

submission always remain entwined—the will must be both shattered and sustained. Obedience is active as well as passive, so the seduction of submission is to be always drawn farther into the divine will.

Chapter 4 focuses on the later books of the *Confessions*, on time and memory, and includes intertextual connections to the *City of God*. The seduction here is the tension between time and eternity. Augustine sees sexuality as irresistibly temporal, drawn to the moment, but his reflections on memory and eternity extend desire into eternity. There is a fundamental relationship between time and desire, and Augustine considers sexuality both in Eden before time, and Paradise after time. Pleasure causes desire to grow, so eternity, then, depends on pleasure. Erotic desire seeks to stop time, but eternity is growth rather than grasping, an opening rather than a completion.

This book succeeds in what it sets out to do. Qualifications may be raised—when everything is seductive, one questions the nature of seduction. The pleasures of postmodern paradoxical prose will fail to seduce some, as will the occasional over reliance on rhetorical question. Yet, if seduction is the redirection of desire, the text succeeds. Readers wanting an historical or literary explication of the *Confessions* will be disappointed; those hoping for a thorough deconstruction of the objectionable elements of Augustine's thought will be as well. Both will be seduced, however—the poststructuralist approach to the text provides insights, intertextuality, and evocative treatment of the Augustinian themes of word, body, incarnation, and desire. While the *Confessions* may have been seduced by a contemporary reading, the reader may be seduced anew to Augustine's text.

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Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia. Edited by **Dietmar W. Winkler** and **Li Tang**. *Orientalia – Patristica – Oecumenica*. Berlin: LIT, 2009. 396 pp. \$39.95 paper.

The last ten years have seen an enormous growth of studies in the field of the expansion of Christianity to China and Central Asia via the Church of the East, documented between the seventh and the early fourteenth century. This interest, arising from a curious mix of Western interest in “non-Western” Christianities, Chinese interest in local Christian history, and the increasing possibilities of

East-West cooperation, resulted in a volume edited by Dietmar Winkler and Li Tang. To some extent, the collection, as the cover claims, includes some “cutting edge” research: many articles introduce recent finds (Central-Asian grave stones, the Luoyang stele discovered in 2006), new interpretations of older finds (notably the Xian Fu stele in at least five different contributions), and attempts to wider contextual interpretations of specific episodes. However, despite the merits of some of these articles, the volume as a whole is disappointing. This is partly due to the near absence of editing, leaving the reader with the abundant use of the term “Nestorian” despite the editors’ rejection of it, and conflicting interpretations of various issues (for example, who was Alopen who was instrumental in formalizing Christianity in China in the seventh century?). More importantly, the volume fails to systematically address the larger issues at stake: what kind of Christianity emerged in Central Asia and China; how was it related to Syriac Christianity in the Middle East (knowledge of which is lacking in many of the articles); and how can this field proceed in view of the admittedly restricted number of primary sources? It is a missed opportunity that the strengths of the individual scholars have not been put toward some collective thinking about these matters.

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Sex, Gender, and Episcopal Authority in an Age of Reform, 1000–1122. By **Megan McLaughlin**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. x + 278 pp. \$95.00 cloth.

As McLaughlin demonstrates in this impressive study, brides, mothers, and fathers were frequent topics in the writings of churchmen during the ecclesiastical reform movement of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Seeking to reform social institutions, clerics frequently wrote about marriage, condemning promiscuity, and praising chaste purity. And in even more emotional language, they defended a metaphorical marriage to the archetype of brides and mothers, the Church herself. Reformers claimed the Church was being prostituted when a simoniac bought and sold church offices; that the Church was being raped when one bishop ousted another; that an antipope was guilty of incest. Clerics used sexualized and gendered language in reforming the private life of families and the public life of the Church: they often had sexuality, gender, and kinship on their minds.