Beauty And Revelation In The Thought Of Saint Augustine

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The beauty that Augustine was groping after in the dark, in his sin, he finally finds in God, the Source of beauty, and Beauty Itself. Augustine as lover of beauty—or, of God as Beauty—is compelling to us today. This Beauty, Augustine says, loves us, it chases after us, breaks through our defenses, ravishes us, and transforms us. From divine revelation to divine communion. Levering begins with Augustine’s works on Scripture and ends with his treatise on the Trinity. The Scriptures, according to Augustine, point us to the Trinity, and the way we achieve union with the Triune God is through the Church, the community of love and truth established by God for this very purpose. Accordingly, Levering organizes the seven key works as an expression of this deep Augustinian insight.
From ancient thought Augustine inherited the notion that philosophy is "love of wisdom" (Confessiones 3.8; De civitate dei 8.1), i.e., an attempt to pursue happiness or, as late-antique thinkers, both pagan and Christian, liked to put it, salvation by seeking insight into the true nature of things and living accordingly. This book places Saint Augustine’s theology in a new context by considering what he has to say about beauty. It demonstrates how a theological understanding of beauty revealed in the created, temporal realm enabled Augustine to form a positive appreciation of this realm and the saving power of beauty within it. It therefore reintroduces aesthetics alongside philosophy and ethics in Augustine’s treatment of God.

Augustine freely admits in the Confessions how strongly he was attracted to Platonism’s emphasis on the superiority of knowledge derived from the ideas by the mind or reason in contrast to the materialism he once imbibed as a Manichee. With impressive familiarity of Augustine’s work and judicious deployment of secondary literature, Harrison charts Augustine’s glad reception of Neo-Platonic epistemology and yet how the Christianization of his thought led him to reject Platonism’s negative evaluation of the temporal, sensible realm. For it is in the beauty of this realm, desp