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The Penitent David in the Bible and in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Cantata "Davide Penitente"

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David, the second king of Israel (who reigned approximately between 1010 and 970 BC), plays a prominent role in the Bible. His name appears about 1,050 times in the Old Testament and fifty-six times in the New Testament, more times than Moses' name, for example. This attests to his exceptional role in the history of the Chosen People and in salvation history. In Biblical culture, the name "David" describes a man. It could mean "beloved" (from the Hebrew root דוד *dvd*) or "highest commander" (from the Babylonian *davi(da)num*). In Sacred Scripture, David is presented as an exceptionally talented man. He is physically attractive and has an honest heart; he is a valiant pastor and a brave warrior; a good leader, strategist, builder, administrator, politician, and diplomat; a musician and poet who suffers greatly because of family situations; a man who is faithful to his friends, loyal to his allies, committed to God, and listens to His prophets. This is a very positive image that, over time, has become idealized (see: 1 Corinthians, Sirach). Today, more and more people believe that this image had little in common with the real David. His position and achievements are questioned, as are his ethical virtues.[1]

It seems that there is no basis for such a far-reaching critique; one cannot interpret the Bible completely contrary to its statements. The legend of David can be developed only on a real basis. There must have been something special about David, since he achieved so much as the youngest son. His family was one of the most prominent in Bethlehem, but this settlement was not a significant

1 Cf. I. Finkelstein, N. A. Silberman, *Dawid i Salomon. Odkrycia archeologiczne, które podważyły wiarygodność Biblii*, Warszawa 2007; S. L. McKenzie, *Dawid, król Izraela*, Poznań 2014. Primarily on the basis of archaeological research, the former authors believe that David was an insignificant king and Jerusalem was a village, while the legend of David's power was created during the Babylonian Exile. The authors of the latter work additionally negate David's strong ethical virtues and believe he was a cunning and ruthless man who took used all possible means to gain power.

hub in this region. The fact that he gained for himself the entire royal family gives food for thought: he served the king Saul as a musician who played the harp, armor-bearer, and brave warrior; Saul's son Jonathan befriended David, who in turn married Michal, the king's daughter. This was probably not only the result of manipulating people, because the author of 1 Samuel writes that all three loved (אהב *'hb*) David (1 Samuel 16:21; 18:1, 20), as did Saul's servants (1 Samuel 16:22) and the entire nation (1 Samuel 18:16). David was charismatic and attracted people to him; he undoubtedly was endowed with the qualities of a leader.

With regards to morality, David certainly did not meet the standards of the Gospels. He used violence and cunning in order to defend himself and his loved ones and to achieve his goals. He was cruel towards his enemies (1 Samuel 27:9, 11; 2 Samuel 8:2). However, it must be said that he was loyal to his allies. He was not the best father, as he favored some of his children over others and turned a blind eye to their transgressions. David was loyal to Saul, but when the latter began to persecute him, David was saved thanks to the help of Jonathan and Michal by hiding amongst Israel's enemies, first the Moabites (1 Samuel 22:3–5) and later among the Philistines. During this time, he defended his people against the Amalekites from the south. He spared Saul, although he had two opportunities to kill him, as his aides recommended. Perhaps the decisive factor in making this decision was fear of God, Whom the king represented (1 Samuel 24:26). After Saul's death, a civil war during which nearly half of the king's family died broke out. Only Jonathan's lame son Merib-baal had survived (2 Samuel 9), after attempting to ascend the throne during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 16:3–4; 19:25–31; 21:7), as did distant relatives (2 Samuel 21:5–9). One of them, Shimei, blamed David for the blood of Saul's family (2 Samuel 16:7–8). David did not kill Saul while running away from Absalom (2 Samuel 16:1–14), nor did he do so later, when he returned to Jerusalem after defeating Absalom (2 Samuel 19:17–24),[2] but before dying he ordered Solomon to kill him along with Joab, the commander of the army who killed Abner, the commander of the Israelites' army, and Amasa, the commander of the Judahites' army (2 Samuel 3:26–27; 20:8–10). For some reason, David did not dispose of them during his lifetime. Salomon executed David's command and David also requested that he kill his

2 S. L. McKenzie, *Dawid, król Izraela*, op. cit., p. 257, claims that the reason for the pardoning of the contrite Shimei was not so much David's mercy after returning to power as it was the thousands of Benjaminites who accompanied Shimei.

elder brother Adonijah, because he wanted to ascend the throne before him (1 Kings 1–2). That was how rulers changed hands at this time; David's behavior fit in with the customs of his age. Wars with neighbors were a constant reality (2 Samuel 11:1). David recognized God's help in his victories over his internal and external enemies; for this, he thanked God (2 Samuel 23). It seems that in doing so David was nonetheless less cruel than his contemporaries and he did take God and His prophets seriously; he entrusted himself to God. David was ready to become a laughingstock for God, because he valued closeness to God more than he did even the favor of his first wife, Michal (2 Samuel 6:16, 20–22). He wanted to build a temple, a worthy house of God, because he was uncomfortable that he himself lived in a cedar palace, but the Ark of God was in a tent (2 Samuel 7:1–16). This is confirmed by the Psalms, which probably have some relation to David, even if not all of those that bear his name were written by him. The term "after [God's] heart," used to refer to David (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22; see: Psalm 78:72),[3] is not without basis and one cannot say that in Sacred Scripture David is presented according to our hearts.[4]

1. The Repentant David in the Bible

The Biblical descriptions of David's life do contain examples of his negative behavior, although there is a clear tendency to try to justify it. The author of 1 Chronicles completely avoids mentioning David's sinning with Bathsheba, although he quotes the Lord's words directed to David, who was about to build a temple: "You have shed much blood, and you have waged great wars. You may not build a house in my honor, because you have shed too much blood upon the earth in my sight" (1 Chronicles 22:8; see: 28:3).[5] In his song of thanksgiving, David says of himself: "For I kept the ways of the Lord and was not disloyal to my God […] I was on my guard against guilt" (2 Samuel 22:22, 24; see: Psalm 18:22, 24). However, praise of him in Sirach 47:1–11 contains a reference to the sins that the Lord has pardoned him (verse 11). His penitential attitude

3 The numbering of the Hebrew Psalms.

4 This is how S. L. McKenzie, *Dawid, król Izraela*, op. cit., p. 282–283, describes the image of David in the Bible.

5 The source of English Biblical quotations: *The Catholic Bible. New American Bible, including the revised Psalms and the revised New Testament, translated from the original languages with critical use of all the ancient sources*, general editor, J. M. Hiesberger, London 1991.

and capacity of conversion is most clearly visible in the description of two sins that were described in detail: his adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband as well as during the census. To an extent, the Penitential Psalms also attest to this. Now, we will deal with these matters in greater detail.

1.1. Adultery and Murder (2 Samuel 11:1–12, 14)

David's greatest falls from grace took place during times of relative stability in his life. The enemies surrounding him had been either defeated or put on the defensive: the Philistines, Amalekites, and Edomites from the south; the Moabites and Ammonites from east of the Jordan; and the Arameans to the south (1 Samuel 30; 2 Samuel 8). The palace made of cedar wood was finished, and the children from his wives and concubines were growing up without any problems. At the beginning of the year, or after night and day became equal in length (March in our calendar), after the winter rains had ended, and before the harvest, when wars were usually waged, David sent an army led by Joab in order to take Rabbah, the Ammonites' capital east of the Jordan, located approximately 110 kilometers (about seventy miles) from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 11:1). This was not the first time that David had acted that way, as other rulers did, although leading a battle was not one of the king's duties. David had already once sent Joab to fight the Ammonites (2 Samuel 10:7), and upon learning about the difficult situation he himself joined in the battle (2 Samuel 10:17–19). This time he also joined in battle having been summoned by Joab after the latter had captured the city's lower districts in order to be the ultimate conqueror (2 Samuel 12:26–31). Thus it is clear that the king trusted his commander and did not believe it necessary to personally participate in all the battles like he did before. At this time, he could have dealt with other matters related to the state or to his family.[6]

This time, however, he acted in an unworthy way, which was made worse because of the context of war; while others fought, he sinned. After having finished his afternoon rest, which in that historical context was something normal and did not necessarily imply laziness, sometime that evening David saw a bathing woman from the terrace of his palace. This was possible even if

6 Cf. J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, Warszawa 2005, p. 372 (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna, 24); J. Łach, *Księgi Samuela. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskursy*, Poznań–Warszawa 1973, p. 398–399 (Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu, 4.1); S. Biel, *Dawid. Medytacje biblijne*, Kraków 2018, p. 138–140.

the woman was bathing in front of her own house and not on the terrace, as the Vulgate implies, because the royal palace was at a higher elevation than the surrounding homes. It is possible that the purpose of this bath was purification after the menstrual cycle (see: 2 Samuel 11:4). It seems unlikely that the woman bathed outside with the intent to provoke someone. She is described as very beautiful (2 Samuel 11:2).[7]

Thus it is unsurprising that the king became interested in the woman and decided to find out more about her. He was told that she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite. Both her father and her husband were among David's famous warriors (2 Samuel 23:34, 39). Furthermore, Eliam's father and therefore Bathsheba's grandfather Ahitophel was David's adviser and later defected to the rebellious Absalom (2 Samuel 15:12). The king certainly knew whose house this was and may have known that woman. The Hebrew text allows us to attribute to him words about Bathsheba in the form of a rhetorical question suggesting a positive response: "Is not this Bathsheba?" That is how the Septuagint translates this sentence. David lures in this woman. She comes and sleeps with him; turning him down in this situation would not have been easy. After engaging in intercourse, the woman cleanses herself of impurity, which lasted for seven days after menstruation had ended. This emphasized that the woman was not at the point pregnant and was fertile. After everything had finished, she went home, but she quickly realized she was pregnant. This fact was evidence of adultery, for which the Mosaic Law punished men and women with death if the woman had become pregnant. This punishment was executed through stoning (Leviticus 20:1); the previous punishment had been burning (Genesis 38:24). Bathsheba told David about her state so that he could help her in her difficult situation (2 Samuel 11:3–5). It was easier for a man, particularly a king, to avoid punishment.[8]

David worked to defend himself and Bathsheba. He called on Uriah and in order to keep up appearances asked about successes in battle and proceeded to encourage him to return home and rest washing his feet, which was the first

7 Cf. A. F. Campbell, J. F. Flanagan, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Samuela*, [in:] *Katolicki komentarz biblijny*, red. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, R. E. Murphy, Warszawa 2001, p. 260 (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna, 17).

8 Cf. J. Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, op. cit., p. 400–401; J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, op. cit., p. 372; B. Costacurta, *Król Dawid*, Kraków 2007, p. 61–65 (Biblioteka Centrum Formacji Duchowej. Duchowość biblijna); S. Biel, *Dawid. Medytacje biblijne*, op. cit., 140–143; C. M. Martini, *Dawid grzesznik i człowiek wiary*, Kraków 1998, p. 61–62 (Duc in altum – Wypłyń na głębię, 18).

thing one did after returning home, but could also be a euphemism for sexual intercourse. After leaving, David sent a gift to him, possibly in the form of food, which was a distinction. However, Uriah did not go to his house, but instead lay at the palace gate along with the king's servants. When asked about the cause of this behavior, he said that he could not have a feast in his home and sleep with his wife because the Ark of the Covenant and the entire army were staying in tents. During battle, warriors were required to abstain from sexual activity (1 Samuel 21:6). Uriah's nobility emphasized the unworthiness of David, who violated all the norms without any scruples. It does not seem likely that the warrior knew about the act of adultery and consciously acted to spite the king and Bathsheba. David encouraged the warrior to stay and the next day he invited him to his home again and got him drunk, expecting that in this way he would go home and sleep with Bathsheba, but Uriah stayed with those who served him in battle. The next day, David decided to get rid of Uriah by taking advantage of the war. He wrote a letter to Joab in which he asked him to leave Uriah in the most important place of battle and then retreat. Uriah himself gave the letter to Joab; he probably did not read the letter, because he did not necessarily know how to read and, furthermore, the letter was tightly sealed. Joab executed the king's command and informed him about it through a messenger. This shared secret was a trump card for Joab with regards to the king, who had to count on him through the end of his life and perhaps did not kill him for that reason. Upon learning about the siege of Rabbah, David got angry because of the army's imprudent approach at the gates of the city (only the Septuagint gives this detail), but he calmed down upon learning about Uriah's death. Everything started to go the king's way. The warrior died in glory on the field of battle; nobody would learn of the act of adultery, because the child would be assumed to be Uriah's; and by taking Bathsheba as his wife he would express his gratitude to and respect for the fallen king. Indeed, after the time of mourning, which usually lasted seven days, David took her to his harem, in which she would be in first place and his son Solomon would succeed his father to the throne. To the king, everything appeared in order and the crime seemed well disguised, but the author of the description of this event gives unambiguously evaluates David's behavior: "[T]he Lord was displeased with what David had done (was angry – רעע *r*")" (2 Samuel 11:27).[9]

9 Cf. J. Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, op. cit., p. 401–406; J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, op. cit., p. 372–373; A. F. Campbell, J. F.

At this point, the prophet Nathan is sent by the Lord in order to shake David's conscience. He does not directly enumerate his crimes; instead, he tells a parable to surprise the king. He tells him a fictional story of a poor man who had only one sheep, which was all he possessed. Unfortunately, a rich man who had many sheep and cattle and who wanted to host a guest took it away from him, because he did not want to take something away from his own flock. David was angered by this man, who acted without mercy, and said that he deserved death, and in any case the poor man should be rewarded four-fold. The king did not realize that the prophet was talking about what he himself had done and issued a verdict on himself, after which Nathan directly told him: "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7). Addressing David in the first person and becoming the Lord's mouth, he says that he is greatly gifted by accepting Saul's house and wives[10] as well as the entire kingdom of Israel, yet he ignored (בזה *bzh*) and disdained of the Lord (נאץ *n'c*)[11] and His word and committed evil (רַע *ra'*) by killing Uriah and taking his wife. That is why he will be punished; his sword will not leave his house, and tragedies will come out of it (רָעָה *ra'a*). His rival will take his wife and will sleep with her in public, while the child that Bathsheba will give birth to will die. The prophet's words achieved their aim and led David to convert, because the king replied curtly: "I have sinned (חטא *ht'*) against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). In his confession, sin is not understood only as violating the law God imparted on us, but also as a reality directly affecting God and ruining his relationship with Him. David's attitude bears witness to his nobility. He was capable of accepting a prophet's harsh words, which few other leaders of the Israelites could do, as could few of those who listened to Jesus, who often spoke in parables to overcome their stereotypes and prejudices.[12]

By acknowledging his guilt and confessing his sins (חַטָּאת *hatta't*), David received the Lord's forgiveness (עבר *'br*), thus saving himself from death, but he

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Flanagan, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Samuela*, op. cit., p. 260; B. Costacurta, *Król Dawid*, op. cit., p. 66–74; S. Biel, *Dawid. Medytacje biblijne*, op. cit., p. 143–145; C. M. Martini, *Dawid grzesznik i człowiek wiary*, op. cit., p. 63–66.

10 Taking the harem of a previous ruler ensured the continuity of treaty obligations – cf. J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, op. cit., p. 373–374.

11 The Hebrew text is: "You have greatly disdained of the Lord's enemies."

12 Cf. J. Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, op. cit., p. 407–412; B. Costacurta, *Król Dawid*, op. cit., p. 77–82; S. Biel, *Dawid. Medytacje biblijne*, op. cit., 146–148; C. M. Martini, *Dawid grzesznik i człowiek wiary*, op. cit., p. 66–68; S. Wronka, *Dlaczego w przypowieściach?*, [in:] *„Utwierdzaj twoich braci" (Łk 22, 32)*, red. T. M. Dąbek, Kraków 2003, p. 245–260.

would bear the consequences of his sins, which would be imparted on his family and nation. Death and violence would accompany him up through the very end. The most frequent punishment for sin is its calamitous consequences, which affect its perpetrator and others. Indeed, Bathsheba's child died shortly after birth despite David's prayer (בקש *bqsz*) and fasting (צום *cwm*, צום *com*). David accepted these punishments without complaining, as he knew he deserved them. In turn, he received Solomon, whom Nathan names Jedidiah, which means "beloved of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:25). God does not abandon David because the latter humbled himself before Him and rejected evil. However, by his sins he paved the way for a wave of iniquity. His oldest son Amnon would rape his half-sister Tamar. David responded with great anger, but did not punish his son or express concern for his daughter. Perhaps his own sin bothered him enough that he didn't take the initiative. Tamar's brother Absolom stood in her defense and avenged her death by killing Amnon. David cried for his dead son, but he pardoned the cunning Amnon after three years. Amnon repaid with such a rebellion that David had to leave Jerusalem, leaving his throne and harem to his son. In this way, Nathan's prophecy was fulfilled. When Absolom died, David cried for him and slowly began to manage the people's rage against him (2 Samuel 13–20). At the end of his life, David had to fight for succession to his throne. Adonijah tried to ascend to the throne, but his rebellion was thwarted by Nathan and Bathsheba. Having gained power, Solomon killed Adonijah and dismissed the priest Abiathar, who supported him. David was spared of these events, because he did not live to see them (1 Kings 1–2).[13]

David considered the challenges in his family life and state to be a punishment from God, which can be considered an element of his repentance. However, he did not blame or accuse God, but instead in his song of thanksgiving and last words (2 Samuel 22:1–23; 7) praised Him and thanked Him for His support and strength, thanks to which he could defeat all his enemies and overcome all difficulties.

1.2. The Census (2 Samuel 24:1–25).

The second episode in David's life that is clearly called a sin and that the king repented for was the census taken near the end of his life. The text is in many points unclear. It begins with a reference to the Lord's anger flaring up (חרה *hrh*)

13 Cf. S. Biel, *Dawid. Medytacje biblijne*, op. cit., 148–149; B. Costacurta, *Król Dawid*, op. cit., p. 83–103.

against Israel, although the cause for that anger is not mentioned. It is believed to have been caused by past events, such as David's permission for the murder of Saul's family (2 Samuel 21). For this reason, the Lord moves the king to register all the generations of Israel, which turns out to be evil. The parallel text of 1 Chronicles 21:1–30 specified that the census did not encompass the generations of Levi and Benjamin (1 Chronicles 21:6). David commissioned this task to Joab and the leaders of the army, who advised the king against doing so, but ultimately fulfilled his command. It seems that they traveled throughout the country along its borders: from the southernmost tip across the Jordan up through the north near Damascus in order to return along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the south. They returned to Jerusalem after nine months and twenty days. They reported some numbers: 800,000 warriors in Israel and 500,000 in Judah, although these numbers seem too high. 1 Chronicles 21:5 gives even higher figures: 1.1 million in Israel and 470,000 in Judah. It has been estimated that the number of inhabitants of David's state was approximately 600,000.

Censuses were known in the second century BC and were taken in Israel as well (Exodus 30:11–16, Numbers 1:1–4). They were not popular among the people, many of whom avoided them, because they implied new taxes, conscription into the army, and involuntary labor. Censuses were seen as the cause of troubles that angered the gods. At the end, the frightened David noticed that evil had been committed and asked the Lord for mercy. "I have sinned grievously (חטא *ht'*) in what I have done. But now, Lord, forgive (עבר *'br*, נָא *na'*) the guilt (עָוֹן *'awon*) of your servant, for I have been very foolish" (2 Samuel 24:10). It does not seem that David tried to palliate the Lord's anger through the census, whose effect was greater funds for worship but angered the Lord even more and brought a harsh punishment on Israel.[14] The Lord's anger mentioned at the beginning of the pericope (2 Samuel 24:1) should be in reference to the census that David wanted to take. It was the cause of God's anger. Meanwhile, the information that the king undertook the census as a result of Divine inspiration conforms to the Biblical authors' relating all activities and events to God as the direct cause. However, this only means that God acquiesced to David's actions, although in God's eyes they were evil from the very beginning. That is how this is understood in the parallel text in 1 Chronicles 21:1 in which it is Satan and not God who leads David to hold the census. The evil of this act seems to rest in the fact that

14 Tak rozumieją tę kwestię J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, op. cit., p. 391.

David interferes with God's competences and tries to appropriate His people, placing new burdens on it and placing too much confidence in his activity.[15]

The punishment for David's census affects the entire nation, as the king is its representative. God prophesies this punishment through His prophet Gad, who presents three alternatives: seven years of famine (1 Chronicles 21:21 speaks of three years), three months of Israel fleeing its enemies, or three days of pestilence. David chose the third option, because he counted on the Lord's mercy (רַבִּים רַחֲמָיו *rabbim rahamaw*), but did not want to fall into man's hands. In Exodus 9:14, pestilence (דֶּבֶר *dewer*) is likewise called a plague (מַגֵּפָה *maggefa*) and kills 70,000 people. Just like during the night of Passover (Exodus 12:13, 23), the angel of destruction wanted to destroy (שחט *szht*, נכה *nkh*, see: Exodus 8:20, 9:15) Jerusalem, but the Lord had mercy (נחם *nhm*) for this misfortune (רָעָה *ra'a*) and stopped the angel's hand. This happened upon David's request: "It is I who have sinned (חטא *ht'*); it is I, the shepherd, who have done wrong (עוה *'wh*). But these are sheep; what have they done? Punish me and my kindred" (2 Samuel 24:17). David was aware of his sin and was ready o burden himself and his family with the consequences of evil upon himself in order to save the people whom he ruled.

Upon Gad's suggestion, David decided to build on altar on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, where the destroying angel was, and offer holocausts (עלה *'lh*, עֹלָה *'ola*) and peace offerings (שֶׁלֶם *szélem*) there in order to stop the plague. Ornan the Jebusite turned out to be supportive of the king; he made available a place at the altar and offered oxen, threshing sledges, and the yokes of the oxen for firewood. He wished David that his Lord the God be merciful (רצה *rch*). However, the king did not agree to sacrifice something he had received gratuitously. He bought the threshing floor and oxen for fifty silver shekels, which was not a large sum (equivalent to about 60–70 grams of gold). According to 1 Chronicles 21:25, David bought this threshing floor for 600 shekels of gold. Perhaps this refers to the entire threshing floor, whereas 2 Samuel refers to a part of it necessary to build an altar. Later tradition associated this place with Mount Moriah, where Abraham met Melchizedek and was supposed to sacrifice Isaac. According to 2 Chronicles 3:1, a temple had been built at this site. After David offered holocausts and peace offerings at the built altar, "The

15 Cf. J. Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, op. cit., p. 500–504; J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas, *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Biblii Hebrajskiej*, op. cit., p. 390–391; A. F. Campbell, J. F. Flanagan, *Pierwsza i Druga Księga Samuela*, op. cit., p. 263; S. Biel, *Dawid. Medytacje biblijne*, op. cit., p. 191–193; C. Martini, *Dawid grzesznik i człowiek wiary*, op. cit., p. 44–47, 49–50.

Lord granted relief (allowed to be convinced – עתר *'tr*) to the country, and the plague was checked in Israel" (2 Samuel 24:25).

Although others had warned him, David sinned. He was convinced of the righteousness of his behavior, confident in his own strength. However, he took note of his error and was capable of confessing to it; he carried it to the Lord, Who set him aside and accepted his sentence presented by the prophet Gad. He is aware of his sin, takes responsibility for it, and defends the people against its calamitous consequences. David counted on God's mercy, because people had disappointed him many times, and he tried to beg the Lord with prayers and offerings in order to save Israel from misfortune. In this description, he appears to be a true penitent standing before the Lord in honesty and truth.

1.3. The Penitential Psalms

Many Psalms are penitential in nature. Church tradition has selected a group of seven it has called the Penitential Psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. This collection was already known to St. Augustine (354–43), and Cassiodorus (485–580) spoke of seven.[16] Of the 150 Biblical Psalms, seventy-three have been directly attributed to David in the Hebrew Bible (eighty in the Septuagint and eighty-two in the Vulgate).[17] In fact, his authorship has been extended to all the Psalms, which have been called the Psalms of David. Of the seven Penitential Psalms, only 102 and 130 are attributed to David in their titles. These titles were added later, and in many cases understanding them is made difficult by unclear terms. All the Penitential Psalms are commonly dated to several centuries after David, usually to the seventh through fifth centuries BC. Some Psalms allude to circumstances in David's life, usually to his partisan wars with Saul: Psalms 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, and 142. Psalm 51, which is one of the Penitential Psalms, refers to David in its title: "when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba" (verse 2). It seems that this text could describe David's feelings caused by a meeting with Nathan fairly well. It is not entirely explained that the root of the text could have come from David, while it was later edited and supplemented, for example with the text about the

16 Cf. S. Łach, J. Łach, *Księga Psalmów. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz, ekskursy*, Poznań 1990, p. 118 (Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu, 7.2).

17 Cf. G. Ravasi, *Psalmy*, cz. 1: *Wprowadzenie i Psalmy 1–19 (wybór)*, Kraków 2007, p. 17 (Zgłębiać Biblię). S. Łach, J. Łach, *Księga Psalmów*, op. cit., p. 50 give different numbers in translation: Septuagint 84, Vulgate 65, Peshitta 86.

destruction of Jerusalem (verse 20–21). The situation could be similar with other Psalms attributed to David. Attributing many Psalms to David, who undoubtedly also was a poet and musician, shows that these texts were a reflection of David's attitudes, including his penitential attitude.[18]

Awareness of sin and guilt are very clear in the Penitential Psalms. Terminology related to these concepts is present in most of these Psalms. We can find in them the following terms: sin – חַטָּאת *hatta't* (Psalm 32:5 [twice]; 38:4, 19; 51:4), חֲטָאָה *hata'a* (Psalm 32:1) and חֵטְא *het'* (Psalm 51:7, 11); fault or transgression – פֶּשַׁע *pésza'* (Psalm 32:1, 5; 51:35); guilt – עָוֹן *'awon* (Psalm 32:2; 38:4, 7, 11); deceit – רְמִיָּה *r^{e}mijja* (Psalm 32:2); folly – אִוֶּלֶת *'iwéwlet* (Psalm 38:6); sinner – חַטָּא *hatta'* (Psalm 51:15) and רָשָׁע *rasza'* (Psalm 32:5); to sin – חטא *ht'* (Psalm 51:6); and to do evil – עשׂה רַע *'sh ra'* (Psalm 51:6). Thus this terminology appears most frequently in Psalms 51, 32, and 38, while it is absent from Psalms 6, 102, and 143.

Sin always leads to a reaction on God's part. In our Psalms, it is expressed with the aid of the following words: anger – אַף *'af* (Psalm 6:2), קֶצֶף *qécef* (Psalm 38:2; 102:11) and זַעַם *zá'am* (Psalm 38:4; 102:11); chastise or reprove – חֵמָה *hema* (Psalm 6:2; 38:2); judgment – מִשְׁפָּט *miszpat* (Psalm 143:2); reproach – שפט *szpt* (Psalm 51:6); judgment – דבר *dbr* (Psalm 51:6); to punish – יכח *jkh* (Psalm 6:2; 38:2); to chastise – יסר *jsr* (Psalm 6:2; 38:2); (the Lord's) hand was heavy – כבד יָד *kbd jad* (Psalm 32:4); (the Lord's) hand has come down upon me – נחת יָד *nht jad* (Psalm 38:3); (the Lord's) arrows have sunk deep in me – נחת חֵץ *nht hec* (Psalm 38:3); (the Lord) lifted me up just to cast me down – נשׂא *ns'* i שׁלך *szlk* (Psalm 102:11); and (the Lord) shattered my strength and has cut short my days – ענה *'nh* i קצר *qcr* (Psalm 102:24). God's negative reaction is most clearly emphasized in Psalms 38, 102, and 6. The terms in Psalms 6:2, and 102:2 are nearly identical. Only Psalm 130 makes no mention of God's reaction against the author of the Psalm.

The Penitential Psalms make frequent references to God's mercy. The following terms were used to this purpose: mercy – חֶסֶד *hésed* (Psalm 6:5; 32:10; 51:3; 130:7; 143:8, 12); another Hebrew term for mercy – רַחֲמִים *rahamim* (Psalm 51:3); faithfulness – אֱמוּנָה *'emuna* (Psalm 143:1); (saving) justice – צְדָקָה *c^{e}daqa* (Psalm 51:16; 143:1, 11); and forgiveness – סְלִיחָה *seliha* (Psalm 130:4). Only Psalm 38 does not contain such words, although it does not lack the author's confidence placed in the Lord.

Apart from Psalm 32, all the Penitential Psalms are lamentations and earnestly ask God for help amidst all sorts of sufferings, threats, and vexations. This could

18 Cf. S. Łach, J. Łach, *Księga Psalmów*, op. cit., p. 45–53; G. Ravasi, *Psalmy*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 15–18.

refer to internal weakness, illness, or fear caused by one's own guilt or destiny and not of enemies who oppress and threaten. Such a situation is presented in Psalms 51 and 130. Meanwhile, Psalms 6, 38, 10, and 143 clearly speak of enemies and oppressors who are the cause of agony. In this matter, Psalm 32 is not unambiguous. Perhaps enemies are responsible for the floodwaters and distress mentioned in verses 6–7. In all the Penitential Psalms, there is awareness of sin or of God's punishment. Sin is the ultimate source of unhappiness; it leads to calamitous consequences and God's punishments. The authors of the Psalms tie practically every difficult situation of the individual or of the community to sin and God's punishment, even if they do not mention them. In such an understanding, each lamentation of the psalm author in a difficult situation can be described as a Penitential Psalm.

For a long time, David's life was threatened, and he faced many enemies in both public and family life. The Penitential Psalms and, in general, lamentations can be easily related to him; they express what he must have experienced when facing obstacles and oppression. He probably tied such situations to his sins. The Penitential Psalms thus to an extent express his penitential attitude.

2. The Penitent David in Mozart's Cantata

We will now look at the image of David as Penitent in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's (1756–1791) cantata *Davide penitente* (KV 469).[19] Does it conform to the Biblical image of David, or does it introduce new traits?

2.1. The Origins of the Cantata

The cantata *Davide penitente* was composed in 1785. It was commissioned by the Viennese Society of Musicians (Wiener Tonkünstler-Societät), which organized charity concerts (*Akademie*) during Lent and Advent in order to support the

19 The abbreviation KV (or K.) means *Köchelverzeichnis* ("Köchel's Catalogue"). The Austrian Ludwig von Köchel (1800–1877) was a botanist by training yet at the same time a musician and scholar of music. In 1862, he published the first complete, chronological catalog of W. A. Mozart's works, containing 626 compositions from 1761–1791. Future editions were updated (the latest update dates to 1962), and the catalogue is still used today – cf. W. A. Mozart, *Listy*, wybór, przekład, komentarze, kalendarium, indeksy I. Dembowski, Warszawa 1991, p. 597–598; *Encyklopedia muzyki*, red. A. Chodkowski, Warszawa 1995, p. 449.

widows and orphans of Austrian musicians. The vocal-instrumental composition, which lasts forty-five minutes, was presented alongside the works of other composers, including Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), on March 13 and 15, 1785, in Vienna's Burgtheater. It was very well received and frequently performed up through the middle of the nineteenth century. The figure of David was very popular in music then. Before 1800, there appeared seventy-two musical compositions whose protagonist was the Biblical king of Israel; ten of them focused on David's penitence. Slightly before Mozart, in 1775 the Italian composer Ferdinando Gasparo Bertoni also presented *Davide il penitente* during a similar concert. Mozart presented his composition as a "Psalm" and described it as a cantata, while the first publishers of his works incorrectly called it an oratorio, as it does not have a dramatic structure based around dialogues usually performed this the aid of recitatives and is not very long. The title *Davide penitente* does not come from Mozart, but it appeared in musical sources and in the correspondence of the composer's wife and son. The publishers of the cantata used a different variant on the king's name, *Davidde penitente*, which is still found in the literature today.[20]

Mozart had very little time to compose a completely new work, one that he would receive no money for. He above all had to work on commissions, of which he had many at the time, because he needed the money to support himself and his wife Constanze née Weber (whom he married in Vienna on August 4, 1782) and son Carl Thomas (who was born on September 21, 1784). Thus he made use of his previous religious composition, the *Great Mass in C Minor* (KV 427/417a), in order to present a choral work hitherto unknown in Vienna. The *Great Mass in C Minor* was Mozart's seventeenth Mass,[21] which he composed in 1782–1783 in Vienna and Salzburg. However, he never finished it, maybe because it was not commissioned, as were almost all other compositions by Mozart during the latter part of his career, but to fulfill his vow and express gratitude to God for healing his wife and the healthy birth of his first son Reimund Leopold (who was born on June 27, 1783, and died on August 19 of that same year).[22] The Mass

20 Cf. W. A. Mozart, *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, Serie 1: *Geistliche Gesangswerke*, Werkgruppe 4: *Oratorien, geistliche Singspiele und Kantaten*, Bd. 3: *Davide penitente*, vorgelegt von M. Holl, Kassel–London–New York 1987, p. IX–X, XII–XIV; A. Beaujean, *Von der c-moll Messe zu „Davide penitente". Bedeutendes Dokument der Parodie-Praxis*, [in:] W. A. Mozart, *Davide Penitente. Exsultate, jubilate*, conducted by N. Marriner, Stuttgart 1987 (Audio CD), p. 11–13, 15.

21 After it, Mozart wrote a requiem Mass, the *Requiem* (KV 626, Wiedeń 1791), which he did not finish because of his premature death. The *Requiem* is the last composition in Mozart's rich oeuvre.

22 Cf. S. Jarociński, *Mozart*, wyd. 6, Kraków 1988, p. 51 (Monografie Popularne); W. A. Mozart, *Listy*, op. cit., p. 439–440 (list z 4 stycznia 1783); G. Mucci, *La musica di Mozart negli anni 1779–1783*,

contained a complete *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, and *Benedictus*, while the *Credo*, *Sanctus* and *Hosanna* were incomplete. The *Agnus Dei*, meanwhile, was completely missing. The *Great Mass in C Minor* was first performed in St. Peter's Cathedral in Salzburg on August 25 or October 26, 1783. Mozart's wife indicated the former date, and the latter was provided by his sister Maria Anna, affectionately referred to as Nannerl. The rehearsal took place on August 23. The parts that were likely missing were supplemented by fragments from Mozart's earlier Masses. Mozart's wife Constanze performed the soprano solo parts. Mozart could use this brilliant composition in order to at least partly circulate it, as musical Masses in Vienna at that time were performed only in certain churches, while an incomplete Mass could not have been presented at all. This wonderful, monumental work for two sopranos; a tenor and bass (it does not appear in the cantata); two mixed four, five, and eight-part harmonies; and a developed orchestra (approximately 150 and, according to some sources, even more than 180 people took part in the premiere performance) sounded thanks to the cantata. Meanwhile, the *Great Mass in C Minor* found itself in the repertoire only in the twentieth century, superseding the cantata. Over time, the missing parts of the Mass based on Mozart's works were added: the *Credo* and *Sanctus* were added in 1901, while the *Agnus Dei* was added in 2010.[23]

In *Davide penitente*, Mozart made full use of the *Kyrie* consisting of one part and the *Gloria* consisting of eight parts from the above-mentioned *Great Mass in C Minor*. In the cantata, Parts 7 and 8 are a whole. Thus it had a total of eight parts, to which two new arias were added; thus there is a ten-part composition. The tenor aria is the sixth part, and for the soprano it is the first part of the eighth cantata. Mozart composed them for two prominent soloists, Johan Valentin Adamberger and Caterina Cavalieri, several days before the concert: on March 6, 1785, for the tenor and on March 11 for the soprano. Up through part 10, which the final parts of 7 and 8 of the *Gloria* contribute to, the composer opened a new cadence for the soloists (sopranos I and II and the tenor) before the final chords. He changed nothing in the score of the *Mass* apart from getting rid of several notes in the *Gloria* in order to enrich the above-mentioned cadence. Meanwhile, he added clarinets to the instruments. The new arias smoothly transition to the next parts of 7 and 9 thanks to modulation – a change

„La Civiltà Cattolica" 142 (1991) vol. 4, p. 22–23.

23 Cf. W. A. Mozart, *Davide penitente*, op. cit., p. IX–X, XII; A. Beaujean, *Von der c-moll Messe zu „Davide penitente"*, op. cit., p. 11, 15; A. Quattrocchi, *L'unica „parodia" di Mozart*, [in:] W. A. Mozart, *Davide Penitente. Exsultate, jubilate*, conducted by N. Marriner, Stuttgart 1987 (Audio CD), p. 23.

of key – although they are marked by greater length and virtuosity and along with a new cadence are of a somewhat more "secular" nature.

From the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries, the use of previously composed music in a new composition was called a parody. Even the greatest composers, such as Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759), and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), made use of this genre. Mozart also sometimes made use of parody. In this case, it took place on a grand scale. What is astounding is that it did not concern, as was usually the case, the score, which was accepted for use not in a church, but in a concert hall, in an unchanged form. However, this was a successful effort, because the rich and diverse music of the *Mass*, similar to oratorio music, was open to a change of character and new contents, corresponding well to the words *Kyrie* and *Gloria*[24].

2.2. The Cantata Libretto

Using the music from the *Great Mass in C Minor*, Mozart wrote a completely different text and changed the language from Latin to Italian. Here is the text of the libretto in the original Italian with an English translation and the parts of the Mass noted.[25]

1. Choir and soprano I (Andante moderato)	*Great Mass in C Minor: Kyrie eleison*
Alzai le flebili [mie] voci al Signor [a Dio], da' mali oppresso.	I have lachrymosely raised [my] voices to the Lord [to God], oppressed by misfortunes.
2. Choir (Allegro vivace)	*Gloria in excelsis Deo*
Cantiam le glorie, cantiam le lodi e replichiamole in cento e cento modi	Let us sing glory, let us sing praise and let us repeat them in hundreds and hundreds of different ways

24 Cf. W. A. Mozart, *Davide penitente*, op. cit., p. IX–X; A. Beaujean, *Von der c-moll Messe zu „Davide penitente"*, op. cit., p. 13–15; A. Quattrocchi, *L'unica „parodia" di Mozart*, op. cit., p. 23–25; S. Wronka, *Dies irae W. A. Mozarta*, „Collegium Polonorum" 13 (1995–1996), p. 228–229.

25 The Italian text comes from: Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg, *Mozart Libretti – Catalogo Online*, http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/libretti-edition/wrkliste.php?sec=libedi&l=5 (16.11.2017). The words added in brackets appear in the cantata's score when the text is repeated; cf. W. A. Mozart, *Davide Penitente. Exsultate, jubilate*, conducted by N. Marriner, Stuttgart 1987 (Audio CD), p. 26–31.

del Signore amabilissimo.	about the kindest Lord.
3. Aria (sopran II) (Allegro aperto)	*Laudamus te*
Lungi le cure ingrate, ah! respirate omai: s'è palpitato assai, è tempo di goder.	Unpleasant concerns are far away Oh! Leave me already: I've had enough fear, now is the time to be merry.
4. Choir (Adagio)	*Gratias agimus tibi*
Sii pur sempre benigno, oh Dio, e le preghiere ti muovano a pietà.	Always be merciful, oh Lord, and let my prayers always make you have pity.
5. Duo (soprano I and II) (Allegro moderato)	*Domine Deus*
Sorgi, o Signore, e spargi [e dissipa] i tuoi nemici. Fugga ognun che t'odia, fugga da te.	Rise, oh Lord, and scatter [and disperse] Your enemies. May every who hates you flee, may they flee from You
6. Aria (tenor) (Andante)	*New composition*
A te, fra tanti affanni pietà cercai, o Signore, che vedi il mio bel core, che mi conosci almen. Udisti i voti miei, (Allegro) e già godea quest'alma per te l'usata calma delle tempeste in sen.	Among so many worries, I looked to You for pity, oh Lord, Who sees my beautiful heart, Who at least knows me. You have listened to my pleas, And this soul has rejoiced because of the silencing by You of the tempest in my breast.
7. Choir (I and II) (Largo)	*Qui tollis peccata mundi*
Se vuoi, puniscimi, ma pria, Signore, lascia che almeno sfoghi, che [almen pria] si moderi	If You want, punish me, but first, Lord, let me to at least unload, so that [at least at first]

il tuo [terribile] sdegno, il tuo furore.	Your [terrible] rage, Your wrath will be milder.
Vedi la mia pallida guancia inferma?	Do You see me, sick, pale cheeked?
Signore, deh sanami,	Lord, heal me,
deh [tu puoi:] porgimi soccorso, aita.	[You can] give me support, help.
8. Aria (soprano I) (Andante)	*New composition*
Tra l'oscure ombre funeste	Among dark, hostile shadows
splende al giusto il ciel sereno,	the heavens become calm and brighten for the Righteous One,
serba ancor nelle [fra le] tempeste	Who keeps His peace and calm heart
la sua pace un fido cor.	in the tempest.
Alme belle, ah! sì, godete, (Allegro)	Beautiful souls, oh! Yes, rejoice,
né alcun fia che turbi audace	and there will be nobody who will detract the audacity,
quella gioia e quella pace,	this joy and this peace
di cui solo è Dio l'autor.	Whose author is only God.
9. Terzet (soprano I and II, tenor) (Allegro)	*Quoniam tu solus*
Tutte le mie speranze	I have place all hopes
ho tutte riposte in te.	in You.
Salvami, o Dio, dal nemico feroce	Save me, oh Lord, from the cruel enemy
che m'insegue e che m'incalza.	that persecutes and hunts me.
10. Chór (i soliści) (Adagio)	*Jesu Christe and Cum Sancto Spiritu + new cadence*
Chi in Dio sol spera,	Who places hope in God
di tai pericoli non ha timor.	has no fear of such dangers.

This text does not name David, but the title *Psalm* that Mozart submitted it under for the charitable concert and that it was identified as in the concert program sends one to the Book of Psalms, which was always associated with David. The text of the cantata paraphrases the Biblical Psalms and primarily expresses the author's oppression and remorse as well as his asking God for mercy and help. For a long time, it was believed that these are the fragments of the Penitential Psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. Since that is the case, then the title *The*

Penitent David naturally came to mind. The composition was supposed to express David's remorse for his sins as well as his pleading for mercy and succor amidst different forms of oppression. The selection and scope of the texts was already to a large extent determined by music, which was composed to accompany words of pleading, thanksgiving, and praise. New texts with respect to content, sound, and structure had to be applied. Mozart probably composed new arias to match the already ready words. In general, the use of Italian lyrics worked well; some claim that in some cases they seem to better fit the music than the Latin words of the Mass. There does not appear to be any dissonance between the music and the lyrics or in the placing of accents in words and sentences. This required quite a bit of work, as the music of the *Great Mass in C Minor* is very rich and refined; sometimes, many notes matched one syllable. On the other hand, the previous spacing of the words of the Mass in the partiture was an aid. Not making use of the historical books of Sacred Scripture dealing with the story of King David (1–2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles) shows that Mozart did not have an oratorio in mind.[26]

We don't have any detailed information regarding who was responsible for the selection of the Psalms. According to Mozart's contemporaries, this was an Italian poet. It seems that Mozart did not himself select the lyrics, but instead was assisted by someone familiar with the Biblical literature in the Italian language. Until recently, this was quite commonly attributed to Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749−1838), whose real name was Emmanuele Conegliano. He was an Italian poet who was active in Vienna in 1783−1792 (later he was in London and New York) and also worked with the Viennese Society of Musicians. He was known to Mozart and quickly became the author of the librettos to three famous Viennese operas: *Le nozze di Figaro* (KV 492, 1786), *Don Giovanni* (KV 527, 1790), and *Così fan tutte* (KV 588, 1790). He gained fame above all as a librettist, having written more than fifty librettos for various composers. By 1785, this composer could boast of several rhymed translations of Psalms. Slightly later, he wrote the lyrics to a four-act great oratorio titled: *Il Davide*. There is much evidence that Da Ponte could have been the author of the libretto to Mozart's cantata. He selected the appropriate fragments of the Psalms and paraphrased them or made use of some available translation. At that time, the Psalms, including those with music added to them, were translated only in poetic form. In Italy, the model for such

26 Cf. W. A. Mozart, *Davide penitente*, op. cit., p. XIV; A. Beaujean, *Von der c-moll Messe zu „Davide penitente"*, op. cit., p. 12–15; A. Quattrocchi, *L'unica „parodia" di Mozart*, op. cit., p. 23–24.

a publication was the work *Estro poetico-armonico* from 1724–1726, in which Girolamo Ascanio Giustiniani (1697−1749) paraphrased the first fifty Psalms; the music was composed by Benedetto Marcello (1686−1739). In Poland, an example of such an edition is the *Melodies for the Polish Psalter*, Krakow 1580, which contains a poetic version of the Psalms translated by Jan Kochanowski (1530−1584) with *a cappella* music by Mikołaj Gomółka (1535−1609). Da Ponte could have made use of Giustiniani's work.[27]

Recently, however, the translation of the Psalms used in Mozart's cantata has been identified.[28] It was the new edition of the Psalms in five volumes (the first volume contained solely introductory materials), a work by Saverio Mattei (1742–1759), a writer, musician, historian of Italian music, and attorney.[29] He knew Latin, Greek, and Hebrew well and translated from the Hebrew text. This is a poetic translation, or rather a paraphrasing somewhat similar to Jan Kochanowski's translation of the Psalms. In Mattei's work, the Italian version is much more comprehensive than the Hebrew text or the attached text of the Vulgate.[30] However, the translator tried to give an accurate sense of the Hebrew expressions, which he analyzed very penetratingly. He referenced the Vulgate in the explanations, noting the differences between them and the Hebrew and Greek text (in the version of the Septuagint, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion). Saverio Mattei was also interested in the Psalms from the perspective of music. He wrote the treatise *La filosofia della musica, ossia la musica de' salmi. Dissertazione*, in which he presented several Psalms in the form of ready librettos of cantatas: *Salmo XVII. Cantata a quattro voci*, *Salmo*

27 Cf. *Encyklopedia muzyki*, op. cit., p. 182; W. A. Mozart, *Davide penitente*, op. cit., p. IX, XIV–XV; A. Beaujean, *Von der c-moll Messe zu „Davide penitente"*, op. cit., p. 12.

28 Cf. Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg, *Mozart Libretti – Catalogo Online*, http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/libretti-catalog/liste.php?t=3&r=-1&l=5 (16.11.2017).

29 S. Mattei, *I libri poetici della Bibbia tradotti dall'ebraico originale e adattati al gusto della poesia italiana. Colle note, e osservazioni critiche, politiche, e morali. E colle osservazioni su' luoghi più difficili, e contrastati del senso letterale, e spirituale*, vol. 1−5, Napoli 1766−1774. After a short period of time, new editions appeared in various Italian cities. The first three editions in Naples were finished in 1774, 1779, and 1833, respectively. In 1780, the eighth edition was ready in Padua. In the nineteenth century, newer editions still multiplied.

30 It has not been determined which edition of the Vulgate the author made use of. It is essentially based on the Septuagint (*Psalterium Gallicanum*), although not entirely and it is also not the *Vulgata Clementina*, and it is also not based on the Hebrew text of the (*Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos*). The author consulted various editions of the Vulgate. It also not known what edition of the Hebrew Bible he used. However, it should be said that the Latin and Hebrew texts used by the author are nearly identical to present-day editions.

CIII. Cantata a tre voci, Salmo LXXII e LXXIV. Cantata a più voci[31]. His work must have been known in Vienna, possibly through Pietro Metastasi (whose real name was Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, 1698–1782), who starting in 1730 was the emperor's poet in Vienna, where he died. He gained fame as a librettist for operas, oratorios, and cantatas. Mozart made use of his libretto in several of his operas and in the oratorio (azione sacra) *La Betulia liberata* (KV 118/74c, Salzburg 1771), which presented the story of Judith and Holofernes on the basis of the Book of Judith. Mattei frequently corresponded with Metastasio about the assumptions and results of his translation of the Psalms.[32]

Later parts of the cantata almost exactly quoted Mattei's paraphrase of the subsequent verses of the Psalms.

1. Psalm 119:1a
Alzai le flebili mie voci a Dio,
Da' mali oppresso[33].

2. Psalm 33:1
Cantiam le glorie, cantiam le lodi
Del mio Signore amabilissimo,
E replichiamole in cento modi[34].

3. Psalm 99:1
Lungi le cure ingrate,
Ah! respirate omai:
S'è palpitato assai,
E' tempo di goder[35].

4. Psalm 4:2
Sii pur sempre benigno, e le preghiere
Ti muovano così[36].

31 S. Mattei, *I libri poetici della Bibbia*, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 227–264.
32 Cf. ibidem, vol. 4, p. 282–303, 327–335.
33 Ibidem, vol. 5, p. 13.
34 Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 236.
35 Ibidem, vol. 4, p. 125.
36 Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 40.

5. Psalm 67:1

Sorgi, o Signor, e dissipa,
E spargi i tuoi nemici: ognun, che t'odia,
Fugga da te[37].

6. Psalm 4:1

A te fra tanti affanni
Pietà cercai Signore,
Che vedi il mio bel core,
Che mi conosci almen.
Udisti i voti miei:
E già godea quest'alma
Per te l'usata calma
Delle tempeste in sen[38].

7. Psalm 6:1–2

[1] Se vuoi, puniscimi, ma pria, Signore
Lascia, che sfoghi, che almen si moderi
Il tuo terrribile sdegno, e furore.
[2] Vedi la pallida, la scolorita
Mia guancia inferma? Signor deh sanami,
Tu puoi: tu porgimi soccorso, aita[39].

8. Psalm 96:12–13[40]

[12] Tra l'oscure ombre funeste
Splende al giusto il ciel sereno,
Serba ancor nelle tempeste
La sua pace un fido cor.
[13] Alme belle, ah! sì godete,
Né alcun fia, che turbi audace

37 Ibidem, vol. 3, p. 133.
38 Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 40. In ed. 8, Padova 1780, vol. 3, p. 60, as well as ed. 3, Napoli 1833, vol. 1, p. 11, the first part of this verse has been changed: "Da te, fra tanti affanni | Pietà sperai, Signore, | Da te, che vedi il core, | Che mi conosci almen." This means that one of the three editions of the Neapolitan cantatas finished in 1779 has been used. The remaining texts used in the cantata remained unchanged, apart from small edits of punctuation, in later editions.
39 S. Mattei, *I libri poetici della Bibbia*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 58.
40 In present-day editions of the Vulgate, these are verses 11–12.

Quella gioja, e quella pace,
Di cui solo è Dio l'autor[41].

9. Psalm 7:1
Signor le mie speranze
Tutte ho riposte in te. Salvami, o Dio,
Dal nemico feroce,
Che m'insegue, e m'incalza[42].

10. Psalm 33:22
Di tai pericoli non ha timore
Chi in Dio sol spera[43].

As we have seen, the cantata makes use of Psalms 4 (twice), 6, 7, 34 (twice), 68, 97, 100, and 120, and it is usually their first verses (Psalms 7, 68, 100, and 120), first two verses (Psalms 4 and 6), first and last verses (Psalm 34), or last two verses (Psalm 97). The first and last verses grab our attention most. Additionally, in this case most of these verses have a more poetic form. It does not seem, however, that the external side of the Psalms was the only criterion for selection. That would attest to certain haste and superficiality. An argument against such a mechanical selection is the fact that there is a fairly coherent compilation in terms of content and is adequate to the music. This would not be possible without carefully reading the texts of the Psalms and probably all of them, because the selected verses come from various places in the Psalter. It seems that Mozart did not have the time and maybe not the knowledge either in order to make such a selection of texts in a foreign language, although this possibility cannot be discounted altogether. Da Ponte could have successfully done this, however. The participation of Mattei himself is rather unlikely, because he was in Naples at the time and there is no evidence that he was in contact with Mozart, through correspondence or otherwise.

In the Hebrew Bible and in the Vulgate, Psalms 4, 6, 7, 34, 68, and 97 are directly attributed to David, while Psalms 100 and 120 do not have such an attribution. The titles of three Psalms present the situation to which the text

41 S. Mattei, *I libri poetici della Bibbia*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 116.
42 Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 64.
43 Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 239.

refers. Psalm 7:1: *A plaintive song of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, the Benjaminite*; Psalm 34:1: *Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him out and he went away.*; Psalm 97:1a: *A Psalm of David, when the land was restored to peace*. In the introductions to the Psalms used in Mattei's cantata, the situation that is referred to is specified; Psalm 120 is also related to David.

According to the Italian translator, Psalm 4 concerns the revolt of Absalom and his accomplices against David (2 Samuel 15–18). Other commentators during his time related the text to David's persecution by Saul (1 Samuel 18–27).[44] Meanwhile, according to Mattei, Psalm 6 refers to David's illness after having committing adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2–5); it has been correctly considered one of the Penitential Psalms.[45]

According to the title, Psalm 7 is supposed to express David's prayer in reaction to the words of Cush, the Benjaminite. Some believe he was Hushai the Archite, David's friend who went to the rebellious Absalom in order to counsel him on how to find a solution that would be beneficial for the king and to inform the king of them (2 Samuel 15:32–37; 16:15–17; 23). Mattei rejects this interpretation because the spelling of the two names is different and Hushai did not come from the tribe of Benjamin. Other scholars have associated Cush with Saul, who persecuted David, explaining that Hushai was an Ethiopian, someone with dark skin, which would represent Saul's dark nature. David used this alias and not the king's name out of respect for the ruler. Others still claimed that he was Shimei of the house of Saul and, therefore, a Benjaminite who threw stones at David and cursed him during his flight from Jerusalem to escape Absalom (2 Samuel 16:5–13). For Mattei, however, such changes of name and their meaning are unacceptable. Some believe that he was one of Saul's bureaucrats falsely accused before the king. Others have not tried to explain this title, noting that all titles in the Psalms were given later and are not of great significance. For our author, these titles are ancient and date back at least to the times of Ezra and thus he cannot avoid them. At the same time, he notes that the majority of the titles have musical annotations and that they rarely refer to the substance of the Psalms. Thus he concludes that Hushai could have been a poet and musical director, the author of a song that had become popular, and David wanted his

44 Cf. ibidem, vol. 2, p. 39–40.

45 Cf. ibidem, vol. 2, p. 57. The author of 2 Samuel does not speak of David's illness, but of the illness and death of the child that Bathsheba gave birth to. When his child was ill, David fasted strictly and did not communicate with anyone (2 Samuel 12:11–19).

Psalm to be sung to the melody of this song. In many Psalms, there is an instruction related to melody: "According to [the melody of]…" (see: Psalm 45:1; 46:1; 53:1). Meanwhile, in the Psalm itself David would justify the slander he had been smeared with in front of his friend Jonathan, the son of Saul.[46]

According to Mattei, Psalm 34 was written the Cave of Adullam, where David hid after he had to leave Achish, the Philistine king of Gath, among whom he had looked for protection from Saul. After he had been recognized, David pretended to be insane and escaped to the cave (1 Samuel 21:11–22, 1). The only problem is the name, because in 1 Samuel King Gath is called Achish, while in the title of the Psalm he is referred to as Abimelech, while in the *Vulgata Clementina* he is called Ahimelech. Some have believed that "abimelech" could have been a common noun that in Palestine referred to every king. Mattei suggests that „Abimelech" or "Ahimelech" contained an incorrect linking of "Ahis" (a proper name) with "melech" (king).[47]

In Mattei's view, the next psalm, Psalm 68, is one of the most difficult. According to the rabbis, it was written during the Exodus from Egypt and the promulgation of the Law on Mount Sinai. This Psalm was to be used during the rolling up and transporting of the tent of meeting. Others have noted Israel's military expeditions and victories up through the defeat of the army of the Assyrian King Sennacherib that besieged Jerusalem during the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35–36). The later Church Fathers associated the Psalm with carrying the Ark of the Covenant from Obed-Edom to the top of Mount Zion (2 Samuel 6:12–15). According to Mattei, it is difficult to pinpoint one moment in the history of Israel. Instead, the Psalm encompassed all miraculous events in the history of the Chosen People and accompanied the procession ceremony in which the Levites, musicians, and women singing and banging drums took part in order to thank God for His care and for victory.[48]

Only in the Vulgate does Psalm 97 have a title (there is none in the Hebrew text) that mentions the restoration and regaining of the land. Mattei believes that this comment refers to David's peaceful ascent to rule over the kingdom after Saul's death or until the Israelite prisoners in Babylon would be freed. In his view, the historical context is similar for Psalms 96 and 98.[49] In the Hebrew Bible and the Vulgate, Psalm 100 does not provide the author in the title: *A Psalm*

46 Cf. ibidem, vol. 2, p. 60–63.
47 Cf. ibidem, vol. 2, p. 235.
48 Cf. ibidem, vol. 3, p. 130–133.
49 Cf. ibidem, vol. 4, p. 114.

of Thanksgiving. One Syrian interpreter related the Psalm to Joshua's war against the Amalekites (Joshua 3–12), which surprised Mattei, because the Psalm did not mention Joshua or any war, enemy, or yoke. In his view, it can be related to every holiday in the Hebrew calendar. Of all the Psalms used in this cantata, it is the only one that Mattei does not relate to David. However, he does not explicitly preclude such a reference; in fact, he could even assume it took into consideration the fact that the neighboring Psalms 98, 99, 101, 103, and 104 mention David, at least in the Vulgate.[50]

Psalm 120 (119) is the first song of the steps and of entering (Psalms 120–134) and also does not provide an author. Because of verse 5, which speaks of Meshech and Kedar, foreigners east and south of Israel, this text was commonly tied to the Babylonian captivity. Mattei refers this text to David, who laments the corruption of Jerusalem and feels he is surrounded by Barbarian peoples, as well. David is nostalgic for a golden age that never existed. In David's time, the world was as corrupted as it had been in the past.[51]

The Psalms used in the cantata thus reflect the dramatic situations in the life of David, who was persecuted by Saul, Absolom, and others. In them, the king asks God for help and thanks Him, praising Him for freeing him from persecution. Only Psalm 6, the only penitential one, expresses acceptance of the punishment, which is evidence of David's awareness of his sin and at the same time a plea for the lessening of God's anger and for healing. Thus in the texts of the cantata, David does not only ask for the pardoning of his sins, but he also asks to be saved from his enemies. Therefore, the title of the cantata, *Davide penitente*, does not seem completely accurate. It does not come from Mozart or from the author of the libretto. If the latter had the penitential aspect in mind, he certainly would have selected more Penitential Psalms, especially Psalm 51, which clearly references David's sin with Bathsheba. The title was given by others, who did not study the contents of the lyrics of the cantata as carefully as Mozart and the librettist could have done. It seems that it is not entirely erroneous, however. In a broader sense, these texts can be related to David's sins, because Nathan prophesied to him that wars and misfortunes would not evade his house for centuries, because he had ignored God, killing Uriah and taking his wife (2 Samuel 12:9–12). The attacks by enemies and ruptures in David's family were the consequences of his sins. Thus when he asks God for succor and

50 Cf. ibidem, vol. 4, p. 125.
51 Cf. ibidem, vol. 5, p. 13.

aid during suffering, he touches upon the sources of theses misfortunes – his sins – and asks for the merciful forgiveness and forgetting of them. Mozart, the librettist, and their listeners were not Biblical scholars or theologians; instead, they focused on the dramatic and musical, rather than theological, dimension of the work. However, they had a basic experience of the faith and understood sacred texts.

Mozart's music allows us to grasp their meaning not only with the mind, but also to experience them and thus better understand David, his dilemmas, and his state of mind. We will see, then, what the texts carried and interpreted by the brilliant music of the young genius from Salzburg, who composed *Davide penitente* at the young age of twenty-nine, tell us about the king of Israel and about all of us.

2.3. David in Light of the Lyrics and Music of the Cantata

When composing music to a text, Mozart tried to reflect its spirit. He did this consciously; for Mozart, the concurrence of lyrics and music was never coincidental.[52] The use of the *Great Mass in C Minor* to new lyrics was possible only because the lyrics of the cantata were in their content and Eucharistic nature similar to the words of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*. The composer pauses for a longer time at these short texts and frequently repeats them. At some points, music that lasts several minutes accompanies only one sentence. This is something of a meditation inscribed in musical notes. Music reproduces the contents and the mood of the text, allowing us to focus on it. It forces us to listen to the lyrics repeated in different combinations enriched by musical commentary. We will see how the synthesis of the text and music looks and what effects it brings. This is not a professional analysis in terms of music, but one made on the basis of listening to the work.[53]

Part 1 begins with a four-part harmony of the same motif, which expresses a humble plea to the Lord during a time of great suffering, somewhat in

52 Cf. S. Wronka, *Po stopniach muzyki ku Absolutowi. Na marginesie dwusetnej rocznicy śmierci W. A. Mozarta (1756–1791)*, „Collegium Polonorum" 11 (1991–1992), p. 27–29, 33–35; idem, *Dies irae W. A. Mozarta*, p. 220–232, 252–261. In these articles, I tried to show the appropriateness of Mozart's music to the words of the *Credo* and *Dies irae* sequence in the words of the Mass.

53 In this exegesis of the cantata, I was assisted by brief comments contained in: A. Beaujean, *Von der c-moll Messe zu „Davide penitente"*, op. cit., p. 14–15; A. Quattrocchi, *L'unica „parodia" di Mozart*, op. cit., p. 25–26.

the style of Bach. The voice of the harmony is strengthened by the even accompaniment of nearly the entire orchestra, as a result of which we have what seems to be the effect of Jesus' prayer known in the Eastern tradition, in which several words are repeated without end. Soprano I adds an even greater intensity to the words of the Psalm. The progression from low tones to very high ones helps us to visualize the great suffering experienced by the Psalmist as well as his cry for help while experiencing evil. When the choir returns, the music becomes calmer once again, but the crescendo of soft voices becoming loud ones, which reflects the volatile spiritual state of the author of the Psalm. At the end, the sounds slowly fade away, depicting the situation of a man crushed by oppression who has lost his strength and is helpless in the face of evil.

In Part 2, the four-voice harmony and almost the entire orchestra are heard. The music is joyful, powerful, and exalted, because it uses elements of the fugue (fugato), expressing encouragement to praise the Lord in many ways without end. Here, the words of the Psalm are a paraphrase of the first words of the *Gloria* from the *Great Mass in C Minor*, to which the music was first composed. When there is talk of the kindest Lord, the sounds grow softer and saturate with warmth in order to depict God's love and the response of the author of the Psalm to it.

Part 3 belongs to soprano II and the orchestra, which at this point is devoid of the timpani and some wind instruments. The music bursts with joy, because the crushing concerns and fears are no more and we can exhale with our full breast and rejoice. This state of bliss and ecstasy is accurately expressed by the bodacious coloraturas, built mostly on the main words: *ingrate*, *respirate*, *s'è palpitato*, *goder*.

In the brief Part 4, the five-part harmony and almost full orchestra produce muted, majestic music depicting pleading that is humble but full of trust in mercy and pity. The Psalmist's abasement is further emphasized by the accompaniment of the violin.

Part 5 is performed by a duet of sopranos I and II with the accompaniment of the orchestra, which has been reduced to little more than just the bowed string instruments. The determined music at the beginning expresses a request that the Lord arise and scatter His enemies, which are also the enemies of the Psalmist; this music expresses complete faith in God's victory. The voices grow softer, as the request turns against the man who hates the Lord to flee with shame and never threaten him, but they once again sound powerful with the

return to the first words. The coloraturas based on the word *spargi* emphasize the Psalmist's main plea, which summons the Lord to defend His name and that of His worshipers.

Part 6 is a newly composed aria for the tenor, who is accompanied by nearly the entire orchestra without the timpani, but for the first time with the flute. The nature of the music is somewhat different from that of music of the Mass, but in the first free half it depicts the Psalmist's humble and earnest plea for mercy amidst great sufferings very well. It consists of trust in God, Who knows man's heart and examines his plea in a just way. The tenor's voice, beautifully emphaszied by the prominent wind instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon) becomes increasingly intense and ends this half with a strong *Signore*. The second half is lively and joyous; it depicts the Psalmist's nearly idyllic mood, because his prayer has been answered. Deep inside the soul, which is emphasized by the singing in the coloratura, he feels gratitude and is happy with the undisturbed peace, because the tempest has left him. When there is talk of them, the music dims down, yet at the same time it expressed that they have been forever entrusted in the Lord.

There are two four-part harmonies and an orchestra without clarinets, flutes, or timpani in Part 7. The slow rhythm and sad sounds with the weeping violin in the background express the Psalmist's awareness of his sin and the sorrow reflecting on his pale cheek, as well as humble trust in God's mercy. With the request to soften God's anger, the music gets softer because of the anxiety, later once again emphasizing the earnest prayer for the healing and succor that God can provide. The composition achieves its peak here, near the Penitential Psalm 6.

Part 8 is the next n*otab*le new aria completely based on the Great Mass in C Minor. It was composed for soprano I. The soloist is accompanied by nearly the entire orchestra, once again with a flute. The first half consists of a somewhat gloomy melody interwoven with bright motifs to express the dark shadows and tempests that surround the Psalmist and, on the other hand, the clearing sky above his head and his deep peace in his faithful, trusting heart. The second half is joyous; in fact, it is triumphant. The music perfectly depicts the joy and peace that beautiful souls enjoy. The soprano b*rings* out the call to joy (godete) particularly through the c*olo*ratu*ra* of peace (pace), whose author is only (solo) God. G*od's uniqueness is additionally emphasized by the nearly a* cappella singing at the end. Meanwhile, anyone who would be audacious enough to blemish this peace is challenged by a decisive voice.

In Part 9, the trio of soloists (sopranos 1 and 2 as well as the tenor) with a slightly reduced orchestra express the peace and confidence in the trust placed in the Lord. It is emphasized many times that "all hopes are placed in the Lord." When depicting liberation from a cruel enemy who persecutes the Psalmist, the music and song get quieter and darker, as if to suggest that some new fears haved appeared, but the repeated *salvami* sounds very powerful and decisive, because God could not disappoint and is capable of defeating all enemies.

In the last part of Part 10, which consists of the last two parts of the *Gloria* from the *Great Mass in C Minor*, a four-part harmony accompanied by the orchestra with the timpani appears. The majestic music of the first part effectively depicts the confident hope, calm, and firmness of a man who placed all his hopes in God. This is an introduction to the long last part, which consists of a four-part fugue *alla breve* (bar $^{2}/_{2}$ or $^{2}/_{4}$). By constantly repeating this same motif and the same words, it expresses the Psalmist's belief that he who places his hopes in the Lord fears no dangers. The crescendo of the music depicts the remaining doubts and fears that are nonetheless overcome by trust in God. The soloists emphasize this once more in the new cadence with inevitable coloraturas and top this off with the chanted words of all the singers, buttressed by the powerful chords of instruments that end this part and the entire cantata.

Thus Mozart studied what the Psalms expressed and referred to David, not elaborating on the situation in these texts and its real connection to David. He did not add any content to the Psalms. Instead, he reproduced the emotions and experiences contained within the words. He did this in a way unparalleled in its beautiful, harmonious, and dramatic music. In this way, Mozart helps us to more fully interpret the Biblical text; he arouses our imagination and empathy. The figure of David the Psalmist becomes very expressive, colorful, and vibrant. David appears as a person who is oppressed and threatened by his enemies, yet full of trust in the Lord. He accepts these experiences as punishment for his sin in accordance with the common conviction at the time that misfortunes resulted from one's fault. He begs God to lessen His anger; he begs for God's mercy and liberation from enemies and woes. He prayers are not for granted. He enjoys God's help and experiences peace and joy. He feels safe in him and fears no dangers.

By listening to the cantata, its music and lyrics, we can come nearer to David and learn from him to acknowledge our sins in the truth, accept difficulties, and also place our hopes in the Lord and persistently call for succor and help and love Him, because He is the kindest Lord.

Abstract

The Penitent David in the Bible and in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Cantata "Davide penitente"

David, king of Israel, is an outstanding figure in Biblical history. Exceptionally talented, he left many wonderful works in various fields: religion, politics, and art. However, he was not free of sin, or even of committing crimes, yet he was capable of rising up from them through penitence and invoking the God of mercy. This is most evident after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and led her husband Uriah the Hittite. I discuss these cases and also deal with the Penitential Psalms, which reflect David's attitude. In the second part, I analyze Mozart's cantata *Davide penitente* (KV 469), in which he used the music from the *Great Mass in C Minor, K. 427 c-moll* for the Italian Psalm Paraphrases of the eighteenth century. I discuss the origins of the piece and of the libretto and comment on it at the musical and verbal level. The cantata is a harmonious synthesis in which the rich music complements the inspired words, reflecting its internal tension and emotions. Listening to this composition, we can more fully experience the contents contained within the Biblical text and delve into David's dramatic world, which is always illuminated by God's grace.

Keywords: Book of Psalms; psalms of penance; David; sin; penance; mercy; trust; Mozart; Davide penitente; Great Mass in C minor

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