

BOOK REVIEW

Todd Klutz (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon* (JSNTSup, 245; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004). xiii + 261 pp. Pbk. US\$60.00.

This volume is a collection of essays presented in the Magic in the World of the Bible colloquium May 6–8, 1999, at the Universities of Manchester and Sheffield. This work is not centred on a specific topic, but is rather a compilation of work from various scholars who evaluate magic from a biblical perspective. This compilation is divided into three sections: ‘Magic’ in the Jewish Scriptures and at Qumran, ‘Magic’ in the New Testament and its Greco-Roman milieu, and ‘Magic’ in Disreputable Books from Late Antiquity.

Todd Klutz initiates the book with an article entitled ‘Reinterpreting “Magic”: An Introduction’. Klutz believes that it is imperative for the reader not to infer that magic is the origin of later religion. On the contrary, Klutz proposes that there is an undeniable relationship between the two. Overall, his goal is not to redefine magic in a new way, but to expand the reader’s defined relationship between magic and religion. This sets the tone for the subsequent articles that look to expand on this relationship.

The first article in part I, ‘Competing Magicians in Exodus 7–9: Interpreting Magic in the Priestly Theology’, is by Thomas C. Römer. This work examines the different views of magic expressed in the redactional history of Exodus 7–9. Römer expresses that the Deuteronomistic group wished to eliminate all divination from the history of Israel, whereas the Priestly tradition attempted to integrate and transform magic to reliance on God. Through this integration, Römer contends that priests, symbolized by Aaron, have a dual identity with magicians. In this event, Yahweh’s magic was shown to be stronger than the Egyptians’; however, it is interesting to note that the Egyptians are shown to have

some magical powers. Overall, Römer describes Exodus 7–12 as a dialogue with Egyptian culture, showing that their magicians are inferior to Yahweh's power.

Christopher L. Nihan's article, '1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud', develops the belief that 1 Samuel 28 warns against the use of divination for the exilic community living in Persia. The article opens with an evaluation of the different passages within the Hebrew Bible that mention divination and necromancy. This is followed by an incisive discussion regarding the redactional history of this passage, concluding that its insertion is post-Deuteronomistic in origin and, as a result, is initiated from Persian practices. Placing the discussion of necromancy within the Persian dynasty clearly indicates that divination was not only an issue before the Israelites entered the promise land, but continued throughout their inhabitation. Nihan parallels 1 Samuel 28 with Isa. 8.19-20, which he also believes was inserted in a later redaction. He believes that both of these sections, which are the only two that identify necromancy specifically, are messages to the Israelites that if God wishes to be silent, speaking to the dead will not help. This is important because of the strong family worship cult with Persia at this time. Overall, Nihan believes that both of these passages are polemics against necromancy and outline their futility in light of Yahweh's silence.

Alain Bühlmann's article 'Qoheleth 11.1-6 and Divination' attempts to uncover possible references to divination embedded within the symbolism of this passage. One issue that Bühlmann wrestles with is the lack of other biblical evidence for divination practices and procedures. For this discussion of divination, Bühlmann evaluates Japanese scholar Akio Tsukimoto's view that there are hidden references and images used within Qoheleth that suggest a divination ritual. Overall, Bühlmann disagrees with most of Tsukimoto's divination references, but does agree that v. 3 contains subtle references. Bühlmann concludes that this section is a polemic against divination because of Qoheleth's stress on reason and action versus reliance on mystical information.

George Brooke closes part I with his article, 'Deuteronomy 18.9-14 in the Qumran Scrolls'. Brooke begins by comparing a number of Qumran texts and their relationship with Deuteronomy, especially regarding polemics against divination. Following this, Brooke closely examines the 'magical' vocabulary of Deuteronomy 18 and its use within the previous Qumran texts, concluding that most of the terms used within

Deuteronomy are avoided within the Qumran community. Brooke finishes by stating that although from an outsider's perspective the Qumran community might appear to be in conflict with Deuteronomy 18, the vocabulary and the attitude of the texts suggest that the community believed they were acting appropriately.

F. Gerald Downing opens part II with his article, 'Magic and Scepticism in and around the First Christian Century'. Downing argues that although there was widespread belief in magic, the people living in the first century were not convinced that it was real. This idea is supported by a number of ancient authors' scepticism regarding magic and miracles. Overall, Downing concludes that the lack of lasting influence of magicians and their magic is a result of scepticism throughout the population.

Arguably the best article in this compilation is Daniel Marguerat's 'Miracle and Magic in the Acts of the Apostles'. Marguerat proposes that Luke makes a conscious effort to pair miracles with the preaching of the word because of the commonness of magic within the ancient world. By pairing a miracle with the proclamation of the Gospel, the apostles eliminate the possibility of misinterpreting the miraculous act. Marguerat gives a number of examples where Luke cleverly avoids a possible misappropriation of magic to the apostles by having the apostles proclaim their faith in God, who alone performs true miraculous wonders. Overall, Marguerat states that pairing of miracle and proclamation is the key for the success of the Christian message and for avoiding being interpreted as magic.

In his article, 'Virtual Prison Breaks: Non-Escape Narratives and the Definition of "Magic"', Andy Reimer compares three separate accounts of possible prison breaks and their relationship with magic. Reimer compares sections of Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius*, *Acts of Thomas* and Acts 16 to show the similar uses of prison release magic within these different texts. In all three works the protagonists have an opportunity to escape captivity through supernatural means; however, none of them takes the opportunity. Reimer proposes that to use supernatural means to free oneself from prison would be to admit to being a magician, which in some cases was the charge that landed them in prison in the first place. Overall, Reimer concludes that it is the actions of the person and their use of magic for their own benefit that signifies that they are magicians. Consequently, the authors of these texts go to great lengths to show their character's restraint.

Thierry Laus, in his article, ‘Paul and “Magic”’, attempts to place Paul within his cultural context in order to comprehend his understanding of magic. Laus quickly introduces two passages with possible relationships to magic, concluding that Paul does not attempt to demythologize magic but acknowledges that there are other powers than Jesus. However, following the rabbinic practice, he states that they are inferior to Jesus Christ.

Lloyd K. Pietersen’s work, ‘Magic/Thaumaturgy and the Pastorals’, opens by expressing that the culture of miracle workers is alive today, namely within the third world culture and also within Western culture as seen through the charismatic movement. Pietersen focuses on Paul’s interaction with Jewish miracle workers in his letters and Acts. Through the use of 2 Corinthians 10–13, Pietersen argues that miracle working was an ongoing problem facing the post-Pauline communities.

The final section is opened by Philip S. Alexander’s article, ‘*Sefer ha-Razim* and the Problem of Black Magic’. Alexander provides an excellent introduction to the construction, themes and literary structure of the *Sefer ha-Razim*. He then examines three magical passages and their implications on Jewish thought and the relationship to the different ideologies expressed. Alexander continues with a discussion of the dating of *Sefer ha-Razim*, placing it with the third to fifth centuries CE and adeptly closes by commenting on the uncommon use of black magic within the Jewish text.

David Bain’s article, ‘ΜΕΛΑΝΙΤΙΣ ΓΗ in the *Cyranides* and Related Texts: New Evidence for the Origins and Etymology of Alchemy?’, attempts to place the elusive ‘black lands’ in Egypt. Based on this, Bain provides an interesting etymology of alchemy and its relationship to magic. Also included is an appendix on the dating of the alchemical writer, Olympiodorus, and a substantial bibliography.

The final article, ‘The Archer and the Cross: Chorographic Astrology and Literary Design in the *Testament of Solomon*’, written by Todd E. Klutz, confronts a number of damaging claims presented by McCown. Klutz begins by challenging McCown’s recessional history and proposes an alternate association of texts that would indicate a different priority. He then continues to offer a thorough exposition of *T. Sol.* 14.3–16.1, concluding that the explicit material, false ending and zodiac sign all indicate priority of the ‘P’ recension. Klutz concludes by offering a number of potential opportunities for future study in this area.

Overall, there is a solid development of the different magical concepts within the biblical setting. There is a well-balanced approach that incorporates a variety of perspectives and theories. This collection would have benefited from a response paper evaluating the different ideas, or a summary tying some of the varied ideas together. On the whole, *Magic in the Biblical World* brings fresh insight into an exciting area of study.

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