nos monuit et docuit. Quae quod multa doctrina summoque studio fecit, non satis ei puto a me his paginulis gratias pares esse persolutas.

Bononiae

Gualtharius Calboli


Miriam Ewers investigates an intriguing question in her revised dissertation, ‘Marcellus Empiricus: De medicamentis. Christliche Abhandlung über Barmherzigkeit oder abergläubische Rezeptsammlung?’. To what extent did Christianity influence Marcellus’ encyclopedia, and could Marcellus have been a Christian? With roughly 2,500 pharmaceutical remedies, organized a capite ad calcem, covering an astonishing variety of complaints and incorporating an equally extensive variety of ingredients, Marcellus’ De medicamentis reads much like other pharmaceutical encyclopedias (e.g., Pliny, NH 24–27; Scribonius Largus, Compositions; Oreibasios, Collectiones Medicae) and medical treatises (Galen, De Compositione Medicamentorum per Genera [Kuhn vv. 12–13]; De Compositione Medicamentorum secundum Locos [Kuhn v. 13]). The tract, however, stands at an interesting point in Roman history, ca 450 CE, at a time when Christianity began its sweeping adlection of Greco-Roman intellectual and folk culture.

Ewers begins with a systematic reconstruction Marcellus’ biography and career (pp. 11–26). Marcellus served as magister officiorum under Arcadius (Codex Theodosianus 16.5.29; 6.29.8 = Cod. Iustin. 12.22.4, and Souda M-203). Marcellus’ Gallic origins are implied by his use of Gallic plant names (pg. 16), but positive proof of his connections to Bordeaux is lacking, as E. asserts. Marcellus, nonetheless, lists the renowned Burdigalensian scholars Siburius, Eutropius and Iulius Ausonius as elder fellow-citizens: praef. 2. It is, however, uncertain if the Marcellus whom Symmachus addresses (9.11, 9.21, pg. 18–20) is our encyclopedist or the politician and Spanish landholder of epistle 2.15 (395 CE). E. suggests the former without critical assessment (pg. 18–20). Although E. rightly notes that both Burdigalensis and Empiricus are modern (Renaissance) appellations, she omits meaningful discussion of the Empiricist school in the context of Marcellus’ text and medical philosophy. Marcellus had no connection with the Empiricist sect, ending some two centuries before his time, and the appellation is suggested by the author’s frequent use of empiricus, expertus, experimentum, especially in chapter titles, as well as his own description of his book as libellum hanc de empiricis (praef. 1).1 His choice of vocabulary may suggest some sympathy with the historical school, and the emphasis on an observational, cause and effect approach, in fact, would have contributed an interesting dimension to the discussion of Christian and traditional elements in de Medicamentis, especially with

regard to the virtue of clementia in a Christian context. The introduction then continues with a survey of de Medicamentis, its reception, nachleben, and scholarship. The introduction ends in outlining the study’s structure and methodology.

E.’s study divides into three methodically organized chapters: possible Christian elements (pp. 27–83), pagan aspects (pp. 86–142), and finally the author’s endeavor to reconcile the mix of Christian and pagan remedies (pp. 142–156). On the whole, E.’s approach to both medical and religious questions lacks nuance. E. disregards Marcellus’ sources – Marcellus explicitly lists five of his Latin sources at praef. 2. She fails to contextualize De medicamentis within the larger Greco-Roman intellectual tradition of medicine, magic, and encyclopedias. Encyclopedias aim to be thorough, not critical, and the inclusion of a pharmaceutical recipe seldom implies endorsement. Rare in the medical corpus, Marcellus’ included, are phrases to the effect of ‘which I use’, or ‘particularly effective’. For one example, see Amarantos the Grammarians in Galen De Antidotis 2.17 [14.208–209 Kuhn] where the author personally uses (ὡς καὶ εὐτυχῶς ἐχρῆτο) a 32-ingredient sore foot remedy. Pliny hardly believed in the efficacy or even validity of much of what he reported (see NH 29.85, where Pliny reports spiders in a bracelet as contraception, according to his source Caecilius: ut Caecilius in commentariis reliquit). E. provides practically no comparative analysis with other medical extractors and encyclopedists. In her analysis of iatroastrology (pp. 113–18) she fails to mention Imbrasios, a significant and extant source, nor does she avail herself of the sources compiled in the Papyri Graecae Magicae for her discussion of iatro-mancy (pp. 86–109).

In section 1.1, in particular, E. over-interprets her examples. Although E. rightly states that the pagan evidence overwhelmingly dominates the collection, she nonetheless gives great weight to the scant recipes that can, however loosely, be investigated within a Christian context. Most of her examples are interpretable according to other traditions: e.g., the healer facing east to administer a cure (an act that aims to increase efficacy through magical means or associable with any number of ancient Mediterranean sun-worshipping cults); the use of purple cloth as evocative of the Passion (also noted in the very non-Christian Pliny the Elder NH 32.77). The curative properties of human saliva are not, as E. suggests, exclusively associated with Christ, and this practice is analogous to treatment by the licks of snakes at Epidaurus (Pausanias 2.27) and possibly also dogs at Lydney Park. E. tends to give precedence to Christian sources, relying strongly on evidence from scripture. However, it is puzzling that she quotes Tertullian on the ideal of chastity, even in marriage (Castit 9.2; pg. 140), without citing Matthew 5.28, the passage that Tertullian quotes.

Granted, there are at least two unequivocal references to Christ. Marcellus recommends white thorn (spina alba) for spleen complaints, which E. interprets as a particularly Christian ingredient, on the strength of the folk tradition, au cou-
rant by the 4th century but not scripturally attested, that Christ’s thorny crown was composed of this botanic (qua Christus coronatus est: 23.29; the relative clause seems an aside rather than integral to the passage). Although E. cites modern uses (see pg. 35, note 107), she offers no comparative evidence from widely available ancient Mediterranean pharmaceutical sources. Dioscourides, to give one comparandum, lists astringent Christ’s Thorn (paliouros) as a remedy for coughs, bladder stones, and snake bites. Marcellus does also append the phrase in nomine Christi (25.13) as a coda to a ritual for gathering pharmaceuticals. The language is otherwise a magical incantation, and Marcellus’ coda may simply reflect the Christianized formula in current use. Finally, Marcellus’ coda to another magical formula against unspecified complaints in nomine dei Jacob, in nomine dei Sabaoth (21.2) is explained by E. as a Christian exorcism, though the coda more strongly suggests a Jewish usage, and the formula is typically pagan. Two (or three) overt examples hardly make a compelling statistical argument.

More compelling is E.’s discussion of the Christian ideals of clemency and mercy. Marcellus advises treating all patients and all complaints, whether curable or incurable, contra a preponderance of medical wisdom to the contrary. The Hippocratic Corpus (de Arte 3.8), Plato (Rep 3.407C-E), Celsus, and others advise the physician to avoid terminal cases lest, for instance, a physician might be accused of killing a patient (Celsus 5.26.1C). Marcellus’ statement of purpose (praef. 4) may reflect an ideal of philanthropy inspired by Christian or Stoic philosophy and philanthropy (e.g., the Puellae Faustiniannae). However, Marcellus’ non-surgical remedies (1.2.4) are just as likely to derive from the Hippocratic oath, a document rooted in Pythagorean purity and eschewing surgery, abortion, or remedies that would cause bloodshed. Furthermore, Scribonius Largus and Celsus, both non-Christians whom Marcellus very likely consulted, employing much the same language as Marcellus, address the treatment of severe illness (Scribonius Largus: ex magnio periculo: 90; vitae periculum: 100; Celsus gravis morbi periculum: 2.4 and others). Finally, caritas was an ideal hardly exclusive to early Christians (see, e.g., Cicero de fin. 1.35, 1.52, 2.45, de Nat. deorum 1.122, Tusc. 1.90; Seneca Minor Ep. Mor. 9.11, Quintilian Inst. praef. 6; Scribonius Largus praef. 3).

Lucid and helpful is E.’s evaluation of non-Christian sympathetic cures (pp. 86–109), usefully classified by type and clearly illustrated in a logically arrayed graph. She considers the sympathy of color, shape, body parts, the transference of vital forces from an animal into a human patient, the magical use of natural objects (amulets and metals), life forces (blood and breath), and magical words and numbers. Interesting also is her discussion of behavior of the patient and preparation of the ingredients (pp. 109–113), which likewise has its origins in magical practices and mystery rites. For example, the efficacy of a cure depends upon the patient’s chastity: a casto homine (8.51; pg. 111 – akin to the Delphic proclamation that those who approach the oracle must ‘think pure thoughts and speak well-omened words’); ingredients must not touch the ground (1.68; pg. 109) – to preserve their purity, one assumes. Clearly contrary to scripture and

early Church philosophy are Marcellus’ recipes for abortion (pp. 129–132, consider 30.19, which Marcellus prescribes also as a remedy for fever), castration (pp. 135–137, 33.62–63, non-surgical), and vengeful prescriptions that damage fellow humans (pp. 133–135, 15.82 – e.g., what to do to an ungrateful patient).

E. cannot and does not deny the preponderance of non-Christian evidence. To resolve the coexistence of Christian and non-Christian remedies, E. suggests that Marcellus included both traditions as a reflection of his times (pp. 112–113): The society was not universally Christian; Christians continued to adhere to popular opinions (or traditional remedies), and contemporary Christian culture was tolerant of non-Christian practices (especially those of proven utility). And Marcellus’ target readership almost certainly included the less educated: plebeis remedia fortuita atque simplicia, quae experimentis probauerant, didici (praef. 2). E. ultimately (and rightly) concludes that non-Christian evidence in de Medicamentis need not militate against the author’s self-identity as a Christian. E. classifies Marcellus among the non-baptized semi-Christians (Halbchrist) for whom traditional beliefs and practices endured (pp. 145–146), concordant with much recent scholarship exploring the endurance of traditional practices among 4th and 5th century Christians. Marcellus himself declares his intellectual debt to pagan culture and medical traditions (praef. 1; carmen de speciebus 1–6), and this debt does not vitiate the plausibility of Marcellus’ Christianity, partial or full (cp., Augustine, Conf. 3.7–8). It may not be possible to determine to what extent contemporary Christianity influenced Marcellus’ de Medicamentis. Such a study could succeed only with a greater understanding of and deeper engagement with the Greco-Roman magical, medical, pharmaceutical, and encyclopedic traditions. Williamsburg

Georgia L. Irby


When Martina Dieterle states in the introduction to her monograph that she has written a «Resümee der nunmehr hundertzwanzi gjährigen Forschungen zu Dodona», she is too humble. Although her book is indeed a wonderful summary of over 100 years of excavations and research related to the site of the oracle of Zeus, it is far more than an overview.

D.’s study is divided into six main chapters that are complemented by four extensive and extremely helpful appendices. It is not difficult to understand the significance of her book; until 2007, there was only one other study – aside from the occasional archaeological guides – dedicated to the sanctuary of Dodona.


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