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THE TERMINOLOGY OF LOVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

II*

The story of the Septuagint usage of the terms for love is almost told by the simple statistics. The verb *ἀγαπᾶν* occurs in the Septuagint about two hundred and sixty-six times, *φιλεῖν* about thirty-six times, *ἐρᾶσθαι* only three times, and *στέργειν* just once. Even this does not give the whole state of the case, for in the majority of its occurrences *φιλεῖν* is used in the sense of "to kiss." It occurs only sixteen or seventeen times with the meaning of "love." That is to say, this word, the common word for love in the classics, is used in the Septuagint in only a little more than five per cent of the instances where love falls to be mentioned: in nearly ninety-five per cent *ἀγαπᾶν* is used. Here is a complete reversal of the relative positions of the two words.

In more than a third of the instances in which *φιλεῖν* is used of loving, moreover, it is used of things—food or drink, or the like (Gen. xxvii. 4, 9, 14, Prov. xxi. 17, Hos. iii. 1, Is. lvi. 10), leaving only a half a score of instances in which it is employed of love of persons. In all these instances (except Tob. vi. 14, where it is a demon that is in question) it is a human being to whom the loving is ascribed. The love ascribed to him ranges from mere carnal love (Jer. xxii. 22 [paralleled with *ἐρασταί*], Lam. i. 2, Tob. vi. 14, *cf.* Tob. vi. 17), through the love of a father for his son (Gen. xxxvii. 4), to love for Wisdom (Prov. viii. 17, xxix. 3, Wisd. viii. 2). Cremer drops the remark: "In two passages only does *φιλεῖν* stand as perfectly synonymous with *ἀγαπάω*,

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NOTES AND NOTICES.

THE FEAR OF ISAAC (Genesis xxxi. 42).

This singular designation of the God of the patriarch, which occurs at the close of Jacob's angry reply to Laban's hypocritical charge of ingratitude: Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear (*Paḥad*) of Isaac had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty; and which is repeated in a slightly fuller form in verse 53, where we are told that, Jacob sware by the Fear (*Paḥad*) of his father Isaac, is regarded by most commentators as requiring at least a word of explanation, while a few, most of whom are comparatively recent writers, have made it the subject of considerable investigation and discussion. The explanations of this phrase are broadly speaking along two lines, the one monotheistic, the other polytheistic. The former is the usual one and has been for centuries practically the only one advocated. The latter has been advanced by certain of the more radical of the higher critics in connection with their contention that monotheism was a late development in Israel.

According to the monotheistic interpretation, the word "Fear" is to be understood as being merely an appellation of Jehovah, the God of the patriarchs,¹ which is here used to describe or designate him as the One, whom Isaac revered and worshipped with religious awe and dread. This interpretation seems to be favored by the LXX, the Peshitto and the Vulgate, as in them the word is translated, which might not have been the case had it been regarded as a proper name. It is rendered in the Targum of Onkelos by the words, "He whom Isaac feared", which seems to be the accepted interpretation of the Jewish commentators. It is also the interpretation of most of the modern exegetes as has been intimated. As proof of this it will suffice to mention the names of Calvin, Matthew Pool, Matthew Henry, Rosenmüller, Reuss, Keil, Delitzsch, Lange, Dillmann, Strack, Skinner, and Driver.

As regards the reason for the use of this peculiar expression, the scholars who accept the view that it is merely an appella-

¹ Cp. the divine names *El Shadday*, and *El Elyon*, in both of which the word *El* is sometimes omitted (not in the Pentateuch, however) and the name *Sûr*, which is sometimes used as a proper name.

tion of Jehovah, are not in entire agreement. Many do not attempt any explanation, save the one stated above, that it means, the One whom Isaac feared and worshipped. The Jewish commentators advanced the rather fanciful view that "as his father was still alive, Jacob would have been wanting in reverence, if he had spoken of God as 'Isaac's God,' even though Jehovah condescended so to call himself".² An explanation, which has been very widely accepted, is stated by Matthew Henry, as follows: "He calls him the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac: for Abraham was dead and gone to that world where perfect love casts out fear; but Isaac was yet alive, sanctifying the Lord in his heart, as his Fear and his Dread." That it was not original with him is clear, since we find it substantially in Matthew Pool. This explanation has probably seemed to the majority of recent writers somewhat fanciful, for the writer has not found it quoted in the best commentaries. It has been suggested instead that we meet here an old name of God. This view may be correct. But it leaves the fact of its occurrence here and here only unexplained.

The polytheistic interpretation of this phrase, which as has been intimated is of comparatively recent date and apparently originated in the attempt of the critics to find in it a confirmation of their theory that the patriarchs were polytheists, has two distinct forms. According to the less usual one these words are understood to mean "the fear which Isaac inspired" (subjective genitive) and consequently must be accepted as implying that Isaac is to be regarded as a God. This view was suggested by Holzinger (1898) with some apparent hesitation.³ It has been subjected to careful scrutiny by Eerdmans,⁴ who points out that Staerk's claim that the genitive must be subjective is not in accordance with the facts, and maintains as against Staerk, Ed. Meyer and others that there is nothing in the history of the patriarchs to indicate that these figures were superhuman in character. He advocates the view which is

² Cf. Ellicott, on *Genesis*, in loco. We find this explanation cited already in Matthew Pool.

³ The theory that the patriarchs were old deities is of course considerably older. But Holzinger seems to have been the first or one of the first to seek confirmation of it in the phrase under discussion.

⁴ *Alttest. Studien* II. S. 10f.

declared to be a 'hazardous speculation' by Skinner, but which is defended by Gunkel that we have here the name of a local deity, worshipped by Isaac, whose shrine was at Beersheba or Mizpah. Gunkel points to the "terror by night" (*paḥad laylā*) mentioned in Ps. xci. 5 as a similar expression, and suggests that there the allusion is to a demon of the night. Eerdmans takes the expression in our immediate context, "Except . . . the Fear of Isaac had been with me" (*hāyā lī*) in a baldly literal sense, "unless I had the Fear of Isaac", as implying that Isaac gave to Jacob when he went away to Padan Aram an amulet of this local deity and that it is to this that Jacob refers. This suggestion reminds us of the comment on this passage in the Talmud,⁵ where it is said that 'Jacob took his God (i. e. idol) out of his bosom and kissed it,' a fanciful interpretation, which suggests idolatry, but not necessarily polytheism.⁶

These attempts of the critics to find here evidence that the patriarchs were polytheists have little to commend them exegetically and are in conflict with the unmistakably monotheistic setting of the narrative. It is true that the Scripture does not deny, perhaps even implies that Abraham had been a polytheist, but even if, as Driver suggests, the reference in verse 53 to the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor implies that Laban and his kin were still polytheists, an inference which the teraphim incident might tend to confirm, this does not justify the inference that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, recognized, far less worshipped the heathen gods from which Abraham's call was clearly intended to separate him and his descendants. The whole narrative clearly implies that Abraham and his descendants were monotheists and this has always been the understanding of the Christian Church.

Such being the case the main question for us to consider is how Jacob came to call the God of his father Isaac by this

⁵ Cf. Strack, *Genesis*, in loco.

⁶ It has also been suggested that *Paḥad* may have the meaning "ghost". But aside from the fact that there is no proof of such a meaning for the word, a sufficient answer to this theory is found, as has been pointed out, in the fact that Isaac was still alive at the time. The attempt to interpret *paḥad* as meaning "thigh, ancestor or clan" (cf. Cheyne, *Encyc. Bib.* art. "Isaac") is opposed by the versions which support the usual rendering.

title, which occurs nowhere else in the O. T. The reasons which have been suggested by the Jewish exegetes and by Matthew Henry hardly seem adequate. It seems scarcely probable that in the O. T. times there could have been any impropriety in Jacob's referring to "the God of Isaac" as long as his father was alive.⁷ And it seems a little improbable to say the least that Jacob in the heat of his dispute with Laban, should find time for theological subtleties. Matthew Henry's interpretation would be an excellent one if it had anything to commend it except the fact that it is doctrinally sound.

It seems rather remarkable that no attempt has been made to connect these words, the Fear of Isaac, with that tragic experience of Isaac's youth at Mt. Moriah, when his father all but offered him a sacrifice upon the altar, in obedience to Jehovah's command. From the standpoint of a sound psychology, it is certain that this awful ordeal must have made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind, especially since it occurred in the most impressionable period of his life. For we know only too well that the tragedies of childhood and youth may cast a shadow over the whole after life and that sometimes the injury done is irremediable. And nothing was more obviously calculated to stamp deeply upon the soul of Isaac the thought of the awful righteousness and severity of God than the fearful testing of his father's faith and of his own filial obedience, which there took place. It has been frequently pointed out that, in his submission to his father,

⁷ In Genesis xxiv, Jehovah is four times called by Abraham's servant, "the God of my master Abraham". If the phrase "God of Abraham" would have been an improper one for Isaac to have used as long as his father was alive, one would suppose that a slave would hardly have ventured to use it even in this modified form. If it was proper for Jacob to speak of the "God of my father"—we find it in vs. 5 and 22 of this chapter and also in xxvii. 20—it is hard to see why there should be any impropriety in the use of the words "God of Isaac," or "God of my father, Isaac." That Elisha could not have referred to "Elijah's God" before the latter's translation seems improbable. Nor does it seem likely that a special insult is implied in the words "God of Hezekiah" as used by the messenger of Sennacherib. This explanation seems to be merely an example of the hair-splitting refinements which we are accustomed to associate with Rabbinical and Scholastic exegesis.

Isaac was a type of the Christ, whose perfect submission to his Father's will is a singular proof of his oneness with the Father. But while this is true there is a danger lest we magnify the type too much in its relation to the Antitype. It is impossible for us to believe in view of what we are elsewhere told of the human frailty and even cowardice which entered into the character of Isaac, that his love for his father and to his God was so strong and so perfect that it was able to cast out all fear of the God, who had commanded his father to offer him as a sacrifice. We recall how Job in his affliction spoke of the terror of God, "Let not thy terror make me afraid"; and how Jeremiah in that time of testing when he was in danger of being cast off by the Lord for disobedience cried out, "Be not a terror unto me."⁸ Such being the case it would be natural for Isaac to use a similar expression. For while the word *paḥad* is a strong one and one which is especially appropriate to describe the terror which Jehovah inspires in the hearts of the wicked, cp. e. g. Isa. ii. 10, 19, 21, it is also used in a good sense to describe the reverent awe which should be felt by the truly pious in the presence and at the thought of the awful majesty of the Lord.

It is to be noted that we are nowhere told that Isaac ever used this word in speaking of the God whom he worshipped. It is used by Jacob in both instances. But it is practically certain that Jacob and Esau were both aware of the tragic experience which their father had passed through in his youth—it was too closely connected with the Promise and the Blessing for it to be a matter of indifference—and the circumstance itself together with the way in which their father told it, perhaps also the manner in which Isaac sometimes spoke of his God, may have made this word seem to Jacob an appropriate one to use in speaking of the God of his father Isaac. The suggestion that he used it with a view to playing on the superstitious fears of Laban (Gunkel) is a very plausible one in view of the fact that Laban had just alluded to the divine warning, which he had received during the previous night, and

⁸ How deeply this aspect of the God of Israel was impressed upon the Judaism of later times is indicated for example by the fact that in the Targum of Onkelos, Elohim is translated by the word Fear" about a dozen times, 'El once, and Ba'al twice. Cf. Brederick, *Konkordanz zum Targum Onkelos*.

which was he asserted the only thing which deterred him from dealing harshly with Jacob. Jacob was too shrewd to let such an opportunity slip by him to magnify the severity of the God of his father, who alone stood between him and the wrath of the unscrupulous Laban.

If the explanation of the use of this expression by Jacob which we have suggested is correct, it reveals to us a new aspect of the life and character of Isaac. It shows us how very human he was and makes more real than ever the trial of Abraham's faith, by suggesting that Isaac was by no means a willing sufferer. It implies that Isaac had all that clinging to life and that instinctive shrinking from death, which is so marked in childhood and youth. Isaac like Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves and it was not easier for him than it is for us to tread the path of obedience. On the other hand it brings into still stronger relief the unique perfection of Him of whom Isaac was a type. And as we turn to the great high priestly prayer in John xvii we are impressed more than ever with the perfect submission of our Lord to the Father with whom he had declared himself to be One. For the Scripture knows of one only who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, the Christ of God.

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