

Works of Arthur Golding - Translations
A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice, 1575

Original Spelling Version

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Words discussed in the glossary are underlined.

Run-ons are indicated by ~~~

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A Tragedie
of Abraham's Sacrifice.

Written in French by Theodose Beza

Translated by Arthur Golding

Finished at Poules Belchamp
in Essex, the XI. of August, 1575.

Thomas Vautroullier, printer.
London, 1577

THE PLAYERS:
THE PROLOGUE, EPILOGUE
ABRAHAM, a shepherd
SARA, his wife
ISAAC, their son
SATAN

THE SHEPHERDS
AN ANGELL OF THE LORD

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THE PROLOGUE

God saue you euery chone both great and small
Of all degrees: right welcom be you all.
It is now long, at least as seemes to me,
Since here such preace together I did see.
VVould God we might each weeke through all the yeare
See such resort in Churches as is here.
Ye Gentlemen and Ladies, I ye pray
Giue eare and harken what I haue to say.
To hold your peace alonly I require.
VVhat weene you (some wil say) by that desire. [Pro.10]
VVe nother can nor will away with that.
But yit you must, or else I tell you flat,
That both of us our labour lose together.
In speaking I, and you in comming hither.
VVherefore I craue but silence at your hand,
My wordes with patience for to understand.
Both great and small, alonly doe but heare,
And I will tel you straunge & woundrous geere.
VVherefore now harken: for the thing is great
VVhereof I mind this present time to treat. [Pro.20]
You thinke your selues perchaunce to be in place,
VVere as you be not, now as standes the case.
For Lausan is not here, it is farre hence.

But yit when neede requires, I will dispence
VVith all of you, that hence within an hower
Eche one may safely be within his bowre.
As now this is the land of Palestine.
VVhat? do you wonder at these words of myne?
I say yit further to you, see you well.
Yon place? It is the house wherein doth dwell [Pro.30]
A servaunt of the liuing Gods, whose name
Hight Abraham the righteous man, the same
VVhose liuely faith hath won him endles fame.
Anon you shall him tempted see and tryde,
I & toucht to quicke with grefs that shal betide.
And lastly you shall see him iustified
By faith, for killing (in a certeine wise)
Isaac his dearest sonne in sacrifice.
And shortly you shall see straunge passions:
The flesh, the world his owne affections [Pro.40]
Not onely shall be shewed in liuely hew,
But, (which more is) his faith shal them subdue.
And that is so, many a faithfull wight,
Anon shall beare me record in your sight.
First Abraham, and Sara you shall see,
And Isaac did shall with them both agree.
Now are not these sufficient witnessings?
VVho minds therefore to see so wondrous things,
VVe pray him onely talking to forbear
And unto us to giue attentive eare, [Pro.50]
Assuring him that he shall see and heare
No trifling toyes but graue & wondrous geere,
And that we will his eares to him restore,
To vse them as he listeth as before.

Abrahams Sacrifice
*Abraham commeth out of his house
 & sayth.*



A Las my God, and was there euer any,
 That hath indurde of combrances so many,
 As I haue done by fleeing too and fro,
 Since I my natiue countrie did forgo?
 Or is there any liuing on the ground,
 Of benefits that hath such plenty found?
 Loe how thou makest mortall men to see,
 Thy passing goodnes by calamitie.
 And as of naught thou madest euery thing:
 So out of ill thou causdest good to spring,
 Was neuer wight so blessed at thy hand,
 That could thy greatnes fully understand.

B

THE PLAY

[Abraham commeth out of his house & sayth.]

ABRAHAM: Alas, my God, and was there euer any,
 That hath indurde of combrances so many,
 As I haue done by fleeing too and fro,
 Since I my natiue countrie did forgo?
 Or is there any liuing on the ground,
 Of benefits that hath such plenty found?
 Loe how thou makest mortall men to see,
 Thy passing goodnes by calamitie.
 And as of nought thou madest euery thing:
 So out of ill thou causdest good to spring. [10]
 Was neuer wight to blessed at thy hand,
 That could thy greatnes fully understand.

Full threescore yeares and thereto fifteene mo,
My life had lasted now in weale and woe,
According to the course in sundry wise
Appointed by thy heauenly destinies,
Whose will it was I should be bred and borne
Of Parents rich in catell, coyne, and corne.
But unto him that richest is in see,
What ioy or comfort could his riches be, [20]
When he compeld, compelled was (I say)
To see, to serue, and worship euery day,
A thowsand forged gods in steede of thee,
Which madst the heauen & earth which we do see?
Thou then eftsoones didst will me to conuey
My selfe from those same places quite away.
And I immediatly upon thy call,
Left Parents, countrie, goods with gods & all.
Yea Lord, thou knowest I wist not whither then
Thou wouldst me lead, or where me stay agen: [30]
But he that followeth thee, full well may say,
He goeth right: and while he holds that way
He neuer needes to feare that he shall stray.

[Sara comming out of the same house sayeth.]

SARA: In thinking and bethinking me what store
Of benefits I haue had erst heretofore,
Of thee my God which euer hast prouided
To keepe my mind and bodie undefiled,
And furthermore according to thy word
(Which I tooke then as spoken but in boord)
Hast blist my aged time aboue all other, [40]
By giuing me the happy name of mother.
I am so ravisht in my thought and mind,
That (as I would full fayne) no meane I find
The least of all the benefits to commend,
Which thou my God doest daily still me send.
Yit sith alone with thee Lord here I am,
I will thee thanke at least wise as I can.
But is not yun my husband whom I see?
I thought he had bin further of from me.

ABRAHAM: Sara, Sara, thy mind I well allow, [50]
Nought hast thou sayd but I the same auow.
Come on, and let us both giue thankes together
For Gods great mercy since our comming hither
The frute thereof as both of us hath found:
Let prayse & thankes from both of us resownd.

SARA: Contented Sir, how might I better doe,
Than you to please in all you set me too?
And euen therefore hath God ordeyned me.
Agein, wherein can time spent better be,
Than in the setting forth of Gods dew praise, [60]
Whose maiestie doth shew it selfe alwayes.
Aboue and eke beneath, before our eyes?

ABRAHAM: Of truth no better can a man devise,
Than of the Lord to sing the excellence,
For none can pay him other recompence
For all his giftes which daily he doth send,
Than in the same, his goodnes to commend.

The Song of Abraham and Sara.

Come on then, let us now beginn to sing
with hartes in one accord,
The prayses of the souerein heauenly king [70]
our onely God and Lord.
His onely hand doth giue us whatsoever
We haue, or shall hereafter haue for euer.
It is alonly he that doth mainteine
the heauen that is so hie,
So large in compasse and in pace so mayne:
and eke the starrie skie,
The course whereof he stablisht hath so sure,
That ay withouten fayle it doth endure.
The skorching heate of sommer he doth make, [80]
the haruest and the spring:
And winters cold that maketh folke to quake,
in season he doth bring.
Both wethers, faire, and fowle, both sea & land,
Both night and day be ruled by his hand.

Alas good Lord! and what are we that thou
didst choose and enterteine
Alonly us of all the world, and now
doth safely us mainteine
So long a time from all the wicked rowtes [90]
In towne and country where we come throughouts.
Thou of thy goodnes drewest us away
from places that are giuen
To serue false gods: and at this present day
hast wandringly us driuen,
To trauell still among a thowsand daungers,
In nacions unto whom we be but straungers.
The land of Egypt in our chiefest neede
thou madst to haue a care,
Thy seruants bodies to mainteine and feede [100]
with fine and wholsom fare,
And in the ende compelledst Pharao,
Full sore against his will, to let us goe.
Foure mightie Kinges were already gon
away with victorie,
I ouertooke and put to flight anon
before they could me spie.
And so I saw the feeldes all stained red
With blud of those which through my sword lay dead.
From God receiued well this benefite: [110]
for he doth mind us still,
As his deere freendes in whom he doth delight,
and we be sure he will,
Performe us all thinges in dew time and place,
As he hath promist of his owne free grace.
To us and unto our posteritie
this land belongs of right,
To hold in honor and felicitie
as God it hath behight,
And we beleue it surely shall be so, [120]
For from his promise God will neuer goe.
Now tremble you ye wicked wights therefore,
which sowed are so thicke
Throughout the world, & worship now such store
of gods of stone and sticke,
Which you your selues with wicked hands do carue,

To call upon and vainly for to serue.
And thou O Lord whom we doe know to be
the true and liuing God,
Come from thy place, that we may one day see [130]
the vengeance of thy rodde
Upon thy foes, that they may come to nowght
With all their gods deuizd through wicked thought.

ABRAHAM: Go to my Sara, that great God of ours
Hath blist us, to thintent that we all howres
Should for his giftes which he alone doth giue,
Him serue and prayse as long as we doe liue,
Now let us hence and chiefly take good heede,
We hazard not our sonne to much in deede,
By suffering him to haunt the company [140]
Of wicked folke, with whom you see we be.
A new made vessell holdeth long the sent
Of that that first of all is in it pent.
A child by nature nere so well dispozed,
By bringing up is quite and cleane transpozed.

SARA: Sir, I doe hope my dewtie for to doe,
Therefore the thing that we must looke unto,
Is that Gods will may be fulfilled in him.
Right sure I am we shall him weeld so trim,
And that the Lord will blisse him so: as all [150]
Shall in the ende to his high honor fall.

* * * * *

[Satan in the habit of a Monke.]

SATAN: I go, I come, I trauell night and day,
I beate my braynes, that by no kind of way
My labour be in any wise misspent.
Reigne God aloft aboue the firmament,
The earth at least to me doth wholly drawe,
And that mislikes not God nor yet his lawe
As God by his in heauen is honored:
So I on earth by myne am worshipped.
God dwells in heauen, and I on earth likewise [160]
God maketh peace, and I doe warres deuize.

God reignes aboue, and I doe reigne belowe:
God causeth loue, and I doe hatred sowe.
God made the starrie skies and earthy clodds:
I made much more: for I did make the godds.
God serued is by Angells full of light:
And doe not my faire Angells glister bright?
I trow there is not one of all my swine,
Whose grooyn I make not godlike for to shine.
Those lechours, drunkards, gluttons, ouerfedd, [170]
Whose noses shine faire tipt with brazell redd,
Which weare fine precious stones uppon their skinnes
Are my upholders & my Cherubins.
God neuer made a thing so perfect yit,
That could the makers full perfection hit.
But I haue made, (whereof I glory may)
A thowsand worser than my selfe farre way.
For I beleue and know it in my thought,
Therz but one God, & that my self am nowght.
But yit I know there are whose foolish mind [180]
I haue so turned quite against the kind,
That some (which now is common long agone)
Had leuer serue a thowsand gods than one.
And others haue conceiued in their brayne,
that for to thinke there is a God is vayne.
Thus since the time that man on mowld was made,
With happy lucke I followed haue this trade
And follow wil (come losse or come there gain)
So long as I this habit may mainteine,
I say this habit wherewithall as now [190]
The world is unacquainted: but I vow
The day shall come it shall be knowne so rife,
Of euery wight, both child, yea man, and wife,
That nother towne nor village shall scape free
From seeing it to their great miserie.
O cowle, o cowle, such mischef thou shalt wurk,
And such abuse shall underneath thee lurke
At high noone daies: O Cowle, o Cowle I say,
Such mischief to the world thou shalt conuey,
That if it were not for the spightfulnesse, [200]
Wherewith my hart is frawghted in excesse:
Euen I my selfe the wretched world shall rew,

To see the things that shall through thee insew.
For I, than who, of all none worse can be,
Am made yit worse by putting on of thee.
These thinges shall in their time without all faile
Be brought to passe. As now I will assaile
One Abraham, who onely with his race
Withstands me, and defies me to my face.
In deede I haue him often times assailed: [210]
But euer of my purpose I haue failed.
I neuer saw olde fellow hold such tack.
But I will lay such loade upon his backe,
That (as I hope) ere long I shall him make
A sonne of myne. I know that he doth take
The true Creator for his onely hold
To trust unto: and that doth make him bold.
In deede he hath alliance with the trew
Creator, who hath promist him a new
Right wondrous things, according whereunto [220]
He hath already done, and still will doe.
But what for that? If stedfastnes him faile
To hold out still: what shall his hope availe?
I trow I will so many blowes him giue,
That from his hold at length I shall him driue.
His elder sonne I feare not: and the other
Shal hardly scape these hands of mine: the mother
Is but a woman: as for all the meynie
That serue him, they be simple sowles as enie
Can lightly be: there is a ragged rowt [230]
Of sillie shepherds, nother skild nor stowt
Ynough against my wily sleights to stand.
But hence I will and worke so out of hand.
To haue them, that unlesse I misse my marke,
Anon I will deceiue their greatest Clarke.

* * * * *

[Abraham comming out of his house agein sayth.]

ABRAHAM: What euer thing I doe or say,
I weery am thereof streit way,
How meete so euer that it bee,
Soe wicked nature reignes in me.

But most of all it me mislikes. [240]
And to the hart with sorrow strikes,
That seeing God is neuer tyrde
In helping me, yea undezyrde:
I also likewise doe not streyne
My selfe, unweerie to remayne,
In dew and trew acknowledgment.
Of his great mercie to me sent,
As well with mouth as with my hart.

THE ANGELL: Abraham, Abraham.

ABRAHAM: ~~~ Lord here I am.

ANGELL; Goe take thyne onely deerebeloued sonne, [250]
Euen Isaac, and bring him to the place
Which hight the myrrh of God: which being done
Slea him in sacrifice before my face:
And burne him whole upon a hill which I
Will shew thee there, goe hye thee by and by.

ABRAHAM: What! burne him! burne him! wel I wil do so.
But yit my God, the thing thou putst me to
Seemes very straunge and irksom for to be --
Lord, I beseech thee, wilt thou pardon me?
Alas, I pray thee giue me strength and power, [260]
To doe that thou commaundest me this howre.
I well perceiue and plainly now doe find,
That thou art angry with me in thy mind.
Alas my Lord I haue offended thee.
O God by whom both heauen & earth made be,
With whom intendest thou to be at war?
And wilt thou cast thy seruaunt down so far?
Alas my sonne, alas, what shall I doe?
This matter askes advised looking too.

* * * * *

[A companie of Shepherdes comming out of Abraham's house.]

THE ONE HALF OF THEM: Hie time it is Sirs as I trow [270]
We hie us packing on a row
To our companions where they be.

THE OTHER HALF: Euen so thinkes me.
For if we all together were
We should the lesser neede to feare.

ISAAC: How Sirs, I pray you tary. Will
You leaue me so behind you still?

SHEPHERDS: Good child abide you there,
Or else our maister your father
And our mistresse your mother may, [280]
Be angrie for your going away:
The time will come by Gods good grace,
That you shall grow and proue a pace:
And then he shall perceiue the charge,
Of keeping flocks in feelds at large,
What daungers come from hill and dale,
By rauening beasts that lye in stale,
Among the couerts of the woode
To kill our cattell for their foodd.

ISAAC: And doe ye thinke I would, [290]
Goe with you though I could,
Before I knew my fathers mind?

SHEPHERDS: In deede a child of honest kind,
And well brought up, ought euermore
His fathers and his mothers lore
In all his doings to obey.

ISAAC: I will not fayle it (if I may)
To die therefore: but will ye stay
A while untill I ronne and know
My fathers will?

SHEPHERDS: ~~~ Yea, therefore goe. [300]

The Song of the Shepherds

O happy is the wight
That grounds him selfe aright
On God, and maketh him his shield:
And lets the worldly wize,
Which looke about the skies,
Goe wander where they list in field.
No rich, ne poore estate,
Can puffe or yit abate,
The godly and the faithfull hart:
The faithfull goeth free [310]
Although he martred be
A thowsand times with woe and smart.
The mighty God him leeds,
In chiefest of his needes,
And hath of him a speciall care,
To make him to abide,
Euen at the poynt to slide,
When worst of all he seemes to fare.
Whereof a prooffe we see
Our maister well may be: [320]
For why, the more him men assayle
And urge on euery side:
Lesse feare in him is spyde,
And lesse his courage doth him fayle.
He left his natiue soyle,
Hard famin did him foyle,
Which draue him into Egypt land,
And there a king of might,
Tooke Sara from his sight,
Uniustly euen by force of hand. [330]
But streit on sute to God,
The king through Gods sharp rod,
Did yeeld to him his wife streit way,
And Abraham neuer stayd,
But as the king him prayd,
Departed thence without delay.
And during this his flight
He grew to so good plight,
That Loth to part away was faine:
Bycause, as stode the case, [340]
To litle was the place,

To keepe the flockes of both them twayne.
There fell a sodeyn iarre
Betweene nine Kings through warre,
Wherein fiue kings were put to flight,
And Loth him selfe, with all
His goods both great and small,
Away was caried cleane and quite.
Our faithfull Maister streit,
On newes of this conceit, [350]
Made fresh pursute immediatly:
And having but as then
Three hundred eighteene men,
Did make the enmies all to fly.
And of the reskewd pray
The tenth to the Preest did pay.
And having done ech man his right,
Returned home anon,
With commendacion,
For putting so his foes to flight. [360]
But nother sonne he had,
Nor daughter him to glad.
Which thing when Sara did perceiue,
She put her maid in bed,
To serue her husbands sted,
Bycause her selfe could not conceiue.
So Agar bare a sonne
A thirteene yeares outronne,
Whose name is called Ismael.
And to this present day, [370]
Our maisters goods are ay
Increaced passing wondrous well.
Then for the couenants sake
Which God him selfe did make,
Betwene him and our maister deere,
Our maister and we all,
As well the great as small,
At once all circumcized were.

ISAAC: My fellowes: God hath shewed himselfe to us.
So good, so loving and so gracious, [380]
That I can neuer any thing yit craue

No small ne great, but that I much more haue,
Than I desire. I would haue gone with you
(As you doe know) to see full fayne: but now
Behold my father commeth here at hand.

ABRAHAM AND SARA: But it behoueth us to understand,
That if God will us any thing to doe,
We must streyt wayes obedient be thereto,
And nother striue nor speake against his will.

SARA: In deede Sir so I thinke and purpose still. [390]
But yit I pray you thinke not straunge, that I
Doe take this matter somewhat heuily.

ABRAHAM: A good hart (wife) doth shew it self at neede.

SARA: Thats trew: & therefore lets be sure in deede,
It is Gods will and mind we should doe so.
We haue but this child onely and no mo
Who yit is weake: in him stands all the trust
Of all our hope, with him it falls to dust.

ABRAHAM: Nay rather in God.

SARA: ~~~ But giue me leaue to say.

ABRAHAM: Can euer God his word once sayd unsay? [400]
No, no, and therefore be you out of dowl,
That God wil keepe & prosper him throughout.

SARA: Yea, but will God haue us to hazard him?

ABRAHAM: No hazarding it is where God doth gard him.

SARA: My hart misgiueth some mishappe.

ABRAHAM: I nother dread nor dowl of any hap.

SARA: There is in hand some secret enterpryze.

ABRAHAM: What ere it be, it doth from God aryze.

SARA: At least, if what it were you wist.

ABRAHAM: I shall ere long, if God so list. [410]

SARA: So long away the child will neare abide.

ABRAHAM: For that our God will well ynough prouide.

SARA: Yea but the wayes now full of daungers are.

ABRAHAM: Who dyes in following God needs neuer care.

SARA: If he should dye, then farewell our good dayes.

ABRAHAM: God doth foresett mens dying times alwayes.

SARA: It were much better here to sacrificyze.

ABRAHAM: What euer you thinke, God thinks otherwise.

SARA: Well then Sir, sith it must be so
The grace of God with both you goe. [420]
Adiew my sonne.

ISAAC: ~~~ Good mother eke adieu.

SARA: My sonne obey thy father still,
And God thee saue: that if it be his will
Thou mayst in health returne right soone agein.
My child I can not me refreyne
But that I needes must kisse the now.

ISAAC: Good mother, if it should not trouble you,
I would desire you one thing ere I went.

SARA: Say on my sonne: for I am well content
To graunt thee thy request. [430]

ISAAC: I humbly doe you pray
To put this greef away.
These teares of yours refrayne,
I shall returne ageine
(I hope) in better plyght
Than now I am in syght:
And therefore stay this greef and wo.

ABRAHAM: My fellows: we haue now to goe
Good six daies iorney ere we rest:
See that your cariages be prest [440]
And all things that we shall neede.

THE COMPANIE: Sir, as for that let us take heede,
Doe you no more but onely shew your will.

ABRAHAM: On then: and God be with you still.
The mightie God who of his goodnesse ay,
From time to time euen to this present day,
So kind and gracious unto us hath be,
Be helpfull still both unto you and mee.
Deale wisely howsoeuer that you fare:
I hope this iorney which we going are [450]
Shall be performed happily.

SARA: Alas alas full litle wote I
When I shall see you all ageine.
The Lord now with you all remayne.

ISAAC: Good mother God you guyde.

ABRAHAM: ~~~ Farewell.

THE COMPANIE: God guide, and keepe you through his grace.

ABRAHAM: Gowe on Sirs, let us hence apace.

* * * * *

SATAN: But is not this ynough to make me mad,
That whereas I make euery man to gad,
And all the world to follow after me, [460]
If they my finger doe but hild up see,
And therwithall set all thinges on a rore:
Yit for all that I neuer could the more
This false olde fellow bring unto my lure,
For any thing that yit I can procure?
Behold he is departed from this place
Gods will full bent tobey in euery cace,
Although the matter neuer be so straunge.

But yit it may be that his mind will chaunge,
Or that he shall him sacrifyze in deede, [470]
And so he shall if I may help him speede.
For if he doe, then Isaac shall be dead,
Whereby my hart shal be deliuered
Of that same feare least God in him fulfill,
The threate whereby he promist me to spill.
And if he chaunge his mind, then may I say
The gold is wonne. For may I once so play
My part, as for to make him disobey
Almighty Gods commaundment, or repyne
Then were he banisht from the grace diuine. [480]
That is the marke whereat I alwayes shoote,
Now hye thee Cowle, set forth the better foote:
Lets ronne apace, and by some cunning drift
Foyle him in feeld, or put him to his shift.

* * * * *

A PAUZE

ABRAHAM: My children: this is now the third day
That we haue traueled making little stay.
Here must you tarry: as for me, I will
With Isaac, goe yit further onward still,
Unto a place from hence yet distant more
Which God almighty shewed me before, [490]
Where I must pray and offer sacrifyze
As he requires. Wherefore in any wyze
Abide you here, and stirre not hence. But thou
Sonne Isaac shalt goe with me as now:
For God requires in this behalfe thy presence.

THE SHEPHERDS: Sir, sith you forbid us we will not hence.

ABRAHAM: This bundle unto him betake,
And I the fire and knife will take.
We shal (God willing) come agein right soone
But in the mean while, wot ye what to doone? [500]
Pray ye to God both for your selues and us.
Alas, alas, was neuer wyght, ywus.

SHEPHERDS: We will not fayle.

ABRAHAM: That had such neede as I.
Well Sirs, I say no more but God be wy.

SHEPHERDS: And with you too.

HALFE THE SHEP: ~~~ It greatly amazeth me.

HALFE THE SHEP: And me likewyze.

HALFE THE SHEP: ~~~ And me too, for too see
Him so dismayd which hath to stowtly borne
All haps that haue befallne him heretooforme.

HALFE THE SHEP: ~~~ To say he is afraid of warre
Debate, or strife, or any iarre [510]
It were no reason: for we knowe,
Abimelech the king did shewe
Such honor to our maisterward,
That he not onely had regard
To visit him, but eke did knit
A leage with him which lasteth yit.
And as for howshold matters, what
Can he desire which he hath nat?

HALFE THE SHEP: He liues in outward peace and rest:
But age perchance doth woork unrest. [520]

HALFE THE SHEP: Of zunnnes he hath but onely one
But in the world mo such are none.
His cattell thryue in such great store,
As God doth seeme to giue him more,
Than he him selfe can wish or craue.

HALFE THE SHEP: Nothing ye can so perfect haue,
But alwaies sumwhat is amisse.
I pray to God him so to blisse,
As soone to cure this his disease.

HALFE THE SHEP: Amen, say I, if it him please. [530]

HALFE THE SHEP: Sure I suppoze how ere the cace doth stand
He hath this time some weightie thing in hand.

The Song of the Shepherds

As howge as is the world we see
With all the things that in it be,
Yet nothing is so strong and sure,
That can for euer here endure.
Almighty God which all mainteynes,
Can nothing spie that ay remaines,
Except him selfe: all else eche one
Indure short time, and soone are gone. [540]
The sunne with bright and burning beames
Goes casting forth his cheereful gleames,
As long as day in skie doth last.
Then darksom night doth ouer cast,
All kind of thinges both fowle and fayre,
With coleblacke winges aloft in ayre.
And of the moone what shall we say,
Which neuer keepeth at a stay?
Sometimes with hornes she doth appeere:
Sometime halfe fast: now thicke, now cleere: [550]
Anon with rownd and fulsom face
The night she fro the skie doth chace.
The twincling starres aboue on hye
Ronne rolling rownd about the skye,
One while with wether fayre and cleere,
Another while with lowring cheere.
Two dayes together match, and ye
Them like in all poynts shall not see.
The one doth passe more swift away,
The other longer while doth stay: [560]
The one, as though it did us spyght,
Bereueus us of the cheerful lyght:
The other with his color bryght
Doth ioy our hart and dim our fight.
One burnes the world with heate from skyes,
With frost and cold another dyes.
With purple, greene, blew, white, and red
The earth earwhile is ouerspred.
Anon a blast of nipping cold
Maks freshest thinges looke seare and old. [570]
The riuers with their waters moyst

About their bankes are often hoyst,
And passe their bownds with rage so farre,
That they the plowmans hope doe marre:
And afterward they fall within
Their chanells, ronning lank and thin.
And therefore whoso doth him grownd,
On awght that in the world is fownd,
Beneath or in the starrie skyes,
I say I count him nothing wyze? [580]
What then of him is to be sayd,
Whose hope on man is wholly stayd?
Each liuing creature subiect is
To endlesse inconueniencis:
And yit among them all, the sunne,
In all his course which he doth runne,
Beholdeth not a feebler wyght,
Than man is in his cheefest plyght.
For that he is most wyze and stowt,
Is so beseeged rownd about, [590]
And so assayld with vices strong,
That often he is throwen along.
What a foole is he, whose hart
Thinks to be free from wo and smart,
So long as he doth liue on mowld?
But if that any creature wOULD
Be sure taccumplish that desire:
He must goe set his hart more higher.
Whereof our maister rightly may
A good example bee that way. [600]

HALFE THE SHEP: The best I thinke that can be now espyde,
Is for too draw us one asyde,
That ech of us may be him selfe alone
Pray God to send our maister which is gone,
A safe returne with gladnesse gowe.

HALFE THE SHEP: I will not be behind I trowe.

* * * * *

A PAUSE

ISAAC: My father.

ABRAHAM: ~~~ Alas a poore father am I.

ISAAC: Sir, here is woode, with fire, and knyfe redy:
But as for sheepe or lambe I see none here.
For you to offer.

ABRAHAM: ~~~ O my sonne most deere, [610]
God will provide. Abide thou heere I say,
While I to God a little whyle doo pray.

ISAAC: Good father go: but yit I pray you showe
Me whereupon this greef of yours doth growe,
Which doth (I see) so greatly you appall.

ABRAHAM: At my returne, my sonne, thou shalt know all.
But in the meane tyme pray thy selfe heere too.

ISAAC: It is good reason that I should so doe.
And therewithall I will ech thing addresse,
That first this wood may be in redinesse. [620]
This billet first shall gin the order heere:
Then this, then that shall cloze together neere.
Thus all these thinges are redie now and prest:
My father shall provide for all the rest.
And now O God I will aside retyre,
To pray to thee, as reason doth requyre.

* * * * *

SARA: The more we liue, the more we see, alas,
What life it is that in this world we passe.
Was neuer woman borne upon the mowld,
That for hir husband or hir yssue could [630]
Hirselve with me in happinesse compare.
But yit I haue indurde such grieffe and care
These last three dayes since they went hence, that well
I am not able to my life to tell,
Which of the twayne hath greater to me beene,
The former ioy, or present payne I meene
Which I haue felt these last 3 dayes, since they

Haue bin away: for nother night nor day
Haue I tane rest, bycause my mind doth ronne
On nothing but my husband and my sonne. [640]
And of a truth I was to blame as tho,
In that I suffered them away to goe,
And went not with them. Of the six dayes three,
Alas but three my God, yit passed bee,
And yit three mo my patience still must proue.
Alas my God which seest me from aboue,
Both outwardly and inwardly alway,
Vowtsafe to shorten these three yeeres I say,
For were they much more shorter than they be,
They be not dayes, but moneths & yeeres to me [650]
My God, thy promis putts me out of dowl:
But if thou long delay the falling out,
I feare I shall haue neede of greater strength,
To beare the peyne in holding out at length,
Wherefore my God, now graunt thou unto me
I may with ioy right soone my husband see,
And eke mine Isaac in mine armes embrace
Returnd in helth and saftie to this place.

ABRAHAM: O God, my God, thou seest my open hart,
And of my thougths thou seest ech secret part, [660]
So that my cace I neede not to declare.
Thou seest, alas thou seest my wofull care.
Thou onely canst me rid of my diseaze,
By graunting me (if that it might thee please)
One onely thing the which I dare not craue.

SATAN: An other song then this yit must we haue.

ABRAHAM: What? what? and is it possible that Gods
Behest and deede should euer be at oddes?
Can he deceiue? euen to this present day
He hath kept towche in all that he did say. [670]
And can he now unsay his word? no, no.
But yit it would ensew he should doe so,
If he my sonne should take away as now.
What say I? O my God, my God, sith thow
Doost bid me, I will doe it. Is it right
That I so sinfull and so wretched wight,

Should fall to scanning of the iudgements
Of thy most perfect pure commaundements.

SATAN: My cace goes ill. O Cowle we must yit find
Some other way tassault this hagards mind. [680]

ABRAHAM: It maybe that I haue imagind
Amisse: the more it is examined,
The more the cace seemes straunge. It was perchaunce
Some dreame or wicked feend that at a glaunce
Did put this matter in my head for why,
So cruell offrings please not God perdye.
He cursed Cayne for killing of his brother:
And shall I kill myne Isaac and none other?

SATAN: No no. Neuer doe soe.

ABRAHAM: Alas alas what ment I so to sayne? [690]
Forgiue me, Lord, and pluck me backe agein
From this leawd race wherein my sin gan go:
O Lord my God deliuer me from this wo,
This hand of mine shall certainly him smight.
For sith it is thy will, it is good right
It should de [be] doone. Wherfore I will obey.

SATAN: But I will keepe you from it if I may.

ABRAHAM: So doing I should make my God untrew,
For he hath told me that there should insew
So great a people out of this my sonne, [700]
As ouer all the earth should spred and ronne,
And therefore if that Isaac once were kild,
I see not how this couenant could be hild.
Alas Lord, hast thou made him then for nowght:
Alas Lord, is it vaine that thou so oft
Hast promist me such things in Isaake,
As thou wooldst neuer doo for others sake?
Alas and can the things repealed be,
Which thou so oft hast promist unto me?
Alas and shall my hope haue such an end? [710]
Whereto should then mans hope & trusting tend
The summe of all I minded to haue sayd,

Is that to thee I hartily haue prayd,
To giue me yssue: hoping that when thou
Hadst graunted it, I should haue liued now
In ioy and pleasure: but I see full well,
The contrary to my desire befell.
For of my sonns, which were no mo but twayn,
To put away the one my selfe was fayne:
And of the other (O hard extremitie) [720]
Both father I, and tormenter must be,
Yea tormenter, yea tormenter, alas.
But are not thou the selfe same God, which was
Contented for too heere me patiently,
When I did pray to thee so instantly,
Euen in the midds of all thy wrath and yre,
When Sodom thou didst mind to burne with fire?
Now then my God and king, wilt thou say nay,
When so my selfe I unto thee doe pray?
Whom I begate him must I now deface. [730]
O God, at leastwise graunt me yit this grace.

SATAN: Grace? in my book that word I neuer found.

ABRAHAM: Some other man my sonne to death may wownd.
Alas my Lord, and must this hand of myne
To such a stroke against all kind declyne?
How will it towch his wofull mother neere,
When of his violent death she needes shal heere?
If I alledge thy will for my defence,
Who will beleue that thou wilt so dispence?
And if men doe not credit it: what fame [740]
Will fly abrode to my perpetuall shame?
I shall be shund of all men more and lesse,
As paterne of extremest cruelnesse.
And as for thee, who will unto thee pray,
Or on thy word and promise euer stay?
Alas, may these hore heares of myne abide
The sorrow that is likely to betide?
Haue I alredy past so many daungers,
Haue I so traueled countries that are straungers,
In heate and cold, in thirst and hunger still, [750]
Continewally obedient to thy will:

Haue I so long time liued lingringly,
Now in the end to dye unhappily?
O hart of mine, clyue, clyue, asunder clyue:
And linger heere no longer time aliue.
The speedier death, the lesser is the greef.

SATAN: Now is he downe, if God send no releef.

ABRAHAM: What sayd I? what intend I? O my God
Which didst create and make me of a clod,
Thou art my Lord, and I thy seruant trew, [760]
Out of my natiue countrie thou me drew.
How oftentimes hast thou assured me,
That unto mine this land should lotted be?
And when thou gaue me Isaac, didst not thou
Most faithfully and constantly auow,
That out of him such offspring should be bred,
As should this land throughout all ouerspred?
Then if thou wilt needs take him now away,
What should I thereunto ageinst thee say?
He is thine owne, I had him of thy gift. [770]
Take him therefore. Thou knowest best how to shift.
I know thou wilt to life him rayze agein,
Rather than that thy promis should be vaine,
Howbeit Lord, thou knowest I am a man,
No good at all or doo or thinke I can.
But yit thy power which ay is inuincible,
Doth to beleef make all things possible.
Hence flesh, hence fond affections euerychone:
Ye humane passions let me now alone.
Nothing to me is good or reasonable, [780]
Which to Gods will is not agreeable.

SATAN: Well, well, then Isaac shall dye: and wee
What will insew thereof shall after see.
O false old hag, thou makste me soft to grone.

ABRAHAM: See where my sonne walks up & downe alone
O silie child! O wretched men, death oft
Within our bosoms lodgeth him full soft,
When furthest of we take him for too be.
And therefore right great need alwaies haue we

To leade such a life, as if we fayne would die. [790]
But wotest thou my sonne (alas) what I
Intend to say?

ISAAC: ~~~ What pleaseth you good father.

ABRAHAM: Alas, that word doth kill my hart the rather.
Yit must I better corage to me take.
Isaac my sonne: alas my hart doth quake.

ISAAC: Father, me thinks that feare hath you dismayd.

ABRAHAM: O my deere child: it is as thou hast sayd.
Alas my God.

ISAAC: ~~~ Sir if it may you pleaze,
Be bold to tell me what doth you disease.

ABRAHAM: Ah my deere child, wist thou what thing it were [800]
Mercie good Lord, thy mercie graunt us here.
My sonne my sonne, beholdest thou this lyne.
This wood, this fire, and eke this knife of myne?
This geere my Isac serueth all for thee.

SATAN: Of God and nature enmie though I bee:
Yit is this thing so hard a cace to see,
That euen almost it is a greef to mee.

ABRAHAM: Alas my sonne.

ISAAC: ~~~ Alas my father deere,
Uppon my knees I humbly pray you heere,
My youthfull yeeres to pitie, if you may. [810]

ABRAHAM: O of mine age the only staffe and stay,
My derling, O my derling, faine would I
That I for thee a thowsand times might dye:
But God will haue it otherwise as now.

ISAAC: Alas my father, mercie I kry you.
Alas alas I want both tung and hand,
Ageinst you in mine owne defence to stand.

But see, but see my tears for natures fake,
None other sence I can or will now make
Ageinst you. ~~~ I am Isaac, none other [820]
But Isaac, your only by my mother.
I am your sonne that through your self hath life
And will you let it be bereft with knife?
Howbeit, if you do't to'bey the Lord,
Then on my knees I humbly doe accord,
To suffer all that euer God and yow,
Shall think expedient for too doo as now.
But yit what deeds, what deeds of mine deserue
This death O God. my God my life preserue.

ABRAHAM: Alas my sonne, God hath commaunded me [830]
To make an offring unto him of thee,
To my great greef, to my great greef and pine,
And endlesse wo.

ISAAC: ~~~ Alas poore mother mine.
How many deathes shall my death giue to thee?
But tell me yit, my killer who shall be?

ABRAHAM: Who? my deere son I my God my God graunt grace
That I may dy now present in this place.

ISAAC: O father mine.

ABRAHAM: ~~~ Alas, no whit that name
Agrees to me. yit should we be to blame
If we obeyd not God.

ISAAC: ~~~ Sir I am redy. [840]

SATAN: Who would haue thought he would haue him so stodie?

ISAAC: Now then my father, well I see in deede
That I must dye. Lord help me at my neede.
My God, my God, now strengthen thou my mind,
And at thy hand such fauor let me find,
That of my selfe I may the upper hand
Obteyne, against this sodein death to stand.

Now bind me, kill me, burne me, I am prest
To suffer all, sith God so thinks it best.

ABRAHAM: Ah what a thing, a what a sight is heere! [850]
Mercie good God, now for thy mercie deere.

ISAAC: Thou Lord hast made me and created me,
Thou Lord upon the earth hast lodged me,
Thou hast me giuen the grace to knowledge thee
Yit haue I not so well obeyed thee
My Lord and God as dewtie doth require:
Which me to pardon lowd I thee desire.
And whereas I to you my Lord and father
Haue not alwaies such honor yeilded rather,
As your great kindnesse did deserue to haue: [860]
Therefore forgiuenesse humbly I doe craue.
My mother: she is now a great way hence,
Wherfore my God vowtsafe hir thy defence,
And so preserue hir through thy speciall grace,
As she no whit be trubbled at my cace.
[Here Isaac is bound]
Alas, I go to deepe and darksom night:
Farewell as now for ay all worldly light.
But sure I am I shall at Gods hand find
Farre better things than these I leaue behind.
Good father, I am redy at your will. [870]

SATAN: Was neuer child that spake with better skil.
I am ashamde, and therfore take my flight.

ABRAHAM: Alas my sonne, before thou leaue this light
And that my hand doe giue thunkindly blowe,
Upon thy mouth let me a kisse bestowe.
Isac my sonne, let this same arme of mine
Which must thee kil, imbrace this neck of thine.

ISAAC: With right good wil and hartie thankes.

ABRAHAM: Ye skyes the great gods woork ay glistring
in our eyes
Which well haue seene how God (who still is trew) [880]
Did me with frute by Isaac here indew:

And thou O land fiue times to me behight,
Beare witnessse that my fingers doo not smight
This child of mine for hatred or for vengeance,
But only for to yeeld my dew obeysance,
To that great God which hath created me,
And all the thinges that liue or moue or be:
Who saues the good that put in him their trust,
And stroyes the bad that serue their wicked lust.
Beare witnessse that I faithfull Abraham, [890]
Through gods great goodnes stil so stedfast am
As notwithstanding all that humane wit
Can say or think, to make me now to flit:
In one beleef I euer doo remaine,
That not one word of God doth happen vaine.
But now my hand, high time it is that thou
Doo gather strength to execute thy vow.

[Here the knife falles out of his hand.]

That by thy killing of mine only sonne,
Thy deadly stroke may through my hart eke ronne.

ISAAC: What doe I heere?

~~~ Alas my father deere! [900]

ABRAHAM: A, a, a, a.

ISAAC: ~~~ I am at your will.

Am I now well? your pleasure then fulfill.

ABRAHAM: Did euer man so piteous cace yit find?

Was euer any frendship yit so kind?

And was there euer yit so piteous cace.

I dye my sonne, I dye before thy face.

ISAAC: Away with all this feare of yours I pray.

Will you from God yit longer time me stay?

ABRAHAM: [Heere he intendeth to stryke him.]

Alas who euer yit so stowt a mind

Within so weake a bodie erst did find? [910]

Alas my sonne I prey thee me forgiue

Thy death. It kills me that thou may not liue.

THE ANGELL: Abraham, Abraham.

ABRAHAM: ~~~ My God heere I am.

ANGELL: Into the sheath put up thy knife,  
And see thou doe not take his life,  
Nor hurt the child in any wyse.  
For now I see before mine eyes,  
What loue thou bearest to the Lord,  
And honor unto him auord,  
In that thou doost so willingly [920]  
Thy sonne thus offer euen to dye.

ABRAHAM: O God.

ISAAC: O God.

ABRAHAM: O Lord a man may see.  
[Heere he takes the sheepe.]  
How good it is obedient for to bee  
To thee: the cace is fitly furnished.  
I will go take him tyed by the head.

ANGELL: O Abraham.

ABRAHAM: ~~~ Lord heere I am.

ANGELL: Thus sayth the Lord, I promis thee  
By my eternall maiestie,  
And by my Godhead: sith that thow  
Hast shewed thy self so willing now, [930]  
Me to obey, as to forbear  
Thine only Isaks life: I sweare,  
That mawgre Satan to his face,  
I will thee blisse and all thy race.  
Considrest thou the lightsom skye,  
And on the shore the grauell drye?  
I wil increace thyne offspring more,  
Than starres in heauen, or sand on shore.  
Their enemies they shall ouercome,  
And of thy bodie one shall come, [940]  
By whom my blissing shall spred forth

On all the nations of the earth.  
By him the treasures of my loue  
And mightie power, shall from aboue  
Be sheaded downe on all mankind,  
Bycause thou hast obeyd my mind.

## THE EPILOGUE

See here the mightie power of earnest faith,  
And what reward the trew obedience payth  
VVherfore ye Lords & Ladies I you pray,  
VVhen you from hence shall go agein away.  
Let not this trew and noble storie part  
Out of the mind and tables of your hart.  
It is no lye, it is no peynted tale,  
It is no feyned iest nor fable stale.  
It is a deede, a deede right trew, of one  
That was Gods faithful seruant long agone. [Epi.10]  
VVherfore ye maisters and ye mistresses,  
Ye Lords and Ladies all both more and lesse,  
Ye rich and poore, ye sorie and ye sad,  
And you also whose harts with mirth are glad,  
Behold, and looke upon your selues ech one,  
In this so fayre example heere foregone.  
Such are trew glasses, shewing to our sight,  
The fayre, the fowle, the crooked, and the right.  
For whoso doth unfeynedly indeuer  
(As Abraham) to keepe Gods sayings euer, [Epi.20]  
And (notwithstanding all the reasons which  
His mind alledgeth backward him to twich)  
Doth stil referre him selfe and all his deedes  
To God: with much more happy yssue speeds  
Than he can wish: for come there stormes or wind,  
Come greef, come death, come cares of sundry kind.  
Let earthquake come, let heauen & skyes downe  
Let dark confuzion ouercouer all:  
The faithful hart so stedfastly is grownded,  
As it abodeth euer unconfounded. [Epi.30]  
Contrariwise the man that trusteth too  
His owne selfwit, thereafter for to doe,



And standeth in his owne conceyt shall find,  
The more he goes, the more he comes behind.  
And euey litle puffe and sodein blast  
From his right course shal quite & cleane him cast  
Agein, how owne selfwilled nature will  
Him ouerthrowe and all his dooings spill.  
Now thou great God which makest us to knowe  
The great abuses which doo plainly showe [Epi.40]  
The wretched world to be peruerted quite,  
Make all of us to take such warning by'te,  
As ech of us may fare the better by  
The liuely faith set foorth before our eye  
In Abraham that holy personage,  
VVhose dooings haue bin playd upon this stage.  
Lo maisters heere the happie recompence  
VVhich God doth giue you for your gentle silence.

FINIS.

ALL PRAYSE AND THANKS BEE GIUEN  
TO GOD. AMEN.