

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books of enduring scholarly value

Religion

For centuries, scripture and theology were the focus of prodigious amounts of scholarship and publishing, dominated in the English-speaking world by the work of Protestant Christians. Enlightenment philosophy and science, anthropology, ethnology and the colonial experience all brought new perspectives, lively debates and heated controversies to the study of religion and its role in the world, many of which continue to this day. This series explores the editing and interpretation of religious texts, the history of religious ideas and institutions, and not least the encounter between religion and science.

Select Narratives of Holy Women: Translation

The twin sisters Agnes Lewis (1843–1926) and Margaret Gibson (1843–1920) were pioneering biblical scholars who became experts in a number of ancient languages. Travelling widely in the Middle East, they made several significant discoveries, including one of the earliest manuscripts of the Four Gospels in Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic, the language probably spoken by Jesus himself. Their chief discoveries were made in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. This fascicule is the translation of a Syriac manuscript from the monastic library of St. Catherine. Translated by Lewis and first published in 1900, the manuscript recounts the tales of a number of saintly women, including Pelagia, a rich courtesan who converted to Christianity and Eugenia, a holy woman who lived as a man and became the abbot of a monastery. An interesting collection of stories with relevance for scholars of Middle Eastern Christianity.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Select Narratives of Holy Women: Translation

From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

TRANSLATED BY AGNES SMITH LEWIS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai
Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108043182

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1900

This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-04318-2 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai
Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

SELECT NARRATIVES
OF
HOLY WOMEN

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai
Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

London: C. J. CLAY AND SONS,
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE,
AVE MARIA LANE.
Glasgow: 50, WELLINGTON STREET.

Leipzig: F. A. BROCKHAUS.
New York: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.
Bombay: E. SEYMOUR HALE.

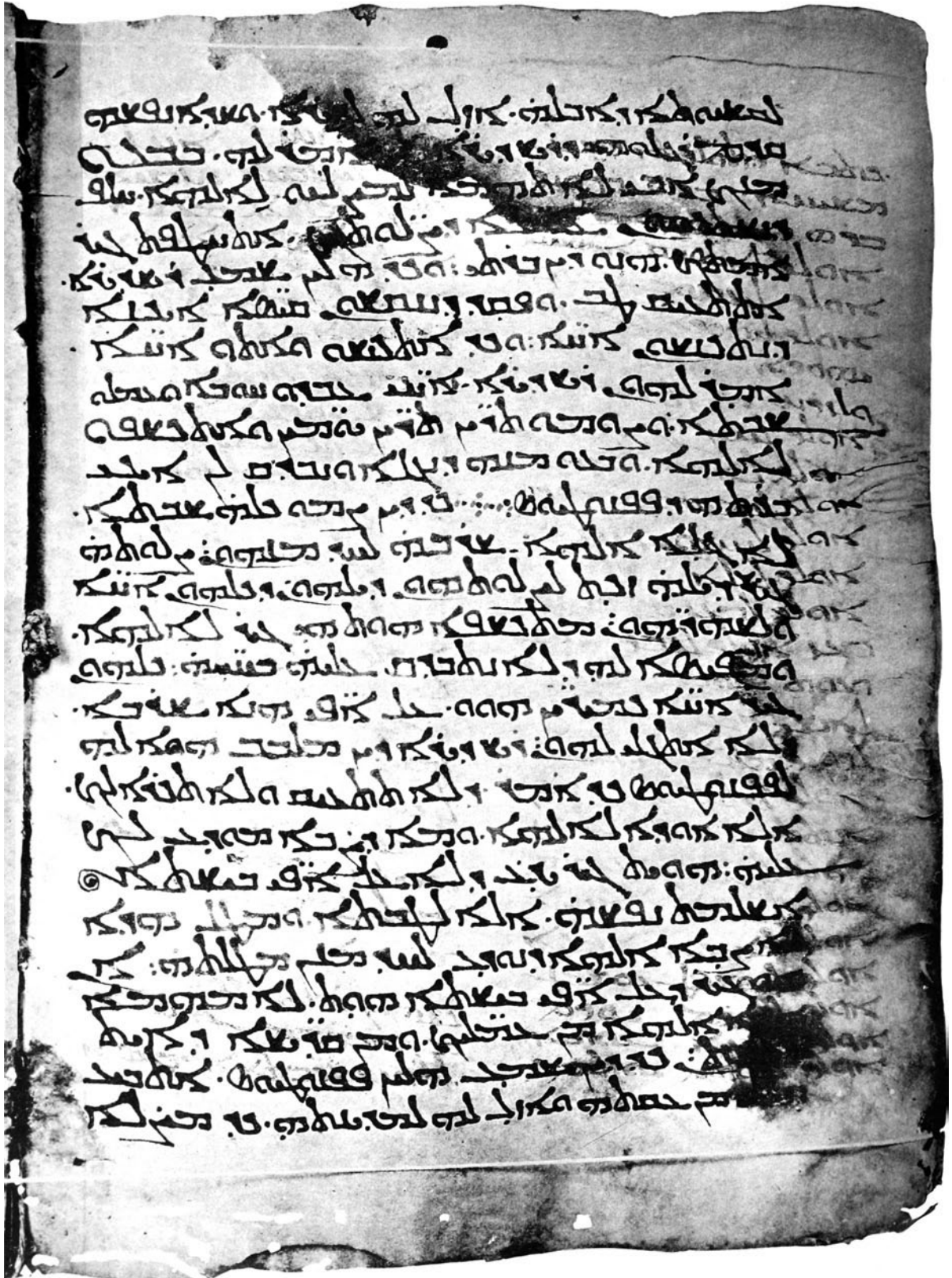
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai
Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

FOL. 82^b(Matt. i. 1—17^a script. inf.)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

STUDIA SINAITICA No. X

SELECT NARRATIVES

OF

HOLY WOMEN

FROM

THE SYRO-ANTIOCHENE OR SINAI PALIMPSEST

AS WRITTEN ABOVE THE OLD SYRIAC GOSPELS BY JOHN
THE STYLITE, OF BETH-MARI-QANŪN IN A.D. 778

TRANSLATED BY

AGNES SMITH LEWIS M.R.A.S.

HON. PHIL. DR. HALLE-WITTENBERG

TRANSLATION

LONDON

C. J. CLAY AND SONS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE

AVE MARIA LANE

1900

[*All Rights reserved*]

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai
Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge:

PRINTED BY J. AND C. F. CLAY,
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

PREFACE.

THIS volume is so closely associated with No. IX. of this series that it hardly requires a separate Preface. The Introductory Notes which precede it belong quite as much to No. IX. as to No. X.; and they have been made to accompany the English Translation, rather than the Syriac Text, with the view of equalizing the size of the two volumes. I shall therefore only recapitulate that these "Select Narratives" form the upper script of the Palimpsest which I discovered in the Convent of St Catharine on Mount Sinai in A.D. 1892, and that the under script is the now famous Codex of the Old Syriac Gospels. Whether the tales are in any way worthy of their position, the reader must judge for himself.

A. S. L.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai
Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

	PAGES
INTRODUCTORY NOTES	ix—xxxii
SELECT NARRATIVES.	
Eugenia	1—35
Mary = Marinus	36—45
Euphrosyne	46—59
Onesima	60—69
Drusis	70—76
Barbara	77—84
Mary (slave of Tertullius)	85—93
Irene	94—148
Euphemia	149—167
Sophia	168—184
Cyprian and Justa	185—203
HYMN OF MAR EPHRAIM	204, 205
COLOPHON	205, 206
INDEX OF PROPER NAMES	207—211

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ERRATA.

Page 86, line 26. *For “Diocletian” read “Hadrian.”*

„ 122, „ 10. *For “Magdo” read “Magedo.”*

„ 140, footnote. *For Συναξαριστής read Συναξαριστής.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)


INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

THECLA.

The story of St Thecla is one of the oldest of Christian legendary romances, for it was composed in the beginning of the third century by an Asiatic presbyter, as Tertullian tells us¹, "out of love to St Paul." The Ebionite heretics had sought to calumniate the character of the great Apostle, finding more than one supposed allusion to his fair disciple in the First Epistle to the Corinthians², and the best antidote to these aspersions was a tale, wherein the acts of this first of women martyrs were placed in their true light³.

St Jerome alludes to Thecla as to a real person. He says that after her temptation at Antioch she was prohibited by St Paul from accompanying him any further⁴. This, however, does not actually prove her existence, for he may have simply pointed a moral from the romance.

The story tells us that when Paul was preaching in the city of Iconium, a man named Onesiphorus went out to meet him, accompanied by his wife⁵, by Zeno, and by the sons of Simon; that he recognised Paul, who was waiting for him on the highway to Lystra, by his personal appearance, which had been

¹ *De Baptismo*, cap. 17.² 1 Cor. vii. 34—38; ix. 5.³ Baring Gould, *Contemporary Review*, Oct. 1877 (p. 862).⁴ *Ad Oceanum de Vita clericorum*.⁵ In the Syriac Palimpsest her name is given as .

already described to him by Titus. Paul was a man of medium size, with scanty hair, bandy legs, large eyes, eyebrows which met, and a long nose; he was full of grace and mercy, at one time seeming like a man, and at another like an angel. Demas and Hermogenes, coppersmiths, who accompanied Paul, were filled with envy at his friendly greeting to Onesiphorus; but Paul entered the house of the latter, brake bread, and preached about the controlling of the flesh, and about our Lord's resurrection.

Whilst Paul preached a virgin named Thecla, daughter of Theocleia, betrothed to Thamyris, sat at a window which was close to the roof of Onesiphorus's house and listened to his words both by day and by night. She saw many women going in to hear him, but himself she saw not. Her mother, Theocleia, becoming alarmed, sent for Thamyris; but to him she would not even speak. He waxed wroth, and went down to the street, where he met with Demas and Hermogenes, who excited him still further against Paul. Next morning he went to the house of Onesiphorus, accompanied by the chief men of the city and many people with stones. They dragged Paul before Castelus the governor, the whole city accusing him of being a magician, and of corrupting their wives. The Governor questioned Paul, and sent him to prison.

But Thecla in the night-time bribed the door-keeper of her mother's house with her own bracelets, and the gaoler with a mirror of gold, and having thus got access to Paul, she sat at his feet, listening to his teaching and kissing his fetters. Her family and her betrothed having found her there, they informed the Governor, who commanded that both Paul and Thecla should be brought before him. Thecla simply stood and looked at Paul, being quite silent when she was questioned. Then her mother cried out that she must be burnt, as an example to other women. The Governor commanded Paul to be scourged, and Thecla to be burnt in the theatre. When she had been brought out for

that purpose she gazed intently on the crowd, in the hope of seeing Paul. And she saw the Lord Jesus, in the likeness of His apostle, sitting by her side. Whilst she gazed at Him He rose and ascended to heaven. The faggots were piled around her by youths and maidens, but she would not burn; a shower of hail and rain extinguished the flames and killed many of the spectators.

Paul in the meantime was fasting after his scourging, with Onesiphorus, his wife and his children, in a sepulchre by the roadside of the Iconians. Paul gave his tunic to a boy, directing him to sell it and buy bread. The boy, meeting Thecla, brought her to Paul, who had been praying for her deliverance. She proposed to cut off her hair, and follow him everywhere. Then Paul sent away Onesiphorus and his family, and went with her and with other people to Antioch. There they met an influential man named Alexander, who fell in love with Thecla, and offered to buy her from Paul. He replied that she did not belong to him. Alexander tried to embrace Thecla in the open street. But she resisted him, tore off his garments, pulled a golden crown from his head and dashed it on the ground, leaving him standing naked. Alexander complained to the Governor, and Thecla was condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts. Thecla begged from the Governor that she should be kept in purity until the sentence was executed. Taking pity on her, he sent her to the house of a rich queen named Tryphæna, who had lately lost her daughter.

Thecla was taken to the theatre, stripped, and exposed to a huge lioness. Tryphæna stood weeping at the door, but the lioness only licked the martyr's hand. Other beasts were let loose, but they would not touch her, and Tryphæna obeying the commands of her own daughter, whom she had seen in a night-vision, took her away, and adopted her. Thecla then prayed for the gift of everlasting life to the daughter of Tryphæna.

Early next morning Alexander himself came to fetch Thecla. She was snatched from the arms of Tryphæna, and was again exposed naked in the theatre. A lioness was brought, but it lay at her feet; a leopard burst, and a bear was killed by the lioness. Then a lion was brought, but he and the lioness fought till both were dead. Whilst other beasts came against her she looked round and saw a pond of water. Invoking the name of the Christ, she leapt into it, as to her baptism. Many evil beasts which were in the water died, whilst a cloud of lightning encompassed her, screening her from view.

Then Alexander brought out two bulls. Thecla was bound between them with ropes, red-hot spits were applied to their thighs, but as the bulls sprang up, a flash of fire consumed the ropes, setting Thecla free. Tryphæna fainted, thinking that Thecla was dead; and this alarmed Alexander, who ran to the Governor, and begged him to release Thecla, and thus save Tryphæna, who was of the family of Cæsar.

Thecla was then brought before the Governor, and when she had confessed her faith in the Christ, he ordered clothes to be brought for her, and all, especially the women, joined in praising God. Tryphæna was converted, with many of her maidens, and Thecla remained eight days in her house, teaching her God's commandments. But the maiden could not forget Paul. She sent messengers to seek for him, and they found him in the city of Myra. She dressed herself like a man, and took many people with her, even some of the queen's maidens, and went to Myra. Paul was astonished, and took her, with her attendants, to the house of Hermæus. There she related all that had befallen her, and after they had prayed for queen Tryphæna, Paul sent her to the city of Iconium with a commission to teach.

Thecla went to the house of Onesiphorus, where she learned that Thamyris was dead, but that her mother Theocleia still lived. She had the satisfaction of trying to persuade her mother

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

xiii

to believe in the Christ, then she went to Seleucia, where she taught for some time, and where she died in peace.

The Latin Church commemorates Thecla on Sept. 23rd. She is said to have died in Isauria, or Lycaonia, her native province, and to have been buried at Seleucia, where a magnificent church was built over her remains. The great cathedral of Milan is dedicated to her. But her body is supposed to rest in a chapel formed out of a natural cave in the Convent of St Thecla at Ma'lula in the Lebanon.

The Greek Church commemorates Thecla on the 24th of September, under the titles of *Πρωτομάρτυς* and *Ἰσαπόστολος*.

It also commemorates two other martyrs of the same name, one of them on June 9th, Sept. 6th, and Nov. 20th, slain with the sword, the other on August 19th, slain by a wild beast at Gaza.

An Arabic inscription several centuries old at the back of the first leaf of the famous Codex Alexandrinus (A) of the Greek Bible, states that it was written by the hand of Thecla the martyr¹. This is translated into Latin by another hand, which Mr Aldis Wright recognizes as Bentley's². To Thecla is also ascribed the beautiful and complete little Psalter, which the monks of St Catherine's Convent on Mount Sinai show as one of their chief treasures. Though it can be read only through a microscope, no mistake has ever been detected on any of its twelve pages. Unfortunately for these traditions, scholars have assigned the Codex Alexandrinus, by the weight of its own internal evidence, to the fifth century.

As the story has already been edited by one of the greatest of Oriental scholars, Dr William Wright of Cambridge, I have only given in Appendix II. a collation of the Syro-Antiochene text on that published by him. The chief differences between

¹ See Scrivener-Miller, *Introduction*, p. 98.

² *Academy*, April 17th, 1875.

the two texts are that the former one always amplifies the saint's name into "the blessed Lady Thecla."

In Dr Wright's text p. 40 a lacuna seems to exist in the sense, and this is filled up by our text on f. 16^a. The form **ܕܝܥܠܗܝܗܝܢ** "she tore herself with her nails," on fol. 14^b, is unusual.

EUGENIA.

The story of Eugenia is nearly the same as that in Add. 14,645, and Add. 14,649 of the British Museum MSS.; these being of the 10th and 9th centuries respectively. The Bishop is called **ܘܥܢܝܐ**, not **ܘܥܢܝܐ**, in them both. His name is not mentioned in the Greek *Συναξαριστής*. In Add. 14,645 Eugenia's brothers are called **ܘܥܢܝܐ** and **ܘܥܢܝܐ**; in Add. 14,649 **ܘܥܢܝܐ** or **ܘܥܢܝܐ** and **ܘܥܢܝܐ**, and in the Palimpsest **ܘܥܢܝܐ** and **ܘܥܢܝܐ**. In Add. 14,649 the name of her proposed bridegroom is not **ܘܥܢܝܐ** but **ܘܥܢܝܐ**. The names of her parents and of the two eunuchs are the same in all. In Add. 14,649 the man who was sent to depose her father Philip from the office of Eparch is called **ܘܥܢܝܐ** instead of **ܘܥܢܝܐ**.

The martyrdom of Eugenia is commemorated by the orthodox Greek Church on December 24th and by the Latin Church on Christmas-Day. Bedjan's text is from Add. 14,649 and Add. 14,645 of the British Museum.

PELAGIA.

The story of Pelagia is supposed to have happened between the years A.D. 449 and A.D. 451. It is as follows:

The Bishop of Antioch in Syria had occasion to summon a council of eight bishops, amongst whom was St Nonnus, with

whom was the narrator of the story, the deacon Jacob. They were all lodged in a hospice attached to the church where the bones of St Julian were preserved.

One day whilst the eight bishops were seated before the church door, discussing various affairs, they asked St Nonnus to expound the Word of God. Whilst he was doing so, a rich courtesan passed before them, seated on a richly caparisoned horse, decked with pearls and precious stones, and accompanied by a host of servants. The air was scented by a profusion of aromatics, and the good bishops were astonished at the dazzling beauty of Pelagia, for such was the courtesan's name.

They, however, turned away their faces from the ostentatious sinner. Nonnus fell on his knees and shed abundance of tears. When Pelagia had passed he said to his brethren, "Do ye not admire the beauty of the courtesan?" They did not reply. He then told them that his admiration of her beauty would impel him to seek more earnestly from God for her conversion to a purer life. Having returned to his cell, accompanied by the deacon, he took himself severely to task for his failure to serve God with as much zeal as Pelagia had displayed in her service of the Devil. The day was Saturday, and on Sunday morning (Divine service having been celebrated during the night) Nonnus called Jacob, and told him that he had seen in a dream how he himself was standing near the horns of the altar, and how a black dove, squalid and dirty, flew above him. When the congregation had departed and he had left the church the dove flew near him. He stretched out his hands, and catching it, threw it into the bath of water on the floor of the church. There it was cleansed, the foul odour which had accompanied it disappeared, and it soared up to heaven.

Then St Nonnus with the seven other bishops and Jacob the deacon went to the largest church in Antioch. After the liturgy, the Archbishop sent the archdeacon to St Nonnus with a Gospel and the permission to teach. This Nonnus did, not in words of

human wisdom, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; till the floor of the church became wet with the tears of the listeners, amongst whom was Pelagia, who was well known in the city, and who confessed her many sins in an audible voice. When the moment came for the celebration of the sacred mysteries she went out, but commanded two of her servants to remain as spectators, and to watch when Bishop Nonnus should come out, so that they might find out for her where he was lodging. She then wrote a letter to him, in which she professed her deep penitence, reminding him that the Saviour ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He replied that he could not receive a visit from her alone, as he was only a weak man, liable to temptation, but that he was willing to see her in the presence of his brother bishops. When Pelagia had received this letter she hastened to the church of St Julian, where St Nonnus received her with his colleagues. She threw herself on the ground and embraced his feet with tears, throwing dust on her head, and begging for the remission of her sins.

All the bishops and presbyters who were present were moved to tears. Nonnus professed his willingness to baptize her, but said that by the canons of the Church she must have sponsors. Pelagia then with great vehemence and copious tears told him that God would require her soul at his hands if it were lost through his refusal to baptize her; and that he would also be held to be a partaker of the guilt of her future sins, and begged him to admit her, as his divine Master would have done.

Nonnus then sent Jacob to the Archbishop, to ask his permission for Pelagia's baptism, and also that a deaconess should be sent to him. Jacob returned with a Roman lady, the Superior of the deaconesses, who with some difficulty persuaded Pelagia to rise. After due confession and preparation she was baptized, and received the holy sacrament from the hands of Nonnus. She stated that Pelagia was the name given to her by

her parents, but that latterly, on account of her many ornaments, she had frequently been called Margarita.

Then the Devil appeared to Nonnus in the form of a black looking man, and showered imprecations upon him for the many thousands whom he had baptized, and had thus delivered from the power of evil; and most of all for abducting his most perfect hope, Pelagia. Receiving no encouragement, the enemy of all good next turned to Pelagia, and upbraided her with ingratitude, pouring out on her the most bitter reproaches. By the advice of Nonnus she made the sign of the cross, and Satan forthwith fled.

Two days later, however, the Devil returned to Pelagia as she was quietly sleeping beside the Roman deaconess, and reminded her of the great wealth which he had procured for her. But she made the sign of the cross, exclaiming, "The Lord rebuke thee!" and awoke the deaconess. Whereupon Satan fled.

On the third day Pelagia gave freedom to all her slaves, and offered all her wealth, which she had won by an evil life, to the discretion of Bishop Nonnus, who bestowed it on the treasurer of the great church at Antioch, with the request that none of it should be allowed to enter the church itself, nor any dwelling of the clergy, nor might it be hoarded in any way, but that it should be at once distributed amongst orphans, widows, and the sick poor.

For seven days Pelagia fasted from food and drink, showing an example of temperance and of chastity. On the eighth day, which was Sunday, she was expected to put off the bridal robes of her baptism, and to put on a woman's ordinary dress. Towards nightfall, however, she went to Bishop Nonnus, and after receiving his blessing, begged him to give her some of his own garments. He accordingly bestowed on her his hair tunic and woollen mantle. During the night she went out in the dress of a man and was never again seen in the city. There was great consternation and grief about her disappearance, but

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Nonnus said that she had chosen the good part, like Mary, and a few days later the Archbishop dismissed the bishops, each one returning to his own town.

Three years later the deacon Jacob went on a pilgrimage to the Holy City, and Bishop Nonnus requested him to make enquiry about a eunuch named Pelagius, from whom he might receive much benefit. After he had performed his devotions at the sacred shrines, he succeeded in finding this person in a cell at the summit of the Mount of Olives, and saw in his face something like the features of Pelagia, defaced and withered by long fasting and many vigils. She recognised him; but he was quite unaware of her identity, until hearing of her death a short time afterwards he attended her funeral, and was present along with the bishop and many other holy men when they discovered that she had been a woman. She was buried with great honour, having in her last years enjoyed the reputation of being a saint, and Jacob was thankful that he had received her benediction.

It is interesting to find that while Gildemeister's text states that Jacob prayed and was blest by the sepulchre of our Lord, the Syro-Antiochene Palimpsest says that he prayed and was blest by our Lord in all the places which he visited (near Jerusalem).

Nonnus is mentioned by Theophanes, as being Bishop of Edessa, *Chronographia*, p. 79.

“Κατὰ τοῦτον δὲ τὸν χρόνον,” he says, “Νόννος ὁ θεοφόρος ἐποίμαινε τὴν τῶν Ἐδεσσηνῶν Ἐκκλησίαν, ὃ τὴν πρώτην τῶν μιμᾶδων Ἀντιοχέων τῷ Θεῷ ἀφιερῶσας, καὶ ἀντὶ Μαργαριτοῦς πόρνης ἁγίαν αὐτὴν Πελαγίαν παραστήσας τῷ Χριστῷ.”

Pelagia is commemorated by the Greek and Latin Churches on Oct. 8.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

MARINA.

The story of Mary, otherwise called Marinus, or Marina, is also found in three of the British Museum MSS., Add. 14,649 (9th century), Add. 12,172 (10th century) and Add. 14,722 (Carshuni, 13th century). In these MSS. the tale has not the exordium of the Syriac Palimpsest. It relates that her mother died when she was seven years old. After her admission into the monastery, and the death of her father, she goes on a journey by command of the Abbot, and lodges, not at an inn, but in the house of a believer ܩܝܣܝܢܐ. On returning, she is not allowed to see the Abbot, but is compelled to sit outside the convent, without any opportunity of exculpating herself; and this she does for four years. The story is told with more conciseness than in the Palimpsest; but with less sympathy and fewer picturesque details. It is free from the absurdity of Marina's self-accusation. The handwriting of both is of considerably later date.

Bedjan appears to have made use chiefly of a manuscript from Mesopotamia, date unknown. The Greek Church commemorates this saint on February 12th, and the Latin Church on June 18th. Her relics were brought from Constantinople to Venice in A.D. 1230, and are venerated there in a church which bears her name. The festival of their translation is kept at Venice on July 17th.

EUPHROSYNE.

This story, as told in the Syriac Palimpsest, is almost in the same words as in Add. 14,649 of the British Museum (9th century); Bedjan's text has a collation from the latter, but is chiefly from a paper MS. in Paris of the 13th century. The

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

word ܐܘܨܝܢ in the penultimate line of f. 82^b of the Palimpsest is probably a singular spelling for ܐܘܨܝܢܐ.

The Greek Church commemorates Euphrosyne on September 25th. She has no place in the Calendar of the Latin Church. Her story is also told in Add. 12,172 and R. F. XLIX. of the British Museum (10th century).

ONESIMA.

The story of Onesima is also told in the British Museum MSS. Add. 14,649, Add. 14,650 and R. F. XLIX. There are some slight variations in the tale, for instance the B.M. MSS. make the beasts of the desert sit round the saint from the sixth till the ninth hour, our Palimpsest from the third hour till the ninth. The Palimpsest states that the portress had sat at the door of the convent for 40 years, the B. M. MSS. extend this to 102 years. This is not the only example which these "Select Narratives" furnish of how ancient legends become more wonderful as time rolls onward.

I can find no mention of Onesima in the *Συναξαριστής*, nor in the Calendar of the Latin Church.

Bedjan's text is from two paper MSS. in Paris of the twelfth century and also from Add. 14,649 of the British Museum.

DRUSIS.

No Syriac manuscript in the British Museum contains the story of Drusis. But there are hymns in her honour in Add. 14,505 and Add. 17,134, the latter being probably, as Dr Wright thinks, in the autograph of the famous Jacob, Bishop of Edessa.

There is also a homily on Drusis by Chrysostom (II. 688). He relates how she found in the furnace a fountain of clear

water; and how she ascended to her heavenly Bridegroom purified both by water and by fire. But he says nothing about her being the daughter of Trajan, nor about her being betrothed to Hadrian. We may therefore suppose that while the legend may contain a kernel of truth, these Imperial relationships of the martyr are simply the outgrowths of popular imagination.

Drusis is commemorated by the Greek Church on March 22nd. There is no mention of her in the Calendar of the Latin Church.

BARBARA.

There is no Syriac text of Barbara in the British Museum. But a reference to her relics will be found on p. 194, c. 1, of Dr Wright's Catalogue.

Barbara is commemorated by the Greek Church on December 4th.

The *Συναξαριστής* tells us that she was martyred during the reign of the Emperor Maximian, who is the Aximus of our tale, and that her father was a Greek.

In a MS. of the British Museum, CCXLVIII. (Egerton 681) we are told that the relics of St Barbara are entombed in a church in a poor Christian town named Camalisk-Gawerkoe, situated about six hours' journey to the southward of Mosul.

St Barbara is commemorated by the Latin Church on December 4th. She was said to have been a scholar of Origen, and she is said by some to have suffered martyrdom at Nicomedia in the reign of Maximinus I. Others aver that she suffered at Heliopolis in Egypt, in the reign of Galerius, about A.D. 306, and this Joseph Assemani considers to be the most authentic.

MARY.

The text of this story is taken from Add. 17,204 in the British Museum, which belongs to the fifth century, and is written in a fine straight Estrangela hand, in two columns, the small stops being in red. There are few diacritical points, except the *seyyame*, and that over the fem. pronom. suffix ܐܘܢܐ. As the text of the Palimpsest is three centuries later, variants from it only are given. The most remarkable of these is the word "three months" for "three days," given as the period during which Mary was imprisoned in her master's house, the longer period being of course in the later manuscript.

The story is also found in Add. 14,649.

I have failed to find it in the *Συναξαριστής*, although there are of course more illustrious saints of the same name.

St Mary, the slave of Tertullius, is commemorated by the Latin Church on November 1st.

IRENE.

No Syriac text of this story is to be found in the British Museum.

Irene is commemorated by the Greek Church on May 5th.

Other saints of the same name are commemorated on April 16th, June 5th, July 28th, August 13th.

The name of Irene does not occur in the Calendar of the Latin Church.

Tela, or Tela Mauzalet, otherwise called Constantine, in honour of the great Roman Emperor, who rebuilt it in A.D. 350, was situated about fifty miles due east of Edessa (see *Ecc. Hist. of John, Bishop of Edessa*, R. Payne-Smith's translation, p. 437, foot-note).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04318-2 - Select Narratives of Holy Women Translation: From the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest

Agnes Smith Lewis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

xxiii

EUPHEMIA.

There is a hymn in honour of Euphemia in Add. 17,134 of the British Museum.

She is commemorated on July 11th and September 16th. Other saints of the same name being mentioned on January 4th, November 19th, and November 22nd.

She is also commemorated with Thecla on the fourth Friday after the Invention of the Cross. (See Dr Wright's Catalogue, p. 186, col. 2.)

The Latin Church commemorates her on September 16th. Four churches in Constantinople once bore her name, also a very spacious one at Chalcedon, in which the fourth General Council of the Church, that which condemned Eutyches, assembled in A.D. 451. Her relics were transferred to the great church of St Sophia in Constantinople. They are now preserved at Syllebria, a metropolitical see, on the Propontic shore, between Constantinople and Adrianople, but a portion is in the possession of the church of the Sorbonne in Paris.

SOPHIA.

The story of Sophia and her three daughters is found in Add. 17,204, and Add. 14,645. As the former of these belongs to the fifth century, I have given its text, with the variants of that in the Syriac Palimpsest, and where some of its pages are missing, I have given the text of the Palimpsest, with variants from Add. 14,645 (10th century).

Sophia and her three daughters are commemorated by the Greek Church on September 17th.

Other saints of the same name are mentioned on May 22nd, June 4th, September 18th, and December 18th.

The legend of Sophia may possibly have become intended for an allegory of the manner in which the Divine Wisdom, or in other words Christianity, with her three daughters, Faith, Hope, and Love, were received in the capital of the Roman Empire; how their beauty was acknowledged, while they themselves were derided, tortured, and slain; how the death of the body had no real power over them; and how they drew all men's hearts after them, so that their place of execution was a place of triumph both for this world, and for the world which is invisible.

Two grains of truth may be found in the legend: Hadrian's cruelty to the Christians, and the painful nature of his mortal sickness.

The name of this St Sophia does not occur in the Calendar of the Latin Church.

The British Museum contains, besides the text which I have edited, from Add. 17,204, other texts in Add. 14,644 (5th or 6th century), Add. 14,650 (6th or 7th century), and Add. 14,645 (10th century).

Bedjan's text is from Add. 14,645 and Add. 14,644.

THEODOSIA.

The Syriac text of the story of St Theodosia has been edited by Assemani in his *Acta Martyrum Occidentalium*, vol. II., p. 204, and on this I have collated the text of the Syriac Palimpsest. In the fifth year of the persecution, *i.e.* A.D. 307, under Maximinus we are told that a holy virgin of Tyre, twenty-eight years old, saw some confessors of Christianity who had been brought to the Forum of Cæsarea for judgment, and besought for herself an interest in their prayers. She was seized, and brought before the Prefect, who tried to persuade her to sacrifice to the idols. On her refusal she was subjected to atrocious tortures, from which she was at last released by drowning. The confessors,