

contemporary theological personalism), but it is a crucial part of Eriugena's fundamentally Neoplatonic system.

The words 'Jesus,' 'Christ,' and 'Word/Logos' all refer to different aspects of the same reality, of course, but they cannot be used interchangeably. When the author describes Eriugena as ascribing the Fall to the rejection of the Logos, he should not use 'Jesus' instead of 'Logos,' since Jesus is an historical figure, predated by the Fall—unless one takes the Fall ahistorically, but then that makes Jesus into an allegorical figure. Finally, there should be more acknowledgement of Eriugena's philosophy, since Neoplatonism really is central to not only Eriugena's thought, but also that of his most important sources: Augustine, pseudo-Dionysius, and Maximus, and there is ample work on it by now—Beierwaltes, Gersh, Jeaneau, d'Onofrio, and Steel, just to mention a few.

Treasures of Irish Christianity: A People of the Word (Vol. II). Edited by Salvador Ryan and Brendan Leahy. Dublin: Veritas, 2013. Pp. 320. Price €19.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-1-847-30431-5.

Reviewed by: J. Haydn Gurmin, *Maynooth University*

The first volume of *Treasures of Irish Christianity* was published in the summer of 2012 and had as its focus 'People and Places, Images and Texts.' The second volume takes as its focus the 'People of the Word.' The volume features 82 scholarly short articles from 73 contributors. Given the great number of articles, the volume brings to light a vast array of treasures from the Irish Christian tradition. The common theme that binds the volume together is reflection on Irish Christianity and the 'word.' As the editors, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Leahy, highlight in their introduction, 'a fascination with words has characterized Irish Christianity from its earliest days' (p. 15). Moreover, while the Irish reflected on 'words' in general they were also 'captivated by the Word himself (Christ) and with that Word as found in scripture' (p. 15).

The 82 articles are organized under four sub-headings: *Foundations*, *Flowerings*, *Fragmentations*, and *New Realities*. Many of the articles are accompanied by high quality coloured images that enhance the overall experience of the volume. It would be impossible to review all of the articles given that they are far too numerous to do them justice. Outlined below are a number of articles taken from each section in order to provide some insight into the wealth of information contained in the volume.

In the section on *Foundations* the opening article, by David A. Kelly, focuses on 'Scripture in the Writings of St Patrick.' Kelly points out that Patrick's writings—the *Confessions* and the *Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*—are suffused with quotations of biblical texts, both direct quotations and allusions to other biblical texts (p. 18), and so the connection between Irish Christianity and the 'Word' is established from the fifth century onwards. 13 articles in total comprise the *Foundations* section. The articles focus on topics that include scripture, the Psalms, and Irish Apocryphal Literature.

David Stifter in his article, 'Words of Power,' informs us that 'medieval healers and their patients trusted in the potent agency of healing words' (p. 32). Stifter gives details of a number of spells including three contained in the Stowe Missal. These spells were used by clerics attending to their community. The first spell surviving in fragmentary

form was used for the ailment of the eye. In the spell, invocation is made to St Íbar, God, and Christ. Other spells include a spell against a thorn, and a spell against urinary problems (pp. 33–34). Stifter points out that ‘the word was more than a means of verbal communication in early medieval Ireland. In its true form, it was an emanation of reality, and reality itself’ (p. 32). The idea of emanation is also taken up in Gregory Collins’s article on ‘John Scottus Eriugena’s Cosmos (810–c.877).’ Collins points out that Eriugena knew Greek which gave this Irish man access to the treasures of the Byzantine Church. As such Eriugena was able to combine his reflections on the cosmology of Genesis with the cosmic speculation of the Byzantine theologians. Collins argues that at a time of loss of ‘self-confidence in Irish Christianity,’ Eriugena can inspire a look to the east for a renewed mystical theology which can help renew our traditions (p. 23). Finally, an interesting article by Colmán Etchingham on ‘The Concept of Purgatory in Ninth-Century Ireland’ refers to a passage from an early ninth-century memoir, known today as *The Monastery of Tallaght*. Etchingham referring to the passage argues that there was the concept of purgatory in ninth-century Ireland and as such challenges the idea ‘that a concept of purgatory took root only in the 12th century’ (p. 52).

Moving to the second part on *Flowerings*, 12 articles comprise this section, and it covers a wide variety of topics. Pádraig Ó Macháin’s article ‘The Word in the Margins,’ highlights that the ‘earliest non-Ogham writing in Irish begins in the margins and between the lines in manuscripts otherwise occupied with Latin texts’ (p. 69). Ó Macháin gives us a glimpse into the life of a scribe who writes a poem in the ninth century, where he is thankful for a stormy sea as this will mean that the ‘warriors of Norway’ would not be ‘coursing on the Irish Sea’ (p. 69). Other writings include reflections on mortality, and devotion to Mary. This article gives a wonderful glimpse into the personality of some of the scribes.

Ann Buckley in ‘The Medieval Office of St Brigit’ points out that the ‘*Virgo Sancta Brigida*, a rhymed office for the feast of St Brigit of Kildare (1 February) is one of only a handful of medieval liturgies for Irish saints in Irish sources to survive with music notation’ (p. 81). Buckley gives an account of the office as found in Trinity College Dublin, MS 78 (c. 1488–1500), and MS 80 (c. 15th century), and astutely outlines that Brigit’s spirit can reach us across the centuries via the aural senses, given new performances of the words and music of her office (p. 84).

Under *Fragmentations*, 23 are collected. Mícheál Mac Craith in ‘Word and Image: Diverging Attitudes’ captures some of the elements of the fragmentation. The question of how to portray images comes to the fore. The Council of Trent had reaffirmed the importance of representation in the 1560s. For Lutherans, Mac Craith explains, ‘images were indifferent,’ but ‘the Reformed churches, came out firmly against images’ (p. 112). Mac Craith notes that the discussion of images had their impact in the Gaelic world. The Annals of Loch Cé, for instance, record the burning in 1538 of the famous wooden statue of Our Lady of Trim amongst other items, the annalist writing in horror that there was not a cross or statue of the Virgin or other holy image in the land that was not also destroyed (p. 112). Mac Craith points out that Catholic educationalists on the continent arguing against iconoclasm quoted scriptural evidence to justify representations of God the Father as an old man and the Holy Spirit as a dove. Furthermore, that Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) argued that ‘images fulfilled the same need for the illiterate that

books supply for the literate,' while Giolla Brighde Ó hEodhasa, an Irish Franciscan at Louvain, following Bellarmine argued that 'images actually influenced the literate much more quickly than books' (p. 114). For, 'what takes a long time to read, can be completely grasped in the mind through a simple gaze at an image' (p. 114).

Oliver P. Rafferty in 'Irish Catholics and the Bible in the Nineteenth Century' indicates contrary to popular opinion that Catholic Bible reading, or familiarity with the scriptures, was relatively widespread (p. 175). As such Catholic religious life at that time was more complex than simply being focused on Marian piety (p. 177). Rafferty details that bishops encouraged Bible reading and often did so 'in response to Protestant proselytizing attempts. Especially in the north of Ireland [and] some vestiges of Catholic practice were clearly influenced by Protestant mores in which Bible reading took pride of place' (p. 177). Yet Miriam Moffitt indicates in her article 'Scripture Reading Among Irish Catholics in the Nineteenth Century' that reaction to the Protestant missions to convert Catholics from the Irish Clergy helped to dissuade Irish Catholics from reading the scriptures. This resistance to scripture reading was fostered through poetry and street ballads 'where Bible reading was closely identified with Protestantism and pro-British (and by inference anti-Irish) sentiments' (p. 181). Moffitt notes that the sentiments of the ballads which characterized people who converted to Protestantism as the 'dirty crowd who turned' helped to effectively ensure that scripture reading did not increase even as literacy levels in Ireland improved (p. 183).

Finally, in part IV, entitled *New Realities*, 33 articles find their home. Martin Henry in 'Irish Theology' takes us back to John Scottus Eriugena (c. 810–877) and raises the interesting question that despite our long tradition of Christianity spanning over 1500 years, we have only produced one speculative thinker with a reputation of being a serious theological interpreter of Christianity. Henry wonders why there is such a dearth of theological thinkers, yet indicates that Bishop Berkeley (1685–1753) and Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) owe much to the Christian tradition, as indeed, James Joyce (1882–1941), Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), W. B. Yeats (1865–1939), and Samuel Beckett (1906–1989). But Henry holds that it is perhaps cheating to enlist such literary figures and to co-opt them into the realm of theology. Henry seems to lament that even with Bishop Berkeley it is difficult to claim him as a theologian given he is more known for his philosophy. So, Henry wonders is it perhaps due to the fact that the Irish are better known for their talking that the preference for the verbal has led to a dearth of theologians? Perhaps as Henry conjectures the best of Irish theology has been lost because it was not written down? Looking back to the Druidic tradition Henry sees that the emphasis on oral transmission may have been detrimental to the written word.

Finally, turning to 'new realities,' Máire Byrne in 'Christian Blogging' tells us that a blog can be considered amongst other things as a 'daily pulpit.' Byrne provides us with the details of a number of Christian bloggers, including Kevin Hargaden (training to be a Presbyterian minister) who has a blog called 'Creideamh,' Patrick Mitchel (Lecturer, Irish Bible Institute) who blogs at www.faithinireland.wordpress.com, and Jane Mellett (scripture scholar), who has a blog at www.janemellett.blogspot.ie. These bloggers give us an idea of a unique engagement with faith in a new social reality. Byrne discusses the growth of social media, and indicates for those of belief, 'blogging has meant that the

religious word no longer operates in a vacuum' (p. 279). With blogging, a wide audience with differing opinions and ideals are able to engage with the conversation.

Treasures of Irish Christianity: A People of the Word offers a readily accessible collection of short but remarkably comprehensive array of articles. The various sections see us move from *Foundations* to *New Realities*. The articles commented upon above hope to give just a taste of the wealth of information discussed in this volume with its focus on the people of the 'word/ Word.' There is much in this volume for those interested in the history of Irish Christianity and given the array of topics and the level of scholarship it is impossible not to be illuminated with the information contained therein. It is not surprising that a third volume has recently been published.

Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes. By Mitri Raheb. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014. Pp. 166. Price \$20.00 (pbk). ISBN 978-1-62698-065-5.

Reviewed by: Jessie Rogers, *St Patrick's College, Maynooth*

The title of this slim volume, along with the eye-catching cover depicting the crucified Christ with *keffiyeh* alongside other victims, accurately captures what this book is about. Mitri Raheb, Palestinian Christian and Evangelical Lutheran pastor, has written a thoughtful and provocative book which aims 'to lay the groundwork for a genuine Palestinian Christian narrative that is politically relevant and theologically creative' (p. 6). He is developing a biblical hermeneutic to serve a theology of liberation from and for a Palestinian context, but what he writes also deserves a wider audience. Certainly my own reading of scripture has been enriched and my perspective shifted in subtle but significant ways by the gift of being shown aspects of the biblical story 'through Palestinian eyes.'

Raheb calls his approach 'geo-political' and reads with the lens of the *longue durée*. This last term, borrowed from the French Annales School of historiography, implies that he takes the long view, focusing on repeated patterns or recurring themes rather than specific events. The biblical story and the current Palestinian situation are the bookends of a long continuous history marked by occupation by a succession of Empires: the Assyrians (722 BCE), the Babylonians (587 BCE), the Persians (538 BCE), the Greeks (333 BCE), the Romans (63 BCE), the Byzantines (326), the Arabs (637), the Tartars (1040), the Crusaders (1099), the Ayyubids (1187), the Tartars (1244), the Mamluks (1291), the Mongols (1401), the Ottomans (1516), the British (1917), and (controversially) the Israelis (1948/67). As for the geo-political element, Raheb works with the story of a particular land and its inhabitants, whose experience has been profoundly shaped by its geographical location vis-à-vis the centres of power. Further, he names as subjects 'the people of the land' (*Am Ha'aretz*) who are defined by long-term habitation in this region rather than by any ethnic, religious or linguistic markers which have varied greatly over the centuries. The case of his own father illustrates some of this complexity. He was born in 1905 as an Ottoman citizen with Ottoman identification papers. He then became a citizen of Mandate Palestine with a Palestinian passport issued by the British Mandate Government. In 1949 he became a citizen of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,