

A WOMAN ABANDONED BY HER APOSTLE: THECLA’S UNIQUENESS AMONG THE APOCRYPHAL ACTS OF THE APOSTLES*

Elif Hilal KARAMAN**

Article Information

Article Types: Research Article, **Received:** 30 June 2021, **Accepted:** 29 September 2021, **Published:** 30 September 2021, **Cite as:** Karaman, Elif Hilal. “A Woman Abandoned By Her Apostle: Thecla’s Uniqueness Among The Apocryphal Acts Of The Apostles”. *Journal of Academic Research in Religious Sciences* 21/2 (September 2021): 963-986.

<https://doi.org/10.33415/daad.960012>

Makale Bilgisi

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi, **Geliş Tarihi:** 30 Haziran 2021, **Kabul Tarihi:** 29 Eylül 2021, **Yayın Tarihi:** 30 Eylül 2021, **Atf:** Karaman, Elif Hilal. “Elçisinin Terkettiği Kadın: Apokrif Elçilerin İşleri Arasında Thekla’nın Eşsiz Konumu”. *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 21/2 (Eylül 2021): 963-986.

<https://doi.org/10.33415/daad.960012>



Abstract

Thecla appears in the apocryphal Acts of Paul. Like many other women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, her story involves an apostle, Christian conversion, turmoil, and heroism. While the Acts of Paul and Thecla shares all these elements with other Apocryphal Acts, Thecla’s story has an unquestionable reputation and fame that others do not. Thecla attracted much more attention than

* This article is a revised version of my Masters dissertation “The Distinctiveness of the Thecla Story Among the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles” (MA Dissertation, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK, 2009).

** Research Associate Dr, Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Divinity, Department of History of Religions, elif.karaman@deu.edu.tr, Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1975-2942>

any other woman in the Apocryphal Acts. Church fathers and other ancient authors gave her a place in their works which has triggered intense interest from modern scholarship. This article will investigate the reason for Thecla's fame, focusing particularly on the elements of her relationship with Paul which earned the story's distinct character.

Keywords: Paul, Christian Women, Miracle, Church Fathers, Christian Celibacy.

Elçisinin Terkettiği Kadın: Apokrif Elçilerin İşleri Arasında Thekla'nın Eşsiz Konumu

Öz

Thekla, *Pavlus'un İşleri*'nde adı geçen bir kadındır. *Apokrif Elçilerin İşleri*'ndeki diğer birçok hikâye gibi, onun hikâyesinde de bir elçi, Hristiyan inancına geçme, çetin sınavlar, karmaşa ve kahramanlık vardır. *Pavlus ve Thekla'nın İşleri*, tüm bu unsurları diğer *Apokrif İşler* ile paylaşırken, Thekla'nın hikâyesi, diğerlerinin sahip olmadığı tartışılmaz bir üne ve şöhrete sahiptir. Thekla, *Apokrif İşler*'deki diğer bütün kadınlardan çok daha fazla dikkat çekmiştir. Kilise babaları ve diğer antik yazarlar Thekla'ya eserlerinde yer vermişler ve bu da çağdaş literatürün daha yoğun ilgisini uyandırmıştır. Bu makale, hikâyenin kendine has bir karakter kazanmasına sebep olan unsurların, özellikle Pavlus ve Thekla arasındaki ilişkinin üzerine yoğunlaşarak bu şöhretin ardındaki sebebi araştıracaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pavlus, Hristiyan Kadınlar, Mucize, Kilise Babaları, Hristiyan Riyazeti.

Introduction

The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (*APTh*)¹ is about a woman who converts to Christianity after meeting the apostle² Paul (d. 64 or 67). *APTh* is part of the *Acts of Paul* (*AP*), however, it has become known as a separate story over time. It is certainly not the only story involving a woman in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (*AAA*). There are other stories which mention converted women and their relationships with the apostles. Even though these stories have different characters and features, their main theme is almost

¹ Thecla's renown warrants her name being in the title of the story, but *APTh* is technically still a section of *AP* and is dealt with as such in much of the scholarly literature dealt with in this article. Therefore, references will be given as *AP* (e.g. *AP.3.21*).

² For scholars in certain contexts there is a debate over whether the designation "apostle" ought to be applied to Paul, but we will use it because this is how he is presented in the *Apocryphal Acts* and how he self-identifies in his letters in the New Testament. See full discussion of this issue in the classic works by James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of the Apostle Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991).

the same. *APTh* seems to have attracted more attention from both ancient and modern audiences than the others, and this article will focus on the reason for its distinctness. We will first offer a short summary of *APTh* before overviewing its reception among ancient authors and modern scholars to contextualise its evaluation and demonstrate the extent of its fame. The roles of women in the *AAA* will then be discussed to provide a comparative background, before *APTh* is examined from the respective perspectives of Paul and Thecla.

APTh begins with Paul entering Iconium, having come from Antioch with his companions Demas and Hermogenes. Paul stays in Onesiphorus's house and preaches there. Although Onesiphorus shows great hospitality, Paul's companions grow jealous towards their host. Meanwhile, their neighbour Thecla, a beautiful woman betrothed to a man named Thamyris, hears Paul's words about the virginal life and is fascinated by them. She sits near the window and does not leave, even to eat or drink, for days.

When she declares her decision to convert to Christian celibacy her mother, Theocleia and her fiancée object. When Theocleia fails to dissuade Thecla, she asks Thamyris to speak to her, but his efforts do not succeed either. Consequently, Thamyris becomes hostile towards Paul and decides to complain about him to the proconsul. Moreover, Paul's traitor companions, Demas and Hermogenes agree to help him. Paul is put on trial for leading wives astray and dissuading maidens from marriage through his teachings. Though Paul is imprisoned while on trial, this does not keep Thecla from visiting him; she bribes the prison guard to see him. Her faith intensifies when she sees that Paul is fearless. Thecla is loyal to Paul regardless of his condition. However, Thamyris learns about her visits and becomes even more furious when he sees that Thecla is emotionally attached to Paul. When Thecla is asked during the trial why she would not marry Thamyris she does not answer and continues to visit the prison. This upsets Theocleia so much that she wants her own daughter to be burned in the arena as a warning to all women taught by Paul. Subsequently, the proconsul decrees Thecla to be burned and Paul to be driven out of the city. Paul leaves the scene when Thecla's punishment is enacted. A great fire is prepared to burn Thecla, but a sudden storm of rain and hail extinguish the fire. Thecla is saved despite many people dying in the storm. Thecla then searches for Paul and finds him fasting and pra-

ying for her with the family of Onesiphorus. She asks to accompany Paul wherever he goes, dressed in a man's attire, but he refuses her and does not accept her desire to be baptised, stating that she should be patient.

Paul and Thecla then go to Antioch together. As they enter the city a local officer named Alexander falls in love with Thecla. When Paul says that he has no connection with her, Alexander harasses her. Paul disappears from the scene again leaving Thecla alone to defend herself. Because she fights back against the officer, he brings her before the governor who then condemns her to the beasts. However, before the punishment takes place, a kinswoman to the king, queen Tryphaena, asks to have Thecla as a guest. The queen comes to love her as much as her own deceased daughter, and is saddened by the judgement against her. When Thecla comes up against the beasts, miraculously a lioness comes and lies down at her feet, licking them. The lioness fights with the other beasts to protect Thecla until it is killed itself by a lion. Thecla then decides to baptise herself since Paul would not do so, and she does this in a pool filled with seals. However, once again a miraculous event sees a bolt of lightning kill the seals. Finally, Thecla is rescued from bulls that she is then tied to, and the governor releases her. She dresses like a man and departs from Antioch with young men and maidservants to find Paul. They find him in Myra, but when they meet Thecla states that she wants to return to Iconium, and Paul gives her permission to teach the word of God there.

Ancient and Modern Approaches to *APTh*

Thecla's ordeal proves extremely interesting even with a cursory reading. If we are to prove that there is a reason for her distinct reputation among the women from AAA, we must first establish the interest that *APTh* has received. *APTh* formed part of the 2nd century *AP* and is attested first by Tertullian (d. 220) in his work *On Baptism*. According to Tertullian, the text was written by an Asian presbyter to legitimise women teaching and baptising:

“But if the writings which wrongly go under Paul's name, claim Thecla's example as a licence for women's teaching and baptizing, let them know that, in Asia, the presbyter who composed that writing, as if he were augmenting Paul's fame from own his store,

*after being convicted, and confessing that he had done it from love of Paul, was removed from his office.*³

The first-ever introduction to Thecla was admittedly rather dismissive. Tertullian discredited the author and the work because the features he considered as its main themes –Thecla teaching and baptising– were in direct contradiction to his beliefs. Tertullian classified the text as a forgery, stating that Paul, who thinks women should “be silent” in church and “consult their husbands at home”,⁴ would not grant them such power. Nonetheless, the doubts about the story’s historical credibility and origin did not deter ancient audiences from taking it seriously. It is stated that although the story was declared a counterfeit it is surprising that Thecla was considered a saint for a long time.⁵ Ambrose (d. 397), bishop of Milan, not only mentioned Thecla in his letters with great admiration about how lions revered her virginity⁶ but also had a new cathedral built in the middle of Milan in Thecla’s name.⁷ His contemporary Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395) also stresses that Thecla was famous for her virginity, so much so that his sister Macrina was secretly named Thecla after her mother saw an apparition during child birth telling her to name the child as such, in the hopes that Macrina would share “the same choice of life” as her namesake.⁸ Thecla’s virginity was not only praise worthy but exemplary, and her heroism was also of great importance for the church fathers. Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390) listed her among those who fought for Christ.⁹ In one manner or another, Thecla was used by the church fathers as the model for female asceticism.¹⁰ Despite Tertullian’s claim that the story lacked a credible foundation it is clear that as

³ Tertullian, “On Baptism”, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 1969), 3/3/677 (17).

⁴ *Holy Bible New Standard Revised Version: NRSV Anglicized Edition with Apocrypha* (London: Harper Collins Publishing, 2007). 1Cor. 14: 34-35.

⁵ Léonie Hayne, “Thecla and the Church Fathers”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 48/3 (1994), 209.

⁶ Ambrose of Milan, “Epistula Extra Collectionem 14 (Maur. 63)”, trans. John. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 307 (14 [63].34).

⁷ Hayne, “Thecla and the Church Fathers”, 210.

⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, “The Life of Macrina”, trans. Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2008), (3.2 [GNO, 372.16–373.3]).

⁹ Hayne, “Thecla and the Church Fathers”, 213.

¹⁰ Hayne, “Thecla and the Church Fathers”, 215.

an exemplar Thecla was popular among authors as early as the 4th c.

By the 5th c. Thecla's cult was highly revered in Seleukeia, where she was reported to have died after going to Iconium.¹¹ The *Panegyric to Thecla*, composed by Pseudo-Chrysostom, originated from the same area. This sermon thought to be intended for women,¹² focuses on Thecla's heroic acts, virginity and martyrdom to exemplify her devotion to the church. As a work historically and geographically related to the *Panegyric*, the *Life and Miracles of Thecla*, attributed to Pseudo-Basil, proves to be the most comprehensive of all after the original *APTh*, but as a result of being translated fully into English only recently¹³ it went unnoticed by modern scholarship for many years. The first section, the *Life*, paraphrases the original tale in its entirety but ends with Thecla living on for many more years; the *Miracles* discusses her miraculous deeds during this time.¹⁴ In the 6th c. Severus of Antioch (d. 538) described Thecla as a "heroic martyr" at the beginning of a homily devoted to her. He used praising Thecla as a medium to honour the church: "*The Church is the society or assembly of those who believe in Christ; they are united in her as the members of a body in the body, making her a perfect body, which is beautiful, powerful and immense.*"¹⁵ The author of the *Pseudo-Titus Epistle*, in the 8th c. mentions the importance of celibacy through the example of Paul resisting Thecla's request to kiss his chains, even though her faith is pure.¹⁶ Perhaps one of the most interesting mentions of Thecla, however, appears in a 15th c. work

¹¹ AP.3.42. English translation of the text is from James K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹² Dennis R. MacDonald - Andrew D. Scrimgeour, "Pseudo-Chrysostom's Panegyric to Thecla: The Heroine of the 'Acts of Paul' in Homily and Art", *Semeia* 38/ (1986), 152-153.

¹³ Linda Ann Honey, *Thekla: Text and Context with a First English Translation of the "Miracles"* (Calgary: University of Calgary, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2011).

¹⁴ Alice-Mary Talbot - Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, *Miracle Tales from Byzantium* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), x-xii.

¹⁵ Monika Pesthy, "Thecla Among the Fathers of the Church", *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1996), 173.

¹⁶ Titus, "The Pseudo-Titus Epistle", trans. R. Mcl Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha, Vol. 2: Writings Relating to the Apostles Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Cambridge; Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003), 62.

called the *Epistle of Pelagia*. Despite its name, the text is in fact a narrative in which Paul travels for his missions, and a king's daughter, Pelagia, wants to abandon her husband for a celibate life with Paul. The king then imprisons Paul and tells him that "he will pay for what he has done to Thecla."¹⁷ The king seemingly objected to Paul convincing Thecla as he had done Pelagia.¹⁸

Tertullian's efforts to discredit the *APTh* and its author seems to have faded permanently among ancient writers in subsequent eras. The determination which the ancient authors displayed in praising Thecla suggests that she was extremely famous among the church fathers through the centuries. Although their focus is centred on different elements of *APTh*, modern writers have shown great interest in the story as well.¹⁹

Perhaps the most discussed aspect of the *APTh* in modern scholarship is its origin, which revolves around the theory of oral legends common before story was written. It is mentioned that there were other stories, other oral legends, which had similar themes to the *APTh*, inspired the presbyter, and were widespread prior to or contemporary with it.²⁰ Scholars think there is enough "internal and external evidence" to justify this claim,²¹ such as "Tertullian's reference to those who told it to legitimate the ministries of women",²² and *APTh* corresponding with the "laws of folk narrative."²³ Since the Asian presbyter is the creator of the Thecla story, according to MacDonald the main clue to the story's origin is the storytellers, who he suggests might be women: "If we are correct in claiming that the author of the *AP* took these legends from oral tradition, the sensitivity to women might well be attributed to female storytellers. In fact,

¹⁷ Translation is based on Edgar J. Goodspeed, "The Epistle of Pelagia", *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 20/2 (1904), 107.

¹⁸ There are other church fathers and ancient authors who use Thecla in their work but the abovementioned examples must suffice due to space constraints.

¹⁹ Our intention is not to debate these arguments in detail but rather lay out the modern scholarship on the *APTh*.

²⁰ Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and The Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 20.

²¹ Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14.

²² MacDonald, *The Legend and The Apostle*, 19.

²³ MacDonald borrows a formula from Axel Olrik, regarding the setting of oral legends and suggests that *APTh* conforms to the rules. MacDonald, *The Legend and The Apostle*, 26. See also Axel Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative", *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 129-141.

we have strong external and internal evidence suggesting that women did indeed tell these stories."²⁴ The external evidence mentioned is again mostly Tertullian; he knew that these stories were told to legitimise women teaching and baptising. If there is a claim about justifying or defending women's rights, it is often assumed outright that this claim belonged to a woman. MacDonald strengthens his claim by referring to the female pattern in the story.²⁵ The location of the storytellers constitutes another element supporting MacDonald's case for the storytellers being women. There is no doubt that these storytellers lived in Asia Minor. According to MacDonald, this area created a convenient environment for this kind of story about women's ministries becoming widespread. In addition to Thecla being venerated as a local saint in central south Asia as late as the 6th c. MacDonald states that "...women exercised more leadership on that subcontinent than anywhere else in the early church."²⁶

The historicity of the *APTh* has also been discussed by scholars. Ramsay claims that customs relating to trials in antiquity, the methods of punishment, the titles used for civil officers, and even the species of animals used to punish Thecla correlate with the era of the story.²⁷ It is believed that even if the events did not happen precisely as narrated, the characters were real and we should hold that the story is historical, at least in part; Thecla and Tyrphaena were real people.²⁸ This position of course does not remain unchallenged.²⁹ After examination of the story's historical and doctrinal elements Boughton proposes that the events in the *APTh* do not correspond to the apostolic age and therefore cannot be accurate.³⁰ She states that even if the story originated from storytellers there is not enough evidence to suggest that they were familiar with apostolic writings.³¹

²⁴ MacDonald, *The Legend and The Apostle*, 35.

²⁵ We will discuss this issue later.

²⁶ MacDonald, *The Legend and The Apostle*, 37.

²⁷ William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), 405.

²⁸ Ramsay, *The Church*, 384, 388.

²⁹ Lynne C. Boughton, "From Pious Legend to Feminist Fantasy: Distinguishing Hagiographical License from Apostolic Practice in the 'Acts of Paul/Acts of Thecla'", *The Journal of Religion* 71/3 (1991), 363.

³⁰ Boughton, "From Pious Legend to Feminist Fantasy", 375.

³¹ Boughton, "From Pious Legend to Feminist Fantasy", 377.

While ancient authors viewed the *APTh*'s portrayal of Thecla as an example for their female audiences, modern writers have approached the text with different concerns, and from a variety of angles.³² To reinforce our claim for the story's fame, a search for "Thecla" within the NASSCAL (North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature) website³³ produces more results than *any* other woman in the *AAA*.

Women's Roles in the *AAA*

Other women in the *AAA* have similar stories to Thecla's, and so to demonstrate the differences between these texts and the *APTh* it is necessary to briefly discuss their context. It has been suggested that there is a pattern which repeats itself in every text; "*the apostle converts a married man or woman to the worship of Christ, which entails in turn the renunciation of carnal relations.*"³⁴ Virginia Burrus has prepared a more detailed formula for these narratives, which she labels "*chastity stories*". Before proceeding further, it may be useful to discuss the issue of *chastity* in the *APTh*. The theme of *chastity* is associated with self-control in the narrative. According to Margaret Howe, the Asian presbyter interprets Paul's teaching about *self-control* in a different way to biblical texts. The presbyter associated *self-control* with *purity*, which means celibacy or virginity in the *APTh*, whereas it means avoiding illegitimate sexual intercourse in biblical texts. Howe explains this digression by arguing that the Asian presbyter was influenced by other movements.³⁵ Therefore Burrus' attribution does not precisely reflect the intended meaning in the story, which is complete abstinence rather than having sexual relations in an acceptable framework, such as marriage. Being celibate means avoiding earthly affections to remain pure and proceed in the way of God. As Beate Wehn argues, being celibate,

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³² For feminist criticism of the works related to the *APTh* see Shelly Matthews, "Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17/2 (2001), 39–55. For a gender critical approach to the *APTh* please see Caroline Vander Stichele et al., *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking beyond Thecla* (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2009).

³³ "Search e-Clavis – NASSCAL" (Access 28 April 2021).

³⁴ David Konstan, "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6/1 (1998), 15.

³⁵ Margaret Howe, "Interpretations of Paul in The Acts of Paul and Thecla", *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald A. Hagner - Murray J. Harris (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 36.

for both genders, but specifically for women, also means that there would be no one claiming rights over the other. A celibate woman would have control over her body and life. Thus, the encouragement to be celibate not only meant avoiding earthly affections but also being free from orders. Celibate women risked forgoing the associated protection and family that a husband afforded them.³⁶ Therefore chastity/celibacy symbolises much more than choice over one's sexual life, and though we will continue to employ Burrus' terminology, precisely what chastity/celibacy represents in the *APTh* should be kept in mind.

Burrus developed her pattern for the chastity stories from Vladimir Propp's model,³⁷ which is as follows:

1. Apostle arrives in town.
2. Woman goes to hear apostle preach.
3. Woman vows chastity.
4. Husband attempts to violate vow.
5. Apostle encourages woman.
6. Woman resists husband.
7. Husband/governor imprisons apostle.
8. Woman visits apostle in prison (encouragement; baptism).
9. Husband/governor attempts to kill apostle.
10. Apostle dies or is rescued (leaves the scene).
11. Husband/governor persecutes woman.
12. Woman is rescued.
13. Woman defeats husband/governor (who may be converted or punished, and never succeeds in persuading the woman).
14. Woman is freed (allowed to remain chaste).³⁸

There are thirteen women in the AAA: Maximilla (*Acts of Andrew*); Cleopatra and Drusiana (*Acts of John*), Artemilla and Eubula (*Acts of Paul*) Agrippina, Nicaria, Euphemia, Doris and Xanthippe (*Acts of Peter*); and the Princess Bride, Mygdonia and Tertia (*Acts of*

³⁶ Beate Wehn, "Blessed Are the Bodies of Those Who Are Virgins': Reflections on the Image of Paul in the Acts of Thecla", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 23/79 (2001), 154.

³⁷ Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 31.

³⁸ Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*, 35.

Thomas).³⁹ The pattern can be applied to all the chastity stories in the AAA. Although some of the stories omit particular steps, the majority follow the pattern. Cleopatra's example presents a different series of events, but her story is best classified as a healing story rather than a chastity story, since she raises her husband from death. All the women in these narratives prevail over hardships and emerge as heroines. The apostle begins the chain of events by preaching, thereby causing the rift between husband and wife. However, it is the women who receive most of the attention. Either their actions or their gender might be understood as lying behind this emphasis.

Converting was for these women a life changing event on multiple levels. Their new Christian faith turned their existing world upside down. The crux of these stories was to represent what can be done with the strength of faith. The women left their families to follow Christ, which meant leaving an established system. *"The chastity stories are witnesses of the experiences of second-century eastern Christian women who lived in societies in which women's roles were clearly defined within the structures of patriarchal marriage and household."*⁴⁰ Despite the pressures of societal norms, these women chose to follow a new, radical celibate lifestyle. They were therefore role models for Christian women in their time. Considering their new life above everything else they redefined their relationships with their husbands, to the fury and embarrassment of the latter. The women accepted the repercussions knowing that they were doing nothing wrong in the eyes of God. Sometimes it took time to prove to the husband that this path was a good deed for God, and sometimes they were never able to convince of this. Regardless, the women were not deterred. What is the relevance of gender, then? A man could also convert and leave his former life, yet men's lives were not constricted by such strictly defined rules. Their existence and worth was not so dominantly defined by their marital status.

³⁹ For texts of these stories please see Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha, Vol. 2: Writings Relating to the Apostles Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, trans. R. Mcl Wilson (Cambridge; Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003); Jan N. Bremmer, "Drusiana, Cleopatra, and Some Other Women in the Acts of John", *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine et al., *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 11* (London; New York: Wilhelm: T & T Clark International, 2006), 77-87; Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*; Konstan, "Acts of Love".

⁴⁰ Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*, 108.

Practically speaking, a man vowing Christian celibacy would not have been considered as having reformed his life to the same radical degree, and his actions would not have been considered sacrificial in the same way.

The issue of gender offers another explanation. The women in these stories possessed remarkable characteristics. For instance, it is often stated that they were very beautiful –e.g. Thecla or Xanthippe– and they are generally from high status families. These stories could have been intended to promote the place of women in Christian society, with the leading women in these narratives constituting powerful exemplars. In our view, this is the reason why the women are the role models in these stories. The female characters had enviable existing social conditions. They were likely to be well-known, admired, and probably occupied a popular position among women. The choices they made were firstly to dedicate their life to the way of Christ, and secondly to remain celibate. They were now separated from their husbands, and able to make decisions about life on their own. Everything that happens to them is a reward for being so sincere in their faith. They witness miraculous events; sometimes they even participate in them and find the strength not to stray from their decision. Moreover, they have the honour of being mentioned respectfully along with the apostles and are all more prestigious than the other men in their stories. These stories were delivered to inspire women. This can be seen clearly in the structure of the narratives, since they all have the same pattern to deliver a common message. Ultimately, these women are role models for early Christian women.

Why Thecla?

If these stories are designed to illustrate an exemplary situation, why has *APTh* been afforded a different level of attention? In order to understand this distinction both Paul's and Thecla's behavioural patterns, as well as their relationship will be analysed.

Paul's Side of the Story

Burrus' pattern is successful in establishing steps which can be applied to the chastity stories. When this pattern is applied to the

Thecla story, it needs to be considered against two episodes: Iconium and Antioch. The Iconium episode misses a step in the structural pattern: “the apostle encouraging the woman”. The Antioch episode does not just omit the same step, but rather what happens is quite the opposite. Paul completely fails to support Thecla.

These two places where the same step of the pattern is omitted, indicate a very notable behaviour of Paul towards Thecla. Paul does not encourage Thecla. Moreover, Paul seems to be always indifferent to Thecla. When Thecla first hears Paul's word, she is amazed. Even though she does not see him in person his speech influences her deeply. “*Thecla ... was sitting at the window close by and listened day and night to the discourse of virginity, as proclaimed by Paul. And she did not look away from the window, but was led on by faith, rejoicing exceedingly*”.⁴¹ Paul, however, seems to doubt Thecla's sincerity in the proceeding events. When Thecla's loyalty to Paul has been revealed she is condemned to be burned and Paul is driven out of the city. After this, Paul immediately vanishes from the scene. Thecla's attempt to look for him “*as a lamb in the wilderness looks around for the shepherd*”⁴² comes to nothing. She receives help, but not from Paul: “*she saw the Lord sitting in the likeness of Paul*”.⁴³ Thecla survives her punishment without any help from the apostle. Paul did not count on Thecla as she did on him. He does not want Thecla to come with him. When she says that she will cut her hair like a man and follow him everywhere he goes, Paul's answer is as follows: “*Times are evil and you are beautiful. I am afraid lest another temptation come upon you worse than the first and that you do not withstand it but become mad after men.*”⁴⁴ As Davies explains it, “*Paul sees Thecla's beauty, not her piety.*”⁴⁵ Paul sees her as a woman susceptible to seduction, too beautiful to stay out of trouble. Her beauty may not be the reason why Paul does not trust Thecla, but it could be why he avoids her. He may have doubted that she was truly ready. Just before they travel to Antioch together, he rejects her wish to be baptised, yet when in another chastity story Artemilla, wife of the governor Hieronymus, asks him for baptism, he in-

⁴¹ AP.3:7.

⁴² AP.3:21.

⁴³ AP.3:21.

⁴⁴ AP.3:25.

⁴⁵ Stevan L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 59.

dulges her. Paul is in prison at that time, but leaves the prison to perform Artemilla and then returns. So, Paul does baptise women, but not Thecla. Even after she endures punishment in Iconium Paul still thinks that Thecla is not ready. He tells her “*Thecla, be patient; you shall receive the water.*”⁴⁶ Her ordeal was seemingly not challenging enough for her to prove herself to him.

Paul’s second action which deviates from “the apostle encouraging the woman” step occurs in Antioch. Immediately after they enter the town, a local officer named Alexander “*seeing Thecla, became enamoured of her and tried to bribe Paul with gifts and presents. But Paul said, ‘I know not the woman of whom you speak, nor is she mine.’*”⁴⁷ Paul is not only failing to encourage Thecla, he openly abandons her. Wehn suggests that Paul “*might have endangered his own bodily and religious integrity*” if he defended Thecla,⁴⁸ and might want to avoid what had happened in Iconium. Antioch is a foreign city, and if the authorities found out Thecla was a convert and a follower of Paul, the pair could have been put on trial again and condemned to death. However, ignoring Thecla while he should have been protecting her does not help Paul in the end. The apostle disappears when it is decided that Thecla will be thrown to the beasts.

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Paul’s actions are markedly different from the usual pattern. We see a unique pattern forming in the story: Thecla repeatedly searches for Paul, and Paul repeatedly disappears from the scene.⁴⁹ In the usual pattern for chastity stories the apostle always encourages the woman, whereas Paul does not even want Thecla to follow him. Despite praying for her when she is condemned to be burned, Paul seems to have little pity for her. The question of why Paul leaves Thecla alone constantly could be answered in many ways. It seems that Paul was more concerned about the problems that Thecla’s ministry could cause than about the positive results it might have. Paul may have had doubts about either Thecla’s piety or her determination, but this is unusual for the common pattern of the chastity stories. The apostle never leaves a woman who converts. He supports her even if he is in prison or condemned to death. He never fears for his or her death, and always tells her to re-

⁴⁶ AP.3:25.

⁴⁷ AP.3:26.

⁴⁸ Wehn, “Blessed Are the Bodies of Those Who Are Virgins”, 159.

⁴⁹ Wehn, “Blessed Are the Bodies of Those Who Are Virgins”, 155.

main steadfast. The apostle is there to encourage the woman and does not abandon her. Paul acts according to the usual pattern in other stories from AAA, where he is supportive and does not fail the female leads. Paul's attitude towards Thecla is therefore particular to *APTh*, which in our view is a distinct feature that caused the story to become more well-known than the others. What prompts Paul to behave differently is a cause and effect relationship between him and Thecla. The starting point of this cycle, however, might prove to be more arduous to pinpoint than we anticipate.

Thecla's Side of the Story

It is now clear that the common structural pattern is omitted in the story. Paul fails to encourage Thecla, and this is unconventional. When Thecla's side of the story is analysed, we will see a completely new step occurring in the pattern, both in the Iconium and Antioch episodes. Firstly, Thecla searches, follows, and finds Paul.⁵⁰ When Thecla is condemned to death in Iconium, Paul leaves her. When she is in the arena the Lord appears to her and she is saved miraculously. Thecla does something unusual and unexpected after she is rescued in that she goes to seek Paul. "*And she said: 'I have been saved from the fire and am following Paul.'*"⁵¹ Normally in chastity stories, if the apostle is not in the scene for any reason, the female character does not chase after him.

When they travel to Antioch together, after the death sentence of Thecla, there is no mention of Paul. Moreover, his disappearance does not wait until her punishment; he vanishes from the scene when Alexander assaults her. "*But he [Alexander], being of great power, embraced her in the street. But she would not endure it and looked about for Paul. And she cried out bitterly...*"⁵² Nevertheless, she pursues Paul immediately after she is saved from her punishment. By this point Paul is in another city, Myra, but this does not intimidate Thecla. "*And Thecla longed for Paul and sought him, looking in every direction. And she was told that he was in Myra.*"⁵³ Thecla is determined to find Paul and this perseverance is met with scepticism by the apostle himself. Instead of appreciating and enco-

⁵⁰ Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*, 38.

⁵¹ *AP.3:23*.

⁵² *AP.3:26*.

⁵³ *AP.3:40*.

uraging Thecla's pious behaviour Paul appears intimidated. Thecla's following of Paul everywhere is rare in chastity stories, and, therefore, is a distinguishing feature. Paul's distant demeanour towards Thecla has been marked as a differentiating motive of the *APth* for those who likened the story to Greek romance novels. Whereas their stormy relationship can be viewed as two lovers' ordeal to reunite despite obstacles⁵⁴ it is crucial to remember that they do not unite at the end.⁵⁵ This is not because of the grim circumstances but Paul's reluctance to be with Thecla. Nonetheless, apart from the final scene *APTh* contains the passion element familiar from Greek novels; we see a deep attachment on Thecla's side even though she is constantly rebutted.

When Paul disappears from the scene, he always leaves something incomplete. In Iconium, Thecla asks for baptism but her request is denied by Paul. After she baptises herself in Antioch she still needs permission from him to teach the word of God. There is also the issue of Thecla's deep commitment to Paul. Howe views Thecla's relationship with Paul as a platonic attachment. She states that Thecla had an intense love towards Paul, whereas Paul is much less interested in her.⁵⁶ Such an attitude is in accordance with the author's claim that Paul did not want women in ministry.⁵⁷ It can be asserted that the main point of the story is to show the attitude of Paul to women's roles in the Christian community. The Asian presbyter might have wanted to explain Paul's view about women in the community or women participating in ministry. According to Howe, however, Paul is the primary element in the story, since he means everything to Thecla. This is why Tertullian says the presbyter wrote the story "*augmenting Paul's fame*", not Thecla's.⁵⁸ Burrus approaches the issue from another angle:

"In literary interpretations which emphasize not the structure of the story itself but rather the context of the story in the larger body of the apocryphal Acts, the apostle is often viewed as the hero of the story; the woman is thereby designated a passive role as

⁵⁴ Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 50.

⁵⁵ Esther Yue L. Ng, "Acts of Paul and Thecla. Women's Stories and Precedent?", *Journal of Theological Studies* 55/1 (2004), 5-6.

⁵⁶ Howe, "Interpretations of Paul", 39.

⁵⁷ Howe, "Interpretations of Paul", 40.

⁵⁸ Howe, "Interpretations of Paul", 46.

*a victim, rather than heroine. A hero who acts on behalf of other victimized characters is known as a “seeker hero” and is contrasted with the “victimized hero” who acts on his or her own behalf.”*⁵⁹

Burrus' classification of Thecla's role in the story has merit, yet Howe's attempt to paint Paul as acting with a determined state of mind at the centre of the whole ordeal does make accurately represent him in *APTh*. Paul's constant abandonment of Thecla is hardly emphasised, while Thecla's perseverance is conveyed in detail. She accomplishes many great deeds while Paul just quietly leaves the scene. When she is rescued from the Iconium arena by a storm this is not a miracle she performs herself, yet its very occurrence demonstrates her worth. She personally performs miracles in Antioch, however. When she is faced with the beasts in Antioch a lioness licks her feet and protects her.⁶⁰ Moreover, Thecla baptises herself, in a pool full of seals no less.⁶¹ The baptism story and Thecla's subsequent teaching, which ancient authors, with the exception of Tertullian, did not emphasise was highly unusual for a woman in the AAA. Even though the apparent lack of interest in these issues among early Christian authors seems to have diverted audience concern elsewhere, they were invested in her strength which enabled all those actions. Again, it amounts to the fact that these actions warrant a hero's courage. Whatever Thecla encounters surpasses what other women endure in other AAA. However, we can say that in Thecla's case the “hero” element definitely outweighs that of the “victim”.

It is apparent by now that Paul in *APTh* is intimidated by the profound attachment and love Thecla feels towards him. If Thecla's motivation for following Paul was purely spiritual she would have

⁵⁹ Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*, 42.

⁶⁰ *AP.3:33*.

⁶¹ *AP.3:34*. Thecla baptises only herself in the story but this does not prevent the arguments about the legitimacy of women teaching and baptising, which is what Tertullian mentions when he talks about the *APTh*. It would be possible to assert that a major part of the story's fame originates from the baptism. This is a very significant phenomenon that cannot be overlooked. However, although the baptism attracts attention first from Tertullian and later modern scholarship, ancient authors do not seem to have invested heavily in this element, probably because it was not their intention to highlight this aspect of Thecla's story and character. On the issue of Thecla's baptism see Stephen J. Davis, “A ‘Pauline’ Defense of Women's Right to Baptize? Intertextuality and Apostolic Authority in the Acts of Paul”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8/3 (2000), 453–459.

stopped chasing him after proving how strong her faith was through her many tests. It is the personal aspect of her affection which scares him. Thecla is portrayed as a resolute character, and this sparked a cycle of abandonment. If it were not for Paul's constant abdication, however, we would not see how powerful a woman Thecla was. Paul's actions unwittingly strengthen Thecla every time he left the scene, and she emerges as a triumphant woman. The female pattern⁶² which is weaved into the narrative strengthens Thecla's independence as a woman. Women's cooperativeness towards Thecla in the *APTh* is remarkable. In all other *AAA*, the female character neither receives all their help from women nor all their hostility from men. Even if there are no women who are hostile towards female characters, there are male characters who assist them, especially the apostle. However, Thecla does not receive help from any man, including the apostle. There is only one situation in which a man technically seems to help her, when the governor in Antioch sets her free. Yet, other women think that this is a gift from God rather than an act of the governor.⁶³ All the characters sympathetic to Thecla or who offer her help are female, apart from Castellius who wept and admired the power that was in Thecla when she was about to be burned.⁶⁴ All the characters who hurt her or Paul were men, such as Thecla's fiancée Thamyris who gave her to the governor,⁶⁵ Paul's companions Demas and Hermogenes, who betrayed Paul and helped Thamyris,⁶⁶ and Alexander, who assaulted Thecla.⁶⁷ It was "women and virgins"⁶⁸ whom Paul was preaching to, and it was Tryphaena,⁶⁹ a powerful woman who protected Thecla before her punishment in Antioch.⁷⁰ Even the lion which did not hurt Thecla in the arena was female.⁷¹ When Thecla fights with

⁶² MacDonald, *The Legend and The Apostle*, 35; Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla*, 8; Jan N. Bremmer, "Magic, Martyrdom and Women's Liberation in the Acts of Paul and Thecla", *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1996), 57.

⁶³ *AP.3:38*.

⁶⁴ *AP.3:22*.

⁶⁵ *AP.3:15*.

⁶⁶ *AP.3:16*.

⁶⁷ *AP.3:26*.

⁶⁸ *AP.3:7*.

⁶⁹ Magda Misset-Van De Weg, "A Wealthy Woman Named Tryphaena: Patroness of Thecla of Iconium", *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1996), 16-35.

⁷⁰ *AP.3:27*.

⁷¹ *AP.3:33*.

beasts, women in the arena support her with their cheering. They throw herbs with perfumes so that the animals may sleep and not harm her.⁷²

The features which significantly deviate from the usual pattern helped the *APTh* to gain fame more than any others in the field. Even if the *APTh* fits the general pattern, Paul and Thecla act differently at times from what is expected. Paul does not generally leave people who trust him; Thecla's actions change his behaviour. Thecla acts rather unusually from the *stereotype* presented in other stories in the *AAA*, but she tries to attune to her situations. Since she does not have Paul around she finds a way to sort herself out. Thecla's heroism and miracles, much like her baptism, are the by-products of Paul's abandonment, causing her to act alone. However, even though Paul is the inspiration for Thecla's single-handed achievements, if it was not for her strong resolve the audience would be left with a story about a helpless young woman. To the contrary, Thecla emerges as the heroine at the end.

Conclusion

Thecla stars alongside Paul in the *APTh* as a woman who converts upon meeting the apostle, just like many others in the *AAA*. Although the outline of the narrative is similar to the rest, we encounter many differences both within the *APTh* and with the traditions revolving around it. Ever since its composition the *APTh* has captivated scholars. Despite Tertullian, the text's earliest external witness, being extremely critical about the content and origin of the story, in the proceeding centuries authors focused on the motives in the narrative, although selectively, and wrote about Thecla extensively.

A structural pattern has been provided in order to investigate the recurring models in the stories from the *AAA*. After analysing the structural pattern of the stories about women and examining women's roles in these stories the *APTh* has been analysed in terms of its popularity among other stories in the *AAA*. The relationship between Paul and Thecla emerges as the most significant reason for the story's distinctiveness. Both characters behave very differently

⁷² *AP*.3:35.

from the usual pattern in the other stories. As an apostle Paul's attitude is different towards the women in the other stories. Thecla's attitude towards Paul makes him act differently and changes the whole concept of the story. Paul is markedly callous and aloof towards Thecla. The Asian presbyter portrays a very different Paul than the one presented in other writings related to the apostle. Likewise, Thecla acts with a determination and persistence unmatched in the AAA. The flow of the story changes direction often because Paul leaves Thecla constantly, so she has to tackle events on her own. Thecla performing her own baptism, one of the most controversial elements of the story, happens because Paul did not want to baptise her and left her alone. Paul vanishing from the scene and taking no responsibility for Thecla actually places her in the foreground. In our view it was Thecla's attitude towards Paul, her persistence, her baptism, and the fact that she endured the whole ordeal by herself that made the story stand out. Even though Paul's persistent abstinence contributed greatly to Thecla's actions, it was her strength as a woman that handed her a glorious victory at the end.

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Elçisinin Terkettiği Kadın: Apokrif Elçilerin İşleri Arasında Thekla'nın Eşsiz Konumu

Elif Hilal KARAMAN*

Ayrıntılı Özet

Apokrif Elçilerin İşleri, elçilerin Hristiyanlık'ı yayma misyonları sırasında yaşadıkları olaylar üzerine kaleme alınmış eserlerdir. Yazarlarının kimliği konusunda her zaman kesin bilgi sahibi olmadığımız bu eserlerde, elçilerin misyonları sırasında yaşadıkları zorluklar, bu zorlukların üstesinden gelmelerine yardımcı olan imanları ve bu esnada karşılaştıkları kişiler hakkında ayrıntılar içeren pek çok hikâye bulunmaktadır. Elçi ile tanışmasının ardından, genellikle kocasını veyahut da nişanlısını terk ederek, Hristiyan inancına katılan, elçi ile birlikte pek çok zorluğa göğüs geren ve hatta mucizeler gerçekleştiren kadınlar ise bu hikâyelerde sıklıkla işlenen konular arasında ilk sıralarda yer almaktadır. Bu kadınların, genellikle toplumsal olarak güçlü ve yönetici gibi ailelere mensup ve/veya güzel olmalarıyla övülerek, Hristiyanlık dinine girmeyi düşünen ya da yeni ihtida etmiş kadınlara birer örnek teşkil etmeleri sağlanmıştır. *Apokrif Elçilerin İşleri*'ne dâhil olan farklı *İşler* bünyesinde, *Pavlus'un İşleri*'nde adı geçen Thekla ile birlikte on dört kadın vardır. Bu hikâyelerde, Virginia Burrus tarafından son haline getirilen model takip eden bir şekilde, kadın elçi ile tanışır, Hristiyan olup riyazet hayatı yaşamak üzere kocası veya nişanlısını terk eder, kadını kararından dönmeye ikna edemediği için sinirlenmiş eş tarafından şikâyet edilen elçi yakalanır ve cezalandırılır, kadın elçiyi hapisanede ziyaret eder ve imanını terk etmemesi için yüreklendirilir, elçi öldürülerek veya serbest bırakılarak hikâyeden çıkar, kadın yakalanır en sonunda da serbest kalır. Bazı adımların yerleri değişse ya da atlansa bile bütün hikâyeler bu modele uygun şekilde ilerlemektedir. Bütün bu benzerliklere rağmen, Thekla, erken dönem Hristiyan yazarları tarafından diğer kadınlara nazaran çok fazla ilgi görmüştür. Gösterilen bu alaka hikâyenin yazılmış olduğu düşünülen MS 2. yy'dan günümüze kadar artarak devam etmiş, modern literatürde de *Pavlus ve Thekla'nın İşleri* olarak nitelenen hikâye ile ilgili pek çok eser kaleme alınmıştır. Bu çalışma, Thekla'nın ve onun hikâyesinin diğer kadınlara ve hikâyelere nazaran çok daha ünlü olmasının ardındaki sebebi araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu şöhretin, ilk bakışta, Thekla'nın kendisini vaftiz etmesi ve hikâye sonunda Pavlus'tan Tanrı'nın kelamını öğretme iznini alması gibi alışılmadık unsurlardan kaynaklandığı düşünülür. Fakat Kilise Babaları'nın da aralarında bulunduğu erken dönem Hristiyan yazarları hikâyenin bu yönlerine, hikâyenin yazarı hakkında ilk yorumları yapan Tertullian'ın konuya getirdiği eleştiri hariç hiç değinmemişlerdir. Hristiyanlık'ın ilk dönemlerinde ve dahi günümüzde çokça tartışılan kadınların dini rolleri meselesinden hareketle, antik yazarlar muhtemelen bu konuların Thekla'nın kadınlara örnek olması açısından uygun olmadığını

* Araştırma Görevlisi Dr., Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, Dinler Tarihi Anabilim Dalı, elif.karaman@deu.edu.tr, Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1975-2942>

düşünmüş ve sadece Thekla'nın imanı, ahlakı ve riyazeti üzerinde durmuşlardır. Hikâye tarihi olarak güvenilir kabul edilmese de Thekla uzun süre azize olarak kabul edilmiş, adına kiliseler yaptırılmış, hayatını ve mucizelerini konu eden eserler kaleme alınmıştır. Devam eden yıllarda modern literatür odağını daha teknik konulara çevirerek, hikayenin kaynağını ve unsurlarını bilimsel açıdan incelemiştir. *Pavlus ve Thekla'nın İşleri'nin*, *Apokrif Elçilerin İşleri'ndeki* diğer hikâyeler ile karşılaştırılarak incelendiğinde Burrus tarafından tespit edilen modelden farklı olarak iki ekstra basamak içerdiği görülmektedir. Bunlar; normalde hikâyedeki kadını hiçbir suretle yüz üstü bırakmayan elçinin, burada Pavlus'un, sürekli olarak Thekla'yı karşı karşıya kaldığı sıkıntılarla tek başına bırakarak terk etmesi ve herhangi bir sebep yüzünden sahnede olmayan elçiyi hiçbir zaman arayıp bulmayan kadının, yani Thekla'nın, terk edildiği her seferde gidip Pavlus'u bulmasıdır. Pavlus'un Thekla'ya karşı tavrı, başka hiçbir hikâyede benzeri görülmemiş olarak mesafeli ve umursamaz şeklindedir. Pavlus, *Pavlus'un İşleri'ndeki* diğer kadınlara bu şekilde davranmadığı gibi başka hiçbir elçinin hikâyelerdeki kadınları problemler karşısında yalnız bırakması söz konusu değildir. Bu durum hikâyenin anlatılışı veya sonraki antik yazarlar tarafından ele alınması sırasında özel olarak vurgulanmamıştır. Bunu yerine karşılaşılan manzara her zaman Thekla'nın kararlılığı ve kahramanlığı üzerine kuruludur. Çalışmamızda ikilinin ilişkisi ve genel manada hikâye, Pavlus ve Thekla'nın bakış açılarından ayrı ayrı değerlendirilmiştir. Bu sayede Thekla'nın hikâye boyunca yaşamış olduğu terk edilme ve sınavlardan geçme döngüsünün başlangıcını belirlemek mümkün olmuştur. Thekla'nın Pavlus ile tanıştıktan sonra geliştirdiği platonik duyguların, yeni dinine olan bağlılığı ile birleşerek kuvvetlenmesi ve zaten güçlü bir karaktere sahip olan Thekla'nın her mücadeleden daha kararlı bir şekilde çıkması, Pavlus'un kelimenin tam anlamıyla gözünü korkutmuş ve ondan uzak durmasına sebep olmuştur. Bu durum ise Thekla'yı daha da kuvvetlendirmiş ve hikâyenin sonunda kendi başına yoluna devam etmesine yol açmıştır. Thekla'nın karakterine ek olarak bu ilişki üzerinde en fazla etki eden unsur hikâyedeki kadın motiftir. *Pavlus ve Thekla'nın İşleri'nin* direkt kadınlara ya da kadınların çoğunlukta olduğu bir kitleye yönelik olarak kaleme alındığı teorisinin kaynağı olan kadın motifi hikâyenin her adımında karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Pavlus tarafından, bilerek ve isteyerek olmasa da davranışlarının bir sonucu olarak başrole getirilen Thekla'nın bir kadın olmasının yanında; hikâyede Thekla'ya yardım eden ve destek olan, insan ya da hayvan, neredeyse bütün karakterlerin kadın olması ve Thekla'ya zarar veren ve karşısında yer alan neredeyse bütün karakterlerin erkek olması kadın motifinin hikâyeye çok sıkı bir şekilde işlendiğinin delilidir. *Pavlus ve Thekla'nın İşleri'nin* "güçlü Hristiyan kadın imajı" ile birlikte Thekla'nın karakteri sayesinde meşhur olduğunu söylemek mümkündür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pavlus, Hristiyan Kadınlar, Mucize, Kilise Babaları, Hristiyan Riyazeti.

