


# Just war theory and scapegoat mechanism: An analysis of *missio Dei* and social order

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**Dates:**

Received: 30 Sept. 2024

Accepted: 27 Jan. 2025

Published: 11 Mar. 2025

**How to cite this article:**

Baleng, G.T., 2025, 'Just war theory and scapegoat mechanism: An analysis of *missio Dei* and social order', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81(1), a10262. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10262>

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This article examined Augustine's just war theory through René Girard's scapegoat mechanism, as posited in his theory of mimetic desire. Augustine, in his development of just war theory, adopted a realist approach to justify the ethical criteria for judging the morality of conflict. Just war theory, in its historical form, interpreted as a positive rule of action based on just war principles that were developed over time. Therefore, through a comparative approach, this article argued the rationality of modern warfare and violence on the notion of the surrogate victim, which is necessary for social order and the formulation of cultures, as posited by Girard. In his corpus, Girard highlights the role of scapegoating and victimisation in the process of unifying a community. Thus, a comparative analysis of just war theory and the scapegoat mechanism can be developed to study the conditions for peace, religious liberty and social cohesion. This article discusses the following points: (1) the modern relevance of just war principles; (2) the effects of scapegoat mechanisms in modern societies and their impact on social order and political discourse; and (3) the role of *missio Dei* in the context of warfare and violence.

**Contribution:** This article contributes to a comprehensive study of moral philosophy through the thoughts of Augustine and Girard. The convergence between violence, war, peace and justice is studied through anthropology and religious cultural lens. Arguably, this process has the potential to develop an empirical framework to study war and violence acts in our modern polarised world. Furthermore, it considers the ideal praxis for *missio Dei* in the context of social order and the common good in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Augustine; Girard, just war; scapegoat; moral philosophy; anthropology; violence; social order.

## Introduction

The theory of just war can be traced back as far as Cicero and Augustine in their respective philosophical, theological and political orientations. According to Weithman (2001:234), '[t]hough Augustine did not draw his own political views together into a coherent whole, subsequent generations of readers have seen unity and power in his political thought'. He nonetheless, developed three just war principles (just cause, legitimate authority and right intentions) that overtime became the foundation for scholarship to develop a systematic theory of just war for the betterment of a political realm.

In the year 410 AD, King Alaric of the Vandals changed the cultural landscape of the Middle Ages through the capture of the city of Rome, which led to the subsequent collapse of the entire Roman Empire. In response, Augustine the bishop of Hippo developed a just war theory as a framework for morality and divine authority. Thus, the aim of a just war theory according to Augustine, was to correct the inevitable sin of humanity. While the framework of his just war theory emphasised divine sanction, the current interpretations focus on legal and moral accountability in warfare.

Therefore, any attempt to study Augustine's just war theory must be developed in consideration of his understanding of natural law and anthropology, common to all descendants of Adam. Moreover, the comparison between Augustine and Girard will allow us to see how continuity of thought is prevalent among different cultures throughout history. Girard studied violence in religion through the lens of anthropology and subsequently created an alternative praxis of

**Note:** The manuscript is a contribution to the themed collection titled 'Mission and Vulnerability', under the expert guidance of guest editors Prof. Lukwikilu Mangay and Prof. Lygunda Fohle.

religious and social ethics. In *Violence and the Sacred*, he sets a framework for cultural theory by providing an anthropological interpretation of the sacred in myths and rituals. Conversely, he clarifies that sacrifice deals with humankind, and it is in human terms that we must attempt to comprehend it (Girard 1986:95).

Similarly, in book 15, chapter 4 of the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2008:419), Augustine advocates for just war based on his negative perspective of humanity. In hindsight, Augustine developed a framework for ethical and moral conduct as an operative norm of warfare based on his dual aspect of human nature and divine plan. Consequently, in the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2008), Augustine unfolds a series of questions about social justice and how it can be structured throughout this book. Emphasising this view, Brooks and Murphy (2011) asserted the following:

The capacity to choose either good or evil is part of being human. Adam, the first human, made that choice in Eden. Hence, moral evils in the world are the product of the fact that God granted humans the power to choose evil. Augustine documents these evils in history during the first part of his monumental *City of God*. (p. xxxii)

However, how can we contrast and compare between good and evil in Augustine's just war theory and Girard's concept of scapegoating in his anthropological studies? Girard's (2013) concept of scapegoating is rooted in what he calls mimetic rivalry, in his analysis of fundamentally mimetic human behaviour. Thus, the foundations of human violence and social conflict are inherited human desires for the same object.

For Augustine, the negative aspect of human nature was centred on his concept of original sin, which led him to establish an ontological condition of human existence. In studying the doctrine of man, Augustine explored the nature of humanity throughout his concept of original sin since Adam's fall. He argued the fall not only as a fall from grace but also as a fall from Adam's true self. He provided a descriptive interpretation of the fall as a double death. Therefore, the subsequent result of the original sin corrupted the relationship between humans and God. Moreover, human nature cannot reform outside God's unmerited grace. In summary, Augustine was convinced that humanity is in a state of malfunction outside God's presence.

On *grace and free will* (Augustine of Hippo 1955, book 1, chapter 4), he, moreover, disregards the motive of murder as justifiable even for any good intentions. Rightfully so, he asserts that the act of murder is always evil. His interlocutor, Evodius, goes further, asserting that even stolen life or property does not justify taking a life, because God alone is the true owner and source of all that we claim to possess. Thus, his just war theory is within the context of his moral philosophy and natural law, where he advocates the concept of the supreme good over evil.

He, nonetheless, recognised the pragmatism of distinguishing between natural law and eternal law, to establish provisions

for temporal law as practical law. In other words, Augustine transformed temporal practices into divine concepts to justify warfare. Thus, Augustine's position on existential and eschatological matters took a realist approach to dealing with the horrors associated with warfare. For Augustine, the visible and tangible reality was an earthly city defined by limited and temporal peace.

Moreover, White (1994), asserts that Augustine recognised that both Christians and pagans shared the same temporal space (political community thus cooperating in the fostering of a minimal level of law, order and peace) regardless of their differences in belief systems. Similarly, in book 19, chapter 17 of the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2013), Augustine takes no issue with such diversity of customs, laws and traditions whereby human peace is sought and maintained.

However, Brown (1967), in contrast asserts that:

It was Augustine's intentions in the *City of God*, to prove to his readers, that hints of a division between an 'earthly' and a 'heavenly' city could be seen throughout the history of the human race. (p. 319)

This dualism in my view should be interpreted as two distinct roles rather than a theocracy because Augustine recognised the ontological limitations of the two cities.

## Interpreting just war theory through the scapegoat mechanism

The relationship between violence and peace is a constant and continuous issue in the 21st century because of the evolving political tensions across the globe. In this context, Girard (2013:2–4) argued that Christianity is the best antidote to violence, which is frequently irrational. The irrationality of violence, moreover, reveals the human inherent injustice that he argues within the framework of his mimetic theory. In his book, *Things hidden since the foundation of the world*, Girard (1987b) posits the following:

In the science of man and culture today there is a unilateral swerve away from anything that could be called mimicry, imitation, or mimesis. And yet there is nothing, or next to nothing, in human behaviour that is not learned, and all learning is based on imitation. If human beings suddenly ceased imitating, all forms of culture would vanish. (p. 7)

Therefore, through mimetic desire, violence can be diverted to another object. This object of violence is an unprotected, marginal 'other': the scapegoat. It is useful for the regeneration of communal peace and the restoration of relationships. According to Schaefer (2015):

The term scapegoat comes from a biblical injunction telling the Hebrews to send a goat into the wilderness to symbolically carry away the people's sins. Similarly, the theory of scapegoating suggests that an individual, rather than accepting guilt for some failure, transfers the responsibility for failure to some vulnerable group. (p. 840)

According to Želinský et al. (2023):

Scapegoating refers to a social phenomenon whereby members of a majority group who feel frustrated or aggrieved take revenge on innocent people, usually members of vulnerable minority groups. According to social psychology, scapegoating occurs when the true source of anger goes unpunished, and people shift their aggression elsewhere... Scapegoating is thought to impel bursts of violence such as pogroms, lynchings, and even genocide. (p. 1)

Moreover, Todorovska (2017:58) argues the scapegoat as the one person labelled as responsible for both the communal misfortunes and the necessary cure for such misfortunes. Through his sacrificial ritual, the communal relationships are amended and social cohesion is realised. 'In Utopian ideas explored in literary fiction and other forms of art, a victim, a scapegoat, is needed to "feed" the future bliss of the community' (Todorovska 2017:49).

Therefore, the violence found in scapegoating mechanism can be classified as objective based on Žižek's (2008) descriptive definition of social violence during the 2005 Paris riots. Žižek (2008:9) distinguishes between subjective and objective violence. In summary, he regards the latter as more perilous and pervasive as an underlying invisible ideological force that gives rise to subjective violence. He likens objective violence to 'dark matter' of physics and rightly argues that objective violence is in most cases normalised and overlooked; thus, in my view it becomes the oppressor's tool of oppression.

In a South African scenario, the practical example of objective violence can be traced back to the policy of apartheid, which turned into a 'dark cloud' hanging over the progress of black South Africans still to date. As a policy, apartheid was argued as a just cause and a normal stance to adopt in protecting the well-being of the overwhelmed white South African minorities who regard themselves as God's chosen people. According to Resane (2020):

For some Africans, the White people's God is cruel, merciless, and lacks a sense of empathy and sympathy with the marginalised masses. This God seems to be the God who sees 'white' only, not 'black'. He is the God of the privileged elite who command other people's public and private affairs. (p. 54)

Conversely, in the new dispensation, the now liberated black South African masses are perpetuating a similar brutal treatment through the constant xenophobic violence directed at fellow Africans living among us. It is as if the black South Africans are mimicking their former oppressors' behaviour to become the new oppressor. And although xenophobic violence as a phenomenology (lived experience) is brutal; xenophobia as an ideology is the worst evil of the two.

According to Theuns (2017:11), South Africa has recently experienced a spate of xenophobic attacks on non-South Africans. These were mainly citizens from other African countries living and working in the country. Moreover, Theuns (2017:11–12) points to research conducted by the Helen

Suzman Foundation on the perceptions of South Africans on non-South Africans. The interview concluded that:

- migrants are involved in crimes (62%)
- they take job opportunities away from South Africans (62%)
- they are culturally different (60%)
- they cheat South Africans, among others, through food prices (56%)
- they use free health services (55%)
- they take Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses (52%)
- they steal South African women (52%).

In this context, the scapegoat mechanism dictates that the local community unite in the act of executing violence against the specified enemy or rather the sacrificial victim who is accused of desiring the same things as the locals. This targeted violence is justifiable on the grounds that foreign nationals are responsible for the struggles and losses experienced by the community at large.

The presence of the foreign nationals is deemed an invasion of human rights and liberties; hence, they should be treated harshly for the misfortunes of the community at large. This is a blame game shifting in which former enemies in the form of a failed government and the affected community come together to perform a sacrificial ritual in the form of eliminating the targeted victim. The failures of the government to provide service deliveries are overlooked, as the sacrificed victim causes the inequalities and vulnerabilities experienced by the community. Thus, the elimination of the victim brings communal peace and the desired prosperity.

Girard (2013:1), in this context posits that, 'If sacrifice resembles criminal violence, we may say that there is, inversely, hardly any form of violence that cannot be described in terms of sacrifice'. He adds that, ... 'sacrifice and murder would not lend themselves to this game of reciprocal substitution if they were not in some way related'. His solution to this inherent injustice emphasises the importance of reflecting Christ's model of nonviolence and redemption to escape cycles of violence and create a foundation for peaceful coexistence. For Girard, Christianity illustrates the significance of humility in conflict resolution. In his earlier work, Girard (1987a) distinguished three different meanings of scapegoating: (1) biblical, (2) anthropological and (3) psychosocial. He further explains that:

Scapegoating enables persecutors to elude problems that seem intractable. But scapegoating must not be regarded as a conscious activity, based on a conscious choice. The very fact that it can be manipulated by people who understand its operation-politicians, for instance- supposes a lack of basic awareness in the passive subjects of such manipulation. Scapegoating is not effective unless an element of delusion enters into it. (p. 74)

In such a context of collective delusions, Girard (1987b), asserts:

What is true for culture as a whole is also true for every individual member of it. No one can do without a highly developed mimetic capacity in acquiring cultural attitudes-in situating oneself correctly within one's own culture. (p. 290)

Girard (1987b) considers the formation of cultures, social order and institutions based on mimetic theory.

In contrast to this view, Augustine justified his theory of war by suggesting that peace requires a sacrificial victim, often in the form of an outsider who desires the same liberties as us. According to Jay (1992:17), sacrifice is seen as a necessary act that brings a community together, and moreover, it separates them from threats. Jay (1992) writes:

Sacrifice joins people together in community, and, conversely, it separates them from defilement, disease, and other dangers. This opposition of joining and separating is so widespread that one of the clearest indications that a ritual killing is properly sacrifice is that it is part of a religious system of this kind. (p. 17)

Girard (2013:6) observes, 'Once we [*the community*] have focused attention on the sacrificial victim, the object originally singled out for violence fades from view. Sacrificial substitution implies a degree of misunderstanding'. He went on to say, 'The celebrants do not and must not comprehend the true role of the sacrificial act' (Girard 2013:7).

Similarly, wars are waged because of an outside threat to communal peace and prosperity. Brooks and Murphy (2011:xv) observe that, 'Augustine, initially embraced the common hope that God had chosen Rome to create a universal Christian Empire, with peace, justice, and the one true faith extending over the whole world'. It was for such a pacifist view that Augustine had developed his just war theory. His aim was to establish peace for the common good of a unified and universal Christian Empire. However, such a wish was untenable and the second best thing for Augustine was to develop just principles that can govern warfare. Delahunty and Yoo (2012) described Augustine's paradox for justifying war by positing the following:

A Christian could wage war when he did so not out of malice or hatred, but out of love of his enemy. War punished the wrong and prevented them from sinning again, rather than serving any desire for glory or revenge. St. Augustine's understanding of individual religious duty led him to a similar view of just war. War served the purpose of recovering lost rights, either those inflicted by another state or by its citizens. (p. 11)

Historically, the notion of peace and liberty is logically consistent with the scapegoat mechanism that eliminates rivalry. It is, as the adage implies, every man for himself, and God for all of us. To wage war to recover one's lost property is to discourage others from wanting what you possess. Thus, human desire lies at the centre of rivalry. How then does Girard's theory correlate with Augustine's theory of just war?

If we examine the mechanism of violence from both Girard's and Augustine's context, we notice that violence is a necessity

based on human survival. In the case of Augustine, Atkins and Dodaro (2004:xvii) assert that Augustine could not afford to neglect the question of violence, in practice or in theory, as it constituted the most urgent and the most fundamental problem of politics.

The same can be argued in the modern context, where violence is a part and parcel of capitalistic governments that thrive on the concept of world domination. Conversely, wars in the Middle Ages were fought to conquer land to expand one's territorial rule. In both contexts, scapegoating is a necessary mechanism that fuels and justifies violence. For this reason, Augustine emphasised that only a legitimate authority could wage war for the purposes of the common good and social order.

## Modern relevance of just war principles

The 21st-century scholarship is especially abundant in materials of warfare. In my opinion, this highlights the prevalence of warfare in modern societies. Moreover, this abundance of literature on warfare refers to theological considerations in the attainment of peace, liberty and social order. Modern theologians, in a continuity of thought from medieval theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas, envision humanity as living under a body of law constituted by God. According to Vorster (2015):

The just war tradition is a rich tradition that has been shaped by the teachings of Cicero, Aristotelian philosophy, medieval and Reformational Christian thought, natural law theory and modern nationalist Christianity. However, it seems that modern just war discourse has relinquished some of its earlier moral roots. (p. 56)

In developing just war principles, Augustine in book 19, chapter 7 of his *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2013), regarded three conditions that must be met for a war to be justifiable. A war must have a just cause, legitimate authority and right intentions. Over time, more principles have been added to establish a set of mutual obligations that govern both the moral aspect and the conduct of warfare once it gets waged.

For Augustine, wars are inevitable because of inherent human depravity. This hypothesis helped him to develop his just war theory as a political realist aiming for the common good, while expecting the worst. In my view, this approach has the balancing effect that a man in Augustine's leadership position could hope for. It has the potential for establishing peace and the common good that promote a political ethos that prioritises morality based not only on Scriptures but on everyday human experience.

Likewise, Weithman (2001:234) asserted that Augustine's political thought heavily relied on ethics, social theory, the philosophy of history, and, most importantly, psychology and theology. Moreover, a distinctive set of political views can be recovered from Augustine's corpus. According to Atkins and Dodaro (2004):



... we need to read his [Augustine's] letters and his sermons. Here we find Augustine reflecting on practical issues as they arise, as he answers a request, intercedes with an authority, debates with an opponent, or advises a friend. We also hear him encouraging, teaching and chastising his congregation from the pulpit in reaction to current events. (p. xii)

Thus, Augustine's letters and sermons constitute his loosely jointed political thought, which he had never assembled. It is in this context that we should approach his theory of just war as a form of political realism and to uncover what it means to be a moral self. According to Augustine's assertion *On nature and grace* (Augustine of Hippo 1978), we should not suppose that human nature cannot be corrupted by sin; instead, we should believe, from the inspired Scriptures that it is corrupted by sin. Our inquiry, therefore, should be on how this could have come about (Augustine of Hippo 1978:128).

From an anthropological perspective, just war theory can therefore be argued as a moral principle in response to human inherent sinfulness in relation to changing social and political contexts as war is inevitable. Such is the nature of man as Augustine posited in his *City of God against the Pagans* (Augustine of Hippo 2008). Therefore, through a comparative approach to Girard's cultural phenomena and Augustine's political realism, the aim of my research is to shed light on how understanding human nature can help us better understand modern concepts of war, peace and justice.

The following themes are also addressed: power, inequality and vulnerability. As a remedy to inherent human depravity, Augustine's political realism emphasised the importance of love and grace in guiding human behaviour and social order. He criticised the flawed nature of the 'City of Man', advocating for a commonwealth defined by love and charity as the criterion for peace and justice.

While examining Augustine's natural theology, Baleng (2024) observes that through mimesis, Augustine in his *Confessions* (Augustine of Hippo 2016), demonstrates, that true virtue and justice can be achieved through imitating the right role models, as humans are naturally imitative creatures. According to Atkins and Dodaro (2004):

... because Christ in Augustine's view was both divine and sinlessly human, we cannot simply imitate him. In the first place, we can never possess the virtues as fully as he does. Secondly, we can do so at all only by a process of conversion and continuous acknowledgement of our failures and dependence upon his justifying grace. Augustine, therefore, uses the apostles and martyrs as role-models for the Christian. (p. xvi)

It is on this point that I assert Augustine's just war principles as practical expressions of imitating the right models. By adopting a realist approach in his development of just war theory, Augustine observes the ethical setting in warfare by imitating moral principles, hoping that the just can prevail over the unjust. Thus, violence and war are only justifiable as a last resort when prohibiting things that threaten social order.

Wright (1965:727) asserts the importance of war as a necessity or convenience means to establish and maintain power and class within an elitist group. In this way, war should be waged after all other alternatives for achieving peace are exhausted. In hindsight, this highlights the tainted nature of humans as Augustine argued in his theory of original sin, which spread from Eve to Adam through mimetic behaviour. Therefore, war becomes a just cause to rectify our inherent human depravity that prevents us from seeing the common good in others.

In modernity, while just war principles provide a normative framework for analysing warfare, the polarisation of our cultures is too great to create a unified theory on this topic. This is indeed the point at which a discussion of war begins, and such a point is a test to human reason, virtue and moral principles. Moreover, because of the secular nature of our culture and world governments, the intentions of warfare are susceptible to evil forces. Thus, Christianity, the religion of love, is no longer the gold standard of justice and morality.

In addition to the polytheistic context of the 21st century, many secular governments are driven by profit as an unquenchable thirst for power. Wars in our current context are fought to perpetuate economic power and maintain the status quo of religious intolerance. As a result, the already marginalised become more vulnerable and *vice versa*. In the current context, Augustine's critique of the 'City of Man' truly reflects the inherent flaws of human governance rooted in self-love and domination, leading to systematic injustices and a failure to achieve the common good.

## Augustine's moral philosophy in his *City of God*

Augustine lived during a tumultuous period and experienced the first invasion of the Roman Empire. This experience according to Vorster (2015:56) fundamentally influenced Augustine's doctrine on just war. The pagans blamed Christianity for the fall of Rome, and this prompted Augustine to write the *City of God* as a defence against the criticism levelled against the Christian faith. Augustine presents the *City of God* as an answer to violence, inequality and the powers that be.

In book 19 of the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2013), Augustine grapples with the perennial philosophical question of what constitutes the supreme good in present life. In other words, what will make us truly happy in this present life. In the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2013), he adopts a human dualistic approach, not only like that of his former Manichean religion but also that of Varro. From Varro's dualistic approach, he concludes that human life is happiest when one enjoys all the goods of the body and soul. He describes virtue and intellect as the goods of the soul.

Thus, the dualism of the two cities alludes to the ethical setting of his political and ontological philosophy. In book 19

chapter 14, of the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2013), he contrasts between earthly peace and eternal peace. Augustine argued about God's commandment on loving God and one's neighbour as much as you love yourself. For Augustine, love becomes the highest of virtues and he developed his moral philosophy that transcends all temporal pleasures (Augustine of Hippo 2013).

To give weight to the argument that war is just, Augustine alludes to power and authority within the context of love for the other. Therefore, the burden of power and authority is to love your fellow man even in times of war. This points out the vulnerability of leadership and for Augustine, war was a question of morality and virtuous acts to those who had power. Recognising the vulnerability of leadership in *Letter 138 to Marcellinus* (Augustine of Hippo 1887), he concludes that peace is not sought for the purpose of stirring up war, but war is waged for the purpose of securing peace.

In book 19, chapter 14 of the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2013), Augustine described the different power structures through the Platonic hierarchy and the role of the Catholic Church as a representative of God on earth. Thus, his *City of God* can be interpreted as a clear distinction between the heavenly and the earthly. This dualistic approach cannot be helped, as Augustine demonstrated in his tale of two cities where humanity is driven by disordered mimetic desires.

## **missio Dei in the context of social order and the common good**

In 1952, the Willingen conference of the International Missionary Council argued that mission originates from the Triune God and, not necessarily from the church herself. Likewise, Augustine's concept of *missio Dei* emphasise the Trinitarian nature of God's mission on earth. Through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, temporal goods that form the basis for peace can be achieved. Such temporal peace is partial compared to the peace found in the 'City of God'.

Brooks and Murphy (2011:xxvii) describe these temporal goods as the most basic good of political life, such as law and order, in a well-functioning society. Augustine's doctrine of the state as a society of common good can be understood within the framework of a Platonic hierarchical structure. Such a structure comprises an ascending category of forms, whereby each form functions in its proper place. In *True religion* (Augustine of Hippo 2005), chapter 7, Augustine describes God as the first and highest essence of life and wisdom. Thus, in contrast, he modified Plato's theory of forms and placed God at the epitome as the source of all other forms. According to MacQueen (1973:76), Augustine views the material world as a perpetual clash between antithetical and irreconcilable principles.

Augustine stressed the necessity of God as an active and living agent for the common good of humanity. Unlike Plato's assertion of a Philosopher King as the ideal human

ruler in his *Republic* (Plato 2007), Augustine (Augustine of Hippo 2007:192) adopts an idealistic approach to his political philosophy and posits for a 'City of God' over a 'City of Man'. In *Letter 189 to Boniface* (Augustine of Hippo 1887), written in 418 AD, Augustine argued war as not a matter of choice but a matter of necessity, forced on us by the twisted dilemmas of a sinful world (ed. Holmes 1975:61).

Similarly, in book 1 of his treatises on the *Laws* (Plato 1934), Plato asserts that war is a teacher of courage, which, according to the Greeks, is the highest virtue of temperance. Therefore, the common denominator in Augustine's and Plato's assertions on war is our inherent sinful nature that makes war inevitable. Thus, for Augustine the only path to redemption is through Christ. As the first political realist, he concluded that striving for any form of justice in this material world is nothing but vanity of human wishes.

Thus, God's eternal law for Augustine is the highest form of our salvation as fallen beings. The ordered structure of his systematic thought meant that he shifted limits by scaling back on his expectations of material forms. Therefore, he advocated a metaphysical approach to theology inheriting the Platonic notion of hierarchical ordered structure. Consequently, Augustine formulated his concept of the 'City of God' as an antithesis of the 'City of Man'. Moreover, the nature and order of each city should be best understood in its category.

In the first chapters of books 14 and 15 of the *City of God* (Augustine of Hippo 2008:347; 413), Augustine describes the eschatology of the two cities. Those who live by faith and love are on a pilgrimage in this world and their ultimate ends are eternal joy and virtue. Conversely, those who conform to this world and live by the standards of falseness, lust for power and self-love, are destined for destruction.

MacQueen (1973:81) observes that by, adding the word 'God' in the title of his book, Augustine applies a criterion or selective principle that isolates for consideration one distinctive city from among the many that have existed in the past and will appear in the future. Augustine's eschatology postulates the antithesis between church and state. Thus, the gist of his concerns is mostly idealistic rather than utopian Rome.

Moreover, Augustine's distinction between the 'City of God' and the 'City of Man' laid the foundation for the schism of church and state as we have it to date. Brooks and Murphy (2011:xxvi) observe that before Augustine, the notion of non-religious political and legal order had not existed. It became a norm to establish all Western political thought within the framework of church and state. From Athens or from Jerusalem, political unity rested upon religious unity.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this article was to analyse Augustine's theory of just war through Girard's scapegoat mechanism, which he argued as foundational to the origins of human culture and

social institutions. The findings of this article demonstrate that Augustine theory of just war and Girard's scapegoat mechanism have the potential to develop a theoretical framework for studying acts of violence in the modern polarised world. Augustine placed theological supposition at the forefront of his political thought and argued for the importance of imitating the right role models and the legitimate authority. Moreover, his views on political philosophy developed in practical situations as evident from his letters and sermons. Besides the lack of systematic writing on this subject, his thought demonstrates his consistent and coherent dualist view of humanity and society in his *City of God*. In the *City of God*, he tackles fundamental questions concerning the supreme good and evil and develops a moral philosophy based on love and natural law. The comparative approach of the research highlights the continuity of thought from Augustine to Girard in matters of politics and anthropology. This approach is necessary for the analysis of *missio Dei* considering the 21st century challenges to social ethics.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Prof. Nico Vorster for his support and guidance during the drafting of this article.

## Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Author's contributions

G.T.B is the sole author of this research article.

## Ethical considerations

This article does not contain any studies involving human participants performed by the author.

## Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

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