THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN

GERMAN AND YIDDISH WORKS

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Sacrifice of Isaac

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In my dissertation I investigate the Biblical story of the Sacrifice of Isaac
as portrayed by six authors, writing in the German or Yiddish vernacular. These
vernacular texts include two medieval German plays, *Der Sündenfall* by Arnold
Immessen, and the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*; two plays by the Reformation
author, Hans Sachs, *Tragedia mit neun Person zu agirn. Die Opferung Isaac. Hat
3 actus* and his *Tragedia. Der Abraham, Lott sampt der opfferung Isaac, hat 21
person und 7 actus,* and Sachs's Meistersang, *Der ertz-Patriarch Abraham mit
der opferung Isaac, ein figur Jesu Christi;* the Reformation play *Drey liebliche
nützliche Historien der dreier Erzveter und Patriarchen Abrahams, Isaacs und
Jacobs, aus dem Ersten buch Mosi, in Deudsche reim verfasset durch
Joachimum Greff von Zwickaw, zu spielen und zu lessen tröstlich. Wittemberg
1540* by Joachim Greff; and two Yiddish texts of the Early Modern period, *Shira
fun Yitzkhak* and *Akêdass Yizhak*.

In addition to a literary analysis of these works, I examine the Christian
texts' use of religious and literary typology, as well as their respective inclusion of
Catholic, Protestant and Jewish exegesis in their depiction of the Sacrifice of

Isaac. My analysis of the German-language texts also addresses two visual works, the Verdun Altar and the *Biblia pauperum*, to illustrate the depiction of this Biblical theme in visual art.

These works chosen evidence the rise of new forms of popular religion, characterized by their choice of vernacular language, new means of addressing religious ideas to the public, new authority figures (authors, not clergy), and the role of print culture.   My examination of these literary works demonstrates how sectarian theology informed their writing, including whether - and if so how - these texts offered religious polemics. I argue that, in addition to their didactic and entertaining nature, the Jewish and Protestant works promulgated their own religious values in part by responding to competing religious traditions. By contrast, the pre-Reformation Catholic texts examined do not exhibit such a multiplicity of intent, functioning predominantly as didactic works and offered no such polemic.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I want to thank Marlene Ciklamini. It is my privilege to have taken my first German course as a Douglass College freshman with Marlene, and to now write my dissertation with her as my primary adviser. Marlene has not only been a scholastic mentor, but a guide through life, for my academic career and my friendship with her have spanned more than four decades. This dissertation is the fulfillment of a passion nurtured by Marlene, who was always there for me, ready to listen, help, encourage, and point the way.

I would like to thank my parents, Ruth and Ernest Lissner, of blessed memory, for imbuing me with a sense of the rich heritage that they came from, and for emphasizing the importance of academic achievement. Of course, behind every woman, there stands her family. To my husband, Ray Burke, and my son, Dan Irwin, go my thanks for not only bearing with my studies, but for encouraging them.

As I reflect on my life and my career at Rutgers University, I realize how fortunate I am to be able to realize two such diverse career paths, maintaining a full-time dental practice while obtaining a PhD in German. The opportunity to return to academe and fulfill my dream is a rare one. I would like to thank Rutgers University, the faculty of the German Department, and the other members of my committee, Jeffrey Shandler, Michael Levine, and Nicholas Rennie for this privilege, and for their support and faith in me. Special thanks go

to the staff of the Rutgers University Library for all of their assistance and efforts in obtaining the myriad of books and articles needed for my research.

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Introduction

A crucible is for silver and a furnace for gold, but the Lord tests hearts.

(Proverbs 17:3)

Genesis 22:1-19, the Sacrifice of Isaac, is a subject that has engaged theologians, philosophers, psychologists, writers, and artists from Biblical times until the present. I will focus on six vernacular authors who treat the Sacrifice of Isaac narrative in Yiddish, Low German, and High German literature from the fifteenth through sixteenth centuries. My aim is twofold: First, I will investigate the manner in which sectarian theology - Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish - as represented by the selected authors, informed their treatments. The works chosen evidence the rise of new forms of popular religion, marked as such by their choice of vernacular language, new means of addressing religious ideas to the public, new authority figures (authors, not clergy), and the role of print culture.[1]   Second, I will examine the use or non-use of these texts as polemical

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[1] The term 'popular religion' is subject to many definitions. Robert Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: Hambledon Press, 1987) 17-18. Scribner suggests four definitions: "It [popular religion] is often defined through the use of polar opposites, in terms such as 'official' and 'popular' religion. The former is institutional religion, the latter that which deviates from institutional norms. Another definition invokes an opposition between theory and practice. Here 'popular religion' is the practical religion embodying the religious views of the ordinary churchgoer. Its polar opposite is 'philosophical religion', the religion of an intellectual elite whose understanding of religion is shaped by theory and / or scholarship. A third definition is social historical. 'Popular religion' is that of the broad mass of the population, compared to that of the upper strata of society, usually those who participate in 'learned culture'. A fourth view shares something of all of these there, but comes with a derogatory value judgment, seeing 'popular religion' as an inferior and distorted version of a 'higher' or 'superior' religion." For the purposes of this dissertation, Scribner's third (social historical) definition is the most applicable.

devices. I argue that, in addition to their didactic and entertaining nature, the Jewish and Protestant works examined promulgated religious values and responded to competing religious traditions. In comparison, the pre-Reformation Catholic texts examined do not exhibit such a multiplicity of intent, functioning predominantly as didactic works.

The six authors examined all preserved the basic Biblical narrative, but each viewed the events of Genesis 22:1-19 as part of the continuum of their own rich religious lore. The pre-Reformation Catholic texts are plays that hold closely to the Biblical text with little addition. The function of the Sacrifice of Isaac in these plays is pre-dominantly a typologic (prefigurative) one. The Reformation plays do not hold as closely to the Bible itself, adding additional characters and changing the typologic emphasis of the Sacrifice of Isaac to a more tropologic (moral) one, although not totally abandoning the typologic interpretation. The Yiddish treatments are in poetic and prose form, reflecting the late development of plays in Jewish culture. These texts evidence the extensive addition of material taken from *midrash*[2].

This dissertation addresses the particular interests of a number of subject areas. I will thus examine the concept of typology so central to the Catholic

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[2] Gary Porton,"Defining Midrash" *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 1, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Ktav Publishing, Inc. 1981) 62. The use of the term *midrash* in this dissertation is in accordance with Gary Porton's often cited definition of *midrash* as "a type of literature, oral or written, which stands in direct relationship to a fixed, canonical text, considered to be authoritative and the revealed word of God by the midrashist and his audience, and in which the canonical text is explicitly cited or clearly alluded to. "Midrashic commentary began in the first century CE.

interpretation, not only from the perspective of a religious methodology, but also in its use in art and literature. I will present the exegesis of Genesis 22:1-19 by Origen (c.185-c.254), one of the Patristic Fathers, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and in Jewish *midrash*. In doing so, my goal is to facilitate an appreciation of the differing religious perspectives. Finally, I will present a manuscript history, if known, prior to the discussion and the analysis of a text. In this manner, I hope to bridge the concerns of the different disciplines involved in this study.

The first text to be examined is *Der Sündenfall* ('The Fall') by the Catholic author Arnold Immessen (dates of birth and death unknown).[3] Written in the second half of the fifteenth century, and structured in rhyming couplets, the play encompasses the story of the *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history) from creation and the fall of the angels to the prophecy of the Savior and Mary's dedication, at age three, in the Temple. The content of the play holds closely to the text of the Vulgate, and its Old Testament scenes function typologically. Immessen adds little detail to the scene containing the Sacrifice of Isaac, which prefigures that of the crucifixion. The action is a test of Abraham, who proves his obedience to God, but the significance of the scene is its prefiguration. Sarah is not present, Isaac plays only a minimal role, and there is no indication of the inner lives of any of the characters.

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[3] This text was edited twice: Otto Schönemann, *Der Sündenfall und Marienklage: zwei niederdeutsche Schauspiele* (Hanover: Rümpler, 1855). Friedrich Krage, *Der Sündenfall; mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen und Wörterverzeichnis* (Heidelberg: C.Winter, 1913). All citations are from the Krage edition, and all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

The second Catholic text is the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*. The author of this text is unknown. There is only one extant manuscript of the play, written in 1514.[4] The play depicts the *Heilsgeschichte* from the baptism of Jesus by John to the incarceration of Joseph of Arimathea. The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* presents a unique use of Old Testament scenes. All other Passion Plays show the Old Testament scenes first and then depict the New Testament story. In the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel,* the thirteen Old Testament prefigurations are interspersed prior to each corresponding segment within the New Testament story. The extra-Biblical narration of a prophet concludes the Old Testament scene, relating it to the New Testament scene portrayed next. The depiction of the Sacrifice of Isaac in the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* is again sparse and holds closely to the Old Testament narrative. Its prefigurative function is, however, clearly and immediately delineated.

Hans Sachs (1494-1576), the prolific Protestant writer, playwright, and Meistersinger of the Reformation, is the author of the next texts. Sachs wrote three works on the Sacrifice of Isaac theme. The first of his two dramas, *Tragedia mit neun Person zu agirn. Die Opferung Isaac. Hat 3 actus* ('The Tragedy with Nine Actors, The Sacrifice of Isaac, has Three Acts') was written in

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[4] The text was edited twice: Gustav Michlsack, *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* (Tübingen: Literarischer Verein, 1880). Johannes Janota, *Die Hessische Passionsspielgruppe: Edition im Paralleldruck: Heidelberger Passionsspiel: mit den Paralleltexten der Frankfurter Dirigierrolle, des Frankfurter Passionsspiels, des Alsfelder Passionsspiels, und des Fritzlarer Passionsspielfragments* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004). All citations are from the Janota edition, and all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

1533.[5] The subsequent expansion of that play, *Tragedia. Der Abraham, Lott sampt der opfferung Isaac, hat 21 person und 7 actus* ('Tragedy, Abraham, Lot, Including the Sacrifice of Isaac, has 21 Actors and 7 Acts'), was written in 1558.[6] Both works contain more extra-Biblical material than the preceding Catholic treatments and include characters not found in the Bible. In both, Sarah, who is absent in the Biblical text, plays a role as a foil to Abraham. The short rhymed version, *Der ertz-Patriarch Abraham mit der opferung Isaac, ein figur Jesu Christi* ('The Patriarch Abraham Sacrificing Isaac, a Figure of Jesus Christ'), written in 1545, is a typologic Protestant Meistersang.[7] These texts differ markedly in their intent from the Catholic texts, with a greater aim to both entertain and polemicize.

  Drey liebliche nützliche Historien der dreier Erzveter und Patriarchen Abrahams, Isaacs und Jacobs, aus dem Ersten buch Mosi, in Deudsche reim verfasset durch Joachimum Greff von Zwickaw, zu spielen und zu lessen tröstlich. Wittemberg 1540 ('Three lovely, useful Histories of the Three Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, from the First Book of Moses, Composed in German Rhyme by Joachim Greff of Zwickau. To Perform and to Read for Comfort [of the Soul]') by Joachim Greff (c.1500-1552) is the next Protestant play examined.[8] It

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[5] Hans Sachs, *Hans Sachs: Werke*, eds. Adelbert von Keller and Edmund Goetze (Tübingen: Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 1870-1908. Rpt. New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1964) vol. X 59. Hereafter referred to as KG. All translation of Sachs's works are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[6] KG, Bd. X 15.

[7] KG, Bd.I 185

[8] Joachim Greff, *Drey liebliche nützliche Historien der dreier Erzveter und Patriarchen Abrahams, Isaacs und Jacobs, aus dem Ersten buch Mosi, in Deudsche reim verfasset durch Joachimum Greff von Zwickaw, zu spielen und zu lessen tröstlich. Wittemberg 1540.* (Digital reproduction of

tells the story of Chapters 12-24 of the Book of Genesis, from Abraham leaving

Charan to the wooing of Rebecca and her meeting with Isaac. In this work, Greff

depicts Abraham in a more emotional manner than previously seen. Isaac takes

a more active role in the play, but Abraham remains the central character.

The last two works discussed, the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* ('Song of Isaac') [9]

and the *Akêdass Yizhak* ('Binding of Isaac'),[10] are Yiddish treatments of the

Sacrifice of Isaac. The *Shira fun Yitzkhak* is a prose retelling of Genesis 22:1-19

written in 1510 in Yiddish. This text is substantially embellished with material

from midrashic sources. The author has also expanded the cast of characters to

include Abraham, Isaac, God, two lads, Satan, Sarah, and the angel Michael.

The *Akêdass Yizhak,* whose earliest extant manuscript dates to 1570, tells the

same story with midrashic embellishment, but in poetic form. It is a longer

version, encompassing eighty-seven four-line stanzas in its longest form, and

exists in several different manuscripts and printed editions. The characters

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manuscript Lo2248.1 Wolfenbüttel: Herzog-August Bibliothek). All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[9] *Shira fun Yitzkhak,* Max Weinreich, *Bilder fun der Yidisher Liṭeraṭurgeshikhṭe: Fun di Onheybn biz Mendele Mekher-Seforim,* (Vilna: Tomor, 1928) 134-38. All citations are from the original version of the manuscript published in this edition, and all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. The text was also published in a romanized version: "Šira von Jizhak," *Akêdass Jizhak: Ein altjiddisches Gedicht über die Opferung Isaaks*, ed. Wulf-Otto Dreeßen (Hamburg:Leibniz-Verlag, 1971) 145-49.

[10] *Akêdass Jizhak/ The Binding of Isaac*, *Early Yiddish Texts, 1100-1750*, ed. Jerold Frakes, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 316-28. All references to the *Akêdass Jizhak* are according to the text of Frakes, unless otherwise noted, and all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. The text was also edited by Percy Matenko and Samuel Sloan, *Two Studies in Yiddish Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), and *Akêdass Jizhak: Ein altjiddisches Gedicht über die Opferung Isaaks*, ed. Wulf-Otto Dreeßen (Hamburg:Leibniz-Verlag,1971). Matenko and Sloan also include a facsimile of the manuscript in reduced size.

included are the same as in the prose version, with the exception of the fact that the angel appearing to Abraham is Raphael, not Michael. Numerous details of the *Akêdass Yizhak* differ from those of the *Shira fun Yitzkhak,* but ultimately midrashic sources form the basis for both works.

Genesis 22:1-19: Language

All six authors draw from a common source, Genesis 22:1-19. These nineteen verses tell the story of God's request of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, and of Abraham's willingness to comply. The story's narration is terse and devoid of details. The Biblical story provides neither insight as to the reason for God's request, nor a sense of the inner lives and emotions of Abraham and Isaac. Sarah is absent from the story altogether. It is the role of exegesis, *midrash*, and literary treatments of the narrative to provide these elements.

The language of Genesis 22 signals its unusual nature, in that it occasions the first use of a number of words in the Bible. The connection between Abraham and Isaac is so precious that this narration contains the very first occurrence of a form of the word 'love' in the Bible. The first verse of Genesis 22 contains the word נסה (trial/test). The Mishnah (the Jewish redaction of the Oral Tradition penned by Judah the Prince in 220 CE) states in Tractate Avot 5:3 that God tested Abraham ten times. There is a divergence among the traditional Jewish exegetes as to what these ten tests are, but in each case, the Akedah (literally,

binding), as the Sacrifice of Isaac is referred to in Jewish tradition, is the supreme

and final test.[11] The distinguishing feature of this last test is not only that it is the

most unthinkable; this test is also unique in its language. None of the prior tests

is called as such. Only in the Masoretic text (authoritative Hebrew text of the

Bible) of Gen. 22:1 does the text read: ‎ויהי אחר הדברים האלה והאלהים **נסה** את־

אברהם ‎(Emphasis mine) (After these things God tempted Abraham). All of the

previous tests were represented by specific situations or were phrased as

unequivocal commands, such as ‎לך לך (go!).[12]

Furthermore, none of the prior nine tests included the word ‎נא or the

phrase ‎קח־נא (please take). The word ‎נא is problematic, as it represents a

significant difference among the three versions of Genesis 22:1 most relevant to

this study, the Masoretic text, the Vulgate translation, and Luther's 1545 German

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[11] There is a divergence of opinions as to what these ten tests are. The opinions of Rashi (1040-
1105 and Maimonides (commonly known by the Hebrew acronym 'Rambam - 1135-1204) may be
found in *The Chumash: The Torah: Haftaros and Five Megillos with a Commentary Anthologized
from the Rabbinic Writing*, ed. Nosson Scherman (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1994) 100-
101. Other sources list these trials as well, including: *Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer* (Jerusalem: Eshkol,
2000**)** Chapters 26-31 (English translation: *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, ed. and trans. Gerald
Friedlander (New York: Hermon Press, 1965) 187-230) and Menachem Meiri*, Bet HaBehirah al
Mesechet Avot*, ed. Benjamin Pereg (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yiśre'eli ha-shalem,
1964) 81-2. Two works which do not list the Akedah as the tenth trial are the *Aboth De Rabbi
Nathan* and the Book of Jubilees. In the *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, the Trials of Abraham are found
in Chapter 33 of Recension A and Chapter 36 of Recension B. These lists are not the same, and
are not in chronological order, so that there is minimal significance to the fact that the Akedah is
not listed as the last trial. It is to be noted that Recension B only contains nine trials, although the
text speaks of ten trials. The trials of Abraham are also listed in the pseudepigraphic Book of
Jubilees 17:17 and 19:8. In the Book of Jubilees the Akedah is listed as the ninth trial, and the
burial of Sarah is the tenth. *Aboth De Rabbi Nathan*, ed. Solomon Schechter (New York:
Feldheim, 1945) 94-5. "The Book of Jubilees," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old
Testament in English*, ed. R.H. Charles, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) 39.

[12] The term 'Masoretic text' refers to the authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Unless
otherwise noted, all Biblical texts cited are taken from:
<http://unbound.biola.edu/index.cfm?method=searchResults.doSearch> 29. Jan. 2012.

translation of the Old Testament. The Hebrew verse Genesis 22:2 reads: ויאמר

אמר קח־נא את־בנך את־יחידך אשר־אהבת את־יצחק ולך־לך אל־ארץ המריה והעלהו שם לעלה

על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך: . The English translation is, "Please take your son,

your only one, whom you love - Isaac - and go to the land of Moriah; bring him up

there as an offering on one of the mountains which I shall tell you."[13] Further, the

translation of the word נא ('pray, please'), is completely omitted in many

translations, including the Vulgate and Luther's translation, and is an unusual use

of language.[14] This omission changes the entire meaning of God's discourse

with Abraham and deserves comment.

In the Masoretic text this verse is unique, as God does not command

Abraham to take his son as an offering, He asks him to do so. As this is not a

command, technically Abraham would not have sinned had he not heeded God's

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[13] *The Chumash* 101. This translation is used and not the standard JPS translation, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1988) or *Genesis,* ed. and trans. Robert Alter (New York: Norton & Co., Inc., 1996), as *The Chumash* contains a more literal translation of the Hebrew text.

[14]In most Christian translations and some Jewish translations, the word נא is not translated. Additional translations examined were: Luther's Bible Translation, New American Standard Bible, American Standard Bible, New Revised Standard Version, King James, Douay-Rheims, Darby, Webster's Bible, World English Bible, and Nova Vulgata. All of these versions may be found at: The Unbound Bible 2005-6. Web. 2 February 2012. <http://unbound.biola.edu/>. *Jewish Publication Society Bible* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1917). Web. 2 February 2012. <http://www.breslov.com/Bible/Genesis22.htm#2>, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), *Genesis,* ed. and trans. Robert Alter (New York: Norton & Co., Inc.,1996), *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, ed. and trans. J.H. Hertz (London: Soncino Press, 1988), *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary,* vol.1, trans. Abraham ben Isaiah and Benjamin Sharfman (New York: S.S.&R. Publishing Co., 1976).

Only Young's Literal Translation and Robert Alter translate נא as 'pray'. The New American Standard, Darby, King James, American Standard, Webster *Jewish Publication Society Bible*, Hertz, and Isaiah render נא as 'now'. The other translations (most notably the Vulgate) do not translate נא at all.

request. If, on the other hand, the word נא (please) is omitted, God would have commanded Abraham to take Isaac as a sacrifice, using the imperative form, ! קח (Take!), Abraham would have sinned had he not obeyed. In Jewish exegesis, Genesis 22:2 foregrounds Abraham's profound faith in God in the most poignant means possible - through Abraham's voluntary accession to God's will. A translation in the imperative may be intended to present a more humanly understandable portrait of Abraham as a man following God's command - as do several of the works examined in this dissertation - but this is not what the Masoretic text conveys. The translation of God's communication to Abraham as a supplication or entreaty, rather than a command, emphasizes Abraham's pure faith, and constitutes a difference in the approach of Jewish and Christian exegetical tradition to this Biblical phrase. For Jews this narrative foregrounds the voluntary nature of Abraham's deed, but for Christians it is an obligatory deed. Hence, according to Jewish interpretation, Abraham is yet more praiseworthy and is on a level higher than what Christian tradition accords him, for Abraham would not have sinned had he not gone to sacrifice his son. Abraham could have avoided this act, as in Jewish tradition (as opposed to Christian tradition) the call to sacrifice Isaac was phrased in the language of a request, and not a command. Nevertheless, Abraham hurried to fulfill the word of God. With this, Abraham demonstrated not only his obedience to an inscrutable command, but his complete and unquestioning faith in the Lord.

Also unique is the Hebrew appellation of the Sacrifice of Isaac, the עקדה (Akedah). This noun, translated as 'binding', is relatively uncommon in the Masoretic text. The noun עקדה (Akedah) itself never occurs in Scripture. The active, conjugated form appears only once, in Genesis 22:9 in the as ויעקד (and he bound), in reference to the Binding of Isaac. The six other occurrences of a form of this word, all of which are found in Genesis chapters 30-31, are of the passive participle and are used in reference to the striped characteristic of sheep, goats or cattle within a flock.

The Vulgate and Luther's 1545 Translation of the Bible do not preserve this singular use of the word 'binding' that has become eponymous with the events of Genesis 22. These two versions render ויעקד respectively as 'conligasset' and 'band', forms of which are common in both translations. Since these Latin or German words are not unusual in the Bible, 'conligasset' or 'band' are not immediately identified with Genesis 22. Thus, they do not have the same power as the Hebrew term, Akedah, and do not evoke the image of Isaac being slaughtered by Abraham.

Christian exegetes changed the focus of the events of Genesis 22, and the terminology used to describe it. In the explication of the text, there was an immediate shift in Christianity from the 'Binding' of Isaac to the 'Sacrifice' of Isaac; from the obedience of Abraham to the actual corporeal sacrifice.[15] In

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[15] David Lerch, *Isaaks Opferung christlich gedeutet : Eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1950). 46-7. This is already found in the earliest extant

Judaism, the term Akedah remained in use, but Christian exegesis focused upon the Sacrifice of the Son - the act that foreshadowed the central event in Christendom, the crucifixion of Jesus. This change is a significant one. It is reflective of the interpretive method of typology used by many of the Patristic Fathers, and one that was influential in their view of the Old Testament and of salvation history. The texts examined in this dissertation reflect this difference of understanding and approach to Genesis 22, which I will explore in the discussion of each text below.

Typology and the Sacrifice of Isaac

In Chapter One, I will examine the typologic interpretive method central to the Christian interpretation of the Sacrifice of Isaac. To Christians, the importance of the Sacrifice of Isaac lies in its typologic nature - the Sacrifice of Isaac as a prefiguration of Jesus and His sacrifice. Due to its significance to this study, I will explore this conception of Isaac, and discuss a concrete example of the theological use of typology, Homilies VIII and IX of Origen,"On the fact that Abraham offered his son Isaac" and "On the promises made to Abraham a second time". This will serve to ground the manner in which the German literary

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complete interpretation of Genesis 22, Origen's 's Homilies VIII and IX, "On the fact that Abraham offered his son Isaac" and "On the promises made to Abraham the second time", which will be examined in Chapter 1.

works on the Sacrifice of Isaac examined in this dissertation emerged from long-established theological traditions.

The typologic method of Biblical interpretation has additional importance, as it transcended theological application and became an interpretive method in other fields as well.   In Chapter Two, I will discuss several examples of typology applied in literature and its use in art. The numerous artistic and pictorial depictions of typologic pairings were more far-reaching than were the literary examples, particularly in the Medieval and Early Modern periods. They were accessible not only to those able to read, but to the greater populace of the illiterate as well. As Paul Heitz and W.L. Schreiber comment: "Die grosse Masse konnte nicht lesen, die lateinischen Gesänge blieben ihr unverständlich, das Wort des Predigers verhallte, das Bild allein prägte sich dem Andächtigen ein…" (The great masses could not read, the Latin Hymns remained incomprehensible to them, the word of the Preacher died away, only the image imprinted itself upon the devout).[16]

The Sacrifice of Isaac was a popular artistic subject depicted by artists as early as the third century CE. Due to the breadth of the subject, I am able to give only a brief introduction to the artistic typologic depiction of the Sacrifice of Isaac. I will discuss two prominent artistic examples, the Verdun Altar and the *Biblia pauperum.* These will serve to demonstrate both the importance of the

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[16] Paul Heitz and W.L. Schreiber*, Biblia pauperum: Nach dem einzigen Exemplar in 50 Darstellungen (*Strassburg: J.H. Ed. Heitz, 1903) 7.

typologic method of interpretation, as well as to foreground the importance of the

Sacrifice of Isaac in art. [17]

Two Pre-Reformation German Catholic Treatments of the Sacrifice of Isaac

Jerome's fourth century Vulgate translation of the Bible from Greek into

Latin served as a 'vernacular' translation for the early Christian Church. However,

as Latin became the *lingua franca* only of scholars and clergymen, the Vulgate

did not serve the common person. The Church was not against this lack of

vernacular Bibles, as it discouraged the reading of the Bible by the laity, who

might misinterpret it.[18] Despite this, there were fourteen printed editions of the

Bible in early new High German and four in early new Low German by 1518,

which is prior to Luther's translation of the New Testament into German.[19]

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[17] For additional information and an extensive bibliography on the Sacrifice of Isaac in art see: Isabel Speyart van Woerden, "The Iconography of the Sacrifice of Abraham," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 15 (1961): 214-255. This scholarly article provides an overview with examples from the Early Christian period through the thirteenth century and traces the change in the use of art in the depiction of the Sacrifice of Isaac. For a wealth of information on typology in early art, many examples of which include the Sacrifice of Isaac, please see: Sabine Schrenk, *Typos und Antitypos in der frühchristlichen Kunst* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1995), as well as the older work, Hans von der Gabelentz, *Die Kirchliche Kunst im italienischen Mittelalter* (Strassburg: J.H. Ed. Heitz, 1907).

[18] Hans Vollmer, *Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Bibel im Mittelalter* (Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1938) 25. See also: Franz Falk, *Die Bibel am Ausgange des Mittelalters: ihre Kenntnis und ihre Verbreitung* (Cologne:J. P. Bachem, 1905).

[19] Albert Gow, "The Contested History of a Book: The German Bible of the Later Middle Ages and Reformation in Legend, Ideology, and Scholarship," *Journal of Hebrew Scripture,* 9 (2009) 8. Kenneth Strand, *German Bibles Before Luther: The Story of 14 High-German Editions* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966). Kenneth Strand, *Early Low German Bibles: The Story of Four Pre-Lutheran Editions* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967).

Wealthy burghers, the nobility, and religious houses generally owned these full

Bible translations. Translations of specific portions of the Bible also existed, and

were more widespread than full editions, as were pericopes, vernacular History

Bibles, and Picture Bibles.[20] Nevertheless, none of these Bibles had

ecclesiastical license, and therefore, there were many local bans on producing or

owning a German Bible. The Bible was thus not in the hands of the common

person, and therefore dissemination of the Word of God needed to proceed

through other means, one of which was Biblical drama.

Arnold Immessen's *Der Sündenfall* and the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel,*

will be the subject of Chapter Three. Many German works highlight the Sacrifice

of Isaac, but these two works present the narrative in a unique manner.[21] Arnold

Immessen's *Der Sündenfall* is the earliest scenic depiction of the Sacrifice of

Isaac in German literature,[22] while the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* contains a

unique presentation of the Old Testament prefigurations.

The language of *Der Sündenfall* is Low German, and it encompasses

3962 lines. The rhyme scheme follows the pattern of rhyming couplets, except for

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[20] Vollmer 82-90.

[21]Fritz Reckling, *Immolatio Isaac. Die theologische und exemplarische Interpretation in den Abraham-Isaak Dramen der deutschen Literatur, insbesondere des 16. Und 17. Jahrhunderts* (n.p., 1962) 30. Other such works include the *Künzelsauer Fronleichnamsspiel* (1479), the *Egerer Fronleichnamsspiel* (before 1479), the *Luzerner Passionsspiel* (before 1494), the *Zerbster Prozessionsspiel* (1507), the *Karfreitag Spiel* of Uerdingen (17th century) and the fragmentary Middle Dutch *Maastricher Osterspiel* of the 14th century. For further discussion of these texts, see: Toni Weber, *Die Praefigurationen im geistlichen Drama Deutschlands* (Frankfurt: Werner und Winter, 1919) 21-57.

[22] Reckling 30. The Sacrifice of Isaac is mentioned in a prefigurative context in the fourteenth century *Maastricher Osterspiel*, but not actually depicted.

the initial acrostic, which follows the scheme of aab, ccd, dde... There is some of Latin used in the text, primarily in the all-Latin stage directions, hymns, and direct quotations from the Bible, only some of which Immessen translates for the audience/reader. There are five Old Testament scenes in the text. These have a prefigurative function and are all from the Vulgate, with some addition by the author.

The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* depicts the *Heilsgeschichte* from the baptism of Jesus by John to the incarceration of Joseph of Arimathea in thirty-six scenes. I chose to include this work, because it contains thirteen unique Old Testament prefigurations within its New Testament story. Other contemporary Passion Plays also contain Old Testament scenes, but the demarcation of their prefigurative function is not as clear as it is in the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*.[23] All other plays containing Old Testament scenes present them in chronological arrangement and then follow these scenes with chronologically arranged scenes from the New Testament. In the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel,* the thirteen Old Testament prefigurations are interspersed prior to each of the corresponding segments within the New Testament story. Each Old Testament scene then concludes with a narrative delivered by one of four rotating Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel or Malachai, in that order and with no relation to the preceding Old Testament episodes. The Prophets serve to recall the Old Testament sequence and relate it to the upcoming New Testament scenes. The

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[23] Reckling 30.

Heidelberger Passionsspiel is the only medieval Passion Play that uses Old Testament episodes in this manner of prefiguration, explanation, and fulfillment, and where the prefigurative scenes virtually determine the structure of the Passion Play.

The intent of both *Der Sündenfall* and the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* was didactic. These plays spread knowledge of the Bible and of the Old Testament as a prefiguration of the New. The treatments of the narratives hold closely to the Biblical text, with little embellishment or attempt to make the events depicted any more understandable than they are in Genesis 22. I argue that these two Catholic depictions of the Sacrifice of Isaac were not a reaction to forces outside the Church, and that their use was solely for sectarian purposes - strengthening the Catholic faith via the promulgation of its tenets among the faithful.

Reformation Treatments of the Sacrifice of Isaac

Chapter Four will encompass works of two authors of the Reformation, Hans Sachs (1494-1576) and Joachim Greff (c.1500-1552)**.** I will consider both authors together with Martin Luther (1483-1546), as he played an integral role in their lives and work. I will examine Luther's Lecture on Genesis 22 and his approach to Biblical drama, because he directly influenced the works of Sachs and Greff. I argue that, as a strong supporter of Luther, Sachs used various dramatic, creative, and didactic techniques to publicize the message of a new

faith through his three depictions of the Sacrifice of Isaac. Greff was also an ardent follower of Luther and wrote Luther several times, seeking Luther's advice about Biblical drama. I will examine Luther's responses to Greff as they apply to his Sacrifice of Isaac drama, and demonstrate the extent to which Greff applied the new Lutheran doctrines to his work.

Both authors wrote during a period of great change. Gutenberg's moveable type had revolutionized the dissemination of the written word and opened new opportunites to spread the Word of God. Luther's German translation of the Bible, coupled with the increase in the number of printing presses, made the vernacular Bible immensely popular. This marked the realization of the medieval Church's fears - the Bible was in the hands of the populace.

The works of Hans Sachs are included for several reasons. The first is that the Sacrifice of Isaac narrative is treated by Sachs three times, in two dramas and one meistersang, with somewhat differing focus in each version. Sachs wrote his earlier Isaac drama**,** *Tragedia mit neun Person zu agirn. Die Opferung Isaac. Hat 3* actus, in 1533. His later one, *Tragedia. Der Abraham, Lott sampt der opfferung Isaac, hat 21 person und 7 actus,* written in 1558, is an expansion of the first play. The works differ both in their length (600 versus 1500 lines) and in the scope of the Genesis narrative. Sachs's earlier play is noteworthy in that it constitutes the first drama devoted entirely to the narrative of

the Sacrifice of Isaac in German literature.[24] It depicts only Genesis 22, whereas the second play includes Genesis: 16-22, from the story of the barren Sarah giving her handmaid Hagar to Abraham, through the Sacrifice of Isaac.

The Sacrifice of Isaac story itself, which follows the basic Biblical narrative with some authorial additions, remains the same in both texts, although it is somewhat abbreviated in the second. What Sachs adds in the longer text are other deeds from Genesis 16-21, such as those of Hagar and Ishmael's birth, the foretelling of Sarah's pregnancy, Sodom and Gomorrah with Abraham's battle to save Lot and his family, and the incident of Sarah and Abraham in Gerar with Abimelech. These serve to emphasize Abraham's righteousness and fidelity to God, as well as to contrast the sinful behavior of others. I will examine the differences in these plays, with particular emphasis on Sachs's depiction of Sarah in the shorter play. Sachs's use of Sarah, as someone who doubts God, is unique to his treatment of the Sacrifice of Isaac narrative.

Typology is the basis of Sachs's poem *Der ertz-Patriarch Abraham mit der opferung Isaac, ein figur Jesu Christi*. Luther came to frown on this method of interpretation, however, neither he nor Sachs completely eliminated typology from their oeuvre. Both of Sachs's plays emphasize typology, but not in the

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[24] Reckling 45. There were earlier dramas that utilized the Sacrifice of Isaac as their theme in other languages. The earliest is the Italian work "Rapresentatione de Habraham, quando Iddio gli commando che facessi sacrificio sul monte d'Isaac, suo figliuolo" by Feo Belcaris. This work was first produced in Perugia in 1448 and first printed in 1485. Other contemporaneous Sacrifice of Isaac dramas include two English miracle plays entitled "Abraham and Isaac" (c.1458 and 1470-80) and a Greek drama (early 16th century).

same measure as *Der Sündenfall* and the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*, where

typology was actually the structuring principle of the play. Sachs's dramatic

treatments of the Sacrifice of Isaac represent a shift in emphasis away from

typology as the main exegetical principle, consistent with the theology of Luther.

Sachs's innovations extend to other areas as well. He utilizes a greater

amount of extra-Biblical material that is his invention alone. Sachs invents

characters, dialogue and scenarios that he uses together with emotionally

charged language in order to make this story more humanly understandable. He

portrays the inner turmoil and conflict of Abraham and includes Sarah, whom he

uses as a foil to her husband. Along with this, Sachs integrates and retains older

dramatic techniques such as the use of a narrator who clearly enumerates the

authorial message in a didactic and non-dramatic fashion. I will show that with his

Sacrifice of Isaac plays and Meistergesang, Sachs achieved his goal of

disseminating new Protestant religious dogma as enjoyable entertainment.

Joachim Greff is the author of the second Reformation treatment of the

Sacrifice of Isaac narrative. Greff is not a renowned author, although his role in

the development of German Reformation drama is an important one. Greff wrote

the first Biblical drama written in High German in North Germany, *Ein lieblich vnd*

nüzbarlich spil von dem Patriarchen Jacob vnd sein zwelff Sünen / Aus dem

Ersten buch Mosi gezogen / vnd zu Magdeburg auff dem Schützhoff / ym 1534.

Jar gehalten, Magdeburg. Gedruckt zu Magdeburgk durch Michael Lothar. ('A

Lovely and useful play about the Patriarch Jacob and his twelve Sons taken from

the First Book of Moses, played in Magdeburg auff dem Schützhoff in the year

1534. Printed in Magdeburg by Michael Lothar'). Glenn Ehrstine states that with

this play, produced in Magdeburg in 1534, "Greff himself arguably initiated the

vernacular tradition of Lutheran Biblical drama…"[25] In 1542 also Greff wrote the

play, *Ein Geistichliches schönes newes spil auff das heilige osterfest gestellt/*

Darinnen werden gehandelt die geschicht von der Aufferstehung Christi zu sampt

der historien Thome ("A Spiritual, Beautiful New Play for the Holy Easter Festival,

The Story of the Resurrection of Christ together with the History of Thomas is the

Subject'). This marked the first time since the posting of Luther's ninety-five

theses on Oct. 31, 1517, that a late medieval drama had been adapted to the

new Protestant faith.[26] This, together with Greff's close connection to Luther and

his colleagues, is the reason for choosing this treatment of the Sacrifice of Isaac

for examination.

Greff's six-act Sacrifice of Isaac drama is entitled *Drey liebliche nützliche*

Historien der dreier Erzveter und Patriarchen Abrahams, Isaacs und Jacobs, aus

dem Ersten buch Mosi, in Deudsche reim verfasset durch Joachimum Greff von

Zwickaw, zu spielen und zu lessen tröstlch. The play was written in 1538 and

printed in 1540 in Wittenberg.[27]   It tells the story of Chapters 12-24 of the Book

of Genesis, from Abraham leaving Charan to the wooing of Rebecca and her

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[25] Glenn Ehrstine, *Theater, Culture and Community in Reformation Bern 1523-1555* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 2.

[26] Ehrstine 1.

[27] Greff states in the Prologue to the Reader that he wrote the work two years earlier.

meeting with Isaac. It begins with a lengthy dedication to the Kurfürst (Elector) Johann Friedrich von Sachsen (1503-1554).[28] A Prologue to the reader follows, and then a narrator, called the *Actor*, delivers yet another Prologue. The play is lengthy, and it would have taken an estimated eight hours to perform.[29]

Greff's work is of further interest, as it is the only work considered whose tendentious nature is blatant. In the Dedication to the Protestant Kurfürst, Greff explicitly rails at length against Pagans, Turks, Catholics and Jews and their sacrilegious beliefs and practices. He foregrounds 'proper' religious beliefs and denigrates those who do not act accordingly. He lauds the Kurfürst, comparing him to a contemporary Abraham, "Darumb auch E.C.G.[30] nicht weniger zu preisen von jderman / und fur einen andern Abraham schir zu halten sein." (Therefore Your Esteemed Highness is to be lauded by everyone / and is to be considered to be another Abraham') (Dedication), and states that even if the Kurfürst is tried as was Abraham, God will never forsake him. Greff is the only author examined who relates a contemporary personage to the Biblical Abraham.

The Abraham of Greff's drama differs in his depiction from that of other authors discussed. In Greff's play, Abraham evidences foreknowledge of the

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[28] For further information on the role of the book dedications typically found among the humanists, see: Karl Schottenloher, *Die Widmungsvorrede im Buch des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953). Johann Friedrich von Sachsen was a friend and ardent supporter of Luther and the Reformation. He reigned as Elector from 1532-1547.

[29] Reinhard Buchwald, *Joachim Greff: Untersuchungen über die Anfänge des Renaissancedramas in Sachsen* (Leipzig: R. Voigtländer Verlag, 1907) 69.

[30] E.C.G. is an abbreviation for Euer Churfürstlichen Gnaden (Your Esteemed Highness).

coming of Jesus as God's messiah who will redeem the world from sin. This interpretation differs significantly from the typologic interpretation contained in the Catholic works, and even from that in Sachs's treatments. It is in accord, however, with Luther's teachings on this subject.

The differences in Greff's play on the Sacrifice of Isaac play represent his efforts to disseminate Luther's teachings. Luther often used his sermons and writings as a forum for open and explicit attack on those of other faiths. He felt that his beliefs were the sole road to salvation, as did Greff. One of the hallmarks of Luther's concept of the Old Testament was his disinterest in interpretating the Old Testament in terms of shadows, allusions, and things to come, for he found Jesus in the Old Testament just as he did in current life.[31] Therefore, although Greff's Abraham knew Jesus, Greff's Abraham also has a contemporary counterpart, the Kurfürst. Nevertheless, Luther did not fully eliminate typology in his exegesis, and neither did Greff in his play. The uniqueness of Greff's play lies in his inclusion of what Luther strove to elucidate - the eternal truth of the Bible and of the *Heilsgeschichte,* a truth that was as applicable in Abraham's time as it was in Greff's.

Greff uses both his Dedication and Prologue to deliver his polemical message. Whereas Sachs used his Dedication to express the didactic intent of his work, Greff uses these portions of his work in part as a forum for vitriolic

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[31] For further information on this topic see Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1948) 86ff., esp 212.

attacks on Pagans, Jews, Turks and Papists, the non-believers whom he explicitly names. I will therefore argue that the Dedication and Prologue set the stage for a play designed to foreground and spread the new Lutheran doctrines.

Two Yiddish Treatments of the Sacrifice of Isaac

Chapter Five will explore two Yiddish treatments of the Sacrifice of Isaac narrative. Yiddish, a language written in Hebrew letters, was the language of daily life used by Ashkenazic Jews (Central and Eastern European Jewry) from medieval times onwards. The average male Jew, although not a cleric or scholar, was literate to some extent, especially in the vernacular.[32] The situation was differnet for the *Loshn-koydesh* - the holy language. Hebrew, and the yet more erudite Aramaic, were connected to the sacred texts and to writings associated with Jewishness; they were the written languages. Those Jews who were better educated, including some merchants, could conduct their correspondence in Hebrew, but only the most highly educated were able to study the sacred Hebrew and Aramaic texts in the original. Even the erudite who could write Hebrew, rarely spoke the language. Circumstances were similar for

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[32]Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Atheneum, 1978) 340. Also, Gérard Nahon, "Orality and Literacy: The French Tosaphists," *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*, eds. David Engel, Lawrence Schiffman, and Elliot Wolfson (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 145.

women, in that many could read the vernacular, but few could read Hebrew, and yet fewer Aramaic.[33]

Whereas most males knew how to read the Hebrew alphabet and learned to read the prayers mechanically, their Hebrew comprehension was, for the most part, poor. Robert Bonfil discusses this high rate of 'Hebrew illiteracy' (lack of comprehension of the meaning of the Hebrew words that the reader was reading as part of his prayers) among medieval Jews. However, this was not true for the Yiddish vernacular, where literacy rates - reading, writing and comprehension of the vernacular - were high among all segments of Jewish society. [34]

This high literacy rate stands in contrast to that of non-Jews in pre-Reformation Germany. It was only under the influence of Luther that literacy rates began to rise among Christians.[35] Bonfil distinguishes between the literacy among Jews and Christians:

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[33]Jean Baumgarten and Jerold C. Frakes, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 78-81. Erika Timm, "Formen der Bibelvermittlung im älteren Jiddisch" *Bibel in jüdischer und christlicher Tradition: Festschrift für Johann Maier zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Helmut Merlein, Karlheinz Müller, and Günter Stemberger (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Anton Hain, 1993) 310. On the development of the Yiddish language see: Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. Shlomo Noble (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1980) or the original Yiddish work: Max Weinreich*, Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh* (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1973). For a summary see: Baumgarten 1-26 and Dovid Katz, *Words on Fire* (New York: Basic Books, 2004) 57.

[34] Robert Bonfil, "Reading in the Jewish Communities of Western Europe in the Middle Ages." *A History of Reading in the West,* trans. Lydia Cochrane, eds. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999) 148-78.

[35] H.G.Haile, "Luther and Literacy" PMLA 91 (1976) 817. As Haile remarks: "From a secular viewpoint, surely the most far-reaching effect of Luther's activity was the radical increase in literacy from the early 1520's on through the rest of the century." Rolf Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen*

With the increased circulation of works in the vernacular, especially in the print age, a rising literacy rate among Christians reduced the distance between texts and society. Among the Jews the opposite was true; Hebrew literacy made no revolutionary strides, but the situation was radically different regarding vernacular languages. [36]

Yiddish, once considered an inferior language relegated to secular discourse and women, was becoming a language of learning, culture, and aesthetic expression, which was changing its status.[37] Dovid Katz cites an astute comment made by Jerold Frakes in a private communication:

It is not Hebrew for men, Yiddish for women, but rather Yiddish for everybody, Hebrew for men. The fiction that men did not actually read Yiddish books is just that - fiction. Men translated those books, wrote those books, typeset, published, peddled, and read them too.[38]

This development helped narrow the separation between the educated and the laymen, and paved the way for Yiddish literature.

The Medieval and Early Modern periods are often thought of as times of oppression and physical insecurity for the Jews, but this was not always the case. As the noted Jewish historian, Salo Baron observed, during the Medieval

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feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1973) 32. Nevertheless, only a limited number of individuals could read. Engelsing estimates that only 10-40% of those living in towns and 5% of the remaining population were able to read. Heidi Hackel, "Rhetorics and Practices of Illiteracy, or The Marketing of Illiteracy," *Reading and Literacy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Ian Moulton (Tournhout: Brepols) 172. It is also important to note that definitions of literacy in the Early Modern period vary, and may not necessarily include complete fluency in both reading and writing, "...Many early modern people, especially women and laborers, surely read without being able to write. Not only was such literacy arguably more nearly normative than other models we have for the period, but it was also sufficient basis for a reader's participation in the marketplace of print."

[36] Bonfil 166.

[37] Bonfil 167.

[38] Dovid Katz, *Words on Fire* (New York: Basic Books, 2004) 57.

Period the Jewish population of Europe increased more rapidly than that of the surrounding Christian population.[39] Further, the average Jewish income surpassed that of their Christian neighbors, as did the Jewish literacy rate. By the end of the fifteenth century the areas of Europe that had been slower to develop, such as Germany (due to its lack of unification), Poland and Hungary, became greater powers. The Jewish expulsion form England, France, and Spain was complete, and those communities in the north-central and northeast areas of Europe became the demographic core of European Jewry. The ghettos that often confined the Jews also protected them, affording the opportunity for the emergence of vernacular Jewish literature for Ashkenazim.[40]

Within this context, Jean Baumgarten discusses the emergence of a literate Jewish 'middle class' that existed on the margin of learned culture, but who were too absorbed in everyday life for study to be central for them. A stratum of more isolated rural Jews had also migrated from more densely Jewish areas. These people, commonly referred to as *proste yidn* or *gemayne layt* (ordinary Jews or common people), were desirous of reading material, as were women. These groups became the primary audience for popular books in the

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[39] Salo Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?" *Menorah Journal*,14:6 (1928) 521. Wesleyan University, 16 January 2002. Web. 1 June 2013.

[40] Baron, 515-26, Baron discusses the misconception of the ghetto's effect on the Jews throughout his article. Also see: Robert Chazan. *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 13-14.

Yiddish and were the target audience of authors, booksellers and itinerant book peddlers.

A variety of books were printed for these groups of Jews. These include the ספר לב טוב (Sefer *Lev Tov or Book of the Good Heart*) of 1620, a book of morals, the ספר ברנט שפיגל (*Brantspigl* or Burning Mirror) of 1596, and the איין שוין מעשה-בוך (*Mayse-Bukh or A fine Book of Tales*) of 1602, all designed for the non-learned householders.[41] Numerous studies have also examined the emergence of popular religion among women in particular through the dissemination of Yiddish books of morality, ethics, and homiletical and devotional material.[42]

Against this background, I will investigate the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and *Akêdass Yizhak*. Both texts were written in the sixteenth century, one in prose and one in verse, and in both cases, the authors remain unknown. Written to engage a general audience, including women and children, these works informed the audience of the basic Biblical story, in order to highlight ethical and moral conduct that could serve as a guide and entertainment.

The *Shira von Yizhak*, the first work examined, is an eighty-seven line prose story of the Sacrifice of Isaac. Written by an unknown author and copied

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[41] On the target audience for the Yiddish books see Zinberg, *A History* 159-164. Excerpts of the *Sefer Lev Tov* work may be found in Frakes 536-40. The *Brantshpigl* is excerpted in Frakes 420-31, and the *Mayse-Bukh* is excerpted in Frakes 488-96 and Baumgarten 26-30, 63.

[42] For full length treatments of this topic, see: Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), Diane Wolfthal, *Picturing Yiddish: Gender, Identity and Memory in the Illustrated Yiddish Books of Renaissance* Italy (Leiden: Brill, 2004, and Edward Fram, *My Dear Daughter: Rabbi Benjamin Skolnik and the Education of Jewish Women in Sixteenth Century Poland* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union Press, 2007).

into a larger codex in Italy, there is only one extant text.   Max Weinreich first published the work in 1928 in both the original Old Yiddish and in his own translation into modern Yiddish, both without Romanization.[43] Wulf-Otto Dreeßen published only a Romanization of the text, and neither scholar provided any annotation.[44] The *Akêdass Jizhak,* the second work considered, also tells the story of the Akedah but, in its longest form, in eighty rhymed stanzas. It is of unknown authorship,[45] and is also known by the opening words found in all editions of the poem, שתם יודשער ('Yudesher shtam /'Jewish Tribe/Nation'). Attesting to the popularity of the work are the facts that seven early copies have survived, there are many intertextual references to the poem, and that there is even a known Purim parody of *Akêdass Jizhak*.[46]

The dependence of these texts on their primary source, the *Midrash Wayosha* (an eleventh century *midrash* with one group of recensions encompassing Genesis 22)*,* as well as other *midrash*ic sources will be examined. I will investigate the differences and similarities of both texts, as well as the

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[43]Weinreich, *Bilder*. An excerpt in translation is published in Zinberg, *A History* 104.

[44] Dreeßen 145-49.

[45] W. Staerk and A. Leitzmann, *Die Jüdisch-Deutschen Bibelübersetzungen von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.M.: J. Kaufmann, 1923) 271. Matenko and Sloan 8 and 70. Dreeßen 10, 59-60. There is some speculation as to who the author might be, but there is no certainty. Dreeßen feels that the copyist of the Hamburg manuscript, Abraham Höksher, could be the author, or that it may have been Jizhak Kutzman, as had been previously suggested by Staerk and Leitzmann. Matenko and Sloan posit that Pixl Šalt, also known as Pinchas Shalit, was the author of the *Akêdass Jizhak*

[46] The text of the parody is reprinted in: Evi Butzer, *Die Anfänge der jiddishen 'purim shpiln' in ihrem literarischen und kulturgeschichtlichen Kontext* (Hamburg: Buske, 2003) 217-224 and discussed 145-9.

characters and the manner of their portrayal. The final topic of this chapter will be

Isaac's fate. In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* Isaac actually dies and is resurrected. In

the *Akêdass Yizhak* Isaac's fate is far more subtle, for although Isaac is not

sacrificed, God counts it as if he were.

Isaac's death and resurrection at the Akedah also have far-reaching

significance christologically. Judaism and Christianity with their respective

traditions and theologies did not exist in a vacuum. Each knew of the other and

their tenets, and were affected and influenced by that otherness. I will argue that

the challenges posed by Christianity influenced these Yiddish texts, and that the

Shira fun Yitzkhak and *Akêdass Yizhak* are in part a polemic against and a

response to competing Christian practices and dogmas.

Chapter 1: Typology as a Method of Religious Interpretation

> Alle Propheten, die Gesamtheit aller Schriftsteller, alle Revolutionen des politischen Staates, alle Gesetze, alle Zeremonien des Alten Bundes deuten nur auf Christus hin, verkünden nur ihn, bilden nur ihn vor… Er war Adam der Vater der Nachkommenschaft, der Heiligen; unschuldig, jungfräulich wie ein Martyrer in Abel, ein Erneuerer der Welt in Noe, gesegnet in Abraham, höchster Priester in Melchisedech, freiwilliges Opfer in Isaak, Haupt der Erwählten in Jakob, verkauft durch seine Brüder in Josef, mächtig in Werken und Gesetzgeber in Moses, leidend und verlassen in Job, gehaßt und verfolgt in den meisten Propheten….[47]

> (All Prophets, all writers, all revolutions of the political state, all laws, all ceremonies of the Old Testament, point only to Christ. They announce only Him, prefigure Him only... He was Adam the father of all that came after Him, of the saints; innocent, virginal, like Abel the martyr, a redeemer of the world as in Noah, blessed in Abraham, the highest priest in Melchizedek, voluntary sacrifice in Isaac, the head of the elect in Jacob, sold by his brothers in Joseph, powerful in works and the law-giver in Moses, suffering and abandoned in Job, hated and persecuted in most of the prophets...)

Erich Auerbach discusses typology, or figural interpretation, in his seminal essay "Figura".[48] He first applies the term to theological interpretation, but then extends the concept to encompass literature. Auerbach defines typology as a distinct mode of interpretation whose aim is, "to show that the persons and

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[47] Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica* IV, 15 PG 22 296. German translation of Eusebius: Maurus Berve*, Die Armenbibel: Herkunft, Gestalt, Typologie. Dargest. anhand von Miniaturen aus d. Handschrift Cpg 148 d. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg*. *Kult und Kunst*, Bd. 4 (Beuron: Beuroner Kunstverlag, 1969) 12.

[48] Erich Auerbach, "Figura," *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973) 11-78.

events of the Old Testament were prefigurations of the New Testament and its history of salvation."[49] Auerbach continues, stating that this form of interpretation:

> … establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events, which have either happened in the incarnation of the Word, or will happen in the second coming.[50]

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[49] Auerbach, "Figura," 30.

[50] Auerbach, "Figura," 53. Auerbach also discusses the etiology of the term *figura,* and that it stems from the Latin as opposed to the term *typus* that comes from the Greek. See particularly pp. 44-9. In his essay, Auerbach traces the history of the term philologically and philosophically and through numerous literary and theological examples. It is by no means the aim of this study to give more than a cursory examination of the basic ideas of typology and the typologic method of interpretation. As such, I use Auerbach's definition as a basis for the understanding of this term.

It is noteworthy, although beyond the scope of this examination, that Auerbach's definition has not gone unchallenged. Richard Emmerson, "*Figura* and the Medieval Typological Imagination," *Typology and English Medieval Literature*, ed. Hugh Keenan (New York: Ames Press 1992) 7-42. Emmerson tests the Auerbachian definition of typology against the content of both the *Biblia pauperum* and the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* discussed below. He concludes that the guiding principle for the selection of types in both works is not historicity, which is Auerbach's criterion, but rather the congruity of correspondence of type and anti-type. Furthermore, there is a greater emphasis in the medieval examples on the anti-type than on the type, as well as on tropological interpretation than is seen in Auerbach's interpretation. Emmerson, 27, sums up his findings by saying that, "- at least in the high and late Middle ages…. There was no 'pure' form of typology distinct from tropology and anagogy." Emmerson thus urges widening of the definition of typology beyond that of Auerbach.

More detailed discussions of typology can be found in: Jean Daniélou, *From Shadow to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Wulfstan Hibbard (London: Burns and Oates, 1960). Daniélou focuses predominantly on the Latin and Greek writers of the second, third, and part of the fourth centuries. Leonhardt Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsman, 1939); (and the English translation: Leonhardt Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald Madwig (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 1982)). This is an excellent examination of typologic thought in the New Testament that emphasizes the unity of the Testaments as part of the *Heilsgeschichte*. Heinz Jantsch, *Studien zum Symbolischen in frühmittelhochdeutscher Literatur* (Tübingen Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1959). The first section of Jantsch's work is devoted to typology. In subsequent sections, the use of symbolism, including typology, is the investigated in a number of works.. Fairbairn provides a good history of typologic interpretation, although it is an older work. Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967).   Richard Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A*

Typology rests upon the principle of repetition of actual events, as opposed to other interpretative means that seek to find a deeper meaning in the text itself, or which utilize extra-historical events as either a sign or signifier. The interpretative method most closely related to typology is allegory. Auerbach acknowledges this, saying that:

> Since in figural interpretation one thing stands for another, since one thing represents and signifies the other, figural interpretation is "allegorical" in the widest sense. But it differs from most of the allegorical forms known to us by the historicity of both of the sign and what it signifies."[51]

The two are further distinguishable in that allegory seeks to find an additional, non-literal meaning in the text. Even if this meaning is intentional, the interpretation becomes allegorical, not typological.[52]

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*Study of Hermeneutical ΤΥΠΟΣ Structures (*Berbien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1981). Davidson gives an excellent survey of the literature that is more current than that of Goppelt. He also devotes approximately a quarter of his book to the word *ΤΥΠΟΣ* and its cognates, tracing its development and use in the Old and New Testaments and by some of the Jewish exegetes, including Philo and Josephus. Sacvan Bercovitch, "Annotated Bibliography,"*Typology and Early American Literature* (Amhurst: University of Massechusetts Press, 1972) 245-337. Bercovitch's work is always cited in connection with a discussion of typology, although it is becoming dated.

[51] Auerbach, "Figura," 54. See also Erich Auerbach, *Typologische Motive in der mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Krefeld: Scherpe Verlag, 1953) 11-14. D.W. Robertson, Jr. *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962) 189-90. Robertson also agrees with this need for historicity. His description of typology cites Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice as a type of Jesus carrying the cross of his crucifixion.

[52] Goppelt 18. The allegory/ typology distinction is the subject of much debate, especially in the scholarship of the Patristic Father Origen (c.185-c.254) Two other definitions of the two terms, which illustrate the broad range of opinion in this matter, are those of Hanson and of Norris. Richard Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959) 7. Hanson states: "Typology is the interpreting of an event belonging to the present or the recent past as the fulfillment of a similar situation recorded or prophesied in Scripture. Allegory is the interpretation of an object or person or a number of objects or persons as in reality meaning some object or person of a later time, with no attempt made to trace a relationship of 'similar situation' between

Typology fits into the schema of the medieval four-fold interpretation of scripture, or *Quadriga*,[53] under the rubric of tropology. Thomas Roche sees a relationship between typology and several other interpretive methods :

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them." This definition rests on a distinction of the similarity of circumstances, as opposed to the historicity of events. R.A. Norris, "Typology" *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. John McGuckin (London: John Knox Press, 2004) 210. Norris' view is far different. He feels that allegory is a form of typology: "…what we call typology counted, in practice, as a species of allegory, which, like all its other species, worked on the basis of some perception of 'likeness' between two items or situations or levels of reality.". For further information on this debate see: Peter Martens, "Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008) 283-317. Martens provides a summary of the past sixty years of scholarship, examines Origen's use of the terms 'allegory' and 'typology' in several of his writings, and concludes that the value of the distinction is mixed. Martens does, however, note that current scholarship in the field of early Christian Biblical studies still places value on this distinction, although again, some scholars still do not. He provides an extensive bibliography of these sources in a footnote. Peter Jentzmik*, Zu Möglichkeiten und Grenzen typologischer Exegese in mittelalterlicher Predigt und Dichtung* (Göppingen: Alfred Kümmerle Verlag, 1973) 88-114. Jentzmik provides a summary of older scholarship pertaining to this distinction. Rudolf Suntrup, "Zur sprachlichen Form der Typologie" *Geistliche Denkformen in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, eds. Klaus Grubmüller, Ruth G. Schmidt-Wiegand, Klaus Speckenbach (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1984) 28-31. Suntrup provides a summary of the controversy among scholars of literature. Joseph Galdon, *Typology and Seventeenth-Century Literature (*The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 25-6, provides yet another perspective by saying, "The Latin Fathers, especially, did not distinguish typology from allegory, and often grouped both methods of exegesis under the term 'spiritual interpretation'… The Latin word *figura* is also used synonymously with both type and allegory in the early scriptural commentators. This adds a further complication to the study of typology in the Fathers and scriptural exegetes."

[53] *Quadriga* (literally the 'four horse chariot') is the traditional form of medieval Biblical interpretation. It encompasses the literal sense and the three spiritual senses, the allegorical, tropological (moral), and anagogical (eschatological). This means of interpretation has been in use since at least the time of John Cassian (d. 435) and is expressed in the medieval couplet attributed to Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349):

  Littera gesta docet; quid credas allegoria,
  Moralis quid agas; quo tendas anagogica.

  [The letter shows us what God and our Fathers did;
  The allegory shows us where our faith is hid;
  The moral meaning gives us rules of daily life;
  The anagogy shows us where we end our strife.]

Couplet and free poetic translation reprinted in Davidson, *Typology* 26. Note that the couplet assigns equal value to all senses. For further information on this fourfold interpretive method see: Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1952).

> Typology employs allegory to imply tropology, which is its ultimate end. That end is the perfection of God's providential plan, salvation for mankind, for individuals, for readers, by making them knowing and willing partakers in the continuing history begun in Genesis... Typology conflates the times of Moses, of Christ, and of readers into a universal *imitatio Christi.* [54]

The goal of Scriptrural interpretation is to apply the Bible to Christian life. Typologic interpretation facilitates this by relating events of the Old Testament to those of the New Testament and to the future.

From a religious/exegetical perspective, typology is not a hermeneutical methodology with specific rules for interpretation.[55] It is a Christocentric approach that seeks to demonstrate the unity of the Testaments as the true and inspired work of a single author – God. According to this view, the Testaments are an inerrant exposition of God's worldly plan that began with the events related in the Old Testament, and then continued and was fulfilled through Jesus, as related in the New Testament. There is no one-to-one correspondence between the events of the two Testaments, but rather a relationship replete with a transcending escalation. One can therefore only fully understand the Old Testament and its prophecies through the New Testament, which has enhanced and fulfilled these prophecies. As Leonhardt Goppelt states:

> It [the Old Testament] is a witness to a redemptive history, to a provisional and inadequate salvation, and a prophecy that points beyond these things

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[54] Thomas Roche, "Tasso's Enchanted Woods," *Literary Uses of Typology*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 75.

[55] Davidson, *Typology* 37-8. The term 'typology' is somewhat anachronistic. The word was not even used until the eighteenth century, when John Semler (1721-91), a German Bible commentator and historian, coined the term.

accomplished though Him **…**Christ's coming is the ultimate expression of God's gracious condescension and that His coming signifies something that could only be accomplished through Him...[56]

At one time, the Old Testament had a function, to prefigure and to prepare for the events recorded in the New Testament. However, the Old Testament did not represent the entirety of salvation history; alone, it was inadequate. Once the New Testament came into being, the Old Testament was no longer to be taken literally. Nevertheless, it remained of value as a figure of the New.[57] With this in mind, the typological method seeks to deepen the understanding of God's ways, His intent, and the message of the Church itself, through both Testaments and their continuity. This thought process is a thread followed from the New Testament itself, where typology constitutes one of the dominant approaches by the Apostles to the Old Testament, continuing through the writings of the Patristic Fathers, and into present day exegesis.[58] Although belief in God's providential role in history has little meaning for most in the twenty-first century, it was axiomatic during the Middle Ages. As Auerbach states, "the figural method… provides the medieval interpretation of history with its general foundation and often enters into the medieval view of everyday

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[56] Goppelt 202.

[57] Jean Daniélou, *Origen*, trans. Walter Mitchell (New York: Sheer and Ward, 1955) 141.

[58] For a summary of more modern interest in typologic exegesis, see: Goppelt 1-17.

reality."[59] It is thus not surprising that the typologic method of interpretation was adapted to other fields, including history, mythology, literature, and art.[60]

Isaac-Jesus Typology

Isaac prefigured Jesus in many Biblical comparisons. Both are 'the beloved son' willingly offered by the father and willingly going to their death.[61] Isaac and Jesus will fulfill the promise: Isaac, through whom the Jewish nation will descend and become great, and Jesus as the messiah. Both figures are of similar or the same age. Commentary as to Isaac's age varies, but he is generally thought to be in his thirties at the time of his sacrifice.[62] Jesus was thirty-three when he died. The two are begotten in an atypical manner. In

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[59] Auerbach, "Figura," 61.

[60] Examples of the use of typology in literature and art are discussed below. Friedrich Ohly has written a number of articles dealing with various aspects of typology. See: "Typologie als Denkform der Geschichtsbetrachtung," *Ausgewählte und neue Schriften zur Literaturgeschichte und zur Bedeutungsforschung,* eds. Uwe Ruberg and Dietmar Peil (Stuttgart: P.S. Hirzel Verlag, 1995) 445-72. An example of the historical application of typology can be found in the practice of calling St. Benedict, the author of the Monastic Rules, the antitype of Moses, the lawgiver, or later, in terming Martin Luther the new Moses. One example of the many cited by Ohly of the use of typology in connection with mythology is that of the staff of Aesclepius and its snake. This is viewed as a type of the Bronze serpent of Numbers 21:8-9 which, as discussed in greater depth below, is in turn a type of the crucifixion. Ohly expands his examination of the use of typology to yet broader areas in two further essays: "Typologische Figuren aus Natur und Mythos," *Ausgewählte und neue Schriften zur Literaturgeschichte und zur Bedeutungsforschung,* eds. Uwe Ruberg and Dietmar Peil (Stuttgart: P.S. Hirzel Verlag, 1995) 473-507 and "Skizzen zur Typologie im späteren Mittelalter," *Ausgewählte und neue Schriften zur Literaturgeschichte und zur Bedeutungsforschung,* eds. Uwe Ruberg and Dietmar Peil (Stuttgart: P.S. Hirzel Verlag, 1995) 509-554. Also to be noted are three of Ohly's prior essays on typology "Synagoge und Ecclesia. Typologisches in mittelalterlicher Dichtung", "Außerbiblisch Typologisches" and "Halbbiblische und ausserbiblische Typologie" in: Friedrich Ohly, *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung* (Darmstadt:Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977) 312-400.

[61] Jesus is called the "beloved Son "three times - Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22, and Matthew 3:17. God, in speaking to Abraham, refers to Isaac as the son "whom you love" (Genesis 22:2).

[62] Exegesis as to Isaac's age will be discussed in connection with the Yiddish texts.

Genesis 21:1 God visits Sarah, and then she conceives. The Annunciation of

Mary takes place prior to the conception of Jesus. An angelic announcement

precedes both births - the three angels, considered by Christians as a type of the

magi and/or the Trinity, visit Abraham and Sarah, and Gabriel visits Mary. Isaac

and Jesus result from supra-biological events - Isaac being born to parents in

their extreme old age and Jesus as the result of a virgin birth.[63] A common

appellation that connects Isaac and Jesus is "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the

son of Abraham" (Matthew1:1). Both men carry the wood with which their death

is to be brought about: Isaac carried this wood upon his back to Mount Moriah

just as Jesus carried the cross to Calvary. Abraham and Isaac travel three days

to Mount Moriah, and there are three days between Jesus's crucifixion and

resurrection (Good Friday to Easter Sunday). Jesus is often referred to as the

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[63]*D. Martin Luthers Werke; - kritische Gesamtausgabe,* vol. XLIII 2, ed J.K.F. Knaake, G. Kawerau, E. Thiele, et. al. (H. Böhlau, Weimar, 1883-) 431**.** All citations are taken from this edition, which is commonly referred to as the *Weimarer Augabe* and will henceforth be abbreviated as WA. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Luther spoke of the nature of Isaac's birth in relation to his theology of *sola Fide* in his Lectures on Genesis 18:1 in the following manner:

Etsi enim Isaac ex carne Abrahae est natus tamen est natus supra vires carnis, quia uterque parens carne pene mortuus, et aetate ad generationem ineptus est. Promissio autem, quam fide apprehendunt, mortuam carnem quasi vivificat, ut non tam ex carne, quam ex virtute promissionis Isaacum natum statuas, hic principalis huius capitus locus est pro iustitia fidei, contra praesumptionem et iustitiam operum.

(For even though Isaac was born from the flesh of Abraham he was nevertheless born in a manner which was beyond the powers of the flesh, since both parents, so far as the flesh was concerned, were almost dead and, because of their age, were unfit for procreation. But the promise which they apprehend through faith revives their dead flesh, as it were. Consequently, you must maintain that Isaac was born not so much from the flesh as because of the promise. This is the chief passage of this chapter for the righteousness of faith over the presumption and righteousness of works.) Translation from: *Luther's Works. American Edition*, vol. 3. ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-860) 177.

'lamb of God'[64] - it was a ram that was sacrificed in Isaac's stead. This further

relates to the parallel tradition of the substitutionary sacrifice and the atoning

power of that sacrifice. Jesus and Isaac are models of the atoning death of a

martyr. Jews pray for mercy in memory of Patriarchs and the Akedah, especially

in the High Holiday liturgy.[65] Further, this 'Merit of the Fathers' (זכות אבות/*Zechut

Avot*) helps to expiate the sins of the people.[66] In Christian thought, Jesus died

in atonement for the sins of humanity.

Satan tries to thwart both Isaac and Jesus from their respective missions.

Mark 1:12-13, Matthew 4:1-11, and Luke 4:-13 record the temptation of Jesus by

the Devil in the desert.[67] *Midrash* relates the role of Satan in trying to hinder the

Sacrifice of Isaac. The lamb caught by its horns in the bush of thorns is

analogous to Jesus's crown of thorns. There is a possible temporal relationship

between the Sacrifice of Isaac and Jesus's crucifixion. Exegesis indicates that

the Sacrifice of Isaac took place not on Rosh Hashanah, but on Passover, but

that the event was intentionally shifted to a different time of the year. The

Passover festival occurs at the same time of the year as Easter, the time of

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[64] John 1:29 and 1:36.

[65] See also the *Song of Songs Rabbah* I 14:1 and *Leviticus Rabbah* 2:11, where it is related that the Akedah was paradigmatic for the morning and evening Temple sacrifices

[66] The theme of *zechut avot* is a recurrent one in Jewish theology, wherein the Akedah is a source of mercy for future generations. Numerous examples of this are cited in: Anthony Saldarini, "The Interpretation of the Akedah in Rabbinic Literature," *The Biblical Mosaic: Changing Perspectives*, eds. Robert Polzin and Eugene Rothman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 150-61.

[67] See Chapter Five for a discussion of this theme.

Jesus's crucifixion.[68] As mentioned above, and will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5, although the Sacrifice of Isaac is halted, there is exegesis maintaining that Isaac died and was resurrected, as was Jesus.

A significant typological parallel is the location of the Akedah and the location of Golgotha. Jewish tradition places the location of the Sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah. According to the *midrash*, the altar that Abraham sacrificed upon is the same altar that Cain and Abel and also Noah and his sons made sacrifices upon.[69] God then showed this altar to Abraham. Abraham rebuilt and restored the altar, which is why the verse says, "Abraham built *the* altar", not 'an altar'.[70] Another source places Mount Moriah directly under the Heavenly Throne of Glory.[71] This was also the site upon which King David would later build the Holy Temple.[72]

Several Christian sources draw a parallel between the location of the Sacrifice of Isaac and that of the crucifixion. The twelfth century work *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* (*The Deeds of the Franks and Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*) suggests that these sites are the same: "Not far off is

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[68] Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial,* trans. Judah Goldin, 4th edition (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007) 51-59.

[69] *Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer* (English version) 227. Hereafter this work will be referred to as PRE.

[70] *Me'am Loez*, vol. 2 332.

[71] *Midrash Tanhuma* (S.Buber Recension), ed. and trans. John Townsend (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1989) vol.1 128.

[72] 2 Chronicles 3:1.

Golgotha, that is 'The place of a skull', where Christ the Son of God was

crucified, and where the first Adam was buried, and where Abraham offered his

sacrifice to God."[73]

Also, Saewulf (a name that may or may not have been a pseudonym), an

English pilgrim also of the twelfth century, states:

> Afterwards you go up to Mount Calvary, where formerly the patriarch
> Abraham built an altar, and at the command of God was ready to sacrifice
> to Him his own son. In the same place, afterwards, the Son of God whom
> [Isaac] prefigured, was sacrificed to God the Father as the victim for the
> redemption of the world.[74]

Daniel the Abbot, a twelfth century pilgrim to Jerusalem, also wrote an account

of his journey stating:

> And nearby in the sacrificial altar of Abraham where Abraham placed his
> sacrifice to the Lord and killed a ram in place of Isaac, and in the place
> where Isaac was brought, Christ was offered up as a sacrifice and died for
> the sake of us sinners.[75]

The Akedah takes place at Mt. Moriah, which will be site of the two Temples, and

specifically the site of the Temples' most holy sacrificial altar. This is the also the

site of Golgotha, the site of the sacrifice of Jesus, whose death supersedes

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[73] *The Deeds of the Franks and other Pilgrims to Jerusalem,* ed. and trans. Rosalind Hill (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962) 98.

[74] *Saewulf*, trans. Rev. Canon Brownlow (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1892) 11. William Boulting, *Four Pilgrims* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2001) 73. Saewulf made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1102/3. His trip is recorded in a fragmentary manuscript written in Latin and preserved in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge as number 111. We know little of Saewulf, other than that he was a merchant and most probably lived in Worcester, England.

[75] Cited in: Mishael Caspi, and John Greene, "Prolegmenon," *Unbinding the Binding of Isaac, e*ds. Mishael Caspi and John Green (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2007*)* xvii.

Jewish sacrifice. Isaac therefore becomes the first sacrificed son and Jesus the last.

Typology and the Early Church

The typological means of interpretation is as old as the New Testament itself.[76] Several of the many well known examples found in the Gospels include John:6:48 when the manna is likened to a prefiguration of the Eucharist, Matthew 12:39 which discusses Jonah's three days in the belly of the whale as a prefiguration of Jesus's three day entombment, and John 3:14 where the bronze serpent is likened to the crucifixion. Jesus himself speaks of his role typologically in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:18).

The Pauline Epistles also contain numerous examples of typology, for Paul's typological understanding of the Bible influenced his theology.[77] As

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[76] The Old Testament itself (from a Jewish perspective and without Christologic interpretation) also evidences a different form of typology within itself. Typologic interpretation of this sort refers to events in the Old Testament that reference a future recurrence, such as those that will take place in Messianic times. This is possible in Christian typology as well. Unless otherwise specified, this latter application of typology is not what is intended when the term 'typology' is used in this dissertation. G.W.H. Lampe and K.J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (London:SCM Press, 1957) 42. I would agree with Lampe and Woollcombe who deem this more a fulfillment of prophecy than typology. I would also agree that 'historical typology' – that based on "….the establishment of historical connections between certain events, persons or things in the Old Testament and similar events, persons or things in the New Testament" (Lampe and Woollcombe 39) and which is similar to Auerbach's definition cited above, came into being only with Christianity. It is to be noted that Christian typology may also look forward to a third era, that of messianic fulfillment.

[77] Goppelt 127-152.

Auerbach points out, Paul used the typological method of interpretation to

"…strip the Old Testament of its normative character and show that it is merely a

shadow of things to come."[78] Paul stressed the priority of the New Testament

and its laws over that which had come before it. He used the typologic method of

interpretation to demonstrate to new converts to Christianity and Judeo-

Christians that the New Law superseded and nullified the Old. The Old

Testament formed the basis for the New, however the Old Law was but a history

of what once was, and a prophecy of what was yet to come. There are many

examples of Paul's use of typology. These include: Romans 5:14, wherein Paul

speaks of types in the old as a shadow of things to come; Colossians 2:16-17

which speaks of the old as a shadow of things to come; and I Cor. 15:22 which

depicts Adam as a type of Christ; and the veil of the Old Covenant which was

removed by Christ in II Cor. 3:14.

　　　Whereas Paul was concerned with gaining and retaining converts to the

New Law, the early Patristic Fathers (those who lived and wrote from about 100

CE to before the Nicene Council of 425 CE) spoke and wrote directly against the

Jews and Gnostics who refused to embrace Christianity. Examples of the use of

typology for this purpose include St. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* (second

century),[79] Tertullian's *Adversus Judeos* (c.197-220) [80] and the *Didascalia* (third

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[78] Auerbach, "Figura," 50.

[79] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ed. Michael Slusser, trans. Thomas Falls (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

[80] Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos*, ed. and trans. Regina Hauses (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2007) 256-7. Chapter 10:6: "Itaque imprimus Isaac, cum a patre hostia duceretur lignum[que]

century).[81] The use of typology to counter the beliefs of the Gnostics, some of whom denied the veracity of the Old Testament, may be found in St. Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* (175-185)[82] and Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* (c.197-220),[83] to cite just a few sources.

The Sacrifice of Isaac in the New Testament

There are numerous relevant passages in the Gospels which have been interpreted Christologically, such as: John 3:16 (For God so loved the world…), 19:17 (Jesus carrying the cross, not Simon), John 18:12 and 24 (Jesus as being bound on the cross), John 1:36 (Jesus as the lamb of God), Isaac as a type of Jesus and Isaac's sacrifice a prefiguration of the crucifixion. The two most overt comparisons of Isaac and Jesus are found in Hebrews 11:17-19 and Romans 4:1-5. In Hebrews, Paul emphasizes the relationship between Isaac and his sacrifice, and Jesus and the resurrection:

ipse sibi portans, Christi exitum iam tunc denotabat in victumam concessi a patre lignum passionis suae baiulantis."(Deshalb deutete vor allen anderen Isaak, als er von dem Vater als Opfertier geführt wurde und selbst für sich das Holz trug, schon damals auf den Tod Christi hin, der, vom Vater zum Opfer hingegeben, das Holz seines Leidens trug./ Therefore Isaac, above all others prefigured the the death of Christ. He, who was led by his father as a sacrificial animal and himself carried the wood of his Passion. - English translation mine.)

[81] *The Didascalia apostolorum in English*, ed. Margaret Gibson (London: Clay & Sons, 1903).

[82] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses.*   Early Christian Writings
< http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book1.html> 15 August, 2012.

[83] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem,* ed. and trans. Ernest Evans (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972).

17. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son;

18. (To whom it was said: In Isaac shall thy seed be called.)

19. Accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead. Whereupon also he received him for a parable. Isaac's death and resurrection have been suspended, but they will be realized by Jesus.

The other important section pertaining to Abraham in the New Testament is

Romans 4:1-5:

1. What shall we say then that Abraham hath found, who is our father according to the flesh.

2. For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God.

3. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice.

4. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned according to grace, but according to debt.

5. But to him that worketh not, yet believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reputed to justice, according to the purpose of the grace of God.

A similar sentiment is expressed in James 2:21-23:

21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, offering up Isaac his son upon the altar?

22. Seest thou, that faith did co-operate with his works; and by works faith was made perfect?

23. And the scripture was fulfilled, saying: Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him to justice, and he was called the friend of God.

These are the central passages that constitute the basis for much of the exegesis examined, and which demonstrate the ongoing theological engagement of the Church with this theme.

Typology in Christian Exegesis of the Sacrifice of Isaac: The Homily of Origen on Genesis 22

The story of the Sacrifice of Isaac was so central to the Church Fathers that nearly every exegete commented on it. As R. Wilkin writes:

> Origen, writing in the early third century, devoted a large section of his homilies on Genesis to the figure of Abraham; Ambrose in the fourth century wrote two books on him; Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom and others preached about him regularly; Cyril of Alexandria in the early fifth century discusses him extensively in a book on Genesis and in an Easter sermon; Augustine devotes a dozen chapters to him in *The City of God*, and numerous other writers hold him up as a model and example for Christians.[84]

An exhaustive study of the Christian exegesis of the Sacrifice of Isaac is not possible here. Therefore only two homilies will be examined, Origen's Homily VIII and Homily IX, "On the fact that Abraham offered his son Isaac" and "On the promises made to Abraham the second time", which are part of the earliest extant complete exegesis of Genesis 22.[85] Origin (c.185-c.254), an early Patristic Father, and one of the great minds of the early Church, is said to be the "founder

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[84] Robert Wilken, "The Christianizing of Abraham: The Interpretation of Abraham in Early Christianity," *Concordia Theological Monthly,* 43 (1972), 724. The work of David Lerch, previously cited, contains a survey of Christian thought on the Sacrifice of Isaac.

[85] Lerch 46-7.

of the scientific study of the Bible"[86] and is particularly noted for his use of typology.[87] The *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, which Origen preached between c.239 and 243 in Caesarea, are a prominent example of the typololic thread that runs throughout much of Origen's exegesis.[88]   The Eighth Homily, which consists of ten points, and the Ninth Homily, which contains three points, are illustrative of Origen's interpretative method. Further, Origen's exegesis on the Sacrifice of Isaac was influential for all later exegesis. As David Lerch concludes:

> ...Die typologische Auslegung dieses Kapitels für dessen spätere Deutung [ist] von geradezu schicksalhafter Bedeutung... Schließlich hat die von Origenes gegebene Gesamtauslegung von Gn 22... fast die ganze spätere Entwicklung vorwegenommen.[89]

> (...The typologic interpretation of this chapter is of prodigious significance for its later interpretation... Origen's definitive interpretation of Genesis 22 anticipated practically the entire later development.)

> In the first of the ten points of his homily, Origen cites Genesis 22:1 from

the Vulgate. He then cites Paul's Letter to the Hebrews:

> By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; to whom it was said: In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead… (Hebrews 11:17-19)

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[86] Daniélou, *Origen* vii.

[87] Origen's use of typology is a major theme discussed throughout Daniélou's *From Shadows to Reality.*

[88] *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. trans Ronald E. Heine, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 71. (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

[89] Lerch 6. See also Lerch 47.

Origen proceeds to draw a parallel between the faith of Abraham that God could raise Isaac up from the dead, and the resurrection of Jesus. He states that, "Abraham, therefore, hoped for the resurrection of Isaac and believed in a future which had not yet happened."[90] Origen further uses this statement to question the 'non-believing' Jews of his time: "How, then, are they 'sons of Abraham' who do not believe what happened in Christ, which Abraham believed was to be in Isaac?"[91] He then goes on to state that Abraham knew he was to be the progenitor of Jesus, emphasizing the prophetic nature of the Old Testament.: "…he [Abraham] knew the Christ was to be born from his seed who was also to be offered as a truer victim for the whole world and was to be raised from the dead."[92] Finally, with the use of the comparative ('truer victim"), Origen stresses the greater veracity of the New Law, and its superiority over the Old.

In the second and third points of his homily, Origen comments on the nature of the test and the manner in which God, by the use of the journey to Mt. Moriah, gave Abraham ample time to consider his impending deed. He further discusses the conflict of the love for a son versus the love of God. This leads to the fourth point, which foregrounds the steadfastness of Abraham. Abraham does not tarry in the fulfillment of God's request, nor does he waiver during the three long days of the journey. The exegete comments on the significance of the

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[90] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 137.

[91] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 137.

[92] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 137-8.

length of the trip: "For also when the people had departed Egypt, they offered sacrifice to God on the third day and are purified on the third day. And the third day is the day of the Lord's resurrection"[93] Occurrences in the Old and New Testaments are clearly juxtaposed.

Origen examines the text of Genesis 22:4 in the fifth point. He questions why Abraham says that he and the lad will return from the mountain. Did Abraham know that they would return, although he was going up the mountain in order to sacrifice Isaac, or was this statement actually a deception? The exegete answers that one of the patriarchs would not be capable of deception, and so it must be that Abraham knew that God would resurrect Isaac.[94]

Origen recites Genesis 22:6 in his next point and specifically establishes Isaac as a figure of Jesus: "That Isaac himself carries on himself 'the wood for the holocaust' is a figure, because Christ also 'himself carried his own cross' …"[95] This is the most clearly expounded of all of the typological images found in the homily.

Using Abraham as an example, Origen enjoins his listeners to perform God's service steadfastly and with joy. Origen explicates the statement in Genesis 22:12, that now God knows that Abraham fears Him. He states that

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[93] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 140.

[94] This thought is similar to that of some of the Jewish exegetes on this subject.

[95] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 140-1.

God, being omniscient, knew that Abraham would fulfill His request, but that the people must be obedient to God's bidding and physically demonstrate that they place God above all else. The exegete draws a parallel between the angel who halted Abraham's sacrifice and Jesus himself - both were apparitions that in actuality were manifestations of God. He compares Abraham to God, for both were willing to sacrifice their only son. God in his munificence, however, did not take Isaac. As Origen says, "Abraham offered God a mortal son who was not put to death; God delivered to death an immortal son for men."[96]

Origen plainly reiterates, "Isaac represented Christ"[97] in his ninth point. To this, he adds that the ram also represents Christ: "Christ is 'the Word of God,' but 'the Word was made flesh'… Christ suffered, therefore, but in the flesh; and he endured death, but it was of the flesh, of which this ram is a type."[98] Origen further draws the similitude to John 1:29, that refers to Jesus as the "Lamb of God." The homily closes with an exhortation to give gladly to the Lord, for those who do will receive back multiples of what they have given.

Homily IX begins by explicating why God needed to call to Abraham a second time, as the message delivered is not a new one. Origen interprets this call typologically. He explains that Abraham did not live only "according to the

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[96] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 144.

[97] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 145.

[98] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 145.

flesh," he also lived "from heaven"[99] - the first promise was Abraham, and the second was Christ. Abraham was to be the father of "those who come to the inheritance through the passion of Christ" and that the promise made to Abraham applies eternally to all who believe in Christ.[100]

God gives no reason for the first promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:2: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed." In addition, Genesis 13:6: " And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: if any man be able to number the dust of the earth, he shall be able to number thy seed also."). Now, however, God gives a reason for His promise: "... because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake." (Genesis 22:16.) The promise is steadfast, as Origen says, because, of the offering or passion of the Son. Further, Origen demonstrates by means of several Old Testament examples, that God's second promises are firmer and that God gives greater preference to His second promises.

The second point of Homily IX deals with the change from the Old to the New through the renewal of God's promise. Origen comments that God speaks to Abraham of his 'seed' in the singular, and not in the plural. With this, he interprets the use of the singular, because there is no multitude intended. There is but one seed - Christ - whose seed is multiplied.

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[99] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 149.

[100] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 149.

The final point contains an interpretation of the verse: "thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies." (Genesis 22:17) Origen interprets this as the triumph of Christ. He returns to the word 'seed': "The seed of Abraham, therefore, that is, the seed of the word, which is the preaching of the Gospel and faith in Christ, has occupied 'the cities of their enemies.'"[101] He continues his explication, saying that the two things to be conquered are actually the individual's soul and sin, the enemy. Origen concludes with the typological wish and prayer: "That we might be able to receive the blessing of Abraham through Christ our Lord, to whom belongs glory and sovereignty forever and ever. Amen."[102]

The use of typology in the homilies on Genesis 22:1-19 is but one example of the many typologic references that pervade the writings of Origen. In his tenth homily on Leviticus Origen summarizes his entire interpretive philosophy:

> Therefore, the Law [Old Testament] and all the things which are in the Law are, according to the opinion of the Apostle, "imposed until the time of correction." Just as those whose craft it is to make tokens from copper and to pour statues, before they produce a true work of copper or of silver or of gold, first form figures from clay to the likeness of the future image – certainly the model is necessary but only until the work that is principal be completed, but when that work on account of that image was made of clay is completed, its use is not longer sought – understand also something like this in these things which were written or done "in a type" and in a figure of the future in the Law and Prophets. For the artist and Creator of all himself

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[101] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 155.

[102] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 156.

came and transformed "the Law which had a shadow of good things to come" to "the image itself of the things." [103]

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[103] Origen. *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16*, ed. and trans. Gary Barkley, *Fathers of the Church*, vol. 83 (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1990) 202-3. Daniélou, *Origen* 139-73. Daniélou cites many homilies and commentaries illustrating Origen's view of typology, the relationship of the Old and New Testaments, and God's plan.

Chapter 2: Typology in Literature and Art

Typology in Literature `

Typology is an old and pervasive method of literary interpretation. I will briefly present several examples to highlight the importance of typology in literature beginning as early as the fourth century. Prudentius (348-410), a Roman Christian poet, in his "Dittochaeon**"** ('Twofold Nourishment', also referred to as the "tituli Historiarum") speaks poetically of a church painting that has forty-nine scenes of the Old and New Testament. The poem is not a pairing of the two, but rather a chronological ordering starting with Adam and Eve and ending with the Revelation of John**.** There are a total of twenty-four Old Testament scenes and twenty-five from the New Testament, and they include typological imagery.[1] A text of several centuries later, the poem of Rusticus Helpidius (d. circa 533), contains a definite pairing of eight Old and New Testament scenes. Three of these pairings consist of groups found in the *Biblia pauperum*, a book that

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[1] *Prudentius,* trans. H.J. Thomson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953) vol II 347-71. Note particularly sections VI, XIV, XV, XX, and XX of the work**.** For a discussion of the *Dittochaeon* including theories of its purpose see: Renate Pilliginer, *Die Tituli Historiarum oder die sogenannte Dittochaeon des Prudentius* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980). For comments on the typologic nature of the work, see: Robert Hollander, "Typology and Secular Literature: Some Medieval Problems and Examples" *Literary Uses of Typology*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 12-16. This work does not include the Sacrifice of Isaac.

contains a series of types and anti-types, which will be discussed in depth below, including one of Isaac carrying the cross as prefiguring the crucifixion.[2]

Several centuries later, the church and monastery of the Venerable Bede (673- 735) in Jarrow contained typologic scenes. These included pictures of Isaac carrying the wood of his sacrifice as a prefiguration of Jesus carrying the cross, and of the bronze serpent as a foreshadowing of the crucifixion.[3] Further, Bede used the imagery of the Sacrifice of Isaac as a prefiguration of the Passion in a sermon that he preached after Epiphany, Homily 1.14.[4] Bede also used typological thought in his discussion of spiritual rebirth in his Homily II.18 on the Gospels. Here Bede discusses the mention of the bronze serpent in John 3:14 as, "…recalling some of the ancient history and explaining that it happened as a figure of his [Jesus's] own passion and of human salvation."[5]

The interest in and focus on typology rose and fell and rose again over the course of many centuries. In the twelfth century, typology received renewed attention in response to the Cathar heresy, as will be discussed below in

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[2] Heitz and Schreiber 3. Campbell Dodgson. *The Weigel-Felix Biblia Pauperum: A Monograph* (London: Chiswick Press, 1900) 4. The poem of Rusticis Helpidius contains three pairs of types and antitypes that are also found in the *Biblia pauperum*, a work which will be discussed below as an example of the medieval use of typology. The pairs are: The Fall and the Annunciation, the sale of Joseph by his brothers and the betrayal of Jesus, and the example cited above.

[3] Venerable Bede, *Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow,* ed. D.H. Farmer, trans. J.F. Webb, *The Age of Bede* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) 194.

[4] Lawrence T. Martin, and David Hurst. *Bede Homilies on the Gospels*. Vol I, Cistercian studies series, no. 110 (Kalamazo: Cistercian Publications, 1991) 140-141.

[5] Martin, *Homilies,* vol. II 178-87.

connection with the *Biblia pauperum*. Typology affirmed religious orthodoxy, and was an important tool of the Church, both in written and oral teaching.

The typologic method of interpretation eventually entered the corpus of Middle High German literature. Readings from the Old Testament during the celebration of the Mass that stood in direct relation to the following ones from the New Testament.[6] Sermons from the pulpit relating the two Testaments, bolstered typologic interpretation. [7] Despite their Latin transmission prior to the end of the twelfth century, preaching of sermons to the laity was always in the vernacular.[8] One of the most important compilations of medieval sermons is that of Priester Konrad of 1170.[9] Schönbach, Mertens, and later Jentzmik examined these sermons. Jentzmik discusses Priester Konrad's extensive use of typology, and analyzes a number of Konrad's sermons that exemplify this. Jentzmik also includes a listing of themes that have typologic significance, including the Sacrifice of Isaac. Konrad's 96th Sermon, "Aber von dem heiligen cruze", is of particular interest, as it deals with Genesis 22:1-19. Priester Konrad retells the story according to the Vulgate, contrasts Abraham's obedience with the disobedience of Adam, and then draws the typologic parallels Isaac-Jesus and of the offering of the only son. Priester Konrad also draws on the legend that Mount

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[6] Nellhaus 310.

[7] Weber 3-4.

[8] Anton Schönbach, *Studien zur Geschichte der aldeutschen Predigt* (Wien: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1896) 219-22.

[9] Volker Mertens, *Das Predigtbuch des Priesters Konrad* (München: C.H. Beck, 1971).

Moriah is also the site of the Holy Temple and of Golgotha, as well as other such parallels.[10]

Examples of typology in German literature are numerous, reaching back to the twelfth century with a vernacular retelling of portions of the Book of Genesis. The *Wiener Genesis*[11] and the *Milstätter Genesis*[12] are two of the earliest examples of typologic literature in the vernacular. They are anonymous works of the twelfth century, both thought to have descended from an unknown archetype. The *Wiener Genesis*, produced around 1150, is the older of the works. It is preserved in Hs. 2721 of the Austrian National Library with 6.062 lines and seven illustrations. This manuscript also contains two other works, a prose version of *Physiologus* and a partial retelling of Exodus.[13] The Milstätter Genesis Manuscript contains a total of eight works and was produced in the late twelfth century. The Genesis and Physiologus portions of this manuscript are the

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[10] Jetzmik 190-221. The sermons of Priester Konrad exemplify the use of allegory as well as typology.

[11] Katherine Smits, *Die Frühmittelhochdeutsche Wiener Genesis*. Philologische Studien und Quellen, Heft 59 (Berlin: E. G. Schmidt, 1972). Smits provides an extensive discussion of the versions of the Genesis poem, their history, dating and transmission, as well as a summary of the scholarship. In addition there is an analysis of the text and a copy of the text itself. See Smits 7-83.

[12] Joseph Diemer, *Genesis und Exodus nach der Milstätter Handschrift* (Wien:C. Gerold's Sohn, 1862). Diemer describes and discusses the manuscript and provides a copy of the text. A facsimile of the manuscript has also been produced: *Millstätter Genesis und Physiologus Handschrift: Vollständige Facsimileausgabe der Sammelhandschrift 6/19 des Geschichtsvereines für Kärnten im Kärntner Landesarchiv, Klagenfurt*. Ed. Alfred Kracher, Codices selecti phototypice impressi, 10 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1967).

[13] Kracher 33. Space was left in the *Wiener Genesis* for additional illustrations, however they were never executed.

earliest examples of fully illustrated German vernacular manuscripts.[14] The

Milstätter Genesis encompasses folio pages 1r-84v of the manuscript, contains

6035 lines, and includes eighty-seven colored illustrations, one of which depicts

the Sacrifice of Isaac.[15] Both works retell the Genesis story from a Christologic

perspective. One of the most prominent uses of typologic imagery in both works

is the blessing that Jacob, who is on his deathbed, gives to his son Judah. The

blessing is related as in the Old Testament; however, it is appended to include

not only Judah, but also Judas, a New Testament figure. The blessing then

discusses Jesus and his role as the true Saviour.[16]

The well known poem of Walther von der Vogelweide(1165-1230), "Der

Leich" also exemplifies the use of typology in Middle High German literature.

This poem likens the virginity of Mary to the Burning Bush in the Old Testament

(Stanza Ib).[17] This comparison also appears in "Barlaam and Josaphat."[18] This

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[14] Hella Voss, *Studien zur illustrierten Millstätter Genesis* (Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlag, 1962) 1. **H**ermann Menhardt, "Die Bilder der Millstätter Genesis und ihre Verwandten," *Festschrift für Rudolf Egger: Beiträge zur älteren europäischen Kulturgeschichte,* vol. III, eds. Egger, Rudolf, and Gotbert Moro (Klagenfurt: Verlag des Geschichtsvereines für Kärnten, 1954) 250. The remaining six texts," Exodus", "Vom Rechte", "Die Hochzeit", "Sündenklage", "Paternoster", and "Himmlisches Jerusalem" are not illustrated in this or in any other manuscript.

[15] Menhardt 251. Space was also left for one additional illustration that was never carried out. Menhardt gives an analysis of all of the illustrations and headings. as well as a summary of previous scholarship on the subject. He further compares the illustrations, the spaces for planned illustrations and the headings of the *Wiener Genesis* with those of the *Millstätter Genesis* manuscripts. His conclusions have been called into question by more recent scholars, but his analysis of the illustrations and headings is useful.

[16] Smits 316-23 and Diemer 108-11. There is no typologic reference in either manuscript related to the Sacrifice of Isaac. In both the story is simply described in accordance with the Old Testament narrative.

[17] *Walther von der Vogelweide,Gedichte: Mittelhochdeutscher Text und Übertragung*, ed. Peter Wapnewski (Frankfurt a.M. u. Hamburg: Fischer Bücherei, 1966) 215-17.

latter work reached German audiences through three Middle High German

sources: the *Laubacher Barlaam* of Bishop Otto II of Freising (written prior to

1220 and surviving in a single manuscript), t89-he *Züricher Barlaam* (a

+6translation which survives only in two fragments), and the translation from the

Latin by Rulolf von Ems (1200-1254) written c.1225-30 and represented in

numerous manuscripts and fragments.[19] In the "Golden Schmiede" of Konrad von

Würzburg (c. 1230-1287) Eve and Mary are likened as well.[20]

Hartmann von Aue (1060-70-1110-20) was well acquainted with typology

as evidenced in his work *Gregorius*. Gregorius, who lives on his rock, a fasting

and emaciated penitent, describes himself as:

> ich gelîche in disen sachen,
> als der ein lîlachen
> über dorne spreite…[21]
>
> (In these matters I was comparable to someone who spread a sheet of
> linen over a thornbush…)

This is a simile for the altar cloth and altar, which in turn is associated with the

ram caught in the thicket and sacrificed in Isaac's stead, and with the sacrificial

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[18] Rudof von Ems, *Barlaam und Josaphat* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965) 64-5. There are many other typological references in this work as well.

[19] Salvatore Calomino, *From Verse to Prose: The Barlaam and Josephat Legend In Fifteenth-Century Germany (*Potomac, Md.: Scripta Humanistica, 1990) 5-6.

[20] *Die Goldene Schmiede des Konrad von Würzburg*, ed. Edward Schröder (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht,1926) line 409-17**.**

[21] Hartmann von Aue *Gregorius,* ed. Friedrich Neumann (Wiesbaden: F.A. Brockhaus, 1981) 5th edition, 204. Lines 3459-3461.

lamb's body stretched to the four horns of the altar (Psalm 118:25-27).[22]

Hartmann then continues the description:

> man möhte im sam gereite
> allez sîn gebeine
> grôz unde kleine
> haben gezalt durch sine hût.[23]
>
> (One could at once have counted all of his bones, large and small,
> showing through his skin.)

This references the Old Testament prophecy of Jesus's crucifixion: *et

dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea* (They have numbered all my bones), found in

Psalm 22:17. The counted bones therefore serve to emphasize that which is

already apparent throughout the work - that Gregorius is a type of Jesus.[24]

Other Middle High German works may be read in their entirety according to the

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[22] F.P. Pickering, *Literature & Art in the Middle Ages* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press 1970) 259 and F.P. Pickering . "On Coming to Terms with Curtius," *German Life and Letters*, 11 (1958) 343.

[23] Hartmann 204. Lines 3462-3465.

[24] Pickering, "On Coming" 343 and Pickering, *Literature* 259. Psalm 22 is often interpreted typologically as a prefiguration of the crucifixion, because its second verse ("O God my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me?") was uttered by Jesus during the ninth hour on the cross (Matthew 27:46). Pickering also cites a sermon on the Mass given in about 1270 by Berthold of Regensburg (1220-72) wherein this comparison of the numbering of the bones is also used. During the Mass the priest re-enacts the cross being raised with his position of standing with his outstretched arms and palms extended upwards, which is termed the *orans* posture. Berthold said of the *orans*: "Dar nach strecket der prister de arme sere von ime: daz bezeichent da unser here gedeent wart an das heilige cruce als er, daz man allez sine gebeine gezelt mohte haben durch sin huet." ["Thereupon the priest stretches out his arms to their full extent. That means that our Lord was stretched from the Holy Cross so direly that one might have counted all his bones through his skin."] It is to be noted that Jewish tradition attributes this Psalm to David, who wrote the Psalm, and pertains to his experiences and feelings.

For further examples of typology in early German Literature, see: Clarence Friedman, *Prefigurations in Meistergesang: Types From the Bible and Nature* (New YorK: AMS Press, 1943) 14-26.

typologic theory. The most notable among these is the *Kaiserchronik*, examined by Friedrich Ohly.[25]

Biblical drama also has a long history. It developed from the liturgy, specifically from the *visitatio sepulchri,* the ceremonies based on the Scriptural accounts of the three Marys - the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the sister of Lazarus. On Easter morning, these women came to the sepulcher of Jesus, and the angels at Jesus's tomb informed them of the resurrection. The plays are based on the line *Quem quaeritis* (*?* (Whom do you seek?) asked by the angels of the three Marys in the Easter liturgy. Such plays date back to the tenth century and form the basis for European drama.[26]

Typology and Art: The Verdun Altar

> During the age of the persecutions it [the Sacrifice of Isaac] has been a symbol of deliverance; from 313 onwards it appears transformed into a dramatic scene with allegorical bynotes; from the Middle Ages onwards, it becomes the principal prototype of Christ's death on the cross.[27]

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[25] Friedrich Ohly, *Sage und Legende in der Kaiserchronik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968). Jentzmik, 222-253. Several surveys detailing the interest of scholars of Germanic literature in this topic are available. These include: Jentzmik 6-88 and Hartmut Hoefer, *Typologie im Mittelalter: Zur Übertragbarkeit typologischer Interpretation auf weltliche Dichtung* (Göppingen: Verlag Alfred Kümmerle, 1971)36-48. As the title of Hoefer's work indicates, he illustrates the use of typology in secular literature, a topic also dealt with by Ohly, as previously cited.

[26] Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press1933) Young's work remains the authoritative account of this practice, although some of his theories have been challenged by more recent scholars. See: Glynn Wickham, *The Medieval Theater*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. 11-54. For a summary of German Biblical drama see: Vollmer 92-115.

[27] Van Woerden 242.

The Verdun Altar, one of the most striking artistic examples of typologic Church art, is located in the Augustinian monastery in Klosterneuburg near Vienna. Originally fabricated as an ambo[28] of fifteen tripartite panels by Nicholas of Verdun (before1130- after 1205) and completed in 1181, the paintings were later reset as a retable (decorative raised structure in back of the altar) of seventeen panels. This was first completed in 1330 after a fire, then again in 1714 when the church was remodeled in the Baroque style, and yet again in the nineteenth century. In its present form, unchanged since the nineteenth century, the Altar consists of seventeen panels that contain the entire *Heilsgeschichte* in pictures and in writing, utilizing an intricate system of typologic images read in several directions. It is a beautiful example of the lengths that artists went to in utilizing this typologic methodology in the creation of their works.

The Altar consists of enamel pictures on gilt copper panels. Each picture has a written circumscription containing the theme of its central image at the bottom and an explanatory text, in the shape of an arched doorway, surrounding the inner Biblical image. Within the Biblical images, there may also be short texts, and some of the pictures of the second and third rows have brief texts appearing in the upper portions of the image. A dedication text accompanies the entire work and runs above and below each of the rows of the

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[28] An ambo is a pulpit from which the Gospels and Epistles are read and from which communications to the congregants are made.

retable, forming the upper and lower portions of a frame for each row of enamels.

This horizontal text explicates the agenda and history of the altar as follows:

QUALITER ETATUM SACRA CONSONA SINT PERARATUM
CERNIS IN HOC OPERE MUNDI PRIMORDIA QUERE
LIMITE SUB PRIMO SUNT UMBRE LEGIS IN IMO
INTER UTRUMQUE SITUM DAT TEMPUS GRACIA TRITUM
QUE PRIUS OBSCURA VATES CECINERE FIGURA
ESSE DEDIT PURA NOVA FACTORIS GENITURE
VIM PER DIVINAM VENIENS REPARARE RUINAM
SI PENSAS IUSTE LEGIS MANDATA VETUSTE
OSTENTATA FORIS RETINENT NIL PENE DECORIS
UNDE PATET VERE QUIA LEGIS FORMA FUERE
QUAM TRIBUIT MUNDO PIETAS DIVINA SECUNDO:
ANNO MILLENO CENTENO SEPTUAGENO
NEC NON UNDENO GWERNHERUS CORDE SERENO
SEXTUS PREPOSITUS TIBI VIRGO MARIA DICAVIT
QUOD NICOLAUS OPUS VIRDUNENSIS FABRICAVIT
CHRISTO MILLENO T(RE)CENTO VIGENENO [UNDE] NO
P(RAE)POSIT(US) STEPHAN(US) DE SYRENDORF GENERAT(US)
HOC OP(US) AURATUM TULIT HUC TABULIS RENOVATUM
AB CRUCIS ALTARI DE STUCTURA TABULARI
PRIUS ANNEXA FUIT AMBONIQUE REFLEXA[29]

(How the sacred agreements of the ages are worked out
you will see in this work; seek the first things of the
world under the first border; the shadows of the Law are in the
lowest; placed between the two, grace gives the present
(well) worn time. Those things which of old the prophet sang in
dark figure the new generation of the Maker made clear, coming
through divine power to repair the ruin, which through the snake
cast out both parents. If you rightly weigh the commandments of
the Old Law, They scarcely show any beauty in outward form,
whence it is obvious that they are of the form of that law which
the divine love gave to the second world. Wernher with happy
heart, the sixth abbot, dedicated to You, Virgin Mary, the work
which Nicolaus of Verdun made. In the year 1331, Abbot Stephan,
who came from Syrendorf, brought here this work, golden and
renewed in tablets, from the altar of the cross from the picture
frames which were first bent around the ambo.) [30]

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[29] Helmut Buschhausen, *Der Verduner Altar: das Emailwerk des Nikolaus von Verdun im Stift Klosterneuburg* (Wien: Edition Tusch, 1980) 12.

The theological program of Biblical typology depicted by the enamels is very complex, and may be read both horizontally and vertically. Viewed horizontally, the Altar contains three rows of pictures. The upper and lower rows of these pictures consist of scenes taken from the Old Testament and are not arranged in any order. Those of the middle row are from the New Testament and read as a chronological depiction of Jesus's life.

With the exception of the last two panels, the images may also be viewed vertically. The vertical arrangement of the enamels forms a prefigurative grouping reflecting the Augustinian threefold time scheme of salvation history (which is in turn a reflection of the Trinity itself) of *ante legem*, depicted in the upper row (the period encompassing creation to the Giving of the Torah, or Law, on Mount Sinai), *sub legem* (the ensuing period until the Annunciation) depicted in the lower row, and *sub gratia* (the time period from the Annunciation until the End of Days) depicted in the middle row. There is a repetition of the words *ante legem*, *sub gratia* and *sub lege* at the beginning and end of each row and on each panel to form the vertical portions of the frame for each row and a portion of the retable as well. Each image on the upper row is an *ante legem* prefiguration of that in the middle row, and the image in the lower row is a *sub legem* prefiguration of that in the middle row, as well as being a depiction of a virtue (one which is also inherent in the act of salvation) relating to both of the scenes

[30] All translations of the inscriptions on the Verdun Altar are taken from: James Marchand, "The Verdun Altar" Dec, 24, 1992, University of Illinois, 22 Feb. 2010 <http://wiretap.area.com/Gopher/Library/Classic/Latin/Malin/verdun.txt>.

above it. The last two panels do not follow the typologic scheme and depict the

Last Things and the End of Days. Taken as a whole, horizontally and vertically,

the panels tell the story of the *Heilsgeschichte* from the Annunciation to the

Second Coming and Last Judgment. Additionally, there are images of the busts

of Prophets in the upper corners of the panels.

Only the ninth panel is of relevance to this discussion and will be

examined in greater depth. It contains the scene of the Sacrifice of Isaac on the

top row (Genesis 22:1-14). The circumscription reads: *Oblatio Ysaac · Victimet ut*

caram prolem pater aptat ad aram (The offering of Isaac · The father prepares

before the altar that he might sacrifice his dear son). The scene depicted is quite

typical in that Isaac is bound, lying upon the altar with his father Abraham about

to sacrifice him, when an angel halts the sacrifice. The panel depicts the angel

preventing the sacrifice by holding Abraham's sword back and pointing to the

ram caught in a bush that will be sacrificed in Isaac's stead. Isaac is a child in

this scene, which is often the manner of his depiction. The altar is a sophisticated

one, which, unusually, bears no relationship to, nor refers to the wood of the

cross. In the upper corner, there are two unidentified winged and haloed

individuals.

The crucifixion as told in all four Gospels is the basis for the image of the

middle row.[31] The scene contains a depiction of the crucified Jesus on the cross,

flanked by Mary (rather unusually pictured as holding a book) and the Apostle

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[31] Matthew 27:33-50, Mark 15:22-37, Luke 23:33-46, and John 19:17-30.

John with the circumscription: *Passio Domini* (Passion of Our Lord). *Victima mactatur qua nostra ruina levatur* (The victim is slaughtered by which our fall is made good). Within the central image above the cross a sign reads: *Ihesus Nazarenus* [*Rex Iudaeorum*]. (John 19:19) The sun and moon are visible behind the upper portion of the cross. Typologically these celestial bodies are significant as well. The moon symbolizes the Old Testament, which no longer shines, and the sun the New Testament that has retained its radiance.[32] In the upper left, the Prophet Daniel holds a scroll that reads: *post haec occidetur Christus* [*et non erit eius populus qui eum negaturus est*] (And after this, Christ shall be slain; and the people that deny Him shall be not His - Daniel 9:26).

The lower picture contains a central image (Numbers 13:23) of a large bunch of grapes on a grapevine being carried on a pole supported by two men. The circumscription reads: *Botrus in vecte* (The cluster on the pole). *Vecte Crucis lignum botro Christi lege signum* (In the cluster on the pole read the sign of Christ, the wood of the cross). In the upper left, the figure of *Sapiencia* (Wisdom) holds a scroll that reads: *Dominus possedit me* [*in initio viarum suarum*] (The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways - Prov. 8:22). In addition to the image of Wisdom with her typologic message in the upper left corner, Prudentia

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[32] Floridus Röhrig, *Der Verduner Altar* (Vienna: Herold, 1955).76.

is in the upper right of the panel with her traditional attributes of a book and a snake, but with no inscription.[33]

The significance of the upper and central pictures is clear and requires no further discussion; neither does the relationship of the two. The relationship of the lower image to the central image is, however, more esoteric. The central image in the lower picture is also typologic in nature. It is a traditional scene, with such depictions already found in the catacombs. The image refers to Moses sending the twelve spies out to investigate the land of Israel. The heavy cluster of grapes, brought back to Moses and the people of Israel by Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies sent to scout out the land, is a symbol of the fruitfulness of the land of Israel. Possibly due to their ages, Tibor Fabiny identifies the older of the two men supporting the pole as Caleb, who represents the Old Testament, and Joshua, the younger, who represents the New Testament at the rear. The pole upon which the grapes hang represents the cross, and the grapes then symbolize Jesus on that cross. This may come from John 15:1, where Jesus refers to himself as the 'true vine'. [34] Additionally, the grapes may also signify the blood of Jesus. [35] This can further be taken to demonstrate that the Old Law,

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[33] Röhrig 75-6. The association of Prudentia and the snake is taken from Matthew 10:16: Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves.

[34] Röhrig 75-6.

[35] Tibor Fabiny, *The Lion and the Lamb: Figuralism and Fulfillment in the Bible, Art, and Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 92. For an extensive discussion of the sources of the theological underpinnings of the Verdun Altar, which is beyond the scope of this investigation, see: Helmut Buschhausen, "The Klosterneuburg Altar of Nicholas of Verdun: Art, Theology and Politics," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 37 (1974): 1-32. The above typologic

which is looking backward towards Jesus has been superseded by the New Law

which is looking forward.[36] Another explanation is that the Old Testament (or

synagogue) looks backwards to Jesus, whose coming it foretold, and that the

New Testament (church) looks forward towards Jesus.[37]

       The positional significance of the images on the retable is easily

elucidated. The viewer's eye is always drawn to the central image. Hence, the

most important time in salvation history, the time *sub gratia* occupies the central

row of images on the altar. The viewer's eye also falls to this row, as it is the only

one with a chronological story. Furthermore, as the Old Testament images of the

upper and lower rows are in no particular order, the viewer must look to the

middle row, the New Testament images, to establish meaning for the images of

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interpretation is not the manner in which Jewish exegetes view this Biblical passage. The Rabbis of the Talmud (redacted c. 500CE) interpreted the passage in the following manner: "There is a tradition that the weight which a man can raise upon his shoulder is a third of the weight he can carry; so from this you may calculate what was the weight of the cluster of grapes, as it is said: And they bare [sic] it upon a staff between two. From the fact that it is stated upon a staff do I not know that it [was carried] between two? Why, then, is there a text to state 'between two'? [It means] on two staffs. R. Isaac said: [It means] a series of balancing poles. How was it? Eight [spies] carried the grape-cluster, one carried a pomegranate, one carried a fig, and Joshua and Caleb did not carry anything. If you wish I can say [that they did not carry anything] because they were the most distinguished of them, or alternatively that they did not have a share in the plan [The bringing of the fruit was part of the plan to discourage the community. They would judge from its size what must be the stature of the inhabitants]" *Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Sotah 34a. Soncino edition. Furthermore, Israel is compared to a vine in many passages in the Old Testament. For example: Psalm 80:8, Isaiah 5:1-2, and Jeremiah 2:21.

[36] Avril Henry, *Biblia Pauperum: A Facsimile and Edition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) 13. The Corona East Window No.1 of the Canterbury Cathedral consists of a central stained glass image of the crucifixion surrounded by four images and is dated to 1200-07. The upper, middle, and lower images present the same scheme as those of the Verdun Altar – the Sacrifice of Isaac on top, the crucifixion in the center, and Joshua and Caleb with the cluster of grapes on the bottom. The *titulus* surrounding the lower image elucidates the significance of the image: "The one [in front] refuses to look back at the cluster of grapes, the other thirsts to see it: Israel does not know Christ, the Gentile worships him." (Translation taken from Henry 13).

[37] Röhrig 65.

the upper and lower rows, again foregrounding the importance of the middle pictures. So too, the central vertical panel is occupied by the most important of all of the occurrences depicted in the retable, which is that being discussed, the ninth panel. This means that the focal point on the altar - the most important position - is the crucifixion. Providing yet further emphasis, this image, with its cross extending over the entire panel, is slightly larger than all of the others. The significance of the column is thus highlighted, and its lesson visible to all: Just as the test of the Sacrifice of Isaac was the greatest of Abraham's tests, and God's sacrifice of His only son, the greatest and most important event in the salvation of mankind, so too is Wisdom the primary virtue, for it is the wisdom of God and of knowing God.

Medieval art has been called "die Dienerin der Kirche" (servant of the Church)[38] and the Verdun Altar a "rarified summary of the long development of typological principle in Northern Art," [39] but this is true only in retrospect. The hand of God seemed closer to those steeped in the religious tradition that formed the foundation of lives of in the Middle Ages than it does to most people today. Accordingly, prefigurative imagery was pervasive and familiar to all; it was imminent; it was the norm.

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[38] Von der Gabelentz, *Die Kirchliche Kunst* 2.

[39] John Sidney Groseclose, "Discrete and Progressive Narration: Typology and the Architectonics of the Verdun Altar, Auslegung des Paternosters and Di Vier Schiven [Four Wheels - referring to the four miracles of Jesus which were: cures, exorcisms, resurrection of the dead and control over nature]," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 8 (1975): 106.

Many other typologic works followed the Verdun Altar. Two of the most important of these are the English "Pictor in carmine" (Painter and Songs)[40] and the "Bible moraliseé" (Moralised Bible).[41] In 1200, a Cistercian monk created the "Pictor in carmine". It is a typological handbook of 138 New Testament events with 508 corresponding prefigurations from the Old Testament created for use by artists. The "Bible moraliseé", produced in the twelfth century in France, contains as many as 12,000 picture medallions, many of which are typologically structured**.** The *Speculum humanae salvationis* (*Mirror of Human Salvation*), created around 1324, pairs three Old Testament images with a New Testament image, with no images of Prophets. This work, with accompanying text, contains 184 miniatures spanning the time from creation to the final judgment. [42] These are but a few of the many examples of such Biblical works that demonstrate the extent to which pictorial visualization transmitted theological concepts to an illiterate populace. This foregrounds the importance of typology in Biblical interpretation and *weltanschauung* and highlights the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac as a theme central to the *Heilsgeschichte.*

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[40] For further information, see: M.R. James, "Pictor in Carmine," *Archeologia*, 44 (1951) 141-166 and *Pictor in Carmine: Ein Handbuch der Typologie aus der Zeit um 1200 : nach MS 300 des Corpus Christi College in Cambridge*, ed. Karl-August Wirth (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 2006).

[41] For further information, see: Gerald Guest, *Bible Moraliseé: Codex Vindobonensis 2554 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1995).

[42] For further information on this genre, see: Adrian Wilson and Joyce Lancaster Wilson, *A medieval mirror: Speculum humanae salvationis, 1324-1500* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984).

Typology and Art: The *Biblia pauperum*

The *Biblia pauperum*, the next artistic example highlighted, originated in the fourteenth century and is of unknown authorship. It depicts the life and Passion of Jesus in a series of miniatures, each of which is paired with two images from the Old Testament and four images of Old Testament Prophets and corresponding text. These bear witness to the centrally depicted New Testament scene on the same page. The addition of text distinguishes the *Biblia pauperum* from other types of pictorial Bibles emphasizing typology, such as the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* and *Bible moralisée*. This intersection of picture and word in a typologic work makes the *Biblia pauperum* an especially suitable subject for this study.

The earliest Bibles that actually bore the name *Biblia pauperum* are not related to the group that bears this name today. These older books tell the story of the Old Testament in severely abbreviated and simplified form. They are seldom more than twelve pages in length and characteristically have a minimal amount of text not accompanied by pictures. The text present is often in verse, which may have served as a mnemonic device, supporting the thought that these Bibles were most probably for use in the cloister schools and in the rudimentary Bible instruction of adults.[43]

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[43] Heitz and Schreiber 10-11. Yet other works, such as those formerly attributed to Saint Bonaventure (1221-74) and now attributed to the Dominican Nicholas of Hanapis (dates of birth and death unknown), also entitled *Biblia pauperum*, and a number of other Latin and German

The books that contemporary scholars refer to as *Biblia pauperum* are a later group of books characterized, as stated above, by groups of typologically arranged pictures accompanied by explanatory text. This group of Bibles bore no title, but was obviously related to the older works discussed above. Beginning with E. H. v. Heinecken, and his 1769 publication "Kurze Abhandlung von der Erfindung Figuren in Holz zu schneiden und von der ersten in Holz geschnittenen und gedruckten Büchern" ('A Brief Treatise about the Invention of Sculpting Figures in Wood as well as about the Earliest Books Printed and Cut of Wood [Woodcuts]'), the name *Biblia pauperum* began to be used. However, as his title states, Heinecken's research was carried out on blockbooks, not on manuscripts.[44] Heinecken theorized that these blockbook editions were for the poor who could not afford a manuscript Bible. This opinion may have been based in part on the predilection of eighteenth century librarians, archivists and cataloguers to view the printed word as being superior to the illustration. For this group, the intended audience for a book whose emphasis was pictorial could only be those who were not capable of reading or those who were poorly educated.[45] Heineken also suggested that Ansgarius, the Bishop of Bremen from 844-864,

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manuscripts containing this term, do not bear a relationship to the work currently being discussed. Heitz and Schreiber give a detailed discussion of these texts.

[44] Blockbooks are produced from a woodcut block. They are a relatively quick and inexpensive means of book production used prior to the invention of moveable type.

[45] Christoph Wetzel, and Heike Drechsler, *Biblia Pauperum: Die Bilderhandschrift des Codex Palatinus Latinus 871 Im Besitz der Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana = Armenbibel* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1995) 9.

was the compiler of the original work.[46]   Contemporary scholarship does not lend

credence to either of Heinecken's theories, and the identity of the compiler of the

Biblia pauperum has not yet been established.[47]

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing investigated this genre of Bibles after

Heinecken, and pointed out that the name *Biblia pauperum* was a misnomer. The

Biblia pauperum would not be suitable for the poor and/or illiterate masses, as

this class did not have the scholarly background necessary to understand the

theological program of these Bibles. The name probably derived from a

manuscript found in the Wolfenbüttel Library, administered at that time by

Lessing. On its first page, the volume bore the entry, "*Hic incipitur Biblia*

pauperum". However, this is in a later hand than the manuscript itself. There

were also numerous other such Bibles in the library, and Lessing posited that

there may have been a need to categorize them. He went on to state that due to

the large number of pictures contained in the Bible, it was simply referred to as

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[46] E,H, v. Heinecken, *Nachrichten von Künstlern und Kunstsachen* (Leipzig, 1769) Part III, 144 and *Idée généerale d'une collection d'estampes* (Leipzig, 1771) 319 as cited in Heitz and Schreiber 1. Heinecken based his suggestion of the inscription he found in a woodblock *Biblia pauperum*: "S. Ansgarius est autor hujis libri" (S. Ansgarius is the author of this book). Heinicken cited a passage from an *Ecclesiastical History of Sweden and Gothland* written by Ornhielm, stating that Ansgarius compiled a book similar to the *Biblia pauperum.* For further information on Heinecken's attribution of the work to Ansgarius, see: William Chatto, *A Treatise on Wood Engraving, Historical and Practical* (London: Charles Knight and Co, 1889) 116-7. *Google Books*, 24 January, 2014
<http://books.google.com/books?id=p3jibVmFUygC&pg=PA116&lpg=PA116&dq=Heineken+also +suggested+that+Ansgarius,+the+Bishop+of+Bremen&source=bl&ots=gpVhxiJBFv&s>

[47] Gerhard G. Schmidt and Franz Unterkircher, *Die Wiener Biblia pauperum; Codex Vindobenensis 1198* (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1962) 15.

the Bible of the poor and/or illiterate.[48] The name had already been in use and continues to remain in use, despite being a misnomer.

The genre of Bibles termed *Biblia pauperum* is not subject to a strict structural definition, but those examples of what today are considered under this rubric bear a great deal of similarity to one another in terms of their composition and content, and certainly in their intent. All of these Bibles contain written material and not only pictures, many contain Latin writing, and all presuppose some knowledge of the Scriptures. It is clear, however, that the intent of these works was to provide edification through the inspiration stirred by the beauty of their fine imagery, both written and pictorial.

It is impossible to prove the intended audience for the *Biblia pauperum*, as there is no extant medieval account of its use. Numerous plausible suggestions are proposed.[49] One prevalent thought is that the "*pauperes*" referred to in the title of these books were those with some education, yet without the means to purchase a complete handwritten Bible. Bolstering this argument is the closing phrase of the St. Florian manuscript:

> Den Bibel is der armen leut
> Die nicht habent viel permeit heut [Pergamenthäute][50]
>
> (This Bible is for poor people
> Who do not have much parchment)

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[48] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Ehemalige Fenstergemälde im Kloster Hirschau," *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings Sämtliche Schriften,* 3rd edition, eds. Franz Muncker, Titus Plautus, Andreas Scultetus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968), vol.12, 38-55.

[49] Henry 4.

[50] Heitz and Schreiber 11

The target groups for these works would thus have been monks, scholars and minor clerics. Many feel that the Bibles were used as an aid in teaching. However, some manuscripts are luxurious, and contain illuminations that are heavily gilded. These must have been costly editions not for use in the school or for those of modest means.

Churches themselves may also have owned a *Biblia pauperum*, which may have been placed on view on holy days. This may have enabled the average person to gain some familiarity with both the typologic concepts in this work, as well as in typologic iconography, especially when viewing these Bibles in conjunction with informational sermons.[51]

The typologic method of interpretation used in the *Biblia pauperum* served the Church in many ways. It is possible that these books were a response to the Cathar heresy, which denied the Old Testament's authority.[52] The Cathars called themselves *pauperes Christi,* hence the reference to the poor. The truths portrayed by the *Biblia pauperum* also addressed another group of heretics - the Jews. Conversion of Jews, a goal of the medieval Church, could take place much more readily when the Jewish Old and Christian New Testaments could be

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[51] Berve 9. Heitz and Schreiber 11. There were relatively few luxurious manuscripts, and most of these stem from a later period.

[52] For further information about the Cathars see: Arno Borst, *Die Katharer* (Stuttgart: Hiersmann Verlag, 1963) and Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

reconciled, and the *Biblia pauperum's* use of pictures, Biblical proof texts, and the interpretive methodology promoted this.[53]

Alternatively, the term may also have referred to those "poor in spirit" – people with poor theological education who were satisfied with abbreviated Bibles. The findings of the eighteenth century scholar Tietze supports this, as he demonstrates that in the Middle Ages the word "*pauper*" was only used in connection with clerics, not the laity and referred to those both poor in the monetary sense as well as those who were poor in the spiritual sense, in terms of a lack of knowledge. It is also to be noted that the term "*pauper"* had a positive connotation in the twelfth century due to its connection to the Christian ideal of poverty.[54] The degree of esteem of this virtue in the later Middle Ages, however, remains unknown.[55]

Heitz and Schreiber note that the Benedictine monks referred to themselves as "Arme Christi, arm mit ihm dem Armen." (Poor Christians, poor, with Him the poor One).[56] Benedictine monks took a strict vow of poverty, although many of their members were from higher socioeconomic strata, were well educated, and had been accustomed to a different lifestyle than of the one they assumed upon joining the Benedictine Order. The one luxury that the

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[53] *The Bible of the Poor = Biblia Pauperum: a Facsimile Edition of the British Library Blockbook C.9.D.2* , eds. Albert Labriola and John Smeltz, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990) 5. Polemical efforts to convert Jews to Christianity are also discussed in Chapter 5.

[54] See, for instance, Matthew 5:3. This phenomenon will also manifest itself prospectively with the Mendicant Orders founded in the early thirteenth century.

[55] Berve 9.

[56] Heitz and Schreiber 11,

Benedictines did not forbid was art. On this basis, Heitz and Schreiber propose that Benedictines were the originators of the *Biblia pauperum*.[57] Many of the exemplars of the *Biblia pauperum,* as well as typologic paintings and glassworks, are found in Benedictine monasteries. Later scholarship does not agree that this is more than a possibility.

Finally, the *Biblia pauperum* may have served in private devotion and personal meditation. Avril Henry observes that the *Biblia pauperum*, "…shows just the right balance of familiar and original imagery and text"[58] for this purpose. Additionally, Henry notes that the forty pages of the work correspond exactly to the number of days of Lent. The volume may have served as a source for daily meditation during this season.[59] This view is supported the fact that some of the blockbooks are printed with so little space between the adjacent image-groups that they may not have been intended to be bound; they were to be hung up on a wall.

Tobin Nellhaus situates the *Biblia pauperum* within the context of a society that is transitioning from orality to literacy. This society placed emphasis on the importance of memory, and the format of the *Biblia pauperum* is mnemonic in nature.[60] He argues that in a time of increasing silent reading, the work would

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[57] Heitz and Schreiber 11,

[58] Henry 18.

[59] Henry 18

[60] Tobin Nellhaus, "Mementoes of Things to Come: Orality, Literacy and Typology in the *Biblia pauperum"*, *Printing the Written Word: The Social History of Books, Circa 1450-1520* , ed. Sandra

have been ideally suited for personal devotion and study. He thus agrees with

Henry, that personal devotion may have furthered the use of the *Biblia*

pauperum. The reade of the *Biblia pauperum*, he conjectures, consisted of

members of the laity with moderate financial means, who were accustomed to

the use of books, but who were not "professional users" of them.[61]

Nellhaus emphasizes another function of the *Biblia pauperum* in the

society transitioning from orality to literacy, and that is the importance of

validation. During this period of transition, textual evidence was becoming

superior to and more enduring than memory. Works that could contextualize the

familiar Old and New Testament images were positioned to become an integral

part of the semiotic chain. The *Biblia pauperum*, which contained both text and

images, was perfectly suited to this society. The pictures recalled the oral

tradition, and the text validated that tradition and reinforced it. Oral mentality and

culture had adapted to literate needs.

The earliest exemplars of the *Biblia pauperum,* dating from about 1310

and 1331 are nine pages in length with writing on both sides, for a total of

eighteen pages. In all of these manuscripts, the first page is blank, so that the

seventeen remaining pages each contain two groups of pictures accompanied by

text and arranged in a vertical format, with a total of thirty-four images – a

number corresponding to the number of years of Jesus's life. When opening the

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Hindman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) 301. Nellhaus aptly points out that medieval learning so prized memory that it became one of the virtues incorporated into Prudence.

[61] Nellhaus 312, 318.

manuscript, one sees four groups of pictures at one time. Each group is composed of a framed central circular image with a scene taken from the New Testament, flanked by two scenes from the Old Testament, one on the right and one the left, and four demi-figures of prophets filling out the spaces between the Old and New Testament images. In the majority of Bibles, one of the Old Testament scenes is *ante legem* and one is *sub lege.* Rarely are both from the same time period.[62] The text of these images is explanatory in nature and serves to relate the Old and New Testament images to one another as well as to connect the four prophets to this relationship. These texts are frequently complex, and not always explanatory. The main text is above or next to the side scenes . It indicates the Old Testament book that the scene is from, and briefly recapitulates the content of the Biblical story. A sentence relates the typologic relationship of the small roundels to the main medallion. The short texts complement the pictures that explicate the relationship of the main New Testament image, the anti-type, and the two Old Testament pictures - the types - that prefigured that New Testament event and foregrounded the four Prophets. Above or adjacent to each of the Old Testament images, there is a longer prose text, the lesson (*lectio*). This texr specifies the Biblical book that the image is from, briefly explaining the content of the episode depicted, and finally relating the typologic relationship between that image and the central New Testament image. This last sentence is generally clear, explicitly stating how the Old

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[62] Elizabeth Soltész, *Biblia Pauperum; Facsimile Edition of the Forty-Leaf Blockbook in the Library of the Esztergom Cathedral.* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1967) V.

Testament event both prefigured and was fulfilled by the New. The central, and thus visually most important images, are always those taken from the New Testament. These images are also neither explicated nor is their inclusion justified, as are the Old Testament images, since the New Testament images form the central story of the life of Jesus.[63]

Each of the four prophets depicted holds a banner bearing one of his prophecies that relates to the central New Testament image. The purpose is to demonstrate that the typologic relationship exists not only between events in the Old and New Testaments, but also between the prophets of the Old Testament who, with divinely inspired vision, foresaw the events that were to take place under the New Law. Their presence endows them with the power of witnessing the fulfillment of their prophecy, and their position within the image helps to emphasize a Christocentric view of history.[64] *Titulti* (inscriptions) composed of three short verses serve to deliver the last form of commentary. Each *titulus* comments on one of the pictures, enhancing the information already given and often furthering the typologic relationship as well. [65]

The first illustrated manuscript written according to the format that modern scholars would actually view as the *Biblia pauperum* is the St. Florian

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[63] Emmerson 22.

[64] Labriola 7.

[65] G. Schmidt-Unterkircher 14-15.

manuscript, dated to around 1310. It is not the urexemplar, as the original

manuscript is unknown to us.[66]

The *Biblia pauperum* was most prevalent in areas where German was the

lingua franca. There are no surviving manuscripts from either English or French

speaking areas.[67] There are, however two editions from non-Germanic areas that

are still extant. One is a printed version from France and the other a xylographic

(woodblock) edition from Italy, discussed below. These versions originate in the

early sixteenth century, a time when interest in them was already waning in

Germany.[68]

The three major manuscript centers of the *Biblia pauperum* editions were

Austria, Weimar, and Bavaria. The basic format of the manuscripts produced in

all of these areas was as outlined above, but some variation does exist. The

Austrian manuscripts contain two groups of pictures on each page. They have a

double circle in the center that contains the New Testament scene, emphasized

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[66] G. Schmidt 5,31,43,54 77-87. G. Schmidt substantiates the argument that an urexemplar must have existed based on the structural similarity of the oldest exemplars which all start on the verso side of the first page. The same mistake is present in all of the known manuscripts of the *Biblia pauperum*. This mistake is that the prophets Elijah and Elisha are mixed up in the first line of the lessons of what should be Elijah waking up the son of the Widow of Zarapheth from the dead and Elisha resurrecting the Son of the Shunamite woman. G. Schmidt attempted to create stemma for each of the three groups of manuscripts of the *Biblia pauperum* and to reconstruct the content, appearance, and location of production of the urexemplar. Later scholarship has neither built upon his work nor attempted a new stemma, as there is insufficient information to do so. All scholars do agree that the urexemplar was created in a south German monastery belonging to either the Benedictine or Augustinian Order and contained thirty-four groups of pictures. For a discussion and description of the individual manuscripts known to him, and of the ateliers and monasteries in which they were produced, see: G. Schmidt 9-26, 34-56.

[67]G. Schmidt 2.

[68] Heitz and Schreiber 38.

by double vertical lines connecting the upper and lower New Testament scenes.

The Weimar manuscript illustrations are all composed of five rings. The central

and largest ring contains the New Testament scene and the surrounding four

smaller rings contain the figures of the prophets. The Bavarian manuscripts show

the greatest variation. Some feature the New Testament scene in a central ring

flanked by Old Testament scenes framed by semi-circular arches or arcades.

Arcades also frame the prophets.[69]

The fourteenth century manuscripts were generally seventeen pages in

length, with two groups of pictures per page. By the fifteenth century, this length

was not adhered to, and in some cases, there was an alteration of the format of

the picture itself. Longer Bibles are also extant, with only one image per page for

more clarity, and with the New Testament images being larger than the Old

Testament images.[70]

Over eighty examples of the *Biblia pauperum* are still extant, and there are

a number of reproductions of these Bibles in printed editions.[71] Of the eighty

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[69] Soltész V-VI. Heitz and Schreiber first established this classification. Hans Gabelentz, *Die Biblia Pauperum und Apokalypse der Grossherzogl. Bibliothek zu Weimar* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1912) 31-34. Gabelentz expanded and modified the classification somewhat. I present their classification here in severely abbreviated form.

[70] Soltész VI.

[71] In addition to the facsimile editions that have been cited, several of these xylographic editions are found in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel and may be viewed online at: "Legit[ur] in genesi .iij. cap[itul]o q[uod] dixit d[omi]n[u]s serpenti super pect[us] tuu[m] gradier[is] ... " Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 2006. 3 April 2010 <http://diglib.hab.de/inkunabeln/1-xylogr/start.htm> ." The Sacrifice of Isaac is found on page 53 of this edition. Conu[er]si ab ydolis per predicacione[m] b[ea]ti johannis drusiana [et] cet[er]i ... "Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August

examples, only fifteen are not illustrated, a circumstance that bears no

relationship to the age of the manuscript.[72] Five of the illustrated manuscripts

and nine of those without illustrations actually are entitled *Biblia pauperum*,

although they only bear a superficial relationship to the visual and theological

format of what we today term *Biblia pauperum*.[73] The texts of many of the eighty

exemplars are in Latin, but some are in German, and some in both languages.

The language of the text, whether Latin or German, does not follow a

chronological order, but rather a regional one, with some of the Weimar and

Bavarian groups of manuscripts written in German. Only the *tituli* of one of the

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Bibliothek, 2006. 3 April.2010 <http://diglib.hab.de/inkunabeln/2-xylogr/start.htm> The Sacrifice of Isaac is found on image 64 of this edition, and Isaac carrying the wood is image number 47. "Nym war ain Ju[n]ckfraw wirt empfachen vn[d] wirt geberen ain kind" Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 2006. 3 April .2010 <http://diglib.hab.de/inkunabeln/3-xylogr/start.htm> and "Nym war ain Ju[n]ckfraw wirt empfachen vn[d] wirt geberen ain kind."Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 2006 3. April 2010 <http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=inkunabeln/4-xylogr-2.>. The Sacrifice of Isaac is found on image 49 of this edition, and Isaac carrying the wood is image 47. "Cod. Pal. germ. 34 Biblia pauperum; Apokalypse; Bilder-Ars-moriendi (Blockbücher)," Heidelberg: Universitätsbibliothek, 3 April 2010 < http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg34/0001 http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg34/0001> . The Sacrifice of Isaac is found on page 22v. Other blockbook editions and manuscript versions are available online as well. A listing of German language manuscripts which also includes several blockbook editions may be found at: " 'Biblia pauperum', dt. ('Armenbibel')", "Handschriftencensus: Eine Bestandsaufnahme der handschriftlichen Überlieferung deutschsprachiger Texte des Mittelalters", 31 May 2010 **<**http://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/1894**>.**

[72] G. Schmidt 20-25, 36-37., 49-50 G. Schmidt briefly examines these manuscripts. Heitz and Schreiber 26, knew of only three unillustrated editions. They considered these either incomplete editions, awaiting the services of an artist, or drafts. Two of the manuscripts they knew of were on paper, and they theorized that these manuscripts may have served as the concept for a *Biblia pauperum* that was to be fabricated by another monastery. This is how the authors explain the fact that there is some variety among the pictures of various manuscripts – the text was transmitted to other scribes, but the actual illustrations were not. It is to be noted that there are other illustrated manuscripts in addition to the ones known to Heitz and Schreiber that were written on paper.

[73] G. Schmidt-Unterkircher 14.

German manuscripts are in verse, although the *tituli* of all of the Latin

manuscripts are in verse.[74]

Blockbooks

        As noted above, blockbooks were the first examples of this genre

investigated by scholars in the eighteenth century. These blockbooks date to the

fifteenth century, with the first volumes produced in southwest Germany. This

first exemplar is now in the Heidelberg University Library in Cod. Pal.germ.34.[75]

The estimated production date of this edition varies anywhere from the first

quarter of the fifteenth century, to 1450, to 1460.[76] The Heidelberg University

Library, however, dates the book to the end of the fifteenth century.[77] The book is

in Latin, however, the German translation is preserved. The exemplar represents

a transitional phase between manuscript and blockbook as it is actually a chiro-

xylographic edition – one wherein the illustrations are fabricated with

woodblocks, but the bulk of the texts are written in by hand.[78]

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[74] Förstner 28.

[75] "Cod. Pal. germ. 34".

[76] Soltész VIII.

[77]"Cod. Pal. germ. 34".

[78] Soltész VIII.

The first German blockbook edition of the *Biblia pauperum* was produced in 1470 by the artists Friedrich Walter and Hans Hurning of Nördlingen.[79]   There were three further editions printed, and in 1471, Hans Sporer of Nuremberg copied this blockbook and printed his own edition, with only minor changes.[80] These xylographic editions are contemporaneous with books printed by means of moveable type, but were more affordable, so that citizens of more modest means purchased them.[81] The xylographic editions of the *Biblia pauperum* are unique in the history of blockbooks in that they are the only blockbooks fabricated whose content is entirely Biblical in nature.[82]

The format of the blockbook page is fairly standard. As in the manuscript version, there are three main images per page, a central New Testament image flanked by two Old Testament images, and four demi-images of prophets. There is only one image-group per page, but two pages were printed from one block, so that when the book was open, there were two thematically related image-groups visible. Due to the nature of blockbook printing only one side of each page was

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[79] This blockbook is printed in facsimile edition: *Biblia pauperum. Deutsche Ausgabe von 1471*, ed. R. Ehwald (Weimar: Gesellschaft der Bibliophilen, 1906). A colored online version is cited above, "Nym war ain Ju[n]ckfraw…"

[80] Heitz and Schreiber 35. Zestermann 21-3. Zestermann sets the date of this blockbook as 1475. He also demonstrates the extent to which Sporer copied the work of Walter and Hurning by demonstrating that their errors were also copied into the new edition. He also enumerates the minor changes made by Sporer. One of these is that the ram is absent from the picture of the Sacrifice of Isaac. Heitz and Schreiber do not mention the number of editions that Sporer made, but Zestermann states that there were three and describes them. They differ only in their manner of printing – whether they are printed on one side or two.

[81] Soltész VIII.

[82] Labriola 5.

printed (these are called anopistographic blockbooks), so that after each two printed pages there were two blank pages, the verso of the printed pages.[83] Many of the blockbook editions were hand colored after printing, which made the pages more appealing and lifelike, as well as heightening their emotional impact.

The blockbooks have nine lines per page, arranged so that there are three *tituli* under the main images. The *tituli* are in verse, and are original to all versions of the *Biblia pauperum* except for five instances.[84] The composers of the *tituli* are unknown as, for the most part, are the artists, and the relationship between the two remains unknown as well.[85] As in the manuscript version, there are four prophecies and two *lectiones.* It is interesting that the *tituli* are more complex in nature than the lessons, and that the lessons rarely relate to the deeper meaning of the page.[86]

The format of the blockbooks exhibits minor variations. The Heidelberg blockbook contains thirty-four pictures, as did the medieval manuscript editions, the model for these blockbooks. In later xylographic editions, the number of woodcuts gradually increased to first forty and then fifty leaves. With this, there

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[83] In some blockbooks two pages were glued together so that there were no blank pages, but this was not the case with the *Biblia pauperum.*

[84] Henry 40. There are a total of 120 tituli of which five have known sources. Two are taken from Peter de Riga (c.1140-1209), two are found on the Hildesheim Chalice (c.1400), and one is also found on the Verdun Altar. Röhrig 43**,** has even suggested that the *Biblia pauperum* was the source of the Verdun Altar, as discussed below. On this topic see also Henry 12.

[85] G. Schmidt 85, concludes that originally, in his speculative urexemplar, the author of the text and the illustrator were two different people, and that the text and illustration were accomplished in two different phases of the production of the manuscript.

[86] Henry 8-9.

was an increasing emphasis on the veneration of Mary as well as on the more

explicit depiction of the Passion.[87] The forty-leaf blockbook was presumably the

more popular, as only one paper copy of a fifty-leaf blockbook has survived.

No exact correspondence of a manuscript and blockbook edition exists,

however, many similarities among manuscript and blockbook editions are noted.

Scholars do believe that some of the xylographic editions are traceable to

specific manuscripts, as well as to an unusual *Biblia pauperum,* a rolled

parchment wall hanging originally discovered in Istanbul, called the *Rotulus*

Seragliensis 52,[88] possibly intended as a pattern book for artists and painters or

for students of the Bible.[89]

Heitz and Schreiber are among the few to grant more than a brief mention

to the Italian xylographic edition. It is entitled "Opera nova contemplativa" ('New

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[87] Heitz and Schreiber 38-45, propose that the author of the fifty-page edition was a cleric and that he used a xylographic edition of the *Speculum humanae salvationis* as a basis for his expansion. They estimate the date of his edition to be no earlier than 1470. Their book is a facsimile edition of this fifty-leaf blockbook.

[88] Adolf Deissmann and Hans Wegener. *Die Armenbibel des Serai: Rotulus Seragliensis Nr. 52* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1934).

[89] Soltész VIII-X. Henry 39. Much of the focus of Deissmann and Wegener's work was devoted to elucidating the relation between the Rotulus and the original forty-page blockbook. No definitive conclusion of this relationship has been reached, and further research is needed. Soltész discusses the similarities of the *Rotulus* to the mid- fifteenth century forty leaf Esztergom blockbook. G. Schmidt 104-109. Schmidt discusses this rotulus, describing it as a fragmentary Parisian rotulus found in the Louvre (no document number given), which he feels is related to the St. Florian *Biblia pauperum.* The degree of similarity of two of the images in both works virtually renders the rotulus a copy of the codex, which all scholars agree with. Schmidt feels that this rotulus was used for didactic purposes as well, but not for artists, rather for the Bible student. He feels that the rotulus was created in St. Florian by the same master as that of the St. Florian exemplar and was to be given to another unknown monastery. He posits that the monks of the second monastery filled in the text based on another exemplar of the *Biblia pauperum*, which accounts for the textual differences in the two works.

Contemplative Works') and was produced no earlier than 1510,[90] by the Venetian

Giovanni Andrea Vavassore, referred to as 'Vadagnino'. The work enjoyed three

reprintings after its initial production. This edition, based on the Latin forty-page

edition, did not include the Prophets, and was not produced in a folio-sized

format, but a pocket-sized edition. To accommodate the pictures, Vadagnino

produced each of the New Testament images and their two corresponding Old

Testament images on a separate page, so that the edition comprises 120 pages.

Only a portion of the Old Testament illustrations came from a Latin edition of the

Biblia pauperum. Others were original Italian creations, and some of the New

Testament illustrations were copies of Dürer's woodcuts of the Passion as found

in his *Passio Christi* of 1511.[91] These illustrations are attributed to Vavasorre's

brother, Florio.[92] Despite the substantial differences from the woodcut editions

produced in Germanic lands, Heitz and Schreiber clearly classify this edition as a

Biblia pauperum.[93] Deissmann and Wegener also mention this Italian blockbook,

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[90] Nineteen extant copies are known, including three in the New York Public Library and one in the Morgan Library. Reidy gives a detailed physical description the blockbook.

[91] Dodgson 21.

[92] Christopher Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance:Prints and the 'Privilegio' in Sixteenth-Century Venice and Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 125.

[93]Heitz and Schreiber 11, 35-36. It is to be noted that although Heitz and Schreiber date the Italian version to not earlier than 1510 and the French version to the sixteenth century, they state that the Italian version was produced at a later date than the French version. Laib and F. J. Schwarz. *Biblia pauperum. Nach dem original in der Lyceumsbibliothek zu Constanz* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1892) 10. These editions are also mentioned by Laib. Morgan and Dodgson 6 and 20, mention the existence of the two editions as well. Later sources do not refer to these editions**.** Perhaps later scholars do not consider these editions to be part of the genre of the *Biblia pauperum,* as they evidence such great deviations from its traditional format and models.

although they do not consider that it belongs to the genre of the *Biblia pauperum*,

as it has other artistic origins.[94]

Printed editions

There were also printed editions of the *Biblia pauperum*, some of which

were contemporaneous with the blockbook editions. In Bamberg, shortly after

1460, Albrecht Pfister produced a *Biblia pauperum* in German using the original

moveable type of Gutenberg and woodcut illustrations. Three known editions of

this forty-leaf blockbook have survived.[95] One of these editions is in Latin and

another in German, both having thirty-four illustrations. The third is also in

German and has an additional ten illustrations. These printed editions display

the same arrangement of pictures as two of the German manuscript editions,

however the *tituli* are absent and the figures of the Prophets are side by side.

Anton Sorg typographically produced a Latin *Biblia pauperum* in 1476 in

Augsburg as well. This edition contains the usual forty illustrations with an

additional six illustrations depicting the salvation of mankind. In this edition, the

middle image is smaller than that found in the xylographic editions and the busts

of the two lower Prophets are absent. The explanatory text of the prefigurative

elements also differs from that of the woodcut editions.

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[94] Deissman 33-4. Deissman and Wegner posit that the *Rotulus* may have been produced in Northern Italy, possibly in Venice. They also mention another Italian blockbook edition that they feel is the only Italian blockbook version of the *Biblia pauperum*, but give no information about it.

[95] Soltész XVIII, dates the editions to between 1462 and 1463.

The French typographic edition is of the early sixteenth century and is entitled "Regard des deux Testaments" ('View the Two Testaments'). Anton Verard in Paris produced the exemplar around 1503. This edition has forty illustrations that correspond to those of the Latin editions. There was also a second printing of this edition in 1520 by Gillt Couteau.[96] Since there are ten surviving forty-leaf blockbooks and only three incunable (prior to 1500) versions, Soltész concludes that the blockbook was the more widely known format.[97]

There are no known copperplate versions of the *Biblia pauperum*. There are, however, works of the fifteenth century produced by copperplate engravers possibly based on the *Biblia pauperum.*[98]

Images

All editions and formats of the *Biblia pauperum* contain two separate scenes from the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac on two individual pages. This fact alone serves to foreground the importance of this story and the plethora of types

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[96] Heitz and Schreiber 36. Laib 8. Laib also mentions these editions.

[97] Soltész XVIII

[98] Heitz and Schreiber 34. These are discussed by the authors in some detail and include eight pages of a fragmentary "Passion" by a Low German engraver known as the "Meister mit den Bandrollen" and the "Passion" by Israhel van Meckenem. Heitz and Schreiber indicate that there may be other engraved works influenced by the *Biblia pauperum,* and that this is an area that requires further investigation.

and antitypes engendered by it. The first scene depicted is that of Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice, and the second depicts the actual sacrifice itself.

In the fourteenth century *Wiener Biblia pauperum* Codex Vindobonensis 1198,[99] examined in more detail here, the image of Isaac carrying the wood is on folio leaf 6v and that of the sacrifice on leaf 7r. The illustrations contained in this parchment manuscript are typical of those in many exemplars and manifest the elements discussed above. The manuscript is available in a high quality facsimile edition. Each of the nine pages contains two sets of illustrations per page. On the left side of the lower image on page 6v there is an image of Isaac with his father Abraham on his way up to Mount Moriah. On his back, Isaac carries the wood for his own sacrifice. He stands upright, gazing forward as his father gazes lovingly down towards him. Isaac is a young lad, which is frequently the case in depictions of him. Abraham is carrying a sword in his right hand and a vessel containing a lit fire in his left, as described in the Biblical narrative. It is a simple scene with both father and son depicted in a serene manner, walking in accord with one another.

The central roundel contains an image of Jesus carrying the cross on his back on his way to the hill of Golgotha. It is the cross of his sacrifice. Jesus, bent under the weight of the cross that leans down to his right, nevertheless has an expression of serenity and acceptance; his gaze is directed upward. There are

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[99] G. Schmidt-Unterkircher, vol. 2 and 3. The authors provide a complete description and history of the manuscript, so that this will not be discussed in depth here.

two unidentified figures accompanying him. One is that of a sorrowful woman,

following behind on Jesus's right side and attempting to help him and support the

cross. The other figure is on Jesus's left side, and is that of a man with a gleeful

expression. He appears to be mocking Jesus and attempting to push the cross

yet further down in order to increase Jesus's burden. The positional significance

of the scene as the central rondel emphasizes this image as the most important

one on the page.

The right side of the page shows a depiction of Elijah and the Widow of

Zarephath from the First Book of Kings 17:10-16.[100] This is also a simple scene

with both an optical and a thematic depiction of antitype and type in the image of

the Widow of Zarephath. The form of the sticks of wood that the widow gathers is

not Biblically specified, however, relating the wooden sticks of the Widow of

Zarephath to the cross of Jesus is a very old typological image that also relates

to the typology of the faith of Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac. According to

the Biblical story, during a drought, God instructs Elijah to go to Zarephath,

where a widow will provide for his needs. As Abraham before him, Elijah has

faith in God, and demonstrates it by unquestioningly obeying the Lord's

command. Elijah finds the Widow and asks her for bread and water. She says

that she has but a handful of flour and a little oil to make bread with, before she

and her son die of starvation. Elijah promises that God will provide, and that her

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[100] Note that what English and Hebrew Bibles refer to as Kings 1 and 2 is referred to as Kings 3 and 4 in the Vulgate. This is because the Books of Kings were considered a continuation of Samuel 1 and 2, which are termed Kings 1 and 2 in the Vulgate.

food will not run out. God rewards both Elijah and the Widow for their faith. The widow feeds Elijah and in turn, her flour and oil last until the end of the drought.

The second portion of the story continues with the illness of the son of the Widow of Zarephath. He is near death and Elijah comes and revives him. Elijah stretches himself out three times (a significant number in Christian theology) upon the boy and calls to the Lord, imploring that the child not die. Indeed, the boy lives. God, through Elijah, has spared the son and preserved him, just as he did Isaac. Isaac is a type of Jesus, and therefore the son of the Widow is also a type of Jesus. This scene is also a prefiguration of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The lesson written on the manuscript page is discussed below, and it optically amplifies the relationship stressed here. However, as in the smaller lesson cited below, there is still something unclear and 'mystical' about this relationship of type and anti-type.

Jesus carrying the cross is only in the Gospel of John (John 19:17). In the other three Gospels, it is not Jesus, but a man called Simon of Cyrene, whom the soldiers force to carry the cross. Both traditions relate to Jesus's collapse under the weight of the cross. From this, we see that the motif of aid forms an additional connection of the images: aid in carrying of the cross and the aid of the Widow of Zarephath from whom Elijah receives sustenance.[101]

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[101] Wetzel 16.

The message of the larger lesson written above the image of Abraham and Isaac clarifies the relationship of the left and central images yet further:

> Legitur in Genesi, quod cum Abraham et Ysaac pergerent simul et Abraham portavit gladium et ignem, ysaac vero, qui ligna portavit, Christum significabat, qui lignum crucis, in quo immolari pro nobi voluit, suo corpora proprio portavit. [102]

> (We read in Genesis (23, 1-10), how Abraham and Isaac were walking together and that Abraham carried the sword and the fire, but Isaac, who carried the wood, was a prefiguration of Jesus, who carried the wood of his cross on his own body. He wanted to be sacrificed for us on this wood.)

The message of the larger lesson written above the image of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath clarifies the relationship of the right and central images in depth:

> In libro Regnum legitur, quo helias clamabat ad mulierem viduam, quae ibat in campum, ut ligna, colligeret et dixit, ut pulmentum sibi faceret, quae respondens ait: En colligo duo ligna, ut infaciam mihi et filio meo pulmentum. Duo ligna significabant lignum crucis, quem ipse Christus in suo corpore proprio portando colligebat. [103]

> (We read in the Book of Kings (III, 17, 10-16), that Elias addresses the widow who went to the field to gather wood, and said to her, she was to cook for him a porridge. She, however, answered and said: See, I am gathering two pieces of wood, to cook a porridge for myself and for my son. These two pieces of wood were a prefiguration of the wood of the cross that Jesus himself collected and carried on his body.)

The shorter messages directly above the respective pictures then reinforce these messages: "Ligna ferens, Christe, te praesignat puer iste."

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[102] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher vol.3 6v. All of the original inscriptions contained in this manuscript are in Latin and were translated by G. Schmidt and Unterkirscher into German. The English translation is mine, taken from the German of G. Schmidt and Unterkirscher.

[103] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher vol.3 6v.

(Carrying the wood to the sacrifice, this boy points to Christ), "Fert crucis hoc lignum Christus reputans sibi dignum." (Christ himself carries the wood of the cross, because he deemed it fitting), and "Mystica sunt signa crucis haec viduae duo ligna" (Mystically, the widow's two pieces of wood point to the cross).[104]

Four prophets are depicted; however, none is identified and only two have banners with writing on them, from which their identities may be deduced. The other two prophets remain anonymous. This is unusual, and may be an incomplete aspect of the manuscript. Isaiah is depicted on the top left of the central rondel. His banner reads: "Sicut ovis ad occisionem ductus est." (He was led as a lamb to the slaughter).[105] Jeremiah is on the bottom right. His banner reads, "Ego quasi agnus mansuetus" ('I am as a tender lamb).[106] Each of these prophets' banners relate to the sacrificial offering, the lamb, which is Jesus. They further serve to illuminate Chistological references found in the Old Testament, again reinforcing the concept of the Old Testament as a harbinger of the New.[107]

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[104] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher vol.3 6v.

[105] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher vol.3 6v.

[106] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher vol.3 6v.

[107] Hoefer 178-93. The *Biblia pauperum* was the subject of the second half of Hoefer's study. Hoefer investigated the text and its connection to the typologic message. He also used the Cod. Vind. 1198, although not the picture groupings having to do with the Sacrifice of Isaac. He then expanded his study of the text to include the entire work, another version of the *Biblia pauperum*, and the works of a number of the Patristic Fathers. Hoefer concluded that the language of the *Biblia pauperum* was similar to that found in references to typologic concepts in Patristic literature.

.   The actual Sacrifice of Isaac is on page 7r of this manuscript. In the upper left hand corner Abraham, who is identified with red lettering above his head, is depicted with an upraised sword in his right hand. In his left hand, Abraham holds up the disproportionately diminutive size young Isaac by the head. An angel holds Abraham's sword, restraining him and preventing the sacrifice.   The angel points down to what is presumably a ram, standing upright with his horns caught in a tree, also disproportionately small in comparison with Abraham, yet proportional in size to Isaac. The ram is situated directly below Isaac, a reference to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who, with a crown of thorns upon his head was sacrificed in order to save mankind. Abraham is depicted as looking at the angel – or perhaps at God - and not at Isaac. He appears serene, as does Isaac, although their facial features are not fully developed. Isaac is looking down, as Abraham holds him up with his left hand. Isaac appears smaller than in the previous manuscript illustration, since Abraham is able to hold Isaac's entire head in his one hand and support his weight in this manner. Unlike the Biblical narrative, there is no evidence of a physical altar in this illustration, and Isaac is not bound - yet he does not struggle. This lack of an altar and binding is typical of the depictions found in the various manuscripts of the *Biblia pauperum,* although it is not the case in many other medieval depictions of the subject.

The other Old Testament type is the Bronze serpent of Numbers 21:4-9. The Jews had sinned by complaining that God had brought them out of Egypt only to die of thirst and starvation in the desert. As a punishment, God sent

poisonous snakes to bite the people and kill them. Realizing their sin and repenting, the people came to Moses and asked him to pray on their behalf. Moses did so, and God commanded him to make a poisonous serpent and to place it on a pole. Gazing at the snake would heal those who had been bitten, and they would live. The image on the right side of the page shows Moses, whose name is indicated with red lettering, talking to the people of Israel, the forefinger of his right hand raised in admonishment. The people have a solemn, unhappy appearance. It is noteworthy that in this manuscript there is no depiction of the Jews who have sinned in the desert and are dying, as found in other manuscripts. The snake itself is coiled around a "Y" shaped stake. This stake mirrors the cross upon which Jesus is crucified in the central rondel in that both have up- tilted arms. This is in contradistinction to the 90-degree angle formed by the arms of the cross in the central rondel of the previous image.

In the New Testament, John 3:14-16, it is related that Jesus used this imagery of the Bronze serpent to teach that he as well would be placed on a cross to cure the sins of the people, and that through him they would live. Just as gazing at the bronze serpent healed the Jews who had been bitten by the poisonous snakes, so too would the cross save those who have sinned. Both images emphasize salvation through faith, but differ in that in the Old Testament image it is physical health that is restored, whereas in the New Testament image it is a spiritual renewal. Furthermore, there is also a connection with the serpent and the devil, from which the cross/Christianity saves its adherents.

The image of the crucifixion is in the central rondel. Jesus is suspended

upon the cross, his head bowed. There is little detail of his body; he is draped in

a cloth from waist to knee. Next to him on the right stands Mary, her hands

folded in prayer. She does not weep. John stands at his left, his head bowed. It

is a solemn, unadorned scene, and is simply entitled "Passio domini" (The

Suffering of the Lord).[108]

Here as on the previous page, the typologic message of the images is

reinforced by the text. Above the image of the Sacrifice of Isaac the text reads:

> Legitur in Genesi, quod cum Abraham gladium extend**i**sset, ut filium suum
> immolaret, angelus domini de celo ipsum prohibuit dicens: Ne extendas
> manum tuam super puerum eo quod timeas dominum. Abraham enim
> patrem celestem significabat, qui filium suum, scilicet Christum,
> pro nobis omnibus in cruce immolavit, ut per hoc nobis signum amoris
> innueret.[109]

> (We read in Genesis (22, 9-13), that an angel of the Lord from heaven,
> when Abraham drew the sword to sacrifice his son, prohibited him to do so
> and said to him: Do not lift your hand against this child, because you fear
> God. Abraham signifies the heavenly Father, who has sacrificed his son,
> that is Jesus, for us on the cross, in order to give us, by this, a sign of His
> love.)

Above the image of the Bronze serpent the text reads:

> Cum dominus vellet populum, quem serpentes momorderant, de
> serpentibus liberare, praecepit Moysi, ut faceret serpentem eneum et eum
> in ligno suspenderet ita, ut quicumque illum aspiceret, de serpentibus
> liberaretur. Serpens, qui enim suspensus intuensque populum liberabat,
> Christum in cruce suspensum significabat, quem intueri debet, qui a
> serpente, scilicet dyaboli, vult liberari. [110]

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[108] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher, vol. 3 7r

[109] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher, vol. 3 7r.

[110] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher, vol. 3 7r

(When God wanted to liberate the people, who had been bitten by the
snakes, from the snakes (Numbers 21, 6-9), He ordered Moses to make a
bronze snake and to hang it on wood, so that all who gaze upon it would
be liberated from the snakes. The snake that had been hung on the wood,
and which liberated the people gazing upon it, was a prefiguration for
Christ, who had been nailed on the cross. Everyone must look upon Him,
who wishes to be freed from the snake, that is, from the devil.)

Supporting these messages are the shorter messages: "Signantem Christum

puerum pater immolat istum." (This boy is the prefiguration of Christ, who is

sacrificed by the Father), "Lesi curantur, serpentem dum speculantur." (Those

who are injured, find healing when they behold the snake), and "Eruit a tristi

baratro nos passio Christi." (The passion of Christ redeems us from the dark

abyss).[111]

The top two of the four prophets surrounding the central rondel are

identified with red writing above their heads. David is on the left, pointing to his

banner with an upraised forefinger. The banner reads, "Foderunt manus meas et

pedes meos." (They pierced my hands and feet [Psalm 21:17]). Isaiah is found

on the top left. His head is raised at an angle higher than David's is, as if he is

looking to the heavens. The forefinger of his right hand is also upraised and is

pointing straight upwards. Isaiah's banner reads: "Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit"

(He was sacrificed because he himself desired it [Isaiah 53:7]). The lower two

prophets are neither identified by name, nor do they have particular identifying

characteristics. From the origin of the sayings on their banners their identities

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[111] G. Schmidt and Unterkircher, vol. 3 7r

may, however, be deduced. On the lower left, the prophet's left hand supports

the banner and his right hand again evidences the upraised forefinger. His gaze

is directed straight ahead. His banner reads: "Numquid capis leviathan hamo?"

(Canst thou draw out the leviathan with a hook? [Job 40, 20[112]]). Job's prophecy

refers to the theme of the "Divine Angler" – Jesus as a fisher of men. F. P.

Pickering offers a more detailed analysis. He posits that the reference is to the

'Divine Angler' who has a fishing line (the genealogy of Jesus), bait (Jesus

himself), the hook that is concealed (the cross) with which the Leviathan (the

Devil) was to be caught.[113] This was the subject of commentary by both Honorius

of Autun (also known as Honorius Augustodunensis, who lived during the first

half of the twelfth century) and Gregory the Great (540-604). These concept of

the Divine Angler was most notably illustrated and introduced to German

speaking audiences in the *Hortus Deliciarum*.[114] The prophet on the lower right is

depicted with an outstretched right hand. The forefinger of his left hand is raised

straight upwards and his gaze is also directed upwards. His banner

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[112] In the Masoretic text this verse is numbered as 40:25.

[113] Pickering 269.

[114] Herrad of Hohenbourg, *Hortus Deliciarum* ed. Rosalie Green, Michael Evans, et. al. (London: Warburg Institute, 1979) vol 2. God Capturing Leviathan, Christ on the Cross as the Hook. Folio page 84r. This folio page depicts God the Father as an angler holding a fishing rod in his hands. The fishing line consists of the seven heads of the patriarchs and prophets, who are unnamed. The crucified Jesus is at the bottom of the line, forming the bait for the leviathan, and the vertical end of the cross continues downward to form the hook. The illustration shows the leviathan with open jaws, as he takes the 'bait' and is hooked. Note that there is also an illustration of the Sacrifice of Isaac in the *Hortus Deliciarum* on Folio page 36r. It is an incomplete drawing of Abraham holding Isaac by the chin with his left hand and holding a knife to his throat with his right hand. The drawing depicts Isaac as a child, but there are no other details in the scene*.* Pickering 270. Pickering also notes that the poet of the *Ezzolied* references this tradition of the angler. See the Vorau Manuscript of the *Ezzolied* v.21.11 in: James Schultz, *Sovereignty and Salvation in the Vernacular, 1050-1150* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publishing, 2000) 46-47.

reads:"Cornua in manibus eius inabscondita" (Rays radiated from his hands [Habakkuk 3:4]).[115] As seen in the previous page of the manuscript, the banners are Christologic references found in the Old Testament foretelling the events of the crucifixion and salvation though Jesus.

Scholars have pointed to the similarity of the Verdun Altar and the *Biblia pauperum* since at least the nineteenth century.[116] The form and scale of the two works are obviously very different. Nevertheless, Schmidt goes so far as to call the Verdun Altar, "die unmittelbare genetische Vorstufe der BP" (the immediate genetic predecessor of the BP)[117] - even though the Verdun Altar was created in

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[115] This prophecy is far more abstruse. Pickering 300-301. Pickering analyzes more of the verse than is translated above: "His brightness shall be as the light; horns are in his hands…" focusing on the term 'horns'. He connects the horns with those with which the radiant Moses is traditionally depicted and then with the horns at the corner of an altar (Exodus 27:2). Pickering extends the thought of an altar to that of a sacrifice and yet further to Jesus as the perfect sacrifice. Less convincingly yet, he also notes that the term 'horns in his hands' may be a figure of hyallage (term reversal) and that the passage should read 'hands in the horns' meaning on or in the hooks or nails of the Cross. Finally, Pickering extends his interpretation to encompass his argument that the crucifixion is often compared to the harp of David in medieval exegesis, English and Middle High German poetry, and in the liturgy. Pickering states that the *cornua* of the Habakkuk verse refer to the pegs of a stringed instrument, a harp. He then concludes that this verse is thus a reference to the crucifixion. The use of the harp as a metaphor for the crucifixion during the medieval period is also discussed in: David Fowler and John Hill, "Harp," *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature,* ed. David Jeffery (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 1992) 331-2.

[116] Albert Camesina and Gustav A. Heider, *Die Darstellungen der Biblia Pauperum in einer Handschrift des XIV. Jahrhunderts: Aufbewahrt im Stifte St. Florian im Erzherzogthum Österreich ob der Enns* (Vienna: Prandel & Ewald, 1863) 2-7. A.C.A. Zestermann, "Die Unabhängigkeit der deutschen xylographischen *Biblia pauperum* von der lateinischen xylographischen *Biblia pauperum,*" *Die deutsche Gesellschaft zur Erforschung vaterländischer Sprache und Alterthümer zu Leipzig* (Leipzig 1866) 4.

[117] Gerhard Schmidt, *Die Armenbibel des XIV Jahrhunderts* (Graz: Böhlaus, 1959) 97. Heitz and Schreiber 4, 13. Heitz and Schreiber bring attention to the fact that Abbott Suger (d.1151) may have incorporated a similar typologic work in the building at St. Denis, which may also have influenced the *Biblia pauperum.* This work, commissioned by Abott Suger, is no longer extant, so that this remains only speculative. The authors also note a number of other instances where stained glass, picture cycles and frescoes have influenced the images found in books and manuscripts.

1181 and the first known exemplar of the *Biblia pauperum* is dated more than a century later, to around 1310.[118] Schmidt's assessment is strengthened by the fact that the Altar of Verdun is the first work to contain both two New Testament images opposing an Old Testament image as well as images of Prophets and their prophecies that relate to the three primary images.[119] This format was then retained and used in the creation of the *Biblia pauperum,* a testimony to the lasting interest in the typologic depiction.

When the images of the Verdun Altar are compared to those of the *Biblia pauperum*, it is apparent that the Verdun Altar contains three groups (7, 11 and 14) of images that are all included in the *Biblia pauperum*. Further inspection reveals that, in both works, most of the groups exhibit some overlap of material. In nine image groups, the Prophetic sayings on the Verdun Altar agree with those found in the *Biblia pauperum.* The Latin verses surrounding the pictures, however, agree in only one instance with those of the *Biblia pauperum*, and this verse is not found on an original panel.[120]

There may also be a relationship between the *Biblia pauperum* and Biblical plays, particularly between the plays about the prophets and the

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[118] G. Schmidt 87. Even the urexemplar of the *Biblia pauperum* is not posited to have been written earlier than 1250.

[119] Heitz and Schreiber 4. Hans Engelhardt, *Der theologische Gehalt der Biblia pauperum. Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, Hft. 243 (Strassburg: Heitz, 1927) 11.

[120] Dodgson 4.

prophetic sayings contained in the *Biblia pauperum.* This relationship requires further investigation and definitive conclusions may not yet be drawn.[121]

The *Biblia pauperum* provides a view into the spiritual cycle; a graphic manifestation of medieval religious thought. The Old Testament past is fulfilled in the New Testament present, thus viewing the Bible as a continuum. The lessons of the past, therefore, are still valid in the present and provide a glimpse of the future to come in the promise and hope of the Second Coming. The *Biblia pauperum* enabled past, present and future to express the reality of present day life as it portrayed the images of type and anti-type in contemporaneous garb and settings, transcending linear chronology. It brought the message of the Bible's imminence and God's plan to its audience, encouraging devotion and meditation and maintaining the eternal lessons of the Scriptures. The image of the Sacrifice of Isaac is central to this cycle, both literally and figuratively. Contained in all of the manuscripts and printed editions, it is placed in conjunction with the most important and continually relevant event in Christendom – the crucifixion. This image was widely disseminated, as evidenced by the many manuscripts, xylographic, and printed editions of the *Biblia pauperum*, all of which contained the same two images, the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac. The iconography and its significance within the *Heilsgeschichte* thus attained widespread familiarity, paving the way for its use as a literary theme.

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[121] Karl Förstner, *Die Salzburger Armenbibel: [codex a lx 12 aus d. Erzabtei St. Peter zu Salzburg* (Salzburg: Pustet, 1969) 28. Labriola 9. Labriola also mentions this because many of the plays featured the same events as those highlighted in the *Biblia pauperum.*

CHAPTER 3: Pre-Reformation German Catholic Treatments of the Sacrifice of Isaac

Arnold Immessen's *Der Sündenfall*

Arnold Immessen's *Der Sündenfall*, so named by its first publisher Otto Schönemann*,* is the oldest of the works examined. The text exists in a single manuscript, Cod. Guelf. 759 Helmstadensis, found in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. It was edited twice, first by Otto Schönemann in 1855, and then by Friedrich Krage in 1913.[1] Krage's edition contains a physical description of the manuscript, as does the 1912 dissertation by Wilhelm Hohnbaum, and the more recent work by Rolf Bergmann.[2] The drama is dated to the second half of the fifteenth century and was penned by Johann Boken, who names himself as the scribe at the end of the manuscript. Boken was an altarist attested to in documents of the Maria-Magdalenerinnenkloster of Frankenberg in Goslar from 1491-1508. Krage notes that there are also three

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[1] Schönemann, and Krage. All citations are taken from the Krage edition

[2] Krage 1-5, Wilhelm Hohnbaum, *Untersuchungen zum "Wolfenbütteler Sündenfall,"* Diss. Universität Marburg (Marburg: Roßteutscher, 1912) 9-10. Rolf Bergmann, *Katalog der deutschsprachigen geistlichen Spiele und Marienklagen des Mittelalters* (München: C.H. Beck, 1986) 368-70. A brief description is also given in: Wolfgang Milde*, Niederdeutsche Handschriften und Inkunabeln aus dem Besitz der Herzog August Bibliothek: Ausstellung in den musealen Räumen der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel vom 9. bis 26. Juni 1976: Katalog (*Braunschweig: Waisenhausdruckerei, 1976) 16. A notation there indicates that there was a transfer of the manuscript in 1815, from der Universitätsbibliothek Helmstedt to the Herzog August Bibliothek.

other unidentified hands who wrote small portions of the manuscript, although

Bergmann states that he can only distinguish two other hands.[3] Krage

considered the extant manuscript to be copied from another manuscript. He

based this upon portions of hastily executed writing in the extant manuscript.

Further, except in one instance, unfilled space was left for decorative initial letters

at the beginnings of scenes.[4] Due to the inscription on its first page, we know

that the manuscript was first owned by Heinrich Bocken, presumably a relative of

the scribe. There is no further information known about the original owner.

It is not clear whether this manuscript functioned as a performative text or

if it the owner intended it for reading purposes only. That the performance of the

text took place is clear, because the text specifies the marketplace as the site of

performance (v.65, 3930), there are detailed stage directions, and the actors

frequently address the audience. Further support for the performance of the

drama is that the text explicitly names two of the actual actors, Cord Vincken

(v.2713) and Sander (v.2731). There is, however, no public record of any

performance of the drama.[5]

The language of *Der Sündenfall* is Low German, with Latin used

exclusively for the stage directions, hymns and quotations from the Vulgate, few

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[3] Krage 3-4. Bergmann, *Katalog* 368.

[4] Krage 1.

[5] Ludwig Wolff, *Arnold Immessen:Bedeutung und Stellung seines Werks in der Geschichte der geistlichen Spiele* (Einbeck: Stadtarchiv und Städtisches Heimatmuseum, 1964) 25.

of which are translated for the audience.[6] The work encompasses 3962 lines,

with a scheme of rhyming couplets. The beginning of the text consists of an

acrostic, carefully crafted from three line verses, and naming Arnold Immessen

as the author of the drama. This section has a different rhyme scheme of aab,

ccd, dde… This acrostic would seem to indicate that the manuscript was for

reading purposes, because it is a purely visual effect, not discernible during a

performance. Krage and Rolf Bergmann also note that there is no differentiation

in the writing of the scenic descriptions, the text and stage directions. The

framing of the text on page 16v, the unidentifiable marks on pages 13r-16v, and

the transposed lines corrected by hand-written notations in the manuscript are

further indications that the text was for reading purposes.[7] However, the

manuscript does bear a close relationship to the format of a performance copy,

which Bergmann considers conclusive evidence that the extant manuscript is

based upon a performance copy.[8]

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[6]v. 2235 provides an excellent example of this. Immessen directly addresses the audience as 'leyen' and translates a Latin citation for them.

[7] Krage, 3. During this period, differentiation of stage directions was often through red writing, so that the directions would be visible. The author's name is actually in its Latinized form, Arnoldus Immessen.

[8] Rolf Bergmann, "Aufführungstext und Lesetext: zur Funktion der Überlieferung des mittelalterlichen geistlichen deutschen Dramas," *Theater in the Middle Ages,* ed. Herman Braet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985) 324-5. Bergmann includes a facsimile of one of the manuscript pages of *Der Sündenfall*,16v, at the end of his article on page 346. Criteria used to determine if a text was used for performance include signs of wear, the use of multiple colors of ink or underlining (so that the producer or actor could find his place easily), and the size of the text itself (a larger copy would be used for a performance than for personal reading).

There is no consensus on the question of performance versus reading text. Wolff feels that the drama was intended for both performance and reading, which would represent something unique and innovative.[9] Bergmann, however, cites numerous examples of 15th and 16th century texts intended for both performance and reading that are preserved.[10] Both Bergmann and Williams–Krapp emphasize the need to reconsider the classification of many medieval dramatic texts, as there have been numerous errors in their classification. The intent for some texts was reading, but often they were misinterpreted as performative copies and vice versa. Williams-Krapp goes so far as to argue that the intent for the majority of medieval dramatic manuscripts preserved was for the private reading of the owners.[11] A text intended for private reading, yet based on one intended for performance, is also not unique. Bergman cites the Trier and the Wolfenbüttel *Theophilus* manuscripts as examples: the Trier copy was a performative text, and the Wolfenbüttel manuscript was for reading only.[12]

Little is known about Immessen himself, and even the dates of birth and death are unknown. Only his position as an educated member of the clergy is

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[9] Wolff, 9. Wolff also points to the fact that the acrostic emphasizes the proud nature of the author who wanted the work recognized as his.

[10] Bergman, "Aufführungstext" 322-29. Bergmann feels that interpretation of the Muri Osterspiel as a performative text is incorrect, and is but one example of many such misinterpretations that undoubtedly exist.

[11] Bergman, "Aufführungstext" 318-29. Werner Williams-Krapp, *Überlieferung und Gattung: zur Gattung, Spiel' im Mittelalter. Mit einer Edition von „Sündenfall und Erlösung*" aus der Berliner Handschrift mgq 496 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1980) 5-29.

[12] Bergman, "Aufführungstext" 314-17.

clear. Immessen's extensive use of Church liturgy, Latin stage directions and

Biblical text citations, and the very fact that he names himself 'Arnoldus

Immessen' using the Latinized form of his first name, all support this conclusion.

Immessen's birthplace, however, remains uncertain. Schönemann posited that

Immessen was from Einbeck or Immessen, which is near Einbeck, based on the

mention of Einbeck beer (v. 2391, 2707, 2738).[13] Creiznach felt that his name

indicated his birthplace.[14] Krage agreed that Einbeck beer was well known, but

did not necessarily indicate the home of the author. Nevertheless, based on a

linguistic examination, he concluded that Einbeck could have been Immessen's

home, but that Alfeld was also a possibility.[15] Hohnbaum, who undertook the

most exhaustive examination of the *Sündenfall*'s site of origin, thought Goslar to

be the home of Immessen, as had Geode previously.[16]   He based his argument

on linguistic usage, the fact that there is documentation that plays were staged in

the Goslar marketplace in the mid-fifteenth century, and that pictures of the

sibyls, found in Immessen's drama, were painted on the walls of the Goslar

Ratshaus, albeit dating after Immessen's time. Wolff was the most recent to

concern himself with this matter. He concluded that Immessen was indeed from

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[13] Schönemann viii-ix.

[14] Wilhelm Creiznach, *Geschichte des neueren Dramas* (Halle: Verlag von Max Niemeyer, 1893) vol. I 229.

[15] Krage, 50-56.

[16] Hohnbaum 60-78 and 91-92, Karl Goedeke, *Grundrisz zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen*, Bd. 1 (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1884) 210. Krage 231. In an addendum to his book, Krage specifically addresses himself to Hohnbaum's 'recent' dissertation and protests the assertion of Goslar as Immessen's home.

Einbeck on the basis of Church documents from 1483. These specifically name

dominos Arnoldus Immessen. There is, however, also a document dated 1486

from the city of Alfeld naming Immessen, so that the attribution remains

uncertain.*[17]*

Der Sündenfall encompasses the *Heilsgeschichte* from creation and the

fall of the angels to the prophecy of the Savior and Mary's dedication in the

Temple at the age of three - all in the space of 24 scenes. It is an unusual

endpoint for a drama, but only Creiznach comments on this, positing that the

extant text is only a portion of the original drama.[18] The play contains a myriad of

Old Testament scenes and characters including God, twenty-two angels and

devils, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Moses,

Melchizedek, the Kings David and Solomon, sixteen Prophets, the Queen of

Sheba and numerous ancillary characters. The play also depicts several New

Testament characters, including Joachim and Anna, as well as twelve Sibyls and

the personifications of Justice and Mercy. In spite of being entitled *Der*

Sündenfall, the drama focuses far more on the salvation of mankind by Jesus,

the Old Testament as a preparation for salvation, and on the prophets and sibyls.

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[17] Wolff 9-10 and Brian Murdoch, "Immessen, Arnold," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Wolfgang Stammler, 2nd ed, vol. 4 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977) 366 and Bernd Neumann, "Immessen, Arnold," *Literaturlexikon,* vol. 6, ed. Walther Killy (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1990) 39. Wolff posits that it is the same person mentioned in both documents. Based on family history, he further posits that Immessen was a cleric in the Alexanderstift of Einbeck, as there is documentation of a vicar named Hermann Immessen in the Alexanderstift in 1453.

[18] Creiznach, *Geschichte* vol. I 229.

Due to the long speech about the offering of the mass that takes place in the Melchizedek scene, the didactic nature of the drama, and the references to the salvation of mankind by Jesus, Creiznach posits that the drama may have been intended for performance on Corpus Christi.[19]

After the depiction of the Fall, there are five prefigurative Old Testament scenes - the offerings of Cain and Abel, Noah, and Abraham, Moses and the Burning Bush, and the offering of Melchizedek. These all prefigure the offerings of the New Testament encapsulated in the mass. There is a sixth scene depicting Seth's trip to Paradise found after the Cain and Abel scene, however this is neither found in the Old Testament, nor is it prefigurative. [20] These scenes are just presented one after the other, and are not connected. The basis of this portion of *Der Sündenfall* is the Vulgate, with the portions of the drama relating to Seth and the Holy Rood being drawn from the Middle Dutch *Boec van den houte* ('Book of the Cross'*).*[21] The two scenes relevant to this examination are the

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[19] Creiznach, *Geschichte* vol. I 229. Creiznach also attaches particular significance to the fact that the Melchizedek scene is in the midpoint of the drama. This is somewhat unusual in light of the fact that Creiznach feels that the drama as we know it is incomplete. Were the drama to have contained additional text, this scene would no longer be in the midpoint.

[20] Weber 22. I would agree with Weber that this scene cannot be considered prefigurative in the same sense that the remaining five scenes can be. First, the Rood legend, although widespread, is apocryphal and not an actual part of the Old Testament. Second, although it does prefigure the Redemption, it does not do so typologically. Weber also argues that this drama is a Corpus Christi play on the basis of Immessen's choice of Old Testament scenes, as all relate to the offering of the Mass.

[21] *Dat boec van den houte; eine mittelniederländische Dichtung von der Herkunft des Kreuzes Christi*, ed. Lars Hermodsson (Uppsala: Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1959). Krage 58-66 , Schönemann ix, Brian Murdoch, *Adam's Grace: Fall and Redemption in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000) 141-2. Krage feels that the actual Middle Dutch version was used by Immessen, whereas Schöneman posits that it was the Middle Low German translation of the legend, but does not substantiate his opinion. Hermodsson 82-91 deals with this question at

Offerings of Abraham and of Melchizedek, which are also the two whose

prefigurative content is most explicit..

The Sacrifice of Isaac takes place in lines 1893-1991 of *Der Sündenfall.*

This scene, for the most part, holds closely to the Biblical story of Genesis 22 as

found in the Vulgate, with little embellishment. The characters with speaking

roles in the scene are the Creator, Abraham, Isaac, and the angel Raphael.

Abraham and the Creator are the main characters. Isaac only asks where the

offering is, and the angel only serves to halt the sacrifice. God, in the form of the

character named "Der Creator", introduces the scene.

The statement that the world is disobedient, but that there is still one

upright man who is to be tested by means of his son introduces the motifs of the

drama. This test will also have an additional function, and that is a prefigurative

one, as is indicated by God's statement:

> Dut schal ock wesen eyn figure,
> De noch ton tiden vp eyn mal
> Sunderlikes wat beduden schal. (v.1903-5)

> (This shall also be a figure
> That after his time at once
> Shall signify something extraordinary.)

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length and after extensive examination concludes that Krage was incorrect. He concurs with
Schöneman and states that Immessen used the Middle Low German version. He further
proposes a stemma positing that Immessen used a no longer extant Middle Low German version
of the text. Murdoch is in agreement with Hermodsson, but does not deal with the issue at any
length.

Immessen emphasizes the importance of the prefigurative nature of the Sacrifice of Isaac by identifying the prefiguration prior to the depiction of Genesis 22. He specifically explains the scene, presumably for the less educated, so that the audience views the scene with this in mind. The emphasis on typology will again be foregrounded with the later mention of the Sacrifice of Isaac found in the speech by Melchizedek discussed below.

The scene proceeds as God wishes to test Abraham, and tells him to sacrifice his only son. Abraham hurries willingly to carry out God's request, saddling the donkey and taking Isaac and two lads with him. They begin the journey. Then Abraham leaves the lads and continues with Isaac, saying that they will return. Isaac gathers the wood, and Abraham erects the altar. When Isaac asks about the animal for the sacrifice, Abraham silences him, saying that God will provide the sacrifice. He bids Isaac to put the wood on the altar, which Isaac proceeds to do, ascending the altar. The text neither mentions nor depicts the actual binding of Isaac. As Isaac ascends, Abraham, prepared with his sword and with fire, is about to sacrifice his son, when he is stopped by the cry of the angel Raphael, who halts the action. Abraham is shown the ram which he is to sacrifice in Isaac's stead. God praises Abraham for his obedience in not withholding his son, and promises eternal reward for Abraham and his family. The scene closes with Abraham's prayer of praise and thanks to God.

Immessen uses this scene to emphasize Abraham's obedience to God. The Sacrifice of Isaac is clearly viewed as a test, as indicated by God's initial

statement, "Eck wil im ropen vnde tempteren" (v. 1905) (I wish to call him and tempt him) and his statement directly to Abraham, "Dar wil eck dynen horsam ynne prouen." (v.1923)[22] (I want to test your obedience). This is in accordance with the text of Genesis 22:1 and the exegesis that views the Sacrifice of Isaac as one of a series of tests of Abraham. Abraham had been the subject of nine other tests, so that he may recognize that God may be testing him yet again. God's direct statement to Abraham, however, is an invention of Immessen. Immessen's rationale for the explicit mention of the fact that this is a test may have again been for the benefit of the audience, particularly because this is the only one of Abraham's tests depicted in the play. It could also have functioned as a motivating factor for both God and Abraham, demonstrating that this command was not an arbitrary one; God had a purpose in asking this of Abraham.[23] Unlike the text of the Vulgate, Abraham's name is called only once by God. God's speech to Abraham is phrased as an imperative, however, as it is in the Vulgate.

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[22] Reckling 31. Reckling indicates that God is testing Abraham "den lezten Gehorsamen"(the last obedient one). I do not find this in the text nor is this found in the Bible or in Biblical exegesis, and must disagree with Reckling's characterization of Abraham. Perhaps Reckling takes the term "stam" (v. 1897) to refer solely to Abraham. I believe, however, that it refers to those who recognized the God of Abraham, not just one individual.

[23] There is much midrashic commentary on the motivation of this test of Abraham. See for instance *Genesis Rabbah* 482-6, Chapter LV:1,2,3,6 that God wished to demonstrate Abraham's righteousness to the world and Chapter LV:4, that this was a result of the fact that Abraham did not offer a sacrifice to God at the time of Isaac's weaning. Other *midrashim* state that it is Satan who points this out to God. To demonstrate Abraham's faith, God immediately tries Abraham. Chapter LV:6, that the test was a result of an argument between Ishmael and Isaac as to who was more loved. During this argument, Ishmael said that he was more beloved as he was circumcised at age thirteen and could have refused, whereas Isaac was circumcised as a baby and had no choice in the matter. Isaac thereupon replies that if God asked of him that he be slaughtered, he would not refuse.

The Abraham of this play is therefore obliged to comply - this is not a request; it is a command.

The play depicts Isaac's obedience to his father, but this is not stressed or lauded, and there is no indication that Isaac knows the purpose of the journey or is aware of God's command. Unlike the Biblical account, Isaac puts the wood on the altar, not Abraham. Abraham also does not bind his son. Immessen may have deviated from the original account in order to show Isaac's willingness to be sacrificed. The author does not show Isaac's reaction after the halting of the sacrifice, and there is no note of his participation in praising God. Isaac is clearly a secondary character, but one of great importance, emphasized in that both God and his father call him Abraham's only son. God refers to him as "Eingebornen" (Only son") v.1910, and Abraham specifically says of him,"Ysaac ist mîn kint allene" ("Isaac is my only child.") v.1920. In addition to foregrounding Isaac's familial significance, this relates to the typologic function of the scene - Jesus is the only son of God. The Latin translation of this word, *unigenitus*, is the Biblical term used three times in the Vulgate version of Genesis 22 to refer to Isaac, and it is also the term used in the Vulgate in John 1:14, 1:18, 3:16, and 3:18 as well as in 1 John 4:9 to refer to Jesus. The New Testament also refers to Isaac using the same term of '*unigenitum*' in Hebrews 11:17. This term is widely used in prayer, most notably in the profession of faith, the Nicene Creed, and

would be familiar to even the less educated. It therefore serves to underline the typologic significance of Isaac.[24]

The play identifies the angel that halts the sacrifice, as in the Yiddish works, despite the fact that he remains nameless in Genesis 22. As in the *Akêdass Yizhak*, the angel Raphael halts the action. In accordance with the Biblical narrative, Sarah and Ishmael are absent. The play mentions the two servants as lads whom Abraham has taken along, but does not give their names, again as in the Bible. This story is solely about Abraham and his obedience. The narrative is terse and without embellishment, much like Genesis 22 itself.

After the Abraham scene, Immessen presents Moses, who stands before the burning bush and receives the command from God to go before Pharaoh and free the oppressed Israelites. Although out of Biblical order, the play presents a scene with Melchizedek thereafter. The character of Melchizedek actually acknowledges this lack of chronological order saying. "Alweldige god, mit erlove ik rede./Wol scholde ik wol eir hebben gesproken;" (v2094-5) (Dear God with whose permission I speak/Certainly I should have spoken earlier). Immessen greatly expands this scene from what takes place in Genesis 14:18-20. It bears no resemblance to any of the other Biblical passages containing references to Melchizedek either. It is rather a device created by Immessen to review several prefigurative wonders that God has wrought and to insert a speech about the

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[24] Although it is anachronistic to look at word usage in Luther's German Bible translation, it is of interest to note that in each occurrence of a form of the word *unigenitum* cited above, Luther used a form of the word eingeboren.

offering of the mass. In this respect, Melchizedek assumes the role of the narrator, absent in Immessen's drama.

Melchizedek has traditionally been linked to the roots of priesthood, the mass and the eternal priesthood of Jesus as the messiah through Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 5:6 and 6:20-7:28, and Psalm 110:4.[25] In Genesis, Melchizedek brings bread and wine and blesses Abraham, who then gives Melchizedek a tenth of his possessions.[26] This is typologically interpreted as foreshadowing the Last Supper and hence of the mass itself. In the verses from Psalms and from Hebrews, Melchizedek is christologically both a priest and type of Jesus.

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[25] Note that the numbering of Pslams is not uniform throughout all Biblical traditions. The Jewish, Lutheran, and American Catholics number the Psalms in the same manner, however the Vulgate, based on the Septuagint, combines Psalms 9 and 10. Thus, according to the Vulgate numbering system, this would be Psalm 109.

[26] There is considerable commentary on this tithing and a difference of opinion as to whether Abraham tithed a tenth of his possessions or a tenth of the spoils of his recent victory. This leads to a variety of discussions on whether Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe, or a tribute or tax. Many of the Patristic Fathers expounded on the role of Melchizedek. An exhaustive examination of this is beyond the scope of this study, however several references are provided here. For the exposition of St. Ambrose on Melchizedek, which was influential for theologians of the Middle Ages see: Ambrosius, "The Sacraments," *Saint Ambrose: Theological and Dogmatic Works*, vol. 44 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1963) 300-1. For general information on St. Ambrose and his use of typology (which also contains a good summary of Ambrose's view of the threefold interpretation of Scripture) see: Craig Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching (*Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2002), especially pp. 219-48. For further information on the Biblical interpretation of Melchizedek and his role see: Fred Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1976), Gottfried Wuttke, *Melchisedech der Priesterkönig von Salem: Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Exegese* (Gießen: Toepelmann, 1927) and V. Aptowitzer, "Malkisedek: Zu den Sagen der Agada," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 70 (1926): 93-113. For an analysis of the typologic significance of Melchizedek see: Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956) 142-161.

Included in the prefigurative scenes that Melchizedek enumerates in *Der Sündenfall* is the Sacrifice of Isaac:

> Dat Abraham yssac to sick nam
> Unde offered ysaac, syn junge kynt,
> Dar me ock eynen geistliken syn ynne vint (v. 2129-31)

> (That Abraham took Isaac to himself
> And offered Isaac, his young child,
> One may find a spiritual meaning in this)

This further reinforces the typologic significance of the prior Sacrifice of Isaac scene. Immessen draws on the well-known significance of the figure of Melchizedek to link Isaac as one in a chain of sacrifices and offerings of Eucharistic significance and messianic fulfillment through Jesus.[27] Melchizedek thereby serves to bind the Old and the New, marking the interconnection of the two and the fulfillment established by the coming of Jesus.[28]

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[27] For further information on the figure of Melchizedek in medieval drama including the German tradition see: Yumi Dohi, "Melchisedech in Late Medieval Religious Drama," *The Dramatic Tradition of the Middle Ages*, ed. Clifford Davidson (New York: AMS Press, 2005) 109-27 and Lynette Muir, "The Mass on the Medieval Stage," *Drama in the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays*, eds. Clifford Davidson and John Stoupe (New York: AMS Press, 1991) 223-29. An indication of the widespread knowledge of the Melchizedek typology is that an image of Genesis 14:18-20 was included in the *Biblia Pauperum* and *Speculum humanae salvationis*. For example, see: Adrian Wilson and Joyce Wilson, *A Medieval Mirror: Speculum humanae salvationis 1324-1500* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984) 138-9 and 173. Numerous other typological images are cited in: Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 129-31.

[28] Wilhelm Creizenach and Adalbert Hämel, *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, vol. 1 (Halle: S.M. Niemaeyer, 1911) 235. Creizenach feels that the Melchizedek scene alludes to the Corpus Christi Feast and posits that the drama may have been intended for performance at that time. Weber 22, also feels that the Old Testament scenes were chosen due to their relevance to Corpus Christi.

Immessen's intention in composing this work was not only to provide entertainment, but to teach, to depict Abraham as in the Bible, faithful, obedient, and withstanding God's test of him. There is little character development, and Immessen does not depict the inner thoughts and emotions of the characters. Neither does the Biblical account. The Prophet Ezekiel's speech at the conclusion of the scene mentions only Isaac, relating the Sacrifice of Isaac to the later sacrifice of Jesus. With this, Immessen highlights the typology of the story in addition to the previous depiction of this scene as a test of Abraham's faith and obedience. Immessen speaks of the Sacrifice of Isaac in the Melchizedek scene as well, and again references the future significance of Abraham's deed. This further emphasizes the Sacrifice of Isaac not only as a test of Abraham, but also as a foreshadowing of the later sacrifice of Jesus. Immessen has thus stressed both the typologic aspect of the story and the Sacrifice of Isaac as a test of Abraham's obedience and faith.

Heidelberger Passionsspiel

The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* exists in only a single manuscript written by one hand. The text was named for the manuscript's location (Heidelberg, University Library, cpg 402) and not, as is usually the case, the location of its performance. The text as we have it was most probably never performed, and the manuscript shows no signs of use. The extant manuscript may have served as a conception of a text for staging and/or record of the text for reading purposes. The basis of the manuscript may have been a play from Mainz, as the

text bears linguistic similarities to the local dialect.[29] Also, there are documented

Passion Plays produced in Mainz in the years 1498, 1504, and 1510.[30] The

manuscript has been edited twice, the first time by Gustav Milchsack in 1880[31]

and then again in 2004 by Johannes Janota.[32] Both editions contain a description

of the manuscript. As the colophon indicates, Wolfgang Stüeckh penned the

manuscript itself and completed it on July 5, 1514. He wrote the manuscript for

Konrad von Waldeck-Yben, who has been traced to a family found in Mainz in

1507.[33]

There is some controversy as to whether the text as we have it is

complete. The word *Finis* appears at the end of the manuscript, and as

mentioned above there is a colophon by the scribe, so that the manuscript seems

to be complete. The work itself ends in what some scholars perceive to be an

illogical place, with Joseph of Arimathea's incarceration, the sealing of his cell,

and its keys brought to Caiaphas. Hansjürgen Linke argues that the final

prefiguration, that of God's command to Jonah, replete with his flight, being

thrown overboard, and his three days in the belly of the whale (v.5730-5811)

goes without its corresponding New Testament prefiguration of Jesus's three day

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[29] Ernst Beutler, *Forschungen und Texte zur frühhumanistischen Komödie* (Hamburg: Hamburg Staats- und Universitätsbiblothek,1927) 123-4.

[30] Bernd Neumann, *Geistliches Schauspiel im Zeugnis der Zeit: Zur Aufführung mittelalterlicher religiöser Dramen im deutschen Sprachgebiet,* vol. 1 (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1987) 574-78.

[31] Gustav Milchsack, *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* (Tübingen: Literarischer Verein, 1880).

[32] Janota.

[33] Beutler 123-4.

entombment (Matthew 12:40) and therefore has no purpose, if the play ends as

we have it. Additionally, Linke supports his contention that the text is incomplete

with the observation that the last Old Testament Prophet to speak in this play is

Isaiah, who in the rotation of Prophets speaking is always the first. Therefore,

there should be three more prefigurations, so that the rotation of prophets is

complete.

According to other documented performances of Passion Plays,

approximately 2500 verses of a play were performed in one day. This would

have meant that the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* would have been performed

over a three-day period, as was the *Alsfelder Passionsspiel.* According to the

manuscript, only 1155 verses would have remained for performance on the last

day. From this Linke concludes that 1200-1500 verses are missing. Linke,

however, draws no conclusion as to the content of the three proposed missing

prefigurations, or of the content of the missing lines; he simply feels that the play

must have ended with the resurrection.[34] Janota does not comment on the

correctness of Linke's argument, but aptly points out that the presence of the

Jonah episode is insufficient evidence to conclude that the play should end with

the resurrection. The Jonah episode merely prefigures the three days of Jesus's

entombment, as stated in Matthew 12:40: "For as Jonas was in the whale's belly

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[34] Hansjürgen Linke, "Heidelberger (rheinhessisches) Passionsspiel," *Verfasserlexicon - Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters, vol. 3,* ed. Wolfgang Stammler (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1933-50) 608-9.

three days and three nights: so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."[35]

The purpose and use of the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* manuscript has been the subject of scholarly debate. Superficially, the manuscript gives the impression that its use may have been for performance. It frequently, although not regularly, has the stage directions and first verses differentiated via underlining in red or blue-green ink, with a thicker lettering, or with pilcrow notations (¶). It also has four headings that appear to be almost the modern equivalent of chapter headings.[36] In several places there is decorative scrolling at the side of the text and there are colored drawings at the bottoms of two pages, one of a swimming duck and one of a monstrance. The underlining, however, does not occur regularly. In most other manuscripts that were used for productions, the name of the person to speak is underlined in red as an aid for the director's orientation within the manuscript while the drama is being performed. The manuscript of the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* is also of smaller size (26.5 x 19.5 cm) than the usual manuscripts used for a performance, since there is long-standing evidence, beginning with the thirteenth century, of the use

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[35] Janota, *Die Hessische Passionsspielgruppe* 3.

[36] Elisabeth Meyer, "Zur Überlieferungsfunktion des Heidelberger Passionsspiels: Von einer Spielvorlage zur erbaulichen Lektüre?" *Leuvensch bijdragen 90* (2001): 150. Meyer points out that all but the first four of the headings that are found in Milchsack's edition (and in Janota's as well) are not found as headings which are set off via the use of greater spacing and thicker lettering in the actual manuscript; they are integrated into the text. As such, what appear to be chapter headings in the Milchsack edition and which contribute to the appearance of a text meant for reading, are in reality only Milchsack's editorial invention and a practice that Janota continued.

of larger sized texts. Additionally, the manuscript bears no evidence of wear due to repeated use, and there are no corrections made where there are errors of either the character who should be speaking or of missing verses, all of which was already noted by Milchsack, the first editor of the text.[37] Milchsack posited that the person who commissioned the manuscript, presumably von Waldeck-Yben, might have wanted a copy of a play similar to one that he had perhaps seen as a remembrance of that occasion as well as for his own enjoyment and edification.

As mentioned in the introduction, the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* contains thirteen unique Old Testament prefigurations within its New Testament story. These prefigurations are: 'Finding a Bride for Isaac', 'Naaman's Leprosy is Healed', 'Susannah is Saved by Daniel', 'Awakening of the Son of the Widow of Zarephath', 'David and Goliath', 'Joseph and his Brothers', 'Feast of Achashverosh', 'Samson and Delilah', 'Affliction of Job', 'Elijah's Heavenly Ascent and the Mockery of Elisha, 'Sacrifice of Isaac', 'Moses and the Bronze serpent', and 'Jonah in the Whale'. In the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*, the thirteen Old Testament prefigurations are interspersed prior to each of the corresponding segments within the New Testament story. Each Old Testament scene then concludes with a narrative delivered by one of four rotating Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel or Malachai, in that order and with no relation to the preceding Old Testament episodes. The Prophets serve to

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[37] Milchsack 293-4.

recall the Old Testament sequence and relate it to the upcoming New Testament scenes. They function in much the same manner in which Immessen used the character of Melchizedek. However, the relationship of the Old Testament story to the New Testament is given at the conclusion of the scene, not at the beginning as in *Der Sündenfall.* In both cases, the dialogue of these Old Testament figures is an extra-Biblical invention intended to explicate the author's prefigurative purpose. In the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* the proclamator, who is termed the 'reigierer des spils' does prepare the audience at the beginning of the play, announcing that prefigurations will follow. He states: "das verkuntten die prophetten weytt/unnd sagtenn seiner zcukunfft zeyt" **(**The Prophets widely announced this/and told of His future time) (lines 7-8).

The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* is the only medieval Passion Play to use Old Testament episodes in this manner of prefiguration, explanation and fulfillment. The prefigurative scenes therefore virtually determine the structure of the Passion Play. This represents a 'modern' technique of integration not seen again until the performance of the 'reverse Passion Play 'entitled *Die Kreuzschule,* first performed in 1748, and of the 1750 Oberammergau Passionsspiel revision by P. Ferdinand Rosner influenced by *Die Kreuzschule*.[38]

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[38]Helmut Klinner, "Die Kreuzschule in Oberammergau von 1748 bis 1905" Beitrag zur Ausstellung, Oberammergau Museum. June 15 – August 28, 2005. Vernon Heaton, *The Oberammergau Passion Play* (London: Hale, 1970) 149-50. *Die Kreuzschule* was a retelling of the Old Testament story that also contained tableaux of the Passion interspersed between the acts of that story. However, it is a 'reverse' Passion Play . The Oberammergau Passion Play told the story of the Passion and interspersed it with tableaux of Old Testament stories that prefigured those of the New Testament Passion. *Die Kreuzschule* told the story of the Old Testament with tableaux of the New Testament Passion interspersed between the acts. There was a presentation of a single act of *Die Kreuzschule* each Sunday during the period of Lent beginning in 1748. In

At that time, the Benedictine friar P. Ferdinand Rosner (1709-1778) revised the
Oberammergau Passionsspiel for 1750 at the request of the villagers. His
revision, known as the "Passio Novo" included the depiction of Old Testament
scenes in the form of tableaux that prefigured events in the New Testament.[39] As
would be expected, one of Rosner's tableaux consisted of Isaac carrying the
wood for his sacrifice as a prefiguration of Jesus carrying the cross of the
crucifixion. [40] This device had also been found in Jesuit drama, and this is

this manner, the citizens of Oberammergau were able to gain stage experience and hone their
acting talents, as well as learn from the contents of the play. Initially there was a presentation of
Die Kreuzschule two years in advance of the Passion Play year in the village church. Ten years
later, it was so popular that performances took place in the open square, so that more people
could be accommodated. There was a change in the performance to five years in advance of the
Passion Play, so that there were performances in 1785 and 1795. In the nineteenth century,
performances of the play took place only in 1825 and 1875, and the last time performance was in
1905. In total, there were performances of *Die Kreuzschule* for nine seasons. The original text,
which is no longer extant, was by P. Anselm Meinhardt (1680-1752). There were modifications
for each new season, with the first surviving text being that of the 1768 season.

[39]Rosner's revision was first published as: Ferdinand Rosner and Otto Ernst Mausser, *Bitteres
Leiden, Oberammergauer Passionsspiel, Text von 1750* (Leipzig: K.W. Hiersemann, 1934). This
edition was a poor one, containing many errors, and has more recently been corrected and
republished: Ferdinand Rosner, *Passio nova: das Oberammergauer Passionsspiel von 1750*, ed.
Stephan Schaller (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1974). Schaller has also written a good biography of
Rosner with a lengthy section about the "Passio Novo": Stephan Schaller, *Passionsspiele
Oberammergau, 1634-1984 (*Munich: Eigenverlag, 1984). The oldest extant text, that of the
Oberammergau Passion Play of 1662 as well as the texts of the *Augsburger Passionsspiel aus
St. Ulrich und Afra* and Sebastian Wild's *Passionsspiel*, can be found in: August Hartman, Johann
Älbl, and Sebastian Wild. *Das Oberammergauer Passionsspiel in seiner ältesten Gestalt* (Leipzig:
Breitkopf und Härtel, 1880). The Oberammergau text is based in great measure upon Wild's play,
which is almost completely contained in the Oberammergau text. It is interesting to note the
absence of the prefigurations in the texts of the latter volume. A good, if at times tendentious and
flowery English language history of the area and play and a summary (including the tableaux) of
the 1930 version is found in: Hermine Diemer, Franz Xavier Bogenrieder, and Walter F. Kloeck,
Oberammergau and Its Passion-Play (Munich: C.A. Seyfried, 1930).

[40] This is found as the first of the two tableaux preceding Act 14, which was originally referred to
as the "sechste Betrachtung" in the 1750 Rosner version of the *Oberammergau Passionsspiel*.

presumably where Rosner saw it used.[41] However, the Jesuit Order was

established after the date of the penning of the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*, so

that no influence on the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* by the Jesuit dramas can be

expected.

The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* comprises 6125 lines, most of which are

in German. There are approximately 450 Latin lines of text, beginning with Latin

citations, most of which are Biblical quotations taken directly from the Vulgate,

many with some change, as will be discussed. There are also a lesser number

of stage directions and hymns prior to the actual dialogue of the play. This is

unique, because no other vernacular Passion Play contains this great an amount

of Latin.[42] It would appear that the purpose of the quotations, the greater

majority of which are then translated into the vernacular, would be for the

instruction of the audience. If this is the case, the question arises as to why the

author cites only the beginning of each verse. Further, as only the German

translations were spoken, there would seem to be no purpose to the Latin ones.

Milchsack advanced a theory for these questions as well. He felt that the Latin

excerpts from the Vulgate were the additions of the scribe; that perhaps the Latin

served as a template for the play itself. The scribe, Stüekh, then copied the Latin

from the no longer extant manuscript as well, although that had not been the

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[41] Wilhelm Creizenach, "Religious Drama," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 9, ed. J.J. Schaff, Philip Herzog, et. al. (New York: Funk and Wagnall's, 1908) 475-79.

[42] Milchsack 292.

intention of the actual playwrite, who also did not intend that the Latin be included in the spoken lines of the play. From the foregoing Milchsack also concluded that the manuscript we have was never intended for use in a performance.[43]

Twentieth-century scholars agree that the intent of the extant *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* manuscript was for reading purposes, however they differ, as does the most recent entry into the fray, Elisabeth Meyer, on the origin of the text. Rolf Steinbach feels that it was written from one that was performed,[44] whereas Werner Krapp-Williams theorizes that it was based on an extensively reworked text.[45] Wolfgang Michael adds that the play may have been produced in Mainz, as Ernst Beutler suggested, as there were documented performances of Passion Plays in Mainz in 1498 and 1510. The extant text, however, dates to 1514, after the date of the last known performance. Michael therefore concludes that the text as we have it was not a performative one.[46] Meyer is the only recent scholar to look to the Latin portions of the manuscript for a clue as to the origin of the text.

Hansjürgen Linke states that the purpose of the Latin in the play was to demonstrate dogmatic correctness and authority and does not concern himself

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[43] Milchsack 293-4. There has been no scholarly comment on this subject with respect to Immessen's *Sündenfall*, but the same would hold true for this work, further indicating that it too was intended for reading purposes.

[44] Rolf Steinbach, *Die deutschen Oster- und Passionsspiele des Mittelalters* (Cologne: Buehlau Verlag, 1970) 174.

[45] Werner Williams-Krapp, *Uberlieferung und Gattung: Zur Gattung 'Spiel' im Mittelalter. Mit einer Edition von Sündenfall und Erlösung aus der Berliner Handschrift Mgq 496* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1980) 14.

[46] Wolfgang Michael, *Das deutsche Drama des Mittelalters* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1971).

further with this theme.[47]   Meyer, however, examines another play, the *Züricher Passionsspiel*, the edition of which was clearly for reading purposes, and finds that it also contains a plethora of quotations from the Vulgate, replete with source citations. She takes this as an indication that the Latin of the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* may likewise be for a reader. However, many of the Biblical sources of the citations are not indicated in the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*. Only when there is a change of source book, which frequently coincides with a change in scene, is the source of the citation given. Nevertheless, during the progression of the play, there are instances where this is not true either.[48]   This would seem to negate Linke's supposition as to the purpose of the Latin in the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel.* Additional obvious questions that even Milchsack voiced are: if the Latin were to have been spoken, where would one find so many actors with knowledge of Latin, and who in the audience would have understood the Latin quotations?

The Sacrifice of Isaac is the thirty-second sequence entitled: *Sequitur prefiguracio Ihesu portantis crucem ad montem Caluarie* (There follows a prefiguration of Jesus carying the cross to the mountain of Calvary) (Lines 4971-5060). Jesus's inquisition by Pilate precedes this, as does the placement of the crown of thorns on Jesus's head, and the decision to crucify Jesus. The scene that the Sacrifice of Isaac typologically prefigures, Jesus carrying the cross to

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[47] Linke 607.

[48] Meyer 152. Meyer points out several of these places.

Calvary, follows after Ezekiel's speech. The Biblical story of Genesis 22 itself

contains God, Abraham, Isaac and an unnamed angel as the characters. There

is no mention of Sarah, nor are there servants in this depiction.

The scene opens with the traditional call by God to Abraham. God calls

Abraham's name twice, as in the Vulgate, but in contradistinction to the Hebrew

text, where God calls Abraham's name only once. A further discrepancy is that

the manner in which God calls Abraham indicates some frustration:

Abraham, Abraham!
wo bistu, du aller mann? (Lines 4971-2)

(Abraham, Abraham!
Where are you, of all men?)

Abraham acknowledgess the call, but seems to feels he must justify himself for

not responding with greater alacrity:

Liebster here, ich bin hie.
dein stim erhortt ich hewdt nye.(Lines 4973-4)

(Dear Lord, I am here.
I did not hear your voice today.)

This is an addition of extra-Biblical material to the text. I posit that this is an

example of Biblical exegesis by the Passion Play author. He has elucidated a

reason for the dual call - God has sought Abraham, but Abrahm did not respond

with sufficient alacrity.[49] Nevertheless, Abraham expresses no hesitation to fulfill God's command.

Isaac's attitude demonstrates further authorial comment. Isaac immediately expresses his willingness to go with Abraham and to do as is commanded. However, he is clearly doing this out of filial devotion, and not so that he may honor God or do his bidding. Isaac states:

> Vater Abraham, ich will willig sein ,
> zcu volnbrengen denn willenn dein.
> kein wortt will ich auch me sagenn,
> das holcz will ich willigklich tragenn
> unnd mitt dir ghenn uff denn berg,
> das du erfullest gottes werck. (Lines 4989-94)

> (Father Abraham, I wish to be compliant,
> to accomplish your will.
> I will not say one more word,
> I wish to willingly carry the wood
> and ascend the mountain with you
> so that you may fulfill God's work.)

Abraham is the one doing God's work. Isaac sees his role as one of fillial devotion and of enabling his father to do God's bidding. Isaac does not know of God's command. This is made apparent in lines 5001-2: "was er will vor ein opffer han gebrantt, sollichs ist dir noch unbekanndtt." (What he [God] wants to have burned as a sacrifice/ this is not yet known to you).

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[49] There is a great deal of midrashic exegesis that finds fault with Abraham. Hence, this is the reason for God's test of him, as detailed in Chapter 5. Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 42. points out that although wrongdoing on the part of Abraham is a persistent theme in Jewish exegesis, the Patristic Fathers never assign guilt or blame to Abraham, and see him only as praiseworthy.

The author continues, depicting Abraham's fear that Isaac may defy God's request. From the statement of, "laß dich willig finden." (let yourself be found willing) (line 5011), it is evident that there is some doubt in Abraham's mind that Isaac will submit to God's desire. Further, when Abraham tells Isaac that he will be the sacrificial animal he says, "ich will dir zcu erst die henndt byndenn" (I want to bind your hands first) (line 5012). In midrashic exegesis and in both the Yiddish *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak,* it is Isaac who asks to be bound on the altar. In these texts, Isaac realizes that as a young man whose innate desire is to live; he may flinch and render himself unfit for sacrifice as a blemished creature, or he may try to disobey his father. Isaac proactively wishes to prevent this possibility, so he asks his father to bind him securely. [50] Abraham's fears are not realized, and the Isaac of the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* does prove himself obedient. Isaac demonstrates this before his impending death by saying, "widder gott will ich nitt streyden,/denn doitt will ich willig leydenn" (I do not want to fight against God/I shall willingly suffer death) (Lines 5015-16).

Abraham sets Isaac upon the altar and Abraham draws his sword, preparing to complete the deed. At this moment, the angel calls Abraham and halts the sacrifice in the traditional manner, telling him to sacrifice the ram in

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[50] Many *midrashim* comment on this. One example is found in *Genesis Rabbah* 56:8: "Another comment: R. Isaac said: When Abraham wished to sacrifice his son Isaac, he said to him: 'Father, I am a young man and am afraid that my body may tremble though fear of the knife and I will grieve thee, whereby the slaughter may be rendered unfit and this will not count as a real sacrifice; therefore bind me very firmly.' Forthwith, he bound Isaac." There is a similar interchange in the *Midrash Wayosha*.

Isaac's stead. The scene ends with the traditional blessing given to Abraham. The angel, Abraham, and Isaac return to their places, and the Prophet Ezekiel comes forward and addresses the audience. It is only from Ezekiel's monologue that Isaac's role in the play and the relevance of the title of this scene become evident.

Before discussing Ezekiel's speech, the large number of Latin quotes and directions contained in the text of this scene warrant discussion, as several manifest significant changes from the original Vulgate text. This scene contains nine Latin Biblical quotations in addition to the common Latin command to the audience for silence ("Silete!") prior to the beginning of the action, and the name of the site of the sacrifice, which is given in its Latinized form. The first citation, Abraham, Abraham! is printed before the first line of the play. The manuscript indicates the source text (Genesis 22). This is the only notation of a source text given in this scene, and would seem to indicate the location of the following Biblical texts for a reader.

The second Latin citation comes from Genesis 22:2 and is prior to line 4975 of the play, but is given in incomplete form. The line reads: "Tolle filium tuum, quem diligis, Ysaac, et vade in terram visionis" (Take thy son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision), leaving out the word 'unigenitum' (only) found in the Biblical text. The omission of this word is glaring. As discussed above, this concept of the 'only son' has prefigurative connotations, a topos of importance to the Passion Play author. The word is included at a later

point in a speech by Abraham, who refers to Isaac as, "Ysaac, meinen eingebornen soenn." (line 5006) (Isaac, my only son). The angel also uses it twice. He first uses this appellation when he halts the sacrifice, referring to Isaac as,"Ysaac, deinem einngebornnen soenn." (Line 5024) (Isaac, your only son) He then uses the term again (Line 5034) when he relates that God wishes to bless Abraham, because he did not want to spare his only son. This is also the same word that was used by Immessen in *Der Sündenfall* when God gave Abraham the command to sacrifice Isaac (v. 1910), and whose Christological associations were discussed above. I argue that this is an error on the part of the scribe or author, or that the source of the quotation is a variant form of the Vulgate. This description of Isaac is typologically too important to deviate from and evokes too many associations with Jesus to be intentionally omitted.

The next three Latin citations are all from Genesis 22:7, and are of little consequence. "Pater mi" (My father), found prior to line 4995, is directly from the Vulgate. "Fili, quid vis?" is a simple word order change of the Vulgate's "Quid vis, fili ?" [What wilt thou, son?], and is found prior to line 4996. Before the next line, the author has inserted: "Ecce, ignis et ligna", again leaving out a word, as he did prior to 4975. The Vulgate of Genesis 22:7 reads: "Ecce, inquit, ignis et ligna" (Behold, saith he, fire and wood). Here the word 'inquit' [saith he] was deleted - an insignificant change, as it is obvious who is speaking. The Latin before line 4999 reads: "Deus providebit sibi victimam "(God will provide himself a victim, which is unchanged from Genesis 22:8 in the Vulgate.

The seventh Latin citation does not appear until prior to line 5018, and is of greater significance. Here the text reads: "Assum, Assum". Assum is merely an alternate form of the same Latin word used in the Vulgate in Genesis 22: 11, "Adsum" (here I am), but here there is a repetition that warrants further examination. In the Vulgate and Masoretic texts, the angel calls Abraham's name twice in 22:11, and Abraham responds once. In the retelling of this passage in the *Heidelberger Passsionsspiel*, Abraham's name is called three times, and prior to line 5018, Abraham responds twice in the Latin citation, yet only once in the actual German text of the play ("Hie bin ich gehorsamer mann" - I, obedient man, am here). It is possible that the author wished to be certain that he got the audience's attention, and therefore increased the repetition of certain key words. Possibly, he wished to emphasize these utterances. We can only posit the rationale behind such liberties, which result in contradictions between the Bible and the text. Nevertheless, this lack of fidelity to Genesis 22 and the lack of conformity of the Latin and German texts constitute a weakness of the play for the knowledgeable reader/viewer.

The quotation prior to line 5019 reads, "Non extendas manum tuam super puerum, neque facias illj quicquam" (Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou any thing to him). This is unchanged from the Vulgate except for the use of an alternate spelling of 'quidquam' instead of 'quicquam'.

The name given to the location of the sacrifice is in Latin prior to line 5027 as "Dominus vidit", which is a more significant change. The Vulgate Genesis

22:14 reads: "Appellavitque nomen loci illius, Dominus videt. Unde usque hodie dicitur: In monte Dominus videbit." (And he called the name of that place, The Lord seeth. Whereupon even to this day it is said: In the mountain the Lord will see.) The site's name is in the third person, present, active singular form, and then the text gives the name that the site is called 'until today' in the third person, future, active, singular form (videbit). The Passion Play author has given the name only once, the first time when Abraham names it. In the Latin of the Passion Play, the name is given in the third person, perfect, active, singular form, however the German name given the site in the text is different. It is "der here sichts" (the Lord sees) (line 5030) - the third person, present, active, singular form is used. These are all subtle, but curious deviations from the Vulgate text. Again, as in the second Latin citation of the play, the author should have focused more on the future significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac. According to Christian exegetical tradition, this site being named is also where Christ would later be crucified. I hypothesize that the use of the name in the future tense, as is mentioned in Genesis 22:14, would have given this site a more typologic connotation. The Latin use of the perfect tense indicates that an act has been completed. The German use of the present tense indicates that the event is happening at that time, which indeed is the case in the play. However, it is possible that the author intended his use of the present tense to indicate a future

action, as this is a use of the present tense in Middle High German and in Modern German.[51]

The dual Biblical naming of this site is an example, according to Christian typologic thought, of the present/past as an indication of the future - that what occurred/was occurring was only a foretelling of what was yet to come. The sacrifice of Abraham's only son Isaac on this site was a shadow of the future sacrifice of God's only son Jesus on this same site. The author thus did not fully realize this opportunity to reinforce the typology of the scene by utilizing the present tense in the name of this site in the directions and text of the play. He should have used the Latin future tense, 'videbit' in the stage directions.

The last Latin citation is found prior to line 5031. It reads: " Per memetipsum iuraui, dicit dominus : quia fecistj hanc rem" (By my own self have I sworn, saith the Lord: because thou hast done this thing). This is unchanged from the Genesis 22:16 in the Vulgate.

The purpose of the variation between the Latin text of the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* and the text of the Vulgate remains unknown. This is the only extant copy of the text, so that we are unable to compare other versions to determine if these variations are a result of scribal error, authorial intent, or if the author or scribe copied them from a variant text of the Vulgate. Unless the latter is the case, they cast a shadow upon Linke's theory, that the Latin citations add

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[51] Scott Shay, *Middle High German Verbs* (Wardja Press, 2006) 17.

veracity to the work. If the citations are not correct, they would have had just the opposite effect upon any knowledgeable readers or audience members. Furthermore, the deviation in the number of word repetitions also detracts from the fidelity of the play due to its lack of faithfulness to the source text, despite the fact that this may be a rhetorical device for an illiterate public. This aspect of the play is a weakness inherent in the work, despite its possible dramatic or exegetical intent.

At the end of the segment concerning the Sacrifice of Isaac, Ezekiel speaks to the audience and explicitly draws the typologic comparison of Isaac willingly carrying the wood upon which he was to die, as told in Genesis 22, and Jesus willingly carrying the cross on which he would die to redeem mankind as related in the Gospels:

> ir habtt gesehen hubsch und schonn,
> wie Ysaac, Abrahams soynn,
> gehorsamlich und unuerzcagenn
> hoitt uff seinen achs selenn getragen
> das holcz, dar uff er leydenn woltt
> denn doitt, sollichs ir suchenn soltt
> im buch Genesis, so stett es geschrieben
> ann dem zwey unnd zweinczigsten teyl woll becliben.
> also wirt komen demuttuglich
> Ihesus, gottes soenn vonn himellrych,
> und wirt das creutz uff der achsselenn tragen,
> als unns die evangelistenn sagenn,
> der ann leydet er williglich denn doitt
> unnd erloist den menschen uß noitt. (Lines 5045-5058)

> (You have seen 'nice and neat',
> how Isaac, Abraham's son,
> obediently and unhesitatingly
> has born on his shoulders

the wood upon which he was to suffer
death, if you were to seek it
in the book of Genesis, it is written
in the twenty-second part. It is found that
thus will humbly come
Jesus, God's son from the kingdom of heaven,
and will carry the cross on his shoulders,
as the Evangelists tell us,
upon which he willingly suffers death
and redeems mankind from distress)

This speech underlines the typologic connection as the primary function of this segment and clarifies the title of the scene, so that the audience need not draw conclusions. It even gives the location of the Old Testament text for the edification of the audience, should they wish to read it in the Bible. Ezekiel's speech also indicates that Isaac is the focus in this scene and foregrounds Isaac's carrying the wood as the sign of the prefiguration. Although Isaac's role appears to be minor in comparison to that of Abraham, particularly as he had far fewer lines in the play, Ezekiel's speech establishes Isaac's prominence.

In this depiction of the Sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham and his obedience/dilemma remain in the background. There is no mention of a test of either Abraham or Isaac. The playwright does not seek to evoke pathos or elicit emotion in depicting the act that Abraham is to carry out. Some extra-Biblical material is used, but not a great deal . Also, there is no presumption of prior knowledge on the part of the audience. This foregrounds the fact that this is primarily a prefigurative scene used for didactic purposes.

Chapter 4: Martin Luther and the German Protestant Treatments of the Sacrifice of Isaac

Die Reformation brachte einen neuen religiösen Inhalt, aber keine neue weltliche Kultur…alle Kunstform steht unter der Herrschaft der konfessionellen Tendenz und soll nur dem kirchlichen Kampfe dienen. Für eine Generation verzichtete der Deutsche willig auf künstlerischen Lebensinhalt, weil das Religiöse ihn fest im Bann hielt.[1]

(The Reformation introduced new religious content, but no new secular culture... all art forms are subject to a confessional tendency and are to serve only in the struggle of the Church. For an entire generation, Germans willingly renounced artistic content, because religion held them firmly under its spell.)

Schuldramen

Schuldramen are easily staged texts with a moralizing and didactic intent,

intended for a younger audience. The first School dramas performed were

classical Latin dramas, particularly those of Terence, and to a lesser extent

Plautus. The Humanists and their admiration of Latin were influential in this

choice.[2] The Humanist interest in Latin and the study of philology and classical

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[1] Wolfgang Stammler, *Von der Mystik zum Barock*, II/1 (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlerische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1950) 303-4. Stammler titles this chapter "Lutherische Pause".

A discussion of the literature of the Reformation and the progression from Medieval to Reformation drama is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For further information, see: Barbara Könneker, *Die deutsche Literatur der Reformationszeit* (München: Winkler Verlag, 1975)7-84; Wolfgang Michael, *Das deutsche Drama der Reformationszeit* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984);Thomas Bacon, *Martin Luther and the Drama* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976).

[2] For further information on the study of Terence during the Reformation and on the influence of his works, see: Creiznach, *Geschichte* vol. II. 88-140. Hans Mangold, *Studien zu den ältesten Bühnenverdeutschungen des Terenz* (Halle an d. Saale, 1912) rpt. Walluf: Sändig, 1972. On the development of Humanist religious drama and its goals, see: James Parente, *Religious Drama*

literature was based on Ciceronian Latin, the means of attaining written and

spoken eloquence. [3] Furthermore, Latin was still the international language of

the educated, and was an important part – if not the most important part - of the

school curriculum.[4] Staging the comedies in their original language afforded

students practice in Latin, memorization,[5] diction, bodily agility,[6] and instruction in

proper moral and ethical conduct. Despite the fact that there were often

obscenities and inappropriate conduct in some of the Latin dramas, they

foregrounded the importance of marriage and faithfulness. To Luther, this was of

paramount importance. Many of the Old Testament themes such as Abraham,

Jacob, Esther, Tobias and Susanna, typically chosen for dramatic depiction in

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and the Humanist Tradition: Christian Theater in Germany and in the Netherlands 1500-1680 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987).

[3] Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987) 38. "The strongly cosmopolitan aura of humanism is, or course, particularly well instanced in the case of Erasmus, who regarded himself as a citizen of the world, and treated languages other than Latin with disdain… [Erasmus] regarded national boundaries and languages as impediments in the path of humanist ideals." McGrath's work also contains a wealth of information on the influence of humanism on the Reformation.

[4] P. Expeditus Schmidt, *Die Bühnenverhältnisse des deutschen Schuldramas und seiner volkstümlichen Ableger im sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin:Verlag von Alexander Duncker, 1903) 7-8. "Latein zu sprechen, war das Unterrichtsziel der Zeit, und zwar das einzige." (To speak Latin was the educational goal of the time, indeed, the only one.) This was clearly the goal of the Swabian educational system as expressed in the School Ordinance of 1543.

[5] P.E. Schmidt 20. Training in memorization was almost as important a goal of humanist education as was skill in the use of Latin. "Das Gedächtnis und immer wieder das Gedächtnis mußte beim Lateinbetrieb der Humanisten die erste Rolle spielen." (Memory, and again, and again memory, had to play the most important role in the Latin education of the humanists.)

[6] Joseph Gillet, "Über den Zweck des Schuldramas in Deutschland im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 17 (1918) 73-6. Gillet demonstrates the emphasis on this aspect for the students, although it is something that, to the modern reader, may appear as an unusual dramatic goal.

newly composed Reformation *Schuldramen,* follow Luther's interest and stress

the importance of family and marriage. This stands in contrast to the Fastnacht

plays which often depict unfaithful husbands and wives, and which Luther did not

approve of. This may be the reason that Luther never mentioned his ardent

supporter Hans Sachs, famous for his Fastnacht Plays. [7]

The Latin school plays were very popular during the Reformation, and

many towns and schools mandated their production and performance.[8] New

plays were composed, mostly on Biblical themes, and, as always, with a

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[7] Bacon 60-4. Bacon discusses the fact that Luther seems to have undergone a change of opinion in his approval of dramas. Prior to the 1530's he approved only of dramas that demonstrated models of exemplary behavior. Thereafter there appeared to be an emphasis on stressing the importance of marriage. Bacon also points out that Luther comments that the Latin dramas show the various societal stations in life, and how to recognize and maintain them - a medieval concept that Luther held fast to.

[8] Hugo Holstein, *Die Reformation im Spiegelbild der dramatischen Literatur des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Nieuwkoop, B. De Graaf, 1967, rpt. Halle, 1886) 33-34. Such ordinances were found in Nördlingen, Zwickau, and Eisleben, among others. P.E. Schmidt 8-18. Schmidt cites ordinances in many other cities as well. Sandor Giovanoli, *Form und Funktion des Schuldramas im 16. Jahrhundert : Eine Untersuchung zu Rudolf Gwalthers "Nabal "* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundman, 1980) 12. The major and most famous German centers of the School Drama were: Strassburg, Zurich, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Vienna, Zwickau, Chemnitz, Meissen, Wittemberg, Magdeburg, Nordhausen, Güstrow, and Zittau. Italy, Spain, France, Denmark, and Bohemia also had a similar tradition of the School Drama. Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas,* Bd. 2 (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1959) 314-26. Kindermann provides more information about the tradition of the *Schuldrama* in some of these towns, particularly in Strassburg. Goedeke, Bd. 2 379, mentions that there was, however, continual disapproval of 'heathen' subject matter. The school ordinance of 1581 in Augsburg granted approval for the performance of three school dramas. Assuming that the plays would be based on a classical theme, the town Meistersänger protested, and they reminded the town authorities that their performance of 'heathen' fables and histories had been banned since 1534 and that Biblical subjects had been substituted for them. Joseph Gillet, "The German Dramatist of the Sixteenth Century and His Bible" *PMLA*, 34 (1919) 473-5. The converse was also true, however, and some objected to the Biblical plays. These critics felt that the place of Scripture was in the pulpit. Kindermann 304, there was also objection to the performance of School dramas in German. The School Ordinances of Nordhausen (1583) permitted performances in German only on Fastnacht. P.E. Schmidt 24-5. The first School Ordinance specifically allowing both German and Latin school dramas was that of Magdeburg in the year 1553. This was the town where Joachim Greff, the last author to be discussed, was the schoolmaster. Later, in 1589, Aschersleben's ordinance specified this as well. Many towns held fast to the Latin tradition into the seventeenth century.

pedagogic intent. As time went on, there were also performances for the enjoyment and edification of the parents and public, not just for students.[9] As a concession to the less highly educated, the *Schuldramen* also gradually evolved into plays in the vernacular. Sometimes on the next day there was a production of a Latin play in the vernacular.[10] Once this occurred, citizens were occasopnally included in the plays. Some citizens even produced plays. This blurs the distinction between the genres of the *Schuldrama* and the *Volksdrama*.[11]

Traditionally, clerics or teachers, who viewed the writing of such plays as an extension of their academic and/or clerical activity, composed school dramas. Most plays were first written in Latin and then translated into German. Most utilized Biblical themes and Reformation theology. Gradually, the vernacular became a language for writing school dramas as well. A few of the Latin dramas were translated into German, such as Plautus's *Aulularia*, which was translated and produced in Magdeburg in 1535 by Joachim Greff, whose drama Sacrifice of Isaac drama will be discussed below.[12] There were some new vernacular dramas

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[9] Kindermann 304. Admission was charged or donations solicited at these performances. In this way, funds were raised for the school and for the poorer pupils. The teachers who were responsible for the performances also received a portion of the proceeds.

[10] Kindermann 307. This practice began in Zittau in the mid-sixteenth century, with other towns soon following suit.

[11] P.E. Schmidt 35. Schmidt emphasizes the difference between the two in that the *Volksdrama* emphasized the dramatic elements whereas the *Schuldrama* emphasized the declamatory aspect. This topic will be discussed again below in relation to Joachim Greff's work.

[12] The full title of Greff's drama is: *Ein schöne Lustige Comedia des Poeten Plauti / Alularia genant / Durch Joachimum Greff von Zwickau Deudsch gemacht / vnd inn reim verfasset / fast lustig und kurtzweilig zu lesen. Magdeburg, gegeben zu Magdeburg / im Jar 1535. 8º (Ratsschulbibliothek Zwickau).*

based on classical themes, but for the most part, the religious zeal of the times

forced these to fade into the backround. Catholic legends and the lives of the

saints were also not topics esteemed by the Reformers, and neither was the

Passion itself. This further focused the choice of suitable dramatic themes on the

ethical and moral lessons of the Bible, particularly those of the Old Testament.

By altering the subject matter and focus of their plays, the Reformers were able

to adapt drama as a means of influencing the public.

The tendentious nature of Reformation drama is well known. The

Reformers did not focus on the art and form of their dramas, but rather on the

message. The use of an announcer evidences the epic intent of the *Schuldrama*.

This character tells the entire story of the play at its very beginning, removing the

suspense and dramatic tension. This enables the audience to focus on the

moral/didactic aspect of the play.[13] Joachim Greff's dramas often include music

and song between the acts, reminiscent of the chorus found in epic Greek

drama. However, as compared to modern epic drama such as that of Brecht, the

school dramas characteristically have little social critique other than in their

moralizing, religious intent. [14] As the *Schuldramen* expanded in scope and

audience, they were not only an educational program of the schools, but became

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[13] For further information on the genre of the Reformation *Schuldrama* see: Holstein 31-65 and Stammler, *Von der Mystik zum Barock* 353-91.

[14] Wedler 159. The influence of both Humanism and the Reformation theologians on academe is documented in Friedrich Roth, *Der Einfluß des Humanismus und der Reformation auf das gleichzeitige Erziehungs- und Schulwesen bis in die ersten Jahrzehnte nach Melanchthons Tod* (Halle: Max Niemeyer 1898).

an extension of the church pulpit, a "Schule des christlichen Lebens" (school of Christian life).[15]

Hans Sachs, the next author discussed, wrote a number of Biblically based school dramas, but composed them exclusively in the vernacular. As opposed to other such dramas, those by Sachs are less expansive, with shorter dialogues. He intended his dramas to be more entertaining than the average presentation. For the most part, *Schuldramen* reflect the engagement of their authors with the religious changes of the time rather than with the aesthetic aspects of their work.

Luther and the Drama

The *Schuldrama* was a genre that Luther specifically approved of:

Comödien zu spielen soll man um der Knaben in der Schule willen nicht wehren, sondern gestatten und zulassen, erstlich daß sie sich üben in der latainischen Sprache; zum Andern, daß in Comödien fein künstlich erdichtet, abgemalet und fürgestellt werden solche Personen, dadurch die Leute unterrichtet, und ein Iglicher seines Amts und Standes erinnert und vermahnet werde, was einem Knecht, Herrn, jungen Gesellen und Alten gebühre, wol anstehe und was er thun soll, ja, es wird darinnen furgehalten und fur die Augen gestellt aller Dignitäten Grad, Aemter und Gebühre, wie sich Iglicher in seinem Stande halten soll im äußerlichen Wandel, wie in einem Spiegel. Zudem werden darinnen beschrieben und angezeigt die listigen Anschläge und Betrug der bösen Bälge; desgleichen, was der Eltern und jungen Knaben Amt sey, wie sie ihre Kinder und junge Leute zum Ehestande ziehen und halten, wenn es Zeit mit ihnen ist, und wie die Kinder den Eltern gehorsam seyen, und freien

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[15] Kindermann 303**.**

sollen etc. Solchs wird in Comödien furgehalten, welchs den sehr nütz und wol zu wissen ist. Denn zum Regiment kann man nicth kommen, mag auch dasselbige nicht erhalten, denn durch den Ehestand. Und Christen sollen Comödien nicht ganz und gar fliehen, drum dass bisweilen grobe Zoten in Buehlerey darinnen seyen, da man doch um derselben willen auch die Bibel nicht dürfte lese. Darum ist nichts, dass sie solchs furwenden und um der Ursache willen verbieten wollen, dass ein Christe nicht solche Comödien mögen lessen und spielen. [16]

(We should not prohibit, for the sake of the boys in the school,, the production of comedies but rather permit and allow them, first so that they may practice the Latin language, secondly, that they are instructed by such personages that are invented and portrayed in such comedies. Moreover, people will be reminded of their own office and status, that is, that they will be taught what is fitting for a servant, a lord, young man and elders, and what they are to do. Yes, the comedies show as in a mirror and present before one's eyes all types of dignities, offices and behavior, how each should comport themself according to their status. In addition, these comedies describe and show the cunning plots and deception of the brats. Similarly, the duty of the parents and young boys, how they are to educate their children and young people for marriage and when the time is appropriate, how children should obey their parents and should marry, etc. Such will be shown in comedies, which is very useful and good to know. Because one cannot be disciplined, and you cannot attain this other than through marriage. And Christians should not flee totally from comedies, because they contain at times coarse obscenities and illicit love, because if that were the case, one would also not be allowed to read the Bible. Therefore, there is no objection and cause to forbid that a Christian should read or play in such comedies.)

Luther was actually consulted on the performance of a Biblical play, and

his correspondence preserved. Joachim Greff, whose Isaac drama will be

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[16]WA *Tischreden* 1, nr. 867. Helmut Krause, *Die Dramen des Hans Sachs: Untersuchungen zur Lehre und Technik* (Berlin: Hofgarten Verlag, 1979) 44-45.

This statement by Luther was well known and often repeated. Similar comments were also made by Luther's colleagues. Holstein 75. Luther's statement was taken seriously by many school officials. Clerics and teachers vied for the privilege of having their Biblical dramas produced, and a flood of new, and often not good, Biblical dramas were written. Furthermore, these school dramas were also performed by the populace, further enhancing the 'reputation' of their authors and increasing the spread of the Biblical drama of the Reformation.

discussed below, had been the schoolmaster in Dessau since 1537. On Palm Sunday, 1543 he wished to produce his Biblical play "Ein Geistliches schönes newes spil / auff das heilige Osterfest gestellt / Darinnen werden gehandelt die geschicht võ der Aufferstehung Christi zu sampt der historien Thome. Auch warden gemelt etzliche rede Christi / hart fur seiner himmelfart geschehen. Zuletzt wird der Triumf Christi hirinnen auch angezeigt / was er durch seine Aufferstehung der gantzen Welt erworben vn aufgerichtet. Allen fromen Christen sehr tröstlich vnd lustig zu lessen. Durch Joachimum Greff von Czwickau" ('A religious, beautiful new play produced for the holy Easter Festival, The play contains the story of the resurrection of Christ together with the history of Thomas, also several speeches of Christ shortly before his heavenly ascent are given. Finally, the triumph of Christ is shown. What he has acquired and established by His resurrection for the entire world. This is consoling and edifying for all pious Christians to read. Authored by Joachim Greff of Czwickau'). This play is generally referred to as the "Osterspiel" ('Easter Play'). The Pastor, Severinus Star, and the deacon, Johann Brusch, disapproved. The dispute reached such fervor that it reached Prince Georg von Anhalt (1507-1553), who instructed Greff to travel to Wittenberg to seek the opinion of the Reformation leaders there. Luther and four others considered the matter of whether it was permissible to produce Biblical stories in rhyme in holy or secular sites for Christian audiences. In question was also the inclusion of music in these performances. All agreed that it was permissible and wrote letters to that effect.

On April 5, 1543, Luther composed a response to Greff's question,

addressing it to Fürst Georg zu Anhalt. Luther supported Greff, stating:

> Es hat der Schulmeister zu Dessau von mir begehrt… was ich davon hielte, Das der pfarrher vnd prediger die leute bewegten vnd vnruhig machten,da sie lieder vnd gesenge des palmentags vnd ander mehr Narren werck vnd Lotter reymen schelten. Solchs hore ich nicht gern…Solche neutralia, weil sie ynn vnschedlichen brauch vnd nicht ergerlich, Solt man lassen gehen."[17]
>
> (The schoolmaster of Dessau requested my opinion: what I thought of this, that the Pastor and Preacher excited the people and made them uneasy, that they should not sing the songs and recitatives of Palm Sunday, and other such foolish works and frivolous rhymes. I do not like to hear such things... such trifles, because they are a harmless custom and not upsetting, should be overlooked.)

 This action constituted an important vindication not only of Greff, but an

affirmation of the importance of Biblical drama.

Luther's opinion of Biblical drama stands in contrast to his disapproval of

the Passion Play. Due to their- prevalence, Luther was presumably familiar with

Passion Plays, particularly as performances took place in Wittenberg. There

were also documented performances in Magdeburg, where Luther attended the

cathedral school in his youth. There are also four sources dating from the

fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries documenting the production of *visitatio*

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[17] WA, *Briefwechsel* X, 286 Brief-Nr 3862. See introductory comments 284-5**.** Holstein 23-4. The other four opinions were rendered by Melanchthon (1497-1560), Georg Major (1502-1574), Rector of the Magdeburg Lateinschule; Hieronymus Nopus (d.1551), the pastor of Regensburg and colleague of Luther; and Paul Eber (1511-1569), the composer. All were in support of Greff and the performances of Biblical drama. It is to be noted that music was also permitted in conjunction with the performances. The responses of Nopus and Eber are reproduced in: G. Buchwald, "Zu dem Dessauer Streite über die Frage, ob der Christ Dichtungen und Schauspiele, welche biblische Stoffe behandeln, anhören und schauen dürfe," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken,* 59 (1886) 569-72. Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen**,** 2010. Web.18 September 2011**.**

sepulchri ('Visit to the Tomb') plays based on the Easter liturgy from Magdeburg
that have been preserved, attesting to the tradition in the Magdeburg cathedral. It
is probable that Luther participated in such performances during his school
days.[18]

Luther spoke about his critical view of the Passion Play in his 1519 "Eyn
Sermon von der Betrachtung des heyligen Leydens Christi" ('A Sermon on the
Meditation of the Holy Sufferings of Christ').[19] His critique extends to the fact that
such plays abuse theology and serve more to stir up emotions against the Jews
than to focus on the Passion of Christ. He also felt that the plays portrayed only a
superficial, unhealthy and sentimental depiction of the true Passion, and that it
was unnecessary to focus on the Passion in this manner.[20] Devotional
meditation was meritorious,[21] but the unreality depicted in a Passion Play was
merely a show that would not bring the viewer closer to God:

> Das heyssen auch rechte Christen, die Christus leben und namen also yn
> yhr leben zyhen, wie S. Paulus sagt: Die do Christo zugehören, die haben
> yhr fleysch mit allen seynen begirden gecreuztigt mit Christo . Dan
> Christus leyden muß nit mit worten und scheyn, sondern mit dem leben
> und wahrhafftig gehandelt werden. Szo vermant unß Sant Pauel:

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[18] Nils Holger Petersen, "Introduction," *The Arts and the Cultural Heritage of Martin Luther,* eds. Eyolf Østrem, Jens Fleischer and Nils Holger Petersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002) 13-14.

[19] WA, vol. 2, "Eyn Sermon von der Betrachtung des heyligen Leydens Christi" 136-42. *Luther's Works*, vol. 42 7-17. Pelikan titles this sermon "A Meditation on Christ's Passion."

[20] WA, vol. 2 "Eyn Sermon von der Betrachtung des heyligen Leydens Christi" 136. *Luther's Works*, vol 42 7.

[21] WA, vol. 2 "Eyn Sermon von der Betrachtung des heyligen Leydens Christi" 139 and WA, vol. 1, "Meditatio passionis eius [i.e. Christi] laudiatissimum est." 342. *Luther's Works*, vol 42 11.

Gendenkt an den, der eyn solchen widerstreyt von den bößen menschen erlyden hat, auff das iyr gesterckt und nit mat werdet in ewerm gemute. Und Sankt Petrus: Wie Christus yn seynem corper gelyden hat, ßo solt yhr euch mit solchem bedenken rusten unnd stercken. Aber diße betrachtung ist auß der weyße kummen und seltzam worden, der doch die Epistolen S. Paul und Petrus voll seynd. Wir haben das weßen in eynen schyen vorwandelt und das leyden Christi bedenken alleyn auf die brieff und an die wend gemalet.

(Those who thus make Christ's life and name a part of their lives are true Christians. St. Paul says, "Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with all its desires" [Gal. 5:24]. Christ's passion must be met not with words or forms, but with life and truth. Thus Saint Paul exhorts us, "Consider him who endured such hostility from evil people against himself, so that you may be strengthened and not be weary at heart" [Heb. 12:3]. And St. Peter, "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, strengthen and arm yourselves by meditating on this" [I Pet. 4:1]. However, such meditation has become rare, although the letters of St. Paul and St. Peter abound with it. We have transformed the essence into semblance and painted our meditations on Christ's passion on walls and made them into letters.[22])

According to Luther, one should not brood upon the suffering and the Passion to evoke pathos, for no identification with the suffering of Christ is humanly possible. Instead, the good Christian should be rejoicing in the resurrected Christ.[23] Moreover, Luther speaks of preparing and strengthening oneself when thinking of the crucifixion. He later, in 1527, denounced the Corpus Christi Play as well, citing similar reasons.[24] Further, Protestants in general showed reluctance to impersonate Christ in plays, especially in his dying hours. They considered it too big a personal responsibility to play the role of God, even

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[22] WA, vol. 2, "Eyn Sermon von der Betrachtung des heyligen Leydens Christi" 141-2. *Luther's Works*, vol. 42, "A Meditation on Christ's Passion" 14.

[23] WA, vol. 2, "Eyn Sermon von der Betrachtung des heyligen Leydens Christi" 140-2

[24] WA, vol 17, p.t.2 437-8. Gillet, "The German Dramatist" 486. Other Reformers commented that the concept of the Passion was too great a suffering to be borne. How much more so, then, was its representation.

in a dramatic presentation.[25] Due to Luther's disapproval, the Passion Play lost

much of its favor, and was relegated to the Catholic south. This became a

source of differentiation between Protestant and Catholic drama.

Despite Luther and the Reformers' view of the Passion Play, Joachim

Greff was still interested in writing such a work. Greff was one of the few to have

kind words for the medieval Passion Play:

> Unser lieben vorfahren haben gut gemeint vorzeiten
> Mit dem spiel der Passion
> wolten uns zu andacht und fromigkeit reizen[26]

> (Our dear ancestors had good intentions years ago
> In depicting the Passion.
> They wanted to incite us towards devotion and piety.)

Greff actually asked Luther's advice about writing such a play, and Luther

advised against it. Greff discusses this in the Prologue to his "Osterspiel":

> Weiter hab ich allererst / noch nicht für ein jar / den joch vnd Ehrwirdigen
> vnsern lieben vatern / Hern Doctor Martinum Luther selbs auch hierüber
> zu radt gefragt / da ich nie dann gewis furgesetz / seinem rad vnd Geiste
> Hierin zu folgen / vnd darbey zu beharen / Hat mir sein Achtbar Ehrwirde /
> gantz gleicher weise geantwortet / Nemlich das doch nichts anders / dan
> ein lechery (wie man dann erfaren) daraus werden würde.[27]

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[25] Gillet "The German Dramatist" 490-2.

[26] Joachim Greff, *Aulularia* Cited in Gillet, "The German Dramatist" 488. For further information on Greff and the Passion Play see: Andrea Seidel, "Joachim Greff und das protestantische Schauspiel", unpublished dissertation (Halle, 1994) 22-25. All translations of Greff's works are mine unless otherwise noted.

[27] Reprinted in: Seidel 161. R. Buchwald 23. Years earlier Greff had been advised against writing a Passion Play by Nicholaus Hausman (c.1479- 1538), a Zwickau theologian and friend of Martin Luther.

> (Further, I have asked for advice, less than a year ago, from our respected and dear Father, Herr Doctor Martin Luther himself, since I intended to follow his advice and his spirit persistently. The esteemed and honorable [Dr. Martin Luther] answered me promptly and sagaciously. Namely, that is that nothing but letchery (as one has since heard) will occur.)

Because of Luther's advice, Greff wrote only the "Osterspiel" and not a full Passion Play.

Hans Sachs, an ardent follower of Luther, was]] interested in writing a Passion Play as well. Despite Luther's negative view of the Passion Play, Sachs wrote the only central German Protestant adaptation of a Passion Play, "Passion Christi" in 1558, which was after Luther's death in 1546.[28]   This play is preserved in multiple versions, ranging from the handwritten version mentioned above to Sachs's last version, "Der Paßion Christi" in the folio edition of Sachs's works of 1561.[29] However, there is a difference, as Ehrstine points out, between the Medieval and Reformation treatments of the Passion. The medieval depictions invariably focus on the mysteries of the Passion, which take place outside the normal human realm. Emphasis in the Protestant treatments is on the historicity of the events, not the mystery inherent in them.[30]

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[28] Ehrstine 23.

[29] Karl Polheim, *Das Admonter Passionsspiel: Textausgabe, Faksimileausgabe, Untersuchungen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1980). Polheim produces a critical edition of Sachs's Passion Play and includes references to the Keller/Goetze edition of Sachs's works in the third volume of his work. He also analyzes all of the versions of Sachs's play. Sachs's Passion Play appears in the KG edition in volume XI 256-311, and was printed according to a normalized version of the folio edition. The KG edition has received much criticism, and not only from Polheim, whose edition is far more thorough.

[30] Ehrstine 26. Michael, *Reformationszeit.* See pp. 347-349, for a discussion of this drama.

Luther and the Old Testament

Luther viewed the Passion Plays negatively, however, he was in favor of depicting the stories of the Old Testament. For him, the Bible and its two Testaments were the living word of God. Luther did not base his interpretation on philology or scientific examination. Likewise, objectivity and scholarly detachment did not form the basis for Luther's Bible study. His was a spiritual approach. It was grounded in the conviction of the Bible as God's word, which was as valid and alive in the time of the prophets and apostles as it was for him and his time. People were to engage with the words and acts of God and His prophets by meditation and as guidance throughout life's trials. Knowledge of the Bible and its depiction were of paramount importance. Throughout his career, Luther therefore lectured on the Bible to his students and congregants, as well as interpreting its texts in his writings. In spite of the many seeming difficulties and questions about God's word, the Bible had to 'speak' directly to the people, just as it did to Luther.[31]

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[31]See the persuasive discussion of John Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2008).

Luther had a strong interest in the Old Testament itself, and this is one of

the reasons for the great number of Reformation dramas based on its stories.

Heinrich Bornkamm stresses this interest in the Old Testament, noting that:

> Wenn man Luthers damals einheitliche biblische Professur in die heute
> üblichen beiden Fächer aufteilen könnte, so müßte man Luther viel eher
> einen Professor der altestamentlichen Exegese nennen denn der
> neutestamentlichen. Von seiner zweiundreißigjährigen Vorlesungstätigkeit
> hat er drei bis vier Jahre dem neuen Testament gewidmet, den Rest dem
> Alten Testament. Während er seine Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments
> in der Wartburgstille in einem Vierteljahr fertigstellen konnte, hat ihn die
> viel schwierigere und umfangreichere des Alten Testaments zehn (mit den
> Apokryphen fast zwölf) Jahre, natürlich mit großen Unterbrechungen, in
> Anspruch genommen.[32]

> (If one could divide Luther's professorship of the Bible, in his time united,
> into two fields as now done, one would have to call Luther a professor of
> Old Testament rather than of New Testament exegesis. He devoted only
> three or four years to the New Testament out of his thirty-two year career
> as a lecturer and all of the rest was spent on the Old Testament. He was
> able to complete his translation of the New Testament within three months
> in the quietude of the Wartburg, but the more difficult and extensive Old
> Testament took him ten (with the Apocrypha almost twelve) years, though
> often interrupted.[33])

Luther spent six years preaching sermons derived from the Old Testament

to his Wittenberg congregation. These sermons were primarily from the books of

Genesis and the Psalms, because Luther considered these the richest treasury

of the Gospel in the Old Testament.[34] They emphasized Luther's view of the unity

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[32] Bornkamm *Luther und das Alte Testament* 6.

[33] Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, ed. Victor Gruhn, trans. Eric and Ruth Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) 7-8. All translations of this work are from the English version.

[34] Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament* 7.

of the Testaments as God's word, law, and his view of the New Testament as the

fulfillment, not the negation of the Old Testament.

The belief that the Old Testament foretold and promised salvation, but that

the New superseded it, was evident in Luther's "Lectures on Deuteronomy" of

1525. There Luther expressed his Christological approach in the following

manner:

> Indicat hic Moses differentiam testament novi et veteris. Testamentum novum est vetustissimum ab initio mundi promissum, imo ante tempora saecularia, ut Paulus ad Titum loquitur, sed tantum sub Christo impletum. Vetus testamentum sub Mose promissum, sub Iosue impletum est. Est autem haec utriusque differentia, quod novum nititur sola promissione miserntis et fidelis dei sine nostris operibus, vetus autem nititur et nostris opiribus [sic]… Ideo Mose, latius non promittit, quam donec servent statua et iura. Quae causa fuit, ut ipsum antiquari tandem et aboleri oportuerit et figuram gerere novi et aeterni illius testamenti, quod ante saecula incepit et post saecula durabit. Illud autem in tempore coepit et post tempus aliquod defecit.
>
> (Here Moses points out the difference between the New and the Old Testament. The New Testament is the older one, promised from the beginning of the world, yes, "before the times of the world" as St. Paul says to Titus [1:2], but fulfilled only under Christ. The Old Testament, promised under Moses, was fulfilled under Joshua. However, there is this difference between the two: the New Testament is founded wholly on the promise of the merciful and faithful God without our works; but the Old Testament is founded also on our works… The promises of Moses, therefore, do not last longer than the statutes and judgments serve. For this reason the Old Testament finally had to become obsolete and had to be put aside; it had to serve as a prefiguration of that New and eternal Testament which began before the ages and will endure before the ages. The Old Testament, however, began in time and after a time came to an end.[35])

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[35] WA 14, 602-3. Translation taken from: Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, ed. Victor Gruhn trans. Eric and Ruth Gritsch, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) 81.

Luther also found literary inspiration in several of the Biblical books. In the preface to his translation of the apocryphal books of Judith and Tobit, Luther commented that these books appeared to him to be religious poems.[36] He also spoke of the Book of Judith in his Tischreden (Table Talks):

> Aus allen Historien der h. Schrift kann ich nicht nehmen, daß das Buch Judith eine Historie sey; dazu wird auch darinne nicht das Land angezeigt, in welche es geschehen soll seyn; sondern wie die Legenden der Heiligen gemacht sind, also ist auch dieses Poema und Gedicht gemacht von einem frommen Mann, auf das er lehrte, daß fromme gottfürchtige Leute unter welchem Judith, das ist, das Königreich der Jüden[sic], in welchem man Gott bekannte, dem Holferne obsiegete, uberwunden, das ist, all Reiche der Welt; und daß alle Tyrannen ein solch Ende bekämen, und gehet ihnen, wie Holfernes, nehmlich daß sie von einem Weibe erwürget warden und umkommen… Darum dünkt mich, Judith sey ein Tragödia und Spiel, darinnen beschrieben und angezeigt wird, was fur ein Ende Tyrannen nehmen.[37]

> (The book of Judith is not a history. It accords not with geography. I believe it is a poem, like the legends of the saints, composed by some good man, to the end he might show how Judith, a personification of the Jews, as God-fearing people, by whom God is known and confessed, overcame and vanquished Holofernes - that is, all the kingdoms of the world. 'Tis a figurative work, like that of Homer about Troy, and that of Virgil about Aeneas, wherein is shown how a great prince ought to be adorned with surpassing valor, like a brave champion, with wisdom and understanding, great courage and alacrity, fortune, honor, and justice. It is a tragedy, setting forth what the end of tyrants is.[38]

Luther also remarked:

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[36]*Luthers Vorreden zur Bible*, ed. Heinrich Bornkamm, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1989) 147-9, 154-6.

[37] WA, *Tischreden* Bd 1 208. Parente 77-80. Parente states that this is only a passage of Luther's cited by Saxon playwrights such as Greff and Paul Rebhun (c.1505-1546) to justify their new plays. Parente maintains that Luther himself actually never openly spoke in favor of Biblical dramas. This seems contrary to the position held by most other scholarship and of the support, discussed below, that Luther and his colleagues lent to Greff.

[38] *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, ed. and trans. William Hazlitt (London: Bell & Daldy, 1872) 11.

> Aber der Text Susanne, des Beel, Abacuc vnd Drachens, sihet auch schönen, geistlichen getichten gleich, wie Judith vnd Tobias, Denn die namen lauten auch dazu, Als Susanna, heist eine Rosen, das ist ein schön from land vnd volck, oder armer hauffe vunter den dornen, Daniel heist ein Richter, vnd so fort an, ist alles leichtlich zu deuten auff eine Policey, economy oder fromen hauffen der glaubigen....[39]

> (But the text of Susannah, Bel, Habakuk and the Dragon, is similar tobeautiful religious poetry, like Judith and Tobias, For also the names allude to this, Susannah is also a rose, that is a beauty in the land and people, or a poor heap among the thorns. Daniel means the judge, and so on. All is easily to interpret as a policy, economy or pious congregation of believers...)

This, together with Luther's great devotion to educational reform, explains Luther's support and encouragement of the Protestant Biblical drama.

Hans Sachs, Luther, and Biblical Drama

Hans Sachs (1494-1576), the most prolific and diverse writer of the Reformation, was greatly influenced by his surroundings. The Reformation, in particular, exerted a major spiritual influence upon Sachs, as his writings reflect. He received a strict Catholic upbringing. His eight years of formal schooling was with the clerics of the Spitalschule, one of Nuremberg's Latin schools. At the age of fifteen, he became a shoemaker's apprentice, and embarked on his dual career as an artisan and writer. Sachs's biography and his literary legacy are well

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[39] WA, *Bibel*, Bd. 12, 492.

known, but his spiritual life and influence in the religious sphere have received less attention.[40]

Sachs first encountered Luther's teachings in 1520, and was immediately interested in Luther's ideas.[41] Nuremberg was a hotbed of social, political and religious discussion and writing, exposing Sachs to all of the prominent contemporary proponents of religious freedom, social equality, and reform. By 1522, Sachs was already in possession of forty writings of Luther and his supporters. Sachs was so involved with the new religious teachings, that between 1520 and 1523 he wrote no literary works. His first work after this period was one devoted to the new teaching, the poem "wittembergisch nachtigall" ('The Nightingale of Wittenberg'), which expounds Luther's teachings in allegorical form. The poet likens the teachings of Luther to the song of a bird that proclaims the conclusion of spiritual night and the dawn of a new day.[42] Sachs was thus one of the first in Nuremberg who publically allied himself with Luther and his teachings, even before the official acceptance of the Reformation in Nuremberg in 1525.

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[40] There are many good studies of Hans Sachs and his works. In addition to the numerous surveys of German Literature in which Sachs is included, the reader is referred to: Barbara Könneker, *Hans Sachs* (Stuttgart L Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1971 and an older, but comprehensive bibliography: Niklas Holzberg, *Hans-Sachs-Bibliographie* (Nürnberg: Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, 1976).

[41] Klaus Wedler, *Hans Sachs* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1974) 47. Wedler dates Sachs's first contact with Luther's writings to 1518.

[42] KG, VI 368-86.

Over the next several years, Sachs focused on spreading the word of the Reformation. By 1527 Sachs had composed eight songs for the Church, some of which were still found in hymnals until the seventeenth century, a reworking of thirteen Psalms in the vernacular, conversions of entire portions of both the Old and New Testaments into *Meisterlieder*, and his important *Prosadialoge,* which treat a variety of religious and social topics.[43] Sachs was one of the pre-eminent champions of Lutheran teaching, publicizing Luther's message in his own works. During the period of 1523-27, his activity earned Sachs the epithet of, "das Sprachrohr Luthers" (Luther's megaphone).[44]

Sachs's dramatic output is prolific, and nearly one third of his dramas encompass Biblical themes, the majority of which draw from the Old Testament. Most of the Biblical dramas are from the second of the three periods of Sachs's dramatic production, from 1545-56.[45] In addition to this, Sachs was the first among the dramatists of the sixteenth century to use the terms 'actus' and 'tragoedia' and to include a cast of characters ordered partially by status and partially by order of appearance.[46]

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[43] Könneker, *Hans Sachs* 1-10. A more detailed account of Sachs's initial involvement with Lutheran doctrine can be found in: Frances Ellis, *Hans Sachs Studies I; Das Walt got: A Meisterlied* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1941) Ellis 24-28.

[44] Erika Kartschoke, "Vorwort", *Hans Sachs: Studien zur frühbürgerlichen Literatur im 16. Jahrhundert* (New York: Peter Lang, 1978) 7.

[45]Könneker, *Hans Sachs* 52. The three periods of Sachs's dramatic creativity are: 1527-36, 1545-56, and 1556-65. During the first period, most of Sachs's dramas were based on themes taken from classical antiquity and showed more Humanist influence and allegorization than those of the later periods.

[46] Könneker, *Hans Sachs* 52.

The Biblical dramas of Hans Sachs draw on much of the same material as do the Passion Plays; however, they do so with different and more 'modern' staging techniques. Sachs no longer used the *Simultanbühne* of the medieval drama, but availed himself of one stage (*Sukzessivbühne)* with defined acts and stage directions that instructed the actors to leave or enter the stage only when they had a role to play. The *Simultanbühne* had entailed the simultaneous use of more than one stage at the same time. All of the stages used in a medieval Passion Play, which were usually held in the market place, in the church or in the area in front of the church, were visible all of the time. The actors were often in their places throughout the play, even when they did not have a role in the current action. They were visible to the audience, as there was no theatrical curtain.

In part, Sachs's rejection of the *Simultanbühne* was because theater now took place indoors in smaller, more confined areas. In part, it was because Sachs wanted no illusions in his dramas. Hence, his works have no instructions for scenery or scenery changes. These previously, and of necessity, had taken place in accordance with the changing locations of the *Simultanbühne*. As far as is known, Sachs's theatrical sets were simple and without decoration, and changes of location and backgrounds were indicated solely by the dialogue

itself.[47] Set design, scenery, and the creation of an imaginary space were not important for Sachs; the reality of the lesson was the focal point of the drama.

Sachs infrequently used typology, a hallmark of the medieval Passion Plays. There are only three epilogues in which typology occurs:[48] "Die Opferung Isaac",[49] "Der Josua mit seinen straiten"[50] and "Der richter Simson".[51] This sparse use of typology is also a hallmark of both later Catholic and Protestant Meistersang, although there are still numerous examples of typology found in early Meistersang.[52] From the Protestant perspective, Luther disfavored typology.

Luther and Typology

Luther initially maintained the traditional emphasis on the medieval fourfold interpretation of Scripture (or *Quadriga*), as seen in his early lectures of

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[47] For further information on the staging used by Sachs see: Dietrich-Bader 50-59 and Polheim 234-6.   Polheim's discussion focuses on Sachs's Passion Play, but his footnote 8 on p. 234 gives a number of references to the significant literature concerning the stage used by Hans Sachs.

[48] Winfried Theiß, *Exemplarische Allegorik* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968) 159.

[49] X74,17ff.

[50] X,127,27ff.

[51] X,213,37ff.

[52] C. Friedman 58-60. Friedman also includes other examples of Meistersang that include the Sacrifice of Isaac theme.

the Psalms (1513-15).[53] In developing his theological approach, he became

opposed to the use of the *Quadriga.* In his 1519 commentary on Galatians 4:24,

he speaks of the finding of the four senses in Scripture as a "kind of game". This

may be allowed to "add extra ornamentation, so to speak, to the main and

legitimate sense" for those who are not as well educated and need the "milky

teaching." [54] In the same lecture Luther adds:

> ... Non autem in contentionibus pro stabilienda fidei doctrina proferantur.
> Nam ista quadriga (etsi non reprobem) non scripturae autoritate nec
> patrem usu nec grammatica satis ratione iuvatur.

> (But these interpretations should not be brought forward with a view to
> establishing a doctrine of faith. For that four horse team [the *Quadriga*]
> (even though I do not disapprove of it) is not sufficiently supported by the
> authority of Scripture, by the customs of the fathers, or by grammatical
> principles.)[55]

A number of years later Luther launched a more direct attack against the use of

the four senses of scriptural interpretation:

> Weil ich jung war, da war ich gelertt und sonderlich, ehe ich in die
> Theologia kam, da gieng ich mit allegoriis, tropologiis und anagogiis umb,
> und machte eitel kunst; wenns jtzt einer hette, er hilts vor eitell heiltumb.
> Ich weiß, daß ein lauter Dreck ist, den nuhn hab ichs faren lassen und diß
> ist mein letzte und beste kunst: Tradere scripturam simplici sensus: denn

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[53]Two notable examples of this are found in: WA 3, 11, where Luther's use of typology is evident at the very outset of his "Dictata super Psalterium" ('Lectures on the Psalter'), and in the Glossa: Praefatio**.** WA 3, 530-532. In Luther's introduction to Psalm 77, he uses the fourfold interpretation several times.

[54] WA, 2, 550. *Luther's Works*, 27 311.

[55] WA, 2, 550. *Luther's Works*, vol. 27, *Lectures on Galatians*, 311.

literalis sensus, der thuts, da is leben, trost, kraft, lehr und kunst inen. Das ander ist narren werk, wiewohl es hoch gleist. [56]

(When I was young and learned and eccentric, before I came to a true understanding of] theology, I treated allegory, tropology and anagogy, but made vain art of it. If someone now, had to do this he would consider it vain holiness. I know that it is total nonsense, but now I have cast it aside and this is my last and best art: To translate the scriptures, to according to the simple sense: because the literal sense does it. There is life, consolation, power and teaching and art. The rest is the work of fools, although it may reach high.)

Luther came to value the literal sense of Scripture as the most important,

and developed the doctrine of *sola Scriptura.* Bornkamm says of Luther's

doctrine:

When the Reformers insisted upon the rule, 'Scripture alone,' they were saying that nothing else can be placed on the same level of this witness to Christ. His words, the accounts of His life, His acts, His suffering and resurrection, and the reflection of all this in the primitive Christian writings is without parallel. It is an inexhaustible wealth in which every age can share anew. Nor can the doctrinal statements in which the Church has compressed the content of this New Testament message into brief formulas ever claim the same importance as the message itself.[57]

There is, however, not always a clear contradiction between the doctrine

of *sola Scriptura* and typologic interpretation of Scripture, even within Luther's

own writings. Luther himself stated that, "...das alte [Testament] hatt gedeuttet

auff Christum, das new aber gibt uns nu das, das vor ym alten verheyssen und

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[56]WA, II *Tischreden* vol. 5 Nr. 5285 45. There are many other places where Luther speaks against typology. Another noteworthy example is found in his response to Andreas Karstadt, "Wider die himmlischen Propheten" ('Against the Heavenly Prophets') (1525) WA, 18 196-7.

[57] Heinrich Bornkamm *The Heart of Reformation Faith: Axioms of Evangelical Belief*, trans. John Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) 42.

durch die figuren bedeut ist gewesen." [58] (The Old Testament pointed toward Christ. The New, however, now gives us what was previously promised and signified through figures in the Old Testament.) This evidences that there is still an element of typology found in Luther's hermeneutics, and that his use of the four-fold exegetic method was never totally abandoned. Luther's lecture *In Genesis in Mosi librum sanctissimum Declamationes* ('Declamations about the Holy Book of Moses in Genesis') of 1527 exemplifies this:

> Das ist die Historien, darynne wir lernen, wie gewaltig Gott redet, und wenn gleich die wort solchs alles nicht geben, so must es doch die History durch die geistliche deutung geben, Also werden wir an Isaac auch sehen, wie Christus darynne abgemalet ist.. [59]

> (This is the story by which we learn, how powerfully God speaks. And even if the words as such do not convey everything, so the story must give it spiritual meaning. Therefore we will also see in Isaac how Christ is portrayed there.)

Even in his later lectures on Genesis from 1535-45, Luther says:

> Ob cam enim causam legimus et evolvimus vetus testamentum, ut Christum videamus praedictum incarnandum, non solem verbis, sed et variis figuris et factis.

> (Our reason for reading and searching the Old Testament is to see foretold, not only in words, but also by means of various figures and deeds, that Christ would become man.) [60]

> Although the literal sense assumed primacy, Luther continued to use other interpretative measures when clearly indicated and needed, but only as an

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[58] WA, 12 275.

[59] WA, vol. 24 398. Cohen 14-15. Cohen specifically cites this passage as a demonstration of Luther's continued use of typology.

[60] WA, vol 43 231. *Luther's Works*, vol 4 133.

addition to the literal meaning of the text itself. There are indeed many instances

when Luther did avail himself particularly of the allegorical interpretation,

although his use of allegory decreased as the years went on.[61] Speaking of

Luther's use of allegory Bornkamm states:

> Das [eine allegorische Auslegung] geschieht nur dort, wo ihm ein
> übertragener Sinn allein möglich scheint. Sonst hat er beide
> Auslegungsweisen oft genug nebeneinander geübt. Aber man muß dabei
> genau unterscheiden: außer in den Fällen offenbarer Notwendigkeit hat
> Luther den wörtlichen Sinn nie durch den allegorischen aufgehoben, wohl
> aber oft genug der wörtlichen Auslegung noch [sic] das Spiel der
> geistlichen Deutung auf Christus und sein Reich hinzugefügt… In dieser
> geregelten Anwendung der Allegorie wurde Luther dadurch bestärkt, daß
> er sie als ein häufiges Kunstmittel der Schrift selbst erkannte.[62]
>
> (He used it [an allegorical interpretation] only where a figurative meaning
> alone seemed possible. Otherwise he often used both methods of
> interpretation side by side. But one must also differentiate accurately:
> except in cases of obvious necessity. Luther never invalidated the literal
> sense for the allegorical; but he often added a spiritual interpretation of
> Christ and his kingdom to the literal interpretation... Luther was
> strengthened in this regulated application of allegory because he
> recognized it as an artistic device frequently used in Scripture itself.[63])

Bornkamm's assessment of Luther's hermeneutics has come under

criticism, and as Gordon Isaac emphasizes, "No single view of Martin Luther is

universally accepted and affirmed."[64] Nevertheless, the impact of Luther's de-

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[61] See Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament* 70-80, for examples of this. McGrath 152-174. McGrath has an excellent chapter on Luther's scriptural interpretation that discusses the hermeneutics of other Reformers as well.

[62] Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament* 81.

[63] Bornkamm, *Luther und the Old Testament* 95-6.

[64] Gordon Isaac,"The Changing Image of Luther as Biblical Expositor," *Ad fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Hagen's Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Timothy Maschke, Franz Posset, and Joan Skocir (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001)

emphasis of the typologic method of interpretation was profound. It led to the

disappearance of religious typology from Protestant drama and reduced the

vitality of the Passion Play. [65]

Luther and Genesis 22

From 1535-1545, the last decade of Luther's life, he lectured in Latin on

the Book of Genesis to his students and future Pastors. The bi-weekly lectures

were written down by several of his students and later edited and published in

four volumes, *In primum librum Mose enarrationes, Reverendi Patris D.D. Martini*

Lutheri, plenae salutaris & Christiane eruditinis, Bona fide & diligenter collectae

('The first book of Moses, in the commentaries of Reverend Father DD Martin

Luther, full of salvation and Christian erudition, faithfully and diligently

collected').[66] Although Luther did not write these volumes himself, and there has

been criticism that they are not an accurate redaction of his thoughts, Luther

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67. In his article, Isaac gives a history of the major scholars' views of Luther's hermaneutical methodology. Timothy Maschke, "Contemporaneity: A Hermaneutical Perspective in Martin Luther's Work," *Ad fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Hagen's Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Timothy Maschke, Franz Posset, and Joan Skocir (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001) 165. Maschke gives a brief bibliography of more recent works dealing with Luther's approach to scriptural interpretation.

[65] Cohen 4, Parente 67-77. Parente discusses the views of other Reformation theologians on the use of typology and its use in Reformation plays, including two Latin dramas about the Sacrifice of Isaac. He concludes that,"Both Erasmus and Melanchthon held that an allegorical interpretation was acceptable, indeed eminently useful, when it accorded with the literal meaning of the text." Note that Parente does not seem to differentiate between allegory and typology.

[66]Maxfield 9. Humanists used the term *enarration* to describe a commentary on a classical text written line-by-line.

personally wrote the preface and postscript to the first volume. In this manner,

he gave his imprimatur to the work.

Luther delivered his Genesis lectures in a line-by-line format, and his

students preserved this format. Some of the lectures are a response to

Catholicism and its practices and against other religions and heretical practices.

Much, however, is philosophical. Thus, the exegesis of Genesis 22 provides us

with a window into Luther's thoughts on the Sacrifice of Isaac. This narrative

would have been on Luther's mind often, as there was a huge triptych with the

Sacrifice of Isaac on one of the panels above the altar of his church in

Wittemberg.[67]

Luther began his lecture on Genesis 22 on October 27, 1539, an

auspicious time because of the death of a number of prominent individuals due to

the plague. A note in the margin of the original edition states that Luther

prefaced his remarks by saying:

> Non ideo quod cupiam vos hoc tempore hic retinere, quo timetur
> periculum pestiferae luis, quod si pestis imminet, fugiat qui volet, ac
> praecipue isti, qui sunt pavidi. Hos enim scriptura sancta iubet exedere
> castris, ne faciant pavere corda fratrum. Ego quidem grassantem leum
> hoc tempore no metuo, sed iudico paveorem praecipuam huius mali
> causam esse.
>
> (I am not lecturing because I want to keep you here at a time when there
> is fear about the danger of a pestilential plague. For if a plague is
> imminent, everyone who wishes should take flight, especially those who
> are fearful. Holy Scripture (Deut. 20:8) commands such people to go back

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[67] Carol Delaney, *Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1998) 154.

from the camp, lest they make the heart of their fellows fearful. As for me, I do not fear a raging pestilence at the present time, but believe that fear itself is the chief cause of this calamity.)[68]

 In this manner, Luther relates contemporaneous events to those of Genesis 22.[69] He uses Abraham's faith as an example of the faith needed by all true believers in the face of the then current plague, as well as other challenges. He continued his exegesis, saying that the word of God should sustain the people, as it did Abraham:

> Nunc in presente periculo pestis ita trepidamus, ac si non haberamus mandatum vivendi et invocandi Deum. Habemus firmissimam vocem prolatam ex ore fili   Dei: 'Ego sum resurretion et vita, qui credit in me, etiamsi mortuus fuerit, vivet: et ominis, qui vivit, et credit in me, non morietur in aeternum.' Sed hanc quis curat aut attendit? ... Ideo exaggeranda et diligenter inculcanda sunt exempla patrum in quibus efficata et virtus verbi Dei et fidei conspicitur...Sic Abrahae unica consolatio fuit in haec incredibili tentatione, quod scivit se habere mandatum Dei:Is certe non fugisset pestem, nec Turcorum multa millia: Quia cor eius firmiter retinuisset illam fidutiam: Credo in Deum omnipotentum.
>
> (At this time, in the present danger of the plague, we are in a state of trepidation. It is as though we did not have the command to live and to call upon God. We have a most dependable Word uttered by the mouth of the Son of God (John 11:25-26): "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." But who is interested in this Word or pays any attention to it?...It is for this reason   that the examples of the fathers, in which the efficacy and power of the Word of God and faith are prominent, should be exalted and carefully emphasized...Thus in this unbelievable trial it was Abraham's sole consolation that he knew he had a command from God. He surely would not have fled from the plague or

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[68] WA, vol. 43, 200-1. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4, 91.

[69] Maschke 165-182. Maschke demonstrates this 'contemporaneity' as a guiding principle of Luther's theology.

from many thousands of Turks, because his heart held fast to this confidence: "I believe in the God Almighty.") [70]

Luther stresses the primacy of faith, even in the face of death, saying: "Victoria autem Abrahae et Isaac et omnium sanctorum est fides, hanc qui habet, is superat pavorem mortis, et vincet et triumphat in aeternum... ("The victory of Abraham, Isaac and all the saints is faith. He who has faith overcomes the fear of death and conquers and triumphs eternally...")[71] Life, for Luther, is a series of tests. Abraham, who was tested many times, exemplifies the strength needed by all men in all times. This foregrounding of faith was central to Luther's struggle against the Catholic concept, the preeminence of works.

Luther highlights the Sacrifice of Isaac solely as a test only of Abraham. He mentions Sarah in the lecture in the context that she was not informed of the test, perhaps because she was too weak to withstand such a shock.[72] Luther also reasons that the servants were not permitted to accompany Abraham and Isaac up the mountain, for they would not have allowed Abraham to carry out the deed.

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[70] WA, vol 43 211-12. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 105-6.

[71] WA, vol. 43 218. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 115.

[72] Avivah Zornberg, *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995) 120. Jewish exegetes had the same thought. Sarah is the subject of discussion in the *Midrash Tanchuma* 22: Abraham said, "What shall I do? If I reveal it to Sarah, female agitation will certainly overcome her *in such an enormous matter. And if I don't reveal it to her now, but only later when Isaac is no* longer here, she will kill herself." What did he do? He said to Sarah, "Prepare food and drink for us, and let us eat and rejoice. She asked, "How is today different from other days? What is the nature of this joy?" He answered, "Old people like us, who have had a child in their old age - surely we should eat, drink, and rejoice!" She went and prepared the food. When they were in the middle of the meal, he said to her, "You know, when I was three years old I first knew my Creator, and this boy is already mature and has not been initiated. There is a place, rather far from us, where boys are initiated - let me take him and initiate him there." She said, "Go in peace."

Luther does not consider Isaac an integral part of the test, and only a minor portion of the lecture centers on him, for "Isaac rei ignarus et tamen paratus obedire" ("Isaac was unaware of the situation [that he was to be immolated]. Nevertheless, he was ready to obey").[73] The exegete therefore lauds Isaac for his faith and for not resisting death. Luther says of him, "Egregia certe fides fuit, qua se tam repente a vita avertere, et in mortem tradere potuit" ("It was surely extraordinary faith through which Isaac was able to turn away so suddenly from life and to hand himself over to death").[74] Five reasons for Abraham and Sarah's great love of Isaac are highlighted in the lecture: He was the child of their old age, Isaac carried God's promise of the future blessing of the world, due to him peace was established in Abraham's home via the expulsion of Ishmael, peace was established through him in the world by the reconciliation with the king, and Isaac was to marry and be the progenitor of the 'Promised Seed'. This last point is a focal point for Luther. The Sacrifice of Isaac is a trial for Abraham, but not just a trial of his faith, rather a trial of the entire existence of the Chosen People. If Abraham slays the progenitor of Israel, how will God's promise be fulfilled that, through Isaac,Abraham's seed will be multiplied?

The circumstance that we cannot understand this test of Genesis 22 is highlighted; it is beyond our powers of comprehension. Yet Luther emphasizes that comprehension is not what is needed, or even possible. Faith is the

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[73] WA, vol. 43 215. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 111.

[74] WA, vol. 43 216. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 112.

essential element to overcome the trial. The theme that our human inability to

understand God's ways and trials, must be resolved solely by faith in God, recurs

throughout Luther's exegesis of Genesis 22.

Throughout the lecture, Luther upholds Abraham as a model for all.

Abraham acted in accordance with God's will and did not despair, despite the

devastating command given him. In order to explain Abraham's behavior, Luther

incorporates the doctrine of the resurrection into his interpretation.   Abraham

does not despair, because he knows that God has the means to fulfill his word:

> Abraham, est hic manifesta contradictio sit: inter mortem enim et vitam
> nullum est medium, tamen non discedit a promissione: sed credit
> morientem filum habiturem semen...Ad hunc modem innititur Abraham
> promissioni, et tribuit divinae maiestati hunc potentiam, quod mortuum
> filium sit reducturus ad vitam...Ut habeat ex se semen... Intellexit igitur
> Abraham articulum de resurrectione mortuorem, et per eum solem solvit
> hanc contradictionem, quae alias solvi non potest, ac merito praedicatur a
> Prophetis et Apostolis eiues fide.

> (Even though there is a clear contradiction here - for there is nothing
> between death and life - Abraham nevertheless does not turn away from
> the promise but believes that his son will have descendants even if he
> dies...Thus Abraham relies on the promise and attributes to the Divine
> Majesty this power, that he will restore his dead son to life...in order that
> he might have descendants...Accordingly, Abraham understood the
> doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and through it alone he resolved
> this contradiction, which otherwise cannot be resolved; and his faith
> deserves the praise it receives from the prophets and apostles.) [75]

Further, Isaac had this same faith, for Luther says of him,"Nam in fide

promissionis moritur, quod futurus sit pater. Ergo Isaac morituret vivit, fit cinis et

pater populorum" ("For Isaac dies in the promise that he will be a father.

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[75] WA, vol. 43 204. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 96.

Therefore Isaac dies and lives; he becomes ashes and the father of peoples").[76]

Later in his lecture, Luther speculates on what Abraham's thoughts at the time of

the Akedah might have been: "Esti igatur iam morriendum ei est, tamen revera

morietur, sed resurget" ("For therefore even if he [Isaac] has to die now, he will

nevertheless not die in reality but will rise again").[77] Death is life - and Abraham

and Isaac knew this and were thus able to face God's test. For Luther, the

doctrine of the resurrection so central to the Christian faith is implicit in Genesis

22.

Luther does not view God's words as a request, as is evident from his

German Bible translation (Gen 22:2: Und er sprach: Nimm Isaak, deinen einigen

Sohn, den du lieb hast, und gehe hin in das Land Morija und opfere ihn daselbst

zum Brandopfer auf einem Berge, den ich dir sagen werde / Take thy only

begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision: and there

thou shalt offer him for a holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show

thee), so that Abraham has no choice in this matter. He must accept the

contradiction of Genesis 21:12 (Denn in Isaak soll dir der Same genannt werden

/ Because in Isaac your seed shall be called) and Genesis 22:2. Further,

Abraham himself is obliged to carry out the deed, leaving no doubt as to its

completion. True to the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith, however,

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[76] WA, vol. 43 216. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 113.

[77] WA, vol. 43 219. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 117.

Abraham's faith is praised, not his deeds. That Abraham did not carry out his task is irrelevant to the tribute that he receives.

This interpretation is contrary to the canonical Epistle of James 2:21 ("Was not our father justified by works, offering up Isaac his son upon the altar?") Luther addresses this seeming contradiction and explains that Abraham was righteous prior to this test. For Luther, it is incorrect of James to conclude that Abraham was justified only after his obedience in this test; James and his followers have misunderstood this Biblical text. Luther bolsters his argument by pointing out that God spoke to Abraham eight times, with Genesis 22:15 being the last. This is without parallel in the Christian Church. It demonstrates the greatness of Abraham, who so often received that which is of paramount importance - the Word of God, or as Luther says, is "Omnia in omnibus" ("all in all").[78] Finally, Luther concludes his lecture by using Genesis 22:16-18 as a springboard for an extensive discussion of the tenet of *sola fide* and the falseness of those who deny it. He again extols Abraham as an example of this doctrine:

> Abraham nisi fuisset iustus et donatus principali illo dono gratiae et misericordiae divinae, nisi fuisset plenus iustitia et fide, nunquam obtulisset filium nec hanc gloriam consecutus esset, de qua praesens locus concionatur... Ad hunc modum Deus ad Abraham hic loquitur: Tu fesciti hoc insigne opus, fuisti obediens, en vicissim insigni miraculo te ornabo, non ut iustificeris, sed ut scias Deum diligere sanctos suos, non solum vocare, iustificare, sed etiam magnificare et glorificare. Iustificare igitur faciunt mirabilia, mirabilibus autem non iustificantur.

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[78] WA, vol. 43 237. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 142.

(If Abraham had not been righteous and had not been endowed with that foremost gift of the grace and mercy of God, if he had not abounded in righteousness and faith, he would never have offered his son; nor would he have obtained this glory of which the passage before us is speaking... Thus God is saying to Abraham in this passage: "You have done this outstanding work and have been obedient. Behold, I, in turn, will adorn you with an outstanding miracle, not in order that you may be justified but to have you know that God loves His saints and not only calls and justifies them but also makes them great and glorious." Accordingly, those who have been justified do wonderful works; but they are not justified by their wonderful works.) [79]

Throughout Abraham's trial, however, Luther emphasizes the humanness of Abraham: "Neque enim ferreo pectore fuit, sed tenerrima natura..." ("He did not have a heart of iron, but he was of a very tender nature...").[80] Luther speaks of the three-day journey to Moriah, and the suffering that Abraham must have endured. Luther does not, however, compare the walk of Abraham and Isaac to the walk to Calvary, a common typologic interpretation. Quite the contrary, he emphasizes the uniqueness of Abraham's situation, saying, "Talis transitus, qualis hic est, nusquam in scriptura sancta descriptus est"("Nowhere else in Holy Scripture is a walk like this described").[81]

Luther is keenly aware of Jewish tradition through the work of Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1340) in Nicholas's *Postilla* (Bible commentary)[82] and Paul of Burgos

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[79] WA, vol. 43 258. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 169-70.

[80] WA, vol. 43 212. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 107.

[81]WA, vol. 43 215. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 111.

[82]Thomas Kalia, *The Influence of Nicholas of Lyra on Martin Luther's "Commentary on Genesis"* (Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1985) 134. Kalia states that Luther draws on Lyra's *Postilla litteralis super Genesim* explicitly 133 times in his *Commentary on Genesis.* Implicitly he drew on the *Postilla* another 109 times. Wolfgang Bunte, *Rabbinische*

(c.1351 -1435), a Jewish convert, both of whom Luther mentions in his lectures.

Luther discusses the etymology of Hebrew words and Hebrew grammar, and the

identities of the servants accompanying Abraham. He mentions Jewish

discussion on how Isaac was bound, and negates the Jewish interpretation of the

origin of the ram. Luther also creates his own interpretation - that the ram was

brought by or created by the angel. He also encourages his followers who want

to study the Bible to study Hebrew, so that,"ut rabinorum nugas etiam

grammatice refutare possint. Periculum enim ingens est, ne suis glosis iterum

obscurent et corrumpant sacra biblia." ("they may be able to refute the nonsense

of the rabbis even on the basis of grammar, For there is great danger that with

their glosses the rabbis will again obscure and falsify the Holy Bible.")[83]

The importance of Genesis 22 is further extolled as the greatness of

Abraham is lauded. Luther deems him, "Quia autem Abraham primus et

maximus inter sancto patriarchas est" ("the foremost and greatest among the

holy patriarchs"),[84] a man able to bear trials that others would not have, and "Est

hoc insigne exemplum, et descriptio perfectae obedientiae."("An extraordinary

example and a description of perfect obedience.")[85] Luther considers the

Sacrifice of Isaac to be a greater trial than Mary's loss of her son in Jerusalem,

Tradition bei Nicholaus von Lyra: Ein Beitrag zur Schriftauslegung des Spätmittelalters (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994) 20-21. Bunte cites numerous quotes by Luther on Lyra's commentary on Judaism, especially in Bunte's chapter on Genesis.

[83] WA, vol. 43 247. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 154.

[84] WA, vol. 43 210. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 91.

[85] WA, vol. 43 201. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 103.

for she had the hope that Jesus was still alive. Luther finds Abraham to be

greater than the saints, because they were not commanded to kill the son of the

promise. In sum, he states, "Sed qui hanc obedientiam tam constanter praestare

potuisset, nullus unquam fuit Apostolorum, Patriarchum, aut martyrum." ("there

was never an apostle, a patriarch, or a martyr who could have shown this

obedience so unwaveringly.")[86] And "ac praeter Christum simile exemplum

obedientiae nullum habemus." ("With the exception of Christ we have no similar

example of obedience.")[87] Luther could give no greater praise.

Hans Sachs and the Sacrifice of Isaac: The Dramas

Sachs wrote two Sacrifice of Isaac dramas:*Tragedia mit neun Person zu

agirn. Die Opferung Isaac. Hat 3 actus* ('Tragedy with Nine Actors, The Sacrifice

of Isaac, Has Three Acts'), written in 1533, and *Tragedia. Der Abraham, Lott

sampt der opfferung Isaac, hat 21 person und 7 actus* ('Tragedy, Abraham, Lot,

Including the Sacrifice of Isaac, Has 21 Actors and 7 Acts'), written in 1558. Both

texts are in the group of forty "geistichen spiel, auss altem und newem

testament" ('Religious plays from the Old and New Testament'), published in

1561. When published, the more recent drama, written almost twenty-five years

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[86] WA, col. 43 209. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 103.

[87] WA, col. 43 215. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 114.

after Sachs's first treatment, appeared before the older. There is no known reason for this. In between these two dramas, In 1545, Sachs composed a short, rhymed version on this same topos, *Der ertz-Patriarch Abraham mit der opferung Isaac, ein figur Jesu Christi* ('The Patriarch Abraham Sacrificing Isaac, a Figure of Jesus Christ'). Treating the same theme repeatedly was a common practice for a sixteenth-century author, and Sachs did this several other times as well. Originality was not the focus of drama and literature at this time, the pedagogical aspect was. [88]

Sachs planned the effect of his works on his public, and expressed this in the first volume of his works:

> Inn dem ersten thail die gedicht (Dichtungen), so auss heyliger schrifft sind oder der schrifft gemess, alles zu Gottes ehr und anraitzung unnd vermanung zu der buss und eynem christenlichen leben,… im anderen thail zusamb verordent weltlich histori, auss den wahrhaftigen geschichtschreibern, auch auss den poeten zu eynem Spiegel, der bösen fusstapffen zu fliehen unnd aber den guten nach zu folgen, … der dritt thail fürbildet die wirdigkeyt der löblichen tugendt, dargegen die schnödigkeyt der schendtlichen laster unnd wie die allmal schand und schaden hindter ihn verlassen, aber die tugend ein untödliche gedechtnuss… Aber im fünfften und letzten theil dieses buchs werden begriffen fassnachtspil, fable und schwenck, doch nit allein kurtzweylig, sondern auch nützlich zulesen, weyl fast yedes stuck mit einer angehenckten lehr beschlossen ist. (KG, 1 4)

> (In the first part there are the poems (poetry), which are taken from the Holy Scripture or in accordance with Scripture for the honor of God, and to

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[88] Brian Murdoch, "Schöpfung, Fall und Erlösung: Hans Sachs and Genesis 1-3," *Hans Sachs and Folk Theatre in the Late Middle Ages: Studies in the History of Popular Culture*, eds. Robert Aylett and Peter Skrine (Lewiston: E.Mellen Press, 1995) 63-81. Murdoch discusses one example of this, Sachs's four treatments of the 'Unequal Children of Eve'. His four treatments encompass the different genres of Meistergesang, Schwank, Comedia and Spiel, and there is a varied emphasis in each treatment.

entice and to remind us to repent and to live a Christian life... in the next part secular histories are grouped together, taken from true historians, also from poets, as a mirror, in order to flee the evil footsteps, but also to follow the good ones... the third part manifests the dignity of praiseworthy virtue, and how to leave behind base and dishonorable vice, and how to leave behind forever shame and loss, but [to maintain] the virtues in eternal memory... But the fifth and last part of this book will contain Carnival Plays, Fables, and Farces, not only amusing, but also useful to read, because nearly every piece ends with a lesson appended.)

Sachs did not deviate from his objective throughout his career. In the dedication to his third and final volume, which contains the two plays discussed next, Sachs stated the intent of his writing to be:

> …nicht allein der kurtzweil unnd frewden halber, sonder von nutz und frucht wegen gehalten seindt, da iedermenigklich als der kayser sambt der ritterschaft, der senat sambt dem gemeinn volck versamlet gewesen und alda augenscheinlich gehöret und gesehen, wie ein erbar tugentreich leben auch nach dem todt unsterblich erhalten wird, darauß man begierig gewesen, solchen ehrlichen thaten nachzuvolgen und ins werck zu bringen, dargegen aber schendlichen unverschembten bossen zu meiden, dieweil ein solch lesterlich ärgerlich leben auch nach dem todt schandt unnd ewige schmach bringet. Darumb haben solche schawspil ursach geben, das man sich erlich, aufrichtig, dapfer und wol hielte unnd der schendlichen laster müssig gienge… (KG, X 4-5)

> (They are not only being seen and heard for entertainment and pleasure, but also for their utility and fruitfulness, because everyone, the Kaiser and his knights, the senate and the common folk, were gathered and have evidently heard and seen how an honorable, virtuous life will be maintained immortally after death, and because of that one is eager to follow such honorable works and bring them to fruition. In contrast to this, one should avoid shameful and arrogant evil acts, since such a sinful and vexing life will bring disgrace and eternal dishonor even after death. For that reason, such plays are the cause that one behaves honestly, uprightly, couragously and well, and that one foregoes disgraceful vices.)

The reader's attention is drawn to the titles of Sachs's dramas. They are explicit and indicate the subject matter, number of actors and number of acts presented. This is typical for the *Volksschauspiel* of the sixteenth century and,

with few exceptions, the entire dramatic corpus of the era.[89] The medieval

Passion Play, in comparison, bore no title. The heading at the beginning of the

play indicated the content. In the case of the Heidelberg Passion Play discussed

above, the heading read, "Hie hebtt an das register oder ordennung vonn denn

geschichtenn, marter und leydenn Ihesu Christi." (Here begins the table of

contents or the order of the stories of the martyrdom and suffering of Jesus

Christ).[90]

The title of a work frequently names its main character. The three

Sacrifice of Isaac works by Sachs each feature different characters in their titles.

The shorter play names Isaac (*Tragedia mit neun Person zu agirn. Die Opferung*

Isaac. Hat 3 actus)*,* whereas the longer play names Abraham, Lot and Isaac

(*Tragedia. Der Abraham, Lott sampt der opfferung Isaac, hat 21 person und 7*

actus). The poem names Abraham, Isaac, and Jesus (*Der ertz-Patriarch*

Abraham mit der opferung Isaac, ein figur Jesu Christi). This already indicates

the distinct focus of all three works.

As the titles indicate, the two dramas are tragedies. The terms

'tragoedia' and 'comoedia' were very loosely and simplistically used by Sachs

and other Reformation dramatists, whose aims were more tendentious than

artistic. They derived this nomenclature from the plays of classical antiquity. In

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[89] Florentina Dietrich-Bader, *Wandlungen der dramatischen Bauform vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Frühaufklärung. Untersuchungen zur Lehrhaftigkeit des Theaters* (Göppingen: Alfred Kümmerle, 1972) 26.

[90] Janota 17.

the sixteenth century, however, the intent of the nomenclature differed. Generally, the tragedies of the Reformation have either a sad outcome or conclude with a death, although the drama itself may also contain comedic elements within it. Conversely, the comedies have a happy ending, although they may include sad elements.[91] Thus, the Sacrifice of Isaac has a positive outcome, in that Abraham does not carry out the sacrifice, and Isaac lives. On the other hand, Isaac prefigures Jesus, who does die, and this is the underlying reason for the consideration of these dramas as 'Tragedia'.

It was common in the sixteenth century, as it had been in the Middle Ages, for dramas to begin with a prologue and end with an epilogue, giving the drama a tripartite structure of prologue, argument/exposition, and epilogue. Sachs's dramas are no exception to this tripartite format. In his dramas, an *Ehrnhold*, an announcer or herald who directly addresses the audience, narrates both the Prologue and Epilogue. This role was important to Sachs, as seen in his register of characters. In the longer drama, as in many of his other dramas, he lists the role of *Ernhold* first, even before that of God.[92]

In the Prologue of Sachs's longer Sacrifice of Isaac play, the *Ernhold* appears on stage and greets the audience in religious terms as "Christen" (KG, X 15) or "gesegneten deß Herrn" (blessed of the Lord) (KG, X 59). This prepares

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[91] Könneker 52.

[92] KG, X 58.

the way for an ensuing topic related to the Bible and religion. [93] The announcer

then advises the audience of the exact location in the Bible from which the play is

drawn, and of the content of the play. This is done to inspire the audience to

read the Bible if they were able to, so that they subsequently would know more

the Bible better. The Ernhold then alludes to the ethical and moral purposes of

the play and instructs the viewer to watch the production. There is no

enumeration of the exact lesson within the drama itself either; this is the function

of the Epilogue.[94] In the shorter play, the Ernhold also requests the audience to

pay attention and maintain decorum - an updated version of the Passion Play's

'*Silete!'*

     The request for decorum may have been necessary for an audience not

experienced at theater going, as was the explicit enumeration of the content of

the play, for an audience not that familiar with the Old Testament. The intent of

the theater of the sixteenth century was not only enjoyment, but also edification.

For Sachs, as discussed above, the didactic aspects of his works were of prime

importance. By the mid-sixteenth century, the concerted effort to eliminate

illiteracy had achieved only limited success. A significant portion of the middle

and lower classes still could not read, book prices were high, and the workday

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[93] For an overview of the role of the herold in Medieval and Reformation drama see: Otto Koischwitz, *Der Theaterherold im deutschen Schauspiel des Mittelalters und der Reformzeit* (Lübeck:Matthiesen Verlag, 1926) rpt. Nendeln/Lichtenstein: Kraus reprint Ltd, 1967).

[94] Parente 72-4. Parente gives several examples of this in other dramas. He also posits possible reasons for this phenomenon, including the possibility that because medieval writers integrated the interpretation within the action of their plays, Humanists wanted to distance themselves from this technique.

was long.[95] Even among those who were literate, the educational level was low. For this populace, theatrical performances provided an ideal forum for the educational advancement that only the wealthy, nobility and clerics had true access to, and Sachs availed himself of this opportunity.

At the end of the Prologue, the *Ernhold* bows, signaling the end of his speech and the beginning of the action, and leaves the stage. In the shorter play, the *Ernhold* has no further role until the Epilogue. In the longer drama, he appears again in Act V as King Abimelech's herold. The stage directions of Act V of the longer version refer to the *Ernhold* three times as "*der herolt*" and once as "*der ernhold*". Although he has only one speaking part (V. 14-19), he appears on stage several times, entering and exiting with both Abraham and Sarah. The text does not specify that the same actor portrays this role, but there is only one herold named in the cast of characters, and it was common for the announcer to appear in the play itself. [96]

The Prologue serves to establish a clear and direct informational relationship between the author (in the form of the *Ernhold*), the audience, and the work. The expository nature of the Prologue, informing the audience of the content of the drama, makes it evident that this play is not a vehicle that will

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[95] Dorothea Klein, *Bildung und Belehrung. Untersuchungen zum Dramenwerk des Hans Sachs* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1988) 100-1. Klein reviews the literature on Nuremberg's literacy rates at this time. Further information on literacy is found in the Introduction and Chapter 5.

[96] Otto Koischwitz, *Der theaterherold im deutschen schauspiel des mittelalters und der reformationszeit; - ein beitrag zur deutschen theatergeschichte* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1926) 80-85. Koischwitz cites numerous examples of Sachs's use of the herold within his plays.

transport the audience to an imaginary realm; there will be a preservation of reality. This is a story – and not a new one - enacted for a purpose. Nothing in the presentation is to be suspenseful; there is a removal of dramatic tension, so that the audience may concentrate on the lesson of the drama.

Sachs's technique of using an *Ehrnhold* was not new. Otto Koischwitz traces the narrated prologue and epilogue back to the earliest forms of drama, the *Quem quaeritis* (whom do you seek) plays discussed in Chapter 2. Koischwitz feels that as drama evolved, moving further away from the church sermon, the prologue and epilogue, together with occasional intermediate, often moralizing remarks, took over the function of the church sermon.[97] Several humanist religious dramatists even went so far as to describe their works as "visual sermons".[98]

This didactic intent, not unlike that of a sermon, holds true for Sachs's entire oeuvre, which included a reworking of the classics into tragedies, comedies, and Fastnachtspiele, and even more so for the Biblically based works examined. Sachs himself expressed his tendentious intent several times:

> Nun von disen angezaygten stucken allen wil ich in ainer summ ain kurtzer erklerung thon dem gemainen man (sollcher handlung unwissent) zu underweysen und leeren, darauß er müg erkennen die götlich warhait und dargegen die menschlichen lügen, darinn wir gewandert haben. (KG, vol. 22 5)

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[97]Koischwitz 10. Ernst Caspary, *Prologue und Epilogue in den Dramen des Hans Sachs* (Dissertation, 1920) 5.

[98] Parente 69.

(From all of these announced plays I want to give a short explanation for the common man who is ignorant of such action, to teach him and instruct him so that he might recognize Divine truth and in contrast, to recognize human lies in which we have indulged.)

With respect to his Biblical dramas, Sachs said:

Das sy annemen das trostlic evangelium und abliessen von dem falschen vertrawen, zu erlangen die säligkeit mit iren selb erdichten wercken. (KG, 22, 5)

(So that they accept the consoling Gospel and desist from false trust, to acquire blessedness with their own poetic works.)

This actually deviates little from the aim of a sermon or much of medieval drama. There is, however, a greater focus on entertainment in Sachs's work than in a sermon and a different atmosphere in the theater than in the Church. Because of this, reception of the impact of Sach's didactic intent was different from that of the medieval drama whose presentation was often associated with the Church.

The sermon and drama also differ in their variety of different characters. The characters of Sachs's plays are, however, for the most part merely the means to demonstrate morals and ethics, and are often prefigurations of Christ and salvation history.[99] The characters experience little development; however,

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[99] One of the best examples of this intent in one of Sachs's plays is found in "Tragedia mit 9 personen zu agieren, Thamar, die tochter könig David, mit irem Bruder Ammnon und Absalom, und hat drey actus" (Tragedy played with 9 people, Thamar, the daughter of King David, with her brother Ammon and Absalom, and has three acts" (KD X 342-64): "Thamar bedeut die christlich seel" (Thamar represents the Christian soul) (KG,, X, 363), "Ammnon uns den Satan bedeut"

there is some concern for making them appear real and for depicting their emotional turmoil, as discussed below. There is little traditional dramatic structure or unity, as the plays follow the Bible, not the traditional Aristotelian dramatic format. The minimal set and stage decoration contribute to the feeling of the stage as a pulpit, with the play's dialogue serving as the means of communicating Sachs's sermonic discourse.

Both of the pre-Reformation Catholic dramas discussed utilize announcers, however in a different manner than in Sachs. In Immessen's *Der Sündenfall*, there is the initial acrostic read by the author, who refers to himself in the first person, "Dat ik dut spêl sus hebbe gescreven" (That I have thus written this play) (V56). He then calls upon an announcer, whom he refers to as the "Prolocutor". The Prolocutor directly addresses the audience with a fifty-five line long summary of the creation of man, of his sinfulness and mortality, and of the grace of God's son. He admonishes the audience to be silent and to listen to what is being told both at the beginning and at the end of his speech, but gives little detail of what is to come or where it is taken from other than to say, "wat in den boken stât gescreven" (what is written in the books) (V. 79). He vouches that all is true, saying, "De wârheit der scrift wil ek iuk melden" (I will announce to you the truth of Scripture) (V.110)[100] and then quotes the old Testament in Latin:

(Ammon represents Satan for us) (KG, X, 363), "Jonadab bedeut fleisch und blut" (Jonadab represents flesh and blood) (KD,X, 363).

[100] Koischwitz 28, 33,54, emphasizes throughout his work that the Herold was a figure trusted by his audience.

"filius non portauit iniquitatem patris" (V.112) (The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father - Ezekiel 18:20), without translation. This is rather curious, as the role of the announcer is generally to explain the play or ensuing action to the audience, which may not be well educated. The presence of a Biblical citation in Latin, however, is in accordance with Immessen's practice throughout the play and, as stated above, may point to his position as an educated member of the clergy and that the intent of this text was for reading purposes, not for performance.

In contradistinction to Sachs's use of an announcer, neither Immessen's untranslated scriptural quotation, nor the Prolocutor's speech as a whole, actually prepare the audience for what they are about to experience. The announcer of *Der Sündenfall* merely serves to quiet the audience and gain their attention with a brief summary foregrounding man's sinful nature. His role is described by Koischwitz as "…der Vertreter weltlicher Obrigkeit und der Repräsentant autoritätiver Würde…." (the agent of secular authority and the representative of authoritative dignity...). [101]

The use of the announcer in the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* serves much the same purpose as in Sachs's works. The announcer, speaking directly to the audience in a monologue that serves as the prologue of the drama, quiets the audience and informs them of what they are about to see:

Ir herenn, stillent ewerenn schall,

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[101] Koischwitz 28.

mein wortt vernement all.
ir habt lang woll vernomenn,
do Christus, vnnser her, wolt komen
vnnd geboren woltt werden
menschlich vff diesser erdenn.
das verkuntten die prophetten weytt
vnnd sagtenn seiner zcukunfft zeyt
vnnd sagtenn die zcu den selben zeidenn,
wie Christus, vnnser here, leydenn
woltt an seiner menscheytt
angst, pein vnnd iamerkeytt,
zcu auch den bitterenn doitt,
do mit er vnns erloist vß noitt.
wie die ding sint gescheenn,
wer solchs will schauwen vnnd sehen,
der soll sich layseenn gestillen.
So megent ir gottes willenn
vnnd seinen himelischenn roitt
hewwtt schauwen mitt der doitt.
der beyspill in der alten ehe
zur gleichnus sint gescheen mehe.
die man zeygenn wirtt zcu diesser stundt.
dar umb bescliessent ewerenn mundtt
vnnd schweigent gar stiell all gar
vnnd nementt diesser ding war. (V.1-26)

(Gentlemen, stop your talking,
Listen to my word
You have heard for a long time
The Christ our Lord would come
And be born
As a man on earth.
The prophets announced that widely
And spoke of his future time
And said at that very same time
Christ our Lord would suffer
Because of his humanity
Fear, pain, and misery
In addition to a bitter death
By which he redeems us from our misery
Who wishes to see and contemplate
How these things happened
He should keep quiet
In this way you can see God's will

And his heavenly voice
Today view the deeds.
Of the examples in the Old Testament
Many have occurred as parable
That we will show in this hour
Therefore close your mouth
And be silent
And hear these truths.)

The announcer specifically mentions the Old Testament prefigurations, emphasizing their unique and important role in this drama. No further part is played by the announcer. He could function to explicate the prefigurative scenes for the audience, but the rotating prophets described in Chapter 2 assume this role. The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* ends abruptly, therefore there is no epilogue or final discussion of the play by the announcer.

The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* author conflates the roles of the announcer and that of the director, as the title 'reigierer des spils' indicates.[102] This was a common occurrence, and Koischwitz posits that this was derived from the Church service, where a cantor frequently assisted in the service. The cantor functioned in an organizational capacity that included calling people up for various parts of the service, much as a theater director would.[103]

Sachs's divided his plays, including the Isaac dramas, into acts, but not further into scenes. Each act also has explicit directions for the actors. These

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[102] Janota 17.

[103] Koischwitz 14. The announcer and "reigirer des spils' are one and the same person in the *Alsfelder Passionsspiel* (this text is also included in the parallel edition of Janota) and the Künzelauer Fronleichnamspiel cited above.

directions are something not previously found in German plays. The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* is somewhat of an exception to this rule, as it did have headings above each change of scenes. In Siegfried Mauermann's opinion, these headings do not constitute a division into acts, but are purely informational. [104] Again, as discussed above, this may be because the text that we have may not have been a performative one. It is not typical of Passion Plays.

The number of acts differs in Sachs's two Isaac dramas due to the scope of the Biblical material depicted. Clearly, the five-act scheme of classical Greek tragedy is not preserved, and the apex of the action is not in the midpoint of either drama. In the seven-act drama, Isaac's birth takes place in the sixth act, as do the banishment of Ishmael and Hagar and their salvation in the desert. The actual Sacrifice is in the final act. In the three-act drama, the announcement that Sarah will bear a son takes place in the first act. By the opening of the second act, it is evident that Isaac has been born and is grown. Now God wishes to try Abraham, and commands him to Sacrifice Isaac. This could be the high point of the drama, although it is difficult not to view the sacrifice that takes place in Act 3 of the text as such.

The announcement that Sarah will bear a son in her old age begins with the exact same wording in both plays and continues very similarly until God and the angels leave. Thereupon the seven-act play continues, in Biblical order, with

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[104] Siegfried Mauermann, *Die Bühnenwanweisungen im deutschen Drama bis 1700* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1911) 25.

the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and does not return to the Isaac theme until the sixth act. The shorter play, however, continues with the depiction of Sarah's skepticism.

One of the distinguishing aspects of Sachs's Sacrifice of Isaac dramas is that Sarah plays a greater role than she has in other treatments of this theme. Sachs depicts Sarah as a skeptic in both plays, especially in her laughter at the news that at an advanced age she is to bear a child. Sarah's laughter is Biblically based (Genesis 18:12 and 21:6), but in Sachs's shorter drama of 1533 there is a long discussion in Act 1 between Sarah and Abraham about the news that Sarah is to bear a child at the age of ninety that is predominantly Sachs's creation. This does not take place in the later, longer drama.[105]

Sarah clearly is unsure about the possibility she will bear a son, although she has denied her laughter to God, as in Genesis 22. In the shorter play she says to Abraham:

> Mein Herr, wie könd solhs müglich sein?
> Ich bin ie alt auff neuntzig jar
> Und geht mir auch nit mehr fürwar
> Nach der weise der andern frawen.
> Wie möcht sich den inn mir erbawen
> Ein frucht, das ich erst wurd geperig?
> Weil du, mein herr, bist hundertjährig,
> Derhalb kann ich das nit glauben. (KG, X 62)

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[105] Abraham was commanded to name his son Isaac in Genesis 17:19. The Hebrew for this name (יצחק) is derived from the verb צחק, laughter. Cohen 7. Cohen points out that Sachs repeatedly uses the word 'lachen' in the dialogue of the play. Although Sachs, who was familiar with the Bible and with exegesis, would have been aware of this, I disagree with Cohen who asserts that the audience would have understood this connection of Isaac's name and Sarah's laughter. Cohen is attributing too much erudition to his audience.

(My Lord, how is this possible?
I am old - about ninety years,
And it does not go the way
Of women with me any longer.
How could within me grow
A fruit [of the womb] that I am able to bear?
Because you, my Lord, are a hundred years old
Therefore I cannot believe this.)

Abraham's faith, expressed several lines later, stands in clear to

juxtaposition to Sarah's disbelief:

Ach, Sara, zweifel nit dran!
Was Gott redt, das wird er auch than.
Sein wort ist gewiß und wahrhafft
Und hat ein allmechtige krafft,
Das zu bringen, was er redt.
Wo er eim ding rüfft, es da steht.
Derhalben so zweifel nit mehr!
Gott kanst du thon kein grösser ehr,
Den einfeltig seim wort glauben.
Laß dein vernunft dich nit betauben!
Sie ist blind in götlichen sachen.
Sie wurd dich zweivelhaftig machen
Im nachgrübeln, wie das möcht sein.
Sonder setz gantz standhaft darein
Dein gmüt, was Gott zu uns hab jehen,
Das werd gewiß und wahrhaft geschehen,
Schein so unmöglich, als es wöll.(KG, X 63-4)

(Oh, Sarah, do not doubt!
What God says, He will also do.
His word is certain and true
And has omnipotence,
To bring to fruition what He says.
When he names a thing, it exists
Therefore, doubt no longer!
You cannot give God more honor
Than to trustingly believe His word.
Don't allow your reason to stupify you!
It is blind in Divine matters.

> It would make you doubt
> In pondering how that might be.
> But rather you should make your mind
> Steadfast, what God has told us,
> That will certainly and truly happen
> As impossible as it might seem.)

Sarah overcomes her skepticism and accepts the truth of God's word:

> Nun, mein herr Abraham, so söll
> Mir Gottes wort auch sein nach dem
> Hertzlich lieb, werd und angenem
> Und will seiner gnaden leben
> Und wo er uns ein sohn ist geben,
> Den wöllen wir auffziehen sehr
> Auff Gottes forchte, zucht und ehr. (KG, X 64)

> (Now, my master Abraham, so after this
> God's word will be dear, worthy and pleasant to me,
> And may we live in His grace.
> And now, since He has given us a son
> We will raise him
> In the fear of God, with discipline and honor)

The above prepares the audience for the confrontation that takes place in Act 2, which is also completely Sachs's invention. When informed of the impending sacrifice of her son, Sarah's doubt is yet more intense. This dialogue and what follows have no basis in the Biblical text.[106] First Sarah flat out says

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[106] *Yalkut Shemoni* 57, *Meam Loez*, Genesis, vol. 2 323-4, Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968) 286-7. Sarah does not appear in Genesis 22, however there are *midrashim* in which a conversation does take place between Sarah and Abraham. In these *midrashim*, Abraham deceives Sarah and tells her that he is bringing Isaac to study at the academy of Shem and Eber. Sarah weeps, but dresses Isaac in finery and cautions Abraham to care well for him. Sarah does say that she may never see Isaac again, but there is no indication that she knows of Abraham's true mission. The servants, on the other hand, do know of what is to befall Isaac according to this *midrash*.

that she will not comply with God's command: "Das thu ich nicht."(I will not do this.) (KG, X 66) Then she questions whether this is really God's command:

> Es ist gar nit glaubig mir.
> Das dir der Herr erschienen sey.
> Es ist ein gspenst und phantasey
> Erschienen dir von der Sathan,
> Hat sollichs dir gemutet an
> Der ergste feind auß neid und haß.(KG, X 66)

> (I do not believe at all
> That the Lord appeared to you.
> It is a ghost and fantasy
> Which appeared to you through Satan,
> He foisted this upon you,
> The worst foe did this to you out of envy and hatred.)

The possibility that Satan gave the command to slaughter Isaac has a long history in Jewish *midrash*, as discussed in Chapter 5, although it is unlikely that Sachs knew of this. [107] The difference is that in Sachs's plays, it is Sarah who brings up the possibility that the command did not come from God, whereas in the Yiddish and midrashic treatments it is Satan who tries to convince Sarah (and Abraham and Isaac prior to that) of this.

Sachs's Sarah continues, explicitly questioning God's desires. Each time Abraham counters her argument with expressions of complete faith, although he also expresses his frail side saying, " Mir is wol also angst als dir." (I am as afraid as you are) (KG, X 66)

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[107] See, for example, *Genesis Rabbah* and Ginzberg, vol 1, 276-8.

In trying to find a reason for God's command, Abraham enters into a conjecture regarding Isaac that is without precedent in Jewish or Christian lore:[108]

> Villeicht möcht er in seinem leben
> Etwan sonst ein böser mensch werden,
> Vil unglücks anrichten auff erden... (KG, X 67)

> (Perhaps he would have sometime in his life,
> Become an evil person,
> And cause much misfortune on earth.)

This dialogue does not appear in the 1558 play, perhaps because such a statement runs counter to the depiction of Abraham as a man of unquestioning faith and the Lutheran doctrine of *sola fide*.

Finally, Abraham says:

> Ach, warumb redst du wider Got.
> Samb dir die Gottes werck nit taugen?
> Mein Sara, du hast menschlich augen
> Die sind in Gottes wercken blend
> Sein heimligkeit gar nit verstand,
> Derhalben so ist wunder nicht
> Das dir die götlichen gericht
> Auß unverstand gar nit gefallen. (KG, X 67)

> (Oh, why are you speaking against God,
> As if God's works are nothing to you?
> My Sarah, you have human eyes
> Which are blind to God's work
> And do not understand His furtive ways
> Therefore, it is not a wonder
> That the Divine judgments
> Do not please you because of incomprehension.)

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[108] Cohen 9. I have been unable to find any such precedent, and Cohen also states that he knows of none.

Sarah goes one step further, asking:

>Solch mördisch unmenschliche that.
>Was hat doch Gott nur lust davon? (KG, X 67)

>(Such a murderous, inhuman deed.
>Why would such a thing please God?)

With this question, Sarah probes the very nature of God. Abraham, however,

does not waiver. Finally, Sarah questions how God can fulfill his promise if

Abraham kills their only son. Abraham, his faith constant, proposes a solution to

Sarah's question saying:

>Gott wird warhafftig seinen bund
>Haltn, wie er uns hat verjehen
>Ob gleich Isaac stirbt tod,
>So kan doch der allmechtig Gott
>Uns wol ein ander andere frucht fürstrecken
>Oder den Isaac aufferwecken
>Wider auß dem verbrendten aschen
>Dadurch den segen wir erhaschen
>Gott hat vil weg unbekandt
>In seiner allmechtigen hand,
>Und zu volstrecken seinen bund
>Wie uns versprochen hat sein mund.(KG, X 68)

>(God will keep His covenant
>As He has promised us.
>Even though Isaac will die,
>Almighty God can and will
>Give us another child
>Or resurrect Isaac
>From the burned ashes
>From which we will snatch His blessing.
>God has many unknown ways
>In His almighty hand
>To complete His covenant
>As He promised through His word.)

Abraham remains firm - there is no contradiction between God's promise and his command. Man does not know God's ways; in some manner, the promise will be fulfilled. Abraham advances the possibility that Isaac will die and that God will resurrect him. This concept, again discussed below, has firm basis in Jewish *midrash* as well. Again, it is unlikely that Sachs was aware of this. However, only in Sachs's text is the resurrection a solution proposed in response to Abraham's dilemma. This exemplifies the shift of emphasis that has taken place between *Der Sündenfall,* the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel*, and the Reformation drama - the de-emphasis of the typologic use of the resurrection theme. Moreover, the Abraham of the 1533 play needs to have answers for what is occurring. He is not acting out of pure faith alone, as is the Abraham portrayed in the other texts examined. This weakness undermines the portrayal of Abraham and is inconsistent with Lutheran theology that emphasizes Justification by Faith, not works. The theologic inconsistancy may be the reason that Sachs eliminated this dialogue in his later version of the play.

In lectures on Genesis, Luther delineated what he felt to be Abraham's greatest dilemma in Genesis 22:

> Dixi, quae fuerit tentatio Abrahae, nempe contradictio promissiones. Egregie igitur elucet eius fides, quod tam prompto animo iubenti Deo obsequitur, et quanquam macdandus sit Isaac, tamen de promissione implenda nihil dubitat, etiam si modum impletionis ignoret, etsi autem trepidat et pavet: quid enim aliud faceret pater? tamen haeret in promissione, futurum, ut aliquando habeat semen.

.   (I have stated what Abraham's trial was, namely, the contradiction of the
promise. Therefore his faith shines forth with special clarity in this
passage, inasmuch as he obeys God with such a ready heart when He
gives him the command. And although Isaac has to be sacrificed, he
nevertheless has no doubt whatever that the promise will be fulfilled, even
if he does not know the manner of fulfillment. Yet he is also alarmed and
terrified. For what else could the father do? Nevertheless, he clings to the
promise that at some time Isaac will have descendants.) [109]

Luther's focus differs totally from the previously discussed Christian

exegesis. Catholic emphasis had been on typology - Isaac as a prefiguration of

Jesus. Luther has now shifted focus to the contradiction between God's

command (and Luther saw it as a command), and His prior promise that through

Isaac Abraham's nation would be multiplied. Sachs has used Sarah, not only as

a foil to Abraham, but also, more importantly, Sachs has used his drama to

foreground this important Lutheran dogma and thereby popularize it.

Reckling sees in Sachs's work the developing, but as of yet unfinished

theology of Martin Luther. Sachs's first drama was written in 1533, but Luther's

Genesis lectures were not held until 1535-45. Hence, Luther's views on Genesis

were not yet a part of Protestant dogma when Sachs wrote his first play. Reckling

feels that the emphasis in Sachs's dramas is twofold. The promise that the

elderly couple will yet have a child is a test of Abraham's faith, whereas the

command to sacrifice Isaac is a test of Abraham's obedience.[110] I argue against

Reckling's view. The faith that God will keep his promise, as quoted above from

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[109] WA, 43 203-4. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 95.

[110] Reckling 50.

Luther's lecture, is exactly what Sachs reflects in his1533 drama. Although written prior to Luther's Lectures on Genesis, the drama is in accord with Luther's thoughts. Abraham is certainly aware of the contradiction between God's command and his promise through Isaac, but as is seen in the dialogue between Abraham and Sarah discussed above, he has faith that God will keep His promise in some manner; God has a plan. The 1558 drama does not contain this dialogue between Abraham and Sarah, perhaps because it contains an abbreviated depiction of Genesis 22. This shifts the emphasis of the later drama to foreground Abraham's obedience more so than his faith and belief in God. Nevertheless, the portion of the epilogue concerning the Sacrifice of Isaac is the same in both dramas, and this, as will be discussed below, is in accordance with the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone.

Abraham maintains his conviction as his argument with Sarah continues, and although lamenting her future loss, Sarah does finally acquiesce to the deed, just as she acquiesced in Act 1. In the parallel confrontations of Acts 1 and 2, Sachs thus utilizes Sarah and her demonstration of doubt, rationalism, and motherly love as a foil to Abraham. This further intensifies the foregrounding of Abraham as the perfect model of obedience - obedience that stems from his belief in God and in God's word.[111] Sarah is not seen again, although in both dramas Isaac and Abraham state that Sarah will be so happy to see her son

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[111] Reckling 46, 153. Reckling finds that Abraham's obedience stems from his belief in God's word, not just God's authority. He finds this to be something new in the presentation by Sachs. I cannot agree with this sentiment. I find that this was true from the outset of the Biblical text itself and has been followed throughout the literary treatments examined.

again. This reinforces the fact that Sarah is only a model of skepticism, almost a caricature, and not a developed character whose agony and ensuing joy the audience sees and shares.

In both dramas, Abraham and Isaac then ascend the mountain, with Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice. The text of the two dramas is virtually identical. Abraham builds an altar, binds Isaac's hands, and tells him that he is to be the sacrificial victim.[112] In both dramas, Isaac expresses willingness to do God's bidding. Abraham lays Isaac upon the altar, and Abraham raises his arm, knife in hand, to complete the deed.

What were to be Isaac's last words have a distinct prefigurative echo that reinforces the Isaac-Christ typology. Sachs's Isaac cries:

> O Herre Gott, an disem end
> Bevilch ich mein geist in dein hend. (KG, X 72)

> (O Dear God, to this end
> I commend my spirit into Your hands.)

Jesus's last words on the cross as recorded by Luke 23:46 in the Vulgate text are:"Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum" (Father, I commend my spirit into Your hands). In Luther's translation they read: "Vater, ich befehle

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[112] Cohen 10. Cohen comments on the number of times that the verb 'binden' and its variants are used in this scene. This is an astute observation, but I would differ with Cohen's conclusion that, "...the conventions of typological exegesis and the play's title *Die Opferung* Isaac notwithstanding, the event witnessed by the spectators was the *Akedah*, the "Binding" of Isaac." It is impossible to disregard both typology and the name of the play. The use of the verb 'binden' is a nice play on the word Akedah, but again, Cohen presumes a much too sophisticated audience.

meinen Geist in deine Hände!" This similarity is so explicit as to have been obvious to a even the simplest Christian.[113]

As is traditional, the angel now halts the sacrifice. In the 1533 drama, the angel remains unnamed. The 1558 drama identifies him as Gabriel.   Although the Biblical account does not name the angel, he is identified in both Yiddish treatments and in Immessen's drama. In the *Shira von Yizchak* the angel is identified as Michael, in the *Akedass Yizchak* and in *Der Sündenfall* he is Raphael, and now a third archangel, Gabriel, is introduced in this drama as the one to halt the sacrifice.

In both Jewish and Christian lore, these three angels each have unique attributes. In the case of Raphael, his role is the same in both traditions, that of being a healer. [114] Gabriel and Michael have different roles according to the two religions. In Judaism, Gabriel represents strength and Michael mercy and forbearance.[115] In Christian tradition, Gabriel is the angel of mercy, while Michael is the angel of judgment.[116]

Immessen may have depicted Michael as the angel halting the sacrifice, because of the role assigned him as the angel of judgment in Christian tradition. The introduction of Gabriel by Sachs is, however, also plausible. No stretch of

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[113] Cohen 11.

[114] James Driscoll, "St. Raphael." *The Catholic Encyclopedia.* Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 21 Jan. 2012 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12640b.htm>.

[115] Margolies 79-80.

[116] Hugh Pope, "St. Gabriel the Archangel." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. 21 Jan. 2012 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06330a.htm>.

the imagination would be required to connect the 'angel of mercy' with the halting of the Sacrifice of Isaac. In addition to this appellation, Gabriel is traditionally associated with the Annunciation, as well as with foretelling the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth (Luke 1:1-38). Sachs also identifies Gabriel as the angel who speaks to Hagar in Acts 1 and 6 of his longer play, announcing to her that her son will be the father of a great nation. This serves to reinforce the connection of the angel of Sachs's play to Gabriel, who propheticically announced the birth of two children destined for future greatness. I assert that this prefigurative association is the reason that Sachs specifically names Gabriel as the angel in these scenes.

The ensuing action again proceeds according to the Biblical account, with virtually the same dialogue and direction found in both plays. The angel acknowledges Abraham's faith, gives the traditional promise, Abraham unbinds Isaac and sacrifices the ram, Abraham, Isaac and the servants leave, and the *Ehrnhold* takes over.

The same *Ehrnhold* who appeared in the Prologue again directly addresses the audience. The longer drama specifically gives a stage direction indicating that the Herold bows to the audience. He has achieved distance between the dramatic action and the Epilogue, and signalled the conclusion of the play. The Herold then summarizes the moral of the story and applies it to the present time. He enumerates the individual points that the audience should have noted, and the lessons they are to learn. Simplistically, this has the effect of

demonstrating the cause, effect, and consequence of the action depicted. This in turn gives the viewer guidelines for proper conduct in his time.[117] The interpretation and possible consequences of the dramatic action are solely in Sachs's hands, for he does not allow the audience to think for themselves or draw their own conclusions. Sachs, via the character of the Herold, does this for them; he is the educator.

The epilogues of both dramas emphasize the dramas' moral and didactic qualities. God keeps his promise and we must have faith in him - an eternal message relevant for all. The typology of God's promise to Abraham, which will culminate in the second coming of the messiah, is evident, but recedes to the background in accordance with the Lutheran emphasis on a tropologic (moral) rather than typologic message.

 The Epilogue of the earlier version of the Isaac drama contains four lessons that are also contained in the later play. The Ernhold explicitly numbers and enumerates these lessons:

> Also sich endet die gescicht
> Da wir vier stück warden bericht:
> Erstlich was Gott das höchste gut,
> Uns durch sein wort verheissen thut,
> Das halt er wahrhaft und gewiß,
> Wo man im nur glaubet diß,
> Wie er noch heut zu diser stund
> Helt sein versprochen gnaden-bund
> Auf erd der seinen christenheit
> Durch den samen gebenedeit,

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[117] Krause 121-123.

Wie er in da verhieß mit nam.
Zum andern diser Abraham
Ist gar ein liebliches fürbild
Aller glaubigen Christen mild,
So auff Gottes wortes zusagen
Alle gefär gehorsam wagen
On allen zweifel, stark und vest.
Sie glauben daß Gott auff das best
Mit in meint trewlich ob in helt
Und was er sie heist in gefelt.
Zum dritten Sara figuriert
Menschlich vernunft, die disputiert
Und kan sich gar nit schicken drein,
Will nur ob dem wort meister sein
Mit ihrem inwendigen zancken
Und viel umbschweifenden gedancken
Ermessen, wie wann, und warumb
Dies geschech und jhenes kumb,
Wil sich dem wort nicht untergeben
Und einfeltig glauben darneben,
Biß sie durchs creutz wird uberwunden
Sambt fleisch und blut, den liget unden
Und im das creuz liegt auff dem nack.
Zum vierden bedeut Isaac
Jesum Christum, unser heyland,
Von Gott, dem Vatter, her gesand,
Verheissen von allen propheten,
So hertzlich auff in hoffen theten.
Das war der gebenedeit sam,
Welcher an des creutzes stam
Von dem vatter geopfert war
Für unser sünd auff dem altar,
Da die gottheit blieb unversert,
Allein die menschheit war verzert,
Welche den wider uns bedeut,
Dadurch noch alle Christenleut
Werden gesegnet und auch sind
Auß gnaden worden gottes kind,
Die auch besitzen allesand
Dort das himelisch vatterland.
Da ewig freud uns aufferwachs.
Das wünschet uns allen Hans Sachs.(KG, X 74-5)

(So here ends the story

With which we have told four things:
First, that God is the highest good
And through His word has promised us
That He will keep His word truly and certainly
If one only believes Him.
Just as still today at this hour He
Keeps His promise
And covenant of mercy,
He will keep this here on earth
For His Christendom
Through His blessed seed
As He promised it by name.
Second, this Abraham
Is a pleasing, mild example
To all believing Christians,
Who obey God's word
Dare to endure obediently all danger,
Without any doubt.
Strong and firmly
They believe that God means truly the very best for them
And keeps what He has promised them.
Third, Sarah represents
Human reason, which argues
And cannot accept [God's ways].
She wants to have the last word
With her inner arguments.
To measure how, when and why
With many roaming thoughts
This and that happens.
She does not want to be subservient to the word
And believe with simplicity,
Until she will be conquered by the Cross,
Including the flesh and blood, which lies below.
And upon whom the cross lies upon His neck.
Fourth, Isaac means
Jesus Christ, our saviour.
Sent by God our Father,
Predicted by all prophets
Who placed their hope
From the bottom of their hearts im Him.
That was the blessed seed
Which was sacrificed by the Father
On the trunk of the cross
For our sins on the altar.

The Divinity was unwounded,
Only mankind was devoured,
Which is represented by the ram
Thereby all Christendom was blessed.
And because of mercy,
Also have become God's children,
Who all together also possess
The heavenly Fatherland
Where eternal joy will wake us.
This is what Hans Sachs wishes us all.)

The first lesson emphasizes that God keeps his promises, He is just, and it is up to man to believe in Him. With this, Sachs draws on the First Commandment and on the Lutheran catechism.[118] Reformation dramatists considered the concept of Divine justice to be one of the simplest to depict, and one of the most effective ways to impress upon the audience the need to embrace piety.[119] Hence, earthly suffering (or in this case testing) will lead to eternal reward through salvation. The second lesson is clear: Abraham is an exemplum; a model for all good Christians. He believes in God and because of his faith is willing to place his trust in Him without any doubt; Abraham knows that whatever God commands is for the best. Abraham is therefore a living demonstration of the Lutheran theology of *sola fide* (Justification Through Faith Alone). In the third lesson, Sachs addresses his unusual portrayal of Sarah. She is representatve of our inclination to argue with God. She is the counterpoint to Abraham, and an exemplum of how not to behave. Her doubt and questioning

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[118] Christof Moufang, *Katholische Katechismen des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts in deutscher Sprache* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964, rpt 1881) 196.

[119] Parente 63-6, gives numerous examples of the use of this trope in Reformation drama.

may only be overcome by the aid of the cross – the representation of God's grace and teaching. Allowing reason to overwhelm faith is a sin against the First Commandment.[120]

Visual typology is inherent in the announcer's speech about Isaac, as the *Ehrnhold* says; "Und im das creutz ligt auff dem nack." (And the cross lies on his neck) (KG, X 75) This evokes the typologic image of Isaac-Jesus carrying the cross.[121] Sachs then connects these images in the final and the fourth lesson. The figure of Isaac is symbolic of Christ, sent by the Father after the prophet had foreseen His coming. He is the blessed seed announced by God, and through whom God fulfilled his promise. This again affirms the first lesson above. When the mortal nature of Jesus died, God remained, just as Isaac was not killed. Further, the ram signifies Christ. Just as the lamb was killed, so was the mortal body of Christ. The ram - the Lamb of God - signifies Jesus, who has two natures, Divine and human. Sachs explicates that the ram suffers and dies, as did Jesus's human manifestation. The Catholic texts examined do not incorporate this concept, although Jesus is often referred to as the 'lamb of God', as related in John 1:29.

This typologic imagery is in accord with Luther's interpretation of Genesis 22:13. Luther expounds that he does not agree with the Jewish exegetes who feel that the ram was created on the sixth day of creation, on the eve of the first

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[120] Moufang 39, 380. WA, vol. 30, pt.1 133, WA, vol. 18 164 lines 25ff.

[121] Cohen 14.

Sabbath and preserved for the Akedah.[122] He feels that God can create things at will, however, the Jewish interpretation was also not completely incorrect, as the coming of Christ was known from the beginning of creation, and that the ram was a figure of Him was understood.[123] This was already a Patristic interpretation. In his third century Homily on Genesis 22, Origen also stated that the ram was a prefiguration of the mortal Jesus, as discussed in Chapter 1.[124]

The seven-act play adds a fifth lesson pertaining to Hagar, whose story was not contained in the shorter drama. The moral of this lesson is obvious. It emphasizes the gravity of the sin of pride:

> Die hagar uns erstlich bedeut
> Auff erd alle weltliche leut
> So nur leben nach fleisch und blut.
> So den zufelt her oder gut,
> Erheben sie sich auff der fart
> Inn ubermut, stolz und hoffart
> Und prüsten sich ob Gottes gaben,
> Samb sie die von in selber haben;
> Unde verachten dann jederman,
> So der gleichen gab nicht han,
> So lang bis in Gott in die hend
> Jammer, trübsal, angst und ellend
> Gibt, samb die gab weichen wöllen.
> Als den sie sich verzaget stellen.
> Dadurch in Gott anzeigen thut,
> Das von im allein komb als gut.
> Darmit treibt er sie zu demut.(KG, X 56-7)

(First, Hagar represents to us

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[122]Mishnah, Tactate Avot, 5:6, PRE XVIII. The pre-existence of this ram also demonstrates that Isaac was never to be sacrificed.

[123]WA, vol. 43 234, *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 137.

[124] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 145.

All secular people on earth
Who only live according to their natyre.
According to an incident haphazardly,
They revolt in their journey
In arrogance, pride and haughtiness,
And they are proud of God's gifts,
As if they got them by themselves
And then disdain everyone.
Who does not enjoy the same gifts
Until God gives them
Suffering, tribulation, fear and misery.
Those who want to avoid those gifts,
They present themselves without courage.
By this God demonstrates to them
That from Him alone
All good originates.
With this, He drives them to humility.)

The second and third lessons are nearly the same in both plays, but they

appear in reverse order. The fourth lesson of the longer drama is new. It

pertains, again with obvious meaning, to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah,

which is not contained in the shorter play:

Zum vierden die statt Sodoma
Ist ein grewlich exempel da
Aller verstockten sünder schar,
Die on buß sünden immer dar,
Sündtlichen wollusten nach trachten,
Gott und sein heyligs wort verachten,
Der frommen sel teglich bekümern.
Die müssen entlich gehen zu trümern
Wann obin bricht der Gottes zorn,
Wern hie und dort ewig verlorn,
Wie Gott den sunder hat geschworn.(KG, X 57)

(The fourth is the city of Sodom,
Which is a horrible example
For the mass of unrepentant sinners
Who sin all of the time without penitence.
They aspire to sinful delights,
They disdain God and His holy word,

Daily they burden the pious soul.
They inevitably will be smashed
When God's ire breaks upon them
Who will be everywhere lost for eternity
As God has sworn to do to the sinner.)

The final typologic lesson is almost word for word the same as in the prior version. In both versions, an author's identical closing statement elucidates the significance of Christ's death for the members of the audience: that all Christians are God's children, blessed through the grace of God via the crucifixion, so that they will possess a divine afterlife.   This adds a third dimension to the Old Testament-New Testament typology, which Theiß feels, differentiates it from medieval typology.[125] The last lines of the play read:

Dadurch noch alle Christenleut
Werden gesegnet und auch sind
Auß gnaden worden gottes kind,
Die auch besitzen allesand
Dort das himelisch vatterland.
Da ewig freud uns aufferwachs.
Und end hat alles ungemachs
Das wünschet uns allen Hans Sachs (KG, X 58)

(All Christians
Are being blessed by this
And also have become God's children.
Through grace
They all possess
The heavenly fatherland there
Where the eternal joy will awaken us
And there will be an end to all misery.
Hans Sachs wishes this to all of us.)

Theiß states:

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[125] Theiß 165.

So zeigt die Sachssche Typologie eine dreigliedrige Form: AT – NT – Gegenwart. Damit weicht sie von der Dreischritt-Typologie des Mittlalters ab, für die die Formel AT – Christus – Eschatologie oder auch Schatten – Bild – Wahrheit galt.[126]

(Thus, Sachs's typology shows a tripartite form: OT-NT-Present. Thereby the Typology deviates from the threefold typology of the Middle Ages, i.e. the formula OT - Christ - Eschatology, or Shadow - Image - Truth.)

I cannot agree with this statement. I argue that Sachs's view does not subordinate the eschatological to the present. The actions of the present (belief in Christ and in God's grace) are the midpoint of both Sachs's and the medieval concept of typology. Through these beliefs, the eschatological reference of eternal life, or as Sachs phrases it, "himelisch vaterland" (heavenly fatherland) will be realized. This is Sachs's concept of "Wahrheit" and is the moral imperative he wishes to convey with these closing lines.

The closing lines also serve another purpose - they demonstrate a shift away from typology to tropology. The moral of the play is a current one in Reformation ideology. The virtues of faith and obedience, as depicted by Abraham and Isaac, represent practical virtues that can and are incorporated into the Lutheran way of life. One must continue to follow the moral lessons of Scripture, as they are the means to future redemption. This type of adherence to virtue as a way of obtaining salvation is typical of Reformation drama. It evidences a shift away from salvation as a theological concept, to salvation as a

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[126] Theiß 165.

goal attained through the exemplary conduct depicted in plays.[127] James Parente actually goes so far as to say:

> In sixteenth-century humanist religious drama, then, theology was subordinated to morality. Theology was, of course, still evident in the soteriological paradigms which the dramatists had contributed to strengthen the faith of the viewers. But, as in the case of the appended allegorical interpretations, the christological sense of the plot was regarded as equal to the literary, moral and even the ecclesiastical levels.[128]

Despite the harshness of Parente's first assertion, he conveys his point effectively. His statement, which did not refer to Sachs's Abraham dramas, applies well to the dramas under examination. Sachs, as was typical of Lutheran dramatists of his time, believed in the educability of his audience, and it was his task to facilitate this education.

Many of Sachs's techniques were not new ones, but Sachs succeeded in adapting them in a different manner to suit his purpose. As demonstrated, the use of an *Ehrnhold* was not a new phenomenon. What is new is that he is the one to deliver the moral of the story, not a prophet or Patristic Father. Further, the *Ehrnhold* is actually speaking specifically on behalf of a new moral authority, the lay author, Hans Sachs.[129]

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[127] Parente 63, 88-9.

[128] Parente 93.

[129] Cohen 15. I disagree with Cohen who states that the *Ehrnhold* delivers the moral in both the prologue and epilogue of the play. In the prologue, he only delivers a plot summary.

Sachs's use of an epilogue was also not his invention. Caspary sees it as derived from the recapitulation of the chorus found in a Greek tragedy. Indeed, in many early Church dramas the choir, not just an individual, ended the drama with a similar recapitulation,[130] and most Passion Plays ended with an Epilogue.[131] The *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* is an exception, perhaps, as discussed above, because the play as we have it is not in its complete form. Immessen also did not utilize an epilogue, and *Der Sündenfall* ends in song.

There are several other deviations from the Biblical text in both of Sachs's dramas, in addition to those already mentioned. The *Ernhold* says that the1533 drama is taken from Chapter 22 of the book of Genesis. In fact, the announcement of Isaac's birth is found in Chapter 21. Sachs did not repeat this error in the 1558 play. Three angels - emissaries of God - do not come to Abraham's tent to announce that Isaac will be born, as in the Biblical narrative. Instead, God himself comes with two angels, and Abraham and Sarah speak directly with God.[132] This foregrounds the Lutheran tenet that there are no intercessors; Abraham spoke directly with God. It is also in accord with Luther's exegesis of Genesis 18:1. In his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther states of

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[130] Caspary 4.

[131] Caspary 5. Examples include the St. Gall and Frankfurt Passion Plays, and the Redentiner and Wiener Osterspiele.

[132] This is certainly contrary to any Jewish interpretation of the Biblical text. According to Jewish theology as opposed to Christian theology, God could never be limited to human form.

Abraham's guests that, "Abraham saw three and worshipped one."[133] Luther felt

that Abraham did indeed recognize God, but that the Trinity was invisible. Sachs

has thus created a visual depiction of Luther's theology.

Upon God's command to sacrifice Isaac, the Biblical text clearly states that

Abraham himself saddled the donkey and split the wood for the offering. In both

plays, Sachs has Abraham ask Sarah to have his servants do this for him. In the

1558 and the 1533 plays, the two servants are given names, Simri and Mesech.

These names are inventions of Sachs, as the servants remain unnamed in the

Biblical text. However, many *midrashim* exist, relating names of the two servants

as Eliezer and Ishmael, and this is accepted in Jewish tradition.[134] Sachs does

not utilize this tradition, creating a larger role for these two servants when he has

Simri say:

> Mesech, lieber geselle mein,
> Was man nur unser herreschaft sein?
> Ich hab heint in der nacht den herren
> Und auch unser frawen von ferrn
> Hören weinen, seufftzen und klagen.(KG,X 53)
>
> (Mesech, my dear friend,
> What has happened to our lordship?
> Today at night I heard from afar our Lord
> And also our Lady
> Cry, sigh, and lament from afar.

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[133] *Luther's Works* vol 3 194.

[134] There is a great deal of exegesis on this interpretation. See for example PRE XXXI, *Midrash Wayosha*, and Rashi on Genesis 22:2. Christian exegesis does not concern itself with the identities of the servants.

To which Mesech replies:

> Ja dise nacht, als es wolt tagen,
> Hab ich dergleich gehört von in,   /
> Was ihn anligt, das weiß ich nicht.
> An hab und gut n nichts gebricht. (KG, X 53)

> (Yes, last night at daybreak,
> I heard something like that from them
> What disturbs them I do not know
> There is nothing lacking
> In possessions and property.)

Simri also overhears Sarah bidding farewell to her son:

> Als wir abschieden auß dem hauß
> Und auch der alt herr war hinauß
> Und Isaac hinach hin gieng,
> Sara, sein mutter, ihn umbfing,
> Weint und küst in zum offtern mal,
> Da daucht mich, ich hört eine gal,
> Der laut (Gott sey es klaget sehr!):
> Mein sohn, ich sich dich nimmermehr,
> Du wirst mIr jemerlich ermört. (KG, X 53)

> (When we left the house
> And also the old Lord was outside
> And Isaac followed him,
> Sarah, his mother, embraced him
> Cried and kissed him many times,
> I thought I heard a shout
> Which said (May God have mercy)
> My son, I will never see you again
> You will be miserably murdered.)

Mesech thereupon replies that this is not possible.

This discussion between the servants is problematic in several respects.

There is no such discussion recorded between the two servants in Genesis 22.

Furthermore, the presumption that Sarah knew what was to transpire is Biblically

unfounded. Although, as discussed above, there is little development of Sachs's

characters in either Isaac drama. In crafting the discussion between the

servants, Sachs has inserted some comment on the character and emotions of

both Abraham and Sarah. These emotions, understandable as they may be, are

also not contained in the Biblical text. In dramatizing the story, Sachs's goal was

to make it interesting for his viewers, therefore he invented new roles. The

liberties that Sachs took are contrary to the Lutheran doctrine of *sola scriptura*

and constitute a deviation from Protestant doctrine. These Biblical inaccuracies

also do not reflect the intent of the Reformers, who viewed the production of

Biblical plays as a means of visualizing the Bible - one even more effective than

sermons.[135]

A further inconsistency exists in both texts with respect to Isaac's

knowledge of what is about to happen to him. As cited above, in the 1533 text

Simri overhears Sarah hugging Isaac stating that she will not see him again, as

he is going to his death. It is possible that Isaac did not hear this, but it is unlikely

that he would not hear his wailing mother as she embraces him. There is no

exegesis in either the Christian or Jewish traditions that interprets the Sacrifice of

Isaac as a punishment for Isaac's past or possible future deeds. In Sachs's plays,

however, Isaac thinks that he may have been guilty of some wrongdoing:

> Lieber Vater, was soll das sein,
> Das du mir bindst die hende mein?

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[135] Ehrstine 2-6.

> Hab ich denn etwas ubles thon? (KG, X 54)[136]

> (Dear Father, what does that mean.
> That you are binding my hands?
> Have I done anything evil?)

This interchange does not take place in the 1533 play. There, Abraham

advances the potential of future wrongdoing by Isaac as a possible reason for his

sacrifice:

> Villeicht möcht er in seinem leben
> Etwan sonst ein böser mensch werden,
> Vil unglücks anrichten auff erden... (KG, X 67).

> (Perhaps he would have sometime in his life,
> Become an evil person,
> And cause much misfortune on earth...)

 These instances highlight Sachs's interest in foregrounding a possible

connection between sin and death. Although this is a Biblical trope in both the

Old and New Testaments, it is not one found in Genesis 22.[137] Luther often

emphasized this connection in his "unholy triumverate" - sin, death, and the devil

- but not in conjunction with Genesis 22.[138]

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[136] The same wording is used in the 1533 play KG, X 71.

[137] The trope of death as a consequence of sin is begins in the second chapter of the Old Testament: "And He commanded him [Abraham] saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat, in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt surely die the death "(Genesis 2:16-17). In the New Testament the most well known example of the connection is in Romans: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Other Biblical references abound. See, for instance: Proverbs 11:19, Ezekiel 18:4, Matthew 25:46, and Romans 1:32 and 5:12.

[138] Scott Hendrix, *Martin Luther - A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). See, for instance, Luther's Sermon in: *Luther's Works,* vol. 51, Sermons I 316 and Luther's Lectures on Corinthians, *Luther's Works,* vol. 28 201,

The final deviation from the text of the Bible occurs in both dramas when Isaac apparently leaves the mountain together with Abraham and the servants. The Biblical account relates only that Abraham and the servants leave, and does not mention Isaac. Isaac's fate after the Akedah has been the subject of several *midrashim*, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, but nowhere do we find that Isaac returns with his father and the servants. Sachs's dramas also indicate that Isaac will see his mother again, a wish that is not Biblically based.

As Abraham and Isaac prepare to ascend the mountain, the stage directions in the 1558 drama state "Abraham kombt mit Isaac, der tregt holz und fewer." (Abraham comes with Isaac, who carries wood and fire) (KG, X 53). As discussed throughout, Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice is an important prefigurative element, but despite its importance to both plays, Sachs only indicates this in a stage direction, not as a direct command by Abraham to Isaac. Here, where dramatic liberty would have called attention to an important element, there is only the action, and not a conversation between Abraham and his son about the wood. Yet even here, there is a discrepancy. In Genesis 22, it is Abraham who carries the fire, and not Isaac.

Sachs's dramas thus show more deviation from the Biblical text than found in the previous dramas examined. He used these embellishments to achieve greater focus on the moral lessons inherent in his plays and on the inner thoughts of the characters themselves. Even with this, Sachs did not utilize all opportunities to foreground the lessons inherent in the text. Nevertheless, the

examination of Sachs's plays demonstrates that, in the presentation of the Sacrifice of Isaac theme, Sachs assigns greater importance to dramatic tension and to plot development than did the Catholic authors.

Hans Sachs and the Sacrifice of Isaac: The Meisterlied

Hans Sachs wrote approximately 4,400 Meisterlieder. Of these, almost 2,000 dealt with Biblical or spiritual themes.[139] His 1545 Meisterlied, *Der ertz-Patriarch Abraham mit der opferung Isaac, ein figur Jesu Christi* ('The Patriarch Abraham Sacrificing Isaac, a Figure of Jesus Christ') does not emphasize the moral aspect of the Sacrifice of Isaac over the prefigurative aspect, as the title already indicates. The poem encompasses Genesis 17:5 through 22:19. It begins with God changing Abraham's name from Abram to Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old. God then pledges Abraham that he will be the father of many nations, that God will be with him and his descendents always, that they will be His people, and finally, that Sarah will bear a son whom they should name Isaac.

The poem relates that Abraham falls on his face, believing what God has told him, and then proceeds to circumcise all the males of his household on one

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[139] Könniker, *Hans Sachs* 31.

day, as per God's instruction. The next three lines relate Isaac's birth and Abraham's love for his home. Thereafter the poet informs us that God wishes to test Abraham. God gives the command to take Isaac and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah, followed by the description of the journey of the sad Abraham, his two servants, and Isaac.

There is a detailed narration of the trip up the mountain and the binding of Isaac, with the traditional conversation between father and son recorded. True to the Biblical text, the unnamed angel halts the sacrifice, calling Abraham's name twice and commanding that he should not harm his son. Now God knows that Abraham fears him, as Abraham would have sacrificed his son to God. Abraham, with God's blessing, sees the ram caught in the thicket and sacrifices it in Isaac's stead. The angel returns and brings the promise that, because Abraham did not withhold his only son, God will multiply his seed as the stars in the heaven in number and as the sand at the edge of the sea. The narrative ends with three lines relating that Abraham went down the mountain, went to Beersheba and dwelt there. The textual citation is then given, and a new section, indicated with a subtitle follows:

Erklerung der figur:

Aus dieser herrlichen figur
Wirt uns hie fürgebildet pur:
Got vatter bedeut Abraham,
Von dem der gebenedeyt sam

Christus, der heyland, ist geboren,
Welcher auch is geopffert woren,
Doch nach der gotheyt unterschieden;
Allein die menschheyt hat gelieden,
Bedeut den wider mit den horen
Derselbig ist geopfert woren
Am creutz das er hat selb getragen,
Daran er wur verwund geschlagen.
Ghorsam in der höchsten geduld
Er starb für unse sünd und schuld.
Durch das opffer gesegnet recht
Ist woren gantz menschlich geschlecht,
All die glauben in Jesum,
Seid ein künckliches priesterthum,
Die all ir feind, sünd, hell und tot
Uberweltigen in der not
Und mehren sich auch immerzu,
Biß entlich zu ewiger ruh
Mit-erben werden durch sein samen
Christi zum ewing leben Amen. (KG, CII 188)

(Interpretation of the [Biblical] Figures:

From this splendid figure
This is depicted for us truly:
God the Father signifies Abraham,
From whom the blessed seed
Christ, the Savior, is born
Who also was sacrificed,
But distinguished according to His Divinity
But this human [aspect] suffered.
This is signified by the ram with the horns
He has been sacrificed at the cross.
Which He Himself carried.
This, upon which he was beaten bloody.
Obedient with the utmost Patience,
He died for our sins and guilt.
Because of His sacrifice,
The whole human race has been truly blessed.
All who believe in Jesus
You are a royal priesthood
Who will overcome their enemies,
Sin, hell, and death in need.
And they will multiply continually

> Until finally to eternal rest
> We will inherit though Christ
> His seed, eternal life, Amen.)

The focus of this poem is the Old Testament story told, often with direct quotation, from Luther's translation of the Bible. Its purpose is to foretell events that will become manifest in the New Testament, and which are explicated at the conclusion of the poem. But there is an artistic dimension to the retelling of the tale as well. In addition to the obvious aabbcc... rhyme scheme of the work, the terse Biblical narrative is embellished. God is described in his might and glory as being "prechtig" (glorious), someone whose prophecies seem impossible, yet are fulfilled. Sachs depicts Abraham as receiving commands and following them immediately and obediently. He is not, however, a wooden, one-dimensional character, for his emotions are depicted. Pathos is evoked by the juxtaposition of the initial description of Abraham's feelings towards Isaac as - "hertzlich lieb" (deeply beloved) - and Abraham's mood as - "trawrig" (sorrowful) - as he gets up in the morning to do God's bidding. This is further emphasized by the description of how Abraham views Moriah - "Schawt an die stett in grosser klag" ([He] looks at the site with great lament).

Abraham is doing what he must, but not with a joyous heart. Sachs depicts him as a realistic character with human emotions. There is no authorial comment on Abraham's faith; it is a fact. Isaac has no role other than that of the sacrificial victim. The interchange, the question where is the sheep to be

slaughtered, marks the only occasion that Abraham and Isaac speak, for this is not a work about them, it is paradigm of belief.

The final section, the "Erklerung der figur" (Interpretation of the [Biblical] Figures) takes the place of the *Ehrnhold*'s speech at the end of Sachs's dramas. In this explanation, the poet clearly delineates several of the prefigurations inherent in this poem. The final interpretative statement is a curious one to have been written in 1545, for it seems to be the work of a Catholic interested in typology, perhaps a pre-conversion Hans Sachs. Clarence Friedman cites great similarity between Sachs's poem and that of an unknown Catholic Meistersinger contained in a manuscript found in Sachs's library.[140] The prefigurative imagery of both Meistersinger who see the ram as a type of Jesus is remarkably similar. The poet does state that Abraham signifies God, so that one may infer the Isaac-Jesus typology, but it is the ram that the poet specifies as the prefiguration of Jesus.

Contrary to the typologic interpretation of Genesis 22, Sachs does not explicitly mention Isaac as a prefiguration of Jesus in the Meisterlied. Sachs does allude to several often drawn comparisons between Isaac and Jesus, such as the status of being the son, carrying the wood/cross of the sacrifice, and the obedience inherent in the sacrifice. However, Sachs does not highlight and clarify the applicability of the dual nature of Jesus, as both Divine and human, to the figure of Isaac. Perhaps Sachs does not do so, because in his explanation of the

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[140]Friedman 112.

characters he states that although the human manifestation of God dies, God continues to exist. Thus, the ram physically does die, as does Jesus, but the Divinity does not. Sachs's interpretation of Isaac is more subtle here than that in his dramas. He explicates that Abraham signifies God, from whom Jesus is born, so that the Isaac-Jesus parallel may be inferred, but this prefiguration is not as overt as his other parallels. Sachs placed emphasis on the dual nature of the ram, but not on Isaac as a prefigurative aspect of Jesus. Thus, the traditional Isaac-Jesus interpretation is not as sharply drawn in this Meistersang as in Sachs's plays.

Typology was an ingrained and pervasive mode of thought, and one that Sachs did not succeed in eliminating. Sachs ardently embraced the new Lutheran reformative tradition, but as this poem evidences, he did not fully eliminate the old in his written work. Sachs wrote sixteen poems interpreting Biblical subjects tropologically, some of which were written prior to his Sacrifice of Isaac poem, yet he continued to write poems with typologic content as well.[141] This variation in Sachs's focus may thus be due to his unique position in history, one, which was on the transition from Catholicism to the new Lutheran faith, but whose tenets may not yet have been firmly rooted.

Sachs is not a great dramatist or a poet of astounding beauty. As Florentina Dietrich-Bader demonstrates, he is more a poet of the epic theater.[142]

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[141] Cohen 5.

[142]This is essentially the thesis of much of Dietrich-Bader's work.

Sachs is also not subtle, as the explicit messages expressed in his epilogues illustrate.   He is, however, a conscience for his audience and a purveyor of examples – of those clearly good and those clearly bad, with but few shades of gray in between. An erudite author, Hans Sachs's goal is that his works be used to guide and educate his audience; to help them stay on the road of proper conduct through life, while at the same time enjoying a bit of entertainment.

Joachim Greff: *Drey liebliche nützliche Historien der dreier Erzveter*

Joachim Greff (c.1500-1552) of Zwickau, was the son of Paul Greff, a Cantor at St. Marien, of Quartus an der Ratschule and the town chronicler. [143] Joachim began his academic education in Zwickau, which had been a Protestant town since 1525, and which was of great importance to Greff's later literary activity. [144] In 1523, a school ordinance specified that on every Wednesday morning and Sunday afternoon the students perform a play by Terence or Plautus in Latin for the other students, as well as for the public. This was the first such school ordinance in a Protestant town. It evidences the influence of the Reformation and of the Humanists, who had a great interest in the classics and

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[143] Seidel 8. Stammler, *Von der Mystik* 370. Stammler gives the dates as c.1510-1552.

[144] Seidel 7.

their use in education.[145] This ordinance set the stage for a tradition of school

drama later carried on by Greff in the vernacular.

In 1529, Greff went on to study in Wittenberg. In 1533, he received an

academic position in Halle and started writing dramas. In 1534 he went to the

altstädtisches Gymnasium in Magdeburg, where he wrote the first Biblical drama

written in High German in North Germany, *Ein lieblich und nützliches spil von*

dem Patriarchen Jakob und seinen zwelff Sönen (A lovely and useful play about

the Patriarch Jacob and his twelve sons).[146] In 1536, he became the rector at the

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[145] Seidel 17.

[146] Seidel 259-61. Most of Greff's works are not published. In addition to the Abraham drama, Greff's works include:

Ein lieblich vnd nüzbarlich spil von dem Patriarchen Jacob vnd sein zwelff Sönen / Aus dem Ersten buch Mosi gezogen / und zu Magdebug auff dem Schützenhoff / im 1534 jar gehalten. Darbey ein kurtz und seer schön spiel / von der Susanna / itzund erst gedruckt Magdeburg 1535. Gedruckt zu Magdeburgk durch Michael Lother. . 8º (Ratsschulbibliothek Zwickau).

Ein schöne Lustige Comedia des Poeten Plauti / Alularia genant / Durch Joachimum Greff von Zwickau Deudsch gemacht / vnd inn reim verfasset / fast lüstig und kurtzweilig zu lesen. Magdeburg, gegeben zu Magdeburg / im Jar 1535. 8º (Ratsschulbibliothek Zwickau).

Tragedia des Buchs Judith jnn Deudsche Reim verfasset durch / Joachi. Greff. von Zwickaw / nützlich zu lesen. Wittemberg. 1536. Gedruckt zu Wittemberg durch Georgen Rhaw. Wittemberg 1536. 8º (Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel).

M V N D V S *ein schöns newes kurtzes Spiel von der Welt art und natur / durch Joachimum Greff zusammen gebracht / nützlich vnd fast kurtzweilich zulesen. Wittenberg 1537. Gedruckt zu Wittemberg durch Georgen Rhaw.* 8º (Ratsschulbibliothek Zwickau).

Das Leiden und Auferstehung vnseres Herrn Jesu Christi / aus den vier Euangelisten durch D. Johan Bugenhagen Pomern vleissig zusamen gebracht / vnd nachmals durch Joachimum Greff von Zwickau jnn Deudsch Reim verfasset / seliglich und tröstlich zu lesen Wittemberg 1538. Gedruckt zu Wittemberg durch Nickel Schirlentz. 8º (Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen).

Ein Geistliches schönes newes spil / auff das heilige Osterfest gestellt / Darinnen werden gehandelt die geschicht von der Aufferstehung Christi zu sampt der historien Thome. Auch werden gemelt etzliche rede Christ / hart fur seiner himmelfart geschehen. Zu letzt wird der Triumpf Christi hirinnen auch angezeigt / was er durch seine Aufferstehung der gantzen Welt erworben vn aufgericht. Allen fromen Christen sehr tröstlich vnd lustich zu lesen. Durch Joachimum Greff von Czwickau 8º (Ratsschulbibliothek Zwickau).

Lateinschule in Dessau, which is close to Wittenberg. Greff remained in Dessau

until 1550, when he and his wife moved to Roßlau, a small town in Saxony

between Magdeburg and Dessau. There Greff functioned as Pastor, albeit

without ordination. Both Greff and his wife died of the plague in 1552.

Demonstrating the intimate connection between Greff's literary output and his

academic activity, Greff did not write any dramas while in Roßlau. He wrote only

two songs and three didactic texts dealing with the Lutheran strife with the

Catholic Church. Greff's total dramatic output includes two secular dramas - one

a comedy and one a Fastnachtspiel, and seven Biblical dramas. His oeuvre

thereby manifests the focal point of his interests - the Lutheran faith. [147]

Greff's dramas are *Schuldramen* (school dramas)*,* although P.E. Schmidt

does not consider Greff's last three dramas, the *Abraham* drama (1545), the

Osterspiel (Easter Play) (1542) and *Lazarus* (1545) to fall into this category. He

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Lazarus Vom Tode durch Christum am vierden tage erwecket. Ein Geistliches schönes newes spil / aus Latein in Deutsche Reim verfasst / zu sterckung des höchsten vnd nötigsten Artikels vnseres heiligen Christlichen glaubens von der letzten aufferstehung vnsers fleisches oder der todten am Jüngsten tage andechtig / sehnlich / vnd tröstlich zu lesen / Durch Jaochimum Greff von Czwickau / itzund Schulmeister zu Dessaw der Stad Halle in Sachssen dedicirt vnd zugeschrieben. Wittemberg 1545. 8º (Herzog August Bibliothel Wolfenbüttel, Ratsschulbibliothek Zwickau).

Ein schöne newe Action auff das Xviij. vnd XjX. Capitel des Euangelisten Lucae gestellt / vnd Reimweis in drey Actus verfasset / Allen büssfertigen sündern tröstlich aber den verstockten Gottes vnd des Euangelij feinden schrecklich zu lesen / Durch Joachimum Greff von Zwickau / yetzund Schulmeister zu Dessaw. Auch ein kurtz Summarium des Xi. Capitels Johanni / von der aufferweckung Lazeri / gleich als ein Lied verfasset / Zu ende dieser Action angehengt. Zwickau 1546. Gedruckt inn der Churfürstlichen Stadt Zwickau / durch Wolff Meyerpeck. 8º (Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Halle).

[147] Seidel 4-15. Goedeke vol. 2 357-8. Goedeke gives slightly different dates for the events in Greff's life. He states that Greff went to Wittemberg in 1528, Halle in 1531, Magdeburg in 1533, 1536-40 in Wittemberg,, 1541 in Dessau, and that the date of his death is unknown.

assumes that these dramas were printed as *Spielbücher* (Books of Plays)*.*

Schmidt bases his opinion on the fact that these plays are technically more

complex than the earlier dramas and contain no mention of the school venue.

Further, the manuscripts all have large fonts at the beginning of each stage

direction; presumably, so that the less learned director and actors will not

overlook them. There is no Latin in these three dramas, although the other

dramas, *Judith* (1536) and *Mundus* (1537) contain Latin, as does *Aulularia,* which

was actually a translation from the Latin original.[148] Schmidt thus concludes that

Greff's last three dramas, including the *Abraham* drama under discussion,

constitute a bridge between the *Schuldrama* and the *Volksdrama*.[149] The

Abraham drama itself contains no Latin at all, even in the stage directions. There

are a few Latin words in the Dedication and the scenes and act are numbered in

Latin. This paucity of Latin, among other characteristics, distinguishes the

Protestant dramas examined from the medieval Catholic ones.

The set design for Greff's drama remains unknown, as no record of it

exists. It was presumably a simple one, with the different scenes signaled in that

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[148] Except for *Judith*, these works were not accessible to me and were not examined by me. Therefore the extent of the Latin contained in these plays was not evaluated. Schmidt also notes that the two latest dramas (not the *Abraham* drama) include communal singing between the acts, and a school drama would not contain this. This is not so. Elsie Helmrich *The History of the Chorus in the German Drama*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912) 26-42, cites numerous *Schuldramen*, both in Latin and in German that included communal singing between the acts.

[149] P.E. Schmidt 91-92. It is to be noted that Schmidt did not have access to Greff's last drama "Zachäus", so that this drama was not taken into consideration in Schmidt's discussion.

they took place on different portions of the stage.[150] This arrangement, typical in humanist dramas was termed the *Badehauszellenbühne.* It consisted of a simple stage that had three or four areas partitioned by curtains. These could be drawn, closing off areas that represented different houses or locales.[151] It is also unclear where the actors in Greff's plays went when they were not involved in the current action. It is possible that they remained on stage at all times, although dramatically this is not effective.[152] It is also possible that the actors remained on stage in a partitioned area whose curtains were closed.[153]Since these may have been school plays, they would not have had the luxury of a performance taking place in a specially constructed theater. Generally, a room in the school or a public building would have provided the stage, so that the facilities were often makeshift and not ideal.

Only the first portion of the drama, that dealing with Abraham, remains of Joachim Greff's *Drey liebliche nützliche Historien der dreier Erzveter.* The title of the work itself indicates that this is a trilogy, as do the cast of characters and the dedication:

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[150] P.E. Schmidt 143-4.

[151] Gunther Haupt, *Friedrich Hermann Flayders "Mora rediviva" und Die bedeutesten Vertreter des lateinischen Schuldramas des 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Buchdruckerei der Tübinger Studentenhilfe, 1928) 7.

[152] Seidel 47.

[153] Ronald Walker, "Joachim Greff's *Tragoedia des Buchs Iudith*: Text, Edition and Introduction to the Text", (Unpublished Disstertaton, Ohio State University, 1978) 67.

> … hab ich dieselbig des Abrahams
> zusampt Isaacs und Jacobs seiner sone
> beider auch hocher trefflicher leute und Ertzveter Historien
> aus den ersten buch Mosi/E.C.G zu hochem lob
> Preis vn ehr/In Deudsche Reim verfasset
> Und in ein Action gebracht vnd gestellet (Dedication)**[154]**

> (I have put into German verse and displayed in dramatic form the histories of Abraham and Isaac as well as of the sons of Jacob, both also highly esteemed people, and the histories of the Patriarchs from the First Book of Moses, in praise and honor of your esteemed Highness.)

Throughout the Prologue to the Reader and the Prologue and Epilogue of the *Actor,* Greff again speaks of all three works. There is controversy as to whether three works ever existed, and if so, what they were. Creiznach posits that the trilogy consists of the Jacob drama, a reworking of the *Abraham* drama, and the *Abraham* drama as we have it, and that the drama presently under discussion is complete.[155] Holstein feels that Greff only wrote the extant portion of the drama, although the title, dedication, and prologue all mention the three histories.[156] Andrea Seidel argues that the other two parts of the drama may not have existed, that the printer, Hans Frischmut of Wittenberg, never printed the other two plays, or that a new Isaac drama and the already extant Jacob drama

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[154] Note: no folio pages or line numbers are given in the manuscript.

[155] Creiznach, *Geschichte*, vol. III 359. I could find no basis for Creiznach's assertion that the *Abraham* drama had undergone revision. Greff states that he wrote the drama in 1538 and it was not published until 1540, but he does not state that it was revised. Seidel 168, states that Greff wanted to revise his 'Jacob' drama in connection with the trilogy, but does not substantiate this assertion. The Jacob drama had already undergone three printings (1534, a second printing in 1534, and a third in 1535), a sign of its popularity.

[156] Holstein 81.

were to have been the other two parts of the trilogy.[157] She bases this on the

110 actors in the cast of characters that Greff listed, which specified those that

took part in the *Abraham* drama, as well as on the Prologue to the Reader

wherein Greff describes the history of the play's origin:

> Auch ich dieselben beiden Historien Abrahams vnd Isaacs / Fast fur zweien jaren (die ich jtzund in druck allererst gegeben) zu dergleichen Action mit den deutschen Reimen verfertigt vnd zusamen gebracht.

> (For nearly two years I have brought together these same two histories of Abraham and Isaac as a play in German rhyme [which I now publish for the first time]).

Further, the "Vorrehde des Actors" ('Actor's Prologue') also pertains to three
plays:

> Dieselben drey Historien schon
> Gestellet in drey Aktion
> Solt jr jtzt hôren vnd sehen

> (You shall now hear
> Those three histories
> Depicted in three plays.)

There is also an announcement of another day's performance, with a play

concerning Isaac, made at the end of the *Abraham* play:

> Wer morgen auch dergleich lust het
> Vnd vns dasselb zu ehren thet
> Das er wolt wider komen her
> Dem wollen wir aber dancken sehr
> Morgen wil Gott solt ir vom Jsac [sic]
> Hören Wiewohl diesen tag
> Auch ist von jm gehöret viel
> Doch morgen wie ich sagen wil
> Dann wolln wir erst Agiren euch
> Sein Historien all zugleich… (Epilogue)

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[157] Seidel 13, 96-7.

(Whoever might enjoy the same tomorrow
And does us the honor
That he wishes to return here,
We wish to thank very much.
Tomorrow, God willing, you will hear of Isaac
As you heard much of him today.
But tomorrow, as I want to say,
We want perform for you
His histories all together.)

Finally, Seidel cites Gottsched's 1757 writing wherein he mentions Greff's

trilogy, but that does not state that only the first part of the trilogy is extant.

Gottsched did cite from Greff's *Abraham* drama, so it is a bit curious that he did

not mention the lack of transmission of two parts of the trilogy, but it is possible

that they were not available to him.[158] This may mean that there were two other

dramas known at that time, or that Gottsched just did not mention the absence of

the other two works. It is possible that Greff simply did not see his plan through to

fruition, and the dramas never existed, that the dramas were not published, or

that they were lost. The question is open only to speculation.

The first portion of the work is a dedication. Written in epistolary style,

Greff uses his Dedication not only to honor his patron, the Duke of Saxony, but

also to rail against the Heathens, Jews, Turks, Papists, and other disbelievers,

much as Luther did in his sermons.[159] Greff mentions only one concrete episode

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[158] Seidel 176-7. The work by Gottsched that Seidel cites is: *Beiträge zur kritischen Historie der Deutschen Sprachen Poesie und Beredsamkeit. Herausgegeben von Einigen Mitgliedern der Deutschen Gesellschaft in Leipzig, Erstes Stück* (Leipzig, 1732) 84. This work was not accessible to me and could not be evaluated.

[159] For further information on Reformation attitudes towards Jews and Judaism, see: *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, eds. Dean Bell snd Stephen Burnett (Leiden: Brill, 2006).   Within this work, Luther's attitude and a bibliography of research on

in salvation history - the Sacrifice of Isaac. This is the prime example of faith.

Greff says of Abraham in the Dedication:

> Sonderlich, da er jn mit der allerhöchsten / ia nie erhorten/versuchung angriffe / nemlich mit dem todte seines einigen sons Isaac / den er jm schlachten solte zum brandopffer. Das da nicht verzweivelung solte nach folgen wo jn Gotte nicht erhalten hette / wen wolte es wunder nemen? Was sagt aber die heilige schrifft? Abraham hat nicht gezweiuelt/ sondern Gott von herzen gegleubet/Ja das is im zur gerechtigkeit gerechnet / dadurch er auch ist selig und Gottes freund worden.

> (In particular, since He afflicted him with highest possible temptation, one never heard of before, that is, with the death of his only son Isaac, whom he was to slaughter for a burnt offering. Who would not think it a miracle, that no despair was to follow, if God had not preserved him. But what does the Holy Scripture say to this? Abraham did not doubt, but believed in God from the bottom of his heart. Indeed, this has been credited to his justification, by which he has become blessed and God's friend.)

Greff continues, narrating the importance of the Sacrifice of Isaac in the

Heilsgeschichte:

> Vorwar diesem Exampel nach, müssen alle Christgleubigen (so fern sie zu Gott zukomen gedencken) an diesem Artickel/welchs der allerhöchste und nöttigste ist zur selen seligkeit / fest und auffs aller hertzte hangen / sich wider den Teuffel / noch die welt/ oder ichtes anders sonst auff erden darvon reissen lassen /Nemlich das sie fest gleuben/ das allein der einige glaub / in den samen Abrahe / das ist in unsern Herren Jehsum Christum/ fur Gott on alles zuthun unser werk selig und gerecht mache ...Achte ich E.C.G. nicht weniger bekrefftigt und bestettigt in Gottes wort und gnad / auch nicht minder erleucht in Gottes erkentnus / als den selbigen hochen/thewern wunderman / und Erzvater den lieben Abraham.(Dedication)

> (Truly, according to the example, all those who believe in Christ (in as much as they are intending to join God), must be steadfast to this dogma/ which is the highest and most necessary to achieve blessedness/ They

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this subject are contained in: Thomas Kaufmann, "Luther and the Jews" *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* 69-104.

must be sincerely and completely devoted/ They should not allow the devil or the world or anything else on earth to tear themselves from this. That is that they should believe steadfastly that the sole belief in the seed of Abraham, that is in our Lord, Jesus Christ, who did all for God, makes our deeds blessed and just**...** I consider Your Esteemed Highness no less confirmed and justified by God;'s word and mercy and illuminated in God's cognition than the same high, beloved dear miracle-man and Patriarch, dear Abraham.)

The overt message is that Abraham is to serve as an example for all of us. This is reinforced when Greff compares the Duke to Abraham in his faith and (God willing) in his continued success. The subtext of the example, however, is still a typologic one.

There are only two other typologic references in the text. One is in the Prologue, and is amplified in the corpus of the play, and the other in the Epilogue. In the Prologue, the *Actor* states of Abraham:

Da er den waren Gott
Inn drey person erkennt hat /
Welche auch mit jm gessen han (Prologue)

(Since he recognized
The true God in three personages
Who also ate with him.)

This is a reference to the three angels who visited Abraham's tent in Genesis 18:1. In Christian typologic interpretation, they are a prefiguration of the Trinity. This reference is restated in the stage direction for Act 3 Scene 1: "Hie erscheinet Gott Abraham in drey Person / da er an der thur seiner hutte sitzt und Abraham redet Gott an" (Here God appears in three people to Abraham / as he sits at the door of his hut and Abraham addresses God). The Cast of Characters,

however, does not include three angels, and Abraham is indicated as speaking

directly to God, who answers in the plural ("Ja thu wie du gesagt hast Auff deine

bit / Sein wir dein gast/ " Yes, we do as you said At your behest/ we are your

guests.).[160]   In the monologue that immediately follows God's speech, the *Actor*

relates that God sent His son, Jesus Christ, in human form. Abraham, who

prayed to God, recognized this.

These references to Abraham and the Trinity are somewhat confusing,

and require clarification. The Patristic Fathers held that God appeared to

Abraham as the Trinity in Genesis 18:1. Luther, however, in his "Lectures on

Genesis" renounced the use of this passage as a proof for the prediction of the

Trinity in the Old Testament. He felt that Abraham did indeed recognize God, but

that the Trinity was invisible. As stated in conjunction with Sachs's depiction of

this scene, Luther felt that Abraham saw three forms, and recognized God.[161]

Sachs depicted three forms in his plays, one of which was God, to whom

Abraham spoke. Greff, on the other hand, depicts only one - God, with whom

Abraham speaks. Greff further indicates in his stage direction that Abraham

recognizes this form as the Trinity. This is contrary to Luther's exegesis, and

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[160] Bornkamm 98-9. Luther argued that one of the Hebrew terms for the name of God, *Elohim*, since it was in the plural, attested to the fact that the Jews recognized the plurality of persons. Jews do not agree with this interpretation, expounding that the term is grammatically used only in the singular form, despite appearing to be a plural. This is often acknowledged by Christians as well. See for instance: *New International Version Study Bible*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) 6. In the commentary to Genesis 1:1: "*God created.* The Hebrew noun *Elohim* is plural but the verb is singular, a normal usage in the OT when reference is to the one true God. This use of the plural expresses intensification rather than number and has been called the plural of majesty, or of potentiality."

[161] *Luther's Works*, vol 3 192-4. See also Bornkamm (English version) 114- 116.

represents either Greff's own interpretation or his lack of knowledge or

misinterpretation of Luther's theology.

The *Acto*r also elucidates the typologic comparison explicitly in the

Epilogue:

> Das nur der liebe Abraham
> Durch seinen glauben / in den sam /
> Der jm verheisen ward von Gott
> Solt sein erlöst von aller not /
> Des war ein figur Isaac
> Wir habens nu am hellen tag /
> Erkleret schon durch Jhesum Christ
> Welcher Abrahams samen ist (Epilogue)

> (That only dear Abraham
> Was to be redeemed from all misery,
> because of his belief.
> We have explained this as clear as day,
> That Jesus Christ was a figure of Isaac,
> Who was Abraham's seed.)

Despite the Protestant antipathy towards prefigurative interpretation, the Isaac-

Jesus connection is still an important one. The remnants of older thought

processes were not completely eliminated. They remain in Greff's work, albeit

more subtly, and predominantly in the narrative frame of the drama.

Attesting to interest in the Sacrifice of Isaac theme in the sixteenth

century, Greff refers to two previously published works by other authors with

content similar to his in the Prologue to the Reader.[162] The 'Prologue to the

Reader' follows. This section heading indicates that Greff intended his text both

for the reading public and for performance. A faith based tone is immediately

set, as the address is to "Dem Leser gnad und fried in Christo." (Mercy and

peace in Christ to the Reader). Greff discusses his drama, and that it is part of a

trilogy. He states the intent of his writing: "nemlich umb unser aller besserung

willen." (namely, for the betterment of us all). He further states that it is better to

watch plays of this nature than to waste time drinking or engaging in other vices,

because these plays are produced "zu Gottes ehre und zu gutem exempel

jdermenniglich" (to the honor of God and as a good example for everyone).

From the outset, Greff intends his work to be instructive and moralistic, as did

Sachs.

Greff furnishes the Cast of Characters next. First there is a list of the 110

characters for all three plays, followed by a separate roster of the 53 members of

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[162] In the Prologue of his his Sacrifice of Isaac drama, Greff refers to a works two nother authors containg content similar to his:This reference is to Valentin Voith's (c.1487-after 1558) drama *Ein schön Lieblich Spiel, von dem herlichen ursprung: Betrübtem Fal. Gnediger widerbrengunge. Müseligem leben, Seligem Ende, und ewiger Freudt des Menschen aus den historien heiliger schrifft gezogen ganz Tröstlich* ('A beautiful, lovely play about the glorious orgin and sad fall. Of merciful reinstatement, difficult life, blessed death, and eternal joy of man as taken from the histories of Holy Scripture, for the consolation of man') (1538) and to Hans Tirolfs drama *Historia von der Heirat Isaacs mit seiner Lieben Rebeken* ('The History of the Marriage of Isaac to his Beloved Rebecca') (1539). Greff thus acknowledges that others had written about these same themes, but states that their work did not influence his. Moreover, his work is original, as it had already been completed by the time that the other works were performed. Seidel 98. Reckling 49. Reckling mentions only the work of Tirolf. There is no evidence of influence by these authors on Greff's work. The works of Voith and Tirolf were not accessible to me and as such were not evaluated.

the cast for the *Abraham* play. Thereafter, the play begins with the frame-like narration by the character called the *'Actor'*. He speaks to the audience directly and summarizes the Biblical events they are about to see. Unlike Sachs's *Ernhold*, Greff's *Actor* interrupts the play a number of times, (such as in the middle of the seventh and eighth scenes of the first act) to tell the audience about portions of the Bible that are not, or technically could not, be depicted in the play. In this manner, Greff is conscientious and does not leave out Biblical details, adhering to the the Lutheran theologic view of Biblical dramas as visual depictions of the Bible. The *Actor* also informs the audience as to what they are about to see and aids them in understanding the play itself, as in the middle of Act 3, Scene 1. In each of his speeches, the narrator also reinforces the lessons learned from the Bible; lessons that are equally as applicable to the audience as they were to Abraham. This represents a hallmark of Luther's concept of the Old Testament that Sachs foregrounded as well. Luther did not interpret the Old Testament in terms of shadows, allusions, and things to come. Luther found Jesus and His teachings in the Old Testament just as he did in current life.[163] This is what Luther strove to elucidate, and this is what Greff strove to portray.

The Sacrifice of Isaac is again the only Biblical episode expressly mentioned by the *Actor* in his Prologue, calling attention to its significance, as was the case in the Dedication. The exemplary nature of Abraham, who was so harshly tested by God, both physically and spiritually, is foregrounded.   The

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[163] For further information on this topic, see Bornkamm 86ff., esp 212.

Actor specifies the Sacrifice of Isaac as the greatest spiritual test, of which there was never one like it before or has there been since. This echoes a similar sentiment by Luther in his lectures on Genesis 22, wherein he expounds that Abraham's was the supreme trial, yet greater than that of Mary when she lost her son. It is possible that Greff may have heard Luther's lectures on his interpretation of Genesis, and that these may have directly influenced his thoughts, for both men stand in awe of the magnitude of Abraham's test.[164]

Greff's drama proceeds according to the Biblical story, with no consideration for dramatic effect or intent. This drama is, as was the case with Sachs's Abraham works, a tendentious, didactic vehicle for the dissemination of Biblical knowledge and Protestant doctrine. Both authors fall into the pattern that Parente discusses in the drama of this era:

> The main objective of humanist religious drama in the sixteenth-century was the dissemination of moral guidelines for the attainment of salvation...Humanist religious dramatists consequently sought to demonstrate a theological and moral point in each of their religious plays: the nature of God's salvation of man and, conversely, the ethical qualities which Christian man had to possess in order to be saved.[165]

Greff himself spoke of his understanding of the function of drama numerous times. In his play *Aulularia* he said:

> Vnd es solts furwar noch heut zu tag niemands dafur halten / das der meinung bey vns geschehe / odder darumb geschehen sey / wo man solche Comedias agiert vnd spielet / das man nur solt frölich vnd guter

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[164] Reckling 49.

[165] Parente 61.

ding dabey sein / vnd sonst nichts anders mehr dauon lernen / Vnd auch zum andern / sol niemands gleuben noch dencken / wie etliche / ia fast der gröste hauff meinet / das mans fur narrenspiel halten solle / Mit nichte nicht / sondern es werden vns solche Specktakel / als fur Exempel vnsers lebens / furgestalt / daraus wir lernen vnd erkennen / aller stende jnn der gantzen welt ampt vnd eigenschafft / vnser leben darnach richten vnd anstellen sollen. (1535, Bl. Aiij)[166]

(And in truth, nobody today should think that this is our opinion, or that this had been our opinion that, when one performs and plays such comedies, one will be only happy and in a good mood without learning anything else from it. And in addition, no one should believe or think, as some people, that is, most people, do, that this is buffoonery. Not at all, rather such spectacles are shown to us as examples of our lives that is that we learn and recognize all classes in the whole world in their function and way of life and that we should comport ourselves accordingly.)

Greff also spoke of this in the Dedication to the *Abraham* play:

Dafur von ehrlichen / christliebenden bürgern / und verstendigen / züchtigen jungen gesellen / in vilen Stedten solche Spiel angericht werden / zu Gottes ehre und zu guten exempel jeder menniglich.

(Therefore such plays are performed in many towns by honest, Christ-loving citizens and by virtuous young men to honor God and as a good example for all.)

As did Sachs, Greff divided his play into acts - six in the case of this play, but Greff further divides the six acts into thirty-nine scenes.[167] Greff applied no real symmetry to his drama and, just as Sachs, had a disregard for the Greek dramatic principles. There are few stage directions for the actors and no descriptions of the set. Greff uses a large cast of characters, with no indication

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[166] Cited in Seidel 25. Seidel also cites numerous other examples of Greff's educational and moralistic intent in the writing of his works.

[167] Greff's drama contains the following division in acts and scenes: Act 1: 8 scenes, Act 2: 5 scenes, Act 3: 6 scenes, Act 4: 6 scenes, Act 5: 6 scenes (there is no scene 4, but there are three scenes entitled Act 5 Scene 5), Act 6:9 scenes. Actually, there are forty scenes in the drama.

that one character may play several parts. The foregoing gives an impression of theatrical disorganization. The technical aspects of the play seem to have been of little importance for Greff. It is again, only the message that was of value.

The action of Genesis 22:1-2 takes place in Act 4 Scene 6, and that of Genesis 22:3-19 in Act 5 Scene 1 of Greff's play. This divides the action into God's command and Abraham's expression of willingness in one scene, and the actual journey and action in the next. There is no reason for the division of the action between two acts, and the divisions of this play into both acts and scenes are for the most part arbitrary ones by Greff. Although Greff foregrounded the importance of the Sacrifice of Isaac in his Dedication and Prologue, this scene does not take place in the midpoint of the drama. Minor events occupy that position in the drama. This is yet further evidence of the nature of Greff's divisions within his play that have more to do with the physical action, rather than the dramatic events of the story.

Reading against the grain, it is possible that this division of scenes was intentional. Jewish exegesis stresses that Abraham rose early and himself saddled the donkey and cut the wood for the sacrifice. Abraham was the zealous man of action; he did not wait for servants, he humbly acted to fulfill God's word at the first opportunity.[168] Greff, however, did not stress Abraham's immediacy of deed. Act 4, Scene 6 ends with Abraham saying that he will go to bed now and

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[168] *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary* 200-1. Rashi on Genesis 22:3.

get up early in the morning, which does not convey an image of action. How could Abraham even think of going to bed and sleeping when he knows what lies ahead of him? The answer is that he is a man of faith and, as per Luther's dogma, acts by his faith alone.   Abraham will be justified, thus he is at peace with what lies ahead of him.

The Sacrifice of Isaac scene begins with Abraham calling to God, praising and thanking Him. This extra-Biblical conversation serves to set the scene for Abraham's forthcoming display of obedience. God then calls to Abraham twice, not once, as in the Hebrew version or in Luther's translation, but as in the Vulgate, and gives Abraham the command to take his son, phrased in words virtually identical to those of Luther. Abraham acquiesces, but then engages in a lengthy monologue bemoaning the fact that he is to kill the son that God gave him; the son that, next to God, is his greatest joy. He then speaks again to God. Abraham acknowledges not only the pain this act will bring him, but also his faith in God. He will put his faith in God, knowing that God will keep His word, despite Isaac's death. Abraham again affirms that he wishes always to be obedient to God and do His will. Abraham will go to bed now and get up early to begin the task.

Act IV Scene 6 displays the more human side of Abraham, as also seen in the *Akedass Yizhak* discussed next. Abraham initially articulates some doubts as to whether he is able to fulfill God's command. He recognizes the insoluble contradiction between the promise that God has made, that from Isaac will come

a great nation, and the sacrifice that God asks him to make. Nevertheless, he does realize that he must acquiesce to God's will, and proves himself ready to sacrifice his son. Abraham is the embodiment of the Protestant belief of *sola fide* – the importance of faith. Faith will overcome all, even seeming contradictions.

Act 5 Scene 1 opens with Abraham's re-affirmation that he will do as God commands. He speaks to Isaac, telling him that God has commanded him to offer a sacrifice and that Isaac is to come with him. Isaac expresses readiness to obey the will of his father, saying that it pleases God when children obey their parents. Abraham leaves with Isaac and two unnamed lads. After three days' journey, Abraham sees the site of the sacrifice. He bids the lads stay and mind the donkey, while he and Isaac pray and then they will come back. The first lad agrees. Abraham loads the wood upon Isaac's back, and says that Isaac should follow him. Isaac then asks where the sacrificial animal is, again in language identical to Luther's translation. Abraham replies that God will show him the sheep, and Isaac says that he will follow his father in everything. Abraham comes to the proper place and builds the altar, laying the wood on it. He tells Isaac that he is to be the sacrifice, lays Isaac upon the wood, and raises the knife, because that is God's - and therefore his - will. Next, an angel calls Abraham's name twice, and then forbids him to injure Isaac, using language very similar to that of Luther. Abraham sees the ram that he is to slaughter instead of Isaac. Isaac praises God with a speech not found in the Bible, and Abraham offers the ram. The angel speaks a second time, yet again using language very

similar to that of Luther. The angel reiterates the promise that because Abraham

did not withhold his son and had faith, God will multiply Abraham's seed and that

his people will be blessed. Abraham praises God, Isaac asks that his hands be

unbound, and the two return down the mountain to the lads.

Abraham is the sole protagonist in this drama. The other characters are

subordinate to him, functioning merely as inert figures from the Bible.

Act 5 Scene 3, which is no longer a part of the Sacrifice itself, evidences Greff's

view of Abraham. This scene consists almost entirely of a Abraham's monologue

praising God, even in the face of His command. The beginning of the monologue

typifies it:

> Ach lieber Gott vnd Herre mein
> Wie wunderlich ist der rad dein /
> Wie greiffstu doch die deinen an
> Mancherley weis / Welchs ich wol kan /
> Merken gar fein vnd auch verstehn
> Wer het gemeint das so solt zugehn /
> Mit meinem son? Welchen du mir
> Gebottest / jn zu opffern dir /
> Wunderlich bistu in dein sachen
> Wer kunds doch wunderlicher machen?
> Doch seins nicht so wunderlich zwar
> Jder kan dennoch offenbar /
> Dein warheit vnd trew darin ersehn
> Es ist ja vorwar mir so gschen. (Actus Quinti Scene Tertia)
>
> Oh dear God and my Lord
> How wonderous is Your will.
> How you assail those
> Who serve you in many ways. Which I can
> Observe very well and can also understand.
> Who would have thought that this should happen
> To my son? He whom you

Commanded me to sacrifice to you.
Inscrutible are You in Your deeds.
Who could act more wonderously?
But nevertheless, it is not so inscrutible,
Everyone can recognize
 Your truth and fidelity.
Truly, it has happened to me.

Greff stresses Abraham's faith, the overriding focus of the play, through Abraham's praise of the wonders that God has wrought for him, and through God's glory. This truth is open for all to see - and this is the message that Abraham is proclaiming. Greff is a staunch supporter of the new Protestant doctrine and accordingly, Greff has suceeded in minimizing the typologic aspect of Genesis 22.

The depth of emotion shown by Abraham is unique to Greff. The *Akêdass Yitzkhak* does underscore Abraham's human emotions, as discussed in the next chapter, but not to the extent that Greff does. The long monologue that Abraham holds just after God's command to slay Isaac in Greff's play, displays Abraham's emotions and the pain that following God's command is causing. Abraham's only son - the son of the promise - is to die.   As Abraham himself states:

Ich bin betrubet one mas /
Dis ist gar viel ein anders wort
Dan das ich fur von Gott gehort /
Das er mir wolt ein son geben
Welcher solte fur mir leben /
In dem solten gesegnet werden
Aller volcker hie auff erden /
Er wolt in segnen mechtig sehr
Uber die zal des sandts am Meer/

Uber die stern am himel klar
Eglich er mas ist es ja war/
Ich leug es nicht/ Es ist geschen
Und danck es auch nur im allein /
Er hat mir ja beschert ein son
Aber was sol ich hierzu thun /
Gott der Herr hat mir geboren
Das ich denselben nu sol todten. (Actus Quarti Scena Sexta)

(I am saddened beyond measure.
This is indeed a different word
Than I have heard from God before.
That He wished to give me a son
Who should live for me,
In whom all people here on earth
Would be blessed.
He was to bless him mighily,
[Making his seed] More numerous than the sand at the sea
And more numerous than the stars of the clear sky.
He is capable of doing what you think.
I do not deny it. It has happened.
And I owe it only to Him,
Since He has given me a son.
But what should I do now
God gave him to me
So that I should now kill him.)

Abraham acknowledges his own frailty:

Freilich es kan ein jderman /
Meinen schmerzen wol bedencken
Dan das mich das nicht solt krencken
Stell ich zu jdermeniglich
Ob das selb nicht solt jamern mich /
Zu wurgen mein eigen fleich und blut
Welchs kein vnuernunfftiges viech thut (Actus Quarti Scena Sexta)

(In truth everyone can
Feel my pain
That it should upset me
I ask everyone
Whether this should not cause me sorrow
To strangle my own flesh and blood
That which no dumb beast does.)

Here, as did Sarah in Sachs's play, Abraham stresses the cruelty of God's

request. Yet because of his faith in God, Abraham is able to overcome his

feelings and declare:

>
> Wiewol so ich es sagen sol
> So weis ich dennoch freilich wol/
> Das deinem wort zugleuben ist
> Du redest war zu aller frist/ ...
> Du hast dich ja beweist daher
> Das du seiest alleine der
> Dem do sey wol zuuertrawen
> Auff dein wort mag man wol bawen/
> Darumb thu ich weg alle schmerzn
> Die ich hate in meinem hertzn /
> Und traw auff dich du lieber Gott   (Actus Quarti Scena Sexta)
>
>
> (Although I have to say it,
> I know very well
> That one must believe Your word
> You speak truthfully at all times...
> You have certainly proven
> That you are the only one in
> Whom one may trust.
> One can trust your word.
> Therefore, I shall put away all the pain
> That I have had in my heart
> And trust in You, dear God.)

For Greff's Abraham, steadfastness of belief is the sole road to salvation.

Abraham is aware that there is a contradiction between God's promise and his

command, just as Sachs's Abraham was in the 1533 version. Nevertheless,

Abraham will retain his faith:

>
> Also/ Ob glech mein son wer tod /
> Doch wirstu ausrichten durch in

Alles das / das du mit furhin/
Hast zugesagt / das weis ich zwar
Dein wort ist in gewisslich war /
Darauff ich mich verlas ganz gern
Wil folgen dir meim Gott und Herrn (Actus Quarti Scena Sexta)

(Therefore, even if my son were dead,
You will accomplish through him
All that You have promised me before.
I know this well
For certain Your word is true,
Upon which I will gladly rely
And obey You my God and Lord.)

Abraham's expresses this again in a later monologue:

Lieber Gott du verhiescht mir ja
Das aus mein son Isaac da /
Solten gesegnet werden
Alle volcker jie auf erden /
Wars nicht das widerspil / frag ich
Da du jn hiessest todten mich?
Wie solt doch das immermehr gschen
Aber wie solt es doch zugehn?
Er sollt leben und sterben auch
Wer das wol muglich immer doch?
War das nicht wider all natur
Wie ich hab gefragt zufur?   . (Actus Quinti Scene Tertia)

(Dear God, You have promised me
That all peoples on this earth
Shall be blessed
Through my son Isaac.
Would this not be a contradiction, I ask
That You commanded me to kill him?
How is that is to happen
And how should this transpire?
That he should live and also die?
Is that nevertheless possible?
Would this not be contrary to nature
As I have asked previously?)

Greff's interpretation of Abraham's dilemma is strikingly similar to that of

Jewish *midrash*. The *Midrash Rabbah* states:

> R[abbi]. Bibi Rabbah said in R. Johanan's name: He said to Him:
> 'Sovereign of the Universe! When Thou didst order me, "*Take now* [!] *thy
> son, thine only son"* I could have answered, "Yesterday Thou didst
> promise me, *For in Isaac shall seed be called to thee* and now Thou
> sayest, '*Take now thy son*,' etc." Yet Heaven forefend! I did not do this, but
> suppressed my feelings of compassion in order to do Thy will. Even so
> may it be Thy will. O Lord our God, that when Isaac's children are in
> trouble, Thou wilt remember that binding in their favor and be filled with
> compassion for them.' [169]

Both passages foreground the emotions of a father and of the future Patriarch of

the Jewish nation, depicting natural and understandable feelings. Abraham is

not super-human. However, in both cases, at the conclusion of reflective

questioning, Abraham acts with complete faith and in accordance with God's

wishes. It is unlikely that Greff knew of this *midrash*, however, the similarity of

Abraham's questions in both texts is marked, attesting to the universal nature of

engagement with Abraham's conundrum.

God rewards the faith of Greff's Abraham as the continuation of

Abraham's monologue demonstrates:

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[169] *Genesis Rabbah* 500. This is also found in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, Tractate Taanis, Chapter 4,
Section 2, *Yalkut Shemoni* 59, and in the *Masachtot Ketanot* Tractate Smachot 8:11. *The
Responsa Project* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Responsa Project, 2003) CD-ROM. *Peskita
de-Rab Kahana*, trans. William Braude and Israel Kapstein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
1975) 358-9. This same comment is found in Piska 23:9. *Talmud Bavli,* ed. Yisroel Simcha
Schorr (New York: Mesorah Publications, 2001) Shabbat 30b. In this text, the exegesis continues
with the thought that Abraham was evidently not saddened by what God asked of him, because
prophecy is not received when a person is sad. Nissim b. Reuben Gerondi, *Commentary on the
Bible,* ed. Leon Feldman (Jerusalem: Shalem, 1968) 282-5. Further commentary teaches that
Abraham's joy in serving God negated his sadness at the impending sacrifice of his son.

Ja het ich der natur folgen solln
Nicht deiner zusag trosten wolln /
Verzweiffert wer ich ganz und gar
Aber du kanst trosten / du kanst schrecken
Und dem traurigne wider erwecken /
Ein frisch un gleubigs herz gen dir
Herr du hast es beweist an mir . (Actus Quinti Scene Tertia)

(If I had followed nature
And not be consoled by Your promise
I would have completely despaired.
But You can console, You can terrify
And vivify in the sorrowful
A fresh and believing heart toward You.
Lord, you have proven it in me.)

Arguing again against Reckling's view, I feel that not only Greff, but Sachs as well, have foregrounded Isaac's sacrifice as the ultimate test of Abraham's faith and obedience; a perspective which is in accordance with Luther's Lectures on Genesis. [170]

What does differ in Sachs's and Greff's versions, is the articulation of the contradiction between God's past promise and his present command. Although it is implicit in the story, and was present in the works of many exegetes, the Jewish or Catholic works do not dramatically foreground this contradiction. The contradiction was seen in Sachs's 1533 drama, however Greff's approach to this contradiction is different than Sachs's. Sachs allows his Abraham to propose solutions to the dilemma of how Isaac can be slain and yet at the same time be the progenitor of the Jewish people: perhaps God will give him and Sarah another son, or resurrect Isaac, or perhaps he and Sarah just do not know what

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[170] Reckling 50.

God is able to do.[171] Greff's Abraham proposes no solution; he and his character, Abraham, simply put their faith in God.

Luther highlighted the contradiction of God's promise and His command as the major aspect of Abraham's trial in his Lectures on Genesis several times, once as stated above and again later in the same lecture:

> Dixi. quae fuerit tentatio Abrahae, nempe contradictio promissionis. Egregie igitur hie elucet eius fides, quod tam prompte animo iubenti Deo obseqitur, et quanquam mactandus sit Isaac, tamen de promissione implenda nihil dubitat, etiam si modum impletionis ignoret, etsi autem trepidat et pavet...
>
> (I have stated what Abraham's trial was, namely, the contradiction of the promise. Therefore his faith shines forth with special clarity in this passage, inasmuch as he obeys God with such a ready heart when **he** gives him the command, And although Isaac has to be sacrificed he nevertheless has no doubt whatever that the promise will be fulfilled, even if he does not know the matter of its fulfillment.)[172]

Greff took this teaching, stated it explicitly, and strove to convey this Lutheran message through his drama.

The other characters appearing in the Sacrifice of Isaac scene - the lads, God, Isaac and Sarah - experience no development, as they are unimportant to the central message of the play. Isaac's reaction, which might have increased the dramatic content of the play, is not even considered.[173] All that is depicted of him

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[171] KG, X 68.

[172] WA 203. *Luther's Works*, vol 4 95.

[173] Isaac is highlighted later in the play when he marries Rebecca. Here he is foregrounded as the paragon of obedience and faith and a role model for good morals and a Christian marriage.

is a that he has faith in, and obedience to, his father, which is pleasing to God.

This exemplifies the type of moralistic imperative/Biblical lesson of honoring

one's mother and father (the Fifth Commandment for Protestants and Jews and

the Fourth Commandment for Catholics) that Greff has inserted into his play for

the benefit of his students:

> Sag nu was sey der wille dein /
> Was ich thun sol das thu ich gern
> Dan es gefelt Gott vunsern Herrn /
> Wo seine fromme kinder sein
> Die iren elter konnen sein /
> Gehorsam leisten allezeit (Actus Quintus Scene Prima)
>
> (Tell me what Your will is.
> What I should do I will do gladly,
> As it is pleasing to God our Lord.
> When His children are pious,
> Who will always be obedient
> To their parents at all times.)

Isaac is not depicted as the thirty-seven year old adult of Jewish tradition,

nor even the twenty or twenty-five year old of Luther's exegesis, and Greff

specifically states that Isaac is not an adult. [174] In recapitulating the Sacrifice of

Isaac scene, the *Actor* says, "Ir habt gesehn das Isaac /   Noch gar ein kind und

knabe sey" (You have seen that Isaac/ is still a child and lad).[175]. Further, Greff

distinguished between the younger and older Isaac in his play. When Isaac is

depicted as seeking a bride, the stage directions indicate that he wears a beard,

and Greff states that he is no longer a boy. Possibly Greff relied on artistic

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[174] *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 91. *Luther's Works*, vol. 4 111. Luther initially states that Isaac was twenty, and later says that Isaac is about twenty-five at the time of the sacrifice.

[175] First Act 5 Scene 5.

depictions of Isaac as a child, or upon Nicholas of Lyra's opinion that Isaac was still a boy.[176] This view may contribute to the portrayal of Isaac as someone loyal to his father and God, but not thinking for himself, for he is merely a child.

Sarah is not present in Greff's drama. Abraham only mentions her in the monologue that follows God's command to sacrifice Isaac. However, this is in the context of being Isaac's mother, of the pain that Isaac's death will cause her and that next to God, Isaac was their comfort and joy. This second-hand account of her feelings is as much a reflection of her absence in the Biblical account as it is of her absence in Luther's exegesis.

The topics of the death and resurrection of Isaac mentioned as a possibility by Sachs, and so central to the Yiddish texts discussed next, do not play a role in this play. Contrary to the Biblical text, Greff's Isaac returns to the lads with Abraham. As related in many of the *midrashim* discussed in Chapter 5, he therefore could not have gone to Paradise. There is no mention of Isaac's ashes, and no indication that Isaac died and was immediately resurrected, so it must be concluded that Greff had no interest in broaching this topic of death and resurrection. This again typifies the growing Protestant disinterest in typologic interpretation and imagery. It also conforms to the Protestant lack of belief in

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[176] Minnie Wells, "The Age of Isaac at the Time of the Sacrifice," *Modern Language Notes*, 54 (1939) 581 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2911242> 7 July, 2013. Wells cites Lyra's *Postitlla super Vetus Testamentum, Genesis xxii.*

relics and saints, which Luther felt to be examples of reliance on works, not faith, and, therefore contrary to his theology.[177]

What is found is the same trope as that in Jewish theology, that just as God helped Abraham, God will help his people. Greff expressed this in the following manner:

> Wie er denn half dem Abraham
> Des wirt dergleich uns allsam (Actus Tertius, Scena Prima)
>
> (As He helped Abraham
> So will He help us all.)

This is very reminiscent of the last strophe of the *Akêdass Yizhak*:

> אונ' אין דעם גלות גידנק אונז זכות אברהם אונ' יצחק אונ' יעקב אין אלי צייט
>
> אום ווילן דער ליבשאפט דיא ער דיר הוט דר צייגט .
>
> (And in the exile remember us in all time in the merit of Abraham and
>   Isaac and Jacob.
> For the sake of the love that he showed you.)[178]

These lines demonstrate that both authors, although separated by difffering religious faiths and several centuries of time, shared a common concern. They both wished to use their works to inculcate faith and transmit the timeless

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[177] For a summary of Luther's views on relics, see: Angenendt 236-8.

[178] Frakes 327 Lines 80-81. The same text is found in the Hamburg manuscript. This is also a trope found in Jewish prayers, particularly those of the Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur period, and will be discussed in Chapter 5 in connection with the concept of *zechut avot* (merit of the fathers).

applicability of the Biblical message: God will help now, just as He did in olden times - have faith.

The final portion of the drama is the Epilogue. It is narrated by the same Actor who narrated the Prologue, and serves much the same didactic purpose as did Sachs's Epilogue. Greff's Epilogue differs stylistically, in that it is not as overtly divided into specific lessons. That it is didactic in intent is clear from the outset of the *Actor's* monologue:

> Die erst Historie hat ein end
> Wir wollen aber nu behend
> Ein kleins lehr daraus geben
> Der wir alhie in unserem lebn /
> Mügen gebrauchen allezeit
> Dann man ja stetz mit dem bescheid /
> Mit solcher weis in solchen sachn
> Sol handeln / Auff das jm kan machn /
> Zu nutz und fromen jderman
> Drumb werden gespilt solch Action. (Der beschlus)
>
> (The first history has come to an end
> Now we want to quickly give a short lesson
> Which we can use all of the time
> Here in our lives.
> That with this teaching of
> How one should act in such matters.
> So that everyone can make use of it,
> Therefore such plays are being performed.)

The lessons that Greff wishes his audience can be summarized as follows:

1. God tried Abraham often and harshly, although God loved Abraham and found him to be faithful and obedient to His word in all ways. From this, the audience should learn that despite spiritual and physical trials, we must derive

consolation from the fact that God still loves us, is with us and will help us now just as He helped Abraham.

2. Although our situation is not the same as that of Abraham, our faith should be equal to his. God always will, can and should provide sustenance for us. He will aid us out of all poverty and will always do what is best for us.

3. Abraham is an example of one to whom God gave more than Abraham gave to God. We should take to heart that God, in His mercy, will always give His chosen ones more than enough. However, we must be cognizant that sorrow and misfortune are also a part of life.

4. Greff anthropomorphizes God as "ein wunderlicher man" (a wonderous man) who will turn sorrow into joy. Man, however, must be steadfast and not allow himself to despair when confronted by pain, fear and need. Abraham was steadfast, and there has been no other like him. He was sustained by his faith, and God himself justified Abraham, because Abraham did not spare his only son. This is a reference to the Sacrifice of Isaac as a demonstration of faith, not works; an illustration of the Protestant doctrine.

5. The purpose of this drama is to demonstrate the importance of faith, of which Abraham is the greatest example. The Apostle Paul spoke of this faith, and drew the typologic comparison to the figure of Isaac, who was Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham.

6. The Actor then expounds that eternal life is found in Christ and that faith is needed for justification, not works. God will help. This is a repetition of central Protestant doctrine.

The above lessons are then reiterated: God may try you, but He will also enrich you; one must rely on God's mercy; God will try you, but He will also raise you up; thank and trust Him always, and He will never abandon you. Hereafter this advice turns to a more practical area - marriage. The audience may learn a contemporary lesson from the manner in which Abraham sought a spouse for Isaac, depicted in the scene following the the Sacrifice of Isaac. When seeking a spouse for your child, do not look for money or property, these come from God. Look for love, and do not force your child into marriage. This may also be a reference to the following section of the play that depicts the search for a bride for Isaac. With this, the Actor closes the play, inviting the audience to return the next day to hear more about Isaac, and the day after, about Jacob.

Through his Epilogue, the Actor has simplistically explicated Lutheran theology for his audience. Abraham is the embodiment of the Protestant dogma of *Sola fide*; the quintessential model of faith in contemporary times as in old. This is a message also conveyed by Luther in Lectures on Genesis:

> Scripta igitur haec nobis sunt in consolationem, ut discamus promissionibus,quas habemus, niti. Ego baptisatus sum, igitur statuere debeome translatum esse ex regno Sathanae in regnum Dei**...** Sic in omnibus aliis tentationibus faciendum est, ubicunque enim contrarium a promissione experimur, certo statuamus, cum se aliter ostendit Deus,

quam promissio sonat, esse eam tantum tentationem, nec ideo hunc baculum promissionis patiamur nobis extorqueri e manibus.

(These events [Genesis 22] are recorded for our comfort, in order that we may learn to rely on the promises we have, I was baptized. Therefore I must maintain that I was translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God... One must act similarly in all other trials, whenever we experience to opposite of a promise, we should maintain with assurance that when God shows Himself differently from the way the promise speaks, this is merely a temptation. Therefore we should not allow this staff of the promise to be wrested from our hands.)[179]

Finally, the *Actor* turns his lesson to one of absolute pragmatism -

marriage. It is well known that Luther was against celibacy and preached that

marriage was a preferable state, even for the clergy.[180] This again underscored

the applicability of the Bible to Luther's times, and the appropriateness of a

suitable marriage through a Biblical model. It was therefore a timely and proper

subtext for a school play.

Parente sums up the goal of Reformation Drama, which applies fully to

Greff's literary output:

The development of humanist religious drama was closely associated with the religious controversies of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. As Protestants and Catholics engaged in bitter doctrinal disputes about the historical hegemony of Rome and the nature of salvation, partisan educators familiar with the utility of drama in schools quickly adapted this medium to disseminate their religious doctrines and train cadres of youth to defend them. In the hands of sixteenth-century pastors and priests burning with missionary zeal, Biblical, hagiographical and even historical

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[179] WA, vol. 43 203. *Luther's Works*, vol 4 94.

[180] See "Vom Ehelichen Leben" WA, vol. 10 II 275-305.

dramas were explicitly designed to instill piety and extol the virtues of a specific church.[181]

Joachim Greff, although little acknowledged, started the Saxon theater of the Reformation. His connection to Luther was also of paramount importance in the development of Reformation drama. Greff was not a particularly skilled dramatist, and his plays have remained obscure. As a literary figure, however, he was the leader of a group, Luther's inner circle of writers, who earnestly tried to follow Luther's exhortations in their lives and works.

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[181] Parente 61.

CHAPTER 5: Two Yiddish Treatments of the Sacrifice Isaac

"To be a lover of God meant, therefore, that Abraham had to empty his heart of love for his son."[1]

This chapter focuses on two Yiddish retellings of the Akedah (Sacrifice of Isaac), the prose *Shira fun Yitzkhak* ('Song of Isaac') which dates to 1510, and the rhymed *Akêdass Yizhak* ('Sacrifice of Isaac') the earliest extant manuscript of which dates to 1570. Hebrew commentary on the austere narrative of Genesis 22:1-19 is as old as the history of exegesis itself, and the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak* draw on centuries of midrashic practice. However, they present their elaborations in a format and language that differs from earlier texts. Unlike works for the Jewish learned elite, these two Yiddish texts are vernacular works of edification through popular forms of entertainment.

I will situate these two texts within the larger context of Early Yiddish literature, especially those texts that engage the Bible. I will also examine the two works against the background of *midrashim* (exegetical and homiletic commentaries on Jewish law or Scripture that seek to gloss seemingly unclear areas of the textual material), elaborating the Akedah narrative that circulated among Ashkenazim (Jews who settled along the Rhine River in Northern France and Western Germany during the Middle Ages and their descendants), whose

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[1] Jerome Gellman, *Abraham! Abraham!* (Burlington: Ashgate,2003) 92.

vernacular is Yiddish, during the Early Modern period. I argue that not only were these two Yiddish works examples of didactic and entertaining forms of vernacular literature, they were also a polemic against Christianity's prefigurative reading of the Akedah and an example of an ongoing significance of the Akedah.

The Importance of Genesis 22 in Judaism

In Genesis 21:12 God promises Abraham: כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע (For in Isaac shall thy seed be called).[2] With this God states that the nation of Israel will descend from Isaac. Yet shortly thereafter, God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac before Isaac has even fathered one child. If Isaac, the progenitor of Israel, dies, there can be no nation, and God cannot keep His promise. Herein lies a conundrum, for the God of Abraham can neither contradict himself nor lie. Nevertheless, Abraham does not question God, and hurriedly goes to complete the task that God asks of him. Abraham's faith in God, which allows Abraham to act without question, is what constitutes the importance of the Akedah and renders the Sacrifice of Isaac of central significance in the Jewish religion.

Demonstrating further engagement with the Akedah, Genesis 22 is so important that it is the only Biblical narrative read daily in many Jewish rites as

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[2] Translations of the Hebrew Biblical citations found in this chapter are taken from: *The Chumash*, ed. Nosson Scherman.

part of the introduction to the morning liturgy.[3] Worshippers also recite

supplicatory prayers both before and after the recitation of the Akedah, asking

God to be merciful to them in the merit of the Patriarchs. They also ask God to

remember the oath He swore to Abraham, to remember His people in times of

trouble, in remembrance of the deed of the Akedah.[4] This builds upon the

concept of *zechut avot* (merit of the fathers), which teaches that God extends

mercy to the Jews because of the merit of their of their ancestors' righteous

deeds.[5] Thus, the pious had the story of the Akedah virtually memorized, simply

by its daily repetition, and knew the merit that the Akedah brought**.**

Genesis 22 is also the Biblical selection read in the synagogue on Rosh

Hashanah, the beginning of the period of Divine judgment for each Jew. Jews

invoke the merit brought by the Akedah in times of trouble, when they beseech

God to have mercy upon the people of Israel as He had mercy on their

forefathers. The *shofar* (ram's horn) blown during the penitential period of Elul

(the Jewish month prior to Rosh Hashanah), as well as on Rosh Hashanah, and

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[3] This section of the daily prayer service is not recited in all Jewish communities; for some it is not traditional.

[4] A portion of the daily meditiation said after the recitation of the Akedah in the morning prayer service reads: "May it be your will, Hashem, our God and God of our forefathers, that You remember for our sake the covenant of our forefathers. Just as Abraham our forefather suppressed his mercy for his only son and wished to slaughter him in order to do Your will, so may Your mercy suppress Your anger from upon us and may Your mercy overwhelm Your attributes." (*The Complete ArtScroll Siddur*, eds. Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, trans. Nosson Scherman (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1998) 25.

[5] The concept of זכות אבות (*zechut avot*/merit of the fathers) is central to Jewish thought. Because of the Akedah and the willingness of Abraham and Isaac to submit to God's will, God blessed Abraham and Isaac's descendants. Therefore, all subsequent generations benefit from the righteousness of the two Patriarchs.

Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), invokes the merit of the Akedah as a plea for mercy by Jews as they stand in judgment before God. The sound of the shofar evokes the memory of God's grace through the substitution of a ram, which is offered instead of Isaac, as well as recalling the wailing of Sarah upon hearing (falsely) of her son's fate.[6]

To the Ashkenazic Jew of the Early Modern period, the Akedah had an additional connection. During the First Crusade of 1096, there were many instances of mob violence directed against the Jews of the Rhineland. Faced with the choice of conversion to Christianity or death, these Jews often chose the latter, and frequently at their own hands. Those who chose death for the sake of *Kiddush Hashem* (martyrdom - literally, the sanctification of God's Name) often killed one another or committed suicide, rather than be killed by the marauding Crusaders. In justifying their actions, these Jews saw themselves as part of the tradition of Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice that which he held most dear - his son, and in effect his dynastic future - in order to proclaim the supreme holiness of the One God. The Akedah became the paradigm for Jewish martyrdom, and the word itself attained this additional popular meaning.

This memory of the massacre of the Crusades still loomed large in the consciousness of fifteenth-century Jews. They perceived the Akedah as symbolic of their history and fate - death in the sanctification of God's name. There are

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[6] PRE 32 and *Leviticus Rabbah* 20:2.

numerous accounts, both historical and poetic, about the persecution of the Jews

during the Crusades, and many use the imagery of the Akedah to portray their

sacrifice.[7] Lena Roos examines the Binding of Isaac as a prototype for

martyrdom during this time, as does Robert Chazan.   Chazan discusses the

Akedah imagery of the *Mainz Anonymous*, a Hebrew First Crusade narrative

written shortly after the event, deeming it so central to the text that it is "the

linchpin of the author's argument [for Jewish martyrdom in response to Divine

command."[8] This emphasis, coupled with the already close connection of the

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[7] The five chronicles are printed in the original Hebrew and translated into German in: *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgung während der Kreuzzüge*, Adolf Neubauer and Moritz Stern, (Berlin: Verlag von Leonhard Simion, 1892, rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1997) and the more recent work: *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des ersten Kreuzzugs*, ed. Eva Haverkamp (Hannover: Hahnsche Buhhandlung, 2005). Spiegel 121-152, discusses some of these works, including the Hebrew Akedah poem of Ephraim of Bonn (1132-c.1200) of the Second Crusade. The first crusade narrative of "Solomon bar Simson: The Crusaders in Mainz May 27, 1096" is reprinted in English translation in Jacob Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook, 315-1791* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1938), 115-120.

[8] Robert Chazan, *God, Humanity, and History: The First Crusade Narratives (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 49. See also: 49-51, 166, 187-90. Lena Roos, *God Wants It! The Ideology of Martyrdom in the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and its Jewish and Christian Background* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006) A5-A125, 87-105. Roos reprints the three major Jewish First Crusade chronicles, *The Chronicle of Solomon b. Simson*, *The Anonymous Chronicle from Mainz*, and *The Chronicle of Eliezer b. Nathan* in parallel form in English. The most striking example from the *The Anonymous Chronicle from Mainz* is reprinted on A20. For further information of the Jews and the Crusades see: Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1987); Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Memories of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); as well as the extensive bibliographies of Chazan and Roos. In addition to the two books cited, Chazan has written numerous articles on the Crusades and the Crusade narratives that are listed in his bibliography. See also: *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1999), particularly, Jeremy Cohen, "The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles in their Christian Cultural Context" 17-34, Avraham Grossman, "The Cultural and Social Background of Jewish Martyrdom in Germany in 1096" 73-86, and Israel Yuval, "Christliche Symbolik und jüdische Martyrologie zur Zeit der Kreuz*ü*ge" 87-106.

Akedah and Rosh Hashanah, led to the ritualization of some of the literature of

the Crusades and its incorporation into the liturgy, particularly that of the time

period surrounding Rosh Hashanah.

In post-1096 Jewish society, the word 'Akedah' became associated with all

forms of martyrdom. Prior to this, only rabbinic elite texts contained such

language.[9] One such example is in the Babylonian Talmud (redacted between

200-500 CE), Tractate Gittin 57b. This text relates that a mother compares the

martyrdom of her seven sons as an Akedah that is greater than

Abraham's: "She said to him [her seventh son]: My son, go and say to your

father Abraham, Thou didst bind one [son to the] altar, but I have bound seven

altars."[10] After 1096, usage of the term extended to popular literature and *piyutim*

(Jewish liturgial poems), such as the "Akedah", a Hebrew poem by Ephraim ben

Jacob of Bonn (1132-c.1200).[11] Usage of the term continues in current Jewish

religious practice as well. The word 'Akedah' is used in the modern *Yizkor*

(Memorial Prayers) to refer to the sacrifice made by those of the Israel Defense

Forces, and a number of the Akedah *piyutim* are still contained in the

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[9] Roos 95.

[10] Soncino Edition, *Babylonian Talmud* Folio 57b.

[11] Spiegel 143-52. Cami 86, 201-3. The earliest extant poem about the Sacrifice of Isaac itself, "Abraham the Steadfast One", is dated to the beginning of the seventh century. Its author is unknown.

contemporary Rosh Hashanah and Yom Yippur liturgy, and in the special liturgy surrounding these holidays.[12]

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi convincingly argues that these *piyutim*, together with the Jewish Chronicles of the First and Seond Crusade, shaped Jewish historical memory.[13] The terror of the Crusades did not fully abate, as the history of persecution waxed and waned over centuries for the Jews of Ashkenaz. Therefore, the image of the Akedah, and the supreme sacrifice in the name of God that it symbolized, remained immanent in the memory of the Jew of the Early Modern period.[14] The *piyutim* incorporated into the liturgy are in Hebrew and are associated with a particular time of the year or festival period. In contrast, the vernacular Yiddish texts are not temporalized.

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[12] The term used in the Yizkor prayer is עקדתם (their Akedah). Many prayer books translate this word as 'their self-sacrifice'. For *piyutim* still contained in the current liturgy see: *Machzor for Yom Kippur*, ed. Menachem Davis (New York: Mesorah Publications Ltd., 2004) 708. See also *The Complete ArtScroll Machzor: Yom Kippur*, ed.and trans. Nosson Scherman (New York: Mesorah Publications 1986) 474-5. Cami 110, 357-9, reprints one of the most famous *piyut*im that served as a model for many others, "At the Hour of Mercy" by Judah Samues Abbas (d.1167). This poem remains a part of contemporary Sephardic liturgy. *The Complete ArtScroll Selichos*, ed. Avie Gold, trans. Yaakov Lavon (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2000) 392. The Akedah became so closely associated with these festivals of forgiveness and repentance, that there is a different 'Akedah *piyut*' added to the liturgy each day between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. These *piyutim* contain pleas to God for forgiveness and mercy in the merit of Abraham at the Akedah. For further information on *piyutim,* see: Susan Einbinder, *Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[13] Yosef Yerushalmi Zakho*r: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982) 37-9, 45-52. Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish Life* 27. See also: Roos 90-91.

[14] Gerd Mentgen. "Kreuzzugsmentalität bei antijűdischen Aktionen nach 1190", *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzűge*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1999) 287-326.

Yiddish Printed Books

The Jews of medieval Ashkenaz were a multilingual group. Many not only knew the coterritorial majority's language or languages, but were also bilingual internally - that is, having a command of both Hebrew and Yiddish. These two Jewish languages existed symbiotically. Hebrew was regarded as *loshn-koydesh* (the sacred language),[15] and Yiddish was the vernacular. Hebrew was the language of God and His Torah, which afforded it prestige and status. Because of this, it was not the language of daily use among Jews; this was the provenance of Yiddish, which had some status, yet was on a lower level of holiness. Further, many Jews also knew one or more languages of their non-Jewish neighbors. These languages had yet lower status, because the languages that Jews knew were valued according to a hierarchy of sanctity.[16]

Gradually and increasingly, Yiddish became a language of written as well as oral communication. From the first surviving vernacular blessing (1272), to extant glosses, which were single words translating a word or two in a Hebrew text, to glossaries and entire translations (sixteenth century), the boundaries of Yiddish expression were expanding, until by the sixteenth century a significant body of Yiddish literature - of which we have only a fraction of what probably

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[15] The term *loshn-koydesh* also includes Aramaic, which is the main language of the Talmud and of large portions of the books of Daniel and Ezra.

[16] Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language* 247-314. Weinreich devotes an entire chapter to internal Jewish bilingualism, as does Baumgarten 72-81. See also: Dovid Katz 45-54.

existed - appeared, aided by the advent of printing.[17] This altered the equilibrium

of Hebrew as a written language and Yiddish as a spoken language, and forged

new pathways for expression in the vernacular.

The advent of the printed word impacted society as a whole, markedly

changing the availability of texts and enabled new kinds of books, making them

increasingly accessible to the less affluent, as well as to those with limited

education.[18] Numerous types of printed books in Yiddish were available in the

sixteenth century. These included literal translations of Hebrew religious and

liturgical texts (the entire Bible, individual books of the Bible, prayer books),

rhymed or paraphrased versions of Hebrew religious texts and *midrash*,

vernacular religious texts with glosses, Biblical epics, works of ethics and

morality, fables, historical works, religious legal texts and responsa, medical

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[17] Chone Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yiddish: Prokim le-toldoteha* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1978) 22-3. Shmeruk points out that there were no popular works of literature written in Hebrew at this time, and that the Ashkenazic scholars were not interested in literary works, hence Yiddish was the language of choice for literature. The financial advantages of writing in Yiddish were evident to the writers of Yiddish books. When Moses Altshuler gave his reasons for writing his book *Sefer brantspigel* in Yiddish, his fourth and last reason was," אזו בדוינקן איך וער מער קויף לויט האבן" ("I thought I would have more customers this way.") *Brantspigl* excerpt taken from: Frakes 423. Trans. In: Chava Weissler, "For Women and for Men Who are Like Women," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 5 (1989),11.

[18] Much has been written on medieval and early modern literacy, as well as on the role of printing in the Reformation. For further information on Jewish literacy, see: Bonfil, *op cit.* and Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Prayer, Literacy, and Literary Memory in the Jewish Communities of Medieval Europe," *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History,* eds. Ra'anan Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Marina Rustow (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) 250-70. On the role of print culture in the Reformation, see: Mark Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and *Flugschriften als Massenmedium der Reformationszeit: Beiträge zum Tübinger Symposium 1980*, ed. Hans-Joachim Köhler (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1981).

works, lyrics, and secular epics.[19] Although many works in Yiddish may have

originated or were promoted as texts for women and the less educated, these

texts were widely read by men as well. Yiddish printed books democratized

knowledge for their readership. Information previously transmitted only in Hebrew

was now widely available and circulated in printed form in the vernacular. The

estimated 120 different books published in Yiddish by 1609, provided Jews

outside the rabbinic elite with access to both religious life and its culture. [20]

Consequently, a modicum of erudite religious knowledge - knowledge in addition

to what was practically required of a pious individual - was no longer the sole

purview of the rabbi or scholar. The stage was set for the rise of popular religion

and literature.[21]

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[19] For examples of all of these genres, see Frakes. More detailed information on Yiddish book printing can be found in: Baumgarten 38-71 and Zinberg, *A History* 49-50. The oldest extant Yiddish printing is a Yiddish poem ("Almekhtiker got") printed in a Hebrew Passover Haggadah from Prague in 1526. It is a translation of the Hebrew song "Adir Hu". Zinberg hypothesizes that the printing of no longer extant chapbooks began earlier in Germany and possibly in Northern Italy, but this cannot be proven. For further information on Yiddish vernacular Bibles see: Chava Turniansky, "Reception and Rejection of Yiddish Renderings of the Bible," *The Bible in/and Yiddish*, ed. Shlomo Berger (Amsterdam: Menasseh ben Israel Institute, 2007) 10-20. Erika Timm, *op cit.* Also, Walter Röll, "Die Bibelübersetzung ins Jiddische im 14. Und 15. Jahrhundert," *Die Vermittlung geistlicher Inhalte im deutschen Mittelalter*, eds. Timothy Jackson, Nigel Palmer, Almut Suerbaum (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996) 183-195. Röll also details the process of Jewish Bible education and provides a list of Yiddish glosses and translations of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Jewish canonical writings through the sixteenth century.

[20] Baumgarten 40. Baumgarten discusses these genres and Frakes provides samples or excerpts of all of them.

[21] For further information on popular religion, see the work of Robert Scribner, cited above,who has written extensively on popular religion and focuses on Germany. See also: Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Michael Stanislawski, "Toward the Popular Religion of Ashkenazic Jews," *Mediating Modernity: Challenges and Trends in the Jewish Encounter with the Modern World, Essays in Honor of Michael Meyer*, eds. Lauren Strauss and Michael Brenner (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008) 93-106, and *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for*

Some Jews also read books in German or Yiddish books based on German literature. Several authors and publishers openly voiced the disdain for secular German literature. They considered reading Biblically based works a more 'suitable' pastime than was the reading of secular heroic fiction. Two examples of this are found in the 1544 Yiddish translation of the complete Bible[22] and in the preface to Elijah Bahur's 1545 Yiddish translation of the Psalms. The first reads:

> This book also has another virtue. For all the women and maidens, all of whom can read German well, spend their time with foolish books like *Dietrich von Bern, Hildebrant,* and the like, which are nothing but lies and fantasies. These same women may now have their pastime in this Pentateuch which is nothing other than pure, clear truth.[23]

In his preface to the Yiddish translation of the Psalms, the printer and publisher Cornelius Adelkind wrote that householders and pious women who did not previously have the opportunity to study "would be glad to spend their time on Sabbath or on festivals in reading godly stories, and not those of *Dietrich von Bern* or *Der schönen Glück.*"[24]   The Rabbis also denounced the reading of such

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Religious Studies, eds. Pieter Vrijhof and Jacques Waardenburg (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1979).

[22] In comparison, Luther completed his translation of the New Testament in 1522 and the Old Testament in 1534.

[23] Zinberg, *A History* 87. Also in: Baumgarten 69.

[24] Zinberg, *A History* 87. This sentiment was repeated in later publications as well, most notably Isaac Sulkes' 1579 translation of the Song of Songs and the 1602 *Ma'aseh Bukh.* For other examples, see: Baumgarten 70,129 and Dovid Katz 89-94.

books, denouncing the *galkhes bikher* (books published in the Roman alphabet) as frivolous, obscene, and filth.[25]

Biblical narratives formed the basis for many Yiddish works that were not translations of sacred texts. These vernacular literary adaptations of the Bible served as a bridge between canonical and popular literature. Here authorial freedom could be exercised to a greater degree. The Bible was so central to Jewish life, that it became an accepted basis for the development of a Jewish literature in the vernacular. As Baumgarten states:

> At each important stage in the development of Yiddish literature, the Bible plays a double role: it is the foundational text par excellence distributed to great numbers among the most varied strata of the Jewish populace; and it formed a site of linguistic experimentation and a reservoir of narrative material on the basis of which was developed a specifically Jewish literature.[26]

Early vernacular Yiddish literary adaptations drawn from the Bible, such as אברהם אבינו (*Avraham Avinu* or Abraham the Patriarch), are already found in the Cairo Geniza Codex of 1382 (now housed in Cambridge and catalogued as T.-S. 10K22), the earliest Yiddish anthology.[27] Midrashic sources form the basis of these works, which contain little Biblical material. Chronologically, the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* of 1510, is the next extant Biblical epic. It differs from the works

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[25]Baumgarten, 155-57.

[26] Baumgarten 82.

[27] This codex containing eight Yiddish texts was found as in a storeroom (genizah) in the Ben Ezra Synagogue located in Fustat (Old Cairo). It was part of 193,000 manuscripts brought back to Cambridge by Professor Solomon Schechter in 1896-7. Excerpts of five of the Yiddish codex texts are found in Frakes 10-29. Baumgarten 132-37. Baumgarten discusses the works as well. Both Frakes and Baumgarten provide bibliographies for these texts.

found in the Cairo Geniza Codex in that in addition to extra-Biblical material,

portions of the text are directly derived from Genesis 22 and integrated within the

text. This is also true of the *Akêdass Yizhak*, the next of the printed Biblical epics.

Other Yiddish works dealing with entire Biblical books, such as the שמואל-בוך

(*Shmuel-bukh* or Book of Samuel) of 1540 also demonstrate this fusion of Biblical

text and extra-Biblical material.[28]

The rabbis diligently attempted to limit the social contact of their

communities with their secular surroundings, emphasizing their Jewish otherness

even in their recommended choice of literature. Often this was to no avail. This

is evident not only by the book prefaces cited above, but also by texts of the

Isaac Wallich Collection (c. 1600).[29] This collection of fifty-five Yiddish poems

was assembled and printed by Isaac (Eizak) Wallach of Worms in Hebrew

characters. As Jerold Frakes observes, these poems testify to a range of songs

popular among Jews in the Rhineland. Only twelve of these poems are of

Jewish origin and were originally composed in Yiddish. The rest are of German

provenance, including the well-known *Hildebrandslied*.[30] These songs

demonstrate that, despite their best efforts the rabbis could not prevent Jews

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[28] Turniansky 27.

[29] Felix Rosenberg , *Ueber eine Sammlung deutscher Volks- und Gesellschaftslieder in hebräischen Lettern* (Braunschweig: Druckerei von Eugen Apelhans, 1888). Rosenberg reprints many selections of the texts along with his commentary and provides a listing of all of the works in the manuscript. Zinberg, *A History* 88-93, includes some excerpts translated into English. Frakes 472-485 includes some excerpts in Yiddish. On the isolation of Jews from secular society see: Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961) 11-42.

[30] Frakes, *Early Yiddish Texts* 472.

from reading or singing non-Jewish texts. They could, however, at least

endeavor to redirect their followers to literature centering on themes that were

more suitable and in a language that marked them especially for Jews. It is into

this situation that the Biblical Yiddish epics entered. They served to provide a

bridge between the Bible and its exegesis and the world of German heroic poetry

that would and could not be excluded. The Yiddish authors created a new and

distinctly Jewish popular literature. This enhanced and extended the possiblilities

for Jewish literary expression, enabling the non-elite to engage with the Bible,

liturgy, and legend in the vernacular, and with printed texts.

Typically, the printing of Yiddish books took place in lots of several

hundred copies. If the publication was successful, another edition was issued

within several years. As a gauge of the number of volumes printed, one

publishing house in Cracow, that of the Helicz brothers, is known to have printed

3,350 copies of various religious books during the period encompassing the

1530's-1550's.

Book distribution and sale took place in several ways. Printers sold books

themselves, there were sales at fairs, and above all, various types of peddlers

sold books. Many peddlers were also book publishers, some of whom wrote the

prefaces or colophons of their books. Their writings detail that some travelled

very far and were away for extended periods selling their wares. They may have

carried their merchandise on carts, and some were able to afford assistants.

Others travelled shorter distances, generally returning home for the Sabbath.

Many books sold by peddlers were mere pamphlets or chapbooks with 2-12

printed pages, containing a few tales (*maase bukheh*). Few of these have

survived, in part due to the poor quality of the paper they were printed on, and

the relatively low esteem in which they were held.[31]

Tsene-rene

The most popular work of Yiddish Bible translation appeared at the turn of

the sixteenth century. It was entitled צאינה וראינה (*Tsene-rene* or Go forth and

look), by Yankov Yitskhok Ashkenazi (1550-1624/8). [32] The *Tsene-rene* is an

adaptation of and commentary on the Torah, Haftorah (weekly selections from

the Books of the Prophets) and Megillot (five scrolls read on holidays: Song of

Songs, Book of Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and the Book of Esther). The

Tsene-rene includes selected verses of the Hebrew Bible with Yiddish

translation, commentary, *midrash*, Talmud, moral edification, legal explanation,

and sermonic lessons. The *Tsene-rene* is relatively contemporaneous to the two

Yiddish works under discussion in this chapter. Its popularity can be judged by

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[31] Baumgarten 64.

[32] *The Weekly Midrash: Tz'enah Ur'enah the Classic Anthology of Torah Lore and Midrashic Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Miriam Zakon (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1994).

the early number of printings and the rabbinic endorsements it received.[33]

Although the literary texts under discussion pre-date the first extant edition of the

*Tsene-ren*e, its original date of composition remains unknown. It is presumably

before the 1622 date of the earliest surviving copy, as that title page states that

there were three prior publications of this work. These editions are no longer

extant, and all that we know of them is that two were printed in Cracow and one

in Lublin.[34] The *Tsene-ren*e draws on older exegesis, much of which forms the

basis for the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak*.[35]

   The name *Tsene-rene* comes from a phrase in the Song of Songs 3:11:

צאינה וראינה בנות ציון (Go forth and look, daughters of Zion). This Biblical phrase

alludes to the fact that the target audience for the work was female, and the

*Tsene-ren*e was often referred to as the 'women's Bible'. Even the distinctive

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[33]Jacob Elbaum and Chava Turniansky, "Tsene-rene," YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe , trans. Deborah Weissman, 25 October, 2013, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Tsene-rene>. David ben Shmuel ha-Levi (also known as TAZ; 1586–1667), an influential scholar wrote, "Whoever is not learned certainly ought to read contemporary Torah commentary in the language of Ashkenaz, such as the *Tsene-rene,* so that he can understand the weekly portion" (*Shulḥan 'arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayim,* 285:2).

[34] A concise summary of the *Tsene-rene's* history, bibliography, and a reprint of the section containing the Book of Esther is given by Frakes. Two Yiddish editions may be found online at: Jacob ben Yitzchak Askenazi, *Tseenah U-Reenah, im Hosafot Rabot* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1927) December 25, 2012 <http://archive.org/details/nybc213555> and Yaakov ben Yitzchak Ashkenazi, *Sefer Tse'enah u-re'enah al Ḥamishah Ḥumshe Torah im hafṭarot ve-ḥamesh megilot ve-targum le-megilot be-lashon Ashkenaz, Ivri ṭaitṣh* (Ṿilna, 1895) December 25, 2012 < http://www.archive.org/stream/nybc202029#page/n0/mode/2up> The work is available in English translation as well: Yaakov ben Yitzchak Ashkenazi, *Tz'enah U'r'enah,* eds. Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, trans, Miriam Akon (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1983). The reader is further referred to: Simon Neuberg, *Pragmatische Aspekte der jiddischen Sprachgeschichte am Beispiel der "Zenerene*" (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1999). Although it is not the primary focus of his study, Neuberg examines the history of the Tsene-rene as well as its author and his sources.

[35] Turniansky, "Reception" 17. Frakes 540-63.

typeface in which the text was generally printed in earlier editions, and that was widely used for other Yiddish texts at that time, is known as *vaybertaytsh* (women's Yiddish). However, the *Tsene-rene* was not only for women. As with many other Yiddish works, it was for the engagement of a general audience - women, children, and those men who, like women, were not members of the rabbinic elite.[36] The *Tsene-rene* became a ubiquitous household volume, typically read on every Sabbath and festival, thus spreading Biblical knowledge to those who were not sufficiently erudite to study the Bible and its commentaries in the Hebrew original.[37]

The *Tsene-rene's* retelling of the Akedah includes Genesis 22:1-13, but not verses 22:14-19. The text contains the original Hebrew phrases commented on in the Masoretic text (authoritative Hebrew text of the Bible), followed by a Yiddish translation, so that those reading this section of the *Tsene-rene* would glean the basic Biblical narrative of the Akedah as well as further explanatory material. The additional commentary given in the *Tsene-rene* explains God's test of Abraham through selected exegesis and *midrash*. I will examine the *Tsene-*

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[36] In his *Seyfer brantspigel,* Altshuler conceived of his audience in the following manner:" דאש בוך לערנן פיל ניט קיין'אונ ווייבר אז זיין דא דיא מאנ' אונ וויברן דען טויטש גימכט ווערט" (Translation in: Baumgarten 208 "This book was written in Yiddish for women and for men who are like women and cannot study much."). Israel Zinberg, "A Defense of Yiddish in Old Yiddish Literature", *Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters,* ed. Joshua Fishman (New York: Mouton Publishers 1981) 165. Zinberg stresses that most Yiddish books were not written exclusively for women (a common misconception): "I have collected some seventy title pages of older Yiddish books and only nine of them are addressed exlusively to the 'pious women and maidens', the others expressly state that they aim also at the 'men and young men'. Some are addressed to the 'dear brethren', 'every man, scholar or common man'."

[37] Turniansky, "Reception" 17. Frakes 540-63. The *Tsene-rene* enjoyed such enduring success, that up to 1980 over three hundred editions of this work were published.

*rene'*s rendering of the Sacrifice of Isaac as an introduction to popularly known exegesis of the Akedah during the Early Modern period. The number of glosses and commentaries cited are of signficance to the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak*.

The *Tsene-rene* begins its narration of the Akedah with two midrashic explanations of unnamed provenance on the phrase in 22:1: אחר הדברים האלה (After these things). The first cites Satan's complaint to God that Abraham made a lavish feast at the weaning of Isaac but did not make a sacrifice to God. God responds that if He were to ask Abraham to kill his son, Abraham would do so. Therefore, continues the *Tsene-rene,* 'after these things' refers to God bidding Abraham to kill his son after this conversation with Satan. The second *midrash* states that Ishmael boasted to Isaac that Ishmael's circumcision took place when he was thirteen years old, and he did not protest. Isaac's circumcision took place when he was only eight days old and so could not protest. Isaac replies that Ishmael gave up but one part of his body, and that if God should request it, he (Isaac) would give up his entire body. Neither *midrash* is used in the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* or the *Akêdass Yizhak.* However, the first *midrash* introduces the character of Satan into the story. Though Satan does not appear in the Biblical Akedah narrative, he appears in both Yiddish literary texts, playing the traditional role of a foil to God.

The next commentary relevant for the Yiddish Akedah texts concerns Genesis 22:4. After Abraham and Isaac leave the lads to ascend Mt. Moriah, the

Tsene-rene cites the exegesis of the *Pirke de* [Chapters of] *Rabbi Eliezer* (hereafter abbreviated as PRE). The PRE relates that Ishmael and Eliezer quarrel as to who will be the heir upon Isaac's sacrifice and Abraham's death. Thereupon, a heavenly voice is heard, saying that neither will inherit. Though the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* does not contain this *midrash,* the *Akêdass Yizhak* retells it in the last line of stanza 34 through stanza 36. Moreover, in the poem God not only says that neither lad will inherit, but that Isaac will not die.

In verse 22:5, the *Tsene-rene* author relates the *midrash* in which Abraham considers whether he should tell Sarah of his actions. Abraham reasons that if he does not do so, Sarah will kill herself, because she will not see her son again. However, if Abraham tells her, Sarah will not allow Abraham to take Isaac. The *midrash* continues with Abraham telling Sarah to prepare a feast. Abraham says that Isaac, who is thirty-seven years old according to this *midrash*, is going to learn to obey the commandments. Abraham will therefore make a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah and take Isaac with him. Lest Sarah change her mind, or anyone be able dissuade him, Abraham rises early to accomplish his task.

This *midrash* does not appear as such in either of the Yiddish treatments of the Akedah. However, in both works Sarah's conversation with Satan reveals her belief that Abraham is taking Isaac to learn Torah. This implies that a conversation such as the one in the above *midrash* took place earlier and is the reason for the journey of father and son. The age of Isaac in these texts does not

follow the *midrash*. The prose tale states that Isaac is thirty years old, while the poetic version does not mention Isaac's age.

In the second part of the *midrash* on 22:5, Satan appears to Abraham and tempts him, saying that if Abraham kills his son, God will be angry. Abraham remains steadfast and states that this is God's command. Satan tells Isaac that he is not going to learn the commandments but that Abraham intends to slaughter him. Isaac replies that if this is God's will, he will acquiesce. Then Satan informs Sarah of what is to transpire, and she also responds that God should do as He wills. Finally, Satan creates a large, deep body of water to impede Abraham and Isaac's passage, but Abraham prays to God, and the water disappears.

Both Yiddish Akedah treatments contain the second portion of the *midrash* with minor variations. In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* Sarah does not believe Satan. In the *Akêdass Yizhak,* Satan tries to convince Abraham that it was not God, but he, Satan, who gave the command to slaughter Isaac. Abraham does not believe this. Sarah faints when Satan tells her of Isaac's fate. When she regains consciousness, she praises God.

In the commentary to verse 22:9 in the *Tsene-rene*, Isaac asks Abraham to bind him. Both the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak* contain this request. Ashkenazi relates how Abraham binds Isaac and places him on the wood, that the slaughter knife touches Isaac, and that Isaac's soul flees from his

body. However, when a voice calls from the heavenly Throne of Glory, saying not to harm Isaac, Isaac's soul reenters his body, and he is resurrected. Abraham unbinds Isaac and recites the following blessing: ברוך אתה יי, מחיה המתים (Blessed are You, God, who awakens the dead). This *midrash* is of central significance to both Yiddish Akedah treatments and is contained, with variation in both texts. It will be discussed below as an example of Jewish polemic against a Christian tenet.

The next section of the *Tsene-rene* commentary narrates the traditional Biblical halting of the sacrifice, this time without the shedding of blood, as in the *Akêdass Yizhak*. Thereafter, Abraham speaks to God. Abraham will not leave until God tells him that He will remember the Jewish people when they sin, that Abraham's actions will serve as atonement and that God should consider it as if Abraham had actually killed Isaac and that his ashes were on the altar. The *Akêdass Yizhak* also shares these thoughts.

Ashkenazi concludes the Akedah section of the *Tsene-rene* with commentary on the ram's horn, or Shofar. The text cites Rabbi Bechaya's mid-fourteenth century exegesis, which relates the ram's horn to Rosh Hashanah. He states that when the Jews blow the ram's horn at Rosh Hashanah, God forgives their sins. This is an allusion to the sentiment that God will forgive the sins of the Jewish people because of the merit of the Akdeah. Both the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak* express this sentiment, and the latter work specifically

explains that blowing the shofar testifies to God forgiving the sins of the Jewish people.

The *Tsene-rene* is divided according to the weekly portion of the Pentateuch read in the Synagogue. The following week's portion encompasses Genesis 23:1-25:18, which includes Sarah's death. The second commentary of that portion narrates that Sarah died of fright upon hearing of how her son had been bound on the altar. This explanation also appears in the Paris manuscript of the *Akêdass Yizhak*.

The *Tsene-rene* exemplifies the manner in which a vernacular text helped to spread religious knowledge among non-scholars. It interprets the sparse Biblical narrative with a curated selection of commentaries and alternative elaborations, chosen for a vernacular reader in Central/Eastern Europe at the turn of the seventeenth century. The work contains much of the midrashic source material drawn upon by both the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak*, but presents it in a different manner. Whereas the *Tsene-rene* is more closely tied to the ritual reading of the Bible in the synagogue, the Yiddish Akedah texts are independent of formal religious practice. The narrative form of these Yiddish texts thus suggests a different type of engagement with Genesis 22 by the audience.

Shira von Yizhak: Manuscript History

There is only one extant copy of the eighty-seven line prose work *Shira von Yizhak.* It is currently located in the Biblioteca Palatina di Parma, where it is catalogued as Cod 2513 (De Rossi Polon.1).[38] The 1510 codex was formerly located in the library of Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi (1742-1831), a Christian Hebraist, bibliographer, and Professor of Oriental languages at the University of Parma. The Akedah text codex, along with one of the other three Yiddish codices owned by De Rossi, was falsely catalogued as a text with commandments pertaining only to women, written in Polish with Hebrew letters. The codex and its contents were only properly identified in 1892 by the Yiddish scholar Adolf Neubauer. [39]

Felix Falk states that the manuscript was written in Brescia, Italy by the scribe Moshe Br.[son of] Mordecai Barlag. Falk also states that the scribe signed this work with the nickname "Moshe Hunt Garmazi" which Falk translates as Moses the dog of Germany.[40] Falk interprets this as ironically meaning that the scribe had been a victim of anti-Jewish persecution. Falk argues that the use of

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[38] Chava Turniansky and Erika Timm, *Yiddish in Italia: Yiddish Manuscripts and Printed Books from the 15th to the 17th Centuries* (Milan: Associazione Italiana Amici dell'Ûniversità di Gerusalemme, 2003) 10.

[39] Weinreich, *Bilder* 112-126. There is also another codex from the sixteenth century that was in De Rossi's library that contained two Yiddish manuscripts. Of the total of four Yiddish manuscripts, one was printed in Brescia, and one in Mantua, both in southern Italy. These manuscripts are also important, because they bear witness to Yiddish as a language spoken in southern Italy in the early sixteenth century.

[40] Anti-semitically likening Jews to dogs has a long history. See: Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). The *Akêdass Yizhak* also compares Jews to dogs in Strophe 79: הוינד דיא אז יאגן מין ניט אונז לושט און (And let us no longer be hunted like dogs).

the word 'Garmazi' indicates that the scribe came from Germany, which would

be in accordance with the language of the text - the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* is written

in Yiddish that evidences an Alemmanic dialect of German with a hint of

Bavarian, and with much of the Middle High German preserved. [41]

The prose text exhibits many similarities with the later and longer poetic

version of the Sacrifice of Isaac, the *Akêdass Yizhak*, the next work to be

discussed. Many of the details and much of the midrashic material are expanded

in the *Akêdass Yizhak*, and both texts exhibit linguistic similarities. However,

there is no definitive evidence that one work was the basis for the other. In

addition, the original date of composition of both texts remains unknown, as none

of the extant manuscripts are known with certainty to be the urtext. Nevertheless,

these two works, along with the *Tsene-rene* and its commentary, suggest an

ongoing circulation of an elaborated Akedah narrative in the Yiddish vernacular.

Shira von Yizhak: Plot Summary

The *Shira von Yizhak* begins with Genesis 22:3. The Biblical or midrashic

source of the story is not given, as the text merely states, "עז שטיט גשריבן " (it is

written),[42] although this phrase often implicitly signals a sacred text. Abraham

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[41] Felix Falk, "Die Talmudische Agadah von Shlomo Hamelekh mitn Ashmodai und dem Shamir in zwei altjiddische Nusakhos," *YIVO Bleter,* 13 (1938) 248. Matenko and Sloan 17, also cite this. I can find no evidence of a connection between the term 'Garmazi' and Germany.

[42] Weinreich, *Bilder* 134. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

and Isaac are going to make a sacrifice. Isaac quickly realizes that he is the intended offering and states that he is willing to do the Lord's bidding.   Satan enters in the form of an old man, with the goal of preventing Abraham from completing his mission. He asks Abraham where he is going. Despite Abraham's response that he is going to pray, Satan makes it clear that he knows the true purpose of Abraham's journey and tempts Abraham not to sacrifice his son. Seeing that this is to no avail, Satan changes himself into the form of a young man and goes to Isaac, who says that he is going to study Torah. Satan says that he pities Isaac for what his father is about to do to him, but Isaac is not tempted to defy God. Satan then goes to Sarah. He asks where Abraham and Isaac are, and she answers that they have gone to study Torah. Satan reveals to Sarah that Abraham has gone to slaughter Isaac, but Sarah does not believe him. Satan realizes that his efforts are futile and changes himself into a large body of water, attempting to impede Abraham and Isaac's passage. God shouts at Satan and dries up the water. Abraham and Isaac proceed to Mount Moriah, where together they erect the altar. Isaac asks his father to bind him, as he is a young man of thirty and might flinch, and bids his father to deliver his ashes to Sarah.

God speaks to His angels of Abraham's exemplary actions and shows them what is transpiring. The angels begin to cry, and their tears fall on Abraham's knife, delaying the sacrifice. Nevertheless, Abraham slays Isaac. God commands the angel Michael to resurrect Isaac and to praise God, who

resurrects the dead. (There is a gap in the text at this point, so that the identity of

the person praising God remains unknown.) At the same time, Abraham sees a

ram, which he sacrifices in Isaac's stead. The story ends with Abraham's prayer

to God. When His children suffer, God should remember the suffering that he

and Isaac underwent, have their image before Him, and be merciful.

Akêdass Jizhak: **Manuscript History**

The following manuscript history demonstrates how a text circulates over

time and space, with each copyist customizing it, something readily done

with non-canonical, popular literature. This stands in contrast with the painstaking

efforts to maintain consistency taken when copying canonical, sacred works. The

rhymed *Akêdass Jizhak* is delivered in four manuscripts - the Hamburg, Paris,

Joffe, and Fragmentary Jerusalem manuscripts -and three printed editions. The

Hamburg manuscript (H) is part of Cod. hebr, 250, fos. 114r-120v, 1574, located

in the Hamburg Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek. Willy Staerk and Albert

Leitzmann partially transcribed the Hamburg manuscript,[43] and Moritz

Steinschneider described it as well.[44]   Percy Matenko and Samuel Sloan

consider that the scribe was Jizhak Kutnam, who identifies himself in the last

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[43] Staerk and Leitzmann 271. Zinberg, *A History* 104-5. A small exerpt is found in Zinberg as well.

[44] M. Steinschneider*, Catalog der Hebräischen Handschriften in der Stadtbibliothek zu Hamburg* (Hildesheim: Olms, rpt 1969) 82-5.

stanza.[45] Dreeßen disagrees, because the handwriting of the *Akêdass Jizhak* is the same as that of the previous work in the manuscript, a group of *minhagim* (rites), whose scribe identifies himself as Abraham Hökscher.[46] Dreeßen, Staerk, and Leitzmann posit Jizhak Kutnam as the author of the work, but definitive proof is lacking.

The approximate dating of the H manuscript is gauged by the date given in fragments of a letter by a different hand found in another portion of the codex. The letter is dated 12 Tammuz 5338 in the Jewish calendar, which corresponds to 27 June 1578. The *Akêdass Jizhak* portion of the codex is thus dated to 1574-1578. Dreeßen considers this manuscript to be the most unaltered text, and, conveniently, it was the one most readily accessible to him. He therefore used the H manuscript as the basis for his edition of the *Akêdass Jizhak*, although it contains only sixty-three stanzas and manifests scribal errors in its text.[47]

The Joffe manuscript (J), first described by Matenko and Sloan, was in the private possession of Judah Joffe at the time of the publication of their book. It is now found in the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, where it is catalogued as MS.4425.[48] The *Akêdass Jizhak* is the second of several works

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[45]Matenko and Sloan 8 and 70.

[46] Dreeßen 10.

[47] Dreeßen 14.

[48] This manuscript is available onine at:
<http://garfield.jtsa.edu:8881/R/YYSBNVHS3V3YUSK6RIQ7XQBKEVFG2E58GNTQH91BS5968
4VHMT-04423>. Jewish Theological Seminary. 10 February 2014.

contained in the manuscript. Based on the watermarks, Joffe himself determined

the manuscript to have been written between the years 1558-1578, most

probably in 1570.[49] After the last stanza, a colophon states that the scribe is

Pinchas, the son of Yehuda.[50] The manuscript was probably eighteen stanzas in

length; however, the first page of this section of the manuscript has been lost.[51]

This is the oldest extant manuscript. Shmeruk believes that the text itself dates to

the fifteenth century, due to the direct connection of the Akedah poem and prior

Hebrew Akedah poems found in the High Holiday liturgy and their rhyme

scheme, discussed below.[52]

The Paris manuscript (P) is currently in the Bibliothèque Nationale, as Ms

hébr. 589, 1579. It was written for a woman named in the last stanza as Dame

Perl.[53] The colophon identifies her brother-in-law as Moses, Shmuel Fawisch as

her father, Hendel as her mother, and Wolf Levi as her husband. According to

the scribe, he states all this so that the owner of the book is clearly identified and

that therefore the book will not be stolen! The writing is meticulous, and the

manuscript contains eighty stanzas, including seven stanzas not found in the

other versions. There are only two stanzas lacking that are in other manuscripts.

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[49] Frakes, 316, accepts this date as well.

[50] Matenko and Sloan, 6-7.

[51] Dreeßen 14.

[52] Chone Shmeruk, "An apgefunener Fragment" *Almanakh fun di Yidishe shrayber in Yiśroel* (Tel-Aviv: Yidishn shrayber-un zshurnalisṭn-fareyn in Yiśroel, 1967) 204. Shmeruk did not specify the Akedah poems referenced.

[53] Erik 124, reads the name as Pessel.

The additional stanzas may have been composed by the copyist of this
manuscript, Anschel Levi, an Italian scribe who names himself in the colophon.
The basis of this attribution is that Levi used Italian words in other works that he
copied, and the *Akêdass Jizhak* contains an Italian word, *afêda* (truly, by God)*,* in
strophe 77 of the colophon.[54]

Matenko and Sloan, Max Erik, and Jerold Frakes consider this the best
and most complete manuscript. Therefore, Matenko and Sloan, as well as
Frakes, used this manuscript as the basis for their editions of the text. Dreeßen,
however, does not concur, as he conjectures that the scribe himself made
numerous additions, but gives no further information for his reasoning.[55] Frakes
agrees that there are additions to the lost urtext contained in this manuscript, but
nevertheless considers it to be the most complete. He published the text without
attempting a critical edition or presenting variant readings.[56]

The Jerusalem Fragment (F) is located in the Jewish National and
University Library, catalogued as Heb. 8º 318. Nehemiah Brüll, a scholar of
German-Jewish literature, first described the text as an incomplete Judeo-
German poem about the Sacrifice of Isaac, but Chone Shmeruk was the

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[54] Dreeßen 23, 143, 190. Erik 124. Erik states that Anschel Levi was a German copyist, but does
not substantiate his claim.

[55]Dreeßen 22. Dreeßen details these additions.

[56] Frakes 316-17.

first to publish it.[57] The text is the thirty-ninth of forty works, folio pages

122b and 123a, in a manuscript that, in Brüll's time, was in private

possession. Brüll conjectures that the scribe was possibly Moshe

b.Gerson, a German, and cautiously set the date of the manuscript as the first

half of the sixteenth century.[58] The manuscript contains only eighteen verses of

the poem. After this, the copyist indicated that there was nothing further (ומכאן

ואילך חסר).[59] This would hardly seem to be sufficient indication that this

manuscript was a copy of a prior one; however, there are also duplications of

letters in the manuscript that indicate that this was a copy and not an original.[60]

Shmeruk argues that the rhyme scheme of the work (AAAA, BBBB) antedates

the AABB, rhyme scheme of other Biblically based works such as the *Shmuel-*

bukh (Book of Samuel) and the *Melokhem-bukh* (Book of Kings) and on this

basis feels that this manuscript is not the urtext.[61]

   In addition to these four manuscripts, there are three printed versions, all

found in the Oxford's Bodleian Library, from the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. The oldest, known as (B), or Opp 8º 624 (4), dates from the

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[57] Nehemiah Brüll, "Beiträge zur jüdischen Sagen- und Sprachkunde im Mittelalter," *Jahrbücher für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* IX (1889) 1-20**.**

[58] Brüll 1,20.

[59] Brüll 20.

[60] Matenko and Sloan 7.

[61] Shmeruk, "An apgefunener Fragment" 204.

seventeenth century.[62] The Prague printing (Ba) or Opp 8º 636 (Ba), also dates

to the seventeenth century, and the Berlin printing (Bb) or Opp 8º 645 (1) (Bb), is

dated 1717. All three printed editions contain essentially the same texts, and

there is nothing known about the authors/editors of these editions. [63]

Jerold Frakes published a copy of the Paris manuscript, and small

portions were also independently transcribed and published by S. A. Birnbaum

and J. Maitlis.[64] Chone Shmeruk published the Fragmentary Jerusalem

manuscript.[65] The Hamburg manuscript has been partially transcribed by Staerk

and Leitzmann,[66] and was described by Steinschneider as well.[67] Matenko and

Sloan published a critical edition of the text, as did Dreeßen.[68] Matenko and

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[62] Erik 124. Erik sets the date of printing as app. 1667.

[63] Dreeßen 30-31.

[64] Frakes 316-28. S.A. Birnbaum, "Specimens of Yiddish from Eight Centuries", *The Field of Yiddish: Studies in Language, Folklore, and Literatur,* ed. Uriel Weinreich (The Hague: Mouton, 1965**)** 1-23. J**.** Meitlis, "Akedas Jizchok," *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon,* vol. 1, ed. Gert Woener, (Zürich: Kindler Verlag, 1965) 320-21. John Anderson Howard, *Hebrew-German and Early Yiddish Literature: A Survey of Problems* (Unpublished dissertation: University of Illinois, 1972). Howard also produced an 'edition' of the Paris manuscript with no comment, transcribing the text into Romanized letters and translating it as part of his dissertation.

[65]   Shmeruk, "An Apgefunener Fragment," 206-9.

[66]Staerk and Leitzmann 271. Zinberg, *A History* 104-5. A small, translated excerpt is found in Zinberg as well.

[67] M. Steinschneider, *Catalog der hebräischen Handschriften in der Stadtbibliothek zu Hamburg* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1969) 82-85.

[68] For a description of all of the manuscripts and printed versions see: Dreeßen 9-30, Frakes 316. Dreeßen's edition cannot be considered a true critical edition, as he only included selected variants from the other texts. Also, Matenko and Sloan offer only some of the alternate readings. Frakes 316, feels that a true critical edition is not possible, as "the extant witnesses present a very complex text tradition that ultimately defies the methods and advantages of critical editing."

Sloan based their edition on the Paris manuscript and included a facsimile of the original, whereas Dreeßen based his edition on the Hamburg manuscript.

All of the above scholars agree that none of the extant manuscripts represent the original work, but no satisfactory stemma is possible. Erik did not know of J or F, so he posited that the H, P and B editions appeared in that order.[69] Matenko and Sloan agreed, but knew of J, which they felt to be the earliest of the four, though they did not know of F. They concluded that J and H (the shorter pair) are related, as are P and B (the longer pair), because J and H evidence greater detail of the Genesis 22 narrative, whereas P and B manifest greater concern with the future implication of the Akedah for the Jewish nation. Matenko and Sloan argue for an oral tradition of the Yiddish Akedah story, with scribes taking liberties in the penning of their particular version. They conclude that the "differences are not sufficiently significant for us to speak of separate versions, but only of variations of the same basic version divided into two fundamental groups, J,H and P,B."[70]

Only Dreeßen attempted to create a stemma, but his effort did not receive scholarly acceptance, as there was insufficient proof for his arguments.[71] Frakes considers that the construction of a stemma is not even possible: "In general the text tradition presents such a variation in diction, phraseology syntax,

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[69] Erik 125.

[70] Matenko and Sloan 8-9.

[71] Dreeßen 51-55.

and stanzaic structure that the various texts could be accounted for only by means of parallel editions."[72]

The author of the work remains unknown, as does his localization.[73] Matenko and Sloan provide a poor foundation for their claim that the *Akêdass Jizhak* originated in a Middle German area, offering less than a paragraph of linguistic examination.[74] Dreeßen convincingly localizes the dialect of the author to the Alemannic-Swabian region, in agreement with Staerk and Leitzman's earlier hypothesis. Dreeßen also notes that, though the author may have written the poem in the Alemennic-Swabian dialect, this does not mean he was working in that area. As the use of the Italian word discussed above demonstrates, he could have been working as far away as Northern Italy.[75]

Akêdass Yizhak: Plot Summary

The text of *Akêdass Yizhak* begins by praising Abraham and Sarah, the progenitors of the Jewish tribe**,** telling of their advanced ages at the time of Isaac's birth and God's desire to test Abraham. With some additions, the next

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[72] Frakes 316.

[73] Matenko and Sloan 68, 8 and Dreeßen 10, 59-60 discuss possible authorship, but no conclusion is possible.

[74] Matenko and Sloan 44.

[75] Dreeßen 62-8.

several stanzas closely follow the Biblical story, as the characters begin their

journey. These additions include identifying Eliezer and Ishmael as

accompanying Abraham and Isaac. There is also an anachronistic discussion

between Abraham and Isaac that Abraham is not a Kohen or Levite (member of

the priestly class) and thus does not have the right to offer a sacrifice. Abraham

responds to Isaac that God will make them priests.[76] Then, as in the *Shira fun*

Jizkhak but in more expanded form, Satan comes in turn to Abraham, Isaac, and

Sarah and attempts to prevent the sacrifice. [77] Realizing that these efforts are

futile, Satan transforms himself into a body of water, as he did in the *Shira fun*

Jizkhak. When Abraham cries out to the Lord for help, God's voice from heaven

reassures Abraham that God will fulfill His promise. God then shouts at Satan

and compels him to drink the water. Satan's stomach becomes distended and, in

an unusal instance of comic revenge, Satan cries out like a bear in distress.

As Abraham and Isaac ascend the mountain, the poem shifts to a quarrel

between Ishmael and Eliezer as to who will be Abraham's heir and receive the

blessing of primogeniture after Isaac's sacrifice. However, God informs them that

Isaac has not died and that neither will be Abraham's heir. The action returns to

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[76] The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma 28b, states that Abraham knew and observed all of the laws of the Torah, although they had not yet been received by the Jewish people. Therefore, he would have known the laws of sacrifice. The *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and *Akêdass Yizhak* author knew of this as well. In strophe 17 of the *Akêdass Yizhak*, Isaac tells Satan that his father is sending him to learn Torah. Sarah also responds to Satan in strophe 21 of that text that Isaac has gone to learn Torah. These same responses are also found in the *Shira fun Yitzkhak.*

[77] Matenko **an**d Sloan 10, see this as the "climax of the poem." I cannot agree, as I view the sacrifice itself as the climax.

the Akedah itself. Isaac realizes his fate and is willing to comply with God's

command. As Isaac himself places the wood upon the altar, the author likens him

to a bridegroom looking forward to the marriage canopy.[78] Requesting Abraham

to bind him and to collect his ashes after his sacrifice, Isaac bids his father to

bring the ashes to Sarah as a remembrance. Isaac raises his eyes heavenward

and utters a phrase taken from Psalm 121:1: אשא עיני אל ההרים [I have lifted up

my eyes to the mountains (the completion of which is: "whence help shall come

to me")]. As his father lifts the knife, Isaac asks Abraham to say the blessing, so

that he may respond with Amen. Heaven and earth quake. God speaks to His

angels and they begin to cry. God calls the angel Raphael and tells him to halt

Isaac's death, which Raphael does. Abraham lays down the knife, unbinds

Isaac, and recites the blessing for God, who resurrects the dead. God praises

Abraham and states that due to his rectitude, He will reward Abraham as if he

had sacrificed his son.

The various manuscripts manifest different endings, which are probably

scribal emendations. This in itself is evidence of the text's vernacularity. Unlike

a sacred text, scribes customized the poem at will or may have heard it

performed with different endings and other elaborations. The Hamburg

manuscript ends with God showing Abraham the lamb that he is to sacrifice in

Isaac's stead and concludes with a entreaty by the humble Jizhak Kutnam, the

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[78] This may be a reference to Psalm 19:5: והוא כחתן יצא מחפתו ישיש כגבור לרוץ ארח [which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs his course with joy]. This is also in the *Midrash Wayosha* and the *Yalkut Shemoni*.

scribe of this manuscript, for the speedy arrival of the messiah. The Paris manuscript implores God to forgive the sins of His people, to allow them not to be oppressed, and asks God to be merciful. The final stanza adds the plea that He remember His people in the merit of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that He show mercy now as He did to the Patriarchs. The final line is a request to send the messiah speedily. The Bodeleian edition ends with an exhortation to trust in God, not to rely on earthly possessions, to realize the fleetingness of life, and not to follow the evil inclination. The poet expresses the wish that we may blow the shofar of the lamb that God desired in Isaac's stead. This edition also ends with a plea for the speedy arrival of the messiah, who will lead us to Jerusalem, amen. The other printed versions end similarly, with the minor differences given in Dreeßen's critical apparatus.[79] In none of the manuscripts is the actual sacrifice of the ram described.

The AAAA, BBBB rhyme scheme of the *Akêdass Jizhak* generally served as a pattern for early Yiddish verse. This form is taken from Hebrew poetry, specifically that of the older Akedah and *Selichot* (forgiveness) liturgy for the Jewish High Holiday and penitential period.[80] The *Akêdass Jizhak* itself states that it was sung. This is referenced in lines 31-2 of the text:

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[79] Dreeßen 144.

[80] Frakes 316 and Chone Shmeruk, *Prokim fun der Yidischer Literatur-Geshikhte* (Yiddish) (Tel Aviv: Farlag U.L. Perets, 1988) 193. Shmeruk, "An Apgefunener Fragment" 204. For further information on the structure of Hebrew liturgical poetry see:*The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, ed. T. Carmi (New York: Viking Press, 1981) 51-72.

נון וועלן מיר דען שטן לושן שטין / אונ' וועלן זינגן בון אברהם אונ' יצחק מין (Now we want to leave Satan be / and want to sing of Abraham and my Isaac.) [81] A song dating from c.1670 in Prague, " *שיין ליד פון ווין בניגון עקידה* " (Pretty Song of Viene sung to the tune of the Akedah [*Akêdass Jizhak*]), and a second song about the Ten Commandments dating from 1685 in Prague, are also recorded as being sung to the tune of the *Akêdass Jizhak*.[82] In its fourth stanza, the Yiddish version of the *Midrash Wayosha* of 1687 mentions singing of the deeds of Abraham.[83]

Due to its length, liturgical rhyme scheme, melody and the addition of a homiletic colophon, Dreeßen posits that the *Akêdass Jizhak* was intended for personal edification and for reading in the home or at a small gathering. Further, due to the Paris manuscript's dedication to a woman, Dreeßen concludes that the poem is primarily for women not well versed in Hebrew.[84] However, Zinberg discusses the declamation of the poem in synagogues as a possibile venue for the poem:

> This extremely popular poem [*Akêdass Yizhak*] which had its own melody (*akeyde-nign*) was undoubtedly declaimed in the synagogue before the people on the Sabbath when the *parashah* [cyclical weekly Bible portion]

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[81] Max Erik, *Di Geshikhte fun Yidisher Literatur fun di elteste Zeiten biz der Haskalh-Tekufah,* (Warsaw: Culture League Press, 1929, rpt. New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, 1979) 125-6.

[82]Erik 125-6. .

[83] *מדרש ויושע*/Midrash Vayousha," *Early Yiddish Texts, 1100-1750*, ed Jerold Frakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 731.

[84] Dreeßen 61.

Veyera [Genesis 18:1-22:24] was read, or on the first day of Rosh Ha-Shanah, when the same *parashah* is also read.[85]

Baumgarten also notes the affinity of the *Akêdass Yizhak* with the genre of *piytim* (liturgical poems) dealing with the Akedah. These were read on these holidays, as discussed above.[86]

The Medieval and Early Modern periods were a time of the spoken word, and silent reading was an uncommon practice, even among the educated. The printed word was becoming more common, but books were still a rare commodity in the sixteenth century. This meant that they were a treasure to be shared through communal reading. Collective reading aloud took place in venues such as schools, synagogues and in homes. Reading Yiddish books aloud to a small group of people in a private home was a common practice, sometimes mentioned by their authors. In the ספר ברנט שפיגל (*Seyfer brantspigel* or Burning Mirror) of 1596, Moses Henochs [Yerushalmi] Altshuler (c.1546-1633) tells his audience to read his book often - or they can have it read to them.[87] In the case of the *Akêdass Yizhak,* evidence indicates that it was not simply recited, but sung. Thus, the two Yiddish Akedah texts spread knowledge to a general audience using vernacular language and new genres of popular entertainment.[88]

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[85] Zinberg, *A History* 105. This melody is no longer known.

[86] Baumgarten 137.

[87]Weissler, "For Women" 11.

[88] Baumgarten 65-81. On the medieval prevalence and importance of reading aloud to a group see Mark Chinca and Christopher Young, "Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: A Conjunction and its Consequences" *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: Essays on a Conjunction and its*

Midrashic Sources of the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and *Akêdass Yizhak*

The texts of both the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak* draw

from the Biblical story of Genesis 22 and midrashic sources. Dreeßen has

demonstrated the long surmised close connection of the *midrash*ic Hebrew text

Midrash Wayosha and the *Akêdass Yizhak* by including portions of this midrashic

text at the bottom of each page of his transcription of the *Akêdass Yizhak*.[89]

The *Midrash Wayosha,* dated to the eleventh century, is composed in

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Consequences in Honor of D.H. Green, eds. Mark Chinca and Christopher Young (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005) 1-15. On the transition from oral to silent reading across several cultures and time periods, see the various essays contained in: *A History of Reading in the West,* eds. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999). On the development of silent reading, see: Paul Saenger, *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). On the ongoing importance of orality in Jewish culture, see Nahon 145-68. On the continuing importance of orality in the Reformation period, see: Mark Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and Robert Scribner. "Flugblatt und Analphabetentum. Wie kam der gemeine Mann zu reformatorischen Ideen?" *Flugschriften als Massenmedium der Reformationszeit: Beiträge zum Tübinger Symposium 1980*, ed. Hans-Joachim Köhler (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1981) 63-76. In a full length treatment, Scribner treats the continued importance of both orality and visual culture for the Reformation: *For the Sake of the Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: Cmbridge University Press, 1981).

[89] August Wünsche, *Aus Israels Lehrhallen: Kleine Midraschim* (Leipzig: E. Pfeiffer, 1907). Dreeßen used Wünsche's German translation, based on the 1519 text printed in Constantinople. It is to be noted that the *Midrash Wayosha* was a very popular work, and that the manuscripts and printed editions contain variations of the material included in them. Elisabeth Wies-Campagner, *Midrasch Wajoscha - edition--tradition--interpretation* (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter, 2009). More recently, a new edition presents, transcribes into Hebrew characters and translates into German seventeen manuscripts of the *Midrasch Wayoscha* from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Wies-Campagner also provides a history and analysis of the work. Rachel Mikva, *Midrash vaYosha: A Medieval Midrash on the Song at the Sea* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012). Mikva presents an introduction to the Midrash and a Hebrew transcription with English translation and commentary of one A and one B recension. Erik 125, incorrectly states that the *Akêdass Yizhak* is based on the *Midrash Tanchuma*. There are similarities between the two, but his assessment is incorrect and the text is much closer to the *Midrash Wayosha.*

verse,[90] so that it is itself actually more of a poem or song than a *midrash*, which

is typically written in prose The extant manuscripts of this work are divided into

two groups, A and B. Only the manuscripts in the second group and one in a

transitional group contain the initial lines that comment on Genesis 22 and are

relevant to the literary Akedah texts. The A recensions and the greater bulk of

the B group are devoted to Exodus 14:30 -15:18, which narrates the Israelites

crossing of the Red Sea. The connection between Genesis 22:1-19 is clearly

established as the *Midrash Wayosha* describes the fear of the trapped Israelites

standing in front of the red Sea with the pursuing Egyptians behind them:

נתגלגלו רחמיו של הב"ה ואמר למשה: *מה תזעק אלי?* כבר זכור אני התפלה שהתפללתלמיד
אברהם בשעה שאמרתי לו, לך ושחוט בנך לפני. מיד קבל באהבה ולמחר השכים לעשות רצוני...

> The mercy of the Blessed Holy One was stirred.*Why do you cry out to
> Me*? (Ex 14:15) I have already called to mind the prayer which my beloved
> Abraham asked of me when I told him, 'Go slaughter your son before Me.
> He willingly agreed and the next day he rose early to do my will.[91]

Zechut avot, the memory of the merit of Abraham's deeds at the Akedah, is what

will save the Jewish nation at the sea. Other connections between the two

Biblical narratives are: the Red Sea splitting parallels Abraham splitting the wood

for the sacrifice, and the tears of those involved in the Akedah parallel the tears

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[90] Leo Landau, " Der jiddische Midrasch Wajoscha," *Monatsschrift fuer Geschichte und
Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 72 (1928) 603. Landau calls this verse *Spielmannsstrophe*
(troubadour verse), which is anachronistic if the earliest recension of the *Midrash Wayosha* is
dated to the eleventh century, as Wies-Campagner and Mikva argue.

[91] Mikva 40-1.

shed by those at the Red Sea.[92] Further, the angel Michael appears in both the Genesis and Exodus segments of the *midrash*.

There are also two extant Yiddish adaptations of the *Midrash Wayosha*, though they do not include the Akedah.[93] The two Yiddish editions are almost identical, and neither is dated. Steinschneider posited that one was printed prior to1687 and the other between 1688 and 1715. Based on the rhyme scheme of the *midrash,* ABABACC, which is reminiscent of that favored by Luther and Hans Sachs, and the vocabulary and sentence construction, Leo Landau dated the original Yiddish version of the *Midrash Wayosha* to the sixteenth century,[94] a view most recently also held by Frakes.[95] It is possible that a Yiddish manuscript of the *Midrash Wayosha* encompassing the Akedah existed, but none has been preserved, and the extant editions only briefly mention Abraham.

A number of variations exist among the *Shira fun Yitzkhak, Ak*ê*dass Yizhak* and the Hebrew *Midrash Wayosha*, and the Yiddish works also contain elements not found in the *Midrash*. There are fewer instances where the *Akêdass Yizhak* and the *Midrash Wayosha* are closer to one another than the *Midrash Wayosha* is to the *Shira fun Yitzkhak*. Other collections of *midrash* also contain

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[92] Mikva 40-1.

[93] A Romanized transcribed edition was published by Landau 601-21, and an edition in Hebrew characters was published by Frakes, as cited above.

[94] Landau 603-5.

[95] Frakes 729. There are sixteen exceptions to this rhyme scheme within the work, that are stuctured as ABABXCC, which was also common in the sixteenth century.

much of the same material found in the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak.* Examination of the portion containing the Akedah of seven collections of *midrashim - Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer, Midrash Rabbah, Yalkut Shemoni, Sefer Hayashar, Midrash Tanhuma, Midrash Rabbah, and Pesika Rabati[96]* - reveals that none of these texts is as close to the two Yiddish texts as is the *Midrash Wayosha*. However, many of these collections contain some of the homiletics found in the *Midrash Wayosha*. This confirms the notion that the *Midrash Wayosha* may have been the key source for the Yiddish Akedah texts. As the prose version preceded the poetic version, it is possible that the poet was familiar with the prior version, but this cannot be proven. We must also consider the general religious knowledge of the authors, obtained both through oral and written means, that contributed to the composition of their literary works. All of these works, as well as the *Tsene-rene*, demonstrate the wealth of elaborations of the Akedah that were part of Ashkenazi literacy in the Early Modern period, available in both Hebrew and Yiddish sources.

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[96] The following texts were used in this study and all citations are taken from them unless otherwise noted: Wies-Campagner, *Midrasch Wajoscha - edition--tradition--interpretation*, PRE, *Midrash Rabbah*, vol 1, ed. and trans. H. Friedman (New York: Soncino Press, 1983), *Yalkut Shemoni* (Jerusalem: Brookman Publishers), *Sefer Hayashar: The Book of the Generations of Adam*, eds. and trans. Nachum Kornfeld and Abraham Walzer (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1993), *Midrash Tanhuma*, vol. 1, ed. John Townsend (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1989), *Midrash Hagadol* vol. 1 (Cambridge: University Press, 1902), 5 April, 2012. <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=38103&st=&pgnum=1&hilite>, *Pesikta Rabati,* ed. M. Friedman (Vienna, 1880) , 6 April, 2012. <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=39324&st=%D7%90%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%94%D7%9D&pgnum=1&hilite=8a31eca2-f574-4f7e-a608-39b66487e61a>.

Comparison of the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak*

The *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak* are literary expansions of the Biblical story of the Akedah. Unlike homiletics, they make use of key literary devices not found in the Biblical original or in *midrashim*. Most notably, these devises include character development, a sense of the individuals' inner lives, and humor. Each work has a different protagonist, a concept alien to the Biblical narrative or to *midrashim*. The literary expansions also extend the Akedah into a pan-historical narrative leading up to the present, evident in the pleas by the authors or scribes of the Yiddish texts that God protect contemporary Jews from harm and speedily send the messiah. Such use of these literary devices is exemplary of popular religion.

There are several obvious differences between the prose *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the poetic *Akêdass Yizhak*. In addition to the differing formats of prose and poetry, the length of the texts and the number of extant copies are the most obvious. The greater length of the poetic version naturally occasions more detail than is found in the *Shira fun Yitzkhak*. The *Akêdass Yizhak* also contains a greater amount of direct speech and more characters. The entire scene involving Ishmael and Eliezer, for instance, is not present in the prose version. There are different angels halting the sacrifice: Michael in the prose version and Raphael in the poem, who also has a greater role than does Michael in the prose

version. Moreover, the two works have different heroes. Despite the work's

name, the protagonist of the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* is Abraham, not Isaac. This is

evident from the outset, as the starting points of the two works differ. The *Shira*

fun Yitzkhak begins with Abraham arising in the morning of the sacrifice, not with

Isaac's birth, as does the *Akêdass Yizhak*. Isaac does not have a large speaking

role in the prose version and is primarily Abraham's willing partner,

foregrounding Abraham's steadfastness. The *Akêdass Yizhak*, conversely,

emphasizes Isaac to a greater degree, portraying his awareness and acceptance

of his fate as well as his faith in God and His commands. The poem's first stanza

indicates that the protagonist of the work is Isaac, from whom the Jewish nation

descends:

יידשער שטאם דיא ווערדי ארט

דר בון אברהם אבינו גבורן ווארד

און' בון שרה דיא מוטר צארט

> (Noble Jewish tribe
> Which was born of Abraham our father
> And of Sarah the tender mother) (Strophe 1)

This follows most of the *midrashim*, which also emphasize the role of Isaac, in

contrast to the Biblical text and earlier exegesis, which highlight Abraham.[97]

The extent of Isaac's awareness of his fate differs in the two texts. In the

prose version, Isaac realizes early in the journey that he is to be sacrificed and

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[97] Ginzberg 249, also discusses these two currents.

articulates his willingness. In the poetic version, Satan tells him of his fate

(strophe 16). Isaac responds that he already realizes what is to transpire and

that his fate is in God's hands. Therefore, it is noteworthy that Isaac later asks

his father where the sacrificial animal is (strophe 38). This may be a matter of

conforming to the Biblical text, where Isaac asks the question at this point in the

narration, or Isaac may be 'testing 'his father as well. I suggest that with Isaac's

awareness of his fate, the poet wanted to emphasize the concept found in

Rashi's (1040-1105) exegesis - but not explicit in the Biblical text - that father and

son were in accord, and that Isaac knew where they were going, despite his

question.

The poem accords Isaac a far greater speaking role than does either the

Bible or prose versions. In the Biblical narrative, Isaac speaks only once, when

he asks Abraham where the sacrificial animal is (Gen 22:7). In *Shira fun Yitzkhak*

Isaac speaks to his father five times. Isaac inquires where they are going; the

Biblical question of where the lamb for the sacrifice is; he expresses his

readiness to do the will of his Creator; Isaac speaks to Satan; Isaac has a longer

monologue in which he asks to be bound, to have his ashes taken to Sarah; and

he queries who will tell his mother of his fate. Isaac has the same interchanges

in the *Akêdass Yizhak* , as well as the following addition speech: Isaac questions

his and his father's suitability as non-priests to offer a sacrifice; he laments that

he does not see the lamb for the sacrifice; he has words of consolation to his

father; he offers a prayer to God and requests that his father make the blessing

over the sacrifice, so that he may give the response of Amen. This expansion of

Isaac's dialogue in *Akêdass Yizhak* produces a much more developed

characterization of Isaac as a willing participant in his fate.

    Shira fun Yitzkhak states that Isaac is thirty years old, younger than

traditional exegetes' explanation that he is thirty-seven.[98] There is no known

source for saying that Isaac is thirty. That it is an error of transcription is

possible, but there are no other extant copies of the work for comparison. In

Shira fun Yitzkhak Satan comments that Abraham is one hundred years older

than his son. Isaac is in the prime of his life, implicitly capable of overpowering

Abraham and resisting his father's effort to slaughter him. Yet, not only does

Isaac not do so consciously, he even takes precautions not to do so instinctively,

by asking to be bound so that he does not flinch at the time of his sacrifice.

    Though *Akêdass Yizhak* does not mention Isaac's age, it does specify

how old Abraham and Sarah are (strophe 2), thereby emphasizing the miracle of

Isaac's birth to a mother of ninety and a father of one hundred. This stanza also

implicitly foregrounds Isaac's role over Abraham's by calling Isaac "דר קורן " (the

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[98] Many exegetical texts cite this, using the rationale that Sarah was ninety when Isaac was born and] that Sarah died at the age of 127 of grief hearing that Isaac had been sacrificed (*Genesis Rabbah* 58:5). Therefore, Isaac would have been 37 at the Akedah. See for instance: *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Chronology,* trans and ed. Heinrich Guggenheimer (Northvale: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1998) 13, PRE XXXI, *Genesis Rabbah* 56:8, *Exodus Rabbah* 1:1, *Midrash Wayosha,*and *Midrash Tanchuma*. There are other sources that give different ages for Isaac at the Akedah, including 26 years old (a single mansuscript (Parma) of the *Seder Olam*), 34 years old (Book of Jubilees), and 25 years old (Josephus, *Antiquities* I, 13, 2).

chosen one), whereas Abraham is referred to by the traditional appellation of

אברהם אבינו (our father Abraham) and Sarah is מוטר צארט (tender mother).

 The characters in *Akêdass Yizhak* articulate their emotions more fully

than do the characters in either the Biblical narrative or *Shira fun Yitzkhak*. Isaac

is the paragon of the dutiful son, yet the author describes his conflicting emotions

in realistic terms. Isaac is initially afraid when he does not see a sacrificial

animal, perhaps recalling Satan's revelation. Abraham is also uncertain about

his son's reaction. Immediately, though, we see that Isaac is indeed as steadfast

as his father is; he will comply. Sensing his father's emotions, Isaac reassures

Abraham of his wish to comply with God's will. Then, in the same strophe, the

poet depicts Isaac's inner turmoil. On the one hand, the narrative explains that

both Isaac and his father are sad - Isaac both consoles and is consoled by his

father - on the other hand, Isaac is joyous, " אז איין חתן דער זיך אויף זיין חופה

ורייאט." (as a bridegroom who rejoices at his wedding) (Strophe 41).

 Isaac's piety is explained and demonstrated at greater length in *Akêdass

Yizhak*. He is an exemplary figure in both versions, but in the poem, Isaac is

described as "den vrumen knaben" (the pious lad) (strophe 20 of the Hamburg

manuscript)[99] and similarly by God (strophe 66 of all manuscripts). Isaac

manifests knowledge of religious law in *Akêdass Yizhak* by questioning his

father's suitability to offer a sacrifice (strophe 7). In the poem, Isaac says that

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[99] Dreeßen's edition of the H manuscript gives only a romanized version of the text, not the Yiddish original.

God will console his parents after his death (strophe 46), whereas in the prose version, Abraham expresses this. Isaac prays formally in the *Akêdass Yizhak*; he utters the phrase from Psalm 121:1, אשא עיני אל ההרים (I will lift up my eyes to the mountains) (strophe 51) and then shortly thereafter asks his father to recite the blessing over the sacrifice, so that he may respond Amen (strophe 53). In addition the narration explains that Abraham and Isaac prayed together prior to the sacrifice (strophe 48).

Satan, who has no role in the Biblical narrative, appears in both texts, attempting unsuccessfully, to disrupt the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Sarah and then turning himself into a body of water to try to thwart Abraham's mission. The greatest difference in Satan's portrayal in the two texts is that he is the subject of humor in the *Akêdass Yizhak,* but not in the prose version. In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak,* God merely screams at Satan, dries up the water that is impeding Abraham and Isaac's passage, and their journey continues. In the *Akêdass Yizhak,* God forces Satan to drink all the water. The poet then describes the comical image of Satan with a swollen and distended belly, growling like a bear (strophes 32-33). No previous exegesis or *midrash* contains this element, although they do mention Satan. Prior to this, the poet also has Satan speaking glibly about his plans for Isaac, saying that he wants to make him into an ape (strophe 13) and asking Isaac if he is going to learn Torah after his death (Strophe 16). Satan uses humor to mock Abraham and Isaac's piety, and ultimately becomes a victim of God's comic revenge. After Satan wants to make

Isaac into an animal, God forces Satan to growl like one. This use of humor is exemplary of popular religion. It offers a more wide-ranging emotional engagement with the narrative than does the austere canonical text.

God plays a greater role in the *Akêdass Yizhak* than in the prose text. In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak,* God speaks only once, commanding the angel Michael to resurrect Isaac. In the poem, God speaks eight times.[100] With the exception of Sarah and Isaac (who perhaps hears God speaking to his father), God speaks directly to all of the characters of the poem: Abraham, Ishmael, Eliezer, Satan, the unnamed angels, and Raphael. Whereas in the prose version God is not mentioned at all until the end of the story - not even giving Abraham the command to sacrifice his son - in the poem God continually reacts and responds to the needs of the characters. When Abraham is in distress with water up to his neck, he hears a reassuring voice from the heavens; as Eliezer and Ishmael quarrel, God intervenes, when Abraham does not believe the angel, God speaks to Abraham directly. The poet makes God an active participant in the Akedah and in the life and fate of the characters of the *Akêdass Yizhak*.

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[100] God gives Abraham the command to sacrifice Isaac (strophe 3); responds to Abraham when he and Isaac are in the water and affirms his promise to Abraham (strophe 32); informs Ishmael and Eliezer that neither will inherit and that Isaac has not died (strophe 36), speaks to the angels to tell them of Abraham's faithfulness; calls the angel Raphael to halt the sacrifice (strophe 58); speaks to Abraham directly and tells him that because of Abraham's faithfulness he will deem it as if Isaac had actually been sacrificed (strophe 64); orders Abraham to sacrifice the ram in Isaac's stead (strophe 66); and finally, informs Abraham that in the merit of his deed He will remember his children and always help them (strophe 65).

Different angels are involved in the Akedah in these two Yiddish works. In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak,* God commands the angel Michael to resurrect Isaac. Though in Genesis 22 the angel is unnamed, he is identified as Michael in several *midrashim*, including the *Midrash Wayosha*, the *Me'am Loez* and the *Yalkut Reuveni*.[101] In traditional Jewish lore, each angel has a unique attribute. The angel Michael is merciful and forbearing.[102] He is often a foil to Satan, since he aids rather than thwarts man.[103] This traditional association is apt here, as Satan plays a large role in trying to hinder Abraham's mission in these Yiddish texts. Raphael, the angel who halts the sacrifice prior to its fulfillment in the *Akêdass Jizhak,* is traditionally the angel of healing.[104] There is no midrashic basis for identifying Raphael as the angel of Genesis 22, but perhaps the author knew of the *midrashim* discussed below, stating that Isaac suffered injury at the Akedah, and thus it was the task of the Raphael to be present.

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[101]Yaakov Culi, *The Torah Anthology (Me'am Loez)*, vol. II,2, ed. and trans. Aryeh Kaplan (New York: Moznaim Publishing Corp., 1989) 337. Hereafter referred to as *Me'am Loez. Yalkut Reubeni* (Amsterdam) 79. It is to be noted that although these are midrashic collections penned only after the Yiddish works being discussed, they represent collections of long extant *midrashim*. Due to this, they are not anachronistic sources. Ginsberg, vol. 1 280. Ginzberg also mentions Michael, but in vol. 5 251 he cites a *midrash* wherein the angel Megaton intercedes. Rachel Adelman, "The Poetics of Time and Space in the Midrashic Narrative — The Case of *Pirkei deRabbi* Eliezer" 13 July 2012.
<http://racheladelman.com/docs/Adelman_PhD_Thesis_on_Pirkei_deRabbi_Eliezer.pdf> 220-21. Adelman discusses the role of the angels Michael and Gabriel in the PRE. In a footnote she cites numerous examples of their inclusion in the PRE and states that, "both Michael and Gabriel function as saviors or advocates before the Throne of Glory. When God's hand is imputed in the Biblical text, the Midrash transfers it to an archangel..."

[102] Morris Margolies, *A Gathering of Angels* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1994) 79-80.

[103] Adelman 220-21.This is particularly evident in the PRE.

[104]Margolies 79-80.

In *Shira fun Yitzkhak* Abraham is the protagonist, a man of action: he gets up, saddles his donkey, takes his servants and Isaac, and goes on his way. Abraham has an answer for Satan, he does not hesitate to call upon God for help when he is in the water, he is the one to say that God will console him after Isaac's death, and when the time for Isaac's sacrifice comes, Abraham does not hesitate. The text describes this last scene in the following manner:

דו נאם אברהם יצחק אונ' ווארף אין אוייף דש מזבח אונ' טרט מיט זיינם קניא אוייף
יצחק הארץ אונ' נאם דש שעכט מעסר אין זיין האנט

(Then Abraham took Isaac and threw him on the altar and trod with his knee on Isaac's heart and took the slaughter knife in his hand.)

The above depiction of Abraham is far different from that in the *Akêdass Yizhak*. This is particularly evident in the scenes with the devil and in the final sacrificial scene.   Satan, in his disguise as an old man**,** informs Abraham that the devil gave the command to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham, however, holds fast to the knowledge that it was God who spoke to him. Abraham says:

איך קער מיך ניט אן דיך טוייבילש גיטרעכט

דען הק"בה" דער מיכש גיהיישן הוט נעכט

אונ' קיין אנדרר ניט נוך טוייבילש גישלכט

מיינם גוט דעם וויל איך דינן רכט:

(I will not turn to you, devil in disguise,
Because the Holy One, Blessed be He, commanded me at night
And no other of the devil's kind.
I want to serve my God properly.) (Strophe 13)

Likewise, at the time of the sacrifice itself, Abraham initially refuses to listen to the command of the angel Raphael and insists that God, who commanded the sacrifice, be the one to halt it. Further, the *Akêdass Yitzkhak* descibes Abraham's emotions as much more vividly torn between his love of God and the love of Isaac. Both father and son use terms of endearment toward each other. Abraham addresses Isaac as מיין ליב זון (my dear son) and Isaac says ליבר ואטר (dear father). The poet describes Abraham's fear - אברהם ור גינג דש הארץ אונ' דש גיזיכט (Abraham's heart and face sank) (strophe 39) - when he sees Isaac's initial worry upon realizing that he is to be the sacrificial animal. Weeping at the altar, father and son console each other: ויל טרעהרן אברהם אויבר יצחק גוש / דש עש וויא איין וושר אויבר אין ולוש (Abraham shed many tears over Isaac / so that it followed over him like a stream) (strophe 49). This emotion is absent in the *Shira fun Yitzkhak*. In both texts, Abraham is steadfast in his desire to serve God. However, the *Akêdass Yitzkhak* portrays Abraham as a man of thought, speech, and heart-wrenching emotion. In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak,* Abraham is a man of impassioned action.

The Role of Sarah

Though Sarah has no role in Genesis 22, she is included in both the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak.* Including Sarah in this masculine narrative may function as a means of addressing and engaging the women in the

audience. She is a figure for female identification in an otherwise all-male narrative; one who is emotionally involved, but also remains steadfast in her faith. Moreover, the *Akêdass Yizhak* links Sarah to the theme of resurrection.

Sarah appears in both works when Satan comes to tell her of what is to befall her son. In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak*, she simply does not believe Satan and plays no further role in the work. In the *Akêdass Yizhak*, Sarah faints upon hearing of her husband's true mission. When she regains consciousness, she says that God's will should transpire. Her fainting simulates death. However, Sarah is able to demonstrate her faith in God by regaining consciousness - coming to life again - and accepting God's will. Moreover, Sarah's fainting and recovery are a prefiguration of the death and resurrection motif of Isaac discussed below. As found in many *midrashim,* the *Akêdass Yizhak* later relates that Satan returns to Sarah and tells her that Abraham sacrificed her son. Upon hearing this news, Sarah actually dies.[105]

In both works, Sarah is also associated with Isaac's death through the disposition of his ashes, which Isaac requests be brought to his mother after his immolation. The cult of relics and of the preservation of ashes is not a Jewish

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[105] See: *Tsene-rene*, *Midrash Tanchuma* Veyera 23 *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 58:5, Rashi 23:2, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* 22:20, and PRE Chapter 32. In some versions Satan returns in the guise of Isaac and tells Sarah of his near-sacrifice, which causes her death. The PRE also notes that Sarah's wailing and cries correspond to the notes of the Shofar (ram's horn) blown on Rosh Hashannah. Both motifs are also found in *Leviticus Rabbah* 20:2 253-4. The *Tsene-rene* discusses this *midrash* of Sarah's death in connection with the next weekly reading from the Pentateuch. For an expansion of this theme, see: Avivah Zornberg, "Cries and Whispers: The Death of Sarah", *Beginning Anew: A Woman's Companion to the High Holy Days,* eds. Gail Twersky Reimer and Judith Kates (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1997) 174-200.

one. Although these practices have a basis is in pagan culture, they experienced

a resurgence in popularity in medieval Christianity.[106] I argue that the

surrounding Christian culture influenced the authors of the Yiddish Akedah texts

in their choice of subject matter. This theme of ashes demonstrates the use of

Christian rhetoric in order to assert a Jewish theme.

The only other author discussed in this dissertation to foreground Sarah

was Hans Sachs, who used her as a foil to Abraham in both of his plays, as

discussed in Chapter Four. In these works, Sarah's skepticism stands in contrast

to the faith of Abraham. This skepticism turns to outright disbelief, as Sarah

refuses to agree to Isaac's sacrifice and questions that this is actually God's

command, culminating with Sarah calling God a murderer. This depiction of

Sarah stands in stark contrast to her portrayal in the Yiddish works. In both the

Shira fun Yitzkhak and *Akêdass Yizhak,* Sarah expresses nothing but faith in

God and the willingness to do His bidding, even when Satan approaches her and

tells her of what is about to befall her son. Sachs uses the literary device of

Sarah as a foil to Abraham to foreground Abrahm's steadfast faith. In contrast,

the Yiddish authors use Sarah as an exemplum of faith; the wife and mother who

shares her husband's unshakeable belief.

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[106] For information on relics, their role in the Church, and their veneration see: James Bentley, *Restless Bones: The Story of Relics* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1985) and Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart (*München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1997).

Akêdass Yitzkhak: **Manuscript Endings:**

The P and H manuscripts and the printed (B) editions of *Akêdass Yitzkhak* all have differing endings, which offer a range of understandings of the significance of the Akedah.[107]   All differ from the Biblical narrative, which ends as God blesses Abraham and his descendants; Abraham returns to his lads, and they go to Beersheba. The P manuscript adds stanzas not found in the other versions of the *Akêdass Yitzkhak.* These verses praise God and bless all people and items (including the knife, ram, and mountain) involved in the story. This version of the poem also narrates Sarah's death. Satan, shamed because of his unsuccessful boasting that he could prevent the Sacrifice of Isaaac, goes to Sarah and shows her a vision of the Akedah, thereby causing her death. The *Shira fun Yitzkhak* does not contain these details, although, as discussed, there is a strong midrashic basis for the relationship between the Akedah and Sarah's death.

The P text then states that God will always be merciful to the Jews, and wishes God to send the messiah speedily, which is also found in the B, and H versions. Unique to the P version is that there is the localization to send the messiah even as far as to Cremona and Venice.   The poet prays that God should not hold our sins against us and not let us be hunted as dogs, an overt reference to contemporary Jewish persecution.

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[107] The conclusions of all three manuscripts may be found in Dreeßen 138-144 and Matenko and Sloan 69-70.

The last stanzas of both the P manuscript and the B edition connect the Shofar and the Akedah. The scribe of the P manuscript extols the merit of blowing the shofar to dispellGod's anger and causing Satan to hide, explaining that when Jews blow the *tekiah, teruah* and *shevarim* (the three traditional patterns of notes blown on the shofar) the heavenly gates of mercy open and the evil inclination has no power over the Jews, thanks to [the merit of] Abraham, Isaac and Sarah. The B edition offers a prayer that, thanks to the merit of Abraham's actions, God will hear the Jews blowing the shofar of the sacrificed ram that God desired in Isaac's stead.

The final lines of the P,B, and H versions of the *Akêdass Yitzkhak* elucidate the concept of *zechut avot*. The final sentiment of the B edition, noted above, links God's remembrance of the Akedah with His mercy. The H manuscript concludes with a plea that, thanks to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, God should remember the Jews in time of sorrow, allow them to live in great joy, and send the long-awaited messiah. The P manuscript typifies the sentiments of all three versions:

און' אין דעם גלות גידענק אונז זכות אברהם און' יצחק און' יעקב אין אלי צייט

אום ווילן דער ליבשאפט דיא ער דיר הוט דר צייגט

(And in the Diaspora think of us always [due to] the merit of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
For the sake of the love which he [God] showed you) (Strophe 80)

The *Shira fun Yitzkhak* concludes with a similar sentiment:

אונ' זייט אברהם: "ליבר הער גוט! ווין מיין קינדר זיין אים ליידא זו גדענק אן דש איך אונ'

מיין זון הבן גהט, דש זול צו בור דיר אל וועגן. אמן סלה

[And Abraham said: "Dear God! When my children are in distress so
remember the distress that I and my son had, this should always be
before you. Amen Selah]

The common concluding plea of these works serves to highlight the central
importance of *zechut avot* and its relationship to the Akedah for contemporary
diaspora Jewry, acknowledging their suffering, and their hopes for future
redemption.

Polemics and the Jewish Resurrection Motif

Efforts by Christians to convert Jews are as old as the Church itself, and
anti-Christian polemical texts have an equally long history. Jewish and Christian
polemical texts of the Middle Ages are well documented by many scholars.
Robert Chazan has written widely on many aspects of medieval Jewish-Christian
relations, and Elisheva Carlebach has discussed German Jewish and Christian
polemical efforts during the Reformation.[108] Most recently Devorah Schoenfeld

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[108]Two of Robert Chazan's most important works on this subject include: *Fashioning Jewish
Identity in Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and
Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth Century Christian Missionizing and the Jewish Reponse (Berkley:
University of California Press, 1989).   Elisheva Carlebach, "Jewish Responses to Christianity in
Reformation Germany," J*ews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth Century Germany*, eds.
Dean Bell and Stephen Burnett (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 451-80. See also: Anna Sapir Abulafia,
Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance (London: Routledge:1995), Jeremy
Cohen, "Towards a Functional Classification of Jewish anti-Christian Polemic in the High Middle
Ages," *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, eds. Bernd Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner
(Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992) 93-114. Daniel Lasker, "Teaching Christianity to Jews:

has examined the the use of Genesis 22 as both an anti-Christian and and anti-Jewish polemic in the exegesis of Rashi (1040-1105) and that of the *Glossa Ordinaria* by Gilbert of Auxerre (d.1135). Aya Elyada has detailed Christian missionizing efforts in Yiddish during the Early Modern Period.[109] These scholars describe a great many examples of Christan and Jewish polemical writing throughout history. Into the Reformation, the thought that Jewish blasphemy contributed to Christian misfortune and divine punishment persisted. Luther's denunciations against the Jews are well-known, as is his early hope that Jews would convert en masse once they understood the veracity of the Reformation.

Jews responded to these efforts by strengthening the commitment and identity of their own community through polemic directed inwardly, to their own people.[110] Their anti-Christian polemic took many forms. They wrote works such as the Jewish 'counter-biography' of Jesus, *Toldot Yeshu* (Life of Jesus), dating to the fourth and eighth centuries, written in both Yiddish and Hebrew;[111] the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and the popular Yiddish work, the *Mayse-bukh*, both

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The case of Medieval Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics" *Judaism and Education: Essays in Honor of Walter I. Ackerman*, ed. Haim Marantz (Beer-Shevah: Ben Gurion University, 1998) 73-86. Chazan, *Reassessing* 50. Chazan specifically points to Jewish knowledge of the triumphs of the Church, as spread through artistic depictions that were accessible to all. Chazan's statement also reinforces the importance of the visual depictions of Christian theology discussed in Chapter 2

[109] Devorah Schoenfeld, *Isaac on Jewish and Christian Altars: Polemic and Exegesis in Rashi and the Glossa Ordinaria* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). Aya Elyada, *A Goy Who Speaks Yiddish: Christians and the Jewish Language in Early Modern Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[110] Public debates such as that of Barcelona in 1263 might be considered an exception to this as might the interchange of religious ideas between intellectuals.

[111] *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen*, ed. Samuel Krauss (New York: G. Olms, 1977).

of which have been discussed above.[112] Anti-Christian polemic was not a new

phenomenon, and its creation was not without cause. Although the number of

Jewish converts to Christianity was remarkably small, the surrounding majority

culture could not but have affected the Jewish community.[113] A polemical

subtext in both the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak* is therefore not a

surprising phenomenon.

    Jews also used the trial of Abraham to counter Christian attempts at

missionizing. Christians argued that the Jews were now suffering Divine

punishment for causing the crucifixion and continue to suffer because of their

ongoing refusal to accept Jesus as their messiah. Conversely, the Rabbis used

the suffering of Abraham to explain the continued suffering of the Jews. Just as

God tested Abraham, so too is He testing contemporary Jews. Moreover, just as

God rewarded Abraham, so too will He reward the Jewish people, if they are

strong and remain faithful to God's commandments.[114] With their works, the

authors of the two Yiddish Akedah texts sought to counter the tropes of

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[112] Elyada 50. Elisheva Carlebach, *The Anti-Christian Element in Early Modern Yiddish Culture* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2003) 12-17. For further information on the anti-Christian polemic contained in the Crusade Chronicles, see the work of Robert Chazan, particularly in *God, Humanity* 187-90.

[113]Chazan, *Reassessing* 201. Chazan comments on this, recalling his recollections upon seeing the cathedral city of Chartres and the narrow streets of the medieval Jewish neighborhood over which the impressive cathedral loomed: "The challenges to the Jewish psyche posed by the environment of medieval Christian Europe could easily have been overwhelming. That the Jews of medieval western Christendom were not overwhelmed constitutes a major achievement - an achievement realized through determined effort and intense creativity."

[114] Chazan, *Reassessing* 200-17. Chazan also briefly discusses missionizing efforts by Christians.

Christianity, utilizing vernacular Jewish texts intended for entertainment, knowledge, and the polemical strengthening of Jewish beliefs.

The first example of a Christian concept subverted for Jewish use is found in the *Akêdass Yizhak*. Isaac and his father are saddened by what is to happen, yet Isaac is also described as "אז איין חתן דער זיך אויף זיין חופה ורייאט " (as a bridegroom who is joyous about his wedding) (strophe 41). The *Midrash Wayosha* and *Yalkut Shemoni* had already incorporated the use of this phrase in relation to the Akedah, but the concept of joy at a sacrificial death is a common one in the description of Christian martyrs.[115] Roos details joyous accounts of Christian martyrs through the ages, including the use of wedding imagery in several narratives. Examples include *The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* of the third century, Eusebius's fourth century description of the martyrs of Lyon, and the eighth century *The Life of Saint Armand* .[116] Pilgrimages and public processions commemorating such events would likely have been known to medieval Jews. Hence the adaptation of this popular Christian motif to a Jewish text exemplifies the interest of a Jewish author in demonstrating equal, if not superior status of their prototypical Jewish martyr over the Christian martyrs.[117]

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[115] *Yalkut* 101.

[116] Roos 119-21

[117] Spiegel 135. Spiegel comments on the use of this midrashic phrase in several *piyut*im and asks: "Would you say that the *payyetanim,* the poets, draw upon *midrash* as usual? Or perhaps woven into the fabric of the *midrash* is something from the vocabulary and spirit of the medieval saints?" The same question holds true for these Akedah texts.

The primary site of polemicizing against Christian doctrine in these two Yiddish texts is Isaac's death and resurrection. As discussed above in Chapter One, Christians viewed Isaac as a prefiguration of Jesus and, as Chazan remarks, Jews in medieval Europe were aware of this teaching. Chazan also comments that identifying Jewish martyrs during the 1096 Crusade with the Akedah was partly done, "to wrest yet another major symbol out of Christian hands and return it to Jewish auspices."[118] Conversely, both Israel Yuval and Ivan Marcus note that medieval Jews responded to Christian teachings by Judaizing Christian symbols.[119] The depiction of the death and resurrection of Isaac in the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and *Akêdass Yizhak* both appropriates a Christian tenet and asserts the patriarch's Jewish significance.

In the *Shira fun Yitzkhak,* the sacrifice is not halted; Isaac dies and is resurrected. In the *Akêdass Yizhak* the death and resurrection motif is found as well, although it is more oblique. In his last speech to Abraham God says that due to Abraham's willingness, the Akedah will be counted as if Isaac had actually been sacrificed:

הקבה שפרך זעלבש צו אברהם זיינם קנעכט

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[118] Chazan, *God, Humanity* 188.

[119] Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood:Jewish Culture and Acculturation in the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). In but one example, Ivan Marcus describes the way in which Jewish school initiation customs paralled Christian Communion rites, in terms of being at the same age, initiated at a specific holiday, administered by a religious authority, and being associated with specific foods, particularly bread. See also: Israel Yuval, "The Language and Symbols of the Hebrew Chronicles of the Crusades," *Facing the Cross: The Persecution of 1096 in History and Historiography*, ed. Yom Tov Assis (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000) 101-117.

זינט דש איך דיך וינד אין אלן זאכן גירעכט

דש וויל איך דיר גידענקן אונ' אל דיינם גישלעכט

עקידת יצחק אז ווען דו אין העשט גישעכט

(The Holy One Blessed be He himself spoke to Abraham his servant
Since I find you righteous in all things
I will accord to you and all of your nation
The Binding of Isaac as if you had slaughtered him.)(Strophe 64)

Further, the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* alludes to the blessing ברוך אתה יי מחיה

המתים (Blessed are you God, who revives the dead). There is a gap in the text at

this point, so that we do not know the exact wording of the line prior to this

blessing, and who utters the blessing.

In the *Akêdass Yizhak* the sacrifice is halted and Isaac does not die,

however, this same blessing concerning the resurrection of the dead is said by

Abraham. Therefore, even though Isaac's death does not actually take place in

the *Akêdass Yizhak*, the symbolic death and resurrection of Isaac is recalled.[120]

Many midrashic collections from the eighth through the seventeenth

centuries also address the death of Isaac at the Akedah. These include the

S*hibbole ha-Lekket*,[121] *Yalkut Reuveni*,[122] *Midrash HaGadol,*[123] *Yalkut Shemoni,*

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[120] For the significance of this blessing and its place in Jewish prayer, see Spiegel 28-37.

[121] Cited in: Spiegel 37.

[122] *Yalkut Reuveni* (Amsterdam) 79.

[123] *Midrash Hagadol*, vol.1, ed. S. Schechter (Cambridge: University Press, 1902) 323. 8 July, 2012 <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=38103&st=&pgnum=189&hilite=>. See: Genesis 22:12 and 22:19.

and the *Daas Zekenim.*[124] The first such complete *midrash* is in the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (eighth century), who states:

רבי יהודה אומר, כיון שהגיע חרב על צוארו, פרחה ויצאה נשמתו של יצחק. כיון כשהשמיע קולו מבין שני הכרובם ואמר, אל תשלח ידך אל הנער,חזרה הנפש לגופו, והתירו ועמד על רגלו. וראה יצחק תחית המתים מן התורה, שכל המתים עתידין להחיות. באותה שעה פתח ואמר ברוך אתה ה' מחיה המתים.

> (Rabbi Jehudah said: When the blade touched his neck, the soul of Isaac fled and departed, [but] when he heard His voice from between the two Cherubim saying [to Abraham ["Lay not thine hand upon the lad" [Genesis xxii,12], his soul returned to his body and [Abraham] set him free, and Isaac stood on his feet. And Isaac knew that in this manner the dead in the future will be quickened.[125]

By describing Isaac as resurrected from the dead (or alluding to this), these Yiddish texts offer a polemic against the Christian teaching that Isaac prefigures Jesus's resurrection and enthronement in heaven as a universally redemptive act. In these Yiddish works, Isaac is restored to life. This is a concept of death and resurrection found in Jewish tradition. However, this depiction of the Akedah in both of these Yiddish texts engages the Christian reading of this Biblical story. I argue that this is an example of anti-Christian polemic in a Jewish literary work. In these texts, Isaac, one of God's chosen three fathers, dies and lives again; he becomes a Jewish symbol of resurrection - a hero who rises from the dead. Moreover, the resurrected Isaac lives corporeally and

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[124] Spiegel 6-7, 30-33, 47. Spiegel 6,31-32n and 46-49. Spiegel also references the *Paaneah Raza, Hadar Zekenim, Minhat Yehudah, Song of Songs Rabbah, Midrash ha Gadol, Mekhilta de Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, Tanchuma,* and the *Neweh Shalom*.

[125] *Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer* 96. Trans.: Friedlander 228. James Goodman, *But Where is the Lamb? Imagining the Story of Abraham and Isaac* (New York: Schocken Books, 2013). Goodman cites this as the first complete and datable *midrash* of Isaac's death and resurrection.

becames the progenitor of the Jewish people.[126]   This polemic also differs in that

the Yiddish works assert that Isaac's story is specifically about Jews, not all

humankind. This foregrounds the fact that the Akedah is about God's

commitment to the Jewish people in the face of their ongoing persecution.

The theme of regarding Isaac 'as if he had died' found in the *Akêdass*

Yizhak also has a midrashic basis. The anonymous compiler of the *Midrash*

HaGadol asks why the narrative states that Abraham returned to his lads. The

commentary given is: אמ' ר אלעזר בן פדת אע"פ שלא מת יצחק מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו

מת ואפרו מוטל אל גבי המזבח [According to R. Eliezer ben Pedat, "Although Isaac

did not die, Scripture regards him as though he had died and his ashes lay piled

up on the altar."].[127] The *Midrash* continues: ויצחק היכן הוא אלא שהכניסו הקב"ה לגן .

עדן וישב שם בה שלש שנים [And Isaac, where was he? The Holy One, blessed be

He, brought him into the Garden of Eden, and there he stayed three years.][128]

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[126] This identification even by Jews themselves is well illustrated by a phrase found in the *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah* 56:3: ויקח אברהם את עצי עולה כזה שהוא טוען צלובו בכתפו [And Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering, and put it on his son Isaac" [Gen,22:6] - like one bearing his own cross]. This is also found in the *Midrash Tanhuma* 22:6 129. Spiegel 75, 84. Note that this is Spiegel's translation, as well as that of numerous other translators. *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis* 493. The translation of Friedman, which has been used throughout this work, is somewhat different: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering (XXII, 6) - like one who carries his stake on his shoulder." In an explanatory footnote Friedman states: "The stake on which he is to be executed." Spiegel further finds this same cross phraseology in *Peskita Rabba* 31:143b, Yalkut #101, and Yelamdenu in *Yalkut Talmud Torah*.   As Spiegel goes on to point out, this phrase was used by many of the Patristic Fathers as an image of Isaac as the prototype of Jesus.

[127] *Midrash Hagadol*, 327. Translation: Spiegel 3-4.

[128] *Midrash Hagadol*, 327. Translation: Spiegel 5.

Here too, the *Midrash* records Isaac having gone to Paradise - that is, he died and was resurrected.[129]

The *Midrash HaGadol* emphasizes that it is the willingness to die, and not the actual death that is important in Jewish thought. In the *Akêdass Yizhak* this serves as an anti-Christian polemic. Christianity emphasizes the importance of the actual death of the Savior; Judaism does not; whether Isaac physically dies or not is not important. Therefore, Abraham is able to fulfill God's will and Isaac his destiny as the progenitor of Israel. Isaac is thus rendered as the protagonist of the action. He is the perfect sacrifice who offers himself willingly, 'dies', is resurrected, and becomes the one through whom the nation of Israel emerges.

The use of their Sacrifice of Isaac texts as polemical devices is not unique to the authors of the Yiddish Akedah texts. The Protestant authors also had a polemical agenda, albeit a different one than the Yiddish authors. Sachs and Greff wanted to publicize the tenets of the new Lutheran faith, and as discussed, Greff openly railed in his Preface against non-Lutherans. Sachs and Greff also published their Sacrifice of Isaac works during a different era, during a period of great change. Literacy rates were increasing, the invention of the printing press made the dissemination of information easier and cheaper, and a new theology was on the rise. Coupled with this, the Latin Bible was now available in the

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[129] Spiegel 6, 31-32n and 46-49. Further, there is a *midrashi*c basis for the thought that Abraham's knife actually shed Isaac's blood at the Akedah, though Isaac did not die. Spiegel references the *Paaneah Raza, Hadar Zekenim, Minhat Yehudah, Song of Songs Rabbah, Midrash ha Gadol, Mekhilta de Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, Tanchuma, and the Neweh Shalom*.

German vernacular. Religion became the purview of the common person, as it did a century earlier for Yiddish speakers, and German vernacular works were now positioned to serve as polemical vehicles.

`   The authors of the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and the *Akêdass Yizhak* took the Biblical narrative of Genesis 22 and crafted a tender and human version of the story. They did this by expanding a story already filled with pathos and emotion, yet remaining true to it, using exegetical material for details and to fill in gaps in the terse text. The authors demonstrated their broad range of Talmudic and midrashic knowledge, which they wove into the Biblical plot in an entertaining manner, introducing religious themes and doctrines into a vernacular literature. Addressing a wider audience, these texts exemplify the rise of popular religion, integrating engaging literary devices - pathos, suspense, and comedy - with an anti-Christian polemic.

Table 1: A Summary of the Comparison of the Literary Texts

	Shira fun Yitzkhak	*Akêdass Yizhak*
Date of Composition	1510	1570 (earliest manuscript)
Format	Prose	Poem
Length	87 Lines	80 four-line Stanzas and a one line postscript(longest of the seven extant texts)
Number of Extant Copies	1	7
Biblical Narrative Encompassed	Genesis 22:3-19	Genesis 22:1-19
Protagonist	Abraham	Isaac
Age of Isaac	30	Not mentioned
Role of Satan	Tries to thwart mission	Tries to thwart mission Comic Figure
Role of God	Speaks only once	Speaks eight times and to all characters. Active participant
Fate of Isaac	Dies, Michael resurrects	Raphael halts sacrifice

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Sectarian agendas pervade the works discussed. The authors added their theological views, polemics, extra-biblical invention, and chose as the protagonist of their texts Abraham, Isaac, or even included Sarah. The Catholic plays are the tersest of those examined. These texts use the Sacrifice of Isaac narrative solely for typologic purposes and manifest the least character development. The minimal extra-biblical invention of their authors serves strictly to further their typologic purpose.

The Reformation plays evidence a far greater degree of authorial invention. As per Luther's theology, typology recedes to the background in the Reformation texts, although it is never entirely eliminated. Authors create new characters and dialogue that aids in conveying the authorial message in a more entertaining manner, providing insight into the inner emotions of Abraham and Sarah. Sachs's Meisterlied is unique among the Reformation works examined, in that Sachs emphasizes the typologic aspect of the Sacrifice of Isaac over the tropologic.

The Yiddish texts utilize the Akedah to foreground the Biblical test of Abraham and his steadfast faith. They contain a greater wealth of extra-Biblical material, virtually all traceable to *midrash*. The exception to this is the appearance of the bear in the *Akêdass Yizhak* that offers comic relief. Notably,

this is the only instance of a light-hearted element in the texts examined. Further, Sachs, Greff, and the Yiddish authors relate their works and God's message to contemporary times, making the Biblical story relevant to their audience.

All authors depict Abraham as the epitome of faith, but the relative importance of Abraham and Isaac differs. Abraham is the protagonist of the *Shira fun Yitzkhak* and Greff's *Drey liebliche nützliche Historien der dreier Erzveter,* sharing that role with Isaac in *Der Sündenfall* and in Sachs's works. Unique to Sachs's Sacrifice of Isaac play is that Sarah is one of the protagonists, serving as a foil to Abraham . Only in the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel* and in the *Akêdass Yizhak* does Abraham recede to the background in favor of Isaac.

Emotional involvement and character development vary among the texts examined as well. In *Der Sündenfall,* neither patriarch displays emotion or character development. These facets are more evident in the *Heidelberger Passionsspiel.* There is yet more character development in Sachs's plays, delivered via the servants, the stage directions, and the argument of Abraham and Sarah. Sachs's Meisterlied is again unique in that Sachs depicts Abraham with deeper emotion and feelings of sadness than found in either Sachs's plays or the other Catholic texts. Abraham's depth of emotion is akin to that portrayed in Greff's work and in the Yiddish texts. Other than expressing his willingness to obey God.'s wishes, Isaac receives little character development in the Catholic and Reformation texts. He receives the greatest amount of character development in the Yiddish texts. Sarah does not appear in the Catholic plays or

in Greff's work. Uniquely, Sachs develops Sarah's character as a foil to Abraham, whereas in the Yiddish texts her steadfastness mirrors that of Abraham.

The Reformation and Jewish authors use their texts for polemical proposes, utilizing popular literary forms to reinforce an ongoing argument against the doctrines of competing religions. However, the polemical intent of the Jewish and Reformation texts differs. The Yiddish texts use an internally directed polemic against competing religious traditions. The polemic of the Reformation texts is intended to spread the tenets of the new faith, and, in the case of the introductory portions of Greff's work, is openly hostile to those of all other beliefs. The Catholic texts, however, manifest no polemical intent.

The rise of vernacular languages, print, and new cultural practices such as staging of vernacular plays, engendered new kinds of popular religious activity, yet still indebted to the official and established elite discourse. Spurred on by print culture, these texts facilitated new non-canonical modes of engaging with religious dogma through entertainment, and fostered new religious ideas and practices. The texts offered education as well as polemics to general audiences, thereby strengthening faith during a time of religious ferment and social and political instability.

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