



The Eastward Transmission of Augustine's Eschatology in Ming and Qing China

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Abstract: Augustine's eschatological doctrines were highly regarded during the Middle Ages and saw a revival in the early modern period. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Catholic missionaries arrived in China and compiled relevant works, spreading Augustine's eschatological thoughts through quotations. This paper provides a detailed introduction to the writings related to Augustine's eschatological ideas by missionaries such as Diego de Pantoja, Alphonse Vagnoni, Philippe Couplet, Manuel Dias, Tomás Ortiz, as well as the Chinese catholic scholars Zhang Xingyao and Li Wenyu. Additionally, it discusses Gabriel de Magalhães's translation of *Fuhuo lun* from the Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. This paper argues that Augustine's eschatological ideas are well represented in Chinese documents from the Ming and Qing dynasties. The frequency of quotations regarding his eschatology is comparable to that of his views on the Trinity and the *Imago Dei*, underscoring the significance of his theory of human nature and thoughts on humanity's ultimate destiny in the context of Ming and Qing China.

Key words: Augustine, *De novissimis*, eschatology, purgatory

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Eschatology is a central theological theme of the 20th century and represents a significant shift from traditional perspectives. Modern eschatology emphasizes the fate of humanity as a whole, as outlined in biblical prophecies, whereas traditional eschatology focuses more on the final destination of the individual, referred to as *De novissimis*, which pertains to the time of death, judgment, heaven, and hell.¹ In the 20th century, there was a renewed focus on the historical eschatology of Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus, 354-430 AD), featuring a diverse range of perspectives and in-depth exploration. However, during the Middle Ages and early modern periods, Augustine's doctrines of *De novissimis* (the last things) was more highly regarded (Scanlon 1999, pp. 316-317).² During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Catholic missionaries arrived in China, and translated and compiled a series of works on *De novissimi*, in which Augustine's eschatological thoughts permeated in the form of quotations. The extensive eschatological ideas of Augustine have been the subject of focused study (Pollmann 2021; Drecoll 2007), yet there is no comprehensive scholarly analysis of their transmission in China. This contribution does not aim to fill that gap. Instead, it will outline how Catholic missionaries introduced Augustine's eschatological thoughts and how these ideas interacted with Chinese culture.

1. Augustine's Eschatological Thoughts

Augustine follows the Christian chronographers of his time and believes that human history can be divided into seven ages based on the seven days of creation, with each age lasting one thousand years (Mathisen 1999, p. 476). The sixth age has passed, followed by a seventh Sabbath and Parousia (*City of God*, [*De civitate Dei*, *civ.*] 22:30). After 394, following his North-African compatriot Tyconius, Augustine ceased to follow the millennial tradition (Pollmann 2021, p.473). Instead, he does not consider the sixth "millennium" to be exactly one thousand years long. Since the Second Coming of Christ will take place at the beginning of the seventh millennium (around the sixth millennium), there are only a few hundred years left before his time. In *epp.* 197-99 to a fellow bishop, Hesychius of Salona (written in 418/419 CE), Augustine specifically addresses the question of Christ's Second Coming, arguing that the future is becoming increasingly shorter and that Christ's Second Coming is "getting nearer and nearer every day", saying that time accumulates and moves toward the end, and

¹ *De novissimis* is often categorized as "individual eschatology" in contemporary systematic theology to differentiate it from collective eschatology, which concerns itself with concepts such as the "kingdom of heaven," the millennium, and the age to come (Erickson 2013 ; Geisler 2011).

² Augustine's theory of justice, which involves heaven and hell, has been a topic of discussion in recent years within the context of individual eschatology, particularly in comparison to annihilationism and universalism (Cho 2010). Recent discussions on Augustine's "juridical-penal framework" of the divine-human relationship (with God as judge and man as sinner) can be seen in Bart Van Egmon's work (Egmon 2018).

it is increasingly possible to say that "the Second Coming is more and more at hand every moment" (Mathisen 1999, pp. 476-78).

Augustine's writings on the Last Judgment, as well as on heaven and hell, are primarily found in his works *Enchiridion* and *The City of God* (books 20-22). Additionally, these themes are discussed throughout his *epistulae* and *sermones*. Augustine describes the resurrection of the bodies of the dead at the Last Judgment as also involving "spiritual bodies." He argues that this refers firstly to the immortality of the body (*ench.* 23:91, *civ.* 20:21), and secondly to the complete submission to the human spirit (*civ.* 20:21, *Serm.* 42:8:11). The resurrected body is perfectly united with the soul, which itself is completely obedient to God and partakes of His divine life. As a result, the resurrected body will possess "complete freedom of movement, and is easily attainable" (*serm.* 242:8:11; 277:12). Moreover, it will be entirely transparent to the soul (*serm.* 243:5). The resurrected saints can see God with their physical eyes (*civ.* 22:29). Those who die young or are disabled in this life will have their bodies restored to perfection at the time of resurrection (*ench.* 23: 85-87). The material elements that constitute the body are eternally indestructible, and God will rearrange them at the resurrection, much like sculptors and potters create new images out of the same materials (*ench.* 23:89): "But if it is the plan of the Creator that in His image the property and distinguishable likeness of each should be preserved, while in other good qualities of the body all should be made equal, then the matter of each body will be so modified that nothing of it will perish, and what is lacking in anyone will be supplied by Him who is capable of creating from nothing. However, if there is to be a reasonable inequality in the bodies of those who rise again, just as there are the voices that make up a chant, then this will be done to each from the matter of his own body so as to make the man fit for the angelic choirs and cause no discomfort to their senses" (*ench.* 23: 90; Daley 1999, pp. 722-23).

Both the Bible and the Church Fathers address the concept of hell, and Augustine offers a rational argument for its existence. He contends that eternal damnation is necessary for the sake of justice. In this life, we often observe that the wicked seem to prosper while the good suffer; justice requires that this inequity be balanced in the next life. For Augustine, the fire, brimstone, and worms of hell are merely secondary punishments, while the primary punishment is the separation from God. He distinguishes between two kinds of death. The first is the physical death we commonly recognize, where the soul reluctantly (and temporarily) leaves the body. The second is the eternal death of the soul due to sin, where the soul suffers the pains of hell alongside the resurrected body, enduring punishment and anguish without end (*ench.* 23:93; *civ.* 21:3:1).

Why do some people end up in hell? Augustine's interpretation varies depending on whether he emphasizes free will or predestination. From the perspective of free will, Christ redeemed humanity, allowing individuals to make a free choice: to love God or not. Those who choose to embrace God have their sins forgiven and will ultimately be brought into God's presence. Conversely, those who reject God find themselves in a state of isolation from the divine. Under the framework of predestination, the original sin committed by the first ancestors distorted the wills of all humankind, making sin inevitable for everyone. God elects certain individuals from among all sinners and grants them the grace that leads to salvation. The rest, who are not chosen, are denied redemption. They must endure the anguish of separation from God and the endless torments that follow, and this separation is everlasting (*civ.* 21:23). On the whole, Augustine adheres to the latter view. Augustine held the view that the world in which we live is a mixed society (*civitas permixta*), made up of the City of God (the Kingdom of God) and the City of this World (the City of the Devil). The City of God loves God, while the City of this World loves only itself. However, no one can determine who belongs to which city; only God knows. Those who love only themselves and not God are doomed to hell or, in a loveless hell in the present (*civ.* 21:23).

The saved do not live without sinning in this world, so they must be purged of their stains before entering into the beatific vision. Therefore, Augustine conceived the idea of purgatory. In *ench.* 29:109, Augustine states that "the time, however, which intervenes between a man's death and the final resurrection, confines the souls in hidden abodes, as each one deserves either rest or suffering, according to what it has earned in the body during its life."³ It is also mentioned in *ench.* 18:69 that "and it can be inquired whether this is true and whether it can be discovered or remain hidden, that some faithful people are saved more slowly or more quickly through a certain purgatorial fire, depending on how much they have loved transitory goods, either more or less."⁴ However, he denies that those who "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:10), that is extremely wicked, can be saved through purgatory, "unless they obtain forgiveness through necessary repentance" (*ench.* 18:69). At the last judgment, both the interim state and the state of purgatory will cease to exist. All people will exist eternally, either in the presence of God or separated from Him (*ench.* 14:54-55, 17:66; *civ.* 20:21-30). Augustine believed that it is beneficial for the living to

³ *Enchiridion* 29:109 "Tempus autem quod inter hominis mortem et ultimam resurrectionem interpositum est, animas abditis receptaculis continet, sicut unaquaeque digna est vel requie vel aerumna pro eo quod sortita est in carne dum viveret." The authors translated the literature from its original languages to English.

⁴ *Enchiridion* 18:69 "...et utrum ita sit quaeri potest, et aut inveniri aut latere, nonnullos fideles per ignem quemdam purgatorium, quanto magis minusve bona pereuntia dilexerunt, tanto tardius citiusque salvari."

perform good works and offer prayers for their deceased relatives and friends who are in a state of moral uncertainty. This can help alleviate the punishment endured by the departed soul (*ench.* 28:109).

In relation to Augustin's theory of Purgatory, the patrologist Fulbert Cayré summarized his views: "Based on 1 Corinthians 3, Augustine clearly affirmed the existence of Purgatory. He recognized that, in the afterlife and at least until the general judgment, there is a temporary punishment intended to purify the soul. Augustine discussed the fire of purification; while he did not specify the exact nature of this fire, he was unequivocal about the existence of Purgatory. Additionally, he acknowledged that prayers, good deeds, and especially the Holy Sacrifice, can help alleviate the suffering of souls in Purgatory" (Cayré 1927, pp. 693-94).

Jacques Le Goff, a renowned contemporary historian of the Middle Ages, asserted that Augustine was the "true father of Purgatory." He claimed that Augustine contributed two important elements to the later concept of Purgatory. First, Augustine limited the effectiveness of the fire of purification (the fire used to purge sins) to those who committed venial sins. Second, he assigned this fire to the period between death and resurrection. While Augustine had not yet introduced the concept of "venial sins" or defined the specific details and location of Purgatory (Le Goff 1981, p. 117). He categorized people based on their moral standing into four groups: those who were completely good, those who were completely evil, those who were not entirely good, and those who were not entirely evil. According to his classification, the completely good would go to heaven, the completely evil to hell, and those in the other two categories would go to Purgatory. Over time, medieval theologians simplified his fourfold classification into three categories: the completely good would go to heaven, the completely evil would go to hell, and ordinary people (neither entirely good nor entirely evil) would go to Purgatory (Le Goff 1981, p. 105; p. 299; p. 303).⁵

The fire of hell is true fire. The damned souls will suffer from the fire of hell even before the Last Judgment (*civ.* 21:10). It will suffer as if it had a body: the suffering the soul feels is like suffering the body feels it from corporeal fire.

⁵ After being systematized by numerous theologians during the Middle Ages, the Council of Trent (1562) officially incorporated the concept of "Purgatory" into Catholic doctrine, establishing it as a fundamental element of religious education. The Catholic missionaries who arrived in China in the 16th century adhered to these teachings. For example, Michele Ruggieri's *The True Record of the Lord of Heaven* (1584) introduced the concepts of Limbo for unbaptized infants and Purgatory (Huang and Wang 2013, vol. 1, p. 15). Similarly, Matteo Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* focused on refuting Buddhist interpretations of Heaven and Hell for strategic reasons. While it discussed Heaven and Hell, it did not mention Purgatory. This can be referenced in the sixth chapter of Ricci's work (Meynard 2014, pp. 159-180).

Although the demon does not have a proper body, he also suffers from fire. After the Last Judgment, the resurrected bodies will be tortured by corporeal fire. Just as the intensity of joy in heaven varies among the saved, so the intensity of suffering in hell varies among damned. All are equally and forever lost, but some suffer more acutely than others (Russell 1999b, pp. 422- 23).

The saints will go to heaven. The essence of heaven is that the saints praise God forever. And secondly, in heaven, human potential is perfectly realized. It is human nature to have a need for heaven. "Our hearts will not rest until they rest in God" (*conf.* 1:1). "God is the fount of our blessedness and He is the goal of our desires" (*civ.* 10:3). At the end of *The City of God*, Augustine says that the resurrected saints will "rest and see, see and love, love and praise" (*civ.* 22:30).

Being in heaven means being fully united with Christ. Heaven is a state in which the whole person, both physically and spiritually, experiences the joy of God's presence. The Apostle Paul distinguished between "*sarx*" (flesh) and "*soma*" (body) in Greek, while Augustine differentiated between "*caro*" (flesh) and "*corpus*" (body) in Latin. The flesh, drawn toward perishable things, is destined to perish. In contrast, the body—created by God in His own image—will be changed, renewed, and transformed into a heavenly body. The resurrected body that dwells in heaven with Christ is the same body that each person possesses in the present. Although the fundamental nature of the resurrected body remains unchanged, some of its properties will change: it will become imperishable and perfect in accordance with its divine potential. Each blessed individual will retain their own individuality, being distinct from God as well as from others. Those endowed with greater potential by their Creator will shine more brilliantly and sit closer or higher to the Creator, but there will be no envy among them, because no one fails to experience supreme joy and fully embody the image of Christ. Heaven is the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, which means directly understanding and seeing God Himself. "We shall see Him by the spirit in ourselves, in one another, in Himself, in the new heavens and the new earth, and in every created thing which shall exist; and also by the body we shall see Him in every body to which the keen vision of the eye of the spiritual body shall extend" (*civ.* 22:29). At the end of *The City of God*, Augustine declares that in heaven we will have eternal rest to see, to love, and to praise God (*civ.* 22: 30; Russel 1999, pp. 419-21).

2. The Jesuits' Introduction of Augustine's Eschatology

During the transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasties, Augustine's works were not translated into Chinese. Instead, his ideas were introduced to the Chinese-speaking world through quotations, aphorisms, and catchphrases. Catholic missionaries were enthusiastic about compiling catechism booklets to

educate Chinese believers. Among these booklets that included Augustine's quotations, the themes covered were diverse, with two or three standing out, such as the Trinitarian view of the image and eschatology (Zhou 2017a, pp. 76-83).

At that time, the works related to the Four Last Things (*De novissimis*) mainly included Matteo Ricci's (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552-1610) *Jiren Shipian* 畸人十篇 (*Ten Essays on Exceptional Men*), Alphonse Vagnoni's (Gao Yizhi 高一志, 1566-1640) *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* 天主聖教四末論 (*Discussion of the Four Last Things of the Sagely Catholic Church*, published in 1636)⁶, Manuel Dias's (Yang Manuo 陽瑪諾, 1574-1659) *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解 (*Direct Interpretation of the Bible*, published in 1636), Ferdinand Verbiest's (Nai Huairan 南懷仁, 1623-1688) *Shan e bao lüeshuo* 善惡報略說 (*Brief Account of Rewards for Good and Evils*, 1670) (Zhang et al. 2014, vol. 33, pp. 651-672), Andre-Jean Lubelli's (Lu Ande 陸安德, 1610-1683) *Zhenfu zhizhi* 真福直指 (*Direct Guidance to True Happiness*, published in 1673) (*ibid.*, vol. 15, pp. 199-472) and *Shansheng fuzhong zhenglü* 善生福終正路 (*The Right Path to a Good Life and a Blessed End*) (*ibid.*, pp. 477-750), Philippe Couplet's (Bai Yingli 柏應理, 1623-1693) *Simo zhenlun* 四末真論 (*True Treatise on the Four Last Things*, published in 1675) (*ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 1-62), *Fuhuo lun* 復活論 (*On the Resurrection*) translated by Gabriel de Magalhães (An Wensi 安文思, 1609-1677), Thomás Ortiz's (Bai Duoma 白多瑪, 1668-1742, a Spanish Augustinian) *Sizhong lüeyi* 四終略意 (*Brief Meaning of the Four Last Things*, published in 1705) (Ren and Wang 2005, vol. 5, 114-44), Zhang Xingyao's (1633-1715?) *Tianjiao mingbian* 天教明辨 (*Clear Discrimination of the Heavenly Teaching*, published in 1711), Jean de Sexas' (Lin Deyao 林德瑤, 1710-1785) *Zhao yong shenjing* 照永神鏡 (*The Mirror of Eternal Illumination*, published in 1769) (Standaert et al. 2013, vol.19, pp. 1-404).

Today, the extent of secularization is quite significant in both the West and China. People generally interpret "heaven" and "hell" symbolically. However, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, individuals in both regions understood "heaven" and "hell" literally, viewing them as real spatial structures. Additionally, concepts like resurrection and the rewards and punishments of the afterlife were also taken literally by most people at that time. As a result, Chinese individuals who sincerely embraced Catholicism seriously considered the Last Judgment and strived to fulfill their duties in this life according to the

⁶ The dating evidence is from Jin Wenbing (Jin 2015, pp. 75 - 76.). This book is stored in the National Library of France (No. 6857) and was printed in 1636. The copy of *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* 天主聖教四末論 which the authors referenced did not indicate the date and place, and it is likely the 1636 version.

Christian “ethics of the two worlds,” hoping to attain happiness in heaven in the future.

A notable example is Xu Guangqi (徐光啟 1562-1633), a prominent statesman and scientist from the late Ming Dynasty in China, who was also one of the “three pillars” of Catholicism during that era. Xu Guangqi once remarked that what shaped his career, motivated him to pursue practical knowledge with sincerity, and inspired him to work diligently throughout his life—without any hint of laziness—was a lengthy conversation he had with Matteo Ricci about the Last Judgment. The details of this important dialogue can be found in the third and fourth articles of Matteo Ricci's writings *Jiren Shipian*. During their lengthy conversation, Matteo Ricci explained to Xu Guangqi that people not only live in this present life but also possess immortal souls. In the future, these souls will be reunited with their resurrected bodies and together they will face judgment by God during the Last Judgment. Some souls will ascend to heaven to enjoy eternal happiness, while others will be condemned to hell for eternal suffering. Influenced by this “ethics of the two worlds,” Xu Guangqi carefully examined and monitored his actions in this life through the lens of eschatology. As a result, he maintained a noble moral character throughout his life, dedicating himself wholeheartedly to serving his country and its people. He also strictly adhered to the moral commandments of Catholicism, becoming a model of devotion to both his country and his faith (Zhu 2001, p. 440; Chai 2002, p. 111).

Xu Guangqi's example highlights the impact of individual eschatology on Catholics during the Ming and Qing dynasties. This paper will examine works that frequently reference Augustine's sayings. We will elaborate several texts within the Jesuit Order that have a clear inheritance relationship.

2.1 The Overture of Diego de Pantoja's Quotation of Augustine's “Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus”

The missionaries who arrived in China during the late Ming dynasty took Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci of the Jesuit Order as their forerunners. They were the first Westerners to introduce Augustine's thoughts to the Chinese (Zhou 2017b, pp.125-35). Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), who accompanied Matteo Ricci to China, is the earliest individual to have quoted Augustine's eschatology explicitly. In his posthumous work, *Pangzi yiquan* 龐子遺詮 (*the Legacy of Pangzi*) (Standaert and Dudink 2002, vol. 2, p. 8),⁷ Augustine is quoted three times. The third volume of this book discusses the

⁷ This book was probably written after 1600, as it states, “in 1600 BC, Feilüe was born into the world as Jesus, taking on human nature through the Virgin Mary, a chaste maiden.”

significance of the Catholic liturgy for the purification of sins. According to Pantoja, any one who believes in other religions will never have the chance to enter heaven and will ultimately end up in hell. Diego de Pantoja states:

Saint Augustine stated that those who are determined to do good and cultivate virtue, even if they exert all their efforts outside of the Ecclesia (referring to the Church), will find it insufficient to erase their sins and appease the Lord's anger. This is similar to a spider's web being inadequate to keep out the cold. He also taught that virtue is the path to ascend to heaven and return to God. Those who aspire to do good, cultivate virtue, and enter heaven but do not follow the holy way of the Ecclesia are like a strong person running quickly but not on the right path. They may tire their muscles and bones, but how can they ever reach their destination? (ibid., vol. 2, p. 154)

This reflects Augustine's belief that "*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*" in his *Sermo ad Caesariensis ecclesiae plebem*. Augustine claimed, "No man can find salvation except in the Catholic Church. Outside the Catholic Church one can have everything except salvation. One can have honor, one can have the sacraments, one can sing alleluia, one can answer amen, one can have faith in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and preach it too, but never can one find salvation except in the Catholic Church."⁸ In the fourth volume of *Pangzi yiquan* 龐子遺詮 (*The Legacy of Pangzi*), when discussing angels and devils, it references Augustine's idea that guardian angels protect good people. It states: "God created my body. From pregnancy to birth, and from birth to death, I rely on the guardianship, reminders, and inspiration of the angels to avoid the harm of demons. Therefore, Saint Augustine said: Guardian angels are the angels from heaven. They descend to our earthly realm to protect the good people whom God hopes will ascend to heaven" (ibid., vol.2, p.194).

2.2. Alphonse Vagnoni's Detailed Quotations of Augustine's Eschatology

Alphonse Vagnoni's work, *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* 天主聖教四末論 (*Discussion of the Four Last Things of the Sagely Catholic Church*, which was published in 1636, contains 4 volumes. The book quotes Augustine approximately 40 times, a frequency higher than that of any other similar works.

2.2.1. The First Volume — *Sihou* 死候 (On the Time of Death)

⁸ <https://catholicism.org/eens-fathers.html> assessed on September 17, 2021.

This volume contains 19 chapters, discussing how people in this world should view death and treat the dead.⁹ In Chapter 1, titled "Death is Inevitable," the text discusses the inevitability of human death. It quotes Augustine: "Whether a person is good or evil is uncertain, but death is the only certainty" (1st volume, 1st *ye*, lower part). When talking about how the first ancestors' sin resulted in the physical death of humanity, he also quotes Augustine, "St. Augustine stated that the body of the first ancestor had the potential to either die or remain immortal. This possibility of death arose from the nature of the physical body, whereas the chance of not dying was a gift from the Lord. However, when this grace was lost due to sin, the one who could have lived forever was then forced to die" (2nd *ye*). Death is a result of sin. It is not created by God, but is instead brought upon humanity by their own actions. The story recounts how the first ancestors were tempted by the devil to eat the forbidden fruit and commit sin. Quoting Paul's words, "Sin entered the world through one man," Alphonse Vagnoni elaborates, "St. Augustine detailed that the first ancestor received life to pass on to his descendants. The consequences of obedience and disobedience would also extend to all subsequent generations. Those who were obedient not only received the grace of eternal life for themselves, but their descendants would also share in it. Conversely, for those who were disobedient, wouldn't the heavy penalty of death for their own bodies also apply to their descendants? The existence of the human body originally depends on the presence of the soul, and the existence of the soul relies on God's love and favor. If a person sins against the Lord, divine grace will surely be lost, and though the soul may inhabit the body, it becomes akin to a dead one" (3rd *ye*).

The soul is sustained by God, and the body is sustained by the soul. Without God, the soul dies; without the soul, the body dies. This idea comes from a famous saying by Augustine. After referencing the Psalms of David, which state that if a person loses their spiritual clarity, they are no different from the foolish, Alphonse Vagnoni returned to Augustine's thoughts: "St. Augustine further explained that once the first ancestor developed a proud heart, he desired eternal life akin to that of the Lord. When he was suppressed, he became like the death of a foolish beast. This reflects the supreme justice of the Lord. From this, we understand that the death of the physical body was not the original intention of the Lord; it resulted from human choice. God is simply enacting the law of sin punishment as originally determined. When a magistrate sentences a traitor to

⁹ Since there is no photocopied version of *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* 天主聖教四末論, the authors provide the folio numbers (*ye* 叶) for the quoted sentences based on the 1636 edition. Please note that the page numbering differs from today's standards; one folio corresponds to two pages in modern terms, and each folio is divided into upper and lower sections.

the death penalty, it is not the magistrate's original intention, but rather a consequence of the traitor's actions, with the magistrate merely applying the law" (Lower part of 3rd *ye*, upper part of 4th *ye*). The first ancestors rebelled against God's commandments, which resulted in original sin for all people. As a consequence, they should receive various punishments, including physical death, which is just.

In Chapter 2, titled "The Fearfulness of Death," it is discussed that all beings created by God love life and fear death. "St. Augustine remarked, 'Stupid beasts are born to die, and that's just the way it is.' However, these creatures fear death profoundly and are quite adept at avoiding it, as if they possess significant intelligence. Humans, on the other hand, were originally meant to live, but through disobedience to God's commandments, they brought death upon themselves. Thus, how much more should they fear of death? Since human life is considered more precious than that of beasts, their fear of losing it is even more intense" (Lower part of the 4th *ye*).

"St. Augustine also noted that many people live their lives knowing they cannot escape a fixed end date. Despite this awareness, they still desire to prolong their lives. Even those who aspire to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and enjoy true happiness often wish to delay their time of death to comfort their innate inclinations. This reveals that human life is indeed a very precious asset. Everyone loves and cherishes it, striving to preserve it at all costs. Therefore, it is no wonder that people fear death" (Upper part of 5th *ye*). From animals to humans, all beings cherish life and seek to avoid death, which is inherent to human nature. People, in particular, yearn for eternal life. There are various aspects that contribute to the fear of death, including differences that arise before death, at the moment of death, and afterward. These differences can stem from both external and internal causes, as well as distinctions between the body and the soul. In the following chapters of this volume, Alphonse Vagnoni analyzes these aspects one by one.

Chapter 4, titled "The Dreadfulness at the Moment of Death," discusses King David's prayer to God: "Rescue me in my time of death; do not let me be overcome by the dread of my enemies." Alphonse Vagnoni immediately references St. Augustine, who states, "The saint does not pray to God to be rescued from the fierce power of the enemy demons, but only to be delivered from the fear of the enemy demons. Why? Because the torment of this fear is more severe than all the tortures in the world" (Upper part of 9th *ye*). That is, to avoid succumbing to the emotion of fear.

In Chapter 6, titled "The Worldly Delusion of Fearing Physical Death but Not Spiritual Death," it begins with the statement: "According to St. Augustine's

theory, there are two types of life and death: physical and spiritual. The life of the body depends on the attachment of the spirit, while the life of the spirit relies on God's favor. When the body loses harmony among the four humors, the spirit departs, resulting in physical death. Conversely, when the spirit loses its harmony with God, the favor is lost, leading to a form of spiritual death" (Upper and lower parts of 14th *ye*). This implies that God is the source of the soul's life, and the soul is essential for the body's life. However, many people would rather choose spiritual death than physical death. "St. Augustine lamented this delusion, stating, 'Many individuals violate God's commandments out of fear of physical death, attempting to avoid the inevitable yet temporary death, only to fall into an avoidable eternal death. Isn't this pitiful? Isn't this astonishing?'" (Upper and lower parts of the 15th *ye*). When discussing the serious consequences of the Last Judgment, "St. Augustine reflected on the ancient scriptures, saying, 'Who doesn't love life, and who doesn't desire to see days of peace? Yet, do not love life in the realm of suffering and death, nor hope for peaceful days in a world that is neither peaceful nor harmonious...'" (Upper and lower parts of the 16th *ye*) It is truly foolish for people to prefer living in a chaotic world rather than entering the realm of true peace.

2.2.2. The Second Volume — The Judgment

This volume explores the concept of private judgment that every person faces upon death, as well as the public judgment that occurs at the resurrection on the Day of Judgment. It begins with a "General Discussion on the Eternal Retribution of Good and Evil," followed by a total of fifteen chapters.

Chapter 1, titled "Man Must Be Judged After Death," states: "St. Augustine asserted that what our holy religion has believed since ancient times is an established truth: once the human soul departs from the body, it is immediately subject to judgment regarding good and evil. This belief is not only reasonable but also highly beneficial for spiritual cultivation. Once a person's life ends, the opportunity to accumulate virtues, perform good deeds, commit sins, and transgressions also concludes. Each individual should receive corresponding rewards or punishments for what they have accumulated, without the need to wait for the public judgment at the resurrection" (This is noted on the lower part of the third *ye*). Thus, one's ascension to heaven or descent to hell can be determined through individual judgment.

Chapter 2, titled "The Public Judgment Is Indispensable," discusses the reasons for the necessity of public judgment. Goodness and evil are often concealed and unclear in the world; the righteous suffer while the wicked enjoy blessings, and rewards and punishments are not always immediately apparent. For the sake of justice, public judgment is essential, as previously argued by

Augustine. At the conclusion of this chapter, it states: "St. Augustine said: There is no need to offer many reasons. Simply acknowledge that the most true and spiritual Lord of all things, whose prophecies were fulfilled through the prophets and saints, and who spoke directly to His disciples, will also fulfill the prophecy of public judgment without exception. Therefore, the more one understands the truth, the more firmly one believes in it, and the greater benefit it will bring to true spiritual cultivation" (the seventh *ye*).

In Chapter 9, titled "The Truth of the Resurrection of the Dead," the discussion centers on the Creator's power to resurrect individuals in their original form. Saint Augustine made a relevant comment on this principle: "Consider the seeds of things. They are incredibly tiny when planted in the ground and are destined to decay. Initially, they lack consciousness or senses. However, when the time comes, they will surely germinate. One seed can multiply into ten, and those ten can grow into hundreds or thousands, thriving and flourishing. Who makes this happen? It is all the work of the divine will of God. Additionally, consider a skilled craftsman who shapes an object from gold. That object may be melted down or broken into pieces, taking on various forms, yet the craftsman can recreate it just as it was before. If a craftsman possesses such wisdom and skill, how could the all-wise and all-powerful Lord be incapable of doing the same? Moreover, think about plants and trees. In the winter, they appear dead and show no signs of life, but when spring arrives, they come back to life, blooming and bearing fruit. Given that the all-powerful Lord can bring all things to life in this way, how could He lack the ability to do the same for the human body? It is a narrow-minded viewpoint of the world that people often witness strange events but dismiss them as ordinary, while they find it hard to believe in things that are less commonly seen, even if they are founded in truth. What can be done about this?" (On the lower part of the 18th *ye* and the upper part of the 19th *ye*) Regarding the appearance of each person's body at the time of resurrection, Augustine's fundamental belief is that God has the ability to recreate a perfect spiritual body from the original materials. In Chapter 10, titled "How the Dead Are Resurrected," the focus shifts to the recombination of the body's original substance and the soul. Saint Augustine stated: "Even if all the original substances of the human body are completely scattered, leaving not the slightest trace behind, they cannot escape the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, the Lord. They will obey the command of the all-powerful Lord and be reunited, resulting in the resurrection of the original person. Since our Lord created all things out of nothing, how could He not be able to replenish the substance to compensate for the lack of the original substance?" (On both the upper and lower parts of the 20th *ye*)

In the following section of this chapter, the discussion of issues such as beauty or ugliness, youth or old age, health or illness, and wisdom or foolishness at the time of resurrection will primarily draw on Augustine's views. In Chapter 15, titled "The Many Benefits of the Thought of the Public Judgment for Spiritual Perfection," Saint Augustine states: "When we reach that dreadful day, we will first hear the angels blowing their trumpets. Looking around, we will see the world in ruins, and all people will be trembling in fear. Then we will be brought before the strict Lord's platform and hear an account of every kindness He has bestowed upon us and every sin we have committed. How could we possibly withstand His righteous anger? Alas, the period of mercy and forgiveness has passed, and the time of justice and punishment is gradually approaching. There is no way to escape. Thus, we must understand without a doubt that the Lord of judgment was more lenient before the judgement and will be more severe after the judgement" (On both the upper and lower parts of the 19th *ye*). As the end of the world approaches, people should feel a sense of urgency in their hearts. The witnesses at the time of judgment, in addition to God and the angels, will also include the sages and saints from previous ages (Upper part of the 20th *ye*). The sages of the past faced the same challenges as I do, yet they distinguished themselves from the crowd. In comparison, it has become evident that I have willingly fallen and positioned myself in a lowly state.

2.2.3. The Third Volume — "Hell"

This volume contains a total of seven chapters. In Chapter 2, titled "Types of Torments in Hell," it explains that the torments of hell can be generally classified into two categories: the torment of sensation and the torment of loss. The torment of sensation refers to the pain inflicted through the five external faculties—the senses—which is considered external pain. In contrast, the torment of loss pertains to the absence of all the blessings bestowed by God, leading to feelings of inner fear and anxiety; this can be viewed as an internal disaster. For human beings, ultimate happiness is found in the Beatific Vision, which means that nothing in this world can truly satisfy the human heart. Saint Augustine once stated, "We are truly born from You, and only You can fulfill our hearts. If people do not return to You, how can their hearts find peace and contentment?" (This quote is drawn from the lower part of the fourth *ye* of the third volume, referencing *conf.* 1: 1) Augustine also expressed, "Hell and all the torments within it are not truly terrifying. What is truly terrifying is losing the blessed countenance of the Heavenly Father and being eternally rejected by Him" (On the upper part of the fifth *ye*). This sentiment emphasizes that God is the very life of the soul, and losing God equates to losing life—a condition described as the second death. In Chapter 3, title "Various Torments According to the Divine Will," it further explains that this kind of death is all-encompassing.

A person's memory, understanding, and love become disconnected from friendship, kinship, beauty, goodness, and love. Instead, they are filled with regret, confusion, and hatred (as mentioned in the lower part of the sixth *ye*).

2.2.4. The Fourth Volume — "Heaven"

This volume consists of a total of thirteen chapters. In this volume, Augustine is referred to as "Aowuding 奥悟丁" or "Aowusiding 奥悟斯丁," possibly indicating a later compilation of this work. In Chapter 1, "Everyone Must Act for a Purpose," when discussing the true happiness that can truly satisfy the human heart, it states, "Saint Augustine said: What is true and complete happiness? It is the attainment of everything one desires, and all that one obtains must be entirely good, free from any evil" (This appears on the lower part of the second *ye* of the fourth volume). In Chapter 3, "Where Does Man's True Happiness Lie," it is explained that within the human soul, understanding and love act like the two hands of the soul, enabling one to "select and embrace the essence that represents true happiness," which is God—the Creator and the beginning of all things. At the same time, God is also the ultimate goal towards which all things aspire. As noted, "In the past, Saint Augustine said to God: One who knows all things but does not know You gains nothing useful and is extremely unfortunate. One who knows all things and also knows You does not merely know things in an absolute sense; it is the knowledge of You that brings true happiness. The reason for this is: My Lord, You created my heart to turn towards You. Therefore, if I do not return to You, my heart will surely find no peace or contentment. Thus, it can be understood that the source of true happiness must lie in the true Lord of all things..." (On the lower part of the sixth *ye*).

In Chapter 4, titled "How the Human Soul Sees the Essence of God," it is stated that true happiness comes from beholding the Holy Face of God. A few days after the death of *Riluoni* 日落尼 (also known as Saint Jerome), he appeared to another saint who loved him, named Augustine. Jerome revealed to Augustine, "The true happiness for me in heaven lies in constantly gazing upon the divine and wonderful essence of God" (On the upper part of the ninth *ye*). This vision also included Jerome sharing with Augustine that in heaven, he used the eyes of his spiritual body to forever behold God. Augustine remarked, "In heaven, what our spiritual eyes perceive is beyond the reach of our physical eyes, ears, and hearts in this world. It is a beauty that surpasses all other beauties" (On the lower part of the ninth *ye*). Augustine believed that the sights and sounds we experience with our spiritual senses in heaven greatly exceed those we perceive with our physical senses in this life. In Chapter 5, titled "How People in Heaven Perceive Things," Augustine explains, "The essence of God is truly a living

mirror, unlike the lifeless mirrors used in the secular world. A dead mirror reflects objects only when placed in front of the viewer's eyes. In contrast, the essence of God, as a living mirror, emanates its own light. Each spirit's perception (referring to the souls of angels and saints) varies in quantity, depth, and degree according to its merits and the blessed light bestowed upon it" (Lower part of the eleventh *ye*).

In Chapter 8, titled "Heaven: Virtues Complete and Flawless, Life Eternal and Death - Free" Saint Augustine once said: "In the world, no virtue is complete, no joy is everlasting, no wish is fully satisfied, and no life is without death. Only when all worldly affairs come to an end and one enters the Kingdom of Heaven can virtue be complete and without blemish, joy be free from any deficiency, wishes be fully fulfilled, life be eternal and without death, and the heart be steadfast and unchanging. Therefore, Heaven is also called the realm of eternal bliss and the land of true life" (On the lower part of the seventeenth *ye* and the upper part of the eighteenth *ye*). This means that the virtues and joys in Heaven are perfect and flawless. In Chapter 9, titled "What are the Blessings of the Bodies in Heaven," it discusses how the bodies of people in Heaven move nimbly, quickly, and without obstruction. Saint Augustine said: "For the blessed people in Heaven, moving from near to far is as swift as a thought" (On the lower part of the twentieth *ye*). This indicates that the saints in Heaven, because they possess spiritual bodies, do not move as ponderously as they do in the mortal world, but instead move as swiftly as a fleeting thought.

In Chapter 10, titled "The Blessings and Joys of the Five Sense Organs of the Body", when discussing the blessings and joys associated with the sense of hearing, Saint Augustine remarked, "The deeds of all the saints in heaven are solely to extol the kindness and virtue of the Lord and to praise His wonderful beauty. They will never grow tired of it" (On the twenty-second *ye*). In heaven, the only music is the praise of God, and one will never tire of listening to it. When addressing the sense of touch (associated with the limbs), Saint Augustine said to his soul and body: "What does my soul hope for? What does my body desire? Only when I reach the heavenly kingdom will everything be complete, and all the desires of both the soul and the body will be fully satisfied. What doubt can there be?" (See the lower section of the twenty-third *ye*) In heaven, all desires of the soul and body are perfectly fulfilled. In Chapter 13, "The Remembrance of the End is Very Beneficial for Spiritual Cultivation", when discussing how the thought of the end can conquer pride, it is noted that Saint Augustine once admonished a proud person, saying: "The glory of one's ancestors, the splendor of worldly power, and the respect and honor given by others may foster a proud heart. In those moments, one should reflect that these accolades are all tied to death, that your body will return to dust and perish, while your soul will be

judged by the Lord. Consider where the emperors, ministers, and prime ministers of the past are now and what traces they have left behind. Look around at the tombs everywhere. Who can distinguish between kings and subjects, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the noble and the humble, the wise and the foolish, the officials and the common people?" (See the upper section of the twenty-eighth *ye*) All things are transient, and one should revere God, the ultimate Judge.

The four-volume work *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* 天主聖教四末論 by Alphonse Vagnoni comprehensively expounds the Catholic eschatological views. Its citations of Augustine are also comprehensive. Later works of the same kind in the Ming and Qing dynasties did not surpass it in terms of the number of citations and the breadth of themes.

2.3. Philippe Couplet's *Simo zhenlun* 四末真論 (True Treatise on the Four Last Things)

Simo zhenlun 四末真論 (*True Treatise on the Four Last Things*) written by Philippe Couplet was engraved and published in Songjiang 松江 in 1675. The "Four Last Things" refer to death, judgment, heaven, and hell. The book includes both illustrations and text.

After the first section, titled "An Account of the Time of Death," there is an "Appendix of Ten Sayings of the Saints." Saint Augustine is cited twice in this appendix: "Saint Augustine said: Whether a person is good or evil is not yet certain; however, the inevitability of death is the only certain thing" (Zhou 2024, vol. 2, p.160). "Saint Augustine said: Those who carefully avoid evil deeds and earnestly practice the right path during their lifetime will surely have nothing to fear" (*ibid.*, p.160).

After the second part, titled "An Account of the Judgment," there is also an "Appendix of Ten Sayings of the Saints," in which Augustine is cited three times: "St. Augustine asserted that what our holy religion has believed since ancient times is an established truth: once the human soul departs from the body, it is immediately subject to judgment regarding good and evil. This belief is not only reasonable but also highly beneficial for spiritual cultivation. Once a person's life ends, the opportunity to accumulate virtues, perform good deeds, commit sins, and transgressions also concludes. Each individual should receive corresponding rewards or punishments for what they have accumulated, without the need to wait for the public judgment at the resurrection. Augustine also stated: There is no need to offer many reasons. Simply acknowledge that the most true and spiritual Lord of all things, whose prophecies were fulfilled through the prophets and saints, and who spoke directly to His disciples, will

also fulfill the prophecy of public judgment without exception. Therefore, the more one understands the truth, the more firmly one believes in it, and the greater benefit it will bring to true spiritual cultivation" (ibid., p.160). "Augustine stated: Consider the seeds of things. They are incredibly tiny when planted in the ground and are destined to decay. Initially, they lack consciousness or senses. However, when the time comes, they will surely germinate. One seed can multiply into ten, and those ten can grow into hundreds or thousands, thriving and flourishing. Who makes this happen? It is all the work of the divine will of God. Since the all-powerful Lord can create everything as it is, why would He be less capable when it comes to the human body?!" (ibid., p. 160).

After the third part, titled "An Account of Heaven" in the "Appendix of Ten Sayings of the Saints," there are three sayings attributed to Augustine. He stated: "All the holy beings in heaven clearly behold the essence of God. This vision is both their task and their delight, allowing them to live a blessed life. The more they behold God's essence, the more they savor it, and the more blessed their lives become. As they savor it, their desire to experience it again grows. This desire is neither burdensome nor urgent; they can savor it repeatedly without ever growing tired of it" (ibid., 160). "Saint Augustine stated: the essence of God is truly a living mirror, unlike the lifeless mirrors used in the secular world. A dead mirror reflects objects only when placed in front of the viewer's eyes. In contrast, the essence of God, as a living mirror, emanates its own light. Each spirit's perception (referring to the souls of angels and saints) varies in quantity, depth, and degree according to its merits and the blessed light bestowed upon it" (ibid., p.160). "Saint Augustine stated that in this world, no virtue is perfect, no joy is everlasting, no wish is fully fulfilled, and no life is free from death. It is only when worldly matters come to an end and one enters the Kingdom of Heaven that virtue can be entirely pure, joy can be complete, wishes can be fully satisfied, life can be eternal without death, and the heart can remain steadfast without change" (ibid., p.160).

After the fourth part, titled "An Account of Hell," there is an "Appendix of Ten Sayings of the Saints." In this appendix, Saint Augustine is quoted: "Saint Augustine often said that hell and all its torments are not truly terrifying. What is truly terrifying is the loss of the blessed presence of the Heavenly Father and being eternally rejected by Him"(ibid., p.161).¹⁰

¹⁰ Philippe Couplet's work, *True Treatise on the Four Last Things*, is included in the compilation *Texts of Western Learning in the Ming and Qing Dynasties*, edited by Huang Xingtao and Wang Guorong (Huang and Wang 2013, vol. 2, 843, 846, 849-850, 852).

When comparing Philippe Couplet's *True Treatise on the Four Last Things* with Alphonse Vagnoni's work, *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* 天主聖教四末論 (*Discussion of the Four Last Things of the Sagely Catholic Church*), it's noticeable that Couplet incorporated several quotations from Augustine that Alphonse Vagnoni also used, and the wording is identical in both texts. However, there are two or three sentences in Couplet's work that do not appear in Vagnoni's. This indicates that while Couplet drew inspiration from Vagnoni's *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun*, he also contributed a small amount of original content to his own writing.

2.4. Manuel Dias's *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解

Manuel Dias's work *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解 (*Direct Interpretation of the Bible*), written around 1636, consists of fourteen volumes in total. The first eight volumes are arranged with the Lord's Day as a clue, while the last six volumes center on the Feast Day. Together, they provide detailed annotations on the scriptures related to these festivals. (Zhang et al, 2014, vol. 17 pp. 288-89) Manuel Dias follows the tradition of annotating scriptures by extensively citing the Church Fathers and Scholastic philosophers, with a particular emphasis on Augustine. In Volume Fourteen of this book, there is a dedicated chapter titled "General Discussion on the Four Last Things." This chapter includes 13 references to Augustine's quotations, most of which differ from those cited by Alphonse Vagnoni and others.

The section titled "The Time of Death" discusses how a person's attitude towards death influences their views on wealth and pride. Death is certain, and life is essentially a journey towards it. If wealthy individuals behave unkindly while enjoying their riches, they will face significant consequences. Therefore, it is important to reject the pursuit of wealth and to prioritize virtue instead (ibid., vol. 19, pp. 520-21). "Saint Augustine stated: originally humans were not meant to die. However, it was the sin of pride that led to their mortality. This death is a consequence of pride. God punishes pride to encourage people to reflect on their actions and cultivate humility. When individuals reflect on their own mortality, they effectively close off the path of pride and open the way to humility (ibid., vol. 19, p. 522). This aligns with the notion of overcoming pride by contemplating death, as mentioned by Alphonse Vagnoni. Augustine also noted that life is filled with uncertainties; for instance, a father cannot predict whether his son will be good or evil, wealthy or poor, strong or weak. However, the certainty of a person's inevitable death is indisputable" (ibid., vol. 19, p. 523). Life is short. "Our lives are like letters being delivered, swiftly heading towards death. When a person is born from their mother's womb, it is as if they are emerging from a tomb,

and when they die and are laid to rest in the grave, these two tombs are close to each other" (ibid., vol. 19, pp. 526-27). Therefore, one should make the most of their time to cultivate themselves diligently.

In the section titled "The Judgment," Augustine discusses the powerful enemies and bitter foes of Christ in the last days. These adversaries subdue people's hearts through force, bribes, and deception, demonstrating hostility toward God and causing significant harm (ibid., vol. 19, p. 532). Augustine refutes those who oppose the resurrection, asserting that God is all-knowing and all-powerful, far beyond human imagination, and that resurrection is not difficult for God (ibid., vol. 19, p. 536).

Concerning the appearance of people's bodies at the time of resurrection, Augustine explains: "The work of God is perfect. Children are not fully developed humans due to their immaturity, and the elderly are not fully perfect either because of bodily decline. At the time of resurrection, there will be neither the young nor the old. Moreover, there will be no distinction between black and white; black-colored individuals will be transformed white. Those who were blind, paralyzed, or had other physical impairments will, at the time of resurrection, possess bodies that are perfectly proportionate, without any excess or deficiency, and will be completely whole" (ibid., vol. 19, p. 537). Augustine's statement about all black people turning white upon resurrection may relate to his concept of "light." Currently, Christ deeply understands people's hearts and serves as a witness; however, he will conduct a great judgment and determine people's sins in the future (ibid., vol. 19, p. 543).

In the section titled "Heaven," it elaborates on the concept of "the good being resurrected to enjoy eternal life." The Gospels recount the account of Jesus being transfigured on the mountain, a moment that left the disciples in a state of ecstasy. This experience parallels the "the state of contentment and joy experienced by Confucius and his student Yan Hui." Augustine describes this as a "faint shadow of true happiness," representing a foretaste of the joy of heaven (ibid., vol. 19, p. 550). Heaven is depicted as a place of light—a wonderful realm where great and small lights shine upon each other, each emitting its own radiance and showcasing its unique beauty. "Each has different merits, and each light has its own uniqueness" (ibid., vol. 19, p. 556). "The first ancestors, who were able to avoid death, are contrasted with the saints who cannot die" (ibid., vol. 19, p. 556). In heaven, the status of the saints is much higher than that of the first ancestors.

What joy do the saints experience in heaven? Unlike the fragmented pleasures of the world, which can only provide one type of satisfaction at a time, the joy of God encompasses all desires and can fulfill every need. "The gold of

the world does not come with jade. The jade does not come with a palace. The palace does not come with property. The property does not come with food and clothing. What a pity! People need many things to find pleasure. God is the gathering place of all needs and pleasures (ibid., vol. 19, pp. 562-563).

For believers, it is worthwhile to exchange the sufferings of this brief earthly life for the eternal blessings and beauty of heaven (ibid., vol. 19, p. 564). This perspective reflects a strong tendency to undervalue this world in favor of the next, indicating a disposition towards renunciation of worldly attachments.

2.5. Zhang Xingyao's *Bian simo* 辨四末

Zhang Xingyao 張星曜(1633 - 1715?), also known by his courtesy name Zichen 紫臣, was a native of Renhe County in the Hangzhou Prefecture, Zhejiang Province. His notable work, *Tianjiao mingbian* 天教明辨 (*Clear Discrimination of the Heavenly Teaching*) published in 1711, comprises a total of twenty volumes. The content is diverse and complex, exploring all aspects of Catholicism. This work can be considered China's equivalent of *Summa Theologica*. The seventh volume is titled "*Bian simo* 辨四末" (*Discernment of the Four Last Things*), and it includes several relevant quotations from Augustine.

When it comes to the common people being misled and fearing the death of the body while neglecting to fear the death of the soul, it quotes: "Saint Augustine stated that human life has two aspects: the physical form and the inner soul. The life of the body depends on the soul's attachment, while the life of the soul relies on God's favor. When the body loses the balance of the four humors, the soul departs, resulting in death. Similarly, when the soul loses its harmony with God, it forfeits God's favor and experiences a kind of death as well" (Standaert et al, 2013, vol. 8, p. 181).¹¹ "Saint Augustine lamented the extreme confusion of the world, stating: Many people violate the commandments of the Lord out of fear of death. They try to avoid the temporary death that can be avoided but ultimately fall into the eternal death that can also be avoided. Is it not sad? Is it not strange!" (ibid., vol. 8 p.182)¹² "Saint Augustine also remarked: The Lord prolongs the lives of the wicked, actually hoping that they will repent. Otherwise, it will surely benefit the good people" (ibid., vol. 8 p.199).¹³

¹¹ This sentence is identical to the text found in Chapter 6 of "The Time of Death" from Alphonse Vagnoni's *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun*. This sentence does not appear in Philippe Couplet's work.

¹² This sentence also appears in Chapter 6 of "The Time of Death." Philippe Couplet does not include this sentence.

¹³ This sentence also appears in Chapter 10 of "The Time of Death." Philippe Couplet has omitted this sentence.

"Saint Augustine stated: humans were originally not meant to die. They incurred the sin of pride and thus faced death. God punishes pride with death, intending for people to reflect on this punishment and become humble. When individuals contemplate their death, they effectively block the path of pride and open the path of humility (ibid., vol. 8 p.229)."¹⁴ "The Lord declared: The days of human life are evil days. Saint Augustine explained: the days of human life are filled with false joys, inappropriate pleasures, sorrows that harm the soul, and fears that pierce the heart. Therefore, they are considered evil. Given that the state of the world is so evil, why do you still love and desire a long life? How confused you are!" (ibid., vol. 8 p.274)¹⁵ "Saint Augustine remarked: Once the life of a living person comes to an end, the opportunity for accumulating virtues, performing good deeds, gathering vices, and committing sins also concludes. Each person should receive corresponding rewards for what they have accumulated, without needing to wait for public judgment at the time of the resurrection of all people. He also stated: Regarding the most true and spiritual Lord of all things, all that was prophesied through the prophets and saints... Just observe the seeds of things in the ground. They are extremely tiny and are bound to decay..." (ibid., vol. 8 pp. 306-07)¹⁶

After our comparison, when compiling the content about "the Four Last Things" in *Tianjiao mingbian* 天教明辨 (*Clear Discrimination of the Heavenly Teaching*), Zhang Xingyao mainly drew on the works of Alfonse Vagnoni, and also incorporated the works of Manuel Dias and Philippe Couplet.

3. Gabriel de Magalhães's Translation of *Fuhuo lun* 復活論 (*On the Resurrection*) in *Summa Theologiae*

Chaoxing xueyao 超性學要 is the first Chinese translation of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, translated by Louis Buglio (1606-1682) and Gabriel de Magalhães, in which the tenth paragraph of the third major branch, the two books of *Fuhuo lun* 復活論, were translated by Gabriel de Magalhães. *Fuhuo lun* 復活論 was printed in 1677, just after the death of Gabriel de

¹⁴ This passage aligns with the text in "The Time of Death" found in Manuel Dias's work *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解 (Direct Interpretation of the Bible).

¹⁵ This sentence does not appear in the works of Alphonse Vagnoni and Philippe Couplet, indicating that Zhang Xingyao has alternative sources.

¹⁶ In this passage, the two sentences "Once the life of a living person comes to an end" and "Just observe the seeds of things in the ground" are identical to texts found in Chapter 1 of "The Judgment" by Alphonse Vagnoni in his work, *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* (天主聖教四末論), as well as in "The Doctrine of the Judgment" in Philippe Couplet's "True Treatise on the Four Last Things." This clearly indicates that Zhang Xingyao borrowed material from his predecessors. Additionally, the phrase "the most true and spiritual Lord of all things" appears in Philippe Couplet's work but is absent in Alphonse Vagnoni's writings.

Magalhães. *Fuhuo lun* 復活論 focuses on the issues of the Last Judgment, the resurrection of the body, and heaven and hell, so it is closely related to “De novissimis 四終.” In *Fuhuo lun* 復活論, there are seven quotations from Augustine.

In the “*Shu* 疏 (Annotation)” section of Chapter Two, titled “Will the Angels Have Something to Do in Our Resurrection,” in Volume One of “On the Resurrection” Augustine is quoted as saying that when the resurrection occurs, God will allow the angels to participate in the process (Zhang et al, 2014, vol. 13 589). In Chapter Three, titled “Do the Ashes of Each Person's Body Have a Natural Tendency to Reunite with Their Soul” of the same volume, it is stated that at the time of resurrection, God can completely transcend natural laws to reunite the body and soul. In the “*Bo* 駁 (Objection)” section, which expresses doubts, Thomas Aquinas cites Augustine and argues that the body has a natural inclination to unite with the soul, therefore, there is no need for supernatural intervention (ibid., vol. 13, P. 620). In the “*Zheng* 正 (Reply to Objection)” section, Thomas Aquinas addresses these doubts by asserting that the body does not possess a natural tendency to unite with the soul; rather, it has only the “*Rongde* 容德 (capacity of reception),” a passive ability to receive and unite with the soul. This union, he argues, requires divine intervention. Aquinas emphasizes the importance of correctly understanding Augustine's statement (ibid., vol. 13, p. 621). The resurrection of the body depends on God reshaping it, much like a potter reshapes clay.

In Chapter Three, titled “Will All the Four Humors of the Human Body, Namely White, Black, Yellow, and Red, be Resurrected” from Volume One, Augustine is quoted expressing that all components of the human body—such as the five sense organs, bones, body fluids, and so on—can indeed be resurrected. God is capable of using the same atoms to recombine them into a body, albeit a spiritual one (ibid., vol. 13 p. 648). In Chapter Three, titled “Will All the Resurrected be Men?” also from Volume One, Augustine indicates that in heaven, individuals will retain their male and female genders, unlike angels (ibid., vol. 13, p. 657).

In the “*Bo* 駁 (Objection)” section of Chapter Two, titled “Will the Resurrected Move with Swiftiness and Lightness?” from Volume Two, it is noted that Augustine states, “For the resurrected, not only should the soul love God, but the body should also love God. The soul always loves God and cannot be separated from Him. So, is it appropriate to say that it moves? The same applies to the body; it is clear that it cannot move with swiftiness and lightness (ibid., vol. 13 p. 739). Here, if the soul in heaven loves God and continually

gazes at Him without being separated, when it is said that the soul “moves,” does that imply a state of separation?

In the “*Bo 駁*(Objection)” section, it raises doubts in Chapter Three, titled “Can the Resurrected Move in an Instant?” of Volume Two, it is noted that “Saint Augustine said: Whenever the soul desires to move to a certain place, the body will follow. The movement resulting from the power of desire occurs suddenly and takes only an instant.” This implies that the resurrected will indeed move instantaneously (*ibid.*, vol. 13 p. 742). The soul in heaven, along with its spiritual body, can be considered as one entity. Its movements are distinctly different from those of a physical body and are much faster, almost as swift as thoughts.

Fuhuo lun 復活論(*On the Resurrection*) delves into detailed issues and reflects the characteristics of medieval scholastic philosophy. Here, Augustine's quotations, as an authoritative Church Father, are highly esteemed. Whether presented as “doubts” or “positive arguments,” his perspectives on resurrection are thoroughly explored.

4. Thomás Ortiz's *Sizhong lüeyi* 四終略意

Thomás Ortiz's (also known as Bai Duoma 白多瑪), an Augustinian friar from Spain, arrived in China in 1695 and authored several works, including *Shengjiao qieyao* 聖教切要(*Essentials of the Catholic Faith*) and *Yaojing lüejie* 要經略解 (*Concise Explanations of Holy Scripture*)要經略解. His book, *Sizhong lüeyi* 四終略意(*Brief Meaning of the Four Last Things*) was published in 1705 and has since been reprinted multiple times. This work is divided into five chapters, each addressing a specific topic: the time of death, the individual judgment, the general judgment, hell, and heaven.

In discussing the “individual judgment,” Thomás Ortiz writes, “The severity of the individual judgment is truly terrifying. Saint Augustine reflected on it and noted: at the judgment, our Lord is the judge who decides the case. Below, hell opens its mouth wide to swallow the sinners. On one side stand various sins, which serve as the true evidence. On the other side are a group of demons, acting as accusers and executioners. Additionally, guardian angels serve as witnesses to the graces that have been bestowed. The soul stands as the defendant, while the conscience of the wicked person acts as the record book, documenting the sins. When the sinner perceives the multitude of witnesses surrounding him—having no words to reply, no means to escape, and no hope for the future—one can only imagine the depth of his terror and

distress." The text vividly describes how sinners, facing severe punishment, find themselves with nowhere to flee (Ren and Wang 2005, vol. 5 p. 123).

When discussing the suffering of sinners who cannot see God, it states, "Saint Augustine stated, if the wicked lose God but obtain all blessings, the suffering they experience would still be unbearable!" It provides the example of Absalom, the son of King David, who felt extreme sorrow because he could not see David. And then it states, "Augustine says, the anxiety of losing the most benevolent and merciful God, along with the suffering of not being able to enjoy the sight of His divine countenance, is so dreadful and terrifying that it surpasses all the sufferings of hell!" (ibid., vol. 5, p. 133)

When addressing the torments of hell, it mentions the fierceness of the fire in hell. "Augustine states, compared with the fire in hell, even the fiercest and most brutal fire in the world cannot be compared at all!" (ibid., vol. 5, p. 135) It also describes the punishment of hell, where water, fire, heat, and cold coexist. "Augustine says, this alternating and opposing suffering is a great torment for the wicked. Imagine being placed into a red-hot iron ball or in the center of a large circle of fire; as I am being burned, I am suddenly moved into a lake of ice water. How could I endure such suffering? Moreover, in the sea of fire in hell, if I were suddenly transported into a sea of snow and was forever subjected to the alternating and opposing sufferings of fire and snow, how could I bear it? Additionally, if the body is either in the fire or in the snow and is always bound by fetters, unable to move left or right, the suffering would be even more unbearable....." (ibid., vol. 5, p. 135)

Thomás Ortiz depicted the sufferings of the "three faculties of the soul" — memory, understanding, and love — in hell. He emphasizes that if people focus only on worldly things without remembering, understanding, or loving God, they will ultimately face eternal suffering in hell (ibid., vol. 5, p. 136). Similarly, Alphonse Vagnoni's work, *Tianzhu shengjiao simolun* 天主聖教四末論 (*Discussion of the Four Last Things of the Sagely Catholic Church*) conveys a comparable message. This notion reflects Augustine's theory of the image, which encompasses the concept of "endowing image, losing image, and restoring image."

When discussing the topic of heaven, it is said, "the wonders of heaven are far beyond human comprehension. Attempting to grasp these marvels with our limited abilities is like trying to contain the entire ocean in a small cup. When Saint Augustine was about to write about the wonders of heaven to Saint Jerome, Saint Jerome, unexpectedly, ascended to heaven and appeared to Saint Augustine, radiating extraordinary brilliance. He asked Augustine, 'What is

your intention? What are you seeking? Can your fist encompass the vastness of the earth? Can your hand stop the swift motion of the heavens? To try to measure the immeasurable and understand the unfathomable is a futile endeavor.¹⁷ Despite Saint Augustine's remarkable intelligence and knowledge, which surpassed that of all others at his time, he still could not fully comprehend the wonders of heaven. If he struggled to grasp these concepts, how could anyone else hope to understand them?.....When Augustine attempted to estimate and describe the eternal bliss of heaven, he reflected on the beautiful things in our world and remarked,in this valley of tears, a place of exile, there exists an abundance of exquisite beauty. Now imagine the realm of eternal happiness in heaven, the homeland of saints, a place of eternal life. How incredibly beautiful, opulent, splendid, glorious, and blissful it must be!" (ibid., vol. 5, pp. 138-39).

When comparing the glories and blessings of heaven with those of the world, "Saint Augustine stated, people in the world may possess gold but not jade; they may have jade but not a palace; own a palace but have no offspring; have offspring but lack food and clothing. Those who obtain one thing often lack nine others, and therefore, they cannot experience complete happiness. The blessings of heaven are innumerable; there is no blessing that does not exist, and all blessings are gathered together. The soul enjoys the true blessings that pertain to its understanding, memory, and love. The various blessings and joys in heaven far exceed all other blessings" (ibid., vol. 5, p. 141).¹⁸ When discussing the pleasures experienced through the five senses of the physical body in heaven, Augustine is also referenced. For example, the experience of taste in heaven takes on a different significance. "Saint Augustine remarked: the magnitude of the taste and the joy of experiencing it are beyond any explanation. The people in heaven constantly savor this flavor, always yearning to taste it, and can continue to enjoy it. The more they taste, the more they long to taste. The longer they taste, the deeper their desire grows. While tasting, they do not feel boredom, and when they wish to taste, they do not feel hunger. Thus, there is never a time when they do not wish to taste, nor is there

¹⁷ This legend is also referenced in Alphonse Vagnoni's work, *Tianzhu shengjiao simulun* 天主聖教四末論 (*Discussion of the Four Last Things of the Sagely Catholic Church*), specifically in the third chapter of the "Heaven." Though the wording differs between the two accounts. Even before them, in 1607, Thomas Mayor, a Dominican missionary working among the Chinese in the Philippines, mentioned this legend in his book *Xinkan gewu qiongli bianlan* 新刊格物窮理便覽 (*Newly Printed Record of the Investigation of Things and Exhaustive Examination of Principle*) on the left side of the 251st *ye*.

¹⁸ This expression is somewhat similar to what is mentioned in the section titled "The Joy of the Saints" in Manuel Dias's work *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解 (*Direct Interpretation of the Bible*); however, the Chinese expressions differ significantly, clearly indicating that Thomás Ortiz does not follow Manuel Dias's work.

a time when their desires go unfulfilled. The joy it brings is always complete, and the saints continuously fully enjoy this joy" (ibid., vol. 5, p. 142).

In comparison to similar works, Thomás Ortiz's writing style is vivid and emotive, with his descriptions being striking. Under his pen, Augustine appears as a painter, allowing the wicked to experience the terrifying scenes of the "Hell Scroll" in ukiyo-e while enabling the righteous to enter the glorious and resplendent heaven illustrated in Gustave Doré's edition of *The Divine Comedy*.

5. Quotes of Augustine's Purgatory Supplemented by Pedro de la Piñuela and Li Wenyu

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Augustine's eschatology was referenced in various works compiled by Jesuits and Augustinians. Though these references were often fragmented, their concise and meaningful nature allowed for a coherent reflection of Augustine's thoughts when considered together. Among these references, Augustine's views on the Last Judgment, the resurrection of the body, the punishment of the wicked in hell, and the ultimate happiness of the saints (the beatific vision) in heaven were highlighted. Overall, Augustine's eschatological doctrines are well-represented in Chinese documents from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Notably, the frequency of quotations regarding his views on eschatology is comparable to those concerning his understanding of the Trinity and *Imago dei*. This suggests that, within the Chinese context of the Ming and Qing dynasties, Augustine's theories of *Imago dei* and his thoughts about the ultimate destiny of humanity were particularly emphasized.

Augustine's ideas about purgatory, the intermediate state, and the belief that the good deeds and prayers of the living can benefit the souls of the deceased are seldom quoted. This may be because, although the concept of purgatory had its early foundations in Augustine's thought—referred to as the "true father of purgator" by Jacques Le Goff—it was more fully developed by other thinkers in the Middle Ages. Currently, the only notable citation of Augustine on this topic comes from Pedro de la Piñuela (Shi Duolu 石铎禄, 1650-1704), who referenced him twice in his book *Ai'jin Lianling Lun* 哀矜炼灵论 (*On Almsgiving for the Souls in Purgatory*). He noted, "Saint Augustine once said: Performing Mass, giving alms, and observing great fasts for the souls in purgatory are deeds of extraordinary merit" (Standaert et al. 2009, vol. 21, p. 257). He further stated, "(The suffering in purgatory) is no different from eternal suffering, except for the distinction between the finiteness of purgatorial pain and the infiniteness of eternal torment. Those within the Church

constantly fear it. One should not claim that entering purgatory is a blessing. Saint Augustine remarked: If a person speaks such words and harbors such expectations, is not it he extremely foolish? Nowadays, when a person burns their finger for just half an hour, they can barely endure it. How then could one withstand the fire of purgatory for several seasons with their entire body and limbs? It may be easy to perform good deeds during one's lifetime to atone for sins and punishments, yet many people are lazy and procrastinate, thereby suffering greatly after death. What a pity!" (ibid., vol. 24, pp. 262-63)

In the late Qing Dynasty, Li Wenyu (1840-1911), a Chinese Jesuit, wrote a book titled *Lianyu lieshuo* 炼狱略说 (*A Brief Account of Purgatory*) in the Xinwei year of the Tongzhi reign (1871). This work was later revised and published as *Lianyu kao* 炼狱考 (*The Treatise on Purgatory*) in 1885 and reprinted by Cimutang 慈母堂 (Motherly Love Hall) in Shanghai in 1905.

First, Augustine affirmed the existence of a place called purgatory after death. This concept is distinct from hell; those who end up in hell are never forgiven, while the Bible indicates that some individuals can still have their sins absolved after death. Purgatory serves as a place for the purification of souls who have committed only minor sins, and it is described as being underground.

"Saints Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, and others have stated that, according to our Lord's words, people can still have their sins forgiven after they pass away. However, once someone enters hell, there will be no possibility of forgiveness forever. Thus, it is evident that, in addition to hell, there is also purgatory" (Li 1905, ye 2-3).¹⁹

"The Old Testament says, 'I went down to the underworld and had pity on those who were in death and were hoping for the Lord's rescue, and I illuminated them with a bright light.' Saint Augustine interpreted this scripture by stating that after Jesus was crucified, He descended into purgatory. Additionally, on the Requiem Mass, the priest prays to the Lord, saying, 'Lord, please grant the souls in the dark prison the opportunity to be released from punishment.' The term 'dark prison' refers to the underworld. Therefore, it is clear that purgatory is located in the underworld"(ibid., ye 6).

¹⁹ The authors provide the folio numbers (ye 叶) for the quoted sentences based on the original edition (Li 1905). Please note that the page numbering differs from today's standards; one folio corresponds to two pages in modern terms. The authors translated the literature from Chinese to English.

Secondly, the soul must endure great suffering from the purifying fire in purgatory. Although it may seem absurd in theory to purify an intangible soul with tangible fire, Li Wenyu also quoted from Augustine:

"Saint Augustine once said: 'It is indeed a strange phenomenon that a physical fire burns a spiritual body, but it is a fact. Just as everyone knows that the soul and body combine to form a human being, no one can fully understand how they combine and how they function. How, then, can we fully comprehend the matters in purgatory? Most people have sinned against the Lord because they have overly loved physical things. Therefore, isn't it appropriate for God to punish them with physical fire?'" (ibid., ye 7)

Thirdly, the duration of punishment in purgatory depends on the will of God and is also related to the severity of the sins committed during one's lifetime. However, the soul itself cannot reduce its punishment in purgatory because the merits and demerits accumulated during one's life have already been determined and cannot be changed after death.

Fourthly, the good deeds, Masses, intercessions, prayers, and other acts performed by the deceased's relatives, friends, fellow believers, and the Church can help reduce the punishment in purgatory, allowing the deceased to exit purgatory earlier and ascend to heaven. The following sentences are particularly worthy of full quotation:

"Saint Augustine stated, 'Alms giving and assisting the poor to help the souls in purgatory is a highly meritorious deed'" (ibid., ye 25).

"(on atonement), Augustine remarked, 'The prayers of the Church, the sacrifices on the altar, and the acts of alms giving can all benefit the deceased. Since the Holy Church practices the sharing of merits, this applies not only to the living but also to the dead'" (ibid., ye 28).

"(Regarding heartfelt prayer and silent supplication), both can help souls in purgatory to be exempt from punishment and absolved of sins. Saint Augustine said, 'The prayers of the righteous are like keys to the gates of heaven.' He also stated, 'When the prayers of the good ascend to heaven, the mercy of God descends to the earth'" (ibid., ye 34).

"Acts of mercy and aiding the poor can replace the punishment of souls in purgatory. Therefore, from the very beginning and continuing to this day, whenever a believer passes away, the Holy Church always donates alms on their behalf. During Saint Augustine's lifetime, when a believer passed away, their relatives often provided food to the poor, demonstrating that almsgiving can save souls. If someone's ability does not match their intentions, particularly if their

family is extremely poor, that is understandable. However, for wealthier families: why not allocate a portion of their wealth to assist the souls in purgatory? (ibid., ye 35).

This can be considered the standard position of the Catholic Church regarding Purgatory since the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Although Li Wenyu did not mention indulgences directly, the concept of Purgatory serves as the theoretical basis for them. However, due to opposition from Protestant churches, indulgences were abolished, and the theory of Purgatory, which underpinned them, was also rejected. This is a topic that Li Wenyu, as a Catholic, chose not to address in his book.

When analyzed together, these Chinese texts provide a comprehensive reflection of Augustine's thoughts of eschatology. They cover his views on the Last Judgment, the resurrection of the body, the punishment of the wicked in hell, and the saints' experience of supreme happiness (the beatific vision) in heaven. However, they omit concepts such as purgatory, the intermediate state, and the belief that the good deeds and prayers of the living can benefit the souls of the deceased.

Conclusions

In the case of Matteo Ricci, who was part of the first generation of missionaries that arrived in China during the late Ming Dynasty, there was already a notable emphasis on using eschatology to address issues concerning what happens after death. Confucianism, as articulated by Confucius, held a limited view, with the statement, "We don't even know about life; how can we know about death?" The missionaries supplemented Confucianism's focus on life—what can be termed its "ethics of one world"—with the "ethics of two worlds" found in monotheistic thought.

Some Confucian scholars, such as Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562-1633), Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565-1630), and Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1557-1627), viewed this integration as a valid solution to the questions surrounding life, death, and the concept of absolute justice—the correlation between virtue and fortune. The influence of these missionaries and their Chinese followers facilitated the spread of Catholic individual eschatology (the theory of the four last things) in China.

Given that the theory of the four last things is closely associated with Augustine, his views on individual eschatology—covering themes of death, heaven, and hell—were introduced in significant detail during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Even the concept of Purgatory, which typically garnered less

attention, was thoroughly presented during this period. Thus, from Matteo Ricci and Diego de Pantoja onward, there was a continuity of Catholic individual eschatology during the Ming and Qing dynasties, reflecting Augustin's influence throughout.

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