

## The Charismatic Gifts in the *Acts of Paul*: Second-Century Trends<sup>1</sup>

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In the *Acts of Paul (APL)*, Paul encounters a ferocious lion during a journey through the wilderness. The Apostle, full of the Holy Spirit, says (IX, 7), “What do you want?” The lion answers, “I want to be baptized.” Paul obliges and it is a good thing too, since he will later encounter this same beast in the arena at Ephesus—and now that it is a Christian too, it will refuse to devour the defenseless apostle. In the *APL*, the story of the baptized lion is just one of many scenes portraying charismatic gifts, including healings, resurrections, supernatural visitations and prophecies.

The legendary character of the *APL*, however, diminishes its historicity concerning first-century events. Its real historical value is in its depiction of the Christian life from a second-century perspective.<sup>2</sup> Where contemporary sources corroborate this portrayal, we are likely standing on firm ground when trying to ascertain trends in the second-century church.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that there is no archaizing tendency within the apocryphal acts of the apostles. The authors of Christian apocryphal literature tried to depict first-century events and

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<sup>1</sup> This paper first appeared in the conference papers of the Society for Pentecostal Studies 29th Annual Meeting. The translations of the *APL* used herein are my own; I have consulted other modern translations, especially that of W. Rordorf, P. Cherix and R. Kasser, “Actes de Paul”, in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain, eds., Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 1.1126-77. The translations of the Bodmer Coptic (IX, 1-13), which has not yet been edited, are based on Kasser’s French. Numeration of chapters and verses also follows Rordorf’s edition. Biblical citations are taken from the RSV.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian testifies to the influence of the *APL* (*de bapt.* 17) in Carthage ca. AD 200. W. Rordorf writes further (“Actes de Paul”, 1.1122): “Thus, we arrive at the date of ca. 150, at the moment when the group of charismatic itinerants flourished and where the resistance to its activities has not yet come to the fore. This date would explain why the struggle against Marcion, condemned in 144, is not yet detectable in our apocryphal document” (trans. mine).

<sup>3</sup> R. A. N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 49-53, associates the *APL* with documents arising “From Heresy and Superstition”. The *APL* is no more “superstitious” than the Book of Acts, and the author is squarely orthodox in his doctrine and faith. The document is entirely consistent with Tertullian’s claim in *de bapt.* 17.5 that its author was a presbyter from Asia. Thus, Kydd’s distinction that the *APL* derives from the “little people, the nameless, faceless masses of Christianity, the ‘John Does’ of the Church” (55) as opposed to bishops and theologians of the church, is no less problematic.

conditions. Deliberate archaizing may be seen perhaps in the lack of official titles given to local leaders<sup>4</sup>: Whereas local leaders exist (see n. 15), their own authority gives way to that of the living apostle, whom they represent in his absence. Nonetheless, writers would inevitably tell their stories according to the thinking of their own time. In the *API*, for example, Paul arrives in each city to find an existing Christian community, a sign of conditions that existed during the second century not the first, when it was usually necessary for Paul to found new churches.

This essay will explore the charismatic gifts in the *API*, by examining (1) its use of Scripture and (2) the trends it displays.

### **Narrative Exegesis**

By observing the use Scripture in the *API*, we can gain insight into one second-century writer's exegesis of biblical texts. Research into the use of biblical texts in the *API* has blossomed recently, especially in the light of a helpful article by British scholar Richard Bauckham,<sup>5</sup> who observes that the author of the *API* seems to take bare historical details related in the Pauline epistles and expands them into full-blown narratives. Bauckham maintains, for example, that the story of the baptized lion derives from the author's exegesis of tantalizing tidbits which Paul recounts in 2 Tim 4.17, 1 Cor 15.32 and 2 Cor 1.8-10.

In my own doctoral dissertation,<sup>6</sup> I have taken Bauckham's suggestion a step further by arguing that the Asian presbyter<sup>7</sup> who wrote the *API* expounds Pauline theology through narrative. The account of Thecla, for example, is a narrative explanation of 1 Cor 6-7. Thecla responds to Pauline beatitudes extolling sexual continence and the resurrection; the literary

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<sup>4</sup> Not that such titles do not exist at all, as X, 2.1 shows.

<sup>5</sup> "The *Acts of Paul* as a Sequel to Acts", in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke eds. (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Pateroster Press, 1993), 105-52. The premise of Bauckham's title however is untenable; more likely, the *API* were written without knowledge of the canonical Acts (see W. Rordorf, "In welchem Verhältnis stehen die apokryphen Paulusakten zur kanonischen Apostelgeschichte und zu den Pastoralbriefen?", in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn*, T. Baarda et al., eds. [Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1988] 225-41).

<sup>6</sup> "The *Acts of Paul* and the Pauline Legacy in the Second Century", unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge (1996), done under the supervision of Prof. Willy Rordorf of the University of Neuchâtel. See also my essay, "The Influence of 1 Corinthians on the *Acts of Paul*", in *Society of Biblical Literature 1996 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996) 438-454.

<sup>7</sup> Henceforth, "the Presbyter" (see n. 3).

dependence of these beatitudes on 1 Cor 6-7 is abundantly evident.<sup>8</sup> But not only so, the account of Thecla's decision not to marry Thamyris may arise from the Presbyter's understanding of 1 Cor 7.36-38, where Paul says that it is better for the engaged person to remain single and devoted to the Lord.

The Presbyter's penchant for narrative exegesis of the Pauline epistles has a bearing on two passages in this study—the Ephesian Episode (IX) and the Corinthian Episode (XII).

In the Ephesian episode, Paul and the Christians were assembled for prayer (IX, 2-3):

Now, an angel of the Lord entered in the house of Aquila; he presented himself before each one. He spoke with Paul in such a way that all become troubled; for, in appearing to them, he was visible to them, but the words which he was saying to Paul they did not hear. When he had finished speaking with Paul in tongues, they were seized with fear and trembling and were silent. But Paul said to them, “My brothers, you have all seen the angel of the Lord come to me, saying to me: ‘A great fire will descend upon thee at Pentecost: Trust in God, Jesus Christ! And disburden thyself of all things on him. Remit to him all of thy care and thy [...]. And he will bear them.’”

Apparently, the Presbyter takes as his cue for this story 1 Cor 13.1, which refers to the tongues of angels, and 1 Cor 14.27-28, which requires that tongues spoken in the assembly be interpreted.<sup>9</sup> This is exactly what Paul does when the angel leaves—he explains the meaning of what it said. While Kasser's translation says that “they did not hear” (“ils ne les entendaient pas”) the words of the angel, it probably means, “they did not understand”, based on Paul's usage of ἀκούω (lit., “to hear”) in 1 Cor 14.2: “For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him (οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει), but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.” Thus, the Ephesians hear from Paul's mouth the meaning of the angelic speech.

In Corinth, the Christians were praying and fasting because of their grief over Paul's imminent departure, when (XII, 2), “Paul, full of the spirit, said, ‘Brothers, apply yourselves to fasting and to charity (ἀγάπην); for I am going into the fiery furnace – I am speaking of Rome – and I would not have the strength if the Lord did not <grant> power to me...’” Following Paul's prophecy, Cleobius, who is “in the Spirit”, says (XII, 3), “Brothers, it is necessary that Paul accomplish this entire divine plan and that he go into [...] of death [...] for a great teaching, knowledge, and sowing of the Word, and that, as a victim of jealousy, he leave this world.” A little while later, “The Spirit came upon Myrta”, a woman, who exclaims (XII, 5):

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. the second, fourth, fifth, eleventh and thirteenth beatitudes of III, 5-6 with 1 Cor 6.3, 19-20, 7.29-34, and 40. See Dunn, “Influence of 1 Cor”, 448-51.

Brothers, why are you regarding this sign with fear? Paul, the servant of the Lord, will save many people at Rome, and will nourish many with the Word, so that it will not be possible to count them, and he will appear above all the believers; and the glory of the Lord will come greatly upon him, so that a great grace will arrive at Rome.

This passage from the *API* corresponds well to 1 Cor 14.26-33, where not more than three prophets utter their messages in the Corinthian assembly. As in the Iconian episode, which illustrates the meaning of 1 Cor 6-7, here the Presbyter creates an episode depicting the Corinthians' obedience to Paul's instructions concerning prophetic messages in worship. Unlike the angel in Ephesus, the Corinthians do not speak in tongues, for they would appear to be taking to heart Paul's endorsement of prophecy over tongues in the assembly (1 Cor 14, esp. vs. 5). Perhaps, the desire to follow Paul on this matter would explain why there is such a scarcity of texts evidencing the practice of glossolalia in the second century.<sup>10</sup>

Myrta's prophecy, however, is an apparent contradiction of 1 Cor 14.34-35, which enjoins silence on women in the assembly. Indeed, Origen interpreted this directive to deny women the right to prophesy in the assembly; furthermore, while Tertullian admitted women the right to prophesy, a prophetess in his own congregation regularly reported her visions only after the people had been dismissed.<sup>11</sup> Since the Presbyter otherwise portrays the Corinthians' behavior

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts*, 53. Tertullian also mentions a member of his congregation who conversed with angels (*de anim.* 9.4).

<sup>10</sup> See W. M. Green, "Glossolalia in the Second Century", *Restoration Quarterly* 16 (1973) 231-39; cf. S. D. Currie, "Speaking in Tongues: Early Evidence Outside the New Testament Bearing on Γλώσσαις Λαλεῖν", *Interpretation* 19 (1965) 274-94; reprinted in Watson E. Mills, ed., *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glossolalia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 83-106. The exception is perhaps Irenaeus 5.6.1 (in Eusebius, *h.e.* 5.7.6), "Just as also we hear many brethren in the church who have gifts of prophecy, and who speak through the Spirit in all manner of tongues, ..." (trans. K. Lake, LCL 1.455).

<sup>11</sup> Origen (catena on 1 Cor 14.34-35, Claude Jenkins, "Documents: Origen on I Corinthians. IV." *Journal of Theological Studies* 10 [1909] 41); Tertullian, *adv. Marc.* 5.8; *de anim.* 9.4. For the interpretation and ET of these texts, see R. Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*, J. Laporte and M. L. Hall, trans. (Liturgical Press, 1976) 19-20, 28-29. Irenaeus *haer.* 3.11.9 appears to allow women to prophesy in the assembly, but he may likewise lack 1 Cor 14.34-35 in his text of Paul. Origen's text falls in the context of a heated polemic against the Montanists prophetesses, demonstrating that the 1 Cor 14.34-35 was particularly pertinent in this controversy—here is one more reason to suggest that the *API* originates early in the second century, at any rate, before the appearance of Montanus. Rordorf once held that the *API* may have stemmed from the New Prophecy, but has since retracted that view ("Was wissen wir über Plan und Absicht der Paulusakten?", in *Oecumenica*

as in keeping with 1 Cor 14.26-33, Myrta's prophecy is surprising. Some NT textual critics consider 1 Cor 14.34-35 to be an interpolation by virtue of its appearance in the Western text not after v. 33 but after v. 40.<sup>12</sup> If so, the Presbyter may very well have felt free to depict a woman prophesying in the assembly because his copy of 1 Corinthians lacked 14.34-35.

### **Second-Century Trends**

#### ***Struggle with Heresy***

When Paul arrives in Iconium, Onesiphorus immediately recognizes him based on a physical description which Titus had made for him, for "He did not know him in the flesh, but only in the spirit" (III,3). Onesiphorus hails Paul with these words, "Greetings, servant of the blessed God." Demas and Hermogenes, Paul's hypocritical traveling companions, become livid because Onesiphorus disregards them (III, 4). "Don't we also belong to the Blessed, that you do not greet us in the same way." Onesiphorus responds, "I see in you no fruit of righteousness." He thus demonstrates prophetic insight into the character of Demas and Hermogenes and effectively exercises the discernment of spirits (1 Cor 12.10): knowing Paul in spirit, he recognizes him through his physical aspect as the servant of God, but he immediately rebuffs the gnostic teachers Demas and Hermogenes, even before hearing their views.<sup>13</sup> The discernment of spirits was essential in the fight against the heretics, as 1 John attests: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world."

This recognition scene has great affinity with a famous second-century confrontation: Marcion once asked Polycarp to recognize him, upon which Polycarp, hearer of the Apostle John and Bishop of Smyrna, said, "I recognize you—I recognize the first born of Satan" (Irenaeus, *haer.* 3.3.4).<sup>14</sup> Both scenes tend to legitimize local leaders standing in apostolic succession. Like Polycarp, Onesiphorus is a friend of an apostle. The heretical Demas and

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*et Patristica: Festschrift für Wilhelm Schneemelcher zum 75. Geburtstag*, D. Papandreou *et al.*, eds. [Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1989] 71-82.

<sup>12</sup> See G. D. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 699-708; Fee counters objections to his arguments in *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 272-81. P. B. Payne, "Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor 14.34-5", *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995) 240-262, has buttressed significantly the argument that 1 Cor 14.34-35 is an interpolation.

<sup>13</sup> They summarize their teaching to Thamyris thus (III, 14): "And we will teach you that the resurrection which he says is coming, has already happened in the children we have, and we will rise again, having come to know the true God."

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Acts 8.20-24 and 13.9-12.

Hermogenes, on the other hand, importune Paul but never sincerely love him. Though never given the name bishop, Onesiphorus functions as one in the *API*.<sup>15</sup> The local leadership of the church was a major weapon against heresy in the second century, as Ignatius (e.g., *Magn.* 7) and Irenaeus (e.g., *haer.* 4.26.2) abundantly attest. Rordorf considers the *API* to have been written in a period when itinerant charismatics still roamed and claimed allegiance in the church<sup>16</sup>: both Paul and Thecla, not to mention the heretical teams of Demas and Hermogenes and of Simon and Cleobius (X, 1), conduct an itinerant ministry. During such a period, the local leadership must also be endowed with the gift of prophecy.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the *Didache*, which knows of itinerant prophets, insists that the local leaders, the bishops and deacons, exercise the ministry of prophets and teachers (*Did.* 15.1). Even in the late second or early third century, the lack of the gift of prophecy amongst the successors of the Montanus, Maximilla and Priscilla was seen as a sign of their illegitimacy.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the *API* attests to a second-century trend that permitted no dichotomy between official and charismatic leadership.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Against Trafficking in the Charismata***

In the *API*, the Apostle exercises the charismatic gifts without expecting remuneration in accordance with Jesus' injunction, "Freely you have received, freely give." Those who would

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<sup>15</sup> Several localities have a single male leader in whose house the church meets: Hermias at Myra (IV, 41), Aquila at Ephesus (IX, 1), Stephen at Corinth (X, 1; XII, 1), and Claudius in Italy (XIII, 3-4). Most of the qualifications for a bishop in 1 Tim. 3.1-7 pertain to Onesiphorus: he is hospitable, above reproach, and the husband of one wife (III, 2); his children are obedient (III, 2, 23); he is not quarrelsome, as he permits even Demas and Hermogenes to benefit from his hospitality (III, 4), nor a recent convert, nor a lover of money (III, 23), nor given to much wine (III, 25); his charismatic discernment shows that he is apt to teach. My interpretation stands in stark contrast to D. R. MacDonald (*The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983]) who argues that the Pastoral Epistles opposed the legends behind the *API*.

<sup>16</sup> Rordorf, "Actes de Paul", 1120-21.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the qualifications for the first deacons in Acts 6.3, which include "full of the Spirit and wisdom".

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous anti-Montanist in Eusebius, *h.e.* 5.17: "For the prophetic gift must continue in the whole Church until the final coming, as the apostle insists [cf. 1 Cor 13.9-10]. But they point to no one, though this is the fourteenth year since Maximilla's death" (trans. G. A. Williamson, *Eusebius: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* [London: Penguin Books, 1965] 164). The Montanist Tertullian similarly criticizes the lack of charismatic gifts amongst the Marcionites (*adv. Marc.* 5.8).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts*, 9; Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: University Press, 1969), 178.

sell gifts of healing are charlatans and magicians, like Simon Magus (Acts 8), who thought that power of Holy Spirit could be bought or sold. Simon Magus becomes the arch-heretic of the nascent church and the father of gnosticism according to Justin and Irenaeus.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, Thamyras offers money to the heretics Demas and Hermogenes (III, 11), which they appear to accept along with a sumptuous banquet. Later, Hermocrates, a rich Myran, comes to Paul for healing from a terminal case of dropsy. In the fragmentary Coptic text, we read Paul's pronouncement that Hermocrates will become well (V, 1), **ⲁⲭⲚⲞⲨⲬⲈⲔⲈ ⲁⲒⲒⲒⲒ ⲓⲁⲪⲁⲗⲓⲧⲓⲧⲙⲡⲣⲓⲈⲚ ⲚⲒⲘⲤ ⲡⲈⲬⲢⲤ** ("without payment, but <in the n>ame of Jesus Christ"). Later, Hermocrates will make an offering to the widows in thanksgiving for the raising from the dead of his son, Dion (IV, 5). The *Acts of John* recounts a story of a man who offers money for the exorcism of his two sons; John heals them freely and instructs the father to give the money to those in need.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while the true man of God will not receive payment for his services, he may direct that gifts be given to the needy (cf. *Did.* 11.9, 12).

### ***For the Conversion of Unbelievers***

Many of the miraculous occurrences in the *API* clearly serve to manifest God's power to unbelievers and to lead to their conversion.<sup>22</sup> This function of the miraculous appears in the fragmentary scene at Philippi in which Paul raises from the dead the young girl, Phrontina, and the crowd exclaims, (XI), "One is the God who made the heaven and the earth, he who has given life to the <young girl in> Paul's <presence>." At Antioch, Tryphaena receives a dream in which her defunct daughter, Falcolnilla, asks her to have Thecla pray for her (Falconilla's

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<sup>20</sup> Justin *I apol.* 26; Irenaeus, *haer.* 1.23. Irenaeus also claims that the charlatans, Simon and Carpocrates, do false miracles through magical deception (*haer.* 2.31.2), and that true gifts are given to the church in the name of Jesus for the benefit of the gentiles (ἐπ' εὐεργεσία τῆ τῶν ἐθνῶν) and should be freely ministered (*haer.* 2.32.2-3; Greek text in Eusebius, *h.e.* 5.7.5 (K. Lake, LCL 1.452f.)).

<sup>21</sup> See chs. 56-57; Jesus is styled the physician who heals for free in the *Acts of John* (22, 56, and 108). See E. Junod and J.-D. Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, CChrSA (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 168 (n. 2), 525-26.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Irenaeus 2.32.4. He states repeatedly that miracles are for the benefit of mankind and explicitly that exorcism often leads to the conversion of the one set free.

translation to the place of the righteous. Later, Tryphaena exclaims as a result of Thecla's miraculous baptism and her salvation from the beasts (IV, 14 [39]): "Now I believe that the dead are risen; Now I believe that my daughter lives. Thecla, my child, enter into my house, and I will assign to you all my goods!" Thus, the miraculous gifts convince this aristocratic woman that God has the power over death, and she and most of her maidservants become believers.

But the miraculous gifts can lead to the condemnation of the unbeliever too. This seems to be Paul's point concerning the gift of tongues—the unbeliever would continue in unbelief as a result of the sign of tongues (1 Cor 14.22f.). Despite Thecla's miraculous deliverance from the pyre through a timely hailstorm, Thamyris apparently remains in his unbelief and Thecla finds him dead upon her return to Iconium (IV, 18 [43]). In the *API*, Nero persists in his unbelief despite learning of Patroclus' recovery from death, despite having been foretold of Paul's return after execution, and despite Paul's post-mortem appearance to him. To be sure, out of fear he relents from his persecution of Christians, but to his own condemnation, this notorious antichrist never responds appropriately.

#### ***Encrateia and the Charismata***

In the *API* there is a clear link between the practice of sexual continence and other forms of asceticism and the gifts of the spirit, especially prophecy: The continent are temples of God's Spirit, and God speaks to them (III, 5-6). This tendency fits in well with the expectations of the Christians of the first two centuries:<sup>23</sup> In the NT, significant sexually continent prophets and prophetesses appear, especially in the Lukan tradition: John the Baptist (Luke 1.15), Anna (Luke 2.36-38), the daughters of Philip (Acts 21.9), perhaps even Paul himself (cf. 1 Cor 7). Luke and the Presbyter seem to have a common expectation, that God speaks to the continent. The practice of continence itself comes to the fore in the late first and early second century: Justin tells us that many Christians made decisions for sexual continence in the period of ca. AD 90, who were still alive in AD 150 when he wrote his *First Apology* (ch. 15).

Furthermore, the second-century apologist, Athenagoras, illustrates that closer communion with God is a strong motivating factor for the celibate:

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<sup>23</sup> In this light, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, ch. 3, "Martrydom, Prophecy, and Continence" (London/Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988), 65-82.

Nay, you would find many among us, both men and women, growing old unmarried, in hope of living in closer communion with God. But if the remaining in virginity and in the state of an eunuch brings nearer to God, while the indulgence of carnal thought and desire leads away from Him, in those cases in which we shun the thoughts, much more do we reject the deeds.<sup>24</sup>

Those who renounce marriage and sexual relations do so in anticipation of the age of the resurrection. Luke 20.35 records Jesus' rebuttal of the Sadducees, who created an absurd story about a woman who would have seven husbands in the age to come: the sons of the resurrection are like the angels of heaven, asexual beings who do not marry. The *API* displays the same eschatological perspective when it says (III, 5), "Blessed are those who have the fear of God, for they shall be angels."

Many scholars<sup>25</sup> have misconstrued the *API*, saying that it issued from encratites, heretics who forbade marriage and required dietary asceticism.<sup>26</sup> These scholars point to the teaching of Paul concerning the resurrection and continence (III, 5-6); to the testimony of Demas and Hermogenes who cast Paul's teaching in a negative light so as to anger Thamyras (III, 12)<sup>27</sup>; and to the baptized Lion who turns away from a lioness.<sup>28</sup> But the *API* fit into the expectations of the orthodox who permitted sexual relations only in the context of legitimate marriage and only for the purpose of procreation<sup>29</sup>: Onesiphorus and Lectra, a married couple with children, are also model Christians in the episode at Iconium in which the virgin Thecla figures so

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<sup>24</sup>*Leg. 33*; ANF 2:146. Cf. Brown, *Body and Society*, 66.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., D. R. MacDonald, *Legend*; S. L. Davies, *The Revolt of Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (London: Feffer & Simons, 1980), 15-16; V. Burrus, "Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts", *Semeia* 38 (1986)101-17; idem., *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (NY-Queenston, Ont.: Mellen, 1987). European scholars have likewise considered the *API* encratite: E. Peterson, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrusfragment der *Acta Pauli*." *Vigiliae christianae* 3 (1949) 142-62; above all, W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, rev. ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 2.234, who sees sexual continence as playing a dominant role in nearly every episode of the *API*. For a the detailed refutation of this view, see Dunn, "Acts of Paul and Pauline Legacy", 69-88.

<sup>26</sup> See Irenaeus, *haer.* 1.28; Hippolytus *ref.* 8.13; cf. 1 Tim 4.1-4.

<sup>27</sup> Rordorf comments (*Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, 1.1132), "... this encratite affirmation comes from Paul's enemies and hardens his point of view; the apostle of the *Acts of Paul* has not forbidden marriage."

<sup>28</sup> The lioness is not portrayed as our lion's spouse; hence he is not refraining from normal marital relations *per se*, but from fornication. He is not at all an encratite lion but a normal Christian lion!

<sup>29</sup> Justin writes (*apol.* 29.1; ANF 1.172): "But whether we marry, it is only that we may bring up children; or whether we decline marriage, we live continently."

prominently. Nevertheless, in keeping with Paul's own teaching (1 Cor 7.7), chastity is lifted up as a spiritual gift which brings one closer to God.<sup>30</sup>

### *Martyrdom and the Charismata*

The most persistent trend in the *API* is the strong link between the charismatic gifts and martyrdom. In Thecla's two passions, we see the vision of Christ in the form of Paul (III, 21), the hail storm which disperses the crowd at Iconium (III, 22; cf. IX, 25), and the theophany in the pool of seals at the moment of Thecla's baptism (IV, 9 [34]); Paul foreshadows Thecla's second passion when she asks to be baptized (III, 25). Paul interprets the angelic message in tongues as a prediction of a persecution coming upon him at Ephesus (IX, 3). The three prophetic messages at Corinth predict Paul's successful mission and his passion in Rome (XII, 2-5). In the voyage to Italy, Jesus appears to Paul and says that he is about to be crucified anew (XIII, 2)—the vision serves to foreshadow Paul's own martyrdom.

The prophetic gifts also provide comfort for a persecuted church. In Myra (V), an angel of the Lord warns Paul that a great struggle would soon confront him, but that God would intervene. Moments later, Hermippus attacks him with a sword but is suddenly struck blind. This scene is reminiscent of Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane—Paul is confronted with a sword and clubs, and declares, "I am not a thief." But it is not yet Paul's time to suffer like Jesus. The Corinthians write to Paul that they have been greatly comforted by a revelation, received by Theonoe, of Paul's deliverance from imprisonment and suffering in Philippi (X, 2.8). Paul discerns in the Spirit that Patroclus' fall is a scheme of Satan to thwart the Roman Christians (XIV, 2); their lamentations to God are answered by Patroclus' return to life, but Nero's wrath nevertheless menaces the peace of the church for a time. Through prophetic messages related to persecution and martyrdom, the Christian finds comfort in knowing that God is in control. Neither Paul nor Thecla will die unless God allows it; and he will strengthen his martyrs in the midst of the severest torture and suffering. Just as Paul knows of his imminent passion before

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<sup>30</sup> Scholars are divided as to whether Paul suggests that marriage is a charism in the same sense as celibacy. G. D. Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 285), for example, considers it a conclusion difficult to avoid; but P. Brown writes about Paul's view, "By contrast, marriage was not a 'gift.' Rather, the fact of being married betrayed an absence of God's call to continence" (*Body and Society*, 56). Brown is probably right, for Paul maintains that the married person is concerned about the things of this present age (1 Cor 7.33), and views marital relations not as a gift of the Spirit which brings one closer to God but as a safeguard against fornication (vv. 2, 9); moreover, marriage is a state in which one is called (vv. 25-28), not a charism.

going to Rome, so also in other accounts from the first three centuries, martyrs receive prophetic visions or dreams informing them of imminent persecution or death.<sup>31</sup>

The NT already contains prophecies of persecution which serve to encourage the church: Jesus predicts persecutions (e.g., Matt 10; Luke 12) and requires that his disciples stand strong and not be afraid or worried because God the Father is concerned about them and the Holy Spirit will speak through them in their defense (cf. Acts 4.8). Perhaps this is why the *API* is particularly interested in the apologia which Paul (III, 17; XIV, 3<sup>32</sup>), Thecla (IV, 12) and Patroclus (XIV, 2) each pronounce before Roman authorities. The original readers may have been particularly attentive at such moments in order to hear what the Holy Spirit would say through the martyr.

The story of the baptized lion, with which this essay began, also demonstrates the second-century trend of tying the charismata to martyrdom. While in the desert, the Holy Spirit fills Paul to give him the courage to face the lion, which he would later encounter in the arena. A lioness also befriends Thecla during her passion, saving her from a lion and a she-bear (IV, 8 [33]). Jesus, too, faced the wild beasts in the desert for forty days (Mark 1.13). Whether Christians met wild beasts in the arena or in the desert, it was comforting to know that God, who made the heaven and the earth, was in control even of the fiercest of his creatures. If the beasts devoured them, God was still in control, because only their bodies could die, not their eternal souls. But it was still nice to know that God in his sovereign power could at any time intervene to change the course of events which the Satan and his antichrists had set up to defeat the Christians.

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<sup>31</sup> Acts 21.10-11; the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 5.2; in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* 1.3, Perpetua recounts her brother's words while she languished in prison for Christ (ANF 3.700): "Then my brother said to me, 'My dear sister, you are already in a position of great dignity, and are such that you may ask for a vision, and that it may be made known to you whether this is to result in a passion or an escape.'"

<sup>32</sup> Two Greek MSS (from Patmos and Athos) and two VSS state that Paul was "filled with the Spirit" when he addressed Nero. Rordorf in his forthcoming edition in the CChrSA has chosen to retain the reading of the Greek MS from Ochrida and of several VSS which have simply, "and Paul said before all ..."