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explanation is a step towards God's ultimate truth. And what illusions have beset the path of religion! Abraham saw Christ's star, and was 'glad.' We can see it shining in the sky of the 'Old Dispensation' from point to point, and moving across the centuries through the troubled hours of that long night of waiting which beset the people of God. Lawgiver and prophet, psalmist and seer, saw that star, and followed it on and on till they fell exhausted, but with their faces towards the light. 'These all died, not having received the promises; but having seen them and greeted them from afar.'

3. God's stars always lead us to our goal. God leads us, it is true, through illusions and from one illusion to another, but not that He may land us in final confusion. If we follow the gleam long enough, and far enough, we shall come to the Grail at last.

Let us arise and follow our star! It will lead us into strange places, perhaps; over many a craggy height, down into many a deep and shadowed valley, through many a haunted forest; but it will ever be on towards the goal of our desire, towards the divine fulfilments of our life. Perhaps, having followed it far, we may for a time miss the star, because we have wandered out of its way, as did the wise men when they turned towards Jerusalem. But as they once more saw the star, when they turned towards Bethlehem, and rejoiced with exceeding great joy, so we shall recover the power of vision when we tread the lowly path of duty.¹ How blessed if, in His strength, not our own, we can say at the end: 'I have seen His star, and by His great mercy I am come to worship Him.'

¹ E. Griffith-Jones in *C.W.P.* xcvi. 304.

Contributions and Comments.

The Sacrifice of Isaac.

THE Divine command to the Patriarch Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering (Gn 22) is generally regarded as a testing or proving of the faith of the Father of the faithful in One God. 'Now I know that thou fearest God,' is conclusive on that head. The difficulty connected with the event lies in the unwillingness to believe that the Almighty could for any purpose command His servant to act in a way which contradicts all that we hold as to the love of God for His children. Human sacrifice was common in the days of Abraham, and the offering of the eldest son was felt to be the highest proof that men could give of their devotion to Deity. Was this feeling the outcome simply of human minds pondering on sacrificial values? Or, was it a putting into practice some innate instinct, the realization of an idea latent in the humanity which we are told was created in the image of God? If man is God's image, if all that belongs to the truth of his being has its counterpart in the being of God, then the idea of the sacrifice of the best must be of Divine origin, and the perversion (if it was a perversion) connected with it which took the form of offering children must be attributed to the sinful condition which ensued the Fall. But was it altogether a

perversion? Was it not rather an anticipation of the great sacrifice when God Himself 'gave his only-begotten Son' to die for our redemption? Looked at in this way, the command to offer Isaac becomes part of the method by which God taught men by symbols the eternal realities concerning Himself. God and His methods being what they are, such a command was a necessary incident in the long process of teaching the world through prophets who have always been the exponents of the Divine will.

If the command to offer Isaac was a foreshadowing of a greater offering to come (albeit already in the Divine Mind) the circumstances of the lesser offering should have some symbolical relation to the greater. We find these in the expressions used in the command. The Voice said: 'Thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest.' At the Baptism of our Lord the same Voice proclaimed: 'This is my Son, my beloved' (St. Matthew); 'Thou art my beloved Son' (St. Mark); 'Thou art my beloved Son' (St. Luke). The descent of the Holy Spirit at the Baptism led St. John to say: 'I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God,' with the subsequent declaration that He of whom he bore witness was 'the Lamb of God,' that is, the sacrifice ordained for the redemption of man.

When the Lord manifested His glory on the Mount, the same Voice declared: 'This is my beloved Son' (St. Matthew and St. Mark). St. Luke, in recording the same event, tells us that the conversation between the Lord and the two witnesses from the Old Testament was concerning His 'exodus,' that is, His sacrificial death, and again the Voice: 'This is my beloved Son, my chosen.' St. John the Evangelist, in connexion with his mention of the Baptist's witness, refers to our Lord as 'God only begotten.' The verbal parallel between the description of the son of Abraham and the Son of God is complete.

Abraham himself has generally been regarded as the O.T. type of the Father, not only from his having, in will at least, offered his son Isaac, but from his whole relation to the believers in One God to the end of time.

Whether 'one of the mountains' of Moriah was or was not the scene of the Great Sacrificial Consummation is uncertain, but wholly probable and in harmony with the setting of the symbolic rite. The relation between the son of Abraham bearing the wood of the offering and the Son of God traversing the Via Dolorosa with the burden of the wood of the Sacrifice has been seen by all. So, with the words of the patriarch, 'God will himself provide the lamb.' Abraham built an altar there, and it is important that the law which commanded altars to be built of unhewn stone or earth should be remembered, since stone, or rock, is the emblem of Deity. The phrase 'the altar of the cross' is only valid if it means the altar on which the wood, the cross, was raised. The cross was not the altar but the wood on which the victim was laid. This point is necessary if we are to preserve the truth that the Great Sacrifice was wholly a Divine action begun eternally in heaven, consummated on earth; that the Offerer and the Offered alike were Divine. Through forgetfulness of this truth has come the bewildering idea of the Sacrifice being an appeasement of the Father's wrath by a self-immolating Son and all the miserable controversies that have darkened counsel in past ages. In the symbolic action by Abraham, though real enough to him at the time, the crucial point was that Isaac was the child of promise. Through this son were all the promises of blessing to be fulfilled in the world; were he to die how could the promise be fulfilled at all? This was the climax of the test, and the strain on Abraham's faith must have been more than we

can imagine. Thus it was that God revealed that the Victim of the Great Sacrifice was One who, in his own nature as God, could not die. As Isaac, simply in his human nature, could die, but, as the child of promise, must not die if the promise was to avail, so with the Eternal Son. As God He could not die, yet a death there must be. When the Patriarch saw the ram caught in the thicket, a victim whose death would avail the purpose of the Divine Mind, he saw the truth of the Incarnation. The Son of God could not die, but He could and did fulfil the Divine will by taking to Himself a nature in which death was possible. The parallel therefore is as complete as any parallel which has to be worked out in terms of temporality can be. And regarded in this light the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac stands alone in the whole history of mankind as a portrayal of that One Offering in which God gave Himself to man through His Son, and provided for man a means by which he can approach and give himself to the Highest. The word 'substitution' has been the centre of any amount of acrimonious controversy through some centuries; much of it would have been avoided had the story of Isaac been more closely studied. It tells of 'substitution' indeed, since Abraham offered the ram 'in the stead of his son'; the animal which God 'provided' was to submit to death, else the prefigurement would not be complete. In the Great Sacrifice there was death indeed, its foretoken must therefore include death in some way. But to regard Christ as our 'substitute' in the sense that He died in our stead and hereby released us from any dying is to misread the earlier event. Christ in His human nature died for us, not to save us from death but from the sin which ensures eternal death. Yet we have to taste of death by mortifying our animal natures so that sin may be killed in us. The ram on Moriah answers to the debased sensual nature which must die if the higher spiritual nature is to be released. If, instead of speaking of our Lord as our 'substitute,' we regarded Him as The Way by which we can identify ourselves with Him in His sacrificial life, we shall be saved from the exaggeration which speaks of 'doing' as a 'deadly thing,' since Christ has done all, and give our attention to that Power which He supplies, 'provides,' that there may be a real death of sin within us. Identified with Him in sacrifice we shall also ensure our rising with Him, here and hereafter. But if we regard Him as our substitute in death we

must also see Him as our substitute in resurrection, a logical conclusion which of itself demonstrates the illogical use of the word substitution.

The Sacrifice of Isaac, considered as a whole, witnesses to the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Love of the Father, and the necessity for our mortifying the members of our body if the spirit in its ransomed body is to live eternally. There is no other event in Old Testament history which contains within itself so large and inclusive a view of all that is meant by Redemption.

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Scottish Bibles.

I HAVE never seen any mention made of the fact that English Bibles printed in Scotland as a rule have different renderings in some places from those published in England.

As a rule Bibles printed in Scotland, in Jn 14⁶ read: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life'; while Bibles printed in England omit the first copulate. The Revised Version inserts this copulate, for it is found in the Greek. Perhaps its omission is due to a typographical error, but this cannot be said of the second instance I would mention—this is in Jn 10²⁸⁻²⁹. Scottish Bibles read: 'And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' This is in harmony with the Reviser's rendering; but Bibles printed in England give the word 'man' in both these verses as having been supplied by the Translators. How this variation has arisen it may be impossible to determine, but it would almost seem as if the first Scottish printers had for their copy a different translation from that supplied to the English printers. At any rate the Scottish Bibles in these places are the more correct.

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'I buffet my Body.'

WHY do Protestant commentators try to explain this sentence away? 'Buffet' (R.V.) is better than 'keep under' (A.V.), which is not a translation at all. The R.V. margin 'bruise' is still better. But the Rheims translation, 'I chastise my body' is best. 'Υπωπιάζω means 'I beat black and blue,' like an eye discoloured in fighting (see the previous verse). St. Paul is simply telling us that he used on himself the severe but wholesome discipline of the scourge.

D. R. FOTHERINGHAM.

Charing Vicarage.

Epiphany.

JESU, Lord, we kneel before Thee;
Angels, Saints, and men adore Thee;
Hear us ever, we implore Thee,
By Thy birth in Bethlehem.

In the hollow rock abiding,
'Mid the soft-eyed oxen hiding,
Underneath Thy Father's guiding,
Thou wert born in Bethlehem.

In the East Thy Star of Ages
Rose o'er lands of ancient sages,
Till it led the Persian mages
To Thy cave at Bethlehem.

'Mid the lowing kine they sought Thee;
Gifts for gods and kings they brought Thee;
Prince and priest and God they thought Thee
Cradled there in Bethlehem.

Jesu, Lord, we kneel before Thee;
Angels, Saints, and men adore Thee;
Hear us ever, we implore Thee,
By thy birth in Bethlehem.

A. H. SAYCE.

Oxford.