

**A Companion to John Scottus Eriugena**, edited by Adrian Guiu, Leiden, Brill, 2020, xii+504 pp., \$283, €236.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-90-04-38267-1, \$283, €236.00 (ebook), ISBN 978-90-04-39907-5

This volume of collected essays is the most recent contribution to the thin but burgeoning scholarship on John Scottus Eriugena. While it does contain some introductory essays on Eriugena's thought, most of the essays are best suited for those who are at least moderately familiar with Eriugena's works and the debates surrounding their interpretation. Adrian Guiu aptly organizes the volume into four sections: the context of Eriugena's thought, interpretations of his magnum opus the *Periphyseon*, under-researched areas of Eriugenian studies, and his legacy in Western scholarship.

The first two essays of the opening section will be helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the cultural context of Eriugena's scholarly formation. Alfred Siewers focuses on how Eriugena emerged from Irish monastic culture in the ninth century, and John Contreni discusses how Eriugena was influenced by and contributed to the culture of the Carolingian Renaissance. In the third essay, Michael Harrington explores the Neoplatonic sources that Eriugena drew from to develop a Christian metaphysics. Eriugena is exceptionally unique for an early medieval scholar since he had access to both Plotinian and Proclean schools of Neoplatonism, which were prominent among Latin and Greek patristic authors respectively. According to Harrington, Eriugena's claim that all created things subsist wholly in God extends beyond the typical standards of Neoplatonism. While Eriugena does draw from a Neoplatonic theory of formal causality, he departs from Neoplatonism insofar as he asserts that there is not a radical distinction between God and creation. Finally, Christophe Erismann's essay explores how the logic that Eriugena employs is a synthesis of Latin authors—namely Boethius—and Greek authors, such as Aristotle and Maximus the Confessor.

The second section focuses on the different approaches and perspectives taken by scholars in interpretations of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*. Notably, many of the essays here also aim to discern and compare the philosophical and theological dimensions of this work. The section begins with Elena Lloyd-Sidle's essay which provides a broad but thoroughgoing overview of the main arguments of the *Periphyseon*. Next, John Gavin S.J. focuses on the Christocentrism of Eriugena's thought, an integral component of his work which is often understated. Gavin's reading of the *Periphyseon* emphasizes how Christ, who is the Word of God incarnate, realizes God's divine wisdom in creation and is the harbinger of humanity's return to God. The third essay by Bernard McGinn, which this reviewer found particularly interesting, argues that the *Periphyseon* should be read as a hexaemeral commentary. Given that much of the discussion between the Nutritor and the Alumnus in Books III and IV of the *Periphyseon* focuses on an exegesis of the first three chapters of Genesis, McGinn makes a compelling argument. According to him, Eriugena's fourfold division of *physis* ultimately provides a framework from which he discerns the ontological division, or lack thereof, between God and creation. The final two essays of the second section focus on Eriugena's anthropology within the scope of his Christian metaphysics. While Willemien Otten shows how Eriugena develops a theological anthropology in which humans initiate and complete the *exitus* and *reditus* of *physis* to God, Giulio d'Onofrio discusses how original sin plays a crucial role in not only Eriugena's anthropology but also his epistemology.


Having explored the context of Eriugena's thought and the foundations of it, the third section offers insights into the understudied areas of Eriugena's work. Particularly, the authors focus on his contributions to medieval theological debates and to translations of Greek patristic authors. Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi's essay focuses on Eriugena's *De*

*Predestinatione*, a work written around 851 (sixteen years before the completion of the *Periphyseon*), that was intended to resolve debates on ‘double predestination.’ Mainoldi offers a close reading of key passages from *De Predestinatione* and details how Eriugena’s contributions to these debates were not received kindly by his contemporaries. Both Joel Barstad and Adrian Guiu discuss Eriugena’s translations and appropriations of Greek patristic authors, namely Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor. While Barstad discusses Eriugena’s translation style of Pseudo-Dionysius, Guiu focuses on how Maximus the Confessor significantly influenced Eriugena’s anthropology and Christology. The final essay of the third section, by Catherine Kavanagh, relates Eriugena’s multifaceted methodology of scriptural exegesis to his emphasis on Christ as the Logos of God.

The fourth section of the volume includes essays that explore the historical impact and legacy of Eriugena in the western intellectual tradition. This is a rich topic that warrants further exploration beyond the four essays provided here. First, Agnieszka Kijewska writes on the reception of Eriugena’s works among 12<sup>th</sup> century French scholastics, namely Honorius Augustodunensis, Hugh of Saint Victor, Bernard of Chartres, and John of Salisbury. Next, David Albertson’s essay focuses on the transmission of Eriugena’s thought throughout German philosophy of the High Middle Ages. He argues that Eriugena had a profound but often overlooked impact on Nicolas of Cusa. The third essay, by Dermot Moran, focuses on the reception of Eriugena in German Idealism and the relevance of themes throughout Eriugena’s philosophy of mind for modern and continental philosophy, particularly phenomenology. In the final essay, Stephen Lahey investigates where Eriugena’s alleged pantheism originates. He traces it back to Eriugena’s association with Amalric of Béne and his followers who were condemned by Pope Innocent III as heretics in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Shortly thereafter, Pope Honorius III banned all of Eriugena’s works except his translations which put a stop to his influence on scholasticism.

One of the greatest strengths of this volume is that many of the essays contribute to understudied areas of Eriugena’s thought, especially his theology. Guiu concludes the volume with Pope Benedict XVI’s thoughts on Eriugena which was delivered in a speech to a general audience at Saint Peter’s square in June 2009. Here Benedict rehabilitates Eriugena’s image as a sincere Christian scholar whose thought ultimately centres on the mystery of Christ as the Word incarnate. In his words, ‘John Scottus is the most evident demonstration of the attempt to express the expressible of the inexpressible God, based solely on the mystery of the Word made flesh.’ Overall, this volume offers a comprehensive survey of the current trends in Eriugenian scholarship and serves as a valuable resource for both novices who wish to learn about Eriugena and experts in the field.

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