

Dasan Jeong yag yong's vulnerability as a Catholic
and Confucian internalization of his faith
Under the Catholic Persecution of Joseon

Dasan (이정용, penname) Jeong yag yong (이정용, 1762-1836: hereinafter Dasan) is one of the greatest Confucianists in the late Joseon (Early Korea, 1392-1910) dynasty. He encountered Matteo Ricci's book, <천주교의 진의 (The true meaning of the Lord of Heaven)> through his Catholic relatives and he became a Catholic. But Catholics in Joseon began to be persecuted within 10 years of introduction of gospel into Joseon, and he chose to be an apostate officially.

This paper will see his vulnerabilities in political, personal and evangelizing context by analyzing primary sources at that period. And this paper will argue that his vulnerable conditions encouraged him to internalize his Catholic faith into new Confucian thoughts. More details are as follows.

First, this paper explores his political conditions. King Jeong-Jo (reign, 1776-1800), who persecuted Catholics, favored and defended Dasan despite his catholic belief. At that time two political parties' fought for hegemony: Dasan's party (Nam-in) was interested in the Catholic and while the opposite party (No-ron) tried to slander Nam-in as followers of evil religion. In this context, Dasan had to exile for 18 years and after that period he couldn't become a government official because of consistent slander of No-ron.

Second, this paper sees vulnerability of evangelizing process in Joseon which influenced Dasan. This paper analyzes Joseon's evangelizing process and Joseon Catholics' understanding of the gospel, and then this process and understanding in Joseon will be compared with that in China.

Third, this paper studies his psychological vulnerability resulting from the relationship with his family. Dasan was not only introduced to gospel by his relatives but also he had to witness their torture, martyrdom. Therefore, Dasan had to live with a wounded heart throughout his remaining years and had to strictly self-inspect his own writings.

Fourth, this paper explores his limited and suffering conditions rather encouraged him to internalize his faith into his new Confucian thoughts and writings. In this paper, his hidden Catholic thoughts will be analyzed through his writings on the Confucian ancestor-rites, monotheistic-Sangje, and human nature, governing the people and so on.