

7 July 2010 at ACU St. Patrick's Campus in Melbourne

## **Research Project Report**

Our Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (GASR) project (2009-2010) 'Augustine's Understanding and the Practice of Poverty in an Era of Crisis' has aimed at considering the problem of poverty and the poor in the discourse of Augustine of Hippo. We are mainly concerned with the problem from the viewpoints of both the development of his doctrinal or theological issues and the strategies Augustine uses to encourage various congregations to approach to the problem of the poor in the society.

After the completion of the three-years project, we will publish the research report in Japanese, which should be submitted to the JSPS (Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science). Not only do we intend to make clear the final outcome of our consideration but hope to introduce a part of the project undertaken by the members of the Centre for Early Christian Studies at ACU. Because our project has been collaboration with colleagues in the Centre and benefited much from the exchange of ideas and suggestions with them. Thus, the report will have two parts: one is our analysis of his treatment of poverty, and the other is Japanese translation of the Chapter 4 (Augustine on Poverty) written by Prof. Pauline Allen and Dr. Edward Morgan published in *Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Realities* in 2009.

As a member of this project, I have been engaged in the analyses of some texts of Augustine. I have already posed the questions, that is, how Augustine adopts the rhetorical and figurative frameworks for the problem of poverty and the poor, and how Augustine concentrates on the issue of the dispositional state of mind when he treats with the problem.

With reference to these points, I have already presented some papers at the conferences from 2008 onward. I shall show you some of them, and then, I would like to inform you of the research in this and next year.

At the preliminary stage of my research, when I participated in the 5th Prayer and Spirituality Conference in 2008, I presented my paper and published the article entitled 'The Emergence of Poverty and the Poor in Augustine's Early Works'. And I participated in the Annual Meeting of the Centre in 2009, and presented the paper 'Rhetorical Approach to the Poor and Poverty in Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*'.

After delivering these papers, I thought that some indications should be given more. In particular, as mentioned above, I have to examine those two points, the validity of his rhetorical constructs of the poor and his concentration on the spiritualisation of the problem, in the texts of Augustine, not only in his early treatises, but in his middle and later works.

At the conference held in 2010 March in Seoul, I presented the paper 'The use of the Poor and Poverty in Augustine's City of God'. In the final section of the paper, I concluded as follows. Let me read some passages.

In the *City of God* of Augustine, the discourse on poverty and the poor is not so much a matter of devoting much thought to show the comprehensive understanding of the problem, still less of drawing out the social and economic realities of the late antique society from it. In this work his use of the poverty occurs sporadically, and within at least eight books of the work there does not emerge any clear reference to the poverty. However, among these limited examples, the mention of poverty is naturally induced by his interest in approaching the main topic. Augustine's apologetic way of dealing with sufferings caused by the sack moves the discussion to the point where the vulnerability of temporal things enables us to examine the disposition of people's soul living in this world. The distinction between the poor and the rich becomes insignificant, thereby clarifying the spiritualising dimension of poverty. Again, under the consideration of the last judgement of God and of the proofs of this judgement, the difference between the poor and the rich should not be regarded as being remained in the time to come. It will be out of human affairs. Thus, the eschatological view of

poverty is firmly rooted in the future hope in which any tension and conflict inherent in the society will be resolved thoroughly.

Some descriptions of poverty seem to be definite and enlightened on the fact in which people were involved and embedded, simply because they show us the names of who were, and have been, the models for the behaviour of contemporary people: first, Paulinus of Nola who abandoned immense wealth is the example of voluntary poverty; and second, Marcus Regulus, Valerius, and Cincinnatus are the representatives of Roman virtues. Augustine is quite proud of both the Christian present and the Roman past. As to the former, he suggests the possibility of those who were put to torture in order to make reveal their properties. While as to the latter, he speaks clearly of their prize: 'They were honoured among almost all the nations; they imposed the laws of their empire upon many races; and they are glorious among almost all peoples to this day, in literature and history.' Although there appears to be a sharp contrast between sufferings and glories, another difference is revealing:

the confessor of holy poverty could not be tortured without a heavenly reward. (*City of God* 1.10.3, Dyson 19)

They have no reason to complain of the justice of the highest and true God: 'they have received their reward'. (*City of God* 5.15, Dyson 216)

This is the way Augustine highlights the transient and passing nature of these consequences and proceeds to the expectation of receiving future reward. By virtue of their honours, the Roman accomplishment has been rewarded: despite their misfortunes, the Christian accomplishment will be rewarded. It does not depend on our esteem of human perfection in this world. It can thus be seen that, again, the foundation of his view of voluntary poverty is the invisibility of the eschatological categories in these realities.

While considering the problem of the poor in these texts, such as the *Enarrationes*, his early works, and the *City of God*, I am also concerned with the spiritualisation of poverty and the poor in the thought of Augustine. In order to make clear the theoretical background of his discourse, I have devoted my attention to his engagement with the spiritual exercises. Not only in his early works did Augustine develop his view of the exercise, but in the later works he continued to refer to the various aspects of the exercise. I have already presented some papers on the theme: at the APECSS Sendai conference in September 2009, in the letters, at NAPS conference in May 2010, in the *De vera religione*, and at the Annual meeting of the Canadian Patristic Conference in May 2010, in the *Sermons*, I have examined how Augustine focused on the issue. Although the spiritual exercises cover some mutually different aspects, in its ascetic and moral dimensions, he sometimes refers to the figurative image of the poor.

Finally, I would like to inform you of my time schedule for this and next years. After the Prayer and Spirituality 6th conference, I shall think again his later works, *Sermons*, and *Letters*. And next year, I have a plan to participate in the Eighth International Medieval Congress which will be taken place in Leeds, from 11th to 14th July, 2011. I hope to read my paper there as the final summary of my research. The committee says in the website of the Congress as follows:

‘As the global economy attempts to recover from the recent staggering economic downturn, and scholars and journalists describe the enormously uneven concentrations of wealth that took place in the decade preceding that downturn, it seems only natural to turn our scholarly gaze to issues of wealth and poverty in the Middle Ages. For that reason, the IMC has chosen for 2011 the special thematic focus: Poor...Rich’.

I think that the Congress will give me a good opportunity of introducing the outcome of our project and of summarising my research project. Thanks for choosing the issue.

Naoki Kamimura