

“blasphemies against the Roman Church, and in proof . . . the letter which he has sent
“to his church here of which I have taken a copy. . . .”

This Katholikos, Alexander, did not always escape retribution or rough treatment himself: the Dominican Fr. Peter Martyr from Julfa, 30.10.1706,¹ described how, when Shah Sultan Husain set out on his pilgrimage to Qum,

“Before going to a distance from the city, i.e. on the 11th September, he bestowed a
“*khal'at*, i.e. robe of honour, according to Persian custom on Alexander the Vartapet,
“ ‘bishop’ of Julfa who, as I wrote, had been elected grand patriarch of Echmiadzin in
“ place of the last one, giving him with the said robe and a parchment recently sent by the
“ king himself the investiture of the patriarchate, as it were, for he had to appear before the
“ king clad in it. But, having received this honour, a few days later he received a great
“ dishonour, viz. on the 22nd one of the chief officials of the Court caused him to be
“ bastinadoed: this was, as far as I have been able to understand, because, as the said
“ official had claimed 500 piastres as his perquisite for the robe and document in question,
“ Alexander had declined to pay, saying that they had been handed to him by the Shah.
“ But the excuse availed him nothing for, when he had been bastinadoed, he had to disburse
“ the money demanded under threat of being again treated to the bastinado . . . and after
“ the space of a few days the said Vartapet left here, setting out on the 14th October. . . .”

The view of one good linguist, the Carmelite Fr. Basil of S. Charles, as given by him in a letter² to the Cardinal Prefect was that:

“the Armenians are so obstinate in their heresies that it is impossible to convert them.
“The people would easily consent, but the ‘bishops’ are so hostile that kindness can effect
“nothing with them . . .”,

and he suggested that a letter should be addressed to Shah Sultan Husain

“who is very benevolent and studious, asking that the Armenians should be subject to the
“Pope’s spiritual authority, and be made to stop cursing Pope S. Leo, and interfering with
“Catholics. . . .”

In that same year, 1708, in fact the French envoy, Monsieur Michel, did obtain from the Shah one *raqam*³ addressed to Vakhtang Mirza (or Vaqtan or Vactanga Khan) viceroy of the principalities of Georgia and Guria, who was bidden to chastise Armenians molesting the Capuchin Fathers at Tabriz, and another *raqam* directed to the Shah’s lieutenant in Azarbaijan, telling him to enquire into the matter of the Armenians accused by the Capuchins at Tabriz and to punish them if the accounts were found correct. When the Carmelites Mgr Maurice of S. Theresa and Fr. Joseph Mary of S. Mary were at Tabriz, 17.1.1711,⁴ they found the Capuchin Fathers Peter and Bernard saying Masses daily and caring for the Catholic inhabitants—a little later, 12.1.1715, Fr. Peter indeed wrote of:

“the two households of English, which had been brought back to obedience to the Roman
“church by the missionaries, . . . continuing to be exemplary and zealous—one of them
“has the status of consul for their nation for the trade of their East India Company—which
“is a source of much edification to all Catholics there. . . .”

But already two months earlier, i.e. November 1710, an order had come from the Shah that they, the Capuchins, with the other missionaries in his dominions should be expelled:

¹ *S.R.*, vol. 559, p. 549.

² *O.C.D.* 238 u, 20.5.1708.

³ *S.N.R.*, III, p. 330.

⁴ *S.R.*, vol. 579, p. 38.