

What May I Hope For?

Modernity and the Augustinian Virtue of Hope



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A thesis submitted for the degree of

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## Acknowledgements

According to Augustine, if we forget what we have begun, we will not discover how to finish (*ciu.* 7.7). These acknowledgements—the last words of this thesis to be written—are an attempt to remember its beginnings in many gifts of time, wisdom, encouragement, and friendship. As words of gratitude, they remember the past in a way that holds hope for the future, situating the relationship between a student and his work within an economy of grace that no thesis could exhaust.

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### **Abstract**

The question, ‘What may I hope for?’ was identified by Immanuel Kant as a central concern of his philosophy. However, tracing Kant’s question into late modernity highlights a tension: Kant’s notion of autonomous selfhood has flourished, but the rational theistic order within which he developed his understanding of hope has been displaced. In a context where the relation between personal identity and objective ontology has broken down, how can we understand hope’s meaning and significance? What may ‘I’ hope for?

Recent approaches in philosophy and psychology have tended to bracket ontological considerations, focusing on hope as a subjective expectation or mental attitude. As a result, hope has often been conflated with optimism. By contrast, the most prominent theologian of hope, Jürgen Moltmann, has proposed an understanding of hope within a revisionist theological ontology.

Problems with these approaches have precipitated a return to the pre-modern understanding of hope as a virtue. My thesis fits within this trend, seeking to contribute an Augustinian understanding of the virtue of hope. Three factors support this turn to Augustine: (1) Augustine (through Lombard and Aquinas) is the source of the Western understanding of hope as a virtue; (2) Augustine’s understanding of hope is a significant lacuna in both hope research and Augustine studies; (3) Moltmann develops his account in opposition to a reading of Augustine’s trinitarian theology that recent scholarship has shown to be erroneous.

This thesis will present a reading of Augustinian hope in relation to Augustine’s theological ontology and understanding of the self. Hope is for the self that does not seek its own (vain) glory, asserting its own subjectivity against God and others, but is instead willingly ‘subjectified’ under Christ and within the ecclesial community. Against the objection of malign sectarianism, I argue that Augustinian hope is good for the world.

## Long Abstract

The parable of the prodigal son who came to appreciate the riches of his abandoned inheritance and return home to his father was a favourite of St Augustine. He frequently referred to it as an illustration of the human condition, and he drew on it to narrate his own path of life in *Confessions*. The story, as Augustine tells it, casting himself as the prodigal, is a journey to hope. Having left behind the Catholic Church into which he was born, and pursued the hopes of worldly ambition and Manichaean religion, Augustine found himself in despair: ‘I had sunk to the depths of the sea, I lost all faith and despaired of ever finding the truth’ (*conf.* 6.1.1). It was only when he was caused to revisit his rejection of the church’s teaching that Augustine found hope to break his despair: ‘A great hope has dawned, for the Catholic faith does not teach what we thought it did when we found fault with it in our vanity’ (*conf.* 6.11.18). The proposal of this thesis is that modernity might follow a similar path, that the modern church, the modern self, even modern society, might yet find hope for the future in the Augustinian theology that is a prominent but rejected source of our modern inheritance.

The guiding question, ‘What may I hope for?’ was identified by Immanuel Kant as a central concern of his philosophy. However, tracing Kant’s question into late modernity highlights a tension: Kant’s notion of autonomous selfhood (the ‘I’ in his question) has flourished, but the rational theistic order within which he developed his understanding of hope has been displaced. In a context where the pre-modern relation between personal identity and objective ontology, and the Kantian framework that followed it have been called into question, how can we understand hope’s meaning and significance? What may *I* hope for?

The way in which hope relates to concepts or commitments that modernity has called into question troubles an easy answer to Kant's question. Particularly important are: (i) the relationship between hope and the good; (ii) the relationship between hope and human agency and identity; (iii) the relationship between hope and history. These three issues will be engaged in the central chapters of this thesis, where I will bring an Augustinian account of the virtue of hope into conversation with modern understandings, arguing its contemporary potential as a constructive proposal.

Recent approaches to hope in philosophy and psychology have tended to bracket ontological considerations, focusing on hope as a subjective expectation or mental attitude. As a result, hope has often been conflated with optimism. By contrast, the most prominent modern theologian of hope (Jürgen Moltmann) has proposed an understanding of hope within a strongly revisionist theological ontology. Problems with these approaches have precipitated a return to the pre-modern understanding of hope as a virtue, part of a wider recovery of the classical tradition of virtue ethics in moral philosophy.

My thesis fits within this trend, following recent developments in Augustine scholarship in order to draw on Augustinian theology as an important but neglected source of hope in modernity. Three factors support this turn to Augustine: (i) Augustine (through Lombard and Aquinas) is the source of the Western understanding of hope as a virtue; (ii) Augustine's understanding of hope is a significant lacuna in both hope research and Augustine studies; (iii) Moltmann develops his account in opposition to a reading of Augustine's trinitarian theology that recent scholarship has shown to be erroneous.

I begin by exploring an important reason for the neglect of Augustine's understanding of hope: the widespread assessment of Augustine as one of history's great pessimists. Tracing this assessment in two of its prominent sources, the theology

of Adolf von Harnack and the biography of Peter Brown, I argue against its validity. The psychological concept of pessimism is a poor fit for Augustine's theology, squeezing his understanding of sin and grace into an alien framework that has served to obscure the integral emphasis he places on the virtues of humility and hope.

This assessment carries over to interpretation of Augustine's *Enchiridion*, where hope is explicitly taken, along with faith and love, to structure the pursuit of wisdom as a life of worship. Resisting the common but superficial assessment that the *Enchiridion* has little to say about hope, I offer an original reading of the text that draws out the understanding of hope that is carried throughout it. The theological understanding of the virtue of hope that emerges relates hope to Augustine's theological ontology of ascent and de-centred understanding of the human self. On this understanding, hope is for the self that does not seek its own (vain) glory, asserting its subjectivity against God and others, but is instead willingly 'subjectified' under Christ and within the ecclesial community, whose way of being is ordered to the fulfilment of creation in the eschatological love of God. It is in relation to this understanding of the human *telos* that the virtue of hope can be understood as the virtue of *faithfully waiting for the fulfilment of love*. This understanding is specific in its relation to the doctrinal commitments of the church, but it is not sectarian: the virtue of hope does not belong to the church as a possession to be owned but is received by the church as a gift that is given to the world. Whilst hope depends internally on particular theological claims, the nature of Augustine's theology of creation and redemption—carried over into hope's relation to faith and love—means hope has a universal scope that should prevent the church adopting a posture of self-righteous disengagement or opposition to the world in which it is situated. Hope is for the fulfilment of the modern self and the modern world order in the fulfilment of the

love of God that is humanity's ultimate good. On its own terms, the church's hope is for the life of the world.

Research into hope in Anglophone philosophy has seen something of a surge in the last decade. A particular focus has been the development of an account of hope that can surpass the 'standard' twentieth-century understanding of hope as a form of desire adjoined to a non-zero, non-unitary expectation (hope = desire + expectation). The particular deficit that philosophers have been eager to address is the importance of hope for human agency. I briefly survey this philosophical interest in the phenomenological practice of hope, highlighting three prominent emphases: (i) the role of hope in human agency; (ii) the rationality of hope; (iii) the interpersonal and communal nature of hope. However, if a strength of analytic enquiry is its rational and conceptual rigour, a weakness is its reticence when it comes to identifying the ontological framework that can hold these different aspects together. It is in this regard that the pre-modern understanding of hope as a virtue presents itself as promising.

When it comes to hope, following the turn to virtue in Anglophone moral philosophy leads historically to Augustine. His seminal account situates hope in ontological (creation) and societal (church) contexts that provide the frameworks of its rational plausibility and communal habituation as a virtue. Turning to *Confessions*, and illumining the unexplored importance of hope in Augustine's narrative, I argue that Augustinian hope plays an important part in a compelling—rehabilitative—account of human agency and identity. That rehabilitation is needed, and therefore the value of such an account, is developed in relation to Charles Taylor's analysis of the modern self's disorientation. Taylor argues that an inarticulacy regarding moral frameworks has left people without the ultimate points of reference needed to ground a sense of who they are and where they stand. The revitalization of modern agency and identity

depends on the rehabilitation of moral horizons that people can commit to and live towards—in hope. Two arguments justify a turn to Augustine as a suitable source for such rehabilitation. Firstly, I develop Taylor’s distinction between ‘goods’ and ‘hypergoods’ to argue that identity-sustaining ultimate horizons are not only ontological but theological. Secondly, I argue that the rational, theistic account of hope and human agency in the seminal modern philosophy of Immanuel Kant is a diminished derivative of Augustinian theology. If moral frameworks are carried and conveyed in the form of narratives, *Confessions* points a way beyond the inarticulacy of the modern self not simply by giving the modern self a new story but by giving a new, restorative way to tell one’s own story: the anti-autobiographical mode of confession that is a fundamental acknowledgement of grace.

Thus far I have advocated an Augustinian account of the virtue of hope in relation to modern philosophical understandings, focusing on the interrelation between hope, human identity, and moral ontology. However, the most prominent modern theologian of hope, Jürgen Moltmann, stands in the way of my Augustinian proposal. The main objection he raises is the objection of modern history: Augustinian hope, he argues, underlies the dark side of modernity’s progress. The oppression, dispossession, and enslavement of native people in imperial projects; the stripping of the natural environment; the horror of modern technology turned on humanity in violent war: this is history without God, Moltmann argues, and it was made possible by an Augustinian understanding of God without history. Classical Augustinian theism, and the virtue of hope that is its accompaniment, are ‘a-historical’: God is outside of the change of history and the virtue of hope that is oriented towards him takes the church out of history also. If Moltmann’s critique of Augustine is valid then the Augustinian hope of this thesis might have a place in modernity’s past but it has no place in its future. I resist Moltmann’s interpretation of

Augustinian theology and offer a strong critique of the social trinitarianism and apocalyptic hope that he has advanced in its stead. Recent work on Augustine's trinitarian theology suggests that Moltmann's dismissal depends on a fundamental misreading. Certainly, we should not avoid or excuse the misuse of Augustinian theology to justify pathogenic aspects of modern history. However, a deeper Augustinian understanding of the relationship between God and creation than Moltmann exhibits has enduring potential to ground a historically-engaged life, and society, of hope.

The concern of this thesis is to offer an Augustinian proposal for hope as a virtue in response to the modern question, 'What may I hope for?' This question, I argue, arises in a world where the man-made self—the self as autonomous agent—has as its vocation a project of self-construction conceived in opposition to the apparently constricting demand of divine worship. Free from the way and goal of liturgical formation, the value of human hope and the nature of human agency meet late modern enquiry as questions to be answered. I follow moral philosophy's late twentieth-century turn to virtue to propose an Augustinian answer that offers hope for the disenchanted modern self within the rehabilitative liturgical life of the church. Hope—as secure as the object of worship towards which it is ultimately aimed—is found by faith, travelling along the way of love that is the path of the Psalms of ascent towards humanity's fulfilment in the consummated worship of the eschatological City of God. This proposal, whilst it is defensible as internally consistent and plausible as a communal practice of life, is clearly not a straightforward answer to the modern question of hope on its terms. Instead, I have sought to engage theologically with the modern search for reliable hope in order to propose a simultaneous subversion and fulfilment of that search by relating it to humanity's fundamental quest for eschatological life. Where Moltmann comes after Kant by proposing a 'reinvention'

of modernity, my proposal is for a rejuvenating *reconnection* of modernity with its theological roots.

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## List of Abbreviations

### Augustine's Works

<i>Acad.</i>	<i>Contra Academicos</i>	Against the Academics
<i>beata u.</i>	<i>De beata uita liber unus</i>	On the Happy Life
<i>cat. rud.</i>	<i>De catechizandis rudibus liber unus</i>	On Teaching the Uninstructed
<i>ciu.</i>	<i>De Ciuitate dei libri uiginti duo</i>	City of God
<i>conf.</i>	<i>Confessionum libri tredecim</i>	Confessions
<i>cons. eu.</i>	<i>De consensus euagelistarum libri quattuor</i>	On the Harmony of the Gospels
<i>diu. qu.</i>	<i>De diuresis questionibus octoginta tribus liber unus</i>	Eighty-three Diverse Questions
<i>doctr. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina christiana libri quattuor</i>	On Christian Doctrine
<i>en. Ps.</i>	<i>Ennarrationes in Psalmos</i>	Explanations of the Psalms
<i>ench.</i>	<i>De fide spe et caritate liber unus</i>	Enchiridion
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>	Letters
<i>ep. Io. tr.</i>	<i>In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem</i>	Homilies on the First Epistle of John
<i>f. et symb.</i>	<i>De fide et symbolo liber unus</i>	On Faith and the Creed
<i>Gn. litt.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim</i>	Literal Commentary on Genesis
<i>Gn. litt. inp.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus</i>	Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis
<i>Gn. adu. Man.</i>	<i>De Genesi aduersus Manicheos libri duo</i>	On Genesis against the Manichees
<i>Io. eu. tr.</i>	<i>In Iohannis euangelium tractatus</i>	Homilies on St John's Gospel
<i>lib. arb.</i>	<i>De libero arbitrio libri tres</i>	On Free Will
<i>mor.</i>	<i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum libri duo</i>	On the Morals of the Catholic Church and the Morals of the Manichees
<i>retr.</i>	<i>Retractationum libri duo</i>	Retractions
<i>s.</i>	<i>Sermones</i>	Sermons
<i>s. dom. mon.</i>	<i>De sermone domini in monte</i>	On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount
<i>Simpl.</i>	<i>Ad Simplicianum libri duo</i>	To Simplicianus
<i>sol.</i>	<i>Soliloquiorum libri duo</i>	Soliloquies

<i>trin.</i>	<i>De trinitate libri quindecim</i>	On the Trinity
<i>uera relig.</i>	<i>De uera religione liber unus</i>	On True Religion

### Kant's Works

<i>CPrR</i>	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i> , trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Alan W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Citations to the first <i>Critique</i> are to the A (first edition) or B (second edition) pages.
<i>Enlightenment</i>	'An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?', in <i>Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History</i> , trans. David L. Colclasure, ed. Pauline Kleingeld (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
<i>Logic</i>	<i>Logic: A Manual for Lectures</i> , ed. Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche, in Immanuel Kant, <i>Lectures on Logic</i> , trans. and ed. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
<i>OP</i>	<i>Opus Postumum</i> , trans. and ed. Eckart Förster and Michael Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
<i>Religion</i>	<i>Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason</i> , in <i>Religion and Rational Theology</i> , trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood, George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

### Moltmann's Works

<i>BP</i>	<i>A Broad Place: An Autobiography</i> , trans. and ed. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2007).
<i>CoG</i>	<i>The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology</i> , trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1996).
<i>CG</i>	<i>The Crucified God: The Cross as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology</i> , trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM, 2001).
<i>CPS</i>	<i>The Church in the Power of the Spirit</i> , trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1992).
<i>ET</i>	<i>Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology</i> , trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).
<i>GC</i>	<i>God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation</i> , trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985).

<i>TH</i>	<i>Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology</i> , trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM, 2002).
<i>TKG</i>	<i>The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God</i> , trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1981).
<i>WJC</i>	<i>The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions</i> , trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1990).

### **Other abbreviations**

Aquinas, <i>ST</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Hyde Park: New Advent, 2008).
Aquinas, <i>comp.</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Compendium Theologiae</i> , trans. Cyril Vollert (London: B. Herder, 1947).
Harnack, <i>hist.</i>	Adolph von Harnack, <i>History of Dogma</i> , trans. James Miller, ed. T. K. Cheyne and A. B. Bruce (London: Williams & Norgate, 1898).
Plotinus, <i>enn.</i>	Plotinus, <i>Enneads</i> , trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Faber and Faber, 1956).
Aristotle, <i>NE</i>	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , trans. and ed. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999).
Aristotle, <i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i> , in <i>The Complete Works of Aristotle</i> , ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

A great hope has dawned, for the Catholic faith does not  
teach what we thought it did when we found fault with it.  
—*conf.* 6.11.18

It's later than you think.  
But it's never too late.  
—Dorothy Sayers

## Introduction: The Future of Hope

In *The Real American Dream: A Meditation on Hope*, Andrew Delbanco narrates the changing hopes of modern America.<sup>1</sup> The details of his account are specific to America but the underlying story it tells is shared more widely by the modern Western world.<sup>2</sup> He describes the story of modern hope as a narrative of transition, its centre moving from God to nation to self. Hope that was first grounded on belief in God and aimed towards the fulfilment of his kingdom was secularized in the nineteenth century and individualized in the twentieth. The first transition represents the ascendancy of Enlightenment reason, the second its demise (or perhaps its dominion, as we shall discuss below). Delbanco's account leads us to late modernity with the future of hope as an open question. Apart from God and reason, what hope is there for the late modern self? In the new-fashioned 'i' world, what may *I* hope for? Delbanco leaves the question hanging, which is arguably where we find it in contemporary Western culture. Hope springs eternal, but, shorn of its sustaining

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Delbanco, *The Real American Dream: A Meditation on Hope* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Literature on hope frequently holds up the United States as a symbol of modern hope and takes the history of the American dream as modern hope's characteristic narrative. America is interpreted as the land of hope, born out of European ambitions for life *plus ultra* and in turn exporting hope to the world. As Hegel puts it, 'America is therefore the country of the future, and its world-historical importance has yet to be revealed in the ages which lie ahead . . . It is a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical arsenal of old Europe.' G.W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History*, trans. H. N. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 169. Jürgen Moltmann, the twentieth century's most prominent theologian of hope, follows Hegel's interpretation, arguing that America 'is an invention of European thinking', a nation founded on the European hope for a new world order of 'God and gold'. For Moltmann, America epitomizes the dream of the modern world. Jürgen Moltmann, 'Progress and Abyss: Remembrances of the Future of the Modern World', in *The Future of Hope: Christian Tradition amid Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and William H. Katerberg (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 5–9. As George Pattison observes, the export of American hope to the world is ongoing, seen in the way that Obama's 'audacity of hope' has been taken up in European political movements in the last decade. See George Pattison, 'Hope', *Political Theology* 17:2 (2016), 199–200.

narrative, ontological framework, and historic community, its meaning and value is contested. Apart from an objective order of reality within which to apprehend and differentiate the merits of future human goods, what future is there for hope itself?

From one perspective, this history of modern hope might seem to represent a straightforward decline. On this view, the horizons of hope have been reduced to the trivial ambitions of the self, and the self has been diminished in the process. What is needed to secure human hope is a twofold approach comprising resistance and recovery. By exposing the incoherence of late modern self-identity, such a declensionist understanding of modernity seeks the future in the past. Hope can be found by turning the modern world back to an idealized picture of the nation under God, hoping for its future as the future of God's kingdom and finding hope for the self within it. But is it possible to hope for the future by directing hope back to the past? If so, what past should we turn back to? The question is important since the success of historical recovery depends on the possibility of a past untainted by the perceived ills of the present.<sup>3</sup>

If a straightforward narrative of decline and hope of recovery is misconceived, or at least more problematic than might first appear, perhaps we need to explore more deeply the modern story of hope on its own terms, as a story of progress. From such a perspective, hope has not been lost but gained: the self has not been diminished by modernity but has grown up through its gift of freedom. Following this line of thought, what we are witnessing in the subjectivity of late modern selfhood can in fact be perceived as the fulfilment of human maturity in accord with the Enlightenment's own vision. Immanuel Kant's essay 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784) is a helpful

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<sup>3</sup> On the impossibility of a straightforward 'solution' to modern problems by returning to premodern principles, see Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 6-7.

source. In answer to his own question, Kant argues that ‘Enlightenment is the human being’s emancipation from its self-incurred immaturity’. The human being has come of age and does not stand in need of the authority of divine revelation or autocratic government, both of which should be left behind. ‘*Sapere aude!* “Have the courage to use your own intellect!” is hence the motto of enlightenment.’<sup>4</sup>

Kant’s vision accords with his underlying anthropology in which the self is taken to be an autonomous rational agent. This is the ‘I’ in his summative questions of philosophy (What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for?).<sup>5</sup> Kant’s third question, which is our focus here, he regarded as ‘simultaneously practical and theoretical’, spelling it out further: ‘If I do what I should, what then may I hope?’<sup>6</sup> As he notes in his manual on logic, this question is the religious question.<sup>7</sup> His well-known answer in the *Critique of Practical Reason* concluded that the rational moral agent could hope for the conjunction of virtue with happiness in the future fulfilment of humanity’s highest good. God’s existence was allowed as a postulate of practical reason, it being rational to believe in the existence of one able to secure the unity of virtue and happiness in the end.<sup>8</sup> For Kant, therefore, hope is rational, existing under the constraint of moral reason within his dualistic ontology of phenomena and noumena. God was not dismissed altogether in his Enlightenment vision but he was

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<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant, ‘An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?’, in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure, ed. Pauline Kleingeld (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 17 (8.35).

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason (CPR)*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Alan W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 677 (A805/B833). Kant later made the importance of the ‘I’ explicit, adding a fundamental fourth question, ‘What is man?’ in his manual on logic. *Logic*, 538 (9.25).

<sup>6</sup> *CPR*, 677 (A805/B833).

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Logic: A Manual for Lectures*, ed. Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche, in Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. and ed. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 538 (9.25).

<sup>8</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason (CPrR)*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 100–101 (5:124–25).

distanced from history, leaving history free for humankind's rational pursuit of the Kingdom of Ends, a universal society of peace and justice.

Kant, on this standard reading, advocated hope's rationalization in accord with an understanding of the 'grownup' self of the Enlightenment. What it seems he did not foresee was that the modern self would soon grow out of the divinized universal reason, which the Enlightenment advocated. The objective reason that was taken to be the ally of freedom in the nineteenth century was itself subject to scepticism as freedom's enemy following the tumult of the twentieth, when Reason (with a capital 'R') was called into question as the ancient God's modern offspring. Following this internal understanding of modernity, the narrative of modern hope (with its moving centre from God to the human self) is not a story of decline but of consummated liberation. The modern self has reached its fulfilment as the centre of its own hopes, able to order its own existence free from the duty of submission to the imposition of an alien theological or rational order. Where the declensionist view looks to the past for its hopes, this progressive perspective perceives the fulfilment of human hope in the present modern order.

At this point, however, there is a twist in the tale of the liberated self. If modern hope has reached its consummation, the ongoing presence of hope is troubling. What more can there be to hope for? The presence of hope would seem to signal that liberation in fact remains in the future and has not yet been achieved in the present. Hope thus appears to work against the maturity of autonomous selfhood: to live in hope is to acknowledge that things are not yet as we would have them be and implicitly concedes the limitation of human knowledge and action. As Victoria McGeer recognizes in her recent account of hope and human agency, hope brings

with it ‘an inevitable confrontation with agential limitation’.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this explains the return to the classical ambivalence concerning hope that emerged in the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Hesiod’s tale of Pandora’s box is frequently referred to in modern literature on hope as an expression of this tension. In the story, hope remains in Pandora’s box after all the evils it contained have been let loose on the world. But is hope the antidote to the evils released—the promise of a future beyond their presence—or is it itself an evil, forever holding people captive to a future that will not come? The ambiguous nature of hope as able to bind people to an uncertain future and so undermine their agency in the present is apparent. The very presence of hope in late modernity—even as a question that demands to be answered—seems to threaten the autonomy of the late modern self.

In his recent overview of the status of hope research in philosophy and theology, Ingolf Dalferth recognizes that hope is a controversial topic: ‘Some see hope as the most humane expression of a deep-seated human refusal to put up with evil and suffering, while others object to it as an escapist reluctance and lack of

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<sup>9</sup> Victoria McGeer, ‘The Art of Good Hope’, in *The Annals of the American Academy* 592:1 (2004), 103, ‘Hope arises in situations where we understand our own agency to be limited with respect to the things or conditions that we desire. If our own agencies were not so limited, we would not hope for what we desire; we would simply plan or act so as to achieve it. Hope signifies our recognition that what we desire is beyond our current (or sole) capacity to bring about—and in the limiting case, it is beyond our capacity *tout court*.’

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle’s account of hope in his *Nicomachean Ethics* exemplifies this ambivalence. Hope is not dismissed outright since courage (in relation to which hope enters Aristotle’s discussion) requires a certain hopeful self-confidence. However, hope is not a virtue for Aristotle and indeed has the potential to undermine virtue by diminishing the rational moral agency of the courageous person. The courageous person must not rely on an object of fear being mitigated, but instead ‘chooses and stands firm because that is fine or because anything else is shameful’. Aristotle, *NE*, 3.7.13. Aristotle goes on to describe hope as a parody of virtuous courage, drawing a parallel between hopefulness and drunkenness to describe the way in which hope diminishes rational moral agency (*NE*, 3.8.13–14). Nietzsche is perhaps the most famous example of a return to this classical ambivalence with regards to hope. Commenting on Pandora’s ‘jar of evils’, he concludes, ‘[Hope] is the most evil of evils because it prolongs man’s torment.’ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann (London: Penguin, 2004), 58.

courage to face up to the realities of the world as it is.’<sup>11</sup> Two aspects of hope that Dalferth highlights suggest reasons for this conflict:

First, the relation between hope and the good. Under ‘the logic of hope’, Dalferth notes the intimate connection between hope and expectation but argues that hope is ‘more than mere expectation’.<sup>12</sup> Pointing out that fear can accompany expectation as well as hope (we might add apathy as a third alternative), Dalferth follows Kierkegaard in asserting that ‘to hope is to relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of the good.’<sup>13</sup> This recognition that hope is aimed towards what is good, or at least the subject’s perception of goodness, is mainstream in historical understandings of hope, and it foregrounds the important relation between hope and underlying axiological and ontological commitments: ‘There are intimate connections between hope, possibility, and the good . . . We cannot hope for just anything or in just anybody. We know that people can and do hope for vastly different things. But there are limits.’<sup>14</sup> Hope, in other words, cannot be reduced to a purely subjective desire or cognitive disposition, but always has an objective aspect. Insofar as hope relates to axiological beliefs, a subject’s hope always exists within a wider order of being and of value that somehow relates the hoping subject to the hoped-for object. Hope, in this sense, can be understood narratively, existing within a certain story of existence and aimed towards a proximate or ultimate horizon of that story’s fulfilment.

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<sup>11</sup> Ingolf U. Dalferth, ‘From the Grammar of “Hope” to the Practice of Hope’, in Ingolf U. Dalferth and Marlene A. Block (eds), *Hope*, Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Dalferth, ‘Grammar’, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, in *Kierkegaard’s Writings*, vol. xvi, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 249. Cited in Dalferth, ‘Grammar’, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Dalferth, ‘Grammar’, 3. This point is understandably troubling for advocates of autonomous selfhood, which is predicated on historic limits of human flourishing being overthrown.

Second, and building on the relation between hope and the good, Dalferth highlights hope's 'blind spot':

If to hope is to relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of good, and if to be good is to be good for someone, then we can truly hope only if we know what is good for us or for those for whom we hope. However, in order to know what is good for us, we need to know who and what we are. And this is our blind spot. We don't really know who we are and hence cannot tell what is truly good for us.<sup>15</sup>

The dilemma Dalferth raises concerns the way hope and human agency and identity are bound together: 'We construct our identities by construing who we are against the backdrop of who we want to be, can be, and ought to be.'<sup>16</sup> This means that hope threatens autonomous selfhood by placing the self under the power of that which is hoped for. In the absence of certain foreknowledge, hope demands that self-identity is invested in a future from which there is no guaranteed return. How can a person know with confidence that she will secure her hope and that her hope will satisfy her? Hope threatens to banish autonomous selfhood to the future with no guarantee that a person will ever be able to be all she now hopes to become. It condemns the autonomous self to live under the spectre that its chosen future—and so its absolute autonomy—will be exposed as a vanity.

The way in which human hope relates to these two fundamental concerns regarding ontology and human agency is important if we are to understand the various interpretations and assessments of hope in late modernity. Hope threatens to commit the late modern self to an identity and bind it within an ontology. What is more, advocates of hope in Western intellectual history have understood both anthropology and ontology *theologically*. The 'blind spot' of hope has been answered by hope's

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<sup>15</sup> Dalferth, 'Grammar', 4.

<sup>16</sup> Dalferth, 'Grammar', 4.

grounding on faith in God and an understanding of concurrence in divine-human agency: ‘We don’t know who we truly are unless we see ourselves from the perspective of God and understand ourselves as the building site of God’s ongoing creative operations.’<sup>17</sup> This theological understanding is historically central but it has become increasingly controversial. The fact that ontological and even theological claims are lurking in the relation between hope, the self, and the good, is particularly challenging in contemporary secular contexts since the developed modern self has its being on the basis that the being of God can be plausibly denied. Late modern society might well have shrunk back from owning its atheism but it guards the right to operate as though ‘God is dead’ (Nietzsche). But what hope remains when God is dead?<sup>18</sup>

Tracing Kant’s question into late modernity highlights a tension: Kant’s notion of autonomous selfhood (the ‘I’ in his question) has flourished, but the rational theistic order within which he developed his understanding of hope has been displaced. In a context where the pre-modern relation between personal identity and objective ontology, and the Kantian framework that followed it, has been called into question, how can we understand hope’s meaning and significance? Recognizing the problem posed by the question of hope in late modernity—and eschewing simplistic strategies of cultural recovery, which easily overlook underlying relations between past and present modes of thought—how can we understand hope’s meaning and contemporary significance? What are we to do with the ongoing presence of Kant’s

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<sup>17</sup> Dalferth, ‘Grammar’, 5.

<sup>18</sup> The relation between the death of God and the loss of hope is implicit in the idea of the removal of the ‘horizon’ in the madman’s famous pronouncement: “‘Where is God gone?’” he called out... We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move?’ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Thomas Common (Minneola: Dover Publications, 2006), III.125, 149.

question of hope if his rational hope and the theological hopes that preceded it are no longer plausible?

Recent approaches in philosophy and psychology have tended to bracket ontological considerations, focusing on hope as a subjective expectation or mental attitude. As a result, hope has often been conflated with optimism. By contrast, the most prominent modern theologian of hope (Jürgen Moltmann) has proposed an understanding of hope within a strongly revisionist theological ontology. Problems with these approaches have precipitated a return to the pre-modern understanding of hope as a virtue, part of a wider recovery of the classical tradition of virtue ethics in moral philosophy.

My thesis fits within this trend, following recent developments in Augustine scholarship in order to turn to Augustine as an essential but neglected source of hope. The intended contribution is an Augustinian account of hope as a virtue, relating the virtue of hope to Augustine's theological ontology of ascent and de-centred understanding of the human self. Hope is for the self that does not seek its own (vain) glory, asserting its subjectivity against God and others, but is instead willingly 'subjectified' under Christ and within the ecclesial community. The church, on this reading, is characterised by its faith working through love (Gal. 5:6) as these are both directed forwards in hope. Its communal life is shaped liturgically as it journeys towards the fulfilment of its worship in its eschatological consummation as the heavenly city, the dwelling place of God.

Of course, this unabashedly Christological and ecclesial focus, situating the virtue of hope within the commitments and practices of the church, raises an important question if our concern is to engage Kant's question of hope as it presents itself in the post-Christendom context of late modernity: If a turn to the Augustinian virtue of hope is necessarily theological and ecclesial, does it carry any value beyond

the church? In a purportedly secular society where the hope that is sought is for the progressive fulfilment of a universal desire for justice and equality, the theological commitments that sustained historical accounts of hope are obscure if not obnoxious. The idea that the church might hold the understanding and pattern of life that speaks to the search for hope in wider society seems distinctly lacking in plausibility.

At this point it is helpful to remember that, for a long time, commitment to the Christian faith lacked plausibility for Augustine himself. He had given up hope of finding truth in the Catholic Church, put off as a youth by what he took to be a materialistic view of divine embodiment and the unsophisticated style of Scripture as he read it literally in his Latin translation (*conf.* 5.10.19-5.11.21). He turned first to Manichaeism until its plausibility also failed and he was left with the scepticism of the Academics (*conf.* 5.14:25). He recalls his hopeless condition: ‘I had sunk to the depth of the sea, I lost all faith and despaired of ever finding the truth’ (*conf.* 6.1.1, cf. Jonah 2:3-6). *Confessions* 6 narrates Augustine’s emergence from despair to hope, by way of the scriptural teaching of Ambrose, a man ‘who bore hope within him’ (*conf.* 6.3.3). Ambrose’s spiritual interpretation of Scripture introduced Augustine to a new way of reading the Bible, and he came to realise that his previous understanding of Catholic teaching on the nature of God was misconceived. ‘Its learned exponents reject as impious any suggestion that God is confined within the shape of a human body’ (*conf.* 6.11.18). Caused to revisit his rejection of the church’s teaching, Augustine found hope to break his despair: ‘A great hope has dawned, for the Catholic faith does not teach what we thought it did when we found fault with it in our vanity’ (*conf.* 6.11.18).

The argument I will develop is that Augustine’s experience, as he narrates it in *Confessions*, might yet be the experience of those who today continue in the tradition of ‘religion’s cultured despisers’—the sceptics of late modernity who are desperately

seeking hope without God, based on the modern world's departure from a diminished simulacrum rather than the truth of the church's teaching. Against the objection of malign sectarianism, which might be raised against the theological nature of my proposal, the final chapter of this thesis will argue that Augustinian hope, which is properly the hope of the church, can nonetheless be recognised as good for the world. If this can be classified as a retrieval project, it is one that seeks to learn from Charles Taylor, who ends his work, *Sources of the Self*, by remembering his aim:

The intention of this work was one of retrieval, an attempt to uncover buried goods through rearticulation—and thereby to make these sources again empower, to bring the air back again into the half-collapsed lungs of the spirit.<sup>19</sup>

It is with such a vivifying goal in view that this thesis seeks to bring Augustine into dialogue with contemporary understandings of hope. Learning from MacIntyre's turn to virtue, but seeking to avoid his dismissal of modernity, I am seeking to develop untapped resources in Augustine's theological account of the virtue of hope to offer a constructive proposal that engages other contemporary philosophical and theological understandings.

This introduction will survey some prominent approaches to hope, highlighting the importance of the two concerns noted above: the relationship between hope and the good, and the relationship between hope and personal identity.

## **1. Four modern approaches**

We will consider four recent approaches to the understanding and practice of hope in late modernity: the first gives up hope as belonging to a theistic ontology that

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 520.

is no longer plausible; the second avoids the challenge of hope, bracketing ontological considerations in order to hold on to the practice of hope: how we hope, rather than what we hope for, becomes the central concern; the third takes a psychological approach to hope, actively conflating hope and optimism, an attitudinal or psychological disposition; the fourth argues for a rediscovery of hope within a radically revised theological ontology. Consideration of these recent currents in hope research will lead us to the potential of rejuvenating the pre-modern Western understanding of hope as a virtue and so to the seminal account of hope in that tradition that is found in the thought of St Augustine.

*i. Abandon hope*

One modern approach is to accept a tragic ontology and so downgrade hope, effectively marking a return to its pre-Christian evaluation. As noted above, on Aristotle's account of human flourishing, hope, whilst important for the exercise of human agency, is not a virtue. It can as easily undermine the agency necessary for the pursuit of virtue as support it. The same ambivalence towards hope is present in Hellenistic philosophy more broadly, most notably in the Stoics, who resisted hope in the name of heroic resignation to the rational order of reality. According to Epictetus (AD 55–135),

[The philosopher] should bring his own will into harmony with what happens, so that neither anything that happens happens against our will, nor anything that fails to happen fails to happen when we wish it to happen. The result of this for those who have so ordered the work of philosophy is that in desire they are not disappointed and in aversion they do not fall into what they would avoid; that each person passes his life to himself, free from pain, fear and perturbation.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Epictetus, *Discourses*, Books 1-2, trans. W. A. Oldfather, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), II.14.7-8.

This tragic outlook of courage in the face of death was ultimately overthrown by the Christian proclamation of hope in the expectation of resurrection life. In the twentieth century, however, putatively post-Christian philosophy embraced a similarly tragic outlook that aligned with the modern, autonomous self. ‘One must imagine Sisyphus happy’, Camus famously proclaimed, sounding a note of resignation that was not limited to Continental philosophy.<sup>21</sup> As Bertrand Russell highlights, according to modern naturalism the good life is not lived in hope but is courageously built on despair:

That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving, that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the noontide brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of the universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built.<sup>22</sup>

This is a bleak picture, but it is tempered by the vision of human life that Russell seeks to build on his foundational despair. Eric Wielenberg takes up Russell’s case to argue that, on naturalism, despair might have the first but need not have the final word. A kind of hope, he argues, is still available. He describes a hope of

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<sup>21</sup> Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O’Brien (New York: Vintage, 1991), 123. Cf. the veneration of tragedy over hope in Jean Anouilh’s version of *Antigone* (1944), CHORUS ‘Surtout, c’est reposant, la tragédie, parce qu’on sait qu’il n’y a plus d’espoir, le sale espoir... Dans le drame, on se débat parce qu’on espère de sortir. C’est ignoble, c’est utilitaire.’ Jean Anouilh, *Antigone* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 2008), 54.

<sup>22</sup> Bertrand Russell, ‘A Free Man’s Worship’, in *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: Touchstone, 1957), 107.

temporary happiness achieved by the moral agent with a heroic ‘self-concept’ who is able to secure a life of internal meaning ‘in a universe which is at best utterly indifferent and at worst downright hostile’.<sup>23</sup> Wielenberg wants to preserve the terminology of hope as part of his project to uphold the possibility of ‘virtue and value in a godless universe’. However, what he advocates is less hope than the kind of courageous resignation that counts ‘taking control’ as a prominent achievement.<sup>24</sup> Wielenberg willingly concedes that we cannot hope to conquer death, but argues that at the least we can hope to conquer the fear of death.<sup>25</sup> This move is problematic: hope is directed inward, dividing mind from body in order to achieve a temporary psychological victory over a certain physiological defeat. Hope that we will be able to grow in courage in order to overcome the fear of death is thin hope in the face of what is a bleak future for the self, for society, and for the created order as a whole.

ii. *The practice of hope*

A second group of approaches recognizes that hope cannot easily be left behind. In the words of Alexander Pope, ‘hope springs eternal in the human breast’.<sup>26</sup> However, holding as fixed its commitment to the autonomous modern self, this approach finds the theological resonance of the next line of Pope’s poem to be

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<sup>23</sup> ‘I propose that the naturalist’s self-concept ought to be as a hero, struggling to satisfy the demands of morality and secure a life of internal meaning for the individual and for loved ones in a universe which is at best utterly indifferent and at worst downright hostile to both projects . . . Victory can at best be temporary, but it is a victory worth struggling for.’ Eric Wielenberg, *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 126.

<sup>24</sup> ‘The naturalist takes control of the mind and refuses to be ruled by fear; this victory over the universe is a worthwhile achievement in and of itself.’ Wielenberg, *Value and Virtue*, 118.

<sup>25</sup> Wielenberg, *Value and Virtue*, 118, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, in *Essay on Man and Other Poems*, ed. Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover, 1994), 48. McGeer offers a contemporary philosophical defense of the ubiquity of hope by arguing for the necessity of hope for human agency. Hope is ‘a unifying and grounding force of human agency’ such that ‘to live a life devoid of hope is simply not to live a human life’. McGeer, ‘The Art of Good Hope’, 101.

problematic: ‘Man never is but always to be blessed.’<sup>27</sup> The hopes of the human heart are thus related to their fulfilment in the blessing conferred by a higher power, bringing into view the ontological and theological commitments dissonant to late modern selfhood that were noted above. In an effort to hold onto the perpetual hope of Pope’s first line without the ontological commitments implied in the second, many approach hope in late modernity by bracketing ontological commitments and transposing Kant’s question into a phenomenological key. Instead of, ‘What may I hope for?’, the question of import becomes, ‘*How* may I hope?’. The focus is placed on the practice of hope as ‘a way of going forward in my deliberations, choices, actions, aspirations and identifications’, a way of life that sustains the continuity of the past and present into the future.<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Lear’s account of ‘radical hope’ is frequently cited as a compelling contemporary account of hope in this mode.<sup>29</sup>

The phenomenological turn to enacted hope represents a development of, and something of a departure from, a focus on hope as an intentional or propositional attitude, directed towards a specified object of hope and resting on some objective grounds. This intentional dimension was an important concern in two preceding

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<sup>27</sup> Pope, *Essay on Man*, 48.

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Lear, ‘Response to Herbert Dreyfus and Nancy Sherman’, *Philosophical Studies* 144:1 (2009), 86.

<sup>29</sup> ‘What makes this hope *radical* is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it.’ Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 103. For discussion of Lear’s work see Herbert Dreyfus, ‘Comments on Jonathan Lear’s “Radical Hope”’, *Philosophical Studies* 144:1 (2009), 63-70; Nancy Sherman, ‘The Fate of a Warrior Culture: Nancy Sherman on Jonathan Lear’s “Radical Hope”’, *Philosophical Studies* 144:1 (2009), 71-80; and Jonathan Lear, ‘Response’, 81-93. Lear’s work has influenced contemporary discussion of hope in moral philosophy and psychology, theology and popular culture. See e.g. Adrienne Martin, *How we Hope: A Moral Psychology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 108-110; Charles Pinches, ‘How to Live in Hope’, in *Christian Century* (July 2017), 22-25; Junot Díaz, ‘Radical Hope’, in Carolina de Robertis (ed.), *Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times* (London: Virago, 2017), 13.

traditions: the pre-modern theological understanding of hope oriented forwards to eschatological life and grounded on belief in God (in the Christian tradition on the resurrection of Christ), and the modern, twentieth-century philosophical understanding of ‘standard’ hope, aimed towards a specified object and grounded on probabilistic expectation. We will consider the emerging focus on enacted hope in each of these traditions.

In his recent essay, ‘From Content to Enactment’, Michael Braunschweig argues for the need for Christian theology to move beyond what he describes as the ‘traditional’ or ‘classical’ understanding of hope that focuses on hope’s objective eschatological orientation and theological grounds.<sup>30</sup> He challenges objective articulations of ultimate hope as being onto-theological and anti-historical (escapist) and seeks to develop Jonathan Lear’s narrativial articulation of ‘radical hope’ as a better alternative. According to Braunschweig, ‘Christian cognition should no longer be approached as a consent to propositional content or the belief in existence of certain entities, but as a *determinateness of life*.’ Hope is not to be aimed at a specific object but understood as a general orientation, ‘a modal determination of existence’. ‘Christian hope is not grounded in a cognitive “core commitment” about the nature of the world or the existence of God but rather is enacted with a fundamental hermeneutical change of perspectives.’<sup>31</sup>

In *Radical Hope*, Lear describes the crisis facing the native American Crow nation in the half century leading up to 1940 as the expanding civilization of American settlers restricted Crow territories to a small reservation, rendering

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Braunschweig, ‘From Content to Enactment: Towards a Theological Hermeneutics of Hope in Discussion with Contemporary Philosophy’, in Dalferth and Block (eds), *Hope*, 279-297. Braunschweig cites Aquinas’s account of hope as his example of the classical paradigm.

<sup>31</sup> Braunschweig, ‘Content to Enactment’, 297, 297, 296.

impossible their former way of life. Since all meaning of life for the Crow existed in connection with their hunter-warrior culture, the end of their way of life equated to annihilation. In Chief Plenty Coups' words, 'When the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again.'<sup>32</sup> Life had lost all meaning; what hope could there be? Lear develops the Crow story as a way of considering 'what we might legitimately hope at a time when the sense of purpose and meaning that has been bequeathed to us by our culture has collapsed'.<sup>33</sup>

The 'radical hope' that Lear develops focuses on the story of Chief Plenty Coups, who interpreted a vision he received as meaning that there might be some way of surviving as a Crow after the disappearance of their traditional life. As Braunschweig notes, the Chief's dream operated on two levels, collective and personal: 'The vision... operating as a new narrative of collective identity provided orientation for the tribe in a time without orientation. At the same time . . . this vision provided the means for a change of concepts of individual moral psychology.'<sup>34</sup> Plenty Coups' leadership, utilizing this narrative of hope, helped his people to navigate the threat they faced. Perhaps it can provide a plausible model of hope in late modernity.

There are strong parallels between the Crow's narrative-based hope and the narrative-based hope of the Jewish Exodus that is central both to the nation of Israel and the Christian faith that depends on its history. However, Lear's paradigm leaves open the question regarding which narratives can function as a resource for hope, hence it has been taken up by secular philosophers as well as theologians. The important insight that Braunschweig identifies is the transition from

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<sup>32</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 104.

<sup>34</sup> Braunschweig, 'Content to Enactment', 291.

objective/propositional to subjective/enacted hope by means of an emphasis on narrative:

For hope, according to this narrative understanding, should not be reduced to the critical question of ‘what one shall hope for’, i.e. the question about the right object of hope, but, conversely, is something that can only be properly articulated in a narrative, which itself aims to pragmatically foster hope in its addressees. Hope, then, is constitutively bound to a context of communicative interaction and is articulated in stories.<sup>35</sup>

There is much to be said for this approach as an anti-reductionist move. Hope for a specific object that is beyond history does have the potential to undermine the temporal and embodied existence of historical life. A narrational and enacted approach is therefore a helpful emphasis. But is it as novel as Braunschweig seems to suggest? Does it necessarily oppose the kind of objective hope that we find in Augustine, Aquinas and the Christian tradition more widely? Despite the helpful emphasis on narrative in Braunschweig’s proposal, the content versus enactment dichotomy is a false one.<sup>36</sup> As we shall see, the historical understanding of hope as a virtue in the tradition of Augustinian theology holds both together.

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<sup>35</sup> Braunschweig, ‘From Content to Enactment’, 291–92; cf. Daniel Johnson’s explanation: ‘The experience of hope has a narrative structure built right into it. When people hope, they lay a story arc over a certain span of history, one that identifies the limitations of the present, offers a vision of how those limitations may be overcome in the future, and furnishes grounds for expecting that that future will be realized. The story may not be fully articulated in the experience itself, of course, but the narrative structure is there just the same. And it becomes even more pronounced as soon as people try to express hope, packaging their experiences in such a way that they might share them with others and revisit them themselves.’ Daniel Johnson, ‘Contrary Hopes: Evangelical Christianity and the Decline Narrative’, in Volf and Katerberg (eds), *The Future of Hope*, 31.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Pinches draws on Lear’s *Radical Hope* to offer an account of ‘how to live in hope’ that avoids this dichotomy. For Pinches, Lear’s insight that hope is a way of life that sustains the continuity between past and future can naturally be taken up to illumine Aquinas’ understanding of hope as a virtue. The specific object of Christian hope can go hand in hand with an appreciation of hope’s enactment: ‘Hope for Christians has always involved a movement forward toward a unifying end, a share in God’s kingdom. As such it also involves a passage through time and in a particular earthly life. It is the virtue of the *homo viator*, the wayfarer.’ Pinches, ‘How to Live in Hope’, 24.

A second tradition that has focused increasingly on the question of *how* we hope (and one that also draws on Lear's work) is that of analytic moral philosophy and psychology, where hope has been taken up as a theme of renewed interest in the last decade. The point of departure for this recent work is what is termed the 'standard' account of hope, expressed by way of twentieth-century linguistic analysis as desire combined with non-zero, non-unitary expectation.<sup>37</sup> Concern that this understanding of hope fails to take sufficient account of the relation between hope and human agency has led to a series of recent attempts by Anglophone philosophers to move beyond it. This literature seeks to offer a better experiential account of hope, exploring the rationality of hope in terms of practical as well as theoretical considerations, and elucidating the relationship between hope and human agency. Important contributions include those from Luc Bovens, Adrienne Martin, Victoria McGeer, and Philip Pettit. This approach will be explored in more detail at the start of chapter 2, where I will argue that its contribution to our contemporary understanding of hope depends on an implicit understanding of the relation between hope and ontological order that needs to be drawn out more clearly.

*iii. Hope and optimism in positive psychology*

Perhaps the most prominent popular understanding of hope (at least in the 'secular' West) comes from the field of positive psychology, of which Martin Seligman is a founding father.<sup>38</sup> Turning from psychology's focus on mental disorders, positive psychology seeks to offer a scientific approach to the

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<sup>37</sup> The works of J. P. Day, 'Hope, a Philosophical Inquiry', *Acta Philosophica Fennica* (1991) and 'Hope', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1969), are frequently cited as sources exemplifying this 'standard' approach.

<sup>38</sup> The approach of positive psychology is exemplified by Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

understanding and development of positive character traits or ‘virtues’. Claiming to be a ‘new science’ of character and the good life, it recognises the influence of philosophical and religious traditions on historical understandings of character and virtue but excludes the normative claims of religion and philosophical accounts of the good from its field of concern, which is strictly empirical.<sup>39</sup> In place of an explicit ontology and correlate understanding of human meaning and purpose, there is a background assumption that modern evolutionary theory can provide a biological framework for human flourishing with which a set of universal virtues can be matched: ‘The ubiquity of these core virtues suggests the possibility of universality and eventually a deep theory about moral excellence phrased in evolutionary terms.’<sup>40</sup>

In *Character Strengths and Virtues*, hope is situated under the core virtue of ‘transcendence’, the label for a category of character strengths ‘that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning’.<sup>41</sup> It is defined as ‘expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about’.<sup>42</sup> There is no strong distinction between hope and optimism. Instead, hope is taken as the label for a set of thematically similar virtues that share a ‘coherent resemblance’ and can therefore be grouped together:

Hope, optimism, future-mindedness, and future-orientation represent a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward the future. Thinking about the future, expecting that desired events and outcomes will occur, acting in ways believed to make them more likely, and feeling confident that these will ensue given appropriate efforts sustain good cheer in the here and now and galvanize goal-directed actions... Distinctions within this family of synonyms exist, although the overlap is considerable... Hope, optimism, future mindedness, and future

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<sup>39</sup> See Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths*, 3-32.

<sup>40</sup> Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths*, 51-52.

<sup>41</sup> Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths*, 30.

orientation have been equally linked with all manner of desirable outcomes.<sup>43</sup>

The movement of positive psychology not only addresses hope as a character strength but itself emerged from a focus on hope and optimism. It was catalysed by Seligman's work, presented in *Learned Optimism* (1990), which sought to counter increasing levels of depression in the developed world since the Second World War.<sup>44</sup> Seligman relates this increase to two trends in the history of twentieth-century modernity: growing individualism ('the waxing of the self') and a decline in communal life ('the waning of the commons'). The first trend parallels the emergence of autonomous selfhood:

The modern individual is not the peasant of yore with a fixed future ahead. He (and now she, effectively doubling the market) is a frantic trading floor of options, decisions, and preferences. And the result is a new kind of self, a 'maximal' self... For better or for worse, we are now a culture of maximal selves. We freely choose among an abundance of customized goods and services and reach beyond them to grasp more exquisite freedoms. Along with the freedoms the expanded self brings some dangers. Chief among them is massive depression. I believe our epidemic of depression is a creature of the maximal self.<sup>45</sup>

Importantly, Seligman seeks to offer an empirical and not a moral account. He simply observes the emergence of the modern individual as an historical trend. The 'waxing of the self' is not a problem on its own. 'If it had happened in isolation, exalting the self might have had a positive effect, leading to more fully lived lives'.<sup>46</sup> The problem arises through the simultaneous operation of another dynamic, namely a

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<sup>43</sup> Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths*, 570.

<sup>44</sup> Martin E. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change your Mind and Your Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 283-284.

<sup>46</sup> Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 284.

decreasing sense of community and loss of higher purpose. Seligman focuses on events in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century:

Commitment to the nation lost its ability to provide us with hope. This erosion of commitment, in turn, caused people to look inward for satisfaction, to focus upon their own lives. While political events were nullifying the old idea of the nation, social trends were nullifying God and the family... Religion or the family might have replaced the nation as a source of hope and purpose, keeping us from turning inward. But, by unfortunate coincidence, the erosion of belief in the nation coincided with a breakdown of the family and a decline of belief in God.<sup>47</sup>

Seligman's understanding here has significant parallels with Delbanco's historical analysis of the transition of modern hope from God to nation to self. The essential difference, however, is that Seligman views the growth of the 'maximal self', the erosion of belief in the nation, and the decline of belief in God as coincidental ('unfortunate coincidence'). These independent trends, he argues, came together in a perfect storm, resulting in significantly increased levels of depression.

Put together the lack of belief that your relationship to God matters, the breakdown of your belief in the benevolent power of your country and the breakdown of the family. Where can one now turn for identity, for purpose, and for hope? When we need spiritual furniture, we look around and see that all the comfortable leather sofas and stuffed chairs have been removed and all that's left to sit on is a small, frail folding chair: the self. And the maximal self, stripped of the buffering of any commitment to what is larger in life, is a setup for depression.<sup>48</sup>

Seligman proposes a twofold solution: first, 'changing the balance of individualism and the commons', seeking to overcome the 'unbridled individualism' of the self by intentionally cultivating communal life; second, 'exploiting the strengths of the maximal self'.<sup>49</sup> This second proposal is his focus and it is here that

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<sup>47</sup> Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 285.

<sup>48</sup> Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 285.

<sup>49</sup> Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 286.

‘learned optimism’ is the answer: ‘One of the great bulwarks of the maximal self is that it believes the self can change the way it thinks. And this belief allows change to take place.’<sup>50</sup> ‘Learning how to think more optimistically when we fail gives us a permanent skill for warding off depression.’<sup>51</sup>

Is the future of hope, then, to be found in the approach of positive psychology? Seligman’s work on optimism is part of a growing movement that argues it may be.<sup>52</sup> However, this approach to hope is not without its problems. In the first place, the understanding of hope advanced in *Character Strengths and Virtues* is impoverished in comparison to accounts of hope in the fields of philosophy, theology, and even psychology itself. As Elizabeth Gulliford comments in a study that compares hope in positive psychology with hope in the theology of Paul Tillich, ‘The species of hope and optimism that these models embody seems to be largely a composite of problem-solving skills and beliefs that enhance perceptions of control of future outcomes.’<sup>53</sup> This idea of hope based on cognition and control can be critiqued at various levels: hope is intellectualized, reduced to a learned way of thinking and acting; hope is individualized, the emphasis on individual agency overlooking any interpersonal aspect of hope;<sup>54</sup> hope is historicized, based on the problematic assumption that ‘in

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<sup>50</sup> Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 291.

<sup>51</sup> Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 290.

<sup>52</sup> Charles R. Snyder’s account of hope is another prominent example. Snyder defines hope as ‘the perceived capacity to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways’. ‘Optimistic goal-directed cognitions are aimed at distancing the person from negative outcomes. Hope theory differs in that the focus is on reaching future positive goal-related outcomes, and there is an explicit emphasis placed on the agency and pathways goal-directed cognitions. The outcome must be of high importance in both theories, but this is given more emphasis in hope theory.’ Snyder offers a helpful comparison elucidating similarities and differences between positive psychology theories that are grouped together in *Character Strengths and Virtues* under the title of ‘hope’. Charles R. Snyder, ‘Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind’, *Psychological Inquiry* 13:4 (2002), 249, 256, 257.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Gulliford, ‘An Interdisciplinary Evaluation and Theological Enrichment of Positive Psychology’, PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2011, 167.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Hope is sustained *between* people and is incomplete if construed purely as a personal strength.’ ‘For

essence conceives the future itself as following an essentially predictable and unchanging course'.<sup>55</sup>

Secondly, in addition to this external critique, the account of hope in positive psychology struggles to attain internal consistency. Seligman seeks to build on the positive character strengths of the modern individual ('the maximal self') in order to mitigate its own weaknesses, but fails to recognise that the so-called 'strength' of the modern individual is, in fact, a weakness. With appropriate training and technique, his approach suggests, virtue can overcome vice; hope can overcome despair. At one level this seems promising. With the tools of modern science at its disposal, surely the modern self can pioneer a way to its own fulfilment. Or can it? Clearly it depends on how the fulfilment of the self is understood. If the fulfilment of the self depends on its relation to society, and its orientation towards a higher (transcendent) meaning and purpose—both of which Seligman suggests it does—then the strength of the 'maximal self' as a denial of limitation turns out to oppose its own wellbeing.

The contradictory tendencies in Seligman's understanding seem to emerge from his failure to engage sufficiently with the relation of the self to God and society in his narrative of modernity. As a result, his proposal is puzzlingly inconsistent. In terms of the self and society, his solution to modern depression proposes limiting the 'maximal self' by re-situating the self in society whilst at the same time bolstering the 'maximal self' by encouraging the self's ability to determine its own future. In terms

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hope to be ignited it must be communicated that there is a way out of despair. Lynch suggests that the means to recovery lies in escaping a solipsistic world by daring to trust the vision of another; "I propose that the sick person *is* really helpless... For he is operating within his own closed system of fantasy and feeling, unable, as a result, even to imagine what is on the outside. He needs another's imagination that will begin to work with his own, and then the two can do it together. He must put on another's imagination in order to rediscover his own." Gulliford, 'An Interdisciplinary Evaluation', 171-172, 172-173; cf. William Lynch, *Images of Hope* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 77.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Gulliford, 'An Interdisciplinary Evaluation', 163.

of the self and God, he classifies hope under the core virtue of ‘transcendence’, a category determined historically by empirical observation of human (religious) experience, whilst at the same time arguing that the ‘maximal self’ has grown out of those traditions and that positive psychology is premised on evolutionary naturalism. Positive psychology (insofar as Seligman’s understanding represents it) assumes the stability of the ‘maximal self’ grounded on an evolutionary biological ontology that it does not develop. It clings to the possibility of human flourishing and fulfilment, borrowing terminology from the classical virtues tradition, but fights shy of questions of ultimate meaning and purpose. It advocates hopefulness but equivocates on hope.

iv. *A new theology of hope*

The philosophical and psychological approaches to hope so far considered have tended to bracket ontological considerations from their understanding, focusing on hope as a subjective expectation or mental attitude. By contrast, the most prominent modern theologian of hope (Jürgen Moltmann) proposes an understanding of hope within a theological ontology that is itself oriented towards the future.<sup>56</sup> As Moltmann famously put it in his seminal *Theology of Hope* (1967):

From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology is hope, forward moving and therefore also revolutionising the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but is the medium of the Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Here, Moltmann owes a debt to Ernst Bloch’s famous philosophy of the ‘Not Yet’: ‘The substance-formations of the world... are full of the tendency of the Not-Yet towards the All, of the alienated towards identity, of the surrounding world towards mediated homeland.’ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. i, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 336.

<sup>57</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology (TH)*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM, 2002), 2.

Moltmann describes his theology of hope as a ‘reinvention’ project.<sup>58</sup> The modern world, ordered rationally towards the consummation of universal human freedom, may have found its progress stalled, but it could be relaunched towards the greater freedom of *God’s* future. In a radical departure from what he perceived to be the backward-looking conservatism of classical theism,<sup>59</sup> Moltmann proposed an understanding of hope in relation to a modernization of God’s being as a social self-becoming. The dislocated modern self could find itself afresh in God, the ‘I’ of Kant’s questions reinvented as part of an inclusive, eschatological divine society. The modern problem of relating subject and object could be overcome at the deepest level, Moltmann argued, by the eschatological integration of the self in Godself.

In his theology of hope, Moltmann explicitly sought to move beyond both the Augustinian understanding of hope as a theological virtue and the understanding of ultimate hope as a rational postulate in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. He argues that Augustinian theism, captive to a Parmenidean staticism and Constantinian conservatism, had theorized God in a theological system that prevented any real hope of historical progress. Kant, on the other hand, paved the way for rational historical progress but without God. Augustine absolutized God as an eternal present outside of time and above history; Kant declared such a God unknowable, absolutizing the eternal presence of reason in history. Moltmann argued that both understandings are fundamentally ‘ahistoric’, effectively absolutizing the present and so preventing the possibility of the real change that Moltmann—opposing Parmenides with

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<sup>58</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, ‘A Passion for God’s Reign’, in Nicholas Wolterstorff et al. (eds), *A Passion for God’s Reign: Theology, Christian Learning and the Christian Self* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 21.

<sup>59</sup> ‘From the beginning of modern times, hopes for something new from God have emigrated from the church and have been invested in revolutions and rapid social change. It was most often reaction and conservatism that remained behind in the church.’ Jürgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (New York: Scribner, 1969), 5-6.

Heraclitus—considers the essence of history. However, whilst his theology of hope rejects Kant’s exclusion of God from history, Moltmann accommodates his theological understanding within Kant’s immanent modern framework. He develops Augustine’s theological account of history but leaves behind Augustine’s emphasis on divine simplicity and essential mystery—central features of classical theism—in order to advance a theology of hope in a historical God.

We will return to consider Moltmann’s theology of hope in more detail in chapter four, considering what may be learnt from his theological understanding of modernity as well as considering some serious problems with his proposal. For now, it suffices to highlight two lines of critique: on the terms of those committed to the theological tradition of creedal orthodoxy, Moltmann’s proposal overrides fundamental theological convictions concerning the being of God in relation to creation. Human society and the human self both participate in God’s own self-becoming in a way that fails to take sufficient account of the distinction between Creator and created. On Moltmann’s own terms, his proposal of a fundamental dialectic or ‘contradiction’ between the historical death and eschatological raising of Christ reveals a problematic divide between history and the eschaton.<sup>60</sup> History’s eschatological future seems ultimately to be a future without a past, stripping historical hope of any meaningful content and undermining concerted engagement in the ethical complexities of modern life. As Oliver O’Donovan argues, Moltmann’s

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<sup>60</sup> This is seen most clearly in Moltmann’s Christology, which denies the existence of a positive analogy between the resurrected Christ and the eschaton, ultimately making Jesus himself not yet the Lord Jesus Christ. Moltmann argues that the crucifixion and resurrection appearances of Christ are both historical events; that is to say, that they are analogous to other events in history. The actual raising of Christ, however, is not historical on Moltmann’s understanding but eschatological, ‘That is to say, it is described as something for which there are no analogies in the history we know, but only apocalyptic promises and hopes that where death is concerned God will give proof of his divinity at the last. “Raising of the dead” is an expression which looks expectantly towards the future proof of God’s creative power over the non-existent.’ *TH*, 183.

theology of hope proposes an eschatological resolution to the question of the modern world's future which fails to land in practice. It has no space for 'careful attention to this world and its redemption, to the needs confronting God's people in differing ages and circumstances.'<sup>61</sup>

This section has presented four recent approaches to the understanding and practice of hope, highlighting the ways in which they wrestle with the interrelated concerns of ontology and personal agency and identity that the theme of hope brings to the fore. There are surely important insights in all of them. Bertrand Russell's embrace of hopelessness in a world without God exemplifies the intellectual honesty of an atheism facing up to the ethical implications of unbelief. The phenomenological turn to enacted hope cannot boast of the same metaphysical rigour but it has provided important insights into the experience and practice of hope. Positive psychology rightly relates the virtue of hope to human flourishing, even if the reductionist understanding of virtue that it presents is problematic. Finally, Moltmann's theological engagement with the hopes of the modern world and instinct to ground human hope on the resurrection of Christ represents a bold move to return hope to the theological commitments that have sustained its reception as a positive contribution to human life and society in Western history. None of these approaches, however, seems able to offer a constructive understanding of hope that holds together the practice of hope with a plausible account of the ontological framework on which such hope depends.

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<sup>61</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 165. In this criticism O'Donovan joins his voice to the objection of liberation theologians that Moltmann found surprising: 'That is the criticism made against him by the theologians of liberation: the programme is too absolute, too dissociated from a context, too much an axe blow which pays no attention to the grain of the wood. Practical reasonableness is more than a knowledge of change; it is a habit of looking around one, taking the measure of the realities that shape the context of action before one embarks on it.' *Finding and Seeking*, 165-166.

The argument of this thesis is that limitations in modern construals of hope, along with challenges to the ongoing practice of hope, present an invitation to reconsider the terms on which hope is sought. Following the turn to virtue in moral philosophy in the latter part of the twentieth century, might we find hope for the future by remembering a different past? If the modern world has mis-remembered its theological foundations, might we find hope for the modern world by orienting its pursuit of the future towards an end given in a more fundamental beginning?

## 2. The virtue of hope

Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981) stands along with the earlier (1958) intervention of Elizabeth Anscombe at the head of a return to the virtues tradition in Anglophone moral philosophy and theology.<sup>62</sup> MacIntyre and Anscombe identified as a problem the interminable disagreement in moral discourse that was a feature of twentieth-century Western philosophy. In their assessment, the loss of a shared account of human meaning and purpose had resulted in a situation where the language of ethics had been stripped of its traditional framework of meaning and so had lost significance.<sup>63</sup> As a result, 'There seems to be no way of securing moral agreement in our culture.'<sup>64</sup> 'Emotivism', MacIntyre's chosen diagnostic term, was the issue of concern. Stripped from a context that could confer meaning, evaluative and especially moral judgments were divested of any criteria of normativity. They were ultimately

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<sup>62</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007); Elizabeth Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19. Other important interventions include those by Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978).

<sup>63</sup> According to MacIntyre, moral judgments had become 'linguistic survivals from the practices of classical theism which have lost the context provided by these categories'. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 60.

<sup>64</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 6.

reducible to expressions of preference, attitude, or feeling.<sup>65</sup> MacIntyre traced the origins of the problem historically, highlighting the failure of Enlightenment attempts to found morality on the passions (Hume), reason (Kant), and will (Kierkegaard). His proposal was for a recovery of an Aristotelian understanding of moral virtue (absent Aristotle's metaphysical biology).<sup>66</sup>

MacIntyre's argument is that there is a narrative unity to human life as it exists in a specific historical social tradition. Such traditions are comprehensive: each has its own story that makes sense of life, bringing with it an understanding of the ultimate good towards which life is to be aimed in a moral quest that provides meaning and purpose. Moral life exists within such societal traditions, according to the human virtues (excellences that accord with the nature of a thing) that are embodied and developed in formative practices and constitute—in their perfected attainment—a life well lived. MacIntyre underlines the importance of the communal aspect of virtue and so the necessity of a traditioned account of the good. This is vital, he argues, since qualities that seem to be virtues in one societal context might in fact undermine virtue in another. Ruthlessness, for instance, might be a virtue in a community of wilderness explorers but a vice in a society established on settled family life.<sup>67</sup> Hope is another such example. Consider Aristotle's view of hope from the perspective of a tradition that venerates a certain kind of courage:

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<sup>65</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 12. The fundamental problem is the rejection of traditioned, *historic* meaning and significance: 'Emotivism rests upon a claim that every attempt, whether past or present, to provide a rational justification for an objective morality has in fact failed. It is a verdict upon the whole history of moral philosophy and as such obliterates the contrast between the present and the past.' *After Virtue*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> 'My account of virtue proceeds through three stages: a first which concerns virtues as qualities necessary to achieve the goods internal to practices; a second which considers them as qualities contributing to the good of a whole life; and a third which relates them to the pursuit of a good for human beings the conception of which can only be elaborated and possessed within an ongoing social tradition.' MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 273.

<sup>67</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 275.

Hopeful people are not brave either; for their many victories over many opponents make them confident in dangers. They are somewhat similar to brave people, since both are confident. But whereas brave people are confident for the reasons given earlier [i.e. on account of their own rational agency which has been cultivated into virtue that can stand firm even in the face of death as the fine thing to do], the hopeful are confident because they think they are stronger and nothing could happen to them; drunks do the same sort of thing, since they become hopeful. When things turn out differently from how they expected, they run away. The brave person, on the contrary, stands firm against what is and appears frightening to a human being; he does this because it is fine to stand firm and shameful to fail.<sup>68</sup>

Aristotle's assessment of hope is far from positive, but he does not dismiss hope outright, maintaining a place for hope insofar as it relates positively to courage.<sup>69</sup> However, Aristotle's naturalistic worldview, and the commitment to courageous self-determination that resulted from it, make it hard to see how hope could ever be considered an Aristotelian 'virtue'.<sup>70</sup> Hope is admissible as positive expectation only insofar as it supports the heroic agency of the virtuous Aristotelian self. This points to a wider concern, namely, the relation between ontology and virtue, between our understanding of human nature, the highest good that is its telos, and the qualities of character that promote human flourishing. As Julia Driver observes:

Human nature is important in understanding the good to which virtuous agents aspire because an understanding of human nature will provide the basis for an understanding of 'human flourishing'. The intuition is that

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<sup>68</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*), trans. and ed. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 3.8.13–14.

<sup>69</sup> For example, in his discussion of fear in *Rhetoric* 2.5, Aristotle argues that hope (in the form of minimal positive expectation) is necessary for moral deliberation, which is always aimed towards a future good: 'Fear sets us thinking what can be done, which of course nobody does when things are hopeless.' For a positive assessment (perhaps overly positive) of the value of hope in Aristotle's framework, see G. Scott Gravlee, 'Aristotle on Hope', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38:4 (2000), 461–77.

<sup>70</sup> Aquinas, likewise, did not regard natural hope as a virtue but a passion, reserving the classification of virtue for theological hope. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (*ST*), trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Hyde Park: New Advent, 2008), II-I,40.1; II-II,17.1.

virtue promotes human good. The differences amongst theorists lie in how the connection is to be spelled out, and what exactly is to count as 'human flourishing' and whose flourishing—the agent's or others'—is taken to be relevant. Views of the virtues—what they are and how they function—can vary dramatically in content, then, depending on what views of human nature are adopted. The problem of specifying the good for humans has been almost intractable, and some writers fear that this is the area where virtue ethics, and virtue theory more generally, will have the most difficulty.<sup>71</sup>

This returns us again to the dual issues of the relation between hope and the good, and hope and human agency and identity. It seems that our turn to virtue has gained little when it comes to these important concerns. How might we respond to the difficulty that Driver identifies? Recent proposals for a renewed understanding of hope as a virtue have followed one of two basic paths. On the one hand are those who have pushed into the relationship between human nature, human flourishing, and virtue to argue in favour of an understanding of hope as a virtue with reference to a specific (often theological) account of the good.<sup>72</sup> Others, eager to advocate the practice of hope as a universal human virtue, have sought to leave aside or play down controversial and seemingly interminable discussions regarding human nature and metaphysical first principles in order to focus on the practice of hope. We will consider two examples of this latter approach before outlining the course that this thesis will follow as an inquiry into the theological virtue of hope in the context of late modernity.

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<sup>71</sup> Julia Driver, 'The Virtues and Human Nature', in Roger Crisp (ed.), *How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 111–12.

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. Aaron D. Cobb and Adam Green, 'The Theological Virtue of Hope as a Social Virtue', *Journal of Analytic Theology* 5 (2017), 230-250; Rebecca DeYoung, 'Practicing Hope', *Res Philosophica* 91:3 (2014), 387-410; Dominic Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope* (New York: Crossroad, 2012); David Elliot, *Hope and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); William C. Mattison, 'Hope', in Michael Austin and R. Douglas Geivett (eds), *Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 107-125.

i. *A natural virtue*

In recent hope research, John Cottingham and Adam Kadlac are amongst those who advocate the benefit of understanding hope as a virtue. Their positions are distinct but they are united in their reluctance to engage the ontological or theological commitments necessary for hope to be understood in this way.

Adam Kadlac takes an explicitly de-theologized approach: ‘I try to approach hope naturalistically—as a distinctly human phenomenon that occurs in a variety of different contexts with any number of ends in view.’<sup>73</sup> Kadlac does not engage with the history of hope as an explicitly theological virtue but brackets metaphysical questions from his discussion. Noting the Christian and Marxist commitments that attend the accounts of hope of Gabriel Marcel and Ernst Bloch (accounts with which he declares some personal sympathy) he presents his approach as neutral: ‘Without at all intending to discount their view on hope, my aim is to be somewhat more neutral with respect to the context in which virtuous hope might occur.’<sup>74</sup> Given the pluralistic nature of late modernity and the common secular recourse to neutrality in the face of seemingly incommensurable understandings of the highest good, Kadlac’s approach is understandable. The benefit it offers is its breadth of appeal: hope may be understood as a virtue regardless of disagreement on deeper matters, and it may be habituated as a realistic mean between optimism and pessimism.

Cottingham likewise makes much of the practice of hope, proposing ‘to approach the virtue of hope from a psycho-ethical, as opposed to metaphysical perspective’.<sup>75</sup> He adopts an understanding of virtue as ‘a disposition of character, acquired and fostered by training and habit, which can contribute to a flourishing

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<sup>73</sup> Adam Kadlac, ‘The Virtue of Hope’, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18 (2015), 338.

<sup>74</sup> Kadlac, ‘Virtue of Hope’, 338 n.3.

<sup>75</sup> John Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, in Dalferth and Block (eds), *Hope*, 18.

life.<sup>76</sup> Unlike Kadlac, however, Cottingham does not bracket ontological commitments entirely. Instead he offers an account of hope as a virtue which proposes that ‘the Pauline account can be harmonized with the Pagan tradition so as to give a message that all can accept.’<sup>77</sup> He refers to this as ‘a universalist or reconciliationist account of hope—one that stresses the continuities between the ethical insights about hopefulness found in secular and religious traditions’.<sup>78</sup> Cottingham’s argument relies on two theological claims. Firstly, ‘that the New Testament writers on hope are less concerned with a miraculous divine intervention that guarantees all will turn out well, than with the authentic spirituality that seeks moral transformation and redemption’.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, that Stump’s strong divergence thesis when it comes to the accounts of virtue in Aristotle and Aquinas cannot be sustained.<sup>80</sup> Cottingham’s concern here is understandable. He is eager to avoid what he describes as the ‘morally repugnant’ (often termed ‘Augustinian’) view of pagan virtue as splendid vice, which he takes to mean that ‘the pagan can be virtuous in name only, or that he or she cannot exemplify... true hope, that title being reserved only for the Christian’.<sup>81</sup>

In our pluralist context, both Kadlac’s and Cottingham’s accounts have an intuitive plausibility, and they rightly highlight important strengths of understanding hope as a virtue: realism (avoiding the excess of optimism and deficiency of pessimism), practical habituation, relation to a wider community of hope, and an intrinsic connection to human flourishing. There is a significant gain from this practical understanding and it raises an important question: Might we not settle for a

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<sup>76</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 19.

<sup>77</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 20.

<sup>78</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 23–4.

<sup>79</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 22.

<sup>80</sup> See Eleonore Stump, ‘The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas’s Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions’, in *Faith and Philosophy* 28:1 (2011), 29–43.

<sup>81</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 26.

return to hope as a virtue that orders life towards the determinate ends of ordinary personal and social life? As Berkowitz argues:

In the long run, a complete understanding of virtue does require an account of first principles and a defence of controversial opinions about human nature and the cosmos. But... perhaps discussion about virtue can proceed some substantial distance before vexing questions about foundations and first principles receive final answers. This is not to say that the question of virtue's foundations is a small matter. It is, rather, to observe that the first principles need not be fixed firmly before an inquiry into the moral and political significance of virtue can get under way and begin to yield benefits.<sup>82</sup>

There is much to be said for this understanding. In the order of dialogue, as in the order of experience, it seems implausibly restrictive (as well as intellectualistic) to put any discussion or attempted practice of the virtue of hope on hold until first principles are agreed and fixed firmly in place. However, it is also true that every practice of hope needs a home, both in terms of a goal towards which to aim and a community oriented towards that end wherein it can be habituated. Insofar as hope aims an ethical agent along a certain course of action, an implicit if not explicit commitment to a coherent future fulfilment of the good is entailed.<sup>83</sup> Whilst the practice of hope as a virtue need not always be consciously related to the ultimate good, and discussion of the virtue of hope need not be reduced to an exclusive focus on the nature of the good, an account of the virtue of hope should at least be cognizant of the ontological claims on which it relies.

It is in this regard that Kadlac's reticence when it comes to the underlying relation between the virtue of hope and the ontological or theological commitments

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<sup>82</sup> Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>83</sup> 'For ethics the important thing is that a coherent future is, implicitly if not explicitly, essential to coherent action. We need a future to which the future of our action is open, a future that will not simply swallow up the action as if it had never been.' O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking*, 150.

that sustain such an understanding is a significant shortcoming. In arguing for a ‘naturalistic’ approach, Kadlac’s virtue of hope leaves him with a deficit that cannot be made up within his paradigm. In presenting a ‘neutral’ account of hope as a virtue, admissible across a range of underlying ontological commitments, he claims an understanding of virtue that floats free from any ontological moorings. However, insofar as he does not argue positively for hope as a virtue on the materialistic ontology of secular naturalism, the capital funding his virtue of hope is borrowed from one or more specific ontological or theological traditions.

Cottingham’s approach might be called on to supplement Kadlac at this point. His appeal to Christian theology in the stream of St Paul and Thomas Aquinas roots his account in the historical tradition in which the virtue of hope was born and sustained. However, Cottingham moves too quickly over controversial theological territory in order to reach the conclusion he is after, that there is nothing in the practice of hope in the Christian tradition ‘that need be seen as radically inconsistent with our natural understanding of hope and its value in human flourishing.’<sup>84</sup> The strength and weakness of Cottingham’s position accords with the strength and weakness of his wider project when it comes to the philosophy of religion, which he thinks ‘needs to be much less cerebral and abstract.’<sup>85</sup> Cottingham’s turn to moral psychology and to spiritual practice is a helpful corrective, but there is a danger of overreaction when he describes the ‘whole point’ of a religious worldview as practical: ‘Its whole point and purpose, and what accounts for its enduring power, is that it is a transformative mode of understanding and living, one that generates new

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<sup>84</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 31.

<sup>85</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 31. See John Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

ways of knowing, richer psychological integrity, and a deeper moral sensibility.’<sup>86</sup> Must transformational practice be placed in opposition to propositional truth when it comes to theological convictions? As is evident from the classical ambivalence to hope, the practice of hope as a virtue relies on a conception of reality such that hope accords with rather than undermines human agency. A religious worldview (Judeo-Christian in the case of hope’s place in Western intellectual history) surely offers more but does not do less than provide a rationally defensible account of how such hope can be understood.

*ii. A theological virtue*

As evidenced in the accounts we have considered, the turn to virtue in philosophy and theology (and to some degree in political theory and psychology) has meant that a renewed understanding of hope as a virtue has gained traction. But what kind of virtue? This remains an important question. Insofar as the virtue of hope is abstracted from its orientation to a traditioned account of the good and divorced from its historical communal practice, the virtue of hope floats free of the ontological order needed to support it. Apart from such an order, late modern appeals to hope as a virtue leave important questions unanswered: Towards what good(s) should hope be aimed? In what tradition(s) is it possible for good hope to be cultivated? How can practices of hope be normatively evaluated?

The contemporary advocacy of incommensurable pluralism when it comes to ultimate commitments—closely related to the modern commitment to autonomous selfhood—resists this line of inquiry. Such questions seem bound to lead to theological claims inadmissible in secular discourse. In a de-theologized context, with

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<sup>86</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 31.

a strong desire to ‘do hope’ without ‘doing God’, it does not seem plausible to go beyond the accounts of Cottingham and Kadlac, which effectively present secular analogues of what is a Christian virtue. Can an account of hope that is theological in its account of the good, ecclesial in its communal embodiment, and doxological in its understanding of ontological order, answer the modern question, What may I hope for?

There are two particular and plausible concerns that weigh against a strongly theological answer. In the first place, invoking substantive theological interests seems bound to shut down a conversation regarding the universal human importance of hope. The call to turn from the hopes of the world to hope in God would seem to undermine both the good of the world and the personal agency that is held as central to human flourishing. In an age where selfhood is equated to the first-person narration of human self-authorship, the preacher’s message is ominous: ‘Hope in God, end of story.’ Understood from this perspective, God does not give hope, he takes it away. A second, related concern is that theological hope shuts out the world, claiming hope as the church’s private possession. John Cottingham raises this issue, referring to the moral repugnance of the notion that the virtue of hope is to be found only in the church.<sup>87</sup> What is more, if hope is necessarily united with divine grace then those beyond the church are not only labelled as second-rate hoppers, but seem to be denied access to the premium virtue that can only be had as a gift.

Alan Mittleman is a persuasive advocate for the importance of engaging the ontological commitments necessary for reliable hope along with economic considerations of hope’s operation. He recognizes the difficulty of arguing for a theological hope in de-theologized world, but suggests that we need to navigate a

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<sup>87</sup> Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, 26.

course between the Scylla of theological specificity on the one hand and the Charybdis of metaphysical vacuity on the other:

We must find a way of speaking about the value of hope that exceeds its role in building confidence, displacing risk aversion, even nurturing moral agency. On the other hand, we need to find a discourse that doesn't rest entirely on particular theological claims.<sup>88</sup>

Mittleman's project, which relates hope as a virtue to democratic citizenship, has much merit as an example of the approach he commends. It seems possible, however, to go beyond Mittleman by clarifying the bounds he sets out. An important distinction can be made between a discourse of hope resting on particular theological claims and a discourse of hope able to engage universal human concerns. Mittleman's concern to present hope as a democratic virtue is a proper concern to guard the latter, but does it have to come at the cost of theological particularity? How can we be sure that the theological commitments most broadly shared across traditions are the most important?

In his recent work on the place of religion as necessary for human flourishing in a globalized world, Miroslav Volf highlights competing visions of human flourishing as bringing about 'a clash of universalisms'. He suggests that, 'To shape globalization with a view toward the global common good, religions will have to learn how to advocate their universalistic visions in a pluralistic world without fomenting violence.'<sup>89</sup> Volf makes a strong case against the argument that religious universalisms necessarily result in conflict. At their strongest, he argues, these same religious visions of life have the resources to undermine the violence that their perversion can fuel. In fact, 'Religions can shape globalization only if they resist

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<sup>88</sup> Mittleman, 'Hope and Metaphysics', 50.

<sup>89</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 58.

being made its mere instruments, remain true to their universal visions of flourishing, and learn how to promote their competing visions in a constructive way.’<sup>90</sup>

If the way to further hope in modernity may be found by pushing into theological particularity rather than pulling back from it, we can look back to the tradition of hope in the line of St Paul, Augustine, and Aquinas, not simply as a resource to answer a modern question but in order to reframe the question itself. On Aquinas’ account of the theological virtue of hope, the virtuous mean—where good hope is located—is not the way of human nature alone but of divine grace.<sup>91</sup> This is a way that not only takes us *between* but *beyond* the opposing vices of presumption and despair. Perhaps a properly theological (that is to say ecclesial and doxological) hope can engage Kant’s question of hope not by navigating carefully between the pitfalls it presents but by challenging the validity of its terms.

### **3. What may I hope for?**

This introduction has highlighted the Kantian origin of the modern question of hope and its relation to the autonomous rational agency valorized in his essay, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ In Kant’s vision the highest end of man is that which accords with the limits of human reason. Man is supremely a rational agent, possessing his own subjectivity within the rational order of the cosmos. Insofar as the late modern question of hope is in continuity with Kant’s question, Kant’s account of rational order and of the rational self continues to set the limits of the debate even after his own answer has been left behind. Following Kant, the hope of human flourishing can allow no space for a sovereign God who works and can be known in history, or for the

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<sup>90</sup> Volf, *Flourishing*, 58.

<sup>91</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, 17.1.

freedom of human agency as existing within a communal order of worship. Modern hope thus develops at odds with the ecclesial hope that is its historic source.

This historic source is the Augustinian theological tradition. Here, hope belongs as a virtue, distinct but inseparable from faith and love, given by the Spirit to the community of worship that is the universal church. It is practiced personally and corporately in patient and joyful perseverance along the way of faith that works through love. Hope sustains through the difficulties of the present, orienting life liturgically towards its eternal fulfilment in the eschatological love of God—the perfected created reality where God’s love for humanity is mirrored without reserve by human love for God and others in God. As such, hope is a *theological* virtue. It is rooted in the relation between God and humanity that was established in creation and brought to fulfilment through the redemption won by Christ. It serves to unite the church as the body of Christ travelling together in remembrance, repentance, and moral renewal towards the common goal that is its eschatological perfection along with its head. If this hope is theologically specific and properly ecclesial, the theological contention that makes it universally relevant is that it is profoundly humanizing. The nature of the church’s relation to Christ means that the freedom of human individuality is not diminished by participation in the hope of the community. On the contrary, it is as human beings are ‘subjectified’ (made subjects) in obedience to Christ as part of his beloved church, living within its liturgical practices, that their deepest human identity as divine image-bearers is brought to fruition.<sup>92</sup>

This theological account of hope is offered in the context of contemporary hope research and within a wider return to the pre-modern understanding of hope as a virtue. I am seeking to contribute an Augustinian understanding of the virtue of hope

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<sup>92</sup> ‘A person is at his best when in his whole life he strives towards the unchangeable form of life and holds fast to it continually.’ *doctr. chr.* 1.41.

and advocate its potential not only as the hope of the church but as the hope of the church *for the modern world*. Three factors support this turn to Augustine: (1) Augustine (through Lombard and Aquinas) is the source of the Western understanding of hope as a virtue; (2) Augustine's understanding of hope is a significant lacuna in both hope research and Augustine studies; (3) Jürgen Moltmann, the predominant modern theologian of hope, develops his account in opposition to a reading of Augustine's trinitarian theology that recent scholarship has shown to be erroneous. One way of considering this thesis is in light of this recent work on Augustine, as an attempt to come after Moltmann with an Augustinian understanding of hope for the future of the modern world. I will seek to make the case that in our late modern context, which prioritises the self as the centre of its own hopes and is simultaneously plagued by issues of conflict and anxiety, Augustine's theological understanding of hope holds out an important alternative.

In order to clarify expectations, I should state up front that this is at heart a project in (renovative) constructive theology rather than historical exegesis or the history of ideas. It is a modern project, advancing an Augustinian understanding of hope as a virtue in the context of late modern philosophical and theological understandings of hope. I seek to ground my proposal in exegesis of Augustine that is answerable to the best historical scholarship but do not pretend to offer a comprehensive historical study. My aim is to understand Augustine's writings in order to offer a theological understanding of hope for our own times in the spirit of St Augustine.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> I am seeking to follow the way of the faithfulness to Augustine advocated by Rivière in his introduction to the *Enchiridion*: '*La véritable fidélité ne consisterait-elle pas surtout à se pénétrer de son esprit?*' J. Rivière, 'Introduction', in Augustine, *Exposés Généraux de la Foi*, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, vol. ix, trans. and ed. J. Rivière (Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1947), 97.

If this sounds like an attempt at straightforward theological repristination, it is important to emphasize that it is not. The Augustinian nature of this thesis is not intended to advance a return to a pre-modern philosophical purity or theological ‘orthodoxy’ in straightforward opposition to ‘modern’, ‘liberal’, or ‘Enlightenment’ projects. It is amidst, for the sake of, and not against the modern world that I am seeking to draw Augustine into dialogue with contemporary understandings of hope. I follow MacIntyre’s turn to virtue and accept his contention that human reasoning is always located in a tradition with implicit if not explicit ontological and axiological assumptions. There is no ‘view from nowhere’. However, I do not consider the ‘Enlightenment Project’ or ‘modernity’ to have failed, evacuating meaning and purpose from moral life in the comprehensive way that MacIntyre asserts.<sup>94</sup> For one thing, the historical movement these terms are frequently called on to represent is far more ambiguous than the labels suggest. If it is possible to identify prominent sources of what are characteristically modern forms of thought and life, it is also the case that modernity is susceptible to multiple interpretations and resistant to straightforward acceptance or rejection. The portrayal of modern catastrophe and fragmentation with which MacIntyre so powerfully introduces *After Virtue*, and the description of modernity’s failure bequeathing a new moral ‘dark age’ with which he closes, is best read rhetorically.<sup>95</sup> The modern world within which we continue to live is too complex in both its historical origins and existing expressions to be rejected in favour of a pre-modern consensus that is an ideal hard to identify in pristine theoretical, let alone practical expression. Adopting a declinist account of modernity on account of the tensions in characteristically modern modes of thought and practice demands too high a view of the past and too low a view of the present. It also demands setting one

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<sup>94</sup> See esp. chapters 5 and 6 of MacIntyre, *After Virtue*.

<sup>95</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 1-5, 263.

off against the other in a way that is hard to sustain since the modern world has not escaped its theological-philosophical inheritance. Indeed, on the terms of Augustinian theology, it could not.<sup>96</sup>

Following Oliver O'Donovan, and drawing on the parable by which Augustine interprets his own spiritual journey, the modern secular world can well be interpreted by analogy with the prodigal son of Luke 15.<sup>97</sup> Modern life apart from God remains inescapably beholden to the Christian home that is behind it and the father's welcome that is ahead, if only it would turn (Godward not simply backward) to see. As prodigals, the call of God on inhabitants of late modernity is a call to remember the riches of their inheritance and to find the future of modern life's many blessings by rightly recognizing their source. It is a call to the modern world to come to its senses, to return to itself, to learn that late modern nostalgia has a spiritual interpretation and can be directed to the future and not only the past.

Assertions that the modern world is bereft of God, that it has 'come of age' and left God behind (Bonhoeffer), that it has turned from God and been handed over to incoherence in 'an age of abandonment' (Ellul), need to be interpreted and utilised with care. Their apocalyptic tendency should be tempered. If the human heart cannot escape the claim of God, by and for whom it was created (*conf.* 1.1.1), neither can human culture. 'However all-embracing the constraints of modern thought may be, God has ordained the Gospel of his Kingdom to redeem it and his Holy Spirit to

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<sup>96</sup> For an opposing view, advocating modernity as its own project in self-assertion and rational progress, continuous with preceding ages through the inheritance of problems but not solutions, see Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

<sup>97</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 275.

interpret it.<sup>98</sup> In turning to virtue with MacIntyre, this thesis takes its MacIntyrean epistemology with a strong Augustinian dose of hope.

The approach of this thesis accords with my theologically hopeful understanding of modernity. Exploring some prominent modern understandings of hope from a perspective afforded by Augustinian theology, I affirm merits of these proposals whilst arguing that they neglect important aspects of human flourishing and are unable to answer in a satisfying way to their own criteria for good hope. My intention is to discern and follow through on their intentions *theologically* in order to reach a more satisfying end. This approach is based on the theological premise that all understandings of life in the *saeculum* (the time between the resurrection and return of Christ where the realms of sin and grace overlap and co-exist as historical realities) are a mixture of truth and error. The antithesis that exists between them is not absolute and historical but principial and eschatological. On this basis, construction, which is itself always provisional, can grow naturally out of critique. The discernment of error can serve a better development of the truth that was initially sought. Augustine's own approach to the philosophy of the neoplatonists presents an example: the presumption that accompanied their pursuit of wisdom had to be subverted in order that they might come to the fulfilment of the pursuit of wisdom in Christ (*conf.* 7.21.27).

Of course, the understanding presented in this thesis is likewise partial, provisional and contextual. The nature of its claim to truth entails that it is susceptible, on its own terms, to the same mode of critical development. This is not only inevitable but welcome. Assertion of my own and argument with the views of others is intended to make disagreement, development, and correction maximally possible—both from those sympathetic to the Augustinian understanding I present and those

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<sup>98</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 272.

(within the church and without) who are sceptical of the commitments that its acceptance entails.<sup>99</sup> My contention is that Augustinian hope is internally coherent and enduringly relevant, above all for the ecclesial community to which it has been given. However, the ongoing importance of the virtue of hope in the church entails a wider application beyond its bounds in accord with the church's calling as a microcosm of humanity on the way to the fulfilment of human flourishing.

I make no claim that the account of hope in this thesis is sufficient to induce acceptance of the (controversial) theological commitments to which it is adjoined. However, for those who cannot accept the theological content of my proposal, I suggest that it is potentially valuable nonetheless: (i) it reveals aspects of hope that modern accounts have neglected, arguably to their detriment (such as the relationship between hope and ontology, hope and love, hope and humility, and the distinction between hope and optimism); (ii) it unsettles the destructive pursuit of immanent hopes as ultimate; (iii) it suggests practices for the cultivation and preservation of hope that are first for the church but can be shared, in analogous forms, for the good of society more widely.

#### **4. Overview**

Five chapters follow this introduction. The first engages the *prima facie* implausibility of drawing on St Augustine—by reputation one of history's great pessimists—in order to further a renewal of modern hope. This chapter will assess the evaluation of Augustine as a pessimist, resisting its validity as an interpretative misstep which reads Augustine through modern psychological categories alien to his thought. In place of optimism and pessimism, we will explore Augustine's thought in

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<sup>99</sup> William Wood, 'Analytic Theology as a Way of Life', *Journal of Analytic Theology* 2 (2014), 56.

view of the native theological categories of humility and hope, both of which are significant emphases throughout his writing. The wider case being advanced is for a late modern turn to hope as a virtue by way of a return to the theology of St Augustine, which productively critiques the modern understandings and categories of thought that have, intentionally or unintentionally, been built upon it.

Chapters two to four are the central constructive chapters of the thesis. They build on chapter one, not by offering a systematic historico-theological account of Augustinian hope but by bringing historically sensitive readings of some of Augustine's texts into dialogue with modern sources. My aim is to make some initial steps towards a constructive Augustinian understanding of the theological virtue of hope for our own day. This proposal relates first to the late modern church, but it is not sectarian. It holds promise as an understanding that can further the presence and practice of hope in the world. Each of these central chapters turns to Augustine in order to engage an important challenge when it comes to the contemporary understanding of hope: the relationship between hope and the good (chapter two); the relationship between hope and human identity (chapter three); the relationship between hope and modern history (chapter four). The significance of the first two of these issues for current conceptual work on hope has already been flagged. The third is an important cultural and contextual consideration and is the prominent concern of Jürgen Moltmann, the leading modern theologian of hope. The aim to address these issues determines the structure of each chapter. All begin with discussion of hope as it relates to the theme at hand in our own modern context before drawing on the understanding found in Augustine.

Whilst prominent features of Augustine's theology of hope will emerge, it is important to note that this thesis is not aiming to be comprehensive. I do not pretend to cover all that would necessarily be included in a full historico-theological study of

hope in Augustine's writings, welcome as such a study would be. The Augustinian texts that have been chosen are certainly important in considering the Bishop of Hippo's understanding of hope in its own right, but their selection has been determined by the particular conversation into which they are being drawn. At least one prominent work has failed to receive the attention one might expect if I was attempting a systematic historical account of Augustine's teaching on hope: focused engagement with *City of God* has been reserved for consideration elsewhere.<sup>100</sup>

Chapter two concerns the relationship between hope and the good that has been left to one side in many discussions of hope in modern philosophy. It returns to the 'standard' twentieth-century account of hope (hope = desire + expectation), and considers recent attempts to move beyond it within Anglophone philosophy. It is in the context of attending to these philosophical concerns that I highlight the benefits of retrieving the understanding of hope as a virtue and develop the idea that the virtue of hope depends on a certain ontological and narrational order, shared by the community within which hope is cultivated and practiced. The second half of the chapter seeks to fill out such an account of hope by developing Augustine's understanding of hope in his *Enchiridion* as inseparably related to faith and love. Whilst many have remarked that little attention is given to hope in Augustine's theological handbook, evidence of the unimportance of hope in Augustine's thought, I offer an integrated reading that seeks to put paid to this assessment. I suggest that the three theological virtues that structure the work operate together such that we should attend to the place of hope throughout the handbook and not only in the articles where hope is specifically

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<sup>100</sup> Whilst an argument for selectivity can justifiably be made on the grounds of space alone, my decision is further supported by the fact that recent work by Michael Lamb (forthcoming as a monograph) provides an excellent defense of Augustinian hope in relation to political theory based on a constructive reading of *City of God*. See Michael Lamb, *A Commonwealth of Hope: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Religion in Augustine's Political Thought*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2014.

addressed. Augustine's theological understanding of hope is developed and offered as a way to overcome the unsatisfying rational calculus of the 'standard' account of hope with a thicker account of the virtue of hope in an integrated and communal life of faith and love.

Chapter three engages the relationship between hope and modern identity. It begins with Charles Taylor's insight (in *Sources of the Self*) that selfhood and the good are intertwined, developing the point to argue that if the good is understood as a horizon of meaning and purpose then hope is necessarily brought into view. The question of what we can hope for depends on who we take ourselves to be. The second half of this chapter turns to Augustine, identifying and exploring the relation between hope, God, and the self as a prominent theme in his *Confessions*. However, since my aim is to draw on Augustine to engage modern hope, I turn first to Kant's seminal question, 'What may I hope for?' placing this question in the context of Kant's philosophy and arguing that his understanding represents a falling away from the Augustinian tradition that was the inheritance of Western society and his own personal inheritance through Lutheran pietism. On Kant's account the theological ontology within which hope was understood as a virtue is re-interpreted according to the dictates of human reason. It is purified of worship and absolved of the mystery that accompanied it. Kant leaves behind the historical incarnation of Christ in order to appropriate the mundane historical potential of a rationalised Christian theology. God, society, and self are re-ordered in a rational-self-centred, as opposed to risen-Christ-centred way. It is this rational self—the self as autonomous agent—that is the self of Kant's question of hope. Returning to Kant's account highlights the central relationship between hope and personal identity in modernity and is an important backdrop to contemporary understandings.

By highlighting tensions in Kant's account of hope as belonging together with his incomplete departure from Augustinian theology, this chapter seeks to re-visit the relation between hope and personal identity theologically. It does so by exploring the prominent (but often overlooked) theme of hope in *Confessions*. In Augustine's famous narrative, hope is for the de-centred self, a self that does not seek its own (vain) glory, asserting its own subjectivity against God and others, but a self that is willingly 'subjectified' under Christ, turning from worldly pride to humble participation in the worshipping community that is his body. Since the future of the church—the perfection of union with God in Christ—is integral to the *telos* of creation, the hope of the church and the true fulfilment of human personhood are aligned. Hope in God and for the realization of God's kingdom engages an agent's will not as an alien imposition but as a disposition, cultivated in (spiritual) practice, in line with the *telos* of human flourishing. The self is truly fulfilled not in pride but in humility, not as the centre of its own hopes but within the future of the church, as part of the body of Christ. The communal hope of the church holds together, in theological relation, the modern dichotomies of individual and communal, subject and object. Insofar as this is the case, the virtue of hope, as it exists within the church's history and is cultivated in practice in the church's life, has the potential to serve as a remedy for the apparent dis-ease of the late modern self and late modern society.

Chapter four concerns the relationship between hope and modern history. In addition to the conceptual challenges to the classical theological approach to hope as a virtue, a return to the virtue of hope raises an important historico-cultural objection. It is perhaps expressed most strongly with reference to prominent critical interpretations of the history of Western colonialism: Has not hope in God, premised on the tenets of classical theism, already been tried and found wanting? Modern theology in the Augustinian tradition has largely accepted the fact that it has and seen fit to radically

revise received orthodoxy in order to find an acceptable theological way forward. This is certainly the case when it comes to the most prominent modern theologian of hope, Jürgen Moltmann. The historical critique that Moltmann makes should be taken seriously, but I resist his interpretation that a line of causation can be drawn between classical theology and colonial exploitation. In fact, Augustinian theological convictions hold promise as a source of modern self-criticism and offer the prospect of a renewal of hope through confession and repentance. This chapter seeks to engage Moltmann's revisionist theological understanding, arguing that he is too hasty in leaving behind core commitments of Augustinian theology to develop an understanding of hope in relation to a novel account of the Trinity. I am seeking to come after Moltmann in view of recent developments in Augustine scholarship in order to indicate a better Augustinian way of hope in God.

The concluding chapter takes the Augustinian understanding of hope that has been developed through the thesis and evaluates it according to six criteria—desiderata for 'good' hope—drawn from discussions of hope in contemporary Anglophone philosophy. Whilst it is of course true that the account of hope I offer employs theological reasoning alien to contemporary secular discourse, my argument is that it both critiques prominent modern understandings of hope on their own terms and offers a positive way of engaging the issues they are seeking to address.

Augustine's path through the *Confessions* took him from temporal hope for the fulfilment of ambition indexed to the immanent material order to the eternal hope of life with God. It was not a journey out of the world but through it and to its fulfilment. It travelled by way of the philosophical hope of wisdom (*conf.* 3.4.7) before finding fulfilment in Christ. This pathway is the one that this thesis seeks to follow, holding up the theological virtue of hope that belongs to the modern world's past as a positive proposal for its future.

## Chapter 1: Hope and St Augustine

There is some irony in turning to Augustine as a conversation partner in order to rehabilitate hope as a virtue in the late modern world. His views on the inherent sinfulness of humanity and the inescapable conflict of history have furnished him with a reputation in modern scholarship as a thoroughgoing pessimist. Augustine is one of the ‘dark minds of Western thought’,<sup>1</sup> ‘a bishop known for holding pessimistic opinions about human nature and society’.<sup>2</sup> One modern editor of Augustine’s *Enchiridion*, which contains some of his most explicit teaching on hope, encapsulates this negative evaluation. He claims that hope receives ‘short shrift’ in the book and goes on to refer to ‘the author’s extreme pessimism about ungraced human nature... in contrast to the more optimistic Pelagian view’.<sup>3</sup> Of course, Augustine is also well known for his emphasis on salvation by grace and the ultimate victory of God’s ‘Heavenly City’. But these are theological commitments in a society sceptical of theological claims; they only fuel the fire of his reputation as a pessimist, being interpreted with a distinctly negative spin. What optimist would hold that the outlook for humanity and for history is so bleak that only God can help? Or that divine intervention and heavenly happiness are humankind’s only ultimate hope? Augustine

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<sup>1</sup> ‘St Augustine and Dostoyevsky are the two dark minds of Western thought, and the former has shaped it profoundly.’ John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 302. Cited in Michael Lamb, *A Commonwealth of Hope: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Religion in Augustine’s Political Thought*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2014, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Chadwick, ‘Introduction’, in Augustine, *Confessions*, tr. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), ix.

<sup>3</sup> Boniface Ramsey, ‘Introduction’, in Augustine, *The Augustine Catechism: The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity*, trans. Bruce Harbert, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1999), 12, 19.

certainly seems an obscure source for an avowedly secular society seeking to shore up its sense of confidence with regards to the future.

Augustine's modern reputation as a pessimist has gone hand in hand with the neglect of his teaching on hope, a prominent theme in his writings that has been largely neglected in secondary literature. A search through Augustinian scholarship (across European languages) uncovers no work devoted to examining the theme of hope throughout Augustine's corpus or in relation to other patristic figures;<sup>4</sup> there is no entry for hope in *Augustine through the Ages*, a major academic encyclopaedia;<sup>5</sup> and there are few recent journal articles or chapters that focus directly on Augustinian hope as their theme.<sup>6</sup> A comparison with Aquinas scholarship reveals a marked contrast: far more attention has been given to Aquinas's understanding of hope as a

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<sup>4</sup> The most extensive treatment of the concept of hope in Augustine is a 1964 monograph by Ladislaus Ballay that seeks to schematize Augustine's understanding of hope with a particular focus on his *Ennarationes in Psalmos*. Ladislaus Ballay, *Der Hoffnungs begriff bei Augustinus untersucht in seinem Werken: De Doctrina Christiana; Enchiridion sive de fide, spe et caritate ad Laurentium und Ennarationes in Psalmos 1-91* (Munich: Max Hueber, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> Allan D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). The encyclopedia has an entry on 'cyberspace' but not on 'hope'.

<sup>6</sup> Exceptions in European and North American scholarship in the last sixty years include: Luis Arias, 'La esperanza en san Agustín: Mensaje al hombre contemporáneo', *Libreria Editorial Augustinus* (1967), 51-75; Ernst Dassmann, 'Christliche Hoffnung in einer untergehenden Welt: Am Beispiel des hl. Augustinus—eines Mannes zwischen den Zeiten', in *Ich will euch Zukunft und Hoffnung geben, Deutscher Katholikentag 85* (Paderborn: Bonifacius-Druckerei, 1978), 197-207; P. Delhaye and J. Boulangé, *Espérance et Vie Chrétienne* (Tournai: Desclée, 1957), 115-137; Pedro Entralgo, 'Esperanza y tiempo humano: San Agustín', in Pedro Entralgo, *La espera y la esperanza: historia y teoría del esperar humano* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1957), 46-76; Pedro Entralgo, 'La esperanza en la teoría Agustiniiana de la memoria', in Pedro Entralgo, *La memoria y la esperanza: San Agustín, San Juan de la Cruz, Antonio Machado, Miguel de Unamuno* (Real Academia Española: Madrid: 1954), 23-46; Jeffrey S. Metcalfe, 'Hoping without a Future: Augustine's Theological Virtues Beyond Melancholia', *Anglican Theological Review* 95:2 (2013), 235-250; Jean-François Petit, 'N'espère rien d'autre que ton Dieu', *Itinéraires Augustiniens* 44 (2010), online: <https://www.assomption.org/fr/mediatheque/revue-itineraires-augustiniens/2019esperance/i-augustin-en-son-temps>, accessed 9 Apr. 2018; José Oroz Reta, 'La esperanza cristiana en *La Cuidad de Dios*', *Mayeutica* 20 (1994), 447-454; Basil Studer, 'Augustine and the Pauline theme of Hope', in William S. Babcock (ed.), *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 201-220.

theological virtue, seemingly overlooking the fact that Aquinas (following Lombard) has Augustine as his major source.<sup>7</sup>

If the absence of hope in Augustine research is notable, it is also important to recognize that this thesis is not the first to highlight the issue, or to return to Augustine's understanding of hope as holding potential in late modernity. Michael Lamb's forthcoming monograph, *A Commonwealth of Hope*, has broken this ground, bringing a theologically informed reading of Augustinian hope to bear on the discipline of political theory, which has often marginalized Augustine by classifying him as a pessimist. Lamb's work makes clear the promise of inquiry into Augustine's understanding of hope, highlighting the prominence of hope in Augustine's thought and resisting Augustine's modern critics to argue that Augustinian hope can be understood as a political virtue in the context of liberal democracy, providing a way between the vices of presumption and despair.<sup>8</sup> Following Lamb, and in light of growing academic interest in the theme of hope, it seems that the lacuna in the study

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<sup>7</sup> Recent work on hope in Aquinas and its contemporary application includes: Romanus Cessario, 'The Theological Virtue of Hope (IIa IIae, qq. 17-22)', in Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 232-243; John Cottingham, 'Hope and the Virtues', in Dalferth and Block (eds), *Hope*, 13-32; Dominic Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope* (New York: Crossroad, 2011); David Elliot, *Hope and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Michael Lamb, 'Aquinas and the Virtues of Hope: Theological and Democratic', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44:2 (2016), 300-32; 'A Passion and its Virtue: Aquinas on Hope and Magnanimity', in Dalferth and Block (eds), *Hope*, 67-88; Alan Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Of enduring importance is the exposition of Thomistic hope in Joseph Pieper, *Über die Hoffnung* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag GmbH & Co., 1977) translated and included together with Pieper's work on the other theological virtues in Joseph Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Lamb, *A Commonwealth of Hope*. I am grateful to Michael Lamb for his generosity in granting me access to his thesis (forthcoming as a monograph). His identification of the theme of hope as a fertile area of research is an important contribution to Augustinian studies and his specific focus on the application of Augustinian hope in the field of political theory represents an important contribution to that discipline. My own distinct interest is in developing a constructive theological account of Augustinian hope in the context of other late modern theological, philosophical, and psychological understandings.

of hope and St Augustine is not a hole to be plugged as much as an opening for fruitful research.

If the identification of such a prominent gap in the vast field of Augustine studies presents an opportunity for inquiry, it also raises an important question: Why has Augustine's teaching on hope been neglected? Seeking an answer brings to the surface two underlying concerns, both of which seem to negate the contemporary value of a specifically Augustinian understanding of hope. On the one hand, Augustine's account of hope seems too theological: How can hope, understood first and foremost as the hope of the church—inseparable from faith, centred on Christ, and aimed towards eternal love in the beatific vision of God—be of more than historical relevance in the modern world? The concern here belongs to the disciplines of philosophy and political theory and represents the secular objection to theological commitments reaching beyond their necessarily constricted bounds. Any hope that may be meaningfully described as Augustinian seems simply too Christian for our secular age. On the other hand, and somewhat paradoxically, the most important modern theologian of hope, Jürgen Moltmann, considers Augustine's view of hope to be too philosophical to have contemporary theological and political relevance. He therefore engages with Augustine primarily as a foil for his own political theology of hope. Whilst modern philosophers may reject Augustinian hope as too theological, Moltmann rejects it as not theological enough. Augustine, he argues, is compromised by an accommodation to the a-historic essentialism of Platonic philosophy, with the result that Augustinian hope is heavenly rather than historical. According to Moltmann the Augustinian virtue of hope holds out an escape from history, undermining a transformation of it.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Moltmann argues that Augustine's hope is 'ahistorical', compromised by its accommodation to the staticism of Parmenides. He reads Augustine's understanding of the *cor inquietam* (*conf.* 1.1.1) as a

At once wedded to inadmissible theology and outdated philosophy, is Augustine's hope set to remain a footnote to his pessimistic reputation? It is the contention of this thesis that there is good reason to push beyond appearances. In fact, it is by digging into the theological convictions that have earned Augustine his modern reputation as a pessimist that we find a deep and integrated account of hope. This chapter will consider the evaluation of Augustine as a pessimist, resisting its validity as a critique before exploring Augustine's thought in terms of the theological categories of humility and hope. These complementary categories, native to Augustine, offer a superior conceptual framework to illumine his thought and its contemporary significance. In opposition to the common perception of Augustine, the argument I will develop is that the ascription of pessimism is a misinterpretation along two lines: first, it interprets Augustine according to modern conceptual categories which obscure his own thought. The terminology of optimism and pessimism, and the de-theologized psychology that these concepts represent, did not come to prominence until the eighteenth- and nineteenth century (optimism came first). As notions, they bring with them an understanding that exists in tension with important aspects of the theological understanding of reality from which they emerged. Second, it exists in alliance with a 'two-Augustines' thesis that assumes the existence of a philosophically-minded, naïve, and optimistic Augustine in 386 (the year of his Milan conversion experience and earliest extant writings), giving way to the pessimistic theologian of sin and grace through a deeper encounter with the

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subjective longing fulfilled, through faith in Christ, in an eschatological beatitude that is above history. This heavenly as opposed to earthly hope, Moltmann argues, leaves the Christian unduly reconciled with the historical status quo. See Jürgen Moltmann, *TH*, 7; 'Christian Hope: Messianic or Transcendent: A Theological Discussion with Joachim of Fiore and Thomas Aquinas', *Horizons* 12:2 (1985), 322. Moltmann's understanding of hope and its relation to that of Augustine is discussed in chapter 4.

teaching of the Apostle Paul in the mid 390s. This interpretation, undermined most prominently by Carol Harrison's work on Augustine's early writings, overlooks the fundamental continuity of Augustine's Christian thought.<sup>10</sup>

The interpretation of Augustine in this thesis is based on Harrison's understanding of broad theological continuity, which recognizes the development in Augustine's thought but resists the disjunctive interpretation of neoplatonic optimism giving way to Pauline pessimism. The underlying aim is to move beyond the dismissal of Augustine as a pessimist, not with a more optimistic interpretation, but by way of a theological understanding that reveals the importance of the virtue of hope as a prominent and unifying theme in his thought. The wider case being made is for a late modern turn to hope as a virtue by way of a return to the *theology* of St Augustine, which productively critiques the modern understandings and categories of thought that have, intentionally or unintentionally, in the mode of development or departure, been built upon it.

The theological understanding at the heart of this chapter reveals an Augustinian theology of hope obscured by the ascription of pessimism. Augustine's teaching on human sin and the need for divine grace is not 'pessimistic' but actually goes hand in hand with a hope-filled account of creation and redemption. In place of the binary opposition of optimism and pessimism, Augustine presents us with a theological opposition between pride and presumption on the one hand, humility and hope on the other. To follow Augustine is to recognise that it is pride rather than pessimism that is the opposite of hope, and that hope itself—inseparable from humility as from the adjoining virtues of faith and love—is quite distinct from the modern concept of optimism.

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<sup>10</sup> See Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

## 1. Reconsidering Augustinian pessimism

When Augustine, or particular aspects of Augustine's thought, is described as 'pessimistic', how are we to understand the meaning of the claim? To put the question another way: If Augustine is one of the 'dark minds of Western thought' (Rawls) what is perceived to be at the heart of Augustine's darkness? Approaching this question, there are two related issues that need to be teased apart. The first concerns Augustine's own interpretation of the human condition and the nature of society: How does he understand and express the nature and potential of human life? What philosophical and theological commitments are involved in his assessment? Does his understanding change significantly through his works? The second issue concerns the modern interpretation of Augustine and the terminology used by modern interpreters to describe—and sometimes to dismiss—aspects of his thought. In addition to a re-examination of Augustine's own understanding, we need to probe the familiar conceptual categories that can easily be taken for granted: What is the meaning of 'pessimism'? What interpretative baggage does it import? Are pessimism and optimism helpful terms if our aim is to allow a constructive Augustinian voice to penetrate the assumptions and practices of contemporary ecclesial and public life? Since we must engage Augustine from the world and time within which we live, it is to our own modern context and to the meaning and adequacy of its terminology that we will turn first.

### *i. The modern concept of pessimism*

In the twentieth century, the concepts of optimism and pessimism came easily to hand as evaluative categories that seemed to aid a modern understanding of Augustine's thought. The ubiquity of the conceptual framework in the interpretation of Augustine makes it difficult to trace its genealogy, but it is evident as early as the

late nineteenth century, when Adolf Harnack argued in his *History of Dogma* (1894-99) that '[Augustine] first perfected Christian pessimism, whose upholders till then had really reserved themselves an extremely optimistic view of human nature.'<sup>11</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, Peter Brown approached Augustine with a different agenda to Harnack's but drew nonetheless on the same categories. Finding the concepts of optimism and pessimism in keeping with his psychological interpretation, he proposed in his famous biography (1967) that Augustine underwent a pessimistic 'Romantic' turn in the mid 390s. Whilst Brown came to reconsider his understanding of Augustine's 'Lost Future'—a more or less tidy transition from philosophical optimism to theological pessimism under the influence of St Paul—his original understanding of the way Augustine's thought changed over time remained common through the late twentieth century. The terminology of optimism and pessimism was heavily employed both by those proposing a more 'optimistic' Augustine and those who continued to highlight elements of Augustine's theology as 'pessimistic'.<sup>12</sup> The latter group of interpreters often contrast Augustine with his Pelagian opponents regarding the capacity of human beings to attain the good, or highlight his limited expectation regarding the impact of the church's teaching on society.

If the appeal of the concepts of optimism and pessimism is understandable for those seeking to navigate a modern path through the complexity of Augustine's work, the ease with which these terms come to modern interpreters of Augustine and the

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<sup>11</sup> Adolph von Harnack, *History of Dogma (hist.)*, trans. James Miller, ed. T. K. Cheyne and A. B. Bruce (London: Williams & Norgate, 1898), vol. v, 65.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Donald Burt, 'Courageous Optimism: Augustine on the Good of Creation', *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), 55-66; Philip Cary, 'God in the Soul: Or, The Residue of Augustine's Manichaean Optimism', *University of Drayton Review* 22:3 (1994), 69-82; David G. Hunter, 'Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage and Celibacy', *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 153-177.

neat interpretative ‘solutions’ they seem to offer should make us cautious. They are natural categories in modern discourse, and whilst it is therefore understandable that we should reach for them as summary terms, it is questionable that they are actually suited to the task of meaningfully illuminating Augustine’s thought. If anything, the opposite is true: the fundamentally theological conception of reality central to Augustine stands in tension with the kind of categorisation delivered by the de-theologized psychological concepts of optimism and pessimism. They belong to a quite different thought-world, existing in tension with Augustine’s own theological account of the virtue of hope. The ease with which they are applied can obscure the fact that they import an interpretative structure that is not a good fit.

Regard for the history of the concepts highlights the difficulty. Optimism and pessimism first came into use in Europe in the eighteenth century,<sup>13</sup> in a world where the theological virtue of hope that had been built on Augustine’s understanding had already been re-interpreted as an emotion subject to the control of independent rational evaluation (hope = desire + expectation), an interpretation quite distinct from hope’s teleological orientation and intrinsic rationality as a theological virtue.<sup>14</sup> They came to flourish in what was a significantly post-Augustinian context that increasingly prioritised psychological over theological understandings of human life. By the mid twentieth century, optimism and pessimism could thus be analysed in terms of their linguistic usage as contrasting psychological dispositions—extreme

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<sup>13</sup> Joshua Dienstag details the emergence of ‘optimism’ following Leibniz’s use of the term ‘optimum’ in his *Theodice* of 1710 and its popularization following Voltaire’s *Candide ou L’Optimisme*. This latter work drew accusations of ‘pessimisme’ in response, a term which grew in usage thereafter. Dienstag notes that the French Academy—the pre-eminent council on matters concerning the French language—formally accepted ‘optimisme’ in 1762 but ‘pessimisme’ only later in 1878. See Joshua F. Dienstag, *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009), 9 n.7.

<sup>14</sup> See Mittleman, *Democratic Hope*, 27-31.

forms of hopefulness and fearfulness—with no necessary theological connection.<sup>15</sup> It is as concepts free from the theological roots of hope and fear that they were available in the late nineteenth- and twentieth century to be applied back on to theology from without. The application of these categories to Augustine fits into a wider pattern: as modernity progressed, changing frameworks of interpretation led to the creation of multiple modern Augustines as his writings were read and critiqued in academic settings that were in various degrees of tension with the historic liturgical practices and confessional commitments of the church. On the one hand this can be viewed positively: enjoying a measure of freedom from the agenda(s) of the church, modern historical and theological scholarship has undoubtedly delivered important insight into Augustine's life and thought and built creatively upon it. However, it is inevitable that Augustine has been viewed—and sometimes obscured—by the lenses of a modern world returning to its sources in a way quite different from his own commitment to a way of life ordered towards God in worship, and to a theological methodology of faith seeking understanding.<sup>16</sup> Recent Augustine scholarship has revisited some of the assumptions of modern interpretation through a close reading of Augustine's texts, finding in twentieth-century interpretation various degrees of caricature that need to be dismantled.<sup>17</sup> This is certainly the case when we come to

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<sup>15</sup> J.P. Day, 'Hope, a Philosophical Inquiry', *Acta Philosophica Fennica* (1991), 68-71. See also J. P. Day, 'Hope', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1969), 89-102. Day's account is frequently cited as the standard linguistic analysis in Analytic philosophical literature on hope and optimism. His interpretation accords with the modern tendency to blur the distinction between the two concepts, arguing that optimism and pessimism are extreme forms of hopefulness and fearfulness. Both optimism and pessimism might be 'reasoned' but neither requires reasons. They are often held as universal attitudes (a tendency always to look on the up/down side) or based on an emotional impulse of desire or fear that acts as a proxy for good reason.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine makes frequent reference to the idea of faith leading to knowledge, often citing Isaiah 7:9 (LXX), 'Unless you believe, you will not understand.' This theme is present in his writing from Cassiciacum onwards and is a major theme in *de Trinitate*. See e.g. *acad.* 3.20.43; *sol.* 1.12-14.23; *s.* 43; *97a.2*; *trin.* 1.2.4f; 7.6.12; 15.1.2.

<sup>17</sup> The infamous 'Augustine' whose theological essentialism stands behind the reaction of social

think about Augustine's teaching on hope and the alternate interpretations of pessimism and optimism that have been applied to his thought.

ii. *Sources of the pessimistic Augustine*

Augustine's reception as a pessimist has become a commonplace of contemporary commentary such that it is often adopted with only minimal explanation of its meaning. However, examining what lies beneath this assessment in two of its most prominent sources, Adolf von Harnack and Peter Brown, exposes some problematic interpretative assumptions. We will consider in turn the work of Harnack and Brown, scrutinising each of their reasoning before returning to Augustine's own theological understanding for a sounder way forward.

Adolf von Harnack approached Augustine through the *Confessions* at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> A professional historical theologian from the liberal Lutheran tradition, he identified Augustine as playing a central role in the historical development of the Christian religion.<sup>19</sup> However, if Harnack regarded Augustine's influence as seminal, he also imposed his own Kantian philosophical commitments onto his reading, claiming—in the terms of a notable false dichotomy—that

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trinitarianism is a prime example. See, for example, Colin Gunton, 'Augustine, The Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 1 (1990), 33-58. Bradley Green's monograph dismantles Gunton's caricature of Augustine by means of a close reading of *de trin*. See Bradley G. Green, *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in the Light of Augustine* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2012). Lewis Ayres and Michel Barnes have persuasively argued that the idea of Augustine 'beginning' with the essence of God and never fully developing a properly Trinitarian theology is a misconceived imposition that is not supported by Augustine's own writing. See chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *The Confessions of St Augustine* (1887), trans. E. E. Kellett and F. H. Marseille, in Martin Rumscheldt (ed.), *Adolf von Harnack: Liberal Theology at its Height* (London: Collins, 1989), 235, 'I do not propose to set before you a complete picture of the activity and influence of this man. I prefer rather to portray him merely according to the work in which he has portrayed himself—the 'Confessions'—the most characteristic of the many writings he has left us.'

<sup>19</sup> Harnack, *hist.*, v, 3, 'The history of piety and of dogmas in the West was so thoroughly dominated by Augustine from the beginning of the fifth century to the era of the Reformation.'

Augustine was ‘to be estimated, even for the history of dogma, not as a theologian but a reformer of Christian piety’:<sup>20</sup>

Augustine comes before us, in the first place, as a reformer of Christian piety, altering much that belonged to vulgar Catholicism, and *carrying out monotheism strictly and thoroughly*. He gave the central place to the living relation of the soul to God; he took religion out of the sphere of cosmology and the cultus, and demonstrated and cherished it in the domain of the deepest life of the soul. On the other hand we shall have to show that... he did not surmount the old Catholic foundation of the theological mode of thought; further, that he was so completely convinced of the supremacy of the religious over moral, of the personal state of faith over ecclesiasticism; and finally, that in his religious tendencies, as generally, he remained burdened by the rubbish of ecclesiastical tradition.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, for Harnack, committed to historical investigation that recovered the ‘kernel’ of Christianity from the ‘husk’ of dogma, the heart of Augustine’s contribution to the history of Christian thought—his theological psychology—could be separated from the way his teaching upheld the doctrinal commitments, tradition, and authority of the Catholic church.<sup>22</sup> The promise of Augustine lay in interpreting his thought apart from, even in opposition to, his support for received doctrine and ecclesial authority.<sup>23</sup> In this way Augustine could be recovered as a revolutionary figure, breaking with tradition, prefiguring Luther, and founding the sense of God and self that lies at the heart of modern theological liberalism.<sup>24</sup> Harnack’s interpretation thus sought to

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<sup>20</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 66-7. Immanuel Kant famously set in motion a diminution of doctrinal commitment in nineteenth-century German theology with his teaching that ‘true religion is not to be placed in the knowledge or the profession of what God has done for our salvation, but in what we must do to become worthy of it’. *Religion*, 160 (6:133).

<sup>21</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 4.

<sup>22</sup> ‘His greatness as a *scientific* theologian is found essentially in the psychological element.’ Harnack, *hist.* v, 21.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Augustine’s exposition of the Church I neither count one of his greater achievements, nor can I hold it to be the central idea which determines what is essential to him.’ Harnack, *hist.* v, 76 n.2.

<sup>24</sup> Summarizing the Christian faith, Harnack famously wrote that ‘the Christian religion is something simple and sublime; it means one thing and one thing only: Eternal life in the midst of time, by the

divide Augustine in order to appropriate him, moving to rescue Augustine from himself in order to develop his thought in the direction which he (Harnack) considered it to be leading.<sup>25</sup>

This identification of Augustine's fundamental theological contribution as the development of a new theological psychology, prefigures the psychological interpretations of Augustine in the twentieth century that found the concepts of optimism and pessimism useful for its task. Well before Peter Brown spoke of Augustine's 'Romantic' turn to pessimism in the 390s, Harnack advanced his view that Augustine 'perfected Christian pessimism' in contrast to the preceding 'optimistic view of human nature'.<sup>26</sup>

Writing in his *History of Dogma*, Harnack cites Tertullian to argue that 'the characteristic feature of the old Christian piety was its vacillation between hope and fear.'<sup>27</sup> On this pre-Augustinian position, with its 'realistic eschatology' and 'primitive Christian hope and morality', the Christian life was lived in a state of uncertain hope that drove moral action as aimed towards the future attainment of eternal life.<sup>28</sup> 'The two most restless elements which can agitate a human breast, hope

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strength and under the eyes of God.' Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (London: Williams & Norgate, 1912), 8.

<sup>25</sup> 'Is there a way of so grasping Augustine's type of feeling and thought, that it may fashion faith into the strongest lever of moral energy and action? Are not the difficulties that rise against his type of piety due perhaps just to his not having developed it forcibly and absolutely enough?' Harnack, *hist.* v, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 65. The underlying contrast here, which relates to Harnack's commitment to his thesis regarding the hellenization of early Christianity, is between the perceived optimism of Greek philosophy regarding human potential to attain the good, and Augustine's emphasis on human sin and the absolute necessity of divine grace for human fulfilment by way of redemption.

<sup>27</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 30, 23. 'The whole Dogmatic (Trinity, Christology, etc.) had its practical culmination, and therewith its end, in the merely retrospective blessing received in baptism. What next? Men feared the judge, and hoped in an uncertain fashion for a still existent grace. The fear of the judge led to fasting, almsgiving, and prayer, and the uncertain hope groped after new means of grace. Men wavered between reliance on their own powers and hope in the inexhaustibility of Christ's grace.' *hist.* v, 67.

and fear, ruled over these Christians. These elements shattered the world and built the Church.<sup>29</sup> Harnack argues that Augustine's major contribution in this context was the displacement of hope and fear through a new psychology of piety based on his doctrine of sin and grace (his 'Christian pessimism'). On Harnack's understanding of Augustine, sin (understood as 'self-will, the proud striving of the heart') was 'the most vital fact of the present, one which, at work from the beginning, determined the life of the individual and of the whole race'.<sup>30</sup> In their sinful condition human beings are fundamentally hopeless creatures, their lives characterised by desire and unrest, they strive after a happiness they are unable to attain. This 'pessimistic' understanding of sinful humanity was the foundation for Augustine's new psychology of Christian piety: a transition from a life of anxious striving to attain God's blessing (hope and fear) to a life of humble reception of the grace of God: 'Theologians before him had taught that man must be *changed* in order to be blessed; he taught that man could be a *new being* if he let God find him.'<sup>31</sup> For Augustine, only the grace of God could help: 'There is only one good, one happiness, and one rest. "It is a good thing that I should cling to God." All is included in that.'<sup>32</sup> This restoration to God 'takes place through grace and love, and in turn through faith and love', which 'are the means by which God enables us to appropriate him'.<sup>33</sup> Hope is displaced from the theological virtues by humility in order to explain how the Christian is delivered with a new sense of rest:

The peace of God is shed upon the soul which has the living God for its friend; it has risen from unrest to rest, from seeking to finding, from the false freedom to the free necessity, from fear to love; for perfect love

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<sup>29</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 70.

<sup>31</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 70.

<sup>33</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 71.

casts out fear... The misery of sin overcome by *faith, humility and love*—that is Christian piety. In this temper the Christian was to live... Thus Augustine dethroned the traditional feelings of the baptised, fear and hope, the elements of unrest, and substituted the elements of rest, faith and love.<sup>34</sup>

Harnack's *replacement* of hope with humility in his account of Augustine's position is a radical reinterpretation that is all the more remarkable given the prominence of hope in *Confessions*, which Harnack takes to be his central source.<sup>35</sup> Augustine is appropriated by Harnack insofar as he can be relied on to support his own liberal historicism, which discards doctrinal commitments in favour of what he perceives to be their individual religious importance.<sup>36</sup> Harnack's view is spelt out in *What is Christianity?* (1900),

The kingdom comes by coming to the individual, by entering into his soul and laying hold of it. True, the kingdom is the rule of God; but it is the rule of the holy God in the heart of individuals; *it is God himself in His power*. From this point of view everything that is dramatic in the external and historical sense has vanished; and gone, too, are all the external hopes for the future.<sup>37</sup>

Given Harnack's resistance to philosophical categories subverting the essence of Christian theology, his interpretation of Augustine as the source of this

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<sup>34</sup> Harnack, *hist.* v, 72. Harnack notes that Augustine 'failed to surmount this uncertainty and unrest' entirely, owing to 'popular Catholic elements in his piety'. *hist.* v, 72 n.2 (italics in original).

<sup>35</sup> The importance of hope in *Confessions* is argued below, in chapter 3. It ought to be noted that Harnack does seek to modify his position, recognizing that Augustine 'did not abolish hope... But in realizing and preaching the rest bestowed by faith and love, he transformed the stormy and fanatical power of hope into a gentle and sure conviction.' *hist.* v, 72. Even on this revised statement, however, the elision of eschatological hope from Augustine's doctrine of the Christian life is out of step with the now *and* not yet nature of Augustine's eschatology. See *beata u.* 4.35; *ciu.* 13.4; *conf.* 10.30.42; 13.12.13; *doctr. chr.* 1.32-33.

<sup>36</sup> Harnack's approach leaves him strongly critical of Augustine's ongoing commitment to the Catholic Church and its teaching. Here, on Harnack's view, we find another Augustine, a dogmatic institutional teacher who ultimately undermined the insight of the reformer of piety. Augustine, 'teacher of the church', 'poured new wine into old bottles' and 'in his reformation of piety did not disturb its character as a preparation for the next world.' Harnack, *hist.* v, 85, 93.

<sup>37</sup> Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, 57 (italics in original).

understanding is ironic. Augustine is effectively used—in spite of himself—as a historical source of support for Harnack’s own Kantian philosophical convictions. Harnack’s eagerness to appropriate Augustine for his own philosophical project seems to have left the rather more coherent, historical Augustine hidden from sight.

A second prominent voice in the reception of Augustine as a pessimist is that of Peter Brown. In his famous biography, published in 1967, Brown identified a fundamental optimism in Augustine’s early Christianity, an understanding in continuity with the possibility of progress towards wisdom that Augustine had found in the writings of the Platonists.<sup>38</sup> For the early Augustine of the *Cassiciacum* dialogues (386-7), once the proper path to God was grasped by the intellect—the pursuit of wisdom by following after the way of Christ—human beings were able to attain to the good.<sup>39</sup> In the mid 390s, however, Augustine underwent a significant change of heart. A return to the letters of the Apostle Paul underlined to him the universality of sin and the extent of humanity’s reliance on the grace of God for salvation. Augustine’s goal had previously been expressed in his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount (393) as the attainment in this life of the peaceful beatitude of the sage in the likeness of the Apostles.<sup>40</sup> ‘Ten years later, this great hope had vanished’.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, revised edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 104, 106.

<sup>39</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 104-105.

<sup>40</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 140.

<sup>41</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 140. To illustrate his comparison, Brown cites *cons. eu.*: ‘Whoever thinks that in this mortal life a man may so disperse the mists of bodily and carnal imaginings as to possess the unclouded light of changeless truth, and to cleave to it with the unswerving constancy of a spirit wholly estranged from the common ways of life—he understands neither What he seeks, nor who he is who seeks it’ (*cons. eu.* 4.10.20). *Augustine*, 140. A significant shortcoming of Brown’s argument is that he assumes a direct parallel between the possible object of hope in *s. dom. mon.* 1.2.9 and *cons. eu.* 4.10.20. In fact the parallel is far from clear cut.

Augustine, indeed, had decided that he would never reach the fulfilment that he first thought was promised to him by a Christian Platonism: he would never impose a victory of mind over body in himself, he would never achieve the wrapt contemplation of the ideal philosopher. It is the most drastic change that a man may have to accept: it involved nothing less than the surrender of the bright future he thought he had gained at Cassiciacum.<sup>42</sup>

Gone, according to Brown, is the optimistic Augustine: his positive (neoplatonic, philosophical) sensibilities quashed by a pessimistic (Pauline, theological) streak that comes into focus increasingly strongly in his repeated recourse to the themes of original sin and divine grace, often emphasized in opposition to Pelagianism. The new, melancholy Augustine, held back by habit, ‘will see in Paul nothing but a single, unresolved tension between “flesh” and “spirit”... Only after this life would tension be resolved’.<sup>43</sup> The language Brown uses reveals the psychological/emotional lens through which he viewed the change: ‘Augustine fought a stubborn losing battle against regarding man as utterly helpless’;<sup>44</sup> ‘he is a man who has realized that he was doomed to remain incomplete in his present existence’;<sup>45</sup> ‘what he wished for most ardently would never be more than a hope, postponed to a final resolution of all tensions, far beyond this life’;<sup>46</sup> ‘all a man could do was to “yearn” for this absent perfection’.<sup>47</sup> Augustine, he suggests, in language that perhaps says more about Brown than it does about Augustine, ‘has imperceptibly become a “Romantic”’: and the *Confessions* which he wrote soon after, when he was the Catholic bishop of Hippo, will be a monumental statement of that most rare mood.’<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 140.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 145.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 145.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 150.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 150.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 150.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 150.

Brown entitled his chapter ‘The Lost Future’ and it is a portrayal of a man in stark discontinuity with his earlier self. However, the picture is not complete: it is lacking in theological analysis. There is no exploration of Augustine’s use of the language of hope, and it notably overlooks the already-not-yet eschatological understanding that is ubiquitous in Augustine’s writing. It should go without saying, of course, that this critique should not be taken to diminish the immense contribution of Brown’s work. The remarkable depth of Brown’s portrayal has made his biography the standard treatment, and there is no doubt that the Augustine whom modern readers are introduced to—together with his midlife crisis—resonates as a compelling figure. In spite, or perhaps because of this modern resonance, the question remains: Is Brown’s portrayal of Augustine’s crisis authentic? Is Brown’s assessment of Augustinian pessimism valid?

The prominence of Brown’s biography has served to root a pessimistic image of Augustine in the contemporary understanding.<sup>49</sup> However, the degree of discontinuity in Augustine’s thought that this reading represents is no longer the scholarly consensus and Brown himself famously revised his support for his earlier view in an epilogue published in 2000. He recognised that his earlier interpretation had been overly influenced by a historical concern of the time ‘that the victory of

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<sup>49</sup> See Harrison, *Rethinking*, 16. Brown was not alone in his assessment, of course. In a famous article, written in 1951, Theodor Mommsen had already offered a pessimistic interpretation of Augustine’s political theology: ‘Augustine did not share the optimism of Eusebius and others; on the contrary, he spoke of his own era as “this malignant world, these evil days” (*ciu.* 18.49), and he reckoned even with the possibility of future persecutions of the Church and the faith (*ciu.* 18.52). He reminded his readers (*ciu.* 16.24) that, according to Christ’s own words, the terminal period of history will not be an era of secular peace and earthly prosperity but just the opposite.’ Theodor E. Mommsen, ‘St Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of the City of God’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12:3 (1951), 374. Michael Lamb’s work on Augustine’s City of God has challenged the apparent neatness of this binary interpretation, highlighting the need to discern rhetorical features of Augustine’s writing (and preaching) concerning the nature of the period between Christ’s first and second coming as well as his own active engagement in civic life. Lamb, *Commonwealth*, 104-52. This recent work adds support to Brown’s change of heart, detailed below.

Augustine's notion of grace over Pelagius' notion of freedom (with its roots in classical, Stoic thought) signalled the end of the ancient world in Western Europe.<sup>50</sup> Brown argues against scholars who have built on his earlier view to suggest that Augustine's pessimistic turn 'caused a sinister fissure to open up between a sunnier, because more "classical", form of early Christianity and an early medieval world dominated by doctrines of original sin and... the all-powerful and inscrutable workings of divine grace.'<sup>51</sup> He is candid about the *theological* nature of his own interpretative failure: 'The principal limitation of this perspective was that an all-absorbing interest in Augustine's relations with the classical past often made us forget his relations with his own Christian present and with the religious currents of his own age.'<sup>52</sup> This is more than a passing admission. In fact, it seems to lie close to the foundation for Brown's change of heart. Looking back on his work, he admits the attraction he felt as a young man to the prospect of adopting the latest historiographical advances and writing a psychological biography conveying the inner journey of 'a figure usually identified with all that was most rigid and unmoving in Catholic dogma':<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 497.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 497.

<sup>52</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 498. Conversely, Brown relates that his change of perspective came through the unearthing of new source material in the Divjak letters (1975) and Dolbeau sermons (1990), both of which show Augustine's interest in theological concerns beyond the refutation of Donatists and Pelagians.

<sup>53</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 150. In the epilogue to the revised edition Brown writes, 'I had begun in 1961 in a conventional manner, intending to write a study of Augustine's life and times. By 1963 I realized that I could do something more than that—I could write the story of the inner growth, in a variety of changing circumstances, of a single, ever changing person. I followed the "long inner journeys" of a man who had lived some sixteen hundred years before my time, largely because the man had talked about himself in such a way as to make a biography possible.' 'A sense of human movement in a figure usually identified with all that was most rigid and unmoving in Catholic dogma was what my biography strove to convey. Such an emphasis on the changes in Augustine's thought and outlook can be challenged. Central elements in Augustine's thought have been shown to be remarkably stable. They seem to bear little trace of discontinuity.' Brown, *Augustine*, 489, 490.

At the time that I wrote, I was not greatly concerned with the theological and philosophical problem of change and continuity in the basic structures of Augustine's thought. The changes that had been detected in his thought interested me, rather, as an historian. What I strove to emphasize were those changes which did indeed seem to reflect the changing conditions of his life... A biography of Augustine, written around such themes, enabled me to approach, from the 'inside' as it were, one of the most significant outer events in the history of the later Roman Empire: the rise of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire.<sup>54</sup>

Brown's methodological self-awareness at this point is one of the features of the epilogue that fit it to the stature of the book. Indeed, taking these comments seriously sheds light on his rationale for writing an epilogue and not an updated edition: Brown's biography—a psychological account troubling the rigid image of the most prominent Catholic Saint—is inescapably a book of its moment. It was published in 1967 and fits well some of the concerns and academic currents of the decade within which it was written. The Augustine he bequeathed to the late twentieth century was perceived through the eyes—and to some degree also in the image—of a young 1960s scholar with Romantic sympathies. The epilogue, amongst other things, amounts to a recognition of this fact and an indication of some of its failings. A prominent one, first identified by Henry Chadwick (and recognized by Brown as 'a fair judgment') is the absence of theology.<sup>55</sup> Acknowledging the focus of his interest in social psychology and his aim of 'bringing back the thought of Augustine for the modern reader', Brown admits that he 'prudently skirted Augustine the metaphysician and limited my consideration of his theology to his notions of grace and of the Church.'<sup>56</sup> In this admission we can recognize something of the same trend of de-theologization as was noted with reference to Harnack's understanding, above.

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<sup>54</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 490.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 495.

<sup>56</sup> 'In bringing back the thought of Augustine for the modern reader, I was faced with an operation as difficult as the attempt to manufacture, through a skilled combination of chemicals, a faithful

Brown's epilogue lays out his change of heart. He now identifies Augustine's teaching on the possibility of spiritual progress within the church as erring 'on the side of optimism':

Augustine, for all the pessimism that he expressed in his writings on the human condition in general, erred on the side of optimism when he preached and advised his fellow-Catholics. He felt that he lived in a fluid world, where good things happened frequently.<sup>57</sup>

Brown highlights the positive tone of Augustine's late letter to Firmus as evidence of a similar attitude to those beyond the church:

A similar optimism coloured Augustine's attitude to those outside the Church... Augustine's Heavenly Jerusalem was the City of God of which glorious things had been spoken in Psalm 87. The psalm makes plain that God had already registered all nations as having been born in Zion. All were potential members of the Catholic Church. The City of God was written partly to clear away the obstacles that littered the extensive common ground between educated pagans and their Christian peers, so that pagans should cross over, as they surely would, to join the Church. If God so wished it, Firmus and his son... would sooner or later come to be enrolled in the City of God, their one true home.<sup>58</sup>

Of course, this transition from a pessimistic to optimistic ascription still leaves in play an unilluminating and theologically problematic framework, but Brown's point is clear: 'As a thinker, Augustine was, perhaps, more a man *aus einem Guss*, all of a piece, and less riven by fateful discontinuities than I had thought.'<sup>59</sup> Carol Harrison has been prominent in taking up the invitation offered by Brown's new understanding.

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reproduction of a natural smell or a natural flavour. I had to appeal to elements in the culture around me that provided some analogies... My interest in social psychology made me exceptionally interested in his views on the relation between individual, society and the Church... For other, quite distinctive aspects of the thought-world of Augustine, I either lacked the necessary chemical equivalents or reproduced their heavy perfumes in a manner that did not do justice to them. I prudently skirted Augustine the metaphysician and limited my consideration of his theology largely to his notions of grace and of the Church.<sup>60</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 494-5.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 510-511.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 511.

<sup>59</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 490.

Following the lead of Goulven Madec's assertion of a single, theological Augustine, her work represents a detailed investigation of Augustine's writings to establish in compelling fashion the existence of 'a fundamental continuity in Augustine's thought from the very beginning'.<sup>60</sup>

In returning to Augustine's understanding of hope, I am following the scholarship of Harrison and her portrayal of Augustine's integrity as a Catholic Christian throughout his writings. Accepting this reading it is evident that the conceptual framework of optimism and pessimism is not fit for purpose. The theological depth and unity of his thought resists analysis according to these de-theologized concepts, which, apart from significant clarification, are not able to do otherwise than conceal the integration of Augustine's understanding. In their place, this thesis proposes the benefit of interpreting Augustine's thought in terms of the complementary categories of humility and hope, classical theological categories that are not only native to, but prominent in Augustine's writing from 386 onwards. Harrison does not focus on the theme of hope in particular, but the thrust of my argument is in line with hers: these categories, and the broader theological understanding of God, creation, and human life within which they are situated, exist in continuity through Augustine's work. There is natural development, of course, but always within a fundamental Christian transformation of neoplatonic thought. As Étienne Gilson argued against Prosper Alfaric as early as 1919 in a critical review of the latter's *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin* (1918), the idea—on which the discontinuity thesis is built—of a neoplatonic Augustine in 386 who only later became a true Catholic, cannot be sustained by the evidence.<sup>61</sup> Augustine clearly

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<sup>60</sup> Harrison, *Rethinking*, 7.

<sup>61</sup> 'M. Alfaric n'a peut-être pas vu à quel point les altérations imposées au néo-platonisme d'Augustin par son catholicisme sont essentielles et s'il les a loyalement signalées il ne les a peut être pas

learnt much from his reading of ‘some books of the Platonists’ (*conf.* 7.9.13; 8.2.3) but his thought is marked from his earliest writings by a commitment to the distinctly non-neoplatonic doctrines of creation *ex nihilo* (*sol.* 1.2), the equality of the divine hypostases (each addressed as God in *sol.* 1.2-3), and the introduction of the theological virtues as marking the way to God (*sol.* 1.3, 5, 13). It is to the theological virtue of hope—the virtue Harnack excised from Augustine’s thought and that has been largely left aside in Augustine scholarship for a century—that we will turn. Where Moltmann recognises the possibility of productively engaging the hopes of the late modern world with a Christian theology of hope, might it be possible to come after Moltmann by recovering hope as a virtue in the theology of St Augustine?

## 2. Hope and St Augustine

I have argued that the conceptual framework of optimism and pessimism obscures understanding of Augustine’s theological thought, and I have sought to subject these modern categories to critique in order to allow the theme of hope to come into view. As we turn to that view, however, we should beware turning too sharply. A straightforward dismissal of modern categories in order to retrieve classical Christian hope, leaving behind the former in order to rehabilitate the latter, is in danger of constructing a false antithesis between classical and modern pursuits of wisdom. Move too quickly and we risk losing sight of the fact that the fundamental antithesis in Augustine’s theology was not between different philosophical or theological understandings of reality but the eschatological antithesis between sin and

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exactement pesées. Le seul fait qu’Augustin ait admis dès le début la création et l’égalité des personnes divines suffirait à établir qu’il fut immédiatement catholique et non plotinien.’ Étienne Gilson, ‘Prosper Alfaric: *L’évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin*’, *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger* 88 (1919), 503.

grace. In any case, such haste would be illusory: the pessimistic Augustine of the twentieth century still exists in the minds, and in the writing, of those to whom he was introduced. Our own historical situation and thus the location of our reconsideration is relative to Augustinian pessimism in a way that makes an absolute departure impossible. If our aim is to cultivate hope, acknowledging and working through the problematic understandings and practices of the present, we will need to resist the appeal of reinvention.

I am therefore not proposing that we simply dismiss the notion of Augustinian pessimism but push into and through it, taking the concerns that are behind this ascription to a more satisfactory theological resolution through an understanding of humility and hope. In fact, my argument is that it is the modern ascription of pessimism to Augustine that is too easy and, as a result, inevitably superficial. Delivered in the context of a modern world in a hurry to move on from the perceived strictures of its unenlightened theological pre-existence, classing Augustine as a theological pessimist allowed certain (apparently extreme) aspects of Augustine's legacy—his teaching on original sin and sovereign grace—to be labelled and dismissed. What it did not do was take sufficient account of the depth and integration of Augustine's theological understanding. In the process, it overlooked the theological complexity of the virtue of hope, leaving it aside along with what had become, to the modern mind, increasingly jarring theological considerations. The proposal I am seeking to advance does not simply aim to oppose the de-theologizing tendency of modernity with an equal and opposite reaction, pushing psychological understandings of hope to one side in order to restore the exclusive dominance of an old theological order. The failure to recognise the good of modernity and the evils it has overcome renders such absolutist retrieval hopelessly nostalgic. By contrast, the kind of retrieval I am advocating can be understood as 'theological rejuvenation'. This approach seeks

to highlight some theological missteps along modernity's path of maturation with the aim of renewing the virtue of hope in our own modern context. Following Augustine's concern to understand sin in the context of the pursuit of the good (*de lib. arb.* 3.1.2) the approach here seeks to make retrieval secondary to renewal in order to advance the potential of a theological rejuvenation of late modern hope.

Noting that Augustinian theology provided the framework for the virtue of hope in Western society, the aim here is to simultaneously argue for the failure of the interpretation of Augustine as a pessimist and critically develop it to a better contemporary understanding of Augustinian hope by mending some of the theological connections that were unduly broken in its construction. The underlying assumption is that Augustinian hope, if it lives up to its claims, should be able to take us through and beyond any distortion in its interpretation. Practising as well as advocating the virtue of hope, the Augustinian theologian can engage the modern world and its associated understandings with patient confidence that its future is not disconnected from the past. The newness of the modern world has not superseded the theological convictions that are an important part of its history.<sup>62</sup>

Seeking to resist dismissal, then, in favour of a more hopeful form of deliberation, we can recognise that the categories of optimism and pessimism are hermeneutically attractive in that they take Augustine's classical philosophical influences and theological convictions and make sense of them in modern terms. The appeal is understandable: Augustine's teaching on human nature, sin, salvation, the angelic realm, Christ, the church, the life of society—all understood in relation to the

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<sup>62</sup> 'Our past is sedimented in our present, and we are doomed to misidentify ourselves, as long as we can't do justice to where we come from.' Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 29. 'An intention which looks ahead depends on a recollection which looks back; and a man who forgets what he has begun will not discover how to finish.' *ciu.* 7.7.

God who in his divine life is fundamentally other than creation—is far removed from the late modern contexts (both academic and ecclesial) where Augustine’s thought has been subject to critique. Augustine does have a strong doctrine of original sin;<sup>63</sup> he does emphasize the inability of human beings to attain the good apart from the grace of God;<sup>64</sup> and there is a strand in his teaching that seems to convey an ambivalence about the future of human society.<sup>65</sup> ‘Pessimism’ seems to capture these aspects of his thought and categorise them with a modern term. However, seeking to deal with the difficulty and complexity of Augustine’s thought in this way is superficial, serving to mute what is most interesting, and perhaps most important, about his understanding. If we take time to push into these particular doctrinal positions—never presented by Augustine in isolation—we find an integrated vision of human flourishing that is decreasingly amenable to the description of pessimism the more deeply it is explored. Augustine, it becomes apparent, seeks to understand and confront the darkness and difficulty in human experience, and through it to hold out an understanding that claims to support not a life of anxious gloom but of joyful hope. We find in Augustine a vision of human life as a moral adventure, patterned on the songful pilgrimage home to God that is held up in the Psalms of Ascent—a journey that leads in its fullest form by way of communal moral formation through the re-ordering of love towards the fulfilment of beatitude in the eschatological worship of God (*conf.* 13.9.10). This

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<sup>63</sup> *retr.* 1.9.6; *Simpl.* 2.13ff; *ench.* 8.26.

<sup>64</sup> ‘The grace of God liberates men from the misery inflicted on sinners, because man was able to fall on his own accord, that is, by free will, but was not able to rise of his own accord. To the misery due to just condemnation belong the ignorance and inability which every man suffers from his birth. From that evil no man is delivered except by the grace of God.’ *retr.* 1.9.6.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Make progress, don’t bother with the present, place your hope in the future; let temporal things lose their value for you, eternal realities grow in importance’ (s. 97a.4). In interpreting such contrasts in Augustine’s teaching (they are particularly prominent in his sermons), it is important to be mindful of his personal example of civic engagement, his use of rhetoric, and the wider theological framework—Augustine’s teaching on the ordering of loves, for example—within which such teaching should be understood.

journey of the heart begins with humble acknowledgment of its place in ‘the valley of weeping’ and will end in the everlasting joy of eschatological rest (*en. Ps.* 120.1). It is a journey—following after Christ and bound spiritually to him—that is lived by faith, overflows in works of love, and is walked in reliable and joyful hope.

*i. A theological journey from pessimism to hope*

The path we need to travel to get from the Augustine of life-denying pessimism to joy-inducing hope begins with a return to the epicentre of Augustine’s theological understanding—his ‘classical’ doctrine of the triune God, the uncreated and immutable Creator of all things, the supreme being who names ‘himself’ in terms of ‘himself’ in Exodus 3:14 as the ‘selfsame’ (*idipsum*).<sup>66</sup> The ‘selfsame’ God is the one under and towards whom all things are ordered. Hence the path of ultimate hope is the path of true worship:

God give us a true faith that will hold no false or unworthy opinion concerning the substance of the Creator. For by the path of piety we are wending our way towards him. If we hold any other opinion concerning him than the true one, our zeal will drive us not to beatitude but to vanity (*lib. arb.* 3.21.59).

If beatitude is the hope that attends the fulfilment of worship, we should also understand it as the hope of creation, which receives its goodness from God and truly enjoys it in dependence on him. Augustine puts expression to this dynamic in

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<sup>66</sup> ‘What is *idipsum*? It is simply *idipsum*, Being-Itself. How can I say anything about it, except that it is Being-Itself? Grasp it if you can, brothers and sisters, for whatever else I may say, I shall not have defined Being-Itself. All the same, let us attempt to direct the gaze of our minds, to steer our feeble intelligence, to thinking about Being-Itself, making use of certain words and meanings that have some affinity with it. What is Being-Itself? That which always exists unchangingly, which is not now one thing, now another. What is Being-Itself, Absolute Being, the Selfsame? That Which Is. What is That Which Is? The eternal, for anything that is constantly changing does not truly exist, because it does not abide—not that it is entirely nonexistent, but it does not exist in the highest sense. And what is That Which Is if not he who, when he wished to give Moses his mission, said to him, “I am who I am” (Ex 3:14)?’ *en. Ps.* 120.5.

*Confessions* 13, describing his life of worship as the right response to God's goodness in creation that is also the way to enjoy that goodness:

I did not even exist to receive your gift of being; yet lo! Now I do exist, thanks to your goodness. Over all that I am, both what you have made me and that from which you made me, your goodness has absolute precedence. You had no need of me... You command me to serve you and worship you that it may be well with me of your bounty, who have granted me first to exist, that I may enjoy well-being (*conf.* 13.1.1).

God's absolute goodness means that for God to live is blessedness.<sup>67</sup> For created human beings to live is to be blessed by God—to be subjects of the God who is love and so subject to love in its fullness.<sup>68</sup> Human hope is for the fulfilment of this creaturely bliss in the blessed life of God. That the blessing of creation was a good yet to be fulfilled is important. In contrast to the immutable beatitude of God's simple existence, when it comes to creaturely existence 'life is not the same as beatitude'. However, 'it has the prospect of being converted to him who made it, so that it may live more and more fully on the fount of life, and in his light see light, and so be perfected, illumined, and beatified' (*conf.* 13.4.5). Augustine here uses the language of conversion to talk of God's work in creation that followed the initial creation of heaven and earth—'heaven' here referring to an intellectual creation 'participating in your eternity though in no sense coeternal with you' (*conf.* 12.9.9), 'earth' referring to unformed matter 'bordering on nothingness' (*conf.* 12.7.7).<sup>69</sup> This initial creation was

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<sup>67</sup> 'You alone are, because you alone exist in utter simplicity, for with you to live is the same things as to live in blessedness, since you yourself are beatitude.' *conf.* 13.3.4.

<sup>68</sup> 'Human nature, you see, did not receive the power to enjoy the state of bliss independently of God's control, because only God is able to enjoy blessedness and bliss by his own power independently of anyone else's control.' *Gen. adu. Man.* 2.15.22.

<sup>69</sup> Augustine thus distinguishes two phases of creation, interpreting Genesis 1:1-2 as describing the creation of heaven and earth prior to the days of creation. He describes these realities as 'heaven's heaven', 'some kind of intellectual creation', and the 'primal formlessness' of 'the invisible and unorganized earth' (*conf.* 12.9.9), 'one near to yourself, the other bordering on nothingness; one, to which you alone would be superior, the other, than which nothing would be lower' (*conf.* 12.7.7).

followed by the creation of mutable, material life with its successive temporal existence and order—through the successive ‘days’ of creation towards divine rest.<sup>70</sup> By describing this second phase of creation as ‘conversion’, Augustine is drawing an analogy with his own conversion. The reorientation of human conversion is the way of participating in the creative process that is aimed towards the rest ‘to be hoped for on the seventh day which has no evening’ (*Gen. adu, Man.* 1.23.41). The fulfilment of creation is one with the fulfilment of conversion (redemption) that is enjoyment of rest: everlasting life in a place of peace beyond which no blessing can be desired, the human creaturely capacity to be blessed by God being entirely satisfied.<sup>71</sup>

As the work of creation is wrought progressively by the Spirit of God who was present and ready for action as the one ‘hovering over the face of the waters’ (Gen. 1:2), so the work of conversion is the work of the same Spirit who comes as divine Gift.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> On this account, temporal succession exists *between* the unformed matter of ‘earth’ and the ‘heaven of heavens’. In creation, the movement of time is the movement of mutable, material existence *towards its fulfilment* in the heavenly life only previously known by angels as spiritual (immaterial and incorporeal) beings. There is no collapsing of the distinction between Creator and creature here since Augustine draws an important distinction between God’s eternal life and creaturely participation in that eternity enjoyed in ‘heaven’s heaven’: ‘Participating in your eternity, though in no sense coeternal with you, O Trinity, this intellectual creation largely transcends its mutability through the intense bliss it enjoys in contemplation of you and holding fast to you with a constancy from which it has never fallen since its first creation, it is independent of the spinning changes of time’ (*conf.* 12.9.9).

<sup>71</sup> Boulding beautifully expresses the relation between creation and conversion in *Confessions*: ‘The *formation* of a spiritual being and its *conversion* are aspects of, or stages in, one creative process... Confession, in Augustine’s pregnant sense, is personal engagement in the creative process. It is a willingness to stand in God’s truth and become a co-creator with God in his creation of oneself. Part of this new creation in the human mind is the ability to see oneself and one’s own history in God’s light. To this kind of truthfulness Augustine’s whole effort of confession is directed.’ Maria Boulding, ‘Introduction’, in Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. and ed. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2012), 31-32.

<sup>72</sup> Augustine’s trinitarian doctrine of creation thus extends into his doctrine of redemption (*conf.* 13.5.6). Rowan Williams’s describes the trinitarian dynamic: ‘Augustine is also clear that the whole divine Trinity is involved in the creative act and in the processes of sustaining and actualizing the movement of creatures...the Father initiates the being of the created order, the Word is the source of life and the exemplar of wisdom and blessedness, the Spirit “oversees” the processes by which

In your Gift we find rest, and there we enjoy you. Our true place is where we find rest. We are borne toward it by your love, and it is your good Spirit who lifts up our sunken nature from the gates of death. In goodness of will is our peace. . . . Your Gift sets us afire and we are born upward; we catch his flame and up we go. In our hearts we climb those upward paths, singing the songs of ascent. By your fire, your beneficent fire, are we enflamed, because we are making our way up to *the peace of Jerusalem* (Psalm 121) (*conf.* 13.9.10).<sup>73</sup>

In God's work of bringing creation to its fulfilment in the rest of the seventh day, the Spirit comes as the Gift of God to human beings, raising them upwards to God along the way of Christ that is the path of joy-through-suffering to the eternal Jerusalem that is marked by the Psalms of Ascent. The final chapter of *City of God* describes the consummation—life in a place of eternal beatitude that is a place of ever-harmonious activity, a place of peace (*ciu.* 22.29-30). Since this 'true place' towards which the work of the Spirit is directed is temporally ahead, as well as transcendently above, the love of the Spirit is accompanied by the hope of its fulfilment (Rom. 5:5; *conf.* 13.7.8).

In contrast to the pessimistic Augustine of modern lore, digging into Augustine's understanding of God, creation, and redemption reveals a deeply embedded account of hope. What is more, this understanding of hope is not merely an intellectual commitment but a central part of Augustine's experience. He describes life after the Fall as being torn between two 'movements of the heart' or 'two loves':

One is the uncleanness of our own spirit, which like a flood-tide sweeps us down, in love with restless care; the other is the holiness of your Spirit, which bears us upward in a love for peace beyond all care, that our hearts may be lifted up to you, to where your Spirit is poised above

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creation's potential for harmony is realized; but Augustine's purpose is simply to spell out the inseparable participation of all three divine persons in the creative act.' Rowan Williams, 'Creation', in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages*, 254.

<sup>73</sup> The relationship between hope and fire that this passage suggests is fascinating given the importance of fire in the history (ancient and modern, religious and secular) of humanity.

the waters, so that once our soul has crossed over those waters on which there is no reliance we may reach all-surpassing rest (*conf.* 13.7.8).

Until movement in either direction is complete, there is hope for the fulfilment of creation through the upward movement inaugurated by Christ and applied by the Spirit. In *Confessions* 13, the Spirit's work in creation is presented as an allegory of the Spirit's work in the church. In Christ, God has created 'a heaven and an earth: the spiritual and carnal members of his Church' (*conf.* 13.12.13). By the work of the Spirit who effectually applied the life of God's Word in creation, God now applies the life of his Word in redemption. As light came through darkness in creation, so by conversion to God light dawned in redemption: 'we who once were darkness are now light in the Lord' (*conf.* 13.12.13). However, the work of the Spirit has still to reach its fulfilment such that there is both a 'now' and 'not yet' to Christian experience. The work of the love of God that is the Spirit of God is enjoyed in the present by faith and in hope: 'As yet we know this by faith, not by anything we see, for we have been saved indeed, but in hope, and hope that is seen is hope no longer' (*conf.* 13.12.13).

With this experiential perspective in view, Augustine's frequent recourse to the Psalms of Ascent takes on further meaning. As well as informing the mind, we should notice their adoption in liturgical practice as songs that move the heart: 'In our hearts we climb those upward paths, singing the songs of ascent' (*conf.* 13.9.10). The final participle can be read as expressing means: the liturgical singing of Psalms is a practice of hope, moving the people of God forwards in the journey of character formation towards its hoped-for end.

ii. *Pride and presumption*

Augustine's emphasis on human sinfulness, as we noted above, is a significant contributing factor to the neglect of his teaching on hope. However, reading Augustine's account of sin within his understanding of God and creation casts quite a

different light on his teaching. Describing the fateful encounter between Adam, Eve, and the serpent, Augustine highlights his interest in probing the origin and nature of sin as an interest in *salvation*: ‘The way, though, in which the serpent succeeded in putting across the sin calls for careful consideration, as it directly concerns our salvation; the reason all this is written down, after all, is to put us on our guard against such things at the present time’ (*Gen. adu. Man.* 2.15.22). The problem of sin in the frame of creation is that it cuts off the *purpose* of creation that is the eschatological fulfilment of its good. The purpose and importance of Augustine’s doctrine of sin is not to lead people to despair, but to lead them through despair to hope. His aim is to mitigate the ongoing power of sin by making plain the manner of its operation.

Augustine highlights the nature of sin as a wilful refusal to live within God’s order, a disordering of love or desire that, viewed relative to the order of creation, is understood as pride:

When the woman told [the serpent] in answer to his question what command they had been given, he came back with: “You will not die the death; for God knew that on the day you take a bite from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5). In these words we can see it was through pride (*per superbiam*) that the sin was put across—I mean, that’s the catch in the words, “you will be like gods”. As also with the whole assertion, “for God knew that on the day you take a bite from it your eyes will be opened”; what else is to be understood but a suggestion that they should refuse to be under God any longer, but should be their own masters instead without the Lord, that they should not keep a rule apparently laid down by him out of a jealous refusal to let them be in control of their own lives, no longer needing inner enlightenment from him, but using their own wits, their own eyes so to say, to tell the difference between good and evil, which he had wanted them to stop doing? (*Gen. adu. Man.* 2.15.22)

Important to recognise in this understanding is that sin is at the same time against God and the order of creation. To be precise, it is against God *by* its opposition to his order of creation (it being impossible for created beings to act

relative to God apart from as created beings in their relation to his created order). It is a proud refusal 'to be *under* God *any longer*', an understanding which subverts both vertical and horizontal perspectives of creation discussed above. To step outside of God's command is to move out from the content of his covenant (his command with its accompanying condition and promise) and the time of its fulfilment. It is also to reject the enlightenment of God to live by the power of human sight. This will be important as we consider, by contrast, the rational agent that is the 'I' in Kant's late Enlightenment question of hope. For Augustine, the self for whom there is hope is the self that is ordered rightly within God's creation; the self that is subject to the 'selfsame' God; the self that is confident of the goodness of its future as resting on the immutable goodness of God. To turn from God is to turn from light to darkness (*conf.* 13.2.3), to turn from the hope of a future resting on God's immutability to the uncertainty of life in the flux of time and change:

All sins are included in this one class, viz. turning away from things which are divine and truly abiding, and turning to things which are changeable and uncertain. They are right enough in their own place, and have a certain beauty of their own. But it is the mark of a perverse and disordered mind to pursue them to the point of becoming subject to them. For rightly by divine ordinance the mind is set over them and ought to bear absolute rule over them (*lib. arb.* 1.16.34).

Here is the irony of pride that Augustine exposes: in pride, the self reaches up in such a way that it ends up *falling below* its true glory; it presumptuously fails to wait in hope, seizing the day in such a way that it *falls short* of its promised end. To turn from God is to turn from the time of one's life, which is ordered towards the fulfilment of time in the 'rest' of creation that represents a secure and intensified relation to God's own eternal life. Apart from the authority of God and the certainty of God's future for creation, the self disintegrates in a restless sickness of the soul

(*conf.* 2.10.18).<sup>74</sup> Mortality reigns in place of eternity; the day of hope becomes a day of presumption and despair, a day of death and not of eschatological life. Sin is an attempted act of liberation from God, which, in a world where the will is directed by desire, must simultaneously be an act of submission to that which is not God and is thus not able to guarantee the future. Pride is against God and as such it is allied with despair, a fundamental loss of confidence in the future. It prevents human beings, and indeed creation more widely, from reaching their intended fulfilment. The pride of Adam, according to Augustine, fundamentally changed the conditions of human life. Every human being born since is born into the conditions of existence that are the consequence of Adam's sin even before the replication of Adam's pride with his or her own.

Important in this regard is Augustine's understanding of human agency. Since human beings always act in accordance with their will, 'only the wrong choices are possible unless the will is properly repaired and maintained by God.'<sup>75</sup> Human beings need to be liberated by God and brought to the freedom of the will found in the supreme love of God (the genitive here working both ways). This freedom 'is the condition in which the soul is in harmony with, and subject to, the truth and the will and love of God.'<sup>76</sup> In distinction from stoicism, Augustine identifies the rational will with properly ordered love, connecting moral character and rational truth to eschatological desire. To this emphasis on the individual will, Augustine adds an important social dimension to his teaching on sin through the correlation of love of

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<sup>74</sup> 'I slid away from you and wandered away, my God; far from your steadfastness I strayed into adolescence, and I became to myself a land of famine.' *conf.* 2.10.18.

<sup>75</sup> John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 187. As Augustine puts it: 'Herein is our liberty, when we are subject to truth. And Truth is our God who liberates us from death, that is, from the condition of sin' (*lib. arb.* 2.13.37).

<sup>76</sup> Rist, *Ancient*, 187.

God with love of neighbour. As he famously develops in *The City of God*, love of self is accompanied by love of power, pride, and apostasy from God. With love of God belongs service, justice, humility, submission to God, and everlasting peace. There is a fundamental antithesis between these two cities, an antithesis that runs as a fracture through sinful human nature and can be ultimately overcome only by the grace of God.

Working down to the theological roots of Augustine's notorious negativity regarding the human self and society is important since it opens the way to an alternative interpretation to the charge of pessimism that is rendered particularly serious by the optimistic sensibilities of the modern age. Beneath the superficial modern antithesis of optimism and pessimism—coordinated with oppositions between freedom and servitude, liberal democracy and autocracy, progress and regress, future and past—we find in Augustine a more fundamental theological antithesis between pride and humility, disordered love of self and re-ordered love of God and neighbour. Whilst it is understandable that Augustine's understanding of sin is perceived on modern terms as pessimistic, it must be remembered that he was not writing in opposition to the modern mental attitude of optimism but to the age-old disease of human pride.

iii. *Humility and hope*

The theological path we have been following has given us a deeper perspective than is evident in Augustine's pessimistic reputation. Where this reputation locates Augustine at the gloomy reaches of a mental cul-de-sac, getting beneath pessimism to Augustine's understanding of the promise of creation and the perversion of pride places Augustine's teaching on a more open, theological road. Where pessimism is a negative mental process cut off from wider considerations of

the good, pride is diagnosed more deeply as a condition of the rational soul relative to the order of its existence and proper end. Where pessimism purports to be a neutral diagnosis and so is unrelated to a remedy (strictly even to the desirability of a remedy), pride is only recognisable within a narrative of creation and redemption. Where the diagnosis of pessimism itself offers no way forward, the recognition of pride is already the first step beyond itself: its acknowledgment is the beginning of the humility that Augustine holds up as the way of hope.

Turning to *Confessions* we encounter the way from pride to humility to hope as Augustine's own; a way patterned on the humility of Christ himself, which is emphasized from the beginning: 'While still a boy I heard about the eternal life promised to us through the humility of our Lord and God, who stooped down even to our pride; and I was regularly signed with the cross and given his salt even from the womb of my mother, who firmly trusted in you' (*conf.* 1.11.17). This is a significant passage, establishing what will be an important theme in *Confessions*: the bringing to birth of Augustine's eternal salvation through baptism as his birth from the womb of 'the mother of us all, your Church' (*conf.* 1.11.17). The representative role of Augustine's own mother serves to keep the presence and call of the church in the narrative. Monica takes the role of midwife, her faith and love bringing Augustine's 'eternal salvation'—that is, his hope—to birth (*conf.* 1.11.17).<sup>77</sup> *Confessions* will follow Augustine through the twists and turns of life, but the fundamental journey he will travel follows the pattern of the prodigal of Luke 15, introduced at the end of Book 1. This journey—not of the feet but the heart (*conf.* 1.18.28)—is laid out in the

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<sup>77</sup> The explicit parallel of Monica with the Church in *conf.* 1.1.17 sets up a theme that continues through the *Confessions*. Monica stands for 'mother church' in the story, representing the church in Augustine's life until he is finally brought to new birth through baptism at which point Monica passes away.

first book: through identification with the humility of Christ in baptism Augustine will find his way home, born again through the church to the hope of eternal life.

As Augustine recounts his own story, the themes of pride and humility are prominent. He describes his departure from God in terms of a proud refusal to submit to God, pursuing instead the vain hope of human honour (*conf.* 1.17.27). In retrospect Augustine recognises this as a ‘rough path’ that could not lead to the fulfilment of human happiness, or ‘rest’ (*conf.* 4.12.18). The contrasting path is the path of Christ: ‘He who is our very life came down... He slew our death by his hidden life and summoned us... to return to him in his hidden place’ (*conf.* 4.12.19). The path of eternal life follows after Christ: ‘Life has come down to you... Come down, that you may ascend, ascend even to God, for you have fallen in your attempts to ascend in defiance of God’ (*conf.* 4.12.19). Here is the ‘*via humilitas*’ that Goulven Madec recognises as defining for Augustine ‘the essence of Christianity’.<sup>78</sup> This is the way of humility that is the way of hope.

### **3. Conclusion**

Questioning Augustine’s reputation as a pessimist has allowed us to reconsider Augustine’s assessment of humanity on his own terms. Pessimism is recast as the kind of appropriate humility that is not only propaedeutic to hope but is itself the way of hope following after Christ. Understood within the frame of Augustine’s doctrines of God and creation, John Rist is right to identify Augustinian humility as the honesty on which life can flourish:

At bottom humility is honesty about the human condition, and it is on the basis of that honesty, that willingness to face the facts, that man’s moral and spiritual regeneration has to be founded. Humility is thus the

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<sup>78</sup> Goulven Madec, *Le Christ de St Augustin: La Patrie et la Voie* (Paris: Desclée, 2001), 39.

companion of love for God just as pride is the companion of love of self.<sup>79</sup>

To the man-made self of modernity, founded on the negative liberty that rejects the necessity of divine worship and spiritual regeneration, Augustinian humility is inevitably a challenge. However, insofar as the conceptual framework of modernity limits humility, it also limits hope, conflating hope and optimism by defining the former not in the thick terminology of virtue but in the thinned-out form of a minimally rational emotion. The Augustinian way forward I am proposing does not dismiss modernity outright but instead calls on the return of the modern self to humility in order to find a better hope in the fulfilment of human flourishing that is its highest good. For Augustine, this hope connects past and future in the history of God's faithfulness to his creation. The good in human beings is created: it is mutable and thus precarious on the one hand but perfectible on the other. Its origin in creation points beyond the immanent frame of modern history to its fulfilment in eschatological life:

As all else that is truly good in the 'natural' Augustine (or in anyone else), his personal identity (and ours)—envisaged as the harmony of man with a pure and undivided heart—exists in hope, in a future state where Adam will not just be repaired but remade and improved.<sup>80</sup>

There is a Christological anthropology at work here. The first Adam sought his own position of power but fell in pride, reaping the consequence of morality: a life that gives way to death. The second Adam sought the good of others, giving up his power to descend in humility, reaping the reward of eschatological life. These two 'Adams' represent rival ways of human being and becoming. Augustine's condemnation of pride and repeated emphasis that human beings apart from God are

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<sup>79</sup> Rist, *Ancient*, 190.

<sup>80</sup> Rist, *Ancient*, 140.

unable to attain to the good that is the fulfilment of their nature (human nature being created by God and ordered towards God) is poorly captured by the ascription of pessimism. It is intended to move his readers and auditors to increasingly embrace the life of the second Adam, following the *via humilitas* that is the way of Christ. With pride belongs presumption and despair. The way beyond them is not attained by strength of will. It is the way of humble confession and moral reformation. This is the Augustinian way of hope.

For the time being optimism and pessimism remain the popular conceptual currency of modernity. However, returning to Augustine suggests the possibility of productively revising these concepts by attending to the reciprocity between humility and hope, and the cultivation of hope in practice as a virtue aiming life towards its ethical fulfilment. If we resist the temptation of seeking to live in the past, might this theological re-vision of optimism and pessimism allow for the rejuvenation of late modern hope? If our assessment of late modernity does not identify as problematic an over-realized commitment to individual agency and an under-realized commitment to shared moral purpose then Augustine is likely to have little to offer. If either or both of these are concerns then we might well find hope in the unlikely source that is the theology of St Augustine.

## Chapter 2: Hope and the Good

The introduction identified two important and problematic issues for the understanding and practice of hope in late modernity: the relationship between hope and the good, and the relationship between hope and personal agency and identity. It is to the first of these that we turn in this chapter, taking the difficulty to lie in the way in which hope's relation to the good (assumed in the distinction between hope and mere expectation) brings into view underlying axiological, ontological, even theological commitments. We will follow Alan Mittleman's account of the broken relationship between hope and the good in modern philosophy, considering contemporary philosophical paths beyond the thin understanding of 'standard hope' that traces its heritage to early modernity. Discussion of hope in contemporary Anglophone philosophy—the tradition in which the twentieth century's turn to virtue was located—will give reason to support a renewed understanding of hope as a virtue in our own time. Turning to Augustine's *Enchiridion*, I argue that Augustine's theological understanding of the relation between hope and the good, which lies at the historical source of hope's interpretation as a virtue, has value as a contemporary understanding.

It is in probing the theological depth of Augustine's account of hope that I seek to add value to arguments for a recovery of the virtue of hope in philosophy and politics. Mittleman's work is a helpful place to begin in view of his concerted engagement with philosophy, political theory, and theology. He presents the merits of the virtue of hope as philosophically plausible and politically essential for the health of liberal society: 'Hope is a civic virtue, in so far as it helps to promote civic association, cooperation, initiative, and effort on behalf of the common good.' Leaning on MacIntyre's understanding of virtue as existing in relation to a shared

narrative tradition—in this case the tradition of liberal democracy—Mittleman suggests that hope can be raised from an emotion to a virtue. Such hope ‘requires cultivation and discernment’ and is ‘subject to strong evaluation... in a way that emotion is not’. Properly hopeful citizens would invest in the common institutions and initiatives of liberal society in order to further characteristically liberal goods (justice, freedom, autonomy, equality of worth and opportunity) whilst also recognising the non-ultimacy of democratic hope and importance of religious hope(s) that orders human purpose towards a transcendent horizon.<sup>1</sup> Lamb’s understanding of hope as a political virtue is similar. Drawing on Augustine and Aquinas he suggests that the virtue of hope can play an important role in contemporary politics, orienting shared proximate hopes between the vices of presumption and despair.<sup>2</sup>

However, if this direction of travel is agreeable (and I think it is), the focus on the political benefit of recovering hope as a virtue still leaves work to be done at the conceptual level. Such is the focus here. I suggest that the path of modern philosophy seeking to overcome some of the tensions within its own inheritance can be advanced theologically by way of renewed attention to the understanding of hope as a virtue that is present in Augustine. Rather than bracketing the relationship between hope and the good, this proposal argues for the rehabilitation of hope as a theological virtue, one of a triad along with faith and love. The *Enchiridion*, or, *On Faith, Hope, and Love*, a comparatively neglected text in Augustinian studies, and one that has been invoked as support for an absence of hope in Augustine’s theology, will be the focus of our attention. I offer a new reading, opposing the assumption that there is little

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12-13.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Lamb, ‘Aquinas on the Virtues of Hope: Theological and Democratic’, *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44:2 (2016), 300-332; *A Commonwealth of Hope: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Religion in Augustine’s Political Thought*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2014, 6-9.

hope in Augustine's *Enchiridion* and arguing that an integrated theological understanding reveals the importance, and potential contemporary value, of Augustinian hope.

## 1. Hope and the good

In his article, 'Hope and Metaphysics', Alan Mittleman argues that philosophical understandings of hope that fail to attend to the relationship between hope and the good, constraining their conceptual analysis within the empirically verifiable domain of human experience, are incomplete. He examines three recent (and prominent) philosophical understandings in order to ascertain what is gained and lost by bracketing metaphysics from inquiry into hope.<sup>3</sup> He finds important insights in each case regarding the *practice* of hope (the question of *how* we hope) but notes that each is silent or neutral when it comes to the *object* of hope. A subjective, phenomenological approach is taken at the expense of an objective, ontological perspective. For Mittleman, this is problematic:

Hope is vindicated by its object insofar as that object is the *summum bonum* . . . An account of the blessed life and a defence of its blessedness is what I find missing in contemporary treatments. They stop too soon, arresting the intellectual quest for the deepest significance of hope . . . Without a metaphysical inquiry into the ground of value, the meaning of hope will elude us.<sup>4</sup>

This line of critique follows a path laid in the latter part of the twentieth century by Elizabeth Anscombe and Alasdair MacIntyre, both of whom identified a

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<sup>3</sup> Mittleman focuses on Luc Bovens, 'The Value of Hope', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59:3 (1999), 667-681; Victoria McGeer, 'The Art of Good Hope', in *The Annals of the American Academy* 592:1 (2004), 100-127; Philip Pettit, 'Hope and its Place in the Mind', *The Annals of the American Academy* 592:1 (2004), 152-165.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Mittleman, 'Hope and Metaphysics', in Ingolf U. Dalferth and Marlene A. Block (eds), *Hope*, Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 53.

breakdown in meaning in modern (Western, and especially Anglophone) moral philosophical discourse. The heart of the problem that they diagnosed was the persistence of normative moral assertion absent the once-dominant classical Judeo-Christian consensus. The situation, as Anscombe perceived it, was ‘the survival of a concept outside the framework of thought that made it a really intelligible one’.<sup>5</sup> Anscombe’s (1958) analysis was accompanied by a call to lay moral philosophy aside ‘until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking’, and to refrain from claims of moral obligation and duty ‘because they are survivals, or derivatives from survivals, from an earlier conception of ethics which no longer generally survives, and are only harmful without it’.<sup>6</sup> MacIntyre, writing over twenty years later (1981), developed this argument into a broader critique: ‘The problems of modern moral theory emerge clearly as the product of the failure of the Enlightenment project’.<sup>7</sup> Historical understanding and recognition of this failure should clear the way for the revival of a traditional pre-modern ethic of virtue, he argued. At first MacIntyre argued for a historical and social account of the good but moved to embrace a Thomistic understanding as he came to the conviction that ‘my attempt to provide an account of the human good purely in social terms, in terms of

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<sup>5</sup> Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’, *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958), 6. MacIntyre echoes this analysis: ‘Moral judgements are linguistic survivals from the practices of classical theism which have lost the context provided by those categories.’ ‘Modern moral utterance and practice can only be understood as a series of fragmented survivals from an older past and the insoluble problems which they have generated for modern moral theorists will remain insoluble until this is well understood. If the deontological character of moral judgments is the ghost of conceptions of divine law which are quite alien to the metaphysics of modernity and if the teleological character is similarly the ghost of conceptions of human nature and activity which are equally not at home in the modern world, we should expect the problems of understanding and of assigning an intelligible status to moral judgments both continually to arise and as continually to prove inhospitable to philosophical solutions.’ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 60, 111.

<sup>6</sup> Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’, 1.

<sup>7</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 62.

practices, traditions, and the narrative unity of human lives, was bound to be inadequate until I had provided it with a metaphysical grounding'.<sup>8</sup>

In *Hope in a Democratic Age*, Mittleman, also drawing heavily on Aquinas, proposes a renewal of the pre-modern Judeo-Christian account of hope as a virtue, arguing for the importance of such an understanding for modern, democratic citizenship.<sup>9</sup> Developing the point that the virtue of hope exists within a specific narrational framework, Mittleman draws attention to the content of the narrative needed to sustain the enactment of hope. 'It may be', he suggests, 'that hope can be thought of as a virtue only within a stream of civilization that tells a certain story about the nature of reality.'<sup>10</sup> Mittleman's point is important: there is a metaphysical dimension to hope, which must take into account the nature of the future, the nature of possibility and the nature of value and the good. That this dimension is often disregarded in contemporary philosophical investigations of hope is a trend Mittleman traces to a change in the understanding of hope in early modernity:

The turn away from a metaphysical grounding for hope, such as one finds in Augustine and Aquinas, arguably begins with those early modern philosophers who interpret hope strictly as an emotion and interpret emotions in as purely a psychological manner as possible . . .

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<sup>8</sup> 'In *After Virtue* I had tried to present the case for a broadly Aristotelian account of the virtues without making use of or appeal to what I called Aristotle's metaphysical biology. And I was of course right in rejecting most of that biology. But I now had learned from Aquinas that my attempt to provide an account of the human good purely in social terms, in terms of practices, traditions, and the narrative unity of human lives, was bound to be inadequate until I had provided it with a metaphysical grounding. It is only because human beings have an end towards which they are directed by reason of their specific nature, that practices, traditions, and the like are able to function as they do. So I discovered that I had, without realizing it, presupposed the truth of something very close to the account of the concept of good that Aquinas gives in question 5 in the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*.' MacIntyre, 'Prologue to the third edition' (2007), *After Virtue*, viii-ix.

<sup>9</sup> Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age*, 8-15. Mittleman relies heavily on Aquinas, finding a similar understanding of hope as a virtue (without the specific terminology of virtue) in the work of Jewish philosopher Joseph Albo (c.1380-1444).

<sup>10</sup> Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age*, 36.

an approach to emotions that scants them of their cognitive content and frames them in terms of non-rational passions.<sup>11</sup>

Mittleman refers to Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and Hume. ‘Their moral psychologies all tend to view hope strictly as an expectation of the future fulfilment of a desired outcome.’<sup>12</sup> It is this early modern understanding that gave rise to what has been referred to as the ‘standard’ account of hope.<sup>13</sup> On this understanding, hope is a propositional attitude combining desire and expectation: to hope is to ‘hope that *p*’, taken to combine (i) the desire that *p* obtains and (ii) the belief that *p* is possible but not certain.<sup>14</sup> The hoping subject is assumed to be an individual rational agent, the hoped-for object is usually taken to be a future good. However, the importance of temporality and ascription of value are open to question as dependent on the perspective of the subject and are therefore not properly included

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<sup>11</sup> Mittleman, ‘Hope and Metaphysics’, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Mittleman, ‘Hope and Metaphysics’, 39.

<sup>13</sup> Adrienne Martin argues that the essential transition is the sixteenth century abandonment of the pre-modern distinction between concupiscible and irascible passions. This distinction, as found in Aquinas, holds that concupiscible appetites are capacities of attraction and repulsion, whereas irascible appetites are capacities of overcoming, motivating an agent to strive against obstacles to attain the good or avoid the bad. Hope was understood as an irascible passion. However, the collapse of this distinction in early modern understandings of motivation opened the way for hope to be analyzed as a straightforward case of desire, qualified by a minimal rational expectation. Adrienne Martin, *How we Hope: A Moral Psychology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 16. In a recent book on the history of the psychological category of emotion, Thomas Dixon highlights an important nineteenth-century transition, which he attributes to the ‘secularization of psychology’: ‘It is an immensely striking fact of the history of English-language psychological thought that during the period between c.1800 and c.1850 a wholesale change in established vocabulary occurred such that those engaged in theoretical discussions about phenomena including hope... no longer primarily discussed the passions or affections of the soul, nor the sentiments, but almost invariably referred to “the emotions”’. This transition is as striking as if established conceptual terms such as “reason” or “memory” or “imagination” or “will” had been quite suddenly replaced by a wholly new category.’ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>14</sup> ‘On these analyses, a hope is in some sense a result of two components, a desire and a subjective probability.’<sup>14</sup> “‘a hopes that *p*’ is true if and only if “a desires in some degree, however small, that *p*, and a believes that it is probable in some degree, however small (e.g. 1/1,000), that *p*” is true.’ J. P. Day, ‘Anatomy of Hope and Fear’, *Mind* 79 (1970), 370, 369.

in the concept of hope itself. Hope is stripped back to leave a mental attitude, a type of (minimally) rational desire that if present in an agent as a constant psychological disposition can be labelled ‘optimism’.

Mittleman is right to conclude that this modern view of hope is metaphysically thin: ‘There is nothing to be said about the worth of one’s object and little to be said about whether hope is virtuous or vicious. There is no duty to hope; there is no sense of meaning or purpose to be disclosed in the act of hope.’<sup>15</sup> To which we might add that the ‘standard’ account gives no hint of the communal nature of hope or the way hope relates to the human experience of temporality and enactment of agency.

If these criticisms are valid it should also be noted that they come from outside the progressive development of modern philosophy. Underlying them is the conviction that the modern tendency to bracket metaphysical considerations is problematic when it comes to hope. However, if following their trajectory might lead us to dismiss modern philosophy and return to the pre-modern conception of hope as a (theological) virtue, we should be wary. A straightforward rejection of modern philosophy for a pre-modern theology of hope is not plausible if our concern is to provide an account of hope that can engage the present. It also overlooks the way that (Augustinian) theology and philosophy are inseparably interrelated in the genealogy of modernity. The idea of a pristine pre-modern past as a straightforward pattern for the future is as illusory as the notion that modernity has ever succeeded in leaving its theological inheritance behind.

This thesis proposes we travel by way of the theological virtue of hope but along a different path—one that seeks to draw on its past to take the modern world forward. We will find motivation to take this route by recognizing that deficiencies of

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<sup>15</sup> Mittleman, ‘Hope and Metaphysics’, 39.

‘standard’ hope have also been observed within the contemporary (Anglophone) philosophical tradition that has inherited it. The following section will summarise some recent attempts in this philosophical literature to supplement the ‘standard’ account, highlighting three shared concerns. Exploring these concerns highlights the present potential inherent in the pre-modern view of hope as a virtue.<sup>16</sup> We will follow this turn to virtue, drawing on Augustine, whose theological understanding of reality and corollary account of hope is a fundamental source of that tradition.

## 2. Beyond ‘standard’ hope

Philip Pettit is amongst the contemporary philosophers who have sought to move beyond the ‘standard’ account of hope as desire combined with expectation. He labels this standard twentieth-century interpretation ‘the lowest common denominator’ analysis of hope, arguing that its general applicability across trivial and non-trivial hopes (the hope of apple pie for pudding or the hope of eternal life) suggests that it has analysed away interest in hope as a phenomenon in its own right.<sup>17</sup> In more interesting cases the elements of belief and desire are necessary but not sufficient for an adequate description of hope, which seems to engage human agency

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<sup>16</sup> A number of scholars, in addition to Mittleman, have recently advanced the potential of such a turn to virtue. Notable contributions include, Aaron Cobb and Adam Green, ‘The Theological Virtue of Hope as a Social Virtue’, *Journal of Analytic Theology* 5 (2017), 230-250; John Cottingham, ‘Hope and the Virtues’, in Dalferth and Block (eds), *Hope*, 13–32; Rebecca DeYoung, ‘Practicing Hope’, *Res Philosophica* 91:3 (2014), 387-410; Dominic Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope* (New York: Crossroad, 2011); ‘*Spe Salvi* on Eschatological and Secular Hope: A Thomistic Critique of an Augustinian Encyclical’, *Theological Studies* 71:2 (2010), 350-379; David Elliot, *Hope and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Adam Kadlac, ‘The Virtue of Hope’, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18 (2015), 337–54; Michael Lamb, ‘Aquinas and the Virtues of Hope: Theological and Democratic’, *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44:2 (2016), 300–32; ‘A Passion and its Virtue: Aquinas on Hope and Magnanimity’, in Dalferth and Block (eds), *Hope*, 67–88; Nancy E. Snow, ‘Hope as an Intellectual Virtue’, in Michael Austin (ed.), *Virtues in Action: New Essays in Applied Virtue Ethics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), 153-170.

<sup>17</sup> Pettit, ‘Hope and its Place’, 153-154.

in a particular way. As McCormick puts it, ‘For a mental state to count as hope it needs to take up space, as it were, in out [sic] mental landscape. Its dominating presence is what allows it to be such a powerful force.’<sup>18</sup>

If ‘standard hope’ is insufficient, the question is how to move beyond it: ‘What is the missing X-factor or X-arrangement?’<sup>19</sup> This concern is prominent in contemporary research on hope and can be broken down into three related considerations that arise from the action and interaction of hope as it shows up in human experience: (i) the relationship between hope and a phenomenological account of human agency; (ii) the rationality of hope; (iii) the interpersonal (‘hope in’ another or others) and communal (‘hope that’ along with another or others) nature of hope. We will expand briefly on these three considerations.

First is the desire to move beyond a conceptual to an action-oriented account of hope. This is in line with a broader transition in analytic philosophy from the linguistic analysis of the twentieth century to a more engaged mode, moving beyond a restricted intellectual focus to take into account practical concerns of motivation and affection. Philosophers have returned to the theme of hope, seeking to offer a better experiential account and elucidate hope’s pragmatic value. The ‘standard’ view is not dismissed but there is a widely accepted need for it to be supplemented with (at least) a third condition. This condition is proposed variously as ‘visualisation’ (Bovens),<sup>20</sup> ‘one’s attitude to a relevant external factor’ (Meirav),<sup>21</sup> and ‘cognitive resolve’ (Pettit).<sup>22</sup> These proposals differ in emphasis but are variations on a theme, ‘what they share is the idea that if one hopes for something, as opposed to *merely* wanting it, this

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<sup>18</sup> Miriam Schleifer McCormick, ‘Rational Hope’, *Philosophical Explorations* 20:sup.1 (2017), 131.

<sup>19</sup> Pettit, ‘Hope and its Place’, 154.

<sup>20</sup> See Bovens, ‘The Value of Hope’, 667-681.

<sup>21</sup> See Ariel Meirav, ‘The Nature of Hope’, *Ratio* 22 (2009), 216-233.

<sup>22</sup> See Pettit, ‘Hope and its Place’.

will have some effect on how one acts or where one focuses one's energy'.<sup>23</sup>

Adrienne Martin seeks to draw the various emphases together in her phenomenological account of hope, which argues that 'the inadequacy of the orthodox definition of hope is most salient in relation to a certain set of cases where a person "hopes against hope"'.<sup>24</sup> Here, her approach draws on the idea of 'radical hope', found most prominently in the work of Jonathan Lear.<sup>25</sup> Martin acknowledges in a footnote that this understanding of hope has its origin in the theological premises that accompany St Paul's account of Abraham in Romans 4:18.<sup>26</sup>

Second, reconsidering the way in which hope is understood by focussing on the importance of hope in human agency brings the rationality of hope into view. On the 'standard' account, hope is rational if the expectation that accompanies a desired outcome has a numerical probability between 0 and 1. Hope is not rational in cases where an outcome is impossible or certain, otherwise hope is a legitimate attitude for a rational agent. This understanding offered a clear way to account for hope's rationality but it did so at the cost of the concept of hope itself: if hope is such a weak propositional attitude that it takes very little for hope to be rational, does hope have much conceptual value over desire, wanting or wishing? For some, it is a strength of hope that it has a lower cognitive bar than belief and so can be useful as a rational attitude in cases where belief is not justified.<sup>27</sup> For others, this low cognitive demand is the problem with hope, which is often drawn on in political discourse in a way

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<sup>23</sup> McCormick, 'Rational Hope', 129.

<sup>24</sup> Martin specifies two features of hope against hope: 'It is hope for an outcome that, first, amounts to overcoming or at least abiding some profound challenge to one's values or welfare; and, second, it is an extremely improbable hope.' Martin, *How we Hope*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> See Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Martin, *How we Hope*, 22 n.5.

<sup>27</sup> See Louis P. Pojman, 'Faith, Doubt and Hope', in *Contemporary Classics in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Loyal D. Rue and Ann Loads (La Salle: Open Court, 1991), 183-207.

whereby its rhetorical power outstrips its rational basis.<sup>28</sup> Moving beyond the ‘standard’ view helps to distinguish hope from desire by including agential commitment of some kind in the concept of hope. However, the rationality question remains: hope might help us to exercise our agency and bring with it positive psychological benefits, but does that make it rational to hope? Might not the relationship between hope and an augmented sense of agency make it harder for a person to rightly attune her subjective assessment that a hoped-for future will actually pertain?<sup>29</sup> What is more, recent appeals to the concept of ‘radical hope’—free from its theological moorings—in order to engage a seemingly uncertain future for global liberal democracy, raise the issue of how such suprarational hope can be rationally evaluated.<sup>30</sup>

What guards our hopes from irrationality masked by self-deception or groupthink? Might we not be better advised to come to terms with things as they are, suppressing our hope for the future rather than seeking a way to justify it? A number of recent articles resist this conclusion, appealing in various ways to the pragmatic as well as theoretical rationality of hope. Pettit argues that the pragmatic benefit of hope in terms of productive human agency is itself enough to make hope practically rational, and if self-deception is interpreted as active cognitive resolve ‘to act and react as if things were otherwise’, it is ‘at least evidentially not irrational’.<sup>31</sup> Martin also focuses on practical reason, accounting for the rationality of ‘hope against hope’

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<sup>28</sup> See Roger Scruton, *The Uses of Pessimism and the Danger of False Hope* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Bovens, ‘Value of Hope’, 680.

<sup>30</sup> The appeal to ‘radical hope’ as a way of responding to seeming reversals in the progress of liberal democracy is a prominent theme of a volume of essays commissioned and edited by Carolina de Robertis in the wake of the 2016 USA election. Carolina de Robertis (ed.), *Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times* (London: Virago Press, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Pettit, ‘Hope and its Place’, 162.

by drawing on a theory of incorporation such that practical benefits of hoping in terms of human agency can be called on to provide a justificatory rationale for hope itself.<sup>32</sup> McCormick seems to have a stronger grasp of the evidential burden that rational hope must take into account, holding together practical and theoretical assessments for hope's rationality. Taking the view that 'hope is deemed 'rational' if, overall, it allows for an augmentation rather than diminishment of agency', she offers four 'relevant dimensions of assessment' that include both epistemic and pragmatic criteria.<sup>33</sup> This follows Victoria McGeer's practical distinction between 'hoping well' and 'hoping badly' to argue that rational hope entails theoretical and practical aspects being held in balance.<sup>34</sup>

The recognition of the need to go beyond the probabilistic theoretical rationality of hope on the 'standard' account that unites these recent approaches is important. A more developed understanding of hope does bring into view hope's pragmatic justification and practical rationality. However, none of these accounts provides a reliable way to move beyond the ambition of integration. One of the strengths of understanding hope as a virtue is that it offers a framework within which 'good hope' can be habituated: a rational order that holds together theoretical and practical reason in a teleological understanding of human life oriented towards the fulfilment of the good.

A third consideration in recent work is hope's relational quality. Both Meirav and McGeer highlight the interpersonal nature of hope, arguing the importance of the

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<sup>32</sup> Martin, *Hope against Hope*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> McCormick, 'Rational Hope', 134, 132. McCormick's four criteria are: (i) The likelihood of the hoped-for outcome obtaining; (ii) The goodness or significance of the hoped-for outcome; (iii) The significance and the benefits to the agent of having the attitude; (iv) The likelihood of hope having an effect on the outcome.

<sup>34</sup> See McGeer, 'Art of Good Hope', 100-127.

connection between hope and trust.<sup>35</sup> Martin also argues that ‘hope plays a crucial role in our standard ways of relating to each other “interpersonally” (and to ourselves intrapersonally)’.<sup>36</sup> To place hope in a person is ‘to relate to her as a rational agent, because it means holding up principles to her as rationally aspirational’.<sup>37</sup> McGeer adds an important perspective to this picture of the interpersonal nature of hope by considering the communal nature of how hope is developed. She draws on the idea of hope being developed through ‘parental scaffolding’ and sustained responsively in view of ‘peer scaffolding’ that helps a person to take proper responsibility for their own agency.<sup>38</sup> Hope, on this account, is not merely interpersonal but communal, the agency of an individual always formed by and functioning within a wider communal context:

Perhaps, the most surprising conclusion... is the extent to which an individual’s capacity for hoping well depends on that individual’s being responsive to the hopes of others and, beyond that, participating in or even building a community of others who are likewise responsive to hopeful lives beyond their own. If this analysis is right, it shows that our success as individual hopers has an irreducibly communal dimension: we cannot hope well without taking a hopeful interest in the hopes of others and vice versa.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Substantial trust in others is critically dependent upon our capacity to feel hopeful about them, about their capacities and dispositions as agents, as well as hopeful about how these capacities and dispositions can be positively affected by our actively and explicitly putting our trust in them.’ Victoria McGeer, ‘Trust, Hope and Empowerment’, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86:2 (2008), 243. For Meirav, the relation between hope and trust is implicit in his argument that hope entails resignation to the support of an external factor, conceived as a person, and perceived to be good. Meirav, ‘The Nature of Hope’, 230-233.

<sup>36</sup> Martin, *How we Hope*, 21.

<sup>37</sup> Martin, *How we Hope*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> ‘In parental scaffolding, children are not initially capable of formulating and pursuing hopes in their own right. Part of the parent’s job, therefore, is to teach the child how to hope. By contrast, peer-scaffolding involves responding to agents as individuals who are already self-scaffolders—that is, as individuals who can and must take the lead in articulating hopes for their own lives and whose own powers of agency must be the powers that get them there, if any powers can.’ McGeer, ‘Art of Good Hope’, 118.

<sup>39</sup> McGeer, ‘Art of Good Hope’, 125.

McGeer moves from this communal understanding of hope to suggest the importance of collective hope as a further category: ‘Shared hopes become collective when individuals see themselves as hoping and so acting in concert for ends that they communally endorse.’<sup>40</sup> This idea raises further questions regarding the structure of communal life needed for a community’s hopes to be well-directed and successfully maintained: What happens when hopes collide? How can hopes of different members of a community be successfully coordinated? Is hope transferable within a community such that those who find it hard to hope can be sustained in hope by others around them? The relational quality of hope that has been variously recognised opens out onto these questions.

The purpose of this brief survey has been to show how the desire to move beyond the ‘standard’ account has led to a renewal of interest in hope and foregrounded the importance of agency, rationality, and community in understanding its nature and value. However, if the strength of analytic enquiry is to open up a concept like hope, illuminating its workings and revealing the concepts to which it is related, the weakness of an analytic philosophical approach is its reticence when it comes to identifying an integrated framework that can hold the different aspects together. It is in this regard that the pre-modern understanding of hope as a virtue presents itself as promising. Whilst there is inevitable variance in theories of virtue, a basic understanding recognises virtues as moral dispositions, acquired or cultivated by habitual action, constitutive of human flourishing, and oriented as part of a wider community towards a shared notion of the good.

Taking hope as a virtue addresses the same three aspects observed in the analytic literature on hope (agency, rationality, community). On a virtue

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<sup>40</sup> McGeer, ‘Art of Good Hope’, 125.

understanding, the integrated nature of hope as a practical disposition holds together the emotional and agential aspects sought by extended versions of ‘standard’ hope. The virtue of hope also brings with it an intrinsic rationality. If we accept that the hopeful agent is oriented towards a conception of the good within a certain ontological frame, hope is a virtue with epistemic as well as practical importance. As Alan Mittleman puts it, ‘Hope knows and affirms the value that inheres in being as such.’<sup>41</sup> This teleological, eudaimonistic understanding of human life gives the virtue of hope (as properly directed towards life’s *telos*) its inherent rationality and ensures its stability. This contrasts with modern hope that assumes a fact-value dichotomy and takes its fundamental definition as an a-rational emotion or longing. The ‘standard’ account, as we have seen, includes a rationality check in terms of probabilistic expectation but such a hope is ‘spontaneous and cheap’, and so easily inverted.<sup>42</sup> It is not clear that merely extending or supplementing the ‘standard’ account can overcome this problem.

Understanding hope as a virtue thus engages the concerns to relate hope to personal agency and to account for its rationality. What is more, insofar as accounts of moral virtue are related to substantive, communal accounts of the good, for hope to be a virtue already implies a community within which hope is learned and habituated. Hope is not first an individual attitude with an additional communal element. Instead, an individual person hopes well insofar as she learns to hope along with others for the shared good(s) towards which a particular society is aimed. The parental and peer scaffolding that McGeer highlights as important in the development of hope is not simply a mechanism by which an individual’s hope is developed, it is itself an expression of a communal hope that seeks the formation of all members of the

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<sup>41</sup> Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age*, 2.

community towards the good. As we shall see in turning to the account of hope as a virtue in Augustine, there are rich resources that both relate to and extend contemporary insights, and offer an integrated account that contemporary analytic understandings struggle to attain.

If a virtue account of hope seems to hold promise, it is also faced with its own difficulties. Central, perhaps, are the ontological, even theological, implications that this understanding would seem to import. One contemporary response is to seek to offer an account of the virtue of hope minus its ontological or axiological commitments. This is the approach of Adam Kadlac, who argues pragmatically for an understanding of virtue that focuses on the active practice of hope but conflates the thick terminology of virtue with the idea of ‘value’: ‘to ask whether hope is a virtue is to ask whether there is any particular value in being disposed to certain future possibilities in this way’.<sup>43</sup> He brackets ontological questions in favour of the pragmatic benefit of active hope:

The value of hope does not lie in the goodness of its object but rather in its effect on the one who hopes—the ways in which it helps one to accurately assess future possibilities, persevere in the pursuit of one’s ends, and relate to other human beings in life-enhancing ways.<sup>44</sup>

In a professedly secular society, there is understandable pressure to follow Kadlac’s professedly ‘neutral’ understanding of the virtue of hope. However, Kadlac’s pursuit results in an account of hope little different from those offered by recent analytic philosophy. It is not clear what his description of hope in the historically weighty language of virtue contributes in addition to other action-oriented accounts. Pushing in the opposite direction, and digging more deeply into the specific ontological commitments necessary for hope to be understood as a virtue, leads us to theological

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<sup>43</sup> Kadlac, ‘The Virtue of Hope’, 341.

<sup>44</sup> Kadlac, ‘The Virtue of Hope’, 342.

commitments that have fallen out of fashion. Whilst this path might also seem like a dead end, if there is hope in the category of virtue, might we not consider again the theological understanding of hope that the modern world—perhaps too hastily—left behind?

Three reasons suggest the potential value of such a reconsideration. Firstly, philosophical literature on hope is already making use of the idea of ‘hope against hope’ that has its origin in the biblical hope of Abraham as understood by St Paul (Romans 4:18). Jonathan Lear’s account of ‘radical hope’ is widely referenced as a way of conceiving hope that brings the experiential benefits of transcendent hope without the need to commit to a specific account of ultimate reality. However, whilst an experiential account of radical hope might not need to describe its presuppositions, such presuppositions exist nonetheless. If ‘radical hope’ has its origins in the thought world of the biblical narrative, pushing into that thought world would seem an obvious step.

Secondly, a historical understanding of hope leads to the importance of theological commitments, not in place of a philosophical understanding of hope but in conjunction with it—the two discourses having a historical integration rather than existing as separate disciplines as is often the case today. The pre-modern account of hope from which modern hope emerged relied on an understanding that is both theological and philosophical. Aquinas’ account of hope as a passion and a virtue is well known, drawing on Aristotle as well as Augustine. Augustine’s own understanding drew on Plotinus as well as St Paul. Even in the account of hope offered by Immanuel Kant, the question ‘What may I hope for?’ is simultaneously rational and religious. Kant departs significantly from orthodox commitments of classical theology but his understanding of hope nonetheless depends on theistic

commitments by way of rational belief, the final intervention of God to unite virtue and happiness allowed as a postulate of practical reason.

Thirdly, and in line with this historical recognition (variously conceived) of the relation between hope and theism, it seems important as a matter of intellectual honesty to recognize that hope entails implicit or explicit metaphysical commitments. ‘In hoping we take a metaphysical stand. We assert the reality of a certain kind of world.’<sup>45</sup> If this is right then it follows that an understanding of hope must at some point take into account its assumptions and submit them for inquiry along with it.<sup>46</sup> It is against this background that this chapter will turn to Augustine’s account of hope. The line of argument follows from the recognition of the appeal of hope as a virtue to acknowledge that the virtue of hope has existed historically on specific theological presuppositions. If we find that the idea of hope as a virtue has value, perhaps we might look afresh at the presuppositions upon which it was based.

It is thus in seeking to explore the presuppositions involved in understanding hope as a virtue that we are led to St Augustine. Hope, understood in the theological frame of creation and redemption, and centred supremely on the person and work of the incarnate Christ, is a central theme in Augustine’s Christian thought. This conclusion, against the pessimistic Augustine of modern caricature, was the burden of the previous chapter. In this chapter, an examination of the theological vision of Augustine’s *Enchiridion*, reading the conceptual analysis of hope in *Enchiridion* 2.8 in conjunction with Augustine’s wider theological framework, will highlight the way in which Augustinian hope, inseparable from faith and love, orders life forwards

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<sup>45</sup> Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> This is not to say that all discussions of hope must be *explicitly* theological. There is much to be gained from recent phenomenological accounts of hope that leave metaphysical questions to one side. However, the pragmatic benefit of bracketing theology or metaphysics does not negate the reality that metaphysical assumptions continue to shape the nature and limits of enquiry.

towards the goal of human fulfilment found in the worship of God, that is, towards the eternal life of the eschatological City. This future is now received and awaited in the joyful hope of the church, which should be understood in its present existence as the heavenly city on its way home, its worship as the present, formative expression of the future it is actively living towards. The church is a community of hope oriented liturgically beyond the transient existence of the material world and the eventual vanity of hope that seeks ultimate fulfilment within its limits. Its hope is not yet realised in sight (Augustine frequently employs a contrast between *spes* and *res*, hope and the thing hoped for) but it is a certain hope on the basis of faith in Christ, guaranteed by Christ's resurrection and ascension. In Christ heaven and earth are already united, his transformed earthly body now existing in heavenly time and space as the proleptic fulfilment of human becoming. One day Christ's present, which is the church's future, will be realized as the created order is brought to its consummation under Christ. Creation will be renewed, transformed into God's dwelling place, the eternal home that is the ultimate goal of all earthly longing, the place where love of God and neighbour are forever fulfilled (*ciu.* 20.14).<sup>47</sup>

Within this theological framework, hope is not only an important theme, it is specifically understood by Augustine as a *virtue*, an excellence of human life inasmuch as it actively orients life towards the fulfilment of God's gracious gift of everlasting love. For the Christian believer—a member of the pilgrim church on its way home—faith, hope, and love are 'the virtues proper to this present life' (*en. Ps.* 83.7). The restless heart might long for home (*conf.* 1.1) but it is the virtues of faith, hope, and love, that are needed to carry it, the wings on which it can fly.<sup>48</sup> This

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<sup>47</sup> See Gerald Bonner, 'Augustine's Thoughts on this World and Hope for the Next', *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* (1994), 85-103.

<sup>48</sup> 'My heart has found itself a home. It plies its wings in the virtues proper to this present life, in faith

chapter will focus specifically on Augustine's understanding of hope as a virtue, an understanding that relies heavily on the writing of St Paul and stands in marked contrast to the ambivalent evaluation of hope in classical philosophy.

At a time when many philosophers and theologians are returning to the virtues tradition as holding promise for a meaningful understanding and integrated practice of moral life, this investigation of Augustinian hope is particularly important. Whilst Aquinas is most often referred to as the source for modern appropriations of the virtue of hope, it was, after all, with a significant debt to Augustine (through Lombard) that Aquinas' understanding of hope was formed. A turn to hope as a virtue leads us back to Augustine, and his appropriation of St Paul, who in turn drew on the example of Abraham (Rom. 4:18), at the beginning of a line of understanding hope that flows through the theological and intellectual history of the West. If hope is to be recovered as a virtue in distinction from the modern transition to hope as an emotion or psychological disposition, untethered from ontological commitments, adjoined to but not integrated with rational human function, Augustine is an essential source.<sup>49</sup>

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and hope and charity, using them to fly to its home.' *en. Ps.* 83.7

<sup>49</sup> The importance of Augustine has been overlooked by recent accounts of the virtue of hope and its contemporary potential, which focus heavily on Aquinas. It seems that the pessimistic interpretation of Augustine continues to bar his potential as a source. David Elliot's excellent account of the virtue of hope in Christian ethics, for example, asserts a strong distinction between Augustine and Aquinas when it comes to the value of life in the present. He argues that it is Aquinas' recognition of the real but imperfect relation between virtue and joy in the present that 'heads off from the outset any model of hope that is based on a denigration of this life and world'. How, exactly, Augustine's account fails in this regard is an unstated assumption. Whilst Aquinas' systematic account of hope is undoubtedly an important source, justifying its potential by distinguishing it from a caricatured Augustinian otherworldliness is unnecessary and unhelpful. David Elliot, *Hope and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 5.

### 3. A theological virtue within a theological ontology

The previous chapter noted that Augustine's understanding of hope was marginalized by the assessment of his thought according to the alien conceptual framework of modern optimism and pessimism. In order to appreciate the importance of hope in Augustine, it needs to be understood in accord with Augustine's theological ontology. The aim here is to give an account of how hope is understood as a virtue in Augustine's thought by relating the ontological and narrational framework of the way of ascent to God to Augustine's understanding of the theological virtue of hope itself.

The ontological framework for Augustine's understanding of hope is one he adapts from the Platonic understanding of spiritual ascent.<sup>50</sup> His theological and explicitly Christological adaptation of this motif is nowhere more evident than in his exegesis of the Psalms of Ascent (119-133 in the Latin translation used by Augustine). These Psalms seem to have been prominent in Augustine's Christian life from his conversion. Having withdrawn 'the service of my tongue from the market of speechifying', Augustine describes how he and his friends set off from Milan to Cassiciacum with the service of their tongues newly directed: 'we climbed up from

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<sup>50</sup> Plotinus' account of the soul's flight from its captivity to material beauty as a journey of ascent to the vision of Beauty itself (*Enneads* 1.6.8) is clearly in the background of Augustine's understanding. Plotinus speaks of a return 'to the beloved Fatherland' and so to 'the Father' as a journey of ascent that is 'not a journey for the feet' but for the soul: 'The Fatherland to us is There whence we have come, and There is The Father. What then is our course, what the manner of our flight? This is not a journey for the feet; the feet bring us only from land to land; nor need you think of coach or ship to carry you away; all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see: you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth right of all, which few turn to use.' Plotinus, *enn.*, 1.6.8 (63). On the particular importance of the triad of faith, hope, and love in distinguishing Augustine's mature understanding of spiritual reform from the neoplatonic understanding of the soul's escape, see M. G. Jackson, 'Faith, Hope, Charity and Prayer in St Augustine', in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented to the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford in 1987* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1989), 265–70.

the valley of weeping singing our pilgrim-song' (*conf.* 9.2). This reference to Psalm 84 as an interpretative key is a prominent motif in Augustine's later commentaries on the Psalms of Ascent, which he preached at Hippo between December 406 and April 407.<sup>51</sup> Augustine reads these Psalms Christologically as speaking of the church's pilgrimage as the body of Christ on her way through the trials that attend life in 'the valley of weeping' that is the fallen material world (*en. Ps.* 119.1). The journey is 'run not with our feet but with our desire' (*en. Ps.* 83.4; 119.1, 8) towards the goal of ascent that is the beatific vision of God in the heavenly Jerusalem, 'a place of happiness beyond all telling' (*en. Ps.* 119.1).<sup>52</sup> The church walks by faith not by sight towards the fulfilment of this eschatological reality (*en. Ps.* 123.2), making progress along the path of faith—that is faith that works through love—which is the path of spiritual maturity following the pattern of Christ.<sup>53</sup> Christ-like humility is thus the way of ascent and stands opposed to pride, which comes before a fall (*en. Ps.* 119.2; 120.5; 122.3; 123.13), preferring to grasp the transient gold of the material world than

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<sup>51</sup> The dynamic evident in the Psalms of ascent is an important presence elsewhere in Augustine's writings not least as the controlling framework of *De Trinitate* and in *De Doctrina Christiana*: 'Since, therefore, we must enjoy to the full that truth which lives unchangeably, and since, within it, God the Trinity, the author and creator of everything, takes thought for the things that he has created, our minds must be purified so that they are able to perceive that light and then hold fast to it. Let us consider this process of cleansing as a trek, or a voyage, to our homeland; though progress towards the one who is ever present is not made through space, but through integrity of purpose and character. This we would be unable to do, if wisdom itself had not deigned to adapt itself to our great weakness and offered us a pattern for living; and it has actually done so in human form because we too are human' (*doctr. chr.* 1.22).

<sup>52</sup> Augustine speaks interchangeably of this ascent as an ascent of the heart (*cor*) (e.g. *en. Ps.* 83:10; 119.8; 122.3; 123.1), of the desire (*desiderium*) (e.g. *en. Ps.* 83.4; 122.4), of the loving will, or affections (*affectus*) (e.g. *en. Ps.* 121.11; 122.4; 123.1), and of the soul (*anima*) (e.g. *en. Ps.* 119.8; 121.1).

<sup>53</sup> The theme of pilgrimage that is so important to Augustine is clearly presented as a journey of progressive moral formation that is located *in the church*: 'Because you are children of the Church, and have made progress in the Church, and are making progress in the Church, and will make progress in the Church if you are not doing so already, and, if you have already made progress, need to be helped in the Church to make even more' (*en. Ps.* 120.8). See Sarah Stewart-Kroeker, *Pilgrimage as Moral and Aesthetic Formation in Augustine's Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 163-202.

live by faith in the hope of the unseen city that is the home of true and incorruptible wealth (*en. Ps.* 123.10). Whilst faith is not yet perfected in the sight that will be accompanied by eternal satisfaction in God and praise of God (*en. Ps.* 122.3), the way of ascent is a way of joy in the midst of suffering on account of the certain hope that belongs to the body of Christ, secure on account of Christ's resurrection to life as its head (*en. Ps.* 120.6; 122.1, 9; 123.7). Augustine's doctrine of *totus Christus* (Christ understood along with his church as head and body) is accompanied by a theological emphasis on God's eternal and unchanging self-satisfaction. In strong distinction from neoplatonism, spiritual ascent does not challenge the Creator-creature distinction but has its goal in the church's Christological participation in God, that is, as the body of Christ participating in the life of its head. This goal is realised in the heavenly exultation with Christ after death that is presented as an 'escape' from the suffering of the material world under the conditions of sin and mortality. This 'escape', however, is not proposed as a rejection of creation but its completion for it will ultimately be an embodied reality. Whilst the Psalm singer's 'pilgrimage is not a bodily one' but an ascent that is 'in his heart' (*en. Ps.* 119.8; *cf.* 122.3), 'bodies that were formerly subject to decay' will one day be returned to the saints in a transformed state of glory, given back as 'bodies free from corruption' (*en. Ps.* 123.3).

It is to this particular theological (Christological, eschatological, doxological) ontology, with its intrinsic *telos*, that Augustine's understanding of the virtue of hope is related. Hope is the theological virtue that accompanies faith and love, directing life forwards along the way of spiritual formation that Augustine continues to speak of in neoplatonic language as an ascent to God: 'Our ascent must be made in the heart, by a good intention, in faith and hope and charity, in a desire for eternity and everlasting

life' (*en. Ps.* 120.3).<sup>54</sup>

According to Augustine, virtue is the way of a happy life and can be summed up as perfect love of God. The classical virtues—temperance, fortitude, justice, prudence—are 'four forms of love' (*mor.* 15.25). A life of virtue does not entail the abandonment of all other loves but 'the ordering of love' (*ciu.* 15.22), rationally directing life to the beatific love of God as the highest good. The capacity for virtue that is the capacity for the good life is given universally to rational humanity (*ciu.* 22.24). The fulfilment of this capacity in a life of virtue, the reward of which is God himself (*ciu.* 22.30), is a divine gift, 'given solely by the grace of God in Christ to the children of the promise and of the kingdom' (*ciu.* 22.24). It necessarily entails both humility and hope.<sup>55</sup>

Augustine by no means denies the goodness of the world, speaking in elevated terms of the many blessings of life as the blessings of God that can be known even apart from him. However, it is ultimately towards a heavenly fulfilment that specific virtues are properly directed and united.<sup>56</sup> Virtue directs life towards its eschatological goal that is the love of God above all things, 'for that is how it is blessed' (*diu. qu.*

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<sup>54</sup> This understanding of progressive moral formation, structured by the triad of faith, hope, and love is ubiquitous in *en. Ps.*; cf. *doctr. chr.* 1.37-1.40; *trin.* 15.28.51.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine's eschatological and Christological understanding of virtue held Christ as the only perfect exemplar. Human virtue is patterned on Christ and most fully pursued in Spiritual union with him as part of his ecclesial body on a journey towards eschatological conformity to the perfected life of its head. The virtue of the greatest human exemplars, Augustine emphasizes, is exhibited along with the humble confession of sin (*s.* 125.6; 397.1; *conf.* 4.11), the integral relation between humility and virtue resulting from the fact that 'vices are overcome through the love of God, which is always the gift of God's grace'. Joseph J. McInerney, *The Greatness of Humility: St Augustine on Moral Excellence* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 94. The importance of the virtue of hope and its relation to humility is not explicitly developed by McInerney and can usefully supplement his account.

<sup>56</sup> 'Indeed, the powers or virtues we need to practice in our lives are four in number; they are described by many writers, and found also in scripture... These virtues are granted to us now in the valley of weeping, but from them we progress to a single virtue. And what will that be? The virtue of contemplating God alone' (*en. Ps.* 83.11).

30). ‘Your virtue lies in your love’, Augustine says of the heavenly city (*en. Ps.* 121.12), affirming the position that he outlined as early as 388: ‘I hold virtue to be nothing else than perfect love of God’ (*mor.* 15.25).<sup>57</sup> Hope is a virtue for Augustine insofar as it relates to this love. ‘To love God freely’, Augustine exhorted his congregation, is ‘to hope in God for God’ (*s.* 334.3). Hope serves to guide love onwards to its heavenly goal.

Of course, Augustine recognizes that all people have some kind of hope and that mundane hopes are multiple and are directed to all kinds of perceived future goods. ‘Nobody in fact can live any style of life without those three sentiments of the soul (*animae adfectionibus*); of believing, hoping, loving’ (*s.* 198.2). What Augustine offers is a theological account of why this should be the case and a way of understanding, and (re)ordering, the multiple hopes of life in relation to the ultimate hope of human happiness, the desire for which he takes to be universal (*trin.* 13.4.7). He does not place earthly and heavenly hopes in absolute but relative opposition, focusing on the primacy of the latter and seeking to delegitimize the pursuit of earthly

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<sup>57</sup> Without the ‘true worship of the true God’ (*ep.* 155.17), there is a sort of virtue that serves a civic function, but it remains, from the perspective of Augustine’s theological understanding, a simulacrum. Apart from the humble way of Christ, followed by way of confession, virtue is distanced from God’s love as its origin and end. Whilst it may be ordered towards proximate goods, it remains disconnected (and disordered) in relation to the ultimate good of the beatific love of God (*ciu.* 5.19, *ep.* 155). Prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice are all fulfilled when they are filled out with the love of God (*ep.* 155.13, 16). The distinction between the virtue of the philosophers and that which Augustine commends to Macedonius in *ep.* 155 as ‘true’ is that the latter accords with ‘the truthful worship of the true God’ (*ep.* 155.2). Both pursue blessedness through virtue, which is to be commended above the search for fulfilment in material things. The difference is that the philosophers ‘still wanted to be the authors and founders... of their own life of blessedness... rather than asking for it from the source of all virtues and still hoping’ (*ep.* 155.2). If the fundamental distinction is one of ultimate commitment, the contrast in the two ways of virtue comes down to humility and to hope. It is important to recognize that Augustine’s argument does not dismiss the civic value of the cardinal virtues. Quite the opposite: what he argues is that the best way to guarantee their value is as manifestations of the love of God on the way to their fulfilment. See the brief but helpful discussion in E. M. Atkins and R. J. Dodaro, ‘Introduction’, in Augustine, *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xvi-xvii.

hopes *as ultimate* for as such they are ‘vain’ (*vana*) (*conf.* 3.4.7). The Augustinian virtue of hope is the virtue that takes up, re-orders, and actively directs earthly hopes to their heavenly home. It is profoundly theological, based on the trust that such a heavenly home in fact exists as the fulfilment of human beatitude and that there is a reliable way open to attain it. For Augustine, that way home is revealed in and attained by Christ. Hope rests on the recognition of life as given within history as it is most deeply understood as God’s time of creation and redemption brought to its fulfilment in Christ. Hope orders life forwards in view of the opportunity for life in Christ that is held open by God’s continued patience (*conf.* 1.18.28-29). Augustine could not be more explicit: ‘With good reason is there solid hope for me in [Christ], because you will heal all my infirmities through him who sits at your right hand and intercedes for us. Were it not so, I would despair’ (*conf.* 10.43.69).

This understanding of hope brings into view the inseparable relation between faith, hope, and love, which we will go on to consider. Hope, we shall see, is the virtue by which life is ordered to the future fulfilment of love in the eschaton. These three theological virtues are added by Augustine to the four classical virtues, ‘which the philosophers were also able to investigate with remarkable industry... For it is right that these three not be omitted, without which we know that no one can worship or please God’ (*ep.* 171A). For Augustine, therefore, good hope relates to true worship (*ep.* 155.2). Hope, like faith and love, is universal (*s.* 198.2) but it cannot be properly evaluated in isolation from its object(s). Only hope ordered ultimately towards God is truly a moral virtue for Augustine, and hope wrongly aimed can be a vice: ‘What poisons charity is the hope of acquiring and keeping temporal things’ (*diu. qu.* 36.1).

#### 4. Faith, hope, and love

Here we turn to Augustine's *Enchiridion*, a summary theological 'handbook' dating from between 419 and 422, which he also referred to as *On Faith, Hope, and Love*.<sup>58</sup> This late work has a twofold importance for our understanding of Augustinian hope: it contains Augustine's most explicit teaching on the theme, and it played an important role in shaping the understanding of hope in the Western theological tradition through Lombard and Aquinas.<sup>59</sup> However, interpretation of Augustine's short theological handbook is not without its share of 'puzzles'. Not the least of these is the seeming imbalance between the large proportion of the work devoted to faith and the little that explicitly relates to hope and love.<sup>60</sup> Why so little hope? Does the

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<sup>58</sup> Augustine uses the longer title *On Faith, Hope, and Love*, in *ench.* 33.122 and *retr.* 2.63. The date of the work is determined by the death of Jerome (c.419), which is alluded to in *Enchiridion* 23.87 and the composition of Augustine's *The Eight Questions of Dulcitius* (422), which is mentioned in *Enchiridion* 1.10. See Ramsey, 'Introduction', 9; Rivière, 'Introduction', 80.

<sup>59</sup> See Peter Lombard, *The Sentences, Book 3: On the Incarnation of the Word*, trans. Giulio Silano (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies: Toronto, 2008), 3.26; Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae*, trans. Cyril Vollert, S. J. (London: B. Herder, 1947). Aquinas quotes *ench.* 1.3 at the opening of his *Compendium* (*comp.* 1.1) pointing readers towards Augustine's *Enchiridion* as the work on which his own is modeled. Both works are structured around the virtues of faith, hope, and love, relating them to the Apostle's creed and Lord's Prayer in similar manner. Aquinas also draws heavily on Augustine's understanding of hope in *Summa Theologiae*, drawing widely from Augustine's works, which he likely cites from *florilegia*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Hyde Park: New Advent, 2008), II-II, qq.17-22. Specific references to Augustine's *Enchiridion* are at *ST.* II-II, 17.3, 18.3.

<sup>60</sup> The assessment that the *Enchiridion* has little to say about hope is widespread: 'It is well-known that the father of the church dealt extensively with 'faith' in his *Enchiridion* but cursory [sic] with "hope" and "love".' J. H. Van Wyk, 'Christian Identity: Augustine on Faith, Hope, and Love', in Eduardus Van der Borgh (ed.), *Christian Identity, Studies in Reformed Theology* 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 92. 'Given the relative neglect of hope and love in the work, many have found it structurally imbalanced, perhaps even doctrinally dubious.' Thomas S. Hibbs, 'Introduction', in Augustine, *Enchiridion*, trans. Shaw, vii. Ramsey observes that hope receives 'short shrift' in the book and goes on to refer to 'the author's extreme pessimism about ungraced human nature... in contrast to the more optimistic Pelagian view.' Boniface Ramsey, 'Introduction', in Augustine, *The Augustine Catechism: The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity*, trans. Bruce Harbert, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1999), 12, 19. A cursory analysis of the well-attested manuscript tradition of 122 numbered sections (see J. Rivière, 'Introduction', in Augustine, *Exposés Généraux de la Foi, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, vol. 9, trans. and ed. J. Rivière (Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1947), 92, highlights the issue:

*Enchiridion* in fact support Moltmann's assertion that there is a distinct lack of hope in Augustinian theology? This chapter will resist such a conclusion, arguing that it fails to grasp the theological integration of Augustine's account of hope as it exists in inseparable interrelation with faith and love—an understanding present from Augustine's earliest Christian understanding.<sup>61</sup> The *Enchiridion* does not represent a pessimistic theological vision that highlights original sin and sovereign grace but has little place for hope. It represents a developed theological account of the way of wisdom in accord with the virtues of faith, hope, and love, that was present in Augustine's writing from Cassiciacum. To establish this continuity, a brief account of hope amongst the theological virtues in *On the Happy Life* (386) will be followed by a more sustained treatment of the same theme in the purportedly 'hopeless' *Enchiridion*.

From his earliest writings Augustine's emphasis on hope is as one of the Pauline triad along with faith and love. The three virtues are present together in *On the Happy Life* (*beata u.* 4.35) and prominent in the first book of the *Soliloquies* (*sol.* 1.1.3; 1.6.12-13; 1.13.23). *On the Happy Life* (386) vies with *Contra Academicos* as Augustine's first extant work.<sup>62</sup> It is a dialogue between Augustine and his friends that explores the happiness that is the highest human good, the final goal of all human activity. Faith, hope, and love are introduced by Monica at the end of the work, the climax of a series of profound, divinely inspired, interventions that puncture the

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12% contain introductory material relating to all three virtues, 82% are assigned to the exposition of faith, 4% to love, and only 2% to hope.

<sup>61</sup> Cavadini moves in this direction in a parenthetical comment: The focus on faith 'is not to underestimate the importance of hope or, especially, love, but only the correct faith will engender the appropriate order of hopes and loves... (and besides, many of the points he wants to make about hope and love are made in the process of summarizing the faith).' John Cavadini, 'Enchiridion', in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages*, 296.

<sup>62</sup> *On the Happy Life* was written 'not after but between the books *Contra Academicos*'. *retr.* 1.2.

dialogue and lead Augustine to remark, ‘Mother, you have really gained the mastery of the very stronghold of philosophy’ (*beat. u.* 2.10).<sup>63</sup> In order to appreciate their importance we need to follow the line of thought which precedes their introduction.

As the dialogue reaches its conclusion the reader is guided to the understanding that the philosophical pursuit of happiness finds its fulfilment in the attainment of the ‘fullness’ (*plenitudo*) that accords with the possession of the wisdom of God (*beat u.* 4.32-34). ‘This means to have God within the soul, that is, to enjoy God’ (*beata u.* 4.34).<sup>64</sup> However, ‘As long as we are still seeking, and not yet satiated by the fountain itself—to use our word—by fullness—we must confess that we have not yet reached our measure; therefore, notwithstanding the help of God, we are not yet wise and happy’ (*beata u.* 4.35). Three aspects of Augustine’s understanding highlight the importance and nature of hope: the threefold ‘not yet’ is notable, highlighting the need for hope; the presence of ‘the help of God’ makes that hope confident; and Augustine’s trinitarian understanding expressed as he goes on to cite the pronouncement of Christ in John 14:6 (‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’) reveals his understanding of ‘the help of God’ in a way that holds together the Trinity and Christology. The theology that underlies Augustine’s hope is inescapably Trinitarian:

This, then, is the full satisfaction of souls, this is the happy life: to recognise piously and completely the One through whom you are led into the truth, the nature of the truth you enjoy, and the bond that connects you with the supreme measure. Those three show to the intelligent man the one God, the one Substance excluding the variety of

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<sup>63</sup> In the context of the dialogue Monica’s interventions are surprising on account of her lack of philosophical training and also her gender: ‘Our mother exclaimed in such a way that we thought we had some great man in our midst’. *beata u.* 2.10. Augustine attributes Monica’s inspiration to God: ‘I became fully aware whence and from what divine source this flowed’. *beata u.* 2.10.

<sup>64</sup> This accords with Augustine’s later reflections on the dialogue: ‘We who were searching together agreed that there was no happy life apart from the perfect knowledge of God.’ *retr.* 1.2.

all vain and superstitious images. Our mother, recalling here those words that still deeply adhered in her memory, awoke to her faith, as it were, and, inflamed with joy, uttered this verse of our priest: ‘Help, O Trinity, those that pray.’ (*beata u.* 4.35; cf. John 14:6).

It will take Augustine many years until he is ready to unpack the theological content of this understanding in *De Trinitate*. For the moment, it is an understanding he has received from Ambrose, highlighted by Monica’s use of the bishop’s words in her exclamation: ‘Help, O Trinity, those that pray’ (*beata u.* 4.35).<sup>65</sup> To summarise Augustine’s position: the life of wisdom that is the life of happiness is presented at the climax of *On the Happy Life* as a way of life ‘not yet’ fulfilled but oriented in hope towards God, on whose help mankind depends, in whom mankind’s fulfilment is found. The life of wisdom is the way of Trinitarian confession that is the way of faith, hope, and love: ‘Indeed, this is undoubtedly the happy life, that is, the perfect life which we must assume that we can attain soon by a well-founded faith, a joyful hope, and an ardent love’ (*beata u.* 4.35).

As Augustine’s theological understanding developed, he modified this early view, revising his opinion on the ‘soon-ness’ of spiritual happiness to emphasize the goal of hope as the *bodily* fulfilment of the happy life in the life to come and not merely the perfection of the soul (as in *beata u.* 4.25).

I said that the happy life resided only in the soul of a wise person during the time of this life, in whatever state his body might be, although the Apostle hopes for the perfect knowledge of God—meaning that than which none greater can exist for a person—in the life to come, which alone can be called the happy life, when the incorruptible and immortal body will be subordinate to its spirit without any disturbance or reluctance (*retr.* 1.2).

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<sup>65</sup> This is the closing line of Ambrose’s hymn *Deus creator omnium*, evidently known by Augustine since he cites its opening lines in *conf.* 9.12.32.

It is often argued that this change of emphasis represents a ‘darkening’ of Augustine’s theological vision in conjunction with a more developed understanding of the fall. However, we shall see in the *Enchiridion* that Augustine’s developed understanding of original sin is only one side of a story that is fundamentally one of Christological development. Augustine did not fall away from philosophical optimism to theological pessimism, instead his theological conception of hope grew and developed along with his understanding of sin and grace. From hope focused on the life of the soul in *On the Happy Life*, Augustine’s historical Christology—Christ as the second Adam overcoming the fall and its effects—led him to argue (as in *retr.* 1.2 and as we shall see in *ench.*) for an embodied eschatological hope, a hope already present in history in the person of the ascended Christ.

Turning to the *Enchiridion*, a work structured by the theological virtues and containing a summary exposition of the Creed and Lord’s Prayer, we find Augustine’s most explicit conceptual account of hope (*ench.* 2.8). However, reading the work in search of Augustine’s theology of hope can be a deflating experience, leading some to argue that if we are looking for hope, we should look elsewhere.<sup>66</sup> The seeming imbalance between the large proportion of the work devoted to faith and the little that explicitly relates to hope and love is expressed by Boniface Ramsey’s observation that hope receives ‘short shrift’ in the book. A cursory analysis of 122 numbered sections, which are present in one prominent manuscript tradition, highlights the issue: 12% contain introductory material relating to all three virtues, 82% are assigned to the exposition of faith, 4% to love, and only 2% to hope. Ramsey argues that ‘Augustine himself does not provide a clue as to why the three virtues were dealt with

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<sup>66</sup> ‘In his *Enchiridion* Augustine gave very little attention to the theme of hope... Whoever wants to know more about the theme of hope should consult the church father’s great book on *De civitate Dei*.’ van Wyk, ‘Christian Identity’, 95-96.

as they were’, offering two possible solutions (neither of which say much for the importance of hope in Augustine): (i) Augustine was subject to the constraint of space and the necessity to give an adequate account of the tenets of the faith; (ii) ‘Faith is discussed at greatest length because it is the most “teachable” of the three virtues’.<sup>67</sup>

If there is little hope in terms of the allocation of space, Ramsey also highlights another issue, which seems to underscore the perception of hopelessness: the work’s emphasis on original sin. According to Ramsey, the *Enchiridion* reveals Augustine’s ‘extreme pessimism about ungraced human nature... in contrast to the more optimistic Pelagian view’.<sup>68</sup>

Add together these two issues and it is perhaps unsurprising that there is not much by way of a secondary literature on hope in the *Enchiridion*.<sup>69</sup> So far as I am aware, only one forthcoming book chapter explicitly considers what the *Enchiridion* can teach us about Augustine’s understanding of hope and the focus there is on elucidating the ‘grammar of hope’ in *Enchiridion* 2.8, drawing on passages from several of Augustine’s sermons and letters.<sup>70</sup> Does the *Enchiridion* in fact support the conclusion that there is precious little hope in Augustine’s theology? This chapter will resist such a conclusion, presenting an understanding of hope as it emerges through an integrated theological reading of the whole of Augustine’s handbook. On this reading, Augustine gives us an account of hope that emerges through the work and can be summarised according to five themes: (i) hope is doxological: with the virtues of faith

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<sup>67</sup> Ramsey, ‘Introduction’, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Ramsey, ‘Introduction’, 19.

<sup>69</sup> There is only a very limited secondary literature on the *Enchiridion* in any case. Introductions and articles include: John Cavadini, ‘*Enchiridion*’; Adolph von Harnack, ‘Analysis and historical appraisal of the *Enchiridion*’, in Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. J. B. Shaw (Washington, DC: Regener Publishing, 2014), 142-168; Thomas Hibbs, ‘Introduction’; Oliver O’Donovan, ‘Faith before Hope and Love’, *New Blackfriars* 95 (2014), 177-189; Boniface Ramsey, ‘Introduction’; J. Rivière, ‘Introduction’.

<sup>70</sup> Lamb, *Commonwealth*, chapt. 1.

and love, hope orders life liturgically towards God; (ii) hope is theological and historical: it is rooted in the God-given goodness of creation; (iii) hope is Christological: it is found by situating life within the history of redemption that centres on the life and work of Christ; (iv) hope is communal: specifically, it is ecclesial as the hope of the body of Christ; (v) hope is practical: it is practiced in baptism, almsgiving, and prayer. The remainder of this chapter will trace these five aspects that also take us sequentially through the *Enchiridion*. The argument will be developed that attention to the conceptual relation between faith, hope, and love, and to the theological integration of Augustine's thought, reveals both a rich understanding of hope, and its importance in his teaching.

*i. Hope is doxological*

In writing the *Enchiridion*, Augustine was not aiming to provide a bare intellectual account of central theological *loci*, balanced according to the measure of the modern mind. He was writing in response to a letter from Laurentius, an eager Christian who had written to him requesting a handbook that would address important questions of Christian life and doctrine.<sup>71</sup> Augustine's stated desire was to encourage Laurentius along the way of wisdom, which the opening paragraph equates not simply with knowledge but with the worship of God.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> We no longer have Laurentius' letter and know little about him other than the fact that he was the brother of Dulcitius, a senior Roman official in North Africa. His request is recorded in Augustine's reply (*ench.* 1.4). See Ramsey, 'Introduction', 9.

<sup>72</sup> 'The true wisdom he wished for Laurentius at the outset consists of not only the correct *cognitio Dei et hominis* but also the genuine worship of God. For just this reason it must be grounded in faith, hope and love.' Basil Studer, 'Augustine and the Pauline Theme of Hope', in William S. Babcock ed., *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 216. This liturgical focus, and the relation between wisdom and worship, is highlighted again by Augustine in his appraisal of the *Enchiridion* in *retr.* 2.63, 'It seems to me that in it I summarized with sufficient care how God should be worshiped, which divine scripture very correctly defines as man's true wisdom.' O'Donovan argues that the *Enchiridion* has a practical aim, contrasting Aquinas' intellectual account of faith as

Augustine is still operating with the eudaimonistic framework evident in *On the Happy Life*, where the relation between wisdom and worship was already implicit in the recognition that the happy life consisted of the pious and complete acknowledgement of God (*beata u.* 4.35). In the *Enchiridion*, it is this doxological aim that brings hope into view since ‘God is to be worshiped with faith, hope and love’ (*ench.* 1.3). ‘These three’ (*illa tria*), as Augustine refers to them, are thus introduced as the virtues that order life liturgically towards God.<sup>73</sup> As such, Augustine will go on to argue, they are distinct but inseparable. Their borders are ‘porous’, including each other in mutual relation as they together structure the way of worship that is the way of love (*ench.* 1.2-3; cf. *trin.* 1.3.5; *ciu.* 10.3).<sup>74</sup> Hope, in its particular role, is the virtue that aims the activity of life towards the fulfilment of worship in the eschaton. There can be no lack of hope in a life of true faith and love.<sup>75</sup>

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knowledge of truth ‘through a series of propositions’ with Augustine’s faith as apprehension of God’s goodness. He identifies a ‘pretentious’ intellectualism in Laurentius’ request, arguing that Augustine ‘dismisses’ his list of questions, ‘faster than it takes to repeat them’. Oliver O’Donovan, ‘Faith before’, 181. Whilst O’Donovan helpfully highlights the practical and dynamic emphasis of the *Enchiridion*, it does not seem necessary to interpret Augustine’s affirmation of Laurentius’ intellectual inquiry as anything other than genuine. The reading advanced here seeks to highlight the intellectual emphasis of Augustinian faith alongside the practical, the two being integrated within a life of worship that calls for the reciprocal relation of reflection and action. See e.g. *ench.* 30.114.

<sup>73</sup> Augustine does not use the terminology of ‘virtue’ for faith, hope, and love in the *Enchiridion*, preferring simply to speak of ‘these three’ (*illa tria*). However, it is clear that Augustine understood them as virtues, explicitly counting them in addition to the four classical virtues with an emphasis on their liturgical role, ordering life towards God in worship: ‘For these three may not be omitted, without which, as we know, no one can worship God or please him.’ Augustine, *ep.* 171a.

<sup>74</sup> ‘We are commanded to love this Good with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength; and to this Good we must be led by those that love us, and to it we must lead those whom we love... This is the worship of God; this is true religion; this is the right kind of devotion; this is the service which is owed to God alone.’ *ciu.* 10.3. In view of Augustine’s emphasis that true worship is the fulfilment of the double commandment to love God and neighbour, hope can be understood as the virtue which maintains the liturgical movement of life, directing human love—and the active ordering of love—*forwards* to the perfection of love in the consummate fulfilment of the eschaton.

<sup>75</sup> Delhaye and Boulangé argue that the *Enchiridion* (in contrast to Augustine’s teaching elsewhere) doesn’t adequately distinguish hope from faith and love, undermining the specific importance of hope in situating life in relation to time. This is not well founded, it draws a questionable distinction between Augustine’s teaching in the *Enchiridion* and in his sermons (Dehaye and Boulangé find a better, more

The relation between the pursuit of wisdom, the worship of God, and the theological virtues is essential if we are to properly understand Augustine's account of hope. Augustine is not interested in providing a general account of the nature of believing, hoping, and loving. He is concerned with faith, hope, and love as they are specifically aimed, that is, with 'what we should believe, what we should hope for, and what we should love' (*ench.* 1.3, emphasis added). Augustine's contention is that as faith, hope, and love are specifically focused through the doctrine of the church on the person of Christ, the eudaimonistic hope of human flourishing is realized. As he summarizes in *Enchiridion* 1.5:

When a mind is filled with the beginning of that faith which works through love, it progresses by a good life even toward vision, in which holy and perfect hearts know that unspeakable beauty, the full vision of which is the highest happiness. This is without doubt what you are seeking, what we must hold first and last, beginning with faith and ending with vision. This is what the whole body of doctrine amounts to. The sure and proper foundation of the Catholic faith is Christ, as the apostle says, 'For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 3:11) (*ench.* 1.5).

The language Augustine uses here explicitly picks up on the themes of Laurentius' letter to Augustine requesting a theological handbook. This is Augustine's answer in summary form and it reveals his aim: to encourage Laurentius in the liturgical pursuit of wisdom that coincides with the pursuit of eschatological beatitude. The way on is lived by faith working through love, in hope of future fulfilment.<sup>76</sup> He will go on to focus on faith as the foundation of hope and love, devoting the majority of the work to an exposition of the creed, before describing

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practical, understanding of hope in *s.* 157, 158; *en. Ps.* 91), and it fails to discern the importance of the teaching on hope that is carried throughout Augustine's theological 'handbook'. P. Delhaye, and J. Boulangé, *Espérance et Vie Chrétienne* (Tournai: Desclée, 1957), 121-123.

<sup>76</sup> The dynamic evident in *ench.* 1.5 is underlined by Augustine's repeated return to Gal. 5:6. See *ench.* 1.5, 2.8; 7.21; 18.67; 31.117.

hope and love as flowing from faith according to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. However, the relation between the three virtues that Augustine highlights means that it is not helpful to argue that hope gets 'short shrift'.<sup>77</sup> Faith and hope can be distinguished but not properly separated since faith—'I believe in God'—is not merely a static belief in the veracity of a proposition regarding God's existence or attributes. Augustine's understanding of faith incorporates 'beliefs *that*' but goes beyond them to a trusting 'belief *in*'. Faith believes in God's word (Word) of promise, and since that promise is yet to be fulfilled in its entirety, 'faith is only faith when what is not yet seen in reality is awaited in hope' (*ciu.* 13.4, cf. *conf.* 13.13.14). The relationship between the virtues means that we need to look right through the book for Augustine's understanding of hope.

This is clear in the conceptual discussion of the three virtues at the start of the *Enchiridion*. Here, Augustine argues that if faith waits in hope, it is equally true that 'hope and charity cannot be without faith' (*ench.* 2.7) since 'What is there we can hope for without believing in it?' (*ench.* 2.8). This is an essential point, distinguishing Augustine's conception of hope from the optimistic projection that is often taken as hope in modern understandings. Apart from faith, hope is distorted into wishful thinking based on the imagination, rational expectation based on the intellect, or agential confidence based on the will.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ramsey, 'Introduction', 12.

<sup>78</sup> The reciprocal relation between hope and faith that Augustine expounds finds a parallel in the relation between hope and trust identified in contemporary analytic philosophy. See McGeer, 'Art of Good Hope'; 'Trust, Hope and Empowerment', in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86:2 (2008), 237-254. McGeer argues for a reciprocal relation between hope and trust. The former article (discussed above) describes the reliance of hope on trust in order to avoid 'wishful' and 'wantful' hopes. The latter focuses on what hope can do for trust: 'even though trust can and does feed our hopes, it is the empowering capacity to hope that significantly underwrites our capacity to trust, that provides its motivational energy and makes rational the extension of our trust in epistemically challenging circumstances.' McGeer, 'Trust, Hope', 237. It is my contention that in both directions of the trust-hope relation, McGeer is developing a fundamentally Augustinian insight that can be strengthened

Turning his focus to hope, Augustine concludes, firstly, that hope is opposed to fear, being directed at the good rather than the bad, where fear is the more appropriate term; secondly, that hope is directed towards the future not the present or past; and thirdly, that hope only concerns matters where personal interest is involved. These three points establish a ‘rational distinction between faith and hope’ (*ench.* 2.8).<sup>79</sup> However, whilst they are conceptually distinct (it is proper ‘to give them different names’ *ench.* 2.8), Augustine goes on to argue that faith and hope are inseparably related. They have in common that ‘we do not see either the things we believe in or those we hope for’ (*ench.* 2.8).<sup>80</sup> Augustine concludes that hope is a specific form of faith, relating to faith’s future fulfilment: ‘When we believe that good things await us in the future, this is nothing other than to hope for them’ (*ench.* 2.8). Hope thus brings into view the pilgrim nature of (Christian) life, and of the church as a community, where faith is ultimately ordered towards the fulfilment of God’s promise in the City of God. Without the confidence of hope, faith would falter—an insight that relates first to the church as a pilgrim community but can be helpfully developed in considering the relationship between hope and trust in society more widely.<sup>81</sup>

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through reconnection to its theological roots.

<sup>79</sup> Faith is contrasted with hope on all three points: i) Faith ‘can be in good things and bad’, ‘who among the faithful does not believe in the punishments of the wicked but without hoping for them?’; ii) ‘There is also faith in past realities, in present ones, and in future ones. We believe Christ died, which is now in the past; we believe he sits at the right hand of the Father, which is in the present; we believe that he will come in judgment, which is in the future’; iii) ‘There is also faith in things that concern us, and in things that concern others; everybody believes that he had a beginning... and that the same is true of other people and other things.’ *ench.* 2.8.

<sup>80</sup> Augustine offers a counter example of a person who believes on the basis of the evidence of things present can fairly be said to believe (cf. John 20:29), but argues that ‘it is better to follow the teaching of the divine words in reserving the term ‘faith’ for faith in things that are not seen’ (*ench.* 2.8).

<sup>81</sup> ‘Hope is very necessary for us in our exile, it’s what consoles us on the journey. When the traveler... finds it wearisome walking along, he puts up with fatigue precisely because he hopes to arrive. Rob him of any hope of arriving, and straightaway his strength is broken for walking. So the hope also

Equally, love must be integrated, along with faith and hope since Augustine is seeking to expound the faith ‘the apostle Paul approves and recommends, the faith that works through love (Galatians 5:6)’ (*ench.* 2.8).<sup>82</sup> Faith that has grown cold and static, no longer reaching out to act in love, is faith that has replaced hope with fear (James 2:19). Following his earlier comments relating hope and the good, Augustine’s final point on the inseparability of the triad concerns the fact that without love for the good, hope cannot exist. ‘So love cannot exist without hope nor hope without love, nor can either exist without faith’ (*ench.* 2.8).<sup>83</sup>

Where does this theological language analysis leave our investigation of hope? Firstly, the inseparable interrelation of faith, hope, and love means that any understanding of Augustinian hope must be developed in conjunction with his account of faith and love. We can distinguish but we cannot abstract Augustine’s hope from the Christian life as a whole.<sup>84</sup> Following this logic, there is an important sense in which the whole of the *Enchiridion* is about all three virtues. When Augustine is talking about the commitments of faith, his understanding inevitably

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which we have here, is part and parcel of the justice of our exile and our journey.’ s. 158.8.

<sup>82</sup> Studer comments ‘how frequently, most often in connection with Galatians 5:6 and James 2:19, Augustine sets the bare faith that can make even the demons tremble in contrast to the full faith working in love.’ Studer, ‘Pauline Theme of Hope’, 214; cf. s. 71.10.16; 90.8; *trin.* 13.20.26; 15.18.32; *ench.* 29.112. ‘No less noteworthy are those passages in which he linked true faith as tightly as possible not only with love but also with hope.’ Studer, ‘Pauline Theme of Hope’, 214; cf. s. 53.10.11; *ep. Io. tr.* 8.13.

<sup>83</sup> It is love that makes possible a future orientation of hope rather than fear, which results from belief without love as evidenced in James 2:19, ‘even the demons believe—and shudder’. *ench.* 2.8.

<sup>84</sup> The nature of the relation between the triad is again made explicit towards the end of the *Enchiridion* as Augustine moves from the long section on faith to turn explicitly to hope and love as they are evidenced in the Lord’s Prayer: ‘From this confession of the faith... arises the good hope of the faithful which is accompanied by holy charity’ (*ench.* 30.114). Note the specificity of the claim that it is ‘*this* confession of the faith’—i.e. that which accords to the specific creedal commitments which have been laid out in the handbook—that funds future hope. This is worth underlining: Augustine’s account of hope, which is the source of the appreciation of hope as a virtue in Western theology and society, is not theological in an unspecified sense, it is confessional within the limits of the church’s Creed.

concerns hope, which is faith's future fulfilment. When he is talking about love he is talking about the good that hope longs to see perfected in the future. Secondly, the conceptual distinction of hope from faith and love provides the bounds to our investigation. Our focus is on the forward-looking aspect of faith in God, on the desired future fulfilment of the good of creation.

ii. *Hope is theological and historical*

As Augustine turns from introductory comments to begin his exposition of faith, following the Creed, he reminds Laurentius that his focus is on 'what ought to be believed in the sphere of religion' (*ench.* 3.9). This emphasis is underlined with reference to the distinction between belief in the God of creation and knowledge of the created order. Knowledge of the created world, investigated by means of 'the power of human speculation' or 'on the basis of facts and experience', is emphasized as being 'opinion rather than knowledge' and relegated in order of importance beneath a committed faith in the creator.<sup>85</sup> The important thing is to believe that the cause of all created things is 'the goodness of the creator who is the one true God', that is God the Trinity (*ench.* 3.9).<sup>86</sup> The argument here is essential for our understanding of hope. Insofar as hope is a specific form of faith, hope does not rest on the results of empirical inquiry or rational speculation. Hope is established on the

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. *ench.* 5.16, 7.21; *doctr. chr.* 2; *conf.* 5.4.7.

<sup>86</sup> It is clear that Augustine subordinates the importance of scientific knowledge of the material world under the knowledge of God. However, Bonner's statement that *ench.* 3.9 shows 'Augustine's lack of concern with material creation' and 'discourages any deep investigation of natural phenomena' is somewhat misleading. Augustine does not argue in *ench.* 3.9 that scientific knowledge is not good or important (Bonner himself points to Augustine's own scientific curiosity in *ciu.* 21.4; cf. *ciu.* 22.24), his point is the specific one that when it comes to the religious life, faith does not depend on scientific understanding: 'When, then, it is asked *what we ought to believe in matters of religion*, it is not necessary to pry into the nature of things, like those whom the Greeks call physicists' (*ench.* 3.9, emphasis added). Bonner, 'Thoughts on This World', 97-98.

creedal faith that takes as its first article belief in the God of creation as the source of all goodness.

Hope comes into view as concerned with the future of creation. Hope is faith in God's creative work that recognizes the goal of creation as the consummation of the love of God for creation and creation for God, and leans forward towards its fulfilment. Augustine's understanding of history in relation to the doctrine of creation in *On Genesis against the Manichees* (388) brings the connection between creation, history, and hope clearly into view:

For what I see throughout the whole tapestry of the divine scriptures is some six working ages, distinguished from each other by definite border posts, so as to say, pointing in hope to rest on a seventh age; and I see these six ages as being like those six days in which the things were made which scripture describes God as making. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.23.35)

Hope is thus rooted deeply in God's work in creation and redemption, which serves to order existence within a particular narrative frame that is inhabited by faith working through love in the hope of love's fulfilment.<sup>87</sup> To put the point another way, reliable hope is possible when the timeline of history is received and inhabited by faith as the story of God's engagement with creation.<sup>88</sup>

The redemptive historical focus of the *Enchiridion* is underlined by Augustine's condensed treatment of theology proper. He asserts that creation is the work of the Trinity, but the emphasis is on God's goodness: the Father, Son, and

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<sup>87</sup> This relationship between hope and the narrative of salvation history adds an important specificity to Braunschweig's argument for narrational theological hope discussed in the introduction, above. Michael Braunschweig, 'From Content to Enactment: Towards a Theological Hermeneutics of Hope in Discussion with Contemporary Philosophy', in Ingolf U. Dalferth and Marlene A. Block (eds.), *Hope* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 291–92.

<sup>88</sup> 'Des weiteren bekommen Zeit und Geschichte Qualität im Rahmen der Erlösung.' ('Time and history get their quality within the framework of salvation.') Ernst Dassman, 'Christliche Hoffnung in einer untergehenden Welt: Am Beispiel des hl. Augustinus—eines Mannes zwischen den Zeiten', in *Ich will euch Zukunft und Hoffnung geben, Deutscher Katholikentag 85* (Paderborn: Bonifacius-Druckerei, 1978), 202.

Spirit are ‘supremely, equally, and unchangeably good’ (*ench.* 3.10). This emphasis is important. Creation is caused by ‘the goodness of the creator’ (*ench.* 3.9) and hence ‘all things are very good’ and yet ‘they are not supremely, equally, or unchangeably good’ as God himself is (*ench.* 3.10). Augustine thus highlights the Creator-creature distinction in terms of the mutability of created goodness in comparison to the immutability of the goodness of the Creator. Creation possessed a ‘wonderful beauty’ but its goodness was fragile, a fragility that left open the possibility of the fall, which Augustine goes straight on to discuss, describing evil in the world in terms of privation, ‘a removal of good’ (*ench.* 3.11).

The virtue explicitly in focus at this point is faith and not hope since we are looking back to the past. However, Augustine highlights hope as flowing from the belief that the supreme goodness of God is the cause of creation. The mutable good of creation is not independent of God but flows from and is ordered to God’s supreme and immutable goodness. Sin represents a denial of this order but its disruption cannot ultimately overthrow it. Augustine has barely mentioned the fall, therefore, when he turns to the way of redemption. As soon as he talks of ‘disease’, he talks about ‘treatment’. He explains evil as ‘those removals of good, known as health’ before immediately discussing the restoration of health and elimination of evil (*ench.* 3.11).

Creation, fall, and redemption are thus raised in quick succession, highlighting the narrational tension of history as on the way to its fulfilment. Faith in the goodness of the Creator and his past work in creation is turned towards the future, that is towards the specific object of hope: ‘What we must do, surely, is to make our way toward that happiness where we shall not be disturbed by any trouble or deceived by any error’ (*ench.* 5.16). As evil is the privation of goodness, error is the privation of truth. Hope is for the happiness that lies beyond their elimination. It is this context

that makes sense of the extended discussion of truth and error that follows from *Enchiridion* 5.17 to 7.22. Returning to his argument against Academic scepticism in *Contra Academicos*, Augustine underlines that truth must be guarded since the way of truth is ‘the path we take to God, which is the path of faith working through love’ (*ench.* 7.21).<sup>89</sup> His concern for truth is thus focused on guarding the positive assent essential to faith since, ‘if assent is taken away, faith is taken away’ (*ench.* 7.20). The truth of particular theological propositions is therefore important but not an end in itself. Knowledge is distinguished in importance in accordance with its role relative to the ‘path we take to God’ (*ench.* 7.21). Propositional truth is subordinated to the end of ‘gaining the kingdom’.<sup>90</sup>

Augustine’s concern in expounding the creed is thus not *only* to explicate its propositions but, as Oliver O’Donovan argues, to develop the credal propositions as purposive proposals.<sup>91</sup> His aim is to cultivate pilgrim faith, the faith of the *viator*, which looks back in order to look forwards in hope on the way to the blessed future:

We must know the causes of good and evil *insofar as it is necessary to enable us to travel along the road that leads us to the kingdom* where there will be life without death, truth without error, happiness without anxiety, we must in no way doubt that the only cause of the good things that come our way is the goodness of God, while the cause of our evils is the will of a changeable good falling away from the unchangeable

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<sup>89</sup> This line of argument is the context for Augustine’s discussion of scepticism and reference to *Acad.* in *ench.* 7.20.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Whilst all error is privation and so related to sin in some way, error not connected to gaining the kingdom is minor—the “tiniest” sin.’ *ench.* 7.21.

<sup>91</sup> O’Donovan, ‘Faith before’, 188-189. This position, which continues to affirm the propositional value of doctrinal statement should be distinguished from the more oppositional paradigm of Harnack, who finds in the *Enchiridion* an Augustinian basis for overcoming propositional theology in favour of an historical process of spiritual formation: ‘Everything is presented as a spiritual process, to which briefly discussed old dogmatic material appears subordinated.’ ‘Even in the outline, novelty is shown: religion is so much a matter of the inner life that faith, hope, and love are all-important.’ ‘The Trinity, taught by tradition as dogma, is apprehended in the strictest unity; *it is the creator*. It is really one person.’ ‘Hereby a breach is made with ancient intellectualism.’ Harnack, ‘Analysis and historical appraisal’, 163; cf. 167-168.

good, first the will of an angel, then the will of a human being. (*ench.* 8.23, emphasis added)

This statement is important in highlighting the pedagogical logic of Augustine's structuring of the *Enchiridion*, and also in giving the lie to the pessimistic profile of Augustine that is based on his teaching of human sin. In fact, the theological model Augustine develops is impossible to constrain in the binary modern categorization of optimism and pessimism. Augustine does not highlight the fall in order to induce guilt or negate the possibility of human fulfilment as the pessimistic interpretation would lead one to expect. His account of sin is clearly subservient to his integrated understanding of creation and redemption. On Augustine's account, sin does not challenge the supreme goodness of God in creation but relates to good as privation, the cause of evil being 'the will of a changeable good falling away from the unchangeable good' (*ench.* 8.23). This paves the way for an account of redemption whereby the goodness of creation is led to the eschatological confirmation that is its fulfilment. The dominant categories, within which Augustine's teaching on sin is configured, are goodness and grace. What is taught is not pessimism but the hope of redemption.

That hope is found by situating life by faith within God's work of creation and redemption is to identify Augustine's hope as historical—hope is faith in the future history of creation. As Rowan Williams puts it, 'Hope... is not just a confidence that there is a future for us, it's also a confidence that there's a continuity so that the future is related to the same truth and living reality as the past and the present.'<sup>92</sup> However, insofar as this is the case, an account of God's eschatological kingdom that outstrips life as we know it (as in *ench.* 8.23) has the potential to undermine historical hope by positing a 'future' that leaves the temporal reality of history behind—a future without

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<sup>92</sup> Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (London: SPCK, 2016), 27.

a past, or a timeless present. It would seem that hope must be *either* historical (oriented to the future of this creation) *or* eschatological (oriented to a reality beyond this creation). This is an important tension and will come again into focus in chapter four when we consider the modern theological hope of Jürgen Moltmann, who argues against Augustine's hope as ahistoric.

Augustine's account of hope navigates this tension through the way in which history and eschatology relate. For Augustine, the hoped-for redemption does not involve an end to history that is its negation but its consummation, the fulfilment of the narrative of history in the eschaton. Moltmann follows standard twentieth-century critiques of Augustine's accommodation to neoplatonism in order to dismiss Augustine's understanding of hope. The argument I will go on to develop in chapter 4, in line with more recent Augustine scholarship, is that there is far more to Augustinian hope than Moltmann recognizes. In fact, many of Moltmann's most valuable theological insights are prefigured in Augustine.

The coherence of hope rests on the hoped-for (eschatological) future being present, in promissory form, in the historical past. Augustine makes the case for such narrational unity by highlighting the 'appetite for happiness' that was present in rational human nature from the beginning and was not lost through the fall (*ench.* 8.24-25). This appetite, misdirected in sin, is rooted in the eschatological orientation of the first man's creation where man's future beatitude was conditional on his ongoing righteousness:

God had threatened him with the punishment of death if he sinned, bestowing free will on him while still ruling him by his authority and terrifying him with the thought of death, and placing him in the bliss of

paradise as if in the shadow of life, from which he was to rise to better things if he preserved his state of justice (*ench.* 8.25).<sup>93</sup>

Given this orientation of creation towards the future, hope that accords with the history of creation looks beyond the mutable good of the initial creation to its fulfilment in the eschaton. The initial creation was finished in something like the way that work on a theatre set might be completed, that is, finished but not fulfilled. It was inherently ordered to a perfection that from the very beginning lay ahead on the timeline of history. Augustine returns to this theme again as he relates his discussion of God's grace in Christ to his intention in creation. He emphasizes the concurrence of divine action and human agency, highlighting the presence in creation of a covenantal dispensation that post-Reformation theology will later describe as the 'Covenant of Works', the offer of eschatological promotion from unconfirmed to confirmed immortality (*posse peccare* to *non posse peccare*) conditional on the condign merit of Adam's free obedience.<sup>94</sup>

Augustine's teaching at this point represents a clear break from the cyclical notion of time as eternal present that accompanied the participatory Platonic ontology of emanation and return. As we shall see below, Augustine's notion of participation is fundamentally historical and Christological. God's people participate in his goodness

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. *retr.* 1.13.4; *ench.* 28.104, 'So God would have willed to preserve even the first man in that healthy state in which he had been created, and at the appropriate time after he had had children to bring him to better things without the intervention of death, where he would be unable not only to sin but even to will to sin... But because God foreknew that he would make evil use of his free will, God prepared his design to bring good even out of one who did evil, so that man's evil will might not be made of no effect but nevertheless that Almighty's good will might be fulfilled.'

<sup>94</sup> Augustine highlights that whilst this created condition called for Adam's meritorious work, this merit was not apart from grace: 'Even then that merit could not have existed without grace, for although sin depended entirely on the freedom of the will, free will was not strong enough to retain man's original justice without divine help and participation in the unchanging good' (*ench.* 28.106). Augustine explicitly identifies the covenantal nature of the relation between God and Adam in *ciu.* 16.27. A helpful discussion of this idea in Reformed theology can be found in Hermann Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. ii, *God and Creation*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 564-571.

as they are transformed into the eschatological worshipping community, the temple that is the body of Christ. For Augustine, the fullness of human perfection was not in the original state, to be regained by means of a return to primal unity. Human perfection has, in fact, always lain ahead of history in the eschaton.

Rather than interpreting as pessimistic Augustine's denial of the possibility of human perfection in this life, we should therefore interpret it in conjunction with his emphasis on the eschatological fulfilment of creation as a deepening of Augustine's understanding of hope. Augustine's increasing emphasis on eschatological hope was not less but more deeply historical. It is ironic that the very emphasis that many modern scholars have seized upon in their dismissal of Augustine as a pessimist is the emphasis that allowed his hope (and the Western world's after him) to come into its own as aimed towards history's eschatological fulfilment.

*iii. Hope is Christological*

Augustine understands hope within a specific narrative that unites creation and redemption, a narrative that joins history to its eschatological fulfilment. The centre of this narrative leads us to the focus of all three theological virtues—the person of Christ—the divine-human mediator between God and man. Hope is found by faith within the particular history of redemption that has as its focus the past, present, and future of his life and work: 'We believe that Christ died, which is now in the past; we believe that he sits at the right hand of the Father, which is in the present; we believe that he will come in judgment, which is the future' (*ench.* 2.8). These commitments of faith hold together the mystery of God with the history of Christ that is at the heart of

Augustine's Pauline understanding of hope.<sup>95</sup> Hope is found in living by faith 'within these mysteries, which are historical facts', that is, within the history of Christ:

Whatever took place in Christ's crucifixion, his burial, his resurrection on the third day, his ascension into heaven and his sitting at the right hand of the Father was done in such a way that Christians might live within these mysteries, which are historical facts and not merely mystical utterances (*ench.* 14.53).<sup>96</sup>

Hope comes through identification with Jesus Christ, first in his death and therefore also in his resurrection and risen life. The relation to Christ is historical: Christians live within the history of Christ's redemption. It is a relation of 'belonging' to Christ such that believers are identified 'with him' in his death, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>97</sup> Augustine's Pauline understanding is of a transition from a life controlled by the earthly passions and desires of the flesh to a new heavenly life 'hidden with Christ in God', an eschatological life that will be fully revealed in the future but corresponds to a path of transformed living now.<sup>98</sup>

Since Christ is already seated at the right hand of the Father without yet the universal establishment of his kingdom, which awaits his return in judgment, there is a partial realization of hope in the present. Members of the church 'are reigning even

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Colossians 1:27; 2:2-3.

<sup>96</sup> *ench.* 14.53, 'Quidquid igitur gestum est in cruce Christi, in sepultura, in resurrectione tertio die, in ascensione in caelum et sedere ad dexteram Patris, ita gestum est ut his rebus, non mystice tantum dictis sed etiam gestis, configuraretur vita christiana quae in his geritur.' The repetition of *gerere* in various forms through the passage and the fact that '*his rebus*' is less specified than 'these mysteries' suggest an alternate translation, woodenly expressed: '...is thus carried out in order that these things—not so much mystical utterances but actually things carried out—have configured the Christian life to be carried out in them'.

<sup>97</sup> Augustine thus modifies Platonic ontological participation in the divine nature by means of a Pauline understanding of spiritual and ecclesial union with the historical Christ.

<sup>98</sup> The gifts of life in God's kingdom, viz. the universal praise of God's name, the establishment of his kingdom, conformity of all things to his will as revealed in his precepts, 'are certainly gifts that we must keep permanently: they begin here and as we progress they grow in us, but once they are perfect, which is something we must hope for in the next life, they will be possessed forever' (*ench.* 30.115).

now with Christ', Augustine argues, referring to the time between Christ's ascension and return, and yet 'in a way appropriate to this period' (*ciu.* 20.9). Whilst the City of God has been growing from the beginning of the world (*ciu.* 20.17), it is the coming of Christ and his resurrection have inaugurated the eschatological life of that City in history in the community of the church.<sup>99</sup> The eschatological end that existed as promise in creation's state of integrity has been realized in history in the historic person of the risen and exalted Christ. What remains is for Christ who is risen as the head of his people to gather his body—the church—to share in the fullness of his glorified humanity that is the perfected image of God.

The relation between creation and the eschaton finds its focus in the historical relation of believers to Christ as second Adam that lies at the heart of Augustine's account of hope. It is central because Augustine's hope is for the future goodness of creation, and yet the hope of creation was dashed by the sin of humanity's historical ancestor. According to Augustine, Adam turned away from the goodness of creation to the evil that is its privation (*ench.* 8.23). In doing so he fell away from the hope that is the end of God's goodness to a 'vain' hope—a desire for 'harmful and empty' things that led only to 'sick pleasure' or 'empty joy' (*ench.* 8.24). Human nature has not been completely destroyed, 'in the midst of all its evils, [it] has not been able to lose the appetite for happiness' (*ench.* 8.25). However, God's promise in creation of eschatological life contingent on human righteousness has given way to the punishment of death that was threatened as the consequence of sin (*ench.* 8.25). Augustine's teaching on original sin is summarized in *Enchiridion* 8.26: 'After [Adam's] sin he became an exile from [paradise] and bound also his progeny, which by his sin he had damaged within himself as though at its root, by the penalty of death

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<sup>99</sup> For Augustine's understanding of the step-change in the times inaugurated by the coming of Christ, see his repeated appeal to Galatians 4:4 in *trin.* 1.14, 22; 2.8, 9, 12; 3.3; 4.10, 26, 28, 30; 15.51.

and condemnation.’ The whole human race, Augustine held, following his reading of Romans 5:12, sinned ‘in Adam’.<sup>100</sup> As a result all human beings are bound to sin and bound to suffer the condemnation of sin that is death.

The primal historical relation of humanity to Adam that binds humanity in sin and death underlines the need for divine initiative in salvation. Importantly, it also provides the necessary structural context for Augustine’s second Adam Christology. This is important to notice since once again the structure of Augustine’s theological understanding defies his categorization as a pessimist. His account of sin is equally subversive of modern optimism *and* modern pessimism. Sin needs to be understood in the context of redemption and therefore in relation to hope. It is only insofar as mankind shares in the sin and impotence of Adam that it is possible for the parallel relation with Christ, to share in the grace, freedom, and life that comes through his work as mediator: ‘There is nobody born from Adam who is not under condemnation, and... nobody is freed from that condemnation except by being reborn in Christ’ (*ench.* 14.51).<sup>101</sup> Without Christ, of course, original sin and pessimism are related: there being no true human hope if man’s appetite for happiness cannot be properly directed. True faith, hope, and love are acts of the will, impossible, apart from a prior act of grace (*ench.* 9.32). But, of course, Augustine does not theologize without Christ. He spells out how a gracious relation to the history of Christ displaces the primacy of the natural relation to the history of Adam. Through the grace of Christ, human beings are able to hope truly in a future that is the eschatological fulfilment of

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<sup>100</sup> See G. Bonner, ‘Augustine on Romans 5:12’, *Studia Evangelica* 5 (1968), 244-247; P. Rigby, ‘Original Sin’, in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine Through the Ages*, 607-614.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *ench.* 14.48, ‘That one great sin, which was committed in a place and state of such happiness with the result that the whole human race was condemned originally and, so to say, at root in one man, is not undone and washed away except by the one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, who alone was able to be born in such a way that he had no need to be reborn.’

human nature (*ench.* 8.23). This is a hope that is not ‘empty’, hope for a future that will not disappoint with ‘sick pleasure’ or ‘empty joy’ (*ench.* 8.24).

Augustine lays out the architectonic structure of salvation before he turns to the specific person and work of Christ as mediator. The task he thus sets himself is to show how Christ could truly function as a second Adam. The two-forms Christology that is prominent in the early books of *De Trinitate* is employed to clarify the mystery of the incarnation: ‘He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, not losing or diminishing the form of God. And through this his was both made less and remained equal, one and the same person in each case’ (*ench.* 10.35). This relation is essential if hope is truly to be found by faith in the historic work of Christ. Christ must be without beginning in order to truly be God, free from the beginning of man in Adam and the experience of time as loss that followed from his sin; and yet he had to be truly man, with a beginning in time that could be a new starting point for historic humanity: ‘one Son of God, God without beginning, man from a certain beginning in time, our Lord Jesus Christ’ (*ench.* 10.35). Only in the time of Christ, that is, within the history of Christ, can there truly be hope of life for human history characterized by sin and death.

Thus, for Augustine, the historicity of hope does not depend on the historicity of God but on the historical and eschatological accomplishment of Christ as second Adam and divine mediator. His historic life, death, resurrection and ascension give confidence that the power and penalty of original sin have been overcome: ‘just as he suffered a true death, in us there is a true forgiveness of sins, and just as his resurrection was true, so also is our justification true’ (14.51). Hope comes through faith, Augustine tells us by living ‘within these mysteries, which are historical facts and not merely mystical utterances’ (*ench.* 14.53).

iv. *Hope is ecclesial*

The relation of hope to faith in Christ by way of creedal orthodoxy highlights the inescapably ecclesial nature of Augustinian hope, which is not grounded on an unspecified recognition of ontological goodness or bare theistic belief but comes through the faith in Christ that is the faith of the Catholic church. It is ecclesial more integrally still in that hope rests on faith in Christ as a public figure, a second Adam who is head of a new humanity. This brings into view Augustine's teaching of Christ as *Totus Christus*—Christ understood as head together with the church as his body. The Spirit who gives new life through Christ is also God who fills the church as his dwelling place, which is 'named after the Trinity, like a house after the one who lives in it, a temple after its god and a city after its founder' (*ench.* 15.56). Hope is for the fulfilment of the dwelling of God in creation that is to be realized in the church's eschatological home. Hope therefore belongs to the whole church, and in a particular way to the part that is the 'pilgrim church', journeying on the way of redemption, aided by the holy angels who never fell into evil. 'They will together form one company in eternity, which is one already by the bond of charity, established to worship the one God' (*ench.* 15.56). It is with this future in view that hope belongs as a virtue, given by the Spirit, to the community of worship that is the church; and it serves to unite the church together as the body of Christ towards its common goal that is its perfection along with its head.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. *ciu.* 22.8; *doctr. chr.* 1.32-33, 'For what words can express, and what thoughts can conceive, the reward which [Christ] is going to give at the end? He has already given us so much of his spirit to support us on our journey, in order that in the troubles of this life we may have this enormous confidence and delight in one whom we do not yet behold; he has also bestowed individual gifts for the consolidation of his church (1 Cor. 12:7), in order that we may perform the tasks that he has indicated not only without murmuring but even with positive enjoyment. The church is his body, as the teaching of the apostle shows (Eph. 1:23); it is also called his bride (Eph. 5:22). So he ties together his own body, with its many members performing different tasks (cf. Rom. 12:4), in a bond of unity and love like a healing bandage. And at the present time he trains it and purges it by means of various

On this understanding, the church as Christ's body and so God's temple is an eschatological community, being built towards the consummated unity of worship in the renewed creation. 'This church which exists among the holy angels and powers of God will be known to us as it is when we are joined with it at the end to share in unending blessedness' (*ench.* 16.61). This future characterizes the church's present as a community of joyful hope, 'on pilgrimage on earth, praising the name of the Lord from the rising of the sun to its setting and singing a new song after its old captivity' (*ench.* 15.56).

The ecclesial nature of Augustine's hope presents an important alternative to the modern understandings of hope that begin with the self's autonomous agency and understand hope as oriented towards the fulfilment of the self's freedom. By contrast, the Christological and ecclesial nature of Augustinian hope serves to displace the self, highlighting the need for the will to be recreated by grace through Christ in order for an individual to find fulfilment through being freed from sin and re-orientated liturgically towards the fulfilment of the love of God in relation to others. Hope flows out of the faith that is the corporate confession of the church, re-constituting the individual's subjectivity in relation to Christ and his future, liberating the will from sin and re-situating personal agency as ordered liturgically within God's world, under God's authority, and on the way to God's future that is the future of his creational intent. Whilst Augustine rightly identifies the properly individual aspect to hope, which is only for things that 'concern the one who is said to have hope in them' (*ench.* 2.8), any prospect of individualism is overcome by submission to Christ. Since

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disagreeable medicines so that when it has been saved from the world he may take as his wife for eternity "the church, which has not spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).'

Christ is the head not of isolated individuals but of the Church, the hoping individual is inescapably situated as part of a society with a shared faith, hope, and love.<sup>103</sup>

v. *Hope is practical*

As a virtue, Augustinian hope is not simply an idea of the intellect but a rational orientation of the heart; hope directs the whole person towards God. As a theological virtue, it is a gift of the Spirit—an ‘infused’ virtue as Aquinas will later distinguish it. Of course, for Augustine, the sovereignty of God does not restrict but liberates human agency. Taking a non-competitive view of divine and human agency, the Spirit’s work is adjoined to practices by which hope is cultivated in the lives of individuals within the communal life of the church.<sup>104</sup> In the *Enchiridion*, Augustine points towards three practices (or sets of practices) that cultivate and sustain hope: administration/reception of the sacraments; almsgiving, defined very broadly as ‘any work of mercy that benefits somebody’ (*ench.* 19.72); and prayer (in particular the Lord’s Prayer).

Baptism is the first such practice of hope, it is the beginning of eternal life by way of participation in Christ’s life and future. The sacrament is a sign of what is already fulfilled in the life of Christ but will not be fulfilled in the life of the baptized body until the beginning of hope reaches its end, an end that will be the ultimate fulfilment of all that baptism signifies. Recognizing that the path of the baptized body (individual and corporate) is through suffering to glory, Augustine makes explicit this

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<sup>103</sup> The communal aspect of hope is highlighted in *Enchiridion* 33.122, where Augustine concludes his work by speaking of how he is ‘hoping for good’ from Laurentius, an encouragement serving the rhetorical purpose of strengthening the hope that was Laurentius’ own.

<sup>104</sup> Augustine is often cited for his negative view of sinful habituation but it is important to notice the place he has for the cultivation of virtue by means of regular training. This latter theme is clearly evident as he talks of love for one’s enemies: ‘But this is a characteristic of perfect children of God, which each one of the faithful must strive for, training his human spirit in this disposition by prayer to God and discipline and struggle within himself’ (*ench.* 19.73).

relation between baptism and hope, and extends it more widely: ‘We should understand that everything that is done in the sacraments of salvation is concerned more with the hope of good things to come than with retaining or gaining good things in the present’ (*ench.* 17.66). The sacraments of the church, in other words, are forward looking, designed to nourish the body of Christ on the way to her eschatological home. When it comes to the practice of baptism in particular, one of the important features of the sacrament is the way it embodies a cleansing and renewal that moves the controlling locus of human identity from the past to the future by way of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. In this practice, the ultimacy of a past earthly life is replaced by the ultimacy of the heavenly life of the eschaton. The power of the past—of sin and death—is sacramentally broken.<sup>105</sup> The power of the future—the Spirit of the eschatological Christ—is sacramentally conveyed. The sacraments that follow baptism can be understood as practices of hope in a similar pattern. The Eucharist, most prominently, is a practice of hope as an embodiment of sacramental union with the eschatological Christ and a foretaste of the heavenly feast.<sup>106</sup>

Prayer and almsgiving are further practices that are related to hope in the *Enchiridion* (singing of the Psalms of Ascent is an important example elsewhere).

Prayer practices submission to God by way of which human beings experience the

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<sup>105</sup> As Augustine put it in a sermon at Hippo Regius to candidates for baptism (dated as pre 410): ‘If the forgiveness of sins were not to be had in the Church, there would be no hope of a future life and eternal liberation. We thank God, who gave his Church such a gift. Here you are; you are going to come to the holy font, you will be washed in saving baptism, you will be renewed in *the bath of rebirth* (Titus 3:5), you will be without any sin at all as you come up from that bath. All the things that were plaguing you in the past will there be blotted out’ (*s.* 213.9).

<sup>106</sup> Cf. John Cavadini’s development of the Eucharist as a sacrament of hope in view of its role in identity formation: ‘The Eucharist is thus a properly eschatological sacrament that mediates an identity suffused with hope in God’s economy of mercy instead of in one’s own ability to create an identity out of whole cloth.’ John C. Cavadini, ‘Eucharistic Exegesis in *Confessions*’, *Augustinian Studies* 41:1 (2010), 89.

liberation of agency to enjoy the freedom that aligns with creaturely nature, a freedom in hope of eschatological fulfilment. The recital of the Lord's Prayer intentionally orders human concerns by the structure of its seven petitions, 'three of which are for eternal gifts and the remaining four for temporal ones, which however are necessary for acquiring eternal gifts' (*ench.* 30.115). This ordering of temporal realities to eternal ones, which the Lord's Prayer is structured to effect, habituates hope that is in the world and for its future. Christians are to pray for present needs in view of the fulfilment of God's kingdom 'so that eternal life in which we hope to be for ever, the hallowing of God's name, his kingdom and his will will endure perfectly and immortally in our spirit and body' (*ench.* 30.115)

The emphasis on almsgiving in the *Enchiridion* can also be understood with hope in view. Remember that Augustine's concern is to strengthen in Laurentius the faith *that works in love* (*ench.* 2.8; 18.27; Gal. 5:6) in hope of love's eschatological fulfilment. The giving of alms, as acts of merciful love, are the fruits of faith in the present that are brought to fulfilment in the heavenly future that is a world of love. The practice of almsgiving (defined very broadly by Augustine so as to include works of mercy of all kinds as well as forgiveness of enemies) as satisfaction for sin serves to keep the faithful on the path to that future (*ench.* 19.70). These acts of love are the way of ongoing life in the faith that is entered by baptism. The heavenly purification that is conferred in the rebirth of baptism is maintained in the giving of alms so long as the love flows from genuine faith (*ench.* 20.75-76). The genuine practice of love—for neighbour as for self—presumes, Augustine argues, a prior giving of alms to the self. Giving thanks for God's loving mercy by which heavenly life is received, acts of merciful love are to flow out to others. As Augustine concludes in turning explicitly to focus on love at the end of the *Enchiridion*, genuine acts of love are the acts of genuine faith and hope (*ench.* 31.117). Love is the goal of faith and hope, 'the greater

it is in a person, the better the person in whom it is' (*ench.* 31.117). The practice of love—for God and for one's neighbour as for oneself—is the ultimate enactment of hope.

In a late modern context, which prioritizes the self as the centre of its own hopes and is simultaneously plagued by issues of conflict and anxiety, Augustine's theological understanding holds out an important alternative. Hope, for Augustine, is for the de-centred self, a self that does not assert its own subjectivity against God and others but a self that is willingly subjectified under God and within the worshipping community. Since the future of the church is integral to the *telos* of creation, the hope of the church and the true fulfilment of human personhood are—in principal—aligned. Hope in God and for the realization of God's kingdom engages an agent's will not as an alien imposition but as the *telos* of human flourishing that is fulfilled within the future of the church. The communal hope of the church thus holds together in theological relation the modern dichotomies of individual and communal, subject and object, spiritual and physical. Insofar as the church lives up to its calling, the individuality of its members is not diminished by their participation in the hope of the community.<sup>107</sup> On the contrary, it is as human beings are made subjects in obedience to Christ and as part of his beloved church that their deepest human identity is brought to fruition. Quite unlike the subjectification of the modern world, which is fundamentally self-assertive and so brittle in its being, alienated or domineering in its relating, and uncertain in its becoming, subjectification by Christ is the authoritative subjectification of eternal love. To be named by Christ as part of his church through baptism is to know oneself as known and loved by God from eternity, and to know

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. *ciu.* 10.3, 'For we are [God's] temple, collectively, and as individuals. For he condescends to dwell in the union of all and in each person. He is as great in the individual as he is in the whole body of his worshippers, for he cannot be increased in bulk or diminished by partition.'

others in light of Christ's love for them. It comes with the promise of perfected human becoming in the image of God, as manifested supremely in Christ.

Insofar as this is the case, the virtue of hope, as it exists within the church's history and is cultivated in practice in the church's life, can serve as a remedy for the dis-ease of the late modern self and society. The church's hope not only offers a theoretical account of integrated personhood but a practical way to become more truly human in relation with others. As a virtue instantiated in practices of life—in prayer and acts of mercy (almsgiving is a major emphasis of the *Enchiridion*)—and sustained practically by word and sacrament, hope furthers the integrated personhood that is ultimately realized in its fulfilment. According to Augustine's understanding, people are most truly formed towards the goal of creation through participation in a community that is consistently oriented in hope towards God's kingdom.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter has turned to Augustine, and in particular to his *Enchiridion* to present Augustine's account of the virtue of hope as holding constructive potential in view of recent philosophical attempts to develop 'standard' hope. For this proposal to get off the ground it has been necessary to engage the apparent lack of hope in the *Enchiridion*. The argument I have developed represents a theological rationale for Augustine's seemingly disproportionate treatment of faith, hope, and love.<sup>108</sup> This is a more intrinsic reading of the text than that of Ramsey, who identifies the seeming imbalance of the *Enchiridion* as a 'puzzle'. He argues that 'Augustine himself does

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<sup>108</sup> This line of argument follows Rivière's comment that Augustine's method in the *Enchiridion* is not primarily that of an apologist, polemicist, or dialectician, but of a theologian: 'Ici l'évêque d'Hippone se pose en pur théologien... Sans doute n'est il pas d'oeuvre où l'évêque d'Hippone se révèle mieux comme le type du docteur chrétien.' Rivière, 'Introduction', 88-89.

not provide a clue as to why the three virtues were dealt with as they were', offering two possible solutions: (1) Augustine was subject to the constraint of space and the necessity to give an adequate account of the tenets of the faith; (2) 'Faith is discussed at greatest length because it is the most "teachable" of the three virtues'. Ramsey's proposals are sensible but they stop short of the theological rationale that is central to Augustine's purpose. In fact, when we take on board Augustine's teaching in *Enchiridion* 1.5, his focus on expounding the church's confession of faith in the Creed, which takes up over eighty percent of the work, is less remarkable than it might first appear. Faith is an important focus for the simple reason that faith in Christ is the *beginning* of the eschatological pursuit of happiness.<sup>109</sup> The faith of the church is the place where Laurentius must start if he is to make progress in the Christian life, and it is the place to which he must constantly return if his progress is to be true. Hope and love flow from the faith of the church since they flow from Christ:

From this confession of the faith, which is contained in short compass in the Creed and is like milk for infants when considered according to the flesh, but is food for the strong when spiritually mediated and reflected on, arises the good hope of the faithful which is accompanied by holy charity (*ench.* 30.114).<sup>110</sup>

On Augustine's understanding, human maturity is found not by moving on from the beginning of faith to pursue love and hope but by growing up in faith. 'Good hope' belongs to the 'faithful', whose lives bear the fruit of love. Christ is not merely the beginning in the way that a gate stands at the start of a pathway, left increasingly behind as one progresses. Instead, in Augustine's analogy borrowed from 1 Corinthians 3, Christ is akin to the foundation of a building, holding up the entire

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<sup>109</sup> It is in this Christological and eschatological sense that 'the correct faith will engender the appropriate order of hopes and loves'. Cavadini, *Enchiridion*, 296.

<sup>110</sup> Augustine's allusion to 1 Cor. 3 ties this passage, which introduces the exposition of the Lord's Prayer, to the summative statement of *ench.* 1.5.

edifice, which is built upon him.<sup>111</sup> The way of faith begins by being built into Christ by the Spirit and continues by repudiating the foreclosed certainty of human endings to build on the certainty of faith, continually re-situating the search for wisdom upon the foundation of Christ. Importantly for modern interpreters, that Christ is the foundation should prevent Augustine's epistemology being understood as a kind of rational foundationalism alien to his thought. Increasing certainty is based on initial faith in Christ that entails commitment to certain propositions without being reducible to them.<sup>112</sup> Progress is made by increasing refinement in line with the pattern that Christ's foundational life and work has set.<sup>113</sup> The analogy can be applied personally but it has an essential corporate dimension: the building in view is the body of Christ that is the church. Individual members are built into and built up within a larger building project of a community together pursuing and ultimately attaining the goal of wisdom.<sup>114</sup>

It is with this goal in mind that hope clearly enters the picture. The alignment of wisdom with worship (*ench.* 1.1-3) means that hope of the church's attainment of

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. *s.* 215.1; *Io. eu. tr.* 98.6, 'In order that what is being built might be completed, the building is added on, the foundation is not removed.'

<sup>112</sup> 'The certitude of faith at least initiates knowledge; but the certitude of knowledge will not be completed until after this life when we see face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Let this be what we set our minds on, to know that a disposition to look for the truth is safer than one to presuppose that we know what is in fact unknown. Let us therefore so look as men who are going to find, and so find as men who are going to go on looking. For when a man has finished, then it is that he is beginning (Sir. 18:7)' (*trin.* 9.1.1).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *doctr. chr.* 1.22. The fact that the building in 1 Cor. 3 is the temple, and that it is made out of God's people, highlights the intimate theological relation between wisdom and worship that Augustine has already affirmed in *ench.* 1.2, 'No word is more suitable to express what wisdom is than one that expressly denotes worship of God.'

<sup>114</sup> Cf. *trin.* 1.2.4, 'In this way if there is a particle of the love or fear of God in them, they may return to the beginning and right order of faith, realizing at least what a wholesome regimen is provided for the faithful in holy Church, whereby the due observance of piety makes the ailing mind well for the perception of unchanging truth.'

wisdom is established on the object of the church's faith, that is, on Christ.<sup>115</sup> Hope is stable, founded on the Christ of Scripture according to the teaching of the church; but hope is not static. The hope of the body relies on faith in the present *eschatological* life of the head who is its redeemer—resurrected and ascended—and so redeeming divine mediator. The stability of hope is thus a dynamic stability that is secure on its foundation of faith insofar as it builds on that faith towards its eschatological fulfilment. It is by actively growing as part of the church in the church's faith that hope is strengthened, increasing the confidence of fulfilment: 'Now the belief in the Lord's resurrection from the dead and his ascent into heaven reinforces our faith with great hope' (*doctr. chr.* 1.31).

I have argued that hope, specifically established on faith in Christ and growing along with love until it reaches its goal in the eschaton, is integral to the life of wisdom that Augustine envisions for Laurentius. Whilst the sections that explicitly engage hope may be relatively few in number, the understanding of hope that is developed through the *Enchiridion* as a whole greatly exceeds what might be learnt from the points where it is the explicit focus. An integrated reading reveals a theology of hope, where the knowledge of God that is by faith in Christ is ordered forwards towards the fulfilment of love in the eschaton.

The integration in Augustine's account centres on Christ. Hope is found by living within the mysterious and yet historical reality of his life and work, an inhabitation that is ecclesial—life in Christ being as part of his body—according to Augustine's understanding of *Totus Christus*. This Christological/ecclesial focus

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<sup>115</sup> Augustine cites Galatians 5:6 at the outset of this section in *ench.* 1.5 but the preceding verse in Galatians is also important in the understanding of the relation between faith and hope that he proposes: 'For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness' (Galatians 5:5). Cf. *s.* 212.1, 'From this faith you must hope for the grace by which all your sins will be forgiven.'

raises the important biblical and Augustinian theme of ‘habitation’. In contrast to the hope of the modern self, which asserts its own subjectivity, seeking to make itself at home in the world, Augustine points to a hope for the self that is willingly ‘subjectified’ through baptism to become an inhabitant of God’s dwelling amongst his people, and granted the freedom of citizenship in God’s heavenly city.

Our destination in this chapter undoubtedly seems far from the concerns of the philosophical discourse with which we started. It would be an understandable assessment that I have sought to answer philosophical problems relating to this-worldly hope with theological answers pertaining to hope in the world to come. The proposal seems inevitably at odds with the paradigm it was intended to engage. Of course, such an assessment depends on a prior assumption regarding the relation between philosophical and theological discourses. According to the modern framework that separates philosophy and theology as it separates reason and faith, to label Augustine’s account of hope theological is to signal its restriction. Augustine would not have seen things that way for he was not limited by the conceptual categories of modernity. To the contrary: ‘It is taught and believed as a chief point of man’s salvation that philosophy, i.e. the pursuit of wisdom, cannot be quite divorced from religion’ (*uera rel.* 5.8). In fact, for Augustine, the best philosophical account of hope is necessarily a theological one since the success of philosophy’s search for wisdom depends on finding the one thing missing from Cicero, that is, the name of Christ (*conf.* 3.4.8). Augustine’s ‘Christian philosophy’ finds its most distinctive feature at this point, in an exclusive commitment to Christ as the salvific mediator between God and man.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Describing his passion for philosophy kindled by reading Cicero’s *Hortensius*, Augustine writes, ‘One thing alone put a brake on my intense enthusiasm—that the name of Christ was not contained in the book.’ *conf.* 3.4.8. The soteriological emphasis of Augustine’s Christian philosophy is aligned with

Augustine, therefore, never fully departs from the philosophical hope of attaining wisdom and happiness. What he finds for himself in Christ and presents to the world in his writings is the fulfilment—albeit through the subversion of sinful pride—of the philosophical quest for wisdom in eschatological union with the Wisdom of God.<sup>117</sup> This remained the case right through Augustine’s writings. Basil Studer summarizes well: ‘Augustine wished to do nothing else in his *Enchiridion* than to present the Christian philosophy as he had understood it since Cassiciacum.’<sup>118</sup>

It is important to note the extent to which this reading subverts the idea of a transition in Augustine’s thought from early philosophical optimism to later theological pessimism. Not only is there clear continuity between Augustine’s philosophical and theological works, which can be understood in terms of a single Christian philosophy, it is hope in Christ as the end of wisdom’s quest—made increasingly explicit through Augustine’s writing—that holds this Christian philosophy together. Augustine’s thought does not become more pessimistic with the increase of its theological depth. As it becomes more deeply focused on Christ, it becomes more deeply hopeful.

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the therapeutic purpose of Hellenistic philosophy identified by Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), and Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). This relationship was served linguistically by the Latin term *salus* meaning both ‘health’ and ‘salvation’, which Augustine capitalizes upon. See e.g. *doctr. chr.* 1.27; *Io. eu. tr.* 8.13.

<sup>117</sup> This is the dynamic of 1 Cor. 1-2, which Augustine cites at the opening of the *Enchiridion*. God declares foolish the godless wisdom of the world, he tells Laurentius, citing 1 Cor. 1:20. But that does not mean the search for wisdom should be repudiated. Augustine’s desire is that Laurentius should be wise ‘in good’, that is, in accordance with the good of creation redeemed through Christ. Wisdom is freely accessible to the world by following the way of faith, hope, and love, that is, along the church’s way of the worship of God through Christ. Cf. *ciu.* 10.3, ‘For our Good, that Final Good about which the philosophers dispute, is nothing else but to cleave to him whose spiritual embrace, if one may so express it, fills the intellectual soul and makes it fertile with true virtues.’

<sup>118</sup> Studer, ‘Augustine and the Pauline Theme of Hope’, 216.

### Chapter 3: Hope and Human Identity

This thesis opened with the insight of Andrew Delbanco that hope in modernity has shifted in focus from the spiritual pursuit of God's kingdom to the historical attainment of the nation's future to the psychological fulfilment of the self-centred—purportedly self-made—human 'self'. The paradigm conceals deeper complexity, of course, but it does capture a broad transition in the understanding of hope, from a theological virtue to a psychological disposition. This transition, which entailed a departure from the God of classical theism in order for the self to reach its own end, represents both a liberation and a loss: I may assert myself as 'the master of my fate'—free to determine my own future—but apart from a sustaining ontological framework, both hope and personal identity have been rendered fragile. We can consider the broad path of hope in modernity in terms of two fundamental locutions: 'I hope *in God* that p' (taking the theological content of '*in God*' to be filled out according to the understanding of the *Enchiridion* expounded in the last chapter) renders hope a virtue and situates the self in integral relation to God and others. 'I hope that p' (bracketing consideration of any wider ontological let alone theological order) reduces hope to an emotion or a bare propositional attitude and leaves the hoping agent isolated and exposed.

The focus of the previous chapter was on the relationship between hope and ontology as it is brought into view by this transition. The focus of this chapter is hope and human identity, or, hope and the modern self. Turning once again to the under-explored understanding of hope in Augustine, I will present an original reading of *Confessions*, which highlights the importance of hope in Augustine's personal narrative and develops its contemporary potential. *Confessions*, I argue, offers an alternative path to the modern story of hope (God to nation to self) that might also

serve as a way on, delivering a better hope for the self in relation to a classical understanding of God that was perhaps too-hastily dismissed. In opposition to the presumption and despair that characterise the modern individual's disenchanted agency and anxious pursuit of its own future—a pursuit on which its being depends—Augustine holds out hope for the willingly de-centred self that humbly receives its subjectivity in relation to Christ as a gift of divine grace. Hope is most truly found within a society that has recognised, and is ordered according to, its dependence on God. Following the path of *Confessions* beyond Immanuel Kant's rationalised Augustinian account of hope, the way of virtue is not merely ontological but liturgical, beginning and ending in worship. The teleological unity of virtue and happiness is not received (as it is for Kant) as the rightful demand of the rational moral agent who has followed the way of virtue to the end. Instead, both the eternal beatitude of the eschatological homeland and the joy through suffering of the temporal way are given by God. Hope is confident since this path has already been fulfilled, having been walked to its end in history in the person and work of Christ. It is universally accessible through his mediation and outpouring of the Spirit (*conf.* 9.4.9; 10.42.67).

This chapter will explore the relation between hope and modern identity in the work of Charles Taylor, who takes the development of Augustinian thought as playing an important part in the emergence of the modern self. Taylor has been criticised by Augustine scholars for interpreting Augustine as anticipating modern subjectivity. However, there remains both historical truth and contemporary value in his emphasis on features of modernity as Augustinian. Not least is the possibility of drawing on neglected aspects of Augustine's thought to follow a path that fulfils as well as subverts modern understandings of personal freedom and rational moral agency in order to find hope for the self. Modern selfhood need not be abandoned in a

turn to Augustine but can be critically developed by attending to neglected aspects of his theological thought. Such is the path that this chapter will follow, identifying a way of hope in *Confessions* that can move us beyond Kant's rationalised Augustinian hope by reorienting the self of Kant's question towards the fulfilment of love, situating the flourishing of the self in agapic relation to human society and to God.

## 1. Hope and modern identity

In his seminal work, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, Charles Taylor argues for the inescapable integration of human selfhood (agential identity) and moral ontology: 'Selfhood and the good, or in another way selfhood and morality, turn out to be inextricably intertwined themes.'<sup>1</sup> Human agency exists inescapably within an ontological framework with strong qualitative distinctions: 'there are ends or goods which are worthy or desirable in a way that cannot be measured on the same scale as our ordinary ends, goods, desirabilia'.<sup>2</sup> Taylor positions his argument in opposition to the 'reductive thesis' of modern moral agency that he describes as the 'naturalist illusion'—the attempt to exclude consideration of moral frameworks, evident most clearly in the immanent moral calculus of utilitarianism. 'The utilitarian', he counters, 'lives within a moral horizon which cannot be explicated by his own moral theory'.<sup>3</sup> Taylor recognizes that people might

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 21. 'My target is the moral ontology which articulates these [moral and spiritual] intuitions. What is the picture of our spiritual nature and predicament which makes sense of our responses? "Making sense" here means articulating what makes these responses appropriate: identifying what makes something a fit object for them and correlatively formulating more fully the nature of the response as well as spelling out what all this presupposes about ourselves and our situation in the world. What is articulated here is the background we assume and draw on in any claim to rightness, part of which we are forced to spell out when we have to defend our responses as the right ones.' *Sources*, 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 31.

and do function at the level of inarticulacy about the frameworks they live within, but that does not negate the existence of such frameworks. Indeed, the naturalist attempt to exclude frameworks fails as an impossibility. The ‘sense of a qualitative distinction’ remains prevalent.<sup>4</sup>

Taylor illustrates his argument by considering the contemporary importance of the question of personal identity: ‘Who am I?’

This can’t necessarily be answered by giving name and genealogy. What does answer this question for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand.<sup>5</sup>

People may see their identity in terms of a variety of commitments, be they local, national, religious, philosophical or whatever. The point is that a person’s answer to the identity question reveals their ultimate point(s) of reference. To take this commitment away would precipitate an ‘identity crisis’, a disorientation that undermines a person’s sense both of who they are and where they stand. Absent such commitment,

They lack a frame or horizon within which things can take on a stable significance, within which some life possibilities can be seen as good or meaningful, others as bad or trivial. The meaning of all these

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 21. ‘I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us; otherwise put, that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include these strong qualitative discriminations. Moreover, this is not meant just as a contingently true psychological fact about human beings, which could perhaps turn out one day not to hold for some exceptional individual or new type, some superman of disengaged objectification. Rather the claim is that living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood.’ *Sources*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 27.

possibilities is unfixed, labile, or undetermined. This is a painful and frightening experience.<sup>6</sup>

Taylor's analysis of the interdependence of ontology and personal identity accords with the approach of this thesis to the meaning and importance of hope in late modernity. The disorientation that Taylor identifies can be understood not only as a loss of meaning in a narrowly epistemic sense but as a loss of hope for a meaningful future. In fact, the importance of hope for coherent moral agency is implicit in Taylor's analysis, brought into view by the idea that a moral framework also functions as a *horizon*. That is to say, a moral framework does not simply provide a coherent sense of meaning or 'place to stand', it provides a future to live towards, a direction of travel to the fulfilment of human meaning and purpose in a teleological sense. Taylor recognises this dynamic in his explanation of the existence of the self in moral space, which is never 'exhausted for us by what we *are*, because we are always changing and *becoming*.'<sup>7</sup> Moral agency is subject to growth (and decay) such that 'the issue for us has to be not only where we *are*, but where we're *going*'.<sup>8</sup> This being the case, and hope being the empowering virtue of the *viator*, for moral agency to be sustained in late modernity, the late modern self must learn again to hope.<sup>9</sup>

That this needs to be a learning *again* was implicit in the account of hope in the last chapter. The 'standard' account of modern hope is insufficient. It is conjoined to modern individualism and an accompanying mode of rational evaluation that overlooks the fact that hope is 'a unifying and grounding force of human agency'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 47.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> On hope as 'preeminently the virtue of the *status viatoris*', see Josef Pieper, *On Hope*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy, in *Faith, Hope, Love*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 98.

<sup>10</sup> Victoria McGeer, 'The Art of Good Hope', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592:1 (2004), 101.

The proposal of this thesis is that late modernity's re-learning process when it comes to hope can benefit from taking Augustine as a guide. Following Taylor's account of the emergence of modern selfhood as relying on a particular development of Augustinian theology, I am not seeking to re-read Augustine against the modern self but for the sake of its future. My argument is that aspects of Augustine's understanding that were left behind in modernity's development might—by way of constructive criticism—guide its onward direction.

In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor is clear that he is not offering a strict genealogical 'explanation' of the modern self, answering the question of its diachronic causation.<sup>11</sup> Instead, he takes his project to be a less ambitious attempt to excavate some of the prominent historical sources of modern identity, highlighting their appeal, inherent visions of the good, and fundamental spiritual power.<sup>12</sup> His aim is to trouble simplistic readings of modernity by highlighting the emergence of modern identity from intertwined emphases in theistic, rational, and romantic sources. Such work is helpful in our time of modern fragmentation in that it has the effect of softening internecine conflict between those who champion one set of sources or concerns over another. For example, if the loss of hope that confronts the modern utility-maximizing self is a result of its losing sight of a substantive moral horizon, might not a greater awareness of the theistic sources in *its own* history provide a healthy internal critique and hold the potential for a remedial pathway? When it comes to hope, to straightforwardly oppose the hopelessness of modern utilitarianism with the hope of historic Christian theism is to read the two positions as self-contained in a way that simply is not the case:

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<sup>11</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 202; cf. *Sources*, chapt. 12, 'A Digression on Historical Explanation'.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 203.

The goods may be in conflict, but for all that they don't refute each other. The dignity which attaches to disengaged reason is not invalidated when we see how expressive fulfilment or ecological responsibility has been savaged in its name. Close and patient articulation of the goods which underpin different spiritual families in our time tends, I believe, to make their claims more palpable. The trouble with most of the views that I consider inadequate, and that I want to define mine in contrast to here, is that their sympathies are too narrow. They find their way through the dilemmas of modernity by invalidating some of the crucial goods in contest.<sup>13</sup>

Taylor's appreciation of the complexity of modernity is important and it cautions against two modes of Augustinian recovery. The first, also critiqued by Jennifer Herdt in *Putting on Virtue*, relies on an oppositional grace-overcomes-nature 'hyper-Augustinianism', which Taylor identifies with the Reformation tradition.<sup>14</sup> This Lutheran mode develops Augustine's assessment of the limits of human reason and non-Christian virtue into a full-scale assault. Grace meets human hope(s) by way of subversion and replacement. The hope of eudaimonic fulfilment in line with human nature is replaced by the hope of heaven in line with the new life that is the gift of the Spirit.<sup>15</sup> The second, postmodern Augustinianism, represented by the Radical Orthodoxy of John Millbank, Michael Hanby et al., follows on the heels of a reconsideration of the relation between nature and grace in twentieth-century theology.<sup>16</sup> In this stream of thought, nature and grace are not opposed but fundamentally integrated. It was the disenchanting effect of modernity, with its

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<sup>13</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 502-503.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 246-247; Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting On Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1-4.

<sup>15</sup> For a recent defence of Luther's rejection of virtue ethics, in opposition to Herdt, see Simeon Zahl, 'Non-Competitive Agency and Luther's Experiential Argument Against Virtue', *Modern Theology* (forthcoming, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., John Millbank, 'Postmodern Critical Augustinianism: A Short *Summa* in Forty Two Responses to Unasked Questions', *Modern Theology* 7:3 (1991), 225-237; Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003).

emphasis on the disembodied intellect, that isolated nature and reason from their pre-modern integration within a participatory ontology where nature is itself a gift of grace. Augustine is employed as a source for a reprimed theological ontology that can overcome the fissiparous effects of modernity.

These two streams of Augustinian theology can be correlated to rival understandings of hope. The former is evidenced in Moltmann's account (see chapter four), which purifies Augustinian hope of its relation to a classical ethic of virtue, highlighting the apocalyptic nature of eschatological hope. The latter underlies an approach exemplified by Jeffrey Metcalfe, which is light on propositional specificity when it comes to the historical life and work of Christ but instead emphasizes hope in terms of ontological participation.<sup>17</sup>

I am seeking to follow a different path, developing an Augustinian account of hope as a virtue (*pace* Moltmann) that is specific in its propositional theological claims (*pace* Radical Orthodoxy). Where the first path seeks to overcome Augustine as the theological source of modernity's malaise, and the second seeks to overcome modernity by way of a return to Augustine, the route I am advocating seeks to draw on Augustine as a source of hope for modernity's future. Rather than interpreting modern selfhood as a pathogenic Augustinian inheritance, or a straightforwardly anti-Augustinian perversion, I travel by way of a theological development of Taylor's argument for the Augustinian nature of modernity.

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<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey S. Metcalfe, 'Hoping Without a Future: Augustine's Theological Virtues Beyond Melancholia', *Anglican Theological Review* 95:2 (1995), 235-250. For a critique of Radical Orthodoxy that resists its participatory ontology, critiquing Hanby's ontological 'Christology of manifestation' on the basis of a detailed exposition of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, see Maarten Wisse, *Trinitarian Theology Beyond Participation: Augustine's De Trinitate and Contemporary Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011).

This might seem a controversial route: Taylor has been widely criticised for aligning Augustine too closely with Descartes, whose anthropology is often taken to be the most prominent source of modern disenchantment.<sup>18</sup> Voiced by postmodern Augustinians sympathetic to Radical Orthodoxy, the point of issue focuses on Taylor's interpretation of Augustinian interiority when it comes to knowledge of God as a prominent source of modern subjectivity.<sup>19</sup> Through Descartes and Montaigne, Augustine's emphasis on individual interiority is taken to have paved the way for the emergence of modern identity in terms of the dubious legacy of what Taylor refers to as the 'punctual self': the independent, intellectual, self-conscious, disembodied—and disenchanted—'I'.<sup>20</sup> The concern, as developed by John Cavadini, is that Taylor's identification of Augustine as a precursor to Descartes relies on reading a reification of the self into Augustine's thought. Taylor seems to overlook important anti-essentialist elements in Augustine's account of identity formation as a 'process that will be complete only eschatologically, and only as a gift partly received and mostly hoped for'.<sup>21</sup> The argument that Taylor fails to develop aspects of Augustine's own understanding and is therefore insufficiently nuanced in his account of Augustinian subjectivity is no doubt legitimate. However, as Rowan Williams recognizes, it is not necessary to reject Taylor in order to supplement his account of Augustine with

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<sup>18</sup> See John Cavadini, 'The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine's Thought', *Augustinian Studies* 38:1 (2007), 119-120; Matthew Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4-5; Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, 8-12; John Millbank, 'Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul', *Modern Theology* 13:4 (1997), 465.

<sup>19</sup> On Taylor's interpretation of Augustine, 'our principal route to God is not through the object domain but "in" ourselves', 'by going inward, I am drawn upward'. *Sources*, 129, 134.

<sup>20</sup> 'It is hardly an exaggeration to say that it was Augustine who introduced the inwardness of radical reflexivity and bequeathed it to the Western tradition of thought. The step was a fateful one, because we have certainly made a big thing of the first-person standpoint. The modern epistemological tradition from Descartes, and all that has flowed from it in modern culture, has made this standpoint fundamental—to the point of aberration, one might think.' Taylor, *Sources*, 131.

<sup>21</sup> Cavadini, 'Darkest Enigma', 124.

communal and dynamic aspects of identity formation.<sup>22</sup> Along the same lines, it would also seem unnecessary to dismiss modern selfhood in order to argue for a process of eschatological identity formation. Charles Mathewes offers a fruitful alternative approach, recognizing Augustine's inward turn as his 'basic epistemological move' but arguing that Augustine's theological anthropology 'not only resists many of our present assumptions but also offers an alternative to them':

Against subjectivism, a properly Augustinian anthropology understands human agency as always already related to both God and the world; thus, it chastens modern predilections for absolute autonomy while still affirming the subject's importance.<sup>23</sup>

Developing this line of argument in view of Augustine's Christological eschatology allows us to affirm the stable self as an eschatological reality that is manifest historically in Christ. This relativizes, *theologically*, the modern self's claim to its own autonomous integrity: the self is inescapably dependent on God and others and, apart from Christ, never at rest (*conf.* 1.1.1).

From the perspective of Augustine's eschatological anthropology, the modern self can be recognised as laying claim to a stability and integrity it has not and cannot attain.<sup>24</sup> It is not, however, an absolute fabrication but an eschatologically over-realized distortion, which, insofar as it opposes its theological *telos*, seeks a non-existent home. Yet it still seeks for home. The human dignity that the modern self relies on as its own maintains a derivative relation to the dignity bequeathed by God and fulfilled in the eschaton. On Augustine's understanding of sin as privation, the truth may be twisted out of shape but cannot be utterly abandoned.

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<sup>22</sup> Rowan Williams, 'Time and Self-Awareness in Confessions', in *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 22-23.

<sup>23</sup> Charles T. Mathewes, 'Augustinian Anthropology: *Interior intimo meo*', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27:2 (1999), 196.

<sup>24</sup> 'The self's decision to love the wrong end can never succeed, for the self is hard-wired to seek right relationship with God.' Mathewes, 'Augustinian Anthropology', 206.

Cavadini's postmodern opposition to modern selfhood affirms much of this. He draws on Augustine's Christological and eschatological anthropology in order to oppose the (modern) notion of a stable self with a (postmodern) emphasis on human subjectivity as constantly under construction. The eschatology he advocates, however, denies any positive fulfilment for the self, even in the eschaton, where 'there is no self... but an ongoing transformation, and ongoing enlargement of heart'.<sup>25</sup> This would seem to be a position that Cavadini cannot ultimately sustain: 'If we have a self, it is one that is eternally stigmatized and thus eternally becoming as it learns ever more fully of its own significance in the love of Christ.' Cavadini seems to equivocate at this point, denying the self in a process of formation on the one hand but needing to affirm the self in order for there to be a meaningful process of formation on the other.

Cavadini's difficulty can perhaps be traced to his postmodern opposition to modernity. My argument is that rather than opposing modern (historical) self-attainment with postmodern (eschatological) self-formation, an understanding of the modern self as eschatologically over-realized can temper any move to dismissal. There is little need of a postmodern Augustine to overcome modernity if we can identify modernity's distorted Augustinianism and draw on the original to encourage the modern world to a greater faithfulness to itself. On the particular point of distinction between the self's stability and an ongoing transformation of personal identity in relation to the love of God, a qualification of Cavadini's understanding of the eschaton might help us. *Pace* Cavadini, there is a proper Augustinian stability to the self in the eschaton, implied in the fulfilment of faith and hope in sight. Love remains, of course, allowing a 'stable' self to be affirmed, not as an utterly independent entity, but in accord with the stability of the self's love for God. There is

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<sup>25</sup> Cavadini, 'Darkest Enigma', 132.

no need to reject such eschatological stability as inevitably ‘static’ in accord with the kind of modern monism that postmodernists recoil against. Following Augustine there is a future unity of the self, found in relation to the God who is Being itself, a unity that will be experienced fully in the eschaton and can be experienced proleptically—through hope—in the present: ‘It is you, you, Lord, who through hope establish me in unity’ (*conf.* 9.4.11).<sup>26</sup>

Paradoxically, an insistence on the subversion of the modern self, overlooking the potential for its fulfilment by way of repentance and faith (Augustine’s route in *Confessions*), grants the modern self too much. For the modern notion of the self to require straightforward refutation, we would first need to grant the success of its prideful self-assertion. This is what Cavadini seems to suggest, constructing an understanding of selfhood that demands theological dismissal:

If the phrase ‘the self’ has any warrant for us in Augustine, it would be for this prideful soul which has reified itself as the ultimate *res* for which even God has become a signifier. If ‘The Self’ corresponds to anything in Augustine, it is this reified structure of pride, an attractive illusion, but ultimately a self-contradiction, doomed to eternal incoherence.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> It would seem that Cavadini overlooks the nature and importance of hope in Augustine’s understanding of the Christian life and so neglects the transition of the self out of enigmatic darkness into eschatological light. In *conf.* 4.4.9 Augustine declares, following the death of friend, ‘I had become a great enigma to myself, and I questioned my soul.’ This fits Cavadini’s description of the postmodern Augustinian self. However, the self-dissipation of the prodigal (9.4.10) gives way to the hope of unity in relation to God (9.4.11). This hope is not the same as self-knowledge, of course. The enigma of the self has not been ‘solved’. But it has been transformed into the stable self-awareness that comes from being known by God, who has given the believer both hope and a future. It is the confidence of the pilgrim who walks the way of confession with eschatological fulfilment in view: ‘Let me, then, confess what I know about myself, and confess too what I do not know, because what I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me, and what I do not know I shall remain ignorant about until my darkness becomes like bright noon before your face’ (*conf.* 10.5.7).

<sup>27</sup> Cavadini, ‘Darkest Enigma’, 127.

This rightly recognizes the Augustinian antithesis between sin and grace but it seems to lose sight of the fact that the antithesis is principial and eschatological: there is no absolute antithesis between modern self-possession and pre-modern self-formation, between propositional and participatory ways of knowing. There is no reified modern self to which Augustine's way of human being and becoming stands entirely opposed. Returning to Augustine, there is an alternative to Cavadini's position: the self can be understood as an eschatological reality, purified of its pathogenic connotations, and taken to refer to Christ (its reflexive and communal nature guaranteed by the Trinitarian relations between Father, Son, and Spirit). It has a secondary application to humanity more widely in accord with Augustine's understanding of *Totus Christus* (see chapter 2), whereby the perfected subjectivity that is Christ's belongs also to the body of which he is head. To be sure, consummated subjectivity is an eschatological reality towards which the church travels, but it can be legitimately claimed and liturgically inhabited by those on the way. Baptism, on these terms, takes on a particular importance. It can be interpreted as a sacramental act of true self description, inaugurally conferring the 'selfhood' that belongs to the body of Christ on the baptized person. Baptism does not represent a person's loss of identity into an unknowable, utterly enigmatic God, but names the believer in relation to the God who has revealed himself in Christ as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I am thus arguing both with and against Cavadini. In agreement, the human assertion of 'selfhood' apart from God is indeed a claim of self-reification. In opposition, I see no theological warrant for reading such an assertion as corresponding to a reality that human pride could ever accomplish. The ultimate human self is the 'I' of Christ, in (positive or negative) relation to whom all human identities are formed. What is more the process of formation is *both* punctiliar and progressive (representing the creedal propositional commitment and historical

practice of faith, true or false).<sup>28</sup> In these terms, we can speak of the development of the self, not simply as an indeterminate theological process of identity formation, but as an historical journey of moral renewal (or decay) into (or away from) the likeness of Christ.

With this interpretation of Augustine in view, perhaps we can accept, but also move beyond, Taylor's argument that emphases in Augustine's thought were taken up (with varying degrees of distortion) into different aspects of the modern project. That this was the case in something like the way Taylor indicates, we can acknowledge, but we need not stop there. A more intentionally theological lens highlights Augustine's conception of the self not only in an ontological but in a specifically Christological and doxological framework. This is the framework developed in the previous chapter whereby Augustine's understanding of the virtue of hope is ultimately aimed towards the fulfilment of the ecclesial life of faith in the eschatological love of God. With this horizon in mind, the hopeless disenchantment of the modern Western self can be related to the emergence not only of a 'de-ontologized' (Taylor) but a specifically 'de-doxologized' self that has learnt to suppress (explicitly or implicitly) its liturgical orientation to God through Christ.

As Taylor recognizes in his distinction between the 'goods' and 'hypergoods' of a given ontological framework, horizons of meaning are layered.<sup>29</sup> An Augustinian theological interpretation can develop Taylor's right emphasis on the importance of qualitative distinctions between goods to highlight the fundamental qualitative distinction as that between God and creation. This correlates with a specific description of the relation to one's ultimate hypergood(s) as a relation of worship.

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<sup>28</sup> Augustine refers to these two aspects of faith as '*fides quae creduntur*' and '*fides qua creduntur*' (*trin.* 13.5.2).

<sup>29</sup> For discussion of 'hypergoods', see Taylor, *Sources*, 62-75.

Going beyond Taylor theologically highlights that the modern world does not simply function in a state of inarticulacy concerning its own ontological framework, it functions in a state of inarticulacy concerning its God. The decline of the notion of cosmic moral order that Taylor highlights is most deeply a loss of the order of worship, a waning of the liturgical practices which order life in tune with the order of nature as creation. Without the liturgical ordering of life towards its fulfilment in worship, there is an inevitability to the late modern collapse of the ontological framework needed to sustain the self. Apart from doxology, ontology cannot but be reduced to utilitarianism. Apart from the self's sense of purpose defined in terms of its liturgical use, we are bound to fashion a purpose of our own, seeking to remake ourselves and use others in the process. In order to find hope, the modern self needs to re-know itself in view of the source that is its beginning and end. At its most fundamental level, what I can hope for depends on the answer to the specific 'Who am I?' question of Christ: 'Who do you say that I am?'

Thus far I have argued for the possibility of finding in Augustinian theology a source of hope for the future of the modern self. In so doing I have built on Taylor's argument for the Augustinian nature of modernity in its historical development to propose an Augustinian way for modernity to move beyond its difficulty with the questions 'Who am I?' and 'What may I hope for?' We will turn below to an original reading of Augustine's *Confessions* that highlights the prominence of hope in the narrative in order to understand the relation between these two questions and advocate an Augustinian way of holding them together. As we shall see, Augustine's coming to himself was situated within a journey to hope in God. However, if we are to locate this proposal in the midst of modernity, we cannot turn directly to *Confessions* without recognising that these questions were raised, and met with an alternative, theologically rationalised, Augustinian response, in the seminal modern philosophy of

Immanuel Kant. If we are going to follow a different Augustinian path to hope in late modernity, we will need to navigate through Kant.

## 2. Immanuel Kant: hope within reason

Kant's account of hope is distinct from other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century understandings in terms of both its content and its importance in his philosophy. The development of the action-oriented category of 'emotion' in the moral psychology of early modernity had brought with it a departure from Aquinas' systematization of Augustinian hope, which he interpreted as both a passion and a theological virtue.<sup>30</sup> Hope came to be widely understood as an action-generating emotion with no inherent rational or moral quality: an 'appetite with an opinion of obtaining' (Hobbes).<sup>31</sup> On this view, hope is restricted only by a minimal subjective probability assessment and has no integral rationality or relation to the good. This is the origin of the 'standard' modern account of hope, discussed in the preceding chapter.

By contrast, Kant's account of hope has more in common with the earlier (Augustinian) theological understanding of hope as virtue. For Kant, as for Augustine

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<sup>30</sup> Claudia Bloeser and Titus Stahl, 'Hope', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/hope/>, accessed 28 Mar. 2018; Alan Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26-36; cf. Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.6.14 (36); cf. René Descartes, 'The Passions of the Soul', in *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writings*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.58 (264); David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Lewis A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 2.3.9 (439); John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 2.20 (180-183). Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin, 1996), 3.12 (106). Alan Mittleman provides a helpful overview of the underlying similarity between these positions, whilst also documenting their differences. Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age*, 27-31.

and Aquinas, hope draws its moral significance from life's teleological orientation to the good within a specific ontological frame. The major difference comes from the nature of that framework: classically theological for Augustine and Aquinas, rationally theistic for Kant. For Augustine, hope is most fundamentally concerned with the fulfilment of worship. For Kant, the consideration of hope emerges as a question concerning the ultimate expectation of the rational moral life. Whilst both understand hope in relation to the fulfilment of wisdom in happiness, each has a different conception of how the way of wisdom relates to God: God's existence as a necessary condition (Kant), God as beginning and end, the heavenly homeland and the historical way (Augustine).<sup>32</sup>

This comparison with Augustine helps to illumine the distinct way Kant's concern with hope is framed. His question 'What may I hope for?' is 'an interest of my reason'.<sup>33</sup> He expands: 'If I do what I should, what then may I hope?'<sup>34</sup> What can rational moral agents, committed to living in accord with the categorical imperative, hold as their ultimate expectation? Will virtue and happiness—often at odds in present experience—be finally conjoined? Kant's affirmative answer depends on rational belief in God as a postulate of practical reason, his philosophical system delivering rational analogues to God and to the Christian life of faith, hope, and love (the order of which he seems to reverse): God is a transcendental ideal; love is living in accord with the moral law's categorical imperative; hope is expecting that virtue will be united with happiness (without that expectation becoming motivational); faith is rational belief.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *CPR*, 677 (A805/B833); *conf.* 10.20.29-10.23.33; *trin.* 13.5.8ff.

<sup>33</sup> *CPR*, 677 (A805/B833).

<sup>34</sup> *CPR*, 677 (A805/B833).

<sup>35</sup> Kant's focus on hope is thus not as an action-generating emotion but a rational propositional attitude, 'an attitude that allows human reason to relate to those questions which cannot be answered by

The previous chapter considered Augustine's understanding of hope within his Christological account of spiritual ascent, highlighting the role of hope as a virtue in relation to the ecclesial progress towards human maturity that will ultimately be fulfilled in the eschaton. Turning to Kant, we find an account of hope that bears resemblance to Augustine's as a rational analogue. In the context of other early modern conceptions, Kant's Augustinian turn is a positive development. His understanding of hope in specific relation to the future fulfilment of the good has at least three benefits over the 'standard' account that emerged in the seventeenth- and eighteenth century: it situates the hoping agent in relation to a moral community of hope, adjoins rather than displaces human effort, and offers an inherent rationality to hope, allowing hope to be distinguished from psychological optimism.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, Kant's departure from Augustine when it comes to his conception of the highest good and human maturity ultimately delivers a quite different understanding, both of hope and of human agency and identity, to that of the Augustinian theological tradition.<sup>37</sup> In place of a path of spiritual progress towards eschatological human maturity in conformity to Christ, Kant understands the Enlightenment project as bringing the

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experience'. Bloeser and Stahl, 'Hope'. Hope is important as a necessary condition of moral action but it does not provide moral action with its content or motivation for such would violate the purity of the moral law. See Christopher Insole, 'The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant's Conception of the Highest Good', *Philosophy* 83 (2008), 335.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Galbraith draws on these features of Kantian hope to advocate its potential as a Catholic middle way between Bloch's atheistic hope without divine assistance and Moltmann's Christological hope without human effort. Elizabeth C. Galbraith, 'Kant and Richard Schaeffler's Catholic Theology of Hope', *Philosophy and Theology* 9 (1996), 333-350.

<sup>37</sup> 'Kant agrees with the tradition that God, as the "Supreme Being", the "All Reality", is the highest uncreated good, or, as Kant puts it, the "highest original good". The rupture emerges, though, with Kant's account of the highest created good, which, for Kant, does not revolve around the enjoyment of, and participation in, God. What "alone constitutes the highest good", Kant writes in the first *Critique*, is "happiness in exact proportion with the morality of rational beings, through which they are worthy of it".' Christopher Insole, 'Kant on Christianity, Religion and Politics: Three Hopes, Three Limits', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 29:1 (2016), 18.

rational realisation of human maturity in history. In place of hope as a theological virtue, orienting life along the way of faith working through love to its fulfilment in the beatific vision, Kant interprets hope as a propositional attitude that allows reason to reach beyond present experience, where happiness and virtue are often at odds, to its rational end, where happiness and virtue ultimately converge.

Kant's distance from Augustine is illustrated by an event recorded by one of his students. Hearing of the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, Kant was elated.<sup>38</sup> 'Now let your servant go in peace for I have seen the glory of the world', he is reputed to have said.<sup>39</sup> The exclamation parodies the *Nunc dimittis* (Simeon's song of jubilation on holding the infant Christ, Luke 2:29-32) and communicates Kant's sentiment towards the incarnation of autonomous human reason in political republicanism. In the French Revolution, mankind's universal Christmas had come, heralding the establishment of what religion pursued as the heavenly Kingdom of God in its universal rational form as the earthly Kingdom of Ends.<sup>40</sup>

In his essay, 'What is Enlightenment?' Kant argued that 'Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage'. Humanity had come of age and did not

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<sup>38</sup> See Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61-92.

<sup>39</sup> Kuehn, *Kant*, 342. Kuehn provides evidence of a similar view held by Friedrich Gentz, a student of Kant's in 1783. Gentz wrote in a letter of 1790: 'The revolution constitutes the first practical triumph of philosophy, the first example in the history of the world of the construction of government upon the principles of an orderly, rationally-constructed system. It constitutes the hope of mankind and provides consolation to men elsewhere who continue to groan under the weight of age-old evils.' Cited in Kuehn, *Kant*, 342.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W Wood, George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 152 (6:122), 'We have reason to say, however, that "the Kingdom of God is come into us," even if only the principle of the gradual transition from ecclesiastical faith to the universal religion of reason, and so to a (divine) ethical state on earth, has put in roots universally, and, somewhere, also in *public*—though the actual setting up of this state is still infinitely removed from us. For since this principle contains the basis for a continual approximation to the ultimate perfection, there lies in it (invisibly)—as in a shoot that develops and will in the future bear seeds in turn—the whole that will one day enlighten the world and rule over it.'

stand in need of the authority of divine revelation, ecclesial tradition, or autocratic government, which should all be left behind. ‘*Sapere aude!* “Have courage to use your own reason!”—that is the motto of enlightenment.’<sup>41</sup> Importantly, however, Kant’s messianic appreciation of human reason did not entail the elimination of God from his philosophy. In fact, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he spoke famously of the need for rational enquiry to be limited: ‘I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith’.<sup>42</sup> Whilst this preserved an important place for rational belief in God in Kant’s system, the strong separation of faith from knowledge denied the theological relation of ‘faith seeking understanding’ frequently affirmed by Augustine, who did not understand faith in God in opposition to knowledge but as the way towards its fulfilment in eschatological sight.<sup>43</sup> Refusing the authority of church tradition and the demands of ecclesial worship, Kant opposed what he saw as a speculative ‘ecclesiastical faith’ that demanded irrational subservience. Instead, faith was purified from the irrationality of divine worship and submission to church tradition, and redefined as ‘rational belief’. Ultimately God also was redefined, ‘not as a world-soul in nature but as a personal principle of human reason’.<sup>44</sup>

Kant’s philosophy, while retaining rational belief in God, thus represents a falling away from the Augustinian theological tradition that was the inheritance of Western society and his own personal inheritance through Lutheran pietism. On

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<sup>41</sup> *Enlightenment*, 17 (8.35).

<sup>42</sup> *CPR*, 117 (Bxxx).

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, *trin.* 1.2.4; 7.6.12; 15.2.2.

<sup>44</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Opus Postumum (OP)*, trans. and ed. Eckart Förster and Michael Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21:19. See Christopher Insole’s account of how Kant’s understanding changed over time to that expressed in the *Opus Postumum*: ‘Where formerly Kant insisted that one had to postulate the existence of God to secure the highest good, Kant now intimates that we must postulate progress in history, as a phenomenal manifestation, the moving image of eternity, of our own noumenal turning toward autonomy. And that would indeed be where we would need to find out hope: not in God, but in ourselves, as divine.’ Christopher Insole, *The Intolerable God: Kant’s Theological Journey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 148.

Augustine's terms, we might say that Kant's philosophy represents the presumptuous prioritization of sight before faith, falling away from God rather than continuing to journey towards him. The historical Christ, who is the model of ascent by way of humble submission, and in whom the church participates in resurrection life, is re-interpreted according to the dictates of Kantian rationality. The Christian religion is likewise reconfigured, purified from the worship of the church and absolved of the mystery that accompanied it, a 'transition from ecclesiastical faith to the universal religion of reason'.<sup>45</sup> Kant leaves behind the historical incarnation of Christ and traditional doctrine of the Trinity in order to appropriate the mundane historical potential of a rationalised Christian theology. God, society, and self are re-ordered in a rational-self-centred, as opposed to risen-Christ-centred way.

This rational self—the self as an autonomous rational agent—is the self of Kant's question of hope, the third of his summative questions of philosophy (What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for?) first stated in 1781 in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>46</sup> Kant's re-interpretation of the self in relation to the messianic coming of human reason in the Enlightenment, rather than in relation to the coming of God's kingdom in Christ, acts as the controlling framework for the answer he will develop. Whilst hope continues to play an important part in Kant's philosophy, it is no longer a virtue to be cultivated, along with faith and love, ordering the moral life to its fulfilment in the beatific vision. For Kant, such hope must be excluded from rational discourse as beyond the realm of (rationally) possible experience. As Sidney Axinn interprets, 'The religious terms, "God," "immortality," etc., may be mentioned but not used to specify possible hopes.'<sup>47</sup> Instead, hope is a

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<sup>45</sup> *Religion*, 152 (6:122).

<sup>46</sup> *CPR*, 677 (A805/B833).

<sup>47</sup> Sidney Axinn, 'Kant on Possible Hope: The Critique of Pure Hope', *Proceedings of the Twentieth*

rational attitude concerning the fulfilment of the moral life. It is a rational necessity, Kant argues in *Critique of Pure Reason*, ‘that everyone has cause to hope for happiness in the same measure as he has made himself worthy of it in his conduct, and that the system of morality is therefore inseparably combined with the system of happiness, though only in the idea of pure reason.’<sup>48</sup> Morality, in other words, has happiness as its theoretical horizon. The categorical imperative that is the requirement of moral reason is rationally adjoined to the hope of happiness.

Kant thus regarded his third question as ‘simultaneously practical and theoretical’, spelling it out further as concerning the hope of the rational agent: ‘If I do what I should, what then may I hope?’<sup>49</sup> It also brings religion into view.<sup>50</sup> If it is rational to hope for the conjunction of virtue with happiness as the end of the moral life, God’s existence is allowed as a postulate of practical reason, it being rational to believe in the existence of one able to secure the unity of virtue and happiness in the end.<sup>51</sup> For Kant, therefore, hope is rational, existing under the constraint of moral reason within his dualistic ontology of phenomena and noumena. God was not dismissed altogether in his Enlightenment vision, but he was distanced from history, leaving history free for humankind’s rational pursuit of the Kingdom of Ends, a universal society of peace and justice under the rule of reason.

Kant is not well known as a virtue ethicist, but he was not short of a theory of virtue in his account of moral action.<sup>52</sup> His understanding of virtue, however, is quite unlike Augustine’s, drawing a strong distinction between piety, ‘a passive respect of

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*World Congress of Philosophy* 7 (2000), 85.

<sup>48</sup> *CPR*, 679 (A809/B837).

<sup>49</sup> *CPR*, 677 (A805/B833).

<sup>50</sup> *Logic*, 538 (9.25).

<sup>51</sup> *CPrR*, 100-101 (5:124-5).

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. Lara Denis, ‘Kant’s Conception of Virtue’, in Paul Guyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 505-537.

the divine law’, and virtue, ‘the deployment of one’s forces in the observance of the duty which he respects’.<sup>53</sup> Augustine’s dynamic of grace leading to virtue is inverted in Kant’s scheme, which moves ‘from virtue to grace’.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the theological virtues central to Augustine’s understanding of moral life are not virtues in the same way for Kant. The parallel between the theological virtues and Kant’s three questions, even more clearly evident on Aquinas’ summary of the concerns of human salvation in his *Compendium Theologiae*, marks an important transition.<sup>55</sup> The theological virtues (corresponding to Kant’s questions in the order faith, love, and hope) have been reconfigured from the way by which God is worshipped (*ench.* 1.3) into ‘concerns of my reason’.<sup>56</sup>

Kant’s later addition of a fourth question, which he declares the fundamental question in his manifesto for modern philosophy, is striking:

Philosophy . . . is in fact the science of the relation of all cognition and of all use of reason to the ultimate end of human reason, to which, as the highest, all other ends are subordinated, and in which they must all unite to form a unity. The field of philosophy in this cosmopolitan sense can be brought down to the following questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope? 4. What is man? *Metaphysics*

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<sup>53</sup> *Religion*, 215 (6:201). Kant goes on to argue that what is meant by ‘true religious disposition’, or ‘divine blessedness’, is ‘*this* virtue combined with piety’ (emphasis mine). That is to say, religion within the bounds of reason requires rational obedience to the moral law apart from any religious motivation, supplemented by a strictly separate, passive, and a-rational delight in God’s law. This comports with Kant’s *a priori* separation of faith (piety) from reason (virtue).

<sup>54</sup> *Religion*, 215 (6:202).

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae*, trans. Cyril Vollert (London: B. Herder, 1947), 1.1.1, ‘Human salvation consists in knowing the truth, so that the human mind may not be confused by diverse errors; in making for the right goal, so that many may not fall away from true happiness by pursuing wrong ends; and in carrying out the law of justice, so that he may not besmirch himself with a multitude of vices. Knowledge of truth necessary for man’s salvation is comprised within a few brief articles of faith... In a short prayer Christ clearly marked out man’s right course; and in teaching us to say this prayer, He showed us the goal of our striving and our hope. In a single precept of charity he summed up that human justice which consists in observing the law... These are the three virtues, as St Augustine says, by which God is worshiped.’

<sup>56</sup> *CPR*, 677 (A805/B833). (emphasis added)

answers the first question, *morals* the second, *religion* the third, and *anthropology* the fourth. Fundamentally, however, we could reckon all of this as anthropology because the first three questions relate to the last one.<sup>57</sup>

It seems that Kant's philosophy, which is centred on the rational self, ultimately calls the rational self into question. As the modern world developed and departed from many of Kant's answers, it was left with his question: What is a human being? Who, or what, am 'I'?

This brief exploration of Kant's understanding of hope is undoubtedly limited, but it has allowed the identification of some of the central concerns underlying the question of hope in its modern expression. For Kant, the question 'What may I hope for?' is raised by the rational inquiry needed to overcome Humean scepticism (the question as it first appears in *Critique of Pure Reason*), and it turns ultimately on the nature of human agency (the question as it is raised in his lectures on logic). That his answer integrates autonomous moral agency with rational belief in God highlights his repeated assertion that the question of hope is simultaneously rational and religious. In the end, however, Kant's attempt at rational integration does not hold. The exclusion of divine intervention from history that is demanded by reason is in tension with the hope of God reconciling virtue with happiness in the attainment of the highest good. How can the reason that excludes God from history reserve the right to call on God's intervention in history at the end? It seems that Kant attempted to overcome this tension by giving up the belief in an independent God to find hope internally, in a divinised self. Of course, even this position continues to rely on the inheritance it has received from Augustinian theology, the basis of its fundamental

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<sup>57</sup> *Logic*, 538 (9.25). (emphasis in original)

commitment to human dignity, universal rationality, and the good of human freedom coming from a tradition with which it is ultimately in opposition.

The integral connection between hope, human agency, and belief in God continued to prove elusive in accounts of hope after Kant. The division in understandings of hope in the twentieth century between the transcendent theological hope advanced most prominently by Jürgen Moltmann, who presents theology *as* hope, and the immanent hopes that are the concern of the ‘standard’ philosophical account reflects the way in which hope has come to be thought of along two separate lines. Proximate, historical hope(s) continue to be treated in philosophical analyses in a way that regards them not only as distinct but divorced from ultimate hope and accompanying metaphysical and theological considerations.

In relating Kant’s account of hope to that of Augustine, the aim has been to highlight the re-framing effect of Kant’s mode of rational enquiry and understanding of moral agency on both the answer and question of hope. The aim as this chapter continues is not simply to return Kant to Augustine but to highlight an alternative Augustinian way of hope for Kant’s late modern heirs, who have inherited Kant’s questions and the first-person stance from which they are posed, but do not share the confidence he had in his answers. Iris Murdoch’s description is apt:

How recognizable, how familiar to us is the man so beautifully portrayed in the *Grundlegung*, who confronted even with Christ turns away to consider his own reason. Stripped of the exiguous metaphysical background which Kant was prepared to allow him, this man is with us still, free, independent, lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, brave, the hero of so many novels and books of moral philosophy.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1970), 80, cited in Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 84.

If Murdoch is right that this hero is still with us, apart from an ontological framework that provides a reliable place for him to stand and a future to live towards, the hero is struggling to hope. Insofar as ‘the exiguous metaphysical background’ of Kantian philosophy was an important precursor to the development of utilitarian moral agency, Kant’s metaphysical minimalism is part of the history of this modern character’s disoriented sense of self.

In proposing that the next chapter in the story of the modern self be written in conjunction not only with an ontological but theological renewal, and in turning specifically to Augustine, the future I am proposing is based on a recovery that many will find problematic. There are two reasons in defence of this move’s validity, a defence made all the more necessary by the fact that the maximal metaphysical background which governs Augustine’s understanding of hope and human agency increasingly lacks adherence within the church and even notional acceptance beyond it. The first reason concerns secular approaches to the relation between hope and human agency that seek a strictly non-theological, philosophical account. It does not dispute the significant insights that such accounts might contain, it challenges the ultimate possibility of their task *on their terms*: Augustinian theology, whether it is recognized or not, is an inescapably important part of the self’s story right through to the present. As Taylor shows in *Sources of the Self*, and develops in *A Secular Age*, modern moral agency does not only carry with it implicit ontological commitments but is enacted in relation to an historical development of the theological positions by which it is shaped. To offer an account of hope in Western philosophy is, willingly or unwillingly, to offer an account situated in relation to Augustinian theology. That there may be value in this tradition that has been obscured by our particular inheritance of it is the argument here.

The second reason in defence of a turn to Augustine engages the charge that it is impossibly nostalgic. Here we need to pause to consider how nostalgia is understood: What is the home that is sensed and sought? There is an important distinction to be made between a turn back in time, and a turn back to God. The first, dissatisfied with the self's development, seeks to re-inhabit a previous chapter in its story. The second seeks the future of the self by way of its vital, energising source. This is the way of Augustine's *Confessions*.

### **3. Augustine: hope in Christ**

Turning to Augustine in order to engage Kant's first-person question of hope brings into view not only Augustine's understanding but also his first-person experience. The path from pride to humility to hope that was proposed in chapter 1 as a way to move through the modern interpretation of Augustinian pessimism to a better understanding of Augustinian hope is not merely conceptual. It is the spiritual path along which Augustine himself travelled, the route of his own moral adventure from the restlessness of the mortal, self-seeking self to the beatitude found—in hope—in relation to the 'selfsame' God.<sup>59</sup> It is offered here as a path that remains open. It is a way of hope we might learn from even if we stop short of following it ourselves.

As Augustine recounts this journey he frequently draws an analogy with the scriptural parable of the prodigal son, who took his father's wealth, hoping for and seeking self-fulfilment in a far-off land only to find that his hope was in vain, leaving him with neither home nor wealth. Only then did he come to his senses and

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<sup>59</sup> The anticipatory—and so inherently hopeful—structure of the believer's knowledge of God in the present is emphasized by Augustine in a sentence he repeats three times in short succession: 'In your sight this is clear to me, but I beg you that it may grow clearer still, and in that disclosure I will prudently stand firm beneath your wings.' *conf.* 12.11.11 (twice); 12.11.13.

return home to his father.<sup>60</sup> The structure of this journey is one Augustine identifies in his own life as well as in the meta-narrative of human existence according to the biblical paradigm of creation, fall, and redemption. For Augustine, living within the divine economy of salvation meant coming home to God: retracing one's steps from a path of proud ambition to one of humble confession; turning from the pursuit of immanent, material fulfilment to a path where proximate earthly hopes are ordered towards ultimate reality; lifting one's sights by the inner illumination of the Spirit to the fulfilment of the good in the unseen but eternal kingdom of God; finding the fulfilment of the human quest for wisdom in the wisdom of God that is Christ. This route to the eschatological fulfilment of human life in Christ was a journey not for the feet but for the heart (*conf.* 1.18.28; *en. Ps.* 83.4; 119.1, 8; cf. Plotinus, *enn.* 1.6.8), a journey of moral (and so spiritual) formation that was walked according to the theological virtues of faith working through love in a life of humble, joyful hope.

In spite of little attention having been paid to the theme in secondary literature, Augustine's *Confessions* can be profitably read as a story of hope.<sup>61</sup> Counting the number of times hope is explicitly mentioned only takes us so far but the 68 occurrences of *spes* and its derivatives at least flag its prominence as a theme. Deeper exploration reveals the depth of this significance: Augustine's practice of confession exemplified in the work—a simultaneous acknowledgement of the unworthiness of the confessor and the eternal praiseworthiness of God—can be

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<sup>60</sup> See e.g. *conf.* 1.18.28; 8.8.19.

<sup>61</sup> James O'Donnell notes the presence of Christian hope in *conf.* 4.5.10 and highlights the frequency of *spes* in books 6, 10, 11-13 ('in later books, *spes* becomes a recurring motif'). However, he does not explore the importance of the theme in any detail. James J. O'Donnell, *Confessions: a text and commentary*, vol. ii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 224. Pedro Entralgo focuses on *conf.* 10 in order to emphasize the way in which hope works with memory in order to relate the temporal experience of human life to its fulfilment in eternity: 'La esperanza del hombre es la adhesión cordial de su existencia tempórea a una eternidad prometidora.' Pedro Entralgo, *La espera y la esperanza: historia y teoría del esperar humano* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1957), 46.

understood as a fundamental act of hope. This is explicit in *Confessions* 10, where Augustine joins his daily practice of confession to his hope in the mercy of God: ‘O my Lord, to whom my conscience confesses every day, more secure in the hope of your mercy than in its own innocence’ (*conf.* 10.3.4).

Based on his reading of the Scriptures, Augustine interprets ‘confession’ as having a dual meaning.<sup>62</sup> ‘The divine writings customarily use the word “confession” to mean not only the avowal of sins but also the praises of God’ (*en. Ps.* 117.2). Both of these two meanings bring hope into view: to confess God’s praise is to actively acknowledge that the *telos* of created reality—the consummation of creation’s God-given goodness—will not be thwarted; to confess one’s sin is to speak of sin before God and so in a way that relativizes its potency and actively denies its victory. In both senses, confession is a recognition of humble dependence that situates life on the way home to God. It is an act of hope, acknowledging the meaning of one’s life and agency in the midst of the ecclesial community (*conf.* 10.4.6) and within the divine narrative that is the story of creation being brought to its fulfilment through Christ.

This coalescence of hope and confession brings into view the relation between hope and the self that has been the concern of this chapter. As for Kant, Augustine’s hope is for the fulfilment of human agency; unlike Kant, the starting point is not the self’s native reason but the decentring of the self in confession. Turning to *Confessions* in view of Kant’s question of hope thus focuses our attention on the Kantian ‘I’. Charles Mathewes’ work on book 1 of *Confessions* is helpful here. Mathewes engages Augustine’s understanding of human agency by considering the authorial voice of *Confessions*, often considered to be a forerunner of modern autobiography. In fact, Mathewes argues, *Confessions* is not an autobiography in any

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<sup>62</sup> See O’Donnell, *Confessions*, ii, 3-7.

straightforward sense.<sup>63</sup> If anything, *Confessions* is more like an anti-autobiography. It represents the impossibility of the telling of one's own story with any degree of finality since 'we will be given to ourselves only eschatologically'.<sup>64</sup> Mathewes' point is insightful, cutting in two ways when it comes to the theme of hope: the hope we find in *Confessions* is not the hope of a self-made man who has taken sole responsibility for curating his life and crafting his destiny; neither, however, do we find Augustine sent back to a fixed identity in a given, authoritarian order of life—a future hope that is merely a disguised return to the past or dull acceptance of the present. Hope is ultimately found in relation to God who calls people forward from the present to a freedom in relation to his life-giving authority. The *Confessions* are not simply a narrative of human guilt and repentance; the very act of confession is itself an act of joyful hope, for the story of life is of created existence that is not flattened but fulfilled through redemption in Christ. 'Conversion is a process of becoming more fully oneself, truly learning one's proper place, by re-orienting one's loves toward their proper end in God.'<sup>65</sup> To confess one's sin in the presence of God is—in hope—a confession of God's praise, a recognition that God has acted in grace, and that he is bringing and will bring the humble confessor to glory (*conf.* 10.38.63). Confession is thus opposite to presumption as well as despair (*conf.* 7.20.26). It offers a way out of despair by way of the humble recognition that the story of every created

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<sup>63</sup> See also Gary Wills, *Augustine's Confessions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 22.

<sup>64</sup> 'We can properly read the *Confessions* only if we fully accept the eschatological dimensions of human understanding; we must accept that our 'beginnings' will only be comprehensible (insofar as they will be comprehensible) from the perspective of the end, and that therefore much more of our lives as currently lived must seem to us to be mysterious. Our lives are not our own, and not even fully given to us; we will be ourselves only eschatologically.' Charles T. Mathewes, 'Book One: The Presumptuousness of Autobiography and the Paradoxes of Beginning', in Kim Paffenroth and Robert P. Kennedy (eds), *A Readers Companion to Augustine's Confessions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 9.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Mathewes, 'Pluralism, Otherness, and the Augustinian Tradition', *Modern Theology* 14:1 (1998), 95.

and fallen life exists within a wider, divinely-authored, narrative of hope: the goal of creation remains open in spite of human sin.

The humility that such confession entails undermines the optimism of human pride that seeks ultimate meaning along a self-determined pathway to the future. It is equally far, however, from any kind of life-denying pessimism or servile acquiescence. Augustinian self-denial is not an outright denial of life, a nullification of human agency. It is a denial of a diminished simulacrum. It recognises the vanity of human power over the future but acknowledges the fundamental victory of grace over sin. It is a willing rejection of a life of sin that leads to death in favour of the way of righteousness that leads through death to life. Human agency that is the refused gift of creation is held out in God's mercy and so must be received in humility; but humility is not the same as passivity. Humble agency is lived adventurously by faith, doing good in the world, acting in love in confident hope of love's fulfilment.<sup>66</sup> It is not pessimistic to acknowledge that the life human beings have been unable to attain under their own efforts is offered freely to all who will receive. In fact, for Augustine, it was an acknowledgement of joyful hope: 'There within... slaying my old nature and hoping in you as I began to give my mind to the new life, there you had begun to make me feel your sweetness and had given me "joy in my heart" (Ps. 4:7)' (*conf.* 9.4.10).

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<sup>66</sup> For Augustine, humility is the way—exemplified ultimately in Christ—by which the image of God is restored and human greatness is attained. Humility is integrally linked to hope since 'it is humility that enables a person to achieve his greatest calling'. The ongoing practice of humility prevents progress in virtue from self-satisfied presumption, which settles for a greatness indexed to the attainment of an immanent hope short of the love of God, which is the source and goal of human greatness. The practice of humility, in confession, maintains the self's forward orientation by situating the self's attainment in view of, and on the way to, the ultimate fulfilment of love that is the goal of hope. Joseph McInerney, *The Greatness of Humility: St Augustine on Moral Excellence* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 63, 120f.

*Confessions* thus offers a personal window into Augustinian hope as a disposition belonging to the divinely de-centred self. Hope is not merely a benevolent emotion or disposition of the mind, more or less rational in accord with statistical probability. Hope is a theological orientation of the whole person, located in the soul, rational in accord with a recognition that life is given by God and finds its true meaning as it is lived within a theological ontology ordered by way of redemption through Christ towards its eschatological fulfilment. The rationality of hope is not external but internal to hope itself, centring, along with Augustine's personal narrative, on Christ: 'With good reason is there solid hope for me in him, because you will heal all my infirmities through him who sits at your right hand and intercedes for us. Were it not so, I would despair' (*conf.* 10.43.69). For Augustine, hope was found by confessing his life as meaningful within God's narrative of creation and redemption of which Christ is the fulfilment. There is hope insofar as his story is bound up with the person and work of Christ as the divine mediator between God and humanity, the only one who has brought life through death in history (*conf.* 10.42.67). Life is ultimately meaningful in hope that Christ's work—and behind it God's mercy—did not and will not come to nought.<sup>67</sup>

Remembering the integral relation between selfhood and moral ontology, with which this chapter began, *Confessions* provides us with a first-person account of hope within a specific theological frame. The unchanging essence of God, the historical victory of Christ, and the ongoing work of divine providence, provide the theological frame for strong and stable hope. God will bring creation to its fulfilment, gathering a

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<sup>67</sup> 'There is but one hope, one reliance, one solid promise, and that is your mercy.' *conf.* 10.32.48; 'My sole hope is in your exceedingly great mercy' *conf.* 10.35.57; 'Can there be any route back to hope other than your mercy, of which we have proof already because you have begun to change us?' *conf.* 10.36.58.

new humanity under Christ (*conf.* 10.43.69). Augustine finds hope by humbly returning along the way of the repentant prodigal of Luke 15 to find his home (and find that God makes his home in him) within the people of Christ, as a baptised member of the pilgrim church. Augustine's structural account of ultimate hope is the framework for the pilgrim life of hope in history. As we shall see, this structure is not simply the structure of human reason (as in Kant) but the structure of the divine wisdom that lies behind creation and redemption (Romans 11:33-36). The structure of hope is not only ontological but ultimately theological, relying on the continuity of creation and redemption to its fulfilment in the worship of God.

*i. The continuity of creation as the structure of hope*

*Confessions* begins with words of praise to God that are also words of hope, a simultaneous recognition of God's complete praiseworthiness and the as yet incomplete nature of human praise. Human beings 'who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you' writes Augustine.<sup>68</sup> He repeats and elaborates his point: 'You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself and our heart us unquiet until it rests in you' (*conf.* 1.1.1). Creation is oriented to the praise of God and the human heart is 'unquiet' or 'restless' (*inquietam*) until it ultimately finds its rest in this praise and the joyful satisfaction that attends it. These opening words of *Confessions* tell us that in an important sense the beginning of hope is the beginning of creation, which was ordered forwards to its seventh-day fulfilment from the outset (13.35.50ff). Human beings are restless simply as creatures: we were made to live in hope, directing life towards our own human

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<sup>68</sup> Prayer—the mode of address to God in which *Confessions* is written—is itself hopeful since it acknowledges the power and wisdom of God that Augustine verbally confesses as ultimately praiseworthy. Prayer relies on God now being who he will ultimately be acknowledged to be amongst his people.

*telos* within the intended consummation of creation's story in the praise of God (Psalm 19).

However, whilst this emphasis on creation is paramount for our understanding of hope, it is not the full picture. The restlessness of the human heart has a further dimension, which brings redemption into view. Between references to the longing of created human beings to praise God, Augustine confesses human sin and its consequences: 'we who carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that you thwart the proud' (*conf.* 1.1.1). Human beings made to praise God have failed to praise him (Romans 1:21 is a key text that Augustine calls on for this understanding of sin).<sup>69</sup> Human beings have sinfully sought to appropriate for themselves the praise due to God by refusing to receive their own power and wisdom as gifts of the supremely powerful and wise God.<sup>70</sup> The result is the human experience of mortality, 'evidence' that the exaltation of creation above the Creator will not continue for ever. As a result, there is a fundamental tension that runs through human experience. Humans, 'a due part of your creation, still do long to praise you', Augustine emphasizes, repeating his earlier phrase ('*aliqua portio creaturae tuae*') to highlight that sin has not undermined the purpose of creation. However, having turned from God to sin, human beings are not able to attain the end for which they were made. People long to and fail to praise God. They still seek the *telos* of created life and yet they experience the end of life in death. Human experience is characterised by hope and hopelessness since the future hope of creation, written into human nature, is out of the reach of fallen human beings, who

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<sup>69</sup> *conf.* 5.3.3ff; 8.1.2.

<sup>70</sup> Augustine's emphasis on God's power and wisdom in *conf.* 1.1.1 parallels that of St Paul in Rom. 1:18-23.

have turned from life as given by the creator to vainly seek fulfilment apart from God in created things (*conf.* 1.20.31).<sup>71</sup>

Of course, *Confessions* (along with the narrative of Scripture within which Augustine situates his life) would not exist if human hopelessness had the final word. ‘Our heart is unquiet *until* it rests in you’, says Augustine, indicating that the future of creation remains open. There is ultimate hope for humanity (reading ‘our heart’ as the corporate human heart) since there is the possibility of a future for human beings that does not end in death on account of sin but sees our created nature brought to its fulfilment in the promised rest of God. The hope we meet in the opening sentences of *Confessions* is therefore not only for the fulfilment of creation but for the redemption that is needed for creation’s promise to be attained. As soon as Augustine speaks of the rest that is the longing of the human heart, he acknowledges that his own desire for God (the highest good) is matched by his need for God’s grace: ‘Who will grant me to find peace in you? Who will grant me this grace, that you will come into my heart and inebriate it enabling me to forget the evils that beset me and embrace you, my only good?’ (*conf.* 1.5.5). By Book 10 we have an answer: ‘There is but one hope, one reliance, one solid promise, and that is your mercy’ (*conf.* 10.32.48). The opening paragraph of *Confessions*, along with the work as a whole, holds together as one the story of creation and redemption. It is within this story of fundamental continuity between beginning and end that Augustine understands and finds hope.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> ‘In this lay my sin, that not in him was I seeking pleasures, distinctions and truth, but in myself and the rest of his creatures, and so I fell headlong into pains, confusions, and errors.’ *conf.* 1.20.31.

<sup>72</sup> Augustine’s understanding of the continuity of creation tempers the charge of otherworldliness when it comes to his theology of hope, focused as it is on the fulfilment of the love of God in the eschaton. Whilst Augustine’s eschatological orientation is strongly at odds with modernity’s search for immanent fulfilment, it is importantly distinct from a neoplatonic scheme, whereby ascent to eternal unity leaves temporal multiplicity behind. For Augustine, temporal loves are properly ordered towards the ultimacy of the eternal love of God, not utterly displaced by it. Similarly, his mature position is clear in its advocacy of bodily resurrection (e.g. *ciu.* 13.16-18, 20; 22.30), and his account of the new heaven and

ii. *Travelling the way of hope*

Identifying the framework within which hope operates raises important questions concerning hope and human agency: What can be said of the life of hope within this framework? Does Augustine help us with an agential account of hope that can move us beyond the limits of ‘standard’ hope and overcome the disenchantment of the Kantian ‘I’? The role of hope in personal agency is the second aspect of hope that the *Confessions* illumine, and they do so by referring us to Augustine’s own experience of finding and seeking rest in Christ.

Through the *Confessions*, Augustine recounts his path of life as a journey that led him via the restless pursuit of vain hopes. He recalls the youthful vigour with which he set out on a hopeless quest for human fulfilment through the attainment of earthly goods. He enjoyed a significant degree of success, rising ultimately to the position of Imperial Rhetor in Milan. However, the fulfilment that he found along this path was empty, eventually leading him to a new search for fulfilment and a new hope of life through faith in Christ—to pursue the eschatological rest that is found in the fulfilment of the love of God. It is a story of redemption that also highlights the reorientation of Augustine’s self-identity in view of his ultimate hope: from a life of self-fulfilment, where Augustine’s love of honour and worldly glory provided the earthly horizon of hope, to the decentring of the self in a life of hope based on faith in Christ and oriented towards the fulfilment of the love of God in the eschaton. The ultimate vanity of the former way of hope is held in contrast with the ultimate fulfilment of hope in God.<sup>73</sup> The pride and fragility of the autonomous self that seeks

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earth is of creation’s renewal: ‘the present world will pass away by a change of state, and not by annihilation’ (*ciu.* 20.14). For a balanced account see Gerald Bonner, ‘Augustine’s Thoughts on this World and Hope for the Next’, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* (1994), 85-103.

<sup>73</sup> Augustine’s focus is primarily on *ultimate* hope. Earthly hopes (directed towards temporal fulfilment) are ‘vain’ insofar as they pretend to an ultimacy which they do not possess and are sought

to live in the present is held in contrast with the humility and security of personal identity that is given by God and brought to fulfilment— through time—in the future consummation.

In Augustine’s experience, of course, the course of true hope did not run smooth. This is a main point of Augustine’s story and it takes us to the meaning of autobiography as ‘confession’. The account of human agency that we find in the *Confessions* is an account of the rehabilitation of the self through the twists and turns of life, through the time and space of creation. It is a process that begins as the self is decentred, liberated from the limitations of its own foreclosed fulfilment to seek its future in a fulfilment given by God. As Maria Boulding highlights in describing the nature of confession:

This creature comes to be in responding to God, in speaking the graced word of faith, love, and obedience back to God. The word of confession is therefore not simply a statement of what is, of the present truth of oneself, seen and admitted in the light of God’s presence, with all the liberation that implies. It is more than a static recognition; it is a creative process.<sup>74</sup>

This emphasis on confession as a creative and responsive process is important. What we can add is that the word of confession is a ‘graced word’ not only of faith and love but of hope—hope for the future fulfilment of the grace of God in creation and redemption. This stands in contrast to the hope of Kant’s rational moral agent, for whom the hope of happiness is rationally permissible in accord with present obedience as its rational end. Augustine’s hope, however, is a response of faith to the

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as offering a secure future that they cannot deliver. However, the path to true ultimate hope does not necessitate the abandonment of hopes for the future of proximate objects of love but reframes and re-orders immanent hopes in relation to the ordering of loves towards the fulfilment of the love of God (*doctr. chr.* 1.27-28).

<sup>74</sup> Maria Boulding, ‘Introduction’, in Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 2012), 25.

prior grace of God. It is expressed in the confession of the *insufficiency* of present obedience. It orients life towards the fulfilment of God's 'creative process' and actively situates the self within it. The agency that adjoins Augustinian hope is characterised by responsive reciprocity to the external order of reality that is the order of God's grace.

The idea of responsive hope that is an important feature of Augustine's understanding is not absent from recent work on hope. In fact, it is central to the proposal of Victoria McGeer, who seeks to delineate what might count as 'good' hope by focussing on the relationship between hope and human agency. She describes good hope as an 'art', involving navigation between the perils of over- and underdeveloped agency that are present in what she describes as 'wilful hope' and 'wishful hope'. The art of good hope, according to McGeer, relies on a recognition that 'maintaining hope requires a somewhat responsive world... a world that in some way or another recognizes and supports the meaning and value we give to our efforts'.<sup>75</sup> In McGeer's account this support is provided by human society. The supportive 'scaffolding' given first by parents and later by peers, who both hope for and offer guidance to one another, enables and accompanies the mature self-reliance that an agent is able to develop. Hope is thus 'a deeply social phenomenon':

One could not become a properly human agent, and therefore an agent who hopes, without the scaffolding of others. It is others who invest us with our sense of how we can be in the world—who literally make it possible for us to take a hopeful, constructive stance towards the future.<sup>76</sup>

McGeer's is a helpful account of how hope is developed and enacted. Her emphasis on the communal nature of good hope is important, as is the distinction of

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<sup>75</sup> McGeer, 'Art of Good Hope', 109.

<sup>76</sup> McGeer, 'Art of Good Hope', 108.

responsive hope from the pathogenic forms of ‘wilful’ and ‘wishful’ hope. Where McGeer’s account can be supplemented is in the relation of ‘good hope’ as a practical action to ‘good hope’ as an objective goal. According to McGeer, the object of hope is determined subjectively: ‘We continue to hope just in case we invest our efforts toward some state or condition that has meaning and value for us.’<sup>77</sup> Related to this subjective perspective, the framework for hope is limited to the immanent consideration of an agent’s social interactions: ‘Maintaining hope requires a somewhat responsive world—where for most of us and in most circumstances this means a somewhat responsive social world—a world of others who, in some way or other, support our hopes.’<sup>78</sup> This subjective perspective is both valid and important but it relies on a corresponding objective order. The kind of social and ontological order that can support good hope must itself exist for an agent to learn to hope well within it. The meaning and value of an object of good hope—in order for that hope to be truly fulfilling—must be meaningful and valuable ‘for us’ because it is meaningful and valuable beyond us in some way. Apart from this objective consideration an agent might learn the art of good hope within a community, supported by parents and peers, developing her own resilient agency as ordered towards a future good that she considers meaningful and valuable only to find that the attainment of her hope leaves her empty. Her hope has been in vain.

Such, we shall see, was the pattern of Augustine’s experience. Both parental and peer scaffolding supported him in coming to hope for the worldly goods of wealth, honour and sex that he was led to value. He even enjoyed the attainment of many hopes within this worldly framework, which was the inheritance bequeathed in his education. He came, however, to realise that the value of those goods was illusory

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<sup>77</sup> McGeer, ‘Art of Good Hope’, 109.

<sup>78</sup> McGeer, ‘Art of Good Hope’, 109.

and his hope was in vain. His personal narrative of hope—recorded in his *Confessions*—gives an account of the reorientation needed for responsive hope to come into its own, a reorientation from worldly hope, pursued by sight, to hope by faith in the grace of God.

The order of grace, explored above as the framework of Augustine's hope, does not negate McGeer's emphasis on the importance of social order. It gives rise to a particular social order that is called and empowered to sustain the hope of its members by its commitment to faith and love. To be such a social order—bearing hope in and for the world—is the calling of the church as a community of self-denying love for God and neighbour. None of this need contradict McGeer's account but it does develop it by highlighting the need for responsive hope to exist in a specific ontological order and then allowing the nature of that order—for Augustine, the order of God's grace in Christ—to shape the art of hope itself. Learning from Augustine, responsive hope is responsive most fundamentally to the grace of God. It is practiced in a communal life of humble, joyful confession, and active, self-giving love. The implications of an Augustinian account of hope in late modernity will be developed in the final chapter but it is worth recognising here that this understanding can have a practical importance both within and beyond the church. Whilst it will clearly be most relevant for the church, where the liturgical practices of confession, thanksgiving, and prayer as well as the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, can be recognised and inhabited as practices of hope, there are societal implications also. Augustine's emphasis on the relationship between hope and grace presents the potential to strengthen hope, and undermine the presumption that is paired with despair, through societal practices of humility, gratitude and forgiveness. It also illuminates the hope-sapping nature of pride, greed and resentment.

The potential for both ecclesial and societal application is helpful to keep in mind as we trace in more detail the place of hope in Augustine's personal narrative. For Augustine, learning the art of good hope was not merely a case of navigating between over- and underdeveloped agency by responding appropriately to the social scaffolding that surrounded him. Whilst the social scaffolding was not unimportant, as we shall see, learning the art of good hope came by way of a fundamental reorientation of the self in view of God's grace in Christ. Mindful that the theme of hope in the *Confessions* has not been developed in secondary literature, and so by way of highlighting its importance as well as relating it to the discussion of this chapter, we will draw out six prominent (but not exhaustive) aspects of Augustine's experience of learning to hope. These are offered not merely as aspects of Augustine's way of hope but in view of the fact that the way of hope, as hope in Christ, remains open.

In fact, this openness is central to *Confessions* and to its contemporary importance. Augustine's story is not an act of controlled self-curation, signalling his credentials for ecclesial office on the terms of worldly greatness.<sup>79</sup> In fact, it is a relinquishment of self-possession, offered publicly as a humble invitation to join the author in a way of learning to speak of himself before God, and so within the divinely authored narrative of creation and redemption as the time God makes for his people. To live within this story, Augustine has discovered, is the way of ultimate hope. We noted above the argument of Charles Taylor that the disorientation of modern selfhood is closely related to modern inarticulacy with regard to the good. The

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<sup>79</sup> If, as many commentators argue, *Confessions* was partly a kind of *apologia pro vita sua* to disarm any critics who were nervous of Augustine's Manichean and otherwise anti-Catholic past, as well as his hurried elevation to the episcopacy, the apologetic he employed was subversive. On the first audience of *Confessions*, see Boulding, 'Introduction', 10-11.

promise of *Confessions* is of the self's rehabilitation by way of a particular mode of re-articulation. The six aspects of Augustine's way of hope should thus be received as aspects of his 'anti-autobiography'. *Confessions* does not simply offer an account of hope, it offers hope within a narrative of incomplete yet hopeful articulation of life in relation to God and in the midst of his people.

Firstly, Augustine's personal narrative highlights that learning to hope is not a packaged strategy but the journey of a lifetime. If good hope is an 'art', it has a jazz-like quality. The way home was one Augustine found (from the divine perspective, one that found him) over time as his journey of life took him through different places, personal interactions, achievements, reversals, temptations, and guiding desires. The story as Augustine tells it is a moral adventure with multiple twists and turns. Its complexity defies reduction and straightforward emulation, and that is intentional: Augustine is not claiming to have found a formula for life that can be processed into a step-by-step strategy. *Confessions* is not a programme but a prayer. Augustine found a new freedom and coherence to his life in relation to God, within the narrative arc of God's creative activity being brought to its fulfilment. The new life he found is lived by faith, ultimately frustrating capture within the limits of human narration; it is lived in hope, frustrating foreclosure according to the limits of human expectation. Augustine's theology of life, as William Harmless has well observed, has the quality of jazz: the Scriptures (particularly the Psalms) provide the 'standard' and Augustine's narrative—mirroring his experience—proceeds by way of creative improvisation in accord (although not always straightforwardly) with the basic melody.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See William Harmless, 'A Love Supreme: Augustine's "Jazz" of Theology', *Augustinian Studies* 43:1 (2012), 149-177.

Secondly, Augustine's hope in God through Christ was the (subversive) fulfilment and not the abandonment of his commitment to the classical understanding of philosophy as a way of life seeking true wisdom. Augustine's reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* is well known as marking a turning point in his adolescent life. Described by Robin Lane Fox as representing a 'conversion' to philosophy, it is a moment often referred to as the beginning of the pursuit of wisdom that would eventually lead Augustine to faith in Christ and baptism into the church.<sup>81</sup> What has not been well observed is that Augustine's turn to wisdom is described in his own words as a crisis and reorientation of *hope*:

The book changed my way of feeling and the character of my prayers to you, O Lord, for under its influence my petitions and desires altered. All my hollow hopes (*omnis vana spes*) suddenly seemed worthless and with unbelievable intensity my heart burned with longing for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise. I began to rise up, in order to return to you (*conf.* 3.4.7).

The 'hollow hopes' to which Augustine refers are the hopes of his youth. They are first introduced as the common hopes of parents for their children, handed down to Augustine in his education, and they amount to the attainment of high position and public esteem (*conf.* 1.10.16 cf. 2.3.8). Augustine showed ability in his studies and pursued with vigour the path set out for him, only later recognising that the 'persistent search of fame' (*conf.* 1.18.29) was the way of worldly temptation described in 1 John 2:12 as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (*conf.* 1.10.16; 1.19.30).<sup>82</sup> Those who follow this way of the world, he says elsewhere, worship

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<sup>81</sup> Robin Lane Fox, *Augustine: Conversions and Confessions* (Allen Lane: London, 2015), 85-87. cf Carol Harrison, *Christian Truth*, 15-16.

<sup>82</sup> This triad is also drawn on by Augustine in *uer. rel.* 38.69. It arguably plays a role in structuring the early books of *Confessions*. See Frederick Crosson, 'Structure and Meaning in Augustine's *Confessions*', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 63 (1989), 88; O'Donnell, *Confessions*, vol. i, xxxv-xxxvi.

illusions that cannot deliver, and enact counterfeit virtue as a result.<sup>83</sup> Whether they recognise it or not, ‘they love temporal things and hope for blessedness therefrom’ (*de. ver. rel.* 38.69). This is Augustine’s diagnosis of his youthful life as he sought the excellence that would win praise from those around him: ‘I believed that living a good life consisted in winning the favour of those that commended me’ (*conf.* 1.19.30). ‘I was myself dominated by a vain urge to excel’ (*conf.* 1.19.30). ‘I rotted in your [God’s] sight, intent on pleasing myself and winning favour in the eyes of men’ (*conf.* 2.1.1). Augustine recounts the vigour with which he pursued what he now perceives to be vanity, his writing conveying the sadness of one who—thanks to God’s relentless pursuit of him (e.g. *conf.* 3.1.1)—had come to see such a seemingly successful life with new eyes.<sup>84</sup> In the final words of book 2 he sums up the result of these hollow hopes as a hollow existence: ‘I slid away from you and wandered away, my God; far from your steadfastness I strayed in adolescence, and I became to myself a land of famine’ (*conf.* 2.10.18).

Augustine recounts his reading of Cicero as marking the end of this vain pursuit. A new love of wisdom ‘called by the Greek name “philosophy”’ (*conf.* 3.4.7) was kindled in him, which turned him away from hope in temporal (and so mutable) things. ‘I was aroused and kindled and set on fire to love and seek and capture and hold fast and strongly cling not to this or that school, but to wisdom itself, whatever it might be’ (*conf.* 3.4.8). This longing, he could write with hindsight, was a longing to flee to God; indeed, ‘Only one consideration checked me in my ardent enthusiasm: that the name of Christ did not occur there’ (*conf.* 3.4.8). However, whilst this ‘conversion’ to wisdom was a departure from false hope, Augustine’s displeasure at

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<sup>83</sup> On vice as counterfeit virtue see *conf.* 2.6.13.

<sup>84</sup> John C. Cavadini, ‘Book Two: Augustine’s Book of Shadows’, in Paffenroth and Kennedy (eds), *Readers Companion*, 26-27.

the undignified style of Scripture meant that he turned down what he would later recognise as another false path: a nine-year detour following the materialistic religion of the Manichees, a sect that had the name but not the truth of Christ (*conf.* 3.6.10). As yet, and for another nine years, Augustine was between hopes. He had turned from the vain ambition of his youth to pursue wisdom which he was yet to find. He was drawn to Cicero but discomfited by the lack of reference to Christ. He became a Manichee but was only ever a ‘reader’, carrying questions he was eventually unable to suppress. He continued to pursue proximate hopes, engaging in public life and advancing in his career to become the imperial orator for Milan (384), but all along his heart remained restless.<sup>85</sup> On the way of deliverance from the desperate presumption of his youth he had as yet no ultimately satisfying hope of his own. In fact, the hope that accompanies Augustine as portrayed in the story of the *Confessions* was that which his mother carried for him in her heartfelt prayers.<sup>86</sup> Augustine might have given up hope of finding true wisdom in the church, but the church had not given up hope for Augustine (*conf.* 3.12.21). Augustine might not yet have found his

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<sup>85</sup> In book 4 of *Confessions*, Augustine describes this period as a time of communal self-deception: ‘I and others like me were seduced and seducers, deceived ourselves and deceivers of others’ (*conf.* 4.1.1). His grief at the death of a friend exposed his inner conflict that was ongoing: ‘I had become a great enigma to myself, and I questioned my soul, demanding why it was sorrowful and so disquieted me’ (*conf.* 4.4.9). He pursued his career teaching the liberal arts on the one hand and sought the ‘hope’ of spiritual liberation through the religion of the Manichees on the other. Looking back on the tension of his experience, however, he recognizes that God was at work. As in Books 1 and 9, he again borrows the language of Psalm 4, but now he is one step removed from the worthless loves of his youth, which have become the loves of the company he keeps. He is swayed, he joins in, but there is a spark of light in his heart: ‘During those years I was teaching the art of rhetoric, selling talkative skills apt to sway others because greed swayed me... You saw from afar, O God, how I was losing my foothold on slippery ground, but how amid the smoke a spark of integrity still guttered in me; for though I taught the students who loved worthless things and sought falsehood (Ps. 4:3), in which pursuits I bore them company, I did try to teach them honestly.’ *conf.* 4.2.2.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Throughout those years my mother, a chaste, God-fearing, sensible widow of the kind so dear to you, though more eager in her hope was no less assiduous in her weeping and entreaty, never at any time ceasing her plangent prayers to you about me.’ *conf.* 3.11.20; cf. 5.9.17.

way to hope in God, but all along, he can later recognise, God was at work to bring him home.

Thirdly, Augustine recounts how he needed to give up vain hope to gain true hope. This theological narrative, which builds on Augustine's quest for wisdom as spurred by Cicero, can be picked up in *Confessions* 5, a book that is full of references to despair and incipient hope. After a long wait and many questions concerning Manichaean teachings (not least on the problem of evil) Augustine met Faustus, a famous and respected leader of the sect. The meeting was deflating, however, and Augustine 'began to give up hope (*desperare*) that [Faustus] could elucidate and clear up for me the problems with which I was concerned' (*conf.* 5.7.12). Looking back, he can write that 'I was being mastered by you for my salvation' (*conf.* 5.10.18) by being led to a position where 'I had given up hope of making any progress in that false doctrine' (*conf.* 5.10.18). However, he did not move quickly to the church. That path was shut since Augustine had 'already given up hope of the possibility that anything true could be discovered in your Church' (*conf.* 5.10.19). The nub of the issue was that Augustine had been led to view God in bodily terms as having material substance (*conf.* 5.10.19),<sup>87</sup> an idea pressed by the Manichees against the Catholic Church that Augustine bought into, considering what he took to be Catholic teaching as ridiculous. But now Augustine had given up hope of finding truth with the Manichees, might he yet come to hope in the church? The prominent note at this point is despair but the first light of hope is already breaking through.

Fourthly, Augustine's hope relied on his acceptance of the hope carried for him in and by the church community. Hope is carried through the narrative of

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<sup>87</sup> 'When I wanted to think about my God I did not know how to think otherwise than in terms of bodily size, for whatever did not answer to this description seemed to me to be nothing at all. This misapprehension was the chief and almost sole cause of the error I could not avoid.' *conf.* 5.10.19.

*Confessions* not primarily by Augustine but for him: in the prayers of Monica (*conf.* 5.9.17),<sup>88</sup> in the teaching of the aptly-named Elpidius (*conf.* 5.11.21),<sup>89</sup> and in the work of God’s providence (*conf.* 5.18.24).<sup>90</sup> Book 6 opens with Augustine still in despair: ‘O you who have been my hope (*spes mea*) since my youth where were you when I sought you? ... I had sunk to the depth of the sea, I lost all faith and despaired (*desperabam*) of ever finding the truth’ (*conf.* 6.1.1). Enter St Monica, presented as a twofold contrast on account of both her faith and hope. She is a model of piety (*conf.* 6.1.1; 6.2.2): devoted to prayer, deeply religious, constant in good works, attendant to God’s voice in Scripture and experience, submissive to the authority of the church. Firm in faith, she is also a model of hope. In contrast to Augustine, who, in despair, ‘had sunk to the depth of the sea’, Monica’s hope is such that she is even able to offer reassurance to the sailors that they would reach safe harbour during a stormy Mediterranean crossing<sup>91</sup>. Nor had she given up hope for Augustine, but is described in terms reminiscent of Abraham who is famously recorded in Romans 4:18 as having

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<sup>88</sup> Monica again appears as a bearer of hope at the start of Book 6, where she is described as ‘steadfast in her fidelity’ and thus even able to offer reassurance to the sailors that they would reach safe harbour during a stormy mediterranean crossing (an illustration employed in *Contra Academicos* 1.1.1 to describe the goal of philosophy’s pursuit for wisdom). ‘Amid the perils of the voyage it was she who kept up the spirits of the sailors, though in the ordinary way it is to them that inexperienced and frightened travellers look for reassurance. She, however, had dared to promise them that they would come safely to the port, because you had yourself made this promise to her in a dream. She found me, by contrast, beset by mortal danger as I despaired of discovering the truth. When I told her that I was no longer a Manichee, though not a Catholic Christian either, she was overjoyed, but not as though this news had taken her by surprise. She was already confident with regard to my wretched condition to this extent, that while she constantly wept over me in your sight as over a dead man, it was over one who thought dead could still be raised to life again.’ *conf.* 6.1.1. O’Donnell, *Confessions*, ii, 305, notes ‘the constant reference to Monnica’s hopes and prayers’ but he does not develop the theme further.

<sup>89</sup> As Boulding notes, Elpidius whose name itself means ‘hope’ is one of the few people whom Augustine mentions by name prior to his conversion in Milan. Boulding, *Confessions*, 129 n.63.

<sup>90</sup> ‘In truth it was you, “my hope and my inheritance in the country of the living”, who for my soul’s salvation prompted me to change my country.’ *conf.* 5.8.14.

<sup>91</sup> This illustration is employed in *acad.* 1.1.1 and also in *beata u.* 1.1 to describe the goal of philosophy’s pursuit for wisdom.

‘hoped against hope’ that he would become the father of many nations, believing in a God whom he knew could bring life out of death. For much of his life, the hope of Augustine was the hope of Monica for him:

Amid the perils of the voyage it was she who kept up the spirits of the sailors, though in the ordinary way it is to them that inexperienced and frightened travellers look for reassurance. She, however, had dared to promise them that they would come safely to the port, because you had yourself made this promise to her in a dream. She found me, by contrast, beset by mortal danger as I despaired of discovering the truth. When I told her that I was no longer a Manichee, though not a Catholic Christian either, she was overjoyed, but not as though this news had taken her by surprise. She was already confident with regard to my wretched condition to this extent, that while she constantly wept over me in your sight as over a dead man, it was over one who thought dead could still be raised to life again (*conf.* 6.1.1).

Monica’s ready acceptance of the ecclesial authority of Ambrose when it came to the prohibition of shrine offerings (*conf.* 6.2.2) aligns her hope in accord with that of the Catholic Church that Ambrose represents. In fact, we are introduced to Ambrose through the faithfulness of Monica as one ‘whom she highly revered’ and whom Ambrose held ‘in like high esteem for her deeply religious way of life’ (*conf.* 6.2.2). Augustine is the odd one out: ‘I was full of doubts... and scarcely believed it possible to find the way of life’ (*conf.* 6.2.2). ‘Not yet had I begun to pour forth my groans to you in prayer, begging you to help me; rather was my mind intent on searching and restlessly eager for argument’ (*conf.* 6.3.3). Augustine had not yet entered into the ‘religious way of life’ that belonged to the church, nor did he have eyes to see the hope that came with it. Viewing Ambrose through a worldly lens as respected and powerful (if also celibate), ‘I had not begun to guess, still less experience in my own case, what hope he bore within him, or what a struggle he waged against the temptations to which his eminent position exposed him, or the encouragement he received in times of difficulty, or what exquisite delights he

savoured in his secret mouth, the mouth of his own heart, as he chewed on the bread of your word' (*conf.* 6.3.3).

Augustine came to experience Ambrose's hope for himself as he came to share in his faith and the spiritual sight that accompanied it. The description of hope that he reads back into Ambrose's experience is therefore important. It is hope through the difficulty of temptation, accompanied by encouragement and joy, nourished on the promises of Scripture. What we see is not simply a desire for an expected future but a virtue bound up with a complex of practices belonging to a certain way of life and aimed, through difficulty, towards life's fulfilment. The theological complexity is highlighted by the fact that the turning point in Augustine sharing this hope for himself was a new understanding of divine substance, of the being of God as spiritual rather than material:

I came to realize that your spiritual children, whom you had brought to a new birth by grace from their mother, the Catholic Church, did not in fact understand the truth of your creating human beings in your image in so crude a way that they believed you to be determined by the form of a human body (*conf.* 6.3.4 cf. 6.4.5).

Augustine also came to a new appreciation of Scripture (*conf.* 6.4.6) and to the doctrine of the Church (*conf.* 6.5.7) and is moved to embark on a search for truth within its teachings (*conf.* 6.11.18). This is explicitly joined in the narrative to Augustine's earlier passion for wisdom inspired by Cicero and his youthful determination to 'leave behind all empty hopes and vain desires and the follies that deluded me' (*conf.* 6.11.18). So far, he concedes, again referencing the prodigal of Luke 15, this quest has come to naught: 'here I was in my thirtieth year sticking fast in the same muddy bog through my craving to enjoy the good things of the present moment, which eluded and dissipated me' (*conf.* 6.11.18). The difference now is that Faustus has been and gone, and the studied ignorance of the Academics has no

appeal. ‘Let us seek energetically and not give up hope’, Augustine exclaims, indicating that his quest for wisdom has received a new lease of life. The turning point? ‘A great hope has dawned, for the Catholic faith does not teach what we thought it did when we found fault with it in our vanity; its learned exponents reject as impious any suggestion that God is confined within the shape of a human body’ (*conf.* 6.11.18).

Fifthly, hope is found along the way of humility that is the way of Christ. The dawn of hope in Augustine’s experience is a notable feature of book 6 of *Confessions*, but it is also clear that Augustine’s hope is still fully to emerge. He is not yet completely clear on the issue of divine incorporeality (*conf.* 7.1.1) and still wrestling with the problem of evil (*conf.* 7.5.7). The difference is that he was now pursuing truth by way of the church’s faith, even if that faith was ‘unformed, wavering and at variance with the norm of her teaching’ (*conf.* 7.5.7).<sup>92</sup> Augustine’s encounter with Platonism needs to be understood within this context. He did not come to Platonism, become dissatisfied, and eventually move on to Scripture. He encountered Platonism *within* his movement to Christ in Scripture and in the church. And he liked much of what he found: the need to ‘return to myself’ in order to ascend to God (*conf.* 7.10.16); the full recognition of divine aseity, God’s existence as outside of space and time (*conf.* 7.10.16; 7.14.20); the supreme goodness of God as correlate with God’s absolute existence and the relative (destructible) good of creation according to its own existence as made by God (*conf.* 7.12.18); a privative rather than substantive view of

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<sup>92</sup> ‘So it was that you, my helper, had already freed me from those bonds, but I was still trying to trace the cause of evil, and found no way out of the difficulty. Yet you allowed no flood of thoughts to sweep me away from the faith whereby I believed that you exist, that your essence is unchangeable, that you care for us humans and judge our deeds, and that in your Son, Christ our Lord, and in the holy scriptures which the authority of your Catholic Church guarantees, you have laid down the way for human beings to reach that eternal life which awaits us after death. These beliefs were unaffected, and persisted strong and unshaken in me as I feverishly searched for the origin of evil.’ *conf.* 7.7.11.

evil (*conf.* 7.12.18; 7.16.22); the ultimate vanity of sin, since the will that turns away from God turns away from the source of its own unity and life, it ‘throws away its life within and swells for vanity abroad’ (*conf.* 7.16.22). The teaching of the Platonists chimed to a great degree with Augustine’s reading of Scripture (7.9.13-14), leading Augustine to recognise that there was much truth that the Platonists grasped. Indeed, he will speak of this school in *The City of God* as the highest philosophical understanding (*ciu.* 8.9), one that recognised that to be a philosopher is ultimately to love God (*ciu.* 8.8).<sup>93</sup> As he puts it in *Confessions*, the Platonists saw the goal that is ‘our beatific homeland’ (*conf.* 7.20.26).

However, whilst they had (at least formally) the right object of hope—the fulfilment of the love of God—they had no sure way of attaining it. Their hope was not itself a vain hope but their way of hope was vain since it attempted to travel by human pride rather than by Christ’s humility (*conf.* 7.21.27). The truth they perceived was akin to the Egyptian gold that was justly plundered by Israel in the Exodus on account of the fact that it truly belonged to God (*conf.* 7.9.15). That status, however, meant that the truth held by the Platonists needed to be received in the mode of humility rather than grasped by human pride; the former the way of God’s wisdom, the latter the way of humanity’s.<sup>94</sup> Augustine calls on his own experience to testify to this point: he attempted to ascend to God in the manner of the Platonists only to be ‘forced back through weakness’ (*conf.* 7.17.23). ‘I looked for a way to gain the

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<sup>93</sup> Augustine’s position in this regard seems fairly even. Writing in 386 he argued that the fulfilment of the Platonic ideal of philosophy was in accord with Scripture and found in Christ (*acad.* 3.20.43); and in 390 he described Christ as the fulfilment of the Platonic search for wisdom (*de uer. rel.* 3.3-4.7). The Scriptural texts of Acts 17:28 and Rom. 1:20-25 are drawn on to provide a theological interpretation of the overlap between Platonism and Christianity in both *conf.* 7.9.15 and *ciu.* 8.10, where the greater depth of discussion does not require interpretation as a change of position.

<sup>94</sup> Romans 1:18-23 is a key text through which Augustine interprets the knowledge of God and correct perception of the formal object of hope that was evident in Platonic philosophy. See *conf.* 7.9.14-15.

strength I needed to enjoy you, but I did not find it until I embraced the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus' (*conf.* 7.18.24). The name of Christ that was lacking in Augustine's encounter with Cicero was equally lacking in the books of the Platonists (*conf.* 7.20.26). The way of philosophy had purified Augustine of his youthful materialism and led him to an appreciation of the object of hope as the fulfilment of wisdom beyond the limits of the immanent order of reality but the finest human pursuit of wisdom could offer no way to reach what it rightly sought. If the homeland is God's dwelling, only God can lead the way. Hope that seeks the fulfilment of the love of God must come from God as a gift, received in humility rather than grasped in pride. Prepared by his reading of the Platonists and inability to follow their way home, Augustine was now ready to read the Scriptures with new eyes:

It was therefore with intense eagerness that I seized on the hallowed calligraphy of your Spirit, and most especially the writings of the Apostle Paul... I began to read and discovered that every truth I had read in those other books was taught here also, but now inseparably from your gift of grace, so that no one who sees can boast as though what he sees and the very power to see it were not from you (*conf.* 7.21.27).

Philosophy could grasp this much but what it did not have was Christ and so it did not have hope. It sought a present above history and not the future through history that was the way of Christ who lived within the time of this creation and now lives in the fulfilled time of the eschaton. It could lead away from false hope but not to the fulfilment of true hope, which could only come by humble submission to the authority of God in the church, that is, by the way of faith in the church's Head. This faith is thus the fulfilment of hope: the dwelling of Christ is the homeland and he has taken up residence in the church as his body.

Sixthly, Augustine's way of hope brings us back to the relation between hope and human agency that has been the focus of this chapter. For Augustine, the goal of hope that correlates with the unity of the self always remains ahead in the eschaton. Augustine's petition to God for renewal was not answered by way of a 'solution' but in a secure path to a future fulfilment. Throughout *Confessions* Augustine turns to the Psalms, appropriating their vocabulary of address to God as one seeking to live within their movement to praise. Psalm 4 is particularly important, its language adopted by Augustine to express his cry to God in Book 1:

The house of my soul is too small for you to enter: make it more spacious by your coming. It lies in ruins: rebuild it. Some things are to be found there which will offend your gaze; I confess this to be so and know it well. But who will cleanse my house? (*conf.* 1.6.6).

If this petition represents the start of Augustine's personal narrative of redemption, his later exposition of Psalm 4 (in Book 9) highlights the importance of this Psalm as interpreting the path that had led him by a circuitous route to find the goal of his journey—and the answer to his earlier cry to God—in Christ.<sup>95</sup> Describing how he left Milan for Cassiciacum following his conversion to Christ, he recounts, 'I read the fourth Psalm in that place of peace. "When I called on him he heard me, the God of my vindication; when I was hard beset you led me into spacious freedom"' (*conf.* 9.4.8). Here we find the closing bracket to the prayer of Book 1. Augustine has found the answer to the problem of his shrivelled soul in the patient mercy and liberating work of God (*conf.* 1.18.28). He has turned from the path of disintegration that is the sinful search for life 'in myself and the rest of [God's] creatures' (*conf.*

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<sup>95</sup> Augustine does not merely read Psalm 4 as an intellectual interpretation of his journey but as a sort of spiritual therapy. He both found his experience in the Psalms and found that praying the Psalms shaped his experience: 'How loudly I began to cry out to you in those psalms, how I was inflamed by them with love for you and fired to recite them to the whole world, were I able, as a remedy against human pride' (*conf.* 9.4.8).

1.20.31) to be established in unity ‘through hope’ (*conf.* 9.4.10) by travelling along the way of humble gratitude, seeking after the unchangeable being of God. The first path is of those who ‘pour themselves out on things which, being seen, are but transient’ (*conf.* 9.4.10). This is a way of life where hope for things that can well be good in themselves is vainly indexed to the uncertain future of this present material order. The way of life now found by Augustine is not by way of human sight, for it is not ultimately ordered towards any mutable future.<sup>96</sup> Instead, illumined by God, it is the way of faith and hope placed ultimately in the one who does not change:

In truth you are Being itself (*idipsum*), unchangeable, and in you is found the rest that is mindful no more of its labours, for there is no one else beside you, nor need our rest concern itself with striving for a host of other things that are not what you are; rather it is you, “you, Lord, who through hope establish me in unity” (Ps. 4:10) (*conf.* 9.4.11).

The emphasis on the ongoing nature of hope is essential. Augustine is not claiming to have himself arrived home, at the perfection that is the end (*telos*) of human life, but to have come to know himself as on the way home, by faith and hope in Christ who is himself the *telos*.<sup>97</sup> On this understanding, the conversion narratives in *Confessions* can be read as building on each other towards conversion to Christ, who is the beginning and the end. He was always behind Augustine, who was signed

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<sup>96</sup> Following the logic of Augustine’s thought in *conf.* 9.4.9, the future is only visible in the glorified (risen and ascended) person of Christ and so made visible on earth in the time of his heavenly session through inner illumination by the Spirit whom Christ has poured out. The future, secured in Christ, will be seen in its final consummation but until that time is accessible only by his Spirit and so only by the eyes of faith and hope. The Augustinian virtue of hope orders life to its fulfilment not simply beyond that which is seen by the normal powers of human sight but that which *can be* seen: ‘For me, good things were no longer outside, no longer quested for by fleshly eyes in this world’s sunlight. Those who want to find their joy in externals all too easily grow empty themselves. They pour themselves out on things which, being seen, are but transient... If only they would weary of their starvation and ask, *Who will show us good things?*’ (*conf.* 9.4.10).

<sup>97</sup> This is highlighted in Augustine’s commentary on Psalm 4. He interprets the Psalm as the voice of the human being who has reached his *telos*, ‘the words of the Lord-man after the resurrection, or those of any member of the church who believes and hopes in him.’ *en. ps.* 4.1.<sup>□</sup>

with the cross from his youth and known by God from his mother's womb (*conf.* 1.11.17 cf. Psalm 139:13). Yet, even following Augustine's baptism, he always remains ahead. Christians are in hope but not yet in reality (*in spe nondum in re*) perfected bearers of the divine image (*conf.* 10.30.42).<sup>98</sup> The church is a people on the way to its fulfilment by faith and hope in Christ, the 'eternal Jerusalem' on earth that itself 'sighs with longing throughout its pilgrimage' (*conf.* 9.12.37). Even following his baptism Augustine continues to pray in hope:

Lord, in your delight at the fragrance which pervades your holy temple, have mercy on me according to your great mercy for the sake of your name. Do not, I entreat you, do not abandon your unfinished work, but bring to perfection all that is wanting in me (*conf.* 10.5.5).

Hope remains because the story of creation—fulfilled in Christ—has not yet reached its final end. The whole narrative of Augustine's *Confessions* in this regard fits within Scripture's ongoing story of creation that is the focus of the last three books (according to Augustine's statement in *retr.* 2.6.1). In coming to Christ Augustine has willingly recognised his life, and the exercise of his agency, as written inside the story of a world on the way to the Sabbath rest that is its intended future. For now, he has come home to the adventure of his life: he has a new author—and so authority—in God; he is part of a new group of fellow travellers amongst God's people; and he has his feet securely established along the way that leads—through suffering—to the blessed eschatological end. He has come to live by faith in Christ within God's true beginning and so to a newly confident and joyfully hopeful search for life.

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<sup>98</sup> Augustin's use of the wordplay between *spe* and *re* to convey his understanding of partially realized eschatology is ubiquitous in his writing. See Studer, 'Augustine and the Pauline theme of Hope', 202.

#### 4. Conclusion

The overarching concern of this chapter has been the relationship between hope and human identity in late modernity: What hope can there be for the modern agent that seeks to carve ‘its’ own identity apart from the demands of what it takes to be alien metaphysical commitments or social bonds? The question is important since the ontological and social frameworks that have been called into question are those that have historically provided the structure of moral life as the way of human flourishing in pursuit of the good. Hope has been historically understood and valued (positively or negatively) in relation to the particular ways this pursuit of the good has been conceived.

The argument of this chapter has followed Charles Taylor’s contention that it is, in fact, impossible to exclude such frameworks and maintain a coherent sense of self. Frameworks (defined by qualitative distinctions) are the sense-making structures of human agency and identity. Their existence might be suppressed but they are still relied on implicitly: ‘In order to make minimal sense of our lives, in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination, of the incomparably higher.’<sup>99</sup> What is more, ‘this sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story... we grasp our lives in a *narrative*.’<sup>100</sup> The same point is made by MacIntyre: the historical character of life as lived through time—remembering the past, hoping for the realisation of present possibilities in the future—means that we make sense of our lives and the lives of others not in terms of isolated propositions but in their arrangement as a story.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 47.

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, *Sources*, 47.

<sup>101</sup> See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 205-225.

The disorientation of the modern self stems from the difficulty it faces in telling its own story without submitting to the imposition of meaning or purpose carried in an external framework. If there is no hope in the story of the self, there would seem to be no room for the self in stories of hope. And yet without hope what future is there for the modern self?

Insofar as this dilemma is anticipated in Kant's fourth question ('What is man?') I have argued that it is the consequence of a diminished rationalisation of Augustinian theology. Kantian hope for the fulfilment of rational moral autonomy, insofar as it was adjoined to his rational theism, resists the caricature of an isolated individual self determining its own future. However, when Kantian theism is called into question the rational narrative of hope also falls away. Kant's move from belief in an external God towards the deification of the self in his late work correlates with a pattern of thought that called the self into question. If the rational self takes God's place, not only is doubt ultimately cast on its reason, but there would seem to be little to distinguish hope from creative self-projection. The expansion of the self leaves it with nowhere to travel beyond itself. The story of the self has a past but no future. In the absence of an external framework of meaning, with strong qualitative distinctions, there can be expectation and actualisation but no meaningful hope.

Returning Kantian hope to Augustine, I have presented a new reading of *Confessions*, arguing that it reveals Augustine's way of hope, both in its content and in its narrational mode. This being the case the wider claim is that the people living with the disorientation of modern selfhood might yet find hope by following Augustine's path. That is, by telling their story in the mode of 'anti-autobiography', finding the fulfilment to the quest for liberated agency in relation to the God of creation, as part of the body of Christ. My argument is that this can be experienced as a subversive fulfilment and not a rejection of modern selfhood since it is not the path

that modern selfhood is defined against. Its truth is not imposed by force from on high but held out—like the welcome of the father awaiting the prodigal’s return—in hope of its willing acceptance as humanity’s way home. The potential for this acceptance can be found within *Confessions* itself: If Augustine’s own story of hope can travel through classical philosophy to Christ, might Augustinian hope not travel likewise through Kant?

## Chapter 4: Hope in God: Augustine after Moltmann

In 1488 the Portuguese Knight and explorer, Bartolomeu Dias, rounded the Southern tip of Africa on his mission—undertaken in service of the king—to pioneer a trade route to India. The peninsula taken to mark the turning point from south to east, and so towards the fulfilment of the journey, came soon to be known as Cabo da Boa Esperança.<sup>1</sup> The name was translated to Kaap de Goede Hoop by colonising settlers of the Dutch East India Company in 1652, and to the Cape of Good Hope by the British, who occupied the colony from 1795. Today, Dias' statue stands outside the South African High Commission in London. In his left hand, he holds a compass; his right hand leans on a cross. A sword hangs from his side.

Jürgen Moltmann has suggested that a theological line can be drawn between Augustinian theology and the 'good' hope that lay behind the competing 'Christian' causes of Western Imperialism. He argues that the hopes of wealth and power taken to be characteristic of much modern colonialism can be understood as the rotten historical fruit of the 'a-historical' (otherworldly) virtue of hope. If such a relation were established would we not be bound to accept that Augustinian hope has been tried and found wanting, that it might have belonged to modernity's past but should not belong to its future?

Moltmann is the most prominent modern theologian of hope and, insofar as he seeks to leave Augustinian theology behind, the main theological rival to my own proposal. Throughout his theological career, Moltmann's fundamental concern has been to present a trinitarian theology of hope for the freedom of the modern world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Dias, from the perspective of his ship, called it *Cabo das Tormentas*. It was the Machiavellian John II of Portugal, from the relative security of his palace, who named it *Cabo da Boa Esperança*.

<sup>2</sup> Moltmann describes hope, borrowing Kierkegaard's term, as a 'passion for the possible' based on

He argues that deficiencies of classical Augustinian theology paved the way for the pathogenic hopes of the modern Western world to come into their own. The colonial imperialism that reached its peak in the nineteenth century is one example of a wider dynamic of modern ‘progress’ that was fuelled by science and technology until it finally blew up in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Or perhaps not finally: the question of the future of modernity after the destruction of a century of conflict is one Moltmann answers theologically, and he answers it by proposing a theological reinvention of the modern world established on an eschatological understanding of God and of hope in God’s future.<sup>4</sup> Moltmann’s theology of hope, ‘after Augustine’ in the way it both seeks to develop and overcome the Augustinian theological tradition, relies at its heart on a new departure in Trinitarian theology: Moltmann seeks to secure hope for history by situating history within ‘the trinitarian history of God’.<sup>5</sup> If Kant can be understood

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faith in God’s promise revealed in Christ. ‘Hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God’. The theological heart of Moltmann’s work is in two series of books between 1964-2000. An initial trilogy of perspectives on theology sought to present ‘the whole of theology in one focus’: *Theology of Hope* (1964); *The Crucified God* (1972); *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (1975). A second series from 1980-2000 presented Moltmann’s ‘contributions’ to systematic theology, which he understood as ‘an expression of participation in the larger network of conversation in Christian theology’: *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (1980); *God in Creation* (1985); *The Way of Jesus Christ* (1990); *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (1992); *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (1996); *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (2000). A third category of Moltmann’s work consists of theological dialogues, which include his interactions with Marxism, liberation theology, the ecumenical movement, and contextual theologies. Jürgen Moltmann, ‘An Autobiographical Note’, trans. Charles White, in A. J. Conyers, *God, Hope and History: Jürgen Moltmann and the Christian Concept of History* (Macon: Mercer, 1988), 205, 221.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The glossy messianic surface of European history has its ugly apocalyptic downside: the victorious progress of the European peoples in the nineteenth century led to the regress of many peoples, with heavy losses. Only a third of the modern world is the modern First World; two-thirds of it is the modern Third World. The “new time” has produced them both, both modernity and sub modernity, as I should like to call them.’ Jürgen Moltmann, ‘Progress and Abyss: Remembrances of the Future in the Modern World’, in Miroslav Volf and William H. Katerberg (eds), *The Future of Hope: Christian Tradition Amidst Modernity and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, ‘A Passion for God’s Reign’, in Miroslav Volf (ed.), *A Passion for God’s Reign: Theology, Christian Learning and the Christian Self* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit (CPS)*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM,

as offering a philosophical rationalisation of Augustinian hope, Moltmann offers a theological reformulation that seeks to move beyond them both. He argues that the God who is timelessly present above history (Augustine), became for the modern world the timeless presupposition of history (Kant). What is needed is an eschatological God of hope in whose being time is fulfilled and in whose future creation will share.<sup>6</sup>

Moltmann's theology of hope is stimulating in its creativity and laudable for its persistent theological engagement with some of the most significant challenges of late modern life. However, it brings with it challenges of its own: on the terms of those committed to creedal orthodoxy, Moltmann's proposal is troubling in its historicization of God. On Moltmann's own terms, the fundamental dialectic he introduces between the historical death and eschatological raising of Christ reveals a deeper and problematic contradiction between history and the eschaton. History's eschatological future seems ultimately to be a future without a past, stripping historical hope of any meaningful context and undermining concerted engagement in the ethical complexities of modern life.

If we find Moltmann's theological proposal problematic, what hope does traditional Augustinian theology hold out for the future of the late modern world? Recent developments in Augustine scholarship suggest the benefit of returning

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1992), 50. Moltmann defines the 'trinitarian history of God' as 'the comprehensive framework of God's dealings with the world'. He expands: 'Through the sending of the Son and the Spirit the history of the Trinity is opened for the history of the gathering, uniting and glorifying of the world in God and of God in the world. The opening and the completion correspond to one another in the openness of the triune God. "The relationship of the divine persons to one another is so wide that it has room for the whole world" (Adrienne von Speyr). At the end God has won his creation in its renewing consummation for his dwelling place. He comes to his glory in the joy of redeemed creation.' *CPS*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> See Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation (GC)*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), 112-124.

Moltmann's understanding to the tradition he seeks to overcome.<sup>7</sup> Freeing Augustine's theology from modern misinterpretation allows, I argue, for the possibility of a renewed Augustinian understanding of hope after Moltmann.

Augustine's theological hope has not, in fact, been found wanting in the modern world because it is not Augustine's hope that modernity has tried.

It is important to underline that the proposal I am advancing is not intended as an attempt to clear the church of responsibility where it offered theological support for the pathological ambitions of colonial regimes. Nor am I arguing that Augustine's theological formulations are beyond critique. The proposal I am seeking to advance is that Augustine's understanding of hope as a virtue admits of further development along the theological lines it is travelling. It is in falling away from the love of God and neighbour that hope is corrupted and good hope goes bad. The *boa esperança* of the Machiavellian Prince of Portugal seeking to make a name for himself and further the wealth of his kingdom is, on Augustine's scheme, a perversion. Hope for material gain, Augustine warns us, can poison love. Such avaricious hope is not a virtue but a vice.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, following Augustine's own understanding of privation, no departure from virtue is absolute, and (apart from Christ) no human development of

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<sup>7</sup> It is increasingly apparent that Moltmann, along with other revisionist understandings of trinitarian theology in the twentieth century, based his dismissal of Augustine on a misconceived paradigm of opposition. This paradigm, attributed to Theodore de Régnon in the late nineteenth century, advanced a strong distinction between Western and Eastern accounts of the Trinity as prioritising either essential divine unity (following Augustine) or personal triunity (following the Cappadocians). This opposition, asserted by Moltmann rather than established with close attention to the sources, is no longer plausible. Lewis Ayres is forthright in his assessment: 'To put matters starkly, the account of Augustine's trinitarianism found in modern theological writings is often just the re-presentation of no longer tenable scholarly arguments as if they were simply given: thus, Augustine is also "read" into the story, largely without much attention to his texts.' Lewis Ayres, 'The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology', in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, ed. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 51.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *diu. qu.* 36.1, 'What poisons charity is the hope of acquiring and keeping temporal things.'

virtue is complete until the eschaton. The power of vice is as a form of virtue. The possibility and promise of virtue is that in Christ the power of vice has been overcome. This complexity translates to an understanding of modernity, and human history more widely, that relativizes significant transitions in intellectual and material culture within the theological history of creation, fall, and redemption. Modernity, with all of its inherent tensions, cannot simply be dismissed for such would deny God's work in history. On the other hand, the world order of modernity is not absolute and should not be assumed as having the power to determine good hope according to the limits of its own future. That prerogative belongs to God such that so long as the order of Creator and creature remains in place, the hope of life remains open.

This chapter engages the challenge posed by Moltmann's proposal that hope for the modern world requires that the Augustinian virtue of hope, and the theological understanding that sustained it, be overcome. In fact, Moltmann's failure to engage adequately with Augustinian theology is arguably a reason why his constructive proposal cannot ultimately address modernity's ills.<sup>9</sup> Considering Moltmann's theology of hope and highlighting some problems in his theological understanding will clear the way for a renewal of Augustinian hope after Moltmann.

## **1. Moltmann after Augustine**

Jürgen Moltmann's contribution to modern theology in the second half of the twentieth century arose from his appreciation, through personal experience, of significant tensions in post-war modernity. The notion of historical progress that was

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<sup>9</sup> This point is developed at length by Margaret B. Adam, *Our Only Hope: More than we can Ask or Imagine* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

central to the modern world's self-understanding through the nineteenth century had been called into question in the military, ecological, and humanitarian tumult of the twentieth. Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* (1964), and the theological programme that has followed it, proposed a way beyond this perceived crisis of modernity by directing the modern world's history of progress beyond the immanent order of Kant's phenomenal realm, to which it had been limited.

Moltmann is critical of the modern world's striving for an end to history within history but he refuses nostalgic theological appeals to a pre-modern past. In fact, he argues that the Western world's crisis was the Western church's legacy: the historical importance of Christian eschatology had been prevented from coming into its own by the conservatism of Western Christianity that stemmed from its compromise with Greek philosophy and adoption as a state religion under Constantine. According to Moltmann, the Augustinian theological tradition as it was taken up in the medieval church was developed as a theology of love but not of hope. Eschatological hope, he argues, was obscured by the Augustinian understanding of hope as a virtue, which is anthropological rather than eschatological.<sup>10</sup> From the earliest Church Fathers (Tertullian is singled out), the theology of the Western church was fundamentally accommodated to the essentialism of Plato and staticism of Parmenides, delivering a 'monarchial' (monistic) view of the Trinity that lent weight to the preservation and extension of Imperial power and the marginalization of the transforming power of eschatological hope:

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<sup>10</sup> He particularly has Aquinas in view when he argues that 'Hope is not a human virtue; it is the beginning of God's future and the life of the future world. The horizon of understanding of hope is not anthropology; it is eschatology.' Jürgen Moltmann, 'Thinking Means Transcending', in Ingolf U. Dalferth and Marlene A. Block (eds), *Hope: Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 242.

Eschatology was long called the ‘doctrine of the last things’ or the ‘doctrine of the end’. By these last things were meant events which will one day break upon man, history and the world at the end of time... But the relegating of these events to the ‘last day’ robbed them of their directive, uplifting and critical significance for all the days which are spent here, this side of the end of history.’<sup>11</sup>

This conservative—‘anthropological rather than eschatological’—theology is rooted, Moltmann argues, in sub-trinitarian Augustinian theism. On this reading, Augustine is named explicitly with Aquinas as propounding an essentialist doctrine of God (concerned with the single divine essence over the three persons) and an individualistic doctrine of man in the image of God that ultimately funded the autonomous agency of modern ‘technological’ humanity. Moltmann laments that ‘This theological decision in Western anthropology has had far-reaching and tragic consequences.’<sup>12</sup>

The result of this pre-modern ‘religion’ was modern revolution: ‘From the beginning of the modern times, hopes for something new from God have emigrated from the church and have invested in revolutions and rapid social change.’<sup>13</sup> Moltmann engages modernity with some sympathy but he also offers a strong critique: the Promethean tendencies embedded in modernity’s pursuit of progress had ultimately delivered a twentieth-century ‘abyss’. The modern world at the end of the twentieth century, he argues, is characterised by the presence of ‘progress’ but the absence of hope.<sup>14</sup> This two-step narrative of Western history characterises

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<sup>11</sup> *TH*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *GC*, 239.

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (New York: Scribner, 1969), 5.

<sup>14</sup> “‘Progress’ is no longer an expression of hope, as it was in the nineteenth century; it is a fate to which people in the industrial countries feel themselves condemned.’ *GC*, 28.

Moltmann's work, which seeks to overcome the tension between a hopeless God and a godless hope:

In religious tradition men turn into recipients of an old message. In the modern world they become pioneers of progress, trailblazers of the future, and discoverers of new possibilities. The church seems to live on memories, the world on hope. In theology one proves truth by quotations from the Fathers, in the modern world by the success of experiments. We will overcome this present schism only if Christianity experiences a rebirth in terms of its origin in the 'Testament of the New'.<sup>15</sup>

Moltmann consistently presents his theological programme as providing the answer to the theological tension inherent in modernity. It is a 'reinvention' project.<sup>16</sup> The modern world, ordered rationally towards the consummation of universal human freedom had found its progress stalled, but could be relaunched towards the greater freedom of *God's* future. In a radical departure from Augustinian theology, Moltmann proposed a modernisation of God's being as a social self-becoming, the unity of God re-defined historically as the eschatological communion of the three trinitarian persons: 'God with future as his essential nature'.<sup>17</sup> There is a future for the modern world, beyond its 'rational' self-imposed limitation, in *God's* eschatological future,

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<sup>15</sup> Moltmann, *Religion*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> 'The project of Western, scientific-technological civilization has become the destiny of humankind. We can neither continue as before without bringing about universal catastrophes, nor withdraw from this larger project and allow the world to come to ruin without us. Our only option is a thorough reformation of the modern world. Hence, *let us reinvent the modern world*' (emphasis added). Moltmann, 'A Passion for God's Reign', 21.

<sup>17</sup> 'Time and again Christians have searched in faith for the stability of eternity within the terrors of time. In the last century such a "faith without hope" elicited a "hope without faith". Because Christians believed in a "God without future", those who willed the future of the earth had no option but to join forces with atheism and seek a "future without God". This is the schism of modern times from which many Christians and many atheists are suffering today . . . But should the knots of history be so tightly tied against each other: Christianity with the past and unbelievers with the future? I think that this present climate can be overcome, but only if Christians call again upon the "God of hope" of the Old and New Testaments and testify to him practically and concretely in responsibility for the present.' Moltmann, *Religion*, 20.

opened to the world in the person of Christ. Christ's historical death and eschatological resurrection (raising rather than resurrection life) are taken to promise a way *with God* through the suffering of the modern world to the realisation of his kingdom.

The hope of Christ that Moltmann presents is the hope that God, society, and the self are united eschatologically: the dislocated modern self can find itself afresh in God; the 'I' of Kant's questions reinvented as part of an inclusive, eschatological, divine society. The modern problem of subjective selves bound to find their own fulfilment could be overcome, Moltmann argued, by the liberating eschatological integration of the self in Godself.

*i. The experiential primacy of hope*

In the theological understanding of Augustine, ontology is prior to hope as its context or narrative frame. Turning to Moltmann, there is an important way in which hope comes first, controlling both his theological method and understanding of God and creation.<sup>18</sup> Significantly, this order is not determined theologically but contextually by Moltmann's personal post-war experience, to which he returns on numerous occasions in his writing.<sup>19</sup> Moltmann's theology of hope represents his educated response not, in the first instance, to the theological problem of sin but to his

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<sup>18</sup> Moltmann's famous dictum was programmatic for his theology, 'From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward moving and therefore also revolutionising the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but is the medium of the Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set.' *TH*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Moltmann was conscripted to serve in the German army in 1944 and captured shortly after by advancing allied forces. Taken as a prisoner of war, he was held first at a camp near Ostend and then in Ayrshire in the South West of Scotland. He describes his experience as one of deep depression: 'We had escaped the mass deaths of war, but for each of us who had escaped there were hundreds of others who had died. It was good to be still alive, but very difficult, in the presence of the dead to go on living—to live differently—to begin afresh.' *A Broad Place: An Autobiography (BP)*, trans. and ed. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2007), 26.

experiential knowledge of modernity's ultimate emptiness. Sin is accordingly reinterpreted as despair.<sup>20</sup> As Moltmann worked out his theology, doctrinal revisions were embraced as necessary modernisations, required in order to support eschatological hope as a subjectively satisfying theological answer to Kant's question.

Writing in the second half of the twentieth century, Moltmann perceived the utopian ambition of the modern world to bring an end to history within history to have failed.<sup>21</sup> Without God it had no future apart from the destruction already exhibited in war and still threatened in nuclear conflict and environmental destruction. He argued that this failure of modernity was the failure of the rational progress that sought an historical end to history, a line he followed from Kant through Hegel, powering Western industrialism and imperialism to its high point in the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Experiencing the failure of this hope in the personal crisis that followed his experience of the Second World War, Moltmann found hope for himself and for the modern world in an experience of God in a prisoner of war camp. He describes how he was 'raised from depression to a new hope in life' through an encounter with God, which he paralleled to Jacob's wrestling with God in Genesis 32. He records being given a Bible by a chaplain and reading the lament of Psalm 39 as 'an echo from my own soul'. Turning to the passion narrative and reading Christ's cry of abandonment, he felt a deep sense of being known by God: Jesus became 'the brother in suffering and the companion on the road to the land of freedom.' This freedom was the freedom of hope, held in the resurrection of Christ, promising a way beyond the historical

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<sup>20</sup> *TH*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> *GC*, 28-29.

<sup>22</sup> Moltmann, 'Progress', 9-14.

hopes of the modern world, whose ideal of liberty languished in the captivity of the concentration camps and the imprisonment of his own life experience.<sup>23</sup>

This experience of abandonment and hope transformed Moltmann's life and profoundly shaped his later theology. The theme of eschatology, which came to be the underlying theme of Moltmann's work, was formed in his understanding as participation in God's personal new beginning through hope in the resurrection of the utterly forsaken Christ. Seizing for an answer to the modern world's despair, Moltmann turned to the suffering God whom he felt could help him, effectively reconfiguring the mysteries of the incarnation and Trinity to provide the hope that he longed for. If there was to be hope, there must be a God of hope.

ii. *An eschatological ontology of hope*

Moltmann's personal experience of God was followed by an increasing interest in theology and then by formal theological study. His early academic life brought him into contact with a prominent emphasis on eschatology in twentieth-century theology. Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer had sought to recover the importance of future eschatology against the liberal theology of Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack. Their 'consistent eschatology' taught that the *Parousia* anticipated by Christ as a future historical event acted as the controlling expectation of his ministry. However, the failure of this future to materialize means that we are left with only certain ethical emphases and Christ's example of tragic abandonment of

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<sup>23</sup> There is a striking parallel between the language used by Moltmann of his imprisonment and the earlier (1946) work of Viktor Frankl. Particularly notable is Moltmann's use of the motif of the broad place of freedom, which Frankl quotes from Psalm 118: 'At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or the world—I had but one sentence in mind—always the same: "I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space."' Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, trans. Ilse Lasch (London: Rider, 2008), 96. Cf. Moltmann, *BP*, 30: 'I summoned up the courage to live again, and I was slowly but surely seized by a great hope for the resurrection into God's "wide space where there is no more cramping".'

the self to God. Understandably, the a-historical nature of this proposal left many unsatisfied, and Dodd (inaugurated eschatology), Bultmann (existential eschatology), and Barth (transcendental eschatology) all sought to offer more compelling ways of relating history and eternity. In Moltmann's view, none of these approaches succeeded. Seeking a way to come after Barth, Moltmann argued that 'it was precisely the transcendentalist view of eschatology that prevented the break-through of eschatological dimensions of dogmatics.'<sup>24</sup>

The eschatological breakthrough was one that Moltmann himself sought to make. His proposal followed Hegel via Ernst Bloch and Hans Joachim Iwand, from whom Moltmann learned 'how to appropriate Hegel's interpretation of the modern experience of the absence of God in relation to the godforsakenness of the crucified Jesus.'<sup>25</sup> The historical dialectic or 'contradiction' between Christ's historical death and eschatological resurrection (raising as opposed to risen life) became central to Moltmann's theology, which went on to propose a thoroughgoing eschatological ontology.

Moltmann's fundamental concern was that the eschatological emphasis in twentieth-century theology had not gone far enough in relating eschatology and history. The central innovation of his theology of hope entailed a radical departure

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<sup>24</sup> *TH*, 26. Critiquing Barth, Moltmann writes: 'What is the meaning of "eschatology" here? It is not history, moving silently and interminably onwards, that brings a crisis upon men's eschatological hopes of the future, as Albert Schweitzer said, but on the contrary it is now the *eschaton*, breaking transcendently into history, that brings all human history to its final crisis. This, however, makes the *eschaton* into a transcendental eternity, the transcendental meaning of all ages, equally near to all ages of history and equally far from them.' *TH*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1987), 6. Elsewhere, Moltmann describes for himself Iwand's influence: 'He formulated the contradiction to "this perverse world" by way of Luther's theology of the cross. God is known in this godless world through his suffering and cross—that is to say *sub contrario*—in contradiction—and through his cross he destroys our godless ties with this world, freeing us for himself and turning us from proud, unhappy gods into true human beings.' *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology (ET)*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 88.

from Augustinian orthodoxy in order to unite eschatology and history in the being of God. That such a departure was legitimate, even necessary, depended for Moltmann on a perceived compromise of Augustinian theology to the Parmenidean notion of ‘the eternal present of being’ that was bound to keep theology and history apart. This same static, a-historical ontology, Moltmann argued, underlies modernity as the source of its ills. Counter-intuitive as it may seem, the modern world’s embrace of chronological progress (its defining feature) represents only a superficial acceptance of historical change. In fact, Kant’s account of chronological time as a transcendental condition of human experience gave the eternal present a new lease of life. With time as a transcendental condition, the modern world’s historical progress takes place on a single immanent timeline such that ‘all temporal events are in principle the same kind’.<sup>26</sup> On the time of the modern world, no genuine progress, no deep change is possible. What is more, whilst Kant might have retained a commitment to rational belief in God, eschatology that transforms history is excluded *a priori*. Modernity has no time for the in-breaking kingdom of God.<sup>27</sup>

The conclusion Moltmann draws from this analysis is that the future freedom of the modern world depends on the possibility of progress beyond its self-imposed limit. Modernity needs to be freed from its eternal present, and this demands a reinvention of its fundamental ontology. This is the challenge Moltmann has taken up over the last half-century in his eschatological theology of hope. In place of the classical doctrine of God, which, in its reliance on Greek philosophy, was part of the problem of modernity and not its solution, Moltmann proposed a radical new formulation: an historical and radically mutable God, who not only works in time but

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<sup>26</sup> *GC*, 112.

<sup>27</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology (CoG)*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1996), 26.

allows his being—as an eschatological reality—to be temporally constituted.

Opposing a caricature of Augustinian theology, whereby God is eternally present to himself but eternally absent from history, Moltmann posits a God who is not above history but is truly historical in his being. Following Ernst Bloch, God has ‘future as his essential nature’:

[This is] the God whom we therefore cannot really have in us or over us but always only before us, who encounters us in his promises for the future, and whom we therefore cannot ‘have’ either, but can only await in active hope.<sup>28</sup>

Moltmann thus presents God to the modern world as the God the modern world can hope for. Along with his dialectical Christology, his social doctrine of the Trinity is central to his proposal: the Trinity must be historicised in order for history to have hope.

Moltmann underlined this in *The Crucified God* (1972) speaking of ‘the death of God’ at the cross without the qualification of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, where it is deemed acceptable language insofar as it is taken to refer to the death of God according to the human nature of the incarnate divine mediator.<sup>29</sup> In place of Augustinian orthodoxy, Moltmann’s trinitarian theology was one of divine becoming, grounding hope on God’s essential passibility as securing his identification with the suffering of the modern world:

We must drop the philosophical axioms about the nature of God. God is *not unchangeable*, if to be unchangeable means that he could not in the freedom of his love open himself to the changeable history of his creation. God is *not incapable of suffering* if this means that he could not in the freedom of his love he would not be receptive to suffering over the contradiction of man and the self-destruction of his creation.

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<sup>28</sup> *TH*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> ‘It is quite correct to talk even of God being crucified—owing to the weakness of the flesh, though, not to the strength of the godhead.’ *trin.* 1.13.28; cf. *s.* 212.1.

God is *not invulnerable* if this means that he could not open himself to the pain of the cross. God is *not perfect* if this means that he did not in the craving of his love want his creation to be necessary to his perfection. The history of the Son and of the Spirit therefore brings about, even for God himself within the Trinity, an experience, something ‘new’.<sup>30</sup>

The security of hope is no longer in God’s unchanging nature and constant faithfulness but in his own eschatological future. Hope is found in God’s journey through the trinitarian suffering of the cross to the trinitarian glory prefigured in the eschatological raising of Christ.

*iii. A trinitarian theology of hope*

The historical note that is fundamental to Moltmann’s theology sounds clearly as he sets out his programme at the start of *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (1980). He surveys the development of trinitarian theology and describes his own understanding as ‘an attempt to start with the special Christian tradition of the history of Jesus the Son, and from that to develop a historical doctrine of the Trinity.’<sup>31</sup> This ‘biblical’ approach, he argues, is distinct from the ‘metaphysical’ point of departure taken by the Western tradition, which ‘began with the unity and then went on to ask about the Trinity’.<sup>32</sup> It is represented in the history of Christian orthodoxy both ancient and modern. In its classical form, it presupposed the unity of God as a ‘homogenous substance’ (following Plato and Aristotle). It continued ‘in the

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<sup>30</sup> *CPS*, 62.

<sup>31</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God (TKG)*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1981), 19.

<sup>32</sup> *TKG*, 19. Cf. *ET*, 321-322: ‘There are two points of departure for the development of trinitarian doctrine, the metaphysical one and the biblical one. The metaphysical approach presupposes the proof that God *is* and that God *is One*... The biblical starting point for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity is that there are three different actors in the divine history, Son - Father - Spirit; the question about their unity then follows.’

framework of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity'<sup>33</sup>, which understood the unity of God as an 'identical subject' (following Descartes, Kant, and Hegel).<sup>34</sup> The way Moltmann relates these two positions and a third that is his own understanding of 'the triune God' is characteristic of the dialectical approach that we have already noted: 'We shall see these ideas as steps along a path.'<sup>35</sup> Theological progress comes through an idealistic process of paradigm shifts along the way of truth.<sup>36</sup> Moltmann argues that the first two (mis)steps along the path to God are funded by alternate sides of Augustinian theology: the doctrine of God in the first place; the doctrine of man in the image of God in the second. The third (presumably final) paradigm shift being his own overcoming of Augustine's theological legacy. These steps can be traced in terms of three different understandings of the unity of God: (i) as 'homogenous substance', (ii) as 'identical subject', (iii) as 'the union of the trinity'.

As Moltmann tells the story of God in the Western theological tradition, he argues that 'ever since Tertullian, the Christian Trinity has always been depicted as belonging within the general concept of the divine substance: *una substantia – tres personae*.'<sup>37</sup> This is the first paradigm, and in Moltmann's account it is deeply problematic since it represents the unwarranted incursion of Greek philosophy into Christian theology. According to Moltmann, the consequence of prioritising an understanding of God in terms of a simple divine essence is to remove God from history. God is understood intellectually as transcendent over and above creation to be known by ascent out of history rather than by historic hope in God's future kingdom.

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<sup>33</sup> *ET*, 321.

<sup>34</sup> *TKG*, 14-16.

<sup>35</sup> *TKG*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Moltmann's argument proceeds according to a dialectical development of doctrine where theological orthodoxy serves its purpose not in terms of its positive content but by providing a position to be overcome, a pushing off point that must of necessity be left behind.

<sup>37</sup> *TKG*, 16.

On this position, Moltmann argues, hope for the future of history is nullified. The temporal existence of both self and society is fundamentally tragic. Even where the language of hope is invoked, what is meant is a dualistic hope for the soul apart from the body, for eternity as an escape from time.

The blame for this theological accommodation to Greek philosophy is attributed first to Tertullian and after him to Augustine and Aquinas:

For Augustine and Aquinas, this one, common, divine substance counted as being the foundation of the trinitarian Persons and was hence logically prior in comparison. Augustine proceeded from the one God, whose unity he apprehended in the concept of the one divine essence, only after that arriving at the concept of the trinitarian Persons.<sup>38</sup>

Moltmann argues that ‘this presentation of the trinitarian persons in the one divine substance had considerable consequences for Western theology and even Western thinking in general’.<sup>39</sup> In particular, it led to the prioritisation of natural over revealed theology, the former coming to act as the framework for the latter such that the unity of God delivered by theistic proofs marginalised the revealed union of the three persons:

Consequently, not only is there undue stress on the unity of the triune God, but there is also a reduction of the trinity to the One God. The representation of the trinitarian persons in a homogenous divine substance, presupposed and recognizable from the cosmos, leads unintentionally but inescapably to the disintegration of the doctrine of the Trinity in abstract monotheism.<sup>40</sup>

Moltmann argues hard here but it is notable that he does not identify the specific

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<sup>38</sup> *TKG*, 16. This is a standard critique offered by twentieth-century trinitarian revisionists. Its lack of foundation has been exposed in recent scholarship. See e.g. Michel René Barnes, ‘Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology’, *Theological Studies* 56 (1995), 237-250. Lewis Ayres, ‘“Remember That You are Catholic” (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8:1 (2000), 39-82.

<sup>39</sup> *TKG*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> *TKG*, 17.

missteps in *De Trinitate* or develop in detail his case for Augustine's problematic reliance on Greek substance ontology. In fact, he does not cite any of Augustine's writing on the Trinity at all.<sup>41</sup> Instead his paradigm is sustained by an assumed neoplatonism in the theo-logic of Augustine's prioritisation of divine unity: 'If the biblical testimony is chosen as point of departure, then we shall have to start from the three Persons of the history of Christ. If philosophical logic is made the starting point, then the enquirer proceeds from the One God'.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the broad ascription of philosophical essentialism to Augustine's trinitarian theology, Moltmann also follows the trend in twentieth-century theology of assuming a clear contrast between West and East, Latin and Greek trinitarian thought. The West is characterised—and compromised—by its commitment to divine simplicity and immutability.<sup>43</sup> The Greek Fathers, on the other hand, are characterised on the basis of their commitment to divine *perichoresis* (the mutual indwelling of the divine persons), a term Moltmann appropriates to describe his own proposed trinitarian unity-relation.<sup>44</sup> However, in spite of his emphasis on the failure of the West and appropriation of *perichoresis*, Moltmann does not make a substantive, exegetical, appeal to the Cappadocians for his trinitarian understanding.<sup>45</sup> His account

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<sup>41</sup> In *TKG*, 225 n.21, Moltmann notes his reliance on the work of the Tübingen theologian F. C. Baur, *Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit unter Menschwerdung Gottes in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Tübingen, 1843), as 'the standard work on the history of the doctrine of the Trinity up to the nineteenth century'.

<sup>42</sup> *TKG*, 149.

<sup>43</sup> 'If, in the manner of Greek philosophy, we ask what characteristics are "appropriate" to the deity, then we have to exclude difference, diversity, movement and suffering from the divine nature. The divine substance is incapable of suffering; otherwise it would not be divine. The absolute subject of nominalist and Idealist philosophy is also incapable of suffering; otherwise it would not be absolute.' *TKG*, 21.

<sup>44</sup> *TKG*, 150, 174ff.

<sup>45</sup> Moltmann is certainly sympathetic to Eastern Orthodoxy and talks about Romanian Orthodox Priest Dumitru Staniloae as a personal influence in the development of his trinitarian theology. Moltmann's writing, however, shows little evidence of deep engagement with the sources of Cappadocian theology.

remains rooted in the Western tradition as a modern account of Western theology overcoming its self.

As Moltmann follows the path of his intellectual history forwards to the modern world, the tradition of Augustinian theology again comes under scrutiny. It seems that Augustine's failure in presenting a God removed from history was not overcome by modernity but was instead embedded in its alternate—subjective—form. If Augustine's doctrine of God represents an a-historic objectivity, his corollary doctrine of human beings in the image of God represents an a-historic subjectivity. According to Moltmann's argument, the founding of modernity saw the theistic substance ontology that came to its own in the thought of Thomas Aquinas being flipped on its head, replaced by an equal and opposite anthropological subject ontology, which was then employed theologically to understand God as an 'identical subject' in a step that represents a second prominent interpretation of divine unity.

According to Moltmann, the turning point in the transition to modernity was the collapse of the pre-modern notion of the ordered cosmos. 'Once man makes himself the subject of his own world by the process of knowing it, conquering it and shaping it, the conception of the world as cosmos is destroyed'.<sup>46</sup> 'Thinking in terms of being was superseded by the rise of modern, European subjectivity'.<sup>47</sup> The substance dualism of Descartes, who divided the world into thought (*res cogitans*) and extension (*res extensa*) is singled out as marking a transition that 'has made the

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His dialogue with Orthodoxy was as a partner in ecumenical discussions in which he was involved from 1963. Revealingly, the conceptual framework that Moltmann employs to validate the purpose of this dialogue is his own dialectical approach: 'The ecumenical dialogues, especially the dialogues between Western Christianity and Orthodoxy, have formed in me the conviction that the confessional theologies we develop for our confessionally divided churches should be seen as only steps on the way to a future ecumenical theology belonging to us all in common.' Moltmann, 'An Autobiographical Note', 219.

<sup>46</sup> *TKG*, 13.

<sup>47</sup> *TKG*, 13.

ontological order of being obsolete, and the monarchy of the highest substance obsolete at the same time. Reality is no longer understood as the divine cosmos, which surrounds and shelters man as his home. It is now seen as providing the material for the knowledge and appropriation of the world of man.’ ‘The unity of what is real is determined anthropologically, no longer cosmologically and theocentrically.’<sup>48</sup> ‘God, thought of as a subject, with perfect reason and free will, is in actual fact the archetype of the free, reasonable, sovereign person, who has complete disposal over himself.’<sup>49</sup> If the God of pre-modern objectivism was carved from the impersonal substance of Greek philosophy, the God of modern subjectivism is the invention of the autonomous human reason that belongs to German idealism. On both sides, according to Moltmann’s account, the error is traceable to Augustine’s capitulation to neoplatonism in his prioritisation of the single divine essence over the historical activity of the three divine persons.

Importantly for our focus on hope, Moltmann identifies this subjective turn as the source of modern atheism and its accompanying sense of despair: ‘A world which has in principle become man’s object proves only the existence of man and no longer the existence of God.’ He goes on to cite the famous ‘God is dead’ passage of Nietzsche’s *Gay Science* in answer to his own rhetorical question: ‘Is this the beginning of European Nihilism?’<sup>50</sup>

Moltmann’s proposal—and in this he finds hope for the future of the modern world—is not to step back to the pre-modern objectivity that came with the Trinity of simple divine substance; nor is it ‘to carry on with the more modern “subject”

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<sup>48</sup> *TKG*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> *TKG*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> *TKG*, 13.

Trinity'.<sup>51</sup> This latter, post-modern, path leads only to a relativism of experience that is accompanied by a hopeless 'inclination towards escapism'.<sup>52</sup> Instead, hope for history is found by going beyond ancient and modern formulations of Augustinian theism, 'taking up panentheistic ideas from the Jewish and Christian traditions' in order to 'try to think ecologically about God, man and the world in their relationships and indwellings'.<sup>53</sup> This represents a third conception of divine unity as 'the union of the tri-unity'.

The theological centre of this newly relational understanding of God and creation is a thoroughly historical doctrine of the Trinity. 'In trinitarian thinking we do not reduce God to a concept', Moltmann asserts, 'we tell his eternal history.'<sup>54</sup> Here he intentionally departs from the fundamental Augustinian distinction between Creator and creature, going beyond Rahner's rule by effectively negating the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity altogether.<sup>55</sup> God is his history, that history includes creation, and it is a history that is not yet complete: 'All created being will find their "broad place where there is no cramping" (Job 36:16) in the opened eternal life of God, while in the glorified new creation the triune God will come to his eternal dwelling and rest, and to his bliss.'<sup>56</sup>

The possibility of this proposal as a theology of hope depends on two fundamental aspects of Moltmann's understanding of the triune God. The first is Moltmann's historical interpretation of *perichoresis*, a concept that he borrows from Eastern Orthodoxy: 'The biblical starting point for the development of the doctrine of

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<sup>51</sup> *TKG*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> *TKG*, 19.

<sup>53</sup> *TKG*, 19.

<sup>54</sup> *ET*, 309.

<sup>55</sup> 'The centre of this thinking is no longer the distinction between God and the world. The centre is the recognition of the presence of God in the world and the presence of the world in God.' *GC*, 13.

<sup>56</sup> *ET*, 323.

the Trinity is that there are three different actors in the divine history... Their unity is not presupposed, but is constituted by the Persons themselves through their reciprocal indwelling.<sup>57</sup> 'If we see the trinitarian union perichoretically, then it is not a self-enclosed, exclusive unity. It is a unity which is open, inviting, and integrating.'<sup>58</sup> There is hope of life, Moltmann argues, 'in the divine Tri-unity'.<sup>59</sup>

For this to be the case, however, there is a second aspect of Moltmann's understanding of the triune God that is important to highlight. It is expressed in the famous title of his second book: the triune God is 'the crucified God'. 'Christ's death on the cross is an inner-trinitarian event before it assumes significance for the redemption of the world.'<sup>60</sup> There is hope of redemption through the suffering of the modern world because the redeeming cross of Christ is 'the "heart" of the triune God'.<sup>61</sup> Hope is found in the God who entered into history and into whom history has entered. That is to say, it is found within the society of the historical Trinity who took the world's tragedy into his own history and overcame it.<sup>62</sup> 'It is only when we plumb the depths of the abyss in "the pain of God" and in Christ's eternal "death of God" that we are possessed by the immeasurable Easter jubilation at the victory of life over sin, death and hell, and over the beauty of the new creation of all things in God's eternal presence.'<sup>63</sup> It is in the promise that God has overcome the tragedy of his own

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<sup>57</sup> *ET*, 322.

<sup>58</sup> *ET*, 322. Moltmann does not restrict the perichoretic relation to describe the mutual indwelling of the divine persons but also draws on it as an explanation of 'the indwelling of human beings in the triune God... Perichoresis does not merely link others of the same kind; it links others of different kinds too. According to Johannine theology there is a mutual indwelling of God and human beings in love: "How who abides in love abides *in* God and God *in* him" (1 John 4:16)'. *ET*, 322-323.

<sup>59</sup> *ET*, 323.

<sup>60</sup> *ET*, 305.

<sup>61</sup> *ET*, 306.

<sup>62</sup> *TKG*, 43.

<sup>63</sup> *ET*, 306.

history by raising Christ from the dead that human beings, as part of the history of God's creation, can place their hope.

Moltmann's proposal that hope for the self and modern society is found in God is the conclusion of a narrative of Western history following three steps: (i) hope in God without history (pre-modern); (ii) hope in history without God (modern); (iii) hope in the history of God (Moltmann). The first two steps, as we have considered, are alternate sides of Augustinian theism. It is only in the third step, in overcoming the Augustinian distinction between God and creation by means of a harmonious history of creation in God, that hope can truly be found. Moltmann's fundamental proposal is that hope for the modern Western world is to be found in a *theological* overcoming of the Western theological tradition. The rest sought by the Augustinian *cor inquietam*, along with the *liberté* of the modern world, Moltmann urges us, must be reinterpreted as a future hope that can only be found in the fulfilment of the history of God.<sup>64</sup> Freeing God from his past is the way to free the world for its future.

Moltmann's theological output over the last fifty years has been considerable, developing but never moving from his central concern to offer a theology of hope for the future freedom of the modern world. His appreciation of, and theological engagement with, the tensions of modernity is a notable achievement in its own right. However, it is also a product of its day. Moltmann's eschatological understanding of God was made plausible by modern theology's emphasis on the doctrine of the Trinity (and the relation of the economic to the immanent Trinity) as a practical concern. But modern orthodoxy (or at least one prominent stream of it) notwithstanding, is it coherent to claim God himself as historic, not only allocating

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<sup>64</sup> 'The doctrine of the immanent Trinity is part of eschatology... The economic Trinity completes and perfects itself to the immanent Trinity when the history and experience of salvation are completed and perfected.' *TKG*, 161.

God a role in the drama of history but positing the drama of history as in some sense constituting his being? As Moltmann actively acknowledged, his proposal is a modernisation of trinitarian theology that represents an intentional departure from the tradition of Western theological orthodoxy.

On the terms of those committed to the theological tradition of creedal orthodoxy, the theological credentials of Moltmann's proposal inevitably fail. Amongst the most fundamental problems is that human society and the human self participate in God's own self-becoming in a way that fails to take sufficient account of the distinction between Creator and created (which Moltmann continues to avow).<sup>65</sup> However, there are also difficulties if we take Moltmann's own terms: his fundamental dialectic or 'contradiction' between the historical death and eschatological raising of Christ reveals a deeper and problematic contradiction between history and the eschaton. History's eschatological future seems ultimately to be a future without a past, stripping historical hope of any meaningful content and undermining concerted engagement in the ethical complexities of modern life. On this final point, the opposition of leading South American liberation theologians (Alves, Gutiérrez, Bonino) to Moltmann's agenda of hope and change is telling, not least since Moltmann intended his theology to further the cause of liberation for which they stood.<sup>66</sup>

This thesis seeks to come after Moltmann in view of these problems whilst also learning from his engagement with modernity. The proposal here is that an

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<sup>65</sup> Moltmann argues that creation is 'differentiated from God' and that 'the triune God will indwell the world *in a divine way*—the world will indwell God *in a creaturely way*.' *ET*, 311. This statement, however, is not clearly explained and is insufficient to protect Moltmann's position from critique when read as part of his understanding of the being of God as historical.

<sup>66</sup> A summary of this argument and Moltmann's response to the liberation theologians that opposed him can be found in, Jürgen Moltmann, 'On Latin American Liberation Theology: An Open Letter to José Miguez Bonino', *Christianity and Crisis* 36: 5 (1976), 57-63.

understanding of hope in accord with the commitments of classical theology is a better hope for the late modern world than Moltmann can offer. As I will argue below, the Trinity is a significant doctrine for theological hope not because it can be easily functionalised—it cannot—but in order to hold firm a commitment to the unchanging God of creation as the God in whom historic humanity can hope. Historical hope is possible since the unchanging God has made himself known in Christ as the mediator between God and man, taking on flesh in hypostatic union. Incarnation and Trinity go together, preserving a prominent place for mystery and doxology, giving eternal hope to the historical people of God. This is the Augustinian understanding that Moltmann is too quick to leave behind.

## **2. Augustine after Moltmann**

Moltmann's ingenuity, I have suggested above, is evident in the way he united eschatology (or eschatological soteriology) with theology proper in his trinitarian understanding of hope. This allowed him to argue that hope for the isolated modern self and for fragmented modern society are truly found in relation to God. This has a superficial resemblance to Augustine's interpretation of the self and society in relation to God. However, the theological differences between their proposals cut to fundamental understandings of God, Christ, and salvation. Here I will argue that the core commitments of Augustine's trinitarian theology—recently revived from its twentieth-century caricature—provide the basis for a much more reliable form of hope than Moltmann is able to offer.

Moltmann's assessment of the failure of the Western church amounts to an argument that Augustine's theology laid the ground for modern human hope, along with its colonial 'heart of darkness', to emerge. The deficiency of Augustine's doctrine of God left a vacuum filled by the development of historical human hope in

modernity; and the deficiency of Augustinian anthropology laid the conceptual ground for that hope to come into its own as a hope seeking realisation through conquest and domination. For Augustine to come after Moltmann these challenges need to be understood and a response to them offered. Such an approach might seem defensive and hopelessly conservative: holding up Augustine as a counter-weight to modern theology, returning to Augustine as if to live again in the past. In fact, it is in on account of twenty-first-century revisions to the standard twentieth-century understanding of Augustine that a reconsideration of Moltmann's dismissal is necessary. Recent work on Augustine's understanding of the Trinity and the place of the doctrine in his wider theological system has undercut the notion that the woes of modernity can be properly attributed to the failure of Augustine's trinitarian theology. As Rowan Williams argues,

Augustine cannot be held responsible for a move towards individualism in anthropology and abstract theism in theology. The introspective method of *trin.* is designed to 'demythologize' the solitary human ego by establishing the life of the mind firmly in relation to God.<sup>67</sup>

Moltmann's interpretation of Augustine's trinitarian theology, in tension with which his own trinitarian theology is formed, is now out of date. This being the case—and the scholarly evidence for its inadequacy is compelling—might it be possible to develop *with* Augustine's doctrine of God a better theology of hope for the modern world? I will offer a critique of Moltmann's trinitarian theology of hope from the perspective of Augustinian theology, probing the historical credentials, theological coherence, and practical benefit of Moltmann's understanding. The conclusion in view is that Moltmann's position is imaginative and stimulating but lacks plausibility both in terms of its internal coherence and eventual value. What is more, returning to

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<sup>67</sup> Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 186.

the understanding of hope in relation to his understanding of the Trinity (from a range of sources and not merely *De Trinitate*) and highlighting its potential in line with the Augustinian understanding of hope developed in the first part of this thesis, suggests that Moltmann's attempt to overcome the history of theology in order to find a theology of hope for history is not, in fact, necessary.

There is more than a hint of irony in Moltmann's critique of Augustinian theology as a-historical. He is right, of course, that Augustine's commitment to divine simplicity—in line with other pro-Nicene theologians—disallows the attribution of 'historical' to the life of God *in se*.<sup>68</sup> However, the idea that a pathological commitment to neoplatonism over Scripture corrupted Augustine's trinitarian theology is now hard to sustain: the influence of neoplatonism on Augustine, as on other pro-Nicene theologians, seems to have been both more complex and more theologically aware than Moltmann recognises.<sup>69</sup>

In fact, it is arguably Moltmann's trinitarian theology rather than Augustine's that is questionable in terms of its historical credentials. His preference for a theological methodology that proceeds by a succession of paradigm shifts indicates that whilst he might hold an historical view of God, he has an Idealistic understanding of history. On one level, Moltmann relies heavily on historical theology, citing historical understandings in order to develop and support his own views. On closer inspection, however, and this is certainly true for his reading of Augustine, Moltmann regularly fails to engage in detail with relevant primary texts or debates in the secondary literature. It is an approach that makes Moltmann's work stimulating to

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<sup>68</sup> Ayres identifies a shared commitment to divine simplicity amongst Greek and Latin pro-Nicene theologians: 'Basil, Gregory, Hilary, and Augustine all use a conception of divine simplicity to explore and bolster the doctrine of inseparable operations.' Ayres, 'Remember', 79-80.

<sup>69</sup> See Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13ff.

read on account of its breadth of coverage but it has negative returns. What Lewis Ayres says of Colin Gunton applies equally to Moltmann: ‘[His] project is thus an interesting one, but one which is deeply flawed methodologically, and that methodological flaw may actually obscure resources which could otherwise promote the development of the theology he is trying to expound.’<sup>70</sup>

Ayres’ is an opinion worth heeding when it comes to Augustine. Over the last twenty years, he and Michel Barnes have led the way in returning the twentieth century’s largely negative appraisal of Augustine’s teaching on the Trinity to the sources of patristic theology. They have ably highlighted both the inadequacy of the standard critique and the promise of *Augustine’s* trinitarian theology. Their work does not engage Moltmann directly but the oppositional view of trinitarian theology that Moltmann subscribes to—West versus East; beginning with the single divine essence versus beginning with the three divine persons (a paradigm often traced to Theodore de Régnon)—is standard of the position Ayres and Barnes have exposed.<sup>71</sup>

There are important nuances in how this paradigm is deployed in modern theology, of course: Gunton’s focus is metaphysical, Zizioulas’s ecclesial, and Moltmann’s is political. Moltmann emphasizes the distinction between approaches as historical versus ahistorical, biblical versus ontological, and communal versus ‘monarchial’, building on Rahner’s critique that Augustine (and the tradition that

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<sup>70</sup> Lewis Ayres, ‘Augustine, The Trinity and Modernity: A Review of Colin E. Gunton, *The One, The Three, and The Many*’, *Augustinian Studies* 26:2 (1995), 132.

<sup>71</sup> Ayres highlights that the criticism has two parts to it: (i) Augustine begins with divine unity in a distinct way from the Greek Fathers; (ii) divine unity is understood, as divine simplicity, to reside in a single substance shared by and prior to the persons. However, turning to Augustine’s account in *s.* 52 and *Ep.* 11, 120, Ayres argues that if Augustine can be said to have had a ‘departure point’ it belongs to his understanding of inseparable operation, a teaching he shared with other pro-Nicene theologians who were likewise committed to the doctrine of divine simplicity. The suggestion that Augustine adopted divine simplicity from neoplatonism as a unity relation prior to the three divine persons is not sustainable from the sources. Ayres, ‘Remember’, 40-41.

followed him) undermined the practical relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity by obscuring the scriptural testimony of the history of salvation with an approach that ‘begins with the one single nature of God as a totality, and only considers him *after that* as constituted by three persons’.<sup>72</sup> Moltmann takes the historical aspect of Rahner’s critique and raises it further, arguing that Rahner failed to develop its implications:

The touchstone for dogmatic constructions is the hermeneutics of the biblical history. If we apply this [i.e. Rahner and Barth’s ‘subjective’] doctrine of the Trinity to the Gethsemane account, for example, we immediately perceive its limitations. Is it one mode of being of the one God who prays there to the other? How can we assume in the triune God only ‘a single will’ and ‘a single consciousness’, when Jesus’ prayer to the Father ends with the words: ‘Not my will but thine be done’? The biblical starting point for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity is that there are three different actors in the divine history, Son—Father—Spirit; the question about their unity then follows... Explicitly trinitarian language can be found in the gospel of John: ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’, says the Johannine Jesus; ‘I and the Father are one’; ‘I am in the Father and the Father is in me’ (John 14:9; 10:30; 14:11). Jesus and God the Father are related to each other as Persons, as the expressions ‘I’ and ‘thou’, ‘we’ and ‘us’ suggest. Their unity is not presupposed but is constituted by the Persons themselves through their reciprocal indwelling.<sup>73</sup>

This passage is helpful in showing how Moltmann’s historical and biblical starting point leads him to his social trinitarian conclusion. It also reveals, however, that Moltmann’s biblical approach is painfully thin. That the orthodox commitment to a single divine will could be dismissed by a simple reference to the Gethsemane prayer is remarkable in its implicit assumption regarding the biblical ignorance of

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<sup>72</sup> Cited in Edmund Hill, ‘Karl Rahner’s “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise *De Trinitate* and St Augustine”’, *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), 68.

<sup>73</sup> *ET*, 322.

Augustinian theology. Moltmann's commitment to history appears to be as a springboard to the future.

Had Moltmann united the orientation of his approach towards the end of history with a deeper inquiry into the past he would have found that Augustine did not in fact teach what he assumed (cf. *conf.* 6.11.18). Augustine's trinitarian theology evidences a clear historical and biblical concern along with, and not in Moltmannian opposition to, the creedal theological commitments of the Catholic Church.<sup>74</sup> In this regard, Augustine's outline of trinitarian theology, recorded in *Sermon 52* (c.410) is a helpful and important summary. The text for the sermon is the baptism of Christ as recorded in Matthew 3:13-17 and it highlights a theological dilemma: not only are the Father, Son, and Spirit clearly distinguished in the text but 'we have the three apparently separable' (separated by place, function and action) (*s.* 52.2). This separation of the divine persons appears to be in clear conflict with the church's creedal commitment to worship one God, hence the challenge: 'Now someone may say to me, "Demonstrate that the three are inseparable. Remember you are speaking as a Catholic"' (*s.* 52.2).

Augustine proceeds to recite the core confessional convictions regarding the Trinity. His brief summary gives a window onto his theological framework: the Catholic faith does not limit the dynamism of Augustine's understanding or take him away from Scripture. Knowledge of the Trinity by faith is joined together with purifying faith in Christ and his work at the heart of God's history of redemption (cf. *trin.* 4.7.11). In terms of the source of Augustine's Trinitarian theology, his convictions are not *merely* rational doctrines supported by ecclesial authority. They

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<sup>74</sup> 'Our task in understanding the Trinity—and Augustine's task in the sermon—may be described as a task of understanding the traditional Catholic faith in inseparable operation *as* a reading of Scripture.' Ayres, 'Remember', 56.

consist, Augustine says, of the ‘summary of biblical testimonies... founded on apostolic truth’ (s. 52.2). He goes on to state what he takes this orthodox understanding to be:

This is what we know, this is what we believe; this, even if we don’t see it with our eyes, nor even with our hearts as long as we are being purified by faith, this all the same we hold with the firmest and most orthodox faith, that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one inseparable trinity or triad; one God, not three gods; but one God in such a way that the Son is not the Father, that the Father is not the Son, that the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. It is this ineffable godhead, wholly self-contained, renewing, creating, re-creating all things, sending reclaiming, judging liberating, this then that we know to be at once both ineffably a trinity, triad or three, and inseparable (s. 52.2).

Unlike the Augustinian position critiqued by Moltmann, this is no ahistoric commitment to divine unity. Augustine does not begin intellectually with one or three, he begins with the faith of the historic community, itself a provisional kind of knowledge that belongs to those on their way—oriented in hope—towards the fulfilment of God’s work of redemption (‘this is what we believe... as long as we are being purified by faith’). The absence of history in Augustine’s faith is the absence of history in God, who is ‘wholly self-contained’, the God who works in history and yet is in himself ‘ineffable’. Rather than offering an understanding of the Godhead by historicizing the Trinity, Augustine is committed to an understanding of God as beyond history but in such a way that makes sense of God’s work in history, supremely in the person of Christ.

As the sermon continues it is clear that the church’s ‘most orthodox faith’ is far from opposed to Augustine’s concern with God’s historical work. In fact, his understanding allows him to properly recognise the diverse appearances of God in history as appearances of the one God, distinguished in *De Trinitate* between divine

manifestations and divine missions in order to highlight the centrality of God's activity in Christ (*trin.* 3.9.27; 4.7.11). Augustine's faith is not static but ordered eschatologically towards the fulfilment of this single divine work of redemption through Christ and the perfection of faith's knowledge in the beatific vision, which is the note on which the sermon ends (*s.* 52.23). The structure of Augustine's trinitarian theology as a knowledge of God by faith ordered towards the beatific vision highlights that orthodox faith in the present exists in hope of its fulfilment in the future.

In terms of the specific challenge of the sermon, the baptismal appearances of the three persons as 'apparently separable' leaves Augustine to answer the question as to how the claim that God is one can be reconciled with the Scriptures. Augustine first lays out the principle of his answer and then seeks to prove it with reference to specific Scriptural texts. The principle—itsself taken from John 1:3—is that 'the Father does nothing without the Son, the Son does nothing without the Father' (*s.* 52.5). God made and governs all things by his wisdom and power, that is to say, the Father created and rules all things through the Son. The principle, in other words, is the inseparable operation of the persons of the Trinity. Augustine illustrates it with reference to the work of Christ in the incarnation that he takes to be at the heart of (salvation) history (cf. *trin.* 4.7.11): the Son and not the Father was born, suffered, and rose; but the birth, suffering, and resurrection of the Son was 'the work of both the Father and the Son' (*s.* 52.8). Augustine is confident that this theological formulation satisfactorily resolves the problem but he feels compelled to go further, to take his theological proposal and seek to demonstrate it 'by the evidence of the holy books' (*s.* 52.8). He does so by showing that the birth of Christ in Scripture is the work of the Father (Galatians 4:4) and the Son (Philippians 2:6-7), likewise for the

passion and resurrection.<sup>75</sup> ‘I have proved my propositions, I think, with the strongest documentary evidence... You have the persons quite distinct but their working inseparable’ (s. 52.14).

On examination, Augustine’s trinitarian theology strongly resists Moltmann’s charge that its ‘point of departure’ is metaphysical rather than biblical and historical. What is more, it reformulates the idea of a ‘point of departure’ away from the first in a series of intellectual commitments, instead emphasizing the primacy of *belief* that is a knowledge of God coordinated with worship, bringing the importance of hope for the fulfilment of worship in view along with it (cf. *ench.* 1.3). Augustine’s point of departure is the historical faith of the church, a point he makes explicit in *De Trinitate* 1.1.1. His position resists Moltmann’s historical understanding of God with a properly historical understanding of the work of God in Christ. Faith in God is oriented forward in hope, not towards the fulfilment of God, but towards the fulfilment of the worship of God that is inherent in its commitment. The God in whom the church believes is not a product of metaphysical speculation but the God who is above all worthy of worship:

Whatever it is that God is, must be believed with piety, reflected on in a holy manner, and as far as possible, as much as is granted us, it must be understood in a way beyond telling. Let words be stilled, the tongue cease from wagging, let the heart be stirred, the heart be lifted up to the mystery (s. 52.15).

Moltmann’s trinitarian theology seeks to de-mystify the Trinity by conceiving of the being of God historically. It is an intentionally political theology aimed to stimulate political action that anticipates the kingdom of God, bringing God’s future into the present. Augustine, on the other hand, strongly maintains the fundamental

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<sup>75</sup> The proof is offered merely for the inseparable operation of Father and Son but the inclusion of the Spirit is evident later in the sermon, e.g. s. 52.17, 21.

mystery of God, affirming by faith that the three divine persons are one and offering his trinitarian theology as an account of how that faith relates to the historical record of God's past activity and the historical purpose of God's work to raise up fallen human beings to find their fulfilment in worshipping him. Moltmann offers an account of how the future history of God can be realised in the present; Augustine teaches that human history as structured according to God's work of redemption in Christ and ordered towards its future fulfilment. For Moltmann, God finds his end through history; for Augustine, the history of creation finds its end in the worship of God. In asserting his position as historical against a supposedly a-historic, 'metaphysical' Augustinian theology, Moltmann obscures the true distinction between his own approach and Augustine's. Both can be described as historical. The key difference is that for Moltmann the being of God provides the fundamental structure of history, whereas, for Augustine, God's work of creation and redemption serves that role.<sup>76</sup> On Moltmann's view it seems that history is finally collapsed into divine ontology. Augustine's historical understanding, however, terminates not in the fulfilment of God's being but humanity's consummated worship of God through Christ. It is Augustine's account that allows the integrity of history and so hope for the future of history to be preserved.

At the heart of his theology of hope, Moltmann's understanding of the Trinity is intended to offer hope for the modern self and society in the history of God. He advances his trinitarian theology as a political theology seeking to overcome what he

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<sup>76</sup> 'The fulfilment and end of the law and all the divine scriptures is to love the thing which must be enjoyed and the thing which together with us can enjoy that thing... To enlighten us and enable us, the whole temporal dispensation was set up by this divine providence for our salvation. We must make use of this, not with a permanent love and enjoyment of it, but with a transient love and enjoyment of our journey, or of our conveyances, so to speak... So that we love the means of transport only because of our destination.' *doctr. chr.* 1.85.

views as the pathological consequences of Augustinian trinitarian theology, labelled as ‘monotheism’: ‘It is only when the doctrine of the Trinity vanquishes the monotheistic notion of the great universal monarch in heaven, and his divine patriarchs in the world, that earthly rulers, dictators and tyrants cease to find any justifying archetypes any more.’<sup>77</sup> This argument has a superficial plausibility: the relation between the single divine will of God and the single divinised will of authoritarian rule seems intuitive. On reflection, however, this is not a trinitarian problem. It is not the number but the nature of the will of God that sets God’s beneficent rule apart from the overreaching power of human authority. Karen Kilby is right to argue that ‘An emphasis on the unity of God, on the oneness of God who stands apart from, over-against the world, could arguably be used to *undermine* as well as to legitimate hierarchical and absolutist forms of government.’<sup>78</sup> Moltmann’s opposition to the subjection of people by their rulers and the subjection of women by men can be welcomed apart from his theological analysis of its cause and proposed trinitarian ‘solution’. In fact, Moltmann’s functionalization of the Trinity should be rejected as an eschatological solution that, as a way to bring difficulty to an end, imposes its own framework on complex problems of modern life.

I have argued that in his trinitarian theology, Moltmann collapses the history of creation into the history of God. The hope this delivers is most truly God’s hope for his own future. Hope for the modern world is found by reinventing its own history of progress within the progress of God’s history. The failure of the history of modernity to bring the freedom it sought is answered by the history of God. This is an appealing theological solution to the problems of late modernity. However, it is one that should

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<sup>77</sup> *TKG*, 197.

<sup>78</sup> Karen Kilby, ‘Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity’, *New Blackfriars* (2000), 439.

be resisted for its promise of historical liberation is empty. Human history is left behind, denying the complexity and extent of past failures; overlooking the potential for present formation through reflection, repentance, and renewed action.

In bringing Augustine after Moltmann I am arguing for the potential of reconnecting with the theological tradition that Moltmann's theology of hope leaves behind, a move that has further potential on account of the significance of Augustinian theology in the making of modernity. For Augustine, the *telos* of history is not the unity of God but the unity of human worship of God: the knowledge of God that comes by way of the fulfilment of the command of Deuteronomy 6:5 to love God with all the heart and soul and mind (*mor.* 1.25.47; 1.30.62).<sup>79</sup> It is towards this end of the fulfilled love of God, which correlates with eternal life, that all things are to be ordered (*mor.* 1.25.47).<sup>80</sup> The call to worship of Deuteronomy 6:5 unfolded in the New Testament as the double command to love God and one's neighbour in God (*mor.* 1.26.48ff). It is for the fulfilment of this end through faith in Christ that human beings are called to hope. In place of Moltmann's hope in God's historical future,

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<sup>79</sup> 'For to Christians this rule of life is given, that we should love the Lord our God with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind, and our neighbour as ourselves; for on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Rightly, then, Catholic Church, most true mother of Christians, dost thou not only teach that God alone, to find whom is the happiest life, must be worshipped in perfect purity and chastity, bringing in no creature as an object of adoration whom we should be required to serve; and from that incorrupt and inviolable eternity to which alone man should be made subject, in cleaving to which alone the rational soul escapes misery, excluding everything made, everything liable to change, everything under the power of time; without confounding what eternity, and truth, and peace itself keeps separate, or separating what a common majesty unites: but thou dost also contain love and charity to our neighbour in such a way, that for all kinds of diseases with which souls are for their sins afflicted, there is found with thee a medicine of prevailing efficacy.' *mor.* 1.30.62.

<sup>80</sup> 'Let us then, as many as have in view to reach eternal life, love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind. For eternal life contains the whole reward in the promise of which we rejoice.' *mor.* 1.25.47.

Augustine turns our attention to the historical future of consummated human worship of the God who was and is and is to come.

### **3. Conclusion**

The chapter has turned to Moltmann as the main theological rival to the argument of this thesis for the contemporary potential of Augustinian hope. According to Moltmann there is no hope in Augustinian theology but only in its overcoming. Augustine and those who followed him in the Western theological tradition, Moltmann contends, undermined historical hope by placing God outside of history. History was thereby left to its own devices as a story—told by man and authorised by a distant omnipotent deity—of divinely sanctioned domination by ‘Christian’ imperial powers and the destruction of creation by untempered industrialisation. The pursuit of progress that characterizes modernity, Moltmann argues, is right in its future orientation but as a secularization of Christian eschatology in itself it has no future. The future of modernity, he contends, can be found in God. Diagnosing the problems of twentieth-century modernity as fundamentally theological in origin opens the way for Moltmann’s proposal of a modern trinitarian theology of hope. If late modern progressivism has rejected the God of the past, might it not find hope in a God who is progressing with society towards its future? And even if late modern society does not find the God who revealed himself in the suffering of Christ, might not the hopes of late modern society be ultimately realised in his future? Unsurprisingly given its contextual engagement, much about Moltmann’s position is attractive. He takes seriously the disorientating effects of modern life and is concerned for those left behind by modernity’s progress. What is more, his theology *as* hope seems also to present the possibility that we can hold on to hope as theology

and so circumvent late modern scepticism when it comes to the place of theological commitments in rational public discourse.

Whilst Moltmann's understanding of hope might be attractive, this chapter has sought to highlight its failure, which is rooted in his twentieth-century misunderstanding of the Augustinian theology that his own proposal seeks to overcome. Instead, I am pursuing a path of theological continuity that stretches beyond retrieval, travelling forwards with Augustinian theology rather than merely recovering the past. One way of conceptualising my project is as an argument for Augustinian hope after Moltmann in order to engage the modern world in a way that Moltmann's theology of hope, in departing from Augustine, has not been able to accomplish. The aim is not simply to put Augustine in the clear when it comes to the woes of modernity that have been laid at his door. It is, instead, to stand on his shoulders, offering a reading of Augustine not primarily as a piece of historical theology but as the basis for a constructive theological understanding of hope. I have sought to return Moltmann to Augustine in order to clear the way for a contemporary development of classical trinitarian theology as offering a reliable hope for the late modern world.

## Conclusion: What May I Hope For?

In their recent overview of the theme of hope in philosophy and theology, Claudia Bloeser and Titus Stahl begin with an observation concerning a methodological transition: ‘Historically, discussions of the importance of hope were often embedded in particular philosophical projects. More recent discussions of hope provide independent accounts of its nature and its relation to other mental phenomena.’<sup>1</sup> This is an important point and one that seems to render anachronistic the approach taken in this thesis. That I have argued for a virtue of hope as embedded in a particular *theological* project seems to make it even less plausible as a source of contemporary understanding and practice. These issues of anachronism and particularity will be engaged directly in this final chapter, which seeks to trouble the assumption of methodological transition in order to advocate the contemporary value of Augustinian hope. Whilst it is doubtless the case that recent discussions of hope *seek to* provide independent accounts of its nature and practice, it is important not to confuse ambition with attainment. The aspiration of independency, evident in the linguistic approach to hope of the twentieth century and in more recent phenomenological enquiry, cannot obscure the fact that these are both ‘particular philosophical projects’. The question is not *whether* an account of hope assumes or entails particular philosophical assumptions, but *what* particular philosophical—or theological—assumptions it entails.

The concern of this thesis has been to offer an Augustinian proposal for hope as a virtue in response to the modern question, ‘What may I hope for?’ This question,

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<sup>1</sup> Bloeser, Claudia and Stahl, Titus, ‘Hope’, in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/hope/> (accessed 28 Mar. 2018).

I have argued, arises in a world where the man-made self—the self as autonomous agent—has as its vocation a project of self-construction conceived in opposition to the apparently constricting demand of divine worship. Free from the way and goal of liturgical formation, the value of human hope and the nature of human agency meet late modern enquiry as questions to be answered. I have followed the late twentieth-century turn to virtue to propose an Augustinian answer that offers hope for the disenchanted modern self within the rehabilitative liturgical life of the church. Hope—as secure as the object of worship towards which it is ultimately aimed—is found by faith, travelling along the ‘way of love’ that is the path of the Psalms of ascent towards humanity’s fulfilment in the consummated worship of the eschatological City of God.

This proposal is clearly not a straightforward answer to the modern question of hope on its terms. Instead, I have sought to develop an Augustinian theology of hope—faithful to the terms of classical (Augustinian) theism—that seeks to engage theologically with the modern search for reliable hope in order to propose a simultaneous subversion and fulfilment of that search. Where Moltmann comes after Kant proposing a ‘reinvention’ of modernity, my proposal is for a rejuvenating *reconnection* of modernity with its theological roots. This reconnection aims towards the fulfilment of the freedom that is central to the modern world’s pursuit but subverts modernity’s claim, as presented in Kant’s ‘Essay on Enlightenment’, to have attained that freedom in the maturity of autonomous human agency. Augustinian freedom is the freedom to live within God’s authority as the way of human flourishing—the freedom of human fulfilment in the body of Christ, as part of a community of worship that orders earthly loves towards the love of God in the eschaton.<sup>2</sup> My contention is

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<sup>2</sup> For helpful discussions of Augustine’s teaching on freedom and human agency see Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 57-72; John

that returning Kantian ‘freedom through assertion of human autonomy’ to Augustinian ‘freedom in submission to divine authority’ subverts the agency of the modern ‘I’ in a way that turns out to be liberating. The modern self’s search for hope is returned to the more fundamental—and ultimately fulfilling—human search for life with God. The freedom to flourish that is the deep pursuit of the modern world is found in the freedom to follow the way marked out in creation and made manifest in Christ. The insecurity of the modern, self-seeking self is brought to a renewed confidence along the way of hope that is its journey home to God. The security—and so joy—of its quest for freedom provided by spiritual and ecclesial union with Christ. Its hope is underwritten by the love of God who seeks and finds his people.

In responding to Kant’s question by returning modern hope(s) to Augustine, the path of this thesis has been inescapably theological. This conclusion chapter will take up the challenge of relating hope as a theological virtue for the church to the concerns of late modern society more widely. It would be an understandable accusation that the hope advanced in this thesis is both anachronistic and sectarian. Have I not marked the bounds of hope round the church by emphasizing the importance of specific theological positions? Does not this creedal specificity severely limit the possibility of hope in the radically pluralist context that is late modern society? In presenting a robustly theological hope for the church am I not thereby denying the possibility of human hope for the modern *world*? I will engage three objections, namely that the account I have offered is problematically particular for a plural society (*particularity*), problematically otherworldly for life in the here-and-now (*escapism*), and problematically committed to long-abandoned metaphysical

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Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 131-136.

claims for anyone seeking to live in the modern world and influence its future (*anachronism*).

This conclusion will proceed in three sections: the first will consider the return to understanding hope as a virtue, developing some desiderata for late modern hope that a virtue account—if it is to be plausible—must positively engage; the second will make a case that the theological virtue of hope developed in this thesis meets the desirable qualities of good hope and resists the charges of malign particularity and world-denying escapism; the third will return to the transition in modern hope from God to nation to self, with which this thesis began, engaging the charge of anachronism by arguing that this transition is neither inevitable or complete.

## **1. Hope's return to virtue**

Adam Kadlac's 'naturalistic' approach is standard of recent Anglophone philosophical understandings of hope, which have tended to begin with the identification of the universality of hope in human experience, bracketing controversial axiological and ontological issues in order to begin their enquiry with reflection on hope's enactment:

I try to approach hope naturalistically—as a distinctly human phenomenon that occurs in a variety of different contexts with any number of different ends in view. Taking this approach thus allows me to focus on the question of whether hope is a praiseworthy disposition for humans to adopt without considering either the goodness of the ends for which one might hope or the truth of the beliefs on which one's hope is predicated... I contend that we obscure the distinctive value of *hope* when we ground its value primarily in the goodness of various ends or the accuracy of our beliefs about the future.<sup>3</sup>

This approach has not been without its benefits. Research within its limits has illuminated hope's importance for psychological wellbeing and moral agency, and

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<sup>3</sup> Adam Kadlac, 'The Virtue of Hope', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18 (2015), 338.

identified ways in which hope can be cultivated and sustained. However, considering hope in isolation from its object raises the question of how it is possible to mitigate against the function of hope as ‘an open invitation for wishful thinking’.<sup>4</sup> As Cobb argues, ‘the possession of hope can have salutary consequences, but it can also make the agent vulnerable to certain kinds of personal risk. The pervasiveness of hope is not a sign of its quality.’<sup>5</sup> Victoria McGeer, whose approach to ‘good hope’ we considered above, identifies and seeks to navigate this issue by distinguishing ‘good hope’ from pathogenic ‘wilful’ and ‘wishful’ hope, which relate to an over- or under-reliance on personal agency. ‘Good hope’ is an ‘art’ that navigates between these poles by learning to hope in a way that is responsive to the agency of others and the possibilities for agential action opened up by the social scaffolding of a properly-functioning society.<sup>6</sup> Bovens’ work on ‘The Value of Hope’—distinct in its emphasis on mental imaging as an important aspect of hope—likewise suggests that good hope is found along a pathway between extremes: ‘What is needed to hope well is (i) a sense of groundedness not to fall prey to epistemic irrationality and (ii) a degree of frustration tolerance not to let failure drag one down.’<sup>7</sup> The question that both McGeer and Bovens wrestle with is: How to navigate the middle way?

It is here that a turn to virtue seems promising. The poles that both McGeer and Bovens refer to as the perils to be avoided if one is to hope well, correlate with the modes of presumption and despair that Augustine (and those that follow him) identifies as the perils that must be resisted in order to live in the way of good hope (*s.*

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<sup>4</sup> Luc Bovens (1999), ‘The Value of Hope’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59:3 (1999), 680.

<sup>5</sup> Aaron Cobb, ‘Hope as an intellectual virtue?’, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 55:3 (2015), 270.

<sup>6</sup> Victoria McGeer, ‘The Art of Good Hope’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592:1 (2004), 100-127.

<sup>7</sup> Bovens, ‘Value of Hope’, 681.

20). This way is the way of the virtue of hope as we have explored it. But must this turn to virtue be a theological move? As we identified in the opening chapter, the theological virtue of hope is not the only candidate with a claim, and there are difficulties in applying it in a context where the theological premises on which it is established are no longer readily accepted. In what follows, I will outline six desiderata of good hope that are present (implicitly or explicitly) in the background of contemporary hope research. Consideration of Kadlac's 'naturalistic' account of the virtue of hope, tailored to the secular plausibility structure of late modernity, will highlight the need for a further criterion: good hope must take into consideration the object(s) of hope as well as the subjective way of hope. This will take us to the Augustinian virtue of hope as one specific account, which, I shall argue, answers the six desiderata, not merely by submitting to their judgment, but also by transforming their premises.

We turn, then, to six desiderata that seek to capture prominent concerns of contemporary hope research as to what constitutes 'good' or 'valuable' hope: firstly, good hope must be universally accessible in a way that relates to the universality of hope in human experience;<sup>8</sup> secondly, good hope must relate to proximate (or 'mundane') and not only to ultimate ends, that is to say, it should not be world-denying;<sup>9</sup> thirdly, good hope must be both resilient and rational—able to orient life through difficulty (as Aquinas recognises) yet in a way that remains rooted in reality and avoids wistful escapism;<sup>10</sup> fourthly, good hope must be responsive to the agency of others, providing a way to relate individual and communal hopes whilst

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<sup>8</sup> 'To live a life devoid of hope is simply not to live a human life; it is not to function—or tragically, it is to cease to function—as a human being.' McGeer, 'Art of Good Hope', 101.

<sup>9</sup> Marx's critique of religion as 'the opium of the people' lies in the background here.

<sup>10</sup> Bovens, 'Value of Hope', 681.

maintaining the distinct integrity of both;<sup>11</sup> fifthly, good hope must empower and not negate human agency, so that just as good hope cannot be world-denying it likewise cannot be utterly self-denying;<sup>12</sup> sixthly, good hope should not be isolated from other aspects of moral life, but integrated with other positive traits of well-formed character.<sup>13</sup>

Turning to hope as a virtue—taking a broad understanding of virtue as a human excellence that is a reliable disposition of the rational will, constitutive, at least in part, of an agent’s flourishing—offers certain benefits that seem to answer many of these conditions. Its major strength is its integration as part of a well-lived life and not merely a psychological disposition with an external probabilistic control. Virtues belong inherently together with (empirical or theoretical) accounts of human flourishing. On this view, insofar as a hope is conducive to agential flourishing it can be regarded as virtuous. The challenge in our contemporary context, of course, is to define agential flourishing without reference to theological or metaphysical claims about personhood or the good.<sup>14</sup> Hence the attraction of Kadlac’s ‘naturalistic’ understanding of hope. According to Kadlac,

Hope is a virtue in three important respects: it tends to encourage a realistic outlook on the future (thereby protecting us from the pitfalls of optimism and pessimism); it frequently constitutes a courageous response to an uncertain future; and it promotes solidarity with others.

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<sup>11</sup> McGeer, ‘Art of Good Hope’, 108, 111, 118.

<sup>12</sup> The recent focus on the relationship between hope and human agency in philosophical accounts of hope can be read as a response to Nietzsche’s criticism of religious and metaphysical hope as disempowering and so de-humanizing.

<sup>13</sup> Bovens, ‘Value of Hope’, 677, ‘When hoping and fearing are considered in isolation from their connection with other character traits, it may be the case that there is little to be said for them. But their close connection with love is what vindicates attitudes of hoping and fearing.’

<sup>14</sup> For an attempt to offer a practical, empirical understanding of virtue see Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 1-4.

On this view, hope is therefore valuable insofar as it contributes to other characteristics that we believe to be human excellences.<sup>15</sup>

On face value, this account seems to fare well against our six desiderata: (i) hope is universal and in some cases virtuous, depending ‘on the context in which it occurs and the effect it has on the person who embraces it’;<sup>16</sup> (ii) the virtue of hope is not world denying but can relate to all kinds of objects since its value ‘does not lie in the goodness of its objects but rather in the effect on the one who hopes’;<sup>17</sup> (iii) hope is rational and reliable in that it concerns probabilistic beliefs about the future rather than straightforward beliefs (the belief that some future success is possible as opposed to an outright belief in a successful future outcome) and as such is more realistic than optimism;<sup>18</sup> (iv) the virtue of hope as a practical disposition is inherently action-oriented such that shared hopes entail acting in solidarity with others;<sup>19</sup> (v) the virtue of hope not only supports but can constitute courageous action; (vi) hope is a virtue ‘insofar as it contributes to other characteristics that we believe to be human excellences.’<sup>20</sup>

Can we conclude on this basis that Kadlac’s ‘naturalistic’ account of hope as a virtue meets the criteria for good hope? If we can, it seems we must also acknowledge that such a response does not take us far. We are held back by Kadlac’s repeated caveat as to which hopes are and are not virtuous. Taking Kadlac’s ‘natural hope’, we are left not with a positive account of the virtue of hope but with the conclusion that any given hope *might be* virtuous. The substantive questions about the nature of

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<sup>15</sup> Kadlac, ‘Virtue of Hope’, 342.

<sup>16</sup> Kadlac, ‘Virtue of Hope’, 342.

<sup>17</sup> Kadlac, ‘Virtue of Hope’, 342.

<sup>18</sup> Consider the difference between ‘I believe it is possible that I will win’ and ‘I believe that I will win’. The former Kadlac takes as hope, the latter as optimism. ‘Virtue of Hope’, 343.

<sup>19</sup> Kadlac, ‘Virtue of Hope’, 349-350.

<sup>20</sup> Kadlac, ‘Virtue of Hope’, 342.

reality and human excellence ('the goodness of the ends for which one might hope or the truth of the beliefs on which one's hope is predicated') that Kadlac brackets in his approach are not ultimately avoided but deferred.<sup>21</sup> If it is possible to lose sight of the distinctive value of hope by focusing all our attention on the object(s) of good hope, Kadlac's account highlights the problem of failing to devote any attention to hope's object. Bracketing consideration of the object of hope inevitably makes it hard to move beyond the realm of the hypothetical when it comes to the value of subjective, enacted hope. Sooner or later, we will need to be specific in our account of human flourishing and recognise that the attempt to exclude ultimate value-claims reduces human flourishing to reported wellbeing: a thin and ultimately elusive version of happiness by numbers.

## **2. A theological virtue**

Moving from current hope research to the virtue of hope as a constructive proposal has left us with the need for an account of the virtue of hope that specifies good hope in terms of both its objective end(s) and subjective practice. It is here that the Augustinian virtue of hope offers a way forward, or such is the argument of this thesis. Recalling the analysis of Augustinian hope in chapter 2, we might summarize the virtue of hope as *faithfully waiting for the future of love*. Taking 'waiting' as a fundamental form of human (in)activity (incorporating watchfulness, patient endurance, humble attention) that requires the full commitment of human agency and the mutual support of human community, such hope has intrinsic and instrumental value. It is itself a form of love, representing a commitment to the future good of creation, and the virtue that orients life forwards towards the ultimate fulfilment of

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<sup>21</sup> Kadlac, 'Virtue of Hope', 338.

love. It is on account of the created givenness of human life and its eschatological fulfilment in relation to the love of God as its highest good that such hope (inseparably related to faith and love) is counted a virtue. Unlike Kadlac's unspecified 'natural hope' this Augustinian account is unabashedly specific, presupposing a particular theological relation to God and others as conducive to human flourishing. Of course, this theological interpretation of human existence and the human good lays claim to a universality that clearly isn't matched by anything like universal acceptance. However, it should be noted that its confessional basis does not oppose but underlies its connection with life beyond the church. Not only can it be tested for internal consistency, it can be weighed for plausibility against our ordinary human experience of being in the world.

We will engage some important objections below but it is important to highlight here that a turn to hope as a theological virtue is not necessarily sectarian. It depends on the theology. In the case of Augustinian theology, the fundamental relation of hope to humility and to love undermines any pathogenic sectarianism. What is more, considered in relation to common human life, Augustinian hope is deeply realistic. It relates to, and makes sense of, the experience of life in time as out of our hands: freely given and yet incomplete. It makes sense of the presence of love and yet also its absence, of growth and decay, of fulfilment and also of suffering, of harmony and conflict, of wonder and terror. And it offers a way through our present (joyful *and* painful) experience of tension to a future resolution that we can commit to unreservedly and for our good.

In addition to its realism, it is rich as a subjective account of hope. The virtue of hope is lived in practices that are enacted and cultivated in the liturgical life of the church community, even as they have potential to be taken up, in analogous ways, more widely. These include—as specific practices of hope—prayer, confession,

baptism, communion, fasting, feasting, thanksgiving, forgiveness, friendship, deeds of mercy, humble service, hospitality, patient endurance, words of encouragement, commitment to justice, submission to ruling authorities, faithfulness in marriage, education of children, learning Scripture, communal remembrance, care for the ill and elderly, burial and commemoration of the dead. When these are intentionally undertaken as practices of hope they not only exemplify but strengthen the virtue that they embody. Importantly, this experiential argument for the plausibility of hope does not negate but relies on its intelligible coherence as an objective account. Here hope's relation to the doctrines of God, creation and redemption, explored in this thesis, comes into view: hope is oriented towards the eschatological love of God, who brought all things into being in creation and providentially guides them to their fulfilment, bringing his creative purposes to their ordained end through his grace manifest in Christ. To be sure, this theological understanding has great depth and terminates in mystery (cf. Rom 11:33) but its paradoxes are not logical contradictions. It can be expressed intelligibly and defended in accord with its claim to truth.

If this theological turn in what was previously a more down to earth discussion of hope is jarring, it is important to recognise that what may seem to us like a natural and obvious separation of philosophical and theological hope is itself historically conditioned. If the objection entered here is that Augustinian hope is too theological to be accepted as a virtue in a secular society, it is answered by challenging the kind of separation of philosophy from theology that divides rather than merely distinguishes between their domains. Such has been the approach of this thesis. As outlined in the introduction, contemporary constructive research on hope tends to follow the modern separation of theology and philosophy, proceeding in two distinct camps. Philosophical and psychological proposals largely bracket ontological questions, engaging with the universal experience and practice of human hope.

Theological accounts are taken to have a restricted focus on particular commitments accessible by revelation, understanding hope as focused on the fulfilment of some particular divine promise(s) and so not relevant to broader discussions of hope as a universal human phenomenon. But must we accept this forced separation?

Christian hope has been related to philosophical hope from the preaching of the Apostles as recorded in the New Testament book of Acts. Their message presented the resurrection of Christ as simultaneously subverting and fulfilling the worship—and also the hope—of Greco-Roman philosophy (Acts 17:22-34; see *s.* 150). Augustine, I have argued, understood the relationship between philosophy and theology likewise, proposing a Christian philosophy of hope that saw in Christ the fulfilment of the classical pursuit of wisdom. What is more, hope was not a virtue in the classical world but was taken up by the church, and passed into society, as a theological virtue in light of the resurrection of Christ. This theological import of hope in Western intellectual history suggests that the strong separation of philosophical and theological hope in contemporary academic research is in need of warrant.

Of course, arguing for the historical importance of theological understandings of hope is not the same as arguing for the present potential of hope as a theological virtue. If the contemporary discussion of hope has moved in a different direction from that which theological considerations can engage then the importance of theological and philosophical integration can be restricted to the level of historical observation. This returns us to the six criteria of good hope that we outlined as requisite characteristics according to contemporary Anglophone hope research. How does our Augustinian understanding of hope as a theological virtue meet them? We will take each in turn:

The first desideratum relates to the scope of good hope in line with the modern commitment to universality: hope must be universally accessible in a way that relates to the universality of hope in human experience. Here Augustine's doctrine of creation and its eschatological fulfilment comes into view, providing an understanding of the universality of hope in human experience. The relationship of sin to creation, on the one hand, and grace to creation, on the other, also provides an objective framework for distinguishing 'good' hope from 'bad' as moral categories. The universal accessibility of hope that is present in creation is preserved by the universal call of grace (Rom. 10:13; *ench.* 2.7).

Second, in line with the down-to-earth concerns of modern inquiry and life, hope must relate to proximate and not only ultimate ends. Here, the concern with theological hope is that mundane hopes for life in this world are disregarded in favour of other-worldly hopes for life in the world to come. Given the contemporary desire for hope in the here-and-now, if theological hope simply refocuses our attention from earth to heaven, then turning to hope as a theological virtue would be to move outside the concerns of a discourse we are seeking to engage. The critique that contemporary accounts of hope bracket ultimate ontological concerns would simply be replicated on the opposite pole, bracketing practical considerations for the sake of an ultimate commitment to theological hope. Such a reactive response, however, is not necessary. The theological relation between creation and redemption, the latter aimed towards the fulfilment of creation's eschatological goal, means that the theological virtue of hope is not a way to escape from creation but the way that the temporal hopes for life in this world are properly ordered towards their eternal home.

Third, good hope must be resilient and rational, able to orient life through the many difficulties that modern humankind has yet to overcome (and many we have created for ourselves), yet in a way that remains rooted in reality and avoids wistful

escapism. This the theological virtue of hope meets by its relation to the cross and resurrection of Christ. The virtue of hope is the virtue that leans forward through present suffering towards a future glory that is awaited in the confidence of faith in Christ and on account of the work of the Holy Spirit. Hope enables rational resilience and is in turn cultivated in practice through difficulty.<sup>22</sup> The resurrection of Christ through death and his present possession of eschatological life transforms the kind of immanent theoretical and/or practical rationality that is used to evaluate hope's reliability in contemporary research. Hope is rational on theological premises as the virtue that aims life towards a future beyond the limits of the present order of existence and towards a reality of life, already present in Christ, that is simultaneously its fulfilment.

Fourth, good hope in an increasingly interconnected world must be responsive to the agency of others, providing a way to relate individual and communal hopes whilst maintaining the distinct integrity of both. The theological virtue of hope fulfils this in two ways. In the first place, it is responsive to God, habituating—especially through prayer and the liturgical ordering of time—a learned reliance on the reciprocal concurrence of divine and human agency. In the second place, it is responsive to the agency of other people. This is integral to its nature as the virtue of the church, aimed towards the fulfilment of the redemptive work of Christ and the self as a member of the body of Christ. The virtue of hope is thus both situated within and actively situates individuals within the history of the church community, where each is particularly valued and gifted with a role to play in reciprocal relations of love.

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<sup>22</sup> In his development of Augustinian hope, Aquinas includes difficulty in his definition, describing the object of hope (first a passion then a theological virtue) as 'a future good, difficult but possible to obtain'. *ST*, II-I, 40.1; II-II, 17.1.

Fifth, hope must empower and not negate human agency. Here Nietzsche's opposition to theological hope as infantilizing looms large in the kind of hope that is the concern of contemporary inquiry. If it is of the essence of hope as a theological virtue that it follows the way of humility, laying down the efficacy of the self's own agency in order to place hope in God, both as means and end, it seems that Augustinian hope must inevitably come into conflict with 'good hope' at this point. The contrast, however, is not as straightforward as it might first seem. The relation of humility and hope that characterises the Augustinian theological virtue does not evacuate human agency from the virtue of hope. What is laid down by hoping in the way of humility is not effective agency but the pride that assumes control, eschews gratitude, and allows no room for grace. In fact, what the theological virtue of hope provides is a way of navigating the perils of 'wilful' and 'wishful' hope (identified by McGeer) not by strictly following a route between them but by moving beyond them, learning to live a life of joyful confession and thanksgiving that accords with and furthers the liberated agency that is the gift of God's grace.

Sixth, good hope should not be isolated from other aspects of moral life, but integrated together with the composition of positive traits that together comprise well-formed character. This criterion represents the late modern desire for holistic life and here theological hope accords with a transvaluation of the standard by its commitment to the fullness of life exemplified in Christ. Operating together with faith and love, the three theological virtues do not displace but structure and characterize the formation of all the virtues that are marks of a flourishing human life. Situated within the history of creation and redemption through faith in Christ, hope is prevented from the parallel and disintegrating dangers of pride and despair. As the servant of love—love of God and all things in God—hope is preserved from egotistical visions to lead the ethical life to its beatific fulfilment.

I argued above that Kadlac's 'naturalistic' virtue of hope met the criteria for good hope in a minimal way, but was limited by its failure to engage substantive questions about the nature of reality and human excellence. Bracketing consideration of the object(s) of good hope left his account under-specified. Surely arguing for good hope as a theological virtue, even if it is possible to make a case that it plausibly relates to the criteria for good hope in the way outlined above, could be criticized as making the opposite error. In specifying good hope with reference to a single ultimate object does not the theological virtue of hope introduce a restrictive particularity? Does it not also move the focus from earth to heaven—from this-worldly to other-worldly concerns—in a way that makes hope a virtue of escape rather than engagement with life in the here and now? We will take these concerns in turn.

*i. Particularity: Every hope needs a home*

The theological particularity of the Augustinian account of hope developed in this thesis is alien to the secular plurality that is the sensibility of late modernity, attracting the charge of sectarianism. Whilst this concern should be taken seriously, not least given the way that theological hope(s) has been historically invoked to further sectarian violence, a blanket dismissal is too quick, overlooking the reality that every account of hope is particular in some way. As I have already argued, the question is not *whether* an account of hope assumes or entails particular philosophical assumptions, but *what* particular philosophical—or theological—assumptions it entails. This recognition opens the way for inquiry into hope that actively engages the assumptions that underlie different accounts.

Following this approach, the particular Augustinian account developed in this thesis can be understood as carrying with it its own *benevolent* theological

universalism grounded in the given goodness of creation.<sup>23</sup> Hope is not for a restricted group or class, it is for all people, a reality to which the heterogeneity of the church—a microcosm of redeemed humanity—is called to bear witness. Its plausibility in late modern society is maintained by the fact that this universalism is one that subverts the dynamics of power and violence through humility and love. This becomes clear as we consider what it means for the church to be the home of hope in the world and for the world. If hope is rightly understood in the first place as the hope of the church, it is not a hope that the church can control or constrain. The second aspect is as important as the first: as the hope of redeemed humanity, the church's hope always reaches beyond itself to the world. It is to be communicated in word and deed beyond the church's bounds, which open outwards in love.

The first aspect—the church as the home of hope—brings the particularity of the church's hope into view. If this particularity underlies the status of hope as a virtue, it is important to recognize that the church is home to hope as itself *in via*, on

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<sup>23</sup> Augustinian *benevolent* universalism is introduced here as a third way to Raymond Tallis' classification of benign and malign universalisms. In *Enemies of Hope*, Tallis writes in support of the ongoing application of the Enlightenment's vision of rational human progress, arguing that 'the kind of applied reason and justice that the Enlightenment thinkers worked for, enable us to separate benign from malign universalism; a malign *laissez-faire* cultural relativism—of the kind convenient for the arms salesman who doesn't mind to whom he sells his weapons . . . —from a benign respect for the variety of human life.' On Tallis's model, human reason discerns 'a hierarchy of values'. 'A more basic value (for example, valuing life) is given priority over a less basic one, since the former is a necessary condition for the choice of the latter; we should give priority to those values which interfere least with the expression of other values.' The universal principle which allows Tallis to resist a problematic form of cultural relativism is provided by the brute fact of 'existence': 'Despite being good relativists, we can still retain a universal principle which is derived from the fact that existence is a *necessary* condition for us to enjoy (or not enjoy) the *accident* of being part of one culture rather than another. There is, in other words, the pure fact of one's existence that has logical, ontological, existential priority over one's status as a member of a particular culture.' Raymond Tallis, *Enemies of Hope: A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 374, 374, 370. It is my contention that Tallis' precondition of rational existence, delivering passively benign universalism is, in fact, a diminished, de-theologized derivative of the precondition of Augustinian universalism, which is created goodness, delivering an actively benevolent universalism of love.

the way to its fulfilment. The church's hope, along with the selfhood of its members, is always a work in progress. Necessarily adjoined to epistemic and moral humility, it is habituated liturgically through practices of prayer and corporate worship that grow the virtue of hope towards the *eschatological* perfection of love. These practices bring the life of the church and her members within the identity of the 'I' of the Psalms, training the church to bear patiently with defeat through lament in order to share ultimately in victory and praise.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, understanding the 'I' corporately highlights the fact that the church represents a bonded community of hope, where the hopes of the strong can carry the weak through despair. The spiritual unity between believers and the interrelation of the theological virtues make it possible for hope to be mediated through the love of the members of the body and ultimately the love of Christ as her head.

The agapic nature of the church's internal bonds, by which hope is shared and the community is built, is also important in the way the ecclesial community meets—or should meet—the world. This is the second aspect: the church as the home of hope *in and for the world*. Bonded by love, the church is a bounded community whose edge should be met by those on the outside not as a barrier but a bridge to the God from whom its love flows. In this way, the church is called not only to be the home of hope in the world but *for* the world. The church's commitment to its own hope should work out in a life of witness to the hope of human flourishing through works of love, and also in opposition to despair through words of testimony.<sup>25</sup> On the church's own

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<sup>24</sup> The liturgical singing of Psalms has been historically central to the worship and formation of the church. For a contemporary proposal that ethical life be shaped by the Psalter see Brian Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> The church will not be able to persuade the world to hope on the world's terms since such would deny the inseparable relation of hope to faith in Christ. However, the church can offer a reasoned defence of its own hope and provide accessible and compelling arguments for those beyond the church not to give up hope, finding reason in the universal experience of created goodness to oppose the

terms, prayer is not to be restricted to the concerns of the community but extends to the present needs and future flourishing of the society in which it is found. The church's love, likewise, is properly extended beyond the church to stranger and alien, who are to be welcomed with hospitality, and served in humility. Furthermore, the church (and her individual members in various positions in society) is to further the public good in a way that is recognizable as good to society at large. In these ways, the church's particular hope—if the church acts consistently with its own theological commitments—should reach outwards as it reaches forwards in love. This is a hope that is good for the world.

Of course, we should not rush past the significance of the 'if'. The failure of the church to act in line with its own historical confessional convictions, as a community of hope in and for the world, presents an understandable reason for many to seek hope elsewhere. For the church's hope to be plausible in our time, it must be enacted in love. If the church is to be known for its hope, there must be a concomitant commitment to a renewal of its worship, so to enact the benevolent universalism that accords with its confession in active love for God and neighbour. So acting in love in line with its hope, the church, even where resisted and opposed, should be recognizable as a welcome home for the poor and marginalised, the stranger and alien beyond its bounds. This kind of love would serve, according to the testimony of the church's own teaching and the example of situations where it is in fact the case, to make the church a hopeful presence, a light pointing to a future of love in an often troubled and fragmented world.

Importantly, the argument developed here for the particularity of the church's hope does not negate the possibility of similar practices of hope being employed to

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irrationality of ultimate despair.

sustain hope in the world. The Augustinian relation between love, hope and humility, for example, and the strong distinction of hope from optimism, suggests practices that de-centre the self as the way to a more hopeful mode of being. Practicing endurance in suffering, commitment to public goods, attention to the gratuitous order of nature, gratitude for human kindness, friendship to others in community, and sacrificial love are all examples of practices that our Augustinian account would have cause to link to increased levels of reported hope (or diminished despair). Whilst, on Augustine's terms, such practices can only simulate a virtue that relies on grace and not only gratuity, they can still, legitimately if only partially, be affirmed. In accord with Augustine's own experience of his hope in material things giving way to hope in the fulfilment of wisdom and then finally to hope in Christ, it is possible (for individuals and societies) to move closer to and further from the truth. What is more, in accord with Monica's experience, the church is rarely able to discern the progress of God's hidden work.

On this understanding, the church does not cease to be and become the home of hope by the practice of hope in the world. In fact, as the body of Christ being conformed to its head, the church has the important responsibility of exemplifying hope for the world in order to draw the world from the practice of 'vain' hope to 'true' hope. These Augustinian categories are not intended as a claim to the church's moral purity over against the world but as a theological and eschatological distinction based on the ultimate *telos* of the virtue of hope being found in Christ. Without faith in Christ hope is ultimately 'vain' since the fulfilment of hope is denied even as practices of hope are developed. This returns us to the nature of Augustine's departure from the classical search for wisdom, which—seeking the homeland but not knowing the way—was not finally attainable apart from Christ. Augustine's own path to hope was to the fulfilment of this quest through baptism into Christ's body. Following after

him, practices of hope in the world that further human wellbeing in the present are surely not to be disdained or dismissed, but human hopes do ultimately need to be led home. Learning the art of good hope by resisting its wilful and wishful excesses is not a process that should be written off as theologically dubious. Instead it can be brought under Christ and led to its fulfilment.

ii. *Escapism: 'On earth as it is in heaven'*

It is the direction of Augustinian hope towards an otherworldly eschaton that is the focus of a second concern: Augustinian hope orients life towards a heavenly fulfilment and so—it is assumed—is of limited earthly use. To reach for hope as a theological virtue in late modernity is not only to turn the modern world back but also to turn our back on the modern world, which is often self-defined in terms of its quest for earthly hope by human progress.<sup>26</sup>

The first step in challenging this objection is troubling its assumptions that modern progress is legitimately self-authenticating and that heavenly hope is necessarily in opposition to earthly goods. Its force rests on a particular conception of the relation between immanent (historical) hope(s) and transcendent (supra-historical) hope. This distinction itself is not controversial, of course. The matter of importance is how the two kinds of hope are taken to relate. The theological virtue of hope orders earthly hopes, as penultimate, towards the ultimate horizon of union with God in the

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<sup>26</sup> 'We moderns are superior to the ancients—both pagan and Christian—in our ability to imagine a utopia here on earth. The eighteenth- and nineteenth century witnessed, in Europe and North America, a massive shift in the locus of human hope: a shift from eternity to future time, from speculation about how to win divine favour to planning for the happiness of future generations.' Richard Rorty, 'Failed Prophecies, Glorious Hopes', *Constellations* 6:2 (1999), 221. The focus in this section is on the modern charge of escapism as it meets Augustinian theology. A postmodern version of the same accusation stands against both theological and progressive historical hope. However, insofar as it rests on a one-eyed interpretation of modernity, into which orthodox Christian theology is collapsed, such post-modern criticism struggles to locate a genuine target. See e.g. Miguel De La Torre, *Embracing Hopelessness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

beatific vision. Earthly life is directed towards a heavenly fulfilment—the eschatological union of heaven and earth—that is the true goal of history. However, the modern world’s historical turn and related scepticism concerning extra-empirical knowledge makes this conception a threat. The worry is that by ordering the knowable to the inherently mysterious, reason is held captive under the guardianship of religion. By ordering the earthly to the heavenly, the primacy of human reason and the value of historical life seems to be diminished. When Moltmann accuses Augustinian hope of being ‘ahistorical’ it is this concern that he has in view.

The genius of Kant’s account of hope is the way he brings the mystery of ultimate hope to heel, placing ultimate hope, along with religion, under rational control. Where theological hope threatened to bring history and human reason under the power of an unknowable God and unknowable future, Kant reversed the apophatic dynamic and claimed the unknowable as the servant of what could be rationally known. After all, his approach assumes, the only way to talk rationally of an unknowable God and unknowable future is insofar as they relate to rational knowledge (a relation Kant famously found by way of his moral philosophy). This Kantian move continues to control late modern apophatic conceptions of ultimate hope, which is reduced to its practical utilitarian purpose.

If the basic Kantian move underlying modern hope (in various forms) seems to reduce the heavenly future to its this-worldly effect, it is also far from the Augustinian understanding in which the theological virtue of hope orders life towards its fulfilment in the eschatological union of heaven and earth. This future is the consummation of created reality and so ultimate goal of history, which is found in the fulfilment of the worship of God that is coterminous with human flourishing (*doctr. chr.* 1.41). On this view, the mystery that is involved in the knowledge of God and the ultimate future is not a problem to be solved by force of reason. It is a reality—bound

up in the distinction between Creator and creature—that is to be acknowledged in life-fulfilling worship (*conf.* 1.1, cf. Rom. 11:33-36). Human reason is misused and distorted if taken as a capacity for liberation determined apart from God. It properly belongs within divine revelation of history’s meaning and purpose, receiving its proper (and properly liberating) limits in accord with the divine mandate bestowed on humanity—as priests of creation—to order reality liturgically to its divine end.

Of course, understood as an activity of devotion to God and not in the historical terms of its human effect, worship can only be classed, on Kantian assumptions, as a waste of time. Hope that begins and ends in worship is inevitably world denying. But, again, why must we take Kant’s modern framework as a given? If worship is understood as a formative liturgical pre-enactment of history’s goal, its effect in the modern world is actually to re-situate life within a different framework and with different future from the kind of foreclosed historical fulfilment that modern progress aims at. If it is a ‘waste of time’ on the terms of this world, where the clock is ticking and every moment is precious, it is also a witness to time beyond time, where temporal existence as the flow of time to the past—time, but for memory, experienced as loss—is replaced by a new form of temporal existence in an eternal life where the past is fully healed and fulfilment ever present.

In orienting life by the virtue of hope towards this future—praying ‘on earth as it is in heaven’—life in this world is not denied but most fully affirmed and led onwards to its fulfilment through Christ. As Augustine spells out in *Enchiridion* 30.115, of the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, three relate to ‘eternal gifts and the remaining four to temporal ones, which however are necessary for acquiring the eternal gifts’. Hope for the fulfilment of God’s kingdom does not negate but orders worldly goods. The concern that this is necessarily ‘world-denying’ is misplaced. It is valid only on a view where life on heaven is opposed to life on earth. For Augustine,

heaven and earth are not in opposition but constituent parts of God's creation intended for a glorious eschatological union. It is sin and not life that heavenly hope actively denies. Properly understood, heavenly hope allows earthly love to come into its own.

Augustinian Christology is important here. Since Christ brings the gracious fulfilment of creation, he embodies both the fulfilment of the Old Testament revelation of God (*cat. rud.* 4.8) and also of the philosophical pursuit of wisdom, which perceives much truth but does not recognise that the fulfilment of wisdom comes by the humble way of Christ (*conf.* 7.20.26). The denial of self and of the world that the theological virtue of hope brings with it is a denial not of life or of learning but of the sin that corrupts the first and constrains the second. The aim of such denial is the affirmation of love towards which life and learning are ordered in Christ by the way of virtue that is the way of love. In fact, it is the theological virtue of hope that allows for love to come into its own *in history* by ordering life towards the fulfilment of love in the eschaton. Immanent horizons of hope are not nullified by eschatological hope in a way that would deny the goodness of creation since for Augustine the goodness of creation is the goodness of the Creator, life in whose presence is life in the consummate created goodness of the eschatological City. This is the object of ultimate hope, speakably unspeakable in its goodness, that is, speakable in words whose meaning is outstripped but not negated (*doctr. chr.* 1.13-14). As Augustine says, 'a place of happiness beyond all telling' (*en. Ps.* 119.1; cf. *ciu.* 19.4). Mundane hopes that are *ultimately* vain apart from Christ can be re-ordered through their re-enchantment towards this end. Leaving behind (escaping from) the idolatry of materialism, the re-ordering of human hope accompanies personal repentance in conversion and baptism, worked out in the sanctifying of the self within the body of Christ.

The focus of this thesis has been conceptual and theological rather than political. I have sought to develop an Augustinian theology of hope that can be developed into a theology of political hope.<sup>27</sup> Of course, the focus of this project should not be taken to diminish the importance or potential of the theological virtue of hope for public life in late modernity.<sup>28</sup> A significant contemporary application of Augustinian hope is in re-imposing and clarifying the nature of the ultimate horizon towards which all hopes are ordered. Human political hopes can be relieved of the burden of ultimacy that they have come to carry—but been unable to bear—in a de-theologized conception of public life and practice of public discourse. Since both the modern church and world have accommodated to this cramped conception of politics (in practice if not in theory) a theology of public hope speaks powerfully to both. When it comes to the church, the virtue of hope offers an alternative to the anxiety that underwrites both accommodation and assertion, challenging the church's adoption of the methods of worldly power as an absence of hope and a denial of its future.

Beyond the church, Augustinian hope has a critical role to play in distinguishing hope from optimism and breaking politics free from an unhelpful conceptual opposition between a politics of austerity on the one hand and audacity on the other. What is more, by placing historical hopes in context and re-connecting political hopes with their theological hinterlands, a theology of political hope is able

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<sup>27</sup> Such an Augustinian theology of political hope would resist collapsing theology into politics as is arguably the case in Moltmann's 'political theology of hope'. Cf. Charles Mathewes' distinction between a 'public theology' and a 'theology of public life'. Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> The work of Mittleman and Lamb is evidence of such potential. See Mittleman, *Hope in a Democratic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Lamb, 'Aquinas and the Virtues of Hope: Theological and Democratic', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44:2 (2016), 300-32; *A Commonwealth of Hope: Virtue, Rhetoric and Religion in Augustine's Political Thought*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2014.

to challenge the plausibility of political hope as ultimate. In our current context this is a necessary deflation, preserving party politics from the unattainable dreams and visions that ferment dissatisfaction, disempower constructive engagement in civic life, and inevitably lead to disenchantment. If a theology of political hope can help to protect the space for constructive democratic political life, it also provides a source for the kind of citizens needed to fill it. At a time when important liberal values of tolerance and equality are widely perceived to be in danger of collapse, Augustinian hope points us beyond politics to a source of love from where such values receive their meaning and power and a universal horizon of ultimate love towards which those values can be ultimately fulfilled.

### **3. What may I hope for?**

This thesis began with Delbanco's contention that the centre of modern hope has moved from God to nation to self, a path without a clear future which inevitably turns hope into a question, already anticipated by Kant, 'What may I hope for?' I have sought to avoid a straightforwardly declensionist reading of this transition whilst arguing that the Augustinian understanding of hope as a theological virtue can point a way forward. Inevitably, turning to, and developing the theology of Augustine attracts the accusation of anachronism: surely, to turn the modern world back to Augustine is to seek to live in the past, a nostalgic attempt to retrieve a past that never was for a future that never can be.

The argument I have advanced that modern hope is a diminished and distorted derivative of Augustinian hope answers this objection in two ways. Firstly, in emphasizing the derivative nature of modern hope, I am seeking to highlight how the values of Augustine and modernity are, in a significant sense, aligned. The rational self of Kant's philosophy cannot escape from its history. Kant's concern for reason,

freedom, and universal morality—like the Revolutionary values of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*—do not emerge from a rational vacuum but from the Christian values of the Augustinian tradition. They are borrowed capital, belonging most truly to the church, which is (or ought to be) committed to them in their archetypal form. The virtue to which the modern world—at its best—aspires was exemplified historically in Christ as head in order to be fulfilled in the eschatological future of Christ as head and body (Christ and his church) in the future. To bring the modern world back to Augustine can therefore be understood as encouraging the modern world to greater faithfulness to itself (its self) and its own commitments. That Augustine’s understanding of hope was prematurely dismissed from modern discussions adds strength to the case. What modern understandings of hope have sought in departing from Augustine and his church can, in fact, be better secured by consciously developing Augustine’s thought and by participating in the church’s future.

However, even if this line of argument is historically accurate and theoretically coherent, it hardly seems plausible from the perspective of a secular late modern society. The second line of argument against the anachronism charge draws on Charles Taylor’s understanding of our secular age as inevitably contested, unsettling its self-coherence in order to look to a future beyond modern disenchantment. The identification of modern hope as a *diminished* derivative of Augustinian hope is significant here. Modern hope, history has made clear, lacks the stability of the theological virtue from which it departed. As a consequence, the late modern self is forever seeking rest. Apart from God, the experience of modern humanity is one of dislocation from the self, world, and time, which are truly known within the distinction of creation from Creator and practiced according to the

theological virtues of faith, love, and hope.<sup>29</sup> This understanding rebuts the anachronism charge by dethroning digital humanity and relativizing (not dismissing) modernity's *chronos* within an Augustinian understanding of time as ordered towards the City of God. Modernity's progress is not denied outright but transformed in line with its re-ordering towards the telos of humanity, that is, towards the fulfilment of union with Christ in the eschaton. The self in isolation has not the power to successfully determine its own future and so is not a reliable centre of hope. The pursuit of hope that the modern self is thus bound to undertake is inevitably configured socially in relation to some kind of nation, and theologically, in relation to some sort of god. There is much that can be said about the practice of good hope in the here-and-now, but, in the end, the question 'What may I hope for?' is answered by a prior question: 'Who, or what, do you worship?'

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<sup>29</sup> See Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

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