



On the Road with Saint Augustine: A Real-World Spirituality for Restless Hearts

James K. A. Smith

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The power of a saint lies in their ability to transcend time, offering spiritual wisdom to every age no matter how remote it is from their own. In *On the Road with Saint Augustine*, James K. A. Smith recognizes this in a refreshing way that speaks to postmodern society.

Although it contains many of Augustine's biographical details, the book's primary engagement is with the hungers of the present age—among them freedom, justice, sex, and identity. Moving through the saint's life, Smith reaches into the past to provide a way forward.

Augustine is not his only guidepost. Among references to pop culture, surprising names surface, including Sartre, Derrida, and Camus, existentialist philosophers who owe a debt, in some form or another, to Saint Augustine, whether they acknowledge it or not. Smith's handling of these philosophers is sympathetic and deft.

Dressed in lovely prose, the book wends its way along the road, stopping to consider how its central Roman African bishop addressed fundamental desires found in every human heart. Avoiding didactic pitfalls, Smith displays a willingness to dialogue with thinkers who may bump against his own convictions. He rejects popular "the road is life" philosophy, instead insisting that, while the journey is vital to an individual's development, such a transitory state is not sustainable as an end in itself.

Smith is unapologetic about his own Christianity: the road must lead somewhere, and perfect satisfaction is found in God. But this is an invitation, not a demand or a threat, and it extends across centuries. Herein, Saint Augustine sounds an ancient call to anyone who has ears to hear him.

On the Road with Saint Augustine teems with beautiful spiritual insights. Here is meat and bread to satisfy the earnest and seeking postmodern soul.

MEAGAN LOGSDON (September / October 2019)

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