Pastoral School of Chicago and Mid-America

JOHN SCOTTUS ERIUGENA IN CONTEXT:

HERETIC OR LAST OF THE LATIN CHURCH FATHERS?

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the School in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Diploma in Pastoral Studies

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I have examined this manuscript and verify that it was written by the candidate and meets my standards of scholarly excellence, and the standards of the Pastoral School of Chicago and Mid-America of The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

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Preface and Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Pastoral School faculty and administrators for their support, and also Protopresbyter Mark for his spiritual guidance, as well as my wife Olesya for her patience, and our mission Rector the Very Rev. Archpriest Claude. Any errors or infelicities are my own. May the reader be blessed and any errors here brought to light, please forgive me.

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Abstract

John Scottus Eriugena was a ninth-century Irish Christian philosopher, whose writings represent the last culmination of early Irish Christian literary tradition, disrupted by the Vikings. A scholar in exile at the Carolingian court schools, according to a later account he ended his life as an abbot in England, where he had been asked to help organize what became Oxford. This study seeks to place his work in the context of early Irish monastic learning, which formed the background of his education, as well as relate it to a primary influence on his writing, namely the works of St. Maximus the Confessor. As one of the few remaining scholars in the West with an expert knowledge of Greek in his day, Eriugena's work engaged the writings of Greek Fathers such as St. Maximus, St. Dionysius, and the Cappadocians, and sought to synthesize them with Latin works of Blessed Augustine influential in the West. The result was a philosophical approach to Nature that was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and that often has been viewed similarly as pantheistic and proto-Scholastic by modern Orthodox scholars. However, conventional modern scholarship on Eriugena arguably reflects earlier Catholic interpretations that did not fully take into account both his Irish context and the relationship of his work to that of the Confessor. This study explores both those contexts in concluding that while Eriugena is best not considered a Church Father (given our ignorance of his life and the ambiguities of his writing), nonetheless he can be recognized as an early Irish Christian philosopher whose work offers a bridge of sorts between Western intellectualism today and the Orthodox Church.

Introduction

St. Patricius or Patrick of Ireland is among the newly officially recognized saints of the pre-Schism West venerated by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church this year (following the lead decades ago of St. John Maximovich in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia). The presence of this fifth-century saint in the annals of the Church is indicated near our home in central Pennsylvania by a wall fresco of saints including him at the Greek Agia Skepi Women's Monastery in the western Poconos. Such recognition today of the original apostolic unity and catholicity of the Orthodox Church before the mid-eleventh century provides an opportune time for also a scholarly reconsideration of the work of the most prominent pre-Schism Irish Christian theological philosopher, John Scottus Eriugena, in terms of its standing (or not) among the patristic writings of the Church. This will involve re-examining assumptions and possibly bias related to Eriugena's work, as it has been read across centuries in the wake of the Great Schism between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism.

Eriugena, a ninth-century philosopher who wrote mainly in Latin, has long been regarded as an out rider of medieval Christian thinking in the Latin West. His work was banned by the post-Schism Roman Catholic Church, and more recently often has been categorized by scholars as a prototype of Catholic Scholastic thinking with a pantheistic aspect. In circles of Anglophone Orthodox scholarship, Eriugena's work has either been ignored or dismissed as Augustinian Neo-Platonist, as if at best perhaps a kind of Latin version of Christian philosophical speculation akin to the works of the Byzantine Psellos or, more heretically, of Plethon. The twentieth-century Orthodox scholar Vladimir Lossky wrote that, "Eriugena did not grasp the distinction between the essence and the energies; on this point he remained faithful to Augustinianism, and was therefore unable to

identify the ideas with God's creative acts of will."[1] Fr. John Meyendorff concluded, "Eriugena uses the eastern patristic tradition [to] fit into his own original philosophical system…. If Eriugena had had broader access to the theology of the Cappadocian fathers, he would have experienced more difficulty in using them as he did, within an exclusively Neoplatonic—and therefore somewhat biased—context."[2] The Lutheran-turned-Orthodox historian Jaroslav Pelikan added somewhat non-committally but skeptically that "most scholars would perhaps agree" with the correctness of Eriugena's ninth-century critics of his Orthodoxy.[3]

Yet much of Eriugena's master work the *Periphyseon* emerges from his engagement through translation and commentary with Greek Church Fathers, especially St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Dionysius the Areopagite. Significant new scholarship on St. Maximus the Confessor's cosmology and anthropology by Orthodox Christian researchers and others in the past two decades affords new light on that saint's writings, and indirectly on their possible relation to Eriugena's, as do the completion of scholarly editions and translations of key works by both writers.[4] And as one of the few and probably the pre-eminent scholar of Greek in Latin Christendom during the ninth century, and perhaps the last prominent Irish scholar in the wake of Viking disruptions of Irish monastic communities, Eriugena's work (which sought to meld aspects of Augustine's thought with

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[1] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 1944, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 96

[2] Fr. John Meyendorff, "Remarks on Eastern Patristic Thought in John Scottus Eriugena," in *Eriugena East and West, Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies Chicago and Notre Dame 18-20 October 1991*, ed. Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten (Notre Dame, IN: University of Norte Dame Press, 1994), 51-68, at 58-59.

[3] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 105.

[4] Especially referred to for this study among secondary sources are *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor* by Melchisedec Törönen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); David Bradshaw, ed., *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

the Greek fathers) was subject to longstanding misunderstanding in the West. Misreading emerged from a lack of understanding of the Greek Fathers and access to their work, and this continued into more secular modern Western scholarship often. Judgments of later Catholic medieval scholarship and a lack of understanding of Eriugena's Hiberno-Latin milieu in the modern world of Orthodox scholarship arguably have contributed to the at-best tepid reception of his work in modern Orthodox studies. But although Eriugena was a teacher and scholar in the schools of Carolingian Frankia at a time of its divergence from the Greek East, at the same time his writing on crucial issues of division tended toward the Greek position, while his likely education in Irish monastic schools placed him close to a circle of Western Christian thinking foundationally shaped by desert monastic influences from the East. In addition, according to a later Latin chronicler, in an account often dismissed, but still much closer to the ninth century than modern dismissals, he ended his years as abbot of a monastery in England near Wales, after having helped to organize what became Oxford University.[5]

A key element of what has been considered aberrantly Scholastic, and thus Roman Catholic, from an Orthodox standpoint in Eriugena's broad overview of nature in his *Periphyseon* relates to the form of his writing: His comprehensive and voluminous style and emphasis on dialectic (albeit in an often non-linear and apophatic way). However, his comprehensive approach actually parallels in encyclopedic form some tendencies in pre-Schism Byzantine Greek writings by St. Photios the Great and earlier St. John Damascene's great synthesis of Orthodox teaching, the latter's form sometimes compared to Western Scholastic writings, although not in content.[6] The key difference

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[5] John J. O'Meara, "Introduction," in Eriugena, *Periphyseon (Division of Nature)*, trans. I.P. Sheldon-Williams and John O'Meara (Toronto: Bellarmin, and Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987), 11-21 at 21.

[6] On St. Photios the Great and the significance of his scholarly writing philosophically, see B.N. Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine Tradition*, ed. and trans. Protopresbyter George Dion. Dragas (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2007), 239-243. On the work of St.

from medieval Western Scholastic writing in the works of Sts. Photios and the Damascene is the degree to which their epistemology is based in the experiential, ascetic, liturgical, and apophatic aspects of Orthodox theology, in short the noetic life of the Church, as distinct from the rationalism of St. Thomas Aquinas and university Scholastic theology as it emerged in a schismatic West, with philosophy becoming predominate over theology.

This study seeks to examine the extent to which Eriugena's writing also can be considered sufficiently integrated with the epistemology, spirit, and doctrine of the writings of the Greek fathers to be re-read as within the Orthodox *phronema* or mindset, and thus whether or not he can be re-considered as in effect writing in the Orthodox Holy Tradition as the last of the Latin fathers, rather than as an heretical progenitor of Latin Scholasticism. In the process, this study will focus on the specific case study of Eriugena's discussion of the primordial causes, theophianies, and "hidden folds of nature," in relation to St. Maximus the Confessor's discussion of *logoi* in his *Ambigua*, and Orthodox theology of the uncreated energies of God and the Trinity, recognized by both writers without the Western *filioque* (which both, however, also considered acceptable in terms of an Orthodox sense of *per filio*).[7] First, Eriugena's work will be contextualized to indicate its parallels with Orthodox Tradition in the Greek *oikumene* of long Late Antiquity, and then in the context of the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor, which so influenced him.

John Damascene in a scholarly philosophical context, see Basil Tatakis, *Byzantine Philosophy*, trans. Nicholas J. Moutafakis (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003), 80-99.

[7] Quotatons from Eriugena's work will be from Eriugena, *Periphyseon (Division of Nature)*, trans. I.P. Sheldon-Williams and John O'Meara (Toronto: Bellarmin, and Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987, and abbreviated PP. The original Latin text referenced from Migne's Patrologia Latina 122 (PL) is found in the best current edition in five volumes published in the Corpus Christianorum Continuation Mediaevalis series, 161-165 (Turnhout: Brepols,1996-2003), edited by Edouard Jeaunneau. Quotations from St. Maximus' work will be from *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vols 1 and 2, ed. and trans. Nicholas Constas (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), which includes both Greek and English texts.

1. Irish Contexts and Byzantine Affinities

Understanding the Irish context of Eriugena's work can help explain its affinities to Greek patristics and Byzantine culture, through the background of Irish monasticism. Recent historical commentary has suggested that western Britain, from whence Ireland was colonized (as embodied in the figure of St. Patrick) was an unusual region of the West in displaying continuity of civic culture from Roman times comparable to the Byzantine world.[8] Irish monasticism in its formative centuries before the Great Schism has been paralleled with desert monasticism in the East, and indeed Irish monastic writers used the Latin term for desert, *desertum*, to describe the ocean in which early Irish saints often traveled and near which island or coastal monasteries were located, in a parallel way to associations of forest and desert in Russian monasticism.[9]

The three names by which Eriugena is known indicate his Irish background: "John the Irishman Irish-born" they mean literally. Glosses in early Irish also suggest his educational background in Irish monastic schools and scriptoria of the early ninth century, a time when Ireland had a reputation for educational prowess in the Christian West, and before the emergence of Western university-based Scholasticism. John J. Contreni and Pádraig P. Ó Néill also have explored biblical glosses with Old Irish vocabulary that they attribute to Eriugena's earlier career before 860, as expressing his relationship with ninth-century Irish literary culture.[10] Of the 660 glosses now attributed to Eriugena, 79 use Old Irish. Contreni and Ó Néill also note how Latin learning in

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[8] Kenneth R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300-800* (Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1994), 257.

[9] Fr. Dr. Gregory Telepneff has outlined parallels and probable connections between early Irish monasticism and Byzantine monasticism in his booklet *The Egyptian Desert in the Irish Bogs: The Byzantine Character of Early Celtic Monasticism*, 2d. ed.(Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2002).

[10] John J .Contreni and Pádraig P. Ó Néill, *Glossae Divinae Historiae, The Biblical Glosses of John Scottus Eriugena* (Sismel, 1997). Their conclusions on the authorship of the glosses can be found on pp. 17-29. I am also indebted here to their section on the Irish backgrounds of the glosses, especially on pp. 50-55.

Ireland by Eriugena's lifetime suffered from a decreasing number of educational centers and a turn toward the vernacular, compared to its earlier golden age. Still, thorough training in Latin and scriptural exegesis (not to mention the possibility of Greek) should still have been available to Eriugena in Ireland. Later accounts place him at the end of his life as a monastic abbot, and the role of a tonsured monk or cleric would be a common profile for someone with such learning from Ireland. However, he is more certainly known to have taught during his prime in Carolingian court schools, and Irish monastic communities also showed a strong emphasis on lay "paramonasticism," associated with *peregrini* or exile scholars.

Eriugena's "familiarity with rare and unusual sources" in writings across his career is seen in the glosses, reflecting a tendency of early Christian Irish scholarship as well.[11] Scholars observe that Irish learning included an unusual array of cosmopolitan sources for the early medieval West, a veritable bibliographic "hall closet."[12] Evidence of Greek sources in the glosses suggests that "John Scottus began his study of Greek and of Greek authors at the very beginning of his teaching career."[13] Most Carolingian-era scholars of Greek had Irish educational backgrounds, with evidence suggesting at least some study of Greek in early Irish contexts.[14]

Contreni and O'Néill also note how the collection of glosses reflects a rich early medieval tradition of glossing Scripture and other Latin works that arguably was most developed in Irish contexts in the West. Based on evidence from extant texts, early Irish biblical exegesis emerged in

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[11] John J. Contreni and Pádraig P. Ó Néill, *Glossae Divinae Historiae*, p. 29.
[12] Peter Jeffery, "Eastern and Western Elements in the Irish Monastic Prayer of the Hours," in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages*, ed. Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99-143, at 100; see also the first chapter of Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[13] Contreni and Ó Néill, 35.
[14] Pádraig Moran, "Greek in Early Medieval Ireland," in *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*, ed. Alex Mullen and Patrick James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 172-192, discusses evidence of Greek study in early Ireland, including some adaptive reuse of earlier bilingual Greek-Latin approaches.

the mid-seventh century in Latin biblical commentaries that continued to be used into the ninth century. These may well have formed a primary background to Eriugena's work, which culminates in the *Periphyseon* as an exegesis of the account of the days of creation in Genesis, a focus also of earlier Irish exegesis, as well as originally in Greek in St. Basil the Great's classic fourth-century *Hexaemeron*.

Irish scholarly backgrounds to Eriugena's work include the presence of Irish *peregrini* ("aliens" or "exiles") on the Continent in Eriugena's day and before. From the end of the eighth to the mid-tenth centuries, some 40 such Irishmen can be identified on the Continent from extant sources, and Irish educational influence was expressed at some 117 sites on the European mainland, not including Charles the Bald's *hospitalia Scottorum*, so the number of Irish *peregrini* must have been considerably larger than the surviving names would indicate.[15] At home during Eriugena"s *floruit*, Irish learning seems to have become more focused on fewer centers, such as Kildare, Clonmacnoise, Armagh, and Bangor. Viking attacks probably contributed to the decline of a larger network of scriptoria in Ireland, and prompted an increase in *peregrini*, whose presence outside Ireland also drew on an early Irish tradition of ascetic exile as a form of ascesis. The rise of the monastic *Céli Dé* ("clients of God") movement in the late eighth and early ninth centuries in Ireland involved a strengthening of ascetic practice, including laity associated with monasteries, and perhaps a relative decline in scholarship. But those developments also could have heightened the emphasis on apophaticism seen in Eriugena's biblical exegesis, culminating in his *Periphyseon*.[16]

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[15] John J. Contreni, "The Irish Contribution to the European Classroom," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies Held at Oxford from 10th to 15th July, 1983* (Oxford, 1986), 79-80. See also T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 592.

[16] On the monastic reform movement in relation to early Irish ascetic practice and notions of exile, see Chapter 6 of my *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). See also Westley Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2006).

His Irish glosses differ from those in Latin in the same manuscripts, primarily because of their explanation of the Old Testament in Irish terms, and they could have been composed in Ireland, or at least for an expatriate Irish community of students on the Continent. Yet because Old Irish was a standardized monastic literary language, the use of vernacular in the glosses does not reveal an exact geography or chronology for his early career. Indeed, in certain respects, Eriugena's Irish glosses are not typical of the extensive corpus of Irish exegesis, and may in part reflect possible early encounters with Carolingian learning as well. Yet his glosses on the Psalms in their terminology echo specific aspects of Irish exegesis from the period, reflecting the significance of the Psalter in monastic educational contexts in Ireland.[17] Another specific parallel to Irish learning, as documented by Contreni and Ó Néill, lies in the glosses' emphasis on "literal and practical approach to the study of the Pentateuch cultivated in the Irish schools," in their interest in material aspects of Old Testament culture, and in drawing parallels with early medieval Irish life. Such an Antiochene-style literal approach to exegesis, with its metonymic emphasis, extends to the emphasis in the Old Irish glosses on etymology, expressing a melding of Irish and biblical learning with iconographic and hesychastic overtones reflective of early Irish Christian ascetic focus. This is also seen in his treatment of the divine names later in the *Periphyseon*, which will be commented on further below.

Eriugena's scholarly career centered on the Frankish court of Charles the Bald and related intellectual and ecclesiastical networks. But both his Irish background and his *floruit* still place him firmly in an epoch before the emergence of what one historical survey has called a different "matrix of mentality and demography" that emerged in high medieval Latin Europe in the eleventh century, an era that also marked more definite divisions between the Eastern and Western churches. At that later time of the Great Schism, patristic scholar Andrew Louth describes the emergence of large-scale changes in European notions of the body, nature, and individual identity, which wrought a

[17] Contreni and Ó Néill, 52, 55.

transition from a sense of the body as engaged with the cosmos, to the body as expressing an inner reality of self.[18] Contreni and Ó Néill conclude that Eriugena's work, apart from aspects of the glosses earlier in his career, "does not display the characteristics of Irish scholarship which regularly occur in the writings of other, contemporary Irish *peregrini* on the continent."[19] But his *Periphyseon* can in its overall focus and concerns be contextualized in early Christian Irish writings on the six days of Creation, and his writings include stands for Orthodox doctrine of synergy against the development of Augustinian ideas of predestination, as well as expressing his preference for not including the *filioque* in the Symbol of Faith or Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as it was being revised in the West.

Early Irish monastic literary culture (which extended around Western Europe through the influence of *peregrini* including scholars such as Eriugena) also showed a distinctive concern with relating biblical and "natural" or indigenous modes of meaning, as expressed in canons and secular laws, in interest in subjects such as meteorology and astronomical cycles, and in hagiography, histories, place-name narratives, and genealogies often shaping native lore as type of indigenous Old Testament. That concern also expressed itself in relating the natural physical world to the biblical, particularly in the form of exegesis termed hexaemeral, focusing on the six days of Creation as described in Genesis (including also explication of the Fall). Eriugena's *Periphyseon* can be read as the culminating philosophical work in that early Irish genre. Both its similarities and differences from

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[18] Felipe Fernández-Armesto and James Muldoon use the section heading "The Matrix: Mentality and Demography" in their collection to describe the rise of the high medieval Latin West in the eleventh century and onward: *Internal Colonization in Medieval Europe*, the second volume in their series *The Expansion of Latin Europe, 1000-1500* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2008). On changing cultural focus on identity and body in the West with the emergence of Scholasticism, see Fr. Andrew Louth, "The Body in Western Catholic Christianity," in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 111-130.

[19] Contreni and Ó Néill,, 50.

earlier Irish hexaemeral writings can be understood in contexts of early Irish monastic literary culture. As the historian Michael Richter observed,

> The concept of the "natural good" in the Irish laws and hagiographical works was not invented by Irish scholars; instead a theological issue of considerable importance which had been discussed widely in the Mediterranean world of late antiquity had found its way to Ireland, and the position on this issue that was accepted by scholars of various sorts of outlook was one which approved of the concept of the 'naturally good.' It appears as firmly established in the late seventh century and had most likely been absorbed considerably earlier. If the Irish Christian teachers had had a choice between Augustine and others, they chose the others.[20]

The Eriugenist Dermot Moran has noted how John Scottus' work as "an Irish scholar living in France and an enthusiastic student of Byzantine Christianity" linked Latin and Greek learning, and there were reasons in Irish literary contexts for his affinity for such synthesis.[21] One was the early Irish literary interest in the "naturally good" noted by Richter, which perhaps reflected but certainly would be receptive to a non-Augustinian strain in monastic asceticism with origins in the Eastern Mediterranean, and its echoes in works of St. John Cassian, on which some early Irish penitential and monastic texts drew.[22]

The historian Cólman Etchingham describes how ascetic penitentialism in early Christian Ireland, exemplified by the Irish "colors of martyrdom," extended to laity "in a quasi- or

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[20] Michael Richter, *Ireland and her Neighbours in the Seventh Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 37.
[21] Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4.
[22] Cólman Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland AD 650 to 1000* (Naas, Ireland: Laigin Publications, 1999), 327; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "The historical and cultural background of the Book of Kells," in *The Book of Kells: Proceedings of a conference at Trinity College, Dublin, September 6-9, 1992*, ed. Felicity O'Mahony (Brookfield, VT: Scholar Press), 1-32, at 7, 11, and 14.

paramonasticism," with an emphasis on embodied transcendence, involving the original sense of *ascesis* as exercise or training.[23] This includes famous accounts of strict Irish ascetic discipline, such as hours spent in the cold ocean in prayer, modeling narratives of the Eastern desert fathers exemplified in Athanasius' *Vita* of St. Antony. As noted, the Latin *desertum* became a term used by the Irish for the sea, as well as for remote hermitages in bogs and on islands. Irish derivations of *desertum* became terms for monastic enclosures and solitary monastics.[24] Just as in Russia forests and islands became the Northern Thebaid (playing on the name of a desert region in Egypt), so too in Ireland the archipelago of ocean and islands in northwestern Europe became the desert. The architecture of early Irish monasteries, not looking inward to cloisters as in the Western High Middle Ages, but more outward oriented, amid a landscape filled with small churches that presumably would have had crowds outside for liturgies and feasts, and lay paramonastic households in outer circles of monastic centers, expressed a certain cosmic engagement akin to early desert monasticism, as in St. Antony's city in the desert. In this cultural world, anchorites according to some early Irish canons, "enjoyed the highest status, on a par with that of the bishop, the king, and other notables," paralleling the high moral standing of an Athonite *gerond* or Russian *staretz* in modern times, amid some fluidity between solitary and coenobitic practice within communities.[25]

> The historian Donnchadh Ó Corráin sums up the early Irish Church in this way:
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> There were worldly and opulent prince-abbots with aristocratic wives, great administrators and political clerics, rigorist anchorites like Colcu who gave most of his food to the poor because he doubted the purity of the monks who provided it, poor country parsons, and a

[23] Cólman Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland AD 650 to 1000*, 317. On the Irish "colors of martyrdom" and their cosmic connections, see my "The Greyest-Greenest-Bluest Eye: Colours of Martyrdom and Colours of the Winds as Iconographic Landscape," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* (Winter 2005): 31-66.
[24] Cólman Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland AD 650 to 1000*, 351, 359.
[25] Cólman Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland AD 650 to 1000*, 323.

> cultivated clergy that maintained a high level of scholarship, produced fine art, and a literature of distinction. The great monastery-towns that had deep pockets and high aspirations carried this cultural activity as long as they had the resources to do so. The Book of Kells is the finest monument to their kind.[26]

Such multiple overlapping hierarchies, entwined with native Irish social networks and cultural landscape, contextualizes an Irish interest in hexaemeral writing that included in the seventh-century cosmological texts, most notably *De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, by the Irish Augustine, and *De Ordine Creaturarum*.[27] Irish interest in exegesis of Genesis included relating it to syncretic Irish scholarship, as also seen in the poetic *Altus Prosator*, attributed to St. Columba in the sixth century, the tenth-century *Saltair na Rann*, and the eleventh-century mythic history of Ireland back to the creation, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*. More than a tenth of a large late-eighth-century compilation of exegesis on the Old Testament attributed to Irish sources focuses on the first three chapters of Genesis. As Martin McNamara noted, "it appears that the early Irish were particularly interested in the Book of Genesis, especially in chapters 1-3, and that they wrote extensively on it."[28]

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[26] Donnchadh O'Corrain, "The Historical and Cultural Background of the Book of Kells," 32.
[27] Augustinus Hibernicus (the Irish Augustine), *De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, PL 35, 2149-202; portions translated in John Carey, *King of Mysteries: Early Irish Religious Writings*, 2d ed. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000); Gerard MacGinty, "The treatise *De mirabilibus sacrae Scripturae*: critical edition, with introduction, English translation of the long recension, and some notes," 2 vols., unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Dublin: National University of Ireland, 1971). For an edited text and Spanish translation of the *Liber de Ordine*, see Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *Liber de ordine creaturarum, Un anemimo irlandés. Del siglo. VII* (Santiago de Compostela: Universitad de Santiago de Compostelo, 1972). Thanks to Marcus Ladd for sharing his translation with me. The definitive scholarly survey of both works and their place in early Irish literary culture is Marina Smyth's *Understanding the Universe in Seventh-Century Ireland* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1996), and for an important scholarly reflection on early Irish Christian cosmology see John Carey, *A Single Ray of the Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland* (Andover, MA, and Aberystwyth, UK: Celtic Studies Publications, 1999).
[28] Martin McNamara, "The Irish Tradition of Biblical Exegesis, AD 550-800," in *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics, Proceedings of the Ninth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies Held at Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, June 7-10, 1995* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1996), 25-51, at 28.

Indeed, the five-book *Periphyseon* focuses extensively on those sections of Genesis in a long section in Book Three, throughout Book Four, and in the opening of Book Five. Martin McNamara suggested a distinctively Irish emphasis on Antiochene-style literal interpretation, which he contrasted with Eriugena's famous image of the multi-colored peacock indicating variegated possibilities of interpreting scripture. But the *Periphyseon*'s spiritual commentary on the Creation remains connected with details from the text with a focus on connecting the spiritual and the natural as both relate to earthly experience.[29] As Eriugena writes,

> Far from anything preventing us, reason herself, in my opinion, if we could but listen to her more carefully, insists that we should understand the relation which exists between the Sacred Texts and reality. For there are many ways, indeed an infinite number, of interpreting the Scriptures, just as in one and the same feather of a peacock and even in a single small portion of the feather, we see a marvelously beautiful variety of innumerable colours. And this variety of interpretation is not contrary to nature, for this tangible earth and water are bodies composed of the qualities of the four elements: and they bring forth nothing of themselves and in spite of all appearance no natural species is born of them. No: it is by the operation of that Life Force which is called the nutritive, in accordance with the laws and principles which were implanted in those elements, that the potency of the seeds which they contain bursts forth from the secret recesses of creation, as far as it is permitted by the Divine Providence, through the genera and the forms into the different species of grasses, twigs, and animals: so that the coming into being of all things which appear to be born of earth and water originates from the same source when the elements themselves have issued forth into their natural species and qualities and quantities. For there is a most general nature

[29] Martin McNamara, "The Irish Tradition of Biblical Exegesis," 48.

> in which all things participate, which is created by the One Universal Principle. And from this nature, as from a most ample fountain, are derived streams, so to speak; and they gush forth in a variety of individual forms through the hidden channels of corporeal creation. For the potency which I have mentioned, coming forth from the hidden places of nature through the various seeds, first declares itself in those seeds, and then mixed with various fluids pullulates into the distinct species of the sensibles.[30]

This iconographic-style approach to Nature recognizes it as both that which is and that which is not, as Eriugena opens the *Periphyseon* in apophatic terms. In the opening he seeks simultaneously to describe the integrated material and immaterial (or meaningful but unobjectifiable) aspects of Nature: "Nature, then, is the general name, as we said, for all things, for those that are and those that are not."[31]

The *Periphyseon*'s frequent references to life emerging in the "secret folds of nature" (*in secretissimis naturae sinibus*), or similar phrases, are its most important connection to the best known of its predecessors in the genre of Irish hexaemeral exegesis, the seventh-century *De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae*, by a writer known as the Irish Augustine or Augustinus Hibernicus. *De Mirabilibus* describes how we should approach natural explanations of biblical miracles from the standpoint of "unformed matter," *ex informi materia*, so that

> even if we should see something new appear among creatures, God, it must be realized, does not create there a new nature, but governs one made long ago; but he, who created, is so

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[30] PP 749 C. Sheldon-Williams amd O'Meara, 390, as corrected in *Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae) Liber Quartus*, ed. Édouard A. Jeauneau, trans. John J. O'Meara and I.P. Sheldon-Williams (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1995), 285, note 29.
[31] PP I, 441 A. Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 25.

> powerful in the governing of his creation, that he seems, as it were, to create a new nature, when from the secret depths of a nature he brings forth what was hidden within it.[32]

In explicating the naturalness of the burning bush seen by Moses, for example, the Irish Augustine offers different possibilities, including a kind of bush that naturally burns but is not consumed, but adds,

> Or assuredly, in that bush that fire seen was not the enemy of trees, but rather that fire was there of which it is said: He makes his angels spirits and his ministers a burning fire. The fire in the bush therefore is proved to be incorporeal, which while it was shown to a corporeal man had necessarily to be shown in some bodily material.

In this the Irish Augustine's exegesis seems to include ideas related to the *logoi* or uncreated energies explicated by Maximus the Confessor in his *Ambigua to John*, translated by Eriugena. Indeed, the earlier Irish writer's emphasis on a higher and lower *ratio* to explain the naturalness of miracles, mirrors the Greek *logoi* in Maximus, in the sense of the higher ratio being also a deeper sense of transformative divine reality in Nature, akin in certain respects to Eriugena's primordial causes.[33] Both the *De Mirabilibus* and *Liber de Ordine*, and then the *Periphyseon*, emphasize the potential future transfiguration of the world at the time of bodily resurrection and the return of Christ, rather than its destruction, suggesting the theophanic nature of creation, an iconographic cosmology related to transfigurative desert ascetic theology, or *theosis*. Both Eriugena and Augustinus Hibernicus drew on

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[32] Gerard MacGinty, trans. and ed., "The treatise *De mirabilibus sacrae Scripturae*," vol. 3, 7-7a, ll.10-11, and 8-9a. Of many references to the secret folds of Nature in the *Periphyseon*, see for example PP 444 C.

[33] As in, for example, PP 690C and D. Eriugena did describe the primordial causes as created, perhaps following a developing Western articulation of created grace arcing from Augustine to Aquinas and beyond, yet also indicated that they could be considered in God, and thus divine, depending on one's perspective. They seem in his synthesis of Latin and Greek hexaemeral writings to indicate a dynamic spectrum of theophanies as forming and energizing creation, which Maximus indicated by associating the *logoi* with energies and the divine Logos in his *Ambigua to John*, *Ambigua* 7 and 22, explored further in the next section. See PP 640C and D, and PP 888A, also PP 448A and B.

Augustine's Latin hexaemeral work, and yet arguably departed from it in ways that seemed to parallel emphases of Greek and Syriac patristic writings. The Celticist John Carey argues that, unlike Augustine, Augustinus Hibernicus indicates "there is no gap—as there sometimes seems to be for Saint Augustine—between a thing's interior essence and its phenomenal character," and seeks to prove the miraculous to be harmonious with nature.[34] The same could be said of Eriugena's emphases in the *Periphyseon* in their difference from what become rationalistic Scholasticism in the West.

Maximus' adaptation of the Christian Dionysius' apophatic cosmic hierarchy, by which Dionysius' divine willings became Maximus' *logoi*, seems to have enabled Eriugena to articulate a philosophy of Nature drawing also on his own educational background in the Irish ascetic sense of the "naturally good." Dionysius' view of the importance of hierarchy, in experiencing God through symbols in creation, related to the continuum of primordial causes, theophanies, and physical effects in Eriugena's philosophy, which in turn involves an iconographic sense of creation. In this way the detailed examination of the Genesis creation account in the last part of Book Three, throughout Book Four, and at the start of Book Five in the *Periphyseon*, echoes the earlier Irish hexaemeral tradition and its cosmopolitan sources. Eriugena's more spiritual approach emerges from his detailed explication of place and names in Book One, which reflects Maximus' sense in the seventh century of *logoi* as metonymic in both shaping and redeeming Creation. For Eriugena, the primordial causes and names are incarnational metaphoric definitions of God that are also places and metonymic. Paradise is both a place and human nature in the image of God. This cosmology exemplifies the incarnational connection between ascetic practices of desert monasticism in early Christian Irish literary culture and the Eastern Mediterranean, and the embodied experience of the "naturally good" in Irish hexaemeral tradition: The Logos embodied as *logoi*, and vice versa in terms of the energies

[34] John Carey, *A Single Ray of the Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland*, 50.

but not the Essence of God, as explicated by Maximus and Eriugena. The eminent Christian bioethicist H. Tristram Engelhardt has glossed an ascetic text from St. Basil of Caesarea (whose work is reflected in Irish hexaemeral tradition, including the *Periphyseon*) on this "desert" sense of the "naturally good" thus: "Natural law is, after all, the spark of God's love in our nature, not the biological state of affairs we find in broken nature. Natural law is not an objective external constraint, but the will of the living God experienced in our conscience…. Traditional Christians recognize the reference environment for humans to be Eden, and the goal of all adaptation to be the pursuit of holiness."[35]

Ó Corráin's earlier cited reference to the Book of Kells (c. 800) as exemplifying Irish monastic cultural achievement can help shed light on Maximus the Confessor's *logoi* as a source for John Scottus' adaptation of the Irish hexaemeral tradition, and his cosmopolitan "Irishness." The *chi-rho* page in Kells shows the thickening of word into image celebrated by Byzantine iconographic theology, and the Irish book also tellingly includes what some consider to be the oldest extant depiction of the Mother of God in Byzantine form in the West. St. John Cassian's writings, articulating the influence of desert asceticism on the early medieval Christian West, of which Ireland was a leading culture, emphasize the link between word-names and meditative embodied prayer, which in the East became known as hesychasm.

Scholarship contextualizing Eriugena more fully in Latin medieval intellectual history understandably has traced reception of his writings in later Western Scholasticism and mysticism. But placing Eriugena also in early Irish contexts can help balance such assessments with an understanding of his writing as pre-Scholastic, in dialogue with a Christian culture still (despite disruptions) interweaving both West and East. A sense of early Irish Christian culture's emphases on

[35] H. Tristram Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics* (Beverly, MA: M&M Scrivener, 2000) 246-247.

cosmic "desert" asceticism relates to what become more fully articulated later in hesychasm, while retrospectively appearing to be distinctive in Irish contexts in the West.[36] Eriugena's discussion of the divine names and place in the *Periphyseon* expresses broad but significant parallels both to early Irish accounts of embodied asceticism and to Byzantine hesychasm. The overlap between the two can be glimpsed not only in Irish penitential texts and saints' Lives, but also in the text of the Irish embodied "colors of martyrdom," and the relation between what John Wortley has described of meditative chant-prayer among desert ascetics of the Eastern Mediterranean, and John Cassian's influential articulation of psychosomatic meditative prayer, adapted from Eastern sources.[37] These practices are perhaps best known today in accounts of the Jesus Prayer.[38]

In discussing etymology of the Greek name for God, Eriugena discusses it as being derived from roots meaning both "to see" and "to run," indicating simultaneous rest and motion. Such a term becomes experienced as a mode that is also a theophany, in his view.[39] Speaking of the metaphoric nature of that naming, he writes, "Therefore these names, like many similar ones also, are transferred from the creature by a kind of divine metaphor to the Creator." Then, following up

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[36] On hesychasm, see *The Philokalia; The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*, vol. 4, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1998). Use of the name of God in hesychastic prayer was also involved in early twentieth-century controversy over alleged heresy of "name-worshipping." For different views of this, see Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, *Icons and the Name of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012); and Loren Graham and Jean-Michel Kantor, *Naming Infinity: A True Story of Religious Mysticism and Mathematical Creativity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

[37] On the embodied cosmic aspects of the "colors of martyrdom," see Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape*, 97-110. Also see John Wortley, "How the Desert Fathers 'Meditated,'" *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 46 (2006): 315-328; and Cassian's discussion of embodied prayer in his ninth and tenth *Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).

[38] On the Jesus Prayer, see the edition of *The Way of the Pilgrim*, entitled *The Pilgrim's Tale*, ed. Aleksei Pentkovsky, trans. T. Allan Smith (New York: Paulist Press, 1999). Eriugena's discussion of proper names for God, beyond the metaphoric, in an apophatic sense, could be taken as anticipating some of the later literature on the Jesus Prayer as invoking God's incarnational yet transcendent name (PP I, 460 D).

[39] PP I, 446 C and D.

on the discussion of rest and motion, he concludes that, as with the physical formation of written and audible words, Divine Nature,

> although it creates all things and cannot be created by anything, is in an admirable manner created in all things which take their being from it; so that, as the intelligence of the mind or its purpose or its intention or however this first and innermost motion of ours may be called, having, as we said, entered upon thought and received the forms of certain phantasies, and having then proceeded into the symbols of sounds or the signs of sensible motions, is not inappropriately said to become—for, being in itself, without any sensible form, it becomes formed in fantasies—, so the Divine Essence which when it subsists by itself surpasses every intellect is correctly said to be created in those things which are made by itself and through itself and in itself [and for itself], so that in them either by the intellect, if they are only intelligible, or by the sense, if they are visible, it comes to be known by those who investigate it in the right spirit.[40]

This apophatic discourse will be clarified in the next section in the context of writings by St. Maximus the Confessor. Indeed, Eriugena identifies names of God with the divine and cosmic continuum of primordial causes, theophanies, and material effects, parallel to Maximus' *logoi* and Dionysius' willings in divine and cosmic hierarchy—the *logoi* being associated by Maximus also with energies, known as the uncreated energies in Byzantine theology and hesychasm. Theophanies in creation for Eriugena (reflecting St. Maximus) are images of eternal causes, and are identified with names or words, which iconographically can be experienced as thickening into images, as embodied virtues and categories of place.[41] The ultimate iconic but real symbol, the names of the Trinity, thus

[40] PP 453B, 454 C and D. Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 39-41.
[41] PP 448B.

expresses hypostatic personhood rather than the Trinity's essential nature.[42] Hesychasm approaches this through the name of the Incarnate Christ

St. Basil the Great taught a synergy of grace and asceticism, enkindling the spark of divine love within, even as the Irish wrote of ascetics as kindled sparks, *oíbelteóir*, in effect, of the divine energies, the *logoi* or theophanic names.[43] One meaning of *logos*, "harmony," undergirds Eriugena's discussion of connections of a musical sense of the cosmos, linking natural law and biblical principle, by evoking "the harmony of nature."[44] Eriugena even related this energy-harmony, in good Irish scholarly fashion, to the seven liberal arts themselves as a kind of quasi-hesychastic hierarchy of *logoi*, but in a more apophatic and experiential way than later Western Scholasticism.[45] There is always an incarnational context to his discussion. He identifies place with definition and with naming, and place also with metonomy or physically based metaphor, paradoxically incorporeal and transfigurative at the same time, symbolically embodied and not simply materialistic but meaningful.[46] He relates the similar trope of synecdoche to scriptural word-images entwined with reality, echoing the Incarnation.[47] Sounding like an early source for Heidegger, as the modern philosopher Dermot Moran's studies have noted, or an early ecosemiotician, Eriugena concludes that a merely objectified sense of world is not a place. He distinguishes world from earth, and place

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[42] PP 447A.
[43] St. Basil, *Ascetical Works*, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 9, trans. Sr. M. Monica Wagner (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), p. 233 (response to Question 2 in The Long Rules).
[44] PP 637A, and 638D; PP 722 C.
[45] PP 486B, C, and D, 521B. See also PP 508D and 509A. Eriugena's sense of reason trumping authority is related to the former's experientially embodied nature; PP 513 B.
[46] Place occupies a large swathe of the discussion in Book One of the *Periphyseon*. On place as definition, see for example PP 485C and D, 486A. On place and metonymy, see PP 480B and C.
[47] PP 559 A; PP 859C.

from a merely materialistic sense of body. The latter for him would parallel binarized or objectifying terminology, rather than a relational and iconographic cosmic rhetoric of *theosis*.[48]

This metonymic aspect of naming as place relates to the theophanic hierarchy of St. Dionysius, and through that to ascetic practice paralleling hesychasm, but also to early Irish literary emphases on place-name lore and on overlay landscape (the "Otherworld" in early Irish and Welsh literatures). Book One of the *Periphyseon* describes proper nature as a container, which lends its name to that which is contained, from the perspective of that which is contained. But the proper nature as essence, ultimately as God, paradoxically remains beyond naming or essentializing. What could be called a resulting hierarchy of names indicates the simultaneous cataphatic and apophatic approaches that Eriugena describes, following Sts. Dionysius and Maximus, and paralleling the Christian ascetic experience of *synergeia* between grace and works evident in St. John Cassian's writings and in both early Irish and Byzantine monasticism. Names proceed from embodied points of view but meld into the hierarchy of theophanies and causes, and vice versa, integrate both subject and what is predicated of a subject.[49] Essential identity likewise is itself relational and not objectifiable.[50] This paradox of synergy somewhat approximates the logical mode of abduction (integrating deduction and induction in the "hunch") in Charles S. Peirce's philosophy of semiosis, a basis for ecosemiotics in environmental studies today.[51]

To review again the importance of early or "desert" ascetic monasticism to early medieval Ireland, the contemplative recluse or *oíbelteóir* ("spark of the contemplative life") was related in texts

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[48] See PP 478A and B, 479C, 480A. On Heidegger and Eriugena, see Dermot Moran, "'The Secret Folds of Nature': Eriugena's Expansive Concept of Nature," in *Re-Imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecosemiotics*, ed. Alfred Kentigern Siewers (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 109-126. On non-binarized or relational terminology, see PP I 459D.
[49] PP 467A, 470D. PP 704B.
[50] PP 490A.
[51] On Peirce, ecosemiotics, and connections to patristic and early Irish Christian cosmology, see the Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Re-Imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecosemiotics*, ed. Alfred Kentigern Siewers (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 1-44, 45-78.

to the *déorad Dé* or "exile of God," also a type of contemplative anchorite or hermit. The status of the *oíbelteóir* involved being seen as equipped for miracles and to act as a judge, as a holy elder.[52] Latin learning in early Irish monasticism seems to have been associated with the monastic training and discipline appropriate for the "exile of God" or ascetic solitary, distinguished from the *oíbelteóir* type, perhaps indicating for the latter the respected higher condition of what in the Eastern Christian tradition would come to be known as a noetic holiness of experience. Irish terminology for the "exile of God" seemed to parallel the Latin *peregrinus*, used in Eriugena's era of learned Irish Christian exiles on the continent, such as himself.[53] Nevertheless, based on Etchingham's careful study, there seems to have been a relation between both types of "exile," and the connection may lie partly in the high level of preparation expected to be a successful contemplative monk. Such could be attached to larger communities, by the early eighth century at least reflected "an amalgam of eremetic ideals and cenobitic [community] practice."[54] There seems to have been a diversity and fluidity in early Irish monasticism between solitary and community practice, the latter including temporary solitary retreat, and also pastoral ministry including work with the sick, which probably constituted the *Céli Dé* movement.[55]

Eriugena's work engages the Dionysian sense of hierarchy as energy, and the role of experiential and embodied *theoria* in realizing one's self in relationship within cosmic and ultimately divine hierarchy. This meshes with Maximus' adaptation of the Dionysian hierarchy and *apophasis* in the *logoi* that are both divine words and harmonies, spanning the physical and the spiritual in embodied transcendence. Thus Eriugena's discussion of the divine names, the primordial causes, and place, merge. His Nature is an *energeia entis* not a Scholastic *analogia entis*. For Eriugena, Creation

[52] Etchingham, 329-331.
[53] Etchingham, 361.
[54] Etchingham, 332, 347.
[55] Etchingham, 351, note 1; 359 and 341.

reflects his synthesis of Greek Christian cosmology with Irish desert ascetic roots. This distinctive sense of Nature also found textual expression in the contemporary literature of the native Irish "Otherworld" and its echoes in Welsh and Middle English literatures. I have examined that literary tradition elsewhere, which finds later parallels in Dostoevsky's "fantasy realism" and the otherworldly relations with the earth described by Elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*.[56]

2. St. Maximus' *logoi* and Eriugena's primordial causes

Having established Irish contexts and Byzantine affinities to Eriugena's work, this final section will seek to address the main (related) two reasons that his work has been called into question as to whether it should have a place in the patristic corpus: Alleged pantheism in his *Periphyseon*, and, related to this, whether or not his discussion of "primordial causes," theophanies, and the "secret folds of nature" in the same work is reconcilable with the Orthodox theology of the uncreated energies of God (as it was fully articulated later by St. Simeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory Palamas, among others). The comparison of these terms in Eriugena's writing with St. Maximos the Confessor's earlier discussion of the *logoi* (part of Eriugena's translation work) and their relation to energies, in the Ambigua and in recent scholarship, will form the basis for this analysis.

Consideration of the Confessor's writings, influential on Eriugena, provide a necessary foreground for the comparison, chronologically and genealogically, but also as a basis for considering the Orthodoxy of the latter's *Periphyseon*. As a recent editor and translator of his work, Nicholas Constas, has noted of the seventh-century Greek Church Father, "so thoroughly did his voice come to resound throughout the Byzantine theological tradition that it is not possible to trace the subsequent history of Orthodox Christianity without knowledge of his work," noting the

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[56] Alfred K. Siewers, "The Green Otherworlds of Early Medieval Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31-45.

vindication of the saint's theology by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681).[57] His *Ambigua* ("Difficulties") sought to elucidate obscure passages in fourth-century sermons of St. Gregory the Theologian, in question and answer form, in two parts, the earlier "Ambigua to John" (c. 628-630), which Eriugena translated, including *Ambigua* 6-71, and the "Ambigua to Thomas," *Ambigua* 1-5, c. 634. The whole is described by Constas as a map of the experience of theosis, which demonstrates "that there can be no nature without its constitutive natural energy or activity."[58] This motion for the Confessor involves within the Logos, God, *logoi* (principles, words, harmonies, reasons, stories, purposes, modes, etc.—the translation into English of *logos* is complex) of beings, "which are like a field of manifestations emerging from and returning to the continuous background of God."[59] In the *logoi*, the Word is inscribed in both Creation and in Scripture.[60] They also are identified with "divine wills" (*Ambiguum* 7.24) and as will be discussed later complexly are associated or identified with the divine energies as well.

Much of Maxmus' discussion of the *logoi* is in *Ambiguum* 7. There he writes that "the many logoi are one Logos, seeing that all things are related to Him without being confused with Him, who is the essential and personally distinct Logos of God the Father" (7:15, 1077 C). "From all eternity, He contained within Himself the pre-existing logoi of creating beings. When, in His goodwill, He formed out of nothing the subtance of the visible and invisible worlds, He did so on the basis of these logoi" (7::16, 1080A). "A logos of human beings likewise preceded their creation….each of the intellective and rational beings, whether angels or men, insofar as it has been created in accordance with the logos that exists in and with God, is and is called a 'portion of God,' precisely because of that logos, which, as we said, preexists in God. If such a being moves according to its logos, it

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[57] Nicholas Constas, "Introduction," in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vols 1 and 2, ed. and trans. Nicholas Constas (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), vii-xxxii, at vii.
[58] Constas, vii, xxxii.
[59] Constas, xvii.
[60] Constas, xviii, and *Ambiguum* 45.2.

comes to be in God—in whom iits logos of being preexists—as its Origin and Cause" (7:16-17, 1080B-1080D). "For in their substance and formation all created things are positively defined by their own logoi, and by the logoi tha texist around them and which constitute their defining limits. When, however, we exclude the highest form of negative theology concerning the Logos—according to which the Logos is neither called, nor considered, nor is, in His entirety, anything that can be attributed to anything else…and is not participated in by any being whatsoever—when, I say, we set this way of thinking aside, the one Logos is many logoi and the many are One" (7:19-20, 1081B).

Then in a couple other of the *Ambigua* he also discusses *logoi* in relation to energy: "…when the intellect naturally apprehends all the logoi in beings and contemplates within them the infinite energies of God, it recognizes the differences of the divine energies it perceives to be multiple and—to speak truly—infinite…. God—who is truly none of the things that exist, and who, properly speaking, is all things, and at the same time beyond them—is present in the logos of each thing in itself, and in all the logoi together, according to which all things exist" (22:2, 1257A). "…He did not become man without the energy that is proper to human nature, for the principle [logos] of natural energy is what defines the essence of a thing, and as a rule characterizes the nature of every being in which it essentially inheres" (2:5, 1037C).

Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos wrote out summaries and notes from the spoken teaching of Fr. John Romanides that included commentary on St. Maximus' teaching about the *logoi*, which has bearing on Eriugena's *Periphyseon*: "Many Fathers, particularly St. Maximos the Confessor, when they refer to the sustaining, maintaining energy of God that is present in the whole of creation, mention the inner principles (*logoi*) of things." Those principles, Fr. Romanides taught, "are not the archetypes of the ideas, as the ancient philosophers asserted, but the relative and sustaining energy

of God."[61] For Augustine, illumination was the vision of archetypes in the essence of God, conceived with the brain, and not the unceasing remembrance of God in the heart in Orthodoxy. Fr. Romanides taught that the Fathers viewed the archetypes as formless, not the Platonic forms, whereas for Archetype they were the forms identical with the archetypes, the *rationes*. But in Orthodoxy, Fr. Romanides taught, the *logoi* are not archetypal forms but divine purposes, destinies, willings. Not archetypes for which created things and beings are analogous copies, the *logoi* "have no similarity at all with created things in patristic literature, and instead of natural laws in the Scholastic Roman Catholic sense there are the *logoi* as natural inner principles, "which are the uncreated energy of God." This shared sensibility between St. Maximus' writings and Eriugena's make the latter arguably Orthodox, although Eriugena's use of Latin in accommodating St. Augustine's terminology make his expression of this sometimes less clear than St. Maximus' Greek writing.

Not all recent scholarship on St. Maximus agrees wholly with the bold identification of the *logoi* with the uncreated energy of God in Fr. Romanides' work as related by Metropolitan Hierotheos, although various nuances of recent studies can contribute to our understanding of both the Confessor's teaching and Eriugena's. However, to contextualize the issue in current debate over the recent Council of Crete, the identification is in accord with Metropolitan Hierotheos' criticisms of the use of the term *person* in certain documents related to the Council, reflecting Metropolitan John Zizoulas' personalist writings. For Metropolitan Hierotheos, *person* in Orthodox theology is a term most properly related to the Persons of the Trinity, to emphasize that the human being finds personhood in Christ as the Person in Whom human beings are made (Gen. 1:26), thus also emphasizing how the elements of true human nature are not individualized as in Western thought

[61] Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, *Empirical Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church, According to the Spoken Teaching of Father John Romanides*, v. 2 (Levadia, GR: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2013), 110-111.

but derive from Christ in the divine energies.[62] The Orthodox philosopher David Bradshaw, while not disagreeing with that overall view, has nuanced the intepretation of St. Maximus' teaching of the *logoi*. In a more detailed explication, he indicates how "it would be a mistake to think of them as intelligible contents or individual essences," since they are God's purposes in creating things and thus their meanings within the divine mind. Rather, the *logoi* can be thought of in effect from the human side as vocations to be realized by synergy, functionally similar to how the Cappadocians described *energeia*. However, Bradshaw disagrees with the scholar Lars Thunberg's earlier appraisal (in line with that of Fr. Romanides) that the *logoi are* the divine energies. Rather, in Ambigua 22 Bradshaw concludes the Confessor writes that the energies are contemplated in the *logoi*. Bradshaw sees the Confessor in his writing splitting the Cappadocian articulation of the energies into three modes, one related to Creation (the *logoi*), a second related to the "things around God" or God's everlasting attributes, and the third to the activity of God, which creatures can share, "for which he tends to reserve the term *energeia*." The terminology of the *logoi* "emphasizes that God is present in creatures, not only as their creator and sustainer, but as their meaning and purpose."[63]

Other recent studies by Orthodox scholars have added to the nuanced interpretation of St. Maximus' writing on the *logoi*, which will inform finally our discussion of the Orthodoxy of Eriugena's effort to articulate a similar teaching in Latin. Melchisedec Törönen writes of how the Confessor's theophanic cosmology (an apt description as we shall see also for Eriugena's) is neither pantheistic nor emanationist, but "a cosmology in which God wants to make himself manifest to his creatures through his creatures in order that he might—hiding in Creation—draw us through

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[62] Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, "Third Letter to the Holy Synod of Greece Concerning the Draft Documents Prepared for the Upcoming Pan-Orthodox Council," March 5, 2016, http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/91319.htm [5/11/17].

[63] David Bradshaw, ed., *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 205-206, including note 67.

himself to himself as he is in himself."[64] Törönen describes *logos* in this context as "difference constitutive of a particular nature," used by the Confessor on three levels or perspectives—apophatic Logos, Logos of the *logoi*, and *logoi* of the Logos.[65] The *logoi* are "God's intentions or wills forhis creation. They pre-exist eternally in the Logos as his wills, and are realized in time," not the beings themselves, but predestination and divine wills, the source of differentiation.[66] Another current scholar, Thorstein Theodor Tollefsen writes of the "Christological logic" of the Confessor's writing of logoi as that by which (quoting St. Maximus) "the essence, that is to say nature, remains both undiminished and unchanged, unmixed and unconfused," providing the way in which the Logo establishes an ordered cosmos and institutes essences of creatures, essences of particulars with *logoi* of their own.[67] In this way, "*logoi* are the divine principles by which individuals, species, and genera are instituted in a created hierarchical system of essences," although he notes (and claims to accept) Törönen's critical emphasis on the *logoi* as something other than Platonic forms and distancing (akin to Fr. Romanides' view) of St. Maximus from Neoplatonism in incarnational Orthodox Christianity.[68] "God therefore knows the taxonomy through the *logoi,* but the *logoi* themselves are the principles of the system."[69] He discusses three different dimensions of *logoi* in Maximus' writing, namely the image-character *logos* of being (nature or "the relation according to nature"), the *logoi* of well-being (actualizing the likeness of God, the deified nature), and the *logoi* of eternal well-being (fulfilling the likeness; eternal nature[70]). For St. Maximus, Tollefsen summarizes, "the *logoi* of

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[64] Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 133.
[65] Ibid., 22 and 133.
[66] Ibid., 128-129.
[67] Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 100, and 85. The quotation is from St. Maximus' *Opscula theological et polemica*, 14, PG 91, 149 D.
[68] Ibid., 87, including note 70.
[69] Ibid. 87.
[70] Ibid., 179.

individuals are contained in the logoi of species, the *logoi* of species by the logoi of genera, and the highest *logoi* are contained in Wisdom, i.e. in Christ," with eternal wisdom being the sum of all the *logoi* in effect, although not constituting Christ.[71] Tollefsen also discusses the condemnation by later Scholastic Roman Catholic decree of the idea that God can make several worlds, noting that St. Maximus contrariwise did not write of God as constrained in free will by necessity, although, "The doctrine of Logos-logoi is an expression of 'the mystery of Christ' [and] Christ Himself is not only the transcendent divine Logos, but is the incarnated one." The activities of God for St. Maximus, including Tollefsen's interpretation, include the logoi but are not limited to them, and the logoi are not a kind of taxonomy-matrix.[72]

Paul Blowers, in his recent study on St. Maximus' writings, summarizes the scholarship on his teaching of the *logoi*, writing, "The logoi seem, then, to be divine 'energies,' either God's 'uncreated energies' or at least the 'creative energies' of the Creator…. For Maximus, the *logoi* themselves 'uncreated' insofar as the uncreated energies inhere in them." Citing Nikolaos Loudovikos, he concludes that the distinction of *logoi* and uncreated energies is basically epistemological with their identification involving "the activity of divine will being carried out in its uncreated energies." Citing Lars Thunberg he notes the *logoi* are at once doubly transcendent and immanent, created and uncreated, yet ultimately materialized in the created order but not created in it given that they are not bound by its material appearance.[73]

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[71] Ibid., 180.
[72] Ibid., 90-91.
[73] Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 112; Nikolaos Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 100; Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maxmus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 138. Loudovikos provides his own helpful summary of recent scholarship on the *logoi* on pp. 53-56.

These different but overlapping interpretations indicate the nuanced complexity yet continuity of St. Maximus' articulation of the *logoi* with the uncreated energies of God later articulated more fully by St. John Damascene, St. Simeon the New Theologian, and St. Gregory Palamas, among others. They also establish a way of contextualizing and reading Eriugena's distinctive cosmology and anthropology from an Orthodox perspective, influenced by St. Maximus, but expressed in Latin and with a synthesis with aspects of the writings of the Blessed Augustine. Eriguena in the structure of his *Periphyseon* writes of four aspects of Nature, namely that which creates and is noted created (God), that which is created and creates (what he calls the primordial causes), that which is created and does not create (matter or creatures, which he distinguishes thus from the Creator), and that which is not created and does not create (God in the sense of an apophatic return to Him). He mainly refers to the primordial causes as created. Yet he also writes that "one in the same nature is considered in one way in the eternity of the Word of God, in another way in the temporality of the world He has constituted" (640C-640D).[74] He writes, similarly to St. Gregory of Nyssa, of Creation as a kind of musical symphony.[75] In this it is significant to remember that one translation of the Greek *logos* is harmony, which suggests a potential embodied aspect to the words of God, and a kind of spectrum of meanings for the primordial causes similar to that seen between the uncreated energies and the *logoi* in Eriugena's Greek master the Confessor (and to the use of the Greek word *kalos* in the Septuagint account of Creation, where God sees everything as both good and beautiful, the latter also having an embodied aspect).[76] Eriugena again had sought sought to synthesize in meaning the writing of St. Dionysius and St. Maximus with those in Latin of the Blessed Augustine of Hippo, who as noted above in Fr. Romanides' commentary was

[74] Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 259.
[75] See St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Interpretation of the Psalms*, trans. Casimir McCambley (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1994), 27-30.
[76] On the universe as comparable to musical harmony, see PP 637D-638A, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 255.

further from Orthodox teachings on the distinction between the Essence and uncreated energies of God, and Eriugena's terminology reflects that sometimes confusing project. But nonetheless there is a spectrum in his writing from the Divine Wisdom (Christ) working through the primordial causes to the shaping of creation that reflects St. Maximus' teaching about energies and *logoi*, albeit with language from St. Dionysius that Christianizes certain Late Antique Hellenic philosophical diction also used in a different context by Neo-Platonism.[77]

In Book Two of the *Periphyseon*, in his primary discussion of primordial causes, Eriugena refers to them as *prototypa* or primordial examples, and *proopismata*, or predestinations or predefinitions, as well as *theia thelamata* or divine volitions, echoing St. Dionysius' earlier writings on the divine willings. Yet Eriugena also says "they are commonly called *ideai*, as pre-formed in His Word," the principles or reasons of all things, the Greek translation for reasons or principles again being *logoi*.[78] Yet this seems in the combination of meanings he gives more of a dynamic sense than the Platonic archetypes criticized by Fr. Romanides. Elsewhere, Eriugena also calls the primordial causes the "brightnesses" of saints, identifying them with Irish and Byzantine tradition of the uncreated light in hesychasm, and "participations."[79] He then lengthily cites from St. Maximus on the Incarnation of Christ and as man as the mediator for overcoming the divisions of fallen human beings and Creeation. He indicates also that the primordial causes, like the continuity of energies and *logoi* in Maximus' writings, "at the same time a they are manifest to senses (and) to intellects after a certain mode in the things of which they are the causes, they do not abandon the excellence of their incomprehensibility but ever abide, as it were, in a kind of darkness, I mean in the most secret recesses of the Divine Wisdom," which he makes clear elsewhere is Christ.[80] Quoting St. Basil's

[77] See, for example, PP 681C-682C, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 308-309.
[78] PP 529B, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 128-129.
[79] PP 558C, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 162; PP 616B, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 229.
[80] PP 551B, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 152.

Hexaemeron on the Genesis account of Creation, Eriugena comments, "For the Holy Spirit fermented, that is, nourished in the fermentation of the Divine Love, the primordial causes which the Father had made in the Beginning, that is, in His Son, so that they might proceed into those things of which they are the causes."[81] For Eriugena, "In the Beginning God made," means "the Father made all things in His Word," following patristic commentary identifying Genesis 1.1 with the opening of the Gospel of John, on which Eriugena wrote a famous homily that survives. He indicates too that the principal causes of all things are "co-eternal with God and with the Beginning in which they were made [Christ]," but not in all respects co-eternal with the Word, yet in his view they participate in "true eternity" without beginning (*anarchos*) in Christ.[82] He identifies the primordial causes with theophanies, through participation with which he says the soul receives activity of God, a motion called *logos* or *dynamis* in Greek, but in Latin *ratio* or *virtus*.[83]

At the end of Book Two, before launching into the next book, which will include the start of his hexaemeral commentary, Eriugena gives this definition of the primordial causes as a kind of capstone to the long dialogue about them:

> The primordial causes then… are what the Greeks call ideai, that is the eternal species or forms and immutable reasons after which and in which the visible and invisible world is formed and governed, and therefore they were appropriately named by the wise men of the Greeks prototupa, that is, the principal exemplars which the Father made in the Son and divides and multiples into their effects through the Holy Spirit. [84]

Yet he goes on again to note in conclusion that they also are called predestinations, willings, participations, and principles. He also lists the primordial causes "which the divine sages call the

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[81] PP 554B, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 155.
[82] PP 561C and D, 562A, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 163-164.
[83] PP 576D and 577A, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 181.
[84] PP 615D and 616A, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 228-229.

principles of all things," including Goodness-through-itself, Being-through-itself, Life-through-itself, Wisdom-through-itself, Truth-through-itself, Intellect-through-itself, Reason-through-itself, Power-through-itself, Justice-through-itself, Health-through-itself, Magnitude-through-itself, Omnipotence-through-itself, Eternity-through-itself, Peace-through-itself, "and all the powers and reasons which once and for all the Father made in the Son." So there is not "in the nature of things" any power that does not proceed "by an ineffable participation from the primordial causes."[85] Eriugena then ends the book on the primordial causes with quotations from St. Dionysius' *On the Divine Name*s.

Later, in Book III, just prior to his hexaemeral commentary's start, Eriugena again quotes St. Dionysius, and then relates in his own commentary the primordial causes both to Creation and the Incarnation,

> Therefore, descending first from the superessentiality of His Nature, in which He is said not to be, He is created by Himself in the primordial causes and becomes the beginning of all essence, of all life, of all intelligence, and of all things which the gnostic [ed. note: not referencing the heresy] contemplation considers in the primordial causes; then, descending from the primordial causes which occupy a kind of intermediate position between God and the creature, that is, between that ineffable superessentiality which surpasses all understanding and the substantially manifest nature which is visible in pure minds, He is made in their effects and is openly revealed in His theophanies.[86]

He then calls this (after Maximus and perhaps St. Gregory of Nyssa) the process of God "calling all things back into Himself," citing Paul's quote on the Areopagus (according to tradition in the presence of St. Dionysius) that "in Him we live and move and have our being." It is easy to see how such passages by Eriugena could be taken as pantheistic and heretical. Yet at the same time, in

[85] PP 617A, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 229-230.
[86] PP 683A-683B, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 310.

the context of the patristic influences on Eriugena, it can also be seen as an effort to describe the workings of the uncreated energies, and, for man (whom Eriugena considers similarly to St. Maximus as in a sense both great microcosm and macrocosm of the universe through the Incarnation) of *theosis*. Such discussion occurs in the midst of language drawing strongly on Dionysian terms of the apophatic, in which God in effect appears to come into being through His energies and *logoi* from the not-being of His unknowable essence. Between God as Creator and the return of Creation to God in Christ, as detailed also by St. Maximus in the *Ambigua's* description of the overcoming of the five divisions, there is for Eriugena a discussion of "the middle," identified with man through the Incarnation, in which he writes that the Divine Nature is said first to be

> created by itself in the primordial causes, and therefore creates itself, that is, allows itself to appear in its theophanies, willing to emerge from the most hidden recesses of its nature in which it is unknown even to itself, that is, it knows itself in nothing because it is infinite and supernatural and superessential and beyond everything that can and cannot be understood; but, descending into the principles of things and, as it were, creating itself, it begins to know itself in something--; secondly, when it is seen in the lowest effects of the primordial causes, in which it is correctly said of it that it is created only, but does not create.

Shortly after this passage in Book III of the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena then begins his commentary on the six days of Creation, which lies at the core of his book, and for which he liberally quotes from Fathers such as St. Basil the Great and Blessed Augustine, with the Incarnation ultimately at the center of the Creation. The passage immediately above contains a brief survey of his nomenclature for what is more precisely known in Orthodox terms as energies and *logoi*--that is the theophanies that emerge from the "most hidden recesses" (or hidden folds) of Divine Nature, the primordial causes that form the basis for Creation and also its redemption, and the effects of the primordial causes in material Creation. His language can be shocking at first to an Orthodox reader

today, in terms of speaking of the Divine Nature being created, but it is clear on careful reading here and from the context of the entire book that he is engaging deeply with the language of both cataphatic and apophatic theology when he does so. That is, the "creation" of Divine Nature is the theophanic appearance of the divine, identified with the primordial causes, in which it can be contemplated and experienced, through participation in what in Greek terminology would be called the uncreated energies of God. Eriugena writes, "access is permitted to the inaccessible Light by means of theophanies…which the divine Word instill into and in a manner ineffable and known to none, implants in pure intellects so that they possess in themselves some condition of true knowledge of that which in itself is altogether unknowable."[87]

Conclusion

This study hopefully is a start to indicate ways in which Eriugena's writings can be read in the light of Orthodox Tradition. It does not rescue his writing from the complexities or at times ambiguity of his often non-linear and voluminous dialogue. Yet both the Irish and Maximian contexts help to provide a background for reading his work that indicates its Orthodox aspects. That said, his writings on theophanies and primordial causes remains potentially confusing and open to heretical and confusing readings when read outside of the contexts of the Church. Yet they also draw on a twilight era of pre-Schism Hiberno-Latin writing, when the Orthodox doctrine of the uncreated energies of God was not fully articulated in the Latin West, and the noetic life of the Church there, in terms of experiential monastic contemplation, arguably was on the wane. It is likely asking too much to expect a clear presentation on these issues from a twenty-first-century Orthodox perspective, by the *peregrini* Eriugena writing in Carolingian courts, perhaps on the run from the

[87] PP 557B, Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, 159.

Vikings with other Irish scholars, and according to later accounts taking up a final home under Alfred the Great's renewal of Christian scholarship in the face of the Vikings.

Reading his work in tandem with that of St. Maximus the Confessor and current scholarship on the Confessor may in fact lead to new insights on the development of teachings of the energies and even about hesychasm. Eriugena's work certainly can inform modern environmental philosophy or philosophy of nature today, as indicated in the work of the philosopher Dermot Moran referenced earlier, in relation to what the Orthodox philosopher Bruce Foltz has called the "other side of nature," related to the "hidden God" of Orthodox Holy Friday hymnology.[88] This is not the "inactive God" (*deus otiosus*) of modern secular Deism, but the transfiguring Christ in Whose energies man participates in *theosis*. That is likely why the pre-eminent English Romantic theorist Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his trajectory from Unitarianism to Trinitarian Anglicanism, found Eriugena's writing an inspiration in resisting Western secular materialism. Eriugena's writing may serve as a scholarly bridge for understanding of the Orthodox Church in the West before the Great Schism, and also for those interested in getting outside of today's Western cultural matrix through studying early Irish Christianity and her Orthodoxy.

In the end, Eriugena is probably best understood in the contexts examined above not as a Church Father, for we do not know enough about his own life and experiential wisdom, but nonetheless as a brilliant philosopher struggling to work within the Orthodox Tradition, even if sometimes unclearly so, including the noetic life of the Church and not an heterodox Scholastic rationalism. Rather than considering him a heretic, it is probably best to think of him in similar terms to the Byzantine philosopher Michael Psellos, who while accused of heresy nonetheless also became an Orthodox monk and stands out intellectually in Orthodox Christian philosophy of the

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[88] Bruce M. Foltz, "Nature's Other Side: The Demise of Nature and the Phenomenology of Givenness," in *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, eds. Foltz and Robert Frodeman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 330-342.

Middle Ages in a qualified way, as highlighted by the modern scholarship of Basil Tatakis. In modern times, Eriugena's position anachronistically could perhaps be compared to the work of a writer such as the Russian Orthodox philosopher Nicholas Lossky, or the writings of Fr. Pavel Florensky and Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, although the latter's speculations on Sophianism were accused of heresy. It is perhaps no coincidence that Coleridge was drawn to and influenced by the works of both Eriugena and Psellos (the former cited in his *Biographia Literaria* and the latter in his *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*), which indicates perhaps how Eriugena can be not so much a patristic teacher through his writings as a potential apologetical and even evangelical bridge between Western sensibilities of intellectualism today and the ancient noetic life of the Church. Certainly Eriugena's voluminous quotations from Greek Church Fathers and Scripture form a connecting point to Orthodoxy today for those readers delving into the history of Irish Christianity, together with his contribution to the hexaemeral Tradition originally shaped in Greek patristics. In the end, it can be argued that Eriugena in his writings was more an early Irish Christian philosopher than either heretic or Church Father, yet one whose work can be understood in light of traditional Orthodox Christianity in the twenty-first century as a potential late Western entry point to the living Holy Orthodox Tradition in the writings and lives of the Church Fathers.

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Vita

A native of Chicago, Alfred Kentigern Siewers was baptized Kentigern Pavlos in the Holy Orthodox Church in 1999. He currently is Warden of Holy Protection Russian Orthodox Mission Parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in Lewisburg, PA, where he lives with his wife Olesya and two sons Nicholas and Kevin. He works as Associate Professor of English, and Affiliate Faculty in Environmental Studies, at Bucknell University, where he is also currently Chair of the English Department. He has a Ph.D. in English with a specialty in early Christian literatures of the British Isles and an MSJ in Journalism from Northwestern University, as well as an MA in Early British Studies from the University of Wales, and has been a research fellow at the Early Irish program at University College Cork. He formerly was a staff writer for the Chicago Sun-Times and The Christian Science Monitor. His publications include *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape*, and the edited collection *Re-Imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecosemiotics*, as well as the co-edited collection *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*. He also has an article in the *Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*. With Profs. David and Mary Ford of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Seminary, he co-edited *Glory and Honor: Orthodox Christian Resources on Marriage*, published by St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press in 2016. In the past he has served as Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America's Contemporary Issues Subcommittee of the Strategic Planning Committee, and as Secretary of the Orthodox Fellowship of the Transfiguration, a SCOBA-affiliated group. His sons are the first in his family line to be baptized Orthodox Christians in childhood since his ancestors in the British Isles, Scandinavia, and the Baltic region a thousand years ago, glory to God!