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THE INFLUENCE OF THE AQEDAH ON REVELATION 5.6-9

M.R.J. Bredin

Introduction

The suggestion of this paper is that the author of Revelation had in mind haggadic traditions relating to Isaac when using Lamb imagery, especially, in regards Rev. 5.6-9; consequently, such traditions will become important in reconstructing the author's original understanding of Jesus. In addition, and related to this, is the question of the author's motive for appropriating this tradition, *viz.*, it is proposed here, that the author felt the need to respond to Jewish polemic.

It is surprising that nothing of significance has been written in terms of the application of the aqedah to Revelation inasmuch as one of the central themes in Revelation is martyrdom, and a central image is a Lamb who is described as slain, moreover, a redemptive role is attributed to that Lamb.¹ These aspects of martyrdom and redemption, as will be seen, are central in the presentation of Isaac by Jews writing around the period when Revelation was written.

In order to persuade the reader that such connections exist and are plausible, certain criteria must be met: firstly, a suitable *Sitz im Leben* be shown to exist between Jews and Christians in Asia Minor to allow for an anti-Jewish polemic to develop; secondly, that the presentation of the Lamb in Rev. 5.6-9 resembles the presentation of the aqedah in Jewish writings; thirdly, that evidence exists to suggest that such *haggadah* was appropriated for anti-Jewish polemic by one other Christian writer in Asia Minor. There will be, then, three main sections, in addition to the conclusion, which will draw together the evidence in order to assess to what extent this proposal can be sustained.

¹ S. Spiegel, (1967), p.85; N.A. Dahl, (1974), p.138 mentions Rev.5 as 'reminiscent of the Akedah but never makes the allusion explicit'. See also M.J. Ford, (1975), p.91; R.J. Daly, (1977), p.73.

Section One

Politico-Economic and Religious Factors

The general consensus is that the last decade of the first century is the most plausible time for the writing of Revelation. There seems to be no serious reasons to question Irenaeus' dating of this text.² A major factor impinging on the daily existence of Jews and Christians living in Asia Minor was the emperor who would exercise his power through appointed governors.³ The late first century saw the reign of Domitian, generally considered a tyrant. However, such a portrayal of Domitian as a tyrant has been challenged.⁴ The Roman historian, Suetonius, who although writing after Domitian's reign, did live through it, is considered by a good number of classical scholars to be a reasonably objective historian,⁵ reports that Domitian claimed for himself the title *Dominus et Deus* in regular written correspondence and conversation, and furthermore, he referred to the taking back of his wife as a 'recall to my divine bed'.⁶ In addition to this, it is reported by Suetonius that Domitian ruthlessly extended the *Fiscus*

² See Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.3): '[the apocalyptic vision] was seen not such a long time ago, but almost in our generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian'. For a good review of the arguments see J.K. Court, (1994), pp.81-108.

³ H.B. Swete, (1922), p. xciii; G.B. Caird, (1966), pp. 22-23, he observes that the governor in the provinces was entrusted with full powers which enabled him to make his own rules and assess his own penalties. On the evidence of Trajan's reply to Pliny's letter about the Christians (Pliny, *Ep.* x.97), the only restriction on the governor was that he could not initiate procedure, there must be an accuser (*delator*); S.R.F. Price, (1984), pp. 2, and 43-44, Price realizes the limitations of the Roman governor and states that in many cases the cities continued to organize themselves (p. 2).

⁴ See L.L. Thompson, (1990) and B.W. Jones (1992). For a response to L.L. Thompson see K.A. Strand, (1991), pp. 188-190.

⁵ J. Ektor (1980); B. Baldwin, (1983); A. Wallace-Hadrill, (1983); M. Grant, (1970), pp. 329-340; M. Grant's revision of *Suetonius*, (1979), p. 8; M. Grant, (1994), p. 84, 97.

⁶ *Dom.* 13.

Judaicus by the use of informers, established under Vespasian after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, to those of Jewish origin who no longer lived as Jews, and to those who lived as Jews without professing Judaism.⁷ Suetonius records his own attendance at the investigation of an elderly Jewish male who was humiliated by those who sought to discover whether he was circumcised or not.⁸ Dio adds that the tax established under Vespasian was exacted as payment for certain religious privileges.⁹ One further negative aspect of Domitian's reign, according to Suetonius, was the ruthless persecution of distinguished Gentiles.¹⁰ However, Domitian is also portrayed as gentle, an able administrator, and one who had military success.¹¹ Suetonius presents Domitian, positive and negative sides, as one who started well, but drifted into tyrannical ways.¹² This is not really surprising for a leader, especially one who suffered a dangerous revolt in 89 CE. The classical scholar P. Kennedy puts it well: 'At the beginning of AD 89, he [Domitian] had an experience from which he never totally recovered: a dangerous revolt by Saturninus, who was in command of the army in Germany. The revolt was put down, but it aroused in the emperor feelings of suspicion and insecurity which lasted until his assassination in 96'.¹³

⁷ Dom. 12.

⁸ Dom. 12.

⁹⁹ 'From that time forth it was ordered that Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two denarii to Jupiter Capitalinus'. (Dio Cassius [c. 215], *Roman History* 65.7.2).

¹⁰ Dom. 15. Suetonius records the execution of Flavius Clemens. Dio Cassius tells us that the charge was that of drifting into Jewish ways (*Roman History* 67.1-2). They (Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla) were condemned for the crime of atheism, which was one of following Jewish ways. Some have argued that the crime refers to Christianity: I.T. Beckwith, (1919), pp. 204-205; H.B. Swete (1922), p. lxxxv; L.W. Barnard (1963-64); G.B. Caird (1966), pp. 20-21; *pace* P. Keresztes (1973); See also Dom. 15 for the account.

¹¹ Dom. 6, 8, 9

¹² Dom. 3.

It is in this latter part of the reign of Domitian that Revelation is understood to have been composed.

There is, however, as the history of Revelation scholarship has observed, no clear evidence of a persecution under Domitian. Such a persecution is not a *sine qua non* for this paper inasmuch as the concern here is the question of the relationship between Jews and Christians in Asia Minor; nonetheless, that relationship is influenced by Roman and Greek factors and, consequently, such factors must be considered. The evidence that there is does point to some sort of encouragement to keep the pressure on Christians under Domitian.

From what has been observed of Suetonius' account of Domitian, certain factors become salient to the question of a situation of crisis between Jews and Christians: firstly, the freedom to practise the Jewish religion; secondly, the extension of both the imperial cult, and the *fiscus Judaicus* (in the case of the *fiscus Judaicus*, by the use of informers). These factors need to be considered.

Hemer believes that Christians were seeking refuge in the Jewish synagogue because of the threat of being liable to the imperial cult. He writes: 'Individual Jews may have informed against individual Christians, or the synagogues may have provided on occasion lists of bona fide members of their congregations. The authorities . . . may thus have had forced on their attention a powerful movement which appeared to defy the emperor under the guise of Judaism which the official Jew repudiated'.¹⁴ The issue of the *fiscus Judaicus* for J.P.M. Sweet is important in that Christians may have avoided paying the tax but still claimed the privileges, but now under the reign of Domitian, Jews were in a powerful situation, and could threaten to expose Christians as tax dodgers and thus leave them guilty before the authorities. Consequently, Christians were in a difficult situation.¹⁵ If they did not recant of the Christian faith, they would be forced out of the synagogue and exposed to the authorities.

¹³ P. Kennedy, (1969), p. 26. For the revolt of Saturninus see Dio Cassius's *Roman History* 65.2,2,1.

¹⁴ W.H.C. Friend, (1965), pp. 178-209; C.J. Hemer, (1986), p. 8; D.A. DeSilva, (1992), pp. 287-289; C.J. Setzer, (1994), pp. 99-104.

¹⁵ J.P.M. Sweet, (1979), pp. 28-31.

This seems plausible inasmuch as Jews had every reason to be unhappy with the growing Christian faith. H.B. Swete observes that Jews may have had a policy of maintaining the status quo by shutting their eyes to much that their consciences disapproved so as to be able to practise their religion unmolested.¹⁶ The Book of Acts illustrates H.B. Swete's point. Acts 16.19-24 indicates that Christians were perceived as a danger to society (see especially 16.21). Furthermore, Christians were perceived as Jews, consequently, there would be a great concern on the part of Jews to distinguish themselves from the trouble making Christians, Acts 19.21-41 illustrates this. In this period, Domitian, whose increasing tyranny was connected with his fear of political usurpers, would most certainly, and did, have the troublesome members of society suppressed. This whole situation is, *a fortiori*, expressed clearly in Rev. 2.9-10 and 3.9. This may be seen in the word βλασφημίαν of Rev. 2.9 which is thought to allude to accusations Jews were bringing against Christians, i.e., that they were not loyal to Rome. The consequence of this βλασφημίαν is spelt out in Rev. 2.10:

ἰδοὺ μέλλει ὁ διάβολος ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰς φυλακὴν

The ὁ διάβολος being the name for the Roman authorities, only Rome had the power to place someone εἰς φυλακὴν. Consequently, the situation was a real and perceived crisis to which Christians had to respond to. Similarly, in Rev. 2.9 there is a hint of response to Jewish claims about Christians, *viz.*, that they are not Christians at all:

Οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλοῦσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίουσ εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς καὶ οὐκ εἶσιν ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ Σατανᾶ.

The suggested setting here is one of Jews declaring that Christians were not Ἰουδαίοι, and 2.9 is the author's retort against the Jews i.e., they are the ones who are not Ἰουδαίοι. DeSilva comments that during this period Jews needed to consolidate their identity over and against sectarian movements and the claim of the early church upon the title 'true Israel'.¹⁷ This situation is illustrated by the inclusion of the Minim in the *Eighteen Benedictions*, Hemer

¹⁶ H.B. Swete, (1922), p. lxxvi.

¹⁷ D.A. DeSilva, (1992), p. 228.

believes it was developed as a way of detecting Christians in the synagogues.¹⁸

Conclusion

In sum, a suitable situation can be established which allows for the possibility of debate between Jews and Christians and, *a fortiori*, Revelation itself alludes to such a situation. One in which Domitian encouraged the local populace, which would have included the Jews, to pass on information to the governors that the Christians were a threat to society. The discussion will now progress to Revelation and the aqedah tradition.

Section Two

Revelation and the Aqedah

Having satisfied the first criterion, the prominent themes in Revelation need to be observed alongside those of the aqedah. One such theme in Revelation is the witness/martyr motif. The author aims, by the use of this motif, to encourage Christians to stay firm to the witness of Jesus Christ, even unto death, if this is required.¹⁹ The witness/martyr themes are prominent features in the work of R. Bauckham on Revelation. Such themes, he observes, are directly related to the figure of Jesus. Jesus is mentioned fourteen times and on seven occasions Jesus is connected with μαρτυρία.²⁰ The connection of μαρτυρία with the figure of Christ is related to his death, consequently, the testimony he bears is that which resulted in his death. Moreover, it is a witness that his followers must continue (Rev. 12.11). The result of this faithful testimony to God will result in victory (νίκος) through redemption (Rev. 5.9).

¹⁸ C.J. Hemer, (1986), p. 9.

¹⁹ This is shown clearly in the work of M.G. Reddish, (1988), p. 89, who argues that the author identifies the conquering Christ as the martyred Christ in order to encourage Christians to stay firm in times of difficulty. See also the work of A.A. Trites, (1973 and 1977); J.P.M. Sweet, (1981).

²⁰ R.J. Bauckham, (1993), p. 66, 72. The seven occurrences are: 1.2. 5. 9; 12.17; 19.10 (twice); 20.4.

In addition to the witness/martyr motifs and the resulting victory, the central and key image of Revelation needs to be observed, *viz.*, the ἀρνίον which appears *vis-à-vis* Jesus twenty eight times. Bauckham points out that the work of the Lamb in Rev. 5 is controlled by the two motifs of messianic war and the new Exodus.²¹ He does not see the witness/martyr motif as explicitly related to these. However, although it might not be explicit, there are good reasons to believe that such a motif exists in that Rev. 5 sets the scene for the presentation of the lamb, and the author is presenting Jesus as a proto-martyr figure; consequently, hints of a martyr motif need to be observed in relationship to Rev. 5.6-9. Examination of features of the aqedah will facilitate this observation.

It should be noted that no direct connection can be made between Rev. 5.6-9 and the aqedah tradition. However, the author of Revelation is not wooden in his use of source/tradition material and so the influence of the aqedah cannot be ruled out *a priori* on the basis that Isaac is not mentioned in the text.

Observations of the least disputed aqedah texts will be carried out in order to establish which texts resemble ideas seen in Rev. 5.6-9 and show ideas that can be seen to pre-date the writing of Revelation.

Pseudo-Philo

Pseudo-Philo's presentation of the aqedah puts forward Isaac as the lamb who is offered on the altar in place of an animal:

'Hear me, father. If a lamb of the flock is accepted as sacrifice to the LORD with an odour of sweetness and for the wicked deeds of men animals are appointed to be killed, but man is designed to inherit the world, how then do you say to me, "Come and inherit life without limit and time without measure?" Yet have I not been born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me?' *L AB* 32.3.²²

The obedience and willingness of Isaac to suffer and die are prominent inasmuch as he acknowledges his *raison d'être* which is

²¹ R.J.Bauckham, (1993), p. 72.

²² Translation used is D.J. Harrington, (1985) in J.H. Charlesworth's *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. Two.

to be offered as a sacrifice to God. The reason for the sacrifice is clearly expressed in the atoning effects which the sacrifice will have for 'the wicked deeds of men'. A further aspect of Pseudo-Philo's presentation is:

'Now my blessedness will be above that of all men, because there will be nothing like this; and about me future generations will be instructed and through me the peoples will understand that the LORD has made the soul of a man worthy to be a sacrifice'. *LAB.* 32.3.

Swetnam considers the possibility that the unique nature of Isaac's sacrifice could be a sign of a reaction to Christian claims about the crucifixion.²³ Yet, there is no way of proving this relationship, however, it is difficult to see how such traditions about Jesus' death would not have been known by Pseudo-Philo and that ideas about Isaac were not known by Christians. The next verse is also interesting:

'And when *he had offered (obtulisset)* the son upon the altar and *had bound his feet* so as to kill him, the Most Powerful hastened and sent forth his voice *from on high* saying . . . '.

The implication here is that the sacrifice was actually carried out.²⁴

Further, Pseudo-Philo understands the significance of the sacrifice in terms of the election of Israel:

'And I asked for his son as a holocaust and he brought him to be placed on the altar. But I gave him back to his father and, because he did not refuse, his offering was acceptable to me and on account of his blood did I chose them'. *LAB.* 18.5

The text provides an understanding that Israel is special to God because of Abraham's obedience, but it is because of the death of Isaac that the covenant is made insofar as the sacrifice is understood to be completed. Yet there is no sense of the heightening of Isaac as in 32.1-4, however, it is the completed sacrifice that is important in 18.5, and his willingness to die is expressed in 32.1-4. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is a development of Isaac as an

²³ J. Swetnam, (1981), p. 54.

²⁴ R.J. Daly, (1977), p. 61. *Obtulisset* being the pluperfect form of *offero*.

exemplary martyr through whose martyrdom the wicked deeds of men are redeemed.

Concluding the discussion on Pseudo-Philo, it can be said that the texts are important for NT study insofar as they were in existence around 70CE although it is difficult to argue on what side of 70CE. Nevertheless, the dating is early enough to place the ideas expressed in the texts within the cultural milieu of the first century.²⁵ Moreover, the elevation of Isaac to that of a martyr effecting salvation for a nation must be considered significant for Rev. 5.6-9. The possible Jewish-Christian link suggested by Swetnam may also raise possibilities for the Book of Revelation.

4 Maccabees

4 Maccabees 13.12 portrays Abraham and Isaac as heroes who are held up as great models for the Jewish martyrs. In this verse, Jews are exhorted in times of trouble and persecution to remember Isaac who is the proto-martyr to whom all Jews should remember:

‘Remember whence you came and at the hand of what father Isaac gave himself to be sacrificed for piety’s sake’. 13.12.²⁶

Note also:

‘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’. 16.20.

An expiatory function here is explicitly attributed to the suffering of the martyrs (6.17-29;17.20-22). However, the expiatory function is not attributed directly to Isaac in any of the above texts. Swetnam argues that because Isaac’s blood was not spilt he could not be considered in the same light as those who were actually martyred.²⁷ Nevertheless, Abraham’s sacrifice is as good as offered inasmuch as the wording of 13.12 would suggest that Isaac is understood as one

²⁵ R.J. Daly, (1977), p. 59.

²⁶ Translation used is H. Anderson (1985) in J.H. Charlesworth’s *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol. Two.

²⁷ J. Swetnam, (1981), p. 48.

who became as a sacrifice.²⁸ Furthermore, if Jews are exhorted to remember Isaac as a model for one who was obedient, it seems odd that the author understood Isaac's act of obedience as inferior to that of the martyrs of the Maccabean revolt in that no atonement value was attributed to him.

The dating of 4 *Maccabees* is debated, but, it is generally dated early enough to be considered significant for Revelation. The question of the setting may be significant insofar as H. Anderson and E. Norden place it in the coastal regions of Asia Minor, mainly on the basis of the large number of sea metaphors.²⁹

In sum, 4 *Maccabees* as evidence should not be underrated. The text indicates ideas about Isaac as a proto-martyr by whose obedience God would look favourably upon Israel. Moreover, the ideas can be located within the cultural milieu of the late first century, possibly in Asia Minor.

JOSEPHUS

Josephus, likewise, heightens the binding of Isaac:

'Now Isaac was 25 years old. And as he was building the altar, he asked his father what he was about to offer, since there was no animal there for an oblation Now Isaac was of such a generous disposition So he went immediately to the altar to be sacrificed'. *Ant.* 1.227-232.

Josephus also writes:

'But on the third day . . . having his son alone with him, he [Abraham] came to the mountain. It was the mountain upon which King David afterwards built the temple'. *Ant.* 1.226.

²⁸ Pseudo-Philo *LAB* 32.4; Philo *On Abraham* 178, which understood the sacrifice to have been completed. This suggests that such was the view of many Jews at this time. R.J. Daly. (1977), p52, observes the idea that the sacrifice has been offered is present in the Palestinian Targum of *The Poem of the Four Nights*: 'And Isaac was 37 years of age when he was offered (אִזְכָּר) on the altar'. אִזְכָּר is the preterite form of קָרַב. This would indicate the idea that Isaac was sacrificed was known.

²⁹ Ed. J.H. Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* (1985), Vol. Two, p. 537.

In the first text, the martyrological theme in which Isaac is portrayed as one who is responsible and aware of the situation and is willing to be sacrificed on the altar, can be seen. In the second, there is a hint of the expiatory theme connected to the martyrological one. It is stated that the place of the binding is the place of the temple, consequently, the binding is linked to the various sacrifices carried out in the temple, such sacrifices that removed the wicked deeds of men. Interestingly, Davies and Chilton argue that Josephus develops the aqedah as a response to the war against Rome, and, therefore, the text is seen as providing a proto-martyr figure for other Jews.³⁰ The Roman admiration for Jews who held out at Masada and, who subsequently died, may make this suggestion plausible (*War* 7. 405).

In conclusion, Josephus provides important evidence of attitudes towards the binding of Isaac in the first century. The prominent theme is that of the heightening of Isaac's willingness and obedience to death, and the binding of Isaac where the temple would be built, would seem a clear indication that an association between Isaac and the temple sacrifices was being made.

Comparison of Ideas and Themes

In Rev. 5.6-9 the most prominent feature is the Lamb who is said to have been killed. Moreover, by his willingness to shed his blood, he has won a great victory for every tribe and tongue and people and nation. In the texts representing the aqedah, the most prominent feature is the portrayal of Isaac as one who is willing to shed his blood because it is demanded of him by God. Furthermore, a victory is understood to have been achieved by this willingness to be a sacrifice. More generally, a possible motive in the writing of the texts was to provide an example of one is true and faithful even unto death.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the second criterion has now been satisfied, and that a clear connection in terms of themes, portrayal and motive can be shown to exist between the portrayal of Isaac in the aqedah and the portrayal of the lamb in Rev. 5.6-9.

³⁰ P.R. Davies and B.D. Chilton, (1978), pp. 521-522

Section Three

An Example of the Use of the Aqedah for anti-Jewish Purposes in Asia-Minor

It has been shown that the first two criteria can be satisfied and that, therefore, a case can be presented for the influence of the aqedah on Revelation. Attention will now turn to the task of satisfying the third criterion, and with it the proposal that the author of Revelation had in mind the tradition of the binding of Isaac.

Attention in this section will focus on Melito (d. c. 190), Bishop of Sardis, his relationship with the Jewish Community of Sardis and three catenae fragments, 9, 10 and 11 which deal with the sacrifice of Isaac.³¹

As has been seen in section one, the situation in Asia Minor was one of hostility between Jews and Christians. By the time of the mid-late second century, the situation can be seen to have deteriorated. By c. 112 CE, Pliny's letter to Trajan tells us that interrogations of Christians were taking place in Asia Minor.³² Moreover, from much of the evidence provided by Trebilco, it can be shown that Jews were doing very well in most areas of Asia Minor.³³ Consequently, there would be a temptation for Jewish Christians to return to the fold. It is in this climate that Melito's work was composed, one which is directed against Jews. In his *Paschal Homily* Jews are blamed for the suffering and death of Jesus, similarly they are accused of stubbornness and of having an inability to understand the figure that they had put to death in Jerusalem. Central to this work is the desire to show the superiority of the Christian tradition over that of Judaism, that is to prove that Christianity has superseded Judaism. What is particularly interesting is R.L. Wilken's suggestion that Melito appropriates the aqedah tradition in order to respond to criticisms made by Jews. Wilken's argument is that the binding of

³¹ See S.G. Hall's Edition, (1979).

³² See also Ignatius, *Magn.* 8; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12-13.

³³ Also A.T. Kraabel, (1971), pp.77-85; S.E. Johnson, (1975), p. 94; Josephus *Ant.* 14.235;

Isaac, for the Jew, was considered a symbol both of God's faithfulness to his people and his continuing love for them.³⁴ However, Melito contends that the binding of Isaac had no such meaning and could not be used to comfort and support the Jews.³⁵ The argument seems compelling. In fragment 9 the argument is clearly prominent when Melito retorts:

ἀλλὰ Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν, Ἰσαάκ δὲ οὐκ ἔπαθεν

Wilken writes: 'Melito wishes to emphasise that Isaac did not die but that Jesus did die. If the *Akedah* was understood in Judaism as a sacrificial offering which became the basis for God's mercy to Israel, that the offering was not completed caused certain difficulties'.³⁶ This seems a logical argument to make from observation of Gen. 22, and one that Melito and, it is argued here, the author of Revelation made use of. Melito continues his argument in fragment 10 when he keeps close to the sense of Gen. 22, and shows that the ram was sacrificed, and it was the ram that redeemed Isaac. As Wilken comments: 'Isaac seems to become a type of the redeemed . . .'.³⁷ In fragment 11, Jesus is called the lamb like the ram (ἀμνὸς ὡς [ὁ] κριὸς), so Jesus the Lamb in fragment 11 is compared to the ram in fragment 10 who redeems humanity by his sacrifice: 'Christ not Isaac' was his battle cry!

In sum, therefore, it would appear that the fragments of Melito provide important evidence of a Christian appropriating the aqedah tradition for polemical purposes against Jews, specifically from a setting of insecurity in which Jews were in a powerful position and were threatening the Christian community. It would appear, thus, that the third criterion, i.e., that the aqedah can be shown to have been used by a Christian writing in Asia Minor, has been met.

Conclusion

The criteria outlined in the introduction have provided the methodological guidelines for this paper by which to reach a

³⁴ It is curious that A.T. Kraabel (1971), p. 84, fails to mention the fragments in his discussion of the hostile nature of Melito towards the Jews.

³⁵ R.L. Wilken, (1976), pp. 64-69.

³⁶ R.L. Wilken, (1976), p. 65.

³⁷ R.L. Wilken (1976), p. 66.

conclusion as to the likelihood of the influence of Isaac *haggadah* on the author of Revelation. In the first section, Revelation's *Sitz im Leben*, with a particular focus on the tripartite relationship between Pagan, Jew and Christian was undertaken, and a proposal made that a climate of bitterness between Jews and Christians was clear, resulting in an increasing sense of crisis on the part of the Christians. In the second section, the importance of martyrological ideas on the writer of Revelation was observed as well as the presence of a Lamb who redeems a people for God by his willingness to shed his blood. Moreover, the question of dating certain aqedah texts, observing characteristics of the aqedah and a comparison with Revelation was made in order to show the clear similarities between them, and that aqedah ideas were circulating around the time when Revelation was written. In the third section, it was shown that there was an example of a Christian appropriating the aqedah tradition for anti-synagogue purposes. At each stage the criteria have been shown to be satisfied and, consequently, the likelihood of an aqedah influence on the composition of Rev. 5.6-9 seems probable - yet not as a typology; rather, it is here proposed that John is using 5.6-9 to formulate an *antitypical* contrast between Jesus (the true proto-martyr, represented in the Lamb imagery who was sacrificed and whose martyrdom has atonement value) and Isaac (who is not sacrificed in the biblical narrative, it is rather the Lamb). As J.E. Wood points out: 'The death of Jesus is the death of the greater Isaac, God's own Son, who truly died and rose again to act as Intercessor before God'.³⁸ The Lamb functions, then, as an image which elevates Jesus above Isaac. It is Jesus who is portrayed as the exemplary martyr, the true and faithful witness to God, the one whom the Christian community must look to and emulate if they, too, are to be conquerors like him..

In sum, the composing of Rev.5.6-9 was influenced by the author's understanding of Jesus as one who willingly went to his death because he considered it God's will. In view of the difficulties his community were facing at the hands of Jews, he addressed this situation by developing a martyr atonement model parallel to that of the rabbis. Whereas they developed it in relationship to Isaac, the

³⁸

J.E. Wood, (1967-1968), pp. 587-588.

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author of Revelation developed it *vis-à-vis* Jesus as an *antitypical* contrast.

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