



What Are They Saying About Augustine?

Joseph T. Kelley

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This book presents an overview of the best of contemporary scholarship on the fourth and fifth century bishop, Augustine of Hippo. His life, his sermons and letters, doctrinal writings and pastoral work, as well as his own faith and spirituality are reviewed in light of new research. This Father of the Church emerges as a dynamic thinker struggling to integrate his Christian faith with the demands of reason, and to discern Christian meaning amidst the political and social controversies that plagued the late Roman world. The circumstances of his life and the dynamism of his faith are more relevant to the contemporary Christian than one might suspect.

The early- and mid-twentieth century saw new scholarly interest in and understanding of Augustine. His persistent influence on Christian theology, especially in the West, was evident, mid-century, at the Second Vatican Council; his thought is cited liberally in Council documents. Since the Council there has been an explosion in Augustine studies, marked largely by the shift from doctrinal to historical approaches and methodologies. New appreciations of Augustine's pastoral role have arisen from careful study of his sermons and letters, several of which have been rediscovered in the past several decades.

Controversy about Augustine's teachings on original sin, human sexuality, and the relationship of church and state continue. However, contemporary Augustinian scholarship invites a reconsideration of long-standing presumptions about Augustine, among both those who defend him as well as those who revile him.

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