SIMON MAGUS

Magic and how a people have perceived it has varied throughout time. In contrast to the past, people today look at magic and know there is a logical explanation as to why something happened. Magic is merely an illusion, not real. But to the minds of antiquity, especially Christian minds, magic was not only real it was a product of the devil. But what does one do when the accused magician is performing his magical acts in the name of the Lord? This is the very case when it comes to Simon Magus, or more commonly known as, Simon the sorcerer from Acts 8, *The Acts of Peter* from the New Testament Apocrypha and the Gnostic Simon of *Adversus Haereses*. What differentiates a man who performs miraculous acts as the Great Power of God from an apostle of Christ who performs similar, if not the exact same, acts? To answer this question one needs to analyze the accounts, the intention of the author behind each, and afterwards, attempt to draw the line between heretic and apostle. And through this, one can better understand what role magic plays in the modern mind.

In the book of Acts in the New Testament (c. 65–110), after the stoning of Stephen and while Philip was spreading the good news in Samaria, readers come across a character by the name of Simon who “had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria.”¹ Calling himself the “Great Power” of God and being an entertaining fellow, the people were drawn to Simon until Philip and his good teachings of Jesus Christ baptized them.

¹ 8.9