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**Yi Toegye, John Calvin, and the Love of Learning in Korea**

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The year 2009 marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Protestant reformer John Calvin. Special lectures, seminars, concerts, publication events, and ceremonies are being held in countries on four continents. As the West and the Christian churches celebrate the 500th anniversary of John Calvin, we would do well to remember that eight years earlier in 2001, Koreans were celebrating the 500th anniversary of Yi Toegye, the nation’s most famous philosopher whose likeness is engraved on the one-thousand won bank note.1 There were many events marking the occasion. Universities held seminars and conferences on his thought, a number of books on his life and philosophy were published or reprinted, and special ceremonies were held at the Tosan Sowon and at his nearby ancestral home. An international conference of scholars of Toegye studies was held in Andong drawing lecturers from Korea, Japan, China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch marked the occasion with a public lecture on “Toegye’s Philosophy” on November 28, 2001, only three days following anniversary of the date of his birth on November 25, 1501.2 For Koreans, the anniversary of Yi Toegye was every bit as significant as the anniversary of John Calvin is for the Europeans and those christians of

1 Yi Toegye was given the name Yi Hwang by his family. His courtesy name was Kyeho but was later changed to Kyongho. He is commonly known by his honorific name, Yi Toegye, taken from the site of his scholarly retreat. It is sometimes written as Yi T’oegye. In this essay I shall use Yi Toegye.

2 “Lectures,” Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, Vol. 76 (2001), 87.

[page 74] the Reformed-Presbyterian tradition who trace their origins to Calvin’s thought.

What makes the 500th anniversaries of Toegye and Calvin significant is that they have an impact beyond the scholarly academic community and the religious and philosophical communities. Both men have had a deep influence upon their societies and cultures that has continued for five centuries, and indeed, continues and will continue into the future.

**Yi Toegye and John Calvin: Contemporaries in Different Worlds**

But why compare Yi Toegye and John Calvin at all? The first and most obvious reason is that they were contemporaries. Yi Toegye was born in 1501 and died in 1570. Calvin was born in 1509 and died in 1564. While Calvin died at a relatively early age of 55, Toegye, who was Calvin’s senior by eight years, died at age 69. The fact that two vastly different cultures produced two men of such stature and influence is most remarkable, and the fact that they lived at almost exactly the same time is most extraordinary. This is even more significant when one realizes that the world of Toegye and the world of Calvin had no contact and that neither man was aware of the other’s existence. Indeed, for the most part, sixteenth-century Europe was as unaware of Korea as sixteenth-century Korea was unaware of Europe.3

3 There were, of course, a few Jesuits who had made it into Central Asia and China as well as Korean Buddhist monks who traveled to China and India. Nestorian missionaries had traveled to Asia even earlier. Japanese incursions into Korea as well as several wrecks of Dutch ships in Korean seas did provide an awareness of Europe toward the end of the sixteenth century. In spite of these early contacts, the two worlds of Western Europe and Northeast Asia existed in virtual isolation from each other. Accounts of some of these early contacts can be found in: Tabish Khair, Martin Leer, Justin D. Edwards, & Hanna Ziadeh, eds., Other Routes: 1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), Juan Ruiz de Medina, SJ, The Catholic Church in Korea: Its Origins 1566-1784, tr. John Bridges, SJ (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch & Seoul Computer Press, 1991), and Hendrik Hamel, Hamel’s Journal and a description of the Kingdom of Korea 1653-1666, tr. Br. Jean-Paul Buys (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch & Seoul Computer Press, 1994).

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A second reason for comparing Toegye and Calvin is that there were numerous similarities in their life and work.4 Both lived in times of political instability and religious and philosophical change. Toegye lived in a time when Neo-Confucian philosophy had replaced the Buddhist religion as the basis of society, and Calvin lived in a time of religious upheaval when the Catholic Church was being challenged by the Protestant Reformation. Both were threatened by opponents to their work of reform. Toegye was threatened by a revival of Buddhism and frequent literary purges within the Neo-Confucian society of the time. Calvin was threatened by Catholics opposing the Reformation as well as by opponents from within the Reformation movement. Both men wrote summaries of their work. Toegye summarized his teachings in the Ten Diagrams of Sage Learning published in 1568 and presented to King Sonju to instruct him in the way of virtuous living. Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion went through numerous revisions until the final edition in 1559. It was originally written in 1536 to present to King Francis I to defend the principles of the Reformation. Toegye founded the Tosan Sodang or study hall in 1561 which later became the Tosan Sowon or academy. Calvin founded the Geneva Academy in 1559 which later became the University of Geneva. Toegye spent most of the last twenty-one years of his life near Andong in south-central Korea after numerous periods of government service in Seoul. Calvin spent the last twenty-three years of his life in Geneva after many years of moving about in France, Italy, and Switzerland. Finally, both men met with their colleagues and students prior to their death to apologize for their faults and any mistakes they may have made during their lifetime.

Both Toegye and Calvin also shared a similar sorrow in their

4 This has been noted by Kim Heup Young in an insightful essay “Imago Dei and T’ien-ming: John Calvin Meets Yi T’oegye.” See Kim Heup Young, Christ and the Tao (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 2003), pp. 89-120. To date, Kim is the only scholar I have come across who has noted the similarities between Calvin and Toegye.

[page 76] personal lives. Toegye’s first wife died shortly after giving birth to their son and he later remarried Shortly after Calvin’s wife gave birth, their infant son died, and Calvin’s wife never regained her health and died an early death. Both men were made tragically aware of the uncertainties and dangers of childbirth during the sixteenth century—whether in Korea or in Switzerland.

A third reason for comparing Toegye and Calvin is that although they were contemporaries and shared so much in common, their worlds were in other ways very different. They were, truly, contemporaries in different worlds. The world of Calvin was a Christian world To be sure, there were different kinds of Christians which often considered each other to be heretics, but the overall ethos was Christian whether Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, or Anabaptist. The question of salvation in the sixteenth century was not a matter of religious pluralism as it is today. Rather, the question of salvation concerned other Christians. The battles that were fought and the heretics who were burned were other Christians who were different from oneself. The world of Calvin was a theistic world which was concerned about God and about human salvation in relationship to God. The afterlife was most important and a great deal of human effort was given to securing a place in heaven following one’s death. Calvin firmly believed in a literal heaven and a literal hell as did virtually all of his European contemporaries.

The world of Yi Toegye was a Neo-Confucian world which focused not upon God and the next life, but upon humanity and the present life. Calvin was a theist but Toegye was humanist. Calvin was concerned about salvation history but Toegye was concerned about the unity of humanity and the cosmos and maintaining the harmony of society. The literary purges which threatened Toegye and other reformist thinkers were not about theology and salvation, but about factionalism and gaining social position and political power in the present life. Calvin was concerned about righteousness before God while Toegye was concerned about becoming a sage and living a virtuous life among one’s peers.5

5 This distinction has been clearly shown in Sung-Hae Kim, The Righteous and the Sage: A Comparative Study on the Ideal Images of Man in Biblical Israel and Classical China (Seoul: Sogang University Press, 1985). See also, Julia Ching, Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study (Tokyo: Kodansha International & Institute of Oriental Religions, Sophia University, 1977).

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Within the Neo-Confucian world of Yi Toeye little concern was given to the afterlife in terms of personal salvation. Rather, the ancestors were venerated in order to assure continuity from one generation to the next and to assure harmony within society. One of the criticisms made against the Buddhists was that they were otherworldly and did not give enough attention to the present world and matters relating to the proper ordering of society. The idea that a person could spend an eternity in either a heaven or a hell was largely foreign to Toegye and his intellectual contemporaries. What was important to them was the idea that one could cultivate the mind so that would could―over time—become a person of virtue, or a sage, and take one’s proper place in society. Toegye believed that it was possible for one to become a sage as did virtually all of his Korean Neo-Confucian contemporaries.

Although Yi Toegye and John Calvin were contemporaries in different worlds they shared one significant characteristic in common— both believed that education was central to the process of attaining salvation or the process of becoming a sage. Both men cultivated a love of learning in their disciples and students, and both men gave considerable attention to the process of education and the founding of educational institutions.

**Yi Toegye and the Founding of the Tosan Academy**

Yi Toegye exhibited an unusual love of learning from an early age and it was obvious to all who knew him that he was destined to do well in the government examinations and eventually take his place as a government official. Although he entered official life at a relatively late age he served in a number of capacities for approximately fifteen years. All he had to say concerning his government service was summed up in the sentence “I was immersed in the dusty world without a day’s leisure,

 [page 78] and there is nothing else worth mentioning.”6 Toegye was not the least bit interested in government service and he chafed at the petty conflicts, the power struggles, and the corruption which he witnessed Being a man of integrity he often took unpopular positions in his opposition to corruption and in his advocating political negotiations with Japan. On a number of occasions he resigned his position and returned to the Andong area to continue his study of Confucian and Neo-Confucian philosophy but he was always called back to Seoul.

In 1545 and 1548 there were severe literary purges as a result of the factionalism among various parties in the government. Toegye’s name appeared on a list of those to be dismissed in the 1545 purge, but friends were able to have his name removed. Toegye was so disgusted with the whole affair―and undoubtedly feared for his own safety—that he was able to fill two posts in a remote rural area near Andong far from the capital city of Seoul Even then he submitted his resignation three times, and finally in 1549 just left his government posts and retired to the countryside to live as an independent scholar.

His brother, Hae, was not so fortunate, however, and was caught up in these literary purges. In 1550 he was sentenced to a beating and exile. Unfortunately the beating was so severe that Hae died while on route to the place of exile.

It was Toegye’s plan to gather a few students around him, found a sodang, or study hall, and devote his life to reading, writing, and teaching. However he was still called to Seoul on several occasions, especially as his fame increased due to his philosophical writings. During the next twenty-one years he was to write fifty-three letters of resignation from government service or refusal of government appointments and during his entire career over seventy such letters. In the end Toegye prevailed and he was able to devote himself to the scholarly life.

6 Quoted by Michael C. Kalton, ed./tr., To Become a Sage: The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning by Yi Toegye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 16. A brief biography of Yi Toegye and a summary of his philosophical ideas can be found at [eng.actakoreana.org/clickkorea/text/04-Thought/ 04-88aut-t’oegye.docl, accessed 2/10/2009.

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Toegye was a prolific writer but he is known today primarily through his involvement in the famed Four-Seven Debate and the publication of The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning, both of which have a direct bearing upon his understanding and practice of education. The Four-Seven Debate continued for seven years and was the greatest philosophical debate of the time.7 This debate was significant for several reasons. To begin with the debate was initially carried on between Yi Toegye and Ki Kobing also known as Ki Taesung (1527-1572). Toegye was the senior scholar being 60 years old at the time, while Kobing was the junior scholar being a mere 32 years of age. It was unheard of for a younger scholar to openly challenge the views of a senior scholar in this way, and it was beyond anyone’s wildest imagination that a senior scholar would answer the challenge and do so in such a gracious way as Toegye did.8 The result was the first public philosophical debate in Korean history.

The debate centered around the Four Beginnings taken from the Chinese philosopher Mencius―compassion, modesty and deference, shame and dislike, and the discrimination between right and wrong; and the Seven Feelings taken from the Chinese Book of Rites―desire, hate, love, fear, grief, anger, and joy. According to Yi Toegye the Four Beginnings are a product of li or reason while the Seven Feelings are a product of chi or sensation. Ki Kobing stated that “the Four Beginnings cannot reside outside the Seven Emotions and that li, likewise, cannot exist away from chi.”9 Following the deaths of both Toegye and and Ki Kobing the debate was continued by the philosopher Yi Yulgok (1536-

7 See Michael C. Kalton, et al., The Four-Seven Debate: An Annotated Translation of the Most Famous Controversy in Korean Neo-Confucian Thought (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994) and Edward Y. J. Chung, The Korean Neo- Confucianism of Yi T’oegye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of the “Four-Seven Thesis” and Its Practical Implications for Self Cultivation (Albany: SUNY Press,

1995).

8 Chung, The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T’oegye and Yi Yulgok, pp. 25-26.

9 Pak Chong-Hong, “T’oegye and His Thought,” in Main Currents of Korean Thought, ed. Korean National Commission for UNESCO (Seoul: Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers & Arch Cape, OR: Pace International Research, 1983), p. 89.

[page 80] 1584) whose likeness appears on the Korean five-thousand won bank note, and Song Hong (1535-1598). Yi Yulgok took the side of Ki Kobing while Song Hong took the side of Yi Toegye. The Four-Seven Debate was significant because it dealt with the relationship between li or reason and chi or sensation or emotion.

Toegye firmly believed that the Four Beginnings which were always good were based upon reason, while the Seven Feelings which could be either good or bad were based upon sensation or emotion. Thus the ultimate basis for human morality was based upon reason. It was, in other words, reasonable for human beings to be compassionate, to show modesty and deference in their dealings with others, to experience shame and dislike when confronted with evil, and to discriminate between good in evil in one’s thinking and moral life. Edward Y. J. Chung says of Toegye’s views: “As revealed in his Four-Seven thesis in particular, his Neo-Confucianism emphasizes a way to cultivate sagehood, that ultimate truth of human nature, calling for a Neo-Confucian way of life that integrates intellectual insight, moral effort, contemplative discipline, and spiritual cultivation.”10 Although Toegye softened his dualistic view of li and chi somewhat and Ki Kobing later expressed “general support” for Toegye’s theory, the renewal of the debate by Yi Yulgok and Song Hong brought about a hardening of the positions with Yi Yulgok’s monistic theory which stated that chi alone operates.11 It is safe to say, however, that within orthodox Neo-Confucian circles Yi Toegye’s views have largely prevailed.

The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning which was presented to Kong Sonjo in 1568 is a summary of Toegye’s knowledge. It went through twenty-nine printings during the Jeoson Dynasty, has been translated into Japanese and English, and currently circulates in three different Korean translations.12 The work consists of ten diagrams with extensive commentaries and explanations of each diagram. The first 5 diagrams

10 Chung, The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T’oegye and Yi Yulgok, 26. 11 Pak, “T’oegye and His Thought,” in Main Currents of Korean Thought, p. 90.

12 Kalton, To Become a Sage, p.24. The original was, of course, written in classical Chinese, which was the language of scholarship at the time.

[page 81] “help the reader to cultivate a virtuous character by clarifying the morality which is based on Heaven’s process” and the second 5 diagrams “stress self-possession, or reverence which keeps the norm in our daily life firmly rooted in its moral practice.”13 In the words of the contemporary philosopher Choi Min-Hong, “The Ten Diagrams are short explanations of our life, beginning with a deep study of the mind and ending with its moral practice.”14 In the Ten Diagrams Toegye sets out to show how li or reason serves as the basis for the cultivation of the mind and the practice of a virtuous life in society.

An innovation in Toegye’s theory of learning was that each of the ten diagrams was to be made into a ten-paneled standing screen to go with the book. The screen was to be placed in the study room where one was repeatedly reading the book. Thus “in moments of leisure the eye could play over the screen and the mind be gently but constantly engaged with its content, so that one might finally totally assimilate this material and make it a part of himself.”15

Toegye had spent much of his lifetime attempting to put his philosophy into practice in the world of government, but his heart was really in the love of learning for its own sake and the passing on of that learning to the next generation. In addition to the established government Confucian academies known as hyanggyo there were also private Confucian academies known as sowon. While the hyanggyo were usually located in towns and cities, the sowon were almost always located in rural areas. At one time there were some 327 sowons in Korea.16 The first sowon in Korea was the Sosu Sowon, established in 1542 as a memorial to An Hyang (1245-1306) a Koryo dynasty Confucian scholar who

13 Choi Min-Hong, A Modern History of Korean Philosophy (Seoul: Seong Moon-Sa, 1980), p. 78.

14 Ibid. Choi presents a detailed listing of the subject matter of the Ten Diagrams on pp. 77-78.

15 Kalton, To Become a Sage, p. 26-

16 See Choi Won-Ki and Kim Jong-Sob, Hankuk eh Sowon (Seoul: Daewon Sa Publishing Co., 1991) for descriptions of virtually all Korean sowons accompanied by extensive color photos. The Tosan Sowon is described on pp. 71- 84.

[page 82] became known as “the Korean Chu Hsi.” An studied in China and hand copied all of Chu Hsi’s works which he then brought back to Korea. He also brought back a portrait of Chu Hsi. The Sosu Sowon (White Cloud Grotto Academy) was modeled after the White Deer Grotto Academy of Chu Hsi in China. In 1550 shortly after resigning his position as magistrate of Punggi Country (a resignation which was refused by the authorities in Seoul), Yi Toegye petitioned the king to grant official status to the Sosu Sowon. The king responded favorably to Toegye’s request and granted a royal charter with the all important name plaque as well as a number of books, thus making the Sosu Sowon an official educational institution.17

Toegye worked hard to assure the legitimacy of the sowons and because of his efforts the sowons rapidly spread throughout the entire country. In the words of Yun Sa Soon Toegye’s role in the development of the sowons was central:

Their spread played a central role in the growth and development of Korean

Confucianism, a matter in which especially the royally recognized academies

took the leadership. It also manifests the extent to which he was inclined to focus

his attention on organizing the world of letters. He was anxious to use his position

as an official to promote the flourishing of a kind of learning he saw as the most

basic foundation for a sound and healthy society.18

The sowons were, therefore, places for the keeping and study of books

17 Peter H. Lee, ed., Sourcebook of Korean Civilization, Volume I: From Early

Times to the Sixteenth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), P. 524.

18 Yun Sa Soon, Critical Issues in Neo-Confucian Thought: The Philosophy of Yi T’oegye, tr. Michael C. Kalton (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1990), p. 11.

[page 83] (thus serving as repositories of learning), places for teaching (thus centers for the spread of knowledge), and local institutions (being semi-private but depending upon government and local support).19 In Toegye’s view the sowons played an important role in spreading a form of education based upon reason and self-cultuvation.

However, sowons also served a more ideological purpose. According to Yi Songmu, “officials of the late Koryo and Yi dynasties adopted Neo-Confucianism as an ideological weapon for their confrontation with the entrenched aristocracy and the Buddhist establishment.”20

This meant that “the academies became not only educational institutions but also the sanctuaries where the local patriarchs of the Confucian scholar community were sanctified and venerated. Furthermore, the government bestowed funds, including land and slaves, on each academy and waived taxes due on lands that supported their activities. Thus, the private academies came to receive the privileges and status formerly enjoyed by the Buddhist temples in the Koyro dynasty.21

This purpose took on deeper significance due to a brief Buddhist revival which took place during Yi Toegye’s time.

Finally in 1561 Yi Toegye was able to realize his dream with the establishment of the Tosan Sodang or study hall. Construction of the initial building which was used as his private study began in 1557 but was not completed until four years later due to Toegye’s lack of financial resources. Consisting of an enclosed room which he used as his study and a larger open room which he used as a classroom, the small building was

19 See Wm. Theodore de Bary, “Introduction,” in The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, eds. Wm. Theodore de Bary & Ja Hyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), PP. 32-33.

20 Yi Songmu, “The Influence of Neo-Confucian on Education and the Civil Service Examination System in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Korea,” in The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, p. 153.

21 Ibid.

[page 84] where he “especially devoted himself to giving instruction regarding the Ch’i-meng, which is a work by Chu Hsi on the Book of Changes, and the Classic of the Mind-and-Heart, a work for guidance in the process of spiritual cultivation.”22 Nearby Toegye also constructed a dormitory where his students lived and studied by themselves. The dormitory was built in an “I” shape which is the Chinese character for “studying.” It was here, from these modest beginnings, that the Tosan Sowon had its origin.

Although Yi Toegye served the government under four Kings— Chungjon, Injong, Myongjong,and Sonjo―it was in this small study hall that he found true happiness and purpose in life. He is remembered as a teacher who was Kind to his students, who gave rice to a student who was in need, and never suspended his lectures even during periods of illness. His teaching style was quite unique for the time—he paused before answering questions and then never refuted wrong questions at once but showed the students how he reached different conclusions. He was known for respecting his students and treating them fairly.33 Only four days before his death he called his students together and lectured all day long on ‘‘mistaken views he had presented in the past.”24

Toward the end of his life, Yi Toegye wrote the following poem:

Summarizing the Reasons for sowon

I have plumbed the Classics until my hair is white,

and yet not heard the Way.

Now it is our good fortune to have numerous sowon

advocating the Way.

So why should the raging tumult of the Examination

System

Make the anxiety of my idle moments grow like

22 Yun, Critical Issues in Neo-Confucian Thought: The Philosophy of Yi Toegye, p. 8.

23 Pak, “T’oegye and His Thought,” in Main Currents of Korean Thought, p. 87.

24 Yun, Critical Issues in Neo-Confucian Thought: The Philosophy of Yi T’oegye, p. 19.

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Perhaps one of the best descriptions of Yi Toegye’s life and work is that of Yun Sa Soon when he wrote of Toegye that “he strove only to become a genuine and full human being.”26

In 1574 four years following Toegye’s death, his disciples and other Neo-Confucian scholars established the Tosan Sowon or Tosan Academy. A number of other buildings were added including two library buildings, two buildings which served as visitors’ quarters, a publishing center where wood blocks were kept for printing, and a lecture hall. The signboard on the lecture hall was given by King Sonjo and the calligraphy done by Han Sok-Pong, a famous calligrapher of the time. Directly above the lecture hall a shrine was constructed where Yi Toegye’s memorial tablet was kept. To this very day memorial services are held here on the second and eighth lunar months. Memorial offerings are prepared in a small offering storehouse adjacent to the main shrine building. Quarters for the caretaker and his family completed the buildings within the main compound. Just outside the compound a second dormitory was built to house an increasing number of students. Much later a small museum was built where artifacts related to Yi Toegye’s life are kept. In 1970, under the direction of the Korean government, the Tosan Sowon was repaired and declared a sacred precinct.27

25 Warren W. Smith, Jr., 16th Century Sowon: The Rise of Private Neo-Confucian Education in Korea―The Why and the Wherefore (Suwon: Sosung Institute of Advanced Studies, Kyunggi University, 2003), p. 99.

26 Yun, Critical Issues in Neo-Confucian Thought: The Philosophy of Yi T’oegye, p. 20.

27 In 2001, as part of the 500th anniversary celebrations a special limited edition boxed book on the Tosan Sowon was published in Korean with extensive English notes, including a “Foreword: In Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Toegye” in both Korean and English. Each building and calligraphy plaque is described and shown in color photos. The book also includes (in Korean) eleven essays on Toegye’s philosophy as well as a chronology of Toegye’s life and work. See Lee Won-Sung, ed., The Dosan Sauwaun, photographs by Hwang Huhn-Mahn (Seoul: Harigilsa Publishing Co., 2001).

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Just outside the main compound on a small hill, which is now an island due to the changing course of the Naktong River, is a memorial tablet marking an event which took place in 1792 to commemorate the 222nd anniversary of Yi Toegye’s death. The state civil service examinations, which were usually held in Seoul at the Sungkunggwan Confucian Academy (now Sungkunggwan University), were held instead at the Tosan Sowon. This was done to honor Toegye’s legacy and influence as well as raise the morale of local scholars. There were a total of 7,228 scholars who took the examination and only eleven passed.

Today the Tosan Sowon is one of the most visited sowons in Korea and it serves as an everlasting monument to the love of learning of Yi Toegye and his influence upon Korean intellectual life and culture.

**John Calvin and the Founding of the Geneva Academy**

In 1528, following his withdrawal from theological studies, John Calvin began to study law in the universities at Orleans and Bourges where he was introduced to the humanist ideals of the Renaissance. While at Orleans he followed such a rigorous study schedule that it affected his health for the remainder of his life. In this he was similar to Yi Toegye, who also followed a study schedule during his youth that caused health problems throughout his life. Calvin completed his law studies, was licensed to practice law, and then moved to Paris where he enrolled at a newly founded university focusing on humanistic studies. Here he immersed himself in literature, ancient languages, and philosophy, and at the young age of twenty-three published his first book, a commentary on Senaca’s Treatise on Clemency which “made him well-known and numbered him among the leading humanist echelons in France.”28

Calvin’s achievements were many but the founding of the Geneva Academy has been called “the culmination of Calvin’s work.”29 Unlike many of the other reformers who had been priests in the Catholic Church

28 “calvin bio” at [www.calvin09.org].

29 “calvin bio,” [http://www.calvin09.org].

[page 87] prior to joining the Reformation, Calvin had given up his study of theology in favor of law and literature and he was never ordained as a Catholic priest. While considered primarily a theologian and a churchman, he was also a humanist and a scholar. According to Brian G. Armstrong, “Calvin lived intimately in the two worlds of the Renaissance and Reformation, and he never was able to resolve the conflict of fundamentally different ideologies.”30 His educational views reflect this dual understanding. Thus, “Under the influence of the Renaissance thought, much attention was paid to usefulness and instrumental ism of knowledge.”31 Calvin placed great emphasis upon rhetoric and public speaking and expression. The ability to master languages, including classical languages, was important to Calvin ana he has been credited with making significant contributions to the development of the French language.32 At the same time “in Geneva...the Church used its teaching ministry for the promotion of virtue.”33 Unlike Yi Toegye, who believed that human nature was fundamentally good, Calvin was a firm believer in original sin so that in terms of education “the pupil must be held in close discipline to escape the ravages of sin within his nature.”34.

30 Brian G. Armstrong, “Duplex cognitio Dei, Or? The Problem and Relation of Structure, Form, and Purpose in Calvin’s Theology,” in Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr., eds. Elsie Anne McKee & Brian G. Armstrong (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), p. 137. See also : E. Harris Harbison, The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation (New York: Scribners, 1956) and Quirinus Breen, John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931).

31 Lee Byung-Soo, “Calvin’s Teaching on the Knowledge of God,” in Calvin in Asian Churches, Vol. III (Seoul: Korea Calvin Society & Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary Press, 2008), p. 149.

32 “calvin bio,” [http://wwwxalvin09.org/EN/calvin-bio/], accessed 2/3/2009.

33 Ahn In-Sub, “Calvin’s Thoughts on Civitas Dei,” in Calvin in Asian Churches, Vol III, p. 276.

34 Towns, “John Calvin (1509-1564),” in A History of Religious Educators, p. 173.

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The Geneva Academy or schola public a was founded in 1559.33 Property for this new school was purchased in 1552,however, as with Yi Toegye’s Tosan Sodang, raising funds proved to be problem and it was not until 1559 that a formal public assembly was held in the Cathedral of St. Pierre formally opening the Geneva Academy.36 Drawing upon his dual Renaissance and Reformation heritage, Calvin recognized two offices in the church―the pastoral office and the teaching or doctoral office. Thus not all of the faculty members in this new school were clergy, especially in the fields of ancient languages and philosophy. Each week there were twenty-seven lectures of one hour in length. Included were courses on the Bible, theology, Greek and Hebrew, and pastoral ministry plus lectures on physical science, mathematics, and rhetoric. The courses on rhetoric used the writings of Aristotle as a text and Cicero as an example. Professors lectured from Aristotle, Plato, Plutarch, various Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages, and from Greek poets, orators, and historians. On Saturdays the theology students expounded on a selected passage from the Bible and each month students defended a theological proposition, first in

35For detailed histories of the Geneva Academy see W. Stanford Reid, “Calvin and the Founding of the Academy of Geneva,” Westminster Theological Journal, Vol. 18,No. 1 (1955), 1-33; Gillian Lewis, “The Geneva Academy,” in Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620, eds. Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke & Gillian Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 35-63; Martin I. Klauber, “Jean-Alphonse Turrettini (1671-1737) on Natural Theology: The Triumph of Reason Over Revelation at the Academy of Geneva,” Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 47,No. 3 (1994), 302-325; and Karin Maag, Seminary or University? The Geneva Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1629 [St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History] (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, Ashgate Publishing Co., 1995). The classic history of the Geneva Academy and the University of Geneva which grew out of the Geneva Academy is C. Bourgeaud, Historie de l’Universite de Geneve, 4 vols. (Geneva: George and Cie, 1900-1934).

36 Robert W. Henderson, The Teaching Office in the Reformed Tradition: A History of the Doctoral Ministry (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 61.

[page 89] a written paper and then orally in an open discussion.37

The Geneva Academy grew rapidly and as the reputation of the school grew students came from throughout Europe. In the words of B. J. van der Walt:

A large part of the enormous influence which emanated from the Reformed Jerusalem (as Geneva was described in the sixteenth century) has to be ascribed to Calvin’s Academy. Already at Calvin’s death in 1564 there were 300 students from practically all the countries of Europe, England, Scotland, Catalonia, Calabria and Venice. Calvin corresponded with a Lithuanian prince and even had a request for trained Reformed men from the church in Russia.38

From the outset the Geneva Academy was an international institution and it continues as an international university today.

During the Enlightenment many illustrious scholars were drawn to the Geneva Academy and it became known for its reception to new ideas and innovative teaching, particularly in the areas of law and philosophy. Even as it had been open to new ideas in terms of religious reform, so too, it was open to new ideas in the humanities. In the nineteenth century formal control by the church came to an end, although Faculty of Theological Studies continued. When the Faculty of Medicine was added in 1873 the Geneva Academy formally became the University of Geneva. Today the dual Renaissance and Reformation emphasis continues through close ties with a number of specialized research institutes, including the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies and the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey which is

37 Towns, “John Calvin (1509-1564)” in A History of Religious Educators, pp. 171-172. It should be noted that initially the Geneva Academy had only five lecturers―two in theology and three in Hebrew, Greek, and philosophy and the liberal arts.

38 B.J. van der Walt, Anatomy of Reformation: Flashes and Fragments of a Reformed Cosmoscope (Potchefstroom, South Africa: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1981), p. 138.

[page 90] related to the World Council of Churches. In the words of the University of Geneva’s website, “The pursuit of higher learning has drawn students and scholars from all over the world to Geneva since the Academy’s very creation. Victims of religious persecution, political refugees, students and researchers alike have all drawn intellectual nourishment from the University and made their own contributions to shared intellectual endeavor.”39 The University of Geneva serves as a lasting tribute to the love of learning of John Calvin and his influence upon European religious and cultural life.

**Yi Toegye and John Calvin and Their Influence upon Higher Education in Korea Today**

While it is true that Yi Toegye and John Calvin lived in totally different worlds, it can also be said that these two worlds have come together in modern Korea. Korea has one of the highest literacy rates in the world with approximately 99% of the population being able to read and write. Furthermore, Koreans are known internationally for their love of learning and desire for education. There is perhaps no country in the world that can compare with Korea in terms of the amount or time and money spent by the average family on the pursuit of education for their children. In the words of educator Horace G. Underwood: “The role of education in Korea is extremely important, and it is seen by Koreans as the primary road to economic and social advancement.” 40 It was Yi Toegye who championed reason as the basis for knowledge and ethical action ana it was his views on learning which influenced the Neo-

39 Universite de Geneve, “An International University,” at [http://www.unigexh/international/ pquoigeneve/univerinter\_en.print.html], accessed 2/6/2009.

40 Horace G. Underwood, Korea in War, Revolution and Peace: The Recollections of Horace G. Underwood, ed. Michael J. Devine (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2001), pp. 292-293. Underwood’s grandfather, Horace Grant Underwood, was the founder of what is now Yonsei University.

[page 91] Confucian approach to education in Korea, even until the present day.41 This high view of education and belief in the importance of reason was to have profound significance when the first Protestant missionaries arrived on Korean soil in the 1880s. The first resident missionary was Dr. Horace N. Allen, a Presbyterian medical doctor who arrived in 1884. He was followed by Presbyterian the Rev. Horace G. Underwood and the Methodists Rev. Henry G. Appenzeller and his wife in 1885. Soon other missionaries followed, including Mrs. Mary F. Scranton, mother of Methodist Dr. W. M. Scranton. From this initial small group arose institutions which later developed into Paichai University and two of Korea’s premier universities, Ewha Women’s University and Yonsei University.

The significance of this is twofold. First, the early missionaries were Presbyterian and Methodist, and both denominations stressed higher education. The Presbyterians especially focused upon the importance of reason and a highly educated ministry, this being a part of their Calvinistic heritage.42 Second, because these early missionaries believed in higher education they did not place an emphasis upon Bible schools, Bible institutes, and Bible colleges. Those Bible schools which were founded

41 See Minhaj Arastu, “Confucian Education in Korea,” at [www.koreasociety.org/index2.php?option=

com\_docmon&task=doc\_view&grid=513&itemid=35], accessed 2/10/2009. This is a curriculum for grades 9-12 requiring 3-4 class periods under the general subject of World History. The subject matter is the thought of Yi Toegye and the development of the Tosan Sowon. According to this curriculum material the “purpose of the lessons that follow is to use this famous philosopher and his school as a means of understanding aspects of Korean education, government and philosophy.”

42 There were occasions where the Presbyterian focus on medical work and education and the Methodist focus on evangelism came into conflict, but this was usually due to personality conflicts rather than church policy. See Daniel J. Adams, “Koreans in Transition: Americanization at the University of Dubuque, 1911-1935,” Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, Vol. 80 (2005), 90-91. For the most part the Presbyterians and Methodists cooperated in their educational work.

[page 92] were almost always for the education of women, and once firmly established they soon became fully recognized colleges and universities.43 This meant that American style fundamentalism with the associated Bible prophecy movement and a rejection of so-called secular higher education never gained a foothold in Korea. Mission founded institutions of higher learning in Korea drew not only from the theological traditions of the Reformation but also from the humanistic traditions of the Renaissance. In this sense the educational legacy of Calvin was very much a part of the Protestant missionary effort in Korea.

This educational perspective fit in well with the Korean Neo- Confucian emphasis upon education as the cultivation of a person of virtue who could serve society. Neither the Korean church nor Korean society in general is satisfied with anything less than the best when it comes to higher education, and this is clearly evident in the contributions of mission related colleges and universities. Within the Presbyterian tradition—with its distinctive Calvinist heritage―there are no less than eight major universities. These include Yonsei University, Soongsil University, Hanshin University, Seoul Women’s University and Chongshin University in Seoul; Han Nam University in Daejon, Keimyung University in Daegu, and Koshin University in Busan. The Presbyterian church in Korea (Tonghap) has seven affiliated theological universities which enroll a total of over 10,000 students, including the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary in Seoul which ranks as the largest Presbyterian-Reformed theological school in the world. In addition there are numerous other specialized colleges and theological colleges and universities among the various Presbyterian denominations in Korea. Prior to the division of Korea there were so many Christians in Pyongyang that the city was referred to as the Jerusalem of Asia, and there

43 See Chou Fang-Lan, “Bible Women and the Development of Education in the Korean Church,” in Perspectives on Christianity in Korea and Japan: The Gospel and Culture in East Asia, eds. Mark R. Mullins & Richard Fox Young (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), pp. 29-45. Chou relates how both Ewha Women’s University and Hanil University in Jeonju developed from small Bible schools for the training of women*.*

[page 93] were so many Presbyterians in the city that it was sometimes called the Geneva of Korea.44

Yonsei University, although founded by Presbyterians, has like the University of Geneva founded by Calvin, greatly expanded its faculties. As in the University of Geneva, theology continues to be taught at Yonsei University but it is free from church control. In the case of Yonsei, as with the University of Geneva, the hospital and associated medical school was one of the first institutions that later constituted the university.45 What is significant about Yonsei University (and also about its sister school founded by the Methodists, Ewha Women’s University) is that as one of Korea’s premier universities its influence is extensive since many of the faculty members of other universities in Korea have studied at Yonsei either as undergraduates or as graduate students. The Reformed tradition of Calvin has, therefore, an influence that goes far beyond the Presbyterian churches and their related institutions.46

44 See Donald N. Clark, Christianity in Modern Korea (New York: The Asia Society and Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986). According to Clark Pyongyang was the center of Presbyterian mission work, and it was here “that the Presbyterian denomination developed its long-standing numerical advantage over other Christian churches in the country” (p. 7). Other histories of the Christian churches in Korea include the following: Allen D. Clark, A History of the Church in Korea (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1971); Lak- Geoon George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910 (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1929, 1970); Kyoung Bae Min, A History of Christian Churches in Korea (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2005); and Robert E. Buswell & Timothy S. Lee, eds., Christianity in Korea (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006).

45 The name “Yonsei” is a combination of the names of Yonhi College and Severence Hospital, two institutions which merged to form the university.

46 For example, of the twelve faculty members of the Department of Christian Studies at Ewha Women’s University, five have degrees from Presbyterian institutions including Yonsei University and Hanshin University in Korea, and Princeton Theological Seminary in the U.S. See Directory of Korean Theological Schools 2006-2007 (Seoul: Korean Association of Accredited Theological Schools, 2005), pp. 172-174, (in Korean). Because of their high academic standards and distinctive joining of the Renaissance and Reformation traditions of learning, institutions of higher education associated with the Reformed- Presbyterian tradition of Calvin are often the preferred schools for Korean professors in the Protestant tradition to obtain degrees.

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According to Kim Heup Young, “In Korea, the Reformed tradition has achieved a miracle, perhaps the most successful mission it its entire history.”47 This has come about in part because of the joining of the worlds of Yi Toegye and John Calvin in Korea. Says Kim, “Their lives and thoughts present remarkable similarities that, I think, illuminate some important clues for the great success of Presbyterianism in Korea.”48 Both men loved learning and had a concern for education ana its role in the reformation of society.

While this last point may be obvious in the case of Calvin it is perhaps less obvious in the case of Yi Toegye. Wm. Theodore de Bary asserts that “To the restless, impatient eyes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Neo-Confucianism has appeared all stuck in a rut—an immoveable mass of tradition and rigid dogma. Yet viewed from the other end, as it arose in the thirteenth century, the new movement is most striking for its burgeoning vitality and reformist zeal.”49 Although a quiet scholar who preferred the countryside near Andong to the royal court of Seoul, Yi Toegye exhibited that reformist zeal in his support of the sowon movement and his focus on the cultivation of virtue and giving service to the community.

It is entirely fitting in this the year of the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin that we also remember that it is the 508th anniversary of the birth of Yi Toegye, for both men cultivated a love of learning. They were, truly, contemporaries living in different worlds—two worlds which later met in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Korea with results that neither of them could have ever envisioned.

47 Kim,Christ and the Tao, p. 89.

48 Ibid.,pp. 89-90,

49 de Bary, “Introduction,” in The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, p. 2.

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