

[received December 27, 1838]

[written in 1837]

+ J.M.J.

M.M. the Directors of the Seminary of Foreign Missions.

Gentlemen and Dear Colleagues,

In the letters which I had the honor to send to you last year, I reported to you what I had been able to learn about the establishment and the state of the Christian Religion in Korea. This is the only new information I have been able to receive. During the first general persecution, a man named Ambroise Kim fled from the capital to the southern provinces. He was arrested and imprisoned in Gyeongsang-do (neighbouring province of Japan) with several other Christians. In the prison he would not take any food. However, he dissuaded the other Christians from following his example. He persevered in this resolution; and after a fast of 20 days he died of starvation. I inquired whether this resolution had been revealed to him from God, no one knows; after his death, the Christians shared his remains and kept them as relics. I asked them if some miracle had taken place through the intercession of this dead man or on his occasion, but no one knows of any.

Christians captive for the faith outside the capital have, to my knowledge, experienced no ill treatment. The shortage of food and clothing are their main miseries. One of them, the brother of one of the 3 students I sent to Macao last year, had received from the Mandarin the freedom to go out, walk around and work outside the prison, provided he reappeared in the evening. He escaped. It does not appear that this action should bring us any bad consequences. I have not heard that the other Christians were kept more strictly prisoners. On December 13 those of the Capital underwent the interrogation and the torments of which one of them makes a detailed report thus: "the 6th day of the 11th month at the time of the sessions (about 2 hours after noon) they brought me and my sister to court. Tang sangni was seated, having on his right and on his left a number of satellites armed with rods to execute the tortures. The criminal judge (tchou phang ni) asks me my name, adding "The perverse doctrine (this is what they call our Holy Religion or doctrine) is contrary to the recognition due to fathers and mothers and moreover prohibited (in Korea by the government), how did you embrace it? »

–R. It is not a perverse doctrine. The members of the Religion of the Master of Heaven who observe its precepts must honor their King, tenderly love their parents, and their neighbor as themselves. Who can say that such a doctrine is contrary to the recognition due to fathers and mothers?

–D. Can you read Chinese writing?

–R. No.

–D. How then could you learn this doctrine, not knowing how to read?

–R. To observe this religion it is not necessary to know Chinese characters, besides I can read our writing and it is translated into Korean language, and I can read it; so how difficult do you think it was it to learn it?

–D. How old are you ? You don't sacrifice to your parents. In the eyes of all these people (the spectators) those who do not offer sacrifices to their ancestors are worse than dogs and swine, they must be put to death. Would you prefer death to abnegation?

– A. It is certain that these sacrifices are vain and useless, and that it is good to reject errors and vanities to embrace the Truth. To serve the table for his sleeping fathers and mothers, and expect them to eat while they sleep, wouldn't that be madness? No doubt, and is it not a greater one still to expect them to eat after they die? The soul goes to its place; and the body is a corpse, what becomes of it, what can it do? The spiritual substance, the soul, cannot feed on bodily food. The precepts of the Master of Heaven are good and there is merit

in observing them. One would not regard as a bad subject someone who would give his life for his prince; how much less he who would give his life rather than deny the Master of Heaven, of earth, of men, of angels and of the whole universe, the King of Kings, the common Father of the human race, who makes rain to fall as he wishes, and the dew, which makes the smallest seed grow up to the highest trees of the forests, of which there is no one who does not feel the benefits, yes certainly I will die rather than deny it.

–D. You're saying the truth ; but the Government prohibits this doctrine under pain of death; and in what way are the sacrifices to the ancestors vain and useless? Isn't bending the knee before an image of the Master of Heaven also a vain and useless action, why don't you worship the images of your parents as well?

– A. The Master of Heaven is all-powerful, infinitely good, knowing everything; that's why I adore him; in the religion of the Master of Heaven, one prays for the souls of deceased relatives; there are special prayers for the dead.

- You're talking to yourself. Who trusts your words, who approves of you? Who taught you this doctrine?

– A. There were books in our house where I learned it.

– Can't you say who your instructor was?

– A. It was a man named Y, who lived in the suburb of the little western gate.

– Is this man still alive?"

– A. In the year Tchang hei niên kan oei (it is a name of the year of 60 years which make up the Korean century. Each year thus has its particular name.) he was martyred in Tchuen tchou (Jeonju, capital of the province of Kien la tao Jeolla-do)

– Why do you denounce only the dead? Denounce all your co-religionist friends.

– R. (the unfortunate here shades the glory of his dialogue) I have none.

– Why don't you change your resolution?"

– A. How can I change a holy resolution?

They close the little trunk that contains my books and take it to the judge. My sister bears the same witness to the truth. They pick up the Hiong teul (this is the name of an instrument of torture), they bring out the pieul tchang (this is the name of another instrument of torture). True Christians do not feel torture; strike, strike, says the tyrant.

– Will you change your resolution, will you persevere in your plan? Do you feel the blows?

– A. How could I not suffer?

– Change your resolutions.

– A. When I read the Christian books, I changed.

- Can't you change anymore?

– A. From the bosom of ignorance having perceived the truth, I cannot abandon it.

– If your head were cut off, would you go straight to Heaven?

They strike without stopping, we do not stop repeating the holy names of Jesus and Mary.

The tyrant: – are you determined to die?

– A. It is our great desire.

– D. Bad subjects that you are, you would like to die quickly? We will beat you without count and without number.

Finally they stopped hitting me. However, my sister, her head bent under the cangue and exhausted, sighs for martyrdom, which she never ceases to ask for, as well as the assistance of the Lord. This has been seen and heard by a multitude of people.

I cannot prolong this story, I cannot develop the innumerable thoughts which fill my soul. The 29th of Chi oeul (this is one of the names of the 11th moon) Peter Yi: My legs were

all torn apart; they were just an open sore. However, thank God, I haven't suffered much yet. I have wished peace to all Christians, and I want to hear news of them.”

One of the captives also sent her relation; but as it is only an abbreviation of this one, I did not think it necessary to send it. On January 26, the day Mr. Chastan entered Korea, a faithful Christian named Agatha Kim went to Heaven to receive the palm of the martyrdom that she had suffered the day before. The tyrant who ordered it is the same one who tormented Christians in the first persecution 37 years ago. It seems that the years and this last experience have somewhat softened the inhumanity and barbarism of his character. It is reported that having learned of the death of this martyr, he said: “I will no longer meddle in the affairs of Christians.”

The first administrators and the great ones of the Kingdom, mandarins and others, do not concern themselves with the affairs of Religion. They are committed to maintaining the government in the status quo during the king's minority. He is only 10 years old; however they married him last spring. One of the great, special friends of the first and principal regent of the kingdom; the same one who gave a letter of recommendation to facilitate the introduction of my late dear Lord of Capsus into Korea, never ceases to show us marks of careful protection. In the autumn of last year, towards the south, there were some turbulent spirits who wanted to form a conspiracy against the young king. The government immediately went after them. Many of them were arrested. Kin (Kim) (this is the name of the human protector whom Divine Providence has arranged for us in Korea) fearing that we might be confused with the rebels, immediately went to find the First Regent, and conversed with him on the suspected authors of this rebellion, when the examination came to the Christians, “There is nothing to fear from them, said Kin, our protector, it is certainly not they who have stirred up this rebellion.” “I know it well,” replied the first regent.

Since this martyrdom of January 26, confessors have not been put to the test, as far as I know. The other Christians in one place only had the cowardice to participate in the general superstitions made on the birthday of the last deceased king. M. Chastan and I have traveled and travel the southern provinces of the kingdom up and down in all directions, without obstacles. To obviate the perfidy of the false brethren, who are the ordinary authors of persecutions, I have recommended that only those who observe the Religion be informed of the arrival of the priests, for we have timid non-observant Christians. But this recommendation could not have its full effect. Not only a large number of non-observants know of our arrival, have seen us, but many pagans themselves. So that, if Divine Providence did not protect us in a very special way, we would already have been in Heaven or in the prisons of Korea for months. It is to your prayers, Gentlemen and very dear brothers, that we owe our entry and our miraculous preservation in this country. We would be incapable of rendering just thanksgiving to God, so please, we implore you, please, continuing your holy work towards its end, please offer him sacrifices of thanksgiving and dispose him to continue this Divine protection for us. M. Chastan told you about his entry into Korea. It was easier than the preparations.

The evening before my departure, at the very moment when the Christians who were to introduce him had gathered to greet me, another Christian came to strike fear among them. The kouant tsai, employees who fulfill the office of gendarmes in France, he says, are in pursuit of the insurgents, they search travelers, deploy their goods and examine even the saddles of horses. Sin pou nai nien tio kê somneta (신부(님) 내년 좋겟스비다) it is good to postpone until next year, added one of the couriers. The expedition seemed a little difficult to me. Mr Yu wanted to go back, it was a question of sending three children, and introducing M. Chastan. It was a month full of daily danger. Because Mr. Yu could not speak Korean, and therefore unable to answer the inquisitors, he would have been arrested at the first meeting as well as all those who accompanied him, from there a general persecution. M. Chastan, on

coming in, was in the same danger. How jen tse mo yang hao, (what do you think of this case?), I say to Mr Yu? (He had spent the whole day with us.) Ouo pou pa oao tcheu, he says, laughing, (I'm not afraid, I'll leave). I reflect a little before the Lord. I could not imagine any accident happening to them. I therefore worked to dissipate their fear, and I had the happiness of succeeding, if not in dissipating it entirely, at least in weakening it sufficiently. I promised them to offer, every day, during this dangerous expedition, the Most Holy Sacrifice to obtain for them a happy journey and a happy success, and they resigned themselves to leaving. Divine Providence seconded our wishes. M. Chastan entered and reached the middle of the kingdom without experiencing the slightest accident. M. Yu and the 3 children arrived in the same way at Pienmen. Mr. Yu was out of danger. We have reason to believe that Divine Providence continued its benign protection to the children, at least until Macao, because if they had been arrested in China, the Korean government would have been informed by the Chinese that the Emperor sent here in last October, and we would infallibly have received some news.

M. Chastan had fortunately arrived, I no longer had to fear any wrong-doing against the Religion in Korea; I was relieved of the care of the children; the Christians most eager to receive the sacraments had been administered; those most eager for instruction had received answers to their questions; I finally found myself freed and able to give some time to the study of the language for which I had not been able to find 4 free days. I retired to Yanggeun, 14 or 15 leagues from the capital. After 4 weeks of study I administered a Christian village. M. Chastan, after 2 months spent studying an examination of conscience translated into Korean, considering himself able to hear confessions without and with an interpreter, heard a hundred of them in the city where he had stayed and then came to find me in Yanggeun. We spent the Easter holidays together and then we went, he towards the south, and yours truly towards the north. We met on July 16. He was returning to the city to take a rest, I intended to continue and visit some villages which had not yet been administered.

On the 18th, 19th, and 20th of July I found myself overwhelmed with fatigue and heat. I was locked up in a house, and a small enclosure where I could breathe without suffering only towards the middle of the night. However, I administered this Christian village. I reckoned that the outside air might bring me back my strength and my health, and I continued my journey; but on the contrary the evil worsened. From the 20th to the 21st I was attacked by such a fiery fever that I felt as though I was clothed in a garment of flames. This attack lasted about twenty hours; I thought I was at the end of my days. I sent for Mr. Chastan, who must have been only a dozen leagues away. However, the fit passed, and convinced that I could not carry out my project, and thinking that I could more easily cure myself in the city, I resumed the road. M. Chastan arrived there a day or two after me. Several physicians were consulted; none had experienced this sort of fever. Far from weakening the disease, their remedy intensified it so much that, if I had not interfered in governing myself, they would probably have led me to the grave. It was after having taken the first portion of one of their remedies that M. Chastan as well as the Christians who were at home, believing my end had come, administered to me all the help of our mother the Holy Church. The Holy Eucharist had no sooner appeared in my cell than I felt the signs of a better future. From that moment on my health continued to improve. However, the attacks of burning fever kept me for three months unable to do anything for the administration and the study of the language.

Today, thank God, my health is perfectly restored; it's been about ten days since I returned to work. M. Chastan left 15 days before me; he left me the letters which you will doubtless receive with this one. Last September he made the report of our administration, and sent it with his letters to Pienmen, convinced that the man whom he had charged to come there on the 9th moon, would be there. He sends it to you.

After two years of repeated requests, 3 times each year, the Christian former mandarin finally obtained permission to go to Beijing this winter, on condition that he give from his own purse (where there can only be borrowed money; he is burdened with debts) 70 ounces of silver to the one whose function he exercises. He will bring, I hope, the trunks of the late my very dear Lord of Capsus and of your servant which have been sometimes on the way and sometimes in storage in China for five years. This path to bring our European effects, apart from its uncertainty, is even more difficult than I had imagined. Our Korean Christians cannot bring to their apartments in Peking our trunks prepared elsewhere; they must arrange them in the form of common merchandise, and wrap them up before the eyes of their pagan compatriots, whence it happens that it is rather difficult to bring books and other religious objects of the same form.

I sent a catechist with this ex-mandarin. He is an old hand: he is making the trip to Beijing for the 20th or 21st time. He promised to bring everything. The reason for this negotiation of our ex-mandarin is quite extraordinary: it is to buy European curiosities for the first time that the First Regent of the kingdom sends him. It is the first time, and perhaps also the last, that our ex-mandarin has always reason to think like this on his own account; and so he will come back again without means to bring our objects from China here. Besides, if we had this means, the difficulties that accompany their use would always deter me from using them, if I could find other passable ones. This contains a thousand imminent dangers of certain persecution in Korea, and perhaps in all the dependencies of the Empire of China. Accept, Gentlemen and very dear colleagues, the assurance of my respects and the sincere attachment with which I have the honor to be in union of prayers and Holy Sacrifices.

Your most humble and obedient servant
Pierre Philibert Maubant

A short note from about the same time

To Mr Legrégeois [Received July 21, 1838]
Sir and very dear colleague

Despite your accuracy in sending us our Viaticums as well as to all our other Missions, yet we have only felt the effects during the time we have spent on the way. If you think like me about our correspondence by sea, please support us and make for this path to an even better work, the introduction of the Europeans whom your prayers have finally brought to Korea, which will depend on you. According to the reports of M. Chastan and others, people would be able to embark in Macau for Korea. Here is how: navigators from Jiangnan would take the objects that you would have sent to Fokien or Tchekiang and would bring them to Ouangou from where they could in less than two hours at high tide time transmit them to our Koreans. There are not 3 leagues from Ouangou to the place where our Christians have promised me to go and expect to go to receive either the Missionaries or their belongings. For this we would need a Confrere in Liaotong on the sea coasts which border Korea. All others could only be Chinese who would rather work to do their own business rather than ours. It is necessary, as you know better than I, to use minute and fatiguing precautions if one does not want to be duped in these countries. Even Christians, honest people moreover, appropriate without scruple what belongs either to the priest or to the missions; this is what I have heard and sometimes seen from Fokien to Korea inclusively. I send you 15 small roots of this Korean plant so famous in China, which is called here 'insam', in China 'jinsan'. Although it is not the same color as those sent to China, it is nevertheless the same. I send it to you with its natural color to spare the wearers the dangers to which they

would have been exposed if it had been reddened. Accept the assurance of my respects and the perfect attachment with which I have the honor to be in union of prayers and Holy. Sacrifices