

others, to become the servant of others. To follow his way is to live the pattern. The directions are very clear. There need be no doubt, no hesitating. God's servants need only the love and the courage to follow the pattern, to follow after all those holy and just servants of God who have gone before them, full of hope and confidence in God's holy word:

The world sees nothing but the pains they endure; they themselves have eyes only for what is immortal; so light their suffering, so great the gain they win! God, all the while, did but test them, and testing them found them worthy of him. His gold, tried in the crucible, his burnt-sacrifice, graciously accepted, they do but wait for the time of their deliverance; then they will shine out, these just souls, unconquerable as the sparks that break out, now here, now there, among the stubble. Theirs to sit in judgment on nations, to subdue whole peoples, under a LORD whose reign shall last forever. Trust him if thou wilt, true thou shalt find him; faith waits for him calmly and lovingly; who claims his gift, who shall attain peace, if not they, *his chosen servants?* (Wisd. iii, 4-9).



REDEMPTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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THE gospels and the new testament generally tell of 'good tidings of great joy': but so does the old testament in its own way, for we can read it as a long-drawn preparation for the gospel, and text after text speaks of God's joyous plan. It is perhaps in this aspect of the scriptures that we best realize the fundamental unity of old testament and new. This unity is well illustrated when we, as we should, explain the term 'gospel' by citing texts of Isaias, e.g.:

Get thee up upon a high mountain,
thou that bringest good tidings to Sion;
lift up thy voice with strength,

thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem. (xl, 9.)

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings
and that preacheth peace;
of him that showeth forth good,
that preacheth salvation
and saith to Sion,
thy God shall reign. (lii, 7.)

The spirit of the Lord is upon me
because the Lord has anointed me.
He hath sent me to preach to the weak
to heal the contrite of heart
and to preach a release to the captives
and deliverance to them that are shut up. (lxi, 1.)

Or, in other words, so good is the good news of the old testament that its wording serves to give us the character of the good news of the new.

The old testament, which adds so much to our understanding of the new, is an utterance of that Israel of old which cradled so many men and women of God who spoke and lived for God; and we, now, know with the certainty of faith that God spoke through the prophets. Israel too was the cradle of Christ: 'see in this small cleft of earth, heaven's founder was born'.¹ And before Christ there had always been a true Israel, conscious of God's favours from the nation's beginning:

I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt,
and thou shalt know no God but me
and there is no saviour beside me. (Osee xiii, 4.)

God asked for total allegiance, but also loved and favoured, and because of this love and favour, could command a response and punish refusals:

You only have I known of all the families of earth;
there will I visit upon you all your iniquities. (Amos iii, 2.)

Such were the responsibilities of a chosen people, such the reality of God's work through them. Despite their sufferings and much-chequered history, there was always an inner core of God's people who could say with all their heart 'the Lord liveth who is Saviour of Israel' (IKings (Sam.) xiv, 39). There was a confidence born of looking at past history with faith and love. Confidence

¹ St Jerome, Ep. 46. P.L. 22, 490.

and faith in the intervention of a loving God went to the building up of a firm messianic tradition. God indeed had saved the people, before they were a people through the ministry of Joseph who was given a mysterious name,² 'for God sent me before you to save life' (Gen. xlv, 5). Such a turn of phrase would apply best of all to Moses whose saving from Egyptian captivity filled the religious imagination of the chosen people for many years to come, and became a main theme of their liturgical prayer. Judges and Kings, and David most of all, typify the Saviour to come; but all the while, for the believing Hebrew, God was Saviour and Redeemer:³ these titles for God recur through the old testament: e.g. 'in thy mercy thou hast been a redeemer to thy people which thou hast redeemed' (Exod. xv, 13). 'Thy redeemer is the Holy One of Israel' (Isaias xli, 14). 'O expectation of Israel and the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble' (Jerem. xiv, 8).

On the threshold of the new testament, Zachary looked back over the old and sang: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel because he has visited and redeemed his people . . . as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets who are from the beginning'. Behind him was the whole series of messianic prophecies, beginning with the mysterious 'first gospel' or *protevangelium* of Genesis iii, 15:

'I will put enmity between you and the woman

between your seed and her seed;

He shall crush your head,

and you shall lie in wait for his heel',

and going on with the many promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. xxii, 15-18; xxvi, 3; xxviii, 14, etc.) and then to Juda in particular:

'The sceptre shall not depart from Juda

nor the staff from between his feet,

until he comes to whom it belongs

to him shall be the nations' obedience' (Gen. xlix, 10),

2 Saphnath-Paaneah, which St Jerome, and so the Douay version, render 'Saviour of the world'. There are numerous modern interpretations. Latest is Vergote's (*Joseph en Egypte*, 1959, p. 145):—'the man who knows things': contrasting with those pretentious people who could not interpret the dreams.

3 *Goel* and *Padah* are the two great words. *Goel* is used (i) of the blood-avenger (Num. xxxv, 19, etc.), (ii) he who defends the widow or prisoner for debt (cf. Ruth ii, 20), (iii) of God as avenger of the oppressed and liberator of his people. Frequently in the Psalms and Isaias (e.g. xliii, 14; xliv, 6; xlvii, 4), (iv) N.T. and Christian theology apply the term to Jesus who redeems from sin. *Padah* is used (i) for ransoming at an assessed price Exod. xiii, 13, 15, etc., (ii) of God ransoming from Egypt and from exile. cf. Deut. vii, 8; Jerem. xxxi, 11; Mich. vi, 4; Zach. x, 8.

and magnificently to the house of David: 'when thy days shall be fulfilled . . . I will raise up thy seed after thee, and establish his kingdom . . . I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son' (2 Kings (Sam.) vii, 12-14). From the prophetic literature a whole series of texts serve to delineate the Messiah-Redeemer who is to be born of a virgin⁴ (Isaias vii, 14), at Bethlehem (Mich. v, 1-3), Wonderful Counsellor, God the Mighty, Father of the World to come, Prince of Peace (Isaias ix, 6), King and Priest (Psalms xlv, lxxii, cx), Root of Jesse, filled with the Spirit (Isaias xi, 1), desired of all nations (Aggeus ii, 8), and withal suffering and betrayed (Psalms xxi, xl, liv, lxviii), lowly servant (Isaias xlii, 1-12, 23), mounted on an ass (Zach. ix, 9-10), sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zach. xii, 8-13; xiii, 1), smitten (Zach. xiii, 7-9), slain (Dan. ix, 26), pierced and mourned (Zach. xii, 8-13; xiii, 1). He who suffers thus is supremely redeemer and vicarious sufferer:

'But it was our sufferings that he bore,
our pain that he endured;
and we accounted him stricken,
smitten by God and afflicted,
but he was wounded for our rebellions,
he was bruised for our sins;
upon him was the chastisement which made us whole,
and by his stripes we were healed' (Isaias liii, 4-5).

Finally we can read of a triumph of the Redeemer in the return (Jerem. xxx, 7-11, 21; Ezech. xxxvi, 24-31; Osee iii, 4-5), and the new covenant (Jerem. xxxi, 31-34), and the rebuilding of the house of David (Amos ix, 11-12), of a kingdom never to be destroyed (Dan. ix, 13-18; ii, 44), of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel ii, 28-32).

Alongside the prophetic tradition we should place the earnest yearnings of so many devout Israelites:

'Arise, O Lord, help us: and redeem us
for thy name's sake . . .' (Psalm xliii, 26).

'May we know thy way upon earth
and salvation in all nations' (Ps. lxvi, 3).

'Drop down dew ye heavens from above
and let the clouds rain the just,'⁵

let earth be opened and bud forth a saviour' (Isaias xlv, 8).

⁴ In a tradition springing from the time of the Greek translators.

⁵ The traditional rendering from the Vulgate of St Jerome.

These are the words and yearnings of men of flesh and blood who were waiting, hoping, for him who was to come, for the prophet, for the Messiah (cf John i, 12; Matt. xi, 3).

Let us now attempt to add precisions about the Redeemer and his redemptive sacrifice, as manifested to us in the old testament.

The unique sacrifice of the new law was prefigured by innumerable rites and sacrifices, and most of all by the passover which was to be transformed into the paschal feast. Associated with the sacrifices was blood, and blood in the old testament stands for a means of propitiation and pardon and making the covenant effective. Mysteriously the value of the many sacrifices lay in a shedding of blood. Blood stood for life itself, and by shedding blood men were conscious of offering to God what was most precious or life itself. Leviticus (xvii, 11) taught that 'the soul is in the blood' and this explained an age-old prohibition. Respect for life, which is of God, commands respect for blood. God accepts blood offered in sacrifice as taking the place of a guilty life (cf. Hebrews ix, 7-21f).

The Hebrews, full of such convictions, offered unending animal sacrifices. An immense outpouring of blood was the concomitant of all the chosen people's history. Though the pagan world too knew of constant sacrifices, yet the Hebrew usages must have seemed sad and repulsive to that world which was unable to follow the Hebrews in their sense of sin and yearning for forgiveness of the one true God who was to be feared and loved above all else.

The immense total of offerings in the life of a devout few, as in the whole history of the people, was never proportioned to the offences against the majesty of God, nor to the gravity of sins committed against him who is Good. From time to time there was a feeling that all this religious slaughter was not enough: 'to what purpose do you offer me the multitude of your victims saith the Lord? I am full, I desire not holocausts of rams and fat of fatlings . . .' (Isaias i, 11). God, through his prophet, pleaded for a true interior disposition. At times too they may have been tempted to offer human sacrifices (cf. IV Kings xvi, 4; xvii, 17; xxi, 6; xxiii, 10; Jeremias vii, 31; xix, 5, etc.), yet God himself had suggested substitution, as in the story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham offered the ram *in place of his son* (Gen. xxii, 13), and this typified what was to come centuries later, when substitution

is seen at its highest and God allowed his only-begotten Son to offer himself for us men and for our salvation. This was the final and perfect sacrifice (cf. Hebrews ix, 12).

It is but natural for a sacrifice to terminate in a sacrificial meal, to find its completion in a communion. Participation in a sacred meal set a seal on the offerings made. These had to be good, as in the stories of Abel and Melchisedech. The good quality of what was offered to God was a constant tradition in Israel. This too is a foreshadowing of that perfect God and perfect Man who is offered in the sacrifice of the new testament. The offerings sacrificed to God came back to the sacrificer in terms of divine blessing, spiritual profit, and notably, of spiritual food as in the mystery of the manna 'which each one picked up according to his need' (Exod. xvi, 18) because of a divine bounty which would again give abundant bread of life for the soul's nourishment, in such a way that some words of scripture apply both to the manna and to the eucharist:

'Thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels;
gavest them bread from heaven prepared without labour;
having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every
taste.' (Wisd. xvi, 20).

So too in the story of Elias, nourished and sustained by bread from God (III Kings xix, 6-8), we have a clear type of our viaticum or eucharistic food on the way to God and the eternity which is himself.

The pasch or passover of the Hebrews most perfectly prefigures the mystery of our redemption. In the passover we find all the elements: the sacrifice of an animal, without blemish, with shedding of blood, and a sacrificial meal. The paschal lamb points to the Redeemer himself—who, significantly, first began to be known as 'lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world' (John i, 29). St Paul tersely and admirably conveys to us the faith of those first generations, and links the old testament and the new when he teaches explicitly 'Christ our pasch is sacrificed' (I Cor. v, 7).

'And then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: this month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first of the months of the year. Speak ye to the whole assembly of the children of Israel, and say to them: on the tenth day of this month let every man take a lamb by their families and

houses . . . a lamb without blemish, a male of one year: according to which rite also you shall take a kid. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and the whole multitude of the children of Israel shall sacrifice it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood thereof, and put it upon both the side posts, and on the upper door-posts of the houses wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh that night roasted at the fire: and unleavened bread with wild lettuce . . . and thus shall you eat it; you shall gird your reins, and you shall have shoes on your feet holding staves in your hands, and you shall eat it in haste: for it is the Phase (that is the passage) of the Lord. And I will pass through the land of Egypt that night and kill every first-born in the land of Egypt both man and beast . . . and the blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be: and I shall see the blood, and shall pass over you . . . and this day shall be for a memorial to you: and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations with an everlasting observance.' (Exod. xii, 1-14.)

This text, seen through Christian eyes, takes on a special fulness of meaning. First there is the time: 'first of the months of the year': so too there was to be a 'fulness of the times' (Gal. iv, 4). The lamb is to be a male, without blemish: our Lord himself, sinless, is offered in sacrifice. 'The whole assembly of the children of Israel' are to offer the sacrifice of the passover; when the time came, it was the Jewish people under their leaders who brought Christ to his death. Blood on 'both the side-posts', etc., prefigures the effectiveness of the blood of Christ, a laver of redemption. 'With unleavened bread and wild lettuce' (bitter herbs). These can be symbols of discipline and compunction which are needed to draw near the Lamb of God. Thus our Lord washed his disciples' feet before they partook of the supper (John xiii, 5, 10; cf. I Cor. xi, 27). 'Holding staves in your hand, and you shall eat in haste.' The passover, then, initiated the march to the promised land. Now, we are journeying to God and much needing spiritual nourishment, for the way is longer and more arduous than from Egypt to the promised land. 'I shall see the blood and shall pass over you'; God will spare and forgive because of the infinite merits of the precious blood. 'A feast to the Lord . . . and everlasting observance': the unique sacrifice of Christ has an eternal effectiveness (cf. Hebrews vii, 27 and ix, 26), and it is the clean oblation offered in every place (Malach. i, 11).

The sacrificial institutions of the old testament all have sign value, all point to Christ and his redemption. But the whole complex of sacrifices and usages had a value in itself, relative to the times in which the worshippers lived; and formed a messianic preparation and enlightened minds and disposed hearts and consciences.⁶ There is a parallel education in the things of God by the Church today which uses, and asks for meditation on, the narratives of these usages and sacrifices in her liturgy. In the Church we can best see how all converges on our Lord who gives himself for mankind. The new testament shows that he was intent on doing the will of his Father, to the point of laying down his life in vicarious satisfaction for the sin of the world; the lamb must needs be 'led to the slaughter'.

Despised and most abject of men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity:
and his look was as it were hidden and despised.

Whereupon we esteemed him not . . .

all we like sheep have gone astray,
everyone has turned into his own way:

and the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all. (Isaias liii,
3; 6.)

Because of such passages, St Jerome very rightly called Isaias 'a fifth gospel'. This same 'gospel' also teaches the value of that sacrifice:

And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity.

If he shall lay down his life for sin,

he shall see a long-lived seed;

and the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in his hand. (Isaias
liii, 10.)

The reward is that ultimate victory of redeeming love; the cross of Christ was a loving means to a glorious end or resurrection. This too is adumbrated in the ancient scriptures.

'Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth,

Yea, my flesh shall dwell secure,

because thou wilt not abandon me to the netherworld,

nor suffer thy pious one to see the pit. (Ps. xv, 9-10.)

St Peter interpreted this of our Lord's resurrection (Acts ii, 22-32), and the Church has maintained the same. The tale of Jonas is cited by our Lord as telling of his sojourn in the tomb (Matt.

⁶ *Summa Theol.* 1a-2ae, 97, 2.

xii, 39-40). The striking narrative of Ezechiel xxxvii is a vision of resurrection and restoration of Israel and of the true house of David:

'I will cleanse them,
and they shall be my people and I will be their God.
And my servant David will be king over them;
and they shall have one shepherd.' (23-24.)

Such words find their superlative fulfilment in the new Israel of God with its one fold and one shepherd. The plan of God does indeed bridge the old testament and the new:

'Incline your ear and come to me.
Hear and your soul shall live.
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
the faithful mercies of David.' (Isaias Iv, 3.)

And finally the joy of redemption achieved can well be sung in words of Isaias:

'Rejoice and give praise together,
O ye deserts of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people:
he hath redeemed Jerusalem.' (Isaias lii, 9.)
And the redeemed of the Lord shall return,
and shall come into Sion with praise;
and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.

They shall obtain joy and gladness:
and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. (Isaias xxxv, 10; cf. li, 11 and cf. Apoc. vii, 17.)

In these, and like, texts, the gospel or good tidings of the old testament find their highest expression.



THE VICTORIOUS SACRIFICE

From St Augustine's 'De Trinitate' (Bk IV, c. 13 and 14)

THE Lord also presented himself to be tempted by the devil, in order to be our Mediator in overcoming his temptations by giving us not only the strength of his help but also the encouragement of his example. But Satan's first attempts after Christ's baptism to steal into the inner citadel of his mind by