

Thaddeus, had given greater weight to those sides and aspects of the Armenian doctrines and liturgy favourable to union with Rome than to their errors in dogma. Rome had been asked to sanction—and eventually did sanction—the saying of the Roman Mass in vernacular Armenian, and for it to be said in the schismatic churches. The attitude of Julfa was one of reverence and cordiality. The Carmelites were, in fact, entering on a terrain all too little known in Europe at that period—the tenets and ecclesiastical history of the various oriental Churches. There had been delivery of the Brief from Paul V to the Katholikos Melchisadech by Fr. Redempt in 1613, and a promising discussion of points of difference at Echmiadzin. The Carmelites came only gradually to make distinction between the 'Uniat' or 'Frank' Armenians (who came from Nakhchiwan—Alingia) and the schismatics, or 'Gregorian' Armenians: and in all charity during the persecutions by Shah 'Abbas I encouraged indiscriminately all Armenians to stand fast as Christians in the first place, giving such assistance as was possible. One of the three Papal Briefs issued during the reign of Shah Safi—that of 13.10.1637 (Arch. Vat., *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 51, p. 30, No. 28)—was on behalf of the Armenians of Nakhchiwan (or Alingia, as it was called by the Latins); and, after explaining how from some 300 years previously the Dominicans had been established there, educating and caring for the people, Pope Urban begged for the Shah's special protection over them and for all Christians in his dominions. The Carmelites away in the city had to supervise ministrations to other oriental communities—Syrians, Georgians, Chaldaeans—besides numerous Europeans, and their efforts among Muslims: their appearances in Julfa were as visitors, discreetly, by invitation, or as occasion demanded. For Julfa—it needs to be emphasized—from its inauguration was a township where Armenian subjects of Persia exclusively might reside: no Muslims, but also no foreigner from Europe. It was their Armenian privilege: and right into the twentieth century it was a unit, the gates of which were closed at night.

On the other hand there had been in the first thirty years of the seventeenth century a considerable party among the clergy, who for the sake of the common Christian cause desired doctrinal union with and recognition by Rome accepting, as they did, the Sovereign Pontiff as Head of the Christian Church on earth—in a period when European relations were sought against internal oppression they needed a foreign sovereign Protector;—and at the same time during those thirty years there had grown up a trading community thriving through trade with and in Venice, the Papal States, Leghorn, France, Poland, Spain. As followers of an Oriental rite these traders were regarded somewhat doubtfully in Catholic countries—how far were they to be treated as faithful or as heretics?: so they found introductions and recommendations from Catholic missionaries useful. Both parties, therefore, spiritual and commercial, for the protection of their interests in Europe supported the nomination of Fr. John Thaddeus as a bishop, the foundation of a college for Armenian boys; and freedom to settle and carry on trade in Europe was a simultaneous representation. The Holy See—the Congregation de Propaganda Fide had been founded a score of years later than the original dispatch of the Carmelites with the objective of work among Persian Muslims—was as ever cautious in responding to these overtures from the Armenians, but began to encourage and urge the missionaries on the spot to get the doctrinal realities of the position ascertained. Only in brief quotations from letters can the development of this situation be illustrated: for instance, in 1627, when the convent at Isfahan was in great financial straits:

“This house is at present living on alms: and our Lord is having particular care to provide for it: as, for instance, for these feast-days without my asking for it the Vartapet, or bishop, Khatchatur gave me one Tuman = 16 scudi. . . .”¹

Just a year later, 2.5.1628, the same writer mentioned that he had been

“. . . on Holy Saturday to give Easter greetings to Khwajeh Nazar, and at the Mass in the church of the Vartapet Khatchatur. . . . We have a boy of Khwajeh Nazar at the

¹ Fr. Dimas, 30.5.1627, O.C.D. 237 b.