Crafting Infinity

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Reworking Elements in Irish Culture

Edited by

Rory T. Cornish and Marguerite Quintelli-Neary

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PREFACE

This collection of essays is the result of the three day southern regional conference held by the American Conference for Irish Studies at Winthrop University, South Carolina, March 4-6, 2010. Over one hundred scholars and academics from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean attended this regional meeting and thirty five papers were presented to the conference. Also included in the conference was a poetry reading by eleven of the participants and plenary addresses were delivered by two leading scholars in their field: the novelist Mary Pat Kelly discussed her latest book *Galway Bay* and the documentary director Keith Farrell of Tile Films, Dublin, reflected upon the role of film in interpreting Irish History. Since the preparation on this volume his two part series on Thomas Francis Meagher and the Union Irish Brigade during the American Civil War, *Fág An Bealach/ The Fighting Irish of the Civil War*, has been broadcasted on both sides of the Atlantic in 2011. In this volume Mr. Farrell's plenary address is included together with the papers of eight other colleagues who presented at the conference; all of the contributors have extended their initial conference papers to develop the themes they developed for the conference itself. The chapters embrace the diversity of the Irish experience and the impulses which have shaped not only modern Ireland herself, but also the transatlantic Irish community. These are themes which will undoubtedly continue to influence the direction Ireland will take in her future, a future which perhaps looks less secure than it once did in the last few decades.

The role history, literature, myth, religion, and music have played in crafting a distinct Irish identity continues to be of interest to scholars as well as the Irish people themselves. Yet the more modern role film and television have played, and will continue to play, in the creation of an Irish identity should not be overlooked. Two chapters included in this collection reflect how religion and nationalist mythology shaped a distinct Irish cultural identity. In his chapter Dr. Peter Judge explores how early Irish perceptions of Christianity fused Catholicism to an older Celtic form. Following a discussion of J. Philip Newell's popular work on Catholic spirituality this study investigates further the importance of the Celtic contingent to the Synod of Whitby (664 CE) and develops the thesis that the Gospel and Letters of St. John inspired a different kind of theology

among the Irish than the more orthodox teachings of St.Augustine of Hippo and St. Augustine of Canterbury. This Johannine feature of the Catholic Church in Ireland, it is further suggested, created an Irish spirituality that was less institutional and more dynamic than other churches in the West, a feature which helps perhaps explain the continuing peculiarities and tensions within Celtic Christianity even today. Where myth touches history is the theme developed by Dr. Marti D. Lee who examines the enduring story of Cuchulain, a heroic figure from the Ulster Cycle, one of the four great cycles of Irish mythology. The work of Standish O' Grady (1846-1928) made Cuchulain into a modern figure in a growing sense of Irish nationalism. O'Grady's *Story of Cuchulain* and *The Story of Ireland*, both of which were published in 1894, and which are still widely read, linked mythology and language to a racial identity, a theme well understood by W.B. Yeats who would term O'Grady the father of the nineteenth century Irish Celtic renaissance. Yet as Dr. Lee suggests, O'Grady was a more complex individual than usually thought; a writer who hoped to create a true history of Ireland which could encompass his own Anglo- Irish heritage and, with it, its own inherent contradictions. His background may have been crucial to his writing for he not only wished to recreate a history of Ireland all could be proud of, but one which would also prompt the Irish to become better behaved and, in his own mind, more civilized. Perhaps, Dr. Lee suggests, an underlying cultural imperialism underscored his vision of Irish history, an attitude that may have prompted Lady Gregory to paradoxically consider O'Grady as a Fenian Unionist.

Dr. Jeffrey Baggett explores the cultural influences upon the writing of another prominent Protestant Irish nationalist, W.B. Yeats. In his attempt to create a new sense of Irish identity Yeats not only used native Irish literary sources, but also occasionally transcended the geographical and cultural boundaries of Ireland herself. Often experimenting with Indian and Japanese themes, Yeats rejected the restricting limitations of popular taste and the traditional literary conventions of an Anglo hegemonic culture in his work. In this vision, Dr. Baggett suggests, Yeats was influenced by the Orientalism of James Hardiman, Sir Samuel Ferguson and James C. Mangan; and it led Yeats to suggest that the Irish soul could be better understood in the context of more universal themes a perspective that may have led many commentators to misunderstand his work by suggesting that it was often disconnected from the bitter realities of the Irish struggle to achieve nationhood. A limited national interpretation, Dr. Baggett suggests, has led previous commentators to perhaps not fully appreciate Yeats's cultural ambitions which helped lay the foundations for

a larger sense of the limitless boundaries for a later twentieth century Celticism. Similarly, escaping the geographical boundaries and cultural limitations of his native Dublin allowed James Joyce in his self-imposed exile from Ireland to create an interior monologue which both encapsulated and transcended his native city. A feature of his work was the constant use of French words, phrases, and illusions to figures and events in French history. In her study, "Pardon My French: Joyce's Gallic Insinuations," Dr. Marguerite Quintelli- Neary challenges earlier assumptions that Joyce's use of French, especially in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, merely offered an opportunity to parade his linguistic abilities or display his cultural pluralism. Rather, it is argued, Joyce often used French to veil risqué, discomforting, or unpleasant situations such as making sport of the Immaculate Conception, recalling his own personal issues with the Holy Ghost in the Trinity, or dealing with anti- Semitism. The use of French, Dr. Quintelli- Neary concludes, was hardly a random device for his constant Gallic allusions allowed him to pun, stress a point, or play with the reader while, of course, pardoning himself.

Themes of constant rebirth and recreation in Irish culture are also reviewed and worked into two other chapters. In his "' (T) he end of everything…build a bungalow': *The Last September* as a Bourgeois Charrette" Dr. Howard Keeley explores the theme of the Big House in an Elizabeth Bowen novel and the reduced circumstance of the Anglo- Irish gentry during the Irish War of Independence. Within the sub-plot of this modernist novel the Montmorency family considers abandoning their estate in preference for life in a small bungalow. Combining a deep reading of Bowen's text with contemporary information from such sources as the fortnightly *Irish Builder and Engineer*, Dr. Keeley suggests that in Bowen's novel the bungalow itself became a metaphor for the Troubles of the 1920's. The impact violence in Ireland itself had on the rebirth and recreation of self is also explored in Dr. Jill Franks' investigation into the feminist themes in both Jennifer Johnston's *The Railway Station Man* (1984) and Edna O'Brien's *House of Splendid Isolation* (1994). In her study Dr. Franks investigates why twentieth century Irish female writers often reveal in their female protagonists a prevalence for emotional paralysis as a response to trauma; a response followed by emancipation and, eventually, a definition of self. By including the work of such feminist psychoanalysts as Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan, Dr. Franks reconsiders the distinctive characteristics of the Irish female novelists.

The transatlantic Irish experience has been, and will undoubtedly continue to be in our present century, a crucial factor in the reworking of

Irish self-identity. The last three chapters of this volume consider this important aspect of the Irish abroad. The cultural continuum Irish music had on the emigrant is explored by Dr. Michael D. Nicholsen in his study of Francis O'Neill, the first Irish born Chicago Chief of Police. O'Neill's collation and publication of a significant collection of Irish traditional tunes, jigs, and reels, both helped establish Chicago as an important centre in the preservation of Irish music as well as insure that Irish music in the United States itself would play an important part in the everyday life of many Irish immigrants as they struggled to create a new Irish American identity. In their attempt to earn a new place in their adopted country many Irishmen would volunteer to serve in the American Civil War. Indeed, over 150,000 Irish and Irish American soldiers fought for the Union in this devastating war and perhaps as many as 20,000 also fought to establish the independence of the Confederacy, the largest foreign born contingent in the armies of the South. No other Irish unit has managed to focus both contemporary attention and the later research of historians than the Union Irish Brigade commanded by the exiled Young Ireland 1848 revolutionary Thomas Francis Meagher. If many books have been written on the Brigade's experiences, and if it has been often featured in a number of American Hollywood films, the first documentary for television was recently broadcast simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic on St. Patrick's Day 2011. In "Fág An Bealach: The Irish Brigade and the Use of Film in the Creation of a Usable Irish Past" its writer and director Keith Farrell explores the way Irish documentary film has had an impact on our vision of Irish history in the twentieth century.

Just as previous historical works and the increasing number of monuments to the Irish Brigade have helped shape modern memory, so too increasingly has film. In reviewing the development of the Irish documentary, this chapter discusses how the projected documentary on the Irish Brigade began, how the director funded, researched, and eventually filmed the project. His work has proved to be a landmark production for it was the first Gaelic language film on the Brigade ever produced in Ireland. Recent historical works in the United States have, however, increasingly concentrated on Confederate topics and the role Irish soldiers played in defending the Confederacy. These have questioned the once dominant role the Irish Brigade had played in modern memory. The Irish are now often portrayed as better Confederates than Unionists and the Irish in the South even better Irishmen for they, rather than the Union Irish soldier, reflected Ireland's own wish for independence and self-determination. In reviewing the careers of two if not totally forgotten, but until recently rather overlooked, Confederate generals, Walter P. Lane of County Cork and

Texas, and Joseph Finegan, of County Monaghan and Florida, Dr. Rory T. Cornish takes issue with the increasing romantic notions of what the Confederacy fought for. If the careers of Lane and Finegan had few connecting similarities, it was their support for slavery and racial domination which eventually linked their careers. The Irish attitude to slavery, and the increasing Irish support the Confederacy itself, Dr. Cornish suggests, is not something the Irish today should not be proud of. Modern memory, Irish realities and the infinite projection of what it means to be Irish are recurring themes within these collected essays.

This present volume suggests that our continuing reflection, re-evaluation, and reshaping of Irish history, literature , music, and the arts in general, may recall the intricacies of the Celtic Knot, a design which adorns illuminated Irish medieval Christian manuscripts and the infinite nature of Ireland's own coastline; a notion manifest in the work of the geographer Tim Robinson. Each historical figure, event, writer, or artist discussed in this collection has expanded the definition of what it may mean to be Irish through invention, innovation, or even relocation. The icons of Ireland's own cultural wellspring have maintained a tradition of crafting infinity through local production as well reworking their past through the achievements of the Irish Diaspora. These essays explore the ways that the Irish, on both sides of the Atlantic, continue to use familiar themes and motifs in the new and changing contexts of the twenty - first century.

CHAPTER ONE

IS CELTIC CHRISTIANITY JOHANNINE?

PETER J. JUDGE

In a popular book on Celtic spirituality, J. Philip Newell points out that the Celtic contingent at the Synod of Whitby (663/664) "deferred to the authority of St. John" the Evangelist in defense of their dating and observance of Easter while those who represented the "Romanizing" element in the English church called upon the authority of St. Peter.[1] There was, in fact, a rather long and complicated dispute about when to observe Easter. Should it occur at the same time as the Jewish Passover–i.e., the fourteenth day of the Jewish lunar month Nissan in the spring? Should it be on the Sunday (first day of the week) after Passover? Or the first Sunday after the first full moon after the springtime (vernal) equinox? This dispute was indeed due at least in part to the discrepancy between Saint John's Gospel and the other (Synoptic) Gospels on the timing of Jesus' death relative to Passover. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus eats a Passover meal with his disciples at the "Last Supper" and then is arrested and dies the next day (i.e., after the Passover has begun). In the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, Jesus dies on the Day of Preparation when the lambs are just being slaughtered for the Passover. Thus, he is tried, crucified, and buried before Passover even begins and his last meal with his disciples was simply that, not a Passover seder.[2] Some early Christians, following the chronology in the Gospel of John, celebrated Jesus' death on the day of Passover, Nissan 14, and were called Quartodecimians. As an actual day of the Resurrection began to be regularly observed and Sunday, the first day of the week, became the Christian weekly day of observance, the Celtic Christians were observing a variation of the Quartodecimian

[1] J. P. Newell, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God. A Celtic Spirituality* (New York / Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 1.

[2] See Matthew 27:17-29 / Mark 14:12-25 / Luke 22:7-23 contrasted with John 13:1-30; cf.18:28; 19:14.31.42.

practice by celebrating Easter on the Sunday following Passover. They apparently did not know the ruling of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE that used an essentially solar calendar to date Easter on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox, a ruling that became dominant in the Roman West.[3] Thus, when parties representing the Roman-sponsored mission of Augustine of Canterbury encountered Celtic Christians from an earlier settlement in the north and west there was conflict. In his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* the Venerable Bede relates the story at some length. Bishop Colman of Lindisfarne spoke for the Celtic church: "The Easter which I am accustomed to observe I have received of my elders of whom I was sent hither, bishop, and this all our fathers, men beloved of God, are known to have solemnized after the same manner. And this observation, that none may think it a light matter or to be rejected is the selfsame which the blessed evangelist John, the disciple who the Lord specially loved, kept, as we read, with all the churches over which he was head." In reply, the "brilliant English cleric" Wilfrid, on the other hand, invoked the apparent practice of Peter and Paul at Rome and "everywhere else in the world" that he had observed except among these "[Redshanks and Britons] and them that are partakers in their obstinacy."[4]

Newell sees in this dispute not simply a spat over "form and style;" rather, the seemingly superficial issues represent a "conflict between two spiritual perspectives or ways of seeing."[5] There is a certain support for this

[3] See the fuller discussion in G. F. Snyder, *Irish Jesus, Roman Jesus. The Formation of Early Irish Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 188–91.

[4] The Venerable Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (Ecclesiastical History of the English People)* (Loeb Classical Library, 117), J.E. King, tr., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 465 & 467. See also J. T. McNeill, *The Celtic Churches. A History A.D. 200 to 1200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 112–13.

[5] Newell, *Heartbeat*, 1. See also p. 31: "At one level it might appear that the synod's discussions, about such matters as the dating of Easter and the style of tonsure to be worn, were superficial. The underlying debate was a very significant one, however, for at stake were the futures of two distinct types of spirituality which had come into conflict and were vying for supremacy."

view.[6] At the same time, while there was indeed some dispute over ecclesial structure and practice, this should not be overplayed but rather viewed with a broader perspective on the evolution of the Western church, as Philip Sheldrake has suggested.[7] Be that as it may, Newell uses this controversy at Whitby to contend that the Celtic church's outlook was inspired by the image of the Beloved Disciple who rested his head against the bosom of Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23). Their spirituality could thus be characterized as a "listening for the heartbeat of God ... [a] listening for God at the heart of life."[8] For Newell, this means a spirituality that is creation-centered; a contemplative spirituality that finds God in and through creation rather than outside of it. Such a "Johannine-inspired"

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[6] McNeill, *Celtic Churches*, 109: "Matters which in the abstract may seem trifles often assume central importance when they are bound up with the sacred traditions of a people, or become the symbols of a certain ecclesiastical attachment. Actually the issue between the Romans and the Celts went far deeper than the recorded exchange of arguments would indicate. The arguments were about the date of Easter, a variation in clerical tonsure, and certain differences in the rite of baptism and in the consecration of bishops. The ultimate issue was that of Celtic ecclesiastical autonomy as against integration within the Roman ecclesiastical system. To some degree the participants were aware of this, and understood the implications of what they were arguing about. But the main discussion took place over the individual points of difference; and in these particulars the Celts were overmatched.

The stage was already well set for their failure at the Synod of Whitby in 663. On the Easter question more than half of the Irish churches had already yielded to the Roman arguments...."

[7] P. Sheldrake, *Living Between Worlds. Place and Journey in Celtic Spirituality* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1995), 12: "It is worth noting in passing that some modern historians consider that Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History* overestimated the importance of the Synod of Whitby. The Synod took place in 664 CE and settled disputes concerning the dating of Easter and the appropriate style of ecclesiastical tonsure. Many people still believe that the Synod marked a definitive victory of the Church of Rome over the native (that is, Celtic) Church of the British Isles. However, the Synod was actually concerned only with the local Church that was dependent on Lindisfarne. Equally, it dealt only with relatively minor matters rather than with the fundamentals of Church organisation and authority. Bede's interpretation perhaps reflects his personal concern for chronology and therefore about the computation of the date of Easter. At least it seems fair to suggest that Bede's view of Whitby contributed to later, more general, views of the seriousness of the differences between Celtic and Roman ecclesiastical styles. As I have already suggested, the questions at issue were really indicative of the general western Catholic melting pot while the acceptable degree of diversity within it was being explored."

[8] Newell, *Heartbeat*, 1–2.

openness to seeing God in all of creation he finds in the fourth-century writings of Pelagius (traditionally thought to have been born in Ireland) and later in the ninth-century philosophy and theology of John Scotus Eriugena.[9] This, he says, conflicted with the more "Roman" style of Christianity that came to dominate the West, associated with Saint Peter and a structured, orderly, hierarchical way of being church. It was buttressed by the writings and practice of Saints Augustine of Hippo and Augustine of Canterbury. Pelagius and Eriugena, it should be noted, were both eventually condemned and their writings banned, as the Roman (Augustinian) model took a more universal hold in the West. Newell argues, however, that their kind of theology and spirituality was not a later (i.e., 4th or 9th c.), heretical perversion of Christian truth but was in fact rooted in Scripture itself.[10]

Newell's book charts and advocates a revival of a Celtic (Christian) spirituality that is more open to nature and the idea that grace builds upon nature rather than outrightly opposing it. God, therefore, is not exclusively *super*-natural but can be found in and through nature. Such an approach gives great value to the Incarnation, and so it can indeed be seen as rather in line with the Gospel of John's insistence that "the Word became flesh (*sarx* in Greek)" (Jn 1:14). There is no doubt that this Gospel can (I would even say *should*) be read as emphasizing that the very *humanity* of Jesus is the vehicle by which God is revealed; his human experience is revelatory and not simply a mask that God puts on in order to draw humans out of and away from their fleshly nature. Newell draws attention to "Two Ways of Listening"[11]— the way of Peter, which finds its "clearest expression" in the Gospel of Matthew where Peter is called the Rock upon which the church is built,[12] and the way of John, a "universal" perspective articulated in the

[9] Newell's Chapters One and Two are respectively devoted to Pelagius (pp. 8-22) and Eriugena (pp. 23-38).

[10] He concludes his Introduction with the following paragraph: "The most significant concept to emerge at the Synod of Whitby in 664 was the Celtic mission's perception of John as listening for the heartbeat of God. It revealed that this tradition did not begin with the Celtic Church and people like Pelagius, but was part of an ancient stream of contemplative spirituality stretching back to St John the Evangelist and even to the Wisdom tradition of the Old Testament. It was a spirituality characterized by a listening within all things for the life of God." Such an evaluation may well represent the kind of overemphasis about which Sheldrake warns (see n. 7 above).

[11] This is the title of his concluding chapter.

[12] Newell, *Heartbeat*, 95–96. Cf. Matthew 16:18. Indeed, the word "church" is found only in Matthew among the four Gospels.

Gospel of John and not restricted to a (Jewish) family line[13] or an institutional structure, but open to all of creation and open to finding God in all of creation.[14] His main point is that these two must ultimately coexist, be held in tension, for a healthy spirituality that values both the *joie de vivre* that abounds in a charismatic, incarnational approach and the security, discipline, and tradition that structure provides. People need both.

> The great tragedy of the Synod of Whitby is that neither the Peter tradition nor the John tradition should have been displaced. Each represents a way of seeing firmly rooted in the gospel tradition. The decision of the synod was a fundamental rejection of the perspective of the Celtic mission. The St John tradition, with *its emphasis on the Light that enlightens every person coming into the world*, had inspired the Celtic mission to believe, like Pelagius, in the essential goodness of humanity. Similarly, St John's vision of God as the Life of the world had led this mission to look for the grace of God within as well as beyond creation. The concept of listening for the heartbeat of God within all things, ourselves, one another and the whole of creation was a feature of the spirituality of the Celtic mission that now began to be displaced.[15]

Whether or not this is an accurate interpretation of the Synod of Whitby, a theology and spirituality that focuses on the inherent goodness of all creation and human beings is indeed attractive. I want to take issue, however, with a smaller point in Newell's reading of and reliance upon the Johannine writings.

As already indicated, Newell puts a great deal of stock in reading John 1:9 in a universalistic and inclusive way: it refers to the true "Light that enlightens every person coming into the world."[16] He extrapolates:

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[13] Cf. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus in Mt 1:1-17 that places Jesus in a very particular family heritage and historical context. "The tendency in the Peter tradition ... is to see God in relation to a particular people. In Matthew's Gospel God brings salvation to the world through a specific line of descent." (Newell, *Heartbeat*, 96). John's Gospel, on the other hand, opens its story of Jesus against the backdrop of the whole cosmos with its obvious reference to the creation: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1).

[14] "The tendency in the John tradition is always to see God in relation to the whole of creation, in relation to 'all things'. It refers, for instance, to the Light 'that enlightens every person coming into the world' (John 1:9). John's canvas is the whole cosmos. His perspective is infinite. In looking at one thing, the life of Christ, his vision includes all things, for Christ is the life of all life" Newell, *Heartbeat*, 96.

[15] Newell, *Heartbeat*, 32; emphasis added.

[16] See the emphasized portion in the paragraph quoted above. He also cites the verse explicitly on p. 96 in the concluding chapter.

> In all creation, and in all the people of creation, the light of God is there to be glimpsed, in the rising of the morning sun, in the moon at night and at the heart of the life of any person, even if that person is of an entirely different religious tradition or of no religious tradition. John's way of seeing makes room for an open encounter with the Light of life wherever it is to be found.[17]

An engaging, even noble, sentiment, but one wonders just how Johannine it really is. Is "John's" spirituality really as "open" as Newell would suggest?

The first issue is, of course, the translation and interpretation of John 1:9. The 27th edition of the standard Nestlé-Aland text of the New Testament in Greek[18] prints the verse as follows: Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον (Ēn to phōs to alēthinon, ho phōtizei panta anthrōpon, erchomenon eis ton kosmon). Note that the editors of N[27]/GNT[4] have punctuated the sentence with commas[19] that lend the sense rendered by the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989): "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world," as well as its predecessor, the *Revised Standard Version* (1946, [2]1971): "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world." The relative clause, whether set off by commas in translation or not, specifies the function of the true light, aside from the main thought that the true light was coming into the world. The editors of N[27]/GNT[4] have chosen to print the commas in order to encourage this reading that it is "the true light" (τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν = singular *neuter nominative*, subject of the sentence) that "was coming (ἐρχόμενον = singular *neuter nominative* participle, complement to the neuter subject) into the world." This same understanding is represented in various modern translations as well:

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[17] Newell, *Heartbeat*, 97.

[18] B. Aland, et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993); see also B. Aland, et al., *The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / United Bible Societies, 1998).

[19] While punctuation was used in ancient and koiné Greek, it was not as common as in modern writing. Manuscript evidence is not plentiful or consistent. Cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated & revised by R. W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 10 §16, with this comment: "Modern editors are compelled to provide their own punctuation and hence often their own interpretation."

New English Bible (NEB, 1976): "The real light which enlightens every man was even then coming into the world."
Revised English Bible (REB, 1989): "The true light which gives light to everyone was even then coming into the world."
New American Standard Bible (1977): "There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."
New International Version (NIV, 1984): "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."
New American Bible (NAB, 1986): "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."
Amplified Bible (1987): "There it was—the true Light [was then] coming into the world [the genuine, perfect, steadfast Light] that illumines every person."
Einheitsübersetzung (1980): "Das wahre Licht, das jeden Menschen erleuchtet, kam in die Welt."
Bible de Jérusalem (1956): "Le Verbe était la lumière véritable, qui éclaire tout homme; il venait dans le monde" and its English translation, The Jerusalem Bible (1966): "The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world."

The interpretation of the Greek text is complicated, however, by the fact that the form ἐρχόμενον (erchomenon) can also be singular *masculine accusative* (the objective case in English). Instead of agreeing with and acting as a complement to the *subject* of the sentence (as above), in this case it would agree with the accusative ἄνθρωπον (anthrōpon) and thus be understood to modify the *object* of the relative clause, "every man." The commas would not be needed to set off the clause and the verse can be translated with the understanding that the "coming into the world" refers to every person: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This is the translation of the King James Bible and reflects Greek text editions of the sixteenth century (particularly Erasmus's NT and what became known as the *Textus Receptus*) and continues to be represented in the modern Greek editions of Westcott-Hort (1881[20]) and the Society of Biblical Literature (2010, ed. M. Holmes[21]), which choose not to

[20] B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek, vol. 1: Text; vol. 2: Introduction and Appendix* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1881).
[21] M. W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta, GA – Bellingham, WA: Society of Biblical Literature – Logos Bible Software, 2010).

print the commas in the text[22]. Reading the verse this way is also the translation/interpretation of the Latin Vulgate: "Erat lux vera quae inluminat omnem hominem venientem in mundum"—*lux vera* (true light) is (feminine) *nominative* while *venientem* is in the *accusative* case and modifies the masculine accusative *omnem hominem* (every man). Luther preferred this reading: "Das war das wahrhaftige Licht, welches alle Menschen erleuchtet, die in diese Welt kommen," as did the Catholic Douay-Rheims version (1582): "That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," and its daughter, the American Catholic Confraternity of Christian Doctrine translation (1941): "It was the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world."

This, of course, is the interpretation that Newell prefers and there is clearly a long history of reading and interpretation that supports his reading of the verse. The Greek text is ambiguous; it can be translated either way. The case can indeed be made that the close proximity of "coming into the world" to "every person" (the one immediately following the other) makes it more likely that they are in fact related as modifier and antecedent so that one can say that the light enlightens everyone who comes into the world. This is supported by some commentators.[23] As mentioned above, taken by itself it is an engaging and ennobling idea that the divine Light illuminates all persons. Yet, Newell's reading blooms into a vision of an open and charismatic community that reflects what he calls "John's way of seeing;" that "makes room for an open encounter with the Light of life wherever it is to be found;" and embraces "any person, even if that person is of an entirely different religious tradition or of no religious tradition."[24] My question above was, "Is this really Johannine?" Is the spirit of the Gospel and Letters so wide-open and all-embracing that it borders on the indiscriminate? I think that, while there is an appeal and open invitation to all people to come to discipleship, there is equally a strong emphasis on discernment, decision, even judgment, that distinguishes authentic disciples

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[22] There is no difference or dispute about the wording of John 1:9 between these versions and N^{27}/GNT^{4}; the only difference is the inclusion of the two commas. The fact that W–H and SBLGNT do not print the commas does not at all mean that they espouse understanding ἐρχόμενον (coming) as modifying ἄνθρωπον (man) and not φῶς (light), but the absence of punctuation leaves that interpretation more available than in N^{27}/GNT^{4}.

[23] For instance, R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 52 n. 2. Also, M. Winter in EDNT 3, pp. 449: "The illumination of every person does not yet mean faith, but rather the God-given possibility that can lead to faith in everyone who opens himself to the divine solicitation."

[24] See the quotation above.

from what is often referred to as "the world." I think there is support for this note of discernment in what we see in the translations of John 1:9 in most modern versions (see above) along with the translations and views of many commentators over the past 50 years.[25] The argument of C.K. Barrett is perhaps the most detailed.

Barrett acknowledges that the translation "every person coming into the world" could be related to a rabbinic expression, "all who come into the world," that was a common way of indicating "every man." Yet, the Hebrew expression is not "every *man* who comes into the world" and so is not exactly the same as in John 1:9—i.e., anthrōpos (man or person) would be redundant in the expression if this were the author's intention. The other translation, "the true light, that enlightens all persons, was coming into the world," is to be preferred because, first, in the immediately following v. 10 we read that the light "was in the world" and it makes sense that this should follow upon a statement that he was coming. We can also notice here that the contrast set up with v. 8 supports this progression through vv. 9-10: John (the Baptizer) was *not* the light but came to testify to it—the true light was coming into the world—the light was in the world.[26] Second, John elsewhere refers to Jesus as "coming into the world"—see John 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 16:28; 18:37; and see especially 3:19 "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world ..." and 12:46 "I have come as light into the world ...". Third, the periphrastic imperfect expression "was coming" (verb "to be" plus a participle) is found frequently enough throughout the

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[25] Thus, for example: C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to John. An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, [2]1978), 160–61; he does not give a complete translation but gives a detailed argument for the sense that "the real light ... was coming into the world;" see below; R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i-xii)* (Anchor Bible, 29) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 9–10: "The real light which gives light to every man was coming into the world;" G. R. Beasley-Murray,. *John* (Word Biblical Commentary, 36) (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 1.12: "This was the authentic light, which enlightens every man by his coming into the world"; E. Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1–6* (Hermeneia), translated and edited by R.W. Funk with U. Busse (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 108.117: "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world"; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John. 1. Introduction and Commentary on Chapters 1–4,* translated by Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 253–54: "He (the Word) was the true light which enlightens every man, (the light) that came into the world"; F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina) (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book. The Liturgical Press, 1998), 33.44: "The true light that enlightens everyone was coming into the world".

[26] Brown, *John*, 10.

Gospel to be characteristic of the author's style. Reading "the true light ... was coming into the world," therefore is a first reference to the incarnation that crescendos in the next few verses to full expression in v. 14: "the Word became flesh and lived among us."

Furthermore, Barrett considers what it means to say that the light "enlightens all men." The verb φωτίζει (phōtizei - here in the 3rd person singular present active) can have the "physical" meaning either intransitively to function as a source of light – thus "to shine" – or transitively to cause to be illumined – thus "give light to," "illuminate," "shine upon," or "make visible." It can also have the more intellectual or spiritual meaning to make known in reference to the inner life or transcendent matters – thus "to illumine inwardly," "to shed light upon," or also "to reveal."[27] Barrett is wary of a Hellenistically influenced interpretation that would understand the Logos à la Stoicism in which "it is natural to see in [Jn 1:9] a reference to a general illumination of all men by divine Reason, which was subsequently deepened by the more complete manifestation of the Logos in the incarnation." Thus, he would prefer the first (more physical) meaning (that the Light causes all to be made visible or exposed) because the following verse (10) stresses that "the world did not know him" and therefore "there was no natural and universal knowledge of the light." Furthermore, in view of the fact that some (even "his own") did not accept him, it is to those who do accept him that he *gives* "the power to become children of God" (vv. 11-12). Finally, Barrett stresses that throughout the rest of the Gospel of John the light functions as an agent of judgment—it exposes persons for who they truly are: some come to the light while others avoid it. Therefore, "[i]t is not true that all men have a *natural* affinity with the light" and the preferred understanding of John 1:9 should be that the true light shines on every person (whether or not every person sees and accepts it).[28]

Others would prefer to nuance Barrett's interpretation of "*enlightens* all persons" (in the sense of the glaring light of judgment that is turned upon all) to adopt an approach that understands that the light is indeed not only the light of judgment but also the light of revelation that, at one and the same time, exposes but also beckons; it illumines externally *and* enlightens internally. Those upon whom it shines are called to a decision and so are

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[27] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 161; also F. W. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG) (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1074.

[28] Barrett, *John*, 161; emphasis added.

filled or are not filled with the light themselves.[29] Indeed, as even Barrett points out, verses 10-12 illustrate this very reality: He, the Light, was in the world but the world did not know him; his own did not accept him; but those who did accept him and believed in his name he empowered to become children of God. The Light, in fact, provokes a "crisis" in its root sense of *judgment*— the Greek word is κρίσις (krisis)—not just in terms of something done to someone but also with an eye on meanings of the cognate verb κρίνω (krinō) which indicate an internal decision; a discernment.[30] The judgment is, therefore, not just a fearful thing but an opportunity; there are indeed negative consequences for failure to grasp or comprehend the light (cf. John 1:5 and the point of the whole of John 9) but there is also a positive invitation to embrace the light. We have it expressed succinctly in John 3:19-21:

> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

Again, in John 9:39-4, where Jesus replies to the Blind Man's confession of faith and the Pharisees' obstinacy:

> Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

At the beginning of this story, before the highly symbolic cure of the Man Born Blind, Jesus had said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5).

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[29] Brown, *John*, 9: "Some think this [phōtizei] does not mean the light of revelation, but the spotlight of judgment, the pitiless, all-revealing light not to be avoided. Verse 7, however, seems to imply a light that one believes in." Haenchen, *John*, 117: "... 'enlightens' (πωτίζει) must mean the proffering of the knowledge of salvation, as does "shines" (φαίνει [phainei]) earlier in verse 5." Beasley-Murray, *John*, 12: "In the face of false claims, the authentic Light is affirmed to be the Word who illumines the existence of every man (positively *and* negatively), for salvation and judgment; see 3:19-21" (emphasis original). So also, Danker, *BDAG*, 1074, who includes John 1:9 among the examples for the definition of φωτίζω as illumination with reference to the inner life.

[30] Danker, *BDAG*, 567–69.

Commenting on John 1:9, Raymond Brown observes that the "picture of light coming into the world to enlighten men is a messianic one taken from the OT [Old Testament], particularly from Isaiah."[31] In each of the "parts" of the Book of Isaiah[32], the Light is the image of the prophetic promise and the Lord's care for his people. Thus, Isaiah 9:2: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined." Isaiah 42:6-7: "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness." And finally Isaiah 60:1-2: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." Brown concludes: "The Prologue [John 1:1-18] associates the witness of John the Baptist, the Isaian voice in the wilderness, with the prophetic proclamation of the coming of the light."[33]

In all these texts the Light comes into the world and enlightens people but this occurs in contrast to darkness, or at least the awareness of darkness and the necessity of overcoming it and of championing the Light over it. For the Gospel of John, in particular, the Light is grace, to be sure, but it demands decision; it is not as indiscriminate or all-embracing as Newell would have it.

Of course, there is no doubt that the Gospel and Letters of John reflect a community that is Spirit-driven (cf. John 14:16-17.26; 15:26; 16:5-15; 20:23; 1 John 4:2.13; 5:6). Nor is there any question that this is a community built on Jesus' one commandment to "Love one another" (John 13:34-35; 14:21-24; 15:9-17, esp. vv. 12 & 17; 1 John 1:7-11; 3:14. 23). Indeed, unlike the Gospel of Matthew, in which Peter is given the authority of "the keys of the kingdom" by Jesus (Matthew 16:17-19) and there is a fairly clearly implied hierarchical structure (18:15-20), in the Gospel of John the apostolic authority behind the community, the ideal disciple, is the

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[31] Brown, *John*, 28.

[32] Virtually all modern studies of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah divide the book into three distinct sections: "First Isaiah," chapters 1-33, reflect the time of the historical person Isaiah in 8th century Judah ; "Second Isaiah," chapters 34-35; 40-55 (except for a few verses, 36-39 are identical to 2 Kings 18:13–20:19), date from the latter period of the Babylonian exile, c. 540 BCE, and the "Third Isaiah," chapters 56-66, come from the time when the exiles began to return to Jerusalem, after 537 BCE.

[33] Brown, *John*, 28. Cf. esp. John 1:6-9.15 on John the Baptist.

disciple whom Jesus loved, who appears to take precedence over Peter. It is the Beloved Disciple who is at the side of Jesus at the Last Supper and to whom Peter signals for some answer about Jesus' betrayer (John 13:23-26). It is the Beloved Disciple who stands at the foot of the cross and receives Jesus' dying spirit (19:26-30). It is the Beloved Disciple who outraces Peter to the tomb, looks in before Peter enters, and who "saw and believed" (20:1-10). Finally, it is the Beloved Disciple who first recognizes the risen Jesus on the shore (21:7), who stands by while Peter is three-times "rehabilitated" after having denied Jesus thrice (21:15-23), and who is clearly identified as the authority behind this Gospel (21:24-25)[34]. Quite obviously the disciple's identity as "the one whom Jesus loved" is what gives him authority and not his status as leader of the Twelve. Moreover, the description of the Beloved Disciple's physical position next to Jesus at the supper is descriptive on a higher level of the disciple's relationship to Jesus as, indeed, an ideal disciple. He was reclining "next to him" (John 13:23, NRSV) or, even more literally, leaning "on Jesus' bosom" (KJV). In Greek, the expression is ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ (en tō kolpō tou Iēsou) which is very similar to the expression used of Jesus' own relationship to the Father in John 1:18: εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (eis ton kolpon tou patros). Just as Jesus was "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18, KJV) or "close to the Father's heart" (NRSV), so, according to the Gospel of John, the Beloved Disciple, the ideal disciple, any authentic disciple is one who enjoys that same intimate relationship of love with Jesus. Such discipleship is truly "Listening for the Heartbeat of God" (Newell's own title). Such discipleship comes with the decision to accept Jesus' invitation to believe in and follow him; it comes with the discernment it takes to embrace the Light, with the constant awareness that the Light can be rejected and one can remain in darkness.

With that distinction in mind, we can take up Newell's assertion that the "tendency in the John tradition is always to see God in relation to the whole

[34] It should be noted here that the disciple identified as the "one whom Jesus loved" or the Beloved Disciple is never actually identified by name anywhere in the Gospel of John, nor does the text of the Gospel itself identify its author as someone named John, one of Jesus' apostles or otherwise (the titles of the Gospels were added later in the manuscript tradition). Thus, while Christian tradition early-on made the connection between the disciple whom Jesus loved who is identified in the text as the one "who is testifying to these things and has written them" (21:24) and an author named John (presumably one of Jesus' twelve disciples), the Beloved Disciple remains a rather mysterious figure, the authority behind the Gospel, who at the same time can function as a historical person in the life of Jesus and as an ideal figure who represents and models true discipleship for all.

of creation."[35] In fact, I can agree that being able to discern God in created reality / human experience is the very point of the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on the incarnation: "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14). Jesus' very human-ness is the *instrument* for finding life with God (what we usually call "salvation") and not a *detriment*. John declares that in this flesh we have seen glory—it is not glory masquerading behind flesh. "No one has ever seen God"—God is the ineffable, the invisible—"It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:18). Throughout this Gospel, then, it is precisely the fleshly Jesus and his human activity that makes God known[36]; all his actions and interactions ultimately help us understand who he is as the Light, the revealer who makes God available. It is by becoming a beloved disciple, by becoming one who is "close to the heart" or "leaning on Jesus' bosom" (13:23) that one comes to know God authentically. This then has positive implications for the human-ness and human activity of disciples and their capacity to make God known in turn. As we saw above in our mention of John 21, the intimate relationship of discipleship forms the basis for authority in the Johannine community, and this charismatic authority resists institutionalism and rigid structure. Yet, even this community experienced the need to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1; see the entire context of vv. 1-6). Not all the "world" knew or accepted the Light (John 1:10-11) and the community had to be instructed, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world ..." (1 John 2:15). Yet, while they needed to use the term "the world" to denote that element that rejected Jesus and remained foreign to their experience of God through him, the community remained confident that it was only in the worldly (to use the term ironically) flesh of Jesus, his very humanity in other words, that anyone authentically came to know God. Conversely, those who deny that Jesus in the flesh is the Christ cannot know God (1 John 4:2-6).

Is Celtic Christianity Johannine? I agree with Newell that it is, but not because it is "at the heart of the life of any person, even if that person is of

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[35] Newell, *Heartbeat*, 96.

[36] See Jesus' reply to the disciple Philip who, after being with Jesus from the beginning, says during the final discourse, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." With almost palpable exasperation, Jesus replies, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:8-9). Jesus adds a little further on, "the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father" (v. 12).

an entirely different religious tradition or of no religious tradition."[37] I would say it is Johannine precisely because it is Christian; precisely because it embraces Jesus' humanity, the earthly and earthy human experience of his disciples then and through the ages; because it embraces the very Johannine idea that God can be known precisely in and through creation and human (inter)activity (here I wholeheartedly embrace Newell's insight). But it does not include all indiscriminately simply because they are human. Instead, more subtly, it can include all who, through their humanity, discern the Light that has come into the world, decide to follow, embrace it as their own, and act accordingly in solidarity with fellow beloved disciples.

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[37] Newell, *Heartbeat*, 97; see above also.

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CHAPTER TWO

WHERE MYTH TOUCHES HISTORY: STANDISH O'GRADY'S CUCHULAIN

MARTI D. LEE

Standish O'Grady has been hailed by many, most famously W. B. Yeats, as the Father of the Irish Renaissance. This may be a slight exaggeration. While O'Grady was one of the first to make use of the myths and legends that would become a major source for many of the writers of the period, and Cuchulain, one of O'Grady's most prevalent characters, would become the symbol for Nationalist revolt, the quality, consistency and readability of O'Grady's work suggest that few may have actually experienced it firsthand. His influence on Revivalist literature, particularly with the myth of Cuchulain, is nonetheless more substantive and complicated than one might imagine. Others may not have emulated his style nor even appreciated his subject matter at first, but between his books, pamphlets, essays, and the *All-Ireland Review*, he kept his favored topics in the public eye. As cultural nationalist movements began to grow in Ireland in the late 19th century, O'Grady was in the forefront with his insistence on the purity of ancient Irish literature, hence the "race" itself, and his personal goal of making art out of history.

To understand O'Grady's ideas and ideals, one must see him in the context of his time and his contemporaries. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a huge increase in the quantity and quality of "Irish" literature—literature that took, as its basis, artistic and cultural traditions of the Irish (and the debatable "Celtic" roots of the people).[1]

[1] Historians are still sharply divided on the veracity of the genetic/ethnic origins of the people of Ireland, but for the purposes of this important cultural renaissance, Celtic culture prevailed and, consequently, gave the Irish common foundation to rally around, one that predated the British colonization of the island.

Although many Irish authors[2] had been successful for years, they had been considered "British" with little or no distinction from any other writers from Great Britain.[3] Two of the most influential figures of this Irish Literary Revival were W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory.[4] Yeats and Gregory combined to create one of Ireland's most nationalist dramas, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, a play that was so effective that it led Yeats to muse in his later years whether "that play of mine sen[t] out / Certain men the English shot?"[5] Yeats's contributions did not stop at drama as he became the poetic voice of the nascent nation and even served in the first Daíl (senate). When the rebels of Easter 1916 became martyrs for the cause, it was Yeats who would memorialize them in his poem "Easter 1916" as he helped the land mourn for the fallen heroes and simultaneously wondered whether their sacrifice had been in vain. Early in his career, Yeats was influenced by the romantic nationalist John O' Leary whose belief in the power of national legends to stir the passions and imagination of the public would become part of Yeats's philosophy for the rest of his life. The use of Irish myths, legends, and folktales would become instrumental in Yeats's dramas and poetry and solidify his friendship and collaborations with Lady Gregory whose interest in the folklore and stories of the peasants of Galway was perhaps even more passionate than Yeats's own, creating an initial bond between these two that would form the most important friendship of their lives.

Perhaps the most significant collaboration between these two would be the founding of the Abbey Theatre. Begun as a "national theatre movement," an idea dreamed up one day in 1897 in the drawing room at Lady Gregory's home Coole Park, the concept was to perform plays of Irish and Celtic themes and to show Ireland as the "home of an ancient idealism." Although they began this plan "outside of all the political questions that divide us,"[6] they soon found their project (which eventually

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[2] Jonathan Swift, Sheridan LeFanu, Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Maria Edgeworth and Oliver Goldsmith among others.

[3] Ireland had, however, a long and valued tradition of literature—oral and written and often in Irish (Gaelic)—that had been overlooked and was considered the literature of the "peasants," and hence not important enough to garner attention in other countries.

[4] O'Grady was friends with many of the most influential figures of this period, including Yeats, Gregory, J. M. Synge, A. E. (George Russell), George Moore, and his own cousin Standish Hayes O'Grady.

[5] Yeats, "The Man and the Echo", 11-12.

[6] Mary L. Kohfeldt, *Lady Gregory: The Woman Behind the Irish Renaissance* (New York City: Athenium, 1995), 114.