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ARTICLE

Wood of Sacrifice and Wood of the Cross: The Aqedah in Judaism and Christianity

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Abstract
This article explores the figure of Isaac and the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham in both Judaism and Christianity. First through a broad exploration and then through an in-depth analysis of two influential thinkers—St. Augustine and Rashi—this paper will explore how the concept of the Aqedah came to be understood by each religious tradition and ultimately demonstrate how both Judaism and Christianity grappled with and integrated the Aqedah into their own traditions. By drawing on a variety of sources throughout the first several centuries of the growing division between Judaism and Christianity, this article argues that both religions were engaged in a broad exchange of ideas about shared, foundational religious figures and a seminal historical moment that came to be interpreted as a more encompassing systematic symbol. Though this exchange was often polemical, by highlighting the centrality of shared religious motifs and re-examining them through a modern lens, this article hopes to provide an academic perspective in the pursuit of building a shared tradition of scriptural study, ultimately providing direction and inspiration for modern Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Keywords
Aqedah, Judaism in antiquity, Rashi, St. Augustine, Second Temple, parting of the ways

Introduction

After the death of Jesus Christ, Christianity did not automatically become its own religion, though it can be easy to skip over the intervening centuries. In reality, during the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity from the first-century religious milieu, both religions canonized their works of scripture and cemented their religious praxis—often through violence or unintentional collaboration—in contrast to the "other." The division was neither immediate nor clear; on the contrary, the two religions separated over centuries, often influencing each other in the process.[1] The results of these influences can still be isolated and identified today.

By primarily examining significant interpretations of the Aqedah, this article will demonstrate how the two traditions examined the story of Isaac's sacrifice and over time developed interpretations of the same story that supported religion-specific needs. While this article does not attempt to directly trace the provenance of these interpretations, it does show that both religions were engaged with motifs that developed over time in a way that can seem parallel. They were operating in the same milieu and responding to similar pressures.

This article is a development of the kind of scholarship about the "parting of the ways" that can be found most predominantly in two works. The first is Daniel Boyarin's *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* and the second is James Dunn's work *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity.* Similar to Boyarin's argument that the development of Logos Christology can be seen as parallel to Judaism's Memra theology, I argue that the development of the Aqedah interpretations in both religions are parallel.[2] The purpose of this article is to continue adding to the body of work that Dunn articulates in the preface to the second edition of his book *The Parting of the Ways*. Dunn writes:

> [A] principal part of my endeavor was to demonstrate the common roots in first-century or late-second Temple Judaism shared by both Christianity and rabbinic Judaism, in the hope that a fuller appreciation of our common heritage would help forward the process of mutual understanding

1 For more on the "parting of the ways," see for example James D.G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (SCM Press, 2000), 301–37 and Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1–86.

2 Boyarin, "The Crucifixion of the Memra: How the Logos Became Christian," in *Border Lines,* 128–47.

> and genuine dialogue […] My [Dunn's] concern was, and still is, that Christians should realize the extent to which Christianity has been shaped by its Jewish heritage […] and how that Jewishness of Christianity continues to be integral to its identity.

While Dunn is writing primarily about the Jewishness of Christianity, this article expands on that and looks at how both religions influenced each other as they developed in the same milieu. While not focusing on the provenance of the specific motifs and interpretations, the fact that similar motifs can be found in both religions in a variety of sources is an example of what could be called creative hermeneutics. David Burrell introduces this concept in his work *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology*. Burrell writes that "conceptual patterns, often developed separately, can illuminate one another once we see them as executing cognate explorations. This approach reflects the fresh face of interfaith inquiry."[3]

By expanding upon Boyarin's focused study of the parallel development of the Christian logos and the Jewish Memra, using Burrell's "creative hermeneutics" and following the path initially envisioned by Dunn, this article advances Jewish-Christian dialogue and adds to the growing scholarly consensus about the porous borders that separated "Judaism" and "Christianity" in the centuries immediately following the death of Jesus and the destruction of the Second Temple.[4] Authors like Boyarin and Dunn have already convincingly laid out arguments for the porous nature of the two religions. The communities most likely lived together and continued to share worship practices including keeping traditional dietary laws; it would not be for several centuries that the communities would separate.

As each religious tradition sought to distinguish itself from the other, defining itself in opposition to the other, stubbornly persistent (and pernicious) ideas about entrenched separation of the two religions took

3 David Burrell, *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2011), xii.

4 The research for this article was greatly inspired by a course on the Aqedah given by Professor Massimo Gargiulo at the Cardinal Bea Centre for Judaic Studies (Massimo Gargiulo, "Dalla legatura di Isacco alla croce di Cristo: il sacrificio del figlio nell'esegesi ebraica e cristiana" [course EC2044, The Cardinal Bea Centre for Judaic Studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy, October 2019–January 2020]). My thanks to Professor Gargiulo for his feedback on initial drafts of this article.

root, such as supersessionism[5] from the Christian perspective (necessarily separating and putting Christians above Jews) and the Medieval halakhic rules mandating Jewish separation from the idolatrous Christian communities (enforcing physical, as well as religious, separation).[6] By re-examining these initial stages to find correlating patterns of exegesis, can we re-imagine a future of Jewish-Christian dialogue rooted in scriptural companionship?

Themes Within the Aqedah in Jewish-Christian History

The nature of the "Jewish" and "Christian" communities that begin the exchange of analysis focused on Genesis 22 is not easily categorized. Karin Zetterholm argues that instead of looking at the first-century communities as "Jewish" and "Christian," one should instead differentiate among Jewish communities: one more rabbinically inclined, and the other "Jesus-centered."[7] Zetterholm builds on the framework of the "parting of the ways" and applies the relatively recent understanding of the early environment in the Judeo-Christian communities. She draws important conclusions about the way that scholars engaged in polemic and how that polemic shifted and influenced their own tradition's motifs or understandings. According to Zetterholm, the "porous" nature of the borders between "Rabbinic Jews" and what she refers to as "Jesus-oriented Jews" allowed for a flow of ideas that ultimately shaped each tradition's understanding of the Aqedah.

Because the communities were all fundamentally Jewish with variations in their acceptance of Jesus' teachings, Zetterholm points toward shared spaces like the synagogue where different understandings of the Aqedah

5 For example, Justin Martyr clearly articulates the founding points of supersessionism in "Dialogue with Trypho" that we can recognize centuries later, namely the abrogation of the Law by Jesus and the arrogance of the Jewish population in maintaining the customs after Christ's death. See Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho," eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), published by Peter Kirby, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html.

6 Maimonides details this separation in the Hilkhot Avodah Zarah 9 where the "Canaanites" are ruled to be idolaters and thus cannot be interacted with. "Canaanites" are understood to be Christians. See Karma Ben Johanan, "Uncensored: Recovering Anti-Christian Animosity in Contemporary Rabbinic Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 114, no. 3 (2021): 393–416.

7 Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Isaac and Jesus: A Rabbinic Reappropriation of a 'Christian' Motif?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 67, no. 1 (2016): 102–20.

could be shared. Two major motifs developed over the centuries that influence the way the Aqedah is interpreted today: the "completion" of the sacrifice and the "willingness" of Isaac. Both ideas about Isaac, according to Zetterholm, influenced the understanding of Christ's sacrifice and were subsequently re-absorbed into Rabbinic analysis.

While fully examining the "chain of transmission" inherent in Zetterholm's thesis is beyond the scope of this article, her argument offers a more complete understanding of the closeness between Judaism and Christianity in the first centuries after the death of Jesus and the destruction of the Temple. Even without completely agreeing with her idea that the religions actively introduced shared motifs from one to the other, it does further reinforce the parallel development of both religions in the same milieu for hundreds of years. The following motifs of the Aqedah demonstrate the parallel development.

The Sacrifice "Carried Out"

The "Aqedah" is "the binding," not necessarily "the sacrifice," of Isaac. Yet the question of whether Isaac intended to actually be sacrificed became a crucial question. Some Jewish and Christian writers took up the idea that the sacrifice was as valid *as if* it had been carried out while others argued that Isaac was sacrificed and then resurrected.

Two first-century Jewish sources imply that the sacrifice was, in some way, carried out or should be considered as having been completed and set the stage for later Jewish sources that fully consider the sacrifice as having been completed. In 4 Maccabees, the story is retold as: "Isaac, seeing his father's hand, with knife in it, fall down against him, did not flinch" (16:18–20).[8] While not immediately obvious, the passage hints that Abraham's hand was not stayed by God's angel but rather, after "Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son" and before "the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven," Abraham's hand fell with the knife, harming his son. Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae* considers the sacrifice as if it had happened, writing "and the deed *had been done* if God had not opposed it."[9]

8 Translation from H. Anderson, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Doubleday & Company Inc., 1985), 561.

9 Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 228 (hereafter *AJ*), trans. William Whitson, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, (John E. Beardsley, 1895), published online by Perseus Digital Library, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0146.

In approximately the twelfth century, this motif is again picked up by *Bamidbar Rabbah*, when Abraham says, "O consider the act as though Isaac's ashes were being heaped up upon the altar."[10] Isaac Kalimi explores this with examples from the *Midrash Mekilta Rabbi Shimeon bar Yohai* and the *Midrash Tanhuma*. In these, one can consider the hand of Abraham separately from the knife; though the angel of God commands Abraham not to lay his *hand* on the boy, this does not mean that Abraham did not wound Isaac in his zeal to obey God.[11] Kalimi writes:

> He (= Abraham) took up the knife to slaughter him (Isaac), until there came forth from him one-quarter of his blood. And Satan came and knocked Abraham's hand, so that the knife fell from his hand. And when he put his hand to take it up, a heavenly voice went forth and said to him: "Lay not your hand upon the lad" (Gen. 22:12); and if it had not done so, he (Isaac) would have been slaughtered already.[12]

Less common is the view that Isaac was indeed sacrificed but then returned to his body or resurrected from the ashes. The *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* (ca.630–1030 CE) and the *Targum Chronicles* (ca. 350–1150) both speak about Isaac's death or ashes and his return.[13] These Jewish perspectives on the completion of the sacrifice—whether the intention of Abraham made it *as if* the sacrifice had been carried out or whether Isaac was indeed harmed or even killed—share an emphasis on the faith of Abraham and his will to follow God's will. This important theme, developed in different ways through this motif, is

10 *Numbers Rabbah* 17:2, Unless otherwise noted, all *Midrash Rabbah* translations are taken from the Sefaria Community Translation (2022), https://www.sefaria.org/Bereshit_Rabbah.17.4?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en..

11 Isaac Kalimi, "'Go, I beg you, take your beloved son and slay him!': The Binding of Isaac in Rabbinic Literature and Thought," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 13, no.1 (2010): 1–29.

12 Excerpt from the *Midrash Tanhuma*, Vayerha 23, quoted in Kalimi, "The Binding of Isaac in Rabbinic Literature and Thought," 22.

13 For example: "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" (Gen 22:12), his soul returned to his body, and (Abraham) set him free, and Isaac stood upon his feet" (*Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* 31:10, trans. Rabbi Gerald Friedlander [Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.,1916], published on Sefaria, https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.31.5?lang=bi) . Dates are approximate and are sourced from Sefaria website. See Kalimi, "The Binding of Isaac in Rabbinic Literature and Thought," 24.

included by Rashi in his commentary on Genesis which will be explored later in this article.

Christian writers also dealt with this motif; however, Isaac's sacrifice is firmly seen as incomplete and a precursor to Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Understandably, the "completion" of the sacrifice of Isaac became a theme in Judaism. It was developed and referred to starting in the early first century and continuing through to the medieval period, as illustrated above, and perhaps in reaction to the Christian exultation of Christ's sacrifice as the "complete" sacrifice in contrast to Isaac's, which was "incomplete" and, by extension, the inferior sacrifice. For example, in two first- and second-century writings, Christ finishes what Isaac started. In the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Isaac is referred to as a "type," but it is Christ who ultimately completes Isaac's interrupted sacrifice. The sacrifice of Isaac is incomplete until Christ comes to fully accomplish it.[14] Similarly, Melito of Sardis writes that "Isaac did not suffer," contrasting this with "Christ did suffer"—another allusion to the incomplete sacrifice of Isaac being completed by Christ.[15]

Interestingly, even the idea of Isaac's resurrection can also be found in early Christian writing. In Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul also writes of Abraham's faith and that "Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death" (11:17–19 NIV). Origen's *Homily Eight on Genesis* expands on this idea, declaring that not only did Abraham believe in resurrection but he also carried through with the actions of the sacrifice with the knowledge that he was merely a prefiguration of "the image of future truth; he knew the Christ was to be born from his seed, who also was to be offered as a truer victim for the whole world and was to be raised from the dead."[16] Origen's analysis of the Aqedah is intertwined with his polemics against the Jewish people. The depth of the penetration of the motif of the "completion" of Isaac's sacrifice in Jewish writings across the centuries is more than understandable when considering the polemical environment from which this motif originates.[17]

14 *Epistle of Barnabas* 7:1, trans. J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Macmillan and Co., 1891), published by Peter Kirby, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-lightfoot.html.

15 Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

16 Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 137–38.

17 Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, 137–38. In addition to insisting on the superiority of Jesus to Isaac, Origen in the same paragraph questions: "How, then, are they 'sons of Abraham' who do not believe what has happened in Christ, which Abraham believed was to be in Isaac?" (137).

We can already begin to see how the shared motif of Isaac's "sacrifice" (completed or not) advanced or underscored important theological developments that would become core components for the two developing religions. We will continue to see this with the motif of Isaac's "willingness" to be sacrificed.

The Willingness of Isaac

The second important motif regarding the Aqedah is the willingness of Isaac. In Genesis, Isaac only questions where the sacrifice is, not knowing he is the intended sacrifice. In subsequent interpretations, his willingness to be sacrificed becomes an important motif both for Jewish and Christian sources and eventually, along with the understanding of the "completion" of the sacrifice, becomes a backbone for the Christian prefiguration of Christ seen through Isaac.

In an early appearance of this motif, Josephus writes that Isaac, upon learning the true nature of the intended sacrifice, "was of such generous disposition as became the son of such a father, and was pleased with this discourse [… and] went immediately to the altar to be sacrificed."[18] Two texts roughly 400 years later emphasize Isaac's eagerness. In *Genesis Rabbah*, Rabbi Isaac suggests that as Abraham went to bind Isaac, Isaac replied:

> Father, I am a young man and I am concerned lest my body shake from fear of the knife and I will trouble you, and lest the slaughtering will be invalid and it will not be considered a sacrifice for you. Rather, tie me very well.[19]

In the *Midrash Tanchuma*, the sacrifice becomes the task of two people, not just one. "'If he has chosen me,' Isaac replied, 'I shall willingly surrender my soul to Him ... they went both of them together (ibid., v. 8), of one mind: convinced that one was to slaughter and the other to be slaughtered."[20]

Several early Christian writings echo this motif. The first-century *Epistle of Clement* depicts Isaac as willingly accepting his sacrifice: "Isaac, with

18 Josephus, *JA* 1.232, trans.Whiston.

19 *Bereshit Rabbah* 56:8, trans. Sefaria.

20 *Midrash Tanchuma-Yelamedenu*, Vayera, Siman 23:3, trans. Samuel A. Berman (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1996), published by Sefaria, https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Tanchuma%2C_Vayera.23.4?lang=bi.

perfect confidence … cheerfully yielded himself as a sacrifice."[21] And again in the Paschal homily by Melito of Sardis, Isaac did not struggle, panic, or grieve at his impending sacrifice but rather, silently accepted his sacrifice.[22] And interestingly, just as in *Midrash Tanchuma,* Isaac becomes an active collaborator by being of "one mind" in the approach to the sacrifice. So too does Origen write that Isaac, by carrying the wood and taking on "the duty of the priest," he becomes "both victim and priest" who "contribute[s] equally with the priesthood itself."[23]

The willingness of Isaac is a strongly-held motif in both Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism and is shared with the early Christian community.[24] While the "completion" of the sacrifice is a point of tension in the Jewish and Christian writings examined above, the willingness, and indeed at times the urging of Isaac to be sacrificed, is an important motif for both religions. Both communities developed and benefitted from an expanded reading of the Aqedah but for different reasons. For Christians, the incomplete nature of the sacrifice of Isaac and the willingness of Isaac buttress the understanding of the Aqedah as a prefiguration of Christ, an important continuity for a religion that views Christ as the "fulfillment" of what came before. Meanwhile, for the Jewish people, the "completion" of the sacrifice and the willingness of Isaac became important measures and examples of Abraham's and Isaac's perfect faith in the face of persecution, an example for the Jewish community as it continued to coalesce into the Rabbinic Judaism that exists today.[25]

Up to this point, this article has broadly explored two major motifs in the analysis and interpretations of the Aqedah in Judaism and Christianity over a broad historical period. Points of similarity and tension have been highlighted but the overarching emphasis has been on the development of similar motifs in a similar time period and milieu. This article will now single out two influential thinkers, St. Augustine (d. 430 CE) and Rashi (d. 1105 CE), and explore these motifs in their writings. While they lived in greatly different time periods, they roughly represent the breadth of the time period this article has explored and, more importantly, they each have a significant

21 *1 Clement* 31:1, trans. J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Macmillan and Co., 1891), published by Peter Kirby, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-lightfoot.html

22 Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. Stewart-Sykes, 76.

23 Origen, *Homily on Genesis* 8, trans. Heine, 141.

24 Kalimi, "The Binding of Isaac in Rabbinic Literature and Thought," 19.

25 Zetterholm, "Isaac and Jesus," 109, 111.

influence and serve as theological reference points for their respective religions.

St. Augustine and the Aqedah

St. Augustine discusses the Aqedah in the influential work, *The City of God*, and in a lesser-known work, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean.* Augustine's interpretation of the Aqedah is immediately preceded by—and therefore should be viewed in the light of—supersessionist imagery. This reflects a continued development of a polemic from earlier Christian authors like Origen, as described above, who, by viewing the Aqedah as a prefiguration for Christ, consequently disparaged the Jewish people.[26] In the preceding chapter of his analysis of the Aqedah, St. Augustine describes the figures of Hagar and Sarah as representing the Old and New Testaments, respectively. Sarah, writes Augustine, "is the symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem," whereas Hagar is cast out, just as the Old Testament is; the subtext being that the Old Testament (Hagar) is no longer relevant because the New Testament (Sarah) is fertile.[27] *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean* similarly undercuts the authority of the Hebrew scriptures by writing that they are truly divinely inspired—but only insofar as they prefigure the coming of Christ.[28] In Augustine's perspective, the Aqedah is important only because it was incomplete and a prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice. From this, however, Augustine's analysis becomes much more similar to some of the Jewish writers we examined above. He emphasizes Abraham's obedience to God as a way to grow in self-knowledge. Furthermore, the challenge given by God had a twofold purpose: 1) to demonstrate to the whole world the faithfulness of Abraham and 2) to demonstrate to Abraham himself his own capabilities.

Augustine also reasons that the only explanation for Abraham's obedience *must* have been his belief in "the immediate resurrection of his son as soon as the sacrifice was over,"[29] another point of commonality, as explored above. It is important to note, however, that while both Jewish and Christian writers embraced this motif, the ramifications are significantly different. For the Jewish audience, Zetterholm muses that perhaps "by reappropriating the idea of the atoning effect of Jesus's death and attributing

26 Cf. Origen, *Homily on Genesis* 8, trans. Heine.

27 St. Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Penguin Classics, 1972), 693.

28 St. Augustine, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean,* trans. Roland J. Teske, SJ (New City Press, 2007), 125–157.

29 St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Bettenson, 694.

to Isaac, the rabbis endowed Rabbinic tradition with a theological idea identical to that of their rivals while simultaneously ensuring that Rabbinic Jews, for whom such an idea may have held some attraction, would not join a Jesus-oriented group.[30] For the Christians of course, Abraham's belief in the resurrection of his son closely connects to God's sacrifice of His Son and firmly establishes Christianity as the true fulfillment of the Old Testament.

But while the sources examined echo that Abraham believed in resurrection, it is only Jewish sources that understand Isaac to actually have been killed. For Christians, and for Augustine, Isaac's escape from harm set up a situation that would be repeated and completed by Christ. Augustine writes, "What other ram to be sacrificed was caught by his horns in the bush but him who was hauled to the frame of the cross […]?"[31] While this appears at first glance to be in continuity with the Rabbinic teachings that viewed the ram "as if" Isaac had been killed, it is a clear distinction from the Jewish tradition. For Augustine, the sacrifice was only symbolic and fundamentally incomplete. In the Jewish writers examined above, the sacrifice was carried out *as if* it had been Isaac and therefore fulfilled all requirements for atonement.

Rashi and the Aqedah

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, better known as Rashi, wrote his authoritative commentary on Genesis between 1075 and 1105 CE. Rashi's commentary on Genesis, while not a culmination, is certainly a crucial development that both incorporates and builds upon centuries of interpretations of and polemics that use the Aqedah. He emphasizes the piety of Abraham as an example of faith but, unlike St. Augustine, deemphasizes the willingness of Isaac by focusing predominantly on Abraham.

Rashi focuses on the faith and character of Abraham in Hellenistic and philosophical terms, more similar to Philo's treatment of the Aqedah in *On Abraham* than to that of the *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* as mentioned above. Rashi writes that God draws out this process "so as not to confuse him suddenly lest his mind become distracted and bewildered … so that he might more highly value God's command."[32] Here we see the Hellenistic influence in the importance given to the clarity of mind and its direct relationship to being

30 Zetterholm, "Isaac and Jesus," 118.

31 St. Augustine, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean,* trans. Teske, 141–42.

32 Rashi, *Commentary on Genesis* 22:2, in *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary*, trans. Abraham Ben Isaiah and Benjamin Sharfman (S. S. & R. Publishing Co., 1949).

highly rewarded, viz., an action done with full intention and clarity of mind is worthier than an action done unknowingly or by compulsion.

Philo writes in *On Abraham* of the opposing forces within Abraham: his strong emotions of love and tenderness for his son and the steadying strength of will over his emotions. Abraham was "mastered by his love for God" and ultimately "overcame all the fascination expressed in the fond terms of family affection."[33] *On Abraham* focuses on the mind's conquering of the body's emotions several times, such as in section 175 when Isaac asks where the sacrifice is and Abraham "admitted no swerving of body or mind" but was able to steadily continue the deception of his son.[34] For Philo, being free from compulsion is of the utmost importance in part because it differentiates the sacrifice of Isaac from the sacrifices that the Greeks—perhaps the audience to which Philo partially addresses *Of Abraham*—are accustomed. The freedom of Abraham's choice makes him worthy of praise, a theme reflected by Rashi.

It is because of this framework that Rashi chooses to highlight Abraham's actions and not the willingness or co-actions taken by Isaac that other Jewish authors include in their interpretations. While it is mentioned that Isaac eventually understands his impending doom, none of the actions that are characteristic in other Rabbinic writings, such as Isaac demanding his father bind him tighter or descriptions of Isaac's age as a young man, fully complicit in his sacrifice, are mentioned.[35]

Despite this, Rashi judges the sacrifice to be fully worthy of the atonement of all of Israel, not because of Isaac's willingness but because of the faithfulness and obedience of Abraham. Zetterholm describes atonement as related to Isaac and Isaac's sacrifice as a clear way that the Christian exegesis influenced the Rabbinic view of the character of Isaac. Rashi is an example of the generations of Rabbinic writers that involved atonement in their characterizations of the Aqedah, though he differs in the emphasis that he puts on Isaac. Instead of the actions of Isaac leading to atonement, it is the fact that Isaac was (or "as if he were") sacrificed by Abraham that atones for the sins of Israel.[36]

33 Philo, *On Abraham* 170–171, trans. F.H. Colson, *Philo Volume VI: On Abraham, On Joseph, On Moses*, Loeb Classical Library 289 (Harvard University Press, 1935), 84–87.

34 Philo, *On Abraham* 175, trans. Colson, 86–87.

35 "Although Isaac then understood that he was travelling on to be slain, yet." Rashi, *Commentary on Genesis* 22:8, trans. Isaiah and Sharfman.

36 As Rashi argues, "The Midrashic explanation is: May God see this Binding of Isaac every year to forgive Israel and to save them from punishment … the ashes

Conclusion

The importance of this analysis lies in the demonstration that across a broad range of time, from the early 5th century of St. Augustine to the 12th century of Rashi, the writings of the leaders of the Church and of the Jewish community reflected that both communities were engaged with theological and community development in similar ways and utilized similar motifs to develop critical theological ideas. For Christians, Isaac became more deeply a typology of Christ. Whereas for Jews, Isaac's willingness more clearly became an example for the whole Jewish community. However, in this development toward "separate" ends, both religions engaged with motifs that were similar and had significant overlaps. This article adds to the growing school of thought—outlined in the introduction—that seeks to recognize that the intertwined nature of Jewish and Christian religious tradition, scripture, and praxis is ultimately a centuries-late response to the Christian ideas of supersessionism and separation that, when institutionalized and internalized over centuries, contributed to and fueled pogroms, ghettoization, and, ultimately, the Shoah. By recognizing, tracing, and understanding the shared intellectual and scriptural history, this paper adds to the new tradition begun after *Nostra Aetate* that finds a way forward in peace and collaboration for two religions, bound by the same covenant and united in brotherhood. Specifically, by examining shared intellectual history, new doors are opened for continued collaborative analysis and interpretation.

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of Isaac heaped up as it were and serving as a means of atonement" (Rashi, *Commentary on Genesis* 22:14, trans. Isaiah and Sharfman).

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