

THE CHALLENGE OF WESTERN LEARNING AS HETERODOXY: RE-READING THE SŎNGHO SCHOOL'S CONTROVERSIES AND CONFLICTS OVER WESTERN LEARNING IN CHOSŎN

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Confucian Orthodoxy, “Daotong” (K. Tot’ong 道統), which establishes Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism as Right Learning (正學), is an idea transcending history in the sense that it is unaffected by the passage of time or contingent factors, whereas “Daotong discourse” (道統論), which distinguishes heterodoxy from the viewpoint of Daotong, is always a historical praxis and a logic operated by a specific historical momentum. Daotong discourse had not been a topical issue in Chosŏn since the time it had accepted Zhu Xi (朱熹) and his interpretation of Confucianism as orthodoxy. Only after the Jesuits entered China in the sixteenth century to introduce their theocentric worldview and academic system that supported it did the need to update a list of heterodoxies and to re-operate Daotong discourse emerge. The Jesuits’ introduction of Western Learning (西學) did not provoke an immediate backlash from scholars in Chosŏn. Research on Western Learning by Sŏngho Yi Ik (星湖 李瀾, 1681–1763) with his open and practical attitude was a good example. However, the vigorous research on Western Learning eventually came to divide the Sŏngho School into two groups “the pro-Western Learning line” (親西派) and “the anti-Western Learning line” (攻西派), schools of thought that came into conflict. This article examines the attitudes of Sŏngho and his School members towards Western Learning, not by focusing on the dichotomy between pro- and anti-Western Learning, but by focusing on “civilization” and the “expansion of Confucianism,” because, as far as Daotong is a universal idea guaranteeing social order and the moral cultivation of individuals, it is also an idea of civilization. If viewed from the perspective of civilization, Western Learning can be regarded, not as mere heretical discourse, but as a practical and intellectual resource that can encourage moral cultivation, improve public welfare, and develop nations, and acceptance of Western Learning can be viewed as a matter of academic and technological progress rather than merely that of orthodoxy. In this context, the controversy within the Sŏngho School that attempted to include not only philosophical speculations but also practical knowledge into the essential nature of Confucianism may

be estimated as being an attempt to expand Confucianism, regardless of any individual member's stance on the issue.

Keywords: Confucian Orthodoxy, Daotong, Heterodoxy, Matteo Ricci, Sŏngho Yi Ik, Sŏngho School, Western Learning

I. CIVILIZATION CONSCIOUSNESS AND DAOTONG

For Confucian scholars, “civilization consciousness”¹ is an idea about the proper and ideal world, and in this context, the core of civilization consciousness is, of course, Confucianism. Confucianism in East Asia is an intellectual system as well as a political principle through which it is believed the individual/society/nation is able to realize an integrated order based, not on violence or coercion, but on morality. From a historical point of view, Confucianism was endorsed as the state learning curriculum during the Han Dynasty, and since then, it started to develop its orthodox nature which did not allow different thoughts and other worldviews. This orthodox idea manifested itself, among others, in the discourse of Daotong (K. Tot’ong 道統), meaning the orthodox transmission of the Way. Ever since Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) coined the term,² Confucians attempted to establish themselves as the center of academia as well as the management of the state through Daotong discourse (道統論) excluding others, in which they argued that there is only one proper Way (道) and that the Way’s transmission to specific persons like Mengzi (孟子) or Zhu Xi establishes the genealogy of the orthodoxy.

For a Confucian scholar, in general, Daotong was an idea transcending history in that it is not altered by any specific historical events or accidental factors. In

* This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2007-361-AL0015).

¹ Recently, in Korea, Japan, and China, *civilization* has been commonly rendered as *wenming* (K. *munmyŏng* 文明). *Wenming* is a traditional term which appears in *Yi Jing* (易經, *Classic of Changes*) and means an idealistic cultural standard. Therefore, it has a similar meaning to *Zhonghua* (K. *Chunghwa* 中華), which expresses Chinese pride in its cultural ideal and moral standards. However, whereas *Zhonghua* functioned as a powerful ideology in China and Chosŏn, *wenming* was restrictively applied to the state or society civilized morally by sages (聖人). *Wenming* reappeared in East Asia, when Fukuzawa Yukichi, the Japanese thinker who played the leading role in the Meiji Restoration, translated *civilization* into *bunmei* (文明) in Japanese, after the late nineteenth century. Since then, *Zhonghua* has been rapidly superseded by *wenming*, a translated word for *civilization* in East Asia.

² According to Wing-tsit Chan, the idea of Daotong existed ever since Mengzi, but it was Zhu Xi who inherited it and began using the term Daotong. Wing-tsit Chan, *Chu Hsi: Life and Thought* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1987), 65–69.

contrast, Daotong discourse is a logic and practice that has been initiated and facilitated by a specific historical momentum. Daotong discourse has resurfaced whenever Daotong *as a general idea* was threatened by specific events or factors in history, and it has been used to exclude heterodoxy (K. *pyŏgidan* 闢異端) or to refute unorthodoxy (K. *ch'ŏksa* 斥邪).

Indeed, Daotong discourse has not been an urgent topical controversy in China and Chosŏn since Neo-Confucianism established itself as an ideological authority. It is true that the doctrines of Yang Zhu (楊朱) and Mo Di (墨翟) were categorized as heterodoxy by Mengzi as well as Taoism and Buddhism, which were designated as heterodoxy by Han Yu (韓愈, 768–824) and were still regarded as heresies in Neo-Confucian circles. However, they did not hold any substantial power to threaten Neo-Confucianism. In particular, in the case of Taoism and Buddhism, even though they existed in social groups, unlike the doctrines of Yang Zhu and Mo Di which had disappeared in history, their social influence was very limited. Therefore, the continuous controversy against “heterodoxies” cannot be attributed to their actual threats. Rather, it is highly likely that such a controversy had occurred as a part of the inner struggle for deciding who held the legitimacy of Neo-Confucianism among rival factions within Neo-Confucianism. The orthodoxy-heterodoxy scheme might be said to be operated, not through the conflicts between orthodox Neo-Confucianism and other heterodoxies, but as an academic and political proclamation to distinguish who inherited the orthodox, or Daotong, among the factions of Neo-Confucianism itself.

The situation in Chosŏn was not unlike that of China.³ In Chosŏn, there were almost no competing ideological groups that could be actual threats to the doctrines of Zhu Xi. With the exception of the early years of the Chosŏn Dynasty when Daotong discourse was activated to get rid of the previous dynasty's Buddhist culture, Daotong in Chosŏn, for a long time, was a kind of reflexive statement to reaffirm its own ideology, not one to refute any specific alternative ideology. For Chosŏn's Confucians, the very proclamation of Daotong was equal to claiming the scholastic authority and orthodoxy of Confucianism, and that they should establish Daotong as their own, not through competition with heresies, but through competition with other factions inside. It was T'oegye Yi Hwang (退溪 李滉, 1501–1570) and his school of thought that stood in the most favorable position in the debate of Daotong, as T'oegye attempted to draw

³ One specific difference between China and Chosŏn is that the Yangming School (陽明學), or the School of Mind of Neo-Confucianism, was labeled as heterodoxy by T'oegye Yi Hwang, who was then recognized as the legitimate inheritor of Zhu Xi's philosophy in Chosŏn, and has been included in the list of heterodox teachings ever since. Due to this categorization, the scholars of the Yangming School in Chosŏn were very few in numbers and could not gain scholastic influence.

the genealogy of Daotong in Chosŏn and has been referred to as the “Zhu Xi of Chosŏn” ever since.⁴

It was after the results of the Jesuit’s efforts to introduce their version of Christianity into China⁵ became visible that the renewal of the list of heterodoxies and the reinstatement of Daotong discourse was called for in Chosŏn.⁶ When Xixue (K. Sŏhak 西學), or Western Learning including, among others, Western philosophy, religious thought, and the natural science of the European Renaissance transferred to China by the Jesuits was introduced to Chosŏn, the Confucian scholars in the eighteenth century of Chosŏn added it to the list of heterodoxies.

When the Jesuit missionaries penetrated China in the late sixteenth century, they argued that Shangdi (K. Sangje 上帝) in the ancient Chinese classics was in

⁴ For the conflicts over Daotong in Chosŏn and the position and role of T’oegye in it, see Martina Deuchler, “Despoilers of the Way—Insulters of the Sages: Controversies over the Classics in Seventeenth-Century Korea,” in *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, eds. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 91–133; Donald L. Baker, “A Different Thread: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian World,” *ibid.*, 199–230.

⁵ A large body of research has accumulated on the Jesuits’ advance into China: George H. Dunne, *Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962); John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009); Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci, A Jesuit in the Ming Court* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011).

⁶ The first article on Christianity as heterodoxy in Chosŏn was written by Chai-sik Chung. Chung illuminated the historical process whereby Christianity came to be evaluated as heterodoxy from when it was introduced by Yi Sugwang (李睟光, 1563–1627) into Chosŏn. This article briefly introduces some significant incidents relating to Christianity in Chosŏn between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including stories of An Chŏngbok (安鼎福, 1712–1791), a disciple of Sŏngho Yi Ik (星湖 李瀼, 1682–1763) and a critic of Western Learning, and of Hwang Sayŏng (黃嗣永, 1775–1801) who wrote the “Silk Letter” to the French Bishop in Beijing asking for Western military intervention on behalf of persecuted Chosŏn Catholics. Please refer to Chai-sik Chung, “Christianity as a Heterodoxy: An Aspect of General Cultural Orientation in Traditional Korea,” in *Korea’s Response to the West*, ed. Yung-hwan Jo (Kalamazoo, Michigan: The Korea Research and Publications, 1971), 57–86. Donald L. Baker also deals with how Western Learning was evaluated by Chosŏn intellectuals. He focuses more on Tasan Chŏng Yagyong (茶山 丁若鏞, 1762–1836) and Yun Chich’ung (尹持忠, 1759–1791), the first martyr in Korean Catholic history, rather than Sŏngho and argues that Christianity gave intellectual stimuli to Tasan in terms of self-cultivation and morality: for example, a feeling of reverence for Sangje, the Lord on High of the Confucian classics. This article is helpful in gauging the critical thinking and position of Confucian scholars of Chosŏn on Catholicism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Please find the details in Donald L. Baker, “A Different Thread: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian World,” *ibid.*, 199–230.

fact the very God they worshipped, that is the Lord of Heaven, or Tianzhu (K. Ch'ŏnju 天主) in Chinese. They also argued that whereas the physical body is mortal, the immortal soul is sent to heaven or hell as either a reward or punishment for one's way of living on earth. Even though the Jesuits' arguments seemed to carry heterodoxical grounds to the Chinese as its logic resembled that of Buddhism, their social activities and the translated books of Western learning in Chinese induced the Chinese people to soon realize that the Jesuits possessed immense scientific knowledge in astronomy, geology, mathematics, and mechanics from highly civilized nations. This realization caused much conflict and debate over the contradictory entity of "heterodoxy with advanced thoughts and technologies" until the Rites Controversy in the eighteenth century, which weakened the status of Catholicism in China.⁷

The situation in Chosŏn was different. The Chosŏn's Confucian scholars first encountered Western Learning only through books without any direct personal encounters with Jesuit missionaries. This allowed the Confucian scholars of Chosŏn an objective and reasonable academic distance from Western Learning. It was Sŏngho Yi Ik (星湖 李瀼, 1681–1763),⁸ an outstanding scholar of eighteenth century Chosŏn, who best utilized this academic distance.

This article examines how Western Learning was debated in a purely academic context and what kinds of conflicts it caused before it was categorized as a political heresy by the state's formal statement. For this purpose, this article looks into the ways in which Sŏngho, Sin Hudam (愼後聘, 1702–1761) and An Chŏngbok (安鼎福, 1721–1791) understood Western Learning and their conflict over it. In the process, this examination will show how Sŏngho utilized Western Learning as a new scholastic resource while succeeding to T'oegye—the symbol of Daotong. This point of view allows us to regard Western Learning, not as something "passively introduced" into Chosŏn's Confucianism as superior knowledge, but as something that was "modified" and "utilized" to be a resource of civilization for Confucianism.

⁷ The results of this particular conflict and controversy were consolidated into a book called *Shengchao paxieji* [聖朝破邪集; Anthology of writings exposing heterodoxy], a critique of Catholicism by Confucian scholars and Buddhists. One can refer to the following study to learn more about the anti-Catholic movement that started in Fujian Province. Eric Zürcher, "The Jesuit Mission in Fukien in Late Ming Times: Levels of Response" in *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. ed. E. B. Vermeer (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 417–457; "Chinese Reactions to Christian Creationism" in *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, ed. Chun-chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 132–166.

⁸ There are not many English references on Sŏngho. For overview information about his life and ideology, see M. S. Seoh, "Yi Ik 李瀼 (1682–1763): An Eighteenth-Century Korean Intellectual," *Journal of Korean Studies* 1, no. 1 (1969): 9–22.

II. A RENEWED LIST OF HETERODOXY

It was in the early eighteenth century when the scholars of Chosŏn started to study Western Learning from a theoretical perspective. It was almost 100 years after Catholicism and *Tianzhu shiyi* [K. *Ch'ŏnju shirŭi* 天主實義; The true meaning of the Lord of Heaven] (completed in 1596 by Matteo Ricci⁹ and published in 1603 in Beijing) was introduced to Chosŏn for the first time.

The first introduction of Western Learning might be traced to the encyclopedic book, *Chibong yusŏl* [芝峯類說; Classified writings of Chibong]. It was completed in 1614 by the Confucian scholar Chibong Yi Sugwang (芝峯 李睟光, 1563–1628) and published in 1633 as a book printed from wood blocks by his son. Yi Sugwang introduced Matteo Ricci and his writings as well as his gifts to the Chinese Emperor such as clocks and a prism in the section entitled “Oeguk” (外國; foreign countries) in the chapter “Chegukpu” (諸國部; all nations). It is noteworthy that Yi Sugwang used the neutral term *oeguk* instead of the traditional term *oei* (外夷; foreign barbarians) when he introduced fifty countries bordering China, which allowed even Matteo Ricci and his major book to be described objectively. For him, Matteo Ricci and Western culture were not related to “heterodoxy” but to unfamiliar “foreign” information. The case of Yi Sugwang is significant in that it shows that Western Learning was not listed as a heresy in Chosŏn from the first moment of its introduction.

Heated discussions and theoretical studies on Western Learning only started in the eighteenth century when numerous books about Western Learning were brought into Chosŏn through the Chosŏn envoy to Yenching (an old name for Beijing) and considerable information on the West was accumulated. It was Sŏngho, a Southerner (K. Namin 南人), and his disciples known as the School of Sŏngho, who led the academic discussion on Western Learning. One of the disciples of Sŏngho, Sin Hudam, who wrote the first book criticizing Western Learning, *Sŏbakpyŏn* [西學辨; Critique on Western Learning], describes an anecdote in the spring of 1724 when he visited his teacher Sŏngho as follows:

On March 21st of 1724, I visited my teacher Sŏngho who was at the time residing in Ahyŏn (鵝峴). I found that I walked into discussions on the

⁹ Matteo Ricci, who opened the door for the Jesuit missionaries to enter China, became a kind of window through which the Chinese, who had thought of China as being the only civilization, got a taste of another civilized world. He was the first cosmopolitan who bridged the West and the East and a messenger of new ideas. For Matteo Ricci's biographical information, see George H. Dunne (1962); V. Cronin, *The Wise Man from the West* (London: Collins Press, 1984).

westerner Matteo Ricci (利西泰) between Master Yi and his disciples.¹⁰

Even though Sŏngho, born into a déclassé family of the south, could not advance to governmental posts due to the contemporary factional struggles between the Southerners and the Westerners (K. Sŏin 西人),¹¹ he was a very influential Confucian scholar of the late Chosŏn, envisioning a Confucian world in which a moral order is realized and proposing various important institutional reforms. Even though Sŏngho as a Southerner in and around Seoul (K. Kiho namin 畿湖南人) succeeded to T'oegye, he approached the “heterodox” Western Learning, unlike other orthodox Confucian scholars, with academic passion and open-minded objectivity. Possibly, his exclusion from holding public offices due to his factional origin might have allowed him to deal with Western Learning without any outside constraint.¹² It is striking that the subjects and areas of his readings were comprehensive, ranging from the essential principles of Catholicism through Thomism and Stoicism to cosmology, astronomy, geology, Cartography, mathematics, and human physiology.¹³

Sŏngho's open attitude naturally influenced his immediate disciples such as Sin Hudam, An Chŏngbok, Kwŏn Ch'ŏlsin (權哲身, 1736–1801), and Yi Kahwan (李家煥, 1742–1801) as well as the next generation scholars such as Yi Pyŏk (李堯, 1754–1786)¹⁴ and the Chŏng brothers, that is, Chŏng Yakchŏn (丁若鏗, 1758–

¹⁰ Sin Hudam, *Habin Sin Hudam ūi Tonwa Sŏbakpyŏn* [Sin Hudam's critique on Western Learning], translated by Seonhee Kim (Seoul: Saram ūi munŭi, 2014), 39.

¹¹ The Southerner faction, one of factions in the late Chosŏn Dynasty, was divided into Yŏngnam Southerners (嶺南 南人, K. Yŏngnam namin) based in Yŏngnam (嶺南) Province and Kiho Southerners based in the Capital Province. The Sŏngho School was the most active of the schools of the Kiho Southerners.

¹² When Sŏngho became an adult, his faction lost its political leverage and the Westerners held it instead. Before long, the Westerners split into the Old Doctrine (K. Noron 老論) and the Young Doctrine (K. Soron 少論). As the Old Doctrine faction took the lead in the political landscape of Chosŏn, the Southerners were forced off the political stage. While they could not advance to governmental posts from that time, the Westerners' checks on them continued. When anti-Catholic persecution started in the 1780s and some of the Kiho Southerners became involved in it, Western Learning or the issue of Catholicism was used as a useful pretext for further repression of Kiho Southerners by the Westerners.

¹³ He read about twenty-one books on various categories of Western Learning. For further references to the Jesuit writings read by Sŏngho, see Kŭm Chang'ae, *Chosŏn hugi Yugyo wa Sŏbak* [Confucianism and Western Learning in the late Chosŏn era] (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2003), 55–56.

¹⁴ Yi Pyŏk, a member of the Sŏngho school, studied under the guidance of Kwŏn Ch'ŏlsin, who was a disciple of Sŏngho, and a friend of Yi Sŭnghun (李承薰, 1756–1801), the first baptized Catholic in Chosŏn. He encouraged Yi Sŭnghun who entered Beijing with his father to be baptized at the Catholic church in Beijing and was later baptized by him. Yi Pyŏk is also famous

1816), Chŏng Yakchong (丁若鍾, 1760–1801), and Tasan Chŏng Yagyong (茶山丁若鏞, 1762–1836).¹⁵ The attitude of Sŏngho, who read and discussed books on Western Learning by himself and who encouraged his disciples to follow him, indicates that Western Learning did not instigate Daotong discourse in the early stage of its introduction into Chosŏn. However, vigorous research on Western Learning came to eventually divide the Sŏngho School into two groups. Junior scholars like Kwŏn Ch'olsin and Yi Kahwan came to embrace Western Learning, with some of them converting to Catholicism. The senior group including Sin Hudam and An Chŏngbok refused to accept new ideas from the West. Generally this division is considered to be between the pro-Western Learning, or pro-Catholicism line (Ch'insŏp'a 親西派) versus the anti-Western Learning, or anti-Catholicism line (Kongsŏp'a 攻西派). The former is also called the left wing of the Sŏngho School (Sŏnghojwap'a 星湖左派), meaning that they transgressed the boundary of Daotong, whereas the latter is called the right wing of the Sŏngho School (Sŏnghoup'a 星湖右派) as they wanted to remain within the venerable tradition of Daotong. While Sŏngho was alive, Western Learning was a topic for scholastic discussion within the school of thought. However, when the political attack on Western Learning started, it became a crucial point of conflict threatening the existence of the school. The conflict persisted until the period

for his transmitting Western Learning to Tasan. His writings such as *Ch'ŏnju konggyŏngga* [天主恭敬歌; An ode to the revered Lord of Heaven] in Korean and *Sŏnggyo yoji* [聖教要旨; Essentials of the holy teaching] shows that his faith coexisted with the moral world of Confucianism. See the following works for more information: Seonhee Kim and Min Jeong Baek, "A Religious Approach to the *Zhongyong*: With a Focus on Western Translators and Korean Confucians," *Journal of Korean Religions* 6, no. 2 (2015): 27–60. For representative studies on Yi Pyŏk, see Kim Ok-hŭi, *Gwang'am Yi Pyŏk ūi Sŏhak sasang* [Yi Pyŏk's philosophy of Western Learning] (Seoul: Catholic University of Korea Press, 1979); Yi Sŏng-bae, *Yugyo wa Kŭrisŭdogyo: Yi Pyŏk ūi Han'gukchŏk sinhak wŏlli* [Confucianism and Christianity: Yi Pyŏk's Korean theological principles], (Seoul: St. Benedict Publishing Co., 1979).

¹⁵ While there are a relatively large number of studies on Tasan in relation to Western Learning in English like those of Donald L. Baker and Michael C. Kalton, the ideological and political characteristics of the Sŏngho School, which greatly influenced Tasan, are not adequately researched. The Sŏngho School is more often than not dealt with as being merely Tasan's intellectual background. I argue that studies on the Sŏngho School in itself are as important as those on Tasan, since Tasan intellectually grew in the Sŏngho School and inherited its legacy, especially its viewpoint on Western Learning. For more detail, see Michael C. Kalton, "Chŏng Tasan's Philosophy of Man: A Radical Critique of the Neo-Confucian World View," *Journal of Korean Studies* 3 (1981): 3–38; Donald L. Baker, "Practical Ethics and Practical Learning: Tasan's Approach to Moral Cultivation," *Acta Koreana* 13, no. 2, (2010): 47–61; So-Yi Chung, "Kyŏnggi Southerners' Notion of Heaven and Its Influence on Tasan's Theory of Human Nature," *Journal of Korean Religions* 2, no. 2, (2011): 111–141; Kevin N. Cawley, "Deconstructing Hegemony: Catholic Texts in Chosŏn's Neo-Confucian Context," *Acta Koreana* 15, no. 1, (2012): 15–42.

from 1785 to 1801 when Catholicism was finally branded “heterodoxy” by the nation itself, with Catholics being publicly persecuted.¹⁶ The theoretical divide within the school, resulting from Sŏngho’s research on Western Learning, sums up the position Chosŏn Confucian scholars held and their critical awareness of problems concerning orthodoxy, heterodoxy and new intellectual resources in the context of civilization.

III. CRITIQUING HETERODOXY, REVERTING TO ORTHODOXY

For Chosŏn Confucian scholars, Daotong was not simply a matter of ideas or theories, but also a very crucial matter in terms of securing the social status and intellectual hegemony of each scholastic school of thought. It is certain that both Daotong discourse and refuting heterodoxy discourse (K. *pyŏgidallon* 闢異端論) were theoretical practices of identifying and blocking heretical factors that might have developed into a threat to intellectual authority. However, much more important for contesting schools of thought was the intellectual hegemony coming with the status of their possessing Daotong. The reason why Confucian scholars who were excluded from politics and/or who were stationed in rural areas could discuss the Way and be concerned about the affairs of the nation was that they carried with them the pride of inheriting Daotong. In particular, the Southerners, who were excluded from political circles, believed that they also had the right and obligation to uphold the Way’s transmission, because they belonged to the school of T’oegyŏ, the scholar who was regarded as a true inheritor of Confucianism, having established Daotong in Chosŏn.

Most of the scholars of the Sŏngho School shared the idea of Daotong with other members of the Southerner faction despite their differences in locality. It was in this context that Western Learning came to intervene as a variable in the

16 Western Learning-Catholicism became the object of political vigilance when the group studying Western Learning, consisting of junior scholars of the Southerner faction, was discovered by the state in 1785. At that time, the event was settled with most of the related Southerners being released. However, when Yun Chich’ung a Confucian scholar in Chinsan (珍山), Chŏlla (全羅) Province, refused to do ancestral rites in 1791, he was put to death, and Western Learning and Catholicism became the object of official persecution. Since then, in the period of from 1801 to 1866, there were four official anti-Catholic persecutions, in particular the anti-Catholic persecution of 1801 (K. Sinyu kyonan 辛酉教難) a sort of political attack on the Southerners by the Westerners. During the persecution, Yi Sŏnghun, who had married Tasan’s sister, and Chŏng Yakchong were both executed, and Tasan himself was sent into exile. These members of the Sŏngho School were all purged owing to political causes, despite the fact that they were not involved in any particular social activities except privately studying books on Western Learning. For Yun Chich’ung, Chosŏn’s very first martyr, see Donald L. Baker (1999).

field of Chosŏn Confucianism. In the eyes of the members of the Sŏngho School, Western Learning was definitely heterodoxy in terms of its denial of the Supreme Ultimate (T'aegŭk 太極) or Principle or *li* (理) of Neo-Confucianism, its belief in the Lord of Heaven with a humanlike personality, and its theory of an afterlife in heaven or hell similar to that of Buddhism. Sin Hudam was the first to criticize and identify Western Learning as heterodoxy. The records on numerous discussions on Western Learning and Catholicism of Sin Hudam with his mentor Sŏngho were compiled into "Kimunp'yŏn" [紀聞編; Transcription of debates on Western Learning], and his final stance on them was summarized in 1724 in *Sŏbakpyŏn*,¹⁷ the first anti-Western Learning writing in Chosŏn.¹⁸ *Sŏbakpyŏn* introduced and criticized the central ideas of Jesuit writings such as Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi*, a preparatory book of Catholicism,¹⁹ *Lingyan lishao* [K. *Yŏng'ŏn yŏjak* 靈言蠡勺; Humble attempt at discussing matters pertaining to the soul] (1624), an introduction of Scholasticism's theory of the soul based on Aristotle's *De Anima*, by Francesco Sambiassi (畢方濟, 1582–1649), and a humanistic geography book by Julio Aleni (艾儒略, 1582–1649), *Zhifang waiji* [K. *Chikpang oegi* 職方外紀; Records of regions beyond the jurisdiction of the imperial geographer] in 1623.

Even though Sin agreed with his mentor about the excellence of Western astronomical calendars after reading Jesuit writings at the recommendation of his teacher, he continued to reserve a critical distance from Western Learning, regarding the miracles in Catholicism as being no different from those of Buddhism. In *Sŏbakpyŏn* Sin states that the Westerner is basically a barbarian (K. *ijŏk* 夷狄) who knows Chinese customs and morality, implying that China is the only genuinely civilized nation of the world. However, Sin defines Western Learning as heterodoxy, not just because it originated from outside of China, but because he thought the main source of Western Learning is "selfishness" against which Confucianism is most vigilant.

Sin argues that while the theories of Western Learning, which entered China in the late period of the Ming Dynasty and which imitated Buddhism and relied on the Lord, might seem proper, the main gist of it is merely selfishness: namely, the desire to live and a fear of death. Scholars would not be drawn to its theories if

¹⁷ *Sŏbakpyŏn* is included in *Habin sŏnsaeng chŏnjip* [河濱先生全集; The complete works of Master Sin Hudam], vol. 7 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 2006).

¹⁸ A large amount of Korean research has been done on Sin Hudam and *Sŏbakpyŏn*. For research in English, see Donald L. Baker, "The Use and Abuse of the Sirhak Label," *Kyohoesa yŏn'gu* 3 (1981): 183–254.

¹⁹ Translators of *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* take it as being a book, not on the Catechism, but on pre-evangelical dialogue used in preparation for the religion's propagation. Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, Translated by Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen (Taipei: The Ricci Institute, 1985), 15.

they only realize that Western Learning is heresy based on the pursuit of selfish interests and only if they are not disturbed by life and death.²⁰

Sin maintains that the idea of an afterlife in heaven or hell as reward or punishment is similar to that of Buddhism and that the basis of these ideas is selfishness desiring life and hating death. From the perspective of Confucianism, behavior with the expectation of a reward is not authentically moral. Therefore, Sin argues that anything that does not help moral cultivation is merely heresy, despite its possible usefulness and advantages.

Sin also criticizes the central ideas of Catholicism such as God having a personality, the immortal soul, and the notion of heaven and hell, from the strictly non-personal perspectives of Neo-Confucian ideas such as principle or *li* (理), and psychophysical force or *qi* (氣). Confucian scholars including Sin perceived the world, not as a creation of God with a personality existing outside the world, but as the product of the fusion of two non-personal cosmic principles called *li* and *qi*. The idea of the immortal soul after death was also subject to fierce criticism because Confucian doctrines considered the soul to be a fleeting product of the fusion of *qi* and that all *qi* is bound to disperse.

In addition, Sin even criticized the scientific technological advances and cultural aspects of Western Learning appraised by his mentor, Sŏngho. Sin viewed the miracles and the stories of gifts from God told by the Jesuit missionaries, not as something proving the power and mercy of God, but as mere acts of trickery. Although Sin paid heed to the advice of Sŏngho who urged him to conduct thorough research on Western Learning before criticizing it, in the end, he classified Western Learning as complete heterodoxy.

As Sin wrote *Sŏbakpyŏn* well before the official persecution of the Catholics, we can surmise that, rather than being an attempt to defend his own school from outside pressures or threats, his book was a scholastic attempt to explicate his thoughts and stance on Western Learning. However, when An Chŏngbok, another disciple of Sŏngho, wrote a book refuting and rejecting heterodoxy in the 1780s, the circumstances had greatly changed due to the Chosŏn government's official prohibition of Catholicism, which made the issue of heresy a great political affair. Catholicism was at the core of scholastic and political controversies in Chosŏn in 1784. Yi Sŏnghun (李承薰, 1756–1801), who came back from Beijing as a Catholic convert, led a reading group on Catholic publications with Yi Pyŏk, Kwŏn Ch'olsin and the brothers Chŏng Yakchŏn, Chŏng Yakchong and Tasan. It was at the house of Kim Pŏmu (金範禹, ?–1786), a middle-ranking man (K. *chungin* 中人), in the Myŏngdong (明洞) area that the group was caught red-handed by the legal

²⁰ Sin Hudam, *ibid.*, 86–88.

authorities in 1785.²¹ King Chǒngjo (正祖, 1752–1800) condemned the middle-ranking Kim Pǒmu only to exile and released the related Southerners. From then on, Catholicism became the crux of a controversy amongst Confucian scholars, and the Southerners who accepted Catholicism were subjected to suspicion and denunciation. King Chǒngjo optimistically presumed that what was denounced as “corruptive teaching” (*sagyo* 邪教) would naturally disappear with the correct reinstatement of Confucianism. However, rallying voices were mounting among Confucian scholars, calling for the eradication of Catholicism. It was around this period when An Chǒngbok completed his writings related to the subject of refuting and rejecting heterodoxy.

An Chǒngbok completed “Ch’ǒnhak mundap” [天學問答; Questions and answers on Heavenly Learning] in 1785²² in the form of answering the questions of a younger scholar of the Sǒngho group with the intention of refuting heterodoxy. If Sin Hudam’s *Sǒhakpyǒn* published before the onset of anti-Catholic persecution was written to theoretically refute Western Learning, An Chǒngbok’s “Ch’ǒnhak mundap,” a warning and admonition directed at younger scholars, was written with the feeling that Catholicism might push the Southerners into a politically dangerous situation. By the same logic which Sin employed to criticize the Western notions of heaven and hell and the immortal soul, that is, the *li-qi* worldview, An Chǒngbok, the right wing of the Sǒngho School conciliated younger scholars who attempted a somewhat intellectual traverse out of the center of orthodox Confucianism, and tried to push the Sǒngho School back into the magnetic field of T’oegye and orthodox Confucianism.

An Chǒngbok answers, on behalf of the school, the questions of those who had taken issue with Sǒngho’s study of Western Learning, his thinking highly of Matteo Ricci and of his calling Ricci a “sage.” He defends Sǒngho stating that he merely meant a distinguished person by the word sage, different from “sage-kings like King Yao (堯) and King Shun (舜)” or “the Duke of Zhou” (周公) and “Kongzi” (孔子). He also criticizes pro-Catholic junior scholars for using the Sǒngho School to rationalize themselves. His efforts to defend the Sǒngho School do not end at the enunciation of Western Learning as heresy. He also edited Sǒngho’s *Todongnok* [道東錄; Document on the Way transferred to Chosǒn], a summary of T’oegye’s writings, at the request of Sǒngho and changed the book’s

²¹ “Ŭlsa ch’ujojǒkpal” [乙巳秋曹摘發; Case of Catholics disclosed by the legal authorities in 1785] in *Pyǒgnip’yǒn* (關衛編) [The collected writings against heterodoxy], ed. Kim Sichun (Seoul: Yǒrhwadang, 1971), 95–97.

²² Sǒ Chongt’ae, “Sunam An Chǒngbok ũi Ch’ǒnhak sǒlmun kwa Ch’ǒnhakko Ch’ǒnhak mundap e kwanhan yǒn’gu” [A Study of Sunam An Chǒngbok’s Ch’ǒnhak sǒlmun, Ch’ǒnhakko and Ch’ǒnhak mundap], *Kyohoesa yǒn’gu* 41 (2013): 5–71.

title to *Yija suō* [李子粹語; Master Yi's essential words], which explicitly shows his personal respect for T'oegye. To An Chōngbok, the enunciating of Western Learning as a refutable heresy and the claiming of Daotong as Right Learning (正學) were two sides of the same coin. An Chōngbok did this, not for his own personal interests, but from a sense of duty to protect and maintain the whole Sōngho School. Other scholars of the Sōngho School also wrote books refuting heterodoxy. Among them were "Yanghakup'yōn" [洋學辨; Critique of Western Learning] by Yi Samhwan (李森煥, 1729–1814) in Ch'ungch'ōng (忠淸) Province and "Pyōgidallon" [闢異端論; Essay on excluding heterodoxy] by Yun Ki (尹愷, 1742–1826), one of the last disciples of Sōngho. These scholars and books were commonly concerned about the possible contamination of orthodox Confucianism and denounced Western Learning as heterodoxy. When the nation began to oppress Catholicism, they had no other choice but to return to the center of Confucianism. They could not afford to cope with internal attacks arising from their suspicions of the Southerners nor could they cope with external attacks.

The conflicts and divisions over Western Learning within the Sōngho School show both the open character of Sōngho's philosophy and the conservative nature of the Kiho Southerners, who wanted to achieve an intellectual power within the Southerner's genealogy succeeding to T'oegye. However, much more significant than the conflicts and divisions was the fact that neither side overstepped the core teachings of Confucianism. In this context, Donald L. Baker states:

The first Korean converts to Catholicism as well as its first critics were the Southerners. Both the converts and the critics were motivated by a common desire to overcome the moral frailty of the human mind.

The critics, because of their recognition of the strength of selfish desires, reacted strongly against Catholic teachings, which seemed, in their view, to encourage self-centered and therefore immoral attitudes and behavior. The converts, on the other hand, were convinced that faith in the Catholic God provided a way to overcome the selfishness which was so often the cause of ethical lapses.²³

Even though the ideological trajectory of these scholars may seem dualistic and complex at first glance, due to the contradictory and complex stances of embracing new intellectual resources while aspiring to be traditional successors of orthodox Confucianism, the essential center of their trajectory and intellectual

²³ Donald L. Baker (1999), 208.

orientation is singular: Confucianism as the genuine discipline. Both those who accepted Western Learning enough to be converts and those who staunchly rejected it were scholars who had the same will to practice the authentic teachings of Confucianism in everyday life. Those who embraced Western Learning wanted to maximize morality through the God of Catholicism.²⁴ Those who rejected it also believed that the denial of Catholicism pursuing personal interests would be essential to the recovery of the true spirit of Confucianism. Sŏngho's ideas, as an intellectual foundation, were at the center of two different directions: pursuing different directions or sharing a common academic aim.

IV. WESTERN LEARNING, A RESOURCE OF CIVILIZATION

Prior to the mid-eighteenth century—before a full-fledged persecution began—studying Western Learning books was a new form of culture among Chosŏn Confucian scholars. An Chŏngbok wrote that “Western writings were already introduced in this country during the last years of King Sŏnjo (宣祖, r. 1567–1608), and there were few renowned scholars who did not read them.”²⁵ In particular, young scholars in Seoul and Kyŏnggi Province, the region most open to foreign culture, perceived Western Learning books from China as a *new intellectual resource*.²⁶ In his letter to Kwŏn Ch'olsin, who was then developing an interest in Catholicism, An Chŏngbok used the term “New Studies” (新學) to describe Western Learning, along with Heterodoxy (異學), Western Studies (洋學), and Catholicism (天主學). This expression New Studies allows us to guess why the Southerners in and around Seoul following Sŏngho gravitated toward Western Learning and Catholicism. To these scholars, Western Learning was heterodoxy but also a new intellectual resource. To some, the former aspect might have been more important, while to others the latter.

Sŏngho, despite his official recognition of the heterodox nature of Western

²⁴ Those who accepted Western Learning highly appreciated it because the teaching of Christianity promoted the individual's self-cultivation by rewarding virtue and punishing vice as Confucianism did. They were convinced that it would serve the reformation of ethical conditions in Chosŏn. Sŏngho was of the same opinion. .

²⁵ “Ch'ŏnhakko” [天學考; Contemplations on Heavenly Study] is available in *Sunamjip* [順菴集; The collected works of An Chŏngbok], *Han'guk munjip chonggan* (Seoul: Minjok munhwa ch'ujinhoe, 2005), vol. 230, 138a.

²⁶ It is well-known that Chosŏn intellectuals received and researched Western science through Western Learning books published in China. For representative studies, see Kim Okhŭi, *Han'guk Sŏbak sasangsa yŏn'gu* [A study of the history of Western Learning in Korea] (Seoul: Kukhak charyowŏn, 1998); Kŭm Chang'ae, *Tongsŏ kyosŏp kwa kŏndae Han'guk sasang* [East-West relations and modern Korean thought] (P'aju: Han'guk haksul chŏngbo, 2005).

Learning, highly appreciated its value as a new intellectual resource. This paradoxical attitude was possible, because he had a very distinctive view on “heterodoxy.” In an essay entitled “Heterodoxy,” Sŏngho criticized the usual attitude of the times, refuting heterodoxy in terms of the attitude of Confucian scholars who criticized Buddhism. He argued that what is important is not a mere berating of heterodoxy but a reflection on oneself about whether one is better than the other.

The problem [of Buddhism] lies only in its pursuit of knowledge. The Buddhists are doing their best in discipline to be sincere in their thoughts. Can we say that the Confucianists of these days come up to this level? They are motivated by self-interests such as ambitions and desires.²⁷

Sŏngho approaches the Jesuits in the same way. “How can one say all Western scholars are the ones to deceive the world? Their problem is merely their excessive faith in ghosts.”²⁸ Sŏngho assumed that the problem of the Jesuits lay in their immoderate *degree* of faith in ghosts beyond the level of rationality. Hence they could not be subject to moral conviction. It is certain that Sŏngho denounced Western Learning as heterodox and drew a line by writing, “I do not believe in the doctrines of Catholicism.”²⁹ However, he thought that Western Learning had something instructive apart from its religious doctrines. When asked by An Chŏngbok whether there was any academic value in Western Learning, his answer was “Positive.”³⁰

Then, what kind of value might it have had? First of all, Sŏngho acknowledged the technological excellence in Western Learning. “There are many brilliant minds in the West. For a long time, they have developed numerous technologies including observational astronomy, manufacturing machinery and mathematics, none of which China can attain.”³¹ He also added, “They brought light to inventions which our ancestors were unable to develop, hence they are highly beneficial to the world.”³² To him, Western Learning was practical. In addition, Sŏngho appreciated the precision of observation tools such as the telescope, the effect of mathematics, and the theory of a spherical earth (*jigusŏl* 地球說), saying,

²⁷ “Sogyu ch’ŏkpul” [俗儒斥佛; Worldly scholars refuting Buddhism] in *Sŏngho sasŏl* [星湖僿說; A collection of essays of Sŏngho] (Seoul: Minjok munhwa ch’ujinhoe, 1976). 149.

²⁸ Sin Hudam, *ibid.*, 64.

²⁹ “Ch’ŏnhak mundap” in *Sunamjip* (2005), vol. 230, 150d.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 230, 150c.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Sin Hudam, *ibid.*, 47.

“I will stand by my stance even if a sage returns to earth.”³³ Sŏngho considered these technologies and tools to have been bestowed upon earth by holy sages as resources of civilization. Furthermore, he believed that technology had advanced with the passing of time, so its origin was of no significance. “Descendents bear better knowledge about the rules of machinery and mathematical principles; even the ancient sages are lacking in some aspects. When descendents broaden their views and constantly research based on this perception, they would become more intricate.”³⁴ In this context, Sŏngho claimed, “If a theory is reasonable, there is no reason to disregard it merely due to its difference from the past ones.”³⁵

The technological advance in Western Learning was not the only aspect of it that Sŏngho acknowledged as being of value. He also admitted that ethical values in *Qike* (K. *Ch'ilgŭk* 七克) [Seven capital sins and seven opposing virtues], a book by Diego de Pantoja (龐迪我, 1571–1618) based on Stoicism and Matteo Ricci's *Jiaoyou-lun* (K. *Kyounon* 交友論) [On friendship] might provide some guidance to Confucian scholars' self cultivation. “The main idea of *Qike*, written by the Westerner Diego de Pantoja, resembles the Confucian doctrine of self-restraint. If the very fair principles of the book are adopted with its idle discourses being excluded, this book is similar to that of Confucius.”³⁶ Sŏngho also acknowledged that each and every word of Matteo Ricci in *Jiaoyou-lun* based on the idea of friendship in Stoicism had profound meaning and was worth contemplating.³⁷ Indeed, the Jesuits strategically utilized Stoic philosophy to imply that Catholicism was in accordance with Confucianism. Sŏngho discovered the affinity of the two in their writings, and acknowledged that the doctrines of Western Learning were comparable to Confucian tradition in terms of moral self-cultivation.

Sŏngho also acknowledged that the culture of the West was highly advanced. Concerning Aleni's *Zhifang waiji* (職方外紀), he commented that the priest leads a Stoic life and taught his students that “even in the region of barbarians a sage can emerge.”³⁸ The idea that the West might have had sages on a cultural level despite its being geographically barbarian had the effect of eliciting an acknowledgment that the West possessed civilization, and went beyond the dichotomy of “Civilized China” (中華) versus the “Barbarians outside China” (華夷). Furthermore, Sŏngho

³³ “Yöksang” [歷象; Astronomical calendar] in *Sŏngho sasŏl* (1976), 188.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Sin Hudam, *ibid.*, 61.

³⁶ “Ch'ilgŭk” (七克) in *Sŏngho sasŏl* (1976), 283.

³⁷ “Tap Chŏng Hyŏnno” [答鄭玄老; Answer to Chŏng Hyŏnno] in *Sŏngho sŏnsaeng chŏnjŏp* [星湖先生全集; The complete works of Master Sŏngho], *Hanguk munjŏp chonggan*, vol. 199, 009a.

³⁸ “Hag'i husinji” [學而後臣之; Learning of a man and then making him a minister] in *Sŏngho sasŏl yusŏn* [星湖僉說類選; The selected essays from *Sŏngho sasŏl*] (Kyŏngsŏng: Mun'gwang sŏrim, 1929), vol. 2, 23.

greatly admired the West's meticulous educational system with primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and with teachers who guided students into advanced educational institutions or future career paths.³⁹

From these perspectives, Sŏngho's criteria distinguishing the heterodox from the orthodox seems not to be based on the will to preserve a particular doctrine but rather on the level of cultural refinement and practicality, that is, the level of civilization. In this context, the following critique by Sŏngho seems noticeably incisive:

Scholars who read books about and discuss the Way do not lose their respect for the Cheng brothers (程子) and their affection for Zhu Xi even when they do not agree with each other over the interpretations of sentences or in the analysis of the minor differences of the Confucian Classics. The followers of the teachings of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi advance to high posts and practice what they have learned from youth, but the livelihoods of people do not improve, the nation is not properly governed. If so, what does the heterodox have to do with the unfulfillment of the Confucian Way?⁴⁰

As Sŏngho stated, if the nation and the livelihoods of its people had not improved even when all Confucian scholars studied Neo-Confucianism and almost none had gone away into heterodoxy, then it was certain that the point must not have been the exclusion of heterodoxy. Enriching the lives of people was much more important than the expulsion of heterodoxy. Therefore, Sŏngho says that, "If we may help people to be wealthy and enjoy their trades in life, everyone except religious practitioners will live by the doctrines of Confucianism. We need not worry whether the Way would be in the light or not."⁴¹

The following paragraph indicates clearly Sŏngho's intellectual orientation and his ultimate conclusion on the subject of heterodoxy:

Even the words of heterodoxy shall be followed if they are deemed right. A man of virtue would not draw a line between friend and foe in practicing the good along with people.⁴²

Sŏngho warns that the very purification process of sifting heterodoxy from the Orthodoxy might destroy the livelihoods of the public and destabilize the nation.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Idan" [異端; Heresy] in *Sŏngho sasŏl* (1976), 262.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Ch'ŏnhak mundap" in *Sunamjip* (2005), vol. 230, 151a.

Absolutisation of a certain learning or a doctrine would not help to stabilize people's livelihoods or recover moral cultivation. Based on an idea that might be a warning to the Old Faction (老論), the then ruling party, Sŏngho appraised Western Learning on a practical level and tried to utilize it for people's livelihoods. He regarded Western Learning as a new resource for civilization that could be used both for improving people's livelihoods as well as for facilitating Confucian scholars' moral self-cultivation. Sŏngho even described Matteo Ricci, the one who introduced this new resource for civilization to China, as a sage:

I [Sin Hudam] asked him. "What kind of person is Matteo Ricci?" The master Sŏngho answered, "You should not take his learning lightly. I do not know whether what is introduced by his numerous books including *Cb'ŏnju sirŭi* (天主實義) and *Cb'ŏnbak chŏngjong* (天學正宗) is exactly in accordance with our Confucian thought, but what he says is truly worthy of being called the teaching of a sage.⁴³

Sŏngho considered Matteo Ricci a "sage" for his academic prowess and deep understanding of morality, despite their being different from those of the Confucian tradition. This shows that Sŏngho acknowledged Matteo Ricci, not merely as an advanced technological expert, but as a figure worthy of being a Confucian sage, the symbol of civilization.

Throughout his life, Sŏngho held a deep admiration for T'oegye, who was at the center of the Daotong, and yearned to learn his philosophy and to follow his life. At the same time, Sŏngho also believed that it was possible to utilize eligible external intellectual resources without departing from the teachings of T'oegye. Consequently, Sŏngho's study of Western Learning might be acknowledged as an intellectual challenge and a philosophical experiment to expand the boundaries of Confucianism towards the genuine ideal world: a moral and civilized society.

V. EXPANSION OF CONFUCIANISM

What is the boundary of Confucianism? Actually, Neo-Confucianism, which Zhu Xi synthesized in the twelfth century, was *new* learning that combined Confucianism with metaphysics, which had not previously been a part of Confucianism. However, most Chinese and Chosŏn scholars acknowledged Neo-Confucianism as Confucianism, and the Neo-Confucian scholars believed that they inherited the teaching of Confucius with obvious self-awareness and responsibility. The introduction of Western Learning from the end of the

⁴³ Sin Hudam, *ibid.*, 40–41.

sixteenth century raised the issue of the discordance between the core ideology of Confucianism and the way of realizing it for the Chinese and Chosŏn intellectuals. Although Western Learning was an unorthodox learning not originating from Confucius, it shared with Confucianism the aim of practical learning to benefit the people. Consequently, the advent of Western Learning posed a question about the essence and the boundary of Confucianism. While most Chosŏn Confucian scholars thought that any ideas outside Confucianism were just heresy and should be excluded, no matter how useful it might be, Sŏngho did not agree with them.

For Sŏngho, Western Learning was a useful intellectual resource compatible with the core nature of Confucian scholars who should be responsible for the livelihoods of people, while consistently self-cultivating in terms of morality. He believed any resources could be selected and used reasonably if they could help fundamental ideas of Confucianism including self-cultivation and the governing of people (K. *sugi ch'ŭin* 修己治人). Apparently, this belief implied his sense of pride that he could utilize others' resources to meet his own needs while discerning and excluding their limits and problems. Sŏngho was not afraid of being polluted by the heterodox, being confident in his ability to select and utilize useful parts for his practical purpose while cutting away any "wrong" or mismatched components. Therefore, it might be said that Sŏngho as an eighteenth-century Chosŏn Confucian scholar did not so much show how Chosŏn Confucian scholars "accepted and embraced" foreign knowledge as showing how they attempted to expand the boundaries of traditional Confucianism by utilizing foreign or external resources.⁴⁴

Sŏngho and his disciples were pioneers in the sense that they faced Western Learning, tested the boundaries of Confucianism, and each of them adopted a unique approach. Some found Western philosophy attractive and attempted to expand the boundaries of Confucianism. Others went back to the center and sought to stay within the intellectual authority of Daotong.⁴⁵ Their differences and divisions were not over the issue of choosing Catholicism as one's religion. Not a single Kiho Southerner overstepped completely his academic foundation

⁴⁴ Sŏngho probably knew that after his death, there would be controversies over his academic tendency. Although he had a unique understanding of the Confucian classics and held an open mind about Western Learning, Sŏngho, who tried to delete independent opinions and delegated editing authority to An Chŏngbok, a rightist, regressed towards conservative tendencies. Yun Tonggyu (尹東奎, 1695–1773), An Chŏngbok, and other rightist students attempted to use this momentum to reverse the expansions led by the Sŏngho School.

⁴⁵ For example, when An Chŏngbok published *Sŏngho sasŏl yusŏn* by summarizing Sŏngho's *Sŏngho sasŏl*, he rearranged and put the *Qike* of Diego de Pantoja into the ninth chapter "Idanmun" [異端門; Heresy] of "Kyŏngsap'yŏn" [經史編; Confucian classics and history] along with writings about Buddhism in order to classify Western Learning as a heterodoxy like Buddhism.

regardless of his own choice in faith. This point applied even to Chŏng Yagyong, who was exiled for being in contact with Catholicism as well as to Yi Pyŏk who went as far as to declare his faith in Catholicism. Neither of them abandoned their Confucian ideal that morally enlightened individuals can contribute to the stability of the community-nation. For them, Western Learning was not a substitute for but rather a supplement to Confucianism.⁴⁶

Be that as it may, it can be concluded that their encounter with Western Learning was a means through which they reflected on themselves as Confucian scholars and expanded Confucianism. They aspired to advance into a true civilization by reevaluating their scholastic language and revising the details in their theory by utilizing an external viewpoint. Here, the “expansion of Confucianism” does not mean that they accepted a foreign religion, but that they tried to introduce new intellectual resources into the field of Confucianism.

Notwithstanding his acceptance of Western Learning and recognition of Matteo Ricci as a sage, Sŏngho’s studies still remained inside the traditional idea of Confucian order. His ideas, as a Confucian scholar and a bearer of civilization, were not impaired in the slightest. Every scholar of the Sŏngho School believed the moral human should be the center of the world, and politics and institutions should support this. At the same time, even though Sŏngho did not divert from the *li-qi* ideas of Zhu Xi and T’oegye, he did not dogmatically believe in the abstract and transcendental *li* theory, and instead attempted a different approach to recover people’s morality. Above all, Sŏngho was not trapped in the self-centered judgment of distinguishing heterodoxy from orthodoxy, and he assessed foreign intellectual resources objectively to utilize them for his purpose within the venerable tradition of orthodox Confucianism. Therefore, Sŏngho’s ideological challenge must be positively appraised in the sense that he open-mindedly studied foreign intellectual resources in order to utilize them as a stimulus for moral recovery within his philosophy, and especially to utilize practical technologies to help the livelihoods of all people. His attempts expanded the boundaries of Confucianism beyond the binary scheme of orthodoxy-heterodoxy.

VI. CONCLUSION

Two extreme reactions to Western Learning within the school of Sŏngho were possible by virtue of the complexity and duality of Sŏngho’s ideational orien-

⁴⁶ Even if both of them belonged to the Southerners, Yŏngnam Southerners adhered to their position that Western Learning should not be accepted because it was a heresy, unlike Kiho Southerners. They intended to inherit T’oegye Neo-Confucianism, which was more orthodox than any other school in Chosŏn. For more details, see Seonhee Kim and Min Jeong Baek, *ibid.*, 44.

tation. He wanted to be an integral part of the genealogy of Confucian orthodoxy by succeeding to T'oegye's philosophy. At the same time, he did not give up utilizing new intellectual resources to expand the boundaries of the Confucianism of his day.

The divisions within the school of Sŏngho were thus not merely different positions towards Western Learning but different methods to answer questions such as "What is the true nature of Confucianism?" or "How can one revive Confucianism in the face of the deteriorating social conditions of the times?" Sŏngho emphasized the core role of Confucianism in moral cultivation and practicality, whereas junior scholars like Yi Pyŏk and Yi Sŏnghun believed that the Confucianist morally ideal world could be realized by recovering individual morality through pious faith in Sangje (上帝), the Lord on High. In contrast, the right wing of the Sŏngho school like Sin Hudam and An Chŏngbok thought that the only proper way of the school of Sŏngho was to maintain the Daotong of Zhu Xi and T'oegye. The balance of these ideological divisions and differences in opinions collapsed when the official persecution of Western Learning enabled the right wing of the Sŏngho School to seize power within the school of Sŏngho in an attempt to return Sŏngho's learning to the venerable genealogy of T'oegye. Despite that, an open-minded understanding of Sŏngho has not seen light even since its reevaluation in the twentieth century. Therefore, it should be noted that these phenomena should be comprehended in terms of political choice in relation to external forces, not simply in terms of academic success and failure.

The dynamics of the controversies over orthodoxy and heterodoxy in Chosŏn drew their power from the methodological differences toward solving the problem of how to maintain and develop Chosŏn as a civilized nation. Sŏngho and some of his disciples believed that accepting Western Learning with new intellectual resources and advanced technologies would expand Confucianism and provide a firmer basis for Chosŏn as a civilized nation. Others, who adhered to orthodoxy, believed that the purity of Chosŏn could only be maintained through excluding the heterodox. Therefore, it can be concluded that their intellectual divergence operated on the common ground that Chosŏn was the central axis of civilization and that the role of Confucianism was as Daotong within Chosŏn. The divergence was different only in terms of different opinions on "the range" of Confucianism, that is, either to limit the range of Confucianism to Neo-Confucianism or to expand its boundaries by utilizing Western Learning. Both positions were exactly alike in that they shared the same expectation and orientation towards civilization, Daotong, and Confucianism. The usual interpretation of Sŏngho's approach to Western Learning as a "unilateral effect" of accepting Western Learning or of "simple aspiration to superior Western

modernity” should be re-read as a backward reading from the twentieth century, where Western modernity has settled as a general and pervasive condition, and as a limited interpretation that restricted Chosŏn Confucianism’s expandability, which has been working from that perspective until today.

Submitted: July 6, 2016

Sent to the revision: October 19, 2016

Accepted: December 3, 2016

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