Smyth, M.: *The 'Liber de ordine creaturarum'*. Turnhout: Brepols. Brepols Library of Christian Sources 5. 2023. 191 pp. ISBN: 978-2-503-59678-5. Price €45.

Liber de ordine creaturarum (*DOC* hereafter) is an anonymous Hiberno-Latin work of theological cosmology which was composed in the second half of the seventh century (pp. 7–8 = Smyth 2011: 137–8), and includes 1245 lines of prose in Díaz y Díaz's 1972 edition. As its title suggests, it describes the providential ordering of created beings. Nevertheless, its account of that ordering does not begin with created beings themselves, but with the order which is internal to God as Trinity. From there, its account of created beings proceeds in general accordance with the sequence of their emergence in the creation narrative of Genesis 1, rather than hierarchically, from the most lofty beings, through to the most lowly. Or if it proceeds hierarchically, it is not in accordance with the hierarchy of beings, but the hierarchy of the four elements from which all such beings are composed: fire surpassing air, air surpassing water, and water surpassing earth. *DOC*'s concern with the divine ordering of created beings is not, however, limited to how that ordering was manifest in their initial created state, but extends to include the subsequent reorderings required by certain angels, and then, by all of humanity, once they had severally fallen, through sin, from the state which had been granted to them at the beginning. As such, hexameral themes give way to eschatological themes towards *DOC*'s conclusion (§13–15; pp. 102–21).

The explicit method by which it produces this description is through simple close reading of the relevant biblical passages. However, the matter is not, in the end, quite so simple as this. For instance, even though *DOC*'s account follows the outline of Genesis 1, and continuously refers to Genesis as it progresses, it is not Genesis, but the hierarchical order of the elements that is consistently evoked as the structure to which the structure of its own discourse must conform (e.g. §4.4–5.1, 7.1–2, 9.1, 10.1; pp. 50–55, 66–7, 82–3, 88–9). So, there is evidently some aspect of what *DOC* calls *mundana philosophia* 'earthly philosophy' (§1.7; p. 36), and not just theology, which is at play in what it is attempting. And even *DOC*'s theological method is not without its own complexity.

Near the beginning of *DOC*, the *uestigia* 'footsteps' in which the anonymous author assures their account will follow, are indeed those of Scripture, but also those *maiorum explanantium* 'of earlier expositors' (§2.1; pp. 38–9). Likewise, at *DOC*'s conclusion, it is insisted that everything which it has said is *bonis et catholicis lectoribus consentiens* 'in full agreement with good and catholic experts' (§15.14; pp. 120–21). As direct and unmediated as *DOC*'s consideration of biblical passages may often appear on the surface, its interpretation of them thus involves a broad (if implicit) synthesis of Patristic thought on the given subject under consideration. As such, the scope of the evidence which *DOC* provides is not

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limited even to its ambitious subject matter. Its central importance, undoubtedly, remains in what it says directly concerning the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, created reality as a total system, the specific character of created reality's various component parts, the post-mortem fate of the soul, and the end of the world. But beyond this, *DOC* is also valuable in what its conclusions reveal about how its anonymous author is synthesising the theological authorities that were available to them.

Moreover, just as the forms of evidence which *DOC* provides are multiple, so too are the intellectual contexts for which that evidence is significant. It holds, of course, the greatest significance for early medieval Ireland. Yet the history of its reception extends in a least three other major directions prior to the fifteenth century: 1) eighth-century England, 2) learned centres on the Continent 'associated with Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionary activity' (i.e. Freising, Fulda, Lorsch, Auxerre, Burgundy, Rheims), and, starting in the twelfth century, 3) Cistercian circles (pp. 25–9 = Smyth 2011: 156–60). There is clearly a great deal of work to be done in assessing the extent and character of *DOC*'s wide and multifarious pre-modern impact, as indeed, on the content of *DOC* itself.

The volume reviewed here is best described as an amalgam composed of materials drawn from two pre-existing works of scholarship on *DOC*: Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz's monograph, *Liber de Ordine Creaturarum. Un anónimo irlandés del siglo VII* (1972), and Marina Smyth's subsequent article, 'The Seventh-Century Hiberno-Latin Treatise *Liber de ordine creaturarum*. A Translation' (2011). In keeping with other entries in the series Brepols Library of Christian Sources, the heart of this book is a side-by-side edition and translation (pp. 34–121): Díaz y Díaz's critical edition of the Latin text is reproduced (1972: 84–205) and placed across from Smyth's translation (2011: 164–209), both of which have been subjected to minor revisions. Smyth has changed the edition in nine places. Where she has introduced an alternate reading, this is usually indicated by a corresponding footnote, but in one case, only by an end note (p. 163: *transgarrientium* > *garrientium*).[1] The majority (i.e. six) of these alternate readings are inherited from the 2011 article, and concern only a single word (§3.5, 4.5 [2x], 6.11, 8.10, 15.14; pp. 48, 50 [2x], 64, 76, 163). There are, however, three new readings — all in chapter 7 (§7.8, 7.10; pp. 66, 68, 70) — and two of these lead to substantial retranslations of the respective phrases to which they

1 In saying this, I am not including changes of punctuation, capitalisation, or paragraph divisions. I am also operating under the assumption that the changing of *conmonis* (Díaz y Díaz 1972: 136, line 1) to *commonis* in §8.3 (p. 72), and the separation of the suffix *que* from its preceding noun in *ciborumque* and *sublimioremque* (Díaz y Díaz 1972: 136, lines 35–6) in §8.5 (p. 74) are typographical errors, rather than undocumented editorial revisions.

belong (§7.8, 7.10; pp. 68, 70).[2] Beyond these, other more minor revisions of her translation, which do not arise from alternate readings, are also to be found: e.g. *corpus animale* 'an animal body' (§11.5; 2011: 196) > 'a natural body' (p. 97); 'disorderly appearance' with 'a natural body' (p. 97); *inordinatum habitum* 'disorderly appearance (§14.11; 2011: 204) > 'disorderly behaviour' (p. 113), etc.

Most of the textual notes are taken word-for-word from Smyth's 2011 article. Nevertheless, there are some significant additions. Indications of how Smyth's interpretation of the manuscript evidence informed her translation choices are more developed,[3] and a number of new cross-references to the Patristic sources that inform *DOC* are provided. Beyond references to other publications by Smyth, engagement with post-2011 scholarship, or else, with scholarship not discussed by the 2011 article, tends to be limited to the notes on chapters 9–10, 12–13 and 15. Her notes on these chapters, however, provide some greatly expanded discussions of diverse subjects (e.g. computus, Pelagianism, the location and nature of Paradise, medieval Irish window-use, etc.), generally for the sake of further justifying existing translation choices. In these discussions, Smyth is closely engaged with the most recent scholarship, with the exception of her notes on the ostensible 'semi-Pelagian' tendencies of *DOC*. In these, the neglect of more recent scholarship results in a number of problems: 1) her employment of the concept of 'semi-Pelagianism' adopted by Herren and Brown (2002), without any recognition of the scholarship which has seriously discredited such a position;[4] 2) her identification of the idea — that faith can (in some sense) be merited — as a sign of 'semi-Pelagianism', when such an idea is found even in St. Augustine's works (e.g. *De gratia et libro arbitrio* VI.13, *De praedesinatione sanctorum* IX.17–X.19); and 3) a false equivalency being drawn between the early Irish

2 *Commotatione uero aeris et uentus uehementiore, ignes etiam ac tonitrua* (Díaz y Díaz 1972: 132, lines 57–9) 'The creator makes lightning and thunder by violently disturbing the air and the wind' (Smyth 2011: 182) is replaced with *Commotione uero aeris uentos et uehementiore concitatione ignes etiam ac tonitrua* 'The Creator makes the winds by moving around the air and also lightning and thunder by agitating it more violently' (pp. 68–9); *prodit* (*fructiferam uim tam in arboribus quam in his, quae olerum diuersis specieus nasuntur, non* ***prodit*** [Díaz y Díaz 1972: 132, lines 69–70:]; 'it lavishes its fruitful vigour not only upon the trees but upon all the various sorts of plants' [Smyth 2011: 182]) is replaced by *perdit (fructiferam uim tam in arboribus quam in his, quae olerum diuersis speciebus nascuntur, non* ***perdit*** 'it does not destroy the fruit-bearing vigour in the trees or in the produce from all the various sorts of plants' [pp. 70–71]).

3 Compare, for example, the note on §6.11, discussing Smyth's preference for *putationem* over the *putationum* of Díaz y Díaz's edition, in 2011: 180, n. 74, with the corresponding note on p. 145.

4 See, for example, the discussion and references in Márkus (2005: 174–8); Márkus (2005: 174–8), and also in Backus and Goudriaan (2021, esp. 25–8).

concept of *recht aicnid* 'natural law' and Pelagius' understanding of natural goodness.[5]

The Indices of this volume are wholly new: 'of Biblical References' (pp. 179–82); 'of Patristic & Medieval Works and Councils' (pp. 183–5); 'of Modern Authors' (pp. 186–7); and 'of Topics' (pp. 188–91). However, its other contents (i.e. the Introduction and Appendix) are also taken from the same article in which Smyth's earlier translation appeared (2011).

Following a brief account of *DOC* itself (pp. 7–8 = 2011: 137–9), the Introduction includes an overview of *DOC*'s origin and dating (pp. 9–25 = 2011: 139–56), the evidence for its later reception, up to and including fifteenth-century Bohemia (pp. 25–9 = 2011: 156–60), and finally, an argument that the division of *DOC* into fifteen chapters is not only original, but has symbolic significance (pp. 29–31 = 2011: 161–3). The new material in the Introduction (that I have been able to identify) is as follows: the change of DOC's *terminus post quem* from 655 to 654 (based on evidence published by Smyth in 2003–4); the inclusion of cross-references to Ó Corráin's *Clavis litterarum hibernensium* (2017); the translation of a Latin title on p. 7; and the rewording of a phrase at the bottom of p. 18. There are a few changes to the Introduction's footnotes as well, but these also are fairly minimal. New cross-references to reference works (Ó Corráin 2017; Lapidge and Sharpe 1985) are provided, as are some further identifications of relevant scholarship. Yet none of the latter provoke any revision of the argument, and among the works in question, only Howlett's edition of *Altus Prosator* (2015) post-dates the original 2011 publication-date of the article from which the Introduction is taken. The absence of engagement with more recent scholarship in the Introduction, or any attempt to summarise her own extensive contribution to our understanding of *DOC*, is significant, as is the absence of any account of the manuscript evidence on which Díaz y Díaz's Latin text is based. In the latter case, however, this is not as radical an absence as it may seem. The basis of an account of the manuscript evidence is found in the Appendix (pp. 123–35 = 2011: 210–22).

The Appendix is composed of translated extracts from the Spanish text of Díaz y Díaz's description of the manuscript witnesses of *DOC*, in the Introduction to his 1972 edition (pp. 47–72). These translations are revised and augmented (both in 2011, and again, in the present volume) insofar as Smyth's own subsequent research has produced different or new results. No new stemma is provided in preference to that of Díaz y Díaz (1972: 67), though a new stemma is certainly implied, considering the priority that Smyth gives to **B** = Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS F. III. 15b over **P** = Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 9561 (pp. 25, 123–5, 141 n. 4.5), and also her identification and description of four manuscript versions of *DOC* which were unknown to him (pp. 133–4 = 2011:

5 In an Early Irish context, 'natural law' tends to describe a secular mode of prophetic revelation, rather than an innate capacity. On this, see Watson (2018: 204–6).

219–20), one of which is new to the present volume, namely, the version found in $\mathbf{N}_2$ = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 3802 (p. 133),[6] a manuscript of the eleventh century. Even so, while Smyth's belief in the priority of **B** continues to influence her editorial interventions in Díaz y Díaz's text (pp. 146, n. 7.4, 7.8 and 7.10), no further exploration of what any of this new evidence may mean for our understanding of *DOC* is attempted in the Appendix. Apart from the description of of this one additional manuscript ($\mathbf{N}_2$), I have not been able to identify any further addition to the information presented in the 2011 version, beyond the inclusion of a new bibliographical entry on page 124.

While a reviewer is on the firmest ground when assessing only what a work has uniquely contributed to existing scholarship, there is an aspect of what this Appendix has inherited from the version which preceded it that will require particular care on the part of its readers. The preamble to the Appendix states that its description of the manuscript evidence 'relies heavily on the more detailed accounts provided by Díaz y Díaz' (p. 123 = 2011: 210). It is regrettable that the intention was not to build on what Díaz y Díaz accomplished in every respect, but there is no problem with this in principle. The problem arises from the fact that, in what follows, there is no differentiation of any kind between the passages that Smyth has directly translated from his Introduction, the material for which she is less directly dependent on it, and the material which her own research has added.[7] It will only be possible for a reader to tell which is which if they manage to locate a copy of Díaz y Díaz's monograph, which is now long out of print and extremely scarce. Of course, the description of manuscripts will, by its nature, tend to be somewhat formulaic. Yet it is a cause for serious concern that I was only able to determine that long passages like this were direct translations by making my own comparison:[8]

6 i.e. $\mathbf{M}_2$ = Muniche, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS clm 6433 [second half of eighth century]; $\mathbf{N}_2$ = Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS, lat. 3802 [eleventh century]; $\mathbf{O}_2$ = Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud. misc. 345 [thirteenth or fourteenth century]; **Y** Ottobeuren (Bavaria), Bibliothek der Benediktinerabtei, MS O.22 (II.353) [c. 1465].

7 For an example of best practice, where the debt to preexisting scholarship is similarly extensive and complicated, see Blöndal and Benedikz (1978: xi). My thanks to Jesse Harrington (DIAS) for directing my attention to this reference.

8 This is from the description of **P** (Díaz y Díaz 1972: 47 = pp. 124–5). Another example (among others) is to be found in the description of **B**. Compare 'El sector A se debe a dos manos, de las que la primera, que escribe los folios 1-8v es, según Lowe, rápida y graciosa, quizá northumbria; la seguna, en cambio, es <<más apretujada y torpe>>. Lowe cree que el códice fue <<escrito en Inglaterra>> y probablemente <<en el Norte>> […] Las abreviaturas muestran a un tiempo formas insulares típicas y formas comunes. Las iniciales son típicamente insulares en negro con puntos rojos; […] Presenta numerosas correcciones, en su mayor parte contemporáneas. La encuadernación fue realizada en Fulda en época antigua según van Regemoreter' (Díaz y Díaz 1972: 48), to 'Two hands occur in section A, of which the first, which wrote folios 1-8^{v}, is according to Lowe "rapid and graceful", perhaps Northumbrian;

> Los títulos de los capítulos están escritos en unciales rojas, a menudo ya desvanecidas […]. En el folio 81v en unciales negras el colofón, *FINIT*. Con frecuencia los capítulos se inician con una gran capital adornada con puntos rojos. Abreviaturas y símbolos son los ordinarios en escritura insular. La ortografía es a menudo equivocada […] *miso*, *minesteria*, *commonia*, *cerubhin*, *longeus*, *occausu*, *sponcgeas*, *sapiti*, etc.; en ciertos casos, las lecturas que ofrece este manuscrito permiten sospechar algunos rasgos del códice de donde fue copiado, quizá un códice insular que consintió a nuestro escriba poner *post est* por *potest*, *tartarum* por *tantarum* […] Como indica Lowe, la escritura, con todo, muestra ya influencias tanto anglosajonas como continentales; de ello deduce que el manuscrito fue escrito <<o bien en Inglaterra o bien por un escriba inglés en el Continente, quizás en S. Bertin>> (Díaz y Díaz 1972: 47).

> The titles of the chapters were written in red uncials, often faded. On folio 81v, the colophon FINIT is in black uncials. The chapters often begin with a large capital letter decorated with red dots. Abbreviations and symbols are those which are common in Insular texts. Spelling in frequently incorrect: *miso*, *minesteria*, *commonia*, *cerubhin*, *longeus*, *occausu*, *sponcgeas*, *sapiti*, etc.; in some cases, the readings in this manuscript make it possible to surmise some features of the codex from which it was copied, perhaps an Irish codex which allows our scribe to put *post est* for *potest*, *tartatum* for *tantarum*. As Lowe indicated, the script shows both Anglo-Saxon and continental influences and he deduced that the manuscript was written 'either in England or by an English scribe on the Continent, perhaps at St. Bertin' (pp. 124–5 = 2011: 211).

While it remains perplexing how a systemic error of this kind could have come about, it will be easy enough to address this issue, providing that a revised edition succeeds the present volume at some point. But in the meantime, it will be difficult for those who do not have access to Díaz y Díaz's monograph, or who do not have sufficient knowledge of Spanish, to know how to accurately reference the descriptions of these manuscripts which Smyth has provided.

Despite this significant issue, the present volume remains a valuable addition to the Brepols Library of Christian Sources. Díaz y Díaz's edition of this important text has long been almost inaccessible. By reprinting his edition of *DOC* together with Smyth's translation, and making them available together for an affordable price, we have been provided with an important resource, both as a university text-book, and as a reference for scholars. And there is, moreover, enough that is new in Smyth's revisions of the material which this volume inherits, that anyone working on *DOC* will need to take account of it. It remains, however, that it has not superseded Díaz y Díaz's edition. This would, admittedly, have gone well beyond

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the second, in contrast, is "more compressed and stiff". Lowe believes that the codex was "written in England", probably "in the North". The abbreviations show both typical Insular forms as well as common forms. The initials are typically Insular, in black with red dots. There are many corrections, mostly contemporary. The binding was done at Fulda and is early, according to van Regemorter' (p. 124 = 2011: 210–11).

the mandate of the series in which it appears. Yet it remains unfortunate, given the relative inaccessibility of his edition. His Introduction, Notes and Indices cover much that is not covered by Smyth's, and his description of the manuscript sources is the absolutely necessary companion to Smyth's for the reason given above. Nor does this book reflect the current state of the relevant scholarship. Outside of the notes on chapters 9–10, 12–13 and 15, the scholarship bequeathed to it from the 2011 article remains almost unchanged. Even so, with the crucial resources that this volume provides now so readily available, there seems good cause to be hopeful about the future of scholarship on this important work.

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