

“towards an Armenian bishop, named Vartapet John, accusing him of being a Catholic because he used to have communication with us, the Vartapet in question joined that Kalantar (Aviet) who the previous year had been removed from his office by the animosity of the schismatic bishop and who, to escape his enmity, had professed Muhammadanism; and they plotted the ruin of the common enemy. They accused him of having had the Quran translated into Armenian with a refutation of it, and other books attacking the Muhammadan religion. For this he was summoned to the inquisitory tribunal of that faith and, convicted on the evidence of 30 Muhammadan witnesses who swore to this, he was condemned to be burnt alive. The Queen Mother protected him, however, and demanded that execution of the sentence should be suspended. We are awaiting the outcome of this and our own re-establishment in Julfa: for this we have some hope from the grandees of the country, to whom we have represented the injustice done us, and the vengeance on the Armenians that our indignant princes may perhaps take. This has made a great impression on the Qurchi-bashi, i.e. general of the old militia: and on this account he has blamed the precipitate sentence of the Diwan Baigi: in fact the latter has repented the deed in such a way that one of his familiars has related to us that he (the Diwan Baigi) had said he feared retribution might fall on his house for what he has done to ours. We hope, therefore, that he will return to us the writing (document), by which we can re-establish ourselves in Julfa. 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, i.e. the Grand Wazir, received with much benevolence the petition that I presented him for the king in this connection. . . . It is worth mention, finally, that while the schismatic bishop was on his way to the chief judge he was wearing a watch, which he had bought for 24 Tumans, as he wanted to offer it to the Shah; but it happened to drop on the road and was broken to pieces. At this accident, turning to those escorting him, he said to them that they should turn back with him, as he considered it an ill omen; but those men, flattering him, answered that, if his conscience did not prick him for any wrong done, he should continue on his way without any fear. Then, raising his eyes to heaven, he said: 'God knows, I have never done any harm to anyone.' When he had to appear the following Sunday in the presence of the judge, he dressed himself in white, thinking it might be the last day of his life. Questioned in the examination whether he had written the book in question (i.e. the refutation of the Quran) he answered that he took an oath that he did not know even how to write. Astonished at this reply the judges answered: 'How is it possible that you being a bishop, are unable to write?' To this he rejoined that the bishop's office among the Armenians consisted in the life and good example led, and the teaching given. He also offered 1,000 Tumans to the judge to take a favourable view of his case, but the latter would not accept anything. So true is it that the sons of darkness are wiser than the children of light.”

(The *Vita P. F. Elia* adds: “The Armenian *ter-ter* (priest), who had gone round collecting seals to the memorial against Mgr Elias, was bastinadoed, and died the same night as a result. When the arch-vartapet Stephen was interceding for this poor old priest during the bastinadoing, a renegade Georgian rebuked him with: ‘O dog! it is not I who beat you or have you beaten, but Pope S. Leo, whom you curse in your Mass, and St. Elias, whose church you have destroyed’. Some time later, accused of having married an Armenian to the daughter of a renegade Georgian, he (Stephen) was seized, taken to the Maidan-i-Shah, and there himself bastinadoed.”)

This long narrative is signed and endorsed by most of the Catholic notabilities then in Isfahan:

“In witness of the truth of this narrative I have signed

“Fr. Elias of S. Albert, Vicar Provincial of the Discalced Carmelites of Persia, and  
“Bishop-elect of Isfahan.

“Fr. John Francis of S. Hermengild, Prior of the Discalced Carmelites of Isfahan.