

defender of the covenant between the Lord and his people, became the example of infidelity and of sin, who even constructed altars to the various idols, on the hills around Jerusalem, for all of his foreign women.

While remembering these sad moments, the author of the small book of Nehemiah, in the fourth or fifth century before Christ, wrote: "Did not Solomon, the king of Israel, sin because of them? Though among the many nations there was no king like him, and though he was beloved by his God and God made him king over all Israel, yet even he was induced to sin by foreign woman" (Neh. 13: 26).

Behold therefore the sad end of a man who had received from God many gifts of wisdom, even up to becoming the reference point of other leaders, who asked his advice. Yet all of this was not enough to maintain him in his fidelity to the Covenant with God. His father David, in his passions of being a man and of an artist, had been capable of great gestures of generosity and also of enormous pettiness. But he had always had the courage to recognize his own limits and to confess before God his own sins. Solomon, with all of his wisdom and the splendor of his fame, ended up far away from God, incapable of resisting the seduction of his many women. Also because of this, his son received from him only infidelity as his heredity, without any wisdom, and due to this the kingdom of David was split into two halves, which were small and of no political importance.

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THE IDOLATRY OF SOLOMON

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Many times, throughout the books of the Sacred Scripture, the sons of the Israelite people were warned against the temptation of taking foreign women as their wives. This recommendation does not stem from a racist prejudice, rather from the will to conserve integral the faith in God, that could have been placed in danger by the presence of people with other religious convictions and different ways of living religiosity, in their midst. The cults of the people who were in the surroundings of Israel often were shown through aberrant manifestations, such as human sacrifices and sacred prostitution.

For this reason, when the Hebrew entered into the Promised Land and they began to conquest the territories already occupied by other peoples, they never made covenants with them, rather, the first thing was that they tried to eliminate them completely. We read these narrations with great discomfort, because we are used to the message of love and of welcoming of Jesus. We must understand though that the time of the Gospel was still far off, and the relationship between nations and people were still governed by domination and by the law of the strongest. This is true also in our times, but today we try to hide these ways of doing with beautiful excuses of civilization, progress and cultural identity.

Once he had become king as successor of his father David, Solomon's first concern was to reinforce his own authority, eliminating every possible internal adversary, and then he tried to establish good relationships with the larger confining kingdoms. In order to be strong allies with Egypt,

he married the daughter of the Pharaoh. It was not a marriage of love, rather it was only a contract of convenience. However, through this, a pagan woman entered into the court of the king, bringing with herself her idols which led to a negative influence in the education of the children. We know how these things come about: the mother, rightly, is the one who lives closest to the children, especially if they are still small, and she can transmit to them her principles and convictions. That which is desirable for a good education, unfortunately also occurs with the negative aspects. This was the case in the family of Solomon, also because the king, after the daughter of the pharaoh, also had other wives: "Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites, from nations with which the Lord had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry, 'because,' he said, 'they will turn your hearts to their gods'" (1 Kings 11: 1-2). It is useless to underline that these women, that are numbered in the hundreds, very difficultly could have been considered as true and proper wives. How could there have been, next to an array of women like this, that reciprocal love, comprehension, solidarity, that one looks for and one desires in matrimony? The perverse aspect of polygamy appears in this case in its worst form.

The sacred author remembers sadly that "when Solomon was old his wives had turned his heart to strange gods" (1 Kings 11: 4). The pureness of the faith in the one God, in He who had freed the people from the slavery in Egypt, began to grow dull. And the king himself, who should have been the first