

“onerous yoke of those despots. Yet all this does not stop Me from receiving with much kindness and courtesy all Christians who arrive thence, or pass through Our kingdom, and from dispensing to them all favour and consideration, just as We show it to those who, born in various provinces of Our realm, inhabit the same with no less liberty than Our other subjects. All of them I have permitted to build public churches, where they may pray and perform the other functions of the Christian religion, which hitherto was forbidden them and which I have granted them out of the singular affection that I have for Your Holiness. Moreover We have restored to their former condition the ‘Three Churches’ at Erivan, demolished by order of the Turkish general, and have entrusted them once more into the hands of the Religious resident at that place, to whom they belonged: rather We have had them rebuilt in much better fashion than before. And, if other Religious should go to visit them and celebrate the Divine Offices in them in the name of Your Holiness, I shall take care that no one dare to hinder them, or cause them the slightest trouble. In addition I promise Your Holiness most solemnly that, should Allah bless and prosper my arms in such way that I may be able to make myself master of the city of Jerusalem, I shall hand over it at once to Your disposal. Lastly I wish and profess that all My realms and whatever may fall under My sway should be subject to the pleasure and will of Your Holiness. Hence, as far as regards Me, I shall never separate myself an instant from Your friendship. On the other hand, it is requisite that Your Holiness, who from Your rank holds the first place among the Christian princes, should compel them with one accord to arm and send their soldiers to destroy the Turks. In this guise all nations will be benefited, and it will be manifest throughout the whole world that a true and sincere friendship exists between us. On My part I shall fulfil My own duties: God will that the Christians may do the same, sure that, if they do not move, take arms and push forward their army against the common enemy, in the general resurrection and last day of the universal Judgment they will have to give the strictest account of it to Christ Jesus, Whom they venerate and ought to fear, for it will undoubtedly befall them.

“For the rest, should in future Your Holiness have any business in these lands, please indicate it to the Fathers who dwell here, and they will bring it to My knowledge. I shall do the same through their intermediary in regard to Your Holiness, to whom I lovingly commend Myself, praying for You a long and very happy life.

“Given at Isfahan in the year 1017” (1609 of the Christian era).

In addition Fr. Vincent carried to Rome a memorial from the Catholic Armenians of the church of S. Mary in Isfahan city (i.e. not in the Armenian suburb of Julfa, then in course of construction), built by Khwajeh Shevelin. It named among its signatories nine clerics and many laymen: it referred to this church built by them and asserted that, though for want of good teachers they differed somewhat from the Frankish (i.e. the Latin) rite, they were good Catholics. They represented that they were in need of enlightenment in the Faith and besought the Pontiff for a Latin patriarch and also urged that an Italian of high lineage with a following of at least three hundred mounted men should be selected for the rule of the ‘Three Churches’ at Erivan, in order to impress the Shah. This section of the Armenians at the Persian capital was one of the fruits of the labours of Fr. John Thaddeus and separated by him from the schismatic Gregorian Armenians: it may be surmised, however, that it came from that part of the Armenian population of the lower Caucasus, transplanted by Shah 'Abbas to Isfahan and elsewhere, which had been in touch and communion with the Dominican diocese of Nakhchiwan.

On the arrival of Fr. Vincent in Rome early in 1610 Paul V received him benevolently. To dispel the apprehensions of the Shah His Holiness did not name a patriarch for the Armenians. But Fr. John Thaddeus had urged the creation of a college in Rome for Armenian boys to be trained and return as priests to their country; and, 31.7.1610, Cardinal Pinelli replied that the erection of such a college would be undertaken. Doubtless the Pope reflected that, should the missionaries be allowed no scope for proselytism among Muslims, a notable