

About Nicholas Alexander Marshall

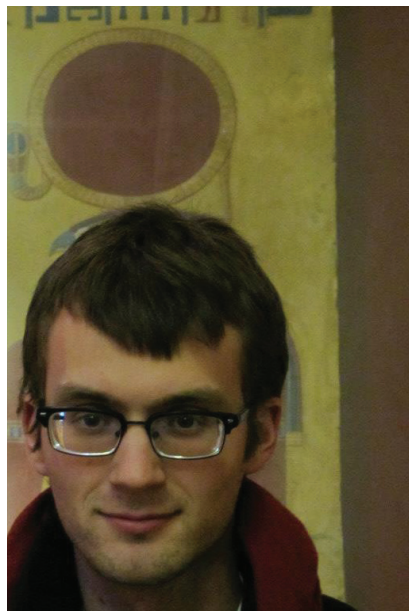
Nicholas Marshall is a historian of religion. He produced his PhD dissertation at the Department of the Study of Religion from 2011-2016. He has participated in a number of research programs, including the Center for the Study of Antiquity and Christianity. He currently lives in Texas with his wife and cat.

Time and place for the PhD defence

Thursday 30 June 2016; 13:00-16:00
Auditorium 1 (room 1441-012), bldg. 1441, Tåsinge-
gade 3, 8000 Aarhus C

Contact

Nicholas Alexander Marshall
Tel.: +1-979-587-7903
Mail: nicholas.a.marshall@gmail.com



THE MEANING OF THEURGY: A MINIMA- LISTIC APPROACH TO THEURGY AND PRE- VIOUS UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE TERM IN LATE ANTIQUAE RELIGION

PhD Dissertation by Nicholas Alexander Marshall

THE MEANING OF THEURGY: A MINIMALISTIC APPROACH TO THEURGY AND PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE TERM IN LATE ANTIQUE RELIGION

Summary of the main points of PhD dissertation “The Meaning of Theurgy” by Nicholas Alexander Marshall, Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University.

The dissertation offers a new approach for considering the contested meaning of the term theurgy as it is present in the writing of Iamblichus of Chalcis (late 3rd - early 4th century CE)

- Iamblichus's concept of theurgy is inconsistent.
- Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* is not only a defense of theurgy, but rather a defense of a number of religious beliefs and practices in late antiquity.
- Conceptions of theurgy present in current scholarship largely depend on an attitude of synthesis which seeks to combine as many points of data as possible, without considering the possibility that later sources might be guilty of inventing connective traditions.
- The dissertation relies on an innovative method to extract the minimal semantic value from a convoluted philosophical text. The author suggests this method could be applied to other convoluted texts.

Conclusion

Upon a minimalistic reading, Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* does not provide enough information to correlate the concept of theurgy with the scholarly meta-narratives which have been constructed on the basis of reading other texts associated with an imagined theurgic tradition.

Facts about the field of study

The term theurgy means “god-work” and has been associated with a number of religious and magical traditions of late antiquity including Gnosticism, Kabbalah, and Buddhism.

The study of Neoplatonism in late antiquity has received a relatively greater amount of attention in recent decades.

Neoplatonism refers to the complex of beliefs more-or-less structured around a “religious” interpretation of the dialogues of Plato.