

Introduction

I. Overview

The *Acts of Paul* appeared in the second half of the second century, between c. 160 and c. 190, probably c. 170–75. The works now designated “Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles” are a disparate group united by a biographical frame that follows an apostolic missionary from his original commission to his death, usually by martyrdom. Five of these books—those featuring Andrew, John, Paul, Peter, and Thomas—are called “major,” although a case can now be made for adding the *Acts of Philip* to that category. Only the *Acts of Thomas* is complete, and all of these acts were subjected to frequent editing. Of the major Acts the piece devoted to Paul was the most acceptable in catholic circles, particularly on doctrinal grounds, and was ultimately condemned more because of its use by heretics, notably the Manichees as well as followers of Priscillian, than for its doctrines. Nonetheless, the *API* continued to be read and utilized as an historical and edifying source throughout the Middle Ages.

Perhaps two-thirds of the entire work survives; several sections are quite fragmentary. The existence of some scenes can be identified or outlined by reference to use by later authors (Section III). Although the work was composed in the late second century, the edition now reconstructed is not earlier than c. 300. Three components of the *API* enjoyed a separate existence. One, the martyrdom, was used liturgically on the appropriate feast, and was thus subject to considerable editing. Another, *3 Corinthians*, was not an original part of the *API*. The third is the material featuring Thekla (or Thekla) of Iconium, who became an immensely popular saint in antiquity and later eras, as well as a more recent feminist heroine. The residue of the work must be pieced out from incomplete papyrus texts.

API represent what most would find a quite old-fashioned viewpoint. The apostle is an itinerant missionary of the sort characterized in Mark

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6:1–12 and its parallels, an itinerant who remains in a town as guest of householders until expelled by officials. The Paul of these non-canonical Acts, like the Paul of Acts, is a wandering missionary, who works wonders and converts large numbers to the faith. Differently from the Paul of Acts, his message has, as the following commentary will show, a strongly anti-establishment edge, rejecting the official forms of authority, notably the Empire and its institutions, particularly the family. He is, like the Paul of the Deutero-Pauline letters (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus), but unlike the Paul of Acts, a “loner,” with no apparent connections to a community in Jerusalem or to other leaders, such as Peter and James. See Pervo, “Hospitality.”

As is the case with all of the ApocActs except those of Thomas, the opening of the *APL* is not extant. The logical and standard place to begin was the call of the particular apostle. In the case of Paul that means his “conversion” in the vicinity of Damascus. The span of *APL* thus extended from that event to his martyrdom in Rome under Nero and subsequent resurrection. The intervening material narrates visits to various sites. In the more complete passages, these visits are not always explicitly initial, church-founding visits. The emphasis is upon the apostle’s pastoral role. This is in keeping with much of the Deutero-Pauline tradition, which honored Paul as a great missionary, but focused upon his role as a teacher for the extant church, as in, most notably, the PE. The balance of this introduction will seek to flesh out and argue for these assertions.

II. The Reception of *APL*

This survey includes not only the identification of witnesses to the existence of the *APL* but also the chronological and geographical extent of knowledge of the text, the portions of *APL* attested in various texts and writers, the use to which it was put, and the various evaluations of this work. Direct allusions mention the title *Acts of Paul* (or a variant thereof). Most of these are primary, i.e., the source comes directly from *APL*. Indirect references often consist of the name of a character from *APL*. By far the most common example is Thecla. Not all such references demonstrate use of *APL*, or even of the Thecla portion (chaps. 3–4). Only references that mention a specific incident constitute evidence. In general, *APL* were accepted as historical from the early third century until the late Middle Ages (and beyond).¹ See the surveys of Holzhey, Schmidt, *Acta*, 108–16, and Vouaux, 24–64.

1. Thecla’s name was removed from the Roman Catholic Sanctorale (Church calendar) in 1969, based upon doubts of her historical existence. She remains on various Eastern calendars.

1. The first, and probably earliest, extant example deviates from the aforesaid generalization. Tertullian, in his *On Baptism* 17.5, condemns *APL*. This reads, in accordance with the most likely text:

Now should certain *Acts of Paul*, which are a fabrication, appeal to the example of Thecla as authorizing women to teach and to baptize, note that the Asian presbyter who concocted that document, aspiring to enhance Paul's standing, was exposed and, despite his plead that he acted out of love for Paul, renounced his office. (author's trans.)²

The alternative text omits "Acts" and could refer to other writings falsely attributed to Paul. Even were this alternative preferred, Tertullian would almost certainly have the *APL* in mind. The shorter text may attempt to improve cloudy syntax or possibly even to remove an aspersion upon the *APL*. See MacKay, "Response"; Ng, "Acts"; Rordorf, "Tertullien"; Hilhorst, "Tertullian," 150–58 (probably the most detailed discussion); and Snyder, "Remembering," 158–61. On the basis of the extant text "baptizing" must refer to Thecla's own irregular initiation. (See the comments on 4.9.)

Tertullian disapproved of Thecla. From that stance one may conclude that at least some women read the text and viewed it as a model. He is a witness both to the existence of *APL* and to the threat it could pose. One should therefore view with caution his claims about the work's origin. (See sec. V.) Tertullian's rejection of *APL* was theological in nature, rather than historical. From his exhortation in the face of martyrdom, *Scorpiace* 15, which refers to Paul's resurrection after execution by Nero, it is most probable that Tertullian knew the entire *APL* (rather than the martyrdom as a distinct work). He does not (and would not) cite his authority for the claim about Paul, but it is *APL* 14. Tertullian is the earliest witness for *APL*, probably for the entire text. He is also the earliest authority for the use of Thecla as an example of women's authority. Tertullian offers a theory of composition, by a single author who sought to enhance Paul's standing.

2. A rather different viewpoint emerges in the *Commentary on Daniel* long attributed to Hippolytus of Rome. This is probably the oldest largely extant commentary upon a biblical book by a Christian author (if it is dated 203–204. See Moreschine and Norelli, 1:242–43). Hippolytus, *In Daniele* 29.3:

2. *quod si quae Acta Pauli, quae perperam scripta sunt, exemplum Theclae ad licentiam mulierum docendi tinguendique defendant, sciant in Asia presbyterum qui eam scripturam construxit, quasi titulo Pauli de suo cumulans, convictum atque confessum id se amore Pauli fecisse loco decessisse.*

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Then accordingly when the angel appeared in the den, the wild beasts were tamed and the lions, wagging their tails at him, rejoiced as being subjected by a new Adam. They, licking the holy feet of Daniel, rolled *around* to taste the soles of his feet and they longed to accompany him. 29.4. For if we believe that, after Paul was condemned to beasts *and that* a lion was set upon him, it reclined at his feet and licked him all around, how do we not also believe what happened to Daniel, which even Darius himself described to all, having dispatched *it* through scribes? And in the books of the Persians and Medes it is read up to today that these *things* really occurred, so that not only the Hebrews nor only the Babylonians, but also the Medes and the Persians and all the nations who live under heaven, having heard the *things* which happened, they themselves feared God. (Trans. Thomas. C. Schmidt, at files/Hippolytus Commentary on Daniel by T C Schmidt. pdf [last accessed 10 January 2012].)

The source of this indirect witness is *APL* 9, in which the apostle relates how he had come to baptize a lion shortly after his conversion. In due course Paul is condemned to the beasts in that very city of Ephesus (cf. 1 Cor 15:32). By a stroke of fortune so good that it seems providential, the lion selected to lunch on Paul was that very same creature. See the comments on chap. 9. The commentator on Daniel does not report the lion's gift of speech or subsequent baptism. Several points merit attention. One is that the commentator, who is not aware of the general credulity presumably shared by ancient common people, expects (and has evidently experienced) doubts about the credibility of the tale of Daniel in the lions' den. Skepticism about wondrous events reported in Scripture is not an invention of more recent godless times.

Even more notably, the author makes his point through an *a maiori* argument, based upon an apposite religio-historical parallel. The greater is the *APL*. The commentator presumes that the audience knows *APL* 9 and takes it as fact. Without those assumptions his argument is utterly futile. The *APL* is evidently scarcely thirty years old, but it has attained the status of "gospel truth," as it were, at Rome.

3. Origen's (c. 185–c. 254) views on official and non-official Scripture vary. See Hanson, *Tradition*, 141. *APL* exemplify this generalization. The first example is indirect. It comes from Origen's *De pascha*, discovered in 1941 and edited in 1979. (See Bovon, "A New Citation.") Nautin, *Origène*, 411, dates this text c. 239–242. For a translation, see Daly, *Origen*. Origen, characteristically, takes the injunction to eat the Passover "with girded loins" (Exod

12:11) in an ascetic sense. At the minimum it prohibits sexual intercourse before Communion. The maximum is more rigorous. In support whereof Origen invokes John the Baptizer's girded loins (e.g., Mark 1:6) and the apostle: "The married man who eats the Passover 'shall gird' also his 'loins' because the Apostle has said, 'Blessed are those who have wives [*if they live*] as those who have none.'" Behind this lies 1 Cor 7:29, but its immediate source is the transformation of that verse in *APL* 3:5, where it is formulated as a beatitude. Origen cites the *APL* without identifying his source. The quotation formula attributes these words to Paul. A parallel would be someone who said, "As Paul said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are'" (Acts 17:22). Contemporary critical scholars would characterize those words as placed in Paul's mouth by the author of Acts. For Origen the words of Paul's sermon in *APL* can be attributed directly to the apostle. The citation is both authoritative and cogent. The next two examples are direct, although a bit puzzling.

Origen, *On First Principles* 1, 2, 3, dated by Nautin, *Origène*, p. 371, c. 229. The discussion focuses upon the relation of Wisdom to Word. The former is identical to the latter, which is called Word "because she [wisdom] is as it were an interpreter of the mind's secrets. Hence I consider that to be a true saying which is written in the Acts of Paul, 'He is the word, a living being.' [*unde et recte mihi dictus videtur sermo ille qui in Actibus Pauli scriptus est, qui 'hic est verbum animal vivens.'*] John, however, uses yet more exalted and wonderful language" (Trans. Butterworth, *Origen on First Principles*, 16–17). The expression "which is written in the *Acts of Paul*" is characteristic of quotations of authoritative documents. The location of this citation is unknown. It probably comes from a speech. The speeches of the *ApocActs* are less likely to survive than are the narrative, as speeches were more likely to be victims of abridgement and censorship. See Appendix 1.

Commentary on John 20.12 (c. 239–242, according to Nautin, *Origène*, p. 411): "If any care to accept what is written in the *Acts of Paul* as a saying of the savior, 'I am going to be crucified again . . .'"

Readers immediately note that, in this milieu, Origen may be aware of objections to the *APL*. This is not to suggest that *APL* has lost standing in the exegete's eyes. He continues to value the work, not because of its stirring stories of rebellious young women or celibate lions, but because of its theological ideas. Each of his citations is of sayings material. Whether one can construct a history of the reception of *APL* from contrasting views of its status is dubious. The source is *APL* 13.2. (For the question of the relation between this passage and the *APtr*, see the comments on chap. 13.)

From these citations and allusions one can deduce that Origen had a "full" text of *APL*, including chapters 3 and 13 (and thus two of the

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“independent” sections). For that famous exegete *APL* was a source of Paul’s *ipsissima verba*. He can quote it just as he cites the letters. *APL* is a useful resource that provides theological data for the interpretation of other scriptures. One may also postulate that Origen’s career witnessed crescent attention to the establishment of textual boundaries, i.e., that limits were being set on the number of authoritative texts of the formative era.

4. Commodian (probably second half of third century; see Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 1:381–82). In his *Carmen Apologeticum* 624–30, Commodian mentions talking animals: Balaam’s donkey, and sandwiched between the talking dog and the articulate infant of APtr 9–12; 15, a reference to the lion that spoke “with divine voice” (“at divine urging”?, *voce divina*). This early Christian poet utilized Numbers and the two ApocActs as historical sources of equal value. See James, *Apocrypha*, 54–56. This witness is interesting because he lived in North Africa and was strongly influenced by Cyprian, who made no reference to *APL*. The indirect reference is probably to chap. 9 (although chap. 1 is possible). Commodian very probably utilized a Latin translation. This is the earliest evidence for that version.

5. The *Didascalia*. This Syriac work of c. 250 may have utilized 3 Cor. This would not be surprising because Ephrem and other Syrian authors accepted this letter. Utilization of 3 Cor does not prove that *APL* was the source, as it was (also) included in the Pauline corpus from an early date.

6. Methodius (died 311–312). Circa 300 Methodius of Olympus issued a *Symposium* based upon that of Plato, which he wished to replace. See Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 1:313–15. Thecla has the climactic contribution. This indirect witness indicates the extent to which Thecla was admired in celibate circles in the third century.

7. *The Physiologus*. This prototype of the medieval bestiary appeared c. 300 or slightly earlier. See Curley, *Physiologus*, chapter 17, which includes a catalogue of those saved by praying: Moses, Daniel, Jonah: “Thecla was thrown into the fire and into the pits of the beasts and the figure of the cross saved her” (Curley, 26), followed by Susanna, Judith, Esther, and the three young men condemned in Daniel. Chapter 31 (pp. 45–46) notes those who fled from evil: Joseph from Mm. Potiphar, Thecla from Thamyris, Susanna from the wicked elders, Esther and Judith from Artaxerxes and Holofernes, respectively, the three youths from Nebuchadnezzar, and Sarah from “Nasmodeus” (Tobit). Thecla will frequently appear in catalogues with Susanna, Esther, and Judith. (Examples include Isidore of Pelusium, 440, *Epistles*

1.160, who compared Thecla with Susanna, the daughter of Jephtha, and Judith. Monophysites of the sixth century place Thecla with Ruth, Susanna, Esther, and Judith among prominent women, and Gregory Nazianzus, *Contra Julian* 1.69, associates her with Susanna.) The specifics indicate that chaps. 3 and 4 were known to the author of the *Physiologus*.

8. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–c. 340). Eusebius belongs to the early stages of efforts to determine and establish a *canon* of sacred Christian writings. From the late first century some writings, notably the letters of Paul, were viewed as authoritative. Inspiration was a broad category. Decisive personal statements notwithstanding, even individual writers were not consistent, and manuscripts contain texts condemned or rejected in “canon lists.” At *H.E.* 3.25 Eusebius lists “the writings of the New Testament.” The first category includes those accepted by all, although Revelation, included in this category, is not undisputed. Next are disputed books, although “most” accept them: James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2–3 John. The third category of NT writings are “spurious,” probably to be taken as meaning pseudonymous: *API*, the *Shepherd [of Hermas]*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, as well as *Barnabas* and the *Didache*. Revelation may belong here, as may the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. Eusebius then adds, confusingly (3.25.6), that these would belong among the disputed. They differ from the “canonical” (*endiathēkous*, “covenanted”) but are known to most Christian authors. The historian then lists heretical writings, including gospels attributed to Peter, Thomas, Matthias, etc., and the *AAndr*, *AJn*, and other Acts. These do not even belong to the category of the spurious. Eusebius evidently has three broad categories: writings accepted by all, disputed writings, in two groups, and heretical texts. The major distinction within the disputed is between those of apparently genuine authorship and those written by others. Paul did not write *API* (and narrate his own death and resurrection). The major point is that Eusebius sharply distinguishes between *API* and the other ApocActs. The latter are heretical. This view was rather general, Tertullian and Jerome being the two major exceptions.

At the beginning of that same book 3 of his *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius discusses (3.3) writings of Peter. There he accepted 1 Peter, but judged 2 Peter “uncanonical,” although some study it “along with other scriptures” (3.1). The *Acts*, *Gospel*, *Preaching*, and *Revelation* of Peter are rejected because not used by right-thinking believers (3.2). In 3.4 Eusebius admits fourteen Pauline epistles, again noting that some reject Hebrews. At the close of sec. 5 he states that he does not acknowledge his so-called Acts as an undisputed book. Eusebius then turns to *Hermas*, which receives a mixed review, not unlike Hebrews or 2 John. Perfect consistency was not

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a Eusebian hobgoblin. One example of this refusal to be controlled by his stated principles occurs two chapters earlier. 3.1 begins with the “Apostolic lottery,” in which each apostle receives a missionary region by lot. This is found, for example, in *A Thom*. At the end of that section the historian notes that Peter was crucified head down at his own request. 2.25.5 states that Paul was beheaded under Nero. The sources of these two statements are the respective Acts of Peter and Paul. Like others, Eusebius was prepared to draw upon *API* for historical data.

9. The Codex Claromontanus. This fifth- to sixth-century Greco-Latin ms. contains at its close a list in Latin of biblical books, with the number of lines in each. This counting of *stichoi* intended to serve as a mark of authenticity and as an indication of tampering. (Unfortunately the length of these lines was not fixed with perfect consistency.) After listing the books of the OT, the text notes four gospels, then epistles of Paul: Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Colossians, Philemon. (Philippians and Hebrews are omitted, probably by error.) Then come 1–2 Peter, James, 1–3 John, Jude, *Barnabas*, Revelation of John, Acts, *Hermas*, *Acts of Paul*, and the *Revelation of Peter*. This fascinating list reflects a viewpoint like that of Eusebius, in which disputed books are set apart from others. It also shows that manuscript Bibles do not always conform to rules, including conciliar decisions.

10. Other manuscript data. Most of these use *API* for details of historical background.

2 Timothy 3:11 (Paul is speaking): “. . . my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.” In the margins of several witnesses, K (ninth century), 181 (eleventh century), and the Harclean Syriac (sixth century or later), after “Antioch” appear: “[W]hat he suffered because of Thecla and from the Jews against those who believed in Christ.” The first addition derives from *API* 3 (Iconium). The second evidently stems from the canonical Acts. The origins of this gloss evidently go back to at least the fifth century, given attestation from Syrian monophysites and Byzantine Chalcedonians. An ancient commentator thus used both the apocryphal and canonical books to detail the sufferings, in much the same manner as modern commentators will refer to Acts to specify 2 Cor 11:24–28.

2 Timothy 4:19 “Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.” 181 (above) and 460 (thirteenth century) insert, after “Aquila”: “*Lectra, his wife, and his sons Simmias, and Zeno.*” The ineptly placed

interpolation evidently derives from a gloss. Its purpose is pedantic enough: to supply the names of Onesiphorus' family. The source is *API* 3.2. This glossator is among those who long ago recognized links between the Pastoral Epistles and the *API*, links that continue to bear scholarly fruit. (That the Pastorals place Onesiphorus in Ephesus and the *API* in Iconium evidently does not matter.) These examples demonstrate that data from the *API* were deemed wholly reliable sources for the elucidation of 2 Timothy and continued to serve that purpose for over a millennium.

11. Some Representative Commentators. Ambrosiaster, as the Latin commentator of the last third of the fourth century is known, remarks, regarding 2 Tim 2:17–18, which says of the unlovable Hymenaeus and Philetus, that they “have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place”: “These persons, as we learn in another writing, said that resurrection comes about as a result of children.”³ The unidentified “other writing” is the *API* 3:13. The two persons are not directly named here; they are Demas and Hermogenes. This comment was repeated by subsequent commentators, including Pelagius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret. See Lalleman, “The Resurrection,” 138–39.

With reference to 2 Tim 4:14 (“Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds”) Ambrosiaster says: “This creature Alexander and the aforementioned Demas were cronies. Previously they had been companions of Paul and feigned friendship for him.”⁴ This increases the probability that Ambrosiaster was reading *API*, rather than cribbing the data from an earlier commentator, for he summarizes 3.1.

Regarding 2 Timothy 1:15 (“You are aware that all who are in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes”) Ambrosiaster observes: “These people, whom Paul mentions, were jam-packed with hypocrisy, for they feigned friendship with the apostle, so that they might affiliate with him and learn more, whence they might do him injury or incite others to do so. When they found their plans exposed, they separated from Paul.”⁵ Despite the differences in names, Ambrosiaster identifies the enemies of Paul in the Pastorals with his opponents in *API* 3. In the late fourth century the *API* was a valuable resource for elucidating the background of the Pastorals, despite such minor matters as the use of different names.

3. *Hi, ut ex alia scriptura docemur, in filiis fieri resurrectionem dicebant*

4. *Alexander iste, et Demas supradictus, collegae fuerunt. Hi prius cum apostolo errant, simulantes illi amicitiam*

5. *Hi, quos memorat [Paul] fallacia pleni errant; simulabant enim amicitias apostoli, ut adhaerentes ei addiscerent, unde illi calumniam facerent aut per alios immitterent. Qui posteaquam viderunt manifestatos se recesserunt ab eo.*

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John Chrysostom (c. 347–407). In his comments on Acts 11:27–30 (collection for famine relief) he cites as an example of giving: Hear . . . her concerning that blessed Thekla, how, that she might see Paul, she gave even her gold: and thou wilt not give even a farthing that thou mayest see Christ: thou admirest what she did, but dost not emulate her (trans. Morris et al., *Homilies*, 167).

The reference is to *APL* 3:18. Thecla was not making a contribution for the relief of the poor but bribes to guardians of doors. Besides their value to the plot and, as the good patriarch implies, marks of the depth of her desire for intimacy with Paul, these bribes demonstrate her renunciation of worldly wealth and beauty. The most important point is that Chrysostom did not deem himself obliged to summarize the story. He could assume that his faithful hearers knew it.

Chrysostom's utilization of *APL* 14 is complex but certain. (See Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 364–68.) The initial motive for Nero's action against Paul in *APL* 14 is the conversion of Patroclus, the emperor's Ganymede (cupbearer and lover). See the comments on chap. 14 and Pervo, "(Not) Appealing."

Chrysostom's speech against the opponents of the monastic life, 1.3, states that conversion of a concubine got Paul in hot water (Vouaux, 37). This looks like confusion with *APtr*, but see the reference to Romans 16 below. His *Homily on 2 Timothy* 10 says, à propos of 4:16: "He had appeared before Nero, but had escaped. Afterwards, because he had converted his cup-bearer, he was beheaded" (author's trans.). John therefore knew *APL* 14.

The *Homily on Acts* 46 states "that Paul was said to have saluted both Nero's cupbearer and his concubine." The exegetical context is Paul's arrest in Acts 21. Evidently an earlier commentator on Romans 16 had attempted to flesh out some of the names in the greeting list by reference to *APL* 14. Such enterprises, a staple of the commentator's art, presume general acceptance of the historical accuracy of *APL*, regardless of its canonical status. Just who was in mind is a difficult question. One possibility for the cupbearer is Narcissus (Rom 16:11). A former slave with this name was an official during the reign of Claudius. Chrysostom was familiar with *APL* 3 and 14. It is possible that he knew these as separate works, but this is no more demonstrable than the hypothesis that he knew the entire book.

12. Various patristic authorities. Jerome (c. 345–420), next to Tertullian, the most vigorous ancient critic of *APL*, proclaimed (*Vir. Ill.* 7): "We therefore classify the *Journeys of Paul and Thecla* and the entire fable of a baptized lion with the apocryphal writings." Although he has taken from Tertullian the story that a presbyter wrote the text, Jerome was familiar with it, for he,

like many more recent critics, was particularly incensed by chap. 9, to which Tertullian did not refer. Jerome utilizes the term “journeys” (*periodoi*), reserving “Acts” (*praxeis*) for the canonical book. He asks if it were possible that Luke (Paul’s constant companion) had overlooked this incident. That question will be answered by Nicephorus Callistus (below). Responsive animals were not a legitimate issue, for in his own egregiously fictional biographies of Paul, Malchus, and Hilarion Jerome did not hesitate to introduce thoughtful, considerate, and obedient animals as helpmeets to the ascetics. Moreover, in the climax of his letter on virginity to Eustochium (*Ep.* 22.41), Jerome introduces Thecla after Mary and Miriam. She will happily dash into Eustochium’s arms. The story of Thecla was exemplary for this difficult and brilliant author. In sum: Jerome knew of chaps. 3, 4, and 9 of the *APL*.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430). In the account of Augustine’s dispute with the Manichean Faustus (*C. Faustum* 30–31), Faustus concedes that Augustine will not accept evidence based upon the Acts of Andrew, John, Peter, and Thomas, but he presumes that arguments utilizing the story of Paul and Thecla will be mutually acceptable. The Manicheans had a corpus of five Acts used in place of the canonical book. In this context it is unlikely that Faustus was contrasting four apostolic acts to a “martyrdom” of Thecla (chaps. 3–4). *APL* is set against the others because it was generally acceptable in Catholic circles. See Vouaux, 46–50, who notes a reference to Thecla also in Augustine’s *De sancta virginitate* 45.

13. Other Texts. The fourth-century *Life of Polycarp*, attributed to Pionius, 2. (Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* 2/3:433–44) may be a witness to *APL*. Paul arrives at Smyrna from Galatia. *APL* 9 (P.Heid) has Paul depart from Smyrna for Ephesus. Nothing can be discovered of his activities there from P.Heid. Rordorf (1149) proposes that he went to Smyrna from Jerusalem. The *Life* is (unlike Polycarp) strongly anti-Quartodeciman. “Pionius” introduces a brother of Timothy, Strateas. These tantalizing data provide no help for the reconstruction of *APL*. See also Rordorf, “Was Wissen wir,” 73.

The *Cena Cypriani. The Dinner Party*, which appeared in northern Italy or southern Gaul c. 360–70 (roughly contemporaneous with Ambrosiaster), resembles in technique the then popular cento, in which authors told the story of salvation in hexameters entirely derived from Virgil, for example, as well as parodic, even satiric, literature. On introductory questions, see Modesto, *Studien*, 72–77, whose edition is utilized here. Harnack, “Drei wenig,” introduced this text into the discussion of *APL*. The specific genre is a symposium, linked to the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–12). Perhaps the work was composed as an entertainment associated with Epiphany. In any case it is a patent example of early Christian humor.

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The text names more than 450 biblical characters, about three-fourths of whom come from the Latin version of the LXX (OL), many more than once. Thecla is among the most popular, with nine references (16.5; 18.8; 24.8, 23; 28.15, 30.17, 19; 32.11; 34.17), all of which can be attributed to *APL* 3–4. For comparison Jesus receives one fewer than Thecla while Peter merits a dozen. In four places (16.9; 18.22; 24.17; 32.13) Paul is named. One of these could refer to the canonical Acts. Other characters are Onesiphorus (24.6) and Tryphaena (34.5), from *APL* 3–4, Hermocrates (20.12; 20.27; 26.16), and Hermippus (26.9), *APL* 5. Some of the statements about Paul could derive from other chapters: 16.9 *patiens stabat Paulus* (“Paul stood suffering”), 18.22 *Paulus candidam* (“Paul [wore] bright white), 24.17 *omnia perministravit Paulus* (“Paul administered everything”) are quite general. A likely reference for 16.9 is *APL* 4.16. 16.9 might refer to his conversion (according to the accounts in Acts 9, 22, and 26 he fell to the ground).

The *Cena* is important for reconstruction of the *APL* in three ways. It attests to the existence of a fourth-century Latin translation that included not only the chapters about Thecla but also material for chap. 5 (Myra) and perhaps other portions of the work. For the author *APL* enjoyed more or less biblical status. No single reference can be positively attributed to the canonical Acts, although at least one is possible. Examples of this material, with glosses and comments:

16.5 *Thecla super fenestram, Susanna in orto*. Thecla in a window, Susanna in a garden. (These two women are often found together. See above.).

16.9b *Patiens stabat Paulus*. Paul stood suffering.

18.8 *Thecla flammeam, Danihel leoninam*. Thecla [wore] fiery red.

18.22 *Paulus candidam*. Paul [wore] bright white. The author uses tropes to indicate what the guests were wearing. Thecla’s color comes from burning at the stake. Paul’s gleaming white attire represents the blinding flash attending his conversion.

20.12b *Ventrem aperuit Hermocrates*. Hermocrates opened his stomach.

20.20–21 *Tunc intulit panes Saul, fregit Iesus*. Paul offered the loaves; Jesus broke them. See, e.g., 12.4.21, *Tradidit omnibus Petrus*. Peter distributed (bread) to everyone. The source may be *APTr*.

20.27b *Panem petebat Hermocrates*. Hermocrates asked for bread.

24.8 *Araneum Tecla*. Among dishes contributed this plays on the spider imagery of 3.9. The word could mean “spider,” but it also refers to a kind of fish.

24.17 *Omnia perministravit Paulus*. Paul took care of everything. Cf. *API* 3.4.

24.23 *Arsinum Tecla*. “burnt wine” (from fire, again, as at 18.22).

26.9 b *Murmurabat Hermippus*. Hermippus was murmuring.

26.16 *Effudit Hermocrates, linteum porrexit Petrus*. Hermocrates poured [it] out; Peter spread the table cloth. Hermocrates suffered from dropsy and gushed. There are several possibilities for the reference to Peter.

28.15. *In fornacatore Ananias, in bestiario Tecla*. Ananias in the oven; Thecla as beastfighter.

30.7 *Taurum Tecla*. Thecla [contributed] a bull.

30.19b *Speculum argenteum Tecla*. Thecla (had) a silver mirror.

32.13 *Flagellatur Paulus*. Paul is whipped. (Could be Acts 17 but *API* 3 fits the singular.)

24.6 *Attendebat Onesiforus*. Onesiphorus attended (3.3).

34.5a *Plorabat Trifena*. Tryphaena wept.

34.17 *Vestem detraxit Tecla*. Thecla removed her dress (she plays most of her scenes in the nude).

This work remained quite popular. A ninth-century edition by Rhabanus Maurus removed all of the references to the *API* (Modesto, *Cena*, 122–75). This shows that he did not believe that such references belonged in a biblical parody. This work demonstrates shows that in popular circles, in which the rules and boundaries of ecclesiastical authorities were not viewed as sacrosanct, *API* could be viewed as a biblical text in the late fourth century.

14. In 384 Egeria, probably a Spanish nun, visited the sacred sites of the East. One of these was the complex at Seleucia devoted to Thecla. Egeria describes her arrival at the martyr’s shrine, “[W]e had a prayer there, and read the whole Acts of holy Thecla” (23.5; trans. Wilkinson, 141). The term “whole acts” would probably include the supplements to chap. 4 added to round off her life and enhance the shrine in Seleucia. Egeria did not have

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to tell her sisters in religion who Thecla was; one may reasonably infer that they were familiar with the Acts.

15. Doubts about *APL*. By the late fourth century official views were hardening. Conflict with the rigorous followers of Priscillian and the existence of the Manichean corpus of Acts brought *APL* into disrepute. (*APL* was a source, like other ApocActs, of Manichean hymnody: Allberry, *Psalm-Book*, 2:143.5–10; 32; 192.25–193.32:143.) Innocent I (bishop of Rome) indicated, c. 405, that ApocActs were employed by Manichaeans and Priscillianists in Spain. Philaster, Bishop of Brescia, c. 390, views the various Acts as suitable only for the elite. The portions of *APL* with a liturgical home, chaps. 3–4, and 14 survived, as did the secondary 3 Cor; the rest seems to have disappeared in the West. The so-called “Gelasian Decree,” a sixth-century piece from Spain or Gaul (France), seeks to demarcate canonical from apocryphal books. Among the latter is “a book which is called the Acts [*actus*] of Thecla and Paul” (6, 22). See Vouaux, 53–58, for details on various authorities. In the East matters were different.

16. The supersession of *APL* 14 at Rome. Under Roman influence the martyrdom chapters of *APL* and APtr were gradually coordinated, revised, and combined with Acts 27–28. The goal was to present and describe the joint martyrdom of Peter and Paul at Rome. See Tajra, *Martyrdom*, 143–65, and Pervo, *Making*, 168–69. (This amalgam was the only form reflective of *APL* known to the ancient Irish Church, McNamara, *Apocrypha*, 99–102, although the story of Thecla may also have been familiar, 113.)

17. Other Acts. *APL* were utilized directly by APtr, directly or indirectly by other ApocActs, and influenced such books as the *Acts of Titus* (Appendix 3), which contains clues about partially or entirely missing chapters of *APL*, and the *Acts of Polyxena and Xanthippe*. See Pervo, *Making*, 166–74.

18. *APL* in art. The amalgamation of the respective stories of Peter and Paul is well represented in art. See Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art*, 134–38. The fourth-century sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (Cartlidge and Elliott, fig. 5.4) and another sarcophagus of the same era (fig. 5.5) depict the arrest of Paul, an event not narrated in *APL*. An ivory of the fifth or sixth century has two scenes from chap. 3: Thecla listening to Paul (fig. 3.7) and Paul being stoned (fig. 3.21). A famous fragment of a sarcophagus from Rome depicts Paul steering a ship named “Thecla.” She may be a trope for the church, often depicted as a ship and as a pure virgin. Perhaps the most famous image of Thecla is a limestone carving now in Kansas City, Missouri, which is a

stylized portrayal of Thecla among the wild animals (*APL* 4; fig. 5.10). For discussion of these and other material remains, see Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art*, 143–62, and Castelli, *Martyrdom*, 157–71. Artistic representation echoes literary testimonies in showing preference for chaps. 3–4 and 14. See also van den Hoek and Herrmann Jr., “Thecla the Beast Fighter: A Female Emblem of Deliverance in early Christian Popular Art.”

19. Byzantine witnesses. On the seventh-century Homily on St. Thecla wrongly attributed to Chrysostom see pp. 140–41 (chap 3).

Nicetas of Paphlagonia, a tenth-century orator wrote a panegyric of Paul that utilized *APL*. Nicetas was a pupil of Photius, a vigorous critic of *ApocActs*. (On the views of Photius, see Junod, “Actes Apocryphes.”) In 1931 Vogt published panegyrics on Saints Peter and Paul by Nicetas of Paphlagonia, a pupil of Photius. Although he was a learned man at home with Scripture and established patristic authorities, Nicetas did not hesitate to use apocryphal sources in his panegyric, including the *APL*. Nicetas follows Acts and the epistles closely until he comes to Paul’s departure from Damascus. Immediately following the description of his escape in the basket (which does not appear to be a component of the extant portions of *APL*), he reports that Paul went to Syrian Antioch (82r; these numbers are those of the ms.). There Paul preached, was imprisoned, and subsequently rescued. The chief of the city saw in a vision his son, who had died. His wife was also restored. This is presumably a summary of the episode of Anchaes and Phila (*APL* 2).

Thence the apostle went to Iconium. Nicetas summarizes the deeds of Thecla, whose authority he underlines. The oration then records a(n initial) Jerusalem visit inspired by a desire to interview Peter, whom Paul had not previously seen (83r). At this juncture (84r, *ad fin.*) Nicetas reverts, apparently, to Acts 13, for 84v reports that, with Barnabas, he returned to Antioch again. Thereafter the orator takes up the mission to the Anatolian cities, Myra and Lystra, with a suitable apostrophe on the apostle’s experiences. Ephesus is the next destination. The orator thus appears to describe an itinerary that moved from Antioch through southern Asia Minor to Ephesus. There Paul delivers a public address, summarizing, after an appeal to natural revelation (cf. *APL* 9), the stories of the fall and the redemption (85v–86v). It is worthy of note that this is the only speech of Paul quoted *verbatim* in the entire panegyric. The text continues to follow *APL* 9. Nicetas refers to an “apostolic act” (*praxis*) and argues that the one who had delivered Thecla would also save Paul from the beasts, referring to 1 Cor 15:32.

Nicetas then generally follows Acts, with an initial acquittal of Paul at Rome followed by more evangelizing and a second arrest that appears to

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derive from later sources that integrated the stories of Peter and Paul. His work shows continued use of multiple sources. The *APL* serve not only to fill gaps in the canonical account but also to supersede it at points, particularly in the narrative reported in Acts 9–15; 19. The Pauline itinerary revealed in this oration is as follows: Damascus, Syrian Antioch, Iconium, Jerusalem, Antioch, Myra, Lystra, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Beroea, Corinth, Macedonia, Troad, Ephesus, and the other cities of Asia, Jerusalem, Caesarea, Rome, Italy, East and West, Rome. Nicetas appears to have had at his disposal the entire *APL*, as he refers to chaps. 2, 3, 4, and 9, at least.

Nicephorus Callistus (c. 1256–c. 1335) composed a church history in eighteen books that covered the period from Christ's birth to 610, based upon various sources. *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25 reads:

Now they who drew up the travels of Paul have related that he did many other things, and among them this, which befell when he was at Ephesus. Hieronymus being governor, Paul used liberty of speech, and he (Hieronymus) said that he (Paul) was able to speak well, but that this was not the time for such words. But the people of the city, fiercely enraged, put Paul's feet into irons, and shut him up in the prison, till he should be exposed as prey to the lions. But Eubula and Artemilla, wives of eminent men among the Ephesians, being his attached disciples, and visiting him by night, desired the grace of the divine washing. And by God's power, with angels to escort them and enlighten the gloom of night with the excess of the brightness that was in them, Paul, loosed from his iron fetters, went to the sea-shore and initiated them into holy baptism, and returning to his bonds without any of those in care of the prison perceiving it, was reserved as a prey for the lions.

A lion then, of huge size and unmatched strength, was let loose upon him, and it ran to him in the stadium and lay down at his feet. And when many other savage beasts, too, were let loose, it was permitted to none of them to touch the holy body, standing like a statue in prayer. At this juncture a violent and vast hailstorm poured down all at once with a great rush, and shattered the heads of many men and beasts as well, and shore off the ear of Hieronymus himself. And thereafter, with his followers, he came to the God of Paul and received the baptism of salvation. But the lion escaped to the mountains.

And thence Paul sailed to Macedonia and Greece, and thereafter through Macedonia came to Troas and to Miletus, and from there set out for Jerusalem.

Now it is not surprising that Luke has not narrated this fight with the beasts along with the other acts: for it is not permitted to entertain doubt because (or seeing that) John alone of the evangelists has told of the raising of Lazarus: for we know that not every one writes, believes, or knows everything, but according as the Lord has imparted to each, so does he perceive and believe and write spiritually the things of the spirit. (trans. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 292)

It is noteworthy that (in the last paragraph) Nicephorus defends the authenticity of the story of Paul and the lion by analogy with the different accounts found in the intracanonial gospels. Both traditions (Acts and the *API*) are valid. Nicephorus regards the “travels” as supplemental to Acts. The extent to which he made direct use of *API* is disputable, since he may have garnered material from Nicetas or another source, but once again there is evidence that a later authority viewed *API* as parallel (“when he was at Ephesus”) to Acts rather than as a sequel. For additional witnesses, see Vouaux, 58–64.

The penultimate example is “The History of the Contending of Saint Paul,” part of an Ethiopic collection. This selection exemplifies the rather extravagant growth of tradition. Researchers peruse this text in hope of discovering a trace of a missing portion of *API*, but with no clear success. The “Contending” is a hagiographic hodge-podge, the object of which appears to have been the utilization of all possible sources before exploiting the less possible. There are many items of interest not germane to this inquiry. An instance is an alternate description (to *API* 3.3, p. 438, chap 2): “[A] . . . vigorous man of fine, upright stature, and his countenance was ruddy with the ruddiness of the skin of the pomegranate, his complexion was clear, his nose was high and large, his eyes were dark, and his cheeks were full, and bearded, and of the colour of a rose.” This is one indicator of ancient lack of enthusiasm for the famous description and a good indicator of fidelity to *API*.

Chapter 9, for example, takes Paul to Ephesus, with a scene reminiscent of the *Acts of John*, as the temple of Artemis contains many sick people. On p. 483 Demetrius, properly, as it were, located in Ephesus and correctly identified as a smith, although as “the smith of the idol Artemis.” Page 484 sees the arrival of a lioness, a mixture of *API* 4 and 9. This creature speaks, and licks while kissing the feet of the accused, Paul and Trophimus. With p. 485 arrives another savage creature, associated with an Alexander (*API* 4). A speech with many features like that of Paul in *API* 9 (p. 485) precedes another lion attack (486–87), at which the creature is a very lamb. All of this, p. 438 makes clear, is what 1 Cor 15:32 was about. The story of Thecla, an immensely popular saint in Egypt, is omitted. The narrator wishes to

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defend Paul against the charge of fracturing marriage. Those who wished to tell the whole story of Paul, the full story of Paul, and more than the full story of Paul utilized *APL* to fill gaps in Acts. It is also an example of mutual contamination among the traditional ApocActs.

The “Letter of Pelagia,” translated by Goodspeed in 1903, was an important source for reconstructing *APL* before the discoveries of the twentieth century. See Schmidt, *Acta*, xxi–xxix. This describes, in the style of *APL*, Paul’s mission to Caesarea (which Caesarea is not specified; Maritima, the coastal capital, is probably in view). The apostle was arrested but released after preaching a sermon on God the creator. The baptism of the lion follows. The raising of a dead brother (see chap. 5) occasions a long sermon with OT examples.

Among those following Paul was Pelagia, the king’s [!] daughter, who left her husband. The example of Thecla looms large. (See also Goodspeed, “Book.”) Arrested, Paul is condemned to the lion, which, of course, is the one he had baptized. This follows *APL* 9 closely. Paul and the lion are released, but Pelagia is condemned to be cast into a red hot, hollow cow. (This kind of torture is familiar in the “Contending” previously reviewed.) Rain ruined this plan, in a somewhat inept borrowing from *APL* 3. The husband took his own life. Schmidt (*Acta* xxv–vi) notes contamination with the known legend of Pelagia of Tarsus. Behind this story can be seen an edition of *APL* that included chaps 4 and 9. Judgment balances between two poles: the *APL* as stimulation for creative hagiography and/or as the basis of tawdry and unimaginative imitation. The same work, as the two representatives of Ethiopic Christianity suggest, may contain both.

20. Manuscripts and versions of *APL*. These witnesses of the specific text of *APL* are the subject of the following section. They also constitute evidence for the popularity and distribution of *APL*. The existence of at least eleven papyri, in Greek and Coptic, from Egypt, is a respectable number. For the canonical Acts thirteen Greek papyri are known.

Concluding summary. The *APL* were known from Spain in the West to Mesopotamia in the East, from France in the North to Ethiopia in the South, and translated into many languages. *APL*, in one form or another, never ceased to be viewed as historical. Theological objections were raised by two famous Latin writers: Tertullian, who fulminated against the text’s authorization of women, and Jerome, who took great exception to the baptism of a lion. The latter indicates that at least some readers did not understand the symbolic nature of this story and ancient debates about the qualities of animals. Of

the former the most important fact is that Tertullian was not joined by nearly every other ecclesiastical authority.

API was tainted in the West because of its use by followers of Priscilian and its presence in the Manichaean corpus of five Acts, but, like most such decisions, it was not universally honored. The Codex Claromontanus list and the *Cena Cypriani* attest to *API*'s presence in a broad collection of biblical books. A parallel to this is the continuing presence of 3 Cor in some biblical mss. and of Laodiceans in Latin mss. until the Renaissance. These were the most Catholic of the ApocActs and often distinguished from the others because of a lack of speculative theology.

API nevertheless suffered a fate common to ApocActs in general: the opening was lost and the final chapter was detached (and edited) to serve as reading for the apostolic feast days. Two factors contributed to the loss of the initial chapter. One is mechanical: the beginning (and closing) parts of codices were the most vulnerable. Another is a deviation from the eventually canonized Gospels and Acts. *API* is distinctive in that three portions survived in independent forms: the story of Thecla (chaps. 3–4), 3 Cor, a later addition then detached to become a part of the Corpus Paulinum, and the Passion.

III. The Materials for the Reconstruction of the Acts of Paul.

This list includes two parts, direct witnesses, with actual texts, and other documents useful for determining the original shape and content. The abbreviations used in this commentary are placed in parentheses. For more details see Geerard, *Clavis*, 117–26.

1. A Greek papyrus of third to fourth century (P.Hamb). Eleven leaves. (Schmidt and Schubart, *Praxeis*). Shorter Greek papyri include:
 - 1a. P. Michigan 1317, 3788, P. Berlin 13893, P. Oxy. 6, 1602, P. Bodmer 10, fourth century, mostly overlapping with P.Hamb. Cf. also Gronewald, "Ei-nige Fackelmann-Papyri," 274–75.
2. A Coptic papyrus of fifth to sixth century, P.Heid. This includes 2000 fragments, ranging from tiny fragments to sections of consecutive pages, of parts of the entire work. (Schmidt, *Acta*)
3. Paul and Thecla (Chaps 3–4), available in over forty Greek mss. and various versions. Conybeare, *Apology*, 49–88, judges (59) that the Latin

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tradition is superior to the Greek, the Syriac to the Latin, and the Armenian to Syriac. His arguments, 49–60, are still worth consulting. For a translation of the Syriac, see Wright, *Apocryphal Acts*, 2:116–45. The variant traditions indicate, at the very least, that this story experienced considerable editing.

4. The Martyrdom (chap. 14), available in several Greek mss. and various versions. Additional bibliography on various versions can be found in Elliott, *Apocrypha*, 358–59.

5. P. Rylands inv. 44 (chap. 1). A short but valuable Coptic papyrus, yet unpublished. See Crum, “New Coptic Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library,” 497–503, 501.

6. Coptic Bodmer Papyrus XLI (chap. 9). See Kasser and Luisier, “Le Papyrus Bodmer XLI.”

The following texts are of use in reconstructing the shape of *API* and in identifying missing or fragmentary chapters:

7. The *Acts of Titus*. See Appendix 3

8. Nicetas of Paphlagonia. See above, II.18

9. Nicephorus Callistus. See above II.18

10. The *Cena Cypriani*. See above II.13

11. The *Life of Polycarp* attributed to Pionius. (See under II.13.)

Fragments of unknown location:

12. A citation from Origen [above]. See also Appendix I.

13. P.Yale 87 (inv. 1376, in Stephens, ed., *Yale Papyri in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library II*, 3–7). See Appendix I.