

● 104

The Jewish Proclivities of Some Non-Jewish Women

● 104A

Women of Damascus

JOSEPHUS *Jewish War* 2.559–61

late 1st century C.E.

AUTHOR, TRANSLATION, AND TEXT: See entry 15.

559 Meanwhile, the people of Damascus, learning of the disaster which had befallen the Romans, were fired with a determination to kill the Jews who resided among them. 560 As they had for a long time past kept them shut up in the gymnasium—a precaution prompted by suspicion—they considered that the execution of their plan would present no difficulty whatever, their only fear was of their own wives, who, with few exceptions, had all become converts to the Jewish religion, 561 and so their efforts were mainly directed to keeping the secret from them. In the end, they fell upon the Jews, cooped up as they were and unarmed, and within one hour slaughtered them all with impunity, to the number of ten thousand five hundred.

● 104B

Poppaea Sabina, wife of the Emperor Nero

JOSEPHUS *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.189–98

late 1st century C.E.

AUTHOR, TRANSLATION, AND TEXT: See entry 15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Shelly Matthews, "Ladies' Aid: Gentile Noblewomen as Saviors and Benefactors in the Antiquities," *HTR* 92 (1999): 199–218. Mary K. Smallwood, "The Alleged Jewish Tendencies of Poppaea Sabina," *JTS*, n.s., 10 (1959): 329–35; see also the Introduction to this section.

189 About this time King Agrippa built a chamber of unusual size in his palace at Jerusalem adjoining the colonnade. 190 The palace had been erected long before by the sons of Asamoniaios and, being situated on a lofty site, afforded a most delightful view to any who chose to survey the city from

it. The king was enamoured of this view and used to gaze, as he reclined at meals there, on everything that went on in the temple. 191 The eminent men of Jerusalem, seeing this, were extremely angry; for it was contrary to tradition for proceedings in the temple—and in particular the sacrifices—to be spied on. They therefore erected a high wall upon the arcade that was in the inner temple facing west. 192 This when built blocked not only the view from the royal dining room but also that from the western portico of the outer temple, where the Romans used to post their guards at the festivals for the sake of supervising the temple. 193 At this King Agrippa was indignant, and still more Festus the procurator; the latter ordered them to pull it down. But they entreated him for permission to send an embassy on this matter to Nero; for, they said, they could not endure to live any longer if any portion of the temple was demolished. 194 When Festus granted their request, they sent to Nero the ten foremost of their number with Ishmael the high priest and Helcias the keeper of the treasury. 195 Nero, after a full hearing, not only condoned what they had done, but also consented to leave the building as it was. In this he showed favour to his wife Poppaea, who was a worshipper of God [theosebēs] and who pleaded on behalf of the Jews. She then bade the ten depart but detained Helcias and Ishmael in her house as hostages. 196 The king, on hearing this, gave the high priesthood to Joseph, who was surnamed Kabi, son of the high priest Simon.

● 105

Thecla of Iconium, an Ascetic Christian and the Prototypical Convert

The Acts of Thecla

probably 2d century C.E.

WORK: Written before the beginning of the third century C.E., and possibly as early as the mid-second century C.E., the work usually called *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* is found within a larger composite work, *The Acts of Paul*, although it may have circulated independently at first. It might more properly be called simply *The Acts of Thecla*, since it is only tangentially concerned with Paul: the central theme is the conversion and subsequent life of Thecla of Iconium. Originally written in Greek, it exists in Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic as well, testimony to its broad popularity.

The work engendered controversy early, in part because Thecla's self-baptism was apparently used by some Christians to legitimate women's performance of the rite of baptism on others. Tertullian denounced the work (or a similar text) around 203 C.E., arguing that it could not be used to give women the authority to baptize, since it was a fraudulent work written by a presbyter in Asia Minor who had in fact admitted the forgery (entry 92A). With the exception of D. MacDonald, Ter-

tullian's testimony has not been given much credence by modern scholarship, which still considers the author unknown. Some contemporary scholars have begun to pay serious attention to the possibility that the text was authored by a woman, but the evidence remains inconclusive at best (see Introduction to section two, note 2).

Several different endings for the life of Thecla exist. In the shortest version, Thecla "enlightens many with the word of God" and dies a peaceful death. In the longer versions, Thecla dies more of a martyr's death, hunted by opponents, and miraculously rescued from assaults on her chastity, which lead, however, to her death. In this edition of the sourcebook, I have included these longer endings as well; they probably date to about the fourth century C.E. and are fascinating evidence for issues posed by the story and cult of Thecla.

Was there ever a Thecla? Scholars have generally assumed that the story in its present form is untrue—that Paul did not convert a woman named Thecla of Iconium. Rather, they have tended to see the story as an enlargement on the few biblical hints of Paul's activity in that area, none of which would account for the development of the Thecla legend. Later Christians, however, were firmly convinced of her reality, and a cult developed around her figure (see entry 75). *The Acts of Thecla* are clearly the literary prototype for other similar stories such as *The Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* and are probably the prototype for similar stories about women converts in the Acts of other apostles. In any case, the text—many of whose characters, especially the more admirable ones, are women—is rich evidence for the kinds of stories told about ascetic Christian women.

TRANSLATION: RSK (7–43); Elliott, *ANT*, longer endings.

ADDITIONAL TRANSLATIONS: *NTA* 2:353–64; *ANT* 272–281; *ANF* 8:487–92.

TEXT: M. Bonnet and R. A. Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* (repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959), 1:235–72.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: There is a particularly extensive bibliography on Thecla; recent (and/or major) works, all with additional bibliographic references, include *Blessings*, 128–56; Melissa Aubin, "Reversing Romance: The Acts of Thecla and the Ancient Novel," in Ronald F. Hock, J. Bradley Chance, and Judith Perkins, eds., *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 257–72; Jan N. Bremmer, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1996); Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Andrew S. Jacobs, "A Family Affair: Marriage, Class and Ethics in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *J ECS* 7 (spring 1999): 105–38; Jean Daniel Kaestli, "Les Actes apocryphes et la reconstitution de l'histoire des femmes dans le christianisme ancien," *Foi et Vie* 88 (1989): 71–79; Jean Daniel Kaestli, "Fiction littéraire et réalité sociale: Que peut-on savoir de la place des femmes dans le milieu de production des Actes apocryphes des

apôtres?" *La fable apocryphe* 1 (1990): 279–302; David Konstan, "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts," *J ECS* 6 (spring 1998): 15–36; Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983); Dennis R. MacDonald, "The Role of Women in the Production of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *Iliff Review* 41 (1984): 21–28; Sheila E. McGinn, "The Acts of Thecla," in *Searching the Scriptures*, 2: 800–828; Shelly Matthews, "Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography," *JFSR* 17 no. 2 (2002): 39–55.

NOTE: The numbering here is taken from editions of the *Acts of Paul*: the Thecla story begins here.

7 And while Paul was speaking so in the middle of the assembly in the house of Onesiphorus, a certain virgin named Thecla (her mother was Theocleia), who was engaged to a man named Thamyris, sat at a nearby window in her house and listened night and day to what Paul said about the chaste life. And she did not turn away from the window but pressed on in the faith, rejoicing exceedingly. Moreover, when she saw many women and virgins going in to Paul she wished that she too be counted worthy to stand before Paul and hear the word of Christ, for she had not yet seen Paul in person but only heard him speak.

8 But since she did not move from the window, her mother sent to Thamyris. He came joyfully as if he were already taking her in marriage. So Thamyris said to Theocleia, "Where is my Thecla, that I may see her?" And Theocleia said, "I have something new to tell you, Thamyris. Indeed, for three days and three nights Thecla has not risen from the window either to eat or to drink, but gazing intently as if on some delightful sight, she so devotes herself to a strange man who teaches deceptive and ambiguous words that I wonder how one so modest in her virginity can be so severely troubled.

9 "Thamyris, this man is shaking up the city of the Iconians, and your Thecla too. For all the women and the young men go in to him and are taught by him that it is necessary, as he says, 'to fear one single God only and live a pure life.' And my daughter also, like a spider bound at the window by his words, is controlled by a new desire and a terrible passion. For the virgin concentrates on the things he says and is captivated. But you go and speak to her, for she is engaged to you."

10 And Thamyris went to her, loving her and yet fearing her distraction, and said, "Thecla, my fiancée, why do you sit like that? And what sort of passion holds you distracted? Turn to your Thamyris and be ashamed." And her mother also said the same thing: "Child, why do you sit like that, looking down and not answering, like one paralyzed?" And they wept bitterly, Thamyris for the loss of a wife, Theocleia for a daughter, the female servants for a mistress. So there was a great commingling of grief in the house. And while

that was going on Thecla did not turn away but was concentrating on Paul's word.

11 But Thamyris jumped up and went out into the street, and carefully observed those going in to Paul and coming out. And he saw two men in a bitter quarrel with each other and said to them, "Gentlemen, tell me, who are you? And who is this man who is inside with you, the beguiling one who deceives the souls of young men and virgins that they should not marry but remain as they are? I promise now to give you a lot of money if you will tell me about him, for I am the first man of this city."

12 So Demas and Hermogenes said to him, "Who this man is we do not know. But he deprives young men of wives and virgins of husbands, saying, 'Otherwise there is no resurrection for you, unless you remain chaste and do not defile the flesh but keep it pure.'"

13 Thamyris said to them, "Come to my house, gentlemen, and rest with me." And they went away to a fabulous banquet, with lots of wine, great riches, and a splendid table. And Thamyris gave them drinks, for he loved Thecla and wished to have her for his wife. And during the banquet Thamyris said, "Tell me, gentlemen, what his teaching is, that I also may know it, for I am very anxious about Thecla because she loves the stranger so and I am deprived of my wedding."

14 But Demas and Hermogenes said, "Bring him before the governor Castellius on the ground that he is seducing the crowds with the new doctrine of the Christians, and so he will destroy him and you will have your wife, Thecla. And we will teach you concerning the resurrection which he says is to come: that it has already taken place in the children whom we have and that we are risen again because we have full knowledge of the true God."

15 When Thamyris had heard this from them, he rose up early in the morning full of jealousy and wrath and went to the house of Onesiphorus, with rulers and officials and a great crowd, with clubs. He said to Paul, "You have corrupted the city of the Iconians, and my fiancée so that she does not want me. Let us go to governor Castellius!" And the whole crowd shouted, "Away with the *magus!* For he has corrupted all our women." And the crowds were persuaded.

16 And standing before the judgment seat Thamyris cried out, "Proconsul, this man—we don't know where he comes from—who does not allow virgins to marry, let him declare before you the reasons he teaches these things." And Demas and Hermogenes said to Thamyris, "Say that he is a Christian, and so you will destroy him." But the governor kept his wits and called Paul, saying to him, "Who are you and what do you teach? For they bring no light accusation against you."

17 Paul lifted up his voice and said, "If today I am interrogated as to what I teach, then listen, Proconsul. The living God, the God of vengeance, the jealous God, the God who has need of nothing has sent me since he longs for the salvation of humanity, that I may draw them away from corruption and impurity, and from all pleasure and death, that they may sin no more. Wherefore God sent his own child, the one whom I proclaim and teach that in him humanity has hope, he who alone had compassion upon a world gone astray, that humanity may no longer be under judgment but have faith, fear of God, knowledge of dignity, and love of truth. If then I teach the things revealed to me by God, what wrong do I do, Proconsul?" When the governor heard this, he commanded Paul to be bound and to be led off to prison until he could find a convenient time to give him a more careful hearing.

18 But during the night Thecla removed her bracelets and gave them to the doorkeeper, and when the door was opened for her she headed off to the prison. Upon giving a silver mirror to the jailer, she went in to Paul and sitting at his feet she heard about the mighty acts of God. And Paul feared nothing but continued to live with full confidence in God; and her faith also increased, as she kissed his fetters.

19 But when Thecla was sought by her own people and by Thamyris, they pursued her through the streets as if she were lost, and one of the doorkeeper's fellow slaves made it known that she had gone out during the night. And they questioned the doorkeeper, and he told them that she had gone to the stranger in prison. And they went just as he had told them and found her, so to speak, united with him in loving affection. And they left there, rallied the crowd about them, and relayed this to the governor.

20 He ordered Paul to be brought to the judgment seat. But Thecla rolled around in the place where Paul was teaching as he sat in the prison, so the governor commanded that she too be brought to the judgment seat. And she headed off joyfully exulting. But when Paul was brought forward again, the crowd shouted out even more, "He is a *magus!* Away with him!" But the governor gladly listened to Paul concerning the holy works of Christ. When he had taken counsel, he called Thecla, saying, "Why do you not marry Thamyris according to the law of the Iconians?" But she just stood there looking intently at Paul. And when she did not answer, Theocleia, her mother, cried out, saying, "Burn the lawless one! Burn her who is no bride in the midst of the theater in order that all the women who have been taught by this man may be afraid!"

21 And the governor was greatly moved. He had Paul whipped and threw him out of the city, but Thecla he sentenced to be burned. And immediately the governor arose and went off to the theater, and all the crowd went out to the inevitable spectacle. But Thecla, as a lamb in the wilderness looks around

for the shepherd, so she sought for Paul. And looking over the crowd, she saw the Lord sitting in the form of Paul and said, "As if I were not able to bear up, Paul has come to look after me." And she looked intently at him, but he took off into the heavens.

22 Now, the young men and the virgins brought wood and straw for burning Thecla. And as she was brought in naked, the governor wept and marveled at the power in her. The executioners spread out the wood and ordered her to mount the pyre, and making the sign of the cross she mounted up on the wood pile. They put the torch underneath the pile, and although a great fire blazed up, the flame did not touch her. For God in compassion produced a noise below the earth, and a cloud above full of water and hail overshadowed (the theater), and all its contents poured out, so that many were in danger and died. The fire was extinguished, and Thecla was saved.

23 Now, Paul was fasting with Onesiphorus and his wife and the children in an open tomb on the road by which they go from Iconium to Daphne. And after many days, as they were fasting the children said to Paul, "We're hungry." And they had no means to buy bread, for Onesiphorus had left behind worldly things and followed Paul with all his house. But Paul took off his coat and said, "Go child, (sell this,) buy several loaves, and bring them (back)." But while the boy was buying bread he saw his neighbor Thecla; he was astonished and said, "Thecla, where are you going?" And she said, "I am seeking Paul, for I was saved from the fire." And the boy said, "Come, I'll take you to him, for he has been mourning for you and praying and fasting six days already."

24 Now, when she came to the tomb, Paul was kneeling in prayer and saying, "Father of Christ, do not let the fire touch Thecla, but be present with her, for she is yours!" And standing behind him, she cried out, "Father, maker of heaven and earth, the Father of your beloved child Jesus Christ, I bless you because you saved me from the fire that I might see Paul." And rising up, Paul saw her and said, "God, the knower of hearts, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I bless you that you have so quickly (accomplished) what I asked, and have listened to me."

25 And inside the tomb there was much love, with Paul leaping for joy, and Onesiphorus, and everyone. They had five loaves and vegetables and water, and they were rejoicing over the holy works of Christ. And Thecla said to Paul, "I shall cut my hair short and follow you wherever you go." But he said, "The time is horrible, and you are beautiful. May no other temptation come upon you worse than the first and you not bear up but act with cowardice." And Thecla said, "Only give me the seal in Christ, and temptation will not touch me." And Paul said, "Have patience, Thecla, and you will receive the water."

26 And Paul sent away Onesiphorus with all his house to Iconium, and so taking Thecla he entered Antioch. But just as they came into town a Syrian by the name of Alexander, the first man of the Antiochenes, seeing Thecla, desired her and sought to win over Paul with money and gifts. But Paul said, "I don't know the woman of whom you speak, nor is she mine." But he, being a powerful man, embraced her on the open street; she, however, would not put up with it but sought Paul and cried out bitterly, saying, "Force not the stranger, force not the servant of God! I am the first woman of the Iconians, and because I did not wish to marry Thamyris I have been thrown out of the city." And grabbing Alexander, she ripped his cloak, took the crown off his head, and made him a laughingstock.

27 But he, partly out of love for her and partly out of shame for what had happened to him, brought her before the governor. When she confessed that she had done these things, he sentenced her to the beasts. But the women were horrified and cried out before the judgment seat, "An evil judgment! An impious judgment!" Thecla begged the governor that she might remain pure until her battle with the beasts. And a wealthy woman named Tryphaena, whose daughter had died, took her into custody and found comfort in her.

28 When the beasts were led in procession, they bound her to a fierce lioness, and the queen Tryphaena followed her. And as Thecla sat upon the lioness's back, the lioness licked her feet, and all the crowd was astounded. Now the charge on her inscription was Sacrilegious. But the women with their children cried out from above, saying, "O God, an impious judgment is come to pass in this city!" And after the procession, Tryphaena took her again, for her daughter Falconilla, who was dead, had spoken to her in a dream: "Mother, the desolate stranger Thecla you will have in my place in order that she may pray for me and I be translated to the place of the righteous."

29 So when Tryphaena received her back from the procession she was sorrowful because she was going to battle with the beasts on the following day, but at the same time she loved her dearly like her own daughter Falconilla and (she) said, "Thecla, my second child, come and pray for my child, that she may live forever; for this I saw in my dreams." And without hesitation she lifted up her voice and said, "My God, Son of the Most High, who is in heaven, give to her according to her wish, that her daughter Falconilla may live forever!" And when Thecla said this, Tryphaena grieved to think that such beauty was to be thrown to the beasts.

30 And when it was dawn, Alexander came to take her away—for he himself was arranging the hunt—and he said, "The governor has taken his seat, and the crowd is clamoring for us. Give me her who is to battle the beasts, that I may take her away." But Tryphaena cried out so that he fled, saying, "A second mourning for my Falconilla is come upon my house, and there is no

one to help; neither child, for she is dead, nor relative, for I am a widow. O God of Thecla my child, help Thecla."

31 And the governor sent soldiers in order that Thecla might be brought. Tryphaena, however, did not stand aside but, taking her hand, led her up herself, saying, "My daughter Falconilla I brought to the tomb, but you, Thecla, I bring to battle the beasts." And Thecla wept bitterly and groaned to the Lord, saying, "Lord God, in whom I believe, with whom I have taken refuge, who rescued me from the fire, reward Tryphaena, who had compassion upon your servant and because she kept me chaste."

32 Then there was a clamor, a roaring of the beasts, and a shouting of the people and of the women who sat together, some saying, "Bring in the sacrilegious one!" But the women were saying, "Let the city perish for this lawlessness! Slay us all, Proconsul! A bitter spectacle, an evil judgment!"

33 Now, when Thecla was taken out of Tryphaena's hands, she was stripped, given a girdle, and thrown into the stadium. And lions and bears were thrown at her, and a fierce lioness ran to her and reclined at her feet. Now, the crowd of women shouted loudly. And a bear ran up to her, but the lioness ran and met it, and ripped the bear to shreds. And again a lion trained against men, which belonged to Alexander, ran up to her, and the lioness wrestled with the lion and perished with it. So the women mourned all the more, since the lioness that helped her was dead.

34 Then they sent in many beasts while she stood and stretched out her hands and prayed. And when she had finished her prayer, she turned and saw a great ditch full of water and said, "Now is the time for me to wash." And she threw herself in, saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I baptize myself on the last day!" And when they saw it, the women and the whole crowd wept, saying, "Do not throw yourself into the water!"—so that even the governor wept that such a beauty was going to be eaten by seals. So then she threw herself into the water in the name of Jesus Christ, but the seals, seeing the light of a lightning flash, floated dead on the surface. About her there was a cloud of fire so that neither could the beasts touch her nor could she be seen naked.

35 Now, the women, as other more terrible beasts were thrown in, wailed, and some threw petals, others nard, others cassia, others amomum, so that there was an abundance of perfumes. And all the beasts, overcome as if by sleep, did not touch her. So Alexander said to the governor, "I have some very fearsome bulls. Let us tie her who battles the beasts to them." Although he was frowning, the governor gave his consent, saying, "Do what you want." And they bound her by the feet between the bulls and prodded them from underneath with red-hot irons at the appropriate spot, that being the more enraged they might kill her. The bulls indeed leaped forward, but the flame

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41 And taking her by the hand, Paul led her into the house of Hermias and heard everything from her, so that Paul marveled greatly and those who heard were strengthened and prayed on behalf of Tryphaena. And standing up, Thecla said to Paul, "I am going to Iconium." So Paul said, "Go and teach the word of God!" Now, Tryphaena sent her a lot of clothing and gold, so it could be left behind for Paul for the ministry of the poor.

42 So Thecla herself headed off to Iconium and entered the house of Onesiphorus and threw herself down on the floor where Paul had sat when he was teaching the oracles of God, and wept, saying, "My God, and God of this house where the light shone upon me, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, my help in prison, my help before the governor, my help in the flame, my help among the beasts, you are God, and to you be glory forever. Amen."

43 And she found Thamyris dead, but her mother alive. And calling her mother to her, she said to her, "Theocleia, my mother, are you able to believe that the Lord lives in the heavens? For whether you desire money, the Lord will give it to you through me, or your child, behold, I am standing beside you."

And when she had given this witness she headed off to Seleucia, and after enlightening many with the word of God, she slept with a fine sleep.

LONGER ENDINGS:

Some manuscripts contain, after "Seleucia," the following material:

and dwelt in a cave seventy-two years, living upon herbs and water. And she enlightened many by the word of God.

44 And certain men of the city, being Greeks by religion and physicians by profession, sent to her pompous young men to corrupt her. For they said, "She is a virgin and serves Artemis, and from this she has virtue in healing." And by the providence of God she entered into the rock alive and went under ground. And she departed to Rome to see Paul and found that he had fallen asleep. And after staying there a short time, she rested in a glorious sleep and she is buried about two or three stadia from the tomb of her master Paul.

45 She was cast into the fire when seventeen years old and among the wild beasts when eighteen. And she was an ascetic in the cave, as has been said, seventy-two years so that all the years of her life were ninety. And after accomplishing many cures she rests in the place of the saints, having fallen asleep on the twenty-fourth of the month of September in Christ Jesus our Lord to whom be glory and strength for ever and ever. Amen.

One manuscript contains the following additional material:

And a cloud of light guided her. And having come into Seleucia she went outside the city one stade. And she was afraid of them for they worshipped idols. And it guided her to the mountain called Calaman or Rhodeon, and having found there a cave she went into it. And she was there many years and underwent many and grievous trials by the devil and bore them nobly, being assisted by Christ. And some of the well-born women, having learned about the virgin Thecla, went to her and learned the miracles of God. And many of them bade farewell to the world and lived an ascetic life with her. And a good report was spread everywhere concerning her; and cures were done by her. All the city, therefore, and the country around, having learnt this, brought their sick to the mountain, and before they came near the door they were speedily released from whatever disease they were afflicted with; and the unclean spirits went out shrieking, and all received their own people in health, glorifying God who had given such grace to the virgin Thecla. The physicians of the city of Seleucia were thought nothing of, having lost their trade, and no one any longer had regard to them. Being filled with envy and hatred, they plotted against the servant of Christ to decide what they should do to her. The devil then suggested to them a wicked device. One day, having assembled, they took counsel and consulted with each other, saying, "This holy virgin has influence upon the great goddess Artemis and if she ask anything of her she hears her, being a virgin herself, and all the gods love her. Come, then, let us take unprincipled men and make them drunk with wine, and let us give them a great deal of money and say to them, 'If you can corrupt and defile her we shall give you even more money.'" The physicians said to themselves that if they should be able to defile her neither the gods nor Artemis would listen to her in the case of the sick. They therefore acted accordingly, and the wicked men went up to the mountain and rushed upon the cave like lions and knocked at the door. And the holy martyr Thecla opened it, emboldened by the God in whom she trusted, for she knew of their plot beforehand. And she said to them, "What do you want, my children?" And they said, "Is there someone here called Thecla?" And she said, "What do you want with her?" They said to her, "We want to sleep with her." The blessed Thecla said to them, "I am a poor old woman, a servant of my Lord Jesus Christ; and even though you want to do something unseemly to me you cannot." They said to her, "We must do to you what we want." And having said this, they laid fast hold of her and wished to insult her. But she said to them with mildness, "Wait, my children, that you may see the glory of the Lord." And when they took hold of her she looked up into heaven and said, "God, terrible and incomparable and glorious to your adversaries, who delivered me out of the fire, who did not give me up to Thamyris, who did not give me up to Alexander, who delivered me from the

wild beasts, who saved me in the abyss, who has everywhere worked with me and glorified your name in me, now also deliver me from these lawless men and let them not insult my virginity which for your name's sake I have preserved till now because I love you and desire you and adore you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost for ever. Amen." And there came a voice out of the heaven saying, "Fear not, Thecla, my true servant, for I am with you. Look and see where an opening has been made before you, for there shall be for you an everlasting house and there you shall obtain shelter." And looking around, the blessed Thecla saw the rock opened far enough to allow a person to enter, and in obedience to what had been said to her she courageously fled from the lawless men and entered into the rock; and the rock was immediately shut together so that not even a joint could be seen. And they, beholding the extraordinary wonder, became distracted, and they were not able to stop the servant of God but only caught hold of her dress and were able to tear off a certain part. All this happened by the permission of God for the faith of those seeing the venerable place and for a blessing in the generations afterwards to those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ out of a pure heart.

Thus, then, suffered the first martyr of God and apostle and virgin, Thecla, who came from Iconium when eighteen years of age. With her journeying and travels and the retirement in the mountain she lived seventy-two years more. And when the Lord took her she was ninety years old. And thus is her consummation. And her holy commemoration is celebrated on the twenty-fourth of the month of September, to the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, now and ever and to ages of ages. Amen.