

The close verbal similarities in the above passages are not numerous, but the ideas correspond closely, whereas in A, B and C there are either no corresponding passages or the similarity is far slighter. Other examples might be cited. Abraham's fear that Sara will not believe his explanation of Isaac's death, and that she will impute to him some sinister motive, is found in E and F only. Isaac's prayer in which he begs forgiveness of his sins and that God will comfort his mother occurs in A, B and C as well as in E and F. A noteworthy correspondence between Beza's play and E and F is found in Abraham's long meditation (E F lines 340-499) the substance of which is very similar to Abraham's reflections on the mount in Beza's play. In both plays Abraham is swayed by considerations which are advanced in the ensuing order, except that in Beza's play (5) precedes (3); the change was made, no doubt, in the interest of logical and artistic effectiveness, and because it emphasized the strongly Calvinistic conclusion.

(1) It is difficult to reconcile God's promises regarding the future of the race in Isaac, with the present situation.

(2) What is impossible to man's intelligence is possible to God.

(3) God can raise Isaac from the dead if that be necessary.

(4) Abraham pleads the weakness of natural affection, but resolves to banish it.

(5) After all Isaac is but lent to his father by God.

A, B and C give expression only to the last of these considerations.

Beza's play seems to me to be by far the most effective of the extant treatments of the Abraham and Isaac story, with the possible exception of the short Chester play—undoubtedly the most remarkable achievement of the old English drama. In the *Abraham Sacrifiant* we recognize at once the work of a skilled literary craftsman. M. Faguet credits Beza with "l'intention de créer un drame à la fois chrétien et classique, qui soit inspiré de l'esprit religieux des anciens mystères, et qui s'accommode aux formes de la tragédie telle qu'on commence à l'entendre."<sup>1</sup> This is an exact description of

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit.* p. 93