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A Confucian Reappraisal of Christian Love: Ahn Changho Contra Augustinian Studies Conducted in South Korea

Jun-Hyeok Kwak 

Department of Philosophy (Zhuhai), Sun Yat-sen University, Zhuhai 519082, China; jhkwak@mail.sysu.edu.cn

Abstract: This paper tackles the dominant views of Augustine's notion of 'love' in South Korea which have been described as the puritan pathos of distance from civic commonality. A complete guide to the reception and transmission of Augustine's philosophy in South Korea would be almost unmanageable. However, the essential key to understanding the place of Augustine's philosophy in South Korea can be found in the interpretations of Augustine's notion of love. In all its complexity in these interpretations, the legacy of Augustine in South Korea turns out to consist exclusively of anti-political or non-communal eschatological longings for salvation. In a similar vein, the dominant views of Augustine's notion of love have been convoluted with their emphasis on the superiority of love of God over love of neighbor. Based on these observations, this paper suggests Ahn Changho's Confucian reappraisal of Christian love as an alternative to the dominant views of Augustine's notion of love in South Korea, by investigating his view of filial piety as mutual love with respect to the possible implications of Augustine's notion of love for shaping or consolidating civic friendship beyond brotherly commonality in Christianity.

Keywords: Christian love; filial piety; Augustine; Ahn Changho; Augustine studies



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1. Introduction

Despite the early encounter of Koreans with Christianity in the seventeenth century, the first translation of Augustine's works into Korean was published in 1953. Kim Chŏng-chun (1914–1981), Presbyterian pastor and professor of Old Testament Studies at Hanshin University, translated 10 books of Augustine's *Confessions*. This incomplete translation, published by the Christian Literature Society of Korea (Taehan Kitokkyo Sŏhoe), was not based on the original Latin text of Augustine's *Confessions* but an English translation. However, it had been highly reputed among Christians as the best translation in South Korea until the first complete translation of the original Latin text appeared in 2016. More than 30 translations of Augustine's *Confessions* in South Korea over a half century had indeed challenged this first translation with a wealth of useful information about Augustine's theological and philosophical backgrounds. Nevertheless, the first translation of Augustine's *Confessions* continues to fascinate Christians in South Korea, and thereby its pivotal influence on Christian education in South Korea is beyond scholarly disputes over its accurate conveyance of the original Latin text.

This idiosyncratically high reputation of the first translation of Augustine's *Confessions* lies not only in its readability in Korean, intentionally requested by the publisher, the main goal of which was an Evangelical Christian mission, but in its suitability for the popular mode of Christian self-discipline in South Korea, culturally shaped through the interplay of Confucian legacy of self-cultivation with the Christian eschatological longing for personal salvation. As Donald Baker points out (Baker 2008, pp. 1–17, 94–121), irrespective of theocentric Christianity or anthropocentric Confucianism, spiritual practitioners in South Korea put an emphasis on the need for self-discipline as an imperative way of subordinating oneself to the divinity or a superhuman power. At this juncture, the vitality of anthropocentric spirituality in Confucian ritual practices in South Korea is aligned with the need

for self-cultivation through which Christians actualize their unity with God, while the spiritual longing of Christians for salvation from their ontological limitations begets the need for self-penitence through which sinners should be disciplined for taking part in God's eschatological fulfillment. In other words, Augustine's *Confessions* had met the ethical and spiritual demands of Christians in South Korea for self-discipline, and, by the same token, the first Korean translation, which was chiefly focused on Augustine's self-penitence from Book 1 to Book 10, has been widely read in spite of its problem with accuracy.

Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea reflect a similar path to that of the first translation of *The Confessions* in their considerations on the moral import of self-cultivation and the eschatological fulfilment of personal salvation.¹ The first scholarly study of Augustine was published in the Presbyterian Journal *Sinhakchinam* (*Korean Presbyterian Journal of Theology*, literally meaning the direction of theology) in 1919, and it was a brief introduction of Augustine's life and his works in general (Cheng 2004). However, even after 2004 when most of Augustine's works were translated in Korean, Augustine's works have not been systematically studied in the context of individual texts, and there are two themes that show remarkable persistence in Augustinian studies which have been asymmetrically focused on *The Confessions* and *The City of God*. The first theme is the pathos of distance from civic commonality. Most Augustinian studies with this theme are rooted in the dialectic of free will and divine grace, almost in a relentless cycle of repentance through self-discipline, and ultimately driven by the spiritual longing for the unity of person with God.² The second theme is the rigid separation of church and state, which can be described using Bernd Wannewetsch's term for the church model of 'political antitype or counter-society' (Wannewetsch 2019, p. 90). In the intensely radicalized arguments related to the second theme, Augustinian scholars reconstitute his teachings with the symbolic dyad of warrior and sinner.³ All in all, the dominant views of Augustine's philosophy in South Korea scarcely possess a political or civic orientation, and they do not try to detect Augustinian normative foundations for the good relationships of the earthly political community.

These thematic orientations of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea could be ascribed to various sociopolitical and historical contexts, including the Puritanical and Calvinistic origins of Korean Protestant churches, the predominance of anti-communism in Korean Christianity followed by the Korean War, and the trade-offs between religious freedom and political freedom under authoritarian regimes. In addition, as Eric Gregory aptly points out (Gregory 2008, pp. 1–29, 75–148), Augustinian studies conducted in general share with one another a distinctly negative stance against the corruptibility of politics, and, by the same token, particularly in 'Augustinian liberalism', scholars usually recommend the need for separating the political from the ecclesial. What comprises the distinctively authentic character of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea is the sensitivity of a religiosity that separates sociopolitical justice from personal salvation without separating the requirement of an ethical life in the earthly city from the ultimate Christian loyalty to the eternal city. Despite the differences that exist between them, the dominant views of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea offer a discrete account of self-discipline while maintaining a persistently anti-political and non-communal stance as a way of undermining the importance of Augustine's discussion of civic commonality.

A complete guide to the reception and transmission of Augustine's philosophy in South Korea would be almost unmanageable, not only given the thematic orientations of Augustinian studies on theological hermeneutics devoted to exploring Augustine's teachings for Christians, but also many other studies on Christianity in South Korea that address Augustine in terms of the Puritan roots of Korean Christianity. However, the essential key for rehabilitating Augustine's discussion of civic commonality in South Korea needs to start with the reappraisal of Augustine's notion of love in South Korean contexts. Based on these observations, this paper tackles the dominant views of Augustine's notion of 'love' in South Korea which have been described as the puritan pathos of distance from civic commonality. More specifically, this paper suggests Ahn Changho's Confucian reappraisal of Christian love as an alternative to the dominant views of Augustine's notion of love in

South Korea, by investigating his view of filial piety as mutual love with respect to the possible implications of Augustine's notion of love for shaping civic friendship beyond brotherly love in Christianity.

2. Augustine's Love in Augustinian Studies

As mentioned above, the authenticity of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea lies in the sensitivity of religiosity that can be described as anti-political or non-communal sentiment. It is anti-political in the sense that the dominant views of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea not only presuppose the corruptibility of politics but also the pathos of distance from civic participation. Despite what one might think of this paradox in light of the apocalyptic militancy of Christian movements these days in South Korea, Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea have invited readers to join in contemplating the wickedness of humanity without God's grace and its total depravity in political or civic commonality. Moreover, it is non-communal in the sense that the dominant views of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea have imparted to readers Augustine's notion of humility, the absence of which has been frequently entangled with the misdirected love of the earthly city. Augustinian scholars in South Korea do indeed fuse Augustine's view of love of neighbor in their consideration of Christian ethics. However, by subsuming self-centered love of God in the eschatological longing for personal salvation, they consciously or unconsciously disconnect Augustine's view of love of neighbor from his discussions of civic love.

There is no other topic concerning the sensitivity of religiosity in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea which needs to receive more attention than Augustine's view of love. Most studies of Augustine's love in South Korea are heavily indebted to Anders Nygren for his distinction of Christian love (*agape*) and Greek Philosophic love (*eros*). Although not all of them accept Nygren's rejection of Augustinian love (*caritas*), they usually accept his interpretation of '*eros*' as a self-centered and acquisitive pursuit that can easily degenerate into cupidity (*cupiditas*) (Nygren 1953, pp. 476–503). Kim's (2004) work is the most prominent example for showing the influence of Nygren's criticism of Augustine's notion of love on Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea.

Thus the Neoplatonic view of love (*eros*) is consistently predominant in Augustine's entire philosophy from the outset, and it also relentlessly runs through it overall. (Kim 2004, p. 105: *my translation*)

As we can see above, following Nygren's account of Augustine's indebtedness to Neoplatonism, Kim pits Neoplatonic self-centered and ascending love (*eros*) against Christian theocentric and descending love (*agape*). Moreover, such a rigid distinction between *eros* and *agape*, which is firmly based on Nygren's interpretation of *eros*, is later tied up with his hermeneutic aim to suggest Augustine's notion of *caritas* as a bridge between two extreme views of Christian salvation: one emphasizing 'goodness' (*bonitas*) cultivated through 'fellowship' (*amicitia*) with God and the other putting forward the totality of faith (*fide*), featured historically through Lutheran antagonism against late Medieval Catholicism (Kim 2004, pp. 121–25). At the most fundamental level, by underpinning Nygren's distinction between *eros* and *agape*, he intends to relay his rendering of God's grace as helping to realize the unity of the ascending love (*eros*) with the descending love (*agape*) in Augustine's notion of love (*caritas*).

Lee's (1961) work is another example in which we can see the influence of Nygren's account of *eros* on Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea. Based on Martin D'Arcy's criticism of Nygren's interpretation of Augustine's *caritas*, he claims that "we should avoid setting up the theoretical presupposition of misdirected selfish love" in our consideration of Augustine's notion of love (p. 36). Furthermore, following Paul Tillich's lead on the natural character of love, he differentiates selfish love from love of neighbor and the true type of 'self-love' that is transformed from self-centered love to God-centered love through the experience of God's descending love. For him, self-centered or selfish love is unjust, since it cannot provide us with any happiness. By the same token, based on Paul Tillich's

sketch of the relation of justice to love (Tillich 1960, pp. 82–90), he maintains that the true type of self-love leads us to love of neighbor and love of the society to which we belong (p. 37). However, his understanding of *eros* is still confined within Nygren's view of *eros* as acquisitive love:

When Augustine says that God is love (*caritas*) and God gives us our love for God, this love (*caritas*) retains a desire for acquisition as Nygren points out. In other word, love (*caritas*) is an acquisitive love. (Lee 1961, p. 32: *my translation*)

It is certain that Lee's consideration of the relation of justice to love leads him away from Nygren's challenge to Augustinian theology, and he appears to depart from Nygren's anti-political or non-communal account of Augustine's notion of love (*caritas*). However, as we can see above, he holds Nygren's view of *eros* in Augustine's notion of love (*caritas*). By putting forward Nygren's view of *eros* in his account of *caritas*, he shows that he does not thoroughly reject Nygren's view of *eros*. In fact, what he rejects is not Nygren's view of *eros* but Nygren's dichotomy of *eros* and *agape*, and what he aims to do with Nygren's view of *eros* is to find the true type of love in Christ as Nygren does through the distinction between 'enjoyment' (*frui*) and 'use' (*uti*) (Nygren 1953, pp. 503–12). In other words, despite his emphasis on love of neighbor and communal commitment under the guidance of Martin D'Arcy and Paul Tillich, his longing for social justice ends up with God's grace that enables men to use Godly endowed free will in the right way of striving for the union with God as the sole bearer of true righteousness.

Both cases shed light on the typical stances of Augustinian studies conducted in Korea with respect to Augustine's view of love (*caritas*). Regardless of the acceptance or rejection of Nygren's dichotomy between *eros* and *agape*, Augustine's love of neighbor or his discussions of communal commonality in Augustinian love (*caritas*) have been chiefly rendered as the manifestation of theocentric '*agape*', and their rightfulness has been thoroughly ascribed to their complete dependence on the right object of love, that is God, accompanied with God's grace, which is the sole basis for realizing the true type of love. In fact, as we can see from the definition of Augustine's two cities in *The City of God*, such an interpretation is not so very far from Augustine's view of love in his texts. In other word, Augustine himself is responsible for the primacy of love of God over love of self and love of neighbor.

The two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self. (*City of God* 14.28: Augustine 1984, p. 593)

As we can see from the most quoted definition of the two cities above, the two loves (*amores*) that made the two cities have a clear hierarchy in Augustine's view of love according to the objects of love to be loved. Love of God should be placed in the first place, and love of other human beings (including self and neighbors) should be placed after love of God. In similar vein, love that involves 'will' (*voluntas*) should be judged as misdirected or disordered if it is not driven by love of God but curved in on oneself (*City of God* 14.7). Thus, it is not surprising to see that in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea, Augustine's view of love has been depicted as the ultimate transformation of love of self and love of neighbor into love of God. Particularly, in the dominant views of Protestant Christianity in South Korea, mostly led by Presbyterians and Methodists, in which God's grace is more uplifting than fellowship with God, it is commonplace that the Augustinian synthesis of *agape* and *eros* is understood through the former, the centrality of which is termed with the sacrifice of the incarnate Christ for humankind.

3. Luther's Augustine and Self-Centered Eschatology

With respect to Augustine's view of love, a more unique feature of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea is the implicit or explicit identification of Augustine with Martin Luther. Augustine's influence on Luther is not in question, as various scholars have explored Luther's uses of Augustine from his longing for spiritual righteousness to

his description of misdirected love. However, it is problematic if Augustine's view of love is interpreted through the lens of Luther's Augustine.

As Philip Cary points out through his comparison of Augustine with Luther in their distinctions of grace and law (Cary 2017, p. 54), Luther had to reformulate and radicalize Augustine's theological views that were not acceptable to his reformist stance. Moreover, there are not a few theological differences between Augustine and Luther. For instance, Luther's denunciation of the positive role of self-love was not something he found in Augustine. As we can see from *On Christian Doctrine*, different from Luther's view that self-love is nothing but an expression of the sinful old nature that should be replaced with the new nature in Christ's grace (Luther 1972, pp. 509–24; Totten 2003), love of self is not so much blameworthy but useful for actualizing the love of God if it is redirected to God (Augustine 1958, 1.21, pp. 18–19). Similarly, in Augustine's mature theology of grace, Augustine did not confine salvation only within our faith in God's grace but gave credit to our good efforts (*merita*) so long as our good works result from God's grace (Cary 2008, pp. 30–32). Nevertheless, Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea often expound Luther's Augustine.

In particular, Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea are overwhelmed by the radical need of God's grace for salvation in Luther's theology of grace. Proponents of Christian moral salience for civic participation in communal responsibility are not exceptional. By extending the consideration of Luther's Augustine to the problems of the South Korean Protestant churches in general, Kim Joo-Han emphasizes Augustine's theology of grace, in which our good efforts can be accredited for salvation. He maintains that "for Augustine, love (*caritas*) is a kind of glue that articulates God's grace and men's efforts" (Kim 2004, p. 124). Putting forward the need for loving self and neighbors, Lee Chang-Sik also reads Augustine's love in a similar way (1961, p. 34). However, given that Kim says "Augustine's notion of love (*caritas*) should be reinterpreted through the Protestant view of grace" (Kim 2004, p. 135), their emphasis on Augustine's view of communal love ends with Luther's theology of grace, in which the relationship of the individual with God for personal salvation is exclusively prioritized over any other relationship between men. At this juncture, Luther's soteriology is called upon to assist in their reformulation of Augustine's love. Here is a good example.

Luther inherited Augustine's conceptions of the Original Sin and God's grace. And, following Augustine's lead, he concluded that sinful men can be righteous only through faith in God. (Chung 2006, p. 25)

Chung Jae-Hyun tries to overcome Luther's Augustine in South Korean Augustinianism by resolving the tension between men's free will and God's grace in the Augustinian theology of grace. As in the quotation above, drawing Luther's theology of grace into his discussion of Augustine's theodicy, he aims to win us over the need for switching our attention from 'righteousness' before God to communal or civic 'care-giving' in Augustine's theology of grace. However, his overstatement of the relationship of Augustine's theodicy with Luther's theology of grace continues when he concludes his work by saying that for Augustine, men's freedom and God's grace can be integrated in the Christian way such that the latter enables the former to take part in actualizing the divine freedom (Chung 2006, pp. 35–38). This concluding remark indicates that what he wishes to overcome is not so much Luther's Augustine but a rigid distinction of men's free will from God's grace. In other words, the guise of Luther's theology of grace in his interpretation of Augustine's theology of grace paradoxically reinforces Luther's soteriology in South Korean Augustinianism.

More importantly, when Luther's soteriology is justified with using Augustine's confession of human sinfulness, Augustine's view of love is embroidered with Luther's eschatology. In Luther's eschatology, God's final judgment is imminent, and all believers are required to engage in desperate spiritual battles against the Devil in the earthly realm (Strohl 2004). Similarly, in the dominant views of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea, we can see the radical need of God's grace for individual salvation from the Devil's

triumph in the sense of urgency in Luther's eschatology. Moon Si-Young's work is a good example.

[Augustine's view of pilgrimage] provides us with an important insight for our earthly way of life. If it can be a source for practicing the virtues of temperance and honorable poverty in the dominant moment of excessive cupidity, shouldn't it be [the very source for accomplishing] the necessary ethical task for believers who belong to the city of God? (Moon 2018, p. 95)

Right before these passages, Moon, the former president of the Society for Christian Social Ethics in South Korea, maintains that what Augustine says about sojourner and pilgrim should be understood in a more proactive way of earthly life than a symbolic life of worldlessness. However, as we can see above, he interprets Augustine's image of pilgrimage in terms of Luther's eschatology. For him, the current world has already reached its final stage, and the triumphant moment of splendid vice (*splendida vitia*) taunts God to end the world imminently. Although he does not share the sense of hopelessness with Luther, his insistence on the evangelical way of life for Christians is firmly bounded by Luther's urgent sense of an imminent day of divine judgment for the earthly city. At this juncture, his criticism of Hannah Arendt for mistaking Augustine's view of love as a nomadic life in the wilderness loses its hermeneutical extension to communal commitment (Moon 2018, pp. 74–77). At the same time, the self-centered longing for righteousness before God is placed at the center of his interpretation of Augustine's love.

Under the shadow of Luther's Augustine, especially in South Korean Protestant scholarly works, Augustine's love of neighbor collapses into the eschatological consummation of self-centered salvation through God's grace. Not a few scholars have tried to overcome these stereotypes of the anti-political or non-communal stance, but, as we have seen so far, they fail to suggest an alternative justification of communal commitment, the motivation of which directly relates to the actualization of love of neighbor. On the surface, they repeatedly point out the need for extending love of God to love of neighbor. Still, they do not present Augustine's view of love in a realizable formula through which the command of love of neighbor can be understood in conjunction with a gradual expansion from 'inward individual grace' to 'outward civic commitment'. Reducing Augustine's view of love to the self-centered preparing for God's eschatological salvation in the earthly city, they consciously or unconsciously seek a separation of believers from non-believers by emphasizing the role of pilgrims in preparing God's eschatological salvation in the earthly city.

This theological climate, overwhelmed by self-centered eschatology, does not allow us to see love of neighbor in terms of communal relationships. Surely, in Augustine's view of love, the ontological ground of neighborly love is love of God. As Oliver O'Donovan says that "the love of God is an all-inclusive moral category from which every other moral obligation, including all forms of neighbor-love, is held to be derived" (O'Donovan 1980, p. 113), love of God cannot be replaceable with love of neighbor that presupposes a relationship between equals. Nevertheless, as Eugene TeSelle points out in Augustine's ethical perspective that "there are norms shared between Christians and others—norms of justice, certainly, and also norms of prudent and effective action" (TeSelle 1998, p. 78), the unity of love of neighbor with love of God in Augustine's view of love does not have to serve as a vital doctrine that justifies a rigid separation of believers from non-believers. To seek Christian love of neighbor only through the lens of the urgent self-centered eschatological salvation is to begin cultivating a ruthless indifference to communal relationships. Additionally, such a radical separation between believers and non-believers is not Augustinian but Lutheran. As Eric Gregory (2008, pp. 75–148) convincingly elaborates, in Augustine's view of love, just as seeking communal commitment out of civic virtue alone is not an appropriate outward action, dwelling too much on self-centered individual salvation is no better than a misdirected subjective motivation for one's happiness.

4. Ahn Changho's View of Christian Love

In this context, Ahn Changho's (1878–1938) view of Christian love can provide us with a compelling alternative to the stereotypes of Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea. Ahn, one of the most prominent Christian leaders in modern Korea, occupies a unique place in Korean Protestant Christianity. He has been held in high esteem as one of the most distinctive patriots through his independent movement under Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), and he has been widely known as an educator whose moral and ethical teachings have continued to inspire the Korean people since his establishment of the Young Korean Academy (*Hŭng-sa-tan*, 興士團) in San Francisco in 1913. In addition, he has been considered a politician who played a significant role in founding the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai in 1919. More importantly, with respect to the subject of this paper, we need to pay attention to the fact that he is taken as the most illuminating example of a Christian sociopolitical practitioner in Protestant Christianity in South Korea. Specifically, Ahn's view of Christian love is frequently identified by Christian movement activists as an expression of Luther's Augustine, the gist of which can be described as the practice of Christian love (*agape*) or the imitation of Christ's sacrifice.

However, Ahn's view of love cannot be identified with God's love (*agape*) in Luther's Augustine. Ahn does not exclude 'human happiness'—which he does not define in the sense of a neo-Platonic goal of pursuit, but rather in terms of a basic condition for survival—from his thoughts on Christian love, and in his vision of Christian love, love of neighbor is not simply conflated with love of God. Clearly, Ahn thinks our highest love must be directed to God, but he concomitantly urges that we should count ourselves truly happy in God's grace *as long as* we love our neighbors and treat them as equals. Ahn's sermon about 'love' (*Sarang*) at the Korean Church in Shanghai in 1919 is closely connected to his view of Christian love.

When we were deeply moved for the sake of the love of our nation, we heard [this idea] like a voice in the desert saying 'water'. But the desperate longing for love in our society became too commonplace to keep its genuine sincerity and authenticity; now it sounds like looking for 'water' in the Yangtze river. So I am asking you what kind of love we are longing for. No one looks for true love in its genuine meaning. This is because we are fallen into a selfishness that betrays the central tenet of Christianity, which is 'love for all people'. (Ahn [1919] 1990, p. 120)

Faced with the reluctance of Korean Christians abroad to take part in the struggle for national liberation, he urged them to prioritize national independence over personal salvation. Specifically, for winning them over, he puts forward love of neighbor which he defines in the same sermon as 'true happiness' in God's grace (Ahn [1919] 1990, p. 120). At the same time, as we can see above, to transform self-centered craving for material gain to altruistic care of others, he employs Christian neighborly love. For him, Christian love reaches its highest good when it contributes to communal happiness. Along the same lines, he repeats that the divinely imposed goal of love cannot be attained by the pursuit of individual salvation.

The essence of Christianity is love, so that we should carry out Christian love strenuously with sincerity. Suppose that there is a poor and sick person and you visit her. Can we say that you are holy if you give her spiritual prayer only but you don't help her get well through medicine and rice gruel bought with money from your pocket? You are holy only when you try to save her with your own money. You can be said to be holy even if you don't do any spiritual things. (Ahn [1919] 1990, p. 122)

He highlights above that Christian love not only means love for God and neighbors in a spiritual sense. For him, love means actual care of the needy in satisfying their basic needs for health and survival. As he defines in the same sermon that "love is the crucial element of human happiness that consists of survival and comfort" (Ahn [1919] 1990, p. 120), his

wholehearted appeal to help the needy is not simply based on the exuberance of love for God or obedience to the Divine command. Moreover, the actual care of the needy is neither envisioned as a stepping stone for realizing the love of God nor conceptualized as a means to realize individual longing for righteousness before God. Love of neighbor in his notion of the actual care of the needy is another endowment given by God for our true happiness. As he says at the outset of this sermon that “happy are those who gives love to others” (Ahn [1919] 1990, p. 120), his view of love of neighbor speaks of a communal tie between human beings.

Furthermore, Ahn not only accepts communal happiness but refuses a rigid separation of ‘us’ and ‘others’. Based on his broad notion of Christian neighborly love, he understands the ultimate goal of love of neighbor is a peaceful coexistence between nations. Surely, he does not offer a surreal expectation of Christian peace. He repeatedly gave counsels as to what we should do under the domination of the powerful. He also seriously considered a military struggle for national independence, as he urged at his inauguration speech as the Minister of Home Affairs of the Provisional Government in Shanghai in 1919 that “if our task cannot be accomplished peacefully, we should carry it out militarily” (Ahn [1919] 1990, p. 101). Nevertheless, he firmly believes that a bond between nations can be shaped through love of humanity.

I don’t want to see Japan perish. Rather I want to see Japan become a good nation. Infringing upon Korea, your neighbor will never be profitable to you. Japan will profit by having 30 million Koreans as her friendly neighbors and not by annexing 30 million resentful people into her nation. Therefore, to assert Korean independence is tantamount to desiring peace in East Asia and the well-being of Japan. (Quoted from An [1932] 1971, p. 34, *slightly revised by the author*)

Ahn’s exhortation to national independence is rooted in Christian neighborly love, and it is not disentangled from love for humanity. As we can see above, his account of love for humanity simultaneously evokes the vivid hope for peaceful ties between nations, and, by the same token, he thinks that one’s specific affection for a particular political community should concur with love of humanity. At this juncture, he thinks that Christian neighborly love enables men to build a bridge between love of the fatherland and love for humanity, thereby backing love of humanity as the divine reciprocal duty of nations and presenting his vision of national liberation as an expression of Christian neighborly love.

Although Ahn’s view of Christian neighborly love can exist only within God’s grace, he uses the special term ‘true happiness’ to denominate that the unity of love of neighbor and love of God does not deprive the former of its authenticity because of the primacy of the latter. Ahn even claims that love of God without love of neighbor is nothing but a love without God’s orientation or a selfish longing for individual salvation. As we can see from Augustine’s account of neighborly love in his mature view of Christian love that the two love commandments are summed up in loving care of neighbors (Canning 1987, pp. 58–75), loving care of the needy cannot be separated from love of God or a concern for one’s salvation in Ahn’s view of neighborly love. His sermon on love, which relates primarily to the weighty consequence of the self-centered soteriological longing for individual salvation in Korean Christian society, shows the possibility of loving neighbors without missing out on love of God but never love of God without loving neighbors. Moreover, his strenuous commitment to national liberation confirms that if it is based on God’s orientation, loving God tends to produce love of humanity even where nations are hostile to each other. Thus, Ahn’s view of Christian love, the ethical stance of which is embodied in Christological communal commitment, cannot be identified with Luther’s Augustine that apparently prioritizes the eschatological longing for individual salvation.

5. Mutual Love with Filial Piety

More importantly, all Ahn’s statements of Christian neighborly love ultimately converged into the need for ‘mutual love’. Specifically, based on his view of Christian love, Ahn advocated the ethical principle of ‘mutual love’ (*chǒng-ŭi*), with which he ushered in

a moral and spiritual reformation of Korean society. The notion of ‘mutual love’ consists of two Chinese characters: ‘情’ (*chǒng* in Korean, *qing* in Chinese) and ‘誼’ (*ŭi* in Korean, *yi* in Chinese). As the character *qing* in Chinese is not easy to decipher, the character *chǒng* in Korean harbors many different connotations that cannot be simplified as an ‘emotion’ or a ‘feeling’. It also signifies an indefinite “situation” in which the parties involved share close and deep feelings with one another while striving to promote an appropriate relationship between them. Likewise, the character *ŭi* is not so easy to interpret in reference to context. It covers such a broad range of relationships that cannot be reduced to brotherly love in Christianity. It also indicates an on-going process, the essential features of which cannot be determined prior to having particular relationships with others.⁴

In light of our considerations on Augustine studies conducted in South Korea, particularly with respect to Augustine’s view of love, we must see carefully from Ahn’s view of mutual love that loving others does not start with loving God. In an article, titled “A Sentient Society and a Merciless Society”, which was published in *Tongkwang* (1926), the official bulletin of *Hŭng-sa-tan*, Ahn laments the absence of ‘mutual love’ in the Korean society of his time. He starts this article by explaining his vision of the spiritual reformation of Korean people that consists of two ethical principles. One principle is concerned with what is contingent and natural, and he calls it ‘mutual love’ (*chǒng-ŭi*). It is relevant to the natural emotions of flesh-and-blood human beings in relationships and it can be observed universally. The other principle is concerned with what is nurtured and disciplined, and he calls it ‘cultivation with depth’ (敦修, *ton-su*). It deals with a process of incessant self-cultivation that can be known as an extension of mutual love toward neighboring others beyond one’s family. At this juncture, he provides the capstone of the argument he has been building that mutual love is a mother’s love for her child.

‘Mutual love’ (*chǒng-ŭi*) is a combination of ‘cherished love’ (親愛, *ch’in-ae*) with ‘compassion’ (同情, *tong-chǒng*). ‘Cherished love’ refers to a mother’s love for her son, and it is ‘love’ as an emotion (情, *chǒng*) that springs from a situation when a mother feels her son to be adorable. ‘Compassion’ indicates the emotional transition that the son’s suffering and happiness become the mother’s own suffering and happiness. And ‘cultivation with depth’ (*ton-su*) means to enlarge ‘mutual love’ and thereby promote and deepen it. In other words, it signifies a cultivating process in which cherished love and compassion can be actualized by practicing them with great effort. (Ahn 1926, p. 29)

Ahn’s definition of ‘mutual love’, which serves to enhance the qualities of society that forge a desirable relationship with others, is a rigidly specific definition in two senses. First, he does not endorse a humanitarian sense of ‘loving all men’ but affirms a discriminating sense of loving one’s own children. Such a sense of ‘mutual love’ is distinctly different from Christian ‘love’ (*agape*), and it especially overlaps with the Confucian idea of love with distinction, i.e., different kinds of love for different kinds of relationships. At this juncture, the disposition of affection that is based on the distinct relationship (親, *qin*) between parents and children does not require a particular capability to develop and maintain an integral sense of morality. It is a natural and contingent feeling that derives from the emotional character of the situation in which a mother sees and loves her son. Second, he does not assume that the reciprocal relationship between parents and children plays a critical role in the enjoyment of ‘mutual love’. In his definition of mutual love, there is no son’s love for his mother. All that affection as mutual love insists on is a mother’s love for her son. That is, mutual love is not exactly identical with the Confucian idea of ‘filial love’, loving one’s parents and children.⁵ When the affection of mutual love is described as a mother’s love for her son, it is an unconditional love rather than a reciprocal love, the mother as the love giver becomes a creator of a mutual love that will be promoted and extended through the practice of cultivation with depth.

Apparently, in Ahn’s view of mutual love, the relationship between parents and children in this understanding of mutual love does not envisage loving God. Although it might not rule out God’s endowment of this natural love, it speaks more of the possibility

of generating an affection of caring for one another in a parent–child interaction. At the same time, this juxtaposition of parental cares with children’s affection for their parents is neither associated with the traditional concerns about the genetic inheritance of children from parents, which often serves to justify social norms that allow parents to control children completely, nor with the political ethics of filial obligation, which serves to maintain sociopolitical orders that prompt a shift from public loyalty to personal loyalty through kinship ties and lineage. It is rather linked more with the transmigration of affection from parents to children.

A child, who has experienced a life full of fear (恐怖心, *kong-p’o-sim*) since his infancy in swaddling clothes, gets out of a house like a prison (獄, *ok*) and goes to school where a strict teacher like a tiger disciplines him harshly. He does not want to attend school, but he has no choice but to go because his parents force him to go. And mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, elder brother and younger brother, all family members are nothing but enemies (怨讐, *wŏn-su*) to one another. (Ahn 1926, p. 31)

Adhering to the two-way channel of mutual love in his description of the absence of mutual love in Korean society, Ahn focuses on the transmigration of love from parents to children, but not on the Confucian ideals of filial piety. The Korean people in his observations know that they have a particular relationship, the preservation and strengthening of which is central to their lives. However, because they do not love each other, they are unable to practice the Confucian ideals of filial piety that would provide them with the reciprocal affection which is denied to them. If this kind of problem is what is meant by the absence of mutual love, then what he aims at is not a rejection of Confucianism but a renewal of the Confucian ideals that had been totally forgotten or had gradually degenerated into the one-sided burden of filial duties without mutual love in the Korean society of his time.

Ahn’s notion of mutual love is a genuine conflation of Christian love and the Confucian idea of love with distinction. It cannot be reduced to either the Confucian ideal of ‘filial piety’ or Christian ‘love without reward’. It is conceptualized primarily in the Confucian love with distinction, but combined with Christian charity (*caritas*). Differing from the Confucian ideal of filial love, the realization of which requires the ideal types of truth-seeking men in the first place, his view of love does not impose any direction of uprightness but starts with natural affection. In addition, Christian neighborly love is embraced in his notion of mutual love, but it is examined carefully through the enactment of ‘mutual love’ as a separate ethical principle, the actualization of which depends on two different normative structures: natural affection and self-cultivation. Mutual love is described as a natural process in which a mother loves the other because the other is her son, and it is also delineated as a disciplined practice that one loves others because one is disciplined to extend loving one’s own kin to loving all. All in all, although his conception of ‘mutual love’ was primarily invested with Christian love (*caritas*) toward humanity, we can hardly deny that it was combined with Confucian ‘filial piety’.

Two normative structures of mutual love, natural affection and self-cultivation, can be found in Augustine’s account of the bond (*vinculum*) between people. As we can see from his view of mutual love (*mutua caritate*) in *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Augustine resolves the question of neighborly love with regard to its relationship with love of God, taking account of neighborly love as a distinct completion in its own authenticity rather than an instrument for perfecting the love of God. Then, having claimed that “no one should think that while he despises his neighbor he will come to happiness (*beatitudinem*) and to the God (*Deum*) whom he loves” (Augustine 1887, 2.51, p. 55), he adds that loving neighbors cannot be identified with mere good will or spiritual assistance but should be extended to helping others in their bodily needs, such as medicine, food, clothing, shelter, and “every means of covering and protection” (2.52, p. 55). At this juncture, ‘medicine’ takes the form of the bodily works of mercy, whereas ‘discipline’ is a self-cultivation through which we dispel the miseries of our neighbor’s soul. At the same time, ‘mutual love’ is not denied

but taken as a human love that can nourish filial love and thereby ultimately make it fitted for love of God.

You bind brothers to brothers in a religious tie stronger and closer than that of blood. Without violation of the connections of nature and of choice, you bring within the bond of mutual love every relationship of kindred, and every alliance of affinity. (Augustine 1887, 2.63, p. 58, slightly revised by the author)

In his eulogy of the Church above, Augustine draws upon at least two closely intertwined specifications concerning 'human love'. The first specification is that filial love in familyhood does not have to be replaced with brotherly love in Christianity. For Augustine, the natural affection of filial love in familyhood continues to work to enhance a bond between believers. The second specification is that mutual love can strengthen filial love, and thereby enhances family ties between people. The conceptual privilege of mutual love here, as Raymond Canning aptly points out (Canning 1983, pp. 17–18), is reflected etymologically as a crucial condition for fortifying bonds between people. Here, mutual love is a prerequisite for actualizing the true happiness of all kinds of human bonds, including family ties, insofar as it nourishes our spiritual and physical infirmity and leads us to neighborly love and love of God. In other words, human love is one that seems, at first, antithetical to love of God, but also has relevance for mutual love, the exemplary practice of which can be clearly seen with 'the counsel of mercy' (*consilium misericordiae*), which can be described as self-cultivation through neighborly love (Augustine 1958, pp. 39–40).

Ahn Changho and Augustine then provide compelling insights into the irrevocably dominant place of Luther's Augustine in South Korean Augustinian studies. In Luther's Augustine and its variations in South Korean Augustinian studies, love of neighbor is more or less subsidiary to love of God, as it has mainly been considered an instrument for completing the love of God or a disciplinary step toward the eschatological completion of individual salvation. However, for Ahn and Augustine, neighborly love is the gift of God, through which human love can be affirmed through God's grace as an essential element for a communal way of life. For Ahn, in particular, the validity of neighborly love does not simply derive from its reliance on love of God. It also originates from human love, endowed by God as natural affection, which should be nourished first through the mother's love for her child. Despite differences in their understanding of mutual love, Augustine also envisages a bond of community in which mutual love nourishes filial love and thereby makes it directed to love of God. Briefly, for Ahn and Augustine, human love is not a mechanism for protecting believers from non-believers, but forms a basis for shaping bonds between people that can transform any self-centered soteriological longing for personal salvation when it takes the encapsulation of mutual love into account in Christian neighborly love.

6. Conclusions

Ahn Changho's notion of mutual love, elaborated through his reappraisal of Confucian 'filial piety' with Christian neighborly love, provides us with an antidote to the idiosyncratic dominance of the non-communal eschatological longing for individual salvation in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea. He certainly does not attribute love of God to neighborly love, nor does he tie insatiable cupidity to mutual love. Nevertheless, he sees the mutually reinforcing dynamics between love of God and love of neighbor through the lens of mutual love in which a rigorously soteriological longing for individual salvation cannot preclude the possibility of human love among people beyond Christianity. At this juncture, the criterion of true happiness is not the puritan pathos of distance from communal commitment but the practice of neighborly love described as loving care of the needy. In helping neighbors in need with food and shelter rather than praying for neighbors, Ahn both envisages and emphasizes the role of neighborly love in actualizing Christian love. He shows that love of neighbor is neither a role play for completing the love of God nor a mere instrument for realizing the self-centered soteriological longing for individual salvation. Although his view of mutual love presupposes the unity of neighborly love with love of God, it does not validate any eschatological pursuit of personal

salvation that annihilates the possibility of the actualization of the former for the sake of completing the latter. Instead, it endorses 'filial love' through which human love, gifted by God's grace, can be combined and converged into an overall practice of neighborly love in Christology.

Ahn's view of mutual love, postulated as a Christological regulative principle that brackets brotherly love in Christianity with love of humanity, is especially appealing when dealing with the dominance of Luther's Augustine in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea. As mentioned earlier, despite continuous efforts to overcome the dominance of the anti-political or non-communal stance in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea, Augustine's view of neighborly love has not been taken seriously in terms of communal commitment. Under the shadow of Luther's Augustine, the interest of the text for Augustinian scholars in South Korea lies not in the need for extending love of God to love of neighbor but rather in the soteriological pursuit of self-cultivation, which ultimately encourages a rigid separation between believers and non-believers. Such a theological climate prevents us from acknowledging love of neighbor in terms of communal relationships. By the same token, self-discipline overwhelmed by self-centered eschatology does not allow us to see the norms shared between believers and non-believers. Ahn's view of mutual love shares with Augustine's view of love a similar consideration that dwelling too much on self-centered personal salvation can be a misdirected selfish love. Faced with problems pertaining to self-centered eschatological salvation in their Christian communities, they suggested an alternative view of love that could strengthen and deepen the bond between people rather than a ruthless indifference to communal relationships.

We can hardly deny that there are similarities between Augustine and Luther in their concerns with Christian self-discipline. However, if we can imagine Lutheran Augustine in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea as one of Augustine's best readers, we will have gone a long way toward repeating some of the faults of South Korea's Protestant Christianity that is now in crisis. Under the banner of the rigid separation of religion and politics, major Protestant megachurches in South Korea that have enjoyed their rapid growth through justifying collective selfishness as God's grace are now involved in nepotism, embezzlement, and moral hazard. In this light, two caveats deserve particular emphasis. First, the eschatological pursuit of individual salvation in the sense of urgency is more likely Lutheran rather than Augustinian. Second, brotherly love in Christianity without considering neighborly love can hardly be considered Augustinian. Recently, not a few Augustinian scholars in South Korea have switched their scholarly interests from Augustine's *Confessions* and *The City of God* to his other works. This new trend is coupled with a growing awareness that Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea are excessively focused on the moral import of self-cultivation and the eschatological fulfilment of personal salvation. Such a new scholarly trend in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea ought to be welcome, particularly by critical insiders of South Korea's Protestant Christianity.

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Notes

- ¹ Throughout this paper, 'Augustinian' refers to scholars or theologians who embody Augustine's biblical hermeneutics but develop their own understanding of the Scriptures. This understanding of Augustinianism can be categorized in the fifth type of Augustinianism in the broader sense which was defined by David Steinmetz as describing Martin Luther as Augustinian rather than Thomist. See Steinmetz (1980, p. 15).

- ² Recent studies conducted in South Korea, which analyze Augustine's philosophy with the emphasis on self-cultivation, are also inclined to support Augustine's account of the need for self-discipline under the guidance of grace. For instance, by analyzing the debate between Augustine and Pelagius, Park Chanho stresses God's grace as the focal point of understanding Augustine's view of free will (Park 2022). In a similar vein, by exploring the legacies of ancient philosophy from Plato to Cicero in Augustine's notion of free will, Ko Hanjin finds God's goodness to be the basis for justifying the power of human will (Ko 2020). Such an emphasis on the need for self-discipline in Augustinian studies leads to the juxtaposition of Augustine with Mencius in the field of comparative philosophy. On this scholarly trend, see Jang (2015).
- ³ Seon Han-Yong's study of *De Civitate Dei* (Seon 1986) gives an account of the place of the church in the earthly city that accords with the dominant view of the separation of church and state in Augustinian studies conducted in South Korea. By emphasizing the church in Augustine's philosophy as a distinctive secular community, the goal of which should be to realize a person's hope for eschatological fulfilment, Seon seeks a separation of church and state without giving up the role of the church in the earthly city as a signpost for eschatological salvation. Although recent studies of *The City of God* in South Korea put more emphasis on the role of the church in politics, they do not reject Seon's claim that, in Augustine's philosophy, no secular city can be a heavenly eternal city. See Kim (2022) and Ahn (2005).
- ⁴ Ahn's notion of 'mutual love' has been often simplified as a set of moral virtues such as 'sincerity' or 'solidarity'. Moreover, it has been frequently intermingled with an ideological rendition of Ahn's ideas of national independence, and thereby it embraces every intimate feeling that can be construed as a political representation of national sentiments or a psychological attachment of individuals to Korean ethnicity. Even when the notion of mutual love is considered as an ethical principle shaping an appropriate relationship between individuals, it is chiefly related to the traditional Confucian practice of self-cultivation for uprightness or Ahn's religious faith in Christianity. When it connects with the former, the notion of mutual love is too firmly prescribed by a transcendental ideal of goodness in Confucianism, and thereby it loses its sociopolitical vision of self-cultivation in relationships with others. When it is rendered an integral part of Christian 'love', its emphasis on 'loving all', which starts with loving one's own family or neighboring others rather than loving God, is inappropriately transfigured into the teleological and religious practice of Christian love (*agape*). See Kwak (2023).
- ⁵ Zhang Xianglong pointed out that the consciousness of filial piety in Confucianism is based on a reciprocal relationship between parents and children. Differing from the general understanding of 'filial piety' (孝, *xiao*) that tends to refine it within children's homage to their parents and ancestors, he argued that filial piety as the most essential source for behavioral rules or norms in Confucianism cannot be activated without the precedent of parental care (Zhang 2007, pp. 314–17). Along the same line, Philip Ivanhoe emphasizes good parental care as a prerequisite for the sense of gratitude, out of which children feel obliged to show reverence for their parents and ancestors (Ivanhoe 2004).

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