

The strengths of *Christians in Egypt* far outweigh its weaknesses. The currency and importance of Meinardus's work cannot be understated. The Christian communities of Egypt want their histories and stories to be told. This volume provides access to those stories, less as a textbook and more as a reference for academician, clergy, and layperson alike.

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Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present. By **Michael D. Bailey**. Critical Issues in History. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. x + 276 pp. \$25.95 paper.

With this survey of the history of magic and witchcraft in Western Europe, Michael Bailey has provided an accessible textbook for an advanced undergraduate setting. Unfortunately, however, there are too few references (even among the "Sources and Suggestions for Further Reading" at the book's conclusion) to make the work a good choice for a graduate seminar. From its opening, the work raises a number of issues critical to understanding the historical difficulties of addressing the phenomena of magic and superstition in the premodern world; to start, the historian must avoid the assumption that they were limited to the manipulation of supernatural forces outside the bounds of organized religion as suggested by many premodern authors. Nor did these practices form part of a thought world considered diametrically opposed to science as they are today (2). In his thoughtful presentation of the subject's central themes, Bailey thus lays the groundwork for fruitful classroom discussions.

The survey opens with a brief introduction to views of magic and superstition in the ancient world. More schematic than detailed, this portion of the book is the thinnest, moving quickly through attitudes toward practitioners of magic in ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. Egypt, for instance, receives only passing attention despite its rich tradition regarding manipulation of the supernatural. It is clear that the main objective of the first portion of the book is to lay the groundwork for subsequent Christian stances toward the supernatural and condemnation of those who claimed to control it. This continuity may be seen in the often negative stereotypes of practitioners in the ancient world and the similar accusations typically leveled against them in later centuries. Bailey's

discussion also demonstrates the ubiquity of magical practices in pagan antiquity and their widespread toleration as long as they were not employed to do harm (35).

According to Bailey, sentiment toward magical practices began to shift with the rise of the Hebrew Bible, which created greater distinctions between magic and religion than had previously existed. This approach was a manifestation of efforts to distinguish monotheistic Judaism from the cultic rites of other peoples (40). The desire to show the superiority of God's power over that of common magic continued with even greater force among early Christians (44). Although Bailey overstates his case in suggesting the uniformity of early Christian attitudes, he does identify some of the essential characteristics of these changes. Most important for these purposes in late antiquity were Christian clerics' association of magical powers with harmful demonic forces, even if some, like Augustine, derided their actual power (55).

Bailey's coverage of the early Middle Ages is brief with only passing reference to Caesarius of Arles, Gregory of Tours, Martin of Braga, and Isidore of Seville. His attention focuses mainly on the limited written sources, aside from clerical condemnations of questionable accuracy, that shed any light on early Germanic and Celtic attitudes toward magical practices. More attention to archaeological evidence would have been welcome here. Although he does not mention her by name, Bailey squarely rejects Valerie Flint's argument in favor of clerical rehabilitation of certain aspects of magical practice (*The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994]), but does not satisfactorily elaborate on what he means by his statement that some degree of clerical accommodation to pagan custom did exist (65). Bailey's assessment appears to be based largely on his reading of subsequent Carolingian and post-Carolingian legislation that strongly condemned magical practices long tolerated by clerics but which were now defined as *magia*, *maleficium*, or *superstitio* (70). Bailey does not consider that these changes may have reflected an expansion of clerical authority rather than the reform of religious custom.

Bailey's presentation is most animated on his own turf of the high Middle Ages. Whereas some clerics considered magical rites a threat, others, especially scholars who populated the newly founded universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were much more interested in understanding magic or in some cases becoming well-versed in practices such as astrology or alchemy (as opposed to astral magic, which was seen as a greater threat due to aspects considered "demonic" by some clerics like Thomas Aquinas [99]). At the same time, clerical authors began to depict Satan as a powerful, apocalyptic figure who might be invoked through complex rituals like necromancy. Legal rulings of the Church served to define the role of inquisitors, whose purpose was to root out those individuals who were

engaged in demon worship and other forms of *maleficium* (116). Not only did the groups supposedly in league with the devil include heretics, but Jews, too, were considered marginal and eager to engage in demonic activities like ritual murder and desecration of the sacrament (114). This chapter concludes with a familiar discussion of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century inquisitorial manuals like those of Bernard Gui, Nicolau Eymeric, Heinrich Kramer, Jakob Sprenger, and others, and gives attention to the women who were the most frequent (but not the exclusive) target of paranoid and punitive legislation against witchcraft.

As noted by Bailey, the persecution of witches did not end with the Reformation but rather reached its peak between 1580 and 1630. Although one might anticipate otherwise, the witch hunts were often most severe within confessional groups (rather than between them), and the greatest number of witch trials occurred in territories, especially in the Holy Roman Empire, where there was greater local autonomy from the authority of the central government, which tended to be more conservative in its stance (154–156). Although Western Europe saw the decline of witch trials in the seventeenth century due to growing doubt about their validity and justice, along with criticism of the corruption of the Church, this was far from the case in Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Hungary, where trials continued into the early eighteenth century. Bailey downsizes estimates of the total number of individuals executed on charges of witchcraft to between 40,000 and 50,000, with many more whose lives were ruined through allegations of demonic magic, torture, and trials (175).

Bailey wraps up his discussion with a cursory survey of Renaissance humanism, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment. He emphasizes that the majority of the population was not touched by learned approaches or skepticism. Instead, he argues in favor of significant continuity of belief in the efficacy of magic among the common people, albeit with the caveat that these practices were not frozen in some sort of archaic form but continued to evolve over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as freemasonry, theosophy, and a variety of other occult movements (215). Like Jeffrey B. Russell's textbook on witchcraft, the final chapters of which now seem dated (*A History of Witchcraft* [London: Thames & Hudson, 1980]), Bailey concludes the book with a recent overview of neopaganism, the Craft, and Wicca. He fittingly frames his discussion of these movements as efforts to contest the limits of socially accepted forms of behavior and suggests that, like those who practiced or who were accused of magic or witchcraft in premodern centuries, their force in history continues to be very real (247).

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