

## ABSTRACT

### Magic, Sorcery, and Sacraments: Combating and Using the Supernatural in Ancient Christian Literature

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In the first four centuries of this era, Christians of the Greek-speaking Roman world displayed a range of attitudes toward rituals and behaviors that they labeled as "magical," i.e. as *mageia*, *goeteia*, or *pharmakeia*. Christian responses to these phenomena and the related terminology range from outright condemnation to self-description. This thesis examines the use of words pertaining to "magical" practice in literature from the first several centuries of the Church, including passages from the didactic texts of the Apostolic Fathers, the novelistic Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and the stories regarding Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels. Patterns of behaviors and contexts associated with Greek "magical" vocabulary are explored in these texts in order to argue that these authors believed their sacraments were in direct conflict, even combat, with the demonically driven, "magical" sacraments of pagan religion.

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MAGIC, SORCERY, AND SACRAMENTS:  
COMBATING AND USING THE SUPERNATURAL  
IN ANCIENT CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

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There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

—C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

This thesis is dedicated to Austin Lloyd Ousley & Ellen Elizabeth Ousley.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the use of "magical" vocabulary, i.e. *mageia*, *goeteia*, and *pharmakeia*, in ancient Christian literature, including the Apostolic Fathers, the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and the Apocryphal Gospels. According to Anthropologist Mary Douglas, "magic belongs, phenomenologically, to the same realm of action as sacraments."<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I use the term 'sacrament' to refer to a religious practice or ritual that petitions a supernatural entity for power. In this way, "magic" refers to sacraments outside the speaker's religion, often with a pejorative bent. Despite the many attempts to solidify a definition of "magic," these early Christian writers understand the subjective nature of *mageia* accusations, and employ this understanding frequently in these texts. I will demonstrate the particular ways each text uses these words and will analyze the major themes that run throughout to argue that Christians saw their sacraments as set in competition with and combat against the sacraments of pagan religion, which they describe with this set of "magical" terminology. The three major themes include the ancient awareness of the subjectivity of these terms, the Christian belief that pagan sacraments involve demonic activity, and the literary use of "magical" battles as effective sets for the Christian God's triumph.

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1973. 8.

Before I address these three themes, I will first clarify my use of the word 'sacrament.' The above quotation from Mary Douglas refers to the anthropological inconsistency of referring to one set of religious rituals, such as those of Christianity, as sacraments while referring to another set of religious rituals, such as those of Voodoo or popular Greco-Roman religion, as magic. She proposes a unity of the two ideas, which for her are only one idea with different labels, and she uses the two words interchangeably. I will follow her in a similar use of 'sacrament' but will abandon her use of magic as a term for religious ritual.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the sacraments as "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions."<sup>2</sup> I take this definition of "visible rites" celebrating "efficacious signs of grace" to mean such rituals which are institutions of the Christian Church, but I use the word 'sacrament' more generally to refer to visible rites acting as efficacious signs in any religious context. In this way, although a prayer said by a Christian is not enumerated among the sacraments of the Christian faith, it is a sacrament by my definition, since it is a visible rite that is efficacious in bringing about a response from the divine, i.e. it petitions God to speak or act. The seven enumerated Christian sacraments "make present" graces from God, while my more general

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<sup>2</sup>Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1131.

definition of sacrament includes any religious act which seeks to make present any divine power or activity. All references to Christian sacraments in this thesis will denote sacraments according to my definition, which includes the seven enumerated sacraments in addition to practices such as prayer or seeking the enlightening of the Holy Spirit through reading the Scriptures. All references to the sacraments of any other religion or tradition will denote the rituals and practices by which its adherents solicit action from the divine. To restate my definition from above, in this thesis, I use the term 'sacrament' to refer to a religious practice or ritual that petitions a supernatural entity for power.

*First Theme: Subjectivity of "Magic"*

Returning to the major themes of this thesis, the first is an ancient literary awareness of the subjective nature of "magical" vocabulary. John Middleton remarks, "Magic is a word with as many definitions as there have been studies of it."<sup>3</sup> In the *Republic*, Plato attempts to establish a substantive distinction between magic and religion, praising religion and wishing to punish harshly those who claimed the ability to seduce and influence the gods with sacrifices, which are somehow different from those of the official cult of the city.<sup>4</sup> For Plato, magic is that which is outside the norm of religious behavior and includes private purifications, abnormal divinations and injurious or "black" magic. The word μαγεία derives from the word μάγος, which originally referred to a member of a

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<sup>3</sup>John Middleton, "Theories of Magic", in: Mircea Eliade (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York, Macmillan, 1987, IX, 82.

<sup>4</sup>Plato. *Respublica*, 364 B.

certain class of Persian priests. Plato's application of the term *mageia* to his category of magic as separate from religion represents an idea that foreign religious influence had negative social effect.

A clear understanding of Plato's distinction between magic and religion can be expressed as follows: religion consists of submission to the divine, whereas magic consists of coercion of the divine; the official cult is submissive to the gods while practices that deviate from it are coercive. For a Greek, for example, a prayer is “any procedure by which man either addresses a divinity or tries to appeal to superior powers in order to obtain a result.”<sup>5</sup> But ritual prayers uttered with the intention of influencing events by means supplicating a deity can conceivably be construed as magic, if an observer believes one ought not to pray to that particular deity, or not to pray in that way. It must be kept in mind that the standard formula for Greek prayer includes an argument or bargain with the divine based on past, present, or future gifts or services given in order to elicit favors from the divine. In other words, ancient Greeks understand interaction with the divine strongly in terms of reciprocity.<sup>6</sup>

There are clear examples of magicians asserting authority over the spirits invoked, yet this authority usually comes from an intimate relationship with a higher divinity that he then uses to compel demons or lower divinities.<sup>7</sup> There is also an abundance of examples of “magical” papyri and other sources that adhere

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<sup>5</sup>Simon Pulleyn. *Prayer in Greek Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. 5.

<sup>6</sup>Pulleyn 37.

<sup>7</sup>Fritz Graf. *Magic in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. 226f.

to established prayer formulas and that petition the divine with submission. Some spells, for example, use the word εὔχομαι and related terms, as well as imperatives, which is also normal in public prayer procedure, while still addressing higher divinities with honorific titles, such as κύριος. One particular spell entitled "A Prayer to Selene" reads: εὐμενίη δ' ἐπάκουσον ἐμῶν ἱερῶν ἐπαιδῶν, "kindly hear my sacred chants."<sup>8</sup> The magician who wrote this text does not recognize a difference between a spell and a prayer, as here he addresses the goddess with a "sacred spell" and calls this document a "prayer," and within that category he places ἐπαιδός as a "sung-prayer" or "spell-prayer." The Latin equivalent of this word is *carmen*.<sup>9</sup>

As one possible solution to these problems of definition, Versnel argues for the creation of a category of "judicial prayers" for texts which are traditionally classified as "magical" *defixiones*, lead tablets upon which has been inscribed a spell-prayer, but which appeal to a deity's sense of justice.<sup>10</sup> Faraone further points out that much of the perceived division between the magician's coercive spell and the priest's pious prayer comes from an evaluation of the vocabulary of these *defixiones*.<sup>11</sup> The modern reader thus has to discern from particular words whether the *defigens*, the person who writes on the tablet, has a pious attitude.

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<sup>8</sup>Faraone, Christopher A., and Dirk Obbink, eds. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. 189.

<sup>9</sup>See Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, composed in 17 BC addressed to Apollo and Diana as the sun and moon as well as a number of chthonic deities.

<sup>10</sup>Faraone. 61.

<sup>11</sup>Faraone. 18.

Faraone explains that a particular set of *defixiones* contains one tablet described as a curse, while the other five in the set were considered religious prayers. The original editor saw the employment of a “prayer formula” in these five tablets, and so he was convinced of their propriety. All six, however, constitute examples of Versnel's judicial prayers since they ask deities to punish an adversary for wrongdoing. It is therefore clear that some portion of "magicians" practiced their craft while operating under the belief that their prayers and rituals were religious and properly reverent, even if others in their communities saw their actions as impious or unacceptable magic.

Scholarship of antiquity tends to regard Christian prayer in an entirely different light from that of magic spells, and the distinction comes from an assumption that magic usually involves a secret body of knowledge that comes from outside "religion." Even then, however, the Christian claim to the enlightening of the Holy Spirit or to symbols of the faith in ancient catechesis comprise a body of secret knowledge entrusted to the faithful, knowledge to which the unbeliever does not have access. Magic could therefore contain Christian ritual practices, depending on the perspective of the one describing them. In a similar fashion, ancient Mediterranean religions contain prayers and rituals (divinatory rites, communal sacrifices) that could be called magical, since they are done in order to convince the gods to speak and act and require specialized knowledge of traditional ritual procedure.

Much of the discussion of magic in opposition to religion, and spells in opposition to prayers, comes from Plato and other such sources that condemn

rituals that fall outside their proposed norms or that are intended to cause harm to other citizens. These abnormal rituals include legitimate religious practices and they also contain reversals of normal ritual practices, but “the differences, however, must not be exaggerated.”<sup>12</sup> Graf expounds on some of these reversals: “Fumigations and libations are perfectly regular rites – only that, in the common worship, one burns incense, one pours wine, milk, or honey; the libations of milk, water, and honey already are extraordinary rites, confined to a few specific rituals. Magic ritual thus uses the common ritual forms, [and] changes only the substances to be burned or libated.”<sup>13</sup> These rites, in other words, largely follow established ritual, yet they introduce innovation. Magic must be understood as being a variation within normal religious practice which sometimes, but not always, involved the abnormal and condemned.

Such condemnations often pertained to the use of rituals and spell-prayers meant to injure or seduce another. As a further example, the Roman philosopher Apuleius of Madaura in his trial of AD 158/9 defended his profession by defining it in opposition to the use of *magia*, the Latin form of the word. Apuleius had married a socially and financially desirable widow, and subsequently her other suitors accused him of obtaining her hand by means of sorcery. He explains the nature of *magia* as inherently injurious and could appeal to Roman legal precedent in the Twelve Tables regarding *excantatio*, or the theft of a neighbor’s crops by supernaturally transferring them from the neighbor’s field to one’s own

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<sup>12</sup>Graf. 229.

<sup>13</sup>Graf. 231.

field. The illegality comes not from the nature of the action however, but from its intent to steal from others.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, accusers of *mageia* do not point to certain other kinds of "magic" like healing: healing spell-prayers and rituals are even seen as medicinal. On the other hand, Apuleius' accusers point to certain objects he has kept from his initiations into cultic mysteries and consider such antisocial worship to be grounds for their charges.<sup>15</sup> The accusers see mystery cults as *magia*, but Apuleius sees them as legitimate forms within wider traditional religion.

### *Second Theme: Demonic Involvement*

The second major theme of this thesis is the close association of pagan sacraments and communication with *daimonia*, "demons."<sup>16</sup> "Magical" texts and papyri, as scholars label them, instruct users to invoke "daemons" in their rituals, and they frequently state that these daemons are either lower-level deities or restless spirits of dead humans.<sup>17</sup> Paul, in contrast, clearly identifies pagan deities as "demons," using *daimonia* in the later Jewish and Christian sense, meaning malevolent spirits in rebellion against God.<sup>18</sup> He follows Deuteronomy, which states, "They sacrificed to demons which were not God, gods they do not

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<sup>14</sup>Mary Beard, John North, and Simon RF Price. *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, a History*. Vol. 1. Cambridge University Press, 1998.155.

<sup>15</sup>Apuleius. *Apologia*, LIII-LVI.

<sup>16</sup> I follow Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, and William Arndt. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2000 [hereafter = BDAG] s.v. δαίμωνιον in denoting the pagan usage "daemon" while denoting the Christian usage "demon".

<sup>17</sup>Graf. 150; these spirits are specified as having died unmarried, untimely, or by a violent death.

<sup>18</sup>1 Cor. 10:20: ἀλλ' ὅτι ἃ θύουσιν, δαίμονις καὶ οὐ Θεῷ θύουσιν· οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαίμονων γίνεσθαι.

know."<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Origen argues that pagan *mageia* constitutes collaboration with demons. He says:

Πρὸς μὲν οὖν Ἑλληνας, ὅτι μάγοι δαίμοσιν ὁμιλοῦντες καὶ τούτους ἐφ' ᾧ μεμαθήκασιν καὶ βούλονται καλοῦντες ποιοῦσι μὲν τὸ τοιοῦτον, ἐφ' ὅσον οὐδὲν θειότερον καὶ ἰσχυρότερον τῶν δαιμόνων καὶ τῆς καλούσης αὐτοὺς ἐπωδῆς ἐπιφαίνεται ἢ λέγεται.

To the Greeks then, [I say] that, having dealings with demons and invoking them for the purposes which they had learned and they desire, *magoi* bring about such a result, as long as nothing appears or is said that is more divine or powerful than the demons or the spells which call them.<sup>20</sup>

Origen here maintains that demons had real and effective power that can bring about miraculous change. Their activity enables the sacramental *mageia* of the *magoi*. For Origen, the incarnation of Jesus, as well as the presence of the angelic host who came to proclaim the Christ, overcame and broke the power of demons. By coming into the world as one "more divine and powerful than the demons," Jesus deeply weakened the ability of pagans' *mageia* to function.<sup>21</sup> Origen explains that the coming of the *magoi* in Matthew was due to their curiosity about what caused the failure of their previous powers.

Augustine held the same view as that of Origen, that *magi* (Latin transliteration of *magoi*) derive their power through communion with demons to bring about their own selfish ends, except he does not indicate that these sacraments ceased to function in his time. He says, "Therefore when the *magi* do

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<sup>19</sup>Deuteronomy 32.17 (LXX): ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ, θεοῖς, οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν.

<sup>20</sup>Origen. *C. Cels.* I.60.

<sup>21</sup>Origen. *C. Cels.* I.60: διὰ τοῦτο οἱ δαίμονες ἡτόνησαν καὶ ἐξησθένησαν, ἐλεγχθείσης αὐτῶν τῆς γοητείας καὶ καταλυθείσης τῆς ἐνεργείας, οὐ μόνον ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπὶ δημησάντων τῷ περιγίῳ τόπῳ ἀγγέλων διὰ τὴν Ἰησοῦ γένεσιν καθαιρεθέντες ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ θειότητος.

such works as the saints sometimes do, they even appear visibly to be similar, but they happen for a different end and by a different [legal] right. The *magi* do them seeking their own glory, but the saints do them seeking God's glory."<sup>22</sup> The different end to which Augustine refers is self-glorification, and the legal right to which he refers is the power that comes from some sort of political union with demons. Robert Markus explains Augustine's remark about the "different right" in terms of semiotic structures. Markus' says this concerning Augustine's theory of "magic":

Augustine distinguishes two semiotic structures. One is authentically public, shared by the whole language-using community, and is used by its members to communicate with one another as well as with God; the other is a 'private' code, restricted to some members of this community and used only by them, to communicate with demons. Magic is part of this second semiotic system.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, for Augustine, pagans use a secret, private set of signs and symbols specially created for communication with demons while, according to Augustine, Christians use public signs and symbols for their communication with God, and each communication system grants its users different quasi-legal rights of access to different supernatural powers. By the terms public signs and symbols, Augustine must mean socially acceptable signs used in context, such as the bread and wine on the table at a communal meal used in the Eucharist, as opposed to the use of antisocial signs that are made up of objects taken out of their proper contexts and brought into pagan sacraments.

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<sup>22</sup>Augustine Hippoensis. *de Div. Quaest.* LXXXIII 79.4: *Cum ergo talia faciunt magi, qualia nonnunquam sancti faciunt, talia quidem visibiliter esse apparent, sed et diverso fine et diverso jure fiunt. Illi enim faciunt quaerentes gloriam suam, isti quaerentes gloriam Dei.*

<sup>23</sup>Robert A. Markus, "Augustine on magic: A neglected semiotic theory." (1994). 388.

Augustine's dichotomy between the "public," socially acceptable language of the Christians and the "private," antisocial language of the pagans is very important, for his understanding the nature of a sacrament, as it reveals the intent of the agent and thus the source of sacrament's power. Augustine distinguishes the miracle of the Eucharistic sacrament from pagan practices, such as a ritualistic meal with a god, because "the semiotic context is completely different."<sup>24</sup> The Christian performs the former as an act of communal worship of the true God, while the pagan performs the latter to establish private intimacy with demonic powers that he can then use for personal advancement. Augustine's description contains a distinction between "public" Christian sacraments as legitimate and "private" pagan sacraments viewed as illegitimate within the Christian religion.

The public/private dichotomy as a definition of magic has many manifestations, the modern incarnation being the sociological view that puts "magic" and "magician" among terms used by socially dominant groups to degrade socially marginal groups, particularly in witchcraft accusations.<sup>25</sup> Again, Apuleius defends himself from a witchcraft accusation brought on by a mob of accusers who revile his philosophy and mystery initiations as *magia*. The sociologist Émile Durkheim articulated the view, first suggested by Plato in different words, that private rituals were antisocial while public rituals maintained

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<sup>24</sup>David E. Aune, "Magic' in early Christianity and its ancient Mediterranean context: a survey of some recent scholarship." *Annali Di Storia Dell'esegesi* 24, no. 2 (January 1, 2007): 250. See Graf. 113, where he discusses one common pagan practice in which a *magos* eats a ritualistic meal meant to attract a deity to eat with him, who then becomes a divine friend and helper, or *parhedros*, for the *magos* for the rest of his life.

<sup>25</sup>Aune (2007). 260.

social cohesion.<sup>26</sup> Augustine here sees the antisocial *magia* as a threat to social cohesion, whereas the Christian sacraments build it up.

Pagan sacraments threatened the community by encouraging antisocial behavior, but they also represented threats because they entailed service to demons, God's enemies. Augustine's emphasis on intent is important to understanding his view of *magia*, as he demonstrates a patent belief that Christian and pagan miracles can and will look the same on the surface, with the only differences between them being the intention of the miracle-worker and the agent that empowers him as a result of the intention. For example, Exodus 7 portrays the Pharaoh's "wise men and sorcerers" accomplishing the same miracle that Moses does, turning their own staves into serpents. Augustine is clear that the pagans were able to imitate Moses' miracle by the power of demons because of their selfish goal of discrediting the God of the Hebrews, an intention that invited communion with demons and granted these men rights to demonic power. In contrast, Moses performed his miracle by the power of the same God for the deity's glory and in order to obtain freedom for his people.

### *Third Theme: God's Victory*

The third major theme in the following analysis is that the authors use stories involving *mageia* to give concrete accounts of God's victory over supernatural enemies. The sacraments of pagan religion are frequently shown as being in direct conflict with true religion, in the same way that God is in direct conflict with the demons who empower the pagan sacraments, and because of

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<sup>26</sup>Aune (2007). 254.

this, he shows his greatness when he defeats the pagan sacraments and their users. In passages where two men are performing miracles, the one who serves God overcomes, as anyone reading these genres would expect. However, the authors depict God as victorious in these narratives to reflect in human terms the believed reality that he had spiritually overcome the forces of his enemies.

God does not only manifest that he has power: through these passages, the Christian writers show that God's power is greater than the other powers in people's lives. Of course, in some passages, God's servants are martyred. However, each martyred apostle converts people before he dies, and the death itself often catalyzes an observer's conversion, spreading the gospel of Jesus and bringing glory to God. These authors provide narratives which encourage believers when God's victory in the spiritual world may appear abstracted from human life. Paul says in Ephesians 6:12, "For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Yet much of pagan "magical" practice amounted to speaking spell-prayers and performing rituals that would tend to immediate needs that the prayers and sacrifices of the official cult would not affect, or paying a reasonable price to have a professional speak and perform the sacraments for you. These ancient Christian authors make use of pagan sacraments in their writing to bring God into the same space as these pagan magicians and show believers that even there he is the victorious one. They portray a God whose Spirit enters physical

places and defeats physical enemies, whom the believers encountered in their everyday lives.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Magic in the Apostolic Fathers

Early Christian writings appear to prohibit the practice of "magic."

*Didache* 2.2 commands this to the follower of the Way: οὐ μαγεύσεις, οὐ φαρμακεύσεις. Holmes renders this as "you will not practice magic, you will not practice sorcery."<sup>27</sup> Both of these translations are problematic, however. Because no consensus concerning the meaning of "magic" exists in current scholarship, translation of these words as "magic" and "sorcery" provide nothing more than imposition of modern English connotations on ancient writers' uses of these words. It is the purpose of this chapter to offer an alternative understanding of early Christian use of *mageia* and *pharmakeia*, i.e. that these terms are better reckoned as sacraments. I will first examine the treatment of these terms in the Acts of the Apostles and Matthew to provide the context for the ideas we see in the Apostolic Fathers, as many if not all of them were operating with living memories of the Apostles and the writers of the New Testament. I will then examine the didactic literature of the Apostolic Fathers and argue that they differentiate their own sacraments from the sacraments of pagans in terms of the latter group's pride and service to demons rather than to true divinity.

To begin with, the texts of the New Testament certainly do prohibit *pharmakeia*, but no passage in the New Testament ever explicitly prohibits

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<sup>27</sup>Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999. 346.

*mageia*. The apostle Paul condemns *pharmakeia* as a "work of the flesh,"<sup>28</sup> and yet he never discusses *mageia* in his writings. Likewise, the Apocalypse of John condemns *pharmakoi* and places them among those who are thrown into the lake of fire, but the book makes no mention of *magoi*.<sup>29</sup> Terms related to *mageia* appear in the New Testament in Matthew's infancy narrative as a reference to the μάγοι, "wise men," and also in the Acts of the Apostles. In the latter, Luke merely describes individuals who practice *mageia* but relates no commandment about it. Instead of condemning the practice, Luke allows the apostle Peter's rebuke to show the pride associated with *mageia*. This rebuke occurs after Philip the deacon goes to Samaria and encounters a certain Simon. Luke describes Simon in this way:

Ἄνθρωπος δὲ τις ὀνόματι Σίμων προὔπηρχεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μαγεύων καὶ ἐξιστάνων τὸ ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρίας, λέγων εἶναι τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν, ὃ προσεῖχον πάντες ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου λέγοντες Οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη Μεγάλη. προσεῖχον δὲ αὐτῷ διὰ τὸ ἰκανῶ χρόνῳ ταῖς μαγίαις ἐξεστακέναι αὐτούς.

But there was a man named Simon who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the nation of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is that power of God which is called Great." And they gave heed to him, because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.<sup>30</sup>

Simon demonstrates his status as a *magos* because he used to practice *mageia* and to "amaze [the people] with his *mageiai*." Simon "[says] that he himself was somebody great" and the people call him the "power of God which is called

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<sup>28</sup>Galatians 5.20.

<sup>29</sup>Apocalypse of John 21.8.

<sup>30</sup>Acts 8.9-11 (English translation from the Revised Standard Version).

Great." These boasts show his pride and his need for repentance. When Philip comes to Samaria preaching the Gospel, the people believe and receive baptism, and the text mentions that Simon himself believes and receives baptism.

Following this, Peter and John come down from Jerusalem and give the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. The power of God amazes Simon and he wishes to purchase the power for himself. The idea that one can purchase power pervades the ancient discussion of *mageia* and plays a part in many accusations of it. Peter responds with an emphatic rejection of the offer and with this rebuke: "Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."<sup>31</sup> Peter's reply to Simon's offer demonstrates a reversal of Simon's previous situation. Initially, Simon was exalted over others through his own power of *mageia*, but he is humbled by the power of God and by the rebuke of God's representative, Peter. Simon sought his own selfish glory through pagan sacraments, but the apostles sought glory for God through a common sacrament of impartation through laying on hands, and the display of God's glory led to Simon's wish to gain access to the sacrament of baptism. Yet pride, which accompanied his *mageia*, corrupted his desire for the power to perform the sacrament of laying on hands. He seeks this sacrament for the same purpose that he performed his *mageia*, in order to obtain the power of God and "greatness" through his power, without its proper use of benefiting or

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<sup>31</sup>Acts 8.22-23 (RSV): μετανόησον οὖν ἀπὸ τῆς κακίας σου ταύτης, καὶ δεήθητι τοῦ Κυρίου εἰ ἄρα ἀφεθήσεται σοι ἡ ἐπίνοια τῆς καρδίας σου· εἰς γὰρ χολὴν πικρίας καὶ σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας ὁρῶ σε ὄντα.

ordaining others. Peter and John impart the Holy Spirit to spread the presence and power of God to a new priesthood of believers who will bring the gospel to the world. Simon shows no interest in spreading the gospel or empowering believers for ministry, but only in selfish gain, as evidenced by his attempt to purchase access to this sacrament. Peter rebukes his sinful desire for private power outside of its natural context, and Simon repents.

The second passage in Acts 13:5-6 dealing with *mageia* occurs when Paul encounters Bar-Jesus, who is also identified by the name Elymas. The narrator explicitly labels him as a *magos* and implicitly condemns Bar-Jesus' practice through Paul's rebuke, which is similar to the one Simon received in Acts 8. Paul and Barnabas find Bar-Jesus and the narrator describes him thus: "a certain man, a Jewish *magos* and false prophet by the name of Bar-Jesus."<sup>32</sup> Bar-Jesus is either a friend or an advisor to the proconsul Sergius Paulus. When the proconsul seeks to hear the message of Paul and Barnabas, a message which would urge him to abandon pagan practices and gods and to turn to the Christian God, Bar-Jesus tries to stop him from believing, because he fears losing his influence with the official and the resultant high status. Yet God receives the glory when Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, rebukes Bar-Jesus and curses him with blindness: "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of

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<sup>32</sup>Acts 13.6: ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον ᾧ ὄνομα Βαριησοῦ.

the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind and unable to see the sun for a time."<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Simon, Bar-Jesus does not repent. He is the "enemy of righteous," opposing the gospel and opposing God's true messengers. He is a Hebrew who is out of place with the proconsul, because many Jews at the time would have considered him unclean for involving himself with a gentile official, as we see in Peter's words to Cornelius' household: "You yourselves know that it is 'unlawful' for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean."<sup>34</sup> God sends Peter to the gentiles to share the gospel and through this to impart the Holy Spirit, expanding the priesthood of believers even to the gentiles. Bar-Jesus, in contrast, practices *mageia* before gentiles, violating this custom without prompting from God, in order to promote himself rather than the Kingdom of God. He submits neither to the Temple cult in Jerusalem nor the true cult of worship found in the Christian church, making his sacraments illegitimate and inimical to the sacraments of the community of the Apostles.

Paul's rebuke even contains two clear reversals of Hebrew scripture to highlight Bar-Jesus' antisocial and illegitimate practice. First, Paul accuses him of διαστρέφων τὰς ὁδοὺς τοῦ Κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας, "making crooked the straight

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<sup>33</sup>Acts 13.10-11 (RSV): Ὡς πλήρης παντὸς δόλου καὶ πάσης ῥαδιουργίας, υἱὲ διαβόλου, ἐχθρὲ πάσης δικαιοσύνης, οὗ παύσῃ διαστρέφων τὰς ὁδοὺς τοῦ Κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας; καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ χεῖρ Κυρίου ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ ἔσῃ τυφλὸς μὴ βλέπων τὸν ἥλιον ἄχρι καιροῦ.

<sup>34</sup>Acts 10.28 (RSV): ἔφη τε πρὸς αὐτούς Ὑμεῖς ἐπίστασθε ὡς ἀθέμιτόν ἐστιν ἀνδρὶ Ἰουδαίῳ κολλᾶσθαι ἢ προσέρχεσθαι ἀλλοφύλῳ· καὶ οἱ ὁ Θεὸς ἔδειξεν μηδένα κοινὸν ἢ ἀκάθαρτον λέγειν ἄνθρωπον.

paths of the Lord." The phrase is a combination and reversal of Isaiah 40:3-4 (LXX), which says, 'Ετοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν...καὶ ἔσται πάντα τὰ σκολιὰ εἰς εὐθεΐαν, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God...and all the crooked places will become straight." Second, Paul says, ἰδοὺ χεὶρ Κυρίου ἐπὶ σέ "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you." This phrase occurs several times in Ezekiel, when he begins to see a prophetic vision. Ezekiel 1:3 (LXX) says, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐπ' ἐμὲ χεὶρ κυρίου, καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ... "And the hand of the Lord was upon me and I saw and behold...", meaning that the hand of the Lord coming upon him as a prophet brought him greater sight. In contrast, the hand of the Lord coming upon Bar-Jesus the false prophet brings blindness.<sup>35</sup> Sergius Paulus sees the triumphant power of the Holy Spirit over Bar-Jesus' *mageia* and believes the Christian message. In the cases of both Simon and Bar-Jesus, *mageia* is set in opposition to the gospel message and the will of God and is consequently defeated by it.

In contrast, Matthew's Gospel shows *mageia* in concert with the gospel and the will of God. Matthew's infancy narrative contains the only instance of words related to *mageia* in the New Testament outside of Acts. This passage provides insight into the question of why the New Testament writers forbid *pharmakeia* but give no explicit command concerning *mageia*. In Matthew, the *magoi* come to worship the newborn king of Israel and the evangelist ascribes no wrong to them. Herod perceives that "he had been tricked by the *magoi*," but

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<sup>35</sup>cf. Luke 11.20: εἰ δὲ ἐν δακτύλῳ Θεοῦ ἐγὼ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια, ἄρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ. "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Matthew indicates that the *magoi* were "warned in a dream" to depart without reporting to Herod, and thus they do not trick Herod as much as they obey the dream, which he perceives as deception.<sup>36</sup> Yet, this neutral or positive use of *magoi* in Matthew is a "lone exception" to the rule that early Christian literature uses *magos* pejoratively.<sup>37</sup> To recapitulate, the word *magos* comes from the Persian word *maguš* meaning a member of the priestly class, and over time it developed the meaning in Greek culture of one who practiced Persian or foreign rites in dealing with the divine, and it was often used in a pejorative sense to discredit another's practice. However, because the English word "magic" derives from this ancient term, there persists a tendency to conflate the modern understanding of magic with the ancient understanding of *mageia*, a temptation into which most scholars seem to fall. Many English translations of the Bible render *magoi* as "wise men" precisely in order to dissociate these men from the negative connotation of "magical" practice. However, these figures at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel demonstrate *mageia*'s ambiguity and provide the other writers of the New Testament sufficient reason to condemn *pharmakeia* but not to forbid *mageia* outright.

The *Didache*, on the other hand, forbids both *pharmakeia* and *mageia* unequivocally. The *Didache*, also known as *The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles*, was likely written in the early to mid-second

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<sup>36</sup>Matthew 2.12,16: καὶ χρηματισθέντες κατ' ὄναρ μὴ ἀνακάμψαι πρὸς Ἡρώδην, δι' ἄλλης ὁδοῦ ἀνεχώρησαν εἰς τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν... ὅτε Ἡρώδης ἰδὼν ὅτι ἐνεπαίχθη ὑπὸ τῶν μάγων ἐθυμώθη λίαν.

<sup>37</sup>David E. Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006. 380.

century as a catechetical text for those seeking to receive the sacrament of baptism, prescribing necessary belief and practice for a follower of the Way.<sup>38</sup>

*Didache* 5.1 reads thus:

Ἡ δὲ τοῦ θανάτου ὁδὸς ἐστὶν αὕτη· πρῶτον πάντων πονηρὰ ἐστὶ καὶ κατάρας μεστή· φόνοι, μοιχεῖαι, ἐπιθυμίαι, πορνεῖαι, κλοπαί, εἰδωλολατρίαι, μαγεῖαι, φαρμακίαι, ἄρπαγαί, ψευδομαρτυρίαι, ὑποκρίσεις, διπλοκαρδία, δόλος, ὑπερηφανία, κακία, αὐθάδεια, πλεονεξία, αἰσχρολογία, ζηλοτυπία, θρασύτης, ὕψος, ἀλαζονεία, ἀφοβία <θεοῦ>.<sup>39</sup>

But the way of death is this: first of all it is evil and full of a curse: murders, adulteries, lusts, sexual immoralities, thefts, idolatries, *mageiai*, *pharmakeiai*, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisies, duplicity, deceit, boastfulness, malice, audacity, greed, shameful speech, jealousy, overboldness, arrogance, pretension, irreverence <of God>.

This verse prohibits *mageia* and *pharmakeia* in the same breath as idolatry. These three terms lie adjacent to one another, implying a connection between them, as in fact other groups of similar sins lie together, e.g. "adulteries, lusts, instances of sexual immorality." Niederwimmer labels the group in 5.1 "sins of false religion."<sup>40</sup> The groups of vices in 5:1 reflect those in 2.2:

οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ παιδοφθορήσεις, οὐ πορνεύσεις, οὐ κλέψεις, οὐ μαγεύσεις, οὐ φαρμακεύσεις, οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ, οὐδὲ γεννηθὲν ἀποκτενεῖς, οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις τὰ τοῦ πλησίον.

You shall not murder, commit adultery, corrupt children, practice sexual immorality, steal, practice *mageia*, practice *pharmakeia*, murder a child in abortion nor kill a newborn, nor covet the things of your neighbor.

*Mageia* lies adjacent to theft, and *pharmakeia* to killing infants, showing a connection between *mageia* and financial harm and between killing and

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<sup>38</sup>Holmes. 334.

<sup>39</sup>*Didache* 5.1.

<sup>40</sup>Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*. Ed. Harold W. Attridge. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998. 116.

*pharmakeia*, with a further association with potions and poisons.<sup>41</sup> The list in 2.2 omits a reference to idolatry, where it would have fit appropriately with *mageuseis* and *pharmakeuseis*. The Didachist likely omits idolatry in 2.2 because, while 5.1 lists nouns referring to sinful actions, 2.2 lists negative verbal commands not to perform those same sinful acts and no verb form of *eidololatria* is attested. Despite this lack of a verb form, idolatry here has a clear connection to *mageia* and *pharmakeia*.

Another passage of the *Didache* 3.4 also suggests this connection between idolatry and *mageia*:

έκνον μου, μὴ γίνου οἰωνοσκόπος, ἐπειδὴ ὁδηγεῖ εἰς τὴν  
εἰδωλολατρίαν· μηδὲ ἐπαοιδὸς μηδὲ μαθηματικὸς μηδὲ  
περικαθαίρων, μηδὲ θέλε αὐτὰ βλέπειν μηδὲ ἀκούειν· ἐκ γὰρ  
τούτων ἀπάντων εἰδωλολατρία γεννᾶται.

My child, do not become an augur, since it leads to idolatry, nor an enchanter nor an astrologer nor a one performing purifications, nor desire to see these things; for out of all these is born idolatry.

This verse clearly identifies all of these specialties as occupations that lead to idolatry.<sup>42</sup> Augury and astrology seek revelation through visible signs in nature.

The word *ἐπαοιδός* "enchanter" refers to those who use spell-prayers sung in meter, but also likely include those who write and sell such spell-prayers, given the common ancient assumption that *magoi* and *pharmakoi* charge money for their practice. The *περικαθαίρων* "one performing purifications" is an unaffiliated, thus antisocial, priest who cleanses a person through rituals and prayers. This

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<sup>41</sup>These connections are more fully developed in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which the next chapter addresses.

<sup>42</sup>See Augustine, *Sermones* 9: *abstinate uos...a mathematicis, ab haruspibus, a sortilogis, ab auguribus, a sacris sacrilegis*. This verse ties pagan sacraments to divination.

practice was sometimes treated as legitimate in pagan literature, while other times as *mageia* and *goeteia*.<sup>43</sup> Here both pagan treatments are subsumed under practices leading to idolatry, while *mageia* and *pharmakeia*, under which the practices on this list fall, both lead to idolatry but are not synonymous with it. Whereas idolatry refers to worshipping idols, *mageia* as pagan sacraments refers to the rituals and prayers performed in order to petition the idols to use their power or give power to the *magos*.

Further evidence for the understanding of *pharmakeia* as pagan sacramental practice comes from the *Shepherd of Hermas*. This text from the early to mid-second century is an apocalypse with five Visions, ten Mandates and twelve Similitudes, divided into two parts, the first four visions most likely dating from even earlier.<sup>44</sup> *Hermas* entreats Christian leaders to differentiate themselves from those who practice *pharmakeia* in this way: "Therefore now I say to you who lead in the church and sit in honor: do not be like the *pharmakoi*, for they bear their own *pharmaka* into bottles, but you bear your *pharmakon* and poison into your hearts."<sup>45</sup> The author suggests that both the *pharmakoi* and the Christian leaders have *pharmaka* of different sorts. The pagans make their *pharmaka* and put them into bottles or boxes, referring to the physical substances of their practice, whether they are mixed drinks, amulets, written prayers, as well

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<sup>43</sup>Matthew Dickie. *Magic and magicians in the Greco-Roman world*. Psychology Press, 2002. 91f.

<sup>44</sup>Holmes. 445-47.

<sup>45</sup>*Shepherd of Hermas* 17 (3.9): νῦν οὖν ὑμῖν λέγω τοῖς προηγουμένοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῖς πρωτοκαθεδρίταις· μὴ γίνεσθε ὅμοιοι τοῖς φαρμακοῖς. οἱ φαρμακοὶ μὲν οὖν τὰ φάρμακα ἐαυτῶν εἰς τὰς πυξίδας βαστάζουσιν, ὑμεῖς δὲ τὸ φάρμακον ὑμῶν καὶ τὸν ἰὸν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν.

as the various common reagents used out of context, e.g. lead curse tablets, dead animals, bones, poisons, and Egyptian and Babylonian ritual words.<sup>46</sup> These things have no place in everyday Roman provincial society.

Christian leaders must instead bear the spiritual *pharmakon* and *iós* “poison” of the gospel into their hearts. This *pharmakon* may refer to the faith placed in the heart of each leader, in a manner similar to Jeremiah 31:33, in which the Lord says, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."<sup>47</sup> This verse discusses the new covenant that God will establish with the House of Israel. Because the Christians perceive themselves as having been grafted onto Israel, "their God" writes this "law," including the words of Jesus, the Torah and the Prophets as well as the faith to believe these things, on the hearts of "[his] people," emphasizing the communal aspect of the faith and obedience to it.

Additionally, the surrounding context suggests that the author of *Hermas* may refer specifically to the Eucharistic sacrament, by which one receives grace, presumably into the heart. The sentence immediately preceding this command in *Hermas* encourages communal sharing of food, reminiscent of Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul condemns the rich for eating and drinking too much while the poorer believers eat nothing at the feasts meant to

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<sup>46</sup>For the poison and foreign words, see Graf, 72-75; for dead animals, 110; for lead curse tablets, 118ff.

<sup>47</sup>Jeremiah 31.33 (RSV); LXX 38.33: Διδοὺς δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτούς· καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν.

celebrate the Lord's Supper.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, *Hermas* discourages "exulting in wealth, lest the needy groan," that is, not giving food to those in need while having abundance, and this is followed by the command concerning the "*pharmaka*" in the leaders' hearts.<sup>49</sup> This idea of sharing with the poor may allude to Paul's letter and to the communal Eucharist, or it may speak more generally of the faith that God puts in them. In either case, the Christian leaders possess *pharmaka* themselves which they hold in opposition to those of the *pharmakoi*. The mention of poison is strange, although it may reflect a play on two meanings of *ιός*: poison, from the connection between *pharmakeia* and making poisons, and arrow, from the connection between *pharmakeia* and erotic spell-prayers. The Christian leaders have a *pharmakon*, a poison which is a love potion, metaphorically Cupid's arrow cutting "into [their] hearts" and making the leaders fall more in love with God.<sup>50</sup>

Ignatius of Antioch goes a step further than *Hermas*, describing the Eucharistic sacrament explicitly in terms of immortality: "...breaking one bread, which is the *pharmakon* of immortality, an antidote not for dying but for living in Jesus Christ forever."<sup>51</sup> This passage comes from Ignatius' closing remarks to the Ephesians about unity in the church. Ignatius stresses loyalty to the church

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<sup>48</sup>1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

<sup>49</sup>*Shepherd of Hermas* 17.6 (3.9.6): βλέπετε οὖν ὑμεῖς οἱ γαυριώμενοι ἐν τῷ πλούτῳ ὑμῶν, μήποτε στενάζουσιν οἱ ὑστερούμενοι.

<sup>50</sup>For a treatment of a love charm, see David G. Martinez and University of Michigan Library, *P. Mich. 757. P. Michigan XVI: A Greek Love Charm from Egypt*. Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1991.

<sup>51</sup>Ignatius of Antioch. *Epistle to the Ephesians* 20.2: ἓνα ἄρτον κλῶντες, ὃς ἐστὶν φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, ἀντίδοτος τοῦ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν, ἀλλὰ ζῆν ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ διὰ παντός.

leadership and describes the sacrament of the Eucharist as the one ritual around which the whole church can gather and submit to leadership. The Eucharist is a substance that gives eternal life to the one who believes in its power. Holmes translates *pharmakon* as "medicine," which muddles the clear connection Ignatius makes between the remedies given by the pagan *pharmakoi* and the sacramental bread given by the leaders of the church to the faithful.<sup>52</sup> A word like "potion" or "concoction" may serve as an alternate translation that reflects the comparison which Ignatius is clearly making to pagan practice. In the previous chapter, he says this: "All *mageia* was dissolved and every spell disappeared, the ignorance of wickedness was destroyed, the old kingdom was ruined, when God appeared as a man for the newness of eternal life."<sup>53</sup> Here Ignatius, like Origen after him, maintains that *mageia* and other such practices of "the old kingdom" held power before the coming of Christ but that his incarnation made them defunct. Now, for Ignatius, the Christ has come and has given his body to be eaten as the only true *pharmakon*, and those who continue in pagan idolatry indulge in false *pharmaka*. They are false because they do not submit their practice to any human authority and are therefore anti-social, unlike the Christians who, Ignatius says, ought to submit in everything to the bishop who alone can perform or commission others to perform the Christian sacraments. These comparisons are widely used by fathers of the church between the two different sets of sacraments in their minds,

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<sup>52</sup>Holmes. 199.

<sup>53</sup>Ig, Eph. 19.3: ἐλύετο πᾶσα μαγεία καὶ πᾶς δεσμός ἡφανίζετο, κακίας ἄγνοια καθηρεῖτο, παλαιὰ βασιλεία διεφθείρετο, θεοῦ ἀνθρωπίνως φανερουμένου εἰς καινότητα αἰδίου ζωῆς.

the pagan *pharmakeia* on the one hand and the rites of the Christian Church on the other.<sup>54</sup>

It is evident that Paul forbids *φαρμακεία* because of its association with pagan religion and its claim to produce miraculous effects through partnership with demons. This is also the Didachist's understanding, as well as that of several other authors of the early Church. The Didachist explicitly forbids *pharmakeia* and adds *mageia* in order to expand the category of idolatry and of sacraments of pagan religion which must be avoided by followers of Christ. The gospel was as equally opposed to worship of false gods as it was to supplication to them for power. In the next chapter, I will examine *mageia* and *pharmakeia* in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which flesh out this opposition and contain a wide variety of these terms' application to individuals and groups.

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<sup>54</sup>Clement of Alexandria describes the sacrament of baptism with the same vocabulary, as a pharmakon of immortality, *Paedagogus* I.29.5. For more Christian comparisons of baptism and the Eucharist to the pagan pharmaka, see Riemer Roukema, "Early Christianity And Magic." *Annali Di Storia Dell'esegesi* 24.2 (2007): 370f.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Magic in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

In this chapter, I will examine the usage of *mageia*, *pharmakeia*, and related words as they appear in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (*AAA*) is a group of works composed in the first several centuries of the Christian Church. Their authors are anonymous, though scholars have attempted to identify the sources of these works.<sup>55</sup> As the label suggests, these works bear resemblance to, and were likely influenced by, the canonical Acts of the Apostles, although this influence is highly debated, as are many other aspects of this genre.<sup>56</sup> Another point of controversy is the connection between these works and the ancient novel. The *AAA* deal with "magical" vocabulary in a manner that is reflective of the canonical Acts, but these *Acta* contain far more occurrences. I will analyze the five major works in this genre and demonstrate several patterns in them: first, that throughout the *AAA*, apostles are accused of *mageia*, *pharmakeia*, or *goeteia* because their teachings or the powers they manifest are deemed religiously and socially illegitimate; second, that most accusations of these sacramental practices, whether made against or made by an apostle, relate to financial harm caused to someone involved; and

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<sup>55</sup>Jan N. Bremmer, ed. *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*. Vol. 6. Peeters Publishers, 2001. 149ff.

<sup>56</sup>Hans-Josef Klauck. *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction*. Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2008. 2f.

third, that pagan gods, especially Aphrodite, represent an antagonistic force of sinful desire in the AAA.

### *The Acts of John*

The *Acts of John* (*AJ*) tells the story of the apostle from the end of his exile on Patmos to his death, but it contains many gaps. From what remains, we see that John spends much of his time in Ephesus and collects a small group of disciples who travel to and from the city with him, and the work as a whole apparently recounts John's evangelization of Ephesus.<sup>57</sup> The text has undergone many revisions, and the text in the standard edition is now understood to contain sections that were not part of the original, especially sections 1-17, which were possibly even circulated independently.<sup>58</sup> These sections deal with John's arrest under Domitian and exile to Patmos and I include them in my analysis despite their status as a later interpolation because they include a congruous treatment of *pharmakeia*.

The first passage containing a word related to *mageia* occurs at the beginning of an assembly at the theater, which John calls for all the elderly women in the city to receive healing. A crowd of spectators gathers to watch the apostle's performance and a prominent official named Andronicus challenges John to come to the theater without clothes, with nothing in his hands and without

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<sup>57</sup>The author of the original text most likely did not write the *AJ* in Ephesus, but regarding where he did write, scholars propose many different possible locations, including Egypt, East Syria, and Asia Minor. See Klauck. 18.

<sup>58</sup>Klauck. 45.

saying the *magikon* name, referring to John's invocation of Jesus.<sup>59</sup> Andronicus' charge indicates that he views the use of Jesus' name as something with supernatural power in it, or at least as something which John had used elsewhere as if it had such power. This is an example of a pagan's reference to a Christian's miraculous activities with a pejorative label. The apostle is thus on the receiving end of an accusation of *mageia*, an event that occurs throughout the *AAA*. In addition, Andronicus demands that John come forward bare of any device or clothing, demonstrating the idea that clothing can be used to identify someone who practices illegitimate sacraments. Andronicus thereby voices a background concern of which readers of the time may have been aware, one which manifests in a clearer way in the other *AAA*: that those who employ *mageia* to heal people do so for monetary profit, and that deception is involved. By demanding that John not wear clothes or utter a *magikon* name, Andronicus attempts to prevent John from tricking the crowd and taking their money unjustly. In the end, the author uses John's submission to legitimize the apostle's healing ministry.

John concludes the assembly at the theater with a denunciation of various sinners, including *pharmakos*, which appears to be a hybrid of two lists of vices in 1 *Corinthians* and canonical John's Apocalypse.<sup>60</sup> The author modifies the canonical Apocalypse and declares that two vices from that verse, "murderers and *pharmakoi*," merit punishment in "unquenchable fire and greatest darkness,"

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<sup>59</sup>*AJ* 31.10-11: μηδὲ τὸ μαγικὸν ἐκεῖνο ὀνομαζέτω ὄνομα ὃ ἀκήκοα αὐτοῦ λέγοντος "...and let him not name that *magikon* name which I heard him say."

<sup>60</sup>1 Cor. 6:9-10 and Rev. 21:8.

which in the New Testament text reads "the lake burning with fire and sulfur."<sup>61</sup> To these sinners, John adds "sexual perverts,...thieves,...[and] robbers" from 1 Cor. 6:9-10. The context gives little indication of the meaning of *pharmakos* except that it is condemnable. Yet, John's condemnation of *pharmakos* along with these other vices is likely meant to reflect a similar teaching and a link with the ethics taught in the New Testament, since the author lists vices in a similarly formulaic manner.

A gap in the text follows this speech, in which presumably the elderly women are healed and Andronicus converts, as he and his wife appear later as believers, satisfied that John is not a *magos*. The next occurrence of *mageia* comes after this gap in the text, at the miraculous destruction of the temple of Artemis. This event has no historical basis, but the author uses this invention to show the dominance of John's Christ over the cult of the goddess, who symbolizes sinful desire in these *Acta*. John enters the temple complex wearing black garments during "the birthday of the idol's temple," for which everyone else is wearing white festal garments in celebration.<sup>62</sup> His dress sets him in direct conflict with the goddess Artemis' worship going on around him, which he will later decry as *mageia* and *pharmakeia*. Initially, however, the people try to kill him but he rebukes them and then ascends a platform. John challenges the people, "Behold I stand here! You all say that you have a goddess, this Artemis. Pray by her that I alone die. Or if you are not able to do this, I alone will call upon my

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<sup>61</sup>*AJ* 36.8-10: πῦρ ἄσβεστον καὶ σκότος μέγιστον καὶ βυθὸς κολαστηρίων καὶ ἀπειλὰς αἰωνίου.

<sup>62</sup>*AJ* 38.1: ἡ γενέθλιος τοῦ εἰδωλείου.

own God on account of your unbelief and I will put you all to death."<sup>63</sup> John clearly sets the power of his god against that of Artemis, and his "piety" against the people's "old worship."<sup>64</sup> The people ask him to spare them, so he combats Artemis alone. In his prayer to his God, John refers to Artemis as a "so-called god" and a "demon" and identifies her with idols, demons, and unclean spirits.<sup>65</sup> He prays and half the temple collapses and kills a priest inside. Then after declaring the supremacy of his God over the deity of the temple, John says, "Artemis herself should have helped. Her servant should have received help from her and not died. Where is this deity's power? Where are her sacrifices? Her birthdays? Her festivals? Her garlands? Where is her great *mageia* and its sister *pharmakeia*?"<sup>66</sup>

In this passage then, John clearly places *mageia* in the context of Artemis' ability to affect the natural world. He asks why she was unable to stop the physical destruction of her temple, and then asks why sacrifices to her and her celebrations were unable to help her. When John asks about the great *mageia*, he is either speaking of the goddess's own power or the power of her followers. Either understanding places the practice firmly within her cult. John describes the whole practice of the religious worship of Artemis as *mageia*. The same is true of

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<sup>63</sup> AJ 39.11-15: ἰδοὺ ἔστηκα ἐνθάδε· πάντες ὑμεῖς θεὸν εἶναι λέγετε ἔχειν τὴν Ἄρτεμιν· εὗξασθε ἐν ἐκείνῃ ἵνα ἐγὼ μόνος ἀποθάνω· ἢ μόνος ἐγώ, μὴ δυναμένων ὑμῶν τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, τὸν ἰδίόν μου θεὸν ἐπικαλεσάμενος διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν ὑμῶν πάντας ὑμᾶς θανατώσω.

<sup>64</sup> AJ 39.5-6: εὐσέβειαν... τοῖς παλαιοῖς ὑμῶν θρησκευμασι.

<sup>65</sup> AJ 40.

<sup>66</sup> AJ 43.8-12: ἔδει τὴν Ἄρτεμιν βοηθῆσαι αὐτήν· ἔδει τὸν ταύτης δοῦλον βοηθηθῆναι παρ' αὐτῆς καὶ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν. ποῦ ἡ δύναμις τῆς δαίμονος; ποῦ αἱ θυσίαι; ποῦ αἱ γενίθλια ἡμέραι; ποῦ αἱ ἐορταί; ποῦ τὰ στεφανώματα; ποῦ ἡ πολλὴ μαγεία καὶ ἡ ταύτῃ ἀδελφὴ φαρμακεία;

his inclusion of *pharmakeia* here. He calls it the sister of *mageia* and includes it in the cult and power of Artemis. John's triumphant speech inspires the crowd to destroy the remainder of the temple, which may indicate Christ breaking the power of sinful desire as well as the subsequent need for repentance from the sin. To add insult to injury, the brother of the priest, the one whom Artemis could not save, brings the body to John, who then raises the priest from the dead and leads him to faith in Jesus.

Another instance of the impotence of pagan divinity comes from the later addition in sections 9-11. These sections contain repeated use of the term *pharmakon*, referring to some sort of substance connected to the practice of *pharmakeia*. The emperor Domitian hears of John and his message of Jesus proclaimed as king and orders John's arrest in anger. John asks the emperor to provide him with a deadly *pharmakon*. After mixing the *pharmakon* with water and praying to the Lord Jesus to mingle the Holy Spirit into the drink, John drinks the mixture in order to prove the power of God over the power of the substance. John's miraculous survival after drinking the mixture is meant to show more than just the Christian God's ability to sustain life. *Pharmakeia* is connected with the power of pagan deities, and so John's victory over the emperor's *pharmakon* through the power of Jesus is a victory over the gods who helped the emperor's *pharmakos* create the substance.

This victory is especially evident in the second miracle of this episode. At first, Domitian believes the servants brought an innocuous drink in order to spare John and he becomes enraged as a result. John wishes to prove the effectiveness

of the drug and the potency of his God over it, so he asks the emperor to call a condemned man to drink from the cup. When the criminal dies, the emperor is satisfied and Jesus is shown to have saved John truly. Yet Jesus' power manifests in an even greater way when it not only prevents death but it also reverses it. John prays to his Lord, "return [the criminal's] soul to him, in order that Domitian may learn that the Word of God is much more powerful than a *pharmakon* and that he rules over life," and then the apostle raises the man from the dead.<sup>67</sup> Domitian reveres the Christian God after this miracle and commutes John's sentence of death to a sentence of exile.

To sum up, in the AJ, we have seen accusations of *mageia* and *pharmakeia* against John for his Christian sacraments and against pagan religion for its sacraments. We have seen the victory of Christian sacraments over those of pagans and a visible victory of Christ over the demonic powers behind the cult of Artemis in the destruction of her temple, and over death.

### *The Acts of Paul*

The Acts of Paul is also a fragmentary text and there are many gaps. Words related to *mageia* and *pharmakeia* are scarce, although the section dealing with Paul in Ephesus refers to *mageia* and *pharmakeia*. The people in the stadium where the apostle Paul faces a ravenous lion cry out, "Away with the *magus*! Away with the *ph[armakos]*!"<sup>68</sup> No part of the extant document gives an explicit

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<sup>67</sup> 11.11-13: ἀπόδος αὐτῷ τὴν ψυχὴν, ἵνα μάθῃ Δομετιανὸς ὅτι ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ φαρμάκου πολὺ δυνατότερος καὶ ζωῆς δεσπόζει. Λαβόμενος δὲ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ ἀνέστησεν αὐτὸν ζῶντα.

<sup>68</sup> *Acta Pauli* 4.35-36: ὅλος ὁ ὄχλος ἐβόα· ἄραι τὸν μάγον, ἄραι τὸν φ[αρμακόν]; The brackets indicate a restoration by the editor.

reason for the crowd's accusation of *mageia*, but the crowds utter something as they enter the stadium that may provide one possible reason for their accusation. The people exhort each other, saying, ἄγωμεν ἐπὶ τὴν θεωρίαν, ἄγωμεν ἴδωμεν τὸν ἔχοντα τὸν θεὸν θηριομαχοῦντα.<sup>69</sup> The first sentence says, "Let us go to the spectacle!" The second sentence could be rendered two ways, "Let us go and see the one fighting the beasts who has God!" or as "Let us go and see the one who has God as his beast-fighter." The first rendering implies that the people condemn him as a *magos*, because they see the claim of this beast-fight participant to "have God" as an unacceptable or antisocial claim to exclusive or special access to the divine. The second rendering implies that they see his "having God as a beast-fighter," as subjugating a deity for personal protection and for gain. The author could mean either or both understandings of his crime of *mageia* in this instance. If the second rendering is correct, this text contains one of the few instances in the *AAA* where an apostle is described in terms of subjugating a deity, rather than merely violating laws or social norms or opposing a pagan deity.

In addition, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, a separate but apparently related text, contains two accusations of *mageia*, both aimed against Paul by shouting crowds because women to whom he has preached, particularly Thecla, believe in Christ's resurrection and call to celibacy. A crowd shouts, "Away with the *magos*! For he has corrupted our women!"<sup>70</sup> Later, before the judgment seat of the

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<sup>69</sup>*Acta Pauli* 4.7-8.

<sup>70</sup>*Acta Pauli et Theclae* 15.6-7: Καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἔλεγεν Ἀπάγαγε τὸν μάγον· διέφθειρεν γὰρ ἡμῶν πάσας τὰς γυναῖκας.

proconsul, the crowd says, "He is a *magos*! Away with him!"<sup>71</sup> A few moments after this Thecla's mother Theocleia speaks to the proconsul, saying, "Burn [Thecla] the lawless one! Burn the non-bride in the middle of the theater so that all the women taught by this man [Paul] will be afraid!"<sup>72</sup> Thecla is therefore violating social norms and laws by converting to Christianity and obeying Paul's command not to marry and to remain celibate. Paul is blamed and accused of *mageia* as an explanation for her behavior and those of other women who behave in a similar, socially deviant manner. Thecla also receives blame and the people place her on the fire because of her participation with Paul. Other *acta* expand on this point, as we will see when analyzing the Acts of Thomas. However, this is the only instance in which a woman is singled out as an accuser of an apostle in the *AAA*, and it therefore opens the possibility of research into the role of gender in witchcraft accusations.

### *The Acts of Peter*

The Acts of Peter (*APt*) does not survive in its entirety in Greek, but the first portion has been preserved in a Latin translation known as the *Actus Vercellenses*.<sup>73</sup> The Latin preserves the story of the Holy Spirit sending Paul to preach the gospel in Spain and Peter's arrival in Rome for his struggle against

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<sup>71</sup>*Acta Pauli et Theclae* 20.4-6: ὁ δὲ ὄχλος προσαχθέντος πάλιν τοῦ Παύλου περισσοτέρως ἐβόα Μάγος ἐστίν, αἶρε αὐτόν.

<sup>72</sup>*Acta Pauli et Theclae* 20.10-12: Θεοκλεία ἡ μήτηρ αὐτῆς ἀνέκραγεν λέγουσα Κατάκαιε τὴν ἄνομον, κατάκαιε τὴν ἄνυμφον ἐν μέσῳ θεάτρου, ἵνα πᾶσαι αἱ ὑπὸ τοῦτου διδαχθεῖσαι γυναῖκες φοβηθῶσιν.

<sup>73</sup>Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher. *New Testament Apocrypha*. Cambridge: Clarke &, 1992. 277.

Simon Magus, a character borrowed from the canonical Acts and rewritten as an inveterate adversary to the apostles. The Martyrdom of Peter, the last portion of the work, survives in Greek and was circulated by itself for some time, although it was originally part of the *APt*.

The first occurrence of *magia* in the Latin text labels the apostle Paul. After Paul leaves for Spain, Simon comes to Rome and appears to fly over the gate. A rumor has spread that he is a god and is the power of God, a phrase also borrowed from the canonical Acts 8:10. Simon leads the majority of the Christian congregation in Rome away from worshipping Christ, and the text informs that some of these misled Christians, who have come to believe in Simon, now call Paul a *magus*.<sup>74</sup> In fact, the Latin translator selected the adverb *magis* to describe Simon's rise in authority, written adjacent to his name, while, immediately following this, reporting that the people were calling Paul a *magus*. The translator may have intentionally used this play on the similarity of the two words, in order to suggest that Simon had risen in influence and had discredited the apostle by means of *magia*. Paul and Simon have indeed both wrought miracles, so the people do not use the label of *magus* because of actions performed, but instead because of the claims of these two miracle-workers. Simon's impressive claims to divinity and his immediate presence allow him to tarnish Paul's image and to discredit his teaching. Notably, the people also refer to the apostle as a *planus*, "deceiver," derived from the Greek *πλάνοϛ*. The narrator in return refers to Satan

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<sup>74</sup>*Actus Petri cum Simone IV: et magis Simone se exaltante in quibus faciebat, et quorundam eorum cottidianis diebus Paulum magum vocantes, alii planum, et tam magnae multitudinis constabilitae in fide omnes dissoluti sunt.*

as an *inplanator* and the speaking dog accuses Simon of being a *planus* and a *deceptor*.<sup>75</sup>

These words indicating deception demonstrate an important point about the accusations of *magia*, as the alleged *magus* displays real power, but what determines the label of his practice as *magia* is the illegitimacy of that power (within the religious framework of the accuser). In this case, after the people saw the miracles of Simon and believed in his divinity, Paul's teaching became illegitimate to their new, Simon-influenced thinking, and thus Paul becomes a "deceiver" in their minds. The same is true of Simon, whose power is real but illegitimate to the narrator and to Peter. This is because in the following passage, Peter has a vision of Christ, who tells him that Simon is a *magus* and his power comes from Satan.<sup>76</sup> This statement provides explicit confirmation that, in the narrative world of the *APt*, Simon possesses real power, but it comes from partnership with demonic forces. These passages mark the people's exchange of Christianity for Simon's miracles, and the beginning of Peter's campaign to convince them to return to the Christian faith.

Several other times, the author identifies Simon as a *magus* or, once in the surviving Greek text, a *magos*. However, the main use of *magia* describes Simon's actions with three phrases: *magia* (as a noun), *magicum carmen*, and *magica ars*. These variations function interchangeably as means to indicate the element of

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<sup>75</sup>*APcS VII: et in vobis inplanator satanas sagittas suas tendit, ut discederetis a via, XII: ut te argueret et conprobaret planum et deceptorem.*

<sup>76</sup>*APcS V: Petre, quem ti eiecisti de Iudea adprobatum magum Simon...omnes enim qui in me crediderunt dissoluit astutia sua et inergia sua satanas, cuius virtute se adprobat esse.*

*magia* in Simon's activity, with a specific focus on spell-prayers. For example, the author employs each of these phrases in a passage discussing Simon's use of *magia* for the theft of a prominent woman's jewels. Peter reports that he was "doing much harm by means of a *magicum carmen*."<sup>77</sup> The apostle specifies the harm done, that Simon and two other men "by means of *magia* carried off all the woman's gold."<sup>78</sup> Simon bestows invisibility upon his accomplices, so that while he stays in the house of this wealthy woman who welcomes him and gives to the needy whenever he tells her to do so, the two men are able to pass into the house unseen and rob her. This whole procedure is reminiscent of erotic magic and seduction, as an indirect reference to the goddess Aphrodite, who opposes Christian virtue and drives men to follow their sinful passions.

Peter reveals that he discovered Simon's crime when a naked and bound boy in a vision showed him the two other men and told him that they and Simon had stolen a golden satyr, an erotic symbol, "by means of *magica* art." The apostle then reports that Simon "the *magus*, the deceitful demon" stole her jewels, which may have been part of her dowry wealth, "by means of *magicum carmen*."<sup>79</sup> In this passage, each of these various phrases expressed the same idea that Simon and the two men stole by working *magia*. Peter's pejorative identification of him as a demon reflects Christ's earlier claim that Simon received power from Satan, as do the times the narrator refers to Simon as an "angel (or messenger) of Satan,"

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<sup>77</sup>APcS XVII: ...*multa mala facientem magico carmine*.

<sup>78</sup>APcS XVII: ...*magia facta sustulerunt omnem aurum melieris*.

<sup>79</sup>APcS XVII: ...*magica arte; ...mago Simoni instabili daemonio; ...magico carmine facto*.

demonstrated by his "*magica* incantations."<sup>80</sup> The author of *AP* uses *magia* to highlight the illegitimacy of Simon's ministry in opposition to the ministry of the Christian apostle.

### *The Acts of Andrew*

The Acts of Andrew is the least complete of the *AAA*.<sup>81</sup> Fragments survive written in Greek, Latin, Coptic, and most importantly Armenian, but piecing them together has been a challenge for scholars.<sup>82</sup> While the Coptic and Latin texts in particular make much use of "magical" vocabulary, concentrating on exorcisms, the Greek versions of the text do not.<sup>83</sup>

The first appearance of such terms occurs in Andrew's speech at the praetorium of the city Patras. The proconsul, Aegeates, has left for Rome. His wife, a believer named Maximilla, eagerly awaits the arrival of Stratocles, her brother-in-law, because she wants Stratocles to hear Andrew's words and believe, and so when he arrives at the praetorium, she and many others greet him in excitement. In the commotion, one of Stratocles' favorite servants, named Alcman, manifests a demon and lies in a pile of filth. Then, when Maximilla sends word to the apostle and asks him to exorcize the demon possessing the

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<sup>80</sup>*APcS* XVII: ...*angelus satanae qui dicitur*; XVIII: *et carminibus magicis ipsius et adprobare eum angelum satanae esse*; XXXII: ...*angelus satanae*; *MartPet* III: ...τὸ πέρας τοῦ βίου ὁ τοῦ διαβόλου ἄγγελος ἔδωκεν Σίμων.

<sup>81</sup>Jan N. Bremmer, ed. *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*. Peeters, 2000. 15.

<sup>82</sup>Dennis R. MacDonald, ed. *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*. No. 1. Society of Biblical Literature, 1990. 321f.

<sup>83</sup>According to MacDonald 331, the *Laudatio* (*BHG* 100) manuscript has a variant after the first mention of *μάγοι* containing the words *καὶ φαρμακοὶ καὶ περίεργοι*, expanding the idea of *magoi* discussed below.

servant, Andrew agrees to come because of his friendship with the proconsul's wife. He enters the praetorium, wades through the crowd, and addresses Maximilla in the middle of the people, presumably so that they may hear his condemnation:

μάγοι ἐστήκασι μηδὲν δυνάμενοι ποιῆσαι, οἳ καὶ ἀπεγνώκασι τὸν παῖδα, καὶ ἄλλοι οὓς κοινῇ πάντες ὀρῶμεν περιέργους· διὰ τί μὴ δεδύνηται τὸν δεινὸν τοῦτον δαίμονα ἀπελάσαι τοῦ ταλαιπώρου παιδός; ἐπειδὴ συγγενεῖς αὐτοῦ ὑπάρχουσιν. οὗτο γὰρ ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος ὄχλου χρήσιμον λέγειν.

"*Magoi* stand unable to do anything, both those who have given up on the child and others whom we all see meddling in public. Why have they not been able to drive the terrible demon away from the suffering servant? Because they are related to it. It is useful to say this in front of the present crowd."<sup>84</sup>

The apostle's speech reveals that, as he passed through the crowd, he encountered men whom he believed to be *magoi* or recognized from their "meddling in public," an accusation against their selling their pagan sacramental practices in the market. He takes this moment as a chance to denounce them "in front of the present crowd," which has gathered to see what would happen to the servant, because "it is useful." That is, it is useful to exorcize this servant when the *magoi* cannot in order to demonstrate the power of Andrew's god over the powers of these other men. He claims that they are "related" to the demon, reflecting an early version of the Christian view that *mageia* comes from establishing community with demons.

Andrew follows this public pronouncement with a prayer for the servant. He addresses his god as one "who does not listen to *magoi*" and he asks him to

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<sup>84</sup>AA 4.12-17.

"banish the demon whom those related to it had not been able to banish," which is a reference to Jesus' words in Matthew, "a house divided against itself will not stand," which argues that it is the contradiction to claim that demons can be used to cast out demons.<sup>85</sup> Once again, the apostle claims that the *magoi* are related to the demon. The demon flees, vocally acknowledging Andrew's unity with God, and Andrew helps the restored boy to his feet. Because of the miraculous exorcism, Stratocles and Alcman his servant both convert and the Christian God is shown to be victorious.

In another fragment of text called the *Martyrium prius Andreae*, a proconsul named Lesbios says of Andrew: "He is a *magos* and a deceiver. It is not right for us to pay attention to him, but rather to seek the benefaction of the gods."<sup>86</sup> As it is found elsewhere, an apostle in the *AAA* is accused of being a *magos* because he is tied to deceit, and the proconsul encourages remaining in the worship of the traditional gods who have always provided whatever the people needed and have protected them. Later, a group of men attack a man named Antiphanes, who was friendly to the apostle and disparage him as one who has received, "a certain foreign *magos* and corrupter and deceiver and destroyer of the gods and destroyer of the temples."<sup>87</sup> These invectives against the apostle come as

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<sup>85</sup> *AA* 5.1, 6-7: Ὁ μάγοις μὴ ἐπακούων θεός... φυγαδεύων τὸν δαίμονα ὃν οἱ συγγενεῖς αὐτοῦ μὴ δεδύνηται φυγαδεῦσαι.

<sup>86</sup> *Martyrium prius Andreae* 3.9-11: Μάγος ἐστὶν καὶ ἀπατεῶν· οὐ χρή ἡμᾶς προσέχειν αὐτόν, ζητεῖν δὲ μᾶλλον παρὰ τῶν θεῶν τὴν εὐεργεσίαν.

<sup>87</sup> *Martyrium prius Andreae* 9.4-5: Ξένον τινὰ μάγον καὶ λυμεῶνα καὶ ἀπατεῶνα καὶ λυμαντὴν τῶν θεῶν καὶ ἀφανιστὴν τῶν ναῶν.

no surprise, particular those referring to the gods and temples, as the apostle's message calls people away from the practice of the pagan religion.

### *The Acts of Thomas*

The Acts of Thomas (*ATh*) is the only one of the five major *AAA* that seems to have survived in its entirety. Complete versions are extant in Syriac and Greek, both of which seem to have arisen simultaneously from a bilingual environment, rather than one simply being a translation of the other.<sup>88</sup> The *ATh* narrates the life of the apostle Judas Thomas who, after showing reluctance to go to India to spread the gospel message despite the Lord's command and encouragement, is sold into slavery by the risen Jesus to a merchant seeking to buy a carpenter. Thomas is taken to India and travels around the country, preaching, working miracles and encountering many people, the most important being three different kings, the unnamed King of Andropolis, King Gundaphorus and King Misdaeus. Each of these men, or a subordinate, accuses Thomas of *mageia* or similar practice because of financial and social problems created by the apostle's teaching. In what follows, I will deal with the Greek text and its peculiar usage of *mageia* and *pharmakeia*, terms only applied in the *ATh* to Christian sacraments.

The first mention of *pharmakeia* or *mageia* in the *ATh* occurs in the city of Andropolis. Scholars have not definitively connected this "city of man" with a particular port, but the Syriac name for the city, Sandarûk, gives a clue to its

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<sup>88</sup>A.F.J. Klijn. *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*. Leiden: Brill, 2003. 3.

possibly being a port near the mouth of the Indus river in the Singh region.<sup>89</sup>

Thomas and the merchant stop in Andropolis on their journey to India. The king has invited everyone to his daughter's wedding feast, and some inhabitants tell Thomas that the gods brought him to celebrate at the festival. These gods embody sinful desire and indulgence, and Thomas combats their influence by refusing food and drink and avoiding looking at a beautiful female flute-player, presumably to resist all temptation to lust.<sup>90</sup> A cup-bearer notices and strikes him for not looking at the flute-player, who also happens to be Hebrew, so Thomas curses the cup-bearer and prophesies that his hand with which he struck the apostle will be eaten by dogs. The cup-bearer acts as a representative of the pagan gods, who are fighting back when he resists temptation. The apostle overcomes them by declaring the word of God, and the flute-player later confirms that the curse and prophecy did in fact come true.

When the King of Andropolis discovers Thomas' power through the miracle he performs against the cup-bearer, he asks the apostle to pray for the married couple. He prays and leaves, and after an appearance of Jesus, the king's daughter and her bridegroom both decide to remain celibate and serve Thomas' god. The king tears his garments in distress learning of the daughter's decision and orders men to find Thomas the *pharmakos* and bring the apostle to him.<sup>91</sup> He does not state so specifically, but either he wishes to punish Thomas for this

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<sup>89</sup>Jan N. Bremmer (2001).127-31.

<sup>90</sup>*ATh* 4-6.

<sup>91</sup>*ATh* 16.3-6: Ἐξέλθατε ταχέως καὶ περιέλθατε ὅλην τὴν πόλιν, καὶ συλλαβόντες φέρετέ μοι ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν φαρμακὸν τὸν κακῶς παρατυχόντα ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ.

betrayal, or more likely, he seeks the apostle in order to force him to undo the effects of the *pharmakon*, which he believes Thomas must have used on the young couple. King Misdaeus makes a similar request later in the *ATh* concerning a nobleman's wife who also embraces celibacy upon conversion at the words of Thomas. This use of *pharmakos* reflects the pattern present throughout the *AAA* in which men whose wives embrace Christian celibacy accuse the apostle of *mageia* or *pharmakeia*. The religious practice of Thomas offends the King of Andrapolis and his response is an accusation because of the unspoken potential for widespread divorce, childlessness and the disruption of dowries and inherited estates. The king's concern revolves around the potential losses caused by celibacy, both financial and social, as the daughter could have no children as a result of obedience to the apostle.

Financial loss accompanies *mageia* later in the narrative, when King Gundaphar of India commissions Thomas to build him a palace and gives him money for his labor and to buy materials. Instead, the apostle gives away the money to the poor. When the king's friends report what Thomas is doing, they describe him thus:

περιέρχεται τὰς πόλεις καὶ τὰς χώρας, καὶ εἴ τι ἔχει πάντα δίδωσι τοῖς πένησι, καὶ διδάσκει θεὸν νέον ἕνα, καὶ νοσοῦντας θεραπεύει καὶ δαίμονας ἀπελαύνει καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ποιεῖ παράδοξα· καὶ νομίζομεν ἡμεῖς ὅτι μάγος ἐστίν. ἀλλ' αἱ εὐσπλαγχνίαι αὐτοῦ καὶ αἱ ἰάσεις αἱ δωρεὰν ἐξ αὐτοῦ γινόμεναι, ἔτι δὲ τὸ ἀπλοῦν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπιεικὲς καὶ τὸ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ σημαίνει ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν ἢ ἀπόστολος τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ νέου ὃν αὐτὸς καταγγέλλει.

He goes around cities and villages, and if he has anything, he gives all of it to the poor. He teaches one new God, and he heals the sick, drives out demons, and does many other wonders. We think he is a *magos*. But his acts of compassion and healings are from himself and without charge, and moreover, his simplicity and gentleness and faithfulness indicate that

he is a righteous man<sup>92</sup> or an apostle of the new God which he himself proclaims.<sup>93</sup>

The king's friends list the apostle's many good works among the people and say that they consider him a *magos*, yet the term's use here is ambiguous. This usage may be the only positive usage of a *mageia*-related term in the *ATh*, simply acknowledging his role in novel sacraments. The deeds listed before and after its use bear purely positive associations, whether healing, giving to the needy or acts of compassion, with the possible exception of the teaching of the new God. On the other hand, the king's friends specify that Thomas heals "without charge," contrary to the expectation that a *magos* would charge for his miracles, reiterating the idea that *mageia* entails market transactions or even financial loss, just as the king has lost all of his money given for the palace. This use of *magos* may contain a negative association because of the teaching of the new God, the sentiment of an accusation made much later in the narrative by a nobleman of King Misdaeus named Charisius.

Charisius, who has lost his wife Mygdonia to the apostle's exhortation to celibacy, accuses Thomas of being "a Hebrew *magos*... [who] teaches a new God and sets new laws onto [the people] which have never been heard, saying, 'You cannot enter the eternal life which I proclaim to you, if you are not freed from your own wives, and likewise wives, if you are not freed from your own

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<sup>92</sup>Klijn, 65. While the Greek text reads *δίκαιος*, the Syriac text has *magušo*, the equivalent of *magos*.

<sup>93</sup>*ATh* 20.5-12.

husbands."<sup>94</sup> Here, the accusation of *mageia* has no connection to a particular ritual practice. Rather, the apostle's social and relational teaching serves as the basis for the label *magos*. Charisius specifies that Thomas is a Hebrew, a foreigner with foreign ideas that threaten Charisius' culture. He more particularly threatens Charisius' financial situation, as Mygdonia's celibacy and resultant revulsion to him foreshadows divorce and Charisius' loss of her dowry. Charisius therefore spends large portions of the text attempting to seduce his wife back into his bed, without success. While Thomas teaches that celibacy alone is virtuous, this teaching, we learn, deviates completely from social norms and from the decrees of the pagan gods. Charisius complains to his wife, "I am your husband from your virginity, and both the gods and the laws give me the right to rule over you."<sup>95</sup> Elsewhere, King Misdaeus asks Thomas, "Why do you teach this new doctrine, which both gods and men hate, having no benefit?" speaking of celibacy, the new Christian God, or both.<sup>96</sup> These pagans point the Christians to human-made laws, which prescribe proper Indian behavior, and to the gods, who oppose Christian virtue and actively seek to promote indulgence in sinful desire in marriage as seen through the husbands' attempts to seduce their wives.

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<sup>94</sup>*Ath* 101.8, 10-14: Ἐβραῖον μάγον ... καὶ διδάσκει νέον θεὸν καὶ νόμους νέους ἐντίθησιν αὐτοῖς τοὺς μὴ πω ἀκουσθέντας, λέγων· Ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν ἢ ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ἀπαλλαγῇτε ὑμεῖς τῶν ἰδίων γυναικῶν, ὁμοίως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τῶν ἰδίων ἀνδρῶν.

<sup>95</sup>*Ath* 114.7-9: ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἐκ παρθενίας σου γαμέτης, τῶν τε θεῶν καὶ τῶν νόμων ἄρχειν σοῦ μοι διδόντων· τίς ἢ τοσαύτη σου μανία;

<sup>96</sup>*Ath* 126.1-3: Διὰ τί τὴν νέαν ταύτην διδάσκεις διδασκαλίαν, ἣν θεοὶ τε μισοῦσιν καὶ ἄνθρωποι, οὐδὲν ἔχουσα χρήσιμον;

Thomas receives the label of a *magos* and a *pharmakos* in several passages with connections to preaching *μάταιος* "empty" words or to *πλάνος*, "deceit."<sup>97</sup> Charisius attempts to dissuade his wife from heeding the words of the apostle, calling his words "empty and his deeds *magikos*."<sup>98</sup> In a similar conversation, he disparages the apostle to Mygdonia:

ὁ μάγος ἐκεῖνος καὶ πλάνος τοῦτο διδάσκει, ἵνα μή τις συνοικήσῃ γυναικὶ ἰδίᾳ... μὴ πλανῶ λόγοις ἀπατηλοῖς καὶ ματαίοις, μηδὲ τοῖς ἔργοις τῆς μαγείας οἷς ἤκουσα τοῦτον διαπραττόμενον εἰς ὄνομα πατρὸς υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος.

That *magos* and deceiver teaches so that no man may live with his wife... Do not be deceived by illusory and empty words, nor by works of *mageia*, by which, I heard, this is done in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>99</sup>

In both of these instances, Charisius directly attacks the teaching of the apostle for both his teaching and sacraments. He even proceeds in a later conversation with accusations concerning the illegitimacy of Thomas' ministry, asserting, for example, that the apostle does not in fact charge money for his miraculous healings, as a *magos* would, but only because no one is actually healed. These claims are meant to strengthen the accusation of deceit and convince Mygdonia to shake off Thomas' influence.

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<sup>97</sup>Other passages not analyzed here containing an accusation of *mageia* or *pharmakeia* based explicitly or implicitly upon empty or deceitful speech include: Gad's plea for Thomas' death in 21.19-22; Charisius' formal accusation of Thomas before King Misdaeus in 101.18-19; the threat made by Misdaeus' messengers to Thomas' host, Captain Siphor, in 102.10-13; Charisius and Misdaeus' rumor conceived about Thomas in 106.1-4, 20-21; and Charisius' warning to his wife against Thomas 123.15-17; and Misdaeus' warning to his wife against Thomas in 134.6-9, 11-12. All of these lines contain *mageia*- or *pharmakeia*-related terms in close proximity to an explicit reference to *λόγοι ματαίοι* or *πλάνος*, or a statement describing words or acts of Thomas that a speaker portrays as deceitful.

<sup>98</sup>*Ath* 89.11-12: λόγων ματαίων καὶ ἔργα μαγικὰ.

<sup>99</sup>*Ath* 96.5-6, 9-12.

Other accusations against Thomas include inducing madness, acting with hubris, and committing "wickedness and sin" that bring about destruction of the home. Charisius consoles himself about the loss of his wife to her perpetual celibacy by saying that the *pharmakos* Thomas has driven her mad by his own madness.<sup>100</sup> In yet another attempt to seduce his wife, Charisius questions Mygdonia and asserts that her madness and anxiety are caused by the apostle.<sup>101</sup> Charisius and Misdaeus further allege that he has insulted the king.<sup>102</sup> Charisius then insults Thomas directly, calling him "wicked one, destroyer, enemy of my house."<sup>103</sup> Misdaeus complains to Charisius that Thomas has been allowed "to destroy [the king's] house by his [Thomas'] sin" and to lead the king's wife astray with *pharmakeia*.<sup>104</sup> Whether they accuse him of inducing madness or sinning in some way, accusers do so because he has converted their wives and caused division in their homes by teaching Christian celibacy, except for Gad, who levels charges because he is grieved over his brother's loss of money. All their complaints about madness and destruction refer to his message and its social and financial costs, not to his actions. They assert his power to infect minds with lying

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<sup>100</sup> *ATH* 99.18, 25-26: τῆς μανίας τοῦ ξένου... καὶ τάχα ἐμμανὴς γενομένη ὑπὸ τοῦ φαρμακοῦ ἐκείνου μανεῖσα εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐξῆλθεν ζητοῦσα ἐκεῖνον.

<sup>101</sup> *ATH* 114.9: τίς ἢ τοσαύτη σου μανία; ὅτι κατάγελως ἐν παντὶ τῷ ἔθνει γεγέννησαι. ἀλλὰ ἀπόθου τὴν παρ' ἐκείνου τοῦ φαρμακοῦ μέριμναν.

<sup>102</sup> *ATH* 106.20-21: εἶχον κατὰ νοῦν εἰπεῖν ὅτι ὁ βασιλέα ὕβρισεν καὶ πλάνος ἐστὶν ὁ ξένος.

<sup>103</sup> *ATH* 106.1-4: πονηρὲ καὶ ἀφανιστὰ καὶ ἐχθρὲ τοῦ ἐμοῦ οἴκου· ἐμὲ γὰρ ἡ σὴ μαγεία οὐ βλάπτει τὴν γὰρ σὴν μαγείαν ἐπὶ τὴν σὴν κεφαλὴν θήσομαι.

<sup>104</sup> *ATH* 138.6-9: διὰ τί με οὐ συνεχώρησας ἀπολέσαι ἐκεῖνον τὸν φαρμακὸν πρὶν τὸν ἐμὸν οἶκον τῇ ἐαυτοῦ ἀμαρτίᾳ διαφθεῖραι; Καὶ τὸ πᾶν εἶχετο Χαρίσιου. ὁ δὲ Χαρίσιος λέγει· ἰ γὰρ ἐστὶν τὸ συμβεβηκὸς σοι; Ὁ Μισδαῖος ἔφη· Ἐφαρμάκευσεν τὴν ἐρτίαν. This is the only use of the verb form in the *ATH*.

words while at other times denying his power to do anything. These accusations against him are not tied to a particular means of performing miracles, but instead derive from social and financial differences with the apostle, which make his sacraments illegitimate.

One charge against Thomas unique within the *ATH* does in fact connect his *mageia* with particular ritual practices, i.e. the Christian sacraments of unction, baptism, and the Eucharist. Speaking to Thomas and her fellow disciples, Tertia recounts a conversation she had with her husband Misdaeus:

μεταπεμψάμενός με ὁ βασιλεὺς Μισδαῖος ἔλεγέν μοι ὅτι Οὐδέπω σου περιέγονεν ὁ μάγος ἐκεῖνος, ἐπειδὴ περ ὡς ἀκούω ἐλαίῳ καὶ ὕδατι καὶ ἄρτῳ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους μαγεύει, καὶ σὲ οὐδέπω ἐγοήτευσεν· ...οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν οὐδέπω σοι ἔλαιον καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ ἄρτον ἐπέδωκεν, περιγενέσθαι σου οὐκ ἴσχυσεν.

Having summoned me, King Misdaeus said to me, "That *magos* has not yet prevailed over you, since, as I hear, he affects men with his *mageia* by means of oil and water and bread, and he has not yet ensorcelled you... For I know that if he has not yet given you oil and water and bread, he has not had power to prevail over you."<sup>105</sup>

Misdaeus' thoughts reveal two things. First, the power which Misdaeus attributes to Thomas' *mageia* comes from the ways in which the apostle uses reagents in his sacraments, employing oil in unction, water in baptism, and bread in communion. He thus attributes power and *mageia* to the ritual sacraments of Thomas' teaching. Second, Misdaeus mistakenly believes that conversion is something that the apostle compels people to do. This mistake is equally evident in his attempt to convince Thomas "to dissolve the *pharmaka*" which he has used on Charisius'

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<sup>105</sup> *ATH* 152.3-9.

wife, mentioned above.<sup>106</sup> Misdaeus uses *mageia/pharmakeia* as a pejorative for portraying Christian sacraments and teaching in a negative light. He also uses the very negative verb *goeteuo* to describe the intended sinister effect of Thomas' sacraments. This use of a word related to *goeteia* is one of only two in the *ATH*. The other comes when Vazan, Misdaeus' son, asks Thomas to teach him his "goetikos power and art."<sup>107</sup> Vazan, seeking to learn this *goeteia* from Thomas, uses this word reflecting an initially negative view of the Christian sacraments, with which he is nonetheless fascinated. The apostle corrects Vazan and the prince later converts to Christianity.

The only demonstrably positive use of *pharmakeia* in this text occurs in Tertia's conversation with Mygdonia, in which Mygdonia tells her that she has not yet tasted the *pharmakon* of life, and for this reason she can not understand the joy of following Christ, even at the expense of her marriage.<sup>108</sup> This use of *pharmakon* is similar to that of Ignatius of Antioch, among others, who uses *pharmakon* to refer to the Eucharist.<sup>109</sup> This sole positive use demonstrates that *pharmakeia* can refer on occasion to a novel or foreign sacrament without a pejorative sense of accusing illegitimacy, and that Mygdonia refers to the sacrament positively.

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<sup>106</sup> *ATH* 127.7-11: Λέγει ὁ Μισδαῖος τῷ Ἰούδα· Φάρμακα ἕτερα διαλύει ἕτερα φάρμακα, καὶ πληγὰς ἐχίδνης θηριακὴ διαλύει· καὶ σὺ εἰ θέλεις δύνاسαι λύσιν τῶν φαρμάκων ἐκείνων δοῦναι, καὶ εἰρήνην καὶ ὁμόνοιαν τοῦ συνοικεσίου ποιῆσαι.

<sup>107</sup> *ATH* 139.8-9: εἰ γάρ τις γοητικὴ δυνάμις ἐστὶν καὶ τέχνη, λέγε καὶ δίδασκε, κἀγὼ σε ἀπολύω.

<sup>108</sup> *ATH* 135.14: οὐδέπω ἐγεύσω τοῦ τῆς ζωῆς φαρμάκου.

<sup>109</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 20.2: ...breaking one bread, which is the *pharmakon* of immortality, an antidote not of dying, but of living in Jesus Christ forever.

The last occurrences of *mageia/pharmakeia* worthy of note are the instances in which Thomas receives the labels and uses them about himself. All occurrences in the *ATh*, with the exception of the reference to the Eucharist, refer to Thomas or his actions with pejorative sense. Once the apostle prays to the Lord Jesus, thanking him for the opportunity to suffer for the sake of the Lord and that he has been called *magos* and *pharmakos* because of the Lord.<sup>110</sup> The last mention of *pharmakeia* in the *ATh* comes from Thomas' mouth, echoing back King Misdaeus' words:

Καὶ ὁ Μισδαῖος Ἐγὼ οὐκ ἠπείχθην φησὶν σε ἀπολέσαι, ἀλλ' ἠνεσχόμην· σὺ δὲ ἐπίδοσιν ἐποιήσω τῶν σῶν ἔργων, ὥστε τὰ φάρμακά σου ἐν πάσῃ τῇ χώρᾳ ἀκουσθῆναι. ἀλλὰ νῦν τοῦτο πράξω ἵνα σου τὰ φάρμακα συναπόληται καὶ ἵνα ἐξ αὐτῶν καθαρεύσῃ τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν. Καὶ ὁ Ἰούδας ἔφη· αὐτὰ ἃ λέγεις φάρμακα εὖεσθαί μοι καὶ τῶν ἐντεῦθεν οὐδέποτε ἀποστήσονται.

And Misdaeus said, "I have not hastened to destroy you, but I have been patient. Yet you have increased your works, so that your *pharmaka* are heard in all the country. But now I do this, so that your *pharmaka* may be destroyed with you and that our nation may be cleansed of them." And Judah [Thomas] said, "These *pharmaka* which you say will go with me will never depart from those here."<sup>111</sup>

Thomas hears the king refer to his works and teaching as *pharmaka* and, using the same word, declares that what he has taught and the power of God which he has imparted through the sacraments will never depart from the believers of India.

### Conclusion

Each of the five earlier *AAA* has similar yet distinct uses of *mageia*- and *pharmakeia*-words. While Acts of John only contains these words for attacks on

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<sup>110</sup>*ATh* 107.5-6: εὐχαριστῶ σοι κύριε ὅτι διὰ σέ φαρμακὸς ἤκουσα καὶ μάγος.

<sup>111</sup>*ATh* 163.16-22.

paganism, the Acts of Thomas almost exclusively contains these words as pagan attacks on the apostle's sacraments, with the exception of the important description of the Eucharist as a *pharmakon* of life. The Acts of Peter uses them repeatedly to identify the antagonist Simon with Satan, while the antagonists in Acts of Paul and Thecla uses them to highlight the social deviance of the Christian faith over and against pagan culture. In all of these, *mageia/pharmakeia* functions as a label for the actual or imagined working of supernatural power that is illegitimate in the eyes of the accuser. There are a few instances where the power is labeled with these terms because of its novelty rather than its illegitimacy, yet *mageia/pharmakeia* still functions as a label for the miraculous practice of "the other." As we have seen, a sacrament may be deemed illegitimate if it violates social norms and causes or appears to cause financial harm.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Magic in the Apocryphal Gospels

In this chapter, I will survey the use of the terms *mageia*, *goeteia*, and their derivatives in the Apocryphal Gospels. This genre includes texts which resemble the canonical Gospels in that they narrate a portion of the life of Jesus, whether his birth and infancy, his ministry, his passion, or his resurrection. I will examine the use of *mageia* vocabulary and associated activity in the Protevangelium of James and the Gospel of Nicodemus in order to demonstrate further the early Christian understanding of *mageia* as subjective terminology referring to sacraments either novel or illegitimate from the religious perspective of the word's user, but also to expand this understanding to include a forensic idea introduced in the Apocryphal Gospels, i.e. that the legitimacy of sacraments can be determined through testing.

#### *The Protevangelium of James*

The Protevangelium of James, an apocryphal infancy gospel, records the story of the conception of Mary and her life until the birth of Jesus and the entrance of the Magi, with two further stories attached to the end. The work was probably written during the second half of the second century in response to pagan charges against the lineage of Jesus.<sup>112</sup> For example, the pagan Celsus in

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<sup>112</sup>Bart D. Ehrman and Pleše Zlatko. *The Other Gospels: Accounts of Jesus from outside the New Testament*. Oxford: New York, 2014. 21-22.

particular had claimed that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary and a Roman soldier who had seduced her. Origen's famous apologetic response *Contra Celsum* answers these charges by referring to the Protevangelium, which establishes the high christological assertion of Mary's virginity through the narration of Salome's postpartum inspection of Mary.

In the first place, the story of Salome and Mary demonstrates a forensic attitude toward miraculous events and sacraments. Salome hears about the birth of Jesus shortly after it occurs, and when she hears the midwife's claim of Mary's virginity, a claim that invokes the miraculous, Salome doubts. Yet instead of leaving in disbelief, Salome goes into the cave to inspect Mary. Upon inserting her hand and receiving a punishing burn from the Lord, Salome repents, believes Mary's testimony, and receives healing, but only after the claim of the miraculous was tested and proven true.

The Protevangelium also contains the *magoi* of Matthew's infancy narrative as minor characters, often quoting from the canonical gospel in its description of their few actions. As in Matthew, the *magoi* come to Herod and ask him where to find the newborn king of the Jews, they offer the newborn Jesus the traditional gifts, and then they leave. Also as in Matthew, the *magoi* are portrayed in a positive light. They ask Herod, quoting exactly from Matthew with one difference, Ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; εἶδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἦλθομεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτόν, "Where is the one who is born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and we came to worship him." The only difference from this text is that in Matthew the last word reads

αὐτῷ. According to LSJ, the meaning of προσκυνῆσαι "to reverence" as with kings and superiors takes the dative in later Greek, which is the case in Matthew, while using προσκυνῆσαι "to worship gods" takes the accusative, which the Protevangelium uses. The *magoi* not only bow to the infant Jesus as king, but also as God. The author may have changed the words of the *magoi* to highlight Christ's divinity and present these men as his faithful worshippers.

The *magoi* are presented as proper worshippers and foils to the evil king Herod in three ways. First, Herod responds incorrectly to the promise of the Messiah by seeking to deceive the *magoi* and to destroy the newborn Jesus, while these magi come to worship him and to give him rich gifts that point to his divinity. Secondly, Herod is ignorant of the signs in the stars and of the scriptures and he needs to seek knowledge of the Messiah from the high priests, who until this point in the text have treated Mary and the messages of God with reverence and faith, indicating that they are not complicit in Herod's plot. The text states, καὶ μετεπέμψατο τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ ἀνέκρινεν αὐτοὺς...καὶ ἀπέλυσεν αὐτούς "And he summoned the high priests and asked them...and dismissed them." These words reflect a more servile relationship of the high priests to the king, whereas Matthew has, καὶ συναγαγὼν πάντας τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπυνθάνετο παρ' αὐτῶν ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται, "bringing together all the high priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born," implying a more cordial relationship. The text also implies but does not explicitly state that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is the high priest, although there is no indication of his being high priest in the canonical Gospels, yet at the

close of the Protevangelium Zechariah strongly opposes Herod and is in fact martyred for it.

The king must bring potentially hostile priests into his house to question them about the Messiah and then to test the information using the *magoi*, asking them to attempt finding the Messiah and to return if they succeeded. In contrast to Herod, the *magoi* have knowledge of the Messiah from both the stars and the scriptures and come at their prompting. They saw the star and knew to interpret it as a king's birth in Judaea. Finally, an angel warns the *magoi* not to return to Judaea, demonstrating God's favor upon them over Herod and his blessing upon their return home without any further ado. The assistance of the angel implies that their practice of *mageia* is not one that needs repentance, unlike that of Simon or Bar-Jesus in Acts. The *mageia* of these men take place in its proper context, as *mageia* comes from the Persian word *maguš* referring to a particular class of royal Persian priests. One could refer to them as gentiles, as various Christian traditions describe, yet their knowledge of Hebrew scripture and their possible point of origin in Persia suggest that the *magoi* were descendants of Jews who remained after the Babylonian Exile, or at least came from some sort of school of the prophet Daniel which would have had knowledge of Messianic prophecies. In this way, their foreign practice still glorifies God because it is done in its proper historical and communal context.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>The only action of the magi which one may construe as blameworthy is their "mocking" (ἐνεπαίχθη) or deception of Herod. The text uses the same verb that Matthew does to describe Herod's realization that he "had been deluded" by the magi. Both here and in Matthew the verb could imply that the magi had been deceitful, a charge often leveled against men as the basis for an accusation of *mageia*, yet the "mocking" clearly comes after the warning of an angel in both narratives as a counter to Herod's own deception and murderous intent. Thus, the magi are not

The Protevangelium therefore discusses *mageia* in a very positive though minimal way, providing one of early Christianity's few passages demonstrably in favor of *mageia*, denoting the religious practice of pious, foreign men. In addition, this work shows a belief that one can determine the nature of a miraculous event by testing it, but also that such tests can be done for evil reasons or can be improperly conducted.

### *The Gospel of Nicodemus: Acts of Pilate*

The *Acta Pilati* constitutes the first part of the Gospel of Nicodemus, the second part being Christ's Descent into Hell. The two parts were circulated together during the medieval period, but the *Acta* were written at some point after the completion of the canonical gospels and before its first attestation in the writing of Epiphanius in the late fourth century.<sup>114</sup> There are two main Greek texts of the *Acta Pilati*, labeled Greek A and Greek B, with mostly minor differences. The *Acta* expounds on Jesus' trial before Pilate and his crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea's petition for the body and its burial, and Joseph's arrest by the Jewish leaders and release by the risen Jesus. I will analyze two passages in this work that display the author's forensic attitude about *mageia*: Jesus' trial and Joseph's explanation of his escape from prison.

Throughout Jesus' trial, two different religious perspectives shape attitudes about Jesus, as his miracles are interpreted by one group as evidence of divinity

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deceitful but merely obedient to the God whom they just worshipped in the flesh. Herod perceives deceit, but there is no reason to read the actions of the *magoi* as anything worthy of repentance.

<sup>114</sup>Ron Cameron. *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1982. 163f.

and by the other group as evidence of demonic activity. The latter group, the Jewish leaders, come to Pilate with the accusation that Jesus claims to be the son of God and a king and that he seeks to destroy the Mosaic Law. With the first charge of divinity and kingship claims, they mean to inspire fear or anger in Pilate that a rebel leader challenges the authority of the emperor. Pilate ignores this for the moment and instead asks about which law Jesus seeks to destroy. The Jewish leaders say he breaks their "ancestral law" not to heal on the Sabbath and then proceed to list the many and various ailments that Jesus healed and demons that he cast out, after which Pilate asks what his evil deeds are. His question shows that he does not understand these healings as evil but as good and that a claim for evil is unsubstantiated.

The Jewish leaders explain Jesus' healings by claiming that he is a *goēs*, in Latin a *maleficus*, and that he casts out demons by the power of Beelzebub. In a Greek recension, they say that "he does these things by using *mageia* and by having demons at his side."<sup>115</sup> Pilate denies this however and says that Jesus casts out demons by the power of Asclepius, a Greco-Roman god of healing.<sup>116</sup> There is no clear indication what Pilate would have believed about who or what the possessing spirits were, only that he takes their removal as a sign of legitimate supernatural power. The Jewish leaders and Pilate both acknowledge the

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<sup>115</sup> *Acta Pilati* 1.1: μαγείας δὲ χρώμενος ποιεῖ ταύτας καὶ τοὺς δαίμονας ἔχων παρ' ἑαυτοῦ.

<sup>116</sup> Though we cannot know whether the author of the Acts of Pilate knew much about the cult of Asclepius, the healer was born from the union of Apollo and a mortal woman, making him a son of god. He was known for healing people and bringing others back to life from the dead. For more on Asclepius, see Pierre Grimal, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. New York: Blackwell, 1986. 62-63. Pilate's mention of Asclepius may show that the author is aware of a pagan conception of Jesus the healer and of his claim to be the "son of God."

supernatural power exhibited by Jesus' exorcisms, yet they interpret it according to differing religious perspectives. The Jewish leaders believe he violates the law sent by God and so he must work in opposition to God. His power is illegitimate within their religion and so it is relegated to *mageia* or *goeteia*. By contrast, Pilate's pagan religion allows Jesus' exorcisms to coincide with the divine will. Pilate then asks his pagan courier to bring Jesus before him. When the courier sees that Jesus is the man whom the Jews praised on Palm Sunday, he worships him by laying an article of clothing on the ground for Jesus to walk on. Although this man is a gentile pagan, he worships the man whom the Jewish leaders now condemn.

When Jesus walks through the door, images of the emperor on standards held on either side bow to worship Jesus just as the courier did. Pilate notices this miracle and interprets it as legitimate homage paid to a son of God. The Jewish leaders, however, cannot accept that such a supernatural event could happen for one who denies their interpretation of Torah, so they claim the standard-bearers moved the standards to make them appear to bow. Because of their refusal to recognize Jesus, they attack his deeds as either demonic, as above, or here as deception, which often accompanies accusations of *mageia*. The standard-bearers defend themselves, saying, "We are Greek men and temple servants, so how could we worship him? For although we held the images, they bowed themselves and they worshiped him."<sup>117</sup> These men distance themselves from participation in

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<sup>117</sup> *Acta Pilati* (Greek A) 1.5: ἡμεῖς ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες ἐσμεν καὶ ἱερόδουλοι, καὶ πῶς εἴχαμεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ; καὶ γὰρ κατεχόντων ἡμῶν τὰς προτομὰς ἐαυταῖς ἐκάμφθησαν καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ.

supernatural activity associated with Jesus by citing their service before pagan gods. As pagans, they are disinterested in Christ's divinity and so they are reliable witnesses to verify the miracle. Yet, the pagan courier just worshipped Jesus, showing that both the courier and the standard-bearers choose how they will interpret the activity surrounding Jesus within their pagan perspectives. The Jews are not satisfied with the standard-bearers' protests, so in a rather humorous fashion Pilate forensically proves the miracle. He orders that Jesus exit, the Jews select new standard-bearers, the courier escorts Jesus back in through the door, and the images bow once again.

Immediately following Christ's reentry, Pilate's wife tells him of a dream she has suffered and tells him to have nothing to do with Jesus, just as she does in Matthew 27:19. The Jewish leaders accuse Jesus a second time of being a *goes* for giving this dream to his wife. Once again, a sectarian Jewish religious perspective limits interpretation of the supernatural. They attribute the dream to *goeteia* because a dream warning against punishing Jesus must be illegitimate in their eyes. They therefore accuse Jesus again and he gives no direct response. The discussion devolves into an argument over whether Jesus was born of fornication, which these men believe has bearing on the legitimacy of his sacraments. The Jewish leaders summarize their accusations against Jesus, that he "was born of fornication, and he is a *goes* and he calls himself son of God and king."<sup>118</sup> A textual variant has "*magus* and blasphemmer and calling himself son of God." They base their denial of his sonship and kingship on their belief that he was an

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<sup>118</sup> *Acta Pilati* (Greek A) 2.5: ἐκ πορνείας γεγέννηται καὶ γόης ἐστὶν καὶ λέγει ἑαυτὸν υἱὸν θεοῦ καὶ βασιλέα.

illegitimate son, which consequently makes his supernatural power illegitimate and justifies the label *goes* or *magus*, invalidating any claim to connection with their holy God. The Jewish leaders repeat this accusation of *mageia* or *goeteia* several times more in the Acts with no further evidence.

By contrast, Nicodemus the Jew, who lends his name to the title of the gospel, speaks up in defense of Jesus during the trial with a contrary example of *mageia*. He points to the example of Jannes and Jambres; note here that brackets indicate parallels from another version of the text:

καὶ γὰρ Μωϋσῆς ἀποσταλεῖς παρὰ θεοῦ εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἐποίησεν σημεῖα πολλά, ἃ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς ποιῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν Φαραὼ βασιλέως Αἰγυπτου. καὶ ἦσαν ἐκεῖ ἄνδρες θεράποντες Φαραὼ Ἰαννῆς καὶ Ἰαμβρῆς [εἶτα εἶχεν ὁ Φαραὼ καὶ μάγους δύο], καὶ ἐποίησαν καὶ αὐτοὶ σημεῖα [μαγικῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενοι] οὐκ ὀλίγα ἃ ἐποίει Μωϋσῆς, καὶ εἶχον αὐτοὺς οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι ὡς θεοὺς, τὸν Ἰαννῆν καὶ τὸν Ἰαμβρῆν. καὶ ἐπειδὴ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίησαν οὐκ ἦσαν ἐκ θεοῦ, ἀπώλοντο καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ οἱ πιστεύοντες αὐτοῖς. [οὗτος οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Λάζαρον ἀνέστησεν, καὶ ζῇ.] καὶ νῦν ἄφετε τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἄξιος θανάτου.<sup>119</sup>

For Moses was sent by God to Egypt and did many signs which God told him to do before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And there were men there serving Pharaoh, Jannes and Jambres [then Pharaoh also had two *magoi*], and they also did not a few signs [using *magikos* skill] which Moses did, and the Egyptians held them as gods, both Jannes and Jambres. And since the signs which they did were not from God, both they and the ones believing them perished. [So this Jesus raised Lazarus and he lives.] So now let this man go, for he is not worthy of death.

Thus Nicodemus narrates Moses' confrontation with the Pharaoh of the Exodus and his *magoi* Jannes and Jambres. His argument says that men who do signs are proven to be either from God or from men, and therefore *magoi* in the latter case, by their lasting effect. Jannes and Jambres did signs, but Moses knew the plan of God by revelation, and their opposition to God's plan proved that they were

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<sup>119</sup> *Acta Pilati* (Greek A) 5.1; brackets indicate parallels from Greek B; the translation is my own.

*magoi*. However, the Egyptians saw their signs and trusted in them. Egyptian religion allowed these men to do these things in unity with divinity, and Nicodemus says they even "held them as gods," and so they were not *magoi* in the perception of the Egyptians. However, according to Nicodemus, Jannes and Jambres and all their followers perished. Their deaths thereby proved their incompatibility with divinity and revealed their works as *mageia*.

Nicodemus then argues that Jesus' case is the opposite of that of Jannes and Jambres. Like the Egyptian *magoi*, Jesus has done many signs and some perceived these as from God while others perceived his works as *mageia*. Jews who believe that Jesus' works are from God have a perspective that allows the Jewish Messiah to be the son of God and they see Jesus' miracles as proof of his Messianic claim. The Jewish leaders choose to exclude this possibility in favor of their midrashic tradition, and his claim to be the son of God becomes blasphemy and *mageia*. But, for Nicodemus, the important difference between Jannes and Jambres on the one hand and Jesus on the other, is that their works did not last, while Jesus' works are lasting and he mentions that Lazarus whom Jesus raised still lives. In his argument, the proof of *mageia* is its ephemeral nature, yet the effects of Jesus' practice remain, and so he is not yet demonstrably son of God or a *magos*, only a man yet to be tested.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Jesus' followers are therefore convinced that his deeds demonstrate his divinity in the same way that the Egyptians were convinced concerning their *magoi*. Nicodemus says in Acta Pilati (Greek A) 5.1: εἰ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐστὶν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ποιεῖ, σταθήσονται, εἰ δὲ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, καταλυθήσονται. "If the signs which he does are from God, they will stand, but if they are from men, they will be destroyed." Nicodemus advocates waiting to act against Jesus until the passage of time proves his divinity or guilt. Gamaliel makes a similar argument in Acts 5:35-39 concerning the influence of the Apostles.

Nicodemus' ultimately unsuccessful defense of Christ shows two aspects of the author's understanding of the meaning of *mageia* and *goeteia*. The first aspect is that an accusation of *mageia* comes from those who perceive a particular use of supernatural power as illegitimate, but that conflicting religious perspectives will differ in their accusation or veneration of any particular miraculous practice. In other words, Nicodemus labels Jambres and Jambres as *magoi* and venerates Moses as a servant of God, yet the Egyptians venerated the two men as gods and opposed Moses. The author, through the mouth of Nicodemus, shows an insight into the subjective use of *mageia* similar to that of the writers of the Apocryphal Acts, which have characters in opposing religious systems refer to each other in terms of *mageia*, e.g. in the Acts of Peter, Simon's followers label Paul as *magos* while Peter labels Simon as such. The second aspect is the author's belief in the ability to test works to determine whether or not they constitute *mageia*. The author reveals this idea both when Pilate tests the miracle of the bowing images by trying to reproduce it, and when Nicodemus asks the Jewish leaders to wait to see if Jesus' works are lasting. Circumstances and the passage of time validate the sacraments of a particular person as legitimate or prove them to be illegitimate. Passage of time and death proved Jannes and Jambres to be *magoi*, while Lazarus' ongoing life functions as Nicodemus' proof of the legitimacy of Jesus' sacraments.

This same concept of testing *mageia* also appears in Joseph of Arimathea's explanation of his miraculous escape from custody. After Jesus died and Joseph buried his body, the Jewish leaders were angry with Joseph and wanted to prevent

him from interfering with Jesus' body any further, so they locked him in a room to which the high priest had the only key. However, when they open the door to release him, they are unable to find him. After Jesus' ascension, Joseph reappears and the Jewish leaders ask him how he escaped. This is the part of his explanation that has pertinence to the testing of *mageia*:

καὶ ἀναβλέψας εἶδον τὸν Ἰησοῦν· καὶ ἔντρομος γενόμενος ἐδόκουν  
φάντασμα εἶναι, καὶ τὰ προστάγματα ἔλεγον· καὶ αὐτὸς συνέλεγέν μοι.  
καὶ ὥς οὐκ ἄγνοεῖτε ὅτι φάντασμα, ἐὰν συναντήσῃ τινὶ καὶ ἀκούσῃ τῶν  
προσταγμάτων, φυγὴ φεύγει· καὶ ἰδὼν ὅτι συνέλεγέν μοι, εἶπον αὐτῷ  
Ῥαββὶ Ἠλίας. καὶ εἶπέν μοι Οὐκ εἰμι Ἠλίας. καὶ εἶπον αὐτῷ ἰς εἴ, κύριε;  
καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς...<sup>121</sup>

And looking up I saw Jesus. Trembling, I thought it was a phantom so I started saying the commandments, and he said them with me. And you are not ignorant that if a phantom approaches someone and hears the commandments, it flees immediately. Seeing that he said them with me, I said to him, "Rabbi Elijah!" And he said to me, "I am not Elijah." And I said to him, "Who are you, lord?" And he said to me, "I am Jesus..."

While this passage does not mention *mageia* or *goeteia*, it describes a unique sacrament that introduces a level of testing phantoms extending beyond its scope in the New Testament. In Matthew 14:26 and Mark 6:49, the disciples see Jesus walking on the water and say that he is a φάντασμα, "phantom," and he dispels their doubt by speaking and drawing Peter to miraculously walk on the water with him. In Luke 24, when Jesus appears to the disciples, they think he is a "spirit" but he verifies his bodily resurrection by showing them the scars in his flesh and by eating fish they give him, whereas in John 21 Jesus gives the disciples food to eat. In all four canonical Gospels, Jesus is proven, before and after resurrection, not to be a phantom or spirit by his physical interaction with the material world.

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<sup>121</sup> *Acta Pilati* 15.6.

In the *Acta Pilati*, however, Jesus' physical interactions with Joseph, speaking to him and touching his feet and kissing him, do not prove Jesus' resurrection. Even after the physical interaction, when Joseph finally opens his eyes to see the Lord, Joseph then states that he thought it was a phantom, implying the belief that phantoms can feign physical interaction. While standing in the midst of the Jewish leaders, Joseph states very clearly that recitation of the commandments drives away phantoms and asserts that such a ritual is commonly known to the characters of the *Acta Pilati*.

This commonly held knowledge serves as Joseph's evidence that Jesus was present in the flesh, since Jesus did not flee but instead joined the sacrament intended to drive him away and participated in the recitation. If the Jewish leaders did not accept the practice of driving away phantoms by recitation, they would not have believed Joseph, but they accept his evidence and become deeply distressed, and begin to question their perspective on the interpretation of Torah. Since they accused Jesus of *mageia* and *goeteia* for his successful exorcisms and believed Jesus interacted with demons, it would have been reasonable for the leaders to accuse Joseph of *mageia* for interacting with a phantom of Jesus. Without the sacrament of reciting the commandments to verify Jesus' bodily resurrection, Joseph would have been liable to the same charge of *mageia* that Jesus faced. Instead, the Jewish leaders "became like dead men and fell to the ground, and they fasted until the ninth hour," and Nicodemus and Joseph must comfort them in order for them to eat.<sup>122</sup> Later, the leaders are corporately reminded of Simeon's

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<sup>122</sup>*Acta Pilati* 16.1: ἐγένοντο ὥσεί νεκροὶ καὶ ἔπεσαν χαμαί, καὶ ἐνήστευσαν ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης.

prophecy about Jesus as the Messiah from Luke 2, and they decide to follow Nicodemus' advice to wait and test if Jesus' ministry was *mageia* or from God, relenting from their earlier vehemence and concluding that if Jesus is remembered at the next year of Jubilee, he is a prophet of God.

In this chapter, we have seen that writers of the Apocryphal Gospels understand that *mageia* and *goeteia* are subjective terms, used to discredit sacraments deemed illegitimate by the speaker or, in the case of the *magoi* of Christ's infancy, to denote foreign or unfamiliar religious practice, and that the legitimacy of these sacraments is proven or disproven by complex testing in a court of law.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined the use of *mageia*, *goeteia*, *pharmakeia*, and related words in early Christian literature, particularly in the didactic literature of the Apostolic Fathers, in the narratives of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and in testimonies of Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels. In these texts, we have seen a wide variety in the employment of "magical" terminology.

The primary uses of these terms in the Apostolic Fathers refer to the sacraments of the pagan religion in the surrounding culture, in order to differentiate the Fathers' own emerging religious rituals from those of the pagans. These authors then label themselves and their sacraments of baptism and Eucharist with "magical" terms to place them in opposition to pagan practices, and they even conceive of these two sets of sacraments as being in combat with one another. Through their ability to apply these labels to themselves, the Apostolic Fathers demonstrate an awareness of the truly subjective nature of "magical" vocabulary.

The authors of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles take up the self-labeling of the Apostolic Fathers and construct stories in which the apostles condemn pagan appeals to supernatural power, whether that is Andrew mocking the pagans' impotence in the exorcism of a demon or it is John denouncing and assailing the entire cult of Artemis. Yet these authors also demonstrate a distinct

awareness of magic's subjectivity, and accordingly they depict pagan characters who condemn the apostles for their teachings and their displays of God's power as magic. Contradictory theological claims, such as those between the apostles who preach one God and the pagans who serve many, lead to conflicting views about the legitimacy of various petitions for divine power.

These conflicting views come to life in the Apocryphal Gospels, where magic's subjectivity is developed further. The authors of these Gospels introduce the notion that the legitimacy of a discharge of supernatural power is demonstrable, and that one can test the sacraments or miracles of an individual to determine whether or not they constitute "magic" within a particular view or religion.

In addition to an awareness of magic's subjectivity, the authors all of these early Christian texts display knowledge of the teaching of the Old and New Testaments on idols, the demonic false gods who inhabited them, and the prohibitions against worshipping or interacting with these beings. The author of the Acts of Peter, for example, portrays the subjective use of *magus* and other pejoratives against both Paul the apostle and Simon the pagan yet, through the authoritative character of Jesus, declares Simon's power to be illegitimate and demonic. The authors of these texts both acknowledge that the pejoratives they use are subjective and teach that all sacraments which do not petition beings other than God receive their power from demons and work in opposition to God. This usage differs from that present in the Rabbinic literature concerning the fallen angels' involvement in magical rites. In that genre, the demons teach men the

knowledge and skill of magic, but there is not the distinct indication that the demons themselves supplied power to these sacraments; instead the knowledge and the uttered words themselves seem provide the power.<sup>123</sup> The pagan gods of the Christian literature treated in this thesis are equated with demons and they are shown to fight directly against the apostles and their teachings.

In this way, through the literary use of "magic," the authors bring the conflict between God and demons into the context of human agents, pitting the servants of each against each other. They create narratives in which God and his messengers take visible victory over the demons that empower the sacraments of the pagans. In the Acts of Peter, Jesus strikes Simon out of the sky after his attempt to ascend to heaven, and in the Acts of Thomas, the apostle curses the cup-bearer who tries to enforce the gods' indulgent spirit at the wedding feast. Christian readers only encounter one of these demonic enemies on a regular basis, the temptation towards sin, but these stories put the spiritual forces behind temptation on the same level as those who enable flying through the air and reanimating corpses. God's victories over these actions of his enemies in this literature serve as encouragements to believers. In James' Proto-Gospel, God corrects Salome's disbelief and the images of the emperor himself bow before the presence of Jesus in the Gospel of Nicodemus. These stories of sacraments in combat provide an incarnation of God's power over darkness in the same way that the Eucharist provides an incarnation of the presence of the Lord.

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<sup>123</sup> Annette Y. Reed, *Fallen angels and the history of Judaism and Christianity: The reception of Enochic literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. 32. See also Joshua Levinson, "Enchanting Rabbis: Contest Narratives between Rabbis and Magicians in Late Antiquity." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 1 (2010): 54-94.

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