

printed (in square brackets) and discussed: especially noteworthy is the expansion in Chapter 13 of the text's original discussion of elephantiasis (pp. lxix–lxxvi and 69–70 with notes), a disease entity that, in antiquity, was closely analogous to modern leprosy. The late expansion reflects a more wide-ranging conception of elephantiasis.

The text is of composite nature although probably, as Petit argues in consensus with most predecessors, the work of a single author (pp. lxv–lxix). It begins with a catechism (answers to neophyte questions, starting with 'How was medicine discovered?') and progresses to jejune outlines – little more than lists at times – of medical subjects. Its content can be divided into three main sections: the nature and history of the art of medicine; anatomy and physiology; and pathology and therapy (p. xvii). Petit's introductory section (Notice) addresses the place of the treatise in ancient medical–pedagogical ('isagogic') literature; its doctrinal stance; its date and authorship; its composition; and the history of the text. Appendices to this section print the prologues associated with each of the two manuscript families and compare the chapters attested in each of them.

Petit's text, translation and commentary are thorough, accurate and sagacious, and I noticed no mistakes or omissions. Anglophone scholarship is well-represented in the bibliography. While we learn nothing revolutionary about ancient medicine from Petit's introduction and notes, she provides us with a scholarly tool of the highest quality.

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Gary B. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. xiv + 246, £18.00/\$35.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-8018-9142-7.

Gary Ferngren's excellent and thought-provoking work is an invitation to reconsider some ideas about early Christianity and its relation to medicine that we have too long taken for granted. His main arguments are the following: Christianity was not a religion of healing, which means that Christ's miracles did not aim to heal people (like Asclepius), but were signs to attest his divine nature. Miraculous healing (and miracles in general) was not common among Christians during the first to third centuries CE. A sick Christian turned to physicians and not to magical–ritual–religious healing. Christian theological and practical philanthropy led to non-medical care for the sick, poor and distressed. With charity and organisation and money, Christianity led to organised (still non-medical) urban health care.

Chapter 2 focuses on the approaches to Greek medicine and physicians of the second-century apologists (Tertullian, Origen, Tatian and Arnobius) traditionally regarded as hostile to medicine. Ferngren reassesses these attacks either as exceptions, or as referring to particular cases, and by no means typically Christian. In favour of Christians' high valuation of medical practice he lists its popularity as an analogy for the healing of the soul, together with the naturalistic aetiology of diseases probably shared by most sick people, pagan or Christian. One could object that attributing an illness to natural causes would not deter the sick person from turning to healing deities or other ritual healing practices. Similarly, when it comes to the versatile and varied class of healing professionals, turning to any of them does not always reflect the patient's aetiology of his own disease, but often depends on availability, the advice of others, the healer's fame and popularity, the patient's financial means, or his possibilities of travel. What facilitated the embrace of medicine by Christians, in Ferngren's view, was the fact that, unlike Greek philosophy, 'medicine, like natural philosophy, could be detached from its pagan framework with relative ease' (p. 40). Chapter 3 emphatically argues against 'the thesis that early Christian sources ascribed all illness to demonic

etiology' (and substitutes for the exaggeration *all*, the equally great exaggeration *none*). A valuable section on demons follows, which distinguishes between demonic possession that requires exorcism, and demon-caused illness that calls for healing. One could easily continue this line of thought and posit a distinction between miraculous healing sought for naturally caused disease and demon-caused illness.

The key concept of Chapter 4 is that the New Testament miracles 'represent the external aspect of salvation, the physical manifestation of a new spiritual order' (p. 65) and are not to be viewed *per se* as healing miracles. Christians, however, were soon to face the challenge put by successful pagan healing miracles. They had to come up with a response and a valuation: 'when claims of contemporary miraculous cures were put forward in the second century, in debate between the followers of Jesus and those of Asclepius, Christians discovered cures were abundant and whose claims were hard to deny, let alone to match' (pp. 70–1). The value of this observation is shown by the fact that it accommodated different possible accounts. Ferngren's is that Christians simply did not consider healing important until the fourth century, but put considerable effort into organised, non-professional, mostly palliative care of the sick. This attitude had a two-fold basis: in Christian medical philanthropy (Chapter 5), which actively cared for the sick, especially during plagues; and also outside the community of Christian worship. The theological imperative behind this was the doctrine of the *imago Dei*: 'every human life has an absolute intrinsic value as a bearer of God's image and as an eternal soul'; while money, writes Ferngren, came from wealthy individuals, long before state sponsorship began in 313. Christians' long experience in medical charity prepared the way for the eventual establishment of the first hospitals as faith institutions (Chapter 6). Christians were able to organise themselves well for a large-scale charity activity, and church communities soon created minor clerical orders to assist

them, chosen for spiritual rather than medical qualifications. In Ferngren's words, the hospital was 'in origin and conception, a distinctively Christian institution, rooted in Christian concepts of charity and philanthropy'. It had, as he sees it, no ancient precursors either in the sphere of medical care, or in that of religious healing.

What may the reader feel is missing from Ferngren's argument? The parallel world of non-medical healing, undoubtedly a contemporary reality. But even if the reader concentrates only on the medical side, and on the Christians' appreciation of medicine, he or she would naturally be curious about the process of adapting medical practice to the needs of faith. How were Hippocratic and Galenic scientific medicine transmitted? How did they become accepted and incorporated into the new Christian *paideia*, especially as medicine, and the study of medicine, was after all a pagan art, with many of its practitioners closely linked to Greek philosophy and to the fading late Antique pagan intelligentsia?

The book is a challenge, in the best sense, and has an important place in the ongoing dialogue between medical historians and Classical and New Testament scholars. In addition to his scholarly qualities, Ferngren has a sympathetic approach and an engaging ability to step back and see the object of research and the research itself as part of a larger picture. 'The modern age is a historical period like any other, limited in its perspective by time and culture . . . Understanding that we, too, have historical and cultural limitations forces us to view the past in a manner that is neither patronizing nor disparaging but appreciative of the power of ideas and practices that we do not always share or fully understand' (p. 10).

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Leigh Chipman, *The World of Pharmacy and Pharmacists in Mamlūk Cairo*, Sir Henry Wellcome Asian Series, Vol. 8 (Leiden: