Obedience unto Death: The Matthean Gethsemane and Arrest Sequence and the Aqedah

LEROY ANDREW HUIZENGA
Wheaton College
Wheaton, IL 60187

SCHOLARS GENERALLY INTERPRET the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence along three complementary lines. First, the sequence emphasizes Jesus' unwavering resolve to continue to the cross. Second, it functions as narrative paraenesis regarding nonviolence: Jesus obeys his own prior command forbidding resistance to violence (5:38-42) in his refusal of deliverance by the sword (26:52).[1] Third, it functions as negative apologetic: Jesus' refusal of mortal might and angelic aid refutes any idea that he was a brigand or magician.[2]

Having merit in and of themselves, these lines of interpretation cohere well with another function of the passage heretofore overlooked yet perceptible to readers sensitive to Matthean narrative dynamics and familiar with traditions of the Aqedah. By means of significant verbal allusions to Genesis 22, the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence evokes echoes of the Aqedah and thus presents Jesus as a new Isaac, who, like the Isaac of extrabiblical Jewish tradition, actively

[1] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr. (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* [3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1988-97] 3. 512) write, "it is not only Matthew's content which recalls the SM . . . the very vocabulary does this, for Matthew uses ἀποστρέφω only here and in 5.42."

[2] Daniel J. Harrington (*The Gospel of Matthew* [SacPag 1; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991] 377) writes, "Jesus rebukes his disciple for using his sword and states that he is no *lēstēs*. . . . By refusing to call upon his Father's twelve legions of angels . . . Jesus avoids doing what a *goēs* might promise. . . . In this way Matthew may well have been countering assessments of Jesus that were being offered by opponents of the Matthean community."

and willingly faces his sacrifice with unflinching courage. The sequence thus presents Jesus' obedience in a particular and not purely general way; emphasizes that his death was no mere murder but rather a sacrifice divinely ordained; provides a *telos* for Jesus' nonviolence; and functions as positive apologetic, filling the vacuum of identity left in the wake of the implicit denial that Jesus was a brigand or magician.

Indeed, the Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of ancient Jewish tradition resemble each other to a remarkable degree: both are promised children conceived under extraordinary circumstances, beloved sons who, for redemptive purposes, willingly face their sacrifices at the season of Passover in obedience to their respective fathers. Thus, when rightly read as a narrative with attention to its first-century C.E. cultural location, the Gospel of Matthew presents a significant Isaac typology.

I. The First-Century C.E. Currency of Aspects of the Aqedah

Many scholars neglect this connection, owing to the mistaken assumption that the intriguing developments in the tradition of the Aqedah emerged late. All major categories of the developing tradition (an active, willing Isaac; Passover associations; a connection with the Temple Mount; theophanic and apocalyptic development; and soteriological import) in fact emerged prior to the Common Era, but the vagaries of dating traditions contained in targumic and rabbinic texts have clouded the discussion. Many scholars feel that those who consider the Aqedah an early development (such as Geza Vermes or Robert J. Daly) commit substantial anachronism, foisting the substance of rabbinic and targumic presentations onto earlier texts.[3] Others find the essence of the Aqedah in those very texts. In an influential article in 1978, Philip R. Davies and Bruce D. Chilton contended that the Aqedah was an amoraic invention developed in response to Christian claims about Jesus, the *sine qua non* being expiation.[4] As many commentators have noted, their article contains much idiosyncratic dating and interpretation of various documents.[5] Most problematic, however, is their strict definition of "the Aqedah,"

[3] Geza Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis xxii," in *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies by Géza Vermès* (SPB 4; Leiden: Brill, 1961) 193-227; Robert J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBQ* 39 (1977) 45-75; idem, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

[4] Philip R. Davies and Bruce D. Chilton, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBQ* 40 (1978) 514-46.

[5] Robert Hayward, "The Present State of Research into the Targumic Account of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *JJS* 32 (1981) 127-50; idem, "The Sacrifice of Isaac and Jewish Polemic against Christianity," *CBQ* 52 (1990) 292-306; Geza Vermes, "New Light on the Sacrifice of Isaac from 4Q225," *JJS* 47 (1996) 140-46; Bruce N. Fisk, "Offering Isaac Again and Again: Pseudo-Philo's Use of the Aqedah as Intertext," *CBQ* 62 (2000) 481-507; Leroy Andrew Huizenga, "The Battle for Isaac: Exploring the Composition and Function of the *Aqedah* in the Book of *Jubilees,*" *JSP* 13 (2002) 33-59.

which has "the twin effects of overstressing atonement or expiation in the tradition and of denying the label 'Aqedah' to all but the latest, most developed stages of that tradition."[6] Thus, it is better to employ the term "Aqedah" as a convenient collective designation encompassing all its permutations. Further, the most significant aspect is neither expiation nor merit but rather Isaac's willingness to participate in his own slaughter, a development appearing not only prior to the rabbinic period but also prior to the emergence of that Jewish phenomenon called early Christianity.

Whereas in Genesis 22 Isaac is a passive figure, later tradents presented him as Abraham's equal in obedience and fortitude.[7] The earliest witness to such is 4Q225, dated between 150 B.C.E. and 20 C.E.[8] Fragment 2 ii.4 presents a willing Isaac: . . . אמר ישׂחק אל אביו כ (“Isaac said to his father, 'T[ie . . .]'”). Although a lacuna exists, all commentators concur that Isaac here consents to the sacrifice.[9] *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* reads, "Tie me well (כפת יתי יאות) so that I may not struggle" (Gen 22:10). *Targum Neofiti* also employs כפת here, as does *Gen. Rab.* 56:8: כפתני יפה יפה (“Tie me very well”). J. T. Milik and James C. VanderKam thus reconstruct the text of 4Q225 as [כ]פות אותי יפה (“Tie me well”).[10] Vermes proposes כפות את ידי (“Bind my hands”).[11] Although generally skeptical of claims that the Aqedah emerged early, on the basis of these later texts Joseph A. Fitzmyer agrees that the restoration of כפת is correct and thus concedes that 4Q225 "becomes important for the developing Jewish tradition, because it reveals an aspect of Isaac's cooperation with his own sacrificial death that figures often in Jewish writings of a later date."[12]

[6] Fisk, "Offering Isaac," 504.

[7] This was not raw innovation, for the phrase "the two walked on as one" (וילכו שניהם יחדו [Gen 22:6, 8]) suggests unity of purpose.

[8] James C. VanderKam and J. T. Milik (*Qumran Cave 4, VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* [ed. Harold W. Attridge and James C. VanderKam; DJD 13; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994] 141) write, "The attractive angular hand of the scribe belongs in the formal sequence and has traits that identify it as Herodian in date. . . . The script resembles the shapes traced by F. M. Cross in figure 2, lines 4-5 ('Scripts', 176)—texts which Cross dates to *c.* 30 BCE–20 CE." Vermes ("New Light," 140) dates it earlier: "The two other 'Pseudo-Jubilees' manuscripts, 4Q226 and 4Q227, the former partly overlapping with 4Q225, are placed by the editors to the second half of the first century B.C.E."

[9] VanderKam and Milik, *Qumran Cave 4, VIII,* 149-52; Vermes, "New Light"; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Qumran Literature," *Bib* 83 (2002) 211-29, here 218-19; and Florentino García Martínez, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in 4Q225," in *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretations* (ed. Edward Noort and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; Themes in Biblical Narrative 4; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002) 44-57, here 52-53.

[10] VanderKam and Milik, *Qumran Cave 4, VIII,* 151-52.

[11] Vermes, "New Light," 142. Referring simply to the "Targums," Vermes (ibid., n. 12) considers his reconstruction more likely than VanderKam and Milik's "since את + suffix is unattested in 4QJubilees and Ps. Jubilees."

[12] Fitzmyer, "Sacrifice," 219.

Further, in ii.6-8 the Aqedah is a test of Isaac's mettle precipitated by Mastema, who seeks to test whether "he [Isaac] would be found weak" and hesitate or indeed submit to the sacrifice and "perish," thus extinguishing "his sons from the earth."[13] Moreover, unlike Gen 22:17, which concerns the blessing of Abraham, 4Q225 emphasizes the blessing of Isaac: "God the Lord blessed Is[aac all the days of his life]" (ii.10). Isaac's genealogy follows. Finally, 4Q225 sets the Aqedah in the context of the Passover, as it presents verbal parallels that suggest that "it is dealing in a Jubilean way with several events that happened in the time of the Exodus from Egypt."[14]

Jubilees' early date (160–150 B.C.E.) makes it a crucial witness.[15] Although lacking a willing Isaac, *Jubilees* presents the Aqedah as a contest on Mount Zion between the Angel of the Presence and the demonic Prince Mastema, as the etiology of Passover and as narrative paraenesis in service of an exemplarist soteriology.[16]

Asserting that Abraham loves Isaac above all, Prince Mastema dares God to command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (*Jub.* 17:16).[17] Since the command is issued on the twelfth day of the first month and Abraham and his party travel for three days before Isaac's binding (18:3), the averted sacrifice on "Mount Zion" (18:13) transpires exactly at the time of the Passover ritual.[18] After arriving at Beersheba, Abraham observes a seven-day feast (18:18-19). The Aqedah has therefore become the etiology of Passover, the only seven-day feast in the Bible (Lev 23:6; Num 28:17). *Jubilees* also associates Passover and the Aqedah through verbal and theological parallels.[19] Abraham's festival involves "rejoicing" and "joy" (*Jub.*

[13] See Vermes, "New Light," 142 n. 14; Fitzmyer, "Sacrifice," 222; VanderKam, "The Aqedah, Jubilees, and PseudoJubilees," in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon; BIS 28; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 241-61, here 254-55.

[14] VanderKam, "Aqedah," 254.

[15] For dating, see James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 17-21.

[16] For an expanded treatment of what follows, see Huizenga, "Battle for Isaac." All translations are from O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," *OTP,* 2. 35-142.

[17] Thus, the onus for the directive shifts from God to Prince Mastema in an attempt to exculpate God from commanding child sacrifice, which *Jubilees* abhors (1:11b). Similarly, *Jubilees* substitutes Mastema for the LORD in its recounting of the strange threat to Moses at Midian (Exod 4:24-26; *Jub.* 48:2-4a). On the Jobian motifs, see J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, "Abraham, Job and the Book of *Jubilees:* The Intertextual Relationship of Genesis 22:1-19, Job 1–2:13, and *Jubilees* 17:15–18:19," in *Sacrifice of Isaac* (ed. Noort and Tigchelaar)*,* 58-85.

[18] In the OT, 2 Chr 3:1 connects the Aqedah with the Temple Mount. See Isaac Kalimi, "The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah, and the Site of Solomon's Temple in Biblical Historiography," *HTR* 83 (1990) 345-62.

[19] *Pace* Davies and Chilton ("Aqedah," 519), who assert that the claim that *Jubilees* ties the

18:18-19), the first Passover is "the beginning of joy" (49:2), and the yearly festival involves "rejoic[ing] before the LORD" (49:22). Prince Mastema is the Satan figure in each account (17:16; 18:9, 12; 48:2, 9) and the obedience of those delivered causes the angel to "stand" against Mastema (18:9; 48:13) and thus "shame" him (18:12; 49:12). *Jubilees,* however, does not attach to the Aqedah any conception of expiation or merit; rather, the actions of Abraham (not Isaac!) and the Israelites of the exodus generation function soteriologically as examples for later Israelites who would maintain covenant status.[20]

Prior to the emergence of Christianity, then, we find significant developments in the Aqedah, particularly an association with Passover and an emphasis on Isaac's willingness. Even if we lacked 4Q225, however, first-century texts such as Josephus's *Antiquities, Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum,* 4 Maccabees, and *First Clement* present a willing Isaac. Moreover, the certain but succinct references to Isaac's willingness in the latter three texts in particular confirm the antiquity and widespread cultural currency of the concept. Recent innovations require detailed presentation, but long-standing legends need only the slightest reference for their evocation. Isaac's willingness therein functions as a resource appropriated, not a novelty newly presented; an *explanans,* not an *explanatum.*

Josephus's vivid presentation in the *Antiquities* (ca. 95 C.E.; *A.J.* 1.13.1-4 §§ 222-36) could be considered his own innovation if we lacked other witnesses. The Aqedah is God's test of Abraham's piety (1.13.1 §223) and occurs on Mount Moriah (εἰς τὸ Μώριον ὄρος [1.13.1 §224]), "whereon king David afterwards erected the temple" (1.13.2 §226).[21] Isaac is an adult of twenty-five and asks his father about the sacrifice while erecting the altar himself (1.13.2 §227), Josephus thus skillfully depicting Isaac's involvement and foreshadowing his forthcoming consent. After Isaac completes the altar, Abraham tells him that he is to be sacrificed, encouraging him to "bear . . . this consecration valiantly" (1.13.3 §229), for one of uncommon birth should endure dramatic death (1.13.3 §§230-31). Being Abraham's resolute son, Isaac "received these words with joy" and "exclaimed that he deserved never to have been born at all, were he to reject the decision of God and of his father and not readily resign himself to what was the will of both, seeing that, were this the resolution of his father alone, it would have been impious to disobey" (1.13.4 §232). Isaac then throws himself upon the altar (ὥρμησεν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμόν), at which point God intervenes. Neither Isaac's binding nor Abra-

Aqedah to Passover "is based entirely on the coincidence of dating," the author wishing simply to provide general roots in ancestral times for later festivals.

[20] *Pace* Vermes ("Redemption," 215), who asserts, "The saving virtue of the Passover lamb proceeded from the merits of that first lamb, the son of Abraham, who offered himself upon the altar."

[21] All translations are from H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL 242.

ham's placing him on the altar finds mention, further emphasizing Isaac's willingness.[22] Josephus presents no conception of expiation or merit, however, in relation to the Aqedah.[23]

Lacking clear reference to the temple's destruction, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* probably dates prior to 70 C.E.[24] Even were *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* as late as 135 C.E., however, as Howard Jacobson suggests, the manner of its three presentations of Isaac's willingness reveals the antiquity and cultural currency of the concept.[25]

In rewriting the Balak episode, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* presents Balaam positively. Reluctant to curse the Israelites, he requests enlightenment (18:3-4). God informs Balaam of the promise to Abraham and states, "I demanded his son as a burnt offering and he brought him to be placed on the altar. But I gave him back to his father and, because he [Isaac] did not object, his [Isaac's] offering was acceptable before me, and in return for his [Isaac's] blood I chose them" (18:5).[26] The passage emphasizes Isaac's behavior. Since Isaac's blood is obviously at issue in the final instance, parallelism suggests that Isaac is meant in the prior two; Isaac "does not refuse" the sacrifice in 40:2 as here (*non contradixit* in both); Isaac explicitly assents in 32:3; and this reading "has the particular virtue of emphasizing Isaac's role, as the roles of Abraham and Jacob are emphasized in this passage."[27]

[22] Louis H. Feldman ("Josephus as a Biblical Interpreter: The 'Aqedah,'" *JQR* 75 [1985] 212-52, here 237) asserts that Josephus "avoided the implication that Isaac had to be tied, because, as the Rabbis (Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer 31) say, he might have shuddered at the sight of the knife and recoiled from the sacrifice, thus dishonoring his father and disobeying God, or because he might have struggled and thus rendered the sacrifice ritually unsuitable (Gen. Rabbah 56. 8). Unlike the Rabbis, who thus indicate that even the patriarchs were human enough to be tempted to disobey, Josephus, here as elsewhere, paints his heroes larger than life and in this case above temptation."

[23] *Pace* Vermes ("Redemption," 198), who claims, "the insistence on Isaac's merit . . . could not be more stressed"; and Daly (*Origins,* 48), who maintains that Josephus emphasizes not only the "obedient piety" but also the "meritorious achievement of the two heroes."

[24] Frederick James Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 6.

[25] Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's* Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: *with Latin Text and English Translation* (2 vols.; AGAJU 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 1. 199-210. The chief verse concerning dating is 19:7, which suggests a temple destruction on 17 Tammuz. Jacobson claims that the Bible assigns the destruction of the first temple to 9 Tammuz (Jer 39:2; 52:6; 2 Kgs 25:2-4) and other sources the destruction of the second to 17 Tammuz (e.g., *m. Taan.* 4.6); thus, 19:7 would provide a *terminus post quem* of 70 C.E.

[26] All translations are from Jacobson, *Commentary.* Most commentators understand Isaac as the antecedent of the several pronouns (*pace* Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah," 528).

[27] Jacobson, *Commentary,* 1. 583. "Then I [God] said to the angels of the service, 'Was it not of this man that I said, "I will reveal everything I am doing to Abraham [lacuna] . . . and of Jacob his son, the third one whom I called first-born [*primogenitum*], who, when he wrestled with the angel who was in charge of hymns, did not let go until he blessed him"'?" (18:5-6).

Deborah's song recounts Israel's history from Abraham's election to Sisera's defeat. Jealous angels precipitate Isaac's sacrifice, of which Abraham informs Isaac (*L.A.B.* 32:1b-2). Consenting, Isaac responds:

> Hear me, father. If a lamb of the flock is accepted as an offering to the Lord as an odor of sweetness and if for the sins of men animals are appointed to be killed, but man is designed to inherit the world, how is it that you do not say to me, "Come and inherit a secure life and time without measure"? What if I had not been born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me? Now my blessedness will be above that of all men, because there will be no other. Through me nations will be blessed and through me the peoples will understand that the Lord has deemed the soul of man worthy to be a sacrifice. (32:3)

The mention of "nations" (*generationes;* perhaps גוים or עמים in the *Vorlage*) and "peoples" (*populi*) is remarkable, for *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* is particularly negative toward Gentiles in Deborah's song.[28] In light of that, the phrase "there will be no other" (*non erit aliud*) is suggestive. The antecedent of *aliud* ("another") is *sacrificium* ("sacrifice") from Isaac's prior sentence ("to be offered as a *sacrificium* to him who made me?"). Davies and Chilton assert that the phrase reveals "the author's awareness of Christian claims concerning Christ's atonement as efficacious for all men,"[29] *generic* claims precipitating the amoraic invention of the Aqedah. Jacobson endorses this insight but with a significant twist: "We may well want to go further. This sounds like polemic against the Christian view that the sacrifice of Isaac was nothing more than a precursor of and model for the genuinely significant event that was the sacrifice of Jesus. . . . LAB seems to be saying, 'Isaac is the only case of human sacrifice recognized by God; there is no other (i.e. Jesus).'"[30]

Jacobson's suggestion devastates the Davies-Chilton thesis, for they maintain that *generic* Christian claims regarding Jesus' atonement occasioned the invention of the Aqedah. Rather, this passage demonstrates that the earliest Christians *appropriated* aspects of the already-existing Aqedah.[31] This appropriation was only natural, for the earliest Christians were indeed Jews and thus most likely familiar with such traditions prior to their acceptance and proclamation of Jesus as Messiah.

[28] For instance, "He chose our nation and took Abraham our father out of the fire and chose him over all his brothers" (32:1). Further, as in *Jubilees,* mixing with the nations (particularly exogamy) and idolatry are condemned (9:5; 18:13-14; 25:9-13; 34; 36:3; 38; 44).

[29] Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah," 526 n. 31.

[30] Jacobson, *Commentary,* 2. 867.

[31] This does not mean that *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* is late. Rather, it demonstrates that early Christians appropriated Jewish traditions of the Aqedah. Since earliest Christianity was a Jewish phenomenon and since radical interpretations of the Aqedah occurred early (e.g., *Jubilees* and 4Q225), *prima facie* the earliest Christians would have been familiar with those interpretations.

Jephthah's daughter Seila invokes the Aqedah in responding positively to her father's dreadful declaration: "Or have you forgotten what happened in the days of our fathers when the father placed the son as a burnt offering, and he did not dispute him (*et non contradixit ei*) but gladly gave consent to him, and the one being offered was ready and the one who was offering was rejoicing?" (*L.A.B.* 40:2). Seila's appropriation of the Aqedah emphasizes Isaac's role and thereby softens the story by rooting her impending immolation in patriarchal precedent. *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* assumes a willing Isaac; it does not present it as an innovation. The Aqedah here is a resource appropriated, demonstrating that the concept of an active, willing Isaac was long established with wide currency, without which it would lack rhetorical effectiveness. As regards expiation, Isaac's words in 32:3 are suggestive, but in 18:5 his blood secures election, not expiation.

4 Maccabees, likely composed prior to 72 C.E., employs Isaac as the paradigmatic martyr courageously confronting his sacrificial death with devout reason.[32] The narrator first mentions Isaac in praising Eleazar, who "by reason like that of Isaac (τῷ Ισακίῳ λογισμῷ) . . . rendered the many-headed rack ineffective" (7:13-14), implying that Isaac faced his holocaust with active courage.[33]

The narrator next draws on Isaac in recounting the brothers' mutual encouragement: "'Courage, brother!' said one, and another, 'Hold on nobly!' And another, recalling the past, said, 'Remember whence you came and at the hand of what father Isaac gave himself (ὑπέμεινεν, "endured") to be sacrificed for piety's sake'" (13:11-12). Given the indicative mood of the verb, the narrator may envision Isaac as having actually died (as perhaps also in 18:11: "Isaac, offered as a burnt offering" [τὸν ὁλοκαρπούμενον Ἰσαάκ]).

Isaac next finds mention in the report of the mother's exhortation to her sons to prefer death to transgression: "you owe it to God to endure all hardship for his sake, for whom our father Abraham ventured boldly to sacrifice his son Isaac, the father of our nation; and Isaac, seeing his father's hand, with knife in it, fall down against him, did not flinch" (16:19-20).

4 Maccabees, then, appropriates an active, willing Isaac as the paradigm of

[32] The author of 4 Maccabees views Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia as a single entity (4:2), but Syria and Cilicia were separated in 72 C.E. by Vespasian (Suetonius *Vesp.* 8.4). Thus, 4 Maccabees was composed prior to 72 C.E. See Elias Bickerman, "The Date of Fourth Maccabees," in idem, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (3 vols.; AGAJU 9; Leiden: Brill, 1976-86) 1. 275-81; and David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Sinaiticus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006) xiv-xvii. J. W. van Henten ("Datierung und Herkunft des Vierten Makkabäerbuches," in *Tradition and Re-Interpretation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Jürgen C. H. Lebram* [ed. J. W. van Henten, H. J. de Jonge, and Peter T. van Rooden; SPB 36; Leiden: Brill, 1986] 136-49) would date it post-100 C.E.

[33] All translations are from Hugh Anderson, "4 Maccabees: A New Translation and Introduction," *OTP,* 2. 544-64.

martyrdom. The manner of appropriation, as in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum,* reveals the antiquity and currency of the concept, for it functions as a resource, not an innovation. Further, since the martyrs' deaths are expiatory (6:27-29; 17:20-22), 4 Maccabees may invest the Aqedah with expiatory significance. As Alan Segal observes, "Martyrdom is associated with vicarious atonement, while Isaac is pre-eminent among the martyrs."[34]

Although often overlooked in literature dealing with the development of the Aqedah, *1 Clement* (dated ca. 95 C.E.) reveals that early Christians indeed knew and appropriated the Aqedah: "Isaac gladly allowed himself to be brought forward as a sacrifice, confident in the knowledge of what was about to happen" (Ἰσαὰκ μετὰ πεποιθήσεως γινώσκων τὸ μέλλον ἡδέως προσήγετο θυσία [31:3]).[35] Clement employs Isaac's conduct for wholly paraenetic purposes, adjuring his audience to "cling to his blessing and discern the paths that lead to it" (31:1), without making any christological use of the passage. Compare *Let. Barn.* 7:3 on this point, where Isaac's passive offering is explicitly presented as a type of Christ's.[36] This suggests that the concept of a willing Isaac was a fully Jewish datum that developed apart from any Christian reflection.

In sum, significant aspects of the Aqedah developed early, Isaac's willingness to participate in his sacrifice foremost among them. Certain later texts bearing witness to such features (the *Antiquities, Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum,* 4 Maccabees, and *1 Clement*) are not so far removed from the time of the Gospel of Matthew, and the manner of their presentations (save that of Josephus) reveals the antiquity and common currency of the concept of a willing Isaac, which, in any case, 4Q225 demonstrates was a pre-Christian development.

II. The Matthean Jesus and the Figure of Isaac

The Matthean Jesus resembles the Isaac of the aforementioned texts: each would die willingly in obedience to his father at the season of Passover for bene-

[34] Alan Segal, "The Akedah: Some Reconsiderations," in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; 3 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996) 1. 99-116, here 108.

[35] Trans. Bart Ehrman, LCL 24. Ehrman ("Introduction," in ibid., 1. 24-25) rejects the traditional rationale for dating *1 Clement* to 95–96 C.E. ("misfortunes and setbacks" in 1:1 referring to persecution under Domitian), but nevertheless accepts a date "sometime near the end of the first century, possibly, as traditionally thought, in the mid 90s during the reign of Domitian" in light of (1) references to the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul, described as "noble examples of our own generation" (5:1-7), (2) the assumption that certain leaders appointed by the apostles are still living (42; 44), and (3) the lack of reference to proto-orthodox hierarchical structures.

[36] "[The Lord] himself was about to offer the vessel of the Spirit as a sacrifice for our own sins, that the type might also be fulfilled that was set forth in Isaac, when he was offered upon the altar," ἵνα καὶ ὁ τύπος ὁ γενόμενος ἐπὶ Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ προσενεχθέντος ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τελεσθῇ (trans. Ehrman, LCL 25).

ficial purposes (variously conceived). Not only is Jesus' death reminiscent of Isaac's, however. Jesus' birth recalls Isaac's as well. In thematic terms, both figures are promised children conceived under irregular circumstances. In terms of syntax, Matt 1:20-21 contains a significant verbal allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX. God tells Abraham, Σαρρα ἡ γυνή σου τέξεταί σοι υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ισαακ ("Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you will call his name Isaac"). Similarly, the angel of the Lord instructs Joseph to take Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκά σου ("Mary as your wife"), for she is pregnant by the Spirit, and τέξεται δὲ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν ("and will bear a son, and you will call his name Jesus").[37]

Obedience unto death, however, is the chief thematic link that binds the figure of Isaac with the Matthean Jesus.[38] Jesus' obedience and teaching on obedience permeate the Gospel (cf. 3:13-17; 5:18-20; 7:15-23; 12:33-37, 46-50; 21:28-32, 43; 25:1-30, 31-46; 28:20), and the passion narrative in particular presents a decisive portrait of Jesus' unwavering obedience.[39] Jesus' obedience, however, is not mere passive resignation to his inevitable fate, as if his obedience consisted chiefly in an existential embrace of his inexorable suffering and death. Rather, Jesus actively orchestrates events to facilitate his sacrificial death, which emphasizes the radical nature of his obedience.

The structure of Matt 26:1-5 suggests that Jesus sets the plot against him in

[37] The NA[27] notes only the second half of the allusion in the margin, while ancient commentators noted the thematic parallels between Mary's virginity and Sarah's barrenness. See Ephrem Graecus, "Sermo in Abraham et Isaac," in *S. Ephraem Syri Opera* (ed. Silvio Joseph Mercati; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1915) 43-83, strophes 9-14; idem, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* (*PG* 56. 613); Ambrose *Isaac* 1.1 (*PL* 14. 527); and John Chrysostom *Hom. Gen.* 49.6-11 (*PG* 54. 445-46) and *Pecc.* 6-8 (*PG* 51. 359-60).

[38] Although the point of comparison lies chiefly in both Jesus' and Isaac's obedience in being willing to die, in some texts Isaac may be envisioned as having actually died (e.g., *L.A.B.* 18:5; 4 Macc 13:12; 18:11, as well as certain rabbinic texts involving Isaac's blood, ashes, or resurrection). See Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 180-81, 192-99; and Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice; The Akedah* (New York: Pantheon, 1967; repr., Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1993) 28-59.

[39] Donald Senior (*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1985] 164-66) speaks for the consensus of commentators when he writes, "At its most basic level, Matthew's passion story is a story of fidelity. . . . The proof of Jesus' fidelity and the final expression of his obedience to God's will is demonstrated in the passion. . . . Jesus' fidelity in the passion demonstrates that every fiber of his being is in harmony with God." So too Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959) 198: "Vor allem aber zeichnet sich die Passion des Matthäus, und nur sie, durch Momente höchster christologischer Bedeutsamkeit aus, die Jesus auch im Leiden als den mit Vollmacht ausgerüsteten Gottessohn zeigen, der seines Schicksals Herr ist." The Gospel of Matthew is not anomalous in this regard, as the obedience of Jesus Christ found significant emphasis in earliest Christianity (e.g., Phil 2:8).

motion. Jesus informs his disciples that he will be crucified at the Passover (v. 2). Only "then" (τότε [v. 3])—after Jesus predicts his passion—do the chief priests and the elders of the people gather and concoct their plot to murder Jesus apart from the feast in hopes of avoiding a riot (θόρυβος [vv. 3-5]). Further, Jesus' prediction comes true, while the conspirators' plot fails in its details, as they do indeed have Jesus executed during the feast, nearly precipitating a riot (θόρυβος [27:24]).

Although the disciples' inquiry about the location for his eating of the Passover (26:17) leaves little time for arrangements, coming just hours before the meal, Jesus simply commands them to locate a "certain man" and directly inform him, "The Teacher says, 'My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples'" (26:18).[40] At the supper, Jesus' revelation of his imminent betrayal and the identity of his betrayer (26:21-25) displays his obedience to his sacrificial commission and control of events; he proceeds apace with the institution of the ritual with severe indifference to the traitor's presence (26:26-29).

At his trial Jesus deliberately seals his own fate. Birger Gerhardsson notes that with his initial laconic response to the high priest's question ("You say so," σὺ εἶπας [26:64]), Jesus "has extricated himself from the High Priest's snare" and thus remains free. Obedient to his Father's will, however, Jesus throws himself not on the mercy but on the judgment of the court:

> But just at this point he takes the initiative himself and says something that he was not forced to say. With spontaneity and sovereignty he allows his evasive answer to be followed by bold words of confession: "But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven." He thus presents to the High Priest better weapons than he could have dreamed of. Jesus can now be condemned on the basis of his own confession before the members of the Council. There is no further need of witnesses.[41]

Finally, the crucifixion testifies to Jesus' obedience and willingness to undergo sacrificial death, as the Matthean Jesus did indeed possess the power to descend from the cross: would nails suffice to hold fast the one who has shown himself master over sickness, demons, and nature (cf. 8:16; 14:13-33)? Donald Senior writes:

> Matthew clearly makes this issue of "fidelity" a major motif of the concluding scenes of the passion. As he hangs on the cross Jesus is once more "tempted" by a procession of taunters: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." (27:40). "He trusts in God, let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (27:43). But just as Jesus had rejected the attempts of Satan to turn him aside

[40] The parallel in Mark 14:14 and Luke 22:11 is softer, phrased as a question: ". . . say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks [Luke adds 'you'], "Where is my [Luke: 'the'] guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'"

[41] Birger Gerhardsson, "Confession and Denial before Men: Observations on Matt 26:57–27:2," *JSNT* 13 (1981) 46-66, here 57.

from the way of fidelity so Jesus' silent commitment to the cross turns back the taunts of his opponents.[42]

Prior to the passion narrative, Jesus' obedience is prominent in three loci involving allusions to Genesis 22 LXX. The first two, the heavenly voices at the baptism and transfiguration, present more significant syntactical parallelism with Genesis 22 than is often noticed or granted. In each instance the voice deems Jesus ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ("my beloved Son" [Matt 3:17; 17:5]), whereas Genesis 22 uses the same words with reference to Isaac ("your beloved son," τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν [v. 2; genitives in vv. 12, 16]). Five words match in precise sequence, not merely ἀγαπητός ("beloved"), a fact obscured when scholars find a dubious reference to Ps 2:7 in ὁ υἱός μου ("my . . . Son"). Further, the baptismal voice comes ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν ("from the heavens"), while in Gen 22:11 and 15 the angel of the Lord speaks ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ("from heaven").

Both passages concern Jesus' obedience. The baptism contrasts Jesus' obedience (Matt 3:13-17) with the Pharisees' hypocrisy (3:7-12) and is tied to the temptation (4:1-11), in which Jesus' obedience is sorely tested. The transfiguration is tied to Peter's confession and rebuke at Caesarea Philippi in a sort of double diptych (16:13-28), suggesting that the heavenly voice (17:5), the structural and thematic center of the Matthean transfiguration (17:1-8), concerns the passion prediction of 16:21 and thus Jesus' obedience to go his way to sacrificial death.

The third locus is the appearance of ὁ ἀγαπητός μου in the formula citation of Isa 42:1-4 in Matt 12:18-21, another passage emphasizing Jesus' obedience: Jesus is obedient like Isaac, contrasted with the Pharisees, who in chap. 12 confront Jesus, ascribe his works to Beelzebul, and seek to kill him, God's chosen.[43]

One therefore finds not only significant thematic correspondence between the Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of Jewish tradition but also shared syntax in significant passages. That the Gospel of Matthew contains allusions to Isaac material in the LXX is not surprising. The Gospel's very composition in Greek suggests readers and auditors familiar with Greek texts and is itself "stark durch die LXX bestimmt," the author likely knowing the OT in Greek from the context of worship.[44] Further, these verbal allusions need not necessarily evoke simple echoes

[42] Senior, *Passion,* 165. Ulrich Luz (*The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* [NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995] 136) similarly writes, "The high priests join in the mockery of Jesus, as do a number of random bystanders and the rebels crucified with him. They mock him in the same way that evil figures in the Bible mock men of righteousness (cf. Psalm 22:7-9; Pss. Sol. 2:18). But the man of righteousness—God's Son, Jesus—chooses not to descend from the cross, remaining instead obedient to God's will (27:38-43)."

[43] See Leroy Andrew Huizenga, "The Incarnation of the Servant: Matthean Christology and the Suffering Servant," *HBT* 27 (2005) 25-58.

[44] Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (4 vols.; EKKNT 1; Düsseldorf/Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985-2002) 1. 53 (emphasis removed), 193. So

of the "plain meaning" of Genesis 17 and 22 but rather echoes of the legends of Isaac known to the reader when warranted by thematic coherence. No text is an island; a text is first composed and received within a particular culture and thus calls for the reader's actualization of certain cultural phenomena for its proper interpretation.

The nature of the Gospel of Matthew suggests an assumed, implied, or model reader familiar with such extrabiblical legends. As James A. Sanders observes, "One must often rummage around in the Targums, midrashim, and Jewish commentaries to see how to learn how a passage of Scripture functioned for Matthew. He was sometimes dependent on a particular interpretation or understanding of a passage of Scripture: indeed, he would have had that interpretation in mind even as he read or cited a text."[45] Thus, the reader of the Gospel of Matthew would likely be familiar with various aspects of the Aqedah present in the Jewish cultural encyclopedia, have them in mind when prompted by a verbal allusion to consider them, and consider which aspects to actualize and which to leave narcotized on the basis of the thematic concerns of the narrative context.[46]

III. Patriarchal Typologies and the Matthean Gethsemane and Arrest Sequence

In light of the prior allusions to and echoes of Isaac, the reader is not surprised to find similar allusions and echoes in the Gethsemane and arrest sequence, especially since both the Aqedah and the sequence concern the obedience of a beloved son.

The Gethsemane scene contains two allusions to Genesis 22. In Matt 26:36 Jesus tells his inner circle, καθίσατε αὐτοῦ ἕως [οὗ] ἀπελθὼν ἐκεῖ προσεύξωμαι ("Sit here while I go over there and pray"). In Gen 22:5 Abraham says to his servants, καθίσατε αὐτοῦ . . . διελευσόμεθα ἕως ὧδε καὶ προσκυνήσαντες ("Sit here . . . [we] will go over there and worship"). Since the adverbial αὐτοῦ is rare in the NT, occurring only three times, all in Luke-Acts (Luke 9:27; Acts 18:19; 21:4; and

too Dale C. Allison, Jr. ("Anticipating the Passion: The Literary Reach of Matthew 26:47–27:56," *CBQ* 56 [1994] 701-14, here 703): "I assume that our Gospel [Matthew] was written for repeated use in an oral setting which also featured Scriptural readings from the LXX."

[45] James A. Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 14-25, here 16.

[46] Readers of the present article will note that I am employing Umberto Eco's eclectic, narrative-oriented, text-centered theory of the Model Reader. See Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979); idem, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); and idem, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

thus not in the Marcan parallel of 14:32, which has ὧδε), the reader finds the allusion striking.[47] Further, Jesus adjures his inner circle to watch and pray ἵνα μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν ("that you may not come into testing" [Matt 26:41]), while God ἐπείραζεν ("tested" [Gen 22:1]) Abraham. Both Gethsemane and the Aqedah are times of testing.

The account of the arrest likewise presents significant syntactical parallelism with Genesis 22. Most remarkable is the phrase μετὰ μαχαιρῶν καὶ ξύλων ("with swords and clubs") found in both Matt 26:47 and 55. In Gen 22:6 and 10 we find μάχαιρα ("knife"), while in Gen 22:3, 6, 7, and 9 we find ξύλα ("wood"). Only in Genesis 22 and the Synoptic accounts of the arrest are these nouns found in such close collocation; although translated differently in English versions of Matt 26:47-56 and Genesis 22, in both passages they are instruments of violent death.[48] Further, in Matt 26:50, after Judas greets Jesus, the crowd ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ("laid hands on Jesus"), while the angel in Gen 22:12 instructs Abraham, μὴ ἐπιβάλῃς τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπὶ τὸ παιδάριον ("do not lay your hand on the boy [i.e., Isaac]"). Finally, in Matt 26:51 a nameless disciple ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἀπέσπασεν τὴν μάχαιραν αὐτοῦ ("stretched forth his hand to draw his sword"), while Gen 22:10 relates that ἐξέτεινεν Αβρααμ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ λαβεῖν τὴν μάχαιραν ("Abraham stretched forth his hand to take the knife") to slay Isaac.

These intriguing verbal parallels are too strong to be merely fortuitous. The reader finds a high degree of explicit verbal correspondence; Genesis 22 is a prominent precursor text in Israel's Scripture; the Aqedah was a prominent precursor tradition in the Jewish cultural encyclopedia; and the Gospel of Matthew has already alluded to Isaac several times.[49] It is not sufficient, however, simply to

[47] It appears also in textual variants in Mark 6:33 and Acts 15:34.

[48] Both nouns μάχαιρα and ξύλον appear in Ezek 31:18, but there they are the "trees of splendor" (μετὰ τῶν ξύλων τῆς τρυφῆς), while Pharaoh and his multitude lie "with those wounded by the sword" (μετὰ τραυματιῶν μαχαίρας).

[49] See Richard B. Hays's criteria for evaluating allusions detailed in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 25-33. Coming from a biblical scholar conversant with literary theory, Hays's criteria have proven especially helpful and remain so today. Scholars from the realm of literary studies have proffered fundamentally similar criteria and methods: see Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976) 105-28; Carmela Perri, "On Alluding," *Poetics* 7 (1978) 289-307; Claes Schaar, "Linear Sequence, Spatial Structure, Complex Sign, and Vertical Context System," *Poetics* 7 (1978) 377-88; Hays's inspiration, John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); and Gian Biago Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 44; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). Unlike Hays, however, I view the difference between allusion and echo as one of kind, not degree: allusions are verbal patterns from a prior text that produce echoes not only of the "plain meaning" of that text but also of traditions attached to it in the culture at large as warranted by the alluding text. See Leroy Andrew Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew* (NovTSup; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

identify and catalogue verbal parallels, to hunt for sources and influences while neglecting interpretive synthesis. How might the reader make coherent sense of these data? Why does Jesus speak Abraham's words if he is likened to Isaac? What does the crowd with its swords and clubs have to do with Abraham's sacrificial implements? Aware of the picture of the Isaac of extrabiblical tradition, the Matthean emphasis on obedience, and the Matthean apocalyptic outlook, the reader perceives creative and ironic thematic parallels between Abraham, his sacrificial implements of knife and wood, and Isaac, on one hand, and God, the crowd with its deadly implements of swords and clubs, and Jesus, on the other.

The willing obedience of Jesus in Gethsemane to endure sacrificial death reflects Isaac's willing obedience at the Aqedah. In Gethsemane, the Matthean Jesus displays absolute fidelity to his Father's will and does not struggle with his vocation. As W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., write, "[Jesus'] course is fixed by the will of God, and this overrides whatever beliefs or feelings he has about death, so there is no real resistance. For Jesus the issue is not death but submission to the divine will: 'Thy will be done.'"[50] Whereas the Marcan Jesus is ultimately obedient, the Marcan version emphasizes Jesus' severe distress (14:34) and his prayer to have the cup removed ("And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him" [14:35]) as well as the disciples' failure to keep watch in the hour (14:37-38, 40-41; cf. 13:32-37). The Matthean Jesus, in contrast, is focused chiefly on the divine will, not on the possibility that the cup may pass: "And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; *yet not what I want but what you want*'" (26:39). The second prayer is similar: "Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done'" (26:42). The text simply notes that the content of the third prayer is identical: "So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words" (26:44). There is thus no progression in Jesus' prayers, no existential struggle; unlike Mark's version, the third prayer is not the resolution of Jesus' struggle, but rather the narrator's simple laconic statement.[51] The Matthean Jesus thus affirms and readily submits to the divine will three times in Gethsemane.

Having thrice declared his submission, Jesus then goes to meet Judas and his party with deliberation: "Rise, let us go (ἄγωμεν). The one who betrays me has come near" (Matt 26:46). Jesus rises not to flee but to confront: ἄγωμεν connotes

[50] Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew,* 3. 502. See also R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 211-15.

[51] See Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew,* 3. 498; and Margaret E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (NTTS 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 67-70.

decisive approach (cf. 21:2), not withdrawal or retreat, for which the Gospel regularly employs ἀναχωρέω (2:12, 13, 14, 22; 4:12; 12:15; 14:13; 15:21; cf. also 9:24 and 27:5), thus displaying Jesus' willingness to submit to the divine will he had thrice affirmed.

Noting the verbal allusions to Genesis 22 in the Gethsemane scene, Davies and Allison raise the issue of thematic parallels: "Is Matthew suggesting a parallel between Abraham's faith and Jesus' faith? or between Isaac's sacrifice and Jesus' sacrifice?" Without choosing either option, they continue: "This [*sic*] is a real possibility. In addition to the parallels of wording and content just noted we observe that both Abraham and Jesus take along three people, that Abraham and Isaac separate themselves from others for worship or prayer, that both episodes are set on a mountain, and that each involves a trial,"[52] thus suggesting that the scene does connect Jesus with either Abraham or Isaac in some vague way. They offer no integrative, systematic interpretation, however.

Were one to choose, Abraham might seem the logical option, since Jesus' command, καθίσατε αὐτοῦ, matches Abraham's (Matt 26:36//Gen 22:5). The following considerations, however, suggest that Jesus the Son is compared to Isaac the son and God the Father to Abraham the father. First, the Gospel has designated Jesus as the beloved Son twice (Matt 3:17 and 17:5, as well as "Son" passim and "my beloved" in 12:18), thus equating him with Isaac. Second, Gethsemane concerns Jesus' death, as the Aqedah concerns Isaac's death. Third, in Gethsemane God is silently present with Jesus by virtue of Jesus' prayer to his Father (Matt 26:39, 42, 44), as Abraham is present with Isaac. Fourth, both Gethsemane and the Aqedah concern the sons' willingness to obey their respective fathers and endure sacrifice. Fifth, since Isaac's willingness and obedience were understood as identical to Abraham's at the Aqedah, Jesus can speak Abraham's words here in Gethsemane as a new Isaac. Therefore, Jesus' words καθίσατε αὐτοῦ allude to Gen 22:5 and produce an echo of a willing Isaac. In the same way, Gethsemane is Jesus' test (πειρασμός [Matt 26:41]) as the Aqedah is a test of Isaac in the tradition, even though Genesis 22 states that God tests Abraham.[53]

At the arrest, Jesus follows through on the commitment he declared in Gethsemane. He obeys his Father's will and voluntarily goes forward with the passion, eschewing the angelic aid and mortal might that would save him from death (Matt 26:52-53). Judas and a large crowd approach, armed with swords and clubs, μετὰ μαχαιρῶν καὶ ξύλων, or, perhaps better, with knives and pieces of wood for their unwitting sacrificial offering of Jesus (26:47). The reader is informed that Judas had told the crowd, "The one I shall kiss is the man; arrest him" (26:48); Judas's

[52] Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew,* 3. 494.

[53] In Matt 26:41, the issue is not temptation in general, but rather the specific test at hand, for Peter's and the disciples' sleeping in Gethsemane precisely parallels the predictions of scandal and denial immediately preceding the Gethsemane scene in 26:31-35.

plan is that the kiss should precipitate Jesus' immediate arrest. Judas addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" (a negative term in Matthew; cf. 23:7-8; 26:25) and kisses him (26:49). Before the crowd can act on the signal and move in to arrest Jesus, however, Jesus interjects and addresses Judas as ἑταῖρος ("friend," also a negative term; cf. 20:13; 22:12) and says to him, ἐφ᾽ ὅ πάρει (26:50a). The phrase is difficult; given Jesus' control of events throughout the passion narrative, it likely possesses the import of "Friend, now do that for which you are here."[54]

In responding to Judas in this way, Jesus has interrupted Judas's proposed plan. Jesus has seized control of events. Only "then"—τότε—after Jesus gives the go-ahead, as it were, can the crowd lay hands on him and arrest him (τότε προσελθόντες ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἐκράτησαν αὐτόν [26:50b]), as Abraham would have laid hands on his son Isaac (Gen 22:12). The τότε is significant; as in Matt 26:1-5, it is only after Jesus declares what will be, only after Jesus grants permission, that his enemies can act. Far more than merely accepting his fate, Jesus directly contributes to the execution of the divine plan, his sacrificial death.

The crowd who lays hands on Jesus to bring about his slaughter wields swords and clubs; Abraham would have laid hands on Isaac to slaughter him with the sacrificial implements of the knife and wood. Detecting thematic coherence here depends on an awareness of the Gospel's thoroughgoing apocalypticism, particularly the idea that all events, even those done by God's human and satanic enemies, are ultimately under God's control, serving God's purposes.[55] In accord with this, the death of Jesus is a function both of the conspiracy of his human enemies (cf. 12:14 and 26:3-4), who stand under Satan's rule (12:34), and of the will of God the Father, as Matthew's Gospel emphasizes the divine necessity of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection and its sacrificial nature in loci such as Jesus' passion predictions (16:21; 17:12, 22-23; 20:17-19; 26:1-2), the saying about the Son of Man giving his life as a ransom (20:28), and the words over the cup in the Last Supper (26:28).[56]

Thus, since the death of Jesus is an act of God in the Gospel, and since in the Gospel's apocalyptic worldview all things, including the actions of the crowd, are ultimately God's doing, God as Father of Jesus the beloved Son in effect wields the crowd with its μάχαιραι and ξύλα ("swords and clubs") to bring about Jesus' sacrificial death in the same way Abraham the father of Isaac the beloved son wielded the μάχαιρα and ξύλα ("knife" and "wood") to bring about Isaac's sacrificial death. The reader thus perceives the following parallels:

[54] Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew,* 3. 509-10, following the reading of Latin codex Armachanus (*fac ad quod venisti*).

[55] Consider Matt 4:1, in which the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, and the Lord's Prayer, which in 6:13 implies that diabolic testing is subject to God's control.

[56] The dynamic is captured succinctly in Matt 26:24a: "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"

Genesis 22/Aqedah	*Matthean Gethsemane-Arrest Sequence*
Abraham	God
Knife and wood	Crowd with swords and clubs
Isaac	Jesus

One of those with Jesus, however, threatens to derail the divine plan, a disciple who has apparently ignored the Sermon on the Mount (5:38-48) and the several passion predictions: stretching forth his hand (ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα), he grasps his sword (τὴν μάχαιραν) and attacks the servant of the high priest (26:51). Whereas Abraham stretched forth his hand (ἐξέτεινεν . . . τὴν χεῖρα) to take his knife (τὴν μάχαιραν) to slay his son (Gen 22:10), this disciple does so to slay a hapless servant. Had the disciple paid attention to the passion prediction immediately *preceding* the transfiguration (Matt 16:21), the voice evoking the Aqedah *at* the transfiguration (17:5, "this is my beloved Son"), and Jesus' words concerning his coming suffering *subsequent* to the transfiguration (17:12), he would have known that the beloved Son Jesus must endure sacrificial death like the beloved son Isaac.[57] Hearing echoes of the Aqedah here in Matt 26:51 involves high irony: Abraham's action would fulfill the will of God, while this disciple's would thwart it.

Having resolved to endure his sacrificial death, however, Jesus again seizes control simply by speaking, the narrator introducing his words with the significant τότε: "Then (τότε) Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword'" (26:52). Jesus next reveals how utterly ironic and misguided the nameless disciple's attack was; were he only to ask his Father, he would be able (δύναμαι) to obtain more than twelve legions of angels who stand ready to rescue him (26:53). As in 4:6-7, however, Jesus refuses angelic aid; his death is perfectly voluntary and he is in total control. One must not overlook this: in the narrative world of the Gospel, the angels are real. As in 4:11, they stand ready to serve and aid him. As Nils A. Dahl notes, "The hearer of Matthew's story hardly doubts for a moment that twelve legions of angels would have been at the disposal of Jesus the Christ if he had prayed for them. But that was a moral impossibility (26:53; cf. 26:61, *dynamai,* 'I am able')."[58]

Thus, Jesus readily submits to his sacrificial death. He does not merely submit to an inevitable death with psychological courage and resignation. Rather, like the Maccabean martyrs, Jesus could indeed avoid death, but, because of his obedience to God, he nevertheless chooses it of his own free accord and even orchestrates events to secure it. Its inevitability lies not in a murderous human conspiracy

[57] In Matt 17:6, all the disciples hear the heavenly voice, not only Peter, James, and John.

[58] Nils A. Dahl, "The Passion Narrative in Matthew," in idem, *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976) 37-51, here 44.

nor solely in the inscrutable will of God, but in Jesus' iron determination to obey his Father in sacrifice.

Jesus explains to the violent disciple the scriptural necessity of his suffering, death, and resurrection: "But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way? (ὅτι οὕτως δεῖ γενέσθαι)" (26:54). The δεῖ here recalls the passion prediction in 16:21 (". . . that it is necessary [ὅτι δεῖ αὐτόν] for him to . . . suffer many things . . . and be killed and be raised on the third day"), implying that the scriptural necessity of 26:54 concerns Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus' closing words, that "all this (τοῦτο . . . ὅλον) has taken place so that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (26:56), also imply that Jesus' death is a divine necessity. In light of the role of the Aqedah in the passage, the Scriptures include Genesis 22.[59]

Jesus addresses the crowds "in that hour" (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ [Matt 26:55]), recalling his words in 26:45 regarding "the hour" (ἡ ὥρα) in which the Son of Man is handed over into the hands of sinners. Jesus implies that he is not a brigand, a λῃστής (although he will be crucified between two [27:38, 44]), and notes that even though he sat in the temple teaching by day (καθ' ἡμέραν), they did not then seize him. Jesus' words imply that the swords and clubs are unnecessary, that he is hiding from no one and fearing no one, that he is prepared to endure his divinely ordained sacrificial death voluntarily in obedience. In this way the Matthean Jesus fulfills the typology of the Aqedah.

IV. Conclusions

Prior to the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence, the reader has encountered several suggestive verbal and thematic parallels between Isaac and Jesus that

[59] Possibilities for the referent of "the scriptures" in Matt 26:54 and 56 include the Scriptures in general; Ps 41:10 (40:10 LXX; Eng. 41:9); Isa 53:12; and Zech 13:7. In light of the role of Isaac in the passage and throughout the Gospel, however, Genesis 22 is also a serious option. Although Matt 26:56 speaks specifically of "the scriptures of the prophets" (αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν) and Genesis 22 is not a prophetic text per se, the Law and the Prophets are given as a unity four times in the Gospel (5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40). In 7:12 the Law and the Prophets are summed up together as one under the rubric of the so-called golden rule. Similarly, Jesus links the Law and the Prophets in 22:40 even though he was questioned specifically about the Law (22:36). Moreover, Jesus presents the Law itself as something to be fulfilled (5:17) and states that the Law itself prophesies ("For all the prophets *and the Law* prophesied until John came" [11:13]). The Law therefore has the character of prophecy, not surprising in light of the oracular view of Scripture the Gospel evinces. John P. Meier (*The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* [Theological Inquiries; New York: Paulist, 1979] 228) writes, "[W]hen we say that Matthew interprets the Law in analogy with prophecy, we do not simply mean that Matthew stresses the prophets' message of mercy and compassion. . . . Matthew gives the Law a prophetic function which is tied to a definite period of salvation-history, a function which is superannuated by the coming of the Fulfiller."

concern not only their deaths but even their very births. The entire life of the Matthean Jesus, then, unfolds in the shadow of Isaac. The reader is thus not surprised to find that the Gethsemane and arrest sequence contains conspicuous verbal allusions to Genesis 22. On the basis of the thematic concern of the passage, namely, Jesus' obedience to endure his sacrificial death, the reader sees in Jesus a new Isaac, who, in postbiblical but pre-Christian tradition, was also a willing, active, and obedient participant in his sacrifice. Indeed, the typology encompasses the figures of God and Abraham as well: Abraham endeavors to slay his willing beloved son Isaac, wielding the sacrificial implements of the knife and wood, while God the Father endeavors to slay his willing beloved Son, Jesus, figuratively wielding the crowd with its implements of swords and clubs.

The Aqedah thus plays a major role in the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence. It emphasizes Jesus' general obedience by appropriating a specific type; reveals that his death resulted from obedience to the divine plan, not a mere human conspiracy; gives his sacrifice as a rationale for his nonviolence; and functions as positive apologetic. The subtle mechanism of allusion increasing its very force,[60] the passage powerfully demonstrates more than that Jesus is not brigand nor magician nor coward. Jesus is in fact cut from the same cloth as Isaac, who faced his sacrificial death with incomparable obedience and courage.

[60] Certain ancients regarded allusion as more rhetorically effective than overt statement. Demetrius (*On Style* 287-88; trans. Doreen C. Innes; LCL 199) reminds us that "genuine allusive innuendo is expressed with these two safeguards, tact and circumspection," the result being that "the passage seems far more forceful because the force is produced by the fact itself and not by an authorial comment." Longinus (*On the Sublime* 16, trans. W. H. Fyfe, rev. Donald Russell; LCL 199) asserts that Demosthenes' allusion to Marathon "transformed a demonstrative argument into a passage of transcendent sublimity and emotion, giving it the power and conviction that lies in so strange and startling an oath."