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The Discourse of Prayer in the Major Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

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Summary

This article presents a linguistic analysis of the prayers in the five major Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. In the first part, the prayers are described in terms of form and structural elements. The second part offers a comparison with direct speech in the same works and Christian prayers and Greek prayers from other sources. The results suggest that this relatively uncharacterised discourse, closer to colloquial speech than any religious model, offers an authentic example of early Christian prayer.

Cet article offre une analyse linguistique des prières dans les cinq principaux Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres. Dans la prèmiere partie, les prières sont décrites au niveau de forme et composition. Dans la deuxième partie elles sont comparées aux discours directs dans les mêmes textes et aux prières chrétiennes et grecques d'origine differente. Selon les résultats, il paraît que ce discours non marqué, qui rapproche le discours direct plûtot qu'une tradition réligieuse, exemplifie la prière authentique des premiers chrétiens.

Introduction

Προσευχόμενοι δὲ μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὥσπερ οἱ ἐθνικοί (Matt. 6:7)
ἐγὼ δὲ ᾔδειν ὅτι πάντοτέ μου ἀκούεις, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὄχλον τὸν περιεστῶτα εἶπον, ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. (John 11:42)

Theory and aim

The verses above highlight two ways in which the discourse of prayer may serve as more than an intimate conversation between the precator[2] and God. It may, as in the second quotation, be used as an explicit vehicle for Christian teaching, or it may take the form of an implicit contrast between the example given and other current practices, as the first quotation suggests. Such motivations are central to the literary use of prayer-texts: these are usually composed by the author

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[1] The first version of this study was written while a member of the Faculty of Classics and St. John's College, University of Cambridge. I would like to offer my thanks to these institutions, my supervisor Prof. G.C. Horrocks, Dr. Simon Pulleyn of Merton College, Oxford, and Prof. J.K. Elliott of Leeds University.
[2] There is no satisfactory term in English for the agent of the prayer. I have therefore borrowed this word, only attested in ante-classical Latin.

for a particular purpose, although they must contain some features of current practice in order to be identifiable as prayers. A study of Christian prayer founded upon such distinctions will produce important insights into the practice of the early Church. Prayer can be seen as a reflection of the concerns of Christian society, not only in its content but in its form and language. Some features may be unconscious, revealing the effect of background influences, while others could be consciously developed or imitated either as a form of self-definition or with more didactic intent.

The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles are the writings of popular Christianity from the second and third centuries. They share many features with the Greek novel and come from a similar background.[3] There are five principal texts, the *Acts of John* (AJ), *Acts of Paul and Thekla* (AP), *Acts of Peter and Simon* (APe), *Acts of Thomas* (ATh) and *Acts of Andrew* (AA).[4] All were originally composed in an educated form of the Greek Koine, apart from the Syriac *Acts of Thomas*, although the *Acts of Peter* are mostly preserved only in Latin. These texts reflect the engagement of Christianity with Hellenistic culture. They function not only as entertaining and didactic writings for the converted readership but also as a contribution to the Christian-pagan polemic.[5] The way this is manifested in the prayers is of considerable importance. If the Church preserved a simple, unadorned language of prayer which differed from that of other religions, this is significant not only in its presentation in these texts but also as a reflection of Christian practice. On the other hand, any similarities to pagan prayers would reveal the influence of other traditions upon Christianity. Of course, it must be remembered that only a certain amount of information on practice can be taken from literary texts. We should also be wary of treating the Apocryphal Acts as a homogeneous ensemble, although I believe that the practice of this study is justified by the external tradition of Christian prayer which informed the authors in their work.

For the purpose of this study, I have considered as prayers all passages which contain second-person addresses to God, some ninety-six in total.[6] My chief aim is to establish the similarities between these prayer-texts in these writings by an internal study and comment on particular recurrent features which appear to contribute to the discourse of prayer. Such elements can also be considered as representative of the actual Christian practice underlying these literary examples, although the reliability of this will be examined in the discussion of the treatment of other forms of discourse. The study will touch on the influences of other traditions on the Church, suggesting which elements, if any, may be peculiarly Christian and explore the use of these in the dialogue with pagans. The results of this work will, I hope, present a basis for more detailed linguistic comparisons of the form and language of prayer in the early Church.

Part One: Form and Structure

The rôle of prayers in the individual Acts

The use and range of prayers varies considerably between the different Apocryphal Acts. Prayer pervades the texts of AJ and ATh. There are numerous one-line prayers as well as extended prayers at key moments: the strong link between prayer and miracles (e.g. AJ 22, 41) is important for the theological presentation. Several texts have a lengthy prayer which follows the apostle's farewell discourse (AJ 112-4, ATh 144-8, AA 63), although the moment of death is marked by an epigrammatic invocation. The frequency of requests is clearly intended to present a picture of a Christian life of prayer.[7] In AJ, most of the prayers are spoken by the apostle, although he encourages others to pray (e.g. AJ 82). In ATh, however, many people address the Christian God, including some pagans! There are fewer prayers in AP and APe: these are also much shorter texts.

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[3] On the "popular" character of these texts, see Pervo in Morgan-Stoneman (1994) pp.242-4, 251 and Reardon (1971) p.305. For the links with the novel, further information may be found in Söder (1932), Kaestli in Bovon (1981) pp.57-67. Hägg notes that the readers of the novel were the first group among which Christianity was accepted (1983 p.90, see also pp.160-1).

[4] This is the accepted chronological order (on the problems of dating, see Davies (1980) pp.6-8. The abbreviations are those used in the *Corpus Christianorum*. It should be noted that AP in this study refers solely to the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* and not to any associated texts (see Bovon 1981 p.295).

[5] See especially Morgan-Stoneman (1994) p.8 and the discussions of propaganda in Junod-Kaestli (1983) p.685 and Prieur (1989) pp.382-3.

[6] On this definition of prayer, compare Aubriot-Sévin (1992) p.24. Each prayer is designated by the abbreviation for the work, followed by its paragraph number in the edition used (see bibliography). When a paragraph contains more than one prayer, the order of appearance is indicated by i, ii or iii.

[7] Similar to the New Testament, especially the canonical Acts of the Apostles (see Plymale (1991) p.4). Hamman's suggestion (1966 p.69) that these texts formed a catechism has not found support.

The majority in AP are one-liners, but I have also considered the longer prayer in the supplement (AP Supp.). The Martyrdom of Peter, the only part remaining in Greek, preserves two prayers. Although these contain a number of anomalies, they still differ from the formulaic final prayers of later hagiography. Prayers are also found with the descriptions of liturgical worship in the longer Acts. The prayer-texts are not merely a device to vary the narrative voice, since they could be omitted without damaging the plot. The inclusion of the words of the prayer therefore has a literary function, be it an implicit contrast or an explicit example. Most prayers contain references to the particular situation which are lost if taken out of context.

Types of prayer-texts

There is much variation in structure between the prayer-texts of these Acts. Not all second-person addresses to God contain a request, so it is necessary to distinguish two sub-classes as well as prayers proper. Most addresses without request I have called **invocations**. These can often be an implicit prayer: if God were present, he would act (cf. AJ 24, AP 28, ATh 27ii). Some texts contain particular formulae of thanks, e.g. δόξα σοι, εὐχαριστοῦμεν σε, but no request. These are referred to as **thanksgivings**.[8] Although not prayers *stricto sensu*, these supplementary groups provide further evidence of the close relationship of Christians with God as depicted in these texts. God can be addressed at any time, in any situation, with any length of prayer. This familiarity with the divinity is another contribution to the pagan-Christian dialogue, which may also be held up as an example to members of the Church. Eight of the prayers in these texts appear in a liturgical context, often combining elements of invocation and thanksgiving, commemorating God's deeds and calling for his presence.[9] These baptismal prayers (ATh 121, 132) and eucharistic thanksgivings (AJ 85, 107; ATh 49, 50, 133, 158) can be analysed in a similar way, even if the request structure is not so pronounced. They also feature a considerable amount of rhetorical elaboration and repetition, which was a feature of the improvised liturgical prayers of the early Church. The similarity with accounts of early liturgies makes it likely that the author was imitating current practice.[10]

Structure

The structure is one of the most characteristic features of prayers. The traditional analysis of classical Greek prayers developed by Ausfeld consists of a tripartite division into *inuocatio* (name, epithets, description), *pars epica* (narrative explaining reason for prayer, relationship to divinity) and *preces* (the content of a prayer).[11] This scheme, however, was developed for pagan prayers, which differ significantly in certain aspects from their Christian counterparts.[12] Pagan prayers often take the form of a transactional bargain, hence the substantial *pars epica* in order to persuade the divinity. The form of words, in particular the address, can be crucial to the success of the prayer, which may result in an extended *inuocatio* with various formulae. It was also believed that a valid prayer could exert considerable pressure on the divinity. Accordingly, much care was taken over the correct formulation, as with the pronouncement of a magic spell.[13]

Christian prayers, on the other hand, are requests to an omnipresent God, whose name is known and who has replaced all covenantal bargains by his incarnation, death and resurrection. These theological differences naturally exert a strong influence on the construction as well as the content of the prayer. In order to provide a more detailed analysis, it is necessary to re-define

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[8] Of the ninety-six passages under consideration, I have classified twelve as **invocations** and seventeen as **thanksgivings**.

[9] Three of these are **thanksgivings** and two **invocations**, although there are also three general prayers which may be classified as liturgical **invocations** (ATh 27i,121 and 133): the categories are not watertight.

[10] On the importance of structure in improvised prayer, see Lightfoot in Lebreton (1924) p.17. General information about improvisatory prayer can be found in von Severus (1972) 1250, Jungmann (1989) p.1.

[11] Ausfeld (1903). See further Versnel (1981) p.2, Kiley (1997) p.123.

[12] Compare the conceptual differences between Jewish and Greek prayers assembled by Pulleyn (1997 p.19-21) and his summary of the mentality of Greek prayer (p.36).

[13] It should be noted that it is misleading to speak of pagan prayer as a unity, although only an outline summary can be offered here. Works devoted to Ancient Greek prayer (Pulleyn 1997, Aubriot-Sévin 1992) note that there seems to be no developed language of prayer, although there are certain formulaic features and technical terms (Cameron 1939). The discourse of Roman prayer, which has a particularly civic function, is clearly marked as a stylized, archaizing form of language (Ogilvie 1969). The prayers closest to the milieu of these texts are perhaps those from Hellenistic religion, heavily influenced by Egyptian cults and magical practices, along with various other syncretic features. There will also have been considerable variation in religious practice across the social spectrum. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed comparison with pagan practices, although I hope to give indications of possible areas of further study.

slightly the three categories listed above. For Christian prayers, the *inuocatio* consists of the **address**, the name or title, usually in the vocative, and the **predication**, the enumeration of the attributes of the addressee. There are three major forms of predication, using a participle, a noun or a finite verb. Many of the second-person verbs which would have been included in the pagan *pars epica* are re-analysed as predication, because they are doxological in function: the bargaining element is absent from most Christian prayers. The remaining *pars epica* therefore becomes the **narration**, consisting of the description of past actions or present circumstances, often including self-reference by the precator. The vital element of the *preces* is the **request**, consisting of the phrase containing the imperative, although the details can be further specified by a purpose clause which anticipates the answer to the prayer. A combination of these elements is found in most prayers, appearing in roughly the same order, despite a considerable amount of variation and repetition. Similar constituents are usually grouped together and often share a unifying sentence-structure, which is used to form a pattern of groups within a particular topic.

The *inuocatio* (address and predication)

The first address usually comes at the opening of prayers, although this can be postponed by a narration describing the circumstances which prompt the prayer (as in APe 39, ATh 65). The analysis by **address** shows the high proportion of vocatives used in Christian prayer.[14] Many of these consist of one or both elements of the name Jesus Christ. The rhetorical particle ὦ is only twice used before the name, at ATh 39 and 80.[15] Despite Jesus' promise "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you" (John 16:23), it is clear that his name is used in apostrophe rather than as an indispensable element of the prayer.[16] This is also shown in the familiarity of the address, e.g. Ἰησοῦ μου (AJ 43). Most prayers are addressed directly to Jesus: although the three in AP 24 explicitly invoke the Father, other prayers in the same text address Christ alone. The commonest form of address by far is κύριε, but πάτερ (AP 24i, ii; ATh 67), δέσποτα (ATh 30, 97), βασιλεῦ (AJ 22, APe 39) and θεέ (AJ 108, 122; AP 24iii; ATh 60) are also found.[17] The longest string of vocatives appears at ATh 47, a list of five in asyndeton. Nouns and adjectives used of the addressee are sometimes found in the vocative, e.g. λογέ (APe 39), κριτά (ATh 30). Abstract nouns can be used in exclamations with the particle ὦ (AJ 21, 77; ATh 39; AA54). The vocative rarely lasts beyond the first clause, after which nominative predication takes over, commonly used with the second-person pronoun, particularly in longer addresses (e.g. AJ 51, 112-4; ATh 25). In many cases this nominative address replaces an initial vocative.[18] There is sometimes also a return to the vocative before the request in order to ensure the addressee's continued attention!

The predication often forms the longest part of the prayer and is particularly open to rhetorical elaboration, since it provides scope to assemble a list of divine attributes. The function of these in Christian prayer is laudatory, whereas the predication in other religions is used to specify precisely the god invoked and give details of his particular capacities.[19] The commonest participles in pagan Greek prayer are μεδέων, ναίων and οἰκῶν which pertain directly to the address: few others are found.[20] Participial predication in Christian prayers draws on a much wider range of verbs and usually occurs with anaphora on the definite article. This initial repetition gives rise to long strings of predication. The article is also used anaphorically with nouns and adjectives. Many of these are biblical titles or analogies used of Jesus, as in the twenty accusative nouns in asyndeton found in the eucharistic prayer at AJ 109.[21] Clauses of predication with finite verbs are often linked by relative

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[14] There is, however, no instance in these texts of the double vocative found in Greek pagan prayer (Pulleyn 1997 pp.133-4).

[15] Although most names have this particle in Ausfeld's examples (1903 p.515), it falls out of use even in the Hellenistic period (Dickey 1996 p.188). Address by first name is also less common in later authors (Dickey 1996 p.46-50).

[16] There are several mentions of ὄνομα in prayers, but it is rarely used in a formula (see further below).

[17] Dickey suggests that the title δέσποτα is a feature of religious language in classical Greek: it is only used by the addressee's own subjects and slaves (1996 pp.95-8). The vocative θεέ and the use of the nominative as an address are first introduced in Judaeo-Christian literature: see Wackernagel in Dickey (1996) p.188.

[18] This feature may be theologically motivated, as an omnipresent Christian God theoretically needs no address.

[19] von Severus (1972) 1137, Nock (1933) p.203. Pulleyn (1997) presents the case for a sharper differentiation between Latin and Greek prayer, arguing that concern over names is "a phenomenon of post-classical syncretism" (p.111) and that predication in ancient Greek prayer has a similar glorificatory function (p.106). See also his discussion on the ornamental and cultic value of epithets (pp.51-3).

[20] Ausfeld (1903) p.521.

[21] This prayer may be a later Gnostic replacement (Junod-Kaestli 1983 p.425). For a contrary opinion see Miller (1975) p.377.

pronouns, drawing on the rhetorical devices of repetition and polyptoton within the similar underlying clause-structure. This elaboration and expansion is a particular feature of later Hellenistic prayers: there are no obvious parallels in ancient Greek religion. Many of the elements used in anaphora may be traced to oriental religions, especially the antithetical prayer structure of Judaism.[22] It is difficult to assess whether Jewish practice had any direct bearing on these prayers: it seems more likely that the influence was mediated through Hellenistic religion. The predication may also be didactic, in that it resembles the structure of the preaching discourses.[23]

The pronoun αὐτός is often found referring to God, as at AJ 22, 57; AP 42; ATh 15, 53; AA 29. This could be a technical use comparable to the Jewish periphrasis for the divine name, as it is used to refer to God in speech (ATh 103, 136). It seems more likely, however, that it is an example of the preference for pronominal reinforcement in language development (compare the non-reflexive use of "-self" in modern spoken English). This is reinforced by its suggestive similarity to the anaphoric οὗτος in third-person predication.[24] Another form of predication consists of anaphora on σὺ εἶ (e.g. ATh 80). This could be specifically Judaeo-Christian, playing on the revealed name of the God of Israel (cf. Exodus 3:14). On the other hand, there are many other examples of reinforcement of person in verbs by pronouns. The form μόνος σύ as found at AJ 51 has been claimed to be typical of Egyptian prayers, but the μόνος θεός topic is widely attested in the New Testament and ancient Greek religion.[25]

It seems right to treat the particle ἰδού as a form of address. As ἰδοῦ, this was originally the second-person singular imperative from the strong aorist middle εἰδόμην, but with the oxytone accent became a particle even in Classical Greek.[26] Its use in the Septuagint reinforced this idea, although in direct speech it was probably not considered a feature of biblical language: ἰδοῦ occurs in a prayer at Aeschylus *Choe*. 247. In the Apocryphal Acts, ἰδού is normally found as an introduction to the narration, as at AJ 18; ATh 49, 107, 144, 145, 146, 153ii, 167; AA 29, although it appears no fewer than fourteen times in the invocation at ATh 142. The similar distribution of the active ἴδε at AJ 22 and ἰδέ at ATh 146 suggests that these are used in the same way.[27] There is also a form of predication with anaphora on ὁρᾷς (e.g. AJ 24, 51). The other paracletic imperative is ἐλθέ, which only occurs in ATh: although this also is almost always used in combination with another imperative, I have treated it as a request because of its technical use in liturgical prayers. Other paracletic forms from Greek prayer, e.g. κλῦθι, are not found.

The *pars epica* (narration)

The narrative element of the prayer contains the least formal interest. The narration is not highly structured, so there is no rhetorical elaboration to the same degree as the predication. One significant feature in establishing the discourse of prayer is self-reference by the precator to his prayer. It could be argued that reference to the request is actually a method of attracting attention and should be handled under the *inuocatio*, but I have chosen to take the first-person verb as part of the narration. The most common phrase is δέομαί σου, found in AJ 21, 22, 82; ATh 10, 47-8 (twice), 53 (twice), 59, 65, 72, 81, 98; AA 16, 28. Αἰτοῦμαι σε is also used (AJ 22; APe 39; ATh 53) as is ἐπικαλοῦμαι (AJ 79; ATh 30, 81, 98). None of these words seems to have a particularly technical reference (even λέγω is used of prayer at ATh 15).[28] Phrases with ἱκετεύω occur three times: δέομαί σου καὶ ἱκετεύω (ATh 25 and 65) and αἰτοῦμαι καὶ ἱκετεύω (ATh 25). It is extremely interesting that none of these words is used in the preceding narrative to introduce a prayer in direct speech (see further Part Two below). Εὔχομαι is only used once in self-reference, after the Lord's Prayer: ἰδοὺ τὴν εὐχὴν εὔχομαι ταύτην καὶ τὸ πρόσταγμά σου πληρῶ (ATh 144). This is also the only use of εὐχή within a prayer. Jesus' words "Ask, and it shall be given to you" (Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9) are quoted at AJ 22 and ATh 53. The internal use of αἰτοῦμαι, supported by the particle οὖν may refer directly to these dominical words (cf. APe 39). Such quotations constitute one of the few Christian methods of justifying requests. These are the only direct quotations, although divine

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[22] See, for example, the psalms quoted in Bakker (1961) p.128-9 and Norden (1956) p.204-7, 220-3.
[23] On the distinctive style of Christian rhetoric based on biblical ideas, see Kennedy (1983) p.180. The description of prayer as "rhétorique christianisée" (Baslez et al (1992) p.266) might be more appropriate if the terms were reversed.
[24] This is isolated by Norden (1956) pp.223-4.
[25] For the Egyptian connection , see Bremmer (1995) p.56: on the topic in general, Norden (1956) p.245.
[26] Liddell-Scott, s.v. ἰδού, Blass-Debrunner (1961) p.80. It occurs most frequently in Aristophanes, which may indicate a colloquial origin.
[27] Indeed, Liddell-Scott recognises ἰδέ as an adverb (s.v. εἶδον). However, the lengthened form at ATh 61 does constitute a request for God's presence and oversight.
[28] Although Plymale considers ἐπικαλέω a technical term in the New Testament (1991 p.85).

words from the Acts themselves are used in prayers (AJ 113). There are also numerous references to God's promises (e.g. ATh 146). Drawing attention to position may form part of the self-reference of the narration, e.g. σοὶ προσκυνῶ (AP Supp.) or ἰδοὺ τολμῶμεν προσέρχεσθαι in an ante-communion prayer (ATh 49), but descriptions of posture are usually confined to the introduction (see Part Two below).

An expression of faith can be included in the narration: πιστεύω σοι is found in ATh 54 and 70 (in the aorist ATh 65, 98) and ἐξομολογοῦμαί σοι at ATh 25 and 107. First-person reference is particularly common in formulae of thanksgiving. These usually begin with a verb such as εὐχαριστῶ σε (ATh 15, 19, 60, 107), δοξάζω σε (AJ 109, ATh 39), εὐλογῶ σε (AP 24 ii, iii) or αἰνῶ σε: a combination of three or more of these forms is found in the texts at AJ 77, AJ 85 and APe 39. The most common form, however, is the impersonal δόξα σοι found frequently in AJ, AA, ATh. All these verbs form the basis for liturgical prayers (e.g. AJ 85; ATh 132). There are some examples of the weighting of the narration in order to balance the request, as in the *pars epica* of pagan prayers. However, this is not usually expressed as a formal bargain but merely implied by antithesis and juxtaposition. One of the most explicit examples is found at ATh 145: "I have completed your work and fulfilled your command … may my trust not be made vain", but this plea is not followed by a more specific request (a very similar example can be found at ATh 167).

The narration is the section in which most links are found with the action of the text. This can be in the form of a statement, but questions are also found in AJ and ATh, e.g. Κύριε, τούτου με ἕνεκεν ἐκέλευσας σήμερον ἐνθάδε ἐξελθεῖν; (AJ 48, cp. ATh 30). These enhance the conversational feel of prayers. Sometimes these even take the form of rebukes, as in Τί μέλλεις, κύριε; (AJ 21).[29] Rhetorical questions can also be used to express the precator's unworthiness, e.g. AJ 109; ATh 72, 80. Time-reference is a particular feature of the *pars epica*. In pagan prayers, an appeal to past events often constitutes the basis for the request, particularly with the εἴ ποτε formula (see below), although present time-reference is not unknown. The narration of Christian prayers is more immediate. The phrase νῦν καιρός is found twice at the beginning of AJ 22.[30] There are also references to the ὥρα, e.g. ἡ ὥρα πάρεστιν · τί ἀπαιτεῖ γενέσθαι; (ATh 73), ὥρα λοιπόν, κύριε (AA 32) or ἐλθέ ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ταύτῃ ᾗ ἐπικαλοῦμαι … (ATh 30) which combines this with self-reference.

The *preces* (request)

The request usually comes last after the preliminaries have been completed, but is occasionally brought forward as the most important element, particularly in one-line prayers (e.g. ATh 54ii; AA14, AA32ii). All the verbs of the requests are aorist imperatives, except for a couple of possible exceptions.[31] This is in keeping with the diachronic tendency towards predominantly aorist forms of the imperative.[32] Both second- and third-person requests can occur in the same prayer (e.g. AJ 79).[33] Negative requests are also found, consisting of μή with the aorist subjunctive. The use of the pronoun before second-person imperatives, e.g. σὺ δός μοι δύναμιν (ATh 97) and especially σὺ ἔσο (ATh 123, 141, 144, 149, 156, 167), is parallel to the return to the vocative before the request, mentioned above, often in contrast to the person of the narration. Third-person imperatives often include the second-person pronoun in the same clause, e.g. ἐνισχυσάτω σου ὁ λόγος (AA 16), ἐλθέτω ἡ δύναμίς σου (ATh 121).

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[29] This is also found in Greek prayer, especially Homer: see Labarbe in Limet-Ries (1980) pp.137-148.

[30] This is highlighted by Junod-Kaestli as a topos of oratory (1983 pp.444-5).

[31] At the textual crux in AJ 82, the prohibition would be aorist subjunctive if Bonnet's conjecture were adopted. It is difficult to categorize ἔσο, but this may be treated as an aorist form (ἴσθι is never found).

[32] There is a considerable literature on this subject. The predominance of aorists in addresses to divinities in Greek prayer and the other details are clearly presented in Bakker (1961) p.12, but his analysis incorporating elements of politeness and situation-connection is unsatisfactory (see the critique in Pulleyn (1997) pp.211-6 and also my further footnote below). Bakker also misinterprets the relation of man to God in Christian prayer: he considers the biblical Jesus as a divine rather than a human figure and therefore treats the present imperatives in the Gospels as anomalous (p.138)! It is enough to note that these texts keep to contemporary practice (the prayers of both the New Testament and Septuagint are almost all aorist: see Blass-Debrunner (1961) section 337 (pp.173-4)).

[33] Note that I have omitted discussion of texts which only refer to God in the third-person, which are usually blessings, e.g AA 13ii and AJ 107. AJ 57 is clearly a prayer.

The imperative naturally occurs in initial position, although it can be displaced by a variety of particles.[34] The function of these is to highlight the request after the *pars epica*. The most common is οὖν in second position (e.g. AJ 22, ATh 59, 73, 144-8, 167: also τοιγαροῦν at AA 54) emphasising the connection between the narration and request. Καί is also found in initial position, especially in AA, where it is used primarily to co-ordinate imperatives, e.g. καὶ ῥῦσαί με ... καὶ φύλαξόν με (AA 14, see also AA 16, 32ii; AP Supp.). This seems to be restricted to second-person verbs (compare the Lord's Prayer, quoted at ATh 144). There are some examples of disjunction, where a contrast is implied after the *pars epica* in a change of either agent or time-reference (e.g. historical narration to immediate request). Formally, these resemble pagan prayers, where the reciprocity between the *pars epica* and the *preces* establishes the relation between precator and divinity, although the transactional content is usually absent from Christian prayers, as mentioned above. It is difficult to determine whether there is any formulaic value to these phrases. The clearest example is in the phrase καὶ νῦν: in Homeric prayer, this is used to signal the request after an εἴ ποτε clause of usually first-person narration. However, it is also found introducing the request without εἴ ποτε in Sappho, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, although its formulaic element is often overlooked.[35] In the Apocryphal Acts, καὶ νῦν introduces the requests at AJ 41, 51, 75 and AA 5, 29. As it is also used within the narration (e.g. AJ 85; ATh 25), it seems unlikely that it is a request-formula in these texts (there is no instance of εἴ ποτε). The reference to the immediate situation is a feature of these prayers, so the frequency of the particle νῦν is unsurprising. It usually precedes the verb (e.g. AJ 42, APe 39, ATh 170 and νῦνι in ATh 98) and is also found in τοίνυν (AJ 22; ATh 30), τανῦν (AP Supp.) and νῦν οὖν (AJ 112-4). This immediate action suits the non-durative aspect of the aorist imperative.[36] This connection of these particles with the general topics of these texts argues against their being borrowed from the more formal rôle in pagan prayers: it is also difficult to isolate formulae in such small units.[37]

Requests are usually not elaborated, although verbs can be combined in polysyndeton. There is a certain amount of internal cohesion in lexis as well as structure, e.g. τέλεσον οὖν εἰς ἡμᾶς ταῦτα ἕως τέλους ... ἵνα κοινωνήσωμεν ἐκείνῃ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ (ATh 61). Some prayers show an element of climax in the narration, e.g. αἰτοῦμεν δὲ σε οὐ πλοῦτον, οὐ χρυσόν, οὐκ ἄργυρον, οὐ κτῆσιν ... ἀλλὰ τοῦτο ... (ATh 53, see also AJ 22). Similar antitheses are found in APe 39 and ATh 158. The actual request is often very general: an extreme form is "For you give us what we want, and it is this which we ask and seek from you" (ATh 72). One frequent topos is "May your will be done" (AJ 18; ATh 3, 30). Other common requests are βοήθησον, ἐλέησον, ῥῦσαι, δέξαι and σῶσον. The faith in God's omnipotence (implied in the third-person imperatives) is also shown in the most common negative request, μὴ ἐάσῃς. The verb ἐλθέ, which only occurs in personal prayers in ATh, is always found in correlation with another imperative, even in the invocation at ATh 27.[38] However, its particular use in liturgical prayers (e.g. ATh 50) may reflect a theological difference in that these acts require not merely the divine presence, but the transferral of that presence into baptismal oil or eucharistic elements. The same formula of request, ἐλθέ καὶ κοινώσον ἡμῖν, is found in both ATh 49 and 50. Ἐλθέτω is also common in liturgical prayers (e.g. ATh 121, 133).

The request itself can be in the form of a purpose clause (e.g. ATh 10, 53, also ATh 72 quoted above). Most clauses with ὅπως or ἵνα are subsequent to the imperative, and specify the details or result of the request. In two cases, the request is followed by a sentence in the future tense: in ATh 25 this describes the intended result, but at AJ 22 πρόσειμι τοίνυν τῇ Κλεοπάτρᾳ anticipates the fulfilment of the request. It is difficult to analyse this within the structure of the prayer and may be conversational in style.

Pragmatic cohesion

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[34] This is an indication of the Hellenistic style: Hebrew influence is responsible for delayed imperatives (see Norden (1956) pp.365-6).

[35] For examples of these classical usages, see (amongst others) Aubriot-Sévin (1992) pp.219-20 and Pulleyn (1997) pp.28-35.

[36] This seems to be a point overlooked by Bakker and his successors. The perceived connection of the request with the situation is indicated in the first instance by <u>particles</u>. The difference in choice of verb-stem remains aspectual. Both present and aorist imperatives are found with the particle νῦν (see prayers quoted in Bakker (1961) pp.50-64 and Sicking (1991) pp.154-60).

[37] The formulaic value of such elements in pagan prayers needs to be evaluated before a comparison can be made. Καὶ νῦν with an aorist imperative also occurs in an address to slaves (Sophocles *Philoc.* 877). Similar phrases are found before requests in the New Testament: καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ (John 17:5), also νῦν δέ (John 17:13) and καὶ τὰ νῦν, κύριε, ἔπιδε... (Acts 4:29).

[38] Contrast the practice of ancient prayers (Pulleyn 1997 pp.136-144, although some of the examples on later papyri quoted on p.137 are co-ordinated).

The combination of these individual elements in practice is demonstrated best in the analysis of a single passage such as the long prayer at AJ 112-4, which may be divided into sixty-eight clauses. Although there is no initial vocative, the direct speech has been introduced by the phrase ηὔξατο οὕτως. The extended participial predication which follows is customarily used only of God: furthermore, it is not unusual for prayers to open in the nominative. The anaphora with the article marks the first twenty clauses as part of the *inuocatio*, with smaller subgroups marked by different structures within the classic participial predication. The first two clauses share an almost identical structure,

#ὁ [PARTICIPLE masc. nom. sing.] ἡμᾶς εἰς [ARTICLE + NOUN accusative]#,

the first two elements of which extend to the third clause, which shows the development in Koine Greek of ἑαυτόν as the only reflexive pronoun.[39] This word is then used to connect clauses 3, 5, 6 and 8 in a chiastic fashion:

A   3:   ἑαυτόν + second-person pronoun
  B   4:   longer clause, ἠρεμήσας, root connection of σώσας and σωθῆναι
    C   5:   preposition + genitive, ἑαυτόν
    C   6:   preposition + genitive, ἑαυτόν
  B   7:   longer clause, word-play on ἔρημον, ἥμερον and ἤρεμον
A   8:   ἑαυτόν + second person pronominal adjective

However, just as the initial ὁ + participle connected clauses 2 and 3, so clause 8 is connected with 9, 10 and 11 by the structure

ὁ [PARTICIPLE fem.dat.sing.] αὐτῇ ... [PARTICIPLE masc.nom.sing.]#

(the first participle is passive in 9-11). In turn, these are connected to the next group (12-15, which share initial nominative participles) by the use of the same initial verb in 11 and 12, ὁ νενικημένη and ὁ νικήσας. It is also worth noticing the chiasmus on a smaller scale in 9, 10 and 11: 9 and 11 both end in a passive participle, whereas 10 has the active and also a juxtaposition ἀνομίαν νόμος. It is hardly surprising that after this tour-de-force, clause 17 is a vocative of address, the first vocative of the *inuocatio*, to ensure God's attention as the request in clause 22 is approached, which is marked by the initial imperative δέξαι. Before that, there are four clauses of nominal predication of the form

#ὁ τῶν [NOUN gen.pl.] [NOUN masc.nom.sing.]#,

with 18 and 19 connected by the same root in ὑπερουρανίων and ἐπουρανίων, while 20 and 21 consist of double forms with internal semantic links.

The next section, chapter 113, combines the participial predication (18 clauses with initial article) with the content of the narration, the story of John's life, although the subject is always God: this is a clear instance of the use of historical narration in Christian prayer to highlight the continual presence of God rather than set up the terms for a bargain. Particularly notable are the two quotations in direct speech of God's words, presumably from the lost opening section.[40] The textual cohesion is maintained by semantic links and temporal continuity in the narration, the prayer discourse by the anaphora and participles. The request at the close of this section is a classic example, with the opening νῦν followed by the particle οὖν. A narrative clause introduces the request with a further temporal reference, but there is no reciprocal presentation. The second-person pronoun in this clause makes a very smooth link into the repeated vocative address before the request, in which the second-person aorist imperative is in initial position. The subsequent relative clause adds further details.

The genitive absolute at the beginning of chapter 114 forms a narration before a series of minimalist third-person imperatives, which omit the article of the accompanying nouns and are found in asyndeton. The grouping of the clauses is based on the position and number of the verb, five singulars followed by three plurals. After another three clauses, in which the plural noun precedes the imperative, there are two clauses of identical structure with "the devil" as subject (both nouns have the article). The pronoun αὐτοῦ which occurs after the initial noun in the next six clauses refers cataphorically to these. After a total of nineteen third-person imperatives, there is a final second-person request in which the verb has been displaced from initial position by the

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[39] See Gignac (1981) p.169. The second-person singular reflexive pronoun is, however, found twice elsewhere in AJ (AJ 19, 96; see also ATh 15, 65, 88).
[40] See Junod-Kaestli (1983) p.83 and 574.

introductory καί. The justification for this request is expressed afterwards by the phrase "as you promised", although there is no obvious allusion here to any biblical event.

In this long prayer, the importance of structural similarity in marking-off the different elements of the prayer form is particularly clear. As well as different combinations of the three major elements, this analysis also makes the groups within these categories and their connection easy to see. This leads to the rhetorical force of the prayer: the persuasive power of the anaphora, the repetition and so on is a direct result of this structure. It may be argued that this rhetorical elaboration is characteristic of literary prayers, but this is to overlook the importance of such basic structures for highly-developed improvisatory prayer, which was a feature of the early Christian liturgy. It is this structure which is primarily responsible for the pragmatic cohesion of the prayers, although deictic markers, semantic similarity and repetition are also used to maintain cohesion. Each prayer is a separate unit with this distinct form.

Summary

Based on this internal study of prayer form and structure, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn. There is an identifiable structure whose elements are recognisable in all the passages defined as prayer-texts. This unity transcending authorial variation strongly suggests that these texts reflect some form of current practice. Although the elements may be comparable to pre-existing models of Greek prayer, there is clear innovation and the avoidance of traditional means of marking the discourse as a prayer. Some of the new features include the repetition of particular clause-structures, which promotes the cohesion of the different elements and the prayer as a whole and has considerable rhetorical effect. However, the language remains surprisingly simple and direct and there is also a flexibility to the construction of the the prayers. This will be investigated further in the second part of this study, which looks at the way the prayers are introduced and compares the texts with other discourses in the Apocryphal Acts and prayers from other sources.

Part Two: Context and Comparison

Signalling of prayers

Prayers are marked in these texts not just by their internal cohesion, as discussed above, but also by the way in which they are introduced in the text. Nearly all the prayers are preceded by a verb of speech: there are a few exceptions (AJ 64; AP 30; ATh 132, 149) where the apostrophe to God comes at the end of another type of direct speech. The most common introduction (over sixty times) is some form of λέγειν, usually εἶπεν. The inchoative forms ἔλεγεν and ἤρξατο λέγειν are also found, particularly before longer prayers. Ἐφή and ἐβόα are found three times each. None of these forms is specific to prayer. Instead, they support the idea that prayer is not distinguished from other forms of speech. Δεῖσθαι, despite its internal use, is never used to introduce prayers, although it is found in a technical sense at AJ 42. "The Lord" is named as the addressee in twelve cases, usually by the introduction εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν κύριον. Seventeen prayers are introduced by some form of εὔχεσθαι: ten of these in conjunction with λέγειν.[41] Ἐπεύχεσθαι is found twice (AJ 75, 85) and προσεύχεσθαι once (AJ 41). Before eucharistic prayers, the form εὐχαρίστησεν is found once (AJ 109) and ηὐλόγησεν twice (ATh 133, 158) always co-ordinated with εἶπεν. There are also several unique introductions, e.g. ὁ δὲ ἀπόστολος τῷ κυρίῳ προσδιελέγετο (ATh 153ii), where choice of verb suggests the conversational nature of the prayer (see also ATh 167). The close of a prayer is often marked with οὕτως and another verb of speech, such as εὐξάμενος (e.g. AJ 85, AA 29) or προσευχόμενον (ATh 107, 156), but again a form of λέγειν is most common. This marking at both ends indicates that prayers are treated as an integral whole: the only exceptions to this are the interruptions in some liturgical prayers which describe the apostle's actions.

It is tempting to look for other external markers to identify prayers. There are some references to a loud voice, with the formulae ἐπάρας τὴν φωνήν found at AP 29 and ATh 65 (cf. APe 2) and μετὰ φωνῆς at AA 54 and 63. These indicate that the prayers are intended for a wider audience even within the narrative. There may also be an implicit contrast with murmured magical prayers.[42] Posture is only mentioned infrequently. The precator is explicitly described as kneeling at

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[41] Ηὐξάτο is only used by itself at AJ 108, 112-4; ATh 97, 144-8, ηὐχέτο at AA 16.
[42] See Versnel (1981) pp.25-7. Aubriot-Sévin (1992) pp.148-59 discusses vocalised prayer in much greater depth: most evidence suggests that ancient Greeks prayed aloud (Pulleyn (1997) pp.184-8).

AJ 42, AP 24i and ATh 97 and standing at AJ 112-4; AP 24ii, 24iii; ATh 49, 144-8.[43] There are further descriptions of the apostle stretching out his hands (AJ 43, 112-4), looking up to heaven (AP Supp.) and "being lifted up in spirit" ($\epsilon\pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\tau\grave{\eta}\nu$ $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}\nu$) (AJ 43, also AA 29). The significance of the outstretched hands is uncertain, although it became a part of Christian liturgical prayer.[44] References to attendant actions are fullest in the liturgical prayers, which reflects their particular significance (e.g. AJ 85, 110; ATh 121, 132, 133). The standardisation of liturgical practices would also have been important.

Comparison of prayers with presentation of direct speech

Although prayers may be signalled in a variety of ways, a comparison with other examples of direct speech in the Apocryphal Acts reveals some differences. A present tense verb is never used to introduce a prayer (contrast ATh 17, 126, 154). Prayers are also usually treated as discrete units, whereas other forms of speech may have the verb of speech in the third-person inserted after the opening words of the apostrophe (for example AJ 31ii; ATh 120iii, 128 139i, 163; AA 42). Despite its use within prayers, the verb $\delta\acute{\epsilon}o\mu\alpha\iota$ never introduces a prayer. However, this restriction is not observed before other requests, such as those at AJ 44, 79; ATh 49, 51, 124. Three requests introduced by $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\eta\tau\alpha\iota$ also contain the phrase $\delta\acute{\epsilon}o\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\sigma o\upsilon$ (ATh 87, 128, 150). There are over twenty occurrences of $\delta\acute{\epsilon}o\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\sigma o\upsilon$ as an internal marker in requests: its common occurrence, as well as the familiar second-person singular pronoun, suggests that this phrase spread to prayers from other requests. Even the more specific forms, such as $\delta\acute{\epsilon}o\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\sigma o\upsilon$ $\kappa\alpha\grave{\iota}$ $\acute{\iota}\kappa\epsilon\tau\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\omega$ are addressed to other humans (ATh 24iii, 57, 64). $\Pi\alpha\rho\alpha\kappa\alpha\lambda\hat{\omega}$ $\sigma\epsilon$ appears in requests (e.g. AJ 40, 74, 76, 81; APe 36i; AA 41, 57) along with various other forms of self-reference (e.g. AJ 76; ATh 57, 151; AA 57). Even $\epsilon\check{\upsilon}\chi o\mu\alpha\iota$ is not solely used as a technical term for prayer. In speeches, it can be used self-referentially with the meaning "I hope" (APe 32iii; ATh 24i; AA 48) or interrogatively (AA 42). It is also found in the phrase $\delta\acute{\epsilon}o\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}$ $\kappa\alpha\grave{\iota}$ $\epsilon\check{\upsilon}\chi o\mu\alpha\iota$ (ATh 68, 88). In narrative, it always refers to prayer (ATh 14, 117, 157). The introductory description $\epsilon\pi\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha\varsigma$ $\tau\grave{\eta}\nu$ $\phi\omega\nu\acute{\eta}\nu$, which may be used in connection with prayers, is also found at AP 17, ATh 33 and 46ii (see also ATh 42-3).

The forms of address in speeches are similar to those found in prayers: most begin with some form of the vocative, although the address can be omitted entirely, when the addressee is indicated by the narrative, e.g. AJ 72, or clear from the context. Following contemporary practice, $\mathring{\omega}$ is used with very few names (examples at AJ 21i, 60; ATh 134, 135; AA 7, 9, 37).[45] Both $\mathring{\omega}$ and $\mathring{\omega}$ are found in exclamations with vocative nouns (AJ 21ii, 30ii, 83; APe 37; ATh 44, 52i, 118, 129, 165; AA 38, 61-2). The nominative address common in prayers is only found once in direct speech (AA 42). It is worth noting several features of pagan invocations which are present in speeches in these texts but absent from prayers. The only greeting expression is $\chi\alpha\hat{\iota}\rho\epsilon$ (AP 4, 8, 25, 30), common as an address to idols in popular piety, but never found of the Christian God. Summons such as $\delta\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\tau\epsilon$ (AP 13, Supp.) and $\delta\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\rho o$ (AP 23, 39; ATh 53) are also absent from these prayers. The formula $\epsilon\check{\iota}\tau\epsilon$ ... $\epsilon\check{\iota}\tau\epsilon$, a feature of the pagan *inuocatio* to ensure the correct address of the divinity, is only found in Thomas's address to the crowd (ATh 28).[46]

The similarity of the predication in prayers to preaching discourses has already been noted. These show an even greater degree of elaboration, as at AA 37-42, with anaphora and repetition, rhetorical apostrophe, polyptoton and juxtaposition of similar words, culminating in the list of fifty-two questions in asyndeton.[47] For similarly brilliant displays of oratorical technique, see also AJ 33-6 and the skilful use of antithesis at AJ 81iii, ATh 76 and 124. The form of predication most common by far is nominal. Participles, preferred in prayers, are much rarer. It is interesting that these are sometimes used to refer to God even outside the explicitly religious discourses (e.g. AJ 29; AA 39), which may suggest a developing technical use.

The requests in direct speech correspond to contemporary practice in that they include a much higher proportion of present-stem imperatives than in appeals to a divinity (e.g. AP 20, 41;

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[43] Kneeling was not common for pagan prayer (Pulleyn (1997) p.190).
[44] Aubriot-Sévin (1992) pp.131-2 notes that $\mathring{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\nu\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ $\tau\grave{\alpha}\varsigma$ $\chi\epsilon\hat{\iota}\rho\alpha\varsigma$ is regular in ancient Greek prayer. A similar phrase is found in the Old Testament: $\acute{o}\tau\alpha\nu$ $\tau\grave{\alpha}\varsigma$ $\chi\epsilon\hat{\iota}\rho\alpha\varsigma$ $\epsilon\kappa\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\eta\tau\epsilon$ (Isaiah 1:15), which forms the basis for Saxer's study in Hamman (1980) pp.335-65.
[45] On this practice, see Dickey (1996) p.206.
[46] For examples of pagan uses of these formulae, see Pulleyn (1997) p. 105, 220; Versnel (1981) p.15, 194, and Norden (1956) p.146. $\delta\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\rho o$ is found in a prayer at *Mart. Andreae* 16 (Bonnet (1898) p.56).
[47] See Kennedy (1983) p.183 on the figures of classical rhetoric used in Christian preaching.

APe 30ii; AA 19ii, 51).[48] This is even found in verbs where the aorist aspect seems more appropriate, e.g. σῶζε (AJ 23ii). There are also fewer third-person imperatives. In most cases, requests to humans lack the ordered structure of prayers, although many individual elements noted above can be found in human requests as well. The imperative is sometimes marked with νῦν (e.g. AA 7, 27iii) or οὖν (e.g. ATh 34, APe 37, 41), but often begins the utterance without any preliminary preparation. Καὶ νῦν is also found at AJ 47; ATh 120ii, 120iii; APe 36iii, 37, and νῦν δέ at ATh 70, 87, 165. Other particles include τοίνυν (ATh 119, 150), τοίγαρουν (e.g. ATh 137; AA4i, 58) and, once, νῦν γοῦν (ATh 166). As may be expected, ἐλθέ is used as a command by itself rather than a subordinate invocation as in prayers. It is also worth noting that wishes with εἴθε and the optative feature in human requests (e.g. AJ 76; ATh 98-9; AA 57) but are absent from Christian prayers.[49]

Language and Christian formulae

There is remarkably little use of specialist vocabulary in the prayers in the Apocryphal Acts. The narration and requests are strongly context-oriented and as such reproduce words from the surrounding text. The *inuocatio* offers the greatest scope for use of technical terms, but most of the predication consists of metaphors and imagery which suggests that this section had an expository rôle. Several of the images come from the Gospels, such as the "good shepherd" (ATh 139) or the "doctor" (AJ 56, ATh 143, 156), but the majority are not specifically Christian. There are some terms which might require explanation to non-initiates, such as the technical use of ἄγγελος and διάβολος, or words such as γέεννα (e.g. AJ 112-4), but these are in general kept to a minimum. There is also little use of abstract nouns, which became a feature of Christian language, despite the exception at ATh 80: "glory to your divinity … glory to your humanity". The preference is for simple words within the same repeated structure. This differs from the dramatic effect of the repetition of words in the Gnostic sections of AJ (especially AJ 94-7), the only comparable example of which is found at APe 39: "You are all and all is in you. You are what is and nothing is which is except you alone."[50] There is surprisingly little direct quotation of the Bible. The Psalms formed the basis of many Christian and Jewish prayers, but they are totally ignored in these texts, which is in keeping with the Hellenistic background suggested for these authors.

The difference between the prayers of the Acts and more traditional Christian prayers can be seen in a comparison with a famous early example, the prayer of Polycarp before his martyrdom.[51] For a start, the prayer is addressed to God the Father rather than Jesus Christ: he is called παντοκράτωρ, which acquires a specifically Christian colouring. The description of Christ includes two specialized terms, ἀγαπητός and εὐλογητός: he is later called ἀρχιερέυς, another word with Jewish associations.[52] The domain of God's power is described in formulaic terms ("angels and powers and all creation") and there are various other stylized phrases which involve technical Christian words (e.g. "among the number of the martyrs", "to the resurrection of eternal life", "in the immortality of the holy spirit", "in a rich and acceptable sacrifice"). The repetition of particular words, often with a biblical connotation, contrasts sharply with the relatively uncoloured vocabulary of the texts of the Apocryphal Acts.[53] The sentences in Polycarp's prayer are also considerably longer, with much more subordination.

The prayer of Polycarp ends with a full trinitarian doxology. These are customary in both prayers and writings of the early Church (AP, APe, ATh and AA all end the narrative with a doxology, as do most Martyr Acts).[54] Concluding formulae are, however, surprisingly absent from the prayers of the Acts. Doxologies are only found at AJ 77, AP 42, AP Supp. and APe 39. These all include a final ἀμήν, also found in two liturgical prayers (ATh 121 Ναί, ἀμήν; ATh 158). The only trinitarian doxology, however, is at AP Supp., which is probably a later addition. The prayer at ATh 149 ends εἰς αἰῶνα αἰώνων, but even this is rare.[55] This startling lack of conclusions even in liturgical prayers is an important indication of the informal character of the prayers in the

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[48] See Bakker (1961) p.12 and page 8 above.
[49] The optative was used commonly on magical tablets (Pulleyn (1997) p.86).
[50] On Gnostic prayer in general, see J.-M. Sevrin's "La prière gnostique" in Limet-Ries (1980) pp.367-74.
[51] *Martyrium Polycarpi* 14, c.160 AD. Text in Musurillo (1972) pp.12-4.
[52] On the formulaic value of the first two words, see Lebreton (1924) p.29. This vocabulary occurs in many early prayers, for example also I Clement 59-61.
[53] Note also that there are no Hebrew words apart from Amen (contrast *Mart. Matthaei* (Bonnet 1898 p.245) or *Didache* 9).
[54] The majority of papyrus prayers quoted in Hamman (1989) pp.122-62 also have doxologies.
[55] On the origins of εἰς αἰῶνα see Versnel (1981) p.61. In these prayers, τὸ λοίπον is more common (εἰς τέλος occurs once (ATh 137)).

Apocryphal Acts. Another common Christian formula refers to the power of Jesus' name. Although Jesus is often addressed by name, explicit reference to the use of this name is absent from prayers. The word ὄνομα is only found in two prayers (ATh 157ii and AP Supp.), but it is employed in a formula on a number of other occasions (e.g. APe 31, 33; ATh 33, 41; AA 27iii). The divine name was particularly invoked in miracles, hence the proconsul's prohibition "Let him not name that magic name" (AJ 31). The familiarity of a conversational address replaces stylized forms. Characteristic features of pagan prayers, whether formulae of invocation or technical terms, are almost totally absent. The one exception is the bizarre request ἀλλὰ κενωθῇ καὶ τὸ σκέλος κατεάξῃ ἐκ τριῶν τόπων (APe 32), a phrase reminiscent of magical incantations.

Colloquial speech in the Apocryphal Acts

The informal register suggested for these prayers may be verified by a study of other representations of direct speech in these texts. The authors' treatment of dialogue also provides an indication of their sensitivity to register and use of language. The diagnostic features of Koine Greek, in which the entire texts are written, are clearly visible.[56] It is very unlikely that any of these morphological simplifications would have been perceived as particularly colloquial. There are, however, some examples of compound adjectives, e.g. χαμαιριφεῖς (AA 33), γυμνοκέφαλος (ATh 56), and compound verbs of the form δειλανδρήσῃς (AP 25), which are popular in origin. These are absent from prayers but found in other forms of speech. The adverbial use of λοιπόν (e.g. ATh 124, 131; AA 14i, 40) also occurs in prayers (e.g. ATh 155). Certain conversations do reproduce features of colloquial speech. The exchange at AJ 88 is striking in its realism: short elliptic phrases connected by various forms of deixis: repeated words, anaphoric articles and deictic pronouns. The popular form of the compound adjective is found in ἱλαροπρόσωπον. There is also nominalisation of a verbal phrase, ὀψόμεθα τὸ τί βούλεται, which is very colloquial. A similar ellipsis can be seen in οὐκ εἶχον πόθεν ἀγοράσωσιν ἄρτους (AP 23). Two exclamations uttered by John are remarkable: τὸν κύριόν σου! and Ζῆ κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός! (both AJ 28). These are used purely as expressions of surprise, despite the sanctity of the divine name. Presumably such forms developed from similar pagan ejaculations, such as μὰ τοὺς θεούς! (ATh 116). These undoubtedly colloquial features point to a reasonably accurate representation of direct speech.

Influence of the Bible

There seems also to be an element of biblical language in other parts of the text. The phrase τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί; (John 2:4) is often explained as a Hebraic colloquialism, but is found four times as τί ἐμοὶ καὶ ἡμῖν; at ATh 45.[57] The form οὐαί is found as an expression of despair (ATh 100, 116), as in the Septuagint.[58] Ἰδού is used fourteen times in direct speech and once in the narrative (APe 36), which is a particular biblical feature. (The distribution of ἴδε confirms its similarity to the particle (e.g. AJ 20, ATh 118, AA 41 and most clearly at APe 31, where it is used with a plural subject.) These are very unlikely to be authorial Semitisms, given the non-Jewish background. Their use in normal forms of speech makes the absence of biblical language (such as that in Polycarp's prayer) all the more striking in the prayers.

Prayers to the apostles?

Certain requests in the Apocryphal Acts appear to share a noticeably higher number of features with prayers and to be set out in a more formal style. Since the majority of these are addressed to the apostles, it could be suggested that the authors here deliberately manipulate the language of the divine address in order to represent the apostles as semi-divine figures. The idea of the θεῖος ἀνήρ became commonplace in later hagiography and cults.[59] The apostle is addressed as κύριε (AJ 20; ATh 54, 94i, 119), δέσποτα (AJ 24; AA 26i) and πάτερ (AJ 86), all used in prayers, although these terms were by no means restricted to divinities. It does seem that κύριε is not used of

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[56] These include simplified verb-forms (οἶδας for οἶσθα (ATh 17, 134)), confusion in aorist morphology (εἴπατε (AP 11) and ἔλθατε (e.g. AJ 88, ATh 16, 70, but classical forms at AJ 61, ATh 28, 77), phasing-out of nouns with irregular morphology (πλοῖον for ναῦς (AJ 88), πρόβατον for ὄϊς (ATh 26, 39)), an increased use of diminutive forms and a number of Latin borrowings in certain lexical fields, e.g. πραιτώριον (AA 3), πραιφέκτος (APe 33) and ἄκτον (AP 38).

[57] This could be a deliberate use of biblical language as it features in an exorcism. A particularly remarkable exploitation of register is found at ATh 32 where the demon usurps divine language (see Norden (1956) p.191). See also the formulaic introduction to the demon's speech at AA 5i.

[58] This is a transliteration of the Hebrew, although also a Latinism (*uae!*). See Blass-Debrunner (1961) p.3.

[59] On this topos, see Söder (1932) pp.95-101, Davies (1980) pp.45-6, Bovon (1981) p.215, Prieur (1989) pp.302-6.

anyone in the Apocryphal Acts except God and apostles. It is also interesting that twice the apostle seems implicitly to reject this form of address, as at AJ 46 where Ναί, κύριε is immediately followed by Ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (see also ATh 119).[60] Certain other terms of restricted use are applied to apostles: Thomas is acclaimed as σωτήρ at ATh 155, while σπλαγχνισθείς is used of John at AJ 24, despite its more traditional application to God at AJ 19 and 77. Outside prayers, the phrase δέομαί καὶ ἱκετεύω is used only in requests to the apostle Thomas. It is unremarkable that ἰδού is used to attract a human's attention (e.g. AJ 56), but the predication ὁρᾷς is a more characteristic feature of prayers, where it appeals to God's omniscience. Some of the imperatives in the requests include verbs which may be considered as belonging to the sphere of divine action: the most striking are ἐλέησον (AJ 56; ATh 64) and σῶζε (AJ 23ii). There is often considerable ambiguity as to the agent in accounts of miraculous resurrections (e.g. AJ 23, 25).

In the *pars epica* section of such requests to apostles, the transactional idea from pagan prayers is much more pronounced. Suppliants appeal far more frequently to their own worthiness (e.g. AJ 20, ATh 34, 128) and even offer a financial incentive in return (AJ 56, cp. ATh 128)! The descriptions of posture also bear a greater resemblance to pagan practices. The supplicant embraces the apostle's feet at AJ 20, 24, 46 and ATh 54, 87, and prostrates himself at ATh 24iii and 87 (cf. APe 10). The crowd touches the apostle's clothes at ATh 54 and the man himself at AJ 44. These postures are also referred to in requests: ἅπτομαί σου τῶν ποδῶν (AJ 76), νῦν ἔμπροσθέν σού εἰμι (ATh 57, also ATh 42, 151ii. There is a similar use of ἔμπροσθεν at ATh 87). Note also the use of προσκυνῶ at AJ 57 and ATh 155, although it is also found of the Christian God in these texts (AJ 103; AP Supp.), so any reference to oriental religions is only secondary.[61] This remarkable emphasis on supplicatory position in requests, combined with the lack of reference to posture in Christian prayer, leads to the tentative suggestion that the authors may be offering a subtle characterisation of the apostle as a <u>pagan</u> divinity. This would lead to a number of possible interpretations: perhaps the apostles are placed on this level to act as recognisable models for the conversion of pagans or to show their function as mediators. Maybe such descriptions are intended to reinforce for Christians the error of earlier pagan practices. The evidence is by no means incontrovertible and this interpretation is offered only as a suggestion, yet if there is any substance to it, there are intriguing parallels with the experience of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra in Acts 14. Instead, we may note in general how little difference there is between requests to a divinity and a powerful human figure. This emerges clearly from the use of some of the more important features in addresses to people in authority, as at AP 36, where the feet of the commander are embraced with the request for mercy.

Summary

This section has highlighted the similarity of prayers to other forms of discourse and considered the ways they are presented in their context. The sensitivity shown by the authors in their depiction of features of the spoken language, such as colloquial conversation and preaching in the grand oratorical style, provides support for considering the prayers as reasonably realistic examples of current practice. The content of these prayers, however, makes surprisingly little use of biblical examples and shows minimal evidence of the influence of Jewish tradition on the early Church. This enables us to situate the prayers in the context of a Hellenistic background. The possible use of prayer as polemic alluded to in the introduction also emerges a little more clearly. The over-riding observation is the informality of Christian prayer as shown in these texts and its remarkable lack of differentiation from conversational requests.

<u>Conclusion</u>

It is dangerous to draw broad conclusions from a study of a limited number of texts and also difficult to extract reliable information about spoken forms of language from literary works. Nonetheless, certain patterns emerge from this investigation. The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles present a clear form of prayer discourse. This is shown best in the uniform structure: each prayer contains a recognisable combination of particular structural elements. Despite the similarity of the general analysis with pagan prayers, differences in content lead to some differences in form. The pattern of clause-structure within these elements encourages rhetorical elaboration, which is a feature of many prayers, although more work needs to be done on its origin. The length of the

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[60] This address expressed deference throughout the Roman period, according to Dickey (1996) pp.100-1.
[61] von Severus (1972) 1161 and 1170. See also the discussion in Pulleyn (1997) pp.191-2. Note that the ancient Greeks considered prostration barbarous (Aubriot-Sévin (1992) p.139).

prayer is determined by the repetition of the constituent elements. It is surprising how close prayer is to the language of other forms of discourse. Addresses to God are usually introduced in the same way as other forms of direct speech. Some are marked by εὔχεσθαι, but this does not have a purely technical meaning. All prayers are closely linked to their context, although they do not perform a narrative function. Technical language and formulae are rarely used, and there is little explicit contribution to Christian polemic. Personal prayer continues to follow the familiar conversational style initiated by Jesus in the Gospels. This is remarkable, considering the highly-stylised language of some pagan prayers and the tendency of religious discourse to become fossilised. Prayers are mostly addressed to Jesus himself, which is a marker of popular piety as well as an early date: later texts show more trinitarian formulae. The relatively minor use of the Bible in personal prayer is also a departure from early Judaeo-Christian practice, but in keeping with the Hellenistic background of the authors. The presentation of prayer in these texts can be seen as an implicit polemic: the freedom of Christian practice contrasts with pagan *religio*. The frequency of prayer may be held up as an example to Christians, in the manner of the second quotation at the head of this study. The prohibition at Matthew 6:7 is observed to a degree: despite the length of some prayers, there are differences between Christian and pagan prayers, although this work shows the need for a detailed study of the development of prayer in the Church and its relationship to pagan models. If it is difficult to distinguish Christian prayer from other forms of request, this is hardly a problem for the Christian:

οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὧν χρείαν ἔχετε πρὸ τοῦ ὑμᾶς αἰτῆσαι αὐτόν (Matt. 6:8)

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