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Irmgard Männlein-Robert, ed.: *Die Christen als Bedrohung? Text, Kontext und Wirkung von Porphyrios*, Roma Aeterna, Beiträge zu Spätantike und Frühmittelalter 5, Stuttgart (Franz Steiner) 2017, 348 pp., ISBN 978-3-515-11537-7, € 56,—.

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This volume is the result of a 2014 conference in Tübingen on Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*, contextualised in the project "Platonismus und Christentum" (p. 9). It consists of an introduction, fourteen articles and an index locorum.

The editor, Irmgard Männlein-Robert, begins by summarizing the volume's fourteen articles and introducing the questions raised therein (pp. 9–18). Based on this overview, she ventures a terse answer to the question posed in the title: Porphyry did in fact see Christianity as a threat politically, religiously, philosophically, culturally and personally (p. 9). His polemic was comprehensive, targeting biblical characters, the biblical text, Christian exegesis, Christian theology and the divinity of Christ. Männlein-Robert here builds on the "sicheren Fragmente und Testimonien dieser Schrift sowie anhand weiterer erhaltener Texte" (p. 9). The use of unnamed fragments is controversial even within the volume (cf. below).

In "Polemical Strategies in the Conflict over Plato's Legacy in the Platonist Schools of the Second and Third Centuries," Dominic O'Meara reviews the discursive methods employed by rival Platonists (pp. 19–30). While the topic might seem to be of limited relevance to the volume, it proves, to the credit of both author and editor, illuminative in contextualising *Contra Christianos* and the agenda of Por-

phyry. O'Meara is cautious and merely suggests that Porphyry's polemic versus Christianity stands in this discursive tradition (p. 30). In the context of the other articles, the editor is however justified in her full approval (p. 11). Implicitly, this conclusion suggests that Porphyry saw Christianity as a philosophical threat and dealt with it accordingly.

Andrew Smith, in "Porphyry's Metaphysical Objections to Christianity in *Contra Christianos*," discusses Porphyry's critique of Christian doctrines (pp. 31–40). He begins his article with a reference to Eusebius' claim that Porphyry focussed his polemic on sacred scripture because he was unable to defame Christian doctrines (p. 31, Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6,18,2–3). Subsequently, Smith searches and finds only one fragment "which very clearly suggests a complex metaphysical basis," a passage where Porphyry denies that the son of God is a logos (p. 33).

Aaron P. Johnson's contribution, "The Implications of a Minimalist Approach to Porphyry's Fragments" (pp. 41–58), develops a taxonomy for evaluating the fragments attributed to Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*—one that should be useful for evaluating other Porphyrian attributions (p. 42). The taxonomy ranges from clearly attributed quotations/paraphrases to quotations/paraphrases loosely attributed to unnamed Greek polemicists. Johnson argues that it is prudent to be a "minimalist," dealing only with clearly attributed quotations and paraphrases, six of the former and thirty-one of the latter (p. 53). He explores the implications of this minimalism, finding that it leaves us with no evidence for polemic versus Judaism or Jewish scriptures. Johnson's approach is sound, and his taxonomy will be helpful for any scholar focusing on Porphyry. For those studying pagan polemic against Christianity and Porphyry's context, the anonymous fragments remain, however, as valuable as ever. In his footnotes, Johnson commendably engages other articles in the volume. In footnote 18, he acknowledges that Riedweg's article likely adds a fragment of *Contra Christianos* that does not easily fit into his taxonomy. In footnote 20, Johnson argues, contra Magny's article, that there is no reason to think that Eusebius intentionally altered quotations.

In "Ein neues Zeugnis für Porphyrios' Schrift Gegen die Christen" (pp. 59–84), Christoph Riedweg argues that John Chrysostom confronted Porphyry in a homily on John (text and translation, pp. 80–84). Given the sound principles of Johnson's taxonomy, Riedweg's article faces a challenge. Riedweg, however, rises to it, providing a persuasive and detailed analysis with mutually supporting arguments. He teases out the implications of his finding for our understanding of Porphyry's polemic versus the Christians, which he summarises (pp. 78–79). Riedweg suggests that Porphyry himself likely raised some of these issues, which cannot be proven by fragments, but which are found in the polemic of Celsus and Julian, and that Porphyry's polemic, Chrysostom's homily and Macarios Magnes'

apology belong in the same (century-long) discursive context (pp. 79–80). This is well-put. Again, the minimalist approach is sound if our interest is limited to understanding Porphyry; but if our interest is in context, the unattributed fragments remain important.

Two articles exemplify how parsing definitions can inform empirical analysis. In the article “Porphyry, Metaphor/Allegory and the Christians” (pp. 85–110), Karla Pollmann asks how to define, and differentiate between, metaphor and allegory. She provides an analysis of Origen and Porphyry, both of whom commended the latter. Pollmann concludes that Porphyry’s critique of Christian exegesis—a main issue for Porphyry (cf. Smith above)—targeted content, and not method per se (i. e., allegorical exegesis was appropriate for Homer, but not the Jewish scriptures). Similarly, Matthias Becker’s article, “Polemik, Bedrohungskommunikation, Emotion” (pp. 111–135), seeks a definition of polemic (pp. 113–116) and concludes that *Contra Christianos* is polemical (pp. 116–124). What Porphyry aimed to achieve was not a consensus with, conversion away from or reinterpretation of Christian positions and scriptures, but their intellectual destruction/defamation (pp. 114, 119 and 135). He was thus motivated because, Becker argues, he perceived Christianity as a threat to the political order, pagan religiosity and philosophy (pp. 112, 126–129 and 134–135).

Illinca Tanaseanu-Döbler’s “Porphyrios und die Christen in De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda” (pp. 137–175) discusses the fragments of Porphyry’s *On Philosophy from Oracles*. Contrary to Eusebius’ claim (*Praeparatio euangelica* 5,36,5), this work, she argues, is not primarily aimed at Christians. The anti-Christian polemic that figures prominently in the work’s main sources (Eusebius, *Praeparatio euangelica* and *Demonstratio euangelica*, and Augustine, *De ciuitate dei*) is thus in a sense incidental. Porphyry sees polemic against Christians as important, but in this work, he has a larger agenda. The Christian idea of “Der *mortuus deus* stellt die philosophische *koine* der Kaizerzeit radikal in Frage; deswegen muß Porphyrios reagieren” (p. 175).

Irmgard Männlein-Robert contributes the article “Zeichen deuten – Zeichen setzen. Porphyrios, die alten Götter und die Christen in Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων / De imaginibus” (pp. 177–206). She demonstrates that Porphyry’s allegoric defence of the images of the gods is exemplary of platonic exegesis but written in the context of a Christian critique of pagan idol worship (p. 204).

Udo Hartmann’s “Auf der Suche nach Platons *Politeia*? Neuplatoniker an den Kaiserhöfen der Tetrachen und Constantins” (pp. 207–235) and Stefan Freund’s “Contra religionem nomenque Christianorum. Die Gegner des Christentums in den *Divinae institutiones* des Laktanz” (pp. 237–259) argue convincingly against identifying Porphyry with Lactantius’ high priest of philosophy (*Diuinae institutiones* 5,2,4; pp. 237–240). There is otherwise little direct focus on Porphyry in these

articles, but they raise questions important for the understanding of context, the role of philosophy at court and Lactantius' answer to critics of Christianity. Hartmann discusses the possible presence and influence of Neoplatonist philosophers at the Tetrarchs' and Constantine's courts. The few scattered remarks in the sources are diligently discussed, for example, Eunapius, Zosimus and Sozomen on Sopatros at the court of Constantine (pp. 229–234). Freund focusses on Lactantius' rhetoric and argumentation, showing that he criticized the opponents of Christianity for defending ideas and positions already well refuted.

Ariane Magny, in "Eusebius' Porphyry," argues that we cannot trust how Eusebius quotes or paraphrases Porphyry (pp. 261–288). There are, she argues, two reasons for scepticism: firstly, Eusebius made a (non-representative) selection of passages to quote/paraphrase; secondly, there is "evidence that he tampered with the original text" (p. 265). If we were to follow Magny, not even Johnson's minimalist approach (cf. above) would help us discern the content of Porphyry's polemic. Her main evidence for tampering is her comparison between places where Eusebius quotes Plato, and known manuscripts featuring Plato's works. This argumentation is hardly convincing. All but one of the (few) noted differences are trivial. Further, Eusebius' quotations of Plato might well stem from manuscript traditions other than those we possess, or from quotations in contemporaneous works of Neoplatonist authors (cf. O'Meara's article above). Eusebius might thus have quoted in good faith. If so, this would likely also be true of his quotation of Porphyry. How else could Eusebius have hoped to refute him for the benefit of contemporary readers?

Volker Henning Drecoll's "Augustin und Porphyrios" (pp. 275–288) probes Augustine's knowledge and use of Porphyry. He argues that Augustine oscillated between quoting Porphyry directly and paraphrasing him loosely. Further, Drecoll shows that Augustine's dealings with Porphyry indicate that Porphyry's positions were still known and influential in Augustine's time.

In "Ein Kampf gegen die Hydra. Die christliche Verteidigungsstrategie des Makarios Magnes im Gegenüber zu exegetisch begründeter philosophischer Bibelkritik" (pp. 289–305), Ulrich Volp analyses Macarios Magnes' *Apokritikos*. He shows that many of the anti-Christian attacks Makarios confronts, and many of his apologetic arguments, date to earlier centuries. There is thus no reason to follow traditional scholarship in presuming that Makarios' main opponent, the unnamed "Hellene," was Porphyry. Volp also argues that Makarios developed a deeper theological argumentation than his apologetic predecessors, in line with his homiletic purpose of influencing not so much critics of Christianity as those who had already accepted the faith.

In the final piece, "'The Old Man from Tyre': Julian's *Contra Galilaeos* and the Fourth-Century Nachleben of Porphyry's Engagement with the Christians,"

Susanna Elm studies the reception of Porphyry in Julian's *Contra Galilaeos* (pp. 307–323). As an Iamblichan philosopher, Julian strongly disagreed with Porphyry on many issues, a fact well known to contemporaries. Still, he was “in overwhelming agreement with” Porphyry's rejection of Christianity (p. 308). Elm argues that Julian's work, while “ostensibly addressing Christians,” also aimed at influencing “contemporary followers of Porphyry by highlighting Iamblichan teachings” (p. 322).

While each article is of high quality, the whole exceeds the sum of its parts. This volume proves the importance of diligent seminar-organisers and anthology-editors for scholarship. For example, reading the articles of Tanaseanu-Döbler and Männlein-Robert in the context of the volume, with its general focus on *Contra Christianos*, provides an answer to the titular question. Porphyry did perceive Christianity as a significant threat. This threat prompted him to deploy apology and polemic both incidentally and directly, both defensively and offensively. One may note that this mirrors the second-century situation, where polemic against Christianity figured both in works aimed against Christians (Celsus and Cornelius Fronto) and, in passing, via philosophical and medical tracts, satire, biography and historiography (Epictetus, Galen, Marcus Aurelius, Suetonius and Tacitus).