

Forbidden Gospels and Epistles, v5

Archbishop Wake

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THE
SUPPRESSED
GOSPELS AND EPISTLES
OF THE ORIGINAL
NEW TESTAMENT
OF
JESUS THE CHRIST

AND OTHER PORTIONS OF THE ANCIENT HOLY SCRIPTURES.
NOW EXTANT, ATTRIBUTED TO

Forbidden Gospels and Epistles, v5

HIS APOSTLES, AND THEIR DISCIPLES,
AND VENERATED BY THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES DURING
THE FIRST FOUR CENTURIES,
CHURCHES DURING
THE FIRST FOUR CENTURIES,
BUT SINCE, AFTER VIOLENT DISPUTATIONS
FORBIDDEN BY THE
BISHOPS OF THE NICENE COUNCIL,
IN THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE
AND OMITTED FROM THE CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANT
EDITIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, BY ITS COMPILERS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL TONGUES, WITH HISTORICAL
REFERENCES TO THEIR AUTHENTICITY,
BY
ARCHBISHOP WAKE
AND OTHER
LEARNED DIVINES

THE EPISTLES OF JESUS CHRIST & ABGARUS KING OF EDESSA.

CHAPTER I.

A copy of a letter written by King Abgarus to Jesus;
and sent to him by Ananias, his footman, to Jerusalem,
5 inviting him to Edessa.

ABGARUS, king of Edessa, to Jesus the good Saviour, who appears at Jerusalem, greeting.

2 I have been informed concerning you and your cures, which are performed without the use of medicines and herbs.

3 For it is reported, that you cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, do both cleanse lepers, and cast out unclean spirits and devils, and restore them to health who have been long diseased; and raiseth up the dead;

4 All which when I heard, I was persuaded of one of these two, namely, either that you are God himself descended from heaven; who do these things, or the Son of God.

5 On this account therefore I have written to you, earnestly to desire you would take the trouble of a journey hither, and cure a disease which I am under.

6 For I hear the Jews ridicule you and, intend you mischief.

7 My city is indeed small, but neat, and large enough for us both.

CHAPTER II.

The answer of Jesus by Ananias the footman
to Abgarus the king,

3 declining to visit Edessa.

ABGARUS, you are happy, forasmuch as you have believed on me, whom you have not seen.

2 For it is written concerning me, that those who have seen me should not believe on me, that they who have not seen might believe and live.

3 As to that part of your letter, which relates to my giving you a visit, I must inform you, that I must fulfil all the ends of my mission in this country, and after that be received up again to him who sent me.

4 But after my ascension I will send one of my disciples, who will cure your disease, and give life to you, and all that are with you.

REFERENCES TO THE EPISTLES OF JESUS CHRIST AND ABGARUS KING OF EDESSA.

[The first writer who makes any mention of the Epistles that passed between Jesus Christ and Abgarus, is Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, in Palestine, who flourished in the early part of the fourth century. For their genuineness, he appeals to the public registers and records of the City of Edessa in Mesopotamia, where Abgarus reigned, and where he affirms that he found them written in the Syriac language. He published a Greek translation of them, in his Ecclesiastical History. The learned world has been much divided on this subject; but, notwithstanding the erudite Grabe, with Archbishop Cave, Dr, Parker, and other divines, have strenuously contended for their admission into the canon of Scripture, they are deemed apocryphal. The Rev. Jeremiah Jones observes, that the common people in England have this Epistle in their houses in many places, fixed in a frame, with the picture of Christ before it; and that they generally, with much honesty and devotion, regard it as the word of God, and the genuine Epistle of Christ.]

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE LAODICEANS.

1 He salutes the brethren;

3 exhorts them to persevere in good works,

4 and not to be moved by vain speaking.

6 Rejoices in his bonds,

10 desires them to live in the fear of the Lord.

PAUL an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, to the brethren which are at Laodicea.

2 Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank Christ in every prayer of mine, that ye may continue and persevere in good works, looking for that which is promised in the day of judgment.

4 Let not the vain speeches of any trouble you, who pervert the truth, that they may draw you aside from the truth of the Gospel which I have preached.

5 And now may God grant, that my converts may attain to a perfect knowledge of the truth of the Gospel, be beneficent, and doing good works which accompany salvation.

6 And now my bonds, which I suffer in Christ, are manifest, in which I rejoice and am glad. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation for ever, which shall be through your prayer, and the supply of the Holy Spirit.

8 Whether I live or die, to live shall be a life to Christ, to die will be joy.

9 And our Lord will grant us his mercy, that ye may have the same love, and be like-minded.

10 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have heard of the coming of the Lord, so think and act in fear, and it shall be

to you life eternal;

11 For it is God, who worketh in you:

12 And do all things without sin.

13 And what is best, my beloved rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ and avoid all filthy lucre.

14 Let all your requests be made known to God, and be steady in the doctrine of Christ.

15 And whatsoever things are sound and true, and of good reort, and chaste, and just, and lovely, these things do.

16 Those things which ye have heard, and received, think on these things, and peace shall be with you.

17 All the saints salute you.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

19 Cause this Epistle to be read to the Colossians, and the Epistle of the Colossians to be read among you.

REFERENCES TO THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
TO THE LAODICEANS.

[This Epistle has been highly esteemed by several learned men of the church of Rome and others. The Quakers have printed a translation, and plead for it, as the reader may see, by consulting Poole's Annotation on Col. vi. 16. Sixtus Senensis mentions two MSS., the one in the Sorbonne Library at Paris, which is a very ancient copy, and the other in the Library of Joannes a Viridario, at Padua, which he transcribed and published; and which is the authority for the following translation. There is a very old translation of this Epistle in the British Museum, among the Harleian MSS., Cod. 1212.]

THE EPISTLES OF
ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO SENECA, WITH
SENECA' S TO PAUL.

CHAPTER I.

ANNAEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

I SUPPOSE, Paul, you have been informed of that conversation, which passed yesterday between me and my Lucilius, concerning hypocrisy and other subjects; for there were some of your disciples in company with us;

2 For when we were retired into the Sallustian gardens, through which they were also passing, and would have gone another way, by our persuasion they joined company with us.

3 I desire you to believe, that we much wish for your conversation;

4 We were much delighted with your book of many Epistles, which you have written to some cities and chief towns of provinces, and contain wonderful instructions for moral conduct:

5 Such sentiments, as I suppose you were not the author of, but only the instrument of conveying, though sometimes both the author and the instrument,

6 For such is the sublimity of those, doctrines, and their grandeur, that I suppose the age of a man is scarce sufficient to be instructed and perfected in the knowledge of them. I wish your welfare, my brother. Farewell.

CHAPTER II.

PAUL to SENECA Greeting.

I RECEIVED your letter yesterday with pleasure, to which I could immediately have written an answer, had the young man been at home, whom I intended to have sent to you:

2 For you know when, and by whom, at what seasons, and to whom I must deliver everything which I send.

3 I desire therefore you would not charge me with negligence, if I wait for a proper person.

4 I reckon myself very happy in having the judgment of so valuable a person, that you are delighted with my Epistles:

5 For you would not be esteemed a censor, a philosopher, or be the tutor of so great a prince, and a master of everthing, if you were not sincere. I wish you a lasting prosperity.

CHAPTER III.

ANNAEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

I HAVE completed some volumes and divided them into their proper parts.

2 I am determined to read them to Caesar, and if any favourable opportunity happens, you also shall be present, when they are read;

3 But if that cannot be, I will appoint and give you notice of a day, when we will together read over the performance.

4 I had determined, if I could with safety, first to have your opinion of it, before I published it to Caesar, that you might be convinced of my affection to you. Farewell, dearest Paul.

CHAP. IV. PAUL to SENECA Greeting.

AS often as I read your letters, I imagine you present with me; nor indeed do I think any other, than that you are always with us.

2 As soon therefore as you begin to come, we shall presently see each other. I wish you all prosperity.

CHAPTER V.

ANNAEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

WE are very much concerned at your too long absence from us.

2 What is it, or what affairs are they, which obstructs your coming?

3 If you fear the anger of Caesar because you have abandoned your former religion, and made proselytes also of others, you have this to plead, that your acting thus proceeded not from inconstancy, but judgment. Farewell.

CHAPTER VI.

PAUL to SENECA and LUCILIUS Greeting.

CONCERNING those things, about which ye wrote to me, it is not proper for me to mention anything in writing with pen and ink: the one of which leaves marks, and the other evidently declares things.

2 Especially since I know that there are near you, as well as me, those who will understand my meaning.

3 Deference is to be paid to all men, and so much the more, as they are more likely to take occasions of quarrelling.

4 And if we show a submissive temper, we shall overcome effectually in all points, if so be they are, who are capable of seeing and acknowledging themselves to have been in the wrong. Farewell.

CHAPTER VII.

ANNAEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

I PROFESS myself extremely pleased with the reading your letters to the Galatians, Corinthians, and people of Achaia.

2 For the Holy Ghost has in them by you delivered those sentiments which are very lofty, sublime, deserving of all respect, and beyond your own invention.

3 I could wish therefore, that when you are writing things so extraordinary, there might not be wanting an elegancy of speech agreeable to their majesty.

4 And I must own, my brother, that I may not at once dishonestly conceal anything from you, and be unfaithful to my own conscience, that the emperor is extremely pleased with the sentiments of your Epistles;

5 For when he heard the beginning of them read, he declared, that he was surprised to find such notions in a person, who had not had a regular education.

6 To which I replied, That the Gods sometimes made use of mean (innocent) persons to speak by, and gave him an instance of this in a mean countryman named Vatienus, who, when he was in the country of Reate, had two men appeared to him, called Castor and Pollux, and received a revelation from the gods. Farewell.

CHAPTER VIII.

PAUL to SENECA Greeting.

ALTHOUGH I know the emperor is both an admirer and favourer of our religion, yet give me leave to advise you against your suffering any injury (by showing favour to us).

2 I think indeed you ventured upon a very dangerous attempt, when you would declare (to the emperor) that which is so very contrary to his religion, and way of worship; seeing he is a worshipper of the heathen gods.

3 I know not what you particularly had in view, when you told him of this; but I suppose you did it out of too great respect for me.

4 But I desire that for the future you would not do so; for you had need be careful, lest by showing your affection for me, you should offend your master:

5 His anger indeed will do us no harm, if he continue a heathen; nor will his not being angry be of any service to us:

6 And if the empress act worthy of her character, she will not be angry; but if she act as a woman, she will be affronted. Farewell.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

KNOW that my letter, wherein I acquainted you, that I had read to the Emperor your Epistles, does not so much affect you as the nature of the things (contained in them.)

2 Which do so powerfully divert men's minds from their former manners and practices, that I have always been surprised, and have been fully convinced of it by many arguments heretofore.

3 Let us therefore begin afresh; and if any thing heretofore has been imprudently acted, do you forgive.

4 I have sent you a book decopia verborum. Farewell, dearest Paul.

CHAPTER X.

PAUL to SENECA Greeting.

AS often as I write to you, and place my name before yours, I do a thing both disagreeable to myself, and contrary to our religion:

2 For I ought, as I have often declared, to become all things to all men, and to have that regard to your quality, which the Roman law has honoured all senators with; namely, to put my name last in the (inscription of the) Epistle, that I may not at length with uneasiness and shame be obliged to do that which it was always my inclination to do. Farewell, most respected master. Dated the fifth of the calends of July, in the fourth Consulship of Nero, and Messala.

CHAPTER XI.

ANNAEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

ALL happiness to you, my dearest Paul.

2 If a person so great, and every way agreeable as you are, become not only a common, but a most intimate friend to me, how happy will be the case of Seneca!

3 You therefore, who are so eminent, and so far exalted above all, even the greatest, do not think yourself unfit to be first named in the inscription of an Epistle;

4 Lest I should suspect you intend not so much to try me, as to banter me; for you know yourself to be a Roman citizen.

5 And I could wish to be in that circumstance or station which you are, and that you were in the same that I am. Farewell, dearest Paul. Dated the tenth of the calends of April, in the Consulship of Aprianus and Capito.

CHAPTER XII.

ANNAEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

ALL happiness to you, my dearest Paul. Do you not suppose I am extremely concerned and grieved that your innocence should bring you into sufferings?

2 And that all the people should suppose you (Christians) so criminal, and imagine all the misfortunes that happen to the city, to be caused by you?

3 But let us bear the charge with a patient temper, appealing for our innocence to the court above, which is the only one our hard fortune will allow us to address to, till at length our misfortunes shall end in unalterable happiness.

4 Former ages have produced (tyrants) Alexander the son of Philip, and Dionysius; ours also has produced Caius Caesar; whose inclinations were their only laws.

5 As to the frequent burnings of the city of Rome, the cause is manifest; and if a person in my mean circumstances might be allowed to speak, and one might declare these dark things without danger, every one should see the whole of the matter.

6 The Christians and Jews are indeed commonly punished for the crime of burning the city; but that impious miscreant, who delights in murders and butcheries, and disguises his villainies with lies, is appointed to, or reserved till, his proper time.

7 And as the life of every excellent person is now sacrificed instead of that one person (who is the author of the mischief), so this one shall be sacrificed for many, and he shall be devoted to be burnt with fire instead of all.

8 One hundred and thirty-two houses, and four whole squares (or islands) were burnt down in six days: the seventh put an end to the burning. I wish you all happiness.

9 Dated the fifth of the calends of April, in the Consulship of Frigius and Bassus.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANNAEUS SENECA to PAUL Greeting.

ALL happiness to you, my dearest Paul.

2 You have written many volumes in an allegorical and mystical style, and therefore such mighty matters and business being committed to you, require not to be set off with any rhetorical flourishes of speech, but only with some proper elegance.

3 I remember you often said, that many by affecting such a style do injury to their subjects, and lose the force of the matters they treat of.

4 But in this I desire you to regard me, namely, to have respect to true Latin, and to choose just words, that so you may the better manage the noble trust which is reposed in you.

5 Farewell. Dated the fifth of the nones of July, Leo and Savinus Consuls.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL to SENECA Greeting.

YOUR serious consideration is requited with those discoveries, which the Divine Being has granted but to few;

2 I am thereby assured that I sow the most strong seed in a fertile soil, not anything material, which is subject to corruption, but the durable word of God, which shall increase and bring forth fruit to eternity.

3 That which by your wisdom you have attained to, shall abide without decay for ever.

4 Believe that you ought to avoid the superstitions of Jews and Gentiles.

5 The things which you have in some measure arrived to, prudently make known to the emperor, his family, and to faithful friends;

6 And though your sentiments will seem disagreeable, and not be comprehended by them, seeing most of them will not regard your discourses, yet the Word of God once infused into them, will at length make them become new men, aspiring towards God.

7 Farewell Seneca, who art most dear to us. Dated on the calends of August, in the Consulship of Leo and Savinus.

REFERENCES TO THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO SENECA, WITH SENECA'S TO PAUL.

[Several very learned writers have entertained a favourable opinion of these Epistles. They are undoubtedly of high antiquity. Salmeron cites them to prove that Seneca was one of Caesar's household, referred to by Paul, Philip iv. 22, as saluting the brethren at Philippi. In Jerome's enumeration of illustrious men, he places Seneca, on account of these Epistles, amongst the ecclesiastical and holy writers of the Christian Church. Sixtus Senensis has published them in his Bibliothecque, p 89, 90; and it is from thence that the present translation is made. Baronius, Bellarmine, Dr. Cave, Spanheim, and others, contend that they are not genuine.]

THE ACTS OF ST. PAUL AND THECLA.

The martyrdom of the holy and glorious
first Martyr and Apostle Thecla.

CHAPTER I.

1 Demas and Hermogenes become Paul's companions.

4 Paul visits Onesiphorus.

8 Invited by Demos and Hermogenes.

11 Preaches to the household of Onesiphorus.

12 His sermon.

WHEN Paul went up to Iconium, after his flight from Antioch, Demas and Hermogenes became his companions, who were then full of hypocrisy.

2 But Paul looking only at the goodness of God, did them no harm, but loved them greatly.

3 Accordingly he endeavoured to make agreeable to them all the oracles and doctrines of Christ, and the design of the Gospel of God's well-beloved son; instructing them in the knowledge of Christ, as it was revealed to him.

4 And a certain man named Onesiphorus, hearing that Paul was come to Iconium, went out speedily to meet him, together with his wife Lectra, and his sons Simmia and Zeno, to invite him to their house.

5 For Titus had given them a description of Paul's personage, they as yet not knowing him in person, but only being acquainted with his character.

6 They went in the king's highway to Lystra, and stood there waiting for him, comparing all who passed by with that description which Titus had given them.

7 At length they saw a man coming (namely Paul), of a low stature, bald on the head; with crooked thighs, handsome legs, hollow-eyes; and a crooked nose; full of grace, for sometimes he appeared as a man, sometimes he had the countenance of an angel. And Paul saw Onesiphorus, and was glad.

8 And Onesiphorus said: Hail, thou servant of the blessed God. Paul replied, The grace of God be with thee and thy family.

9 But Denies and Hermogenes were moved with envy, and, under a show of great religion, Demas said, And are not we also servants of the blessed God? Why didst thou not salute us?

10 Onesiphorus replied, Because I have not perceived in you the fruits of righteousness; nevertheless, if ye are of that sort, ye shall be welcome to my house also.

11 Then Paul went into the house of Onesiphorus, and there was great joy among the family on that account: and they employed themselves in prayer, breaking of bread, and hearing Paul preach the word of God concerning temperance and the resurrection, in the following manner:

12 Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

13 Blessed are they who keep their flesh undefiled (or pure); for they shall be the temple of God.

14 Blessed are the temperate (or chaste); for God will reveal himself to them.

15 Blessed are they who abandon their worldly enjoyments; for they shall be accepted of God.

16 Blessed are they who have wives, as though they had them not; for they shall be made angels of God.

17 Blessed are they who tremble at the word of God; for they shall be comforted.

18 Blessed are they who keep their baptism pure; for they shall find peace with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

19 Blessed are they who pursue the wisdom or doctrine of Jesus Christ; for they shall be called the sons of the Most High.

20 Blessed are they who observe the instructions of Jesus Christ; for they shall dwell in eternal light.

21 Blessed are they, who for the love of Christ abandon the glories of the world, for they shall judge angels, and be placed at the right hand of Christ, and shall not suffer the bitterness of the last judgment.

22 Blessed are the bodies and souls of virgins; for they are acceptable to God, and shall not lose the reward of their virginity; for the word of their (heavenly) Father shall prove effectual to their salvation in the day of his Son, and they shall enjoy rest for evermore.

CHAPTER II.

1 Thecla listens anxiously to Paul's preaching.

5 Thamyris, her admirer, concerts with Theoclia
her mother to dissuade her,
12 in vain.

14 Demas and Hermogenes vilify Paul to Thamyris.

WHILE Paul was preaching this sermon in the church which was in the house of Onesiphorus, a certain virgin named Thecla (whose mother's name was Theoclia, and who was betrothed to a man named Thamyris) sat at a certain window in her house.

2 From whence, by the advantage of a window in the house where Paul was, she both night and day heard Paul's sermons concerning God, concerning charity, concerning faith in Christ, and concerning prayer;

3 Nor would she depart from the window, till with exceeding joy she was subdued to the doctrines of faith.

4 At length, when she saw many women and virgins going into Paul, she earnestly desired that she might be thought worthy to appear in his presence, and hear the word of Christ; for she had not yet seen Paul's person, but only heard his sermons, and that alone.

5 But when she would not be prevailed upon to depart from the window, her mother sent to Thamyris, who came with the greatest pleasure, as hoping now, to marry her. Accordingly he said to Theoclia, Where is my Thecla?

6 Theoclia replied, Thamyris, I have something very strange to tell you; for Thecla, for the space of three days, will not move from the window, not so much as to eat or drink, but is so intent in hearing the artful and delusive discourses of a certain foreigner, that I perfectly wonder Thamyris, that a young woman of her known modesty, will suffer herself to be so prevailed upon.

7 For that man has disturbed the whole city of Iconium, and even your Thecla, among others. All the women and young men flock to him to receive his doctrine; who, besides all the rest, tells them that there is but one God, who alone is to be worshipped, and that we ought to live in chastity.

8 Notwithstanding this, my daughter Thecla, like a spider's web fastened to the window, is captivated, by the discourses of Paul, and attends upon them with prodigious eagerness, and vast delight; and thus, by attending on what he says, the young woman is seduced. Now then do you go, and speak to her, for she is betrothed to you.

9 Accordingly Thamyris went, and having saluted her, and taking care not to surprise her, he said, Thecla, my spouse, why sittest thou in this melancholy posture? What strange impressions are made upon thee? Turn to Thamyris, and blush.

10 Her mother also spake to her after the same manner, and said, Child, why dost thou sit so melancholy, and, like one astonished, makest no reply?

11 Then they wept exceedingly, Thamyris, that he had lost his spouse; Theoclia, that she had lost her daughter; and the maids, that they had lost their mistress; and there was an universal mourning in the family.

12 But all these things made no impression upon Thecla, so as to incline her so much as to turn to them, and take notice of them; for she still regarded the discourses of Paul.

13 Then Thamyris ran forth into the street to observe who they were that went in to Paul, and came out from him; and he saw two men engaged in a very warm dispute, and said to them;

14 Sirs, what business have you here? and who is that man within, belonging to you, who deludes the minds of men, both young men and virgins, persuading them, that they ought not to marry, but continue as they are?

15 I promise to give you a considerable sum, if ye will give me a just account of him; for I am the chief person of this city.

16 Demas and Hermogenes replied, We cannot so exactly tell who he is; but this we know, that he deprives young men of their (intended) wives, and virgins of their (intended) husbands, by teaching, There can be no future resurrection, unless ye continue in chastity, and do not defile your flesh.

CHAPTER III.

1 They betray Paul. 7 Thamyris arrests him with officers.

THEN said Thamyris, Come along with me to my house, and refresh yourselves. So they went to a very splendid entertainment, where there was wine in abundance, and very rich provision.

2 They were brought to a table richly spread, and made to drink plentifully by Thamyris, on account of the love he had for Thecla and his desire to marry her.

3 Then Thamyris said, I desire ye would inform me what the doctrines of this Paul are, that I may understand them; for I am under no small concern about Thecla, seeing she so delights in that stranger's discourses, that I am in danger of losing my intended wife.

4 Then Demas and Hermogenes answered both together, and said, Let him be brought before the governor Castellius, as one who endeavours to persuade the people into the new religion of the Christians, and he, according to the order of Caesar, will put him to death, by which means you will obtain your wife;

5 While we at the same time will teach her, that the resurrection which he speaks of is already come, and consists in our having children; and that we then arose again, when we came to the knowledge of God.

6 Thamyris having this account from them, was filled with hot resentment:

7 And rising early in the morning he went to the house of Onesiphorus, attended by the magistrates, the Jailor, and a great multitude of people with staves, and said to Paul;

8 Thou hast perverted the city of Iconium, and among the rest, Thecla, who is betrothed to me, so that now she will not marry me. Thou shalt therefore go with us to the governor Castellius.

9 And all the multitude cried out, Away with this imposter, for he has perverted the minds of our wives, and all the people hearken to him.

CHAPTER IV.

1 Paul accused before the governor by Thamyris.

5 Defends himself.

9 Is committed to prison,

10 and visited by Thecla.

THEN Thamyris standing before the governor's judgment-seat, spake with a loud voice in the following manner.

2 O governor, I know not whence this man cometh; but he is one who teaches that matrimony is unlawful. Command him therefore to declare before you for what reason he publishes such doctrines.

3 While he was saying thus, Demas and Hermogenes (whispered to Thamyris, and) said; Say that he is a Christian, and he will presently be put to death.

4 But the governor was more deliberate, and calling to Paul, he said, Who art thou? What dost thou teach? They seem to lay gross crimes to thy charge.

5 Paul then spake with a loud voice, saying, As I am now called to give an account, O governor, of my doctrines, I desire your audience.

6 That God, who is a God of vengeance, and who strands in need of nothing but the salvation of his creatures, has sent me to reclaim them from their wickedness, and corruptions; from all (sinful) pleasures, and from death; and to persuade them to sin no more.

7 On this account, God sent his Son Jesus Christ, whom I preach, and in whom I instruct men to place their hopes, as that person who only had such compassion on the deluded world, that it might not, O governor, be condemned, but have faith, the fear of God, the knowlege of religion, and the love of truth.

8 So that if I only teach those things which I have received by revelation from God, where is my crime?

9 When the governor heard this, he ordered Paul to be bound, and to be put in prison, till he should be more at leisure to hear him more fully.

10 But in the night, Thecla taking off her ear-rings, gave them to the turnkey of the prison, who then opened the door to her, and let her in;

11 And when she made a present of a silver looking-glass to the jailor, was allowed to go into the room where Paul was; then she set down at his feet, and heard from him the great things of God.

12 And as she perceived Paul not to be afraid of suffering, but that by divine assistance he behaved himself with courage, her faith so far increased that she kissed his chains.

CHAPTER V.

1 Thecla sought and found by her relations. 4 Brought with Paul before the governor. 9 Ordered to be burnt, and Paul to be whipt. 15 Thecla miraculously saved.

AT length Thecla was missed and sought for by the family and by Thamyris in every street, as though she had been lost; till one of the porter's fellow-servants told them, that she had gone out in the night-time.

2 Then they examined the porter, and he told them, that she was gone to the prison to the strange man.

3 They went therefore according to his direction, and there found her; and when they came out, they got a mob together, and went and told the governor all that had happened.

4 Upon which he ordered Paul to be brought before his judgment seat.

5 Thecla in the mean time lay wallowing on the ground in the prison, in that same place where Paul had sat to teach her; upon which the governor also ordered her to be brought before his judgment-seat; which summons she received with joy, and went.

6 When Paul was brought thither, the mob with more vehemence cried out, He is a magician, let him die.

7 Nevertheless the governor attended with pleasure upon Paul's discourses of the holy works of Christ; and, after a council called, he summoned Thecla, and said to her, Why do you not, according to the law of the Iconians, marry Thamyris?

8 She stood still, with her eyes fixed upon Paul; and finding she made no reply, Theoclia, her mother cried out saying, Let the unjust creature be burnt; let her be burnt in the midst of the theatre, for refusing Thamyris, that all women may learn from her to avoid such practices.

9 Then the governor was exceedingly concerned, and ordered Paul to be whipt out of the city, and Thecla to be burnt.

10 So the governor arose, and went immediately into the theatre; and all the people went forth to see the dismal sight.

11 But Thecla, just as a lamb in the wilderness looks every way to see his shepherd, looked around for Paul;

12 And as she was looking upon the multitude, she saw the Lord Jesus in the likeness of Paul, and said to herself, Paul is come to see me in my distressed circumstances. And she fixed her eyes upon him; but he instantly ascended up to heaven, while she looked on him.

13 Then the young men and women brought wood and straw for the burning of Thecla; who being brought naked to the stake, extorted tears from the governor, with surprise beholding the greatness of her beauty.

14 And when they had placed the wood in order, the people commanded her to go upon it; which she did, first making the sign of the cross.

15 Then the people set fire to the pile; though the flame was exceeding large, it did not touch her; for God took compassion on her, and caused a great eruption from the earth beneath, and a cloud from above to pour down great quantities of rain and hail;

16 Insomuch that by the rupture of the earth, very many were in great danger, and some were killed, the fire was extinguished, and Thecla preserved.

CHAPTER VI.

1 Paul with Onesiphorus in a cave. 7 Thecla discovers Paul; 12 proffers to follow him: 13 he exhorts her not for fear of fornication.

IN the mean time Paul, together with Onesiphorus, his wife and children, was keeping a fast in a certain cave, which was in the road from Iconium to Daphne.

2 And when they had fasted for several days, the children said to Paul, Father, we are hungry, and have not wherewithal to buy bread; for Onesiphorus had left all his substance to follow Paul with his family.

3 Then Paul, taking off his coat, said to the boy, Go, child, and buy bread, and bring it hither.

4 But while the boy was buying the bread, he saw his neighbour Thecla, and was surprised, and said to her, Thecla, where are you going?

5 She replied, I am in pursuit of Paul, having been delivered from the flames.

6 The boy then said, I will bring you to him, for he is under great concern on your account, and has been in prayer and fasting these six days.

7 When Thecla came to the cave, she found Paul upon his knees praying and saying, O holy Father, O Lord Jesus Christ, grant that the fire may not touch Thecla; but be her helper, for she is thy servant.

8 Thecla then standing behind him, cried out in the following words: O sovereign Lord Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of thy beloved and holy Son, I praise thee that thou hast preserved me from the fire, to see Paul again.

9 Paul then arose, and when he saw her, said, O God, who searchest the heart, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, I praise thee that thou hast answered my prayer.

10 And there prevailed among them in the cave an entire affection to each other; Paul, Onesiphorus, and all that were with them being filled with joy.

11 They had five loaves, some herbs and water, and they solaced each other in reflections upon the holy works of Christ.

12 Then said Thecla to Paul, If you be pleased with it, I will follow you whithersoever you go.

13 He replied to her, Persons are now much given to fornication, and you being handsome, I am afraid lest you should meet with greater temptation than the former, and should Not withstand, but be overcome by it.

14 Thecla replied, Grant me only the seal of Christ, and no temptation shall affect me.

15 Paul answered, Thecla, wait with patience, and you shall receive the gift of Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

1 Paul and Thecla go to Antioch.

2 Alexander, a magistrate, falls in love with Thecla:

4 kisses her by force:

5 she resists him:

6 is carried before the governor, and condemned
to be thrown to wild beasts.

THEN Paul sent back Onesiphorus and his family to their own home, and taking Thecla along with him, went for Antioch;

2 And as soon as they came in. to the city, a certain Syrian, named Alexander, a magistrate in the city, who had done many considerable services for the city during his magistracy, saw Thecla, and fell in love with her, and endeavoured by many rich presents to engage Paul in his interest.

3 But Paul told him, I know not the woman of whom you speak, nor does she belong to me.

4 But he being a person of great power in, Antioch, seized her in the street and kissed her: which Thecla would not bear, but looking about for Paul, cried out in a distressed loud tone, Force me not, who am a stranger; force me not, who am a servant of God; I am one of the principal persons of Iconium, and was obliged to leave that city because I would not be married to Thamyris.

5 Then she laid hold on Alexander, tore his coat, and took his crown off his head, and made him appear ridiculous before all the people.

6 But Alexander, partly as he loved her, and partly being ashamed of what had been done, led her to the governor, and upon her confession of what she had done, he condemned her to be thrown among the beasts.

CHAPTER VIII.

2 Thecla entertained by Trifina;
3 brought out to the wild beasts;
a she-lion licks her feet.
5 Trifina upon a vision of her deceased
daughter, adopts Thecla,
11 who is taken to the amphitheatre again.

WHICH when the people saw, they said: The judgments passed in this city are unjust. But Thecla desired the favour of the governor, that her chastity might not be attacked, but preserved till she should be cast to the beasts.

2 The governor then inquired, Who would entertain her; upon which a certain very rich widow, named Trifina, whose daughter was lately dead, desired that she might have the keeping of her; and she began to treat her in her house as her own daughter.

3 At length a day came, when the beasts were to be brought forth to be seen; and Thecla was brought to the amphitheatre, and put into a den in which was an exceeding fierce she-lion, in the presence of a multitude of spectators.

4 Trifina; without any surprise, accompanied Thecla, and the she-lion licked the feet of Thecla. The title written which denoted her crime, was Sacrilege. Then the women cried out, O God, the judgments of this city are unrighteous.

5 After the beasts had been shown, Trifina took Thecla home with her, and they went to bed; and behold, the daughter of Trifina, who was dead, appeared to her mother, and said; Mother, let the young woman, Thecla, be reputed by you as your daughter in my stead; and desire her that she should pray for me, that I may be translated to a state of happiness.

6 Upon which Trifina, with a mournful air, said, My daughter Falconilla has appeared to me, and ordered me to receive you in her room; wherefore I desire, Thecla, that you would pray for my daughter, that she may be translated into a state of happiness, and to life eternal.

7 When Thecla heard this, she immediately prayed to the Lord, and said: O Lord God of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, thou Son of the Most High, grant that her daughter Falconilla may live forever. Trifina hearing this, groaned again, and said: O unrighteous judgments! O unreasonable wickedness! that such a creature should (again) be cast to the beasts!

8 On the morrow, at break of day, Alexander came to Trifina's house, and said: The governor and the people are waiting; bring the criminal forth.

9 But Trifina ran in so violently upon him, that he was affrighted, and ran away. Trifina was one of the royal family; and she thus expressed her sorrow, and said; Alas! I have trouble in my house on two accounts, and there is no one who will relieve me, either under the loss of my daughter, or my being unable to save Thecla. But now, O Lord God, be thou the helper of Thecla thy servant.

10 While she was thus engaged. the governor sent one of his own officers to bring Thecla. Trifina took her by the hand, and, going with her, said: I went with Falconilla to her grave, and now must go with Thecla to the beasts.

11 When Thecla heard this, she weeping prayed, and said: O Lord God, whom I have made my confidence and refuge, reward Trifina for her compassion to me, and preserving my chastity.

12 Upon this there was a great noise in the amphitheatre; the beasts roared, and the people cried out, Bring in the criminal.

13 But the women cried out, and said: Let the whole city suffer for such crimes; and order all of us, O governor, to the same punishment. O unjust judgment! O cruel sight!

14 Others said, Let the whole city be destroyed for this vile action. Kill us all, O governor. O cruel sight! O unrighteous judgment.

CHAPTER IX.

1 Thecla thrown naked to the wild beasts;

2 but they all refuse to attack her.

8 She baptizes herself in a pit of water.

10 Other wild beasts refuse to injure her.

11 Tied to wild bulls.

13 Miraculously saved.

21. Released.

24 Entertained by Trifina,

THEN Thecla was taken out of the hand of Trifina, stripped naked, had a girdle put on, and thrown into the place appointed for fighting with the beasts: and the lions and the bears were let loose upon her.

2 But a she-lion, which was of all the most fierce, ran to Thecla, and fell down at her feet. Upon which the multitude of women shouted aloud.

3 Then a she-bear ran fiercely towards her, but the she lion met the bear, and tore it in pieces.

4 Again a he-lion, who had been wont to devour men, and which belonged to Alexander, ran towards her; but the she-lion encountered the he-lion, and they killed each other.

5 Then the women were under a greater concern, because the she-lion, which had helped Thecla, was dead.

6 Afterwards they brought out many other wild beasts; but Thecla stood with her hands stretched towards heaven, and prayed; and when she had done praying, she turned about, and saw a pit of water, and said, Now it is a proper time for me to be baptized.

7 Accordingly she threw herself into the water, and said, In thy name, O my Lord Jesus Christ, I am this last day baptized. The women and the people seeing this, cried out and said, Do not throw yourself into the water. And the governor himself cried out, to think that the fish (sea-calves) were like to devour so much beauty.

8 Notwithstanding all this, Thecla threw herself into the water, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But the fish (sea-calves) when they saw the lightning and fire, were killed, and swam dead upon the surface of the water, and a cloud of fire surrounded Thecla; so that as the beasts could not come near her, so the people could not see her nakedness.

10 Yet they turned other wild beasts upon her; upon which they made a very mournful outcry; and some of them scattered spikenard, others cassia, others amomus (a sort of spikenard, or the herb of Jerusalem, or ladies rose), others ointment; so that the quantity of ointment was large, in proportion to the number of people; and upon this all the beasts lay as though they had been fast asleep, and did not touch Thecla.

11 Whereupon Alexander said to the governor, I have some very terrible bulls; let us bind her to them. To which the governor, with concern, replied, You may do what you think fit.

12 Then they put a cord round Thecla's waist, which bound also her feet, and with it tied her to the bulls, to whose privy-parts they applied red-hot irons, that so they being the more tormented, might more violently drag Thecla about, till they had killed her.

13 The bulls accordingly tore about, making a most hideous noise; but the flame which was about Thecla, burnt off the cords which were fastened to the members of the bulls, and she stood in the middle of the stage, as unconcerned as if she had not been bound.

14 But in the mean time Trifina, who sat upon one of the benches, fainted away and died; upon which the whole city was under a very great concern.

15 And Alexander himself was afraid, and desired the governor, saying: I entreat you, take compassion on me and the city, and release this woman, who has fought with the beasts; lest both you and I, and the whole city, be destroyed;

16 For if Caesar should have any account of what has passed now, he will certainly immediately destroy the city, because Trifina, a person of royal extract, and a relation of his, is dead upon her seat.

17 Upon this the governor called Thecla from among the beasts to him, and said to her, Who art thou? and what are thy circumstances, that not one of the beasts will touch thee?

Forbidden Gospels and Epistles, v5

18 Thecla replied to him; I am a servant of the living God; and as to my state, I am a believer on Jesus Christ his Son, in whom God is well pleased; and for that reason none of the beasts could touch me.

19 He alone is the way to eternal salvation, and the foundation of eternal life. He is a refuge to those who are in distress; a support to the afflicted, hope and defence to those who are hopeless; and in a word, all those who do not believe on him, shall not live, but suffer eternal death.

20 When the governor heard these things, he ordered her clothes to be brought, and said to her, Put on your clothes.

21 Thecla replied: May that God who clothed me when I was naked among the beasts, in the day of judgment clothe your soul with the robe of salvation. Then she took her clothes, and put them on; and the governor immediately published an order in these words: I release to you Thecla the servant of God.

22 Upon which the women cried out together with a loud voice, and with one accord gave praise unto God, and said; There is but one God, who is the God of Thecla; the one God who hath delivered Thecla.

23 So loud were their voices, that the whole city seemed to be shaken; and Trifina herself heard the glad tidings, and arose again, and ran with the multitude to meet Thecla; and embracing her, said: Now I believe there shall be a resurrection of the dead; now I am persuaded that my daughter is alive. Come therefore home with me, my daughter Thecla, and I will make all over that I have to you.

24 So Thecla went with Trifina, and was entertained there a few days, teaching her the word of the Lord, whereby many young women were converted; and there was great joy in the family of Trifina.

25 But Thecla longed to see Paul, and inquired and sent every where to find him; and when at length she was informed that he was at Myra, in Lycia, she took with her many young men and women; and putting on a girdle, and dressing herself in the habit of a man, she went to him to Myra in Lycia, and there found Paul preaching the word of God; and she stood by him among the throng.

CHAPTER X.

1 Thecla visits Paul;
6 visits Onesiphorus;
8 and visits her Mother
9 who repulses her.
14 Is tempted by the devil.
16 Works miracles.

BUT it was no small surprise to Paul when he saw her and the people with her; for he imagined some fresh trial was coming upon them;

2 Which when Thecla perceived, she said to him: I have been baptized, O Paul; for he who assists you in preaching, has assisted me to baptize.

3 Then Paul took her, and led her to the house of Hermes; and Thecla related to Paul all that had befallen her in Antioch, insomuch that Paul exceedingly wondered, and all who heard were confirmed in the faith, and prayed for Trifina's happiness.

4 Then Thecla arose, and said to Paul, I am going to Iconium. Paul replied to her: Go and teach the word of the Lord.

5 But Trifina had sent large sums of money to Paul, and also clothing by the hands of Thecla, for the relief of the poor.

6 So Thecla went to Iconium. And when she came to the house of Onesiphorus, she fell down upon the floor where Paul had sat and preached, and, mixing tears with her prayers, she praised and glorified God in the following words:

7 O Lord the God of this house, in which I was first enlightened by thee; O Jesus, son of the living God, who wast my helper before the governor, my helper in the fire, and my helper among the beasts; thou alone art God for ever and ever, Amen.

8 Thecla now (on her return) found Thamyris dead, but her mother living. So calling her mother, she said to her: Theoclia, my mother, is it possible for you to be brought to a belief, that there is but one Lord God, who dwells in the heavens? If you desire great riches, God will give them to you by me; if you want your daughter again, here I am.

9 These and many other things she represented to her mother, (endeavouring) to persuade her (to her own opinion). But her mother Theoclia gave no credit to the things which were said by the martyr Thecla.

10 So that Thecla perceiving, she discoursed to no purpose, signing her whole body with the sign (of the cross), left the house and went to Daphne; and when she came there, she went to the cave, where she had found Paul with Onesiphorus, and fell down upon the ground; and wept before God.

11 When she departed thence, she went to Seleucia, and enlightened many in the knowledge of Christ.

12 And a bright cloud conducted her in her journey.

13 And after she had arrived at Seleucia she went—to a place out of the city, about the distance of a furlong, being afraid of the inhabitants, because they were worshippers of idols.

14 And she was lead (by the cloud) into a mountain called Calamon, or Rodeon. There she abode many years, and underwent a great many grievous temptations of the devil, which she bore in a becoming manner, by the assistance which she had from Christ.

15 At length certain gentle—women hearing of the virgin Thecla, went to her, and were instructed by her in the oracles of God, and many of them abandoned this world, and led a monastic life with her.

16 Hereby a good report was spread everywhere of Thecla, and she wrought several (miraculous) cures, so that all the city and adjacent countries brought their sick to that mountain, and before they came as far as the door of the cave, they were instantly cured of whatso'ever distemper they had.

17 The unclean spirits were cast out, making a noise; all received their sick made whole, and glorified God, who had bestowed such power on the virgin Thecla;

18 Insomuch that the physicians of Seleucia were now of no more account, and lost all the profit of their trade,

because no one regarded them; upon which they were filled with envy, and began to contrive what methods to take with this servant of Christ.

CHAPTER XI.

1 Thecla is attempted to be ravished,
12 escapes by a rock opening,
17 and closing miraculously.

THE devil then suggested bad advice to their minds; and being on a certain day met together to consult, they reasoned among each other thus: The virgin is a priestess of the great goddess Diana, and whatsoever she requests from her, is granted, because she is a virgin, and so is beloved by all the gods.

2 Now then let us procure some rakish fellows, and after we have made them sufficiently drunk, and given them a good sum of money, let us order them to go and debauch this virgin, promising them, if they do it, a larger reward.

3 (For they thus concluded among themselves, that if they be able to debauch her, the gods will no more regard her nor Diana cure the sick for her).

4 They proceeded according to this resolution, and the fellows went to the mountain, and as fierce as lions to the cave, knocking at the door.

5 The holy martyr Thecla relying upon the God in whom she believed, opened the door, although she was before apprised of their design, and said to them, Young men, what is your business?

6 They replied, Is there any one within, whose name is Thecla? She answered, What would you have with her? They said, We have a mind to lie with her.

7 The blessed Thecla answered, Though I am a mean old woman, I am the servant of my Lord Jesus Christ; and though you have a vile design against me, ye shall not be able to accomplish it. They replied, Is it impossible? but we must be able to do with you what we have a mind,

8 And while they were saying this, they laid hold on her by main force, and would have ravished her. Then she with the (greatest) mildness said to them: Young men have patience, and see the glory of the Lord.

9 And while they held her, she looked up to heaven and said: O God most reverend, to whom none can be likened; who makest thyself glorious over thine enemies; who didst deliver me from the fire, didst not give me up to Thamyris, and didst not give me up to Alexander: who deliveredst me from the wild beasts; who didst preserve me in the deep waters; who hast everywhere been my helper, and hast glorified thy name in me;

10 Now also deliver me from the hands of these wicked and unreasonable men nor suffer them to debauch my chastity which I have hitherto preserved for thy honour; for I love thee, and long for thee, and worship thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for evermore. Amen.

11 Then came a voice from heaven, saying, Fear not Thecla, my faithful servant, for I am with thee. Look and see the place which is opened for thee; there thy eternal abode shall be; there thou shalt receive the (beatific) vision.

12 The blessed Thecla observing, saw the rock opened to as large a degree as that a man might enter in; she did as she was commanded, bravely fled from the vile crew, and went into the rock, which instantly so closed, that there was not any crack visible where it had opened.

13 The men stood perfectly astonished at so prodigious a miracle, and had no power to detain the servant of God; but only catching hold of her veil (or hood), they tore off a piece of it;

14 And even that was by the permission of God, for the confirmation of their faith, who should come to see this venerable place; and to convey blessings to those in succeeding ages, who should believe on our Lord Jesus Christ from a pure heart.

15 Thus suffered that first martyr and apostle of God, and virgin, Thecla, who came from Iconium at eighteen years of age; afterwards, partly in journeys and travels, and partly in a monastic life in the cave, she lived seventy– two years; so that she was ninety years old when the Lord translated her.

16 Thus ends her life.

17 The day which is kept sacred to her memory, is the twenty–fourth of September, to the glory of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, now and for evermore. Amen.

REFERENCES TO THE ACTS OF ST. PAUL AND THECLA.

[Tertullian says that this piece was forged by a Presbyter of Asia, who being convicted, “confessed that he did it out of respect to Paul,” and Pope Gelasius, in his Decree against apocryphal books, inserted it among them. Notwithstanding this, a large part of the history was credited and looked upon as genuine among the primitive Christians. Cyprian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Austin, Gregory, Nagianzen. Chrysostom, and Severus Sulpitius, who all lived within the fourth century mention Thecla or refer to her history. Basil of Seleucia wrote her acts, sufferings and victories, in verse; and Euagrius Scholasticus an ecclesiastical historian, about 590, relates that “after the Emperor Zeno, had abdicated his empire, and Basilik had taken possession of it, he had a vision of the holy and excellent martyr Thecla, who promised him the restoration of his empire; for which, when it was brought about, he erected and dedicated a most noble and sumptuous temple to this famous martyr, Thecla, at Seleucia, a city of Isauria, and bestowed upon it very noble endowments, which (says the author) are preserved even till this day.” Hist. Ecel. lib. 3 cap. 8.—Cardinal Barenius, Locrinus, Archbishop Wake, and others; and also the learned Grabe, who edited the Septuagint, and revived the Acts of Paul and Thecla, consider them as having been written in the Apostolic age; as containing nothing superstitious, or disagreeing from the opinions and belief of those times; and, in short, as a genuine and authentic history. Again, it is said, that this is not the original book of the early Christians; but however that may be, it is published from the Greek MS. in the Bodlian Library at Oxford, which Dr. Mills copied and transmitted to Dr, Grabe.]