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Review of *Disciplina-Arcani, Allegorical Exegesis and the Mystagogic Character of Scripture: New Advances On the Theology of Ambrose of Mailand, German*, by C. Jacob

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self-violence of these two penitential models. Instead, she offers these as stories of women's "freedom," and moreover, as stories of women's voices. The difficult question of the correlation between these literary constructs and real women is not addressed.

The *Lives* of early women saints speak from an era almost devoid of evidence written by women themselves. The difficulty lies in how to assess their witness, which stands both with and against the voices of church fathers. This historical dilemma presents a serious, even an urgent, problem toward which this book offers sadly little help.

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"*Arkandisziplin, Allegorese, Mystagogie: Ein Neuer Zugang zur Theologie des Ambrosius von Mailand.* By Christopher Jacob. *Theophaneia* 32. Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1990. 300 pp. DM 98.

This study began as a dissertation for the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Rhenish-Wilhelm University. The title is somewhat misleading since approximately forty percent of the book is a *Forschungsbericht* dealing with previous scholarship not on Ambrose but on the definitions and origins of the *disciplina arcani*, the early Christian practice of excluding the non-baptized from parts of the liturgy. The explanations are manifold but inconclusive: Hellenistic mystery religions, gnosticism, "unwritten" apostolic traditions, and the awe-inspiring nature of the initiatory sacrament among others. Brokers joke that there are more mutual funds than stocks; although impressed with Jacob's survey, the reader comes away from the first chapter thinking that with the *disciplina arcani* there are more theories than evidence.

In chapter two Jacob argues that Ambrose, who had a strong interest in sacramental theology, became acquainted with the principles of the *disciplina arcani* and brought them into his exegesis. Allegorical exegesis inevitably had an air of mystery, not only because one could never be sure not only what underlay the literal reading of the text but also if the meanings of the text could ever be exhausted. So taken was Ambrose by the mystagogic character of Scripture and the sacraments that he actually linked his exegesis to his sacramental theology. "Der geistige Sinn der Schrift erschließt sich erst im Licht der Taufe; in dieser biblischen Hermeneutik gründet dann auch die Hermeneutik der Allegorese, die Notwendigkeit einer allegorischen Darstellung des theologischen Sinn der Schriftauslegung" ("The spiritual sense of Scripture is developed first in light of Baptism; upon this biblical hermeneutic is also based the hermeneutic of allegory, the necessity of an allegorical presentation of the theological sense of the scriptural explanation.") (p. 283).

Hardly a work for the general church historian, this book will aid those interested in Ambrose, in Late Latin exegesis, and in the *disciplina arcani*.

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Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian. Edited by JOANNE MCWILLIAM. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992. x + 237 pp. CAN \$35.00.

This short volume is a collection of papers presented at a conference held to celebrate the 1600th anniversary of Augustine's conversion. The majority of the articles are concerned with the veracity and unity of the *Confessions*. Kenneth Steinhauser, using several approaches to the problem, finds this unity in the theme of the realization of the beauty of God. Jamie Scott focuses on the term "confession"—which is not identical to "autobiography," but can refer to confession of sin, of praise, or of religious faith, as in the confessions of the Christian martyrs. The coherence of the *Confessions* is seen through this understanding of the term.

Colin Starnes attends to the problem of the apparent discrepancies between the *Confessions* and the writings at Cassiciacum. Focusing on the visions at Milan and Ostia, he concludes that the book accurately portrays the Christian growth of the convert, a growth illustrated by these visions.

Another perennial question, the Neoplatonism of Augustine, is treated by Roland Teske. Examining Augustine's use of the term "spiritual man" he finds that it refers to those who judge rightly because they are in contact with the divine ideas. The spiritual person must be in the church, but must also be adept at neoplatonic spiritualism. R. D. Crouse carries the same question further into history. He maintains that Augustine reinterpreted Neoplatonism in a Christian sense, his doctrine of the Trinity placing a higher value on the physical and visible. Eriugena and Boethius continued the same tradition, remaining faithful to his intentions.

J. J. O'Meara and Leo Ferrari both deal with the veracity of the *Confessions*. O'Meara insists that it is not an autobiography, but a "life," a tale with a moral. The theme is salvation, centering in conversion. Thus Augustine's portrayal of events is subjective, but is not invented. Ferrari also concludes that Augustine uses dramatic license, but is faithful to his own development. He uses computer data banks to show that conversion was becoming central to Augustine's thinking during the *Confessions* period, and he presented his own conversion in light of this concern.

Concerns that take us well beyond the *Confessions* are treated in other articles: T. D. Barnes, for example, speculates on the possible relationships between Ambrose and Symmachus, and their impact on Augustine's career.

William Babcock and Peter Slater trace developments concerning evil and free will through much of Augustine's career. They both contend that while