

## Ambrose, Augustine, and the Pursuit of Greatness

Since Aristotle, the concept of the magnanimous or great-souled man was employed by philosophers of antiquity to describe individuals who attained the highest degree of virtue. Greatness of soul (*magnitudo animi* or *magnanimitas*) was part of the language of Classical and Hellenistic virtue theory central to the education of Ambrose and Augustine. Yet, as bishops they were conscious of fundamental differences between Christian and pagan visions of virtue. Greatness of soul could not be appropriated wholesale. Instead, the great-souled man had to be baptized to conform with Christian understandings of righteousness, compassion, and humility. In this book, J. Warren Smith traces the development of the ideal of the great-souled man from Plato and Aristotle to latter adaptations by Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch. He then examines how Ambrose's and Augustine's theological commitments influenced their different critiques, appropriations, and modifications of the language of magnanimity.

J. Warren Smith is Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Duke Divinity School. He is the author of *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa* (Crossroad, 2004) and *Christian Grace and Pagan Virtue: The Theological Foundation of Ambrose's Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

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J. WARREN SMITH  
*Duke University*



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*In meorum magistrorum memoriam*

Abraham J. Malherbe

(1930–2012)

who first taught me to read Christian texts in their  
Greco-Roman context

Marilyn McCord Adams

(1943–2017)

who with warmth taught me that studying historical  
theology is doing theology

*et potissime*

Rowan A. Greer

(1934–2014)

who taught me how to see the Fathers as broken  
lights that nonetheless give flashes of insight into  
the One who is light and life

Sir Thomas More: Why not be a teacher? You'd be a fine teacher;  
perhaps a great one.

Richard Rich: If I was, who would know it?

Sir Thomas More: You; your pupils; your friends; God. Not a bad  
public, that.

Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons*

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*Super omnia, Deo omnia gloria et honor et laus.*

## Abbreviations

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abraham</i>	Ambrose
<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>	Plutarch
<i>Alc. 1</i>	<i>Alcibiades, I</i>	Plato
<i>Alc. 2</i>	<i>Alcibiades, II</i>	Plato
<i>An. Post.</i>	<i>Analytica Posteriora</i>	Aristotle
<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annales</i>	Tacitus
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology for David</i>	Ambrose
<i>Artax.</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>	Plutarch
<i>b. vita</i>	<i>De beata vita</i>	Augustine
<i>ben.</i>	<i>De beneficiis</i>	Seneca
<i>c. duas ep. Pel.</i>	<i>Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum</i>	Augustine
<i>c. Faust.</i>	<i>Contra Faustum</i>	Augustine
<i>c. Jul.</i>	<i>Contra Julianum Manicheum</i>	Augustine
<i>Cain</i>	<i>De Cain et Abel</i>	Ambrose
<i>Cat. Min.</i>	<i>Cato Minor</i>	Plutarch
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>	
<i>civ. Dei</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>	Augustine
<i>clem.</i>	<i>De clementia</i>	Seneca
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>	Augustine
<i>Constant.</i>	<i>De constantia sapientis</i>	Seneca
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>	
<i>De amic.</i>	<i>De amicitia</i>	Cicero
<i>de Or.</i>	<i>de Oratore</i>	Cicero
<i>De tranq. anim.</i>	<i>De tranquillitate animi</i>	Plutarch
<i>Disc.</i>	<i>Discourses</i>	Epictetus
<i>div. qu.</i>	<i>De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>	Augustine
<i>doc. Chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina Christiana</i>	Augustine

<i>en. Ps.</i>	<i>enarrationes in Psalmos</i>	Augustine
<i>ench.</i>	<i>enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide spe et caritate</i>	Augustine
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>	Seneca
<i>ep. Jo.</i>	<i>In epistulam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus</i>	Augustine
<i>Eth. Eud.</i>	<i>Ethica Eudemia</i>	Aristotle
<i>Eth. Nic.</i>	<i>Ethica Nicomachea</i>	Aristotle
<i>fn.</i>	<i>De finibus</i>	Cicero
<i>Her. F.</i>	<i>Hercules Furens</i>	Seneca
<i>Hex.</i>	<i>Hexameron</i>	Ambrose
<i>Iac.</i>	<i>De Iacob et uita beata</i>	Ambrose
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>	Homer
<i>Inst. ora.</i>	<i>Institutio oratoria</i>	Quintilian
<i>inv. rhet.</i>	<i>De inventione rhetorica</i>	Cicero
<i>Ios.</i>	<i>De Ioseph</i>	Ambrose
<i>Ira</i>	<i>De Ira</i>	Seneca
<i>Is.</i>	<i>De Isaac vel anima</i>	Ambrose
<i>Luc.</i>	<i>Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam</i>	Ambrose
<i>Max. cum prin.</i>	<i>Maxime cum principibus philosopho</i>	Seneca
<i>Med.</i>	<i>Meditations</i>	Marcus Aurelius
<i>Nab.</i>	<i>De Nabuthae</i>	Ambrose
<i>nat. d.</i>	<i>De natura deorum</i>	Cicero
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>	
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>	Homer
<i>Off.A.</i>	<i>De Officiis</i>	Ambrose
<i>Off.C.</i>	<i>De Officiis</i>	Cicero
<i>paen.</i>	<i>De paenitentia</i>	Ambrose
<i>pat.</i>	<i>De patientia</i>	Augustine
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>	Plato
<i>Phoc.</i>	<i>Phocion</i>	Plutarch
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>	
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politica</i>	Aristotle
<i>Prae. ger. reip.</i>	<i>Praecepta gerendae reipublicae</i>	Plutarch
<i>psal.</i>	<i>Expositio psalmi</i>	Ambrose
<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica</i>	Plato
<i>Rh.</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>	Aristotle
<i>S.</i>	<i>Sermones</i>	Augustine
<i>sacr.</i>	<i>De sacramentis</i>	Ambrose
<i>SC</i>	<i>Source Chrétiennes</i>	
<i>Sol.</i>	<i>Soliliquia</i>	Augustine
<i>Spir.</i>	<i>De Spiritu sancto</i>	Ambrose
<i>Sym.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>	Plato
<i>Them.</i>	<i>Themisocles</i>	Plutarch

*List of Abbreviations*

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<i>Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i>	Augustine
<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes</i>	Cicero
<i>vera rel.</i>	<i>De vera religione</i>	Augustine
<i>virg.</i>	<i>De virginibus</i>	Ambrose

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