

SOME LESSONS FROM THE MEDIEVAL RECEPTION OF THE ACTS OF *THECLA* IN THE LIGHT OF THE LATIN MANUSCRIPTS

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Abstract. The large number and wide geographic spread of the Latin manuscripts shows that the *Acts of Thecla* were widely known in the Middle Ages in spite of the negative views of Tertullian, Jerome and the *Decretum Gelasianum*. Included in liturgical books, among martyr passions and lives of saints, the story shaped the faith of monastic, clerical and church communities. This paper explores the extent to which the manuscript tradition preserves or modifies the difficult details of the writing: the encratic teaching of Paul, Thecla's affection for the apostle, and in particular her baptism and teaching. The Latin manuscripts are essentially faithful to the narrative, including potentially difficult issues. However, some manuscripts tend to mitigate details and statements that seem problematic, to align Thecla's deeds with conventional ecclesial teaching and practice.

Keywords: Acts of Paul and Thecla, Latin manuscripts, Western reception, martyr passions, lives of saints, baptism, women teaching.

The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* [APTh] recounts the story of a young elite woman from Iconium who gives up marriage and chooses a life in chastity after hearing the ascetic-encratic teaching of Paul.² Thecla faces martyrdom twice but

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² Richard Adelbert LIPSIVS, Maximilien BONNET, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha 1*, Leipzig: Hermann Mendessohn, 1891 (reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1990), XCIV–CVI, 235–272; Léon VOUAUX, *Les actes de Paul et ses lettres apocryphes*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1913; Jeremy BARRIER, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla: A Critical Introduction and Commentary* (WUNT 270), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009; Richard A. PERVO, *The Acts of Paul. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Cambridge: James Clarke,



is miraculously rescued. Her preservation from fire and from the wild beasts illustrates and prefigures the eschatological salvation of the chaste.³ Unlike other martyr virgins, however, Thecla stands out through two unconventional exploits. Following Paul's deferral of her request for baptism, facing martyrdom, Thecla baptises herself to the last day. After her rescue from the teriomachy, Thecla proceeds to teach the word of God.

The reception of the APTh is remarkable, though not uncomplicated. In the Eastern and Oriental Churches Thecla was remarkably popular.⁴ The Greek manuscript tradition designates her as protomartyr and equal of the apostles (*isapostolos*) or even as apostle.⁵ Her story is retold and expanded in the *Life and*

2014; Willy RORDORF, Pierre CHERIX, Rudolphe KASSER, "Actes de Paul", in François BOVON, Pierre GEOLTRAIN, *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens 1* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), Paris: Gallimard, 1997, 1115–1177; J.K. ELLIOTT, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1993. The work may go back to an oral tradition of the late first century: Dennis R. MACDONALD, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983.

³ Korinna ZAMFIR, "Asceticism and Otherworlds in the Acts of Paul and Thecla", in Tobias NICKLAS *et al.*, *Other Worlds and their Relation to this World. Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions* (JSJSup 143), Leiden: Brill, 2010, 281–303

⁴ On the reception of the APTh and the cult of St Thecla in the East: Carl HOLZHEY, *Die Thekla-Akten: ihre Verbreitung und Beurteilung in der Kirche*, München: Lentner, 1905, 54–62; Léonie HAYNE, "Thecla and the Church Fathers", *VigChr* 48 (1994) 209–218; Pauline DE FLERS, *Sainte Thècle, première vierge et martyre. Vie, légende et cultes*, Paris: Cerf, 2019, esp. ch. 5; Stephen DAVIS, *The Cult of Saint Thecla. A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 (focusing on Seleucia and Egypt); Mónica PESTHY, "Thecla Among the Fathers of the Church", in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, edited by Jan N. BREMMER, Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996, 164–178 (166–175); Richard A. PERVO, *The Acts of Paul. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014, 46–47; Sever J. VOICU, "Thecla in the Christian East", in *Thecla: Paul's Disciple and Saint in the East and West*, edited by Jeremy W. BARRIER, Jan N. BREMMER, Tobias NICKLAS, Armand PUIG I TÀRRECH (Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 12), Leuven: Peeters, 2017, 47–68; *Thecla and Medieval Sainthood: the Acts of Paul and Thecla in Eastern and Western Hagiography*, edited by Ghazzal DABIRI, Flavia RUANI, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

⁵ LIPSIUS, BONNET, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha 1*, XCIV–CVI, 235.

Miracles of Saint Thecla, attributed to the 5th century Bishop Basil of Seleucia.⁶ The Western reception of the APTh, however, was more ambivalent, not least because of the notorious position of Tertullian vis-à-vis women teaching and baptising.

In this essay, I tackle a segment of the reception of the APTh in the West, focusing on the Latin translations. I explore the extent to which the manuscript tradition preserves or modifies the difficult details of the writing: the encratic teaching of Paul, Thecla's affection for the apostle, their complicated relationship, the emotional reactions of Thecla, and in particular her baptism and teaching.

Mixed reception in the West

The ambivalent reception of the APTh in the West was largely due to the negative assessment by Tertullian (*Bapt.* 17).⁷ Tertullian does not raise theological objections but takes issue notably with the impact of the writing on ecclesial practice, namely with women claiming the right to teach and baptise, following the example of Thecla, a custom contradicting 1 Cor 14,34-35. To make the point, Tertullian challenges the credibility of the author, the presbyter claiming (to no avail) that he wrote the Acts *amore Pauli*. In the context of this ominous paragraph, Tertullian discusses the right to baptise, an issue that will be relevant for the assessment of the changes operated by some of the Latin manuscripts. Tertullian argues that in principle all Christians are allowed to baptise, but in practice the hierarchical order should be observed. The right to baptise pertains firstly to the bishop. Otherwise, the rite can be performed by the priest and the deacon with the authorisation of the bishop. Laypersons can administer the sacrament only as a last resort (*alioquin etiam laicis ius est*, 17.2). Lay baptism is acceptable only in case of emergency, in life-

⁶ Gilbert DAGRON, Marie DUPRÉ LA TOUR, *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle: texte grec, traduction et commentaire* (Subsidia hagiographica 62), Bruxelles: Société des bollandistes, 1978; Scott F. JOHNSON, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study*, Cambridge: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2006; Linda Ann HONEY, *Thekla: Text and Context, with a First English Translation of the Miracles* (doctoral dissertation), University of Calgary, 2011; *Life of Thekla* (Ps.-Basil of Seleucia), transl. by Andrew S. JACOBS, [HTTPS://ANDREWJACOBS.ORG/TRANSLATIONS/THECLA.HTML](https://andrewjacobs.org/translations/thecla.html) (02.06.2024).

⁷ Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani *Opera*, Pars I (CSEL 20), ed. August REIFFERSCHIED, Georg WISSOWA, Vienna: Tempsky, 1890, 201–218 (215).

threatening conditions.⁸ Although *laicis* could be understood as gender-inclusive, Tertullian immediately questions the right of women to baptise and vehemently criticises those who invoke the example of Thecla to do that (17.4-5).

As Thecla baptising herself will be one of the sensitive issues in the Latin manuscript tradition, it is worth noting that the Western position regarding women baptising is mostly, though not entirely negative. Canon 41 of the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*, wrongly attributed to a purported fourth Synod of Carthage of 398, forbids women to baptise.⁹ Nonetheless, while invoking the prohibition, Thomas Aquinas argues that women are allowed to baptize in a case of urgency,¹⁰ a view also affirmed by the Council of Florence.¹¹

Jerome, following Tertullian,¹² and the sixth century *Decretum Gelasianum*¹³ count the APTh among the apocrypha. However, the stichometric list inserted in the Codex Claromontanus mentions the *Actus Pauli* among canonical Scriptures.¹⁴ This suggests

⁸ [...] *in necessitatibus* [...] *sicubi aut loci aut temporis aut personae condicio compellit: tunc enim constantia succurrentis excipitur cum urguetur circumstantia periclitantis, quoniam reus erit perditii hominis si supersederit praestare quod libere potuit.* *De bapt.* 17.3 (REIFFERSCHIED, WISSOWA, 215).

⁹ *Mulier baptizare non praesumat*, cf. *Concilia Galliae A. 314 – A. 506* (CCSL 148A), edited by C. MUNIER, Turnhout: Brepols, 1963, 173; Lawrence J. JOHNSON, *Worship in the Early Church 3: An Anthology of Historical Sources*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009, 190. It is unclear whether the *Statuta* is indeed a collection of North African canons or a work of an author from Southern Gaul. JOHNSON, *Worship* 3, 188. (The collection has been attributed to Caesarius of Arles or Gennadius of Marseilles.) Lay baptism was addressed by the Council of Elvira in the early fourth century without reference to women (DH 120).

¹⁰ *Summa theol.* III, Q. 67 art. 4. The arguments will not be detailed here, but they deserve attention. Thomas considers that the baptism administered by women outside the case of urgency is valid, even though the act is sinful.

¹¹ *In causa autem necessitatis non solum sacerdos vel diaconus, sed etiam laicus vel mulier, immo etiam paganus et haereticus baptizare potest, dummodo formam servet Ecclesiae et facere intendat, quod facit Ecclesia.* (DH 1315, Bull *Exsultate Deo*).

¹² *De vir. illustr.* 7. Hieronymus, *Liber de Viris Illustribus* (TU 14, 1a), ed. Carl Albrecht BERNOULLI, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896, 1–56 (11, the *Periodoi* of Paul and Thecla).

¹³ Ernst VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Das Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis in kritischem Text* (TU 38.4), Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912, 52.

¹⁴ *Versus Scribaturarum Sanctarum*, in *Codex Claromontanus*, 467v-468v (468v), together with the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas and the Apocalypse of Peter. The list is probably from the 4th century or earlier: Edmon L. GALLAGHER, John D. MEADE, *The*

that in some circles (whether earlier or contemporary with the Claromontanus) the writing had the same status as the now-canonical books of the New Testament.¹⁵ Further, a number of New Testament manuscripts from the 9th to the 13th century supplement two passages of 2 Timothy (3,11; 4,19) with excerpts from the APTh,¹⁶ indicating that it was seen as a source that could shed light on canonical writings.

In spite of Tertullian's disparagement, numerous early Christian and medieval authors praise Thecla as a paragon of virtue, in particular for virgins, and pay tribute to her strength and courage in martyrdom.¹⁷ In Rome, Thecla was venerated as early as the 4th century, as the catacomb bearing her name attests.¹⁸ Her cult

Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 183–185; Glenn E. SNYDER, *Acts of Paul*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013, 244.

¹⁵ Kelsie G. RODENBIKER argues convincingly that the obeli before the four now non-canonical books as well as before *Ad Petrum prima* and Judith are secondary and challenges the claim that these books would have been regarded as non-canonical status since the inception of the list. The list reflects in fact a larger NT, comparable to that rejected by Eusebius (*h.e.* 3.25.4-5). "The Claromontanus Stichometry and its Canonical Implications", *JSNT* 44.2 (2021) 240–253.

¹⁶ K (9th c.), 181 (10/11th c.), 460 (13th c.), the Syro-Harklensis (Bruce M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, London – New York: UBS, 1971, 648; 650; PERVO, *Acts*, 48-49)

¹⁷ She is praised as virgin despising martyrdom, for her fortitude and virtue, as a model of holiness: Ambrose, *De virg.* 2.19-21; *Ep.* 37.36; Augustine, *Virg.* 44; Jerome, *Ep.* 22.41; Rufinus, *Apol. in Hyeron.* 2.26; Zenon of Verona, *Tract.* 8.1. *De timore*, PL 11,324-325; Cyprian (of Antioch?), *Or. pro martyribus*; *Or. sub die passionis suae* (PL 4); the spurious *Cena Cypriani*. Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 2,13; Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* 4.26.97; 8.1.46; 8.3.34, 8.3.171; 8.4.14. HOLZHEY, *Thekla-Akten*, 65–78; Pauline DE FLERS, *Sainte Thècle, première vierge et martyre. Vie, légende et cultes*, Paris: Cerf, 2019, part I., ch. 5, part II., ch. 3; Chiara O. TOMMASI MORESCHINI, "Thecla in the Latin Sources", in *Thecla: Paul's Disciple and Saint in the East and West*, edited by Jeremy W. BARRIER, Jan N. BREMMER, Tobias NICKLAS, Armand PUIG I TÀRRECH, Leuven: Peeters, 2017, 69–105; Jeremy W. BARRIER, "A Cainite Invocation of Thecla? The Reception of the *Acts of Paul* in North Africa as Exemplified in Tertullian's *de Baptismo*", in *Thecla and Medieval Sainthood: the Acts of Paul and Thecla in Eastern and Western Hagiography*, edited by Ghazzal DABIRI, Flavia RUANI, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, 35–60; Klazina STAAT, "Reception and Rejection. Thecla and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* in the Passion of Eugenia and Other Latin Texts", in the same volume, 256–281.

¹⁸ The early 4th century Roman catacomb of St Thecla (Via Ostiense), not far from the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, is mentioned in the 7th century pilgrim guide, the *Notitia*

flourished in the early Middle Ages, especially in and around Milan, in Lyons / southern Gaul, and later in Tarragona.¹⁹

For centuries, Thecla was evoked and the APTh were handed down in liturgical books. The memorial of Thecla appears in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, that of Bede and in the liturgical books of several local churches.²⁰ Thecla was initially absent from the liturgical books of the Church of Rome, probably under the influence of Tertullian, Jerome and the Gelasian Decree. Her memorial was included in the first official editions of the Roman liturgical books in the 16th century, following earlier local martyrologies.²¹ The cult of St Thecla became thereby part of the liturgical practice of the universal church. The first official *Rituale Romanum* (1614), approved by Paul V, also refers to Thecla in the Libera-prayers.²² The cult of St Thecla endured in the Western Church up to the 20th century.²³

ecclesiarum urbis Romae; PL 101, 1359–1365 (1363). Recent restoration work on the frescoes has uncovered the oldest extant depiction of Paul. Barbara MAZZEI, “La decorazione del cubicolo degli apostoli”, in EAD. (ed.), *Il cubicolo degli apostoli nelle catacombe romane di Santa Tecla. Cronaca di una scoperta*, Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, 2010, 33–88. One of the frescoes may depict Thecla. See also Tony BURKE, “Catacomb of Saint Thecla”, NASSCAL (entry: 1 July 2022).

¹⁹ HOLZEY, *Thecla-Akten*, 71, 96–100; FLERS, *Sainte Thècle*, part III., ch. 2.

²⁰ On the late antique and medieval calendars, martyrologies, and the medieval missals and breviaries: HOLZEY, *Thecla-Akten*, 72, 75–76, 86–93; FLERS, *Sainte Thècle*, part II., ch. 3 (Le martyrologe romain). She was commemorated on 23 September. For alternative dates: “Thekla, Follower of the Apostle Paul”, in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity From its Origins to circa AD 700, Across the Entire Christian World*, University of Oxford, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=S00092> (Marijana VUKOVIC, *Cult of Saints*, E04850: 13 June; E05059: 20 December; E05060: 21 December).

²¹ On martyrologies, missals and breviaries: HOLZEY, *Thecla-Akten*, 89–93.

²² *Rituale Romanum Pauli V. Pont. Max. iussu editum* (Rome, 1614), 89 (*Et sicut beatissimam Theclam virginem & martyrem tuam de tribus atrocissimis tormentis liberasti, sic liberare digneris animam huius serui tui, & tecum facias in bonis congaudere caelestibus*). The reference is also found in the editio typica approved by Leo XIII, published in Regensburg. Thecla continued to be invoked in Libera-prayers up to the 19th century. HOLZEY, *Thecla-Akten*, 78–86.

²³ After Vatican II, St. Thecla was removed from the *Calendarium Romanum* (1969) and the *Martyrologium Romanum* (2001), because of her doubtful historicity. *Calendarium Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum*,

The most important proof for the lasting importance of the writing and of Thecla in the Middle Ages are the numerous Latin manuscripts of the APTh and of the *Life of Thecla*. Later, bilingual, Greek and Latin editions of the APTh and of the *Vita* will be published, but these are outside the scope of this paper.²⁴

The Latin translations of the APTh

The Latin manuscripts typically render the APTh under the heading *Passio Sanctae Teclae (virginis or martyris)*, among martyr acts or in Sanctorals, following the order of the liturgical year. Thecla embodies the martyr virgin. In some manuscripts, the APTh are included in thematic clusters on martyr virgins or female saints. The Latin codices have thus a hagiographic character and serve liturgical purposes. They come

Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1969, 68 (*sancti qui graves historicas difficultates praebent*), 140 (her commemoration is based only on the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla*; she was included in the 11th century). The editors also cite serious difficulties about the historicity of St Cecilia, yet they choose to keep her, *popularis devotionis causa* (69). The cult of Thecla is nevertheless preserved in Tarragona (solemnity), in the Mozarabic rite in the Archdiocese of Burgos (memorial), and in the Ambrosian rite in Milan and the diocese of Lugano (memorial). Joachim SCHÄFER, “Thekla von Ikonium”, in ID., *Ökumenisches Heiligenlexikon* (28.08.2022).

²⁴ Ernst Grabe published a bilingual, Greek and Latin edition of the APTh in 1698: *Spicilegium SS. Patrum ut et Hæreticorum Seculi post Christum natum I., II. & III., tomus I*, Oxford: Theatrum Sheldonianum, 1700, 95–119 (“Martyrium sanctae et gloriosae Protomartyris et Apostolato defunctae virginis Theclae”), 120–127 (“Passio S. Theclae Virginis and Martyris”, based on the C. Digbaei 39). Pierre Pantin had already published the Greek-Latin edition of the *Vita ac miraculis* in 1608 in Antwerp: *Basilii Selevciae In Isavria Episcopi De Vita ac Miraculis D. Theclae Virginis Martyris Iconiensis Libri Dvo*, ed. Petrus Pantinus Tiletanus, Antverpiae: Ex officina Plantiniana, 1608 (dedicated to King Philip III of Spain). Vernacular translations of the *Vita* also appeared. Excerpts of the APTh were translated to German and French in the 16th century. The French translation of the *Vita* was published in Paris with the nihil obstat of the Bishop of Clermont and the approval of two theologians: *La vie de sainte Thècle, première martyre de son sexe, disciple de l’apôtre s. Paul*, composée pars. Basile de Séleucie. Traduite en françois par un prestre du clergé (M. de La Chétardie), Paris: Imprimerie de Nicolas Jacquard, 1668. In Italian: Andrea SANTINI, *Vita con alcuni miracoli della gloriosa vergine, e protomartire santa Tecla protettrice del popolo, e titolare della collegiata di Este*, Venezia, 1803.

mostly from the libraries of religious orders, some from the library of a chapter, a seminary, or a church.²⁵

Otto von Gebhart distinguished five text types, which survive completely (A C); almost completely (B) or fragmentarily (D E), in a number of manuscripts of uneven quality.²⁶ Gebhart's extensive systematisation was supplemented by Jean-Daniel Kaestli, based on the manuscript collection of the Bollandists and other sources.²⁷

Gebhardt listed under text type A two 14th-century witnesses (BHLs 8020a in the Bollandist catalogue [*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*): the Cod. Lat. 5306 (A, Bibl. Nat. Paris, the second part of a Legendary from France), which places the *Passio S. Teclae* between the life of martyr virgin St Julianna and that of Bishop St Albin, and Cod. 479 (B, municipal library of Toulouse, from the Dominican collection), which has it between the Passion of St Julianna and that of St Perpetua and Felicitas. Kaestli also includes here the 11th-century Dublin 174 (in what follows Du 174, Trinity College, probably from the chancery of the Cathedral of Salisbury),²⁸ based on which he and Gérard Poupon published a new edition of A.²⁹ The manuscript is significantly earlier than those of Gebhardt, but it also deviates quite often from the text of A and B, in circumstances where these follow the Greek text more faithfully.

The best represented text type is Gebhardt's group B, which he divided in three groups. Version Ba (BHLs 8020b, 8020c and 8020d), the most faithful to

²⁵ I indicate the provenance of each manuscript below. On the *vitae*, the martyrs' passions, their circulation between monasteries, and the production of excerpts and summaries: HOLZHEY, *Thecla-Akten*, 75–76.

²⁶ O. von GEBHARDT, *Passio s. Theclae virginis. Die lateinischen Übersetzungen der Acta Pauli et Theclae nebst Fragmenten, Auszügen und Beilagen* (Texte und Untersuchungen 22/2), Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902, vii–x. Lipsius mentioned only the Codex Casinensis 142 (C / c, 11th c.), the Cod. Digbaei 39 (d, 12th c.) and the *Sanctuarium* of Boninus Mombritius (m, 1476, 6 Brussels codices).

²⁷ Jean-Daniel KAESTLI, “Les Actes de Paul et Thècle dans la tradition latine. Recherches sur les manuscrits des diverses formes de la Passio Theclae et leur signalement dans la Bibliotheca hagiographica Latina”, *AnBoll* 135.2 (2017) 265–358.

²⁸ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, vii–x, xxxv–xlv; KAESTLI, “Actes”, 272. Gebhardt preferred A (A) for his edition because although fraught with errors, is less prone to make arbitrary changes.

²⁹ Jean-Daniel KAESTLI and Gérard POUPON, “Les Actes de Paul et Thècle latins. Édition de la version A et de sa réécriture dans le manuscrit de Dublin, Trinity College, 174”, *Apocrypha* 27 (2016) 9–110.

the Greek, is found in several 11th–14th century manuscripts, the vast majority of these martyrs' passion accounts.³⁰ (The version has an important lacuna between

³⁰ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, x–xvi, lvi–lvii; KAESTLI, “Actes”, 273–275. The text type is found in the Cod. Bruxell. II 973 / C (C): (Royal Library of Brussels [KBR], 11th c., from the Abbey of Saint-Ghislain (Hainaut), between the *Passio Anastasiae virginis* and the *Passio S. Eufemiae*); Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 94 / D (D) (14th c.): the *Vita Beatae Teclae uirginis*, completed with the *Miracula*, after the Passion of St Ignatius; Harleianus 4699 / E (E) (Brit. Library, 13th c.): *Vita uel obitus beatae Teclae uirginis* between the *Vita* of St Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, and that of St Martialis confessor; Cod. 137 (Bern, municipal library, 12th c.), between the *Passio S. Pelagiae* and the *Hieronymi narratio de natiuitate S. Mariae*; Cod. 197 (3131) (KBR, 1465, from the Abbaye du Rouge-Cloître, Saint-Paul en Soignes), between the passion of St Matthew and that of St Cyprian and St Justina, virgin; Cod. Bruxell. 9810-14 (3229) (KBR, 12/13th c., passion of holy virgins, from the Saint-Laurent Abbey of Liège), between the *Sermo* in the feast of the 11,000 martyr virgins from Cologne, and the *De inuentione capitis S. Ioannis Baptistae*; Cod. Bruxell. 21885 (1277 / 3275, KBR, 1277, copied by a monk from the Saint-Martin Abbey of Tournai), between St Maurice and the martyrs of the Theban Legion, and the Passion of Saints Cosmas and Damian; Cod. 23 (14; Arras, municipal library, 13th c.), between the *Passio S. Matthei* and the *Passio S. Firmini*; Cod. 148 (Clermont-Ferrand, municipal library, 13th c.), between the Passion of St Maurice and the Theban Legion (here *Exsuperius*, Candidus, and Victor) and that of St Cyprian; Cod. 1711 (Bibl. Mazarine, Paris, 11th c., from the Saint-Joseph des Carmes of Paris), between the *Vita* of St Euvrtilius, bishop and confessor, and that of St Fursius, bishop; Cod. Lat. 11759 (Bibl. Nat. Paris, 14th c., from the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris): *Conuersio et certamina beatae Theclae uirginis*, between the *Passio* of St Maurice and companions, and that of Sts Andochius, Thyrsus, and Felix [martyrs of Autun]; Cod. Lat. 12612 (Bibl. Nat. Paris, 13th c., from the Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Corbie, later the property of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés), between the *Passio* of St Marcel and that of St Emmeram; Cod. Nouv. acq. lat. 2179 (Bibl. Nat., Paris, 11th c., from the Santo Domingo de Silos monastery (Burgos); the text has features of the text types Ba and Cb): *Actus uel passio S. Theclae, quae passa est in Iconio et in Antiochia sub Sistilio praeside et Alexandro principe*, between the *Passio* of St Thomas and the *Lectio ecclesiastica* on St Stephen martyr; Cod. 1399 (Rouen, municipal library, 12th c., from the Abbaye de Jumièges), between the *Vita* of St Matthew the Evangelist and the that of St Laudius bishop; Cod. Vatic. Regin. 542; Cod. Brux. (Bibl. des Bollandistes, 506, 13th c., from the Abbey Saints-Rictude-et-Pierre de Marchiennes); Trier 1160 (1410) (Stadtsbibl., 12th c., the property of the Saint-Matthias abbey from Trier); Bern 137 (Burgerbibl., 12th c.); Padua, Bibl. Cap., E.25 (12th c., Legendary of the ordinary time, from the capitular church of Santa Giustina de Monselise); the latter also includes chs. 11–19, closer to version Bc, but is more faithful to the Greek (KAESTLI, “Actes”, 277–281).

chapters 11–19, which limits the assessment of these manuscripts’ faithfulness to the Greek.) Version Bb (BHLs 8020e) is preserved in several 12th–18th cent. manuscripts (some have the lacuna of Ba, in others it is supplemented from C).³¹ An important exemplar of version Bc (BHLs 8020f) is the Sanctuarium of Boninus Mombritius of 1476.³²

³¹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, xvi–xxii, liv–lvi; KAESTLI, “Actes”, 281–285: Brux., Library of the Bollandist Society, Ms. 146 (Brussels, mid-18th c.; from the merger of mss. J (Saint Saviour monastery, Utrecht), and k (St Martin monastery of Tours): *Martyrium S. Theclae uirginis*; and further similar mss. from Utrecht and Tours; it shares with Ba the lacuna between chs. 11–19; Cod. Brux. 7917 (KBR, 14th c.; originally from the library of the St Jerome chapter of Utrecht, signum musei Bollandiani P Ms 17), between the *Passio* of St Hildegard and the *Vita* of St Pelagia; the Cod. Hagae Comitum L 29 (70 E 21) (Hague, Koninklijke Bibl., 1461, originally Weesp 14, the *Martyrologium* of Weesp, later *Liber sororum Sanctae Katarinae Muiden*), *Passio S. Theclae uirginis et martyris*, between the Passion of St Maurice and companions and the *Vita S. Amori confessoris*; Cod. J 3 (Hague, Koninklijke Bibl., 14th c., from the same community): between the Passion of St Maurice and companions and that of Sts Cosmas and Damian; Cod. Harleianus 2801 / F (F) (British Museum, London, 12/13th c.), part of a Passional (from the Premonstratensian Abbey S. Maria et S. Nicolaus Arnstein, Rheinland-Pfalz, 1464): between the *Vita* of St Solemnis [bishop of Chartres] and the *Passio* of St Firmin [bishop of Amiens]; Cod. 525 / G (G) (Leipzig, Universitätsbibl., 1354) – *Liber nonus, de passionibus aliquorum sanctorum*, introduced by the *De sancta Tecla virgine*, followed by the *De sancto Stanislao*; Cod. Brux. 98–100 / H (H) (KBR, 12th c., second part of a Passional, from the abbey of Knechtsteden?), as in F (F) above; Cologne (Hist. Archiv der Stadt Köln, W 164a, 15th c., from the three-volumes Legendary of the Herrenleichen monastery of the Augustinian canons); Fribourg, Bibl. publique et universitaire, L 743 (Legendary in two parts: J. de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* (13th c.) and *Legenda sanctorum* (14th c., probably of German provenance); Trier, Stadtsbibl., 1372 (previously 1316, 11–12th c., the property of the monastery of St Martin of Tours); Vatic. lat. 8565 (Bibl. Ap. Vaticana [BAV], 11–12th c., property of the Saint-Pierre Abbey of Malmédy (Liège); Ivrea, Bibl. Capitolare, 105 (previously 35, 14th c.); Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, Best. 701 Nr. 113a (Gymnasium 5), 14th c., provenance: Kollegiatstift St Martin und Severus, Münstermaifeld (Rheinland-Pfalz).

³² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, xxi–xiii, xlv–liv; KAESTLI, “Actes”, 285–290; Boninus Mombritius, *Sanctuarium seu vitae sanctorum* = BHL 8021, printed by the monks of Solesmes, II (Paris: Fontenmoing, 1910), 309–314 (in the printed edition: pp. 559–564; the Passion of Thecla is preceded by the martyrdom of St Symphorosa and her seven sons, and the story of the Roman virgin martyr St Susanna, and followed by the martyrdom of Sts Trophimus and Eucarpus); KAESTLI, “Actes”, 268. The other ms. is Cod. A. 116 Dresden / L (L) (Sächs. Landesbibl., Staats- und Universitätsbibl., 14th c.), which has the *Passio S. Theclae* between

The manuscripts belonging to version C, which Gebhardt classified in four subgroups, treat the writing rather freely: they often supplement the text and treat the text rather freely. Version Ca (BHLs 8020g and 8020h) is found in several manuscripts from the 11th to the 14th century.³³ Cb (BHLs 8020i, 8020k and Epitome VII / BHLs 8024o) is preserved in 11th to 15th century codices³⁴ according to Kaestli,

that of the Theban martyrs and the *Dedicatio basilicae archangeli Michaelis*. Further mss. include the St (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibl., HB XIV 14, 9th c., from the chapter of Konstanz, later in the possession of the Benedictine Abbey of Weingarten, Wurtemberg); No / Novara (Bibl. Capitolare del Duomo, 026, XXVI, 11th c.): *In natuitate Beate Tecele uirgi(ni)s*; also Bibl. Capit. del Duomo, 027, XXVII, 15th c., and 029, XXIX, 14th c. (copies of the former; they drop the beatitudes).

³³ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, xxiii-xxv, lxiv-lxxiii; KAESTLI, "Actes", 291-295: Stuttgart, N (N), Cod. bibl. Fol. 57 (Württembergische Landesbibl., 11/12th c., originally Kloster Zwiefalten (Reutlingen) Nr. 167, vol. I, the second volume of a Passional), between the Passion of St Martina virgin martyr and that of the Holy Forty martyrs; Paris Cod. 5308 / O (O) (Bibl. Nat., 12th c.), between the *Passio* of St Emmeram and of Sts Andochius, Thyrsus, and Felix; Trier Cod. 35 / P (P) (library of the episcopal seminary, 13th c., from the St. Maximin Abbey in Trier, part of the Great Passional of Trier); München Cod. Lat. 701 (Bayerische Staatsbibl.; 14th c., from the Diocese of Augsburg, used by the Teutonic Knights), between the Passion of St Maurice and of Sts Cosmas et Damian; Cod. Vatic. Reg. Lat. 497, 11-12th c., *Passio S Teclae virginis*; Rome, Bibl. Vallicelliana, VII (13-14th c.); Würzburg, Universitätsbibl., Mp Th F 122 (14th c.; from the Cistercian abbey of the Holy Virgin in Ebrach; Legendary, among the lives of holy women: *Passio sancte Tecele uirginis*; Frankfurt (Stadt- u. Universitätsbibl., Barth. 4, 1356, Legendary of the St Barthelemy capitular church.

³⁴ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, xxvi-xxviii; KAESTLI, "Actes", 295-301. Wien, Cod. Lat.339 (Salib. 11) (Österr. Nationalbibl., 13th c.; mainly legends of female saints; from the chapter of Salzburg); Cividale, Bibl. Capitolare, Cod. XVIII R (R) (Passional, t. XII, on holy women), library of the Seminary, 13th c.), between the Passion of holy virgin martyrs Euphemia, Dorothy, Thecla, and Erasma and that of Justina, Cyprian and Theognitus; Cod. XIII / S (S), same provenance, 1469): *Passio S. Teclae uirginis et mart. Christi* between the Passion of St Maurice and companions and that of Justina, Cyprian and Theognitus, from Santo Domingo de Silos monastery (Burgos); Ar, Vatican, Archivio del Capitolo di S. Pietro, A4 (C), 11th c.: *Nat(ale) sancte Thecle mar(tyris)*; Monte Cassino, 534 (Archivio e Bibl. dell'Abbazia, 11th c.; Bologna, Bibl. Universit., 1473 (from the Basilica Santo Stefano de Bologne, 1180; Gebhardt considers counts it to Cc, below); Vatican, Archivio del Capitolo di San Pietro, mss. A3 (B, 13th c.); A7 (F, 13-14th c.); A8 (G, 15th c.); A9 (H) 1339, Legendary.

is often superior.³⁵ Cc (BHLs 8020l and 8020m) is found in a number of codices from Italy and a few other manuscripts (two of which were used by Lipsius in his edition of the APTh).³⁶ The Cd (BHLs 8020n) deviates repeatedly from the other representatives of C.³⁷

³⁵ KAESTLI, "Actes", 353.

³⁶ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, xxviii-xxxii; KAESTLI, "Actes", 268, 308-318. Lipsius used Cod. Casinensis 142 / T (T)=BHL 8022; Monte Cassino, Archivio e Bibl. dell'Abbazia, 11th c. (c in Lipsius; *Passio S. Teclae uirginis* between that of St Maurice and companions and that of Sts Cosmas and Damian), and the Cod. Bodleianus Digbaei 39 (Oxford, previously *liber beate Marie Abendon*, 12th c., possibly from St Mary's Abbey, Abingdon (published by Grabe in *Spicilegium Sanctorum Patrum*, I, Oxon., ²1700, 120-127; ms d in Lipsius). Kaestli assigns it to text type Cd. The *Passio S. Teclae* is followed by that of St Blasius. Further codices: Cod. Vatic. Lat. 6076 / U (U): (1610, originally the property of the female monastery St Cecilia of Trastevere, *Natiuitas S. Teclae uirginis*); Milano Cod. B. 55 inf / V (V) (Bibl. Ambrosiana, 11th c., from the metropolitan chapter); Rome, Cod. I / W (W) (Bibl. Vallicelliana, 11th c., Sant'Eutizio de Norcia Abbey (Umbria)); Cod. 1473, according to Gebhardt (Bologna, Bibl. Universitaria, 1180, the story of Thecla is followed by the Passion of Cosmas and Damian); Rome, Cod. B. I. 4. / 719 (Bibl. Casanatensis, 10/11th c., *Passionale*); Monte Cassino Cod. 147 (Archivio e Bibl. dell'Abbazia, 11th c., as in the Cod. Casin. 142); Cod. Vatic. Lat. 6453 (BAV, 12th c., probably from Pisa); Cod. Vatic. Lat. 6458 (BAV, 16-17th c.); Rome, Cod. Vallicell. IX (11/12th c.); Cod. 3239 (18108) (Brussels, Royal Library, *Passionale*, 12th c.), Oct. 9, between the *Vita S. Remacli episcopi et martyris* and the *Passio S. Theodardi episcopi*; Cod. Lat. 5310 (Bibl. Nat. Paris, 10th c.), between the *Vita* of St Cassian and the *Adsumptio S. Philippi apostoli*; Cod. 856 (Cambrai, municipal library, 13th c., preceded by the *Passion* of St Maurice and companions); Lucca (Bibl. Capitolare Feliniana, *Passionario P+*, 12th c.); Rome, Bibl. Casanatense, 457 (B.I.12), 14th c., lectionary from Benevento; Rome, A 81 (D) (Archivio di S. Giovanni in Laterano, 12th c., Lucca); Rome, Bibl. Vallicelliana, XXV (11-12th c., from the Sant'Eutizio de Norcia Abbey (Umbria); Naples (Bibl. Naz. Vittorio Emanuele II, XV.AA.14, 13th c.); Lucca (Bibl. Capitolare Feliniana, 89, 12th c.); Fi: Paris, Lat. 11753 (Bibl. Nat. France, 12th c., property of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

³⁷ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, XXXII-XXXIV; Kaestli, "Actes", 313-317; Bruxelles, 18108 (3239) / X (X): (KBR, 12th c.; from the Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Lobbes (Thuin, Hainaut); Paris, Lat. 5310 / Y (Y) (Bibl. Nat. France, 10th c.); Z (Z): Oxford, Digbaei 39 (Bodleian Library, 12th c., St Mary's Abbey, Abingdon); Cambrai (Bibl. Mun. 856 (760), 13th c., Saint-Aubert Augustinian abbey, Cambrai); Arras (Bibl. Mun. 23 (14), 13th c.; Mont-Saint-Éloi Abbey); Montpellier (Bibl. univ. de Médecine, 55; 9th c.; from the Saint-Étienne de l'Étrier Abbey in Autun, workshop of Metz or Worms); De sancto Paulo et de conuersatione uel uita S. Theclae; Saint-Omer (Bibl. publique, 716, t. VII (13-14th c., Clairmarais Abbey).

It is difficult to single out one group of manuscripts as the most faithful to the Greek, because of the sheer number of Latin manuscripts and the ensuing variety of readings even within a group. While Gebhardt counted Ba and A (esp. A) among the most faithful renderings of the Greek, they too may deviate from the non-standard text of Lipsius and Bonnet (also used by Barrier), all the more as there was no ‘canonical’ Greek text, and rewriting was a common practice. Kaestli and Poupon added Du 174 to Gebhardt’s group A, but it often proposes a different reading compared to A (sometimes closer to B) and it is often lengthy and effusive compared to the concise style of A. It would be a sizable challenge to identify the Greek text behind each of the manuscript types.

In what follows I will look at manuscripts belonging to the text type A, B and C. I will not deal here with fragments and epitomes.

Before comparing the Latin texts to the Greek version(s) a preliminary observation is in order. The large number of Latin codices listed here, produced for liturgical and devotional purposes show that, notwithstanding the criticism of Tertullian and Jerome, the Western Church did not ignore the story of Thecla. Quite the opposite, Saint Thecla, the virgin martyr, was set as an example for the religious, both male and female, for priests and lay believers, all over Western Europe.

The emphases of the Latin manuscripts

In what follows, I will examine the specific emphases of the Latin manuscripts, in particular regarding the portrayal of Thecla and the description of her relationship with Paul, potentially problematic details, like Thecla baptizing herself and teaching, and the encratic features of the writing.

One would expect the translations to modify or eliminate such details. In fact, although the manuscripts showcase a number of differences, some minor, like the spelling of the names of characters or places, others more significant, like the wording of phrases, they usually follow the Greek text and the details of the narrative rather faithfully. That said, some manuscripts do modify a number of important details of the narrative.

The teaching of Paul

(3.5) In Iconium, Paul teaches the word of God about self-restraint (ἐνκράτεια) and resurrection. Mss. A and B of version A are faithful: *uerbum dei [...] de*

abstinentia et de resurrectione,³⁸ just as Ca, Cc, and probably (the lacunary) Cb.³⁹ Conversely, Du 174 (Kaestli and Poupon's additional exemplar of A) reads *de continentia et castitate*, without reference to resurrection.⁴⁰ Ba has only *sermo dei de continentia*, Bc *sermo dei de omni iustitia et de continentia*.⁴¹ Cd also drops the reference to *abstinentia* (reading simply *de uerbo tractare*).⁴²

A preserves the strong wording of the second beatitude (keeping the flesh pure): *castam carnem*. Again Du 174 is closer to B; these manuscripts are less focused on the carnal dimension, referring instead to the body (Du 174: *casta corpora custodirent*; Ba: *corpum suum*) or the person herself (Bc: *qui se in castitate custodiunt*).⁴³ Ca and Cd are similar to A, whereas Cc comes closer to Bc (*castitatem suam*).⁴⁴ It is unclear whether the change from *caro* to *corpus* is deliberate or presupposes a Greek manuscript that had used σῶμα.

These variations suggest that in a number of manuscripts the link between chastity and resurrection tends to be dropped and the strong physical expression of purity tends to be replaced with an emphasis on the person.

(3.7) Thecla hears Paul teaching on chastity (περὶ ἀγνείας λόγον) and receives it with faith and joy. As she cannot see Paul, she longs to hear the word of Christ in person, like other women and virgins do. The theme of *castitas* is preserved in Du 174, as well as Bb, Bc (*de castitate et oratione sermonem*) and C.⁴⁵ A (A B) and Ba drop *castitas*: Paul teaches about the love of Christ and observance [probably of the commandments of God] (*de caritate Christi et obseruatione [praeceptorum dei]*, A)⁴⁶ or about prayer (Ba, *orationis sermonem*). Du 174 finds it important to stress that Thecla's modesty prevented her from attending the gathering.⁴⁷

³⁸ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 12.

³⁹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 13.

⁴⁰ KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 37 (*Qui ubi orationem detulit statim sermonem de continentia et castitate connexuit*).

⁴¹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 12.

⁴² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 13.

⁴³ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 12; KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 37.

⁴⁴ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 13.

⁴⁵ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 18–19; KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 40, 43.

⁴⁶ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 18. Only Du 174 has *de castitate sermonem*. KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 43.

⁴⁷ KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 43 (*pudore ac uerecundie uirginali congregatione interesse non poterat*).

(3.17) Paul's speech before Roman governor develops the message of the writing. Paul was sent by the living God, the avenging God (θεὸς ἐκδικήσεων), the jealous God, the self-sufficient (ἀπροσδεής) God, who wants the salvation of humans, to save them from corruption and uncleanness (ἀπὸ τῆς φθορᾶς καὶ τῆς ἀκαθαρσίας), from all pleasure and death (πάσης ἡδονῆς καὶ θανάτου), that they would sin no more. In his mercy, the Son of God desires humans to escape judgement, through faith, godliness, the knowledge of sobriety (σεμνότης) and love of righteousness. Paul's speech establishes a clear connection between corruption and pleasures, between uncleanness and death. Sexuality is the cause of corruption and death. This understanding converges with the summary connecting ἐνκράτεια and resurrection (3.5), with the beatitude promising salvation and eternal reward to virgins (3.6), as well as with Thamyras' charge that the teaching of Paul leads young ones and virgins to renounce marriage (3.11). The teaching of Paul tends therefore towards encratism.

Some Latin translations reflect certain unease with the punishing and somewhat abstract image of God, and, more importantly, with the association of sexual desire with sin and eschatological judgment.

Of all Latin manuscripts, Bb is the most faithful (Ba is lacunary and cannot be assessed). It retains most of God's titles (omitting only an equivalent of the abstract ἀπροσδεής), and keeps the connection between desires, uncleanness, corruption and death (*ut a corruptela et immunditia et ab omni libidine et morte educam eos, ut iam non peccent*).⁴⁸ This connection is also found in Ca and Cc (*ab omni libidine et morte sua, ab omni libidine et a morte*, respectively).⁴⁹

A makes several changes. Modifying the epithets of God, it envisions a righteous, but gentler God. It omits jealousy. God is a God of justice, not of vengeance, of providence, not a self-sufficiency. (It is not clear why the living God becomes a powerful God.) The translation retains the connection between corruption and impurity (*a corruptela et ab immunditiis*) but translates "will" (*ex omni voluntate*) instead of desire.⁵⁰ This may have occurred through the copyist or a predecessor misreading or intentionally changing *voluptate* in a Latin Vorlage. This change removes the problematic link between desire and death. *Voluntas* returns in the

⁴⁸ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 42.

⁴⁹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 43.

⁵⁰ Cod. Paris 5306; GEBHARDT supplies *mala*, reading 'ill will': *ad salutem hominum misit me, ut a corruptela et ab immunditiis homines repellerem et ex omni [mala] uoluntate atque interitu mortis et ex omni tormento liberarem, ita ut non peccent neque uoluntatem [peccandi] desiderent*. *Passio*, 42.

last clause of the sentence: so that they may not sin nor desire the will to sin (*ut non peccent neque uoluntatem [peccandi] desiderent*). Du 174 is rather similar: Paul is called to free humans from corruption and uncleanness, from any will pertaining to the realm of death and from all eternal torments, that they sin no more nor have worldly desires.⁵¹ For some reason, the fear of God is omitted, and the love of truth is replaced by the knowledge of truth.⁵²

According to Bc, God's primary purpose is to save people from the error of idolatry (*ab errore idolatrie et a corruptela*); the manuscript omits thus the connection between desire and death.

It is difficult to know how A and Bc have come to change the purpose of God's salvific will, shifting from rescue from divine to human judgement. Gebhardt renders *ut non sint sub iudicio hominum* ("that they may not fall under the judgment of men"), but in the context of Paul's hearing before the Roman governor *hominem* in A may be more appropriate. This reading suggests that Paul, Thecla and those who follow the ascetic path cannot be judged by a representative of the Roman government. Bc refers explicitly to a human judge (*nec iam sub iudicio sint iudicum terrestrium*).⁵³

Cd abbreviates and paraphrases the passage – God has sent Paul to save humans from corruption and lust, from sinning and from desiring worldly pomp (*ut a corruptibilibus et uoluptatibus abstineant, ita ut non peccent neque pompas saeculares desiderent*).⁵⁴

To sum up, all available versions, with the exception of Bb, weaken or eliminate the encratic character of the passage.

Thecla's relationship with Paul

The Iconium episode has several references to Thecla's attachment to Paul and some emotional reactions, which may seem puzzling if not inappropriate.

(3.7) All versions mention that the words of Paul lead on Thecla to faith. Du 174 is more elaborate.⁵⁵ In addition to faith, A and B add that she is also induced to

⁵¹ KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 55.

⁵² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 42, 44.

⁵³ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 42.

⁵⁴ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 43.

⁵⁵ *tenebatur studio fidem in eum quem relinqueret locum in quo crementa fidei et magisteria colligebat*. KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 43.

great affection (*fide et affectu maximo*). To avoid misunderstandings, Bc stresses that her faith in God leads to a great affection for Christ (*fidem iam habens in deo affectu maximo Christi ducebatur*). Thecla longs to be worthy to hear the word of God (A) and the teaching of Paul (B, C) in person.⁵⁶

(3.8–9) Theoclia complains to Thamyris that her daughter has been holding to the beguiling words of the stranger for three days and three nights, and has not left the window, forgetting to eat and drink. Paul teaching the young women and men to fear the only God and to live in purity (ἕνα καὶ μόνον θεὸν φοβεῖσθαι καὶ ζῆν ἁγνῶς). Listening him, Thecla clings to the words of the stranger like a spider in a window, captivated by a new kind of desire and suffering greatly (κρατεῖται ἐπιθυμία καινῇ καὶ πάθει δεινῷ). The language clearly evokes lovesickness. The apostle raises strong emotions (ἐπιθυμία, πάθος δεινός) in her.

A and Ba follow the Greek rather faithfully in 3.8, with some variations. Bb is damaged but the reading seems similar. Bc on the other hand minimises Paul’s mesmerising influence: Theoclia remarks that Thecla was captured by the love of the unknown Christ.

A drops the comparison of Thecla clinging to the window as a spider, as well as her yearning and passion. In Bc Thecla is enchanted by the new doctrine (*nouae doctrinae attonita*), not a new passion stirred by Paul.

(3.18–19) Breaking the norms of social respectability, Thecla visits Paul in prison at night. She listens his teaching about the great works of God (τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ θεοῦ) sitting at his feet, as a disciple. Her faith grows, as the bonds of the apostle. She is obviously moved by fervour and affection.

For some reason, A, Ca, and Cd drop the reference to the faith of Thecla and speak instead of her joy. Bb also omits her kissing the bonds of Paul.⁵⁷ Bc (the Sanctuarium of Boninus Mombritius) emphasises that Thecla listened Paul teach about the wisdom of Christ (*Christi sapientiam docentem*) and that her faith in Christ (*fide Christi*) grew. Thus, her kissing the bonds of the apostle is less an emotional outburst directed to Paul, and more a sign of enthusiasm for Christ.⁵⁸

When Thecla’s whereabouts are discovered, her relatives find her united to Paul by bonds of love (συνδεδεμένην τῇ στοργῇ, 3.19).⁵⁹ Jeremy Barrier remarks

⁵⁶ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 18–19.

⁵⁷ Cod. Paris 5306, GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 46; KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 57–59. Ba is lacunary.

⁵⁸ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 46–47. Cb and Cd also omit the reference to Thecla’s faith growing.

⁵⁹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 48.

with good reason that the APTh are “speaking of chastity in the language of the romance”.⁶⁰ A mentions the bond but does not speak of affection: Thecla sits at Paul’s feet, as if tied to his feet (*quasi colligatam ad pedes eius*). Du 174 mentions her being bound to the apostle but explains that they are bound by the love of the divine knowledge to be acquired (*colliga[ta] ad pedes Pauli uelut quodam uinculo dum percipiende cognitionis diuinae amore constringitur*).⁶¹ Ba conversely is even more explicit: *ianitoris inuenerunt eam quodam affectu eidem copulatam*.⁶² Bb simply notes that she sits at Paul’s feet (*Pauli pedibus assidentem*).⁶³ The other versions omit or soften the emotional attachment to Paul. In Bc she is discovered listening to Paul about the teaching of God (*doctrinam dei a Paulo audientem*). According to Ca and Cd, it is the desire for Christ that binds her to Paul’s feet (*colligatam desiderio Christi*).⁶⁴ This overview shows how most manuscripts minimise the emotional-erotic overtones of the narrative.

(3.20) When Paul is brought before the governor, Thecla remains in the cell, rolling over (κυλίω) the place where the apostle had sat and taught her. A similar emotional scene occurs upon Thecla’s return to Iconium. In the house of Onesiphorus she falls to the ground (πίπτω) on the spot where Paul once sat teaching the word of God and prays in tears on the place where the light has been revealed to her (4.17). This latter scene evokes Acts 22,7,⁶⁵ where Paul recounts his experience of his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. With all their oddity, these scenes speak of the holiness of the place where revelation occurs. The APTh also highlight the authority of Paul as teacher of Thecla. To be sure, the act expresses strong emotions.

A preserves the scene faithfully.⁶⁶ B manuscripts shorten it: Paul and Thecla are brought before the court one after the other, thus Thecla rolling around on the spot where Paul has taught her is omitted.⁶⁷ In C, Thecla remains in prison for some time; it is incomprehensible why she rolls around in that place, since there is no longer any mention of Paul teaching her there.⁶⁸ The omission is difficult to explain.

⁶⁰ Acts, 117.

⁶¹ KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 60–61.

⁶² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 48.

⁶³ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 48.

⁶⁴ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 48–49. Cb and Cc are lacunary (*desiderio eius; colligatam desiderio*).

⁶⁵ BARRIER, Acts, 184–185.

⁶⁶ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 50; KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 61.

⁶⁷ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 50.

⁶⁸ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 51.

(3.21) Condemned to the stake, Thecla looks for Paul like the lamb in the wilderness searching for her shepherd. Scrutinising the crowd, she sees Christ sitting as Paul. (The identification of the apostle with Christ is a common motif in the apocryphal Acts.⁶⁹) The posture underlines the teaching authority of Paul. Thecla believes that Paul thought she would not persevere. She watches Paul ascending to heaven, a further detail that identifies the apostle with Christ.

A (A) follows the Greek fairly faithfully (*sicut agnus in deserto circumspicit pastorem suum, sic illa Paulum quaerebat... uidit dominum [sedentem] in effigia Pauli*). However, at the end of the scene Paul does not ascend to heaven but looks up to heaven (*ad caelum respiciebat*).⁷⁰ The ascension of Paul may have been considered too dramatic. It was also difficult to harmonise with the next scene, where the apostle prays with Onesiphorus' household in the tomb. Du 174 on the other hand preserves the ascension. Moreover, the Lord explains in a soliloquy that the apostle has ascended to heaven to see him, and he was worthy of that because he endured for his law (*ait dominus: Paulus ad me ingressus ut me uideret; meruit enim quoniam pro mea lege sustinuit. Intendebat autem Tecla uehementius in eum, qui subito in caelum ascendit*).⁷¹

B envisions Paul as teacher: Thecla looks for him as a lamb (Bb: little lamb, *agnicula*) looks for her shepherd and teacher (*pastorem suum et doctorem*). Bc expands Paul's titles further: he is shepherd, teacher of Christ and servant of God (*pastorem Paulum, Christi doctorem et dei famulum*). In Bb (and most likely Bc) Thecla sees the Lord sitting in heaven in the image of Paul (*specie Pauli*). This makes the Paul-Christ identification even more explicit (although it is more difficult to understand how the apostle will ascend to heaven, once he is already there).⁷² The image of Thecla who raises her gaze to heaven as she awaits martyrdom, evokes that of Stephen in Acts 7,55-56. C adds that Thecla later understood what she saw (*intellexit postea quod uiderat*).⁷³

⁶⁹ AT 11, 151–155, AA 32, AJ 87–89, APt 21–22. Daniel MARGUERAT, “The Acts of Paul and the Canonical Acts. A Phenomenon of Rereading”, *Semeia* 80.1 (1997) 169–184 (179–181); ELLIOTT, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 254–255, 316–317, 415, 452, 503–504.

⁷⁰ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 54, 56.

⁷¹ KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 65.

⁷² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 54, 56. The text is lacunary (*Et cum ... in caelum*), but it is fairly similar with Ba (*Et cum eum intenta respiceret, ille recessit in caelum*), therefore it certainly recounted the ascension on Paul. Bc, also lacunary, ends with *recessit ab oculis eius in caelum*. Paul is a διδάσκαλος already in the *Life*, DAGRON, DUPRÉ LA TOUR, *Vie*, 218, 48.

⁷³ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 57. Ca has ‘sheep’ instead of ‘lamb’ (*sicut ouis*).

(3.23-24) After her miraculous rescue from the pyre Thecla looks for Paul. The children of Onesiphorus inform her about his moaning for her and his praying and fasting for her over six days. Thecla hears Paul praying for her. She, in turn, gives thanks that she was rescued so that she may see Paul again.

B follows the Greek faithfully: Paul weeps / is concerned for her (*flet ... tui causa*, Ba Bb; *sollicitus ... est tui causa*, Bc). A softens the dramatism of the impact on Paul, omitting his moaning for Thecla.⁷⁴ C, on the contrary, emphasizes Paul's grief.⁷⁵

In Bc Thecla, praying, calls Paul a teacher (*quia [tu] liberasti me et fecisti ut doctorem nominis tui Paulum uiderem*), a common emphasis in B.⁷⁶ In C, Paul's supplication is even more intense (Ca: *ne ignis tangat Theclam, sed transeat eam a nihilque noceat eam*). In Cb, Thecla's prayer is markedly liturgical (*Pater ... terram, qui misisti Iesum Christum filium tuum sanctum, gratias tibi ago, pater benedicte, qui saluasti me*), while in the Cd God sends his angels to save her from the stake.⁷⁷

(4.15–16) After her ventures in Antioch, Thecla longs to see Paul and she sets off for Myra in men's clothing, accompanied by young men and women. The translations preserve the theme of longing for Paul. Cd, on the other hand, explains that Thecla's yearning is due to her desire to learn more from him (*Thecla uero desiderabat uidere Paulum, ut plenius instrueretur ab eo*).⁷⁸ This eliminates any possible misunderstanding regarding the nature of her longing. All manuscripts recount that after Thecla's account of her baptism, Paul takes her into the house, but only A preserves the detail that he takes her by her hand.

⁷⁴ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 62 (A B also drop the reference to the six days); KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 71.

⁷⁵ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 62-63 (Ca, Cb: *semper ingemiscit propter te et orat ad dominum*; Cc *dolet pro te et orat ad dominum et ieiunat iam dies sex*; Cd: *multum enim ingemiscit propter te rogans dominum*).

⁷⁶ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 64. Ba follows the Greek. Bb is fragmentary. Paul's prayer: A: *non tangat Theclam ignis... ancilla tua est*. Ba, Bb: *Theclam ignis non tangat... quia tua est*; Bc: *tua est famula*.

⁷⁷ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 65. See Cb, Cc: *ne tangat ... sed transeat ab ea*; Cd: *ne omnino tangat*.

⁷⁸ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 112–113. Most Latin manuscripts mention a city other than Myra, most commonly the more familiar Smyrna (A Bc, Cb Cd; Ca has Moysa).

Thecla's baptism

Baptism becomes a central topic at the end of the Iconium-episode, reaching the climax when Thecla baptises herself in the theatre in Antioch (4.9).

In Iconium, after her rescue, Thecla offers to follow the apostle. She asks for baptism (the seal of Christ, τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγίδα) trusting that this will strengthen her amidst the temptations to which Paul fears she may succumb. Paul speaks of shameful (αἰσχρός) times; Thecla's beauty may expose her to another trial or temptation (πειρασμός) and she may fail. Temptation is here clearly sexual, a major issue in a writing that links eschatological salvation to sexual renunciation. Thecla's willingness to cut her hair signals her readiness to give up her feminine beauty, understood as an instrument of temptation.⁷⁹ Paul however postpones fulfilling her request for baptism ("be patient [μακροθύμησον] and you will receive the water", 3.25). The APTh envisage baptism as the pinnacle of an ascetic life, as a reward for those who have proven themselves worthy of it by withstanding temptations. Thecla's renunciation of marriage and her readiness to receive a martyr's death in Iconium do not seem to be sufficient: she will have to endure similar trials in Antioch.

A and Ba accurately represent Thecla's proposal to follow the apostle, Paul's warning, and Thecla's request for baptism.⁸⁰

Bc (the Sanctuarium of Boninus Mombritius) speaks not simply of evil times (A Bb: *tempus turpe*; Ba: *turpe et asperum*), but of hard times of persecution.⁸¹

⁷⁹ E. Margaret HOWE, "Interpretations of Paul in the Acts of Paul and Thecla", in Donald A. HAGNER, Murray J. HARRIS, *Pauline Studies. Essays Presented to Professor F.F. Bruce on his 70th Birthday*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980, 33–49 (41). Anne JENSEN parallels the gesture with the monastic tonsure (*Thekla – die Apostolin. Ein apokrypher Text neu entdeckt*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien: Herder, 1995, 115). The same must have been the understanding of Cc (*Circumtonde me*), GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 67.

⁸⁰ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 66. Compared to the brief proposal in all the manuscripts cited by Gebhardt, Du 174 Thecla's proposal to follow cut her hair and follow Paul, rendered in indirect speech, is long and pretentious (*Cum hac suavitate perfunderetur Tecla potiendae eius gratiae petiit a Paulo si placeret ut tonderet comam capitis sui et ita apostolum sine ulla forma sexus sequeretur in uia quocumque dirigendam apostolus eam estimaret*). KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 73.

⁸¹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 66.

Thecla's martyrdom is thus interpreted in the wider frame of the Roman persecutions against Christians, not primarily as a result of her countercultural rejection of marriage.

Ca Cc have Thecla asking Paul to cut her hair, emphasising the authority of the apostle.⁸²

In A (A B) Paul urges Thecla to persevere, not to be patient (*Sustine, et accipies signum aquae*).⁸³ In Du 174 Thecla not only asks for baptism (*signaculum in Christo*) that will preserve her from temptation but also reassures Paul that his blessing and the grace of the Lord's name is a bulwark of faith. Paul asks her to have patience, and she will receive grace, not the (sign of) water.⁸⁴ Bb and Bc omit the final exhortation of Paul, thus Thecla's request remains unanswered.⁸⁵ This is all the more puzzling as the episode ends with Paul leaving Iconium after baptizing the entire household of Onesiphorus (this makes little sense, since Onesiphorus and his family are pillars of the community). These manuscripts move away from the focus on Thecla's baptism.

Ca Cd preserve the reference to baptism, described as the anointing of God (*dei lotio*, Ca) or the bath of regeneration (*lauacrum regenerationis*). Cc is more evasive: Paul promises her the sign of salvation (*signum salutis*). Cb, on the other hand, promises a solution (*solutio*) to Thecla.⁸⁶

In Antioch Thecla becomes worthy of baptism by preserving her chastity. She rejects Alexander's overtures and stands her ground even when he has her condemned to death (4.1-2). She asks the governor to allow her to keep herself pure and Queen Tryphena assists her in that by taking her into her house (4.2, 6).

The Latin translations preserve the focus on *castitas*.⁸⁷ The topic is even more emphatic in Du 174: disregarding the danger of certain of death, concerned about modesty, and anxiously desiring to keep her virginity, Thecla beseeches the judge to preserve her from Alexander, so that she may be allowed to offer herself with a

⁸² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 67.

⁸³ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 69.

⁸⁴ *Nullum uerearis; benedictio tua et dominici nominis gratia plenum fidei munimentum est. Cui Paulus ait: Patientiam habe, et accipies gratiam.* KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 75.

⁸⁵ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 69.

⁸⁶ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 66-69.

⁸⁷ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 74-75, 86-87 (A: *me castam seruauit*; Ba: *me castam inuiolatamque seruauit*; Ca Cd: *mundam me seruauit*).

chaste body. Her death is described in sacrificial terms, as oblation. The governor cannot deny the pious request of the virgin.⁸⁸

In the theatre, seeing her death approaching, Thecla stretches out her arms and prays, realising that the time has come to baptise herself (Νῦν καιρὸς λούσασθαί με, 4.9). Her posture is that of an *orans* (4.9).⁸⁹ Throwing herself into the water, she baptises herself in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to the last day (Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑστέρᾳ ἡμέρᾳ βαπτίζομαι).⁹⁰ Emerging from the water, she is covered by a fiery cloud (νεφέλη πυρός) that shields her naked body.

The Latin translations preserve the image of Thecla praying with her arms outstretched to God, standing amidst the wild beasts, in a sign of fortitude. Thecla is a model martyr. In fact, some manuscripts envision Thecla as an *orans* already in the Iconium episode, when she steps on the pyre (3.22): she does not do the sign of the cross but opens her arms in the shape of a cross or in a gesture of prayer.⁹¹ As *orans*, she accepts martyrdom in a gesture of devotion to God.⁹²

⁸⁸ KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 79 (*Tecla tamen, periculi negligens et securo mortis et sollicita pudoris et conseruande studio uirginitatis adtentata, hoc solum iudicem deprecata est ut donec insubrogeretur ad bestias nullam uim ei Alexander auderet inferre, set casto corpore oblatum munus impleret. Negare non passus est praeses quod pie a uirgine petebatur [...].*)

⁸⁹ BARRIER, *Acts*, 161.

⁹⁰ ὑστέρᾳ ἡμέρᾳ refers here to the last day, the day of judgement, not the following day (BARRIER, *Acts*, 162, noting the parallel with 1 Tim 4,1; *pace* DAGRON, DUPRÉ LA TOUR, *Vie*, 251, n. 7).

⁹¹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 58–59 (*extensis manibus similitudinem crucis faciens, Ba*) (*extensis manibus ad deum, Ca*, cf. *Cb* and *Cc*, without *ad deum*, *Cd: expansis manibus orans*).

⁹² In the Iconium-episode, the detail is found in the *Life*: Thecla signs herself with the sign of the cross and extends her arms in the shape of the cross. DAGRON, DUPRÉ LA TOUR, *Vie*, 218–219 (referring to Alfred STUIBER, *Refrigerium interim: die Vorstellungen vom Zwischenzustand und die frühchristliche Grabeskunst* (Theophaneia. Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums 11), Bonn: Hanstein, 1957, 188, on the representation of martyrs as *orantes*). On early Christian images of women as *orantes*: Karen Jo TORJESEN, “The Early Christian Orans. An Artistic Representation of Women’s Liturgical Prayer and Prophecy”, in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, edited by Beverly Mayne KIENZLE, Pamela J. WALKER, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998, 42–56. This scene inspired the representations of Thecla notably in the East, e.g. the fresco in the Exodus Chapel of the El Bagawat necropolis (Kharga oasis, Egypt). On the chapels of the necropolis: Matthew MARTIN, “Observations on the Paintings of the Exodus Chapel, Bagawat Necropolis, Kharga Oasis, Egypt”, in *Byzantine Narrative*:

The changes in the Latin translations concern mainly the baptismal formula. While baptism in the name of Christ was consistent with early practice,⁹³ several manuscripts use the consecrated Trinitarian formula (A Bc Ca, the Padua manuscript, probably Cc [*in ... sancti*], Cb and Cd are lacunary). Ba and Bb retain the Christological formula. Ba has the strange *in nomine Christi et in nomine Iesu*. In Bb she strengthens herself with the seal of Christ (*muniens se signaculo Christi*). For some reason, according to most Latin translations Thecla baptises herself to the newest day (or hour), not to the last day (the day of judgement).⁹⁴ This shifts the focus from the end time to a new beginning. Du 174 seems to combine two versions: Thecla's words initially follow the Greek (*in nomine domini Iesu Christi ultima die baptizor*), but subsequently throws herself into the water saying *ecce ego in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti*.⁹⁵

In Du 174 and C the baptism scene is more dramatic. Whereas in the Greek text we learn only after the baptism, post factum, that the seals in the pool are life-threatening, according to C, the danger is obvious from the beginning. The crowd and the proconsul try to dissuade her, but Thecla throws herself into the water and baptises herself in spite of the danger. Cd notes that her decision is a sign of trust in God (*uero confisa in domino*).⁹⁶

It is interesting that the Latin translations preserve the interpretation of Thecla's gesture as water baptism, as opposed to the *Life*, which suggests that her decision to throw herself into the pool with deadly, man-eating seals means embracing

Papers in Honour of Roger Scott (Byzantina Australiensia 16), edited by John BURKE *et al.*, Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2006, 233–544 (246–247), see also “Exodus Chapel, Bagawat Necropolis”, NASSCAL [02.06.2024]. On the probable background of the representations of Thecla: DAVIS, *Cult*, 150–172. See also the 7th c. ivory from Laodikeia ad Lycum: Celal ŞİMŞEK – Barış YENER, An Ivory Relief of Saint Thecla, *Adalia* 13 (2010) 321–334. In the West it is seen on one of the reliefs in the Chapel of St Thecla in the Tarragona Cathedral, and to a degree on the altar carved by Fr. Joan in the same cathedral (15th c.); Thecla's outstretched arms are held by angels: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CatedralTarragona-PereJoan-StaTecla-8996.jpg>.

⁹³ BARRIER, *Acts*, 161.

⁹⁴ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 94–95; KAESTLI, “Actes”, 280 (A: [*in*] *nouissima hora nec non et die*; Ba: *in nomine Iesu nouissimo die*, cf. Bb; Bc: *hodie*, Ca: *nouissimo die*, Cb: *nouissimi diei*).

⁹⁵ KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 91, 93.

⁹⁶ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 94–95 ; KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 91, 93.

a martyr's death. Fulfilment is reached in death.⁹⁷ The life interprets her act as martyred baptism rather than water baptism.

The Padua manuscript stands out not only through the Trinitarian formula (*In nomine patris et Iesu Christi filii eius et spiritus sancti cedat michi aqua ista pro baptismo*), but especially by attributing baptism in a spiritual sense to Paul, who had already baptized her through his teaching and prayers. The fiery cloud that accompanies her water baptism is only a confirmation of this spiritual baptism by Paul.⁹⁸ This will be formally asserted by Paul when they are reunited.

As a rite of initiation, baptism includes accompanying rites: the baptizand takes off her clothes, baptism is performed by immersion, followed by a confession of faith and finally by the donning of clothes. The question of the governor (“who are you and what is it about you [τίνα τὰ περὶ σέ], that none of the beasts harmed you?”, 4.12) expresses his amazement that she remained unharmed. His rhetorical question gives Thecla the opportunity to confess her faith: she is the slave of the living God (θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος δούλη); she believed in the Son, the only way of salvation and the foundation of immortal life (μόνος σωτηρίας ὁδος⁹⁹ καὶ ζωῆς ἀθανάτου ὑπόστασις), a refuge for the storm-stricken, a relief for the oppressed, a shelter for the desperate. [...] The one who does not believe in him will not live

⁹⁷ DAGRON, DUPRÉ LA TOUR, *Vie*, 250–251. «Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου, Κύριε, ὑστέρα ἡμέρα βαπτίζομαι», ἐνήλατο τῷ ὕδατι τούτῳ, τῆς διὰ τοῦ θανάτου λοιπὸν ἐρῶσα τελειώσεως καὶ πρὸς Χριστὸν ἀναλύσεως. [...] κυβιστῆσαι καθ’ ὕδατος, οὕτω πρόδηλον τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν φωκῶν ἔχοντος θάνατον, ὃν ἡ μὲν παρθένος ὑπερησμένιζε μόνον ἵνα τύχη τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ τελειώσεως. The translators take τελείωσις for initiation and ἀνάλυσις for deliverance. The latter may also refer to death (as in 2 Tim 4,6).

⁹⁸ *Paule, uir dei excelsi, sicut me sermone tuo ita precibus tuis baptizasti. Nam in aqua sacrarum posita uidi aperto celo lucem mihi descendentem et dixi hoc secundum est baptismum quod Paulus in me non celebrat.* KAESTLI, “Actes”, 280. On the divine confirmation of Thecla’s self-baptism in the APTh: BARRIER, *Acts*, 164.

⁹⁹ LIPSIUS, *Acta* I, 246 reads ὅρος (‘boundary’), with Greek mss. ABC. He is followed by BARRIER, *Acts*, 170–172, who nonetheless translates ‘way’. E has ὁδος, cf. VOUAUX, *Actes de Paul*, 218, n. 3; François BOVON, “La vie des Apôtres: traditions bibliques et narrations apocryphes”, in *Les Actes apocryphes des Apôtres. Christianisme et monde païen* (Publications de la Faculté de Théologie de l’Université de Genève 4), edited by François BOVON, Genève: Labor et Fides, 1981, 141–158 (154, n. 56). PERVO translates ‘definition’, reading ὅρος (*Acts*, 172). A B have *salutis terminus*, presupposing a Greek text that had ὅρος.

but meet eternal death. Thecla's inviolability stems thus from her being a servant of God and her faith in Christ.

The Latin manuscripts reinterpret the question of the governor. According to A Cb Cc Cd, he asks Thecla what her spells (*carmina*) are, envisioning her as a sorceress.¹⁰⁰ This is even clearer in Cd, where Thecla dismisses the accusation of witchcraft, arguing that she was saved by the Almighty God, not through magical abilities. (*Ego non sum maga, ut uos putatis, sed sum ancilla dei uiui, qui habet potestatem super omnia quae creauit*). God has power over life and death (Ca Cb). In the context of the writing, the assumption makes sense, for in Iconium Paul is charged before the Roman authorities with being a magician (3.15, 20). As his disciple, Thecla may have similar powers. That said, the Greek text does not call Thecla a witch. For medieval readers, such accusation against a young woman would have been very serious.

(4.15) In Myra Thecla finds Paul preaching the word of God. The apostle fears (again) that Thecla may fall to temptation, but she recounts him that she has been baptized: the one who worked with Paul in preaching the gospel also worked with Thecla in her baptism (Ἐλαβον τὸ λουτρὸν [...] - ὁ γὰρ σοὶ συνεργήσας εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κάμοι συνήργησεν εἰς τὸ λούσασθαι).

Thecla's statement is found in A and B, with minor differences (A: *accepit ablutionem*; Ba: *lauacrum accepit*).¹⁰¹ C, on the other hand, tries to avoid affirming that Thecla baptised herself with the assistance of Christ: Christ helped Thecla in need, not in the washing. According to Ca, finding Paul teaching the word of God, Thecla tells him: "receive my speech [...] He who granted you [help?] in the gospel also granted me [help] in need" (*accipe locutionem meam ... Qui enim tibi concessit in euangelio, et mihi concessit in necessitate*).¹⁰² In Cb Cc Cd, Thecla informs Paul that she has received the washing (Cb: *accepit lotionem*; Cc: *accepit*

¹⁰⁰ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 104–107. B asks more subtly about the powers operating on her behalf (Ba: *quae sunt quae circa te aguntur*; Bb: *cuius condicionis euiusque artis vel operis*). See OLD, 304; Peta G. FOWLER, Don P. FOWLER, s.v. *carmen*, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, edited by Simon HORNBLLOWER and Antony SPAWFORTH (online 22.12.2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.1372>.

¹⁰¹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 114, 116 (A: *Qui enim tibi operatus est in euangelio, et mihi operatus est in ablutionem* (B however has *probatio* instead; Bb: *Qui enim operatus est tibi in euangelio, operatus est et mihi in lauacro*; probably also the lacunary Bc); KAESTLI, POUPON, "Actes", 105.

¹⁰² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 114–117.

lauacrum in necessitate; Cd: *accepi lauacrum*), but the emphasis is on necessity. The *mihi concessit in necessitate* refers not only to Christ helping Thecla in a time of need, but surely to the condition of necessity that allowed a woman facing martyrdom to baptise herself. These manuscripts interpret the baptism of Thecla as a baptism of necessity. This is clearest in Cc: *accepi lauacrum in necessitate*. This is noteworthy, given that in spite of the negative opinion of Tertullian (discussed earlier), by the Middle Ages lay baptism, even performed by a woman, was justified in cases of necessity. This insight mitigated the unconventional character of Thecla's undertaking. The translators were essentially suggesting that Thecla baptised herself in danger of death, surrounded by pagans, at a time when neither the apostle nor any other qualified person could do that. The Cd, on the other hand, speaks of Christ's mercy: *Qui enim tibi concessit in euangelio, et mihi ipse misertus est; nam et accepi lauacrum*. Baptism is a sign that God/Christ had mercy on her.¹⁰³

Thecla, the teacher

After her rescue, Thecla remains in the house of Tryphaena for eight days, teaching her the word of God (κατηχήσασα αὐτὴν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ). Tryphaena comes to faith together with her servants (4.14). The plural παιδισκῶν can denote both men and women.¹⁰⁴ It does not follow from the text that Thecla taught only the female servants of Tryphaena.

With the exception of Bb, all manuscripts speak of women who believe after hearing the teaching of Thecla (A Ba Bc: *ancillae*, Ca: *mulieres multae et ancillae*, Cb Cc: *multae mulieres et ancillae*, together with their mistress, Cd: *turbae mulierum et uirginum*). According to Bb, after Thecla taught the word of God, several members of Tryphaena's household became Christian (*docens uerbum dei, ita ut plurimi in domo Triphenae fierent Christiani*). The inclusive masculine plural also envisages men among Thecla's disciples.¹⁰⁵ Du 174 on the other hand explicitly includes young men among the members of Tryphaena's household whom Thecla teaches: *docens Trefenam cum omni domo sua et ad timorem dei prouocans, ita ut crederent pueri et puellae plurimae in domino*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 115, 117.

¹⁰⁴ BARRIER, *Acts*, 176–177.

¹⁰⁵ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 110–113.

¹⁰⁶ KAESTLI, POUPON, “Actes”, 103.

(4.16) Paul listens in amazement as Thecla tells her story. When she announces that she returns to Iconium, the apostle commissions her to go and teach the word of God (Ἦπαγε καὶ δίδασκε τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ).

With one exception (Cc), all the manuscripts mention Paul's commissioning of Thecla to go and teach (*uerbum dei*; Ba, Sanctuarium: *dei sermonem*; Bb: *doce omnes*). Cb adds that she should do it with confidence and without hesitation (*cum fiducia nihil haesitans*). Cd reads: *Vade, filia, cum salute et praedica ibi uerbum dei*.¹⁰⁷ The valedictory formula (A Cd) confirms Paul's authority and eliminates any romantic overtones: the apostle is Thecla's teacher and spiritual father. The Padua manuscript is again interesting, because Paul formally confirms Thecla and her baptism by laying on his hands, thus bringing the sacrament to completion (*Et imponens manum super Teclam consignauit eam et confirmauit baptismum eius. Et confirmans eam domini sacramento fecit eam redire Yconium*).¹⁰⁸ The laying on of hands is explicitly a confirmation of her baptism, needed to avoid any doubts regarding its validity. But this will allow her to teach the word of God.

(4.18) Thecla's successful teaching mission is emphasised in the summary on the last stage of her life in Seleucia: she enlightened many with the word of God (πολλοὺς φωτίσασα τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ θεοῦ). Thecla's teaching is not limited to the household of Tryphena. The inclusive masculine plural indicates that she taught both men and women.

Several Latin manuscripts speak only in general terms of Thecla enlightening many, without mentioning that he did so by the word of God (A: *multos inluminauit*; cf. Ba: *multos in domino confirmans et illuminans*; Cd: *multos inluminauit ibi*).¹⁰⁹ (A and Ba depart here from their generally faithful rendering of the Greek.) Bb emphasises that she went to Seleucia endowed with many gifts of grace and enlightened many by the example of her life (*decorata multiplici gratia domini: uirginitate, martyrio atque sanitarum efficacia. Et cum multos illuminasset conuersationis*¹¹⁰ *suae exemplo*). In this reading, Thecla is first and foremost a role model, an example of chastity, of virginity, of readiness to embrace martyrdom; her spiritual strength and miraculous healings reveal the grace of God.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 116–119. Cc preserves only the sending (*Vade*).

¹⁰⁸ KAESTLI, "Actes", 280.

¹⁰⁹ GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 126–127.

¹¹⁰ S.v. *conuersatio*, OLD, 482.

¹¹¹ See also C. Casinensis 142 / T (T), which mentions teaching nonetheless: KAESTLI, "Actes", 309 (*abiit Seleuciam ibique exemplo conuersationis et uitae atque etiam doctrinae plurimos*

According to Bc (the Sanctuarium), Thecla enlightened many with the teaching of God (*multos in domino illic dei doctrina illuminans*). Somewhat unexpectedly Ca and Cb also follow the Greek: *multos ibi inluminavit uerbo dei*.¹¹² Cc, on the other hand, says nothing about Thecla having enlightened many (with the word of God or otherwise).

Conclusion

The APTh reflect a community in which ascetic women played a more prominent role. Tertullian's dislike for such women who, inspired by the example of Thecla, felt called to the ministry of baptism and teaching, contributed significantly to the ambivalent reception of the writing in the Western Church. The negative view was reinforced when Jerome and the Gelasian Decree counted it among apocryphal writings. Nonetheless, other textual witnesses attest its enduring importance. The large number and wide geographic spread of the Latin manuscripts shows that the story and example of Thecla remained highly popular in the Middle Ages. Included in liturgical books, in the context of martyr passions and lives of saints, the story shaped the faith of monastic, clerical and church communities.¹¹³

The Latin manuscripts are essentially faithful to the narrative, including potentially difficult issues like Paul's encratic teaching, Thecla's attachment to Paul, and especially the decision of a young woman to baptise herself and teach, a teaching ministry confirmed by the apostle himself. However, in some manuscripts there is a tendency to mitigate details and statements that seem problematic, to align Thecla's deeds with conventional ecclesial teaching and practice.

The encratic features are softened by dropping the connection between chastity and resurrection (Du174 Ba Bc Cd; however not A (X) Ca Cc and probably Cb). Chastity remains a major theme, but a number of manuscripts emphasise in addition the love of Christ and the observance of the commandments of God (A Ba), turning Thecla into a more accessible role model.

erudiens post multa certamina ac duplicem uirginitatis et martyrii coronam requieuit in pace).

¹¹² GEBHARDT, *Passio*, 127.

¹¹³ On the edifying role of martyrologies and lives of the saints read during the liturgical year: John J. GALLAGHER, "Liturgy and Learning: The Encyclopaedic Function of the Old English Martyrology", *Religions* 13.236 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030236>.

Thecla's affection for Paul and her desire to join him are not romantic in nature. She longs to be worthy to hear the word of God; she is seized by the love of Christ and enchanted by the doctrine the apostle preaches (not moved by passion). The proximity of the apostle allows her to grow in faith, divine wisdom, and the love of Christ (Bc Ca Cd). Emotional outbursts like kissing the chains of the apostle are omitted (Bb) or explained by her being moved by the wisdom of Christ and her faith in Christ (Bc). Her being bound to the feet of Paul has to do with the love for divine knowledge (Du174 Bc) and desire for Christ (Ca Cd). Paul is for Thecla the shepherd, the teacher, the servant of God (B), and her spiritual father (A Cd).

Baptism is administered with a Trinitarian formula (A Du174 Bc Ca Padua, probably Cc). According to the more faithful manuscripts, it is clear that Thecla baptises herself (A B). However, C tries to emphasise that we deal with a baptism of necessity (Cc). These changes bring Thecla's action in line with the medieval of teaching and practice of baptism. A manuscript (Padua) may preserve the idea of Thecla baptising herself but suggests that true baptism, even when spiritual in nature, still comes from the apostle, and her water baptism is eventually made complete by his confirmation.

Teaching appears to be the most problematic issue. According to most witnesses, in Antioch Thecla teaches only women. Only Bb and Du 174 allow that she taught men as well. All manuscripts mention Paul's commissioning, authorising Thecla to teach, except for Cc. According to Ba (Padua), on the other hand, the apostle not only sends but also confirms her by laying on of hands. While this is not an act of ordination, it makes Thecla's self-baptism complete and valid, a precondition of her commissioning to teach. Some manuscripts leave out from the concluding summary the reference to Thecla having enlightened many with the word of God (preserved in Bc Ca Cb), and speak only about enlightenment (A Ba), attributed to Thecla's exemplary life (Bb), or omit the subject altogether (Cc). Cc is the most "orthodox" in regard to the ministry of women in the church. The majority of the manuscripts belonging to this group stem from Italy (Rome included). In sum, a significant part of the Latin manuscripts eliminates Thecla's teaching, a core element of the story. The same will go later for the Roman Breviary, which drops all references to Thecla baptising herself and teaching.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ *Breviarium Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti concilii Tridentini restitutum Pii V. Pont. Max. iussu editum*, Roma: Paulus Manutius, 1570, 830.

The dismissal of the suspicion of witchcraft raised with regard to a young woman like Thecla, who, although chaste, abandons certain conventions of female behaviour, reflects a peculiar medieval concern regarding independent women.

With the story of Thecla, the Latin translations have preserved the memory of a strand of early Christianity where women (especially ascetics) played a more significant role in spreading the faith in Christ than later ecclesial opinion would allow. However, in the transmission of the *Passio Theclae*, the ‘taming’ of Thecla begins. She is even more harmless in the post-Tridentine Roman liturgical books. She becomes the martyr virgin introduced to Christianity by Paul, a model of chastity and virtuous life, ready to die for her faith in Christ. There is no mention of her baptising herself or teaching. Moreover, while Thecla’s veneration will continue well into the modern age, after the Second Vatican Council she will be excluded from the record of saints and martyrs of the universal Church. Her dismissal is in way the late victory of Tertullian.

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