THE PERSON OF THE KING

The fact remains that, for a period of several centuries, Israel lived under a monarchy, and this is precisely the period when its political organization is best known. Moreover, royal institutions had an undeniable influence on some of Israel's religious conceptions, though this influence may have been exaggerated by a recent school of exegesis. We must therefore devote some attention to them. Unfortunately our information is one-sided; it is mainly about Judah, from which most of our documents have come, and we have just seen that Israel held another view of the royal power. Moreover, it is incomplete, because the Biblical writers were not specially interested in studying institutions. We can of course make good this deficiency by examining the organization of the neighbouring countries, which is sometimes better known; this can be very helpful, but then we run the risk of attributing to Israel ideas or customs which were foreign to it.

1. Accession to the throne

We have seen that while the dynastic principle was never really accepted in the northern kingdom, it was always observed in Judah. Even in Judah, however, accession to the throne implies a divine choice: a man is 'king by the grace of God', not only because God made a covenant with the dynasty of David, but because his choice was exercised at each accession. If the kingdom descended to Solomon and not to his elder brother Adonias, it was 'because it came to him from Yahweh' (1 K 2: 15; cf. 1 Ch 28: 5), and, as we shall see, every enthronement meant a renewal of the Davidic covenant and an adoption of the new sovereign by Yahweh. This idea of divine choice is universal in the ancient East. It is affirmed in Mesopotamia, even when a king succeeds his father, as was the ordinary rule, and at all periods, from Gudea, who is 'the shepherd designed by Ningirsu in his heart', down to Nabonidus, whom 'Sin and Nergal chose to reign when he was yet in his mother's womb', and Cyrus, of whom a Babylonian document says, 'Marduk chose his name for the kingdom over the world.' With this we naturally compare Is 44: 28, 'It is I (Yahweh) who say to Cyrus: My shepherd', and Is 45: 1, 'Thus says Yahweh to Cyrus his anointed.' The idea is carried to extremes in Egypt, where every king is held to be a son of Ra, the sun-god. In the
Aramaean kingdoms of Syria, Zakir, king of Hamath and La’ash, says: ‘Ba’al Shamañ called me and stood by me, and Ba’al Shamañ has made me king.’ This Zakir was a usurper, but Bar-Rekub, king of Senjirli, was a legitimate heir, yet he said: ‘My master Rekub-el has made me sit on the throne of my father.’

The dynastic principle does not necessarily involve primogeniture, but this was probably the rule among the Hittites, though not, apparently, in the Aramaean kingdoms of Syria. In Egypt and Assyria the father was usually, though not always, succeeded by his eldest son. The king appointed the heir-apparent and took him as a partner in the government during his lifetime. Similarly, at Ugarit the king appointed the heir from among his sons. In Israel too, primogeniture was a title to the succession, but appointment by the king was also required (2 Ch 21: 3), for the king was not bound to choose his eldest son. Though Adonias, the eldest surviving son of David, hoped to be king (1 K 2: 15 and 22), and was supported by a whole party (1 K 1: 5-9; 2: 22), a rival party supported Solomon (1 K 1: 10). It lay with David to choose his successor (1 K 1: 20, 27), and he chose the younger son, Solomon (1 K 1: 17, 30). Joachaz succeeded Josias, although he had an elder brother, who was later placed on the throne by the Pharaoh and given the name Joaqim (2 K 23: 31 and 36). It is possible that this choice between the sons took place only if the first-born, the normal heir, was dead: with Solomon this would be Amnon, and with Joachaz it was the Yohanan mentioned in 1 Ch 3: 15, of whom nothing is said at the time of the succession. This seems to have been the custom also in Assyria. But the situation was complicated when a king had several wives: Roboam preferred Maakah, although she was not his first wife (compare David and Bathsheba) and he gave Abiyah, Maakah’s eldest son, precedence over his brothers, in the hope that he would be king (2 Ch 11: 21-22).

Solomon was anointed king during the lifetime of his father (1 K 1: 32-40), who did not die until some time later (1 K 2: 1-10). Similarly Yotham assumed power when his father Ozias became a leper (2 K 15: 5), but we are not told that he was at once anointed. These are the only two co-regencies expressly mentioned in the Bible, though there may have been others not mentioned. Some modern historians list a whole series of them: Josaphat, Ozias and Manasseh in Judah, and Jeroboam II in Israel, are all said to have reigned at the same time as their fathers. But these are only hypotheses whose main purpose is to harmonize the discordant data of Biblical chronology. In the two certain cases, Solomon and Yotham assumed power because their fathers were too old or too ill to rule; the term co-regency is therefore somewhat inaccurate, and the situation is not quite the same as in Egypt or Assyria.

Women were excluded from the succession. In the kingdom of Israel, Joram succeeded his brother Ochozias because the latter died without male
II: CIVIL INSTITUTIONS

descendants (2 K 1: 17; cf. 3: 1). In Judah, Athaliah seized power on the
death of her son and reigned for seven years, but her reign was regarded as
unlawful and was terminated by a revolution (2 K 11).

2. The coronation rites

We possess two fairly detailed accounts of an enthronement, concerning
Solomon (1 K 1: 32-48) and Joas (2 K 11: 12-20). Both situations are exception-
tional: Solomon's accession was the last event in a long intrigue and took
place in his father's lifetime, while the accession of Joas brought to an end the
usurpation of Athaliah. Though a century and a half passed between the
two coronations, the two rites are so similar that they must represent the
general custom, at least in Judah. There were two parts to the ceremony, the
first of which was performed in the sanctuary, and the second in the royal
palace. It included the following: investiture with the insignia (not mentioned
for Solomon), anointing, acclamation, enthronement, homage of the high
officials (not mentioned for Joas). We shall consider these points in order.

(a) The setting: the sanctuary. Solomon was consecrated at Gihon, the spring
of Jerusalem. Is it because water played a part in the ceremonies, as in the
rites of purification before the coronation of the Pharaoh? Some authors,
interpreting Ps 110 as a coronation psalm, point to the allusion in v. 7: 'He
drinks of the brook by the wayside', but it is a most flimsy theory. It is much
more likely that Solomon was consecrated at Gihon because the sanctuary of
the Ark was there. We are in fact told that when Sadoq came to Gihon he
took the horn of oil 'in the tent' and anointed Solomon (1 K 1: 39): this,
then, would be the tent which David had erected for the Ark (2 S 6: 17),
and the 'tent of Yahweh' where Joab sought refuge (1 K 2: 28), and near it
would be the altar at which Adonias (who was quite near by, at the Fuller's
spring, 1 K 1: 9) took refuge on hearing that Solomon had been enthroned in
the palace (1 K 1: 49-50). Joas was consecrated in the Temple, where, we
presume, the consecration of the other kings of Judah after Solomon took
place.

According to 2 K 11: 14, during the ceremony Joas remained 'standing
near the pillar, as the custom was'. We may compare this with 2 K 23: 3,
which shows us Josias 'standing near the pillar' during the reading of the
law: the parallel passage 2 Ch 34: 31 merely says 'in his place'. Writing of
Joas, 2 Ch 23: 13 adds the detail that this place was 'near the entrance'. So we
may connect it with the 'king's dais' (in Greek) and the 'entrance for the
king', which Achaz took out of the Temple to gratify the king of Assyria
(2 K 16: 18). This dais is perhaps the one which Solomon erected in the
middle of the court, according to 2 Ch 6: 13. This detail is illustrated by two
stelae, one from Ras Shamra and one of Egyptian origin, which show the

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king (or a worshipper?) standing on a pedestal before an image of the God. We may then ask ourselves whether, in 2 K 11: 14; 23: 3 and 2 Ch 23: 13, we should not translate ‘on the dais’ instead of ‘near the pillar’. One fact is certain, that a special place was reserved for the king in the Temple, just as there was a place for the Pharaoh in the Egyptian temples; the new king stood in this place during the ceremonies of consecration.

(b) The investiture with the insignia. According to 2 K 11: 12, the priest Yehoyada gave Joas the nezer and the edath. The meaning of nezer is certain: it is the diadem or crown, which is the royal emblem par excellence (2 S 1: 10; Jr 13: 18; Ez 21: 30–31; Ps 89: 40; 132: 18). The word edath is more difficult: it means ‘testimony’ or ‘solemn law’, and is usually corrected to s’adh, ‘bracelets’. And in fact, in 2 S 1: 10, Saul’s diadem and bracelets, which would have been royal insignia, are brought to David. But perhaps in the sacring rite we ought to keep edath. We find that Ps 89: 40 gives ‘diadem’ as a parallel to the ‘covenant’, b’rith; now b’rith is sometimes synonymous with edath. Another synonym is hdq, ‘decree’; Ps 2: 6–7 speaks of the sacring of the king and the ‘decree’ of Yahweh. We may compare it with the ‘protocol’ mentioned by Egyptian enthronement rites, which was supposed to have been written by the hand of the god: e.g. Thutmose III says: ‘He has put my diadem on me and established my protocol’, which would be a good parallel to 2 K 11: 12. This protocol contained the Pharaoh’s coronation names, the affirmation of his divine sonship and power; it was an act of legitimation. It may be that the new king of Judah was given a similar testimony affirming his adoption by God and promising him victory over his enemies, in the manner of Yahweh’s ‘decree’ in Ps 2: 7–9, or recalling the covenant between Yahweh and the house of David (2 S 7: 8–12; Ps 89: 20–38; 132: 11–12, where the word edath occurs).

In Egypt it was the bestowal of the crowns and sceptres of Upper and Lower Egypt which made a man Pharaoh. In Assyria, the crown and sceptre were placed on cushions in front of the god; the priest crowned the king and handed him the sceptre. The Israelite accounts of enthronement do not mention a sceptre: it is not an exclusively royal emblem, there is no special name for it, and when it is carried by the king it seems to signify his executive power (Ps 2: 9; 110: 2) and his functions as judge (Ps 45: 7).

(c) The anointing. The coronation or imposition of the diadem does not appear in Solomon’s sacring, as it does in that of Joas, but the two accounts agree on the essential rite of anointing (1 K 1: 39; 2 K 11: 12). It is mentioned from the beginning of the monarchy, for Saul (1 S 9: 16; 10: 1), for David as king of Judah (2 S 2: 4), then as king of Israel (2 S 5: 3), in addition to the special tradition in 1 S 16: 13. Apart from Solomon and Joas, it recurs in the story of Absalom’s usurpation (2 S 19: 11); it is recorded of Joachaz in the kingdom of Judah (2 K 23: 30), and of Jechu in Israel (2 K 9: 2, 6). But it is certain that all the kings of Judah were anointed, and it is probably true
of all the kings of Israel. The prophet Samuel anointed Saul (1 S 10: 1) and David (according to the tradition of 1 S 16: 13). Jehu was anointed by a disciple of Eliseus. A priest anointed Solomon, according to 1 K 1: 39 (though v. 34 speaks of Sadoq and Nathan, a priest and a prophet) and Joas (2 K 11: 12). In the other instances the texts use a plural verb, but the rite was obviously performed by a single officiant, who was a religious personage. There can be no doubt that all the kings of Judah were consecrated in the Temple and anointed by a priest.

Anointing is a religious rite. It is accompanied by a coming of the Spirit; we would say that it confers a grace. Thus the spirit of God took hold of Saul after he was anointed (1 S 10: 10), and in the story of David the link between the two is even more direct according to 1 S 16: 13. The king is the Anointed of Yahweh (1 S 24: 7, 11; 26: 9, 11, 16, 23; 2 S 1: 14, 16 (Saul); 2 S 19: 22 (David); Lm 4: 20 (Sedecias); cf. 1 S 2: 10; 12: 3, 5; 2 S 22: 51; Ps 18: 51; 20: 7, 84: 10; 89: 39, 52, 132: 10). The king, a ‘consecrated person, thus shares in the holiness of God; he is inviolable. David refuses to raise a finger against Saul because he is Yahweh’s Anointed (1 S 24: 7, 11; 26: 9, 11, 23), and he executes the man who had dared to lift his hand against the king (2 S 1: 14, 16).

The anointing of a king is not, however, a rite peculiar to Israel. Yoatham’s fable about the kingship of Abimelek (Jg 9: 8, 15), shows that the rite existed in Canaan before the establishment of the Israelite monarchy, and the command to Elias to go and anoint Hazael as king of Aram (1 K 19: 15), may indicate that the rite was practised at Damascus, though this is not borne out either by the account of Hazael’s accession (2 K 8: 9-15) or by the non-biblical documents. Concerning Canaan, extra-biblical documents do exist, though they are not all equally convincing. There is a text from Ras Shamra which may contain an allusion to the anointing of Baal as king, but the text is mutilated and its meaning uncertain. One of the Amarna letters tells us that the kings of Syria and Palestine were anointed as vassals of the Pharaoh, and an Egyptian balsam vase found in one of the royal tombs at Byblos may have served for such an investiture. These facts suggest an Egyptian practice rather than a native custom: we know from other sources that the high officials in Egypt were anointed on appointment to office, but the Pharaohs were not. The kings in Mesopotamia do not seem to have been anointed: the only text which might be quoted is of doubtful value: it is a mutilated passage of the Assyrian royal ritual, which may refer to anointing. Hittite kings, on the other hand, were anointed with ‘the holy oil of kingship’, and in their titles these sovereigns are styled, ‘Tabarna, the Anointed, the Great King, etc.’

Was anointing, in Israel, a strictly royal rite? In 1 K 19: 15-16 God commands Elias to go and anoint Hazael, Jehu . . . and Eliseus. Hazael was to be king of Syria, Jehu would be anointed king of Israel by a disciple of Eliseus, but we the wc 1, 'anc Yahwe where Man Ex 40: in perp Priestly in one, 6: 13 (t by all ) Ever the hist not ev ance of as head note, h certain Za 4: : Josue a but eve is a mo quently either, anointi only te just qu conter is prob 2 M 1: priests had ne Hence were at days th We religion person Anoin and the is there Thes
but we hear nothing of the anointing of Eliseus or of any other prophet. Here
the word was demanded by the context and is used metaphorically. In Is 61:
1, ‘anointed’ is used figuratively and signifies the prophet’s consecration to
Yahweh (cf. Jr. 1:5). The same figurative use is found in Ps 105:15 = 1 Ch 16:22,
where the Patriarchs are called ‘anointed’ and ‘prophets’.

Many passages, however, say that priests were anointed, and according to
Ex 40:12-15, it was this anointing which conferred on them the priesthood
in perpetuity, from generation to generation. These passages all belong to the
Priestly tradition, and in them we can distinguish two parallel series of texts:
in one, anointing is reserved to the high priest alone (Ex 29:4-9; Lv 4:3, 5, 16;
6:13 retaining the singular), 15:8; 12:16:32), while in the other it is received
by all priests (Ex 28:41; 30:30; 40:12-15; Lv 7:35-36; 10:7; Nb 3:3).

Everyone admits that all these texts were edited after the Exile. Before this
the historical and prophetic books never mention the anointing of priests,
not even of the high priest. It is therefore possible that, after the disappear-
ance of the monarchy, the royal anointing was transferred to the high priest
as head of the people, and later extended to all the priests. One should
note, however, that, apart from these texts from the Pentateuch, there is no
certain evidence for the anointing of priests before the Hellenistic period.
Za 4:14, it is true, speaks of the ‘two sons of the oil’, who are probably
Josue and Zorobabel, the spiritual and temporal heads of the community;
but even if we grant that this unusual expression refers to an anointing (which
is a moot point), it is certain that Zorobabel was never anointed, and conse-
quentially we cannot conclude that the high priest Josue was ever anointed
either. There remains the uncertain text of 1 Ch 20:22, which mentions an
anointing of Sadoq as priest, along with that of Solomon as king. This text
only tells us how the practice of former times was then pictured (cf. the texts
just quoted from the Pentateuch referring to Aaron), but it is no evidence of
contemporary practice. On the contrary, the ‘anointed prince’ of Dn 9:25
is probably the high priest Onias III, and the ‘race of anointed priests’ in
2 M 1:10 is apparently that of the high priests. But the custom of anointing
priests had ceased by the Roman era, and the Rabbis even thought that it
had never been practised throughout the period of the Second Temple.
Hence it is hard to say at what period the high priest or the priests in general
were anointed, though it is clear that it was not under the monarchy.1 In those
days the king was the only Anointed One.

We have stressed somewhat this problem of anointing, because of its
religious implications. Anointing, as we shall see, made the king a sacred
person and empowered him to perform certain religious acts. Further,
‘Anointed’ and ‘Messiah’ are synonyms, being respectively the translation
and the transliteration of the same Hebrew word, messiah. The reigning king
is therefore a Messiah, and we shall see that he is also a saviour.

These elements were to combine in the expectation of a future saviour who

would be the Messiah King. But it was only in the last century before Christ, in the apocryphal Psalms of Solomon, that this combination became explicit and that the long-promised, long-expected saviour was called the Anointed, the Messiah.

(d) The acclamation. After the anointing, the new sovereign was acclaimed. The horn or the trumpet was sounded, the people clapped their hands and shouted: 'Long live the king!' (1 K 1: 34, 39; 2 K 11: 12, 14; cf. 2 K 9: 13). It is the same shout which the rebels must have raised at the banquet of Adonias (1 K 1: 25), and which greeted the appointment of Saul at Mispah (1 S 10: 24). This was the cry of Hushai when he pretended to go over to Absalom (2 S 16: 16).

This acclamation does not mean that the people chose the king, but that the people accepted the choice made by Yahweh and made effective by the anointing: the shout of ‘Long live the king!’ is not a wish, it is an acquiescence (cf. ‘Jehu is king’ after the anointing and the sounding of the horn in 2 K 9: 13). Men recognize the king’s authority and submit to it. The same meaning must be given to similar expressions such as the greeting: ‘May the king live for ever!’ (1 K 1: 31), or the oaths by the life of the king (1 S 17: 55; 2 S 14: 19). This oath is sometimes coupled with one by the life of Yahweh (2 S 11: 11; 15: 21), and this double formula makes the king’s authority parallel to that of God.

(e) The enthronement. After the acclamation all left the sanctuary and entered the palace, where the new king took his seat on the throne (1 K 1: 46, Solomon; 2 K 11: 19, Joas). This action marks the assumption of power, and ‘to sit on the throne’ becomes a synonym for ‘to begin to reign’ (1 K 16: 11; 2 K 13: 13). The same expressions recur in other Eastern cultures and in our modern languages. Thus the throne becomes the symbol of royal power (Gn 41: 40; Ps 45: 7), and is sometimes almost personified (2 S 14: 9). It is still called the throne of David, when speaking of his successors the kings of Judah (1 K 2: 24, 45; Is 9: 6; Jr 13: 13; 17: 25), to mark the permanence of the Davidic dynasty promised by Nathan’s prophecy, ‘Your throne shall be established for ever’ (2 S 7: 16; cf. Ps 89: 5; 132: 11-12).

Solomon’s throne of gold and ivory is described in 1 K 10: 18-20 as one of the wonders of the world; its back was surmounted by bulls’ heads, two standing lions served as arm-RESTS and it was approached by six steps flanked by figures of lions. The thrones of gods or kings which archaeologists have unearthed provide analogies which illustrate this description, and there is no need to look for a cosmic symbolism, as some have done.

As Yahweh was held to be the true king of Israel, the royal throne is called ‘the throne of Yahweh’ (1 Ch 29: 23), and more explicitly, ‘the throne of the kingship of Yahweh over Israel’ (1 Ch 28: 5). This throne of Yahweh had Justice and Right for its supports (Ps 89: 15; 97: 2). The king’s throne, too,
was firmly established on justice (Pr 16: 12; 25: 5; 29: 14; cf. Ps 72: 1-2), or on right and justice (Is 9: 6).

(f) The homage. When the king had taken possession of his throne, the high officials came to do him homage (1 K 1: 47). This homage is mentioned only in the account of Solomon, but it must have taken place at every accession: the ministers made acts of obedience and the new sovereign confirmed them in their offices. Here the Assyrian royal ritual had a picturesque ceremony: the officials laid their insignia before the king, and then ranged themselves round in any order, without regard for precedence. The king then said: ‘Let every man resume his office’, and every one resumed his insignia and his place in the hierarchy.

3. The coronation name

At the coronation of the Pharaoh his full set of titles was proclaimed, comprising five names, of which the last two were the names of accession and of birth, each inscribed on a cartouche. In ancient Mesopotamia an old coronation text of Uruk says that the goddess Ishtar takes away the king’s ‘name of lowliness’ and calls him by his ‘name of lordship’. But the Assyrian royal ritual says nothing of a change of name, and one must not draw too sweeping a conclusion from expressions like those of Assurbanipal in his inscriptions: ‘Assur and Sin have pronounced my name for power.’ This is probably no more than a way of signifying predestination by God; we may compare a Babylonian text about Cyrus: ‘Marduk has pronounced his name, Cyrus of Anshan, and has appointed his name for kingship over the world.’ Consequently, it is not proved that the kings of Assyria took a new name at their coronation. Asarhaddon certainly received a new name when he became heir-apparent, but this name was hardly ever used in his reign. There remain three instances which are clearer: Tiglath-Pileser III took the name of Pulu when he became king of Babylon (cf. the Pul in the Bible, 2 K 15: 19; 1 Ch 5: 26), Salmanasar V reigned at Babylon under the name of Ululai, and Assurbanipal called himself Kandalanu at Babylon; perhaps they were conforming to a custom of Lower Mesopotamia. Several Hittite kings were known by two names, but as both names are used in official texts dating from their reigns, they cannot be birth and coronation names.

In Israel, the Messianic titles given to the child, probably the Emmanuel, whose birth is foretold in Is 9: 5, have been compared with the five names of the Egyptian protocol: there are in fact four double names, and perhaps the trace of a fifth. This is very probably a literary imitation of an Egyptian custom, but it does not justify the conclusion that the kings of Israel were given a similar set of titles at their accession.

On the other hand there are two certain instances of a change of name. When the Pharaoh made Elyaqim king, he gave him the name of Joiaqim (2 K 23: 34), and Mattanyah, placed on the throne by the king of Babylon, was named
Sedecias (2 K 24: 17). The two cases are similar in that each time a foreign suzerain intervenes, whereas Joakim came to the throne between these two kings without his suzerain intervening and with no mention of a change of name. The change might then be a mark of the bond of vassalage, except that one would expect the Pharaoh to give his vassal an Egyptian name (cf. Gn 41: 45), and the king of Babylon a Babylonian name (cf. Dn 1: 7), whereas the new names of these two kings are just as Hebrew and even Yahwist as those they had before. It is therefore possible that the change was an Israelite custom accepted by the foreign master.

If this is so, the kings of Judah—we find nothing similar in Israel—may have been given a coronation name or a reigning name, and this conclusion seems to be confirmed by other texts. Besides general expressions like 2 S 7: 9; 1 Ch 17: 8 (literally, 'I will make you a great name'), which have their equivalents in Egypt, certain facts are significant. To begin with the most cogent, the son and successor of Josias is called Joachaz in 2 K 23: 30, 31, 34, but Shallum in Jr 22: 11, and the list of Josias' sons in 1 Ch 3: 15 contains no Joachaz but does contain a Shallum. May this not be the birth name, and Joachaz the reigning name? We know that the successor of Amasias is sometimes called Oziyas and sometimes Azarias in the accounts of 2 K 14: 21—15: 34, but the prophets always call him Oziyas (Is 1: 1; 6: 1; 7: 1; Os 1: 1; Am 1: 1; Za 14: 5), and so does 2 Ch 26, every time, in the account of his reign. Yet he is called Azarias in the genealogy of 1 Ch 3: 12. We may therefore conclude that Azarias was his birth name and Oziyas his coronation name. According to 2 S 12: 24-25 the child of David and Bathsheba received the name of Solomon from his mother, but the prophet Nathan called him Yedidyah. It is curious that this latter name never appears again: could it have been his birth name, displaced by his reigning name? A still more hazardous conjecture is to consider David as the coronation name, in fact a royal title, of the first king of Israel, whose birth name was Elhanan: the same Elhanan who slew Goliath according to 2 S 21: 19, and the same as that Baalhanan, who, according to Gn 36: 38-39, reigned over Edom after a certain Saul.

If we have no more or no clearer examples, the reason may be that the reigning name, the only official one, almost always completely displaced the name given at birth, so that it was no longer even remembered. But in every instance we are still in the realm of hypothesis: the most one can say is that it is probable, though not certain, that the kings of Judah took a new name when they succeeded to the throne.

4. The enthronement psalms

The crowning of the king was accompanied by popular demonstrations. Besides the cry of 'Long live the king!' there was cheering, and playing on
the flute and trumpet (1 K 1: 40; 2 K 11: 13-14). This music and cheering evidently provided an accompaniment to songs praising the new ruler, as in such demonstrations in the East to-day. Some of the ‘royal’ psalms may have been composed and sung in this most solemn of settings, as Ps 45 was composed for a royal wedding. The question concerns chiefly Ps 2 and 110, which seem to allude to the rites of enthronement.

In Ps 2, in reply to the princes of the earth who have conspired against Yahweh and his Anointed (v. 2), Yahweh declares that it is he who has established his king in Sion (v. 6). The king (or the cantor) then proclaims the decree, the ḫḏq, of Yahweh: on this day of sacring he adopts him as his son and promises him dominion over all the land (vv. 7-9). Then the kings pay homage to him (v. 12). In this psalm, then, we find the anointing, the ‘decree’ (which is the equivalent of the ‘testimony’ delivered to Joas, 2 K 11: 12, and of the ‘covenant’ with the house of David, 2 S 7: 8-16a), and finally the homage. The supposed revolt of the vassal kings is understandable at the time of a change of reign, and has a parallel in the sham fight which was performed in Egypt at coronation feasts. The question of adoption will be considered later.²

In Ps 110, Yahweh seats the king on his right hand (v. 1), promises him the sceptre of power (v. 2), declares that he has begotten him (v. 3, according to the Greek, the text being corrupt and disputed), and declares him a priest after the order of Melchisedech (v. 4); the king slays his enemies, he is ‘arbiter of the nations’ (vv. 5-6). Here again we see the enthronement, the investiture, the promises and probably the adoption. The allusion to the priesthood of Melchisedech will be discussed later.³

These two psalms are therefore close akin and would be appropriate to a waking feast. Against this it may be objected that the New Testament uses them as Messianic psalms, and that part of the Jewish tradition and all Christian tradition interpret them as such. Some writers point out that the psalmist could not promise universal empire to the human king of the little kingdom of Judah, and that he certainly could not address him as Yahweh’s son. Yet there is nothing here which goes beyond the expressions of court etiquette, or the ideas the Israelites held about their king. On the first point, there are numerous parallels from other Eastern sources, but we need only recall the ‘Psalm of David’ (2 S 22=Ps 18), in which the king sings of his victories over all his enemies in terms very like those of Ps 2 and 110, or the expressions of the royal wedding song in Ps 45, which also allude to the sacring, or the good wishes expressed at the accession of Solomon (1 K 1: 37 and 47). The title of ‘son’ is found in Nathan’s prophecy (2 S 7: 14), where the primary reference is to the human king descended from David, as the next words (vv. 14b-15) show. Moreover, the terms of this prophecy are applied explicitly to Solomon by 1 Ch 17: 13; 22: 10; 28: 6. The two aspects

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2. Cf. p. 111.  
of universal dominion and divine adoption are combined in the commentary on this prophecy given in Ps 89: 20-38.

Other psalms, too, may have been sung on this occasion, even though they did not contain express references to the ceremonies of the day. Ps 72, for example, prays that the king may reign in justice and foretells that he will rule to the ends of the earth, and Ps 101 draws a portrait of the righteous prince.

It has been maintained that Ps 2, 72 and 110 were at first royal psalms, and were modified after the Exile in a Messianic sense; but it is very hard to say what the revisions were. It is more reasonable to suppose that these psalms, like Nathan’s prophecy and other texts referring to royal Messianism, had a twofold meaning from the moment of their composition: every king of the Davidic line is a figure and a shadow of the ideal king of the future. In fact, none of these kings attained this ideal, but at the moment of enthronement, at each renewal of the Davidic covenant, the same hope was expressed, in the belief that one day it would be fulfilled. All these texts, then, are Messianic, for they contain a prophecy and a hope of salvation, which an individual chosen by God will bring to fulfilment.

5. The king as saviour

The king is ipso facto a saviour. It is a common idea among primitive peoples that the king embodies the good estate of his subjects: the country’s prosperity depends on him, and he ensures the welfare of his people. The idea is common in Eastern countries, too. In Egypt, to cite only two examples, there is a hymn about Menes which reads: ‘He has come to us, he has brought the people of Egypt to life, he has done away with their afflictions.’ Another hymn describes the reign of Ramses IV in these words:

Those who had fled returned to their towns, those who had hidden showed themselves again;
those who had been hungry were fed, those who had been thirsty were given drink;
those who had been naked were clad, those who had been ragged were clothed in fine garments;
those who were in prison were set free, those who were in bonds were filled with joy . . .

In Mesopotamia, Assurbanipal says: ‘From the moment that Assur, Sin, etc., placed me on the throne, Adad made his rain fall, Ea opened her springs, the corn grew five cubits high, the harvest of the land has been abundant.’ Adad-shum-usur, a priest, wrote to the same king: ‘Shamash and Adad . . . have destined for my lord the king . . . good government, days of justice, years of righteousness, abundant rains, powerful floods, good com-
merce...; those who have been ill for many days are cured. The hungry are satisfied, the starved grow fat...Women give birth, and in their joy tell their children: our lord the king has given you life.'

It is not surprising, then, to find similar developments of thought in Israel. So we read in Ps 72:

He will judge the lowly among the people with justice,
    he will prove himself a saviour to the children of the poor,
    and will crush their oppressors.

He will come down like gentle rain upon grass,
    like the showers which soften the earth.
In his days justice shall blossom forth,
    and widespread peace, until the moon be no more.

He will set free the poor who call for help,
    and the lowly, who stand helpless, alone;
he will show mercy to the weak and the poor,
    and will save the life of the poor.

Abundance of wheat on the earth,
    even on the tops of the hills!
Abundance like Lebanon's, when its fruit is awaking,
    and its flowering, like grass over the earth!

Just as in former times the Judges had been 'saviours' (Jg 3:9, 15), so under the monarchy the king delivered the nation from its enemies (2 S 19:10); he was a 'saviour' (2 K 13:5), whom men called to their aid (2 K 6:26).

6. Divine adoption

Some recent writers go further, and speak of the king's divine character, of a divine kingship, or of a divinization of the king, in Israel. Here too they appeal to Eastern parallels, but not all of them are equally convincing. It is clear enough that the Pharaoh was considered a god: he is called, without qualification, 'the god', or 'the good god': he is the son of Ra, the creator god; during his life he is an incarnation of Horus and after his death he is assimilated to Osiris. This divine character is expressed in the royal titles, in religious literature, in the rites of coronation and in art, which represents the Pharaoh with divine attributes and more than human stature.

In Mesopotamia, it was from time to time acknowledged, in very early days, that the king had a divine character. Among the Babylonians and Assyrians, however, this is far less apparent. Despite the fiction of divine sonship and the fact that a certain supernatural power was ascribed to him, the king still remained a man among men. It was quite a different concept from
that which the Egyptians had. Among the Hittites the king was deified after his death, but during his lifetime he was not recognized as a ‘god’.

The limited evidence available from Palestine and Syria, apart from Israel, does not allow us to conclude that the kings were deified. In the Amarna letters, when the vassal kings address the Pharaoh as ‘my Sun (god)’ or ‘my god’, they are conforming to the Egyptian manner of expression, which need not necessarily be a true expression of their own thought. The Aramaean inscriptions seem to exclude the notion of the king’s divinity by representing him as definitely subordinate to the god. The historical and ritual texts from Ras Shamra say nothing of any divinization of the king, and it is only by a forced interpretation that the mythological poems can be invoked as witnesses to it.

It is not true then, to say that the idea of a divine king was shared by all the peoples of the ancient Near East. And when we turn our attention to Israel, the arguments adduced are extremely flimsy. It is true that the anointed king stood in a special relationship to Yahweh. David knew everything, ‘like an angel of God’ (2 S 14: 17, 20), but the very words of this flattery exclude the idea that he was a god (cf. 1 S 29: 9). The idea of any king-worship, whereby the king, on certain feasts, took the place of God, is based on mere conjectures. Thus, some writers appeal to Ps 45: 7, rendering it as ‘Thy throne, O Elohim, endures for ever and ever.’ Other possible interpretations have been suggested, such as ‘divine throne’, ‘throne like that of God’, but even if the text calls the king an Elohim, we must remember that the term ‘Elohim’ is applied not only to God but to beings of superhuman power or nature. Thus, for example, it is used of members of the court of heaven (Jb 1: 6; Ps 29: 1; 89: 7), of the shade of Samuel (1 S 28: 13), and even of exceptional men such as princes or judges (Ps 58: 2; 82: 1, 6). The Israelite idea is that while the king is not just a man like other men, he is not a god (cf. 2 K 5: 7 and Ez 28: 2, 9).

This leaves the affirmations of divine sonship in Ps 2: 7 and 110: 3 (Greek). The word of Yahweh in Ps 2: 7, ‘Thou art my son, to-day I have begotten thee’, is best understood as a formula of adoption. According to the Code of Hammurabi, when someone adopted a person, he said to him, ‘You are my son’, and if the latter wanted to break the bond thus created, he would say, ‘You are not my father’ or ‘You are not my mother.’ Such declarative formulas were used in Israel for engagements: ‘To-day you shall be my son-in-law’ (1 S 18: 21), for marriage: ‘Henceforth you are her brother and she is your sister’ (Tb 7: 11), and for divorce: ‘She is no longer my wife’ (Os 2: 4). In the same way, in Ps 2: 7, Yahweh declares that on this day of consecration, ‘to-day’, he acknowledges the king as his son; he adopts him. This brings us back to Nathan’s prophecy: ‘I shall be his father, and he shall be my son’ (2 S 7: 14). It is no valid objection to say that the text speaks of the adoption of the entity effective fo

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of the entire Davidic dynasty, for this adoption, obviously, had to be made effective for each sovereign; thus the text is applied to Solomon by 1 Ch 22: 10 and 28: 6.

Granted that the king is adopted by Yahweh, this does not by any means imply that he is equal to him or deified. Ps 89: 27, commenting on Nathan's prophecy, makes the necessary distinction: 'He will call unto me, Thou art my father, my God, the Rock of my salvation.' Israel's religion, indeed, with its faith in Yahweh as a personal God, unique and transcendent, made any deification of the king impossible. Nor can it be said that this represents only the official religion, for if the popular religion or the royal ideology had accepted such a divine character of the king, we should find traces of it in the Prophets, who are anything but lenient towards unfaithful kings. They accuse the kings of many crimes, but never of claiming divinity. Israel never had, never could have had, any idea of a king who was a god.

7. The king and worship

The fact remains that the king, sanctified by his anointing and adopted by Yahweh, is a sacred person and seems thereby to be empowered to perform religious functions. One often hears of the royal priesthood in Israel. We recall that the kings of Egypt, Assyria and Phoenicia were priests. In the Bible, Melchisedech is both king of Salem and priest of El-Elyon (Gn 14: 18). And it is precisely Ps 110: 4, which we have interpreted as an enthronement psalm, which says: 'Thou art a priest for ever in the order of Melchisedech.'

In the historical books, the king appears several times as the leader in acts of worship. David sets up the first altar for Yahweh in Jerusalem (2 S 24: 25); it is David, too, who conceives the project of building him a temple (2 S 7: 2–3), and, according to 1 Ch 22–29, plans in detail how this is to be served. It is Solomon who actually builds the temple directly opposite his own palace, and who dedicates it (1 K 5: 8). It is Jeroboam who founds the sanctuary in Bethel, recruits its clergy and arranges its calendar of feasts (1 K 12: 26–33); hence it is a 'royal sanctuary' (Am 7: 13). The chief priests are officials nominated and dismissed by the king (2 S 8: 17; 20: 25; 1 K 2: 26–27; 4: 2). Josias publishes ordinances concerning the Temple (2 K 12: 5–9), and Josias supervises their enforcement (2 K 22: 3–7). The same Josias takes the initiative in the reform of worship and directs it in person (2 K 23). The priest Uriyyah carries out the modifications introduced by Achaz in the sanctuary and its worship (2 K 16: 10–18).

But the kings go even further: the historical texts show them personally performing priestly acts. They offer sacrifices: e.g. Saul at Gilgal (1 S 13: 9–10), David at Jerusalem (2 S 6: 13, 17–18; 24: 25), Solomon at Gibeon (1 K 3: 4, 15), at Jerusalem for the dedication of the Temple (1 K 8: 5, 62–64), and then at the three great feasts of the year (1 K 9: 25). Some of these texts can,
of course, be taken in a factive sense, that the king 'had sacrifice offered', but not all are capable of this meaning. And other texts in fact exclude it: in 2 K 16: 12-15, Achaz goes up to the new altar he has had made, offers the first sacrifice, and then commands the priest to continue the liturgy there; in 1 K 12: 33 it is said that Jeroboam 'went up to the altar to offer sacrifice' (cf. 13: 1f.). Again, David and Solomon bless the people in the sanctuary (2 S 6: 18; 1 K 8: 14), which is a rite reserved to the priests by Nb 6: 22-27 and 1 Ch 23: 13. Solomon consecrates the middle of the court (1 K 8: 64). David wears the loincloth which is the vestment of officiating priests (2 S 6: 14). Neither the prophets nor the historical books before the exile make any protest against these intrusions by the king into liturgical worship. It is only after the end of the monarchy that they become a stumbling-block, and 2 Ch 26: 16-20 says that Ozias was struck with leprosy because he had dared to burn incense at the altar, thus usurping a privilege of the sons of Aaron (2 Ch 26: 18, cf. Nb 17: 5; 1 Ch 23: 13).

All this evidence calls for a carefully balanced solution. The part played by the king in the regulation and supervision of worship or the nomination of the clergy does not mean that he was himself a priest; it does not exceed the prerogatives which the head of State may have over the State religion. It is quite another thing when he performs actions which are properly sacerdotal. But we must note that the instances where the king's personal action is beyond question are all very special or exceptional: the transference of the Ark, the dedication of an altar or a sanctuary, the great annual festivals. Ordinarily, the conduct of worship was left to the priest (2 K 16: 15). Anointing did not confer on the king a priestly character, since, as we have seen, priests were not anointed in the days of the monarchy; but it did make him a sacred person, with a special relationship to Yahweh, and in solemn circumstances he could act as the religious head of the people. But he was not a priest in the strict sense.

But, it may be objected, Ps 110 is a royal psalm, and it calls the king a 'priest'. It has recently been suggested that this verse (Ps 110: 4) was addressed, not to the king, but to the priest whom the newly enthroned king (vv. 1-3) was confirming in his functions, and that these words were originally addressed to Sadoq, the psalm being composed in David's reign. It is an interesting hypothesis, but without foundation. The text can be explained otherwise: it could mean that the king was a priest, but in the only way in which an Israelite king could be: that is, in the way we have described. He was a priest in the same way as Melchisedech, who, it was thought, had been king and priest in that same Jerusalem where the new king was being enthroned. It was the starting-point of the Messianic interpretation to be given to the verse in He 5: 6.

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