tent, and the vessels of service were at Gibeon, no longer associated with the ark. One could approach the ark at Zion, but without the sacrifice which was the only way into the sanctuary; one could approach the altar at Gibeon, but this would only give access to the holy place which was completely empty. The relationship between the altar and the ark

seemed to be lost forever through the unfaithfulness of the priesthood. This truth that the altar — expiation — was the means necessary to gain access to God's throne, and that without it it was impossible for the Lord to dwell in grace in the midst of His people, had to be established anew completely. The ark was in Zion; it was asserting its place on the mountain of grace, but could it be enthroned there unless the question of sin were definitely settled?

At this time God used the king's sin, the sin of a single man but one representing the people before Him, to show the resources of His grace in dealing with sin upon the altar, the witness of expiation.

Chronicles highlights this great event. God's counsels can be fulfilled only at Moriah (2 Chron. 3: 1). As far as the promises of God were concerned, that had already been revealed in figure to Abraham at this same place when Isaac was sacrificed. Without the Father's "one beloved Son" (Mark 12: 6), no sacrifice for sin could be provided. Hence the name of this place: "On the mount of Jehovah will be provided" (Gen. 22: 14). In type, grace had found a way of displaying itself in its fullness at the altar on Mount Moriah, where Isaac, the father's son, had been offered; and not at the brazen altar which belonged to the order of Sinai and which could never take away sins. At Moriah grace met righteousness, and there God found the means (He alone could do so) to make these two apparently irreconcilable attributes of His Being kiss each other. Thus triumphant grace reigns through righteousness; thus God's counsels are fulfilled!

The failure has scarcely been committed when we find how God judges it and also — according to the warning Joab had given — its consequences for all the people. Over against this judgment the king confesses the evil, and not, as in 2 Samuel 24, when only his conscience accused him. In both cases, he asks God to put away his iniquity; but how could God do so? Must not judgment run its course? David is called upon to choose between three alternatives (vv. 10-12), and this free choice brings out his entire confidence in the mercies of the Lord which are very great (cf. 2 Sam. 24: 14). According to Romans 12: 1, the mercies of God are all His work of grace with regard to sins and to sin. Naturally, the extent of this work could not be revealed to David in the same way it is to us, but he sensed that he could commit himself to it alone. He did not want to fall into the hands of men, for he knew he could find no grace from that direction.

In contrast with the "us" of 2 Samuel 24: 14, here in verse 13 we find an important little word: "Let me fall, I pray Thee, into the hand of Jehovah." Here David offers himself as a substitute. He stands alone in the breach. Further on (v. 17), he takes the fault entirely upon himself: "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered?" and he offers his life for the sheep. After that, he intercedes: "Let Thy hand, I pray thee...be...not on Thy people, that they should be smitten." David could not say to God as Christ: Why hast Thou forsaken me? but he could take the character of a mediator and truly charge himself before God with all the guilt by identifying himself with the judgment of the people.

We are running ahead a bit in order to show how David represents Christ, although very incompletely, since his own sin was the cause. Let us now return to verse 14. The plague is raging in Israel: The angel comes to Jerusalem. What will become of this city, the place of royal grace? How will God reconcile His judgment with His grace? Will He destroy Jerusalem to make His righteousness prevail? Will He pardon it at the expense of His holiness? David "saw the angel of Jehovah stand between the earth and the heavens, and his sword drawn in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem" (v. 16). The king humbles himself, repents, and mourns with the elders. Together they fall upon their faces, but David alone confesses his sin, as representative of the people. David, we say, sees the angel, but the Lord had seen the angel and had stopped him. "And as he was destroying, Jehovah beheld, and

He repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, "It is enough; withdraw now thine hand" (v. 15). The first thing that God does is to suspend judgment; only after that does David, seeing the angel, humble himself. Then the angel, standing by the threshing floor of Ornan, speaks to Gad the prophet. At the Lord's command, he had withdrawn his hand, but he had not yet put his sword back into its sheath; he commands David to go up to the very place where he was standing.

The Lord, we have said, had seen the angel; then David had seen him; now Ornan in turn sees him (v. 20). At this sight he and his sons hide themselves, terror-stricken. But Ornan is reassured when he sees David (v. 21), sent by God to erect an altar on the threshing floor of Ornan. Indeed, what could be more reassuring than to see the Lord's Anointed, the one commissioned by God to accomplish expiation and put an end to judgment?

David buys the place of the threshing floor, not just the threshing floor alone as in 2 Samuel 24: 21, 24. This explains the difference in the purchase price. Ornan, full of good will, but ignorant, would like to be able to contribute to this work. David does not allow him to do so; he alone will offer God a sacrifice which he will pay for out of what he has, but which will cost Ornan nothing. David does not wish to give to God that which belongs to another, but that which is his own, just as Christ gave His own life. David acquires everything with his own resources: the place, the threshing floor, the altar, and the burnt-offerings. Ornan's threshing-sledges are not used, as he had desired, to consume the sacrifice: God consumes it with fire from heaven. That is His character in judgment, but it is at the same time, as with Elijah, the sign given by the Lord that He has fully accepted the sacrifice.

All these details reveal to us in David in a marvelous way, Christ, of whom it is said that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Indeed, David here plays this role in figure, although we must not forget that his own sin was the cause of all this scene. He is the mediator, intercessor, and priest, for he builds the altar and offers the sacrifice. The high priest is not even mentioned here, so as to leave all the place to David.

Now judgment has been consummated, the offering is accepted; now that justice has been satisfied, the angel's sword is of no further use. "Jehovah spoke to the angel; and he put up his sword again into its sheath" (v. 27). Peace with God has been definitely acquired on David's altar in Ornan's threshing floor on the summit of Moriah; peace is acquired for Israel and for whosoever, as Ornan, from among the nations has seen David and has accepted the sacrifice. Henceforth, as long as it is a question of the counsels of God in grace alone, this sword shall never again be drawn against Israel or Jerusalem.

How different is the scene when it is a matter of the responsibility of man or the people! (Deut. 28: 15-44; Ezek. 5: 12-17; Rev. 6: 7-8). And far more yet: for men who rebel against God and who have not received the love of the truth that they may be saved, a sword, more terrible than that of the angel, will issue forth from the mouth of the Son of Man when He shall come from heaven to consume them (Rev. 19: 15).

The divine answer is given man at Ornan's threshing floor. Henceforth it is there that David sacrifices. "At that time when David saw that Jehovah had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. And the tabernacle of Jehovah, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt-offering, were at that time in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God; for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of Jehovah" (vv. 28-30). The brazen altar at Gibeon, instead of being a place of security for David, was a terrifying place and he would go there no more. All that had been instituted under the law could not henceforth reassure his soul, for the law was a ministry of condemnation. God had revealed another

place of approach to Himself, the place chosen by grace where divine judgment had been abolished, the only one that could suit David from now on.

What would now become of the altar instituted under the law? Another altar had taken its place and had been reunited to the ark, God's throne in the midst of His people. In all this scene we are surrounded by grace which does away with judgment! Zion is the mountain of grace; the altar is the altar of grace; the sacrifice, a sacrifice of pure grace; and henceforth God's throne takes on the character of a throne of grace. We are speaking of this scene as it is presented to us in the First Book of Chronicles.

1 Chronicles 22

Preparation of Materials for the Temple

Solomon's Character

“And David said, This is the house of Jehovah Elohim, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel” (v. 1). The altar that had been built and the sacrifices that had been offered sufficed for David to proclaim the establishment of the temple. Doubtless the Lord's house was not yet constructed, but in effect it was found there where the altar — the sacrifice — and the throne (or ark) was, the real presence of God in the midst of His people. Later, in the Book of Ezra, when the ark had ultimately disappeared, the altar alone remained as gathering center for the people, and then the remnant built the temple around the altar.

These examples show us how we may recognize the house of God, whether we consider the present time as similar to the days of David which preceded Solomon's glory, or whether we view the days we are passing through as days of ruin resembling those of Ezra, which in reality they are.

Having proclaimed the existence of the house of God, David is occupied with its future manifestation (v. 2). The king gathers the strangers living in the land of Israel and appoints them to work together at erecting the future temple. 153,600 in number, as we learn in 2 Chronicles 2: 2, 17-18, they are employed as bearers of burdens and as stone cutters. Only the latter are mentioned here. Their work bears the stamp of servility, yet it is different from that of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9: 21), for we know how costly the stones of the temple were (1 Kings 5: 17). Moreover, we see in verse 4 that the nations beyond the land of Israel were called to join in this great work and that they applied themselves with zeal and absolute good will. So it will be when the millennial temple is built (Isa. 60: 10, 13; Zech. 6: 15).

“And David prepared iron in abundance...and brass in abundance...and cedar-trees innumerable.” In 1 Chronicles 18 of our book, as in 2 Samuel 8, we learn that the brass, silver, and gold came either from the booty of war, of which David kept nothing for himself, or from the voluntary offerings of the nations which sought the protection of the king of Israel. The cedar wood came from Lebanon and was brought by the people of Tyre and Sidon. Other less precious materials also contributed to the temple's construction, for iron was needed “for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joists” (v. 3). Iron was not only useful, but it was indispensable, despite its lesser worth. It was one of the products of the land of Canaan, “a land whose stones are iron” (Deut. 8: 9); and it alone could serve to join together the various pieces of wood in the building. Without it, the doors of the temple could not be opened or closed, nor could the partitions be built. Just so, even the most common materials of the heavenly land

are indispensable to Him who has determined the order of His house and whose alone is the secret of its construction. Likewise, let us not despise the materials that enter into the composition of the building if they have value in the eyes of the sovereign Architect of the house.

In verse 5, David, thinking of Solomon's youth, prepares everything necessary for him, for he was not yet strong enough to build this house which was to be "exceeding great in fame and in beauty in all lands." Likewise, when the true Solomon will take in hand the reins of government, he will find all that will constitute the glory of His kingdom already prepared by the true David, by Him who suffered and was rejected by His people. It is David who commands Solomon (v. 6) to build a house for the Lord, but he had himself received this commandment from God, for the Lord had told him: "He shall build an house unto my name." Thus God in His counsels has decreed that everything is to be subjected to Christ for "the administration of the fullness of times," but it is in virtue of His sufferings and rejection that the Lord has the right to the kingdom. Solomon was not called upon to establish it, for the kingdom was only in his person in germ. Solomon was still "young and tender," but David through his sufferings and victories had prepared everything necessary for God's rest and the reign of righteousness and peace about to be inaugurated.

When it is a matter, in type, of Christ's millennial reign, it is impossible to separate His sufferings and His rejection from His glories. This is why 1 Peter 1: 11 tells us that the prophets testified "before of the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these." It is the same here, and we insist particularly upon the little phrase in verse 14: "And behold, in my affliction I have prepared...and thou shalt add to it."

This is all the more striking as Chronicles does not in any way take up David's afflictions. Except in this passage they are not once mentioned. We have previously seen the reason for this omission. Throughout Chronicles David is shown us as taking possession of the kingdom according to God's counsels and establishing the kingdom by his victories over the nations. This latter feature, as we have already seen, in this book is presented in an accessory way, the Spirit in a single account uniting all the victories of the king won at different times in order to bring in the future reign of his son Solomon, the king of peace.

Martial victory and peace, here presented in type by these two distinct men, will be fulfilled in the person of a single Man, Christ. The distinction we have just made we find expressed here by the mouth of David: "The word of Jehovah came to me saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto My name, for thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about; for his name shall be Solomon [peaceful], and in his days I will give peace and quietness unto Israel. He shall build a house unto My name; and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever" (vv. 8-10). Yet, although Chronicles passes over David's affliction in silence, it was impossible not to mention these words: "My affliction." Without this there could be no rest for the throne of God in His temple and in the midst of His people. In his affliction David prepared all the materials for the house of God. Also, when in Psalm 132 it is a matter of finding "a place for Jehovah, habitations for the mighty One of Jacob," habitations of which the ark's return to Zion was only the prelude, the psalmist cries: "Jehovah, remember for David all his afflictions" (v. 1). The temple and the earthly throne before whose footstool the saints will bow are founded upon "the afflictions of David." It is the same in Revelation 5 with the heavenly throne. Its center is the slain Lamb who is the root of David. Thus the earthly and heavenly portions of the kingdom are both built upon the sufferings of Christ.

David in his affliction had prepared everything for the house of God, and Solomon, the king of peace, was to add yet more (v. 14). So it will be during Christ's reign; he will add all His glories to His temple upon earth as well as to the new Jerusalem in heaven, acquired at the price of His sufferings on the cross.

To organize everything involved in Solomon's reign, it would be necessary that the Lord give him "wisdom and understanding" (v. 12). Indeed, this is the only thing we see him himself asking of the Lord in 2 Chronicles 1: 10. As king of glory he was to prosper in fulfilling all the Word of God, just as it is said here: "Only Jehovah...place thee over Israel, and to keep the law of Jehovah thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to perform the statutes and ordinances which Jehovah commanded Moses for Israel" (vv. 12-13). Alas! Solomon, as the responsible king whose history is given us in the First Book of Kings, completely fails in all that God had entrusted to him; whereas Christ, after having perfectly corresponded to God's thoughts, will deliver into the hands of His Father, intact, the kingdom whose administration will be entrusted to him (1 Cor. 15: 24).

One thing more was necessary for Solomon: "Be strong and courageous; fear not, neither be dismayed" (v. 13). "Arise and be doing and Jehovah be with thee" (v. 16). Strength, firmness, and activity which he could find only in himself were necessary. This is what will characterize the Lord in His kingdom. Not only will He be firmly established by virtue of God's counsels, but He will find the resources of His government in His own perfections. Nothing will be lacking in His character for the prosperity of the kingdom placed in His hands by His God.

What blessing this reign will bring for Israel! "David commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son." They too were to "set [their] heart and [their] soul to seek Jehovah [their] God." They too must "arise and build the sanctuary of Jehovah Elohim" (vv. 17-19). And thus the Lord associates us with His kingdom and the administration of His house. He will have disciples, acquired during His rejection, seated on twelve thrones, judging all the tribes of Israel. The new Jerusalem will have twelve foundations upon which will be written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They will share in the character of Him who strengthened Himself and arose to act. They will share in His work (v. 19); yet not in the wisdom which has prepared everything beforehand in order to obtain this glorious result. This wisdom is uniquely the portion of the true David who has heaped up the materials, of the true Solomon who has ordered everything and set all in motion for the establishment of this eternal kingdom!

1 Chronicles 23

Solomon Established King

The Levites

At the beginning of this chapter, David makes Solomon king of Israel (v. 1); in 1 Chronicles 29: 22, he is made king for the second time. This event, mentioned only in Chronicles, thereby takes on a special importance. In 1 Kings 1, Solomon is anointed, so to say, at the last moment of David's reign, when the life of the latter, like a candle-end about to die out, was still throwing off a feeble glow, and the old king was lacking the strength to make a prompt, manly decision according to God. Solomon's ascension to the throne put an end to Adonijah's usurpation, and signalled the judgment of all those who, like Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei, had opposed God during David's reign. Chronicles suppresses

this entire account and does not even mention Abishag, the Shunammite, who became the occasion of Adonijah's judgment. The events we have cited, along with many others, enlighten us as to the comparative scope of Kings and Chronicles. In the book of Kings David is responsible to appoint Solomon king according to God's order and would have, we can clearly see, failed in this responsibility, had God not intervened (see 1 Kings 1). Solomon likewise was responsible to establish his kingdom upon righteousness with regard to those who had taken advantage of the reign of grace in order to do evil. He did so according to God's thoughts, although later he fell into sin.

Chronicles presents an entirely different order of thought. When God's grace, which had been glorified over against judgment, had been proclaimed at Ornan's altar upon Moriah, the reign of peace could be instituted, for peace depends upon grace. Once the victim's death has intervened, the sacrifice becomes the basis of all blessing, righteousness is satisfied, grace has stopped judgment, and peace is made. Peaceful Solomon can now be established king over Israel by David while David is yet reigning. The son sits with his father on his throne. Does this not speak to us in a striking way of Christ's reign? Expiation having been accomplished on the cross, Christ has sat down at the Father's right hand on His throne (Ps. 110: 1; Rev. 3: 21); crowned with glory and honor in the heavenly part of His kingdom. This first phase of His kingdom has taken place and is existing at present, just as it was at Solomon's establishment by David. The second phase of Christ's reign will take place when, like Solomon, He will be established and anointed a second time with regard to His earthly kingdom (1 Chron. 29: 22).

In First Kings, Solomon's having his place on the throne during his father's lifetime is presented in a way much less striking, but in accord with the purpose of this book. The two personalities, David and Solomon, are there rather united in one, so that the reign of the second is the uninterrupted continuation of that of the first.

Note:1 See Meditations on 1 Kings by H. L. Rossier. Introduction.

In 1 Chronicles 29, as we have already said, Solomon is made king a second time to rule over Israel and, according to God's counsels, to take in hand the reins of the earthly kingdom. Thus this book closes in a worthy way with the fulfillment in Him of the promises as to the government of this world.

From verse 3 we see David numbering the Levites, for the preparation not only of the materials for the temple, but also of all its service, down to the least detail, depends entirely on him. The Levites are first numbered from the age of thirty years and upward, but they perform the work of the service from the age of twenty years and upward (vv. 3, 27). This was the order established by David and not that which had been established by Moses with regard to the sons of Kohath (Num. 4: 3). Once the reign of peace had been positively established, the Levites could enter into the activity of service at a younger age. The obstacles which had hindered this before Solomon's establishment were removed; the Levites no longer had to "carry the tabernacle, nor any of its vessels for its service" (v. 26). The difficulties created by the fact that the Lord had journeyed under one tent with the camp of Israel were lifted. The strength of mature men was no longer necessary from the moment when it was no longer necessary to carry the ark, the altars, and the vessels from stage to stage, or to load the rest on carts. Henceforth the service would devolve upon younger men who could devote themselves to the various tasks in the house of God without being betrayed by their strength.

All these arrangements were done "by the last words of David" (v. 27). Notice how much these differ from those uttered in 2 Samuel 23: 1. There we see David confessing to having completely failed in his responsibility, although the eternal covenant based upon God's grace could not be annulled. At the same time the eyes of the prophet-king are directed to Christ, the Just Ruler, who will bear the full weight of responsibility of His reign unwaveringly. Here there is not a word about responsibility. The

king ordains the order of a perfect service beforehand: a service that answers to God's thoughts concerning the ultimate reign of His Beloved One.

The Levites were 38,000 in number. 24,000 of them — thus the majority — directed the work of the house of God. They had the office of leaders and overseers among God's people. 6,000 were officers and judges. It is important to understand that administration and judgment is not entrusted to the greatest number of God's servants. A still smaller number, 4,000, kept the gates. Their function was to guard that nothing profane or foreign should find its way into the temple. Disasters may take place among God's children when all think they are qualified to discern, failing to accept the fact that this service is entrusted to some to the exclusion of others. Lastly, 4,000 Levites praised the Lord with instruments. Here again we find an order that affects us with regard to praise. If the Christian Church is composed without exception of kings and priests, which was not the case with the Jewish assembly, then the Church is not composed of Levites.

A certain order, a certain initiative as to the direction of the praise was incumbent upon the musicians. It is the same in the assembly: a small number have been qualified for this office which has its importance just like everything that relates to worship. Praise was offered with instruments made by David (v. 5). David alone was the author of all that had to do with the future temple, even of the musical part of the worship. Nothing like it had been instituted under the system of the tabernacle in the wilderness. The instruments themselves had been invented by David in connection with the glorious accession of Solomon to the throne, a type of the millennial reign of Christ upon earth. Today praise is in connection with His heavenly glory and consequently has an entirely spiritual character.

After the numbering of the Levites comes their division into courses (vv. 6-23) according to their three families: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. - Aaron and Moses belonged to the sons of Kohath, but Aaron and his sons are “for ever” separated from this family of Levites in order to exercise the office of the priesthood “for ever” (v. 13). As for Moses, once “king in Jeshurun,” lawgiver, mediator, and leader of the people: he together with his sons enters into the tribe of Levi (vv. 14-26), and does not with his family occupy a place superior to his brethren from the moment the reign of Solomon begins. Thus we see him on the holy mountain disappearing completely together with Elijah to give place to Jesus alone, entering into His kingdom.

A difference is noted here between the priests and the Levites. The former did service to the Lord Himself (v. 13), the latter, “did the work of the service of the house of God” (vv. 24, 28).

In verses 28 to 32 we find the details of the Levites' service. They attended to:

1. the courts and the chambers;
2. the purification of all holy things; and
3. the work of the service of the house. This latter consisted of three aspects: a. arranging the showbread; b. providing the flour for the meal offering and for the unleavened cakes; c. attending to all measures of capacity and size.
4. They struck up the praise.
5. Lastly, the service connected with the burnt offerings on the sabbaths, on the new moons, and on the solemn feast days devolved upon them.

All this was to take place “continually before Jehovah” (v. 31). In verse 32 their service is summarized in three points. They kept their charge: firstly, in relation to the tent of meeting; secondly, to the sanctuary; and thirdly, they were servants of the sons of Aaron their brethren.

All this is full of instruction for anyone who wants to devote himself to the service of the Lord, and any such person should meditate on the details in this passage. Two features dominate all the rest here. On the one hand, a service worthy of the name must be rendered to the Lord; on the other hand, the servant must take a place of humility, of modesty, and of inferiority in relation to the priestly family which, as we know, includes all believers, and must not be composed of men who lord it over God's heritage, regarding them as belonging to themselves (1 Peter 5: 3).

1 Chronicles 24

The Priests

In this chapter we find the divisions of the priests. First, there is that which cannot be wanting in Chronicles: the flesh has been completely put aside and judged in the person of Nadab and Abihu. Then come Eleazar and Ithamar. On account of the unfaithfulness of Eli and his sons, Ithamar loses his preeminence under the reign of David and Solomon, and then under Christ's millennial reign, although the priesthood is not taken away from him (v. 3). Eleazar, through Zadok who is descended from him, occupies the first place on account of Phinehas' zeal. He becomes the founder of the faithful priesthood which will walk forever before the true Solomon in His kingdom (1 Sam. 2: 25; Ezek. 48: 11). David here distributes the priests into classes according to their chiefs: Zadok descending from Eleazar, and Ahimelech, from Ithamar. Abiathar, descending from Ithamar, was, as we know, driven from the priesthood by Solomon (1 Kings 2: 26): but this fact is not mentioned in Chronicles, where we find the priesthood as well as the kingship established according to the counsels of God.

As we were saying, Eleazar occupies a place of special blessing: "And there were more head-men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar" (v. 4). There were sixteen heads of fathers' houses in the family of the former, eight in that of the latter. "And were they divided by lot" (v. 5). It was the will of God, and not that of man, that set them in courses, for before the gift of the Holy Spirit the lot was the sign of God's direct intervention without the will of man (Acts 1: 26; Luke 1: 9). "The princes of the sanctuary and the princes of God were from out of the sons of Eleazar and from among the sons of Ithamar" (v. 5), it is said, thus emphasizing the difference between these two families. Note: This sentence is based on the French J. N. Darby translation where different words are used for "'of the sons of Eleazar" and "'of the sons of Ithamar." [Translator] "One father's house was drawn for Eleazar, and one drawn for Ithamar" (v. 6), so that the sons of Eleazar had a double portion. Thus there were twenty-four classes of priests according to God's thought. We see this order reproduced in the twenty-four elders — kings and priests — of Revelation 5.

In verses 20-31 we find the numbering of the sons of Levi who still remained to be divided by lot. First (vv. 20-25), the sons of Kohath (see Amram, v. 20 and 1 Chron. 23: 12), then, in verses 26-31, the sons of Merari, Gershon having been counted as a single course on account of its fewness in number (1 Chron. 23: 11). Note that the least among the Levites had the same portion as the chief fathers in the division by lot according to the Lord's free choice (v. 31).

1 Chronicles 26

Doorkeepers, Overseers of the Treasures, and Judges

In verses 1-21 we find the courses of the doorkeepers. Obed-Edom is here, as always, the object

of special blessing. Whereas Meshelemiah, the son of Korah, numbers eighteen sons and brethren destined to this office in his family, and Hosah of the family of Merari, thirteen sons and brethren, Obed-Edom numbers sixty-two in his direct posterity. He had eight sons, for it is said that God had blessed him (v. 5). Had he not, together with his family, been the keeper of the ark in his house for three months? It was at that time that the Lord had blessed his house (1 Chron. 13: 14; 1 Chron. 16: 38). He had become a doorkeeper of the ark when David brought it up to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15: 18). We see him and his numerous family with him here as doorkeepers of Solomon's future temple. Of his sons it is said that they were rulers in their father's house, that they were mighty men of valor, able men in strength for the service. We do not reflect often enough that the service of the doorkeepers, like that of the priests (1 Chron. 9: 13), required these qualities. It is hardly enough to say that this unprepossessing task requires humility, dependence, zeal, and self-forgetfulness; strength and valor are necessary also.

The doorkeepers had charge of all the gates of the temple. They must be able to repel any undertakings against the house of God besides watching with continual energy so that no defiled person might enter the courts of the Lord, but also must keep the doors open so that no member of the priesthood who had the right to enter the temple might be excluded.

The doorkeepers of the future temple were indicated by lot, which moreover designated the keepers of each gate. Shelemiah had charge of the door to the east; Zechariah, his son, a wise counsellor, had charge of the gate northward; Obed-Edom was in charge of the door to the south, but he was always specially blessed among all the others, for his sons had under their direction the storehouse.

Among the Levites (vv. 20-28) we find those appointed over the treasures of the house of God and over the treasures of the holy things. During this period which preceded the reign of peace a descendant of Moses (v. 24) was the overseer of the treasures; another, Shelomith with his brethren, had charge "over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which king David, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated (from the wars and out of the spoils had they dedicated them, to maintain the house of Jehovah), and all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah had dedicated: all that was dedicated was under the hand of Shelomith, and of his brethren" (vv. 26-28), until the moment when all these treasures would be employed by Solomon. Here for the third time Joab's activity is seen in a favorable light.

Other Levites from among the Jizharites were officers and judges (v. 29). Those who remained at Hebron, where David's kingship had begun, were established "for the administration of Israel on this side Jordan westward, for all the business of Jehovah, and for the service of the king" (v. 30), and "king David made" them "rulers over the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and the affairs of the king" (v. 32). Thus those who from the beginning of David's reign had been his witnesses and companions receive a special distinction.

1 Chronicles 27

The Service of the King

This chapter (vv. 1-15) deals with the service of the king. As in all these enumerations, the number twelve with its factors is always mentioned. It indeed deals with what concerns the kingdom upon earth, having the twelve tribes as their center. There were army divisions of 24,000 men each for the twelve months of the year, one division for each month. Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, is especially

mentioned among David's thirty mighty men (cf. 2 Sam. 23: 20) as head of the third division. God delights to remember him.

The overseers of the treasures and of all the goods belonging to king David are enumerated in verses 25-31.

Verses 32-34 remind us of the sorrowful circumstances which accompanied David's career as responsible king, but there is no mention here of the "counsel of Ahithophel," nor of Absalom's rebellion, nor of Joab's treachery. All this does not enter, as we have often repeated, into the purpose of Chronicles. On the contrary, Hushai the Archite is mentioned opposite the simple reference to the name of Ahithophel; Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, one of the mighty men distinguished by David, opposite the name of Abiathar, whom Solomon drove from the priesthood, because he had supported the usurper Adonijah. Joab, great Joab, the captain of the army, the king's relative, the most influential man next to David, is mentioned with but a single phrase.

DAVID'S LAST INSTRUCTIONS

1 Chronicles 28 - 29

1 Chronicles 28

Solomon, The King According to the Counsels of God, and His Responsibility As Such

In 1 Chronicles 23: 2, David had gathered together "all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites" so as to give them directions for the service of the temple and the order of the kingdom. In this chapter he assembles "all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the princes of the the divisions that ministered to the king, and the captains over thousands, and the captains over hundreds, and the comptrollers of all the substance and possessions of the king and of his sons, with the chamberlains, and the mighty men, and all the men of valor, unto Jerusalem." In fact, he addresses all the people (v. 2), for he wants to make known to all what God has revealed concerning the temple itself, the religious center of the kingdom.

"I had in my heart," he says, "to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of Jehovah and for the footstool of our God, and I have prepared to build" (v. 2). This is what Psalm 132 expresses in a very remarkable manner. David, in all his tribulations had not given himself rest until he had found a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord — a place where this covenant, deposited in the ark, could eventually be established for God's people without being exposed to a fresh journey across the desert or to new vicissitudes in the hands of the Philistines. This rest of God was at the same time that of "the footstool of His feet," for the ark was the throne of God who was seated between the cherubim, the throne which He had established in the midst of His people.

Such were God's counsels of grace. In Chronicles we see them accomplished in David and Solomon as types of Christ, but they were accomplished only in type. For soon this ark, which through David's solicitude had found its rest on Mount Zion and in the midst of a glorious temple built by Solomon, disappeared and its place of rest was completely destroyed.

David had made immense preparations for this house, but he recalls what Jehovah had told him (1 Chron. 22: 8): "Thou shalt not build a house unto My name, for thou art a man of war, and hast shed blood" (1 Chron. 28: 3). Through his sufferings David could prepare the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," but he could not bring in that rest as long as the kingdom still bore the impress of the warrior character of its leader. So will it be with Christ. At the cross He laid the foundation for eternal rest, but He will not establish this final rest until after all His enemies will have been put under His feet.

In verses 4-6 David insists, in the presence of all the representatives of the people, on that principal fact that Chronicles always emphasizes: the accomplishment of God's counsels according to the election of grace. The Lord had chosen him, David, to be king over Israel forever; He had chosen Judah as prince; in Judah He had chosen the house of Jesse. Among the sons of Jesse He had taken pleasure in David, to make him king. The Lord's free choice as well as God's good pleasure had been upon the least and most humble of them all, strong and mighty no doubt in God's eyes in his struggle with the lion and the bear in the wilderness, but having nothing in the eyes of men that they should desire him. Was he not a type of the Perfect Servant, acclaimed by Jehovah as the object of His good pleasure at the very moment He was publicly taking a place of most profound humiliation in the baptism of repentance? But later came that moment when God declared Him to be the true Solomon, the object of the same good pleasure as at John's baptism, when He appeared on the holy mountain, anticipating the glory of His eternal kingdom.

Among David's numerous sons God had again "chosen Solomon...to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah over Israel" (v. 5). Note this expression which we find again in 1 Chronicles 29: 23: The kingdom of Solomon is "the kingdom of Jehovah"; his throne, Jehovah's throne. Do not these words speak to us of God's counsels with regard to Christ's future kingdom? This is all the more striking here as God says of Solomon: "I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his father" (v. 6; cf. 1 Chron. 22: 10; Heb. 1: 5). Solomon is God's son, and he will build a house (Heb. 3: 3-4); he is the Chosen One of Jehovah who "will establish his kingdom forever" (v. 7). Lastly, "Jehovah has chosen [him] to build a house for the sanctuary" (v. 10).

But in this passage we find a characteristic little word: "If." This is the first time* this word is uttered in Chronicles in relation to the kingship or to the people: "If he be firm to do My commandments and Mine ordinances, as at this day." "If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cut thee off for ever" (vv. 7, 9). Note: We shall see a second example in 2 Chronicles 7: 17.

Solomon, although considered here in his perfection as the king according to God's counsels, is nonetheless responsible and his kingdom cannot be made firm if he does not measure up to this responsibility. Chronicles, in accord with its purpose, does not present Solomon to us as having failed. Even less than in the account of David's history, it does not mention his fallibility or his faults. Yet nonetheless Solomon remains responsible. Such exactly is Christ's character as the King of righteousness and of peace. He will be responsible to Him who has entrusted the kingdom to Him and will carry out His office perfectly until He delivers up the dominion into the Father's hands (1 Cor. 15: 24). Doubtless Solomon personally failed completely in this, but Chronicles does not mention this, since it deals with the counsels of God realized in Christ.

However we find here another reason for presenting the blessing as conditional. The successors of the first two kings are neither Davids nor Solomons. Kingship according to God's counsels does not go beyond them, for in them in type it reaches to the millennial reign of Christ. Nevertheless the kingship continues through Solomon's line until the appearing of the true King, the house of David forming an uninterrupted chain which ends in Christ. Now this line of descent only rarely offers us features of the true King. The house of David falls into ruin; the people of Solomon give themselves up to idolatry. All this cannot be passed over in silence in Second Chronicles when it tells of the royal house and of the chosen people. Yet, as we shall see in studying the Second Book, the general character of this inspired writing is maintained in the midst of ruin and God acts in grace, covering a multitude of sins at the least trace of repentance, whereas the books of Kings expose the faults of all the kings without mitigation, even those of David and Solomon.

The “if” therefore serves in part as an introduction to the history that follows Solomon's in the following book.

In verse 8 David is speaking “in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of Jehovah, and in the audience of our God.” He establishes that the people also are responsible, although in this the king takes the first place: “Keep and seek for all the commandments of Jehovah your God; that ye may possess the good land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children after you for ever” (v. 8).

In the preceding chapters we have seen the religious and civil system established by Jehovah by means of the authority conferred by Him upon David. This system does not resemble the order of things established by Moses, although it does not in any way contradict it. Neither the priests, nor the Levites, nor the singers, nor the doorkeepers, nor the army are organized as in the past. Everything is new; everything depends upon the king who establishes them according to lot, that is to say, under the immediate direction of the Lord. In verses 11 to 19 we find the same principle when it is a matter of the temple compared to the tabernacle. Only it is by inspiration (v. 12) that David had received all the details, not by a model placed before the eyes of a Moses upon the mountain, which the latter was to execute. David received these details (they were in him, in his mind) through the Spirit. Nothing depended upon his gift of organization or upon his natural intelligence. Everything came directly from God. “All this said David, in writing, by Jehovah's hand upon me” (v. 19). He also received by inspiration the directions concerning “the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah” (v. 13). The vessels themselves were different from those of the tabernacle, without really differing in their typical significance. Their number and weight differed; new vessels were added. So too it was with the musical instruments. The very weight of each object of gold and of silver was determined by inspiration, from the candlesticks to the goblets and forks (vv. 16-17). The ark of the covenant which enclosed the law remained the same, with its mercy seat and the cherubim overshadowing it, for neither the covenant nor the mercy seat could be altered in any way. By contrast, the cherubim that spread out their wings and touched the two walls of the sanctuary, were something entirely new (2 Chron. 3: 10-14; 2 Chron. 5: 7-9).

In verses 20 and 21, David exhorts Solomon anew to be strong, to do it, to fear nothing, for the Lord would not forsake him “until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished.” This is again an unconditional promise, and Solomon finds help, not only from the workers (1 Chron. 22: 15), but also from the courses of priests and Levites, from the princes, and from all the people.

1 Chronicles 29

David's Prayer

Solomon Established King for the Second Time

“And king David said to all the congregation, Solomon my son, the one whom God has chosen, is young and tender, and the work is great; for this palace is not to be for man, but for Jehovah Elohim” (v. 1). The person of Solomon is here set in the limelight more and more as a type of Christ in His reign. David says of him: “whom alone God hath chosen” (KJV). He is the only one, the object of His choice, the only one who answers to His thoughts and to His eternal counsels concerning the kingdom.

But, as David had already said (1 Chron. 22: 5), Solomon was still “young and tender” and was not yet full grown so as to be able to take up the reins of government. While awaiting this moment, his

father had proclaimed him king, and as such, had seated him with him upon his own throne (1 Chron. 23: 1). What is here said speaks to us of Christ. It goes without saying that in Him there was no weakness that would delay His kingdom, for God has exalted Him and has given Him a name above every name — but at present He is seated upon His Father's throne in heaven, and, as Man, He is waiting for the moment determined by God to rule over Israel and the nations. In this sense the time of His full development has not yet come for Him, and the hour of His earthly kingdom has not yet struck.

Now David had done all that was needed for God finally to be able to establish His throne at Jerusalem. “And I have prepared,” he says, “according to all my power” (v. 2); but he adds: “And moreover, in my affection for the house of my God I have given of my own property of gold and silver, for the house of my God” (v. 3). Christ loved the Church and gave all that He had, even His own life, so that He might build it as a holy temple where God could dwell. All is ready for His glorious manifestation, but meanwhile Christ is adding material for the building and even allows us to cooperate in His work. “And who,” he asks, “is willing to offer to Jehovah this day?” (v. 5). Then all the people's representatives willingly offer valuables, “gold, silver, precious stones” (see 1 Cor. 3: 12), and this offering is approved. There are no collaborators in the wisdom which has prepared all, but there are collaborators in the work: and so it is with us today.

But let us not forget that this passage does not deal with the Church. It speaks to us of an earthly people in the midst of whom the Lord was going to dwell and who would be a people willing to contribute of all that they have toward the glorious establishment of the house of God at Jerusalem.

The result of this liberality is general joy, both among all the people and in David's heart: “And the people rejoiced because they offered willingly, for with perfect heart they offered willingly to Jehovah; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy” (v. 9). The prophet Zephaniah describes a similar fellowship in joy: “Be glad with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem...Jehovah thy God...will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will exult over thee with singing” (Zeph. 3: 14, 17).

Then (vv. 10-19) David blesses the Lord. He blesses Him as the God who at Bethel had made promises to Jacob, calling him Israel (v. 10), and who had said to him: “I am the Almighty God: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee; and kings shall come out of thy loins” (Gen. 35: 11). Then he celebrates His greatness, His strength, His glory, His splendor, His majesty, for all things are of Him in heaven and upon earth. The kingdom and the exaltation are His, for He is Head above all things. Riches and glory come from Him, for He rules over all things. Power and might are in His hand and He is able to make great and give strength to all.

Thus David with all the people celebrated the glorious name of the God of Israel.

All that the king and his people — who are nothing in the presence of God — can willingly offer Him is of Him, and they only give Him that which they have received from His hand. As for them, before Him they are but strangers and sojourners like all their fathers: they pass on like a shadow and die. And now, all this abundance they are offering Him comes from Him and all belongs to Him, but He takes pleasure in the uprightness of the king's heart who is willingly offering all things, and in the uprightness of the hearts of the people who are doing likewise.

Lastly, David asks this same God who had made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob), to keep and to direct the hearts of His people toward Him, and to give Solomon a perfect heart to obey Him, to do all these things, and to build the temple prepared for by David.

Such is this magnificent prayer. It gives all glory to God alone, to God who by virtue of His

counsels has made promises to His elect. It puts man in his true place before God. It expresses an absolute dependence on Him who alone can direct the hearts of His own to please Him.

After having praised God, David leads the praises of all the congregation (cf. Ps. 22: 22, 25), a striking image of Him who, after having suffered and having been “answered...from the horns of the buffaloes,” declares God's name to His brethren and gives them the example of perfect praise so that they might imitate it.

Then the people “bowed down their heads, and did homage to Jehovah and the king” (v. 20); thus the king is associated with the Lord in a joint homage. Again this word carries our thoughts to Christ. The man whom we see here blessing God has the right to be worshipped just as as God Himself.

The people offer sacrifices in abundance and, characteristically of Chronicles, Solomon is made king for the second time (v. 22; cf. 1 Chron. 23: 1). The first time we saw him seated upon his father's throne; now he is seated upon his own throne. In Revelation He likewise makes this promise to the overcomer: “He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with Me in My throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3: 21). In effect, it is as King upon his throne that Solomon, the son of David was “anointed...to Jehovah to be prince,” and He will bear this character in His millennial reign. Zadok is also anointed “to be priest,” and we see at last realized in him the prophecy which had said: “And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest...and he shall walk before Mine anointed continually” (1 Sam. 2: 35).

“And Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king instead of David his father, and prospered” (v. 23). Henceforth the throne of the King is identified with the throne of the Lord! Thus Jehovah is God, but He is also Christ. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Col. 1: 16-17); He who is worshipped on the throne (Rev. 4: 11); Him whom God has exalted and to whom He has given a name above every name (Phil. 2: 9). His glory is not referred to in this passage as the result of the work which He has accomplished for us, but as that which He has undertaken to glorify His Father. When we think of His work for us, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and worship. But His glory as Man exalted to God's right hand, declared by Jehovah to be He who is “the Same and [whose] years shall have no end” (Ps. 102: 27), so that the two Persons are but one, without being confounded — this glory ought also to occupy our thoughts much. Although the name of Solomon does not make us think, as does that of David, of Christ as the Savior of His people, nevertheless in Him we find One who is “Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9: 6), the true Solomon, seated on the throne of Jehovah.

This glorious scene, unprecedented in Israel's history, is presented to us as the inauguration of the reign of peace of Him whom God has chosen and of whom He has said: “Behold My Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa. 42: 1). No event in the Word can give a more astonishing picture of the dawn of Christ's future reign when He will take the government of all things in hand, for He is above all. Then all Israel, all the princes and mighty men, and also all David's sons will submit themselves to Him (vv. 24-25). It will be the time of the fullness of His power!

This scene ends the first part of Chronicles. No doubt we find less moral instruction for ourselves and our conduct in this book than in the books of Samuel and the first eleven chapters of the First Book of Kings. But it brings before us primarily Christ, God's eternal counsels concerning Him, the glories characteristic of Him and of the order of His kingdom, the dwelling place of God established definitively in the midst of His people, the intimate association between these two characters — the true David and the true Solomon — and finally, of His identification with Jehovah in His kingdom.

Would not our souls have suffered a great loss if God had not given us this portion of Scripture?

Let the rationalists and unbelievers in the pride of their spurious science despise it: believers worshipfully treasure it and keep each word as a new revelation of the unfathomable riches of Christ!

The last verses of our chapter (1 Chron. 29: 26-30) repeat 1 Kings 2: 10-12 in view of at last closing David's history. The Holy Spirit mentions his old age "full of days, riches, and honor" in harmony with the purpose of this book, and in contrast with his end as it is recorded for us in 2 Samuel 23: 1-6 and in 1 Kings 1.

We have already noticed elsewhere that Chronicles informs us of the prophetic origin of the books of Samuel and Kings.

APPENDIX

The Order of the Tribes

A. Genesis 29-30

Natural order of the sons of Jacob according to their birth

This order speaks to us of man's plans acting according to his own thoughts outside the thoughts of God. We see these plans with Laban's giving his daughters to Jacob and with Rachel and Leah giving Jacob their maidservants. The order indicated here is as follows:

4 sons of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah.

2 sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant: Dan, Naphtali.

2 sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant: Gad, Asher.

2 sons of Leah: Issachar, Zebulon.

2 sons of Rachel: Joseph, Benjamin.

B. Genesis 35: 23

Order of the sons of Jacob dwelling in Canaan

The first three sons of Jacob had manifested themselves to be murderers and incestuous. Their only guarantee for entering into Canaan lies in the promise given to Abraham and in the free election of grace. Here we find these three guilty sons at the head of the list:

6 sons of Leah.

2 sons of Rachel, to whom are joined, so to say, the 2 sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, and the 2 sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant.

In this way, Leah and Rachel are equal in number and possess the same privileges according to the election of grace.

C. Genesis 46: 8-25

Order of the sons of Jacob at their entry into Egypt

We find the order of nature again here, but according to the wives. God has the upper hand in all that concerns the family of promise, but at the same time Leah and Rachel each reap the fruits of their own self-will. The order is as follows:

6 sons of Leah

2 sons of Zilpah

2 sons of Rachel

2 sons of Bilhah.

D. Genesis 49

Typical and prophetic order of the sons of Jacob

We will not enter into this very interesting subject which we have already dealt with elsewhere. Note: See: *Jacob ou la discipline* (p. 82) by H. Rossier [in the original French], and more especially: *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible. volume 1*, by J. N. Darby. Let us simply note:

Among Leah's six sons, Zebulon and Issachar are transposed. Issachar represents Israel's servitude to the Gentiles before the appearing of Dan, the Antichrist.

Dan himself, the son of Bilhah, is completely out of place. He represents the Antichrist, and after him we find the prophetic history of Israel's restoration. Naphtali, Bilhah's second son, is again out of place and comes only after Gad and Asher, Zilpah's sons, because he represents the joyous final liberty of restored Israel.

Joseph and Benjamin, the sons of Rachel, crown all this prophecy in a marvelous way as types of Christ.

E. Exodus 1: 2-5

Order of the sons of Israel in relation to their sojourn in Egypt

This order differs from that of numbers 2 and 3.

Joseph, type of Christ, who receives his brothers is entirely set apart from them.

Gad and Asher, sons of Zilpah, are placed last. Note: In Exodus 28: 11, 17-21 the names of the tribes are engraved on two onyx stones "according to their birth" (1 Chron. 28: 10) and on the twelve stones of the breastplate. Here the order is not mentioned and consequently is uncertain. This same uncertainty exists in Revelation 21: 19-20.

F. Numbers 1: 5-16

The tribes represented by their princes who assist in the numbering

Levi is omitted between Simeon and Judah, as not to be numbered. Asher and Gad are transposed. Ephraim and Manasseh replace Joseph. According to Jacob's prophecy (Gen. 48: 14-22), Ephraim takes precedence over Manasseh.

G. Numbers 1: 20-56

Order of numbering for combat

Gad, whose role is more than once to fill in the gaps, replaces Levi, who is absent from the numbering.

H. Numbers 2

Order of the encampment of the tribes

They are arranged under four heads: Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan. Levi is at the center, surrounding the tabernacle.

I. Numbers 7

Order of the princes of the tribes at the dedication of the altar

The same order as that of the encamping except, naturally, that Levi has disappeared.

J. Numbers 10: 11-28

Marching order of the tribes

The tabernacle, taken down and borne by Gershon and Merari, two of the levitical families, goes between Judah and Reuben. The sanctuary, borne by Kohath, the third levitical family, goes between Reuben and Ephraim. The ark alone goes ahead a three days' journey to seek out a place of rest for the people.

K. Numbers 13: 5-17

Order of the heads of the tribes to spy out the land

When it is a matter of spying out the land, all the tribes are deliberately mixed and mingled.

L. Numbers 26

Numbering after the plague

This is like the numbering for combat, except that Manasseh here again takes his place in relation to Ephraim according to the order of birth, whereas for combat Ephraim occupies his place according to the election of grace. This fact is important: it is as though God were beginning anew under the high priest's administration in grace (see 1 Chron. 17) the history of the people in responsibility crossing the wilderness, so that He might bring them into Canaan.

M. Numbers 34: 18-29

Order of the princes of the tribes for the division of the land

Here the order is absolutely outside that of nature. Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, having chosen their part beyond Jordan, are omitted. Moses, the only one in view previously as leader of the people, gives place to Eleazar (the priesthood) and to Joshua (Christ in the Spirit) leading the

people and determining their inheritance.

N. Deuteronomy 27

The tribes on Gerizim and Ebal

On Gerizim to bless: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, Benjamin.

All are the sons of the legitimate wives. This list moreover contains the names of those who are types of Christ: Levi, Judah, Joseph, Benjamin.

On Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali.

These, with the exception of Reuben and Zebulun, are the sons of the maidservants. Reuben and Zebulun are the firstborn and lastborn of Leah: they surround the sons of Zilpah. It is as though the curse were being pronounced by the representatives of the entire stock of the first wife and by all that is born of the flesh.

O. Deuteronomy 33

Prophetic order of the tribes, not according to the aspect presented by Jacob's prophecy, but according to the blessings brought by God's government in grace, according to their faithfulness in the land and according to the faithfulness of Moses, type of the future King

Simeon is omitted, for Israel's history as a people in the flesh has been terminated from the outset on with Reuben (cf. Gen. 49: 3-7). Then after Reuben, Judah the Lawgiver appears — Christ. Levi occupies a place of separation among the tribes: his faithfulness has produced fruit: intelligence, consecration, teaching, intercession, and praise. Joseph, also separated from his brethren, has a double portion in the persons of Ephraim and Manasseh. According to the election of grace, Ephraim once again takes precedence over his brother. Judah, Levi, and Joseph are types of Christ. The tribes which then follow are the picture of the blessings of the age to come: activity and rest, virtue, strength, riches, spiritual blessings, eternal rest.

P. Joshua 15-21

Order of the tribes entering into possession of the land

This is a spiritual order. In first place are Judah, Joseph, and Benjamin, types of Christ; only Joseph is represented by Ephraim, the object of the election of grace, and by the half-tribe of Manasseh, which excludes the order according to nature, the other half-tribe having remained beyond the Jordan. Simeon, who according to natural order should be in second place (1 Chron. 19: 1) does not take his place until the spiritual order (1 Chron. 15-18) is exhausted, so to speak. Dan (1 Chron. 19: 40) occupies the last place.

Q. 1 Chronicles 2: 1-2

Already cited at the beginning of this chapter of these Meditations. Instead of order, there is apparent disorder, all being equally the objects of the purposes of God in grace.

R. 1 Chronicles 2: 3 - 1 Chronicles 8: 34.

The genealogical order of the tribes in relation to the kingship

The kingship is established according to God's counsels, the character which it always bears in Chronicles. Judah, from whom comes the Lawgiver, is presented first. But Judah is chosen by pure grace; his history teaches us this here. His wife, a Canaanite, gives him a first-born, Er, whom the Lord slew on account of his wickedness. Thus, just as in 1 Chronicles 1, we find the natural man here first, the man whose whole history begins with the fall and judgment. Nonetheless, God gives Judah the preeminence because according to His counsels the Prince is to come forth from him (1 Chron. 5: 2), and not for any other reason. Also from the beginning of this chapter we see Judah's posterity traced down to David, the Beloved (vv. 13-17). In the enumeration of the other tribes, Levi occupies an important place (1 Chron. 6) on account of the major and indispensable role given him under the kingship for the worship and the service of the temple.

Reuben, the firstborn, has lost all preponderance, not only because this is given to the royal tribe of Judah, but also on account of his sin (1 Chron. 5: 1-2) which relegates him to a place even after that of Simeon, his brother (1 Chron. 4: 24). Besides, we are told that Joseph had the birthright, except for Judah's right to the kingship (1 Chron. 5: 2). It was becoming that he who had been rejected by his brethren should have the first place as head of the family of Israel. The tribes of Dan and Issachar are passed over in silence. This latter feature shows us that in Chronicles we are dealing with an incomplete and even fragmentary genealogical order. 1 Chronicles 2 demonstrates this in more than one place.

S. 1 Chronicles 12: 23-27

The order according to which the tribes come to submit themselves to King David

This doubtless depends in part upon their distance and the difficulty or ease of their journey to come to David at Hebron. Thus it is that the two and a half tribes beyond Jordan arrive last. However, Judah, the royal tribe, comes first, followed by Simeon and Levi who in large part depend upon him, and Benjamin, inseparable from Judah and Jerusalem. Benjamin is mentioned three times in this chapter.

T. 1 Chronicles 27: 16-22

Order of the tribes according to their princes

Here again, the order in which the tribes are mentioned is different from the others. Aaron, the high priest, occupies a place apart in the tribe of Levi and Zadok is the prince of the priesthood. He is "the one who shall walk before [Jehovah's] Anointed" forever and who exercises the priesthood, not only during Solomon's reign, but also during Christ's millennial reign. Joseph, type of the rejected suffering Son, has three princes: one for the tribe of Ephraim, one for each of the half-tribes of Manasseh. Dan comes last for the above-mentioned prophetic reason about the millennial reign. Gad and Asher are missing. Their omission seems to be explained by verses 23 and 24. There we see that David's thought at the time of his failure was to number Israel, not only the men of war, but also all the people from the age of twenty years and under. Thereafter he does so no more, for his past action was, perhaps without his realizing it, an act of rebellion against the Lord; something all the more serious since all his life long he was able to experience that his only safeguard was to trust in the Lord. This

time he does not number the people “for Jehovah had said He would increase Israel as the stars of heaven” (v. 23). He even sets Gad and Asher completely aside, just as Joab was once unwilling to number Levi and Benjamin.

U. Revelation 7

Order of the tribes sealed by grace

In this prophetic and symbolic picture every distinction is effaced except that Judah occupies the first place, for in Revelation it is a matter of God's government and of Christ's millennial reign. Here we no longer find the half-tribes of Manasseh. Levi is sealed like the other tribes. Joseph replaces Ephraim. Dan is entirely omitted — he is judged according to Jacob's prophecy; the Antichrist and his people, represented by Dan, cannot be sealed.

V. Ezekiel 48

Order of the tribes established on the millennial earth

Here the temple and the city, the priests, Levi, and the Prince form the center of the land and their position determines the order of the tribes. The position of the latter starts from both sides of this center northward and southward. It is to be noted that the sons of the legitimate wives are closest to the sanctuary, and those of the maidservants at the most distant extremities. Judah and Benjamin, the “Lawgiver” and the “Son of my right hand,” occupy the places closest to the sanctuary, to the north and to the south; because here it is a matter of government, of which they are representatives. There follow on the one side and on the other Reuben and Simeon who thus lose their rights according to nature. Levi belongs in the center: he is connected with the temple, as the “Prince” is with the city. Issachar and Zebulon, sons of Leah, to the south, correspond with Manasseh and Ephraim, sons of Rachel, to the north. Ephraim is nearer the sanctuary than Manasseh. Then come the sons of the maidservants. Gad, the son of Zilpah, to the south has, as usual, a place somewhat apart (see F). He corresponds to Naphtali, son of Bilhah, in the north. Dan, the last tribe to the north, as far as possible from the sanctuary, Note: We find 7 tribes to the north of the sanctuary and only 5 to the south. (For these details, see the helpful map at the back of the French J. N. Darby translation Bible and found also in some English Darby Bibles.) once again occupies the place he has always occupied in the distribution of the land. This is perhaps the reason why Asher who, according to a symmetrical plan should be found after Gad to the south, is added to the north, thus accentuating the distance to which Dan is relegated.