

Book Reviews

The commentary itself gives an interesting insight on medical thought and practice during the late twelfth century. The unrivalled position of Hippocratic medicine is evident from Maimonides' statement in his introduction that "these are the aphorisms which every physician, and even non-physician should know by heart". Seven sections follow containing various Hippocratic aphorisms, some of which Maimonides refrains from commenting on, some he states to be clear, some he elaborates on and explains, while he disagrees with a few and takes issue with Galen for justifying Hippocrates since although "one of the greatest of physicians, the justification of misstatements, even of a great man, is not admirable". For example, in section 4: 48 Maimonides contradicts Galen's explanation of Hippocrates' prognosis of imminent death when a patient displays symptoms of uninterrupted fever with the body externally cold and internally burning and also has a thirst. He contradicts Hippocrates' aphorism concerning intestinal disorders (section 2: 20) and states that Hippocrates makes generalizations from one or two examples, a point he repeats on several occasions. It can be clearly seen from comments like these that Maimonides had an independence of mind on clinical observation and logical deduction.

Here and there the odd typographical error crops up. The translation is, however, lucid and readable with useful notes and comparisons with the Talmud which will be of much value to those without access to this work in its original language or Hebrew.

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HOWARD CLARK KEE, *Medicine, miracle and magic in New Testament times*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 55, Cambridge University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. x, 175, £10.95/\$12.95, (paperback).

This paperback reprint of a book first published in 1986 offers a comparative study of Jewish, New Testament, and pagan attitudes towards medicine, miracle, and magic. The result, however, is profoundly unsatisfactory.

The tripartite division of healing, originally a purely heuristic device, soon takes over the narrative, and the fluid boundaries, particularly between magic and miracle, are quickly forgotten. Major topics, such as the relationship between sin and disease, are barely noticed, save for the Old Testament, while the crucial passage in the Epistle of James, 5, 13–16, receives a mere two lines. Kee is at his best in dealing with the Jewish evidence, where he can exploit new discoveries to go beyond the older survey of Preuss; his comments on Christian texts are strangely jejune; while his acquaintance with pagan authors is sketchy. Errors abound. The shrine at Cos has a full-scale operating theatre, benches, instruments and all (p. 70); Dioscorides (41) writes a medical encyclopaedia known as the *Greek Herbal*; the date of Celsus is out by a generation, that of Rufus by two. Secondary sources are often misunderstood. Garcia Ballester's careful exposition of Galen's rational medical conjecture is misrepresented (57); and Dioscorides is claimed as part of the imperial establishment (46). The account of Rufus (47–55) is marred by an uncritical acceptance of the authenticity of all the cases in the *Krankenjournal*. Misprints and wrong citations abound, not least in the bibliography, where the remarkably good selection of texts in A. J. Brock's *Greek medicine* is only the most conspicuous omission.

Oddest of all is the Appendix. In the 1986 edition, this contained Charlesworth's publication and translation of a new healing text from Qumran. In this edition, although it is cited on p. 47, and the reader is referred to the Appendix for further discussion, it has been replaced by some Jewish magical texts from the Christian period, taken from a more accessible publication. No reason for the change is given, and (p. 150) the notes to the old Appendix still remain.

This is a significant loss, for the Qumran text was far more relevant in date and in subject to the overall theme of the book, and was far from easy to locate otherwise. This botch-up has robbed this revision of what was, to this reviewer, the most valuable feature of its predecessor. A few good things still are to be found, but the reader must be constantly on guard against many unjustified statements.

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