

way, love retains its mysteries precisely because reason simply cannot penetrate beyond its confines.

Thus, while there is much that the philosopher, theologian, and lay person can learn from Masterson's book, I find myself in two minds regarding the developments of his overarching view. On the one hand, as a person who shares Masterson's Christian faith, I subscribe to his belief in a God who will ensure that the values expressed in our personal love endure after death. Contrarily, as a philosopher, I find myself somewhat unconvinced by his conclusions. In my view, Masterson's arguments and conclusions do not adequately protect themselves from the famous dictum of David Hume that one cannot deduce an 'ought' from an 'is.' Masterson argues for Kant's incorporation of hope as an article of practical reasoning in the following terms: 'the ultimate coherence of this rational exigency or practical necessity that virtue should be accompanied by due happiness and thus accomplish the whole of perfect good . . . requires that good exist' (p. 124). Yet, this surely does not amount to the conclusion that God exists, only that the agent is rationally coherent when he postulates such. Surely agency coherence does not itself adduce the conclusion that God exists. Hope, therefore, may permeate the rational agent's concerns but never attain the conclusion that the object of this hope exists. Thus, the 'is' refers to the experience of love, loss, and death, with the 'ought'—which is not concretely secured by Masterson over and above this status—being that which a loving God will actualise in the form of an 'is.' On the latter, it seems that Kant's endeavour (outlined in the preface to the second edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*) to create room for faith in God still continues to chime.

Finally, as to the reasonability of hope, Masterson does provide a solid basis for concluding that his hope is reasonable in the absence of a richer explanatory account than he provides. However, by an alternative construal, the absence of a better theory does not, in and of itself, lend support to the view that is presented. That being said, Masterson's account is highly scholarly and his thinking is thought provoking. I would recommend this book particularly because Masterson's unique adaptation of classical metaphysics is fascinating.

Two Lives of Saint Brigid. Edited and translated by Philip Freeman. Dublin: Four Courts, 2024. Pp.188. Price €19.95 (pbk). ISBN 9781801511162.

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St Brigit is arguably the most famous woman in Irish history. She, and her successor abbesses, founded and ran the Church of Kildare, one of the most powerful institutions in Ireland for many centuries. She is the object of some of the earliest surviving written literature in Ireland, the most famous of which is a *Life of Brigit* composed by Kildare cleric, Cogitosus, whose account of Brigit's miracles became the most widely circulated and copied *Life* of any Irish saint. Cogitosus's text, and that of an anonymous author, commonly referred to as the *Vita Prima*, marked the beginning of an impressive Irish

literary legacy which went on to include celebrated writers such as Mary Shelley, James Joyce, Seamus Heaney and Sally Rooney.

In time for the 1500th anniversary commemorations of Brigit's supposed death in 524, Philip Freeman, Fletcher Jones Chair of Western Culture at Pepperdine University and prolific translator of classical and early medieval Latin texts, brings these *Two Lives of Saint Brigid* to a modern audience. Freeman succeeds beautifully in his laudable objective, 'to offer for the first time translations of both Lives along with the Latin texts for interested readers, students and scholars, with the hope that it will provide a resource for further research and study' (p. 11). These new readers will surely benefit from Freeman's accessible style which brings renewed energy to these historical sources.

Freeman provides a brief introduction including a cursory list of some of the manuscripts, English translations of both Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigid* and *Vita Prima*, Latin editions of both texts, and a short list of further reading at the end.

These texts are important partially due to their early dating. Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigid* was composed in the mid-7th century, according to Freeman (p. 8), before the anonymous *Vita Prima* (p. 10), for which he proposes no potential age, though other scholars have suggested dates from the seventh and eighth centuries. The texts, in many ways, are quite different. Cogitosus's is shorter, in a more 'polished' Latin, is centred on Kildare, and includes grandiose claims of 'ecclesiastical authority' (p. 9). The *Vita Prima*, on the other hand, provides a 'more national rather than local narrative' and depicts Brigit as 'a more forceful and uncompromising character' (p. 9). Both texts portray Brigit as a devout, merciful, kind, generous and hospitable woman—a confident and caring leader who held her own with kings and bishops and rescued the downtrodden from penury (see, for example, pp. 28–29, 32–33, 77–79).

Theology students will appreciate the cross references to (predominantly) biblical texts provided by Freeman in both of the translations. These are perfunctory, however, and students should still consult the introductions provided by Seán Connolly in his translations of both Cogitosus and the *Vita Prima*, which are available online via academic databases. (Those interested in theology will also enjoy the many published analyses by Katja Ritari, none of which are listed in Freeman's reading list.) Connolly provides rich textual exposition and informed historical and literary analysis—insights which are necessary to guide the uninitiated through the texts. Freeman's translations are not superior to those of Connolly, and his co-editor Jean-Michel Picard, which scholars have been using since the late 1980s. Of course, what these translations lack is the Latin editions on which they were based, which remain unpublished. For too long scholars have been relying on the archaic 17th-century editions by John Colgan and the Société des Bollandistes, though Karina Hochegger's 2009 editions are available online. The lack of modern editions with correlating English translations has undoubtedly hindered research into the texts and the multiple societies, cultures and communities they reveal. Freeman's greatest achievement is bringing the editions and translations together in one volume.

The translation does not face the edition on the page opposite, unfortunately, so the reader has to constantly flick forwards and backwards between the edition and translation. Oddly, the translation precedes the edition in this publication—a questionable formatting choice given that the edition is necessarily produced first. This impractical formatting is one of the glaring indications of the true intended audience of this book.

The Latin editions, unreadable to the general public, are treated as an afterthought. The treatment of the manuscripts, both in the introduction and in the editions, is severely lacking. The critical apparatus is minimal and limited to select variant readings of only a few manuscripts. As anyone who attended the Brigid's Worlds conference in Maynooth on 13–14 September 2024 (Proceedings forthcoming with the same publisher, Four Courts Press) can attest, there is much detailed study being undertaken on the rich corpus of manuscripts, and Freeman's radically reduced list, especially of the *Cogitosus* manuscripts (only 14 out of over 80 manuscripts mentioned), relies too heavily on Ludwig Bieler's sorely outdated 1965 study. The work of Jean-Michel Picard and Fabio Mantegazza (whose full scientific edition of *Cogitosus* is forthcoming) are especially important in this regard. Freeman claims that he is using the 'earliest and best' (p. 11) manuscripts without any explanation as to why he has come to these conclusions. There is no mention of whether any of these manuscripts are digitised online, but that he had to 'in some cases commission for the first time high-quality images of the most important sources' (p. 11), none of which are reproduced here for the reader. In fact, one of the earliest surviving manuscript copies of *Cogitosus*, on which Freeman relies, Reims. Bibliothèque de Reims, Ms. 296 (9th/10th century), has been digitised and is freely accessible to all at <https://portail.biblissima.fr/fr/ark:/43093/mdata9c30c-21445c376897484feb1a94acff4e42939ce>. I can only guess that some of the other manuscripts of both texts may also be digitised. Freeman incorrectly identifies Reims as the oldest manuscript, although his Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Latin 2999 is from the same era and incorrectly listed here (p. 12) as from the 11th century.

Scholars are enumerated amongst the desired readers (p. 11). Unfortunately, for researchers, postgraduates and specialists, the merits of this book are limited. The introduction and further reading are both so short and incomplete as to render them inadequate. A fundamental requirement in any academic endeavour is to substantiate statements, and thus provide accountability, with references to both primary and secondary sources. Freeman acknowledges this lack, explaining that he has 'resisted the scholarly urge to overburden the text with notes and commentary' (p. 11). Fair enough.

But here we come to my frustrations as a reviewer. The book is clearly not for me, an academic specialist in the history of the period, and therefore, I need to be cautious in my criticisms. Were I to list all the fundamental technical problems with these editions I might rightly be criticised myself in missing the point of the enterprise, a pitfall I regularly caution my own students of hagiography to avoid. As Freeman himself explains: 'Biography . . . was never the point of hagiography . . . Her stories were recorded primarily to inspire Christians to a more holy life and should be read as such' (p. 7). I would like to follow this same instruction and to judge the book on its merits.

Much as it disappoints me that this book does not offer the rigorous modern editions and matching English translations historians are in dire need of, it is certainly a convenient and welcome 'one-stop-shop' for all and an excellent introduction for undergraduates. Freeman's triumph is in communicating these medieval texts to non-specialist audiences and the general public—an underappreciated skill. Most importantly, Freeman's lively and engaging translations in *Two Lives* will surely stimulate much needed further research on these valuable and influential texts.