

Anecdota rustica. Textus minores ad aedificationem pertinentes prout in codicibus saec. VIII-X asseruati sunt. Cura et studio Javier SOAGE. (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, 311). Turnhout, Brepols, 2022. 24,5 × 15,5 cm, xxiv–285 p. € 205. ISBN 978-2-503-59912-0.

On the face of it, this is a book with the editions of five texts, which all “have to do with religion, more exactly perhaps with the communication of basic Christian knowledge” [p. viii]. Each text has its own introduction about the extant manuscripts, sources, previous scholarship and editorial choices made. The brief general introduction to the volume explains how these five texts have been selected as witnesses of a shared intellectual culture, and how complex the transmission history of such anonymous texts can be.

On closer inspection, however, the book offers something more intriguing. What the texts have in common is not only their subject matter, but also the fact that they are all anonymous, that their origins are unknown, and that they all take different shapes and forms in their various manuscripts. What is more, in his introduction J. S. explains how there are connections between the texts and between the manuscripts in which they have been transmitted (p. ix–xi). At the level of the texts, there are clear instances of direct or indirect borrowing: such contacts become visible, for instance, in the shape of seventeen cases where quotations from Jerome from the fifth text (the *Sententiae generales de opusculis Sancti Hieronymi*) were included in the fourth one (the *Florilegium sapientiale*). At the level of the transmission of these texts in their manuscripts, we are looking at some three dozen manuscripts, with at its core a smaller group of 9th- and 10th-century codices from the Rhine-Rhône-area. This core cluster (about a dozen manuscripts, p. ix–xi) transmits either several of the texts edited here, or a combination of one or more of the texts with one of their main direct sources.

What we are looking at, in other words, is evidence for a group of people in a fairly focussed period and geographical area, who were all interested in improving basic religious knowledge and in creating texts and manuscripts to this end. They read, copied and used each others’ work, usually so freely that most of the texts edited in this book exist in a variety of lengths, versions or redactions. In this sense, as J. S. notes, the texts can serve to contextualise each other (p. vi) and shed light on what extends to a local cultural phenomenon. The inspiration for this approach comes from Robert E. McNally’s work on the *Liber de numeris*¹, who was able to contextualise this text within a “wide and rather coherent array of texts,

¹ Robert E. McNALLY, *Der Irische Liber de numeris: eine Quellenanalyse der Pseudo-Isidorischen Liber de numeris*, unpublished PhD thesis, Munich 1957.

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excerpts, and miscellanies” (p. v). Even though the *Liber de numeris* is an anonymous text of unknown origin, McNally was able to show how it was no exotic unicum, but part of an intellectual tradition. This approach is exciting and interesting (albeit rather labour-intensive), and works very well for such texts as these. For one thing, it sheds light on the “lives” of, and connections between little studied anonymous texts, which turn out to be more relevant for historians than is usually assumed. For another, this approach invites scholars to connect other texts and manuscripts into “clouds” of early medieval knowledge. That Carolingian and post-Carolingian culture was not just an elite affair is well-known, but how this religious culture “worked” at levels below courts and intellectual centres is still largely *terra incognita* —J. S.’s work, in that sense, shows one promising way forward.

The five texts selected form a more or less coherent cluster through the core of early medieval manuscripts that are at the heart of the book. The first text, named *Sententiae de floratibus diversis* (the editor has coined titles for those texts unnamed or inconsistently named in the manuscripts), is a catechetical text in 46 questions and answers, which survives—in several versions—in 17 manuscripts. The first twenty questions are about man as God’s creation (Of which elements is man made? Why was he created?), the remaining 26 concern what one may call basic religious knowledge (How are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit one God? On which day did God create the earth? What are the books of the Old and New Testaments?). The main sources for this work are Isidore’s *Differentiae*, and pseudo-Isidore’s *Liber de numeris*. The *Quaestiones de velere ac novo testamento*, the second, much shorter text, is in fact J. S.’s own reconstruction, based on four overlapping short sets of questions-and-answers about the bible, extant in a total of five manuscripts, sometimes with additional material about exegesis and etymology. The third text, coined *Sermo seu instructio rusticorum*, instructs the reader in how to lead a good Christian life by living virtuously and avoiding sin and non-Christian practices. It survives in a long and a short recension (3 manuscripts for each version), which have usefully been printed side by side. This text shows many parallels with both Martin of Braga’s *De correctione rusticorum* and pseudo-Pirmin’s *Scarapsus*, and has as its main source the sermons of Caesarius of Arles. The *Florilegium sapientiale*, the fourth text, is again a hypothetical reconstruction on the basis of three manuscripts (a fragment, an incomplete version and an abridged version respectively, p. 114). This is an alphabetical collection of quotations from the Bible—excerpted mostly from the Books of Wisdom—and, to a lesser extent, from other authoritative works (e.g. Isidore’s *Synonyma*). The early medieval author/compiler has conveniently added labels to many of the sentences (for instance: *monachalis*, *vidualis*, but also *generalis*) to indicate their target audience; the themes range widely. The final and longest text, the *Sententiae generales de opus-*

culis sancti Hieronymi, contains some 400 (sometimes reworded) excerpts from St. Jerome's works, mostly from his letters, organised by work. This text, too, survives in a "complete" version and several shorter selections. One of the complete versions was used for the compilation of pseudo-Defensor's *Liber scintillarum*, and, to a lesser extent, for the *Florilegium sapientale* (the fourth text edited here).

In the best of *Corpus Christianorum* traditions, J. S. delivers a useful set of editions of texts which surely deserve more attention than they have received thus far. His approach will hopefully inspire other scholars to investigate more (interrelated groups of) anonymous texts in "families" of early medieval manuscripts. One point of criticism in this context is, however, his reconstruction of hypothetical texts, which delivers texts which do not actually exist in any manuscript and are therefore a shaky basis for further research. In the case of the *Quaestiones de vetere ac novo testamento*, for instance, it would have been preferable to edit the four "sibling" texts separately, and offer the hypothesis of a shared "mother" text in an introduction. The one element of the book which could have done with more attention is, meanwhile, the general introduction. There is no attention at all for fundamental questions important to make sense of the texts and contextualise them: what were these texts for? What was their intended audience? What kind of people would have written or compiled such texts, and how do the products of their efforts fit in with the religious and cultural history of the time? While we can be grateful for J. S. for delivering this edition, there is, as always, a lot more work to do.

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Graeme WARD. *History, Scripture and Authority in the Carolingian Empire. Frechulf of Lisieux*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. 24 × 16 cm, xvi+255 p. GBP 70. ISBN 978-0-19-726728-8.

This book, a thoroughly reworked version of the A.'s Cambridge PhD-thesis, is a study of the *Twelve Books of Histories* by Frechulf of Lisieux. It is a rich reading of that work in its Carolingian intellectual contexts, as reception of patristic works. As such it provides valuable insights about the nature of Carolingian intellectual work and engagement with authoritative texts. The Carolingians read the fathers to recreate their teachings in the present, and as G. W. argues, the *Histories* also illuminates how Frechulf understood their place in Christian history.

As G. W. explains, the usual way of interpreting early medieval historiography is reading it through its political context. Instead, he sets out to demonstrate the value of reading a historiographical work in its intellectual contexts. Frechulf was the bishop of Lisieux from ca 824/825 to 850/852, and compiled his *Twelve Books of Histories* in ca 830. It is the most extensive Carolingian historical work, and the