

C. P. E. SPRINGER: *The Manuscripts of Sedulius: a Provisional Handlist*. (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 85, Pt 5.) Pp. xxi + 244. Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1995. Paper, \$20. ISBN: 0-87169-855-2.

Sedulius was an extremely popular writer in the Middle Ages, and his influence as a schoolbook extended at least to the time of Colet and Nebrija. His best known work is his five-book *Carmen Paschale*, an account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection prefaced by a rhetorical presentation of Old Testament miracles to convince any doubters. This work was translated by Sedulius into prose; it is hardly surprising that this was less popular (S. discusses this on p. 12) when one bears in mind the evidence that for Late Antique readers verse held a charm that apparently no prose, however elaborate and rhythmical, could rival. The letter prefaced to this *Opus Paschale* was sometimes known as the *Ars Sedulii*, and S. is surely right against Lapidge (pp. 8–9) to see this work of the fifth-century Sedulius, rather than one of Sedulius Scottus, in the list preserved at the end of Oxford, Bodleian, Tanner 3—though a fuller presentation of the evidence would have helped. Sedulius also wrote two well-known hymns, an epanaleptic one in elegiacs (*Cantemus socii* . . .) and an alphabetic one in Ambrosian stanzas (*A solis ortus cardine*), of which different excerpts (especially one beginning *Hostis Herodes impie*) were used in different liturgical contexts. The manuscripts preserve various other bits and pieces, including the biographical notice to which we owe the information that Sedulius wrote in Achaëa in the reigns of Theodosius and Valentinian (assumed to be II and III respectively).

Since his earlier essay on Sedulius' Christian epic (see *CR* 40 [1990], 159) S. has spent several active years seeking to list and describe the hundreds of relevant manuscripts. They are presented here in two sections: one contains manuscripts of the Paschal works (excluding those containing only fragments, which come later), and the other 'a goodly sampling of manuscripts which contain less substantial portions of Sedulius' works or *Seduliana*'. The hymns feature strongly here. He gives a description of each manuscript, information about its contents, date, and provenance, and various other matters, including what is known of its ownership and in what mode he consulted it. There are bibliographies for each manuscript, which sometimes include studies of works by other poets. The information of various kinds is less full in the second section, but S. has performed an invaluable service for future students of Sedulius and his many manuscripts.

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L. MORISI (ed., trans., comm.): *Alcimi Aviti De Mundi Initio* (Testi e Manuali per l'Insegnamento Universitario del Latino). Pp. 146. Bologna: Patron, 1996. Paper, L. 19,000. ISBN: 88-555-2376-7.

By the time Avitus wrote his six short epic poems on Christian themes, most of them in a series *de spiritalis historiae gestis*, based on themes from Genesis, Christian paraphrase or epic had come a long way. His *De Initio Mundi* is particularly attractive: there are few obvious axes to grind, and the theme of Creation gives ample scope for entertaining descriptions of the new world, the beginning of human life, and the garden of Eden. Speeches are put into the mouth of the Creator which relate significantly to classical models, as a rule more subtly than *progeniem sine fine dedi* (175). In the tradition of paradoxographic and Hexameron literature there are intriguing details: of nails and hair, for example, which nourished by the spleen *nec abscisa dolent, hinc nunc augmenta resumunt* (line 113; M. chooses not to emend). The editor's introduction, rather surprisingly, does not set out the basic facts which would help the reader understand the poet and his work, but instead, after minimally fulfilling 'le doverose premesse', presents an exposition of the prefatory letter in prose that Avitus addressed to the bishop Apollinaris. The critical apparatus is also less helpful than it might be; criticizing the apparatus of Peiper as 'disorganico ed affrettato', M. proceeds to the other extreme and provides one that is 'skeletal' and without sigla. The reader is faced with entries like *caelumque refulgens: caelique figuras*, sometimes with a note in the commentary to help, but often, as in this case (131), not. In 163 *perderet* is hardly credible ([*Christus*] *penderet nexus, culpas dum penderet orbis*); if there is a theological point to be weighed here, we should have been told. In 76 McDonough's