

Letter from Alexandre Hoang to Mgr de Gouvea, Bishop of Peking (1801)

French translation (By Mgr. Mutel) Hong Kong 1925

English translation by Brother Anthony

All names are given using the modern form of romanization.

A rare event in the history of the Church, the Catholic faith was born in Korea without direct evangelization. Scholars who were part of Korea's embassies to the Peking Court brought back Christian books, read them and spread them; many, convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and touched by grace, converted. One of them, Yi Seung-hun, went to Peking, was baptized there under the name of Peter and, on his return to Korea, converted many of his compatriots. The Christians had already numbered several thousand when the first priest, Jacques Zhou (Wen-mo), sent by the Bishop of Peking, succeeded in secretly crossing the border (1794). Thanks to his zeal, the faith flourished and, by 1801, the number of Catholics had reached ten thousand. But a terrible persecution broke out, and the Father and many Christians (especially the most influential) fell victim to it.

The document translated in this booklet is a letter written by Alexandre Hoang on October 29, 1801, to the Bishop of Peking, Alexandre de Gouvea, informing him of the facts of the persecution and proposing plans capable, in his opinion, of saving the Church in Korea. This piece is written on a piece of silk measuring 62 centimeters long by 38 wide, and, carefully folded, could easily be concealed in clothing to cross the border. It's a marvel of calligraphy and even micrography, as it contains 121 lines of 110 characters, making a total of over 13,000 characters. The letter never reached its destination. It was discovered and seized by the police; envoy Thomas Hoang and Alexandre Hoang were arrested and beheaded. Some thirty years ago, the Police Archives were dispersed, and we had the good fortune to recover this precious document.

Attached to the original was a copy, also on silk, but much shorter: all passages relating to the execution of Fr. Zhou (a Chinese subject) and details that might arouse the greed of the Chinese suzerain have been removed.

In the margin, this copy states that it was sent to Peking by the Embassy in the winter of 1801 and brought back the following year. We wanted to denounce the so-called plot, but we didn't want to compromise ourselves.

Following the original document, we also publish a translation of this copy. It seems that, for a long time, the only version of the famous letter known to the public was this carefully redacted text. Historical documents of the time mention two plans, and the third, the most compromising, seems to have been ignored.

That these plans were largely fanciful, dangerous and imprudent is self-evident; but that the author's intentions were fundamentally upright is also beyond doubt. Nevertheless, it's easy to see why the Korean government took action against the author.

This translation, printed in a very small number of copies, is intended to accompany the curious original piece which we propose to offer the Holy Father on the occasion of the Beatification of our Korean martyrs, in the jubilee year 1925.

Seoul, December 8, 1921.

G. Mutel,

Ev. of Mopsuestia,

Vic. Apost. of Seoul

We sinners, Thomas and others, cry out to our venerable Bishop. Last spring, on the happy return from the embassy, we learned that your precious health is prospering, but days and nights have rushed by and the year is drawing to a close, so we cannot know if it is still so; however, hoping from the Lord's broad liberality that you possess body and soul equally at peace, that day by day more conversions are taking place, we would like to follow the wind to offer you our feelings of veneration, as well as our joyful congratulations.

As for us sinners, our iniquity is so heavy that, on the one hand, we have drawn down the wrath of the Lord, and our wisdom has been so short that, on the other, we have lost the sympathy of men and great persecution has broken out. The calamity reached as far as the Father, and we sinners, who did not know how to face the danger and give our lives as our master for the Lord, how do we still dare to moisten our brush to send you our complaints? But when we think that our holy religion is in danger of being overthrown, that our people are in danger of perishing, that our good Father is dead and we have no one to turn to for help, that our brothers are scattered to the four winds and there is no one to consult with, surely only our venerable Bishop, a father to us through his kindness, a shepherd through his eminent dignity, can take pity on us and save us. In the immensity of our distress, to whom can we turn?

We would like to give you an abbreviated account of the events of the persecution, but as it has been brewing for a long time, and the events are excessively numerous, it is difficult to tell it all in a single word; so we have set them out below, hoping that, in your compassion for us, you will take note of them.

For the moment, the cause of religion seems lost without remission; only we sinners have fortunately escaped; John has not been discovered either: is this not a sign that the Lord's mercy has not forsaken our Eastern country? Alas! the dead have given their lives to bear witness to religion; it would be fitting for the living to confront death to protect it; but their means are weak, their strength modest, they don't know what to do. Together with two or three Christians, we have secretly discussed what should be done, and we open our hearts to you by sharing it with you. We humbly hope that, having read it, you will have pity on these poor abandoned people, and that you will take prompt action to save them.

We sinners are like a flock of scattered sheep: some wander adventurously in the mountain gorges, others are camped by the wayside, all weep and lament, pain has penetrated to the marrow of their bones, and, day and night, all they hope for is the omnipotence of the Lord and the boundless mercy of Your Eminence. We humbly trust that with all your heart you will implore the Lord's grace, asking him to spread his mercy far and wide, to save us from the midst of water and fire, and to restore us to our homes.

Today, the holy religion is spread throughout the universe, the inhabitants of the ten thousand kingdoms loudly celebrate its praises and rejoice in its holy discipline. As for us, the inhabitants to the left of the sea, aren't we also the beloved children of the Supreme Lord? Our country, being so far away, heard the announcement of religion only very late; our temperament is weak and we bear pain with great difficulty; during these ten years of storms we have been constantly in tears and worries, but the tribulations of this year have surpassed all our thoughts and even our dreams. Unfortunate as we are, how have we fallen into such extremes? After a calamity like this, if we don't receive very special help, the Holy Name of Jesus will disappear forever from our eastern country. When we think or speak of this, our insides tear with pain!

And you, Christians and priests of China and Europe, when you hear of these perils and sufferings, will you not be moved and seized with pity? We dare to hope that you will bring these matters to the attention of the Sovereign Pontiff and spread them to all countries; nothing, it seems, must be spared to come to our aid, as much to imitate the intense charity of

Our Lord, as to manifest the spirit of solidarity that exists in holy religion and respond effectively to our ardent hope. Sinners that we are, hand on heart and shedding tears, we open up to you the innermost depths of our aching souls, stretch out our necks and lift our feet, all waiting for the good news: you, our venerable Lord, have mercy on us a thousand and ten thousand times over! Our letter cannot tell you everything.

Since 1795, when the arrest (of Fr. Zhou) failed, the previous King had been more and more plagued by doubt and fear; so he secretly kept watch without relaxing for a moment, and finally, unable to discover the Father's whereabouts, he had entrusted a certain Jo Hwa-jin with the mission of falsely claiming to be a Christian in order to spy on what was happening in Hojung (another name for Chungcheong-do). This was followed by the persecution of Cheongju in the winter of 1799, so the devout Christians of this Chungcheong province died out and all but disappeared.

Choe Thomas, named Pil-gong, was a man of the middle class: upright by nature and firm in spirit, he applied himself to practicing justice without seeking to enrich himself; his fervor was very great, and his dignified bearing set him above the vulgar. During the persecution of 1791, he had the misfortune to give in to temptation and apostasy. The previous King was very fond of him: he married him and gave him dignity, and Thomas had no choice but to accept. These last years, retired in his house, he conceived a deep sorrow for his past faults, and constantly thought of sacrificing his body in penance. On the eighth lunar month of 1799, the previous King suddenly called him to the Ministry of Crimes. He was asked, "Are you still practicing the perverse doctrine, yes or no?" Thomas, seeing his desire fulfilled and resigned to die, set about expounding how fidelity and filial piety are the very doctrine of Holy Religion, and also what feelings of repentance he was experiencing. His words, of admirable clarity and dignity, were admired by all present, and the judge was both astonished and offended; he reported the matter to the sovereign, but the King forbade any further molestation, and so he was acquitted. The Ministers of State petitioned the King to oppose him and demand his punishment, but His Majesty gave an evasive reply, often expressing his intention to protect him. And so the case fell apart.

Yi Martin, named Jung-bae, was from a secondary Soron family – the name of a secondary family is given to the sons or grandsons of a nobleman's concubine – and lived in Yeosu, in Gyeonggi province; of above-average courage and a lively, decisive character, he was bound to life and death with Kim Geon-sun. When Kim Geon-sun converted, Martin too embraced the faith and was baptized; his fervor was like fire. He acted openly and bravely, without fear of recognition. On the Easter feast of 1800, having cooked a dog and prepared some wine, he gathered together the Christians of his village, and sitting down by the side of the road – a small mountain path – they recited the Easter Angelus aloud, striking a calabash to accompany themselves. Once they'd finished singing, they drank the wine, ate the meat and, when the meal was over, went back to singing, and so on all day long. But soon they were denounced by an enemy family, and all eleven of them were arrested and taken to court. Some of them were weak, but thanks to Martin's exhortations and encouragement, they all endured harsh torments and remained steadfast. As a result, they were imprisoned, not released. Martin originally possessed a certain knowledge of medicine, but was not very skilled at it. After entering prison, if anyone came to consult him, he would first implore the Lord's grace before administering acupuncture or remedies, and not one was not healed. From then on, his reputation grew, and people flocked in from near and far, so much so that the prison gate resembled a marketplace, and this without the magistrate himself being able to prevent it; what's more, having fallen ill himself, he came to consult him. As a result, during his stay in prison, he never lacked for daily sustenance. Kim Geon-sun used to say: "If Martin was asked how well he cured illnesses, fearing that his reputation would become too glaring, he would reply that out of 10, he would cure 8 or 9, but in truth it was 10 out of 10, 100 out

of 100, not one that he didn't cure. When the prison staff asked to see his medical recipes, he replied: "I have neither books nor recipes, only I honor the Master of Heaven. You too, if you want to learn medicine, must believe in God." "But all your books have been burnt, how could we study the doctrine?" And Martin laughingly replies, "I have incombustible books in my heart, they're enough to teach how to practice religion." One of his fellow inmates, Won John (Won Gyeong-do), had an old slave, who came assiduously to visit him and, talking to him about family things, soon came to words of discouragement. John was not shaken by this, but once she spoke of such lamentable things that he seemed to be moved. Martin glared at her, and the terrified old slave dared not finish and turned away. She didn't come back afterwards, saying: "Mr. Yi's look is really terrible, I can't go back there." In prison, he copied books or recited prayers; he also preached doctrine and exhorted others. One of the jailers was touched, embraced the faith and became a fervent Christian.

Gwon Cheol-sin was of the Namin or Dongin party: the descendant of a large family, he lived in the Yanggeun district of Gyeonggi province. Through his study of the classics and rites, he had made a name for himself in the world as a scholar. When the Holy Religion entered Korea, his whole family adopted it; but, as it was a family of reputation, the slanders were violent. His younger brother Il-sin died in the persecution of 1791. From then on, he dared not practice ostensibly, but the hatred of his enemies was all the more violent. In the summer of 1799, real devils from the district itself falsely accused him before the magistrate, and his Gwon relatives fought back in his defense. The case was about to take on great importance, when, thanks to the magistrate's good spirit, it was settled and he was released. But the villains didn't stop there and, through secret intrigues, they got together with bad magistrates from the capital and, on the fifth lunar month of the year 1800, they accused him to the King, saying: "In the whole Yanggeun district the perverse religion is flourishing; not a man studies it and not a village is not infested with it, and the magistrate himself keeps quiet and doesn't investigate; he really deserves blame and punishment." The previous King agreed, and the magistrate was forced to admit his guilt and resign. As soon as the new magistrate took possession, the old cases were recalled and many arrests were made. Cheol-sin, being elderly, was frightened and went up to Seoul to avoid arrest. The magistrate then took his son and imprisoned him in his place. Many times the son asked to be punished in his father's place, but the magistrate would not allow it, insisting on arresting Cheol-sin. The matter remained pending for a long time.

Although the previous King was timid and fearful, if it was a matter of affairs, he did not wish to see it spread; moreover, the affair of the priest was of equal interest to both countries, and if it were to become known, it would be difficult to deal with it; this is why, after 1795, the various officers of the Court often asked him to severely prohibit the Holy Religion, but he always referred them to the competent ministers, as if he had not wanted to interfere. The persecutions in the province were undoubtedly ordered in secret, but outwardly he seemed to know nothing about them. In fact, he wanted to soften the Christians' hearts, have the Father arrested in secret, and end the affair in secret too; but, before he could realize his plans, he died.

Kim Yeo-sam hails from Chungcheong-do. They were three brothers and all received baptism; then, to avoid persecution, they emigrated to the capital. In recent years, Yeo-sam became lukewarm and renounced religion; he befriended people with loose morals, and his two brothers couldn't stop him. There was also a certain Yi An-jeong, also from Chungcheong-do and a resident of the capital. He had a certain fortune and was related to Yeo-sam by marriage. Yeo-sam, being very poor, would always have liked to be helped by his gifts, but An-jeong was unable to satisfy him, and so he became bitterly hateful towards him. An-jeong was accustomed to attending the sacraments; Yeo-sam, who suspected this, foolishly said to himself that if the Father exhorted him to give alms, he wouldn't dare not

obey him, and since the Father didn't exhort him, he didn't give any charity. So he turned his wrath on the Father and resolved to do him harm; that's why he secretly reported what he knew about the Father to a satellite leader. How could the latter, who for 5 or 6 years had searched and found nothing, not be overjoyed when he heard this? He promised him, if the affair succeeded, that he would be given a highly-paid position. And he asked, "But this man, where is he at the moment?" Father was living in Colomba's house at the time. Yeo-sam could also have guessed. So he agreed with the chief of the satellites this, "On such and such a day, come to my house, and then I will tell you." But before the day of the interview, Yeo-sam went to another house, where he suddenly fell ill and was unable to return home. On the appointed day, the satellite chief came to the appointment, but returned empty-handed. Fortunately, there was a Christian who heard about all this and informed the Father, who then retired elsewhere. He ordered Yi An-jeong to prepare a few dozen ligatures and go to Yeo-sam to make peace with him and disarm him, and Yeo-sam's anger gradually subsided. A few days later, the King died, and with all the administrative authorities so busy, the matter did not come to light. However, after his secret denunciation, Yeo-sam couldn't leave it at that; he continued to associate with people without confession and to hatch plots to finally satisfy his wickedness.

In our kingdom, for 200 years, the nobles have been divided into parties; there are the Namin, the Noron, the Soron, and the Sobuk, i.e. 4 parties. In the last years of the previous king's reign, the Namin further divided into two. On one side were Yi Ga-hwan, Jeong Yak-yong, Yi Seung-hun, Hong Nak-min, and a few others: all had embraced the faith, but, for love of life, had renounced it. Although outwardly they persecuted the Holy Religion, in their hearts they kept as it were a dead faith; but, their followers being few in number, they had lost much of their influence. On the other side were Hong Eui-ho, Mok Man-jung and others, who hated religion with all their hearts. For 10 years, these two factions had harbored a deep hatred for each other. The Noron had also divided into two factions: the Sipa, who in everything supported the Sovereign's views and were sincerely devoted to the late King, and the Byeokpa, who, attached to the traditions of their party, opposed him; they regarded the Sipa as their enemies; their party was numerous and their influence great. The late King feared them; in those final years, the whole kingdom obeyed them. Yi Ga-hwan was the kingdom's foremost scholar, and Jeong Yak-yong had extraordinary talents as a scholar and administrator. Before 1795, the previous King loved them and put them to work; but after 1795, he left them aside, and yet it was these two men whom the Byeokpa hated the most, seeking to harm them. Although Ga-hwan and others had denied religion and even persecuted it, all those in the Byeokpa party still denigrated them as followers of the perverse doctrine. But when the slanderous attacks occurred, the previous King always covered them up, so that the Byeokpa were unable to do them the harm they sought. But when the King died, his successor being very young, it was Queen Dowager Kim who took power to run the administration; she was the second wife of the King's grandfather. Originally from the Byeokpa family, she had been sidelined by the late King, and for a long time had been unable to satisfy grudges accumulated over the years, when she unexpectedly found herself in power. She immediately turned to the Byeokpa to wreak her vengeance. In the eleventh lunar month of 1800, the funeral of the previous king had scarcely been completed when the entire Sipa party was deposed, and the Court found itself half-empty. All the villains who had long sought to undermine religion were allied with the Byeokpa; when they saw the change that was taking place, they all rose up with a bang, and it was a real feast.

In the fourth lunar month of 1800, after the names of the Myeong-hoi Brotherhood had been proclaimed, all the members zealously set about their duty, even those outside the Brotherhood followed the impulse, and all worked for the conversion of their neighbors; so, between autumn and winter, there were many conversions, and day by day they increased.

The majority were women and girls, followed by simple folk and the lower classes. As for the men from noble families, they feared some political misfortune, and the faithful among them were then very few in number. During the persecution of 1795, Colomba had the merit of saving all, and as her qualities and influence placed her above all others, the Father entrusted everything to her. Colomba was fervent and well-instructed in doctrine, so she made many conversions, and many women or daughters of dignitaries entered the religion thanks to her. And since, according to the law of the kingdom, except in the case of rebellion, prosecution does not reach noblewomen, these people cared little for official defenses. The Father, too, wishing to use them to achieve freedom, treated them with great benevolence; it could be said that the great affairs of religion were entirely in the hands of women, but also that because of this they were widely publicized.

The question of Holy Religion is one of the great affairs of the Government; so, after the advent of the new King, as it was known that he would certainly deal with it some day, and it was not known in what sense he would do so, the Father redoubled his vigilance and attention, and all the Christians were also worried. On the 17th of the 12th lunar month, the Ministry of Crimes sent satellites to seize Choe Pil-gong Thomas and imprison him. As this man's case had been pending since the previous year, his arrest this time came as no great surprise; at the time, only the old prohibitions were involved, and the Court had not yet issued any severe instructions; so the Christians, while keeping their guard up, were not too frightened.

At dawn on the 19th, the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, Choe Thomas's first cousin, Choe Pil-je Peter, was with some Christians inside a pharmacy overlooking the street, reciting the festive prayers. Outside, under the window, police officers were on the lookout for sapèque gamblers. Sapèques are played for money by people without a confession, and the police always prohibit it. Hearing the sound of Christians beating their chests inside, they thought they were gamblers shuffling their cards. They broke the window and rushed inside; they found no gamblers, but having searched all those gathered, they discovered a Christian calendar. As they couldn't read, they couldn't guess what it was, but they took it to the agents who could read, and it turned out to be a religious document. But it was already broad daylight, and the other Christians had all scattered. Only two, Peter and Oh Stephen, were apprehended and taken to court, where they were imprisoned with Thomas. Then the satellite chiefs, relying on Kim-yeo-sam and the handy men of their court, and using them as their eyes and ears, began to snoop around and search. The Christians were in terror and turmoil; however, as the year drew to a close, the pursuits eased a little.

On the 9th of the first lunar month, the chief catechist Tchoe Chang-hyeon John was arrested. And from then on, the satellites were night and day on all the roads, searching and arresting. Those who were caught filled both Prefectures of Police – the Prefecture of Police is double, the one on the left and the one on the right – but they were generally poor, ignorant people who had only recently entered the religion, women of the common people. Very few showed any strength or courage.

On the 11th, the Queen Regent issued a proclamation severely prohibiting religion. It read something like this: "The previous King used to say that when true doctrine shines, perverse doctrine extinguishes itself. Now we hear that perverse doctrine exists as before; from the capital to the provinces of Gyeonggi and Chungcheong, it is spreading and becoming more flourishing by the day. How can we not tremble and feel "cold at heart"? That in the capital and in the provinces, the law of houses made solidary from five to five be reinstated. If there are any among them who practice this doctrine, let the group leader denounce them to the magistrate for punishment; and if they do not correct themselves, they must be treated as rebels, annihilated and lost so that no trace of them remains." And the

fiercer the fire of persecution became, the less Christians knew either where to put their hands or their feet.

The president of the Myeong-hoi Brotherhood, Jeong Yak-jong Augustine, was Yak-yong's third eldest brother. He originally lived in Yanggeun, but by the time of the persecution in the fifth lunar month of 1800, his entire family had moved to the capital. His detractors were still very numerous: in the summer of 1800, there was a hostile dignitary who went so far as to attack him by name in the very presence of the previous King, demanding his punishment. The affair was only stopped by the King, who reprimanded the accuser. But then, seeing the situation considerably worsened, and as the glow of the fire increased, he thought within himself that he could not escape, and, gathering up what he had of books and objects of piety, and also the Father's letters, he locked them in a trunk, which he entrusted to another house. Shortly afterwards, however, there was an alarm at the house where the trunk was kept, and he wanted to take it home. But, fearing that it might be taken by the satellites, he instructed Im Thomas to use it as a load of firewood, wrapping the trunk in dry pine leaves. On the evening of the 19th, this load was brought along the street; but the trunk was large, and the leaves too thin, and it didn't look like a load of firewood. An agent from the town hall, in charge of monitoring contraband, saw the load and suspected it contained the meat of a smuggled ox – the slaughter of oxen by private individuals is strictly forbidden. He forced the bearer to go before the magistrate and, when the trunk was opened, it was nothing but books and objects of the Holy Religion, along with the Father's letters. The magistrate was appalled, and sent the bearer and his load to the Prefecture of Police. It was like oil thrown on the fire, and with it the calamity of the persecution worsened.

After the trunk of books was taken, the Christians sank into consternation, fearing they would not be able to survive a single day. Yet, after ten days, calm returned without incident. At the beginning of the 2nd lunar month, the Prefect of Police Yi Yu-gyeong was changed, and the new Prefect Shin Dae-hyeon took charge of affairs. Only Choe Thomas, his cousin Choe John and Im Thomas were not released; some said he wanted to beat them to death, others that his intention was to send them into exile. On the outside, the searches and arrests calmed down a little, and as the Christians' joy exceeded their expectations, they thought it might all be over. Then a Sobuk Pak Jang-seol, a Noron, Yi Seo-gu, and a Namin Choe Hyeon-jung concerted to present a petition; they strongly attacked the holy religion, demanding that the Christians be treated as rebels and that Shin Dae-hyeon be punished for having shown too much indulgence. The Regent, seething with anger, brought Dae-hyeon to justice and had the 4 Christians imprisoned at the Police Prefecture transferred to the State Criminal Court. According to the law of the Kingdom, nobles and rebels are tried by the State Criminal Court, while the Police Headquarters deals only with thieves; crimes committed by the common people are dealt with by the Ministry of Crimes. All the Christians were commoners; by entrusting them to the Prefecture of Police, it was intended to apply to them the penalties of thieves; by transferring them to the State Criminal Court, it was intended to treat them as rebels. On the 9th of the second lunar month, Yi Ga-hwan, Jeong Yak-yong, Yi Seung-hun and Hong Nak-min were imprisoned at the State Criminal Court. On the 11th, Gwon Cheol-sin and Jeong Yak-jong were arrested. The Prefecture of Police was also ordered to re-arrest all Christians previously released. In addition, those incarcerated in Yeosu and Yanggeun were sent to the State Criminal Court. So of all the known Christians in Seoul and the provinces, not a single one was able to escape. On all the roads, satellites came and went day and night without stopping. And the prisons of the State Criminal Court, the two Police Prefectures and the Ministry of Crimes were full to overflowing.

On the 24th, Colomba's entire household was arrested, and since then a great many noblewomen and daughters have been arrested, but I have not been sufficiently informed about all of them.

When Jeong Augustine arrived at court, the judge questioned him about the provenance of the trunk of books, and Augustine admitted to owning them. The judge then picked up the letters in the trunk one by one and asked him about them, but Augustine remained silent. The judge then sent word to the people in his household: "If your husband or your father would only consent to declare the priest's first and last name, and his place of residence, there would be no reason to put him to death, but he is enduring a terrible beating without wanting to open his mouth. You, the members of his family, must surely know all this, so have pity on your leader's life and confess everything clearly". But they all replied that they knew nothing. And so, at a Council of State Ministers, he was found guilty of rebellion and felony. On the 26th, Augustine, Choe John, Choe Thomas, Hong Gyo-man Francois-Xavier, Hong Nak-min and Yi Seung-hun, all six were beheaded together.

After that, 9 more people were beheaded: among them were 3 women, one of whom is Columba; I don't know about the other two. As for the 6 men, I don't know who they are either; probably they were Choe Peter and his companions, but as my information is not precise, I don't dare say that this is surely the case.

All the Christians who had been imprisoned in Yeosu and Yanggeun were sent back to their county to be beheaded; but, as I was unable to obtain any information, I cannot speak of them in detail.

The chief catechist, Choe Chang-hyeon John, was a middle-class man, a distant nephew of the 1795 martyr Choe In-gil Matthias. The teachings of truth had been handed down in his family, and when the Holy Religion penetrated Korea, he was among the first to enter. A calm and prudent man, enlightened and zealous, he remained so for 20 years. His examples were simple and edifying, his words brief and to the point. If someone had any doubts, or if adversity had made him sad, as soon as he saw his face, he felt comforted, feeling that what was troubling him was neither so serious nor so difficult, and when he had heard some of his words, he felt his heart relieved and delivered. When he preached doctrine, he was clear and interesting, and although he spoke quite naturally without trying to please, everyone loved to hear him and never tired of it. He knew how to penetrate the interior, and those who listened to him received great spiritual consolation. Obedience and humility seemed natural to him, and just as there was nothing extraordinary about his exterior, there was nothing to take away from it either. His virtue made him the most esteemed of Christians, and there was no one who did not love and trust him. His house was located in the district known as Ipjeong-dong; (the well with the hat); also, among the Christians, it was called Gwan-cheon (the fountain with the hat). Jo Hwa-jin, who was in charge of spying on Chungcheong-do, was well aware that Choe Gwan-cheon was the leader of the Christians; but, as he knew neither his real name nor his domicile, he had been unable to arrest him. At that time, as persecution was spreading, John had taken refuge in a Christian's house to avoid it. But on the 6th of the 1st lunar month of 1801, feeling ill, he had to return to his house for treatment. On the 9th, in the middle of the night, Kim Yeo-sam, led by satellites, came to arrest him in his house, and he was incarcerated at the Prefecture of Police. After about 10 days, he received 13 strokes of the thieves' board; while he was being beaten, he held his breath and fell to the ground, as if dead. But after the ordeal, as the judge listed his crimes, he stood up vigorously and began to explain the 10 commandments of the Holy Religion. The judge asked him, "Since you say you honor your parents, how come you don't offer them sacrifices?" He replied, "Think about it, please; when you're asleep, even the most exquisite dishes cannot be tasted, a fortiori how could a dead man use food or drink?" And the judge, not knowing what to say, sent him back to prison. Since then, I've heard nothing more about him, only that he was beheaded on the same day as Jeong Augustine: he was 43 at the time.

Jeong Yak-jong Augustine had an upright character and a sagacious mind; his depth of knowledge surpassed the ordinary. He had once studied the doctrine of Lao-tze on the



principle of endless life and, believing wrongly what it says about creation, he sighed and exclaimed: "At the time when heaven and earth were transformed, even immortal spirits could not avoid dissolution: this is not the doctrine of immortality: it does not deserve to be applied to."

As soon as he heard of the Holy Religion, he firmly believed in it and applied himself to practicing it. During the persecution of 1791, few of his brothers or friends were steadfast, but he was not shaken. He didn't like to talk about the things of the world, but his greatest joy was to talk about doctrine, and even if he was ill or starving, he didn't seem to feel any pain. If a point of doctrine was obscure to him, sleep and food were unattractive, and he thought about it with all his heart and strength, ceasing only when his objection was resolved. On horseback or in a boat, he never interrupted his meditation. If he met ignorant people, he would instruct them with all his might, until his tongue was tired and his throat sore, but he never got tired of it, and no matter how rude they were, there were few who didn't understand. Previously, he had composed a two-volume work in Korean script for Christian use, entitled *Jugyo-yoji* (Principal Articles of Religion). He had put together the books of religion he owned and, adding his own background, had made it very clear, so that even women and young children could understand it at first sight. There were no doubtful or obscure passages. It is a precious work for our Korea, and superior to the *Tchyou-yo*, a similar work published in China; the Father approved it. His long years of study had become habitual and second nature. And when he met Christians, after the customary compliments, he'd start disserting on doctrine, and the whole day would be spent on it, without anyone talking about anything else. If he was given the solution to a point or two he hadn't understood up to then, he'd be overjoyed and give his heartfelt thanks. If lukewarm or ignorant people refused to hear the doctrine, he couldn't overcome his grief and sadness. If questioned on any point of doctrine, he was like a man who pulls an object out of his bag and, without pain or long reflection, talks about it abundantly and without stopping. If he was contradicted or objected to, he was never embarrassed; his discourse was well ordered, without the slightest error or difficulty; mysteries and supernatural truths he expounded in detail with solid arguments, knowing how to strengthen faith as well as inflame charity. If he was inferior to Gwan-cheon in virtue and reputation, he surpassed him in his knowledge of doctrine. And as the divine perfections and truths of all kinds, like a sea spread out, are scattered in many books, without there being a complete treatise, and as those who read them hardly manage to possess them, he wanted to extract them from each of these books and divide them into chapters according to the subjects, to make a single treatise which he would have called the Complete Treatise of Holy Religion, so that future students could benefit from it. His manuscript was barely half-written, when persecution prevented him from completing it. When he was arrested and imprisoned, the judge interrogated him for having violated the King's order. Augustine then presented him with a series of reasons testifying to the truth of the holy religion, and clearly showing that it should not be prohibited. The exasperated judge rebuked him for arguing against the King's order, and so he was branded a rebel and a felon. As he left the prison, mounted the chariot and headed for the execution ground, he addressed the crowd in a loud voice, saying: "You people, don't laugh at us; for the man who lives in this world, dying for God is only natural. At the time of the Great Judgment, our tears and weeping will be changed into true bliss, and your joys and laughter will be changed into true sorrow; you don't have to laugh about it among yourselves." At the moment of execution, turning to those present, he said: "You others, do not fear: what is happening is only just. You, therefore, have no fear, and later imitate him and do likewise." When he received his first blow, his head was only half severed; he rose majestically and, opening his hands, traced the sign of the Cross over himself, then fell back as if at ease. He was beheaded with Choe Thomas, then aged 42.

As for Choe Thomas, he was old and sickly, exhausted by his long stay in prison. When they put him on the chariot, he was not conscious of anything, but as he approached the place of execution, he began to show a cheerful face. He was beheaded first, at the age of 56.

Hong Gyo-man Xavier was the brother of Gwon Cheol-sin's mother, and lived in Bocheon district, Gyeonggi province. In his youth, he had received a bachelor's degree, and later continued to study the classics. As the Gwon family embraced religion, he too made a profession of it; he detached his mind from dignities and became the apostle of his neighborhood, of which he was reputed to be the leader. His daughter was married off to Augustine's son, and he himself became the target of denigration. It was then that he was arrested and martyred. Hong Nak-min Paul (alias Luke) was from Yesan in Chungcheong province, and as a young man received his bachelor's degree. He then emigrated to the capital, where his friends included Yi Seung-hun, Jeong Yak-yong and others. Between 1784 and 1785, he embraced the Holy Religion and gained a reputation as a fervent Christian well versed in doctrine. But he continued to take examinations, to avoid gossip. In 1789, he obtained the rank of doctor and, through a series of dignities, rose to that of Auditor of the Bureau of Censors. During the persecution of 1791, the previous King forced him to apostatize. There were many bad examples of this at the time; those who apostatized no longer observed any religious practices, yet Paul never stopped reciting his prayers and keeping fasts or abstinences. During the administration of the sacraments in 1795, he received the additional ceremonies of Baptism, and had prepared to confess, but before he could do so, persecution broke out with violence. His name was on Han Yeong-ik's petition denouncing religion, and once again the late King forced him to renounce religion. Since then, however, withdrawn to his home, he continued to keep Christian observances, but when he went out, he conformed to the demands of the century. When he lost his mother in 1799, he did not erect tablets. In recent years, however, his fervor had cooled a little. He had intended to return to the Lord with all his heart, but before he could realize this beautiful design, he was caught and beheaded with the others. Prison matters are always guarded with strict secrecy, so I've never been able to find out exactly what happened. However, if you think about it, this defendant's case wasn't that serious; if he had apostatized when he appeared before the judge, he certainly wouldn't have been put to death; but he was beheaded, which shows that it was because he didn't apostatize.

Yi Seung-hun Peter was Yi Ga-hwan's nephew on his mother's side, and was married to Jeong Augustine's sister. In his youth, he obtained the degree of licentiate, and had retained a taste for the study of philosophy. The scholar Yi Byeok held him in high esteem. By this time Yi Byeok had secretly read the books of religion, but Seung-hun knew nothing of it. In 1783, he accompanied his father to Peking. Yi Byeok secretly recommended the following: "In Peking, there is the Catholic Church, and in the church, there are European scholars who preach religion. Go to them, ask for a copy of the Creed and ask them to baptize you. Then the missionaries will love you very much, and you'll get lots of wonderful and interesting things from them; certainly you won't come back empty-handed." Seung-hun did as he was told: he went to the church and asked to be baptized. All the priests who were there, saying he didn't know the doctrine, wouldn't grant him baptism, only Fr. Ryang insisted with all his might that he be baptized; he also gave him many religious books. Returning to his home, Seung-hun, Yi Byeok and others devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the study of these books, realizing that this was the true doctrine; they immediately began to exhort their friends, and within a short time a great number of renowned scholars embraced the religion, looking to Seung-hun as their leader. Later on, his father severely forbade the religion, and wicked comrades attacked him just as strongly, but Seung-hun bore it all patiently and continued to practice it. The previous King liked him for his fine qualities; in the

autumn of 1790, he placed him by special favor in the dignities and thus he became magistrate of the Pyeongtaek district. In 1791 he was arrested and apostatized; he even wrote a number of libels attacking religion, but not from his own heart. In 1795, having learned of the arrival of a priest in Korea, he was moved, converted and even prepared himself for the sacraments; but a few days later, persecution having risen, he was taken back by his fears and withdrew. As he had been the primary cause of the introduction of Christian books, when the enemies of religion began to attack him, it was always Seung-hun they blamed for its introduction. The fiery King protected him in all circumstances. Although Seung-hun outwardly followed the century, if he met close friends from the old days, he resumed his close relations with them, unable to forget his feelings of yesteryear. And it was always hoped that he would be brought to his feet. But he was enveloped in calamity, and, as he was still reproached for having introduced religious books into Korea, had he apostatized again he would not have avoided the supreme punishment; so it is impossible to know whether or not he died with good feelings. I'll have to find out later.

As for Yi Ga-hwan, from his earliest youth he surpassed the common man in intelligence and knowledge, and when he grew up, his eminent talents made him the leading scholar in the kingdom. There wasn't a book he hadn't read, and his impeccable memory seemed that of a mind. He had also studied astronomy and geometry. He used to say with a sigh: "When this old man dies, there will be no trace of geometric science left in all Korea. As a young man, he already believed in cosmology, and when he looked at the sky, he would sigh and say to himself, "To such a great arrangement as this, how is it possible that there isn't a cause and a master?" At the age of 30, he was awarded a licentiate and a doctorate; the previous King held him in the highest esteem. In 1784 and 1785, he learned that Yi Byeok and others believed in and observed the Holy Religion. He rebuked them, saying, "I, too, have read several books from Europe;--he had at home the *Memoirs on the Government of Kingdoms* and the *Summa of European Sciences* and other works;--these are only curious dissertations and books of little value; they may well increase our erudition, but how can we make them the rule of his education and his life?" Yi Byeok replied with such good reasons that Ga-hwan was at his wits' end. So he asked for books to study them in depth. Yi Byeok gave him several elementary books; he then had the work *Seongnyeon-gwang-ik* (Life of the Saints), but, fearing that Ga-hwan didn't believe in miracles, he didn't want to lend it to him. Ga-hwan insisted on having it, and he was given all the religious books in the world. He studied them thoroughly, discussed them and finally decided to believe in them, saying: "This is the truth, this is the true doctrine, and, if it were not the truth, the things contained in these books would be contempt of Heaven, an outrage to Heaven, and the scholars of Europe would never have been able to cross the seas to preach their doctrine, they would have died struck by lightning". And so he himself exhorted his disciples and had secret relations with Yi Byeok and the others. Evenings and mornings, they frequented each other. His fervor was great. It was a time when Yi Seung-hun and his companions had recklessly taken to administering the sacraments. Ga-hwan urged the others to be baptized; for himself, he was unwilling, his intention being to be appointed ambassador to Peking to be baptized by European missionaries. But soon afterwards, seeing how bad things had become, he gave up the practice altogether. And, as the Christians under attack belonged in large numbers to Ga-hwan's kin, the wicked always portrayed him as the master of religion. At the time of the 1791 persecution, he was prefect of Gwangju and often persecuted religion as if to exonerate himself. The application of the thieves' procedure to Christians was inaugurated by Ga-hwan. After 1791, the previous King put many Namin in charge; Ga-hwan, taking advantage of the opportunity, held several important posts and was promoted to Minister of Public Works. After the martyrdom of 3 Christians in 1795, the enemies of religion, unaware of the priest's whereabouts, laid all the guilt on Yi Seung-hun and Ga-hwan, and as accusations and

defenses constantly crossed each other in attacking them, the late King was obliged to send Seung-hun into exile in Yesan and to disgrace Ga-hwan by appointing him magistrate of Chungju. In Chungju itself there was a Christian, and as he was the target of violent attacks, Ga-hwan inflicted severe punishments on him and even forced him to apostatize. Ga-hwan also inaugurated the application to Christians of the torture of bone-bending, the greatest punishment for thieves. In addition, he took a slave from the mandarin and made her his concubine; all this to stop and protect himself from slanderous attacks. However, from that moment on, he was left out of the limelight and was unable to return to his position. Retired to his home, he occupied his leisure time with literature. His wife herself had a deep faith; she converted her daughters, her daughters-in-law, the concubines and slaves of the house, and if, by chance, some book was discovered, Ga-hwan didn't worry about prohibiting anything. Between 1798 and 1799, having heard that persecution had broken out in the provinces, he said in secret to his close friends: "This affair can be compared to someone hitting the dust with a stick; the more you hit, the more the dust rises: however much our Sovereign might want to prohibit it, in the end he won't succeed." As soon as he entered the Tribunal of State Criminals, he took his side without admitting anything. Since those who had to judge him were all enemies who had constantly been jealous of him, they had to do everything they could to lose him; so, knowing full well that in the end he wouldn't get away with it, he recognized himself, reverted to his natural disposition, and to the day of his death never changed. He ended his life under the violence of the blows; and in torments; he was then 60 years old. This was a few days before the martyrdom of the six. Gwon Cheol-sin was also beaten to death, but I don't know in what condition, good or bad. I'll have to wait until I've had a chance to find out more.

Choe Pil-je Peter, nicknamed Ja-sun, was Thomas's first cousin; his family was poor and his parents elderly; he sold remedies for living, the price was moderate and the quality excellent, so the public had confidence in him. Admirable honesty and loyalty were reflected even in his face, and those who observed him regarded him as a good man. Thomas, who by character was rather proud and aloof, revered and feared him, and although he was younger, he consulted him in all things before acting, not daring to decide anything on his own. Thomas had a younger brother who denigrated the Holy Religion and attacked Christians, but as far as Peter was concerned, he didn't dare criticize him, having the habit of saying that, of all Christians, there was only Ja-sun and that the rest didn't count. Father Zhou also used to praise him, saying: "Among spouses who keep continence, very few go all the way; but for the Ja-sun spouses, their purpose is all the firmer for the more they have applied themselves to mortification; they are truly wise people. After he was arrested, his father, who was a pagan, was so seized with fear and confusion that he fell ill; however, at the point of death, he believed in the Lord, and only died after receiving baptism. Peter received the news of his death in prison, and asked the judge for permission to leave. The judge gave him permission to go and bury his father, and gave him to understand that his intention was to see him escape. But Peter would have none of it, and after the funeral, at the appointed time, he returned to make himself a prisoner. He was then beheaded and died a martyr at the age of 32. However, there are reports that, unable to endure the torments, Peter apostatized and, as the judge did not release him, he retracted his apostasy before dying. None of this is categorical, which is why there is still some doubt.

Kim Geon-sun Josaphat was descended from a large Noron family; his home was in Yeosu, Gyeonggi province. One of his ancestors, Sang-heon, had rendered great services to the country. Dignities were therefore hereditary in his family, which was the most illustrious in the kingdom. Josaphat was born with exceptional gifts; from the age of 9, he wanted to apply himself to the science of the immortals. As a young child, while studying the Teachings and Words of Confucius at his teacher's school, he came across the phrase: "You must honor

the spirits, but keep away from them .....”, and asked: “If you must honor them, you mustn’t keep away from them, and if you must keep away from them, you mustn’t honor them. Honoring and staying away, what does that mean?” And his master didn’t know what to answer. The book *Gi-insip-pyeon* (Father Ricci’s Ten Paradoxes) was at his home, and Josaphat enjoyed reading it. At the age of 10 or 11, he wrote an essay on Heaven and Hell to prove the necessity of their existence. When he was a little older, he devoted himself to vast studies: the Classics, the Historians, the Memoirs, medicine, geography, and even the books of Buddhism and Lao-tze and military treatises, nothing he had not studied in depth. At the age of 18, he lost his adoptive father. In Korea, the funeral rites prescribed by the scholars of the Song dynasty were observed, but many ancient rites had fallen into disuse. Josaphat discussed all this and corrected it, but the scholars of the century, who were scandalized by it, wrote libels blaming him. Josaphat replied, citing such appropriate quotations and in such abundant style that Yi Ga-hwan, having read his writing, said with a sigh: “I wouldn’t be able to do the same.” At home, he was noted for his fidelity and great vigilance over himself, and his virtue was evident even in the neighborhood. His household was rich, so he liked to spend his wealth on alms; but for himself, in food and clothing, he was as simple as a pauper. His reputation was very high, so when he came to the capital, chairs and horses flocked to his house; it was up to whoever had the privilege of seeing him. With Yi Martin and 5 or 6 others, he had made what looked like a pact of alliance, for life and death. Their plan was to sail across the sea to Jiangsu or Zhejiang, and from there to Peking, in order to consult European scholars, acquire from them all kinds of useful and profitable knowledge, and return to spread it in their own country. But as they embraced religion, they did not carry out this plan. These 5 or 6 men were all martyrs for the Lord. By this time, those who had embraced religion were almost all from the Namin party, not a single one from the Noron party. Despite his ardent desire to learn about the religion, Josaphat could find no way in. Fortuitously, through a Christian who lived in the province, one day he saw the image of the Archangel (Saint Michael); he then falsely thought that the Holy Religion had something to do with magic, and immediately with Gang I-cheon and others he applied himself to magic. This Gang I-cheon was a scholar of the Sobuk party, but his feelings were not pure; he thought that the present dynasty could not last much longer, that there would be the society of winds and clouds, and he practiced these occult arts in order to be ready to take advantage of the opportunity to push himself into the seats. Jehoshaphat, who was unaware of this, was thus deceived into associating with him. The Father, having heard of his uprightness, wrote to him to exhort him. Jehoshaphat was touched and gladly surrendered, leaving behind all his past studies and giving himself wholeheartedly to the Lord. He was then 22 years old. By this time, not one of his close friends was unconverted, but Gang I-cheon refused to believe sincerely. A few months later, I-cheon’s affair was discovered and criminal proceedings ensued. Josaphat was implicated, but as the late King knew of his fine qualities, he gave him his protection and thus escaped ill fortune. After his baptism, he was extraordinarily fervent; his father and brothers couldn’t ignore this, and they made their prohibition even more severe. And so, for 3 or 4 years, there was continual domestic persecution; then the attacks followed and became even more intense. Jehoshaphat was irreproachable in his conduct, modest and humble, like a simple man and an ignoramus; this was a reason for him to be esteemed and honored even more. Concerning the circumstances of his arrest, as well as the firmness he showed at the moment of his execution, I have not been able to find out much; however, I have heard it said that at the moment of being struck down, he addressed the assembly, saying: “Dignities and the reputation of this world are vain things; I have abandoned them and have not sought them out. Only this holy Religion of the Lord of Heaven is very true and very sure, that’s why I die for it without regret. All of you, pay close

attention.” In the end, his head was cut off and he died a martyr: he was 26 years old at the time. No one in the capital regretted or deplored his death.

Kim Baek-sun was a man from the capital, a distant cousin of Geon-sun. His family was originally very poor, yet he was determined to make a name for himself. One of his ancestors, Sang-yong, had been a state minister. In 1636, Manchu armies stormed the city of Ganghwa, and Sang-yong, unwilling to surrender, set himself on fire. Because of this, a temple with a monumental gate was erected for him. In our kingdom, an altar has also been erected inside the royal palace, where sacrifices are made to the two emperors, Man-ryeok and Sun-jeong, of the previous Ming dynasty. Every year, the King, accompanied by his retinue and the descendants of the heroes who died out of loyalty, goes to this altar and performs the rites. When this is done, he opens an examination to award ranks to those who have attended the sacrifice. This is called the Loyalty Examination. Only Baek-sun did not attend; he said: “Fidelity to the rites of the Zhou does not consist in attending a sacrifice. Today, those who do attend think only of emerging laureates from the examination; this is infinitely out of place, for me, I want no part of it.” In his younger days, following the movement, he too had attacked Holy Religion, and all his efforts were directed towards passing the exams. But, having recognized the danger of the dignities of the century, he no longer had any desire to push himself into them. He read the books of Song dynasty scholars and delved into the truths of nature, only to find that these doctrines were full of doubts and obscurity, and could not be fully trusted. Later, he read the books of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu and, having seen in them that, when man dies, there is something that is not destroyed and that remains, he made a new dissertation from them, which he read at a gathering of friends. But his friends blamed him, saying, “This man is disserting on new and extraordinary subjects; he certainly follows the religion of the West.” Baek-sun, hearing this, had his doubts and said to himself: “Because I’ve touched on a subject that’s beyond human reach, they say it’s the religion of the West: this religion of the West must have marvelous doctrines,” and immediately got in touch with some Christians. He discussed the matter for several years, then, feeling convinced, he firmly believed and began to observe the precepts of the religion with the utmost fidelity. His mother also converted and became fervent. As for his wife, hard-headed and ambitious, she always hoped that her husband would achieve honors; and, suddenly seeing her hopes ruined, she couldn’t suppress her anger and came to shower her husband with insults. With that, relatives and friends began to slander and denigrate him. But Baek-sun was not in the least shaken. His maternal uncle came to him to try to seduce him, and when he finally got nothing, he said, “If you won’t listen to my words, I’ll break off all relations with you.” Baek-sun replied, “Even if I break with my uncle, I cannot break with my God. “So all his friends began to write to him to break with him, and in his kinship there was a concerted effort to drive him out of the family. And Baek-sun suffered all this with a peaceful heart. He used to say, “Ever since I came to know the Lord, my heart has not been moved by anything; it is like a mountain.” He was beheaded on the same day as Geon-sun. He was 32 at the time. He had only recently embraced religion, and so had not yet been baptized, so he has no baptismal name.

Yi hui-yeong Luke was a close friend of Jehoshaphat. He first lived in Yeosu and later emigrated to the capital. A painter by profession, he excelled at painting holy images. He too had his head cut off and was martyred.

Hong Pil-ju Philip was the son of Colomba’s husband’s first wife. Gentle and good-natured, he imitated his mother and embraced religion. However, he had not shown great zeal or application, when, having passed into the Father’s service, within a year he was thought to be a completely different man, and everyone was struck by this. At home, he was accustomed to serving at the altar. When he was arrested and put in prison, the judge questioned him

about the Father and subjected him to terrible torture, but Philip bore it all without revealing anything. In the end, he was condemned to have his head cut off. He was 28 years old.

Gang Colomba was born into a family of half nobles. Highly intelligent, with a firm and courageous heart, a noble spirit and aspirations to great things, from childhood and within her family she had had the ambition to become a saint; only, not knowing the way, she was content to imitate others and invoke Fo. But as her knowledge grew beyond the age of 10, she realized that these things were vain, false and unbelievable, and she stopped practicing them. When she grew up, she was given in second marriage to Hong Ji-yeong of Deoksan. Her husband, unintelligent and vulgar, did not live up to her ideal; this usually made her restless and sad, and she kept in her heart the desire to leave the dust of the world and the cares of the century.

When the Holy Religion began to spread in Chungcheong-do, Colomba heard these three words spoken: "The Religion of the Lord of Heaven." Reflecting inwardly, she said to herself, "The Lord of Heaven is the master of heaven and earth: the name of this religion being right, its doctrine must be true." She then asked for some religious books, and as soon as she had read them, she inclined her heart and firmly believed. Her sagacity, diligence, fervor and mortification were admirable and beyond the ordinary. She converted her entire household, and her zeal extended to the neighborhood. Only Ji-yeong lacked decisiveness: when his wife urged him, he would say "Yes, yes" and accede to her wishes; but, as soon as the enemies of religion began to decry her, he also approved of them and believed them. When his wife rebuked him, he wept loudly and confessed his wrongdoing; then, if his evil friends returned to the charge, he acted again as before. No matter how hard Colomba tried, she was unsuccessful. She realized that she would never be able to sympathize with him. When the persecution of 1791 spread to their region, she entrusted the care of her lands to her husband and, taking her son and daughter with her, went to Seoul. She helped Ji Hwang Sabas in his enterprise, in which she played a large part. In 1795 she was baptized. As soon as the Father saw her, he liked her very much and appointed her catechist, entrusting her with the task of supervising and directing the Christian girls. During the torment of the Fifth Lunar month, it was she who first conceived the plan to escape the Father, and who alone found the means to carry it out. She hid the Father in her own house and watched over his safety with all her might, so that the satellites came to the door, but returned empty-handed.

After the turmoil, the Father decided to stay in her house, and for 6 years she took part, helping with all her might, in all the important undertakings of the religion. Father had absolute confidence in her, so much so that no one could compare with her. On the inside, Colomba served the Father in such a way that action and rest, clothes and food, everything was to her liking. On the outside, she looked after the things of religion; if there were any projects to promote, any social relations to maintain, she did so without ever sparing herself. She gathered together many young girls to instruct and educate them, then sent them out to houses to exhort the inhabitants to believe in the Lord.

She also made apostolic rounds, devoting night and day to it, so that she hardly had time to sleep. Well-educated in doctrine and eloquent in her words, she converted a considerable number of people. When a decision had to be made, she was firm and decisive, and everyone was in awe of her. Arrested and taken to court, the judge questioned her about the Father's comings and goings, subjected her six times to the bending of bones, but she remained so mute and immobile that the executioners on either side said, "It's a spirit, it's not a woman." Finally she had her head cut off and was martyred; she was 41 years old. The previous King had an elder brother, born of a second wife, whose son had been put to death for rebellion. The late King exiled him to the island of Ganghwa; the whole kingdom demanded that he be put to death, but the King would not have it. His wife and the wife of his son remained in their former palace. In 1791 or 1792, a Christian woman took pity on them

and urged them to convert. But Colomba herself went to visit them, and when they had received the sacraments, she even admitted them to the Myeong-hoi Brotherhood. Those who heard of this were deeply concerned. When the affair broke, they were automatically sent poison to commit suicide. As for the criminal from the island of Ganghwa, he never embraced religion, but as he was accused in this case, he was also given poison to kill him. ] I don't know the surnames or baptismal names of the two princesses. Nor do I know the date of martyrdom of all those executed after Choe Peter.

Jo Peter was a man from Yanggeun; his widowed father was very poor and worked the fields to support himself. Until the age of nearly 30, Peter had neither put up his hair nor taken a wife. Weak and crippled, there was nothing about his appearance that caught the eye, and what's more, he was also awkward in the affairs of the world. Everyone laughed at him without paying the slightest attention to him. He studied doctrine under Jeong Augustine, and only Augustine liked to praise his great fervor. In the fourth lunar month of 1800, he had gone with his father to Yeosu, to Yi Martin's village. When Yi Martin was arrested, so were he and his father, and when they got to court, they didn't waver. The irate judge told him: "If you don't obey my orders, I'll beat your father to death". So he took the father and, in Peter's presence, beat him cruelly. Defeated, he let out a few words of apostasy; he was released from prison. But Martin and the others having rebuked him for his weakness and exhorted him, he was moved to repentance for his fault and returned to court to recant. The judge, filled with anger, locked him up in a harsh prison. Each time he was interrogated, while the other criminals received only the set number of blows, Peter was beaten longer and harder. For the judge, seeing what a man he was, despised him in his heart of hearts, telling himself that with such a man it was easy to triumph. However, to his great displeasure, the man was very firm, and so he took a deep dislike to him, wanting absolutely to knock him out. During his 11 months in prison, his fine examples and fine words were numerous, but, having forgotten them, I can't report them in detail. I'll have to find out more later. He was baptized in prison. On the second lunar month of 1801, the judge subjected him to severe torture and torments to force him to apostatize. He replied: "Heaven doesn't have two masters, man doesn't have two hearts: I'm willing to die, and apart from that, I have nothing more to say". The judge sent him back to prison, and a few days later, on the 14th of the 2nd lunar month, he died in the prison itself.

Yi Jon-chang Louis, accused of spreading religion in Chungcheong-do, had his head chopped off in Gongju. And, as this man was reputed to be an apostate, I don't know how he behaved when he died. I hear from some that he died in good spirits, but I dare not trust them to believe it. It is also said that Jeongsan and Yesan each had a martyr, but I don't know who they are either.

After 1791, Jeolla-do had gone 10 years without persecution and Christians were very numerous. But at the beginning of the fourth lunar month, in Jeonju, Yu Hang-geom Augustine, in Gosan Yun Ji-heon Francis and others, numbering over 200, were arrested. Only one poor Gimje scholar, Choe Yeo-gyeom, stood firm and was beheaded and martyred. All the others faltered. The apostates, both from Seoul and from the province, were all sent into exile in distant localities, and their number is very considerable. But as for Yu Augustine and his brother, and also Yun Francis, as they were leaders, they were not sent into exile, but transferred to the capital's prisons. When Kim Thomas was arrested, there was talk of his comings and goings (with Fr. Zhou); because of this, he too was transferred to the capital's prisons. I haven't yet been able to find out whether they have died or been sent into exile. According to heathens, the number of those who have been executed or died in prison exceeds 300, not counting the province, and since our kingdom of Korea has existed, never have so many people been killed as this year. I don't know whether to believe them or not. What's more, I don't know who died and how many martyrs. Those whom the government



wanted to put to death, to the last man, were people of high status and reputed scholars; as for the simple folk or those of the lower class, they were often known and purposely allowed to escape, or, if they were punished, it was in a rather benign way. And so, in the capital, there still remained a good number of low-class people.

I myself was an eyewitness to the events before the 15th of the second lunar month, and was generally well-informed about them; but for those that followed, I could only rely on what I heard reported. As a result, there is much that is doubtful and incomplete. As for the acts of the martyrs that I know for certain, and those concerning people I have known intimately for a long time, I have generally reported them, but this is only a summary. As for the other things, I haven't had the temerity to write them down. And yet I fear that, among the many, there are some that are not accurate. I'll have to find out again.

After 1795, Father Zhou resided constantly at Colomba's house, or if he made a few rounds elsewhere, Colomba was the only one to know, and she let no one know. When the persecution broke out, there was a Christian who, seeing the dangerous situation and fearing that it would be very difficult to avoid any damage, had scoured the province and discovered Christians living in secluded places; he had prepared two very suitable places of refuge among them. Having then come to Seoul and seen Colomba, he begged her to warn the Father, proposing to offer him the means of protecting himself by hiding. Colomba replied, "He's already withdrawn to a safe place, there's no need to think about changing him again." The Christian insisted on renewing his requests, but to no avail; he had to return without having done anything. 5 or 6 days later, the peril becoming even more pressing, this Christian, fearing that the storm would reach him, took refuge far away with his whole family. When Jeong Augustine arrived at the court, he refused to say anything. Colomba and her son were then arrested and subjected to terrible torture. But they too, resigned to death, said nothing. The judge then attacked her slave and had her bones bent, putting her to the test. The slave, unable to endure these torments, revealed the whole truth: she also indicated the Father's age and his portrait. Then the judge, addressing Colomba, said to her: "Your slave has revealed everything, it is quite useless for you to recuse yourself any longer; you must indicate the place where this man is." She replied, "It's true that this man previously resided in my house, but he left a long time ago and now I don't know where he is." So a proclamation was posted promising rewards; they also drew the Father's portrait to have him searched as far as the province. But in the middle of the third lunar month, the Father gave himself up (I don't know which house he lived in, why he gave himself up or on what day) and went straight to the State Criminal Court. The astonished employees asked him who he was. He replied, "I, too, am a man who practices religion: learning that the Court severely prohibits it, and that so many innocent people are being put to death, life has become pointless; that's why I've come to ask to die."

They surrounded him to bring him before the judge, and it was then known that he was the Father: immediately he was sent to prison, where he was locked up; they only put chains on both his feet, but did not question him. During his stay in prison, it is said, there were many interrogations and written answers, but I haven't been able to see any of them. I only heard pagans report the following: "The character who gave himself up gave himself up as a European: before that, when the six Christians were executed, they had been treated as rebels, but after the Father had uncovered himself, the people of the capital said among themselves that the European in his prison had explained clearly how Christians are not rebels." They also report that the European scholar did not want to die until he had declared all he had to say; but only after that did he consent to die. It seems that these reports are not untrue. After the 15th of the Fourth Lunar month, the Court ordered the commanding general of the Royal Guard to carry out the military execution with suspension of the head. This is the second mode of capital execution. The general pretended to be ill and did not appear for three

days. After three days, the sick general was dismissed, and a new one was put in charge of the execution. On leaving the prison, the condemned man was caned once (30 strokes applied to the front of the legs). Mounted on the chair that carried him, the Father crossed the town, looking right and left at those who were watching him. He said he was thirsty and asked for some wine, and one of the soldiers brought him a cup, which he drank whole. He was then taken ten lilies south of the ramparts, to the military parade ground (on the riverbank, in a sandy plain called Noryang). An arrow was attached to each of his ears, and one of the soldiers handed him the death sentence to read. The writing was quite long, yet he read it through with the utmost calm, then held up his head and received the fatal blow. It was the 19th of the fourth lunar month, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, at around 4pm.

As soon as he had been beheaded, a gale of wind blew up, black clouds darkened the sky, lightning flashed across the sky, and thunder thundered with a dreadful roar, to the dismay of the entire capital. At that moment, a Christian who was traveling 300 lilies away, and another who had taken refuge 400 lilies away, seeing this storm and these thunders so strange, said to themselves: "Today there is certainly something extraordinary": they noted the day, and later learned that it was precisely the day and hour of the Father's martyrdom. They hung his head for 5 days, guarding it day and night, not allowing anyone to approach. After this, the general gave the order to bury the body, but they continued to keep a strict watch; however, the Christians succeeded in secretly finding out the location of the burial site, their intention being to move the remains later. The Queen Regent gave her consent, but the general who had previously ordered the burial dared to remonstrate, saying: "Since he has already been buried, what need is there to do so? And that was that. However, the soldiers guarding the tomb, tired of watching over it all the time, secretly moved it to another location. The Christians searched high and low for the hiding place, but to this day they have found nothing. At the time of the execution, the rumor spread that it was a man from Quelpaert, because they didn't want to report it to the Chinese Court, so they hid his identity. After the Father's martyrdom, the violence of the persecution abated somewhat, but the searches and arrests have not yet ceased. There are still many captives in prison. Some say there are still 9 people to be beheaded. I don't know whether they're true or false.

From the very beginning of the Father's arrival in Korea, there was a denunciator, and the late King became aware of it; for this reason, during the 7 years of his stay in Korea, the Father was constantly obliged to take precautions, exposed to fear and forced to restrict himself, never daring to administer the sacraments freely; so the number of those who were able to share in their benefit is small, and the great majority are women. Among the provincial Christians or those of Seoul's ordinary class, there were a good number who were fervent, but those who shared in the benefit of the sacraments are rare. These men had all endured many hardships and for many years had held out hope, but times being so hard, even shut away in their homes, they dared not open their mouths to utter the two words "Spiritual Father" and, when they least expected it, the Father fell victim to the wicked, so that they could only contemplate his face after his head had been hung and exposed. Their trials and zeal of ten years vanished in a single day, and for body and soul they felt cornered into ruin and death. There was no refuge left for them, either to live or to die, and in their grief they lost heart, not knowing what to become. We sinners may well console them by saying: "If the Shepherd and Father came to us solely to save men, how could we not have willingly spread the benefits of his ministry far and wide? Only, because of obstacles of all kinds, he had to put a brake on his charity and moderate himself. Now that he is a martyr, the power of his intercession in heaven must far exceed what he could have done on earth. So the support of all of us, the hope of all of you, must be double what it was in the past; we must not harbor the slightest feeling of discouragement". For the future, these poor Christians are torn

between faith and doubt, between sadness and resignation: it is to be feared that there has never been a spectacle like this in the whole of the past.

In Europe, if the ancient persecutions were even more cruel than those we are now enduring here, at least the priests succeeded one another, the sacraments were never interrupted, so the Holy Religion was not ruined and annihilated, the souls of the faithful could be saved and assisted; but in our Korea, the present situation is quite different, and we have none of this hope. If the sheep has lost its shepherd, it can still graze and grow, the child who has lost its mother can still hope to keep its life, but for the sinners that we are, no matter how many times we think about it, the truth is that we no longer have the means to live. We sinners, born in a country that has always been plunged in darkness, had the good fortune to become God's children; we thought unceasingly and solely of making every effort in our hearts to glorify the name of the Lord and thus acknowledge at least one in ten thousand blessings. But who could have guessed that halfway through, we'd come up against such a calamity? We've heard it said that the blood of martyrs is a seed for religion; but alas, our poor country is plagued with misfortune! Its eastern neighbor is Japan, and these islanders, in their savage ferocity, have broken with the Lord of their own accord, and our government's assessment is that, on the contrary, they have been skillful, and it wants to seek to imitate them. How can we not feel cold at heart? However, our Korean character is soft and weak; laws easily fall into disuse, and surely there will be none of Japan's terrible ferocity here. But, for the moment, among the Christians, there are hardly any notable, intelligent and strong men left; as for the ignorant and common people, the women and children, if we take a rough count they number no less than several thousand. But there's no one to lead or instruct them, and no way of trying to raise anything. So, seeing them in such a state, how can we expect them to last long? Within ten years before, without even any official persecution, won't everything be absolutely lost? Alas, what pain! How can one, before dying oneself, have the heartbreak of seeing holy religion completely annihilated?

We sinners have escaped this year's calamity: gratitude and concern are intertwined in our hearts: we are grateful for the merciful blessing of our protection, since we have been able to keep our lives, and we are filled with fear, because our sins being so numerous, we have not been among the elect. Truly, we would like, in the time we have left to live, to devote ourselves to every fatigue for the Lord, but not only do we lack wisdom, but our very strength is exhausted. Will we be condemned to return to the earth, devouring our grief, or to end our days holding on to our resentments? In the midst of this pain and anguish, who will have pity on us? Who will console us? Although our desire is to bring our lamentations before the merciful seat of Your Excellency, customs and rivers bar our access; we cast our eyes far away and, unable to catch sight of you, our affliction and anguish only increase. What can we do? When we heard that the Father had given himself up, apart from the shock and grief we felt, we also conceived a great fear, that if a report of the affair were sent to the Chinese Court, your church would find itself implicated, and then it would seem that the cause of religion in Korea was lost without hope; so, day and night, we were in mortal anxiety far exceeding that which we felt for our own kingdom. Fortunately, covered by an extraordinary grace of protection, the very principle of our security was untroubled. What's more, we ourselves are not dead; John is unharmed. The Lord's will seems quite obvious, and since the affairs of our Korea remain entrusted to Your Excellency, how could we do otherwise than turn to you, to open the depths of our hearts in loving gratitude for such a great benefit? We therefore ask your permission to set out everything, confident that you will consider it with benevolence.

Of all the kingdoms in the universe, Korea is the poorest. There are no more than a dozen families in the country, who are virtually immune to hunger and cold. In 1794, when it came to receiving the Father, nothing could be prepared in advance, and it was only after his

arrival in Korea that provision was made for the necessities, albeit in a very precarious way. This was undoubtedly due to our inexperience and ignorance of business; but, in truth, it must be attributed above all to our great poverty, which did not allow us to do any better. In recent years, as the number of Christians has increased considerably, our resources have been a little greater than in the past, but we have not yet been able to carry out what should have been done, nor to find the right men to welcome and house the Father. As a result, the unprecedented misfortune and calamity we have suffered stems from our lack of resources. This year, after the persecution, whole families who suffered it are ruined from top to bottom; even those who wanted to save their lives have gone out naked and despoiled, so that today's poverty and misery are even greater than before 1794. If we had a plan in mind, it would be impossible to carry it out, and today, after all these losses and ruins, if we had any resources left, there would have to be Christians to discuss them; there aren't any yet, but if there ever are any we can use, we'll see to it that they are brought together.

If we're talking about the situation at the time, we can say that if, after 1795, there were numerous trials every year, this was due to two causes. One was that the previous King, suspecting and fearing the priest, was determined to find out about him; the other was that the Norons, jealous of the Namin, were making every effort to bring them down. Today, the object of the King's suspicions has fallen; the people the Norons were jealous of have disappeared, the leading men of the religion are all dead, and when the present year is over, calm will return. As far as the localities are concerned, it's true that in the capital there's the law of five houses joined together; but if, in the districts inhabited by Christians, the law is strictly observed, in the places where there were no Christians, it exists only in name without being observed: everyone is at peace and can gain a foothold. As for the routes to be followed, in the three provinces of Gyeonggi, Chungcheong and Jeolla, Christians were originally numerous; in the two provinces of Gyeongsang and Gangwon, there are Christians who have sought refuge in recent years and who live there; But in the two provinces of Hwanghae and Pyongan, there have never been any Christians, nor has anyone sought refuge there; opinion is calm and pagans are without suspicion. At the gate of the barrier, there is surveillance and searches, but after a year or two, when there has not been a single suspect, little by little the surveillance will ease and something can be attempted.

As for the way to act, in the past, everyone was concerned with spreading religion and obtaining freedom; today, that's all over and done with. We must simply strive to preserve it; with deep moats and solid entrenchments, aim strictly to guard ourselves, strengthen those who have already entered religion, instruct those whose training is not complete, attract divine grace with fervent prayers and wait in silence for a favorable opportunity; then we can preserve ourselves without difficulty. During the events of 1794, the Christians were so happy with the unexpected happiness that was coming their way, that they neglected the indispensable precautions, and the error of the beginning was enough to lead to a desperate situation. Today, if we can redouble our prudence and vigilance, if we are careful not to flaunt ourselves in broad daylight, there is no reason why tribulation should arise again. The situation, as we see it, being such, we undoubtedly cannot wait for death without doing anything; but for everything, we need resources, before we can question anything.

Thus, without our being careful, this whole business of maintaining religion or ruining it, of the life of souls or their death, depends on the Mammon of iniquity; and it is because we lack resources that we risk incurring the ruin of religion and the loss of souls: how can we not groan and lament? This is why we have the boldness to express our requests to you, humbly hoping that you will deign to appeal to the pity of all the kingdoms of Europe; for the resources which must serve to maintain the holy religion in Korea and to save souls, must be procured in great secrecy and even effectively prepared, and then we can continue to solicit from you the blessing of a second life. Please, Your Excellency, take pity on us! We

realize that it's rash of us to bother you with such requests, but to remain silent and ask nothing, or to ask and get nothing, is also eternal death for us. If having asked we get nothing, at least we can die without regret, and that's why we dare to cry out to you. We, sinners, wretched and destitute of everything, must seek support in all things. We therefore beg Your Excellency, on the one hand, to imitate the merciful goodness of the Lord of every perfect gift, and on the other, to think of the weakness and misery of the poor persecuted people that we are, to fulfill our hopes and favor our designs; this will be for the greater good of holy religion, for the greater good of our souls! We sinners, if we are fortunate enough not to be rejected, and if we are promised the means of a second life, we will do our utmost to respond and make ourselves worthy of it. But this is not a matter of a day, or even a month; the plans and preparations will take at least three years.

When it comes to crossing the border, there are two difficult things: one is the hair, the other is the language. Hair can grow easily, but language is difficult to change; if you could only speak well, there wouldn't be much danger. That's why our idea would be to send you a Korean in advance, who would come to the Mission and teach some young missionary the Korean language, in order to provide for the necessities of the future. We think this would be very good, but we don't know what you think. If we get your approval, we'll have to agree on a password between us and make a firm convention, either for the time of the winter passage, or, if this winter passage is not convenient, change for the spring passage, and we can hope that everything will succeed well.

Another great convenience would be for a devout Chinese Christian, discreet and prudent, to emigrate within the Barrier of Stakes, to act with consummate caution, letting nothing transpire, to open an inn to welcome travelers, and then, in coming and going, or when it comes to transmitting letters, everything will go without the slightest difficulty, and it is impossible to tell all the advantages of this plan. It is like the capital point on which the very life of our Korea depends, and it is not difficult to realize; and if there is anyone who has pity on our Korea as our own Father, he will gladly follow it. Can we not hope that you will be willing to intercede with the fervent, discreet and prudent people you know, with a view to realizing this plan? Our kingdom now finds itself in a time of fear, suspicion and turmoil; whatever it may be, if the Emperor gives an order, we will never dare to contravene it. Taking advantage of this moment, therefore, if the Pope were to send a letter to the Emperor saying: "Our desire is to spread religion in Korea, and we have heard that this kingdom depends on the Court of China and has no relations with other countries; therefore we address You asking that Your Majesty signify to this kingdom that it should receive European literati; they will teach it the way to practice fidelity and respect and to be loyal and faithful to the Empire, in order to acknowledge Your Majesty's benefits." If so urged, the Emperor, who is already aware of the loyalty and circumspection of European scholars, will hopefully accede to this request. This is what is known as using the Emperor's authority to make the feudatories work. The Holy Religion may find peace in this, but we do not know if the present situation in China allows this means to be used. However, we ask you not to lose sight of it.

The Lord's benefits to our Korea can be said to exceed all measure. In the beginning, when no missionary had ever come, the Lord deigned to promote the doctrine and to give it to us Himself. Then He gave us someone to administer the sacraments. These benefits, so extraordinary and so repeated, cannot be counted with the fingers of a hand. The chastisement we have suffered this year, we know full well, was called for by our infidelities. And yet the Lord's merciful goodness has not completely abandoned us; indeed, it seems that if, in the midst of so much ruin, he has preciousely kept us a thread of communication, it is to clearly manifest his desire to save our Korea. The Lord's grace being such, if God's servants, whether in China or Europe, with a unanimous heart and all their power, strive for it, how can they fail to turn calamity into good fortune and save, by restoring life to it, this country which

is no bigger than the palm of our hand? We sinners console ourselves and others with this thought, doing our utmost to brave death and live on. It is therefore our wish that Your Excellency will also comply with the Lord's will and hasten to work towards our salvation.

We have heard that in recent years, in China, the rebels from the west are very threatening, that the government armies have been beaten several times and that the borders of the Empire are shrinking every day – it is impossible for the Emperor not to be saddened and concerned. If there were someone capable of suggesting good advice among those who have the Emperor's confidence, he should take this opportunity to say to him: "When you are at peace, don't forget the danger, and as long as you subsist, don't forget that you can perish, that's the way to last a long time. Your dynasty originated in the East, and has now ruled all of China for 200 years. In this world, supreme power is uncertain and unstable. If, in the future, some misfortune were to befall you, you would have to fall back on Ningouta; its territory is narrow and cannot suffice for an empire; but from Ningouta Korea is separated only by a river, from one bank to the other you can see fire and smoke, you can call and answer each other, and its territory covers more than 3,000 lys. To the east and south, the land is rich and fertile, the west and north have strong, well-trained horsemen; the mountains extend to 1,000 lys, and the timber is inexhaustible. The sea surrounds it on three sides, fish and salt are abundant; ginseng from the Gyeongsang province is very common and inexpensive; there are excellent horses in great quantity on the island of Quelpaert: this is a kingdom to which Heaven has refused nothing. The Yi dynasty is very weak, hanging on by a thread; it is a Queen who is in power, where treacherous ministers exercise all the authority; the administration is in disarray, the people groan and murmur. The time is absolutely right for you to order her to make her submission to the Empire, so that clothing becomes similar in both countries and communications are free. It would be attached to Ningouta in order to enlarge the original territory of the Imperial House; a superintendence would be created between Anju and Pyongyang; the King would be ordered to oversee his kingdom as Imperial Prince. It would be necessary to spread benefits widely, to firmly attach the hearts of the people, and, if some revolution should occur in the Empire, to entrench oneself in the country east of the Yalu river, if one knew how to guard one's natural defenses, if one gathered young people to educate and train them, if one took advantage of the propitious occasion to enter into a campaign, one would find there the basis of a power of 10,000 years. What's more, I learn that his King is young and not yet married; if, therefore, a princess from the imperial family is designated as the Emperor's daughter and married, making her the Queen of this Kingdom, the present King will become His Majesty's son-in-law, his successor will be his mother's grandson, and naturally they can only be loyal to the Imperial Court. This would even serve to contain the Mongols. If we let the present opportunity pass, one fine day some adventurer may arise who will seize it, make the government prosper, strengthen its military power, and then all this will escape us, and not only escape us, but will on the contrary turn against us, ending up obstructing us. If we don't act when the time comes, there's no time to repent later. May Your Majesty therefore deign to act."

It is in this general sense that it would be appropriate to speak, but accommodating the form to the present circumstances of the Chinese Court. If the Emperor acquiesces, then the men of the Holy Religion will find a way to intervene, and we can hope to arrive little by little at a predominant situation that nothing can shake. As the Chinese Christians are numerous, they also have great means of action, so how could they not find the small path that would enable them to get this proposal through? We learn by chance that an English doctor, appointed in recent years by imperial decree, is on intimate terms with the Empress's Cabinet, and that he is also on very good terms with Your Excellency, and also that there are Christians on the staff of his house. Couldn't this be the way to achieve our goal? If such a man can be found, and if he takes care to comply with the above advice, we can hope that the

Emperor will listen favorably and adopt it. However, we must not give this order of submission to the Empire without any reason; we absolutely must find one or two contraventions, in order to use them as a pretext to carry out our plan. In our kingdom, there are a good number of things that are unjust or contrary to the law; I wouldn't dare enumerate them all, but the fixing by private authority of the calendar and also by private authority the issuing of money are two things well known to the Chinese Court, but which it has never mentioned. All it takes is a simple inquiry to make the accusation. Moreover, this plan is advantageous to the imperial family, and in no way detrimental to our kingdom.

At present, the Kingdom's situation is very shaky, and it's surely difficult for its friendship to last long; if it makes its submission, the treacherous courtiers' sideways glances will be over, and the Yi dynasty's situation will be strengthened. So how can this be peace for the holy religion alone? It is also the very happiness of our homeland. Please don't regard this plan as too far from the goal, and don't hesitate to put it into practice!

In your letter of last year, we were told that, in a few years' time, large ships would be sent to us. But now the situation has changed; if these boats only come, it's difficult to expect any results. There is, however, a plan by which the Koreans, inevitably, will be reduced to impotence and submit; only this plan suffers from some difficulty. However, allow us to explain it to you in detail. The military power of our kingdom is originally very weak, putting it last of all the countries in the universe. What's more, it has been at peace for 200 years; the people no longer know what a soldier is; there is no valiant prince above them, no devoted ministers; if some misfortune were to occur, it would be collapse and ruin, and we could wait for it without doing anything. If, therefore, we could procure a few hundred warships carrying large cannons and other formidable weapons, with 50 or 60,000 trained soldiers, and bring along 3 or 4 well-educated and business-minded Chinese scholars, it would be enough to land directly on the seashore and send a letter to the King saying: "We are the ships of Europe destined to spread religion; we have not come for your sons or daughters, nor for your wealth; having received the Pope's order, we have come to save the souls of this country. – If your noble kingdom agrees to receive even a single missionary, we ask for nothing more; we will not fire a canonball or an arrow, nor touch the slightest clod of earth or blade of grass: but, having concluded a pact of eternal friendship with you, we will return satisfied. But if you do not wish to receive the envoy of the Master of Heaven, then we will execute the Lord's punishment and put you to death, to the last man. Does the King wish to receive just one man and thus avoid the punishment of his entire kingdom? Or is he determined to incur the total ruin of his kingdom rather than receive a single man? The choice is his. The religion of the Master of Heaven has as its own goal works of fidelity, filial piety, mercy and charity; if the whole kingdom accepted and practiced it, it would truly be boundless happiness for Your Majesty's kingdom. We have no profit in it ourselves. Please do not entertain any doubts."

It would then be necessary to speak of all the countries of Europe that worship the true God and derive the benefit of long peace and great prosperity, and also of various countries of the Far East, which, having welcomed the missionaries, find advantages without any inconvenience; to explain all this at length and make it well heard, and then most certainly so much the kingdom will be seized with trembling and fear and will not dare not to obey. If the number of boats and the number of men can be as we have said, it will be for the best; but if that cannot be managed, a few dozen boats and 5 or 6,000 men will be enough. A few years ago, a European merchant ship was carried by a storm into our kingdom, at Dongnae. A Christian climbed aboard and observed it in detail; on his return, he said that this ship alone was capable of standing up to a hundred of our warships.

If the Koreans were so cruel to the holy religion, it was not because of the ferocity of their character. There are two reasons for this: one is that the struggle between the various

parties is so fierce that the pretext of religion is used to bring down and ruin one's opponents; the other is that knowledge and experience are so pitifully poor that nothing is known other than the things of Song times; as soon as there is the slightest enterprise that deviates from this, it is regarded as the greatest event that can occur between heaven and earth. It's exactly like the little child from a remote province; brought up at home, he has never seen the people outside, and as soon as he meets someone whose face is unknown to him, he is seized with fear and starts to cry. The current situation is absolutely like that. So there's a lot of suspicion and fear, and nowhere in the universe would you find comparable ignorance and weakness. That's why, when the Father surrendered himself, fearing that the Christians might stir up some trouble, they didn't dare resort to torture for a long time, and it was only when they were convinced that the Christians would do nothing that they started killing to exterminate them. And yet the feeling of doubt and fear has not yet dissipated; so, if we take advantage of the fact that, because of these suspicions, opinion is not fixed, and arrive with an apparatus showing that we want to take away the piece, intimidate them while letting them know that they have no reason to be worried, and enlighten their ignorance, they will see all the consequences of accepting or not accepting. Fearful of power and eager to keep the peace, they will certainly not dare to refuse. This plan, though difficult, cannot fail, if carried out, to give complete results. That's why, if we're in a position to put it into effect, let's apply ourselves to it with all our might. It will be excellent, excellent good fortune!

Someone may say: "An expedition like that, not to mention the fact that it's more or less difficult, is hardly in keeping with the good example befitting holy religion." We reply: "Not so. For the last 10 years, in our kingdom, martyrs have been very numerous, even the priest of the Holy Religion and great ministers of the State have been mercilessly put to death. It is true that the wicked had inflicted upon them the mark of rebels, but it has been impossible to find the slightest proof that they had failed in the fidelity due to the kingdom, and their fine examples of magnanimity are recognized by the whole of public opinion. If the Christians of our Korea were to rise up to foment unrest, it would undoubtedly be a bad example; but, Europe is the country of origin of the Holy Religion, for 2,000 years it has spread religion throughout the universe, and there is not a kingdom that has not converted. Now, this tiny country in the East not only refuses to submit, but is preventing conversions, persecuting the Holy Religion and putting its priest to death, to such an extent that nothing like this has been seen in the whole of the Far East for 200 years: if soldiers are raised up to punish him for his sin, what is really inadmissible? According to Jesus' own teachings, the sin of not allowing religion to be preached is even more serious than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. If we were to destroy that country, there would be nothing contrary to the good examples of holy religion.

Moreover, in all this, the aim is simply to show off one's reputation and power in order to gain acceptance for the preaching of religion; the people will suffer no harm, not the least of their possessions will be taken from them. Rather, it is the height of mercy and justice, and an admirable example. How can we fear that the example will be deemed bad? All we can fear is that we won't have the strength to give it. Someone may also say: "It is to be feared that if we act in this way, it will be reported to the Court of China, and then the Mission will have to suffer." We reply: "For that, it's easy: let the letter say this: The Pope had once ordered such and such a Father to spread religion in your noble kingdom; yet your noble kingdom not only did not welcome him, but on the contrary put him to death, and now you still refuse to receive missionaries; we will dispatch a special envoy to make known the sin of your noble Kingdom to the Court of Peking, in order to make it clear that our intention is to spare the people, while punishing the fault committed."



Moreover, our kingdom, fearing to reveal the fault it has committed in putting a Chinese subject to death on its own authority, and to incur the reproaches of the Chinese Court, will never dare send a report. So there's nothing to worry about.

The matter of opening an inn inside the frontier barrier is what is most necessary and urgent. The sooner it's opened, the better. As for the other plans, it will take something like 3 years before we can implement them and hope for a good result, and after that time we hardly know what changes will take place in the world. For us sinners, days are like years; it's impossible for us to do anything on our own, but our hope is all the firmer for it. So we beg you to have mercy on us and save us without delay!

In this year's persecution, very few Christians of any notoriety have managed to escape, and those who remain are obliged to hold their breath and remain hidden, in order to make people believe in a complete extermination: this is the only way to be able to preserve religion. But these Christians have to travel to trade, others are forced to emigrate to flee persecution, and many are on the road. When there is a day of fasting or abstinence, it's easy to give oneself away; that's why we're taking the liberty of asking that, for those Korean Christians who are on the road on a day of fasting or abstinence, they should all be exempt, so that they can hide their existence.

There is a Christian who, at his last confession, vowed to observe fasting two days a week until his next confession. After the persecution, this man had to abandon his home to go into hiding; he wanders here and there in the mountains of the province, and in these mountains, food is excessively poor; moreover, staying with others, his situation is even more difficult, so that, whatever he does, he cannot keep the fast, but he fears sinning by not observing his vow, so he dares to ask for dispensation. He also asks if there was any sin in the past when he was unable to observe it.

In the year of the Incarnation 1801, the day after the feast of the holy Apostles Simon and Jude.

The sinners Thomas and others greet you again and respectfully present this writing.