

and others for damage to the Capuchin mission in Tiflis done at his instigation, and for compensation: it was dated 3.1.1719 (Arch. Vat., *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 94, p. 24):

“Illustrious and most puissant king, greeting and the light of Divine grace. The anxiety of mind and vexation caused Us, when by letters from those parts We lately heard of the wrongs, the insults and very serious losses which the Catholic Armenians at Tiflis in the province of Georgia and the missionary Religious of the Order of the Friars Minor of S. Francis called Capuchins, assisting them in their spiritual needs, who are living there by the permission of Your Highness, not so very long ago were compelled to suffer, goes beyond all verbal explanation.

“For, as We have understood, they have been very badly used, beaten with rods, given deadly wounds, spoiled of their goods and afflicted with every other kind of injury.

“Besides this, the House of the missionaries was pillaged and in barbarian fashion together with some part of the church utterly demolished and levelled with the ground.

“Now all these acts, as We have likewise learned, happened chiefly at the dastardly instigation and by the craft of the schismatic Patriarch of Armenia at Echmiadzin and of a certain Vartapet Minas, implacable enemies of the orthodox religion, who made a conspiracy to ruin the same Armenian Catholics and the missionaries with such bitterness of spirit that not even the chief man of the place (although, aroused by the enormity of the crime, he did not omit to oppose them as far as he was allowed) was able to restrain the fury of their attack.

“Therefore with the obligation of Our pastoral office urging Us, We earnestly beg and beseech Your Highness to order that as many as were responsible for this dreadful persecution or took part in it, but especially the above-mentioned Patriarch and Vartapet be all coerced by some signal punishment, and over and above that You will cause all losses, which both the missionaries and the other Catholics above-mentioned have so undeservedly suffered, to be made good by them as quickly as may be.

“But what We first and foremost earnestly ask of You is that You will order the House and church of the missionaries to be rebuilt forthwith. For, since these are naught but abodes for pious devotions, and habitations and sanctuary for the Faithful who are continually praying to God, the Greatest and Best, for the temporal happiness and safety of the princes by whose benefaction they were established, they ought in no wise to be bereft of Your royal patronage.

“Further We urgently solicit of You that You will deem all missionaries and Catholics living in Your dominions especially entrusted to Your protection, and so support with Your aid and protection their affairs that henceforth they cannot any further be persecuted and molested by the schismatics, but will get that tranquillity and the free exercise of the Catholic religion, which up till now they possessed by the kindly permission of Yourself, the king, and of Your ancestors.

“Finally We demand of Your Highness with the greatest intentness of mind of which We are able that You will be pleased to ratify all the privileges, which Your distinguished forefathers of their clemency conceded to the aforesaid Catholics and missionaries, and especially that You will exempt and absolutely free them from the very serious oppression they now suffer from Your tax-collectors on account of certain unusual taxes beyond their capacity, and that You will give orders that merely that tribute be exacted from them which in past times they had been accustomed to pay according to their power.

“This will not be so supremely worthy of Your fairness and magnanimity as it will be by far the most gratifying to Us who in turn, when occasion is offered of complying with Your wishes, will not omit openly to display Our mutual goodwill, well disposed towards You, and meanwhile We earnestly pray the Father of mercies and Author of all good things to preserve Your Highness safe and sound for long, flourishing in all happiness