

“long ago, Gregory the Illuminator; yet, if you would truly imitate him, as We believe you desire to do, it behoves you to accept that same Catholic Faith held by the Holy Roman Church, the true and only mother and mistress of all churches in the whole world.

“For, though that people of the Armenians which submits to you as patriarch professes the Christian Faith and acknowledges many mysteries of that same Faith and accepts in a number of points the true doctrine, yet by lapse of time it has slipped and fallen away from that whole and undefiled rule of Faith which from the very start of the nascent Church the holy Fathers and Doctors firmly held: and in some points it has dissented and actually at present is dissenting, a tragedy We cannot mention without very great grief of heart on account of the very great loss of souls redeemed with Christ’s blood and every sort of bane and calamity which daily results therefrom. For it is certain that without a true unadulterated Faith it is impossible to please God: but that is not a true and unadulterated Faith which contradicts the Faith in some portion, since it is written that he who offends in one thing has become guilty of all. . . .”

Then, after praying that the Katholikos and his flock will abandon schism, and recognize the Roman Pontiff as vicar of Christ and successor of S. Peter, the universal head, Pope Clement XI continued:

“. . . But, in order that a way may be open to you to accomplish this at last with God’s blessing, We append to this letter of Ours a printed formula in which are contained the articles of the holy Catholic Faith. It is not other than that which S. Peter and the Apostles taught and which the Roman Church has from the very start set before all the faithful to be kept. Now We exhort you and implore you with the utmost charity, as you love your salvation and that of your flock, and if you seriously are seeking for it, do not delay your signature—not indeed with the pen but rather penned by the heart—and add it to this formula; and that you will send it back to Us at once so subscribed, and that you will be willing henceforth to be the herald of the truth contained in it, and the teacher to that people. In such an endeavour the missionaries will gladly add their labours to yours—of course, as is proper, with all submissiveness and respect towards you, for it is well known to them that desired it is by Us that the cult of the Catholic religion in those parts should be attended by no lessening of your dignity.

“For the rest, We have heard in a grateful and glad spirit from Our well-beloved son, the Religious, Jacques Villotte of the Society of Jesus, who (not?) long since departed thence” (i.e. from Persia) “in company with the envoy of the Most Christian King, that you had not omitted to encourage by your authority mutual liking between the Armenians and the European missionaries: for those good offices We are very greatly in your debt, and We much more fervently pray God that what he has begun in you he will make perfect, and bountifully pour down on your head the gifts of his grace, in the hope of which We very lovingly impart the Apostolic blessing to your Fraternity.

“Given at Rome, the 15th March 1710.”

Of the responsibility of the Katholikos Alexander for the widespread persecution of Catholic Christians and missions in the Ottoman Empire in 1708 there is independent witness—from Turkish territory: the Capuchin, Fr. John Baptist from Orleans, a refugee then in Isfahan, wrote as regards their mission at Baghdad:¹

“At last, in the 17th year of our stay in that mission, 22.4.1708 (after we have had the blessing . . . to give baptism to more than 5,000–6,000 children of the races, Jacobites or Syrians, Nestorians or Chaldaeans, Armenians and Greeks . . . and after having freed some Europeans from slavery), the Devil made use of Alexander the patriarch of the Armenians, who by dint of money obtained from the Porte a general and most efficacious

¹ *S.N.R.*, III, p. 10.