

Augustine's Early Commentaries on the Pauline's Epistles: Outline of the 2011–2013 Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research Project

Naoki KAMIMURA

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In today's short paper with the lengthy title of 'Augustine's Early Commentaries on the Pauline's Epistles: Outline of the 2011–2013 Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research Project', I shall first trace a brief outline of this three-years GASR project that has already started from April 2011, and then provide summaries of two papers, one of which was delivered at last year's annual meeting of Canadian Society of Patristic Studies, and the other which will be presented at the next meeting of this Society, which will be held at Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, in 29-31 May 2012. Finally, I shall recapitulate some problematics of this project, thereby offering an possibility of extending the observation of Augustine's exegesis.

1 GASR 2011–2013 PROJECT

This collaborative project entitled 'The Theory and Practice of the Scriptural Exegesis in Augustine' is made possible by a research-grant from Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (jsrps). We have received funding of \$ 60,600 for three years for our Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research by jsrps.

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Principal Investigator: Dr. Naoki KAMIMURA, Research Fellow, Tokyo Gakugei University.

Principal Collaborator: Ms. Makiko SATO, PhD candidate and Adjunct Lecturer, Keio University.

Overseas Collaborator: Prof. Pauline ALLEN, Director of the Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University.

1.1 Purpose

The overall purpose of this ongoing project is to comprehensively explore the details of the scriptural exegesis in Augustine's early treatises on both the book of Genesis and Pauline's epistles. The project does not concentrate solely on what is often called 'patristic exegesis' in a narrow dogmatic sense; instead, the comprehensive model for reading the book of Genesis and Pauline letters in the context of contemporary linguistic and philosophical thinking of Augustine is chosen to indicate a much wider spectrum of this project. As the cooperative project is undertaken by the association in an effort to investigate Augustinian exegesis from different viewpoints, this project will advance the former projects, one of which has considered his earliest Genesis commentaries: *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* and *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, and the other has examined the early stage of his linguistic development in *On Lying* and *On Christian Teaching*.

1.2 Synopsis

During several years prior to his consecration as bishop in 396, not only does Augustine continue with his anti-Manichaean works, such as *The Catholic Way of Life and the Manichean Way of Life*, *The Two Souls*, and *A Debate with Fortunatus, a Manichean*, but is forced to become much acquainted with the scriptures, thereby fulfilling the demanding role of priest in one of Africa's major sees. Indeed, Augustine's works change during this short period. Scholars have shared the idea of a revolution in his thought in the mid-390's. This implies his careful reading of Pauline's letters and his pursuits of a pastoral life, concluding with his response *Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician* in 396. Thus, by analysing some of his philosophical and exegetical works around the mid-390's and considering the significance of this idea in the light of these works themselves, we shall identify diverse strategies employed by Augustine meeting his obligation to perform the pastoral, charitable, and administrative duties, instead of pursuing a planned series of treatises on liberal arts and a fierce attack on the Manichaeans. The following problems will be treated with his works written between 391 and 396:

- i. How does Augustine interpret the book of Genesis and Pauline epistles?
- ii. What is the evolution of his language theory in this period?
- iii. What is the evolution of his anthropological reflection in this period?

1.3 Plan

As the outcomes of this project, we have already presented some papers and review as following:

i. Referred articles:

M. SATO, 'The Understanding of Self-Deception in Augustine's *Confessiones*', *Studies in Medieval Thought* 53 (2011) 59–75 (in Japanese).

N. KAMIMURA, 'Friendship and Shared Reading Experiences in Augustine', *Patristica*, supplementary vol. 3, eds. S. Tsuchihashi, et al. (2011) 69–83.

ii. Presented papers:

N. KAMIMURA, 'The Exegesis of Genesis in the Early Works of Augustine', Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Patristic Studies: 31 May 2011, St. Thomas University, Fredericton, Canada.

N. KAMIMURA, 'The Significance of the *Sortes* in Augustine', 16th International Conference on Patristic Studies: 9 August 2011, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom.

M. SATO, 'The Word and Salvation: Augustine's understanding of Christ', The Japanese Society of Medieval Philosophy, 60th Conference: 5 November 2011, Seinan Gakuin University, Fukuoka, Japan (in Japanese).

iii. Review:

M. SATO, Review of P. Cary, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought*, Oxford 2008 (xxiv+344pp), in *Studies in Medieval Thought* 53 (2011) 197–200 (in Japanese).

From the year 2012, we shall continue to investigate the questions above mentioned, by focusing on both Augustine's exegetical discussion of Pauline's letters: *Prepositions from Romans*, *Commentary on Galatians*, *Unfinished Commentary on Romans*, and *Miscellany of Eighty-Three Questions* q. 67, and Augustine's language theory in the period when he wrote *On Lying*: see G. Ceresola, *Fantasia e illusione in S. Agostino dai Soliloquia al De Mendacio* (Genova 2001). We shall deliver our papers at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society (KAMIMURA, 'Augustine's evolving commentaries on the Pauline epistles') and the APECSS conference (KAMIMURA, 'Augustine's interpretation of a passage from Romans in his early works': SATO, 'The Word and our words: Augustine's understanding of Christ as divine word').

2 CSPA PAPERS

Next, I shall provide summaries of two papers, one of which was delivered at last year's annual meeting of Canadian Society of Patristic Studies, and the other which will be presented at the next meeting of this Society.

2.1 2011 CSRS paper on Genesis commentaries

First, I shall show you a part of the concluding remarks in this paper:

I have shown, in this paper, that Augustine's view of Gen. 1:26 evolved rather gradually during about several years between the Cassiciacum dialogue (387) and *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis* (393/394). In the third section of this paper I have offered certain signposts which enable us to understand more clearly what he was speaking of a difficult passage of Genesis, how he was shaping the interpretation of Gen. 1:26–27a, and not interpreting the verse 27b ('male and female he created them') at all. In fact, as shown in the first section, he could expound on the words, 'to our image and likeness' in *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis* and understand the human likeness to God in terms of the participation in the Likeness, who is the Word and the Son of the Father. Yet, no doubt it was not only able to be achieved through Augustine's effort in this commentary, but also by the continued commitment to the text in another works. In the case of Gen. 1:27b, once after offering an allegorical interpretation in *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, there were no citations in his writings before 393/394.

After posing the question of why Augustine continued the interpretation of Gen. 1:26, while passing over Gen. 1:27b, I paid attention to a passage from 1 Cor. 11:7, with which, in *Answer to Adimantus, a Disciple of Mani* (392 or 394), Augustine could proceed to the literal interpretation of Gen. 1:26. The combination of materials for the interpretation of Gen. 1:26 puts the emphasis on the whole Trinity, the expression of human superiority to other animals, and the spiritual transformation of the soul, which were explicitly repeated in his early works. These elements really contribute towards the understanding of Gen. 1:26. An important factor that can be said to have combined them together is Augustine's primary concern for the internal unity and harmony of the scriptures, which were persistently charged by Manichaeans. Thus, it would be considered as the crucial basis for his understanding of a correlation between the image and likeness of the Son and its spiritual implications.

2.2 2012 CSRS paper on Pauline commentaries

First, I shall show you the abstract of this paper that was already submitted to the programme committee of the Canadian Society.

Within a relatively narrow range between 394 and 395, Augustine's mutually different types of commentary on Pauline letters can be dated. In his *Revisions*, Augustine explains to the reader how he engaged in three interpretations of Paul during this period: *Prepositions from Romans*, *Commentary on Galatians*, *Unfinished Commentary on Romans*. Around the same time, he put together and published various kinds of philosophical, theological, and exegetical questions posed to him by his monastic confreres, that is *Miscellany of Eighty-Three Questions*, in which some questions are concerned about the passages from Pauline letters. Towards the end of his priesthood, therefore, he concentrates on the problem of divine grace, human freedom, and conversion. It is interesting to note that, in some of these expositions, Augustine also provides the framework both for ages of human history and for stages of the individual's spiritual development. In this paper, I shall argue about the significance of argumentation, thereby considering his spiritual sensitivity and pastoral insight.

Here I shall refer to the schema derived from Paul according to which the life of the individual believer is graded into four stages, corresponding to that of salvation history. This configuration emerges consistently in Augustine's expositions of Pauline letters as follows:

1. *Prepositions from Romans*, 13–18 (written in 393–394).
2. *Commentary on Galatians*, 46 (written in 394).
- (3. *Unfinished Commentary on Romans*, written in 394–395)
4. *Miscellany of Eighty-Three Questions*, q. 66.3–7.

In the *Prepositions from Romans* 13–18, for instance, Augustine speaks of the characteristics of this teaching that involves four stages (*gradus*) or four actions (*actiones*). This expresses both (a) the stages of human history as realised in relation to the Law and Christ's coming and (b) the various dispositions

of the believer in connection with the good and the evil. In the first stage, that is designated as 'before the law' (*ante legem*), one is ignorant of both the meaning and power of sin and one's own sinful nature. In the second stage, as 'under the law' (*sub lege*), one knows that sin is forbidden and perceives the call of the morally good. However, one cannot suppress one's own desires and defeated by the habitual, fixed inclination of the will and thought. In the third stage, as 'under grace' (*sub gratia*), despite of one's continued subordination to the desires of the 'flesh', one is no longer conquered by one's own disposition towards the evil. One is thus able to resist those desires by withholding the consent. Finally, in the fourth stage, as 'in peace' (*in pace*), the conflict disappears. One is no longer held by the bond of mortality and never required to fight battles against the continuous intervention of one's own desires.

It is noteworthy that the critical feature of this schema lies in Augustine's understanding of the move from stage two to stage three. It differs significantly from his earlier explanation of humanity as a straight progress towards God. Because Augustine himself locates Paul's presentation of the transition from the situation of human beings 'under the law' to that of 'under grace', here we can approach Augustine's view by thinking about a decisive, spiritual development in his exegesis of Roman 7:24-25.

Selected bibliography:

- W. BABCOCK, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-396)', *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979) 55-74.
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 C. HARRISON, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford 2006).
 D. PATTE and E. TESSELLE (eds), *Engaging Augustine's on Romans: Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation*, Romans through History and Cultures Series (Harrisburg, PA 2002).
 E. PLUMER, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford 2003).

3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the concluding remarks of my CSPS 2011 paper, I have already stated that Augustine's comprehension of the internal harmony of the scriptures, which was vehemently charged by the Manichaeans, would contribute decisively to the formation of his exegetical method of expounding the difficult passages from Genesis. We must bear in mind that Manichaeism was the ineluctable context within which Augustine had become acquainted with the scriptures themselves. With regard to his encounter with Paul, it is interesting to note that, although Manichaeism was also an important element in which Augustine confronted Paul's thought before his conversion, there have existed another Christian commentators on Pauline letters, who would have had an influence on Augustine's early reading of Paul. The first Latin commentaries on Pauline letters were composed by Marius Victorinus (soon after 362): an anonymous author whom we call *Ambrosiaster* completed a series of commentaries on all thirteen Pauline epistles (between 366 and 384): Jerome wrote commentaries on some of Pauline letters (around in 386): Pelagius' early work was a series of expositions of all the Pauline letters (between 405-406 and 410): and the Donatist Tyconius' *Book of Rules* was written at around the time when Augustine was writing the *Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician*. Consequently, my intention would be to indicate that, in addition to a new audience to whom, as a new priest, he had to preach in the church of Hippo, we must take all these commentators, especially new opponent the Donatist Tyconius, in order to evaluate how both Augustine's linguistic thought and his anthropological reflection have evolved during this short period, and what motives lay behind his intensive engagement with Pauline epistles.