

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

suggestion is more worthy of note than the tinkering of Sirmond or the free composition of the egregious Gagnay, as is M.'s own tentative *quaereris* in 286, especially since it offers a new approach to the problem.

The notes in the commentary do not always match the printed text (in 79 M. prints *signi* but translates *segni* and vigorously defends it in the note), and many of them deal with important textual points in breathless parentheses, such as the one of fourteen lines (if I have negotiated the brackets correctly) in the very long note on *lienis*, 110. The translation does not always reflect the insights of the commentary: at line 14 *librantis pondere verbi* it does not do justice to the exposition of intransitive *librantis*, and at 88 (*pulsantis verbere plectri*) ignores the quotation from Cicero and translates *plectri* as 'vocal chords' (ignoring *pulsantis*). Many of the notes give parallels from classical, Biblical and Patristic literature, but sometimes more could be said about the grammar and meaning of Avitus: e.g. on 26 *acceperere genus sine germine* (where *genus* means more than 'vita' which appears in the translation), and *et semen voluisse fuit* ('e fu seme il volere di Dio') in the next line. In 70 *tollere vultus* is certainly an Ovidian line ending but no attention is drawn to Avitus' use of the infinitive after *accipiat*. Numerous notes explain the poem's stylistic attractions in a style that is itself rather wordy and ornate, in marked contrast to the practice of many anglophone commentators who hurry over such matters assuming that the reader needs no help in examining effects of alliteration or rhythm. But these comments on style are one of the most consistently illuminating areas of the commentary. The bibliography and index are also helpful.

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O. ZWIERLEIN (ed.): *Severi Episcopi <Malacitani (?)> in Evangelia Libri XII: Das Trierer Fragment der Bücher VIII–X. Unter Mitwirkung von Reinhart Herzog erstmalig herausgegeben und kommentiert von Bernhard Bischoff + und Willy Schetter +.* (Abhandlungen der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Neue Folge, 109.) Pp. 220, 23 pls. Munich, 1994.

The Trier fragment of Severus of Malaga's biblical epic was brought to light in 1967 by Bernhard Bischoff. It amounts to no more than three bifolia of the mid-ninth century containing the final 228 verses of Book 8, the whole of Book 9 (406 verses), and the first fifty-three lines only of Book 10. A mid-ninth century Lorsch catalogue describes the whole work as *Metrum Seueri episcopi in euangelia libri XII*, from which one can see roughly how much of the work must have been lost.

The first transcription of the text (which is in a poor state of preservation, as a glance at the plates at once makes clear) was made by Bischoff, and his collaborator Herzog began preparing a commentary. Bischoff's *Nachlass* came into the hands of Schetter in 1992, only a matter of months before his untimely death, yet he was able to leave behind him an almost complete commentary. His work, together with that of Bischoff and Herzog, has now been completed by Z., who scrupulously distinguishes between the various contributors, where necessary, and encloses his own additions in square brackets.

The identification of the Lorsch catalogue's 'Seuerus' as the bishop of Malaga is prompted by Isidore's notice in *uir. ill.* 61 (cited p. 11), although he does not mention the present work, and the evidence of linguistic and prosodic usage strongly suggests a late sixth-century date (pp. 27–34). Passing familiarity on Severus' part with the doctrines of Isidore of Pelusium comports well with the scholarship of the Spanish littoral, receptive as it was to the influence of Constantinople. Severus' literary sources are those one would expect: Virgil, Claudian, Juvencus, Sedulius, Avitus; not, however, Arator, who seems in the seventh century to have been unknown to Isidore and Julian of Toledo (see 'Die nicht-biblischen Quellen des Severus', pp. 14–26).

The editing of the fragment is meticulous (though many places have defeated modern lighting techniques, and lines have been truncated when the folia were forced into service as binding material), and the commentary as full and informative as could be desired. The introduction is most helpful for orientation in an otherwise barren period of Spanish Latin verse, and the *index verborum* is a bonus. The whole book is a most fitting memorial to the life's work of Bischoff and Schetter.

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