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Kevin J. Kalish

*Bridgewater State University*, [kevin.kalish@bridgew.edu](mailto:kevin.kalish@bridgew.edu)

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**The Apple among the Trees: *To Abraham* (PBodmer 30) and the Apple at the Sacrifice of Isaac<sup>1</sup>**

Kevin J. Kalish  
Bridgewater State University  
Department of English  
kevin.kalish@bridgew.edu

**Abstract:** The poem from the Bodmer Papyrus (PBodmer 30) *To Abraham* contains a number of perplexing phrases and images—one in particular is the ambiguous word μῆλον, which appears in no other known text on the Sacrifice of Isaac. In this poem Abraham, in place of his son Isaac, chooses the μῆλον. I contribute to our understanding of how the poem works by demonstrating what μῆλον signifies in this context. I argue that the poem deliberately uses the ambiguous word μῆλον precisely because it can mean both sheep and apple. Moreover, when the apple is understood in the context of patristic interpretations of Song of Songs 2:3 (one of the few places μῆλον appears in the Septuagint), it becomes clear that the apple that Abraham chooses in place of his son points typologically to Christ and the meal Abraham prepares anticipates the Eucharist.

**KEY WORDS:** Early Christian Poetry; Sacrifice of Isaac; Bodmer Papyri

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier draft of this paper was read at the Ancient Ornamentalism Conference, Ohio State University, October 2009; Michael Ierardi and Matthew Dasti provided extensive feedback during the Office of Teaching and Learning Summer Institute (Bridgewater State University). I would like to thank those who provided feedback on these earlier versions, as well as the anonymous reviewer, for the many helpful corrections and suggestions.

## INTRODUCTION

The account in Genesis 22 of Abraham's willingness to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him— before God's messenger commands him to sacrifice a ram in his place— has inspired, and continues to inspire, a range of reactions. Referred to as the Aqedah (the binding of Isaac) or the Sacrifice of Isaac, this brief narrative stands as a central narrative in both Jewish and Christian traditions, and also plays an important role in Islamic tradition. The story of Abraham's supreme test of faith has been retold and refashioned in literature and art, both ancient and modern; commentators, exegetes, poets, and homilists have returned to it again and again. Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and Auerbach's illuminating essay "The Scar of Odysseus" attest to its continuing importance in the modern age. A number of recent studies have explored this narrative and the multitude of interpretations this Biblical text has inspired.<sup>2</sup>

Even with this great multitude of ancient and modern attempts to unpack the meaning of Genesis 22, unexpected readings are still to be found. An anonymous Greek poem from the Bodmer Papyri, *To Abraham* (PBodmer 30) provides one of those unexpected readings of the Sacrifice of Isaac. This poem, dating from the late fourth to early fifth century,

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<sup>2</sup> Robin M. Jensen, "The Offering of Isaac in Jewish and Christian Tradition," *Biblical Interpretation* 2 (1994): 85–110; Mishael Caspi and Sascha Benjamin Cohen, *The Binding (Aqedah) and Its Transformations in Judaism and Islam: The Lambs of God* (Lewiston 1995); Lukas Kundert, *Die Opferung/Bindung Isaaks* vol.1-2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1998); Edward Noort and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretations* (Leiden 2002); Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians, and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge 2004).

is unique and revealing in its reading of Genesis 22, giving us a fresh way to look at the familiar Biblical narrative. Discovered in 1952 in Egypt, this poem was first published in 1999.<sup>3</sup> The codex in which this poem survives is itself unusual. Entitled by the editors “Codex of Visions” on account of the two vision narratives found within it— the visions from the *Shepherd of Hermas*, as well as the new poem the *Vision of Dorotheus*— the codex also contains many short poems composed in classical meters and full of epic vocabulary. Although presented in this archaizing dress, the subject matter of these poems concerns not gods and heroes but episodes from the Bible. *To Abraham* fits this pattern; the language is archaizing, though the subject of the poem is a praise of Abraham, told via a series of speeches and a unique retelling of the sacrifice of Isaac.

Previous scholarship on this poem, while giving us a readable text and exploring certain aspects of this poem, has left many questions unresolved. André Hurst and Jean Rudhardt published the text in 1999 (under the auspices of the Foundation Martin Bodmer, which owns the papyri). Their edition, with an introduction, commentary, and translation into French, provides the basis for any further study. A version of the poem was published prior to this by Enrico Livrea, although controversy surrounds the unauthorized publication of this text.<sup>4</sup> An article by Tadjczyk and Witczak suggests many improved readings.<sup>5</sup> In 2002 two

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<sup>3</sup> André Hurst and Jean Rudhardt, *Codex Des Visions: Poèmes Divers*, Papyrus Bodmer 30-37 (Munich 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Enrico Livrea, “Un Poema Inedito Di Dorotheos: Ad Abramo,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 100 (1994): 175–187. On the controversy surrounding this publication, see Hans E. Braun, “Mitteilung Der Bibliotheca Bodmeriana,” *ZPE* 103 (1994): 154.

<sup>5</sup> Tomasz Tadjczyk and Krzysztof Witczak, “Critical Notes to Dorotheos’ Hymn Πρὸς Ἀβραάμ,” *Eos* LXXXVI (1999): 257–65.

translations appeared in English with further commentary and discussion of how this poem fits into the broader context of Jewish and Christian literature.<sup>6</sup> While these translations and commentaries make strides towards solving the problems of the text and its meaning, much remains unclear. Hilhorst, in the most recent publication on *To Abraham*, calls attention to the need for further study. Concerning the question of whether the poem's origins are Christian or Jewish, he writes: "what we need is a convincing explanation of how the images function with the present poem. In the meantime, I would prefer to leave the question open."<sup>7</sup> What is lacking, therefore, is a sense of the poem as a whole, a unified understanding of how the images, metaphors, and allusions work together. In this essay, I will contribute to our understanding of how the poem works by demonstrating what the apple signifies. My argument is that the poem deliberately uses the ambiguous word *μηλον* because it can mean both sheep and apple; moreover, when the apple is understood in the context of patristic interpretations of Song of Songs 2:3, it becomes clear that the apple that Abraham chooses in place of his son points typologically to Christ and that the meal they share anticipates the Eucharist.

## OVERVIEW OF THE POEM

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<sup>6</sup> Pieter van der Horst and F. G. Parmentier, "A New Early Christian Poem on the Sacrifice of Isaac," in *Le Codex Des Visions*, ed. André Hurst and Jean Rudhardt (Genève 2002), 155–172; A. Hilhorst, "The Bodmer Poem on the Sacrifice of Abraham," in *The Sacrifice of Isaac. The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretations*, ed. Noort and Tigchelaar (Leiden 2002), 96–108.

<sup>7</sup> Hilhorst, "The Bodmer Poem on the Sacrifice of Abraham," 107–08.

After a three-line proem in which we hear that God the Creator sent a messenger to Abraham, the poem then follows an alphabetic acrostic.<sup>8</sup> Two lines (13 and 14) are missing, but otherwise the papyrus is in fairly good shape. The first part of the poem proceeds as a succession of speeches. We have not only Abraham and Isaac giving speeches, but Sarah plays a positive role as well, and this is uncommon in early Christian texts—she even usurps Abraham’s role of telling Isaac to prepare.<sup>9</sup> She exhorts her only-begotten to go to his death with joy (11). Unfortunately, the two lines that are missing happen to be just where Sarah speaks. Isaac in turn responds by asking for his bridal chamber to be prepared and for his hair to be braided. As Abraham prepares the altar, the flames are likened to the parting of the Red Sea (20-21). When the Lord stops Abraham from slaying his son, there appears nearby not a ram but a sheep or apple (25). Abraham, with the fruit from amongst the trees in place of his son, then provides a nice banquet. A three-line summary completes the poem in which Abraham is praised for ascending the Tower (28-30).

A distinguishing characteristic of this poem is its alphabetic acrostic.<sup>10</sup> Acrostics functioned in a variety of poetic genres in antiquity, and its use in *To Abraham* signals how late antique poets were adapting and using this formal structure. Often acrostics are found in liturgical poetry of this period. The poem also rewrites a Biblical episode—a common technique in Christian hymnody. In addition, its use of dialogue and imagined speeches

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<sup>8</sup> See the Appendix for the Greek text.

<sup>9</sup> See discussion of Sarah’s involvement in Sebastian Brock, “Two Syriac Verse Homilies on the Binding of Isaac,” *Le Museon* 99 (1986): 61–129; Brock, “Sarah and the Aqedah,” *Le Muséon* 87 (1974): 67–77; Brock, “Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition,” in *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy* (Göttingen 1981), 2–30.

<sup>10</sup> Hurst and Rudhardt, *Codex Des Visions: Poèmes Divers*, 37–8.

connects it with hymns of the period, especially those coming from the Syriac tradition. Yet the meter and Homeric diction connect *To Abraham* to the classicizing poetry of poets such as Gregory of Nazianzus or Nonnus. Indeed the poem displays a melding of genres and poetic types as it incorporates elements from various poetic traditions. Below is a translation of the text.

TRANSLATION

*To Abraham*

He who joined together the world, both heaven and the sea  
sent to Abraham from the heavenly realm a swift messenger,  
instructing him to sacrifice his beloved son as a perfect sacrifice.

According to the alphabet

As soon as he learned he rejoiced with a ready heart  
5 And he went to see if he could convince his renowned wife.

“my wife, the immortal God desires that I should carry away  
brilliant Isaac, the great gift given us in our old age,  
our child. May he accomplish God’s will.

With my hand outstretched I shall bind my unblemished son to the altar.”

10 As soon as Sarah learned this, she began to wax poetic in her encouragement:

“Be brave, my beloved son, because you’ve been happy in this life

Isaac, the child of my loins,

[two lines missing]

15 Rejoicing greatly the bright-shining son spoke these soothing words:

“My parents, make ready the blossoming bridal chamber,

let the people braid my radiant hair with braids,

so that I may complete with an eager spirit the holy sacrifice”

At once experienced men built a fire around the altar,

20 the sea gushed forth around the flame, the sea that Moses would part;

A wave raised up the son of Abraham

The father brought his son, smelling of incense; the son rejoiced at the altar

while the father introduced his son above Hephaistos;

Abraham was rushing to strike the sharp sword against his neck—

25 but the hand of God restrained him—for nearby there appeared an apple/sheep.

Abraham, saving his son, plucked<sup>11</sup> from among the trees the fruit,

he proceeded to choose the fruit for preparing the feast

### Conclusion

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<sup>11</sup> This translation relies upon the textual conjecture of Hurst and Rudhart; other translations are possible depending on how the beginning of the line is reconstructed. For more on this line, see below pages 12-13.



At once, O man of great soul, may you receive another reward for this,  
a thousand flowering children, to illumine you  
30 the all-worthy giver of gifts, who climbed upon the tower.

#### THE APPLE AMONG THE TREES

After all the preliminary details— Abraham receiving the command from God, then preparing for their journey; Isaac and Abraham traveling alone after leaving behind their servants— the narrative of Genesis 22 reaches its crux when father and son find themselves at the place for the sacrifice. Although Isaac is silent in the Biblical account up to this point, he now asks the question that must weigh heavily upon him: where is the animal for the sacrifice? His father Abraham assures him that God will provide the sheep. With his son bound upon the wood of the altar, Abraham is about to slay his son when this filicide is called to a quick halt. The messenger of God tells Abraham that he need not slay his son. Instead, he is to take the ram “held fast in a sabek plant by the thorns. And Abraam went and took the ram and offered it up as a whole burnt offering instead of his son Isaak” (Genesis 22:13).<sup>12</sup>

The most troubling questions for any interpreter to answer come at this moment, with the last minute substitution that just barely prevents human sacrifice. Why does God test Abraham in such a drastic manner? Very early in the Christian exegetical tradition, this

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<sup>12</sup> Quotations from the Old Testament are taken from the New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS); New Testament passages are from KJV.

almost-sacrifice is understood as a type, a figure of things to come.<sup>13</sup> Reading events of the Old Testaments as types and figures that will have their fulfillment with the coming of Christ is a method of non-literal interpretation established already in St. Paul. In the Epistle to the Romans, Adam “is the figure (*typos*) of him that was to come” (Romans 5:14).<sup>14</sup> According to this nonliteral figurative reading, Isaac is the innocent victim willing to be sacrificed; he anticipates the fulfillment of this sacrifice with Christ’s death upon the cross. Melito of Sardis, writing in the second century, makes the connection between the binding of Isaac and Christ’s sacrifice explicit:

For as a ram he was bound  
  
(he says concerning our Lord Jesus Christ),  
  
and *as a lamb* he was shorn,  
  
*and as a sheep he was led to slaughter,*  
  
and as a lamb he was crucified;  
  
and he carried the wood on his shoulders  
  
as he was led up to be slain like Isaac by his Father.  
  
But Christ suffered, whereas Isaac did not suffer;

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<sup>13</sup> The literature on typology in Biblical interpretation is vast and much has been written about how typology relates to allegory; for a recent discussion with a survey of recent literature, see P. W. Martens, “Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: the Case of Origin,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008) 283-317.

<sup>14</sup> ὅς ἐστι τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος. See also I Cor 10:6 where the sins of the past are types.

for he was a model of the Christ who was going to suffer.<sup>15</sup>

Melito here draws upon Isaiah 53:7.<sup>16</sup> This furthers Melito's typological reading as both Genesis 22 and the notion of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah are intertwined as types that have their fulfillment in Christ. Melito draws attention to the incomplete nature of Isaac's sacrifice as Isaac is called a model (*typos*). Christ's sacrifice then completes the form of the sacrifice set forth by Abraham and Isaac. Typology in this instance highlights the relationship between the two events; the latter event fulfills the earlier event.

This typological reading of Isaac as a figure of Christ becomes commonplace in patristic exegesis. In a homily attributed to John Chrysostom, this reading is developed further, as each element in Genesis 22 is seen as a type of Christ's sacrifice:

Christ is led like a sheep to the slaughter [Is 53.7]; Isaac is led to the sacrifice as a type of Christ. The sacrifice is before his eyes, and Isaac does not disobey his father. For he is a type of Christ, "who was obedient to his Father, even unto death, the death of the cross" [Phil 2.8]. Isaac was a son and at the same time a sacrifice. Likewise Christ also is the son of God, and "the lamb that takes away the sin of the world" [Jn 1:29]. The father [Abraham] did not spare Isaac, and neither did God

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<sup>15</sup> Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha* (trans. Stuart George Hall; Oxford 1979) Fragment 9.

<sup>16</sup> "And he, because he has been ill-treated, does not open his mouth; like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before the one shearing it, so he does not open his mouth."

spare Christ. “For he did not spare his own Son, but handed  
him over for all (Rom 8:52).”<sup>17</sup>

For these typological readings to work, there must be the incomplete earlier figure— here, Isaac— and the one who comes later to be the fullness that the figure represented. Typology bridges the temporal divide between the two events.

These forms of typological interpretation highlight the strangeness of what is going on in *To Abraham*. In this poem Isaac is not a type or figure of things to come, as he is in the examples above. Whereas those typological readings emphasize a temporal difference between the events of Isaac’s binding and Christ’s sacrifice, in *To Abraham* the temporal divide is broken down when Abraham chooses the sheep/apple and provides a feast. Moreover, *To Abraham* uses a word not seen in other texts that deal with Genesis 22. In the Genesis text Isaac asks his father about the absence of the crucial piece for a sacrifice when he asks “where is the sheep (πρόβατον)?”<sup>18</sup> When the sacrifice of Isaac is halted, a ram (κρίος) is discovered nearby entangled in a bush. As evident in the passages quoted above, Christian commentators often linked Genesis 22 with Isaiah’s mention of the lamb (ἀμνός). But *To Abraham* uses neither πρόβατον nor κρίος, nor ἀμνός to describe that which Abraham sacrifices in place of his son: “there appeared nearby a sheep/apple” (φάνεσκε γὰρ ἐγγύθι μῆλον 25). As is customary in this poem, the language is trying to sound archaic with the use of the epic form of the verb “to appear” (φάνεσκε) and the adverb for “nearby” (ἐγγύθι). It is what

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<sup>17</sup> *Contra ludos et theatra* (PG 56, 549-550).

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 22:7.

appears nearby that is so perplexing, since μήλον can have two very different meanings. It can mean small livestock, such as a sheep; but it can also mean an “apple.”<sup>19</sup>

At first one might be tempted to assume that μήλον here must mean “sheep,” since this is a sacrifice and sheep are usually sacrificial victims, whereas one rarely if ever hears of an apple being sacrificed. But the following lines complicate matters. Here are lines 25-27:

φάνεσκε γὰρ ἐγγύθι μήλον·

ψήλεν δ' Ἀβρ]αάμ, υἷα σώων, ἀνὰ δένδρεα καρπὸν

ὥστε προσθ]έμενος τό ρ' ἐλέξατο δαίτα πονεῖσθαι.

for nearby there appeared a sheep/apple.

Abraham, saving his son, plucked from among the trees the  
fruit,

he proceeded to chose the fruit for preparing the feast.

While it is certainly unusual to have an apple as a sacrificial victim, it is just as unusual to have a sheep called a fruit and taken from among the trees. Hurst and Rudhardt offer a solution with the suggestion that fruit here simply means any product of the earth, thus including livestock.<sup>20</sup> There are also challenges here due to the state of preservation of the papyrus. Fortunately, the papyrus preserves with clarity the whole phrase in line 25 about how there appeared nearby the sheep/apple (μήλον). In the next two lines (26-27) the papyrus

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<sup>19</sup> Doric and Aeolic μάλον ‘apple’ (cf Latin *mālum*) came to have an *eta* in Ionic and appear and sound identical to μήλον ‘sheep.’

<sup>20</sup> Hurst and Rudhardt 41.

is damaged, making the first phrases difficult to discern fully. The papyrus preserves intact the phrases “saving his son” (υἱα σώων) and “among the trees the fruit” (ἀνά δένδρεα καρπὸν) along with the mention of the feast in the line 27: “he chose the fruit for preparing the feast” (τό ρ’ ἐλέξατο δαίτα πονεῖσθαι). The beginnings of these last two lines (26-27) present difficulties. While the reconstruction Ἀβρ]αάμ is pretty certain, the initial word of this line is less so. I have followed Hurst and Rudhardt’s reading, but even in their notes they express uncertainty.<sup>21</sup> Tadjczyk and Witczak offer the reading “ψίζετ(ο) [he has cried (with joy)].”<sup>22</sup> In the next line Abraham prepares a feast; this much is clear. Again the beginning of the line is uncertain. Hurst and Rudhardt’s reconstruction ὥστε προσθ]έμενος translates as something like “and continuing.”<sup>23</sup> Tadjczyk and Witczak again offer a nice solution with their reconstruction: “ὠριμον []έμενος” (“when he took off the mature fruit from the tree, has ordered to make the sacrifice”).<sup>24</sup> While much remains uncertain here, some things are clear: Abraham’s son is saved and a sheep/apple from among the trees takes the place of his son. Even if the first phrases of lines 26-7 remain uncertain, what is clear is that Abraham chooses the fruit (τό ρ’ ἐλέξατο δαίτα πονεῖσθαι 27) and this fruit is the μήλον of line 25 (φάνεσκε γὰρ ἐγγύθι μήλον).

There are compelling and so far unnoticed reasons for understanding the μήλον as an apple. In typical fashion, *To Abraham* incorporates here a phrase from an earlier poet.

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<sup>21</sup> Hurst and Rudhardt 55.

<sup>22</sup> Tomasz Tadjczyk and Krzysztof Witczak, “Critical Notes to Dorotheos’ Hymn Πρὸς Ἀβραάμ,” *Eos* LXXXVI (1999): 257–65.

<sup>23</sup> Hilhorst 99.

<sup>24</sup> Tadjczyk and Witczak 262.

Hesiod's *Theogony* describes the apples of the Hesperides as “fruit among the trees”: Ἑσπερίδας θ', αἴς μῆλα πέρην κλυτοῦ Ὠκεανοῖο / χρύσεια καλὰ μέλουσι φέροντά τε δένδρεα καρπὸν (“and the Hesperides, who care for the golden, beautiful apples beyond glorious Ocean and the trees bearing this fruit”).<sup>25</sup> *To Abraham* uses the phrase “δένδρεα καρπὸν” in the same metrical position at the end of the line.<sup>26</sup> The borrowing from Hesiod could thus be an easy solution to fill out the verse, as is common in this type of archaizing poetry. But the allusion also suggests a number of things. First of all, it explains why *To Abraham* uses “trees” instead of a single tree. Secondly, the allusion to Hesiod prevents us from assuming that the μῆλον is simply a sheep. Although at first one is tempted to read μῆλον as a sheep, the allusion to Hesiod brings the sense of “apple” to the forefront.

In addition to these allusions and comparanda, there is an even more compelling reason why μῆλον in *To Abraham* should be understood as “apple.” The word μῆλον appears rarely in the Bible, although it does appear a number of times in the Song of Songs.<sup>27</sup> While Hurst and Rudhardt made this initial observation,<sup>28</sup> what has gone unnoticed is what the apple in the Song of Songs signified in patristic interpretations. In Song of Songs 2:3, the beloved compares her lover to a fruit or fruit-tree in the midst of the trees of the forest: “as an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons” (Ὠς μῆλον ἐν τοῖς

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<sup>25</sup> *Theogonia* 216. Translation from Hesiod, *Theogony*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Livrea also notes Homer *Odyssey* 11.588 and 19. 112, as well as Apollonius of Rhodes 1.1142. In these instances the phrase is not in the same metrical position as it is in Hesiod and *To Abraham*.

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 30:14; Joel 1:12; Proverbs 25:11; Song of Songs 2:3, 2:5, 4:3, 6:7, 7:9, 8:5. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for highlighting these additional usages.

<sup>28</sup> Hurst and Rudhardt 41.

ξύλοις τοῦ δρυμοῦ, οὕτως ἀδελφιδός μου ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν υἱῶν). Patristic interpreters found ways to connect the apple here in the Song of Songs to Christ. When we look to Gregory of Nyssa (335/340 - 395), we find a key to what the apple signifies.<sup>29</sup> Gregory's commentary is careful to demonstrate how the sensual language is to be understood spiritually: "what is described there is an account of a wedding, but what is intellectually discerned is the human soul's mingling with the Divine."<sup>30</sup> He goes on to say that "it philosophizes by means of things not to be spoken, that is, by setting before our minds, with a view to establishing these teachings, a picture of the pleasurable things of this life."<sup>31</sup> Still further, "he [Solomon] has so disposed the soul that she directs her gaze toward purity by means of instruments that seem inconsistent with it and by means of impassioned utterances communicates a meaning that is undefiled."<sup>32</sup> All of this is to set up the manner by which Gregory interprets the meaning of the apple in Song of Songs 2:3. Gregory understands the general *scopos* of the Song to be about the soul uniting to Christ and this informs every detail of the text. Thus, he understands the apple to be Christ. He explains that at this moment in the text the soul first beholds the beauty of the

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<sup>29</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (trans. Richard A. Norris Jr., Atlanta 2012). Gregory's commentary on the Song of Songs most likely comes from the 390s. Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs laid the groundwork for much that came after, but for his commentary we must rely on the Latin translations of Rufinus and Jerome. On Origen's commentary, see J. Christopher King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture: The Bridegroom's Perfect Marriage-song* (Oxford 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Homily 1 (Norris 25). For the Greek text, see Gr. Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum* (ed. Herman Langerbeck, Leiden 1960).

<sup>31</sup> *In Cant.* 1 (Norris 25).

<sup>32</sup> *In Cant.* 1 (Norris 31).



Bridegroom (Christ).<sup>33</sup> After some discussion of the meaning of various details, Gregory concludes his discussion of the apple with the following:

What is our conjecture, then? He who for love of humanity  
grew up in the woods of our nature became an apple [μήλον]  
by sharing flesh and blood. For in the coloring of this fruit one  
can see a likeness to each of these. By its whiteness it copies a  
characteristic of flesh, while its reddish tinge by its appearance  
attests its kinship with the nature of blood.<sup>34</sup>

Here Gregory is explicit in making the connection: the apple in Song of Songs 2:3 represents none other than Christ who took on flesh and dwelt amongst mankind. At first this may seem extraordinary, but for Gregory the allegory of the Song is all about the soul's union to God, which comes about through the Incarnation, through Christ taking on human nature and restoring mankind to its primal beauty.

This interpretation of the apple is not limited to Gregory of Nyssa and thus not an isolated or esoteric reading of what the apple in the Song of Songs signifies. Procopius of Gaza (475-538) is straightforward in his explanation of what the apple signifies: "Christ is the apple, because of the whiteness of his flesh and the redness of his blood, and the sweet-scent of his preaching."<sup>35</sup> Procopius develops the same idea found in Gregory, namely that the colors of

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<sup>33</sup> *In Cant.* 4 (Norris 117).

<sup>34</sup> *In Cant.* 4 (Norris 139).

<sup>35</sup> Procopius of Gaza, *Catena in Canticum Canticorum* (PG 87,1588). μήλον δὲ ὁ Χριστός, διὰ τὸ λευκὸν τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τὸ ἐρυθρὸν τοῦ αἵματος, καὶ τὴν τοῦ κηρύγματος εὐωδίαν Cf PG 87,1581: ὁ δὲ Κύριος ὡς μήλον γέγονεν ἐν δρυμῷ.

the apple relate to the flesh and blood of Christ. Furthermore, this understanding of the apple is apparent in liturgical hymnody. A hymn attributed to Joseph the Hymnographer (812/818 - 886) praises Mary who gives birth to the sweet-smelling apple: “Hail, from whom alone there springs the unfading Rose; / hail, for thou hast borne the sweet-smelling Apple (ῥόδον τὸ ἀμάραντον, χαίρε, ἡ μόνη βλαστήσασα· / τὸ μῆλον τὸ εὖοσμον, χαίρε, ἡ τέξασα).<sup>36</sup>

While this example is from a later period, what we see is that the interpretation established in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries by Gregory of Nyssa and Procopius of Gaza becomes common-place, so that a hymn to the Mother of God can describe her giving birth to the apple with only an indirect reference to the Song of Songs.

Now the use of μῆλον in *To Abraham* takes on a new dimension. In light of these examples, it would seem likely that the poem uses this ambiguous word strategically: we are meant to first consider a sheep, but then with the mention of the fruit from the trees we are led to see the fruit from the trees as Christ. This figural interpretation unlocks the ambiguity present in *To Abraham*. If the apple from the trees is Christ, then we can make sense of these final lines of the poem. Abraham chooses in place of his son an apple—a symbol pointing ahead to Christ—and they share a feast in anticipation of the Eucharist when Christ’s sacrifice will bring about a new feast.

What is interesting here is that Isaac is not a type as so often in patristic exegesis. Instead, Abraham takes from the tree a symbol, the apple, which stands for Christ; not only does he take from the trees the fruit that anticipates Christ, but he also prepares a feast with

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<sup>36</sup>Canon for the *Akathistos*. For the text see Wilhelm von Christ and Matthaios K. Paranikas, *Anthologia Graeca Carminum Christianorum* (Lipsiae 1871) 247.

this fruit from the tree. Genesis 22 makes no mention of a meal of any kind; after the sacrifice of the ram, the angel of God tells Abraham that he will be blessed. Abraham returns to the young men who were left waiting and they return. But here in this poem we have a feast. In addition to the strangeness of there being a feast, the word δαῖτα (27) here is surprising, as it calls to mind Homeric feasts. It has been noted that this is likely a Eucharistic meal.<sup>37</sup> If the sheep/apple is Christ, then all the more reason to see this meal as Eucharistic. According to both Gregory of Nyssa and Procopius, the two colors of the apple (the red exterior and the white interior) stand for the blood and the body of Christ. Thus when Abraham prepares a banquet, they partake of an apple in symbolic anticipation of the Eucharist when the faithful will partake of the body and blood of Christ. Thus the reason for using μῆλον with both its meanings: as a sheep, Christ is the sacrificial offering in place of Isaac. As an apple, Christ shows his nature as human and divine and his appearance in the flesh. This is a remarkable way to recast the narrative of Genesis 22: in place of the ram caught in the thicket, they enjoy an apple. No other retelling or commentary of Genesis 22 imagines there being an apple to take the place of Isaac.

#### ISAAC THE BRIDE

Now that we have established how to understand the sheep/apple, it is worth looking at other moments in the poem to see if they make more sense in light of this reading. As we have seen, the presence of the sheep/apple in place of Isaac fundamentally recasts the

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<sup>37</sup> Livrea, "Un Poema Inedito di Dorotheos: *Ad Abramo*," 187.

narrative. Instead of a ram we have a symbol that anticipates Christ, and the narrative ends with feasting. This unexpected feast (at least for readers of Genesis 22) highlights the sense of joy that permeates the entire poem.

From the very beginning of the poem, there are unexpected moments. Whereas Sarah is entirely absent from the narrative in Genesis, here in this poem she plays a prominent role. After Abraham hears with great enthusiasm (“rejoiced with a ready heart” ἐχρήρατο πρόφρονι θυ[μῶι 4), the command from God, he first tells his wife Sarah.<sup>38</sup> Then Sarah, who is silent throughout the Biblical narrative, addresses her son and she speaks like a Homeric hero as she urges him on: “As soon as she learned this she boasted as she spoke wise words” (ἠύξατο δ’ ὡς πεπύθε[σ]κε γυν[ῆ] πεπνυμέ[να βάζει]ν· 10). She does not bid him to look forward to future joy, but consoles him by observing that his life has been good: “Be brave, my beloved son, Isaac, the child of my loins, because you’ve been happy in this life” (θάρσει, ἐμὸν φίλε τέκνον ἐπ[εἰ] μάκαρ ἔπ[λεο σὺ ζ]ῶν/ Ἰσα[κ] ἐμῶν μελέων τ[έκος] 11-12).

Isaac, who after all is the one who must endure this sacrifice, might be the one to express some hesitation. Even in Genesis he begins expressing some concern when he asks his father why he has all the tools required for the sacrifice, except the lamb. Yet in *To Abraham* there is no hesitation on Isaac’s part. He not only expresses the same joy as his parents, but he also speaks about the sacrifice as if it were a marriage. Others have noted the strangeness of Isaac being depicted as a bride rather than a groom, but the significance has

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<sup>38</sup> While a number of other texts depict Abraham as eager and even joyful, Sarah’s presence is quite rare. Philo presents Abraham as glad and eager; Ephrem Syrus’ Commentary on Genesis presents a similar image of a joyful Abraham. See the discussion in Brock, “Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition,” 6.

been left unexplored.<sup>39</sup> When Sarah entreats Isaac to prepare with eagerness for the sacrifice, he responds by telling his parents to prepare a “blossoming wedding-chamber” (νυμ[φί]διον θαλερόν θάλαμον 16). This image of the “blossoming” (θαλερόν) wedding chamber is unique to the poem. It is not unusual to use θαλερόν in conjunction with marriage (Od. 6.66, 20.74), but it is rare to find it used with the bridal chamber itself.<sup>40</sup> Young people and plants are referred to as blossoming, since this word comes from a verb to describe the growth of plants (θάλλω). The chamber (θάλαμον), on the other hand, usually signifies a woman’s chamber; with νυμ[φί]διον the idea of a wedding chamber is clear. Yet θάλαμον, in addition to meaning a chamber or inner room, is also used metaphorically to refer to the grave.<sup>41</sup> When Antigone approaches her death in Sophocles’ tragedy, she speaks of the chamber (θάλαμον) metaphorically as the final resting place, i.e. the grave (τὸν παγκοίτην ὅθ’ ὀρώ θάλαμον “common chamber in which all come to lie”).<sup>42</sup> To return to the poem, the implication is that the wedding-chamber/bed will be Isaac’s tomb. Isaac is not delusional, as one might expect from someone who just heard that he is to be sacrificed. Instead, he seems to have classical heroines in mind. He sounds like Iphigenia at Aulis awaiting her wedding (which turns out to be a sacrifice) or Antigone anticipating her death.<sup>43</sup> Or better yet, Isaac is like Jephtha’s

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<sup>39</sup> “I wonder if Isaac here features as a bride. This needs further research.” Hilhorst, “The Bodmer Poem on the Sacrifice of Abraham,” 106.

<sup>40</sup> Livrea, “Un Poema Inedito Di Dorotheos: Ad Abramo,” 183. Apollonius of Rhodes (1.1031; 3.656) has similar language, but in none of these is the bridal chamber ‘blossoming’ (θαλερόν)

<sup>41</sup> *LSJ* s.v. θάλαμος II.

<sup>42</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone* (ed. Mark Griffith, Cambridge 1999), 266.

<sup>43</sup> In a review of Kessler’s *Bound by the Bible*, van der Horst points out that the connection between Isaac and Iphigenia is already in Josephus, Ant. Jud. 1:223. *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2005.02.47 (2005).

daughter, who had already been made into a Greek-type heroine.<sup>44</sup> There is a long and well-documented tradition in Greek poetry of comparing marriage to death that stretches back to Greek drama and continues in Greek folk song.<sup>45</sup>

First let us examine how Isaac is like Iphigeneia from Greek mythology. In the version of Iphigeneia's sacrifice as told in Euripides' drama *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Iphigeneia thinks that she is coming to her wedding. Her father Agamemnon, who has heard from the prophet that they can only sail for Troy if he sacrifices his daughter to the goddess Artemis, brings her to Aulis (where the Greek fleet is stuck with a lack of winds) under the pretense that she is to marry Achilles. The language of marriage and sacrifice are intertwined as the chorus sings of a wreath that will adorn not a bride but a sacrificial victim: "But you, Iphigeneia, on your / lovely hair the Argives will set / a wreath, as on the brows / of a spotted heifer."<sup>46</sup> Immediately after this choral song Clytemnestra announces that her daughter now knows the truth. Iphigeneia boldly accepts this fate and willingly asks for the sacrificial wreath: "set the wreath on my head."<sup>47</sup> Just as Iphigeneia expected a wedding wreath but now finds herself wearing the wreath of a sacrificial victim, so too does Isaac participate in a reversal. Isaac asks not for a wreath of sacrifice, but for his hair to be braided, as if he is a bride preparing for a wedding: "let the people plait my radiant hair with braids" (ξαν[θ]ήν μοι πλοκάμοισι κόμην πλέξασθε

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<sup>44</sup> Jephtha's daughter is discussed in van der Horst and Parmentier 159-160; see also Margaret Alexiou and Peter Dronke, "The lament of Jephtha's daughter: themes, traditions, originality" *Studi Medievali* 12 (1971) 819-863.

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Alexiou et al., *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Lanham, MD 2002).

<sup>46</sup> σέ δ' ἐπὶ κάρᾳ στέψοθσι καλλικόμαν / πλόκαμον Ἀργεῖοι Eur. *IA* 1080 translation of Merwin and Dimock, *Iphigeneia at Aulis* (New York 1992) 1455-1458.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 1477.

πολιται). This word for “braided hair” is rare, although it is used by archaic and Hellenistic poets. Gregory Nazianzus uses a similar phrase for braided hair, for instance in his poem for his sister: “Another sang the beauty of my sister; below the radiant, braided hair her dark brow rising above her silver cheeks.”<sup>48</sup> Clearly Gregory of Nazianzus when speaking of braided hair is talking about the hair of a woman. So what does it mean for Isaac to speak as if he is the bride? His speech lacks the morose tone often found in these speeches of heroines about to meet their death. *To Abraham* changes the usual pattern. Instead of a young woman discovering that she will not be married but will encounter death, Isaac discovers that he will encounter death and rejoices as if it were a wedding.

Since what Isaac encounters at the sacrifice is the symbolic apple that represents Christ, his joy seems to be in anticipation of this encounter. This would then explain why Isaac speaks in language redolent of weddings. Nuptial imagery is present already in the New Testament with the parables about the wise virgins (Matthew 25), and patristic literature develops these images at great length. Nuptial symbolism is found in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, *2nd Clement*, a fragment of Melito, the *Odes of Solomon*, as well the second and third century fathers Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Clement of Alexandria, as J. Christopher King has shown.<sup>49</sup> In the parable of the wise virgins (Mt 25), the wise virgins await the coming of the bridegroom. The virgins who are ready to meet the bridegroom are figures of the Church awaiting its marriage to Christ, the bridegroom. The earliest witness to this imagery

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<sup>48</sup> PG 37,1494 (2.2.2). "Ἄλλος ἄεισε / Κάλλος ἐμὸν, ξανθοῖσιν ὑπὸ πλοκάμοισι μέλαιναν / Ὅφρὸν ὑπερέλλουσαν ὑπ' ἀργυρέησι παρειαῖς.

<sup>49</sup> King, *Origen on the Song of Songs*, 2ff.

outside the New Testament comes, in fact, from another text in the Bodmer Papyri. Bodmer Papyri 12 contains a brief hymn, likely by Melito of Sardis, in which Christ is called the bridegroom: τὸν νυμφίον ὑμῶν Χριστόν.<sup>50</sup> In the *Shepherd of Hermas* the Church is depicted as a bride coming of a bridal chamber who then encounters Hermas.<sup>51</sup> As King observes, “among writings of the subapostolic period, the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 148) most plainly shows the first evidence of an early openness to nuptial symbolism.”<sup>52</sup>

Another source for the nuptial imagery is of course the Song of Songs. The bride and the bridegroom were understood as the Church and Christ or as the soul and God—i.e. some combination of a feminine entity (*ekklesia, psyche*) and a male figure. Gregory’s commentary— as we have already discussed in the explication of the apple— demonstrates how nuptial, even carnal, imagery can take on a spiritual sense. Moreover, Gregory of Nyssa’s commentary demonstrates how the male Isaac can take on the female role of the bride:

What is described there is an account of a wedding, but what is intellectually discerned is the human soul’s mingling with the Divine. That is why the one who is called ‘son’ in Proverbs is here called ‘bride,’ and Wisdom, correspondingly, is transferred into the role of bridegroom. This is to assure that the human person, once separated from the bridegroom, might be betrothed to God as a holy virgin (cr. 2 Cor 11:2), and,

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<sup>50</sup> *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana: The collection of the Bodmer Papyri*, (München 2000). See also King, *Origen on the Song of Songs*.

<sup>51</sup> Vision 23 (iv.2).

<sup>52</sup> King, *Origen on the Song of Songs*, 2.



once joined to the Lord, may become 'one spirit' (1 Cor 6:17)  
through being mingled with that which is inviolate and  
impassible, having become purified thought rather than heavy  
flesh.<sup>53</sup>

With this allegorical understanding of the marriage between the soul and God in place, let us look at Isaac's words in comparison to other poet's use of this imagery. Gregory of Nazianzus in one of his poems depicts a mystical marriage, where the groom is Christ and the bride the soul about to enter the wedding chamber:

Christ has opened the veil,  
  
he is astounded, seeing the prized, exceedingly beautiful bride,  
  
good, like a pearl, sitting gracefully, with a high brow;  
  
although you are beautiful, yet he adds further charm.  
  
Christ will lead you (the bride) rejoicing to his home,  
  
and he will prepare for you a wedding banquet along with  
  
great,  
  
spotless choirs singing heavenly songs.  
  
And he will crown your head with ever-blooming graces,  
  
and he will set forth a bowl full of a sweet drink,

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<sup>53</sup> *In Cant.* 1 (Norris 25).

and he will reveal the mysteries of wisdom, the true lights of  
his unclothed mind—of which we see down here only the  
image in a mirror.<sup>54</sup>

This epithalamion takes the conventions of the marriage song but applies them in an allegorical manner. Gregory imagines what happens as Christ the bridegroom encounters the pure soul, the bride, and leads it into the inner chamber. A banquet is laid out for the rejoicing soul. In fact Gregory of Nazianzus uses the same word for rejoicing (*καγαλαλώσαν*) that is used in *To Abraham* to describe Isaac's own rejoicing (*καγαλαλών*).

Isaac's delight comes from his anticipated wedding to death, because at his death he will meet his bridegroom. *To Abraham* employs nuptial imagery in line with Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, and the linked imagery from the Song of Songs and the parable of the Wise Virgins unlocks the mysteries of this poem. Isaac, therefore, represents the chaste soul, υἱὸν] ἄθι[κτον (*To Abraham* 9), a pure and unblemished offering who prepares for his marriage to Christ. He foresees—or maybe Sarah suggests to him—that his sacrifice is a matter for rejoicing, since it means that he is going to meet his beloved. Isaac is not a prefiguration or a type of Christ in this poem, as he so often is in Christian literature. Rather, Isaac is a virginal soul who anticipates meeting Christ, the apple among the trees, who will be sacrificed and provide a banquet by offering his body and blood, represented here in the poem by the apple.

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<sup>54</sup> PG 37.631 (1.2.2).

## CONCLUSION

Modern discussions of figural interpretation have tended to emphasize a distinction between typology and allegory; these studies of the interpretative practices of patristic readers have argued that typology was often favored over allegory since typology preserved historical distinction.<sup>55</sup> Erich Auerbach in his classic essay *Figura* defines typology thus: “Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life.”<sup>56</sup> It is this separateness in time that often differentiates typology from other forms of allegory. One problem with allegory is that it diminishes the historical value, and this was especially a concern for how Christian interpreters read the Old Testament. Yes, the departure from Egypt did occur; it is not simply an allegory of the soul’s escape from the passions. So then what kind of figural interpretation do we find in *To Abraham*? This poem complicates matters because Abraham chooses the apple for the feast. *To Abraham* does not envision the sacrifice of Isaac as a type or a foreshadowing, a pattern of things to come; rather, in a proleptic manner, the sacrifice of Isaac becomes the Eucharistic meal itself. A future event is understood as having already happened. Can we then describe this as typology, or is it something else? Here it is important to note that even as typology emphasizes the historical difference, there is at the

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<sup>55</sup>Martens, “Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction” 283-317.

<sup>56</sup>Auerbach, “Figura” In *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Gloucester, MA 1973)

same time a sense in which this historical difference cloaks what is only an apparent difference in time. As Auerbach explains, “the eternal thing is already figured in them, and thus they are both tentative fragmentary reality, and veiled eternal reality.”<sup>57</sup> The events in the life of Christ may take place within historical time; yet these events cloak a “veiled eternal reality” which Abraham beholds in symbolic form. Thus the poem’s use of the “apple” is a symbol cloaking the eternal reality of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. This understanding of symbol and reality may lie behind the comment in St. John’s Gospel when Christ says: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”<sup>58</sup> A passage from St. Athanasius on Genesis 22 further demonstrates how Abraham saw beyond the temporal into the eternal reality cloaked in the events of the sacrifice of his son Isaac. In *Festal Letter VI* Athanasius says: “When Abraham offered his son, he was worshipping the Son of God; when he was prevented from sacrificing Isaac it was Christ that he saw in that ram offered as a substitute in immolation to God.”<sup>59</sup> Time breaks down in this manner of interpretation, as the later event of Christ’s sacrifice is seen already in the earlier event of Isaac’s almost sacrifice and the substitution of the ram. This manner of interpretation, apparent both in *To Abraham* and Athanasius, is perhaps best represented visually. In the sixth-century basilica of St. Catherine’s Monastery, there are two encaustic icons flanking the apse. On the pilaster to the left is a depiction of the Sacrifice of Isaac, to the right the Sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter.<sup>60</sup> As

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<sup>57</sup> *Figura* 59-60.

<sup>58</sup> John 8:56.

<sup>59</sup> *Festal Letter 6*. PG 26,1387. Quoted in Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 133.

<sup>60</sup> Weitzmann, Kurt. “The Jephthah Panel in the Bema of the Church of St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18 (1964): 341–52. Weitzmann argues for

Kurt Weitzmann observed in his seminal work on these icons, “the Abraham and Jephtha panels were composed as perfect counterparts, oriented toward the altar which stands between them in the center of the bema.”<sup>61</sup> In the depiction of the Sacrifice of Jephtha’s daughter, she is being sacrificed at a table; this table has a covering with the design of a cross, clearly meant to reflect the altar table. The symbolism is unmistakable— Isaac and Jephtha anticipate in a symbolic manner the sacrifice that takes place on the altar table in the Eucharist.

What we have in *To Abraham* is typology, but typology understood broadly as a figural reading related to and not opposed to allegory.<sup>62</sup> Christ is eternally present, though here in symbolic form in the figure of the apple. Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac approach the sacrifice with joy because this sacrifice is about a symbolic wedding: Isaac comes to the altar as a bride and encounters there the bridegroom Christ. Abraham does not literally offer up Christ as a sacrifice— this would have serious theological implications, not to mention how it would completely dismantle the Biblical narrative. Rather, what is happening in this poem is that Abraham is offering in place of his son a symbol, the apple, which is understood as pointing toward Christ. Thus Isaac is not a type of things to come; instead, the apple sacrificed in place of Isaac prefigures Christ. It is a bold retelling of Genesis 22; the poet takes liberty with the

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a 7th century date for these panels since they are clearly part of a later expansion; he suggests a Syro-Palestinian origin.

<sup>61</sup> Weitzmann 344.

<sup>62</sup> Here I follow the observation of Norris in his introduction to Greg. Nyssa *In Cant* (xlviii-xlix): “Clearly, though, unlike many present-day scholars, he failed to discern any important difference between ‘typology’ (a word for which he had no equivalent) and ‘allegory.’” See also Martens 309.

text, as an apple gets sacrificed and they enjoy a meal that anticipates the Eucharistic meal itself.

In conclusion, *To Abraham* is deliberate in its choice of a word with dual meanings. By doing this, the poem forces us to pause and ponder which it is— a sheep or an apple— and recognize that the while at first it seems it must be a sheep, it is also an apple. From there we are left with the problem of how an apple can be sacrificed; as we turn to Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of the Song of Songs, we then see that the apple is Christ.

APPENDIX

Πρὸς Ἀβραάμ ὑπέ[ρθ]ετα

“Ὅς κόσμον συνέζευξε καὶ οὐρανὸν[ ἡδὲ θά]λασσαν  
αἰθέρος ἐκπροΐαλλε τῶι Ἀβραάμ ἄγγ[ελον] ὡκὺν  
ρέξαι ἐδὸν φίλον υἷα τεληέσσην ἐκατόμβην.

κατὰ στοιχείον

αὐτίκα δ’ ὡς ξυνέηκεν ἐχήρατο πρόφρονι θυ[μῶι  
5 βῆ δ’ ἴμεν εἰ πεπίθοιεν ἀγακλειτήν παράκοι[τιν·  
“γύναι ἐμή, ποθέει θεὸς ἄμβροτος ὄφρα κομ[ίσσω  
δῖον Ἰσακ, μέγα δῶρον ἔη[ν] ἐπὶ γήραο[ς ο]ἰδ[ῶι  
ἐκγενέτης· τελέσειεν τ[ῶι γε θεοῦ τὸ θέλ]ημ[α·  
ζεύξω ἐμὸν ποτὶ βωμ[ὸ]ν ὄρ[εγνὺς υἰὸν] ἄθι[κτον]”.  
10 ἠύξατο δ’ ὡς πεπύθε[σ]κε γυν[ῆ] πεπνυμέ[να βάζει]γ·  
“θάρσει, ἐμὸν φίλε τέκνον ἐπ[εῖ] μάκαρ ἔπ[λεο σὺ ζ]ῶν  
Ἰσα[κ] ἐμῶν μελέων τ[έκος ] .κλ. [

[κ

[λ

(τοκῆας *vel sim.*)

15 μείλιχα] καγχαλῶν προσεφώνεε φαίδιμος υἰός·  
“νυμ[φί]διον θαλερὸν θάλαμον τεύξασθε τοκῆες,  
ξαν[θ]ῆν μοι πλοκάμοισι κόμην πλέξασθε πολίται,  
ὄφ[ρ’] ἱερ]ῆν τελέσαιμι χάριν μεγαλήτορι θυμῶι”.  
π[ῦρ αὐ]τὰρ περὶ βωμὸν ἐτείχισαν ἴστορες ἀμφίς,

7. ἔη[ν] ἐπὶ γήραο[ς ο]ἰδ[ῶι HR: ἐμ[ο]ῦ [ἐ]πὶ γήραος [ο]ἰδῶι Liv || 8. ἐκγενέτης : fort. ἐκ γενετής  
HR || τ[ῶι γε κτλ : fort. π[ᾶν] ὅτι οἱ τὸ θέλ]ημ[α vel π[ᾶν] ὁ θεοῦ τὸ θέλ]ημ[α HR || 10.  
]πεπνυμέ[να βάζει]γ HR: ]πεπνυμέ[νον υἰὸ]ν Liv || 11. ἐπ[εῖ] μάκαρ κτλ HR: ἐπ[ε]σ]ι  
μακάρτ[ατος ἄλλ]ων Liv || 12. τέκος vel τόκος HR || 15. μείλιχα HR: μήτερα Liv || 18. ὄφ[ρ’]  
ἱερ]ῆν : vel ὄφ[ρ’] ὑμ]ῶν Liv || 19. π[ῦρ αὐ]τὰρ HR: π[υρὴν] γὰρ Liv

20 ῥ[οίβδη]σεν δὲ θάλασσα περὶ φλόγα, τὴν ῥὰ Μοῦσῆς  
 σ[χίσε]ι· Ἀβραὰμ υἱὰ ποτιξυναείρετο κύμα  
 τ[ὸν δ' ἔ]φερεν θυόεντα πατῆρ, χαίροντα δὲ βωμῶι  
 ὑψόθε]ν Ἐφαιστοιο δειδίσκετο, θύνατο δ' ὄξυ  
 φάσγανο]ν ἀυχένεος ποτιθινέμεν· ἀλλὰ θεοῖο  
 25 χεῖρ μὴν ἀμ]φετάνυστο· φάνεσκε γὰρ ἐγγύθι μῆλον·  
 ψῆλεν δ' Ἀβρ]αὰμ, υἱὰ σώων, ἀνά δένδρεα καρπὸν  
 ὧστε προσθ]έμενος τό ῥ' ἐλέξατο δαίτα πονεῖσθαι.

τὰ λοιπ]ὰ πρόσθετα

ἀὐτ[ίκα σύ, ] μεγάθυμε, λάχοις γέρας ἄλλο κατ' αὐτὸ  
 χίλια[ τέκνα σ]ε τοῖον ἐπαυγάσαι ἀνθεμόεντα  
 30 δωρο[δότη]ν πανάριστον ἐπεμβεβαῶτ' ἐπὶ πύργωι.

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20. ῥ[οίβδη]σεν : vel ῥ[οίζησεν HR || 21. σ[χίσε]ι HR: σ[χίζε]ν Liv || 23. ὑψόθε]ν Liv || δειδίσκετο :  
 διδισκετο B || 25. init. suppl. Liv || 26. ψῆλεν : ψιλόν? ψευστήν? ψευδέα? HR|| 28. ἀὐτ[ίκα HR:  
 κύρ[ιέ μου] Liv || 29. [τέκνα σ]ε τοῖον HR: [κύρι]ε, τοῖον Liv || 30. δωρο[δότη]ν HR: Δωρό[θεο]ν  
 Liv