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Abstract

Die Erzählung von Davids Helden, wie sie für David unter Einsatz ihres Lebens in Bethlehem Wasser holen und dieser es vor Jhwh ausgießt (2 Sam 23,13-17 par. 1 Chr 11,15-19), ist heute kaum mehr bekannt. Im Spätmittelalter und insbesondere bei den Antwerpener Manieristen war die Erzählung jedoch sehr beliebt. Sie wurde häufig zusammen mit der Königin von Saba vor Salomo und der Anbetung der Weisen aus dem Morgenland dargestellt. Im Zentrum dieser typologischen Auslegung steht die Anbetung und Verehrung Christi, in die der Auftraggeber beziehungsweise Besitzer mit seiner Frömmigkeit mit einbezogen werden sollte. Unter dem Einfluss der Reformation veränderte sich die Auslegung insgesamt: Lediglich ein knappes Jahrhundert später wird die Erzählung in einem Kupferstich als moralisches Exempel für Selbstkontrolle und Verzicht verwendet. In einem Landschaftsgemälde von Claude Lorraine spielt sie schliesslich nur noch eine untergeordnete Rolle. Die Heldenerzählung wird historisiert, sie verliert ihre Bedeutung und gerät in Vergessenheit.

The text in 2 Sam 23:13-17 and 1 Chr 11:15-19 tells the story of David and three heroes who bring him water from the well of Bethlehem. This text is not well known today, but in earlier times it played an important role. The interpretation of this story differs greatly, however, through the epochs. During the reformation at the transition from late Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period, it has undergone huge transformation in its religious significance until it finally lost its meaning and tended to fade into the background. Not only different interpretations, but also the varying religious experiences people made with one and the same text are striking and shaped by their ideological, social, political and historical background. In what way is it interpreted and what triggered the re-

¹ This paper is an enlarged version of a presentation I gave at the Hebrew and Semitic Studies Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and in the Session "Bible and Visual Art" at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, in November 2012. It is dedicated to my teachers at University of Bern, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Walter Dietrich and Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Ulrich Luz who taught me the Books of Samuel and opened my eyes to the hermeneutical importance of Reception History. Last but not least I am grateful to Dr. Susan Sorek for her comments and corrections and to Dr. Konstantin Moritz A. Langmaier for his help with the Latin translation (all mistakes are certainly mine alone).

interpretation? Who influenced whom?² What meaning did the text suggest for the identity of societies and individuals through the centuries? How was the biblical text used to describe motive and value structure?³ Are the visual interpretations, part of a collective conscience and thus “mainstream” or do they just represent the idea of a single individual?⁴ And what were the triggers that caused this story to finally lose its meaning?

There are not many Old Testament stories where it is possible to evaluate such a huge transformation in visual interpretation over a short period of time. Therefore, 2 Sam 23:13-17 and 1 Chr 11:15-19 is especially suitable to answer these questions. In my analysis, I will first explore the significance of the text and try to evaluate its possible ancient implications. I will then present two different types of visual interpretation, one from the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century and the other from the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. Thereby the differentiation between exegesis as a synchronic and diachronic analysis of the biblical text and the study of the reception history is assumed.⁵ From a hermeneutical point of view, this is problematic, because it is not possible to consider any form of exegesis to be *voraussetzungslos*⁶ (without presupposition) and historical-critical interpretation needs to acknowledge its own historicity. Recognizing the alterity of biblical texts, it is however essential to differentiate between the explication and the application of sense and meaning.⁷

² There is no doubt that sometimes painters and sculptors are ahead of scholars when they suggest new interpretation of the biblical text as Samuel Terrien demonstrated. See Terrien, *Renaissance Artists and Biblical Exegesis*, 268-278 and Kipfer, *Der bedrohte David*, 24f.

³ See e.g. Schapiro, *Words and Pictures*, 12: “In each style are rules of representation which, together with the ideas and values paramount in the culture, direct the choice of position, posture, gesture, dress, size, milieu, and other features of the actors and objects.”

⁴ DeLapp, *The Reformed David(s)*, 6-13, speaks of a “social imaginary”. He acknowledges however that the differentiation between collective consciousness and the individual is problematic and that “the historian’s knowledge of past social imaginaries is often mediated through individuals” (9).

⁵ Oeming, *Hermeneutik*, 101, claims: “The differentiation between author, text and later interpretation is necessary and possible.”

⁶ See Bultmann, *Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich?*, 409: “Die Frage, ob voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich ist, muß mit Ja beantwortet werden, wenn ‘voraussetzungslos’ meint: ohne daß die Ergebnisse der Exegese vorausgesetzt werden. In diesem Sinn ist voraussetzungslose Exegese nicht nur möglich, sondern geboten. In einem anderen Sinn ist freilich keine Exegese voraussetzungslos, da der Exeget keine tabula rasa ist, sondern mit bestimmten Fragen bzw. einer bestimmten Fragestellung an den Text herangeht und eine gewisse Vorstellung von der Sache hat, um die es sich im Text handelt.”

⁷ See Luz, *Hermeneutik*, 311: “Mir scheint, dass die Unterscheidung von Explikation und Applikation von Sinn und Bedeutung von Texten um der Alterität der Texte willen unbedingt nötig ist.”

1. The Story of the Three Warriors Bringing David Water from the Well of Bethlehem in 2 Sam 23:13-17 par. 1 Chr 11:15-19

The story of three unnamed warriors who bring David water from the well of Bethlehem in 2 Sam 23:13-17 par. 1 Chr 11:15-19 is inserted into a list of heroes and warriors (*gibbôr*, see 2 Sam 23:8, 16, 17) with short accounts mentioning their valor paralleling 2 Sam 21:15-22.⁸ It comprises only five verses and refers back to David's early career, when he was an outlaw chief, a fugitive from Saul and before he became a Philistine mercenary. It starts by mentioning the opponents: three out of the thirty heroes – literally “head” – (*šəlošāh mehaššəlošîm roš*) on the one hand and the band of Philistines (*ḥajjat pəlištîm*) on the other.

- 13 And three of the thirty heads went down,
and they came at harvest time to David to the cave of Adullam.
And the band of Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim.
- 14 And David was then in the stronghold
and the Philistine post was then in Bethlehem.
- 15 And David longed,
and said:
*“Who will draw me water from the well of Bethlehem,
which is at the gate?”*
- 16 And the three men broke through the Philistine camp
and drew water from the well of Bethlehem,
which is at the gate,
and bore it,
and brought it to David
but he was not willing to drink it,
and poured it out to Yahweh.
- 17 And he said,
*“Far be it for me, Yahweh, that I do this.
Is it not the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?”*
And he was not willing to drink it.
These things did the three heroes.

The story begins with the information that three heroes went down (*ird*) and came (*bw*) to David, while the Philistines encamped (*ḥnh*) at a fixed place. The first two verses contain some important information about the setting, namely time and place of the narrative. The narrated time is located at the beginning of the harvest (*ʾæl qāšir* V. 13). This time indication is missing in the version in 1 Chr 11:15 and LXX.⁹ But in the next verse the narrative refers back to this time,

⁸ See Garsiel, *The Water Retrieval*, 51*: “The story of the mission of the three who retrieved water for David is integrated into the first part of the list, where the officers of the warriors are listed and accounts of their valor related.” Similarly McCarter, *II Samuel*, 499.

⁹ While 1 Chr 11:15 adds “to the rock” *ʾal haššur*; see also the Lucianic recension (LXX^L) translating “to the rock” (*eis tēn petran*), the LXX reads a *nomen proprium* (e.g. *eis Kasōn*).

saying that “at that time” (*'āz* V. 14) David was “in the stronghold and Philistine post was then (*'āz*) in Bethlehem” (V. 14). The word *'āz* in V. 14 thus twice refers back to the given time indication.

The localization in V. 13 and V. 14 is however contradictory: In V. 13 the text says that the three heroes came to David to the cave of Adullam (*'ael mē'ārat 'ādullām*).¹⁰ V. 14 mentions however a stronghold (*məṣūdāh*)¹¹ as the place of David. These localizations are not identical since *mē'ārat* refers to a natural shelter, while *məṣūdāh* rather implies a fortification.¹² In addition, the localization of the Philistines is disparate. On the one hand it is said in V. 13, that they were encamped in the valley of Rephaim (*bə'emæq rəfā'im* see also 2 Sam 5:18; 22) and on the other hand in V. 14 it is mentioned that they had a military post (*maṣṣāv*) in Bethlehem.¹³ This final piece of information is important for further understanding of the deeds of the three heroes of David.

After this introduction indicating time and place, the story describes in V. 15 the needs of David. The fact, that David is longing (*'wh₁*) to drink water from Bethlehem “is prompted more by homesickness than thirst”.¹⁴ The notion that David wishes to drink water from the well of Bethlehem is followed by direct speech. David simply asks who will bring him water from the well of Bethlehem which is at the gate.¹⁵ There is no further explanation given to shed any light on the intention of David's words: Is this just an articulation of David's wishes or does it comprise an implicit challenge?¹⁶ The text does not make this clear, but continues with the reaction of the three heroes: the three heroes enter (*bq'*) the camp (*maḥānæh*)¹⁷ of the Philistines, they drew (*š'b*) water from this one specific well at the gate of Bethlehem, they took it (*nś'*) and brought it (*bw' Hifil*) to

¹⁰ See also par. 1 Chr 11,15. The cave of Adullam is also mentioned in 1 Sam 22,1. It can be identified with *Hirbet eš-Šēḥ Maḡkūr*.

¹¹ See also par. 1 Chr 11,16 as well as 1 Sam 22:4-5; 24:23; 2 Sam 5:7 par. 1 Chr 11,5b; 2 Sam 5:17 and others.

¹² In Judg 6:2 and Ezek 33:27 the two words are mentioned together.

¹³ The Septuagint repeats this information again at the end of V. 15. *to hypostēma tōn allophylōn tote en Baithleem* (V. 14) and *to sustēma tōn allophylōn tote en Baithleem* (V. 15). This addition is missing in 4QSam^a frgs. 159-161 too and is – as Cross / Parry / Saley, Qumran Cave 4, 190, stated – “an obvious dittography from the preceding verse”.

¹⁴ McCarter, II Samuel, 495. See also Auld, 1 & 2 Samuel, 600: “Like many an exile, he longs for nothing more than the familiar water of home”.

¹⁵ The MT reads *mbb'*, while LXX witnesses here as well as in V. 16 *ek tou lakkou*. It is thus not clear whether it is really a well or rather a cistern.

¹⁶ Garsiel, The Water Retrieval, 51*, states that “David set a challenge before his men”. See similarly Stolz, Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel, 287: “Die ist gewiß als Provokation zu einem waghalsigen Unternehmen zu verstehen, dessen Risiko man vernünftigerweise nicht eingehen würde. Die Drei werden ihrem Ruf gerecht und leisten das Unmögliche (V. 16).” However, it is obvious, that it is not an order. See Hentschel, 2 Samuel, 103, “Von einem Befehl konnte natürlich keine Rede sein.”

¹⁷ The *maḥānæh pəlištīm* is also mentioned in 1 Sam 13:17; 14:19; 17:4 (PI); 17:49; 28:5; 2 Sam 5:24 etc. In V. 13 the uncommon word *ḥajjah* is used instead and V. 14 speaks of the *maṣṣāv*.

David. Their intention is not explained either: Why should the three heroes risk their lives “to penetrate enemy lines for water, when water might have been found elsewhere more easily?”¹⁸ The text leaves this question open and turns again to David’s inner feelings. This time it says that David was not willing (*'bh*) to drink the water and poured (*nsk Hifil*) it out to Yahweh. Here too, the glimpse into David’s innermost thoughts is followed by direct speech: “Far be it for me, Yahweh, that I do this. Is it not the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives (*næfæš*)?”¹⁹ Also in this case, the text leaves the reason for the action of the figure open: why did David pour out the water, for whom was David performing this act and what response did he seek to inspire?²⁰ The story simply closes by repeating, that David did not want (*'bh*) to drink – a notion which is redundant since David already poured the water to the ground – and it finally ends with the statement that the three heroes did these things (*'ellæh 'āsû šelošæt haggibborîm*).

The sequence of actions in this narrative is coherent: David expresses a desire to drink the water of the well of his native town of Bethlehem, then occupied by a Philistine garrison. Three of David’s heroes break through the camp and bring him water. But instead of drinking it, David pours it out to the Lord. Although the story is very short and possesses a clear structure, its meaning is not obvious. Gnuse therefore stated, that either “we are not told some necessary information, or there is a problem with this plot”²¹.

The meaning of the story has been questioned very often. It has been assumed that David’s action has to be regarded as ungrateful, rendering his men’s valiant efforts meaningless and that the story consequently contains a hidden accusation. Alternatively, the opposite has been postulated and assumed, that the story is *ad maioram gloriam regis*. David overcame his sinful lust through self-control and resisted drinking the water realizing how he jeopardized the lives of his soldiers. However, David himself entered the Philistine camp in 1 Sam 26:5-13 and thus the story could demonstrate nothing more than how courageous and brave David’s warriors were and particularly how loyal they were to him.²² The “water retrieval” mission in this respect can be seen as “pri-

¹⁸ Gnuse, *Split Water*, 234.

¹⁹ LXX adds here *piomai* (shall I drink). 1 Chr 11:19 has still a fuller text: “Shall I drink the blood of these men with their lives? – for with their lives they brought it.” – See Auld, 1 & 2 Samuel, 598.

²⁰ Gnuse, *Split Water*, 236.

²¹ Gnuse, *Split Water*, 235.

²² See e.g. Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis*, 502: “Sicherlich geht es einmal um eine kühne, keine Gefahr scheuende Gefolgschaftstreue; es ist die Ehre Davids, mit solchen Leuten auf Gedeih und Verderb verbunden zu sein.” See also McCarter, *II Samuel*, 496: “David’s reaction is not ungrateful. On the contrary, by refusing to drink he acknowledges his mistake in idly wishing for water from his hometown and shows that he has no wish to imperil loyal soldiers to indulge his whims.”

marily a reconnaissance mission” which “served as a formative crucible for the courageous warriors, who proved themselves worthy of induction into the elite corps of ‘David’s warrior’s’”.²³ This explanation is especially popular by those scholars who see in the story a variation of the deeds of Alexander the Great (see Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander* 7.5.9-12; Plutarch, *Lives, Alexander* 42.3-6; Arrian, *Anabasis* VI.26,1-3, 1st-2nd century CE).²⁴ Finally, the story was interpreted as a glorification of Yahweh. The libation of the water was considered as a sacral act and therefore the heroes’ feat nothing less than a sacrifice before God.²⁵

All these suggestions are possible readings of one and the same text and it is precisely this ambiguity which made different applications possible as discussed below.

2. David as Saint and Ancestor of Christ in the Medieval Tradition and Antwerp Mannerism

From the Late Middle Ages onwards the story of David and the three warriors was seen closely associated with the Queen of Sheba bringing Solomon gifts (1 Kings 10) and the wise men from the East coming to see the new born king (Matt 2:1-12). The focus of all three stories is on the proskynesis and the adoration. The stories from the Old Testament were regarded as prefiguration of the three Magi, examples of inner epiphany and models of the love for Christ.²⁶ David and Solomon were seen as ancestors of Christ and they were honored by the courageous action of the three warriors or by the Queen of Sheba respectively.²⁷

As a fixed combination these three stories – David and the three Warriors, Queen of Sheba before Solomon, and the Adoration of the three Magi – appear

²³ Garsiel, *The Water Retrieval*, 60*.

²⁴ Mathys, *Ein hellenistisches Buch*, 282 however admits, that the story is not glorifying David in contrast: “Alles Heldische und Rührende, das Alexander hat, fällt bei David weg”. See also Gnuse, *Split Water*, 237-248.

²⁵ See Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, 287: “Damit ist die Wahnsinnstat nicht für den König, sondern für Jahwe getan worden – ihm hat der Einsatz gegolten, und ihm verdanken die Drei, daß sie mit dem Leben davongekommen sind. Letztlich ist also auch diese Heldentat eine Rettungstat Jahwes.”

²⁶ See Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 106-111: “In particular, vv. 11-12 lead to believers to identify with the magi: the magi, who bring gifts to Christ and after meeting the child return home a different way, become examples for people who come to faith, who in so doing assume obligations and who later do not return to their ‘former sect’.”

²⁷ In this context of the typological interpretation, where the Hebrew Bible is seen as prophecy, which is fulfilled in the New Testament, also Ps 72:10 plays an essential role: “May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.” The three Magi as well as the kings from Tarshish and Queen Sheba stand for the pagans worshipping the newborn Christ. See e.g. Tertullian, *Contra Marcion* III,13.

in the widely spread *Speculum humanae salvationis* (Mirror of Salvation).²⁸ The medieval manuscripts from the early fourteenth century are very helpful in clarifying how the story of David functioned as a commentary on the Adoration of the Magi and the manifold typological relationship between Old and New Testament texts: As the three warriors of David were not frightened of the Philistine enemies, the wise men were not scared of the power of Herod and went to Bethlehem to see the new born king. As the three heroes got the water at the well of Bethlehem, so the three Magi received from Christ the water of eternal life. And as David got excited about the courage of his heroes, Christ rejoiced at the coming of the three wise men, because it announced the conversion of the pagans.²⁹



Fig. 1 and 2: *Speculum humanae salvationis* (c. 1350, Ostmitteldeutschland).

One of the first known altars that draws on this typological interpretation is the so called *Heilspiegel Altarpiece*. It comprises several panels, now in the Kunst-

²⁸ This combination is not at all self-evident as a slightly earlier typological interpretation in the *Biblia pauperum* demonstrates. Instead of the three warriors bringing David water from the well of Bethlehem, it shows Abner's pact with David. A wing of a folding triptych, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art shows precisely this scene: David is enthroned, receiving a messenger, who informs him that Abner, ruler of the house of Saul, will help deliver Saul's kingdom to him and thus make him ruler over all Israel (2 Sam 3:12). (See *Abner's Messenger before David and The Queen of Sheba Bringing Gifts to Solomon; The Annunciation, Master of the Saint Barbara Legend*, c. 1480, oil on wood, each panel 93,3 x 44,8 cm, The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931, Accession Number 32.100.56a–d, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). The central panel of this triptych, depicting the *Adoration of the Magi*, is now in the Galleria Colonna, Rome. See Wolff, *Hebrew Kings*, 283.

²⁹ See Niesner, *Das Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, 197-200.

museum Basel, the Musée des Beaux-Arts Dijon, and the Gemäldegalerie Berlin and is ascribed to Konrad Witz.³⁰ He probably painted the altar between 1434 and 1444 for the Augustinian Abbey St Leonhard in Basel. This was precisely the time when the Council of Basel was convened. It can be supposed that the altar and Council stand in close relation and share a time reference.

Twelve fragments belonging to the *Heilspiegel Altarpiece* are known today, six of them show the inner side of the altar.³¹ They all have a golden background in which the names of the figures are written to clarify identification: the slightly smaller paintings show Antipater before Caesar, Esther before Ahasuerus, the Queen of Sheba before Solomon and Abraham before Melchisedech. All four images display a pair of figures with one figure sitting and the other one paying respect. In the three slightly higher paintings, the majority of the figures are standing. One of them shows Augustine and the Tiburtin Sibyl and the other the story of David and his warriors split into two separate scenes, namely “Aby-sai” kneeling before David and “Sabobai” and “Benaia” standing behind them (fig. 3 and 4).³² All three warriors are wearing costly tournament clothing and holding precious vessels which they offer to David. David is not only presented as king, but also as *sacerdos* with his fingers forming the sign of benediction.³³ It was supposed that the figure of David represents Sigismund of Luxemburg, who had been king since 1411 and Holy Roman Emperor since 1433 and present at the Council of Basel as monarch wearing the coronation regalia and as guardian of the Church wearing liturgical cloths during the general assembly of the Council in the Cathedral.³⁴ Not only the fine facial features and physiognomy, but also the hat, obviously made from fur and decorated with pearls, support this argument for a crypto-portrait.³⁵ Although some skepticism towards this interpretation remains,³⁶ it cannot be overlooked that the identification of rulers with the story in 2 Sam 23:13-17 and 1 Chr 11:15-19 played an important role.

The *Heilspiegel Altarpiece* presents biblical and extra biblical figures not only as prefigurations but also as examples of adoration, visualizing a religious expe-

³⁰ Konrad Witz was born in the first decade of the fifteenth century in Rottweil on the Neckar and died in 1445 as a citizen Basel where he spent most time of his life. Althaus, Konrad Witz, 3-4.

³¹ For an overview of relevant propositions of reconstructions, see Eggenberger, *Die Basler Heilspiegelbilder*, 85-88 and Schauder, *Der Basler Heilspiegelaltar*, 105-110.

³² While the three warriors are not mentioned by name in the biblical narrative, they are introduced here as Abysai (Abishai), Sabobai (Sibbecai?) and Benaia (Benaiah).

³³ See Althaus, Konrad Witz, 6.

³⁴ See the Portrait of Emperor Sigismund (c. 1432-1433, tempera on parchment glued on wood, 58.5 x 42 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien) and the drawing by Pisanello (1438, 314 x 384 mm, Département des Arts Graphiques, Inv 2479, Louvre, Paris).

³⁵ For further arguments see Eggenberger, *Die Basler Heilspiegelbilder*, 92-94; Schauder, *Der Basler Heilspiegelaltar*, 113 and others.

³⁶ See Brinkmann, *Der Basler Heilspiegelaltar*, 100: “Auch gegenüber den vermuteten Krypto-porträts des Heilspiegelaltars ist also Skepsis angebracht.”

rience and a clear political message.³⁷ Last but not least the Book of Hours of René d'Anjou demonstrates the personal affection of a sovereign with the story of David and his warriors. René d'Anjou was also present in Basel in 1434, where his title as Duke of Lorraine was confirmed by Emperor Sigismund. During this time, he must have seen the *Heilspiegel Altarpiece* and maybe he was even the commissioner.³⁸ Some years later he added an illustration of King David and the three warriors to his Book of Hours. For a long period of time he was held captive by the Burgundian duke, Philip the Good, and not able to live in his hometown Nancy.³⁹ Sharing a similar experience as David and presumably overwhelmed by homesickness, the biblical prototype may have been especially precious to him.⁴⁰



Fig. 3 and 4: Konrad Witz, *Abisai before David and Sibbecai and Benaiah*. Mirror of human salvation (c. 1435, altarpiece, inner side, mixed media with panel and covered oak wood, 101.5 x 81 cm / 97.5 x 70 cm).

A fragment from a larger painting and presumably also part of an altar, attributed to the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden and now in the Royal Museums

³⁷ See Eggenberger, *Die Basler Heilspiegelbilder*, 95: "In den Handschriften und Drucken des *Speculum humanae salvationis* wird in den Bildern die Typologie veranschaulicht, hier aber werden die Bilder als Mittel eingesetzt, um eine ganz bestimmte Aussage zu formulieren. Und diese Aussage ist unseres Erachtens politischer Natur."

³⁸ See Eggenberger, *Die Basler Heilspiegelbilder*, 96-100.

³⁹ For more details see Eggenberger, *Die Basler Heilspiegelbilder*, 105-106.

⁴⁰ See *Book of Hours, Use of Paris* ('The Hours of René d'Anjou'), Part II, Attributed to Barthélemy d'Eyck, c. 1442-1443, 222 x 165 mm, France, fol. 139r Egerton MS 1070, British Library, London http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Egerton_MS_1070, accessed on 27.3.2018. For more information, see Eggenberger, *David Rex et Propheta*, 492-495.

of Fine Arts in Belgium, is also thought to refer to this story.⁴¹ The king in the foreground could well be David; he has a desperate expression in his eyes, his mouth is open and the teeth visible. Four men are standing directly behind him, without any vessels in their hand and with a calm and stern expression. There are, however, too few iconographical details to substantiate the subject. Nevertheless, Rogier van der Weyden may have known the story of David and the three warriors and may be referring to it by using the well as a disguised symbol in the Bladelin altar (fig. 5) as well as in the Columba altar.⁴² The motive of the well of Bethlehem continued in Flemish painting after its initial appearance here.⁴³



Fig. 5: Rogier van der Weyden (workshop), Middelburger-Altar (Bladelin-Altar; c. 1445, 3 panels, oil on oak wood, 93,5 x 41,7 cm).

The topic of the Adoration of the Magi flanked by David and his warriors on one side and Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and the other became very popular some decades later during the Antwerp Mannerism.⁴⁴ There are at least

⁴¹ Groupe d'hommes (fragment), Rogier van der Weyden (atelier de) (1451-1475, oak, 50,1 x 31,7 cm, Inv. no. 7016, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles). See Blum, *Early Netherlandish Triptychs*, 20-21; Stroo / Syfer-d'Olne, *The Flemish Primitives I*, 153-162. See also <https://www.arnolfinimystery.com/water-of-bethlehem>, accessed on 30.03.2018.

⁴² See Blum, *Early Netherlandish Triptychs*, 21. St Columba Altarpiece, Rogier van der Weyden (1455, oil on oak panel, 3 panels 138 x 70 cm, 138 x 153 cm, 138 x 70 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich).

⁴³ See Blum, *Early Netherlandish Triptychs*, 21. Of course this motive could also refer to Maria as well (*fons puritatis*, *fons amoris* etc.; see Kirschbaum et al., *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, 486-487), but it makes sense, that it is just the "well of Bethlehem" referred to in the David story.

⁴⁴ The Antwerp Mannerism is a stylistic movement in drawing and painting in northern Europe during the early part of the sixteenth century (c. 1500-1530) and has to be distinguished from the Mannerist period in Italy, which began slightly later and lasted until the seventeenth century. The style is characterized by dramatic gestures and figural arrangements, lavish costumes, vivid, sometimes abrasive coloristic effects, imaginative architecture that freely combines Gothic and

four triptychs showing these three scenes together – although not all of them are complete.⁴⁵ The Adoration of the Magi was especially appropriate “to dramatically emphasize the direct intercession of holy figures”⁴⁶ and was developed to give flamboyant expression to the new devotional iconography of the period. The three wise men were usually depicted as kings and represented three different ages of man: a boy, a man in his best age and an old man as well as three known continents, Europe, Asia and Africa. The scenery of the Adoration of the Magi is often set in ruined palace architecture as a symbol of the abandoned house of King David.

The scenery in all four triptychs is the same: In the left wing an aged David under a canopy receives a richly armored knight in his throne room. David is not alone, but surrounded by his courtiers and some curious spectators. The background provides a glimpse on palaces and towers of a city. It makes clear, that David does not sit in an abandoned place, even a cave, but in the center of a large fortified city. The paintings are very rich in detail such as architectural features, a canopy with splendid materials of brocade and velvet, exquisite clothes, costly garments, weapons and vessels made of precious metal, as it is characteristic of that style. Part of David’s menagerie is also a dog, as in this depiction from Pseudo-Blesius, or a trained monkey, symbolizing his wealth.

What is generally regarded as the oldest⁴⁷ of these triptychs is now in the Museo del Prado in Madrid (fig. 6).⁴⁸ It is attributed to Pseudo-Blesius one of the most inventive artists of the Antwerp Mannerists. In this triptych the fantastic architectural setting makes up the greatest part. The very lofty architectural settings are characteristic for Pseudo-Blesius.⁴⁹ Not only the natural elements, the hills and mountains in the background are in this case especially noteworthy, but also the figures, since a separate scene shows how the three warriors stand before the gate at Bethlehem, guarded by Philistine soldiers. There is another triptych, which could have been influenced by that of Pseudo-Blesius in the Museo del Prado and is now in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt (fig. 7).⁵⁰ It was painted by the so-called Master of von Groote Adoration, named after Freiherr von Groote the former owner. Although there are many similarities, some differences are striking

Renaissance elements, and demonstrative technical virtuosity. See Wisse, Northern Mannerism, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nman/hd_nman.htm, accessed on 28.2.2018.

⁴⁵ There might be some more, see Wolff, Hebrew Kings, 281-282.

⁴⁶ Wisse, Northern Mannerism, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nman/hd_nman.htm, accessed on 28.2.2018.

⁴⁷ See van der Brink, Das »von Grootsche Triptichon«, 59-60.

⁴⁸ For more information see <https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/adoracion-de-los-reyes-magos-el-rey-david-recibe/2eb53b52-8511-4639-a5ec-31a60c530373>, accessed on 28.3.2018.

⁴⁹ Wolff, Antwerp Mannerist, 133.

⁵⁰ For more information see <https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/de/werk/triptychon-mit-der-anbetung-der-heiligen-drei-koenige>, accessed on 28.3.2018.

which are characteristic for this version: David is not sitting on his throne as in all the other versions, but instead he appears to stand up from his seating position. There is no genuflecting water-bearer in the foreground, instead, the three mighty men, clearly identifiable, are standing before David. David holds a container of water in his hand and is pouring out the water. The reaction of the three warriors to David's action is remarkable: the first one from the right side, standing in the front, has an introverted, distracted gaze, the second one seems to be very surprised about David's action, while the third one is



Fig. 6: King David Receiving the Cistern Water of Bethlehem, The Adoration of the Magi and King Solomon Receiving Gifts from the Queen of Sheba, attributed to Pseudo-Blesius (c. 1515; oil on panel, 58 x 54 cm).



Fig. 7: King David Receiving the Cistern Water of Bethlehem (91,8 x 42,2 cm), The Adoration of the Magi (114,6 x 84,8 cm) and King Solomon Receiving Gifts from the Queen of Sheba (92,7 x 42,8 cm), attributed to the so called Master of the Groote Adoration of the Magi (1516-1519, mixed media with oak wood).

standing in the background of the image laughing. All three of them are of different ages, as the three kings in the middle panel. There is finally a fourth man standing in the foreground on the left side, close to David, watching the scene. The painting is of remarkable vitality. It consists however of lesser figures compared to the other triptychs and the background is eye-catchingly deserted.⁵¹

⁵¹ Infra-red Reflectography (IRR) brought to light that in the underdrawn preparation of the painting the fight of David's men with the Philistines was depicted. See van der Brink, *Das »von Grooten Triptichon«*, 59.

There are two more triptychs with the same scene, one of them – presumably the earlier one – is now in the Art Gallery Ontario, Toronto (fig. 8 and 9),⁵² the other one is in the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 10 and 11). Both paintings have lost their central panel and have been cut at the top and made rectangular. In the panel of the Art Institute of Chicago the addition of triangular inserts at the inside upper corners is clearly visible.⁵³ In the painting now in the Art Gallery Ontario, Toronto no later addition is visible and this may raise the question whether it had originally been the same height as the one in Chicago. This would also explain why the upper part in the panel of the Art Institute of Chicago is much more elaborate.

The scenes of David and the three warriors are not only similar in subject and composition but also in design. A very close look is necessary to see the differences: a changed shade color, the shape of the arches, putty and hybrid ornamentation, the hat of David, the turban of the third warrior, a heroic sculptured figure in the background (in one version it is a naked boy, presumably Paris, in the other one dressed as warrior holding a vessel), and the two monkeys in the foreground. However, altogether the differences are marginal.

The scene shows an armour-clad warrior, who is about to kneel to present the container of water as David raises his hand. And again, it is precisely this gesture which is eye catching and marks the difference between the two paintings: while David seems to raise his hand tentatively in the painting now in the Art Institute of Chicago, he clearly stretches out his hand to refuse the water in the depiction in the Art Gallery of Ontario. Since the soldier in the middle distance does not carry a water bottle in the depiction from the Art Institute of Chicago, he forms with his hand a similar gesture to David. Together with the hand of the warrior in the front holding the precious water bottle, they form an almost equal-sided triangle around the vessel in the middle.⁵⁴ This gesture also helps to distinguish the three warriors in the painting of the Art Institute of Chicago, from the attendant courtiers around them: The genuflecting water-bearer wearing a helmet and armour in front of David is clearly one of them. Additionally, the armoured figure at the extreme right also belongs to the group of David's mighty

⁵² The title of the painting "The Messengers with the Water Before David" used by McQueen, *From Renaissance to Rodin*, 30, is misleading. Instead of "David and Sheba panels" it would be more appropriate to talk about "David and Salmon panels".

⁵³ See Wolff, *Antwerp Mannerist*, 129.

⁵⁴ I would therefore rather speak of an elimination of the water bottle in the painting from the Art Institute of Chicago, which in my view is much more elaborate. At least, this has nothing to do with the biblical text as Wolff, *Antwerp Mannerist*, 133, suggested: "The scene of King David reveals fewer alterations; nevertheless, the inclusion of a water bottle in the hand of a soldier in the middle distance of the Toronto picture indicates that it is closer to the source of the narrative. The flask is omitted from the same soldier's hand in both the drawing and paint stage of the Art Institute wing, so that he appears to be an astonished onlooker rather than one of the three mighty men."

men and the third one is the turbaned soldier with a pike.⁵⁵ An unarmed young man with a falcon is standing behind David watching the scene. He can already be found in the painting in the Museo del Prado, although without the falcon.



Fig. 8 and 9: The Messengers with the Water Before David and The Queen of Sheba Visiting King Solomon, attributed to Pseudo-Blesius (c. 1515-1520, oil on panel, c. 55,4 x 26,4 cm).

The triptych in the Art Institute of Chicago was also ascribed to a so-called Master of the Grootte Adoration (fig. 10 and 11).⁵⁶ However, because “the association of the wings appears to be even more complex and typical of the exchange of influences among the Antwerp Mannerist painters,”⁵⁷ the altarpiece is ascribed more generally to a Master of the Antwerp Adoration Group.

This topic of the Adoration of the Magi was a favourite subject of Antwerp Mannerist painters and their patrons. In keeping with the increase in private

⁵⁵ See also Wolff, *Antwerp Mannerist*, 131.

⁵⁶ For the results of Infra-red Reflectography (IRR) see Wolff, *Hebrew Kings*, 285-188.

⁵⁷ Wolff, *Antwerp Mannerist*, 132.

devotion at that period, it offers the viewer a close-up, intimate involvement. By adding the typological pendants and depicting king David and his warriors on the



Fig. 10 and 11: King David Receiving the Cistern Water of Bethlehem and King Solomon Receiving the Queen of Sheba, attributed to the Master of the Antwerp Adoration Group (1515-1520, oil on panel, transferred to canvas, 73,5 x 27,5 cm).

left wing, and king Solomon and the Queen of Sheba on the right, the possibilities of identification with the devotees are even expanded. The diversity of gender, ethnicity and age of those who adore Christ, be it as prefiguration or following the story in Matt 2:1-12 is remarkable: not only for the different ages and ethnicities⁵⁸ but – including the Queen of Sheba, a pagan adoring Solomon – also different genders are represented. Finally, yet importantly, the reaction of all figures – be it the three warriors or the three kings – to what they see differs greatly: surprise, laughter, astonishment, horror and maybe even shame. Everyone should be addressed and invited to join the scene and to share their different religious experience.

Although the four triptychs mentioned above are not cult images in a narrow sense and were likely never used as altars (the wings are too small and only painted on one side), they were addressing the religious feeling of a relatively sophisticated audience.⁵⁹ They were presumably not produced on request, but painted for the newly established art market.⁶⁰ The depictions of David and his

⁵⁸ The third soldier standing in the background in the painting in the Art Gallery of Ontario is wearing a turban, similarly to the depictions of the king of Asia in many paintings of the Adoration of the Magi.

⁵⁹ See Wolff, *Antwerp Mannerist*, 134.

⁶⁰ See e.g. Wolff, *Hebrew Kings*, 288: "The Adoration triptychs and fragments with David and Salomon are all executed with care and refinement, but they do not now show signs of having been commissioned works. Indeed, the repetition of related or identical compositions in itself ar-

warriors do not focus on the heroic deeds of single individuals, nor do they seem to have a clear moral message, instead they were documents of worship and belief.⁶¹

3. David as Example of Self-Control and Heroism in Early Modern Landscape Painting

Less than a century later a very different interpretation appears and is first seen in engravings. One of the earliest is from Johann Theodor and Johann Israel de Bry printed in a book about David from 1597.⁶² David is standing dressed as a warrior like the men behind him and the three warriors are bringing him large vessels with water. David has one vessel in his hand and is pouring out the water. In the background the guarded gate of Bethlehem and the three warriors



Fig. 12: David, Virtus exercitissimæ probatum Deo spectaculum, ex Davidis, Pastoris, Militis, Ducis, Exsulis ac Prophetæ exemplis, 1597, 59 (see footnote 63).

are clearly visible. The engraving has the title TEMPERANTIA REGIA (“royal self-control”). The summary of the biblical story, two elegiac distiches and some further explanation contain a demand to the reader to act like David. The focus now clearly lies on David’s deed. He behaves impeccably, although he leads his warriors into danger.

gues against a commission.” Wolff, *Antwerp Mannerist*, 134, summarizes: “The several versions of these compositions point to the repetition of successful formula, but they were probably not painted for the mass market.”

⁶¹ There is just one example which could be used as counter argument: It is a triptych showing scenes from Solomon’s life and presumably also includes Solomon’s worship of other Gods (1 Kings 11). In this case it is highly unlikely that the painting should animate to share the religious feeling depicted. See triptych with the Life Story of Solomon, Master of the Salomon triptych (in or after 1521, oil on panel, 107,5 x 77 cm, Inv. no. 433, Mauritshuis, Den Hag), see <https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/explore/the-collection/artworks/triptych-with-the-life-story-of-solomon-433/#>, accessed on 31.3.2018.

⁶² See Kipfer, *Der bedrohte David*, 357-289 and 401.

*It is not amazing to desire something: it harms, but he wishes to get (the water)
But it is from greater significance, to not hardly conquer one's mind
To endure the danger for the ruler is beautiful
But it is more beautiful, if the king avoids this for those who belong to him.*⁶³

The text in the following exemplifies, that it is normal to be surrendered by natural desires, but that everyone can decide to indulge oneself or to resist.

Sometimes the scene can also be found in illustrated Bibles from the seventeenth and early eighteenth century before interest in this topic disappeared.⁶⁴

Paintings of David and the three warriors are rare, but there is one example which will be discussed here. It is a landscape painting by Claude Gellée, also called Claude Lorrain,⁶⁵ now in the National Gallery in London (fig. 13). He mainly painted commissioned works not only for very rich and powerful nobles from all over Europe (e.g. King Philipp IV from Spain) but also highly placed churchmen. The back of a drawing (see below fig. 16) includes some information about the buyer of this painting: *l'ano 1659 Claudio Gellee tableaux faict pour [rest cut off; in a different hand] prince don Agostino.*⁶⁶ There is no doubt that it was made for Prince Agostino Chigi (1634-1705).⁶⁷ Agostino Chigi was the nephew of Pope Alexander VII, "who had been elected in 1655 and had himself acquired two paintings from Claude the same year".⁶⁸ Pope Alexander VII "had been determined to avoid the worst abuses of nepotism and to preside over a more austere

⁶³ See David, *Virtus exercitissimæ probatum Deo spectaculum, ex Daudis, Pastoris, Militis, Ducis, Exsulis ac Prophetæ exemplis, Benedicto Aria Montano meditante ad pietatis cultum propositis. Æneis laminis ornatum a Ioanne Theodore, & Israele de Bry, fratribus ciuib. Francofurtensibus. Quid huic nous editioni a Conrado Ritterhvsio ex biblioth. M. Bergiiprocurata accesserit, prefatio docebit. Ex Officina M. Zachariæ Palthenii (1597, 59).*

⁶⁴ The same topic can be found in a woodcut from Matthias Scheits in *Biblia Illustrata* a Scheits, te Amsterdam, Reinier en Josua Ottens, c. 1672, <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/bkt01:000400560>, accessed on 31.3.2018.

In the widely spread *Biblia ectypa* the scene is again moved inside a palace: See e.g. Johann Christoph Weigel, *Biblia ectypa. Bildnussen auss Heiliger Schrifft Alt und Neuen Testaments*, Augsburg 1695, e.g. <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11198925-2>, p. 131 accessed on 31.3.2018.

See further two illustrations by Caspar Luyken, *Proefdruk van een prent welke is opgenomen als illustratie in: Historiae Celebriores Veteris Testamenti, 1708*, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.146472>, accessed on 31.3.2018 and *De schriftuurlyke geschiedenissen en gelykenissen van het Oude en Nieuwe Verbond, 2 delen. Amsterdam, Wed. Pieter Arentsz II en Cornelis van der Sys, 1712*, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-45.873>, accessed on 31.3.2018

⁶⁵ Claude Lorrain was born in the Duchy of Lorraine around 1600. It is not clear when he came to Rome, but in the early 20s he became a studio assistant of the landscapist Agostino Tassi. He visited Naples and settled permanently in Rome around 1628. Together with Nicolas Poussin he ranked as one of the most distinguished landscape painters until his death in Rome in 1682.

⁶⁶ See Röthlisberger, *Claude Lorrain*, 343.

⁶⁷ See Langdon, *Claude Lorrain*, 114 suggested, that it was presumably intending to hang at the Castel Sant' Angelo or in the palace at the piazza SS Apostoli where Prince Agostino lived with the Pope's brother, Mario Chigi.

⁶⁸ Röthlisberger, *Claude Lorrain*, 343. See also Langdon, *Claude Lorrain*, 114.

court".⁶⁹ It therefore has been suggested, that the choice of the subject of David does not commemorate a specific event but reflects the condition of Prince Agostino and the desire of the family to refrain from the usual excessive nepotism.⁷⁰ If this interpretation is correct, the story of David therefore became an example illustrating the rejection of dubious gifts. It would then have been interpreted as an anti-bribery narrative.



Fig. 13: Claude Lorrain, Landscape with David and the Three Heroes at the Cave of Adullam (1658, oil on canvas, 112 x 185 cm).

But what is most surprising in this huge painting (please note, that the dimensions are larger than the altar paintings mentioned above!) is the landscape itself: with its majestic rocks, trees, and Bethlehem with its wonderful array of pyramids and towers, it takes up the heroic theme.⁷¹ As it is characteristic for Claude Lorrain, the mythological and biblical scenes were embedded amidst an impressive landscape scenery and the figures are all very tiny, almost marginal to the whole setting. It becomes clear that Claude Lorrain is not painting with the help of figures, with gesture, body language and physiognomic expression, but he is painting the whole story in a much more holistic way including the land-

⁶⁹ Langdon, Claude Lorrain, 114.

⁷⁰ See Röthlisberger, Claude Lorrain, 344. See Langdon, Claude Lorrain, 114: "In his painting for Agostino Chigi, Claude holds up the stern virtue of David, who refuses to drink the water that the three heroes have brought for him; their risk has been too great, for they have daringly broken through the ranks of the Philistines to obtain it."

⁷¹ See Langdon, Claude Lorrain, 114. Landscape painting was divided into two styles the "heroic" and the "pastoral or rustic" by Roger de Piles (1635-1709) in *Cours de Peinture par Principes* (1708).

scape.⁷² Some of the elements Claude Lorrain repeated several times and also used them in this painting such as the isolated tree, the massive rock and the plain extending into the far horizon.

Although the landscape is clearly Italian, the painting is an authentic interpretation of the geographical setting of the biblical text. The cave Adullam⁷³ in the foreground with David and his entourage, Bethlehem in the middle distance – a free variant of the Roman Torre delle Milizie (upper part) and Torre dei Conti (lower part)⁷⁴ – and the valley of Rephaim in the far distance, were visualised very vividly. Claude Lorrain did not paint the historical town of Bethlehem as it was known at that time nor did he paint an oriental landscape,⁷⁵ rather he located the story of David in his own context. By showing a very fertile western European landscape Claude Lorrain is underlining the symbolic meaning of the story: David's desire to drink water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem was prompted more by nostalgia for the fine-tasting water of Bethlehem's well than by real thirst.

As I have demonstrated above, the biblical text is not very precise whether David is located in the cave of Adullam or in the stronghold and Claude Lorrain carefully left out this question: He did not depict the place where David remained. We can see a small cave in the background but there is no hint that it is David's lodging. Rather it is possible to suppose that David just left the stronghold, which is situated behind him but not depicted in the painting.



Fig. 14: Claude Lorrain, Rocky Landscape with Two Soldiers (c. 1658, black chalk, pen and brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white, 311 x 430 mm).

⁷² Sonnabend, Claude Lorrain, 17: "Die großen Historienmaler seit Raffael erzählen vor allem mithilfe der Figuren, mit Gesten, Körpersprache und physiognomischem Ausdruck. Claude erzählt von der Landschaft her oder besser gesagt vom Ganzen her. Er verlegt die Dramaturgie seiner Geschichten in die Komposition selbst und der Betrachter erfährt dies umso intensiver, je tiefer er sich auf das Gemälde einlässt."

⁷³ Langdon, Claude Lorrain, 106, suggested, that "the towering cliffs and cave are drawn from a small strikingly naturalistic painting of a sheepfold in the Campagna". See Claude Lorrain, 1656, oil on panel, 35 x 44,5 cm, Akademie der bildenden Künste, Wien.

⁷⁴ See Röhrlisberger, Claude Lorrain, 343.

⁷⁵ Claude Lorrain only rarely painted oriental landscape with palms etc. See e.g. Saint Onofrius 1635, Oil on canvas, 158 x 237 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Claude Lorrain depicted David standing in the middle of a wonderful landscape on a very “unnatural” platform. This platform seems to be cut in the rock but it is from a very symmetric round form.

Two preparatory drawings by Claude Lorrain are known and show two different scenes (fig. 14 and 15). However, there is no doubt that those sheets were done in view of the painting. The first one displays two of David’s he-



Fig. 15: David and the Three Heroes, Wildenstein Album (1658, pen and brown ink and wash, and yellow-brown wash, with white opaque watercolor over black chalk, inscribed and signed on lower margin in pen and brown ink: “disigne fait del quadro de principe don Agustino / Cladio G. / I. V. F. Roma”, and at lower right: “Davide al desert”, 252 x 361 mm).

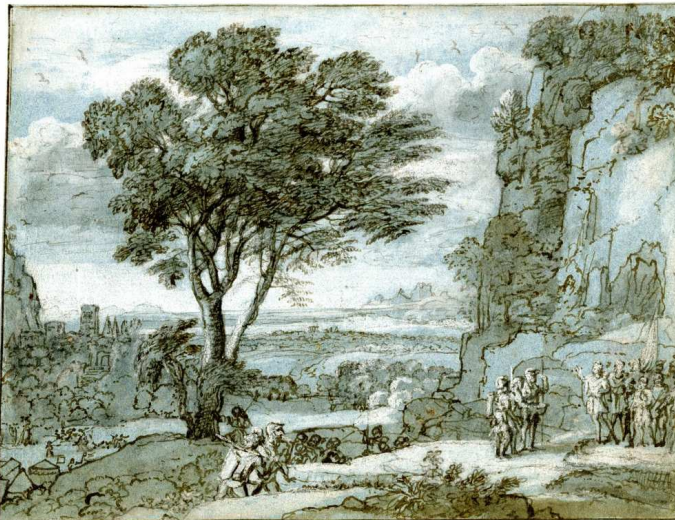


Fig. 16: Liber veritatis 145, blue paper, pen, gray-brown wash, heightened Landscape with David at the cave of Adullam (Second Book of Samuel, XXIII, 13-17), record of painting in the National Gallery, London (NG 6471) from the Liber Veritatis; in foreground at right David and other figures standing in front of the cave, beyond at left Bethlehem, and tents of the Philistines (1658, pen and brown ink and grey-brown wash, heightened with white, on blue paper).

roes.⁷⁶ The second one shows the three heroes before David and belongs to one of Claudes’ most splendid figure drawings.⁷⁷

There is a third drawing (fig. 16) which is clearly a record done from the painting. (Claude Lorrain made a drawing of all his paintings and collected them in a book, the so-called *Liber Veritatis*. By doing so, he highlighted some details and changed them smoothly. The *Liber Veritatis* guaranteed that no other painter could copy a subject from Claude Lorrain and sell it under a false name.)

⁷⁶ Röthlisberger, Claude Lorrain, 304 states: “The recto of this large drawing is not a compositional study in the ordinary sense. It would be unsuitable for the subject, since it leaves no space for David and the three Heroes on the right.”

⁷⁷ Röthlisberger, Claude Lorrain, 304. In this case it is impossible to decide whether this is an ultimate study for the figures or a record of the finished picture.

But what has not been perceived so far is that Claude Lorraine did not only put the story in a natural context, but also “historised” it. David is not depicted as old king, but as a young, strong hero as he is known from the so called History of David’s Rise. Claude Lorraine painted a moment in the story not focusing on the selfless action of his warriors (which is not depicted), nor on their admiration of David (they do not kneel before him), but on David’s rejection of the water: David lifts his hands in a clearly repellent gesture. The climax of the story, David’s reaction on the deeds of his warriors is rendered as close as possible to the biblical text.

4. Conclusion

The differences between the two types of visual interpretation are substantial. The altar paintings from the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century focus on the depiction of belief and adoration. They were made as devotional work and stand in close connection to a typological interpretation. The story of David and the three warriors bringing water from the well of Bethlehem is understood as an antetype of the New Testament story of the Adoration of the Magi. As the three warriors, the Queen of Sheba and the three Magi are worshiping David, Salomon or Christ, respectively, by bringing them gifts, the owner is worshiping the Lord by commissioning an altar. The triptychs as such had a high religious value.

The visual interpretation from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are different. They seem to stand in a profane context. The sacral or even liturgical context has been replaced by a moral and aesthetic function. In the painting by Claude Lorraine the huge format and the importance of the landscape demonstrate this focus on the *docere* (instructing), *movere* (move) and *delectare* (delight). This image may once have had a prominent place in a Roman palace. Claude Lorraine visualized the biblical text very precisely. He wanted to render the story closely to the Scripture and by doing so he laid an emphasis on a historical interpretation. The *sensus literalis* denotes what the text directly states or reports. This is not to say that the painting did not have any moral meaning. At that time the Aristotelian concept of the *similitudo temporis* still played an important role. It holds that the past, present and future are identical and that the situation in antiquity is repeated in present days. Pagan-antique figures and Old Testament characters were taken as positive or negative examples in early modern times. The biblical texts were understood as secular classical texts, but at the same time they function as a moral instance. It is therefore also possible that the image of Claude Lorraine included a moral dimension by stressing the humble reaction of David, abstinence and self-control refusing to drink the water which the three men drew at risk to their life. Only with the end of the moral

claim of images the story of David and the three warriors finally ceased to be of significance and fade into oblivion.

Both types of images are very typical for their time. One is probably made for a devotional context focusing on a typological and allegorical reading. The other is made for a profane context, focusing on a moral, aesthetical and historical interpretation. These two types of images are an excellent example of the hermeneutical shift during that time. The invention of central perspective in the Renaissance period and the development of novel visual representation in the Italian Renaissance with a more realistic style led to a mimetic understanding. The image was not to be understood as a symbol, but as a realistic reproduction of a historical reality.⁷⁸ The sixteenth and seventeenth century can be understood as an epoch in between the patristic-medieval interpretation of the Scripture and modern biblical criticism.⁷⁹ The ahistorical, typological interpretation is completed by a philological and historical analysis. The biblical stories are not understood anymore as axiomatic truth but were increasingly analyzed through a historical-critical method. Richard Simon, Jean le Clerc, Benedict de Spinoza and others started to ascertain the text's original meaning in its historical context and its literal sense or *sensus literalis historicus*. This new understanding of the biblical text influenced also visual interpretations. Only having this in mind, we are able to understand the visual exegesis of an image correctly. Therefore it is not only necessary to carefully analyze the historical, biographical, social, religious context of an image, but also take into account the hermeneutic of scripture and the function of images. And it is precisely such "pictorial transmutations of a single text" that give "iconographic studies their great interest as revelation of changing ideas and ways of thought"⁸⁰.

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⁷⁸ See Kipfer, Art. Baroque Visual Art, 71.

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⁸⁰ Schapiro, Words and Pictures, 13.

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