

Special Feature

The Understanding of and Response to  
Western Learning by Confucian Scholars  
of the Yeongnam Region in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century:  
Emperor Above, Master of Heaven,  
and Worshiping Rites for the Spirit

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## Introduction

In this article, I examine the understanding of and intellectual response to Western Learning by the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region, which refers to present-day Gyeongsang Province, around the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, I review how these scholars perceived and criticized the concepts of Deus (Ch. *Tianzhu*; Ko. *Cheonju*) and anima (*yeonghon*), which the books on Western Learning introducing Catholicism particularly emphasized. Confucian scholars at that time understood the concept of ancestral spirit in a different way from the concept of anima in books on Western Learning. They tried to elucidate the meaning of the traditional ritual of ancestor worship, which was closely connected with the spirit (*hon*) of the ancestor, from the Neo-Confucian perspective of the theory of principle and material force (*igi ron*). While these efforts had been made in the past, various complex elements of the Yeongnam region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century drove the intellectual reflection and response of these scholars. For instance, the circulation of various books on Western Learning that entered Joseon, the concern arising from the how contemporary intellectuals sympathized with a considerable part of the arguments made in books on Western Learning such as *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shiyi*), *All Signs Indicating the Lord's Reign* (*Zhuzhi qunzheng*), *A Preliminary Discussion on Anima* (*Ling yan li shao*), and *Seven Overcomings* (*Qi ke*), and the demand that Confucian scholars must respond to the critical questions books on Western Learning posed to them all worked together to urge the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region to reflect upon and contemplate their own beliefs and values.<sup>1</sup>

After the shock of the Jinsan Incident in early 1791, during which Catholics burned the spirit tablets of their parents and refused to carry out Confucian funerary rites and ancestor worship, Western Learning as well as books on them were officially regarded as heterodoxy and banned in Joseon. Of course, even after the government announced the ban, books on Western

Learning spread around the capital and Gyeonggi area as well as the Hoseo region, which refers to present-day Chungcheong Province, through various routes. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, when the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region discussed Catholicism, was after the king Jeongjo had died and the 1801 Catholic Persecution had taken place, which made it difficult for them to directly access books on Western Learning. These scholars appear to have indirectly encountered Western Learning and the principles of Catholicism through the writings of the Southerner faction based in the Gyeonggi area, particularly those of the Seongho School.<sup>2</sup> Yi Ik and An Jeongbok's discussions of Western Learning and Catholicism were transmitted to the disciples studying under Daesan Yi Sangjeong 李象靖 (1711–1781), who criticized the writings in various ways. Nam Hanjo 南漢朝 (1744–1809), Jo Suldo 趙述道 (1729–1803), Jeong Jongno 鄭宗魯 (1738–1816), and Ryu Geonhyu 柳健休 (1768–1834) defined Western Learning and Catholicism as heterodoxy and expressed their concern about the scholarly attitude of the Seongho School, which took a favorable stance in their interpretation of Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> Ryu Geonhyu, who regarded Buddhism, the Xiang-Shan School, and the Wang Yangming School in addition to Catholicism as heterodoxy and broadly recorded the criticisms of his senior scholars, also added his own opinion in his text *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy* (*Ihak jipbyeon* 異學集辨), quoting the writings of Yi Ik 李瀼 (1681–1763), who wrote the postscript to *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven*, and *An Examination of Catholicism* (*Cheonhak go* 天學考) and *Questions on Catholicism* (*Cheonhak hongmun* 天學或問), also known as *Questions and Answers on Catholicism* (*Cheonhak mundap* 天學問答), by An Jeongbok 安鼎福

2 Nam Hanjo and Ryu Geonhyu, both Confucian scholars of Yeongnam region, said that they did not see the books introducing Catholicism in person.

3 An Jeongbok's work caught the attention of the Southerners of the Yeongnam region and provided an opportunity for them to newly establish their criticism of heterodoxy and their awareness of having transmitted the Way. Compared to the Confucian community of Yeongnam region, Yi Ik and An Jeongbok presented a conversational stance towards Western Learning and Catholicism in many aspects. Even as he criticized Catholicism as being heterodoxy, Sunam An Jeongbok tried to understand the significance of their theory of Master of Heaven, the soul, and their logic of rewarding good and punishing evil. This was in part because he also needed a method to persuade his disciples. Gang Segu (2012) provides a detailed introduction of the thought of An Jeongbok. See Ham 2010, for Sunam An Jeongbok's view on Western Learning as expressed in *Questions and Answers on Catholicism* (*Cheonhak mundap*). See Seo 2013, for a detailed explanation on how *Questions and Answers on Catholicism* was the completed and last version of several stages of drafts including *Questions on Catholicism* (*Cheonhak hongmun*).

1 This article shares the critical awareness of the previous studies in that it analyzes the way Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region thought through the concepts of Emperor Above (*sangje*), Master of Heaven (*cheonju*), the soul (*yeonghon*), and the spirit of the deceased (*bollyeong*). At the same time, I intend to supplement an analysis from a different angle regarding how the Confucian scholars, who critically responded to the theory of the immortal soul and perceived the temporariness of the ancestral soul, justified the meaning of rituals of ancestor worship. See An 2002, 2005.

(1712–1791).<sup>4</sup> Nam Hanjo, the teacher of Ryu Geonhyu who once directly corresponded with An Jeongbok, wrote “Discussion of Doubtful Points in Sunam An Jeongbok’s *Questions on Catholicism*” (An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun* byeonui 安順庵天學或問辨疑) and “Discussion of Doubtful Points in Seongho Yi Ik’s Postscript to *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven*” (Yi Seongho Ik *Cheonju silui* bal byeonui 李星湖漢天主實義跋辨疑) after receiving the writings of An Jeongbok through his disciple Sin Chibong 申致鳳 (1743–?).<sup>5</sup>

Previous studies have already shown how the Southerners of the Yeongnam region distanced themselves ideologically from the Southerners of the Gyeonggi area in order to assert the legitimacy and identity of their school of thought among other scholars of the Toegye School.<sup>6</sup> These scholars in the Yeongnam region were strongly aware that they had carried on the Way by inheriting the legitimacy of the Toegye School. They expressed this by redefining the learning they had succeeded as orthodoxy (*jeonghak* 正學) and simultaneously vehemently objecting to heterodox learnings that went against it. Such scholarly efforts naturally led to the criticism by these Yeongnam Confucian scholars of the perspective of Western Learning, which was not easy to accept from the Neo-Confucian worldview of the Zhu Xi School. In particular, the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region, who emphasized the non-actional (*muwi*) and non-personified properties of the Neo-Confucian concepts of the Great

Ultimate (*taegeuk*) and principle (*ri*), found it difficult to accept the concept of a Master of Heaven (*cheonju*), a personified ruler described as being able to judge between the rewardable good and the punishable evil. It was also not easy for them to understand the notion of anima unique to a certain individual entity that lasted without end as they believed in ghosts and spirits (*gwisin*), the spiritual and physical side of the soul (*honbaek*), and the becoming and disappearing of all things due to the contraction and extension (*gulsin* 屈伸), decline and growth (*sojang* 消長), and the making and transformation (*johwa* 造化) of *yin* and *yang*. This article will focus on the intellectual understanding and critical response of the Confucian scholars of Yeongnam region regarding these two points.

Matteo Ricci 利瑪竇 (1552–1610) judged that the concept of Emperor Above (Ch. *shangdi*; Ko. *sangje*) in ancient Confucian Classics was useful to propagate the concept of Deus in China. He argued from the complementary view (*boyu ron*) that Deus and Emperor Above meant the same entity. He used the Theory of Four Causes of Aristotle (384–322 BC) to prove the existence of Deus. In other words, the material and form constituting all things is innate in things, but the efficient cause and final cause that moved all things and let them realize their purpose is external and thus is Deus.<sup>7</sup> Ricci defended the personified Emperor Above of Confucianism, which he saw to be similar to Deus, and criticized the theory of principle and material force (*igi ron*) of Neo-Confucianism. He particularly argued that the concept of principle (*ri* 理) or the Great Ultimate (*taegeuk* 太極), which did not have rational capabilities (*yeongseong* 靈性或 *yeongjae* 靈才), could not create or rule spiritual entities such as human beings and thus could not be the ruler of all things.<sup>8</sup> According to Ricci, principle (*ri*) was not a substance, or *substantia* (*zilizhe* 自立者), that exists by itself but an accident, or *accidentia* (*yifutzhe* 依賴者), that had to depend on other things for its existence.<sup>9</sup>

4 See Yi 2009, for a detailed explication of the significance and composition of Ryu Geonhyu’s *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy* (*Ihak jipbyeon*). The author introduces how the Southerners of Yeongnam region intended to secure the transmission of the Way, from Toegye to Yi Sangjeong, through *Scholarly Essence of Yi Hwang and Yi Sangjeong* (*Gye-Ho hakjeok* 溪湖學的) and to secure the legitimacy of the Toegye School by refuting the heterodoxy including Catholicism while distancing themselves from the Southerners based around the capital through *Collections of Criticisms of Heterodoxy*.

5 See Seo 2013; Kim 2014; Kim 2015 to see more of how Nam Hanjo received the writings of An Jeongbok by way of Sin Chibong, how he critically mentioned Seongho and Sunam in his “Discussion of Doubtful Points in Sunam An Jeongbok’s *Questions on Catholicism*” and “Discussion of Doubtful Points in Seongho Yi Ik’s Postscript to *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven*,” and how he was cited in Ryu Geonhyu’s *Collections of Criticisms of Heterodoxy* as supporting evidence for to criticize Catholicism.

6 Kim Seonhui (2015) provides a detailed description of how *Questions and Answers on Catholicism* by An Jeongbok, a Southerner of the Gyeonggi area, was re-summoned as the grounds for the argument of the transmission of the Way and repelling heterodoxy. Ryu Geonhyu particularly wrote the “Catholicism” (Cheonju hak) of *Collections of Criticisms of Heterodoxy* based on An Jeongbok’s view of Western Learning and the criticism of him by Ryu’s teacher, Nam Hanjo. Kim introduces the critical awareness of the Southerners of the Yeongnam region who sought to secure scholarly legitimacy and the “power-knowledge” from Kim Seongil and Yi Sangjeong to Ryu Geonhyu and Ryu Chimyeong after Toegye’s death.

7 *Tianzhu shiyi*, pyeon 1, item 6: “天下無有一物，不具此四者。四之中，其模者質者，此二者在物之內，為物之本分，或謂陰陽是也。作者為者，此二者在物之外，超於物之先者也，不能為物之本分。吾按：天主為物之所以然，但云：作者，為者。不云：模者，質者。” For the translation of *Tianzhu shiyi*, see Song 1999.

8 *Tianzhu shiyi*, pyeon 1, item 3: “其三曰：物雖本有知覺，然無靈性，其或能行靈者之事，必有靈者為引動之。試觀鳥獸之類；” *Tianzhu shiyi*, pyeon 1, item 4: “其二曰：物本不靈，而有安排，莫不有安排之者。” [...] 又問：“理者靈覺否？明義者否？” “如靈覺明義，則屬鬼神之類，曷謂之太極，謂之理也？如否則上帝鬼神夫人之靈覺，由誰得之乎？彼理者以己之所無，不得施之于物，以為之有也。理無靈無覺，則不能生靈生覺。請子察乾坤之內！惟是靈者生靈，覺者生覺耳。自靈覺而出不靈覺者，則有之矣。未聞：有自不靈覺而生有靈覺者也。”

9 *Tianzhu shiyi*, pyeon 2, item 8: “夫物之宗品有二。有自立者有依賴者。物之不特別體以為物，而自能成立，

Ricci also presented the hierarchy of various souls such as the living soul (*saenghon* 生魂), the sentient soul (*gakhon* 覺魂), and the spiritual soul of humans, or *anima humana* (*yeonghon* 靈魂), that was created by Deus. He emphasized that the physical body with form (*sinhyeong* 身形) disappeared, but the human soul did not.<sup>10</sup> Ricci argued that ghosts and spirits (*gwisin*) and souls of the deceased ancestors were not made up by material force (*gi* 氣), pointing out that while ghosts and spirits were revered and worshiped through worshiping rites, there was no rule about performing rituals of worship to material force.<sup>11</sup> *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven* seriously questioned the way the Chinese had the long-standing tradition of worshiping their ancestors and carrying out rituals of ancestor worship but did not believe in the immortality of the spiritual soul after death. His criticism that such rituals were empty acts of amusement if the soul of the dead all disappeared in the end and could not receive the worshiping rites performed by descendants<sup>12</sup> posed a grave challenge for the intellectuals of late Joseon. The Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also took this intellectual challenge seriously. They thought hard about the ghosts, spirits, and souls they believed in as well as the principles and significance of the rituals of ancestor worship. In the following sections of this article, I first examine what the concept of principle (*ri* 理) meant in the Neo-Confucian worldview that the Confucian scholars of Yeongnam region primarily shared from the two aspects of non-action (*muwi*) and ruling over (*jujae*). Next, I look at the words of the Southerners of Yeongnam region to review how the Neo-Confucian concept of principle (*ri*) or Emperor Above (*sangje*), which contained both aspects, proved different from the concept of Deus in Catholicism. Finally, I look at the concept of soul (*hon*), which was different from the view of the *anima* of Catholicism and the basis and significance of the rituals of ancestor worship in relation.<sup>13</sup>

如天地鬼神人鳥獸草木金石四行等是也。屬自立之品者。物之不能立，而託他體以爲其物。”

10 *Tianzhu shiyi*, pyeon 3, item 3: “人身雖死，而魂非死。蓋永存不滅者焉。凡知覺之事，倚賴于身形。身形死散，則覺魂無所用之。故草木禽獸之魂，依身以爲本情，身歿，而情魂隨之以殞。若推論明辨之事，則不必倚賴于身形，而其靈自在。身雖歿，形雖離。其靈魂，仍復能用之也。故人與草木禽獸不同也。”

11 *Tianzhu shiyi*, pyeon 4, item 4: “以氣爲鬼神靈魂者，絜物類之寔名者也。立教者，萬類之理，當各類以本名。古經書云氣，云鬼神，文字不同，則其理亦異。有祭鬼神者矣，未聞有祭氣者。何今之人絜用其名乎？”

12 *Tianzhu shiyi*, pyeon 3, item 8: “彼孝子慈孫，中國之古禮，四季修其祖廟，設其裳衣，薦其時食，以說考妣。使其形神盡亡，不能，聽吾告哀，視吾稽顙，知吾事死如事生，事亡如事存之心，則固非自國君至於庶人大禮，乃童子空戲耳。”

13 See Gwon 2003, 2011, for more on the scholarly trends and thought of the Confucian community

## The Principle and Emperor Above: Non-action and Ruling Over

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the Confucian scholar of Song China, and his disciples left many statements regarding the meaning of Emperor Above appearing in the ancient Confucian Classics. The School of Zhu Xi explains the world and things based on the theory of principle and material force, and Zhu Xi and his disciples interpreted the concept of Emperor Above by using the categories of principle and material force as well. Zhu Xi directly states that “The Emperor Above works by principle.”<sup>14</sup> He distinguished between the blue sky, which has a visible form, and the heavens, which referred to the personified Emperor Above that imbued the people with the mind. Since the heavens granted the principle, this also meant that it ruled over (*jujae* 主宰).<sup>15</sup> What did Zhu Xi mean by saying that the Emperor Above ruled over all things? According to Zhu Xi, the term ruling over should not be understood as meaning that there is an entity in the heavens that judges the sins of people.<sup>16</sup> Although Zhu Xi writes that “King Wen is by the Emperor Above as he ascends and descends”<sup>17</sup> in *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*), he explains that it is not right to say that King Wen was really beside the Emperor Above and the Emperor Above existed as if it were a clay figure (*sosang* 塑像) created in this world.<sup>18</sup> His

of Andong in the Yeongnam region around the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gwon Oyeong (2003, 298–388) provides a detailed introduction of how the scholarly school of thought of Andong after Toegyong divided into the two lines after the Byeong-Ho Dispute surrounding Kim Seongil and Ryu Seongnyong, how the school of thought was passed down from Yi Sangjeong to Ryu Chimyeong, his great-grandson, and how Ryu Chimyeong participated in the proofreading of Ryu Geonhyu’s *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy* and Ryu Chimyeong’s rigorous critical attitude towards heterodoxy later became the driving force behind the movement to protect the orthodox and repel the heterodox and the movement of the Memorial of Ten Thousand Men. For the academic tendencies and thought of Kim Seongil and Ryu Seongnyong, which served as the backdrop of the Byeong-Ho Dispute, see Gwon 2011, 266–349.

14 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 1, item 21: “帝是理爲主。”

15 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 68, item 10: “曰：‘所謂天命之謂性，此是說道；所謂天之蒼蒼，此是形體；所謂惟皇上帝降衷於下民，此是謂帝。以此理付之，便有主宰意。’”

16 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 1, item 22: “‘蒼蒼之謂天。運轉周流不已，便是那箇。而今說天有箇人在那裏批判罪惡，固不可；說道全無主之者，又不可。這裏要人見得。’ 備問經傳中天字。曰：‘要人自看得分曉，也有說蒼蒼者，也有說主宰者，也有單調理時。’”

17 This phrase comes out in “Great Self, King Wen” of *Book of Odes*.

18 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 2, item 57: “又如云：‘文王陟降，在帝左右。’如今若說文王眞箇在上帝之左右，眞箇有箇上帝如世間所塑之像，固不可。然聖人如此說，便是有此理。如周公金縢中乃立壇埋一節，分明是對鬼，‘若爾三王是有丕子之責於天，以旦代某之身。’”

understanding was that the sages would have written this in the Confucian Classics for a reason. For instance, when Zhou Gong said in “The Metal-bound Coffin” (*jinteng* 金縢) of the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing*) that “he faithfully cleaned and set up the altar,” Zhu Xi took this as clearly indicating the act of praying to the Emperor Above and to ghosts and spirits. Although Zhu Xi did not regard that a personified Emperor Above ruled over the world by judging the evils of people, he also did not completely deny that the Emperor Above did indeed rule over.<sup>19</sup> The features of the Emperor Above that Zhu Xi had in mind are related to the properties of the principle as in the following quote:

Principle exists where material force gathers. In general, material force can condense and contrive, whereas the principle has no emotions or intentions and is not contrived. Principle exists where material force collects and condenses [...] the principle is simply a pure, empty, and vast world. It has no form, nor does it leave any trace. The principle cannot contrive. Material force can gradually change, condense, and produce things. At the center of such material force, however, lies the principle.<sup>20</sup>

The above is how Zhu Xi replied when asked by a disciple about the relationship between the principle and material force. According to his answer, it cannot be determined which comes before and after. All that can be known is that principle exists where there is material force, and material force circulates and depends on the principle. It is worth noting how Zhu Xi said that the principle has no emotion, will, the ability to plan, or the capacity to bring things into existence. These words, that principle has no emotion or intention, does not calculate or judge, and does not deliberately do or create, ultimately means that the principle does not have any personified or artificial properties. If Zhu Xi said earlier that the Emperor Above referred to the principle, then this seems to mean that the Emperor Above he was talking about was an entity with no emotions, will, judgement, or deliberate action, and thus did not rule over the world. At the same time, however, he said that it is not right to say that there is absolutely no entity ruling over the world. Then what did Zhu Xi mean by an Emperor

Above that ruled over? When his disciple, referring to how the Emperor Above was commonly used to refer to the way the heavens ruled over the world, asked Zhu Xi who was it that ruled over then, Zhu Xi answered, “Ruling over exists in itself. The heavens are immensely strong and firm. It operates ceaselessly by itself. There is clearly an entity ruling over for this to be.”<sup>21</sup>

When explaining the meaning of the principle and Emperor Above, Zhu Xi saw that it had properties of ruling over on the one hand while also saying that there was no separate personified entity ruling over the world on the other. This is why he said that “Ruling over exists in itself” and not that there was a distinct entity making judgments. The words by Toegye Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501–1570), the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian scholar of Joseon, resembles Zhu Xi’s basic approach to the principle and Emperor Above. Yi Hwang is famous for saying in his theory of principle and material force that the principle arises (*ri bal* 理發), the principle moves (*ri dong* 理動), and the principle is reached by itself (*ri jado* 理自到). In particular, he wrote in a letter to Gobong Gi Daeseung 奇大升 (1527–1572), who was one of his disciples, that the concept of the principle has both the aspect of a non-acting original form and the aspect of the act of moving and ruling over. The way Yi Hwang said “The principle is reached by itself” through the mind was an explanation of how the principle has properties of ruling over.

When speaking of the investigation of things, this means that one truly searches for the principle and realizes the law of all things. When speaking of things being investigated, can you not say that the ultimate principle itself will always reach one following this act of pursuit? This shows how the original nature of the principle is without emotion, will, or contrivance. It is the extremely mysterious work of the principle that it arises following what it encounters and that there is nowhere the principle cannot reach. Earlier, I only considered the aspect of the true form of the principle in its non-action without knowing that it can be realized through its mysterious work and consequently treated the principle practically as a lifeless thing. Is not this thought very far from the Way?<sup>22</sup>

19 See *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 1, item 22 in footnote 16.

20 *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 gwon 1, Item 13: “及此氣之聚，則理亦在焉。蓋氣則能凝結造作，理卻無情意，無計度，無造作。只此氣凝聚處，理便在其中。[...] 若理，則只是箇淨潔空闊底世界，無形跡，他卻不會造作；氣則能醞釀凝聚生物也。但有此氣，則理便在其中。”

21 *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 gwon 68, Item 11: “或問：‘以主宰謂之帝，孰為主宰？’曰：‘自有主宰。蓋天是箇至剛至陽之物，自然如此運轉不息，所以如此，必有為之主宰者。這樣處要人自見得，非語言所能盡。’問：‘錄作也。’因舉莊子執綱維是，孰主張是十數句，曰：‘他也見得這道理，如圭峰禪師說‘知’字樣。’”

22 “Dap Gi Myeongeon,” *Toegye seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 18: “方其言格物也，則固是言我窮至物理之極處，

Yi Hwang wrote that he had reconsidered the action of the principle thanks to the criticism by Gi Daeseung. In the quote above, Yi Hwang writes that he had only considered the fundamental aspect of the principle, that is, how it did not make specific effort and merely did not act. Now, however, he understood how the principle moved and manifested by itself. This is because Zhu Xi, during a conversation with his disciple, distinguished between the action of the mind and the action of the principle.<sup>23</sup> According to Yi Hwang's interpretation, Zhu Xi's words that "the principle dwelled in all things, and the work of the principle does not go beyond the mind of humans" make it seem as if the action of the principle was still dependent on the work of the mind, but the way Zhu Xi distinguished the two by saying that "the principle acts, so why must we speak of the action of the mind?" shows that the principle went where the mind went was attained by itself. Yi Hwang thus saw that the principle possessed the two aspects of its original non-action and its aspect of subtle action. Because he acknowledged that the principle acted subtly, he said that the principle was reached in itself and warned against regarding the principle as a lifeless thing.

This is the context in which Yi Hwang said the principle was the heavens and Emperor Above was the ruling over by the heavens. When his disciple Yi Deokhong 李德弘 (1541–1596) asked Yi Hwang how to approach the issue of the heavens, Yi Hwang answered, "Since all above the earth is the heavens, the heavens accompany us wherever we may go. Heaven is the principle. When we understand that there is truly no object without the principle always dwelling within, then we would not be able to neglect the Emperor Above even for a single moment. The Emperor Above refers to the aspect of the heavens ruling over."<sup>24</sup> Yi Hwang often warned Yi Deokhong to "revere the Emperor Above"

and told him that "since the Emperor Above is close to you, you must always be fearful whatever the object or wherever you may be."<sup>25</sup> Yi Hwang did not just warn his disciples. In his memorial to the king Seonjo he urged him to listen to the love and mind of the heavens and listen to its will and orders. In the "Six-provision Memorial Submitted in the Mujin Year" (Mujin yukjo so 戊辰六條疏), Yi Hwang emphasized that the king, as one who had received the love of the heavens, must try to read the intentions of the Emperor Above. Because the imposing presence of the heavens was very strict and cannot be taken lightly, he told Seonjo, citing the *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents*, it was important that the king fear the commanding presence of the heavens and follow its will.<sup>26</sup> Yi Hwang appears to have partially acknowledged that the Emperor Above was a majestically noble entity that ruled over, similar to how he recognized the action of the principle. He underlined that the king and his disciples must know how to venerate and fear the Emperor Above, who was always by them.

Yi Sangjeong 李象靖 (1711–1781), an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian scholar of the Yeongnam region, established himself as the scholarly leader of the Yeongnam Southerners by inheriting the household and Toegye School of thought, which had been carried on by Kim Seongil 金誠一 (1538–1593), Yi Hyeonil 李玄逸 (1627–1704), and Yi Jae 李栽 (1657–1730) after Yi Hwang's death. After reflecting upon the problem of the order and movements of the principle and material force, he tried to better clarify the principle's properties of non-action and ruling over in the following quotes below. While Yi Sangjeong acknowledged Yi Hwang's theory that the principle arises by itself and moves at the same time, he tried to prevent such arguments from excessively emphasizing the ruling over of the principle and its contrivance.

As Toegye said, "The principle arises to become the Four Beginnings, upon which material force depends to arise. The principle is what lets this happen." While saying that "the Great Ultimate gives birth to yang," he also

及其言物格也，則豈不可謂物理之極處，隨吾所窮，而無不到乎？是知無情意造作者，此理本然之體也，其隨寓發見而無不到者，此理至神之用也。向也，但有見於本體之無爲，而不知妙用之能顯行，殆若認理爲死物，其去道，不亦遠甚矣乎？”

23 "Dap Gi Myeongeon," *Toegye seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 18: "蓋先生說，見於補亡章或問中者，闡發此義，如日星之明，顧視雖常有味其言，而不能會通於此耳。其說曰，‘人之所以爲學，心與理而已。心雖主乎一身，而其體之虛靈，足以管乎天下之理，理雖散在萬物，而其用之微妙，實不外一人之心，’初不可以內外精粗而論也。（其小註，或問：用之微妙，是心之用否？朱子曰：理必有用，何必又說是心之用乎？心之體，具乎是理，理則無所不該，而無一物之不在。然其用實不外乎人心，蓋理雖在物，而用實在心也。）其曰，‘理在萬物，而其用實不外一人之心，’則疑若理不能自用，必有待於人心，似不可以自到爲言。然而又曰，‘理必有用，何必又說是心之用乎？’則其用雖不外乎人心，而其所以爲用之妙，實是理之發見者，隨人心所至，而無所不到，無所不盡。但恐吾之格物有未至，不患理不能自到也。”

24 "Sang Toegye seonsang," *Ganjae jip*, gwon 3: "先生曰，地上皆天，及爾遊衍，安往而非天乎。蓋天即理也。苟知理之無物不有，無時不然，則知上帝之不可須臾離也，亦不可須臾忽也。上帝，指天之主宰處言。”

25 "Sang Toegye seonsang, gapja," *Ganjae jip*, gwon 3; "Sang Toegye seonsang, jeongmyo" *Ganjae jip*, gwon 3.

26 "Mujin yukjo so," *Toegye seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 6: "其必能知天命之不易矣，其必能知高高在上，而日監于茲，不容有毫髮之可欺矣。能如此則其在平日，必有以秉心筋躬，克敬克誠，以昭受上帝者，無不盡其道矣。[...] 書曰，皇天無親，克敬惟親，民罔常懷，懷于有仁，鬼神無常享，享于克誠。詩曰，畏天之威，于時保之。惟聖明之留意焉，則幸甚。”

said that “the principle originally has no emotion, will, or contrivance. Its ability to rise and act is the extremely mysterious workings of the principle.” This is a highly accomplished discussion. However, its ability to arise and act is not a contrived action with intention but something that does and ceases by itself. This is the same as how it does not rule over while ruling over and how it does not act while doing.<sup>27</sup>

Zhu Xi said, “Movement is not the Great Ultimate. The Great Ultimate is what makes movement.” He also said, “Great Ultimate is the principle. The principle cannot be explained by movement, but since the principle dwells in material force, there also cannot be no movement.” Yulgok based his argument on these words. Zhu Xi also said, “There is movement in material force because there is movement in the principle. If the principle did not have movement, then what is the movement of material force based on?” He also said, “The principle makes things move without moving itself.” The principle generally manifests in living things. Although the principle uses the vehicle of material force in order to move, the subtlety displayed and operated by the principle is an extremely mysterious action. It does without doing and therefore does not lack action because it is too vast. It rules without ruling over and therefore does not lack the properties of ruling over because it is too enormous. It does not act but subtly rules over by itself. It rules over by itself but originally does not act. Only by understanding this can the wholeness of the Way can be discussed together.<sup>28</sup>

These quotes were written by Yi Sangjeong to defend and support Yi Hwang when the scholars of the Yulgok School, based on the argument of Yi I 李珣 (1536–1584), criticized Toegye’s theory of the mutual arising of the principle and material force. Following the words of Yi Hwang, Yi Sangjeong writes above that the discussion of the principle can only be complete when the original nature of the principle, which has no emotion, will, or action, and the subtle workings of the principle, which arises and rules over, are explained together.

27 “Dok Seonghak jipyo,” *Daesan jip*, gwon 40: “退陶曰，‘理發爲四端，所資而發者氣耳，其所以能然，實理之爲也。’又論太極生陽曰，‘無情意無造作，本然之體，能發能生，至妙之用也。’如此乃是至論。然又須見得所謂能發能動者，非是用意造作，自行自止，如曰不宰之宰，無爲之爲耳。”

28 “Dok Seonghak jipyo,” *Daesan jip*, gwon 40: “按朱子曰，‘動靜非太極，而所以動靜者太極也。’又曰，‘太極只是理，理不可以動靜言，理寓於氣，不能無動靜。’此即栗谷所本之說也。然又嘗曰，‘理有動靜，故氣有動靜，若理無動靜，氣何自而有動靜乎？’又曰，‘未動而能動者理也。’蓋理是活物，雖乘氣而爲動靜，而其發揮運用之妙，則乃其至神之用耳。故無爲而爲，非泯然無爲也，不宰而宰，非冥然無宰也。今須見得雖是無爲而自有主宰之妙，雖有主宰而其本體之無爲者自若，然後方可與語夫道體之全矣。”

At the same time, he emphasized that it is important to understand that the principle rules over while seeming not to and that the principle acts without seeming to. He stresses the same point in the second quotation above. The principle cannot be described as not ruling over or not acting at all. Although the principle does not seem to act, it subtly rules over, and although it rules over, its original state is non-action in itself. By acknowledging both the original form and workings of the principle as its aspects of non-action and ruling over, Yi Sangjeong embraced and carried on the basic standpoint of Toegye. Citing Yi Hwang’s words, he saw that it was possible to see the principle and material force mutually arising, since sometimes material force follows the movement of the principle and sometimes the principle rides on the movement of material force. Regarding this point, he says that it was possible to distinguish between whether the principle was prioritized or the material force was prioritized.<sup>29</sup> Since the two Chinese characters of movement, *dong* 動 and *jeong* 靜, can be used in both cases depending on what they referred to, he explained how the principle and material force can both have movement as the following:

While movement seems to truly belong to the side of material force, material force can move or be still because the principle is ruling over. It is therefore not problematic to say that the principle has movement. The principle is originally carried by material force. Therefore, even if the principle is said to have movement, the non-acting original form of the principle simply exists by itself. Even saying that the principle does not have movement will not damage the extremely subtle action of the principle, since the principle is what rules over material force. Their way of looking only at how the substance of the Way does not act and believing that the basis of movement and the opening and closing of *yin* and *yang* naturally exists by itself is to mistake the principle as a lifeless thing. On the other hand, if they were to regard the non-action of the principle as a malady and only emphasize how the principle has movement, this is similar to the error of thinking that the true man of no rank (*muwi jinin*) is actually there, glittering.<sup>30</sup>

29 “Dok Seonghak jipyo,” *Daesan jip*, gwon 40: “退陶亦曰，‘理動則氣隨而生，太極動而生陽是也。氣動則理隨而顯，復見天地之心是也。’由是言之，各就其所主，而謂之理氣有互動，烏不可也，然亦非各在一邊自爲動靜也。其相資相須之勢，固無頃刻之離者，而但於其間，隨其所發地頭而有主理主氣之分耳。”

30 “Igi dongjeong seol,” *Daesan jip*, gwon 39: “蓋動靜二字，只是使用底字，故隨其所指，皆可通用。然究其分，則固屬乎氣之一邊，而氣之所以動靜者，實此理之所宰，則亦不害爲理之有動靜也。蓋理本搭於氣，故謂

As per Yi Hwang's perspective, Yi Sangjeong argues in "Igi dongjeong seol" (Theory of the Movement of the Principle and Material Force) that the principle can be said to have movement, just as material force has movement. Of course, saying that the principle has movement is an interpretation of the traditional expression in the *Book of Changes* (*Zhou yi*) that says the Great Ultimate gives birth to *yin* and *yang*. Yi Hwang and Yi Sangjeong did not see the principle as having contrived action and unnaturally ruling over. However, Yi Sangjeong pointed out that if this made people believe that all things in the world arise and grow by themselves because the principle does not act, this was to commit the error of regarding the principle as a lifeless thing that has no function. By the same token, Yi Sangjeong also warned that if people only look at the way the principle moves and overly emphasize how it rules over, this will result in the misunderstanding that the principle exists somewhere and rules over the world like an invisible true man of no rank or a personified Emperor Above. In this sense, the concept of Emperor Above that Yi Hwang and Yi Sangjeong, as two Confucian scholars of Yeongnam region, had in mind possessed both the properties of non-action and ruling over, but with the emphasis placed on the latter.

## Differentiating Deus and Emperor Above

The Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region, which included the disciples of Yi Sangjeong such as Ryu Jangwon 柳長源 (1724–1796), Nam Hanjo, and Jeong Jongno, as well as the next generation of disciples such as Ryu Geonhyu and Ryu Chimyeong 柳致明 (1777–1861), tried to clearly distinguish between the meaning of Master of Heaven (*cheonju*), which the books on Western Learning emphasized, and Emperor Above (*sangje*), which appeared in the Confucian Classics. Interestingly, Nam Hanjo and his disciple Ryu Geonhyu attempted to redefine the meaning of the Emperor Above in Confucianism more rigorously from the aspect of the principle while criticizing the perception of the Master of Heaven by the Southerner scholars of Gyeonggi Province. Nam

之有動靜也，而其本體之無爲者自若。實主於氣，故謂之無動靜也，而其至神之妙用，又未嘗或損也。彼見道體之無爲，而謂動靜闖關自爾也者，固陷於認理爲死物之科，而或病其爲此，而偏主理有動靜之說，則又恐近於無位真人閃爍自在之失。”

Hanjo's *Collected Writings of Sonjae Nam Hanjo* (*Sonjae jip*) features a critique of the *Questions on Catholicism* by An Jeongbok of the Seongho School. When Nam Hanjo was staying in the capital from 1782 to 1783, he corresponded with An Jeongbok, during which he received the request to critique An Jeongbok's *Questions on Catholicism*, a text that had been written to criticize books on Western Learning such as *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven*.<sup>31</sup> Around 1790, Nam Hanjo composed "Discussion of Doubtful Points in Sunam An Jeongbok's *Questions on Catholicism*" to discuss the questions that An Jeongbok's writings raised. He also pointed out problems of "Postscript to *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven*" (*Bal Cheonju sirui* 跋天主實義) written by Yi Ik in "Discussion of Doubtful Points in Seongho Yi Ik's Postscript to *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven*." The Southerners of the Yeongnam region around the 19<sup>th</sup> century criticized Catholicism and emphasized the non-action of Emperor Above as a notion distinct from the concept of Master of Heaven again out of concern that the Southerners of the Gyeonggi area favorably interpreted the concepts of Deus and anima in Western Learning even while appearing to criticize them.

For instance, Yi Ik remarked that "Western Learning only regards the Master of Heaven as the supremely noble being. The Master of Heaven is the same as the Emperor Above of Confucianism. The way they revere, fear, and believe in the Master of Heaven is similar to how Sakyamuni is regarded in Buddhism."<sup>32</sup> For Yi Ik, the Master of Heaven spoken by Western priests such as Matteo Ricci was the same as the Emperor Above emphasized in

31 See the annotation of *Collected Writings of Master Sonjae*. Nam Hanjo studied under Soam Kim Jindong, his maternal uncle, and under Yi Sangjeong and Ryu Jangwon. When he traveled to the capital to take the state examination, he briefly corresponded with the disciples of Seongho including An Jeongbok. Nam Hanjo was involved in the Memorial of Ten Thousand Men to Exonerate Crown Prince Jangheon that sought to clarify the "righteous cause of the Imo year" (*imo uiri*) over 30 years since the Purge of the Imo Year and sent several letters to Kim Jindong about his impressions during then. Nam Hanjo, whose scholarly endeavors were based on the theory of righteousness of the Learning of Zhu Xi, did not serve as a government official and devoted himself to raising disciples. More time needed to pass for the Southerners of Yeongnam region to enter central politics. The king at that time, Jeongjo, carried out various measures to support the movement to posthumously reinstate Crown Prince Jangheon. Jeongjo re-evaluated the performance of the Southerners of the Yeongnam region and carefully oversaw the selection and appointment of talented individuals. See Kim 2007, 425–51.

32 "Bal *Cheonju sirui*," *Seongho seonsaeng jeonjip*, gwon 55: "其學專以天主爲尊，天主者，即儒家之上帝。而其敬事畏信則如佛氏之釋迦也。"



Confucianism. He criticized that the way Westerners excessively worshiped the Master of Heaven and stressed that the doctrine of heaven and hell was no different from the worship of Sakyamuni and the doctrine rebirth in Buddhism. At the same time, he commented that the words of *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents* prove that it is difficult to deny that the principles and experiences of rewarding the good and punishing the evil, retributive justice, and auspicious and misfortunate events actually existed.<sup>33</sup> In other words, he acknowledged that the belief in the Emperor Above and ghosts and spirits who grant good fortune or causes misfortune also existed in Confucian culture. In his understanding, the bible (*Cheonjugyeong* 天主經) had not been that different from *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents* at first, but as the customs and people's beliefs changed in the West, they had no choice but to add the doctrine of heaven and hell and divine miracles. This shows how Yi Ik criticized Catholicism on the one hand but also tried to understand their perspective to a considerable extent on the other.<sup>34</sup>

Nam Hanjo, however, began by criticizing how Yi Ik interpreted that the contents of the bible had initially not been very different from the Confucian Classics.<sup>35</sup> Although he himself had not read the bible in person, he saw the arguments of Westerners as being a device to pursue their own personal interests under the pretext of relying on a high and noble Master of Heaven and helping human beings do good. Nam Hanjo took issue with the way Seongho Yi Ik had compared the bible, which tempted people by the logic of reward and punishment in the doctrine of heaven and hell, with the autonomous self-cultivation of Confucianism, which followed the doctrine of the mean without personal inflections. In addition, referring to Yi Ik's words, "King Wen brightly shines in the heavens above," Nam Hanjo pointed to the way Yi Ik saw that the spiritual forces of the deceased of the sages and ordinary people after their death had different status, rank, and position and suspected that Yi Ik, like

Catholicism, also saw divine forces (*yeongsin* 靈神) as immortal after death.<sup>36</sup> In that case, Nam Hanjo criticized, Yi Ik was treating the Emperor Above of Confucianism as the same as the Master of Heaven in Western Learning.

Seongho said that the Master of Heaven they speak of is the Emperor Above of Confucianism. Emperor Above in Confucianism is explained through the ruling over by the principle. The Emperor Above has no emotion, intention, or contrivance and is the foundation of all changes. The Master of Heaven they speak of is explained as the divine side of material force. It has emotion, intention, and contrivance and thus creates all kinds of technical skills. The Confucian rituals of worshiping ghosts and spirits is rooted in the principle. This is the rightful way to serve the Emperor Above. The heaven and hell they speak of only insist on divine forces and is thus an intrigue to worship and serve the Master of Heaven. This difference in impartiality and partiality (*gongsa* 公私) and authenticity and inauthenticity (*jinwi* 眞僞) is larger than the contrast between ice and charcoal fire or the difference between fragrance and stench.<sup>37</sup>

In the quote above, Nam Hanjo recalls how the Emperor Above in Confucianism is a term referring to the ruling over of the principle. Because the Emperor Above, as the principle, has no emotion, intention, or contrivance, he says, it can serve as the basis that causes things to change. This refers to Yi Sangjeong's emphasis on the original nature of the principle, which is that the principle does not act. Nam Hanjo belittles the Master of Heaven as spoken by Westerners to merely be a divine force (*yeongsin*) that has emotion, intention, and artificial contrivance. Divine force here refers to an entity formed by material force. Nam Hanjo also criticizes that such divine forces are not impartial or true because they have personal feelings and intentions. This is

33 See "Bal *Cheonju sirui*," *Seongho seonsaeng jeonjip*, gwon 55.

34 See An 2002 for more on how the Seongho School reinterpreted the traditional Emperor Above and the theory of ghosts and spirits of Confucianism in the process of understanding Western Learning and Catholicism and how they expressed the way Catholicism influenced their perspective to change. An provides a detailed introduction divided by type.

35 "Yi Seongho Ik *Cheonju sirui* bal byeonui," *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: "詩書之言, 皆聖人躬行心得之餘, 發爲文辭, 以垂訓萬世, 非爲世俗之漸變而設是言而教戒之也. 吉凶禍福之理, 亦天道之自然類應, 如栽之必培, 傾之必覆, 非爲頑愚之不率教而立是說而驅率之也. 余未見天主經, 不知爲說如何, 而不過以自私之術, 假爲善之名, 託之於莫尊之天, 以誘脅齊氓耳. 然則其說之淺陋矯誣甚矣. 以之而配無私執中之經, 以之而擬惠迪從逆之訓, 其比擬之不倫, 豈特天壤之相遠哉."

36 "Yi Seongho Ik *Cheonju sirui* bal byeonui," *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: "有論文王在上於昭于天之義曰, 聖賢凡愚之神, 其升上之際, 各以地位等級, 有高下層數, 信斯言也, 人死而靈神, 果不滅矣. 靈神之所託, 各隨其人之善惡, 而果有高下之殊矣. 其論神既如此, 則彼所謂天主, 眞以爲儒家之上帝也. 說詩之意如此, 則彼所謂天主經, 眞可以配儒家之詩書矣. [...] 大抵近世之學, 其弊有二, 學必以自得爲貴, 道必以博取爲務. 學要自得, 故不遵先儒成說, 而硬鑿安排, 向別處走. 道務博取, 故擇不精語不詳, 指鐵爲金, 認賊爲子, 而不覺其駭駭然入於其中."

37 "Yi Seongho Ik *Cheonju sirui* bal byeonui," *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: "其曰彼所謂天主, 卽儒家之上帝也. 儒家所謂上帝, 以理之主宰而言也, 無情意無造作, 而能爲萬化根本也. 彼所謂天主, 以氣之靈神而言也, 有情意有造作, 而繼出許多伎倆也. 是以儒家之祭祀鬼神, 本乎理, 昭事上帝之義也. 彼之天堂地獄, 專主靈神, 崇奉天主之術也. 其公私誠僞之分, 奚啻冰炭薰蕕之相反哉."

because he saw the Master of Heaven of Catholicism as being nothing but a personified entity who judges the good and evil of human beings and tempts humans with the doctrine of heaven and hell. It is clear that Nam Hanjo and his disciples regarded a personified ruling entity that became angry, judged, and punished to be an unrefined entity of contrived ability. Nam Hanjo feared that the heterodox prioritized material force, as in the case of divine force, and neither understood the principle nor were they ruled by the principle, thus making the action of material wicked.<sup>38</sup>

Like his teacher, Yi Ik, An Jeongbok also explained that the learnings of a Confucian scholar was to worship the heavens by referring to examples of Emperor Above in *Book of Documents*, the way King Wen served Emperor Above in *Book of Odes*, how Confucius feared the heavenly mandate, and how Mencius served the heavens by preserving the mind and cultivating the innate nature.<sup>39</sup> While explaining how the Emperor Above was a term referring to the properties of ruling over, An Jeongbok went further to say that this had already been said by Confucian scholars. He differentiated between the heavens as the principle when speaking of ruling over and the sky as a thing when speaking of form and material force. The heavens could be called the Emperor Above from the perspective that it ruled over, but since it was the Great Ultimate and the principle considering that it had no sound or scent, the Emperor Above and the principle of Great Ultimate were one and the same.<sup>40</sup> Ryu Geonhyu, the disciple of Nam Hanjo, criticized this distinction in the *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy*.<sup>41</sup> According to Ryu Geonhyu, when Zhu Xi said the “Non-Ultimate

and yet Great Ultimate” (*wuji er taiji* 無極而太極), he was already referring to both the principle’s aspect of having no sound or scent and the aspect of ruling, whereas Sunam ultimately distinguished between the Emperor Above and the Great Ultimate even though he said they were alike. Nam Hanjo criticized item 20 of An Jeongbok’s *Questions on Catholicism*, which explained the Emperor Above and the principle, as the following:

Westerners regard the Emperor Above as their master while excluding the Great Ultimate. This is because they see the Emperor Above as a divine force with emotions, intentions, and contrivance. They do not like how the principle can do so by itself and thus try to eliminate the principle [of the Great Ultimate]. Where there is the principle, there are things, and where there are things, there is the principle. Primarily, though, the principle always comes before, and things come after, because the principle is generally the cause of things. Westerners regard the principle to be dependent on things and use the metaphor of how subjects follow their rulers. This, however, is to say that things precede the principle. If a thing arises to take form without the principle and the principle depends on the thing, the principle in this case is useless and unnecessary. How can this make sense? Moreover, the Emperor Above can rule over all things because the principle has no sound or scent and thus can be the foundation of all things. A divine force with emotions, intentions, and contrivance such as the Master of Heaven is no different from a thing below. How can this be the ruler of all change? The paragraph where An Jeongbok says “The Emperor Above is the origin of the principle and gives rise to all things between the heavens and earth” meant to explicate how the Great Ultimate is the foundation that gives birth to things. His wording being difficult, however, he ended up erroneously implying that Emperor Above has emotions, intentions, and contrivance. In addition, although An Jeongbok distanced himself from the way books on Western Learning used the metaphor of king and his subjects in explaining the relationship between things and the principle, calling it illogical, he was unable to clarify the confusion resulting from the problem of what comes first and what comes after and thus ended up failing to elucidate the way or dispel heterodoxy.<sup>42</sup>

38 “Yi Seongho Ik *Cheonju sirui bal byeonui*,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: “大抵異學之所主者，氣也。而彼西學，特其甚焉者也。氣之爲物，無理以主之，則必流於邪妄。故西士之無物不窮，只是窮得此邪妄而已，無幽不通，只是通得此邪妄而已。伎倆愈精，邪妄愈甚，其不離於膠漆盆中，固其所也。”

39 “Cheonhak mundap,” *Sunam seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 17: “書曰，惟皇上帝，降衷下民，若有恒性，克綏厥猷。詩曰，惟此文王，小心翼翼，昭事上帝。又曰，畏天之威，于時保之。孔子曰，畏天命，子思曰，天命之謂性。孟子曰，存心養性，所以事天也。吾儒之學，亦不外於事天。”

40 “Cheonhak mundap,” *Sunam seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 17: “上帝主宰之稱，而爲萬物之總主，吾儒已言之矣。人之稱天有二，一是主宰之天，曰天命之性，曰畏天命之類，是天即理也。一是形氣之天，是天即物也，周子之圖，本於孔子太極生兩儀之言，以有主宰而言之則曰上帝，以無聲無臭而言之則曰太極曰理，上帝與太極之理，其可貳而言之乎？[...] 上帝爲理之原，而造此天地萬物。天地萬物不能自生，必有天地萬物之理，故生此天地萬物，安有無其理，而自生之理乎？此即後儒氣先於理之說，不足下矣。”

41 “Byeon yanghak sangje cheonju,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “健休按，上天之裁，無聲無臭，即所以贊上帝也。朱子之釋無極而太極，亦曰：‘上天之裁，無聲無臭，而實爲造化之樞紐，品彙之根抵。’此其所以上帝與太極，不可分而二之也。今順菴之言曰：‘以有主宰而言，則曰上帝，以無聲無臭而言，則曰太極。’既如是分言之，則上帝不得爲無聲無臭，而太極不可謂有主宰也。其下雖言其理不二，而語脈之間，不能無病。損齋於此，殆不欲苛摘而不之辨也。”

42 “An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun byeonui*,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: “彼之上帝而斥太極，蓋以上帝爲靈神而有情意有造作，故惡理之自然能如此，而必欲絕去之也。夫有理則有物，有物則有理，而推其本原，則又必先有理而後有物，蓋理即所以爲是物者也。今彼以理爲依賴於物，引論於臣之從君，則是乃先有物而後有理。方其始之爲物也，固若有無理之物，而及其理之依於物也，亦不過依附贅剩之一理矣，此其果

The part Nam Hanjo focused on is the item where An Jeongbok criticizes how *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven* compared the relationship between things and the principle to the relationship between a king and his subjects in order to defend its perspective that the principle was the dependent entity and exists only if a thing existed and does not exist if a thing did not exist. An Jeongbok explained here that the Emperor Above, as the origin of the principle, gives rise to all things between the heavens and the earth. The principle, he said, was necessary for the formation of all things between the heavens and the earth since they cannot arise by themselves.<sup>43</sup> Nam Hanjo, however, criticizes that this explanation leads to the misunderstanding that there is a personified entity that artificially gives birth to all things. Ryu Geonhyu, citing Nam Hanjo, also wrote in the *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy*, “How can the Master of Heaven the Westerners speak of exist above the top of the head of humans, like a thing with a form, and command the authority that lets people live or die or grants them fortune or disaster? This is the typical method of referring to the true man of no rank in Buddhism. How can this be discussed together with the Emperor Above of Confucianism?”<sup>44</sup> Ryu Geonhyu points out how the Emperor Above must not be understood as a personified entity who judges human beings and commands the power to reward and punish, like the true man of no rank in Buddhism or the Master of Heaven of the West. Both Nam Hanjo and Ryu Geonhyu criticized how Yi Ik and An Jeongbok seemed to find fault with the concept of Master of Heaven but in fact equated it with the Emperor Above of Confucianism and said that an Emperor Above that ruled over by commanding rewards and punishments came out in the ancient Confucian Classics. This shows how the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region placed more emphasis on the original non-acting nature of the principle rather than as an Emperor Above that ruled over compared to the way Southerners of the capital

area viewed the Emperor Above.<sup>45</sup>

The comments of Mangok 晚谷 Jo Suldo 趙述道, another disciple of the Daesan School whom Ryu Geonhyu frequently cited in the *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy*, are quite intriguing.<sup>46</sup> Ryu Geonhyu cites and discusses the words of Jo Suldo in his “Discussions of Catholic Practices” (Byeon cheonhak gongbu 辨天學工夫) of “Catholicism” (Cheonjuhak 天主學) in gwon 6 of the *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy*. According to Ryu Geonhyu, Jo Suldo did not see the heavens and humans as two separate principles since humans received the Way from the heavens.<sup>47</sup> He regarded the methods that Yao and Shun, Tang of Shang and Wu of Zhou, Confucius and Yanzi, and Zisi and Mencius taught as having commonly originated in the heavens and humans. Jo Suldo writes that revering the heavens (*gyeongcheon* 敬天) is all nothing but a method of self-cultivation to perfect oneself by veneration towards the heavens. The words cited in the *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy* and the words Jo Suldo himself writes in “Questions and Answers at the Cloud Bridge” (Ungyo mundap 雲橋問答) of *Collected Writings of Mangok Jo Suldo* (*Mangok jip* 晚谷集) are somewhat different in this passage. The following is an excerpt from “Questions and Answers at the Cloud Bridge.”

Where revering the heavens is mentioned in the Confucian Classics, it is written that one cultivates oneself by venerating the way of the heavens. [...] The words, “The Emperor Above is by you” or “The Emperor Above gazes down on here everyday” refer to how the affairs of Emperor Above do not go beyond the self. If one turns to the self to preserve one’s mind, this is reason of the original body of the world (*seoncheon* 先天), the reason of

45 An Yeongsang analyzed that the Seongho School revived the theory of the Emperor Above of ancient Confucianism in the process of critically accepting Catholicism, whereas the Toegye School of the Yeongnam region reinforced their stance on the theory of a rational Emperor Above of Zhu Xi, namely the concept of the principle. I agree with this analysis. See An 2005, 119–24.

46 See Kim 2002 for more on the family background and academic records of Mangok Jo Suldo. Jo Suldo is the grandson of Jo Deongnin, who died during the political strife between the Patriarchs and the Southerners during the reign of Yeongjo. According to Kim’s study, the Hanyang Jo Clan of Jusil, Yeongyang, formed a political alliance with the scholars of the Southerners of south of the capital for the reinstation of Jo Deongnin and his family while corresponding key figures among them such as Chae Jegong, Yi Heongyeong, and Jeong Yagyong.

47 “Byeon cheonhak gongbu,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “(晚谷)曰, ‘天者, 天之天也, 聖人者, 人之天也. 天以是道, 賦之於人, 人以是道, 稟之於天, 天人初無二理. 而聖人則即其理一之中, 必知其分之殊. 故自堯舜禹之大聖, 其傳授之法, 不過曰精一執中而已. 湯武之建中建極, 孔顏之博文約禮, 思孟之明善誠身, 是皆本諸天而言之乎, 本諸人而言之乎?’”

成說乎? 且上帝之主宰乎萬物者, 以理之無聲無臭而能為品彙之根柢. 若是有情意造作之靈神, 則下同於一物, 而安能為萬化之主宰乎? 盛辨所謂上帝為理之原而造此天地萬物一段, 本欲明太極生物之本, 而語意硬澀, 反有情意造作之累. 且於物理君臣之說, 雖斥其不成說, 而不明其本末先後之乖亂, 明道闢異, 兩皆有欠.”

43 “Yi Seongho Ik *Cheonju sirui bal byeonui*,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: “第二十條, 其言曰, 但聞古君子敬恭乎天地之上帝, 未有尊奉太極者. 又曰, 理是依賴者, 有物則有物之理, 無物則無物之理, 有君則有臣, 無君則無臣. 若以虛理為物之原, 是無異乎佛老之說云, 此等言語, 其果成說乎? 上帝為理之原, 而造此天地萬物, 天地萬物, 不能自生. 必有天地萬物之理, 故生此天地萬物, 安有無其理而自生之理乎?”

44 “Byeon yanghak sangje cheonju,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “健休按, 豈若彼所謂天主者, 眞苦有形之物, 着在人人頭上, 而主其生殺禍福之權哉. 是乃釋氏無位眞人之舊套, 而比論於吾儒所請上帝, 可乎?”

the specific workings of this world (*hucheon* 後天), the reason of governing the world (*gyeongnon* 經綸), the reason of norms, and the reason of mutual participation and assistance. Is this what the heavens expect of humans or what humans expect of the heavens? If the words of Western Learning are true, then all things below humans are useless, and all subtle uses of learning as spoken by the sages become things that must be discarded.<sup>48</sup>

Jo Suldo regarded expressions such as “The Emperor Above is by you” or “The Emperor Above oversees this place everyday” as focusing on the Emperor Above among the heavens and even once said that the Master of Heaven mentioned in Western Learning is another name for the Emperor Above in Confucianism.<sup>49</sup> This may suggest that Jo Suldo equates the Master of Heaven of Western Learning with the Emperor Above of Confucianism in the same way as Yi Ik or An Jeongbok did. However, Jo Suldo goes on to criticize that “Catholicism says there is a Master of Heaven among the heavens and to describe it as being the most mysterious among all things mysterious and the strangest out of all things strange. Westerners do not seek the heavens within their minds but base their minds in remote and absurd places.”<sup>50</sup> According to Jo Suldo, although the Master of Heaven in Western Learning and the Emperor Above in Confucianism seem alike in that humans fear and revere the heavens, they are distinct in that the Emperor Above in Confucianism is the heavens sought inside one’s mind. This is why he said that to revere the heavens was to cultivate the self, as the quote above shows. He also emphasizes that the way the Emperor Above exists beside one or how it supervises all things everyday did not go beyond the boundaries of the human mind. Preserving one’s mind was to serve the heavens. In this sense, his question “Is this what the heavens expect of humans or what humans expect of the heavens?” is very significant. It ironically expresses how the heavens should pray to and expect from humans, not the other way around, since all affairs of the heavens can only be realized by

the efforts of human beings.

In *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy*, Ryu Geonhyu cited the passage where Jo Suldo criticized how the Master of Heaven, to which Westerners prayed, was regarded as a true man of no rank, a celestial deity of the heavens, or the Jade Emperor practicing sorcery.<sup>51</sup> Ryu Geonhyu focused on how Jo Suldo’s criticism distinguished between the Emperor Above in the Confucian Classics, which he saw as existing for everyday learning by practicing reverence of the mind, and the Master of Heaven of Western Learning, which existed for humans to pray towards an external authoritative entity in order to fulfill their personal desires. At this point, however, Ryu Geonhyu points out that Jo Suldo criticizes the study of the heavens of the West but does not actually clarify the meaning of the heavenly principle (*cheolli* 天理). This shows Ryu Geonhyu’s concern that Jo Suldo did not sufficiently emphasize how revering and fearing the heavens was only possible by understanding the heavenly principle that elucidates the human imperatives in the relationship between father and son, ruler and subject, and husband and wife.<sup>52</sup> Ryu Geonhyu also occasionally took a critical stance in this way towards the words of his senior scholars in the same school of thought such as Nam Hanjo, Jo Suldo, and Jeong Jongno. The Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region saw the Emperor Above as having the properties of both the principle of non-action and ruling over. However, Master of Heaven of the West judged the good and evil of humans based on a certain personified nature, which, in their view, was only the personification of the divine force that had emotions, intentions, and judgment. Of course, *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven* emphasized that the Master of Heaven was a completely immaterial and intellectual entity and that the human soul was not material force but an immaterial entity that did not disappear. To the Confucian scholars, however, a personified entity who judged the world with emotions and will and controlled humans with the doctrine of heaven and hell, whatever it may be called, was regarded as being in the same category of a divine

48 “Ungyo mundap,” *Mangok jip*, gwon 8. “凡經中諸言敬天者，必曰敬天之道，而修之於吾身也。[...] 曰上帝臨女。日日監在茲云者，言上帝之事，實不外於吾身。即吾身而存吾心，則所以先天者此也，所以後天者此也，所以彌綸者此也，所以範圍者此也，所以參贊輔相者，亦此也。是果天有待於人乎，人有待於天乎？今若西學之言，則自人以下，皆無用之長物，聖人所云功夫妙用者，皆可廢可棄之事也。”

49 “Ungyo mundap,” *Mangok jip*, gwon 8. “其曰上帝臨汝。日日監在茲云者，亦於天之中，以上帝為主，西學之所云天主者，實上帝之異其名耳。”

50 “Ungyo mundap,” *Mangok jip*, gwon 8. “天之中，又有天主，玄之又玄，奇之又奇。不求諸吾心之天，都寄精神於渺茫荒虛之域。”

51 “Byeon cheonhak gongbu,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “西學 [...] 除非有無位真人降臨道場，一呪而天神來御，再呪而玉皇翔空，恍兮惚兮，何有何亡。此說之行，將見天地不得其位，日月不得其明，江河不得其平矣。”

52 “Byeon cheonhak gongbu,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “健化按，蓋天之所以為天者，以其有天理也。彼以理虛，則是無天理也。天理之敝有五，而其最大者，曰父子君臣夫婦。彼以天地為父母，而曰父母不我有，則是無父子也。彼以上帝為大君，而曰君臣不我有，則是無君臣也。況男女混雜而無別，則無夫婦。無夫婦則無父子，無父子則亦無兄弟矣。若是而曰敬天若天畏天先天後天而不違，可乎？”

force, which was finite and limited. Perhaps the Confucian scholars thought that if the Master of Heaven of the West was completely immaterial and perfectly universal, then it should have properties of non-action, like the principle of the Great Ultimate. In this sense, the Confucian scholars of Yeongnam region did not equate the Emperor Above of Confucianism with the Master of Heaven, or Deus, of the West.

### The Soul, the Spirit of Ancestors, and the Ritual of Worship

The second key concept emphasized in books on Western Learning is the soul (*yeonghon*). The term soul is one of the translations of anima, a concept in medieval Western philosophy, into classical Chinese.<sup>53</sup> According to books on Western Learning, the human soul, which was made in the form of the absolute being of God, does not perish even after separating from the physical body but instead exists forever, is unique to each individual, and is ultimately judged based on the good and evil it did in this world. *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven* in particular emphasizes that this human soul, after being created by God, is not only immortal but distinctive to each individual. In short, the soul can be characterized by its immortality and individuality. The corresponding Neo-Confucian concept can be seen as ghosts and spirits (*gwisin* 鬼神), which are understood as the action of contraction and extension of *yin* and *yang*. Ghosts and spirits, the ethereal and physical aspects of the soul, and the rituals of worship were important topics in the conversations between Zhu Xi and his disciples. As Zhu Xi cited in *Commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong zhangju)*, ghosts and spirits are the contributing action (*gongyong* 功用) of the energy of *yin* and *yang* of the heavens and the earth, the traces of how the heavens and the earth gave rise to all things, and the result of the smooth workings (*yangneung* 良能) of both *yin* and *yang*.<sup>54</sup> The Neo-

Confucianist scholars referred to the expanding and mysterious energy as spirit (*sin* 神) and the contracting, coalescing energy as ghost (*gwi* 鬼). According to this definition, the mind and physical body of humans and the soul's ethereal and bodily aspects were all ghosts and spirits manifested through the contraction and expansion of the two forces of *yin* and *yang*. While the material forces of *yin* and *yang* is generated anew every day and grows, once the material force is full, it gradually disperses and disappears. Zhu Xi saw that the material force that gives rise to humans and all things ceaselessly acts, but the material of individual entities disappears once all things die. Therefore, he said, the material force of the heavens and the earth, the mountains and the rivers, and of ancestors cannot be recovered as form.<sup>55</sup> Of course, Zhu Xi said that it was the way of things for the material force of one's ancestor to return and respond if one devotes the clear and spiritual force (*jeongsin* 精神) reverently, since the material force of the ancestor and their descendants were the same. For instance, if not much time has passed since the death of the ancestor and the ethereal and physical sides of the soul had not completely dispersed yet, the soul of the ancestor will readily react to the sincere devotion of the descendant. In the case of a remote ancestor going back many generations, however, it was not possible to know whether the material force of that ancestor existed. In other words, if the principle existed, the ancestor would react, and the descendant could meet the ancestor due to the universality of that principle, but the material force of an ancestor that has already dispersed never gathers again. Zhu Xi thus denied not only the immortality of the soul of a long-deceased ancestor but also denied that it was uniquely that of an individual.<sup>56</sup>

All that gathers and disperses is material force. The principle merely dwells in material force and does not condense to form things or become innate nature. What humans must carry out is the principle. While material force coalesces and disperses, the principle cannot be explained by coalescing

53 Ever since Matteo Ricci translated anima to soul (*yeonghon*) in *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven*, there has been objections raised against this translated term because of the properties of material force that the concept of spirit (*hon*) carries. Other translations for anima have been raised including divine nature (*yeongseong*), divine body (*yeongche*), spiritual intelligence (*yeongmyeong*), and holy spirit (*seongnyeong*). I do not delve into this here as it is not the main argument of this article.

54 *Zhongyong zhangju*, chapter 16: “程子曰，鬼神，天地之功用而造化之迹也。張子曰，鬼神者，二氣之良能

者。愚謂以二氣言，則鬼者陰之靈也，神者陽之靈也。以一氣言，則至而伸者為神，反而歸者為鬼，其實一物而已。[...] 物之終始，莫非陰陽合散之所為，是其為物之體，而物所不能遺也。”

55 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 68, item 18: “又問，‘齊明盛服，以承祭祀，卻如何?’ 曰，‘亦只是此往來屈伸之氣。古人到祭祀處，便是招呼得來。如天地山川先祖，皆不可以形求，卻是以此誠意求之，其氣便聚。’ 又問，‘祖先已死，以何而求?’ 曰，‘其氣亦自在。只是以我之氣承接其氣，才致精神以求之，便來格，便有來底道理。古人於祭祀處極重，直是要求得之。’”

56 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 3, item 19: “人死雖終歸於散，然亦未便散盡，故祭祀有感格之理。先祖世次遠者，氣之有無不可知。然奉祭祀者既是他子孫，必竟只是一氣，所以有感通之理。然已散者不復聚。”

and dispersing. Because material force does not immediately scatter as soon as human beings die, performing ancestor worship elicits a response in principle. If many generations separate the descendant and his ancestor, it cannot be known whether the material force of the ancestral spirit is there or not. The same material force of the ancestor that is worshiped, however, is eventually transmitted down to the person performing the ritual if he is his descendant. Therefore, it is the way of things that sincere devotion and reverence will resonate.<sup>57</sup>

It is worth noting how Zhu Xi acknowledges that the principle of response from the ancestor that is possible by the sincere devotion of the descendant consistently exists but confesses that we cannot know whether the ancestral souls exist or not, since all material force ultimately ceases to exist. The disciples of Zhu Xi questioned him, saying that it was hard to understand how we can resonate with ancestral souls if we perform ancestor worship to a soul that does not exist in contrast to the way we pray towards an existing entity when worshipping the heavens and the earth and the mountains and the rivers.<sup>58</sup> It was difficult to fundamentally justify the ritual of ancestor worship by simply answering that the same material force responds. Zhu Xi ultimately had no choice but to emphasize the principle of response, namely, the universal principle which humans must do: “The coalescing of material force leads to the formation of human, while the dispersal of material force leads to the formation of ghosts and spirits. Even if material force has dispersed, the principle of *yin* and *yang* of the heavens and the earth continuously arises and is thus endless. Even if the clear spiritual force and the ethereal and physical aspects of the ancestral soul has already dispersed, the clear spiritual force and the ethereal and physical aspects of the soul of the descendant gradually continue by itself. This is why utmost sincere devotion and reverence during the ritual of worship can reach the ethereal and physical side of the ancestral soul. It is difficult to put into words. After its dispersal, it appears as if there is nothing left anymore.

57 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 3, item 19: “曰: ‘夫聚散者, 氣也. 若理, 則只泊在氣上, 初不是凝結為一物而為性也. 但人分上所合當者, 便是理. 氣有聚散, 理則不可以聚散言也. 人死, 氣亦未便散得盡, 故祭祖先有感格之理. 若世次久遠, 氣之有無不可知. 然奉祭祀者既是他子孫, 必竟只是這一氣相傳下來, 若能極其誠敬, 則亦有感通之理.’”

58 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 3, item 20: “用之云: ‘人之禱天地山川, 是以我之有感彼之有. 子孫之祭先祖, 是以我之有感他之無.’ 曰: ‘神祇之氣常屈伸而不已, 人鬼之氣則消散而無餘矣.’”

Utmost devotion and reverence can elicit a response since the principle is always here.”<sup>59</sup> According to the theory of the principle and material force of Neo-Confucianism, where there is the principle, there is material force. In this theory, it is believed that we as the descendant can encounter our ancestor if we carry out the principle. When his disciple said that if the principle is not involved, the object of worship, or the soul, cannot gather, while if the principle is involved, the object of worship, or the soul, will gather, Zhu Xi replied that this was so.<sup>60</sup> If what ultimately justifies the ritual of worship is the universal principle, then things such as the blood-related ancestral soul, the uniqueness or individuality of the ancestral soul, and the relationship specific to the ancestor and the descendent becomes nothing but a temporary measures.

When his disciple asked him whether clear and mysterious spiritual force of the ancestors was the clear and mysterious spiritual force of oneself and thus resonated only within the family, while the material force of the heavens and the earth, the mountains and the rivers, and the sages was a public material force of the universe, Zhu Xi answered by saying that the ancestral soul was also a public material force.<sup>61</sup> In other words, because Zhu Xi emphasized the universality of the principle, he regarded the soul of all humans, which contracted and extended and waxed and waned, to be the universal and shared energy of the heavens and the earth. This led to the dilution of the unique significance of the soul in the ritual of worshipping the ancestral soul within one’s family. Zhu Xi said although the material force of a person leaving behind no descendants eventually disappears in terms of blood ties or specific traits but in its aspect as the vast energy of the heavens and the earth, it did not disappear. The soul of the deceased thus had never ceased to exist even if they had no descendants. If a worshipping ritual was properly performed for the dead in compliance with

59 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 2, item 52: “曰: ‘只是這箇天地陰陽之氣, 人與萬物皆得之. 氣聚則為人, 散則為鬼. 然其氣雖已散, 這箇天地陰陽之理生生而不窮. 祖考之精神魂魄雖已散, 而子孫之精神魂魄自有些小相屬, 故祭祀之禮盡其誠敬, 便可以致得祖考之魂魄. 這箇自是難說. 看既散後, 一似都無了. 能盡其誠敬, 便有感格, 亦緣是理常只在這裏也.’”

60 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 3, item 76: “用之曰: ‘若理不相關, 則聚不得他; 若理相關, 則方可聚得他.’ 曰: ‘是如此.’ 又曰: ‘若不是因國, 也感他不得. 蓋為他元是這國之主, 自家今主他國土地, 他無主後, 合是自家祭他, 便可感通.’”

61 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 2, item 53: “問: ‘上古聖賢所謂氣者, 只是天地間公共之氣. 若祖考精神, 則畢竟是自家精神否?’ 曰: ‘祖考亦只是此公共之氣. 此身在天地間, 便是理與氣凝聚底. 天子統攝天地, 負荷天地間事, 與天地相關, 此心便與天地相通. 不可道他是虛氣, 與我不相干. 如諸侯不當祭天地, 與天地不相關, 便不能相通. 聖賢道在萬世, 功在萬世. 今行聖賢之道, 傳聖賢之心, 便是負荷這物事, 此氣便與他相通.’”

the principle, then it was possible to elicit a response from the souls of the deceased even if they were not of one's actual ancestors.<sup>62</sup> This was because Zhu Xi believed that rituals of worship could be performed based on the proper principle, and if there was a principle, there was a corresponding material force. The proper principle here that Zhu Xi referred to is closely related to the hierarchical order of Confucian social status such as the Son of Heaven, the lords, high officials, the gentry, and the ordinary people. Since Zhu Xi saw that "only the Son of the Heaven may perform the ritual of worship to the heavens and the earth; only the lords may perform the ritual of worship to the mountains and the rivers; and only the high officials may perform the ritual of Five Sacrifices (*wusi* 五祀)," he believed that the level of the clear and mysterious spiritual force (*jeongsin* 精神) of the person performing the rites must match the object of worship in order for the object to respond and arrive.<sup>63</sup> Since the Son of Heaven commanded all affairs of the world, the material force of the Son of Heaven and the heavens and the earth become interrelated. If one yearns for the way of the sages and seeks to learn the minds and ways of the sages, the material force of oneself and the sages become mutually involved. Spiritual force (*sin* or *singi*) does not come to receive and enjoy what is not of the same category. Whether or not the material force of oneself and the spirit are interrelated depends on whether one's clear and mysterious spiritual force is on par with that of the object to whom one is worshiping through ritual.<sup>64</sup> In the end, the most important thing in performing the ritual of worship is one's sincere devotion.

Zhu Xi entreats in regard to worshiping rites that while the intelligence and luminosity of the spiritual force (*sinmyeong* 神明) cannot be known for sure, the existence of the spirit does not need to be sought somewhere far away, since it depends on how sincerely one is devoted.<sup>65</sup> According to Zhu

Xi, the spirit exists where there is sincere devotion and does not where there is no sincere devotion. Therefore, the principle of ghosts and spirit is ultimately the principle of one's mind.<sup>66</sup> All worship derives from the living being, namely, the descendant. Zhu Xi emphasizes that the soul of the dead and the deceased ancestors are the same material force, and that it is "I," the descendant performing the ritual, who commands over it all.<sup>67</sup> Regarding this point, Zhu Xi said, "If I can command them, I can also direct their material force. If this is the case, there is a point of interrelation at which we."

The view that the ritual of worship was a summoning of the responding spirit that is being worshiped became a key point for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region in justifying the meaning of worshiping rites. Ryu Geonhyu cites many of the aforementioned words of Zhu Xi in the *Collection of Criticisms of Heterodoxy*. Ryu Geonhyu emphasized that the worship of ghosts and spirits was based on the principle. Since all material force eventually disperses, the argument of books on Western Learning that the soul was immortal was an error. Although the heavens and the earth and the mountains and rivers were not one's ancestors, one was interrelated with the object of worship as the main agent commanding their material force. The ritual of worship was a summoning of the spirit by one's sincere devotion, not an act of receiving and enjoying by a spiritual and luminous entity that appeared after being hidden.<sup>68</sup> As Zhu Xi argued earlier, Ryu Geonhyu also recognized that one may perform worship if it were proper based on the principle even if one was not the ancestor's descendant and that one can reach

62 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 2, item 57: "問: '根於理而日生者浩然而無窮, 此是說天地氣化之氣否?' 曰: '此氣只一般。周禮所謂天神地示人鬼, 雖有三樣, 其實只一般。若說有子孫底引得他氣來, 則不成無子孫底他氣便絕無了! 他血氣雖不流傳, 他那箇亦自浩然日生無窮。[...] 然聖人制禮, 惟繼其國者, 則合祭之, 非在其國者, 便不當祭。便是理合如此, 道理合如此, 便有此氣。[...] 不成說有子孫底方有感格之理, 便使其無子孫其氣亦未嘗亡也。'"

63 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon2, item 55: "曰: '以我之精神感彼之精神, 蓋謂此也。祭祀之禮全是如此。且天子祭天地, 諸侯祭山川, 大夫祭五祀, 皆是自家精神抵當得他過, 方能感召得他來。如諸侯祭天地, 大夫祭山川, 便沒意思了。'"

64 The original text is as follows: "神不歆非類, 民不祀非族, 只爲這氣不相關。"

65 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 25, item 4: "祭如在, 祭神如神在。' 雖神明若有若亡, 聖人但盡其誠敬, 儼然如神明之來格, 得以與之接也。[...] 范氏所謂 '有其誠則有其神, 無其誠則無其神。' 蓋神明不可見, 惟是此心盡其誠敬, 專

一在於所祭之神, 便見得 '洋洋然如其上, 如在其左右。' 然則神之有無, 皆在於此心之誠與不誠, 不必求之恍惚之間也。南升。"; *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 25, item 5: "曰: '如非所當祭而祭, 則爲無是理矣。若有是誠心, 還亦有神否?' 曰: '神之有無也不必, 然此處是以當祭者而言。若非所當祭底, 便待有誠意, 然這箇都已錯了。'"

66 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 2, item 61: "問 '祭祀之理, 還是有其誠則有其神, 無其誠則無其神否?' 曰: '鬼神之理, 即是此心之理。'"

67 *Zhuzi yulei*, gwon 2, item 56: "陳後之問: '祖宗是天地間一箇統氣, 因子孫祭享而聚散?' 曰: '這便是上祭所謂若要有時, 便有; 若要有時, 便無, 是皆由乎人矣。鬼神是自有底物事, 祖宗亦只是同此一氣, 但有箇總腦處。子孫這身在此, 祖宗之氣便在此, 他是有箇血脈貫通。所以神不歆非類, 民不祀非族, 只爲這氣不相關。如天子祭天地, 諸侯祭山川, 大夫祭五祀, 雖不是我祖宗, 然天子者天下之主, 諸侯者山川之主, 大夫者五祀之主。我主得他, 便是他氣又總統在我身上, 如此便有箇相關處。'"

68 "Byeon yanghak sangje cheonju," in "Cheonjuhak," *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: "蓋祭祀鬼神, 以氣言而原於理, 故朱子曰, '氣之已散者, 固化而無有矣, 其根於理而日生者, 固浩然而無窮也。' 既曰已散者, 化而無有, 則與彼靈神不滅之說, 已自不同矣。且以昭事上帝言之, 朱子曰, '神不歆非類, 民不祀非族, 只爲這氣不相關。' [...] '祭祀之禮, 以我之誠感, 召發祭之神, 以其本一氣故也。非有一物昭昭靈靈, 藏在一處, 俟其昭事, 而時出以響之也。'"

the currently interrelated soul through sincere devotion.<sup>69</sup> Even if the soul has already dispersed and disappeared, based on the principle, the limitless material force of the heavens and earth is newly and endlessly generated vastly every day. In the end, it is one's mind that knows such principle. Ryu Geonhyu said that the principle of death is not something known separately from living.<sup>70</sup> This statement was informed by how his teacher, Nam Hanjo, in explaining the words of Confucius regarding the worship of ghosts and spirits, said that ghost and spirits cannot be worshiped if one cannot sincerely and reverently worship a person. Death cannot be known without knowing life.<sup>71</sup>

Ipjae Jeong Jongno 立齋 鄭宗魯 (1738–1816),<sup>72</sup> who was a fellow scholar of Nam Hanjo and also wrote “The Life of Sonjae Nam Hanjo” (Sonjae Nam gong haengjang 損齋南公行狀) after Nam Hanjo's death, said that worshiping the dead, that is, the ritual to worship ghost and spirits, was based on the worship of the living.<sup>73</sup> Jeong Jongno saw that the spirit tablet was created for the deceased because they had taken form when they were alive, and food was prepared for the worshiping ritual for them to receive and enjoy because they had eaten food when alive. Jeong Jongno went further to say that memorial tablets were created for worshiping sages, and spirit tables were created for worshiping ancestors, but this did not mean that the soul of the dead dwelled in the spirit tablets or memorial tablets. The tablets merely served as a structure for picturing the deceased in carrying out one's admiration, reverence, and

sincere devotion of worship.<sup>74</sup> Thus, Jeong Jongno did not emphasize the actual existence of the ancestral soul, or the soul of the deceased, which was symbolized by the memorial or spirit tablet during the worshiping ritual, and in a sense, had the all-encompassing material force in mind, similar to Zhu Xi.

How can the deceased have a substantial material force? It is merely that the material force that is evenly transferred down from the ancestor has been equally innate in the descendants since their birth, and ordinary people have evenly received the material force inherent in the sages from the heavens and the earth. Therefore, the material force of descendants is the material force of the ancestors. The ancestors being worshiped are summoned by and respond to this material force regardless of whether they are one generation apart or four to five generations apart. In terms of ordinary people, their material force is the material force of the sages. The sages being worshiped are summoned by and respond to this material force regardless of the town, country, or world they are in.<sup>75</sup>

Although the material force of ancestors is temporarily connected through blood ties for a while, this also ceases to exist after a long period of time passes. The reason I can communicate with the material force of another sage regardless which town or country I am in and elicit a response of the material force by performing a worshiping rite to the sages is because the sages are worth worshiping according to the principle. By the same token, I can encounter my ancestor regardless of how many generations there are between myself and my ancestor because my mind feels a reverence towards them as the object of worship corresponding to the principle. Jeong Jongno's argument resembles Ryu Geonhyu's perspective of worshiping rites mentioned earlier. Jeong Jongno saw that the worshiping rituals can change depending on the meritorious conduct of the deceased as well as the future generations who benefited from this contribution. For instance, if the descendants benefited greatly by the meritorious conduct of their ancestors, the descendants could perform

69 “Byeon jesa magwi gusik,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “蓋招聚未散之氣，固孝子哀痛迫切之至情而至。論祭祀，則畢竟以我為主，故曰祖考精神，即我之精神，自我盡誠以求之，則一氣相感，神無不格。雖非子孫苟其所當祭者，其氣莫不與我相關，是則所謂氣之已散者，固化而無有，而根於理而日生者，浩然而無窮者也。”

70 “Byeon yeongsin bulmyeol,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “原始而知生之由於氣聚，則必能反終，而知死之由於氣散，非生之外，別有知死之道也。故曰，‘或曰，不告子路，不知此乃所以深告之也。’以此而謂之昆侖吞棗，可乎？謂之以神怪而不語，可乎？”

71 “Byeon yeongsin bulmyeol,” in “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6: “問事鬼神 蓋求所以奉祭祀之意 而死者人之所必有 不可不知 皆切問也 然非誠敬足以事人 則必不能事神 非原始而知所以生 則必不能反終而知所以死 蓋幽明始終 初無二理 但學之有序 不可躐等 故夫子告之如此。”

72 Jeong Jongno, who was six years older than Nam Hanjo, was from the same Sangju area as Nam Hanjo, and a member of his in-law family. Jeong Jongno was Nam Hanjo's academic colleague and disciple for his whole life. He collected the manuscripts of *Collected Writings of Sonjae Nam Hanjo* (*Sonjae jip*) after Nam Hanjo's death and led the proofreading and the composition of a chronological record of his life and his posthumous biography.

73 “Gwisin non” *Ipjae jip*, gwon 25: “大凡事死之禮，一本於事生，生而有形體，故死而為之重主，生而有飲食，故死而為之祭祀。”

74 “Gwisin non” *Ipjae jip*, gwon 25. “今人之祭先用主者外，其祭賢若聖也，奉皆用位版焉。是所謂神主與位版，初無死者之魂留接於此。只為生人想像髣髴寓慕致誠之地而已耶。”

75 “Gwisin non” *Ipjae jip*, gwon 25: “死者豈有氣之可言乎。只是祖考所傳之氣，子孫均得之於胎胎，聖賢所稟之氣，凡人均得之於天地。故以子孫言之則其身之氣，便是祖考之氣，而苟其所當祭之祖考，無論一世與四世五世，莫不以是氣而感召之。以凡人言之，其身之氣，便是聖賢之氣。而苟其所當祭之聖賢，無論一鄉與一國天下，莫不以是氣而感召之。”



worshiping rites to their ancestors virtually for eternity beyond merely a hundred years of three or four generations.<sup>76</sup> This shows how Jeong Jongno viewed that worship could vary in proportion to the descendant's reverence of and sincere devotion to his ancestor. If I greatly benefited from the meritorious conduct of one who was not my ancestor, I may worship him through ritual based on the principle of my mind even if I am not a descendant of his. This goes along the same lines as how Ryu Geonhyu said that I could perform worshiping rites to anyone with whom I became interrelated with though my sincere devotion.<sup>77</sup>

The perspective that the key commanding ruler was one's mind and that the spiritual force can be reached depending on the sincere devotion and reverence of the one performing the worshiping rite in the present, which continued on ever since Zhu Xi's discussion of it, appears to have continued to influence many younger generation Confucian scholars following him. However, even though Zhu Xi emphasized that only whether the principle was proper mattered and the existence of spirit should not be wished for, the issue of whether the receiving soul, such as the ancestral soul, during the worshiping ritual truly existed inevitably became a crucial problem for the descendants. Matteo Ricci criticized the concept of worshiping rites Confucian scholars harbored in *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven* because of this point. An Jeongbok was also aware of this criticism in books on Western Learning when he expressed his concern in a letter to Seongho Yi Ik that if worshiping rites were justified only by the yearnings of the filial descendant without the premise of the ghosts and spirits of the ancestors, it may be nothing but a blasphemous

play for phantoms.<sup>78</sup> An Jeongbok confesses that the theory of ghosts and spirits has aspects making it hard to completely understand. This was because Confucian scholars thought that the gathering of material force meant life, while death would cause the material force to disperse and ultimately cease to exist, but Westerners argued that even though a person dies, there was a kind of soul that did not die and existed as an individual and unique ghost and spirit.<sup>79</sup> Seo Gyeongdeok's theory of ghosts and spirits, although similar to that of Matteo Ricci, did not argue that the soul was immortal and said that there was only a difference in speed when the ghosts and spirits coalesced and dispersed. An Jeongbok asked Yi Ik whether Seo Gyeongdeok's words were somewhat valid. He also wondered that if one acknowledged the argument that there was a soul that did not disperse, then it was not that strange to say that there was an entity who commanded such souls and was in charge rewarding the good and punishing the evil.<sup>80</sup>

Nam Hanjo wrote "Discussion on Doubtful Points in Sunam An Jeongbok's *Questions on Catholicism*" and criticized An Jeongbok's theory on ghosts and spirits in order to answer his questions and criticize his skepticism. Nam Hanjo sharply criticized how An Jeongbok displayed an ambivalent stance that hovered between existing and not existing (*yumu* 有無) and suspicion and trust (*uisin* 疑信) even though the theory of the immortality of soul in the books on Western Learning carried fundamental errors. He also criticized how An Jeongbok deferred judgment while asking how we could know for sure whether things Westerners said really did not exist between the heavens and the earth.<sup>81</sup>

76 "Gwisin non" *Ipjae jip*, gwon 25: "凡人之死而受報，一惟其功德之所及。故今以功德之及於子孫言之，其止於一世者，其受報也亦止於一世，其止於三四世者，其受報也亦過百世無窮。是其報之者，雖是子孫，而使之報者，非有功德之祖先乎。"

77 Although the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region spoke of the disappearance of the ancestral soul and emphasized the mind and sincere devotion of the descendant performing the worshiping ritual while criticizing the argument that the soul was immortal, I do not see this as a stance that "completely denies the actual existence of ghosts and spirits of ancestors" and conclude that the ancestral soul only exists in one's mind and has no substance, as An Yeongsang analyzes in his study. Confucian scholars during then believed that the blood-related ancestral soul I share with my ancestor may disappear, but the material force of the heavens and the earth connecting myself with the ancestors clearly exists, and this was possible by the ceaseless regeneration by the eternal and universal principle. If the Confucian scholars regarded the actual existence of ghosts and spirits to be an issue only of my mind, as An Yeongsang argues, then this results in the denial of the actuality of the principle and the actuality of the action of material force. For this reason, I take a different stance from how An Yeongsang reduces the concept of soul of the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region entirely into a problem of the descendant's mind. See An 2005, 128–30.

78 "Sang Seongho seonsaeng seo," *Sunam seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 2: "若如儒者之說，則聖人立祭祀之義，明有祖先鬼神來格之理。若徒為孝子順孫思慕之心而設，則是不幾於虛假戲玩，而不敬之甚者乎？"

79 "Sang Seongho seonsaeng seo," *Sunam seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 2: "鬼神之說，以繫辭祭義及濂洛諸先生之說觀之，其情狀可見而終有所疑。其等有有三，有天地之鬼神，有人死之鬼神，有百物之鬼神。人死之鬼神，其理最難明。後世論說有三，儒者謂氣聚則生，散則死而歸於空無。西士謂氣聚為人，既而為人之後，別有一種靈魂，死而不滅，為本身之鬼神，終古長存。佛氏謂人死為鬼，鬼復為人，輪迴不已。"

80 "Sang Seongho seonsaeng seo," *Sunam seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 2: "花潭鬼神論，與利氏說合。而利氏則謂自有生人以來，其鬼長存，徐氏謂有久速之別，徐說似優矣。李子嘗非徐說，則不敢復有所疑。而終有可疑者存，則不可以語涉異教為懼而含糊不發，不就正於有道矣。天堂地獄之說，言語貌像，終是異端。然而果有未散之靈魂，則必有主張者存，有主張者存，則賞善罰惡，或不怪矣。然而末稍賞繁刑重，主張者將何以區處耶。是其說之終有窒礙處也。"

81 "An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun* byeonui," *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: "彼說之差謬，此條最其根柢，而前後所辨，類皆置之有無疑信之間，無以拔其迷謬之本，而反以滋流俗之惑也。南軒張子曰，流俗眩於怪誕，忱於恐畏，胥靡而從之，雖英才敏識，往往習熟見聞，而不以為怪，乃曰，焉知天地間，無有是事，委諸茫昧而止。於是鬼神之說，淪於空虛，而人心不正，浮偽日滋。此言，似為今日為彼學者設也。"

Nam Hanjo, who believed that the gathering and dispersal, or life and death, of form and spirit was nothing but the contraction and extension and decline or flourishing of a material force and that not even the largest heaven and hell would be able to accommodate all of the continuously existing souls floating in the air for thousands of years since the birth of humans, asked in return how such a principle, in which the material force of the heavens and the earth only grows without disappearing and only extends without contracting, is possible.<sup>82</sup> He writes that life is the physical energy, or specific traits, of the body, that intelligence and luminosity of the soul (*yeong* 靈) was the spiritually mysterious aspect (*sin* 神) of the material force, and that the arising of this mysterious and eternal energy was called knowledge and perception (*jigak* 知覺).<sup>83</sup> He strongly criticized the immortality of the soul, asking how a separate soul could exist after the dispersal of physical energy and the absence of the soul and the absence of knowledge and perception, if life, the soul, and the act of knowing and perceiving were all based on the physical energy of material force.<sup>84</sup>

If a person dies and the material force disperses, there is no spirit that does not vanish. However, if it is said that the ancestral spirit comes again, coalesces, and receives and enjoys, what exactly is the kind of spirit that is being mentioned here? The spirit is the mysterious aspect of material force. When it is in the heavens and the earths, it becomes the spirit that circulates and operates, and when it exists in a person, it becomes the spirit that knows, perceives, and operates. Although it can be differentiated depending on whether it is in the heavens or the human, it is the same in that it becomes the spirit. If a person dies, the form disappears, the physical energy becomes separated, and the spirit scatters and disappears. The material force that allowed its birth and the material force that

was passed down, however, never disappeared. What do we refer as the “material force that allowed its birth”? This is what allows the heavens and the earth give rise to things. What do we call the “material force that was passed down”? This is the material force that people are born by and transmitted to their descendants. [...] The immortal soul the Westerners speak of means the action of knowledge and perception. This exists when gathered and ceases to exist when dispersed. The mysterious and spiritual force [in Confucianism] is based on the principle and is generated every day. It gathers when summoned and receives and enjoys upon arrival. Only when it is understood that it is not right according to principle to believe that knowledge and perception and what Westerners call the soul is immortal can we understand that the spirit arrives during worshiping rites is only possible by the principle that the spiritual soul responds to sincere devotion.<sup>85</sup>

In the quote above, Nam Hanjo writes that although Westerners and Confucian scholars both use the Chinese character *shen* 神, there is a clear distinction between right and wrong.<sup>86</sup> In his view, although the Master of Heaven and soul as argued in the West are said to be immortal, their soul was merely a finite agent that experienced knowledge and perception. This is why he belittled the soul they worshiped as nothing but an entity which existed when coalesced but ceased to exist when scattered. The spirit as discussed by Confucian scholars, meanwhile, was based on the principle and newly arose every day. The principle here is understood and perceived by the mind of the descendent who performed worship. Nam Hanjo says that if the person performing the ritual summons with true reverence and sincere devotion, the object of the worship, the entity to whom the worshiping rite is performed, will arrive following this principle. As long as we understand and perceive this principle, the material force of the heavens and the earth and the material force transmitted to the descendants was

82 “An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun byeonui*,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: “形神之散聚生死，即一氣之消長屈伸也。若使人死而靈神不滅，箇箇團結於虛空中，則人生以後幾千萬年，偏塞充滿於天地間者，雖許大天堂地獄，亦不得盡容。而天地之氣，只有長而無消，有伸而無屈，夫焉有此理耶。”

83 “An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun byeonui*,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12. “生者，血氣也。靈者，氣之神也，知覺者，神之發也。非生則靈無所附，非靈則覺無所發。有則俱有，盡則俱盡，豈有外生覺，而別有所謂靈魂哉。其說之淺陋，不足以欺兒童，而世之號為讀書者，相率而靡然從之。學術之不明，人心之好怪，一至於此，可勝歎哉。”

84 The item where Ryu Geonhyu cites Nam Hanjo in “Byeon yeongsin bulmyeol” and “Byeon jesa magwi naesik” of “Cheonjuhak,” *Ihak jipbyeon*, gwon 6, is considerably different from Nam Hanjo’s actual words in *Collected Writings of Master Sonjae* (*Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*). The difference in context in two should be considered. I cite the words of *Collected Writings of Master Sonjae* for the analysis in this article.

85 “An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun byeonui*,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: “(但於上靈神不滅條，愚既斥之。) 以人死而氣散，無有不滅之神，而於此復以為祖考之神，率且格焉，此神，果何神也。夫神者，氣之靈也。在天地則為流行運用之神，在人則為知覺運用之神，在天在人，其分雖殊，而其為神則一而已矣。人之死也，形漸魄離，所謂知覺運用之神，固已遊揚消散，而若夫所以生之氣，與夫所傳之氣，固未嘗亡也。何謂所以生之氣？天地生物之氣是已。何謂所傳之氣？人得是氣而生，而又以是氣傳之子孫者是已。[...] 彼所謂神，以知覺運動而言也，聚而有，散而無者也。吾所謂神，以根理日生而言也，招之而萃，享之而格者也。夫惟知靈神不滅之無理，然後方知祭祀來格之為實然之理。”

86 “An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun byeonui*,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: “神字雖同，而其邪正真妄之分，不啻如薰蕕冰炭之相反，而不可同年而語，明矣。”

a single force that was connected. This material force was always arising newly and changing according to the principle. In this context, Nam Hanjo says that the material force that has not dispersed yet after a person dies and the material force that begets people are one, and while the dispersal after death does indeed change depending on the speed, it is the principle that what comes and is generated is circulates and mutually responds to each other.<sup>87</sup> He explains this phenomenon by dividing it into two aspects. First, what has not yet dispersed but will eventually change refers to the phenomenon of the descendant coming into contact with the ancestor through the same material force. Second, what reaches the descendant and is newly generated is the principle of the responding spiritual force. The most important thing in worshiping rites for Nam Hanjo was thus not whether or not a specific individual soul existed or not after death but for the person performing the ritual to become aware of the principle that both the spiritual forces of ancestors and of decedents respond to each other and to reverently devote oneself to the worshiping ritual.<sup>88</sup>

From the perspective of the universality and eternity of the principle, the soul in Western Learning, whether it was Deus or anima, was simply the gathering and dispersal of material force. This is why the Confucian scholars during then did not see the finite soul called Master of Heaven as an entity worth venerating. The Confucian scholars in the past had criticized Buddhist theory of ghosts and spirits when faced with their theory of reincarnation. For the Confucian scholars, this theory of rebirth was regarded as a logic in which the same material force circulated alternatively between human and ghosts and spirits. The Confucian scholars including Nam Hanjo believed that all material force was continuously generated anew ceaselessly because of the existence of a permanent and universal principle. Therefore, the principle, which enabled the spiritual force to reciprocate, was everlasting and universal, but nothing of

spiritual force itself lasted forever. Spiritual force was endlessly generated and disappearing over and over again. Likewise, the ancestral soul, which arose, eventually disappeared. When performing the worshiping ritual, one was thus to know and perceive the principle with one's mind and revere the proper object. If the principle was proper, the spirit being worshiped could be said to exist. Seen this way, the souls in books on Western Learning, Deus, and anima were regarded as finite entities who were limited precisely because of their personification and their individuality.

## Conclusion

This article has looked at the understanding of Emperor Above and Master of Heaven, the meaning of soul and ancestral soul, and the principle of the worshiping ritual by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region. Confucian scholars of Southern Song including Zhu Xi also discussed the meaning of Emperor Above and the principle. This concern was shared with the Confucian scholars Yi Hwang and Yi Sangjeong of Joseon. Yi Hwang distinguished between the form and action of the principle and focused on the aspect of ruling over in the concept of the principle. He compared the principle to a personified Emperor Above and emphasized the ethical supervision by the Emperor Above. Yi Sangjeong, who inherited the Toegye School, explained the action of the principle and the Emperor Above argued by Yi Hwang as “what does not rule over but rules over and what does not act but acts.” It cannot be said that the Emperor Above does not rule over the world at all, he said, but the action of the principle cannot be understood as an artificial and personified entity surveilling and controlling humans from outside. In other words, this should not be understood as a true man of no rank that existed in some mystical place to watch and oversee humans.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region focused on concepts of the principle and the Emperor Above again when they witnessed how the notion of the Master of Heaven in books on Western Learning spread among a number of Confucian scholars including the Seongho School, who appeared to accept the argument. Wary of the favorable interpretation of the Southerners of the Gyeonggi area such as Yi Ik and An Jeongbok, who acknowledged that the Emperor Above in Confucianism was the same as the

87 “An Sunam *Cheonhak hongmun* byeonui,” *Sonjae seonsaeng munjip*, gwon 12: “氣之未遽散者，與夫所以生之氣，只是一氣。故歸而散者，固無久遠不化之事，而來而生者，實有流通相感之理。此後兩說之意也。前說以子孫接續之端而言也，後說以神氣感格之理而言也。言各有所當，不可執彼而疑此也。”

88 When the descendants understand and perceive the principle in their mind, this does not mean that the principle is reduced to a principle of the mind. For Neo-Confucianists, the principle was a real entity. As long as the principle existed, the spiritual force 神氣 that operated by this principle was always actually newly formed and underwent changes. This passage therefore must not be incompletely interpreted as saying that the responding spiritual force does not really exist and that the principle of meeting the object of worship is only understood and perceived inside the mind of the descendant, who reverently devotes oneself to the ritual.

Master of Heaven of the West given how the Emperor Above interfered in human affairs and rewarded good while punishing evil, the Southerners of the Yeongnam region felt the need to more clearly define their scholarly identity. The disciples of Yi Sangjeong including Ryu Jangwon, Nam Hanjo, Jo Suldo, Jeong Jongno, Ryu Geonhyu, and Ryu Chimyeong criticized the notion of Master of Heaven and emphasized the non-acting aspect of the Confucian view of Emperor Above, that is, the non-personified and universal properties of Great Ultimate and the principle. Even if the books on Western Learning defined Master of Heaven as immaterial, eternal, and intellectual, the Confucian scholars concluded that a personified Master of Heaven with emotions and will, who judges the good and bad of humans, was still a finite entity, like the divine force. These Confucian scholars emphasized the universality and public aspect of the principle in face of this limited personified entity. When explaining the ancestral soul in particular, the Confucian scholars focused on how it was a public entity. Although the ancestral soul connected by blood ties and physical traits eventually ceased to exist, the flow of the single material force that gave birth to the ancestor and descendants did not. This was because the principle continued to regenerate new material force. They understood the newly generated material force based on the universality of the principle as a public material force.

In criticizing the limitations of the personified soul emphasized by books on Western Learning, the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region reflected upon and contemplated the meaning of ghosts and spirits and ancestral souls they themselves had believed in. The depth in their thought reflects their efforts to move beyond the narrow meaning of ritual, in which the descendant of the same family worshiped the ancestral soul corresponding to the same material force and instead explore the public value and universal principle of worship. They emphasized that worshiping ghosts and spirits was based on the actually existing principle that our minds perceive. While the heavens and the earth, the mountains and the rivers, and the sages were not my own ancestors, it was I, as the main agent, who commanded them, which related me with the object of worship and allowed me to summon the spirit with my sincere devotion. These scholars saw that whether it was my own ancestors or the sages, I can reciprocate and connect with them through worshiping rites because the principle made them worthy of revere and worship. Therefore, the key to worshiping rites was to revere the proper object by understanding and perceiving the principle

with the mind. They also argued that the spirit existed only when it was proper according to the principle. This was based on their belief that whatever the object of worship may be, its spiritual force and the person performing the worshiping ritual connected with each other because there of the actual existence of the proper principle.

The encounter with Western Learning and the theories of Catholicism by the Southerner Confucian scholars of the Gyeonggi area as well as the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region was an important opportunity that triggered their various inner capabilities. While Confucian scholars considered the meaning of the principle, the Emperor Above, ghosts and spirits, and the spiritual and physical aspects of the soul for a long time based on the Neo-Confucian worldview, it was only after they encountered Western Learning and Catholicism as the Other that they reflected upon the important features and values of how they saw the Emperor Above and the soul. In this sense, the discussion and criticism surrounding the concepts of the Master of Heaven and the soul motivated the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region to understand and reinforce their intellectual and scholarly identity. The reason they could decipher and criticize the personified Master of Heaven and the belief in the immortality of the soul they encountered in books on Western Learning was clearly because it was a point of contact enabling conversation between the two worlds of thought. It is impossible for texts coming from completely different cultures and traditions to meet without a common foundation of understanding. The interpretation of the Seongho School, which compared the bible with *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents* is a case in point. The spread of Western Learning agitated the intellectuals of Joseon and caused the division of thought but, on the other hand, provided an impetus for them to actively reflect upon their beliefs and values. This is evident by the intellectual response of the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region, who contemplated the meaning of Emperor Above, ancestral soul, and worshiping rituals.

Translated by Jong Woo PARK and Boram SEO

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## Abstract

This study reviews how the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region in Joseon around the 19<sup>th</sup> century critically perceived Western Learning, particularly the Catholic concepts of Deus and anima. The Confucian scholars of Yeongnam primarily focused on the two aspects of the principle from a Neo-Confucian worldview: the aspect of non-action (*muwi*) and the aspect of ruling over (*jujae*). They understood the notion of Emperor Above (*sangje*) through this ruling nature of the principle. While guarding against the favorable interpretation of Western Learning by the Southerners of the Gyeonggi area such as Yi Ik and An Jeongbok, the Southerners of the Yeongnam region felt the necessity to distinguish their scholarly identity more clearly. The disciples of Yi Sangjeong such as Nam Hanjo, Jo Suldo, Jeong Jongno, Ryu Geonhyu, and Ryu Chimyeong criticized the concept of the Master of Heaven (*cheonju*) and emphasized the aspect of non-action found in Emperor Above in Confucianism, namely, the impersonal and universal properties of the Great Ultimate (*taegeuk*) and the principle (*ri*). Although Western books introducing Catholicism argued that Deus was an immaterial, eternal, and intellectual being, Confucian scholars regarded that a personified Master of Heaven, who had specific emotions and will and judged the good and evil of humans, was ultimately in the same finite category as divine force (*yeongsin*). In face of such limited and personified characteristic of the Master of Heaven, the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region further emphasized the universality and public nature of the principle. This was particularly the case of ancestral spirit (*hollyeong*), which was universal and public. According to them, material force was constantly regenerated in accordance with the universality of the principle. One was able to perform a worshiping rite and reciprocally connect with the objects of worship, be it one's ancestors or the sages, since the principle deserved to be revered and worshiped. The key to the worshiping ritual was to therefore understand and perceive the principle with one's mind and venerate the proper objects of worship. The spirit (*sin*) only existed when the principle was proper. The encounter with the arguments of Western Learning and Catholicism by the Southerners of the Gyeonggi area who were of the Seongho School as well as the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam region served as an important opportunity that triggered their various inner capabilities. While the dissemination of Western Learning agitated the intellectuals of Joseon and divided their lines of

thought, it also provided an impetus for them to actively reflect upon the beliefs and values they harbored. This is evident by the intellectual response of the Confucian scholars of the Yeongnam area who critically reviewed the meaning of Emperor Above, ancestral spirit, and worshiping rituals.

**Keywords:** Emperor Above (*sangje*), Deus, Master of Heaven (*cheonju*), divine force (*yeongsin* 靈神), soul (*yeonghon* 靈魂), ancestral spirit (*hollyeong* 魂靈 or *hon* 魂), principle, worshiping ritual

