

up to them; accordingly, the Philistines, emboldened, went in their pursuit, slaughtering many of the children of Israel on Mount Gelboe and in different towns. During the battle the Philistines badly wounded Saul with an arrow and killed Abinadab, Melchisua and his other sons, with the exception of Ishboseth; furthermore they killed David's brother Jonathan. Then, in one of the towns, they slaughtered the five children Merob had borne to Hadriel. Perceiving himself to be wounded, Saul said to his shield-bearer: "Draw your sword and take my life before the Philistines come and kill me making fun of me." But the shield-bearer, overcome by extreme terror, did not wish to do this. So Saul drew his own sword and flung himself upon it, piercing himself through the heart. When the shield-bearer saw that his king was dead, he did the same and died beside him. Afterwards the Philistines cut off Saul's head and hung it from the walls of Bethsan. During the night, some brave Israelites from Jabes of Galaad took the corpses of Saul and his sons, of Jonathan, and of his five grandchildren, the children of Merob and Hadriel, and gave them burial in the woodland of their town. When the Israelites living in the towns nearby saw that the soldiers of Israel had fled and that Saul had been slain, they fled from their towns and escaped. The Philistines then took possession of those towns. Saul died at the age of sixty-two years, and Jonathan at the age of thirty-two. Sadly, Saul is to be counted among the reprobates, so that he is in the eternal fire of Hell.

Chapter IX

David's distress at the deaths of Saul and Jonathan

1. On the third day after Saul's death, while David was in South Carmel with his wives Achinoam and Abigail, an Israelite soldier presented himself who had come from the camp of the deceased king, and who had witnessed how Saul had asked his servant to run him through with his sword. The soldier, coming before David, prostrated himself on his face and made him a reverence. David asked him: "Where have you come from?" The young man answered: "I was able to escape from the camp of the Israelite army." David asked: "Well then, what happened?" The youth replied: "When the battle began, the Israelite troops took to flight, and many of them lie dead on the field, and Saul, Jonathan, Abinadab and Melchisua have perished as well." David asked the Israelite soldier: "How do you know that Saul and the other three are dead?" And thinking that he would earn David's esteem, filled with a touch of pride, he answered with the following falsehood: "I found myself on Mount Gelboe when Saul had cast himself on the point of his sword. And when the Philistines were coming up close, looking back he saw me and called to me, saying: 'Kill me with your sword because I am now in my death agony and death does not come;' accordingly, being certain that he was not going to survive, I gave him the deathblow. I then took the crown from his head and the bracelet from his arm, and I bring them to you who are my lord." When David heard this, he rent his garments and wept for love of Saul, Jonathan, and all those who had been slain of the house of Israel. Then David said to the young man: "Why, then, did you dare raise up your hand to kill the anointed of the Lord?" And summoning one of his guards, he commanded: "Fall upon this man and kill him." And the guard killed the soldier while David said: "You can blame no one but yourself for your death, for out of your own mouth you have given testimony against yourself that you killed Saul, the anointed of the Lord." Shortly afterwards some surviving soldiers presented themselves before David, and informed him about what had really happened and how Saul had killed himself by flinging himself on his own sword.

2. David composed a funeral hymn on the death of Jonathan, which he commanded to be taught to the children of Israel, saying among other things: "Consider, O Israel, who they are who have been struck down and have lost their lives on your highways. The illustrious of Israel have perished on your mountains. How the valiant fell! Mount Gelboe, may dew or rain never fall upon you again, because there the shield of the valiant was laid low, the shield of Jonathan. Never did Jonathan's arrow leave his bow without cleaving the bowels of the strong, never was a stroke of his sword wasted. Jonathan was swifter than the eagle, stronger than the lion. Weep then, O children of Israel, weep over Jonathan. How is it possible that he was slain on your peak, Mount Gelboe? O my brother Jonathan, surpassingly gallant, I weep for you! As a mother loves her only son, so did I love you."

Book II

David, second King of the People of Israel

Chapter I

David is consecrated King of Israel in Hebron. Sedition of the saulists. Death of Abner and of the innocent Ishboseth

1. After the days of mourning for the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David, knowing that the throne of Israel corresponded to him and that he should be anointed king, asked the Lord: "To what city am I to go?" And the Lord answered him: "To Hebron," which was the capital and Holy City of Israel. David, then, set out taking his two wives Achinoam and Abigail, all the people he had with him in his service and his army.

2. That same year of 4137, in the city of Hebron, before the Temple of God, in the presence of High Priest Abiathar as well as the princes and elders of each of the thirteen tribes of Israel, Most Holy Melchisedech, in the presence of them all, anointed David king, he being thirty years of age, To this all said: "Amen." David then learnt that the men of Jabes of Galaad had given burial to Saul; so he sent them emissaries to tell them on his behalf: "May the Lord bless you for having performed that work of mercy to Saul giving him burial. From henceforth the Lord will show you greater mercy and fidelity, and I also will show myself grateful for that deed you have performed. Be of good cheer and take heart, for though Saul is dead, the Lord has anointed me King of Israel." During the first three years of his reign, David established his throne in Hebron, capital and Holy City of Israel.

3. Following David's elevation to the throne as King of the People of God, there existed a minute faction of Israelites, followers of the deceased Saul and known as Saulists, who did not acknowledge David as king, and who were scattered

throughout Israel. This unsubmitive faction was encouraged by Abner, Generalissimo of Saul's army, who on his own account and against the will of Saul's firstborn Ishboseth, had declared the latter King of Israel. The conflicts between the innumerable followers of King David, who made up the majority in Israel, and the few Saulists who followed Ishboseth, lasted three years. During the time the conflict lasted between the Royal House of David and the remnants of that of Saul, David's House became increasingly stronger, while that of Saul went into decline until disappearing. Ishboseth was forty years of age when, without accepting the title of king or actually reigning, he was everywhere proclaimed king by Abner and his partisans.

4. The rebellious and seditious Abner, in an endeavour to impose his dominion over Israel by making use of the innocent Ishboseth, went out with his army to do battle against David, and camped in Gabaon, where also came Joab, general of David's armies. The conceited Abner, wishing to make a display of the confidence he had in his soldiers' bravery, and to intimidate David's forces, made a challenge to Joab for twelve young men from each side to come out and fight. This challenge gave rise to a great combat in which David's troops defeated Abner's inflicting serious losses. Joab's brothers Abishai and Asahel were also present. Since Asahel was very fleet-footed, he set out in fierce pursuit of Abner resolved to kill him. And though Abner thrice urged his pursuer to turn back, Asahel took no notice. Then Abner pierced him through with his lance, killing him on the spot. Asahel's two brothers Joab and Abishai kept up the chase of the still fleeing Abner until sunset; but as Abner was protected by a group of supporters, Joab and Abishai opted to end the pursuit.

5. Soon relations between Abner and Ishboseth became soured as a result of Ishboseth having reproached the Generalissimo for maintaining an illicit relationship with Respha, a second order wife of the deceased Saul, which was considered a crime since it concerned the widow of a king. Abner's fury reached such a pitch that he threatened to leave Ishboseth without a kingdom and place himself and his soldiers under David's command. But Ishboseth, considering himself David's faithful subject, had never accepted nor exercised kingship. He therefore looked disapprovingly on Abner proclaiming him as king against his will in order personally to dominate the situation in Israel, and admonished Abner for betraying David, true King of Israel placed by God. To avenge himself on Ishboseth, Abner sent messengers to David to say to the king on his behalf: "To you alone pertains all Israel. Let us become reconciled, for I offer you my entire army, and you will reduce the unsubmitive followers of the deceased Saul to obedience." In this manner the perverse Abner endeavoured to lay at Ishboseth's feet all the blame for the Saulist sedition against David, having as objective that the king consider Ishboseth as a usurper to his throne. As a condition for making peace with Abner, David demanded that his wife Michol, Saul's daughter, first be brought to him. With Abner's leave, David sent an embassy to Ishboseth saying: "Restore to me Michol, who was given to me in marriage for having killed two hundred Philistines." And Ishboseth, who bore David no ill will, had his sister sought out at once and sent to the king her husband.

6. Abner, then, began the mission of convincing the Saulists to accept David as King of Israel, saying: "For some time now you have desired to have David as king. Well then, acknowledge him now as such since the Lord has said of David: 'By the hand of My servant David I will save My People Israel from the power of the Philistines and from all My enemies.'" Then Abner went to Hebron to inform David that a section of the Saulists had agreed to acknowledge him as king. For this occasion David prepared a banquet as a mark of esteem for Abner and the twenty or so men accompanying him. After they had dined, Abner departed with his soldiers to confront a group of Saulists who still remained obstinate in not acknowledging David as king. In this clash Abner was killed together with some of the soldiers at his orders. David gave Abner a worthy burial in Hebron.

7. When Saul's son Ishboseth heard that Abner had been killed fighting a seditious group opposed to the king, he was filled with consternation. Ishboseth had two shield-bearers who were brothers, Recab and Baana by name, who knew that their master was a faithful partisan of David, for Ishboseth had never accepted or exercised kingship over the Saulists. With the ambition of winning David's esteem and receiving honours, they entered the home of Ishboseth while he was asleep in bed and cut off his head; and in the expectation that David would applaud their crime as though it were the finest service rendered to his person, they presented Ishboseth's head to the king, saying: "Here is the head of Ishboseth, the son of your enemy Saul who schemed against your life. Today God has avenged the king against Saul and his lineage." But David, angered, said: "Villains, you have assassinated an innocent man in bed in his own home. I will now take vengeance on you for his blood, shed at your hands, and thus exterminate you from the earth." So David gave orders to his men, and they killed the two brothers; he then buried Ishboseth in Abner's grave in Hebron. Ishboseth was assassinated in the year 4139, that is, a year before David entered Jerusalem in triumph. Even with Ishboseth dead, the diminished number of the deceased Saul's followers kept up for another year their search in the tribe of Benjamin for a king, in order to continue Saulism.

8. Though David had been informed by Jonathan that Abiathar had attained the High Priesthood by betraying his father and his seven brothers, it is not so strange that David should have consulted God through him, nor that when he became king that he took no action against Abiathar, since the High Priesthood was lifelong, and David had no authority to depose anyone who exercised that office, and neither to name anyone in his place, for God had permitted Abiathar's betrayal, and given validity to his appointment as High Priest. For his betrayal of his father and brothers in order to reach that Church office, crimes of which he was later sincerely repentant, Abiathar was to pay during Solomon's reign, by an injustice committed by that king. Thus David considered that the High Priest was the anointed of the Lord, and that it was for God to mete out punishment to him. So though David did not wish to lay hands on Abiathar, the king cannot be accused of complicity on that account.

Chapter II

David conquers Jerusalem and enters in triumph. The Ark of the Covenant is brought to Jerusalem from Hebron

1. In the year 4140, when the Throne of Israel was still in Hebron, the Lord moved David to carry out the conquest of Jerusalem. The king, with a large army, headed for Jerusalem to seize it from the Jebusites, its inhabitants, besieging it on all sides. But the Jebusites, proud of the fact that the city's strategic location made its conquest extremely difficult, displayed their contempt for David's forces by guarding its walls with the blind, the lame and other cripples, in order to give the besiegers to understand that these invalids were by themselves defence enough to repel the Israelite army. The besieged, in a mocking and waggish tone, shouted down at David: "You will not enter this fortified place if you do not first cast out of it the blind, the lame and other cripples, who as you can hear are saying: 'David will not enter here.'"

2. David had offered to name Generalissimo of his armies the first to assault the walls of Jerusalem, strike a Jebusite and hurl down the blind and the lame who insulted and cursed him. Joab, the son of Sarvia, was the first to make the assault, and without hesitating on account of the dangers that assailed him on all sides, stormed the besieged with courage and daring, being followed with fiery impetus by the Israelite forces he led. The Jebusites finally overcome, David seized the fortress of Sion, the entire city of Jerusalem coming under his dominion; and he slew all those who were not converted to the Lord God of Israel. Then the king, fulfilling his promise, granted Joab the post of Generalissimo over his entire army. David's victory over the Jebusites in Jerusalem occurred forty-five days prior to the king's triumphant entry into the city to reside there permanently, and fifty days prior to the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant, an event which took place five days after David's triumphant entry.

3. After overcoming the Jebusites, David returned immediately to Hebron, entering that city forty-one days prior to the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. In Hebron the Prophet Nathan, on behalf of Most Holy Melchisedech, gave the order to King David for the Ark of the Covenant to be borne by the priests to the town of Bethlehem, and conveyed into the same cave where the Prophet Samuel, and David himself when young, had been accustomed to pray, and more important, where Our Lord Jesus Christ was to be born. Also on behalf of Most Holy Melchisedech, the Prophet Nathan gave David the order for the Temple of God which the Prophet Samuel had raised in Hebron eighty-three years previously to be dismantled; this Temple, sumptuously embellished, was constructed partly of iron and partly of wood and could therefore be dismantled; and that it be transported to Jerusalem. Forty-one days before it reached Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was taken out of Hebron and borne towards Bethlehem, entering the famous Cave forty days prior to David's arrival in Jerusalem. During the forty days the Ark of the Covenant remained in the Cave of Bethlehem, it received due worship from the Prophet Nathan, the priests and others designated by God. The Ark of the Covenant's sojourn in the Cave of Bethlehem for forty days, is figure of the Child Jesus' forty days' stay in that cave from His Birth until His Presentation in the Temple. After being dismantled, the Temple was transported from Hebron to Jerusalem without a stopover in Bethlehem, since time was required for it to be dismantled and reassembled again. The site where the Temple was to be located in Jerusalem was indicated to David by the Prophet Nathan in accord with instructions received from Most Holy Melchisedech, and which David obeyed. On the eve of David's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the Temple had been worthily reassembled.

4. In that same year of 4140, when he was thirty-three years of age, David entered Jerusalem in triumph, being brilliantly acclaimed by the children of Israel; including by the scanty number of Saulists who had until then continued in sedition against the king, for they had now withdrawn from their error. The principal elders of the thirteen tribes of Israel acclaimed their king and lord with the following vivas: "Viva David, King of the Hebrews! Viva David, King of the Israelites! Viva David, King of the Jews! Viva David, King of the Earth!" And to each of these acclamations, the People of Israel gathered there responded: "Viva!" And from that moment on the term 'Jew' was considered a synonym of 'Hebrew' and 'Israelite', though in its strictest sense it indicated a member of the Tribe of Judah, and in its spiritual sense a member of the People of God. When the Israelites cheered David as King of the Earth, they referred to the whole Earth or earthly globe. After David had entered Jerusalem, complying with the order of Most Holy Melchisedech given through the Prophet Nathan, he went directly to the Temple of God, which had already been worthily reassembled, entered it and inspected everything, including the most sacred departments, since the Ark of the Covenant had not yet been deposited there. David, at thirty-three years of age, by his triumphant entry into Jerusalem and inspection of the Temple of God, is figure of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, at that same age, entered Jerusalem in triumph and inspected the whole Temple.

5. In that same year of 4140, five days after David's triumphant entry, the Ark of the Covenant entered Jerusalem, also called City of David, amid a magnificent accompaniment and reception. The glorious translation of the Ark of the Covenant from the Sacred Cave of Bethlehem to Jerusalem, took place with utmost splendour and magnificence, amid great rejoicing by all. The Ark of the Covenant was borne upon the shoulders of the priests of the Lord, preceded by all the other priests attired in their sacred vestments, and by the princes of the People of Israel; all of them presided by High Priest Abiathar, and by King David adorned in all his royal attire. Many armed men, the most courageous and select of the army, formed the guard of honour. The sacred procession was heralded by the lively sound of trumpets blown by the levite ministers, to the harmony of seven choirs of musicians, whose sacred canticles were accompanied by the sound of cymbals, lyres, drums and zithers. An immense crowd followed the Ark cheering and acclaiming the God of Israel; David's family was to be found among them. When the Ark of the Covenant had passed through the gates in the walls of Jerusalem, the great king David, seeing that God, in the Ark, was entering majestically to come and dwell in Jerusalem, filled with enthusiasm at so extraordinary an event, took off his kingly cloak and laid it on the ground as a royal carpet, in order for the Ark of the Covenant to pass over. And then, to the sound of the music and singing of the seven choirs, harp in hand the king began to dance jubilantly before the Ark in God's honour; and did

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so with such dignity that the People were greatly edified by that joyous dance of their king, which was in itself a prayer to the Creator, filled with religious unction.

6. But amid that untold jubilee, a lamentable episode occurred. David's wife Michol, accompanied by her maidservants, was in the street beside the Ark of the Covenant, witnessing the entrance into the city of the solemn procession. When she saw her husband the king take off his royal cloak and lay it on the ground as a carpet for the Lord, and then proceed to dance before the Ark, she deemed David's action to be appropriate to a clown, so that Michol began to ridicule him publicly with mockery and satanic guffaws, provoking her maidservants to do likewise, and publicly saying in a contemptuous tone: "What a fine figure the King of Israel cuts today, despoiling himself of his royal attire before the people and dancing as would a clown!" By mocking the king, Michol mocked the praise he gave in honour of God and therefore of the Ark of the Covenant; for David's dancing was no pretext at all for contempt or mockery, but for praise and imitation. Seeing how his wife Michol offended God by her irreverence, and also offended him in his royal dignity, David went over to her and severely rebuked her in these words: "Michol, although in your eyes it may seem that what I have done is appropriate to a clown, you should know that it is correct and pleasing in the eyes of God; since in the presence of the Lord, Who has chosen me, instead of the descendants of your father Saul, and has anointed me king over the People of Israel, I would dance yet more in His honour and glory; for, though it seems contemptible in your eyes and in those of your maidservants, the more a man humbles himself in the eyes of God, the more he will be exalted by Him." Yet even after these words from David in the presence of the multitude, Michol, far from repenting, continued to mock with renewed shrieks and guffaws, profaning the Ark of the Covenant by her satanic behaviour, and instigating her maids to mock David by laughs and insults. But suddenly, from the interior of the Ark of the Covenant, there issued from the Soul of Christ a devouring fire in the form of rays which fulminated Michol and her abetting maids in the sight of the whole multitude; which saw them turn to ashes as punishment, and as warning to anyone who might ever dare to mock the Ark. By this punishment of Michol and her maidservants, the God of Israel was glorified and King David exalted. Being barren, Michol left no descendants.

Chapter III

Jerusalem, capital and Holy City of Israel. David aggrandizes Jerusalem

1. By David's triumphant entry in that year 4140, Jerusalem was established as capital of Israel; and by the installation of the Temple brought from Hebron in which the Ark of the Covenant was deposited, it was constituted Holy City of the People of God. David's reign in Jerusalem was to last thirty-seven years, which together with the three he had reigned in Hebron made a total of forty years.

2. After establishing his throne in Jerusalem in that year 4140, the king dwelt in the fortress of Sion, so that Jerusalem received the additional name of City of David, who had splendid buildings constructed in and around it. In this manner both Jerusalem and the throne of David became increasingly strengthened and aggrandized, for the Lord God of Hosts was with him. For the city's aggrandizement, the king commanded cedarwood to be brought, and skilled carpenters and stone-masons to be procured. Bethlehem is also called the City of David, for there he was born.

Chapter IV

Greatness, peace and prosperity of the People of Israel. King David's glorious victories over his enemies

1. After David's exaltation to the throne of Israel, the unity of the people, together with interior tranquillity, was further consolidated. In David's reign there began an era of peace, greatness and prosperity for the People of Israel. Nonetheless, the powerful monarch still had to continue the arduous enterprise of exterminating many of the tenacious enemies of the People of God who dominated part of the extensive Israelite territory and threatened to extend their possessions further.

2. The first war David waged after his establishment in Jerusalem was in the year 4142, against the Philistines, who dominated the south-west of Israel and were a continuous menace to other Israelite territories; for they had succeeded in advancing their positions further and further until they had spread along the Rafain valley, to the south of Jerusalem. Forewarned of the danger, David assembled his army and encamped with it in a fortified and secure place, in order afterwards to set out against them. But as David never committed himself to battle without first seeking God's counsel, turning to prayer he consulted the Lord, asking: "Would it be right for me to assault the Philistines now? Will You deliver them into my hands?" The Lord responded: "Go, I will deliver the Philistines into your hands." So David headed for the enemy's encampment, defeating and inflicting great slaughter on them in the battle. So great was David's jubilee that, filled with gratitude towards God, he exclaimed: "The Lord has broken my enemies as easily as cleaving water." But some time later the Philistines returned again and spread out anew along the Rafain valley. So David consulted the Lord, asking: "Should I attack the Philistines and will You deliver them up into my hands?" The Lord answered: "Go out against them, but do not attack them head on; rather, circle round behind them, and attack them from behind, concealed among the balsam trees; and when among the balsam trees you hear the sound of footsteps, attack fiercely, because it is I, your God, Who goes out before you to vanquish the Philistine army." By this disposition, God wished to put to the test David's obedience and faith in His words. David did what the Lord had commanded, routing the Philistines as far as the Egyptian frontier, inflicting heavy casualties on his enemies.

3. After this victory over the Philistines, powerful King David, impelled by God, went on one campaign after another to liberate Israel from the invaders who, ever since the time of Saul, had dominated much of the territory of the People of God. In one of these battles he vanquished the Moabites, who controlled some territories on the east bank of the Jordan, which David reconquered, extending his dominions up to the frontier with the Arabian desert. On the way to Syria, in another battle he defeated the Philistines who had occupied the central part of Israel following the battle in which Saul perished. Continuing further north, he vanquished several Syrian kings, inflicting great slaughter on their armies and seizing their wealth; extending Israel's dominions as far as the River Euphrates. By these and other triumphs,

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David reconquered for the People of God all the territories that had been invaded by her enemies, again restoring Israel's frontiers to the limits attained in the times of Samuel.

Chapter V

David adopts Jonathan's son Miphiboseh

When David's brother Jonathan died, he left behind him a five-year-old son, borne to him by one of his maidservants; neither Jonathan nor the maidservant were married. The boy was crippled in both legs as the result of a fall his mother had when she fled with him in haste on hearing the news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. Miphiboseh was taken by his mother to the home of her father Amniel, who resided in Lodabar, on the east bank of the Jordan. There he was very lovingly brought up, without his mother revealing that he was Jonathan's son, for fear that were she to do so the child might be in danger, since he would then be considered as the grandson of Saul, officially deemed to be Jonathan's fate, and accordingly had given orders to find out whether the boy was still alive in order to have him brought to the palace, she sent a message to the king revealing the boy's whereabouts. And since Miphiboseh had a servant called Siba, the king summoned him and asked: "Are you Siba?" "Yes lord," he replied. The king questioned him: "Is it true that Jonathan's son is alive?" The servant responded: "Yes lord, he is alive but crippled in both legs." So David sent for Miphiboseh to come; and when he was in the presence of the king, David told him: "You have nothing to fear, for it is my wish to lavish favours on you for love of your father Jonathan. You will always dine at my table." Miphiboseh, bowing before him, asked the king: "Who am I, your servant, that you should deign to lay your eyes on a poor cripple such as myself?" The king summoned Siba and said to him: "Take pains, you and your children and servants, to cultivate the ground for him, and provide him with everything he requires." Siba said to the king: "Just as you have commanded, so will it be done, my lord." And from then on Miphiboseh stayed in the palace of the king, who looked upon him as if he were his son.

Chapter VI

David's adultery and crime

1. In the year 4147 David sent Generalissimo Joab, his officers and a large part of his army to the frontier with the Arabian desert in order to confront the Ammonites who threatened to enter Israel. The Israelite army crossed the frontier and besieged the Ammonite town of Rabah, where the invading army was quartered. The Ammonite town of Rabah lay to the east of the Israelite town of Rabah.

2. In the meantime, David had remained behind in Jerusalem. And it came to pass that, rising from his bed following the siesta, he went for a stroll on the terraced roof of the palace, and in the garden of a house opposite saw a woman of great beauty bathing herself. This was not the first time she had acted in this manner; for, setting her sights on the king and ambitious for royal grandeur, she would exhibit herself on occasions to draw David's attention, in order to seduce him. David, who had not noticed her until then, captivated by her charms, let himself be carried away by his disorderly inclinations instead of turning to divine help. So the king sent to find out the woman's identity, and they told him that she was Bethsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of General Urias, who was with the army besieging Rabah. David dispatched messengers to bring her into his presence, and she came with the greatest complaisance. Once Bethsheba arrived, the king sinned with her. She then returned home, and not long afterwards communicated to the king that she had conceived by him. David at the time was forty years old.

3. When David came to learn of Bethsheba's pregnancy, he straightaway dispatched a message to Joab, saying: "Send me Urias." Joab did so. When General Urias came into the king's presence, David asked him how Joab and his troops were faring, and how the war was proceeding. Then David, with astute hypocrisy, said to Urias: "Go home, wash yourself and rest." When Urias left the palace, David immediately sent him food from his royal table; however Urias did not go home, but slept at the palace gate with the other officers of the king. When they told the king that Urias had not gone home, David, redoubling his malice, summoned him and asked: "Have you not arrived following a long journey? Well then, why have you not gone home to rest?" Urias responded: "My Generalissimo Joab and the soldiers of my army sleep on the hard ground. Am I, in the meantime, to go home and eat and drink, and sleep with my wife? By the life and health of the king, I swear that I will do no such thing." Then David said: "Stay here today as well, and tomorrow you will set out and rejoin your army." So Urias stayed on in Jerusalem, and David invited him to eat and drink at his table, making sure he became drunk; for, by so doing, the king hoped that Urias would go home and sleep with his wife. But Urias, leaving at nightfall, did not go home but again slept as before with the other palace officers. David's perverse insistence that Urias go home and sleep with his wife, had the aim that, by sleeping with Bethsheba, the child that she had conceived by David would be attributed to Urias, and thus the adultery committed by her and the king be concealed.

4. Seeing that his perverse plan to conceal his adultery had failed, and moreover passionately coveting his neighbour's wife, David thought out the most iniquitous way to succeed in his plans: resort to the adulterous murder of the husband. So the day after the banquet, since he had observed that Urias had not gone home that evening either, David wrote a letter to his Generalissimo Joab, and gave it to Urias to deliver. The letter said: "Put Urias in the battle-front, where the fighting is thickest, and abandon him so that he be struck down and die", for David knew that Joab would accede to this request. Joab, then, having the town of Rabah under siege, placed Urias where he knew the bravest enemy soldiers were stationed; they, in one of their confrontations with Joab's soldiers, killed some of them, including Urias. Joab sent messengers to David so that, among other things, they might relate to the king how the enemy's catapulters, from on top of the walls, had killed some of the Israelite soldiers, including his servant Urias. David, with the greatest cynicism, replied: "Say to Joab: 'Do not be discouraged by this failure, for the experiences of war are like that: at one time it is the turn of some and at another the turn of others to perish by the sword. Give your warriors fresh heart

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to exert themselves against the town until it is conquered". When Urias' wife heard that her husband had been killed, she kept the days of mourning; then David had her brought to the palace and took her as wife. This sudden and unexpected marriage quickly infused into the people justified misgivings regarding David's and Bethsheba's adultery and its relation with Urias's death, with the corresponding scandal to all. When the time for her delivery came, Bethsheba gave birth to a son, conceived in her adultery with David. The child was born in the year 4147, and on being circumcised was given the name Solomon, which means pacific.

5. Joab sinned grievously in rendering David the terrible service of causing the death of General Urias, since one must die rather than obey an order that runs counter to God; nonetheless, in due time Joab repented of his sin. David's abominable action should serve us as material for profound reflection; since, lamentably, for not having dominated his eyes, he fell into a grievous sin of adultery and other related faults, coming to commit as well a vile sin of homicide by the premeditated death of General Urias.

Chapter VII

David, repentant of his sins, is forgiven by God

1. Some months after Solomon's birth, Bethsheba's first son by David, since the king showed no sign of repentance for his twofold sin of adultery and homicide, the Lord sent the Prophet Nathan in His Name to rebuke the king for his iniquity. Nathan began by presenting to David the following parable: "In a town of your kingdom there lived two men. One was rich and the other poor. The rich man possessed sheep and oxen in abundance; but the poor man owned nothing other than a little sheep which he had bought and raised in his home, and which was to him like a daughter. But a guest having arrived at the rich man's home, the latter, to give him a dinner, did not want to take any of his own sheep or oxen, but took the sheep from the poor man and stewed it to be eaten by the guest who had come to his home." When David heard this, exceedingly angry, he said to Nathan: "As the Lord lives, the man who did such a thing deserves to die." Then Nathan said to David: "You are that man. And concerning you the Lord God of Israel says this: 'I anointed you to be King of Israel, I freed you from the hands of Saul, I gave you the royal throne of Israel and placed at your disposition her women. And to all this, I had thought to add much more. How, then, have you despised My Law by doing evil in My sight? For, besides committing adultery with the wife of Urias, you caused him to perish at the hands of the enemy and have taken to wife the woman who was his. Hence affliction and punishment shall never depart from your house.'" And Nathan added: "Listen, then, to what the Lord says: 'I will permit that from your own house disasters befall you, that someone close to you takes some of your wives and sleeps with them, and that you be slain by the sword. For you have sinned in secret, but I will permit misfortune to befall you in the sight of all Israel.'" "

2. When he heard the divine rebuke for his crimes and the misfortunes that would befall him as punishment, deeply repentant for his enormous sins, David wept over them with great bitterness of soul and besought pardon for them, saying: "I have sinned most grievously against my Lord and God." And at David's sincere repentance, the Lord showed him mercy; hence Nathan said to David: "The Lord, who has also seen your deep sorrow and repentance, has forgiven your sins and will not permit you to die by the sword. But since by your bad example you have given scandal, and cause for the Lord's enemies to mock His Law, the son born of your adultery will irremediably die." This said, Nathan returned home. When the child Solomon was three months old, the Lord struck him with a serious illness, and the doctors gave up hope for his recovery. All in the palace saw that the child was in his death agony and would die at any moment. David, in a terrible state of anguish because of this family tragedy, retired apart and prostrated himself to the ground; and with great sincerity besought God to cure his son, backing up his fervent prayer with the strictest fasting and harshest penance. And all at once God hearkened to the clamour of His repentant servant David; and out of regard for him, worked the portentous miracle of curing his son, who, as all could verify, suddenly recovered his health, beauty and colour. David, who had retired apart to pray and do penance, hearing strange whisperings among the servants, thought that the child had died. But they told him: "Your son has recovered his health and lives." Then David, rising up from his prostration, washed himself and anointed himself with oil, and dressing himself in his royal attire adored the Lord by acts of generous gratitude. The king was so jubilant that he prepared a great banquet in the palace to celebrate this event.

3. Notwithstanding David's penance and the divine pardon obtained for his adultery and crime, the Lord permitted many of the punishments and misfortunes announced to the king by Nathan to befall his house. As a result of the child's illness, Bethsheba also repented of her sin.

Chapter VIII

Victory over the Ammonites and the fall of Rabah

In the year 4148, while in David's palace there took place, respectively, the sad and joyful episodes of Solomon's illness and miraculous cure, Joab, Generalissimo of the Israelite armies, was besieging the Ammonite town of Rabah. And when he was ready to launch an assault on the town, Joab sent emissaries to David, saying: "I have fought against the town of Rabah, and it is about to fall. So then, assemble the rest of the army now and come and finish off the conquest, for to you, O king, must be attributed the honour of the victory." So David gathered his troops, marched upon Rabah and took it by storm. After slaying the Ammonite king, David took possession of his crown of gold studded with precious stones. The inhabitants of Rabah not converted to the true God were slain by the Israelite army, which took from the town an immense quantity of valuable spoils. And David, who in battle always acted in the spirit of justice and never of vengeance, in the taking of the town of Rabah demonstrated more than ever before benevolence and charity towards his enemies; for though it is true that he severely combated paganism and idolatry by killing those who remained obstinate in their perverse beliefs and morals, he never employed cruel and inhuman methods; accordingly, in his battles the king cannot be accused of being bloodthirsty. After taking Rabah, David returned with his whole

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army to Jerusalem. Despite having iniquitously obeyed the king by arranging Urias' death, Joab continued as Generalissimo of the armies, since David did not commit any injustice by retaining him in that post.

Chapter IX

David wins fresh victories over his enemies

1. In the year 4150, thirteenth of David's reign, Ammon, king of the Ammonites, allied to three Syrian kings, prepared to invade some of Israel's territories on the east bank of the Jordan. Warned, David placed Joab at the head of his troops. The Ammonite army camped near Medaba, an Israelite town on the frontier with the Arabian desert. But their allies, the Syrian armies, had fallen back to some distance from the field of battle in order to be deployed at the moment they deemed most opportune. So Joab, Generalissimo of Israel's armies, seeing that they were going to attack him head on and in the rearguard, deployed part of his soldiers in battle order against the Syrians, and left the rest of the army under the command of his brother Abishai, to march head on against the Ammonites. Prior to the battle Joab said to his brother: "If you see the Syrians overcoming me, come to my help, and if the Ammonites overcome you, I will come to yours. Do your best, and let us fight bravely for our people and for Jerusalem, the Holy City of our God. As for the rest, the Lord will dispose things according to His greater pleasure." This said, Joab and his soldiers attacked the Syrians, overwhelming their army and inflicting such heavy casualties that the survivors immediately fled. When the Ammonites learnt of the great slaughter inflicted on the Syrians, terror-stricken they also fled, with considerable loss of life.

2. Some months after their great defeat, the Syrians reorganized their armies and returned; and, in league with the Moabites, Ammonites and Madianites, they made ready to invade the south-eastern part of Israel. Warned, David gathered his troops, crossed the Jordan and headed for Jelan, where the great battle took place. Israel's victory was apotheotic, since David and his army destroyed many Syrian chariots and slew a large number of the four enemy armies' cavalry and infantry, and struck down the general of the Syrian army killing him instantly; the remaining soldiers, seeing their defeat by Israel, fled terror-stricken.

Chapter X

David's wives and children

1. When David established his throne in Jerusalem, he brought eight wives from Hebron: Michol, who was fulminated, Achinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Gesur, Haguit, Abithal and Eglá. He also brought with him the following sons: the firstborn, Amnon, by Achinoam; the second, Absalom, by Maacah; the third, Daniel, by Abigail, who died in infancy; the fourth, Adonias, by Haguit; the fifth, Saphathias, by Abithal; and the sixth, Jethraan, by Eglá.

2. When residing in Jerusalem, David married Bethsheba, wife of the first order. He also took four concubines or wives of the second order. So David had a total of thirteen wives, nine of the first order and four of the second order or concubines. Each of the thirteen tribes of Israel provided David with one of his thirteen wives. In this way, each tribe was represented by a woman in David's conjugal life: there could be no more perfect union between David and his people at that time. Here follow the tribes to which certain wives belonged: Michol, who had been fulminated, to the tribe of Benjamin; Achinoam, to the tribe of Issachar; Abigail, to the tribe of Judah; Maacah, to the tribe of Dan; Bethsheba, to the tribe of Levi.

3. David had a total of fifty-three sons and daughters. Six were born before he established himself in Jerusalem, and forty-seven in Jerusalem. Here follow some of his sons born in Jerusalem: Solomon, Samua, Sobad, Nathan, Jebahar, Elisua, Eliphalet, Noga, Napheg, Japhia, Elisama, Elioda, Eliphalet; also born to him was a girl named Thamar, Maacah's daughter, Absalom's sister by both parents. The wives who bore David children before he established himself in Jerusalem, also bore him others after he had established himself there. From Solomon, son of David and Bethsheba, derives the line of succession from which was to be born Saint Joseph, Virginal Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. From Nathan, son of David and Bethsheba, derives the line of succession from which was to be born the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter XI

David manifests his desire to construct a Temple to God.

God promises David that from his descendants would be born Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings

In the year 4155, that is, one century after the destruction of the Temple of Shiloh, David was in his palace in Jerusalem, frequently meditating on the immense benefits he was receiving from the hands of the Almighty; so that, filled with concern for the zeal of the glory of God, he resolved to build Him a grand and sumptuous Temple, permanent and definitive, in order to deposit therein, with supreme magnificence, the sacred and precious Treasure of the Ark of the Covenant, Throne of the Most High, and to offer God in more solemn manner the required worship in His honour. Thus preoccupied, one day he went up to the Prophet Nathan and said: "Don't you see that I am living in a sumptuous palace, while the Ark of the Covenant is in a provisional Temple? I feel it my sacred duty to raise up to God a Temple whose grandeur and magnitude surpass every edifice on earth." And the prophet answered; "Do not delay. Follow the dictates of your heart, for the Lord is with you." But that same night the Lord spoke to Nathan, saying: "Go and say to My servant David: Thus says the Lord: 'I thank you for your admirable proposal to build Me a Temple according to your noble plans. But it will not be you who carries out this grandiose work, since you have stained your hands with blood killing the innocent Urias to marry his wife Bethsheba, with whom you had already committed adultery. It will not be you who will build Me a Temple, but one of your sons, for when you have ended your days and gone to rest with your fathers, after your departure I will raise up a son of yours, and it will be he who shall build My definitive Temple. I will make his royal throne secure forever and will be his Father and he will be My son.'" And Nathan transmitted all God's words to David. Then the king humbly prostrated to the ground, and prayed to God saying: "Who am I, my

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Lord God, and what is my house, to have raised me to so high a dignity? And this seeming yet little to You, O Lord, You have willed to assure your servant of the permanence of his house in the centuries to come. In these great marvels which You have done for Your servant, You have displayed Your grandeur. There is none like unto You, nor does there exist a God outside of You. You have chosen Israel to be always Your people and You to be always her God. Now, then, O Lord, may the promise made to your servant and to his house live forever, in order that Your Name be eternally magnified, and it be said: 'The Lord of Hosts is the God of Israel. The throne of your servant David will be firm before the Lord.'" These words refer more especially to the Exalted King who was to arise from the line of his successors, that is, to Our Lord Jesus Christ, descendant of David.

Chapter XII

Amnon's incest. Absalom's fratricide

1. David's second son Absalom, a proud and conceited prince, gallant and handsome in appearance, yearned with uncontrollable ambition to be able to seat himself one day on the throne of Israel; which by right fell to Amnon, David's firstborn. Absalom had a sister by both parents called Thamar, extraordinarily beautiful, vain and somewhat frivolous. It chanced that in the year 4161, as Thamar was accustomed to flaunt her physical attractions before the firstborn Amnon, her brother on her father's side, upon whom she looked with favour, he fell passionately in love with her. This was observed by Absalom, who saw the way open to put into practice an incestuous and criminal plan so that the throne of Israel might one day be his. Astutely, he began by emphasizing Amnon's good qualities to his sister, thereby fomenting Thamar's vain and seductive tendency towards Amnon. Absalom even went so far as to insinuate to his sister that, if she managed to cause him to fall into her voluptuous net, Amnon would be punished by David and possibly be deprived as well of the right to succeed him on the throne; so that this right would thenceforth pass on to Absalom as the king's second son. As Amnon's passion for his sister Thamar was so vehement, he lived in continual agitation, for it appeared to him very difficult to do anything unchaste with her. However, the perverse Absalom, to put his plans into practice, made use of one of his servants, to whom he gave instructions so that Amnon might fall into the trap. The servant, approaching David's firstborn one day, said to him: "Amnon, my prince, why are you every day more restless and haggard? Trust me and tell me what is wrong." Then Amnon told him that it was owing to the passion he felt for Thamar. The servant, following instructions received from Absalom, said to Amnon: "Look, stay in bed tomorrow as if you were sick, and send one of your servants to say to Thamar: 'I beg you, my sister, to come to my quarters and prepare me a meal to my taste, and serve it to me yourself.'" Accordingly, Amnon took to bed pretending to be sick, and sent one of his servants to call Thamar. When she was inside his quarters, the two alone, she prepared a meal to his taste and brought it to his bed. Amnon did not want to eat it himself, but told Thamar to give it to him by her own hand. And when she approached, he grasped her, saying: "Come, my sister, sleep with me." Thamar, pretending that her brother's unchaste petition displeased her, said to him: "Do not try to do me violence, Amnon, for that is not permitted in Israel. Do not commit such villainy for I shall not be able to suffer my dishonour and you will be deemed senseless." Since Thamar wanted to satisfy her unchaste desires with her brother who was so pleasing to her, when he used force she allowed him to take hold of her, though making some pretence of resistance, and slept with him. Once he had satisfied his lustful desires, however, Amnon felt such great aversion for her, that the hatred he conceived for Thamar was greater than the unbridled passion with which he had previously desired her. Accordingly, Amnon told her brusquely: "Thamar, get up and leave", and then called a servant to cast her out, which he did, bolting the door on the inside. The vain Thamar, seeing her pride trampled on, went about the palace shrieking to make it notorious that she had been violated by Amnon. It was Absalom who made sure that the affair reach David's ears as soon as possible, in the hope that the king would adopt harsh measures against Amnon, his firstborn, deprive him of his right to the throne and even condemn him to death for the crimes of violation and incest. David, who loved Amnon very dearly, greatly afflicted, reproached and punished his son very severely; but did not consider him guilty of violation, since the king knew that Thamar was just as much to blame as Amnon, since she had constantly been luring him on.

2. Absalom, seeing that the plan he had conceived of using Thamar had not succeeded as he had wished, decided to put an end to his brother himself. It came to pass that, two years later, on the occasion of the sheep-shearing near Bethlehem, according to custom, Absalom invited his father the king and all his brother princes. David excused himself from attending; and though he was not in favour of his son Amnon attending, since he harboured some fear for his personal safety, the king finally acceded to Absalom's repeated requests. Shortly before the guests arrived, Absalom had given the following instructions to his servants: "Be on the alert, so that when Amnon is under the influence of wine, and I give the signal, I will craftily induce him to provoke a quarrel with me, in order that the two of us fight man to man. You will then pretend to come and intervene between us, and with your help I will kill Amnon as if in self-defence." Everything turned out as planned by Absalom, who killed Amnon. Terror-stricken, his brothers rose from table and fled. But since other servants had been informed by their fellow servants of Absalom's plan to kill his brother, they went in haste to inform the king. When this came to Absalom's notice, he fled and took refuge in the home of his maternal grandfather in a town outside David's dominions, remaining there for three years. When David learnt that Absalom had killed Amnon, he feared that the rest of his sons were also dead. But his servants assured him: "Only Amnon has been slain, because Absalom swore to kill him ever since the day he violated Thamar, his sister." David at once sent a squadron of troops in pursuit of Absalom, in order to bring him back and give him the chastisement he so rightly deserved for his crime; but it was not possible to take him prisoner, since he had taken refuge in a town outside the dominions of the King of Israel. Greatly afflicted, David continually wept over Amnon's death.

3. In the year 4166, when Absalom had been living at his maternal grandfather's home for three years, it came to pass that his mother Maacah astutely decided to implore her husband King David to pardon her son, motivated by the ambition that he might one day come to occupy the throne of Israel after the king's death. To do so, she presented

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herself before him dressed in mourning, and shamming great sorrow prostrated herself to the ground and said: "O king, my husband, have compassion on my sorrow." David asked her: "What troubles you?" Maacah answered: "I come to beseech of my king and my lord forgiveness for my son Absalom; because you, O David, are like an angel of God, ever prepared to show mercy to your servants." David, deeply moved by his wife's plea, said to her: "I grant you the grace you ask of me: go, then, and bring back my son Absalom. But you must inform him that he will not inherit the throne of Israel, for I have already inwardly decided who shall be my successor." Though her ambitions were frustrated, Maacah thanked him with refined pretence, saying: "O my king and my husband, today your maidservant has found grace in your eyes, because you have granted the petition I made you to forgive our son." Maacah sent Joab, on the king's behalf, to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem; and, moreover, to communicate to him the royal decision that he was excluded from succession to the throne of Israel. Absalom, however, had not lost all hope of becoming future king, given that he hoped to win David's heart by guile. When he came into the king's presence in the palace, casting himself at his feet, with a profusion of sham tears, he made him reverence as his king and lord; and David embraced and kissed his son, thereby confirming that he had forgiven him for the fratricide committed against Amnon. But at the same time the king, with unshakeable steadfastness, told Absalom that, notwithstanding his pardon, he was excluded from succession to the throne of Israel, for he had already decided which of his sons would be king after his death. That night David revealed to his wife Bethsheba that he had already decided that after his death, Solomon, their son, would be King of Israel. The astute Bethsheba, however, cajoling her husband somewhat, asked him to give her his word that the decision was final. So David said to her: "I swear to you by the Lord God of Israel that our son Solomon will reign after me, and will sit on my throne."

Chapter XIII

Sedition, rebellion and death of Absalom

1. After returning from his grandfather's home and being reconciled to the king his father, the ambitious Absalom, though aware that he was excluded from succession to the throne, paraded through Jerusalem mounted on a chariot, preceded by horsemen and footmen, full of vanity and conceit on considering himself the king's eldest son. To gain the sympathy of all who came to the palace to present some affair to the king, he rose at dawn and stood at the door, and with guileful cordiality let it be understood that he placed the greatest interest in their problems, saying: "Your claims appear to me reasonable and just. The sad thing is that there is no person sufficiently trained to hear you." And he added: "Oh! If I were judge of Israel in order that all might come to me who had business affairs, and I would render them justice." Thereby he calumniated his father, letting it be understood that David's administration of justice was in a state of abandonment and neglect; by which Absalom endeavoured to stir up the people to revolt against the king his father. Moreover, when anyone approached to make him a reverence, he shook him by the hand, embraced and kissed him. So did Absalom to all in Israel who came to the king for him to hear and judge them, by which he drew the hearts of Israelites to himself and withdrew them from their affection for the king.

2. In the year 4167, Absalom, who was thirty years old and impatient to usurp the crown of Israel, moved to Hebron on the pretext of visiting the tombs of the Patriarchs, taking two hundred men with him. When in that city, helped by a good number of his partisans, he dispatched emissaries to all the tribes of Israel, saying: "Absalom, Crown Prince, is going to be proclaimed king in Hebron." Many from the different tribes, believing in good faith that David was about to abdicate in favour of his son, joined Absalom's seditious movement, which counted on the support of Achitophel, a counsellor close to the king. So then, a powerful conspiracy was formed against David, and Absalom's partisans increased daily in numbers. David, who was in Jerusalem, when informed of his son's sedition in Hebron, that Achitophel gave it his backing, and of the strength of the forces that followed him, understood the supreme gravity of the conflict and how difficult it would be to confront it by force; so that prudence counselled him to opt for flight. So David said to his servants: "Be quick and let us flee, otherwise we will fall into Absalom's hands. Make haste to flee, lest he catch us unawares, cast himself upon us and kill us and many in the city." The king's servants responded: "Whatever the king our lord commands us to do, we his servants will carry out." So then, the king left Jerusalem with his children and his eight principal wives, leaving the four secondary wives or concubines to watch over the palace. Generalissimo Joab, the palace servants and the royal guard which was made up of six hundred of the bravest warriors also accompanied him. David took with him his nephew Miphiboseth, crippled in both legs, accompanied by his servant Siba. High Priest Abiathar and the Priest Sadoc accompanied the king as far as the city limits, but by David's command they remained in Jerusalem to continue fulfilling their mission in the Temple, in which the Sacred Treasure of the Ark of the Covenant was deposited. When they saw King David leave, all the inhabitants sobbed loudly. The king, with his family and those accompanying him, crossed the Cedron Brook, and weeping climbed the hill of the Garden of Olives. When they had gone a fair distance along the road, Cusai, another of the king's counsellors, came out to meet them, but David sent him back to Jerusalem so that, from there, he might send news to the king of what was happening. Afterwards, the king, having reached a certain town, was constrained humbly to support the curses which a man of Saul's family, Semei by name, hurled at him, saying: "Get along with you, get along with you, David, bloodthirsty man, Belial's henchman. Now the Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed of the house of Saul; for having usurped his kingdom, the Lord has placed it in the hands of your son Absalom. See how you find yourself now crushed by misfortune for having been a bloodthirsty man." And while he said this, he hurled stones at David. Then Abishai said to the king: "Why must that dog be allowed to curse my lord the king? I will go and cut off his head." But the king responded: "Let him curse me. For if the Lord allows him to curse David, who shall dare to ask Him why? You are witnesses that a son born of my flesh seeks to end my life. So then, what does it matter if one who is not of my blood curses me? Let him, then, curse me according as the Lord allows. Perhaps the Lord will take pity on me and return me good for the curses I receive today."

3. Cusai, a great friend and loyal servant of the king, returned to Jerusalem, arriving at the same time as Absalom, accompanied by Achitophel, entered with his army. But the astute Cusai, deeming that he would thereby render David better service, of his own initiative and without the king having so commanded, presented himself to Absalom feigning loyalty and said: "O king, may God be with you!" And Absalom asked: "How is it that you have not gone to accompany your friend David? Is this your gratitude towards him?" But Cusai replied: "By no means, for I have to serve whomsoever the Lord has chosen and proclaimed as king of the People of Israel. Just as I obeyed your father, in like manner I will obey you as well." Seduced by Cusai's flattering words, Absalom named him as his counsellor so that, in accord with Achitophel, now David's bitter enemy, they should deliberate on the means they should take to destroy David. The perverse counsel of Achitophel would have occasioned David very serious calamities without the powerful counterweight of Cusai's authority, who often intervened so that Absalom might not follow the recommendations of the other adviser. One of the iniquitous pieces of advice that the wicked Achitophel gave Absalom was that he should violate David's four concubine wives, and thereby trample on the sacred honour he owed him as king as far as respect towards his wives was concerned. So Achitophel said to Absalom: "Abuse your father David's four concubine wives, whom he left here in Jerusalem to keep watch over his palace. Thus all Israel, knowing that you have committed this outrage against your father, will despise him and bind themselves more strongly to you." Hence they raised a pavilion for Absalom on the palace roof, for him to profane his father's couch in a manner notorious to all Jerusalem, causing general scandal. David's four concubines acquiesced with pleasure to the wanton desires of Absalom, a very handsome young man, not only out of complaisance, but also to win the favour of one who had proclaimed himself as new King of Israel and to remain as his wives; moreover, they had seen King David, sixty years of age, flee from Jerusalem taking his wives of the first order. The proud Absalom had a monument erected to himself in the Valley of Josaphat, for he said: "I have no sons, and this will serve as memorial to my name"; for Absalom was sterile, and therefore left no descendants by whom to be remembered.

4. Another of Achitophel's perverse machinations was to make Absalom the following suggestion: "I will take twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David while he is on the road; and throwing myself upon him, since they are all weary and disheartened, I will rout them. And after all those accompanying him have fled, the king will be helpless and I will put an end to him. In this manner I will draw to you all those who are with the king." Achitophel's counsel appeared correct to Absalom; but nonetheless he summoned Cusai to hear his opinion as well. Cusai said sagaciously: "Achitophel's counsel does not appear correct to me this time either, for your father and those following him are very brave men, and it is almost certain that Achitophel and his men will fail in their attempt and be defeated, which will resound throughout Israel to your great discredit." Cusai, moreover, to gain time to warn David to prepare his troops, suggested to Absalom to assemble a large army at a certain spot in Israel and fall suddenly upon the king in order that not a single man might escape. Cusai at once directed High Priest Abiathar and the Priest Sadoc to send a secret message forthwith to tell David: "Do not stay tonight in the desert country, but cross the Jordan without delay, lest you and all your people find yourselves overwhelmed by Absalom's troops." So, having been warned, the king commanded the tents to be taken down, and continued with all his company to cross the Jordan. In the meantime, seeing that Absalom had preferred Cusai's opinion, Achitophel, deeply wounded in his self-love, left for his town and hanged himself.

5. David's patience and resignation in supporting all this bitterness were rewarded by the Lord God of Israel; for when the king had crossed the Jordan, many very brave warriors joined him prepared to defend him at all costs. When he reached the Israelite town of Rabah, he lodged there. Three illustrious and wealthy Israelites called Sobi, Machir and Berzellai provided abundant provisions and comfortable quarters. Machir was brother to Miphiboseth's mother.

6. The proud Absalom entrusted the command of his troops to his cousin, General Amasa, and went in search of his father, camping in the Galaad region. King David, having reviewed his forces, divided them into three corps, placing one under the command of Joab, another under Joab's brother Abishai, and the third under Etai. Then he said to his troops: "I want to go out with you into battle as well." But the three generals answered: "Under no circumstance should you come with us, for even were the enemy to make us flee, or kill half of us, they will not feel satisfied, for you alone are worth ten thousand." The king said to them: "I will do as seems right to you." And he stood at the gates of the town; and when the soldiers had filed past before the king, they made their way out to the battlefield. David, however, gave this command to his Generalissimo Joab, to Abishai and to Etai: "Preserve my son's life at all costs"; for David desired them to bring him back alive in order to admonish him with love and guide him along the path of virtue. The whole army heard the king's command to the three generals to bring Absalom back alive. So David's armies set forth to combat the forces of the rebellious Absalom, and the great battle between them took place in the forest of Ephraim, near Mahanaim. The defeat of the rebels by David's army was crushing and bloody, and on the battlefield twenty thousand of Absalom's troops fell dead. And it came to pass that Absalom, fleeing on a mule, ran into David's troops, and to avoid them rode beneath a spreading oak tree where, caught up by the hair, he was left hanging in the air, and died of a broken neck. Joab immediately sounded the trumpet and halted the army in its pursuit of the fleeing rebels, so that they, acknowledging their error, might return to the king's loyalty. They took Absalom's body down and brought it to David, who buried him in the Valley of Josaphat, by Jerusalem.

7. Absalom's tragic end should serve as a salutary lesson to all children, for them to know how serious a sin it is to injure, persecute and offend their parents, whom on the contrary they should always love, respect and obey, except in something contrary to the Holy Law of God.

Chapter XIV

Absalom's defeat and tragic death is announced to David. David weeps bitterly for his son. Seba's rebellion.

War against the Philistines. Solomon's marriage and the birth of his first son

1. Shortly after Absalom's death, Generalissimo Joab sent messengers to David to inform him of his son's death. The king was in the Israelite town of Rabah. The messengers, on arrival, said to the king: "Good news, our lord and king, for God has worked justice today against all those who rebelled against you." But the king asked: "Is my son Absalom alive and well?" When David learnt that his son was dead, filled with sorrow he went up to the tower of the palace and wept bitterly, saying: "My son Absalom, Absalom my son! If only I could have died instead of you, so as to save your soul from possible eternal damnation? Absalom, my son! My son, Absalom!"

2. When Joab reached Rabah, they informed him that the king was weeping and mourning for his son, and consequently the victory, that day, was turned into a day of mourning for the whole army, for it was heard said: "The king is transfixed with grief because of his son." And the depth of feeling with which David wept for the death of Absalom was so great, that the army's triumphant entry into Rabah and the public festivities accustomed to be held on these occasions had to be suspended. While David, head covered with ashes, was exclaiming aloud: "My son Absalom, Absalom my son," Joab entered the king's presence and besought him to go out and speak to his soldiers, to let them know how very satisfied he was with them for the service they had rendered him. In view of Joab's words, David went to the door of his palatial residence in Rabah. When the people learnt of this, they all came and presented themselves before the king to honour him and display their gratitude for the victory obtained against Absalom's rebel partisans. Later, those who left for their respective destinations, said everywhere: "Why don't you make the king return to Jerusalem? For Absalom, who deceived the people betraying David, is dead." As the king had granted a general pardon to everyone in Israel who had taken Absalom's side, this generous indulgence was the talk of all, with the result that David gained the hearts of all Israelites, so that after Absalom had been buried, the elders of Jerusalem sent a message to the king: "Return from Rabah with all your people." On the way back, after having crossed the Jordan, a great multitude of Israel went out as far as Galgala to receive the king, among them Semei, who, prostrating himself before David, said to him: "My king, do not seek to punish my evildoing, nor remember the curses received from your servant the day you left Jerusalem. For since I acknowledge the crime I committed by insulting and stoning you, I am come today to beg your forgiveness." And though Abishai, one of his generals, told the king to have Semei killed, David said: "Is this by chance a good day to kill a son of Israel, above all if he is repentant." Then David said to Semei: "I forgive you, and I swear to you that you shall not die." The elderly Berzellai, one of those who had helped David with provisions and lodgings while in Rabah, accompanied the king. And David, very grateful, said to the old man: "Come with me so that you can live in my company." Berzellai answered: "I am eighty years old; am I now of an age to go with the king to Jerusalem? How could I be of service to my lord the king? So then, I beseech you, let me die in my town and be buried beside my father and mother. Here you have my son Camaan. He can go with you, my king and lord; do whatever seems good to you." The king said: "Then let Camaan come with me, and I shall do for him whatever you desire." The king kissed Berzellai and heaped blessings upon him, who then returned home.

3. After the victory against Absalom's forces, David returned again to Jerusalem, and was received by the multitude with great jubilation and applause. When in the palace, not wishing to repudiate the four concubines who had cohabited with his son Absalom, he put them in a house where they lived in rigorous enclosure under strict watch, without lacking sustenance. There they remained confined until the day they died, living as though they were widows, for David never again had any further dealings with them.

4. Shortly after David's return to Jerusalem, a man of Saul's kinship named Seba rebelled against him. Seba was followed by a group of Israelites opposed to the king, renewing Saulism, under the orders of General Amasa. Seba and his partisans headed for the north of Israel. Being informed, Joab set off with his soldiers in pursuit of the rebels and, fighting with them along the way, slew Amasa. He then continued after Seba, who succeeded in taking refuge in the town of Abela, deceiving its inhabitants saying that Joab and his troops were coming to destroy the town, and that they should therefore shut the gates to prevent him from entering. When Joab reached the walls of the town, the gates were shut; but a sentry, leaning out over the walls, asked: "Have you come to destroy this town?" Joab responded: "I have not come to destroy this town, but to find a man called Seba who has rebelled against King David. Hand this man over to us and we will withdraw at once." So the sentry said: "Well then, right now we will throw you his head over the walls." In effect, those inside the town cut off Seba's head and threw it over the walls. Joab withdrew with his troops and returned again to the king's side in Jerusalem.

5. In 4168, when David was sixty-one years of age, the Philistines, forever on the watch, crossed the Arabian desert to invade the People of Israel from the east. The Prophet Nathan, on behalf of Most Holy Melchisedech, told David of the attempted invasion by the Philistines, and that he should therefore go out with his army to confront them. David pursued and vanquished them, capturing seven enemy towns in the Arabian desert. After this victory David returned to Jerusalem, where he intoned a hymn of thanksgiving to God, saying among other things: "The Lord is my stay, my fortress and my Saviour. God is my defence, my shield and the staff of my salvation. In Him shall I always hope. It is He who exalts me above my enemies. He is my refuge. I will invoke the Lord, to Whom all praise is due, and I will be saved from my enemies. May the Lord live forever and may my God be blest. Blessed be the mighty God who has saved me. Hence, O Lord, I will sing Your praises in the midst of the nations, and will sing canticles in honour of Your Holy Name."

6. In the year 4169, three thousand years prior to the Enthronement of the Holy Face of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacred Place of the Lentisco of El Palmar, the Prophet Nathan, on behalf of Most Holy Melchisedech, communicated to David exactly where in Jerusalem the majestic Temple had to be built; accordingly, Nathan accompanied the king to the precise spot. Previously on this same site stood the Temples built, respectively, by our father Saint Adam, by

Patriarch Saint Heber, and by Most Holy Melchisedech. From then on David began to amass a vast quantity of gold, silver, precious stones, wood and other noble materials, for the future construction of the Temple.

7. In the year 4173, at the age of twenty-six years, Solomon, on his father's advice, married the very beautiful Jerusalem maiden Syon, from the tribe of Judah. This first marriage of Solomon was, then, in accordance with God's Law. The following year, 4174, Syon gave birth to Solomon's firstborn son, who received the name Roboam at circumcision.

Chapter XV

David's last four wars

During 4175, when David was sixty-eight years of age, the Philistines, setting out from Egypt with a large fleet, came across by the Mediterranean Sea four times and each time disembarked at the port near the Israelite town of Azotus. Each of these invasions occasioned a war against the Philistines in which King David had to take to the field at the head of his army. In each of these battles King David triumphed over the enemy armies crushing them completely.

Chapter XVI

Adonias, David's fourth son, claims the kingdom of Israel. Solomon is anointed and proclaimed Crown Prince.

David forgives Adonias. Death of King David, the Lion of Judah

1. In the year 4177, the last of his life, David, now old, felt himself affected by a strange ailment that filled his whole body with such intense cold that he was unable to warm himself, despite the log fire he had burning in his quarters. When his servants saw how much he was suffering, they said to one another: "Let us seek the best wool in Jerusalem for our lord the king, and with it make special coverlets which will provide him with sufficient warmth." So they took large quantities of wool from the best flocks; and when the coverlets were ready, they brought them to the king, who felt great relief from the cold that pervaded his bones.

2. Adonias, David's fourth son, was ambitious to succeed to his father's throne, given that his three elder brothers had died. But he feared that his ambition would be frustrated, since he suspected that David's will was that he be succeeded by Solomon, owing to the attentions lavished on the latter by the king. Thus he was on the lookout for a favourable occasion to usurp the throne by force, for he said: "I will reign." When he saw his father laid up in bed with the sickness which was to cause his death, he had chariots made like those of his dead brother Absalom, and took an escort of horsemen and footmen, so that all would acknowledge him as Crown Prince; his boundless ambition reaching the point that while David was still alive, he proclaimed himself king of Israel, for which he counted on the help of Zahir, a general of David's army, and a portion of the soldiers, as well as many other rebellious Israelites. This illegal royal proclamation was celebrated by a great banquet. But Adonias did not count on the support either of High Priest Abiathar or of the Priest Sadoc or of Generalissimo Joab, since they condemned his rebellion against his father.

3. When the Prophet Nathan heard that Adonias had proclaimed himself king, he went at once to the palace for an interview with Bethsheba, Solomon's mother. He asked her: "Are you not aware that Adonias, Haguit's son, has proclaimed himself king without the knowledge of David our lord?" Then Bethsheba declared to Nathan how her husband the king had sworn to her in private that her son Solomon would succeed him to the throne, which decision she alone knew. Nathan, surprised at the news, said to Bethsheba: "Take my advice and present yourself before your husband David and say to him: Is it not true, O my king and lord, that you said to me: 'I swear to you by the Lord God of Israel that our son Solomon will reign after me, and shall sit on my throne?' Then how is it that Adonias reigns? And while you are still speaking with the king, I will enter and back up your reasonings." So Bethsheba entered the room of the king her husband, and spoke to him exactly as Nathan had told her; moreover she added: "O my king and husband! All Israel has turned her eyes to you waiting for you to declare who shall sit on the royal throne after you; for otherwise it will come to pass that after the death of my lord the king, there will be fratricidal wars in order to occupy the throne." Bethsheba was still speaking to the king when the Prophet Nathan arrived, who, prostrating himself to the ground, said to him: "O my king and lord: Have you by any chance said: 'Adonias will occupy the throne and reign after me?'; for today he has proclaimed himself king. And his partisans have acknowledged him as such saying: 'Viva King Adonias! Is it possible that my lord the king has given such an order and not communicated to me, your faithful servant, who should sit on the throne of the king, my lord, after his death?'"

4. And since Bethsheba had left the royal chamber so that Nathan might speak to David alone, the latter, after listening to the prophet's complaints, said: "Call Bethsheba." So when she had entered the king's chambers, he said to her: "As God lives, Who has delivered my soul from all danger, just as I swore by the God of Israel saying: Your son Solomon will reign after me and shall sit on my throne after me, thus shall I carry out today." And Bethsheba, bowing her face to the ground, said: "Live forever David, my lord and king!" Then David said to the Prophet Nathan: "Command my guard to be assembled, and have my son Solomon sit on my mule, and lead him to the Grotto on the summit of the Mount of Olives; there you will anoint him as future King of Israel. Forthwith, you will have the trumpets sounded and you will say: Long live Crown Prince Solomon, future King of Israel! Afterwards, with Solomon seated on my mule and accompanied by you, you will return to the city and enter through the gate in the walls that looks out onto the Mount of Olives. After my death he will come and sit on my throne, and will reign in my stead." Nathan answered: "May it be so, may the Lord and God of my master the king confirm it thus. Just as the Lord has protected my master the king, in like manner will He be with Solomon, and will exalt his throne just as He has exalted the throne of my master King David." The Prophet Nathan made public David's decision to anoint his son Solomon as future King of Israel. That same day of the year 4177, the Prophet Nathan mounted Solomon on King David's mule, and led him to the summit of the Mount of Olives. And in a cave, now known as the Grotto of the Pater, the Prophet Nathan anointed Solomon with oil; and then, when the guard sounded the trumpets, all the people cried out: "Viva Crown Prince Solomon, future King of Israel." Forthwith Solomon, mounted on the mule, returned to the city and entered by the gate in the

walls afterwards known as the Golden Gate. All the people followed Crown Prince Solomon, and a troop of armed soldiers sounded the trumpets, and the jubilation was so great that the earth resounded to their acclamations. Crown Prince Solomon, on the mule, and accompanied by the Prophet Nathan and by an immense crowd, headed for the Temple; and on reaching the court, received the honours of High Priest Abiathar, the Priest Sadoc, the other priests and the levite ministers.

5. Shortly after the election of Solomon as Crown Prince of the throne, the Lord God of Israel deigned to improve David's health a little, so that he could leave his bed and walk in his chambers. During the last three months of his life, among other counsels, David commanded his son Solomon to build a sumptuous Temple to the Lord God of Israel in Jerusalem. Therefore he said to him: *"My son, it was my will to build a Temple to the Lord God, but the Lord spoke to me and said: 'You have stained your hands with blood by slaying the innocent General Urias so as to marry his wife Bethsheba, with whom you had already committed adultery. Therefore it will not be you who builds the Temple in My Name, but a son of yours. He will build the Temple in My Name. He shall be My son and I shall be his Father, and I will make the throne of his kingdom secure forever.'"* And David added: *"Now, then, my son Solomon, be happy and may the Lord be with you. And after my death, build the Temple to the Lord your God."* David gave Solomon the design of how all the building should be carried out, models of all the sacred objects, and the plans of the whole layout. For the project he had already gathered a vast quantity of gold, silver, precious stones, copper, iron, wood and other noble materials. Moreover David said to Solomon: *"Take heart, then, and set to work, and may the Lord be with you."* And David commanded the princes of Israel to help his son Solomon in the grandiose work of the Temple.

6. Several weeks before King David's death, his son Adonias requested to be received by his father to implore his forgiveness, and King David acceded. Adonias, after making the due reverences, weeping profusely, sincerely besought forgiveness of his father. Moreover, he acknowledged his brother Solomon as heir to the throne, since this was the will of the king. David manifested to his son Adonias that he forgave him.

7. Three days prior to David's death, the Prophet Nathan, on behalf of Most Holy Melchisedech, made known to the king that the kingdom he was to hand over to his son Solomon had a population of a little over three and a half million Israelites, male and female, including both those who were Israelites by birth and those who were Israelites solely by Faith. David, then, made no census of the People of Israel; rather, the Lord communicated to him the number of his subjects. Therefore, it was Solomon who, in the final years of his reign, due to his pagan and corrupt life, unjustly ascribed to David the grievous sin of commanding a census to be made of the population of the People of Israel motivated by pride and presumption, and contrary to the will of God. Solomon made this calumnious accusation at a later date with the aim of sullyng the name of his deceased father, branding him as proud, arrogant and disobedient, which were exactly the vices dominating Solomon during the final stage of his life. By various writings, Solomon's pen falsified not a few passages of Sacred Scripture; since what this proud king sought was to highlight grave defects in others so that less attention might be paid to his own, many of them grievous in extreme.

8. Shortly before death, David gave his son Solomon wise and prudent counsel. Among other things he said to him: *"I am going to die, since this is the end of every mortal. Be of good heart and manly spirit. Be neither afraid nor faint-hearted, and observe the Commandments of the Lord God of Israel, walking in His ways and keeping His ceremonies, precepts, laws and statutes, as is written in the Law of Moses. And thus the Lord God of Israel will help you to achieve success in whatever you do and in whatever you put your mind to. In this way the Lord will also confirm the words He spoke to me: 'If your son keeps to the right path and walks before Me in truth, with all his heart and all his soul, one of your lineage will always occupy the throne of Israel'. May the Lord grant you wisdom and prudence to rule Israel, to keep the Law of the Lord God and demand that all your subjects keep it."* Finally, David reminded his son Solomon, as well as the elders at his deathbed, to carry out his vehement desire to raise up the Temple to the Lord God of Israel, saying to them: *"Prepare your hearts therefore, and prepare your souls, and seek the Lord God. Set to work, then, and build the Temple of the Lord God in Jerusalem, in order that the Ark of the Covenant and the sacred vessels be moved from the provisional Temple that exists at present, to the one you will construct with the greatest magnificence and splendour."*

9. It is not true that on his deathbed David commanded Solomon to have Joab killed or to have Semei killed. This was another of Solomon's falsehoods following the death of his father in order thus to have a false pretext, before the people, for killing Joab. On his deathbed, David only concerned himself with beseeching God's forgiveness for his sins, weeping bitterly, and recommending to Solomon to be a better king than he.

10. In that same year, 4177, three thousand years prior to the elevation to the pontifical throne of Pope Saint Gregory XVII the Very Great, following the recommendations made to his son, and after blessing him, King David, the Lion of Judah, died in his palace on Mount Sion, in Jerusalem, at the age of seventy years, after forty years of glorious reign. His death was holy and enviable. Solomon, overcome by tears and with devoted heart, filled with emotion and gratitude, for he loved his father David dearly, closed his eyes and buried him close by his palace. And he and the whole People of Israel mourned David for thirty days.

11. Solomon inherited from his father King David a strong and very extensive kingdom; for in addition to all the territories that had belonged to Patriarch Saint Abraham, he also received another part of the Arabian desert which David had conquered with his sword.

Book III

Solomon, third King of the People of Israel

Chapter I

Solomon instated as King of the People of Israel

1. In the year 4177, after the death of King David, his son Solomon inherited the throne of the extensive territory of Israel. Solomon kept thirty days of mourning for his deceased father. On the eve of the completion of the thirtieth day, that is, on the twenty-ninth day of the thirty, in a cave now known as the Grotto of the Pater or of the Teaching, which is on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Most Holy Melchisedech sanctified King Solomon and Queen Syon his wife by touching the lips of each with the Triple Benediction, both receiving in their souls the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit; for God, knowing the passionate character of Solomon, wished to forearm and fortify him by Sanctifying Grace, and this privilege was of great help to him in his life.

2. After sanctifying them, Most Holy Melchisedech spoke to Solomon as follows: *"Though it is lawful for you to have other wives, it is My wish that Syon be your only wife."* By this advice Most Holy Melchisedech wished to warn the king of the dreadful danger his soul would face if he married other wives. He wished to free Solomon from their waywardness by this paternal exhortation. Thus, if Solomon were not to comply with God's wish by remaining monogamous, he would surely fall into the most grievous moral depravity; as sadly occurred as from the tenth year of his reign, when the king, against the divine precepts, married the pagan Artemisa, daughter of the Pharaoh, and a multitude of other pagan women.

3. The thirty days of mourning for his father concluded, King Solomon convoked the princes, elders and other subjects of the Chosen People to assemble in Jerusalem before the provisional Temple erected by King David on Mount Sion. The virtuous Prophet Nathan anointed Solomon King of Israel in the presence of High Priest Abiathar, the Council of elders, the princes and courtiers, and an immense crowd. All, with great jubilation, acclaimed: *"Viva Solomon, King of Israel!"* On the occasion of this transcendent event, High Priest Abiathar, now a virtuous man despite his former errors and crimes, the Priest Sadoc and the other priests of the Temple offered to God, in token of gratitude, many animal victims, and made many offerings. Among those who made public manifestation of their fidelity to the new monarch was his elder brother Adonias, who died a few months later after a painful illness.

4. Amid this very solemn worship, God not only deigned to manifest to the people His complacency by multiple miraculous signs, but as well Most Holy Ananias appeared to Solomon and said: *"Ask of Me what you will, and I will grant it to you."* The king answered: *"O my Lord and my God, you have shown great mercy to my father David, and have constituted me king at his death. So now, O Lord God, fulfil the promise you made to my father David that one of his lineage would always occupy the throne of Israel. And since you have made me king of this far-spreading and densely populated territory of Israel, grant me wisdom and prudence to rule this people of Yours well."* Most Holy Ananias said to Solomon: *"This petition is not only pleasing to you but to Me also, for you have not asked for riches or property or glory or a long life; rather you have asked for wisdom and prudence to rule My people, of whom I have made you king. Therefore, the wisdom and prudence you ask of Me are granted. Moreover, I will fill you with riches and possessions and glory to such a degree that will resound throughout the Earth."*

Chapter II

Solomon's wisdom and greatness

1. God, then, made Solomon great in wisdom, prudence and magnanimity. His wisdom surpassed that of the kings of all other countries. He was the wisest of all men, since his knowledge embraced a multitude of subjects: moral, juridical, poetic, artistic, scientific, as well as the natural sciences. King Solomon left to posterity four marvellous moral Books containing holy and wise maxims, that form part of Sacred Scripture, and which he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: Proverbs, Wisdom, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. His knowledge also embraced the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. So eminent was Solomon's wisdom that his fame spread outside his kingdom, and kings and subjects of different nations came to hear his eloquent and profound teaching.

2. Solomon was one of the monarchs who have attained the greatest glory and happiness on Earth. Chosen by his father David in preference to his two elder brothers who were still alive, his brow was girded by the glorious crown of Israel amid his subjects' most intense manifestations of love and fidelity. By his wisdom and prudence Solomon improved yet further the political, social and administrative order established by his father. Under his royal authority he had highly competent persons for the government of the People of God. Moreover, he made use of skilful governors throughout Israel, who supplied him with large quantities of excellent provisions for himself, his household and for the many horses of his guard and for the beasts of burden at his personal service. The succulent viands of Solomon's table and the luxury of his palace chambers were unsurpassed in opulence by any other royal court.

3. The following were Solomon's chief government officers when he began to reign: Joab remained as Generalissimo of the army; the prime minister was Azarias, son of the Priest Sadoc; his secretaries were Elihoreph and Ahias, sons of Sisah; Josaphat, son of Ahilud, was chancellor; Banahias was palace superintendent; and the king's confidant was Zabud, son of another Nathan, who was a priest.

4. One of the episodes of Solomon's reign which left to posterity manifest proof of his great wisdom and prudence, was an unusual lawsuit between two women: In the early years of his reign, the two women, widows of the same husband, came before the king's tribunal. When in Solomon's presence, one of them said: *"O my lord, deign to hear my petition: This woman and I live together in the same house, and I gave birth in the room we shared. Three days later she gave birth as well. We were the only ones in the house. But one night the son of this woman died, because*

while sleeping she unwittingly overlay him. But when she realized her loss, she arose silently during the night, and while I was asleep, she took my child from my side and bore him with her to her bed, and in his place left her dead son. When I awoke in the morning to nurse the one I thought was my son, I found him dead; but afterwards, examining him more closely, I recognized that he was not the child to whom I had given birth." To this statement the other woman replied: "What she says is false, for it is her son who died and mine who lives." The first woman, on the contrary, said: "You lie, for my son is alive and yours is dead." And in this manner they disputed in the presence of the king. Then Solomon spoke thus: "I hear one say: 'My son is alive and yours is dead'; and the other answers: 'No, the dead boy is yours and the live one is mine.'" The king, addressing one of his ministers, said: "Take up a sword"; and when he had done so, added: "Divide the live child, and give half to the one and half to the other." But the woman who was mother to the live child, her inner self moved out of love for her son, said weeping to the king: "I beg of you, lord, that you give the living child to the other woman, and not kill him." But on the other hand, the one who was not mother to the child said quite coldly: "Divide it in two, so that it be neither hers nor mine." King Solomon then pronounced this sentence, saying to one of his ministers: "Give the live child to the woman who has pleaded for him to be spared, for her great heart shows that she is his mother." The sentence pronounced by the king became known throughout Israel, and the respect and consideration of all towards Solomon was increased, seeing that the wisdom of God assisted him in the administration of justice.

Chapter III

Preparations for the building of the Temple of God in Jerusalem

1. From the outset of his reign, Solomon kept very much in mind his sacred and compelling obligation to raise up a Temple to Almighty God, in which the splendour of religion and the magnificence of divine worship would shine forth with extraordinary pomp. As it was his desire to commence this grandiose work as soon as possible, shortly after beginning his reign he said to the priests, elders, princes and ministers of his kingdom: "You are well aware of my father David's desire to build a sumptuous Temple in Jerusalem to the Omnipotent God of Israel, and that by divine disposition this mission was entrusted to me by my father according to the command he received from the Lord. Who said to him: 'It will not be you who builds Me the Temple, but a son of yours. For when you have ended your days and gone to rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you a son of yours. And it will be he who builds My definitive Temple. I will make his royal throne secure forever and will be his Father and he will be My son.'" When all had listened to Solomon's words, they exclaimed in great jubilation: "Blessed be the Lord who gave David a son so filled with wisdom to rule His people"; and then added: "We will fulfil all your desires and organize groups of special workers to assemble larger quantities of cedar and pine, stone and precious objects for the building of the Temple."

2. To accomplish the holy and ambitious project of the Temple of God in Jerusalem, Solomon already counted on an abundance of gold, silver, precious stones, wood and other noble materials accumulated by King David for this purpose during his reign. Solomon, however, besides all that his father had already assembled, commanded his ministers to organize several large groups of workers, not only in Israel but in other countries as well, so as to accumulate, under their guidance, the different materials still needed for the building of the Temple of God in accord with the required grandeur. The number of workers dedicated to preparing the materials exceeded two hundred thousand. To them had been entrusted the task of preparing the materials with precision and care to make easier their placement in the sacred edifice to be built. The workers, grouped according to their special skills, and under the guidance of accredited craftsmen, made it their concern: some, to cut cedar, pine and other necessary timbers, growing in the extensive and exotic forests of the Israelite territory of Lebanon, and of territories outside Israel; others, to quarry and square stone for the foundations and walls, as likewise fine marble of several varieties and colours; also, a specialized group was dedicated to acquiring gold, silver, ivory, precious stones and other materials used for adornment. Moreover, Solomon exhorted the children of Israel to offer all kinds of jewelry of gold, silver and precious stones, as well as cloths, perfumes, wood and so forth for the Temple of God, to which his people responded with utmost generosity. Solomon was unstinting in the fabrication of all the objects needed for God's worship: lamps, sacred vessels, thuribles, altars and so forth.

3. Powerful King Solomon possessed the two most important maritime fleets of his time: one, based in the Mediterranean, in the ports of what today is Lebanon; another, in the Red Sea, based at Asiongaber. To construct the great Temple to God in Jerusalem, he made use of his two maritime fleets to bring the most noble materials from different places; one of them went to the city port of Tharsis, today Seville, Spain, to bring gold, silver, elephant tusks, monkeys and peacocks from there for the Temple and afterwards for his palace. For its magnificence, Solomon's Temple would long be the admiration of the world.

Chapter IV

Construction of the Temple of Jerusalem

1. Solomon began the construction of the majestic Temple of God in Jerusalem on the 8th of December in the year 4180, in the third year of his reign, four hundred and ninety years and six months after the departure of the Children of Israel from the land of Egypt, and a thousand years before the Immaculate Conception of the Divine Virgin Mary. Solomon built the Temple in a little less than four years, since it was concluded on the 21st of November 4184, a thousand years before the Presentation and entry as a religiosa of the Child Mary in the Temple at the age of three years, and a thousand years after the birth of Patriarch Saint Abraham.

2. The Temple of God was built by Solomon on Mount Moriah, in Jerusalem, on the exact spot indicated to David by the Prophet Nathan on behalf of Most Holy Melchisedech. This same spot is the site of the temples previously constructed, respectively, by our Father Saint Adam, by Patriarch Saint Heber, and by Most Holy Melchisedech. Therefore, Solomon built it on a site different to that of the provisional transportable Temple installed by his father; for the latter had been brought from Hebron by David and located by him on Mount Sion in Jerusalem on the exact spot where

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afterwards the great edifice was built containing the Cenacle, in which Christ celebrated the Last Supper with His Apostles and instituted Holy Mass. The hall of the Cenacle was built on the very spot where the Sanctum Sanctorum of David's Temple had been, and therefore where the Ark of the Covenant had stood until its transfer to the Temple of Solomon.

3. The Temple of God constructed by Solomon in Jerusalem was an immense enclosure comprising the Tabernacle or Sanctum Sanctorum, the antetabernacle or Sanctum, the vestibule and three courts, and was in all six hundred cubits (318 m) long and three hundred cubits (159 m) wide.

The Tabernacle or Sanctum Sanctorum: It was an enclosure twenty cubits (10.6 m) long, twenty (10.6 m) wide and thirty-eight (20.14 m) high. Its walls comprised three superimposed layers of different materials: one of stone, another of cedar and another of gold laminae, in such fashion that the gold completely covered the cedar, and the cedar the stone. Along the gold walls were hung sumptuous embossments of cherubim and palms, made of olive wood overlaid with gold; and they adorned the entire length of the walls, the cherubim having two outstretched wings and two faces, one of a lion looking to the right, and another of a man looking to the left. There were no windows in the walls, so that the enclosure was kept in complete darkness. The coffered ceiling was also panelled with sumptuously decorated gold laminae. The enclosure of the Sanctum Sanctorum was separated from the enclosure of the Sanctum by a wall with a wooden door covered by artistically decorated gold laminae. The door was closed as well by a golden chain. Behind the door, inside the Sanctum Sanctorum, there hung an enormous and very luxurious curtain, called the inner veil; so that the veil prevented anyone outside from seeing the most sacred treasure there, namely the Ark of the Covenant; thus the Sanctum Sanctorum was the most sacred and holy spot, to which only the High Priest had access. He entered once a year in an official and solemn manner; for apart from this day, he had no access for worship, though he did for other purposes; and other priests as well designated by him had access to carry out vigilance, cleaning, and other necessary duties. Access to the Sanctum Sanctorum was by way of the Sanctum enclosure.

The Antetabernacle or Sanctum: It was an enclosure forty cubits (21.2 m) long, twenty cubits (10.6 m) wide and twenty-eight cubits (14.84 m) high, the walls of which were sumptuously constructed of the same materials as the first enclosure, though with less opulence. In the upper part of the walls were windows with grills. Inside the Sanctum there stood five golden candelabra to the right, and five to the left, each having six curved arms and a central upright one. There too stood the table with the thirteen loaves of proposition, made of cedarwood overlaid with gold. In the depths of the enclosure, in front of the door and veil of the Sanctum Sanctorum, properly in the centre, stood the altar of perfumes, made of cedarwood overlaid with gold, where incense was burnt morning and evening. The Sanctum was separated from the enclosure called the vestibule by a large multicoloured curtain called the outer veil, which prevented the objects of worship in the Sanctum being seen from the vestibule. Access to the Sanctum was through the vestibule or Porch of Solomon.

The Vestibule or Porch of Solomon: It was an enclosure thirty cubits (15.9 m) long, thirty cubits (15.9 m) wide and twenty-four cubits (12.72 m) high, of great artistic beauty, and which lay before the Sanctum. It was covered, except for the central part which was in the open air. At the entrance stood two bronze columns, one called Joachim and the other Booz. Access to the Porch of Solomon could be had directly from outside the Temple by way of the main gate or Golden Gate, which faced towards the east or orient. Beside the Porch, to either side of the Sanctum, and making up a single building, stood a three storey edifice, having thirty-three rooms on each floor. Access to these floors was by a spiral staircase on either side of the vestibule. One of the buildings was for the use of the priests, and the other for the residence of the pious women. From the Porch of Solomon there was direct and independent access to the three courts.

The three courts had the following characteristics:

The court of the priests: It encompassed the Tabernacle, the antetabernacle and the two adjoining buildings, as from either side of the Porch of Solomon. The court of the priests, rectangular-shaped, was two hundred cubits (106 m) long and seventy cubits (37.1 m) wide. In its whole extent it was partly covered over by arcades and partly in the open air. In this court stood the altar of holocausts or sacrifices, made of cedarwood overlaid with bronze, upon which lay a kind of grille, beneath which was deposited a type of stove where the wood of the holocausts burned, lit by the Sacred Fire. Upon the altar was placed the Sacred Fire contained in a kind of brazier. When the victims were laid upon the altar, the Sacred Fire was decorously placed upon a small side altar. From the altar of holocausts a subterranean passage ran into the Cedron Brook, serving as a conduit for the blood of the victims. Between the altar of holocausts and the Sanctum stood the bronze font where the Priests purified themselves before and after the sacrifices. In the priests' court was to be found: the place for the great Sanhedrin or Supreme Council of the Jews, the king's throne which he always occupied when present in the Temple, and the gazophylacium, an enclosure containing public collection boxes into which the people placed their offerings for the Temple; these offerings were deposited in them from the court of the Israelites through an opening. From the court of the priests there was access to the court of the Israelites by way of the corresponding gates: one to the north, another to the south and another to the west.

The court of the Israelites: It completely enclosed the court of the priests and served as its wall. It was a rectangular enclosure four hundred cubits (212 m) long and one hundred and forty cubits (74.2 m) wide, partly covered over by arcades and partly in the open air. One part of this court was for the men, and the other for the women. From the court of the Israelites there was access to the court of the priests and to the court of the catechumens by means of the corresponding gates: one to the north, another to the south and another to the west. It was called the court of the Israelites because only those professing the Jewish Faith were allowed to enter.

The court of the catechumens: It completely enclosed the court of the Israelites and served as its wall. It was a rectangular precinct six hundred cubits (318 m) long and three hundred cubits (159 m) wide, partly covered over by arcades and partly in the open air. From the court of the catechumens there was access to the court of the Israelites by way of the

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corresponding gates: one to the north, another to the south and another to the west. From the court of the catechumens there was access to the outside of the Temple by way of the corresponding gates, each with its arcade: to the north, to the south and to the west. It was called the court of the catechumens because those who were to embrace the Jewish Faith were prepared there.

The precincts of the majestic Temple of God built by Solomon, then, had four gates: the Golden Gate, facing to the east or orient, which was the main gate; another facing to the north or septentrion; another facing to the south or meridian; and another facing to the west or occident.

Chapter V

Most solemn inauguration of the Temple of God in Jerusalem

1. For the inauguration of the Temple of God and the consequent translation and enthronement of the Ark of the Covenant, Solomon decreed the celebration of great solemnities, so that all the priests, elders and princes of Israel came to Jerusalem, as did an immense multitude of faithful from the thirteen tribes of the Chosen People. The Temple was officially inaugurated on the 21st of November in the year 4184, the day the building was completed, though it was not inaugurated for worship until the 8th of December that year, on which date the Ark of the Covenant was enthroned in the Tabernacle or Sanctum Sanctorum and the first sacrifices of animal victims were offered in the new Temple. Nonetheless, during the seventeen days preceding the glorious translation of the Ark, solemn processions were held for the transfer of all the other sacred objects in the provisional Temple installed by David on Mount Sion.

2. The glorious translation of the Ark of the Covenant from the provisional Temple of David to the definitive Temple of Solomon took place, then, on the 8th of December 4184, seventeen days after the inauguration. The Ark of the Covenant was translated on the shoulders of priests of the Lord. The solemn procession was headed by a brilliant entourage of priests, presided by High Priest Abiathar, immediately preceding the Ark, in which were deposited the Chalice of Melchisedech containing the Triple Benediction, the Tablets of the Law, the gold cup containing manna, Moses' staff, Aaron's staff, and the Pentateuch or original Books of Moses. King Solomon, attired in all his royal regalia, followed the Ark of the Covenant with his firstborn, ten-year-old Roboam, to his right, both accompanied by the elders and princes of Israel, and escorted by the large palace guard. A vast multitude of people witnessed the most solemn translation, among them the king's mother Bethsheba, his wife Syon and their other children. Along the route the levite ministers sounded their trumpets, and several choirs intoned sacred hymns to the sound of cymbals, lyres, drums and zithers. The Ark of the Covenant's entry into the Temple of Solomon was apotheotic. When the Ark had been placed in the Tabernacle or Sanctum Sanctorum, while all sang: "Praise be to the Lord for He is gracious, for His mercy endures forever," a thick cloud, sign of God's presence and acceptance, covered the entire Temple, in such manner that the glory of the Lord filled it completely. Then Solomon exclaimed in a loud voice: "The Lord makes Himself manifest in this Cloud which covers everything, just as He manifested Himself on other occasions in times past. Great was my longing, O Lord, to build the Temple, and today I see it fulfilled; for the house of Your lasting Dwelling and Throne has been built." Then Solomon, facing the vast gathering of people, blessed them all from his throne, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, Who has carried into effect the promise He made to my father David. May Your eyes, O Lord, be open to the gazes of Your servant and of Your People Israel, and may Your ears hear all our petitions."

3. When Solomon had concluded his fervent prayer, Most Holy Ananias appeared to him and said: "I have heard your prayer and listened to the petition you have made before Me. I have sanctified this Temple which you have built to establish My Name therein forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there every day. If you walk before Me as did your father, with an upright and simple heart, and if you do all the things I have commanded you, and keep My laws and Commandments, I will establish the reign of your throne in Israel forever, as I promised to your father David, saying: 'The throne of Israel will never lack a man of your lineage'. But if you and your children obstinately separate yourselves from Me, neither following Me nor keeping the Commandments and ceremonies I have prescribed, and stray away to render worship to false gods and adore them, I will remove My People from the face of the Land of Israel which I gave them, and will permit the Temple consecrated to My Name to be destroyed, and Israel will become the laughing stock and an object of ridicule for all peoples, who astonished will ask: 'Why has the Lord proceeded thus with His People and Temple?' And they will receive the following reply: 'Because they abandoned the Lord their God and followed after false gods, whom they adored and worshipped. That is why the Lord has permitted all this evil to befall them.'"

4. From the 8th to the 15th of December, among very many other and diverse offerings, in the majestic Temple of God a large number of oxen and sheep were offered to Almighty God on the altar of holocausts by the High Priest and the other priests, in uninterrupted turns day and night. On the 8th of December, during the first sacrifice, God manifested His glory a second time by means of the Cloud, and a fire descending from Heaven consumed the victims placed upon the altar; this was witnessed by the people with holy respect and untold joy. The solemnities which for eight days were celebrated in the Temple of Solomon were afterwards celebrated annually under the name of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple.

5. After the inauguration of the majestic Temple of God raised up by Solomon, the portable Temple which King David had installed on Mount Sion was dismantled and kept in the outbuildings of the Temple.

Chapter VI

Solomon commands the building of synagogues throughout Israel

1. Although prior to King Solomon, from the times of Caudillo Joshua, according as Moses had commanded, there were synagogues distributed in different spots in the Land of Israel to teach the Law of God, nonetheless it was not in a fixed, disciplined or organized manner. It was King Solomon who, after completing the Temple and enthroning the

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Ark of the Covenant within, on that same day the 8th of December 4184, wisely and piously instituted the Sacred Synagogue; so that it became compulsory for all cities, towns and villages of Israel, no matter how small, to have at least one synagogue, according to the population and size of the town, and thereby instruct the people in divine Law. As from the institution of the synagogue by Solomon, each locality had at least one synagogue.

2. The synagogue, according to the means of the locality, had to be a splendid building, for the honour and glory of God, since there His Divine Word was taught. Every synagogue had at least one altar. In the most prominent part of the synagogue, at the far end facing the door of entry to the edifice, stood a coffer, as sumptuous and worthy as possible, for many were of gold and finely wrought, in which were deposited the copies, in scrolls or parchments, of the Law of God. Among others, there had to be copies of the Pentateuch, the Book of Joshua, the Psalms of David, and some of the prophets.

3. The Books were kept in embroidered coverings and deposited in the coffer, which had a sumptuous inner veil or curtain, so that when opened the contents were not visible. The exterior of the coffer was completely covered over by a fine transparent veil. Everyone felt veneration for the sacred coffer, inasmuch as God was there, represented by His Word. When the priest opened the coffer, he and all present prostrated themselves as a sign of reverence for God by means of His Word, and the priest incensed the open coffer before taking out a Book. After taking out the corresponding Book, he laid it on the altar; and before reading it, incensed what he was about to read; and all those present prostrated themselves. There was enough space between the altar and the coffer to enable the priest to place and incense the Book, which was read facing the people. The faithful were in rows, first the men and then the women, with a screen of good quality material, according to means, between them, so that men and women were not in contact but could see each other. Before reading the Word of God, which was preferably on Saturdays, the appropriate Psalms of David were sung, according to the reading of the day. When the reading concluded, they sang Psalms again, and before replacing the Book in the coffer, the priest incensed it again and blessed all present with it, that is, with the Word of God contained therein. There was great respect for the Word of God, and this devotion to the Divine Word was a figure of the Holy Eucharist; for God was represented in the Book by means of His Word. The institution of the synagogue was one of the good works performed by Solomon while still leading an upright life, and therefore before he went astray.

Chapter VII

Building of Solomon's palace. Children born to Solomon by Queen Syon. Fortification of towns

1. After the great solemnities of the dedication of the Temple, Solomon, who had been residing in the palace constructed by David on Mount Sion, in Jerusalem, built a sumptuous palace for his official residence, as befitted his magnificence, the building of which took three years. Before the palace was completed his mother Bethsheba died. She was the only one of David's wives still living.

2. During the first fourteen years of their marriage, King Solomon and virtuous Queen Syon had thirteen children: eleven boys and two girls. Solomon took his wife Syon and their thirteen children to live with him in his new royal palace built in Jerusalem. Solomon had these thirteen children before his disastrous marriage to the Egyptian Artemisa.

3. In his palace or official residence, Solomon erected a large throne of ebony overlaid with pure gold; the upper part of the high back of the throne was rounded, and it had two arms, two golden lions supporting each arm. Six steps led up to the throne, and on the steps stood twelve small lions, six on each side. Solomon's throne was so sumptuous that its like was never made in any other kingdom. He also built a recreation palace, where he planted numerous trees, principally cedars, so that it took the name of the Forest of Lebanon Palace. Both palaces were the admiration of the kings of other countries owing to the great profusion of superb woods, gold, silver and other noble materials used in their construction and decoration. All the plate from which he ate and the cups from which he drank were of pure gold. So then, King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the Earth in wealth, in such fashion that the whole world wanted to see the opulence with which Solomon lived.

4. Solomon built princely towns, further strengthened those already existing by constructing stout walls, and had splendid routes of communication laid out for better travelling within his kingdom; he garrisoned the towns with regiments of soldiers, horses, war-chariots, weaponry, and so forth; and he organized a powerful army under the command of men skilled in defence and in the tactics and ruses of war. Economic progress and social well-being reached very high levels. Kings of other nations felt great fear and respect for the ascendancy of Solomon, who was the admiration of all for his wisdom, wealth and might.

Chapter VIII

King Solomon takes preventive measures against Semei, former partisan of Saulism

1. Semei, after having been forgiven by King David for the insults he had proffered him, lived near Jerusalem in great fidelity to the Law of God. Though it is true that many years previously he had been a staunch supporter of the Saulist sedition, after his repentance he became not only a faithful servant of David, but also of Solomon. But despite Semei's demonstration of virtue and fidelity, King Solomon, aware of his previous Saulist leanings, had taken certain measures of security in his regard, given that Semei was a man of great influence, not only in Jerusalem but also in all Israel. Therefore, after the Temple had been built, Solomon brought Semei to live in Jerusalem and thus have him under his control. This upright and prudent step on Solomon's part was in view of the fear that Semei could make Saulism resurge, though the king was aware of his repentance and the pardon granted to him by his father David.

2. To carry out this measure of prudence, Solomon sent for Semei to whom, when in the king's presence, he said: "Semei, build a house for yourself in Jerusalem and live in it, and do not leave the city to go elsewhere. But understand that if you do leave, on that day I will have you killed." Semei replied to the king: "I humbly accept your command, O my King Solomon; exactly as my king has said, thus will your servant fulfil." And Semei, a very virtuous man, who had accepted the royal command with great sincerity, built a house in Jerusalem and lived there.

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Chapter IX

King Solomon's journey to Egypt. Solomon's abominable project of marriage to a pagan, the daughter of Pharaoh

1. During the first ten years of his reign, Solomon, model of virtue, wisdom and prudence, faithfully complied with his sacred duties, and the Lord made him ever greater with heavenly blessings and Graces. All this redounded to the greater glory of the king, owing to the extraordinary prestige he came to attain, the most faithful love his vassals professed for him, the growing prosperity of his kingdom and the tranquil possession of his extensive dominions.

2. It is to be lamented that Solomon, instead of humbly corresponding to the great benefits received from God, became filled with vainglory on seeing himself surrounded by so much grandeur. And because he began to stray from the right path, he was rebuked by God through the virtuous Prophet Gad, to whom the king replied: *"Don't harass me."*

3. It came to pass that in the year 4187, the tenth of his reign, Solomon, forty years old, putting more confidence in human dealings than in divine protection, and ignoring God's warnings through His Prophet Gad, journeyed down into Egypt to visit the Pharaoh and to make a political and military alliance with him so as to guarantee the security of his territory of Israel. As a result of this visit he came to meet the Pharaoh's daughter Artemisa, a pagan girl of eighteen, priestess of religious syncretism. Seduced by the extraordinary beauty of this Egyptian woman, Solomon allowed himself to be carried away by his carnal impulses, ever more unbridled, and asked for her as wife, contrary to the norms established in the Law of Moses, which forbade marriages of the children of the People of God to pagans. Though Solomon was aware of this divine precept, to carry out his abominable caprice he gave as pretext that his marriage to the Pharaoh's daughter gave the throne of Israel greater security from possible attacks by other kings. After his sojourn in Egypt, Solomon returned to Jerusalem in the same year, in order to prepare the solemn reception there for her who was to become his second wife. God, through the Prophet Gad, admonished Solomon not to carry into effect his marriage to Artemisa. Solomon replied: *"Don't harass me."*

Chapter X

High Priest Abiathar, Generalissimo Joab and the magnate Semei oppose the abominable marriage of the king to the Pharaoh's daughter. Solomon's vengeance on all three

1. The official news given by Solomon of his forthcoming espousal to the Pharaoh's young pagan daughter greatly surprised many magnates of his court, and was utterly rejected by High Priest Abiathar, Generalissimo Joab and the upright Semei, who all firmly opposed the marriage. With great respect but with clarity, before it was to take place, they tried to dissuade the king, warning him that this marriage opposed the Law of God and that it would therefore bring grave consequences for him and for the people. However, since the king was not prepared to desist from his iniquitous desires — seeing that Abiathar, Joab and Semei were very serious obstacles to him, and fearing that owing to their great prestige they would influence other priests, military men, elders, courtiers and the common people as well, in opposition to his matrimonial plans — Solomon considered how best to rid himself of the three. God, through the Prophet Gad, warned Solomon to desist from the iniquitous plans he was proposing to carry out, to which the king replied: *"Don't harass me."*

2. The Priest Sadoc, who was ambitious to secure the post of High Priest, was the promoter of Abiathar's dismissal; for knowing that the latter was inflexibly opposed to Solomon's project of marrying the pagan Egyptian, he calumniated the High Priest, saying to the king that Abiathar had been in favour of the sedition of the king's brother Adonias when the latter aspired to the throne of Israel. Though Solomon knew for a fact that this accusation was untrue, and was simply a calumny by Sadoc against Abiathar, nonetheless, since he was himself increasingly inclined towards his abominable marriage, he saw in this splendid opportunity for dismissing Abiathar from the post of High Priest and giving the office to Sadoc, partisan of his royal aberrations. This was Solomon's iniquitous pretext for dismissing Abiathar from the post of High Priest and giving the office to Sadoc. Though Solomon sinned very grievously by dismissing Abiathar, he did not have him killed because he was a Priest of the Lord, considering that such a crime would be committed against God Himself.

3. Though the High Priesthood was lifelong and Solomon had no authority to depose the holder, nor to put anyone else in his place, nonetheless God permitted Solomon's injustice and validated the naming of Sadoc as High Priest, in order that Abiathar might pay for his betrayal of his father and brothers so as to obtain the highest Church post, for which crimes Abiathar was sincerely repentant. That was how Abiathar lost the High Priesthood. He and his family then became like any other, a humiliation worse for him than if Solomon had ordered him killed. What is more, in this way Samuel's prophecy concerning High Priest Heli was fulfilled, when he had told the latter in God's name: *"In that day I will verify all I have said against Heli and his house, which will be stripped of the dignity of the High Priesthood which, by succession from father to son, belongs to it."* This prophecy, made many years earlier, was fulfilled at that moment.

4. High Priest Sadoc, instated by Solomon with divine leave but not in accordance with God's Will, though indeed afterwards accepted by God, once he had occupied his post became afraid that Abiathar might be reinstated in his former post, either because he might ask Solomon's pardon, or because some prophet, in God's name, might command the king to reinstate him. So, to assure himself of the post of High Priest, Sadoc had Abiathar killed. By his death Abiathar purified himself of his previous crimes and obtained the salvation of his soul.

5. High Priest Sadoc, who came to occupy his post through an injustice, was the father of the heresies of the sadducee sect, which among other errors denied the existence of the angels, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the flesh. God permitted the naming of Sadoc also as a punishment for the prevarication of many members of the Church at that time.

6. Next Solomon turned to ridding himself of the virtuous Generalissimo Joab, for which purpose the king, influenced by Sadoc, concocted the false pretext that Joab had been a partisan of Adonias, and had backed him as successor to the throne of Israel, which charge was completely false. When the ominous news of the calumnious charge against him reached Joab, suspecting that his death had already been decreed, he took refuge within the Sanctum enclosure of the Temple of Jerusalem, and thereby avail himself of the right of refuge, given that it was a sacred and inviolable place. Though the Law of Moses deprived murderers, which was not the case of Joab, of this right, even so they could not be killed inside, but had to be seized and taken outside to be executed.

7. Solomon was notified that Joab had taken refuge in the antetabernacle of the Lord, and that he was standing beside the altar of proposition clinging to one of its horned corners. The king sent his superintendent Banahias with this command: *"Go and kill him."* Banahias went to the antetabernacle of the Lord; and when inside the enclosure, said to Joab: *"The king says this: 'Go outside.'" Joab replied: "I will not go outside, but will die here."* Banahias made Joab's answer known to the king, who said to his superintendent: *"If Joab wants to die inside the sacred enclosure, comply with his wish. Kill and bury him."* So Banahias went and attacked and murdered the virtuous and innocent Joab inside the sacred enclosure of the Sanctum, by which Solomon stained with blood the Temple he himself had built to God. Joab's murder was seen from behind curtains by High Priest Sadoc, so that he, by permitting it, was also to blame for the sacrilegious crime. Joab was afterwards secretly buried in the Cedron Valley. After Joab's death the king made Banahias Generalissimo of the army, and gave the post of superintendent to Jeroboam, Nabath the Ephraean's son, born in Bethlehem of Judah, a valiant young man whom the king had protected and promoted for his talent and ability.

8. Once Joab had been done away with, it was the turn of Semei, who lived in his own house in Jerusalem without ever leaving the city, according to the royal command. To put an end to Semei, Solomon employed the following stratagem. He secretly sent a messenger in whom he had complete confidence to induce three of Semei's slaves to flee the house and go to another town, telling them not to fear because they reckoned with the king's promise that they would obtain their freedom. Solomon hoped thereby that Semei would go out in search of his slaves and thus, for having disobeyed the order not to leave the city, give the king a pretext for killing him.

9. When Semei was notified that his slaves had fled to the home of a magnate in the town of Geth, he rose and saddled his ass and went in search of them, by which he proceeded justly before God, believing that he was within his rights and that the king's prohibition did not extend that far. But the messenger, who had been lying in wait, at once informed Solomon that Semei had left the city. Solomon quickly sent some of his guards to bring Semei to the palace. When Semei was in the king's presence, Solomon said to him: *"Did I not swear to you by the Lord and forewarn you that on whatever day you left the city, you would be killed? And you answered me: 'I humbly accept your command, O my king Solomon; exactly as my king has said, thus will your servant comply.'" Solomon at once commanded Banahias to take the innocent and virtuous Semei outside the palace and have him killed. The command was obeyed.*

10. By their deaths, High Priest Abiathar, Generalissimo Joab and the magnate Semei obtained the grace of martyrdom.

Chapter XI

God, through the Prophet Gad, foretells to Solomon the death of ten of his children if he marries Artemisa. Solomon's abominable marriage to the Pharaoh's daughter. Solomon falls into idolatry

1. After Solomon's acts of retaliation against Abiathar, Joab and Semei, God, through the Prophet Gad, foretold to Solomon, among other things, that if he came to marry the priestess Artemisa, at the very moment he entered the royal palace with her, ten of his children, sick for a month with malignant fever, would die. To this Solomon replied: *"Don't harass me."*

2. King Solomon, ever more obstinate in his plans to marry the Pharaoh's daughter, against God's repeated prohibition, commanded everything necessary to be prepared to give Artemisa, whom he had told to come up from Egypt, a lavish and brilliant reception. In that same year, 4187, at forty years of age, Solomon married the Egyptian priestess Artemisa in the Temple of Jerusalem, in the presence of High Priest Sadoc; which was a condition set by Artemisa. Solomon thus openly violated Holy Divine Law and profaned the Sacred Temple. At the same moment that Solomon and his wife Artemisa entered the royal palace of Jerusalem, as divine punishment ten of his children died. Also at that same moment, the virtuous Queen Syon, heroically and voluntarily, sexually repudiated her husband King Solomon, though she continued to live in the palace caring for her three children.

3. Following his marriage to Artemisa, Solomon's conduct went from bad to worse. Rejecting in his heart many of the precepts of the Law of God, he let himself be dragged down by the delights of the flesh, the vainglory of his wisdom, the arrogance of power, unbridled taste for luxury and ambition for wealth, among other concupiscences. It was precisely Artemisa, priestess of religious syncretism, who corrupted the heart of the king, causing him to fall into the heresy of reconciling the true religion, that of the People of Israel, with the pagan religions of other countries, when truth is irreconcilable with error. Solomon the wise, in his craving for licentious pleasure and greed for temporal power, and forgetting his spiritual power, by enthroning the idols of Egypt in the Temple of God in Jerusalem, profaned it yet further. Solomon, then, at the same time as he rendered worship to God, did so as well to idols, and by doing so lit one candle to God and another to the devil.

Chapter XII

The Queen of Sheba visits Solomon

1. One of the countries where Solomon's greatness made a strong impact was that of Sheba, which included what is now Yemen, to the south of Arabia, and Ethiopia, on the other side of the Red Sea. The territory of Sheba was ruled by a pagan queen called Candice. Having heard of Solomon's fame, she came to Jerusalem with the aim of verifying the

king's wisdom and magnificence, of which so much was spoken. In her visit to Solomon, Candice brought with her great riches: camels laden with spices, gold and precious stones. When in the presence of Solomon, she proposed to him many difficulties she had in her heart, and which were unravelled by the king with great assurance and wisdom. The Queen of Sheba, then, having heard the wisdom of Solomon, and seen the grandeur of the Temple he had raised to God, the sumptuousness of his palaces, the opulence of his cuisine, the chambers of his courtiers, the diverse multitude of servants and their magnificent attire, the royal cup-bearers in their splendid livery, and the victims that were immolated in the Temple of the Lord, was astonished, and as if beside herself said to the king: "True is the fame that I have heard speak in my country about your wisdom, wealth and power. I did not believe what they told me until I came myself and saw it with my own eyes and felt it with my hands, finding that they had scarcely told me the half of it; your wisdom, wealth and power, indeed, surpass what fame publishes about you. Fortunate are your people, and happy are your servants who are always about you and listen to your wisdom. Great and powerful must be this Lord of yours, whom you say is your God, and Who has placed you on Israel's throne with such magnificence for you to rule her and administer justice by your great wisdom." Though Queen Candice displayed her admiration and astonishment at Solomon's grandeur, she was not converted to the true God but continued in her idolatry. She gave Solomon the valuable treasure she had brought from Sheba.

2. Solomon, captivated by the beauty of the Queen of Sheba, lived with her intimately for the year she stayed in Jerusalem. When Candice, Queen of Sheba, returned to her country, she bore six children in her womb, all male, fruit of her adulterous cohabitation with King Solomon. They were born, grew and multiplied. Many of the inhabitants of Ethiopia are descendants of the illicit union between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Some of these Ethiopians afterwards embraced the Faith of Israel.

3. Christ, in the Gospel, makes mention of this visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon when He says: "The very Queen of the South, or Sheba, will manifest herself on the day of judgement against the men of this generation, and will condemn them; for she came from afar to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and I am greater than Solomon; and nonetheless, this villainous people does not want to listen to Me." In this pronouncement, Christ condemns the hardness of heart of many of the Jewish People, who listened to His words and rejected His divine wisdom, refusing to accept His holy doctrine. The Lord calls to their minds the episode of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon to show up yet further the evil dispositions of those who presumed to be children of Abraham and observers of the Law of Moses. For the Queen of Sheba, though a pagan, had the good will to come from afar to hear the judgements of Solomon, of limited wisdom; whilst they, who deemed themselves children of the People of God, despised the sublime teachings of the Messias, Son of the Most High, of Infinite Wisdom. For that reason, on the day of judgement, Our Lord Jesus Christ, as Supreme Judge, will cast in their teeth that infamous temerity of theirs which showed them to be worse than the pagans themselves. The sacred text does not mean to say, therefore, that the Queen of Sheba shall judge that perverse generation which rejected Christ's Gospel.

Chapter XIII

Solomon's marriages, as well as numerous illicit unions, with pagan women.
Solomon raises numerous altars to idols. Solomon's unbridled licentiousness

1. After his marriage to Artemisa, besides his wanton affair with Candice, Solomon passionately loved many other pagan women of diverse creeds: Moabite, Ammonite, Sidonite, Hethite, Philistine and so forth, contrary to what the Lord God of Israel had said concerning pagan nations: "Do not take from them women for yourselves, nor let them marry your women, because they will infallibly pervert your hearts so that you follow their gods." Nonetheless, this precept did not render marriages contracted under such conditions invalid. But as for polygamy, God only allowed a maximum of thirteen wives per man, so that any in excess of this number no longer lived with the man in marriage but in illicit union. Solomon cohabited carnally with a thousand and one women, of whom only thirteen were his true wives, and of these thirteen only Queen Syon was pleasing to God. To justify his depraved polygamy, Solomon erased from Deuteronomy the limitation set by God, which was a total of thirteen wives per husband. The licentious women with whom Solomon cohabited, under the guidance of Artemisa, perverted the heart of the king ever further. Solomon came to profane yet more the Temple of God in Jerusalem, enthroning therein the many idols of the pagan women with whom he lived; among them Astarte, idol of the Sidonites, and Moloch, idol of the Ammonites, and so on. And not only in the Temple, for Solomon also erected on the Mount of Olives a temple to Camos, idol of the Moabites, and another to Moloch, idol of the Ammonites; and he did the same in other parts of Jerusalem and in many towns of Israel. Solomon, accompanied by his pagan women, offered incense and sacrifices to their idols; and in this utterly wicked and aberrant way he gratified them.

2. King Solomon, in his unbridled craving for pleasure, not only had licentious relations with women, but also with men. His incontinence with women reached such a point that they no longer fully satisfied his wanton desires, so that he also sought to satisfy them with those of his own sex. Besides, Solomon had effeminate men brought into the quarters reserved for men in the Temple of Jerusalem, for them to be at the service of the male pilgrims; given that women had their own independent quarters.

3. Solomon was the founder of the first estate or antechamber of Freemasonry; although the Levitical High Priest Annas was the true founder of Freemasonry, at the time of Christ.

Chapter XIV

God threatens Solomon and announces a schism in Israel

1. Frequently the Lord, through the Prophet Gad, admonished Solomon for his life of corruption and idolatry. But since the king always rejected these censures, for his heart was becoming ever more hardened by vice, God, terribly

irritated with Solomon, again sent him the Prophet Gad with the following message: "Solomon, thus says the Lord your God: 'Because you have proceeded against Me adoring false gods, and therefore have kept neither My pact nor the precepts I gave you, I will permit your kingdom to be divided into two. However this will not occur in your days, out of love for your father David, but when it is in the power of your son Roboam.'" To this divine reproach Solomon answered the Prophet Gad with his customary: "Don't harass me."

2. In view of the king's obstinacy, God then sent the Prophet Ahias to reproach him for his waywardness, exhort him to mend his ways and return to the virtuous life he led during the first ten years of his reign; for God, as Father of Goodness, wanted Solomon to be converted and saved. So then Ahias, in God's name, made known to Solomon the following prophecy: "O King Solomon, thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I see your heart more and more hardened every day, and by your bad example you induce your subjects to follow your iniquitous ways. For you have abandoned Me, your Lord and God, in order to adore Astarte the god of the Sidonites, and Camos the god of Moab, and Moloch the god of the children of Ammon, among many other idols. So then, you have not followed My ways and practised righteousness in My presence; neither have you kept My Commandments and laws nor have you imitated the good example of your father David. Pay heed, O king, to My Fatherly reproof: remove from the Temple you have dedicated to Me all the idols you have enthroned there, and burn them; expel from the Temple all idolaters and those who profane it; destroy all the altars and idols you have erected throughout the territory of My people; exterminate all profaners and idolaters who are not prepared to be converted to Me, the God of Israel; repudiate all those pagan women who cohabit with you. If you do not mend your ways, Solomon, and turn your eyes to me with sincere repentance, I will permit the kingdom of Israel to be divided at your death; for the people of the north or Samaria will rise up against your son Roboam and will proclaim as king Jeroboam, from the tribe of Manasses; though the other part of Israel will remain under the crown of your son Roboam, for love of My servant David, and for Jerusalem, which city I have chosen from among all those of My people. O Solomon, meditate well on My words, for if you obey Me in all that I command you and return to My ways and do what is upright in My sight, keeping My Commandments and precepts as did My servant David, I will be with you, and in your descendants I will make the throne of Israel even more secure.'" 3. Solomon, blinded by pride, said to Ahias: "You are a prophet as irksome as the Prophet Gad. I assure you that, though I don't change my life, nothing of what you have told me in the Name of God will come to pass, since I will prevent it"; to which the Prophet Ahias asserted: "Solomon, king of Israel, in the Name of God, I say to you that you are blaspheming, for all that I have foretold concerning you if you do not change your life will come to pass." The Prophet Ahias then returned to where he had come from, harrowed by pain and weeping profusely, for he saw that there was no remedy for Solomon given his obstinate attitude. Ahias, in solitude, then wept bitterly and prayed to God for Solomon because he did not want to mend his ways, and because he was capable as well of committing any crime to prevent the fulfilment of what God had foretold about the division of the kingdom of Israel.

4. These commands of God through the Prophet Ahias were given to King Solomon on the 25th of December in the year 4199, the twenty-second of his reign, a thousand years before the Birth of Christ, when Solomon was fifty-two years old and his son Roboam twenty-five.

Chapter XV

Solomon plans to kill Jeroboam. Jeroboam flees to Egypt at God's command

1. After the Prophet Ahias had admonished Solomon in God's name, and foretold the division of the kingdom of Israel if he did not amend, Solomon took steps to kill his very faithful superintendent Jeroboam, at that time a virtuous man, of great talent and excellent qualities. But the king, despite his wisdom, acted foolishly, since he did not bear in mind that God is infinitely wise and can shatter human plans.

2. In view of the very serious danger Jeroboam was running, God, without wasting time, said to the Prophet Ahias: "Quickly, don't delay; seek out Jeroboam and tell him to free himself from Solomon's cruel hands by fleeing into Egypt." Ahias made this known to Jeroboam who answered: "If this command comes from God, as I believe it does, then since God does not lie I will obey and flee into Egypt, for if not Solomon will kill me." So Jeroboam fled as quickly as possible into Egypt, where he remained until he received news of Solomon's death.

Chapter XVI

Solomon had countless children by his numerous wives. Human sacrifices offered to idols by Solomon and Artemisa

1. Solomon, by his thousand and one wives, had countless children. The priestess Artemisa herself bore him twenty-four children, all male, in six deliveries of quadruplets. The reason the bible texts speak solely of three of Solomon's children, is that only three survived in Israel. The king became so perverse that the countless children his women bore to him were offered in holocaust to idols, in the Temple of Jerusalem, by the priestess Artemisa. In these ceremonies he acted as her coadjutor, though fully aware that the idols did not represent the true God. Solomon, then, condescended with his wife to these sacrifices for political and economic reasons. The priestess Artemisa and King Solomon began human sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem in the year 4193, after six years of marriage.

2. In the year 4211, three days prior to the last human sacrifices offered in holocaust to idols by Artemisa and Solomon in the Temple of Jerusalem, the Prophet Semeias, in God's name, presented himself at the royal palace where King Solomon, the priestess Artemisa and their twenty-four children were, to announce to them that if they offered one more human sacrifice to idols in the Temple of God, at that same moment their twenty-four children would be reduced to ashes by a fiery ray issuing from the Ark of the Covenant. In the year 4211, three days after the Prophet Semeias' visit, a thousand years before the Finding of the Child Jesus at the age of twelve years in the Temple of Jerusalem amid the doctors of the Law, the priestess Artemisa, King Solomon and their twenty-four children offered another sacrifice of human victims in holocaust to the idols in the Temple of God in Jerusalem. At that same moment a potent fiery ray issued from the Ark of the Covenant and reduced to ashes Artemisa's and Solomon's twenty-four children,

who symbolically remained as footstools of the twenty-four ancients who adore the Lord God of Hosts. Artemisa's and Solomon's four eldest children were thirteen years old, and the four youngest seven years old, when all were reduced to ashes by the Holy Wrath of God. From then on, Artemisa, forty-two years old, and Solomon, sixty-four years old, ceased forever to offer human sacrifices, after having done so for eighteen years.

Chapter XVII

Factors mitigating Solomon's sins

1. Though Solomon sinned very grievously in offering idolatrous sacrifices, he did not do so with the express desire to offend God directly. This does not excuse his culpability, since he knew he was offending God, but it does mitigate his perversity. King Solomon rendered worship to idols for his material goals, such as to obtain gold, women, and build palaces, not only in Jerusalem but also throughout Israel, and consequently imposed a heavy yoke on the people as well by way of excessive taxes. And though there were times when Solomon was less wicked, not on that account did he remove the idols and their altars.

2. King Solomon, furthermore, despite his perversity, never killed a prophet, for he felt in his heart that to dare to do something against any of them would be to go directly against God, and this he did not wish to do. Certainly, Solomon often disobeyed God's commands made known through His prophets, saying: "*Don't harass me,*" but he never harmed, tortured or killed any of them. Neither did Solomon dare to kill any Priest of the Lord, for he considered that this would be a crime directly against God. That is why, in the case of High Priest Abiathar, though Solomon sinned grievously in dismissing him, nonetheless he respected his life; many other kings did the opposite, daring to kill prophets and priests. Solomon's respect for sacred persons mitigated his perversity.

3. Despite his unbridled licentiousness, pertinacious idolatry and other corrupt practices, Solomon never forbade worship to God in the Temple of Jerusalem; what is more, he presided, as king, the levitical sacrifices offered to the Lord God of Hosts.

4. Thus, despite his abominable sins, Solomon saved himself, not only because of the majestic Temple he raised to God in Jerusalem, the prayers of his virtuous wife Syon and of his father David, but also because he never killed any priest or prophet, nor did he forbid worship to God in the Temple, which many other kings indeed did.

Chapter XVIII

True peace and false peace in Solomon's reign. Solomon burdens his people with excessive taxes

1. During Solomon's reign there was no war at all in Israel. But this peace was not always pleasing to God, since every good ruler is obliged to use force when necessary in defence of the holy and just interests of the nation. During the first ten years of Solomon's reign, there was indeed true peace according to the divine plan, given that, as a reward for the king's fidelity, God did not permit any other nation to dare to intrude into the dominions of His people. Nonetheless, when the king began to stray from the right path, God permitted other countries to rise up against Israel; and Solomon, instead of waging war on them, made peace treaties with his enemies, contrary to the divine plan; accordingly, that peace was false.

2. As from the tenth year of his reign, Solomon's idolatry and craving for riches and pleasure were the principal factors in causing the prestige and power characterizing the People of Israel to follow a course contrary to that of a true kingdom according to the divine plan. Solomon, in his unrestrained desire to accumulate riches for his personal glory and so as to be powerfully armed, and also in his eagerness to procure pagan women for his pleasures, intimidated many kings of other countries by threatening to wage war on them, without ever intending to do so; they, faced with the danger of losing their kingdoms, made pacts with King Solomon becoming his tributaries, and sending him, among other goods, gold and beautiful young women. Solomon made his threats of war using the two most powerful fleets of his time: one based in different ports of Lebanon, and which sailed the length of that maritime zone; and the other in Asiongaber and other ports of the Red Sea, with its various sailing routes. Solomon also possessed a large and well-equipped land army, with horses and chariots; for with the tribute he received from other kings, he made sure to arm himself well, not in order to wage war, but to intimidate and obtain more tribute and women. In this manner Solomon became king of kings, since he was the most powerful king on earth. King Solomon not only received tributes of gold, silver, etc., as likewise beautiful women, but also idols, which he proceeded to set up in the Temple of God in Jerusalem, in the high places and in many other parts of Israel.

3. Many nations became tributaries of the mighty Solomon at his threat of waging war on them if they did not submit to his yoke. Among these tributary kings were those of Egypt, Sheba, Sudan, Abyssinia, Persia, Spain, part of India, Mesopotamia on the other side of the Euphrates, the Phoenecian Canaanians of Carthage and so forth.

4. The excessive luxury in which Solomon lived, the incessant squandering for his unbridled vices, all kinds of complaisance towards his numerous women, the abominable buildings for idolatrous worship and other manifold expenses which outraged God and the people, led him to burden his subjects with excessive taxes; on account of which the general discontent became intense in Israel, since many saw in the king not a father but a tyrant. To all this was joined the building of a new and opulent palace, and other very luxurious quarters for the fancies and licentiousness of the impious and satanic Artemisa, his second wife. The general discontent of the inhabitants of Israel, joined to the corruption of many of them, were also the cause of the future invasions suffered by the Chosen People in the final years of Solomon's reign.

Chapter XIX

Many territories of the People of Israel obtain autonomy by becoming Solomon's tributary kingdoms

1. In the final years of Solomon's reign, as prelude to the chastisements that were to occur on account of his utter waywardness, God permitted some of the territories of Israel to rebel against the king. These uprisings were promoted,

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by means of corresponding incursions, by the successors of former kings of those Israelite territories under Solomon's crown.

2. God, who did not desire the dismemberment of the extensive territories of the People of Israel, at the proximity of each of these invasions, by way of the Prophet Gad warned Solomon, saying to him: "*Arise and defend My territory.*" God thereby commanded him to go with his army and prevent the invasion. Solomon, however, never obeyed God's command, but made pacts with the invading kings, making them his tributaries and demanding of them, among other wealth, gold and beautiful women. Through these God-opposing pacts, many territories of the People of Israel came under the sway of the successors of their former pagan kings; though they were tributaries subject to the crown of Solomon, whom they feared owing to his threat of waging war on them if they did not comply with the obligations of the pact.

3. Among other invading kings of the People of God were King Adad, who came from Egypt and seized Edom or Idumea, as well as the whole Sinai peninsula; thirty-three Syrian kings, among them King Rasin, who seized the extensive territory of Syria; the Philistine kings, who seized Lebanon, in the north; and also other Philistine kings who entered Israel through the port near the Israelite town of Azotus, and seized other parts of the southern coast. Likewise the Israelite territories of Moab, Madian, Ammon, Arabia etc., were invaded, which passed beneath the crowns of their respective kings.

4. Sadly, King Solomon's pacific agreements with the pagan kings he permitted to rule in many of the territories of Israel as tributaries, brought as ill-fated consequences not only the dismemberment of the territorial, political and social unity of the Chosen People, but also the official and progressive introduction in those territories of the idolatry and other pagan morals of the invading peoples, with the resultant influence on the rest of Israel.

Chapter XX

Solomon's last days. Death of Queen Syon and death of King Solomon

1. In the year 4217 the very virtuous Queen Syon died in Jerusalem at the age of sixty-one years, as a result of the great suffering caused her by the countless sins of her husband Solomon, then seventy, especially those of idolatry. Queen Syon was buried in the royal pantheon, beside King David, on Mount Sion in Jerusalem. Solomon, who was by then feeling remorse for his utter waywardness, kept thirty days of mourning for his deceased wife Syon, with great manifestations of sorrow for having made her suffer so much by his infidelity.

2. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon at the age of seventy, and therefore a year prior to his death, is reflected a certain repentance for much of the viciousness of his life. He also gave orders to remove all the idols and their altars, both in the Temple and in the whole of Israel. But he died before this order was completely carried out. Nonetheless, Solomon did not restore the honour he had taken from his father David, and from others, by his falsification of Sacred Scripture; and though he was perfectly able to retract prior to death, this he did not choose to do, so that his repentance in life was incomplete. It was at clinical death, during particular judgement, that Solomon felt true repentance for all the innumerable sins he had committed during his life; so that, at those moments of particular judgement, he was fully prepared, were he to return to normal life, to undo all the evil he had done and to obey everything he had not obeyed. He did sufficient to save himself from eternal damnation, but with insufficient love to free himself from the pains of Purgatory, or at least to mitigate their duration and intensity, when in fact he was capable of loving God a very great deal. Though it is true that Solomon possessed a great capacity for love, as he had demonstrated in life by his excessive love for riches, women, gold, honours, cuisine, etc., for Solomon excelled in the seven capital sins, nonetheless, at clinical death he did not demonstrate sufficiently his capacity to love God, so that he was unable to free himself from the pains of Purgatory.

3. Solomon, then, at clinical death, since he was truly repentant, freed himself from eternal damnation by: the Infinite Mercy of God; the petitions of the Divine Soul of Mary; the incessant petitions of Holy King David in Abraham's Bosom; the prayers of his very virtuous wife Syon, who during her life redoubled her prayers, penances and fasting for the conversion of her husband, suffering bitterly for him; the sublime Temple to God which he had raised in Jerusalem; and also his virtuous conduct during the first ten years of his reign, when he was holy and wise. King Solomon, by divine and unalterable decree, will remain in Purgatory until Christ's return to Earth to establish His Messianic Kingdom. By our prayers we can greatly diminish Solomon's suffering in Purgatory.

4. Solomon died in the year 4218, at the age of seventy-one, after having reigned in Israel for forty-one years. He was buried in the royal pantheon, beside the tomb of his father David, on Mount Sion in Jerusalem. At his death he was succeeded on the throne of Israel by his son Roboam, who was married to Maacah. She had been born in the town of Abesalon, that is, she was a daughter of that town, and was priestess of the obscene idol Priapos. She bore to her husband future king Abia.

Book IV

Division of the kingdom of Israel into two kingdoms: Judah and Samaria

Chapter I

General considerations concerning the division of the People of Israel into two kingdoms: Judah and Samaria

1. God did not desire the division of the kingdom of Israel, and it is therefore inadmissible to hold God responsible for the schism of His people. Nonetheless, God permitted the division for most high ends, principally to punish the sins of Solomon in his descendants, the waywardness of many, the obstinate attitude of Roboam, and thereby purify a large proportion of His people. Solomon then, was chiefly responsible for the schism of the People of Israel, and he

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is charged with this offence in the Book of Ecclesiasticus. His son Roboam was next to blame for the schism, owing to his headstrong inflexibility in the face of the just petition of many of his people.

2. In the kingdom of Judah only descendants of the tribe of Judah reigned legitimately. In the kingdom of Samaria eighteen kings, belonging to ten of the tribes, reigned legitimately; for besides the tribe of Judah which had its own kingdom, the tribes of Ruben and Dan were also excluded. Those of the tribe of Ruben did not reign since, though Ruben was Jacob's firstborn, God did not permit any of his descendants to reign owing to his sin of incest with Bala, his father's wife. Neither did God permit any king from the tribe of Dan, because Dan was responsible for Ruben's incest, and because of his unbridled ambition, in league with his mother Bala, to usurp the rights of the firstborn. In both kingdoms, Judah and Samaria, there were good and bad kings.

3. In order for the prophets of God to anoint the kings of the People of Israel, before the sacred anointing of the new king with oil, the corresponding prophet required an oath from him to defend, including with the sword, the worship of the Lord God of Hosts, and to persecute, including with the sword, idolatrous worship. The anointing of the new king was customarily carried out following the thirty days of mourning for the death of his predecessor, though there were cases when this interval was not respected. And that the prophet should have anointed the new king, despite the correct or incorrect way he had risen to the throne, was so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continual infidelities, continued permitting the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or a perverse way.

4. In both kingdoms, Judah and Samaria, lived descendants from all the tribes of Israel. In both kingdoms there were good and bad people.

5. The kingdom of Judah embraced the southern part of Israel and had as its capital Jerusalem, where the king resided. The kingdom of Samaria embraced the northern part and had as its capital Sichem, where the king resided.

6. In the kingdom of Judah was to be found the Temple to God raised by Solomon in Jerusalem, and this city was the official residence of the Levitical High Priest.

7. In the kingdom of Samaria, when its inhabitants were unable to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem for seven successive years, because either the king of Samaria or the king of Judah, or both, prevented it, in the eighth year a portable Temple was erected in Sichem, analogous to that constructed by Moses in the desert, so that in the eighth year the people of the kingdom of Samaria could celebrate the feasts established by the Law of Moses. God commanded the Prophet Ahias to have this portable Temple made. At the end of the eighth year, the portable Temple was removed. Whenever the portable Temple was erected, it was under the authority of a chief priest, who in turn was subject to the Levitical High Priest in Jerusalem. The inhabitants of the kingdom of Samaria were obliged to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem for the feasts established by God whenever none of the aforementioned impediments existed.

8. In both kingdoms, Judah and Samaria, there were good and bad Levitical priests.

Chapter II

Roboam is proclaimed in Jerusalem as king of the People of Israel

In the year 4218, the thirty days of mourning for Solomon's death having elapsed, people from all the tribes of Israel gathered in Jerusalem to attend the anointing of Roboam as king of Israel, ceremony carried out by the virtuous Prophet Gad before the Golden Gate of the Temple, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend, including with the sword, the worship of the Lord God of Hosts, and to persecute, including with the sword, idolatrous worship. This solemn ceremony was held in the presence of High Priest Sadoc, the other priests, the Council of Elders, the courtiers and the immense crowd gathered there. Immediately after he was anointed, all proclaimed the new king, exclaiming: "Viva Roboam, king of the People of Israel!" And Roboam, amid popular acclamation, entered the city of Jerusalem with great majesty by the Golden Gate, which was also one of the city gates, and traversed the streets amid displays of enthusiasm. Next, High Priest Sadoc and other priests offered to God, in the Temple, sacrifices and offerings as a token of gratitude for the elevation to the throne of the new king. Roboam, then, began to reign in the year 4218, at the age of forty-four years.

Chapter III

Uprising against Roboam in Sichem by many of the People of Israel.

Jeroboam is proclaimed king of Samaria, Roboam continuing as king of Judah

1. When the news of Solomon's death reached Egypt, Jeroboam, exiled there, said to himself: "The one who sought me to kill me has died. I will go back to my people again"; and without any delay, accompanied by his entourage, he returned to Israel, heading directly north to the territory of Samaria, to the city of Sichem, since he did not wish to go to Jerusalem for fear that he might be killed by Roboam, Solomon's son, who days previously had been proclaimed king of Israel.

2. When it became known that Jeroboam was in Sichem, many Israelites from all the tribes gathered in that city to make known to him their discontent that Roboam had been anointed and proclaimed king of Israel without the previous requirement that he intend to reduce the insupportable tributary burden imposed by Solomon that oppressed the people. The rumours, then, of a threatened uprising in Sichem against the new king soon spread throughout Israel. But Jeroboam endeavoured to soothe the people, in the hope that God would provide the necessary remedy for peace.

3. When Roboam was informed of what was happening in Sichem, he set out for that city accompanied by the Council of Elders and an entourage of young courtiers with the objective that the rioters there submit to his authority as king of Israel. When Roboam arrived in Sichem, Jeroboam, in the name of all the people gathered there, made this plea to the king: "Roboam, your father Solomon placed a very heavy yoke on us; so that we beseech you to ease it by reducing the tributes we have been paying; and in this way we will acknowledge you as our king." Roboam replied: "Withdraw

for now, and return to me in three days' time." The people withdrew and Roboam summoned the Council of Elders, asking them: "What do you advise me to reply to this people?" They said: "If you accede to the plea of this people, grant their petition and speak to them tenderly, they will be your vassals forever." This wise answer given by the elders came from God Himself. But Roboam, not satisfied with the opinion of the elders, consulted the young courtiers who had grown up with him, asking: "What do you advise me to reply to the people's request: Lighten for us a little the yoke your father imposed upon us?" The young courtiers made him answer: "To this people you are to reply thus: 'If my father Solomon imposed upon you a very heavy yoke, I will increase the weight of it yet further.'" And this foolish reply of the youths came from Satan.

4. So Jeroboam and all the people presented themselves before the king on the third day, exactly as he had commanded. And Roboam, who had despised the counsel given to him by the elders, replied to the people harshly according to the counsel of the young courtiers, saying: "My father imposed a heavy yoke upon you. Well, I will add yet further to its weight." And the king did not wish to condescend to the people. Then Jeroboam, in the name of all, replied to the king saying: "We are faithful followers of the virtuous and just King David, and have nothing to do with the oppressor King Solomon. What heritage or benefit can we hope from you, Roboam, when you are prepared to lay upon our shoulders a yoke even heavier than the one your father laid upon us?" When the Israelites gathered in Sichem heard these words, they rose up against Roboam, even threatening him with death. At the same time they proclaimed Jeroboam as king, all crying out in unison: "Viva Jeroboam, king of Samaria!" Then Jeroboam said to Roboam: "Begone to the land of Judah where you have been proclaimed king and reign there, for I will reign in Samaria where I have been proclaimed king." Then Roboam took his chariot in all haste and fled to Jerusalem with his entourage, though perceptibly diminished, for all the elders who had come from Jerusalem remained in Sichem, and only the young courtiers returned. In this way the northern part of Israel, from then on known as the kingdom of Samaria, became separated from the southern part, from then on known as the kingdom of Judah.

5. After the proclamation of Jeroboam as king of Samaria, God appeared to the virtuous Prophet Ahias and gave him the following command: "Now you, in My Name, anoint Jeroboam as king, who has been proclaimed by many in Israel, so that it be seen that I permit this division of My people." The Prophet Ahias went quickly to seek out Jeroboam; and in the city of Sichem itself, before the sepulchre of Patriarch Joseph, he anointed Jeroboam with oil as king of Samaria, after the king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The whole people acclaimed anew: "Long live Jeroboam, king of Samaria!" God, through Ahias, said to Jeroboam: "If you are obedient to Me, fulfil My commands and lead My people by My ways, I will make your throne secure for you in your descendants as I did for David; so that, just as the Messias will be born from his lineage, so He will also be born from yours. But if instead of following My ways you take the wrong path, and do not obey My commands, great calamities will befall you and your descendants, and the throne will be taken away from you and your descendants." After having uttered these words, in the presence of Jeroboam the cloak the Prophet Ahias was wearing suddenly and miraculously tore into eleven pieces. At this Jeroboam, startled, asked the prophet what this tearing of the cloak meant, saying: "What is this sign? What does God want from me?" Ahias replied: "The sign that God wants to give you is that, if you do not comply with what He has commanded, this kingdom will not be occupied by your descendants, but by kings from ten tribes, who will succeed one another. But the kingdom of Judah will be ruled by kings from its own tribe." Then Jeroboam said to the Prophet Ahias: "May God not permit that this come to pass. May God help me to comply with His will at all times, so that my throne endure forever, and that the Messias we await may also descend from my lineage." Ahias answered: "Everything can be fulfilled if you are faithful to God; but if you are not, your throne will be shattered as my cloak demonstrated by tearing apart." Jeroboam, from the tribe of Manasses, began to reign in Samaria in the year 4218, and established his royal court in Sichem. Subsequently he greatly embellished this city with splendid buildings.

6. When Roboam, fleeing Sichem, reached the city of Jerusalem, he assembled his army to give battle to the new kingdom of Samaria and subject it to his royal authority. But the Lord addressed His word to the Prophet Semeias, saying: "Speak to Roboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the rest of his people, and tell them that the Lord says the following: 'Do not go forth to give battle to your Israelite brothers of the north of Israel; for it is I Who have permitted the division of My people by the proclamation of Jeroboam as king of Samaria.'" All obeyed the words of the Lord, desisting from going to make war on Jeroboam.

Chapter IV

Jeroboam, king of Samaria, is faithful to God during the first three years of his reign.

Roboam, king of Judah, forbids people from the kingdom of Samaria to enter the Temple of Jerusalem.

Jeroboam, king of Samaria, forbids his subjects to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem

1. During the first three years of his reign, King Jeroboam of Samaria was pious and virtuous. He complied with the will of God, and allowed his subjects to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem to fulfil the divine precepts.

2. King Roboam of Judah, from the very outset of Jeroboam's reign, incensed at his rejection by the inhabitants of the kingdom of Samaria, in retaliation, for the first three years, forbade their entering the Temple of Jerusalem to fulfil the religious obligations of the annual feasts imposed by God; accordingly, he placed a strict watch on the frontiers of his kingdom. Roboam, from the first moment of his reign, was a perverse king. King Roboam, at the end of the first three years of Jeroboam's reign, not out of any desire to serve God but to serve himself, and holding to the hope that Jeroboam might be overthrown and he be proclaimed king of Samaria, authorized the inhabitants of Samaria to enter the Temple of Jerusalem; for in this way he thought to attract the sympathy of people from the kingdom of the North for his own personal interests.

3. King Jeroboam, at the conclusion of the first three years of his reign, on hearing that King Roboam had reversed the prohibition against the inhabitants of the kingdom of Samaria entering the Temple of Jerusalem, feared that his subjects would rise up against him and proclaim Roboam king of Samaria. Jeroboam said to himself: *“If my subjects go up to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices in the Temple of the Lord, soon their hearts will turn to Roboam, king of Judah, and on being reconciled to him will take my life.”* Jeroboam forbade his subjects to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem, and accordingly placed a very strict watch on the frontiers of his kingdom. And the heart of this king became hardened in such fashion that he raised altars to idols, mainly in Bethel, in the south of Samaria, and in Dan, in the north, making a cast of a golden calf in each of these towns. When idolatry was established in Samaria, Jeroboam said to his subjects: *“Do not go up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the Temple of the God of Judah. O Israel, here are your gods, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.”* And many of Jeroboam’s subjects, among other idolatrous altars, visited those of Bethel and Dan, in order to adore the golden calves and offer them incense and sacrifices. Jeroboam, besides raising altars to idols in many parts of Samaria, appointed men of Levi’s lineage as priests of the idols, and established as a solemn feast-day the fifteenth day of the eighth month, on which day he himself went, sometimes to Bethel and at others to Dan, to burn incense before the idols and offer sacrifices to them. These actions of Jeroboam were the beginning of his waywardness and prevarication.

Chapter V

The Prophet Gad of Judah, in God’s name, goes to Samaria to reproach Jeroboam for his idolatry. God punishes the lying Prophet Ajjias

1. In the year 4222, fourth of Jeroboam’s reign, when the king was in Bethel burning incense and offering sacrifices to the golden calf, a man of God presented himself there, namely the highly virtuous Prophet Gad, from Judah, to reproach Jeroboam for his idolatry. The Prophet Gad cried out against the altar of Bethel, saying in God’s name: *“Hear, O Jeroboam, the words of the Lord: ‘Altar, altar, the time will come in which a descendant of Ephraim’s lineage shall be born who will be called Jehu, who upon you will cut the throats of the idolatrous priests who now burn incense, for upon you he will burn the bones of those men.’”*

2. As proof of the truth of his prophecy, the Prophet Gad added: *“This is the sign by which you shall know that it is God Who speaks through my lips. Lo, the altar shall break apart, and the ashes upon it shall be scattered.”* When Jeroboam heard this prophetic imprecation, he stretched his hand out and commanded the Prophet to be seized; but the hand became withered at that very instant, and the altar broke asunder and the ashes were scattered everywhere. Confounded, the impious king then besought the Prophet Gad to intercede before God, saying to him: *“Pray to the Lord God for me, that my hand may be restored.”* Gad made prayer to God and Jeroboam recovered the vitality of his hand, which returned to its normal state.

3. Jeroboam, to lure Gad into the service of his own perverse interests, said to the prophet: *“Come home with me and dine, and I will heap riches upon you.”* But the man of God replied to the king: *“Though you were to give me half the riches of your house, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place; for thus the Lord has expressly commanded me by this order: ‘There you will neither eat bread nor drink water, nor will you return by the same way as you came.’”* And in effect, he departed by a different route to that he had used for coming to Bethel.

4. In Bethel, however, there dwelt another prophet of God called Ajjias, an old man, to whom his sons came on behalf of King Jeroboam, to tell him what the Prophet Gad had done in Bethel, and moreover to inform him of the royal desire that he concoct a false message containing a command from God for the Prophet Gad. In payment for these iniquitous services, Jeroboam offered the Prophet Ajjias of Bethel the riches the upright and virtuous Prophet Gad had not accepted when, through his intervention, God cured the king’s withered hand. What Jeroboam endeavoured was to entice the Prophet Gad, a man of God, to his throne for perverse selfish ends. Ajjias, who was a true prophet of God, instead of rejecting outright the king’s iniquitous proposition, agreed to his plans in exchange for the riches he was offered. So he asked his sons: *“Which way did the man of God go?”* And his sons showed him the return route used by the man of God, who had come from Judah. Then he said to his sons: *“Saddle the donkey.”* When it was saddled, he mounted and went in search of the Prophet Gad, whom he encountered beneath a tree, and asked him: *“Are you the man of God who went to speak with the king?”* Gad replied: *“I am.”* The prophet from Bethel said to him: *“Come home with me to eat bread.”* And since the Prophet Gad, man of God, replied that he could not accept because the Lord had forbidden him to do so, the other prophet, inveigling him with a false message he had prepared, deceived the Prophet Gad saying to him: *“An angel said to me in the name of the Lord, speaking of you: ‘Have him go home with you to eat bread and drink water.’”* The Prophet Gad deemed the other’s message to be truly the word of God, for he did not consider this Prophet Ajjias, whom he knew, to be capable of lying, and much less of putting on God’s lips words not spoken by Him. Therefore, out of humility, Gad followed him to his home. When at the house of the lying Prophet Ajjias, while they were dining, God spoke to the virtuous Prophet Gad revealing that he had been deceived by the other, saying moreover: *“Gad, My servant, I praise your conduct because you have acted uprightly in the belief that this countermand came from Me. But it is not so, because this prophet of mine with whom you are dining has deceived you ignobly in order that you disobey Me. Inform him that as punishment for his abominable falsehood, a lion will kill and devour him, and only his bones will remain.”* Having ended this prophecy, the Prophet Gad, man of God, headed for the kingdom of Judah by a route different to that he had used for coming. Shortly afterwards the deceitful Prophet Ajjias mounted his donkey, and when he was out in the country a lion appeared and devoured him, leaving only his bones; and by this punishment God’s prophecy through the virtuous Prophet Gad was fulfilled.

Chapter VI

God establishes true worship in the kingdom of Samaria for the subjects of this Kingdom whenever prevented from going up to the Temple of Jerusalem

1. In the year 4225, seventh of the reign of Jeroboam, king of Samaria, in the city of Sichem, Most Holy Ananias said to the Prophet Ahias: *“I charge you with the mission of constructing a portable Tabernacle, a replica of the one My people had when, under Moses’ command, they were led through the desert for forty years. Likewise, I charge you to make replicas of the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple of Jerusalem and the other sacred utensils. When you have made this Tabernacle and this Ark of the Covenant, you will set up the Tabernacle and inside it the Ark, beside the tomb of My servant Joseph in Sichem. And in the eighth year of Jeroboam all the worship that corresponds to My people will be celebrated therein, including the two daily sacrifices, as well as the Passover, etc. This worship can only be carried out by Levitical priests and never by others who are not. The priests will be served by levite ministers in what corresponds to their ministry. Over them all will be a chief priest, who will act only in the name of the High Priest in Jerusalem, and he will carry out all the functions that correspond to the High Priest. In the coming eighth year, all this worship will be carried out. Throughout the whole of that year, My people dwelling in this kingdom who, for the seven preceding years have not been able to go up to Jerusalem, whether by obstruction of the king of Samaria or by obstruction of the king of Judah, will be enabled to attend My worship. At the conclusion of the worship of the eighth year, everything will be gathered up, which will be the task of the Levitical priests. The Ark of the Covenant, which is always to be borne by the priests, as well as the portable Temple, will be stored on Mount Carmel, where they will be safe. And whenever for seven successive years those of the kingdom of Samaria are prevented by some prohibition from going up to the Temple of Jerusalem, in the eighth year the Tabernacle containing the Ark of the Covenant will again be placed beside the sepulchre of My servant Joseph in Sichem, and thus until the moment comes when everything shall be destroyed.”* Most Holy Ananias ended by pledging His word to the Prophet Ahias, saying: *“I will send you great prophets so that this kingdom may have the opportunity of salvation.”* This was fulfilled in Elias, Eliseus and many other prophets, since God does not abandon those who seek Him.

2. In the year 4226 the portable Tabernacle containing the Ark of the Covenant, which Most Holy Ananias had commanded the Prophet Ahias to have made, was installed for the first time beside the sepulchre of Patriarch Joseph. The first chief priest was chosen by God, and the following were by succession from father to son. There was a ceremony of consecration of the replicas of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and the other sacred utensils. In this portable Tabernacle there was a twofold presence of the Sacred Fire: one inside the replica of the Ark of the Covenant; and another outside, for the sacrifices, incense, etc. The Sacred Fire had been brought by Most Holy Melchisedech from the Temple of Jerusalem. At the end of each eighth year, the Sacred Fire outside the Ark automatically became extinguished, thereby concluding that year of grace; for it was God’s sign that the worship had come to an end, and that therefore they should again take the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Carmel, where the dismantled Tabernacle was kept under the custody of Ahias and a group of prophets, as well as a group of priests and levites. While the replica of the Ark of the Covenant remained on Mount Carmel, worship of adoration to God through prayer and penance was never lacking before it; given that the Sacred Fire was the Most Divine Soul of Christ, and therefore the Most Blessed Trinity was present in the Ark of the Covenant. After the Founding of the Order of Mount Carmel by the Prophet Elias, the dismantled Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant came under the custody of the Order. Whenever it was necessary in the eighth year to install the Tabernacle in Sichem, the corresponding chief priest or Vicar of the High Priest in the Temple of Jerusalem, from the Sacred Fire of the Ark of the Covenant, lit the corresponding Sacred Fire which thereafter remained outside for the sacrifices; so that, in addition to the Fire inside the Ark, there was another outside.

3. During the time the portable Temple was kept dismantled, regarding the different mosaic precepts which required the offering of animals, loaves or libations, as for example the purification of a woman after giving birth, the people had to go to their respective synagogue for the Levitical priest to impose prayers and penances on them in place of the animals, loaves or libations.

4. In the course of the centuries, as a result of Herod’s persecution, the Holy Family took refuge in Egypt for seven years, unable to attend worship. In the eighth year they were able to return to Israel, and stayed in Nazareth, in the kingdom of the North. The seven years without worship in the kingdom of the North were a figure of those seven years the Holy Family remained in Egypt.

Chapter VII

The Prophet Ahias foretells the extermination of Jeroboam’s son and of all his family. Martyrdom of the Prophet Ahias

1. In the sixteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam, his firstborn Abia fell gravely ill, so that the king said to his wife: *“Go and dress so that you may not be recognized as my wife and go to Shiloh, where the Prophet Ahias is staying, who predicted that I was to reign over this people. Take with you as well ten loaves of bread, a cake and a pot of honey; go and visit him and he will tell you what shall happen to our son.”* Jeroboam’s wife did as he had told her, and leaving Sichem for Shiloh, arrived at the home of Ahias, who could no longer see because his sight was dimmed on account of his great age.

2. But the Lord said to Ahias: *“Look, Jeroboam’s wife is coming to you to consult you about her sick son. You will tell her such-and-such.”* She entered dissembling her identity. However, Ahias heard the noise of her footsteps when she came through the door and said to her: *“Come in, Jeroboam’s wife. Why pretend to be someone else? I have bad news for you. Go and say to Jeroboam: The Lord God of Israel says this: ‘I exalted you in the midst of the people, and made you king of Samaria when I permitted Israel’s People to be divided into two Kingdoms. But you, instead of following the upright paths of My servant David, have done evil, raising altars to false gods and turning your back*

on Me. Therefore, if you do not convert to Me and return to the upright paths of the beginning of your reign, I will permit great evils to befall those of your lineage, Jeroboam, for your house will be destroyed and its remnants swept away like dung until no trace remains. Furthermore, whoever of your house dies in the town will be eaten by the dogs, and whoever dies outside will be devoured by the birds of the air'. This is the message which God has communicated to me for you, Jeroboam."

3. Then the Prophet Ahias also said to Jeroboam's wife: "Go home, then, and tell your husband that if he is not converted to the true God, your son Abia will die. Besides, the Lord will permit a usurper of Samaria's throne to exterminate the house of Jeroboam after his death, which will come to pass in this time in which we now live"; for not only did Jeroboam himself commit abominations, but was also the cause of many of his people committing them. So Jeroboam's wife departed, and once in Sichem related to her husband the exhortations and prophecies made to her by the Prophet Ahias in God's name. Jeroboam brazenly despised these divine rebukes and warnings; and his cruelty went even further, for the virtuous Prophet Ahias was killed by order of Jeroboam, king of Samaria, after the queen had related the prophet's announcements regarding the proximity of the death of his son Abia and the destruction of his house if he were not converted to the true God. At the moment when the Prophet Ahias was murdered by order of Jeroboam, the king's son, Abia, died as result of his illness.

Chapter VIII

**Roboam, king of Judah, consummates his wickedness by giving himself up to idolatry.
The kingdom of Judah invaded by King Sesac of Egypt. Roboam's death**

1. When he began to reign, Roboam was already married to the impious priestess Maacah, and his son Abia had been born. But during his reign, Roboam married and lived in illicit union with other pagan women, and came to have a total of seventy-eight wives, despite God's prohibitions by way of the Prophet Gad.

2. During his reign the perjurer Roboam stood out for his infidelity to God. His heart corrupt, he fell into idolatry, rendering worship to the false gods adored by his wives, and drawing in his wake many of the People. Roboam raised up altars to idols both in the Temple of God in Jerusalem and in other parts of the city, and as well throughout the kingdom of Judah. Moreover, he continued to permit the effeminate men introduced by Solomon to stay in the Temple, and who were at the sexual service of men pilgrims. In turn, he also allowed his perverse wife Maacah, priestess of the obscene idol Priapos, to introduce masculated women into the quarters reserved for women, in the Temple of Jerusalem, to be at the carnal service of women pilgrims. The idol Priapos was a repugnant hermaphrodite human figure.

3. The virtuous Prophet Semeias, in God's name, frequently admonished Roboam as well for his sins and idolatry, exhorted him to become converted, and foretold to him, moreover, that if he was not, severe chastisements would befall his kingdom. In the fifth year of Roboam's reign, because of the grievous prevarication of the king and many of his vassals, God permitted the kingdom of Judah to be punished by the invasion of kings of other countries. Sesac, king of Egypt, allied to the kings of Libya, Ethiopia and others, came to the kingdom of Judah with a powerful army and began to take the strongest towns until reaching Jerusalem.

4. The Prophet Semeias, in view of this invasion, presented himself in Jerusalem to King Roboam and the princes of Judah, saying: "The Lord says this: 'You have abandoned Me, so I also have abandoned you into the hands of Sesac.'" The inhabitants of Jerusalem were thrown into consternation, many confessing their sins, and they said: "The Lord is just"; since there were also people faithful to the divine precepts. Accordingly the Lord, seeing that they had humbled themselves, said to Semeias: "Because they have humbled themselves, I will not permit them to be completely destroyed, but will afford them a little succour to avoid a terrible extermination. Nonetheless, this punishment will teach many of the kingdom of Judah to know the immense difference there is between serving Me and serving abominations." God, then, did not permit the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah to remain under the dominion of Sesac, king of Egypt; who, therefore, withdrew from Jerusalem after sacking the Temple of God and the king's palace, and seizing many treasures from both buildings. Despite the divine mercy shown to the kingdom of Judah, Roboam continued his licentiousness and idolatry; for he once more disobeyed the divine command, through the Prophet Semeias, to destroy the idols and be converted to God.

5. In the year 4226, after having reigned eight years in Judah, Roboam died in Jerusalem at the age of fifty-two without the least sign of repentance. He was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Sion. At Roboam's death he was succeeded on the throne of Judah by his son Abia, born to his wife Maacah in the year 4195, during the reign of his grandfather Solomon.

Chapter IX

Abia, second king of Judah

1. In the year 4226, the thirty days of mourning for his father having passed, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Abia was publicly anointed king of Judah by the virtuous Prophet Semeias, before the Golden Gate of the Temple of Jerusalem, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. He was acclaimed by the people.

2. During the three years of his reign, the perjurer King Abia followed the same course of iniquity as his father, whose idolatry he faithfully imitated. His mother Maacah, while her husband was still alive, had an incestuous relationship with her own son Abia, from which the future king Asa was born.

3. In the year 4228, second of his reign, for mere political convenience of Jeroboam king of Samaria and of Abia king of Judah, the inhabitants of Samaria were able to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem.

4. In the year 4229, third of his reign, Abia, moved by ambition, thought to seize the kingdom of Samaria, and declared a political and territorial war, without any religious basis, on Jeroboam. So then, Abia set out with a powerful army to invade Samaria, and Jeroboam came out to meet him with a considerably smaller number of soldiers. With both armies facing each other, the proud and reckless King Abia, blind with rage, challenged Jeroboam, unjustly labelling him as usurper of the throne of Samaria in these words: "Hear you, O Jeroboam, and all your people: Are you by any chance unaware that the territory under your crown belongs to me as David's successor? Are you also unaware, Jeroboam, that being Solomon's servant you dared to rise up against my father Roboam usurping the territory you dominate today? Surrender, then, and yield Samaria to me forthwith, for it belongs to me as David's legitimate descendant." But while Abia was challenging Jeroboam by word, the latter stealthily mobilized and deployed his squadrons so skilfully that he managed to encircle Abia; then with a great cry he announced to his men the beginning of the bloody battle. Despite the fact that Jeroboam was unfaithful to God because of his perverse idolatry, the Lord God of Hosts did not permit him to lose the battle, in order thus to punish the abominations of Abia, king of Judah. So the triumph was for Jeroboam's army, which wreaked great slaughter upon the army of King Abia, who was also slain in this battle that year 4229, after having reigned three years in Judah. At his death his son Asa inherited the throne.

Chapter X

Asa, third king of Judah. Demolition of idolatrous altars and promulgation of edicts in accord with the Law of God.

Asa's victory over King Zara of Ethiopia

1. In the year 4229, the thirty days of mourning for the death of his father having elapsed, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, Asa was publicly anointed king of Judah by the virtuous Prophet Azarias, before the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. He was very enthusiastically acclaimed by the people. Asa, in contrast to his father, was upright of heart, for he did what was good and pleasing in the eyes of God.

2. Asa the Virtuous, from the outset of his reign, devoured by zeal for God, destroyed all the idols in the Temple of Jerusalem and throughout Judah, and promulgated edicts condemning to death idolaters and all other transgressors thus punished in Divine Law. He cast out of the Temple of Jerusalem the effeminate men at the service of male pilgrims and the masculated women at the service of female pilgrims. King Asa, before the Temple, burnt his own mother Maacah, who had refused to be converted, together with the idol Priapos, represented by an exceedingly repugnant and obscene figure. He also handed over to the Temple of the Lord the gold and silver, and various kinds of vessels or utensils, which his father and grandfather had misappropriated from the worship of God for their own use. Moreover, during his reign, he built many towns, fortified others and made his kingdom secure by means of a powerful and thoroughly well-equipped army.

3. But the peace the kingdom of Judah enjoyed was suddenly shattered by the invasion of the south by King Zara of Ethiopia who, with the ambition of conquering part of the territory of the kingdom of Judah, entered by way of Idumea with a large army. Asa went out to meet the enemy, and with his soldiers formed up in battle order, in the Sephata Valley close by Maresa, he invoked the Lord God, saying: "Lord, given Your infinite Power, for You there is no difference between succouring one who has great strength and one who has little. Come, then, O God, to our aid, for in You do we trust and we have come in Your Name to do battle against this great army of King Zara. O Lord! May the power of man be humbled by the power of God." Despite the fact that Asa's army was smaller than Zara's, when the battle began the forces of Judah, with divine help, filled the hosts of the Ethiopian king with such terror that they fled in panic. But courageous King Asa pursued them with his army as far as Gerrara, and after conquering that part of Philistine territory, entered Idumea, where the Ethiopians were defeated with great slaughter. In the battle King Asa of Judah slew King Zara of Ethiopia with his sword. Asa and his men took many rich spoils on the battlefield; and moreover reconquered that part of Idumea. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

4. When King Asa returned with his army after the glorious victory over the Ethiopians, the virtuous Prophet Azarias, son of Oded, came out to meet him, and moved by the Spirit of God said to Asa: "Listen to me, O Asa and peoples of the kingdom of Judah. The Lord has been with you in battle because you have been faithful to Him. Whenever you seek God, you will find Him; but if you abandon Him, He will abandon you. Many days will come when the People of Israel will live far removed from the true God, without priests to teach them and forgetful of His Law. But despite their infidelities, whenever, in the midst of their afflictions, they are converted to the Lord God of Israel and seek Him, they will find Him. But times will come when, because of part of His People's unfaithfulness to God, there will be no safety out of doors, but terror for the inhabitants of the earth; for nation will rise up against nation and city against city, for the Lord will permit you to be distressed by all kinds of affliction as punishment for having been unfaithful to Him. Therefore, O children of Judah, be encouraged every day to be more faithful and loyal to the Lord God of Israel, and do not let your hands tire of serving Him faithfully, for your labours will receive their crowning reward." Having heard the words and prophecies of the Prophet Azarias, King Asa was encouraged and strengthened yet further to undertake greater reforms in his Kingdom in God's honour.

5. King Asa entered Jerusalem victoriously by the Golden Gate to an apotheotic reception, not only from many of his own subjects, but also from many of the kingdom of Samaria who had crossed over to the kingdom of Judah seeing that Asa was with the Lord God of Israel. Amid the acclamations of his people, he passed in triumph through the streets of the city. Afterwards, in the Temple, they sacrificed to the Lord a large number of oxen, sheep and rams they

had brought from the spoils of the vanquished Ethiopian enemy, kept by them for their provisions. Amid these sacrifices King Asa, with great solemnity, ratified his alliance with God, and told all ever to seek the Lord God of their fathers with their whole heart and soul. He then added very sternly: "Whoever, then, does not seek the Lord God of Israel will die, from the least to the greatest, whether man or woman." And all present, to the sound of trumpets, jubilantly made an oath of fidelity out loud to the Lord with their whole hearts.

Chapter XI

Death of Jeroboam, first king of Samaria. Nadab, second king of Samaria

1. In the year 4235, after reigning seventeen years, King Jeroboam of Samaria died, struck down by God with a terrible intestinal illness, his insides bursting asunder. He died impenitent in the city of Sichem. The numerous shreds of his burst body were swept away like dung.
2. The thirty days of mourning for the death of King Jeroboam having elapsed, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, in that same year, 4235, his son Nadab, likewise from the tribe of Manasses, began to reign in Samaria. Nadab was anointed king by the virtuous Prophet Jehu of Samaria, in Sichem, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. But the perjurer Nadab followed the same road of impiety as his father, adoring idols and drawing many of his people into idolatry.
3. In the year 4236, second of the perverse King Nadab's reign in Samaria, there was no need to install the portable Tabernacle in Sichem, since there was no hindrance to going up to the Temple of Jerusalem.
4. In the year 4237, Nadab, motivated by ambition and not by zeal for God, laid siege to the town of Gebethon to recover it, since it was in the hands of the Philistines. As punishment for his impiety, God permitted one of King Nadab's vassals, Baasa, son of Ahas from the tribe of Issachar, to conspire against him during the siege. Baasa killed Nadab in that same year, 4237, after two years' reign. The corpse was left unburied in the encampment and was devoured by the birds of the air. The regicide Baasa, with the army, raised the siege of Gebethon, for he was more concerned about being proclaimed king as soon as possible in Sichem by the people.

Chapter XII

Baasa, third king of Samaria. Martyrdom of the Prophet Jehu of Samaria. Death of Baasa

1. After having assassinated Nadab, in that same year of 4237, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, Baasa, from the tribe of Issachar, began to reign in Samaria, and was anointed king in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Jehu of Samaria, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The perjurer Baasa, utterly perverse, a bloodthirsty man who had killed Nadab, also exterminated all of Jeroboam's other descendants, not leaving a single person of his lineage alive, as the Lord had foretold through the Prophet Ahas.
2. In the first year of Baasa's reign, war broke out between the kingdoms of Samaria and Judah. For Baasa had forbidden his vassals to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem to comply with their religious duties according to Divine Law; moreover, to enforce this impious command, he had fortified the town of Ramatha or North Ramah, which belonged to the kingdom of Samaria, on the frontier with the kingdom of Judah and the most common route of entry. Nevertheless, the very virtuous Asa, King of Judah, to enable those of Samaria to go up to the Temple of Jerusalem, moved by God, went over with his army and seized the town of Ramatha or North Ramah. Baasa, however, in an endeavour to recover his kingdom's town, allied himself to the pagan King Benadab of Syria; and both, with a powerful army, laid siege to the town of North Ramah, occupied by King Asa of Judah. But King Asa, with the help of the Lord God of Hosts, freed himself from the siege laid by Baasa and Benadab, vanquished them and also conquered part of Samaritan territory.
3. So then, at no time did the virtuous Asa, King of Judah, ally himself with the pagan King Benadab of Syria. Accordingly, in the adulterations of biblical texts in the so-called official bible which has been used up till the publication of the present Palmarian Bible: both the adulterated biblical episode relating this alliance as also the adulterated biblical episode speaking of the Prophet Anani reproaching King Asa and the king putting the prophet in the stocks, and as likewise the adulterated episode of the slaughter of many of the people, are all falsifications by perverse King Manasses, who reigned in Judah many years later.
4. God, in order to give opportunities for salvation to impious King Baasa, admonished him for his idolatry, first through the virtuous Prophet Anani, and then through the Prophet Jehu, both of Samaria. But the utterly perverse king of Samaria, despising all of God's rebukes through His prophets, continued on his depraved course with ever greater abominations; for he went so far as to offer his children in holocaust to idols, provoking Divine Wrath yet further. In the twentieth year of his reign, God sent the Prophet Jehu to communicate to him the following prophecy: "Baasa, king of Samaria, I permitted you, a vassal, to occupy the throne of the kingdom of Samaria; but you, instead of doing what is upright before Me, have followed the perverse ways of Jeroboam and caused My people to sin, provoking My wrath by your sins. So then, if you are not converted to Me as the true God I am, I will permit your house and your descendants to be exterminated, so that they will have the same end as Jeroboam's. Baasa, whoever of your lineage dies in the town will be eaten by dogs, and whoever dies outside will be devoured by the birds of the air." The virtuous prophet Jehu was killed by order of Baasa, king of Samaria, after communicating to him the prophecies concerning the destruction of his house should he not be converted to the true God.
5. In the year 4261, Baasa, after having reigned twenty-four years in Samaria, died in the city of Sichem poisoned by his own son Ela, who succeeded him on the throne. Baasa died in the most abject impiety, and was buried in that city.

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Chapter XIII

Ela, fourth king of Samaria. The anti-king Zambri. Anri, fifth king of Samaria

1. In the year 4261, Ela from the tribe of Issachar began to reign. The thirty days of mourning for the death of his father having elapsed, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, Ela was anointed in Sichem by the very virtuous Prophet Semeias, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Ela did not fulfil the oath but followed the perverse example of his father Baasa. In the year 4263, having become inebriated in the course of a banquet given in his palace in Sichem, Ela was attacked and assassinated by Zambri, a cavalry officer, who also killed all Baasa's and Ela's descendants, and as well their friends.
2. While Zambri, after committing his killings, usurped the throne of Samaria, the army was again besieging the Philistine town of Gebethon. As soon as the army heard the news that Zambri had been backed and acknowledged as king by a trifling minority, it proclaimed Anri, general of the army, as king of Samaria. Anri at once headed for Sichem to depose the usurper. When Zambri came to know of this, overcome by fear he locked himself up inside his palace quarters and committed suicide by setting fire to them. Having perished miserably amid the flames he damned himself eternally. The usurper Zambri, from the tribe of Dan, was not, then, a true king, but an anti-king. The throne did not pertain to him either by blood or by nobility or by divine permission or by acclamation by the people, since those of the tribe of Dan were excluded from all possible access to the throne. His false reign lasted seven days.
3. Anri, from the tribe of Benjamin, began to reign in the year 4263, after the death of King Ela; and so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, Anri was anointed in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Anani, brother to the Prophet Jehu of Samaria, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Anani, in God's name, assured Anri that if, faithful to his oath, he destroyed the idols and their altars erected in his kingdom and complied with the other precepts of Divine Law, his house would continue to reign in Samaria through his descendants.
4. Despite the acknowledgement of Anri as king of Samaria by the army and a section of the inhabitants, there were some who refused to accept him as king since they favoured Tebni, son of Gineth. But Anri soon put an end to this division among the people by commanding Tebni's secret assassination. At God's command, the king was rebuked for his crimes and abominations by the Prophet Anani, but Anri took no notice; consequently, he went from bad to worse, becoming another of the perverse kings of Samaria. Anri, by his bad example, not only induced the people to commit idolatry, but, moreover, compelled the people thereto by oppressive laws. Anri, just like all the preceding kings of Samaria, had his official residence in Sichem; but during his reign he built and founded a town which he called Samaria.

Chapter XIV

Death of Asa, third King of Judah. Josaphat, fourth King of Judah. Holy Year in Jerusalem. Death of the virtuous Queen Nazareth

1. In the year 4269, after a reign of forty years, Asa the Virtuous, King of Judah, died in holiness in Jerusalem and was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Sion. He was succeeded on the throne of Judah by his son Josaphat.
2. In that same year, 4269, the thirty days of mourning for the death of his father having elapsed, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, Josaphat was anointed by the virtuous Prophet Jehu of Judah, before the Golden Gate of the Temple of Jerusalem, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Josaphat was one of the most upright kings of Judah, so that he was known as 'the Pious'. He completed the work of his holy father King Asa. Josaphat rendered great services to God's Temple, raised walls and fortresses in many towns of his kingdom, amply supplied them with provisions and organized a large army.
3. Josaphat took measures to the best of his ability so that the people might know the Law of God well in order to put it into practice better. With this aim, in the third year of his reign, he headed a commission of priests, levite ministers and doctors of the Law, all with great apostolic ardour, and toured the towns of Judah, to instil in his subjects greater fidelity in the service of God, to stamp out any errors that might exist, and to foster moral reform yet further.
4. Virtuous and prudent King Josaphat effected a great improvement in the reform made by his father with respect to the authority of judges and the exercise of their functions. He took great care that the judges were upright and competent. In the most important towns of Judah he established tribunals of justice for ecclesiastical, civil and penal cases. And in Jerusalem, moreover, he established the Superior Tribunal of Justice, formed by the Council of Elders under the presidency of virtuous High Priest Amarias.
5. Josaphat, furthermore, gave the following command to those responsible for the administration of justice: "Consider very carefully what you do, for you are not to exercise judgement arbitrarily, but as representatives of the Lord in that faculty. You will be responsible for all the judgements you make; so that if you do not judge uprightly, this evil will recoil on your own consciences. Bear very much in mind that God, the Supreme Judge, will be present at the judgements and sentences you pass, and that He is going to judge you afterwards in His all-righteous tribunal when He summons you to judgement. May the fear of the Lord, then, be with you. Carry everything out diligently, for in the Lord our God there is to be found neither injustice nor acceptance of persons nor craving for gifts."
6. Nonetheless the pious King Josaphat, among other faults, committed that of relating himself by marriage to King Achab of Samaria; for in the final months of the year 4276, seventh year of his reign, against the just admonitions of

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High Priest Amarias, he went to Samaria to concert the marriage of his son Joram to Athaliah, the daughter of Achab and Jezebel. For the occasion of the betrothal, Achab decreed splendid feasts in all Samaria. And in his palace in Sichem he celebrated sumptuous banquets in honour of Josaphat, his son Joram and the entire retinue that had accompanied them from Judah, slaughtering many rams and other animals. After sojourning in Sichem a few days, King Josaphat, his son and their retinue returned to Jerusalem, taking with them Athaliah, Joram's bride-to-be, who came accompanied by an entourage made up of ladies-in-waiting and guards.

7. When Josaphat arrived in Jerusalem, the Prophet Jehu of Judah, accompanied by High Priest Amarias, visited him and said: "*Josaphat, for having arranged to become related to the impious King Achab and his family, who detest God, you deserve that the Lord vent His Holy Wrath upon you.*" Jehu, then, severely reproached King Josaphat for the betrothal of his son to the idolatrous and perverse Athaliah, since the Holy Law forbade such unions; therefore he warned the king in addition never to effect the marriage. Nevertheless Josaphat, disregarding the voice of God through the Prophet Jehu, and fresh warnings from High Priest Amarias, allowed his son Joram to marry Athaliah who, though from the tribe of Benjamin, was a pagan since she shared the idolatry of her impious parents Achab and Jezebel. By giving his permission, Josaphat sinned very grievously. His sin brought upon Judah one of the anathemas hurled by the Prophet Elias on the 16th of January in the year 4277; for the exuberant forest of that area now known as the desert of Judah, became a desert again. A few months after these punishments, Josaphat, acknowledging his sin, repented sincerely and commanded his son not to take part in the idolatry of his wife Athaliah, and even to repudiate her if she were not converted. Joram ignored his father's command; and abandoning the worship of the true God, adored idols together with his wife. In view of this conduct, Josaphat disinherited Joram from the throne of Judah, and expelled him and his wife from the territories of the kingdom of Judah. Josaphat's blunder of allowing his son to marry Athaliah, besides causing him grievous sufferings and expiations, after his death brought terrible consequences for his family and the kingdom.

8. One of King Josaphat's great and victorious exploits in war was the one he realized in 4281 against a powerful army made up of Moabite, Ammonite and Idumean soldiers, which pitched camp in the hills of Engedi, beside the Dead Sea, to give decisive battle to the king of Judah. Josaphat, though very brave, was suddenly struck with fear. But reflecting, he at once implored the help of the Lord, and commanded his subjects to undertake special prayers and fasting throughout his Kingdom. Many of the inhabitants of Judah came to Jerusalem to implore the Lord's succour, and to present their prayers to Him. King Josaphat, before the Golden Gate of the Temple, amid a vast multitude, male and female, of all ages, prayed thus to the Lord God: "*Lord of our fathers; You are the God of Hosts and possess dominion over the kingdoms of all nations. Strength and power are in Your hands and none can resist You. By chance did You not, our God, deliver this land of Judah in which we now dwell to our Father Abraham forever; when You caused its pagan inhabitants to perish? Well then, O Lord, the Ammonites, Moabites and Idumeans are preparing to expel us from the possession You gave us. O God of ours! We are certainly not strong enough to be able to resist that multitude of enemies of Your people who come to wage war on us. And since we know not what to do, to You we address our prayers and raise up our eyes, in order that You, O God of Hosts, be our Caudillo and Guide in this battle.*"

9. After the king had made his fervent prayer, the Prophet Jazahiel, an Essenian religioso, uttered the following words in God's name: "*Pay heed, O King Josaphat and all those of Judah. The Lord says this: 'Be neither afraid nor intimidated at the sight of this large army lying in wait for you, since God Himself will fight for you, so that you do not go into battle alone. For that reason, remain steadfast in your confidence in God and you will perceive the Lord's succour upon you. Be neither afraid nor intimidated; tomorrow you will set out against your enemies and the Lord will be with you.'*" When Josaphat and all the people heard these words, they prostrated themselves on their faces before the Lord and adored Him.

10. The next morning the armies of Judah, under the command of Josaphat, set off to give the decisive battle to the three allied enemy armies. When in the desert of Tecua, King Josaphat said to his forces: "*Listen to me, men of Judah: Trust in the Lord your God and you will be safe; believe in His prophets and everything will go well.*" And he commanded them to intone the praises of God, and all in unison said: "*Glorify the Lord, for His mercy is everlasting.*" And it came to pass that, as soon as they had begun the sacred canticles, Josaphat's army attacked the enemy forces with unwonted vigour; and they, panic-stricken, became so bewildered that in their flight they slashed at each other, wreaking great slaughter among themselves. Josaphat, with his brave army, at the same time as he pursued and gradually exterminated them, entered the territory of Moab and reconquered a large part thereof. The Moabite king, together with the few survivors left to him, succeeded in taking refuge in the town of Ar and shut the gates in the walls. But the army of Judah, under the command of Josaphat, beleaguered the town so tenaciously that the king of Moab, observing that the siege was becoming unendurable, seized his firstborn son and, in the sight of Josaphat and his army, offered him in holocaust to the idol Moloch, so that the latter might succour the pagan king. This human sacrifice so enraged Josaphat that he leapt over the walls and with his own sword slew the Moabite king. Josaphat then completed the reconquest of the territory of Moab, reincorporating it into the People of God under the crown of the kingdom of Judah.

11. This victory of Josaphat over the king of Moab, besides providing the army of Judah with a huge and highly valuable booty of jewellery, clothing, precious vessels and so forth, served to make the name of Josaphat more feared in all those nations, as there it became well known that the Lord God of Hosts had fought for him. Josaphat, with his army, destroyed all the idols and their altars throughout the reconquered territory of Moab. The biblical text relating an alliance that Josaphat made with the king of Samaria and the king of Edom or Idumea in order to vanquish the king of Moab is the product of falsifications by King Manasses.

12. After this great victory over the Moabites, in that same year of 4281, while Josaphat was again residing in Jerusalem, God, through the Prophet Jehu of Judah, commanded him to arise, and with his powerful army wage war on the Philistines in the south-western part of his kingdom as yet not reconquered. They had usurped it in the final years of the reign of King Solomon, who by that time had strayed far from the right path. Josaphat, obeying the prophet's command, organized his army; and after beseeching divine help, took up his sword and led the army to the territory occupied by the Philistines. With heroic courage Josaphat waged war on them, vanquishing them with great slaughter. He then entered the town of Azotus, where the Philistines had rebuilt the temple to the idol Dagon, demolished this temple together with all its idols, and with his own sword slew the Philistine king, who had taken refuge in the town. He also killed all those who were not converted to the true God and hurled to the ground all the idols and their altars in the reconquered Philistine territory; nonetheless, some of the unconverted Philistines managed to flee outside the dominions of Judah. By this great victory, that territory, which had been occupied by the Philistines, again came to form part of Judah.

13. King Josaphat declared the year 4284 a Holy Year, since it was the first centenary of the inauguration of the Temple of God raised by King Solomon in Jerusalem.

14. The virtuous Queen Nazareth, wife of King Asa and mother of King Josaphat, died in the year 4286.

Chapter XV

Death of Anri, fifth king of Samaria. Achab, sixth king of Samaria

1. After a reign of ten years, in the year 4273 Anri died in the same impiety in which he had lived, and was buried in Sichem. He was succeeded by his son Achab, also from the tribe of Benjamin.

2. In that same year, 4273, Achab began to reign in Samaria. After the thirty days of mourning for his father had elapsed, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, Achab was anointed in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Anani, brother of the Prophet Jehu of Samaria, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Anani, when he anointed Achab king, told him in God's name that if he destroyed the idols and their altars erected in the territory of his kingdom and complied with the other precepts of Divine Law, his house would continue to reign in Samaria through his descendants.

3. But Achab, paying no heed to God's exhortations through the Prophet Anani, let himself be drawn along by the execrable influence of his wife, the pagan Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonites. This perverse queen, idolatrous, arrogant, domineering and adulterous, plunged to such depths of iniquity that, claiming for herself the title of prophetess, she preached and taught the worship of idols to all, and persecuted to death the prophets of the Lord who remained steadfast in the worship of the true God. By her depraved power of seduction, Jezebel drew Achab in her wake with such diabolical skill, that she did not allow him to persevere for long in the good intentions he made on those occasions when he felt true sorrow for his sins. Despite her powerful influence over Achab, Jezebel made sure never openly to defy her husband, knowing him to be a cruel man, even capable of killing her in a fit of rage. For that reason, when the king made decisions that ran counter to Jezebel's wishes, she did not oppose him to his face, since she feared him; but procured in a maliciously seductive way to make him change his mind. At the instigation of his wife, Achab raised a huge temple to the idol Baal in the town of Samaria, built by his father, and erected yet more altars to idols throughout the territories of his kingdom; and to them he rendered worship, offering many of his own children as well in holocaust, whereby he thus further provoked Divine Wrath. In addition, in Jezreel he constructed a pleasure palace, where he frequently resided.

4. The impious and perverse Jezebel, wife of Achab, with blind obstinacy and refined malice persecuted the prophets of God living in the kingdom of Samaria, killing many of them. At that time King Achab had as his majordomo a God-fearing man called Abdias, who remained uncontaminated in the midst of a vicious and idolatrous court. By his good counsel to the king, Abdias always endeavoured to counteract the perverse influence exercised over him by his wife. And Achab, who had great respect for his majordomo, protected him from Jezebel's wiles; in such fashion that she never dared to make an attempt on Abdias's life for fear of the king her husband. During the persecution by the impious queen, the highly virtuous young majordomo Abdias greatly favoured those prophets of the Lord who did not apostatize, hiding them in caves and feeding them. Many of them, remaining faithful to God, died as martyrs in the persecution by Jezebel; and those who out of fear apostatized, became servants of the idol Baal. After serving Achab as majordomo, Abdias was to fulfil a lofty mission as prophet of God.

5. On the 16th of January in the year 4277, fourth of Achab's reign, the Prophet Elias presented himself before the impious king of Samaria, to admonish him in God's name for his execrable conduct and to urge him to conversion and thus avoid Divine Wrath falling upon him and his people. Since Achab arrogantly despised the Prophet Elias's warnings, the latter, devoured by zeal for God, pronounced three solemn anathemas, at the same time as, among other curses, he said to Achab: "*Achab, in the Name of the Lord God of Israel, in whose presence I am, I tell you that neither dew nor rain will fall in these years, until I withdraw this curse from the earth at God's command.*" Some of the deserts of Palestine and neighbouring countries owe their origin to Holy Divine Wrath, unleashed by God owing to the three solemn anathemas hurled by the holy Prophet Elias at parts of the earth. After his interview with the king of Samaria, the Prophet Elias, at God's command, withdrew to the Carith Brook, a tributary of the Jordan. After Elias's solemn anathemas and other curses, drought prevailed for three and a half years throughout the kingdom of Samaria and in other parts.

6. So great was the lack of water and food for men and animals, that Achab sent several messengers in search of Elias so that he might remedy so grievous an affliction, but they did not find him. Following successive searches, in the year 4280, three and a half years having elapsed, the Lord God spoke to the Prophet Elias saying: "*Go and present*

yourself to Achab, and if he shows repentance for his perversity, I will make rain fall on the earth again." And it came to pass that, with Achab and his family in the Jezreel valley near Mount Carmel, the king sent his majordomo Abdias to investigate where water and grass might be found to nourish the horses and other livestock of the royal court, for all ran the risk of perishing. While the majordomo was on his way, Elias went out to meet him, accompanied by a group of followers. Abdias, prostrating himself face to the ground, said to him: "Are you, my lord, the Prophet Elias?" Who replied: "I am. Go and tell King Achab, who tries so hard to find me, that Elias is here." Abdias was fearful that while on the way to inform Achab, the Lord would command Elias to go elsewhere. So he said to the prophet: "My lord King Achab has sent many messengers in search of you, and all have sworn that they were unable to find you; for it is certain that the Lord God kept you hidden and removed you from one place to another so that they might not find you. So that if I go to inform the king, when he comes out to look for you, if he does not find you he will kill me." Elias said: "In the name of the Lord God of Hosts, in whose presence I am, I tell you that today I will show myself to the king." Encouraged by these words, Abdias left to inform Achab, who, going out to meet Elias, said to the prophet: "Is it not you, by chance, who has thrown Samaria into turmoil by the drought?" Elias replied: "All this evil is your doing and that of many in your kingdom. But if you wish rain to fall on this land again, send now for the four hundred and fifty prophets of the idol Baal, and assemble your people as well, so that all come before me on Mount Carmel."

7. On the 16th of July in the year 4280, on Mount Carmel Achab assembled the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and many of the inhabitants of Samaria, including his virtuous majordomo Abdias. Then the Prophet Elias, addressing all the people, said: "For how long will you be like those who sit on the fence, saying at times that the Lord is the true God, and at others that He is not, rather Baal? I affirm before you that the Lord whom I serve is the Most High God, whom you must faithfully serve; and therefore, that the idol Baal is a false god." In view of this true testimony, the people kept silence. And Elias spoke anew: "I alone, with divine help, will stand up to the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. I am going to demonstrate to you that my Lord is the true God. Bring, then, two bullocks: one for the prophets of Baal to cut into pieces and lay over firewood, but without setting fire to the wood; I will cut the other bullock into pieces and also lay it over firewood without setting fire to the wood." On one altar the false prophets laid the corresponding carved up victim over firewood; and, in turn, the prophet Elias laid his, carved into pieces, over firewood on an altar erected using thirteen stones in honour of the thirteen tribes of Israel. When all was prepared, Elias said to the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal: "Invoke the name of your god, and I will invoke the name of my God; and whichever of the two has the power to make fire descend upon the victims will have demonstrated that He is the true God." All the people responded: "Excellent proposal." The false prophets invoked the name of Baal from morning until midday, saying: "Baal, hear us!" But no voice was heard, nor was there anyone to reply; and they leapt fanatically around the altar. Midday came without Baal having given any reply at all to the false prophets, and Elias said to them mockingly: "Cry out, cry out louder, and see if this god of yours manages to hear you." And the four hundred and fifty uttered louder cries, and slashed their bodies, according to their rites, with knives and lancets, until they were covered in blood, so as to be heard better. Since they received no reply at all, Elias then said to all the people: "Draw near, fill four pitchers with water and pour it three times over the victim and the wood on my altar." And they did so, and the water ran from the top of the altar down to the ground, forming puddles. Then the Prophet Elias, full of confidence in God, said in a loud voice: "O Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob! Demonstrate today, yet again, in the presence of all, that You are the true God of the People of Israel, and that I am Your servant; and that by Your command I do all these things. Hear me, Lord, listen to me, so that this people may know that You are the Lord God, so that their hearts may be converted anew." And immediately the Lord God Almighty caused fire to fall from Heaven upon the altar erected by Elias, and it consumed the victim, the firewood, the stones, the dust and even the puddles on the ground. When the people saw the prodigy, face to the ground they exclaimed: "The Lord of Elias is the true God." Then Elias said to them: "Lay hands on the prophets of Baal, so that not one of them escape." When they had been seized, Elias commanded them to be brought to the Cisson Brook, where he cut their throats with his own sword, taking their lives. In view of such an extraordinary event, King Achab and the many others present there, overcome by the fear of God, repented sincerely of their sins. Elias sternly urged them to remain faithful to the true God and to destroy all the idols and their altars in the kingdom of Samaria; and he announced to them that the rain they needed so desperately was coming. Then he withdrew from their presence.

8. This mission concluded, on that same day, the 16th of July 4280, Elias climbed Mount Carmel, and knelt down with his face to the ground. At this juncture the Divine Soul of Mary, in human form, appeared to the prophet over the Mediterranean Sea, and at that moment the Order of Mount Carmel was founded. Then Elias said to Eliseus, who was one of his followers: "Go up higher and look out over the sea." He, having climbed and looked out, came down to where Elias was and said to him: "I see nothing unusual." Elias said to him a second time: "Go up and come down, and go up again, till seven times." And the seventh time it came to pass that Eliseus saw a tiny cloud shaped like the footprint of a man arise from the sea, at which moment the Divine Lady rose up on this cloud to Heaven until disappearing. At the same instant She rose up, heavy rain fell, and the hitherto prevailing drought ceased from then on.

9. While Elias was on Mount Carmel, King Achab, who had reached his palace at Jezreel, related to his wife Jezebel all the prodigies the prophet had wrought, how he had cut the throats of the prophets of Baal, and the announcement of the proximity of rain, which was already falling. Jezebel, observing the conversion of her husband and many of his people to the true God, employing her perverse wiliness, feigned repentance and kept silence, since this was not the propitious moment to face up to Achab, his very virtuous majordomo and the great crowd, who had all witnessed God's prodigies through His Prophet Elias.

10. The Prophet Elias, Father and Founder of the Carmelite Order, as from the apparition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, organized the basics of the common life on Mount Carmel, giving the first rules of religious life to that first

numerous community of Carmelite Religiosos, who lived as hermits, instilling in the Order the spirit of prayer, penance and devotion to the Virgin Mother of God to come.

11. Brief was Achab's perseverance in the good resolutions made after his sincere conversion; for, seduced by the irresistible and impetuous Jezebel, he relapsed, even more ardently, into the same perversity of his past life, despite the exhortations of his virtuous majordomo. Jezebel's diabolical plans, then, succeeded in turning to evil not only her husband but also many of those who had been converted. Mistress, then, of the situation, Jezebel then displayed her rabid anger towards the Prophet Elias for having cut the throats of the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal with his sword. So she sent Elias a messenger, saying: "What you have done to them, and yet more, may the gods do to me, if tomorrow at this time I do not inflict on you what you did to each one of the prophets of Baal." Faced by this threat, the Prophet Elias felt overwhelmed by bitter desolation, not only because of the cruel persecution by the impious Jezebel, but also on account of the hardness of heart of the majority of his people, who had not responded to Grace, despite the great prodigies God had manifested through him in the sacrifice against the priests of Baal. Because of his zeal for the glory of God and on account of Jezebel's persecution, the Prophet Elias, amid the afflictions he suffered as consequence of a dark night of the soul, walked in circles around Mount Carmel until, almost spent, he besought God to dispose of his life and send him death: "Enough now, Lord, of life; take my soul to Yourself, for I prefer to die rather than see how terribly You are offended by the majority of Your people, who live with their backs to You, immersed in idolatry and corruption."

12. On the 8th of December in the year 4280, nine centuries prior to the Immaculate Conception, the Prophet Elias, to free himself from the clutches of the impious Jezebel, fled Mount Carmel, after leaving the Prophet Eliseus as Vice-Superior General of the Carmelite Order, and exhorting all his sons in religion to pray in their sacrifices for him and for his return. Elias, then, fled alone, all the other Carmelite religiosos remaining on Mount Carmel, none of them departing from there during Jezebel's persecution, for she did not persecute them at this time, but only the Prophet Elias. Moreover, Mount Carmel was impregnable by privilege of God, and no one dared to do it any harm.

13. In his flight from Mount Carmel, the Prophet Elias made his way southwards; and then headed eastwards towards the Desert of Judah, newly reappeared owing to an anathema hurled by him. In this desert he remained forty days and forty nights in fasting, prayer and penance. These having elapsed, the Lord transported Elias from the Desert of Judah to the Mount of God or Horeb, also called the Mount of Ananias, or Sinai; and he lived in the cave where God had appeared to Moses. And the Lord God spoke to the prophet saying: "What troubles you, Elias." He replied: "I burn with zeal for the Lord God of Hosts, for the majority of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Samaria have abandoned You and live with their backs to You; for they have destroyed Your altars and put many of Your prophets to the sword; and they even seek to kill me." For at Achab's command, all the altars dedicated to the Lord existing in the sacred synagogues throughout Samaria had been destroyed, and in their place altars had been erected to the idols. God consoled the soul of His servant by sublime prophecies concerning the recently founded Order of Mount Carmel.

14. On the 8th of September in the year 4281, after an absence of nine months due to Jezebel's persecution, the Prophet Elias returned to Mount Carmel, remaining until shortly before, on the banks of the Jordan, he was rapt up in a fiery chariot to the Planet of Mary.

15. Prior to his being rapt up, the Lord had commanded Elias to designate Eliseus as his successor in the post of Superior General of the Order. Moreover, God had revealed to Elias that Hazael would become king of Syria, and Jehu king of Samaria. But God did not command Elias to anoint them; for the first was a pagan and could not be anointed by a prophet of God; and the second would later be anointed by another prophet, a spiritual son of the Prophet Eliseus.

Chapter XVI

Naboth refuses to sell his property to King Achab. Achab has Naboth killed and seizes his property.

Elias' prophecy against the house of Achab, if he is not converted. The Prophet Elias is rapt up to the Planet of Mary

1. Naboth, a native of Jezreel, owned a property near King Achab's summer palace, with house, vineyard and other buildings. And it came to pass that in the year 4283 the king said to Naboth: "Give me your property, for it is nearby and adjoins my palace. In exchange I will give you another which is better; or if you prefer, its fair value in money." To this Naboth replied: "God deliver me from giving you the inheritance of my parents, for they are buried there." Achab, in a furious rage at Naboth's refusal, returned to his Jezreel palace and flung himself onto his bed not wishing to eat. His wife Jezebel went in to see him and asked: "What is this? What reason do you have for being sad? Why do you not want to eat?" Achab replied: "I have spoken to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him: 'Give me your property, and I will pay you in cash, or if you prefer, give you a better one in return'. To this he has replied that he will not." Then Jezebel said to him with sarcastic irony: "So, your authority is indeed great, and you do indeed rule the kingdom of Samaria well! Come now, get up and take some nourishment, calm down and I will tell you how to obtain it. You must authorize that Naboth and his sons be killed after accusing them falsely of rebellion against you." Achab, at Jezebel's instigation, wrote a letter sealing it with his royal ring, and sent it to the elders and princes in Jezreel. The letter ran: "Demand the presence of Naboth and his sons before your tribunal and bribe two men to declare as false witnesses against them, saying: 'They have risen up against the king'. And after sentencing them to death for this indictment, take them out and stone them to death on their own property." The elders and princes of the town did what the king had commanded. After Naboth and his sons had been executed, the iniquitous tribunal sent a message to Achab saying: "Naboth and his sons have been stoned to death." So Achab went in to where his wife Jezebel was and said to her: "Now I can take possession of the property of Naboth the Jezreelite, who did not wish to gratify me and give it to me in exchange for money, for he and his sons are dead."

2. Achab then headed for Naboth the Jezreelite's property to take possession. But the Lord spoke to the Prophet Elias, saying: "Leave, and go out to meet Achab, king of Samaria, who is heading for Naboth's property to take possession. But you must speak to him in these terms: 'The Lord says this: You have committed murders, and after them you are going to seize Naboth's property'. To this you will then add: 'Hear what the Lord has to say: On this spot where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth and his sons, they will lick yours.'" Elias presented himself to Achab and told him everything the Lord had spoken. The king asked: "Do you by chance consider me as an enemy and have I done something against you, for you to announce such misfortunes to me?" And Elias replied in God's name: "Yes I do indeed consider you as such, for you have sold yourself to your wife's wish to do evil before the Lord. Therefore evils shall befall you, and your house and posterity shall be exterminated, for you have provoked My Just Anger, and through your fault many of My people have also sinned. Moreover, I announce to you in God's name that a pack of dogs will lick your blood in the field of Jezreel; and right there the dogs will devour the flesh of Jezebel, so that her bones will lie in the field of Jezreel like dung upon the ground; in such fashion that passers-by will say: 'And this is that Jezebel!'" So then, when Achab heard these words, seized by the fear of God, he felt true repentance for his sins, so that he put on a hair-shirt, fasted and slept in a penitential sack, appearing crestfallen and humbled. The Prophet Elias commanded the king to repudiate the impious Jezebel. But she anticipated this, for with great astuteness she suddenly abandoned her husband and went off to live in another town, in the hope that Achab would soon require her amorously at his side and she again have the opportunity to bring her influence to bear on him and induce him to evil, which sadly afterwards occurred.

3. After Jezebel's departure, Achab gave the command for all the idols and their altars which had been raised again in Samaria to be destroyed. The command was obeyed.

4. On the occasion of this visit to King Achab by Elias, the king's majordomo Abdias was accepted by the prophet as a religioso of Mount Carmel; though by command of the Founder of the Order, the majordomo stayed on at King Achab's side as God's instrument to help him persevere along the right path.

5. The Prophet Elias was rapt up to the Planet of Mary on the 21st of November in the year 4284, at forty years of age.

Chapter XVII

Achab's victories over Benadab II, king of Syria. Achab disobeys God

1. Following the episode of Naboth's property, King Achab had a new lease of life in which he was faithful to the Lord God of Israel, with the resultant improvement in morals throughout his kingdom. As from this conversion, during the rest of that year 4283, all of the year 4284 and part of the year 4285, King Achab permitted his subjects to go up to the Temple of God in Jerusalem.

2. In the year 4285, King Benadab II of Syria, allied to the other thirty-two Syrian kings, at the head of a powerful army invaded the kingdom of Samaria and besieged the city of Sichem, where King Achab was to be found with part of his army. In view of so critical a situation, terrified by the powerful and fearsome enemy lying in wait for him, Achab implored divine help. So God sent him the Prophet Anani with this message: "The Lord God says this: 'Have you seen that immense multitude of Syrian soldiers? Well, fear not, for today I will deliver them into your hands so that you may know that I am the Lord God of Hosts.'" Achab asked: "With whom will I go to wage war on such a vast Syrian army?" The prophet replied: "With the few soldiers with you inside the city besieged by the enemy. You yourself will begin the combat and you will vanquish with the aid of God, but you must kill Benadab II." Achab, then, reviewed the soldiers with him in the city and found them to be very few; and leading them out, he headed for the encampment where Benadab II and the other Syrian kings were eating and drinking sumptuously. When the Syrian kings realized that Achab was advancing upon them, they gave their soldiers the command to face up to them. The two armies did battle for seven days, and on the seventh day, crushed by the superhuman vigour of the small Samaritan army, the Syrians took to flight. Achab pursued them till outside his dominions, wreaking great destruction on their horses and chariots and killing many of their soldiers. Benadab II fled into the Syrian town of Apeca, where he was captured by Achab. As Achab was undecided whether to kill Benadab II because of the tempting proposals the Syrian king made him, God commanded the Prophet Anani to tell him to kill the Syrian king. But the king of Samaria, contrary to God's command, did not kill Benadab II, rather he freed him in exchange for a vast quantity of gold and other riches. God, angry with Achab, again sent His Prophet Anani to the king to tell him: "The Lord says this: 'Because you have allowed Benadab II to escape out of your hands when he was deserving of death, what you have not done to him I will allow him to do to you.'" But the king of Samaria despised this prophecy, and afterwards returned to his palace in Sichem, amid the acclamations of its inhabitants.

Chapter XVIII

Achab, instigated by Jezebel, again gives himself up to all kinds of abomination.

Fresh war against the Syrians. Death of King Achab

1. In the year 4285, despite the efforts of his virtuous majordomo Abdias to move the heart of Achab to remain faithful to God, the king, who passionately yearned for Jezebel's embraces again, summoned her to return to the palace. When at her husband's side, the wicked queen with greater perfidy incited him to give himself up wholly to idolatry and every kind of abomination; and Achab, selling himself to Jezebel's impious desires, amply surpassed his previous iniquities. In a short time the idols and their altars were re-established throughout Samaria, with the resultant moral corruption of a section of the people. In the towns of Bethel and Dan the respective temples to golden calves were again built.

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2. In the year 4291, the armies of the thirty-three kings of Syria having been re-established, under the command of King Benadab II they formed up beside the town of Ramoth of Galaad in battle order, so as again to invade the kingdom of Samaria. At the time Achab was residing in his palace in the town of Jezreel, and as he was undecided whether or not to set out with his army and prevent the invasion, instigated by Jezebel he consulted the prophets of Baal she protected. They foretold to him in the name of their idols, that if he went up with his soldiers and confronted the Syrians at Ramoth of Galaad, he would happily see how the gods would deliver the enemy into his hands. But Abdias, the king's virtuous majordomo, sternly announced to him that to overcome the Syrians he must first repent of his sins, again banish idolatry from his kingdom and implore the help of the Lord God of Israel. Since Achab disregarded the counsel of his majordomo to follow that of Jezebel and of the four hundred false prophets, Abdias said to the king that, before commencing the battle, he should hear the counsel of Micheas, a prophet of the Lord. Achab summoned Micheas, who was one of the prophets called Minor, and said to him: "Micheas, the prophets of Baal, who protects my wife Jezebel, have announced victory to me if I give battle to the Syrians. I now wish to hear if your words are in accord with the good report of the other prophets." Micheas replied: "By the Lord my God, what He tells me, that I will say." Achab asked: "Micheas, should we go out to give battle to the Syrians at Ramoth of Galaad or not?" The Prophet Micheas answered: "If you are first converted to the true God, destroy the idols and their altars and repudiate your wife Jezebel, gladly go out to war, for the Lord will deliver the enemy into your hands." Achab responded: "I entreat you once and for all, in the name of the Lord, to tell me nothing but the truth." Micheas said to the king: "Look Achab, the Lord has permitted Satan to put on the lips of the prophets of Baal the deceitful prophecy that if you deliver yourselves into the hands of their false gods, you will emerge victorious from the war against the Syrians." Micheas added: "I have seen two visions relating to this battle. First I saw the Lord God of Hosts seated on His throne and all the angelic hosts surrounding Him to His right and left, and the Lord said: 'Who will deceive Achab, king of Samaria, so that he go out against the Syrians and perish at Ramoth of Galaad?' And then I saw how the infernal spirit placed himself before the Lord and said: 'I will deceive him'. And the Lord asked: 'How?' The infernal spirit replied: 'I will be a lying spirit on the lips of the prophets of Baal'. The Lord said to the infernal spirit: 'If King Achab is not converted to Me, does not exterminate all the idols in his kingdom and does not repudiate the perverse Jezebel, I will permit him to be deceived by you and perish.'" The Prophet Micheas added: "I have seen the angelic hosts prepared to help you in the great battle, at God's command, if you are sincerely converted to the Lord, destroy all the idols in your kingdom and repudiate Jezebel. And I have also seen your armies scattered about the mountains like sheep without a shepherd, utterly defeated, some wounded and others dead, and you among the dead, which will come to pass if you do not pay heed to the warning I send you in God's name." After the Prophet Micheas had related these allegorical visions, Sedecias, one of the prophets of Baal, who had previously been a prophet of the Lord, struck Micheas a tremendous blow in the face, saying: "By chance what I have foretold to the king is false and what you have foretold to him is true?" Micheas replied: "You will verify that I speak the truth concerning the evil to befall the king if he does not pay heed to me." Achab, incited anew by Jezebel, instead of following Micheas' counsel, became enraged at him and said to his governor: "Lock up the prophet in a dungeon and keep him on bread and water alone, so that he suffer hardship and anguish, until I return in peace victorious." Micheas said: "Look to what you do, for the evil that shall befall you and your kingdom will be attributed to you for having disobeyed the true Lord and God." And then the prophet, in a loud voice, exclaimed to all present: "Bear very much in mind what I have just said to the king." This the whole people came to know as well from the lips of the courtiers themselves.

3. King Achab then, despising the counsel of Micheas, and putting his confidence in the favour of idols, launched himself into battle against the Syrians. When the battle began, the Syrian king Benadab II, confronting Achab, pierced him through with his sword, and the king of Samaria fell seriously wounded, dying shortly afterwards amid terrible death throes and gestures of despair and impiety. The Syrians took possession of some of the towns of Samaria, after sacking them and seizing immense riches and treasures. God did not permit these kings to make further incursions into the kingdom of Samaria, impelling them to discontinue their conquests.

4. Achab's vassals took his dead body to Jezreel in a chariot, and when they arrived at Naboth's property they took it out to carry into the palace. But before they were able to cleanse the chariot of Achab's blood, it was licked up by a pack of dogs just as the Prophet Elias had foretold. The cadaver of King Achab was buried in the town of Samaria.

5. When the majordomo Abdias heard the news of Achab's death, behind Jezebel's back he succeeded in having the virtuous Prophet Micheas freed from the dungeon where he was held by order of the king. Micheas and Abdias fled from the court so as to avoid being killed by Jezebel, and journeyed to Mount Carmel to live there as Religiosos of the Order. The Superior General was now the Prophet Eliseus, for Elias had been rapt up to the Planet of Mary seven years previously.

6. The perverse and accursed Jezebel, one of the principal figures of the Antimary, committed adultery with certain of the courtiers, by whom she had several children. Among these children were Ochozias, heir to the throne of Samaria, who was the son of Jezebel and a prince of the tribe of Levi; and Joram, who was the son of Jezebel and a high ranking dignitary of the tribe of Simeon. But, officially, the two brothers were deemed sons of Achab and Jezebel.

Chapter XIX

Ochozias, seventh king of Samaria. Death of Ochozias

1. At Achab's death so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, he was succeeded on the throne by Ochozias, who was not a son of his but of the adulterous Jezebel and a prince of the tribe of Levi. Ochozias, from the tribe of Levi, began to reign in Samaria in the year 4291, and was anointed in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Anani, after the new king had sworn the ritual oath to

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defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. When the prophet anointed Ochozias king, he told him in God's name that if he was faithful to his oath, destroyed the idols and their altars erected in his kingdom, and complied with the other precepts of Divine Law, his house would continue to reign in Samaria through his descendants. But the perjurer Ochozias took no notice of the prophet's advice and followed the same paths of iniquity as had Achab and Jezebel. The Prophet Anani at God's command, admonished Ochozias for his abominations. But the king did not take the slightest notice.

2. In the third year of his reign, Ochozias, seriously ill as the result of a fall from a high chamber of his palace in the town of Samaria, sent some messengers saying: "Go and consult Beelzebub, god of Acaron, as to whether or not I will survive this sickness." But the Angel of the Lord, that is, the Most Divine Soul of Christ, spoke to the Prophet Eliseus, saying: "Go out to meet the king of Samaria's messengers, and tell them to transmit to the king these words of Mine: Ochozias, am I not by chance the true God? Why do you send out to consult Beelzebub, the prince of darkness? Look, if you are not converted to Me as the Lord God I am, from the bed on which you have lain down you will not rise up, but will die without remission." When the messengers returned to Ochozias, the king said to them: "Why have you returned without carrying out the mission I entrusted to you?" And they transmitted to him the words which, in God's name, the Prophet Eliseus had spoken to them. The king asked them: "What figure and garments did this man have who came out to meet you and spoke those words?" They replied: "He was a bald man, dressed in a camel's skin, and girded with a strip of leather." Then Ochozias said: "Ah! That is the Prophet Eliseus."

3. King Ochozias then sent a captain and fifty soldiers in search of the Prophet Eliseus, who was found to be sitting in the same spot where he had previously spoken with the king's messengers. The captain said to him: "Eliseus, the king wishes you to go to his palace, for he is prostrate in bed." Since the prophet was undecided as to whether or not to go with them, the Most Divine Soul of Christ, under the form of Angel of the Lord, appeared to him and said: "Go down with them into the presence of Ochozias." By this, God wished to give the impious king a further opportunity of conversion through His prophet. When in the presence of the king, Eliseus said to Ochozias: "Thus says the Lord: 'Am I not by chance the true God? Why do you send out to consult Beelzebub, the prince of darkness?' Look, on the Lord's behalf I say to you that if you are not converted to Him as the Lord God He is, from the bed on which you have lain down you will not rise up, but will die without remission." When Ochozias heard the prophet's words, he was filled with the fear of God; and, sorry for his sins, promised to demolish the idols and their altars throughout his kingdom. But God did not restore his health on account of these tokens of repentance, since it was necessary that the king first fulfil the promise to destroy the idols and their altars.

4. Though Ochozias was prepared to comply with the promise he had made to the Prophet Eliseus, afterwards, influenced by his perverse mother Jezebel, he desisted from these good resolutions. So then, according to the word of the Lord pronounced by Eliseus, Ochozias died in that same year, 4294, eight months after the prophet's visit, and after having reigned in Samaria three years. At his death he was succeeded in the kingdom of Samaria by his brother Joram.

Chapter XX

Death of the virtuous Queen Bethlehem. Death of Josaphat, fourth King of Judah.

Joram, fifth king of Judah. Martyrdom of the Prophet Jazahiel. Death of Joram, king of Judah

1. In the year 4291 the virtuous Queen Bethlehem died. She was the wife of King Josaphat and mother of the perverse King Joram.

2. Josaphat, after achieving a great spiritual, social and economic revival in the kingdom of Judah, and having widened her frontiers, died in sanctity in Jerusalem in the year 4293 after a reign of twenty-four years. He was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Sion. The Jerusalem valley bears the name Josaphat in honour of this king. Josaphat, among many other children, had Joram, his firstborn, Azarias, Jahiel, Zacharias, Jazarias, Michael and Saphathias. When Josaphat was dying, his son Joram and daughter-in-law Athaliah returned from exile.

3. At Josaphat's death, the throne of Judah pertained to his second son Azarias, since his firstborn Joram had been disinherited from succession by his father because of his repeated disobedience in refusing to abandon idolatry and other abominations. But Joram, despotic and murderous, in order to seize the throne of Judah, assassinated all his brothers, as well as those princes most zealous in the worship of the true God and in sound morals. His wife Athaliah was also to blame for these horrendous crimes of Joram, having influenced him powerfully to commit them.

4. Despite the fratricides and homicides committed to ascend the throne of Judah, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or perverse way, Joram began to reign in the year 4293 with the approval of the immense majority of the people, being anointed king in Jerusalem by the virtuous Prophet Jehu of Judah after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The perjurer King Joram in nowise followed the upright steps of his virtuous father Josaphat; but, influenced by his wife Athaliah, acted with the same wickedness as his regal in-laws, Achab and Jezebel of Samaria. Joram erected altars to idols, not only inside the Temple of Jerusalem, but also in the city and throughout the territory of his kingdom. By his infamous behaviour, he caused many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of other parts of Judah to prostitute themselves and fall into idolatry.

5. Amid his idolatry and abominations, in the fourth year of his reign a letter was brought to Joram by the Prophet Jazahiel from the Prophet Eliseus, which ran: "The Lord God says this: 'Because you do not walk in the upright paths of your father Josaphat and your grandfather Asa, but follow the paths of iniquity, for you have murdered your brothers, who were better than you, and have caused many of the inhabitants of your kingdom to prostitute themselves, this I announce to you: If you do not convert to the Lord God, destroy the idols and their altars, repudiate your perverse wife Athaliah and expel her from the palace, the Lord will strike you down with a terrible illness of the bowels, so that

your insides gradually protrude from your body until you die." In view of these announcements by the Prophet Eliseus, King Joram, far from converting, hardened his heart further by fresh and terrible abominations. For besides, after reading the letter, he commanded the Prophet Jazahiel to be slain, which command was executed immediately.

6. The Idumean region together with the whole Sinai peninsula, was subject to the crown of Judah since its reconquest by virtuous King Asa. But as punishment for Joram's abominable conduct and that of many of his people, in the fifth year of his reign God permitted an exiled successor of the king of Idumea to enter that territory with his forces and rise up against King Joram. The latter, with his army, confronted him; and though in the battle the king of Judah had the advantage in strength, nonetheless, the rebel troops resisted the enemy pressure with great courage and integrity, to the point that King Joram and his army retreated; and Idumea and the Sinai peninsula remained under the crown of the invading king. God also allowed the Philistines to seize the south-west of the kingdom of Judah, entering by the Mediterranean port near the town of Azotus. In like manner the town of Lebna, also in the south-west of Judah, rose up against Joram and from then on was independent of the Kingdom.

7. In the sixth year of his reign, before Joram was struck down by the terrible bowel disease, the virtuous Prophet Micheas, in God's name, appeared before the king. He again reproached Joram for his idolatry and other terrible abominations, and required him to be converted to the Lord God of Israel, to destroy the idols and their altars, repudiate his perverse wife Athaliah and expel her from the palace. By this God gave Joram a fresh opportunity of conversion, wishing moreover to spare him the terrible disease by which he would be struck down, were he to remain obstinate in his impiety. Joram not only despised the prophet's exhortations, but had him locked up in a dungeon, and commanded him to be cruelly scourged. After Micheas had been thus ill-treated, the king let him go free.

8. In view of Joram's obstinate wickedness, God wounded him in the bowels with an agonizing, pestilential and incurable disease; so that thus slowly consumed by a putrid humour, his bowels began gradually to protrude from his body, until in the year 4301, after having reigned eight years in Judah, Joram died amid frightful convulsions and pain, in the most abject impiety. After his death there were neither funeral rites nor a burial, since his body was burnt. At the death of Joram he was succeeded by his son Ochozias.

Chapter XXI

Joram, eighth king of Samaria. Martyrdom of the Prophet Anani. Ochozias, sixth king of Judah. Martyrdom of the Prophet Jehu of Judah. General Jehu is anointed King of Samaria. Death of Joram, Ochozias and Jezebel, at the hands of Jehu

1. So that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Joram, from the tribe of Simeon, eighth king of Samaria, son of Jezebel and a high ranking dignitary of the tribe of Simeon, began to reign in the year 4294, and was anointed king by the virtuous Prophet Anani, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The prophet promised him, in God's name, that if he was faithful to his oath, destroyed the idols and their altars erected in his kingdom and complied with the other precepts of Divine Law, his house would continue to reign in Samaria through his descendants. Though Joram removed the statues of Baal and their altars erected by Achab, nonetheless he did not demolish the golden calves and their altars newly erected in the towns of Dan and Bethel. The Lord God gave Joram great opportunities for conversion, exhorting him through the Prophet Anani; but the perverse king, instead of accepting Anani's good counsel, gave the command to have him killed, which command was executed. By this Joram reached such a depth of degradation, that he not only raised anew the idols and their altars in the kingdom of Samaria, but he even offered many of his children in holocaust to idols, thereby further provoking Divine Wrath.

2. In the meantime, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Ochozias, sixth king of Judah, began to reign in the year 4301, and in Jerusalem was anointed king by the virtuous Prophet Jehu of Judah, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Ochozias, son of Joram and Athaliah, was married to the pagan Azaliah, who was one of the daughters Achab had by women other than Jezebel; accordingly, Azaliah was Athaliah's sister on her father's side and, therefore, Ochozias's aunt. This king followed his father's wicked example, being just as iniquitous and idolatrous. The Prophet Jehu of Judah, in God's name, commanded King Ochozias to be converted to the Lord God of Israel and destroy all the idols and altars; moreover, to repudiate his pagan wife Azaliah and expel her and his mother Athaliah from the palace. The Prophet Jehu assured the king telling him that, if he did not do this, he would die at the hands of the Champion of God's Justice in the proximity of Jezreel, a town of the kingdom of Samaria. By all these warnings and directives, God wished to give Ochozias an opportunity of conversion. But the perverse king not only disobeyed God's command through Jehu, but moreover gave the order for the prophet to be slain, which was carried out without delay.

3. While King Ochozias was giving himself up fully to all kinds of impiety and abomination, King Joram of Samaria also slid down the path of iniquity. But in the year 4309 the following came to pass in Samaria: King Joram had a general named Jehu, a brave and upright man who feared the true God, and who enjoyed great prestige among his soldiers. God, to re-establish His worship and sound morals in Samaria, commanded the Prophet Eliseus, who was on Mount Carmel, to anoint General Jehu as king of Samaria in order that he be the instrument of justice against the impious King Joram. But, by God's wish, the Prophet Eliseus entrusted this mission to the Prophet Micheas, his spiritual son in Carmel, telling him: "Micheas, make ready, take this vessel of oil and go to General Jehu's encampment. And then, in the presence of his chief officers, you will pour oil upon his head and, in God's name, will anoint him king of Samaria. This mission fulfilled, you will return here again immediately." The Prophet Micheas headed for Jehu's encampment, who was gathered with the chief officers of his army. When Micheas saw Jehu he informed him of the

mission that brought him there in God's name through the Prophet Eliseus, and the general at once knelt before Micheas; and after Jehu had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship, the Prophet Micheas poured the oil over Jehu's head, saying: *"The Lord God says this: 'I have anointed you king of Samaria so that you be Champion of My Justice; for you will exterminate the lineage of the house of Achab, the person of Joram and all their descendants. In this way I will avenge the blood of My servants the prophets poured out by Jezebel, who will be devoured by the dogs in the fields of Jezreel, without there being anyone to bury her.'"* His mission fulfilled, the Prophet Micheas returned to Mount Carmel. Then one of Jehu's captains commanded the trumpets to be blown, and with the whole army gathered, said: *"Jehu has been anointed king by command of the Lord God. With him the kingdom of Samaria will be able to achieve justice, order and peace. For none of this will be possible as long as the impiety of Joram, the fornications of Jezebel, idolatry and other abominations exist."* When they heard these words, the large army, prostrated before Jehu, proclaimed him king of Samaria to the unanimous and jubilant cry: *"Jehu is our king! Viva Jehu, King of Samaria!"*

4. At that time, King Joram of Samaria was residing in the town of Jezreel. Jehu sent him certain emissaries to inform him that he had been deposed, since God, through the Prophet Micheas, had anointed him as the new king of Samaria and the army had proclaimed him as such. Therefore he demanded Joram's unconditional surrender. Failing to do so, Jehu would be forced to declare war on him with his army. Joram, who was not prepared to surrender his crown, not only allied himself to Achab's seventy sons, but at Jezebel's instigation, also sent an urgent embassy to his cousin Ochozias, king of Judah, to come to his aid at the head of his army. Achab's seventy sons were as perverse as their parents Achab and Jezebel: some were the children of both, others were his by other wives, others were his or hers by their various adulteries. Achab's seventy sons also had their own army.

5. King Jehu, aware of the coalition between Joram of Samaria, Ochozias of Judah and the seventy sons of Achab, duly prepared his army in order to give them the decisive battle. But before King Jehu, with his soldiers, left the encampment to confront the three enemy armies, he invoked the aid of Lord God Almighty. The great battle between Jehu's army and the three allied armies took place in the proximity of Jezreel, where the Lord gave the victory to Jehu, who, with his sword, not only killed Achab's seventy sons, but as well transfigured Joram's heart, killing him instantly. King Joram of Samaria died, then, in the year 4309, having reigned fifteen years.

6. When Ochozias, king of Judah, saw that his ally King Joram had been killed, he fled; but Jehu raced after him saying: *"I will also put an end to this impious king."* Though Ochozias was grievously wounded by Jehu's sword, he fled in his chariot to Megiddo, driven by several of his soldiers, dying there shortly afterwards. The soldiers then brought his cadaver to Jerusalem in the same chariot; there he was buried in the royal pantheon. Ochozias died in the year 4309, having reigned in Judah eight years.

7. After King Joram's death, the perverse Jezebel, in the Jezreel palace, induced her numerous guard to offer strong resistance to Jehu's army. But Jehu, with great courage, invaded the town, unleashing the final battle in the field overlooked by the palace, which latter his army seized after those within had surrendered. Jezebel, seeing herself vanquished by force, now endeavoured to win Jehu over by her customary guile; accordingly, seductively painted and dressed, she placed herself at a window of the palace to look out at Jehu, who on his horse was victoriously passing by that side of the building, in order to win him over. Jehu raised his head towards the window, and on seeing Jezebel said to two servants at her side: *"Throw her out of there."* Jezebel was thrown out of the window and fell to the ground, battered and bruised, but still alive, beside the walls of the palace, in the same property she had misappropriated from Naboth. Then the horse on which Jehu was mounted, not directed by the king but moved by God, trampled Jezebel to death. Jehu did not command burial to be given to the pagan and perverse Jezebel. Her cadaver, then, lay abandoned on Naboth's property and a pack of dogs devoured it leaving only the bones, which no one buried. When Jehu learnt of this, he said: *"What the Lord foretold through His servant Elias has been fulfilled, when He said: 'In the field of Jezreel the dogs will devour the flesh of Jezebel, so that her bones will lie in the field of Jezreel like dung upon the ground; in such a fashion that passers-by will say: 'And this is that Jezebel!'"* This perverse woman, then, figure of Antimary, died in the year 4309, damning herself eternally. Centuries later, at the time of Christ's death on Calvary, the body of Jezebel arose, and from then on is likewise in Hell together with her soul.

Chapter XXII

Jehu, ninth King of Samaria

1. Jehu, from the tribe of Ephraim, took possession of the throne of Samaria in the year 4309, being acclaimed in Sichem as king by the multitudes. From the very outset of his reign he forbade, under pain of death, the adoring of false gods, and re-established sound morals in Samaria. Idolatry was so repugnant to him that he said to his soldiers: *"I swear to you that whoever of you leaves alive a single one of the followers of Baal, will pay for it with his own life."* And he wielded the sword with all courage, putting an end to the adorers of idols throughout his dominions, saying: *"I will put an end to the adorers of Baal. I do not adore Baal, but only the Lord my God; and I will put all adorers of Baal to death. All sacrifices to Baal are forbidden, and I will kill whoever offers sacrifice to Baal."* Jehu killed, then, all the priests, prophets and other followers of idols who were not converted to the true God. For this mission he chose days when the idolaters expressly went up to their temples, and there presented himself with his army to exterminate them. Jehu never pretended to be an adorer of idols so as to draw idolaters deceitfully to their temples, and then put an end to them. Thus he never used dissimulation in order afterwards to execute the followers of false gods. All were perfectly aware that he persecuted idolatry because it was repugnant to his upright conscience, since pagan worship was a grievous attack on the worship of the true Lord and God. The virtuous King Jehu, Champion of God's Justice, destroyed all the idols and their altars erected by preceding kings throughout the kingdom of Samaria, including the golden calves in the towns of Bethel and Dan. Moreover, Jehu persecuted all idolaters, not only within

his kingdom, but also outside its frontiers; for he fulfilled with exceeding zeal and rigour all that God had commanded him.

2. God, by means of the Prophet Eliseus, commanded Jehu to arise with his powerful army and wage war on the Philistine king of Lebanon. Jehu obeyed, vanquished the enemy, conquered the territory, killed the Philistine king, destroyed all the idols and re-established worship of the true God. A sizeable number of the Philistines were converted, others were exterminated for their persistence in idolatry and many also escaped.

Chapter XXIII

Athaliah, illegitimate Queen of Judah. Joas proclaimed Crown Prince of Judah. Death of Athaliah

1. In the year 4309, Athaliah, from the tribe of Benjamin, on learning of the death of her son Ochozias, king of Judah, at the hands of Jehu, King of Samaria, dominated by ambition, seized the throne with the approval of the immense majority of the people. The Prophet Micheas, as was ritual for every monarch, went to Jerusalem to anoint the new queen. The anointing was not carried out because Athaliah refused to swear the oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship; for she neither wished to be anointed by a prophet of God, nor was she prepared to renounce her idolatry and other abominations. What is more, the utterly proud and perverse Athaliah, to reaffirm her fidelity to the devil, commanded that she be anointed satanically by a false prophet called Acca, also from the tribe of Benjamin, who was a prophet of Satan and chief priest of Baal. Before being anointed by Acca, Athaliah swore the satanic oath to defend idolatrous worship and to persecute the worship of the true God.

2. The perverse and illegitimate queen, to make her crown secure, took the cruel resolve to exterminate the descendants of the Royal House of Judah; accordingly, she gave the command for all the members of David's lineage to be slain, including her own grandchildren. Of them all, only Prince Joas, two years old, son of Ochozias and Azaliah, was saved from death, rescued from Athaliah's clutches by Princess Josabab, the boy's aunt, wife of High Priest Joyada. Joyada took Joas to Mount Carmel, where he was concealed by the members of the Carmelite Order until proclaimed Crown Prince in the Temple of Jerusalem. Athaliah also killed her sister Azaliah, Ochozias' widow.

3. In the year 4309, the virtuous High Priest Joyada, to avoid Athaliah profaning the Ark of the Covenant, at God's direct command, translated the Sacred Ark to the town of Bethulia or Megiddo, in the kingdom of Samaria, where the virtuous King Jehu reigned. From then on the perpetual sacrifice in the Temple of Jerusalem ceased, until it was re-established after the death of the usurper Queen Athaliah. Notwithstanding, in Bethulia the perpetual sacrifice continued in the portable Tabernacle, brought from Mount Carmel and installed in the town. The Ark of the Covenant brought from Jerusalem was deposited within this Tabernacle.

4. While the royal scion Joas grew up in Mount Carmel under the wise and prudent direction of the Prophet Eliseus, at the time superior of the Essenian or Carmelite Order, the usurper and illegitimate queen Athaliah ruled the destinies of the kingdom of Judah with tyrannical disorder, corrupting it ever further by pagan abominations. Athaliah had employed a great part of the wealth, vessels and other sacred utensils of the Temple for the embellishment and worship of the temples to Baal erected by her husband Joram, by her son Ochozias and by herself.

5. In the year 4315, sixth of Athaliah's despotic rule, the virtuous High Priest Joyada, moved by God, made ready to dethrone the usurper queen and proclaim Joas Crown Prince, with the consequent restoration of the legitimate monarchy in the kingdom of Judah. For such a risky mission High Priest Joyada counted with the powerful help of the virtuous Jehu, King of Samaria; to whom, in that same year, the Prophet Eliseus communicated, in God's name, the command to collaborate with Joyada in the restoration of divine worship in Jerusalem and the restoration of the legitimate monarchy in the kingdom of Judah, which Jehu put into practice without any delay.

6. In the same year, 4315, Jehu, with a large number of brave and capable soldiers, went to Mount Carmel to receive, from the hands of the Prophet Eliseus, the eight-year-old boy Joas, and afterwards took him in secret to Jerusalem. In the meantime, High Priest Joyada sent emissaries of great confidence throughout the kingdom of Judah, to communicate secretly to priests, levite ministers and princes of the families faithful to him, that they should congregate in Jerusalem on a certain date, without revealing to anyone the motive for which they had been summoned. For his holy ends, Joyada counted on the majority of the chiefs of the army of Judah, who were by then weary of the perverse and despotic behaviour of Queen Athaliah.

7. The plan was carried out with such providential discretion, that on the day assigned for the proclamation of the Crown Prince of Judah, all those summoned by Joyada arrived in Jerusalem. On that day, in Jerusalem there arrived as well High Priest Joyada, the boy Joas, and King Jehu with his army. A good number of Jehu's soldiers, as well as a good number of the soldiers of the kingdom of Judah faithful to the cause, guarded Athaliah's palace to prevent her leaving, and occupied strategic points of the city to avoid any contrary reaction from the queen's few partisans. The priests and levite ministers occupied the Porch of Solomon, and all the others who had congregated gathered before the main façade of the Temple of Jerusalem. Then High Priest Joyada, from the Golden Gate of the Temple, with great solemnity revealed to all the crowd the happy news that there yet remained in Judah a legitimate descendant of the royal blood of David, miraculously preserved by Divine Providence so as to continue through him the throne of so eminent a lineage. Joyada then presented to the immense crowd the boy Joas attired as a prince, the High Priest to his right and King Jehu of Samaria to his left. Next, the venerable High Priest Joyada proceeded to the august ceremony of the sacred anointing of Joas as Crown Prince of the kingdom of Judah; and forthwith said to all: *"Behold Joas, legitimate descendant of the House of David, Crown Prince of the kingdom of Judah."* The choirs of musicians, immediately intoned sacred hymns, the trumpets resounded with spirited blasts, and the multitude, joyful and moved, exclaimed with great enthusiasm: *"Viva Joas, Crown Prince of the kingdom of Judah!"*

8. High Priest Joyada, to give the perverse Athaliah an opportunity for conversion, commanded certain of the chiefs of the army of Judah to go to the queen's palace and tell her to come to the Golden Gate of the Temple, in order that