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When wounds meet hope: African Christian thoughts of Augustine and Tutu

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Across the African sub-region and indeed some parts of the world, there have been constant struggles of political instability, corruption, ethnic conflicts and poverty, among others, which continue to shape both social and religious communities. These, therefore, call on Christianity regarding how to faithfully respond to such deep wounds without losing hope. This paper assesses the complex relationship between realism and hope within African Christian expression in a theological dialogue between Augustine of Hippo and Desmond Tutu. The study is centred on the main question: How can African Christianity balance deep woundedness and stable hope by drawing on Augustine's realism and Tutu's Ubuntu? Adopting the comparative theological methodology, the study employs key primary texts, including Augustine's *City of God*, *Letters*, and *Confessions*, alongside Tutu's writings, such as *No Future Without Forgiveness* and *The Rainbow People of God*, to juxtapose theological concepts such as human dignity, justice, unity, coercion and hope. The paper reveals that Augustine's theological realism finds the limits of justice and the prevalence of sin yet proposes an eschatological hope that is built on patience and perseverance. Tutu's Ubuntu theology is also founded in African ethics, extending hope for active social healing through forgiveness and reconciliation. This paper concludes that the church in Africa must live 'between wounds and hope', where the hostilities of harsh realities are met with empathetic pastoral care, and realism is guided by transformative hope.

Contribution: This study offers fresh perspectives on how Christianity in Africa can circumvent the harsh impacts of the social and spiritual predicaments through a dialogue between classical theological ideas and contemporary restorative praxis.

Keywords: Augustine of Hippo; Desmond Tutu; Ubuntu; realism; hope; reconciliation; Liberation Theology; African Theology.

Introduction

African Christianity obstinately faces the multifaceted predicaments of managing its wounds and maintaining hope. Africa's wounds are largely from the scars left by colonialism, including apartheid and, in present times, corruption, poverty and ethnic conflict, among others (Elbourne 2002). The history of the continent swings between suffering and resilience (Bediako 1995; Katongole 2011). The wounds of the people extend beyond the political and economic spheres, leading to theological enquiry that demands that the church address the realities of her people (Longman 2010). The church must give to the people the hope that grace can transform her wounded histories into a place of healing and renewal (Maluleke 1997). This paper explores how African Christianity can offer hope in meeting the pains of the church through a theological dialogue between Augustine of Hippo and Desmond Mpilo Tutu.

Although the two have a difference of 16 centuries between them, Augustine and Tutu represent two eminent African Church Fathers who provide perspectives on dealing with the African age-long predicaments. Augustine's 4th-century North African context, which is dominated by the Donatist schism and the waning authority of the Roman empire, called for a response to dealing with human justice and the prevalent reality of sin (Frend 1952; Markus 1988; Shaw 2011). His picture of the City of God presents earthly politics within the eschatological story of God's peace, promoting a realism that is built on hope (Augustine 1998:426; Brown 2000). Notwithstanding, Tutu's influence is felt on South Africa's apartheid regime, marked by the brutal reality of discrimination, which calls for theological reflections on reconciliation. Tutu's ideologies centred around the African ethic of Ubuntu; thus, 'I am because we are' stressed the nexus between personhood, communal healing and restorative justice (Battle 1997; Gade 2011; Shutte 2001; Tutu 1999). His chairmanship of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) demonstrated how

faith can be employed as a tool for dealing with hurt in a transformative and impactful manner (Brittain & Maphumulo 2022; Pityana 2020; Walaza 2022).

Methodologically, this study employs a comparative theological approach to examine key texts by the two primary Church Fathers within their socio-historical contexts. The analysis is based on four interconnected themes: human dignity and relational personhood, unity and healing, justice and restorative practices and the interplay between realism and hope. Theologically, the paper utilises contextual theology and Ubuntu hermeneutics to assess Augustine's eschatological realism through Tutu's 'Ubuntu' restorative hope. Both Fathers present a theology in which the African Christian is invited to a faith that exists between wounds and hope, which involves accepting suffering honestly while maintaining God's grace to reconcile through love (Tilley 1997; Villa-Vicencio 2009).

Augustine of Hippo

On 13 November 354 CE, a pillar of the church, Aurelius Augustinus, largely known as Augustine of Hippo, was born in the Roman province of Numidia in a town called Thagaste, which is present-day Souk Ahras in Algeria. Patricius, his father, was a Roman official and a pagan; meanwhile, Monica, his mother, was a devout Christian whose influence led to Augustine's conversion (Brown 2000).

Augustine received a Roman education in rhetoric, philosophy and literature, firstly in Madauros and later in Carthage, where he became absorbed in Manichaean dualism. This philosophy explains the problem of evil through a cosmic battle between light and darkness (O'Donnell 2005). His curiosity, however, led him beyond the Manichaean doctrines to other sceptical philosophies before becoming a Neoplatonist.

Augustine of Hippo died in 430 CE, when the Vandals besieged Hippo. His remains were afterwards moved to Sardinia and eventually to Pavia, Italy, where they are preserved. He is acknowledged as a doctor of the church in Catholicism, a saint in Orthodoxy and a foremost inspiration for many Protestant reformers like Luther and Calvin.

Conversion to Christianity and contributions

Augustine's conversion is well chronicled in his autobiography titled *The Confessions*, which captures his spiritual journeys in the Christian faith. Augustine was a deep seeker who was very inquisitive intellectually, particularly on moral issues. He was critically influenced by Ambrose of Milan's allegorical interpretation of Scripture. After several years of his mother's constant prayers for him to come to know the Lord, it was not until 386 that he had the dramatic conversion experience. This turning point came when he read Romans 13:13 14 and understood that the command to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh' was a divine command, thereby clearing his doubts (Confessions VIII.12) and compelling him to respond to Christ. He was subsequently christened by Ambrose in Milan during the Easter of 387, together with his son Adeodatus, thus defining a significant change in his life from darkness to light (Augustine 1991). Soon after his conversion, he travelled to North Africa as a monk, but in 391, he was ordained a priest in Regius (today's Annaba, Algeria), and by 395, he was later consecrated bishop of Hippo, till his death died in 430.

Even as a bishop, Augustine of Hippo developed a great interest in pastoral care and was a prolific writer, given his inquisitive background and development. He is survived by nearly 500 sermons today and wrote extensively against heresies. In spite of his writings against the Manichaeans, who were dualists, Augustine maintained that creation is full of goodness, though deeply corrupted by sin. He further disputed the Donatists, who questioned the 'potency' of sacraments administered by priests who denied Christ to save their lives, particularly during the Great Persecution. They considered such priests unworthy of administering the sacraments and saw them as 'traitors'. Augustine upheld the position that the church was universal and united and that sacraments derived their efficacy from Christ and not from the minister who administered them (Frend 1952; Tilley 1997). Augustine again opposed the Pelagians in his time. The Pelagians were a movement that denied original sin and overemphasised human free will. Augustine emphasised the doctrine of original sin, the essence of grace and the need for salvation (Markus 1988).

Augustine wrote extensively to shape Christian theology and philosophy. These texts included The *Confessions* (ca. 397–400), which is a theological autobiography that addresses issues of memory, sin and grace (Augustine 1991). He also authored *The City of God* (413–426) after Rome was invaded (410) and the City of Rome was captured by the Germanic group Visigoths, led by king Alaric I. The history of the time influenced the title as he compared the earthly city with the heavenly City of God. Augustine of Hippo further penned *On Christian Doctrine* (397:426), which is a fundamental text for biblical hermeneutics. In addition, he wrote treatises like *On Baptism* and *On Nature and Grace* in response to heretics like the Donatists and the Pelagians. His works present him as a pastor and philosopher who sought truth, justice and the total transformation of humankind through grace. His ability to combine realism and hope inspires a lot of theological reflection even today, making him not only a historical figure but also a lasting voice in global Christian thought and expression.

Augustine's realism and hope in a broken world

The socio-political context in North Africa influenced Augustine's pragmatism. Studies have revealed the intertwined nature of the social, regional and economic tensions that affected the theological development of antiquity, including Roman North Africa (Frend 1952; Shaw 2011; Tilley 1997). The Donatist controversy, for instance, had

a profound impact on the church in North Africa for several generations. These studies validate why Augustine strongly emphasised issues of unity and peace, which must be approached with pastoral patience and legal recompense, including measured restraint to correct deviations (Augustine 2001:ca. 408–411, Ep. 93). When the controversies in North African became apparent, Augustine, based on Luke 14:23 (*compelle intrare*), relied on Roman law to keep breakaways in check, describing coercion as a tool of medicine for discipline rather than revenge (Ep. 93 to Vincentius). Although many scholars today disagree with Augustine's application of Law to whip schismatics into line, it is clear that he intended to use it as a salvific medicine to bring the church together (Markus 1988; Shaw 2011; Tilley 1997).

Augustine's support of the moderate use of coercion stems from his understanding that peace and charity share a strong bond. In his relationship with General Boniface (Ep. 189), Augustine assured that peace, which is not the same as victory, be the aim and that even enemies be reformed rather than ostracised (Augustine 1998:ca. 418–420; see also Augustine 1998:426, XIX.7; XIX.12–15). Some scholars describe this as a 'just war' account, but Augustine's position is more ascetic and pastoral, given his interest in monastic life. That notwithstanding, modern scholars have identified the dangers of war as moral deformity [*libido dominandi*] in rulers and peoples (Dodaro 2004).

In *The City of God*, Augustine compared two 'cities' based on affection in this regard: the worldly city, where there was love for self to the displeasure of God, and the City of God, where its inhabitants loved God and rather dishonoured passions of the self (Augustine 1998:426). The two cities here represent a moral theology that runs 'through' history, sorting motives rather than census rolls (Dodaro 2004; Markus 1988). Saeculum should be understood as temporary pilgrimage of the faithful and political communities which can and should secure real, if not penultimate, goods. Augustine called peace the *tranquillitas ordinis*, 'the tranquillity of order', and he repeatedly stressed that households and commonwealths rightly prize concord and stability (Augustine 1998:426, XIX.4; XIX.13; XIX.17). His account refutes both quietism and perfectionism: earthly peace matters and may be justly defended, but it is neither absolute nor final (Dodaro 2004; Gregory 2008).

The 'Augustinian realism' captured his political and social perspectives on human failings and social vulnerability and his encounter with God's hope in his experience of God's peace. The period of Augustine's writings was marked by political instability, religious breakaways and disturbances in North Africa, yet Augustine maintained that history is still in God's mercy and transformation (Brown 2000; Markus 1988). His pragmatism is based on *libido dominandi*, the disordered 'lust to dominate' and a moral psychology ordered (or mis-ordered) by love. His hope is eschatological, but not escapist: it calls the pilgrim to seek proximate goods; order, justice and peace, without confusing them with the final good (Augustine 1998:426, XIV.28; XIX.4; XIX.17).

Augustine's eschatological hope crowned his realism. The *City of God* journeys towards the consummation in which the saints enjoy perfect concord in God (Augustine 1998:426, XXII.30). This hope relativised earthly projects, disciplined political expectations and sustained patient labour for proximate justice: Christians should contribute to their commonwealths as 'pilgrims', seeking the peace of the city in which they sojourn (cf. *City of God* XIX; *Confessions* for the restless desire reoriented to God). Modern interpreters have drawn on this tension between high hopes and chastened means to develop Augustinian ethics for democratic citizenship and civil society (Elshtain 1995; Gregory 2008). The upshot is not cynicism but a politics of humility: institutions are necessary yet finite; laws can restrain vice but cannot perfect love and the church witnesses to a peace that both judges and leavens temporal orders.

From Brown's landmark biography to Markus's account of the *saeculum* and Dodaro's retrieval of grace and civic responsibility, the scholarly consensus reads Augustine as neither a theocrat nor a quietist, but as a theologian of order who places political life within the drama of salvation history (Brown 2000; Dodaro 2004; Markus 1988). More recently, scholars like Shaw (2011:561–570) complement classic studies of the Donatists (Frend 1952; Tilley 1997), offering a stark view of sectarian hatred that clarifies why Augustine's twin themes of realism about sin and hope for healing remain instructive.

Desmond Tutu

Desmond Mpilo Tutu's early life and ministry paved the way for his subsequent accomplishments (Gish 2004; Meiring 2023; Tutu 2004). Tutu was born in Klerksdorp, Transvaal and relocated to Johannesburg when he was 12 (Allen 2006). He worked hard to complete his education, which culminated in his ordination. His early years as a parish priest and curate demonstrated the interplay of personal and theological influences that influenced his public vocation. Tutu's desire for redemption, sympathy for the poor and profound understanding of Scripture and tradition shaped his prophetic ministry in the face of apartheid (Battle 1997; Tutu 2004, 2011). He became a teacher at Pretoria Bantu Normal College and graduated from the University of South Africa in 1954 (Allen 2006). After 3 years as a high school teacher, he began studying theology and was ordained a priest in 1960. From 1962 to 1966, he pursued more theological studies in England, ultimately earning a Master of Theology (Gish 2004). He taught theology in South Africa from 1967 to 1972 before returning to England for 3 years as assistant director of a London-based theological institute.

Tutu was appointed Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg in 1975, becoming the first black person to occupy the position (Allen 2006). He served as the Bishop of Lesotho from 1976 to 1978, after which he became the first black general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (Battle 1997). Tutu holds honorary doctorates from various renowned universities in the United States, the

United Kingdom and Germany. Desmond Tutu defined his goal of 'a democratic and just society without racial divisions', outlining minimum demands such as equal civil rights for all, the repeal of South Africa's passport laws, a common system of education and the end of forced deportation from South Africa to the so-called 'homelands' (Ali 2020).

Meiring (2022:86–87), among other scholars, strongly maintains that Tutu's influence was especially significant in South Africa (Allen 2006; Battle 1997; Meiring 2023). His Christian vision was rooted in obedience and church perception (Kobe 2023). He advocated for a renewed church model inspired by Eastern Orthodoxy. This inclusive church approach emphasised direct care for underprivileged groups, reflecting Tutu's belief in the 'Ubuntu theology', which promotes visible church unity and communal well-being (Lebona 2020). His support of the Disputed Decree of Christian Reconciliation over sensational miracles highlights his dedication to a prophetic theology centred on justice and reconciliation. Tutu's focus on reconciliation and justice was not just an abstract ideal but a tangible need that guided his work in the church and society (Boesak & De Young 2012). He sought to build a church that actively fought social injustices and promoted reconciliation (Brittain & Maphumulo 2022:304–320). His leadership helped shape a more active and socially engaged African Christianity, evolving in response to the continent's ongoing challenges and opportunities. Tutu's impact on African Christianity is defined by his unwavering dedication to justice, community cooperation and innovative church practices. Examining Archbishop Desmond Tutu's influence on African Christianity reveals several significant contributions that have profoundly impacted the continent's religion and its practice.

Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology evolved in the vibrant setting of Latin American Christianity in the 1960s and 1970s, but its origins go back centuries (Asedillo 2021). This theology was heavily impacted by the political and social situations of the colonised and oppressed peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America, particularly the racial inequality caused by European colonialism. Liberation Theology aimed to confront colonisers' impunity, privilege and silence (Christison 2023). According to Cones (2024), Liberation Theology gradually gained traction, resulting in a discourse between theologians, laypeople and the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy (Cones 2024).

It reinforced different critiques of social injustice while emphasising the Christian message of justice and social reform as vital to Christian faith. Despite its diminished status in the changing global setting, its values continue to resonate in other movements and efforts to combat tyranny. The struggle for freedom against tyranny continues as long as the oppressed strive to change their circumstances, indicating the critical relevance of messianic expectancy in history, as emphasised by Gutiérrez (1971).

Tutu was a strong opponent of the apartheid regime, which institutionalised racial segregation and injustice in South Africa (Boesak 2017; Noyoo 2021). He utilised his position in the Anglican Church to speak out against the injustices suffered by black South Africans, connecting parallels with the oppression addressed by Liberation Theology in Latin America. Tutu incorporated Liberation Theology themes into his Christian beliefs, emphasising the importance of justice, equality and all people's inherent dignity (Van Klinken & Chitando 2021). He defined the struggle against apartheid as a moral and theological imperative, which is consistent with Liberation Theology's emphasis on social reform and justice.

Tutu's international prominence and eloquence helped draw global attention to South Africa's battles, just as liberation theologians in Latin America attempted to highlight the plight of the oppressed in their respective nations (Mole 2023). His initiatives drew international attention and solidarity, forcing the apartheid state to change. Following the end of apartheid, Tutu presided over the TRC, which sought to confront past human rights violations while also promoting healing and reconciliation (Boesak & De Young 2012; Grimes, Soltis & Lloyd 2023). This effort exemplified Liberation Theology's emphasis on restorative justice and the necessity for social and moral change. Tutu continuously pushed for nonviolent resistance, harmonising with the Liberation Theology tenet of attaining justice and social change without using violence. He believed in the power of peaceful protest and moral persuasion to bring about change. Tutu's spiritual leadership and moral authority provided a strong example of how religious leaders could play a crucial role in social justice movements. His efforts inspired many within and outside the church to engage in the struggle for liberation and equality.

Ecumenism and interfaith dialogue

Interracial and interfaith collaboration were crucial to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's concept of the Incarnation, human society's ultimate purpose and Christian identity (Luis 2020). These pledges were critical to Tutu and were not to be compromised. He argued that religiosity's moral obligation was to develop a civil society that produced citizens competent to participate in debates about public goods and values (Shah 2021). Tutu recognised the function of religious preconceptions, theological commitments, reason and narrative imagination in constructing social theory and acknowledged their significance in ecumenical and interreligious discourse. He claimed that to overcome moral despair, societies required a variety of secular and religious traditions and identities.

Being the first African General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), Tutu played a vital role towards unifying disparate Christian groups in the fight against apartheid. Under his leadership, the SACC became a prominent advocate for human rights and social justice. Tutu worked to bridge doctrinal divides among member churches, fostering cooperation and collective action (Walters 2022).

This unity was crucial in presenting a strong, unified front against the oppressive apartheid regime.

Tutu continually emphasised the significance of Christian unity, stating that the church must work together to successfully confront social injustices. He argued that internal divisions in the church diminished its moral power and impact. He supported communication and cooperation across many Christian traditions, including Anglican, Methodist, Catholic and other Protestant churches, in order to achieve common goals such as poverty alleviation, education and healthcare. Tutu, a strong advocate for interfaith dialogue, saw that collaboration among different religious traditions was essential for developing peace and understanding in a diverse society (Atabongwoung, Lütz & Austin 2023). He actively collaborated with religious leaders from other faiths, including Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and traditional African religions, to foster mutual tolerance and collaboration. Tutu thought that all religions shared fundamental qualities such as compassion, justice and the quest for peace, and he used these ideals to form alliances for social justice causes (Appiah-Thompson 2020). He took part in interfaith conferences, debates and peaceful co-existence activities, highlighting the importance of religion in tackling social and moral challenges. His inclusive attitude contributed to a bigger, more inclusive justice movement.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The TRC of South Africa was established under The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34 of 1995 to document and address human rights violations during the apartheid era (Meiring 1999; Pityana 2020). The TRC was empowered to testify to these violations, issue amnesty to some offenders and recommend compensation and rehabilitation for victims, while adhering to South African law, which included the 1996 Constitution, as well as numerous criminal justice and human rights statutes. Desmond Tutu was named chairperson of the commission. His administration was distinguished by a dedication to restorative justice, which emphasised truth-telling and forgiveness as necessary for reuniting a divided society (Walaza 2022; Walling 2022). Tutu's 'Ubuntu' ideology, which believes in the interconnection of humanity, was central to the TRC's approach, fostering collective healing and relationship restoration (Shutte 2001).

Tutu ensured that the TRC's proceedings were public and transparent, allowing South Africans and the international community to witness the process. This transparency was vital for fostering a shared understanding of the country's painful past and for providing victims with a platform to share their stories. The public hearings were crucial for the personal healing of victims and for the societal acknowledgement of the atrocities committed during apartheid.

Legacy and impact

Desmond Tutu's impact was both theological and religious (Pillay 2022). Tutu positioned his vision of Christianity and church work to oppose the claims made by the Dutch Reformed Church and its members. Despite constituting about 2.3% of the entire population, the Dutch Reformed Church strove to establish itself as the 'true church' of South Africa (Giliomee 2003). In theological terms, it advocated for an exclusive God, a divinely required racial hierarchy as part of the Creator's purpose and a 'special relationship' with the Creator (Botha & Forster 2017; Giliomee 2003). Tutu's theological critique addressed these specific claims. While his action made headlines, it was his theological views that had far-reaching consequences for both Christianity and South African society in general (Moodie 1975). The hostility of the established Afrikaner church to Tutu's Christian revolutionary theology demonstrated that, in language and narrative, he succeeded where liberals failed (ed. Pieterse 2021). Whereas secular humanism, rationalist philosophy and Marxist analysis, both within and outside of South Africa, failed to effect systemic change, an old black Christian preacher condemned the world to sin, righteousness and judgement (Maluleke 2020; Meiring 2022). Tutu marshalled a previously held Christian notion of morality, related to and evolved through Christ, forcing not only individual South Africans but also the larger environment to reassess their public actions. His words and deeds resulted in an almost universally acknowledged code of conduct for South Africa's post-apartheid era.

While Tutu's interfaith efforts emphasised shared values of justice, peace and compassion, scholars have noted that doctrinal differences among faith traditions can complicate meaningful engagement. Therefore, Tutu's perspective of universal ethics, instead of core theological distinction, may affect the depth of long-term collaboration (Akah & Ajah 2022:5–7; Shunmugam & Naidoo 2024:2–4). Critics argue that theological differences may result in superficial agreements that overlook the fundamental beliefs and practices exclusive to each religion, making attempts at authentic and long-lasting interfaith partnerships more challenging.

A dialogue between Tutu and Augustine

Bringing Desmond Tutu and Augustine of Hippo in dialogue shows how African Christianity can hold her wounds together in hope. The contexts of the two theologians, though worlds apart, respond to similar conditions. The following thematic comparison highlights their similarity and differences.

Human dignity and relational personhood

Both Augustine and Tutu upheld the value of humans in relational existence. Augustine found human dignity in the theology of *imago Dei*, insisting that humanity discovers fulfilment in the God factor in them (*City of God* XIX.13; Augustine 1998:426). This view was crucial because during creation, God breathed into humans His spirit, which made them living beings based on the creation story. This spirit, therefore, was found in all of mankind, irrespective of where

they found themselves. This breath identified and linked human beings to the creator. Tutu pushed the Ubuntu philosophy as a theological anthropology as 'I am because we are' (Tutu 1999). This position emphasised the invulnerability of human beings when interconnected, for which reason one cannot exist outside of the other. While Augustine emphasised the interior reordering of love through grace, Tutu underscored the communal character of personhood. In different idioms, both challenged individualism and affirmed the relational constitution of human life.

Unity, healing and witness

In ecclesiology, Augustine maintained that the church is a place of unity, although there may be schisms. In response to the Donatists, he argued that the church's sanctity is a result of Christ's gift and sacramental unity, and not based on the purity of the priests (Tilley 1997). To him, therefore, although the church is united, there is still space for dissenting positions because human beings are different, notwithstanding the differences that affect the unity of the whole. Tutu, on the other hand, during the apartheid period, also saw the church as the morality of the nation (Tutu 1994). His chairmanship of the SACC and the TRC showed that to him, the church is the place where wounds are expressed and settled (Villa-Vicencio 2009). The two Church Fathers in this respect saw the church as the cementing agent in fixing broken aspects of society, even though Augustine looked more towards institutional unity, while Tutu stressed pastoral healing.

Coercion and restorative practices

The two Fathers differ when it comes to the subject of justice. Augustine advocated for the application of some level of coercion as a disciplinary measure against the Donatists, defining it as 'medicinal correction' based on love (Eph 93; Augustine 2001:ca. 408–411). According to Augustine, where unity is concerned, sometimes some dose of reluctant compulsion must be employed to attain the oneness of the church (Shaw 2011). Meanwhile, Tutu rejected retribution but advocated for restorative justice (Tutu 1994). He saw confession and forgiveness as major tools in building a healthy society: 'Restorative justice … is concerned not so much with punishment as with correcting imbalances, restoring broken relationships' (Tutu 1999:54–55). Although Augustine's corrective coercion is criticised for being against Christian charity (Frend 1952), Tutu's restorative model does not deal holistically with injustice; it may only be superficial (Mamdani 2000; Wilson 2001). In light of these, Augustine and Tutu dealt with the problem of striking a balance between discipline and forgiveness in times of conflict.

Realism and hope

Regarding eschatology, Augustine posits that earthly justice was limited, delicate and constantly affected by the *libido dominandi* (*City of God* XIX. 4; Brown 2000). He suggested that there was no true justice on earth because everything was temporal and transient. He argued, therefore, that actual peace was found only in the City of God, which the church was marching towards (Markus 1988). In this regard, a relationship with the church then guaranteed a movement towards actual peace (Tutu 1994). On the other hand, Tutu did not necessarily speak against the eschatological idea of justice in the world to come; he asserted that forgiveness and reconciliation were essential ingredients towards justice even here on earth. His Ubuntu spirituality agreed with what Battle (1997:26) calls a 'prophetic eschatology', which expresses God's kingdom experienced today through healing. Therefore, while Augustine focused more on the hope of justice in the world to come, Tutu was certain that some high level of peace and tranquillity could be sustained on earth before experiencing the heavenly peace and justice. From Tutu's perspective, living in peace with each other on earth provided a foretaste of the heavenly peace to be enjoyed by all in the City of God.

Living between wounds and hope

Tutu and Augustine offer an essential framework for African Christian expression in a wounded world. Augustine dealt with the Christian expectations, focusing on the reality of sin and the influence of politics, while Tutu encouraged communities with a goal of forgiveness towards a restorative environment. Their dialogue suggests that Christian witness in Africa must be relevant in a prophetic hope without deception and realism without hopelessness.

The examples of Augustine and Tutu are not mere historical experiences but also vital tools for African Christian expression because they help to bind up the wounds of the world. Most parts of Africa and the world over are faced with issues of hunger, corruption, disaster, ethnic violence, poverty and colonialism, among others. In Africa, where hopes have become fragile, the church continues to deal with such wounds that have festered for many decades (Katongole 2011; Maluleke 1997). Attention to Augustine's realism and Tutu's restorative hope provides the African churches with a pragmatic blueprint for their prophetic and pastoral mission.

Tutu reminds the church that keeping silent at the sight of injustice implies the church is siding with the oppressor against the victims (Allen 2006). This is another way of saying silence means consent, thus agreeing with the oppressor for mayhem to be unleashed on vulnerable people. Staying neutral may appear 'safe and secure' for the church, but doing so denies the church its credibility and purpose as a voice of reason in society. The church must therefore take clear stances against corruption, abuse, ethnic violence and exploitation of the underprivileged. The church can play its watchman role as the conscience of society through pastoral letters, public witness and media, both traditional and social, rooted in the gospel's call to justice. The church leadership should empower the clergy with social engagement and advocacy skills as the voice of the voiceless.

Furthermore, Augustine's concept of *libido dominandi* calls on Christians to note that injustice is not only 'out there' in society or governments but also prominent within the church's structures (Brown 2000). This is key because very often, some Christians over-emphasise the sacredness of the church and forget that the church is a place for not only saints but also sinners and a place where many of the vices of society can also be found. There are examples of corruption, injustice and misappropriation and misapplication of funds, among others, that, as happens in society, are equally at home within the body of Christ, the church. It must be clear that the church is a home for sinners to be transformed into saints. In keeping the church sacrosanct, there should therefore be stronger governance systems to model justice internally from a theological basis, showing society that integrity is possible in Africa's institutions. The church must be an example to society; it should speak out against injustice, be the voice of the voiceless and even more, heal the wounds of the hurting.

Additionally, the struggle between Augustine's desire for unity, in which sometimes coercion may have to be employed, and Tutu's idea of restoring by forgiving brings to the fore the challenge for churches today: the balance between truth and justice. Shallow forgiveness that is not deeply rooted and that is based on inequality is destructive; however, punitive approaches that do not give room for restoration are equally harmful (Mamdani 2000; Tutu 1999; Wilson 2001). Forgiveness must be deep from the heart and not superficial, and the role of punishment in restoring the offender must be upheld to bring the erring one back home, not to push them far away from the faith. The church should devote resources to its reconciliation mandate, which should not exclude truth-telling and socio-economic initiatives.

Although Augustine saw the church on earth as in transit, aiming for the City of God (Augustine 1998:426, XIX.17), Tutu, on the other hand, held that while on earth, the church must be seen as a healer in transit. This is to argue that, like the parable of the Good Samaritan, although the church is on a journey, it must not lose sight of the happenings in its environment. While here on earth, the church must minister to the wounds and predicaments of crime, prison, refugee camps, violence and poverty, among others. In this light, churches and councils must be seen to bring sacramental and spiritual ministry with practical diakonia by establishing health clinics, trauma healing centres, food banks and peace-building programmes in conflict-prone areas. In doing these, the church will be ministering here on earth and essentially picking up other persons to go along with them on their transit journeys towards the City of God. The argument then is that ministering to the wounds of the world, the church will be making disciples for the kingdom of God. Healing the wounds of the world, then, is an evangelistic tool that cannot be overlooked.

Given the many wounds of Africa, the strength of the church, therefore, lies in refusing to overlook the wounds but working to eradicate the wounds to build a better continent. Augustine's temperate realism about sin and history, juxtaposed to Tutu's Ubuntu philosophy towards reconciliation, offers the African church a way to live faithfully 'between wounds and hope'. The church in Africa must speak prophetically, provide a prototypical justice, advocate for reconciliation that touches the hearts and structures and be a pilgrim-healer in society, among others. These are not easy responsibilities to attain, but they typify what Tutu describes as 'prisoners of hope', which is the mandate of the church to the world (Tutu 1999).

Conclusion

African Christianity has often deepened where wounds meet hope, from colonialism and apartheid to the recent predicaments of corruption, ethnic violence and poverty; the church's mandate must be to heal these wounds and offer hope. As Augustine and Tutu demonstrate, the wounds can also become the nexus of God's grace with avenues of healing, reconciliation and transformation.

Placed in dialogue, Augustine and Tutu thus provide an interaction for African Christian expression, of Augustine's discipline of hope with realism, with Tutu's discipline of realism with hope. They suggest that the church in Africa, in response to their peculiar wounds, must neither withdraw into hopelessness nor rush towards a non-existent hopefulness. Instead, their call is to walk a journey of justice and reconciliation, not only acknowledging the sufferings of the people but also working to bring holistic healing to them. In view of African Christianity today, this approach implies confronting the corruption and injustice without misapprehension and also providing forgiveness and reconciliation without resignation. The church must name the wounds openly but deliver hope, both in the present and in the eschatological. The church then becomes relevant to her pilgrim community, which, though wounded, advances faithfully towards the peace in the City of God.

Living where wounds meet hope is accepting that justice is not static but a process involving the recognition that the Christian faith is not about escaping suffering but rather transforming the wounds into a testimony of grace. Augustine asserted that the pilgrim city is built not by triumph but by grace-filled longing for God's peace. Together, the two African Church Fathers represent African Christianity as a vocation in woundedness, yet full of hope.

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Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. The author confirms that this work is entirely their own, has reviewed the article, approved the final version for submission and publication and takes full responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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