

Review: Expounding Eriugena

Reviewed Work(s): Iohannis Scotti Eriugena Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae) Liber Quartus by John Scottus Eriugena, Édouard A. Jeauneau, Mark A. Zier, John J. O'Meara and I. P. Sheldon-Williams; Glossae Divinae Historiae: The Biblical Glosses of John Scottus Eriugena by John Scottus Eriugena, John J. Contreni and Pádraig P. Ó Néill

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Source: *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 122 (Nov., 1998), pp. 247-258

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30008262>

Accessed: 07-09-2023 18:07 +00:00

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Review article: Expounding Eriugena*

These two fine books considerably advance Eriugena scholarship by providing careful critical editions of two very different types of literary work. Édouard Jeuneau's long-awaited edition (first announced in *Speculum*, 1978) of *Periphyseon* Book IV gives us Eriugena the speculative metaphysician and theologian. John J. Contreni and Pádraig P. Ó Néill's handsome edition, with full *apparatus criticus*, of the *Glossae divinae historiae* provides us with an insight into Eriugena the grammarian and scriptural exegete. Together these two editions considerably advance our understanding of Eriugena's linguistic and grammatical capabilities, his scriptural exegesis and his philosophical sophistication. Contreni and Ó Néill convincingly argue for Eriugena as author of these biblical glosses, which include some containing Old Irish words, thus providing a textual link between Eriugena and early Irish culture. This is important, as, aside from his name, and some attestations of his provenance in letters and other materials which refer to this 'Irishman' (*scottus*), little survives to connect Eriugena with his birthplace. The *Periphyseon*, in particular, carries not a single reference to Ireland or anything connected with Irish culture, and the evidence from the few Hiberno-Latin features of his writing is inconclusive.

I

Johannes Scottus Eriugena (c. 800 – c. 877) is unquestionably the most important philosopher writing in Latin between Boethius and Anselm. Those who have studied him recognise that he is also a philosopher of the first rank in any age, though unfortunately he has generally been treated in the conventional histories of philosophy as a minor figure of the dark ages. Eriugena was committed to Christianity, but equally committed to Neoplatonism. He understood the dynamic cosmic movement of the

*IOHANNIS SCOTTI ERIUGENAE PERIPHYSEON (DE DIVISIONE NATURAE) LIBER QUARTUS. Edited by Édouard A. Jeuneau, with the assistance of Mark A. Zier. English translation by John J. O'Meara and I. P. Sheldon-Williams. Pp xlv, 338. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. 1995. No price given. (*Scriptores Latini Hiberniae XIII*)

GLOSSAE DIVINAE HISTORIAE: THE BIBLICAL GLOSSES OF JOHN SCOTTUS ERIUGENA. Edited by John J. Contreni and Pádraig P. Ó Néill. Pp xxx, 253. Firenze: Sismel (Edizioni del Galluzzo). 1997. No price given.

Neoplatonic descent from and return to the One as being identical to the Christian story of Creation–Fall–Redemption. His Neoplatonism was drawn almost exclusively from Christian sources, but his understanding of Christianity was enriched by his contact with Eastern Greek Christianity. Eriugena had a thorough, if imperfect, working knowledge of Greek, highly unusual in the West at that time. He also displayed a deep sympathy with the Greek mind, and his translations of Dionysius and other Greek Christian authors, though flawed, nevertheless capture very accurately the mystical spirit of the Greek theological tradition which, up to that time, was almost unknown in the Latin West. Thus in the *Periphyseon* he was in a position to produce a unique synthesis between the Neoplatonic traditions of the Greek Christian East (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite) and the Latin Christian West (most notably Augustine and Ambrose).

We know nothing of Eriugena's early life, though Contreni and O'Neill speculate that he was trained in Irish schools but emigrated to France in the 820s, somewhat earlier than other biographers have suggested. Eriugena first emerges in historical record in the mid-ninth century as a philosopher and liberal arts *magister* at the court of Charles the Bald, the grandson of Charlemagne. Around 850–51 he engaged in a dispute on predestination with the Saxon monk Gottschalk. Though censured by ecclesiastical authority for his part in this debate, he was nevertheless soon afterwards asked to translate sacred writings, presumed to be by the patron saint of France, St Denis, writings which had been presented to King Charles's father, Louis the Pious, by the Byzantine emperor. These extraordinary works were in fact pious forgeries probably composed by a sixth-century Christian follower of Proclus, now generally referred to as 'Pseudo-Dionysius'. Eriugena's success in translating the *Corpus Dionysii* probably encouraged him to translate the *De hominis opificio* (*On the constitution of man*) of Gregory of Nyssa, large extracts of which, under the title of *De imagine*, are quoted in *Periphyseon* Book IV. He also translated Maximus Confessor's *Ambigua ad Johannem* and *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* and possibly the *De fide* of Epiphanius (which also makes an appearance in Book IV). He wrote an extensive commentary on Dionysius and a commentary on the Gospel of St John. Not satisfied with translation and commentary, Eriugena embarked on a massive project, the *Periphyseon*, more popularly if inaccurately known as *De divisione naturae*, completed around 867. This dialogue between an anonymous master and student, extending over five books, is nothing less than a *summa*, a huge compendium of knowledge on the natures of all things, ranging over everything which falls under Eriugena's fundamental division of all things 'into those that are and those things that are not' (*in ea quae sunt et in ea quae non sunt*, I, 441a).

The *Periphyseon* is truly a remarkable work, astonishing both in its extraordinary scope and complexity, and distinguished by the originality of its conception, the depth of its philosophical and theological speculation, and, not least, by the brilliance of its literary execution (Jeauneau describes the writing as 'witty, close-knit and vigorous').¹ This dialogue was popular up

¹Eriugena, *Periphyseon liber quartus*, ed. Jeauneau, p. xxi.

until the twelfth century, but it attracted theological censure both during the middle ages and later. In 1210 and 1225 the *Periphyseon* was included in a general condemnation of the heresies of David of Dinant and Amaury of Bène. In the seventeenth century, soon after the appearance of Thomas Gale's first printed edition, the *Periphyseon* was listed in the first edition of the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, remaining in it until the Index itself was shelved in the 1960s.

At the beginning of *Periphyseon* Book IV Eriugena labels his enterprise a *physiologia*, a 'study of nature', and indeed one manuscript of the *Periphyseon* in the British Library in London calls the whole dialogue '*Liber Physiologiae Iohannis Scottigenae*'. This is an accurate title, as the 'study of nature' is meant to include not just created nature but also the divine creator and the dialectical relation between creator and created. The *Periphyseon* is Eriugena's physics and metaphysics rolled into one. Nature, the totality of all things that are and are not, which includes both God and creation, has four divisions: nature which creates and is not created (God); nature which creates and is created (the primordial causes); nature which is created and does not create (the created temporal effects); and nature which is neither created nor creates (non-being). The original intention (expressed at III, 619d–620b) was to devote one book to each of the four divisions; thus Book I deals with the divine nature and the procession or *exitus* of all things from God, Book II treats of the primordial causes, and Book III their created effects, including the nature of *ex nihilo* creation and the stages of the creation of the world. The topic of creation requires Eriugena to address issues connected with the biblical account of creation, and thus in Book III, he embarks on his own version of a *Hexaemeron*. The momentous event of the emergence of human nature on the sixth day of creation requires extended treatment, and Eriugena is forced to devote his fourth book to this topic, and in doing so to relegate to an additional book the return of all things to God. Eriugena was thus forced to depart from his original plan of four books and add a fifth. This is particularly important and helps to identify stages of composition of the text, a point to which we shall return.

Before examining Jauneau's edition itself, it is worth while to try to place Book IV in the intellectual scheme of the *Periphyseon* as a whole. Book I examines the first division of nature, God. According to Eriugena, God is not 'literally' (*proprie*) substance or essence: he does not possess quantity, quality or relations. God is not in place and time, but transcends all, dwelling in inaccessible darkness. He is 'beyond being' and may even be described as 'non-being' or as 'nothing'. God's nature is so transcendent and infinite that it escapes definition and circumscription. We do not know what God is (*quid est*). But similarly, God does not know what he is, and thus, remarkably, Eriugena concludes that God is unknowable even to himself, this ignorance being a sign of his infinite richness rather than expressing a limitation on his nature.

But, being superabundant and overflowing, God radiates outwards from his transcendent darkness into the manifest light of creation. In this eternal outpouring, God at once eternally creates himself and all other things. God's self-creation is a form of self-manifestation (I, 455b), that is, God manifests

himself in an infinite series of revelations or theophanies (I, 446d). This self-creation is understood by Eriugena as a self-expression, a speaking of the Word which at the same time brings about the creation of all other things, since all things are contained in the Word. The Word enfolds in itself the ideas or primary causes of all things. This doctrine of *causae primordiales* (the term comes from Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*) combines the Platonic theory of forms, Dionysius' discussion of the divine rays, and the Stoic–Augustinian notion of eternal reasons. God contains in himself an infinite series of 'divine willings' which are the causes of all created things. The number of causes is infinite and none has priority over the other, e.g. being is not prior to goodness, or vice versa. Each is a divine theophany. These primordial causes may be contemplated either in their cause or source who is God, or in their created manifestations in this world, a point Eriugena took from Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, II, vi, 12. *Periphyseon* Book II discusses these primary causes located in the mind of God, but, since they are causes, their very nature is to flow out from themselves, bringing about their effects, and so Book III looks at the created effects.

This outflowing (*exitus*) creates the whole universe from the highest genus to the lowest species. In this causal procession like produces like; incorporeal causes produce incorporeal effects. All created things are essentially incorporeal, immaterial, intellectual and eternal. God creates out of himself, and all creation remains within him. In Book III Eriugena emphasises God's presence in and transcendence above his creation. Because all things originate from God through his will, and because all things are sustained by God's power (and hence all things, in the Neoplatonic sense, 'remain in' God), God and the creature can in a certain sense be said to be one and the same: 'It follows that we ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For both the creature, by subsisting, is in God; and God, by manifesting himself, in a marvellous and ineffable manner creates himself in the creature.' (III, 678c)

Furthermore, all things are contained in the divine Word, and since man is made in the image of God, all things may be said to be contained in man. Man is the *officina omnium* (II, 530d). In a sense, then, the whole universe is contained in human nature, and had human nature not fallen, all things would retain their purely incorporeal natures. The whole spatio-temporal world and our corporeal bodies, including the division into sexes, are a consequence of the Fall (*propter peccatum*, IV, 896b), a 'superaddition' (*super-addita*) on to the purely mental and immaterial. Place and time are definitions which locate things, and since definitions are in the mind, then place and time are in the mind (I, 485b). The sensible, corporeal spatio-temporal appearance of things is produced by the qualities or 'circumstances' of place, time, position, and so on, which surround the incorporeal essence. The reform of nature from its material to its incorporeal status, then, is dependent on the reform of human nature, a reform made possibly by Christ's *inhumanatio*.

Books IV and V discuss the return (*reditus*) of all things to God, a return which centres around the absorption of all things into human nature and then the reintegration of human and divine nature. Corporeal things will

return to their incorporeal causes, the temporal to the eternal. The human mind will achieve reunification with the divine. Human nature will return to its idea in the mind of God, and thus perfected human nature will become paradise. Humans who refuse to let go of the ‘circumstances’ will remain trapped in their own fantasies, and this, rather than any place (*locus*), constitutes hell. The elect achieve a special deification (*theosis*) whereby they will merge with God completely, as lights blend into the one light.

Since the *recollectio* begins in man, Eriugena’s treatise on man in Book IV, his *De homine*, is pivotal for the whole scheme of *exitus* and *reditus*. The ambitious anthropology expressed herein has been the focus of much philosophical interest in the twentieth century. Eriugena ranges widely, treating of the creation of man, the Fall and the consequent division of the sexes, the meaning of human nature as made in the image and likeness of God (*in imaginem et similitudinem dei*), the nature of paradise to which perfected human nature will return, the nature of the devil and of evil will. Eriugena’s philosophical account of man as a *medium* between animal and angel, a *medietas* between the earthly and the intelligible worlds, is thoroughly infused by his efforts to make sense of sacred scripture. Eriugena draws heavily on Augustine’s commentaries on Genesis especially *De Genesi ad litteram*, as well as Ambrose’s *De paradiso* and Gregory of Nyssa’s *De hominis opificio*. But Eriugena is never a slavish follower — he departs from Augustine on several points, including on the question of the purely spiritual nature of paradise, whether Adam’s body was animal or spiritual, and whether humans *ante peccatum* ever actually spent time in paradise. Eriugena adopts Gregory of Nyssa’s view that sexual difference is a result of the Fall, that the real Fall is the fall from intellect into sense, intellect distracted by the voluptuousness of sense. Thus sexual difference really makes no difference for humans, or, as Eriugena boldly puts it, ‘Man is better than sex’ (*homo melior est quam sexus*, II, 534a). Furthermore, Eriugena believes this agrees with scripture: ‘In Christ there is neither male nor female’ (IV, 795a).

In Book IV Eriugena’s radical scriptural exegesis supports original philosophical claims about human nature. Eriugena combines commentary with philosophical dialectic where opposing definitions are juxtaposed. As Jeaneau notes, ‘Although Book IV of the *Periphyseon* has the appearance of a Biblical commentary, dialectic plays a privileged role in the exposition.’² Jeaneau notes how Eriugena employs dialectic to highlight the contradictions inherent in human nature: man is an animal and man is not an animal; man is spiritual and not spiritual. Yet, for Eriugena, these contradictions are really indications of man’s exalted status, and Jeaneau comments: ‘Few Christian authors show such audacity.’³ As we shall see, Contreni and Ó Néill also cite boldness as characteristic of Eriugena’s genius.

The transcendent nature of God means that we can legitimately apply contradictory predicates to him; so too we may apply contradictory predicates to human nature. For Eriugena, ‘rational animal’ does not adequately

²Ibid., p. xv.

³Ibid., p. 286 n. 37.

define human nature. Following Gregory of Nyssa, Eriugena also denies that human nature is a microcosm made up of all parts of the world. Humanity is a mirror of all things, and the definition of humanity as 'a certain intellectual concept formed eternally in the divine mind' (IV, 768b) is one which applies to all other things too. Eriugena feels he has articulated the universality and comprehensive nature of humanity in this extraordinary definition.

Book IV fully explores the manner in which human nature mirrors transcendent divine nature. Only man is made in God's image — not even the angels are accorded that honour, so in a sense man is greater than the angels. Perfect human nature would have possessed the fullest knowledge of its creator, of itself, and of everything else, had it not sinned (IV, 778c). This mirroring of God in man occurs especially in the cognitive domain. As we have seen, God knows that he is but not what he is. But man too knows that he is, although from this he, likewise, cannot grasp what his essence or nature is. Jeaneau acknowledges that a version of the *cogito* is found in *Periphyseon* Book IV, though, unlike Descartes, Eriugena cannot proceed from recognition of existence to circumscription of man's essence. Human self-ignorance is an exact mirror of the divine self-ignorance.

Man would have ruled the whole of the universe as its subject (IV, 782c). Man, like God, is the *plenitudo bonorum* (IV, 796a) Just as God is infinite and unbounded, human nature is indefinable and incomprehensible and open to infinite possibility and perfectibility (V, 919c). God's transcendence and immanence are reflected in human transcendence and immanence with regard to its world. Consider the following remarkable passage from Book IV, which is a typical example of Eriugena's dialectical thinking and of the close parallelism between human and divine:

For just as God is both beyond all things and in all things — for He Who only truly is, is the essence of all things, and while He is whole in all things He does not cease to be whole beyond all things, whole in the world, whole around the world, whole in the sensible creature, whole in the intelligible creature, whole creating the universe, whole created in the universe, whole in the whole of the universe and whole in its parts, since He is both the whole and the part, just as He is neither the whole nor the part — in the same way human nature in its own world (in its own subsistence) in its own universe and in its invisible and visible parts is whole in itself, and whole in its whole, and whole in its parts, and its parts are whole in themselves and whole in the whole. (IV, 759a–b)

Eriugena concludes that human nature is 'wholly in the wholeness of the whole created nature (*in universitate totius conditae naturae tota est*), seeing that in it every creature is fashioned, and in it all are linked together (*in ipsa copulata*), and into it all shall return, and through it must all be saved' (IV, 760a).

Eriugena's exaltation of human nature has been criticised as leading to pantheism — collapsing the difference between God and man. But others — including Jeaneau — want to defend Eriugena's orthodoxy, by pointing out that only the unique nature of Christ has all the perfections which Eriugena attributes to human nature, since *vir autem perfectus est Christus* (IV, 743b) and Christ is also one in substance with God. Jeaneau claims that Eriugena recognises that Christ is unique and that the individual is not

collapsed in the universal. Humans will always be different from God in that they have been created and God is creator (IV, 796b). However, I believe a case can still be made for saying that Eriugena really intends his perfected human nature to possess divine attributes in a genuine way. The argument turns on an answer to the question ‘To what extent is man made in the image and likeness of God?’ Eriugena has two answers. First, an image is not an image unless it is identical to its exemplar in all respects except number or subject (*excepta subiecti ratione*, IV, 778a). From this we may conclude that man differs from God *in subiecto*, that is, that there is solely a difference in number. But difference in number does not mean that God and man stand apart from each other as two identical billiard balls would occupy different places. Neither God nor man is in space or time; both are incorporeal, and hence numerical difference, or difference in subject, can only have the Neoplatonic meaning that the first will always differ from what comes after the first. God is first, and hence man comes after. But ‘after’ (*post*) here has no temporal meaning, as Eriugena emphasises (IV, 808a). A second answer he gives is that God is creator and man is created, but since creation is self-manifestation, that amounts to saying no more than that God manifests himself fully in man. He sometimes qualifies this by saying that man is by grace what God is by nature, quoting Maximus Confessor (e.g. V, 879c–880a), but elsewhere, especially in the concept of theophany or divine manifestation, he fuses the notion of nature with that of grace: all natures are theophanies, that is, produced by grace. God is the source of both *dona* and *data* — indeed, both are revelations of the divine nature. Indeed, there are many places where Eriugena cites texts (e.g. Maximus) to suggest that God and man imply each other. One is at the heart of the other. Similarly, human nature and the angelic nature are mutually mirroring. This notion of the intertwining and merging of minds is at the very core of Eriugena’s mysticism and of his understanding of the relation between human and divine natures and their coming together in the person of Christ. Christ is actually what all human beings can be and will be; this is precisely the promise of salvation for Eriugena. Consider the following passage from Book II:

For if Christ Who understands of all things, [Who] indeed is the understanding of all things, really unified all that He assumed, who doubts then that what first took place in the Head and principal Exemplar of the whole of human nature will eventually happen in the whole? (II, 545a)

This clearly implies that humanity as a whole, that is, resurrected human nature in its perfected state, will be truly illuminated and merged with the divine, for human nature itself in its very essence is the *intellectus omnium*. Furthermore, the use of the future tense here is somewhat misleading, since time itself is a function of our fallen state and the perfected state is timeless, so that there is a sense in which perfected human nature already is one with God and always has been one with God. Eriugena, then, has a dialectical understanding of the relation of God and man which can be viewed as orthodox from one point of view, but which is always transgressing the boundaries of orthodoxy in the direction of a view which has God and man mutually contemplating themselves and each other in an eternal play of

theophanies. Thus a kind of mystical humanism is celebrated in *Periphyseon* Book IV, a humanism best understood through Eriugena's account of the dialectic of self-knowledge and ignorance.

Eriugena's emphasis on infinity is wonderfully encapsulated in his claim that the infinite number of interpretations of sacred scripture are like the innumerable colours in a peacock's tail (IV, 749c), a simile which Jeaneau considers 'completely original'.⁴ Learning is endless — be it learning about nature or scripture. *Sacrae scripturae interpretatio infinita est*, Eriugena says in Book II, 560a. Eriugena celebrates the lack of limit and inherent transcendence not just of human nature but also of the whole of nature. Nature as a whole is an infinite series of theophanies. This, I believe, is Eriugena's most significant contribution to philosophy.

There is no doubt, too, that Eriugena saw himself as an intellectualist and rationalist philosopher. It is in Book IV that he makes the bold claim that one need only introduce the 'opinions of the holy Fathers' where 'the gravest necessity requires that human reason be supported for the sake of those who, being untrained in it, are more amenable to authority than reason' (IV, 781c–d). Eriugena is clear that right reason (*vera ratio*) is self-justifying and that authority is only for the instruction of lesser minds where reason does not rule. Similarly, Eriugena is untroubled by conflict between authorities, most notably between Greek and Latin authors. For him the variations of interpretation are again infinitely diverse avenues to the one truth. Indeed, Eriugena anticipates many modern philosophical positions: he is humanist, idealist, Renaissance *magus*, process theologian, all *avant la lettre*. Let us turn now to Jeaneau's edition.

II

Jeaneau's edition brings a new level of scholarship and critical accuracy to his continuation of the project begun by the late I. P. Sheldon-Williams. Before his death in 1973 Sheldon-Williams had completed an edition of the first three books: Book I was published in 1968, Book II in 1972, and Book III appeared posthumously, seen through the press in 1981 by John J. O'Meara. Sheldon-Williams had assembled materials for the edition of Books IV and V and had completed a draft English translation of these books. Jeaneau acknowledges that Sheldon-Williams's edition, despite imperfections, 'marks an important stage in the knowledge and interpretation of the *Periphyseon*'.⁵ Despite its obvious merits, Sheldon-Williams's efforts at a critical edition were not without their flaws and detractors. From the outset Sheldon-Williams was criticised for his arrangement of the manuscripts, for his inconsistent use of sigla and other intrusive typographical devices, for various textual misreadings, for misidentifying some of the handwritten glosses, and for confusing Irish and Carolingian hands. Sheldon-Williams made other decisions which have been challenged. He

⁴Ibid., p. 284 n. 27.

⁵Ibid., p. xxxiv.

adopted the title *De divisione naturae* for the whole work, whereas in fact it was a subtitle to Book I. He also claimed that Book I emerged from an earlier 'essay in dialectic', but offered no evidence for this. Chiefly, Sheldon-Williams was criticised for conflating various versions of the text from several different manuscripts, in a similar manner to the earlier editors (Gale, 1681, and Floss, 1853). Gale and Floss published editions which ran together into a single text what was contained in the main body of the manuscript and in various marginal annotations. This disguised the gradual evolution of the text, and, as Jeauneau remarks, 'today . . . this mixed type of edition is inadequate to the needs of scholarship'.⁶

In contrast to Sheldon-Williams, Jeauneau aims to offer a 'genetisch-critische Herausgabe' by laying out the text in a manner which more clearly displays its evolution. The new edition is based on six manuscripts, including two not used by Sheldon-Williams (since they contain only Books IV and V): Paris, Bibl. Nat., Lat. 12965, and Bamberg, Staatliche Bibliothek, Phil. 2/2. Jeauneau argues that the extant manuscripts of the *Periphyseon* manifest four distinct levels of development, or, if you like, four editions. This new grouping offers the basis for a new stemma (promised on p. xxxiii n. 98). Jeauneau has generously given us a helpful account of his working method. First, with the assistance of Mark Zier and Lesley Smith, the manuscripts at Avranches, Bamberg, Cambridge, Rheims and Paris were painstakingly and carefully transcribed. Then Jeauneau compared these texts, unravelling the stages of construction of the composite text, making the interpolations distinct. In advocating his four-stage development hypothesis, Jeauneau jettisons Sheldon-Williams's suggestion of the origin of the dialogue in a treatise on dialectic and installs as the original base manuscript Rheims, Bibliothèque Municipale, 875, *before* the enlargements and corrections introduced by the Irish hands (designated by Rand as *i*¹ and *i*²) and by other Carolingian hands. According to Jeauneau, Stage 1 is Rheims 875, 'a working copy contemporaneous with the author'⁷ which originally contained all five books, but now has only Books I–III and a portion of Book IV (up to 855d). Stage 2 is witnessed both by Rheims 875, together with the enlargements, and also by Bamberg Phil. 2/1 (excepting those additions and corrections in the hand *i*² — which, when added in, constitute Stage 3). Stage 3 contains only the first three books. Stage 4 is manifest in the two Paris manuscripts (12964 and 12965) and Bamberg Phil. 2/2. This version 'incorporates all the changes of the previous editions together with certain corrections and additions which may or may not be authentic'.⁸

A special difficulty presents itself with regard to the edition of Books IV and V. The extant manuscripts for these books are comparatively late, dating from the twelfth century and not the ninth as in the case of the first three books. Avranches and Cambridge, both twelfth-century manuscripts, are the sole witnesses for the end of Book IV and the whole of Book V in

⁶Ibid., p. xxxiii.

⁷Ibid., p. xxx.

⁸Ibid.

Stage 2 versions, with Avranches noticeably less accurate than Cambridge in several places. Jeauneau follows Bishop in taking Avranches and Cambridge to be two descendants of an earlier lost exemplar. Sheldon-Williams, understandably, did not employ these manuscripts except in part of Book III, but Jeauneau was required to utilise them in his edition, combined with the two ninth-century manuscripts which contain Books IV and V, namely Bamberg Phil. 2/2 and Paris 12965, manuscripts which Jeauneau takes to be exemplars of the fourth and final stage of composition. Though Paris contains many errors, taken together with Bamberg it represents 'the earliest and best tradition of the final version' of Books IV and V.⁹

In his edition Sheldon-Williams identified as a single hand what has been discerned by Ludwig Traube as the hands of two Irish scribes (those designated by Rand as *i*¹ and *i*²). Jeauneau claims it is now indisputable that *i*¹ and *i*² are in fact two hands and lays heavy emphasis on the difference between them, since one of them (*i*²) was responsible for noting that the project might expand to a fifth book (IV, 743c), correcting the plan for four books announced in Book III. As to whose hands they are, Jeauneau adopts an agnostic stance in this edition, thereby forswearing his earlier conviction (also held by Bischoff) that one of them (*i*²) was Eriugena's own hand. Clearly the matter is not settled, as Contreni and Ó Néill claim that the weight of evidence is in favour of *i*¹ as the hand of Eriugena.¹⁰ Either way, these Irish hands belonged to persons intimately familiar with Eriugena's philosophy and his literary plans, and certainly were no mere scribes.

In his acknowledgements Jeauneau pays generous tribute to the method of working of the most prominent of the Eriugena workers of earlier this century — Dom Maïeul Cappuyns who died in 1968. Cappuyns (who dreamed of establishing a critical edition) had an interesting working method which impressed Jeauneau: he unbound the pages from Floss's *Patrologia Latina* edition and pasted blank pages on either side of these on which the variants were recorded. Jeauneau also lists recently discovered manuscripts found in Austria, Belgium, France and Germany,¹¹ and notes that the existence of several *florilegia* indicates a wider readership in the early years than was once supposed. This edition retains the layout of previous editions — parallel Latin and English texts, with copious explanatory notes at the end. Sheldon-Williams's ear for Eriugena's cadences is reflected in his English translation, which has the same complex quality, long sentences broken with commas and semi-colons, which John O'Meara has retained, while making fairly extensive changes to Sheldon-Williams's draft translation. All in all, Jeauneau's edition is a magnificent achievement. It is also in order to congratulate Professors Jeauneau and O'Meara for their efforts and the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies for producing such a handsome volume. We look forward eagerly to the appearance of Book V.

⁹Ibid., p. xxxii.

¹⁰Eriugena, *Glossae divinae historiae*, ed. Contreni & Ó Néill, p. 78.

¹¹Eriugena, *Periphyseon liber quartus*, ed. Jeauneau, pp xxiv–xxv.

III

Turning now to Contreni and Ó Néill's edition of the *Glossae divinae historiae*, it is over a century since biblical glosses, marked IO(H), appearing interspersed with other glosses in a ninth-century Vatican manuscript, Reg. Lat. 215, ff 88r–106r, were attributed to Eriugena by Bruno Güterbock in 1895. Since then four further manuscripts have been unearthed: Paris, Bibl. Nat., Lat. 3088, ff 108–21 (=P); Paris, Bibl. Nat., Lat. 4883A, ff 7ra–19rb; Paris, Bibl. Nat., Lat. 1977, ff 63r–65v; and Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 258, ff 16va–19ra, giving a total of 660 glosses, including 79 containing Old Irish words which translate difficult Latin terms. In four of these manuscripts Eriugena's glosses are interwoven with those attributed to Haimo of Auxerre (marked AI or HAI). Earlier studies have already isolated and edited the Old Irish glosses in some of the manuscripts, but the present edition is the first complete one, drawing on all five manuscripts, including the one (P) discovered by Bernhard Bischoff. The original intention of the *Glossae* was to provide glosses covering the entire Bible as a teaching aid. The fullest manuscript itself depends on a lost earlier manuscript, which, judging by errors in transcription, was written in insular script. Presumably, as the Old Irish glossary became less intelligible, the Eriugenian glosses gradually dropped out of circulated manuscripts, until they had entirely disappeared by the thirteenth century. The *Glossae* had only intermittent interest for scholars. In the seventeenth century DuCange consulted them when compiling his famous dictionary of medieval Latin. Sheldon-Williams thought the IO(H) glosses had been erroneously attributed to Eriugena and hence ignored them. The revival of interest is due to Contreni and Ó Néill's convincing efforts to argue for Eriugena's authorship, and to the presence of the Old Irish terms. Otherwise the glosses are of purely philological interest.

Contreni and Ó Néill argue that the glosses form a coherent whole. They further argue that manuscript P was written in the diocese of Rheims during the time of Eriugena, probably before 860. Its Irish authorship is attested by the presence of Old Irish glosses distributed throughout the manuscript. But the evidence for Eriugena as author has been largely indirect, based on characteristics of the composition and parallels with other works of Eriugena. The editors note the author's boldness in interpreting scripture and show that his confidence in Greek was such that he felt he could emend Latin lemmata on the basis of his insights into the Greek. They also cite parallels with Eriugena's *Annotationes in Marcianum* — unusual explanations (e.g. both texts contain the otherwise unattested interpretation of *licitor* as a standard-bearer rather than a court officer), bizarre etymologies, and so on. The author of the *Glossae* also knew Maximus, which further suggests Eriugena. Convincing proof of authorship has come recently in the form of an eleventh-century note in a Vatican manuscript which refers to Iohannes Scottus as author of various scriptural commentaries.

The *Glossae* in general provide detailed evidence of Eriugena as grammarian and liberal arts master. The glosses rely on Theodulf of Orléans's edition of the Bible, which gives us further knowledge of Eriugena's scriptural sources. The Old Irish glosses in particular show concern to

translate technical Latin terms into those familiar to Irish scholars (e.g. *istorarium* is translated as *senchas*, traditional knowledge, which is interesting because traditional learning was usually contrasted with church doctrine in early Ireland). Overall, however, the glosses are disappointing in terms of what they reveal about Eriugena as philosopher. Indeed, they are so sparse as to give us little hint about the kind of knowledge which gave birth to them, other than that it was the kind of eclectic knowledge which Eriugena had assembled in his career as grammarian at the Carolingian court, before he had mastered Greek and embarked on his extensive readings in Greek Christian Platonism. The *Glossae*, then, stands with the *Annotationes in Marcianum* as testimony to Eriugena's intellectual formation as arts *magister* before he went on to become a philosopher of world status.

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