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"What Was Pat Lady?": The David and Bathsheba Story in Medieval and Early Renaissance English Literature

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***"What was *pat lady*?"*: The David and Bathsheba Story
in Medieval and Early Renaissance English Literature**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia**

In partial Fulfillment

**Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

by

Stanley Kustesky

1994

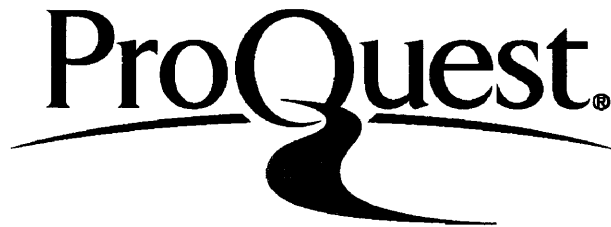
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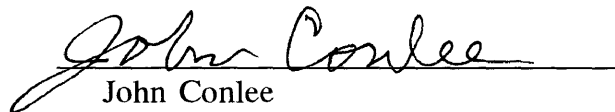
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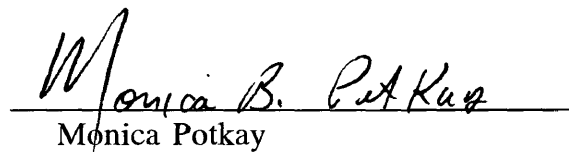
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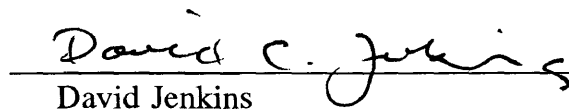
Master of Arts


Author

Approved, July 1994


John Conlee


Monica Potkay


David Jenkins

Dedication

To Marlene, who *is* "pat lady."

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Abstract

The David and Bathsheba story is one of the most powerful dramatic narratives in the Old Testament and contains all the intrigue and prurient interest of a twentieth-century soap opera. The Jewish people, the Church Fathers, and a great many of the writers of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance were troubled by this tale of lust, murder, and adultery because it dealt so frankly with the baser qualities of human character. They attempted to transform the story into an allegory of human pride in order to emphasize in it what they saw as its more didactic and spiritual concerns. Even so, these interpreters maintained a relative silence on this facet of David's character because they believed that this particular story was too awkward for popular consumption. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that medieval writers seem to have developed three principal strategies for coping with this episode: (1) they downplayed David's all-too-human sins simply by suppressing any mention of the story and by emphasizing David strictly as a type and precursor of Christ; (2) they shifted the blame for David's temporary fall from grace to Bathsheba and her feminine wiles; and (3) they used the story of Bathsheba in establishing David as a singular emblem of contrition, penance, and atonement, thus certifying him as an example of God's overwhelming mercy.

A survey of medieval and early Renaissance English literature demonstrates these three strategies. Included are sermons, homilies, instructional manuals, dramatic works, and poetry dating from the late-tenth to the sixteenth centuries. The works are examined for how the David and Bathsheba story is expressed; with few exceptions, the suggested strategies appear to have been applied consistently regardless of literary genre. The theological and philosophical shifts of the Protestant Reformation removed what was believed to be the patristic clutter of excessive allegory, thereby freeing the story for interpretation as a model of human passions inherent in all people. David was still an emblem of God's mercy, not because he was a type of Christ, but because he demonstrated God's response to fallible human conduct.

The result was that the story regained its original fascinating power as a tale of forbidden lust, murder, and adultery, and was used by subsequent writers as a tale which functioned as a basic expression of corruptible human nature.

***"What Was *Pat Lady*?"*: The David and Bathsheba Story
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Dauid þat mony had in wone
Rafte him his wif þat had but one
He had a dougti knygt of fame
his wif barsabe bi name
Alas she was faire & brigte
Þe kyng cast ones on hir sigt
he asked what was þat lady?

-- *Cursor Mundi*

INTRODUCTION

David's Character and the Biblical Narrative of His Love for Bathsheba

The life, character, and accomplishments of King David form a central focus in the Old Testament. From his appearance as a young shepherd boy anointed by Samuel in Bethlehem in 1 Kings 16:13ff., until his death as an old man in 3 Kings 2:10-11, the story of his life unfolds in a rich and complex narrative with few equals in the rest of the Old Testament. As David matures into adulthood, so does his stature; he emerges as a singular model of military prowess, physical strength, intelligence, and faith. The narrative depicts an extraordinary array of events for one lifetime: the killing of Goliath with a slingshot; the bonds of perfect friendship with Jonathan; the refusal to participate in regicide; the waging of brilliant military campaigns against hostile foes. David rules Israel as king for forty years; he has seven named wives, twenty-one named children, and numerous unnamed wives and concubines. If these achievements were not sufficient, he writes the 150 psalms and brings the Ark of the Covenant to the new capitol of Jerusalem. Throughout these episodes David lives as an obedient servant of God. Only in one instance does David swerve from this path of righteousness with his lust for an eighth wife--Bathsheba.

The story of David's one great sin is narrated over fifty-two verses in two chapters of the Second Book of Kings; it is a story that contains all the intrigue and prurient interest of a twentieth-century soap opera. [The text of that story is translated from the Vulgate by the author in Appendix A; Appendix B contains the Latin Vulgate text.] Later in his life David experiences the revenge of God's promised sword for his great sin when his sons rise up against him. As he slides into a troubled old age, David's many sons vie for succession to his throne, but David never again turns against God and remains ever the Lord's humble servant.

David's accomplishments made his life a signal one for both the Jewish people and the Church Fathers, and for both groups the only blot on his otherwise exemplary character was the Bathsheba episode. The Church Fathers in particular, as well as the great many of the writers in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, were troubled by this tale of lust, murder, and adultery because it dealt so frankly with the baser qualities of human character. They attempted to transform the story into an allegory of human pride in order to emphasize in it what they saw as its more didactic and spiritual concerns. Even so, these interpreters maintained a relative silence on this facet of David's character because they believed that this particular story was too awkward for popular consumption. So controversial was that story that even "the *Rule* of St. Benedict forbids that the books of Kings . . . should be read in the evening, in case they might over-excite the hearers."¹ Indeed, in the medieval

¹Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952) 24.

mystery plays intended for the general public the figure of David is often conspicuously absent from the array of Old Testament figures celebrated in them-- despite the fact that David was regarded as a precursor and type of Christ.

Medieval writers seem to have developed three principal strategies for coping with the particular frankness of the David and Bathsheba episode: (1) they could downplay David's all-too-human sins simply by suppressing any mention of them and by emphasizing David strictly as a type and precursor of Christ; (2) they could shift the blame for David's temporary fall from grace to Bathsheba and her feminine wiles, in keeping with the particular anti-feminist bias of the Middle Ages; or (3) they could use the story of Bathsheba in establishing David as a singular emblem of contrition, penance, and atonement, thus certifying him as an example of those who receive God's overwhelming mercy. These various devices raise a question of morality peculiar to the Middle Ages--how to instruct the laity on transforming gross human passions into spiritual assets without dwelling on the often ugly details of immoral sinful conduct.

In the pages that follow, I will examine this question through the writings of the Church Fathers and the English authors of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, as they tread their way very carefully around the human frailties of one of the Old Testament's greatest men.

CHAPTER I

The Patristic Line of Interpretation

During a spring weekend in March, 390 CE, in Thessalonica, Roman capitol city of the Greek provinces, a horrible crime of public passion occurred. It was a terrible outrage that would have the subsequent and unexpected effect of bringing King David out of the Old Testament and into the forefront of Christian biblical exegesis. It would result in David becoming for all believing Christians a singular emblem of contrition, penance, and atonement--a striking example of God's overwhelming mercy. Also from this time, the more negative aspects of David's character would be overlooked while he was presented strictly as a type and precursor of Christ--a pattern of symbolic representation that would continue, with few alterations, for the next one thousand years.

On the weekend in question, Butheric, the Roman Master of the Soldiers, was lynched by an angry mob in the Circus because he had jailed a games' contender favored by the citizens of the city. It seems that this honorable garrison commander

had among his slaves a beautiful boy, who excited the impure desires of one of the charioteers of the circus. The insolent and brutal lover was thrown into prison by the order of Butheric; and he sternly rejected the importunate clamours of the multitude, who, on the day of the public games, lamented the absence of the

favorite, and considered the skill of a charioteer as an object of more importance than his virtue.²

The crowd was so outraged, in fact, that one murder was insufficient to quell their fury; they killed Butheric's principal officers as well, dragging the bodies through the streets, and thereby heaping sacrilege upon sedition. The emperor Theodosius I, who "had earned the title 'the Great' because of his devout Christianity,"³ was equally outraged. Noted as a man whose "behavior veered disconcertingly between opposites,"⁴ he was ready one moment "to award grim sentences and punishments, but was equally ready to cancel them and grant pardons"⁵ the next. The violence of these vicious murders of his appointed representatives produced one of his harshest sentences, and certainly one of the most devious.

A month later, in April, the people of Thessalonica were invited to the Circus on the pretext of a special entertainment, courtesy of the emperor. Thousands of unsuspecting citizens jammed the arena, anticipating a lavish spectacle, but rather than games, they received the emperor's justice instead: "soldiers, who had secretly been posted around the Circus, received the signal . . . of a general massacre,"⁶ and gave the crowd a spectacle they had not expected. When the carnage was finished, at least

²Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. III, J.D. Bury, ed. (London: Methuen and Co., 1909) 181.

³Michael Grant, *The Roman Emperors: A Biographical Guide to the Rulers of Imperial Rome, 31 BC - AD 476* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985) 272.

⁴Grant 272.

⁵Grant 274.

⁶Gibbon 182.

seven thousand people lay dead,⁷ "and it is affirmed by some writers that more than fifteen thousand victims were sacrificed"⁸ to the caprice of Theodosius' mood swings.

Almost immediately after the fact, the emperor repented his action.

Recognizing that there was little he could do to make amends for his capricious decree, he went to Milan to attend church services. Before Theodosius could enter the church, however,

he was met by Ambrose, the bishop of the city, who took hold of him by his purple robe, and said to him, in the presence of the multitude, "Stand back! a man defiled by sin, and with hands imbrued in blood unjustly shed, is not worthy, without repentance, to enter within these sacred precincts, or partake of the holy mysteries." The emperor, struck with admiration at the boldness of the bishop, began to reflect on his own conduct, and, with much contrition, retraced his steps.⁹

Unfortunately, as colorful as this version of events may seem, it is more apocryphal than actual. What Ambrose did do, in fact, was fail to meet Theodosius on his return--"I excuse myself by bodily sickness, which was in truth severe, and scarcely to be lightened but by great care"¹⁰--sending him a letter instead to explain his

⁷Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace, eds., *St. Ambrose, Some of the Principal Works, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, trans. H. De Romestin (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890) 450, note 1.

⁸Gibbon 182.

⁹Sozomenus, *The Ecclesiastical History of the Church, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890) 393-394.

¹⁰Ambrose, Letter 51.6, 451.

absence from honoring the royal presence. The letter is a forceful, direct document in which "Ambrose deliberately approached the emperor as a spiritual guide,"¹¹ instructing him in the ways of the Lord. The letter is also a marvel of rhetorical skill and manipulation, both of ideas and of the emperor.

The primary biblical model Ambrose cites to Theodosius as an example of repentance is Nathan's harsh indictment of David for his adultery with Bathsheba:

Are you ashamed, O Emperor, to do that which the royal prophet David, the forefather of Christ, according to the flesh did? To him it was told how the rich man who had many flocks seized and killed the poor man's one lamb, because of the arrival of his guest, and recognizing that he himself was being condemned in the tale, for that he himself had done it, he said: "I have sinned against the Lord [2 Kings 12:13]." Bear it, then, without impatience, O Emperor, if it is said to you: "You have done that which was spoken of to King David by the prophet," and if you repeat those words of the royal prophet: "O come let us worship and fall down before Him, and mourn before the Lord our God, Who made us," [Ps. 94], it shall be said to you also: "Since thou repentest, the Lord putteth away thy sin, and thou shalt not die [2 Kings 12:13]."¹²

After further elaboration on David's sin, Ambrose builds carefully to his ultimate point: "The devil envied that which was your most excellent possession. Conquer him whilst you still possess that wherewith you may conquer. Do not add another sin to your sin by a course of action which has injured many."¹³

¹¹Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992) 111.

¹²Ambrose, Letter 51.7, 451.

¹³Ambrose, Letter 51.12, 452.

The important element in this discourse is that Ambrose is styling himself as a more soft-spoken Nathan to Theodosius' more impulsive David. In the process, he stretches the implications of Nathan's parable in order to make a different point. Nathan's moral lesson was directed specifically to David's adultery with Bathsheba and his subsequent arrangements for the death of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband, rather than to a massive revenge-slaughter of innocent people. Nathan placed David in the awkward position of having to justify his lust for one woman, when the Lord had given him "thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Juda."¹⁴ Nathan also wanted David to recognize that he had acted with total disrespect for God's sacred law. David made no excuses and simply accepted responsibility for his actions.

Ambrose by analogy suggests that Theodosius is in a position similar to David by being the ruler of a vast nation; he then quite skillfully extracts a further implication from the words around the Bathsheba episode, using them to demonstrate the true humility and penitence of a great king in the face of the superior power of God. He is, perhaps, accusing Theodosius of adulterating his position as emperor through improvident judgment. The story of Saul in I Kings, and his frequent irrational outbursts, especially against David, would appear to bear a more striking similarity to the character and career of Theodosius, but Saul is not favored of

¹⁴2 Kings 12:8.

God,¹⁵ and the understanding Ambrose wishes to advance is that Theodosius is. Theodosius is, after all, a *Christian* emperor and a man vital to the growing influence of a young Church besieged by heresies in all quarters of the empire. What Ambrose accomplishes with his letter is to authenticate "himself as the critic of the imperial rage and, consequently, as the arbiter of imperial mercy."¹⁶ It is a significant achievement with far-reaching consequences for later developments between the Church and State during the Middle Ages.

In order to better aid the emperor's considerations of penance, Ambrose appended to his letter the *Apologia Prophetae David*, his interpretation of Psalm 50, the one assumed to be written by David in penance for his sin with Bathsheba [see Appendices C and D for Latin Vulgate text and the author's translation]. The *Apologia* skillfully avoids direct reference to the original reason for which the psalm was written; David's sin is mentioned in the second paragraph and thereafter forgotten. The most critical issue is penance. Speaking of St. Paul's statement that it is the Lord who judges all men, "who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart,"¹⁷ Ambrose reminds the emperor:

¹⁵See, for example, 1 Kings 15:10-11, "And the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying: It repenteth me that I have made Saul king: for he hath forsaken me, and hath not executed my commandments. And Samuel was grieved, and he cried until the Lord all night." Samuel has a great deal of difficulty in trying to convince Saul of God's displeasure with his rulership.

¹⁶Brown, *Power and Persuasion* 113.

¹⁷I Cor. 4:5.

But David already filled the time, and obtained favor, and has been justified to Christ; because the Lord himself is glad to be called Son of David, and therefore whoever believes in him is illuminated.¹⁸

Ambrose wants also to caution the emperor of the dangers of impulsive actions:

"Anger . . . was an illness of the soul, a sign of the endemic weakness of the human race, incurred by Adam's fall. But it was an illness that could be healed by Christian penance."¹⁹ The sins of lust, adultery, and murder are transformed into ones of pride and anger.

While penance was the ostensible purpose behind David's composition of the Psalm, the sin Ambrose evokes for Theodosius' benefit is David's spontaneous submission to his desires. David had lusted for a married woman--something he should not have done--and his anger at the potential denial of his continued satisfaction prompted David to have Uriah sent to the siege of Rabba where he could easily be killed, as he was. The obvious parallel is that the royal anger, incurred by the impetuous lynchings of his appointed officials, would not be satisfied without revenge--a deliberate sin of commission. By giving in to his immediate passions, Theodosius was placing himself in great spiritual peril, exactly the point of Nathan's harsh words to David. With enviable rhetorical skill and sincere religious belief, Ambrose reinscribes a critical event in David's life and begins the process of altering

¹⁸Ambrose, *Apologia Prophetae David*, *Patrologia Latina* 14:676B. "Sed David jam tempus implevit, et gratiam meruit, et justificatus a Christo est; quandoquidem David se dici filium ipse Dominus gratulabatur, et qui eum ita confitebantur, illuminabantur."

¹⁹Brown, *Power and Persuasion* 113.

David's significance in Christian belief.²⁰

As copies of Ambrose's *Apologia* circulated in the empire, one made its way eight-hundred miles by land and sea to the city of Hippo in North Africa, where Augustine was bishop. He had spent several years under Ambrose's tutelage before converting to Christianity and now, a bishop himself, he was in charge of a growing, but still minor, church. In 392 Augustine began writing his own commentaries on the Psalms, and his version of the meaning of Psalm 50 is similar to Ambrose's, yet represents an important expansion of Ambrose's point of view, incorporating David initially as a specific type of the Church, and then as one of Christ.

In Augustine's commentary, David's adultery is recounted briefly, "with grief indeed . . . and with trembling," in the second paragraph: "Captivated with this woman's beauty, the wife of another, the king and prophet David, from whose seed according to the flesh the Lord was to come [Rom. 1:3], committed adultery with her. . . . The sin was committed, and was written down."²¹ Yet for Augustine, as for Ambrose, the particular sin involved is not of greatest consequence; rather, "Not then for falling is the example set forth, but if thou shalt have fallen for rising again.

²⁰Ambrose's recommended penance was less than it might have been for an ordinary person. The atonement "probably took the form of abandoning an imperial procession in full regalia," as well as appearing "without his regalia in church for a few Sundays" [Brown, *Power and Persuasion* 112]. Ambrose probably saw this as replicating in some measure David's submission to the will of God through his prophet.

²¹Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1956) 190.2.

Take heed lest thou fall."²² Augustine finds a different cautionary moral in the verses of the psalm in which David becomes a larger symbol for Christians to examine:

Ye know that God is high: if thou shalt have made thyself high, He will be from thee; if thou shalt have humbled thyself, He will draw near to thee. See who this is: David as one man was seeming to implore; *see ye here our image and the type of the Church* [emphasis added].²³

Augustine would develop his ideas further in *On Christian Doctrine*, "started in 396 CE but left unfinished until 427."²⁴ Building on what he saw as Paul's "idea of the spiritual life as a vertical ascent,"²⁵ and Ambrose's view that "the main problem [of exegesis] was still to understand the 'spiritual' message of the Old Testament in terms of allegories,"²⁶ Augustine wanted to set down his own guidelines. He was concerned especially with interpreting those passages which might be regarded as posing difficulties in exegesis. In many respects, he was not going against the accepted apostolic position: "The very boldness of Paul in attacking the authority of the Old Testament law was predicated on a continuity with the Old Testament and on the identity between the God of the law and the God preached in

²²Augustine, *Psalms* 190.3.

²³Augustine, *Psalms* 190.21-22.

²⁴Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 264.

²⁵Brown, *Augustine* 151.

²⁶Brown, *Augustine* 154.

Christ."²⁷ Augustine never "denied or even doubted the historicity of any of these stories, . . . though he also offers an allegorical interpretation of [their] meaning,"²⁸ with David being a case in point.

In his slender volume, Augustine examines what he sees as the differences between *caritas*, spiritual love directed towards God, and *cupiditas*, libidinous love directed towards human or material objects. With specific reference to David, and not mentioning Bathsheba by name, he recounts the story of their adultery as a demonstration of libidinousness: "The sins . . . have been recorded for a reason, and that is that the lesson of the Apostle [Paul] may be everywhere momentous, where he says, 'He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.' There is hardly a page in the holy books in which it is not shown that God resists the proud but to the humble offers grace."²⁹ The tone suggests a certain sense of exoneration for David's specific sin because of Augustine's view that "what is frequently shameful is in a divine or prophetic person the sign of some great truth."³⁰ The end result is that "whatever is so narrated [in the Bible] is to be taken not only historically and literally but also figuratively and prophetically, so that it is interpreted for the end of

²⁷Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol. 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971) 110.

²⁸Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers, Vol. I: Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*. 3rd ed. rev. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970) 68-69.

²⁹Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1958) 99.

³⁰Augustine, *Doctrine* 91.

charity, either as it applies to God, to one's neighbor, or both."³¹

During the same time that Augustine was working on *Doctrine*, he also began writing his monumental *City of God*, a personal *summa theologica* of his Christian beliefs. The book completes his work of redirecting the focus of Old Testament analysis, turning its stories into harbingers of the New Testament. Book XVII, in particular, examines the prophetic nature of the Old Testament and states that it has one purpose in mind: it is "more concerned . . . with foretelling the future than with recording the past."³² The psalms, by virtue of their arrangement and their predictive content, make David the greatest prophet because "all those prophecies, when rightly interpreted, are referred to the Lord Jesus."³³ Augustine argues that Nathan's words from God--"I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house to my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever"³⁴--refer to Christ, not Solomon. With this idea Augustine reinscribes the Old Testament to better support his belief that "the Bible was literally the 'word' of God . . . a single communication, a single message in an intricate code . . . [so that] the most bizarre incidents of the Old Testament could be taken as 'signs', communicating in an allusive manner,

³¹Augustine, *Doctrine* 91.

³²Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1972) 712.

³³Augustine, *City of God* 737.

³⁴2 Kings 7:12-13.

something that would be made explicit in the New."³⁵

Augustine's writings bear the marks of an intense mind at work, as it probes and questions, seeking the answers to the puzzle posed by the often literal frankness of the Bible. The era of the Apostles was over and the conversion of the Roman Empire carried as many practical problems as it did ones of doctrine, and it was to doctrine that Augustine directed his energy. Ambrose was essentially a politician, an ecclesiastical courtier, a man with direct access to the ear and mind of the emperor: "On the surface, he is the most striking representative of the Roman governing class of his age--that is, of men whose position depended less on their patrician birth, than on their ability to grasp and hold power in a ruthless society."³⁶ He moved from provincial governor to bishop with lightning speed, and his authority as bishop was accepted by all classes with no question.

Augustine, on the other hand, was a theorist, a philosopher, a convert with sufficient zeal to explore every phrase and comma of scripture with an eye to creating a unified view of Christian belief who

prefers to give both a literal and a spiritual interpretation to the same text, the one signifying or prefiguring the other. ...[T]he sins of righteous men, such as David's adultery, are recorded in order to warn us against pride. ...In this way the medieval scholar's view of Scripture was determined.³⁷

With a slight assist from Ambrose, Augustine worked between 392 and 429--the space

³⁵Brown, *Augustine* 252-253.

³⁶Brown, *Augustine* 81.

³⁷Smalley 24.

of a single generation--to transform the nature of biblical exegesis and re-define David's place in religious history. David's sins, along with the person of Bathsheba, pale into the background as David's spontaneous admission of guilt, performance of penance, and genuine manifestations of atonement become hallmarks of the true servant of God. That David is also the direct progenitor of the line which produces Joseph, husband of Mary and father to Jesus, fulfills the prophecies of Christ as made by David himself in his 150 psalms. Augustine's mode of interpretation would survive long after him. Charlemagne, in c. 800, decreed that the *De Doctrina Christiana* serve as the guide for education: "learning as a preparation for Bible study. Bible study meant the study of the sacred text together with the Fathers; the two kinds of authority were inseparable."³⁸ At the head of the list of the Fathers was Augustine, whose influence during the Middle Ages was pervasive.

As Augustine's writings circulated throughout the Christian empire, they also exerted strong influences upon how other bishops developed their own ideas about the allegorical sense of the Old Testament in general, and of David in particular. St. Jerome, for example, finds "moral truth" in the Bathsheba episode when he asks Christians to "Notice for a moment that even in one's own house the eyes are never safe from danger."³⁹ St. Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, wrote a commentary in 434 on the books of Kings, in which "David [is transformed into] a type of the promised

³⁸Smalley 37.

³⁹Jan Wojcik, "Discrimination Against David's Tragedy in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature," *The David Myth in Western Literature*, eds. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Jan Wojcik (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1980) 32.

Messiah, Bathsheba into a type of the carnal law that binds people until 'liberated by her association with the son,' and Uriah into a type of the Jewish people whose knowledge of the law the Messiah attempts to raise to new heights."⁴⁰ Around 600 Isidore of Seville wrote a volume dealing with questions raised by David's sin. The good bishop allegorizes David as a type of Christ, Bathsheba as the Church, and Uriah as the Devil:

The most desirable of all men, when he was walking in the solarium, fell in love with the Church, washing the grime of ages off her body. He took her from her house of clay into a house of spiritual contemplation. Afterwards he killed the devil that had been plaguing her, thus liberating her from an endless marriage. ...Let us love this David, so beloved, who has liberated us from the Devil through his mercy.⁴¹

As the construction of these elaborate allegories suggests, the story must have been a troubling one to prompt such over-developed allegories of its meanings.

Perhaps the danger of Augustine's method, as Isidore's rendering demonstrates, is that it may introduce matters into the story of David and Bathsheba that have no basis in the scriptures; even so, Augustine "distinguished sharply between the authority of the Bible, which never needed to be corrected but only obeyed, and that of later bishops, who needed to be corrected by it."⁴² Augustine believed that God's truth would always triumph over incorrect or poorly thought-out ideas about His plan of salvation.

⁴⁰Wojcik 33.

⁴¹Wojcik 34.

⁴²Pelikan, Vol. I, 303.

While Augustine was at work establishing the direct line of patristic exegesis that would thrive unquestioned for the next fifteen generations, a thousand miles to the east, and three hundred years earlier, the Apostles had been creating the very New Testament he was interpreting. At that same time, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, c. 38-110 CE, was writing his *Antiquities*, an alternative view of biblical narratives. After the writer(s) of the Books of Kings, Josephus is "the only other ancient writer who rendered the Kings story in its entirety."⁴³ His work was known and accepted by the Church Fathers and is often cited in their historical writings, for example by Eusebius in his *The History of the Church*, c. 311-325. In fact, "the *Antiquities* of Josephus . . . would be used for biblical studies all through the Middle Ages,"⁴⁴ and copies of his works were in Monte Cassino in the eleventh century, indicating that he could be found in the core libraries of other monasteries as well.⁴⁵

Whether Josephus' interpretation of the David and Bathsheba story influenced the medieval presentation of the narrative is a point which cannot be deter201^[120'

⁴³Wojcik 22.

⁴⁴Smalley 30.

⁴⁵See Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1927) esp. Ch. III, "Books and Libraries," 70-92.

th great certainty. Given the nature of how Augustine had treated the story, a logical assumption would be that the biblical narrative is the dominant version for the medieval period; but given the fact that Josephus' narrative was available, and given his gossipy penchant for specific character detail, it is entirely possible that details of his version became mixed in with those of the Vulgate whenever the story was preached or written about in the various monasteries.

What is most interesting about Josephus' version of events is that he imputes motives to David and Bathsheba, analyzes moods, and comments on their morals [see Appendix E for text]. His object appears to be fleshing out the story in order to fill in details not found in the Bible's version. This David, he writes, "fell now into a very grievous sin though he were otherwise naturally a righteous and religious man, and one that firmly observed the laws of our fathers."⁴⁶ He was "overcome by that woman's beauty, and was not able to restrain his desires."⁴⁷ After she had slept with David, Bathsheba conceived "and sent to the king that he should contrive some way for concealing her sin (for according to the laws of their fathers, she who had been guilty of adultery ought to be put to death)."⁴⁸ The balance of the chapter follows the course of David's contrivances, in fascinating detail, as Josephus recounts the actions of a man bent on having his will at any price. Nathan is presented as "a

⁴⁶Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews, The Works of Flavius Josephus, Vol. II*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1974) VII.7.1, 436.

⁴⁷Josephus VII.7.1, 436.

⁴⁸Josephus VII.7.1, 436.

fair and prudent man," responding to a God who "appeared to [him] in his sleep, and complained of the king."⁴⁹ This prophet dislikes confrontations with kings, recognizing that they are passionate men, "guided more by that passion than they are by justice . . . [so] . . . he resolved to conceal the threatenings that proceeded from God, and made a good-natured discourse to [David]"⁵⁰ instead.

The bulk of Josephus' narrative is occupied with David's dispatching of Uriah, "a valiant soldier, and [one who] had a great reputation for his valor, both with the king and with his countrymen."⁵¹ Uriah dies, according to Josephus, as a genuine hero in spite of the king's efforts. The effect of this contrast between a king and one of his best warriors is to emphasize the desperate level to which David falls in his desire to hide his sin and calm Bathsheba's fears. Josephus suggests that this is the first sin David has ever committed and that he is unlikely to do anything like this in the future. Bathsheba's remarkable beauty is such that she "surpassed all other women"⁵²--always a danger to the spiritual condition of a man's soul. Augustine does not refer to Josephus, but his concerns about *cupiditas* share a similar note of wariness.

Josephus, of course, is not the only source of Hebrew commentary on the David and Bathsheba story. The Midrash, the medieval compilation of several

⁴⁹Josephus VII.7.2, 439.

⁵⁰Josephus VII.7.2, 439.

⁵¹Josephus VII.7.1, 437.

⁵²Josephus VII.7.1, 436.

hundred years of Jewish sermons and commentaries, and the Talmud, exegesis on the law and its subsequent interpretations dating from c. 250 CE, present David in a light similar to that of Josephus. In general, David "is, above all, the great king by whose offspring God looks forward to ruling Israel until the end of time."⁵³ The Midrash, however, exhibits a tendency to rewrite the Bathsheba episode: "The accusation of adultery is softened by mentioning . . . that David's lust for Bathsheba wasn't all his fault. She provoked it by taking off her dress where she knew he could see her."⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the rabbinical speculations in the Talmud are similar to versions like that of Isidore of Seville. One view suggests that Satan was on the balcony in the form of a little bird, which David shoots at and misses, tearing accidentally the screen behind which Bathsheba is brushing her hair. Another suggests "that David deliberately sinned in order to allow God to assert His superiority over David [because] David wanted to let himself serve as an example to all human beings that no one, no matter how perfect, can expect to live without sin."⁵⁵ Yet, in general, the rabbis tend

to exonerate [David] from all blame, both in respect to the law itself since he decreed that "every one who goes out to war shall write a bill of divorce to his wife" (Shab. 562), and Bathsheba was thus a divorcee; and because of his wholehearted remorse after the deed: "David said before the Holy One, blessed be He, 'Lord of the universe! Forgive me for that sin.' 'It is forgiven you,' He replied. 'Give me a sign during my lifetime,' he entreated. 'During your lifetime I shall not make it known,' He answered, 'But I shall make it known during

⁵³Wojcik 26.

⁵⁴Wojcik 27.

⁵⁵Wojcik 28-29.

the life of your son Solomon'" (Shab. 30a). Some go even further, saying, "Whoever says David sinned is mistaken . . . he contemplated the act, but did not go through with it" (Shab. 56a).⁵⁶

The great variety of these interpretations suggests that the rabbis had as much difficulty with the Bathsheba episode as the Church fathers did. For the rabbis, David's life and career led to the reign of Solomon, the greatest king of Israel. Because he built the temple at Jerusalem, an action God denied to David, Solomon becomes a far more important figure for the continuation of the law. The same verse Augustine uses as a prophesy of Christ [2 Kings 7:13], the rabbis use as God's pronouncement on Solomon's creation of the focus of Jewish life.

The rabbis also treat David as a prophet in 3 and 4 Kings, and in the Psalms, recognized for having predicted many of Solomon's nobler actions. Likewise is David commended as a moral example to the Jewish people. Even if David is a man of minor character flaws, he did everything that God requested of him. His lapses were few, and the one with Bathsheba is almost written off as due to the wiles of the woman. The rabbis allegorize as much as the Church Fathers do because, for both sides, the David and Bathsheba story is an aberration in character which they found too awkward to explain comfortably to an uneducated laity.

One further reference worth noting is Mohammed's oblique mention of the David and Bathsheba story in the Koran. Sūra XXXVIII is devoted to illustrating the idea that to be righteous in the eyes of the Lord is a more proper and powerful

⁵⁶"David," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 5 (Jerusalem: The Macmillan Company, 1971) 1328.

condition than that of maintaining an important position in the world. To this end, David, Solomon, and Job are offered as fitting examples of men who sought ultimately the truth of their relationship with God. Verses 20-26 employ Nathan's parable as a method of confronting David for his pride of position, rather than for a sin of adultery with Bathsheba, continuing the practice of avoiding the unpleasant details of immoral sinful conduct. Two disputants ask David to decide the disagreement between them over ownership of a single ewe lamb [See Appendix F for full text.] When David answers that the one owning many sheep has no right to claim the single ewe of the other,

24.David gathered that we
Had tried him : he asked
Forgiveness of his Lord,
Fell down, bowing
In prostration, and turned
To God in repentance.

25. So We forgave him
This lapse : he enjoyed,
Indeed, a Near Approach to Us,
And a beautiful Place
Of final Return.⁵⁷

David is guilty of pride and exceeding his bounds of rulership as king, and Mohammed manipulates quite skillfully the original Old Testament story to make another point entirely, even though the essence of the original story is still present:

26. O David! We did indeed
Make thee a viceregent
On earth : so judge thou

⁵⁷Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (New York: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1946) 1222.

Between men in truth and justice:
 Nor follow thou the lusts
 Of thy heart, for they will
 Mislead thee from the Path
 Of God : for those who
 Wander astray from the Path
 Of God, is a Penalty Grievous,
 For that they forget
 The day of Account.⁵⁸

This view of David straying "from the Path of God" and thereby failing in his unnamed duties as God's "viceregent on Earth" are ones which will be found considerably later when Nicholas of Lyra in the fourteenth century examines an alternate view of David's sins.

In general, Augustine, Ambrose, and all the other Fathers and writers set in motion a line of thought about life, religion, and politics in which the present moment was the one closest to the completion of God's plan for humankind. The past was prelude, and its facts of history could only be interpreted as spiritual metaphors and allegories which pointed the way to their anticipated theocracy:

this familiar procession of patriarchs and prophets, the Savior and his Apostles, was the literal historical sense, which the scholar shared with the laity. Another procession walked beside it, more sharply outlined, darker or brighter, the Church and the Synagogue, virtues and vices, the Old Testament's foreshadowings of the New. The layman was just able to perceive them. He saw them in windows and on the walls of churches; he heard hints of them in sermons. ...The types are so real and so familiar that they may be used as arguments from authority, as well as from illustration. Their

⁵⁸Yusuf Ali 1223.

influence may be beneficent or sinister.⁵⁹

To this end, the habit of glossing the Bible began in which clerks and canons, priests and bishops, commented in the margins of their great hand-copied Bibles on the meanings they found contained in the sacred text. The point of what became known as the *Glossa Ordinaria* was to explain the Bible, providing an extended commentary on the Scripture as initially propounded by the Church Fathers. Though there are many versions of the *Glossa*, it usually begins with Jerome's commentary (c. 406-419), and most frequently ends with Nicholas of Lyra's *Postilla literalis super totam Bibliam* (1322-1332), and Paul of Burgos' *Scrutinium Scripturarum* (1434). All these writers comment on the Fathers, on other writers, and on themselves, forming a running dialogue on the finer points of exegesis. Often these glosses became textbooks in the universities, for example Peter Abelard's *Sic et Non* (c. 1123) and Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* (1152), or were the bases for public lectures and sermons. All together, the *Glossa* provides a fascinating entrée into the medieval monasteries and universities where the central tenets of Christianity were given a remarkably free rein for discussion.

As a result, the Middle Ages produced a variation of Augustine's historical-literal-figurative-prophetic method of biblical interpretation: "the 'four senses' of scripture--the literal-historical and the three 'spiritual' senses, the allegorical, the

⁵⁹Smalley 24-25.

tropological or moral, and the anagogical."⁶⁰ The eminent theologians of the Middle Ages, including Thomas Aquinas, were working to define the theology of the Bible as framed against the Church Father's doctrinal point-of-view. They split hairs and etymologies over the meanings of phrases and the significance of stories in order to remain true to the reverence they believed was owed to the Fathers, but were more actively engaged in establishing a rigorously defined discipline which explained as completely as possible God in his being, and his relation to the human world. The Church Fathers were still the primary authority on interpretation--until Nicholas of Lyra, that is.

The first seeds of the Protestant Reformation may be said to have been planted in 1322 when Nicholas of Lyra, a Franciscan, began his *Postilla literalis*. Though other writers had referred to various Hebraic commentators, Nicholas is perhaps the first exegete to include careful references to the Hebrew Bible, the Midrash, the Talmud, the works of Rashi (medieval Talmudist, 1030-1105), and Maimonides (1135-1204, Spanish rabbi who helped introduce Aristotle to Europe)--as well as Classical writers such as Ovid, Seneca, and Plato. More than this, he began the process of biblical analysis known as the *duplex sensus literalis*, the double literal sense, "which covered a range of possible meanings of Scripture, and depended on the reader's understanding in accordance with his own intellectual capacities."⁶¹

⁶⁰Diana Wood, "...*novo sensu sacram adulare Scripturam*: Clement VII and the Political Use of the Bible," *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of Beryl Smalley*, eds. Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 237.

⁶¹Wood 258.

Nicholas' double-literal sense means that those "citations of the Hebrew scriptures that were found in the New Testament had two literal meanings. The primary and perfect meaning referred to Christ; the secondary and less perfect meaning referred to the facts of biblical history before Christ."⁶² In other words, Nicholas is in basic agreement with Augustine's method; however, it becomes important for him to express "in a different way that which was already held, namely, that the 'spiritual' meaning of the Old Testament is clearly given in the *letter* of the New."⁶³ Such a view was spurred by the fact that "by the time of Lyra, some men, at least, were keenly conscious that for the senses of Scripture one must go back to the Hebrew, not only to correct the Latin version (corrupted often by copyists), but also to discover the exact meaning or the wider suggestions of the Latin word or phrase."⁶⁴

Like Augustine, Nicholas of Lyra believed that "David is . . . the greatest prophet of the *Old* Testament, because he expressed the mysteries of Christ most amply and most clearly."⁶⁵ Nicholas reverts to the Hebrew, Latin, and Greek texts as well as Hebrew and Arabic commentary, and he reaches his conclusions--unlike Augustine--almost exclusively with original source materials in mind. Augustine, after all, was "the only Latin philosopher in antiquity to be virtually ignorant of

⁶²Mark Zier, "Nicholas of Lyra," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. VII, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982) 126.

⁶³James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969) 70.

⁶⁴Hailperin 8.

⁶⁵Hailperin 176.

Greek."⁶⁶ Nicholas was establishing effectively a new dynamic of interpretation that would have far-reaching implications when Martin Luther began taking a closer look at his analysis, c. 1520. But for the moment, he was to offer a different interpretation of the David and Bathsheba episode than had prevailed heretofore because he "seeks to identify not the outward acts but the root sins"⁶⁷ of which David is guilty. While many monks over the centuries had concentrated on adultery, murder, and treachery as David's overt sins, Nicholas determined that David had sinned in three covert and more significant ways: *per luxuriam* (through extravagance or excess), *per negligentiam* (through negligence of his duties to God), and *per superbiam* (through pride or arrogance).⁶⁸ It is an argument which he builds carefully and with exactitude.

In the course of his short direct commentary, Nicholas states what he means precisely by these three sins: David is guilty *per luxuriam* because in the heat of momentary desires he was the principal perpetrator of the act of adultery; this in turn leads to his sinning *per negligentiam* in that he ignores the matters of the war in order

⁶⁶Brown, *Augustine* 36.

⁶⁷Charles A. Huttar, "Frail Grass and Firm Tree: David as a Model of Repentance in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *The David Myth in Western Literature*, eds. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Jan Wojcik (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1980) 40.

⁶⁸Nicholas of Lyra, *Postilla literalis, Glossa Ordinaria et Biblia Latina*, (Basel: Johann Froben and Johan Petri, 1498) Sebastian Brant, ed. (Watertown, MA: General Microfilm Co., 1986) II Regnum XI. The following three paragraphs detailing Nicholas' argument are drawn from this text.

to investigate Bathsheba knowingly and makes great haste to complete the sexual act with her; finally, he sins *per superbiam* because, in his arrogance as king, he punishes Uriah for not complying with his will, thereby killing an innocent man.

Using the text of II Kings, Nicholas explains that in the course of this year the most eminent citizen of the kingdom, knowing that his armies are in the field foraging for their horses, chooses to remain in Jerusalem. By seeking the comforts of his own home, he uses his power immoderately and lapses in his duties. Such a state of extravagance causes his fall into the sin of adultery. In citing Ecclesiasticus 33--the entire chapter, which begins "No evils shall happen to him that feareth the Lord"--Nicholas argues that many evils come to him who does not look out for them; that pride is always a sinner's undoing. In his recapitulation of his comments, Nicholas argues that David neglected his inner awareness of God's goodness to him, thereby hastening his own downfall.

The comments of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, often located in printed editions on the opposite side of the Vulgate text from Nicholas', make continual reference to the influence of the devil in causing David to sin with Bathsheba, indicating that she was the devil's instrument; the unfortunate couple fell into sin because they did not seek the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit to aid them in escaping the occasion of sin. Nicholas responds by stating that people cannot just blame the devil for lapses in their conduct because everyone must realize, as Seneca observed, that harmful passions corrupt man with swiftness; that it is easier to exclude the passions than to rule them, to deny them admittance than to control them after they have been admitted. David is

the one responsible for bringing Bathsheba to his rooms for the purpose of committing adultery with her; as she is a subject of his and submissive to his command, Nicholas implies that she is a victim of David's lapse, rather than the instigator of the various sins. At no point in his commentary does Nicholas state explicitly that Bathsheba is culpable in this matter. Then again, neither does he exonerate her; his emphasis remains focussed almost entirely on David.

Nicholas accepts the literal story but seeks to discern in it the deeper philosophical and spiritual meanings behind it. The effects of this on Martin Luther would be profound; for Luther, "the Old Testament, spiritually understood, conveys just what the Old Testament conveys. Only in the New Testament, however, is the message finally purged of earthly, carnal things--'sublimated from the letter.'⁶⁹ The Old Testament *in toto* becomes the story "of the historical Israel *before* Christ, as well as for Israel outside Christ,"⁷⁰ and whose interpretation leads inevitably to the life and work of Christ. Luther finds in David not only the perfect type of Christ, but Christ himself; the spiritual meanings behind the Old Testament, as expounded by Nicholas of Lyra, are enhanced and developed by Luther in ways that Nicholas might not have anticipated. The same is true for John Purvey and Nicholas Hereford who did the actual translating of the Lollard Bible of the late-fourteenth century: "they appealed to Lyra freely to justify their disregard for the secondary interpretations of

⁶⁹Preus 163.

⁷⁰Preus 147-148.

the [biblical] text, . . . and translated large portions"⁷¹ of Lyra's *Postilla* into their version.

The cumulative effect of Nicholas of Lyra's concepts was to reinscribe a thousand years after the first reinscription the significance of Old Testament exegesis, just as Augustine had done in the post-Apostolic period of the early Church. And just as this different approach was designed to rid the Scriptures of syntactical and interpretive corruptions, Luther desired to rid them of theological and ecclesiastical ones. His action would, in his view, once again free the Scriptures from their past and open the doors to yet another refinement and expression of their meanings and intent. One of the results was that views of David would change yet again, once the Protestant Reformation hit its full stride. How medieval literature aided in this process is discussed in the next chapter.

⁷¹Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (1966; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920) 166.

CHAPTER II

David and Bathsheba in Medieval English Literature

The David and Bathsheba story in the Middle Ages occurs in a variety of the religious works--such as sermons, homilies, and instructional manuals--as well as in the English poetry, literature, and drama during the period. The overall religious pattern found in most of these works remains consistent with patristic thought: David is a type of Christ and an emblem of God's overwhelming mercy. The style of this presentation is consistent from the late-tenth century through the early-fifteenth century. A new element, however, that appears in some of the religious works and receives particular emphasis in the literary and dramatic works is the tendency toward a more anti-feminist use of the story, especially from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. This pattern culminates in the sixteenth century with a large poetic literature, pro and con, on the culpability of women in general for men's misdeeds and sins. From the Elizabethan period onward, the biblical framework appears to recede into the background as the debate becomes more particularized about feminine culpability for men's presumed woes.

A. Sermons, Homilies, and Instructional Manuals

From the late-tenth century there is an extant Kentish paraphrase of Psalm

Fifty, a psalm presumably written by David after his adultery with Bathsheba. The Old English extends to 157 lines and bears a striking resemblance to Augustine's exposition discussed earlier. The commentary is interspersed with a Latin text of the Psalm which follows "the Roman Psalter, St. Jerome's earlier version of the Latin text, rather than the Gallican Psalter which appears in the Vulgate."⁷² The exposition opens with a thirty-line explanation of David's sin against "Uriam" and "Bezabe," commenting on his greatness of character, his position in God's eyes, and his fall from grace. Twenty verses of the psalm are then commented upon, and the piece ends with the writer's prayer:

Grant us, mighty God
that we always overcome our hidden sins
and for us to earn lives
in a land of eternal bliss. Amen.⁷³

The prayer highlights the commentary's overall theme: the weakness of even the greatest of men in the face of temptation and the belief that all men need God's love and mercy, even as He gave these to David. The emphasis is less on the specific sin, or on any imputation of wickedness to Bathsheba, than it is on individual responsibility for personal actions.

David as a symbol of God's mercy also occurs in Old English homilies of the

⁷²Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942) lxxxix, vol. 6 of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition*.

⁷³Dobbie 93-94. "Forgef us, god mæhtig / þæt we synna hord simle oferwinnan / and us geearnian æce dreamas / an lifigendra landes wenne. Amen." (ll. 154b-157b)

twelfth century. The ones found in Trinity MS B.14.52 "were originally translated from Latin homilies,"⁷⁴ implying an even older date for their composition. Two interpretations treat David as an example of penance and treat the Psalms as prophetic poems--both of these are continuations of the patristic line of interpretation. A third interpretation, however, is the more specific indictment of women as the cause of men's sins. A sermon on "The Lord's Prayer," for example, states:

There are three things that weigh down mankind: the first is the will itself, the second is evil crimes, and the third the lusts of the flesh. And these two, that is, sin and the will, help the third, that is, the fleshly lusts which mislead mankind; and it is wholly through the devil that men are thus mistaught. As it is by the woman and her mirror; she beholds her mirror, and her shadow cometh thereon, and the shadow teacheth her how she may make herself look most lovely, for she desires to please all the lechers who look on her and so draw them to her. So cometh the devil into man's heart.⁷⁵

The sermon does not mention David and Bathsheba specifically, but the elements of the story may be discerned in the specific reference to a woman's concern for her beauty. It is the act of Bathsheba washing herself and thereby making "herself look most lovely" which catches David's eye and so draws him to her. Such a view is also found in the *Ancrene Wisse* discussed later in this section. Similar admonitions are present in sermons on St. John the Baptist and on St. Mary Magdalene, both of which counsel women to restrain themselves, "following the light of penitence, that is,

⁷⁴R. Morris, ed. and trans., *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century* (London: N. Trubner & Co., 1873) ix, vol. 53 of The Early English Text Society.

⁷⁵Morris 28.

example of the cleansing [of sin], [if they cannot] follow the light of virginity."⁷⁶

David himself is cited frequently as a prophet whose psalms provide specific instructions on how the good Christian is to behave. In a sermon for the "Beginning of Lent" the listeners are reminded:

But listen now what threats David setteth upon us except we perform our behests and turn to him instantly-- . . . Except ye turn to God instantly, he will draw his sword, that is, his vengeance, . . . and he will smite and bruise flatling with the sword, or will cleave with the edge, or pierce with the point and burn. . . . My advice is that we should . . . do as the prophet David admonishes us, saying . . . Decline from evil and do good.⁷⁷

The Psalter, presented as David's guide to positive christian living, is a standard element of the homilies. A variation is to refer to Christ as "the Son of David,"⁷⁸ followed by later references to David's psalms, thereby linking the two figures and making David the precursor and type of Christ. The "Ascension Day" sermon does this by referring to four psalms that mirror the Gospel accounts of Christ's descent into hell, his resurrection, and ascension into heaven to sit as judge over mankind.

The Harrowing of Hell, a standard medieval topos, is presented this way:

But when he came to hell the angels that came with him cried out to the devil, and said, . . . Princes of Darkness open your gates, the king of bliss will come herein. The voice was heard by the prophets who were therein, and one of them (that was David) answered thus, . . . The Lord, who is strong and mighty in battle; and our . . . Savior then brake the iron hinges (or bolts) and shivered

⁷⁶Morris 140, 142.

⁷⁷Morris 60, 62.

⁷⁸Morris 88.

in pieces the gates, and went in. Then was hell light for once (and never afterwards) with heaven's light. And he bound the old devil and harrowed hell of those that previously had here pleased him. And as the psalmist saith, . . . he brake their bonds and led them out of darkness and from the shadow of death. . . .⁷⁹

As this brief excerpt indicates, the subject was one for vivid explication. The New Testament is vague on the details of Christ's descent into Hell, but popular belief made it a significant part of his three days in the tomb before his resurrection. By the fifth century "the descent into Hell became a vehicle for a theology that embraced both justice and mercy."⁸⁰ Since the general belief was that all pre-Christians resided in Hell, including all the Old Testament patriarchs, it was only natural that David be the figure who speaks to Christ. As the medieval symbol of God's justice and mercy, David would best represent the effects of Christ's redeeming act. Thus in the merging of sermon and popular legend, patristic thought and medieval allusions are joined to demonstrate firmly the direct relationship between David and Christ.

By the time of a collection of Middle English sermons, dated 1376-1415, the linkage of David and Christ is even stronger. Christ is most often referred to as "pe sonne of Daud,"⁸¹ and David is heralded for his battle against Goliath, with Goliath representing the "feend," and David's three stones being "feyth, hope, and charite,

⁷⁹Morris 112.

⁸⁰Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981) 119.

⁸¹Woodburn O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960) 145, vol. 209 of The Early English Text Society.

. . . þat we shuld ouercomm þe devell, with þe myght of God."⁸² In two other sermons, David's immediate contrition after the sin of the census in 2 Kings 24⁸³ is used as an example of proper conduct: instead of blaming others for personal faults, a sin of pride, it would be better to look at the self, just as David did. The sermon on chastity only refers to the prophet speaking in Psalm Fifty, and then commands sexual purity with no further reference to David's sin. Of the fifty-one sermons in this collection, there is no direct mention of Bathsheba by name, and while this collection is certainly not the last word on the subject, it indicates a relative silence on the David and Bathsheba story. "The general nature of this collection, however, is reasonably clear. It is made up of sermons . . . which were assembled here to serve as materials for other preachers. The fact that [they] are written in the vernacular is good evidence that they are designed for lay audiences."⁸⁴ The implication of this material seems to be that one should tread softly around the difficult story of David and Bathsheba.

Much the same is true for the *Speculum Sacerdotal* of the early fifteenth century, whose "purpose was to give the priest without an adequate knowledge of Latin a fund of material, both expository and narrative, with which he might instruct

⁸²Ross 105.

⁸³See Ross 178ff. and 310ff.

⁸⁴Ross xix.

and amuse his parishioners during the year."⁸⁵ Of the seventy sermons in the text, David's sin with Bathsheba is mentioned only twice: in the sermon on St. Paul⁸⁶ and in the one on St. Matthew.⁸⁷ In neither instance is Bathsheba mentioned by name, and in the Matthew sermon David is linked with Saul and Matthew as three sinners who become models of repentance. The Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene are also the most frequent models of ideal womanhood, with little mention of other women as either good or bad examples. Curiously, in the sermon on penances that is directed specifically to sins of fornication and adultery, the only indirect reference to David concerns simple fornication, the appropriate penance for which is to recite the seven penitential psalms. The description of marriage after adultery between the two partners shares all the details of the David and Bathsheba story without a direct reference to it. In an extended passage of the sermon, penances for the sin of adultery are followed immediately by those penances to be given for manslaughter and the sudden death of any child. While the text is cautious about this linkage of events, the pattern is that of the David and Bathsheba story, implying the author's deliberate following of the Old Testament narrative in preparing his guidelines.

Approximately twenty-five to fifty years prior to the *Speculum*, c. 1375, is *The Book of Virtues and Vices*, a fourteenth-century translation of the French *Somme des*

⁸⁵Edward H. Weatherly, ed., *Speculum Sacerdotale* (1936; London: Oxford University Press; New York, Kraus Reprint Co., 1971) xxxviii-ix, vol. 200 of The Early English Text Society.

⁸⁶Weatherly 22.

⁸⁷Weatherly 209.

Vices et des Virtus or *Somme le Roi*. *Virtues and Vices* is also a product of "the Church's requirements concerning lay education during that period,"⁸⁸ and it provides instructions concerning the Ten Commandments, the various virtues of Christian love and grace, and the varieties of vices and sins. David is cited, as usual, through the psalms, but the famous episodes of his life are not mentioned. There is, however, an unusual reference to the Emperor Theodosius that occurs in a section entitled "The Branches of Mercy." Under the topic of forgiving an evil will, the writer suggests that God will forgive a person as that person forgives others. The reference to Theodosius concerns his personality and recalls the horror of the Thessalonica massacre:

Men seyn þat þe Emperour Theodosie þougþ þat men
 diden hym grete goodnesse whan men besougten hym
 forgeuenesse of here mysdedes, and þe woþer þat he
 was, þe raþer forgau he his wrappe. For he hadde
 leuere drawe to hym grete lordes bi loue þan bi drede.⁸⁹

In *Virtues and Vices* are four more elaborate David references worth noting because they are a departure from the typical mode of presentation. The first one occurs in the section on repentance and contrition, where David is invoked through the Psalter, but there is no mention of his particular sins.⁹⁰ The emphasis is on the quickness of his repentance, coupled with examples from medieval daily life rather than from the life of David or other biblical figures. The second mention occurs in

⁸⁸W. Nelson Francis, ed., *The Book of Virtues and Vices* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) ix, vol. 217 of The Early English Text Society.

⁸⁹Francis 203.

⁹⁰See Francis 172, ll. 1-25, and 174, ll. 20-25.

the section on chastity, and here David is grouped with Samson and Solomon as men "fellen bi wommen, and, forsoþe, had þei wel kepte here gates, þe enemye ne had neuere y-take so grete strengþes."⁹¹ The third reference, under "Bidding Bedes"-- that is, saying prayers--uses David, along with Sts. Augustine and Gregory, as examples of "a brennyng herte of þe loue of God,"⁹² men who devoted their entire being to serving God without question. The fourth mention of David, which also appears in "Bidding Bedes," is a curious one:

as þe kyng Daid geueþ ensauple þat hadde al forgete his noblesse and dignitee, whan he bad to God and despised hymself, so þat he seide to-fore God, 'I am a litle worme and no man'; and in þat he beknew his wrecchedhed and vnworþynesse, his pouerte and his nakedhed. For as a worme is litle worþ and foul and þing of nougt þat wexeþ out of þe erþe al naked, rigt so is euery man as of hymself foul and pore.⁹³

The interest here is that while the reference is unconnected to any specific episode of David's life, the heart-felt nature of David's penitence and his sense of unworthiness are quite clear. The passage uses Psalm 21:7 as its keynote theme, lifting a verse from the one Psalm which was treated as the most direct prophecy of Christ's passion and the triumph of his kingdom; yet it does not apply the prophetic aspects of the Psalm. The emphasis is placed on the image of David as contrite and penitent before God's majesty and mercy. The use of this particular Psalm in the context of saying prayers may well reflect David's state of mind after Nathan's rebuke, which the

⁹¹Francis 226.

⁹²Francis 234, ll. 11-12.

⁹³Francis 238-239, ll. 25-33.

larger context of this passage would appear to support.

David and Bathsheba also make an appearance, perhaps surprisingly, in the *Ancrene Wisse*, the early-thirteenth century manual for English anchorites [see Appendix G for text]. The eight parts of the text cover the life of an anchorite and prescribe the appropriate devotions and conduct expected of a truly spiritual recluse. Part II, "The Outer Senses," begins with "the defense of the heart by the five senses."⁹⁴ David, as God's prophet, is invoked repeatedly through the psalms, especially with references to his fears about losing his heart: "And where did she [the heart] break out of David, the holy king, God's prophet? Where? God knows, at the window of his eye, because of one sight that he saw while looking out just once, as you will hear after."⁹⁵ What is heard after, following the story of Jacob's daughter Dinah losing her maidenhood, is this:

In the same way Bathsheba, by uncovering herself in David's sight, caused him to sin with her, a holy king though he was, and God's prophet (2 Samuel 11:2-5). ...This man...because of one look cast on a woman as she washed herself, let out his heart and forgot himself, so that he did three immediately serious and mortal sins: with Bathsheba, the lady he looked at, adultery; on his faithful knight, Uriah her lord, treachery and murder (2 Samuel 11). ...All came about not because the women looked foolishly on men, but because they uncovered themselves in the sight of the men, and did things through which they had to fall into sin.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, trans., *Anchorite Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991) 66.

⁹⁵Savage and Watson 66.

⁹⁶Savage and Watson 68-69.

There is no doubt about who is at fault in this version. Women, even though in the position of being devout ascetics who have taken vows of chastity, are nevertheless directed to preserve and defend their purity "from the animal man who thinks nothing about God, and does not use his senses as one ought to do."⁹⁷ The onus and burden of protection from sin are placed directly on the woman, "this pit"⁹⁸ that leads men into sin. The heavy-handed, even sado-masochistic, manner in which the David and Bathsheba story is reinscribed into yet another variation indicates that the writer of the *Wisse* mined the story for implications not necessarily found even in the sterner interpreters of the patristic view.

Not all versions of the story carry the moral imperative of the *Wisse*, and one such example is the *Cursor Mundi*, a late-thirteenth century "compilation of Scriptural history, to which legendary and allegorical tales and reminiscences of secular, Oriental and Occidental, history are added,"⁹⁹ including a lengthy version of the Holy Rood. With a prologue and seven parts which cover the seven ages of man, the poem is vast in its range of material as it covers the history of humankind from creation to Doomsday--a not inconsiderable undertaking. The *Cursor Mundi* is extant in four principal manuscripts: the British Museum MS. Cotton Vespasian A. III; the Bodleian MS. Fairfax 14; the Göttingen University Library MS. Theol. 107; and the

⁹⁷Savage and Watson 69.

⁹⁸Savage and Watson 69.

⁹⁹H. Hupe, "The Filiation and Text of the MSS.," *Cursor Mundi: A Northumbrian Poem of the XIVth Century*, Richard Morris, ed., 1893 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 59, Vol. 101 of The Early English Text Society.

Trinity College Cambridge NS. R. 3.8. The four versions form an interesting contrast to one another, with the primary differences being spelling and word order.

David's sin with "Barsabe" and his murder of "Ury" form the opening section of the Fourth Age of Man, with the sins occupying thirty-two lines (7879-7911), and the following fifty-eight lines (7912-7970) elaborating Nathan's parable and the death of the unnamed child. All four manuscripts record David's response to seeing Bathsheba, who "alas she was faire and brignt" (Trinity I. 7885), as "what was þat lady?" (l. 7887), a phrase inevitably calling to mind twentieth-century vaudeville routines. Uriah is a knight in the king's "ost" (l. 7890), placing the story in a medieval context--a stylistic motif of medieval narrations of the biblical story. Uriah is away, and David "bi þat lady lay" (Trinity I. 7892); when her pregnancy is discovered, Uriah is sent for and given a letter by David to the "marschal of his hoost" (Trinity I. 7898). The order is for Uriah "into battle so shulde be led / þat he shulde sone be ded" (Trinity II. 7901-02). The handling of Nathan's parable is a model of economy in all four manuscripts, culminating in David

An orisoun soone gon he make
 þat het Miserere mei deus
 hem owe to seye hit þat synnes rewes
 of alle þe salmes of þe sautere
 þis salme for penaunce hap no pere. (Trinity II. 7963-7970)

Of interest in the *Cursor Mundi's* version of the story is that the entire focus is placed on David; Bathsheba is an assessor whose dazzling beauty causes David to sin. Nathan's judgment of David is that he has broken God's law in a way unbecoming a king, not that he has committed the particular sins of adultery and

murder:

God made þe kyng of Israel
 To lede þe folke in lawes wel
 Pou shuldes haue holde þe lawe instede
 & hast broken þe lawe þat he forbede
 . . .
 Þi synne þat þou in priuete did
 Bifore folke hit shal be kid.
 (Trinity ll. 7939-42; 7953-54)

David's immediate repentance continues to uphold the traditional reading of him as an emblem of God's mercy and justice, while Bathsheba remains the symbol of the temptation to which he succumbed. The didactic moral tone of this version of the story remains consistent with the accepted patristic line of interpretation.

B. Medieval English Literature

Explicitly religious works such as those which have been discussed have a parallel in works which, while still didactic, are less specifically scriptural in content. Even so, the David and Bathsheba story manages to figure prominently in their content as well. Just as the *Cursor Mundi* demonstrates a certain independent spirit which blends scriptural content with popular mythologies, so, too, do other collections of popular material. Although written and collected by monks in various abbeys over a long period of time, works such as *The Early South-English Legendary* and *Legends of the Holy Rood* mark a departure from strict biblical exegesis. These anthologies reflect the imaginative entwining of important figures from the Bible and the Classical past with popular beliefs and superstitions about the everyday world. The *Legendary* dates from 1285-1295, while the *Rood* reflects versions of the same stories from the

eleventh, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries found in several manuscripts in the British Museum and Bodleian Libraries.¹⁰⁰ The variety of stories these collections contain "represent the Christian mythology, as it had been formed in the course of centuries . . . [in a] popular [style] adapted to the subject, the public, and to the occasion."¹⁰¹

The Laud and Vernon manuscripts contain essentially the same story, thus demonstrating the consistency of the narrative over time. Of interest is the fact that only in the Vernon MS. of the fourteenth century is Bathsheba mentioned by name, with the other versions either ignoring her or glossing over her presence. David is sent by God to Mount Tabor, in Arabia, to reclaim the three rods left there by Moses. David is to keep them safe in his garden in Jerusalem because they will be used for Christ's cross in the future. In David's garden, "Alle þre bicome to on: wat bitokenep þis / Bote pat fader and sone and holi gost" (Vernon ll. 127-128). David walls in his garden to protect this miraculous tree, "for he wuste þat it was goud" (Laud l. 266). With no further comment, the versions move to David's adultery and its aftermath:

Vernon: Po seint Daid i-sunged hedde þe sunne of lecherie,
And Mon slauht þo for Bersabe he lette slen Vrie,

¹⁰⁰See specifically Richard Morris, ed. and trans., *Legends of the Holy Rood; Symbols of the Passion and Cross-Poems, in Old English of the Eleventh, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1871), Vol. 46 of the Early English Text Society, for the dating of the twenty-plus manuscripts consulted.

¹⁰¹Carl Horstmann, ed., *The Early South-English Legendary, or Lives of the Saints* (1887; Millwood, New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1975) xii. The Rood story contained here is from MS. Laud 108.

Vr lord nom þer-of wreche gret swiþe sore he bi-com;
 Vnder þe treo his penanunce he dude þat he þer-fore nom;
 þer he made his Sauter; his sunnes forte bete,
 And þe raþere hit him was for-giue for þe holy treo so swete:
 Þo bi-gon he eke for his sunne þe holy Temple to arere,
 Swiþe noble in Jerusalem; ac he deyde in þe fourteneþe yere.
 (ll. 137-144)

Laud: Þo seint Dauí hadde i-wrougt þe sunne of lecherie
 And man-slaugt þo for is owene wif he het slen vrie,
 And ore louerd nam þar-of wreche swiþe sori he bi-cam,
 Onder þat treo is penaunce he dude þat he þare-fore nam.
 Þo makede he þere þene sauter is sunnes for-to bete;
 Þe sonere is sunnes him weren for-giue for þe holie treo so swete.
 Þo bi-gan he al-so for is sunnes þe holie temple a-rere
 Swiþe noble in Ierusalem ake he deide in þe fourteope yere.
 (ll. 267-274)

Uriah is named in all the versions, indicating that a king slaying one of his best warriors is perhaps the more significant offense. Likewise in all the versions David writes the psalter under the Holy Rood as his penance, begins the Temple, but dies in the fortieth year of his reign before it is completed. The specific biblical details about David are directly from 2 Kings; the fanciful details of his trip to Mount Tabor reflect the imaginative side of the poems drawn from popular legends. David's impossibly quick journey, made in hours rather than weeks or months at God's express command and with his express assistance, and the sacredness of Jerusalem to Christian belief reflect firmly David's position as a type of Christ and emblem of God's mercy, but in a more creative fashion. The details of the Bible are couched in an idealized version of the Old Testament as a world which existed only to serve the purposes of the New Testament--the rule of Christ through his Holy Church.

In a similar manner, the Holy Rood legends form a significant portion of the

substance of the David episode in the *Origo Mundi*, "The Origin of the World," Part I of the Cornish *Ordinalia*. This three-part drama is the only extant example of a medieval dramatic presentation of the David and Bathsheba story. The *Ordinalia* is unique in its portrayal of the story, and "is certainly not derived from, and is apparently uninfluenced by, any of the surviving plays in English."¹⁰² It exists in a single manuscript, Bodleian 791, with two other copies, dating from 1375. The three plays, the *Beginning of the World*, *Christ's Passion*, and the *Resurrection of Our Lord*, were meant to be performed over a three-day period. While no definite records of its actual performance dates exist, there is sufficient documentation to support the first performance in "earthen amphitheaters"¹⁰³ as early as 1264 and as late as 1303.

Of note is that "the *Ordinalia* was written to be performed and represents a considerable dramatic and literary effort in a language without, as far as we know, a literary tradition and in a peripheral country where full-bodied theatre might not be expected to have flourished."¹⁰⁴ The David episode, for example, is a dramatic version of the Rood legends discussed above, following the same order of events. What is strikingly different, however, is the presentation of the Bathsheba episode [See Appendix H for text]. David, pleased with himself for having brought the three rods back safely to Jerusalem, suddenly encounters Bathsheba washing her dress in a

¹⁰²Robert Longworth, *The Cornish Ordinalia: Religion and Dramaturgy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967) 2.

¹⁰³Longworth 6.

¹⁰⁴Longworth 14.

nearby stream. He is so smitten with her that he makes something of a rash vow in promising to give her "every hall and chamber of [his] palace and will be [her] husband,"¹⁰⁵ if she will come to him.

Bathsheba's unbiblical response to the leering David is that she would go to him willingly, "if only I might manage it without the fear and risk of being discovered. Were a certain villainous man ever to find out, he would kill me then and there."¹⁰⁶ David's response is that he will have "the knight Uriah"¹⁰⁷ killed--a second rash vow *before* they sleep together. Bathsheba demands even further assurances that David will "kill [Uriah], since if he lives and ever learns of our delight, he'll somehow find a way to do me harm."¹⁰⁸ The matter is settled with David's repeat of his promise that "in return for [her] love the man dies and make no mistake about it."¹⁰⁹

Significant in the *Ordinalia*'s dramatic and tense presentation of events is the absence of the patristic typology of David. Here David is an ambitious, self-satisfied, wily, and lustful king, a man who has nothing of the prophet about him until Gabriel reprimands him for his sins--not Nathan--with the parable of the sheep. At its

¹⁰⁵Markham Harris, trans., *The Cornish Ordinalia* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1969) 57.

¹⁰⁶Harris 57.

¹⁰⁷Harris 57.

¹⁰⁸Harris 58.

¹⁰⁹Harris 58.

conclusion, the archangel's phrase is "You, David, are such a man,"¹¹⁰ rather than Nathan's more pointed and precise "You are that man!" When David sits under the Rood Tree, he begins writing verse one of Psalm One, "Blessed is the man," rather than the "Have mercy on me, O God" of the penitential Psalm Fifty found in virtually all other literary versions.

Of even greater interest is the *Ordinalia*'s characterization of Bathsheba as a scheming Lady Macbeth-type, especially in her exchanges with Uriah as he arms himself for his fateful journey. Her two short speeches which bracket Uriah's sole response to her are a startling departure from all other versions:

BATHSHEBA

On my soul, don't go, don't ever leave me! It breaks my heart to hear talk like that. I swear by my loyalty to you, lord and husband, that if you leave home, I'll not only stop eating, I'll hang myself.

URIAH

Our sovereign's will, my faithful Bathsheba, my wife, must be done. That's as inevitable as that I can't stay with you any longer. So here's a good-bye kiss, and you pray hard for me, very hard.

BATHSHEBA

Oh, how I wish I'd never been born, for now I'm in agony on account of you, my sweet husband! . . .
Nevertheless, my prayer for you is that you will never return, since that would be the better thing.¹¹¹

If an emotional cast is given to this dialogue, then Bathsheba is a wife pleading legitimately with her husband that her will must be obeyed; when it isn't, she curses

¹¹⁰Harris 61.

¹¹¹Harris 59.

Uriah instead, in proper dramatic fashion. Likewise, if a type is at work here, Bathsheba may be seen as a symbol of the duplicitous woman, though she be "the choicest blossom of her sex."¹¹² There are echoes of a strong anti-feminism consonant with that found in the *Ancrene Wisse*, which was written about the same time as the *Ordinalia*. In the *Wisse*, Bathsheba is guilty of sin because she allowed David to see her in a state of dishabille, and thus breaks a significant rule of modesty:

Do not bid any man to look at your altar unless his devotion requires it and he has your leave. Draw well inside and draw the veil over your breast, and quickly do up the cloth again and fasten it very tightly. If he looks toward your bed, or asks where you lie, answer lightly, "Sir, it doesn't matter," and keep silent.¹¹³

The argument can be made that Bathsheba is presented in the *Ordinalia* as breaking this same rule, one which was applied not only to nuns but to all women. The virtues of decorum and chastity were preached from the pulpits on Sundays, with the Virgin Mary and St. Mary Magdalene held up the preferred models of such virtue. As noted earlier, these two women were also regarded as appropriate models, respectively, of piety and repentance: "Both female figures [were] perceived in sexual terms: Mary as a virgin and Mary Magdalene as a whore--until her repentance. The Magdalene, like Eve, was brought into existence by the powerful undertow of misogyny in Christianity, which associates women with the dangers and degradation

¹¹²Harris 58.

¹¹³Savage and Watson 71-71.

of the flesh."¹¹⁴ Such a view is perhaps one way to make sense of the portrayal of Bathsheba in both the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Ordinalia*. Bathsheba functions, especially in the play, as a moral counterpart to images of the two Marys; Bathsheba's fate can be inferred even though she is seen no further in the play. The question then arises as to why she is not punished openly in some violent way for her willful deceit, though her inconstancy and duplicity toward Uriah stand as a sufficient indictment of women. Her representation is consistent with the medieval idea of blaming her for David's sin, despite the fact that in the text of II Kings David is the most active participant. He is, after all, the king, and he has God-given authority over the people. The *Ordinalia*, completely out of keeping with the biblical story, presents her as more active and willing than David to perpetrate the sins of adultery and murder.

The nature of the scene suggests that even though the Old Testament was regarded as a prefiguring device of the New in patristic and medieval thought,

its characters, although to be regarded with some reverence, were still thought of as creatures of flesh and blood. There are, of course, no saints in the Old Testament. Abraham lied about his wife, Moses struck the rock in anger, David committed adultery; and their fallibility made them more human and hence more amenable to dramatic realism.¹¹⁵

If this is the case, then the exaggerated characterizations and rampant anachronisms of

¹¹⁴Marina Warner, *Alone of Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) 225.

¹¹⁵Murray Roston, *Biblical Drama in England: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968) 30.

the *Ordinalia* offer a suggestion as to why the story was too awkward for popular consumption. An obvious attempt is made in the play to speak more directly to the audience of laity in images which the clerics took to be their language. What the dramatist has done is present Bathsheba as a fish-wife, alternating between love and harangues, a woman who epitomizes the Church's low opinion of women. How well the laity understood typologies in the first place is an open question; yet the deliberate changes to the biblical narrative in the *Ordinalia* indicate that "the very artificial character of typology . . . makes liable to suspicion any nascent certitude about the layman's ease in perceiving types."¹¹⁶ Too much subtlety might detract from the central purpose of the drama which is found in the next two plays: the saving acts of Christ. The Bathsheba episode is in the play to show how the Old Testament leads to the New, and that is what matters. The allusions are homely, but their point is not.

Such directness of allusion is a principal trait of the rest of the literature to be examined. In *Piers the Plowman*, the late-fourteenth century allegory, c. 1362-1390, quotations from David's psalms occur often in the text, and David himself makes one brief appearance in Book XII of the B text. Just as the Good Thief was saved by repentance, so

Al-so marie Magdelene ho myghte do worsse
 As in lykyng of lecherye no lyf denyede.
 And dauid þe douhty þat deynede how vrye
 Mighte slilokeste be slayn and sente hym to werre

¹¹⁶Longworth 32.

Leelliche as by hus lok with a lettere of gyle.¹¹⁷

Once again, there is no mention of Bathsheba and the emphasis is placed on the murder of Uriah, not on the adultery of David and Bathsheba. The issue here is that perhaps because Bathsheba never repented of her sin in any overt manner, she is passed over in favor of the preferred type of good repentant woman, Mary Magdalene.

Another work written about the same time, c. 1348-1386, presents the David and Bathsheba story in a manner which becomes more common during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Pearl-Poet's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* contains one striking reference to David and Bathsheba during the climactic moments of the tale. After the Green Knight has struck his third blow and barely nicked Gawain's neck, he explains the purpose of the three blows to the surprised knight, and then invites him to stay on at his castle for a few more days. Gawain responds with a vehement and uncharacteristic denunciation of women:

'Nay forsoþe,' quop þe segge, and sesed hys helme
 And hatz hit of hendely and þe hapel þonkkez,
 'I haf sojorned sadly--sele yow bytyde,
 And He yelde hit yow gare þat garkkez al menskes!
 And commaundez me to þat cortays, your comlych fere,
 Boþe þat on and þat oþer, myn honoured ladyez,
 Pat þus hor knygt wyth hor kest han koyntly bigyled.
 Bot hit is no ferly þag a fole madde
 And þurg wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorge;
 For so watz Adam in erde with one bygyled,
 And Salamon with fele sere, and Samson, eftsonez--
 Dalyda dalt hym hys wyrde--and Dauyth, þerafter,

¹¹⁷William Langland, *Piers the Plowman*, Vol. II, ed. Walter W. Skeat (London: Oxford University Press, 1886) 211.

Watz blended with Barsabe, þat much bale þoled.
 Now þese were wrathed wyth her wyles, hit were a wynne huge
 To luf hom wel and leue hem not, a leude þat coupe.
 For þes were forne þe freest, þat folged alle þe sele
 Excellently, of alle þyse oþer vnder heuen-ryche
 Pat mused;
 And alle þay were biwyled
 With wymmen þat þay vsed.
 Pat I be now bigyled,
 Me þink me burde be excused.' (ll. 2406-2428)¹¹⁸

At least three interpretive perspectives may be found in this passage: an obvious antifeminist bias; evidence of the integration of biblical imagery into Arthurian literature; and another example of the grouping of David with other biblical figures.

Such an antifeminist outburst from Gawain, "the standard-bearer of the Arthurian order,"¹¹⁹ is somewhat shocking because "he appeals to the antifeminist lore mechanically and automatically, as though his own faults might thereby be excused. Contemporary audiences were doubtless intended to discern this irony."¹²⁰ Interpreting this speech as ironic is probably correct, given the elaborate internal construction of the poem. When Bertilak chides Gawain for not revealing the green girdle, Gawain rips it from his body and hurls it at Bertilak's feet. He then launches into a quick diatribe directed against himself: "Now I am fawty and falce, and ferde

¹¹⁸Casey Finch, trans., Middle English texts eds. Malcolm Andrew, Ronald Waldron, and Clifford Peterson, *The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 316.

¹¹⁹William A. Nitze, "The Character of Gauvain in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes," *Modern Philology* 50 (1953): 225.

¹²⁰Finch 398.

haf been euer / Of trecherye and vntrawþe" (ll. 2282-2283).¹²¹ In his embarrassment of recognition, Gawain blames women because he is not ready at that moment to accept fully the blame--even though he recognizes his error. His attack on women may then

be seen as a rhetorical element in a speech whose wider function is to balance, and compensate for, the serious emotional outburst of Gawain's first speech. The balance restored, Gawain can then continue in more serious vein, reasserting the moral element and now claiming his guilt and his responsibility; the girdle, which he angrily threw down, is now accepted with a new significance, the emblem of the flaw in his own nature.¹²²

An alternate view of Gawain's emotional speech is that it reflects his position "as one of the exemplary victims of deceitful womankind."¹²³ The *blasme des femmes* tradition--the reproach of women--suggests the antifeminism common to the Middle Ages, but also suggests that men are equally responsible for abusing women. In *SGGK*, Gawain fits both categories in that his reputation for being a great lover of women, and therefore one who abuses them, is joined with his being abused by them in order to bring about his eventual chastisement for such abuse. "The *Gawain*-poet's particular genius lies in his juxtaposition and reconciliation of these extremes within

¹²¹Finch 314.

¹²²David Mills, "The Rhetorical Function of Gawain's Antifeminism?" *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 71 (1970): 640.

¹²³Mary Dove, "Gawain and the *Blasme des Femmes* Tradition," *Medium Ævum* 51.1 (1972): 20.

the limits of a single story."¹²⁴ Such a view may also account for Gawain's grouping with Adam, Samson, Alexander, and Constantine in *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, "the second of the surviving Middle English bird-debates, coming not long after the *Owl and the Nightingale* in the second half of the thirteenth century."¹²⁵ The poem examines the worth of women, an issue in which David will begin to figure more prominently as will be discussed in Chapter III. The significant point here is that the linkage of David with Adam, Samson, and Solomon has become a standard topos of the medieval period, as noted before, and is not surprising in this context.

The second interpretive perspective, the use of David in an Arthurian context, is also not surprising, given the topos of the Nine Worthies which began to appear near the beginning of the fourteenth century. The groupings of three pagan, three Jewish, and three Christian heroes serve as "a stock example of the transitoriness of earthly glory and the punishment of Pride."¹²⁶ Less and less during the later Middle Ages does David stand as a singular example of penitence and God's mercy; instead, he is incorporated into a broader historical perspective which seems to pit

¹²⁴Dove 26.

¹²⁵John Conlee, ed., *Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Anthology* (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991) 237.

¹²⁶John Finlayson, ed., *Morte Arthure* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967) 92, note to 3260ff. The pagans are Alexander, Hector, and Caesar; the Jews are Joshua, David, and Maccabeus; and the Christians are Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey de Bouillon. Godfrey is frequently replaced by another hero, based on the preferences of the writer.

men against women, suggesting that if men have made a mess of the world, it is only because women have forced them into irrational choices and decisions. It is as if men are wallowing in Adam's response to God in Gen. 3:12, "The woman, whom thou gavest to me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat." The topos is interesting, not because it is specifically antifeminist, but because David is given a role which continues to suppress the Bathsheba episode and maintain him as a type of the superior male.

The Nine Worthies appear in several works, most notably in the *Parliament of the Thre Ages* (mid-fourteenth century), the *Morte Arthure* (c. 1380-1440), and in Caxton's preface to Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485). Caxton chooses to use the Worthies because, by accepting Malory's book, "The sayd noble jentylmen instantly requyred me t'emprynte th' ystorye of the sayd noble kyng and conquerour Kyng Arthur and his knyghtes."¹²⁷ His is also one of the latest literary usages of them.¹²⁸

The *Morte Arthure*, over fifty years earlier, "is an isolated work. There is nothing quite like it in the literature of the Alliterative Revival . . . [and it is] a rare

¹²⁷Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, Eugene Vinaver, ed., 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) xiii.

¹²⁸See Roger Sherman Loomis, "Verses on the Nine Worthies," *Modern Philology* 15.4 (1917): 19-27, for an examination of the topos in Latin, French, German, and English. He indicates that it was widely popular during the fifteenth century and found expression in art work and theatrical presentations, as well as in verse and song.

example of a mode of poetry which had been replaced by the romance."¹²⁹ Of note in this fascinating text is the use of the Nine Worthies in section five, "Arthur's Dream of the Wheel of Fortune." In this Fellini-esque montage of images, David is the sixth figure arrayed on the Wheel of Fortune to appear to Arthur:

The sexte had a sawtere semliche bownden
 With a surepel of silke sewede full faire,
 A harpe and hande-slynge with harde flynte-stones;
 What harmes he has hente, he halowes full sone:
 "I was demede in my dayes," he said, "of dedis of armes
 One of the doughtyeste, that duellede in erthe;
 Bot I was merride one molde in my moste strengethis
 With this mayden so mylde, that mofes us all." (ll. 3316-3323)¹³⁰

Striking here is the absence of reference to lechery, lust, or sin, the absence of any reference to Bathsheba, and the ironic reference to Dame Fortune as "this mayden so mylde." David is recognized for the "sawtere," a book given royal treatment in purple silk, and the "harms he has hent"--an oblique reference to his sins--which appear to be already forgiven. There is an implication here that his multiple sins of lust, adultery, and murder, and perhaps his marriage to Bathsheba, were his undoing--and that the blame should be placed on Dame Fortune. There is a sense of prediction in David's comments to Arthur that is more indicative of what will happen to Arthur rather than to what actually happened to David. If David had not valued himself so highly, perhaps he would not have experienced the difficulties he did in the latter part of his reign. It could be argued that David's reign after his adultery was a troubled

¹²⁹John Finlayson, ed., *Morte Arthure* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967) 11.

¹³⁰Finlayson 94.

one, but that God never removed his hand from David as He did with Saul. David's immediate penance is what saved him from even greater divine wrath, as Nathan tells him. The implications of David's statements should not have been lost on Arthur. The reference is unique for its oblique qualities of reference to the Biblical narrative.

Such is not the case with the *Parliament of the Thre Ages*. The Worthies appear in the central section of the poem, and are "the only other notable English treatment of the subject."¹³¹ David appears as part of Old Age's long speech to Middle Age and Youth, during which he reminds them that no matter how great a man becomes, death is the final door for all:

Than Daid the doughty, thurghe Drightynes sonde,
 Was caughte from keypyng of schepe & a kyng made.
 The grete grym Golyas he to grounde broghte,
 And sloughe hym with his slyng & with no sleghte elles.
 The stone thurghe his stele helme stong into his brayne,
 And he was dede of that dynt--the deuyll hafe that wreche!
 And than was Daid full dere to Drightyn Hymselfen,
 And was a prophete of pryse and praysed full ofte.
 Bot yit greued he his God gretely ther-aftire,
 For Vrye his awnn knyghte in aventure he wysede,
 There he was dede at that dede, as dole es to here;
 For Bersabee his awn birde was alle þat bale rerede. (ll. 442-454)¹³²

Old Age moralizes on the sin with Bathsheba, indicating that David ruined an otherwise noble life by attempting to satisfy his lady. The view contains stock antifeminism, yet does not elaborate on the dangers of sexual deceit, as in the *Morte Arthure*. The most striking contrast is between the killing of Goliath as the work of a

¹³¹Finlayson, 91-92, note.

¹³²Conlee, *Debate Poetry* 126-127.

strong purposeful king, and the killing of Uriah as the work of a man who has lost touch with his connection to God. The disruption is brought about by the sense of luxury a man can experience when he succumbs to his desires; kingship and knighthood are threatened when the senses are overpowered, a much clearer idea than in the *Morte*.

One view of the *Morte Arthure* is that it makes Arthur the model for being Britain's King David; that the parallels between the biblical account of David's life, and those recounted in the *Morte* "are not results of definite allusions so much as they are a structure that grounds and traditionalizes the shape of Arthur's career."¹³³ Just as the Church Fathers shaped and molded the interpretations of David's life for popular consumption, so, too, did the writers and shapers of Arthur's life in the various versions which circulated throughout Europe. "Arthur in the *Morte Arthure* stands in an exemplary light which radiates from the *exemplum* of David in the Books of Kings: he is the magnificent king who also sinned grievously, suffered accordingly, and finally survived his fall by the grace of God."¹³⁴ Without doubt, David's life and typology formed a significant part of Middle Ages religious belief; his inclusion in the Nine Worthies, giving him a direct tie to Arthur, would suggest that in the popular mind such an association between the two would not be unrealistic. On two major occasions David offered immediate atonement for his sins, an action Arthur

¹³³R.A. Shoaf, "The Alliterative *Morte Arthure*: The Story of Britain's David," *Journal of English and German Philology* 81.2 (1982): 207.

¹³⁴Shoaf 212.

imitates at Gawain's death (ll. 3965ff.), and his own (ll. 4312ff.):

David and Arthur both were human in an all too human world, proud and humble by turns; both were sinners and men of violence; both were lovers of power and victims of power. And yet the one was an ancestor and a *figura* of the Messiah; while the other is the *rex quondam rexque futurus*, for whom the Kingdom of Logres still waits, groaning and travailing.¹³⁵

The comparison of David and Arthur is certainly worthy of further consideration, given the place Arthurian lore came to occupy during the Middle Ages. Arthur may be seen as embodying the highest qualities of the Christian king, a worthy successor to David in the typology of a changing world. The sins of a distant Old Testament king, presented in imagery adapted to the times, are easier to comprehend in a king like Arthur who, though still somewhat remote, reflects the values and beliefs of English society. The emphasis which occurs here is that of changing values and perspectives, the key, perhaps, to understanding the changes of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries in England.

With the Arthur of Malory and the alliterative *Morte* came a relative balance between Christian and secular typologies. The Bible seemed to be treated by lay writers as less a source of religious belief than as a book from which to mine homelier examples of conduct and morals. Such examples could be aimed more directly at the prelates and politicians who were exhibiting traits not consonant with their own directives and teachings. The fifteenth century in England is notable for the marked absence of the David and Bathsheba story, or even stories of Goliath and of

¹³⁵Shoaf 226.

Jonathan. And aside from the religious manuals discussed earlier, there is little evidence of poetry and drama which treats the episode with any type of significant attention. Even the sermon manuals were more oblique in their references to the story.

There is one work, however, that does appear during the apparent drought of David and Bathsheba stories, and that is Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale," c. 1388-89, one of the great fabliaux of the Middle Ages. Chaucer's bawdy comic tale combines numerous biblical elements in an adulterous episode which bears some intriguing resemblances to the David and Bathsheba episode. Since the intent of many fabliaux was "burlesquing the values and behavior of the courtly system,"¹³⁶ Chaucer takes great delight in using a scene from the life of one of the sacred icons of biblical typology and satirizing it. The clerk, Hende Nicholas, desires to sleep with John the Carpenter's wife, Alisoun, but must get John out of the way. Using the ruse of a coming flood, Nicholas convinces John to remain in a tub under the roof of the house for his own safety. In this way Nicholas is able to spend his evening of delight with Alisoun. However, Absolon, the parish clerk, also has designs on Alisoun and intrudes into Nicholas' plans for the denouement of the tale.

Chaucer's use of Davidic imagery--Nicholas playing the psaltery; his singing two songs to Alisoun (one of which may be the Fiftieth Psalm); John in a tub under the roof; a rival to Nicholas named Absolon, after David's son who does ravish his

¹³⁶John H. Fisher, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1989) 8.

wives--may well be part of Chaucer's sly debunking of a popular topos:

Having Nicholas sing David's great psalm of penitence has the additional attraction of introducing in the *Miller's Tale*, at least by implication, the triangle of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah. And surely Nicholas' plan to get John the Carpenter out of the way so that he can take his pleasure with the Carpenter's wife, is at least crudely analogous to David's desire for Bathsheba and his plan to eliminate Uriah. And both Nicholas and David carry out their plans with marked success, though in both cases they come to regret what they have done.¹³⁷

Such speculation is not unwarranted, considering particularly that the Christian humanism of the Italian Renaissance, through the works of Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Tasso, were having an important influence in England during this period. What Nicholas of Lyra had begun with his repositioning of Patristic interpretations was affecting how typology was being treated.

Such a shift in emphasis, along with the social and political changes of the later Middle Ages, would make it reasonable to expect that the position of David as a type of Christ and the emblem of sincere penitence would change. That Chaucer had ties to the Lollard movement may certainly help to explain the revised attitude toward the David and Bathsheba story which materialized finally in the sixteenth century; that the Lollards used a considerable part of Nicholas of Lyra's writings to free the Bible from patristic thought suggests that Hende Nicholas may well be Chaucer's satiric view of the changing attitudes toward biblical exegesis. While it is impossible to

¹³⁷John Conlee, "The 'Kynges Noote' and Biblical Parody in the *Miller's Tale*." Unpublished manuscript of a paper presented at the Southeastern Medieval Association Conference in New Orleans, September 1993.

know the truth of the matter with any degree of certainty, it is still possible to view the *Miller's Tale* as a statement on the flux in which the Church found itself as it verged on the Reformation. Though the actual events which precipitated the Reformation were still over one hundred years away, the ideas of change were already present during the latter half of the fourteenth century; Chaucer's broadness of humor and pointed usage of popular biblical topoi may well reflect Lollard attitudes toward the necessity of change. In the short prologue to the tale, The Miller apologizes for his story because "I am dronke, . . . / And therefore if that I mysspeke or seye, / Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye" (ll. 3138-3140); Chaucer also apologizes at the end of the prologue, saying that he does not repeat this tale for any "yvel entente, but that I moot reherce / Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse" (ll. 3173-3174). The double justification suggests not only Chaucer's desire to not offend anyone, but also to alert his readers to criticisms that would have been common in the popular discussions of his time. Chaucer may not be taking sides in the debate over a vernacular Bible, or Wyclif's doctrines on faith and belief, but he is certainly having a great deal of fun with them. It is an area for further discussion and development.

CHAPTER III

David, Bathsheba, and The Early English Renaissance

In spiritual matters at least, the medieval world was one of absolutes, operating as it did with a single principal religion, and a group of emerging nations that bowed, however unwillingly at times, to the authority of the Roman Catholic pope. Yet from the reign of Henry II (1159-1189) onward, the delicate balance between the religious necessities dictated by the Church and the political exigencies of nationalism reflected increasing tensions between popes and monarchs. The fourteenth century in particular was the time of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church at Avignon and the Great Schism of 1378, both important components of the Hundred Years' War between England and France. The instability of secular and ecclesiastical authority was aggravated further with the devastating effects of the Black Death beginning in 1348, and reappearing with regularity for the remainder of the century.

In the midst of this turmoil came the call for a vernacular Bible in order "to express the religious and political self-awareness of the peoples of Europe."¹³⁸

¹³⁸Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World*, Trans. Janet Sondheimer (New York: New American Library, 1962) 368.

Latin, the official language of discourse between Church and State, was seen increasingly as a language "which symbolized the domination of the Curia and canon lawyers."¹³⁹ The urgency was based on the desire of many secular leaders for ordinary people to have access to the Bible's message:

in England the Oxford professor John Wyclif expounded heretical views on the sacraments, condemned the priesthood for its corruption, and claimed that the ultimate authority in religious matters was not the pope but the Bible. . . . Wyclif's followers, the Lollards, spread their doctrines by preaching and promoting the reading of the Bible; they provided a faith built on personal experience.¹⁴⁰

Wyclif's views were to lead to his formal condemnation by the Church as a heretic, resulting in his forced retirement from public view in 1381. Nearly forty years after his death in 1384, his bones were dug up and scattered on the ground because it was only then that the Inquisition realized the full force of the changes he had wrought in the treatment of Scripture.

John Wyclif is important to the history of biblical interpretation because he believed that to rid the Church and State of their equally bothersome rivalries, it was necessary to provide greater access to the Bible for all levels of society. He believed that if the Bible "was God's law, which should be asserted over the accretions of canon law that had usurped its place, then it should be known to those, clergy or

¹³⁹Heer 368.

¹⁴⁰Norman Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993) 500.

laity, who had the duty of seeing that it was observed in England."¹⁴¹ In other words, if the Bible was cleansed of its accumulated clutter, then society could indeed function as the proper Christian community envisioned by Augustine in *City of God*. To this end, Wyclif exerted considerable effort toward the dissemination of an English vernacular text of the Bible.

The evidence suggests, however, that Wyclif himself did not translate the Bible; rather his followers, Nicholas Hereford and John Purvey, between 1380 and 1395-97, produced a variety of versions which were not collated into a single volume until 1890. The Lollards' translations were directed toward

removing the corruptions from versions of the Vulgate; a need to elucidate the text by using patristic commentary from the *Glossa Ordinaria*; creative work to be done in bending the vernacular for use in a biblical translation; finally, an immense task of writing, correcting, and rewriting the translation.¹⁴²

Their central aim was that all readers of Scripture be "encouraged first to understand the *sensus scripture*, and then to construct *argumenta* according to that sense, and thus to avoid sophistries."¹⁴³ In this way, the accretions of centuries could be stripped away to reveal the stark simplicity of the Christian message of salvation. It may be realistic to state that Wyclif's purpose, and one eventually realized during the

¹⁴¹Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford:Blackwell, 1992) 239.

¹⁴²Lambert 247.

¹⁴³Gillian R. Evans, "Wyclif's *Logic* and Wyclif's Exegesis: the Context," *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, eds. Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 299.

Reformation, was "for an open Bible . . . [in which] the Old and the New Testaments lay side by side in the same volume, open to all readers in their naked form."¹⁴⁴

There are approximately 180 copies of the various stages of the Lollard translations which survive. These are all hand-copied and raise the question of how widely disseminated they actually were among the common people. The Church, since 1079, had forbidden the translation of Scripture into the vernacular of any country, and in 1401 English bibles written before that year were collected and burned; even so, by the late-fourteenth century there existed a common perception that both the corruptions of the biblical text and those of the Church required an immediate reformation. Because of these burnings, it is questionable how influential a Wycliffite text of the Bible was upon English literature of the time. What Wyclif pursued in England did not disappear quietly but spread slowly, inexorably, across Europe. With the appearance of the printing press in 1455, it was only a matter of time before English vernacular translations of the entire Bible appeared in fairly rapid succession: William Tyndale's in 1525; Miles Coverdale's, 1535; Henry VIII's Great Bible in 1539; and the Puritan Geneva Bible in 1560. The Geneva Bible was:

one of the most influential translations of all times. It was the first English version to number the verses throughout. It was the first to use italics for words not in the MSS but added by the translators (a tradition adopted in the King James and many later Bibles.) Moreover, its Roman type and handy quarto size helped make it extremely popular. Sometimes called "the Bible of Shakespeare," it continued in popularity well into the

¹⁴⁴Roston 116.

17th century.¹⁴⁵

The Geneva Bible text is the one which affects most directly the writers of the English Renaissance simply because it had the widest circulation [see Appendices I and J for Geneva texts of II Kings (Samuel) and Psalm 51 (50)]. The Geneva text is notable for its amplification of the Latin in fleshing out the meanings and implications of the Vulgate text. Where, for example, Bathsheba "was greatly beautiful" in the Vulgate, she "was very beautiful to look upon" in the Geneva text. The overall moral tone is closer in spirit to that of Josephus than to Jerome, imparting to the entire episode a stronger description of sin and its punishment. Perhaps in their desire to achieve a more explicit morality in the story, the Puritan sense of absolute right and wrong filtered into their English translation. The result is a text in which there is no suppression of detail, no avoidance of David's overt sins, and certainly no exoneration of Bathsheba. The Geneva's gloss to verse 3, where David inquires who this woman is, states that Bathsheba "was not an Ifraelite borne, but conierted to the true religion,"¹⁴⁶ implying that she should know better because she would, as a convert, be more aware of the nature of culpable conduct.

In the aggregate, what these translations accomplished was to eliminate many monastic interpretations of biblical texts, as well as to bring about a reexamination of the various patristic views of the Bible. As mentioned previously, during the

¹⁴⁵David Lyle Jeffrey, ed., *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1992) 876.

¹⁴⁶Lloyd E. Berry, ed., *The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969) 140.

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there is a marked absence of specific references to the David and Bathsheba story, perhaps attributable directly to the unrest associated with the general discontent for the Church and its practices. The Nine Worthies topos and the prevalence of Arthurian literature seemed to receive a greater focus of interest as far as David is concerned, especially during the fifteenth century. This appears to be true of other Old Testament figures as well, such as Samson and Solomon. With the sixteenth century, however, come three prominent uses of the David and Bathsheba story which will serve to close this present survey: David as a member of a larger grouping of Old Testament, Classical, and historical men whose woes were brought about through the wiles of women; David as a model of "sexual profligacy;"¹⁴⁷ and David as "the model of a rake."¹⁴⁸

The first view of David, as one of a select group, is a continuation of a pattern observed in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in which a good man's fall or difficulty was precipitated by a woman's sexual temptation. This pattern is one which appears with increasing frequency in the poetry of the sixteenth century, usually in satires of women's foibles that are then answered pro or con in poetic defenses. The differing sides of medieval debate poems such as *The Thrush and the Nightingale* and *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* are here separated into individual poems which

¹⁴⁷Raymond-Jean Frontain, "Ruddy and goodly to look at withal: Drayton, Cowley, and the Biblical Model for Renaissance Hom[m]osexuality," *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 36 (1989): 12.

¹⁴⁸Raymond-Jean Frontain, "The Curious Frame of Chapman's *Ovid's Banquet of Sence*: 2 Samuel 11," *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 31 (1987): 38.

espouse only one side of the issue. In general, ". . . the subject matter [is] women primarily, and . . . the intent and attitude [are] exaggerated or controversial."¹⁴⁹ A complex set of ideas and beliefs are reflected in these poems that have antecedents to the Classical and Apostolic Eras, with the most prominent being the failure of women to be perfect exemplars of femininity. To this end, catalogues of women, "*florilegium*, a genre unnamed until the Renaissance,"¹⁵⁰ were created. Their purpose was "to transmit conventional wisdom and cultural consensus"¹⁵¹ as the authoritative compilations of what constituted the essential nature of women, both good and bad. Centuries earlier Walter Map, Henry II's unofficial court reporter, had created an influential dialogue between Valerius and Rufinus about why Rufinus should not take a wife. In Map's work Valerius states unequivocally that "the problem with matrimony is that it leads not to sin but to slavery."¹⁵² Map links three biblical women and a specialized group of women as indicative of his position: "Eve (disobedience), Bathsheba (bad influence), Delilah (deceit), and Solomon's harem (apostasy)."¹⁵³ Map further uses these women to indict Medea as the ultimate bad woman, one who combines all the negative individual traits of women into one

¹⁴⁹Francis Lee Utley, *The Crooked Rib: And Analytical Index to the Argument about Women in English and Scots Literature to the End of the Year 1568* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, 1944) vii.

¹⁵⁰Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1991) 11.

¹⁵¹McLeod 12.

¹⁵²McLeod 49.

¹⁵³McLeod 50.

soul.

Walter Map's dialogue, however, is an exception to the general trends of antifeminism in the early Middle Ages, being directed against marriage *per se* rather than against women in general. The satires and defenses popular four hundred years later reflect similar biases, and the same grouping of women returns in spectacular fashion, with Bathsheba figuring as a prominent member. Examples of such works are: Thomas Feylde's "A Contrauersye bytwene a loue and a Jaye" (1508), in which David is part of a group that includes Aristotle, Hercules, and Arthur; Gawin Douglas' "The prolog of the fourt buik of virgell Treting of the Incommoditie of lueve and Remeid pairof" (1513), with David's compatriots including Virgil, Narcissus, and Theseus, and where "women are counseled to choose Reason as guide rather than Venus;"¹⁵⁴ C. Pyrrye's "The Dispraise of Women" (1563-71), where Lot joins the list of David's fellow-travellers; and John Allde's "A godly ballad declaring by the Scriptures the plagues that haue insued whordome" (1566-67), which states, in principle, that men should

Avoid the lusts of youth, which sting like the serpent.
Remember the punishments which came to the generation
of Noah, to Pharaoh, Abimelech, the Sodomites, the
Sichemites, Potiphar's Wife, Bathsheba, Zimri, Samson,
Solomon, Herod, and many others. Pray to God that he
may save us from such sins and such punishments. And
God save our noble Queen!¹⁵⁵

A final example worth comment is that of William Lauder, a Scottish minister

¹⁵⁴Utley 309.

¹⁵⁵Utley 225.

who turned his hand to the occasional poem, producing in 1568 this charming, if somewhat bland, short verse which reflects the moral imperative of avoiding the snares of women. His is a sentiment typical of virtually all the satires directed against women:

The Butterflie, hir selfe for to distroye,
 Upone the nycht to flie Scho dois nocht stint
 Unto the candle,--sho taks thairof sick Ioye,--
 Quhill scho hirself in to the Flam haue brint.
 My tender freind, this in thy hart thow hint
 And haue It euer in thy momorye:
 Quha hants Hurdome, no dout he sall be tint,
 And Birne him self, as dois the Butterflie.

The sapient salomon, with wemen was confoundit,
 Thocht he was wysest that euer nature wrocht;
 The force of Samson, that in to strenth aboundit,
 Be Dalyla was suddellie out socht;
 The Propheit Dauid, full deir his loue he bocht,
 With mony mo that vsit sick vaniteis,
 Was dyuers wayis vnto confusioun brocht,
 And brint thame selffs, as dois the Butterfleis.

Quhairfor, my freinds, from fantasie refraine!
 Detest that Sin of vice and vanytie,
 Quhilk saule and bodie both dois bring to paine!
 Fle frome that lust, as from your Inymie!
 Syne, in this mateir, merk the Moralytie,
 And lat it be to yow ane trew Instructioun,
 Thay may be all compard vnto this Flie,
 That wyfullie dois wirk thair awin Distructioun.

Thocht men in Mariage, with thair maiks repair
 In Decent maner, no man suld It reproue,
 For of that Band God was the Minister,
 Ordand of him for our wealth and behoue.
 Sen this Commaud we haue from God aboue,
 Cheiflie for this, to hait all Harlottrie,
 Lat euerie one chuse thame thair lauchful Loue,

That lakis Holy gyft of Chaistetic.¹⁵⁶

Lauder's skillful manipulation of biblical quotations is directed to the end of "lauchfull Loue"--lawful love--which preserves the command of God "to hait all Harlottrie," implying that the majority of women are incapable of being anything but wanton creatures; men are fools, like butterflies, if they are attracted to the flame that will "brint thame selffs" and bring about their destruction.

The works which respond to the excessive denunciations of women in the satires never answer them by defending the particular women cited; nor, for that matter, do they defend the men accused. The defenses most frequently blame men for their inability to control themselves, just as Lauder does in the verse above. Works in praise of women, which most frequently borrow from Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*, and attempt to create a Nine Feminine Worthies topos, tend to reach into the Classical, rather than biblical, past for a more balanced view of women. It is safe to say that "the quarrel about women was endless because its arguments, example and *ad hominem*, could be turned either way. If the satirists urged that man alone was created from earth in God's image, the defenders asserted that woman, being made of man, was of finer stuff than earth."¹⁵⁷

Yet one of the more striking elements of the Renaissance was a re-examination of the roles women played in society and how men should look at them. The satire

¹⁵⁶Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of William Lauder, Playwright, Poet, and Minister of the Word of God* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1870) 39-40, Vol. of The Early English Text Society.

¹⁵⁷Utley 35.

and defense poetry gave way to a more explicit eroticism in which the very females who had been vilified for their amorous qualities were now adored as objects of desire. The walled garden became a symbol for those feminine attributes men desired most to partake of, in as luxurious a setting as possible. The awareness of the incessant march of time, with its threat of inevitable death, seemed to hasten the desire for the indulgence of sexual delight when the passions were ripe--not at some later time. The courtly tradition of the Middle Ages, with its sense of heightened, if not delayed, gratifications, gave way to a more blatant immediacy:

The presence of the beloved, her eyes, her gestures, her smile, her words, and above all objects that touched her body became sacred to the man who loved her. In profane as well as sacred love, a force, mysterious and divine, caused two hearts to beat as one. The love poetry of Ovid, Virgil, Dante, Petrarch, and the troubadours found prosaic and rather physical embodiment among aristocrats in the sixteenth century and among other classes in the centuries that followed.¹⁵⁸

Such a view is a marked contrast to the deprecation of women in the Middle Ages, "since the identification of misogyny with the desire for perfection is the site of . . . contradiction--a conflict between the keenness of the awareness of woman as flaw and the desire for wholeness, expressed in the persistent exhortation to virginity."¹⁵⁹

The awakening of humanist values in the Renaissance had the immediate effect of

¹⁵⁸Orest Ranum, "The Refuges of Intimacy," *Passions of the Renaissance*, Roger Chartier, ed., Arthur Goldhammer, Trans. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1989) 244-245, Vol. III of *A History of Private Life*, Philippe Ariès and George Duby, eds.

¹⁵⁹R. Howard Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," *Representations* 20 (1987): 15.

transforming women from objects of disdain into ones of desire. The problem with this change lay in attempting to incorporate the conventional notions of sin and sexuality, wherein woman provides the moral flaw, with emerging ideas of human beings as individuals, responsible for their personal conduct outside the confines of a prescribed and rigid religious moral code. To this end, the David and Bathsheba story was reinscribed yet again--three times removed from the original story--in order to mine the story for implications omitted or ignored during the previous one thousand years.

The new version of the story appeared in George Peele's *The Love of David and Fair Bethsabe, with the Tragedy of Absalon*, in 1588: "In sixteenth-century England . . . increasingly explicit descriptions of [David's] affair with Bathsheba caused his name to be associated with erotic matters, George Peele's dramatization of David's spying on Bathsheba naked in her bath being the most sensual scene to be presented on the Elizabethan stage."¹⁶⁰ Of significance is the fact that "Peele's is the only Elizabethan play on the subject of the House of David,"¹⁶¹ and thus stands in the same light as the Cornish *Ordinalia* as a singular example of the use of the story. David remains a model of repentance for the Elizabethans because Nathan's chiding still recalls for them the punishment for sin. The Renaissance had not eliminated guilt for misconduct; rather, it was a time in which the nature of such

¹⁶⁰Frontain, *Ruddy and Goodly* 12.

¹⁶¹Inga-Stina Ewbank, "The House of David in Renaissance Drama: A Comparative Study," *Renaissance Drama VIII*, S. Schoenbaum, ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965) 6.

misconduct was being questioned and reexamined in light of individual interpretations of vernacular scriptures. The use of David and Bathsheba was one in which

David's abuse of his political power ... is the result of the sensual usurpation of reason's power within him. This usurpation in turn is an aspect of the war between sin and faith in which God is invoked as a merciful ally against the feared enemy, but God is at the same time the threatening, wrathful judge whom men must fear and to whom they must submit. The proper mode of relation to this divine power is directly linked to the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, and hence to the temporal as well as spiritual power of the Church.¹⁶²

Peele's drama enters directly into this new view of human beings' relationship to the Bible and to previously accepted views by providing the depiction of an explicit sin followed by an equally explicit depiction of the sin's aftermath. What he accomplishes is a rapid telling of the entire book of II Kings, making a few slight emendations in the process, and placing the sin within the context of David's entire life. It is a fascinating exercise in revision.

The structure of Peele's drama is continuous, without scenes or act breaks, and the passage of time is marked twice by the appearance of a Chorus. The action of the play begins with a brief "Prologus," and the direction, "The Prologue-speaker, before going out, draws a curtain and discovers Bethsabe, with her maid, bathing over a spring, and David sits above viewing her."¹⁶³ Bathsheba is singing a song

¹⁶²Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) 126.

¹⁶³Dyce 465A.

which is a call to the sun and air to ease her passions, in words which paraphrase, and even parody, various verses of the Canticle of Canticles : "Let not my beauty's fire / In flame unstaid desire, / Nor pierce any bright eye / That wandereth lightly." Her sensual awareness as she bathes does inflame David watching from above, and he compares her seductive charms to those of "Fair Eva, . . . [who] Wrought not more pleasure to her husband's thoughts / Than this fair woman's words and notes to mine."¹⁶⁴

David then calls his servant Cusay to observe this wonder with him, invoking the metaphors of "new-hewn cedar" and "fine-perfumèd myrrh," terms which describe the Holy of Holies in the Temple Solomon will later build (cf. 3 Kings 6-7), as well as further reference to the Canticle of Canticles (cf. 3:6). Peele weaves the imagery of the Canticle into the entire opening scene, first in Bathsheba's speech, then in David's, creating a tone of excited sensualism and blatant sexuality. The topos of the Good Physician, used by the patristic commentators as an image of Christ's healing message, is here applied by David to his desire for Bathsheba:

DAVID

So since thy beauty scorch'd my conquer'd soul
I call'd thee nearer for my nearer cure.
. . . So come and taste thy ease with easing me.

BATHSHEBA

One medicine cannot heal our different harms;
But rather make both rankle at the bone;
Then let the king be cunning in his cure,
Lest flattering both, both perish in his hand.

¹⁶⁴Dyce 463B.

DAVID

Leave it to me, my dearest Bethsabe,
Whose skill is conversant in deeper cures.¹⁶⁵

The word play with the images of doctoring an illness are both a satirical rebuke of religious doctrine, and typical Renaissance imagery for sexual activity. The entire encounter is designed to excite and arouse the viewers, adding a note of danger inherent in all immediate gratifications of sinful desires. As David had earlier said to Cusay:

Bright Bethsabe shall wash, in David's bower,
In water mix'd with purest almond-flower,
And bathe her beauty in the milk of kids:
Bright Bethsabe gives earth to my desires;
Verdure to earth; and to that verdure flowers;
To flowers sweet odours; and to odours wings
That carry pleasures to the hearts of kings.¹⁶⁶

At first, Bathsheba demurs when Cusay requests her presence in David's rooms--"My lord the king, elect to God's own heart, / Should not his gracious jealousy incense / Whose thoughts are chaste: I hate incontinence"¹⁶⁷--but she as quickly capitulates. Her crossing the yard to come to David is remarked by him in images later immortalized in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book IX, when Satan approaches Eve for the temptation, and in language also implied in Adam's and Eve's eyes being opened after eating the forbidden fruit in Gen. 3:6-7:

Now comes my love tripping like the roe,
And brings my longings tangled in her hair.

¹⁶⁵Dyce 464B-465A.

¹⁶⁶Dyce 464A.

¹⁶⁷Dyce 464A.

To joy her love I'll build a kingly bower,
 Seated in hearing of a hundred streams,
 That, for their homage to her sovereign joys,
 Shall, as the serpents fold into their nests
 In oblique turnings, wind their nimble waves
 About the circles of her curious walks;
 And with their murmur summon easeful sleep
 To lay his golden sceptre on her brows.--
 Open the doors and entertain my love;
 Open, I say, and, as you open, sing,
 Welcome for Bethsabe, King David's darling.¹⁶⁸

Just before David and Bathsheba enter his chamber to satisfy their desires, David sends Cusay to Uriah, to bring him from the front lines at Ammon. In a departure from Scripture, Bathsheba makes no later announcement that she is pregnant, nor does she request that David needs to resolve the problem.

After the exit to David's chambers, Bathsheba is seen only two more times in the play: for a short speech after Uriah's death and the birth of the child, and at the end of the play to plead her case with David for Solomon's succession to the throne (cf. 3 Kings 11-31). In the first instance, her speech is a model of repentance for her sin, in what could pass for a paraphrase of Psalm Fifty, or a combination of various elements from all seven of the Penitential Psalms:

Mourn, Bethsabe, bewail thy foolishness,
 Thy sin, thy shame, the sorrow of thy soul:
 Sin, shame, and sorrow swarm about my soul,
 And, in the gates and entrance of my heart,
 Sadness, with wreathèd arms, hangs her complaint.
 No comfort from the ten-string'd instrument,
 The tinkling cymbal, or the ivory lute;
 Nor doth the sound of David's kingly harp
 Make glad the broken heart of Bethsabe:

¹⁶⁸Dyce 464B.

Jerusalem is fill'd with thy complaint,
 And in the streets of Sion sits thy grief.
 The Babe is sick, sick to the death, I fear,
 The fruit that sprung from thee to David's house;
 Nor may the pot of honey and of oil
 Glad David or his handmaid's countenance.
 Urias--wo is me to think hereon!
 For who is it among the sons of men
 That saith not to my soul, "The king hath sinn'd;
 David hath done amiss, and Bethsabe
 Laid snares of death into Urias' life?"
 My sweet Urias, fall'n into the pit
 Art thou, and gone even to the gates of hell
 For Bethsabe, that wouldst not shroud her shame.
 O, what is it to serve the lusts of kings!
 How lion-like they rage when we resist!
 But Bethsabe, in humbleness attend
 The grace that God will to his handmaid send.¹⁶⁹

The weaving of personal guilt and shame for her sin is considerably more powerful than the few short lines David speaks after his chastisement by Nathan: "Nathan, I have against the Lord, I have / Sinnèd; O, sinnèd grievously! and, lo, / From heaven's throne doth David throw himself, / And groan and grovel to the gates of hell!"¹⁷⁰ Strangely, his remorse for his sin is in the third person, in stark contrast to the obvious personal emotion of Bathsheba's powerful sense of penance: the hint of antifeminism is still in the air because David's impersonal use of the third person distances him from his sins and has the effect of placing blame squarely on Bathsheba.

Peele recounts the subsequent events much in accord with the narrative of II

¹⁶⁹Dyce 470A-B.

¹⁷⁰Dyce 471A.

Kings, namely, Absalom's treachery against his father, and then his death at Joab's hands. There seems to be little connection made by Peele between the Bathsheba episode and the subsequent events. David remains an aloof and unengaging character, even though the opening sequence presents a man moved by passion and desire. The balance of the play has a linear flatness to it which makes for an uninspired presentation of a remarkable figure.

Perhaps the value of the text may be found in the final comments of Peele's text editor:

The reader must not imagine that I consider Peele on a par with Marlowe as an improver of the English drama. I cannot but be aware that Marlowe had a more powerful intellect than Peele, and a far deeper insight into the human heart; yet, though Peele was quite unequal to the production of dramas so full of passion and pity as *Faustus* and *Edward the Second*, it may not be too much to assert that his *David and Bethsabe* vies in tenderness and poetic beauty with any of the plays of his sublime associate.¹⁷¹

To recall another critic from a later period, Peele's drama would be a better one were he a better dramatist. The momentary glimpse of eroticism was, perhaps, still an important step during the Renaissance for giving yet another twist to the significance of the David and Bathsheba story.

The interest of Peele's drama may well lie in the fact that it presents a new concept of man's relationship to God. By freeing the Old Testament from its rigid precursor relationship to the New Testament, Peele made his David and Bathsheba

¹⁷¹Dyce 346.

more human; their licentiousness and its associated crimes were no longer facts to be avoided, but were instead to be examined and understood as "both the rebellious longing to gratify the senses and the passionate, tearful craving for self-abasement and submission"¹⁷² to a more immediate and personal God. This is what Nicholas of Lyra had discovered when he looked at scripture through eyes not limited to the patristic interpreters, and which the Renaissance would bring into sharper relief.

From the seventeenth century onwards, writers, poets, and dramatists would produce

a wealth of new models drawn from the Old Testament rather than from the New. The Protestant recognized the impossibility of imitating the Christian Messiah in any but the lamest sense, and chose instead such mortal yet sacred models as Abraham, Moses, and David. The prefigurative method was largely swept aside as 'supersticion' and medieval shibboleth, and in its place arose a new respect and admiration for the ancient Hebrews struggling, often successfully, against sin and despair in their vision of the ultimate victory of righteousness.¹⁷³

Such indeed was the case as far as David was concerned. After Peele's singular drama, Thomas Fuller's *David's Heinous Sin, Hearty Repentance, and Heavy Punishment* (1631) and Abraham Cowley's *Davideis* (1656) were merely the beginning of a long series of works devoted to David and the fascinating events of his character and life. Byron, Browning, J.M. Barrie, Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, William Faulkner, and Joseph Heller are but a few of the writers who have seen in David's life and in his relationship with Bathsheba a paradigm of human existence.

¹⁷²Greenblatt 126.

¹⁷³Roston 108-109.

Perhaps their story has undergone the varieties of interpretation that it has simply because David and Bathsheba are so very human and alive in a book not usually associated with such emotions. Perhaps, in hindsight, it was necessary that Ambrose confront Theodosius as he did, and set in motion a train of ideas that had to undergo an astonishing series of permutations and variations before it returned to what it began as in the Bible: a unique and honest expression of human nature. That may well be what the Church Fathers intended all along; it just took a long time to get there.

Appendices

- A. English Translation of Latin Vulgate II Kings 11:1-12:1-25
- B. The Latin Vulgate Version of 2 Kings 11-12:1-25
- C. The Latin Vulgate Psalm 50
- D. Translation of Psalm 50
- E. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, From Book VII
- F. The David and Bathsheba Episode in the *Koran*
- G. The *Ancrene Wisse*, from Part II, *The Outer Senses*
- H. The Cornish *Ordinalia*, from Part I, *Beginning of the World*
- I. The Geneva Bible Version of 2 Kings 11-12:1-24
- J. The Geneva Bible Psalm 51

A. The Story of David and Bathsheba

Translated from the Vulgate, Second Book of Kings

11 1 And it happened at the end of the year, at the time when kings go forth to war, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all of Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabba; but David remained in Jerusalem.

2 And it happened after noon that David arose from his bed and walked on the balcony of the king's house. And he saw from the balcony a woman washing herself; moreover, the woman was greatly beautiful.

3 Therefore the king sent and inquired who the woman was; and it was told to him that she was Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, wife of Uriah the Hittite.

4 And so David sent messengers and took her; and she came to him, and he slept with her, and presently she was purified from her uncleanness.

5 And she returned to her house; she had also conceived, and she sent and told David and said, "I have conceived."

6 Therefore David sent to Joab, saying, "Send to me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David,

7 and Uriah came to David. And David asked how Joab did, and the people, and how the war was carried on;

8 and David said to Uriah: "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah departed from the house of the king; and the king sent to him a large quantity of meat.

9 But Uriah slept in front of the door of the king with all the other servants of his lord and did not go down to his house.

10 And it was told to David by some with authority: "Uriah did not go to his house." And David said to Uriah: "Did you not arrive from a journey? Why did you not go to your home?"

11 And Uriah said to David: "The Ark and Israel and Judah live in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord stay upon the face of the earth; and shall I go to my home to eat and to drink and to sleep with my wife? By your welfare and by the welfare of my soul, I will not do this thing!"

12 Therefore David said to Uriah: "Stay here today and tomorrow I will send you away." Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next.

13 Indeed David called him, how he should eat and drink before him, and he made him drunk. He went out in the evening and slept on his couch with the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his own house.

14 And, therefore, when the morning had come, David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah,

15 writing in the letter: "Place Uriah in the main battle, where the fight is greatest, and leave him there so that he may be struck down in battle."

16 Because Joab was besieging the city, he put Uriah in the place where he knew the bravest men were.

17 And the men coming out of the city fought against Joab; and there fell

some of the people, of the servants of David, and Uriah the Hittite was also killed.

18 Then Joab sent and told David all about the battle;

19 and he commanded the messenger, saying: "When you have told all the details of the battle to the king,

20 if you see him angry and he should say, 'Why did you go so near to the wall to fight? Did you not know that many spears are thrown from above, off the wall?

21 Who struck down Abimelech, the son of Jerobaal? Did not a woman throw a mill-stone upon him from the wall, and killed him in Thebes? Why did you go near the wall?', you say: 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.'"

22 Therefore the messenger departed and came and told David all that Joab had commanded him.

23 And the messenger said to David: "The men prevailed against us and they came out to us in the field, and we, fighting hard, pursued them as far as the gate of the city.

24 And the archers shot their arrows at your servants from the wall above; and many of the servant's of the king are dead, but indeed, your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead."

25 And David said to the messenger: "Say this to Joab: Do not let this thing discourage you; for various is the event of war and now this one, now that one is consumed by the sword; encourage your warriors against the city, that they destroy it. And you will overthrow it."

26 Then the wife of Uriah heard that her husband Uriah was dead and she mourned him.

27 And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her into his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. And displeasing to God was this thing David had done.

12 1 Therefore God sent Nathan to David. When he was come to him, he said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor;

2 the rich man had a great many sheep and oxen.

3 But the poor man had nothing at all except one little ewe lamb, which he bought and nourished, which had grown up in his house together with his children, eating of his bread and drinking from his cup and sleeping in his bosom; and it was to him like a daughter.

4 And when a certain stranger visited the rich man, he refrained from taking of his own sheep and oxen, to prepare a feast for that stranger, who had come to him, but took the ewe of the poor man and prepared it for the man who was come to him."

5 The indignation of David against this man was very much wrathful and he said to Nathan: "As the Lord lives, such a man is a child of death, who has done this,

6 he should restore the sheep fourfold, because he did this thing and did not have pity."

7 Then Nathan said to David: "You are that man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I anointed you in rulership over Israel and I rescued you from the hand of

Saul,

8 and gave to you the house of your master and the wives of your master into your bosom and anointed you king of Israel and of Judah and, if these are too little, I will add to you greater things.

9 Why therefore have you contempt for the word of God, and done evil in his sight? You have slain Uriah the Hittite and taken his wife to become your wife and killed him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10 Thus this thing will never depart from your house and will be there for ever more, because you have despised me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and made her your wife.

11 This is what the Lord said: Behold I will stir up evil against you from your own house and I will take your wives in front of your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he will sleep with your wives in the sight of this sun.

12 Because you did this secretly, truly I will do this in the sight of all Israel and in the sight of the sun."

13 And David said to Nathan: "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David: "The Lord has already taken away your sin; you will not die.

14 Nevertheless, because you have given opportunity to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child who is born to you will surely die."

15 And Nathan went out to his own house. And the Lord struck the child, which the wife of Uriah had borne to David, and his life was despaired of;

16 and David pleaded to the Lord for the life of the child and David fasted and going into the house lay upon the earth.

17 And the old people of his house came to him in order to make him get up from the earth; but he would not do this, nor would he eat meat with them.

18 And it happened on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the baby was dead; they said to each other: "Behold, when the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not listen to our voices. Now, if we say: 'The baby is dead?', how much more will he afflict himself!"

19 Therefore when David saw his servants whispering, he understood that the baby was dead and said to his servants: "Surely the child is dead?" They answered to him: "He is dead."

20 David raised himself from the earth and washed and anointed himself; and when he had changed his garments, he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped and then came into his own house, and he asked for some bread, and he ate.

21 Then his servants said to him: "What is this you have done? While the infant was yet alive you fasted and wept; now that the child is dead, you rise up and eat bread."

22 He said: "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept for him. Because I said: Who knows, if the Lord will not give him to me, and the child might live?

23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Shall I be able to bring him

back to me any more? I will go to him instead, but he will not return to me."

24 And David consoled his wife Bathsheba and went in to her, and slept with her, and she bore a son; and he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him

25 and he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet and called his name Jedidiah (that is, Beloved of the Lord) because the Lord loved him.

B. The Vulgate Version, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979

II Regnum 11:1 - 12:24

11 1 Factum est autem vertente anno, eo tempore, quo solent reges ad bella procedere, misit David Ioab et servos suos cum eo et universum Israel, et vastaverunt filios Ammon et obsederunt Rabba; David autem remansit in Ierusalem.

2 Et factum est vespere, ut surgeret David de strato suo et deambularet in solario domus regiae. Veditque de solario mulierem se lavantem; erat autem mulier pulchra valde.

3 Misit ergo rex et requisivit quae esset mulier; nuntiatumque ei est quod ipsa esset Bethsabee filia Eliam uxor Uriae Hetthaei.

4 Missa itaque David nuntiis, tulit eam; quae cum ingressa esset ad illum, dormivit cum ea, quae se sanctificaverat ab immunditia sua.

5 Et reversa est domum suam; cum autem concepisset, mittens nuntiavit David et ait: "Concepi."

6 Misit autem David ad Ioab dicens: "Mitte ad me Uriam Hetthaeum." Misitque Ioab Uriam ad David,

7 et venit Urias ad David. Quaesivitque David quam recte ageret Ioab et populus, et quomodo administraretur bellum;

8 et dixit David ad Uriam: "Descende in domum tuam et lava pedes tuos." Et egressus est Urias de domo regis; secutusque est eum cibus regius.

9 Dormivit autem Urias ante portam domus regiae cum aliis servis domini sui et non descendit ad domum suam.

10 Nuntiatumque est David a dicentibus: "Non ivit Urias ad domum suam." Et ait David ad Uriam: "Numquid non de via venisti? Quare non descendisti ad domum tuam?"

11 Et ait Urias ad David: "Arca et Israel et Iuda habitant in papilionibus, et dominus meus Ioab et servi domini mei super faciem terrae manent; et ego ingrediar domum meam, ut comedam et bibam et dormiam cum uxore mea? Per salutem tuam et per salutem animae tuae, non faciam rem hanc!"

12 Ait ergo David ad Uriam: "Mane hic etiam hodie, et cras dimittam te." Mansit Urias in Ierusalem die illa et altera.

13 Vocavit enim eum David, ut comederet coram se et biberet, et inebriavit eum. Qui egressus vespere dormivit in strato suo cum servis domini sui et in domum suam non descendit.

14 Factum est ergo mane, et scripsit David epistulam ad Ioab misitque per manum Uriae

15 scribens in epistula: "Ponite Uriam in prima acie, ubi fortissimum est proelium, et recedite ab eo, ut percussis intereat."

16 Igitur cum Ioab obsideret urbem, posuit Uriam in loco, quo sciebat viros esse fortissimos.

17 Egressique viri de civitate bellabant adversum Ioab; et ceciderunt de populo, de servis David, et mortuus est etiam Urias Hetthaeus.

18 Misit itaque Ioab et nuntiavit David omnia de proelio;

19 praeceptique nuntio dicens: "Cum compleveris universos sermones proelii ad regem,

20 si eum videris indignari et dixerit: 'Quare accessistis ad urbem, ut proeliaremini? An ignorabatis quod desuper ex muro tela mittantur?

21 Quis percussit Abimelech filium Ierobaal? Nonne mulier misit super eum molam versatilem de muro, et mortuus est in Thebes? Quare iuxta murum accessistis?', dices: Etiam servus tuus Urias Hetthaeus occubuit."

22 Abiit ergo nuntius et venit et narravit David omnia, quae ei praeceperat Ioab.

23 Et dixit nuntius ad David: "Quia praevaluerunt adversum nos viri et egressi sunt ad nos in agrum, nos, facto impetu, persecuti eos sumus usque ad portam civitatis.

24 Et direxerunt iacula sagittarii ad servos tuos ex muro desuper; mortuique sunt de servis regis, quin etiam servus tuus Urias Hetthaeus mortuus est."

25 Et dixit David ad nuntium: "Haec dices Ioab: Non te affligat ista res; varius enim eventus est belli et nunc hunc, nunc illum consumit gladius; corrobora proelium tuum adversum urbem, ut destruas eam. Et tu conforta eum."

26 Audivit autem uxor Uriae quod mortuus esset Urias vir suus et planxit eum.

27 Transactoque luctu, misit David et introduxit eam domum suam, et factus est ei uxor peperitque ei filium. Et displicuit, quod fecerat David, coram Domino.

12 1 Misit ergo Dominus Nathan ad David. Qui cum venisset ad eum, dixit ei: "Duo viri erant in civitate una, unus dives et alter pauper;

2 dives habebat oves et bobes plurimos valde.

3 Pauper autem nihil habebat omnino praeter ovem unam parvulam, quam emerat et nutrierat, et quae creverat apud eum cum filiis eius simul de pane illius comedens et de calice eius bibens et in sinu illius dormiens; eratque illi sicut filia.

4 Cum autem peregrinus quidam venisset ad divitem, parcens ille sumere de ovibus et de bobus suis, ut exhiberet convivium peregrino illi, qui venerat ad se, tulit ovem viri pauperis et praeparavit cibos homini, qui venerat ad se."

5 Iratus autem indignatione David adversum hominem illum nimis dixit ad Nathan: "Vixit Dominus, quoniam filius mortis est vir, qui fecit hoc;

6 ovem reddet in quadruplum, eo quod fecerit istud et non pepercerit."

7 Dixit autem Nathan ad David: "Tu es ille vir! Haec dicit Dominus Deus Israel: Ego unxi te in regnum super Israel et ego erui te de manu Saul;

8 et dedi tibi domum domini tui et uxores domini tui in sinu tuo dedique tibi domum Israel et Iudae et, si parva sunt ista, adiciam tibi multo maiora.

9 Quare ergo contempsisti verbum Domini, ut faceres malum in conspectu eius? Uriam Hetthaeum percussisti gladio et uxorem illius accepisti uxorem tibi et interfecisti eum gladio filiorum Ammon.

10 Quam ob rem non recedet gladius de domo tua usque in sempiternum, eo quod despexeris me et tuleris uxorem Uriae Hetthaei, ut esset uxor tua.

11 Itaque haec dicit Dominus: Ecce ego suscitabo super te malum de domo tua et tollam uxores tuas in oculis tuis et dabo proximo tuo, et dormiet cum uxoribus tuis in oculis solis huius.

12 Tu enim, fecisti abscondite; ego vero faciam istud in conspectu omnis Israel et in conspectu solis."

13 Et dixit David ad Nathan: "Peccavi Domino." Dixitque Nathan ad David: "Dominus quoque transtulit peccatum tuum; non morieris.

14 Verumtamen quoniam blasphemare fecisti inimicos Domini propter hoc, filius, qui natus est tibi, morte morietur."

15 Et reversus est Nathan domum suam. Percussitque Dominus parvulum, quem peperat uxor Uriae David, et graviter aegrotavit;

16 deprecatusque est David Dominum pro parvulo et ieiunavit David ieiunio et ingressus domum pernoctabat iacens super terram.

17 Steterunt autem seniores domus eius iuxta eum cogentes eum, ut surgeret de terra; qui noluit neque comedit cum eis cibum.

18 Accidit autem die septima, ut moreretur infans. Timueruntque servi David nuntiare ei quod mortuus esset parvulus; dixerunt enim: "Ecce, cum parvulus adhuc viveret, loquebamur ad eum, et non audiebat vocem nostram. Nunc quomodo dicemus: 'Mortuus est puer?' Peius patrabit!"

19 Cum ergo vidisset David servos suos mussitantes, intellexit quod mortuus esset infantulus dixitque ad servos suos: "Num mortuus est puer?" Qui responderunt ei: "Mortuus est."

20 Surrexit igitur David de terra et lotus unctusque est; cumque mutasset vestem, ingressus est domum Domini et adoravit et venit in domum suam petivitque, ut ponerent ei panem, et comedit.

21 Dixerunt autem ei servi sui: "Quid est quod fecisti? Propter infantem, cum adhuc viveret, ieiunasti et flebas; mortuo autem puero, surrexisti et comedisti panem."

22 Qui ait: "Propter infantem, dum adhuc viveret, ieiunavi et flevi. Dicebam enim: Quis scit, si forte miserebitur mei Dominus, et vivet infans?"

23 Nunc autem, quia mortuus est, quare ieiuno? Numquid potero revocare eum amplius? Ego vadam magis ad eum, ille vero non revertetur ad me."

24 Et consolatus est David Bethsabee uxorem suam ingressusque ad eam dormivit cum ea, quae genuit filium; et vocavit nomen eius Salomon. Et Dominus dilexit eum

25 misitque in manu Nathan prophetae et vocavit nomen eius Iedidia (id est Amabilis Domino) propter Dominum.

C. Psalmus 50

- 1 *Magistro chori. Psalmus. David,*
2 *cum venit ad eum Nathan propheta,*
 postquam cum Bethsabee peccavit.
- 3 Miserere mei, Deus, secundum misericordiam tuam;
 et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam.
- 4 Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea
 et a peccato meo munda me.
- 5 Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco,
 et peccatum meum contra me est semper.
- 6 Tibi, tibi soli peccavi et malum coram te feci,
 ut iustus inveniaris in sententia tua et aequus in iudicio tuo.
- 7 Ecce enim in iniquitate generatus sum,
 et in peccato concepit me mater mea.
- 8 Ecce enim veritatem in corde dilexisti
 et in occulto sapientiam manifestasti mihi.
- 9 Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor;
 lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.
- 10 Audire me facies gaudium et laetitiam,
 et exsultabunt ossa, quae contrivisti.
- 11 Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis
 et omnes iniquitates meas dele.
- 12 Cor mundum crea in me, Deus,
 et spiritum firmum innova in viceribus meis.
- 13 Ne proicias me a facie tua
 et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.
- 14 Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui
 et spiritu promptissimo confirma me.
- 15 Docebo iniquos vias tuas,
 et impii ad te convertentur.
- 16 Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meae,
 et exsultabit lingua mea iustitiam tuam.
- 17 Domine, labia mea aperies,
 et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.
- 18 Non enim sacrificio delectaris,
 holocaustum, si offeram, non placebit.
- 19 Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus,
 cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.
- 20 Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion,
 ut aedificentur muri Ierusalem.
- 21 Tunc acceptabis sacrificium iustitiae, oblationes et holocausta;
 tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.

D. Author's Translation of Psalm 50

- 1 To the Master of the Choir. A Psalm. David,
- 2 after he came away from Nathan the prophet,
and after his sin with Bathsheba.
- 3 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy;
and according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my iniquity.
- 4 Further, wash me from my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 5 Because I know my iniquity
and my sin is always before me.
- 6 To you, to you only I have sinned, and have done evil before you,
that you may be justified in your words and may overcome when you are
judged.
- 7 Behold I was conceived in iniquities;
and in sins my mother conceived me.
- 8 Behold you have loved truth
and made manifest to me the hidden things of your wisdom.
- 9 Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I will be cleansed;
wash me, and I will become whiter than snow.
- 10 To my hearing you will give joy and gladness,
and my humbled bones shall rejoice.
- 11 Turn away your face from my sins
and blot out all of my iniquities.
- 12 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a strong spirit within my bowels.
- 13 Do not cast me away from your face
and do not remove your holy spirit from me.
- 14 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.
- 15 I will teach the unjust your ways,
and the impious will be converted to you.
- 16 Deliver me from blood, O God, God of my salvation,
and my tongue will extol your justice.
- 17 O Lord, open my lips.
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 18 Sacrifices would not please you,
burnt offerings, if presented, would not satisfy you.
- 19 A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit,
a contrite and humbled heart, O God, you will not despise.
- 20 Deal favorably, O Lord, in your good will with Sion,
that the walls of Jerusalem will be built up.
- 21 Then you will accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations, and burnt offerings;
then will they place calves upon your altar.

E. From Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, Vol. II, Book 7, Ch. 7

Trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974)

pp. 436-440

**How David Fell in Love with Bathsheba, and Slew Her Husband
Uriah, for Which He is Reproved by Nathan**

1. But David fell now into a very grievous sin, though he were otherwise naturally a righteous and a religious man, and one that firmly observed the laws of our fathers; for when late in an evening he took a view round him from the roof of his royal palace, where he used to walk at that hour, he saw a woman washing herself in her own house: she was one of extraordinary beauty, and therein surpassed all other women; her name was Bathsheba. So he was overcome by that woman's beauty, and was not able to restrain his desires, but sent for her, and lay with her. Hereupon she conceived with child, and sent to the king, that he should contrive some way for concealing her sin (for according to the laws of their fathers, she who had been guilty of adultery ought to be put to death). So the king sent for Joab's armor-bearer from the siege, who was the woman's husband; and his name was Uriah: and when he was come, the king inquired of him about the army, and about the siege; and when he had made answer, that all their affairs went according to their wishes the king took some portions of meat from his supper, and gave them to him, and bade him go home to his wife, and take rest with her. Uriah did not do so, but slept near the king with the rest of his armor-bearers. When the king was informed of this, he asked him why he did not go home to his house, and to his wife, after so long an absence; which is the natural custom of all men, when they come from a long journey. He replied, that it was not right, while his fellow-soldiers, and the general of the army, slept upon the ground, in the camp, and in the enemy's country, that he should go and take his rest, and solace himself with his wife. So when he had thus replied, the king ordered him to stay there that night, that he might dismiss him the next day to the general. So the king invited Uriah to supper, and after a cunning and dexterous manner plied him with drink at supper till he was thereby disordered; yet did he nevertheless sleep at the king's gates, without any inclination to go to his wife. Upon this the king was very angry at him; and wrote to Joab, and commanded him to punish Uriah, for he told him that he had offended him; and he suggested to him the manner in which he would have him punished, that it might not be discovered that he was himself the author of this punishment; for he charged him to set him over against that part of the enemy's army where the attack would be most hazardous, and where he might be deserted, and be in the greatest jeopardy; for he bade him order his fellow-soldiers to retire out of the fight. When he had written thus to him, and sealed the letter with his own seal, he gave it to Uriah to carry to Joab. When Joab had received it, and upon reading it understood the king's purpose, he set Uriah in that place where he knew the enemy would be most troublesome to them; and gave him

for his partners some of the best soldiers in the army; and said that he would come to their assistance with the whole army, that if possible they might break down some part of the wall, and enter the city. And he desired him to be glad of the opportunity of exposing himself to such great pains, and not to be displeased at it, since he was a valiant soldier, and had a great reputation for his valor, both with the king and with his countrymen. And when Uriah understood the work he was set upon with alacrity, he gave private orders to those who were to be his companions, that when they saw the enemy make a sally, they should leave him. When, therefore, the Hebrews made an attack upon the city, the Ammonites were afraid that the enemy might prevent them, and get up into the city, and this at the very place whither Uriah was ordered; so they exposed their best soldiers to be in the forefront, and opened their gates suddenly, and fell upon the enemy with great vehemence and ran violently upon them. When those that were with Uriah saw this, they all retreated backward, as Joab had directed them beforehand; but Uriah, as ashamed to run away and leave his post, sustained the enemy, and receiving the violence of their onset, he slew many of them; but being encompassed round, and caught in the midst of them, he was slain, and some other of his companions were slain with him.

2. When this was done, Joab sent messengers to the king, and ordered them to tell him that he did what he could to take the city soon; but that as they made an assault on the wall, they had been forced to retire with great loss; and bade them, if they saw the king angry at it, to add this, that Uriah was slain also. When the king had heard this of the messengers, he took it heinously, and said that they did wrong when they assaulted the wall, whereas they ought, by undermining and other stratagems of war, to endeavor the taking of the city, especially when they had before their eyes the example of Abimelech, the son of Gideon, who would needs take the tower in Thebes by force, and was killed by a large stone thrown at him by an old woman; and, although he was a man of great prowess, he died ignominiously by the dangerous manner of his assault. That they should remember this accident, and not come near the enemy's wall, for that the best method of making war with success was to call to mind the accidents of former wars, and what good or bad success had attended them in the like dangerous cases, that so they might imitate this one, and avoid the other. But when the king was in this disposition, the messenger told him that Uriah was slain also; whereupon he was pacified. So he bade the messenger to go back to Joab and tell him, that this misfortune is no other than what is common among mankind; and that such is the nature, and such the accidents of war, insomuch that sometimes the enemy will have success therein, and sometimes others; but that he ordered him to go on still in his care about the siege, that no ill accidents might befall him in it hereafter: that they should raise bulwarks and use machines in besieging the city; and when they have gotten it, to overturn its very foundations, and to destroy all those that are in it. Accordingly the messenger carried the king's message with which he was charged, and made haste to Joab. But Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, when she was informed of the death of her husband, mourned for his death many days; and when her mourning was over, and the tears which she shed for Uriah were dried up, the king took her to wife presently; and a son was born to him by her.

3. With this marriage God was not well pleased, but was thereupon angry at David; and he appeared to Nathan the prophet in his sleep, and complained of the king. Now Nathan was a fair and prudent man; and considering that kings, when they fall into a passion, are guided more by that passion than they are by justice, he resolved to conceal the threatenings that proceeded from God, and made a good-natured discourse to him, after the manner following:--He desired that the king would give him his opinion in the following case--"There were," said he, "two men inhabiting the same city, the one of them was rich and [the other poor.] The rich man had a great many flocks of cattle, of sheep, and of kine; but the poor man had but one ewe-lamb. This he brought up with his children, and let her eat her food with them; and he had the same natural affection for her which any one might have for a daughter. Now upon the coming of a stranger to the rich man, he would not vouchsafe to kill any of his own flocks, and thence feast his friend; but he sent for the poor man's lamb, and took her away from him; and made her ready for food, and thence feasted the stranger." This discourse troubled the king exceedingly; and he denounced to Nathan, that "this man was a wicked man, who could dare to do such a thing; and that it was but just that he should restore the lamb fourfold, and be punished with death for it also." Upon this, Nathan immediately said, that he was himself the man who ought to suffer those punishments, and that by his own sentence; and that it was he who had perpetrated this great and horrid crime. He also revealed to him, and laid before him, the anger of God against him, who had made him king over the army of the Hebrews, and lord of all the nations, and those many and great nations round about him; who had formerly delivered him out of the hands of Saul, and had given him such wives as he had justly and legally married; and now this God was despised by him, and affronted by his impiety, when he had married, and now had another man's wife; and by exposing her husband to the enemy, had really slain him; that God would inflict punishments upon him on account of those instances of wickedness; that his own wives should be forced by one of his sons; and that he should be treacherously supplanted by the same son; and that although he had perpetrated his wickedness secretly, yet should that punishment which he was to undergo be inflicted publicly upon him; "that, moreover," said he, "the child who was born to thee of her shall soon die." When the king was troubled at these messages, and sufficiently confounded, and said, with tears and sorrow, that he had sinned (for he was without controversy a pious man, and guilty of no sin at all in his whole life, excepting those in the matter of Uriah), God had compassion on him, and was reconciled to him, and promised that he would preserve to him both his life and his kingdom; for he said, that seeing he repented of the things he had done, he was no longer displeased with him. So Nathan, when he had delivered this prophecy to the king, returned home.

4. However, God sent a dangerous distemper upon the child that was born to David of the wife of Uriah; at which the king was troubled, and did not take any food for seven days, although his servants almost forced him to take it; but he clothed himself in a black garment, and fell down, and lay upon the ground in sackcloth, entreating God for the recovery of the child, for he vehemently loved the child's

mother; but when, on the seventh day, the child was dead, the king's servants durst not tell him of it, as supposing that when he knew it, he would still less admit of food and other care upon himself, by reason of his grief at the death of his son, since when the child was only sick, he so greatly afflicted himself, and grieved for him; but when the king perceived that his servants were in disorder, and seemed to be affected as those are who are very desirous to conceal something, he understood that the child was dead; and when he had called one of his servants to him, and discovered that it was so, he arose up and washed himself, and took a white garment, and came into the tabernacle of God. He also commanded them to set supper before him, and thereby greatly surprised his kindred and servants, while he did nothing of this when the child was sick, but did it all when he was dead. Whereupon, having first begged leave to ask him a question, they besought him to tell them the reason of this his conduct; he then called upon them unskillful people, and instructed them how he had hopes of the recovery of the child while it was alive, and accordingly did all that was proper for him to do, as thinking by such means to render God propitious to him; but that when the child was dead, there was no longer any occasion for grief, which was then to no purpose. When he had said this, they commended the king's wisdom and understanding. He then went in unto Bathsheba his wife, and she conceived and bare a son; and by command of Nathan the prophet, called his name Solomon.

F. The David Episode from The Koran

Trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

(New York: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1946) 1221-23

20. We strengthened his kingdom,
And gave him wisdom
And sound judgment
In speech and decision.
21. Has the Story of
The Disputants reached thee?
Behold, they climbed over
The wall of the private chamber;
22. When they entered
The presence of David,
And he was terrified
Of them, they said:
"Fear not: we are two
Disputants, one of whom
Has wronged the other:
Decide now between us
With truth, and treat us not
With injustice, but guide us
To the even Path.
23. "This man is my brother:
He has nine and ninety
Ewes, and I have but one:
Yet he says, 'Commit her
To my care,' and is moreover
Harsh to me in speech."
24. David said: "He has
Undoubtedly wronged thee
In demanding they single ewe
To be added to his flock
Of ewes : truly many
Are the Partners in business
Who wrong each other :
Not so do those who believe
And work deeds of righteousness,

And how few are they?" . . .
 And David gathered that we
 Had tried him : he asked
 Forgiveness of his Lord,
 Fell down, bowing
 In prostration, and turned
 To God in repentance.

25. So We forgave him
 This lapse : he enjoyed,
 Indeed, a Near Approach to Us,
 And a beautiful Place
 Of final Return.
26. O David! We did indeed
 Make thee a viceregent
 On earth : so judge thou
 Between men in truth and justice:
 Nor follow thou the lusts
 Of thy heart, for they will
 Mislead thee from the Path
 Of God : for those who
 Wander astray from the Path
 Of God, is a Penalty Greivous,
 For that they forget
 The day of Account.

G. From The *Ancrene Wisse*, Part II, The Outer Senses

Trans. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchorite Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991) 66-72.

Here begins the second part, of the defense of the heart by the five senses.

Omnia custodia serva cor tuam quia ex ipso vita procedit (Proverbs 4:23).

"Protect your heart well with every kind of defense, daughter," says Solomon, "for if she is well locked away, the soul's life is in her." The hearts guardians are the five senses, sight and hearing, taste and smelling, and the feeling in every part. And we must speak of all of them, for whoever protects these well does as Solomon commands: protects well their heart and their soul's health. The heart is a most wild beast and makes many a light leap out. As St. Gregory says, *Nihil corde fugiatus*, "nothing flies out of a person sooner than their own heart." David, God's prophet, at one time mourned that she had escaped him: *Cor meum dereliquit me* (Psalm 39:13), that is, "My heart has fled from me." And another time he rejoices and says that she has come home: *Invenit servus tuus cor suum* (2 Samuel 7:27)--"Lord," he says, "my heart has come back again; I have found her." When so holy a man and so wise and so wary lets her escape, anyone else may anxiously dread her flight. And where did she break out of David, the holy king, God's prophet? Where? God knows, at the window of his eye, because of one sight that he saw while looking out just once, as you will hear after. . . .

Lucifer, because he saw himself and gazed at his own fairness, leaped into pride, and from an angel became a hideous devil. Of Eve our first mother it is written that sin found its very first entry into her through her sight: . . . (Genesis 3:6): "Eve looked on the forbidden fruit and saw it was fair; and she began to delight in looking at it, and set her desire on it, and took and ate of it, and gave it to her husband." See how Holy Writ speaks, and how profoundly it tells the way sin began, thus: sight went before and made a way for harmful desire--and the act that all humanity feels came after it.

This apple, dear sister, symbolizes all the things that desire and the delight of sin turn to. When you look at a man, you are in Eve's situation: you look at the apple. If someone had said to Eve when she first cast her eye on it, "Ah, Eve, go away, you are looking at your death," what would she have answered? "My dear sir, you are wrong, why are you challenging me? The apple that I look on is forbidden me to eat, not to look at!" . . . The beginning and the root of all this sorrow was one light look. . . . So let every weak woman fear greatly--seeing that she who had just then been wrought by the hands of God was betrayed through a single look, and brought into deep sin which spread over all the world.

. . . In the same way Bathsheba, by uncovering herself in David's sight caused him to sin with her, a holy king though he was, and God's prophet (2 Samuel 11:2-5). Now, here comes a weak man--though he holds himself estimable if he has a

wide hood and a closed cloak--and he wants to see some young anchoresses. And he just has to see whether her looks please him, she whose face has not been burnt by the sun--as if he was a stone! And he says she may confidently look upon holy men--yes, someone like him, with his wide sleeves. But, arrogant sir, have you not heard about David, God's own darling?--Of whom God himself said *Inveni virum secundum cor meum* (Acts 13:22): "I have found," he said, "a man after my own heart." This man, whom God himself in this precious saying declared a king and a prophet chosen above all, this man, because of one look cast on a woman as she washed herself, let out his heart and forgot himself, so that he did three immeasurably serious and mortal sins: with Bathsheba, the lady he looked at, adultery; on his faithful knight, Uriah her lord, treachery and murder (2 Samuel 11). And you, a sinful man, are so brazen as to cast foolish eyes upon a young woman! Yes, my dear sisters, if anyone is eager to see you, never believe good of it, but trust him the less. I would not have it that anyone see you unless he has special leave from your director. For all the three sins I have just spoken about, . . . all came about not because the women looked foolishly upon men, but because they uncovered themselves in the sight of men, and did things through which they had to fall into sin.

For this reason it was commanded in God's law that a pit should always be covered, and if anyone uncovered a pit and a beast fell in, the one who had uncovered the pit had to pay for it (Exodus 21:33-34). This is a most fearsome saying for a woman who shows herself to the eyes of men. She is symbolized by the one who uncovers the pit; the pit is her fair face and her white neck and her light eyes, and her hand, if she holds it out in his sight. And also her words are a pit, unless they are well chosen. Everything to do with her, whatever it may be, which might easily awaken sinful love, our Lord calls all of it a pit. This pit he commanded to be covered, lest any beast fall in, and drown in sin. The beast is the animal man who thinks nothing about God, and does not use his senses as one ought to do, but seeks to fall into this pit that I speak of, if he finds it open. But the judgment is very severe on whomever uncovers the pit, for she must pay for the animal that has fallen in. She is guilty of that animal's death before our Lord, and must answer for his soul on Doomsday, and pay for the loss of the animal and have no other coin but herself. This is a most heavy payment! And God's judgment and his commandment is that she pay without fail, because she uncovered the pit in which it drowned. You who uncover this pit, you who do anything by which a man is carnally tempted through you, even if you do not know it, fear this judgment greatly. And if he is tempted so that he sins mortally in any way, even if it is not with you but with desire toward you, or if he tries to fulfill with someone else the temptation which has been awakened through you, because of your deed, be quite sure of the judgment. For opening the pit you must pay for the animal, unless you are absolved of it. [You must, as they say, suffer the rod, that is,] suffer for his sin. A dog will happily enter wherever he finds an opening. . . .

H. The Cornish Ordinalia: A Medieval Dramatic Trilogy

Trans. Markham Harris (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1969) 51-65. Excerpt from I: *Beginning of the World*

[God creates the heavens and the earth, and on the sixth day creates Adam and Eve. Adam names the animals, and God then sanctions the seventh day as holy to Himself. Then follows the fall of man and the progression of heroes and prophets who are working out God's plan of salvation to redeem mankind. After Moses comes David.]

KING DAVID SHALL APPEAR AND WALK ABOUT

KING DAVID

After talk and work, it is a good custom to take food and drink, followed by rest. So, butler, hasten and fetch me some of your best wine. My head grows heavy, and I feel the need of sleep.

BUTLER

My dear lord, please don't become annoyed, for as quick as you can say the word, I'll come to you anywhere I'm required. I'm always on instant call. Parlez, vous-etes mon seigneur Now, this is a spiced and honeyed wine of choice quality. No better vintage will ever pass your lips. Drink it, matchless lord. It's the equal of anything this country has to offer.

KING DAVID

A toast to your good fortune, butler The drink is clear and well mulled, by the Lord, and has made me so drowsy that now I truly crave sleep.

COUNSELOR

Go, my lord, and lay yourself down in order that we may cover you with such rich stuffs as become a king of your dignity.

GOD THE FATHER

Gabriel, make haste and go to King David in Jerusalem. Say to him that on Arabia's Mount Tabor he will find the rods which Moses planted. Let him bring them to

Jerusalem against the time that in Bethlehem a child is born who shall redeem the world. A cross is to be made from those rods, on which Christ, my beloved son, will be crucified. Blessed are they who shall worship him.

GABRIEL

O Father, full of grace, your will is my command, and my duty without exception of time or place or without urging.

(And then he shall come to King David, he being alone, and Gabriel says:)

You are to proceed immediately, David, to Mount Tabor in Arabia. Take from there the three rods which were planted by Moses and bring them promptly home with you to Jerusalem. There will come a day when they are needed to make a cross on which the Son of Man, none other, shall be humbled.

(Then the king, awakening, says in astonishment:)

KING DAVID

Benedicite dominus! In my dream I saw an angel before me, saw him clearly. HE ordered me to bring the rods of grace from Mount Tabor that through them we might obtain salvation. Messenger, fetch me my horse. All men of my house, nobles and commoners, come with me.

MESSENGER

By God's day, my lord, the pick of the steeds are ready and the tawny coursers; likewise the hackneys and the palfreys, a noble sight in their array. Mount, Lord, at your pleasure.

KING DAVID

Blessings, messenger. I shall set off at once and ride swiftly toward the mountain. And in order that we may be led to our destination along the right path, let us pray to God the Father in the fullness of his mercy.

(Here let King David come down.)

In the name of God, the Father of heaven, I will mount, and may his spirit keep watch over my soul.

(Then he shall ride.)

Hallowed be the moment in which the angel instructed me, for look about you, we have come unhindered to the mountain. Let every man dismount and fasten his gaze upon the rods before us so greenly growing. With great homage to our mighty Lord, I cut from the ground the rods of grace.

COUNSELOR

These are indeed the rods of grace, since nowhere have you ever smelled a fragrance the like of this. Now I know that God is in this place, I am sure of it, because the odor of the rods is so sweet.

KING DAVID

Musicians, play! Tabors, trumpets, and three hundred harps' cythol, viol, crowd, and psaltery; citherns, nakers, shawms, organetti, drums; also cymbals, recorders, and the rest.

(To the riders.)

And now, knights and squires, to horse, each and every one of you, and hasten toward home in the precious name of God the Father.

A BLIND MAN

Most esteemed lord, in some way help me with those rods of yours, for I am blind. Bless me with them at this very moment of my darkness.

A LAME MAN

Also give me, a cripple, the strength to walk like a normal man, and I will believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are the rods of exceeding grace.

A DEAF MAN

As for me, great king, I will thank God just that much more if through the Lord's favor and the power of the rods my stone-deaf ears are aided.

KING DAVID

I am disposed to help all three of you, provided only that your faith in the merciful salvation of the rods is perfect. In nomine patris et filii atque spiritus sanctis salui modo eritis.

BLIND MAN

Glory be to the Father! We are truly healed of our afflictions. Praise be to God, who has heard our voice. These rare rods that have no equal.

(Here let King David alight from the horse.)

KING DAVID

Now let us dismount, but before we go into the castle, tell me, my followers, where should the rods be planted that we may show them the most honor and afford them the best opportunity to grow?

COUNSELOR

While we're considering the matter, we can leave the three of them at rest in some verdant spot and appoint guards to watch over them with diligence, making the penalty for carelessness very severe.

KING DAVID

Faith, that is good advice. Butler, I order you and your companion to guard the rods. You are to see to it that they are not moved elsewhere under any circumstances, lest you be disemboweled and hanged, both of you. In the meantime, before I eat anything, I want to sleep for a while. I am tired from so much travel and wish to rest.

(King David goes up into a tent.)

MESSENGER

I'm going to guard them with such respect and care that the boldest man alive, a king or even an emperor, won't be able to budge them from right here.

BUTLER

Emperor, king, sultan, never mind how great he is, he's not about to move them. Damn his eyes, I'm the one who's keeping these rods of grace in Jerusalem from now on.

MESSENGER

All right, then, settle down to one side, friend, and keep your eyes peeled right and left as well as ahead, because if anybody sneaks up on us and makes off with the rods

without our knowing it, all we'll get for our pains is disgrace.

BUTLER

By my stones, such as they are for size, nobody steals these rods, I don't care how big he is or how huge his coillons! Go ahead, sleep on your spigot and rest yourself, and if you get to hankering for a girl, I'll fix you up with one in a hurry.

(Then the king, waking from sleep, shall go to the rods and say:)

KING DAVID

How soft my rest has been, how sweet is the sleep of morning! In his work, may God the Father be glorified forever. If I have his favor, I shall proceed to plant the rods with fullest honors in some beautiful and unsullied place.

SECOND MESSENGER

Dear lord of peerless wisdom, a wonderful thing has happened. Within the span of this night alone, the rods put down their roots into the earth and while you've been elsewhere, the three stems have joined together to make one.

KING DAVID

I praise God and lift my prayer to heaven from a full heart, for he is omnipotent and his every work a marvel.

(He shall go to the rods.)

Since it is the father himself who has planted them, they shall stand where they are. Woe to the man who disregards the divine will, great the sorrow that lies in wait for him. In order that we may honor the tree and, at the same time, gauge its growth, I direct that its stem be girdled with a silver band.

BUTLER

Here is the band you ordered prepared, made of pure, solid silver. I will put it in place so that we can tell exactly how much the tree has grown a full year from now.

(King David speaks to Bathsheba, who is washing her dress in the stream.)

KING DAVID

Through your gracious favor, my lady, show a little love toward me, for my eyes have yet to fall upon a woman who pleases me more. In return, I give you every hall and chamber of my palace and will be your husband. We shall never part as long as we live.

BATHSHEBA

My admired and beloved lord, king of the earth, you must know the pleasure it would give me to do as you wish if only I might manage it without fear and risk of being discovered. Were a certain villainous man ever to find out, he would kill me then and there.

(Let Bathsheba go home with King David.)

KING DAVID

For your sake, Bathsheba, my flower of all the world, I solemnly pledge that the knight Uriah shall die. You are and will always remain the sole desire of my heart. Therefore come to my bed that I may make you mine.

BATHSHEBA

Being utterly unable to say no to you, I'll give you everything you ask of me. But sweetest lord, kill him, since if he lives and ever learns of our delight, he'll somehow find a way to do me harm.

KING DAVID

Dear heart, whom God has made the choicest blossom of her sex, in return for your love the man dies and make no mistake about it. . . .

. . . Uriah, best of my knights, trusting in your devotion, I am asking you to assemble and lead a well-armed force into combat against a dangerous enemy of mine who seeks to dominate the kingdom. Because of illness, I shan't be able to ride with you.

URIAH

I am always ready, my dear lord, to do everything in my power to carry out your wishes without being urged, and as a knight worthy of trust I shall never retire from the field of battle until the contemptible aggressor has paid for his insolence.

KING DAVID

Upon my soul, most noble Uriah, you answer becomes you, and I love you for it. Take care, accordingly, that you station yourself in the forefront of the struggle, where a charge of cowardice cannot hold, and the claim that you are afraid of any man is idle.

URIAH

My lord, I swear by the orders I have received from you that no man shall prove me coward, for mine will be the first blow struck on this expedition, and I will demonstrate my prowess. So now it's good-bye to you, my lord of lords, for I shan't delay longer, except to beg your blessing before I go.

KING DAVID

My blessing on you always. Our messenger will accompany you and our butler also, both of them armed.

URIAH

I must be sure to speak to my wife before leaving home, for, if I were to go off without a word, it would break her heart.

(He speaks to Bathsheba.)

Bathsheba, my own sweet one, I've got to journey into battle, there's no choice. But there is this--it will soon be over.

(Here Uriah is equipped and armed.)

BATHSHEBA

On my soul, don't go, don't ever leave me! It breaks my heart to hear talk like that. I swear by my loyalty to you, lord and husband, that if you leave home, I'll not only stop eating, I'll hang myself.

URIAH

Our sovereign's will, my faithful Bathsheba, my wife, must be done. That's as inevitable as that I can't stay with you any longer. So here's a good-bye kiss, and you pray hard for me, very hard.

BATHSHEBA

Oh, how I wish I'd never been born, for now I'm in agony on account of you, my sweet husband! . . . Nevertheless, my prayer for you is that you will never return, since that would be the better thing.

(Here Gabriel comes down.)

URIAH

Now, messenger, if you're in hopes of being rewarded, pray carry my banner properly, and you, butler, be as eager and aggressive as a well-armed knight.

(Here he mounts a horse.)

SECOND MESSENGER

Don't worry about me, Uriah, I tell you. My life on it, you're not going to have the slightest cause.

(And then they ride out of the platea, and afterward the messenger comes and says to King David:)

I wish you joy, my lord. As you see, I have come home again, but the knight Uriah has been killed and your butler as well. I grieve for them.

KING DAVID

Ah, so Uriah is dead! Mindful of your duty to the crown, tell me the circumstances of his death and how he came to lose his life, seeing that he was both proud and valiant and regarded himself as a very formidable man.

SECOND MESSENGER

Nevertheless, he is dead, by God's day. Wanting to throw the enemy into disorder, he laid about him with fury, but a certain horseman gave him his fatal wound, brought him speedily to the ground, and there hacked him to pieces.

(Then the angel shall come to King David and ask him a question, saying:)

GABRIEL

Answer me this, mighty king: there was a man who had a hundred sheep while his neighbor had only one; if that man stole his neighbor's one sheep, what would be his

fit punishment? Let me have the plain truth.

KING DAVID

I will answer at once and without equivocation. Beyond doubt, the only just sentence for such a man would be execution. Anyone who behaves like that merits death.

GABRIEL

You, David, are such a man. Although you could have availed yourself of any number of other women, you took from Uriah the only woman he had, his wife. Your own judgment be upon you.

KING DAVID

The Lord grant forgiveness to my soul. Great is the misery I brought upon myself when I sinned with the body of that evil woman. Deus mei miserere in the light of your grace and pity, that I may be spared the torment which has no end.

(And then under the sacred tree he begins the Psalter, "Blessed is the man . . . [Psalm 1].)

My esteemed advisor, I beg you to spell out a penance for my sins. What shall I do, seeing that I have angered God, my precious Lord and Father?

COUNSELOR

As an atonement for those sins, order the building of a temple, great in all its dimensions and lustrous throughout. Gather an ample roster of stoneworkers and notify the entire population of the city.

KING DAVID

May God favor you since surely, as it seems to me, your counsel is good counsel. I shall therefore act on it unfailingly from this time forward.

(King David goes up.)

Messenger, my worthy liegeman, come to me as fast as my words fly, so that you can carry out my wishes.

SECOND MESSENGER

By God the Father, my dear lord, at all times and in all places I am on the alert to

serve you.

[King David announces the building of the temple and his words are repeated by the messenger. The masons begin to arrive and describe the erection of the scaffolding to commence the work. While they are talking, God the Father descends into the scene.]

GOD THE FATHER

David, because you are a murderer, you shall never complete for me the building of a house of worship. In very truth, you have destroyed a likeness of my face, namely, Uriah, a knight ever faithful.

KING DAVID

Who, then, Lord, will fully raise your temple?

GOD THE FATHER

It is Solomon, your most dear son, who shall fully raise it. Such is the fact.

(Here God goes up.)

KING DAVID

Now I know that my time has come, the term of my life having been long.

(David shall go to the tents.)

I entreat you, my lords, to crown my son, Solomon, king in my stead, and as your sovereign honor him as long as you live. Esteem him even as you have esteemed me, for it is God who has revealed him to you, and the throne is his by the will of heaven.

SECOND MESSENGER

Regardless of what the future may bring, my lord, any wish of yours is both command and obligation in my eyes. Yet, God willing, the time would never come when I desired a king other than you.

KING DAVID

It is contrary to the will of the Father, hallowed be his name, that I remain longer among you. O God, my soul is in your hands. May they preserve it from the terrors of the hereafter.

(And then King David shall die.)

COUNSELOR

Deep, deep is our sorrow that our matchless lord is dead. Let us go and lay his body in the grave. Let us pray for his soul, that God in the fullness of his pity may take David unto himself and to heaven's eternal feast.

(And he shall bury him, carrying the body under one of the tents, and shall go to Solomon; and the messenger says:)

SECOND MESSENGER

Let us go and fetch Solomon and place him on his throne, king designate in his royal chair, that he may be crowned as was enjoined upon us by his father before he died.

HERE SOLOMON SHALL MAKE HIS APPEARANCE

I. The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition

Ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969)

II Samuel XI - XII:1-24

XI 1 And when the yere was expired in y time when Kings go forthe to battel, Daid fent Ioab, and his feruants with him, & all Ifrael, who deftroied the children of Ammon, and befieged Rabbah: but Daid remained in Ierufalem.

2 And when it was euening tide, Daid arofe out of his bed, and walked vpon the roofe of the kings palace: and fro the roofe he fawe a woman wafhing her felfe: and the woma was very beautiful to loke vpon.

3 And Daid fent and inquired what woman it was and one faid, Is not this Bethfheba y daughter of Eliam, wife to Vriah the Hittite?

4 Then Daid fent meffengers, and toke her away: and fhe came vnto him and he lay with her: (now fhe was purified from her vnclennes) and fhe returned vnto her houfe.

5 And y woma coceiued: therefore fhe fent & tolde Daid, & faid, I am with childe.

6 Then Daid fent to Ioab, faying, Send me Vriah the Hittite. And Ioab fent Vriah to Daid.

7 And when Vriah came vnto him, Daid demanded him how Ioab did, & how the people fared, and how the warre profpered.

8 Afterwarde Daid faid to Vriah, Go downe to thine houfe, and wafh thy feete. So Vriah departed out of the Kings palace, & the King fent a prefent after him.

9 But Vriah flept at the dore of the Kings palace with all the feruants of his lorde, and wente not downe to his houfe.

10 Then they tolde Daid, faying, Vriah went not downe to his houfe: and Daid faid vnto Vriah, Comeft thou not from thy iourney? why dideft thou not go downe to thine houfe?

11 The Vriah answered Daid, The Arke of Ifrael, dwel in tents: and my lord Ioab and the feruants of my lord abide in the open fields: fal I then go into mine houfe to eat and drinke, and lie with my wife? by thy life, & by the life of thy foule, I will not do this thing.

12 Then Daid faid vnto Vriah, Tarie yet this daye, and tomorrowe I wil fend thee awaie. So Vriah abode in Ierufalem that day, and the morrowe.

13 Then Daid called him, & he did eat and drinke before him, & he made him droke: & at euen he went out to lie on his couche with the feruants of his lord, but went not downe to his houfe.

14 And on the morrowe Daid wrote a letter to Ioab, and fent it by the hand of Vriah.

15 And he wrote thus in the letter, Put ye Vriah in the forefrote of the ftrenghth of the battel, & recule ye backe from him, that he me be fmitten, and dye.

16 So whe Ioab befieged y citie, he afigned Vriah vnto a place, where he

knewe that ftrong men were.

17 And the men of the citie came out, and foght with Ioab: & there fell of the people of the feruants of Daud, & Vriah the Hittite alfo dyed.

18 Then Ioab fent and tolde Daud all the things concerning the warre,

19 And he charged the mefsenger, faying, When thou haft made an end of telling the matters of the warre vnto the king,

20 And if the Kings angre arife, fo that he fay vnto thee, Wherefore approached ye vnto y citie to fight? knewe ye not that they wolde hurle from the wall?

21 Who fmote Abimelech fonne of Ierubefheth? did not a woman caft a piece of a milftone vpon him from the wall, and he dyed in Thebez? why went you nye the wall? Then fay thou, Thy feruant Vriah the Hittite is alfo dead.

22 So the meffenger went, and came and fhewed Daud all that Ioab had fent him for.

23 And the meffenger faid vnto Daud, Certainly the men preuailed againft vs, and came out vnto vs into the field, but we purfued then vnto the entring of the gate.

24 But y fhooters fhote fro the wall againft thy feruants, and fome of the Kings feruants be dead: and thy feruant Vriah the Hittite is alfo dead.

25 Then Daud faid vnto the meffenger, Thus fhalt thou fay vnto Ioab, Let not this thing trouble thee: for the fworde deuoueth one afwel as another: make thy battel more ftrong againft the citie & deftroy it, & encourage thou him.

26 And when the wife of Vriah heard that her houfband Vriah was dead, fhe mourned for her houfband.

27 So when the mourning was pafte, Daud fent & toke her into his houfe, and fhe became his wife, and bare him a fonne: but the thing that Daud had done, difpleafed the Lord.

XII 1 Then the Lord fent Nathan vnto Daud, who came to him, and faid vnto him, There were two men in one citie, the one riche, and the other poore.

2 The riche man had exceding many fhepe and oxen:

3 But the poore had none tat all, faue one litle fhepe which he had boght, & nourifhed vp: and it grewe vp with him, and with his children alfo, and did eat of his owne morfels, & dranke of his owne cup, and flept in his bofome, and was vnto him as his daughter.

4 Now there came a franger vnto the riche ma, who refused to take of his owne fhepe, and of his owne oxen to dreffe for the franger that was come vnto him, but toke the poore man shepe, and dreffed it for the man that was come to him.

5 The Daud was exceding wrothe with the ma, and faid to Nathan, As the Lord liueth, the man that hathe done this thinge, fhall furely dye,

6 And he fhall reftore the labe foure folde, becaufe he did this thing, and had no pitie thereof.

7 Then Nathan faid to Daud, Thou art the man. Thus fayth the Lord God of Ifrael, I anointed thee King ouer Ifrael, and deliuered thee oute of the hand of Saul,

8 And gaue thee thy lords houfe, and thy lords wiues into thy bofome, and gaue thee the houfe of Ifrael, and of Iudah, & wolde moreouer (if thee had bene to

little) haue giuen thee fuche and fuche things.

9 Wherefore haft thou defpifed the commandement of the Lord, to do euil in his fight? thou haft killed Vriah the Hittite with the fworde, and haft taken his wife to be thy wife, and haft flaine him with the fworde of the children of Ammon.

10 Now therefore the fworde fhall neuer departe from thine houfe, becaufe thou haft defpifed me, and taken the wife of Vriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11 Thus faith the Lord, Beholde, I wil raife vp euil againft thee out of thine owne houfe, and wil take thy wiues before thine eyes, & giue them vnto thy neighbour, and he fhall lye with thy wiues in the fight of this funne.

12 For thou didft it fecretly: but I wil do this thing before all Ifrael, and before the funne.

13 Then Daud faid vnto Nathan, I haue finned againft y Lord. And Nathan faid vnto Daud, The Lord alfo hath put away thy finne, thou fhalt not dye.

14 Howbeit becaufe by this dede thou haft caufed the enemies of the Lord to blafpheme, the childe that is borne vnto thee fhall furely dye.

15 So Nathan departed vnto his houfe: and the Lord ftroke the childe that Vriahs wife bare vnto Daud, and it was ficke.

16 Daud therefore befoght God for the childem and fafted and went in, and laye all night vpon the earth.

17 Then the Elders of his houfe arofe to come vnto him, and to caufe him to rife from the grounde: but he wolde not, nether did he eat meat with them.

18 So on the feuenth day the childe dyed: & the feruants of Daud feared to tel him that the childe was dead: for thei faid, Beholde, while the childe was aliue, we fpake vnto him, and he wolde not hearken vnto our voyce: how then fhall we fay vnto him, The childe is dead, to vex him more?

19 But when Daud fawe that his feruants whifpered, Daud perceiued that y childe was dead: therefore Daud faid vnto his feruants, Is the childe dead? And they faid, He is dead.

20 Then Daud arofe from the earth, & wafhed and anointed himfelfe, and changed his apparel, and came into the houfe of the Lord, and worfhipped, & afterward came to his owne houfe, and bade that thei fhulde fet bread before him, and he did eat.

21 Then faid his feruants vnto him, What thing is this, that thou haft done? thou didft faft and wepe for the childem while it was aliue, but whe the childe was dead, thoug didft rife vp, and eat meat.

22 And he faid, While the childe was yet aliue, I fafted, and wept: for I faid, Who can tel whether God wil haue mercie on me, that the childe may liue?

23 But now being dead, wherefore fhulde I now faft? Can I bring him againe anie more? I fhall go to him, but he fhall not returne to me.

24 And Daud comforted Bathfheba his wife, and went in vnto her, and lay with her, and fhe bare a fonne, & he called his name Salomon: alfo y Lord loued hi.

J. Psalm LI, from The Geneva Bible, 1560

When Daid was rebuked by the Prophet Nathan, for his great offences, he did not onely acknowledge the same tpo God with protestation of his natural corruptio and iniquitie, but also left a memorial thereof to his posteritie. Therefore firft he defireth God to gorgiue his finnes, And to renue in him his holie Spirit, With promes that he wil not be unmindeful of thofe great graces. Finally fearing left God wolde punifh the whole Church for his faute, he requireth that he wolde rather increafe his graces towards the fame.

To him that excelleth, A Pfalme of Daid, when the Prophet Nathan came vnto him, after he had gone in to Bath Sheba.

- 1 Haue mercie vpon me, o God, according to thy louing kindenes: according to the multitude of thy compaffions put awaie mine iniquities.
- 2 Wafh me throughly from mine iniquitie, and cleane me from my finne.
- 3 For I knowe mine iniquities, & my finne is euer before me.
- 4 Againft thee, againft thee onely haue I finned, & done euil in thy fight, that thou maieft be iufte when thou fpeakeft, and pure when thou iudgeft.
- 5 Beholde, I was borne in iniquitie, and in finne hath my mother conceiued me.
- 6 Beholde, thou loueft trueth in y inwarde affections: therefore haft thou taught me wifdome in the fecret of mine heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyffope, and I fhall be cleane: wafh me, & I fhall be whiter then fnowe.
- 8 Make me to heare ioye and gladnes, that the bones, which thou haft broken, maie reioyce.
- 9 Hide thy face from my finnes, and put awaie all mine iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a cleane heart, o God, & renue a right fpirit within me.
- 11 Caft me not awaie from thy prefence, and take not thine holie Spirit from me.
- 12 Reftore to me the ioye of thy faluacion, and ftablish me with thy fre Spirit.
- 13 Then fhall I teache thy waies vnto the wicked, and finners fhall be conuerted vnto thee.
- 14 Deliuer me from blood, o God, which art the God of my faluacion, and my tongue fhall fing ioyfully of thy righteoufnes.
- 15 Open thou my lippes, o Lord, and my mouth fhall fhewe forthe thy praife.
- 16 For thou defireft no facrifice, thogh I wolde giue it: thou deliteft not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit: a contrite & a broken heart, o God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Be favourable vnto Zion for thy good pleasure: builde the walles of Ierusalem.

19 Then shalt thou accept the sacrifices of righteousness, euen the burnt offering and oblation: then shall they offer calves vpon thine altar.

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