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**Passion and Resurrection of Christ, told in words and images as a Rebus
In German, illustrated manuscript broadside on paper, glued to a large parchment document
(a Lehrbrief, dated 1744)
Southern Germany or Austria, c. 1750-1850**

Broadsheet on paper, glued to a parchment document, complete, ruled in pencil with 32 lines (16 double rules framing the lines of script, each line widely spaced), written in sixteen long lines in a German gothic script, eighty-seven small pictures, fully colored, large parts of line ten and part of line eleven has flaked away with loss of text and parts of four pictures, some damage to the right-hand side, lines 3-8 (revealing pen flourishes) damaging one picture but leaving script mostly intact, a few stains obscuring text, some minor flaking throughout, framed. Dimensions 607 x 394 mm.

Large broadside on the Passion of Christ, a very rare, and certainly very charming, example of a religious rebus for children copied and decorated by hand. Rebuses on religious topics date back to the seventeenth century in Germany, with the printing of the first Hieroglyphic Bible in 1684. Children were the intended audience for these texts which tried to express serious ideas in an engaging and more memorable fashion by replacing occasional words with small pictures. Most religious broadsides were printed. This hand-made example raises interesting (and still unanswered) questions about its origin: who made it, when, and why?

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Southern Germany or Austria after 1744, the date of the document used as a backing sheet; stylistically, this seems more likely to be eighteenth century (cf. for example, abb. 110, Schenck, a rebus dating 1728), but given its possible relationship to a lithograph by Renner from 1840 (discussed below), a later date cannot be ruled out entirely.

Now pasted onto a large parchment document, leaving the document's verso visible, which is largely blank apart from the inscription in a large very flourished script, "Lehr Brief dem Joseph Pischinger <Veirt?> Anno 1744." (A Lehrbrief was a certificate granted when an apprentice became a journeyman in a guild). There is reversed script showing through to the verso from the front of the document; damage to the righthand side of the upper sheet has revealed a few letters/pen flourishes from the recto of the document. Traces of decoration are also visible on the verso at the top (and also, less clearly at the bottom) which seem to be unrelated to the Lehrbrief (and there is a possibility that there is an under-script, suggesting the document was copied on re-used parchment).

2. Faint remains of modern notes in pencil on the verso.

TEXT

Incipit, "[Als] Jesus* an den Garten* [von Gethsemane] und auf den <Oliven>berg* ging daselbst mit Angst und Troner sein Leiden nun anfang schwitzte er Blut* bat<y?> Vater*

nicht mein sondern dein Wille geschehe ... seienm Tod* die Himmelskrone* erwornden,
Amen."

The story of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ told as a rebus, combining words and images; in the incipit and explicit cited here, for example, the words marked with an asterisk are actually small images (their verbal equivalents are helpfully written beneath the images).

ILLUSTRATION

The eighty-seven small images (five now damaged and illegible) are charming accompaniments to the text. Some are quite simple, for example the lantern in line two, or the Cross depicted several times; others are more detailed, including images of Mary, of Christ in the tomb, and the skeleton used to signify death.

A close comparison exists in print, a broadside (a broadside is a manuscript or printed text on a single sheet, not intended to be folded into a codex, or rolled into a scroll) lithograph printed in double columns with hand-colored rebus illustrations, *Leidengeschichte des Herrn Jesu Christ*, published in Nuremberg, c. 1840 by G. N. Renner; there is a copy at the Bridwell library, Southern Methodist University in Dallas (Online Resources). Georg Nikolaus Renner (1803-1854) was an art dealer and publisher in Nuremberg from 1826. His company, G. N. Renner and company, which he operated together with his brother-in-law, Friedrich Schuster, specialized in illustrated items, including board games and religious texts. As the SMU exhibition explains, "Intended for young readers, this rhyming German lithographic broadside narrates the story of Christ's Passion by means of a rebus, combining printed text and sixty-three hand colored images that stand in for particular words."

Our example was also created as a single large sheet (a broadside), but it is a manuscript, copied and decorated by hand. It is related in terms of form and content to Renner's lithograph. However, although both are rebuses on the Passion of Christ, they are not exact copies of one another. There are significant differences in wording and images, as well as in the placement of the images. More research is needed to unravel their relationship. It is possible that the creator of our manuscript knew Renner's broadside, and was inspired by it. But it seems more likely that our manuscript dates before the printed broadside, and that both were inspired by a popular tradition of rebuses on the Passion, as suggested by Eva-Maria Schenck's passing reference to single sheets on religious subjects, including the Passion, hawked house to house in Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Schenck, 1973, pp. 46-47).

Written communications which replace selected words with images, or rebuses, can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Family names on heraldic shields were sometimes expressed through a rebus (for example, Jehan de Cocquerell, whose thirteenth-century shield included three chickens or cocks, Schenck, 1973, abb. 17). In some rebuses the word or name is expressed phonetically by a clever combinations of images and letters (modern puzzle rebuses are still popular). In the case of the broadside described here, small images simply replace words. An important precursor to our broadside on the Passion of Christ is the "hieroglyphic Bible," that introduced the Bible to children with brief biblical passages expressed through a combination of words and images. The earliest example is the German Bible by Melchior Mattsperger (1627-1698), published in two parts in Augsburg in 1684 and 1692, and then in four subsequent editions. (Hieroglyphic Bibles in Dutch and French were published by 1745; the first English language edition of this work, *A Curious Hieroglyphick Bible*, was printed in London in 1783.)

There are also numerous examples of broadside rebuses, often in verse, circulating in German from 1620 on (one example is the rebus poem, *Die Blinden auß Böhmen*; Online Resources), as well as single sheets on religious subjects following in the tradition established by the Hieroglyphic Bibles. The tradition continued through the eighteenth century (cf. the rebus sheet from London, 1796, teaching children the ten commandments, the Apostle's Creed, and the Lord's prayer, Online Resources), and into the nineteenth century, as seen in Renner's rebus on the Passion.

Manuscript rebuses seems to be very uncommon indeed. We were able to find nothing directly comparable to our broadsheet; an English Hieroglyphic Bible manuscript from the eighteenth century illustrated with watercolors was sold by Cowan's, Cincinnati, in 2017 (Online Resources).

LITERATURE

Schenck, Eva Maria. *Das Bilderrätsel*, Hildesheim 1973.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Leidengeschichte des Herrn Jesu Christ, published in Nuremberg, c. 1840 by G. N. Renner; Dallas, Southern Methodist University, Bridwell library

<https://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/ShapeofContent/Broadsides/Rebus>

Print of Crucifixion and instruments of the Passion by G. N. Renner and co.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/pgs.08001/>

SMU, Bridwell Library, "The First Hieroglyphic Bible for Children"

<https://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/Childrens-Books/Bibles/First-Hieroglyphic-Bible#:~:text=Leopold%2C%20%5Bca.-1730%5D.,Augsburg%20in%201684%20and%201692.>

Jeremy Norman's History of Information, "Melchior Mattsperger Compiles the First Hieroglyphic Bible for Children"

<https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=3103>

Bayerische SB, Mattsperger, Melchior, *Geistliche Herzens-Einbildungen Inn zweihundert unt Fünffzig Biblischen Figur-Sprüichen angedeutet allen ...*, Augsburg, [1688], Res/L.eleg.m.1341-1/2#1

<https://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00001240&pimage=196&v=150&nav=&l=de>

The Sacred Monitor, or Sponsor's Present: Containing the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, Hieroglyphically Displayed, London, Henry Fry for James Lee, 1796

<https://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/WelcomeAdditions/Ephemera/TenCommandments>

Die Blinden auß Böhmen, beginning, "Hort zu ir frommen Biderleut" (Rebus poem)

<https://volksmusik-forschung.de/datenbank/lied.html?id=133509>

<https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/fwhb/klebeband18/0043/image>

Cowan's Auctions, Cincinnati, late 18th-century English Rebus (hieroglyphic) Bible manuscript, *The Hieroglyphick Bible, III Edition*, illustrated with small watercolors
<https://www.finebooksmagazine.com/blog/exquisite-english-rebus-bible-auction>

Rebus Catechism, Bridwell Library (*Curieuse Bilder-Catechismus mit zierlichen Figuren: durch dessen Gebrauch die Kinder von ihrer zartesten Jugend an auf eine angenehme Weise zur Erkenntnis der Evangelischen Warheiten können angeführet werden*, Nuremberg, **Gabriel Nicolaus Raspe**, 1773)
<https://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/Catechisms/Hieroglyphic>

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