

Covetousness or Christ at the Heart of an Empire

Desire and Spiritual Formation in Ambrose
of Milan's *On Naboth*

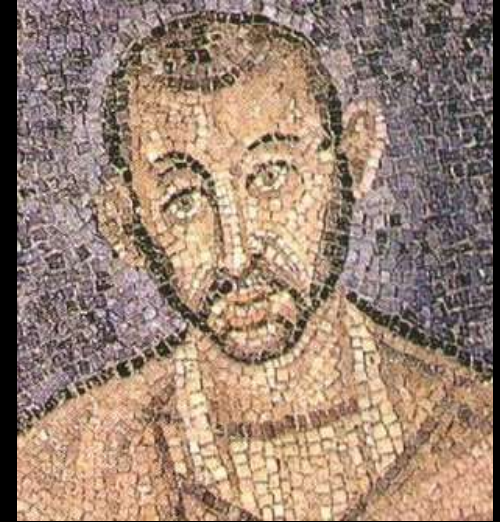
Mako A. Nagasawa



THE ANÁSTASIS CENTER
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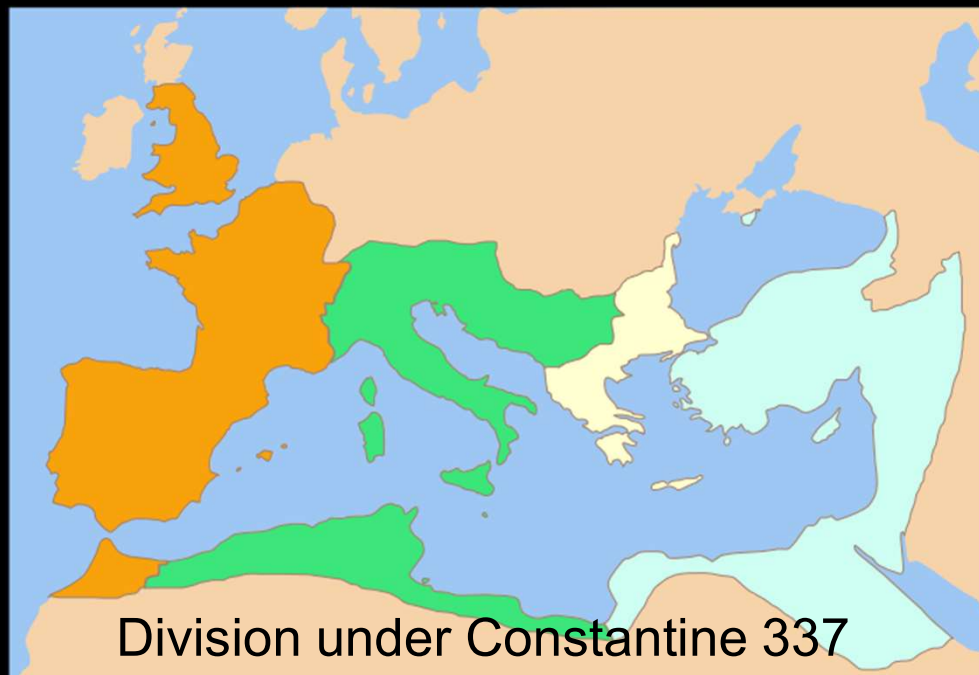
Outline

- Milan and the Roman Empire
- Ambrose of Milan
- Ambrose of Milan's *On Naboth*



Milan as D.C. and Wall Street

- Capital of Western Empire (286), home of Emperors
 - Maximian (284 – 305)
 - Constantine (312)
 - Theodosius (380's)



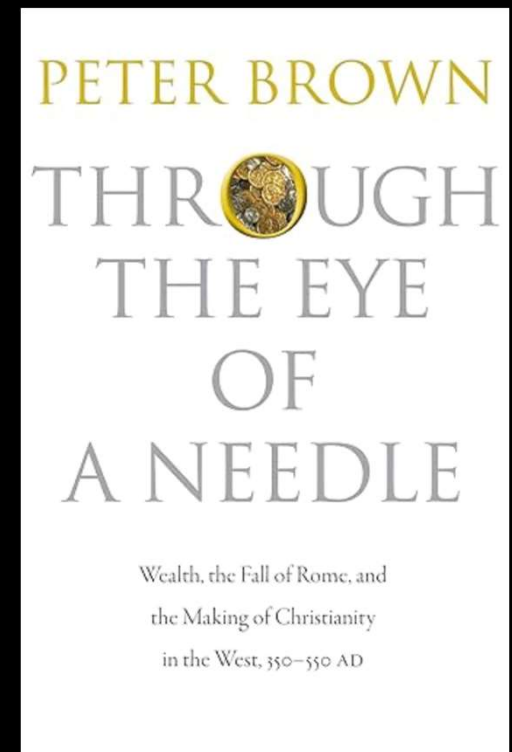
Milan as D.C. and Wall Street



Ancient wood model of an Egyptian granary, 2000-1900 BC
Photo credit: Janmad | Wikimedia, CC-3.0.

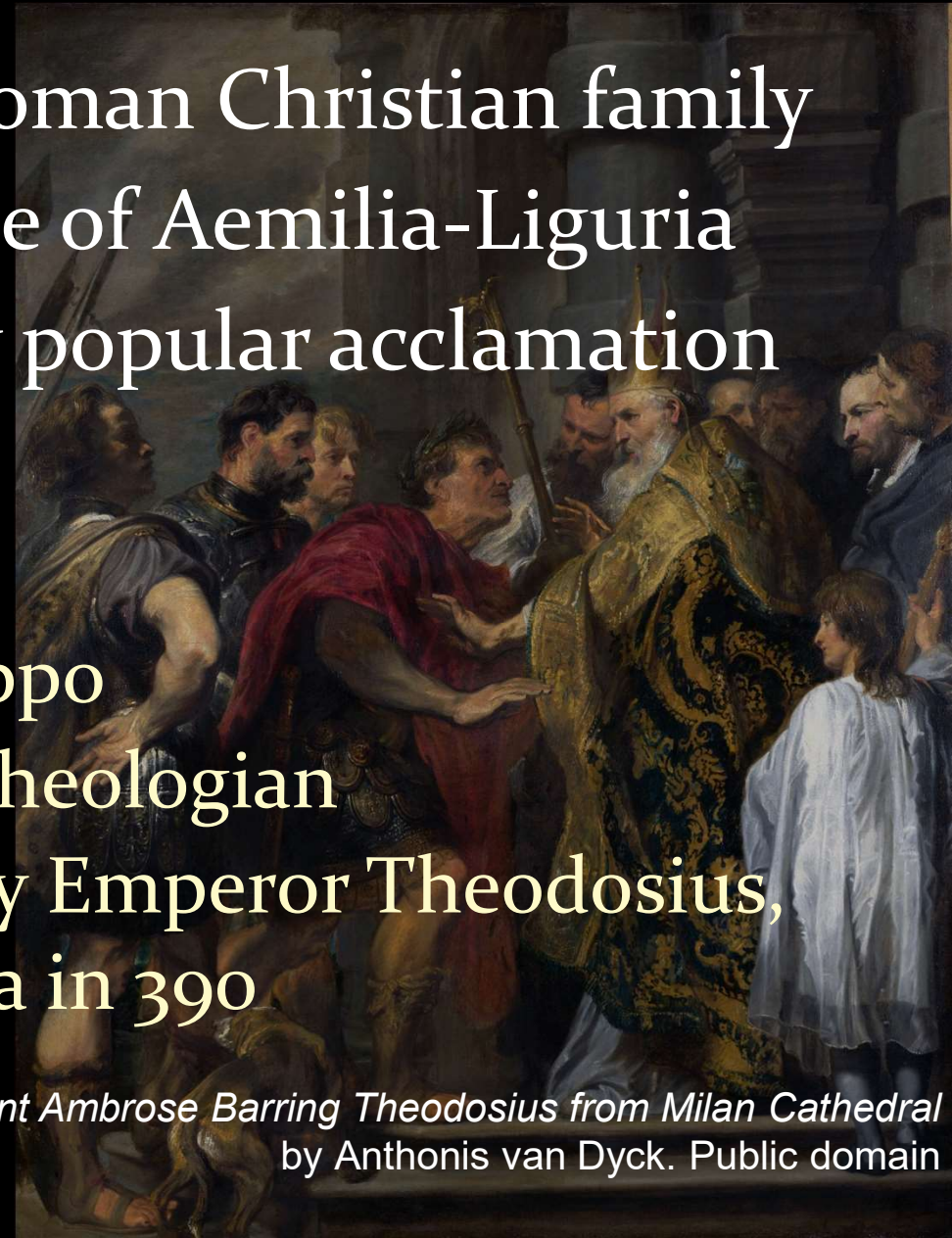
Milan as D.C. and Wall Street

- Agriculture in the Mediterranean World
 - “notorious for the variability of its harvests, due to unstable climatic conditions... menaced by flattening cloudbursts, by random scything by hailstorms, and by the perpetual menace of prolonged drought and of “dry” winters in the plateaus... In all areas except Egypt, yields could vary by over 50 percent from year to year.”
 - Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350 – 550 AD* (Princeton University Press, 2012), p.12



Ambrose of Milan

- Born c.339, upper class Roman Christian family
- Roman governor, province of Aemilia-Liguria
- Bishop of Milan in 374 by popular acclamation
- Leadership
 - Pro-Nicene
 - Helped Augustine of Hippo
 - Preacher, hymn-writer, theologian
 - Policy change adopted by Emperor Theodosius, Massacre of Thessalonica in 390
- Died 397



Saint Ambrose Barring Theodosius from Milan Cathedral
by Anthonis van Dyck. Public domain

Ambrose of Milan's *On Naboth*

- Delivered 389
- Translated to English by Martin R.P. McGuire (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1927)
- Paragraph numbers added by Mako Nagasawa

Ahab Revealed: Diagnosis

- “He flees from the whole world who, in consideration of his conscience, fears to be **discovered**. And therefore, although according to its symbolic value it is a rich person talking to a poor person, according to the narrative it is Ahab saying to Elijah: ‘You have **found me out**, my enemy’ (1 Kgs. 21:20). How wretched the conscience that was saddened when it was **made manifest!**” (55)
- “A sinner is **found out** when his wickedness is **made manifest**, but the righteous person says: ‘You have tried me with fire, and no wickedness has been **found in me**’ (Ps. 17:3).” (56)



Ahab Revealed: Who He Became

- “King Ahab, ungrateful for the good things that he had received from heaven, [was] slain in such a way that his wounds would be licked by **dogs**. For, because he who could not be sated by all the wealth of a kingdom had desired a poor man’s vineyard, he was brought lower than utter destitution by the Lord. No one was found to wash his wounds, no one to cover his body. Human kindness failed in his regard, and **canine savagery** took its place. Clearly the avaricious man found worthy ministers for his obsequies.”
(77)

- Reversal:
 - Ahab murdered Naboth and left him unburied
 - Ahab is now, too, but with dogs also



On Naboth: Outline by Scriptural Focus

- Introduction: Greed “Has Certain Steps” (1 – 4)
- Ahab and Naboth in 1 Kings 21 (5 – 32)
- The Rich Fool in Luke 12:13 – 34 (33 – 44)
- Jezebel and Ahab in 1 Kings 21 (45 – 61)
- Job’s Generosity (62 – 63)
- Who is Master, Servant, from Matthew 6:19 – 24 (64 – 66)
- God’s Reign in You, from Psalm 76 (67 – 77)
- Ahab and His Fate in 1 Kings 20 – 22 (78 – 81)
- Notable: Genesis 1 (creation belongs to all) in 2, 11, 34, 37, 58

God's Creation Vision from Genesis 1

- “The earth was established **in common for all**, rich and poor.. Nature, then, knows no distinction when we are born, and it knows none when we die.” (2)
- “The world was **created for all**, but you few rich try to keep it for yourselves.” (11)
- “The rich man's plenty, the whole world's abundance, **ought to be everyone's wealth**” (34)
- “The produce of the earth **he claims for himself alone**, although he does not want to use it himself but **deny it to others.**” (37)
- “You alone are usurping what was given in **common for the use of all**. The earth belongs to **everyone**, not to the rich, but there are fewer who do not use what is theirs than who do use it. You are giving back something that is owed, then, and not bestowing something that is not owed.” (58)

On Naboth: Outline by Scriptural Focus

- Introduction: Greed “Has Certain Steps” (1 – 4) (2)
- Ahab and Naboth in 1 Kings 21 (5 – 32) (11)
- The Rich Fool in Luke 12:13 – 34 (33 – 44) (34, 37)
- Jezebel and Ahab in 1 Kings 21 (45 – 61) (58)
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The Steps of Covetousness

- “Greediness has, as it were, **certain steps**, and as a person mounts them he hastens on to heights whence grave ruin awaits his downfall. Such a person was better off when he had less. In view of his possessions his requirements were modest, but with an increase of income there came a growth in greed. He does not want to be small in his wishes or poor in his desires. And so two intolerable situations are joined together: he increases the ambitious longing characteristic of a rich person without laying aside an attitude of begging. Hence divine Scripture teaches us how wretchedly he is in need and how abjectly he begs.” (4)



The Steps of Generosity?

- We'll discover this together!



Stairs in the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy
Photo credit: Ashley Wang | Flickr, CC-2.0

Ahab's Steps of Greed

- Ahab: an example of greed and wrong desire
 - “The poor man **coveted none** of the rich man’s possessions, but the king **seemed to himself to be lacking something** because the poor man, who was his neighbor, had a vineyard.
 - “Who, then, seems to you to be the poor man? Certainly the one seems to be poor **in terms of goods**, the other **in terms of desire**.
 - “A **rich disposition** knows not how to **want**, and **abundant goods cannot satisfy** an avaricious man’s **yearnings**.
 - “Hence the rich man is **covetous** in his envy of [another’s] property and complains of poverty.” (5)

Ahab's Steps of Greed

- Ahab: “Vineyard” – offers another or money
 - “Give me your **vineyard** and I shall make it a herb **garden**, because it is near my house, and I shall give you another **vineyard** in its place. But, if you prefer, I shall give you money for the **vineyard**, and I shall make it a herb **garden**.” (6) (8 – 12)
 - A convenient way to get tastier meals!

Ahab's Steps of Greed

- Naboth: “Ancestral property”
 - “And Naboth said to Ahab: God forbid that I should give you my **ancestral property**.” (6) (13)
 - Greatest and unique blessing from God and ancestors (13)
 - Israel as partial restoration of God’s garden humanity?
 - Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 11 could have strengthened his exegesis and case for Jesus as full restoration of God’s true humanity
- Ahab mourns
 - “And his spirit was troubled, and he slept on his bed, covered his face and ate no bread” (1 Kgs. 21:1–3) (6) (14 – 15)

Ahab's Steps of Greed

- Ahab wants to *exclude* Naboth
 - Why not just pay Naboth?
 - “For he who desires to occupy everything with his own possessions wishes the other person to possess nothing... It is not, therefore, that you **desire** to possess something useful for yourself so much as it is that **you want to exclude others**. Your concern is more **to despoil the poor than to increase your own wealth.**” (11)
 - Ambrose deploys Isaiah 5:8, “Woe to those who join house to house and field to field” (12)
 - “You enclose wild animals and construct dwellings for beasts, but you destroy those of human beings. You allow the sea onto your estates so that its creatures may not be wanting [to you], but you extend the boundaries of your property so that **you will have no neighbors.**” (12)

Ahab's Steps of Greed

- Ahab relies on Jezebel
 - Phoenician princess from the merchant kingdom of Tyre
 - Worshiper of Baal (1 Kings 16)
 - Lies in his name (44 – 47)
 - Murders in his name before God (48 – 50)
 - “They pretend to be downcast” (51)



Jezebel and Ahab

Photo credit: Jim Forest | Flickr, CC-2.0

Ahab's Steps of Greed

- Ahab internalizes Jezebel
 - “Do not be an Ahab, in that you desire your neighbor’s property. Do not let that **savage Jezebel, avarice, live in you**. It is she who urges you on to bloody deeds, who does not restrain **your desires** but encourages them, **who makes you sad** even when you possess what you have **desired**, who strips you naked when you are rich.” (54)

Ahab's Steps of Greed

- Ahab opposes God's word, makes God his enemy
 - “Elijah said to him: ‘I have found you out, for **you did evil** in the sight of the Lord’ (1 Kgs. 21:20)... he says: ““You have found me out, my **enemy.**” (56)
- Who Ahab becomes
 - An insatiable whirlpool, a stagnant well, an inactive pile of riches, standing water with worms, a burning fire (57)
 - “Do not let your treasure **stand** and do not let your fire **stand**. It will **stand in you** unless you resist such a thing with your works of mercy.” (57)

Turning Points

- Have some empathy!
 - Grieving mother displaced with starving children (1)
 - Anguished father who considers selling a son (21 – 25)



Sudan Famine, February 1993 by Kevin Carter, *The New York Times*
Photo credit: Cliff | Flickr, CC-2.0

Turning Points

- See, you corrupt and entrap your heirs
 - “You leave behind heirs who fight among themselves. To your heirs, who fear to diminish or violate what has been left them, you leave behind an inherited responsibility rather than an open-ended benefit. If your heirs are frugal, they maintain it; if they are spendthrifts, they use it up. And so you **either condemn your good heirs to constant anxiety or leave behind bad ones**; wherefore let them condemn your deeds.” (3)

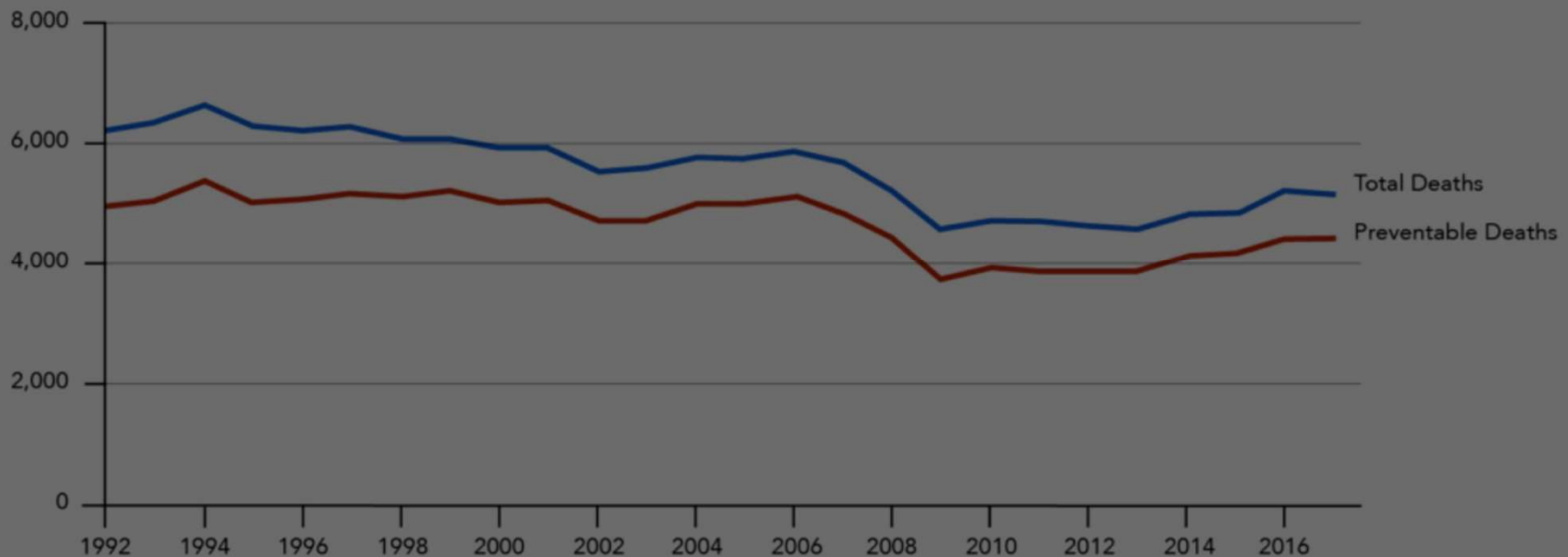
Turning Points

- See, they use you like you use the poor
 - “The **idle heir** looks forward to your death, while the **disdainful heir** complains that you will die too late” (17)

Turning Points

- Acknowledge the people who die working for your appetite
 - “How many die so that pleasures may be prepared for you! Deadly is your greed, deadly your luxury. One man **tumbled** from a rooftop when he was readying large storerooms for your grain...” (20)

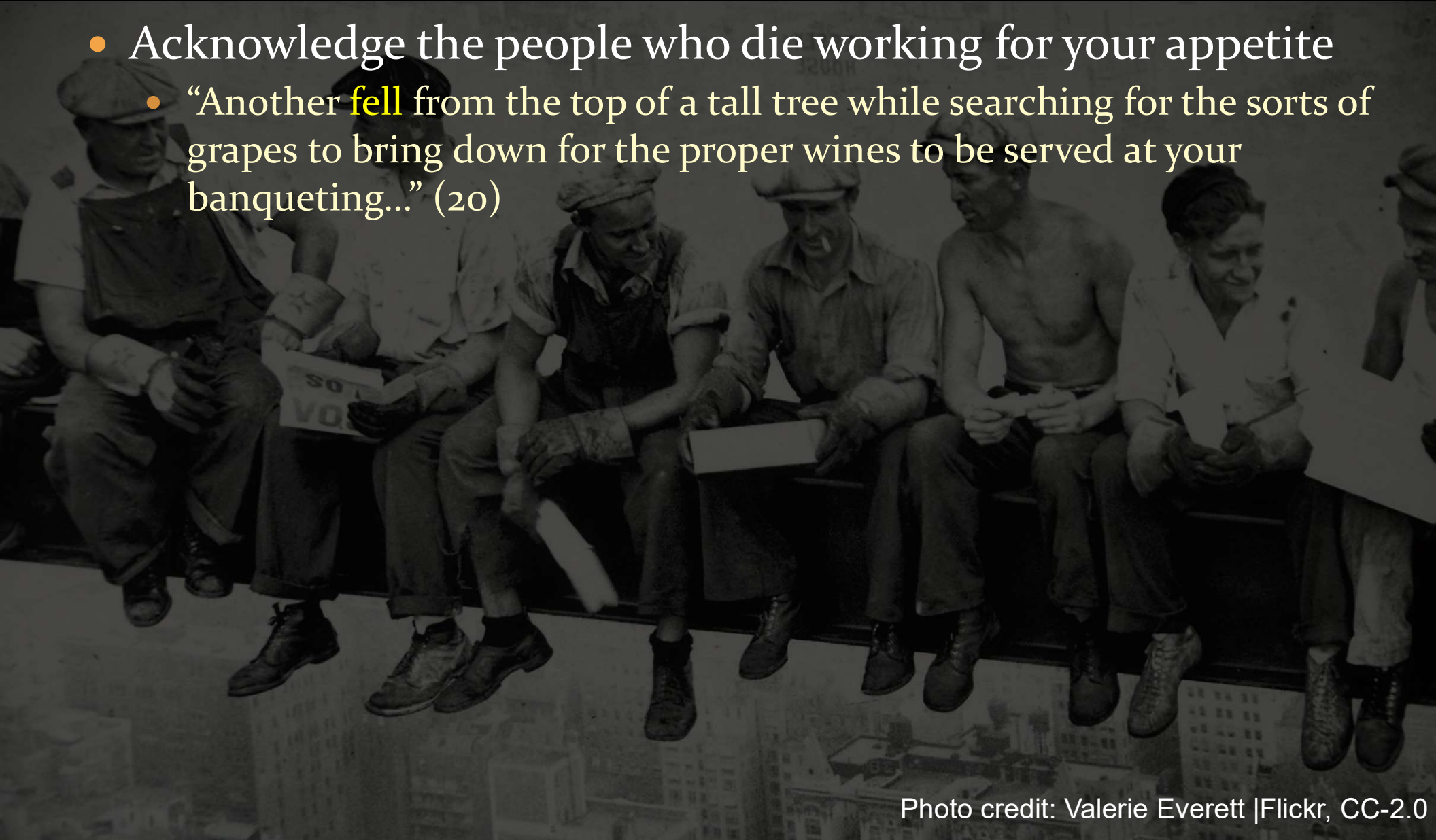
Work-related-injury deaths, United States, 1992–2017



Source: <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/work-overview/work-related-fatality-trends/>

Turning Points

- Acknowledge the people who die working for your appetite
 - “Another **fell** from the top of a tall tree while searching for the sorts of grapes to bring down for the proper wines to be served at your banqueting...” (20)



Turning Points

- Acknowledge the people who die working for your appetite
 - “Another **drowned** in the sea in his anxiety that a fish or an oyster might be lacking to your table...” (20)



Deepwater Horizon explosion resulting in 11 deaths
Photo credit: US Coast Guard | Public Domain

Turning Points

- Acknowledge the people who die working for your appetite
 - “Another **froze** to death in the winter as he made an effort to look for rabbits or to set snares for birds...” (20)



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Deaths of 6 poultry plant workers "entirely avoidable," Labor Secretary says

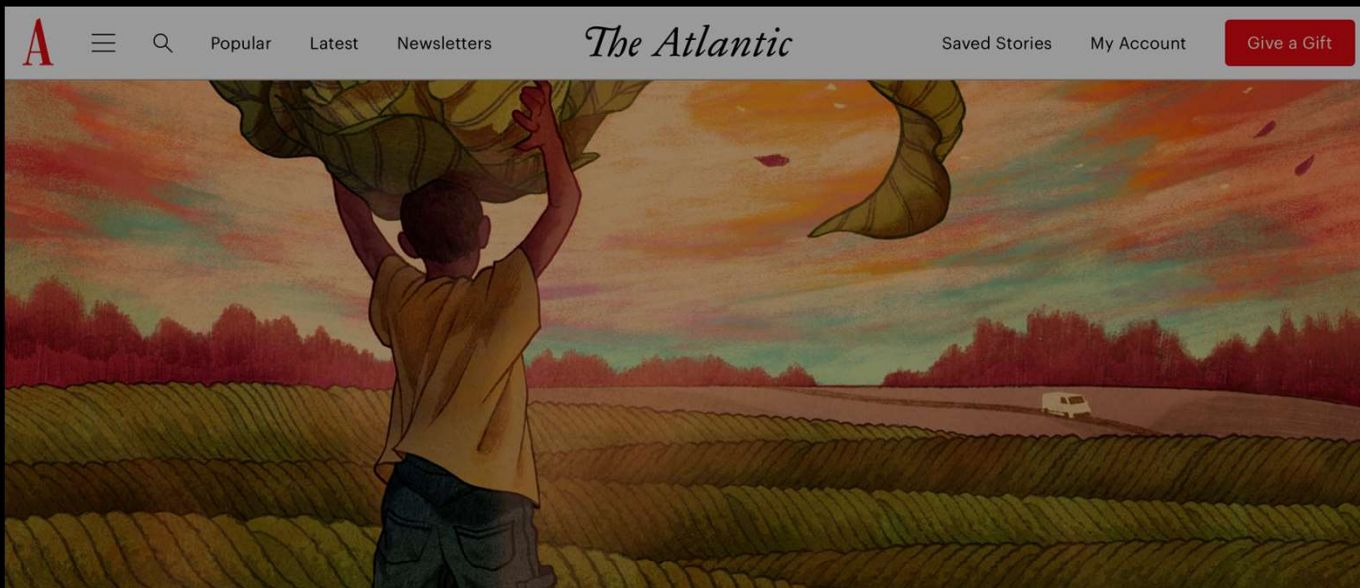
MONEY WATCH By Kate Gibson
July 23, 2021 / 2:24 PM EDT / MoneyWatch

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Six workers died of asphyxiation after entering a freezer room where an equipment malfunction caused the release of colorless, odorless liquid nitrogen into the air, OSHA found. Liquid nitrogen is used to flash-freeze chicken products at the plant, which employs about 180 people, many of them immigrants fearful of deportation, Kurt Petermeyer, regional administrator for OSHA in Atlanta, said.

Turning Points

- Acknowledge the people who die working for your appetite
 - “Another **was beaten** to death before your eyes if he happened to do something displeasing, and he spattered your banquet with the blood that he shed...” (20)



Leonardo Santamaria

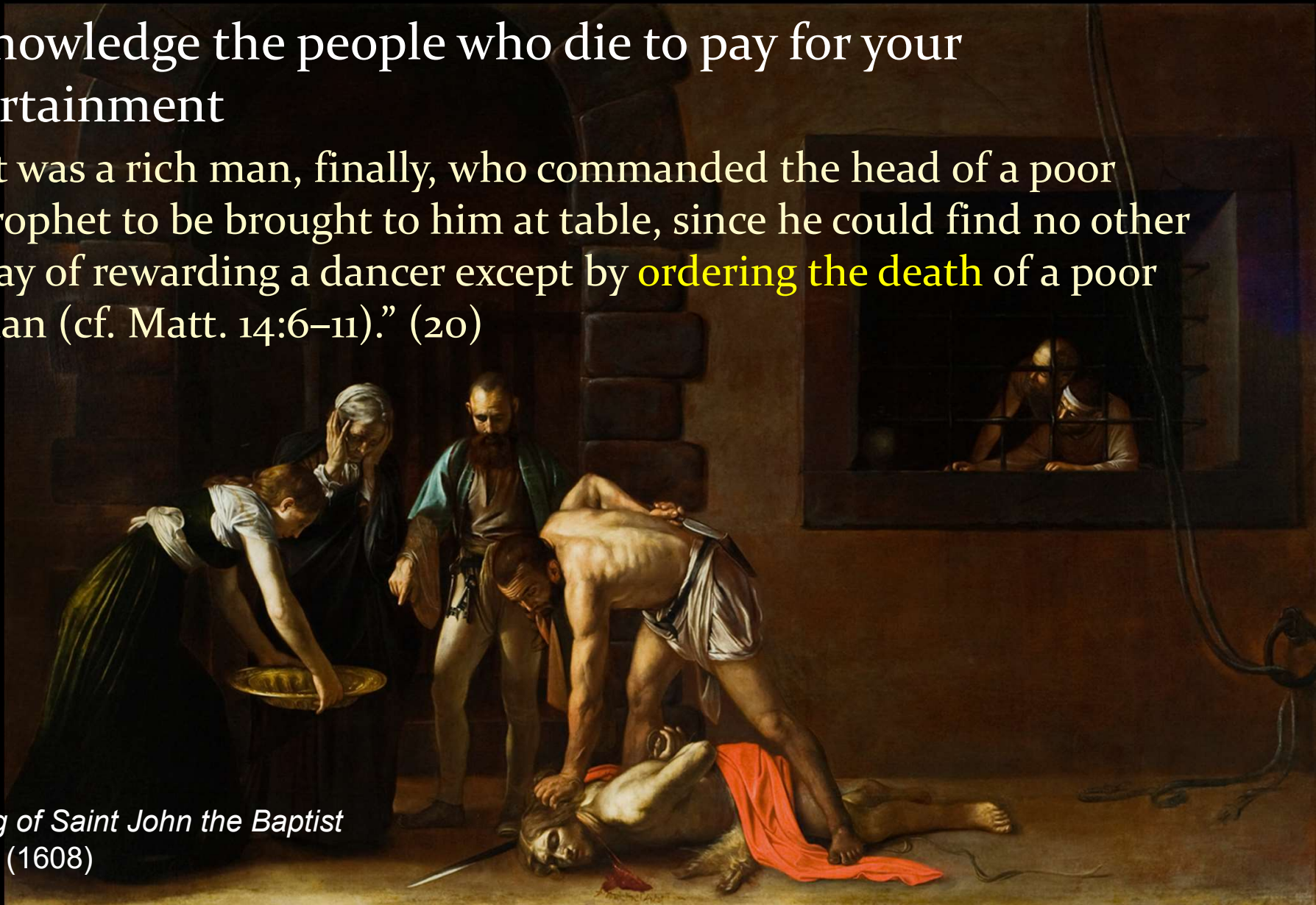
THE OVERLOOKED
CHILDREN WORKING
AMERICA'S TOBACCO FIELDS



THE DARK SIDE OF
Chocolate

Turning Points

- Acknowledge the people who die to pay for your entertainment
 - “It was a rich man, finally, who commanded the head of a poor prophet to be brought to him at table, since he could find no other way of rewarding a dancer except by **ordering the death** of a poor man (cf. Matt. 14:6–11).” (20)



The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist
by Caravaggio (1608)

Turning Points

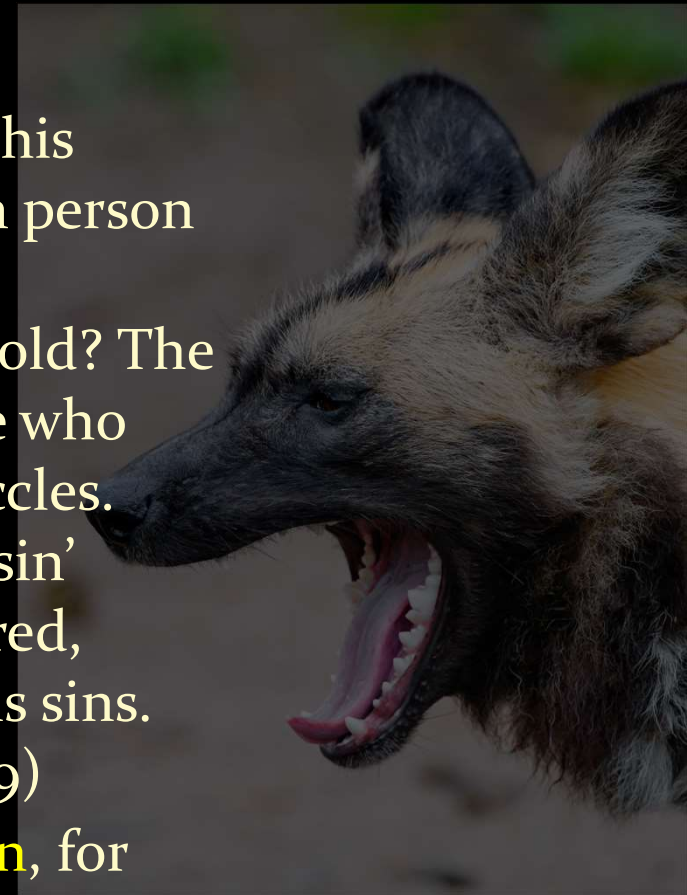
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- Note: harm principle can be translated for liberal democracies



The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article from The Independent. The website's logo and name are at the top left, with a 'Subscribe' button and a 'Menu' icon to the right. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for NEWS, SPORTS, VOICES, CULTURE, LIFESTYLE, TRAVEL, and PREMIUM. The article's breadcrumb is 'Climate > News'. The main headline reads: '‘Here it is better not to be born’: Cobalt mining for Big Tech is driving child labor, deaths in the Congo'. Below the headline is a sub-headline: 'Child labor, sexual assault, birth defects, abject poverty, workers buried alive: A new exposé on artisanal cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo lifts the curtain on a nightmarish world in which billions of people are unwittingly complicit. Senior climate correspondent Louise Boyle reports'. A small bell icon is visible on the right side of the sub-headline.

Turning Points

- You are never satisfied
 - “His kingdom should be among the dead and his headquarters should be **hell**. For what is a rich person but a kind of **bottomless pit** as far as wealth is concerned, an **insatiable hunger or thirst** for gold? The more he devours, the more he **burns**. ‘The one who loves silver **will not be satisfied** with silver’ (Eccles. 5:10)... ‘For he who commits sin is the slave of sin’ (John 8:34); he is always trapped, always fettered, never free of chains, because he is always in his sins. What a wretched slavery it is to serve sins!” (29)
 - Also: “they themselves are **slaves of corruption**, for people are **slaves** to whatever masters them... It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “The **dog turns back** to its own vomit” (2 Pet.2:19 – 22)



Turning Points

- What makes you more happy?
 - “How many lives of the poor could I have saved with last year’s harvest? Prices that are counted up in grace and not in money were the ones that **should have given me pleasure**... The rich man’s plenty, the whole world’s abundance, ought to be everyone’s wealth.” (34)
 - “But this is not what you say. Instead you say: ‘I will tear down my granaries [to build bigger ones].’ (35) “**...he is pleased more by high prices than by abundant crops.**” (37)

Turning Points

- See, greed is a magnet for fear
 - “**Why are you afraid?** I confront you with your own words: ‘You have many good things laid aside for many years.’ You can have plenty both for yourself and for others; you can have an abundance for everyone. Why tear down your granaries?” (39)
 - “How much better it is to be a generous distributor than **an anxious custodian!**” (42)

Turning Points

- See, greed is a magnet for pride
 - “Why are you **proud**, O rich man? Why do you say to the poor man: ‘**Do not touch me**’?” (59)

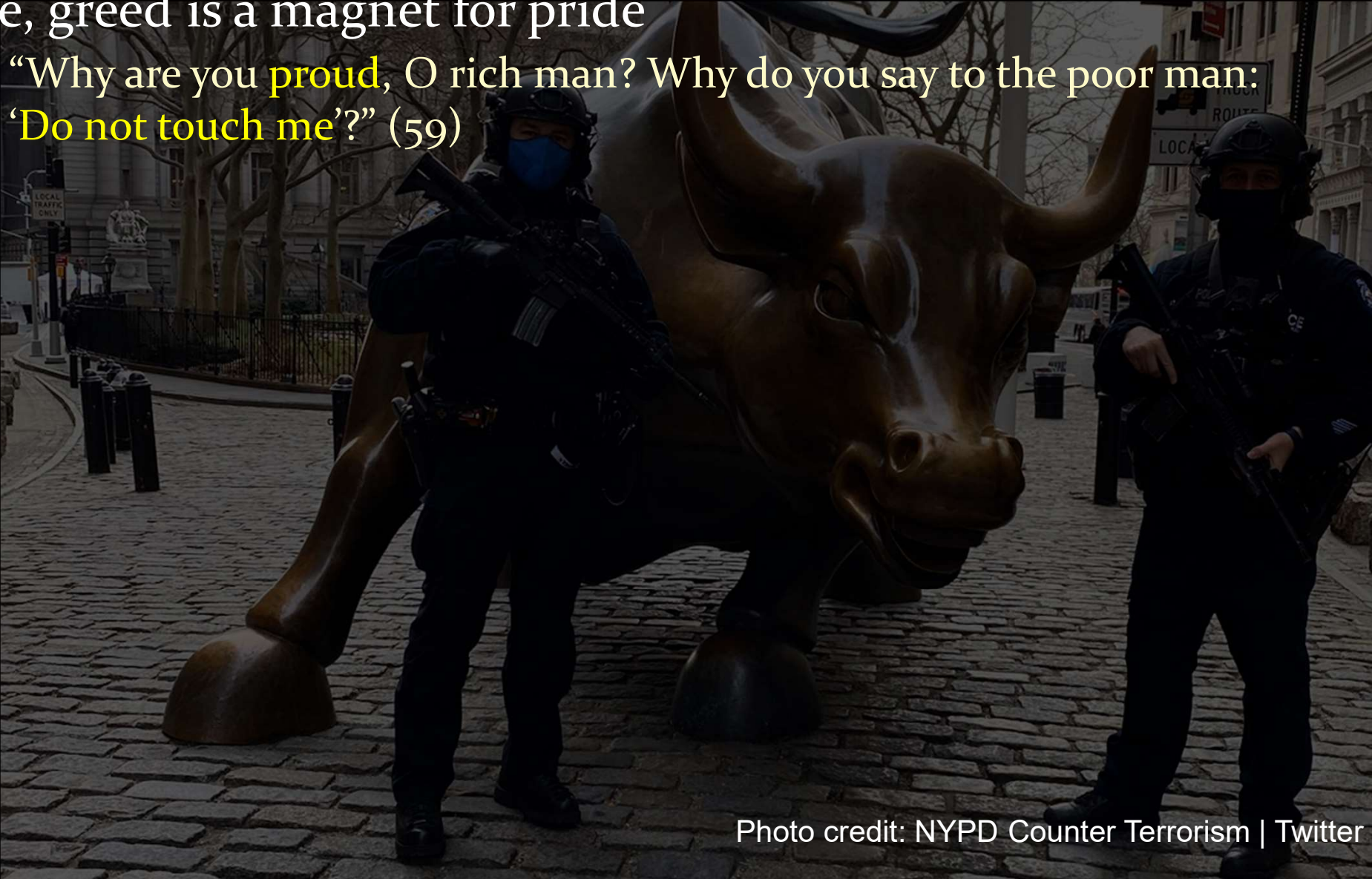


Photo credit: NYPD Counter Terrorism | Twitter

Steps of Generosity

- Poor people are the best “granaries”
 - “Let me show you **a better place** to store your grain, where you can keep it safe so that thieves will be unable to take it from you. Enclose it in the **heart of the poor**, where no worm will eat it, where it will not get stale with age. As storerooms you have the **breasts of the needy**, as storerooms you have the **homes of widows**, as storerooms you have the **mouths of infants**, so that it may be said of you: ‘Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings you have perfected praise’ (Ps. 8:1–2). **Those are the storerooms that abide forever, those are the granaries that future abundance will not destroy.** For what will you do a second time if you grow still more next year? If this happens a second time you will destroy what you are now building and build on a still larger scale. For God gives you abundance either to overcome or to condemn your avarice, so that you may not have any excuse.” (40)

Modern grain silos

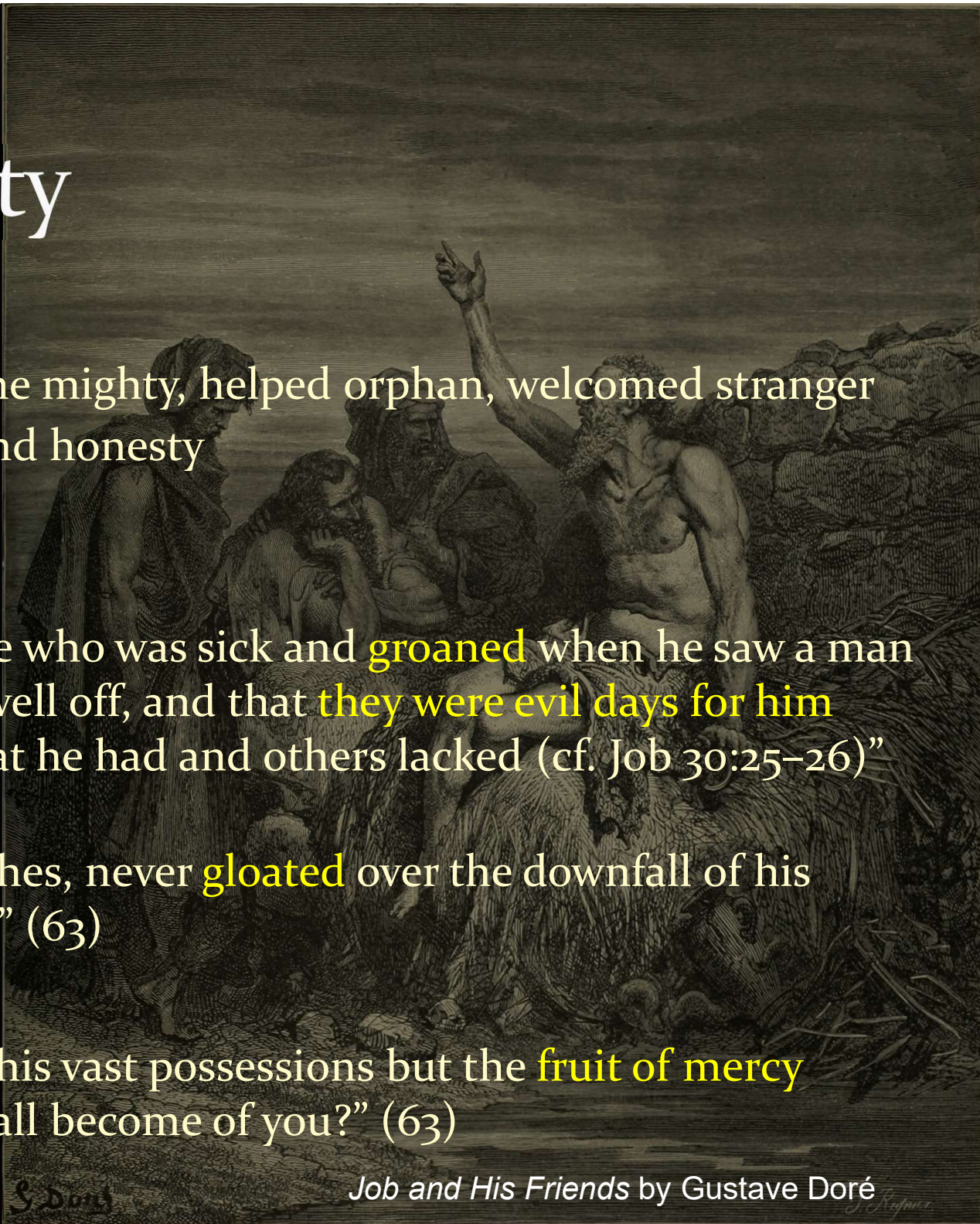
Photo credit: Feral Arts | Flickr, CC-2.0

Steps of Generosity

- Poor people are the best “soil”
 - “Hence it is written: ‘Sow for yourselves unto righteousness’ (Hos. 10:12). Be a spiritual husbandman: sow what is profitable to you. **Sowing is good in the hearts of widows.** If the soil brings forth a richer yield than it received, how much more will be multiplied the recompense of the mercy that you have shown!” (64)

Job's Generosity

- Not just deeds
 - Freed the poor from the mighty, helped orphan, welcomed stranger
 - Public transparency and honesty
 - Forgave debts; etc.
- But also desires
 - “he **wept** over everyone who was sick and **groaned** when he saw a man in need while he was well off, and that **they were evil days for him** when he observed what he had and others lacked (cf. Job 30:25–26)” (62)
 - “never **delighted** in riches, never **gloated** over the downfall of his enemies (cf. Job 31:29)” (63)
- And you?
 - “if he kept nothing of his vast possessions but the **fruit of mercy alone** — then what shall become of you?” (63)



S. Doré

Job and His Friends by Gustave Doré

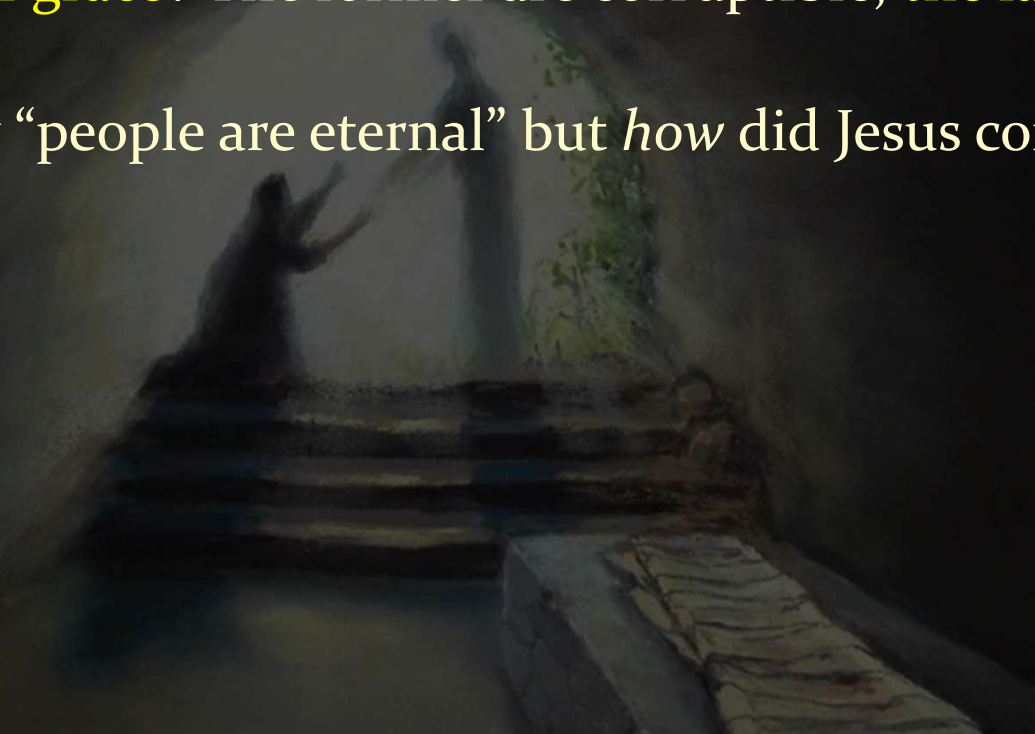
Steps of Generosity

- “But what if they misuse it?”
- Giving benefits **you**
 - “Sell your gold, rather, and purchase **salvation**; sell your precious stone and purchase the **kingdom of God**; sell your field and buy back for yourself **eternal life**” (64)



Steps of Generosity

- You can share in Christ's character
 - “Rather, when you read this, reflect that death can snatch these things from you or one more powerful than you can take them away. Why then do you want little things instead of **great things**, empty things instead of **eternal things**, treasures of money instead of **treasures of grace**? The former are corruptible, **the latter endure.**”
(64)
 - Not simply “people are eternal” but *how* did Jesus conquer death?



Steps of Generosity

- Patristic framework: Real participation in Christ
 - Jesus perfected human nature for us (Hebrews 1:3; 5:7 – 10; 12:1 – 2)
 - The circumcised heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4)
 - The cleansed heart (Psalm 51:9 – 11)
 - The responsive heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:18; 36:26 – 36)
 - The heart with God’s script written on it (Proverbs 3:3; 7:3; Jeremiah 31:31 – 34)
 - Undid the corruption of sin (Matthew 3:13 – 4:11; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 15:17)
 - Theosis: In him, we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4)
 - “God is at work in you to desire and to do” (Philippians 2:13)
- Christian virtue ethics
- Human being, human becoming

Steps of Generosity

- Giving benefits **you** because you participate in...
 - “Sell your gold, rather, and purchase **salvation** [*of your true humanity from sinfulness*]; sell your precious stone and purchase the **kingdom of God** [*which is the reign of God as revealed in Jesus own humanity*]; sell your field and buy back for yourself **eternal life** [*which is the life of eternal love and generosity in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*]” (64)



Steps of Generosity

- Who shares in what you possess?
- Decay and death in your stuff; or
 - “Reflect that you do not possess these things by yourself. The **moth** possesses them with you; **rust**, which consumes money, possesses them. Avarice has given these partners to you.” (65)
- The God of goodness in your character
 - “But see whom **grace** would place in your debt: ‘The lips of the righteous shall bless the one who is prodigal with his bread, and there shall be a testimony of his **goodness**’ (Sir. 31:23)” (65)

Steps of Generosity

- “Even God will be your debtor”
 - “It makes **your debtor God the Father**, who, like one in debt to a good creditor, pays the interest on the loan with which the poor person was helped.
 - “It makes **your debtor the Son**, who says: ‘I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, and I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you clothed me’ (Matt. 25:35–36). For he says that whatever was given to any of the least ones was given to him (cf. Matt. 25:40).” (65)

Steps of Generosity

- “Even God will be your debtor”
 - “You make God your debtor by a kind of **charitable usury**” (38)
 - “How much better it is to be a generous distributor than an anxious custodian! How much it would **profit you in terms of grace** to be called the father of many orphans rather than to possess innumerable staters sealed up in a sack! For our money is left behind here, but **grace is transferred with us to the Judge for our merit.**” (42)

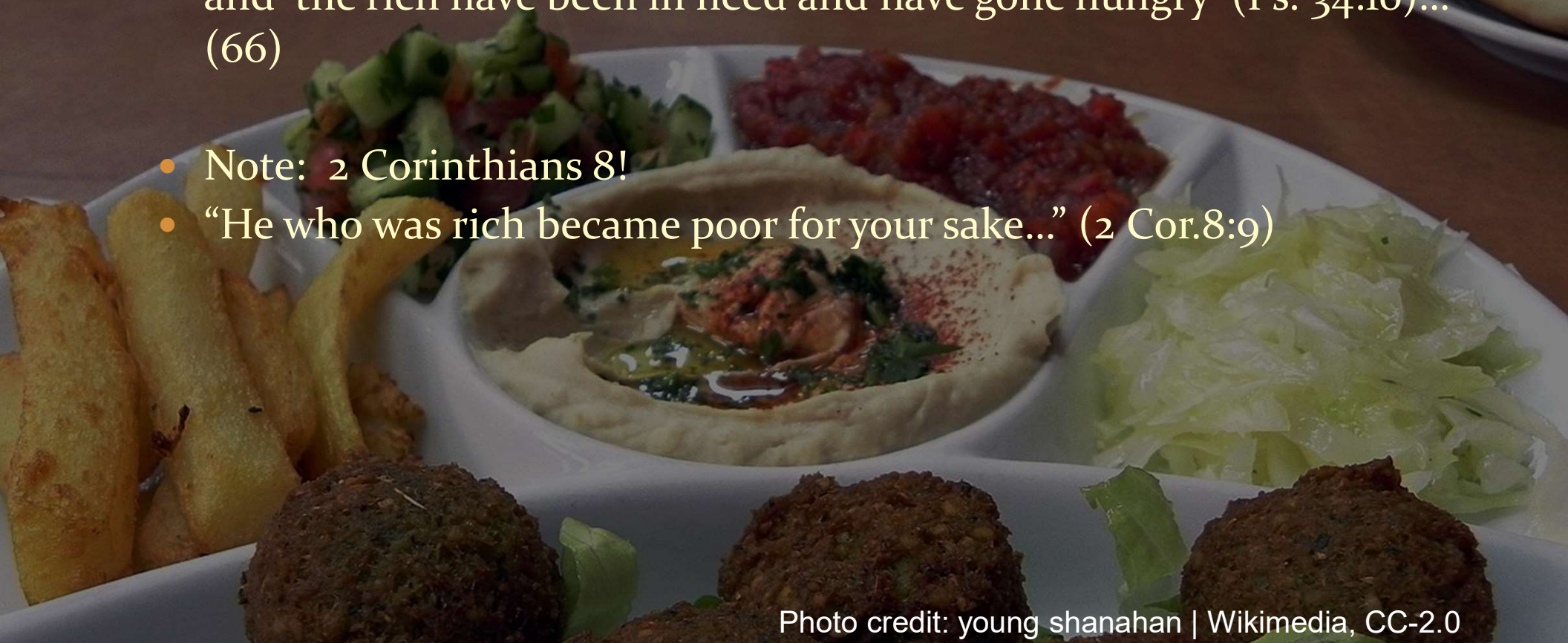
Steps of Generosity

- “Be rich to God” – rich in sharing
 - “If you wish to be rich, be poor to this world so that you might be rich to God. The one who is **rich in faith** is rich to God; the one who is **rich in mercy** is rich to God; the one who is **rich in simplicity** is rich to God; the one who is **rich in wisdom**, the one who is **rich in knowledge** — they are rich to God.



Steps of Generosity

- “Be rich to God” – rich in sharing
 - “There are those who possess **an abundance** in poverty and who are in need as far as wealth is concerned. The poor **abound** whose ‘deep poverty has **abounded** in the riches of their simplicity’ (2 Cor. 8:2), and ‘the rich have been in need and have gone hungry’ (Ps. 34:10)...” (66)
 - Note: 2 Corinthians 8!
 - “He who was rich became poor for your sake...” (2 Cor.8:9)



Steps of Generosity

- “Be rich to God” – invest in your future
 - “For not in vain does Scripture say: ‘The poor **shall** be put over the rich, and their own slaves **shall** lend to their masters’ (Prov. 22:7), because the rich and those who are masters sow what is useless and evil, from which they do not gather fruit but pluck off thorns. And therefore the rich **shall** be subject to the poor, and slaves **shall** lend spiritual things to their masters, just as the rich man asked that the poor Lazarus would lend him a drop of water. You also, O rich man, can fulfill these words: ‘Give to the poor and you have lent to God.’ For ‘he who gives to the poor lends to God’ (Prov. 19:17).” (66)

Steps of Generosity: Bonus Content!

- “Dwell in Zion” – Psalm 76 (LXX 75) and Christ (67 – 77)
 - “God is known in the believing soul” not “among princes and consuls” (67)
 - You will be “established in peace” not “agitated, disturbed, set ablaze by the different desires” (68)
 - You will be “possessors of wealth” not “possessed by wealth” (69)

Steps of Generosity: Bonus Content!

- “Dwell in Zion” – Psalm 76 (LXX 75) and Christ (67 – 77)
 - Be the chariot driver who gets up again, not the downed horseman who remains down (70 – 71)
 - Popular classical image of the human person harnessing desires
 - Answers the question of sin and failure
 - God always wants our partnership
 - Be the confessor who participates in Jesus’ self-offering and returns to God (72) and returns gifts to others (73)

Steps of Generosity: Bonus Content!

- “Dwell in Zion” – Psalm 76 (LXX 75) and Christ (67 – 77)
 - Know what delights Jesus (74)
 - “For the Lord Jesus takes delight not in those who make offerings, all clad in purple, but in those **who rule over their own dispositions**, who by the authority of their mind exercise dominion over bodily wantonness.” (74; cf. 64 – 66)
 - “Return gifts” and “Be reconciled” (75)
 - “I do not demand what is mine [the creation; Psalm 50], but from what is yours [yourself, your will, your desires] you can offer the zeal of your devotion and faith.” (75)

Steps of Generosity: Bonus Content!

- “Dwell in Zion” – Psalm 76 (LXX 75) and Christ (67 – 77)
 - “Draw near, be not distant” (76)
 - 11 Make vows to the Lord your God
And perform them;
Let all who are around him
Bring gifts to the one who is awesome [Ambrose: “terrible”] (Ps.76)
 - “You return gifts, you who are not far from the Lord, ‘who are round about him,’ for ‘you who were **distant** have been brought close’ (Eph. 2:13). But those who seem to themselves to be close on account of their riches and power have become **distant** because of their avarice. For no one is **outside** except the one whom wrongdoing has **shut out**, just as it **cast out** Adam from paradise and **shut out** Eve (cf. Gen. 3:23–24). No one is **distant** except the one whom his own misdeeds have **banished**.”

Steps of Generosity: Bonus Content!

- “Dwell in Zion” – Psalm 76 (LXX 75) and Christ (67 – 77)
 - “Make the avenger your debtor” (75)
 - 11 Make vows to the Lord your God
And perform them;
Let all who are around him
Bring gifts to the one who is awesome [Ambrose: “terrible”],
 - 12 Who cuts off the spirit [“breath”] of princes,
Who inspires fear in [“is terrible among”] the kings of the earth.
 - “For, because he who could not be **sated** by all the wealth of a kingdom had **desired** a poor man’s vineyard, he was brought lower than utter destitution by the Lord. No one was found to wash his wounds, no one to cover his body. Human kindness failed in his regard, and **canine savagery** took its place. Clearly the avaricious man found worthy ministers for his obsequies.” (77)
- Frame: Participation in God’s giving of creation and in Christ’s character

On Naboth: Outline by Scriptural Focus

- Introduction: Greed “Has Certain Steps” (1 – 4) (2)
- Ahab and Naboth in 1 Kings 21 (5 – 32) (11)
- The Rich Fool in Luke 12:13 – 34 (33 – 44) (34, 37)
- Jezebel and Ahab in 1 Kings 21 (45 – 61) (58)
- Job’s Generosity (62 – 63)
- Who is Master, Servant, from Matthew 6:19 – 24 (64 – 66)
- God’s Reign in You, from Psalm 76 (67 – 77) (74)
- Ahab and His Fate in 1 Kings 20 – 22 (78 – 81)
- Notable: Genesis 1 (creation belongs to all) in 2, 11, 34, 37, 58, 64 – 66, 74 (self-mastery and shared dominion)

God's Creation Vision from Genesis 1

- In creation, God gives us shared dominion
 - God gives the earth to all and to each
 - God calls us to share in His gift-giving
- In Christ, God gives us dominion over sin in ourselves
 - God gave Jesus' new humanity to all and to each
 - God calls us to share in Jesus the gift-giver
 - Jesus shares with all who share like him, with him, in him
 - Have dominion over sin, greed within ourselves

Liturgy and Christian Justice

- Focus: the desires under the deeds
- Shaping of the self: desires via deeds
- Multiple emotional points of engagement
- Multiple turning points offered
- Multiple Scriptures in the creation-Christ (new and transfigured creation) relation

Liturgy and Christian Justice

- Exercise: How do you preach “the rich young ruler”?
 - Jesus’ *palingenesia*: regeneration, re-gensis
 - Matt.19:28: story quoted in *On Naboth* 64
 - What is the *regeneration*?
 - Why is sharing important in the *regeneration*?
 - Contexts
 - Matt.19:3 – 12: re-gensis regarding marriage
 - Mark 10:1 – 12: re-gensis regarding marriage
 - Luke 18:15 – 19:10: “new birth” motif in infants, Zaccheus climbs tree

Liturgy and Christian Justice

- Critiquing, extending Ambrose: Institutionalized coveting?
 - Peter Brown's critique
 - “When it came to the central functions of the Roman state, even the vivid Ambrose was a lightweight.” (p.146)
- Covetousness: purely individual or ultimately personal?
 - Separating capital from labor: contra Adam Smith
 - Limited liability in corporate law, etc.
 - Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865*
 - Externalities: forcing other to pay for your actions
 - False marketing: extracting health, life from others
 - Money in politics: oligarchy skews democratic governance

Liturgy and Christian Justice

- Critiquing, extending Ambrose: Christ vs. Empire
 - Animal motif for empires in Daniel 7:1 – 14
 - Animal motifs used to portray David as an Adam in 1 Sam.17:34 – 36
 - Animal motifs for opponents of David in Psalms
 - Animal motif for sin, opponents of humanity in Genesis 3 – 4
 - Christ as “son of man”, Adam/David figure in Dan.7:13 – 14
 - Restraining empire roles
 - Luke 2:1 – 20; 3:23 – 38: Jesus as new Adam /David
 - Luke 3:12 – 13: Imperial tax collectors collect no personal salary from colonized subjects
 - Luke 3:14: Imperial soldiers reduced to policing, not extorting
 - Luke 19:1 – 10: Personal restitution for institutional, imperial theft
 - Acts 19: Challenging the idolatry-industrial complex



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Appendices

- Appendix A: Explaining Ambrose on Atonement and Human Destiny
- Appendix B: Critiquing Ambrose's Sermon

Appendices

- Appendix A: Explaining Ambrose on Atonement and Human Destiny
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Atonement and Destiny

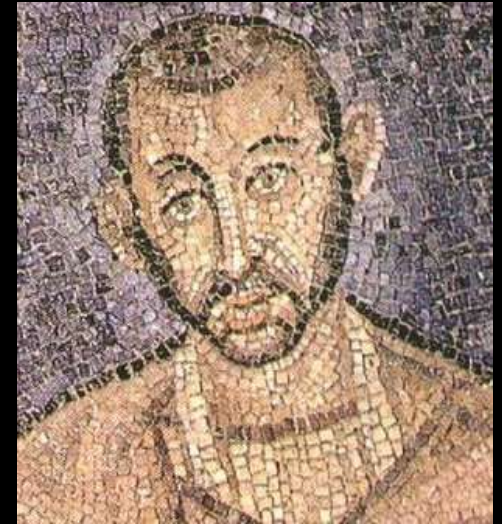
- From Deserving to Desiring
 - “For what is hell but the deprivation of that which is exceedingly **desired** by someone? Therefore, according to the analogy of **desire**, whoever **desires** God rejoices and whoever **desires** sin is punished.”
 - John of Damascus (c.675 – 740), “seal of the patristics,” *Against the Manicheans* 94.1569, 1573



Icon of John of Damascus

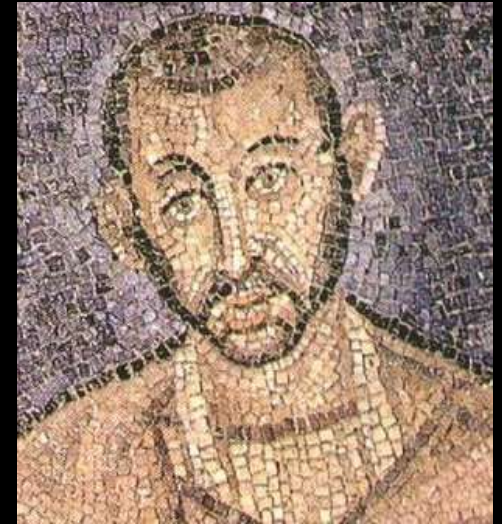
Atonement and Destiny in Ambrose

- Hell is cultivating the wrong desires
 - “So the Lord said it through Isaiah, saying, “And they shall see the members of men who have averred against me; and their worm will not die, and their fire will not be extinguished” (Isa.66:24). The grinding of teeth also expresses a feeling of indignation, because too late we repent, too late we moan, too late we take it upon ourselves to have sinned with **a perversity so tenacious.**”
 - Ambrose of Milan, *Commentary on Luke 14*



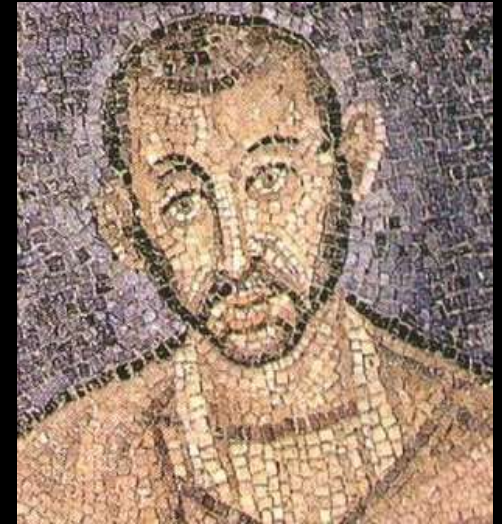
Atonement and Destiny in Ambrose

- Hell is cultivating the wrong perceptions
 - “So Isaiah says, “Walk in the light of your fire and the flame that you have lit” (Isa.50:11). The fire is the one engendered by the sadness of faults; the worm comes from the fact that the insane sins of the soul **attack the mind and the senses** of the guilty, and gnaw at the entrails of his conscience (Sag.12:5); as the worms are born of each, so to speak, of the body of the sinner.
 - Ambrose of Milan, *Commentary on Luke 14*



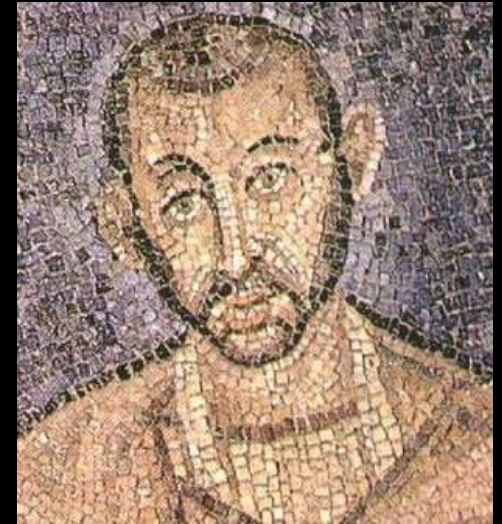
Atonement and Destiny in Ambrose

- **Fire** is symbolic of God's *refining* presence:
 - “And Isaiah shows that the Holy Spirit is not only Light but also **Fire**, saying: And the light of Israel shall be for a **fire** [Isaiah 10:17]...
 - For our God is a consuming **Fire**, as Moses said [Deuteronomy 4:24]... For the bush was **burning** but was not consumed, because in that mystery the Lord was showing that He would come to illuminate the thorns of our body, and not to consume those who were in misery, but to alleviate their misery; Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with **fire**, that He might give grace and destroy sin. [Matthew 3:11]...



Atonement and Destiny in Ambrose

- **Fire** is symbolic of God's *refining* presence:
 - “What, then, is that **fire**? ...that **fire** which improves good deeds like gold, and consumes sins like stubble. This is undoubtedly the Holy Spirit, Who is called both the **fire** and light of the countenance of God.
 - “And as there is a light of the divine countenance, so, too, does **fire** shine forth from the countenance of God, for it is written: “A **fire** shall burn in His sight.” For the grace of the day of judgment shines beforehand, that forgiveness may follow to reward the service of the saints.”
 - Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit*, book 1, chapter 14, paragraphs 164 – 165, 169 – 170



Appendices

- Appendix A: Explaining Ambrose on Atonement and Human Destiny
- **Appendix B: Critiquing Ambrose's Sermon**

Covetousness Reframed

- Ambrose's "real texts"
 - Luke 12:13 – 34
 - Matthew 6:19 – 24
 - Matthew 19:13 – 30
 - Genesis 1 – 2
- Ahab in 1 Kings 21
 - Used as a case study of covetousness as defined by the New Testament
 - But what does the story mean in the context of
 - The Old Testament?
 - The entirety of the biblical canon?

Covetousness Reframed

- Ahab and 1 Kings 21 in the context of Israel/Old Testament
 - Obtaining a “garden”: an ironic image
 - Trying to re-enter the original garden
 - But actually retells the story of the fall
 - Ahab and Jezebel: Adam and Eve
 - Forbidden land: Forbidden fruit
 - Covets tastier food: Covets food
 - Seduced by animalistic temptation: Seduced by serpent’s temptation
- Now in canonical context...
 - What did “ancestral land” mean?



Covetousness Reframed

- Jesus claimed the whole planet
 - “They shall inherit **the earth**” (Mt.5:5) not just “the land” (Ps.37)
 - “On **earth** as in heaven” (Mt.6:10)
 - “All authority in heaven and on **earth** has been given to me” (Mt.28:18)
 - “The promise that he would inherit **the world**” (Rom.4:13)
- “Ancestral land” for Jesus as
 - The seed of Abraham (Gal.3:16)
 - The true Israelite (Rom.2:28 – 29; 6:6; 8:3; 10:4)
 - The heir of David (Rom.1:3 – 4)

Covetousness Reframed

- Jesus' definition of God's land and family
 - Jesus claimed the whole planet
 - Shares with all who share like he does
 - All ancestors gifting inheritances to all children
 - Expanding, missional
 - Not geography-specific
- Moses and Jesus on caring for children
 - Moses: God regifted the garden land to all Israelites (Lev.25)
 - Jesus: Jesus welcomed all children, taught care for all (Mt.19:13 – 15)

Covetousness Reframed

- Moses and Jesus on “hardness of heart”
 - Moses allowed for “hardness of heart” in Israel
 - For marriage (Deut.24:1 – 4)
 - For sharing via family ancestral lands and debt-forgiveness (Lev 25; Dt.15)
 - Jesus undid “hardness of heart,” restored God’s original creation vision
 - For marriage (Mt.19:4, 8)
 - For economic sharing and debt-forgiveness (Mt.19:28 *palingenesia*)

Covetousness Reframed

- Ahab and 1 Kings 21 in the context of creation/new creation
 - Obtaining a “garden”: an ironic image
 - Trying to re-enter the original garden
 - But actually retells the story of the fall
 - Ahab and Jezebel: Adam and Eve
 - Forbidden land: Forbidden fruit
 - Covets tastier food: Covets food
 - Seduced by animalistic temptation: Seduced by serpent’s temptation
- Now in canonical context...
 - Whatever interferes with passing down a good inheritance?
 - Laws governing wealth-production
 - Housing as a common good, public good
 - Indebtedness as community problem