

defensiveness. Scheck reserves the highest praise for Ali Bonner's recent book, *The myth of Pelagianism* (Oxford 2018), but as in the case of Bonner, a more balanced interpretation is not only available but seems to be more suitable. Second, might the surge in the genre of biblical commentaries in the fourth century have served as a more informative context within which to situate Pelagius' major contribution? Scheck's notes on the text attest to the significance of other commentaries being written in the second half of the fourth century, but Scheck does little in his introductory framing of Pelagius' commentaries to speak to the significance of that broader phenomenon due to the focus placed on the Pelagian controversy he considers to be an unfortunate and undignified response to Pelagius' traditional theology. Third, is a volume like this the place to pursue what appears to be a thinly veiled anti-Protestant polemic of the sort described by scholars such as Jonathan Z. Smith as a disturbingly common trend in scholarship on early Christianity? Scheck's endorsement of Pelagius over against the perceived excesses of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings and their supporters in the Christian tradition seems to be energised by a severely anti-Protestant edge, as Scheck critiques the likes of Martin Luther and John Calvin (for example, pp. 32–5, 353) as Augustinian extremists. A final question of lesser significance: might there have been a clearer way to delineate the biblical verses than by mere quotation marks? The combination of this convention with the use of endnotes can slow down the reading process, though opting for footnotes would not be worth losing the quantity or quality of the learned notes Scheck has provided for his readers.

As has become customary, Scheck's translations and commentary will make a lasting contribution, in this case to the study of late antique biblical commentaries, the reception of Paul and the life, thought and legacy of Pelagius.

NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

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*The historian as detective. Uncovering Irish pasts. Essays in honour of Raymond Gillespie.*

Edited by Terence Dooley, Mary Ann Lyons and Salvador Ryan. Pp. 304 incl. 17 ills. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2021. €55. 978 1 84682 999 4.

*JEH* (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046922002226

This handsome book is a treasure trove of nuggets focused on Irish historical conundrums ranging in date from the fifth century to the end of the twentieth. It comprises seventy essays, each of them about 1,000 words in length, dealing with specific episodes or queries. The array of topics covered reflects the eclectic interests of the scholar in whose honour this grand *Festschrift* has been published. Raymond Gillespie has been one of the most prolific of historians on early modern Ireland and this book stands as eloquent testimony to the influences he exerted through his publications, his teaching and his interaction with colleagues. The idea of 'the historian as detective' is not a new one, but the editors use it as their organising principle to bring together an enormous team of investigators who solve some knotty cases from Ireland's past. The vast majority of the essays are comprised of micro-histories, though there are a couple of fictionalised narratives thrown in for good measure. What the best of them have in common is that they reveal how historians employ a range of strategies to find answers to puzzling

questions, and in the process confirm the old adage about genius. These essays can be recommended to students and any other would-be historians as examples of the craft. This reviewer was especially struck by Seán Duffy's essay on King John's Castle, at Carlingford, which shows a master at work and reflects Gillespie's inspiration as a teacher.

There are a great many essays of ecclesiastical interest in the *Festschrift*. Colm Lennon offers a fascinating study of the death of Richard Creagh, archbishop of Armagh, in the Tower of London in 1587/8. Lennon is Creagh's modern biographer and no one is better placed to present an account of his demise. He has likened Creagh to Nelson Mandela, another prisoner of conscience who was incarcerated for decades and yet remained an inspirational figure. Catholic sources were unanimous in claiming that Creagh was murdered in the Tower by poison. Lennon's investigation reveals that Elizabeth's secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham, 'conferred' about Creagh's future before his death and, more importantly, he had an agent inside the Tower of London when Creagh died. The agent, Robert Poley, played a key role in the Babington Plot by which Walsingham was able to eliminate another Catholic dissident: Mary, Queen of Scots, who was executed within a fortnight of the burial of the leading Irish dissident. Lennon confirms the veracity of much of the detail of the Catholic accounts of Creagh's last months in prison, while the circumstantial evidence he uncovered about Poley lends further credence to their claims that he was murdered. All in all, a very satisfying piece. Another stand-out essay is Colmán Ó Clabaigh's investigation of murder and mayhem in medieval Irish monasteries. Himself a Benedictine, Ó Clabaigh is able to shine light from an unusual angle on cases in which monks killed fellow monks. Comparing monasteries to universities he identifies one critical difference: 'academics can go home in the evening; monks can't'. In academia, he observes, antipathy among colleagues may be vented in 'an occasional vitriolic review' but 'in the 24/7 world of the medieval cloister it sometimes festered, turned toxic and erupted into mischief, mayhem and even murder'. This is a highly entertaining yet insightful exploration of life in (some) medieval monasteries compressed into a mere 1,000 words. Such is the sheer number of contributions in this book it is impossible to acknowledge them all, though it feels invidious not to do so. None the less, among the others one might mention the essays on early Christian Ireland's 'missing martyrs', on an early Irish pilgrim, on why Ruaidhrí O'Connor, the last high-king of Ireland (†1224), was offered six wives by the pope, on Irish Franciscan chicanery at a Roman funeral in 1626, on 'a very bad man' who left the Irish College at Paris in 1872, on Ireland's 'lost cardinal', William J. Walsh (†1921), perhaps 'the greatest cardinal it never had', on the churchwardens of a parish in County Longford who sued a parishioner in court because he responded too loudly to the prayers, on a defence of the Church of Ireland, on catechetical ignorance and its celebration in Irish folklore, *et cetera*. The list is not exhaustive, but it serves to illustrate something of the range of riches on offer. This book has scores of case studies that are informative and interesting, some strikingly so. One ought never to underestimate the sheer joy of reading a well-crafted essay, and this book is full of them.

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