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Mainstream culture and the inculturation of Catholicism in late Chosŏn Korea

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Sages appear in the Eastern Seas; they have the same mind, the same principle. Sages appear in the Western Seas; they have the same mind, the same principle.

Lu Jiyun, 1150

Abstract.....	5
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
Early Catholic Praxis	15
Will of Fidelity: Yi Pyŏk	28
Orthodox Heresy: Chŏng Yakchong and Chŏng Yakchŏn	59
In Defence Of Orthodoxy.....	82
Letters to Paris, Reports to Rome: French Missionaries in Korea, 1836 – 1886	112
Conclusion	152
Bibliography.....	155

Abstract

This thesis attempts to apply inculturation theory to early Catholicism in Korea, focusing specifically on applying it in a way which recognises Korean society's influence on the incoming belief system. Previous studies of the subject have tended to deal with Western influence on Korea's society – my hope is to recognise and discuss the flow of influence in the opposite direction: how did mainstream Korean worldviews, including Confucianism, shape the Korean understanding and expression of Catholicism? The study period dates from 1784, when the first Korean was baptised into the Catholic church, to 1886, when France and Korea signed a treaty which gave the first official recognition to Catholicism within Korea. This work analyses the poems, letter, catechisms and writings of those involved with early Korean Catholicism to provide examples of points when a unique, syncretic form of Catholicism emerged, fusing Catholic beliefs with classical Eastern aesthetic forms and thought-modes.

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Introduction

When Yi Sŭnghun 李承薰 (1756-1801) was baptised into the Catholic church in Beijing in 1784, he could not have known what a seismic effect his decision would have on Korean society. What began as a thought-experiment by a marginalised group of aristocratic intellectuals grew to become an illegal religious movement which would undergo harsh suppression, play an indirect role in Korea's interactions with colonial powers, and, many years later, play key roles during both the Japanese colonial administration and the struggle for democracy.

In this study I have attempted to understand how Catholicism was expressed and understood in Korea during the religion's early history on the peninsula. By analysing the original writings of those involved in the religion, whether Korean or foreign, pro- or anti-Catholic, I hope to uncover the specific ways in which Catholicism was adapted and moulded to Korea's particular culture, a culture which was based on Ming Chinese Neo-Confucianism and represented an entire system of metaphysics, social guidelines and moral education. Necessarily this undertaking involves working, in the main, with documents written by aristocratic literati and the French clergy who attempted mission in Korea. The thinking of Catholic *paeksŏng* 百姓, the "ordinary people" who maintained the guttering flame of *sŏhak* once the aristocratic practitioners had been sanctioned, deserves extended and thoughtful analysis too, but such analysis is beyond the scope of this study, particularly considering the relative paucity of documents from the period 1801 – 1836. The first chapter, *Early Korean Catholic Praxis*, does examine some of the relatively small corpus of evidence left to us by non-aristocratic early Catholics.

I have adopted Chung's (1995) definition to classify Korea's brand of Confucianism as a thought-system which "anchors a society, offering its members a stable world view... through this normative order, which contains values, norms and rules."¹ Such a system will ultimately have a profound effect on the cultural tropes introduced into it, including Catholicism.n

1. Inculturation

This study is focused around one question: how did Catholicism respond to the Korean culture it entered? Common sense tells us that a new belief system, coming into a country in the form of isolated scraps of doctrine, which is then picked up and propagated by a group of men steeped in Confucian tradition, could *not* remain impervious to change. The process by which incoming cultural tropes are influenced by their host settings is called inculturation, and this term is very often used to specifically describe the arrival of Western Christianity in non-Western societies. The "fusion of Christianity with Mediterranean cultures"² is itself a classic example of inculturation – one so powerful that it persists to this day. While there is a considerable body of work examining the inculturation of Christianity in African societies, and many scholars have undertaken discussions of Christian inculturation in the Chinese sphere, but there is something of a gap concerning Christian inculturation in Korea.

Therefore, I intend to leverage some of the previous work and methodologies concerned with African and Chinese Catholic inculturation to arrive at a greater understanding of Catholicism's early inculturation in Korea. Of course, caution is needed. Korea's situation was unique, and differed from that of China and most of the African societies exposed to Catholicism in several key ways. Western state economic and military power was not directly involved with Catholicism's early propagation on the peninsula as it was in Africa; and in contrast to China, there was only very limited early adoption and toleration of Catholicism amongst Korean elites, and even this was very short-lived before the religion became taboo in public life; and foreign missionaries in Korea – principally French members of the MEP³ – entered the country clandestinely. Their very presence was illegal.

But the "typical" African missionary project, what Boulaga critically dubs "a Christianity of empire"⁴, does also have some important parallels with the Korean situation. Boulaga argues that imported religion posed a greater threat to the persistence of local African cultures than anything else, as African religious practices are engrained in local cultures. The relevance to Korean society, where Confucianism dominated – a quasi-religion which infused every aspect of Korean life – is intriguing. As we will see, Catholicism was strongly resisted as it was perceived as posing an existential threat to Korean society. Hillman (1993) also challenges the narrative of inculturation accompanying

¹ Chung, Chai-shik, *A Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World: Yi Hang-no and the West*, Seoul: Korea Research Monographs. 1995. 1

² Hillman, Eugene, *Toward an African Christianity: Inculturation Applied*, USA: Paulist Press, 1993. 35

³ The MEP, or Missions Étrangères de Paris – "Paris Mission Society".

⁴ Boulaga, Eboussi, *Christianity Without Fetishes: A Critique and Recapture of Christianity*, translated by Robert R. Barr, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984. 17

“modernity” which is typically used to justify incoming western military, economic and cultural (including religious) dominion. The similarities here with Korea during the late Chosŏn period are less striking, the Church acting as it did without any official presence on the peninsula.

Bhaba (1994) discusses the concept of “hybridity” as the reverse of inculturation, where a cultural element becomes recognised and feared as a threat to authority, precisely because it simultaneously reflects the authority and warps it. But the work of thinkers like Uzukwu (1996), Laamann (2006) and Nyenyembe (2011) is still an excellent starting point for a discussion of Korean Catholicism. An inculturation-focused approach, after all, begins and ends with a fundamental acknowledgement that culture transfer is a two-way process, and this study hopes to provide ample examples of exactly that two-way exchange by directly referencing primary sources written by those involved in early Catholicism on the peninsula. Munga (1998) details the 1976 conference of African theologians, EATOWT 1, which explicitly called for a re-centring of theological study towards understanding religion in Africa in the context of African life and culture and a new methodological approach to the study of inculturation of religion in Africa. In Munga’s words, this proposed shift – which we can see filtering through into church and secular inculturation studies by the early 1980s – “draws to the center of the interpretational procedures the question of universality and the limitation of the theological interpretation”.⁵ We can apply this viewpoint to early Korean Catholicism by asking: how “universal” were the “universal” concepts of Catholic orthodoxy? What kind of room for negotiation or re-shaping was there concerning doctrine, practice and understanding? Uzukwu’s work is significant because he explicitly calls for inculturated Christianity to be viewed with a mindset which is “setting aside elements of a foreign view of the world propagated with intensity since the era of colonialism”⁶, something I aspire to with my own work: examining Korean Catholicism not as a passive acceptance from outside of a western belief system but of a dynamic, two-way process where Korean culture – a specifically Korean Confucian culture – influenced the incoming creed arguably *more* than it was itself influenced by Catholicism. Some ethnic groups in Africa “maintain the fundamental aspects of their traditional culture”⁷ simultaneously alongside imported Christianity. Did this happen in Korea, and if it did – how? Just as Uzukwu calls for an “African theology of inculturation”⁸ so I hope to make a modest contribution to a an emergent historical theory of Korean inculturation, by adapting the broad framework of these prior studies:

1. a definition of the host culture: its organisation and philosophical foundations
2. a discussion of how and why Catholicism was introduced to the host culture
3. an examination of the local church’s relationship with its host society and with central Catholic authority – autonomy, doctrinal adaptation and response to local needs

1. and 2. have been covered extensively in both Korean- and English-language scholarship. It is 3. that bears the most likelihood for new work; English-language work on the topic has paid little attention to Korean Confucian influence on imported (and subsequently indigenified) Catholicism. Munga (1998) argues that the new African inculturation theory stems from Africans’ understanding of the impact of the western colonisation process, and must be understood in conjunction with independence movements, pan-Africanism, and local nationalist, socialist and communist ideologies. This then gives us a framework for a broader way to understand those involved in a inculturation project in general:

[Inculturation involves] mobilizing the symbolic structures of several cultural contexts: their own; that of the colonial agents and missionaries through whom Christianity was transmitted... the cultures of the ancient worlds that influenced and shaped the production of the Bible.⁹

This is a lens which has immediate historiographical parallels with Korean scholarship on Catholicism and Confucianism. African independence and nationalist movements reached their apex in the 1950s and 1960s, exactly the period when Korea was most viciously torn between capitalist and communist systems, sought to break the shackles of colonialism and foreign intervention, and longed to assert itself and its people’s identity on the world stage. So while Antonio (2006) cautions against relying overly on

⁵ Munga, Stephen, *Beyond the Controversy: A Study of African Theologies of Inculturation and Liberation*, Sweden: Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, 1998. 39

⁶ Uzukwu, E, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, New York: Orbis.1996. 3

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. 5

⁹ Antonio, Edward P., *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology*, Peter Lang, 2006. 17

abstract, theoretical definitions of inculturation – the process inherently reflects the culture it is involved in and therefore takes widely varying shape from context to context – nevertheless there are some common strands present in every discussion of inculturation, and in this work I will attempt to demonstrate how they apply to early Korean Catholicism.

Accordingly Iraola (2007) found something unexpected occurred during his time as a Catholic priest in Korea in the 1980s; Korea influenced and changed his understanding and practice of Catholicism. If this was the case for a clergyman in the modern era, how much more so would it be for the Frenchmen who entered the peninsula from 1836 onwards, isolated from their Western hierarchy and totally immersed in their new host culture? Or for the *yangban* 兩班 literati who essentially created a version of the religion based on their understanding of a small number of Catholic works written in classical Chinese?

1. Culture: creating and reflecting

Huang and Zürcher (1993) detail the way in which Confucian ideals were constructed so as to eventually become fundamental to China's culture – and also presented in such a way as to be of greatest utility to China's leaders. The same process occurred in Korea. By the late Chosŏn period (generally agreed to be from the late 16th century through to the end of Korean independence in 1910) Confucian ideals were continually mobilised and exploited to maintain the privileged position of the *yangban* 兩班, “two branches”, the aristocratic literati who controlled the country.

The Confucian ideals were first publicly venerated, then institutionalized into vehicles for state employment, and finally propagated at various local levels... such diverse promotions of Confucianism are not for personal growth cultivation and growth as the Confucians and Neo-Confucians originally envisioned, but in order to shape and produce a docile, manageable and “loyal” populace.¹⁰

Fauconnet-Buzelin (1996) reminds us that we can only ever act and perceive in accord with our historical context and personal experience. We judge any epoch with the values of our own time. While Fauconnet-Buzelin's claim serves as meta-evidence for my core hypothesis – that context and milieu are fundamentally influential on behaviour and understanding – it is also a warning. Meanwhile Chung (1995) argues that we should examine a culture of a given milieu at least as closely as its politics or economy. “Culture is much more stable and resistant to change than are a society's economic and political forces. Consequently, a fundamental alteration of a society is rare, because it requires extensive changes in its shared cultural orientation.”¹¹ Catholic Koreans sought to fundamentally change late Chosŏn Korea, though as we will see, the central thrust of my argument is that they saw their efforts and beliefs as compatible with their host culture. For their part, of course, the Korean establishment perceived Catholicism as a fundamental threat to Korea's traditional culture.

Accordingly the early history of Korean Catholicism (synonymous with Christianity for much of the period) is a fascinating example of how thought-systems are created and adapted and how they are defined as orthodox or heterodox. Indeed key to this study is the concept of orthodoxy: how immutable truths – foundational principles – appear. There are concepts in every culture which everyone “knows”; things and idea which have “always” been accepted as the fabric of a given society. These truths have an origin somewhere. The specific origin of Catholicism in Korea, at least, is well defined: Korea became a self-evangelised culture, one of only a very few. Christian knowledge had been filtering in to Korea in a very limited way as intellectuals examined Christian works via China, but in the late 18th century Koreans performing official diplomatic functions in Qing China made direct contact with Western Catholic clergy, having researched the creed in their homeland, and then brought the new faith back home with them.

Korea in the late 18th and 19th century was a complex society that was quite different from Catholic Western societies. Huang and Zürcher (1993) describe the Confucian cultures of the East as “basically normative” humanism – the Confucian saw humanity as a process, rather than a destination or an endpoint; Confucianism involved active engagement with the process of improving oneself and society. The *how* and the *what* of Confucian culture were inextricably linked; the process of self-cultivation was the aim. Furthermore, material existence had an innate order to it which was intrinsically harmonious and *good*; every being, particularly the human, had a place in that order. The human's moral duty was to devote themselves to understanding that place and fulfilling its concomitant

¹⁰ Huang, Chun-Chieh and Zürcher, Erik, *Norms and the State in China*, Leiden: EJ Brill, 1993. xii-xiii

¹¹ Chung, 1995. 1

obligations. Confucianism was¹² “firmly pragmatic”,¹³ focused on the practical concerns of harmonious and individual group life, but its thought also strove towards “cosmic symbiosis”¹⁴ – it was not merely “scheming instrumentalism”.¹⁵ The Confucian human understood themselves only in relation to others; family, neighbours, countrymen. The five relationships, *oryun* 五倫, provided detailed schema for every relationship in a person’s life. While the theme of the individual formed an important thread of intellectual enquiry it was only through relationships with others that the individual could grow and express their humanity. Catholic practices – heteropraxes – threatened and warped these relationships in ways which were fundamentally unacceptable to Korea’s Confucian culture. The Confucian concern for one’s relative position in society is the key to its insistence on orthopraxy. If a person or group decided to engage in behaviour outside of prescribed limit, that would affect their relationships with others. Nothing could exist in a vacuum, and a harmonious society could not accept or tolerate deviant practices, as they would inevitably have a harmful effect on other members of the society. An individual’s selfishness, laziness or mistaken beliefs would ultimately act to harm others, no matter the philosophical justifications for such behaviours – Confucianism was “averse from abstraction”¹⁶, and therefore new concepts could only have value when they fitted harmoniously with the entire system.

Discussion and debate were central to the Confucian intellectual tradition, as we shall see, and thinkers devoted entire lives to complex and innovative examinations of the core points of their doctrine and controversial issues. The Confucian concerned with self-improvement used formal education as a strategy for working towards enlightenment. But he or she did not slavishly parrot the words of their forebears (though memorisation of classic tracts was a key building block of a Confucian education). Instead they sought to examine afresh the assumptions of their milieu. Confucianism did not demand intellectual conformity or hidebound acquiescence. It *did* demand adherence to certain practices which were seen as utterly essential to a morally-ordered existence. These practices – including loyalty to one’s monarch and ritual respect paid to departed ancestors – were not to be challenged, and had been laid down in the great works of antiquity. As the founder of the Ming dynasty, late Chosŏn Korea’s cultural wellspring, had argued:

How can they be changed?¹⁷

Thus when early Catholic Koreans began leveraging their Confucian educations to describe and propagate Catholic ideas they used the tools of the milieu to do so – “concrete images, stories and anecdotes showing morality in action”¹⁸ – but their efforts were not successful. Oh (1993) summarises the conflict between the dominant Confucianism of late Chosŏn Korea and Catholicism as “political, cultural and ideological”;¹⁹ in other words, in every relevant sphere Korean Catholicism found itself, at various points, in opposition to its host culture.

2. Reflexive Methodology

Examining the methodology and aims of this study immediately raises essential epistemological challenges. Chung (1995) discusses the inherent problems in historical examination of any culture. Examining one’s own culture one may “tend to overlook things that outsiders may consider important. This pitfall is comparable to the tendency of the foreign observer who brings ethnocentric categories from his own culture to the understanding of someone else’s culture, whether those categories fit or not.”²⁰ As a Catholic born and educated in the West, I have sought to recognise and mitigate my own biases and assumptions while undertaking this study. The story of early Korean

¹² Confucianism remains an important cultural influence and thought-mode in East Asian culture. The past tense is used here to denote reference to the societies covered by the scope of this study.

¹³ Huang and Zürcher, 1993. ix

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.* x

¹⁶ *Ibid.* xiv

¹⁷ *Yü-chih ta kao hsü-pien*, in *Huang Ming chih-shu* (1579), Tokyo: Koten kenkyūkai facsimile edition, 1966/1967. Translated in Clunas, Craig, “Regulation of Consumption and the Institution of Correct Morality by the Ming State”, in *Norms and the State in China*, Chun-Chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher (Eds.), Leiden: University of Leiden, 1993. 41

¹⁸ Huang and Zürcher, 1993. xiv

¹⁹ Oh, Kangnam, “Sagehood and Metanoia: The Confucian-Christian Encounter in Korea”, in *The Journal of American Academy of Religion* volume 61 [2] (1993). 305

²⁰ Chung, 1995. vii

Catholicism is a story of interpretation, and necessarily any study of the topic is yet another mediation. A subject defined so fundamentally by its scholarly and doctrinal foundations – whether Korean Confucian, Western Roman Catholic, or some combination – also presents another interesting challenge to the historian; there is literally a contiguous lineage of scholarship leading from the historical figures’ writings through to modern-day discussions of the subject.

Sō (2014) details the conflict within modern Korean scholarship concerning the early Catholic church. On one side, there are historians who are cautious of “material which does not fit well with the historical facts [and] requires thorough criticism.”²¹ On the other, theologians, often practicing Catholics, who “have considered these materials to be reliable without thorough criticism.” Sō is himself a historian, as one might guess from his statement, but – as we shall see – he has a point; much of the modern theological scholarship on this topic is insufficiently critical. Additionally some concerns have been raised over the authenticity of at least one major source, Yi Pyōk’s *Sōnggyo yoji*, which are discussed in the chapter examining it. But I have still made extensive, and hopefully nuanced, usage of church sources – they can be of supreme utility to the historian, whether they discuss their orientation or not. Iraola’s (2007) work, for example, is a sensitive and detailed discussion of the methods and organisation of early Korean Catholicism despite his caveat that “historical research is not the aim of this work.”²² Instead his objective, as shared by other church thinkers consulted in this study like Ri (1989), is to uncover the “theological and philosophical rationale”²³ behind the work of the early Korean Catholics. As historians of religion we seek to take one step back, not directly discussing the strengths and weaknesses of a particular viewpoint - where scholars like Iraola and Ri engage in extended discussion of the appropriateness of a given argument, and how effective such a viewpoint might be in further propagating Catholicism, as historians we instead concentrate on outlining its context and influences.

3. Late Chosŏn Korea

The Korea of this period was a fascinating culture (Palais, 1984), “closed, hierarchical and quintessentially Neo-Confucian in its morals and ethics.”²⁴ Having enjoyed a relatively stable, isolated agrarian existence under a single dynasty since 1392, the country’s lack of social mobility was an important factor in the maintenance of the social status quo. Its intellectual culture, meanwhile, was dominated by vigorous debate amongst the *yangban*. At times these debates directly influenced politics, and during the period of this study the elite layer of Korean society was deeply riven by political factionalism which had its roots in doctrinal and praxis-related disputes.

The specifically Korean form of Confucianism of this period, which provided an entire legal and moral code, was very well established and entrenched by the end of the late Chosŏn. The Canon of National Law, *Kyōngguk taejŏn* 經國大典, was introduced in 1460 and explicitly bound up particular legal obligations with *ye* 禮, or propriety (Cawley, 2015). Legal obligation, public duty and private self-cultivation were all within the remit of the Confucian ethical system, and the virtuous person was never to spare any area of their life the most rigorous continual self-evaluation.

By the late 18th century this particular brand of Confucianism, the Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi, had deeply influenced all of Korea’s customs, institutions and culture. The hybrid nature of its ruling class, the *yangban* aristocracy, was also a direct result of the influence of the particular thought-mode dominating the peninsula. The *yangban* theoretically derived their legitimacy from the moral example they provided as a result of their understanding and practice of the great books of classical Eastern antiquity. Ostensibly entrance into the ranks of the *yangban* was meritocratic, but in practice the process had bend debased somewhat by the late 18th century, and commoner ascension to *yangban* status through academic achievement was rare, if not impossible. The *kwagŏ* 科擧 exam system which provided a means for entrance to government office was often corrupted by prominent families to ensure they remained influential. Though the monarch ruled the country the *yangban*, or those of them involved with government, generally enjoyed a high degree of influence; Willett Wagner describes the king as “*primus inter pares*”, ruling a society which “at its finest point of balance represented a kind of

²¹ Sō, Chongt’ae, “Ch’ogi Han’guk ch’ŏnju kyohoesaui chaengjŏm yŏn’gu” (“초기 한국천주교회사의 쟁점 연구”) (“A study on issues around early Korean Catholic Church history”), in Church Research Journal 46, 2015. 180

²² Iraola, Anton Egiguren, *True Confucians, Bold Christians. Korean Missionary Experience: a model for the third millennium*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 42

²³ Ibid. 42

²⁴ Finch, Andrew, “The Pursuit of Martyrdom in the Catholic Church in Korea before 1866”. 2009. 97

constitutional monarchy, but that more normally tilted between degrees of tyranny and of an ochlocracy of aristocrats in which the king was little more than a figurehead.”²⁵ Leaving aside the question of whether aristocrats could ever be described as making up an ochlocracy, Willett Wagner’s analysis is accurate, and as we will see, the Korean ruling elite exerted decisive influence over the throne during the period 1784-1886 at several key points in the history of Korean Catholicism. For example, King Chǒngjo’s support of the Catholic-containing Southerner faction in the face of strident criticism from its enemies is a perfect example of Korean monarchs’ tendency during this period to “accede to minimum demands until faced with ultimate choices.”²⁶ Chung (2001), meanwhile, provides a fascinating and persuasive view of the context into which Catholicism in Korea was introduced. He sees the late Chosŏn as having taken the “suicidal”²⁷ course of calcifying its values and ideals:

Authority rather than reason was the criterion of truth... By the sixteenth century, society was completely arrested in growth, poisoned by this ideal of the perfect-man. The veneration of idealized ancestors dried up the stream of progress.²⁸

The intellectual culture of the period was not irredeemably cynical, however, by any measure. Some of the greatest minds of Eastern thought emerged and engaged in sincere and critical reflection of their society. The doctrinal lines along which the various factions had separated allowed them to claim a moral imperative for their manoeuvrings, with each believing they represented correct, orthodox thought. Wagner (1974) cautions that, although some of the original differences between the various factions appear trivial on the surface, they can not be merely dismissed as excuses to engage in struggle “motivated by desires for economic affluence and social prestige.”²⁹ In other words, the philosophical underpinnings of their struggles were sincerely-held beliefs.

And while the politics of the late Chosŏn were ruthless (Willett Wagner, 1976) there are multiple examples of respected individuals either attempting morally-rooted, idealistic reform or conversely refusing to engage with corrupt administrations and groups. As we might expect from a society attempting to express “pragmatic idealism”,³⁰ the late Chosŏn establishment response to Catholicism was based firmly on real-world action. Its condemnations of *sōhak*, “Western thought”, were based only on legal condemnation of and moral disgust at Catholics’ various outrages. Catholicism, however, had supernatural sanctions at its disposal, eternal reward or punishment, and this inducement/threat horrified Chosŏn thinkers for its apparent efficacy.

Accordingly, Catholicism remained an irredeemably fringe philosophy. Unlike in China, where Christianity enjoyed some periods of official acceptance, and was even directly influential on some legislation in one isolated episode (Zürcher, 1993), the Korean establishment never really wavered in its rhetorical condemnation of the incoming creed.

4. The French Missionaries

The first Frenchmen to arrive in Korea were members of the MEP. Although Korea was initially evangelised by Koreans, those indigenous Korean Christians came into contact with Catholicism through meeting Catholic missionaries in Beijing, and so from the very earliest days of the Korean church Korean Catholics hoped to connect with the Western Roman Catholic administration.

A full and comprehensive discussion of the Catholic missionaries’ activities, methods and philosophies in East Asia is beyond the scope of this study, but the main points should be quickly outlined. Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) was appointed Visitor to the East in 1573, and during his time in Macao he noted that the local efforts were aimed at Europeanising Chinese Christians (Riestra, 1986). They were “compelled” to wear European clothes and take Western names, and Western clergy had not learned Chinese. Valignano felt that a different approach was needed, and so he summoned Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) in 1579 and asked him to begin learning Chinese in preparation for mission to the Chinese mainland. Ruggieri began journeying to the mainland from Macao and also began to make contact with Chinese authorities. He was joined by Matteo Ricci in 1582. Ricci made extensive efforts to use the local culture of China to explain his beliefs, mastering Chinese and adopting

²⁵ Willett Wagner, 1974. 2

²⁶ Ibid. 3

²⁷ Chung, David, *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginnings in Korea*, 2001, Albany: State University of New York. 23

²⁸ Ibid. 26-28

²⁹ Willett Wagner, 1974. 1

³⁰ Huang and Zürcher, 1993. ix

local customs. He succeeded in sparking interest in Catholicism in some Chinese nobles, and his strategy – accommodation – was then adopted by Jesuits all over the world.

By the late seventeenth-hundreds, however, the French Revolution had almost completely put a stop to European missionary activity. It was Napoleon's decision in 1805 to revive a number of missionary orders, including the *Missions Étrangères de Paris* (MEP), which would eventually lead to the Western clergy presence in Korea (Iraola, 2007). The MEP took on responsibility for many missions and areas which had been previously administered by the Jesuits, who had been suppressed by Clement XIV in 1773.

While the Jesuits in China had concentrated on recruiting the elite, and consequently consistently engaged in sophisticated debates with intellectuals (Zürcher, 1997), the Frenchmen who began arriving on the Korean peninsula in 1836 did not have much opportunity to do so. They entered the country secretly and faced imprisonment and execution if captured, very unlike their earlier counterparts in China who had enjoyed direct access to the highest echelons of Chinese society. Accordingly the letters and diaries of the Korea-based missionaries show little of the doctrinal explanations which Ricci, Ruggieri and others devoted so much time to in China. Iraola (2007) sees the arrival of the Frenchmen in 1836 as a “return” to a missionary method he labels “*conquista*.”³¹ He defines *conquista* missionary activity as typically occurring alongside military and economic intervention in host cultures – essentially the model followed by Spanish and Portuguese colonialists. Clearly that was not the case in Korea, where small bands of clergy slipped into the country illegally, but the intellectual mindset of *conquista* missionary activity was very much in evidence – to begin with. As we shall see, the French missionaries were unable to influence Korean culture and Koreans without themselves being influenced, even if they were not able to admit to such processes occurring, although at least ostensibly the Frenchmen followed a conception of religion which had not changed since the mid-14th century:

Incorrect interpretations, or other unorthodoxies, had to be condemned as the antithesis of such truth, as heresies. Authority, as in the word of God, was the only acceptable truth.³²

In other words, Catholicism (much like orthodox Neo-Confucianism) was an immutable and unchangeable truth. Nyenyembe (2011) summarises the traditional missionary outlook:

The priesthood we have inherited from missionaries functioned in a top-down model and looked at the lay faithful as being at a lower grade in the Church, indeed like children... expatriate missionaries and the local priests looked abroad.³³

Hillman also recognises the entrenched Western cultural bias of the Church:

What passed for evangelism during the past hundred years was in reality a dissemination of the western experiences and expressions of Christian faith. These foreign religious interpretations of the faith with their alien cultural accoutrements and social constructions, were translated literally... typically, the translations were exclusively linguistic and literalistic.³⁴

Finch (2009) sees the French priests' understanding of their religion as “distilled from the ‘Tridentine’ Catholicism of contemporary France”³⁵ – battered by secular assaults on their institution they retreated into a calcified and ultra-conservative administrative conception of their beliefs. But even such an entrenched mindset could not prevent their new host culture from deeply influencing their works.

So where, then, is the line between immutable and negotiable doctrine? For inculturated Catholic societies all over the world, it has been fluid – at times the immutable has been fluid, what Tyrell (1907) recognises in the knowingly oxymoronic phrase “the relative inertness and immutability of orthodox theology”.³⁶

³¹ Iraola, 2007. 40

³² Strathern, Paul, *Death in Florence: the Medici, Savonarola and the Battle for the Soul of Man*, London: Vintage, 2012. 132

³³ Nyenyembe, Jordan, *African Catholic Priests: Confronting an Identity Problem*, Cameroon: Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group, 2011. 33

³⁴ Hillman, 1993. 4

³⁵ Finch, Andrew, “The Pursuit of Martyrdom in the Catholic Church in Korea before 1866”. In *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60 (1) (January 2009). 103

³⁶ Tyrell, George, *A Much-abused Letter*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907, p40

5. Terminology, scripts and sources

Throughout this discussion the terms “Catholic” and “Christian” are used interchangeably. The first Protestants reached Korea in the mid-nineteenth century and therefore the majority of this study concentrates on time periods which predate their arrival. The decision is merely a stylistic flourish and is designed to slightly relieve the monotony for the reader of encountering the word “Catholic” several times in a single sentence.

All of the original Korean-language sources referenced in this study, including Korean prayers and catechisms written by French clergymen and anti-Catholic legislation and polemics, are available in modern readable versions, either in print or online. The French-language sources I have cited, too, are all available in modern academic works. The second and third full chapters in this study, *Will of Fidelity* and *Orthodox Heresy*, deal with works written by prominent aristocratic Korean Catholics, respectively Yi Pyök’s *Sōnggyo yoji* and Chōng Yakchong’s *Chugyo yoji*. The fourth full chapter, *In Defence of Orthodoxy*, deals with the sustained and coherent establishment response to early Catholicism, considering philosophical treatises, legislation and royal decrees. By contrast the relevant Latin *Ad Urbem* (“To the city”, ie to Rome) reports I have quoted alongside appropriate French-language sources in the fifth and final full chapter, *Letters to Paris, Reports to Rome*, are only available in the Vatican archives, which I visited in the spring of 2015. These reports, held in the Vatican’s *Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide* (“Historical Archive of the Propagation of the Faith,”) archive, are challenging documents – the ink is now very faded and much of the ornate handwriting is difficult to read. Any errors or omissions in the original Latin text, which is provided where I have quoted my translation as a footnote, are due to my incorrect reading of the handwritten original. Additionally, paper was a precious resource at the time, leading the writers to pack lines very closely together on a page and use both sides of a piece of paper. However, once I had become accustomed to the style of handwriting used I began to appreciate how unique and useful these documents – never before translated into English – were.

The first full chapter of this study, *Early Korean Catholic Praxis*, provides an overview of the specific activities of early Korean Catholics, and amply illustrates the innovative forms their religion took as it absorbed the influence of the broader Korean social milieu.

Early Catholic Praxis

Introduction

Korean Catholicism exhibited some unique and fascinating practices in its early period. These practices are relevant to this study in light of Baker's (1999) assertion that correct praxis was the overriding concern of Korean orthodoxy: doctrine was only valuable – or tolerable – if it inculcated proper behaviour. Accordingly the practices which arose from early Korean Catholic praxis deeply dismayed the social establishment, and also at times took on forms which troubled the European Roman Catholic administration.

The potential within Catholicism for disruption – in terms of its being a heterodox belief-system – was not a problem in itself for the Korean establishment. Variant, sometimes deviant, philosophical discussions and schools of thought had long been tolerated in the East Asian intellectual sphere. Zürcher (1997) notes that Eastern thought-systems allow for discussion and debate around “metaphysical, ontological, and other theoretical subjects... that in a Western context would be essential elements of orthodoxy.”³⁷ Only when a doctrine affected behaviour did it cross over into unacceptability. Baker quotes Donald J Munro's assessment of Eastern conceptions of the value or danger of a particular philosophy:

What was important to the Chinese philosophers, where questions of truth and falsity were not, were the behavioral implications of the statement or belief in question... what kind of behavior is likely to occur if a person adheres to this belief? Can the statement be interpreted to imply that men should act a certain way? ³⁸

Thus dispute was inevitable: Catholicism prescribed certain ways of acting, some of which were to come into irreconcilable dispute with Korean societal mores. There is an irony to the fact that the early Korean Catholics' cultural background as late Chosŏn Koreans obliged them to read their religion as one obligating particular praxis, even when those practices brought them into grave conflict with that same culture. This potentially self-destructive intellectual predisposition, towards assessing a doctrine on its practical implications, was well established within Eastern intellectual culture; even thinkers condemned as heterodox like Chŏng Tasan and Mo Tzu sought to evaluate their worldviews on their practical applications and consequences (Baker, 1999).

From the late 18th century onwards “many followers”³⁹ of one of the central voices of Korean moral orthodoxy, T'oegye Yi Hwang 退溪李滉 (1501-1570), argued for Catholicism to be labelled as one of the supremely harmful philosophies, on the basis of the practices it inculcated (Baker, 1999). T'oegye's ideas had been explored and propagated through the work of Sŏngho Yi Ik 星湖李瀾 (1681-1763), who in turn had overseen a branch of Korean intellectualism which eventually counted the orthodox anti-Catholic thinkers Sin Hudam and An Chŏngbok (see *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*) as members. (The Chŏng brothers and Yi Pyŏk, who feature prominently in later chapters, along with many other prominent early *yangban* Catholics, were also members of this lineage.) Yi Ik found a belief unacceptable if it led to violation of any of the “touchstones”⁴⁰ of Confucianism – loyalty, filial piety and selflessness. As we will see, at various points Catholicism was seen to encourage repudiations of all three.

But however far Catholics moved from their host culture, the cultural bedrock of the Korea of this time was supremely important in influencing the Catholicism which emerged, with Confucianism in particular playing a vitally important role:

In the web of factors which inspired, motivated and confirmed Christians in their chosen

³⁷ Zürcher, Erik, “Confucian and Christian Religiosity in Late Ming China”. In *The Catholic Historical Review* 83 (4) (October 1997), 614-653. 616

³⁸ Munro, Donald J, *The Concept of Man in Early China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1969. ix. Quoted in Baker, Donald, “A Different Thread: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian World”, 1999. 3

³⁹ Baker, 1999. 4

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5

course, these Catholic elements were complemented or reinforced by others, which had their origins in the nature of contemporary Korean society and the fact of a church leadership that had traditionally been formed by members drawn from the Confucian elite. The Church in Korea was inevitably constrained and shaped by a social context in which Chu Hsi Neo-Confucianism had been the predominant ideology since the fifteenth century.⁴¹

Deviant practice was the spark behind the first official legal punishments of Catholics. The Punishment Board administrative division of the government surveilled a secret religious meeting in the Seoul house of the Catholic and *chungin* 中人 Kim Pömu 金範禹 (1751-1787), where Kim and other early Catholics were conducting a religious ceremony in 1785 (Dallet, 1875). The *yangban* Catholics involved were not punished or detained, but Kim was tortured and subsequently sent into exile, where he died, thus becoming Korea's first Catholic martyr. The March 1785 rescript *Ŭlsich'uchojökbalsagön* 乙巳秋曹摘發事件 (“*Official Government Rescript Exposing the Incident in the Autumn of the Year of the Serpent*”) was written in response to the arrests, and stridently criticised Catholics for the unacceptable practices they had been engaging in: painting their faces white, wearing hoods over their heads and prostrating themselves before foreign books. It's notable that this first official encounter with Christianity apparently involved rituals which weren't based on typical Roman Catholic practice. *Ŭlsich'uchojökbalsagön* also first deployed the phrase *mugunmubu* 無父無君之學 in relation to Christianity: “without foundation, without ancestry” (Bae, 2014). This criticism – Catholicism's suspect provenance – would go on to form a key part of the official objections to the religion (see the chapter *In Defence of Orthodoxy*). Although some government figures called for strong suppression of Catholicism at this point, more moderate opinions prevailed. It would not be long, however, before other Catholic practices would lead to widespread condemnation (Choi, 2006; Cawley, 2012).

1. The Ch'önjinam scholars

The men who gathered to study Catholicism from 1777 held themselves to a rigorous standard of ascetic living, in common with Confucian scholars throughout the East. Yet even in these earliest days they were beginning to forge a unique and syncretic way of life which placed Christian belief within an Eastern classical framework. Byun's (1984) church history hagiography outlines their daily routine:

Everyone rose at dawn and washed in cold water of the mountain spring... they recited proverbs as a mental self-discipline. These were taken from various Christian works... they observed the Lord's Day every seventh day according to the lunar calendar.⁴²

This way of life is very similar to the daily routine followed by the fiercely anti-Catholic 19th century scholar Yi Hangno 李恒老 (1792-1868)⁴³ (Chung, 1995); Yi Pyök, the Chöngs and their companions still hewed rigidly to the forms and conventions of their cultural context even as they explored ideas which would turn out to be unacceptable within that same cultural context.

Byun's reliance on Dallet (1875) as a source betrays a general weakness in the church histories on this topic, of all eras. Dallet is cited directly in an attempt to explain the scholars' embrace of Catholicism:

The scholars, who were familiar with the illogical and contradictory theory of Chinese classics, were anxious to find the truth so they readily and willingly responded to what was beautiful and reasonable in Catholicism.⁴⁴

Byun's portrayal is not accurate or reasonable: to portray these men as frustrated with or unfavourably disposed towards the classics of Chinese literature which had formed the bedrock of their education is simply incorrect. Any examination of their subsequent works, as later chapters will show, reveals a deep appreciation for and conscious and unconscious emulation of those same classics in form and rhetorical and artistic method. Byun and Dallet's aim is to revere Catholicism, not to denigrate Eastern classicism,

⁴¹ Finch, Andrew, “The Pursuit of Martyrdom in the Catholic Church in Korea before 1866”. In *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60 (1) (January 2009), 95-118. 116

⁴² Byun, 1984. 21-22

⁴³ For more on Yi Hangno and his influential attacks on Catholicism in the mid-19th century, see the chapter *In Defence of Orthodoxy*.

⁴⁴ Dallet, 1874. Quoted in Byun, 1984.

but the historian in search of objectivity must regularly examine these types of biases when consulting church history sources.

Although Catholic practices of this period were denounced and viewed with suspicion, it was not until an incident in 1791 that the new religion was finally declared completely unacceptable.

2. 1791: The Chinsan Incident

The Korean attitude to the ancestral rites illustrates the societal position on orthodoxy versus orthopraxy. Although the rites were only actually a correct memorial observance for one's ancestors, many ordinary Koreans (and Chinese) viewed them as a supernatural process by which spirits were contacted. This view of the rites was vigorously protested by the intellectual elite (Iraola, 2007), who mirrored classical orthodoxy in believing that the rites were simply an expression of respect:

The superior man looks upon [ancestral rites] as a fine gloss put over the matter, while the common people consider it supernatural. He who thinks it is a gloss is fortunate; he who thinks it is supernatural is unfortunate.⁴⁵

In truth, though, it did not matter if the commoners had an incorrect understanding of the meaning of the rites, as long as they practiced them correctly. One of the tragedies of Korean Catholicism is that this widespread popular misconception of the meaning of the ancestral rites was picked up by the Western Roman Catholic administration, and based on this understanding, they insisted that Eastern Catholics not perform the rites – subsequently exposing Korean Catholics to significant hardship and suppression. The view on ancestor worship had not been uniform throughout the Western church; while Dominicans and Franciscans opposed ancestor worship totally, Jesuits felt that the tablet was an image rather than a literal resting place for the soul (Ch'oe, 1998).

Ultimately the less accommodative viewpoint was victorious when Pope Clement XI (1649-1721) proscribed rites worship for Eastern Catholics in 1704. When they became aware of the church's stand on the rites, Korean Catholics sought in vain for ways to balance their religious and cultural duties (Ch'oe, 1988). A Catholic, Yun Yuil 尹有— (1760-1795), begged Beijing's bishop Alexandre de Gouvea (1751-1808) to reconsider the decision in 1789:

Yun: It renders the life of a Catholic convert very difficult not to be allowed to observe an ancestral memorial rite. Can't there be any way to overcome this hurdle?

De Gouvea: Catholicism attaches great importance to sincerity; and the offering of foods to the dead violates sincerity.⁴⁶

Catholicism held that the spirits of the dead were departed and should not be invoked. Their mistaken understanding was that the Eastern rites involved a supernatural form of communication with the spirits of the departed (Mungello, 1989). The proscription of ancestor rites was a severe blow to the Korean Catholic project, as ancestor worship was crucially significant to life in the late Chosŏn. As we shall see, the consequences of its prohibition would be exceedingly severe.

Yun Chich'ung 尹持忠 (1759-1791) was a cousin of the Chŏng brothers who had converted to Catholicism upon Yi Sŭnghun's return from Beijing in 1784, and when his mother died in the spring of 1791, he and his Catholic cousin Kwŏn Sang'yŏn 權尙然 (1751-1791) decided to abrogate their mourning responsibilities associated with the ancestral tablets, believing the practice to be idolatrous. They burnt all of the ancestral tablets in their possession and buried the ashes, as well as burying Yun's mother as a Catholic (Baker, 1999). Outraged relatives reported their actions and the pair were arrested. The leading figure calling for action against Yun and Kwŏn was Hong Nagan 洪樂安 (1752-?), a senior member of Chŏngjo's court – and, like Yun and Kwŏn, a member of the *Namin* 南人 (“Southerner”) faction.

Finch (2015) argues that this incident provided a kind of rallying point for Korean Catholics, as their first taste of martyrdom – and in their minds, a signifier of eventual success, a mirror of the

⁴⁵ Hsün Tzū, “Discourse On Heaven”, in *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, translated by Huttin, Eric L, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. 181-182.

⁴⁶ Ch'oe, Ki-bok, “Ancestor Worship: From the Perspective of Confucianism and Catholicism”. In *Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea*, Jung Young Lee (Ed.). Studies in Asian Thought and Religion, volume 8. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988. 40-41

travails of the Western church during its early epoch. (The principal figures involved in prosecuting the case eventually met ignoble fates themselves, a development which was taken by Catholics as a sign of divine providence.) Korean society at large, meanwhile, saw the Catholic ambition for martyrdom as “a shocking novelty... there was no eschatological or soteriological encouragement for martyrdom”⁴⁷ within the Korean cultural milieu or doctrinal tradition. The after-effects were significant; Roux (2012) sees the affair as marking the turning point which “transformed the academic controversy against Catholicism into political suppression.”⁴⁸ The Catholic attitude towards martyrdom is further discussed below.

Yun expressed his beliefs while under investigation, and there is a decidedly Confucian slant to his argument – worshipping the tablets was actually disrespectful to one’s parents:

They have no flesh and blood relationship with me. They did not give me life nor educate me... how can I dare to treat these man-made pieces of wood as though they were actually my mother and father?⁴⁹

When Yun was asked by the court to briefly summarise his creed, he again attempted to frame it in as Confucian a light as possible:

What we practice can be reduced to the ten commandments and the seven virtues.⁵⁰

Destruction of ancestral tablets was not unknown; the establishment had some previous examples of destruction of ancestral tablets to draw upon when deciding the appropriate punishment, and the legislation Article 104 of the Great Ming Code, entitled “Discarding or Destroying Things Such as Utensils or Crops” 棄毀器物稼穡等, advised that those “destroying ancestral tablets shall be punished by ninety strokes with the heavy stick” 毀人神主者, 杖九十.⁵¹ There are also recorded cases of those guilty of similar crimes being sent into permanent exile. But Yun had not only betrayed his parents and ancestors; he had compounded his heinous crime by his practice of studying Catholic works, which had been prohibited by King Chǒngjo in 1788. In other words, his heteropraxy was motivated by heterodox thinking, and the *combination* of the two necessarily resulted in extremely harsh punishment. In his memorial to the King, Hong Nagan reported that the cousins’ crime was legally analogous to the offences of “Uncovering Graves” and “Destroying Bodies”, thereby requiring a penalty of execution. They had also violated *samgang osang* 三綱五常 (“Three Bonds and Five Virtues”) – the bonds of superiority of ruler over subject, fathers over sons and husbands over wives and the virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity. Clearly influenced by Hong’s analysis, the monarch’s final judgement was draconian:

For those liable with a crime linked to the [three] bonds and [five] virtues: after the case is concluded and the criminals executed, their wives, sons and daughters shall be enslaved. Their houses shall be destroyed [and replaced by] a pond, the district [where the criminals lived] shall be dropped in rank, and the county magistrate shall be relieved of his duties.⁵²

Thus both men were sentenced to death. Yun and Kwōn were beheaded on the 8th of December 1791. Clearly the combination of grave heteropraxy and an alien and dangerous heterodoxy resulted in exceptionally harsh punishments. The obverse point is that neither destruction of the ancestral tablets by themselves, nor espousal of a foreign philosophy, would have been sufficient to result in the kind of condemnation which the two cousins received. Next we will examine the place of another group of early Catholic worshippers who became the target for harsh criticism and calumny: women.

3. Women in the Church

⁴⁷ Finch, Andrew, “The ‘blood of the martyrs’ and the growth of Catholicism in late Chosōn Korea”. In *Historical Research* 88 (242) (November 2015), 675-692. 681

⁴⁸ Roux, Pierre-Emmanuel, “The Great Ming Code and the Repression of Catholics in Chosōn Korea”, article in *Acta Koreana*, 15 (1) (June 2012), 73-106. 78

⁴⁹ Dallet, 1874. 48. Translated in Baker, 1999. 26

⁵⁰ Dallet, 1874. 43. Translated in Baker, 1999. 27

⁵¹ Translated in Roux, 2012. 79-80

⁵² Roux, 2012. 81

Torrey (2012) argues that once the early elite scholars who had espoused Catholicism were executed or exiled, the religion began to drift increasingly far away from Eastern philosophical orthodoxy, showing “a growing emphasis on specifically Catholic, other-worldly themes, with little, if any, reference to Confucian motifs.”⁵³ While this holds true for the writings and beliefs of “commoner” Catholics throughout the nineteenth century, I propose later in this thesis that the Korean-language work of the French missionaries is significantly influenced by the Korean milieu.

One strikingly unique aspect of early Korean Catholicism was the prominent involvement of women in its organisation and worship, several of whom will be discussed here in detail. Females played important roles within the church as messengers and organisers (Iraola, 2007; Cawley, 2015), and Torrey (2016) argues that female activity within the early Catholic church

afford[ed] women more freedom and agency than the traditional system and even... disrupt[ed] the status quo.⁵⁴

Torrey goes to quote a number of contemporary Korean scholars who provide compelling evidence that women involved in the church strove for equality, within the church hierarchy and in Korean society as a whole. For example, Torrey cites Dallet’s (1875) recounting of two women arrested and detained for their Catholicism in 1815, Yi Anna and Ch’oe Barbara, who were given the chance to apostasise and so win their freedom, in contrast to companion male Catholics who had been summarily executed. They insisted that they be treated the same as the male detainees, a request motivated by their understanding of Catholic doctrine:

According to you, the men should honor God, their supreme Father, but the women should not. Such talk is useless. I only expect that you treat me according to the laws.⁵⁵

While women were denied agency and influence in public (Torrey, 2016), the *naewabōp* 内外法 (“law of private and public domains”) directed that they should have primacy in organising the affairs of the household, and this meant that certain women grew to be extremely influential in the early Korean church, as so many of its activities were undertaken secretly inside the private residences of believers. By 1839 women formed such a significant proportion of Catholics that the anti-Catholic royal edict *Ch’ōksa yunūm* 斥邪論音 specifically addressed them at points (Rausch, 2012). (See the chapter *In Defence of Orthodoxy* for more on *Ch’ōksa yunūm*). Additionally, one of the potential motivations for Chōng Yakchong’s *Chugyo yoji* having been written in *han’gūl* (see the chapter *Orthodox Heresy*) was due to the fact that a large proportion of the church’s membership was made up of women. Cho (2004) notes that the social milieu of the time provided “almost no opportunities”⁵⁶ for women to socialise outside of the home, and therefore the activities and social links provided by Catholicism also acted as another factor to encourage female involvement, a motivator quite outside of the specific attraction of Catholic doctrine – several modern studies have underlined the importance of the social dimension in encouraging participation in religious activity (Weiss Ozorak, 1989; Witter et al, 1985).

Kang Wansuk (1761-1801) amply illustrates the syncretic and adaptive nature of early Korean Catholicism. She was a member of the *pansō* subclass, those who had *yangban* heritage as the children of concubines, and she was well educated. The Chinese priest Zhou Wenmo (1752-1801), clandestinely present in the country, created a special role for her, *yōhoejang*, “female catechist” – “responsible for all matters relating to women in the church, in particular for their conversion and religious training”.⁵⁷ Kang trained and indoctrinated many women by herself, providing shelter and food for destitute women at her home (at least one point in her life she was a wealthy landowner). She was arrested in April 1801 during the intensive hunt for Zhou Wenmo, and died in prison on the 2nd of July of that year, unwilling to renounce her faith even under harsh torture. As Torrey (2016) notes, the fact that Kang was executed is in itself evidence of the important role she played.

Kang was highly-regarded by her contemporaries, who praised her zeal, education and personal qualities:

⁵³ Torrey, Debernieri Janet, “Separating from the Confucian World: the shift away from syncretism in early Korean Catholic texts.” In *Acta Koreana* 15 [1] (June 2012), 127-145. 142

⁵⁴ Torrey, Debernieri Janet, “Transcendence and Anxiety in the Prison Letters of Catholic Martyr Ludgarda Yi (1779-1802)”. In *Journal of Religion and Literature* 47 [3] (Fall 2016), 25-55. 26

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 26

⁵⁶ Cho, 2002. 121

⁵⁷ Ledyard, 2006. 47

Because of her thorough understanding of doctrine, her articulateness in speech, and her powers of argument, a very large number of people were converted. She was impressive in dealing strongly and decisively with any matter.⁵⁸

Hwang Sayōng, of course, had a direct interest in portraying other Catholics as impressive and morally-upright personages, but nonetheless Kang did play a very important role in the church's activities at this point. She trained and indoctrinated many women by herself, and leaving aside the accuracy or otherwise of Hwang's hagiographic descriptions we can appreciate the unusualness of a woman taking a lead in any social movement of this era.

The Korean Catholic church also challenged late Chosŏn norms by insisting that male Catholics treat female companion members gently and compassionately. The norm for the era was that males in dominant positions (fathers, husbands, older sibling) had supreme authority over their female relatives; women could be beaten and castigated when their behaviour was not virtuous. Concubines were bought and sold as property. Female children were less favoured than male, and were sometimes exposed. Women were discouraged from marrying again if their husband had passed away (Maynes, 2012).

In contrast, the Catholic church insisted that male converts refrain from beating wives and maintaining concubines (see *Letters to Paris, Reports to Rome*) and argued against forced marriages. Female children were to be celebrated, not cursed or left to die of exposure. Korean Catholics also broke yet another deeply-held social taboo by teaching widowers that they could remarry (women of the *yangban* class in particular were strongly discouraged from marrying again). Cho (2004) uses quotations from *Sŏngch'al Kŭryak*,⁵⁹ a prayer book written in c. 1864 by the French clergyman Daveluy (1830-1884), to support his argument for the unusual agency and consideration which Korean Catholicism gave to its female members, but earlier writings also provide compelling evidence – the extant diaries of some Catholic women, for example, provide a record of the unique ways in which they exercised agency over their own lives. To mitigate hostility towards their celibacy some Catholic women, including Yun Chŏmhye, followed a strategy where they dressed as widowers, while one Yi Yuhŭi married a fellow Catholic man who also vowed celibacy (Cawley, 2015; Finch, 2015). This could be read as a further example of inculturation; Western Roman Catholicism, of course, had its venerable tradition of sodalic celibacy, but the expectation was for married couples to attempt to produce offspring.

Many of the early Catholic women took vows of chastity – the earliest example is Shim Agi 沈阿只 (1783-1801), a teenager who wrote of her decision to undertake a vow of chastity in the late 1790s. Kang Wansuk is joined by Yi Suni (1782-1802) as Catholic Korean women whose life presents a valuable opportunity to analyse the experience of women in the church. Yi is a particularly important figure in that she left written direct evidence of her activities; other Catholic Korean women's lives are mediated via third-person reports (Torrey, 2016). Yi was a descendant of the scholar Yi Sugwang 李晬光 (1563-1628) who had grappled with Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi*, and was also a maternal granddaughter of Sŏngho Yi Ik (1681-1763), as well as being nieces of Kwon Ch'olsin 權哲身 (1736-1801) and Kwon Ilsin 權日身 (?-1791), two central figures in the Ch'ŏnjinam group.

The vows of chastity which Catholic women often took as part of their practice were exceptional – and outrageous – for the era. Chastity and celibacy were looked upon extremely unfavourably; rejection of marriage and procreation was a grave wrong in late Chosŏn Korea, founded on the belief expressed in the *Mencius* that

there are three ways you can fail to honour your parents, and the worst is to have no heir.⁶⁰

Yet despite this strong cultural prohibition, some Catholic women clearly saw the maintenance of their celibacy as of supreme importance to their Catholic identity. As Yi wrote:

When I arrived at my husband's house, I easily obtained the thing that was the object of all my anxiety and the worry of all my days. I found myself with him at the ninth hour; at the tenth, both of us took a vow to keep our virginity, and for four years we have lived as brother and sister. During that time there were some temptations – ten times or so – when we were not far

⁵⁸ Hwang Sayōng, *Silk Letter* (1801). Translated in Ledyard, 2006. 47

⁵⁹ *Sŏngch'al Kŭryak* is covered in more detail in *Letters to Paris, Reports to Rome*.

⁶⁰ *Mencius*, 7:26. Translated by David Hinton, Washington DC: Counterpoint, 2002. 137. Cited in Cawley, Kevin, "4 Dangerous Women in the Early Catholic Church in Korea".

from losing everything. But thanks to the Precious Blood, which we both invoked, we avoided the devil's ambush.⁶¹

To mitigate hostility towards their celibacy some Catholic women, including Yun Chŏmhye, followed a strategy where they dressed as widowers (later, French clergy entering the country secretly would dress as bereaved nobles); while Yi, of course, married a fellow Catholic man who also vowed celibacy. A decision to remain celibate is summarised by Finch (2009) as “a difficult and potentially dangerous course in a society where marriage was the expected norm.”⁶² Cawley (2015) undertakes a fascinating discussion of the way in which Korean Catholics enjoyed agency in making independent discussion regarding their sexual status, but our interest here is principally *why* Catholic women rejected not just sexual immorality, but even sex within the context of marriage. What drove this “personal volition”,⁶³ in Cawley's phrase, towards celibacy?

Lay celibacy has a long tradition within the Western Catholic tradition, but its practice by Korean laywomen is notable for the conflict such a practice set up with its host culture. One possible explanation for the fervent adoption of celibacy which is examined by Cawley (2015) is that Korean Catholic women may have sought to vigorously “equalise” themselves and others in whatever ways they could – by exercising agency in whatever avenues were available to them: their sexual decisions, their important organisational and doctrinal roles, and their control of financial resources (which were sometimes used to elevate the condition of traditionally inferior portions of society).

Certain societal features may also have predisposed many of the religion's female adherents towards celibacy. While celibacy was deeply disapproved of as a rule in the late Chosŏn, some women were not permitted to marry, either for a period of time, or permanently; for example, palace servants were proscribed from marrying while undertaking their service, and Kang Wansuk recruited heavily from this demographic. Widows – also stridently discouraged from marrying again, and actually legally proscribed from doing so in the case of *yangban* women – were another important source of Catholic recruits. Thus they did not simply become celibate as a result of their encounter with the Western religion; women with experience of celibacy were attracted to Catholicism, where their celibacy could take on a personal significance. The late Chosŏn taboo against remaining unmarried served to motivate women who were compelled to be celibate towards Catholicism, women who were more or less completely excluded from performing a useful function in broader society.

Females maintained influence throughout the early period of the church's existence in Korea; during the 1839 suppression, over 65% (51 out of a total of 78) of those executed as Catholic were female (Torrey, 2016). And while ultimately their experiences within Catholicism exposed them to physical hardship, guilt and anxiety, as well as wider societal condemnation, Catholic women also “enabled a new kind of self-expression”⁶⁴ through their religious practice.

4. Children

The early Korean Catholic church taught its members that children were to be treated with kindness. They were not to be beaten or whipped, again in contrast to the typical child-rearing techniques of the late Chosŏn, when children were strictly punished by a remote father (Chung, 1995). Instead children were to be treated with love and consideration by both parents. I believe this expression of love and benevolence by Korean Christians towards their families was at least in part fuelled by a synergistic awareness of the parallel Confucian obligation to improve one's broader society through the practice of benevolence, just as Finch (2009) draws intriguing parallels between the Confucian obligation towards *in* 仁, “benevolence”, and the Christian exhortation to love one's neighbour. Christianity was a way to fulfil Confucian duties. As *The Analects* says:

The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their *in*. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their *in* complete.⁶⁵

In their turn, children were expected to honour and obey their parents, in line with both Korean cultural mores and the core tenets of Christianity. There was nothing in this praxis of

⁶¹ Yi Yuhŭi, letter to family. Translated in Ledyard, 2006. 53-54

⁶² Finch, 2009. 105

⁶³ Cawley, 2015. 88

⁶⁴ Torrey, 2016. 29

⁶⁵ Confucius, *Analects*. Adapted from a translation in Ching, *Confucianism*. 87. Cited in Finch, 2009. 106

subservience to one's parents which the establishment could object to – until Christians insisted on situating it as part of Western thought. Yi Suni's husband, Yun Chich'ung, wrote:

The basis of filial piety to parents is derived from God's commands.⁶⁶

Once again, we see how the practice of Catholicism in Korea was not potentially massively distant from the conventions of its wider Korean cultural environment, but key thought-positions served to irreconcilably sever the religion's adherents from their host culture.

Catholics also fulfilled the Biblical commandments and expressed *in* by performing extensive work caring for abandoned and orphaned children. In 1859 forty-three children were recorded as being brought up in the homes of Catholics, and in 1864 believers founded an organisation devoted to helping children, *l'Oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance* ("The Work of the Holy Childhood"). Working entirely clandestinely, and overseen by the French priest Maistre (1808-1857), the organisation "gathered up"⁶⁷ abandoned children and provided for them. The Pyŏngin Suppression, which began in 1866, curtailed these activities until 1880. In 1886, the final year of the period we will discuss here, the commencement of diplomatic relations between France and Korea was followed by the construction of the first major orphanage in Korea, administered by the Catholic church. (Yu, 1990).

5. Mixed Sex Worship

In late Chosŏn Korea, the Confucian admonition to separate the sexes after the age of seven was assiduously enforced. As mentioned above, women were chiefly confined to the home, before and after marriage, and men and women lived in separate parts of the household. Korean Catholicism interpreted the Catholic doctrine of equality in a way which saw them challenge this traditional gender separation by having close mixing between males and females, both during worship ceremonies and during the administrative activities of the church. This mixed-sex worship was viewed by society at large as indicative of sexual impropriety.

Mixed-sex worship was also conflated with the celibacy practiced by Catholics to create a twin set of reasons for denunciation. As Rausch (2012) describes it, "Catholics were thus attacked for not having enough sex and for having sex with the wrong people." Rausch's article is an excellent discussion of late Chosŏn administration dismay at Catholic sexual practices, but by using such wording he is framing the issue with a 21st century Western liberal mindset. Catholics were not attacked for "not having enough sex",⁶⁸ but – as Rausch himself recognises – "threatening the destruction of human society."⁶⁹

During an interrogation the Catholic male Ch'oe P'ilche revealed the specifics of his experience with mixed-sex observance, where males and females worshipped closely, separated only by a wall with an open window. (The conventions of the time saw suspects refer to themselves as "culprits.")

For the *ch'ŏnmye* they had put up a picture of Jesus on a wall hung with drapes. Cushions and other items had been laid out and the priest was sitting there with male [culprits]. The women from Yi'u's house sat outside the window, reciting.⁷⁰

The testimony of Sŏ Kyŏng'ŭi, a young female convert, made more explicit the sexual impropriety thought to be inherent in Catholicism:

There was a man who was called "the head of the church". Brother Hong's mother shared a seat with the *kyoju* [catechist] as he instructed the two ladies. Culprit saw such scenes several times... one night, when culprit, without particularly thinking about it, opened Lady Song's door and looked in, a man suddenly jumped up and ran out to the back door of the side room... later, a man's shoes were seen in the cabinet, and Lady Song again said they were just female slave Hong's shoes.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Dallet, Charles, *Histoire de l'Église de Corée (History of the Korean Church)*, Paris: V. Palmé, 1874. 52

⁶⁷ Cho, 2002. 124

⁶⁸ Rausch, 2012. 57

⁶⁹ Ibid. 57

⁷⁰ Ledyard, 2006. 55.

⁷¹ Ibid. 55-56

Sŏ and Choe's statements illustrate how deeply conservative the cultural milieu was at the time. While the presence of a male in a female's bedroom at night can be reasonably interpreted to be evidence of sexual activity, note that the fact male and female worshippers simply sat next to one another was given the same prominence. The interrogation of another Catholic woman, Yun Chŏmhye, also revealed details of the mixed nature of worship:

It has been six years now since Brother Zhou [Zhou Wenmo] has been a hidden visitor in Wansuk's house. In each month there might have been six or seven, sometimes even ten or more holy days when the scriptures would be read and studied. Men and women from all over [would come] for the lectures, participating all together, and culprit assisted on these occasions.⁷²

Yi Kyŏngŏn, a brother to the celibate Yi sisters, was arrested and interrogated in 1827. His captors also charged that Catholics engaged in sexual immorality (Rausch, 2014). While Catholics saw mixed-sex activities as an important way to express their belief in equality before God, the state sought to discredit the new religion by emphasising the sexually-immoral aspects of its practice.

6. The search for martyrdom

There was a persistent and defining obsession with martyrdom for some early Korean Catholics. The topic features heavily in their writings (see Torrey's 2016 examination of Yi Suni's prison letters) and also features in interrogation records and establishment criticisms of Catholicism. Contemporary church histories also still display a welcoming attitude to death in the service of religion; Byun (1984) describes Kwŏn Ilshin's martyrdom as "receiv[ing] the laurel of glory."⁷³ Finch (2015) sees the fact of Korean martyrs having existed "almost from the church's very inception" as vital in having shaped "a purely Korean cult."⁷⁴ Both myself and Finch also believe that the French clergymen's institutional memories of the attacks their organisation had suffered during the French Revolution were influential in the development of the early Korean church's attitude to martyrdom. The Frenchmen's desire to be martyred was rooted in the values of French "Tridentine" Catholicism, the brand of the religion disseminated by the French clergy (See *Letters To Paris, Letters To Rome*).

Finch (2009; 2015) has examined martyrdom in the Korean Catholic church, labelling it "an important and positive element in Catholic mission"⁷⁵ on the peninsula; arrest, imprisonment and torture acted as a stimulating factor for the production of Catholic writings and increased religious activity. This argument is rigorous. Men and women risking their lives for their faith "doubled down" on their commitment – the consequences were so severe that only those who truly believed in the faith would continue to propagate it. Then, of course, there is the eternal reward for the martyr. My own view is that this cult of martyrdom contributed to some of the risk-taking and elaborate schemes engaged in by certain of the early Korean Catholics and French clergy. Finch delves deep into an impressive collection of sources discussing the particular nature of French seminary education to support his assertion:

Martyrdom, seen in the context of a sinful, transient and corrupting world, thereby became the pre-eminent path to salvation, combining as it did purgative and atoning suffering in imitation of Christ with the promise of heavenly reward and a special relationship with God.⁷⁶

Martyrdom also potentially provided an avenue for wider dissemination of Catholic ideas, as captives debated with prosecutors and communities discussed purges, and Catholics sought to express their ideas publically whenever possible. Even while imprisoned and often while undergoing torture the education of many literati Catholics, including women, influenced them to engage their captors in debate (Finch, 2009; Ledyard, 2006; Iraola, 2007):

It is clear from surviving curricula that debates could be sharp, inquiring and wide-ranging. Women of the *yangban* class too would have received some degree of education: Yi Yŏnhŭi, was said to possess a 'great intelligence', while the magistrate who interrogated the ladies-in-

⁷² Court records, interrogation of Yun Chŏmhye. Translated in Ledyard, 2006. 51

⁷³ Byun, 1984. 27

⁷⁴ Finch, 2015. 691

⁷⁵ Finch, 2015. 675

⁷⁶ Ibid. 678

waiting, Pak Huisun and Chŏn Kyŏngnyŏb (herself described as ‘having... a remarkable intelligence’), berated them for following a superstitious creed such as Christianity, even though they were better educated than most women.⁷⁷

In addition to these face-to-face confrontations, of course, Catholics published detailed and comprehensive justifications of their faith using the tools and language of the establishment (see *Orthodox Heresy, In Defence Of Orthodoxy* and *Will Of Fidelity*).

Much of the testimony, interrogation records and writings of Koreans who were martyred for their faith support Finch’s (2009) conclusion that martyrdom was the primary objective of a significant minority of early Korean Catholics – ie, those who were actually martyred.⁷⁸ Yet both Finch (2009) and Rausch (2012) caution against perceptions of the early Catholic Korean community as composed exclusively or even overwhelmingly as martyrs. Martyrdom was not the typical result for most early Korean Catholics – only a minority sought death in service of their religion. Finch holds that Catholicism “was in any case a fairly safe investment: for most, the sacrifice and stigma were only potential.”⁷⁹ Inevitably, the most fervent and extreme cases are the ones which are most readily apparent to the historian, while in actuality during any given wave of suppression Catholics were given ample opportunities to apostasise, and at all points of the movement’s early history, many did so; some people apostasised on multiple occasions over their lifetime. The letters of the French clergy, Imbert, Huin et al record frustration with constant apostasy and re-baptism by Korean commoners in the mid-18th century (see *Letters To Paris, Reports To Rome*). The authorities also often accepted “equivocal responses”⁸⁰ as apostasy, and the aristocratic intellectuals who founded the Korean strand of Catholicism also presented several prominent cases of apostasy (Korea’s first baptised Catholic, Yi Sŭnghun, renounced his faith on three separate occasions).

Yet late Chosŏn Korea was a culture almost entirely absent any tradition of martyrdom, and the fact that even a small minority of Koreans were willing to die for their religion is worthy of examination. There are a few examples of worthy deaths in the great Chinese classics which form the seedbed of Korean culture, but it was not until Catholicism was introduced that replication of these examples would be seen as desirable. What is relevant to this thesis are the ways in which Korean Catholic martyrs presented and understood their travails through the artefacts of their Neo-Confucian milieu.

Finch (2009) argues that familial bonds – Confucian family bonds, three of the cardinal relationships – were expressed through Catholic martyrdom activities. Families begged to be martyred or imprisoned together. The marital bond “proved particularly strong with eight couples suffering martyrdom.”⁸¹ Children “followed their parents’ example.”⁸² Twenty-one of those martyred during the 1839 *Kihae* Suppression had lost family members to the 1801 *Sinyu* Suppression – “such awareness may have chimed with an indigenous concern with family genealogies, which valued the achievements of notable ancestors and hankered after posthumous respect.”⁸³ *Chesa*, ritual obeisance to departed ancestors, was often performed on the anniversary of the death of a Catholic martyr (Finch, 2015). Yi Pyŏk eventually publically renounced his Catholicism in response to his father’s threats of suicide (see *Will Of Fidelity*), while Kwŏn Ilsin traded a qualified renunciation of his religion in exchange for a place in exile close to his mother. I support Rausch’s (2014) argument that these decisions were the result of Confucian “moral obligations to the family... [coming] into conflict with the Catholic emphasis on the relationship between God and human beings.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, Rausch believes that early Korean Catholics who did pursue martyrdom sought to fuse their cultural milieu with their religious beliefs by “creatively reinterpret[ing] Catholic notions of the afterlife in accordance with Confucian morality.”⁸⁵ In something of a contrast to Finch, Fauconnet-Buzelin (1996) argues, without providing evidence, that the proportion of insincere Christians found in Korea was “without doubt” less than that found in other established national churches. (This assertion seems to be at odds with the picture painted by the French priest Pierre Maubant (1803 – 1839) in his formal reports from the peninsula.)

⁷⁷ Finch, 2009. 108

⁷⁸ See translated excerpts from Dallet’s records of confessions and interrogations in Finch, 2009.

⁷⁹ Finch, 2009. 115

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 105

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 108

⁸² *Ibid.* 108. Dallet volume 2 presents multiple examples of various combinations of family martyrdom.

⁸³ Finch, 2009. 111

⁸⁴ Rausch, 2014. 214

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

There *was* a significant tradition of relentless physical and mental dedication to a task within Korean culture: the scholar's effort to understand the Way. An exemplar Confucian devoted his entire being to self-mastery, and we can see that these types of attitudes were reflected by Korean Catholics. One martyr, Ch'oe Kyōnghwan, "engrossed himself in frequent meditations, pious readings, an ardent charity and an admirable understanding of [Catholicism]."⁸⁶ This could be the epigraph of a rigorously orthodox *yangban*, less the specifics of what the study was devoted to. And Finch (2009) provides a useful summary of the particular tendencies of Korean intellectual culture. The yearning for martyrdom of the Korean Catholics may have been the logical conclusion – or perhaps the *reductio ad absurdum* – of these particular tendencies:

Exhortations to act morally, pessimism concerning the present world, a tendency towards asceticism, and a concern for group solidarity and posthumous reputation were not unique to Catholicism or its martyr cult. Many of the first Catholic converts were Namin followers of the philosopher Yi Ik, and this may have had a bearing on their acceptance and understanding of the spiritual ethos surrounding martyrdom. Yi Ik developed a significant ascetic strand within his philosophy, and had emphasised the need for personal moral cultivation through control over bodily passions and desires... moreover, although Confucianism had no developed eschatological teaching, which would have promoted a desire for martyrdom, it did encourage the pursuit of virtue and the imitation of the sages. Consequently, Confucian attitudes to stoicism and virtue could have mirrored Christian concepts of martyrdom by providing *yangban* and *chungin* Christians – and possibly others – with examples of individuals who had suffered privations and death by adhering to their moral convictions, together with a received set of ascetic values. These would have been reinforced by the requirements to protect their essential humanity even in the face of death and to fulfil their social obligations to others.⁸⁷

When this particular character of the Korean intellectual psyche was combined with the significant reference to ancient Western martyrs within the Korean Catholic tradition, where Western examples of martyrdom were used to construct the peninsular Catholic understanding of the same (Finch 2009), it is unsurprising that some of those involved with the religion in Korea were so preoccupied with martyrdom.⁸⁸ An indigenous Korean martyrology also quickly sprang up, with traits unique to the milieu. Localised accounts had a resonance for their readers which the ancient stories of St Polycarp and St Appoline could never match. The family of a martyr, Won Shibo, paid their ritual respects to him on the date of his death, while other martyrs wrote documents before their death specifically for use as moral examples. The letters of men and women like Yi Suni (see above) and Yi Kwangnyōl were "valedictory epistles"⁸⁹ firmly in the Confucian tradition – apart from the beliefs they espoused.

7. Self-organising hierarchies

Iraola (2007) characterises the early pre-missionary hierarchy as "lay":⁹⁰

I consider also unfortunate that the implementation of the Korean Ecclesiastical vicariate (diocese) in 1836 meant de facto an abrupt end to the leadership role of the laity.⁹¹

The structure and function of the various posts of the pre-missionary Korean Catholic church came from a Chinese version of the *Missale Romanum* (Iraola, 2007), the standard Roman Catholic missal or order of church service. Here we see another typically Korean inculturation characteristic – interpreting a text and putting it into practice. Operating within and coming from an intrinsically stratified and hierarchical society, Korean Catholics naturally reflected this in the way they practiced and understood their religion. Figures took on *soi-distant* roles and positions (the Ch'ōnjinam group took

⁸⁶ Dallet, 1874, volume 2. 161

⁸⁷ Finch, 2009. 116-117

⁸⁸ See examples in Finch, 2009. 109

⁸⁹ Finch, 2009. 110

⁹⁰ Iraola, Antton Egiduren, *True Confucians, Bold Christians. Korean Missionary Experience: a model for the third millennium*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 40

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 40

it upon themselves to dispense the sacraments from 1784 onwards), and subsequently eagerly accepted the responsibilities and titles placed upon them by Zhou Wenmo and, later, the French priests:

An astonishing small Christianity was organised. The members nominated one amongst themselves “bishop” and the others were given the title of “priest. These “priests” preached, said the Mass with a gold chalice, took confession, gave confirmation [and] coated themselves in admirable silk garments.⁹²

Their upbringing and the world that surrounded them demanded that they create a hierarchy, even in service of an ostensibly egalitarian creed – Koreans could not understand the world in any other way. There is an irony to the truth that a sclerotic, hierarchical institution like the Catholic church was in fact devoted to an egalitarian creed; and then when it clandestinely transported itself into a foreign deeply hierarchical society it immediately began constructing a rival system. Until 1801 *yangban* dominated the early Korean church’s leadership, another trait influenced by Korea’s unique societal structure. Christian doctrine contained nothing promoting lay leadership by a scholar-gentleman class, indeed the example of the Pharisees explicitly criticised such a demographic; the *yangban* leadership is another direct example of the powerful influence of Korea’s dominant cultural influence on the shape of its emerging Catholic church.

Yet of course Korean Catholicism defied its milieu in important ways, structurally as well as thematically. Women had key responsibilities and *yangban* aristocrats were also the religion’s chief denigrators, yet nearly a third of those martyred during the 1801 Kihae suppression were also *yangban*, despite only representing around ten percent of the total population at the time.⁹³

The intellectual endeavours of some of the church’s Korean adherents is another example of their unique approach. Leveraging their Eastern classical education from the very beginning of their endeavours they began writing poems, treatises and discussions, in marked contrast to the typical process of missionary work, where Rome-approved missionaries acted as mediators of doctrinal material. Two of the most important, Chŏng Yakchong’s *Chugyo yoji* and Yi Pyŏk’s *Sŏnggyo yoji* are examined in this study in separate chapters.

8. Conclusion

The cultural setting of early Korean Catholicism placed primary importance on action rather than doctrine (Baker, 1999). The doctrine which led Catholics to orthopraxy was most significant in that it led to orthopraxy: certain cultural practices (ancestor veneration, marriage, separation of the sexes) had to be observed regardless of the philosophies followed by an individual. Their propriety was considered super-doctrinal, part of an inherent culture: it could not be challenged or analysed, so “the distinction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy was made on the basis of cultural lines, not theological lines.”⁹⁴ It was only when Catholics began to replicate practices which were not orthodox that they set themselves on course for an irreparable schism with mainstream society. The particular innovations of Catholics regarding equality among the sexes, mixing of classes and treatment of children are portrayed by Iraola (2007) as attempts at a wholesale re-casting of Korean society in light of Christian values. This is an exaggeration, for (as later chapters will show) Korean Catholics had no desire to dismantle the entirety of the Korean social structure, and many of them were quite happy to maintain seemingly oppositional Korean cultural practices alongside nominal Catholic observance.

Early Catholic Koreans also consistently displayed a talent – perhaps a mania – for independent adaptation of their religious behaviours. This was a result of the deep and rigorous Confucian education many of the movement’s figureheads had undergone. Having grown up within a Confucian cultural milieu, they found irresistible confluences between the orthodox Eastern ascetic tradition and the physical mortification of Western martyrs. And also like Confucians, Catholic Koreans presented themselves as constantly vigilant against sexual immorality – though they were portrayed as otherwise by their enemies. Korean Catholics used the techniques and psychological posture of mainstream Korean society even when their beliefs were in opposition to it. Meanwhile, real accounts of faith and martyrdom written by figures from within the Korean Catholic community both created and were a part of the same community, a self-perpetuating cycle: exposure to accounts of martyrdom fed the belief which, for some, would eventually lead to their own willing martyrdom.

⁹² Vauthier, 1966.

⁹³ Finch, 2009, 106

⁹⁴ Chu, Weon Yeol, *The Confucian Roots of Fundamentalist Ethos of in the Korean Presbyterian Church*. Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 2006. 102

The next chapter discusses the work of the seminal Korean *yangban* Catholic Yi Pyŏk (1754-1785), whose synthesis of Christian doctrine with Eastern form embodied many of the particular characteristics of the early Catholic church.

Will of Fidelity: Yi Pyök

1. Introduction

Older texts from the far East are not easily comprehensible to a Western reader... in the case of the writings of Yi Pyök, the difficulty is increased by the interpenetration of two cultures, Chinese and Korean, and the approach, unique in his genre, of a Confucian scholar who delivers the Christian message in the context and with the resources of Confucianism, while drawing from the Bible, the Christian liturgy and the writings of the missionaries to China.⁹⁵

- Jean Sangbae Ri, *Confucius and Jesus Christ*

Emerging from the same group of literati as Chöng Yakchong (see the chapter *Orthodox Heresy*), the writer Yi Pyök (1754-1786) also made a significant contribution to the corpus of native Korean Catholic literature, although his works differ markedly in style from Chöng's. As a whole, the group produced writings which presented Western Catholic ideas through the language and aesthetics of Eastern classicism: "they received and understood Catholicism on the basis of old Korean ideas or traditional Confucian thoughts."⁹⁶ Yi Pyök's own work has been described by a Catholic thinker as an attempt at creating "a supplement to Confucianism"⁹⁷. Catholicism took root during a series of *ganghakhoe*, "study meetings", which he attended along with other members of his Southerner faction between 1777-1779. The collection of individuals who met to discuss Catholicism is referred to as the Ch'önjinam group, after one of the locations where they met. Many of the men who made up the Ch'önjinam group went on to play significant roles in the very early history of Korean Catholicism; not least Yi Pyök, who holds a special prominence for church historians and members of the modern Korean Catholic church. His work *Sönggyo yoji* 聖教要旨 ("Hymn of the Adoration of God"), written some time between 1779 and 1784 "is considered the premier text for Christian inspiration in the Korean tradition".⁹⁸ His significance does not just rest on his extant works; church writings from his era through to the present day rhapsodise on the significance and quality of his work, while also mythologising his attributes. Yi Pyök seems to have been held in very high regard by his contemporaries for his learning and personal qualities, and the reverence they felt for him has influenced later writers on the subject. Many years after his death his compatriot Chöng Tasan wrote:

If he were alive, his virtue and knowledge could not be compared with mine or anyone else's in the world. But now I am alive and he is gone. Then deep sorrow comes into my mind and therefore I shed tears for him with his book in my arms.⁹⁹

Yi Pyök's extant corpus is comprised of a single long-form poem *Ch'önjugonggyöngga* 天主恭敬歌 ("Hymn of Adoration of the Lord of Heaven") and a set of forty-nine poems, *Sönggyo yoji* 聖教要旨 ("Essence of the Sacred Doctrine"). The works are important because they provide extensive evidence of innovative syncretism between Christian message and Confucian form and method, what has been called "an authentically Christian reflection with the sole resources of his Korean culture"¹⁰⁰ by Jean Sangbae Ri, a French-educated Korean priest whose 1989 study of Yi's works is closely referenced in this chapter. The work is what Ri calls an "acceptance" of Confucian truths in Christianity. Ri's term – *une reconnaissance* – is telling, unsurprising for a priest to use: for Ri, Yi Pyök did not "negotiate" or "convert" Western thought into Korean ideas. Instead he accepted a universal truth. This type of process has a strong pedigree in Korean intellectual history: innovations were often presented as rediscoveries of truth (see Conclusion, below). Ri's viewpoint actually occurs regularly throughout

⁹⁵ Ri, Jean Sangbae, *Confucius et Jésus Christ: la première théologie chrétienne en Corée d'après l'œuvre de Yi Piek, lettré confucéen, 1754-1786 (Confucius and Jesus Christ: a first Christian theology in Korea as according to the work of Yi Pyök, Confucian scholar)*, Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1989. 38-39

⁹⁶ Yi, Wön-sun, "The Sirhak Scholars' Perspective of Söhak in the Late Chosön Society". In *The Founding of Catholic Tradition in Korea*, Yu, Chai-shin (Ed.), USA: Asian Humanities Press, 2004. 82

⁹⁷ Iraola, Antton Egiuren, *True Confucians, Bold Christians. Korean Missionary Experience: a model for the third millenium*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 264

⁹⁸ Faconnet-Buzelin, 1996. 125

⁹⁹ Chöng Tasan, *Yudang chonjip*. Translated in Yi, 2004. 70-71

¹⁰⁰ Ri, 1989, 90.

Christian writing about Christianity in Korea – that Confucianism was *already* Christian. There are certainly some striking similarities between the thought systems, but it's not a proposition which bears serious scrutiny, as discussed below.

1a. Translations, versions and authenticity

Yi Pyök's work was originally written in classical Chinese, a decision which has obvious significance: unlike the *han'gŭl Chugyo yoji*, these works could only be read by people who had devoted significant time to learning classical Chinese, a tiny proportion of the Korean population at the time. Yi's political affiliations and family background also give some clue as to his motivation for engaging with his elite compatriots on their own terms. As a member of a prominent aristocratic family, he wanted to propagate his beliefs amongst fellow elites. Unlike Chŏng he was not seeking to bring Christ's message to the masses.

This chapter primarily references Yi's original classical Chinese text, with occasional discussion of Ri's French versions¹⁰¹ (1989) and the modern Korean translations found in the 1986 Hwangsŏkduruga publishing house version along with the modern Korean translations of poems 18 and 19 found in Kim Dongwon's 2014 monograph. In their original form none of the individual poems of the *Sŏnggyoyoji* have titles – Ri (1989) gave them titles of his own devising, but I have chosen not to replicate them here. The Ri and the Hwangsŏkduruga versions also differ somewhat as to the start and finish points of several of the poems, although both versions maintain thematic consistency. Below is the original text of one poem, number 18 in Ri and the second half of 18 and the first half of 19 in the Hwangsŏkduruga publication, with adjacent literal translations of the Chinese characters in the order they appear in. This chapter uses Ri's versioning unless noted otherwise. I have been unable to locate the original text of *Ch'ŏnjugonggyŏngga* so have used Ri's 1989 French translation.

¹⁰¹ Ri is a native speaker of Korean who had a thorough grounding in classical Chinese during his education before living and working as a clergyman in France, where he also completed advanced studies. He is therefore qualified to apply his own understanding and flourishes to Yi's text, though we must be aware of the extra meaning he applied to the starkness of the original.

Poem 18

Original text	Literal translation
幼丁漸壯	grow older; child/adult/bit-by-bit/to get bigger
習染殊童	to become; to develop/ to be soaked in; to be stained by/ especially/ child
詭謙襲貌	to delude/ modesty; humbleness/ to be worn/ appearance; state; face
駭笑匿衷	to ring a bell/ happiness/ to be hidden/ true thoughts
克伐驕縱	to be capable/ to strike; to hit/ arrogance/ slackness; self-indulgence
窘抑困窮	to be fast/ to change view/ hardship/ to end; to complete
倘憾墮落	perhaps/ resentment/ to drop out; to fall out/ to drop out; to fall out
機術奚庸	authority/ to be deceived/ how/ foolish

Classical Chinese is a beautiful and frustrating system. Each of the thousands of characters has many different potential meanings, and within a given clause the English-speaking reader has to engage in extensive amounts of interpretation and negotiation to produce completely coherent sentences. For example, the character 染, pronounced *yŏm* in Korean and seen in the second line, can mean “to dye or stain”, “to be soaked”, “to take on a colour”, “to make dirty” and even “to defile”. All of these meanings follow a coherent thread – a process of significant, observable change – but “to dye” is quite some way removed from “to defile”, and not all or even most characters only express a related set of meanings. For an even more striking example of the divergent meanings which characters can express, 殊, pronounced *su* in Korean, can be used to mean “to kill”, “to decide”, “to sever”, “to be almost dead”, “to be different”, “to be passed by”, “to be excellent”, “especially” and “unusually”. Therefore the translation of texts written in Chinese characters requires a holistic awareness of the historic context of the piece, the mentality of the author and the different possible meanings of the words. The intractability of Chinese as a language for the expression of Western concepts is a recurrent theme; even the polymath Catholic scholar Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) struggled to express certain Western theological concepts through Chinese characters.

Ultimately, of course, some Chinese and Koreans did ingest, understand and express Christian doctrine as written via classical Chinese. Below is my subsequent “full” English translation of the poem. Note the extensive use of bracketed inserts, necessary to produce full English prose:

Child grows into a man aged twenty little-by-little
 [Whatever he is] soaked in stains a child especially
 The appearance of false humility is put on
 Ringing laughter hides [his] true thoughts
 [If he is not] capable of striking down [his] arrogance
 Hardship [may] quickly finish [him] off
 Perhaps regret drops and falls out [of him]
 How [can he be so] foolish, deceived as to [what is true] authority¹⁰²

¹⁰² *Sŏnggyoyoji* 聖教要旨 (“*Essence of the Sacred Doctrine*”), Poem 18. Ri, 1989; Hwangsŏkduruga, 1986. 77-79.

In the interest of transparency, my translations follow the model above – my own “extra” words are bracketed. While this approach sacrifices readability, I was wary of the dangers of the opposite approach. Ri’s (1989) French versions are beautiful but make significant additions and alterations to the meaning of the original text, which in a few cases change the meaning from the original.

Some modern scholars doubt the authenticity of Yi’s purported works, as discussed in the introduction. In a detailed and clinical examination of the specific characters used in the work, Yun Min’gu (2014) argues that *Sōnggyo yoji* is a forgery completed in the 1920s or 1930s. While Yun’s work is potentially convincing, he does not advance any motivation for such a forgery, instead highlighting technical inconsistencies between versions, and a recent review of his monograph by Sō Chong’ae (2015) rebuts some of the technical points Yun makes regarding the usage of certain *hancha*, finally positing that Yun has reached his judgement overly hastily, with more work being needed before a conclusion can be reached. Nonetheless it is important to recognise that a significant body of modern scholars, not just Yun, retain serious doubts around the authenticity of *Sōnggyo yoji*. By creating a piece of work which so deeply reflects and magnifies classical Korean culture through a Catholic prism, purported twentieth century forgers hoped to further deepen Korean Catholicism’s identity as influenced by the peninsula’s cultural milieu.

One argument in favour of the work’s authenticity is the inglorious end to Yi Pyōk’s Catholic faith: he publically recanted his beliefs under pressure from his family. Despite all of the astounding stories surrounding him, ultimately he is not an ideal figure to base a corpus of forged work around – why not choose someone like Chōng Yakchong or Kim Pōmu, men who maintained their beliefs up until martyrdom? To add to the controversy, the scholars are not split on neat theological versus historical lines; Yun is an ordained Catholic priest while Sō (who has expressed general concerns over the historical validity of research undertaken by Korean theologians) is a historian.

Regardless, if the works attributed to Yi were not authored by him, they are still valuable as they provide a picture of the type of cultural heritage Korean Catholics wished to build for their creed. If his oeuvre is a forgery, we can deduce that it was important for those who committed the forgery to convince Koreans, Catholic and non-Catholic, of the intellectual connection between the new belief and the culture it now found itself in. And if such a connection was made retrospectively, by falsely attributing documents to allegedly exemplar Confucian-Christians like Yi, it still demonstrates that the falsifiers felt a need to connect their worship to their homeland, and does not change Korean Catholicism’s status as a unique syncretic cultural element.

1b. Yi Pyōk: Man and Myth

Yi’s life story is fascinating, and almost certainly embellished in part. Descriptions of him – contemporaneous or written later – report that he was a man possessing unusual physical and mental talents. These reports must be examined carefully with an awareness of their biases. Yi also apparently possessed a stubborn and defiant nature; his grandfather Yi Gūn “occupied high positions in the armed forces... Yi Pyōk should have opted for a military career as well. But he refused such a career, well suited though it would have been to his skills.”¹⁰³ As a result of his refusal to follow in his father’s footsteps Yi “lost, at least in part, his [father’s] affection”.¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting, however, that his great-grandfather Yi Kyōngsang 李景詳 had been a part of Crown Prince Sohyōn’s 昭顯世子 (1612-1645) entourage during the eight years when the Crown Prince was held hostage in China (1636-1644) by the Qing dynasty. The Crown Prince became deeply interested in Catholicism during his time in China, and brought Catholic works with him when he returned (Choi, 2006). As he died within a short time of his arrival back in Korea there was no opportunity for him to promote Catholicism.

Another source rich with information about Yi’s life and work is Charles Dallet’s monumental *History of the Church of Korea*. Like Ri, Dallet (1829-1878) was also a Catholic clergyman, and his work is also clearly that of a believer. Dallet’s description of him shows how Catholics of the 19th century wished to portray him:

He was said by Korean relations to be eight feet tall and capable of lifting a hundred pounds with a single hand... his speech could easily be compared to a majestic river. Furthermore, he applied himself to understanding all manner of things, and the study of the sacred books of

¹⁰³ Ri, 1989. 22

¹⁰⁴ Ri, 1989. 22

the country which he had made in his youth had given him the habit of always digging for the hidden meaning underneath the text.¹⁰⁵

This is clearly not an accurate description, at least not in the physical aspect. Ri concedes that Dallet may have exaggerated Yi's valour "*un peu*",¹⁰⁶ but says we must still take note of his vigour and his intelligence; and here we can see that Ri, too, has an interest in portraying Yi as impressive. Yi's propensity towards "digging for the hidden meaning" was to have a foundational influence on his expression of Christianity. As examples will show he did not simply repeat the Western Bible stories he learnt; as well as seeking to adapt them to his milieu by employing Eastern classical devices and cultural artefacts, he also engaged in a critical attempt to understand the stories further by discussing their meaning and implications. In other words, he approached his new religion as an Eastern scholar. Also a church hagiography, Byun (1984), depicts Yi Pyök in similarly hyperbolic terms:

He stood out from the other children for he was clever, calm and prudent from his early childhood. Yi Ik, who was an elder scholar of the time and knew the young child, foretold that he would become a great man... at seven, he had already mastered the Chinese Classics. One day, when he was young, he spoke to scholars about the Christian doctrine he had learned from the Chinese Catholic doctrine books brought from China by his great-grandfather. They were amazed at his clear and reasonable explanation which none of them could refute.¹⁰⁷

The parallels with Jesus – teaching the elders as a child, an auspicious birth – are clear. Ri's Yi Pyök is also intellectually exceptional:

He tried to find out the truth by reading every book he could get his hands on. Despite his knowledge, he stayed as a simple scholar, refusing to sit for the state examinations and, by doing so, precluded himself from the possibility of taking on high public office... he gained a very high reputation amongst other scholars.¹⁰⁸

This type of myth-making is a persistent theme in Korean history and historiography. From the semi-divine sage kings of antiquity, through Chosŏn and Goryŏ's legendary founders, kings like Sejong and Yŏngjo, and into the re-casting of Jesus as a paragon of Eastern virtues, reality and idealisation were often merged, as a further excerpt from Dallet's 1874 description shows:

In the year 1777 [丁酉年], the famous scholar Kwŏn Ch'ölsin, accompanied by Chŏng Yakyong and various others who wanted to acquire knowledge, went to a remote pagoda to engage in studying the deepest mysteries without interruption. Yi Pyök, having heard of the conference, was filled with joy, and resolved to go and join them. It was winter, with snow covering all of the roads, and the pagoda was more than one hundred *li* distant. But these difficulties could not stop such an ardent heart... the night overtook him some little distance from his target... there could be no-one more disappointed than he when he realised he was on the wrong path, and that the pagoda he was seeking was situated on the opposite side of the mountain! The mountain was high, it was covered in snow, and many tigers had their lairs there. Undeterred, Pyök lifted up the monks [inhabiting this other pagoda] and brought them with him. He took an iron bar to defend against attacks from ferocious beasts, and, making his way along through the darkness, he arrived at last at his destination.¹⁰⁹

Ri understatedly calls this melodramatic account of Dallet "somewhat prettified".¹¹⁰ Ri is not the only contemporary source which engages in hyperbolic depictions of Yi; in Byun (1984) Yi's "arguments were as brilliant as the sun; they struck like a hurricane and they cut like a sword."¹¹¹

Of course, historical rigour is not of primary importance in the building of a belief system, though it is crucial in its dissection. Whether we look at Yi Pyök as portrayed by his fellow Christians,

¹⁰⁵ Ri, 1989. 22, cf. Dallet, 1874. 13-14

¹⁰⁶ Ri, 1989. 22

¹⁰⁷ *The Founding Fathers of the Catholic Church in Korea (1779-1831)*. edited by Byun Ki-yung. St Joseph Publishing Company: Seoul, 1984. 19

¹⁰⁸ Ri, 1989. 22

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 23

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 23

¹¹¹ Byun, 1984. 26

or his own presentation of Jesus, we can see consistent reflections of the kind of construction of key figures which has occurred since at least the founding of the Yi Chosŏn dynasty (Haboush, 2001).

1c. Confucianism as Pre-Christian Christianity

Matteo Ricci believed that Asians had always worshipped God – and so had used the terms *sangje* 上帝, “Lord-on-High” and *chŏn* 天, “heaven”, in his writing – deploying pre-Christian terms in a Christian context. Pope Clement XI banned the usage of these terms by Catholic writers in 1701 (Mungello, 1989), arguing that the terms did not encapsulate a strictly Christian meaning, having unacceptable atheistic connotations; essentially, as they could and had been used to define an atheistic Confucianism they could not be used by Christians. But for Ri, Confucianism is *not* atheist, despite the reputation it has been given “more than once”¹¹² for the same. One of Ri’s key assertions, central to his understanding of Yi’s work, is that pre-Christian belief in Korea (and presumably China) was actually Christianity, or at least worship of the God of Christianity. The references to the sky, the heavens and heaven’s ruler in classical Eastern texts led to the discovery of God many centuries before Westerners turned up.

One obvious challenge to Ri’s assertion is that a Christ-less Christianity could not be Christianity, and that addition of Christ to the same turns something not Christian into Christianity. Most scholars’ reading of Confucianism, or classical Eastern orthodoxy, would hold that the references to the sky and heaven are aimed at the Great Ultimate, understood as a persistent process from which all things spring – not a discrete, sentient intelligence such as the God of Christianity. “A fundamentally atheist cultural mainstream could not have put a Yi Pyŏk on the road to discovery to Christianity”¹¹³ argues Ri, but this is debatable: Christianity has persisted in other atheist/“atheist” societies. Theism, in the specific meaning of a sentient intelligence, is not a necessary pre-condition for acceptance of a given religion, only a desire to understand and discuss principles and ideas not immediately obvious from direct human experience, and such a desire is utterly characteristic of late Chosŏn Korea. Indeed some of Ri’s theorising tends to the crankish: “the story of the origins of Christianity in Korea gives one to think that the people of the Far East have perhaps lived for thousands of years serving the true God – until the day when they come to recognise God in Jesus Christ... the point to clarify above all is for the vocation of Confucianism to be recognised one day in the Church as a step to Christianity.”¹¹⁴ This is a bold aim, and potentially an offensive one: Confucianism as an intermediary stage before the perfection of Christianity. One cannot accuse Ri of over-caution.

But then what, after all, drew the Ch’ŏnjinam group towards Christianity? They were as spellbound by its promise as a system of personal growth and self-development as they were by the supernatural and philosophical elements of the belief. Yi Pyŏk and his peers had been steeped in the rhetoric and practice of self-improvement and self-reflection since their earliest years, so it is unsurprising that Christianity’s characteristics would have appealed to them: both Confucianism and Christianity could be described as systems which teach discipline, piety, study and self-reflection alongside love of others and obedience to a higher power. The classics of the East provided readers with multivarious semi-historical, semi-mythic examples of virtue, and the Jesus Christ Yi Pyŏk discovered continues in this tradition, crystallising the character and virtues of the exemplary Confucian. It was Yi’s “will of fidelity to the purest Confucian tradition”¹¹⁵ which initially drew him towards the creed and gave him continued strength to maintain his beliefs.

1d. End of Life and Death

Despite his physical and mental strength, Yi’s end was ignoble. Having continually ignored increasingly desperate pleas from his father to abandon the Western thought (here we have another direct example of Confucian-Christian conflict) Yi was finally moved to apostasise when his father threatened to kill himself. Byun’s (1984) church history viewpoint is that Yi only succumbed to the pressure to apostasise because “if Catholicism became known as a religion which would allow a believer to watch his father hang himself, nobody would ever believe in it”,¹¹⁶ but this opinion completely disregards both any personal affection Yi would have had for his father and the powerful

¹¹² Ri, 1989. 17

¹¹³ Ibid. 17

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 18

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Byun, 1984. 29

influence of the cultural milieu of the time (while reinforcing the depiction of Yi Pyök's supremely strong Christian faith). As a Confucian, being responsible for the death of one's father would be the worst crime imaginable. As a Christian, not saving one's father from eternal damnation would be an unimaginably heavy burden. After finally relenting and recanting his Christianity in 1784, Yi withdrew from public life altogether, dying a year later. It is useless (though intriguing) to speculate on the proportion of Confucian filial piety versus Christian concern for the soul of his father which led Yi to finally renounce his faith; but that both competing priorities were present at all should serve as ample illustration of the complex nature of the topic. Western missionaries who arrived in Korea after 1836 had to be carefully schooled in the difficulties of such a predicament – to them, Yi had abandoned his faith without sufficient justification: "It was also difficult to appraise missionaries sufficiently of the nuances of the Korean language to correctly interpret a family issue of this type."¹¹⁷ (For more examples of the Western missionaries' struggle with the unique style of Korean cultural characteristics see the chapter *Letters to Rome, Letters to Paris*.) Yi "could not conceive that God would want a son to kill his father"¹¹⁸ and found himself placed in an unbearable moral double-bind.

Here we arrive at another small controversy. Ri (1989) and Jou (1970, cited in Ri, 1989) both hope that Yi's recantation was false:

Yi Pyök never [again] justified his actions and his beliefs, nor did he evangelise others... his father and other members of the family, moreover, knew that Yi Pyök had not really apostatised, because they locked him in the house, cutting off all relationships with other Christians. Yi Pyök suffered, not because of his apostatisation, because he never renounced his Christianity... unfortunately there doesn't exist any evidence in support of this interpretation, apart from some contradictory rumours from some faithful confused by Yi Pyök's silence.¹¹⁹

If we consider Korean filial piety, we can affirm in all certainty that Yi Pyök was not an apostatist. But it is a shame not to have documents to prove this.¹²⁰

Yi Pyök's recantation has been lost, leading Ri to wonder if he "could have employed words with a double meaning, as Koreans often do in delicate situations".¹²¹ Once he had recanted he withdrew from public life and lived in very basic circumstances in a rural retreat, reportedly paying little attention to his health, before dying on the 14th of June 1785 (Iraola, 2007). Leaving aside the question of whether a purported superhuman like Yi Pyök could ever have been imprisoned against his will, the tragic circumstances of his death are another compelling demonstration of the depth to which Confucian orthodoxy had cut into his life and thinking.

2. Confucian Enquiry

When we examine his works, we can see that three lines of Confucian enquiry into the existence of God all converged in Yi Pyök's Confucianism. From the very beginning the Ch'önjinam group's enquiries into Catholicism were influenced by their background in Confucian intellectualism. Their investigations were begun as a consequence of the most Confucian of motives: a sincere quest for absolute truth and self-improvement. As Dallet writes, their techniques were similarly orthodox – reading of works followed by analysis and discussion between peers:

Amongst these scientific structures, one can find some elementary glimpses of religion. There were books on the existence of God, on Providence, on the spirituality and the immortality of the soul, and on the method of marshalling one's morals to combat the seven deadly sins by contrary virtues. Accustomed to obscure and often contradictory theories in the Chinese works, these righteous men, eager to uncover truths, soon glimpsed something immense, beautiful and rational in Christian doctrine. They lacked the explanations to acquire complete knowledge, but what they had read was enough to stir their hearts and enlighten their minds. Immediately, they began to practice all they knew of the new religion, prostrating daily, morning and evening, to engage in prayer. Having read that on the seventh day they must

¹¹⁷ Ri, 1989. 30-31

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 31

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Jou, Jae-yong, *Hankuk katollik saüi ongwi* (한국 가톨릭 사의 응위, "Korean Catholic Advocacy"), Seoul: Central Catholic Church of Korea, 1970. 51. Quoted in Ri, 1989, 31.

¹²¹ Ibid.

devote themselves entirely to the worship of God, on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th day of each month they left all other business to attend to meditation only, and observed abstinence on these days; and all of this was in the greatest secrecy, without telling anyone. It is not known how long they continued these exercises, but the following events suggest that most were not faithful for long.¹²²

Ri concedes that “Dallet’s interpretation is visibly Occidental”.¹²³ Yet there can be no doubt that this single conference was the key primogenitor of the founding of the Christian Korean community. Already one can see the emergence of a distinctive Koreanised worship: a sabbath day which did not fall on the occidental calendar, and a self-imposed fast. These aspects of late Chosŏn Catholicism were a direct result of the particular educational and societal within which they were generated: that is, they were examples of inculturation.

Once the group had decided to become Christian, one of their member, Yi Sŭnghun, was entrusted with a special mission. He would accompany his father, a high-ranking diplomat, to Beijing, where he would seek out a priest and undergo baptism. He would also return to Korea with as many doctrinal books as possible. Here, then, is one of the core distinctive features of Korean Catholicism: self-evangelisation. Possibly uniquely Korea was not beset by earnest Westerners extolling the benefits of Roman Catholicism. Instead a group of men discovered Catholic doctrine by themselves, studied it and decided to begin practicing and believing (Kim, 2013; Han, 2002). This tells us several things about late Chosŏn society. Firstly, it was a society of ideas, a culture where the philosophy espoused by an individual (at the elite level) was of the utmost importance. Secondly, it was a society where *praxis* – the expression of those ideas – was supremely important too. (There could be and was, of course, a disconnect between ideas which were *seen* to be expressed and the reality of their expression, due to human weakness and greed or political expediency.)

The Ch’ŏnjinam group kept their conversion secret initially, because they knew that deviation from orthodoxy/praxy was unacceptable in their social milieu. Doctrinal differences between the various schools of thought struggling for influence during the late Chosŏn were able to remain as background theoretical disagreements, to an extent, until they caused differences in practice which could then be pointed out as acceptable or unacceptable – and leveraged by rival factions to create political advantage. By taking on an alien doctrine the Ch’ŏnjinam group set themselves on course for an irreconcilable conflict with the values of their society.

The struggle for orthodoxy is ongoing: Ri writes that the neo-Confucianism of Yi’s period “had become unrecognisable and had led the people to ruin”.¹²⁴ As historians striving (probably fruitlessly) for a neutral, value-free historiography we must recognise the tendency in Ri and other church historians towards “orthodoxising” the endeavours of the early aristocratic Korean Catholics. Ri contrasts the late 17th century mainstream trend on the peninsula with Catholicism in terms of Confucianism “contributing especially to justifying political authority”.¹²⁵ This is both true and untrue; almost none of the factional machinations and few of the governmental initiatives of the late Chosŏn had concern for the masses at their core, and both were rigidly backed by scholarly reasoning. But one could hardly argue that hierarchical organisation is or was a perversion of Ch’eng-Chu learning – and one might also point out the corrupt and vicious excesses of the European Roman Catholic power structure, far removed from Jesus’s commands to love one’s neighbour. Of course there is no great mystery to Ri’s myopia: a true proponent of any philosophy, as both Ri is and Yi Pyŏk was, will believe that if it is expressed and practiced correctly it will result in better conditions.

Ri and Dallet both discuss at length Yi Pyŏk’s discussions with – or instructions to – Yi Sŭnghun before the younger Yi set off for Beijing. In a macro sense here is the Korean social order at work: a respected elder orders a younger man to convert to a religion despite Yi Sŭnghun “knowing nothing, at this point”¹²⁶ of Christianity apart from what Yi Pyŏk was telling him. Yi Sŭnghun complied, and was baptised in China.

In the following excerpts from the text I hope to demonstrate how Yi deployed a Confucian worldview to understand and promote Catholicism.

3. The Debate with Yi Kahwan

¹²² Ri, 1989. 24, cf. Dallet, 1874. 14-15

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ri, 1989. 116.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ri, 1989. 25, cf. Dallet, 1874. 14-15

Another event which has received significant attention from historians of this subject is Yi's public debate with one Yi Kahwan, a fellow member of Yi's *Namin sip'a* 南人時派 ("Southerner faction") and staunch Confucian. Before his engagement with Yi Pyök, Yi Kahwan had previously studied Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi* and de Pantoja's (1571-1618) *Qike* and rejected them (Yi, 2004). Many years later, Hwang Sayöng's *Silk Letter* – an exhortation to the Portuguese Bishop of Beijing to intervene militarily in Korea – described Yi Kahwan as "the top Confucian scholar since Yi Ik... [he] became the premier scholar in the kingdom. There was no book he had not read, and his incredible memory seemed like that of a spirit"¹²⁷. Although Yi Kahwan's commentaries on the Four Books have survived to the present day, it is not accurate to say that Yi Kahwan is remembered as a top-level scholar; the claim was probably made to bolster the reputation of Yi Pyök.

After Yi Pyök provided Yi Kahwan with more Christian works for him to study, the men engaged in a lengthy public debate. Yi Kahwan finally conceded to Yi Pyök that the Christian religion had some value, allegedly saying:

[Christianity is] the truth, it's the true doctrine, and if it was not the truth, the things contained in these books, contemptuous of Heaven, would have outraged Heaven, and the scholars from Europe would never have been able to travel through the seas to here, but would have been struck dead by lightning from Heaven.¹²⁸

Whatever the actual truth of the aftermath, it seems that the two men did have a public discussion and Yi Pyök expressed ideas which intrigued and disturbed orthodox thinkers. Indeed, Yi Kahwan eventually converted to Christianity and wrote some Catholic poems himself. Something of a publicity coup for Christians, the religion could not be dismissed out of hand when a relatively respected intellectual such as Yi Pyök was able to demonstrate potential truths in the creed. Even the public nature of Yi Pyök's defence meant that the new movement needed to be addressed seriously. (For the establishment defence, see the chapter *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*.)

4. The Text

i. *Ch'önjugonggyöngga* ("Hymn of the Adoration of God")

This work was composed in 1779 when Yi Pyök was 26. Yi's style does not lend itself easily to interpretation: he makes heavy usage of Christian terminology "which he seems to regard as self-evident in a context which is nevertheless explicitly Confucian"¹²⁹. Ri attributes this to "a trait of the Korean character, inclined to adopt what is good without asking the reason"¹³⁰, an interpretation which is certainly open to debate, even with reference to Ri's own arguments – the Ch'önjinam scholars, after all, did not accept Christianity until they had engaged in sincere examination of it.

Immediately at the start of the work, Yi Pyök's introduces the central themes of Confucian thought: the cardinal relationships. Parents (referencing father-son and husband-wife) and king are mentioned. Also mentioned is the soul in the body, a reference to the Confucian preoccupation with mastery over the self, and a precursor to one of the central conflicts between *söhak* and *yuhak*: the orthodox author's earnest belief was that a person contained within themselves everything necessary to attain perfection, whereas Christians believed that humans contained a spark of the divine bestowed upon them by an external intelligence:

Like the parents of a family,
Like the King of a kingdom,
Like the soul in a body –
So is the Lord in the sky

The second stanza revisits the same themes even more explicitly:

Respect your parents,
Serve your king,
Keep the fundamental laws

¹²⁷ Ri, 1989. 22

¹²⁸ Ri, 1989. 21-22

¹²⁹ Ibid. 39

¹³⁰ Ibid. 39

The adoration of the Lord of Heaven is the first [law]

Many orthodox thinkers criticised Catholicism on the grounds of its selfishness and nihilism. A morbid preoccupation with the life to come could only lead to one's earthly obligations being neglected. Yi addresses these concerns and inverts them: death is a cause for celebration. The Christian should welcome death as the beginning of a new life in heaven with God:

Though death may come to my body,
My soul lives forever

But in the very next lines he reiterates a human's duties. Here is the first outright fusion of *sǎo* and *yu* thinking, conflating Confucian propriety with worship of Ch'ŏnju, and emphasising that correct behaviour in the mortal plane is very much a duty of Christians. By neglecting one's earth-bound obligations the Christian is turning their back on this world and the next:

Humanity, morals, worship of the Lord of Heaven,
Immortality of the soul – if you ignore these things,
In this life you would be as a stone or a piece of wood,
And upon dying you will be cast to hell

As with Chŏng Yakchong's *Chugyo yoji*, Yi also criticises Buddhism. The Neo-Confucianism which had been the foundational philosophy of Chosŏn Korea from its founding had devoted significant energy to attacks on Buddhism – the state religion of the previous Goryŏ dynasty. Yi's upbringing and education would have instilled in him this same distrust of Buddha's teachings:

Aware of the existence of God,
Do not worship the superstitions of Buddhism

The following stanza has more clear parallels with Chŏng's approach. Given this work's publication date of 1785, and the fact that *Chugyo yoji* was completed in 1798 or 1799, it is very likely that Chŏng had read the *Ch'ŏnjugonggyŏngga*. Both works draw on the same Confucian tradition to transmit Western Christian doctrine in ways which would resonate with an educated Eastern audience:

Was there ever a child without a father?
Was there ever a shadow without light?
Although you do not see the face of the king,
Are you not still subjects of his kingdom?

Book One of the *Chugyo yoji* uses exactly the same arguments, although expressed in full prose in Korean rather than a poetic style in classical Chinese:¹³¹ there must be some original creator of humanity who was *not* human. Even though we cannot directly see the possessor of ultimate authority (an earthly monarch or a deity) we still accept that he or they exist.

In this next excerpt, we again see quite explicit usage of direct comparison between Yi's secular milieu and the Christian God:

Like the parents of a family,
Like the King of a kingdom,
Like the soul in a body –
So is the Lord in the sky

The poem is an example of synthesis between the concrete humanism of the Confucians and the theological/metaphysical discussions of the Christians, and also makes the righteous person's duties quite explicit: the most pressing duty, higher than any earthly obligations, is to worship God. A person who does not accept God and devote their life to worship is nothing more than a rock or piece of wood. There is an unmistakable parallel here with the Confucian view of humanity's higher purpose, of transcendence through explicit effort beyond base drives and animal instincts. But unlike *Chugyo yoji*, Pyŏk's prayer isn't a logical explication of the truth or otherwise of Christianity. Denial of Christ is a sin: there is no other explanation.

¹³¹ See, for example, *Chugyo yoji*, Book One, Chapters 2, 3 and 11

ii. *Sŏnggyoyoji* (“Essence of the Sacred Doctrine”)

The *Sŏnggyoyoji* is a much longer work, a set of forty-nine poems written in classical Chinese, set down either in 1779, 1784 (during the Ch’ŏnjinam group’s discussions) or in 1785, when Yi was held captive by his family. The work is written in the *saon hanshi* 四言漢詩 (“four syllable Han poetry”) poetic style. *Saon* was not just a stylistic choice; its use fundamentally affects the way the knowledge is understood (by reader and audience) and transmitted. By providing examples and analysis below I hope to reinforce Yi’s (2004) claim that Yi Pyŏk “was considerably accustomed not only to Sŏhak but also traditional Confucianism.”¹³²

a. Structure

The work is structured in a way which requires analysis, seeming to jump from topic to topic, even within a single poem. Yi (2014) divides the work into poems 1-15, a re-telling of the main stories of the Bible, and 16-49, where Yi Pyŏk “represents the attitude of those who were... both Confucian scholars and Catholics who devoted themselves to the faith in the late Chosŏn period.”¹³³ My approach here is to analyse the poems in small clusters which deal with similar themes, wherever they appear in the sequence. The very first poem recounts the creation story of the book of Genesis.

The first cluster consists only of the first poem, an example of Yi Pyŏk’s representation of the sentient God.

b. Cluster I: Sentient God

1.

[Before] any people had come [to be in existence]
未生民來
First, the Lord-on-High existed
前有上帝
Absolutely the only god
唯一真神
Nothing can compare [with his] power
無理能比
[For] six days [God] created [with his] power
六日力作
Firstly [he] opened the heavens and the earth
先闢天地
Then the multitude of the ten thousand things
萬物多焉
Already rare, wondrous as well
既希且異
Finally [God] made [a man by] blending the earth
遂辨和土
Next [God] put life into [the man]
將為靈矣
[And] bestowed a place to live
命處暘臺
Not long after [God] created a multitude of other things
千百皆與
Appropriately, [as the man had a] household, [God] was driven to
復使宜家
[Send] a woman [who] went there [to the man]

¹³² Yi, 2004. 70

¹³³ Yi, 2004. 72

女兮往事
“I am your husband,” the man said
謂之曰夫
“You and I are like one another” [the man said]
爾我如自
Whatsoever thing they desired was theirs...
凡所求者

...However, [they] craved to know good [and] evil...
然欲善惡

...[the man] listened [to the serpent’s] words [and] put his hands on [the forbidden fruit]
聞言摩拿
In this way, sin was acquired
得罪因此

c. Cluster II: Western lore, Eastern understanding

Poems 2, 3, 5 and 6 demonstrate Yi Pyōk’s Eastern understanding as applied to Western doctrine (or mythology). Poem 2 recounts the story of Cain and Abel. The original Bible story of Cain and Abel does not give any motive for Cain’s murder of his brother. Yi Pyōk’s interpretation is that Cain’s act – utterly unthinkable to a right-thinking Confucian, and only less serious than patricide and regicide – has indelibly stained humanity with its sin:

1. Poem 2

[Through] the faith [in his] heart [Abel] offered a lamb [to God]
羊祭信心
Cain, [his] older brother
長子苦兄
Killed [him] – the origin [of sin]
敵殺及今
Accordingly, his ancestors...
以致彼族...

...love sensuality and indulgence
...愛身尼色
[And] flaunt their horses and wealth
列馬羅金

The split from Western Judeo-Christian orthodoxy is notable. In the typical occidental re-telling Eve is seen as the progenitor of sin, not Cain. Is this Yi’s response (conscious or unconscious) to the primacy of maleness in late Chosŏn Korea? The centering of Eve might have made the doctrine impossible for Yi’s intended audience, educated *yangban*, to take seriously. Perhaps Yi himself discarded the figure from Eve, who is absent from the poem as a force of urgency, as he was himself uncomfortable with a woman playing a central role.

The third poem recounts how Jesus taught in the temple as a child. Such an example would have been shocking and impressive to Yi Pyōk’s audience, one conditioned to such an intensely age-hierarchical society as Chosŏn Korea. Yi’s Jesus not only correctly understands and interprets great works, but also engages in competent displays of orthopraxy: rites and observances. The late Chosŏn also observed the Confucian custom of recognising scholars as adults with a public presentation of works, a tradition referenced here:

2. Poem 3

...in the flower of his youth [Jesus] went to the temple
華年至殿
Among [the congregation he taught] the holy books correctly

在會妥書
 The scholars [in the] crowd entered into a covenant [with Jesus]
 相約衆士
 Surely [Jesus] knew reason [and] observances [deeply]
 必知理數

Yi also further underlines Jesus’s status as learned by emphasising that “scholars [in the crowd]” “entered into a covenant” with him; he was not merely preaching to the uneducated masses.

In Poem 5, Jesus is shown as a leader worthy of reverence by Eastern sages, while Mary is compared to an orchid, *nancho* 蘭草, a classical Eastern symbol of purity and virtue:

3. Poem 5

[Mary was] a prize, slender [even] in comparison [to] an orchid...
 蘭性較細...

...Friends [and] sages came from the east...
 ...東界友師...

...[Guided by] auspicious starlight...
 ...軍光祥視...

...[They] fell down [in tribute in front of the baby Jesus], each of them leaning on the next
 ...伏拜依次

Poem 6 portrays Jesus as a dragon, a classical Eastern symbol of power and heavenly benediction¹³⁴ (note that the dragon in Western classicism is typically symbol of evil – here Yi has deliberately chosen a signifier from his own culture despite its meaning clashing with that of the incoming cultural meme):

4. Poem 6

...[when] the beast¹³⁵ withers, [his] leathery skin falls off
 ...畜老革荒
 The dragon¹³⁶ is born holding [his] head [up high]
 龍現首舉

The dragon is an age-old symbol of luck and vigour within the Eastern tradition (Doré, 1966). Specifically to Korea, the dragon was one form of the *mirūk* (Maitreya) Buddha, an embodiment of Buddha which had specific eschatological characteristics (Pak, 2013). While early Korean Catholic doctrine had a strong tradition of criticism of Buddhist ideas – another example of Christianity attempting to be as orthodox as possible whenever it could – Yi may have chosen to depict Jesus as a dragon precisely because of these similarities with a messianic returning Jesus.

d. Cluster IV: Christianity with Confucian characteristics

The third cluster consists of poems 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 26 and 39. Yi Pyōk attempts to forge a new Koreanised Christianity here by emphasising the importance of key Confucian traits within Christianity.

In poem 8 Yi re-iterates the requirement for sincerity in endeavours aimed at self-improvement. He uses the characters *chōng* 正 (“right”; “true”) and *chik* 直 (“straight”; “honest”) in combination to indicate Jesus’s “sincere and honest heart”. The reference to “cultivating virtue” with “repayment” in mind is a direct rebuttal to the opponents of Christianity who have commented that

¹³⁴ See for example *Yongbiōch'ōnga* 龍飛御天歌 (“Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven”) (c.1445-1447), where various key figures from Korean history and folklore were depicted as dragons.

¹³⁵ King Herod.

¹³⁶ Jesus.

the religion is rooted in selfishness, the wish to escape punishment. The Jesus of this poem also demonstrates correct reverence for the God who created him – his father and teacher. In the second part of the poem sequence there is no distinction between Christ, Christianity and the Church, because “to the Korean way of thinking, religion is above all a method of education following the spirit of its founder.”¹³⁷ The wider effect of this way of thinking was to create a form of Christianity in Korea which emphasised individual choice and responsibility. A baptised Korean who had sincerely reflected on the possibility of becoming Christian, equipped with a rigorous intellectual education which had taught him how to deeply contemplate philosophical and metaphysical affairs, was then fully set to begin dispensing the sacraments and baptising others into the faith.

1. Poem 8

[The devil promised] to give profound, honourable glory

尊榮強施

[But Jesus was not] cultivating virtue [with a] scheme [for] repayment [in mind]

修德圖報

Through being true [and] honest [Jesus] emptied out [his heart]...

正直兩虛...

The pairing in poem 9 of *chi* 智 (“the wise”) with *u* 愚 (“the foolish”), serves a clever double-purpose. It emphasises that Jesus’ message is one worthy of consideration by sincere thinkers and seekers of truth - whilst also re-affirming the Christian message of inclusivity. There is also a reference to rules and laws and a warning that Jesus was “attacking and opposing illegality and unreason”. Like the most admirable scholar Jesus “collects the good and excellent”, “rejects sumptuousness” and “reveals what is hidden”:

2. Poem 9

Joyfully, happily riding a donkey

乘驢歡樂

Commanding [and] attracting the wise [and] the foolish

總集智愚

Giving out doctrine one-by-one...

條誠張布...

...attacking [and] opposing illegality and unreason

...攻擊速逆

always collecting the good [and] excellent

常聚俊英

Rejecting sumptuousness, rebuking passion

旨斥氣賁

Scattering darkness, revealing what is hidden

隱暗畢陳

The poem finishes with a mention of *in* 仁, “benevolence”, the cornerstone virtue of Confucian propriety. “The characteristic idea of Confucius appears in the idea of *benevolence* 仁. This term, homophonic with the word which designates humanity in general [Korean: *in* 人], means excellence or virtue by mutual love, by which men can live happily in society.”¹³⁸ Benevolence is expressed through *correct conduct* (Kaltenmark, 1972, cited in Ri, 1989), *ye* 禮. The *Lúnyǔ* 論語 (“*Analects*”) contains extended discussion on the concept of *in*. The matters discussed in the *Lúnyǔ* are rooted in contextual situation; there are no overarching meta-theories. The character in 仁 is composed from the characters for “human”, *in* 人 and “two”, *i* 二 – humanity is characterised by relations with others, and it is through relationships (father to son, king to subject, and so on) that a moral life can be lived. And the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 teaches “benevolence is humanity; [it should] lead to very great kindness”.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ri, 1989. 84

¹³⁸ Ri, 1989, 77.

¹³⁹ *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸, Chapter 20, Paragraph 5: 仁者人也、親親為大。

Yi took the very concrete and contextual fixation with *in* of classical Confucianism and began to apply it to the supernatural and ostensibly context-independent concept of the divine Jesus. He centred the work in Christ to focus the doctrine on a man who exemplifies Confucian ideals in his concrete existence – that is, in terms his audience can relate to and respect. Jesus embodies *in* 仁, humanity:

...Correctly believe [in God], get protection
 ...該恃庇釋
 Spread compensation, benefit humanity
 藉謝恩仁

Poem 10 continues to build the mythology of Jesus: a person of “mercy” and “charity”, who ensured that his followers engaged in “contemplation” and were given “a perfect understanding of ancient history”. This last trait is a purely Korean Confucian flourish – nowhere do the gospels mention Jesus teaching history; and for him to have taught his followers about the Shang Emperor and Tang dynasties is unlikely in the extreme. The poem carefully makes a distinction between the public trappings of worship – the sacrifices – and the work of self-improvement, fellowship and contemplation which is so important: personal prayer *sayu* 私籲 and assembled communion *kongdo* 公禱.

3. Poem 10

...His lofty will was exalted
 ...志揚讚美
 The signs [in] the Lord’s Prayer were examined¹⁴⁰
 默記祈文
 [They were] well-versed in going through ancient history...
 通達古史...

...an ox was burnt, its flesh divided
 ...燔牡割肉
 an ancient form of practice
 舊例雖存
 [But sacrificing] young bulls and sheep
 羔牛特犢
 [Is not the] only dedication [given for God’s] happiness
 錫獻豈欣
 Personal appeals [or] public prayer
 私籲公禱
 Inclining through grace to drink wine
 葡萄飲傾
 [We] are advised to open the doors of the place of worship [from] a place of goodness in our heart
 開堂誠勸

Christ is the essential content of *Sōnggyo yoji*, and accordingly Yi Pyōk fully addressed his nature in Poem 11, revealing the full scope of Jesus’ supernatural powers, deviating from the carefully-measured image of the sage-scholar: this Jesus is unmistakably a god - but his virtuous nature and righteous actions are still highlighted. He “protects people of every tribe”, “heals the sick” and “cultivates submissiveness and tenderness”.

The miracles of Jesus were potentially controversial. Yi Pyōk was said not to have provided Yi Kahwan with certain books prior to their debate because he was worried that the Christian miracles discussed within would seem absurd to his opponent. This is a claim made in Hwang Sayōng’s letter of 1801, certainly not the most rigorous of sources, but it is probably a reliable nugget of information as it does not paint Christianity in a particularly flattering light – a religion full of such crazy stories that those introduced to them may be sceptical. Yet a Christian work must discuss Christ, and a Christ who

¹⁴⁰ The Lord’s Prayer – *kidomun*/기도문/祈文 – is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, 6:5-13 and Luke 11:1-4, as taught to the disciples by Jesus.

possesses characteristics which are beyond mortal humanity. The delicacy with which early Korean Catholics approached Jesus' supernatural nature serve as a reminder of the multiple sites of conflict between Eastern orthodoxy of the period and Christianity. At some point men like Yi Pyök and Chöng Yakchong had to commit to elements of doctrine which were incompatible with their social milieu and educational background.

Perhaps as a balance, the final part of the poem once again emphasises the supposed qualities of Jesus which mesh with a Confucian narrative: how he “always” 恒 “cultivates” 懷 “tenderness [and] firmness” 恭順; his persistence when confronting “exterior violence” 外暴 or, most pertinently, “internal wrongdoing” 內愆.

4. Poem 11

Making clear [and] calling attention [to] the precious word
 著語貴喻
 One miracle follows another
 奇略更接
 [Jesus] protects [people of every] tribe [and] injured shepherds
 顧種牧傷
 Night and day, sunshine or moon[light]
 夕朝歲月
 Casting out spirits, healing the sick
 鬼逐病醫
 Releasing [from] impurity, erasing disaster
 污解禍滅
 Awaking [from] sleep [those who had been] buried [in their] tombs
 葬墓寢興
 Making clean women [who] touch [his] clothes
 捫衣婦潔
 Reaching the boat [on] the surface [of the water, which was threatened by] waves
 詣船波面
 [Jesus stopped] the wind blowing [on] the boat [on] the water
 息風舟底
 [As people] watched, [he] healed the sick...
 愈疾環觀...

 ...always cultivating submissiveness [and] tenderness
 ...恒懷恭順
 [whether facing] external violence or internal wrongdoing
 外暴內愆
 fighting and winning each and every [time]
 庶幾戰勝

Poem 14 paints followers of Jesus as deriving their strength from “humility” ; they are valuable members of their community who “help others”. The disciples practice correct respect for age, with junior deferring to senior and senior mentoring junior: “The elders respond [to the] juniors’ questions”

5. Poem 14

The root [of] the family [of disciples’ strength] is humility
 宗姓卑微
 The elders respond [to the] juniors’ questions
 祖孫答述
 Together [they] strive to help [each other] and advance
 共獲濟進

Poem 16 confronts self-examination. Nothing could be more Confucian. The Western Christian tradition emphasises a lineage of teachers, often who have been directly inspired by God. The impetus

is external. In contrast the Eastern tradition advocates the necessity of self-improvement: through study of the great works, one can arrive at an independent conception and expression of propriety. Here again we see the difference in priority within the two meta-traditions between heterodoxy and heteropraxy. The Westerner follows the prescribed works. The Easterner arrives at correct behaviour through their own interpretation of particular works. Ri disagrees – “Yi and his compatriots were concerned above all with *truth* and *doctrine*”¹⁴¹ – but Yi’s work here represents a development of the typical classical obligations, of elder to younger:

6. Poem 16

Provide [missionary work] to ascertain [your God-given] talents
量才託授
[Disciples] keep and preserve [the tradition] of help and aid
衛翼扶持
Suffused [with] the knowledge [and] teachings [of] abstention
詔戒誘誨
Studying these ideas night and day
晝晚鑑茲
Children gathered round in a group reciting and chanting
兒輩謳誦
Choosing poems and picking prose readings
賦擇詩稽
Explaining clearly [to others as befits their respective] ages
齒牙申講
Choose [what is] near [and what is] far
遐邇均推

This poem reflects and strengthens one of the core strands of Eastern orthodoxy, that of education and guidance. The older generation “keep and preserve” the crucial “[tradition] of help and aid” which creates a harmonious society. From pre-Confucian times the virtuous Easterner was commanded by the heavens to share knowledge and dedicate himself to unshowy self-improvement. An excerpt from the *Book of Odes* demonstrates:

God said to King Wen
‘I am pleased with your intelligent virtue,
Not loudly proclaimed nor portrayed,
Without extravagance or changeableness,
Without consciousness of effort on your part,
In accordance with the pattern of God.’¹⁴²

Chapchō 雜著 (“*Collected Writings*”), a work of the rigorously orthodox scholar Yi Hangno which criticised Catholicism (see the chapter *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*) also referenced King Wen:

[King Wen] is the filial son of heaven and earth [who] knows the mind of the Ruler Above.¹⁴³

Poem 26 also takes the ideal Confucian lifestyle as its opening subject. Yet its ultimate theme is not the pursuit of perfection, but is instead the coming day of judgement.

7. Poem 26

Abstain absolutely [from indulgence], strictly pledge
謹恪密盟

¹⁴¹ Ri, 1989. 75. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴² *Shih Ching* 詩經 (“*Book of Odes*”). Translated by Legge, James. USA: Lionshare Media. 2014

¹⁴³ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*. Kwōn 12 (*Aōn*): 12a. Adapted from a translation in Chung, Chai-shik, *A Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World: Yi Hang-no and the West*, Seoul: Korea Research Monographs. 1995. 151

Glory and praise will shine upon [you]
 譽賞似赫
 Look around – everything crumbles [into nothing]
 轉眼崩蕘
 Look around in fright [at the] hushed and quiet blackness
 驚靚幽黑
 Everything collapses
 戾網橫罹

As the early waves of suppression by political enemies and disapproval from allies and family decimated the literati ranks of the early Catholic Church, *chungin* members like Thomas Kim Pöm-u took on more responsibility. The *chungin* were a specialised class, men who possessed extensive knowledge of scientific techniques or foreign languages (Baker, 2007) but whose lineage did not permit them to join the aristocracy. The *yangban*, in turn, were legally prohibited from officially engaging in technical work of this type, although many indulged their curiosity privately. The initial introduction of Catholicism to Korean intellectual life made no distinction between religious ideas and scientific enquiry (Chung, 1995; Baker, 1999) and this poem, number 39, reflects that early confluence. Catholicism was partly understood as a system of ordering and measurement; accordingly we can consider the influence this aspect of the way Koreans had presented it to themselves had played on Yi and his compatriots. Alongside poem 33 “Tools” mirrors the Korean Neo-Confucian interest in organisation and definition: “all of this is organised and tidy”.

8. Poem 39

Judging by the measure, evaluating materials
 覈觚評材
 [Their] usage made to help
 借資佐輔
 A low wooden bench is appropriate for sleep
 睡眠榻狀
 A spoon for breakfast or dinner
 饗殮匕筋
 Yank and wield the reins, dust [flies from a galloping horse]
 揮塵挽韉
 Sucking [on the tip of the brush], paper is cut [ready for writing]
 吮筆裁楮
 Property [is] put aside, placed carefully
 妥貯穩儲
 All of this is organised and tidy
 般件臚署

e. Cluster V: the Eastern Classics

The next cluster consists of excerpts from poems 12, 14, 30, 35, 48 and 49 and focuses on Yi Pyök’s usage of examples and stories from the canon of Eastern classics to promote Christianity. Poem 12 makes explicit reference to *gusa* 九思 “the nine thoughts”, a section in Confucius’ work *Lúnyǔ* 論語 (“The Analects”):

1. Poem 12

Scattered and woven [through] the Book of Isaiah
 散編賽說
 It is noted [that] a prophecy [will be along] soon
 錄久兆伊
 “[I will] build [your] ruined house again,
 毀宇再建
 Before [the] end, remember the meek;
 預計末期

Barren soil will become fertile”

廢園吉壤

Who could trick you into believing that God is not treated with praise?

頌對誰欺

The streets [will] sing, the valleys [will] accede

街歌谷應

This reminds [one of] the nine thoughts

俾讓九思

The “nine thoughts” were a nontet of subject matter which a person (assumed to be male in the original text) concerned with self-improvement and enlightenment should concern themselves.¹⁴⁴ This inclusion is notable as it is an explicit reference to a work essential to the orthodox canon. It is also curious as the “nine thoughts” do not seem to bear much relevance to the subject matter of the poem:

Confucius said, "The superior man has nine things which are subjects with him of thoughtful consideration. In regard to the use of his eyes, he is anxious to see clearly. In regard to the use of his ears, he is anxious to hear distinctly. In regard to his countenance, he is anxious that it should be benign. In regard to his demeanour, he is anxious that it should be respectful. In regard to his speech, he is anxious that it should be sincere. In regard to his doing of business, he is anxious that it should be reverently careful. In regard to what he doubts about, he is anxious to question others. When he is angry, he thinks of the difficulties (his anger may involve him in). When he sees gain to be got, he thinks of righteousness.¹⁴⁵

There is certainly the presence of these themes in the work as a whole – in poems 9 and 11, for example – so why Yi placed this reference to the “nine thoughts” here is something of a mystery.

Poem 30 is densely thicketed with references to classical history. Ri places these references from Yi in their historical context within Confucian thought. Long before Confucius, classical history taught that heaven rewarded virtue and punished vice exhibited by rulers. The rule of sage-kings like Yao and Zhou was endorsed by the heavens through their being provided with the opportunity to rule for a long and fruitful period, while evil rulers like Jie of the Xia dynasty eventually found themselves standing in opposition to the moral order of the universe. As Confucius wrote:

On this account the ruler will first take pains about his own virtue. Possessing virtue will give him the people.¹⁴⁶

And so, like the great leaders of antiquity Jesus is a suitable ruler because he is morally and intellectually perfect. While the perfection of Yi’s Jesus is innate and unassailable, he still seeks to continue educating himself and others.

2. Poem 30

Ridding themselves of dead wood, pulling out [dying] grass

振枯拔草

Forgiving those who repent, giving salvation to those are aware of their wrongdoing...

宥勇伸囚...

...Behaving with [the] dignity [of] Yōsang or Guyangsu

...品格呂歐

[From] faraway countries [to] northern China, [they] share a mission

朔夏盤蹈

Through the light of the pole star [they] pick out [their path] from country to country

¹⁴⁴ Confucius, *Lúnyǔ* 論語 (“*The Analects*”), Book 16, Chapter 10. Translated by Legge, James. London: Penguin Classics. 2016

¹⁴⁵ Confucius, *Lúnyǔ* 論語 (“*The Analects*”), Book 16, Chapter 10. Translated by Legge, James. London: Penguin Classics, 2016 (1893).

¹⁴⁶ Confucius, “Commentary of the Philosopher Tsang”, in *Daxue* 大學 (“*The Great Learning*”). Translated by Legge, James. London: Penguin Classics, 2016 (1893).

核斗辨州
Reaching their goal despite the heat
暨寒迄熱
Hauling their cane across the face of the earth
曳杖緯球

Confucius's *Daxue* 大學 (“*Great Learning*”), a foundational classical text, demonstrates exactly the core values of the Confucian orthodoxy influencing Yi's non-Confucian heterodox beliefs. This excerpt details the praise the Duke of Zhou gave to King Wen:

Ever think of your ancestor,
Cultivating your virtue,
Always striving to accord with the will [of Heaven].
So shall you be seeking for much happiness.
Before Yin lost the multitudes,
[Its kings] were the assessors of God.¹⁴⁷

Many centuries before Christianity, classical Eastern orthodoxy was giving a prescription for proper behaviour and conduct: self-reflexive, disciplined effort at moral cultivation combined with a regard for the natural order of the universe (“Heaven” here). This pre-Confucian conception of Heaven does not refer to a sentient intelligence as some Christian scholars had claimed, but is instead the idea of *i*, principle, and *ki*, material force, the twin elements which create, and provide an inherent rationale to, all existence. Yi's work simply (and cataclysmically) replaces these non-sentient drivers with the Christian God, a sentient force. The end result is the same – humans must strive towards perfecting themselves to live in harmony with this supernatural motivator and organiser. And when we look at the words of Solomon from the Judaeo-Christian Torah/Old Testament we can see that the theme of national and personal self-cultivation being inextricably intertwined is by no means exclusive to the Sinitic East. Solomon is recorded as saying:

Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.¹⁴⁸

So while the moral man – pre-Confucian, Confucian, or Christian with Confucian leanings who is accused of heresy against that same Neo-Confucianism – is compelled to construct a nation which is righteous, the effort begins and ends with one's inner reflections.

Poem 35 contains a reference to Ch'ōnlíma 千里馬, a horse mentioned in Chinese and Korean classical folklore:¹⁴⁹

3. Poem 35

Tide rises [and] falls like Ch'ōllima
潮黃駛驥

The final pair of poems, 48 and 49, form an illuminating dual example of Yi's synthetic work. 48 could be an excerpt from the Book of Daniel or the Song of Psalms apart from the final line: “[In this way we can] slowly fix [our] stubbornness [and come out of the] darkness”. Yi reminds the reader that ultimate responsibility for the response to the news preached by Christians comes from the individual – a superb example of a Confucian mindset.

4. Poem 48

Watch for the boundless wonder [of God]
知窺浩蕩
Look up at the loud sound

¹⁴⁷ *Shih Ching* 詩經 (“*Book of Odes*”). Translated by Legge, James. USA: Lionshare Media. 2014

¹⁴⁸ Book of Proverbs, 14:34

¹⁴⁹ See Spring, Madeline K, "Fabulous Horses and Worthy Scholars in Ninth-Century China". In *T'oung Pao* volume 74: 173–210. 1988; Henry, Eric, "The Motif of Recognition in Early China". In *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47 (1): 5–30 [28]. 1987

喧奕無辺

[There is] deep, profound light shining

緝熙淵穆

Kneel barefoot, bowing in front of [God]

匍匐跣踣

Strongly casting out shame and blame [from one's mind]

慙懟胥剛

Prostate oneself correctly, look on

偃僕踧踖

[In this way we can] slowly fix [our] stubbornness [and come out of the] darkness

冥頑徐悛

Poem 49 also references exemplar kings – “Yu, T’ang, Yao [and] Shun” 禹湯堯舜 – and sages: “Tzu Lu, Min Tzeu K’ien, Confucius [and] Mencius” 仲閔孔孟.

5. Poem 49

Scheming to manage court officials

策絜臣僚

[Were kings such as] Yu, T’ang, Yao [and] Shun

禹湯堯舜

[Guiding] court officials [&] scholars towards laws

箴規紳儒

[Were the sages] Tzu Lu, Min Tzeu K’ien, Confucius [and] Mencius

仲閔孔孟

Excessive luxury is dismissed [at the wise ruler’s] discretion...

斟酌奢淳...

...Walk softly - the burning fire threatens

...炎火怖趨

So we try to pacify our hearts

撫膺敏懇

Yi’s mention of these worthies is an explicit method of framing his truths as a continuation of Eastern orthodoxy. The intellectual sphere in the late Chosŏn demanded that philosophical innovations be cast as uncoverings rather than developments – “this was the truth all along”. Yi’s beliefs were so deeply anathematical in some key aspects – the belief in equality before God, the focus on an afterlife, and the primacy of the bond between God and believer above any other bond – that there was never any realistic prospect of their adoption by the prevailing Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, but as a member of the marginalised Southerner political faction, so oppressed by their Old Doctrine rivals, his intellectual heritage was one where minority views were vigorously defended through appeals to links with undisputed orthodoxy. Thus he employs the semi-mythical figures of Yu, T’ang, Yao and Shun alongside the most venerated(?) of Confucian thinkers within his Christian works. Writing a century ago the Protestant missionary Gilbert Reid (1857-1927) summarised the moral education which deployed these figures, a type of education which Yi’s work is part of:

The whole history beginning with the ancient rulers, Yao and Shun, down to Yü the Great, founder of the Hsia dynasty in 2205 BC, on to T’ang, founder of the Shang, in 1766BC, on to King Wu, founder of the Chou dynasty in 1122 BC, is a history full of warning, admonition, and exhortation, with examples of upright reformers and statesmen to follow and cherish, and with the example of bad rulers to shun and abhor.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Reid, Gilbert. “Confucianism, An Appreciation.” In *The Harvard Theological Review* volume 9 [1] (January 1916). Cambridge: Harvard. 13

From the dynasty's founding, propriety in the Chosŏn had been based upon the Zhou-li, the ancient rites of China's Zhou dynasty (Chung, 1995). References to Zhou in Pyŏk's work are an explicit attempt to situate Catholicism within moral correctness.

6. Cluster VI: late Chosŏn society

In Cluster VI Yi Pyŏk directly addresses the conditions in his milieu, the late Chosŏn. Poems 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24 and 36 highlight Yi's efforts to provide examples which his readers could relate to, while commenting on his homeland's culture and society. His intention was to develop the Korean Catholic corpus beyond the distant Mediterranean backdrop of the Bible.

Poem 13 references a cross-section of society, so important to Confucian thought: “artisans, workers, rich and poor”:

1. Poem 13

Artisans, workers, rich [and] poor

工役貧富

Everyone¹⁵¹ gets on well with [and] is close [to one another]

左右近交

2. Poem 14

In the final line of poem 14 Yi is directly acknowledging that his Christianity is a challenge to his social milieu by potentially disrupting customs. Such change to customs, though, is not necessarily negative, if it is done as a result of reasoned argument, and the new custom is morally superior – “knowledge” which “destroys” “obscurity”:

[Through] knowledge obscurity is made to be destroyed

創識破淫

Rather, discussion changes customs

尙議變俗

Poem 18 was seen at the start of this chapter as an example of the possibilities (and pitfalls) offered by translations from different versions. Apart from the reference to “authority” *ki* 機 – God in this case - in the final line, the poem could (once again) be a rigorously orthodox work, as it emphasises the importance of a complete moral education from an early age and the crucial role of sincerity and self-discipline:

3. Poem 18

Child grows into a man aged twenty little-by-little
 [Whatever he is] soaked in stains a child especially
 The appearance of false humility is put on
 Ringing laughter hides [his] true thoughts
 [If he is not] capable of striking down [his] arrogance
 Hardship [may] quickly finish [him] off
 Perhaps regret drops and falls out [of him]
 How [can he be so] foolish, deceived as to [what is true] authority

Kim (2014) interprets this poem as a caution against self-deception: “eventually it turns out that self-deception is the greatest misfortune. If one is not true to oneself internally one cannot be truthful in front of God, and if one cannot even be truthful in front of God finally the road to salvation would be closed.”¹⁵² Moral perfection in Confucianism, of course, begins and ends with the self. Self-discipline, self-monitoring and self-honesty; without mastery of these traits perfection cannot be achieved.

¹⁵¹ Literally “left and right”, a phrase meaning “everyone”, “all people”.

¹⁵² Kim, Dongwŏn, “Gwangam Yi Pyŏkŭi *Sŏnggyo yoji* haesŏl” (“광암 이벽의 聖教要旨 해설”) (“Exposition on Gwangam Yi Pyŏk's *Sŏnggyo yoji*”) in *Pastoral Information* volume 6 [5] (May 2013). 90

Poem 19 takes the scholar as its topic, followed by poems 20, 21 and 22 which deal with, respectively, the peasant, the artisan and the merchant. These four categories are the basic building blocks of the harmonious Confucian society. The late Chosŏn had witnessed the emergence of strident satirical criticism of its leaders,¹⁵³ and Yi's writing carries a biting edge: scholars who devote their lives to pleasure are “scorning sincere abstention as the mood takes them”. Yi also associates negligent Confucians with worship of Buddha and, once more at the end of the poem, mixes Christian folklore into Eastern form by labelling these unworthy men “a mob of Pharisees”. Kim (2014) highlights Yi's comparison between the unworthy *yangban* of his era and the Pharisees of Jesus' time: “Just as the Pharisees appearing in the Bible paid lip service [to their religion/values] but were not practicing, so Yi Pyŏk's satire points out that the scholars of the Chosŏn era were paying lip service but not practicing... it is a paradox when living with an attitude of the pursuit of correctness... for a reader to become a saint, he focused upon academics to discipline his body and mind. However as time passed gradually, his original intention and purpose was degraded through having passed the civil state exam by expedient measures in order to attain a government position.”¹⁵⁴ Yi's intention here is to call for the rediscovery of what Kim calls “the true spirit of scholarship” – see below for more on the long tradition in Korean intellectual life of new ideology being introduced as a return to original values.

Poem 19 is clearly a retelling of a pivotal Old Testament reading from the Book of Amos which is a part of central to Christianity:

4. Poem 19

[Some scholars] like amusements [more than] reading books
 博嗜簡篇
 [They should] read diligently [at their] chair [or on their] bamboo mat
 几筵勤讀
 Quick to enjoy singing and dancing and engage in merriment
 琴劍端遊
 Scorning sincere abstention as the mood takes them
 專侮慎篤
 Rotten [and] vain [in their] government positions
 尸爵曠官
 Desiring good fortune [through] acts of devotion [to] Buddha
 貪祐祀佛
 A mob of Pharisees
 法喇嚙朋

Confucian wisdom held that the peasant was the foundation of a harmonious society, and late Chosŏn society certainly shared that belief, at least in its discourse.¹⁵⁵ Echoing previous non-Christian stylings Yi lauds the hard work done by peasants, before what is now becoming a mainstay of his poetic technique: an exhortation to Christian beliefs in the last two lines.

5. Poem 20

Coming busily [from] the mud
 泥塗奔走
 By all means farming
 竊認農耕
 Irrigating lakes, burning plants
 澤灌煙植

¹⁵³ See Pak, Jintae, “조선후기 풍자문학의 유형 - 고전소설 · 판소리 · 가면극을 중심으로” (“Chosŏnhugi gap'ungmunhakui yuhyŏng - gojŏn sosŏl, p'ansori, gamyŏngŭkŭl jungshimŭro”) (“Forms of late Chosŏn satirical culture: focusing on classic novels, opera and maske dances”). In *Journal of Korean Language Education Research*, volume 18, Seoul: Korean Language Education Research Society, 1981. 7-41

¹⁵⁴ Kim, 2013. 91-92. “Attitude of correctness”: *sushin*/修身

¹⁵⁵ Peasants were often placed under extremely onerous taxation obligations – see Palais, James B, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea*, Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1975.

Wiping off the dew, treading upon the dirt...

抹露踐塵...

...[Remember] the immensely grave judgement [approaching] while thinking of the boundary of the field

...疇想寅鞠

Fall to one's knees, reverently look for [salvation]

曲跪虔尋

Poem 20 advises its subject, merchants, to ensure they are also storing up credit with their creator by establishing “a storehouse” in the “blue heavens”.

6. Poem 20

...Full of money, worried [it] will blow away

...錢滿慮攘

[They must] stop [worrying about worldly things and build a] storehouse [in] the blue heavens

駐庫穹蒼

Poems 23 and 24 expand the Confucian remit of the work with their topics, focusing on the home and family. Poem 21 requires little analysis. It makes no mention of Christianity, instead being a vintage example of orthodox Eastern advice on the good management of a home and family:

7. Poem 23

[It is]joyful [for a]family [to] look after [and] revere [one another]

嘉戚看承

Older and younger siblings

昆玉姊妹

Pure love for one's parents brings happiness

純孝爺權

[To] the low and weak, show kindness

卑弱佑惠

Do not have a cold heart

刻薄肇襄

Think [of] servants [with] love [and] mercy

憐惜奴婢

Number 24 rhapsodises on good governance – a central preoccupation of Confucian thinkers throughout the ages. Like its predecessor it does not mention Christian themes explicitly.

8. Poem 24

Forecast benevolence, call [for] wisdom

卜賢徵哲

Responsibility [for] affairs of state [requires] high loyalty

荷政輪忠

Capture rebels, arrest thieves

俘叛禦盜

Make account [of your usage] of your seal of authority for proclamations...

驗印頒封...

...No shortcomings tolerated, behaving impeccably

...夔詰藐躬

Awaiting instructions, informing [themselves] of their duty

俟駕奏職

Poem 36 discusses the obligation upon those displaying ability to express it in service to their government – “remarkable creatures... must be chosen for the ministry and encouraged”. The link between bureaucratic rank and scholarly achievement was long-established (and complex) in late Chosŏn Korea. The ostensibly meritocratic state exams, the *kwagŏ* 科擧, were the gateway to official aristocratic lineage and subsequent power and status as a part of the royal bureaucracy. Yet by Yi’s era the process had become debased by nepotism, and – along with Yi – there were many esteemed scholars who rejected government posts or only took them up intermittently with reluctance. This ambiguity is referenced by the “flatterers, the proud, accusers and scoffers” in the poem, and “accusers” may also have been an acknowledgement of the precarious situation of Yi’s faction, the Southerners. The idealised goal of the Confucian, though, would be to serve society within a righteous administration, and *in toto* this poem reflects that.

9. Poem 36

[Among] the dishevelled hair of the child or the very old man
 髻童耆耆
 [If] open-minded, extraordinary, heroes shine out [from the crowd]
 倜儻俠豪
 [Don’t] hesitate – recommend [and] promote them
 遴薦勵獎
 Scold flatterers, rebuke the arrogant
 諂傲譏嘲
 Who have wide faces, stupid [while appearing] intelligent
 顛預伶俐
 Check [under their] skin and hair
 縷晰膚毫

g. Cluster VII: Meditations on Nature through a Christian lens

In this next cluster of poems – 31, 32, 33, 40 and 41 - we see Yi’s efforts to explore Christian themes via a favourite subject for meditation in the Eastern classical tradition: the natural world.

Poem 31 encourages readers to attempt to understand the Christian God through contemplation of nature. Yi Pyŏk here drew on a long tradition within Eastern classicism of meditation on nature and turned it to a specifically Christian objective. The line “If one searches for the truth with all of one’s efforts, [one can] explore the principles of creation deeply” is a beautiful encapsulation of the Confucian worldview:

1. Poem 31

If one searches for the truth with all one’s efforts
 蹇裳參叩
 Explore the principles of creation deeply
 楷模秘探

The 32nd poem in the sequence discusses the concept of *chŏn* 天, “heaven”, which was so central to early Eastern classicism and advocates meditation on nature as the path to “profound harmony”. Indeed, *Ch’ŏnjugonggyŏngga* starts and finishes with the word “Lord on High”, “a term characteristic of explanations of the idea of God in the Chou-king, before Confucius”¹⁵⁶; we can conflate this approach with the opening words of Chŏng Yakchong’s *Chugo yoji*: “when we gaze upon heaven...”¹⁵⁷ Confucius, according to Ri, had a “sceptical and agnostic” attitude to religion, but nonetheless “evoked Heaven as the supreme judge which we can not deceive and whose will the sage or the king must follow”.¹⁵⁸ Yi uses the word “heaven” to represent the works of God through nature – a re-deployment of the classic Eastern sense of the word, through which the *sangje* of antiquity is absorbed into the new Christian deity.

¹⁵⁶ Ri, 1989. 76

¹⁵⁷ Chugyoyoji. 137

¹⁵⁸ Ri, 1989. 77

2. Poem 32

...[We] turn our heads to look up at the high heavens
...瞻囑層霄
The summer clouds shine [on the] woods
霞輝林豔
The rainbow hurries past, the hoarfrost withers
霓霜催凋
The sun and rain, drought and flood
暘靈旱潦
[God's] harmony and changes can be seen.
竚覲變調

Neo-Confucianism has been characterised as a system of ordering (Kim Haboush, 2001; Kim, 2010; Oh, 1993) – defining the universe through naming and describing its content. In the thirty-third poem in the sequence, Yi uses a similar rhetorical technique to the one seen in Chǒng Yakchong's *Chugyo Yoji*.¹⁵⁹ Pairs of adjectives – “long and short”, “straight and hidden” – are employed as a shorthand to mean “everything in existence”

3. Poem 33

If we studiously examine the known world
攷究寰區
Long and short, open & cramped
長短闊狹
Concave and convex, rugged and perilous...
凹凸崎嶇...

A recurrent theme in this work is internal versus external value. In poem 40, “Treasure”, Yi lists a number of highly valuable items, including “a pot from China” and “a Tang brazier”, describes their beauty, and then concludes that they “contain their value hidden deep in the interior”. For the late Chosŏn, Tang Chinese culture was held up as an exemplar of societal perfection.

4. Poem 40

A bead not measuring much, short or long carved jade;
寸珠咫璧
Beautiful blue [and] red coral
青衍丹瑚
Water collects, water streams
洛鍾泗磬
A pot or brazier [from] Qing [China]
秦鼎唐鑪
Beautiful jade fashioned into a bowl [and] black gems
琳琅琥玖
Different precious stones
瑪瑙砮趺

Although Yi criticises aristocrats who neglect their duties to idly play music in poem 17, the forty-first poem in the sequence celebrates music, and in a curiously visceral way – there is no discussion of the study of music as a worthy method of self-improvement. Instead the music “rings out”, sounds like “silk being torn” and becomes “a swift current”.

5. Poem 41

¹⁵⁹ *Chugyo Yoji*. 138

Blow the piri, touch the flaxen [strings of the instrument]
 噓竹彈絲
 The tastefully-named tungso [is] hit [and] knocked
 簫韶拊拍
 The excellent jade and gold of the rhythm
 逸韻鏗鏘
 The falling and dripping [music of the] small bell [rings out like] silk being torn
 淋鈴裂帛
 A swift current turns [and] rages [from] [the] mountaintop
 湍激峯廻
 Thunderous thunder drags lightning [across the sky]
 霆轟電掣
 Continue to recite, pull together and harmonise
 賡詠翕諧

Poems 42-44 expound on the beauty and simplicity of nature and rural life without any direct reference to Catholicism or Eastern Classical ideals. Their role is to highlight how “la providence s’inscrit dans le quotidien”¹⁶⁰, as Ri puts it – “divine providence is written in the everyday”.

5. Conclusion

Yi Pyök’s beliefs were indelibly marked by his association with Confucianism. His *Sōnggyo yoji* emphasised the precepts of Confucianism and promoted its ethical concepts while espousing Catholic lore and doctrine. He also used the aesthetic and rhetorical techniques of Eastern orthodox classicism in the work. Furthermore its particular form – using many thousands of obscure Chinese characters – could only have been created by someone with an extensive classical Eastern education. As Yi (2004) writes:

[Yi] emphasized the righteous way, and explained, with examples of ethical goodness such as loyalty, filial piety, charity, mercy, love, and faithfulness, that these were the practical methods of putting this righteous way into action. And thinking that the holy way already exists in the minds of all men, he stressed the similarity between Catholicism and Confucianism... [Yi] harmonized the ethical ideas of traditional Confucianism and the morals of Western Catholicism.¹⁶¹

Yi goes on to claim that Yi Pyök’s work shows a “strong consciousness”¹⁶² about his society. This, I think, is projection by Yi; a principal criticism of early Korean Catholicism by the establishment was its selfish disregard for society, and Yi is here trying to position Yi Pyök to counter those accusations. Yi Pyök criticised the late Chosŏn, but only in as much as it did not represent a pure expression of his ideal Confucian/Christian society. There is no evidence in *Sōnggyo yoji* of any desire for a radical recalibration of the late Chosŏn towards anything we might recognise as a modern egalitarian Christian society. Instead Yi Pyök wanted his countrymen to begin understanding their Confucian practices via a Christian lens. This type of retrospective re-casting of early Korean Catholic works can also be seen in Iraola’s (2007) discussion of Chōng Yakchong’s *Chugyo yoji* (see the next chapter).

Yi is on surer ground when, like Ri (1989), he holds that Yi Pyök’s embrace of Catholicism was a cerebral, explicit process driven by study and contemplation. His “knowledge of the Confucian tradition was so deep that he could not accept Sōhak without reflection”; “the intellectual basis”¹⁶³ on which he came to be Catholic “was his Confucianism, whose ideas he had cultivated throughout his life.”¹⁶⁴ But when we compare *Sōnggyo yoji* to *Chugyo yoji* we see that the Confucian tradition allowed men writing about the same subject at the same time to express their beliefs in very different ways. *Chugyo Yoji* is filled with complex justifications and deductions concerning the nature of God/Jesus. In sharp contrast, rather than attempt to persuade his audience with logical rhetoric, Yi Pyök presents the existence of God as an undeniable fact. Like the classical texts he drew upon, *Sōnggyo yoji* is fully rooted

¹⁶⁰ Ri, 1989. 69

¹⁶¹ Yi, 2004. 74

¹⁶² Ri, 1989. 69

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 75

in context-specific examples and practical exhortations. Yi was aware of the theological arguments discussed in the West around concepts like the trinity and the resurrection – “the same dogmas did not escape him”¹⁶⁵ – but chose instead to forge a new path. Yi’s work “never departs from the concrete reality of the practice or of human conduct”,¹⁶⁶ and this is itself characteristic of his education and milieu. Christianity was being criticised as nihilistic, selfish and wasteful, concerned as it was with the hereafter and eschatology (Choi, 2006; Cawley, 2012). Yi sought to defeat these attacks by grounding his theology in everyday life and current existence – in other words, using Confucian techniques and forms to combat Confucian criticisms.

Clearly, Yi Pyök attempted to fit Jesus into the lineage of Eastern exemplars. Yi Pyök’s Jesus accomplishes everything which would be expected of a classical Eastern sage: Jesus’ actions and their result in Yi’s portrayal are designed to show him as a subject worthy of adoration. More broadly, the sage of the East should seek to order the universe, both by understanding and classifying it and by making direct interventions as a ruler to promote harmony. The search for order is Confucianism’s central motivation – and all parts of Yi Pyök’s work reflect this concern. Ri (1989) argues that there was no inherent conflict involved in accepting Jesus as a part of this pantheon – his understanding of Confucius’ idea of sagehood is that the doctrine was open to the idea of *sainthood* and divine presence in the earthly realm, a further expression of *in* 仁:

Being a natural man, Confucius did not deny the existence of a higher concept of *in* could be ‘sainthood’ because the saint could save all of humanity.¹⁶⁷

In his commentary, Ri also consistently conflates “saint” and “sage”, a comparison which is not correct: the two concepts are not interchangeable. This is a debatable position, to say the least; “sagehood” was not “sainthood”, and Jesus’s Western provenance barred him from accession of sagehood anyway. Besides, the Confucian sage achieved his position thanks to impeccable self-control and mastery of his natural tendencies, not bloodline (divine or otherwise). Ri argues that Yi’s examples showcase “saintliness” across the span of human history. But it is not accurate to designate Yao, Shun, Yu and T’ang as “saints” in the Christian tradition when they held no Christian beliefs or knowledge of Christianity. One can argue that there is a commonality to expressions and practice of virtue across cultures and time, but that is not sufficient to claim, as Ri does, that sages are saints. Yi Pyök’s original text is not so bold; it is possible to read the stanzas of the *Sönggyo yoji* as comparing the great men of Eastern antiquity to Christian ideals without claiming them as Christian. The differences between the two concepts, saint and sage, are important. Christian sainthood represents lives of devotion and self-denial but the catalyst is external – God – rather than internal. Catholic sainthood may not always or even usually involve direct supernatural intervention from the deity, but the Catholic must understand their belief in terms of a sentience which exists independently of themselves. In contrast the central nub of orthodox Confucianism is perhaps that everyone possesses the internal possibility of greatness. In contrast anyone who professed their belief in the Christian God could potentially achieve sainthood, but that would always involve mediation with an external sentience, God. However, regardless of Ri’s overly-flexible interpretation, the potential conflicts here do not negate the plain fact that Yi was attempting to express his beliefs within the forms and rhetorical conventions of his society.

a. Jean Sangbae Ri: Rebuttal and Agreement

This chapter has made heavy usage of Jean Sangbae Ri’s 1989 work *Confucius and Jesus Christ*, partly in response to the relative lack of secondary sources discussing Yi Pyök. Where Ri’s interpretation has been problematic these inconsistencies have been explored to a point – and here we will further examine the idiosyncrasies of his viewpoint. Ri is himself a Catholic clergyman, ordained in the Korea of his birth and later having trained extensively in France. His work is valuable but must be used with caution, as excerpts have shown: it is very much a religious history rather than a history dealing with religion. Ri’s Christian faith inescapably suffuses his work - “without this doctrine we can do nothing”¹⁶⁸ – but his own perception of Christianity serves to highlight some of the parallels between Western and Eastern thought systems. Ri is ostensibly talking about Christianity when he writes:

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 77

¹⁶⁸ Ri, 1989. 25, cf. Dallet, 1874. 16-17

Without it one cannot regulate one's heart nor one's character. Without it, how could one know the different duties of kings and of commoners?.. without it, the fundamental rule of life, the creation of heaven and earth, the laws of the poles, the course and the revolution of the heavenly bodies, the difference between good and bad spirits, the origin and the end of the world, the union of the soul and body, the reason of good and evil... all of this would stay unknown.¹⁶⁹

But this distillation of Christianity could also serve as a checklist of the preoccupations of Confucianism. Ri's thesis visits similar themes to much of the work done on inculturation since the 1960s (see *Introduction*), adding to a new recognition of the importance of host cultures and the significant contribution they have made to the forms of Catholicism which have emerged in any given society. Yet there are problems with his approach. He argues, curiously, that "the Christian faith as understood in Western countries – absolute submission to a revealed God – does not play an important role for Yi Pyök, because mankind's true difficulty is the distortion or negation of God"¹⁷⁰ despite there being a significant number of parts of *Sönggyo yoji* which challenge his claim: poems 1-13 focus on Bible lore and the life of Jesus while poems 31 – 47 are meditations on various aspects of life and existence, often without explicit reference to Christianity, moral propriety or human suffering.¹⁷¹

It is difficult to argue with Ri's assertion that Yi's Jesus falls absolutely in line with the classical virtuous monarch. He is "above all a wise man, who possesses human and transcendent virtue, governs the kingdom and civilises the world in accordance with Heaven, for the good of the people."¹⁷² Christian and non-Christian, Confucian and non-Confucian alike seem to agree that there is a moral order to the universe. The extent to which this order is sentient itself or overseen by a sentient being varies between schools of thought, of course; and while it's an intriguing argument, it is not definitive to say that such an order is "Christian", or even theistic, merely waiting for any given thinker to perceive it as such – the basic fact that some thinkers do not and did not perceive it as such makes such a claim impossible to assert universally.

Equally, the Jesus of *Sönggyo yoji* and Chöng Yakchong's *Chugyo yoji* differ from any of the sage-kings of antiquity in important ways. He never ruled an earthly state, impeccably or poorly; his earthly bloodline was humble; and he was not rewarded for his virtue in his earthly life. And unlike T'ang, Yao and Shun, Jesus had no military dimension to his worth.

b. Söng and Verbum Factum

The concept of *söng* 聖, "sincerity", referenced throughout *Sönggyo yoji*, is found in Christianity too: *verbum factum*, the Word made flesh: sincere praxis - practicing as one preaches. "The word *söng* has an extremely profound and dynamic meaning within a Confucian environment, in place of repeating the word 'Christ', to prepare the second part of the text which is devoted to developing Christianity in the form of Confucianism".¹⁷³ Yi uses the phrase *sönggyo* 聖教 as seen in the work's title to refer to the Catholic church as a whole. Ri's reading of the late Chosön Korean mindset as one which "[did] not like to discuss or analyse in the abstract"¹⁷⁴ is a debatable claim, but his specific point with reference to Yi Pyök's work is less controversial – Christianity is a guidebook towards achieving a morally proper existence. Whether the correct moral order of the universe is created by God, or God is merely one route towards it, is impossible to say, and is irrelevant, though Ri seems to suggest that moral correctness can exist outside Christianity: "Religion is above all a concrete teaching which encourages the honest life of man".¹⁷⁵

Some modern scholarship on Korean Catholicism reflects this philosophy, combining historical analysis with explicit guidance on the practice of sincerity. While Ri's work is not a Christian how-to manual, Kim's (2014) short discussion and parsing of poems 18 and 19 explicitly advises the reader on how to apply the lessons in the poems to contemporary Christian praxis. Kim also uses honorifics to discuss Jesus, calling him *Yesunim* ("Master" or "Teacher" Jesus) and directly compares the poem to various Bible passages, an exercise which seems somewhat myopic from an academic

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ri, 1989. 83

¹⁷¹ See, for example, 33, 34 and 35.

¹⁷² Ri, 1989. 77

¹⁷³ Ibid. 84

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 84-85

viewpoint, given the richness of the Eastern references in the work, though it is understandable for a Christian writer to do so.

c. The Church as Organisation and Mental Space

The sense of a church as an organised space or body is subservient in Ri's understanding of Yi's Catholicism, although clearly early Korean Catholics placed some importance on fellowship and communal worship.¹⁷⁶ Here Ri is making a case for Korean Catholicism as a new Catholicism – in poem 10, Yi's Church is the entirety of the Christian experience: lived experience of Christian mission, good works, organised and communal and personal and spontaneous prayer and belief in Jesus/God. In contrast to *Chugyo yoji Sōnggyo yoji* does not talk much of what Ri calls the “interior life” of the church: liturgy, sacraments and hierarchy. This is a by-product of Yi's Confucianism, and is also seen in the independent organisation of the early Korean church; sincere and learned men could be expected to, and did, organise affairs on their own initiative.

For Ri, Yi's writing evinces continuity, not revolution. While he finds himself facing political, intellectual and moral censure, Yi is actually attempting to express values in line with Korea's glorious past. Again, whether this past ever actually existed is debatable, and not immediately relevant; Yi believed that he was acting in accordance with the nominal core values of his society – that is, striving for the most moral existence, while mired in a contemporary society which has degraded and perverted itself:

At no point in his writings does one get the impression that Yi Pyōk wants to create rift. The Confucian Christian will not think or not live differently than those before him who have sought the path defined by the classics of antiquity. The break is only with the deviations and superstitions of the surrounding culture, following a recent tradition and thoroughly corrupted. Awareness of this corruption appears in all the testimony of historians at this time and dominates the whole issue of the passage of Confucianism to Christianity.¹⁷⁷

Kim (2014) also explores Yi's discussion of the degeneration of the late Chosōn. “When the rich and powerful act with false humility, the first thing they lose is their pure heart and humanity. The first thing retained when they forfeit their ideals and convictions is they are frustrated and lose motivation in life and suffer the misfortune of wandering”¹⁷⁸; Yi is railing against the hypocrisy of his society – his concern is that “lies and deceit will overwrite one's true devotion in order to match up with other people”¹⁷⁹. Yi wishes to bring Korea back to where it used to be, using and through the truth of Christianity. Indeed, the transition from Koryō Buddhism to Chosōn Confucianism had been presented as a revival of essential truth by its architect, the scholar Chōng To-jōn (1342-1398). This was belief: their background and education had led them to a truth which had been there all along (we can add in Ricci's assertions about the historical Eastern worship of heaven as actually being that of a pre-Christian God, too). But Ri's point about the “surrounding culture”, *la culture ambiante*, requires further discussion. How can we separate form from meaning? Where is the line between a meaningless ritual, specific to a time and place, and a meaningful component of a given belief? How did Yi and Chōng decide what they would discard and what would form integral parts of the Korean Christianity they were constructing?

Their solution was elegantly simple: the only parts of their traditional education and values which did not survive their encounter with Catholicism were those in direct opposition to Catholic values. Anything else was liable to adaptation and re-deployment as a proselytising tool. There are two ways (at least) to look at this process: my argument is that the depth and breadth of Yi and Chōng's immersion in Eastern orthodoxy allowed them to create a uniquely Korean form of Catholicism, while other scholars argue that embracing Catholic ideas (and consequently rejecting key parts of their society's orthodoxy) was such a departure from “their” values as to represent an irreconcilable break.¹⁸⁰ This was certainly the prevailing attitude at the time, and the debate continues.

¹⁷⁶ See the chapter *Early Catholic Praxis*.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 87

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 89

¹⁷⁹ Ibid

¹⁸⁰ During a debate following my presentation of a paper based on the chapter *Orthodox Heresy* at the 12th International Society for Korean Studies conference in Vienna in August 2015, Professor Donald Baker argued that Chōng and Yi's works were too far divorced from the core elements of Confucianism to be considered in the same intellectual lineage. I disagreed, for the reasons outlined in

Yi's contemporary Chǒng Yakchong approached the debate as just that, a debate; rather than take Yi's standpoint, that Christian ideas were self-evidently true, Chǒng Yakchong sought to use logic and rhetorical techniques to persuade his audience of the truth of the religion. The next chapter examines his central work, *Chugyo yoji*.

this chapter, while appreciating Professor Baker's significant contributions to this topic, many of which I have referenced.

Orthodox Heresy: Chǒng Yakchong and Chǒng Yakchǒn

Introduction

This chapter situates *Chugyo yoji* 주교요지 (*Essentials of the Lord's Teachings*) by Chǒng Yakchong (1760-1801) as part of a continuum of many centuries of classical thought in Korea. *Chugyo yoji* was widely read by early Korean Catholics, to such a degree it has been described as “the most basic handbook”¹⁸¹ of the movement. During Chǒng’s era, the late Chosǒn dynasty (朝鮮, 1392-1910), Neo-Confucianism orthodoxy dominated the cultural mainstream. When Catholicism emerged it was considered to be a repugnant doctrine: of untrustworthy foreign provenance and espousing ideas which were anathema to the dominant thought-modes of the time.¹⁸² Chǒng was executed in 1801 after several years of official suppression, having refused to renounce his beliefs until the end, and his family — including his younger brother Chǒng Yagyong, most well-known as Tasan¹⁸³ — were tarnished forever by his heresy.¹⁸⁴ This chapter also examines a short work by another Chǒng brother, Chǒng Yakchǒn, *Sipgye myǒngga* 十誠命歌 (“Song of the Ten Commandments”).

Chugyo yoji is of vital importance to our understanding of Korean Catholicism. When we read it we can see firm evidence of Yakchong’s deep immersion in the orthodox philosophy and thought of his age, despite the controversy surrounding his beliefs; the book is a compelling symbol of the early Korean Catholic church as a whole—underground, hidden and heretical, persistent and tenacious, and deeply rooted in classical orthodoxy. Completed in around 1790 and first published in 1798 or 1799, it was the first indigenous Catholic treatise written in the native Korean *hangŭl* script—and was thus the first full explanation of the Catholic faith available to Korean society at large, what Han defines as the *sǒmin* 서민, “ordinary people”.¹⁸⁵ Previously available works were written using Chinese characters and so were only accessible to educated male aristocrats. Chǒng’s text left a huge impact on Korean Catholicism of the period: as late as 1864 a copy of the work made by Daveluy, a French missionary to Korea, was “widely disseminated”.¹⁸⁶ *Chugyo yoji* comprises two Books made up of numerous short chapters, with Book One being made up of thirty-two sections, Book Two comprising eleven (somewhat longer) chapters.

¹⁸¹ Iraola, Antton Egiguren, *True Confucians, Bold Christians. Korean Missionary Experience: a model for the third millennium*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 38

¹⁸² Ahn, Dae-ok, “18 segi chǒngjogi chosǒn sǒhak suyongŭi gyebo” (“18 세기 정조기 조선 서학 수용의 계보”) (“18th century Korea’s king Chǒngjo’s acceptance of Catholicism”), article in *Journal of Eastern Philosophy*, volume 71, 2012, 55-90.

¹⁸³ Tasan himself, at the very least, showed interest in Catholic ideas, and academic debate to this day remains lively as to whether he was at any point a Catholic (Baker 2007 and 1998; Cawley, 2012 and 2014; Kim, 2010; Kim, 2013). Although Tasan’s epigraph for another brother, Yakchǒn, would seem to have been written from a position of sympathy to Catholic ideas, Baker (1998) describes how Tasan later denounced the faith, having estranged himself from Yakchong due to his important but problematic role in the early Catholic Church vis-à-vis the authorities. Additionally, Yakchong wrote at least one letter explicitly pointing out that his brothers were not Catholic, though this letter may have been an effort at protecting his siblings from certain torture and/or execution. Conversely Kim (2013) asserts that Tasan took baptism in 1784—actually before Yakchong—and Cawley (2012; 2014) points out that the family’s lives were at stake, and Tasan’s declarations were therefore made under psychological duress of a kind, and even contradicted in his own writings. Kim (2010), meanwhile, is uncertain as to his Catholicism one way or another. The truth will never be definitively known, but a circumspect reading of Tasan’s writings on the matter alongside an awareness of his family’s precarious situation is wise.

¹⁸⁴ Baker, Donald, “Tasan and His Brothers: How Religion Divided a Korean Confucian Family”, article in Lee, Sang-oak and Park, Duk-so (Eds.), *Perspectives On Korea* (Sydney: Wild Peony Press), 1998

¹⁸⁵ Han, Kǒn, “Chǒng Yakchongui sinhaksasang – Chugyo yojirŭl t’onghan sinron bunsǒk” (정약종의 신학사상 – 주교 요지를 통한 신론 분석) [Chǒng Yakchong’s theological ideas – analysis of the doctrine of God through *Chugyo yoji*], article in *Han’kuk Sasang Sahakhoe* (한국 사상 사학회) [Journal of Korean Thought], volume 19, (Seoul: Korean Society of the History of Ideas), 2002, 137.

¹⁸⁶ Sǒ Chongt’ae, “Philological Review of Chǒng Yakchong’s *Chugyo yoji*”, article in *Korean Society for the History of Ideas Journal* volume 18 number 0, (Seoul: Korean Society for the History of Ideas, 2002), 2002.

Chung (1995) characterises Korean morality and philosophy as “prescriptive”¹⁸⁷, and this is a suitable adjective for Chŏng’s work; tonally Chugyo yoji is somewhere between polemic and missal, combining moral instruction and Christian doctrine with intellectual debate intended to prove the correctness of its message.¹⁸⁸ The first book lays out the basic tenets of Catholicism and presents arguments extolling its correctness; the second book re-tells elements of Catholic teaching. Both parts are densely thicketed with Eastern classical references while directly confronting Catholicism’s clashes with Korean orthodoxy. We might consider this curious considering the target audience of uneducated commoners, but Chung persuasively posits that the Korea of the late Chosŏn was a society where broader cultural significance was widely attributed to the philosophical and intellectual tools of the elite:

In a homogenous culture and stable society like Korea, in which tradition and morality were prescriptive, there was a high degree of cultural integration. Thus, the moral and religious symbols of the intellectuals provided a universal meaning to the people as well.¹⁸⁹

That is, with a single culture having been dominant for hundreds of years, throughout Korean society there was an appreciation for its values and symbols.

Despite his apparent reverence for the culture he had grown up as part of, there were, naturally, a significant number of sites of conflict between Chŏng’s beliefs and his milieu, and *Chugyo yoji* does not shy away from addressing these clashes. But while Baker (1998) situates Chŏng as an extremist, operating on the margins of Korean society - this is a fair summary of the man in many respects - his work is still deeply rooted in orthodoxy, in method if not in message.

Work on Korean Catholicism to date has focused on its history as a process whereby an alien cultural element was introduced into a host culture, more or less as a whole. But the Catholicism which emerges in work like Chugyo yoji is not simply a reproduction of Vatican teachings. Instead it is a unique and rich phenomenon inherently suffused with Eastern classical ideas. Tasan himself wrote in his *Tonghoron* 東胡論 (“*Discussion on the East and Barbarians*”) that Korea creates its own distinctive culture, quite different from anywhere else:

Chosŏn, as it is a land situated directly east, applauds good etiquette in its customs [...] ah, already one cannot live in China – [Chosŏn] is the only place one can live in the East.¹⁹⁰

1. The Decision

Baker (1999) sees the decision by the Ch’ŏnjinam group to begin practicing Catholicism as rooted in a sincere desire to master the human mind’s natural inclination to immorality. The foundational influences on the Ch’ŏnjinam group’s faction, the Southerners, had written extensively on the need for constant vigilance and effort by the virtuous man to master the mind’s tendency towards slothfulness or distraction. Baker believes that frustration with their inability to live up to this exacting standard is a key factor in explaining their adoption of Catholicism. Tasan exemplified this attitude:

Frustration at repeated failures to conform to the Neo-Confucian vision of rectitude led to guilt. That guilt led to disillusionment with one of the cornerstones of Neo-Confucian thought. Conventional Neo-Confucian moralists presumed that all men have within themselves the strength to eventually become a sage, to form a trinity with heaven and earth. Tasan asked if all men can be sages, why are not all men sages? Especially, he asked himself, why was he, who tried so hard to eliminate self-centred biases and follow moral principles, unable to go through even a single day without going astray at least once in thought or action? The guilt Tasan felt at his inability to live up to the high

¹⁸⁷ Chung, Chai-sik. *A Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World: Yi Hang-no and the West*. 1995. 3

¹⁸⁸ Cawley, Kevin, “Deconstructing Hegemony: Catholic Texts in Chosŏn’s Neo-Confucian Context”, article in *Acta Koreana* 15 [1] (2012): 15-42.

¹⁸⁹ Chung, 1995. 3

¹⁹⁰ Chŏng Tasan, *Tonghoron* (東胡論) (Discourse on the East and Barbarians) in Chŏng Tasan, *Chŏng Tasan chŏnsŏ* (“*Chŏng Tasan’s Testament*”), 1:12:7b-8a, accessed via the online Database of Korean Classics, date unknown: www.db.itkc.or.kr [accessed on 06.06.2015]: 史稱東夷爲仁善，真有以哉！況朝鮮處正東之地...嗟乎，既不能生乎中國，其唯東夷哉。

standards of self-denial and self-discipline Sŏngho raised for himself and his followers prepared Tasan to respond favourably to Catholic writings which claimed to identify a source of moral strength in the personal deity found in the earliest Confucian classics.¹⁹¹

Thus the Ch'ŏnjinam scholars came to believe that belief in this “personal deity” was the only way for the virtuous man to force himself to continuously practice *kyŏng* 敬, “reverence”. Baker asserts that Tasan’s personal understanding of this God was *not* the Christian entity – but his brother Chŏng Yakchong’s understanding and belief unquestionably was.

2. *Chugyo yoji*: Language and Style

This chapter uses the original Korean text of *Chugyo yoji* which is presented in the 2012 KIAT volume, alongside Debernieri Torres’ excellent English translation, although all of the quotes below are my own translations. The KIAT text is based on a 1932 version of the text, Moveable-Type Manuscript F, and also includes extra text from various other editions to highlight differences and omissions. Where versions differ this has been noted in the footnotes.

Chŏng used a number of deliberate techniques to make his “Lord of Heaven” appealing to his audience, not least his consistent conflation of *Ch'ŏnju* (천주), the Lord of Heaven (that is, the Christian God), with earth-bound royal dynasties. In Korea “kingship was a conspicuous site of tension between ascription and performance”,¹⁹² and from at least the founding of the Chosŏn era, Korean kingship was supposed to embody both inherent moral superiority through a royal bloodline, and individual greatness expressed in superior feats of prowess, both intellectual and physical. Chumong (朱蒙, r. 37BC – 19BC), Koguryŏ’s legendary founder, was a “warring hero”¹⁹³ in Chosŏn representations, while Silla’s progenitor Pak Hyŏkkŏse (朴赫居世, r. 57BC – 4AD) possessed divine royal heritage; and a century after his tenure, Chosŏn’s founder Yi Sŏnggye (李成桂, r. 1292-1398) was being depicted as both divine ruler and possessor of “astounding”¹⁹⁴ military ability.¹⁹⁵ Han discusses the “totemistic faith basis”¹⁹⁶ of Korean belief and argues that Chŏng sought to ensure that his depiction of Jesus would be taken literally, not dismissed as an allegory or non-literal legend, as was the contemporary attitude towards the Tan’gun story:

From the beginning of the creation to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Chŏng Yakchong summarises the entirety of the salvation of the Word, and then in the second volume paragraph 8 again supplements this information. [Chŏng] has already rejected the myth of Tan’gun in the second volume; the human-as-God, namely, the details of Jesus Christ’s birth, are held as traditional tenets without deviation. Through the premise of human sin and death, along with the Lord of Heaven’s mercy, the relation between divinity and humanity is restored and, moreover, the assertion identifying Jesus [as the son of God] is disseminated [...] to a readership soaked in a traditional way of thinking about faith, the truth of the Lord of Heaven becoming human through the divinity and humanity being united in one, had a lot of potential for collapsing. And there was a danger that the mystery itself would [merely] be regarded as a legend or myth. For a representative example we can look at the myth of Tan’gun, the founder of the [Old] Chosŏn dynasty.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ Baker, Donald, “A different thread: Orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian world”. In *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, Deuchler, Martina and Haboush, JaHyun Kim (Eds.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. 20

¹⁹² Haboush, JaHyun Kim, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yŏngjo and the Politics of Sagacity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. x

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ The Koguryŏ dynasty ruled from 37BC – 668 AD; the Silla from 57BC – 935AD; and the Chosŏn from 1392 – 1910.

¹⁹⁶ Han, 2002. 147

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 147–148

King Yǒngjo (英祖, r. 1724 – 1776), a contemporary of Chǒng, devoted his tenure to doomed attempts at embodying this perfect idealised monarch (Kim Haboush, 2001). In a similar vein, literally, Chǒng’s Lord of Heaven also represents a royal bloodline:

As Jesus had already chosen human form, so He became the originators’ descendant,
sharing the same bloodline as the rest of us.¹⁹⁸

The fourth king of Chosŏn, Sejong (世宗, r. 1418 – 1450) ordered the composition of the *Yongbiŏch’ŏnga* 龍飛御天歌 (“Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven”), an epic poem detailing the deeds and provenance of Sejong’s royal forebears. The first document written in *hangŭl*, the *Yongbiŏch’ŏnga* holds a prominent place in Korean literary history, and it continued the representation of the early Chosŏn rulers as utterly appropriate in every dimension: through their bloodline, their moral virtue, and their intellectual and physical prowess. The relevance of the *Yongbiŏch’ŏnga* here is that it illustrates a direct link between the most orthodox and correct panegyrics of early Chosŏn – the regime so closely tied to Neo-Confucianism – and Chǒng’s much later work, anathema to Korean Confucianism yet indelibly suffused by it. Compare this stanza from the *Yongbiŏch’ŏnga*:

The tree with deep roots does not tremble in winds;
its flowers are perfect, its fruit abundant.¹⁹⁹

and this excerpt from Book One of *Chugyo yoji*:

Typically when we look at all of the Lord of Heaven’s creation we come to know that the width and height of the sky, the shining sun and moon, the thickness and depth of the soil and the sea, the blooming profusion of the trees and all the wild animals, the sublime colours and sounds, the various extraordinary tastes and smells.²⁰⁰

Han describes Chǒng’s style as *chǒnghwanhagye*, “wordy” or “rambling”²⁰¹, but his distinctive voice ultimately “gives an impression of the firmness of his attitude through his faith towards the Lord of Heaven’s omnipotence”, and we can unpack Chǒng’s linguistic choices to further probe how he represented Catholicism to his audience.²⁰² The text is full of four-syllable phrases (with additional Korean particles), derived from what Su calls “the solemn tetrasyllabic meter... the classical style for eulogy”,²⁰³ and *Chugyo yoji* is full of these evocative and poetic representations of nature and geography. Confucian and Neo-Confucian continually attributes righteousness and virtue to a celestial origin. As Mencius wrote:

The sagely man knows the heavenly way. To know and practice it is sagely.²⁰⁴

Again we can emphasise the celestial and extra-human roots of propriety in the minds which had informed Chǒng’s education. “Sagely knowledge is something special; it is to know the heavenly way,”

¹⁹⁸ Chǒng, Yakchong, *Chugyo yoji* (주교요지) (“Essentials of the Lord’s Teachings”), Seoul: The KIATS Press, (c.1798) 2012: “예수 이미 인성을 취하신 고로 원조의 자손이 되시고 우리와 같은 혈맥이 되시는지라.” 178

¹⁹⁹ *Yongbiŏch’ŏnga* (龍飛御天歌) (Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven), Canto II, in McCann, David, *Early Korean Literature: Selections and Introductions*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, McCann’s translation. 125

²⁰⁰ Chǒng, *Chugyo yoji*: “대개 천주의 만드신 만물을 보면 알 것이니, 하늘의 높고 넓음과, 일월의 빛나고 밝음과, 땅과 바다의 두텁고 깊음과 초목금수의 변화롭고 많음과, 각색 기묘 한 빛소리와, 각종 기이한 맛과 향내와.” 141-142

²⁰¹ Han, 2002. 149

²⁰² Ibid. 149

²⁰³ Su, Jui-lung, “Shi Poetry: Music Bureau Poems (Yuefu)”, article in *How to read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, edited by Cai, Zong-qi, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 85

²⁰⁴ Mencius, *Ching* 18, translated in Huang, Chun-chieh, *Mencian Hermeneutics: A History of Interpretations in China*, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001. 132

writes Huang (2001); “at the same time, this heavenly knowledge can be obtained by any human being”.²⁰⁵ Chu Hsi (1130-1200) had discussed a similar kind of reverence felt by those who contemplated the heavens, though he did not believe that a sentient intelligence resided there:

[The heaven] forms and makes, the Kosmos was formed by the action of the Yin and Yang. The opposites grinding together, as the grain is scattered from a mill, so do all things come.²⁰⁶

Poetry was of such importance to a classical Eastern education that Martin (1901) argued that “an apprenticeship in the art of poetry forms a leading feature in [China’s] educational system”.²⁰⁷

To give another example, McCann writes that the word *ttūt*, “doing”, can be interpreted in the *Yongbiŏch’ōngga* as “intent”, “meaning” or “significance”, “the reframing of historical narrative as prophecy”.²⁰⁸

[Yi Sōnggye] moved to Lofty Mountain,
and this was part of heaven’s doing [...]
he moved to virtue’s source,
and this was part of heaven’s doing.²⁰⁹

Chōng also uses *ttūt* 뜻 – in this excerpt, in the form *bonttūt* (“real intention/meaning”) - to describe the Lord of Heaven’s wishes:

If he were to punish sinners straight away... it would not be in accordance with his real intention for humanity to ascend to heaven.²¹⁰

Chang (1983) also discusses the role played by semi-mythical figures such as the Yellow Emperor in bestowing legitimacy on Eastern regimes. Chōng’s Lord of Heaven can be placed in the same continuum, as a work blurring the lines between history, mythology and prophecy, in exactly the same way as Chosōn’s rulers, poets and historians did, and for exactly the same reason: to bolster the legitimacy of a ruler’s claim. This type of myth-creation is part of the lineage of Eastern classicism from the pre-Confucian sage kings through Confucius and Mencius up to Chu Hsi and the Ch’eng brothers, the thinkers whose beliefs had most fundamentally informed the intellectual life of Chōng’s era.

The way of heaven and earth is the way of the sage kings
The way of the sage kings is the way of Confucius and Mencius
The way of Confucius and Mencius is the way of Ch’eng and Chu.

3. A Disturbing Doctrine: How a Confucian Became Catholic

The fit is not perfect. As mentioned, there were significant areas where Christianity came into irresolvable conflict with the dominant thought-modes of 1798 Korea – not least with Chōng’s claim that, while Jesus embodied the purest and most noble bloodline in existence:

Jesus united divine and human nature in one body²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Huang, Chun-chieh. *Mencian Hermeneutics: A History of Interpretations in China*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001. 132

²⁰⁶ Chu Hsi, in “The Orthodox Philosophy of the Chinese”, Knox, William George, *The American Journal of Theology* volume 7 [1], 1903. Knox’s translation. 46

²⁰⁷ Martin, W., “The Poetry of the Chinese”. In *The North American Review* 172 [535] (June 1901). 853

²⁰⁸ McCann, David, *Early Korean Literature: Selections and Introductions*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 130

²⁰⁹ Ibid. Emphasis added. McCann’s translation. 42

²¹⁰ Chōng, *Chugyo yoji*. Emphasis added: “만일 다 별하시면.. . 사람을 내시어 하늘에 올리려 하신 본뜻이 아니라.” 163

²¹¹ Ibid. “예수 한 위에 천주성과 인성을 결합하여 계시니”. 165

this bloodline was shared by every single person on the face of the earth:

As Jesus had already chosen human form, so He became the originators' descendant, sharing the same bloodline as the rest of us.²¹²

Clearly this idea of equal bloodlines was in direct opposition to everything late Chosŏn Korea prized. (Chŏng also criticised ritual ancestor worship, probably an even more toxic position for him to take at the time.) But he had no choice – Catholic doctrine is unequivocal: all are equal before God. Chŏng attempted to present Jesus to his audience in a way which was acceptable in the milieu of late 18th-century Korea, but only so far as that representation did not conflict with his view of the foundational tenets of Christianity. However, he did seek to mitigate the problems presented by Jesus' sharing of his "royal" blood by emphasising his mandate from heaven:

I have been given a complete mandate both in heaven above and the earth below; you all, then, must follow my orders and go out into the world, teaching the proper *obligation* to the Lord of Heaven of all people.²¹³

Jesus has already ascended [to heaven] and will now stay there; having been given a mandate to give and take life, and to bless and punish all people, He will return again after the end of the world, and will decide the blessings and penalties all people will receive for their good works and their sins.²¹⁴

Chŏng also cleverly uses the example of royal marriage to argue that the shared equality between Jesus/God and humans elevates humanity, rather than debasing himself:

The combination of the Lord of Heaven and mankind with each other sees the Lord of Heaven elevate humanity; humanity cannot debase the Lord of Heaven. To give an example, if an earthly king mixes with a vassal's daughter, making her his queen, the female's baseness is no more, while the king remains noble.²¹⁵

(Catholic orthodoxy, as embodied by Thomas Aquinas, also assumed there were "status differences" between humans, a natural order of superior and inferior.) Chŏng's Jesus exhorts his followers to teach the "proper way", *parŭn dori* 바른 도리. *Dori*, "duty" or "obligation" is a word derived from the Sino-Korean character *to* 道, "way" or "path". Though *do* 道 was used to refer to any thought-system or belief which provided a prescription for correct living, it was often – perhaps principally in Chŏng's time – used as shorthand for *the Way*: Confucianism. Accordingly Chŏng presents the worship of Christ as forming part of the non-negotiable demands placed on the righteous person by Confucian orthodoxy.

Yet however troublesome his provenance, the Jesus/God of *Chugyo yoji* is firmly embedded in a Confucian tradition of example, study and self-criticism (Kim Haboush, 2001):

²¹² Ibid. "대개 천주의 만드신 만물을 보면 알 것이니, 하늘의 높고 넓음과, 일월의 빛나고 밝음과, 땅과 바다의 두텁고 깊음과 초목금수의 변화롭고 많음과, 각색 기묘 한 빛소리와, 각종 기이한 맛과 향내와." 141-142

²¹³ Chŏng, *Chugyo yoji*: "내가 하늘 위와 땅 아래의 권을 온전히 받았으니, 너희들이 마땅히 내 명을 받아들여 천하에 가서, 천주의 바른 도리로 만민을 가르치고". 172

²¹⁴ Ibid: "예수가 이미 오르시어, 이제 천당에 계시며 만민을 살리고 죽이고, 복을 주고 화를 주는 권한을 맡아 계시니, 이후에 세계 마칠때에, 다시 이 세상에 내려오시어, 천하고금 사람의 공과 죄를 살펴 상과벌을 결단하시리라." 172

²¹⁵ Ibid: "천주와 사람이 서로 함함에 사람은 천주와 같이 높아지려니와, 천주는 사람과 같이 낮아질 길이 없으니, 비유컨대 세상 인금이 신하의 딸을 왕비로 삼아 배합하면, 그 여인의 낮은 것은 없어져도 임금의 높은 것은 높은 대로 있음과 같으니라." 178

Jesus was present in the world for thirty-three years, and represented utmost virtue; he built divine teachings and swayed the hearts of people... all things in creation followed his commands, and in this was the revelation of the infinite ability of the Lord of Heaven.²¹⁶

When Jesus was present on the earth He took on a human nature in order to conceal His infinite power and authority as the Lord of Heaven; and through His virtues, mercy, humility and patience, He diligently worked towards our salvation, teaching us. But when this time comes [the apocalypse] His authority and glory will make heaven and earth tremble and he will openly reveal his supremely just and righteous nature.²¹⁷

Chǒng himself, quite fittingly, had only come to believe in Catholicism after deep reflection, what Kim (2013) calls “many years” of “casting his gaze”²¹⁸ over the new religion, and his presentation of Jesus as a scholar and educator reflects this approach. Chǒng’s background was rigorously classic, if rooted in a faction of Korean aristocracy which had suffered attacks on its perceived propriety: Chǒng “encountered the Catholic faith armed with Southerner thought” and an “inclination towards Daoism”²¹⁹. He had eventually “reached the conclusion”: Catholicism was the correct way. Han (2002) expands on his background. Chǒng Yakchong came from “the house of a good clan”²²⁰ and “had studied Confucianism according the scholarly atmosphere”²²¹ of his family home. This further explains Yakchong’s frequent use of historical examples and allegorical comparison of Catholicism with Confucian filial piety: he was a Confucian.

4. Confucianising Christ: Examples from the Text

Examining *Chugyo yoji* bolsters Cawley’s argument that Jesus Christ as understood in Eastern Asia performed Confucian functions with Catholic supplementation.²²² There are myriad examples in the text of Chǒng’s Chǒnju being refracted through the lens of Eastern classicism. From the beginning of the work, Chǒng seeks to draw explicit comparisons between his Catholicism and the very foundations of Korean society. A long-established belief in Eastern classicism held that a ruler’s behaviour directly influenced the natural world: a righteous ruler gained heaven’s blessing and bountiful crops followed; an unworthy ruler subjected his people to floods and drought. The first paragraph seeks to democratise and personalise this belief, situating Korean Catholic worship within a familiar framework:

In general, when people gaze upon the heavens, they know that there is an owner [of the earth] above them, so that when they face the suffering of illness, they look up to the heavens and plead, hoping for an escape; when they come across thunder and lightning, they call their sins to mind, and become startled and fearful; if there were no owner above, how could every person’s heart become like this?²²³

²¹⁶ Ibid: “예수가 세상에서 서른 세 해를 계시며 지극한 덕의 표양을 보이시며 지극히 거룩한 교를 세우시고 사람의 마음을 감화하시고... 천지 만물이 다 명령을 따르니.” 167

²¹⁷ Ibid: “예수가 세상에 계실 때는 인상을 취하여 천주의 무궁 하신 권능과 위엄을 감추시어 다만 인자하시고 겸손하시고 인내하시는 모든 덕으로써 우리 사람을 가르쳐 구속 공부하시더니, 이때에 이르러서는 그 위엄과 영광이 찬지에 진동하여 당신의 지공 지의 하심을 혁혁히 나타내어 보이심이라.” 174

²¹⁸ Kim, Taeyǒng, “Chǒng Yakchongŭi chǒnju gyori ihac” (정약종의 전주 교리 이해) (Understanding Chǒng Yakchong’s Catholic Doctrine), article in *History and Economy* 89 (2013). 111

²¹⁹ Ibid. 111

²²⁰ Han, 2002. 126

²²¹ Ibid. 127

²²² See Cawley, “Deconstructing Hegemony” and Cawley, Kevin, “Dis-assembling Traditions: Deconstructing Tasan via Matteo Ricci” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 24 [2] (2014): 297-313.

²²³ Chǒng, *Chugyo yoji*: “무릇 사람이 하늘을 우리러봄에 그 위에 임자가 계신 줄을 아는 고로 질통고난을 당하면, 양천축수하여 면하기를 바라고, 번개와 우레를 만나면 자기 죄악을 생각하고 마음이 이러하리오?” 137

Classical orthodoxy – still so significant in Chǒng’s era - held that immoral behaviour by a monarch would incur heavenly displeasure and would be punished by drought, famine or flooding. This excerpt clearly builds upon these foundational ideals and extends the idea to the entirety of humanity, now held personally responsible by a sentient supernatural intelligence.

A central preoccupation of Korean propriety at the time was one’s place amongst one’s ancestors. Proper observation of rites of remembrance and treating one’s forebears with reverence were crucially important. In the second paragraph of the book Chǒng leverages the Korean’s awareness of their ancestry to draw what he sees as a logical conclusion: the first ancestor must have been something more than human, an entity with the ability to spontaneously generate sentient life:

If we were to go back step-by-step, there would definitely be a person who started everything, and who then would the person be? If we say that this person had earlier parents, who would they be? There must, then, have been a person in the first place who did not have parents, but who, then, gave birth to him? If it is said that that he became born from his parents, who gave birth to his parents? Did this first-born person give birth to their own body, since he would surely have been born without parents? As I see it, there must have been a first person who not only gave birth to people but also brought about not only people but the first wild animals, plants and trees. There is one who ultimately brought about the trees, plants, animals and people. He is called the Lord of Heaven.²²⁴

The next section continues in the same vein:

Even a small house cannot build itself, but comes about only from a skilful craftsman, so how can this big house, like the heavens and skies, build itself? Certainly it comes about due to an extremely powerful divine personage, [and] when we see a house which has been built we know there must be a craftsman even if we cannot see the craftsman; so when we see the heavens and earth, we know that there must be an owner who made them, even though we cannot see him, the Lord of Heaven.²²⁵

Creation theories are centrally important to Christianity, but traditionally Eastern classicism had little interest in considering the process of creation. Instead Chǒng’s intention is to reflect a consistent method of Eastern classical intellectual inquiry: the origin of a thing. While Confucius and his disciples did not devote time or energy to considering what precedes or follows material existence, they did concern themselves with the origins and purposes of earthly processes. *The Analects* and *The Great Learning* discuss the necessity for study of beginnings:

If he make the root his secondary object, and the result his primary, he will only wrangle with his people, and teach them rapine.²²⁶

Chǒng replicates this pattern of intellectual inquiry:

²²⁴ Ibid: “차차 올라가면, 분명히 시작하여 난 사람이 있을 것이니, 이 사람을 누가 낳았꼬? 이 사람도 부모가 있어서 났다 하면, 그 부모는 누가 낳았을꼬? 처음으로 난 사람은 반드시 부모가 없이 낳았을 것이니, 그 사람은 제 몸을 스스로 낳았을꼬? 할 것이냐? 그렇다면, 이 사람만 제 스스로 나고, 뒷사람은 스스로 나지 못할까? 이로서 미루어 보건데, 처음에는 사람을 분명히 내신 이가 계실 것이니, 사람 하나를 가지고, 의논하면, 초목과 짐승도 다 그리하여, 처음 난 초목은 초목이 초목을 낳음이 아니고, 처음 난 짐승도 짐승이 짐승을 낳음이 아니라, 초목과 짐승과 사람을 모두 내신 이가 계시니, 이 내신 이를 천주라고 일컫느니라.” 137

²²⁵ Ibid: “적은 집도 절로 되지 못하여 반드시 공교한 정인 이 있어야 하거든, 이런 천지 같은 큰 집이 어찌 절로 되리오? 반드시 지극히 신통하시고 능하신 이가 계셔 만들어야 할 것이니, 장인을 보지 못하여도 집을 보면 집 지은 장인이 있는 줄을 알 것이요, 천주를 보지 못하여도 천지를 보면 천지 만드신 임자가 계신 줄을 알 것이니라.” 137-138

²²⁶ Confucius, *Daxue* 大學 (*The Great Learning*) translated by Legge, James. Chapter 10 verse 8. Accessed online on 02.04.2017 at <http://aevipress.org/MediaAssets/GoldenRule/GreatLearning.pdf>

People of this world may not be able to see [something] with their own eyes, yet if they think about it using their intuition they can trust there are many [unseen] things which exist; even though a child whose father died before he was born may not be able to see his father, he knows that he had a father when he thinks about how his body came to exist. Even if a person's forefather has never been seen, one can trust that he existed when one sees his descendant. Just as the common people in the countryside may have never lain eyes on the king, but when they see their country and its affairs, they trust in his existence.²²⁷

Book One, Chapter 12 is devoted to the Lord of Heaven's intellectual prowess. Here we can see for the first time a theme which Yakchong returns to again and again: the omniscience of God. This is another method by which the Catholic God is drawn into a frame of reference open to the common Korean reading *Chugyo yoji*. The elite layer of Korean society most readily apparent to Yakchong's audience, the local *yangban* aristocracy, owed their position (ostensibly at least) to their learning. Therefore, to properly impress his readership, Yakchong's supreme ruler of the universe would have to be the most knowledgeable entity in it too:

[The Lord of Heaven] knows everything in its entirety. He is already infinitely mighty so He surely knows everything in its entirety. Through His infinite power He can make heaven, earth, and all things, by knowing through His infinite wisdom the sublime principles of making them. If He were not to know things infinitely, how could He have bestowed His infinite power? Therefore we must say that His knowledge is infinite; He perceives sharply and clearly the greatness and smallness, the purity and impurity, and the depth and shallowness of all things; He knows the inner thoughts of myriad spirits and the hidden intentions of billions of people, so there is not even the slightest chance of concealing anything from Him; furthermore, the countless generations of past and present stand unconcealed before His eyes.²²⁸

Subsequently, Chǒng's Lord of Heaven is everything an 18th-century Korean might look for in a ruler:

The Lord of Heaven is supremely wise, supremely able, supremely virtuous, supremely strict and supremely just.²²⁹

Equally powerful is the Lord of Heaven's representation as the bringer of order – the search for order in the universe being a central preoccupation of Korean Neo-Confucianism:

There was chaos and no order. Hereupon He brought order: on the first day, with one command, in an instant He created light.²³⁰

Consistently throughout the work, Chǒng draws direct comparison between the Lord of Heaven and orthodox earthly government:

²²⁷ Chǒng, *Chugyo yoji*: “세상 사람이 눈으로 보지 못하여도 이치로 생각하면 믿을 일이 많이니, 유복자가 그 아버지를 보지 못하여도 제 몸이 생긴 것을 헤아리면 아버지가 있는 줄을 알 것이요, 사람의 조상을 본 이 없도, 그 자손을 보면 조상 있는 줄을 믿을 것이요, 시골 백성이 임금을 뵈옵지 못하여도 나라가 있고, 정사가 있는 것을 보면 임금이 계신 줄을 믿을 지니, 이와 같이.” 158

²²⁸ Ibid: “대개, 천지 만물을 만드는 묘리를 무궁한 슬기로 먼저 아셔 야 무궁한 힘으로 만드실 것이니, 만일무 궁히 알지 못하신다면, 무궁한 힘을 어찌 베푸시리요? 그러므로 만물의 크고 작음과 정하고 추함과 깊고 열음과 무수한 귀신의 은밀한 마음과 억만 사람의 숨은 뜻을 다 꿰뚫어 훤히 아시어, 털끝만큼도 속일 수 없다, 또 억만 년 이전의 일과 억만 년 이 후의 일이 역력히 눈 앞에 벌어져 있으므로, 그 아심이 무궁하시다 이르느니라.” 141

²²⁹ Ibid: “천주 지극히 밝으시고 지극히 능하시고, 지극히 어지시고, 지극히 공변되시니.” 152

²³⁰ Ibid: “ 혼돈하여 차례 없는지라. 이에 차례를 나누실새, 첫날은 한 번 명하시어 경각 사이에 빛을 내시고.” 160

To make a comparison, the chief ministers' glorious fortune and the pleasurable wealth and honour enjoyed by provincial governors and commanders of the military all come from the hands of the king... just as we can know a king's great wealth by observing the prosperity of his hundred ministers, when we see the beauty of all things in heaven and earth we come to know that the Lord of Heaven is infinitely beautiful.²³¹

A single village has a single official: a single province has a single governor; and a single country has a single king. There could not be a greater wrong, then, if the people of a village were to serve two officials, or if the populace of a province were to serve two governors, or if a country were to serve two kings.²³²

Heaven's blessings are in seeing and glorying in the supremely benevolent splendour of the Lord of Heaven: we can compare this worldly fortune. Glorious riches and high position are given to a prime minister, a court minister, a governor, a military commander and a high magistrate from the hand of their king; therefore we can come to know that the glory, wealth and honour of an entire government's officials rests in the king's own body.²³³

When one sees the glory of an entire government's officials, the excellence of their king appears even greater; and when one sees the goodness of all creation, one would praise the Lord of Heaven's virtue and skill even more.²³⁴

It is as if a king here on earth were to give an order and a royal communiqué to the people; he would surely speak first to a close subject, who would then report to the provincial offices, and the provincial offices would report to each and every town, and from every town the town official would inform all of the common people. If the common people were to hear and say 'I have seen neither the king's face with my own normal eyes, nor have I heard the king's words with my own ears', and in this way did not believe [in the order] nor obey, what kind of sin would that be? Certainly, they would not escape death.²³⁵

Ch'ong reinforces the reader's earthly obligations to their monarch while discussing the reverence and fear the Lord of Heaven inspires. Simultaneously he bolsters classical propriety and legitimises *Ch'ŏnju*:

²³¹ Ibid: “비컨대, 정승판서의 영화로운 복과 감사, 병사의 영화 부귀한 즐거움이 다 임금의 손에서 나온 고로... 백관의 부귀함을 보면 임금의 지극한 부귀를 기히 앗과 같이, 만물의 아름다움을 보면 천주의 무궁히 아름다움심을 보면 천주의 무궁 아름다움심알지니라.” 142

²³² Ibid: “한 고을 관장이 하나요, 한 도에 감사가 하나요, 한 나라에 임금이 하나이니, 한 고을 사람이 두 관정을 섬기고, 한 도내 백성이 두 감사를 섬기고, 한 나라 신하가 두 임금을 섬기면 그 죄가 만 번 죽어도 아깝지 아니하리니”. 152

²³³ Ibid: “천당의 복은 천주의 무궁히 좋으신 영광을 보고 누림에 있으니, 세상 복으로 비유컨대 정승, 판서와 감사, 병사와 수령들의 부귀하고 영화로움이 다 그 임금의 손으로 부터 나왔기에 백관의 부귀영화가 그 임금 한 몸에 갖추어 있는 줄을 가히 알 것이요.” 156

²³⁴ Ibid: “백관의 영화를 보면, 임금의 귀함이 더욱 나타나며 만물의 좋음을 보면 천주의 덕능을 만 배나 찬송할지니”. 156

²³⁵ Ibid: “이들테면 세상 임금이 백성에게 전교와 운음을 내리려 하시면 반드시 먼저 가까운 신하에게 말씀하여 차차 감영에 전하고, 감영하고에서는 각 읍에 전하고, 각 읍에서는 면임에게 분부하여 백성들에게 전하나니, 만일 그 백성이 듣고 가로되, ‘나라 임금의 얼굴도 내 눈으로 보지 못하고 임금의 말씀도 내 귀로 듣지 못하였노라.’ 하여 믿지 아니하고 봉행치 아니하면 그 죄 어떠할꼬? 반드시 죽기를 면치못 할지라.” 181

When the people look at the royal palace, their hearts feel naturally fearful... they are afraid of the king in the palace.²³⁶

Chǒng's Lord of Heaven also embodies and reinforces the other Five Relationships:

The Lord of Heaven's love for humanity is like a parent's love for their children. After a parent has first built a house and prepared land around it and filled it with fixtures and fittings, they give life to their children. Similarly the Lord of Heaven firstly brought forth the sky as a roof, the earth to hold, the sun and moon to give light, and gave them many different types of grains and fruit to be planted and harvested, before later bringing forth people.²³⁷

And while Yi Pyŏk's earlier *Sŏnggyo yoji* had almost entirely erased feminine agency, Chǒng ensures that his work deploys the Western bible creation story to emphasise the traditional Eastern gender and sibling hierarchy:

The female was born from the male so that the wife could properly obey her husband.²³⁸

[Jesus is] a son to God the father, and an elder brother to all people.²³⁹

Chǒng then goes on to develop further the parallels between Chǒnju and earthly royal lineages, using a kind of subversion-through-reinforcement-of-obligation to place Christian worship in a context of Confucian propriety:

There is only a single Lord of Heaven in the heavens – how can an earthly person be known as Almighty God? In other words, if some wrongdoer were to point to a common person and say “that is the king” in a country which had only a single king, would that not be a great evil?²⁴⁰

Chǒng's logic here is questionable. He advocates *not* paying an earthly ruler the proper respect due to them because of their subservient place below the Christian God, by appealing to the necessity for paying proper respect to an (earthly) ruler! Yet regardless of the particular flaws in Chǒng's argument this excerpt is another example of the deep, almost unconscious usage of classical Eastern tropes in his work.

Chǒng even seeks to situate Catholicism's rejection of ancestor worship within a context of classically-correct filial piety, rather than (as was the sentiment at the time – Choi, 2006) its absolute antagonist. His argument is that those who are *truly* enlightened will not venerate their ancestors as their genuine ancestor – the Lord of Heaven – deserves all of their praise:

For people to turn and bow to the heavens, the sun and moon and the stars, is a grave sin. In other words, if parents were to present a house and its surrounding lands to a

²³⁶ Ibid: “백상이 대궐을 바라보면 그 마음이 절로 두려워 하나니... 대궐 안에 계신 임금을 두려워함이라.” 143

²³⁷ Ibid: “천주 우리 사람을 사랑하심이 마치 부모가 자식을 사랑하심과 같으니, 부모가 자식을 위하여 먼저 집을 짓고, 전지와 가장집물을 장만한 후에 자식을 살리나니, 천주도 이러하시어 먼저 하늘을 내어 덮으시고, 땅을 내어 실으시고, 일월을 내어 비추시고 오곡과 배과를 내어 기르게 마련하시고, 나중에 사람을 내시니라.” 160

²³⁸ Ibid: “연인이 사나이에게서 난 것은 아내가 마땅히 남편에게 공순하게 하심이요.” 161

²³⁹ Ibid: “천주께는 성부의 아들이시요, 사람에게는 만민의 장형이시니”. 166

²⁴⁰ Ibid: “천지간에 천주상제 오직 하나이시니, 어찌 세상 사람을 상제라 이름하리오? 비유컨대, 한 나라에 임금이 오직 하나이어늘 만일 범인을 가리켜 임금이라 하면, 그 죄악이 어찌 크지 아니하리오?” 145 (Missing from 1932 manuscript; present only in A and B.)

child of theirs, would it not be wrong for the child to venerate the house and its surrounding lands as if it were they who had provided him with life?²⁴¹

A later paragraph also presents Catholicism as the path to enlightenment – the ultimate goal of the orthodox scholar, as Catholics are people attempting to exemplify moral uprightness:

The people spreading the Lord of Heaven’s teachings are all learned and well-versed in all of the knowledge in creation; their morals are a shining example; how could they give birth to weighty falsehoods about the Lord of Heaven?²⁴²

Bible figures such as Adam, Eve and Mary also embody Eastern classical virtue:

The Lord of Heaven gave a special blessing to Adam and Eve, ensuring that their character would be good and unattached to selfishness, and that their wisdom was bright and unclouded, and that their hearts would be extremely moral and without prejudice.²⁴³

[Mary’s] character was supremely pure, and her conduct was supremely beautiful; she alone was not saddled with the original sin, and her kind virtue was the greatest ever seen on earth.²⁴⁴

Adam is also tied into Confucian orthodoxy by being presented as the primogenitor of humanity:

As Adam is the ancestor of all people on earth, so all of his descendants must suffer for his sins; and as Jesus is the saviour of mankind, so all of humanity receives the blessings for his merits.²⁴⁵

In late Chosŏn society, “complicity law” (*yŏnjwabŏp*) decreed that relatives and later generations faced responsibility and consequences for their forebears’ actions; titles and privileges were handed down from one generation to the next; and of course great emphasis was placed on a family’s prestigious past accomplishments.

Chugyo yoji also directly conflates mortal and heavenly law. Chŏng emphasises that Catholics must obey the law, and correct hierarchy, where doing so will not conflict with religious obligation:

If an ordinary person was to sin against the manager of their villager, they would be given the punishment of *t’aejang*... if they were to sin against the king they would not be able to escape death. Even, then, if the offence is of a single kind, if the person sinned against is of a higher station then the punishment will be more severe.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ Ibid: “사람이 천지 일월 성신을 향하여 절하는 것이 크게 그른지라. 비유컨대, 대부모가 자식을 위하여 집과 전답을 장만하여 주거든 자식이 집과 전답으로 산다 하여 그 집과 전답을 향하여 절하고 집과 전답을 주신 부모의 은혜는 생각지 아니하면 어찌 그르지 아니하리오?” 144

²⁴² Ibid: “천주교를 전하는 사람이 다 슬기롭고 착하여 천지 만물의 일을 밝게 통달하고 도덕빛이니, 어찌 천주교의 중대한 말씀을 허탄하다 하리오?” 180

²⁴³ Ibid: “천주 아담과 에와에게 특별한 은혜를 나리어 그 성품이 착하여 사욕이 없고 그 슬기가 밝아 흐린 곳이 없고, 마음이 극히 발라 편벽되지 아니하니”. 161

²⁴⁴ Ibid: “그 성품이 지극히 순전하시고, 그 행실이 지극히 아름다우시어 홀로 원죄에 물들지 아니하시고, 그 착하신 덕은 천하 만고에 제일이 되시는지라.” 164

²⁴⁵ Ibid: “아담은 만민의 조상이 되는 고로, 그 죄의 해를 만세자손이 다 받고 예수는 만민의 구세주가 되시는, 그 공의 은택을 만세 사람이 다 입으니”. 180

²⁴⁶ Ibid: “백성이 원에게 죄를 지었으면 그 형벌이 태장을 받을 것이요... 임금께 지었으면 죽기를 면치 못할 것이니 죄는 한 가지라도, 죄지은 곳이 더욱 높을수록 그 형벌이 더욱중한지라.” 163
Taejang was a punishment which involved striking a person on the buttocks between ten and a

Jesus is portrayed as a proclaimer of earthly law as well as spiritual doctrine. This particular facet of Chǒng's Jesus is not compatible with the Western idea of Jesus – the laws by which Jesus lived had been established for millennia before his birth, and in the gospels Jesus proves himself a peerless scholar of those same laws. Therefore Chǒng's Jesus is clearly influenced by the writer's background and intended audience:

During Jesus's forty days on earth He established the Lord of Heaven's sacred religion and laws, and taught the disciples in minute detail.²⁴⁷

Equally, as with the Eastern punishment for those betraying an earthly king – *pulch'ung* 不忠 – so Adam and Eve's wrongdoing is visited upon the next generations. Here we can see another refraction of the concept “complicity law” or “implication liability” (see above). “Through [the late Chosǒn's] complicity law, solidarity is prepared”²⁴⁸; Chǒng's audience could relate to the punishments meted out by God, as they were under the jurisdiction of similar concepts. The punishments meted out by the Lord of Heaven have a moral purpose and are a form of education:

If a person's forbears sins against the king, generally his descendants must serve as conscripts on the border, according to the law; how, then, can anyone say that punishing descendants for their ancestors' sins is not just?²⁴⁹

In this way even if people of this world cannot see the Lord of Heaven, and have not been up to heaven, when they see the rewards and punishments meted out by their earthly king, how can they say that the king of all creation does not dole out infinite reward and punishment?²⁵⁰

The Lord of Heaven embodies supreme benevolence and supremely strict virtue; as He is supremely benevolent, His wish is to forgive all of humanity's sins, but if He were to forgive all of their sins, His supremely strict virtue would not be fulfilled, and moreover, humanity would sin without scruple. Due to His supreme strictness, He wishes to punish sinners straight away, but if He were to punish them irrevocably His supreme benevolence would be corrupted, and it would not be in accordance with His wish for humanity to ascend to heaven. Therefore either forgiveness or punishment by themselves were difficult, and both courses of action together were troublesome. Furthermore, [the Lord of Heaven] embodies supremely just virtue, and therefore wishes to make the punishment fitting to the sin. The sins were already without limit, so only once the punishment was likewise without limit would it become equal to the sin and thereby allow atonement.²⁵¹

hundred times. Also employed was *changhyǒng* which involved hitting a person's buttocks between sixty and a hundred times with a cudgel.

²⁴⁷ Ibid: “예수가 세상에 계신 지 사십 일 동안에 천주 성교의 법을 세우시고, 그 제자들을 자세히 가르치시고”. 171

²⁴⁸ Han, 2002. 147

²⁴⁹ Chǒng, *Chugyo yoji*: “사람의 조상이 임금께 득죄하였으면 그 자손이 대대로 변방에 충군하고 종되는 법이 있나니, 원조의 벌이 그 자손까지 연루 함을 어찌 마땅치 않다 하리오?” 164.

²⁵⁰ Ibid: “이와 같이 세상 사람이 비록 천주를 뵈옵지 못하고 천당에 가 보지 못하였으나, 세상 임금의 상과 벌을 보면 어찌 천지 임금의 무궁하신 상벌이 없다 하리오?” 158

²⁵¹ Ibid: “천주 지극히 어지시고 지극히 엄한 덕이 계시니, 지극히 어지신즉 사람의 죄를 다 사하고자 하시되, 만일 그저 사하시면 지극히 엄하신 덕을 행치 아니하여 사람이 더욱 죄를 짓기에 기탄없을 것이요, 지극히 엄하신즉 죄인을 즉시 벌하고자 하시되, 만일 다 벌하시면 지극히 덕이 상할 것이요, 또 사람을 내시어 하늘에 올리려 하신 본뜻이 아니라. 이러므로 그저 사하기도 어렵고, 벌하기도 어려워 두 가지 다 난처하고, 또 지극히 공변된 덕이 계시니, 지극히 공변되신즉 그 형벌이 그 죄에 맞갈게 하고자 하실지라. 그 죄가 이미 무궁한즉 그 형벌도 무궁한 후에야 그 벌이 그 죄에 마땅하여 속죄가 될지라.” 163

There is no way to know someone's inner heart when existing in our world; even evil people pretend to be good and are thought of as good by the ignorant, while good-hearted people are thought of as evil by the ignorant when they suffer pain. Because the goodness of wickedness of a person does not show clearly, then, the Lord of Heaven carries out his righteous judgement now and forever, fully revealing each person's hidden good or evil. All of the people under creation will see and know one another, with the Lord of Heaven making them understand his boundless justice.²⁵²

Towards the end of the work Chǒng recounts a sinner's regret at not having followed the law of God. In tone and style this section could be any lapsed *yangban's* lament, minus the reference to *Ch'ŏnju* and the saints:

Woe is me! When I was on earth if I had not lied to my conscience, and if I had served the Lord of Heaven according to the truthful words and made just a small effort, I would have gone up to heaven with the saints... but I did not do what was so easy.²⁵³

4a. Common stock of terms

Chǒng also uses several medical terms which would have had particular resonance for his audience:

A person's body is made up of the five viscera, the six organs, the four limbs and the hundred parts.²⁵⁴

Kim (2000) argues persuasively that these kinds of terms form part of a common stock of Korean knowledge, so familiar as to be fundamental. The Chosŏn physician Hō Jun had gathered and synthesised classically-influenced Korean medical knowledge in his 1613 book *Tongŭi pogam* 東醫寶鑑, [*Thesaurus of Eastern Medicine*]; Hō's work retains currency even today, and its terms and phrases would certainly have been familiar to Chǒng's audience – what Kim calls “a summary of foundational principles”²⁵⁵ synthesised “thanks to the interchange between the so-called three religions: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism”.²⁵⁶

Also forming part of this common stock of terms are the words *manmul* (만물, everything under the sun),²⁵⁷ *paeksŏng* (백성, “the masses”) and *paekwan* (백관, the government) which are employed extensively throughout the work – and are ubiquitous throughout Confucian-influenced Korean and Chinese work. Their use is yet another marker of the deep influence of Eastern classicism on Chugyo yoji. Choi (2012) notes that the idea of *manmul* was consistently deployed throughout the history of Confucian and Neo-Confucian thought (Chǒng's philosophical antagonist Yi Hang-no used the term *manmul* in his attacks on Christianity – see the chapter *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*²⁵⁸). Kim (2010) details the centrality of the concept in the rigorously orthodox work of scholars who used it to justify the continued social order in Korea (and other societies organised along Confucian lines). *Manmulilchaeron*

²⁵² Ibid: “사람이 세상에 있을 때에는 그 마음을 알 길이 없어, 악한 사람도 겉으로 착한 체하면 남이 모르고 착한 줄 알며, 착한 사람도 괴로움을 받으면 남이모르고악한 줄로 알아, 사람의 밝히 드러나지 아니한 고로, 천주가 한 번 공변되어 십판 하시어, 천하 고금 사람으로 하여금 다 서로 보고 서로 알아, 천주가 지극히 공변되신 것을 이때에 바야흐로 알게 하시느니라.” 174-175

²⁵³ Ibid: “내 일이여! 세상에 있을 때에 내 양심을 속이지 말고, 바른말을 듣고 따라, 천주를 섬기며 조금 수고를 하였다면성인과 같이 천당에 올라가... 쉬운 일을 못하고”. 177

²⁵⁴ Ibid: “사람의 오정육부와 사지 백체가 한몸에 붙은 고로.” 180

²⁵⁵ Kim, Ho, *Hō junui tongŭi pogam yŏngu* (호준의 동의 보감 영우) (*Research on Hō Jun's compendium of Eastern medicine*, Seoul: Iljisa, 2000. 135

²⁵⁶ Ibid. 134

²⁵⁷ The word *manmul* literally means “the ten thousand things”. *Paeksŏng* translates as “the hundred surnames” and *paekwan* as “the hundred ministers”.

²⁵⁸ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*. Kwŏn 25 (*Chaphō*): 8ab; kwŏn 1 (Aŏn): 4b. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 129

萬物一體論, “many- things-as-one-theory”, was popularised by the Chinese scholar Wang Yangming 王陽明

(1472-1529):

The historical characteristics of *manmulilchaeron* are diverse. The first feature is grounded in a sensitivity towards understanding and helping others and holds that the meaning of existence is reciprocal transaction. The second feature is the ideology’s role in sustaining the Confucian order... there having been a strong desire to pursue the interests of the privileged in a class-based society, the theory was one of the weapons used to justify the law of the jungle. In this period the theory of *manmulilchaeron* serves to maintain the [particular] phenomena [of Chosŏn society], diluting complaints and forcing reconciliation.²⁵⁹

Wang’s work questioned the central supposition of the Chu-Ch’eng school, that existence was composed of *i* and *li* in varying compositions, and was accordingly ultimately rejected by the Chosŏn academic establishment. But although Wang’s own school of thought was considered heterodox in Chŏng’s era, his conclusions were themselves rooted in fundamentally orthodox study, and their appearance in Chŏng’s treatise serves as further proof of his immersion in Eastern classicism.

4b. The Soul

Late Chosŏn intellectual orthodoxy had been mapped out by the Four-Seven Debate between the thinkers Yulgok (1536-1584) and T’oegye (1501-1570). They had differed as to the source and drivers of human impulses and emotions, but through a skilful and explicit process of mutual negotiation and delicate statement the differing schools of thought of each scholar had been able to remain as orthodox. As a Southerner, Chŏng Yakchong’s intellectual heritage was deeply influenced by T’oegye’s teachings, as was the work of his close compatriot Yi Pyŏk (see the chapter *Will of Fidelity*). Chugyo yoji also discusses the root and purpose of the human emotions, in a way which owes a significant debt to T’oegye:

The soul of a person is not something which occurs thanks to the body. When the body is born, the Lord of Heaven provides it with a holy soul; through this soul a person likes or dislikes things which lie outside their body... this mind that feels pleasure and displeasure surely does not rise from the body but appears from the soul; therefore humans and wild beasts are different according to [the humans’] soul; even though the body may die the soul cannot. Also the holy soul does not have a physical form... so there is no way for it to die.²⁶⁰

Commonly when people die, there’s a custom of ‘summoning the soul’; if the soul was known to have died alongside the body, how could there be this custom of ‘summoning the soul’? Even if one calls the soul, it is already fixed in place [in the afterlife]; it cannot return; but it is called because it exists.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Kim, Nak-jin. “Manmulilcherongwa inmulŏngdongiron tonghae bon myŏng yuhakgwa chosŏn yuhakŭi pigyo” (“萬物一體論과 人物性同異論을 통해 본 明 儒學과 朝鮮 儒學의 비교”) (“A Comparative Philosophical Study of Characteristics of Ming and Chosŏn Confucianism: Focusing on the Theory of ‘All creation is one body’ and the Theory of ‘Human Nature and Things’ Nature”). In *Research In Confucian Thought Culture* 39 (2010). 261

²⁶⁰ Chŏng, *Chugyo yoji*: “사람의 혼은 제 몸에서 생긴 것이 아니라. 몸이 태어날제, 천주가 산령한 혼을 붙여주시니, 그런 고로 제 몸 밖의 일도 좋아함이 있고 싫어함이 있으니... 이 좋아하고 싫어하는 마음이 반드시 그 몸으로 솟아나지 아니하고 혼으로부터 나오니, 그러므로 사람은 짐승과 달라 영혼이 따라 있기에, 몸이 죽어도 영혼 따라 죽지 아니하느니라. 또 신령한 혼이 형상 없어... 죽을 길이 없느니라.” 154.

²⁶¹ Ibid: “또 세속에 사람이 죽으면 초혼을 하는 법이 있으니, 만일 영혼이 그 몸과 같이 없어지는 줄을 알면, 어찌 혼을 부르는 법이 있으리오? 비록 그 혼을 불러도 혼이 이미 정한 곳이 있어, 다시 올수 없거니와 혼이 있기에 부르느니라.” 155

When the soul and body are both combined into one, [only] then will a person be complete.²⁶²

Later in the work, however, Chǒng seeks to reinforce the point that soul *and* body must act in unison to achieve the correct expression of veneration, through proper living. Orthodoxy held that the two were so intimately connected they could not be usefully separated; mastery of physical ... was an invaluable part of training the non-physical portion of one's existence. Confucians venerated the body, as a gift from one's ancestors; it was not merely a vessel to be carelessly discarded. Observant *yangban* of Chǒng's era did not cut their hair or shave their faces, and even their fingernail clippings were collected and stored for eventual burial. Confucius was recorded as saying:

Body, skin hair; [we] get [our] parents'. [We] dare not wear out [and] damage [them].
[Through this we can] first arrive at filial piety.²⁶³

Catholicism was criticised for its disregard for the physical, material existence (see the chapter *In Defence of Orthodoxy*), and with these explicit recognitions of the material body of Jesus Chǒng is seeking to mitigate these criticisms. But Neo-Confucian teachings were not oriented towards physical sensuality (quite the opposite). Intellectual challenge and moral self-cultivation were both the goal and the method. Chǒng sternly reminds his readers that his Christianity, too, is ultimately focused on higher things:

The blessings and pleasures of the soul are boundlessly greater than the physical body's²⁶⁴

The orthodox explanation for the soul, meanwhile, was that it was received from one's ancestors via one's father's semen. The word for soul used here – *chǒnggi* – and the word for semen, *chǒngnaek*, are etymologically related. Both words are built from the Sino-Korean root of *chǒng* 精, “essence” or “spirit”. Chǒng's use of the word *chǒnggi* in place of the more common *hon* places this God-given Christian soul firmly into an orthodox tradition.

T'oegye had also written extensively and authoritatively on the inherent characteristics of humanity (E Chung, 1995). The essential quality of human nature – whether it was good or bad – had been a principal theme of Eastern thinkers for millennia, and in Chǒng's interpretation of the Christian viewpoint we can see unmistakable reflections of T'oegye – and therefore Chu Hsi and the Ch'eng brothers.

4c. Attacks on Daoism and Buddhism

The orthodox Neo-Confucianism of the entire Chosŏn period had been a doctrinal accompaniment to the founding of the dynasty in 1392; the previous Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392) had been a state where Buddhism had been “almost a state-sponsored, mainstream religion”²⁶⁵, and when the Chosŏn was founded Buddhism was replaced by Neo-Confucianism as the dominant and state-sponsored thought-system (Chung, 1995). Accordingly there was a long tradition of academic attack on Buddhism by rigorously orthodox Chosŏn scholars. Part of Chugyo yoji devotes significant space to criticising Buddhism and the other great Eastern philosophy, Daoism, for the same reasons they had been attacked by mainstream thinkers: their superstition, mysticism and unhelpful disregard for the current material existence. Of course many – if not all – of these accusations were also levelled at Christianity (see the chapter *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*), but Chǒng's intention was to place his Christianity into the lineage of correct thought. (Shin, 2011, writing about Chinese literati, points out that although Confucian orthodoxy held Eastern mysticism in contempt many orthodox thinkers were interested in it, a “paradoxical history of accepting and even exploring”²⁶⁶ supernatural Daoist and Buddhist

²⁶² Ibid: “영혼과 육신이, 두 가지가 한데 합하여야 온전한 사람이 될 것이다.” 175

²⁶³ Confucius, “The Scope and Meaning of the Treatise”: “身體髮膚, 受之父母, 不敢毀傷, 孝之始也。” *Classic of Filial Piety* [online]. Available at http://www.tsoidug.org/Papers/Xiao_Jing_Comment.pdf (accessed 14.03.2016)

²⁶⁴ Chǒng, *Chugyo yoji*: “영혼의 복락은 또한 육신보다 한량없이 더 좋으니”. 176

²⁶⁵ Chung, 1995. 11

²⁶⁶ Shin, Junhyoung Michael, “The Supernatural in the Jesuit Adaptation to Confucianism: Giulio Aleni's *Tianzhu Jiangsheng Chuxiang Jingjie* (Fuzhou, 1637)”, in *History of Religions volume 50 [4] (May 2011)*. 335

theories.) By attacking Buddhism – and the Daoism he had explored in his youth – Chǒng sought to establish Christianity as within the continuum of orthodox and legal philosophies. His attacks on the central figures of Buddhism are merciless:

The Buddha and the Bodhisattva are people, brought forth from the Lord of Heaven.²⁶⁷

[Buddha’s] parents were greater than him, and above his parents and his king was the infinitely greater Lord of Heaven... will there ever again be a greater wrongdoer in all space and time?²⁶⁸

In the world, if there were a traitor, clad in the king’s clothes and sitting in the king’s position, if a foolish person saw [that traitor with] the same appearance as the king, and bowed down before him and served him faithfully, then the greater this person’s loyalty to the traitor, the greater his treason against the true king.²⁶⁹

Chǒng also does not accept any of Buddhism’s doctrinal truths – unlike the conventions and practices of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, which he espouses:

Nothing in the Buddhist scriptures can be trusted as true.²⁷⁰

Not all copies of *Chugyo yoji* contain these particular chapters. 18 to 31 were excised from the 1932 manuscript, probably as a concession to the Buddhist inclinations of the Japanese colonial administration, which governed Korea between 1910 and 1945 (reference from CY introduction). Shin (2011) neatly encapsulates Eastern Catholic criticisms of Buddhism as “rather contradictory... since Catholicism shared with Buddhism a number of common areas such as afterlife explanation, supernatural mysteries, and the visual culture of icon and narrative both for cultic and meditative practices.”²⁷¹ Yet this is precisely why Chǒng needed to attack Buddhism. Buddhist and Christian symbolism and mythology were much closer to each other than either was to Confucianism, and so Chǒng (and other Eastern Christians) had to reinforce their beliefs’ parallels with Confucianism and denounce Buddhist mysticism. Writing on Chinese-based Western Jesuits, Shin (2011) details that they were unable to convert classical Eastern symbols to explain the Trinity, the resurrection of Christ and the holy sacraments, although they were successful in some areas – for example, Ricci adapted the classical idea of heaven 天 and used it to represent the Christian God. Chǒng, along with Yi Pyŏk however, was able to do exactly that, as excerpts below will show.

4d. Analogy and Metaphor

Analogy and metaphor had been used as classical teaching devices from the very foundation of Eastern literary tradition (Beck, 2006). Confucius’ work is replete with elegant examples, such as these two excerpts from the *Analects*:

Whoever acts to work upon a loose strand destroys the whole fabric.²⁷²

Only when the year grows cold do we see that the pine and cypress are the last to fade.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Chǒng, *Chugyo yoji*: “저 부처와 보살도 또한 천주의 내신 사람이라.” 145

²⁶⁸ Ibid. “그 부모도 저모다 높고, 또 부모와 임금 위에 무궁히 높으신 천주가 계시거늘... 천하 만고에 이런 대죄인이 다시 있느냐?” 146

²⁶⁹ Ibid. “세상에 역적이 있어 임금의 옷을 입고 임금의 자리에 앉았거든, 미혹한 사람이 그 임금과 같은 모양을 보고, 그 앞에 가 절하고 섬겨 충신 노릇하면 역적에게 충신이 될수록 참 임금에게는 더욱 역적이 되는 지라.” 151

²⁷⁰ Ibid. “불경 안에 거짓말이 무수하되다 변변 못하고 대강 의논하노라.” 146

²⁷¹ Shin, 2011. 331

²⁷² Confucius, *Analects*, 2:16, translated by Waley. In Beck, Sanderson, chapter “How Confucius Taught” in *Confucius and Socrates: Teaching Wisdom*. Santa Barbara: World Peace Communications, 2006. Accessed online at <http://www.san.beck.org/CONFUCIUS3-How.html#4> on 03.04.2016

By layering his own work with metaphorical and allegorical examples Chǒng demonstrated the deep influence his education and upbringing had had on his work, consciously and unconsciously. For an orthodox scholar there was no better device to engage one's audience than a story or phrase which could be related directly to their own experience. In the case of Chugyo yoji, aimed at a non-educated audience, this technique was particularly vital.

Metaphor and allegory had played a key role in the central philosophical controversy of the late Chosŏn period, the Four-Seven Debate; the highly respected scholars Yulgok and T'oegye had differed concerning the origins of emotions, whether they originated in *i* 理, principle, or *ki* 氣, material force. Chung (1995) argues that the Confucian and Neo-Confucian traditions of metaphor and allegory were deployed during this debate to simplify the various viewpoints and also to ultimately unify differing schools by allowing them to express their ideas in ways which could be interpreted as orthodox:

One way to unify premises with each other and check they are right is to borrow a metaphor... it can be richer and more vivid to draw emotional theories and a variety of accordingly different underlying assumptions between schools.²⁷⁴

The Confucian scholars explain that, unlike T'oegye or Yulgok, when it comes to any situation [through metaphor] two contradictory feelings can be simultaneously expressed. [p349]²⁷⁵

Clearly any political and social designations as unorthodox were a price Chǒng was willing to pay, but his own use of allegory and metaphor further demonstrate his membership of the community of orthodox scholars. And this type of re-deployment of orthodox doctrine to a particular purpose was not without precedent in Chosŏn Korea – Chung (1995) describes how the various powerful literati factions would use orthodox teachings to bolster or weaken given monarchs depending on their roles.²⁷⁶ In other words, late Chosŏn Korea was a society where the underlying philosophical principles governing society were taken so seriously that they could act as a genuine check on a king's exercise of power.

5. A Response to Han (2002)

In his 2002 article “Chong Yakchong's theological ideas — analysis of the doctrine of God through Chugyo yoji” Han highlights the *Western* influences found in Chugyo yoji. He ostensibly argues against the work representing a melding of Eastern and Western thought: Han's Chǒng echoes Thomas Aquinas, the bedrock of western Catholic orthodoxy, using the Thomistic “mechanistic principle of causation”:²⁷⁷

Through this awe [of nature] humans come to know the absolute. For Chǒng Yakchong this facet of human nature proves the existence of God... [echoing Aquinas] the existence of God, his general form, is revealed vaguely to us through the nobility of nature.²⁷⁸

Certainly, Chǒng was fundamentally influenced by western doctrine. The classical heaven was “rather broad, nonpersonified, and even ambiguous”,²⁷⁹ while “Yakchong has still yet to accept Middle Ages orthodox [Eastern] theology”²⁸⁰ and challenges the traditional Eastern belief that heaven itself is a sentient recipient of prayer: “Through Eastern concepts, through the power of being imbued with life, heaven was regarded as being the source of all life [...] Chǒng Yakchong criticised these Eastern concepts, explaining that when humans sent their pleas to heaven their target was literally the sky itself... when people looked towards the blue heavens, the reverence which formed by itself in their

²⁷³ Confucius, Analects, 9:27, translated by Beck. In Beck, 2006, *ibid*.

²⁷⁴ Chung, Edwin, 1995. 321

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*. 349

²⁷⁶ Chung, Chai-shik, 1995. 69

²⁷⁷ Han, 2002. 134

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*. 135

²⁷⁹ Shin, 2011. 334

²⁸⁰ Han, 2002. 131

heart was due to the existence of God.”²⁸¹ Han then asserts that Chǒng’s work is directly influenced by Matteo Ricci, further strengthening its ties to the West:

Chǒng uses the concept of ‘great ruler, great person’ in his own idea of the living Lord of Heaven. This concept is often found in Matteo Ricci’s discussions of the Lord of Heaven; within the concept the attributes of a Lord of Heaven based on a Confucian value system and ethics are expressed.²⁸²

Ricci, of course, was the innovator who first sought to present Catholicism in a way which would be acceptable (and comprehensible) to Confucians. Han argues that this is how Chǒng (and Ricci) expressed Catholic thought: as staying relevant to ideals of *ch’ung* 충, loyalty and *hyo* 효, filial piety which were of supreme importance in the milieu - Catholic martyrs could dedicate their lives to their faith while staying true to these exemplary values, giving their obedience to the ultimate and most deserving father. Thus we can begin to trace a parallel Catholic/Confucian lineage taking in Ricci and Yakchong – but it seems strange to classify such a lineage as solely “Western”, as Han does.

Han goes on to define Chǒng’s Jesus as a mediator, *kǒgan* 거간 between the Lord of Heaven and humanity; what could be more classically Eastern? Orthodox Korean kings and Chinese emperors were, of course, uniquely charged with a special moral responsibility to help their subjects fulfil the wishes of heaven. That responsibility was theoretically intertwined with every authoritative role in eastern society: husband, father, magistrate, teacher, and older sibling. Chǒng even uses the phrase *changhyǒng* 장형, “older brother”, to explain Jesus’ role:

If we are to discuss the combination of heavenly and human natures [in Jesus], Jesus is close to the Lord of Heaven up in heaven, and he is close to humanity below on earth; so between the two, the Lord of Heaven and humanity, Jesus becomes a middleman. He is the son of the Lord of Heaven, and he is the elder brother of every single member of humanity. If an elder brother were to look at a younger sibling’s sins against their father with pity, and ask the father for forgiveness as if it were he himself who had committed the sins, the father would surely forgive the younger brother upon seeing how sincerely the older brother pleads. So just in this way, Jesus’ one person becomes a ladder between humanity and the Lord of Heaven.²⁸³

Han goes on to contradict himself somewhat; his reading is that Chǒng never accepted “middle ages orthodox [Eastern] theology” – but he defines late Chosǒn intellectual orthodoxy as seeking to impose order on the universe by defining the function of everything in it.²⁸⁴ This is exactly the preoccupation of much of the first book of *Chugyo yoji* (see above). By Han’s own admission the way Yakchong’s argument is ordered is irredeemably steeped in Confucian concerns. Consciously and unconsciously *Chugyo yoji* seeks to situate Catholic belief within an orthodox Korean context:

[Chǒng Yakchong] often compares the Lord of Heaven to secular kings. The Lord of Heaven is not [just] the king of a single country. Through a great monarch the Lord of Heaven introduces all the things existing in the universe. This is how the Lord of Heaven’s church does not corrupt or fail to acknowledge the authority of the ruler in the social order at the time of writing. His awareness of one’s parents is the same. Human servitude to the Lord of Heaven is compared to a child’s filial devotion to their

²⁸¹ Ibid. 132

²⁸² Ibid. 140

²⁸³ Chǒng, *Chugyo yoji*: “천주성과 인성이 겸하여 계심을 의논하면 위로 천주께 천하시고, 아래로 사람에게 친하시니, 예수 천주와 사람, 두 사이에 거간이 되시어, 천주께는 성부의 아들이 시요, 사람에게는 만민의 장현이시니, 형된 이가 그 아버지께 아우의 죄지음을 보고 불쌍히 여겨 그 아버지께 아우의 죄를 자기가 지은 듯이 하여, 사하시기를 구하면 그 아버지 된 이가 그 맏아들의 간절히 비는 형상을 보고 만드시 그 작은아들의 죄를 풀어 줄지라. 이와 같이 예수 한 위가 천주와 사람, 두 사이에 사다리가 되시느니라.” 166

²⁸⁴ Han, 2002. 135

parents... through human customs, creation is explained – namely, as a parent equipping its children with lands and a livelihood.²⁸⁵

For Han, Chǒng’s philosophy rejects his eastern milieu, but the work – evinced in Han’s presentation of it – displays classic Confucian reasoning methods, if not conclusions. Han is correct to say that the eastern classical tradition pays relatively little attention to theories of creation, but Chugyo yoji sees Chǒng Yakchong turning a classical Eastern education to precisely that problem. Chǒng’s work is still part of a Korean orthodox continuum (as an extreme outlier, admittedly) rather than a complete break with everything he has been taught. Han’s conclusions are indicative of a major flaw with much of the scholarship on Chugyo yoji: focusing on its conclusions (anathema to its milieu, and perhaps anathema to some of the modern western and Korean scholars studying the subject) rather than the process by which they have been arrived at. Is Chǒng Yakchong’s work Korean Catholicism? Or is it Catholicism expressed by a Korean? It is both. Catholicism expressed by a Korean becomes foundationally “Koreanised”, for want of a better term. If we accept that the transmission of information is never value-free, we must accept that *Chugyo yoji* produces something unique and new. It is one man’s attempt at faithfully expressing inviolate concepts, originally written in languages foreign to him, and having undergone centuries of translation and negotiation by numerous authors, in his own language and to his own people. Han uses the word *t’och’akhwa* 토착화 “inculturation”, only once in his article, to describe what he sees as Chǒng’s failure to make the creed acceptable. Chǒng’s doctrine was “heterogeneous and exotic”²⁸⁶; his efforts at inculturating Catholicism within a “Korean theology” were “only felt remotely”; Han claims that Catholicism was adopted in spite of its relationship with Korean culture, not because of it - but a critical reading of *Chugyo yoji* reveals it to be foundationally influenced by Confucian Chosǒn. After all, the Catholic Church, somehow, endured in Korea. Perhaps its persistence in the face of such hostility was thanks to its unique syncretic character, a character which had been forged by its early adherents.

Chǒng’s methods were taken directly from the Chinese Jesuit approach, whose “method of complementing Confucianism aimed not merely to coexist, but eventually to consummate the latter and become “the orthodox,” as Erik Zürcher termed it.²⁸⁷ Shin (2011) feels that Eastern societies were predisposed towards syncretic approaches, espousing (in China’s case) one non-superstitious doctrine publically, Confucian orthodoxy, and then superstitious Buddhism in the personal sphere; thus Christians like Aleni in China Chǒng Yakchong in Korea wondered if the need for mysticism could be fulfilled by Christianity which could then supplant Confucianism as its correct perfection.

7. Chǒng Yakchǒn and *Sipgye myǒngga*

Chǒng Yakchǒn (1758-1816), a brother of Yakchong and Yagyong and another original member of the Ch’ǒnjinam Gorge group, wrote a Catholic poem in 1779, *Sipgye myǒngga* 十誠命歌 (“Song of the Ten Commandments”) which also displays the confluence of Christian doctrine with Eastern classical references and rhetorical flourishes which is characteristic of very early Korean Catholicism. Yi (2004) details Chǒng Yakchǒn’s impressive achievements as a Confucian scholar; he had written exegesis of a classic text and “a sort of encyclopaedia.”²⁸⁸ Kim (2005) believes that the poem’s format is an example of *t’och’akhwa*, “inculturation”: “The important point regarding inculturation’s entry is the unique form that our Ten Commandments take here in its manuscript.”²⁸⁹ By expressing the Ten Commandments in a rigorously Eastern form Chǒng made a vital contribution to mediating the central tenets into the intellectual Korean consciousness. Consisting of 37 lines, like Yi Pyǒk’s *Sǒnggyo yoji*, the *Sipgye myǒngga* attacks what Chǒng sees as the hypocrisy of Chosǒn Korea’s ruling class. And not only do they fail to embody the values they espouse; they also indulge in superstition and veneration of unworthy entities:

Worldly scholars are laughable.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 137-139

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 153

²⁸⁷ Shin, 2011. 334

²⁸⁸ Yi, 2004. 82

²⁸⁹ Kim, Yǒngsu, *Kyochu Ch’ǒnchugasa* (校註 천주가사) (“*Annotation and Commentary on the works of Catholicism*”), Seoul: Hanguk kyohoesa yǒnguso (한국 교회사 연구소) (“Korean Church Historical Research Institute”), 2005. 17

How many spirits are there with them throughout their entire lives.
Throughout the entire day and night they learn spells and incantations, prostrate on the floor
Do not invest evil spirits with false and empty formalities, trust the Lord of Heaven instead²⁹⁰

Chǒng Yakchǒn also refers to the foundational concepts of Yin-yang and the Great Ultimate, encouraging their study via a Christian sensibility. Yi believes that this line could be said to be “somewhat *Neo-Confucian*”²⁹¹ (the discussion of the Great Ultimate and *ūmyang*’s role in creation was a hallmark of Neo-Confucianism from Chu Hsi onwards), but this is contradictory, as Yi then admits that this part of the song, below, is actually an exhortation to abandon contemplation of these concepts in favour of the Lord of Heaven:

Scholars discuss *ūmyang* and the Great Ultimate, [instead they should] discuss Sangje and Sangsǒng [God of Heaven]
When discussing they seem to be different, however they are [both to do with] the Lord of Heaven ²⁹²

Debate, discussion and active refutation of criticism of their ideas were also a priority for Christians, as portrayed by Chǒng Yakchǒn:

Never resting from debating the pros and cons and [never] dancing along with empty discussion²⁹³

Hyo 孝, “filial piety” was the foundation of “creation”, and worshipping God (“Chǒnju” is the phrase used here too) was a proper extension of the filial obligation:

Among all things in the world filial piety is the most important.
Not recognising one’s parents’ love and becoming a thankless child
Is the greatest of sins, and one will go to hell after death.
If our parents’ goodness is larger than the sky,
Then the Lord of Creation, the father of all creation including the grass and trees,
Is the very Lord of Heaven.
Therefore one who knows filial piety
Also loves the Lord of Heaven.²⁹⁴

Christians were to engage in self-reflexive observation of themselves and society and decide how to act accordingly:

You also watch the world – therefore what behaviour should you engage in?²⁹⁵

Unlike *Chugyo yoji* and *Sǒnggyo yoji*, Chǒng makes an explicit reference to Korea’s nationhood and political situation:

The fate of the nation is tilting, towards what will be a rise and fall.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ Chǒng Yakchǒn, *Sipkye myǒngga*: “세상사람 선비네 이아니 우순사. 사람나자 한평생에 무슨귀슨 그리 많노. 아침녁 종일토록 합장배례 주문외고 있는돈 귀한재물 던져주고 바쳐주고 자고깨자 행선언동각기귀신 모셔봐도 허망하다 마귀미신 우매하고 사람들아 허위허례 마귀신 믿지말고 천주믿세”. In Kim, 2005. 18-19

²⁹¹ Yi, 2014. 79. Emphasis added

²⁹² Chǒng Yakchǒn, *Sipkye myǒngga*: “음양태극 선비님네 상제상선 의논하소. 말이일러 달랐으되 이무두가 천주시네.” In Kim, 2005. 19

²⁹³ Ibid: “갑론을박 쉬지않고 논쟁구결 무용일세”

²⁹⁴ Ibid: “천지고금 만물지사 부모효도 으뜸일세. 부모은혜 모르고서 불효자식 되고나면 죄중에서 제일크고 죽은후에 지옥가네. 하늘 같이 넓은대자 부모정이 일컬으면 인간금수 초목만물 그아버지 천주일세 부모효도 알고지면 천주공경 알고지고.” In Kim, 2005. 20

²⁹⁵ Chǒng Yakchǒn, *Sipkye myǒngga*: “너는또한 세상보고 무슨행신 어이할고”. In Kim, 2005. 21

He uses the word *kukun*, “fate of the nation”, although it would be a mistake to ascribe our modern-day understanding of nation and statehood to this term. Instead Chǒng is issuing a rallying call for the shared cultural and moral values of the societies influenced by Eastern classicism. The blame for the degradation in society is laid at the feet of insincere members of the government and elite:

This [perilous state of the nation] is because there are too many treacherous subjects
And they always slander one another.
In these fights many people have been injured.²⁹⁷

Chǒng then goes on to connect the seven days of the week and the Sabbath “with traditional sayings and teachings”²⁹⁸:

Friends, please listen to these words
Pleasure, anger, sadness and joy are lain down in front of us so we try to evade them
It has been said since olden times
That a human lives until the age of seventy
And boys and girls must grow up separately from seven years old
Do your best during the six days in a week and on the seventh let us calmly
Worship the Lord of Heaven²⁹⁹

Confucian orthodoxy, meanwhile, held that the sexes should be separated from the age of seven. The entirety of *Sipgye myǒngga* is a beautiful attempt to present Catholic ideas within a Confucian framework. The Eastern impetus towards self-reflection, diligence and societal harmony are re-cast as being in service of God; Chǒng portrays the worship of the Christian God as given within the daily life of the sincere thinker, framing it as a natural and foundational part of one’s daily life.

Chǒng Yakchǒn renounced his Catholicism during the 1791 incident, but remained under suspicion throughout his life (see *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*).

8. Conclusion

When Chǒng Yakchong faced court proceedings in 1801, he reasserted his claims that Catholicism actually represented true orthodoxy:

Do you think I would follow these teachings if I thought they were evil, heterodox doctrines? I follow Catholic teachings because I know that they are the most fair and impartial (*kong*), the most correct and orthodox (*chǒng*), and the most genuine and true.³⁰⁰

Yet both during his lifetime, and since, Chǒng’s attempt at presenting Christianity as compliant with the Eastern orthodox tradition has been partially successful at best. The Korean establishment was, evidently not at all persuaded: they eventually sentenced Chǒng Yakchong to death when he repeatedly refused to denounce his faith. Meanwhile, modern scholars from various backgrounds and disciplines also question whether *Chugyo yoji* can be viewed as having descended from Confucian orthodoxy. Baker argues that the work shows “little influence” of its author’s “Confucian youth... despite growing up in a Confucian literati household and receiving a traditional Confucian education”.³⁰¹ And though Yi (2004) is writing from church studies background rather than a historical one, he too ultimately believes that the Chǒng brothers and their compatriots “sought solutions not from any institutional innovation nor from Confucian ideas”.³⁰² Instead he sees the Chǒng brothers’

²⁹⁶ Ibid: “국운이 기울어져 흥망성쇠 뚜렷하네”. In Kim, 2005. 22

²⁹⁷ Ibid: “간신소부 까막까치 혈뜬어서 싸움일세.”

²⁹⁸ Yi, 2004. 80

²⁹⁹ Adapted from Yi’s translation, 2004. 80 “벗님네야 이내말씀 들어보소 인산세상 희로애락 다투서 면할손가 인생칠십 고래희라 옛말부터 인컬으고 남녀칠세 부동석도 일곱부터 성장일세 일곱날중 옛새간은 근면노력 다하고서 일곱째날 고요히 천주공경 하여보세”. In Kim, 2005. 20

³⁰⁰ *Ch’uan kǔp Kugan* vol. 25, p. 49. Translated in Baker, “Different Threads”. 33

³⁰¹ Baker, 1999. 34

³⁰² Yi, 2004. 82

works as being rooted in their understanding of the Catholic idea of universal love.

I disagree. When balanced against the evidence I have presented above, I believe that this may be evidence of Yi's own predisposition towards Catholicism; no-one can create cultural artefacts completely divorced from the environment in which they operate. I believe that there is significant evidence of Chŏng's background and milieu evident in his work, His work placed belief in the existence of a sentient God above any particular moral behaviours (Baker, 1999), creating "a perfect example of the new model of orthodoxy – doctrine provides the basis for moral principles rather than the other way round."³⁰³ Chŏng's work also shows deep and fundamental influence from classical Eastern thought. His doctrine "unfolded" "on the basis of traditional thoughts."³⁰⁴ I concur absolutely with Yi's summary of his work – "not merely a translation of the Chinese books of Sŏhak, but a unique achievement."³⁰⁵ Chŏng presented Catholic doctrine "in the terms of traditional Korean thought."³⁰⁶

Of course, despite the efforts towards orthodoxisation which early Catholics attempted, they met sustained and organised intellectual opposition; the sanctions the Chŏng brothers eventually faced occurred only after a long and systematic campaign of intellectual mobilisation against Catholicism. The next chapter analyses this establishment response to Catholicism as it emerged.

³⁰³ Baker, 1999. 33

³⁰⁴ Yi, 2004. 77

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

In Defence Of Orthodoxy

Ethics and education are one with politics.³⁰⁷

Introduction

So far this work has concentrated on the works produced by those involved with Catholicism in Korea. In contrast, this chapter will discuss how the orthodox establishment responded to the emerging religion. My intention is to provide the crucial philosophical and political context within which Catholicism was attempting to establish itself in Korea. By looking at the specific responses of the establishment, and their understanding of Catholicism, we can better understand how Catholicism was succeeding or failing to adapt to a Korean setting.

We can appreciate that the fact there was a response at all illustrates the threat Catholicism was perceived to represent. In the contemporary West, no-one devotes much time or effort to denouncing communism. That ideology's danger to the apparently indefinitely persistent status-quo of liberal democracy has subsided. Instead, Western administrations devote endless amounts of money, media coverage and polemic to challenging different threats such as Islamic fundamentalism or immigration. The late Chosŏn, furthermore, "had not been known for violent religious persecution."³⁰⁸ Catholicism had shown a seductive ability to utilise Korean cultural artefacts, which made it a serious threat, one worthy of a harsh and sustained response.

By examining what a given orthodoxy considers heresy, we can understand what that orthodoxy itself is - and we can begin to understand how any given belief system is created:

When society lacks problems and is accepted as a natural order, the conservative mentality... does not spend time theorizing about society... but when opposing elements threaten the existing social order, the traditionalist mind is "oriented to meanings" and begins to reflect seriously on society's historical-philosophical foundation.³⁰⁹

Chu (2006) and Chung (1995), along with Kim Haboush (2001), believe that the fall of the Ming in 1644 had influenced late Chosŏn Korea's unwavering attitude against innovation. By the late 18th century, as the guardians of a doctrine whose source was now gravely threatened by the primacy of the barbarian Qing, Koreans had to ensure it was assiduously preserved. This attitude was the primary motivator in the establishment's response to Catholicism; when correct practices were threatened by *sŏhak* the establishment acted stridently against it. Chung (1995) snappily encapsulates why the Chosŏn establishment responded so vociferously to the emergence of Catholicism:

Since orthodoxy is a socially constructed authority, in the midst of conflict it is inherently vulnerable to attack; the ideas and institutions claimed as sacred require perpetual defense from destructive influences.³¹⁰

That is: at some point any given orthodoxy has to have been created and introduced, something which the late Chosŏn establishment was fully aware of. Chosŏn Korea, of course, was inextricably linked from its conception with the introduction of a new orthodoxy – Ch'eng-Chu Neo-Confucianism, which had supplanted Goryŏ Buddhism. The challenge with the introduction of a new orthodoxy is for its proponents to explain why their beliefs are, firstly, true and, secondly, actually a foundational truth of the universe which has been uncovered, rather than invented. Clearly Chosŏn Confucians had done this successfully. Many hundreds of years later Korean Catholics were much less successful, but comparison of the two approaches illuminates generic aspects of the process. Chung (2001) argues that the arrival of Christianity "hopelessly"³¹¹ degraded the authority of traditional Korean culture. I do not agree. Catholicism provided a challenge and a concern, but it never seriously threatened to usurp the establishment. It was a combustible mix of philosophical innovation and political expediency which

³⁰⁷ Chung, Chai-sik, *A Korean Confucian Encounter With The Modern World*, 1995. 75

³⁰⁸ Haboush, JaHyun Kim, "Letters of the Catholic Martyrs". In *Epistolary Korea*, Haboush, JaHyun Kim (Ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 361

³⁰⁹ Chung, Chai-sik, 1995. 129

³¹⁰ *Ibid.* 28

³¹¹ Chung, David, 2001. 29

stoked the fury of the Korean establishment's response. (The religion's earliest proponents were members of a political faction which was under assault from powerful rivals – see below).

1. The intellectual environment of Korea, 1784 - 1886

Catholicism was introduced to Korea during a turbulent period characterised by tension between the stated principles of the society, and the reality in practice. Late Chosŏn Korea was a culture where primacy was placed upon a man's intellectual ability, at least discursively (wealth and familial and political connections were as important, but much less talked about). Ostensibly, then, late Chosŏn society sought to promote and venerate elites on the standard of their moral example and mastery of the classics, as espoused within the classics themselves:

T'ang held fast the Mean, and employed men of talents and virtue without regard to where they came from.³¹²

The reality, however, was that Chosŏn Korea of the late 18th century was very far from being a pure meritocracy. Powerful interest groups with aristocratic heritage ensured that influence and prestige remained within their ambit. Kim (2008) summarises the tension between the two key principles of Chosŏn culture: meritocracy and aristocracy. While educational achievement was supposedly the key to access to positions of responsibility and status, “the Chosŏn elites did not mean to put all social strata on an equal footing; it was their staunch belief that the distinction between men of noble and base origins must be maintained.”³¹³ So while scholarly facility was still important by the late 18th century “the aristocratic component seems to have gained the upper hand.”³¹⁴ Kim characterises the late Chosŏn's social composition as a response to the increase in the *yangban* population, contrasted with a relatively inflexible amount of government positions, and a retrenchment of their status against other sections of society who were competing for influence and rank, including the *chungin* 中人 interpreters and technicians. Meanwhile, other groups marginalised from the bureaucracy did not seek to elevate their position through appeals to equality. Instead they sought to define themselves as exceptional and accordingly deserving of special status like the favoured *yangban* (Kim, 2008). In other words, mastery of learning was not only the correct path to self-enlightenment – it provided very tangible fiscal and social benefits too. But we must not be overly cynical. This era of Korean history does not represent an entire abandonment of meritocratic principles, by any means. The period 1784 – 1886 is littered with examples of people, overwhelmingly males but with some female examples, who devoted their lives to sincere pursuit of knowledge. Some of the greatest thinkers in human history flourished during this period and sincerely devoted their energy to intellectual discussion of the issues of the day.

Accordingly, when an alien doctrine appeared which seemed to pose an existential threat to the principles of Korean society – a doctrine which was dangerously seductive to boot – the establishment response was formidable. Not only was significant police and military pressure brought to bear on Catholics, but right-thinking men and women of letters engaged their talents to denounce the dangerous new *sŏhak* and both drive and justify its suppression.

Catholicism certainly had the odds stacked against, even before it earned the hostile scrutiny of the establishment. The introduction and subsequent dominance of Confucianism in Korea is a subject of immense complexity. A surface-level summary might argue that the Yi coup over Goryŏ was triumphant because Confucian advocates possessed political and military influence, and Confucianism could co-exist cognitively with Buddhism to a very large extent (indeed even today many Koreans perform both Confucian and Buddhist practices). Neither of these factors were in the favour of Korean Catholics. Catholicism was brought to the peninsula by members of a waning aristocratic faction, already under severe assault from political enemies, and once they were destroyed the faith passed into the hands of powerless commoners.

Official legal and moral responses to Catholicism occurred in 1785, 1791, 1801, 1815, 1827, 1839, 1846, 1860 and 1866, with a further official denunciation in 1881. By examining the legal and

³¹² Mencius, *The Chinese Classics: The Works of Mencius*. Translated by Legge, James. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. 1960. 326. James Legge's translation. Cited in Kim, Sun Joo, Kim, Sun Joo. “Fragmented: The T'ongch'ŏng Movements by Marginalized Status Groups in Late Chosŏn Korea”. In *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 68 [1] (June 2008), 135-168. 142.

³¹³ Kim, Sun Joo. “Fragmented: The T'ongch'ŏng Movements by Marginalized Status Groups in Late Chosŏn Korea”. In *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 68 [1] (June 2008). 135-168. 135

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* 136.

moral motivation for these events – many of which involved arrests, torture and exile execution - and Korean Catholic responses to them, we can arrive at a fuller understanding of the unique character of Catholicism as practiced and understood in the late Chosŏn.

Chung (1995) encapsulates the lineage of the intellectual orthodoxy which defined the Korean establishment of 1784-1886, dominated as it was by the *Noron* 老論 (“*Old Doctrine*”) clique:

In Korea it was the Learning of Human Nature and Principle (*Sŏngnihak*), which was a scholastic system of philosophical teaching based on upon the authority of Cheng I and Chu Hsi, that dominated the country’s intellectual life. As the country’s almost monolithic orthodoxy, it successfully suppressed all other ideas...³¹⁵ in time, from these characteristics of Chu Hsi’s ethic and the pattern of behavior based on it arose an inclination for rival individuals and factions, who fought for power and self-interest, to resort to moralistic censure and the manipulation of truth through a textual interpretation of the classics. As a result a pervasive belief that there is only one right path and that a variety of philosophical views could not exist side by side began to take root. Gradually this unitary belief, which had its inception during the reign of Sŏnjo and became even more deeply entrenched after the seventeenth century, permeated almost all areas of intellectual and social life. By the end of the nineteenth century Chu Hsi’s orthodoxy had been petrified into this unitary belief.³¹⁶

Confucianism was the “state cult”³¹⁷ – not just a belief system followed by the members of the state apparatus, it was the belief system which defined and prescribed the form of the state. Therefore any perceived challenges to it were dealt with extremely gravely.

Political realities – intra-Korean discord

As mentioned above, the resistance to *sŏhak* was not solely due to lofty moral and ideological concerns. Politics during the late Chosŏn was characterised by factional concerns, with different groups of *yangban* being bound together by blood and marriage and common philosophical beliefs, and the vast majority of the key principal figures involved with early Korean Catholicism were members of a particular political faction, the *Namin* 南人 (“*Southerners*”). For their part the Southerners were heavily influenced by Yi Ik (1681-1763), a seminal Korean intellectual who had examined (and rejected) works written in classical Chinese by Western missionaries including Ricci. As Willett Wagner says, “factionalism was the central political phenomenon of the Yi [Chosŏn] dynasty”³¹⁸; Catholicism could hardly hope to avoid being pulled in.

Oh (1993) sees the adoption of Catholicism by some Southerners as a natural consequence of their earlier embrace of what is often called the “practical learning” or *Sirhak* school of thought – not only did *Sirhak* involve discussion and examination of Western ideas and inventions, but by its nature adoption of a new way of thinking predisposes those who adopt it to exploring other new ideas. Accordingly my belief is that the intellectual culture of the *Namin* had a strong strand which encouraged innovation and laid a foundation for the examination of Catholicism by some of them. (Many *Namin* were fundamentally opposed to Catholicism. While Fauconnet-Buzelin describes the *Noron* as “conservative and anti-Christian”, and both she and Iraola describe the *Namin* in similar ways, as (respectively) “liberal”³¹⁹ and “progressive”,³²⁰ this may be an anachronistic ascription of political values from pro-Catholic modern sources.)

Regardless of how closely given factions may match up to modern political delineations, tensions between the factions were a key contributing factor to the anti-Christian suppressions which gathered steam after the death of the scrupulously non-partisan King Chŏngjo in 1800. Chŏngjo, like his grandfather and predecessor Yŏngjo, had pursued a formal policy of non-discrimination (Oh,

³¹⁵ Chung, 1995. 93.

³¹⁶ Chung, 1995. 101

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23

³¹⁸ Willett Wagner, *The Literati Purges: Political Conflict in Early Yi Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1974. 1

³¹⁹ Fauconnet-Buzelin, Françoise, *Mourir pour la Corée: Jacques Chastan, missionnaire apostolique du Diocèse de Digne* (“*To Die for Korea: Jacques Chastan, apostolic missionary from the diocese of Digne*”), Paris: L’Harmattan, 1996: “Mais une crise politique s’ouvrit avec l’accession à la régence de la Reine Kim, née dans une famille du parti conservateur et anti chrétien No Ron, jusqu’alors écarté du pouvoir par le parti libéral Nam In.” 129

³²⁰ Iraola, 2007. 221

1993), and did his best to reward merit rather than affiliation, but he had faced an enormously challenging task - the balance of power in the late Chosŏn between throne and aristocrats was very delicate and the king could never afford to ignore the enormous influence and resources wielded by the most successful elites. By the late 18th century the *Noron* domination meant its members controlled many key posts throughout Chŏngjo's government and sought to oppress their rivals, including the *Namin*. Some *Namin* also maintained influence but when prominent members of their clique became involved in Catholicism their beliefs became a useful tool to attack them with.

How much of the opprobrium was driven by political expediency, and how much was genuine outrage at the ideas being peddled by Yi Pyŏk, Chŏng Yakchong, Kwon Ch'ŏlshin and others, is open for debate. It is reasonable to consider that a man's moral and philosophical beliefs were of central importance to his own self-image in the period; at least some of the calumny shown towards the Catholics was genuine. And when we examine the discourse of the period from anti-Catholics we can see that it was passionate and resolute. Nevertheless Chung (1995) proposes that Korean establishment defences of their beliefs were inextricably linked to class self-interest. The suppressions of 1801, 1839 and 1866 all "occurred while a faction or descent group was expelling (or tried to expel) another and grasping political power."³²¹

2. Korea's first encounters with Catholicism

Long before any Korean began actively practicing Catholicism, Korean thinkers had engaged with the Western creed. The very first intellectual encounter between Koreans and Catholicism was positive. Yi Sugwang 李睟光 (1563-1628) was a respected scholar, thoroughly grounded in the classics, who had also seen military action against Japanese contingents in the aftermath of the Imjin Wars (1592 – 1598). Similarly to his Ch'ŏnjinam successors, Yi performed diplomatic functions for the Chosŏn administration in China, where he came across the works of Matteo Ricci. Yi wrote a twenty-volume encyclopaedia, the *Chibong yusŏl* 芝峰類說, which showed respect for the Western ideas he had been introduced to (Yi, 2002), though "only fragmentarily and out of curiosity."³²² His contemporary Yu Mongin (1559-1623) read Ricci's works *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 ("The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven") and *Ŭhaoyoulun* ("On Friendship") and saw the Confucian *sangje* and Ricci's Lord of Heaven as the same entity – though his terse final assessment was that Catholicism was a "false doctrine that deceives people."³²³

By 1784 the Ming dynasty – the basis of Korea's own culture – had been replaced by the Qing as China's rulers, a succession of rulers who originated in south-Western Manchuria; in other words, barbarians. Korean scholars and rulers saw themselves as the only surviving guardians of Ming culture, which was based on Confucian propriety. As well as representing a cultural exemplar the Ming had assisted the Chosŏn militarily – while the Qing had been responsible for several devastating invasions of the peninsula. Accordingly Korea's relationship with China in the period 1784-1886 was highly complex. Ritual tribute was paid to the Qing regime while recognising the Qing's status as uncivilised interlopers. Korean *yangban* built and maintained shrines and memorials to great figures from Ming culture – and diplomatic envoys continued to journey from Korea to Beijing to maintain relationships with the Qing (Chan, 2017). It was during these visits that Koreans first encountered Western Catholic clergy face-to-face.

3. Pre-crisis

Catholicism did not remain an intellectual curiosity for long. Once it was being practised on the peninsula it quickly became a priority for the establishment to challenge, disrupt and, soon enough, suppress. Rausch (2012) and Roux (2012) thoughtfully discuss the connotations of the word "persecution", *pakhae* in Korean. Both scholars have chosen to use the term "suppressions" instead in an effort at neutrality, particularly in the context considering the official proclamations as part of good faith efforts to do what was believed to be best for Korean society as a whole – Roux (2012) also criticises church hagiographies for presenting the early history of Korean Catholicism as one of a

³²¹ Roux, Pierre-Emmanuel, "The Great Ming Code and the Repression of Catholics in Chosŏn Korea", article in *Acta Koreana*, 15:1, 2012. 91

³²² Yi, Wŏn-sun, "The Sirhak Scholars' Perspective on Sŏhak". In *The Founding of Catholic Tradition in Korea*, Yu, Chai-shin (Ed.). Translated into English by Kim Yun-sŏng. Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 2004. 47

³²³ *Ibid.* 48

religion “continuously and arbitrarily persecuted by the state”,³²⁴ when in fact there were carefully considered moral and legal justifications for the suppressions, alongside periods of official tolerance. Roux and Rausch’s argument for the use of the term “suppressions” is sensible.

Rausch (2012) has defined official anti-Catholic rhetoric as being shaped in response to two main influences: the Korean court’s objectives (or rather, multitude of objectives) and the characteristics of Korean Catholics at given points, but the proportion of these two influences was not uniform across different incidents. What were the reasons behind these attacks? In response to Catholic heteropraxy, as in 1791? Or driven by an initial intellectual argument, as in 1839? I have attempted to understand each round of suppression through careful examination of documents from pro- and anti-Catholic sources.

This chapter also examines a number of counter-counter arguments, responses to criticism of Christianity by Christians. The main examples are Hwang Sayōng’s *Silk Letter* of 1801 and Chōng Hasang’s *Sejang sasō* (“*Letter to the State Council*”) from 1839.

3a. Yi Ik, Sin Hudam and An Chōngbok

The Pyōngja War between Korea and the Manchus (1641) led to a treaty which formalised diplomatic relationships between the Chosōn state and the Qing (Yi, 2004). Korean diplomats began visiting Beijing again and new ideas – including those of the Western missionaries who were by then present in the Chinese capital – began to permeate back into Korea. The founding figure of Korean critical intellectual engagement with Catholicism was Yi Ik (1681-1763), who engaged with Catholicism in works including *Ch’ōnju sirūi pal* 天主實義跋 (“*Postscript to The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*”), a commentary on Ricci’s *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (“*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*”). Later, Sin Hudam (1702-1761) and An Chōngbok (1712-1791) were two establishment thinkers who were “particularly vocal”³²⁵ in their denunciations of Catholicism in the period immediately before Catholicism began to be directly practiced in Korea.

Yi Ik (1681-1763) built a reputation during his lifetime as a peerless thinker. A *Namin*, Yi examined Matteo Ricci’s works and ultimately rejected them:

If the Lord of Heaven truly felt compassion for mankind and descended to this earth in human form, walking and talking among men like any other man, then, since in the million places on this earth there are an infinite number of people deserving of his compassion, he should have admonished them all one by one. But how could the Lord of Heaven, in the form of just one man, do all that? Those living outside of Europe, those who have never heard of these European teachings, have seen no signs of his having visited them. What is so special about Europeans that he has so favored them with his visits? And what about all these miraculous signs of the Lord's presence that Europe claims? How do we know they are not simply the tricks of evil spirits?³²⁶

Yi challenged the Western understanding of Jesus/God on two of key sites. Firstly, Jesus’s role as an embodiment of compassion was contradicted by his having taught and healed only in Judea and Galilee; the true sage’s way could be replicated by ordinary men and was not bound by place or context. Secondly, the supernatural feats attributed to Jesus were anathema to Yi’s Eastern orthodoxy – again because Yi espoused a philosophy which allowed any sufficiently sincere and dedicated man to achieve sagehood. For Yi Jesus’s supernatural provenance and feats placed him within the murky realm of superstition and evil spirits.

[Catholicism] reveres only the Lord of Heaven, who is the same as *sangje* in traditional Confucianism. People revere, worship and believe in him with awe, as believers in Buddhism do Buddha. It recommends good deeds and warns about evil deeds with such

³²⁴ Roux, 2012. 74

³²⁵ Baker, Donald, “A different thread: Orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian world”. In *Culture and the State in Late Chosōn Korea*, Deuchler, Martina and Haboush, JaHyun Kim (Eds.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. 5

³²⁶ Yi Ik, “Matteo Ricci’s Catechism.” Translated in *Sources of Korean Tradition, Volume Two: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, by Lee, Peter H, and Theodore de Bary, William. Edited by Choe, Yongho. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. 126

theories as those of heaven and hell... it rejects Buddhism thoroughly but does not know that it itself goes back to illusion and falsity in the end.³²⁷

Yi theorised that Westerners were forced to create the ideas of heaven and hell to force themselves into acting correctly, as they had not been given a full education as to the importance of propriety for its own sake (see *Introduction*). The attempts by Korean and Western Catholics to meld Western conceptions of eternal reward and punishment with Eastern orthodoxy, therefore, were not to be read as a licit expansion of correct thought; they were instead a dangerous perversion. Ultimately Yi dismissed any religion rooted in supernatural phenomena. And a belief in such phenomena, whether Buddhist or Christian, fatally damaged any value the religion may have held.

Yi also examined “Seven Virtues”, a tract written in Chinese by the missionary Diego de Pantoja (1571-1681) which advocated the practice of the classic Christian virtues: humility, temperance, charity and so on. While he was impressed with the practical guidelines de Pantoja’s work provided he criticised its theology and supernatural mysticism:

This book will be a great help in our effort to restore proper behaviour... it is surprising, though, to find talk of God and spirits mixed up in this fine work. If we excise all such non-essential bits of grit and copy down only the parts in it that are worthwhile, then we can treat it as orthodox Confucianism.³²⁸

Their Lord of Heaven is the same as Sangje of we Confucians, but the way they respect, serve, fear and trust God is the just like the way the Buddhists treat Sakyamuni.³²⁹

Yi’s thought was hugely influential, particularly amongst members of his faction: it is important to remember that the majority of *Namin* remained deeply hostile to Christianity. For example, Ch’ae Chegong (1720-1799) was an extremely influential and well-respected figure in the late 18th century, the left councillor of state at this time, a *Namin* – and a committed critic of Catholicism. Ch’oe Hōnjung, also a Southerner, was one of the prosecutors of the Chinsan Incident (see below). His grandson Ch’oe Uhyōng would play the same role during the Taewōn’gun’s persecution of the 1860s.

Two other learned men examined Christianity before the Ch’ōnjinam *Namin* decided to adopt it. Sin Hudam (1702-1761) was a leading *Sirhak* (“practical learning”) intellectual who primarily criticised Catholicism on the basis of its representation of the soul (Iraola, 2011). Sin read Western works, including Ricci’s *Tianzhu shiyi*, Aleni’s *World Geography* and Sambiassi’s *On The Human Soul* around five decades before the Chōnjinam meetings. He immediately took issue with Ricci’s theorem of separation between the body and the soul; for Sin, Confucian orthodoxy held that the animation of material existence was inseparable from that same existence. (The extended discussion of the immortality of the soul in Chōng Yakchong’s *Chugyo yoji* is understood by Iraola (2007) as a direct response to Sin’s arguments.) Sin had studied under Yi Ik and was introduced to Catholic thought by him. Yet while Yi Ik cautiously endorsed some elements of Catholicism, Sin was irrevocably hostile towards it. Yi Ik even rebuked him somewhat for the intransigence of his stance towards *sōhak*:

The Jesuit priests undertook such a far and long voyage and eventually reached China... considering their kindness, their friendly intentions, and their deep thoughts, I think that they have some of the qualifications to find something important and worthy... I am afraid that you reject Catholicism without any deep understanding or consideration.³³⁰

But Sin remained a staunch opponent of Western thought. He also directly challenged the Christian claims about *sangje*. Sin’s reading was that *sangje* did not have a creative role, but was instead a guiding force – not a sentient entity:

³²⁷ Yi Ik, *Ch’ōnju sirūi bal* (“*The Threads of the Lord of Heaven*”). In *Sōngho Sasōl* (“*The miscellaneous writings of Yi Ik*”), volume 54. Translated into modern Korean by Yi, Wōn-sun, “The *Sirhak* Scholars’ Perspectives on *Sōhak*”, 2004. Translated into English by Kim Yun-sōng. 47

³²⁸ Yi Ik, *Sōngho sasōl*, Seoul: Minjok munhwa ch’ujinhoe, 1977-1978. Volume 1. 13: 22-b; 30: 39b-40a. translated in Baker, Donald, 2002. 17

³²⁹ Yi Ik, *Sōngho chōnjip* (“*The complete works of Yi Ik*”), 55:27b, included in *Sōngho sōnsaeng munjip* (“*The collected works of Yi Ik*”), Seoul: Kyōngin munhwasa, 1974. Translated in Baker, 1999. 18

³³⁰ Sin Hudam, *Hapinjip* (“*Collected Works of Hapin Sin Hudam*”), volume 2. Translated into modern Korean by Yi, Wōn-sun. “The *Sirhak* Scholars’ Perspectives on *Sōhak*”, 2004. Translated into English by Kim Yun-sōng. 50

The so-called *sangje* governs everything in the world only after it has been made, just as man uses his own mind only after he was born; that mind never made the human body. So *sangje* reigns over the world, to be sure; but who on earth can say that he created this world?³³¹

He was suspicious of Catholicism's geographical origin:

The various states of Europe are nothing but barbarian tribes on the fringes of civilisation. Europeans have no basis for claiming for themselves or their civilisation the same respect which China and Chinese receive.³³²

Sin also rejected the Catholic theory of an independent soul; his reading of Eastern orthodoxy was that the force which animated physical being was inseparable from that existence and could not exist without it. Here is another demonstration of the oppositional characteristics of Eastern and Western meta-viewpoints – Eastern philosophy saw material existence and its animation as a holistic process, while the Western conception saw them as discrete elements with an abstract existence.

Sin also further developed a consistent theme in establishment criticisms of Catholicism: it was selfish. It was not driven by a sincere desire for self-improvement and service to others, but a desire to avoid punishment and gain reward after death:

They believe only for material blessings, and not only is their belief ignoble but it also stems from selfishness. If one seeks only his own interest without seeking for true virtue, he will never be a virtuous man.³³³

Selfishness, in fact, was a defining characteristic of Catholicism:

There are thousands of deviant doctrines, all different, yet all flow from the common spring of selfishness.³³⁴

Sin's final and devastating assessment was that Catholicism was simply another form of Buddhism. He cited its teachings on an afterlife, its selfish exhortations to disregard the here-and-now and the theory of soul and body having separate existences (Yi, 2004):

All these teachings are just the same as Buddhism. But its thought is shallower and more deceitful than Buddhism.³³⁵

Unlike Yi Ik, Sin saw nothing good whatsoever in Catholicism; its preoccupation with the afterlife made it harmful to society overall.

Meanwhile, An Chǒngbok's most widely-disseminated anti-Catholic works were *Ch'ŏnhak ko* ("Thoughts on heavenly learning", 1785) and *Ch'ŏnhak mundap* ("Questions and answers on heavenly learning", 1785). An's son-in-law was Kwŏn Ilsin (1736-1791), a prominent member of the original group of Ch'ŏnjinam Catholics; Kwŏn would eventually die in police custody while being interrogated. Chung (1995) believes *Ch'ŏnhak mundap* to have been "perhaps the most influential among the earlier systematic critiques of Christianity".³³⁶ An's assessment of *sŏhak* was simple and stark:

Anything that is not Confucian is heterodox.³³⁷

³³¹ Sin Hudam, "Commentary on *Tianzhu shiyi*". Translated in Yi, Wŏn-sun. 2002. 52

³³² Sin Hudam, "Sŏ hakpyŏn" ("On Western Leaning") in Yi Manch'ae, ed., *Pyŏgwip'yŏn* ("In defense of orthodoxy against heterodoxy"), Seoul: Yŏllhwadang, 1971, 90. Translated in Baker, 1999. 7

³³³ Sin Hudam, *Pyŏkkwip'yŏn*, volume 1. Translated into modern Korean by Yi, 2004. Translated into English by Kim Yun-sŏng. 55

³³⁴ Sin Hudam, "Sŏ hakpyŏn" ("On Western Leaning") in Yi Manch'ae, ed., *Pyŏgwip'yŏn* ("In defense of orthodoxy against heterodoxy"), Seoul: Yŏllhwadang, 1971, 90. Translated in Baker, 1999. 16

³³⁵ Sin Hudam, *Hapinjip*, volume 2. Translated into modern Korean by Yi, 2004. Translated into English by Kim Yun-sŏng. 54

³³⁶ Chung, 1995. 33

³³⁷ An Chǒngbok, *Sunanjip*, volume 2. 27b. Translated in Baker, 1999. 6

Furthermore, like Sin Hudam, An saw the provenance of Catholicism as immediate grounds for rejection. It had no connection to China, and therefore could not lead to moral improvement:

I have heard of China transforming barbarians but I have never heard of barbarians transforming China.³³⁸

Also like Sin he decried the selfishness of Catholicism:

The difference between the basic approaches of Confucianism and Catholicism is the difference between selflessness and selfishness... Catholic doctrines and practices are all manifestations of individual selfishness. There is no comparison with the purely selfless stance of our Confucianism.³³⁹

When Jesus worked on “saving the world,” he focused on a world after this one. He tantalized people with promises of heaven if they did good and threatened people with hell if they did evil. In promoting moral behavior, the Sages, however, focus on this world. They illuminate virtue and revitalize the people in order to educate and transform them. Jesus encouraged people to focus on what they thought would benefit them the most personally. Our Sages fostered a concern for what was best for everyone. Therein lies the difference.³⁴⁰

An voiced concerns about Catholicism’s selfish, morbid obsession with the afterlife at the expense of one’s present existence; whereas Confucianism made a positive contribution to society and the individual through encouraging diligent self-cultivation Christianity relied on the threat of horrific punishment or sublime reward to gain adherents. Christians “are only thinking about the next world when they talk about doing good and avoiding evil... their ideas all have their roots in individual selfishness”.³⁴¹ For An, Christianity represented an attack on the most deeply-held principles of Korean society. The Christian’s commitment to chastity and unconditional forgiveness was a selfish rejection of one’s duties to one’s king and family: “to follow the example of Jesus and love [an enemy of one’s ruler or one’s parents] would be a grave violation of your moral obligations and a betrayal of your ruler or your parents.”³⁴² Equally, the Christian situation of the body as an enemy to master was also a serious offence against morality: “these Europeans warn us about the three enemies of man. The first is our own body. The sensations of sound and sight, of taste and smell... quietly weaken us internally... we get our bodies from our parents. So, if our bodies are our enemies, then our parents who gave us those bodies must be our enemies as well!”³⁴³ Thus ultimately *Sōhak* represented an attack on the Three Relationships – king and subject, father and son and husband and wife – which made it more pernicious than Taoism, Buddhism or heterodox Confucianism. The Christian’s concern was, for An, purely individual – selfish; an unacceptable betrayal of the Confucian preoccupation with harmony. It was here, perhaps, that the Korean Catholics most failed to inculcate their religion: accusations of selfishness and lack of investment in proper worldly harmony were an extremely pungent weapon for their critics to deploy.

Yi (2004) situates An and Sin’s engagement with Catholicism as part of a sincere effort at understanding truth, rather than being based on political expediency. Political factors were motivators in many of the criticisms levelled at Catholicism (see below), but Yi correctly notes that these two thinkers were concerned only with the moral and logical weaknesses of Catholicism, particularly considering that their discussions pre-date any full-blown pogroms. Their arguments against Catholicism were based wholly on its rhetorical deficiencies and suspect provenance, as Catholic practice was yet to become an issue in their era. Scholarly disapproval of Catholicism (or indeed any doctrine) would only expand into official mobilisation when it “went beyond the realm of ideas into

³³⁸ Ibid., 6

³³⁹ An Chōngbok, *Sunamjip*, volume 6. 34a. Translated in Baker, 1999. 14-15

³⁴⁰ An Chōngbok, “Ch’ōnhak mundap” (“A Conversation on Catholicism”), k17 in *Sunam sōnsaeng munjip* (“Collected Works of An Chōngbok”), translated in “Dying For Heaven” by Rausch, Franklin, in *Death, Mourning and the Afterlife in Korea*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press 2014. 219

³⁴¹ An Chōng-bok, “Ch’ōnhak mundap” (“A Conversation on Catholicism”). Translated by Baker, Donald, in “The Encounter with the West” in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilisation: Volume Two: From the Seventeenth Century to the Modern*, Lee, Peter H. (Ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 144

³⁴² Ibid. 144

³⁴³ Ibid. 142-143

organized public action which challenged the authority of the state”.³⁴⁴ This state authority was of course very broad, much broader than that represented by Western administrations – the state had a duty to control and encourage moral behaviour, and ultimately the monarch derived their authority from the example they presented: “ritual and social morality were the glue that held Confucian society together”.³⁴⁵ This duty would play an important role in the clampdowns when they did occur.

3b. *Ŭlsa ch’ujo chökpal sakkön*

The government memorial *Ŭlsa ch’ujo chökpal sakkön* (“the affair [of (Catholicism)] exposed to the Ministry of Punishments in the year Ŭlsa”) was published in 1785 in response to the discovery of secret Catholic meetings at the house of a *chungin* Catholic, Kim Pömu (1751-1787). After Yi Sünghun’s return to Korea as a baptised Christian in early 1785, he and his compatriots had begun secretly practicing Catholicism in earnest, and one of their gatherings in Seoul was raided by government enforcers, who at first suspected that illegal gambling was taking place (Iraola, 2007).

The communique marks the first official government denunciation of Catholicism and made prominent use of the phrase *mubumugun* 無父無君 in relation to Christianity: “without foundation, without ancestry”. *Mubumugun* would go on to become a recurring and central theme in criticisms of Catholicism, and indeed represented a crystallisation of the concerns around provenance made by Sin Hudam and An Chöngbok. Despite the strong wording of the document’s title, Kim was the only person punished as a result of the Catholic worship sessions. The other members of the congregation were *yangban* aristocrats who were not detained or punished (although they asked to be dealt with in the same way as Kim). Kim later died from injuries sustained during his interrogation and became the first Korean martyr.

3c. 1791: The Chinsan Incident

The first major legal mobilisation against Korean Catholics then took place in 1791, when two Catholic cousins in Chinsan, Yun Chich’ung (1759-1791) and Kwön Sang’yön (1751-1791), burnt their ancestral tablets and buried Yun’s mother as a Catholic (see the chapter *Early Korean Catholic Praxis*). The country having been scandalised, Yun and Kwön were executed and prominent Catholics were exiled and stripped of office.

This abandonment of ancestral rites was “the most heretical element”³⁴⁶ of Christian practice, but it was not the only reason for such harsh treatment to be meted out. Ledyard (2006) points out that King Chöngjo’s administration prominently featured *Namin* (generally not Catholics) – and accordingly, there was motivation for rival factions to smear the entire faction in order to free up appointments. Chöngjo resisted pressure for a general purge, instead requiring influential Catholics to apostasise (sometimes re-apostatising if they had renounced their beliefs in 1785). Choe (1972), meanwhile, does not see the 1791 incident as a persecution, but an extension of inter-factional conflict. As well as statutes prohibiting the trading, production and possession of Catholic books, the Incident led to a revival of the *oga chakt’ong* (*pöp*) 五家作統(法) system, “five family common provision (law)” system. Families were organised into groups of five which had obligations to report on each other and would also share punishments if any one family was noncompliant (Iraola, 2007).

4. The Suppressions

Major suppressions occurred in 1801, 1839 and 1866, and accordingly the rhetorical lead-in to these pogroms feature heavily here.

4a. 1801

1801 marks the dawn of the period summarised by Cho (2004) as “a type of thought control”³⁴⁷. The establishment set out to re-assert the core of Korean society’s concepts – “if orthodoxy

³⁴⁴ Baker, 1999. 9

³⁴⁵ Ibid. 9

³⁴⁶ Choe, Young Ching, *The Rule of the Taewön’gun, 1864-1873: Restoration in Yi Korea*. Cambridge: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1972. 92

³⁴⁷ Cho, Kwang, “The Chosön Government’s Measures against Catholicism”, article in *The Founding of Catholic Tradition in Korea*, Yu, Chai-shin (Ed.). USA: Asian Humanities Press, 2004. 103

were clarified, they believed, the new heterodoxy would cease.”³⁴⁸ Events were set in motion in 1801 which were to set the tone for the establishment response to Catholicism for much of the 19th century: cyclical waves of increasingly harsh suppression. The 1801 *Sinyu* suppression was begun in response to the apprehension of the Catholic priest Zhou Wenmo, who had entered the country in December 1794. Supported by Korean Catholics, including Hwang Sayōng, Kang Wansuk and Chōng Yakchong, his catechist for doctrine, Zhou had ministered clandestinely throughout the country until his discovery. The authorities first became aware of his presence in 1795, and for six years he evaded capture. When he finally surrendered himself in June 1801 a new wave of declamation was unleashed, one which would have cataclysmic consequences for Korean Catholics. Although the rounds of anti-Catholic action previous to 1801 had involved police action, executions and rhetorical establishment denunciations, the events of 1801 were to introduce a new dimension of organisation and intent to the purges; what Finch (2015) describes as a shift from “a policy largely characterized by persuasion and inducements to one of severe penalties and executions”.³⁴⁹ King Chōngjo’s death in 1801 led to his young son, Sunjo, taking the throne, with the Dowager Queen Chōngsun ruling as regent (Chōngsun was a former concubine of Sunjo’s great-grandfather, Yōngjo, who had ruled between 1724 and 1776).

Practical measures began with a memorial from Queen Chōngsun 貞純王后 (1745-1805) in January which called for strict adherence to the obligations of the *oga chakt’ongbōp*:

Every mayor must enforce the law that organizes households into groups of five. If there is a Catholic family in the five-household organization, the mayor must report it to the government office. If they remain Catholic, all in the organization [ie within that particular five family group] and their children will be executed.³⁵⁰

Before it came to Korea, the so-called ‘Learning of the Lord of Heaven Jesus’ existed in the West, where it bewitched the people with theories of heaven and hell, taught them not to respect their parents, led them to act out of harmony with the cosmic pattern, and threw principle into disorder. This strange teaching is completely without morality... the former king always said that if orthodox learning was illuminated then evil learning would disappear on its own. But, as we have heard, this so-called evil learning, which is the same as it always has been, has spread from the capital to the provinces of Kyōnggi and Honam, and its adherents grow daily in number. As for a person being a person, it is a matter of morality. As for a country being a country, it is a matter of civilization. This so-called evil learning is without father and king, destroys morality, interferes with the spread of civilization, and causes people to degenerate into barbarians, birds, and beasts. And so the foolish people are infected with these errors and led astray... if, now that evil learning has been strictly forbidden, there is still a gang of people who do not mend their ways, then it is right to treat them as rebels.³⁵¹

As Cho correctly points out, this edict acts as confirmation that the *oga chakt’ongbōp* introduced in 1791 had not previously been strictly adhered to. Rausch (2012) summarises the key points of the edict: Catholicism threatened the very existence of the state – by degrading civilisation 教化, that which made a country a country. The teaching caused humans to deteriorate individually, too, turning into “barbarians, birds, and beasts” 夷狄禽獸. The Catholics’ lack of father or king – *mugunmubu* – made them rebels (逆) who could not be trusted to display proper respect to their monarch or forebears. The Queen successfully presented her argument in the context of necessity; Chōngjo had tried to “illuminate” the “orthodox learning” for Catholics, but they had refused to accept his guidance. Now more serious measures were necessary. This edict deviates somewhat from the template for these proclamations in that it does not use *sōhak*’s foreign origins as grounds for automatic criticism.

1801 also marked, conversely, the beginning of widespread dissemination of Catholic materials written in the Korean alphabet (Cho, 2004). 83 works had been introduced by that year which were written in *han’gūl*, both translations and original works, including *Chugyo yoji* which had

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 103

³⁴⁹ Finch, Andrew, “The ‘blood of the martyrs’ and the growth of Catholicism in late Chosŏn Korea”, in *Historical Research*, 88:2 (2015). 676

³⁵⁰ *Sūngjōngwŏn ilki* (Diary of the royal secretariat), volume 97. 287. In Cho, 2002. 106

³⁵¹ *Sūngjōngwŏn ilgi* (Daily records of the royal secretariat), 97:287–89 (Sunjo, yr. 1, 1.10. *chōnghae*). Translated in “Like Birds and Beasts: Justifying Violence Against Catholics in Late Chosŏn Korea” by Franklin Rausch, in *Acta Koreana* 15:1 (43-71), 2012. 47-48

been completed in 1798 or 1799. (Catholic books had actually been formally banned in 1787, with auto-da-fés occurring, even extending to the royal library, whence 27 volumes were incinerated).

The 1801 suppressions were not only or even mainly influenced by moral concerns; Finch (2015) argues that Queen Chōngsun skilfully manipulated the atmosphere of the time to wipe out political enemies who had been tainted by a connection to Catholicism. Rausch (2012) also sees the suppression as primarily politically-motivated. Queen Chōngsun allied herself with the *Noron* faction and sought to mitigate the influence of the *Namin* who had enjoyed prominence during Chōngjo's reign. The Catholicism of many key *Namin* presented a vulnerability for her and her allies to attack.

4b. Hwang Sayōng and the Silk Letter

The Queen's memorial had triggered a sweeping round of arrests and executions as the establishment sought to apprehend Zhou Wenmo. His compatriot, Hwang Sayōng, was apprehended in September 1801, having written an inflammatory letter addressed to Beijing's Portuguese Bishop Alexandre de Gouvea (1751-1808), the *Silk Letter* 帛書. The *Letter* roused the establishment to new heights of wrath. It also contains a wealth of detail concerning the administration's motivations for its mobilisation against Catholicism.

While fulfilling official duties to Beijing Hwang was baptised into the Western faith by Zhou Wenmo and also immersed himself in clandestine Catholic activities in Kyōnggi and Gangwon, studying and praying with Zhou. The *Letter* was written on silk and sewn into a messenger's clothes, a common way for Catholics at the time to send secret communications. It discovered on the 26th of September 1801 and Hwang was executed and cut into six pieces on November the 5th. The *Letter* is a significant document, comprising over 13,000 Chinese characters in its original form. Chung (2001) praises the Silk Letter as "remarkably free from the usual Oriental exaggerations",³⁵² but I caution that portions of the letter are undoubtedly hyperbolic.

It is important to recognise that it was a response to the renewed suppression which had begun that year. A significant portion of it begs for financial assistance for Korean Catholics; many had had their possessions and land confiscated. (After his execution Hwang's own property was confiscated and his relatives sent into exile.) A recurrent theme throughout the government's suppression actions was bewilderment at the espousal of Catholicism by educated nobles (Cho, 2004). Though *yangban* Catholics may have made their decision to worship as Catholics as the result of sincere study and reflection, and believed that their new beliefs represented the correct expression of Confucian orthodoxy, they were punished more harshly than uneducated commoners. The *Letter*'s author was a case in point. He came from a noble *Namin* family (Chōng, 2009) and was Chōng Yakhyōn's son-in-law. He showed remarkable promise from a young age, passing the *kwagō* examination at the age of 16 and earning the attention of King Chōngjo, an earnest patron of intellectuals. In the letter Hwang discussed the establishment preoccupation with noble Catholics:

The people that the government really wants to kill are the learned scholars who have high positions. The government reasons that the people are not as guilty as these learned men, because they are ignorant. Many common people were saved from death because the government overlooked their offence.³⁵³

Hwang's pronouncements on the national character of Koreans and regional politics also enraged orthodox and administration observers. In fact, the *Letter* could have been purpose-written to showcase the evils of Catholicism. Firstly, Hwang criticised the Korean people, the bureaucratic elite, and the King:

We, the sinner, were born in the region of darkness, but fortunately by the grace of our Lord, we have become his people. We were so grateful for his special grace that we wanted to serve the Lord with all our hearts... I have heard that the blood of the martyrs becomes the seeds of the Church. But unfortunately, our country is located next to Japan. Those islanders are cruel and have forsaken the relationship with the Lord on their own. Our government approves of it and plans to imitate what they have done. Is that not

³⁵² Chung, David, *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginnings in Korea*, 2001, Albany: State University of New York

³⁵³ Hwang, Alexander Y and Kim, Lydia T. "The Silk Letter of Alexander Sayōng Hwang: Introduction and Abridged Translation". In *Missiology* 37 (2009). 165 – 179. 170

ridiculous. Since our people are gentle and weak and the law is not strictly enforced, the persecution should not be as atrocious as in Japan.³⁵⁴

The Yi dynasty is very weak, like a string that is about to break. The king's mother is acting as regent, and powerful nobles are wielding arbitrary control. In this chaos, the people are grumbling and sighing. At this time, make Chosun a vassal country. Make the king wear the same robe and free the traffic on the border.³⁵⁵

Secondly, he sought foreign military intervention on Korean soil:

In the letter sent last year, it was requested that a large boat be sent, but now the situation has changed to such a degree that success seems like it will be difficult.³⁵⁶

If a few hundred armored ships and fifty or sixty thousand troops came to our shore with a few Chinese scholars who were accomplished writers and were to send a letter to our king stating: "We are evangelists from the West. We have not come here for wealth but to save lives according to the order of the Pope. If your country agrees to accept just one missionary, we will go back without firing one single shot and without any demands. We will just sign an agreement of friendship and go back rejoicing. But if you do not accept the messenger of the Lord, we will not go back even after you have died as a result of the Lord's punishment. Is the king willing to save the whole nation by accepting one missionary, or is the king not going to accept one person and lose the whole nation? Make your choice. The teachings of the Lord emphasize love, loyalty to the king and honoring of one's parents. The Lord's teachings will be a great benefit to this kingdom. We do not gain any profit by spreading this teaching. Our intentions are sincere. Please do not doubt us."³⁵⁷

If a base is established on the east side of Yoyang and Shimyang, the great distance and roughness of the area in between will give protection even when the whole world rebels. Soldiers can be trained and employed when the opportunity comes. That will establish a foundation for a dynasty for 10,000 years. Moreover, I hear that the king of Chosun is still young and does not have a wife yet. If one of the royal princesses becomes his wife, the king will be a blood relation, and his son will be considered a grandson of the emperor. He will be very loyal to your dynasty. Also Chosun can be a power to check Mongolia. If you miss this opportunity, another might take the place. And if that country settles down and becomes strong, it will not be good for us. This is the time. If you do not decide and act now, you will regret it later.³⁵⁸

There is no competent king and there are no virtuous officials.³⁵⁹

Some of Hwang's suggestions and exhortations to de Gouvea, like the above quote, border on fanciful. Clearly he was reacting to the extreme stress of the official scrutiny Catholics were undergoing, but his suggestions were, of course, looked upon extremely unfavourably by Chosŏn grandees.

Finally, the letter also provided extensive evidence for Catholic detractors of the corrupt way in which Catholics encouraged fraternisation between male and female:

Women made up two-thirds [of converts], and one-third were either of the common run

³⁵⁴ Ibid. 172

³⁵⁵ Ibid. 175

³⁵⁶ Hwang Sayŏng, *Silk Letter*. Translated from modern Korean translation in Chŏng, Sŏngghan, "Hwang Sayŏngŭi 'paek sŏ' (帛書)e daehan yŏngu – boda t'ongjŏnjŏkin yŏksahaesŏgŭl wuihan han siron" ("황사영의 '백서'(帛書)에 대한 연구 – 보다 통전적인 역사해석을 위한 한 시론") ("Research on Hwang Sayŏng's 'Silk Letter' – a study for more conservative historical interpretation). In *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology* (33), 91-116, 2009. 97

³⁵⁷ Hwang, Alexander Y and Kim, Lydia T. "The Silk Letter of Alexander Sayŏng Hwang: Introduction and Abridged Translation". In *Missiology* 37 (2009). 165 – 179. 176.

³⁵⁸ Ibid. 175

³⁵⁹ Ibid. 176.

or slaves... Kollumba [Kang Wansuk] gained great distinction for her sheltering and protection of [Zhou Wenmo], and since her talents and abilities stood out from the crowd, Father [Zhou Wenmo] assigned her special responsibilities. Kollumba was also a very zealous manager. She converted a great many people, and the women she brought into the faith from officials' families were especially numerous... the general balance of strength in the church thus came to be with the women members, and as a result her own renown spread far and wide.³⁶⁰

For six years she was [Zhou Wando's] facilitator for all important church affairs. [Zhou Wenmo] looked upon her with the very highest regard and trust. No other person enjoyed comparable status.³⁶¹

Hwang's letter also confirms that levels of acceptance of Catholicism on the peninsula had varied:

Before, Catholics were not afraid to reveal their religion, but now we cannot afford to.³⁶²

Once Zhou and later Hwang had been executed, the Dowager Queen's court had to provide an explanation for events to Beijing, as it was diplomatically delicate for them to have unilaterally executed a Chinese citizen. In an explanatory note sent to China, the Chosŏn court outlined that Catholics who "profaned Heaven, despised the sages, were rebels against the king 背君 and looked with contempt upon their fathers... ceased performing ancestor rites and did away with their household shrines and ancestral tablets... bewitched the foolish people with talk of heaven and hell... and by means of baptism assembled an evil gang 凶黨".³⁶³ Sexual immorality was once again hinted at, in the way Catholics gathered men and women in the same place and did "bestly things" 禽犢之行.³⁶⁴ The Catholics had made good on the threat they posed at the beginning of the year; they were now "plot[ting] rebellion" 謀逆, so the "evil cult" had to be "torn out at its roots."³⁶⁵ Comparisons to animals were also made, the introduction of another rhetorical device which would be revisited often: the Catholic community was "a coiled snake" 蛇盤 or a "worm" 蚓.³⁶⁶ Hwang Sayŏng was said to have a "wolf's heart" 狼軀心腸 and a "fox's face" 狐魅面目.³⁶⁷ Outward appearances also marked one as evil and bestial, as Yi Kahwan's "bug-like eyes" 蜂目 and "wolf-like howls" 豺聲³⁶⁸ revealed his evil nature. The Catholic God was also compared to a "snake god" 蛇神 and an "ox spirit" 牛鬼.³⁶⁹

Zhou, the Korean government explained, had been executed because he had looked and spoken like a Korean (other sources suggest that Zhou's Korean language ability was far from perfect (Ledyard, 2006), and therefore that the Chosŏn administration had known that he was Chinese when he had been executed. Indeed, Hwang's letter had suggested using Zhou's execution as a bargaining chip against Korea). The Chinese court accepted Korea's reasoning and pardoned the execution of Zhou.

Once China had accepted the Korean version of events the Dowager Queen sought the formal end of the suppression by compelling the King, then a boy of eleven, to visit his ancestral temple and report success in the endeavour, an act which marked its conclusion. Some within the court were still not satisfied; there was a call for posthumous denigration of Ch'ae Chegong, who had died in 1799, as punishment for overseeing the *Namin* when so many of them had turned to Catholicism. Chŏng Yakchŏn, brother to Yakchong and Tasan Yakyong, had apostatised many years previously but also faced calls for investigation. Such after-tremors of the suppression further reveal its political motivations. The final proclamation referencing the events represents a concentrated form of the

³⁶⁰ Hwang, Sayŏng, *Silk Letter*. Translated in Ledyard, Gary, "Kollumba Kang Wansuk, an Early Catholic Activist and Martyr". In *Christianity in Korea*, Buswell, Robert (Ed.). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006. 40-44

³⁶¹ Ibid. 47

³⁶² Ibid. 173

³⁶³ *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 47, 410 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 10. 27 *kyŏngŏ*). Translated in Rausch, 2012. 50

³⁶⁴ Ibid. 50

³⁶⁵ Ibid. 51

³⁶⁶ Ibid. 51

³⁶⁷ Ibid. 55

³⁶⁸ Ibid. 55

³⁶⁹ Ibid. 55

previous attacks, while introducing a specific class awareness to the criticisms. Catholics were “a number of the low born, the shiftless, and people who resented our country.”³⁷⁰ They had “formed a gang to obtain power and fame” and “gathered together ruffians from the marketplace, farmers and young women workers and mixed with them, sullyng good customs and right morals.”³⁷¹ Yi Sūnghun’s followers were “barbarians” 眞胡種, “deluding the world and deceiving the people”, threatening “to destroy the five relationships and three bonds.”³⁷² Ch’ae Chegong was also denounced as having been Catholic, someone who “esteemed the dregs of Taoism and Buddhism.”³⁷³ Catholicism was a “pretext” 假托 for rebellion; they had “pulled passages from the writings of the sages and worthies to support their heresy”.³⁷⁴

The 1801 suppression was ended by an edict which echoed the criticisms which began the offensive:

Those Catholics are deluded into believing in heaven and hell... though it is normal for human beings to love life and fear death, when they are brought to the execution ground, they look on it as a comfortable place to lie down and take a rest!³⁷⁵

The language of this edict is even more critical than that in the one which began the suppression, as the establishment struggled to process the implications of the Catholics’ thirst for martyrdom. Meanwhile the brutality of the action served only to reinforce the faith of the heretics - “that same violence helped drive the development of a distinctly Korean Catholic vision of the afterlife that inspired believers to choose to die rather than repudiate their faith.”³⁷⁶

4c. Yi Mansu and *Sinyu ch’ōksa yunūm*

The establishment’s response to Zhou’s discovery and later Hwang’s letter was written by Yi Mansu, a respected scholar who had won prestigious titles and national prominence as a royal adviser (Chōng, 2009). On the 25th of November 1801 his *Sinyu ch’ōksa yunūm* 辛酉斥邪論音 (“*Silken sounds to eradicate heresy in the year Sinyu*”) was released, a document detailing the threat posed by Zhou and Catholicism in general. *Sinyu ch’ōksa yunūm* introduces some of the central criticisms of the Western creed which would be further developed, both by Yi himself and later orthodox scholars:

How woeful! Originally these Western countries came to our country [bringing] grace, not coming as an enemy, but whatever logic one uses to look at it, have they not turned out to have crossed over ten thousand leagues of ocean with warlike intentions?³⁷⁷

The punishment the Catholics were given was “correct punishment” 正刑³⁷⁸. Korea’s unique position as a country “biased towards one particular side” [ie towards China], “seeking to obtain the Emperor’s blessings with funerary tributes by officials”³⁷⁹, was threatened by the presence of Catholicism on the peninsula.

Yi followed *Sinyu ch’ōksa yunūm* with *T’osa pan’gyomun* 討逆頒教文 (“*Edict for the punishment of heterodoxy*”). It was released on the 22nd of December 1801 and was distributed amongst the masses to explain why Catholics had been punished so harshly, explicitly refuting Hwang Sayōng’s *Silk Letter* “in minute detail”³⁸⁰. The specifics of Hwang’s crimes were reported:

On one part of the silk a letter was written, in another clause a new treachery was laid out. He even summoned three hundred troubles to the land of the way of righteousness,

³⁷⁰ *Sūngjōngwŏn ilgi*, vol. 98, 25–27 (Sunjo, year 1, 11. 8 *sinbae*). Translated in Rausch, 2012. 52

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* 52-53

³⁷² *Ibid.* 53

³⁷³ *Ibid.* 53

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 53

³⁷⁵ *Sunjo sillok* 純祖實錄 Veritable records of King Sunjo, 47, 419 (*Sunjo sillok*, yr. 1, 12.22. *kapcha*). Translated in Rausch, 2014. 226-227

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 227

³⁷⁷ Yi Mansu, *Sinyu ch’ōksa yunūm*. Translated from a modern Korean version in Chōng, 2009. 99

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 99

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 99

³⁸⁰ Chōng, 2009. 98

opening the door to traitors and calling in nine boats to lie off the coast.³⁸¹

Korea's unique place as the protector of moral propriety is emphasised: it is the land of *chōngdo* 正道, “the way of righteousness.”³⁸²

Yi Mansu also compared Catholics to wild animals, re-using phrases which had been deployed earlier in the year in the royal edict:

People like Hwang Sayōng have the heart of wolves and the face of foxes.³⁸³

And once again, Christianity's dangerously licentious sexual dimension was highlighted. Catholic women had:

overturned their moral duty and confused public morals.³⁸⁴

Christianity was no more than a perversion of Buddhism, comparable with shamanism:

His words pipe in the dregs of Buddhism, that of the void and the spirits, making up ghosts, a metamorphosis that resembles the shamanist faction.³⁸⁵

Like Sin Hudam and An Chōngbok, Yi Mansu was disdainful of the supernatural, mystical elements so prevalent in Catholicism. Its talk of spirits and resurrection placed it firmly alongside other the misleading superstitions, Buddhism and shamanism.

Finally, and most egregiously in Yi's eyes, Hwang had knowingly betrayed his kingdom and nationhood:

Much more than that, becoming exceedingly crafty and base, he proceeded to arrogantly and wickedly separate himself off [from Korean society].³⁸⁶

The focus on this aspect of Hwang's crimes is interesting when we consider the context of 1801; Korea saw its nationhood almost exclusively through the lens of the *sadae* 事大 relationship with China, and concepts of citizenship and patriotism were not common currency amongst the Korean masses who received Yi Mansu's commentary. Regardless, this is the most damning of Yi Mansu's indictments: that the Catholic credo is a deliberate cover for seditious activity. The Catholics are not perverted by their errant theology; they have adopted an errant theology to intrigue against the Korean state apparatus. (Hwang's letter certainly provided Yi and other establishment figures with plenty of evidence to support this conclusion). Hwang and other Catholics acted *daeyōkbudo* 大逆不道, “outside of tradition”³⁸⁷:

In general these people pretend on the surface to be engaged in heresy, while on the inside they are brooding on committing treason. First they dissemble at a theology, of course while bringing down disaster and calamity from the sky, until finally the king and their parents sees them as an enemy and the damage they have done as opponents of the throne is openly revealed.³⁸⁸

Yi Mansu here uses the word *sagyo* 邪教 rather than *idan* 異端 to denote “heresy”; *sagyo* literally means “wicked” “education”, while *idan* is comprised of characters meaning “divergent” and “endpoint” – literally a “different thread”. *Idan* was still a pejorative term and was also often used to criticise Christianity (Baker, 1999) but *sagyo* contains a sense of deliberate, wilful evil which is absent from the

³⁸¹ Yi Mansu, *T'osa pan'gyomun*. Translated from a modern Korean version in Chōng, 2009. 98

³⁸² Ibid. 98

³⁸³ Ibid. 98

³⁸⁴ Yi Mansu, *T'osa pan'gyomun*. Translated in Cawley, Kevin, “4 Dangerous Women in the Early Catholic Church in Korea”. In *Religious Transformation in Modern Asia: A Transnational Movement*, Kim, David W. (Ed.), Leiden: Brill, 2015. 83

³⁸⁵ Yi Mansu, *T'osa pan'gyomun*. Translated from the modern Korean translation in Chōng, 2009. 98

³⁸⁶ Ibid. 98

³⁸⁷ Ibid. 99

³⁸⁸ Ibid. 99

term *idan*.

These same criticisms of Catholicism appear again and again, in varying proportions, throughout the late 18th and most of the 19th century. Yi Mansu's attack is notable for its focus on the perceived insincerity of *sŏhak*'s adherents, their religious belief only a cynical cover for attempts at power. Other considerations are secondary. Ultimately, Hwang's crime was so great that it was difficult to conceive of what his punishment should be:

There are not many examples of this kind of traitor; and there are none as flagrantly wicked.³⁸⁹

5. 1839

Events of note occurred between 1801 and 1839, not least the entrance of French clergy into Korea in 1836 (see *Reports to Rome, Letters To Paris*), but for much of this period there is relatively scant relevant documentation remaining to the historian. There were sporadic localised mobilisations against Catholics up until 1839, particularly in 1815 and again in 1827, but 1839 marks the next full-scale suppression.

On the fifth of the third month, 1839, the Dowager Queen Sunwŏn (1789-1857) and Yi Chiyŏn 李止淵 (1777-1841), the newly appointed Third State Councillor 右議政, launched a campaign after the discovery of Catholic believers in Seoul and in the provinces. Considering that the suppression policy of 1801 had been too lenient, they decided to implement an “extermination policy” 殄滅之政 which consisted in “punishing so that there would eventually be no more punishments” 辟以止辟之道³⁹⁰

There are notable similarities between the context for the 1839 suppression when compared to 1801. Once again a young king, Hŏnjong (r.1834-1849) was on the throne, directed by a Queen Dowager regent, in this case his grandmother, Queen Sunwon. However, this suppression was motivated more by anti-Catholic feeling amongst the bureaucracy and the King's influential in-law clan than factional conflict.

To begin the suppression the Dowager Queen oversaw the drafting of a memorial, written and published under the name of the young King Hŏnjong.

5a. King Hŏnjong's *Ch'ŏksa yunŏm*

Bae (2014) sees the anti-Catholic orthodox polemics of thinkers such as Sin Hudam (1702-1761) and An Chŏngbok (1712-1791) as a continuation of the T'ang Chinese tradition of *ch'ŏksaron* 斥邪論, (“treatises on expelling wickedness”). This tradition was explicitly continued in King Hŏnjong's *Ch'ŏksa yunŏm* 斥邪論音 (“Royal rescript against the heretics”). Recorded in the *sillok* chronicle on 18th of October 1839, though distributed at some point before Chŏng Hasang's execution on 22nd of September, *Ch'ŏksa yunŏm* provides a valuable insight into the motivation behind the anti-Catholic sentiment of the time. Firstly, Catholicism drew adherents away from the path of righteousness:

When one talks of the form of the heavens, one talks of Sangje. Unfortunately, the wicked bandit Yi Sŏnghun brought back Western books; even though the late king did not ban the Lord of Heaven's religion, as it is called, which secretly lures and attracts even right-thinking men away from the path of righteousness... these wicked followers have already the original texts [of Christianity], and are revising [our] customs.³⁹¹

But Catholics were not just misguided – they were deliberately deceitful:

³⁸⁹ Ibid. 98-99

³⁹⁰ Roux, 2012. 100-101

³⁹¹ Hŏnjong, “Ch'ŏksa Yunŏm” 斥邪論音 (“Royal rescript against the heretics”). Translated from modern Korean version in *Hŏnjong sillok* (“Chronicle of King Hŏnjong”) volume 6, 18th day of the 10th month of the 5th year of his reign (1839). Accessed via http://sillok.history.go.kr/id/kxa_10510018_001 on 09.01.2017

Ju Munmo disguised himself and swaggered towards the city.³⁹²

They continued to advance a sinister political agenda, desiring the overthrow of the Yi dynasty by foreign forces:

Hwang Sayōng prepared a silk letter in order to call for foreign ships, his brutal attempt and treasonous procedure was pressing... [Catholicism] introduces the will of foreign countries.³⁹³

There is a surprisingly personal tone to the edict in places, perhaps to emphasise the monarch's fatherly role towards his subjects (despite only being aged eleven):

Now this heresy rampages about as it pleases, through my shortcomings and having failed to guide [the country]. I will drink the bitter draught of self-reproach.³⁹⁴

The edict also dismantles the Christian concept of Jesus, using typically rigorous orthodox logic:

This Jesus – it is difficult to know whether he is real or fake, a spirit or some type of person. We are told by his followers that he was first of all the Lord of Heaven, then he died and came back to life, and he is also the creator of all material things and mankind... although we are never to become confused [by his nature], now he has returned to heaven, while still being a person... is this logical?³⁹⁵

Rausch (2012) points out that *Chugyo yoji* fully explains the Catholic view of these difficult questions, and asserts that the writers of the document must simply have ignored its doctrinal explanations – unsurprising when Catholicism was viewed as such a grave threat.

The document also discusses Christian neglect of *hyo* and *chesa* at length:

Alas! If one did not have a father, how could one be born? And if one did not have a mother, how could one be raised? Through saying that parents give us our body and the Lord of Heaven gives us our soul, these people [Catholics] are showing reverence and love to the Lord of Heaven and are not showing it to their parents. How can one bear to see this grave matter of the blood relationship [treated in this way]? Although we repay our ancestors through cherishing them with the rites, the filial person cannot endure the death of their parent, and is not even able to concede through logic that it could happen. But these people smash their ancestral tablets and abrogate their responsibilities to their forebears... in truth when this type of thing is carried out, where could the soul of these people, which they [claim to] lean upon, be found?³⁹⁶

And once again, the particular structure of the Roman Catholic church is criticised, with an elected pope and bishops:

The boundaries between a king and his subject cannot be breached, like the boundary between heaven and earth, but the Pope and religious leaders of these people make their own title for themselves, like a chief of a tribe of barbarians or the leader of a mob of thieves.³⁹⁷

Catholics are also criticised for their rejection of marriage and the family:

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

If there is to be balance of positive and negative, certainly there are to be wedded couples, and this cannot change. Yet these people don't marry and do not form families so their virtuousness is [merely] a pretext for foolishness.³⁹⁸

The custom of mixed-sex worship, and the Christians' disregard for class divisions, was degrading the fabric of Korean society:

Through jumbling up the low people together, man and woman, our customs are being tarnished and made disordered.³⁹⁹

And finally, echoing Yi Mansu's 1801 treatise, the King also used metaphors of wild animals to refer to Christians:

Though the tiger and the wolf are evil beasts, they still understand the proper relationship between father and son; even such low animals as the jackal and the otter are aware of their moral duty.⁴⁰⁰

In toto the edict focuses much more on the doctrinal and moral wrongs of Catholicism when compared to the 1801 denunciations, which dedicated themselves principally to discussing the specific sedition and disloyalty of *sōhak* adherents at the time.

5b. Chōng Hasang's *Sang chaesang sō*

Chōng Hasang's (1795-1839) 1839 *Sang chaesang sō* 上宰相書 (“*Letter to the State Council*”⁴⁰¹), is the first *hogyoron* 護教論 or apologetica written by Korean Catholics, an attempt to directly engage with the state apparatus and explain why the worship of Catholicism should not be punished (although Yi believes Chōng's father Chōng Yakchong's work is an “apology”⁴⁰² for Christianity). Coming surprisingly late in the development of Korean Catholicism, it must be seen in the context of the burgeoning *Kihae pakhae* 己亥迫害 of that year, named Gihae in the Korean dating system. During the purge, directly endorsed by Hōnjong (above) 119 Korean Catholics and three French clergy would lose their lives. Chōng's letter is valuable because it is an explicit legal appeal to those prosecuting the initiative – in other words, the stakes could not have been higher. The letter stridently criticises the anti-Catholic actions being undertaken by the bureaucrats overseeing the suppression, the second vice-premier and governor Yi Chiyōn (1777-1841).

Baker (1999) notes that Chōng Hasang did not receive the same education as his father had, as a result of having gone into exile at the age five – but the letter shows a “greater sensitivity to how Korea's Neo-Confucian ruling elite evaluated moral, philosophical, and religious claims”⁴⁰³ than his father's work. (See the chapter *Orthodox Heresy* for my response to Baker's assertions regarding the lack of Confucian influence in Chōng Yakchong's work.) Chōng visited Beijing secretly ten times between 1816 and 1825 and had been instrumental in facilitating the arrival of foreign clergy onto the peninsula. The document became an important reference point for Korean Catholics, just as *Chugyo yoji* had been – “expressing the very essence of Catholicism so simply and neatly that after a while it came to be used as a dogmatic textbook.”⁴⁰⁴

The letter acknowledges Chōng's place within the Korean social hierarchy, opening with the phrase *ōp'dūryō aroiopgōndae* – “I'm telling you this with my face down.” This phrase was deployed to counter the King's claims that Korean Catholics had rejected the ways of righteousness. Indeed Yi

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Chōng, Hasang, *Sang chaesang sō* (上宰相書) (Letter to the State Council), (1839) 1987. Accessed via http://center.jesuits.kr/dgpds/upload/%EC%83%81%EC%9E%AC%EC%83%81%EC%84%9C_%EC%A0%95%ED%95%98%EC%83%81.pdf on 27.01.2019

⁴⁰² Yi, 2004. 75

⁴⁰³ Baker, Donald, “A different thread: Orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian world”. In *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, Deuchler, Martina and Haboush, JaHyun Kim (Eds.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. 35

⁴⁰⁴ Yi, 2004. 77

(2004) situates the first portion of the book as “a request for the righteous spirit”⁴⁰⁵ – Chǒng Hasang having deployed the posture of Neo-Confucian enquiry to criticise the way Catholicism was being attacked. It was not Confucian, Chǒng argued, to dismiss a belief out of hand without fully investigating it. Accordingly, at the start of the document he invokes a roll-call of the great minds of Eastern thinking to argue for an inclusive approach to new thinking:

I’m telling you this with my face down: the reason Mencius excluded Yang Ming and Mozi’s incorrect arguments is that he was afraid of these ideas damaging schools of Confucianism. The reason Han Yu pushed away the Buddha and Lao Tzu was that he thought their ideas might confuse people, and carry them away [from propriety]. No-one asked neither the meaning nor the logic of [this] heresy [ie Catholicism], and they made this heresy a wrong and harmful religion through harmful and bitter words; before and after sinyu year [1801], even though they killed so many people with strict laws, nobody sought to check the origins and meaning [of Catholicism]. In general, if something meets the standard of righteousness, even a sage should accept it, even if it is the words of a woodcutter, so why do you ban the Lord of Heaven’s religion in our country?⁴⁰⁶

Chǒng’s argument is that the rejections of innovation in antiquity, firstly, were undertaken by the finest minds in history, and secondly that they were based on a proper understanding of the potentially dangerous heterodox doctrines. In contrast, the late Chosŏn’s rejection of Catholicism is based on an incorrect and incomplete perception of it. The mention of the woodcutter serves to draw parallels between Jesus and Confucius and Mencius – all three men came from relatively humble backgrounds and Jesus and Confucius engaged in physical labour.

The letter also uses typically Confucian rhetorical assertions to question the need for the suppression:

Would those who follow this path have a harmful influence over Confucianism? Would the normal people be thrown into chaos?⁴⁰⁷

Does Catholicism harm the family? Does it harm the state? Look at what Catholics do, study their behavior, and you will see what kind of people we are and what kind of teachings we follow. Catholics are not rebels. Catholics are not thieves. Catholics do not engage in lewd activities or murder.⁴⁰⁸

He then counters these rhetorical questions:

This way has to be practiced daily by everyone from the Son of Heaven [天子, ie the king] down to ordinary people; this way cannot be said to be either harm or confusion. Now I dare relate briefly why this duty is not wrong.⁴⁰⁹

Chǒng goes on to elucidate why Catholicism is intellectually and morally acceptable within Confucianism, one of several parts of the work where the influence of *Chugyo yoji* is deeply apparent in the letter. Chǒng uses three examples from human existence to justify his beliefs:

Here I will give three pieces of evidence. Firstly, all things in material existence, secondly humans’ intuitive knowledge and thirdly the Bible.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. 78

⁴⁰⁶ Chǒng, Hasang, *Sang chaesang sŏ* (상재상서) (*Letter to the State Council*), (1839) 1987: “丁夏祥 伏以孟氏之廓闢,楊墨者,恐其肆害,於儒門也.韓愈之攻,斥佛老者,恐其惑亂於黔首也.古之君子立法,設禁必考,基義理之如何.爲害之如何.然後當禁者禁之,不當禁者不禁之.若其果合於義理,則雖芻蕘之言,聖人必取此,不以人廢言之義也.” Accessed via http://center.jesuits.kr/dgpds/upload/%EC%83%81%EC%9E%AC%EC%83%81%EC%84%9C_%EC%A0%95%ED%95%98%EC%83%81.pdf on 27.01.2019

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid: “爲學者,將爲儒門之害歟.將爲黔首之亂歟.是道也,自天子達于庶人,日用常行之道?”

⁴⁰⁸ Chǒng Hasang, *Sang chaesang sŏ* (“*A letter to the State Council*”), (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1976). 24-25. Translated in Baker, 1999. 35

⁴⁰⁹ Chǒng, (1839) 1987: “是道也,自天子達于庶人,日用常行之道,則不可謂,爲害爲亂也.茲敢畧言,其道理之不非.”

Chǒng's examples from material existence are particularly strongly influenced by *Chugyo yoji*:

The family home is the pillar and the foundation stone; if there are girders and rafters, if there are exterior doors, walls and fences, and if there are no gaps and spaces, the rounded and angular parts of the building will all fit together well... now, our world is like a family house.⁴¹¹

His usage of the home – a technical description of its components – is very similar to Chǒng Yakchong's usage in *Chugyo yoji*. Other segments of the work echo *Chugyo yoji* in their use of specific metaphors and examples, such as using an unseen father as a metaphor for Chǒnju, or listing the various types of visible creation:

The Lord of Heaven is the great ancestor and great director of all of creation... a child may not be able to have laid eyes upon its father, but does that child not still trust that it has a father?⁴¹²

There are feathered and crawling beasts; and how could the exceedingly strange forms of plants which we see be formed by themselves? If they really did form by themselves, how would the sun and moon and stars not depart from their orbit? How would the seasons not break their cycle?⁴¹³

And employing examples from classical history (using figures which also appear in Yi Pyōk's *Sōnggyo yoji*):

If we didn't have the examples from history of Yao, Shun, Wu, T'ang, Mo, Zhou, Confucius and so on, how would we ever have learnt the laws of the heart? How would we have known what laws to follow? Simply and straight-forwardly writing and putting down the rules of the heart and the laws onto paper, reading and solidly emulating [the great men] of history.⁴¹⁴

In fact, Chǒng's letter is densely packed with references to Chinese history. He mentions “the floods of Emperor's Yao's time and the first Qin Emperor's pogrom, burying Confucian scholars and burning books” 焚書坑儒, the exemplar statesmen Wei Zheng 魏徵 and the Duke Wenzhao 梁文昭公, and also invokes Ricci and Ruggieri et al's arrival in Ming China. All of these references are to emphasise the propriety of the Western teachings:

The Western missionaries came to the Ming country and introduced many writings which have remained up until today.⁴¹⁵

Chǒng then uses direct quotations from the Five Classics “in order to prove a basis for [his] description of Sangje in the roots of Chu Hsi learning”:⁴¹⁶

410 Ibid: “厥有三證焉。一曰萬物,二曰良知,三曰聖經。”

411 Ibid: “何謂萬物,請以房屋喻之彼房屋也。

柱石有樑椽有門戶有墻壁,間架不失尺寸,方圓各有制度。若曰,柱石樑椽門戶墻壁... 夫天地大房屋也。”

412 Ibid: “此以萬物而知有主宰也... 異於遺子,不見其父,不信其有父也哉。”

413 Ibid: “飛者,走者,動者,植者,奇奇妙妙之像狀,豈有自然生成乎。若果自然則,日月星辰,何以不違其躔次。春夏秋冬,何以不違,其代序乎。”

414 Ibid: “古之堯舜禹湯文武周孔之傳,亦有經史而來也。若非經史,則誰知有堯舜禹湯文武周孔之傳,何心法設,何典章乎心法也。典章也,載之竹帛布在方冊。”

415 Ibid: “大明萬曆年間,西士來遊,多著述至今流傳於中國。上主黜祐東方,東邦之幸同福為奇,今焉五十有餘年矣。此以聖經,而知有主宰也。”

416 Pae, Yohan, “Chǒng Hasangŭi ‘Sang chaesang sŏ'e gwanhan yŏngu – Hŏnjongdae ‘Chōksa yunŏm’ gwaŭi pigyorŭl jungshimŭro” (“정하상의 「상재상서」에 관한 연구 – 헌종대 「척사운음」과의 비교를 중심으로”) (“Research on Chǒng Hasang's ‘Letter to the State Council’, focused on

If one has been exposed to the Chinese classics, how could one doubt this treatise [of mine] even slightly? Amongst the Chinese classics, did not the Book of Changes 易經 [tell us] “make offerings to heaven”, the Book of Odes 詩經 [tell us] “report your concerns to heaven”, the Book of History 書經 [tell us] “revere heaven”, and did not Confucius say “giving offence against heaven means that prayers cannot be offered”?⁴¹⁷

By using the term Sangje Chǒng sought to “argue that early Confucians did make specific references to a Supreme Being.”⁴¹⁸

Ultimately however, like Yi Pyōk and his father Chǒng Yakchong, Chǒng Hasang is adamant that where Catholicism and Confucianism come into direct confrontation, his Catholicism wins out:

Tablets of the so-called gentry will also be forbidden in the Catholic church. Tablets are neither the bodies nor the humors and pulse of one’s parents, and are not related to [God’s] grace; and also, it does not matter who tends to them better. However great [or small] the name is of a parent, what can be said about the real mother or father by a craftsman using ink and paint?⁴¹⁹

Yet Chǒng makes the crucial distinction that tending to the tablets of one’s parents is not filial piety; it’s simply unnecessary idolatry.

Chǒng goes on to criticise Buddhism, furthering echoing *Chugyo yoji* – and thus the orthodox arguments which *Chugyo yoji* itself sought to echo:

[Buddhism] plagiarised the words of the Lord of Heaven’s religion and emulated its laws, [but] with reason and logic becoming crooked, and ethics and discipline being left on the roadside.⁴²⁰

The letter also represents an attempt by Chǒng to meet some of the more pragmatic and pressing concerns levelled against Catholicism – namely, that the religion was inextricably bound up with the colonial machinations of foreign powers. Hwang Sayōng’s letter had done incalculable damage to the image of Catholicism on the peninsula, and so Chǒng Hasang had to make an attempt to mitigate these criticisms. The significance here is that Chǒng was trying to present a uniquely *Korean* Catholicism, one which paid heed to patriotism and obligations to the monarch:

Are we to be a family? Are we to be a country? If one describes our behaviour, one would come to realise that our behaviour was merely that of keeping to the path of righteousness. Then, did we plot treason? Did we undertake evil acts? Did we engage in thievery? Were there any murders which occurred? Why was such excessive punishment rained down upon us, and the Lord of Heaven betrayed?⁴²¹

Chǒng’s attempt was singularly unsuccessful, but it must be recognised. This emerging Korean Catholicism was indelibly influenced by the Confucianism which opposed it – Korean Confucianism provided a holistic system of morals and political instruction and organisation, and accordingly Korean Catholicism also began to construct itself as a complete philosophy. There was, after all, no separation between “church” – the individual’s cultivation of their inner self – and state in late Chosōn Korea, and so individual Catholics like Chǒng saw no reason why their personal religious belief would not extend to influencing attitudes towards politics and the state.

comparing it with King Hōnjong’s ‘Royal rescript against the heretics’), in *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology* 46:1, 211-239, 2014. 227

⁴¹⁷ Chǒng, (1839) 1987: “以此等文字,不少概見於中國經史疑焉.中國經史亦不云乎.易曰以享上天,詩曰昭事上帝,書曰禋于上帝,夫子曰獲罪于天無所禱也.”

⁴¹⁸ Baker, 1999. 36

⁴¹⁹ Chǒng, (1839) 1987: “所謂,士大夫木主,亦天主教之所禁也.既無氣脉骨血之相連,又無生養劬勞之上關矣.父母之稱,何等重大,以工匠之所製造,粉墨之所粧點”

⁴²⁰ Ibid: “聖教之文字,依樣聖教之規矩,義理舛錯倫紀絕倒,此所謂亂朱之紫,亂苗之莠也”.

⁴²¹ Ibid: “爲害於家乎,爲害於國乎,觀其事而察其行,則可知其人之如何,其道之如何,此輩曾爲不軌乎,曾爲偷乎,曾爲奸淫乎,曾爲殺越乎.”

Bae (2014) sees the letter as almost identical to King Hönjong's *Chöksa yunüm*, but I believe that the influence the work takes from *Chugyo yoji*, as picked out above, is also vitally important. Having revisited many of the same arguments and allegorical themes as *Chugyo yoji*, *Sang chaesang sŏ* also contains a much higher proportion of explicit Eastern classical references over the course of its approximately 3,000 characters. Additionally, there are several central premises of *Chöksa yunüm* which are not addressed by Chŏng, as the figure below, translated from Bae, illustrates:

Item	<i>Chöksa yunüm</i>	<i>Sang chaesang sŏ</i>
Heaven and the Lord of Heaven	Expresses the presence of Sangje in heaven	Demonstrates the existence of the Lord of Heaven as a separate entity
Jesus	Is Jesus a spirit or a person?	No mention
Ancestral rites	Abrogating the rites is a beastly wrong	Filial piety is an obligation, but demonstrates why maintaining ancestral tablets or performing offerings of food should be forbidden
Sovereign and subject	[Without a monarch] Christianity is baseless	Apologetica for Christianity using the Ten Commandments
Doctrine of the soul	No particular mention	Evidence of different types of souls
Heaven and hell	Obtaining the blessing of the dead after their death is absurd	Provides evidence of heaven and hell based on the doctrine of the soul, through ethical reward and punishment

Chŏng's espousal of his father's doctrine, at great cost to himself and in full knowledge of the price his father had paid, serves as another illustration of the depth to which the orthodox cultural milieu cut into late Chosŏn society – that is, the primacy of filial devotion, to such an extent it even demanded a person follow a doctrine which is condemned because of its deleterious effect on that same piety to one's parents.

Chŏng was executed on the 22nd of September 1839.

6. 1866

The Great Suppression of 1866 represented the first attempt at complete eradication of the Korean Catholic church. Prior actions, though brutal, had not been aimed at complete liquidation of the religion's adherents. King Hönjong's successor, King Ch'ölchong (1849-1863), had avoided active attacks against Catholics (Rausch, 2012). Upon his death in 1863 he was succeeded by yet another boy-king, Kojong (r. 1863-1907). Although Queen Dowager Cho was officially Kojong's regent when he ascended to the throne at the age of twelve, his father, Yi Haŭng (1820-1898) wielded dominant influence as a dynamic and forceful *Taewŏn'gun* 興宣大院君 or Prince Regent.

Increased Western scrutiny of Korea heightened the Taewŏn'gun's concerns that Catholicism represented the insidious spearhead of colonisation and needed to be eradicated (Choe, 1972; Palais; 1975; Rausch, 2012). The move against Catholics began in December 1865, when believers including French clergy were rounded up and arrested, and were speedily executed. On the twenty-fourth day of the second month an edict signed by the Dowager Queen Cho was distributed throughout the country, written in classical Chinese and Korean. The edict explained that an "extraordinary disaster" 變怪 had beset the country; the "evil breed" 凶種 of Westerners had recruited Koreans who loved "disaster" 樂禍.⁴²²

The primary target were the French clergymen illegally in the country, and the seriousness of the effort is illustrated by the fact that the the first ever decree law, *yulhyŏng* 律令, issued specifically against Catholicism (Roux, 2012) was published in mid-1867, it read:

Those who conceal foreigners and communicate with them have been corrupted by the perverse learning. They shall be punished by immediate decapitation, and their wives and sons shall be enslaved. (In all cases of people practicing the heretical learning, the

⁴²² *Kojong sillok*, vol. 1, 207 (yr. 3. 1. 24 *kapsin*). Translated in Rausch, 2012. 59

immediate [sentence] is only applied to the body [of the criminal]. Those who have kept such books at home shall turn them over to the government, which will burn them. If dissimulated books are discovered, the offenders will be severely punished [i.e. executed].⁴²³

On the third day of the sixth month of 1866 King Kojong issued another proclamation formally bringing the suppression to an end. The words attributed to him emphasised his fatherly role, a role he embodied despite being only fifteen years old:

There is no one in this country who is not my child.⁴²⁴

It went on to re-emphasise Korea's identity as a Confucian exemplar, calling on readers to dedicate themselves to the Way with renewed vigour, and highlighted the example of Korea's venerable *kunja* 君子, "gentlemen scholars" and chaste and faithful married women (Rausch, 2012). Catholic doctrine and belief was ridiculed, particularly their belief in the afterlife and salvation through Jesus and Mary, although the edict did a "fair job"⁴²⁵ of summarising their beliefs about God which suggests its writers had read *Chugyo yoji*. Catholics were once again portrayed as animals and barbarians:

Less human than jackals and crows... lacking human hearts, they have degenerated into dogs and pigs... [Catholicism] destroys morality and principle, turning people into birds, beasts and barbarians.⁴²⁶

Finally, the edict quotes directly from the *Classic of History* 書經:

If there are bad and unprincipled men who refuse to obey and contravene orders, then cut off their noses and utterly exterminate them, leaving them without descendants.⁴²⁷

This is the first direct quotation from any of the great classics in governmental anti-Catholic propaganda, in notable contrast to the pro-Catholic documents. Rausch (2012) argues that its usage may have been in response to criticism of the brutality of the initiative. The limited direct mention of the three Frenchmen still at large, meanwhile, may have been in response to the Taewŏn'gun's embarrassment at having sought a direct audience with Berneux beforehand (see *Letters to Paris, Reports to Rome*).

In response to French military incursions of later in the year, later edicts from the throne continued to refer to Catholics in animalistic terms – using terms like “fox spirits” 狐魅 and “incestuous deer” 麀聚.⁴²⁸

The events of 1866 came about due to pressure on the Taewŏn'gun to stamp out the pernicious foreign influence Catholicism represented (Choe, 1972). Orthodox elements within the bureaucracy also sensed – once again – an opportunity to attack their political rivals. The Regent had actually maintained relatively close links with Catholics in Korea, both foreign and indigenous, up until this point. He associated closely with some Catholics, including the *Namin* Hong Pongju and the *Pukin* 北人 (“Northerner”) Nam Chongsam, whose father had taught him.

Three of the Frenchmen, Ridel, Féron and Calais, escaped the slaughter. Ridel reached China where he persuaded French military forces to intervene in September; two French ships menaced Seoul and there were some small-scale armed confrontations between the two countries on Kanghwa island. Predictably, this intervention increased the severity of suppression against Korean Catholics.

On December the 11th the Korean government responded to China, who had enquired as to what had been occurring:

It was the French who took countless treasures and weapons from our country. Therefore it may be conceivable that we demand indemnities from France. On what grounds can

⁴²³ *Yukchŏn chorye, kwŏn 9 (Hyŏngyŏn), yulhyŏng*. Translated in Roux, 2012. 87-88

⁴²⁴ *Kojong sillok*, vol. 1, 227 (yr. 3, 8. 3 *kich'uk*). Translated in Rausch, 2012. 59

⁴²⁵ Rausch, 2012. 60

⁴²⁶ *Kojong sillok*, vol. 1, 227 (yr. 3, 8. 3 *kich'uk*). Translated in Rausch, 2012. 60

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61

⁴²⁸ Rausch, 2012. 62

she possibly make such a demand on us [ie demand reparations for the killed Frenchmen]? As for matters such as trade and the propagation of religion... they shall never be permitted, no matter how many years our little country and her people may suffer from the Western barbarians.⁴²⁹

By 1868, local authorities had been given authorisation to “execute the criminals first and inform the king afterwards” 先斬後啓.⁴³⁰ By the end of the violence in 1871, it appears that around 900 people had been executed as Catholics.⁴³¹

Unlike in 1801 and 1839, there were no direct responses to the 1866 edicts from Korean Catholics. Instead, the Taewŏn’gun sought to legitimise his campaign by calling on intellectuals whose philosophies also called for action against Catholics. First amongst these men was Yi Hangno 李恒老 (1792-1868). On October the 16th, Yi was appointed to the post of associate assistant secretary of the royal secretariat. Yi was a major figure in the intellectual opposition to Catholicism. Unlike Yi Ik, Sin Hudam and An Chŏngbok, Yi Hangno criticised Catholicism in the midst of pressing legal and police measures taken against Catholicism. My reading of his work, however, is that he too was motivated by a sincere anxiety concerning the morally damaging effects of Catholicism. Firstly, we must consider that he had criticised Catholicism periodically throughout his life, during periods when it was not a pressing issue. Secondly, although his work was leveraged by the Taewŏn’gun in the 1860s, his near life-long eschewment of government positions proves his earnestness. It was only very near the end of his life, under significant pressure from the Regent, that he accepted a position in 1866.

6a. Yi Hangno and *Ch’ŏksa wijŏng*

Yi founded and spearheaded the *Ch’ŏksa wijŏng* or “reject heterodoxy and defend orthodoxy” movement, a movement which was “paradigmatic”⁴³² of orthodox institutional opposition to Catholicism. He believed his work resisting Christianity to continue in the lineage of *chon Chu yangjŏk* (“respect the Zhou and expel the barbarians”) – the “cardinal moral principles in the Spring and Autumn Annals”⁴³³ – following Chu Hsi and, much later, Song Si-yŏl’s distinctions between civilised Chinese and barbarian Manchu and Mongols. He was “especially alarmed by Western individualism”⁴³⁴ (Chu, 2006; Chung, 1995).

A talented and precocious scholar from his youth, and a member of the dominant *Noron* faction, Yi lived a life of secluded study. He attempted to put his principles into practice with ascetic determination – for example, he suffered terribly with malaria as a youth but refused to rest in bed (Chung, 1995).

Meanwhile, the fall of Beijing to Anglo-French forces in 1860 served as a distressing wake-up call for the Korean elite (Chung, 1995). The Qing dynasty – themselves a barbarian lineage – were overwhelmed by Western savages. This was followed in 1862 by the Chinju Uprising, the most violent explosion of the domestic peasant unrest which had been fomenting for years as a result of crushing poverty.

The Taewŏn’gun (r.1863-1874) became proxy ruler of Korea in December 1863, as unofficial regent for his son, the future King Kojong. The Taewŏn’gun maintained a stance of absolute isolation from the Western forces which had wreaked havoc in China and irrevocably altered Japan, and his policies were met with enthusiastic support from *yangban* like Yi Hang-no. Yi’s pre-existing doctrine of *chon Chu yangjŏk* fitted exactly with the Taewŏn’gun’s perspective. Later in the Taewŏn’gun’s reign the *yangban* became alienated by many of the Taewŏn’gun’s policies (Palais, 1975) but despite their conflict both regent and literati continued to regard themselves as guardians of Confucian orthodoxy, irrevocably opposed to Western influences.

⁴²⁹ Dallet, volume 2, 452. Translated in Choe, 1972. 117

⁴³⁰ Roux, 2012. 89

⁴³¹ There are wildly differing numbers of estimated deaths. Roux (2012) discusses them on page 89. The figure of around nine hundred is from *Ch’imyŏng ilgi* 致命日記 (“*Journal of the Martyrs*”), a document compiled by Bishop Mutel between 1891 and 1895. Other estimates range from 80,000 to 20,000 deaths. Mutel’s interest was in collecting evidence for potential canonisation, and my belief is that this motive can be taken as evidence of sincerity.

⁴³² Chu, Weon Yeol, *The Confucian Roots of Fundamentalist Ethos of in the Korean Presbyterian Church*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006. 151

⁴³³ Chu, 2006. 151-152

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.* 155

Thus in January 1863 at the age of seventy-one, responding to the events around him and having spent his life engaged in serious study, teaching and reflection, Yi wrote his first explicit criticism of Christianity, *Pyöksa pyōnjūng* (“Exposing Heretical Teachings”), building on the doctrine he had been espousing since middle age: *Chon chunghwa yang ijok* (“revere China, expel barbarians”). Yi’s personal beliefs were rooted in the most orthodox thinkers: Confucius, Mencius and Chu Hsi. He followed Mencius’ beliefs concerning the need to provide for and morally educate the common populace, and he saw his role in the fight against *sōhak* as one of providing proper direction to the masses. Yi’s thought was influenced by Mencius’ warning:

When [a ruler] rejoices in the joy of his people, they also rejoice in his joy.
When he sorrows for the sorrow of his people, they also sorrow for his sorrow.⁴³⁵

Yi saw Christianity and Western military adventurism as driven by *ki*, material force, without any regard for *i*, principle or moral order:

[Heterodox teachings] mistook material force for principle and desires for [original human] nature.⁴³⁶

Heterodox teachings are essentially aimed at destroying the barrier of principle...
[Confucianism prioritises] the mastery and riddance of the impediment of material force.⁴³⁷

Although the Westerners’ inventions and innovations displayed “cleverness” 伶俐 and “convenience and ingenuity” 利巧⁴³⁸, the way they lived their lives was utterly deplorable. They ate flesh and drank alcohol, were not concerned with right or wrong, tolerated favour and held grudges, and ceaselessly pursued pleasure whatever their morals taught them. They did not even cut their hair.⁴³⁹ Their mistake – investing Heaven with a sentient intelligence – led them to confuse worship of Heaven with serving Heaven:⁴⁴⁰

Now they say: success in the world is not enough to be glorified, and authority [of the state] is not enough to be feared. Abolish your human relationships, depart from your ceremonies and music, and pray earnestly after our manner. Then you can be absolved of your sins and received blessings and infinite happiness.⁴⁴¹

[Christianity] destroys nature and sacrifices it for private desires.⁴⁴²

The Four Virtues [ie, humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom] are the truths of the Heavenly Way, and the Five Relationships are constant in the human way. Besides these everything is heterodox and perverse.⁴⁴³

The Christian doctrine of equality could only lead to ruin, in Yi’s view. There was an inherent moral order to the universe and denying it would cause chaos:

Propriety originates from order, and conflict from questioning. Order means clear and orderly distinction between high and low and before and after. On the other hand,

⁴³⁵ Mencius, *Kǐng Hwuy of Leang*, Part 2, Book 1, chapter IV. Translated by Legge, James. In *The Chinese Classics: Confucius and Mencius*, London: Trübner & Co. 1867. 144

⁴³⁶ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, *Kwōn* 12 (*Aōn*): 1b. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 126

⁴³⁷ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, 2a; *Kwōn* 17 (*Chapchō*): 7a. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 126

⁴³⁸ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, *Kwōn* 25 (*Chapchō*): 18a. Translated in Chung, 1995. 150

⁴³⁹ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, *Kwōn* 25 (*Chapchō*): 12a-13a. Summarised in Chung, 1995. 152

⁴⁴⁰ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, *Kwōn* 25 (*Chapchō*): 23ab; *kwōn* 12 (*Aōn*): 16a. Adapted from a translated summary in Chung, 1995. 137

⁴⁴¹ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, *Kwōn* 25 (*Chapchō*): 22b. Translated in Chung, 1995. 153

⁴⁴² Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, *Kwōn* 25 (*Chapchō*): 22a. Translated in Chung, 1995. 152

⁴⁴³ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings*, *Kwōn* 12 (*Aōn*): 9a. Translated in Chung, 1995. 164

questioning [of status] arises among the people who are equal with each other in rank and order. If there is order [among people] there will be no questioning of rank.⁴⁴⁴

Chung (1995) views Yi's efforts at more concerned with proper moral guidance than any intervention in national policy, although his anti-Christian writings make many explicit references to the political situation. He sought to:

Save the corrupt conditions of the times.⁴⁴⁵

Vital to the correct functioning of society was *ye* 禮 (“propriety”). All interactions in a society were governed by *ye*; a prescribed, formalised system for how to behave with one another. Confucians like Yi argued that observation of propriety was the starting point for harmony. Even without understanding any of the theories behind it, people could live productive and correct lives simply by relating to one another as laid out by *ye*. The Western doctrine of equality was therefore an attack on the most fundamental principles of harmonious Korean society.

Yi used the concepts of *i*, the Supreme Ultimate, *yang*, the Way, Confucian morality and *Sangje* interchangeably. He contrasted them with *ki*, which was also used interchangeably with the West, physical existence, and the Lord of Heaven. In Yi's view Chōng Yakchong's *Chōnju* was not the East's *Sangje*; and Yi Pyōk's usage of the word *Sangje* to discuss Christian ideas was simply incorrect.⁴⁴⁶ “Any metaphysical conception of a personal and transcendent God like that of the Bible is totally absent from Yi's thought, although there is a vague conception of some Supreme Power ruling over the world.”⁴⁴⁷

Yi did not discriminate between Western religion, manufactured products and philosophy; everything Western was indelibly tainted with its origin in *ki*. There was to be no compromise. Although some Western inventions were skilful and useful, anything with a Western provenance had to be strictly avoided. In 1835-36 he had written:

The Western doctrine, though having a thousand beginnings and ten thousand strands, forms the primary basis of denying one's father and the king.... It [provides] the means [and rationale] for circulating currencies and [promoting] sexuality.⁴⁴⁸

The Christian practice of worship attended by both males and females of any age and marriage status was an indicator of sexual immorality (*t'ongsae*). (It is interesting to note that Maubant and his compatriots believed Korean society to be sexually corrupt due to the practice of concubinage – see the chapter *Reports to Rome*.) Even worse than the sexual permissiveness which Yi believed to be a hallmark of Christianity was the prospect of unrestrained market activity which was associated with the Westerners. Yi believed that the inherent human desire for acquisition and physical necessity for food and clothing would be over-indulged by the “ingenious skills” 奇特 and “specious crafts” 技巧 which Westerners possessed. In a memorial to the young King Kojong of 1866 Yi implored the monarch to burn all of his Western possessions:

This subject neither wears on his body Western-woven clothes nor has he ever used things Western. This has been the rule of his household. Full of earnest feelings this subject wishes to make it known to His Majesty what he has himself practiced and to extend to the nation what he has practiced in his own household.⁴⁴⁹

As members of an agrarian subsistence-farming society, Koreans were painfully aware of the direct link between agricultural production and societal harmony. Peasant revolts and famine were often directly linked (Palais, 1975) and Yi saw Western economic activity – indistinguishable from Western religion – as a potentially leading to catastrophic deficit in food and grain:

⁴⁴⁴ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings, Kwon* 10 (*Aon*): 16a. Translated in Chung, 1995. 190

⁴⁴⁵ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings, Kwon* 12 (*Aon*): 6b. Translated in Chung, 1995. 126

⁴⁴⁶ Chung, 1995. 127

⁴⁴⁷ Chung, 1995. 151

⁴⁴⁸ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings, Kwon* 12 (*Aon*): 6a. *Kwon* 15 *Chapchō*: 16a-17a. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 127

⁴⁴⁹ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings, Kwon* 3 (*Sōch'a*): 19ab. *Kwon* 15 *Chapchō*: 16a-17a. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 127

How could we suffer [the Westerners'] hidden transactions for resources of our clothes and food? As for their goods the Westerners manufacture them by hand and there is a surplus [of manufactured goods] day by day. But as for our goods, we yield them from the land, and year by year the yield is not enough. If we were to exchange that which is scarce for that which is in surplus how could we not be in difficulty?⁴⁵⁰

A strict ban on the use of Western goods at home and on their transactions in the market and the severe punishment of those who use and sell them [is necessary]... this will be an essential point in internal reform. But yet if such a measure of ban and punishment were not to be rooted in His Majesty's body and mind, it would be likened to controlling the end of the stream and blocking the water's flow.⁴⁵¹

If scholars nowadays are aware of the calamities of the West, they are on the side of the good.⁴⁵²

It did not matter whether one practiced any Western teachings – even having read of them was deserving of the harshest punishment. (We may contrast Yi's fundamentalism with that of Chŏng Yakchong and Yi Pyŏk, who was equally convinced that not believing in *Chŏnju* would result in dire consequences, this time in the afterlife.⁴⁵³) In Yi's work the Neo-Confucian style of learning combined with pragmatic political considerations to calcify scholars' attitudes on particular doctrinal issues – no discussion could be entered into:

If the generations to come were to punish those who study Western learning, it would not even be necessary to find what they read or how they behaved. For those who covertly circulate currencies, express sexuality, and discuss things that are devoid of [moral] distinctions and principles have invariably indulged in Western Learning... the calamities of circulating currencies and expressing sexuality would drive us into a barbaric and beastly state without even allowing us any other.⁴⁵⁴

Indeed, the fundamental philosophical error of Western thinking completely negated and corrupted everything it touched:

Western Learning mistakes what is endowed with material and physical form for the agent of creation. And thus it enjoys what is simple; and with a profit-oriented mind-and-heart ruins ethics and destroys properties.⁴⁵⁵

As for Westerners themselves, they were not only corrupted by their doctrine. They were inherently more savage and less capable of becoming civilised than Koreans and Chinese. Yi's work further propagates a hierarchy of civilisation which was developed by Chu Hsi and later T'oegye and had been referenced by earlier anti-Catholic thinkers like An Chŏngbok and Sin Hudam.⁴⁵⁶ People who followed Confucian custom were fully human, whereas according to Chu Hsi the barbarians who surrounded China (for example, Mongols and Manchus) were something between humans and beasts, while T'oegye believed them to be "human... [but] not much different from beasts".⁴⁵⁷ Yi Hangno believed that the Westerners were below even the barbarians – "beasts" 獸, separate from "humans" 人.⁴⁵⁸

Other considerations – national sovereignty, political factionalism – were at least ostensibly unimportant in Yi's attacks on Christianity:

⁴⁵⁰ Yi, Hang-no, *Collected Writings, Kivŏn 3 (Sŏch'a)*: 22b. Translation in Chung, 1995. 208

⁴⁵¹ Yi, Hang-no, *Collected Writings, Kivŏn 3 (Sŏch'a)*: 22b. Translation in Chung, 1995. 209

⁴⁵² Yi, Hang-no, *Collected Writings, Kivŏn 12 (Aŏn)*: 12a. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 127

⁴⁵³ See the chapter *Orthodox Heresy* and Chŏng, Yakchong, *Chugyo yoji*, 2012 (c.1798). 156-158, 183

⁴⁵⁴ Yi, Hang-no, *Collected Writings, Kivŏn 12 (Aŏn)*: 7b-8a. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 128

⁴⁵⁵ Yi, Hang-no, *Collected Writings, Kivŏn 12 (Aŏn)*: 7b-8a. Translation from Chung, 1995. 128

⁴⁵⁶ Chung, 1995. 139

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Yi, Hang-no, *Collected Writings, Kivŏn 2, (Purok)*: 16b-17b. See also 26b, 40ab; kwŏn 17 (*Chapchŏ*) 26b-27a, 27b-28b; kwŏn 3 (*Sŏch'a*): 10b. Cited in Chung, 1995. 139

The Westerners' injury to morality is the greatest concern. Between heaven and earth there remains an element of yang in our Eastern land. If this were to be destroyed, how in the world could the Heavenly Mind suffer the destruction?... to be or not to be of the nation is of secondary importance.⁴⁵⁹

A cynical mindset would point out that Yi's position served to give moral legitimacy to these more expedient concerns, but Yi was enlisted by the Korean establishment precisely because his conduct and thinking had always displayed utmost sincerity; and even before the crisis he had been an outspoken opponent of Western influences – his *Nonsōyangsagyochihwa* 論西洋邪教指畫 (“*On the Calamitous Influence of the Perverse Teachings of the West*”) was written in 1835-1836. Yi was the only Chosŏn establishment voice to discuss the confrontation between West and East solely “in terms of a conflict of semiotic systems”.⁴⁶⁰ Nevertheless, we must situate his anti-Christian writings in the context of his era. *Yangban* like Yi felt that their society was “coming apart” as “discontented elements” “were making fresh claims to the *yangban*'s entitled position in society.”⁴⁶¹ An awareness of the seismic changes “shaking” Korean society “exacerbated the consciousness of crisis”.⁴⁶²

Just as Yi Pyŏk and Chŏng Yakchong had turned the language and symbolism of their classically-educated upbringing to the project of spreading Christianity, so Yi Hangno saw his work as employing the same tools to fortify correct moral reverence for that same classical inheritance. In other words, Yi Hangno used the great classics of Chinese learning and their moral examples to inspire living in the way they prescribed:

China's culture teaches and transforms barbarians so that they admire and delight in China. This comes from the natural principle of heaven and the human being's innate knowledge of moral obligation. It is like the roots of a tree nourishing its branches and leaves, and the hands and feet [of a person] guarding his abdomen and heart. It cannot be otherwise.⁴⁶³

It is notable that some sections of Yi's writings could have come straight from *Chugyo yoji*:

The ruler should serve heaven as a filial son serves his father. The ruler should love his people as a benevolent father loves his cherished child. Finally the ruler should revere his god as a loyal subject.⁴⁶⁴

Chung's (1995) sensitive and thorough discussion of Yi's life and work delineates Yi's efforts as regarding “creativity, imagination, a critical mind, and an experimental mind as subversive”.⁴⁶⁵ Yet orthodoxy had its own creativity, an insatiable drive to keep reinforcing and re-defining itself – something Chung admits, in contrast to his earlier assertion, when he writes “tradition can survive only through constantly self-transforming and reinterpreting its substance according to the problems of the changing situation”.⁴⁶⁶

7. 1881 and beyond

1881 saw the final formal establishment attacks on Catholicism. Two French missionaries, entered Korea in 1876, the first to do so since the death of their predecessors ten years previously. They were followed by Ridel, one of the three foreigners who had escaped in 1866, in 1877. He was arrested in 1878, but was not tortured or executed, merely expelled, while his followers were starved to death in prison rather than killed outright. In 1880 two more Frenchmen entered the country, Nicolas Liouville (1855-1898) and Gustav Mutel (1854-1933). Mutel would go on to play a major role in the formal consolidation of Korean Catholicism as the country's eighth bishop. Liouville was arrested in the rural Hwanghae province in 1881 but was soon released and given tacit approval by local

⁴⁵⁹ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings, Kwon* 12 (*Aon*): 17a. Translation adapted from Chung, 1995. 128

⁴⁶⁰ Chung, 1995. 129

⁴⁶¹ Chung, 1995. 191

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings, Kwon* 25 (*Chapchō*): 17a. Translation from Chung, 1995. 128

⁴⁶⁴ Yi, Hang-no. *Collected Writings, Kwon* 9 (*Aon*): 9a. Translation from Chung, 1995. 174

⁴⁶⁵ Chung, 1995. 227

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid. 228

bureaucrats to continue his ministry, I believe in response to the growing influence of foreign powers on the peninsula.

In 1881 Kojong issued an edict again denouncing Catholicism in response to the complaints of establishment figures who believed that the country had become overly lenient to the foreign belief, but the growing involvement of foreign powers in Korea (not least including the presence of Protestant missionaries) acted to retard anti-Catholic sentiment. In 1886 Korea and France signed a treaty explicitly giving protection to Catholics on the peninsula.

8. Conclusion

[Trying to suppress Catholicism] is like hitting ashes with a club. The more you strike, the more they rise up. Though the King wants to put a stop to it, in the end, there is nothing that can be done.⁴⁶⁷

These were the words of Yi Kahwan (1742-1801), the Southerner who had debated Yi Pyök. There was a curious resilience to Korean Catholicism, despite the strength of the attacks against it, motivated by the inextricable association between Catholicism, Western military expansionism and Western economic activity and by the insidious way Catholicism had adapted itself to the Korean milieu through classical Eastern aesthetics and thought-modes. These specific political and foreign-culture associations, repeated throughout the work of these orthodox thinkers, demand further discussion. The letters of the French missionaries in Korea are almost completely devoid of mentions of political agitation, yet Korean scholars saw *sōhak* as a monolithic and all-encompassing system, leading the establishment to “effectively destroy”⁴⁶⁸ the Korean Catholic church.

Oh (1993) quotes Kūm’s (1978) claim that “both parties had revealed the lack of understanding on the essential concepts of the other party”, an assertion I must challenge. Early Korean Catholic writers showed a deep and complete understanding of the key concepts of the orthodoxy of their era, and rejected certain of these key concepts in full awareness of their significance. For their part, establishment figures either understood and subsequently disproved key concepts relating to Catholicism, or wilfully ignored them when convenient.

The motivations for all of the rounds of suppression were broadly similar: the *mugunmubu* 無父無君 character of Catholicism, its “utter lack of foundation or ancestry” were at the heart of the establishment opposition to it:

Chosŏn society was founded on the core Confucian principles of filial piety and loyalty, so when [Catholicism] came to be seen as a religion which rejected king and father it was difficult for it to survive.⁴⁶⁹

Furthermore, I believe that the Korean establishment was seriously perturbed by the espousal of Catholicism by the intellectual layer of its society. By inculturating Catholicism, expressing it in ways and means which meant the most to them, the early *yangban* believers served not to spread their religion but to harden opposition to it. A thought-system which provided a seductive and palatable alternative to the status quo had to be vigorously repulsed. Catholic apologies or defences of their faith engaged directly with establishment criticisms and attempted to situate Catholic doctrine and practice as an acceptable expression of Confucianism – indeed, often as the supreme expression of it. Korean Catholics selected and highlighted pertinent examples from their doctrine and practice, and also *created* specifically Confucianised materials. Chŏng (2009) reminds us that just as the *Silk Letter* was continually used by orthodox scholars throughout the 19th century to reignite feeling against Catholics, this process has continued to the present day; contemporary scholars select and pick pieces from the *Letter* and other Catholic documents to advance their particular agenda. Rausch’s final analysis of the governmental response to Catholicism concedes that “their criticisms primarily rested upon misunderstandings so that what they criticized was not what Catholics believed.”⁴⁷⁰ In other words, the good faith intentions of the Chosŏn bureaucracy were amplified by deliberate bad faith interpretations of Catholic belief.

⁴⁶⁷ Yi Kahwan’s statement is recorded in Hwang Sayōng’s *Silk Letter* of 1801. This translation is taken from Rausch, 2014. 213

⁴⁶⁸ Roux, 2012. 99

⁴⁶⁹ Chŏng, 2009. 92

⁴⁷⁰ Rausch, 2012. 67

Good intentions and incorrect interpretations were also a hallmark of the French clergy who arrived in Korea, secretly, from 1836 onwards. The next chapter examines their lives and work.

Letters to Paris, Reports to Rome: French Missionaries in Korea, 1836 – 1886

1. Introduction

This chapter examines the documents sent to Paris Rome by French clergy in Korea. By cross-referencing particular social and cultural traits and descriptions of local Catholic practice, and the Western clergy's reactions to the same, I hope to expand our understanding of the process by which the practices and beliefs of these incoming Westerners were influenced by both non-Catholic society and pre-existing Catholicism on the Korean peninsula. This chapter will also attempt to set the missionaries' activities in the broader context of Korean local and international politics at the time.

The Beijing diocese was relieved of responsibility for Korea in 1831, when it was given the status of a vicariate apostolic under the auspices of the *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris* (MEP), an arm of the church devoted to propagating Catholicism in new territories.

The French clergy who entered Korea were not only performing missionary work for grateful and welcoming indigenous Catholics. They were also perceived as a grave threat by the country's establishment; they had to enter the country secretly and their presence was legally proscribed. Many of them were ultimately captured, imprisoned and executed alongside members of their congregations (Choi, 2006). To the Korean establishment the French missionaries represented a particularly potent mix of dangers – their religion not only glorified selfishness and threatened social stability, criticisms of Catholicism which had been made from its first encounters with Korean thinkers; the Frenchmen were also thought to be a direct spearhead of colonial machinations. This was partly true. While Catholic missionaries had often worked as conscious agents in global colonisation efforts, the Frenchmen discussed in this chapter were almost completely marginalised from the geopolitical manoeuvrings of their period, and their existing writings do not appear to provide any evidence of desire to have become involved in such strategies (Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996).

Furthermore, the missionaries of this period were very far removed from having broad political influence. These men had trained as priests in the atmosphere of post-revolutionary France, when the Catholic church's position and relevance had been stridently challenged (Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996). In 1801 Napoleon had enshrined Catholicism into law as France's state religion, but the France of the first half of the 18th century still bore the scars of the Revolution's anti-Catholic fervour. Imbert, Chastan, Maubant and others grew up in a France pockmarked by "damaged churches, dispersed liturgical furniture and closed or sold religious institutions. Similarly, ecclesiastical personnel were decimated";⁴⁷¹ these were priests who "belonged to the first wave of men whose ardent piety and good character was tempered by a childhood without comfort."⁴⁷² In the final years of the 18th century priests had even been executed in France, and liberal French thinkers had begun to question the relevance of the church and the point of its existence. Therefore the priests who arrived in Korea from 1836 onwards did not have the extensive economic, diplomatic and military support other clergy had enjoyed in the missionary adventures of previous centuries. The contrast with the Catholic church's situation in China in the same period is stark. French clergy in China in the 19th century enjoyed direct military and diplomatic support from their own government and from other Western states (Bays, 2012), and accordingly European priests maintained an "iron grip on power in the [Chinese] church."⁴⁷³ For the Frenchmen in Korea, however, once they set foot on Korean soil they were largely cut off from the outside world, and accordingly they developed idiosyncratic techniques for their mission. But, nevertheless, their arrival coincided with a period of colonial scrutiny for Korea, and they were thus indelibly associated with Western colonial ambitions. The only direct involvement in colonial affairs which we have evidence for is a bizarre interlude in 1866 when a French clergyman was quietly enlisted by the Korean administration for potential representation in discussion with the Russian Empire (see below). The initiative was not successful, not least due to the reluctance of the French cleric, and the most brutal and bloody suppression of the century followed immediately afterwards. Throughout the extant body of documents there are also one or two moments where the Frenchmen muse on Western colonial intervention on the peninsula.

⁴⁷¹ Fauconnet-Buzelin, Françoise, *Mourir pour la Corée: Jacques Chastan, missionnaire apostolique du Diocèse de Digne* ("To Die for Korea: Jacques Chastan, apostolic missionary from the diocese of Digne"), Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996. 9

⁴⁷² Ibid. 10

⁴⁷³ Bays, Daniel, *A New History of Christianity in China*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 73

The intellectual atmosphere in which Maubant, Chastan and their confreres had been educated had encouraged priests towards sequestered and conservative mind-sets. The unconditional support of the French administration for the church had been removed by the revolution, when liberal intellectuals had begun attacking the church. Fauconnet-Buzelin (1996) divides the intellectual life of France of the late 18th and early 19th century into two camps, clerical and anti-clerical; priests were considered to be irredeemably conservative and incapable of contributing to reform. Accordingly, they fulfilled expectations and retreated into calcified positions. But the particular attitudes they displayed towards their new flock were not just due to their mix of conservative upbringing and church education. The “anti-clerical” strand of the wider public discourse, ostensibly one they were in opposition to, also contributed to the mindset they would bring to Korea:

Religious and cultural superiority seemed to go hand in hand. The Enlightenment affirmed his perception, since all of a sudden a handful of nations owned the intellectual and technological know-how and the necessary tools that made them masters. It was the duty of the West to spread not only the true religion, which all heathens had to embrace if they were to be saved, but also the culture and technology that were the key to civilised living and progress.⁴⁷⁴

So despite the anti-religious flavour of Enlightenment intellectualism, it still had an important influence on Western religious missionaries.

2. French, Latin and Korean

A number of sources written in English, Korean and French have dealt extensively with the published French letters sent to the MEP and unpublished private diaries written by Imbert et al. Accordingly this chapter concentrates more on the substance of the *Ad Urbem* (“To The City”, ie to Rome) reports, written in Latin, sent from Korea to Rome, although where appropriate excerpts from the reports are compared alongside the French documents. These *Ad Urbem* reports have not received much academic attention, if any, and they deserve to be analysed alongside the more extensive documents which found their way to Paris. This chapter also examines two catechisms written in Korean by French priests.

3. The Evolution of Mission to Korea

The first foreign clergyman to enter Korea was a Chinese priest, Zhou Wenmo 周文謨 (1752-1801), in 1794. From 1789 Korean Catholics had been clandestinely requesting the presence of ordained Catholic clergy from China, although the wave of suppression which had begun in 1801 as a result of the discovery of Zhou’s presence and which was then intensified by Hwang Sayōng’s intercepted *Silk Letter* (see the chapter *In Defence of Orthodoxy* for more) made it impossible for more clergy to be sent safely. In 1793 three Catholics, Paul Yun Yuil, Saba Ji Hwang and John Pak undertook to journey to Beijing in order to meet with ordained clergy there and guide them back to Korea. Yun remained at the border and Hwang and Pak journeyed onward to Beijing as part of an official Korean diplomatic delegation. The official connections and high government rank of many of the early Korean Catholics were probably instrumental in facilitating Hwang and Pak’s journey. Once the party arrived in Beijing, Hwang contacted the Bishop of Beijing, Alexandre de Gouvea, the Portuguese clergyman who had been the intended recipient of Hwang Sayōng’s appeal for intervention. De Gouvea then decided that Zhou would journey to Korea. Travelling separately from Pak and Hwang, he left Beijing in February of 1794 and rendezvoused with Hwang and Pak in Manchuria near the border with Korea. The three men then journeyed together to the Amnok river, the northern land border between China and Korea. Waiting until the river froze in December of 1794 to cross, Zhou disguised himself as a Korean and made his way into the country.

One of Zhou’s most notable contributions was organising the *Myōngdohoe* 明道會 (“Society for illumination of the way”), a lay study society which counted many prominent *yangban* Catholics amongst its members and which is in fact still in existence today. Zhou faced many hardships alongside his fledgling flock, constantly moving around the country to avoid scrutiny and sleeping and eating in very difficult circumstances. The difficulty of his task was compounded by the linguistic and cultural

⁴⁷⁴ Iraola, Antton Egiguren, *True Confucians, Bold Christians. Korean Missionary Experience: a model for the third millenium*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 67

differences between Korea and China. Hwang Sayōng's letter of 1801, a plea to the Portuguese Bishop of Beijing, de Gouvea, to supply help to Korean Catholics (for more, see the chapter *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*), makes reference to these differences:

There are two things that make it difficult to cross the border. One is hair, and the other is language. Hair can easily grow back, but language is not an easy matter. If one were fluent, it would not be dangerous. We thought that one of our men could go the Cathedral in Beijing and teach our language to young people so that their language skills can be used in the future.⁴⁷⁵

This segment foreshadows some of the problems and challenges around language, appearance and dress faced by the French Jesuits upon their eventual entrance into the peninsula. While Koreans did not cut their hair, Chinese men of the era shaved the front of the scalp, and the basic garb of the two countries was quite different. Furthermore Chinese and Korean, of course, are vastly different languages grammatically and in terms of their pronunciations, though the Korean lexicon borrows extensively from Chinese.

Zhou was killed during the 1801 *Shinyu* suppression, having decided to surrender to the authorities in an attempt to bring an end to the anti-Catholic initiative. For over thirty years Korean Catholicism then persisted in isolation, with indigenous lay Catholics independently practicing and interpreting their religion, much as the Ch'ōnjinam group had begun doing some twenty years earlier. The Korean vicariate was formally established on the 9th of September 1831, with Barthélemy Bruguière (1792-1835) as its first bishop – in 1834 a Chinese priest, Liu Fangji 劉方濟 (1795-1854), was dispatched to Chosŏn in order to help prepare for Bruguière's entrance. Bruguière never actually made it to Korea, dying of illness in October 1835, whilst waiting in Manchuria for a good opportunity to cross into the country. Liu – referred to in contemporary documents by his Christian baptismal name, Pacificus – did manage to enter the country.

No Western clergy actually set foot on the peninsula until January of 1836, when Pierre Philibert Maubant (1803-1839) arrived.⁴⁷⁶ This is a consistent theme of the Roman Catholic church's activities in Korea: administrative policy sought to bend reality to its will, rather than the bureaucracy reflecting reality. Any Catholic religious activity taking place in Korea until 1836 was quite independent of the Church, despite the vicariate having been created. And as we shall see, once Western clergy began to filter into the country it was no simple task for the church to be brought into compliance with Roman Catholic strictures.

4. Imbert, Chastan and Maubant: Hardship and Faith

As early as 1829 Bruguière had pondered providing missionaries to Korea. His personal letters echo the fatalism of a successor, Imbert (see below):

If the first priest sent to this country could not penetrate it or was put to death, it would be a gain for him without being an appreciable loss. We still have the satisfaction of having tried everything.⁴⁷⁷

Fauconnet-Buzelin rightly ponders the appropriateness of Bruguière's appointment – he had spent his missionary career in Thailand – but it is unsettling, considering that she is an academic historian, when she demonstrates the kind of Sinitic bias which we have come to expect from church histories and the primary sources of the missionaries themselves: “Bruguière was not best placed to accomplish this task: a native of mission to Siam, he knew neither the language nor the customs of China which one would have to traverse in order to win Korea.”⁴⁷⁸ Of course, knowledge of Chinese language, culture and writing systems was crucially important in Korea, but it is odd that Fauconnet-Buzelin does not mention *Korean* cultural artifacts too when discussing mission to Korea. In contrast to Bruguière, his successor Imbert, who features heavily in this chapter, was “one of the foremost connoisseurs of the

⁴⁷⁵ Hwang, Alexander Y and Kim, Lydia T. “The Silk Letter of Alexander Sayōng Hwang: Introduction and Abridged Translation”. In *Missiology* 37 (2009), 165–179. 174

⁴⁷⁶ It is possible that Western clergy may have visited Korea as part of the Christian faction of the Japanese invasions of 1592 – 1596. See Iraola, 2007.

⁴⁷⁷ Bruguière, letter to MEP directors from Bangkok, 19th of May 1829. In Dallet, Charles, *Histoire de l'Église de Corée* (“*History of the Korean Church*”), Charleston: Nabu Press, 2014 (1874). 16

⁴⁷⁸ Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996. 124

Chinese language, written and spoken.”⁴⁷⁹ Thus already we can see that the missionary project was potentially oriented incorrectly, considering Korea to be a region of China. In an incisive comment based on his reading of an earlier draft of this thesis, Dr Pierre-Emmanuel Roux advised that he considers Imbert’s attitude as stemming from his decades-long immersion in the Chinese cultural sphere. I may be analysing events and attitudes with an overly early-twenty-first-century attitude; we must bear in mind that the missionaries had had much less exposure to different cultures than we have today.

Reading the letters and journal entries of the Frenchmen prior to their entry into Korea, however, we can see that some of the values and practices of their home culture were not too far removed from those of late Chosŏn Korea, however alien they may have believed it to have been. Jacques Honore Chastan (1803-1839), who followed Maubant into the peninsula in December 1836 as the second Western priest to gain access to Korea, had a childhood and vocational education which prepared him well for the ascetic lifestyle of the missionary. He had “lived a simple and laborious childhood”⁴⁸⁰ and his upbringing had been orthodox and conservative; “the young Jacques learned very early on respect for the Christian virtues most in fashion at the time: devotion, filial piety, obedience, moral purity.”⁴⁸¹ He then entered a seminary at the age of 17, where the routine involved long hours of prayer and little sleep alongside difficult manual labour (Taine, 1878). His upbringing had also inculcated in him a love of reading and study, and a desire to both provide and emulate good moral examples. His letters to his parents, meanwhile, demonstrate a reverence and tenderness worthy of a *yangban*. Like the best Korean Confucians, he had taken his moral education from reading great works and from emulating his parents:

Reading the Bible and the lives of the saints produces an admirable effect on the hearts of young infants... the good examples given in these books imprint themselves as a seal upon wax.⁴⁸²

My dear father, having thrown your seeds upon the fields you till, you also sowed more precious seeds in our hearts, which are destined to bloom for eternity.⁴⁸³

If I am a priest, if I am in China, I think it is indebted in large part to those pious readings that you used to read [to us] in the evenings or on Sunday... while instructing my flock, I often cite your example, my dear mother, to mothers who are negligent in instructing their own families.⁴⁸⁴

The natural affection that any good son should have for a good father [and] a good mother.⁴⁸⁵

The discomfiting prospect of a foreign priest admonishing negligent local mothers aside, we must recognise that these sentiments hardly seem out of step with the Confucian social milieu – French and Korean social mores were perhaps already closer than one would have first assumed. Therefore my contention is that the intellectual expression of Confucianism was not as alien to incoming European priests as one may have initially thought: their France was rural, they were ultimately subservient to a higher power, and they were practically bound within a hierarchy (we may debate its flexibility). Deep reverence for elders and parents was not the wacky anachronism which perhaps current Western eyes

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. 124

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid. 21

⁴⁸¹ Ibid. 21

⁴⁸² Chastan, letter to parents from Macao, 31st of August 1833. AMEP volume 577. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “La lecture de la Bible et de la Vie des saints produit un effet admirable sur les cœurs des jeunes enfants... les bons exemples dont ces livres sont pleins s’y impriment comme un cachet sur la cire.” 21

⁴⁸³ Ibid: “mon cher père, pour vous délasser des travaux de la campagne, après avoir ensemencé vos champs pour récolter de quoi nourrir nos corps, vous aviez soin de jeter dans nos cœurs une autre semence bien plus précieuse, puisqu’elle est destinée à fructifier pour l’éternité.” 21

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid: “Si je suis prêtre, si je suis en Chine, je m’en crois redevable en grande partie à ces pieuses lectures que vous aviez coutume de faire le soir ou le dimanche... en instruisant mes chrétiens, j’ai souvent, oh! Ma chère mère, cité votre exemple aux mères de familles négligentes à instruire leurs enfants.” 21

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid: “Cette affection naturelle que tout bon fils doit avoir pour une bon père, une bonne mère”. 58

view Korean social structures as. As we have seen, within the Korean intellectual sphere Christians were consistently excoriated for their celibacy and abandonment of family bonds, and Chastan even appeared to share these concerns to a degree, worrying that fulfilment of his vocation necessarily involved neglecting his duties to his parents:

[It was] a hard shock to my heart... given by God... [to be separated from] my parents, my relatives and my country.⁴⁸⁶

Ultimately however Chastan's obligations as a Christian superseded his affection for his family and his desire to remain in his homeland. Remaining in France would have been evidence of "an inordinate love"⁴⁸⁷ for his parents, and may even have caused God to "condemn"⁴⁸⁸ both him and his parents.

Chastan's earlier letters also reveal the preconceptions the Frenchmen carried concerning "these poor infidels",⁴⁸⁹ those who were ignorant of the teachings of the Catholic church:

Sitting in the shade of the night, blinded by the darkness of the superstitions which surround them on all the sides, they will fall, in the future as in the past, into hell. Many, however, would be delivered if they had someone to lead them on the way to salvation.⁴⁹⁰

But Chastan's view was not that "infidels" were irredeemably backwards and ignorant. He expressed a willingness to learn and adopt the customs and languages of cultures he would be ministering to:

[Missionaries] need to learn the language, adopt the customs, in short be all things to all people to win the world for Jesus Christ.⁴⁹¹

Chastan here deploys Pauline Christianity to justify the tactics that he and his compatriots would have to employ to evangelise Korea. Paul's letter to the Galatians explicitly erased any cultural hierarchy and had made clear that only devotion to Christ was important:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.⁴⁹²

Chastan put this argument into practice – entering Macao in 1830, he began learning Chinese:

Now I know some Chinese characters, I am able to hear the confessions of Chinese Christians who are presented to me. The number of Christians is increasing every year by at least twenty. The zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls and the consolation which is tasted by the children of Jesus Christ are good and more clean and lead more people [to Christ] than anything we could say or write.⁴⁹³

While still in Malaya, Chastan discussed starting a seminary for Koreans:

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ 23rd March, 1827, letter from Chastan to seminarians in Digne, in the archive of the Diocese of Digne. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "pauvres indigènes." 69

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid: "Prendre l'habitude d'être toujours utilement occupés, soit au ministère des âmes, soit à l'étude des langues des pays."

⁴⁹² Holy Bible, St Paul's Letter to the Galatians 3, 26-29. New International Version, 2011.

⁴⁹³ Chastan, letter to Mgr. Legrégeois, 22nd April 1830. AMEP vol B 220. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "Je connais maintenant quelques caractères chinois, j'ai pu entendre les confessions de chrétiens chinois qui se sont présentés à moi. Le nombre de ces chrétiens augmente chaque année d'une vingtaine au moins. Le zèle de la gloire de Dieu et du salut des âmes et la consolation qu'on goûte à donner des enfants à Jésus-Christ sont bien plus propres à vous faire prendre les moyens qui y conduisent que tout ce que l'on pourrait dire ou écrire." 100

As I know how to read Chinese books, I could be of some use to Monsignor de Capse in starting a college for Koreans.⁴⁹⁴

Here again is the conflation of Korean with Chinese. Perhaps only Huin's letters (1836-1866) show a full understanding of Korea's place as a distinct cultural and linguistic entity. A few months later, Chastan's preparations for entering Korea are entirely focused on Sinitic concerns:

I have a passably Chinese appearance, I speak Chinese, I'm going to buy some goods for my guides and we will pass as merchants.⁴⁹⁵

Also in these pre-Korean letters of Chastan's we can examine early traces of the desire for martyrdom which characterised much of the discourse of early Korean Catholicism:

Neither gold, nor silver, nor precious stones excite my ambition. What does? Unceasing work and, if God gives me grace: martyrdom.⁴⁹⁶

Soon enough, Chastan would enter Korea and begin spreading the word.

5. Clothes of Mourning: Daily Life for the Missionaries

In 1837 Chastan and his compatriot Pierre-Philibert Maubant (1803-1839) finally succeeded in penetrating Korea after an extended period of false starts and frustrated attempts. They were accompanied on their journey into Korea by three Korean catechists, Kim Taegôn 金大建 (1821-1846), Ch'oe Pangje and Ch'oe Yangöp 崔良業 (1821-1861). Kim and both Ch'oes had smuggled themselves out of Korea and trained and ministered in Macau, China and the Philippines before their return home; Kim would later become the first Korean priest. They entered by the northern border with China, dressed in

clothes of mourning which consisted of a big habit of strong coarse cloth, a hood which leaves the eyes, nose and mouth uncovered, a large bell-shaped hat over it, and a sort of fan of canvas which stands before the face. This outfit is in fashion in this country and is very convenient for hiding our figures and especially our beard which would make us suspect when we appear in public.⁴⁹⁷

The Korea which greeted the first French arrivals in 1836 was nominally ruled by King Hönjong (r.1834-1849); Hönjong had ascended the throne two years previously, in 1834, aged just eight years of age. The real source of power until 1840 was his grandmother, the Queen Regent Sunwon, widow of Hönjong's predecessor and grandfather King Sunjo. The country was also deeply isolated and inhospitable to visitors – particularly those seeking to promulgate a creed which was irrevocably associated with sedition and corrupt moral influence.

⁴⁹⁴ Chastan, letter to Mgr. Florens, 21st of January 1833. AMEP volume 577. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "Comme je sais lire les livres chinois je pourrai être de quelque utilité à Mgr de Capse pour former un collège de Coréens." 135

⁴⁹⁵ Chastan, letter to Allemand from Nanking, 17th of March 1834. In the diocesan archives of Digne. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "J'ai la figure passablement chinoise, je parle chinois, je vais faire acheter quelques marchandises à mes courriers et nous passerons en qualité de marchands." 160

⁴⁹⁶ Chastan, letter to Rougon de Pompiéry, 16th February 1834. In the archives of the Archdiocese of Digne. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "Ni en or, ni en argent, ni en pierres précieuses. C'est quelque chose de plus grand et de plus digne d'exciter mon ambition. Qu'est-ce donc? Ce sont des travaux sans nombre et ensuite, si Dieu me fait la grâce: le martyre." 146

⁴⁹⁷ Chastan, letter to parents, 12th September 1837. Archives of the archdiocese of Digne. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "habiller en deuil qui consiste en un gros habit de toile fort grossière, un capuchon qui ne laisse à découvert que les yeux, le nez et la bouche, un gros chapeau en forme de cloche par dessus, une espèce d'éventail qu'on tient devant le visage. Cet accoutrement est à la mode du pays et fort commode pour cacher notre figure et surtout notre barbe qui nous ferait soupçonner lorsque nous paraissons en public." 196-197

Maubant's letters from 1836 show evidence of deep engagement with the fundamentals of Korean social structures, and the difficulty of everyday life for the commoner:

The eldest of every family must keep, on a tablet, the name of their ancestors, and worship it. At fifteen points throughout the year the family must worship the tablet at home... there are high temples in Confucius' honour.⁴⁹⁸

More than three-quarters lives in the mountains, planting tobacco, feeding only on roots, herbs and wild leaves for a portion of the year. This year, some have died of hunger. I have found a great number of families reduced to an absolute extreme of poverty, my dear brother. I have distributed some money, as well as fourteen confessors... there is still more than 150 taels of silver remaining, which we have kept in reserve for the introduction of the bishop or the next compatriot who we are expecting to receive by the eleventh moon. If we happen upon some [more] money we can plod along for a bit longer; and if not, we'll live on leaves and herbs, like our poor Christians.⁴⁹⁹

Of course we cannot disregard the possibility that these letters represent an exaggeration of the hardships involved in the mission, particularly the financial situation. The MEP sought to maximise the amount of money donated to its foreign initiatives by publishing in France letters, reports and diary entries by missionaries; they were hugely popular with an enthralled French public. In such a context it is unlikely that anyone reporting back to France would reveal it if their financial situation was completely comfortable. Therefore we must be critical when reading descriptions of this type.

Chastan was joined in 1837 by the clergymen Laurent-Joseph-Marius Imbert (1796-1839), now Vicar Apostolic of the Korean vicariate, and Pierre Philibert Maubant (1803-1839). Maubant's subsequent *Ad Urbem* reports form an important part of this chapter; a long report he wrote in the December of 1838, which provides a fascinating glimpse into both Korean Catholicism at the time and the mindset of the Western men sent to oversee the religion, and a shorter letter from 1839. Further on in the chapter the reports of a later French Bishop of Korea, Jean-Joseph-Jean-Baptiste Ferréol (1808-1853) and two priests, Joseph Ambrose Maistre and Martin-Luc Huin, are examined.

Imbert's arrival in 1837 meant that "the framework of institutional Western Catholicism penetrated into Korea." He was "neither an innovator nor a maverick"⁵⁰⁰; convinced of the "superiority of occidental civilisation" he "manifested condescension in his understanding of indigenous customs".⁵⁰¹ His 1838 report, which he wrote after having spent nearly two years on the peninsula, is invaluable for our understanding of the evolution of Korean Catholicism. Written in stiff official Latin, it illustrates Korean attitudes to the religion, believer and non-believer, and it also highlights the concerns and preoccupations of the newly-arrived missionaries. The report covers Korean worship and culture in significant detail.

The report also shows that he had some knowledge of the political situation in Korea at the time, as well as information about the rule of Hōnjong's predecessor, Sunjo (r.1800 – 1834), though his dating of Sunjo's reign is inaccurate. Maubant's assessment is that the Regent Sunwon (confusingly, an unidentified male "first brother" of the king is referred to as the "Regent" in this excerpt) poses a severe threat to Catholics in Korea. This conclusion is extremely interesting – Queen Sunwōn was one of the driving forces behind the 1839 *Gihae* suppression 己亥迫害 which would ensnare Maubant, Chastan and Imbert.

⁴⁹⁸ Maubant, letter to the Directors and Prosecutors of the MEP, 4th April 1836. AMEP volume 1260. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "Chaque aîné de famille doit conserver sur une tablette le nom de ses parents et l'adorer. A quinze époques de l'année les cadets doivent se rendre chez lui pour adorer aussi la tablette... il y a quelques temples élevés en l'honneur de Confucius." 210-211

⁴⁹⁹ Chastan, letter to the Directors and Prosecutors of the MEP, 4th April 1836. AMEP volume 1260. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "Plus de trois quarts habitent les montagnes, plantent du tabac, se nourrissent une partie de l'année de racines, herbes et feuilles sauvages. Cette année il en est mort quelques-uns de faim. J'ai trouvé un très grand nombre de familles réduites à l'extrémité, mon cher confrère de même. Nous leur avons fait distribuer quelque argent ainsi qu'aux quatorze confesseurs... il ne nous reste plus qu'environ 150 taëls, que nous réservons pour l'introduction de l'évêque ou du confrère que nous espérons recevoir cette année à la onzième lune. S'il nous arrive quelque argent nous pourrions vivoter; sinon, nous vivrons d'herbes et de racines comme nos pauvres chrétiens." 215

⁵⁰⁰ Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996. 226

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

Ruling is the first brother of the King, and the King's grandmother [Queen Sunwŏn]; the Regent [the Queen's brother] is prudent and strong, favourable to our religion as was his father's administration from 1803 to 1827. The religion now enjoys some peace... but the danger is that the Regent is dying, and that the Queen's grandmother has the vicious and hostile disposition of grandees [*yangban*], the scourge of our Mass, and may prosecute a new and violent persecution; unless the God in whose hand is the co-regent (a boy of 12 years old) [King Hŏnjong] and the other princes turns them to the protection of their church.⁵⁰²

This detailed knowledge of the political situation in Korea, however accurate or not it may be, is a signifier that the missionaries were not completely isolated from wider Korean society. Perhaps they maintained informal news networks as much as possible through Catholics and friendly non-Catholics. Additionally Maubant's description of the *yangban* as "the scourge of the masses" is possibly a conclusion that he had reached as a result of first-hand observation of Korean society, but a personal bias against a powerful and unfriendly non-Catholic administration may also have been a factor.

In the relatively short time these first French missionaries were working and living in Korea, they travelled extensively and met many different people. But while they immersed themselves in Korea's culture, and were accompanied by the catechists who were intimately familiar with Korean language and customs, reading the reports now one would hardly know that Korea possessed its own vernacular. In fact, language was a central, persistent and defining issue for Imbert and the other Western clergy. Not only were they native French speakers who had to work and live in Korean and make detailed reports back to Rome in Latin, but they appear to have been confused as to which language to express their religion in: Korean or classical Chinese? Chŏng (2009) claims that earlier Chinese priests entering Korea spent time with older Korean-speaking Chinese, near the border, to learn *hangukmal*, but none of the Western clergy make any mention of learning Korean before they enter the country. (And even after six years in the country, the native Chinese speaker Zhou Wenmo's Korean was reportedly difficult to understand and require interlocution – Ledyard, 2006). Simply working and writing in Chinese was not an option either; whereas the earlier *yangban* Catholics all had decades of experience with reading and interpreting Chinese language texts, and had therefore been able to read works by Ricci and other Christian writers, the common orders of Korean society had no knowledge of Chinese, spoken or written; and anyway, centuries earlier, Ricci had completely avoided certain doctrinal and theological discussions as they were simply too difficult to express satisfactorily in Chinese. (Inherent qualities are challenging to express in Chinese, as the language – and its philosophical bedrock – hesitates to see concepts in isolation. The classical Chinese worldview holds that everything is connected and takes its meaning from its relationship to other things in its system.)

Therefore the complexity of the tasks involved in new arrivals' attempts to spread their philosophy can hardly be underestimated. Translation and interpretation of information between two nodes sharing a culture and language always involves a change in that information; how much more would it change, then, from original texts written in ancient Hebrew or Koine Greek, translated into Latin, subsequently understood as Latin texts by native speakers of French, German and Italian, and translated again into literary Chinese, before being consumed by native speakers of Korean with a scholarly command of Chinese characters? Margiotti summarises the difficulties this caused: "To avoid too many expenses and the dangers of a long journey, four catechists were chosen, respectively aged 41, 32, 26 and 20, and began to teach them Latin. The two eldest were reading [Latin] quite fluently after eight months, and faced the theology exam in November 1838 (written in Chinese). By the same date, with the help of interpreters, the communion prayers had been translated into Korean."⁵⁰³ But the problem of language was not simply administrative. As Imbert reported, the Korean language stood within a hierarchical relationship with written Chinese:

⁵⁰² Imbert, *Ad Urbem* report, 1st December 1838: "Primus regens frater est aviae reginae homo prudens et fortis, favens Religioni sicut et pater ejus sub cujus administratione ab anno 1803 ad 1827. Religio alicquali pace fruita est... sed periculum est ne moriente illo regente vel avia regina novo et violenti persecutionis flagello percutiatur ista Misso, propter pravas et hostiles dispositiones magnatum; nisi Deus in cujus manu est corregis (puer 12 annorum) et aliorum principum illa convertat ad protectionem Ecclesiae suae, cujus divina voluntas sit semper benedicta." *Acta Sacrae Congregationis Cardinali Potente* ("Journal of the Congregation Cardinal Potentate") (*ACTA CP*) volume 23, f123

⁵⁰³ Margiotti, Fortunato, "La Cina Cattolica al traguardo della maturità" ("The goal of maturity in Chinese Catholicism"), in Metzler, Josef (Ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, volume 3.1 (1815-1972), Rome/Freiburg: Herder, 1975. 565

Translation into the vernacular language [ie, Korean] has been accepted from the beginning of the Christian religion in Korea, the learned despise the vernacular language, and that makes it less suitable for praying to God. Therefore they have used Chinese books, not only in respect of the sound [of the characters], however, but the significance of a character's figurative meaning; they have used, and prayed, and declared what they do not understand at all... as soon as I understood the language four interpreters translated the common prayers, all of which are now learnt by young and old who eagerly learn them and recite fervently.⁵⁰⁴

Of course, this was a familiar path for Imbert: as a native speaker of French he had had to gain a sufficient command of Latin to read and write official church communiqués. There is even a general similarity between the Latin-French lexical relationship and that of Chinese-Korean. The majority of French vocabulary is derived from a Latin root, and similarly up to seventy percent of modern Korean is derived from Sinitic loanwords.

Once inside Korea Chastan finally acknowledged that there was a discrete Korean language, but like Imbert, he did not see it as key to the doctrinal part of their mission:

Korean science consists of knowledge of Chinese characters and composition. The Koreans despise their own characters and writing, it's for women, they say.⁵⁰⁵

Was Imbert dismayed by the necessity for working and speaking in Korean after having laboured so hard to gain a command of Chinese? There seems to be almost a contempt for the Korean language in his report. He also displays here a sophisticated knowledge of Chinese characters and their relation to the Korean language, an awareness that Chinese characters, whether pronounced as Korean or Chinese, could be used phonetically to represent a morpheme in either language, or to represent a specific meaning, divorced from the pronunciation. Throughout the text Imbert does not use the word “Korean” even once to describe the language spoken in his new home. Instead *vernaculus* is the term he uses. The word literally means “native”, and is generally contrasted with a *lingua franca*, a language foreign to its speakers which is used either to communicate more broadly or for ecclesiastical, literary or administrative purposes – with classical Chinese fulfilling that function in the Korea of this era. Imbert's use of the term immediately hierarchizes Korean as lower than classical Chinese, and reinforces the impression that he did not fully appreciate Korea's character as a distinct culture with a well-defined identity. This is puzzling – the complexities of the *sadae* relationship aside,⁵⁰⁶ Korea was not simply a region of China; Imbert would have been well aware of the difficulty of entering the country and could not have failed to grasp that the legal and cultural framework was quite distinct from that of China. He had also grown up in the France of the very early nineteenth century, by which point French had been completely standardised across the country – we cannot ascribe this curious ignorance of Korean to the generous motive of his own experience of spoken daily French as an offshoot of Latin. Having dedicated themselves to a hard-won command of Latin, followed with the even more challenging effort to master Chinese, did Maubant and Imbert then lack enthusiasm for tackling Korean – particularly when it did not appear to be the language within which loftier concepts were typically communicated? Vauthier (1966) argues that the upbringing and background of these men was absolutely central to the way they performed their ministry and viewed the world, and here is an example of those forces acting together. In the chapters *Orthodox Heresy* and *Will of Fidelity* I have made exactly the same claim concerning Korean Catholics.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid: “Magna etiam sollicitudo fuit in translatione precum quotidianarum et dominicalium in Vernacula lingua, ab initio susceptae Religionis Christiani Coreani, suo genio indulgentes vernaculam linguam despexerunt, ut minus aptam, qua oraretur Deus. Sinensibus ergo libris, quoad sonum solum non vero significationem characterum translatis, usi sunt et orabant, quid dicerent omnino non intelligente... statim ac tantisper linguam intellexi, advocatis quator interpretibus orationes communes transtulimus quas omnes nunc Juvenes et Senes docti et indocti avidè discunt et ferventer recitant.”

⁵⁰⁵ Chastan, letter to the Directors and Prosecutors of the MEP, 4th of April 1836. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “La science coréenne consiste dans la connaissance des caractères et de la composition chinoise. Les Coréens méprisent leurs caractères et leur écriture, elle n'est que pour les femmes, disent-ils.” 209

⁵⁰⁶ There was a complicated system of ritual tribute from late Chosŏn Korea to Qing China, known as *sadae* 事大, “submission”. See Ye, Ch'wen-hong (Ye Quanhong), “Chosŏn hugi O Toilŭi sadaesahaeng yŏn'gu” (“조선 후기 오도일의 사대사행(事大使行) 연구”) (“Research on the late Chosŏn thinker O Doil's philosophy on the sadae system”), in *Yŏnmin Study Society Journal* (20), 2013. 93-142

An excerpt reveals the potent mix of gender, class, educational and national power dynamics at play in the Frenchmen's milieu:

As set forth above, Korean Christians had been using Chinese words in their recitations of their prayers – better to say nothing of these barbarians who understand nothing, as if a young French farmer were to pray in Latin or Greek, baptising sick children or adults; not only catechists, but as if the ignorant populace and stupid women had bestowed these sacraments.⁵⁰⁷

This quote reveals Imbert's own prejudices. Having been educated in Latin, he is subtly criticising the church's policy of rote recitation of dogma in unknown languages while also showing himself to be not immune from class considerations: "a young French farmer" praying in Latin or Greek is clearly a picture he finds absurd. Yet Imbert was himself from a humble background. The word "ignorant", *ignorantes*, has perhaps more pejorative connotations to us today than it would have had to Imbert – but only because peasant ignorance at the time was a given, from Normandy to Saenamto. The phrase "stupid women" is equally illuminating; one wonders if Imbert met any other type of female.

Indeed, his tone is far from tender throughout. He is positively ill-tempered as he discusses the search for prospective clergy in the first *Ad Urbem* report:

The first two have learnt to read in Latin enough that they no longer have to study theology via Chinese characters, their instruction is to me indeed laborious... I would like to instruct ten [initiates], but they can not be found.⁵⁰⁸

Continuing on the same subject in a letter to the MEP he reveals the lack of doctrinal materials available to the initiative:

I make it my duty to give them two classes a day. This summer they have learnt to read reasonably well... I have put the two best of them to study theology as translated into Chinese... in this way I hope that we will be able to have ordinations within three years.⁵⁰⁹

I can not tell you how much I have been distressed by the loss of my books, many of which have been necessary for me [to use] every day, especially with the emerging clergy I teach every day. The loss of the Chinese books will delay for many years the growth of this mission... I pray that you send me copies, of these above all: 1) the theology of Hamel, in Chinese; 2) the synod in Chinese; 3) the abridged theology of Mascula... as for the other Chinese books, if the coadjutor of the deal succeeds, you will bring them with you.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ Imbert, *Ad Urbem* report, 1st December 1838: "Sicut superius exposui Christiani Coreenses in recitatione precum utebantur vocibus Sinicis, melius dicam Barbaris quibus nihil intelligebant, non secus ac si rudis agricola Gallus Latine vel Graece oraret: iisdemque verbis baptizabant aegrotos pueros vel adultos; nec solus catechista, sed plerumque ignara et stupida mulier hoc Sacramentum conferebat." *ACTA CP* volume 23, f123

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid: "Duo primi per octo menses latine legere didicerunt satis currenter nunc a 1st November operam dant studio theologiae Sinsensibus caracteribus exarato, eorum instructio laboriosa mihi quidem est."

⁵⁰⁹ Imbert, letter to the Directors of the MEP, 30th November 1838. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: "Je me fais un devoir de leur faire deux classes par jour. Cet été ils ont appris à lire un peu passablement... j'ai mis les deux premiers à l'étude de la théologie traduite en chinois". 228

⁵¹⁰ Imbert, letter to Legrégeois, 3rd of December 1838. Archives du Séminaire des Missions Étrangères de Paris ("Archives of the Seminary of Foreign Missionaries of Paris", or AMEP) volume 1254: "Je ne saurais vous dire combien j'ai été affligé de la perte de mes livres dont plusieurs choisis et préparés depuis de longues années m'étaient absolument nécessaires surtout pour le clergé naissant que j'instruis tous les jours. La perte des livres chinois retardera de plusieurs années le bien de cette mission... je vous prie de m'en faire prendre des copies et de les envoyer, surtout: 1e) la théologie en chinois de M. Hamel. 2e) le synode en chinois. 3e) la théologie abrégée de Mgr de Mascula... quant aux autres livres chinois si l'affaire du coadjuteur réussit il les apportera avec soi." In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996. 233–234

Unfortunately, the source does not give a full list of the specific volumes which Imbert has lost. The snippet concerning the education of the catechists is also illuminating for another reason: Maubant's apparent ease with the fact that Koreans would be learning about the new faith in a language and writing system which was very far from being in everyday usage. The modern ecclesiastical source Margiotti (1975) describes Imbert, drafted in to the burgeoning Korean mission as "someone with a good knowledge of the language and customs of the Chinese – therefore who was best adapted to tackling the situation"⁵¹¹. Even today one still finds Korea-related documents in the Vatican's archives filed under "China"; and Margiotti talks about Korea as receiving "the same words of the Diocese of Peking and *the rest* of the Chinese Empire."⁵¹²

A further complicating factor concerns the way in which Chinese characters were understood and used in Korea. There were several systems employing Chinese characters which were quite distinct from typical classical Chinese (and were actually incomprehensible to people without specific knowledge of them) (Lee and Ramsey, 2011). Then there is the fact that Chinese characters have Korean pronunciations which are quite different from their Chinese sounds. Unfortunately Imbert does not provide any greater detail about the specific systems being used. But regardless of whatever system was used, the catechists were initially being taught about Catholicism using works written in classical Chinese, before moving on to Latin. Therefore we can venture that the candidates were drawn from a section of Korean society which had access to an orthodox classical education. This raises further compelling questions. The candidates must either have come from influential and wealthy families – in other words, families with the most to lose from accusations of heteropraxy – or perhaps they had at one point been *chungin* 中人, commoners trained in technical skills (like Thomas Kim Pömu, the early Catholic who had become a mainstay of the church some fifty years earlier when suppression of the *yangban* Catholics had begun). The *chungin* took on various technical tasks to do with translation and scientific measurement which were proscribed to *yangban* as official pursuits. In fact, Imbert's report shows some familiarity with Korean society's caste system:

The manner of the nation is to be explained in a little more detail... the population of Korea is best divided into three classes: nobles, merchants and common people. One could also add 4), slaves, but they have come to be identified with the free common people.⁵¹³

Imbert's comment regarding slaves having "come to be identified with the free common people" bears comparison with an excerpt from Dallet, who records the *yangban* Catholic Sin T'aebo saying in around 1780:

Once you come in here [ie join the Catholic church], whether you are *yangban* or *sangnom*, it is of no matter.⁵¹⁴

Sangnom 常者, literally "ordinary person", was a phrase which was used to refer to the lowest kind of person. Sin's comment certainly reflects ostensible Roman Catholic values, but in neither his nor Maubant's era were there any official legislative moves towards equalising the status of slaves or elevating commoners.

A much shorter report from Imbert, dated March 1839, is mainly concerned with administrative details – he wishes to seek dispensation to authorise others to make appointments. This letter also contains details about the realities of day-to-day suppression faced by Christians:

This year that kingdom [Korea] is pressed for provisions; in addition to being hard-pressed by hunger Christians are being persecuted, since henchmen, monstrous Harpies, know that they can plunder [Christian] followers, with the Christians then saying that

⁵¹¹ Margiotti, Fortunato, "La Cina Cattolica al traguardo della maturità" ("The goal of maturity in Chinese Catholicism"), in Metzler, Josef (Ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, volume 3.1 (1815-1972), Rome/Freiburg: Herder, 1975. 565

⁵¹² Ibid. 566

⁵¹³ Imbert, 1838: 'Optime movit SC Corea populum velut in tres classes divisum esse: 1. Nobles 2. Mercatores 3. Plebes. Potui addere 4. Slaves, sed cum libertatem adipiscuntur plebejis annumerantur.'

⁵¹⁴ Dallet, 1875. 388

they have been driven to apostasy by the governors... but if God be for us who can be against us; we expect to see Christ again a short time later.⁵¹⁵

This report also advances a potential pragmatic factor which may have influenced attitudes towards the clergymen - money and income associated with the fledgling Catholic community may have made it a target:

Notwithstanding the purpose of giving alms, about forty taels (300 francs) having been distributed to the poor in the past year, many have perished with hunger; they had received the Sacraments, that is, the resignation and the submission of the soul to the Creator.⁵¹⁶

It is possible that the missionaries distributed money to non-Catholic commoners – although they may have had to declare a willingness to believe in Christian doctrine and receive Christian sacraments. The preparations made for the Western clergy's arrival by Liu Fangji are referred to, and reveal that the Catholics were involved in significant financial transactions, which attracted unwelcome attention:

Pacificus Yu had bought five houses for the opportunity of administering alms-houses, of which three have already been sold, and due to the notoriety from the money brought into the other two, they were sold to the same end; they were sold for a price cheaper than their expensive purchase price.⁵¹⁷

As well as preying directly on the Catholics' resources non-Christian neighbours could reap monetary rewards from the authorities by turning in Catholics: "at the community level, the greatest danger came from the risk of denunciation from bad catechists or pagan family members of converts... Christians were thus easily identifiable and often the religious motive was only a pretext which allowed denouncers to be paid a personal reward or take the property of those they did stop."⁵¹⁸ Roux (2012) believes that Christians were "a perfect target" for extortion, an assertion which is born out by excerpts from the French-language correspondence of Imbert and, later, Huin (see below). Corruption had become so entrenched during this suppression that the Dowager Queen had complained that "police officers were more zealous to extort Christians than to arrest them."⁵¹⁹

Additionally, it is notable that Liu's place in the story is in marked contrast to his martyred antecedent, Zhou Wenmo. Liu was stridently criticised by his French contemporaries and in the modern church history of Margiotti (1975); he was obliged to return to China in 1836. Imbert accused him of serial sexual immorality and infanticide, while Daveluy, writing much later, limited his accusations to charges of concubinage. Unlike Zhou Wenmo and the Frenchmen who would replace him, Liu did not travel the Korean countryside, limiting his activities to Seoul.

There is also another telling reference to China in this second report:

The missionaries... have long respected and learned the language and customs of China to assume this responsibility.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁵ Imbert, *Ad Urbem* report, 30th of March 1839: "Isto anno annonae caritate premitur istud regnum, under praeter necessitatem famis dura premuntur Christiani persecutione, siquidem satellites velut immanes Harpiae quas nosse possunt Christianorum domus spolient, et Christianos praefectis tradunt ad apostasiam adigendos... sed si Deus pro nobis quis contra." *ACTA CP* volume 23 f.129. The Harpies of classical Western antiquity were said to be responsible for unexplained disappearances.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid: "Non obstante eleemosyna, quadraginta circiter taelium (300. Fran) quam anno praeterito pauperibus dispertieram multi fame perierunt; receperant Sacramenta, cum resignatione et submissione Creatori suo animus reddiderunt."

⁵¹⁷ Ibid: "RD Pacificus Yu ex corrogatis eleemosynis quinque domus emerat pro opportunitate administrationis, ex quibus tres jam venditae fuerunt quia notoriae factae periclitabantur: ex redacta pecunia duae aliae emptae fuerunt ad eundem finem." Emphasis added.

⁵¹⁸ Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996. 210-211

⁵¹⁹ Roux, Pierre-Emmanuel, "The Great Ming Code and the Repression of Catholics in Chosŏn Korea", article in *Acta Koreana*, 15:1, 2012. 88

⁵²⁰ Imbert, *Ad Urbem* report, 30th of March 1839: "Missionarius... diu probatus et linguam et mores Sinicos". f.129 *ACTA CP* volume 23

Again, we must contrast Imbert's attitude with modern perceptions of Korea. Contemporary observers understand Korea as a discrete and unique culture with many distinctive characteristics, not simply a region of China. Even if the Korea of this period had been a part of China rather than a distinct sovereign nation, it still had its own language.

It is difficult to build up a cogent picture of the realities of day-to-day life for indigenous and foreign Catholics in Korea at this time but clearly, the daily living situation for the Frenchmen was complex. The official rhetoric (see chapter *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*) allowed for nothing more than complete proscription of the Western creed and one imagines that a concerted police or military effort would have been sufficient to drive out or capture and execute the French interlopers at the least. Yet from 1836 onwards there was a consistent, tenacious presence of foreign clergy on the peninsula. Clearly these men and their Korean supporters were determined and hardy, characteristics which go some way to explaining their persistence – but individual toughness is not a sufficient explanation. Perhaps official scrutiny and oppression of the Christians was not as all-encompassing as official communications made out. For while the Frenchmen were possessed of absolutely unshakeable faith and belief in their mission:

countless are the chances for a new mission which is full of labours,⁵²¹

Chinese clergy operating in Korea were vulnerable to detection due to their appearance and the language they spoke, so clearly Caucasian clergy would have been absolutely singular amongst indigenous Koreans. Although from the reports it is difficult to know exactly how much contact the French clergy had with “pagan” locals, there are references in *all* of the *Ad Urbem* reports referenced in this chapter to information imparted by local non-Christians. The implications of these contact networks are obvious: the foreign clergy did not exist in hermetic Catholic-only spaces, and therefore there must have been variation in the hostility of the local response to them if they maintained some links with non-Catholics.

By autumn of 1838, Imbert, Chastan and the Catholic community was increasingly aware of the precariousness of their situation. The entire country was alive with rumours of the Frenchmen's presence, and they found themselves under increasingly close scrutiny as they moved around the Korean backcountry:

Many peasants talk about our disguises and our method of travelling. Despite this, our catechists advise us against changing.⁵²²

Yet his letters still show evidence of that surprising indirect link between the top echelons of Korean society and the foreign clerics. Chastan apparently was in contact with someone at the top layer of Korean society, as he was made aware of the illness of Kim Yugŭn 金逾根 (1785-1840), a brother of the Queen Dowager Sunwŏn:

Many commoners of the highest class know that we are here, and were plotting to make denunciations against us; they did not dare to go through with them because they feared falling into a pit, suspecting that the high minister was the propagator of our holy religion.⁵²³

[Kim Yugŭn's] close friend asked us to pray for him (with his full knowledge) and offer masses for his intentions. His health is now restored somewhat. On Assumption day, he again summoned our Christian mandarin and again charged him with commissions for China, which is a big advantage for us.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ Ibid: “Innumeri sunt istius novae Missionis casus difficiles”.

⁵²² Chastan, letter to the Prosecutors of the MEP, 10th of October 1838. AMEP volume 1246. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “plusieurs payens parlent de notre costume et manière de voyager. Malgré cela les cathéchistes sont d'avis de ne pas en changer.” 239

⁵²³ Chastan, letter to Allemand, 5th of October 1838. AMEP volume 1246. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “plusieurs payens de premier ordre sachant que nous sommes ici ont fait complot pour porter accusation contre nous; il n'ont pas osé en venir à bout parce qu'ils craignent de creuser une fosse et de tomber dedans en soupçonnant le grand ministre d'être le fauteur de notre sainte religion.” 240

⁵²⁴ Ibid. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “son intime ami nous fit prier (à son insu bien entendu) d'offrir la messe à son intention. Sa santé s'est un peu rétablie. Le jour de l'Assumption il fit de nouveau appeler

This interplay between forbidden Catholicism and aristocratic support was exceedingly complex. The same mandarin was far from certain in his convictions:

The heart of this minister is not at rest. He serves the vanity of idols, he offers tribute to them.⁵²⁵

In January 1839 the maternal grandfather of the King, who was “very hostile to Christians”,⁵²⁶ came to power. This political upheaval combined with food insecurity to create a violent and unstable atmosphere where Christians were once again targeted:

Satellites, really hungry harpies, stop Christians who have so little to ease themselves in order to seize and pillage their homes.⁵²⁷

The confessors held in Pghô Tchang prison receive 600 Korean coins every day (around 15 or 16 francs), the proceeds of the sale of the objects we had hidden... the mission has lost a large amount of items and merchandise... more than 345 pounds [of goods] which we had brought with us.⁵²⁸

Meanwhile, during their day-to-day ministrations, flexible and inconsistent attitudes to Christian praxis seem to have been a major challenge for Maubant and his compatriots:

...when a [baptised] sick person is restored to health, he says he neither had any desire to take up the faith nor knew what was happening to him. We have commanded that [a willingness to take up the faith] must be the conditions under which one is baptised... We were not able to investigate whether many had been baptised, or the validity of their baptism... sometimes the circumstances pointed to people being conditionally baptised, which once again is the same as not being baptised at all.⁵²⁹

Here we see inculturation – that is, adaptation of an incoming cultural trope and its adherents to a new setting. Catholicism was so well-established in the missionaries’ native France that there were no procedures or techniques evolved to deal with people who picked up and put down Catholicism as they pleased. And while Christianity was by no means part of the established cultural fabric in China, it still had a history there of several hundred years, and had even benefited from a toleration edict between 1692 and 1706. Imbert’s clear outrage at the inconsistency of some Korean quasi-Catholics potentially evinces a contrast with the more established Catholic communities he had worked within in China.

Shin (2011) discusses the syncretism of Sinitic cultures, with their long history of co-existence between competing thought systems, mainly Buddhism and Confucianism in varying ratios in Korea’s case, and I believe this is a motive for the non-committal approach to Catholicism used by some of Imbert’s flock. “Puzzling as it must have been to European missionaries with a dominantly Christian culture, Chinese intellectuals exploited both Confucianism and Buddhism as two different conduits for

notre mandarin chrétien et le chargea de nouveau de ses commissions pour la Chine, ce qui pour nous d’un grand avantage.” 239-240

⁵²⁵ Ibid. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “le cœur de ce ministre n’est pas en repos. Il sert la vanité des idoles, il leur offre des hommages.” 240

⁵²⁶ Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996. 242

⁵²⁷ Imbert, letter to Legrégeois, 30th March 1839. AMEP volume 1260. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “les satellites, vraies harpies affamées, arrêtent les chrétiens qui sont tant soit peu à leur aise pour s’emparer de leurs maisons et les piller.” 242

⁵²⁸ Chastan, letter, 1839 (written at some point after his arrest). AMEP volume 1260. In Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996: “Les confesseurs de la prison Pghô Tchang reçoivent par jour 600 sapèques coréens (de 15 à 16 francs) fruit de la vente de nos objets cachés... la mission a perdu une multitude d’effets en marchandises... et plus de 345 louis qu’ils nous avaient apportés cette année.” 256

⁵²⁹ Imbert, *Ad Urbem* report, 30th of March 1839: “Cum infirmus sanitate restitutus negat se ullam habuisse voluntatem illum suscipendi, sed nec scivisse quid circa se ageretur... Quidam etiam et satis multi non potuerunt investigare a quo et an valide baptizati fuissent. Jussi ut denuo sub conditione baptizentur... perpensis circumstantiis aliquando illos sub conditione baptizandos, aliquando a baptisate denuo conferendo abstinendum duxi.” *ACTA CP* volume 23 f.129

social, ideological activities on the one hand, and personal, religious lives on the other hand.”⁵³⁰ For Easterners “a religion counts as much as it works... as it is efficient in solving physical, mental, and natural hardships in life.”⁵³¹

This second March 1839 report also contains an undated letter written to Imbert by Chastan which letter gives an insight into the missionaries’ knowledge of Korean society and governance:

[Christians] were delivered to the commander and underwent various and horrible torture... those who remain steadfast in the faith are detained in prison, in order to be repeatedly subjected to torture, and they die of misery and hunger... the ancient laws of apostasy which punish all Christians with death and exile have not been revoked.⁵³²

This report also references a particular practice, related to the Christian baptism, which seemed to infuriate Chastan. Unfortunately he does not directly explain what it is!

The custom has sprung up in this kingdom, unknown in unbaptised adults in other regions.⁵³³

Chastan also references an apparent trend of converts undergoing baptisms without being fully committed to the faith:

No-one should be baptised without a sincere conversion.⁵³⁴

Whatever mysterious custom is being referenced specifically, Chastan’s re-statement of the importance of sincere baptism is an example of unwitting inculturation: the baptismal rite *is* the process by which one declares that one is ready to become a Christian. He and the other French missionaries have had to add in an even more explicit recognition of this fact to ensure that conversions are sincere – and have thus modified Catholic praxis to adapt to its new milieu. Chastan also expresses his concerns of the validity of baptisms and confirmations which have taken place outside of their oversight: this is another example of inculturation – that is, the form and practice of Catholicism on the peninsula diverging from Roman orthopraxy, and the resultant efforts of the “official” agents to respond to it.

The rite of confirmation as encountered by the missionaries also underwent a process of transformation:

Priests of the Chinese congregation delegated the power to perform rites of confirmation⁵³⁵

The reference to “priests of the Chinese congregation” (*congregatione Sinicis*) deserves further examination. Imbert must be referring to lay Korean Catholics who had taken on some clerical roles, without being ordained. He is not referring solely to his antecedent, James Zhou Wenmo. Chastan’s reference is plural, *sacerdotes*, and as a clergyman trained in complete accord with Roman Catholic doctrine it is unlikely that Zhou would either have been described as “never before... [having] the power to administer confirmation” or would have himself conferred the power to perform confirmation on lay practitioners. Confirmation is a process of re-statement, whereby a Catholic (in this case) underlines the commitment to the Church made on their behalf as a baby. Again, we see inculturation at work – agents not “allowed” to perform confirmation had been themselves authorising others to perform the rite.

⁵³⁰ Shin, Junhyoung Michael, “The Supernatural in the Jesuit Adaptation to Confucianism: Giulio Aleni’s Tianzhu Jiangsheng Chuxiang Jingjie”, in *History of Religions* 50 (4) (May 2011), 329-361. 335

⁵³¹ Ibid. 344.

⁵³² Chastan, letter, appended to Imbert’s *Ad Urbem* report, 30th of March 1839: “Qui fuerunt praefecto traditi varia et horribilia tormenta tolerant ... qui in fide constantes permanent, in carcere detinentur, et identidem tormentis subjiciuntur ut apostatent vel certe moriantur miseria et inedia... antiquae leges quae morte omnes Christianos plectebantur et apostatae exilio non fuerunt.” *ACTA CP* volume 23 f.129

⁵³³ Ibid: “in isto regno mos inolevit ut adultus non baptizetur.”

⁵³⁴ Ibid: “nemo baptizetur sine sincera conversione.”

⁵³⁵ Imbert, *Ad Urbem* report, 30th of March 1839: “Sacerdos Sinensis... habuerunt facultatem administrandi confirmationem” f.129 *ACTA CP* volume 23

Like confirmation, confession, forgiveness and penance are central within Catholic praxis and doctrine, and Imbert again found that the Korean Catholicism he encountered had evolved features which deviated considerably from Roman teaching:

I found the faculty of the Sacred Congregation-delegated Episcopal Bishop had been [further] delegated, absolving a confessor who had dared to accept the confession of an accomplice in a shameful sin.⁵³⁶

Imbert is deploring the fact that a lay Korean clergy member had been taking confessions – he also heard the confession of both parties and forgave them both. As modern readers, we may perhaps wonder why a sincere hearing of confession could be said to be a “shameful sin”. But Imbert and the Western Catholic administration did not accept that sincere motives are sufficient to prevent sin – administrative and technical as it might be in this case – being committed. Here one can draw comparison with the Eastern classical ideal of sincerity as the wellspring of correct conduct. This is a recurring feature of the early Korean Catholic church (see the much earlier dispensation of the sacraments by the Ch’ŏnjinam group), and is one which was not tolerated by the Catholic administration wherever it was encountered. Correct action and correct result were incorrect if they were not propagated within the Roman Catholic framework.

It was a challenge for Korean marriage traditions, too, to be pulled into line with Roman Catholic expectations. Imbert details closely the particular character of marriage in this milieu:

They are married from childhood, from the age of 9 or 10, often with a contract... the law does not permit nobles to divorce. If a noble is not content with his wife, he takes a concubine, and he lives with her in the family household, alongside the wife. But because of poverty or strife wives/concubines sometimes flee and join another man; if her husband investigates [and discovers this] such a woman is immediately killed.⁵³⁷

(Imbert was mistaken to believe that nobles were not permitted to divorce; divorce was a well-established procedure.) Concubinage and polygamy were (and continue to be) unacceptable to the Catholic church. According to Imbert’s letter, it was a constant struggle for the Westerners to impress upon their congregation the primacy of celibacy and the absolute incompatibility of divorce and multiple spouses with Catholicism:

The common people or the wives of merchants, generally for similar reasons of serious poverty, debase the morals of their husbands, acting against themselves, even by writing a bill of divorce.⁵³⁸

Imbert then goes on to display some contempt for local wedding celebrations:

Korean infidels usually apply some empty observance in celebration of marriage, [using] living goose or stork to pay for a given day to rent out a place.⁵³⁹

This is an unfair criticism: in rural France of the 19th century, Imbert’s homeland, weddings were also an occasion for secular merrymaking which was quite independent of the religious meaning of the ritual. Coontz (2006) details the struggle between secular and conservative religious forces which had been seeking to re-define marriage in France since the revolution – that is, before Imbert was born. It is not accurate to consider his background as one where marriage was solely a religious undertaking, and accordingly we must question the tone of his condemnation of Korean marriage observances. In

⁵³⁶ Ibid: “Non inveni Sacram Congregationem facultetm delegasse Episcopo Capsensi absolvendi confessarium qui ausus est excipere Confessionem complicitis in peccato turpi.”

⁵³⁷ Ibid: “Omnes matrimonium et saepe a pueritia 9 vel 10 annorum... Lex non permittit divortium nobilius, de aliis tacet. Si nobilis non est contentus de sua uxore, concubinam accipit et cum illa vivit, uxore in domo manente, sed propter paupertatem vel discordias aliquando uxor aufugit et alteri adhaeret viro, si maritus possit illam investigare statim illum occidit.”

⁵³⁸ Ibid: “Plebejorum vel mercatorum uxores propter similes rationes paupertatis, quae est generaliter gravissima, vel morum discordantiam a maritis suis subtrahunt se, vel etiam scripto libello repudii vel laceratae vestis frustulo divortium faciunt.”

⁵³⁹ Ibid: “Coreani infideles vana quadam observantia in celebratione matrimonii adhibere Anserem vel Ciconiam viventem, quam praetio dato pro illa die conducunt a nutrientibus illas.”

societies and cultures throughout history marriages have represented important occasions for social cohesion, fun and relaxation. Thus we can see here another example of Imbert's personal feelings towards Korea and its people.

In the next excerpt from an 1842 *Ad Urbem* report another French priest, Emmanuel-Jean-François Verolle (1805-1877), discusses the possibility of entering Japan from Korea. (Verolle was Bishop of Manchuria at this point, and never entered Korea. The details in his reports are based on letters he received from the clergy active on the peninsula.) The obsession with reaching Japan, even more hostile than a supremely dangerous Korea and a distinctly unstable China, is illustrative. It shows us the burning ambition and drive which informed the work of these men – they were more than willing to give their lives for the cause, as many of them did – but it could also be proof of a kind of faith-based myopia, a refusal to accept the reality of a situation:

And it could, indeed be done... it is said in the northern part of the approach to be easier, that is by the side of the Sea of Japan. But before it is tested and the way out is explored, it is necessary to reach an agreement with the Koreans: the place, the time, the plan for opening the way... if God is for us, who could be against us!⁵⁴⁰

It seems counter-productive for Verolle to be engaged in sincere discussion of mission to Japan when the Catholic position in Korea at the time was so precarious. There is a mania to Verolle's writing here – he is writing as if diplomatic relations between Catholics in Korea and Japanese non-Christians are imminent, when in fact Korea was a country where his compatriots had been brutally executed. The history of humanity, of course, is often that of immobile precepts coming up against flexible realities and human frailties. Lach encapsulated this trait of Western clergy in Asia as “excessive zeal”⁵⁴¹ in reporting the success of a mission. Rienstra (1986), meanwhile, notes that Matteo Ricci's letters and reports were notable for their honesty and realistic assessment of his experiences in China – often in contrast to Jesuit communications as a whole: “as early as 1566, the reliability of [published letters from Jesuit missionaries to their headquarters] was being questioned by the Jesuits themselves.”⁵⁴²

Rienstra advances another important motivation for potential distortions or omissions, or perhaps re-framings, in these letters. From the beginning of Western missionary activity there had been a great deal of European public interest in their activities. Their letters were periodically translated, edited, abridged and published for sale to a curious public, and these published letters were thus an important driver of European public support for missionary activity. While the missionaries of the mid-19th century were much reduced in influence and political power from their time of Ricci and others, it was therefore important for missions to be portrayed with optimism in the reports in preparation for future publication.

While this period of Korean Catholicism is characterised by the prominent role of indigenous commoners and foreign clergy, Verolle's letter also contains an intriguing reference to a convert from a more elevated background:

A Korean pagan from the royal city of Kinkitao [Gyŏnggi-do] said to him that: the mandarin Lieou, known as Augustinum, had eventually been beheaded and cut up, and this would have been for the reason that books of Europe were found with him, and moreover that aliens had been brought into the Korean kingdom; and the whole family of this Lieou would be put to the sword.⁵⁴³

This “Augustinum Lieou” was Yu Chin'gil 劉進吉 (1791-1839), an interpreter who entered into the Catholic faith in 1823, and met Western and Chinese Catholics in Beijing during the 1820s and

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid: “Et posset quidem fieri... Dicitur in parte septentrionali faciliorem esse aditum, nempe secus mare Japonicum. Sed antequam haec via tentetur et exploretur, oportet cum ipsis Coreanis convenire; de loco, de tempore, de modo etc consilium aperire... Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos!”

⁵⁴¹ Lach, Donald. *Asia in the Making of Europe*, volume 1, book 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. 318

⁵⁴² Rienstra, M Howard. *Jesuit Letters From China 1583-84*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986. 6-7

⁵⁴³ Letter from Verolle, 16th February 1842: “Paganum Coreanum ex civitate regia Kinkitao, qui dixit illi: Mandarinum Lieou (Augustinum) fuisse mebratim concisum tandemque capite obtruncatum, propterea quod libri europei apud ipsum fuissent inventi, et insuper quod introduxisset extraneos in regnum Coreanum, suam istius Lieou (Augustini) familiam totam gladio eecidisse.” *ACTA CP* volume 23, ff 266-271

1830s.⁵⁴⁴ While we can note in passing the Sinitic Romanisation of Korean place and family names, more interesting is this Augustinum Licou's designation by Verolle as a "mandarin". Was Lieou a *yangban* or a commoner with some official duties? Either way, the reference is yet more evidence of a relatively deep entrenchment of Catholic worship at the time. Although the period from 1801 is generally characterised as being dominated by commoner conversion and worship, clearly some Koreans with a measure of social status and power were still practicing the Western creed:

Certainly there is a civil state... absolutely miserable Christians are deprived of the protection of the laws; hardly a month passes without us hearing of persecution in this restive country.⁵⁴⁵

The ellipsis is in the original document; what thoughts does it substitute for? Does Verolle find the Chosŏn civil state unimpressive? Is he thinking of it as the deadly arbiter of justice? The "... " signifies that Verolle had not only found there was a civil state in a place he had thought of as uncivilised and wild, but that it had turned out to be more capable and more dangerous than he had ever imagined.

The initial band of visitors eventually discovered just how hostile their new home was; three years after their entrance onto the peninsula, Imbert, Chastan and Maubant were captured and beheaded by the Korean authorities. Margiotti's modern church history describes their arrest and execution, and how the religion was described in an official royal edict:

Actually, what had happened was that the Vicar Apostolic and the missionaries, seeing the impossibility of escaping... were delivered up to the investigators of their own accord and on September the 21st, 1839, were beheaded at Sae-nam-t'o in Seoul. A royal edict published the following November 24th justified the execution of many of the faithful, declaring the Catholic religion execrable and perverse and accusing their followers of many crimes.⁵⁴⁶

Given the almost complete lack of non-Koreans living and working on the peninsula, and the tiny size of the indigenous Catholic population, we may marvel at the fact that they were not discovered earlier.

6. 1845 – 1863: A Period of Peace

Jean-Joseph Ferréol (1808-1853) entered Korea clandestinely in October of 1845, accompanied by the now ordained Kim Taegŏn and Antoine-Marie Daveluy (1818-1866). The Korean church had been decimated by the events of 1839, although by the time of the men's arrival the atmosphere of hostility had cooled considerably. In a December 1852 *Ad Urbem* report to Rome Ferréol wrote:

Monday was also the day in which the year during which God protected us progressed in peace [ie, the start of Advent and beginning of the church's calendar]. The Christian community continues to live in a period of peace, not divided by the government, unless a new traitor were to rise.⁵⁴⁷

The reference to a new "traitor" (proditor) underlines again how vulnerable the Korean Catholics were to betrayal from within their ranks.

It should not surprise us that in this period pragmatic factors were still a driver of conversion and interest in the religion. It seems that at least one local person, unnamed in the report, had declared himself to be a member of the clergy despite being married. Ferréol believes that the reason for this development is economic – the self-professed priest and other locals who have received what Ferréol

⁵⁴⁴ Information provided by Dr Pierre Roux, thesis correction notes, January 2019. Yu is mentioned in Finch, Andrew, "A persecuted church: Roman Catholicism in early nineteenth-century Korea." Article in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51 (3), July 2000.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid: "Miserabilis certe est istic Christianorum civilis status... absolute privantur protectione legum; vix transit mensis quin audiamus persecutionem."

⁵⁴⁶ Margiotti, 1975. 566-567

⁵⁴⁷ Ferréol, *Ad Urbem* report, 18th December, 1852. "Part. dell' Indie Orient e Cina 1848 – 1856" in *Scritture Originali riferite alle Congri*: "Lune quoque annum Dio protegante in pace transivimus. Res Christiana modo tranquilla non vidatur a gubernio statim pecturbanda, nisi surgat novus proditor." Folio 133 volume 78 part 2

sceptically calls “evangelic inspiration” may have benefitted from disbursements from the French missionaries or alms from Catholic communities:

I had hoped that more consideration would have been given to the legion of difficulties caused to us by a shortage of priests... [a certain Korean soi-disant priest] has been consecrated, living apart from his wife in chastity. I am considering very carefully what to make of all the priests who have [apparently] received evangelic inspiration, assuming as I am that the economy is affecting the number of adults wanting baptism.⁵⁴⁸

He goes on to reveal that he and his local colleagues saw a necessity for practical modifications, just as Imbert had in 1838:

I humbly ask that you allow me and other priests... to use the services celebrating the passion DNIC... and an esteemed breviary for Fridays in Lent; moreover, each year on [Good] Friday to [have permission] to use an alternative to the usual missal to reflect on the duty and passion [of the crucifixion].⁵⁴⁹

Also of note is the availability of religious materials in this period. Ambrose Maistre (1808-1857), a contemporary of Ferréol who entered Korea in 1852 by sea, wrote in an *Ad Urbem* report in 1853:

There is a teacher who has written the rudiments of the faith in various folios in Chinese and Korean... in the local language there are catechisms, homilies on the Gospel, the life of the saints, books on the imitation of Christ, a book of prayer and other certain small works.⁵⁵⁰

Korean is still, to Maistre, “the local language”. It is noteworthy that nearly twenty years after the first entrance of western clergy onto the peninsula that there was apparently only a corpus of materials containing *rudimentis* – “rudiments” – of the faith. This is testament to the number of powerful factors combining to make translation of materials extremely challenging at this time: the complexity of the concepts in question, the vast linguistic gulf between Latin and French and written Chinese, and then the further layer of Korean; the intractable difficulty of communication and movement in late Chosŏn Korea, greatly exacerbated by the Catholics’ need for secrecy; and the need for every document having to be copied by hand.

Maistre’s letter also seems to showcase the wilful ignorance of realities on the ground which is a reoccurring characteristic in the correspondence of these missionaries. Perhaps it was essential for them to continue with such a difficult and dangerous undertaking. Realistic assessment of the situation could not have failed but to discourage, and these men had made it their trademark to continue with their chosen path in spite of the difficulties they faced. Maistre’s priorities are underlined by this passage from the same missive:

The spiritual need for the mission doesn’t only come from civil oppression, but the biggest difficulty of all in this region would be to set up a Parisian seminary in the Kiang-nam

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid: “Sperabam quod consideratis istius legionis difficultatis ex sacerdotum penuria dispensatico _____ vires probatis, uxore vivente ex cum vote castitatis separata, ad sacerdotum evenendis concederatus. Insufer attento defatigione maxima qua fabricant omnes sacerdotes in hoc segno evangelister, dispensationem ad affectum assumendi in baptismo adultorum ritum.”

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid: “Humiliter rogo... ut concedatur nihi or alius sacerdotibus in mitrione laborantibus facultas recitandi celerbrandique officia JJ passionis DNIC spineo corona lancea ex lavorum, JJ sindonis, JJ quimque plagarum et pietioticimi sanguinus, a stigmata in breriaro Dom. pro feriis sextis in quadragesima; insuper quaque feria sexta anni non impedita recitandi celebrandique officum votivum et mipam passionis DNIC.” The initialism DNIC stands for the Latin phrase *Domini Nostri Iesu Christi* – “Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

⁵⁵⁰ Maistre, *Ad Urbem* report, 20th August 1853: “Sunt magister in variis folis que juventatem in litteris sinicis et coreanis, numen in fidei rudimentis instituerunt... on lingua vernacular sunt catechismus, homilia in evangelia, vita sanctorum, libri quator de imitatione Christi, liber precum et alia quodam opuscula.” AMEP volume 78 ff 1334.

[Kangnam] region where missionaries have always passed their earliest opportunity here... these auspicious promises have gone up in smoke.⁵⁵¹

A subsequent report by Ferréol revisits Imbert's concerns and discusses the unique shape of marriage in Catholic communities in Korea, and the Western clergy responses to them:

There is a Christian, a girl, whose fathers or cousins had her married, and they are pagans; when the time of the marriage negotiations came, she was with certainty given to non-Christians; [and in the] home of the non-Christians, besides many acts of superstition, they indulge in prostitution [ie, concubinage], in their daily life, they do not have legitimate partners in the eyes of God. In these quite miserable circumstances shouldn't we command them to at least avoid sexual immorality?⁵⁵²

As with Maubant, Ferréol here acknowledges that the structure of Korean society is quite hostile to Catholic marriage practices. The reference to prostitution indicates that the Catholic girl had been married off as a subordinate wife on the orders of her male relatives, despite such a marriage being incompatible with her beliefs; she was to be an additional wife to an already-married husband.

Also in 1852 there was an amnesty for Christians:

A general amnesty was granted by the King on the occasion of the birth of the crown prince⁵⁵³

A royal amnesty indicates that either there were enough Catholic adherents for worship of God/Jesus to have become an issue which needed to be addressed – or that there were enough Catholics for an amnesty to be an expedient measure to lead to an increase of support for the throne. The Christian population had reached 12,450 by 1853 (Margiotti, 1975). Ferréol escaped arrest and execution, but his health was eventually broken by the unforgiving demands of the mission. In the words of Cardina I Naro (see below), “his own zeal was not tardy in consuming him.”⁵⁵⁴ Consumed he was; by 1853 he was dead.

Maistre wrote a letter to Rome in August of 1853 which provides further insights into the danger and hardship of their undertaking, as well as the almost disposable attitude individual Catholics took to one another, foreign or indigenous, as long as their efforts advanced the religion:

New missionaries arrived, through having good fortune on their sea journey, to the mission on the 26th of March; but their jubilation was short-lived, for they had been taken ill during the journey and could not be brought back to health, passing away on the 18th of June. But their deaths were not mourned, as they had directed three young Korean men towards the general college in Linang [modern-day Penang, Malaysia].⁵⁵⁵

By this point Maistre viewed the “Koreans” as a distinct nation and people. His letter also contains further evidence of the missionaries' utilisation of local information networks: he had access to

⁵⁵¹ Ibid: “Spirituales huquis missioni necessitates nom solum ab oppressione potestatis civilis veniunt, sed et maxima difficultate profectum inducesorum in istis legionibus forent coniedere seminario Parisienne missionem ixteros locum in provincia Kiang-nam ubi missionarios haberet semper pasatos qui prima occasione data hic transmeare... hoc fausta promissa in fumum abierunt.”

⁵⁵² Ferréol, *Ad Urbem* report, 18th December, 1852: “Sunt quodam puella Cristiano, quarum patres aut ali cognati qui de matrimonio caram babent, sunt pagani; quando nubendi tempus advenerit, certo tradentur gentilibus; domi vero gentilium, prater superstitionis actus permultos, in fornicationis indulger statu quotidiano vivent, cum coram Deo legitimo conjuges non habeatus. In ea serum circumstancia satis miserabili, nunc era satius illis imperatiri dispensationem ut faltem peccatum fornicationis vitentur?” *Scritture Originali riferite alle Congri* volume 78 part 2 folio 1331

⁵⁵³ Naro, Costantino Patrizi, *Ad Urbem* report, 1874: “Un'aministia generale fù anche accordata dal Re nell' occasione della nascita del principe ereditario.” *ACTA CP* volume 242, fl 71

⁵⁵⁴ Constantino, 1874: “Il suo zelo non tardò a consumarlo.” Fl 73

⁵⁵⁵ Maistre, letter, 25th August 1854: “Novus missionarius via maritima feliciter ad hanc missionem dic 26th Martu pervenit; sed lingua non fuit ipsius nostraque jubilatio, siquidem in itinere iam infirmus, nullis hic medis ad sanitatem potunt revocari, et die 18 junie vita migravit. Lodem vero temporis momento mense martio scibiret, versus finas vela faciebant tres alumni coreani ad collegiam generale in Linang directi.” *ACTA CP* volume 23, fl 335

information sources relating to the broader geo-political situation at the time. It's notable that here Maistre supplies rumours concerning Russian activity in Korea to compatriots in Europe!

A number of us Christians have been captured and were imprisoned and put on trial, at first in the capital of the province and then in the city... however no blood was shed; some of those who were weaker apostatised. [Illegible adverb] all were released, [some of them] even without apostatising as the governors do not seem to require piety [in orthodox Korean social mores], but rather fear.⁵⁵⁶

Already no-one can ignore the great cunning, treachery, savagery, barbarism and even demises caused by execution, of this wicked and cruel emperor of Russia.⁵⁵⁷

Russian activity in Korea in 1855 was limited – Chung (1995) says that Russia only began expanding its Asian territory in 1860 – but the significance is that such information was being transmitted to the Frenchmen at all, rather than its accuracy.

Maistre's choice of phrase – “were to protect their specific contribution” – is further quite explicit proof of his particular biases. Even the “legitimate authority established” in Korea and other non-Christian nations could justly be subordinated if it meant that Catholicism could be further propagated.

Siméon-François Berneux (1814-1866) arrived in Korea in 1856, landing by sea in the north-eastern Hwanghae province. As his writings show, the peace and stability of this period was only in comparison to the previous harsh suppression; there were still dangers, as his March 1855 letter to Rome relates:

How precarious is this mission in Korea, the people live where there is always going to be persecution.⁵⁵⁸

And by 1857 there was still a necessity for secrecy. He wrote of

Our catacombs, where the persecution has obliged us to stay hidden.⁵⁵⁹

This type of statement, Finch argues, “drew on imagery and vocabulary with origins in the Apostolic and Patristic churches”⁵⁶⁰ – that is, the very beginnings of the Catholic and indeed wider Christian church tradition.

In 1861 Berneux, now the country's Bishop, expressed the risks which Korean Catholics still faced:

In China, they grumble against Christians and that's it: in Korea... there are mandarins in charge of applying the laws we break; these sorts of [missionary] expeditions suit the Korean character, still half-savage... [on sending a boat to Korea from Shanghai]: in my

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid: “Neque defuit nobis persecutionis probatio in provincia primum deinde in urbe capitale plures christiani capti incarceratique fuerunt... nullius tamen sanguis fusus est; aliqui debiliores apostato fuerunt, caterique omnes absque apostasia dimissi suadente non fumentium praefectorum pietate, sed magis europorum timore.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid: “Nemo quippe iam ignotare potest quanta cum astutia, perfidia, immanitate, barbarie dimis imo supplicis, ultims hisce temporibus, impius ac ferox imperator Russia.”

⁵⁵⁸ Berneux, letter, 15th March 1855: “Quom precalia sit mission in Corea, dagentium vita, ubi fuctunda semper debaccatum persecutio.” *Scritture Originali della Congregazione Particolare nell'Indie e Cina* (“Original writings of the congregation belonging to India and China”) (SOCP) volume 78, f1338

⁵⁵⁹ Berneux, letter, 1857. In *Perŏnoe munsŏ* (“Correspondence of S. F. Berneux), edited by S Ch'oe, Seoul, 1981. Translated in Finch, 2015. 680

⁵⁶⁰ Finch, 2015. 680

opinion you might as well put a stone on the neck of those who would do this expedition.⁵⁶¹

The low-level hostility towards Catholics of this period were soon to explode into a full-blown persecution – in this case, the most brutal and bloody of all the suppressions, aimed at eradicating the religion completely.

The letters of the Berneux and Martin-Luc Huin (1836-1866) provide a valuable insight into the form of Catholic practice in Korea in the period from 1863 – 1876 when *sōhak*'s adherents came under sustained and severe attack, as well as the danger and hardship Catholics faced at this point.

Huin entered Korea in 1865 by sea, and his surviving French-language letters and diaries provide a highly valuable resource, particularly when compared with Berneux's official communications with the MEP (As a relatively junior member of the mission Huin did not make reports to Europe.) The two men had strongly divergent characters and worldviews, both of which become apparent in the excerpts from their letters and diaries entries which appear in a 1966 church history work by Vauthier. Vauthier's viewpoint is undeniably hagiographic: his intention is to write from a "church history" viewpoint, "perceiving the divine" in the "depth, harmony, and beauty"⁵⁶² of Christianity. But the extensive selections he provides from Huin's personal correspondence are essential to understanding a missionary mindset in this context. Unlike the *Ad Urbem* reports of Imbert, Chastan, and Ferréol, Huin's letters to friends and family are warmer, more personal, and more cheerfully open about the subjectivity of his viewpoint. Berneux's administrative communications to the MEP headquarters meanwhile, written in his role as Bishop of Korea, reveal the additional pressures these men faced, having to justify and defend their work to their superiors. Detailed analyses of both men's writings are attempted below.

Firstly, however, we can appreciate that Vauthier's work, despite its biases, is also valuable in its analysis of the shape and scope of French Catholic missionary administrations:

The goals were fixed: aims to form a native clergy while considering as far as possible local customs and mores. Realising this plan was, certainly, more difficult and not smooth on either count... even attentive consideration to the religious morals of pagan people does not allow quick discernment of what can and must be integrated... when one has lived in a Western civilisation, within which one has lived and by which one has been impregnated, it is very difficult to disassociate that which is purely "shape", and so changeable, from that which is closely linked to the substance of the Christian mysteries.⁵⁶³

Even writing from a hagiographic viewpoint, Vauthier recognises both a need for a broader recognition of which cultural artifacts may be considered Christian, and that such a recognition was no easy endeavour for men of this particular background and education. In his introduction, Vauthier asks the reader not to judge Huin and other Frenchmen operating in Korea by modern standards, but to recognise the tiny exposure they would have had both to new cultures and to the idea that other cultures could possess valuable truth. Of course, Vauthier's work was published in 1966, and reading it now, one feels that his own attitude towards non-Western cultures is far from value-neutral. He relates the conditions under which Huin made his way through the Korean islands: "Primitives are naturally rowdy and boisterous: but the inhabitants of this island, either in view of danger or in anticipation of an upcoming looting, uttered terrible cheers when they saw the foreigners approaching."⁵⁶⁴

Both Huin and Berneux were ultimately executed during the 1866 persecution. Like his predecessor Chastan, Huin was from a humble rural background. He joined the MEP in 1863 and reached Manchuria on the 30th of October 1864, finally entering Korea in May of 1865. Also like Chastan, Huin displayed a reverence for his parents which would be mirrored by many espousing Eastern values:

⁵⁶¹ Berneux, letter to the MEP directors, 16th February 1861. In Vauthier, Emile, *Un témoin du Christ: Luc-Martin Huin, missionnaire et martyr en Corée (1836-1866)* ("A Witness for Christ: Luc-Martin Huin, missionary and Martyr in Korea (1836-1866)), France: Curate of Bourbonne Les Bains, 1966: "En Chine, on jase contre les Chrétiens et puis ce tout: en Corée... en mandarin et se charge d'appliquer la loi qui nous proscriit; ces sortes de d'expéditions vont au caractère coréen, encore à demi sauvage... à mon avis mettre un pierre au cou des matelots qui feraient cette expédition". 72

⁵⁶² Vauthier, 1966. 63

⁵⁶³ Ibid. 45-46

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid. 75

My dear father, as I kiss your trembling hand with the deepest respect, I will write a line.⁵⁶⁵

Throughout his letters there is what Vauthier describes as “a filial piety which never fails.”⁵⁶⁶ But Huin experienced the same tension between filial piety and service to God which had troubled Chastan thirty years earlier, had tortured Yi Pyök sixty years previously, and had drawn withering condemnation from the Korean establishment. When he announced his intention to become a missionary his mother accused him of not loving his parents and not following the fourth commandment, “honour thy father and mother”.⁵⁶⁷

Huin’s actions occasionally display a lack of caution which contrasts strikingly with the careful tone of the reports of his compatriots. Compare this letter, from the Bishop, Berneux:

Here we are in a very precarious position... I plead that, when you send us brethren in the future, it is instilled in them that they not use the Koreans for anything reprehensible and do not seek to Europeanise them. It’s a big mistake to think that, in order to convert Eastern peoples, they must be turned into Europeans. We have never managed to make them give up their local practices which, moreover, are often preferable to those of Europe. We can tell the new brethren that they well want to continue to adhere to these recommendations in the places where they will spend their time here. No firearms, I forbid them.⁵⁶⁸

with this from Huin, who was unable to resist a detour as he made his way to his landing point by sea:

I went onto land once, on an island, so I could have the pleasure of touching Korean soil. I had borrowed a gun to impose a little on a wild escort I found myself with, who greeted me by asking my name, writing on the stone, what I had done, my intentions, etc... I got rid of his unwelcome company as soon as possible, he who wanted to touch everything, even lifting up my trousers. He had never seen anything the likes of me.⁵⁶⁹

In this period the Frenchmen continued using their well-tested tactic for moving around the country by dressing themselves in the mourning clothes of noble women. Doing so meant they went unchallenged by common Koreans as they travelled. Huin seemed to find the enterprise thrilling:

All four of us were dressed in Korean clothes, those of a noble in mourning... pagans cede the lead to us on the paths which are the only roads in the country, and did not dare even look at us due to respect for the nobles classes, especially when they appear in mourning. For our part we laughed with gaiety in our hearts under our big hats and behind the veils which covered our faces.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁵ Huin, letter from Shanghai to his parents, 4th of October 1864. In Vauthier, 1966 “Mon bien cher père, tant que votre main tremblante, que je baise avec le plus profond respect, pourra me griffonner une ligne”. 21

⁵⁶⁶ Vauthier, 1966. 21

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. 21-22

⁵⁶⁸ Berneux, letter to Albrand, superior of the MEP, 19th of November 1865. In Vauthier, 1966: “Nous sommes ici dans une position très précaire... veuillez aussi inculquer à nos futurs Confrères qu’ils doivent, une fois arrivés en Corée, se faire aux usages coréens qui n’ont rien de répréhensible, et ne pas avoir la prétention de les européeniser. C’est une grande erreur de croire que pour convertir les peuples d’Orient, il faut d’abord en faire des Européens. Jamais on ne réussira à leur faire abandonner leurs usages locaux qui d’ailleurs sont souvent préférables à ceux d’Europe.” 70-71

⁵⁶⁹ Huin, undated letter. In Vauthier, 1966: “Je descendis une fois à terre. Dans cette île, pour me procurer le plaisir de fouler aux pieds le sol coréen. J’avais un pistolet d’emprunt pour en imposer un peu à cette escorte sauvage qui m’accueillit en me demandant mon nom, en écrivant sur la pierre, ce que je venais faire, mes intentions, etc... Je me débarrassai le plus tôt possible de cette compagnie importune qui voulait toucher à toutm jusqu’à mes bas en soulevant mon pantalon. Ils n’avaient jamais rien vu de semblable.” 75

⁵⁷⁰ Huin, undated letter: “Nous avons tous quatre des habits coréens, nous étions en costume de nobles en deuil... les païens nous cédaient le pas dans le sentiers qui sont les seules routes du pays et n’osaient

There is a rich irony here. The proponents of the doctrine of absolute equality before God enthusiastically adopted the garments and privilege of the aristocracy which despised them; and the orthodox hierarchy which wished to destroy the priests actually provided a method by which those priests might work undetected. The fervour and self-belief of Huin is evident by his jolly reaction. Perhaps his lack of caution was motivated by his desire for martyrdom, or perhaps he did not fully appreciate the seriousness of his situation. Finch (2009) cites Rodney Stark to rebut accusations of masochism towards Catholic church martyrs, but I am not certain that some aspect of martyrs' personalities were not inclined towards self-flagellation. The accounts of some Korean church martyrs' lives and attitudes, as seen in Huin above and discussed further in the chapter *Early Korean Catholic Praxis*, often betray a morbid fascination with their death.

While Berneux was more cautious than Huin, he was not a hidebound slave to the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church. When he felt occasion demanded, he was stridently critical of his superiors:

You seem to think, as do the esteemed directors, that not all possible care is taken regarding my measures for the safe entry of missionaries. I am not surprised, you having no idea of our position here in Korea.⁵⁷¹

The establishment of a Christian [ie Western] family in this place would be a very good way, and I have often thought about it. But it is impractical for many very good reasons, only one of which will convince you. A family which I establish on this coast will have to co-operate very frequently with superstitions; on their refusal, their house will be demolished and pillaged, and they will consider themselves as having got off lightly if they are merely ordered to leave the village.⁵⁷²

The excerpt from Berneux's letter above is also crucial in that it directly acknowledges the potency of the Korean cultural milieu and explicitly recognises that missionary work in Korea involves accommodating Catholicism to local conditions – importing a European Catholicism, attempting to “Europeanise” Koreans, could never succeed. This is a remarkable position when we consider that the earlier *Ad Urbem* reports could only frame inculturation and accommodation in the most circumspect terms.

Huin provides several fascinating details concerning daily life for commoners of this period, details he views nostalgically as being similar to life in biblical times:

The mistress was occupied in grinding barley... seeing the turn of the wheel, I thought I saw another Rachel, like the Rachel from the time of the ancient patriarchs. This country is, in effect, primitive like that of Abraham and Jacob.⁵⁷³

He saw Korean society and legal structure as “arcane” and archaic – backwards:

As at the time of the catacombs, the law of the arcane is in full force here.⁵⁷⁴

même pas nous regarder par respect pour la classe des nobles, surtout quand ils apparaissent en deuil. De notre côté nous riions de gaieté de cœur sous notre grand chapeau et derrière le voile qui nous couvrait le visage.” In Vauthier, 1966.

⁵⁷¹ Berneux, letter to the MEP directors, 16th February 1861. In Vauthier, 1966: “Vous semblez penser, ainsi que MM. les Directeurs, que mes mesures pour assurer le succès de l’entrée des Missionnaires, ne sont pas prises avec tout le soin possible. Je n’en suis pas étonné, n’ayant pas l’idée de notre position en Corée.” 71

⁵⁷² Berneux, letter to the MEP directors, 16th February 1861. In Vauthier, 1966: “L’établissement d’une famille chrétienne en cet endroit serait en effet un très bon moyen, et j’y ai pensé souvent. Mais il est impraticable pour plusieurs raisons dont une seule suffira pour vous convaincre. Une famille que j’établirai là devra coopérer aux superstitions qui sur cette côte sont très fréquentes; sur son refus, sa maison sera démolie, pillée, et les individus devront s’estimer quittes a bon marché s’ils s’en tirent avec une seule bâtonnade et ordre de quitter le village.” 72

⁵⁷³ Huin, undated letter. In Vauthier, 1966: “La maîtresse occupée à moudre de l’orge... en la voyant tourner la meule, je crus voir une autre Rachel, comme au temps des anciens Patriarches. Ce pays en effet est aussi primitif que celui d’Abraham et de Jacob.” 86

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid: “Comme au temps des catacombes, la loi de l’arcane est en pleine vigueur.” 87

The private house continued to be the locus for religious activity in this period - a kind of de facto inculturation, as churches could simply not be built:

Like all the Korean houses, it's covered in thatch; it serves as church for the Christians. It's in my room that I say mass and they gather in secret to pray. The windows serve as doors; in place of glass, we put oiled paper. ... there aren't tables, chairs or furniture; it's easier to do without.⁵⁷⁵

Huin found the privation of his existence tiring, but viewed it as an acceptable price to pay:

[Living conditions] are extremely tiring... it costs one something to make oneself habituated to this regime; but why talk of sacrifices? Isn't this what I have chosen freely and knowingly to expiate my sins and bear witness a bit of love to God?⁵⁷⁶

Surprisingly, he had a personal manservant and a housekeeper. A French priest of 1865 living in France would have had a housekeeper to cook and clean, but a not a manservant who dressed and "obeyed" him:

Here, in a Christian house, I learn the language of the country, and I have for a manservant a man of 55 years old who has already served other priests who died; he dresses me, he obeys me very well, we are a great household altogether. It's the wife of the master of the household whom I use as a chef, she is very willing, and she would like to prepare more food for me in a European style.⁵⁷⁷

But some important changes had taken place since the church's earlier days. While in the late 18th century, Christian mixed-sex worship practices had attracted official condemnation (see *Early Korean Catholic Praxis*), by Huin's era segregated worship conditions had apparently been re-established. Even in the very cramped conditions of Huin's makeshift church, male and female worshippers were separated, in accordance with mainstream Korean social mores of the time:

In my little mud hut, there are three little compartments; in one I say mass, in the other women stand so that they may hear, in the third men [stand].⁵⁷⁸

It was the grandfather who brought the charming infant of two months into my room; her mother, out of respect, stayed in the doorway.⁵⁷⁹

The Western Catholic church had, in general, stopped segregating congregations by sex by the late 16th century, although some conservative, rural areas in France and Belgium continued with the practice – that is, the kind of background which Huin came from. Did Huin alter the practice of Catholic worship in his new home to reflect its values, did he simply carry on with the conditions he found when he arrived (segregation having been re-introduced at some point by someone else), or did he consciously resurrect a forgotten mode of worship?

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid: "Comme toutes les maisons coréennes, en terre, couverte au chaume; elle sert d'église aux chrétiens, c'est dans ma chambre que je dis la messe et qu'ils se réunissent en secret pour prier. Les fenêtres servent de portes; au lieu de verre, on y met du papier huilé... ne cherchez ici ni tables, ni chaises, ni meubles' c'est bien plus simple de s'en passer." 89

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid: "C'est extrêmement fatigant... il en coûte un peu (très fort) pour se habituer à ce régime; mais pourquoi parler de sacrifices? N'est-ce pas la portion que j'ai bien librement et sciemment choisie pour l'expiation de mes péchés et témoigner au Bon Dieu un peu d'amour?" 90

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid: "J'apprends ici dans une maison chrétienne la langue du pays, j'ai pour domestique un homme de 55 ans qui a déjà servi d'autres Pères qui sont morts; il est dressé, il m'obéit très bien, nous faisons ensemble un excellent ménage. C'est le femme du maître de la maison qui me sert de cuisinière, elle a de la bonne volonté, elle voudrait me préparer mes repas comme en Europe." 92

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid: "Dans ma petite cabane en terre, il y a trois petits compartiments: dans l'une je dis la messe, dans l'autre se tiennent les femmes pour l'entendre, dans le troisième les hommes." 92

⁵⁷⁹ Huin, letter of 21st of October 1865: "'C'est le grand-papa qui apporta cette charmante enfant de deux mois jusqu'à l'intérieur de ma chambre; sa mère, par respect, était à la porte.'" In Vauthier, 1966. 94

As he adapted modes of worship to his new locality he also adopted Korean-style clothes and personal appearance:

I wear my beard more as less as it grows, I have long and very very thick black hair, subsequently assembled at the top of my head; I make it into a topknot which resembles an elongated pear. Inside the house, baggy trousers and a small jacket comprise all of my clothing. When a missionary wishes to go out he adds a long robe of a sombre colour which resembles our burlap, and a huge conical hat.⁵⁸⁰

But apparently these efforts weren't uniformly successful:

We are always hidden and we never go out without disguises. However, we are recognised very often, because we don't look like Koreans at all.⁵⁸¹

The wearing of Korean clothes was not only a security precaution. There were practical considerations – Korean designs and materials were all that was readily available – but there was also an important inculturative element to consider. Wearing the same clothes and grooming oneself in the same manner as the Koreans was a way for the Frenchmen to bridge some of the huge cultural gap between themselves and their congregation (as Matteo Ricci had worn Chinese dress in China). It was also an attempt to de-couple some of the Euro-Mediterranean cultural trappings from the essential message of Christ. The fact that Huin and his compatriots were recognised regularly also further bolsters my theory that, on a local level, the clergy were somewhat integrated with non-Christian communities.

Huin altered other personal habits of his to fit into his new milieu – he felt he had to begin smoking tobacco to live up to his congregation's expectations:

After I eat, I go to smoke my pipe. It should not seem strange to you, because in this country everyone smokes, sometimes women more than men; if the missionary did not smoke, it would seem very odd.⁵⁸²

Huin was also a dedicated student of Korean, understanding that communicating in the local language was vital to the mission:

They have already urged me several times to give them the sacraments: it's the men who push most of all. I tell them that I don't yet know quite enough of their language.⁵⁸³

Accordingly, Huin explicitly grasped the difference between the Korean language and Chinese characters:

I have been studying Korean with keenness, while also pursuing Chinese characters... studying Korean is an obligation which could easily lead one to become discouraged, if one were not undertaking the enterprise for good God.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁰ Huin, undated letter: "Je porte ma barbe passablement fournie, j'ai les cheveux longs très noirs et très épais reliés au sommet de la tête; ça me fait un chignon comme une poire allongée. A l'intérieur de la maison, un large pantalon bouffant et une petite veste composent tout le vêtement. Quand le missionnaire veut sortir il y ajoute une longue robe de couleur sombre qui ressemble à notre toile d'emballage et un vaste chapeau conique." In Vauthier, 1966. 92-93

⁵⁸¹ Ibid: "Nous vivons toujours cachés et nous ne sortons qu'en abits de déguisement. On nous reconnaît cependant très souvent, parce que nous ne ressemblons pas aux Coréens." Emphasis added. 92

⁵⁸² Ibid: "Après mes repas, j'y vais fumer ma pipe. Que cela ne vous paraisse pas étrange, car dans ce pays-ci tout le monde fume, quelquefois les femmes plus que les hommes; si le missionnaire ne fumait pas, cela paraîtrait tout extraordinaire."

⁵⁸³ Huin, undated letter: "Ils m'ont déjà pressé plusieurs fois pour que je leur donnasse les sacrements: ce sont les hommes qui sont les plus pressés. Je leur réponds que je ne sais pas encore assez la langue." In Vauthier, 1966. 93

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid: "Je travaille avec ardeur à l'étude du Coréen, tout en poursuivant celle des caractères chinois... cette étude de Coréen est encore une besogne qui découragerait facilement, si elle n'était entreprise pour le bon Dieu." 95

Alongside the persistent social and cultural conditions which were inhospitable to Catholicism, Vauthier (1966) argues that the geo-political situation, particularly from 1860, had a definitive influence on Chosŏn Korea's attitude to the Catholic missionaries. As China was weakened by its contact with the West, and the barbaric Japan flourished, so establishment Koreans felt that the necessity for isolation grew ever stronger. Thus when the Taewŏn'gun came to power in 1863 as regent these various factors eventually synergised into a brutal assault against Christians – although initially, Berneux was positive regarding prospects for Christians under the Taewŏn'gun:

The father of the King is neither hostile to the religion nor to missionaries, he knows that there are eight missionaries here. He even spoke of the bishop [Ferréol?] in particular to pagan mandarin with whom I have some relations.⁵⁸⁵

Sadly his assessment of the regent was not borne out by later events. This letter does, however, further show that there was some integration and communication between the Frenchmen and upper layers of Korean society. Clearly the picture was more nuanced than absolute suppression and arrest for the missionaries – and as these further excerpts show, during the early part of the Taewŏn'gun's reign he actually enlisted Berneux's help as a potential intermediary with Russia:

It's the case that the Russians are demanding to trade with Korea. [The Taewŏn'gun] said to this mandarin, that if I could get rid of the Russians, he would introduce religious freedom. I did meet the prince, [but] being from a nation and a religion different from that of the Russians, I could not have any influence over them. The mother of the King, knowing our religion, has taken on the catechism in part; she has asked me to say masses to give her son grace for advancing onto the throne. I doubt that she has been baptised... the Queen Regent belongs to the Hcho family, notorious in Korea for its hate against Christians. The Kim clan, all-powerful under the previous King and favourable to Christians, have been replaced by men prepared to take extreme measures against us. With this mix of favourable and hostile people, what can we expect? I do not know yet.⁵⁸⁶

Berneux's letter of 19th of November 1865:

I just heard from the Prince Regent, via a mandarin, reports on the subject of a new case of the Russians demanding to be allowed to establish themselves on Korean territory. The Prince received my communications with kindness; his wife asked me to write in secret to the minister in Beijing and demand religious freedom; the nobles of the capital desire the arrival of the French navy. For my part, I will do nothing until it has been discussed with the Regent. Although still banned, our position is good, and I think next year our position will be even more comfortable.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁵ Berneux, letter of August 1864. In Vauthier, 1966: "La père du roi n'est hostile à la religion, ni aux missionnaires, il n'ignore pas que nous sommes ici huit Européens, il a même parlé de l'évêque en particulier à un mandarin païen avec lequel j'ai quelques relations." 106

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid: "C'est à l'occasion des Russes qui demandent à faire le commerce avec la Corée. Il a dit à ce mandarin que, si je pouvais le débarrasser des Russes, il accorderait la liberté religieuse. J'ai fait fait répondre au prince qu'étant d'une nation et d'une religion différente de celle des Russes, je ne pouvais avoir sur eux aucune influence. Sa femme, mère du roi, connaît la religion, a appris le catéchisme en partie; elle me demande des messes d'actions de grâces pour l'avènement de son fils au trône. Je doute qu'elle puisse être baptisée... la reine régente appartient à la famille Hcho, célèbre en Corée par sa haine contre les chrétiens. Les Kims, tout puissants sous la dernier règne et favorables aux chrétiens, sont remplacés par des hommes propres à prendre contre nous les mesures les plus extrêmes. De cet amalgame de personnes favorables et hostiles, que pouvons-nous attendre? je n'en sais rien encore." 106

⁵⁸⁷ Berneux, letter of 19th of November 1865. In Vauthier, 1966: "Je viens d'avoir avec le Prince Regent, par le moyen d'une Mandarin, quelques rapports, au sujet de la nouvelle instance des Russes qui demandent qu'on leur permette de s'établir sur le territoire Coréen. Le Prince a reçu avec bienveillance mes communications: sa femme, mère du Roi, m'a fait prier secrètement d'écrire à notre ministère à Pékin, de venir demander la liberté religieuse; les grands de la Capitale désirent l'arrivée des navires français. Pour moi, je persiste à ne rien faire avant d'avoir conféré avec le Regent. Quoique toujours proscrits, notre position est bonne, et je crois que l'an prochain nous serons encore plus à l'aise." 107

On the 10th of December 1865 Berneux wrote that he would no longer be taking any part in negotiations with the Russians:

I persist in not doing anything, as I will not be officially authorised. If I had a boat now I would set sail for Beijing without the Regent knowing... I renounce this project.⁵⁸⁸

Berneux's brief involvement with Korean politics is another aspect of the unique characteristics of the religion on the peninsula. Although the Roman Catholic church of this era had abandoned most of its political ambitions in Europe, for Korean elites it was quite natural that an educated and able man (as they presumed Berneux and his compatriots to be) should take an active role in affairs of state. Regardless, the mood soon turned against Catholics – viciously.

In early 1866, by which time it was estimated that there were around 23,000 Christians on the peninsula,⁵⁸⁹ the Taewŏn'gun ordered the start of the most brutal wave of suppression to date, as related by Cardinal Naro in 1874:

There are no longer isolated mass arrests but they are undertaken by decree, to annul any vestiges of Christianity. There have been more than 2,000 martyrs, with some claiming that there have been up to 5,000 or 6,000. In the provinces Christians are subjected to interrogation, but in the capital all of those who are recognised as having been friends of Christians are immediately and without any sort of process thrown into prison. A large number of them have perished in misery, with [non-Christian] villagers profiting from the persecution to increase their own fortunes. A new law is in force for all to present themselves to the mandarin of their territory, so they may know if they are Christians or not. The regent has said that in less than ten years, ["I want to destroy his religion by its root[?]."⁵⁹⁰

This excerpt shows the extraordinary bureaucratic commitment the Taewŏn'gun brought to his campaign against Christianity – requiring every royal subject to present themselves to local administrators to prove that they were not Christian was a very significant mobilisation. The Taewŏn'gun was a complex and idiosyncratic ruler. A libertine in his youth, his late-middle-age ascension saw him adopt unconventional and paradoxical methods to ensure an stable foundation was laid for his son's kingship (Palais, 1975). He despised Catholicism because it represented multiple assaults on classical Eastern orthodoxy: rejection of royal and state authority, a challenge to notions of hierarchy, and a persistent connection with sinister foreign powers. Yet his own wife, as referenced above, was sympathetic to Catholicism.

Margiotti believes that it was the Catholicism's connection to foreign powers which finally provoked this final bloody *pyŏngin* 丙寅⁵⁹¹ suppression of 1866:

A memorial by three Christians to the regent Tae-won-kun, on the occasion of the landing of some Russian ships on the coast of Korea at the beginning of 1866, rekindled the suspicion of treason on the part of the Christians, and the departure [of the Russians] promulgated a degree of general anti-Christian persecution. In March the two bishops and seven missionaries fell victim to this new rage.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸ Berneux, letter of 10th of December 1865. In Vauthier, 1966: "Je m'obstine à rester immobile tant que je ne serai pas autorisé officiellement. Si j'avais un bateau maintenant, j'irais à Pékin à l'insu du Régent... je renonce à ce projet." 107

⁵⁸⁹ Margiotti, 1975. 569

⁵⁹⁰ Naro, 1874: "Non vi sono più arresti isolati ma proscrizioni in massa; si tratta di annullare qualunque vestigio di cristianesimo. I martiri sono più di 2,000, altri assicurano che ve n'ebbe più di 5,000 a 6,000. Nelle provincie i cristiani sono sottoposti ad interrogatori, ma nella capitale tutti quelli che sono riconosciuti d'essere stati anche amici de'cristiani sono subito e senza procedura di sorta cacciati in prigione. Un gran numero infra quelli sono periti di miseria, i paesani profitano dell' persecuzione per aumentare le loro fortune. Una nuova legge ordina a tutti di presentarsi al mandarino del territorio dove giungono, onde si sappia se sono cristiani o nò. In meno di dieci anni disse il regente, io voglio annientare questa religione fino nella sua radice." *ACTA CP* volume 242, fl 73

⁵⁹¹ *Pyŏngin* 丙寅 is the name of the year 1866 in the Korean calendar.

⁵⁹² Margiotti, 1975. 569

By 1873 the political situation for the late Chosŏn had changed irrevocably. While an official recognition of Catholicism was still twelve years away, Korea was now under sustained scrutiny from local and Western powers who sought to exploit her to their own ends. The Taewŏn'gun's policies ultimately failed, and probably actually hastened the demise of Korea as an independent nation – his opposition to foreign influence resulted in military confrontations which were then used as excuses by said foreign powers to pursue even more aggressive action.

Meanwhile, amidst the turmoil, even as late as 1879 the Catholic administration was still confused regarding Korea's cultural and political status:

During the far East Synod of 1879 concerning the division of the missions, Korea had not been considered at all, but corrections were made to it by a decree of April 16, 1884 [when Korea] was ascribed to the fourth region together with Japan. And in the first regional synod held in Nagasaki in March 1890 Korea was represented by EC Doucet due to the death of Mgr. Blanc. [Blanc's] successor Mgr. Mutel did however note that the SC would have been more sensible to combine [Korea] with China as a synodal region for geographic, political and especially apostolic reasons. These were as follows: the first missionaries came from China, the religious press consisted of books translated from Chinese and they both [Korean and Chinese Catholics] used Chinese books.⁵⁹³

This justification for considering administering Korea as a part of China was based on some ignorance – the first Korean-language Catholic doctrine, the *Chugyo Yoji*, had been published around 1798, and by 1879 Korean-language Christian religious materials were widely available. And as we have seen, the perception of Korea as a subordinate region of China has persisted to the modern day within the Roman Catholic church.

Between 1871 and 1876 there were no foreign clergy in the country. Félix Ridel (1830-1884) entered secretly in 1877 as Bishop and was followed by Gustav Mutel (1854-1933) in 1880, who entered with the knowledge and agreement of the Korean administration. Before visiting the country Mutel educated himself in Korean and classical Chinese (Rausch, 2103): “Mutel held on to a particular belief that his episcopal predecessors had maintained, that religion and state have each a distinct sphere of influence, and that each should enjoy free rein in its own sphere without having to worry about being imposed upon by the other.”⁵⁹⁴

After the final official condemnation of Catholicism on June the 12th 1881 (see the chapter *In Defence Of Orthodoxy*), Catholicism was openly tolerated in Korea. On the 4th of June 1886 Korea and France signed a treaty which extended official royal protection to Catholics (Young, 2004 Kang, 1997). The 1886 treaty marks the end of the period of my study, but it is important to note that at this point Korea found itself at the centre of an extremely complicated set of manoeuvres between various foreign powers interested in exploiting the country – it would be inaccurate to envision this treaty as having been signed between two equal sovereign powers who both thought it in their best interest. France, vying against Japan, Russia, China, the US and Britain, was putting overt and implied military and diplomatic pressure on Chosŏn Korea in an attempt to attain primacy on the peninsula. In many respects, the Yi dynasty administration's fears that Maubant, Imbert, Ridel et al represented the vanguard of a wave of foreign domination and influence were correct. The motives of the French visitors were sincere – they wanted to share what they saw as the profound truth of Catholicism – but their suppression and martyrdom were successfully leveraged by French elites who steered public opinion towards intervention and vengeance (Kim, 2008).

The geo-political turbulence of the late 19th century ended when Japan emerged as the foreign power with greatest influence over Korea. Korea was became a protectorate of Japan in 1905 and was formally annexed in 1910. Margiotti (1975) disingenuously describes the period from 1910 onwards as being one when “the Japanese conceded religious freedom for all”.⁵⁹⁵ While religious freedom was technically legally enshrined during the occupation (1910-1945), Japanese tolerance of any given Korean religious organisation was entirely contingent on that organisation's co-operation with the colonisation project, and in Margiotti's description we can see further echoes of the administrative myopia which the Catholic church bureaucracy displayed so often in its dealings with Korea, an obsession with codified documentation whatever the realities on the ground.

⁵⁹³ Margiotti, 1975, p570

⁵⁹⁴ Rausch, Franklin, “The Bishop's Dilemma: Gustav Mutel and the Catholic Church in Korea, 1890-1910”, in *Journal of Korean Religions* 4 (1) (April 2013). 48

⁵⁹⁵ Margiotti, 1975, p570

6. The Korean Works of the Missionaries

6a. Imbert and *Ch'ŏnju sŏnggyo konggwa*

In 1838 Imbert wrote a *han'gŭl* catechism, *Ch'ŏnju sŏnggyo konggwa* 천주성교공과 (“Course on the Lord of Heaven’s Good Works”). Although he perished in the 1839 *Kihae* 己亥迫害 suppression, the work was not made widely available until 1862. When we compare *Ch'ŏnju sŏnggyo konggwa* with his successor Marie-Nicolas-Antoine Daveluy’s later work *Sŏngch'al Kŭryak* (c.1864, see below) differences are immediately apparent; Imbert’s work was written after less than two years in Korea, and after he had spent more than twenty years in other Asian countries, some of which, like Indochina, had a dominant Buddhist influence in their mainstream culture, whereas Daveluy had been living in Korea for more than two decades when he wrote *Sŏngch'al Kŭryak*. Thus where *Ch'ŏnju sŏnggyo konggwa* utilises Imbert’s perception of pan-Asian cultural tropes, which were not especially engineered for the particular needs of a Korean audience, Daveluy’s work draws on his nearly two decades of life inside Korea. Yet despite *Ch'ŏnju sŏnggyo konggwa*’s relative lack of Koreanisation, its very existence makes it valuable – Imbert’s formal reports and letters, as we have seen, really gave no quarter to the idea of adaptation and accommodation, so this work serves to illustrate that he did recognise a need to adapt Catholicism to local Korean conditions. (It also demonstrates that Imbert came to an appreciation and command of the Korean language.)

Furthermore, *Ch'ŏnju sŏnggyo konggwa* contains some scattered examples of expressions and phrases which were appropriate for a classical East Asian context. For example, Jesus came to the world as:

The king of glory.⁵⁹⁶

The word used here, *sŏngja*, has unquestionable connotations of sagehood, containing the word *sŏng* 聖 – “revered, holy”; a central concept in Eastern classicism and one which does not necessarily encapsulate anything supernatural – in other words, Imbert repurposed a secular concept to describe the divine Jesus. This Jesus performs the same function as the Way, facilitating correct thought and action:

today, our hearts and bodies and thinking and words and behaviour [have been made by God]⁵⁹⁷

Imbert uses the word *haengsil*, “behaviour, conduct” rather than the more common *haengdong*, “behaviour, actions”: *haengsil* carries a connotation of propriety and striving for correctness.

One of the book’s prayers explicitly mentions the five relationships 五倫:

Those who serve the Lord with all their heart,
The king and all the rulers,
Parents who are good friends, brothers...⁵⁹⁸

A prayer for leaving the house talks of the “right way”, *parŭn gil*:

O Lord, teach me to see the right way, guide my steps⁵⁹⁹

Imbert re-casts self-reflection in a Christian context:

⁵⁹⁶ Imbert, *Ch'ŏnju sŏnggyo konggwa* (천주 성교 공과) (“Course on the Lord of Heaven’s Good Works”), 1838: “영광의 임금이신 예수.” Accessed via <https://namu.wiki/w/천주성교공과> on 10.01.2017.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid: “오늘날 우리의 마음과 몸과 생각과 말씀과 행실을.”

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid: “모든 전심으로 주를 섬기는 자와, 우리 국왕과 모든 관장과, 부모 친우 은인과 형제와 먼 이와”. 3.13

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid. “오주여, 나를 가르치사 바른 길을 뵈시고”. 3.31.7

We will repent of our sins with a single mind
And will set our hearts on it
We will not dare reprove ourselves⁶⁰⁰

Today let us not fall into sin, but instead let us master our thoughts, words and behaviour, so that we may receive the Lord's command with sincerity⁶⁰¹

Today I think carefully about the sins I have committed against the Lord
Through thoughts, words or behaviour
I see too that my sin is habitual.
(Each person then reflects quietly)⁶⁰²

Chōngsōng, “sincerity”, is of course a crucial component of Confucian rectitude. Without sincerity propriety can never be achieved.

The work also exhibits perhaps the first example of Latin transcribed in *han'gŭl*:

Habemus adominum. (Which means "to the Lord")⁶⁰³

Gratias Asagamus Dominoes Theo Nostro. (This means “thank you Lord our Lord”)⁶⁰⁴

Finally Imbert emphasises Mary's representation of several central concerns for the Confucian: the purity of her physical existence (echoing Yi Pyōk and Chōng Yakchong's portrayals), the perfection of her mastery over her own thoughts and her role in propagating the royal bloodline:

Through the communion of the glorious lifetime compassion of holy Mary you will be saved from the present sorrow and enjoy eternal rest⁶⁰⁵

Mary, filled with royal grace... you are as one with the Lord, and you amongst all women shall receive grace.⁶⁰⁶

6b. Daveluy and Sōngch'al Kiryak

Marie-Nicolas-Antoine Daveluy (1818-1866), who entered Korea in 1845, perished alongside Huin, Berneux and six other Frenchmen during the *pyōngin* suppression (Choi, 2006). During his time in Korea he wrote a catechism in *han'gŭl*, the *Sōngch'al Kiryak*, “Strategies for Self-Introspection”, which first became available to Catholics on the peninsula in 1864. It's an enormously valuable document; as it was written while Daveluy was ministering clandestinely and directly to Korean commoners, it shows an unmistakable awareness of the cultural milieu in which it was written. Additionally, unlike the letters sent to Paris or the reports posted back to Rome, the *Sōngch'al Kiryak* was only ever intended for local consumption, and so Daveluy was free to adapt and blend the precepts of his faith with the tropes of his host culture. At around 14,000 *han'gŭl* characters, *Sōngch'al Kiryak* is much shorter than *Chugyo yoji*

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid: “일심으로 우리 죄과를 아파 뉘우쳐 마음을 정하여, 다시 감히 주의 명을 범치 않으려 하나이다.” 4.3.1

⁶⁰¹ Ibid: “오늘날에 일체 죄에 떨어지지 말게 하시고, 또한 생각과 말과 행위를 인도하사, 주의 명을 정성으로 받들게 하시되.”

⁶⁰² Ibid: “오늘 생각이나 말씀이나 행실이나 께함으로, 천주께 얻은 죄를 자세히 생각하고 그 중에 습관된 것을살피나이다. (잠간 동안에 각 사람 묵묵히 성찰하라).” 4.4.2

⁶⁰³ Ibid: “하베무스 앓 도미눔. (이는 ‘주께 향하나이다’ 란 뜻).” 5.2

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid: “그라씨야스 아가무스 도미노 테오 노스뜨로. (이는 ‘우리 주 천주께 감사할지어다’란 뜻).” 5.2

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid: “영화로운 평생 동정이신 성 마리아의 전달하심으로 현재의 비애에서 구원을 얻고 영원한 복락을 누리게 하시되.” 4.3.14.1

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid: “성총을 가득히 입으신 마리아... 주 너와 한가지로 계시니, 여인 중에 너 총복을 받으시며.” 4.3.3

and *Sōnggyo yoji*, but alongside Imbert's *Ch'ŏnju sōnggyo konggwa* it provides a crucial counterpoint to the French clergy's officially-disseminated documents. The work's synthesis of Christian values with Eastern forms is striking, and every part of it provides multiple instances of specifically Koreanised Catholicism. In this section I will provide examples which highlight Daveluy's localised efforts at accommodation, despite Roman Catholic administrative opposition to the tactic. Fittingly for a work titled "Strategies for Self-Introspection" it begins with an extended discussion of the importance of self-reflection, continued study and practice in order to achieve eternal redemption:

I will give you a book that will open the way to self-reflection to help you to understand reasonably well... if we do not follow the obligation each of us has to always be discussing and practice the Ten Commandments and [resist] the Seven Deadly Sevens, we will surely fall into eternal damnation.⁶⁰⁷

Western Roman Catholic orthodoxy in the mid-19th century did not place any obligation on its adherents to discuss the tenets of their faith, or understand them – only obey them. But Daveluy urges his readers to accept they have an "obligation", *ch'aek*, to "always be discussing", *nŏlli ūnonhanŭn*, their religion's precepts, as well as practicing them. This is a concrete example of inculturation – expressing Catholic obligations in Confucian terms – and is a powerful illustration of the influence their Korean had had on Daveluy. Discussion and analysis of the tenets of Catholicism was not a central concern of the 19th century France which Daveluy and his compatriots had trained in; instead, as we can see from the personal letters and official reports of these men, rote memorisation, unshakeable faith and diligent practice were what was expected in a Western European Catholic context. But to truly inculturate their religion amongst their new potential audience Daveluy and compatriots also had to re-cast Catholicism as requiring sincere study and thought.

The introduction to *Sōngch'al Kīryak* goes on to exhibit many of the themes and rhetorical devices which appear throughout the work. Daveluy had clearly absorbed something of the Confucian concern with context and interrelationality – the crimes and sins he discusses are made more heinous when they are committed under certain conditions or by people in certain positions. For example, piety to parents and respect for elders is emphasised:

Being angry at parents or elderly is different from being angry at people of your age and younger people.⁶⁰⁸

Equally one's place in society and accompanying obligations affect the severity of one's offences:

Stealing is different when you do it to the rich and when you do it to the poor. It's also different when you steal from your parents' belongings and when you steal someone else's.⁶⁰⁹

[To] the person who lives in the palace: [for you] to not follow the law is different from when citizens don't follow it.⁶¹⁰

Committing [sins] at a church is considered more serious, as well as is committing [sins] at a public place with many others.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁷ Daveluy, *Sōngch'al Kīryak*, *Introduction*: “이런 교우를 불쌍히 여기고 그 타당히 고해하기를 돕고자하여 성찰하는 길을 여는 책을 내여 주느니 이는 고해 예비할 때 마다 볼 책이라... 십계사규와 칠죄종을 자세히 풀지 못하니 각 사람이 마땅히 먼저 이 모든 도리를 널리 의논하는 책에서 배울지라.” Accessed via <https://ko.wikisource.org/wiki/성찰기략> at on 29.10.2016

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid: “부모나 옷사람에게 한것과 평등과 아래사람에게 함이 다르고.”

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid: “부자에게 도적함과 굶는사람에게 함이 다르고 남의 물건을 가져옴과 부모의 물건을 기입이 다르고.”

⁶¹⁰ Ibid: “나라의 궐을 맡은자 법을 거스림과 백성이 함이 다르고.”

⁶¹¹ Ibid: “아무 죄라도 성당에서 범함이 더 중하고 여러사람 있는 곳에서 범함이 더 중하며, 혹 뜻을 따라 더하니 곳 생명 구하기를 위하여 도적질함과 주식잡기를 위하여 함이 다르고.”

Intention is important – pre-meditated anger or spitefulness is worse than impulsive immoral behaviour:

Interrupting and lying thoughtlessly are different from getting jealous and hurting people.⁶¹²

Daveluy also provided practical advice for his audience concerning how to memorise and reflect upon the scriptures. This section of the work could easily have come from an orthodox Eastern admonition on the importance of sincere study and sustained effort:

When reading prayers, forget distracting thoughts. Forgetting them, keeping them in your mind temporarily and keeping them for a while are different. Having a thought of taking revenge on someone a little, a lot, or for days and months are [all] different. A couple of instances of verbal abuse is different from an extended [instance]. Working for a short time on Sunday is different than working all day on Sunday. Being in a cult once is different from being in it often. So, when introspecting, try to disclose everything that is relevant above and confess how heavy your sin is.⁶¹³

Catholics were to practice the most stringent and active self-policing, making themselves aware of even the smallest of their sins:

Be dutiful, and rarely-committed sins can be easily fixed, so don't commit them often and remember the number of times you do them and confess them. When smaller sins and often-committed-sins happen, try to remember how many times they happen, but if you don't know the number then examine [the situation] carefully, and confess the approximate number, such as "it was once a week" or "a certain number of times a month." If you introspect without sincerity or if you don't honestly confess how many times you committed these sins, you won't be forgiven – so why would you do that?⁶¹⁴

Catholics must combine assiduous self-reflection with study of the precepts of their faith to properly express their religion:

Sins committed by thoughts, initial intentions, or words, as well as meddling, are easily found in the ten commandments, and every single thing [ie type of sin] hasn't been listed in this book, so when individuals introspect, they should remember how these work and examine the articles in this book themselves.⁶¹⁵

612 Ibid: “훼방과 거짓말같은 것이 무심히 함과 남을 질투하고 한하거나 해하는 뜻으로 함이 다르며.”

613 Ibid: “염경할 때에 분심잡념을 물리치고 아니 물리침과 무심히 머무르고 짐짓 머무름과 잠간 머물고 오래 머무름이 다르고 원수 값을 마음은 적게 두고 크게 됨과 몇일몇달을 됨이 다르고 악담이나 음담이나 두어마디 함과 길게함이 다르고 주일날에 한참 일을 함과 종일 함이 다르고 이단의 일을 잠깐 한번 함과 제 천을 세워 풍속대로 자주 범하고 또한 여러 사람을 인유하여 범케함이 다르니 성찰할 때에 마땅히 힘을 다하여 범한 바죄에 이같은 연유 | 혹 겸하여 없는가 사색하여 능히 고해할 때에 그 경중을 밝히 알게 할지니라.”

614 Ibid: “충하고 혹 드물게 범한죄는 범한 번수를 잡기 쉬우니 대개로 이르지 말고 불가불 수를 똑똑히 기억하여 그 수대로 고할것이오, 경하고 혹 자주 범한 죄는 힘을 다하고도 그 번수를 실로 정하지 못하거든 주대전에 착실히 사색하여 혹 ‘날마다’나 혹 ‘한주일안’이나 혹 ‘한달에 몇번’이나 범하였는지 수를 대략잡아 그대로 고할지니라. 만일성찰을 가벼이 하거나 혹 부끄린 탓으로 범한 바 각 죄의 수를 실상으로 이르지 아니하면 그 죄의 사함을 얻지 못할 것이니 어찌 범연히 할것이나”.

615 Ibid: “생각이나 원의나 말로 범한죄와 남에게 간섭한 죄는 십계조목마다 걸리기 쉬운것이로되 또한 이 책에 번번히 벌리지 못한 것이니 각 사람이 성찰할 때에 이 두어끝이 어떻게 죄되는 도리를 기억하여 마땅히 스스로 책에 있는 조목에 대하여 사색할지라.”

Daveluy then provides his readers with a series of terse commands, each presented in relation to a particular Commandment, although he expands the scope of his suggestions significantly beyond matters relating directly to the particular Commandment. Many of these instructions are custom-crafted for a Korean, Confucian readership. In the section dealing with the First Commandment, “thou shalt have no other gods before me”, the audience is urged not to:

Doubt whether, or saying that, the holy way is not genuine⁶¹⁶

Another grave offence:

Not learning the correct way because it’s difficult⁶¹⁷

Simply parroting doctrine without attempting to understand it is not acceptable:

[It is forbidden to] memorise what is written orally without grasping it in the mind⁶¹⁸

Catholics should observe diligent study habits:

[Do not] chatter or smoke tobacco when looking at one’s books⁶¹⁹

Heresy – *idan* – which was how Catholicism was considered, here means Buddhism:

Looking at heretical books or books from the school of heathens without impedance; believing that heresy has value or speaking without believing; speaking of, enjoying or handling heresy; buying, selling or borrowing heretical items; giving money to heresy; deciding to commit heresy.⁶²⁰

In the section dealing with the Fourth Commandment – “honour thy father and mother” – Daveluy examines four of the five key relationships; not just parent/child, but husband/wife, senior/junior and friend/friend. Beginning with admonitions on how to behave with one’s parents, he warns against:

Hating one’s parents, or making one’s parents hate oneself; despising parents; seeking to nurse a grudge in one’s heart against one’s parents or looking to hurt one’s parents; putting one’s mind towards betraying one’s parents; wishing for parents to die early.⁶²¹

Daveluy goes on to detail a myriad of ways in which the reader could dishonour their parents, but must not:

Beating someone or an animal because you cannot beat your parents... treating parents with a chilly face... not listening to parent’s proper names; listening to parent’s incorrect names [ie common/familiar forms of address]... recommending that parents turn to crime... not trying diligently to teach a parent who is aged or dull.⁶²²

⁶¹⁶ Ibid: “성교의 무슨도리가 참되지 아닌가 의심하거나 말하기.” volume 1: *First Commandment*.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid: “요긴한 도리를 힘써 배우지 않기.”

⁶¹⁸ Ibid: “무슨 경문을 마음 없이 입만 따라 외우기.”

⁶¹⁹ Ibid: “여러히 신공하거나 책볼 때 지껄이거나 담배먹기.”

⁶²⁰ Ibid: “이단의 책이나 열교의 책을 관면없이 보거나 집에 두거나 빌리기; 이단의 효험 있는줄로 믿거나 혹 믿지 아니하고도 말하기; 아무 길흉의 징조를 믿거나 혹 믿지 아니하고도 말하기; 이단의 말을 하거나 즐겨듣거나 거들기; 이단 범할 뜻을 두기.” Volume 1: *God’s Commandments*.

⁶²¹ Ibid: “부모를 미워하거나 한하기; 부모를 업신여기기; 부모를 마음으로 원망하거나 해할 뜻을 두기; 부모를 배반할 마음을 두기; 부모 일찍 죽기를 원하기.” Volume 1: *Fourth Commandment*.

⁶²² Ibid: “부모를 감히 때리지 못함으로 다른 사람이나 짐승을 때리기... 부모를 쌀쌀한 낯으로 대접하기... 부모의 바른 명을 듣지 아니하기; 부모의 바르지 아닌명을 듣기... 부모를 권하여 범죄케 하기... 부모가 늙거나 둔한것을 요긴한 도리를 힘써 가르치지 않기.”

The prohibition on not listening to “proper names”, *parŭn myŏng*, and listening to “incorrect names”, *parŭji aninmyŏng*, is a particularly interesting example of Koreanisation. While familiar and formal forms of address certainly existed in Daveluy’s native French, and he would have addressed his own parents with the formal “vous” and as “mere” and “pere”, within Korean language and culture the contextual use of names modes of address is of primary importance. One uses different verb forms and completely avoids the use of second-person pronouns when addressing elders such as one’s parents, and a parent’s given name is *never* used by their children. Within the various and imaginative ways Daveluy thinks up to disrespect one’s parents, he does not countenance using a familiar form of address with a father or mother. Even hearing a parent’s given name being used, or being addressed casually, should be strenuously avoided! This passage is strong evidence that Daveluy had deeply internalised the values of his setting and sought to express them within his Catholicism.

Daveluy then provides advice on how to raise a child, and many of his suggestions replicate classical orthodoxy:

[It is a sin to] not teach one’s child common courtesy and manner (as befitting one’s circumstances); to not look at one’s child’s heart, words and deeds.⁶²³

Next comes guidance for married couples, who are told to that it is a sin to:

Not to try to agree with one another or to want to die early... listening to the wrong given name for a person... to have a wife and failing to give birth.⁶²⁴

Here Daveluy is unrepentantly reinforcing the Confucian marital structure: the husband must lead the couple, and a marriage must produce children. Next, siblings:

[It is wrong to] not try to preserve brotherly love; not help one’s brothers and sister; resent, blame, blaspheme, fight or beat one another.⁶²⁵

In his final discussion of these particular cardinal relationships, Daveluy addresses the reader’s duties towards their country and monarch. It is forbidden to:

Not follow the correct laws of one’s country; hide one’s levies on a pretext (not paying taxes); grumble against or blame the king or ministers⁶²⁶

In another example of adapting the message to its audience Daveluy gives advice to readers who own slaves:

[It is a sin when] an owner scolds, beats or requires excessive work from a slave or servant; [it is a sin] if the master does not ensure a proper departure from life for their servant or does not give his slaves a covenant [ie release them upon his death].⁶²⁷

At first glance we might assume that slavery would be absolutely incompatible with Christian values. But the Catholic church’s attitude to slavery had shifted and shown inconsistencies throughout history (Maxwell, 1975; Davis, 2008), and various passages in both the Old and New Testament had been used to justify slavery. It is debatable what Daveluy’s own attitude to slavery may have been. Daveluy

⁶²³ Ibid: “자식을 세속의 인사와 예모를 처지대로 가르치지 않기 (예의 바르게); 자식의 마음과 말과 행실을 살펴 바르게 함을 힘쓰지 않기.”

⁶²⁴ Ibid: “부부가 서로 뜻을 맞추기로 힘쓰지 않거나 일찍 죽기를 원하기... 가장의 옳지 않은 명을 듣기... 자식을 낳지 못함으로 아내를 한하기.”

⁶²⁵ Ibid: “형제 영육의 일을 서로 도와주지않기; 형제 영육의 일을 서로 도와주지않기; 형제 서로 분노하거나 원망하거나 욕하거나 다투거나 때리기.”

⁶²⁶ Ibid: “나라의 옳은 법을 좇아 지키지 않기; 마땅히 바칠 구실을 속이기 (세금 안 내기); 국왕이나 관장을 한하거나 원망하거나 휘방하기.”

⁶²⁷ Ibid: “주인이 머슴이나 종을 몹시 꾸짖거나 욕하거나 때리거나 힘에 과한 일을 시키기; 주인이 머슴이나 종의 영육의 사정을 돌아보지않거나 사경을 언약대로 주지않기.”

left France in 1844, so he must have been aware of Pope Gregory XVI's 1839 bull *In supremo apostolatus*, which strongly condemned slavery, and the subsequent ban on Catholic involvement in slavery in 1843. Therefore we can define these tacit endorsements of slavery as another example of adjustment and accommodation to a Korean audience. No Catholic entreaty published in the West in 1864 would have mentioned slavery in anything but condemnatory terms.

The section on the Fifth Commandment, “thou shalt not murder”, advises readers to practice moderation and parsimony in their consumption:

To deliberately harm or kill your body; harming the body with excessive food; eating in anger or to hurt your body; eating something harmful when you are sick.⁶²⁸

The next section tackles the Sixth and Ninth Commandments together – “love thy neighbour as thyself” and “thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife”. Catholics must ensure they guard against:

Wanting a concubine.. listening to gossip or idle talk... reading bawdy poems or listening to bawdy songs⁶²⁹

Daveluy uses the word *ch’ōp*, “concubine”, a word with a specific meaning – a woman who is an ancillary sexual companion.

Daveluy also repeats the Confucian admonition against mixed male and female worship:

Men and women [should not be] in one room... when one talks about the way or studies books, men and women [should not be] jammed together into one place.⁶³⁰

Catholicism was continually attacked for its morbid fascination with the afterlife and selfish disregard for earthly responsibilities. In response, Daveluy calls on Catholics to avoid morbidity and excessive focus on death. Readers should avoid:

Thinking about the circumstances of mourning... attracting others to death by word of mouth or glances.. [you must] cut yourself off from those who are attracted to death.⁶³¹

Discussing “The Seven Deadly Sins” – a pivotal concept in Occidental Catholicism since the refinement of the concept by Pope Gregory I in 590 – Daveluy effectively mediates the concept into a form which would be understandable by his Korean audience, continuing to draw upon the language and images of classical Eastern orthodoxy. He warns readers to guard against:

Disliking when others' affairs go well, or being happy when others' things don't go well; because of jealousy, saying words that alienate people, or trying to stop someone's good thing from happening; not listening to others' right words, or seeing all of their words and behaviours twisted because of jealousy.⁶³²

Daveluy uses the word *barūn* here – right, correct – in full awareness of its significance. *Barūn* is the adjectival form of *parūda*, “to be right, to be correct,” a concept represented in Chinese characters by 正 *chōng* – “rightness, correctness, uprightness”; in other words, one of the central concepts in

⁶²⁸ Ibid: “자기몸을 일부러 해롭게 하거나 죽이기; 음식을 과도히 하여 몸에 해롭게 하기; 분노하여 먹지 아니하거나 혹 몸을 부디쳐 상하게 하기; 병든 때에 짐짓 해로운 것을 먹거나 해로운 것을 하기.” Volume 1: *Fifth Commandment*.

⁶²⁹ Ibid: “첩 얻기를 원하기... 음난한 말이나 이야기를 하거나 즐겨듣기... 음난한 글을 읽거나 음난한 노래를 부르거나 즐겨듣기.” Volume 1: *Sixth and Ninth Commandment*.

⁶³⁰ Ibid: “남녀들이 마구 한 방에 자기; 도리 의론 할때나 책 볼 때에 남녀가 혼잡하기.”

⁶³¹ Ibid: “남의 사음 범하는 것을 좋은줄로 말하기... 말로나 눈짓으로 남을 사음에 유인하기... 사음에 유인하는 사람을 끊지 아니하기.”

⁶³² Ibid: “남의 일이 잘되는 것을 싫어하거나 잘못되는 것을 즐거워하기; 시기하여 이간하는 말을 하거나 남의 좋은 일을 힘써 못되게 하기; 시기하여 남의 바른 말을 듣지 아니하거나 그 모든 말과 행사를 예사롭게 아니보기.” volume 2: *The Seven Deadly Sins: Jealousy*

Eastern orthodoxy. Echoing the concerns of Yi Pyök and Chöng Yakchong, Daveluy argues that doctrine was only of value if it led to practicing correct actions and saying correct words.

Daveluy then develops the idea further, explicitly drawing upon the foundational reproach of Confucian training, self-policing:

If you don't cut off that jealous mind of yours, it will be a root of many sins, so introspect carefully.⁶³³

Daveluy places study and self-improvement on the same footing as prayer. And perhaps mindful of the typical accusation levelled at Christians in East Asian cultures – that they neglected their familial and societal obligations - he then admonishes those who:

Omit either your soul's duty or physical duty, or are not diligent because of laziness.⁶³⁴

The book's readers are left in no doubt. Their "soul's duty", *yönghonüi bonbun* (ie worship of the Christian God) is as important as their "physical duty", *yukshinüi bonbun* – earthly obligations towards reverence of ancestors and the monarch and their duty to play a role within their society. The word *yukshin* 肉身 derives from two characters, *yuk* and *shin*, which further illustrate Daveluy's awareness of the particular pressures faced by his audience. *Yuk* 肉 simply means "meat" or "flesh", but while *shin*'s 身 prime meaning is *body*, the character also contains senses of *oneself*, *personally*, *one's moral character* and even *social status*.

Having promised that he would attack Buddhism in the introduction, in the section "Pride" Daveluy defines some of Buddhism's wrongs - a tactic he learnt from earlier indigenous Korean Catholic writings, who had sought to make their creed more palatable to a Confucian elite by attacking Buddhist practices and superstitions. Catholics are told not to:

Be content with thinking more of wordly affairs rather than hewing to the proper path.⁶³⁵

Neither should they:

And once again deference and respect for parents and elders is emphasised:

I would expect those doing wrong to one's parents or one's elders in general to reflect upon themselves minutely.⁶³⁶

In the section "Lechery" Daveluy places obligations on the reader which suggest he wanted them to picture a government official reading the work:

Write correct laws so that one's selfish desires do not prevail; do not foster self-interest.⁶³⁷

The word *maddanghan*, "correct", derives from the Chinese character *üi* 宜. Its main meaning is also "correct", but the character has a second sense of "should" – ie, the right behaviour and conduct *should* be engaged in. Daveluy is attempting to create a Christianity which is compatible with the highest standards of Confucian propriety (absent ancestor worship), also emphasising doctrinal propriety must be accompanied by correct behaviour.

⁶³³ Ibid: "질투하는 마음을 힘써 끊어버리지 아니하면 무수한 죄의 뿌리되니 자세히 성찰하라." volume 2: *The Seven Deadly Sins: Jealousy*

⁶³⁴ Ibid: "게으름으로 영혼의 본분이나 육신의 본분을 꺾거나 착실히 아니하기." Volume 2: *The Seven Deadly Sins: Sloth*

⁶³⁵ Ibid: "속사와 세물에 빠져 천주와 영혼의 일을 드물게 생각하기." Volume 2: *The Seven Deadly Sins: Pride*

⁶³⁶ Ibid: "부모와 무릇 옷사람에게 잘못하는 일이 오함에서 나는것이 많으니 제 사계를 상고하여 자세히 성찰하라." Volume 2: *The Seven Deadly Sins: Pride*

⁶³⁷ Ibid: "마땅한 법을 써 사욕을 눌러 이기지 아니하기; 사욕 기르는 것을 끊지 아." Volume 2: *The Seven Deadly Sins: Lechery*

The entirety of the section on “Greed” highlights the parallels between the Catholic monastic tradition of parsimony and the Confucian distaste for over-indulgence. Daveluy also discusses the body – the physical presence bestowed upon the recipient by their ancestors. It is wrong to:

Do harm to the body through [eating] excessive amounts of food⁶³⁸

And sinfulness must, again, be responded to with sincere introspection:

one must self-reflect if one misses out on one’s duty or upsets one’s parents or others or causes disharmony in the house or acts lewdly through alcohol⁶³⁹

The pogrom which took the lives of Daveluy, Huin and Berneux continued until 1871. Even as late as 1870, entrance into Korea was fraught with danger, as a Cardinal Costantino Patrizi Naro relates in a report dated 1874 which summarises mission activity throughout Asia:

Monsignor Ridel was condemned to death, he who had been given the title Bishop of Filippopoli in Rome in 1870. At that time there were three missionaries on the Korean border, in Manchuria, looking to pay to enter when there was a favourable occasion. If one ignores the number of martyrs of the last persecution, if one even ignores what was done to students of the seminary – what is left is animated by neophytes with such perseverance and apostles filled with an ardour which will prosper in the mission to Korea.⁶⁴⁰

7. Conclusion

The correspondence of the French clergy in Korea displays a rigid attitude to accommodation and modification in its explicit words, but implicit or unconscious acceptances of modifications to practice, as the excerpts in this chapter have demonstrated. We must also recognise that the “golden era” of accommodation by Western missionaries spearheaded by the Jesuits, the late 16th and early 17th century, had long passed by the time Imbert, Daveluy and their countrymen had begun their work in Korea (although of course rival orders had implemented different philosophies). While the reality of the necessity for accommodation in order to make a success of Catholic mission in Asian societies remained, it was not possible for the MEP missionaries to explicitly admit to it. This is the single greatest piece of evidence for accommodation within the work of the clergy in Korea of this period: without it, Catholicism could not have gained a foothold in late Chosŏn society. The Catholicism which greeted them was already distinctive and modified, and the Frenchmen’s efforts to hammer it back into an orthodox Roman Catholic form would always involve accommodation, particularly whilst the bureaucratic and administrative atmosphere was so hostile.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, none of the missionaries’ official communiqués made any explicit recognition of their accommodative strategies. Additionally the missionaries’ discourse did not seem particularly invested in a specific appreciation of Korea, its people or its culture. In large part the *Ad Urbem* reports seem to treat their location as almost incidental; Korea could be Tonkin or Goa or any one of a hundred different places being evangelised. Perhaps, having lived and worked in a wide spread of geographical locations throughout the East, these men had cultivated an ability to distance themselves from the locals they lived amongst, aware that at any moment they would be moving on from a given community, either in response to reassignment or as their safety became threatened.

Yet whether it was acknowledged or not, significant modifications were made to the practice of Catholicism on the peninsula both before and under the Frenchmen’s auspices. The foreigners

⁶³⁸ Ibid: “과한 음식으로 몸을 해롭게 하기.” volume 2: *The Seven Deadly Sins: Greed*

⁶³⁹ Ibid: “술로 인하여 본분을 꺾거나 부모나 남을 상해하거나 집안의 불목하거나 행음하는 그런 것이 두가지 죄를 꺾하니 그대로 성찰하라.”

⁶⁴⁰ Naro, *Ad Urbem* report: “Condannati a morte Msg Ridel, fu consarato in Roma nel 1870 col titolo di Vescovo di Filippopoli. In questo tempo tre missionari sono sulle frontiere della Corea, in Mandchuria, presti ad entrarvi quando se ne porgerà loro favorevole occasione. S’ignora il numero dei Martiri dell’ultima persecuzione, s’ignora anche ciò che sia avvenuto degli allievi del Seminario, ma ciò che è dato d’asserire si è che neofiti animati da una tale costanza nella fede e apostoli ripieni d’un simile ardore faranno prosperare la missione di Corea per quanto arrabbino contro di essa i persecutori.” *ACTA CP* volume 242, stanza 266

arrived to find a version of their faith which was markedly different, and they had to accommodate it. They had no choice; Catholicism of a certain variety was already established, and would continue alongside their attempts to wrestle it back into a orthoprax mould. We must also note that the foreigners' arrival beginning in 1836 could not have resulted in instant compliance to Rome's understanding of (Roman) Catholicism. The clandestine nature of the religion's practice, the tiny numbers of foreign clergy in the country and the difficulty of travelling and communicating throughout the region combined with Korea's pervasive and unique cultural milieu to provide significant challenges to the priests' mission. Not until the 1870s would Korea be safe and stable enough for foreign clergy for the religion to be completely subsumed into the monolithic Mediterranean-Latin cultural trappings of Roman Catholic orthodoxy.

The Jesuit missionary Giulio Aleni had adapted Ricci's policy of accommodation to extend their doctrine from Ricci's audience of the central Beijing bureaucracy to Aleni's rural literati and commoners (Shin, 2011). Shin argues, persuasively, that Christianity in the East was adapted *to* Christianity, not the other way round, and (at least in China) Christianity was advanced as the "perfection of Confucianism".⁶⁴¹ There is little evidence of this specific approach in the French missionaries' communiqués from Korea, unsurprising when we consider that two hundred years had passed between Aleni's era and that of Daveluy et al, and during that time the scope and autonomy of the Jesuits' operations had been severely curtailed by intra-Church political manoeuvrings and broader geo-political considerations. The Chinese-based Jesuits "could penetrate into the hearts of both uneducated commoners and Confucian literati" not only by "underscoring [Christianity's] affinity to the intellectual discourse of Confucianism" but also by "boldly proposing [Christianity's] supernatural dimension".⁶⁴²

Aleni published his work *Tianzhu Jiangsheng Chuxiang Jingjie* 天主降生出像經解 (*“Explanations on the Incarnation of the Heavenly Lord”*) in China in 1637, a time and place which was very different to the Korea of 1839. Korean Christians had no choice but to engage with Confucianism; although there were various social and religious movements challenging orthodoxy alongside Christianity in this period of Korean history (Chung, 1995) there were no other established major rivals to Confucianism to compare with 17th-century China's Buddhism and Taoism.

The original Jesuit accommodationists in China sought to win people to Christianity by virtue of living admirable lives and showing respect to the language, philosophy and customs of China (Riestra, 1986). The Frenchmen living and working in Korea were clearly interested in a more direct practice of Christianity, making conversion and celebration of the sacraments at the core of their work. Equally, we cannot discount the difference in legal framework between Ricci's China and Maubant's Korea. The tenure of Ricci et al certainly had its ups and downs, but there were long periods of friendly relations and official toleration of their religion. By contrast the French clergy in Korea worked in a thoroughly inhospitable setting. Prioritising conversions and dispensation of the sacraments over relationships with powerful figures was an expedient move when the missionary's life could be forfeit at any point.

One of the most curious aspects of these letters is their treatment of the language problem. Chinese had a long history as a language of importance for Catholic missionaries, whereas Korean was relatively obscure; but the principles of Ruggieri and Ricci-style missionary work held the importance of learning a prospective congregation's native tongue as of primary importance. Clearly Imbert and others had different objectives. Perhaps they prioritised Chinese as many of their doctrinal materials – not to mention the vast majority of the indigenous Korean Catholic materials produced between 1784 and 1836 – were written in Chinese characters. Perhaps also a kind of snobbery inculcated by their Latinate education biased them against "vernacular" Korean and towards literary Chinese.

As an administration, the Catholic church followed a rather straightforward policy; complicit with regimes which supported or tolerated it and in opposition to power structures which suppressed it. During the colonial era, for example, the Catholic hierarchy in Korea worked quite closely with the Japanese administration as a *quid pro quo* in return for official tolerance of Catholicism (Baker, 2013). Rausch sees many conservative French missionaries as having been "not particularly nationalistic",⁶⁴³ uninterested in geo-political nation-building or spearheading French colonial ambitions, as these types of interest were bound up with the emerging post-Revolutionary secular state which continually clashed with the Roman Catholic establishment in France and Europe as a whole. The France which

⁶⁴¹ Shin, 2011. "The Supernatural in the Jesuit Adaptation to Confucianism: Giulio Aleni's *Tianzhu Jiangsheng Chuxiang Jingjie*". In *History of Religions*, Vol. 50, No. 4, Jesuit Missionaries in China and Tibet (May 2011), pp. 329-361. 331

⁶⁴² Shin, 2011. 331

⁶⁴³ Rausch, 2013. 46

had produced these men, after all, was “beset by conflict between conservative supporters of the Catholic church and Republican anti-clericals.”⁶⁴⁴ These conflicts went on to influence the French clergy’s somewhat anarchic posture towards the Chosŏn state, the broader Roman Catholic hierarchy and the period’s colonial intrigues. The Chosŏn administration, for its part, seriously suppressed the Western priests and their flock only when a number of factors met. Their doctrinal heresy and foreign provenance was not enough for large-scale – but when these two characteristics combined with political instability (domestic unrest or colonial perustration) Catholics on the peninsula suffered brutal oppression.

Amidst these conditions the Frenchmen attempted to minister to the needs of their votaries and maintain a church which was reasonably compliant with Roman Catholic regulations. Ultimately the inculturation which occurred during these efforts was significant, and recognised by many of the clerics on a personal level, though it was not officially acknowledged and largely remains unheralded by modern commentators, both by academic historians and church chroniclers. The French clergy combined a singular set of influences to achieve a singular, and not-entirely-controlled, outcome which makes up part of the utterly unique history of early Korean Catholicism. In the next and final section of this study we will analyse my findings and conclusions as a whole.

⁶⁴⁴ Rausch, 2013. 45

Conclusion

Early Korean Catholicism represented an anomaly, even when compared to the later history of the religion. The Korean experience would never be repeated, with such a unique set of circumstances: the independent entry of Catholicism into a closed state with a highly-developed and refined culture, one markedly distinct from that of the West, where a small group of renegade aristocrats decided to espouse a foreign belief system. In the introduction to this study I asked whether Uzukwu's (1996) assertion that some – even most – African Catholics have maintained their cultural identity alongside their Catholicism would apply to early Korean Catholics. My response is that it did: up until Catholicism's legalisation in 1886, there is ample evidence that Korean Catholics created syncretic forms of worship and understanding which were heavily influenced by their cultural background.

In 1860 Qing China signed treaties with France, Russia and Great Britain. Again displaying Rome's attitude to Korea, Cardinal Naro includes the peninsula in his analysis of a treaty signed by a sovereign China:

The treaty of Peking stipulated nothing about religious freedom in Korea. Nevertheless, the monitoring was lax.⁶⁴⁵

“Religious freedom”, of course, is a telling phrase: a concept as odd to Chosŏn Koreans as exhortations to abandon popular democracy might be to modern Western Europeans. We must remember that this was a period when ideas like *citizenship*, *nationhood* and *diplomacy* were undergoing a process of translation and negotiation in order to be used by and against Koreans. The modern reader daily encounters tropes from external sources which have embedded them into their own culture to varying degrees; they can therefore examine a given concept in an abstract way when it is encountered. In its simplest form: *there* they do *this*. But even the most sophisticated and worldly Chosŏn scholar would have experienced only a tiny fraction of the competing cultural inputs characteristic of our modern lives. Culture and society were organised along persistent and stable lines, lines which were themselves buttressed by similarly well-established foundations. There was no easy or well-defined protocol to fall upon when the status quo was interrupted by foreign elements, elements which were foreign in any and all senses of the word at one point or another. Given that, the official reaction to Catholicism is not at all surprising. What is surprising is that the religion survived at all.

Two factors are central in explaining the persistence of the religion. Firstly, again as modern readers it is easy to forget just how arduous and unreliable communication and transport was in the 19th century: projection of state power and guidance took considerably longer than it does in the early twenty-first century. Local considerations – ties of blood or marriage, or opportunities for enrichment – could override national duty without attracting undue censure. Catholics *must* have received tacit support or assistance in return for money from non-Catholic locals to be able to survive. Secondly, the doctrine itself was enormously attractive to a populace which was thoroughly exploited by the ruling classes, promising as it did an eternal afterlife in paradise.

Once Western clergy were legally established in Korea from the late 19th century onwards, the piecemeal efforts at inculturation which the French pioneers had engaged in earlier in the century were definitively abandoned. The Korean Catholic church, now firmly under the control of Roman overseers, sought to erase the particular character of its own history and enthusiastically set about ensuring its forms and expressions complied with Western, Mediterranean, Judaeo-Christian cultural forms. The religion's history on the peninsula was not completely discarded, however; during this period of consolidation and growing establishment acceptance of the Catholic church, Bishop Gustave Mutel (1830-1884) dedicated significant resources and time to securing copies of many of the documents which have formed important parts of this study, purchasing, for example, the original of Hwang Sa-yŏng's *Silk Letter* 帛書, and also extensively researching the history of Korean martyrs. But the unique inculturative practices which marked the early years of the religion's practice disappeared – forever. Accordingly, this early history continues to deserve our attention.

To many scholars, whether historians in search of an objective truth or church thinkers looking to extend and deepen their understanding of their faith, this unique meld of Western and Eastern form and philosophy never existed. Many historians see the efforts of Chŏng Yakchong and Yi Pyŏk as having rejected Eastern orthodoxy: the core elements of Christianity are too different from the foundational precepts of Confucianism for this “Koreanised Christianity” to be considered within the same lineage. Church writers, meanwhile – scholars who place their personal Christian faith at the

⁶⁴⁵ Naro, *Ad Urbem* report, 1874, *ACTA CP* volume 242, stanza 263

centre of their work – wish to portray Korean Christianity as having been compliant with Roman orthodoxy, or at least not overly influenced by the peninsula’s dominant culture.

Clearly, I have a different opinion, but the debate leads essentially to one question: what makes up the core of a thought-system? When does Catholicism stop being Catholicism and when does Confucianism stop being Confucianism? Every respondent will have a different answer. I argue that the *way* an idea is presented (in this case Christian doctrine) makes it worthy of consideration alongside other thought-systems expressed in the same way, particularly when there is no clear delineation between the form and the message, as is the case with Neo-Confucianism. Questing for truth and seeking to understand is itself the core of Eastern orthodoxy. Therefore I argue that using classical Eastern forms – of argument and of aesthetics – to debate and argue decidedly un-Confucian ideas forms an unarguable part of the same system, particularly when one considers that debate and inquiry are so central to the Confucian worldview.

One self-evident truth is that the Ch’ŏnjinam group decided to practice Catholicism based on their understanding that it reflected and amplified the best parts of their immersion in Confucianism up to that point. They, at least, did not regard it as a break with what they had learnt. And late Chosŏn intellectual history is notable for the constant search to “uncover” the new orthodoxy; different factions and groups could and did attain significant wealth and political power by possessing a monopoly on “truth”. For their part Chŏng Yakchong, Yi Pyŏk and others were part of an oppressed clique, bedevilled by ideological opponents. Their desire to “uncover” a new understanding of ultimate truth is not surprising. What is surprising is only that many of them apparently found something in that truth which overrode their previous convictions in important and irreconcilable ways.

There is also something of an imbalance in much of the scholarship on the subject in that it tends to focus on the incoming religion’s influence on Korea. In this study I have tried to rectify the balance somewhat by considering the transfer of culture, information and influence in the opposite direction: Korea’s influence on Catholicism. Hopefully here at least it is less controversial to state that the late Chosŏn had an enormous effect on *sŏhak*. Poems, catechisms and prayer books were produced in the local language by indigenous and foreign Catholics, not simply translations of Roman standards, but works which drew liberally on the local culture. Koreans enthusiastically adopted, then adapted, Catholic practices with minimal oversight from Western observers (or Western-trained figures like Zhou Wenmo). When Western clergy did establish a toehold on the peninsula they found themselves confronted with a variety of Catholicism unlike anything they had experienced before, even if some of the underlying precepts of the dominant culture – hierarchism and respect for one’s elders – were ones they could respect and emulate. The way French clergy and Korean laypeople finally conducted themselves, adhering to the “truth” in the face of scorn, death and exile, had precursors in Korean and Sinitic culture. The Way was the only way, and had to be followed. The disagreement came about only as to what the Way entailed. And an early twenty-first century viewpoint may be responsible for us making more of this similarity between the two cultures than people at the time might have thought; in the late 18th and early 19th century individualism was a less all-encompassing motivator of action as it is today. As evident from their actions, for many of the figures who played key roles in this story obedience to greater ideals and group interest was unremarkable.

But despite the basic similarities between the Eastern and Western viewpoints the “orthodoxisation” efforts of the Catholic *yangban* thinkers were more or less futile. However sophisticated their arguments and however deeply they drew on their native cultural inheritance, Catholicism would never be accepted as an evolution of orthodoxy. It represented a toxic confluence of foreign provenance, heretical practices and espousal by a sidelined political faction which guaranteed it would be utterly rejected.

Another potential driver of Korean Christianity may have been a self-serving quest for fame and prestige by being the discoverers of a new truth. Any allusion to such base motives by the Ch’ŏnjinam scholars would have immediately and definitively precluded the possibility of their ever being honoured in such a way, so its absence from their discourse does not mean it did not exist. We must simply bear it in mind as a possibility, particularly when some of the opprobrium deployed against Catholicism in Korea was driven by pragmatic political factors. There is no direct mention of any motive of this type in any of the primary sources so this brief mention of the possibility will suffice.

Meanwhile, the Frenchmen were in an unenviable position. Leaving aside the physical travails and psychological stress of their efforts – constantly on the move, travelling by foot in difficult conditions, afraid of arrest and betrayal – they were entangled within an unresolvable theoretical and administrative dilemma. Ricci and Ruggieri’s accommodationist strategies had long been officially discredited and proscribed, but Korea’s unique and vibrant indigenous culture forced Imbert, Daveluy and the others to adapt their message and methods, whatever they disclosed officially to their Roman superiors. Thus some modern Catholic thinkers have re-visited early Korean Catholicism and found in it a model for the modern church’s efforts, recognising the efforts which were made at clandestine

inculturation. Since Vatican II's recommendations (1964-1965) accommodation and inculturation have once again placed at the forefront of evangelisation and continued practice. The early Korean Catholics exemplified these traits:

Announcing his good news to compatriots, conducting dialogue with their culture, looking at the needs of fellow citizens and passionately feeling the pain, suffering and oppression of the poorest of the poor, and devoting their whole lives to the transformation of society to make it a better place for those who need it most.⁶⁴⁶

(Kim then characterises these early *yangban* Catholics as people “who had been Confucians.”⁶⁴⁷)

Finally, then, we can recognise that necessity breeds innovation. The original accommodation approach was in response to the rejection of Christianity by Judean Jews; early Christians thus sought converts in the non-Jewish cultures of the Mediterranean, in the words of one famous passage from the New Testament preaching in the languages of the “Parthian, Medes, and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene... and of Rome.”⁶⁴⁸ The French missionaries who visited Korea found themselves continuing this work of localising Christianity, often while ostensibly maintaining Roman orthodoxy. Thus it was that the early proponents of Catholicism in Korea, native and foreign, responded to unique conditions with a unique and nuanced effort of inculturation.

⁶⁴⁶ Kim, Sunghae, “Foreword”, in *True Confucians, Bold Christians. Korean Missionary Experience: a model for the third millennium*, by Iraola, Antton Egiguren, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. 19

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid. 20

⁶⁴⁸ New Testament, Acts 2: 9, 10.

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