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A text prepared by Mgr Bruguière and attached to a letter he sent from Macao, dated December 14, 1832.

P. S. I have before me exact and authentic memoirs on the state of Christianity in Korea; I have made an abridgment of them in which I have preserved all the interesting facts; I enclose it with my letter. I beg the Editor of the Annals of the Association to insert it in one of his issues, if he deems it appropriate; I have no doubt that the Associates will read with pleasure facts so edifying and so worthy, in all, of the first centuries of the Church.

Notice on the state of Christianity in Korea.

Korea is a peninsula situated to the north-east of China. It lies between 24 and 43 degrees of northern latitude. Its width extends from 122. to 149. degree of eastern longitude, meridian of Paris. It is bounded on the north by a wall which separates it from the Manchu Tartars; on the east, by the Sea of Japan; on the west, by the Yellow Sea, or Gulf of Peking; on the south, by a canal which communicates with the China Sea and the Hoang-Hai of the Chinese. It is separated from Japan only by a strait of twenty-five to thirty leagues in width; this distance is hardly more than twelve leagues, if one takes it from the most eastern island which depends on Korea. It is believed that the Koreans are of Tartar origin. However, their morals, customs, arts and sciences are the same as those of the Chinese; they have the same religion, the same writing and the same language; but they pronounce differently. They have preserved the old Chinese costume, such as it was under the last dynasty. They never wanted to admit the reform introduced in China by the Manchu Tartars. They tie their hair like the Cochinchinese.

“Korea is a poor country, without trade or industry; the land is quite fertile and well cultivated; the products and fruits of the temperate zones are found there. Various kinds of wheat are cultivated there; however, rice is the common food. It is said that the vine grows in these regions, but the use of wine is unknown: the inhabitants drink, like the Chinese, grain brandy. Although this country is located at a lower latitude, it is nevertheless much colder than in France. The Koreans are well built, with an interesting physiognomy, and very polite. They are generally not very warlike; those who live in the northern provinces are more courageous, and make quite good soldiers when they are exercised. Women enjoy greater freedom than in China and Japan. The king of Korea is vassal and tributary of the emperor of China. He did not take the name of king until the emperor gave him the investiture of his kingdom. He is obliged every year to send ambassadors to Peking, to pay homage to his suzerain and to offer him the ordinary tribute. Except for this, this prince exercises absolute authority over his subjects, and he does not owe an account to anyone for the exercise of his power. This country has never enjoyed complete independence: it has been successively subjected to the Chinese, the Japanese and the Tartars; but it has suffered little from its various revolutions. The number of its inhabitants cannot be precisely known; the estimate that has been made varies from twelve to twenty million.

“The Gospel was first preached in Korea towards the end of the sixteenth century. When Tai-Ko-Sama, Emperor of Japan, brought war to this region, most of the generals and soldiers of his army were Christians. These fervent neophytes, after having subdued the Koreans by their valor and the strength of their weapons, undertook to submit them to the yoke of the Gospel by their instructions. The charity and the pure and edifying life of the chiefs and soldiers made a great impression on the minds of the Koreans, and gave weight to the words of the missionaries: a good number were converted; but the light of the Gospel

shone only for a moment in those lands, and then died out. The ferocious emperors Xogun-Sama and To-Xogun-Sama, who reigned after Tai-Ko-Sama, carried out a general massacre of their Christian subjects, who numbered two million: it is likely that the Koreans who professed the same religion were included in this proscription. Ecclesiastical history has preserved the names of some Koreans martyred during this terrible persecution, which ruined Christianity in Japan and the neighboring provinces.

The memoirs of the time speak, among other things, of a young neophyte whose example proved, without reply, that God would perform a miracle rather than abandon an infidel who followed the lights of his conscience and sought the truth with an upright and docile heart. This young man was born some time before the Japanese made war on his country. From a young age, he felt an extreme desire to achieve true happiness, that is, happiness that had no end. He withdrew to a solitude to meditate more at ease on this happiness he was seeking. He had for dwelling only a cave, which he shared with a tiger who had occupied it before him. This ferocious animal respected his host; he even gave up the cave to him some time later, and retired elsewhere. The young recluse, with the sole purpose of preserving his innocence, practiced all sorts of mortifications; he abstained from everything that was not absolutely necessary to preserve his life. One night while he was occupied with the means of acquiring that happiness of which he had not the slightest knowledge, a man of majestic and divine aspect appeared to him and said: "Take courage, in a year you will pass the sea, and, after much labor and fatigue, you will obtain the object of your desires."

The year had not yet expired, when the Japanese entered Korea under the leadership of Tsucamidono, Christian king of Fingo (Augustine Arimandono¹, king of Bingo²). The young solitary was taken prisoner; the ship which was carrying him to Japan was wrecked near the island of Zeuxima (Tsushima Island): he fled to the coast; those who were leading him probably perished in the waves. However, he regained his freedom, and being seduced by the austere life of the monks, he thought he had found what he had been looking for for so many years. He retired to one of the most famous pagodas of Meaco (Kyoto): he was not long in realizing his error; these idolatrous monks were nothing less than perfect men. This misunderstanding caused him such great sorrow that he fell ill; during his illness it seemed to him that he had seen the whole pagoda on fire. Shortly afterwards, a child of ravishing beauty appeared to him and consoled him: "Do not fear," he said, "you are on the eve of obtaining this much desired happiness. He was not cured, that he abandoned a house which reminded him of so sad memories. The same day he met a Christian to whom he recounted his sorrows and adventures; the latter immediately took him to the Jesuit College, where he was instructed in the mysteries of religion. As his heart was already prepared to receive the divine seed, he believed without hesitation, and tasted without difficulty the holy morals of the Gospel. He immediately asked for Baptism; they did not think it necessary to subject him to a longer trial; the grace of the sacrament produced admirable effects in a soul so well disposed.

While he was being instructed, a Jesuit showed him a picture of our Lord: "O my Father!" he cried, "here is the one who appeared to me in my cave, and who predicted all that has happened to me. He followed the missionaries and devoted himself to the care of the sick, especially the lepers. There is no virtue of which this predestined soul did not give an example: almost excessive mortifications, charity for the unfortunate, eager care for the Missionaries, whose work and dangers he shared, zeal for the salvation of souls, such are the virtues that he did not cease to show the rest of his days. He found nothing beyond his strength when it came to giving thanks to a God who had given him so many graces even before he could know and appreciate His gifts.

1 The Japanese Catholic 'daimyo' Konishi Yukinaga (1555-1600).

2 Bingo Province was a province of Japan on the Inland Sea side of western Honshū, comprising what is today the eastern part of Hiroshima Prefecture.

In 1614, he followed Ukandono³, general of the Japanese army, who was exiled for his faith, to the Philippines. After the death of this great man, the young Korean returned to Japan; he resumed his duties and accompanied the missionaries as a catechist. As the persecution became more and more frightening every day, he felt obliged to redouble his fervor, and he multiplied his austerities and his prayers. God rewarded so many virtues with a glorious martyrdom. The neophyte, having gone one day, according to his custom, to visit the confessors of the Faith, declared himself to be a Christian and a catechist; he was arrested on the spot and taken to the prisons of Nagasaki, where he had to suffer a lot. He was condemned to be burned at the stake for his attachment to the Faith; he underwent this horrible torture with admirable constancy.

“Vincent Kouan-Cafioë⁴, who suffered martyrdom with a large number of Jesuits, was also a Korean. He was the son of one of the principal officers of the king of Korea. This lord was ordered to accompany his prince, who was going to fight the Japanese in person. Fearing for his son, he entrusted him to a reliable person, to lead him with all his family to an inaccessible castle; but God, who wanted to make Cofioë a Christian and a martyr, allowed him to go astray; he separated from his driver, and found himself by chance quite close to the Japanese army. Far from being frightened, the young Cofioë, who was barely thirteen years old, wanted, out of a curiosity that was quite forgivable at his age, to see it more closely; and, without thinking of what he was exposing himself to, he went straight to the tent of the king of Fingo, the general-in-chief.

This prince, who was a Christian, was moved with compassion at the sight of this young orphan of a ravishing beauty: he took him in affection, and charged one of his relatives to take care of him until the end of the war. He then entrusted his education to the Jesuits, who taught him religion and baptized him. The young Cofioë, as much out of affection as out of gratitude, did not want to be separated from those who had begotten him to Jesus Christ; he always accompanied them on their apostolic journeys: he was finally taken and led with them to the prisons of Chimabara. However terrible this prison was, the holy Confessors added voluntary austerities to their sufferings. The most brutal guards had been chosen to increase the harshness of their detention; but the angelic life of the prisoners, their patience, and an air of sanctity that appeared on their person, softened the ferocity of these satellites; they began by admiring a religion that raises man above himself, and often ended by embracing it. When their return to the feelings of humanity was noticed, others were substituted, who soon found themselves defeated in their turn.

The governor, indignant at no longer finding guards inaccessible to pity, entrusted the care of the prisoners to an officer of his kinsmen, who was more like a ferocious beast than a man. His hatred of Christianity knew no bounds; however, as soon as he saw the prisoners, he was moved, and after eight days he declared himself a Christian.

The governor, surprised as well as indignant at this conversion, spared neither reproaches nor threats to bring the neophyte back to the worship of idols. This officer invariably replied: “You can strip me of my jobs, take away my possessions, and even take my life; but you will not be able to do anything to my spirit; I will live and die a Christian. Seeing that the rigor of the prison did not diminish the constancy of the confessors, the governor resolved to torment them, but separately, so that they would not animate each other.

3 Justo Takayama Ukon (ジュスト高山右近), born Takayama Hikogorō (高山彦五郎, 1552-1615), a Japanese Catholic daimyo who died in exile in Manila.

4 Saint Vincent Kaun [ビセンテ・かうん] professed cleric, Jesuit, born: c. 1579 in (Korea). A native of Korea, he was brought to Japan in 1591 as a prisoner of war and was subsequently converted to Christianity. Entering the Jesuits, he studied at the Jesuit seminary of Arima and worked for three decades as a catechist in both Japan and China. Seized during the persecution of the Church, he was burned alive at Nagasaki on June 20, with Blessed Francis Pacheco. The name Cafioë is derived from his Japanese family name Kahei 嘉兵衛.

He began with Cofioë; he believed that a foreigner would be more easily overcome; he brought him to his house, filled him with friendship and caresses; he made him the most seductive promises, and at the same time threatened him with the most horrible torments, if he did not obey immediately. The Korean neophyte simply answered him: I am a Christian, and I will never renounce my religion. Immediately he had him exposed naked to a cold wind, and forgetting at the same time the character of judge with which he was clothed, he was not ashamed to exercise the function of executioner. With his own hands he held the holy confessor, who only laughed at such a horrible torture; then he made him swallow a large quantity of a certain drug, which the patient threw out of his mouth with streams of blood. This torment caused him to faint, but he immediately regained his senses and his strength: from that moment on he felt no more pain, except for a slight numbness in his feet and hands. However, they continued to torment him for several days in a row, without ever being able to tire of his constancy.

Finally he was sent back to prison in a hovel open to all winds; he spent twenty-four days there, exposed to the insults of the air and deprived of all food. He was still breathing when the emperor ordered him to be transported to Nangasaki, to be burned alive as a Christian with the illustrious companions of his prison and suffering. Before dying, he asked Father Pacheco, the Jesuit provincial, to admit him into the Society; this Father granted him this grace, and received his vows on the very spot where they were both going to make their sacrifice. Cofioë suffered martyrdom under Emperor Xogun-Sama II.

Around the same time a young Korean woman named Julie Ota gave a similar proof of courage. Cubo-Sama⁵, tutor of the emperor Fideiory, had begun a general persecution which only ceased with the extinction of Christianity. At first he wanted to make all the great officers of the crown and the ladies of the palace who professed this religion apostasize; but he found in all of them an invincible constancy. Julie, of illustrious blood, was brought up at the court of Cubo-Sama; she was greatly beloved by the prince, who made it a point of honor to marry her to the greatest lord of the empire. First of all, it was a question of changing her religion; Julie answered the tyrant in such a way as to deprive him of all hope in this respect, and immediately took a vow of virginity. Not content with appearing in public with all the outward signs of religion, she also went to all the houses where the Christians held their assemblies; an extraordinary thing in Japan, where the ladies never go out except accompanied by the largest procession, and even then very rarely. She wanted to force the Cubo-Sama to grant her the palm of martyrdom at any price, and in those unhappy times, it was nothing less than being condemned to fire or other even crueller torments.

Cubo-Sama, who considered it a disgrace for him to be defeated by a young foreigner, attacked her in every way; but Julie emerged victorious from all these battles. Finally the tutor delivered her, with two other ladies of the palace, into the hands of the satellites who led them from island to island, then they separated Julie from her companions, and deported her to an island inhabited by poor fishermen, who had no other dwelling than a few huts. Her exile and sufferings lasted forty years, that is, as long as her life: but if she lacked the consolation of men, she was fully compensated by the abundance of favors from Heaven. One thing, however, caused her some grief, and that was that she had not shed her blood for Jesus Christ; she found occasion to write to a Jesuit missionary to express her grief on this subject. The missionary replied that she should not worry, because the Church honors as martyrs those who have been exiled for the Faith: this answer filled her with joy and dispelled all her worries. The history of Japan speaks of another Korean, who was burned alive with the famous Jesuit Charles Spinola.

⁵ In fact, Julia was at first part of the family of a leading Japanese general, a Catholic, Konishi Yukinaga. After the downfall of Konishi Yukinaga at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Julia was made to serve Yukinaga's vanquisher Tokugawa Ieyasu (whom Dallet calls Cubo-Sama) as a lady-in-waiting.

“About one hundred and sixty years later, Christianity reappeared in Korea through a truly admirable combination of circumstances. In 1784, a young Korean lord named Yi, who was in Peking with his father, who was an ambassador, ardently desired to study mathematics; he approached the European missionaries and asked them for books on this science; they took advantage of this opportunity to give him books on religion. This young man was struck by the sublimity of the dogmas and the purity of the morals of Christianity: he wanted to know our religion in depth. Grace acting inwardly, particular instructions soon completed what the reading had begun: he wanted to be a Christian. He replied that he had only one wife, but that if he had more than one he would give them all up, if he could only be a Christian on that condition: he was therefore baptized and took the name of Peter. He was baptized and took the name of Peter. Peter was immediately transformed from a neophyte into an apostle; when he returned to his homeland, he wanted to share with his fellow countrymen the grace he had received. He preached the Christian religion; his relatives and friends were his first disciples. They in turn became preachers; the men showed at least as much zeal as the women, and within five years there were four thousand Christians in the royal city and in the countryside.

“Religion was preached publicly; it was preached at court and in the provinces; the true God had a large number of worshippers among the nobility. In 1788, the governor of the capital had Thomas Kim (Kim Beom-woo⁶) arrested for preaching a foreign religion (It is remarkable that throughout the East the Christian religion has always been recognized as good; it has only been condemned as foreign.) On hearing this news, several neophytes presented themselves to the governor, and declared that they were also Christians and preachers of this religion. The latter, astonished at their number, sent them home and condemned Thomas King to exile, where he died the same year. The Christians, far from being intimidated by this beginning of persecution, became all the more intrepid. However, there were many doubts which the Christians could not resolve on their own; they did not understand certain articles clearly; there were others which seemed impossible to practice in this uncertainty, and they found no other expedient than to send to Peking to consult the bishop.

It was Paul In who was entrusted with this commission. During his stay, Paul received the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. He brought the pastoral letter of the Bishop, written on a piece of silk, in order to deceive the vigilance of the guards. On his return, Paul did not fail to tell his countrymen what he had seen in Peking. He spoke of the beauty and decoration of the churches he had visited, of the majesty of the ceremonies and the solemnity of the divine service he had attended, of the sacraments he had received, of the missionaries who had come from the farthest reaches of the West to proclaim the religion, whom he had seen himself, etc. The Koreans, inflamed by this account, also wanted, at whatever price, to have priests and to participate in the holy mysteries; they sent Paul In and the catechumen Ou to the Bishop, to ask him for a missionary. The Prelate showed himself willing to satisfy them; he gave them all that was necessary to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, and taught them how to make wine; he promised them a Priest; the Koreans were to go and take him from the borders, from a designated place.

“The Priest did indeed leave at the beginning of the year 1791, and was at the rendezvous; but no one appeared. The mother of Thomas In and Jacques Gwon, who was about to die, asked her children not to allow any superstitious ceremony to be performed at her funeral: they promised and kept their word. The relatives and allies of the deceased having gone to the funeral, asked for the tablets of the ancestors; Paul answered without hesitation that he had burned them. At these words, the relatives became furious and began to blaspheme against the Christian religion. Paul and James, far from being intimidated by their cries,

6 김범우 Kim Beom-woo 金範禹 (1751-1787) Thomas.

answered them without emotion: “We are Christians, and so was our mother. Our religion “forbids us to give superstitious worship to the ancestors; it is according to its orders that we have destroyed these tablets; it is impossible for us to erect them again: we are ready to die rather than change our resolution.”

The pagan relatives, no longer possessing themselves, immediately brought the two brothers before the governor, as guilty of impiety. Paul In confessed the alleged crimes of which he was accused; he demonstrated the truth of the religion and the falsity of the worship of the ancestors. The governor, a declared enemy of Paul's family, did not want to let slip such a favorable opportunity to satisfy his particular hatred; he gave the affair a criminal form, drew up a slanderous report and sent it to the court. The king, naturally good, but timid, appeared frightened; he appointed a commissioner to inform legally against all those who professed the Christian religion. The two brothers appeared before the new judge; when questioned about their alleged impiety, they replied, as they had the first time: “It is true that we threw the tablets into the fire because our mother ordered us to do so, and that this cult is superstitious. We want to live and die as Christians; besides, we are always willing to obey the king and the laws of the empire, in everything that is not contrary to the law of God.” The judge seemed displeased with this answer, he had them put to the test; but neither torments nor caresses could overcome the constancy of these intrepid confessors: the angry judge condemned them to death as followers of a foreign religion. According to custom, the sentence was presented to the king for his signature; he was saddened by it; Paul was dear to him because of his personal qualities, and his family was highly regarded at court. He sent some of his officers into the prison to urge the two brothers in his name to erect the tablets; they refused. The prince thought he had been defied; he confirmed the sentence, and immediately the execution was carried out.

James Gwon, reduced to the most deplorable state by the torments he had suffered, could hardly pronounce the holy names of Jesus and Mary. During the whole journey, Paul preached to the pagans, who had gathered in large numbers to witness a spectacle so new to them. When they arrived at the place of execution, they were again asked to offer sacrifices to their ancestors and to renounce the new religion; on their refusal, the officer ordered Paul to read his sentence written on a tablet. Paul gladly took it, read it in a loud and firm voice, put his head on the block, pronounced the sacred names of Jesus and Mary several times, and signaled the executioner to carry out the sentence. The executioner cut off his head, as well as his brother's, when he pronounced the names of Jesus and Mary; this was on December 7, 1791.

The king soon repented of having signed the sentence: he sent an order to postpone his execution; but when the message arrived, the martyrdom was consummated. The two bodies remained unburied for nine days; guards were posted; they wanted to intimidate the Christians by this sad spectacle. When this period had expired, the relatives were allowed to remove them for burial, but they were astonished to find the holy bodies flexible and without any sign of corruption; the features of their faces were not altered, their blood was still ruddy and liquid, a circumstance all the more extraordinary since it was then the middle of December; at this time the cold is very great in Korea, and all liquids were actually frozen even inside the houses. This prodigy filled the pagans with admiration: they cried out that innocent people had been condemned, and some were converted. The royal inquisitor, disconcerted by such firmness, did not dare to proceed against the other confessors of the faith: “I have read,” he said, “in their books, that the more Christians are killed, the more infidels embrace their law; they make it a duty not to fear death; after they have given their blood for their religion, they are honored as supernatural beings. He was content to use promises and threats. These means did not succeed any better than torments, and in the second year of the persecution the king ordered that all Christians be delivered.

“However, the bishop of Peking wanted to introduce a missionary into Korea. John A, whom he had sent at first, had not been able to enter because of the persecution: he died some time later. The Prelate chose to replace him with a young Chinese priest, barely 24 years old. He was a man of great merit and piety; his name was Jacques Velloz; his Chinese name was Zhou⁷; he took the name Li when he entered Korea. He left in 1794 for his new mission; when he arrived at the borders, he found obstacles that he could not overcome for the moment; the following year he was finally able to reach his destination. His arrival caused inexpressible joy; he administered the sacraments, heard some written confessions, celebrated the holy day of Easter and gave communion. This was probably the first time since Christ that the Sacrifice of the New Law was offered in these lands. The missionary applied himself tirelessly to the study of the language. The government was soon informed of his arrival. In June of the same year, an apostate, who pretended to be converted, managed to discover his retreat; he went to report it to the court. But a military mandarin, an apostate like himself, who sincerely hated his crime, was present at this denunciation; he immediately ran to warn the missionary of the danger which threatened him.

A Christian woman, named Colomba Gang Wan-suk⁸, offered to hide the priest in her house, at the risk of her life. She succeeded in hiding him for more than three years from all searches; her zeal earned her the crown of martyrdom. The pursuits being useless, Matthias Choe, who had initially lodged the missionary, was seized, Sabbas Ji, and Paul Yun, who had introduced him to Korea. The three confessors, when questioned legally about the missionary, refused to answer. They were beaten, their knees were crushed, and it was not possible to extract a single word from them. The judge was furious and took their silence as an insult, and ordered that they be tormented until they died. This inhuman order was carried out in all its rigor, and the holy Martyrs died in torment, without saying anything.

“The king, who was naturally peaceful, could not bring himself to order a general persecution; he was content to strip the mandarins of their offices; he degraded some military officers because they professed the Christian religion. Peter Yi, the first apostle of Korea, was sent into exile. The moderation of the prince did not prevent the governors of the provinces from vexing the Christians according to their whim and their particular hatred. Many neophytes abandoned their possessions and homes, and withdrew to the deserts and mountains to escape the fury of these subaltern tyrants. There were some apostates, but in small numbers; some, without openly apostatizing, slanted in the profession of their faith; the greatest number held firm, and sacrificed everything to their religion.

“In the year 1800, there were already more than ten thousand Christians who had been firmly converted. The missionary was preparing to open a mission in the mountains when the king of Korea died, leaving only a son, still a child, to succeed him; the queen mother had the regency. During the minority, the mandarins, enemies of our holy religion, did much to force the regent to proscribe Christianity and to ignite a general persecution. They pretended to be alarmed by the great number of Christians of all ranks, even of the highest nobility. One of the members had the courage to plead the cause of religion; he was strangled (it is believed that he was a Christian), and the persecution was resolved. It soon took on a frightening character; several Christian mandarins were arrested; Pierre Li, who had been recalled from exile, was among them; they imprisoned all the Christians they could find; they even seized those who were suspected of having heard the religion preached, even though they had not embraced it; the courts were in constant session day and night.

7 Father Zhou Wen-mo 周文謨 (Korean pronunciation 주문모 Ju Mun-mo) (1752-1801). James. Blessed.

8 강완숙 Gang Won-suk 姜完淑 (1761-1801) Columba. Blessed.

During the year that the proceedings lasted,” say the Koreans in their report, “terrible torments were used to overcome the constancy of the Confessors; others were invented which until then had been unknown, and for which no name could be found.

“Alexis Hoang-Che Joung (Alexander Hwang Sa-yeong⁹), author of a project to introduce European missionaries into Korea, was arrested and condemned to be cut into pieces as a traitor to his country. After his martyrdom, the heads of all those who had been imprisoned were cut off (it seems that Pierre Yi was martyred in this circumstance). So many people were killed and tormented that, in everyone's opinion, nothing like this had ever been seen in the history of this kingdom: ministers, courtiers, scholars, nobles, burghers, artisans, farmers, merchants, mercers, women, children; in a word, people of every rank and condition were compromised for embracing Christianity; so everyone murmured, all were in affliction, and complained of such cruel oppression whose end was not foreseen. “

“The danger increased from one moment to the next; it was very difficult for the missionary to escape the searches of so many people who were in pursuit of him. A pagan mandarin, pretending to want to be instructed in the religion, managed to find out where he was retreating; he was obliged to change his place of residence several times; finally, he decided to surrender himself and constituted himself a prisoner in the last days of April 1801. He was interrogated; he answered sincerely, without compromising anyone. He made a reasoned exposition of the Christian religion, in the form of an apology; he protested that he had only come to Korea to procure the glory of God and to work for the salvation of men. This document was deposited in the court archives. When it came time to decide the fate of the prisoner, opinions were divided: some wanted him to be sent back to his homeland; others asked for more information; the greatest number opted for death: the latter opinion prevailed.

On Sunday of the Holy Trinity, May 21, 1801 he was placed on a kind of tumbrel filled with straw, and led to the torture; all the troops were put under arms. When one arrived at the place of the execution, one made him go around the place of arms three times, to intimidate the people. The holy Confessor preached Jesus Christ to all those he met: “I am dying,” he said, “for the religion of the Lord of heaven. In ten years from now, you will be struck by a great calamity; then I will be remembered.” These words made a great impression among the infidels. He then knelt down, joined his hands and received death with the greatest calm.

“A little before the execution, the sky, which had been pure and serene until then, was suddenly covered with thick clouds; a violent wind arose that made the sand fly and the stones roll; the rain fell in torrents; the darkness was such that one could not distinguish objects at a very slight distance: But as soon as the soul of the holy Martyr flew up to heaven, the horizon cleared up again, the storm ceased, the sun appeared again, brighter than ever, several rainbows were seen in the distance, and light clouds, after having risen little by little, descended and went to hide under the horizon, on the north-west side. These phenomena made a great impression on the minds of the people: it was publicly said that an innocent man had been condemned. The holy body remained exposed for three days; then the soldiers secretly removed it: the Christians have never been able to know what they did with it.

“The memoirs I have before me, written by eyewitnesses, are full of praise for this young missionary. He was, they say, full of talent and virtue, he was very prudent; tireless in his work, he shortened his sleep so as to have more time to devote to study and the salvation of souls. His life was one of continual fasting and mortification. The most unequivocal proof of his superior merit is that he was found worthy by the famous Bishop of Peking, Mgr. de Govéa, to be entrusted alone, at the age of twenty-four, with a mission of this importance. A

9 황사영 Hwang Sa-yeong 黃嗣永 (1775-1801). Alexis. Martyr.

Christian lady, Colombe Kiang, who had been able to observe him closely for several years, wrote his life, or rather the story of his mission. I have not been able to obtain this piece.

“The death of the missionary did not slow down the zeal of the neophytes. The persecution was still going on, when they sent a Christian to the Bishop of Peking to ask for another priest, but he was arrested at the frontier. Several letters were found on him, which made the persecutors aware of the relations between the Prelate and the Korean Christians. The deputy and two other neophytes who accompanied him were immediately taken to court: they remained firm in their faith and had their heads cut off. The government was frightened and believed that all of Europe was going to move to invade Korea: they wrote to the emperor of China to ask for troops; they assured him that one hundred ships would soon make a raid in the country. Fortunately, the emperor did not take the matter seriously; he only laughed at these alarms. He replied to the king of Korea that the European missionaries were men of unflinching loyalty, incapable of plotting against the state. They have been here, he added, for two hundred years; their conduct has been irreproachable: besides, if you have reason to fear, guard your borders. Finally, the persecution slowed down little by little; all the Christian prisoners who were of the common class were released. This persecution produced more than one hundred and forty martyrs, not counting those who had shed their blood in the previous two. Some were cut into pieces; others died in the torments; the greatest number were strangled, or had their heads cut off; more than four hundred were exiled for the Faith; one cannot count the number of those who were released after having been tormented or having languished for a long time in the dungeons. I have heard of some other persecutions which followed this one; but there does not seem to be anything certain about it.

“For more than thirty years since the Koreans have no longer had a missionary, they have not ceased to write to Rome and Peking to ask for a priest. They have repeatedly sent deputies to the Bishop of Xangsi and to the Bishop of Nanjing, etc. These prelates, in spite of their good will, have so far been able to form only wishes for these unfortunate neophytes: I hope that their desires will soon be fully fulfilled. I hope that their wishes will soon be fulfilled. Will France, which contains so many holy ministers, have none for Korea? The bread of the word is abundantly distributed to the other missions: could we refuse a few crumbs to neophytes who have deserved the Church so well? Is there, however, a mission that can be compared with this one? They are only yesterday, and already they have eclipsed the glory of the most famous Christianities: in one year alone, ten thousand Koreans have provided a greater number of martyrs and confessors than several Christian nations have done in an entire century. A praiseworthy zeal, no doubt, hastens to make unfaithful peoples, who more than once trample on these precious pearls and threaten death to those who offer them, partakers of the gifts of God. And will these children, cherished by Providence, these neophytes, still preserved by a prodigy, always be deprived of the bread of the word and of participation in the sacraments, to which they have an inalienable right as servants of the Faith? But I feel that these reflections take me away from my subject; let us try to interest Heaven in their favor, if it is impossible for us to do more for them.

“The Koreans have drawn up several acts or memoirs of the martyrdom of their compatriots; I will give a few abbreviated extracts. Here is how they express themselves on this subject, in the letter which they addressed to the Supreme Pontiff who was then in prison (in 1811).

“We have made a collection of the acts of our martyrs, which contains several volumes. Persecution obliges us to write this letter on silk, so that the bearer can hide it more conveniently under his clothes: the danger of losing one's life in such a case is ten thousand to

one; that is why we cannot send Your Holiness voluminous works. For the time being, we are sending only the acts of the martyrdom of the Missionary, of the catechist Colombe, etc., and of some others, ten in all, with the names of forty-five who were the most distinguished; their acts fill several volumes; we will humbly take the liberty of sending them to Your Holiness when we have the opportunity. As for the others, numbering one hundred and forty and more, who strove to obtain the grace of martyrdom and finally did so, care has been taken to collect and preserve the acts of each one of them; it will take some time to find the various persons who are in possession of them. When a missionary comes to Korea, we will proceed to print them. Although they are martyrs of a poor foreign kingdom, they have nevertheless had the good fortune to be admitted into the holy religion; their names have found a place in the book of life, and their merits are written with the merits of those who died for justice. They are truly pleasing to God; they are loved by the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Angels: they will also be pleasing to your Holiness. Through the merit of our Martyrs, we hope to receive as soon as possible the spiritual help that we ask for with a thousand and ten thousand tears of blood.

Thomas Soui-Py Koum (Thomas Choe Pil-gong). Thomas suffered countless torments in the first and last persecutions; he was always firm and constant. He had been a Christian for seventeen years, that is, he was one of the first converts by Peter Ly; he was caught and suffered extraordinarily in the royal prison; he was sentenced to death. The executioner who was in charge of the execution was not very experienced: he did not kill his head with the first blow; Thomas wiped his blood with his hand, looked at him without being troubled and said: “Precious blood! He was finished at once.

Augustine Tim-Joux (Augustine Jeong Yak-jong). Augustine was one of the first Christians. His father, very angry at his change of religion, distressed him, even tormented him in every way; but Augustine persevered to the end. He preached and wrote books of piety; he wrote a book entitled Sentences of the Christian Religion, which is very useful for beginners. During the persecution he was imprisoned and testified to the faith before the *Geumbu* tribunal (criminal court); he suffered greatly and was sentenced to death. When he arrived at the place of execution, he sat down with a cheerful and laughing face in front of the instruments of his torture; then, casting his eyes on the spectators, he said: “Heaven and earth and all creatures have a very noble and very great Lord who created them and preserves them: you must all return to your first principle. You regard my torture as ignominious; you are mistaken; you will know one day that this supposed ignominy is my glory.” The executioner ordered him to place his head on the instrument of torture; he obeyed, and placed himself in such a way that he could see the sky: it is better, he said, to die looking at the sky than looking at the earth. The executioner trembled and did not dare to strike: finally the martyrdom was consumed. Charles Si-Siam, his son, generously confessed Jesus Christ before his judges; he showed the same firmness and constancy as his father: he was martyred one month later.

Alexis Sou-Joum-Houam (Hwang Sa-yeong). Alexis came from a noble family. From the age of sixteen, he showed extraordinary talent and obtained the highest grade in literature in a competitive examination. The king wanted to see such a distinguished subject; he showed him great consideration, and said to him, taking him by the hand, “When you are twenty years old, I will take you into my service.” But before he had reached that age, he embraced the Christian religion. From then on, he renounced the world to be concerned only with his salvation; he made great progress in piety; he abandoned his books of literature and did not concern himself with science; when he was called to the general competition, he left his composition blank and withdrew. The king, astonished at this alleged neglect, kindly urged

him to study: he demanded that he appear at the examinations; he recommended him to his teachers. Finally the king learned that he was a Christian and that he had nothing but contempt for honors. The prince seemed distressed at this news; however, he did not molest him.

Alexis employed his time to compose books of piety and to preach the religion: his relatives and his friends were singularly irritated; they overwhelmed him with insults and curses, but he did not take account of it. The reception of the sacraments increased his fervor; he helped many missionaries who had a special affection for him (the acts of his life are very extensive). At the beginning of 1801, there was an express order to seize his person; it was only by a series of miracles that he managed to escape the searches of his enemies. He hid for a long time among his friends: finally he disguised himself, left the capital and withdrew to a mountain forty leagues away; he found a tile kiln which he made his home. Thomas Houan, his friend, was the only one who knew the place of his retreat, and in this solitude he occupied himself only with prayer and the means of introducing missionaries into Korea. He wrote his project on a piece of silk and intended to send it to the Bishop of Peking; his plan was thus conceived: The Prelate would have arranged an embassy between the King of Portugal and the King of Korea; Missionaries admitted to the court on the foot of scholars, with the title of mathematicians, would have publicly preached the Religion under the protection of the prince, and everyone would have professed it without fear, etc. However Thomas discovered it by a misunderstood compassion: Alexis was taken at once; one found on him his project of embassy. The government was dismayed: an invasion was expected; Alexis was condemned to be cut into pieces, as a criminal of lèse-majesté and a traitor to the fatherland (This torture is called Lim-chè: there are two kinds; in one, the arms are cut off, 2. In the other, the criminal is chopped up, so to speak, into small pieces, or rather left to the fury of the executioners, who carry out the sentence according to their barbaric whim; sometimes they push the barbarity to the point of devouring his palpitating limbs, before the very eyes of the victim. This torture is known in all the kingdoms of the East which have adopted the laws and regime of the Chinese).

Colombe Vang-Xou-Kiang (Colomba Gang Wan-suk¹⁰). Colombe came from a noble and ancient family. From the earliest age, she gave proof of a superior genius and a courage above her sex. She was chaste, modest, gifted with a gentle and affable character. Her mother was a woman of a cantankerous character, who exercised her patience for a long time. Colombe, considering that her sex did not allow her to do anything great, resolved to dress as a man and to leave the world; but, after reflection, she gave up her project (it is not clear what is meant here by leaving the world; Colombe was still a pagan when she conceived this design). She was married to a man who was also of noble extraction: he was a simple man and of a gentle and easy commerce; but the mother-in-law had in common an annoying character, less however than the mother of Colombe. The latter had for her mother-in-law all the affection and all the complaisance of a well-born daughter: when this lady was in a bad mood, Colombe appeared before her with a serene and laughing face, and more often than not she succeeded in calming her down and restoring her cheerfulness. She was already married, when she heard about the Christian religion; she embraced it at once and was baptized. During the first persecution, she devoted herself to the service of the holy Confessors; she prepared food for them with her own hands (1790). The Bishop of Peking warned the Christians in a pastoral letter that the worship of the ancestors was idolatrous: Colombe submitted, but the mother-in-law was even more obstinate. Colombe begged and pleaded with her to abandon superstitious ceremonies, but the old woman would not give in. God worked a

10 강완숙 Gang Won-suk 姜完淑 (1761-1801) Columba. Blessed.

miracle to authorize Colombe's instructions; then the mother-in-law gave in. Colombe would have liked to live in continence; but her husband was a pagan; the man abandoned the house and took another wife.

Colombe, then free to follow her inclination, withdrew to the royal city with her mother-in-law to pursue more freely her own salvation and that of her relatives. The Missionary soon knew the merit of this lady: he entrusted her with the instruction of the persons of her sex who were of a mature age. Agathe, a young Christian virgin, was placed in the same house to instruct the young people. It soon became clear that the missionary could not have made a better choice. In 1795, he ran a very great danger: Colombe hid him in a pyre; she alone and a slave were of the secret; her son and her mother-in-law ignored it. The latter had refused to receive the missionary in her house; she feared for her own life. Colombe tried to move her by compassion and gratitude: "How!" she said to her, "the missionary came here at the risk of his life, for the sole reason of working for our salvation, and today, because the enemies of our religion are pursuing him, we must refuse him an asylum... people are not made of wood or stone: how do you expect him to live, if he has no rice to eat and a house to take cover? The good lady agreed to everything; but fear, stronger than gratitude, made her refuse everything. Colombe was so distressed that she became ill and even feared for her life. Her mother-in-law tried to dispel her melancholy: "No," she said, "I want to get out of here; I will dress like a man, I will go all over the city to find the missionary and put him in a safe place, even if it costs me my life. So you want to leave me, my only support, my only help? I will follow you wherever you go, I will die with you. Ah, how comforted I am to see you arrive at the degree of virtue I desired! If the Missionary came, would you receive him? Do what you want; I don't want to separate myself from you.

Colombe immediately invited the missionary to come out of his hiding place and to go into the company room (Chim-Bon). The priest remained in this house for more than three years. One day, while drawing water, she saw a bracelet at the bottom of the well; she went down to get it, but she drowned: her death was considered an effect of Providence. However, Colombe, always animated by a holy zeal, preached, instructed, attacked all the vices and gave the example of all the virtues; also her instructions made marvelous fruits. However great her qualities were, she did not please everyone; many took pleasure in antagonizing her. There is nothing human that does not have some imperfection; we often see something similar in the saints: one should not always conclude for that that she was wrong.

In 1801, Colombe and Agathe were arrested and brought before the tribunal of Chim-Fou crimes.) They confessed Jesus Christ, explained clearly the origin of the world, refuted superstitions, and praised uprightness and sincerity (lying and deceit are not counted among the vices by the Orientals; the Chinese do not consider them to be an honorable quality). The judges were filled with admiration. You are doctors," they said. In spite of this praise, they had them put to the torture. There is no torment that they did not make them suffer, to force them to renounce Christianity and to discover the other Christians. Their toes were broken and their bodies were soon nothing but a wound. They always showed the same calm and tranquillity during these various tortures; they did not utter a single complaint, nor did they let out a single word that could reveal the other Christians; they exhorted and instructed those who were locked up in the same dungeons (it seems that they were pagans); they quoted passages from Confucius to prove to them the conformity of his doctrine with the morals of the gospel. Their constancy was unshakeable. Their trial was not yet over when they learned that the missionary had suffered martyrdom: Colombe immediately tore a piece of his robe and wrote the story of his life from the time of his entry into Korea until his death; she sent this writing into the hands of a Christian woman. The closer the day of their sacrifice approached, the more Colombe and Agatha grew in fervor: it was observed that, on the eve of their martyrdom, they showed a joy of which they had never given so great a sign, when all

was well with them in the world. Colombe had a son named Philip, who was also a prisoner of Jesus Christ; but he was held in another prison.

This young man had let slip in the torments some expressions which made one fear for his perseverance. One day when she was brought before the criminal judge, she met her son; as soon as she saw him, she shouted at him with all her strength: Philip, don't you know that Jesus Christ is coming down on your head to enlighten you, and you are still blind? This young man, struck by his mother's words, felt his courage revived, and ended his life with a glorious martyrdom. It was summer; the heat was excessive; the prisoners suffered greatly from thirst. Colombe ordered a slave girl to dig the earth in a place that she indicated to her; at once water gushed forth in abundance. In the first days of July, she was placed with eight other Christian ladies on a tombereau, and led to the torture: during the whole journey, Colombe recited prayers in a loud voice. A moment before the execution, she turned to the officer who was on guard, and said to him: "According to the law, one must undress the condemned before the execution; but we are women, decency does not allow that one uses it thus with regard to us: go therefore promptly to warn the superior mandarin, so that it is allowed to us to preserve all our clothing. They were granted this grace; then all these ladies looked at each other smiling, satisfied to have obtained the object of their request. Colombe made the sign of the cross, and presented her head to the executioner: she was thirty-eight years old.

"The bodies of the nine martyrs remained exposed in a pile of mud for several days. When the order came to bury them, they were found perfectly preserved, without any sign of putrefaction, without any bad odor; the features of their faces were not altered, and the blood was not corrupted; however, it had rained, and the heat was very great; all the Christian and pagan spectators recognized something supernatural.

"Agathe Tim-Hay-In (Agatha Yun¹¹). Agathe was allied to the family of the martyr Paul In, of whom we spoke above. She was very young when she embraced the Christian religion, and from then on she took a vow of virginity. Among Korean Christians there are many people of both sexes who have taken a vow of perfect continence. Agatha, believing she could find means of sanctification elsewhere, which she did not find in the place of her birth, resolved to leave her father's house for a time; she secretly procured men's clothes, and, unbeknownst to her mother and her sisters, she took her time with an elderly relative of hers, and fled to Paul In, to be thoroughly instructed. of Religion. Her mother, unaware of what had become of her daughter, believed that the tiger had devoured her; she cried day and night over her daughter's misfortune when she finally learned that she was in the house of Paul In, their relative. After a fairly long absence, Agathe, yielding to her mother's importunities, returned to the bosom of her family. The heathen, who knew not the things of God, murmured; but Agatha allowed bad tongues to speak and suffered everything with patience, for the love of Jesus Christ.

In 1795, she retired with her mother to the royal city. She had not yet received the sacrament of the Eucharist when the persecution broke out. However, Paul In died a martyr; she hid for a few years; she had much to suffer. The persecution having subsided, Agathe had the happiness of receiving communion. Soon after, his mother died; she retired to Colombe Kiang; the Missionary entrusted him with the education of little girls. She led a very mortified way of life; her fasts were frequent; she prayed and meditated a lot; she was making sensible progress in piety. His mother had been surprised by death before she could receive the sacraments; it was for Agathe a continual subject of affliction. One night, she saw her mother in a dream in the company of the Blessed Virgin; she was greatly disturbed by this vision; the

11 윤점혜 Yun Jeom-hye 尹占惠 (?-1801) Agatha. Blessed.

Missionary reassured her, and explained this dream favorably. Another time, while in prayer, he seemed to see the Holy Spirit descending on the Blessed Virgin; she thought it was an illusion; she consulted the Missionary: he replied that it was a favor from Heaven; he showed him an image which represented this mystery. She had a great devotion to the Saint whose name she bore; she would have liked all persons of her sex to take her as their patroness.

In 1801, the great persecution arose: she was taken with Colombe Kiang; she shared his sufferings and his torments until death. She was martyred in the beginning of July, 1801, at Jam-Ken, the place of her birth; she had been sent back from the capital to be executed in her native town, in order to inspire terror in the inhabitants. On the eve of her martyrdom, several Christian women, who were imprisoned with her in the prisons of Yanggeun, observed that Agathe was as calm and as cheerful as if the sentence passed against her had not concerned her; his mind and heart were absorbed in God; she was no longer of this world. On the day of her martyrdom, she walked cheerfully to the place of execution, and joyfully received death which opened the gates of heaven to her. When his head was cut off, instead of blood, a white liquid like milk flowed out.

Luthgarde Li (Lutgarda Yi¹²). Luthgarde's parents were Christians; she early applied herself to the service of God. She was still very young when her mother thought of marrying her; but Luthgarde told her that her intention was to consecrate her virginity to God. Whatever affection this lady had for her daughter, and however willing she showed herself not to thwart her desires, she insisted, in the opinion of the Missionary himself, that she marry a Christian named John. It happened, by an effect of Providence, that this young man to whom she had been betrothed, found himself in the same dispositions as Luthgarde: they both made a vow of perfect continence, and lived as brother and sister. She enjoyed, in all the neighbourhoods, a great reputation for piety; everywhere people spoke only of its virtues; they praised his modesty, they admired his charity. She nursed her father-in-law and mother-in-law with all imaginable zeal; she had for them that tender affection which a well-born girl naturally feels for those who gave her birth.

In the great persecution of 1801, her whole family was arrested; Luthgarde's husband and father-in-law were martyred; she, her mother-in-law and two of their relatives were condemned to exile. They set about executing the sentence; Luthgarde and Matthew, her relative, claimed: "According to the law, Christians must be put to death: we want to be treated with all the rigor of the edict." No matter how much she insisted, her wishes were not yet granted. "What! she said to them, I have at home ten thousand volumes in which Religion is taught, and I do not deserve death? I persevere in my faith: if I could be put to death ten thousand times, I would not change my feeling. If the mandarins leave me alive, they are breaking the laws and harming the peace of the kingdom. She wanted to incite them to take action against her. At that time, the mandarin who killed the most Christians was the most esteemed at court, and regarded as the most favorable to the government. But it was in vain that she complained; the sentence was not revoked; the holy Confessors were sent into exile: however, scarcely had they gone ten leagues than they were recalled. The next day, all the judges met to deliberate on the fate of the exiles: Luthgarde and the three other Confessors appeared before the tribunal. She defended the cause of Religion with uncommon eloquence: Her words flowed from her mouth like running water; she had no fear; she firmly believed and hoped for great justice. The judges used praise and promises to win her over; they could not succeed. They were all condemned to death: before sending them to execution, their toes were broken; they all protested that they had felt no pain. While they were being led to their death, Matthew was preaching Religion. Luthgarde thought he noticed that his stepmother

12 이순이 Yi Sun-i 李順伊 aka 유희 Yuhee (1782-1802) Lutgarda. Blessed.

was showing weakness and experiencing fear: this woman had some regret at seeing herself separated from her three sons exiled for the Faith; she therefore cried to her relative: Matthew, revive our courage. They exhorted each other, saying to each other: We must today lay down all earthly affections our heart must be entirely with God.

“At the time of the execution, the executioner wanted to take off a part of Luthgarde's clothes; but she stopped him by saying: “As condemned, I am in your power; beware, however, of laying your hands on me.” She took off her outer dress herself. The executioner wanted to approach again to bind her hands; she pushed him back with threats, placed her hands properly, and immediately received the double crown of martyrdom and virginity: she was twenty-three years old.

I end my narration here: the facts that I have reported are enough to make this mission interesting. The zeal of the Korean Christians to share with their compatriots the grace they had received, the multitude and the constancy of their martyrs and their confessors, the perseverance of the neophytes in asking and seeking Missionaries, are truly admirable and make augur well for this mission. Everything leads us to believe that the Gospel will make progress in this virgin land, which has already produced a hundredfold: please Heaven that these are not empty hopes! Perhaps progress would be more noticeable were it not for the suspicious policy of the Eastern princes. They cannot distinguish the Christian religion from the Europeans who professes it; they envelop in the same proscription the foreigner who preaches Christianity, and the Indian who embraces it. A pure and selfless zeal which devotes itself to the greatest sacrifices, only to teach the truth to its similar and to make it happy after its death, is a phenomenon which exceeds the sphere of their genius. More than once they thought they saw in all this only a secret plot, plotted against the security of the state. God please enlighten these blind princes at last on their true interests!