

어거스틴에게 있어서의 신앙과 이성

Faith and Reason in Augustine

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1955년 생으로 경북대 사대를 졸업하고 한국과학기술원에서 반도체 물리학으로 이학석사와 박사학위를 받았다. 일년 동안 한국과학재단 Post Doc.으로 시카고 대학에서 연구하였고 경북대학교 물리교육과 부교수로 재직하면서 기독교대학설립동역회 기획담당으로 사역한 바 있으며 미국 위스콘신 대학에서 과학사를 공부하였고, 현재 휘튼대학에서 신학을 공부하고 있다. 저서로는 「기독교적 세계관」, 「기독교적 학문연구」, 「현대과학 정신과 기독교인의 대응」, 「기독교 세계관의 이해와 적용」 등이 있고, 수필집 「낮은자의 평강」이 있다.

초록

어거스틴은 사도 바울 이래 현대 기독교의 모습을 만드는데 가장 큰 영향을 미쳤다고 평가되는 인물이다. 그러므로 여기서 어거스틴이 신앙과 이성을 어떻게 관련지었는지를 살펴 보는 것은 오늘 우리들의 학문활동을 평가하는데 도움이 된다고 생각된다. 어거스틴은 이성의 능력을 인정하는데 조금도 인색하지 않았다. 그러나 이것은 어디까지나 이성이 신앙의 인도 아래 있을 때라는 전제 하에서였다. 어거스틴은 신앙이 이성을 선행한다고 주장하였으며 그러할때 이성은 이성으로서의 바른 역할을 수행할 수 있음을 분명히 하였다. 끝으로 본고에서는 이러한 어거스틴의 사상이 후대 사람들의 사상에 어떤 영향이 있었는가를 살펴 본다.

As Whitehead remarked that Western philosophy is “a series of footnotes to Plato,” we could say that Western theology is “a series of footnotes to Augustine.” Although many later thinkers made various footnotes to his works and some offered strong criticism on his thought, Augustine still remains as the most influential figure in shaping Christian thought.¹⁾

Among Augustine's numerous contributions to Christianity, what makes him so important for us is that he held together disparate elements of thought and experience. In his mind personal experience and rational structure were kept in constant interplay. His influence on philosophical thought is bound up with his characteristic teaching about faith and reason which are often found split into warring factions. His rational expression of faith brought a new perspective on all human problems.

Many Christian thinkers wrestled with the problem of the relation between faith and reason. But it was not until we come to Augustine that we find the problem dealt with in a truly masterful and definite way. He was not merely a syncretist but an original thinker. This paper is to discuss one fundamental issue of Augustine's thought: his view on faith and reason. Which comes first, faith or reason, and what are the limits of each?

1) Daniel D. Williams, “The Significance of St. Augustine Today,” in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, edited by Roy W. Battenhouse, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979) p.4.

1. Faith Precedes Reason

In his epistles, Apostle Paul confronted the “wisdom of the world with the foolishness of the preaching” and asserted that “the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom.”²⁾ In the same line, Augustine declared that “faith precedes reason” because “unless you believe, you will not understand”(*nisi credideritis, non itelligetis*). In his Latin Bible, Augustine found this text.³⁾ On this text was based the famous principle, *credo ut intelligam*, which passed into medieval theology as a legacy from Augustine.⁴⁾ He opposed Tertullian’s view that faith recommends itself in proportion to its absurdity (*credo quia absurdum*) and regarded the priority of faith as eminently reasonable.⁵⁾ For Augustine faith and reason were never to be opposed to one another or kept apart from each other. He made clear how this was so and why.

Augustine undertook to exhibit the faith-factor in all knowledge

2) I Cor. 1:21~25

3) This is a translation of the Septuagint version of Isaiah 7:9(b), which will not be found in our English Bibles. The Vulgate rendering (*si non credideritis, non permanebitis*), like the English versions (A. V. and R. V. : “If you will not believe, surely ye shall not be established”), follows the Hebrew.

4) See E. Gilson, “The Future of Augustinian Metaphysics,” in *Monument to St. Augustine*, ed., M.C. D’Arcy and others (London, 1945). It was cited in Alan Richardson, “Faith and Presuppositions,” *Faith, Reason, and the Gospels*, ed., John J. Heaney (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1966), pp.80~81.

5) Robert E. Cushman, “Faith and Reason,” in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979) p.288

and his apologetic recommended the particular suitability of submission to Christ as the indispensable corrective of a reason disabled by human pride. His solution did not repudiate evidence, reason, philosophy, and culture, rather it preserved to faith history and grace. Augustine's conviction was that faith is the gateway to understanding. For him faith was the Gospel wisdom, *sapientia*, which must replace the classical knowledge, *scientia*.⁶⁾ The faithful shall see God by the instrument of reason, but reason cannot attain the vision of God unless it is corrected and guided by faith.

So the great advantage of the Augustinian conception of the relationship between faith and reason is that it saves the central dogma of Christianity that faith is not a mere guessing at indemonstrable truth. Faith is a source of illumination which enables the building of a truly rational philosophy to begin. Faith is not a short cut, nor a substitute for understanding but a condition of it. So "blind faith" is a contradiction in terms, for faith is the source of light and understanding. At the very heart of his thinking was the conviction that Christian faith alone enables a man to be rational. Faith is a light and guide without which reason cannot work. It is an indispensable condition of understanding.

6) St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book XII, Chap.14. 21~23; Chap.15. 24~25. Unless other translations were referred to, Augustine's writings were cited from the series of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978).

2. The Powers of Reason

Augustine was convinced that, if not guided by faith, reason did afford wrong knowledge. But the priority of faith does not mean that all questions are answered by faith dogmatically before we try to reason about them. Rather it means that once we have been turned toward God, we are free to inquire into all questions with our reason.⁷⁾ Perceiving the overwhelming weight of the Platonic theism founded upon reason, he said that Platonists' "gold and silver... [were] dug up from certain mines of divine Providence, which is everywhere infused" and "should be seized and held to be converted to Christian uses."⁸⁾ And Augustine convinced himself that "every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's."⁹⁾

Augustine had no doubt that reason is useful for some degree of understanding of God's existence and acquisition of knowledge. He boldly advocated the view that God Himself is intelligible. God is the truth and we can have some degree of apprehension of God. Our knowledge of God is essentially a rational knowing that was made possible by faith in the biblical revelation. The knowledge of God is mediated by human words. The use of words is a function of rational mind and means communication between rational minds. Our

7) D.D. Williams, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, p.6.

8) St. Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, Book II, Chap.40.60.

9) St. Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, Book II, Chap. 13.28.

knowledge of God must remain rational knowledge in this sense. For him rational analysis of any problem was always a step in the pilgrimage of the mind toward God. The search for God's intelligibility was never ended in his life. But he always made a final reservation as he led us closer to the vision of living God. God is infinite and perfect and so our finite and defective minds cannot wholly comprehend Him even though God Himself illumines our apprehension. "He whom thou comprehendest is not God" was an Augustinian motto.¹⁰⁾

Augustine retained a high estimate of natural reason (*ratio naturalis*), because this reason is never to be taken in isolation from the illuminating activity of the Holy Spirit. Although even man's reason was wholly occupied with creatures and directed away from God by the power of his sinful will, it is still empowered by divine illumination to apprehend the creatures. For Augustine the reason was reflecting an image of God in human and thereby capable of being partaker of the divine nature.¹¹⁾

3. Reason needs Faith

For Augustine, faith was necessarily bound up with reason, and neither reason nor faith can be understood without the other. There could be no conflict between faith and reason, for faith was necessary

10) D.D. Williams, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, p.7.

11) St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book XIV, Chap.8.11; Chap. XI. 5.8; Chap XIV.12.15.

condition for correct reasoning. Faith could not oppose reason. The fact that Christian faith is opposed to rationalism should not lead us to suppose that faith is itself opposed to reason, for rationalism operates only through the employment of a concealed faith-principle which is nonetheless as necessary to it as is faith to Christian philosophy.¹²⁾ Therefore, to speak of “faithless reason” is to be ignorant of the very nature and constitution of reason.

Faith is not a mystical but a rational activity, by which we can get the knowledge of God. Our knowledge of God is a mediated knowledge, and the One Mediator is Christ the Word.¹³⁾ Augustine pervasively insisted that Jesus Christ is the beginning point of knowledge.¹⁴⁾ Although he taught a certain primacy of reason, he claimed that the divine informing by Jesus Christ is the precondition of all *scientia*, but his appeal to the primacy of faith is not to be identified simply with an appeal to divine authority. The authority served only a converted heart and will. For example, the Bible was not authoritative to “the uncleansed will” and the church had authority only to the person who had faith. Although faith cannot do without authority, authority is also impotent without a redirection of the will through the divine grace. Augustine did not believe that reason is inherently incompetent, but rather that reason is incompetent in virtue of the perversion of the will.¹⁵⁾

12) Alan Richardson, *Faith, Reason, and the Gospels*, p. 83.

13) Alan Richardson, *Faith, Reason, and the Gospels*, p. 85.

14) St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book V, Chap.11.12.

15) R.E. Cushman, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, pp.296~297.

In the epistemology of Augustine, “faith is in some way the starting point of knowledge”¹⁶⁾ and faith must precede reason, not because reason is intrinsically incompetent but because reason not submitted to the divine grace is untrustworthy. He began in faith and was made perfect in sight. Though his expression of faith was somewhat different from that of Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), the order was the same: “I believe in order to understand” (*credo ut intelligam*). In Augustine, it is not that we start with faith *and then* go on to understanding but that we start in faith *in order to* go on to understanding.¹⁷⁾

The primacy of faith in the process of knowledge rested upon Augustine’s conviction that reason and knowledge depend upon the character of the actual will that is corrupted. Perceiving love related to the will, Augustine acutely pointed that right knowledge is dependent upon right love rather than love dependent upon right knowledge.¹⁸⁾ To Augustine this accorded with the teaching of the Bible: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”(Matt. 5:8).¹⁹⁾

4. Knowledge and the Will

Augustine’s principle to the knowledge process is the doctrine of

16) St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book IX, Chap. 1.1.

17) R.E. Cushman, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, p.300.

18) R.E. Cushman, *ibid.*, p.299.

19) St. Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, Book II, Chap. 7.11.

the primacy of the will in all knowledge: Nothing is fully known to us unless we give the consent of the will. We may have awareness of reality without completed cognition of that reality. There may be some kind of *cognitio* without *agnitio*, acknowledgement. But the completed cognition requires full acknowledgement, affection or obedience. Only when man turns totally toward the truth does it become available to him. It implies that faith in the sense of personal trust and belief is prior to understanding. Therefore, what is not effectually known is precisely what is not adequately acknowledged or loved.²⁰⁾ A man must believe in order that he may understand.

In Augustine's thought, there was no knowledge without having God in the will. He pointed that man wants to have God in the mind, not in the heart, for the sake of his freedom of the will. Man withholds commitment until he has sight, but man cannot achieve sight until he yields commitments. Man does not know God because he does not love God. Augustine said to philosophers that "for although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."²¹⁾ Augustine believed that even the Platonists were not to avoid idolatry but paid divine honors to many gods.²²⁾

20) R.E. Cushman, *ibid.*, p.290.

21) Rom. 1:21~23.

22) St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book VIII, Chap. 10.

In the case of the creatures, as in the instance of all other knowledge, full knowledge waits upon desire or love. According to Augustine, man wants to use the creatures while pretending to seek God through them. It is love or desire which turns diffused awareness into true cognition. The generation of the mind is preceded by some desire, by which knowledge is born through seeking what we wish to know.²³⁾

5. Augustine and Aristotle

Augustine established a Christian theory of knowledge in opposition to Aristotelian intellectualism, in which being has primacy over the good and the theoretical reason has primacy over the practical mind.²⁴⁾ Aristotelian intellectualism is traced back to Plato. For Plato, sense experience was not a valid means of investigating reality, since it is often erroneous and at best can only recognize facts in this changing terrestrial world. Reflecting the Platonic orientation, Aristotle safeguards "pure truth" by rendering its acquisition independent of "practical considerations." This is the ground of the subordination of the practical to the theoretical reason in Aristotle and generally in Western thought. It makes room for the idea of pure "objective" knowledge and the ideal

23) St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book IX, Chap. 12. 18.

24) Cf. John Burnet, "Aristotle," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XI, London, 1924, 15~16.

of knowledge as pure contemplation of being. In the intellectualism, the will is in all cases subservient to the intellect.²⁵⁾

In contrast, Augustine insisted that the noetic function of reason is dependent for its direction and operation on the practical reason. The theoretical reason as well as the sensible nature has its predisposing affection. Augustine said, "If I speak to the cold and indifferent, he knows not what I say."²⁶⁾ Thus Augustine made explicitly the integration of the practical and theoretical reason.

In Aristotle's thought, belief involved an act of will or consent, while knowledge has no place for preference or consent of the will. But Augustine regarded knowledge as well as belief as involving a movement of the will or consent.²⁷⁾ To Augustine, man's awareness of God could not pass to knowledge without desire or consent of the will and the merely rational or contemplative approach to God was self-contradicted.

As mentioned before, to Augustine, to know (*cognoscere*) was to acknowledge (*agnoscere*). So the full cognition of personal God was at the same time the dissolution of the bondage of the selfish will. Unless knowledge involved acknowledgement, that is, the consent of the will, then right action would not necessarily follow upon right knowledge. In Augustine's view, the pure contemplative knowledge could be no more useful to solve the ethical problem than

25) R. E. Cushman, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, pp. 302~303.

26) St. Augustine, *On the Gospel of St. John*, Tractate XXVI, Chap. VI. 4.

27) R. E. Cushman, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, p. 303.

it could the theological problem.

From acute reflection, Augustine discovered in human's will the key that unlocked both the theological and ethical problem at one time. It was the death of self-love that was the same volition turning awareness of God into recognition of God. To Augustine, therefore, the conception of non-value-directed knowledge not only did not suffice to solve the ethical problem but was false of the knowing process.²⁸⁾

6. Augustine's Influences

Most of the medieval theologians directly depended upon Augustine in the view of faith and reason. For example, Anselm presented Augustinian ontological argument for the existence of God.²⁹⁾ Bernard of Clairvaux(1109-1153) shows the clear influence of Augustine, saying that "the proud eye does not see the truth. To the sincere the truth is obvious. Truth does not withhold itself from the pure in heart and thus fail to be told."³⁰⁾ Bonaventura (1221-1274) sought to organize all knowledge within the unity of

28) R. E. Cushman, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, p. 305.

29) For Augustinian influence on Anselm, see M.J. Charlesworth, "Introduction," *St. Anselm's Proslogion*, tr. M.J. Charlesworth (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) pp. 22-40.

30) For example, see "Sermons on The Song of Songs," in *Bernard of Clairvaux, Selected Works*, tr. by G.E. Evans, (New York:Paulist Press, 1987) pp. 251-2.

the mystical vision of God.³¹⁾ Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) made clear distinction between philosophy and religion, reason and revelation, but he believed that both are closely related each other. In particular, when Anselm set out to show that if we clearly understand the idea of God as the “Greatest Being” we must see that God exists, he was working with a thoroughly Augustinian conception of faith and reason. In him lofty reason and faith worked together in perfect harmony. His famous proposition was that “faith precedes knowledge” (*fides praecedit intellectum*). Divine things were a matter of experience before they could be understood by the intellect. Anselm said, “He who does not believe has not felt, and he who has not felt does not understand.” (*Qui non crediderit, non experietur, et qui expertus non fuerit non intelliget, de fide trin.*) And also he said, “Christ must come to the intellect through the avenue of faith and not to faith through the avenue of intellect.” (*Christianus per fidem debet ad intellectum proficere non per intellectum ad fidem.*) On the other hand, he attacked blind faith and called it a sin of neglect when those who have faith, do not strive after knowledge. Anselm had a great respect for Augustine. So he deserved calling as “the second Augustine” or “the tongue of Augustine,” because he totally agreed with Augustine in spirit and main arguments.³²⁾

31) For Augustine’s influence on Bonaventura, see George Boas, “Introduction,” in Bonaventura, *The Mind’s Road to God*, tr. George Boas (New York: Macmillan Pub. 1953).

32) D.S. Schaff, *The Middle Ages* in the series of *History of the Christian Church*

The next great medieval figure in Augustinian line is Thomas Aquinas. He so delicately adjusted his Aristotelian framework within the Augustinianism that they must be said to share a breakable unity of perspective. So the two stand for rather different types of adjustment of faith to reason.³³⁾ For Thomas, the reason was not capable by its own powers to discover the higher truth pertaining to God, such as the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation. Theology employs the reason, not to prove faith, but to throw light on doctrines which are furnished by faith. Theology is the higher science, because of the certainty of its data and of the superior excellence of its subject-matter.³⁴⁾ So there could not be contradiction between faith and reason, philosophy and theology. Both come from the same God and are fountains of knowledge.

Augustine's arguments in faith and reason gave an impact on the Christian church even after the Reformation. There was a broad measure of agreement within the church that faith is compatible with reason. Indeed faith required reason both in order to understand what is believed, and to articulate what is believed in a coherent and systematic way. There was a fairly definite correlation between the function of reason in articulating or reconstructing faith, and the function of faith delimiting reason. We remember that there have

(vol. V), edited by Philip Schaff(Grand Rapids, MI:Eerdmans, 1986(originally published in 1907), pp. 600~601.

33) E. Przywara, *Polarity* (London, 1935), p.116. Przywara's essay in *A Monument to St. Augustine*(New York, 1930). It was cited in Willians, p.13.

34) *Summa Theologica*, I.1~5, 8; I.32~1. It was cited in *History of the Christian Church* (vol. V), pp. 666~667.

been seemingly contradicting events such as the Forbidden Index, the Divine Oath(1272), the 217 Forbidden Presuppositions (1277) and the trial of Galileo (1633) in the history of science. But recent studies of the historians of science show that those events were not the genuine struggles between faith and reason, or the church and academics, but struggles between different ideologies.³⁵⁾ there was in the medieval church and in current Roman Catholic theology the general agreement that reason is compatible to the basic doctrines of faith.³⁶⁾ Such a tradition could be traced back to the great African teacher, Augustine.

7. Concluding Remarks

For Augustine, the passage from knowledge to acknowledgement, from philosophy to Christianity, was the transition from “presumption” to “confession.” It was a movement away from the standpoint of autonomous reason to a voluntary recognition of God. In the humility concerning the limits of human reason, Augustine took up a position which is relevant to us. The wise knows the mystery of God and distrusts all neat argument for God. To those the infinite God is a continual source of freedom for new inquiry.

35) For example, see several articles in *The Reappraisal of the Scientific Revolution* (edited by Lindberg and Westmann), or *The Crime of Galileo* (by Santilana), *The Copernican Revolution* (by Kuhn).

36) “Faith and Reason,” *Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), pp.247~249.

In Augustine's view, faith and reason required one another. So it was error to separate them. Faith presupposed reason and reason necessarily required the correction of faith. "I believe to understand" was the slogan attributed to Augustine and adopted by Anselm. Under this theory reason is operative only insofar as it has been replaced in subjection to prior Christian commitment and faith. Paradoxically, however, it appears that once the initial faith commitment has been made, there are few limits to the powers of reason in this tradition ³⁷⁾.

37) W. Corduan, "Reson," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed., W.A. Elwell(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990) pp.915~6.