

Magie im antiken Christentum. Eine Studie zur Alten Kirche und in ihrem Umfeld. By Marco Frenschkowski. (Standorte in Antike und Christentum, 7.) Pp. xiv + 338. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2016. €69 (paper). 978 3 7772 1602 7
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Marco Frenschkowski is Professor for New Testament Studies at the University of Leipzig and has, through his numerous publications, proved to be a well-versed expert in the fields of magic, spirituality and alterity in the ancient world and within the historico-cultural context. The book under reviews reflects the core area of his research and forms a kind of ‘bridge’ between two fields of his work: on the one hand it is, with its 338 pages in total, to be considered as a ‘reworking’ (p. xi) of a previous publication, namely of his ‘Magie’ (*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* xxiii [2010], 857–957). On the other hand it is a foretaste of a work which has been on the stocks for some time: his *Zauberbücher: ein Handbuch magischer Ritualltexte in interkultureller Perspektive*, co-edited with M. Siefener for publication in 2017.

As far as the book under review is concerned the author begins with ‘ancient conceptual history’ and ‘approaches to a theory of the magic’ (ch. ii). An outline of magic follows, first ‘in Greek and Roman Antiquity’ (ch. iii), then ‘in oriental, Old Testament and Jewish traditions’ (ch. iv). Subsequent studies on the Christian context start with the magic ‘in earliest Christianity’ (ch. v), then in the ‘Early Church’ (ch. vi). A brief consideration of the legal history of magic (ch. vii) and of ‘the position of the Early Church concerning magic’ (ch. ix) rounds off the survey of the discourse on magic within the Early Church.

Though this survey follows to a large extent the *RAC* article, it is however in no way a kind of ‘second edition’, but rather a considerable expansion upon it. So the author contributes to current discussions, for example on pp. 233–6 with material on Julius Africanus, concerning whose ‘Kestoi’ the state of research has – not least because of M. Wallraff’s 2012 new edition – changed since the *RAC* article was published. The ambivalent but generally positive opinion of magic which manifests itself in the ‘Kestoi’ is described with the aid of many examples within the context of Christian discourse in the third century.

Furthermore, important texts on on magic are not only extensively discussed but also quoted in full. Original quotations are repeatedly to be found in the running text (for example, on pp. 57–9, Diogenes Laertius’ description (vit. 1, 1–9) of Persian magicians), and the book contains as an appendix three fundamental texts in German translation, namely Theocritus, *Idylls* 2 (‘Pharmakeutika’); Pliny, *Natural history* 30, 1–18; and Proclus, sacr. (CatAlchGr 6, 148–51).

This journey through the descriptions of and sources for magic through roughly three millennia, from the ancient oriental roots until the end of the late antiquity in all its variety is written in a fluent style and testifies to the author’s profound knowledge. The four-and-a-half pages of ‘selected general literature’ (pp. 315–19) reflect but a very small portion of what the author has consulted for his researches and has referenced in the footnotes. Because of the tremendous amount of material that this book provides it will serve as an important starting point for individual research.

However, the content of this book is not limited to a thoroughly effective presentation of ‘ancient’ magic with a focus on Christian discourse. What distinguishes

it from other work on ancient magic (to name just three examples, Graf's *Magic in the ancient world* [1996; English translation 1999]; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish magic* [2008] or Dickie, *Magic and magicians* [2001]) is the way in which it links with other discourses on magic. From an approach of cultural science and ethnology Frenschkowski looks towards neighbouring cultures, for example when he paraphrases Indian texts on at pp. 42–8. Furthermore he surveys the post-ancient discourse on magic until the present day and describes modern 'revivals' of magic, for example in science-fiction literature or in the Wicca cult. In particular the brief chapter viii, 'Ancient and modern conceptions of magic – an indication of problems', outlines, in only three pages, important insights into the current religious situation in Europe. To cite only one example: the shift in the definition of a ritual. In ancient times a ritual must under all circumstances be performed in the right way, otherwise there could be negative consequences; in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, for example among the following of A. Crowley, a ritual is the expression of the individual and variable will of the person performing the ritual, indicating general social individualisation processes that are then also reflected in a changed discourse on magic. It is to be hoped that the author will at a later date express himself on this topic in greater detail.

So this book, especially through its manifold connections and references to neighbouring cultures on the one hand and to present-day milieus on the other hand, points far beyond the field of 'ancient Christianity'. Certainly it focuses on the ancient Christian discourse on magic, but it incorporates it into the dynamics of what can be understood through the ages as 'magic'.

'So, in the end, what is magic?' one wants to ask of the author. It is clear that he does not want to operate with a limited conception of magic. 'We do not at all need to define magic precisely', he assures the reader at page 22. A working hypothesis is sufficient, which can then be adjusted according to context.

Finally, who is this book for? A broad readership will read it with benefit: the interested non-professional because the cultural-scientific references are convincing; the novice in religious studies because the central discourses are described in a precise and comprehensive way; and the specialist because of its broad inter-cultural character and the sheer volume of its material.

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Prudentius and the landscapes of late antiquity. By Cillian O'Hogan. Pp. viii + 197.

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Prudentius began to publish at the age of fifty-six yet more survives of his verse than of Vergil and Horace combined, giving hope to late starters and to all others grace to persevere. Certainly the finest Christian poet whose native language was Latin, he has been of continued relevance to hymn-writers and literary historians if not so much to historians of doctrine. The present volume's substantial bibliography indicates the wide range of scholarly interest that the poet's varied *opera* have aroused. Cillian O'Hogan presents a revised doctoral thesis here; and if that shows in the meticulous acknowledgement of secondary sources, the fault is pardonable in a scholarly work. It draws principally, but not exclusively, on the *Peristephanon*, that