

“ . . . I do not know from what motive some missionary, well aware of the insults, statements and actions by the Armenian patriarch Alexander, had spoken so misleadingly that, instead of making clear the truth, he had tried to hide it, aided by a letter written by the patriarch in question to His Holiness: so that, because of that letter and the false information given there (in Rome), His Holiness replied with a very courteous letter of his own to the patriarch.

“So your Eminence should know that about 20 years ago this patriarch wrote and gave to be printed a booklet (which I have read) in which he spoke with very great contempt of the Holy See, S. Leo and the Council of Chalcedon—and this booklet, about one finger thick, was read by those who have so ill informed Your Eminence: to say that since then the patriarch has changed signifies nothing; because, besides that book still remaining in circulation, on receiving the reply from His Holiness he (Alexander) cast ridicule on that letter. Three years ago at the instance of M. Michel (ambassador from the Most Christian King to the Shah of Persia) the patriarch in question wrote a circular letter to his spiritual subjects, in which he exhorted them to live in peace with all Christians; but . . . after the departure of the ambassador he excommunicated all those who had entered our ‘Frank’ churches. And at that juncture he was the principal cause that in Turkey many Christians were made Muslims and that so violent a persecution by the Grand Signor occurred in that country. Finally last year (i.e. 1710) as you know from elsewhere, by dint of money he obtained a *raqam* (the most rigorous that there has ever been, they say) against the ‘Franks’ for our expulsion: and now he has come here to molest us—what it will be, God knows. . . .”

The “very courteous letter” and “reply” from Pope Clement XI, on which the Katholikos Alexander was thus said to have cast ridicule, was dated 15.3.1710 (Arch. Vat. *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 87, p. 194): the mention in it of the Jesuit Père Villotte having stated at Rome how the patriarch had used his authority to encourage good relations with the Latin missionaries reveals the name of the person who “had spoken so misleadingly” in Rome, in the words of the Carmelite Father—information so contrary to the abundant evidence of the violent enmity Alexander showed throughout against the Latin missionaries, that the veracity of the informant about matters Persian in general becomes impugned. Extracts from the Brief are quoted below to show that the Katholikos had taken the initiative in correspondence and that the Sovereign Pontiff forwarded him for signature a formula of Catholic Faith, which would disown the heretical practices and beliefs in which the Armenians persisted:

“Pope Clement XI to the Venerable brother Alexander, Patriarch of the whole Armenian nation.

“Venerable Brother greeting and the Apostolic blessing. With great esteem We perused your Fraternity’s letter, wherein besides a clear and courteous expounding of your goodwill to Us there seemed to Us to shine forth, together with your special zeal for the Christian religion, a certain praiseworthy resolve to search and enquire into the truth out of the holy Scriptures and the witness of the Fathers, sure founts (if uncorrupt) whence can especially be elicited that verity.

“Herein, then, We had a pleasing and uncommon example of your good faith; and, as We know what position you occupy and how honoured you are among the celebrated Armenian people, Our heart burned with longing to oblige your present mind, with also the additional hope that, once you had explored the truth, you would become a partaker of Our anxiety to promote the eternal salvation of your folk, and that you would take care to lead the sheep which follow you into Christ’s fold along that safe path outside which he who walks utterly errs and strays, in order that they together with you might climb by way of the true Faith to the Divine grace and through grace to everlasting glory in heaven. It was also a delight for Us to learn from your letter that you revere this supreme chair of S. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, following your famous predecessor of