

Yet challenging me at every turn, as a North American Christian, theologian, classroom teacher, and parent, is the question addressed by Lassalle-Klein through Sobrino: How “to do in our university way what Romero did in his pastoral way?” (180). Or, as Ashley evokes Karl Rahner in his sublime conclusion: How to help the people of our time “catch sight of” the God who loves us and enters history to liberate us from all that threatens us (268)? Pulsing throughout with the dynamism of a faith that seeks justice in the whole of life and even unto death, this is an essential collection of primary and secondary resources for advanced undergraduate- and graduate-level theological inquiry—an unflinching vision, both beautiful and costly, of a Christian faith that humanizes.

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Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation. By Jennifer Harvey. Prophetic Christianity. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. Pp. viii + 262. \$25.

Cyprian Davis and Bryan Massingale, among others, have detailed the US Roman Catholic Church’s mediocre record in dealing with racial injustice and the lack of willingness to take more extensive and effective action. Harvey is a Protestant writing for and about her fellow Protestants, but she has much to teach Catholics.

In part I, H. draws on her antiracist work and scholarship to craft a devastating critique of reconciliation as the goal of the churches’ efforts. Reconciliation ignores the actual history and devastating costs of white supremacy, still evident today in the appalling inequalities between blacks and whites. So reconciliation alone does not address the basic cause of racial alienation, massive and systemic racial exploitation. Alienation is the symptom, not the problem. Consequently, reparation must replace reconciliation as the churches’ focus.

Yet, as H. recalls in part II, Christian churches recoiled from the demand for reparations when it was presented in the Black Manifesto at Riverside Church in 1968. A few lone white voices recognized its justice, but the churches’ leadership decisively rejected the Manifesto without asking whether its charges were true and whether, therefore, reparations were in fact necessary. So the Civil Rights Movement did not engender reconciliation since its precondition, reparation, had not been met. Indeed, reparation has hardly ever been seriously discussed in church contexts—with two notable exceptions.

In part III, H. describes efforts by Presbyterians and Episcopalians to understand the workings of a system that allocates material goods and establishes social hierarchies by ascribing particular meanings to skin color. H.’s interviews and analysis of the process in the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland offer hope and point a way forward. Understanding the system led to white Christians’ commitment to work for reparations. And only reparations, H. convincingly argues, can bring about the desired reconciliation.

“Dear white Christians” will be deeply troubled by this book—and they should be. It is “overwhelming . . . to recognize and admit such evil [of white supremacy]” (227) with no clear and immediate solution in sight. Taking H.’s findings to heart, though, is an indispensable first step toward one.

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The Beauty of God’s Presence in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Eighth International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2012. Edited by Janet Elaine Rutherford. Dublin: Four Courts, 2014. Pp. 288. \$74.50.

The 15 papers in this volume treat topics tied loosely to the notion of God’s beauty in nature, Scripture, visual art, and liturgy. The theological method of the essays, as Rutherford’s introduction announces, aims to contribute to a living tradition that will benefit future generations. As in previous volumes of the Maynooth conference proceedings, the authors represent a variety of international and ecclesial backgrounds.

The result is a mix of figures and themes organized more or less chronologically. Approaches range from careful philological analysis to a contemporary artist’s meditation on the difference between the icon and “rhythmic painting.” Despite the diversity of topics, certain ancient thinkers—for example, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus Confessor—figure prominently.

Only a few studies focus on beauty itself. These include reflection on the beauty of *nous* in Plotinus and the philosophical sources for claims about divine beauty in Gregory of Nyssa and Symeon the New Theologian. Addressing perennial issues of theological aesthetics, especially the relationship between sensible and supersensible beauty, these authors summarize the issues without offering many new insights. Other essays, generally more successful, treat beautiful objects—the pearl, for instance—or alluring texts, especially the Songs of Songs, to articulate the sacramental appeal of nature and Scripture for an early Christian audience. Lastly, some essays engage rather broad topics, such as Cyril of Alexandria on the Psalms or the link between beauty and the person through the centuries; but given the limits of space, these essays fall short of adequately exploring the nuances of their subject.

The international authorship may contribute to some inelegant English style and occasional typos. Moreover, standards for the use of secondary literature vary: some authors are careful to locate their piece in the scholarly landscape, while others focus on the straight exposition of ancient texts. Still, as the introduction promises, the volume, when read as a whole, shows the centrality in early Christian thought of God who is beauty.

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