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Grace, Endeavours and *Emma*

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Emma (1816), arguably an ultimate masterpiece that represents 'the culmination of Jane Austen's work as a novelist', offers questions to ask while reading[1]. This piece examines some reasons why it has universal appeal. The most obvious is its reliance on individuals' endeavours. Although in her prayers she places God's Grace as an essential part of people's thoughts and behaviours, encouraging human strife and endeavours, Austen concentrates her description in her novels on human part. The essential divine help is taken for granted or intentionally hidden. Thus, even those who do not share Christian faith could accept the world where they value self-examination, self-control and self-discipline. As expected in her works, this significance of the self goes hand in hand with the scepticism about personal point of view. Indeed, the letters and conversation reveal unreliability and selfishness of the personal views and the first-person narrative. And all this serious business of the self is done light-heartedly in *Emma*.

[1] David M. Shapard, ed. *The Annotated Emma by Jane Austen* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), xxi.