

Wednesday 30 November, 8th Week

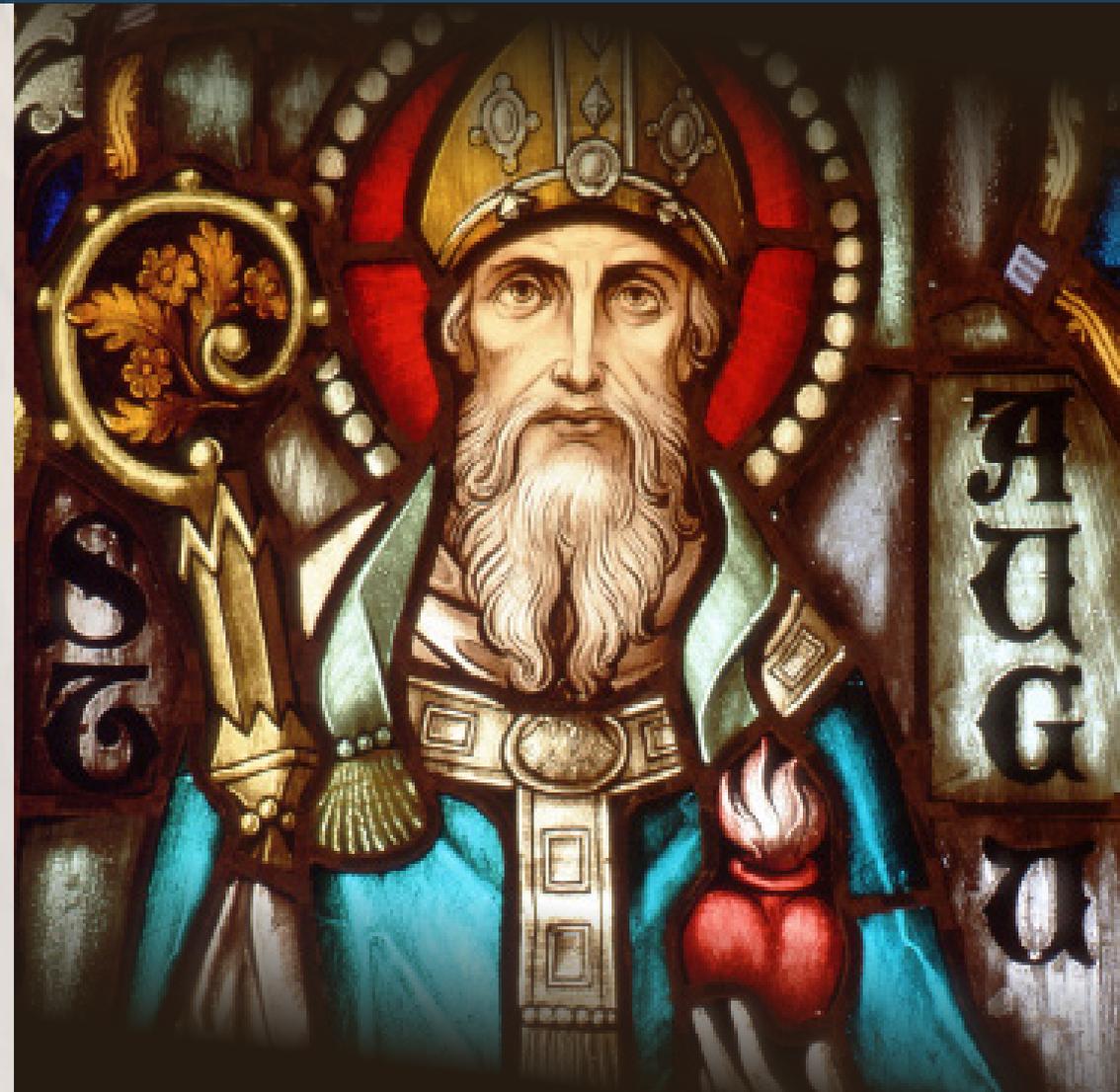
St Isaac the Syrian: Prophet of the Inner Life

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware

Isaac the Syrian, also called Isaac of Nineveh, lived and wrote during “the golden age of Syriac Christian literature” in the seventh century. Cut off by language and politics from the Churches of the Roman Empire and branded “Nestorian,” the Church of the East produced in isolation a rich theological literature which is only now becoming known to outsiders. Yet over the centuries and in all parts of Christendom, Isaac’s works have been read and recommended as unquestionably orthodox.

Saint Isaac of Syria was an ascetic, a mountain solitary, but his writings are universal in scope. They are addressed not just to the desert but to the city, not just to monastics but to all the baptized. With sharp vividness he speaks about themes relevant to every Christian: about repentance and humility, about prayer in its many forms, both outer and inner, about solitude and community, about silence, wonder, and ecstasy. Along with the emphasis that he places upon “luminous love”—to use his own phrase—two things above all mark his spiritual theology: his sense of God as living mystery; and his warm devotion to the Saviour Christ.

Kallistos Ware is the Assistant Bishop in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, sometime Spalding Lecturer of Eastern Orthodox Studies at the University of Oxford



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Recollection Series - Michaelmas 2016
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THE RECOLLECTION SERIES 2016 MICHAELMAS

Intensive introductions to some of the key periods, characters & ideas of Christian history.

Wednesday 19 October, 2nd Week

St Augustine: The Concept of Delight and the Contemporary Challenge of Consumerism.

The Rev'd Dr Mark Clavier

The power of words over minds has long been recognised: Plato and Socrates worried about it and the great Roman orator Cicero believed those who excelled in it should lead the Roman Republic. Indeed, the art of rhetoric has been considered something akin to sorcery—the ability of eloquent people to manipulate wills has been the object of admiration and of fear. Today, the same power can be seen at work in consumer culture, with its relentless shaping of people's desires, their ideas of happiness and even their identities – all for profit.

It is by and large the case that the Church has yet to awaken to the challenge of consumerism. Yet in the great fifth-century theologian of the West, Augustine of Hippo, she has a thinker who not only recognised the power of words over people but was willing to meet that worldly rhetoric head on with a new rhetoric directed towards salvation. Drawing upon his own long education in rhetoric, Augustine came to understand profoundly its underlying psychology, and to see clearly that in a fallen world of competing alternatives, heaven can be won or lost through the power of words.

To churches struggling to challenge both the excesses and the underlying potency of consumerism, Augustine offers a God whose Eloquent Wisdom can supersede all worldly rhetoric. By reading consumer culture through the lens of his rhetorical theology, Christians can be awakened to the true destiny of their restless hearts.

Mark Clavier is Vice-Principal and Charles Marriott Director of Pastoral Studies, St Stephens House, Oxford

All are invited for tea and coffee before the lecture, from 3.30pm. The lecture itself lasts about an hour, followed by a time of questions and discussion.

Wednesday 16 November, 6th Week

Doxology and Knowledge of the Heart in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, book 1

Professor Carol Harrison

This paper will explore why, when book 1 of *De Doctrina Christiana* is really about love, Augustine persisted in using the categories of signs and things, and use and enjoyment, even though they give rise to so many difficulties, and proved so inimical to what he actually wanted to say. It argues that, in fact, these classical categories are subverted and transformed by Augustine's treatment of the double commandment of love of God and love of neighbour and his conviction that God can ultimately be known only by a 'knowledge of the heart'—one which leads, not to an exercise of the intellect but to doxology or praise of the unknowable, ineffable God. It takes issue with recent trends in Augustine scholarship which, in examining Augustine's debt to Stoicism, appear to have undermined his doctrine of grace and loving knowing.

Carol Harrison is Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, Christ Church

There will no Recollections Lecture in 4th Week. Instead, on 2 November, we will be celebrating a Requiem Mass for All Souls Day at 6.30 pm.

