

“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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