

and Christian alike, and the more recently enrolled *nouveaux riches* crowd. This chapter is a must read for anyone who has followed the ups and downs of this question.

This fresh thinking is also on display in the penultimate chapter, where Lizzi Testa provides a detailed analysis of the politics leading up to Alaric's sack of Rome in 410. Where others have portrayed the Senate as little more than a municipal body at this point, she describes it as "a lively, multilingual, quarrelsome institutional body, deeply conservative but also prone to unscrupulous solutions" (189), and dismisses religion as a motivating factor in the Senate's eventual decision to oppose the court and throw its weight in with the usurper Attalus. The concluding chapter on St. Valentine demonstrates the range of Lizzi Testa's interests, but also testifies to the way her deep familiarity with the genealogy of the Senatorial aristocracy unites the various themes of this book. Combining hagiographical clues with information from the Codex-Calendar of 354, she identifies the patron saint of lovers as a member of the clan of the Symmachi and an early Christian convert who shared the broad-minded views espoused by Quintus Symmachus in his argument for return of the Altar of Victory.

Lizzi Testa's decision to build her chapter about new topics results in much more continuity than the typical translation of previously published work allows. It also allows for nice changes of pace in topics, but underlying all is the detailed understanding of the fourth-century Roman aristocracy that is her hallmark. Every chapter contains a discussion at the granular level that will be of primary interest to specialists. But the chapters are well signposted, and the variety of topics, along with the instruction Lizzi Testa provides on how to use a variety of sources and methodologies, make this book of interest to a wide variety of readers.

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***Ambrose, Augustine, and the Pursuit of Greatness.* By J. Warren Smith. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 350 pp. \$99.99 hardcover.**

J. Warren Smith has shared with us a wealth of reflection, information, and resources for further research. He has bridged the divide between Classical and Christian notions of the highest degree of virtue. For those who are unfamiliar with the discussions that surround this topic, the book is a thorough introduction. For those who are familiar with them, he has provided a nuanced and judicious assessment of the trajectory of thought from the Athenian reception of Homer to Augustine. He has given a fair presentation of diverging views among modern scholars on ancient questions concerning the end of virtue, suicide, and chastity. Smith traces an organic development in which the ideas of earlier thinkers form the basis for later developments. Under the pressure of historical circumstances and then with the rise of Christianity, Classical ideals were transformed into Christian ideals based on conscience (*conscientia*: the self-knowledge of a virtuous soul in the presence of God) and the abandonment of the honor-humiliation axis for the cultivation of humility, the essential condition for

true self-knowledge. With some irony, Smith refers to the great but humble Christian as the “small-souled” man who realizes that greatness lies in one’s participation in a “divinely authored drama” (274).

The book is divided into three parts. In Part I, Smith considers the perfection of Classical virtue in Greek and Roman thinkers. He begins with Socrates, the iconic great-souled man for all the ancient schools of philosophy. Then he turns to Aristotle, who accepts the role of honor in the life of the Athenian citizen but shifts the emphasis to virtue as the basis for honor. More austere than Aristotle, Plato identifies the pursuit of honor with ambition and the appearance of virtue. In his counter-Homeric myth of Er, three of the Homeric heroes choose nonheroic lives in their reincarnation. For both Plato and Aristotle, the great-souled man is primarily a lover of virtue rather than of honor.

In chapter 2, Smith turns to Rome. He reviews the teachings of Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch. As Cicero wrote, the Roman republic was being torn apart by warring ambitions. He replaces the cardinal virtue of fortitude with *magnitudo animi*, the high courage to seek the common good, justice, and liberty in the face of adversity, suffering, and death. Seneca, a Stoic and prime minister to Nero, understood that philosophy could no longer be used to establish a just political order (81). Instead, he attempted to show that it was in the best interests of both emperor and empire to temper governance (*imperium*) with clemency. Finally, Plutarch engaged in the diplomatically delicate task of writing complementary lives of Greek and Roman great-souled men. In the life of Phocion, especially in his unjust arrest and execution, Plutarch portrays Phocion as a self-sufficient Stoic who endured shame and dishonor with equanimity and without resentment.

Ambrose was the ideal writer to bring the Classical notion of the great-souled man into the Christian ethical and literary idiom (Part II, Chapters 3 and 4). The pagan philosophers taught virtue by using exemplars from Homer and from history; Ambrose, educated in the tradition, used the same methods in his catechetical treatises and in the *De Officiis*. Following the exegesis of Paul, Ambrose used Old Testament patriarchs, figures of Christ from a golden age where a nobler and more liberal virtue was based on the faith of Abraham, as models for Christians living under the new covenant. Thus, Ambrose made a claim for continuity between the best of Israel and the Christian Church and for the superior virtue of Christianity over that found under the Jewish Law. The love of Christ enables Christian gentiles to fulfill the commandments of the Old Law in ways that Jews could not. Based on this love, Christians also attain a level of virtue that far surpasses Cicero’s *exempla*. For Ambrose, the magnanimous, great-souled Christian is compassionate beyond the measure prescribed by Cicero. The patriarch Joseph is his prime example. Joseph did not take revenge on his brothers, or feel resentment towards them, but gave them food and welcomed them into Egypt in their need. “Joseph illustrates the difference between Stoic clemency and Christian compassion and between Christian and Ciceronian liberality” (159). The standard by which Ambrose’s mercy is measured is God’s mercy in the economy of salvation.

For Ambrose and Augustine after him, the great-souled Christian stands before God by means of his conscience and in humility as a creature who is capable of sin but saved by the mercy of Christ. In chapter 5, Smith compares Ambrose’s David and Plutarch’s Phocion to examine pagan and Christian virtue under duress. When he is shamed and humiliated, David has two advantages over Phocion. He has hope in God’s eschatological reward, and he is more realistic, humbly considering his own imperfections. David is Ambrose’s *humilitatis magister* (185); he is great-souled because of his great humility.

In Part III, Smith shows Augustine's continuity with the teaching of Ambrose and his development of it. In Chapter 6, Smith analyzes Augustine's use of the term *magnus animus* and concludes that it describes one who is bound to God in love. Greatness consists paradoxically in the Christians' recognition that they are lowly souls made to praise, love, and adore God. Again, the love that unites them to God finds its fullest expression in compassion (236). In chapter 7, Smith looks at Augustine's critique of Roman virtue and his refinement of the Christian ideal. In the *City of God*, Augustine develops the significance of conscience as he considers the plight of Christians after the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410, many of whom had taken refuge in North Africa. He is confronted with the pastoral two-edged sword of women who committed suicide to avoid rape and those who endured rape and dishonor in order to avoid suicide. Augustine has often been accused of an unfair and heavy-handed critique of Lucretia. Smith does an admirable job of showing how in the judgment of chastity, the witness of conscience outweighs the witness of death (257).

We owe J. Warren Smith a debt of gratitude for providing us with a thorough and excellent account of the pursuit of virtue and greatness in the ancient world. He has shown both the making of the great-souled man in pagan and early Christian writers and the immense difference Christianity brought to the horizons of greatness.

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Sharing Myths, Texts and Sanctuaries in the South Caucasus: Apocryphal Themes in Literatures, Arts and Cults from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Edited by Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev. *Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha* 19. Leuven—Paris—Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2022. xx + 363pp. €105.

To outsiders, the region named for the Caucasus Mountains often evokes wonder, fear, and confusion. Routinely imagined to lay at the juncture of “East” and “West,” Caucasia’s peoples are often described as living *between* worlds, that is, occupying the margins—and sometimes constituting a bridge linking—the great “civilizations” of Afro-Eurasia. Though ubiquitous, this characterization cannot be defended, for pre-modern Caucasia was a dynamic, long-term site of cultural production and cross-cultural encounters. The modern obsession with nations and ethno-linguistic groups has added additional layers of confusion. A welcome corrective is offered by this thoughtful and engaging volume, which is based on papers presented at a conference held at Universität Regensburg in February 2020. Edited by noted Armenologist Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev, it offers snapshots of late antique and medieval Caucasia that underscore the region’s agency, interconnectedness, mobility, diversity, and cross-cultural contribution to the Eurasian ecumene.

Dorfmann-Lazarev sets the scene in the superb introduction. His definition of the South Caucasus, the focus of this tome, encompasses lands between the Black and