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A Reassessment of Augustine's Theological Thought and Its Contemporary Relevance

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Abstract

The theological thought of Augustine remains relevant in addressing the challenges of the modern era, including secularism, moral relativism, and the crisis of Church authority. This study examines the concepts of original sin, grace, predestination, and the relationship between faith and reason within a contemporary context. Through a content analysis of scholarly literature, it is observed that Augustine's ideas provide ethical and spiritual guidance for both the Church and society. Furthermore, the concept of *Civitas Dei* offers a perspective on the Church's role amidst social transformations. Augustine's theological legacy serves as a profound reflection for Christians navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Abstrak

Pemikiran teologis Augustinus tetap relevan dalam menghadapi tantangan zaman modern, termasuk sekularisme, relativisme moral, dan krisis otoritas Gereja. Penelitian ini menganalisis konsep dosa asal, rahmat, predestinasi, serta hubungan iman dan akal dalam konteks kekinian. Melalui metode analisis konten terhadap literatur pustaka, ditemukan bahwa pemikiran Augustinus memberikan panduan etis dan spiritual bagi Gereja dan masyarakat. Konsep *Civitas Dei* juga menawarkan perspektif bagi peran Gereja di tengah perubahan sosial. Warisan teologis Augustinus menjadi refleksi mendalam bagi umat Kristen dalam menavigasi kompleksitas dunia modern.

A. Introduction

Aurelius Augustine (354–430 AD) stands as one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Christianity, whose ideas continue to exert a profound influence on theology, philosophy, and ethics to this day. His doctrines on original sin, divine grace, predestination, the relationship between faith and reason, and the concept of *Civitas Dei* (the City of God) provide a foundational framework for understanding Christian faith and social life. However, in the modern and postmodern eras, characterised by secularism, moral relativism, and rapid social change, questions arise regarding the continued relevance of his thought in addressing contemporary challenges. This study, therefore, seeks to revitalise Augustine's theological thought and examine its significance in the present context, particularly for the Church, individuals, and society.

The central issue explored in this research is the extent to which Augustine's thought remains relevant in addressing theological, ethical, and social challenges in the contemporary era. Specifically, this study investigates how Augustine's theological concepts can serve as a guide in responding to issues such as secularisation, moral decline, the crisis of Church authority, and the relationship between religion and science. By tracing the relevance of Augustine's ideas, this study also seeks to identify how the Church can interpret and apply his legacy in contemporary faith and practice.

The research methodology employed in this study is content analysis of relevant literature, including Augustine's original works as well as various academic studies on his thought. This approach facilitates a comprehensive exploration of Augustine's key theological concepts and their contextualisation across different historical periods. By engaging with scholarly sources and contemporary interpretations from theologians and philosophers, this study aims to provide a broader and more applicable understanding of Augustine's theological thought.

The findings of this study indicate that Augustine's thought retains significant relevance in addressing various contemporary challenges. His doctrine of original sin, which highlights humanity's inclination towards evil, remains pertinent in light of today's moral and social crises. His reflections on divine grace and predestination also offer profound insights into the relationship between human free will and divine sovereignty in salvation. Furthermore, his balanced approach to faith and reason provides a valuable perspective in addressing the frequently debated conflict between science and religion in modern discourse.

This study also reveals the importance of Augustine's thought in the social and political spheres. His distinction between *Civitas Dei* and *Civitas Terrena* offers crucial insights for the Church in determining its role in an ever-changing world. The Church is called not only to engage with social issues but also to remain steadfast in its commitment to divine values. In an era of globalisation marked by political and economic instability, Augustine's ideas can serve as an ethical foundation for navigating the challenges faced by modern society.

This research is beneficial for various audiences, particularly theologians, Church leaders, and the wider community seeking to understand the enduring significance of Augustine's thought in contemporary life. By revisiting his theological ideas, this study aspires to provide fresh perspectives for addressing spiritual, moral, and social challenges. Additionally, it serves as a valuable reference for theologians and philosophers in formulating relevant approaches for the Church in responding to the demands of the present age.

In conclusion, this study affirms that Augustine's intellectual legacy is not merely of historical value but also has tangible implications for the present. His thought offers profound reflections on the relationship between humanity and God, the role of the Church in society, and the continuing relevance of Christian faith in an ever-changing world. Thus, revitalising Augustine's thought is a crucial endeavour for the Church and Christian believers in navigating the complexities of the modern era while remaining grounded in a robust theological foundation.

B. Research Methodology

This study employs the method of content analysis applied to relevant scholarly literature on the theological thought of Aurelius Augustine and its significance in the present era. Content analysis is an approach used to systematically examine the substance of texts in order to identify meanings, key concepts, and their relevance within a specific context.

This approach involves an in-depth examination of texts under review, followed by the categorisation of central themes in Augustine's thought that bear relevance to contemporary theological and social challenges. Concepts such as original sin, grace, predestination, the relationship between faith and reason, and the role of the Church in society are analysed to assess how these ideas contribute to addressing present-day issues, including secularisation, moral relativism, and the crisis of spiritual authority.

In gathering data, this study relies on recognised academic sources that interpret Augustine's thought within both historical and contemporary contexts. These sources are analysed comparatively to trace the continuity of Augustine's intellectual legacy and to examine how his ideas have developed and been applied across various theological traditions.

The data analysis is conducted through an interpretative approach, wherein each of Augustine's key theological concepts is examined based on its doctrinal significance and its relevance to the present dynamics of the Church and society. The categorised data is then evaluated within the framework of modern challenges, resulting in a synthesis that elucidates the relationship between Augustine's thought and its contemporary theological and ecclesiastical significance.

By employing content analysis of scholarly literature, this study aims to provide a more systematic and applicable understanding of Augustine's theological contributions. The findings are expected not only to offer theoretical insights but also to contribute to theological reflection that may be applied by the Church, scholars, and society in addressing various theological, social, and moral issues in the modern and postmodern era.

C. Results and Discussion

The Life and Ministry of Aurelius Augustine: From Conversion to His Influence on Christianity

Aurelius Augustine, or Saint Augustine of Hippo, is recognised as one of the greatest thinkers in Christian history, whose profound contributions shaped the development of Western Christian theology. As a Church Father and Doctor of the Church, his theological legacy has significantly influenced both Catholic and Protestant traditions. Augustine was born on 13 November 354 AD in Tagaste, Numidia, in what is now Souk Ahras, Algeria. He was the son of Patricius, a Roman official and pagan, and Saint Monica, a devout Christian (Brown, 2000).

Augustine received a classical education in Carthage, then a major intellectual centre of North Africa. There, he studied philosophy, literature, and rhetoric—disciplines that formed the core of higher Roman education. Following his studies in Carthage, he pursued further academic endeavours in Rome and Milan. During his intellectual journey, he was initially drawn to Manichaeism, a belief system that combined elements of Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism. However, his eventual disillusionment with the inconsistencies of Manichaean doctrine led him to embrace Neoplatonism, particularly the teachings of Plotinus (O'Donnell, 2015; Mawikere & Hura, 2023).

A decisive turning point in Augustine's life occurred in 386 AD when he experienced a spiritual conversion after reading Romans 13:13-14. This transformative moment is meticulously documented in his renowned work *Confessiones*, written between 397 and 400 AD. In this text, Augustine vividly recounts his struggles with sin, his search for truth, and the moment of enlightenment that led him to fully embrace the Christian faith (Chadwick, 1991).

On Easter in 387 AD, Augustine was baptised by Bishop Ambrose in Milan, an event that marked a fundamental transformation in his life. Following his baptism, he returned to North Africa and established a monastic community in Tagaste. His monastic life continued until 391 AD, when he was ordained as a priest in Hippo Regius. Four years later, he was consecrated as Bishop of Hippo, a position he held until his death on 28 August 430 AD, during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals (Markus, 2001; King, 2010).

As a prolific Christian thinker, Augustine produced numerous works that have left an enduring mark on the history of Christian theology and philosophy. One of his most celebrated writings is *Confessiones*, which serves not only as a spiritual autobiography but also as a profound philosophical exploration of time, memory, and the human relationship with God (TeSelle, 2006). This work continues to be a subject of theological and philosophical study to the present day.

Augustine also authored *De Civitate Dei* (413–426 AD), a monumental work that examines human history from a theological perspective. In this treatise, he contrasts the "City of God" with the "Earthly City" to illustrate the dynamic interplay between faith and political power. Augustine composed this work in response to the sack of Rome in 410 AD, aiming to affirm that earthly kingdoms are transient, whereas the kingdom of God is eternal (Dodaro & Lawless, 2012).

Another significant contribution is *De Trinitate* (399–419 AD), in which Augustine investigates the doctrine of the Trinity. He endeavours to elucidate how the three persons of the Trinity can be comprehended philosophically without diminishing their theological significance. In this work, he develops a psychological analogy of the Trinity, correlating the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with the structure of human consciousness (Ayres, 2010).

In the field of hermeneutics and exegesis, Augustine composed *De Doctrina Christiana* (397–426 AD), a guide to biblical interpretation and Christian teaching methods. He underscores the necessity of reason in understanding Scripture and emphasises love as the principal hermeneutical key in interpreting sacred texts (Bonner, 1970). This treatise remains a foundational reference in biblical studies and homiletics.

One of Augustine's most significant theological disputes was his opposition to Pelagianism. In *De Natura et Gratia* (415 AD), he upholds the doctrine of original sin and the necessity of divine grace for human salvation. He rejects the notion that salvation can be attained solely through human effort, without divine intervention (Rees, 1988). This argument later became a cornerstone of the theology of grace in both Catholic and Protestant traditions (Mawikere & Hura, 2023).

Beyond Pelagianism, Augustine also confronted Donatism, a movement that asserted the validity of the sacraments depended on the moral purity of the minister administering them. In *De Baptismo* (400–401 AD), he argues that the efficacy of the sacraments is based on the authority of the Church rather than the personal virtue of the officiant. This position played a pivotal role in shaping the doctrine of the universal Church (Freund, 1952).

In theological anthropology, Augustine developed his reflections on free will and determinism across various works. He asserts that while human beings possess free will, original sin has so deeply corrupted it that divine grace is essential for choosing the good (Rist, 1994). This doctrine has significantly influenced Western Christian theology, particularly within Augustinian thought.

Augustine also made substantial contributions to political philosophy and social ethics. He formulated ideas on justice and the role of the state in maintaining civil order, themes that have been extensively studied in Christian political philosophy. His reflections on the relationship between Church and state served as a foundational reference for medieval and subsequent political thought (Elshtain, 1995).

Augustine's intellectual legacy extends beyond theology into philosophy and psychology. His concept of time, as articulated in *Confessiones*, profoundly influenced modern philosophers such as Henri Bergson and Martin Heidegger. Furthermore, his ideas on will and memory laid the groundwork for cognitive psychology (Matthews, 2005; Wetzel, 2010).

In sum, Augustine's intellectual legacy continues to be the subject of scholarly inquiry across multiple disciplines. His extensive corpus offers profound reflections on the relationship

between faith and reason, the primacy of love in Christian life, and the role of grace in human salvation. His thought remains relevant, serving as a foundational pillar for theological, philosophical, and humanistic studies to this day (Harrison, 2006).

The intellectual and spiritual legacy of Augustine is not solely grounded in his life and ministry but also in the theological ideas he formulated throughout his lifetime. As both a philosopher and theologian, he developed fundamental concepts that have shaped Christian doctrine for centuries. From his reflections on grace and original sin to his discourse on the relationship between faith and reason, Augustine provided a theological framework that continues to be studied and debated to this day. To gain a deeper understanding of his influence, it is essential to examine how his teachings on salvation, the Church, and divine order have served as the foundation of Christian thought in the West and in other regions where the Gospel has been proclaimed.

Augustine's Major Theological Doctrines

Original Sin (Peccatum Originale)

Aurelius Augustine developed the doctrine of original sin, which had a profound influence on Western Christian theology. In his work *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione* (AD 412), he asserted that all humanity inherits sin from Adam. This concept is based on his interpretation of Romans 5:12, which states that sin entered the world through one man, resulting in death for all. Augustine argued that, as a consequence of Adam's fall, every individual is born in a state of sin, possessing a natural inclination towards evil (*concupiscentia*).

In *Enchiridion*, Augustine further clarified that original sin affects not only the moral disposition of humanity but also its will and intellect. Therefore, baptism is essential for the remission of original sin and the restoration of humanity's relationship with God. Without baptism, he maintained, individuals remain in a state of sin and are estranged from salvation. His doctrine of original sin played a crucial role in shaping the Catholic Church's soteriology and became a central point of contention with movements such as Pelagianism, which rejected this idea (Brown, 2000).

Grace (Gratia) and Salvation

In his theological reflections, Augustine placed great emphasis on the indispensable role of grace in human salvation. In *De Spiritu et Littera* (AD 412), he distinguished three forms of grace bestowed by God: *gratia praeveniens*, the grace that precedes and awakens faith in an individual; *gratia cooperans*, the grace that assists believers in their spiritual growth and practice of faith; and *gratia perseverans*, the grace that ensures perseverance in faith until the end of one's life. Augustine argued that without divine grace, humanity is incapable of attaining salvation, as its will has been weakened by original sin.

The significance of grace in salvation became a central issue in the theological debate between Augustine and the followers of Pelagius. Pelagius maintained that human beings could achieve salvation through their own efforts and moral virtue, whereas Augustine insisted that salvation is granted solely by God's grace. His doctrine subsequently laid the foundation for the *sola gratia* theology of the Protestant Reformation, which was later emphasised by Martin Luther and John Calvin (TeSelle, 2006).

Predestination (Praedestinatio)

As an extension of his doctrine of grace, Augustine developed the concept of predestination. In *De Correptione et Gratia* (AD 426), he affirmed that God has chosen certain individuals for salvation (*electi*), while others remain in sin and are destined for eternal punishment. This election, according to Augustine, is not based on human merit but solely on God's irrevocable grace. He maintained that human will plays no role in determining salvation, as it is entirely dependent on divine decree, which is independent of human effort.

Augustine's doctrine of predestination later became foundational to Calvinist theology. However, in subsequent theological developments, figures such as Thomas Aquinas sought to reconcile this doctrine with the idea of human cooperation in accepting divine grace. Nevertheless, predestination has remained one of the most debated and controversial doctrines in the history of Christian theology (Ayres, 2010).

Free Will and Divine Sovereignty

In *De Libero Arbitrio*, Augustine examines the relationship between human free will and divine sovereignty. He argues that while human beings possess free will, it has been weakened by original sin. Without the aid of divine grace, humanity is incapable of choosing true goodness, as its natural inclination is directed towards sin. Augustine asserts that only through God's grace can human beings attain true freedom in choosing what is good.

Furthermore, Augustine endeavours to reconcile the concept of free will with divine sovereignty. He does not deny that humans retain the capacity to make choices, yet he maintains that these choices, in themselves, are insufficient to achieve salvation without divine intervention. Thus, he constructs a theology that upholds the notion that God's sovereignty does not negate human free will but rather perfects it (Rist, 1994).

The Doctrine of the Trinity

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine expounds upon the concept of the Trinity, affirming that God is one essence in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He emphasises that while these three persons share the same divine substance, they are distinct in their relational identity—the Father as the source of divine being, the Son as the eternal Word, and the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between them.

To illustrate this doctrine, Augustine employs a psychological analogy, likening the human soul's faculties—memory (Father), intellect (Son), and will (Holy Spirit)—to the nature of the Trinity. This analogy seeks to demonstrate how three distinct yet unified aspects can reflect the triune nature of God. His theological insights into the Trinity significantly shaped the development of Trinitarian doctrine within Western Christianity (Dodaro & Lawless, 2012).

The Church and the Sacraments

Augustine opposed Donatism, which held that the Church consisted solely of the righteous and that sacraments administered by immoral priests were invalid. In *De Baptismo*, he contended that the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend on the moral purity of the minister but on Christ as the true source of sacramental grace.

For Augustine, the Church comprises both the sanctified and those still undergoing spiritual transformation. He further emphasised that sacraments, particularly baptism, are divine gifts that remain valid regardless of the personal holiness of the officiant. His perspective laid the groundwork for understanding the Church as a universal institution embracing all believers (Frend, 1952).

Eschatology (The End of Times)

In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine distinguishes between the *Civitas Dei* (City of God) and the *Civitas Terrena* (Earthly City). The *Civitas Dei* consists of those who live by faith and will attain eternal life with God, whereas the *Civitas Terrena* represents those who reject God and will face eternal damnation. He emphasises that history is a perpetual conflict between these two cities, culminating in God's ultimate victory at the end of time.

Augustine's eschatological vision not only influenced Christian theology but also shaped medieval political thought. He maintained that earthly kingdoms are transient, whereas the Kingdom of God is eternal. His ideas became foundational for the relationship between the Church and the state in Western Christendom (Markus, 2001; King, 2010).

Humanity, Society, and Politics

Augustine's socio-political thought is primarily developed in *De Civitate Dei*, wherein he explores the relationship between humanity, society, and politics in the light of Christian faith. He argues that human nature is predisposed to sin, necessitating laws and order to prevent chaos in society.

In his political reflections, Augustine asserts that earthly governments play a role in upholding justice, yet they cannot replace the divine order of God's kingdom. The state functions to restrain evil, but ultimate salvation comes only from God. Therefore, while the state is necessary, Christians must orient their lives towards the City of God (Elshtain, 1995). Additionally, Augustine regards the Church as the moral guide of society. While the Church should not be subjugated to political power, it must provide ethical direction to rulers and citizens alike in fostering just and moral governance (Matthews, 2005; Wetzell, 2010).

Augustine's Opposition to Heresies

Augustine confronted various movements that he deemed heretical. One of these was Manichaeism, which posited a radical dualism between light and darkness. Augustine refuted this view, asserting that evil is not an independent entity but rather the absence of good (*privatio boni*) (Brown, 2000).

Beyond Manichaeism, Augustine also opposed Pelagianism, which maintained that human beings could attain salvation without divine grace. In *De Natura et Gratia*, he insisted that salvation is solely an act of divine grace (Markus, 2001; King, 2010).

Furthermore, Augustine rejected Donatism, which held that sacraments were only valid if administered by morally pure clergy. In *De Baptismo*, he reaffirmed that the efficacy of sacraments derives from Christ himself, rather than the virtue of the minister (Freund, 1952).

Augustine's theological thought not only provided the foundations of Christian doctrine in the classical era but continues to hold relevance in contemporary theological and philosophical discourse. His engagement with various heresies underscores his commitment to preserving the integrity of Christian teaching amidst intellectual and social challenges. His reflections on original sin, grace, predestination, free will, and the relationship between Church and state remain central to theological inquiry.

In the modern context, Augustine's ideas continue to serve as a crucial reference in addressing theological and ethical issues faced by Christians amid the dynamic changes of society, politics, and culture.

The Relevance of Augustine's Theological Thought for the Church, Humanity, and Society in the Contemporary Era

Original Sin and the Reality of Human Moral Decay

Augustine's doctrine of original sin (*peccatum originale*) provides a theological foundation for understanding humanity's inclination towards sin. In *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione*, he asserts that all human beings inherit sin from Adam, resulting in an inherent tendency towards evil (*concupiscentia*). This concept remains relevant in the modern and postmodern world, which is characterised by moral relativism, nihilism, and ethical decadence (Brown, 2000).

Amidst a culture that increasingly exalts unlimited individual freedom, Augustine's thought serves as a reminder that human nature is inherently prone to sin and cannot attain moral perfection through personal effort alone. The moral crisis, widespread injustice, and social conflicts of the present age underscore the necessity of spiritual transformation through divine grace rather than mere social reform (Markus, 2001; King, 2010).

Divine Grace as the Answer to the Crisis of Secularism

In *De Natura et Gratia*, Augustine emphasises that human salvation can only be attained through divine grace (*sola gratia*). In an increasingly secular world, his thought remains pertinent

in addressing the challenges posed by modern humanism, which emphasises humanity's capacity to achieve happiness without reliance on God.

Secularism, which rejects dependence on God, has given rise to a culture of materialism and individualism. The modern Church is often tempted to conform to these narratives, thereby diminishing its spiritual authority. Augustine affirms that without divine grace, humanity remains in a state of spiritual alienation and is incapable of attaining true happiness (TeSelle, 2006).

Predestination and Divine Sovereignty in an Age of Uncertainty

Augustine's doctrine of predestination, articulated in *De Correptione et Gratia*, offers a theological perspective on divine sovereignty in history. In an era marked by economic, political, and social uncertainty, this doctrine provides a counterbalance between extreme determinism and the notion of absolute human freedom (Ayres, 2010).

The postmodern Church often oscillates between passivity and excessive social activism. Augustine's thought offers a perspective in which, while God is sovereign over the world, human beings remain responsible for living in faith and love. The Church must recognise that salvation is not merely a product of human effort but ultimately a manifestation of divine grace working within human history (Rist, 1994).

Faith and Reason: Addressing the Challenges of Science and Skepticism

In *De Trinitate* and *Confessiones*, Augustine underscores the harmony between faith and reason (*fides quaerens intellectum*). In a world dominated by positivism and scientific scepticism, his thought remains a guiding principle for the Church in confronting contemporary intellectual challenges (Dodaro & Lawless, 2012).

Science is often upheld as the sole foundation of absolute truth, while religion is dismissed as a subjective belief devoid of rational basis. Augustine rejects this dichotomy, asserting that reason must be subject to faith, yet faith must also seek a deeper understanding. The modern Church must adopt this approach to avoid falling into either anti-intellectualism or the mere imitation of secular rationalism (Matthews, 2005; Wetzell, 2010).

The City of God: The Political Relevance of Augustine's Thought in a Global Context

In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine distinguishes between the *Civitas Dei* (City of God) and the *Civitas Terrena* (Earthly City). This distinction remains relevant in a world that continues to experience tensions between political interests and spiritual values (Freund, 1952).

In a global landscape marked by extreme nationalism, exploitative political ideologies, and religious conflicts, the Church must understand its position as the representation of the *Civitas Dei* within a transient world. Augustine's thought reinforces the idea that while the Church exists in the world, it must not lose its identity as a community that prioritises divine values over mere worldly concerns (Markus, 2001; King, 2010).

The Relevance of Augustine's Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology for the Modern Christian Community

In *De Baptismo*, Augustine refutes Donatist claims that sacraments are valid only when administered by morally pure clergy. He affirms that the efficacy of sacraments is derived from Christ as the source of grace rather than the personal morality of the minister (Brown, 2000). This perspective remains crucial for the modern Church, which faces challenges arising from spiritual scandals and a crisis of confidence in religious authority. In an increasingly individualistic world, Augustine's thought reminds believers that sacraments are divine gifts bestowed upon the community of faith, not mere personal rituals subject to human judgment (Dodaro & Lawless, 2012).

Augustine's Eschatology and Hope Amidst Global Uncertainty

In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine asserts that world history will culminate in God's ultimate victory. In an era of globalisation fraught with uncertainty, his eschatological vision offers hope that the world is not the final reality (Markus, 2001; King, 2010).

The modern Church is often caught between pessimism due to the world's crises and an overly naive optimism. Augustine's thought serves as a reminder that while moral and social decay persists, eschatological hope remains the foundation of Christian faith. The Church must remain steadfast in its spiritual mission, avoiding both despair over worldly affairs and an uncritical embrace of utopian optimism (Elshtain, 1995).

The Implications of Augustine's Thought for the Church, Humanity, and Society in Contemporary Culture

Postmodern culture is characterised by pluralism, the deconstruction of authority, and radical subjectivism. In this context, Augustine's thought offers a perspective in which truth retains its divine authority, even as the world rejects theological absolutism (TeSelle, 2006).

The Church in the postmodern era must emulate Augustine's approach, which not only defends the truth of faith but also engages in dialogue with a changing culture. By adopting an apologetic strategy rooted in Augustinian thought, the Church can remain relevant without compromising its doctrinal integrity (Matthews, 2005; Wetzel, 2010).

Augustine's influence extends beyond the Church; his insights offer profound reflections on the relationship between humanity, society, and politics. In *De Civitate Dei*, he asserts that human history is a struggle between the *Civitas Dei* (City of God) and the *Civitas Terrena* (Earthly City), representing the distinction between those who live by faith in God and those who pursue worldly interests (Markus, 2001; King, 2010). Although human beings dwell in a transient world, they are called to orient their lives towards God as the ultimate end. In a modern context, this thought challenges the process of secularisation, which increasingly marginalises spiritual values in society.

Augustine acknowledges that human nature is inherently inclined towards sin (*concupiscentia*), leading to injustice, social conflict, and corruption. Consequently, the state has a role in maintaining order and justice, yet it cannot offer true salvation, for only God possesses ultimate authority over the human soul (Elshtain, 1995). In contemporary political discourse, this principle serves as a critique of totalitarianism and political ideologies that seek to replace religion as the determinant of moral values and life's purpose. A state that aspires to absolute authority risks eroding individual freedoms and undermining ethical values within society.

At the same time, Augustine's thought remains relevant in addressing the challenges of modern democracy. In a democratic system, individuals are granted the freedom to establish laws and policies, yet this liberty must be constrained by a higher moral truth. Augustine argues that without a firm ethical foundation, freedom may be exploited for personal or partisan interests, ultimately resulting in injustice and the oppression of the vulnerable (Matthews, 2005; Wetzel, 2010). In an era increasingly defined by moral relativism, his thought serves as a reminder that truth cannot be determined solely by majority consensus but must be anchored in objective moral principles.

Furthermore, Augustine's theological vision contributes to the development of a social ethic centred on love and justice. His concept of *ordo amoris*, articulated in *De Civitate Dei*, emphasises that an ideal social order is one founded upon love directed towards God and fellow human beings. When this love is supplanted by worldly desires—such as greed and the pursuit of power—society inevitably experiences moral disintegration (Rist, 1994). In today's context, this principle serves as a critique of consumerism, economic exploitation, and societal indifference towards the poor and marginalised.

With regard to the relationship between Church and state, Augustine reminds us that although the state plays a role in enforcing law and order, the Church must not become entirely subservient to political interests. The Church must maintain its prophetic voice, holding the state

accountable in cases of moral deviation and social injustice. This notion remains highly relevant in the modern world, where many religious institutions struggle to preserve their independence amidst political and economic pressures (TeSelle, 2006).

Thus, Augustine's reflections on humanity, society, and politics offer a framework for understanding the social and political challenges of the modern and postmodern eras. He reminds us that while humanity possesses the freedom and capacity to build civilisation, without proper guidance and love for God, society will succumb to moral decay. His thought, therefore, serves as a foundation for ethical reflection in the pursuit of a more just, civilised, and morally ordered society.

This affirmation further underscores the enduring significance and relevance of Augustine's thought across various aspects of contemporary human life. The moral dilemmas, ethical crises, and social instability of the present age highlight the necessity of a strong spiritual foundation in shaping civilisation. The Church, society, and individuals must draw upon Augustine's theological reflections to navigate the complexities of the modern world while remaining anchored in transcendent truth. By understanding the relationship between faith, reason, and a just social order, we are led towards the conclusion of this study—a meditation on how Augustine's intellectual legacy continues to shape and inspire both the Church and the wider society.

D. Conclusion

Augustine's thought has made a profound contribution to Christian theology, particularly in the doctrines of original sin, grace, predestination, and the sacraments. His teachings have not only laid the foundation for both Catholic and Protestant theology but continue to serve as a key reference in Christian philosophical discourse. The concept of original sin underscores humanity's inherent inclination towards sin, necessitating divine grace for salvation. In the modern world, marked by moral crises and relativism, this doctrine remains pertinent as a reminder of human limitations in attaining true goodness without divine intervention.

Furthermore, Augustine's reflections on grace and predestination highlight the centrality of God's role in human salvation. *Sola gratia*, or salvation by grace alone, affirms that human effort alone is insufficient to attain eternal life. In a society increasingly exalting individual freedom and moral autonomy, this principle offers a critical reflection on secular ideologies that dismiss humanity's dependence on God. The Church is thus called to reaffirm the necessity of grace and divine mercy in the spiritual life, avoiding an overreliance on human effort alone.

In the relationship between faith and reason, Augustine asserts that the two are not in conflict but must work in harmony. This perspective remains highly relevant in addressing modern challenges such as scientific positivism and scepticism towards religion. Science is often regarded as the sole source of truth, while religion is perceived as a matter of subjective belief. However, Augustine maintains that reason must be subordinate to faith, yet faith itself must continually seek deeper understanding. This principle provides a foundation for the Church to engage with contemporary intellectual currents without compromising its doctrinal integrity.

In the social and political sphere, Augustine's vision of the *Civitas Dei* (City of God) and the *Civitas Terrena* (Earthly City) continues to offer valuable insight into the Church's position in a world fraught with uncertainty. The modern world faces various challenges, including extreme nationalism, political exploitation, and religious conflicts. As Augustine emphasised, the Church must remain a prophetic voice, resisting entanglement in worldly interests while upholding divine values. The recognition of the world's transience should encourage the faithful to remain oriented towards eternal truths and true justice.

Thus, Augustine's intellectual legacy is not merely a theological reflection of the past but a guide for the Church, humanity, and society in confronting contemporary challenges. His thought underscores the necessity of openness to divine grace, the balance between faith and reason, and the unwavering commitment to the Kingdom of God amidst the shifting tides of history. In an increasingly complex modern and postmodern era, Augustine's teachings provide ethical and

spiritual guidance, enabling the Church to remain steadfast in its calling as a witness to truth and hope in a changing world.

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