

Daniele Pevarello

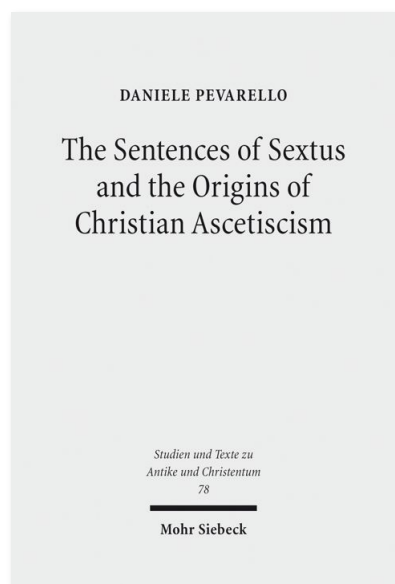
The Sentences of Sextus and the Origins of Christian Asceticism

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Daniele Pevarello analyzes the *Sentences of Sextus*, a second century collection of Greek aphorisms compiled by Sextus, an otherwise unknown Christian author. The specific character of Sextus' collection lies in the fact that the *Sentences* are a Christian rewriting of Hellenistic sayings, some of which are still preserved in pagan gnomologies and in Porphyry. Pevarello investigates the problem of continuity and discontinuity between the ascetic tendencies of the Christian compiler and aphorisms promoting self-control in his pagan sources. In particular, he shows how some aspects of the Stoic, Cynic, Platonic and Pythagorean moral traditions, such as sexual restraint, voluntary poverty, the practice of silence and of a secluded life were creatively combined with Sextus' ascetic agenda against the background of the biblical tradition. Drawing on this adoption of Hellenistic moral traditions, Pevarello shows how great a part the moral tradition of Greek *paideia* played in the shaping and development of self-restraint among early Christian ascetics.

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