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Nineveh Overturned: Augustine and Chrysostom on the Threat of Jonah

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Abstract

Both John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo find in the story of Jonah and the Ninevites an invitation to reflect upon the moral and political challenges undergone by cities facing the possibility of disaster. While Nineveh was threatened with destruction at the hands of the divine, cities like Constantinople and Rome were instead threatened with disaster of a natural or military kind, ranging from earthquakes to invasions. Regardless, both Chrysostom and Augustine thought the lessons of Jonah could be applied to contemporary crises. The two pastoral preachers did so in quite different ways, however. For Chrysostom, the repentance of the Ninevites in the face of a divine threat served as a model for his own congregation. For Augustine, however, the divine was incapable of uttering threats, and so Jonah's prophecy had to come true: Nineveh had to be overturned. In order to make this case, Augustine reconfigured the meaning of the word "overturning" (*euersio*), so that he could make the case that the repentance of the Ninevites was driven not by their fear, but rather by the combined agency of divine grace and political coercion.

Augustine did not know much about the historical destruction of Nineveh. What he did know was mediated to him by scripture, which speaks of Nineveh more than once. Augustine could have, for example, culled his understanding of Nineveh from Nahum 2.7–9 and 3.1–7. There we find the demolition of the city prophesied as punishment for Neo-Assyrian aggression. But Augustine is not terribly interested in Nahum or the crimes of long-dead empires. Instead, he views Nineveh through the lens of Jonah. Although it earned derision from pagan critics, the tale of Jonah's adventure in the whale's belly remained popular among ancient Christians, in no

small part due to the fact that it typologically prefigured Christ's death and resurrection.¹ The message of repentance also resonated, with the Ninevites standing as shining examples of Gentile piety.² Christians could put such *exempla* to work on behalf of their own agenda, as John Chrysostom did in his homiletic invocations of Jonah. And while Chrysostom distinguished himself in many ways, he still stands as a representative of a late ancient tradition into which Augustine would emerge as something of a rebel.³

Augustine, nevertheless, is not entirely removed from this tradition. He, too, interprets Jonah in terms of repentance. But this theme is not as clear-cut as it might seem. It was not enough for Christians to acknowledge that the Ninevites repented, then imitate them in repentance. The figure of Nineveh, Augustine thought, can teach us more than that. It can relate the possibility of mass repentance to the question of what actually constitutes a city, which in turn helps us reflect on what it means for a city to be destroyed. Nineveh can further show us what role authority—divine and human—has to play in overturning a whole city. By reading Augustine's interpretation of Jonah alongside that of Chrysostom, we can better appreciate the gap between the exegetical approaches they took when applying scripture to the traumas afflicting their own communities, from Antioch and Constantinople to Hippo and Carthage (no strangers to disaster). This hermeneutical rift demarcates two rival political theologies of disaster in late antiquity.⁴

JONAH IN LATE ANTIQUITY

In Jonah, God tells his prophet to announce that Nineveh is to be overturned, overthrown, or destroyed (depending on the translation). According to those who consulted the Hebrew text, this catastrophe was to take place in forty days. Augustine's African *Uetus Latina*, reflecting the

Septuagint, told him the Ninevites were given only three days.⁵ Regardless of the exact deadline, what made an impression on Augustine was how plainly God prophesied Nineveh's end. "In three days," Jonah (3.4) declared on behalf of God, "Nineveh will be overturned." It sounded like a promise, and for Augustine promises of God were impossible to frustrate. Given his understanding of divine immutability and omnipotence, there was no way for this prophecy to go unfulfilled. Yet go unfulfilled it did, at least according to Jonah. The people of Nineveh heard Jonah's message and, to his great surprise, repented for their sins. God relented; the city survived. Does that make the prophecy false? Was it a mistake, a broken promise, or even a lie? Was it a strategic warning, prodding the Ninevites to moral regeneration, though never intended to be carried out?⁶ Would that make it a noble lie of divine providence?

Before exploring how Chrysostom and Augustine answer these questions, it would be wise to contextualize them within the history of ancient Christian Jonah-exegesis. The common move was to associate Jonah's whale-borne adventure with the death and resurrection of Christ, regardless of how many days either event might have taken. The list of Jonah-as-Jesus proponents is long: Tertullian,⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem,⁸ Ambrose,⁹ Theodore of Mopsuestia,¹⁰ Theodoret,¹¹ and Augustine himself.¹² Even Irenaeus already has Jonah typologically prefiguring both Christ and those who will be saved through faith in Christ.¹³ As he explains:

So also, from the beginning, God did bear human beings to be swallowed up by the great whale, who was the author of transgression, not that they should perish altogether when so engulfed, but arranging in advance the finding of salvation. This was accomplished by the Word through the "sign of Jonah" [Matt 12.9–40] for those who held the same opinion as Jonah regarding the Lord, and who confessed and said, "I am a servant of the Lord, and I worship the Lord God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." [Jonah 1.9] So

human beings, receiving an unhoped-for salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God, and repeat, “I cried to the Lord my God in my affliction, and he heard me from the belly of Hades.” [Jonah 2.2].¹⁴

For Irenaeus, Jonah adheres admirably to the dictates of the divine. Making a case for the prophet’s humility (in itself an admirable attempt), Irenaeus diminishes any hints of delusional self-righteousness. Yet while it is true that Jonah’s initial fidelity to the Lord is presented as laudable, the twists and turns of the text have left many with the sense that perhaps the prophet’s confidence was misplaced.

So what did other Christians make of Jonah’s frustrated confidence in his own prophecy? 1 Clement 7.7 sketches the story: “Jonah preached destruction [καταστροφήν] to the people of Nineveh; but those who repented [μετανοήσαντες] of their sins made atonement to God by their prayers and received salvation, even though they had been alienated from God.”¹⁵ Here, as in Ephrem’s Syriac,¹⁶ Jonah is an item in a list of famous repentances. God told Jonah to warn the Ninevites of their destruction; the Ninevites repented and were saved. To pose questions concerning prophetic truth and divine immutability would seem out of place. The lesson is: we must repent like the Ninevites. Echoing the sentiments of 1 Clement, Theodoret and Ambrose both emphasize divine mercy.¹⁷ What seemed like a divine threat yielded to God’s forgiveness. The innocence of Nineveh’s children, adds Salvian, moved the divine heart to mercy.¹⁸ Others found Jonah more fruitfully confusing. Cyril of Alexandria and Gregory Nazianzen focus on Jonah’s real expectation that material destruction would befall Nineveh.¹⁹ For them, the prophet’s frustration should not be elided in the name of God’s forgiveness.

Long before Cyril, Origen introduced Alexandria to the issue of Jonah’s frustration. In his *Homilies on Jeremiah*, he posed some unsettling questions:

I will venture an inquiry into how God might deceive [ἀπατᾶ] and say certain things so that sinners stop doing the things they would be doing if they did not hear these words. Take the one who said: “In only three days, Nineveh will be overturned [καταστραφήσεται].” Was he speaking truthfully? Was he speaking untruthfully? Was he speaking deceptively [ἀπατῶν], with a deceit that converts [ἀπάτην ἐπιστρέφουσιν]? If no conversion took place and the overturning of Nineveh followed, would this then be truth-telling rather than deception [ἀπάτη]? It depended upon those who heard.²⁰

There is much to consider here.²¹ Does God deceive in order to save? If not, how can God’s promise to destroy Nineveh go unfulfilled? If so, what must we say about the mechanics of salvation? Taken to one extreme, this account has God threatening actions he will never take. In that case, the threat gives the urban populace a chance to respond either correctly or incorrectly. Their response constitutes the fulcrum of their salvation. If the Ninevites responded rightly, the threat would be negated. If they responded wrongly, the threat would be fulfilled. The outcome of the prophecy would hang in the balance, contingent upon Ninevite initiative.²²

It is as yet unclear whether Jonah understood the contingency involved in his prophecy. Turning to Jerome, however, we find Augustine’s contemporary emphasizing Jonah’s ignorance of the open-endedness of God’s utterance. In his *Dialogue against the Pelagians* (415 C.E.), Jerome reads Jonah in light of the text (Jer 18.7–8) that occasioned Origen’s exegesis. To those concerned by divine inconstancy, Jerome tells us:

God will respond through Jeremiah: “At one point, I might speak against a people and their kingdom, saying that I would uproot it and destroy it and ruin it. But if those people repent from their evil because I spoke against them, then I too will repent from the evil I thought of doing against them. At another point, meanwhile, I might say that I would nourish

people and build up their kingdom. But if that kingdom does evil in my sight and does not hear my voice, I will repent from the good I said I would do for it.” In his time, Jonah got angry about having to become a liar at God’s command. But Jonah stands convicted of unjust sorrow: he would rather destroy countless people with honesty than save just as many by lying.²³

For Jerome, reading Jonah in terms of divine contingency was prophetically mandated by this intertextual link to Jeremiah. The quotation is full of conditional statements about what the deity might do if certain people act in one way rather than another. This conditionality of divine action is indexed to temporal points of demarcation: at this instant, God says this; if, at a later instant, the situation changes, God too will change his intention. It is this divine contingency that hubristic Jonah missed. The prophet wanted above all to speak truth, not falsehoods, even if those falsehoods turned out to be engines of salvation. Yet, for Jerome, that is precisely what they were. God did make Jonah speak falsely. The content of the prophecy was not true.²⁴

THE THREAT OF JONAH IN CHRYSOSTOM

Whereas Origen and Jerome leave us with tantalizing hints, Chrysostom presses ahead with divine contingency in Jonah. Comparing passages across John’s corpus reveals shared tendencies across contexts, such as his sense that the prophet’s anger cannot be dismissed.²⁵ In his *Homilies on Repentance*, preached in Antioch around 386–87 C.E., Chrysostom sounds a note that would not be dissonant if heard from Jerome three decades later:

“The word of the Lord,” they say, “came and said to Jonah, ‘Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh.’” Simply put, the Lord wanted to shame Jonah through this great city, since he saw in advance that the prophet would flee. But let us also listen to this preaching: “In only

three days, Nineveh will be overturned.” But why do you say that you will do such terrible things, Lord? “So that [ἵνα] I will not do what I say I am going to do.” That is why the Lord threatened [ἠπειλήσεν] the Ninevites with Hell: so that he would not throw them into Hell.²⁶

For Jerome, it was possible that Jonah had been instructed to speak falsely for the sake of salvation. The elevated end justified mendacious means. For Chrysostom, the divine utterance is not just contingent, but intentionally misleading. Why does God foretell a false future? “So that” (ἵνα) God would not have to follow through on his threat (ἀπειλή, ἀπειλεῖν). Such a reading is consonant with Jerome’s Jeremiah, subsuming the deity into conditional discourse, as if God were saying, “If you repent, I will change my mind; if you do not repent, I will stay the course.” Instead of making a true claim about the future, the divine utterance simply spurs the Ninevites to repentance, thereby avoiding the contingently posited destruction.

Chrysostom’s God speaks through Jonah so that he will not have to act upon the declaration he forces Jonah to utter. Even if we want to avoid the word “deception,” it must at least be admitted that divine misdirection is in play. But does this therefore mean that God’s decision not to destroy Nineveh is contingent upon human action? Chrysostom’s phrasing above avoids the wait-and-see approach of Jerome’s deity, but raises new questions: If God is promising to overturn Nineveh so that he will not have to overturn Nineveh, does this mean he is forcing the Ninevites to repent? Is God’s relation to the people primarily causative? If we look to other passages, however, we find the causative power of God still mitigated by contingency. The truth-value of the prophetic statement ultimately depends upon Ninevite initiative.

Chrysostom’s *Homilies on Lazarus and the Rich Man*, preached 388–89 C.E., emphasize the people’s response to God in Jonah. There John stresses similarities between the Ninevites

and his fellow citizens. In the wake of an earthquake, the disaster theologian reminds his audience things could have been worse.²⁷ The quake was a warning meant to trigger a reaction:

Think about what we would have suffered if it had seemed like a good idea to God to bring every last thing down. I am saying this so that your fear of what happened will always be heightened and your thoughts will be fixated on it. He shook us, but did not tear us down. If he wanted to tear us down, he would not merely have shaken us. But since he did not want to tear us down, the earthquake was a messenger announcing the wrath of God to everyone so that, becoming better through fear, we might delay real vengeance.²⁸

The threat of destruction serves as a warning to repent, lest further destruction rain down upon the city. No metaphor, this city is a material reality ruled by real-world politics.²⁹ Chrysostom was not the first to politicize and theologize disasters. Earthquakes, specifically, were a recurring concern in the Eastern Mediterranean. While Chrysostom's early sermons were in Antioch,³⁰ literature also abounds on seismic events in his later home, Constantinople.³¹ There, earthquakes found their way into liturgical commemorations, which reenacted the city's mass repentance—led by the emperor—to ward off aftershocks.³² Christians were even more likely than their polytheistic forebears to posit divine (rather purely natural) etiologies for quakes.³³ Sources from Nilus³⁴ to Nestorius³⁵ attest to this; even the *Trisagion* finds its origin in a quake.³⁶ Politics and repentance, like theology and disaster, get inextricably interwoven. Whereas Constantinopolitan calendars enshrined earthquakes liturgically, Chrysostom inscribed his political theology of disaster homiletically.³⁷

Accordingly, Chrysostom is comfortable rendering disasters theologically legible.³⁸ He connects his own context to that of Jonah, daring to interrogate God in the second person:

God did the same sort of thing with foreigners: “In only three days, Nineveh will be overturned.” So why do you not overturn it, God? You threaten [ἀπειλεῖς] to raze it to the ground. Why not raze it to the ground? “Because I do not want to raze it to the ground. That is why I threaten [ἀπειλῶ].” So why do you say it? “So that [ἵνα] I will not do what I say, let my word go first and prevent my deed.” And so: “In only three days, Nineveh will be overturned.” In those days, it was the prophet who spoke. Today, it is the [crumbling] walls that make a sound.³⁹

God’s response to Chrysostom’s questioning is that there is an intentional disjunction between the prophetic utterance and the action to be undertaken. Chrysostom’s account of contingency remains subtler than Jerome’s: rather than sitting back and waiting, God arranges the situation so that it leads to mass repentance. Yet the people’s initiative remains crucial. God does not wish (οὐ βούλομαι) to destroy Nineveh, which is what necessitates the threat. But that wish could still be frustrated, leading to actual destruction. God’s word goes ahead of his activity, “so that” (ἵνα) he does not have to act rashly and destroy what he wishes not to destroy. The working-out of divine activity rests upon the response of the people. If they respond rightly, God gets his wish; if they respond wrongly, God would have to reluctantly destroy Nineveh against his wishes. The situation facing Chrysostom’s audience is the same. Their crumbling walls are a divine warning, akin to Jonah’s: repent, and you will not be crushed.⁴⁰ The choice is yours.

In his *Homilies concerning the Statues*, also delivered to the Antiochenes back in the spring of 387 C.E., Chrysostom addresses his congregation’s fears of retaliation following their *lèse-majesté* against imperial statuary.⁴¹ Already we find him adopting a pastoral attitude, applying the story of the Ninevites to the uncertain future facing his people.⁴² The message is one of hope, rooted in the virtuous activity of the Ninevites and the mercy of God. “The virtue

[ἀρετή] of these people was great, but much greater was God’s love for humankind,” says Chrysostom in the middle of his homily.⁴³ The magnitude of the threat is proportionate to the magnitude of divine φιλανθρωπία. Fear is not so distant from love. A few passages earlier, Chrysostom had remarked:

Their fear gave birth to salvation. The threat [ἀπειλή] dispelled the danger. The sentence of overturning stopped the overturning. A new, astonishing thing happened: the sentence threatening [ἀπειλοῦσα] death gave birth to life.⁴⁴

Threatening is the appropriate speech-act when one wants to instill fear of a hypothetical outcome. That is how it becomes the means for mercy in the case of the Ninevites, who are given the opportunity to display their virtue in response to a divinely uttered threat.

Keeping in mind Chrysostom’s pastoral purpose, it becomes clear that this lesson applies just as well to his city. The hope for salvation survives thanks to providentially appointed periods during which the choice to repent lies before the masses. Chrysostom’s exegesis, walking a fine line between human initiative and divine providence, leads to a stark claim regarding the outcome of Jonah’s prophecy, as the preceding lines of this same passage attest:

For Jonah certainly did threaten [ἠπειλήσε] the city of the Ninevites. “Only three days,” he said, “and Nineveh will get turned upside down [καταστραφήσεται].” What then? Tell me: was Nineveh turned upside down? Was the city overturned [ἀνετράπη]? No. The opposite happened. The city rose up. It got brighter. In all the time since, the brilliance of its glory did not disappear. All of us still sing of it now, amazed that ever since then it has become a safe harbor for all sinners. Rather than sending us off to fall into despair, it calls us all to repentance, through both what it achieved and what it received from God’s foreknowledge.⁴⁵

Chrysostom's interpretation of the divine utterance as a threat undermines the idea that prophecy must be a true statement about the future. It is no surprise that he mentions Jer 18.7–8, the same passage cited by Origen and Jerome.⁴⁶ Despite God promising Nineveh's destruction, the point of the story is that Nineveh was not destroyed. Jonah's statement had no truth-value. That was never the goal. The goal was to create a contingent set of circumstances in which the Ninevites had the choice to repent or not.⁴⁷ Providence arranges the parameters of the situation, but the "virtue" (ἀρετή) of the people determines the outcome.⁴⁸

Chrysostom's pastoral hermeneutics determines this exegesis, described by some as "semi-Pelagian."⁴⁹ Yet David Rylaarsdam has argued that John's approach is by no means pitted against the finer points of Neoplatonic theology (including divine immutability).⁵⁰ The bishop is merely employing the rhetorical instrument of συγκατάβασις to accommodate his message to his audience.⁵¹ The reading of Jonah that matters most, from this perspective, is one that resonates homiletically. Rhetorical strategy, not speculative acrobatics, fine-tunes that resonance.

In defending John's συγκατάβασις, Rylaarsdam builds upon the work of Margaret Mitchell, who had in turn built upon Frances Young's revision of the Antioch-Alexandria dichotomy. Abandoning the polarity of "literal" and "allegorical" exegesis, we must instead conceive of a spectrum between rhetorical incision and philosophical precision.⁵² Placing Chrysostom along this spectrum, we sense he was interested in fomenting change within his own city, not impressing the scholars of Egypt. This implies no value judgment: John's approach is no worse for being pitched rhetorically and politically. "Chrysostom would argue," says Rylaarsdam, "that teaching Scripture using the techniques of one's culture does not preclude coherent theological ideas."⁵³ A clarification of the Antioch-Alexandria dichotomy need not prevent us, then, from appraising the theological coherence of Chrysostom's exegesis. We can

appreciate the effect of homiletic συγκατάβασις, while at the same time spying theological trouble down the road. Jonah forces exegetes to take a stand on the problems of divine immutability and contingency, thereby revealing otherwise hidden rifts in the realm of theological hermeneutics.

In addition to using συγκατάβασις to avoid a confusing debate, Chrysostom also sought to exhume the historical roots of scripture itself, via what Mitchell calls a “necromantic intention.”⁵⁴ Scripture is for John a relic; it makes present the saintly figures about whom it speaks.⁵⁵ Long dead, their situations—and their cities—still speak to us now. This is clearest in John’s encomia of Paul as a dead author resurrected in exegesis.⁵⁶ Could a similar logic apply to Jonah? Admittedly, the prophet did not resonate with Chrysostom as deeply as did the Apostle. Yet the desire to homiletically resurrect the dead—a city of the dead—remains. Necromancing the Ninevites collapses the distance between them and John’s audience. As an *exemplum*, Nineveh finds its meaning not only in its own historical instantiation, but also in its re-instantiation in the crumbling walls of Antioch or Constantinople.⁵⁷

THE TRUTH OF JONAH IN AUGUSTINE

A sustained Augustinian exegesis of Nineveh can be found in *City of God* 21, composed no later than 426–27 C.E.⁵⁸ There the context is a discussion of whether or not God would condemn anyone to eternal punishment. Unlike several of his forebears, Augustine is willing to explore the possibility that the divine plan does not eventuate in universal salvation. If the destruction of Nineveh was foretold merely as a warning, some might suppose, then perhaps hellfire too is an empty threat.⁵⁹ Augustine rejects this out of hand. For him, God’s promise to overturn Nineveh was just that: an unconditional promise to overturn Nineveh. Augustine reminds us that “God did

not say, ‘Nineveh will be overturned if the Ninevites fail to realize they need to repent and so correct themselves.’ He did not announce the future overturning of that city with such a stipulation.”⁶⁰ The declaration was simply that Nineveh would be overturned in three days; no further qualification was needed.

If that was God’s prophecy, and if such a prophecy cannot fail to be fulfilled, then it remains for Augustine to show us how Nineveh was in fact overturned, when his source states explicitly that it was not. We might expect him to invoke the fact that the historical Nineveh was indeed destroyed at a later date, as does Tobit.⁶¹ Augustine does no such thing. Instead, he takes us deeper into the text. He points out that the verb used for Nineveh’s destruction—at least in his version—is *euertere*. This word certainly could mean “to destroy,” but it can also be broken down into its components, *ex* and *uertere*, leaving us with “to turn out” or, as we might say, “to overturn.”⁶² Taking the verb this way grants Augustine interpretive latitude. It allows him to reflect upon what it means for a wayward people to undergo *euersio*:

Sinners are overturned in two ways. Either the people themselves are punished for their sins, as with the Sodomites, or the sins of the people are destroyed by repentance, as with the Ninevites. And so what God predicted did happen. Nineveh was overturned.⁶³

On one level, this is mere allegoresis.⁶⁴ The literal destruction of Nineveh does not occur, and so the exegete relativizes the meaning of the text by taking refuge in a metaphorical use of its main verb. This is what allows Augustine to make his point about repentance as moral rupture, in which God takes the lead role in upsetting humanity’s ethical stagnation.⁶⁵

On a different level, though, we might pry into what Augustine is doing by looking at how he determines what exactly a city is. This would in turn allow us to frame his discussion of Nineveh as a reflection bearing upon his own urban context. What, then, was Nineveh? Was it

the sum of its walls and its temples and its houses? Or was it something else? Augustine makes his point most bluntly not in the ornate *City of God*, but in the plain speech of a sermon delivered in the winter of 410–11 C.E.:

Pay attention to what Nineveh was, and see that it was overthrown. What was Nineveh?

They ate and they drank. They bought and they sold. They planted and they built. They had time for perjury and lies and drunkenness and crimes and corruption. This was Nineveh!⁶⁶

For Augustine, the city was not so much a physical space as a cycle of habits. The *eversio* of Nineveh would then be the fasting and lamentation of its people, the covering of men, women, children, and even animals in bristling sackcloth. Augustine did take the lesson of Jonah to be one of repentance. But he was not arguing that, in light of divine warnings, we should repent so that God will change his mind and have mercy on us. Augustine found such a reading naïve, misconstruing both God's nature and God's role in our repentance. Instead, his message was that God overturns us and brings about conversion in us through the efficaciousness of his own incontrovertible prophecy. This was the *eversio* at the heart of Jonah.

Augustine held this view alongside the ever-present risk of cities undergoing quite literal destruction. Back at the beginning of the *City of God*, dating to 413–14 C.E. (closer to Alaric's sacking of Rome and the sermon just cited), he linked the specter of destruction to the problem of moral renewal.⁶⁷ There he told the story of Scipio Nasica, the Roman statesman who opposed the destruction of Carthage, claiming rivalry kept the Romans vigilant. Virtue was best cultivated as a matter of life and death. Scipio predicted that, if Rome's superiority became unchallenged supremacy, a disintegration of the city's moral fabric would follow. In Augustine's view, the prediction hit its mark. Carthage was destroyed, and the golden age of Roman morals was brought to an end in the circus and the theater.⁶⁸ Here we find the same verb Augustine uses

when talking about Nineveh: *euertere*.⁶⁹ But whereas Nineveh was morally overturned for the better, Rome took a turn for the worse. In both cases, the walls still stood—for a time.

Just as Nineveh's role as an imperial center came to an end, so would Rome's. This fear of decline reached a crisis point with Alaric's arrival. The question of how to respond to the threat of a city's destruction was a live one. Augustine's *City of God* was of course written in the wake of this seemingly seminal event, but it is again in his sermons that we find him weaving together the theme of repentance and the threat of destruction most intimately. In these homilies, Augustine plows over the same scriptural text to turn up new possibilities. Preaching in Carthage in the summer of 411 C.E.,⁷⁰ he retells the story of Nineveh, now in light of the Psalms:

Even after the prophet's warnings, even after that voice said, "In three days Nineveh will be overturned," [Jonah 3.4] the Ninevites talked to one another about whether they should ask for mercy. "Who knows?" they said in their discussion, "perhaps God will go reflect on his decision for the better and have mercy on us?" [Jonah 3.9] This was an uncertain matter. That is why they said, "Who knows?" Because of this uncertainty, they sought repentance, and they merited certain mercy. They threw themselves to the ground in tears. They fasted. In sackcloth and ashes, they threw themselves down to the ground, groaning and crying. God spared them. Nineveh stood. Or was it overturned? Well, it appeared one way to people, but another way to God. I, however, think that the prophet's prediction was fulfilled. Look again at what Nineveh was. See that it was overturned.⁷¹

Augustine spins for us a familiar tale about repentance as moral inversion, but he also introduces a point about perspective. "It appeared one way to people," he says, "but another way to God." The divine view on these matters is far from evident to us. Catastrophes of the greatest magnitude—the desolation of cities—can be used by God as mere figures. Even if the emphasis

is on the moral overthrow of Nineveh or Rome, the historical fact that both cities were constantly threatened with physical destruction lurks between the lines. The divine plan, for Augustine inscrutable, includes within itself the horrifying realities of Nineveh's fate or Rome's destiny.

These two faces of *euersio*, moral and physical, are similarly intertwined in Augustine's remarks on African cities. In the same sermon delivered at Carthage, he projects the overturning of the Ninevites onto the African metropolis, now a regional center in Rome's empire:

Who would not call this city [i.e. Carthage] "overturned," if all those unhealthy people who are abandoned to their own nonsense ran heartbroken to the church, calling upon the mercy of God for their past actions? Would we not say, "Where did Carthage go?" It was overturned, because it is not what it was.⁷²

Unlike Nineveh, Carthage had already been destroyed (and reborn) before the question of its repentance was raised. Regardless, Augustine continues to draw out his definition of what a city is in light of both its moral habits and the memory of its literal destruction. The matter of a city's moral *euersio* still sits uncomfortably close to the possibility of its physical *euersio*.⁷³

Although it was politically risky to relate Nineveh's destruction to threatened cities like Rome and Carthage, Augustine was not afraid to call upon the imperial power woven into their urban fabric. This mattered most in ecclesiastical wars waged against the Donatists, who (in his view) hubristically considered themselves the virtuous remnant of the one true church in Africa. After years of attempts to persuade them to join his flock, Augustine decided that coercion would also be acceptable.⁷⁴ Sympathetic powers of the state could be called upon to compel resistant Donatists to attend the proper services and recognize the right clergy.⁷⁵ A later work in which Augustine made the case for this strategy was *Contra Gaudentium*, written in 419 C.E. as a response to Gaudentius, the Donatist bishop of Thamugadi in Numidia. In this text we find

another of Augustine's treatments of Nineveh. Here his focus shifts from the meaning of *euersio* to the brute mechanics of how the Ninevites came to repent. While God remains responsible for overturning the city, it turns out that the king of Nineveh had a role to play, as well.

The core of the debate between Gaudentius and Augustine is whether civic authority should intervene in matters of morality and faith. In his reading of Jonah, Gaudentius emphasizes the fact that God sent a prophet—not a ruler—to spur the Ninevites on to renewal. To Augustine, this reading glosses over the events of Jonah 3.6–9.⁷⁶ There we find that it is not the commoners' reaction to the prophet that brings about their repentance. It is only when the prophecy reaches the king that meaningful change can begin:

When this message reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his chair and tore off his clothes. He put sackcloth on himself and sat back down in ashes. The same message was then proclaimed by the king and the other powerful people. They said, "People and mules and sheep and cows should neither taste anything nor be fed, nor drink any water." And so the people and the mules put on sackcloth. At great cost, they cried out to the Lord. Each one turned away from the path of evil injustice, which they had in hand. At long last, do you hear that the king cared about this, though it displeases you that this belongs to the care of kings? What was done [by the people] was done at great expense, certainly, though it was less than what ought to have been done. It was for this reason, then, that the Ninevites were driven to penitence by the governing power of the king—by improvements, proscriptions, and perhaps the terror of soldiers—because they fulfilled his commands obediently.⁷⁷

The repentance of Nineveh could never be accomplished without its king.⁷⁸ In this instance, the ruler acted as an instrument of the divine; in that respect, some connection is retained to the

liturgical commemoration of imperially motivated mass repentance in the disaster theology of Constantinopolitan records.⁷⁹ If a heathen king could play a role in a people's conversion to piety, then a Christian ruler holds a greater responsibility to do the same. The story of Nineveh contained within itself lessons for not only surviving the decline of Rome, but even thriving within whatever remnants of Roman authority still stood.

Just as with Chrysostom, the theological weight of Jonah in Augustine was revealed via his hermeneutical style. Michael Cameron has argued that Augustine's approach to scripture underwent a sea-change as he moved from Neoplatonic neophyte to episcopal exegete.⁸⁰ Instead of revelling in the disjunction between literal and figurative meanings, Augustine forged connections between those two semantic levels, so as to reach richer hermeneutical depths. His reading of Jonah bears that out. Yet Augustine was also a revered rhetorician, making him no enemy of Chrysostom's in the field of homiletics. Accommodation via *συγκατάβασις*, however, was not a trademark of Augustinian sermons.⁸¹ As Mitchell has shown, this is not the only hermeneutical distinction between Augustine and Chrysostom.⁸² When it comes to Jonah, that distinction shades over into issues of theological substance: again, the debate over the graceful primacy of divine agency rears its head.

Though primarily concerned with Augustine's early figurative exegeses, Cameron begins his work with Augustine's reply to Volusianus, a Roman politician assigned to Africa.⁸³ Volusianus asked a common question: why had Christianity failed to save Rome from Alaric's attack? Looking to scripture, Volusianus suggests it contains too many teachings that undermine sociopolitical stability. Augustine replies that Volusianus has failed to think like a Christian (to paraphrase Cameron).⁸⁴ The goal is not to look for roadmaps to geopolitical success in scripture; instead, the idea is to acknowledge the distance between socioeconomic flourishing and moral

renewal. Figurative exegesis heeds this distance. In the context of Jonah, that means detaching the true *eversio* of Nineveh from the material question of its destruction. The same logic applies to contemporary disasters, natural or otherwise. Whether it is an earthquake in Antioch or the Goths at the gates, the desire to find just-so theological explanations is misplaced. Reading God's wrath onto the natural or political landscape without allowing for critical, hermeneutical distance is where the real threat lies. This is what, for Augustine, Volusianus cannot see. Whereas Chrysostom, the necromancer, sought to raise the Ninevites from the dead so as to make his pastoral incision into present politics, Augustine let the dead lie dead. For him, the impetus to repent resided not in what the Ninevites did, but in what the Ninevites signified.

CONCLUSION

To Chrysostom and Augustine, the story of the Ninevites said something about the relationship between a city's sanctity and its survival as a material compound, packed with human bodies. But the moral health and physical well-being of a city both remained precarious. Jonah brought these two fragile features of the city together. The promise to overturn Nineveh called to mind an existential threat, only later revealing itself as a claim on moral regeneration. For Augustine, this led not to divine contradiction, but to our own rethinking of what cities are. Chrysostom wanted to reform the ancient city; Augustine sought to transform our understanding of what cities can be.⁸⁵ His exegesis held Jonah's statement to be true: "In three days, Nineveh will be overturned." Jonah was no liar. There was no deception. The prophecy strikes us as a feint only if we fail to understand the meaning of "Nineveh."

Two moral theologies of repentance thus flowed into two political theologies of disaster. While both pastors wanted to shepherd their flocks toward greener moral pastures, they differed

in their views on how civic sin was to be overcome. Baptizing the exemplary virtue of the Ninevites, Chrysostom cast contemporary disasters as divine warnings in order to provoke social change in his city. Attributing ethical transformation to immutable grace, Augustine distanced disasters from the divine in order to redefine the *ciuitas* apart from Pelagian and Donatist presumptions to virtue. This move away from an etiology of θεομηνία marks a meaningful shift from Chrysostom to Augustine. Nevertheless, Augustine's approach remains political, as evidenced by his appropriation of Nineveh in defense of coercion. If the city is something other than its walls, if it is instead the collective continuation of its moral habits, then the forces protecting that city might have a stake in those habits. Rulers would have as much interest in the piety of the people as in the strength of the walls. The figure of Nineveh thus takes us from reminders about repentance to reflections on the nature of sociopolitical bodies. Yet despite reimagining the city as a system of moral habits, Augustine could never bypass the question of its physical fate. Though he remains silent on Nineveh's historical end, the sacking of Rome and the destruction of Carthage linger in the background, just as earthquakes in Antioch or Constantinople did for Chrysostom. The moral overturning of a city must always be negotiated alongside the possibility that it could be overturned in a more literal sense. This thought might have troubled the mind of the dying Augustine in 430 C.E., as the Vandals prepared to overthrow Hippo.

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¹ Ariane Magny, “Porphyry in Fragments: Jerome, Harnack, and the Problem of Reconstruction,” *JECS* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 515–55, esp. 529, citing Augustine’s *Ep.* 102.30 (CSEL 34.2:570; 409 C.E.); Jeremy Schott, “Porphyry on Christians and Others: ‘Barbarian Wisdom,’ Identity Politics, and Anti-Christian Polemics on the Eve of the Great Persecution,” *JECS* 13, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 277–314, esp. 305, citing *Contra Christianos*, fr. 46.

² Aug. *Ep.* 102.37 (CSEL 34.2:577); Hier. *Ion.* (SC 323:166–68; CCL 76:379). Cf. Timothy Hegedus, “Jerome’s Commentary on Jonah: Translation with Introduction and Critical Notes,” M.A. Thesis (Wilfred Laurier University: 1991); Thomas M. Bolin, *Freedom beyond Forgiveness: the Book of Jonah Re-Examined* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 25–29, and Bolin, “Jonah 4:11 and the Problem of Exegetical Anachronism,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 24 (2010): 99–109.

³ This contrast between Chrysostom and Augustine is motivated in part by Elaine Pagels, “The Politics of Paradise: Augustine’s Exegesis of Genesis 1–3 versus That of John Chrysostom,” *Harvard Theological Review* 78, no. 1–2 (January–April 1985), 67–99, esp. 69, where Pagels makes the case for taking Chrysostom as “representative” of Augustine’s “predecessors.”

⁴ On disaster theology, see: D. K. Chester, “The Theodicy of Natural Disasters,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51, no. 4 (Nov. 1998): 485–506; Terence Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: the Bible, God, and Natural Disasters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); Ann Duke, Brenda Ihssen, and Kevin O’Brien, “Natural Disasters as Moral Lessons: Nazianzus and New Orleans,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* 6, no. 1 (Mar. 2012): 56–70.

⁵ In *Ciu.* 18.30 and 18.40 (CCL 48:621, 635), Augustine has “three days” paralleling Christ’s death and resurrection. Jerome had “forty days” paralleling Christ’s sojourn in the desert. Cf. Aug. *Ep.* 71.3 (CSEL 34.2:253; ca. 403 C.E.), narrating the Bishop of Oea in African

Tripolitania introducing Jerome's version to his congregation with little success. The Jewish community was asked to judge between the two versions, surprisingly deciding in favor of the African text. See also: Paula Fredriksen, "*Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei: Augustine on Jews and Judaism*," *J ECS* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 299–324, esp. 302n8; Mark Humphries, "Rufinus' Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin *Ecclesiastical History*," *J ECS* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 143–64, esp. 148; Hillel Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers," *J ECS* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 421–52, esp. 44; Josef Lössl, "A Shift in Patristic Exegesis: Hebrew Clarity and Historical Verity in Augustine, Jerome, Julian of Aeclanum, and Theodore of Mopsuestia," *AugSt* 32, no. 2 (2001): 157–75, esp. 158.

⁶ Julia Fleming, "By Coincidence or Design? Cassian's Disagreement with Augustine concerning the Ethics of Falsehood," *AugSt* 29, no. 2 (1998): 19–34, esp. 30–32, which unearths the anti-Augustinian polemic within *Coll.* 17.25 (CSEL 13:488–96), an argument for threatening worse punishments than one intends to deliver.

⁷ Tert. *Pud.* 10 (SC 394:196–200; CCL 2:1299–1301) and *Res.* 58 (CCL 2:1006–1007).

⁸ Cyr. H. *Catech.* 14.20 (PG 33:850).

⁹ Ambr. *Iob* 4.6.25 (CSEL 32.2:285).

¹⁰ Thdr. Mops. *Os.-Mal.* 152–53 (PG 66:321). Eric Phillips, "Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Pedagogy of Destruction," in *Suffering and Evil in Early Christian Thought*, ed. Nonna Verna Harrison and David G. Hunter (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016): 161–70, esp. 163–66, on Jonah's pedagogy of destruction: his threat carried weight only because God had destroyed past enemies of Israel. Cf. *Os.-Mal.* 166 (PG 66:340–41; FC 108:202). See also Robert Wilken, "*In Novissimus Diebus: Biblical Promises, Jewish Hopes, and Early Christian Exegesis*," *J ECS* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 1–19, esp. 2: "Even Theodore of Mopsuestia, who was critical of the

indiscriminate application of prophetic texts to the life of Christ, recognized that several psalms (2, 8 and 45) and some passages from the prophets, e.g. Joel 2.28, Zech 9.9, Mal 4.5–6, et al. and the book of Jonah referred to Christ.”

¹¹ Thdt. *Os.-Mal.* 1459–61 (PG 81:1721). See: Derek Krueger, “Typological Figuration in Theodoret of Cyrrhus’ Religious History and the Art of Postbiblical Narrative,” *J ECS* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 393–419, esp. 403; Jeanne M. Heisler, “Gnat or Apostolic Bee: a Translation and Commentary on Theodoret’s *Commentary on Jonah*,” Ph.D. Thesis (Florida State University, 2006).

¹² Aug., *Ep.* 102.31 (CSEL 34.2:571). See Frederick van Fleteren, “Augustine’s Principles of Biblical Exegesis, *De Doctrina Christiana* Aside: Miscellaneous Observations,” *AugSt* 27, no. 2 (1996): 109–30, esp. 116.

¹³ John Behr, “Learning through Experience: the Pedagogy of Suffering and Death in Irenaeus,” in Harrison and Hunter, *Suffering and Evil*, 33–48, esp. 43: Irenaeus’s Jonah signified “the transgressing human race and its Saviour.”

¹⁴ Iren. *Haer.* 3.20.1. Here I rely upon the text of Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Contre les Hérésies*, Sources Chrétiennes 211 (Paris: Cerf, 1974), 382–86. Behr, “Learning Through Experience,” 40, offers this amended translation.

¹⁵ Translated by Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 55. Cf. Alberto Ferreiro, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture XIV: the Twelve Prophets* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 144–45: “Jonah announced destruction to the Ninevites and they repented of their sins, besought God in prayer and, estranged though they were from God, obtained salvation.” Unless otherwise noted, translations from Greek and Latin below are my own, though I frequently consulted Ferreiro’s versions.

¹⁶ See: P. J. Botha, “Antithesis and Argument in the Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian,” *Theological Studies* 44, no. 3 (1988): 581–95; Botha, “Contrast and Contrivance in Ephrem the Syrian’s Hymn *De Virginitate* XLIV,” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 12, no. 1 (2001): 30–40; Sebastian Brock, “Ephrem’s Verse Homily on Jonah and the Repentance of Nineveh: Notes on the Textual Tradition,” in Antoon Schoors and Peter Van Deun, eds., *Philohistōr: Miscellanea in Honorem Caroli Laga Septuagenarii* (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 71–86; Christine Shepardson, “Interpreting the Ninevites’ Repentance: Jewish and Christian Exegetes in Late Antique Mesopotamia,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 14, no. 2 (2011): 249–77.

¹⁷ Thdt. *Os.-Mal.* 1475–76 (PG 81:1740); Ambr., *Ep.* 60 (CSEL 82.2:118–19).

¹⁸ Salv. *Ep.* 4 (PL 53:163): “At first wounded by the sins of the Ninevites, God softened at the crying and wailing of its infants. Admittedly, we do read that the entire populace mourned. Still, it was the fate facing the innocent children that merited mercy above all. As God says to Jonah, ‘You are so sad over your vine.’ (4.9) And later: ‘Should I not then pardon the great city of Nineveh, with its 120,000 inhabitants who do not know left from right?’ (4.11) God was declaring that, because of the integrity of the innocent, he would pardon the crimes of the guilty.”

¹⁹ Cyr. *Os.-Mal.* 386–87 (PG 71:633–35); Gr. Naz. *Or.* 2.106 (PG 35:505; SC 247:224–26).

²⁰ Or. *Hom. in Jer.* 19.15.55–75: Ninevites fell into two groups: (1) the deceived, who repented and were saved; (2) those who were not deceived and despised the prophecy, knowing God would not destroy Nineveh and refusing to repent. Though correct, they met the worst fate: *πυρὶ αἰωνίῳ παρεδίδοντο*, says Origen. Here I have relied upon the edition of Pierre Nautin and Pierre Husson, *Homélie sur Jérémie XII-XX*, Sources Chrétiennes 238 (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 10–298.

²¹ For context, see Mark S. M. Scott, “Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: the Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen’s Universalism,” *J ECS* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 347–68, esp. 365–66, rendering *Hom. in Jer.* 20.3.2 (SC 238:260): “Perhaps then, as a father (πατήρ) wishes to deceive a son (υἰόν) in his own interest while he is still a boy (παῖς), since he cannot be helped any other way unless the boy is deceived, as a healer (ιατρός) makes it his business to deceive the patient (κάμνοντα) who cannot be cured unless he receives words of deceit, so it is also for the God of the universe (ὁ τῶν ὅλων θεός), since what is prescribed has to help the race of men (τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος).”

²² Scott, “Guarding the Mysteries,” 366: “God threatens eternal hellfire, then, to promote our spiritual progress by spurring us to action; it is a benevolent deceit, designed to spare us from suffering. This interpretation finds support in the ensuing passage, where Origen illustrates the principle of pedagogical accommodation through the book of Jonah, where God vows to destroy Nineveh, only to relent after the people repent.”

²³ Hier. *Pelag.* 3.6. Here I have relied upon the edition of Claudio Moreschini, *Dialogus aduersus Pelagianos*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 80 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 48. Jerome’s dialogue and the Vulgate have Nineveh “subverted” (*subuertetur*) rather than “overturned” (*euertetur*).

²⁴ Cf. Augustine against noble lying in *De Mendacio* (CSEL 41:413–66; 395 C.E.) and the anti-Priscillianist *Contra Mendacium* (CSEL 41:469–528; 420 C.E.). See also: Alan Brinton, “St. Augustine and the Problem of Deception in Religious Persuasion,” *Religious Studies* 19 (1983), 437–50; Boniface Ramsey, “Two Traditions on Lying and Deception in the Ancient Church,” *Thomist* 49 (1985), 504–33; and Thomas Feehan, “Augustine’s Moral Evaluation of Lying,” *AugSt* 21 (1990), 67–81. Not all Christians agreed; see Fleming, “By Coincidence or Design?,”

32: “Cassian offers his reader two interpretations of the threat against Nineveh, each of which undermines one of Augustine's positions: in order to explain the passage, one must accept either an ethical view of falsehood or a theology of grace which the bishop would reject. Either choice, from this perspective, would seem to put Augustine in the wrong. In Jonah 3:4–10, perhaps Cassian thought that he had found biblical confirmation of his counterpart's theological flaws.”

²⁵ Chrys. *Poenit.* 2.3.20. Here I have relied upon the edition of J.-P. Migne, *Opera Omnia Quae Exstant* I, *Patrologia Graeca* 49 (Paris: 1862), 287-289.

²⁶ Chrys. *Poenit.* 5.1 (PG 49:308). This passage mixes scripture with conjectures about what God might say.

²⁷ On Chrysostom's earthquakes, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 88–92 (the Antioch quake of 396 C.E.), 167 (the Constantinople quake of 400), and 232 (Theodoret's reference to a fake tremor on the night of Chrysostom's arrest). Macrina anticipated this link between Jonah and disaster theology; see Nicholas Constatas, “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream:’ the Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 91–124, esp. 99.

²⁸ Chrys. *Laz.* 6.1. Here I have relied upon the edition of Migne, *Opera Omnia Quae Exstant* II, *Patrologia Graeca* 48 (Paris: 1862), 1028. Cf. Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 98.

²⁹ Aileen Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 1–22, 67–84. Cf. Hagit Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition: John Chrysostom on Noah and the Flood* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 22–31.

³⁰ On dating Antiochene versus Constantinopolitan sermons, see Pauline Allen and Wendy Mayer, “Chrysostom and the Preaching of Homilies in Series: a Reexamination of the Fifteen Homilies *In Epistulam ad Philippenses*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 49, no. 3 (August 1995): 270–89.

³¹ Brian Croke, “Two Earthquakes and Their Liturgical Commemoration,” *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 122–47, remains influential; see: Croke, “Jordanes and the Immediate Past,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 54, no. 4 (2005): 473–94; Jonathan Bardill, “The Golden Gate in Constantinople: a Triumphal Arch of Theodosius I,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 103, no. 4 (October 1999): 671–96; Johannes Koder, “Imperial Propaganda in the *Kontakia* of Romanos the Melode,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 62 (2008): 275–91. On liturgical-geological time, see: Cornelis Datema, “When Did Leontius, Presbyter of Constantinople, Preach?,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 35, no. 4 (December 1981): 346–51; Robert E. Carter, “The Chronology of Twenty Homilies of Severian of Gabala,” *Traditio* 55 (2000): 1–17; Yoram Tsafir and Gideon Förster, “The Dating of the Earthquake of the Sabbatical Year of 749 CE in Palestine,” *Bulletin for the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 2 (1992): 231–35.

³² Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 146: “in the case of Constantinople, the Christian emperor took on a new role as leader of the alarmed and penitent population. . .” Cf. 147: “earthquake liturgies” were “public and ceremonial manifestations of repentance.”

³³ Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 123: “For the [sixth-century Constantinopolitan] Christian Agathias [v.7–8], such unpredictable events as earthquakes could never be explained in natural terms. There was simply no point in investigating their origin. They were merely the will of God and that is all there was to it.” Cf. 145: the “quantitative increase in the recording of earthquakes is to be explained ultimately by the Christianization of the Roman world, that is to say although quakes were experienced and recorded in antiquity and sometimes interpreted as a manifestation

of divine wrath [θεομηνία], the God of the Christians assumed a more dominant and consistent role as the ‘Earthshaker.’ Interest in the physical causes of earthquakes declined and they came to be ascribed to the will of God, pure and simple.”

³⁴ Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 124, citing *Ep.* 2.265 (PG 79:336): Nilus resisted aiding the ruler by praying against earthquakes so long as Chrysostom was exiled. On Chrysostom’s exiles, see: Rudolf Brändle, *John Chrysostom: Bishop, Reformer, Martyr* (Strathfield: St. Paul’s, 2004), 113–48; Lieve van Hoof and Van Nuffelen, “Monarchy and Mass Communication: Antioch AD 362–3 Revisited,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 101 (2011): 166–84, esp. 170.

³⁵ Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 127–28, 131–32, citing Nestorius’s *Bazaar of Heracleides*, SEC 79.18–80.14. Like Chrysostom, Nestorius claims the divine threatens humankind to trigger repentance.

³⁶ Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 127, 145, dating the Trisagion quake to 438 C.E.

³⁷ On political engagement, see: Justin Stephens, “Religion and Power in the Early Thought of John Chrysostom,” in Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski, eds., *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 181–88; Mayer, “Antioch and the Intersection between Religious Factionalism, Place, and Power in Late Antiquity,” in Cain and Lenski, *Power of Religion*, 357–69.

³⁸ Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 146: a late ancient quake was “a demonstrable sign of God’s dissatisfaction.”

³⁹ *Chrys. Laz.* 6.1 (PG 48:1028). Cf. *On Wealth and Poverty*, 98. Chrysostom claims the Ninevites “drove off the divine wrath” in an encomium to Paul, according to Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 459. Chrysostom praises gentile piety above the

supposed obstinacy of Jewish communities; see: Joshua Garroway, “The Law-Observant Lord: John Chrysostom’s Engagement with the Jewishness of Christ,” *J ECS* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 591–615; Shepardson, “Controlling Contested Places: John Chrysostom’s *Adversus Iudaeos* Homilies and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy,” *J ECS* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 483–516; Mitchell, “‘A Variable and Many-Sorted Man:’ John Chrysostom’s Treatment of Pauline Inconsistency,” *J ECS* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 93–111.

⁴⁰ Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 138, says that a 447 C.E. quake in Constantinople doubled as both natural and political disaster, since the walls were weakened in advance of an attack by the “Huns.”

⁴¹ Frans van de Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom, the Homilies on the Statues: an Introduction* (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1991); Nathanael Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom and the Contested Spaces of Constantinople,” *J ECS* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 161–89; J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose & John Chrysostom: Clerics between Desert and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 205–15.

⁴² On John’s pastoral homiletics, see: Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 26–54; Ashish Naidu, *Transformed in Christ: Christology and the Christian Life in John Chrysostom* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 18–82; Douglas Finn, “Sympathetic Philosophy: the Christian Response to Suffering according to John Chrysostom’s *Commentary on Job*,” in Harrison and Hunter, *Suffering and Evil*, 97–120, esp. 114: “This pastoral focus is evident in his massive homiletic output, and it consistently governed his method of scriptural commentary, the primary locus of which was the homily. One of Chrysostom’s primary goals in commenting on Scripture was the improvement of his congregants’ behavior.” Finn cites: Robert C. Hill, “St. John Chrysostom: Preacher on the Old Testament,” *Greek*

Orthodox Theological Review 46, nos. 3–4 (2001): 267–86, and *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (Leiden: Brill 2005), 107, 183–92, 195–97.

⁴³ Chrys. *Stat.* 5.6. Here I have relied again upon Migne, *Opera Omnia Quae Exstant* II, *Patrologia Graeca* 49 (Paris: 1862), 77.

⁴⁴ Chrys. *Stat.* 5.5 (PG 49:76).

⁴⁵ Chrys. *Stat.* 5.5 (PG 49:76). Compare Greek “turning”-terms to *euersio*.

⁴⁶ Chrys. *Stat.* 5.5 (PG 49:76).

⁴⁷ Finn, “Sympathetic Philosophy,” 101–3: Chrysostom’s “philosophy” was pastoral “philanthropy.” Cf. Jan R. Stenger, “Where to Find Christian Philosophy?: Spatiality in John Chrysostom’s Counter to Greek *Paideia*,” *JECS* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 173–98.

⁴⁸ Hill, “The Spirituality of Chrysostom’s Commentary on the Psalms,” *JECS* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 569–79, esp. 576: “Not surprisingly in the light of his efforts to retain a balance in the process of salvation, his views have been thought to approximate in some degree to pelagian positions.” And 577: “It is also in regard to his views on the context of salvation, and not simply the agents, that Chrysostom’s theology has been found wanting. Texts of his were thought by Pelagius and his followers like Julian of Eclanum to be grist to their mill in downplaying the Fall and original sin, which Augustine found it necessary to reinterpret in keeping with his own (not invulnerable) view.”

⁴⁹ See Mayer, “Patronage, Pastoral Care, and the Role of the Bishop at Antioch,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 55, no. 1 (2001): 58–70. On “semi-Pelagianism,” see Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 416, 421–22; Mitchell is skeptical that a reference to “Pelagius” in Chrysostom’s epistles is relevant, but notes that Chrysostom ordained Cassian. On free will in Chrysostom’s disaster theology, see his exegesis of Noah in Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition*, 159–87. Cf. Pagels,

“Politics of Paradise,” 98: “Pelagius’s supporters would make the counterclaim (and with reason) that they only followed ancient tradition concerning the church and human nature—tradition most recently championed by John Chrysostom himself.”

⁵⁰ David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: the Coherence of his Theology and Preaching* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), 53–54, where Chrysostom’s God is a “psychagogue.” Cf. Mayer, “Shaping the Sick Soul: Reshaping the Identity of John Chrysostom,” in Mayer and Geoffrey Dunn, eds., *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 140–64, esp. 145, characterizing John’s approach as “psychagogic” and “medico-philosophical psychic therapy.” She cites: Andreas Heiser, *Die Paulusinszenierung des Johannes Chrysostomus: Epitheta und ihre Vorgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Demetrios Tonia, *Abraham in the Works of John Chrysostom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014); Ray Laird, *Mindset, Moral Choice, and Sin in the Anthropology of John Chrysostom* (Strathfield: St. Paul’s, 2012).

⁵¹ On συγκατάβασις, see Rylaarsdam, *Divine Pedagogy*, 55–99, 214–15.

⁵² Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 388–90.

⁵³ Rylaarsdam, *Divine Pedagogy*, 287.

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 433 (cited more fully below); cf. Rylaarsdam, *Divine Pedagogy*, 231–38, on “making the invisible visible.”

⁵⁵ Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 43–46.

⁵⁶ See Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 433: “Chrysostom’s portraits of Paul are suggestive resources for the study of hermeneutics generally. In his encomiastic portraits of Paul, I have argued, Chrysostom sought to create a ‘meaningful relation between the living and the dead.’ Chrysostom’s epithets, *encomia*, and *ekphraseis* of Paul self-consciously sought to effect this

necromantic intention.” Cf. Pak-Wah Lai, “The Monk as Christian Saint and Exemplar in St. John Chrysostom’s Writings,” *Studies in Church History* 47 (2011): 19–28.

⁵⁷ Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 383–88, links scriptural exemplarity and historical instantiation, thereby modifying Young’s distinction between historical and exemplary.

⁵⁸ This date is from Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God: a Reader’s Guide* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 34–35.

⁵⁹ Augustine recounts this argument (which he opposes) in *Ciu.* 21.18: *Hoc ergo erat, inquiunt, in ueritate seueritatis, quia id erant digni; sed in ratione miserationis non erat, quam non continuit in ira sua, ut ab ea poena supplicibus parceret, quam fuerat contumacibus comminatus. Si ergo tunc pepercit, aiunt, quando sanctum suum prophetam fuerat parcendo contristaturus, quanto magis tunc miserabilius supplicantibus parcat, quando ut parcat omnes sancti eius orabunt! Sed hoc, quod ipsi suis cordibus suspicantur, ideo putant scripturas tacuisse diuinas, ut multi se corrigant uel prolixarum uel aeternarum timore poenarum, et sint qui possint orare pro eis, qui non se correxerint; nec tamen opinantur omni modo id eloquia diuina tacuisse. Nam quo pertinet, inquiunt, quod scriptum est: Quam multa multitudo dulcedinis tuae, Domine, quam abscondisti timentibus te, nisi ut intellegamus propter timorem fuisse absconditam misericordiae diuinae tam multam secretamque dulcedinem?* / “And so, these people say, God’s threat was uttered in the truth of severity, since the Ninevites did deserve to be overturned. Yet it was not true by reason of pity, as God did not continue to be angry. As a result, He spared those who begged Him from the punishment threatened against the stubborn. If, they continue, God spared them even when His holy prophet was saddened by that sparing, how much more pitifully will he spare those who beg Him when all His saints will be praying on their behalf! Perhaps they think that divine scripture keeps silent about what they suspect in their hearts, so that many will correct

themselves out of fear of extended or eternal punishment. And there will be some who can pray for those who have not yet corrected themselves. But they are not really of the opinion that the divine eloquence keeps silent about this in every way. They do think, after all, that this part of scripture is pertinent: ‘How great is the multitude of your sweetness which you have hidden from those who fear you, Lord?’ (Ps 31.19) They think that, through this fear, we are to understand how great the hidden and secret sweetness of divine mercy was.” Here I have relied upon the edition of Bernhard Dombart and Alphonse Kalb, *De ciuitate dei libri XI-XIII*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 48 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 785.

⁶⁰ For full context, see *Ciu.* 21.18 (CCL 48:784): *Sic ergo isti uolunt iudicii Dei comminationem non esse mendacem, quamuis sit neminem damnaturus, quem ad modum eius comminationem, qua dixit euersurum se esse Nineuen ciuitatem, mendacem non possumus dicere; et tamen factum non est, inquiunt, quod sine ulla condicione praedixit. Non enim ait: “Nineue euertetur, si non egerint paenitentiam seque correxerint;” sed hoc non addito praenuntiauit futuram eursionem illius ciuitatis. Quam comminationem propterea ueracem putant, quia hoc praedixit Deus quod uere digni erant pati, quamuis hoc non esset ipse facturus. Nam etsi paenitentibus pepercit, inquiunt, utique illos paenitentiam non ignorabat acturos, et tamen absolute ac definite eorum eursionem futuram esse praedixit.* / “There are some, then, who do not want the threat of God’s judgment to be a lie, even though He will condemn no one. They take as their example God’s threat that he would overturn the city of Nineveh, which we could not say is a lie. Still, they say, what was unconditionally predicted did not happen. God did not say, ‘Nineveh will be overturned if they fail to realize they need to repent and so correct themselves.’ He did not announce the future overturning of that city with such a stipulation. For that reason, they still think that the threat was true, since God predicted the suffering the Ninevites truly deserved,

even though He was not going to make it happen. For although He did spare them for being repentant, they say, surely He was not ignorant that they were going to repent in the future. And still he absolutely, definitely predicted their future overturning.”

⁶¹ Tobit 14.3–4 (NRSV): “When he was about to die, he called his son Tobias and the seven sons of Tobias and gave this command: ‘My son, take your children and hurry off to Media, for I believe the word of God that Nahum spoke about Nineveh, that all these things will take place and overtake Assyria and Nineveh. Indeed, everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel, whom God sent, will occur. None of all their words will fail, but all will come true at their appointed times [. . .].’”

⁶² Attila Fáj, “The Stoic Features of the Book of Jonah,” *Apeiron* 12, no. 2 (Dec. 1978): 34–64, esp. 36, suggests that Augustine’s wordplay (*euersio* as destruction and conversion) could also occur in the Hebrew and that later Jewish commentators in Spain exploited this. Chrysostom’s Greek terms are similar but not identical, using the prefixes for “down” and “up” rather than “out” or “over.”

⁶³ *Ciu.* 21.24 (CCL 48:791–2): *Euertuntur enim peccatores duobus modis, aut sicut Sodomitae, ut pro peccatis suis ipsi homines puniantur, aut sicut Nineuitae, ut ipsa hominum peccata paenitendo destruantur. Factum est ergo quod praedixit Deus; euersa est Nineue [. . .]. Cf., from the same chapter (CCL 48:791): Nineuitae quippe in hac uita egerunt paenitentiam et ideo fructuosam, uelut in hoc agro seminantes, in quo Deus uoluit cum lacrimis seminari, quod postea cum laetitia meteretur; et tamen quis negabit, quod Dominus praedixit in eis fuisse completum, nisi parum aduertat, quem ad modum peccatores Deus non solum iratus, uerum etiam miseratus euertat?* / “The Ninevites, certainly, desired repentance in this life, and this was fruitful for them. They were planting in the field that God wanted them to plant in—and it was

planted with tears, so that it could be harvested in happiness. Still, who would deny that what God predicted was completed in them? Someone could only deny that if they paid too little attention to how God does not only grow angry at sinners, but also overturns those on whom He has mercy.”

⁶⁴ Cf. *Serm.* 361.21: *annuntiauit ionas, non misericordiam, sed iram futuram: non enim dixit, triduo, et ninue euertetur; si autem poenitentiam in isto triduo egeritis, parcat uobis deus: non dixit hoc. euersionem solam minatus est, et praenuntiauit: et tamen illi de dei misericordia non desperantes, conuerterunt se ad poenitendum; et pepercit deus. sed quid dicemus? quia propheta mentitus est? si carnaliter intelligas, falsum uidetur dixisse: si spiritualiter intelligas, factum est quod dixit propheta. euersa est enim niniue. / “Jonah announced future wrath, not mercy. He did not say: ‘In three days, Nineveh will be overturned. But if you perform repentance before these three days are up, God will spare you.’ He did not say that. Only overturning was threatened. And that is what he announced in advance. Yet still the Ninevites did not despair of God’s mercy. They converted themselves and repented. And God spared them. What then shall we say? Has a prophet lied? If you understand this according to the flesh, it looks like he spoke a falsehood. But if you understand this spiritually, what the prophet said did happen. Nineveh was overturned!” Here I have relied upon the edition of Migne, *Opera Omnia V*, *Patrologia Latina* 39 (Paris: 1865), 1610.*

⁶⁵ Roland Teske, S. J., “Spirituals and Spiritual Interpretation in Augustine,” *AugSt* 15 (1984): 65–81, esp. 77: “A final example of spiritual understanding has to do with the prophecy of Jonah that in three days Nineveh would be overthrown. Augustine says that the text must be understood spiritually if the truth of Scripture is to be saved. Thus, though the city was not physically overthrown, it was spiritually overthrown insofar as the people repented of their sins. Here it is

the interior act within the incorporeal soul that saves the truth of the prophecy.”

⁶⁶ *Serm.* 361.21 (PL 39:1610–11): *attende quid erat niniue, et uide quia euersa est. quid erat niniue? manducabant et bibebant, emebant, uendebant, plantabant, aedificabant, periuriis uacabant, mendaciis, ebrietatibus, facinoribus, corruptionibus: haec erat niniue.* And from the same chapter: *attende modo niniue: plangunt, dolent, contristantur, in cilicio et cinere, in ieiuniis et orationibus. ubi est illa niniue? nempe euersa est, quia non in illis superioribus actibus constituta est.* / “But look at Nineveh a little later: they lament, they grieve, they grow sorrowful in their sackcloth and ashes, in their fasts and prayers. Where is that old Nineveh? It has most definitely been overturned, since it did not consist in such superior acts.” On dating, see *Sermons 341–400 on Various Themes*, trans. Edmund Hill, O. P., (Hyde Park NY: New City, 1995), 485–88.

⁶⁷ Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem & Babylon: a Study into Augustine’s City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 98–99, links Nineveh to two-cities theology, citing *Ep.* 177 (CSEL 44:669–88; ca. 416 C.E.), *C. mendac.* 17.34 (CSEL 41:516), and especially *Ep.* 164 (CSEL 44:521–41; ca. 415 C.E.), with the “inhabitants of Nineveh” as potential citizens of the *ciuitas dei* before Christ.

⁶⁸ *Ciu.* 1.30: *At ille Scipio pontifex maximus uester, ille iudicio totius senatus uir optimus, istam uobis metuens calamitatem nolebat aemulam tunc imperii Romani Carthaginem dirui et decernenti ut dirueretur contradicebat Catoni, timens infirmis animis hostem securitatem et tamquam pupillis ciuibus idoneum tutorem necessarium uidens esse terrorem. Nec eum sententia fefellit: re ipsa probatum est quam uerum diceret. Deleta quippe Carthagine magno scilicet terrore Romanae rei publicae depulso et extincto tanta de rebus prosperis orta mala continuo subsecuta sunt, ut corrupta diruptaque concordia prius saeuis cruentisque seditionibus, deinde*

mox malarum conexione causarum bellis etiam ciuilibus tantae strages ederentur, tantus sanguis effunderetur, tanta cupiditate proscriptionum ac rapinarum ferueret inmanitas, ut Romani illi, qui uita integriore mala metuebant ab hostibus, perdita integritate uitae crudeliora paterentur a ciuibus; eaque ipsa libido dominandi, quae inter alia uitia generis humani meracior inerat uniuerso populo Romano, postea quam in paucis potentioribus uicit, obritos fatigatosque ceteros etiam iugo seruitutis oppressit. / “But Scipio, that great priest of yours, the best man in the judgment of the whole Senate, was afraid that this calamity would befall you. He did not want Carthage, Rome’s rival, to be torn apart. He contradicted Cato, who had decided that it should be torn apart. But Scipio feared that security would be an enemy to weak souls. He saw that terror was necessary for the citizens, just as a fitting tutor is necessary for students. And he was not deceived in this opinion. The affair itself proved that he spoke the truth. Great Carthage was indeed destroyed. The terror of the Roman republic was beaten back and extinguished. And so many evils followed, having arisen out of these prosperous things, that concord was corrupted and destroyed by savage and cruel sedition. Soon after, the Romans were devoured by such confusions and civil wars (in connection with evil causes)—so much blood flowed, such savagery burned with desire for crime and plunder—that those Romans who feared their enemies on account of their untouched evil life suffered the cruel destruction of their untouched life by their fellow citizens. This desire to dominate, which (along with other human vices) was in pristine condition among the Roman people, first conquered the few powerful men and then oppressed the rest, bruised and wearied, under the yoke of slavery.” Here I have relied upon the edition of Bernhard Dombart and Alphonse Kalb, *De ciuitate dei libri I-X*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 47 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 31.

⁶⁹ *Ciu. 1.33 (CCL 47:32–33): O mentes amentes! quis est hic tantus non error, sed furor, ut exitium uestrum, sicut audiuius, plangentibus orientalibus populis et maximis ciuitatibus in remotissimis terris publicum luctum maeroremque ducentibus uos theatra quaereretis intraretis impleretis et multo insaniora quam fuerant antea faceretis? Hanc animorum labem ac pestem, hanc probitatis et honestatis euersionem uobis Scipio ille metuebat, quando construi theatra prohibebat, quando rebus prosperis uos facile corrumpi atque euerti posse cernebat, quando uos securos esse ab hostili terrore nolebat. Neque enim censebat ille felicem esse rem publicam stantibus moenibus, ruentibus moribus. Sed in uobis plus ualuit quod daemones impii seduxerunt, quam quod homines prouidi praecauerunt. Hinc est quod mala, quae facitis, uobis inputari non uultis, mala uero, quae patimini, Christianis temporibus inputatis. Neque enim uestra securitate pacatam rem publicam, sed luxuriam quaeritis inpunitam, qui deprauati rebus prosperis nec corrigi potuistis aduersis. Volebat uos ille Scipio terreri ab hoste, ne in luxuriam flueretis: nec contriti ab hoste luxuriam repressistis, perdidistis utilitatem calamitatis, et miserrimi facti estis et pessimi permansistis. / “Mindless minds! It is such a mistake, or rather such an outrage, that (as we have heard) while people in the East grieved and great cities in far-off lands conducted public lamentations of sorrow on behalf of your destruction, you sought out theaters. You went right in and filled them all up. You did things even more unhealthy than what you did before. This fall of souls, this disease, this overturning of uprightness and honor is what Scipio feared when he kept you from building theaters, when he discerned that you could be easily corrupted and overturned even by beneficial things, when he did not want you to be secure from the terror of the enemy. He did not think that a republic with standing walls but crumbling morals could be happy. But amongst you, the seductions of impious demons were stronger than human foresight and precaution. That is why you do not want to think about the evils you do. But*

the evils you suffer—those you attribute to the ‘Christian times.’ In your security, you seek unpunished luxury, not a peaceful republic. You who are depraved by beneficial things cannot be corrected by detrimental things. Scipio wanted you to be terrified by the enemy so that you would not be dissipated in luxury. Untouched by the enemy, you took up luxury again. You wasted the usefulness of the disaster. You became most wretched and you remained the worst.”

⁷⁰ This date is from *Expositions of the Psalms*, vol. 2, trans. Maria Boulding, O. S. B. (Hyde Park NY: New City, 2000), 410.

⁷¹ *Psal. 50.11: dixerunt enim, quamuis post minas prophetae, quamuis post illam uocem: triduo, et niniue subuertetur; dixerunt apud se, petendam esse misericordiam; dixerunt ita apud se disceptantes: quis nouit, si deus flectat in melius sententiam suam, et miseretur? incertum erat, cum dicitur: quis nouit. de incerto paenitentiam egerunt, certam misericordiam meruerunt; prostrauerunt se in lacrimis, in ieiuniis, in cilicio et in cinere prostrauerunt se, gemuerunt, fleuerunt, pepercit deus. stetit niniue, an euersa est niniue? aliter quidem uidetur hominibus, et aliter uisum est deo. ego autem puto impletum fuisse quod propheta praedixerat. respice quae fuit niniue, et uide quia euersa est [. . .].* Here I have relied upon the edition of Eligius Dekkers and Jean Fraipont, *Enarrationes in Psalmos I-L*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 38 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), 607.

⁷² *Psal. 50.11 (CCL 38:608): quis non diceret ciuitatem istam, in qua nunc sumus, feliciter euersam, si omnes illi insani, nugis suis desertis, ad ecclesiam compuncto corde concurrerent, dei misericordiam de suis factis praeteritis inuocarent? nonne diceremus: ubi est illa carthago? quia non est quod erat, euersa est [. . .].*

⁷³ Cf. *Exc. urb.* (CCL 46:249–62), probably written by Augustine, which relates scripture to the crumbling of great cities, from the the sack of Rome to the earthquakes threatening Constantinople.

⁷⁴ For a recent reevaluation of Augustine and coercion, see Peter van Nuffelen, *Penser la tolérance durant l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris: Cerf, 2017), esp. 65–92, 129–52. Cf. Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 133–53; Peter Brown, “Political Society,” in Markus, ed., *Augustine: a Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City: Anchor, 1972), 311–35; Rowan Williams, “Politics and the Soul: a Reading of the City of God,” *Milltown Studies* 19–20 (1987), 55–72. Frederick H. Russell, “Persuading the Donatists: Augustine’s Coercion by Words,” in William Klingshirn and Mark Vessey, eds., *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 115–30; Gillian Clark, “‘The Truth Shall Make You Free:’ Augustine on the Power of Religion,” in Cain and Lenski, *Power of Religion*, 189–200.

⁷⁵ In *Ep.* 173 (CSEL 44:640–48), dated between 411–14 C.E, Augustine’s proof-text is the dinner parable in Luke 14.23 (NRSV): “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.”

⁷⁶ *Gaud.* 2.12 ventriloquizes Gaudentius: *et regem niniuitarum oblitus quid legeris populo de agenda paenitentia non mandasse dixisti; haec enim uerba tua sunt ad me: quid, inquis, miseros decipis? ionae deus praecepit, prophetam dominus ad populum misit; nihil tale regi mandauit. aduerte ergo quid scriptum sit et noli irasci nisi tibi ipsi, qui uel diuina scripta non recolis uel tu potius miseros decipis . / “. . . you said the king of the Ninevites did not order his people to perform penitence. You have forgotten what you read! These are your words to me: ‘Why,’ you say, ‘do you deceive the miserable? The God of Jonah ordered them. The Lord sent a prophet to*

the people. The king was not entrusted with this.’ But turn now to what is written, and try not to get upset—except at yourself, since you have either not gone over the divine scriptures or have yourself deceived the miserable.” Here I have relied upon the edition of Michael Petschenig, *Scriptorum contra Donatistas pars III*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 53 (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften 1919), 270.

⁷⁷ *Gaud.* 2.12 (CSEL 53:271): *cum que peruenisset sermo ad regem ciuitatis niniue, surrexit de sede sua et detraxit sibi uestimenta et se circumdedit sacco et consedit in cinere. praedicatur que a rege et a potentibus, dicens: homines et iumenta et oues et boues non gustent quicquam nec pascantur et aquam non bibant. et induti sunt saccos homines et iumenta: proclamauerunt ad dominum inpense et auersus est unusquisque a uia nequitiae suae et iniquitatis quam in manibus habebat. audis ne tandem regem curasse, quod ad curam regum tibi displiceat pertinere? certe ut inpense ageretur, quod minus quam oportuerat agebatur. ideo ergo niniuitae non sunt expoliationibus proscriptionibus que uel terrore militum ad paenitentiam imperio regis artati, quia oboedienter iussa fecerunt.*

⁷⁸ Cf. *Ep.* 185.5.19: *aliter enim seruit, quia homo est, aliter, quia etiam rex est; quia homo est enim, seruit uiuendo fideliter, quia uero etiam rex est, seruit leges iusta praecipientes et contraria prohibentes conuenienti uigore sanciendo, [. . .] sicut seruiuit rex nineuitarum uniuersam ciuitatem ad placandum dominum compellendo [. . .].* / “[A king] serves in one way as a human being and in another way as a king. As a human being, he serves by living faithfully. But as a king, he serves by enforcing just and instructive laws while prohibiting their violation with an appropriate amount of vigor. [. . .] So it was with the king of the Ninevites, who served his entire city by compelling them to placate the Lord [. . .].” I am relying here upon the edition

of Alois Goldbacher, *Sancti Augustini Epistulae*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 57 (Vienna: Akademie des Wissenschaften, 1911), 17.

⁷⁹ Croke, “Two Earthquakes,” 146–47.

⁸⁰ Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine’s Early Figurative Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 17: “wary” of *allegoria* and its “theatrical connotation of false representation,” Augustine “came to prefer the less precise but more serviceable term ‘figure’ (*figura*).”

⁸¹ John Cavadini, “Simplifying Augustine,” in John van Engen, ed., *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 63–84, shrinks the distance between speculative theology and pastoral engagement; see 69: “Augustine does not ‘simplify’ his own work by omitting particular topics of discussion, or at least not in any way easy to describe. Nearly all the topics taken up in *De Trinitate* are well represented in the sermons, and some qualify as homiletic preoccupations.”

⁸² Mitchell, *Heavenly Trumpet*, 416–22. Beyond the Pelagian issue, there is also the dearth of proper encomia in Augustine. Yet cf. 411–12, noting that Augustine and Chrysostom similarly centered their hermeneutics on an ideal of the author (e.g., Paul) as a person. Mitchell, 422, sums it up: “In both Augustine’s and Chrysostom’s oratory it is telling that Paul stands ready to provide live testimony when called upon, often by a direct summons from a reader who presents himself as on intimate speaking terms with the apostle. The process of author-centered hermeneutics was at work in both bishops, but it took different forms. Each experienced Paul differently, even as each lived into Paul’s reflective life in disparate ways.”

⁸³ Cameron, *Christ Meets Me*, 3–5.

⁸⁴ Cameron, *Christ Meets Me*, 4: Augustine “instructs Volusianus about the need to understand first, before considering any particular claim of Christian thought, *how Christians think.*”

(Cameron’s italics.)

⁸⁵ Hartney, *Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City*, 11: “it would be a mistake to think that his preaching energies were devoted to encouraging his congregations to retire from urban life and adopt asceticism in all its extremes in the deserts or mountains outside of their cities. [. . .] Instead he asks for a reinterpretation of existing models in a Christian framework. In fact, much of Chrysostom’s preaching is directed at keeping the ancient city alive and thriving. The only difference is that it would be a demonstrably Christian city in all its components.”