

**Review of Michael C. Sloan, *The Harmonius Organ of Sedulius Scottus: Introduction to his Collectaneum in Apostolum and Translation of its Prologue and Commentaries on Galatians and Ephesians*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012.**

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# Bryn Mawr Classical Review

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**Michael C. Sloan, *The Harmonius Organ of Sedulius Scottus: Introduction to his Collectaneum in Apostolum and Translation of its Prologue and Commentaries on Galatians and Ephesians. Millennium-Studien / Millennium studies. Bd 39. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012. Pp. x, 210. ISBN 9783110281224. \$112.00.***

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## Preview

The title derives from the description of Carolingian biblical compilations based on earlier writers as “an organ with many pipes producing one harmonious sound” (p. 10); as the penultimate word is spelt correctly throughout the book, it is a shame that the error in the title was not picked up in time for the review copy or the alternative cover displayed in Google Books, although it has now been corrected on the publisher’s website. The “harmonious organ” might also relate to Sedulius’ own description of Paul as a *sonorum organum* (line 200 of the preface) although this link is not made explicitly in the book and Sloan translates the phrase as “sounding instrument”.

This impressive and welcome volume should raise the profile of Sedulius Scottus among Anglophone students. The 133-page introduction includes extended discussions of the *septem circumstantiae* of rhetorical interpretation, Sedulius’ Latinity, and his treatment of his three main sources, Jerome, Augustine and Pelagius. This is followed by an English translation of the three sections of his Pauline Commentary which provide the raw material for the investigation (the Prologue, Galatians and Ephesians) with a facing Latin text. The study began as a doctoral dissertation on the *After Augustine* project at the University of St Andrews. Sloan makes the point that “a study of Sedulius Scottus’ *Collectaneum* is essentially a study in reception” (p. 74), identifying not only Sedulius’ sources but the changes he may have introduced to their texts (including significant omissions) and any ideological or cultural bias thus revealed. It takes one stage further the work of Frede and Stanjek, editors of the *Collectaneum*, locating a few references missing from their *apparatus fontium* and distilling some of the broader characteristics of the commentary. Perhaps the most important new insight is the influence of Servius’ *Commentary on the Aeneid* on Sedulius’ Prologue. Sloan is a very sympathetic reader of Sedulius, arguing that “despite its visible similarity to a gloss, Sedulius’ *Collectaneum* is a work of interpretative exegesis” (p. 41) and that “his learning and creativity are revealed through his selection of others” (p. 77).

The complex world of Carolingian biblical scholarship requires a number of skills to navigate successfully. Sloan's reading is careful and comprehensive, demonstrating linguistic sensitivity and a good grasp of the historical and theological background; his topics and examples are judiciously chosen and the introduction is well-paced. One area in which he is less successful is the referencing of manuscripts, important as primary sources in this area. An index of manuscripts, as well as a consistent form of citing them, would have been helpful. Sloan accepts Savage's identification of Sedulius as the copyist of manuscript (B) of Servius on purely internal criteria, including 225 occurrences of his own name in the margin (p. 12): these are more plausibly the annotations of a later reader.<sup>1</sup> Sedulius could have used a codex without being its copyist (p. 32), and given that manuscripts in Sedulius' hand have been identified (e.g. Paris, Arsenal 8407, a bilingual Greek-Latin Psalter), a palaeographical argument would carry more weight. There is an unfortunate misapprehension that witness E to *De ciuitate dei* is a manuscript, apparently post-dating Sedulius (pp. 104–5). Instead, as footnote 320 shows, this is Eugippius' extensive sixth-century collection of extracts from Augustine.<sup>2</sup> If this is indeed Sedulius' source (which could also explain the lack of references and abbreviation of the subsequent passage), it might be a significant piece of information regarding his reception of Augustine. One wonders too whether any of the Augustinian material used by Sedulius was mediated through Bede's compilation (mentioned on pp. 8, 108). Sloan makes the point that "it is only in the matters of great and ecclesiastical import that we find the work of Augustine sourced by Sedulius" (p. 94), with most of these references being to writings other than commentaries: did Sedulius actually have access to a complete copy of Augustine on Galatians, or did he only know it through excerpts? The explanation for Sedulius' explicit naming of his source at Galatians 4:25 is unconvincing (p. 132), as "Ambrose" is cited by name five times in Sedulius' commentary on Romans: both surviving manuscripts of the Latin version of Theodore of Mopsuestia appear to match Sedulius in switching from Ambrosiaster to Theodore at Galatians, and Rabanus Maur's switch at Philippians is exceptional.

Sloan's attempts to isolate Sedulius' own contributions occasionally overlook other possible sources or place excessive weight on an incidental detail. Most of the technical grammatical terms cited to demonstrate Sedulius' pedagogical interests (p. 38) are taken directly from Jerome's commentaries (Gal. 3:19, 4:15, see also 6:1; Eph. 1:16), as are comments about variation in biblical manuscripts (e.g. Gal. 5:9, 5:19).<sup>3</sup> The change from *adquaesiuit* to *adquisiuit* in a citation of Acts 20:28 is more likely to be phonetic than to reveal that Sedulius checked the Vulgate form of this illustrative citation used by Pelagius at Ephesians 1:14 and altered his biblical text (p. 135): in fact, *adquisiuit* occurs at this point in manuscript B of Pelagius. Sometimes the partial body of material limits the conclusions: even though Sedulius does not mention Pelagius by name in his prologue, Galatians or Ephesians (p. 77), he explicitly cites him six times in Romans, confirming Sloan's opinion that the silence elsewhere is not theologically motivated.

In his translation, Sloan reproduces the layout of Frede and Stanjek, with biblical lemmata in capitals and other quotations in italics, although as he omits the apparatus of sources or biblical references the italics merely hint at Sedulius' intertextuality.<sup>4</sup> The marginal letters indicating sources are included even

though Frede deemed them not to be original: it would have been useful to include a key to these, particularly as XP, Q and D appear not to relate to authors and so may perplex readers. <sup>5</sup> Like Sedulius, Sloan does not say whether he has followed a particular version of the biblical text. One peculiarity is the preservation of Pelagian forms of certain proper nouns, such as Annanias for Ananias (p. 141), Seregius for Sergius (p. 143 and throughout the book) and Tythicus for Tychicus (p. 231) while others have their customary English spelling (e.g. Jerome, Gamaliel, Philemon, Abraham).<sup>6</sup> Despite the challenges posed to the translator by Sedulius' brevity, the expositions generally fare better than the extended prose of the preface. The structure of the original often remains imposed upon its rendering, especially in ablative absolutes such as "these having been briefly compressed" (*his breuiter strictis*; line 163), the frequent use of "lest" for *ne*, or the following:

Whence certainly some people want all the ordered letters to be understood thus that the letter which had been written later was placed first and that one could progress through the individual letters in steps to the more perfect truths. *unde intelligi quidam uolunt ita omnes epistolas ordinatas, ut prima poneretur quae posteriora fuerat scripta et per singulas epistolas gradibus ad perfectiora ueniretur.* (lines 94–7)

More punctuation, or a reframing of the structure, would help here and elsewhere. The use of *i.e.* to translate *id est* or *hoc est*, including biblical citations (e.g. p. 143), is possibly over-literal, although Sloan does use different words matching the key terms *siue*, *aliter*, *uel* and *aut* (cf. p. 53). However, the consistent use of "or rather" for *siue* seems to add a preferential nuance more akin to *siue potius* or *immo*. This is exemplified at Gal. 3:15 where the inconsistency in rendering the biblical lemma is also unexpected:

BROTHERS, I SPEAK AFTER THE MANNER OF A HUMAN BEING. I.e. I use a human example. Or rather: ACCORDING TO A HUMAN BEING. For I grasp a more eminent and profound meaning in these *promises*, if I were to speak of it.

FRATRES, SECVNDVM HOMINEM DICO. Hoc est, humano utor exemplo. Siue: SECVNDVM HOMINEM. Nam excelsiorem et profundiore sensum habeo in his *promissionibus* si dicerem

At line 54 of the prologue, the word *modicus* appears to have been omitted from the translation: *Paulus id est modicus* is presumably an etymology based on φάυλος (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9). Since he has taken pains to show that Sedulius was not as anti-Semitic as has sometimes been claimed (pp. 66–9), it is surprising that Sloan introduces the adjectives Jewish (twice) and Christian into his translation of Gal. 1:13. In Gal. 2:6, there is no attempt to reproduce the Latin ambiguity which may have misled the commentator, nor make the link between *inuidit* and *inuidia* in 3:1. I wonder whether, following *miror* in the biblical text of Gal. 1:6, *nescio quae uos aura a fidei rectitudine deflectit* should be translated more strongly than "some breeze or other turns you away from an upright faith", and "presents" seems to undervalue *charismata* at Gal. 4:18. Footnote 403 (p. 177) suggests that *conuersatio* in Philippians 3:20 may have been substituted by Sedulius for *municipatus*: in fact, *conuersatio* is the standard form here, being

the reading of the Stuttgart and Oxford Vulgates as well as the majority of Old Latin witnesses.

The book closes with a brief but excellent conclusion and a bibliography.<sup>7</sup> At the end, it is Sedulius himself who provides the harmony in contrast to the dissonance of Carolingian society (p. 233). One might go so far as to suggest that Sloan shares many of the qualities he identifies in his subject: he too deserves acclaim for his skill and scholarship in combining disparate sources into a useful introduction to an intriguing area of biblical study.

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### Notes:

- [1.](#) Although we may note that both Rabanus Maur and Claudius of Turin identified their own material in compilations: see Gorman in *Speculum* 72.2 (1997) pp. 312–5.
  - [2.](#) There is also no “Edition p” in the *Corpus Christianorum* edition of this work.
  - [3.](#) The marginal letters suggest that the reference to metonymy in Eph. 5:16 may derive from Isidore.
  - [4.](#) The rationale for the provision of two biblical references in footnotes 409 and 410 but not elsewhere is unclear.
  - [5.](#) Frede and Stanjek suggest, with increasing hesitancy, that they correspond to Chrismon (i.e. χρῆσιμον), *quaere/quaerendum* and *dictum* or *difficile*. In Sloan’s Latin text, HI is missing from the margin at Gal. 5:19 and 6:1.
  - [6.](#) There are a number of inconsistencies in names elsewhere, such as Cassianus on p. 39 but Cassian on p. 92 (only the former appears in the index), Rhabanus on p. 9, Rabanus on p. 40 ff. but also Hrabanus in the index.
  - [7.](#) There are a few minor errors in the bibliography, such as the attribution of Joseph Kelly’s catalogues of biblical commentaries to J.N.D. Kelly; two works of Löfstedt are mentioned on p. 42 but only one appears in the bibliography; no details are given for the *Jerome of Stridon* volume mentioned on p. 79. The two volumes of Gryson 2007 are a replacement for Frede 1995 (cf. note 268).
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