

“If the Armenians keep to their promises I hope God will bless them by giving them grace, so that your Eminences can complete that which has been begun. But, if on the other hand (as is the more probable and more customary in their race) they do not keep to them, I shall be equally content with the Divine Will, and beg your Eminences not to trust any more in the letters and promises of that race, nor to hope for their reunion with the Roman Church whether by orders of the Shah, or for the sake of the protection of our Catholic princes. *It should be prohibited for any Armenian to enter the Papal States unless he first make a profession of the Catholic Faith. I would suggest that the Holy See propose to the Venetian Republic, to the Grand Duke*” i.e. of Tuscany) “*and to the Emperor to have an order jointly issued to their subjects to the effect that, if Armenians do not within a certain time find means of reuniting themselves to their Head of olden time, all their goods in those states will be confiscated.*”

In so forcibly expressing his view of the policy to be adopted the Apostolic Visitor was but allying himself to and repeating the recommendations of Carmelites like Fr. Dionysius, Fr. Barnabas, Fr. Casimir and others from fifty years previously down to Bishop Elias, as recorded in these pages: in the light of their experience, and modern experience who can say that they were not right in the result they foresaw? With these people it was their monetary, their trading interest, their pocket which counted more than any ecclesiastical ordinance. The persecution and campaign of intrigue in Julfa, Tabriz, etc., would surely have ceased altogether.

Independently, in his Memorial of 2.5.1702, personally presented at an audience of the Council, Bishop Elias approached the Doge and Senate of the Republic of Venice on similar lines:¹

“. . . I venture to suggest that, after so many favours and permits granted us by the king of Persia the missionaries could now easily convert the greater part of the Armenians, who are well inclined towards the known truth of the Catholic Faith, and also could arrange for the complete reunion of them along with the patriarch to Holy Church, the only obstacle coming from some chief leaders, banded together with the bishops and doctors in Julfa who, being unable any longer to do any harm to the missionaries, are applying all their strength to the ruining of families which declare themselves to be Catholic, even so far as to accuse them of the crime of *lèse-majesté* for having invested their money in this most Serene Republic. . . . If it would please his Serene Highness and the exalted College and Senate to write and to cause to be written in their name some letter warning the Kalantar of Julfa and his counsellors among the chief Armenian merchants that, considering the orders of his own king as also the favours which they receive here from the most Serene Republic and the Christian potentates, even to the point of having all freedom to live in their own fashion in this capital city, they should desist from thus directly or indirectly by themselves or others preventing the rightful liberty of the Catholic religion.”

There were those among the Catholics, even in Isfahan itself, who disagreed with such methods as advocated above, and considered that the result of the Papal envoy's discussions with the Armenians had been negative: among them Bishop Pidou de St. Olon of Baghdad with all his years of work among Armenians in Europe (although he protested against the Armenian persecution of Catholics and intrigues, like all other Latins):

“Mgr d'Ancyra left here for the East Indies on the 15th November” (1699) “after having taken with small result a great deal of trouble for the conversion of these schismatic Armenians . . . who were from before enraged against the Romans, . . . and I believe that in reality gentleness is more suitable with such persons than harshness and severities and the dire threats, with which they have been irritated beyond measure in the past. *They had promised that prelate to write a letter of submission to His Holiness the Pope, but they*

¹ S.N.R., II, p. 414.