

The Greatness of Humility: St. Augustine on Moral Excellence. By Joseph J. McNerney. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016. xvi + 197 pages. \$26.00 (paper).

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The Greatness of Humility is both an exegesis of Augustine on humility and a defense of humility, as Augustine understood it, against its ancient rivals and modern critics. “The thesis of my study,” Joseph J. McNerney writes, is “that the height of human greatness includes and is dependent upon humility” (4).

The opening chapter addresses ideals of greatness in ancient philosophy, concentrating on Aristotle’s *megalopsychia* (“magnanimity,” “great-souledness”) but reviewing also the ideals of Stoic virtue, Ciceronian *Gloria*, and Plotinian ascent to the good. Three chapters follow, exploring the links of humility to other central themes in Augustine’s theological anthropology and ethics. McNerney begins from the idea of the human person as in the image of God. Human greatness consists in imaging the Trinity as fully as possible through knowledge and love of God. But in us the image of God is obscured and distorted because of sin, such that it cannot be restored by our own efforts. It takes humility to acknowledge that we cannot do it on our own, and to be receptive to God’s grace. In the intellectual realm, greatness requires curbing our pretension to understand God on our own and humbly accepting faith in Christ, as Augustine illustrates in his own case in book 7 of the *Confessions*. In so humbling ourselves, we become like the God who became human “even to death on a cross” (Phil 2:8) and like the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth, “the personification and standard of humility” (107). In the *City of God*, humility and pride become the marks of the two great communities into which humanity is divided: “The earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self” (14.28).

After expounding Augustine on humility, McNerney devotes a chapter to the moral theories of David Hume and Friedrich Nietzsche, for whom humility and human greatness are opposed. In his concluding chapter, McNerney argues for the “humble greatness” of Augustine’s ideal person over the rival Aristotelian, Humean, and Nietzschean ideals. A US Navy commander and professor in the Department of Leadership, Ethics, and Law at the US Naval Academy, McNerney looks at the theories through the lens of leadership and asks whether readers would prefer as their leader a haughty Aristotelian great-souled person; a Humean concerned primarily to seek pleasure and avoid pain; a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, scornful of the herd; or an Augustinian humble leader, capable of self-criticism and free of ill-will toward others.

The Greatness of Humility is a revised 2012 doctoral dissertation from The Catholic University of America. In keeping with contemporary Augustine scholarship, it draws substantially on Augustine's sermons and biblical commentaries as well as his more systematic works. The writing is clear enough that undergraduates could use this book for research on Augustine's idea of humility. However, too much of the infrastructure of the dissertation remains in place here. Far too many sentences serve to move blocks of argument into place, like cranes installing Jersey barriers. Almost any point made once is made (and documented) several times, and some of them need not be made at all (for instance, the first two sentences on page 67, both of which assert that Scripture had great influence on Augustine's moral theory).

But it was something other than the writing that troubled me as I read. The world is full of people who think too highly of themselves. They celebrate touchdowns, campaign for president, maybe write book reviews. I do not find them, however, among undergraduate women who take classes in spirituality. Such students tend to internalize humility as a mistrust of self that undermines personal agency and confidence—the very attitude Hume and Nietzsche deplored. To them I like to quote Saint Teresa of Avila on humility as an accurate self-knowledge that allows us to accept gifts and responsibilities from God that we might otherwise reckon too great for us. Augustine, at least as McNerney presents him, shows little awareness of this problem, but occasionally (e.g., 184) McNerney comes close to admitting that Hume and Nietzsche may have a point.

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Seeking Shalom: The Journey to Right Relationship between Catholics and Jews.

By Philip A. Cunningham. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. xii + 268 pages. \$30.00 (paper).

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Philip Cunningham has made the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* an occasion to document and analyze the history, development, controversy, and prospects surrounding the “most profound change in the ordinary magisterium of the Church” to emerge from Vatican II. It is clear, judicious, thoroughly documented, and insightful. Built substantially on Cunningham's published work of the past two decades, which has been diligently refashioned to avoid the many potential pitfalls of a “collected works” book, *Seeking Shalom* is a coherent account of the main themes of the new Catholic theology of Jews and Judaism. It can serve well as an introduction