



Hee-Kuk Lim, Translated by Hoyeon Choi

Legacy and Portrait of Early Church History in Korea

Scholar Minister Yi Won-Young

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Chapter 1

Raised in the Family Tradition of Confucians

Pedigree of Yi Won-young

Yi Won-young (1886–1958), the second of four children was born to Yi Kwan-ho and Kim Young on July 3, 1886 at 50 Wonchon Neighbourhood, Dosan District, Andong County. He had one elder brother, Won-kuk and two younger brothers, Won-sae and Won-shik. He was born the 14th descendent of Yi Hwang, penname Toegye (1501–1570) and his family tree belonged to Sunjeong clan.

Yi of the Jinseong Yi family originated in the 15th century in Dosan Township from Yi Kae-yang (1424–1488) who moved to the village and took root. Among his descendants were Yi Wu (1469–1516) and Yi Hae (1496–1550) who were prominent both in poetry and in letters. However, Yi Hwang (1501–1570) was one of the most brilliant authorities in Neo-Confucian¹ thought and philosophy and shaped the Korean Neo-Confucianism through his brilliant interpretation of Zhu Xi's teaching; he elevated the level of the Way which dominated Choson dynasty to a new height of intellectual sophistication. He scrutinized the details of the Way (*Do*, or *Tao* or *Dao*)² and systematized and established its bases for Neo-Confucianism. He studied the details of the Rites and the

- 1 The School of Nature and Principle is also called Neo-Confucianism by the Western countries. In Sung (Song) dynasty, Confucian scholars reassessed the teachings of Confucianism and integrated Buddhism and Daoism into one philosophical system. Zhu Xi spearheaded the study, and focused on the explanation of human nature, universal order writing many books on them. He saw the world determined by a dualism between 'i' (pronounced as 'i' in Korean, while *li* in Chinese), the principle, and 'ki', (pronounced as 'ki' in Korean, while '*chi*' in Chinese), the material force. It had deeply influenced every aspect of the Chinese lives.
- 2 Dao means the "Way" and Daoism representing philosophical and religious traditions had influenced Asia for millennia. Taoist emphasizes human proprieties and rituals and worship of ancestors.