

ABSTRACT

BEAUTY IN THE WORD: AMBROSE OF MILAN'S THEOLOGICAL VISION AND USE OF  
LATIN AND GREEK SOURCES IN THE *HEXAMERON*

ROBERT WARREN JOHNSON, B.A., M.A.

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY, 2026

This dissertation primarily offers an analysis of Ambrose of Milan's *Hexameron*. The *Hexameron* is a collection of homilies centered around the six-day creation story. Specifically, this dissertation endeavors to present a theology of beauty as Ambrose develops it within that text. This theology is inextricably linked to a God who orders in wisdom and speaks clearly through the Scriptures. For Ambrose, beauty is not simply related to aesthetics (though it does not ignore the aesthetic sense). Rather, Ambrosian beauty is first and foremost rooted in wisdom and truth. This finds its fulfillment in Christ Incarnate and especially Christ Crucified. The human being, responding in wonder to the sum total of this beauty, is led to worship. Ambrose's vision therefore supports a theological anthropology that specially emphasizes the transformative nature of this dynamic encounter with a living God.

After first exploring Ambrose's general approach to Scripture and the beautiful in Chapter One, his vocabulary is examined, focusing specially on the word *pulcher* (or its adverb, *pulchre*.) This word provides a lens through which to understand the beauty and design of Scripture, while simultaneously pointing to the beauty and purpose of the soul. Both point to one's ultimate end in sharing in the glory of the image of God. Chapter Two acknowledges and discusses Ambrose's use of the Christian Greek East (especially Basil) as well as rhetorical tools from the Classical Latin tradition. It argues that Ambrose's vision is not a mere copy of Basil's, even if it is familiar with and makes use of it. Rather, it is a work that stands alongside Basil's *Hexameron*. It presents new emphases in a Western Roman voice. Chapter Three discusses Ambrose's vision of creation as a whole, looking at how he adopts the language and ideas of his philosophical predecessors (such as Plato). Chapter Four brings all of these claims together, examining how the theological anthropology is lived out in worship. It does this by way of incorporating *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis*. Here, we see how the soul finds union with Christ. Its desire for the beautiful finds rest in him.