

Entangled Confessionalizations?



The Modern Muslim World

15

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Entangled Confessionalizations?

Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety
and Community-Building in the Ottoman
Empire, 15th–18th Centuries

Edited by

Tijana Krstić

Derin Terzioğlu

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¹ The full name of the project was ‘The Fashioning of a Sunni Orthodoxy and the Entangled Histories of Confession-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th–18th Centuries’ (project ID: 648498; ERC Consolidator Grant).

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We dedicate this volume to all those who have striven and continue to strive to preserve academic freedom, critical inquiry, and the spirit of collegiality around the world.

Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu
November 2021

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

Words from Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian that appear in the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary are given in their anglicized form and are not italicized. These include, for instance, the terms Quran, sharia, aga, firman, ulema, berat, mufti, qadi (thus, we also use qadiasker, although it is not in the said dictionary), pasha, Kizilbash (thus, we also use Kadizadeli), fatwa, Shi'i, vizier, waqf, timar. Certain technical terms that exist in English are adjusted to follow more closely the Turkish pronunciation—thus, we use sheikh *ül-islam* (as an alternative for shaykh al-islam; both are given in Merriam-Webster). Otherwise, technical terms from Ottoman Turkish are transliterated according to their modern Turkish form and given in italics, so *pişkeş*, *buyruk*, *hatt-ı şerif*, etc.

When transliterating directly from the sources in manuscript, transcription rules of İslam Ansiklopedisi are applied for Ottoman Turkish, but we use *k* instead of *q*. For transliteration from Arabic and Persian we use the IJMES rules for translation and transliteration, including for the personal names and titles of works (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-middle-east-studies/information/author-resources/ijmes-translation-and-transliteration-guide>), which are given without diacritics, but with indication of 'ayn and hamza (except when hamza is in the initial position). For the sake of consistency, we follow the same rule in rendering personal names and titles in Ottoman Turkish (i.e. we indicate only 'ayn and hamza but not the long vowels).

Place names with accepted English spellings are spelled in accordance with English norms, for example, Etchmiadzin, Istanbul, Damascus, Riyadh, Iraq. This rule applies also to the cities of publication in citations.

For transliteration of words and names in Armenian, both Eastern and Western, both Middle and Old (Grabar) Armenian, we used the Hübschmann-Meillet-Benveniste (HMB) system, which is suggested by the *Revue des études arméniennes*. The same system is used to transliterate Armeno-Turkish (i.e. Turkish written in Armenian script).

For romanization from Greek we used the modified Library of Congress system, which entails no diacritics for long vowels, but the use of 'h' for *δασεία* (Ἑλλην—> Hellen, *Ἱερεμίας*—> Hieremias, *Ἰωάννης*—> Ioannes). We use the established classical transliteration for historical or key terms (such as *βασιλεύς*—> basileus). The English rendition of the dioceses, however, is according to Nomikos Michael Vaporis, Codex (B̂) Beta of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople:

Aspects of the History of the Church of Constantinople (Brookline MS: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1975). For the names of authors, we followed the transliteration they use in their international publications (Χασιώτης—> Hassiotis); otherwise, we transliterated them according to the above rules.

Since there is no generally agreed upon transliteration system for Syriac, we sought to match the approach we followed for transliteration of personal names in Arabic and Persian. Thus, the names of East Syrian Christians are transliterated in a simplified way, without indicating long vowels or any diacritics except ˆ for ܘ (thus, ˆAbdishoˆ). Well known English versions of Syriac names are used where appropriate (e.g. Ephrem, Eliya). In the case of Greek names used in Syriac, we used the most well-known forms, which are often Latinized (Ignatius, Nestorius). In respect of place names, the modern names for cities in Mesopotamia are used (Cizre not Gazarta, Diyarbakır not Amida), unless in reference to a quotation from Syriac or in a Syriac name (thus ˆAbdishoˆ of Gazarta). When Syriac place names are mentioned, transliterated versions are provided without diacritics except for ˆ (e.g. Tur ˆAbdin).

For Hebrew, we use the simple transliteration system loosely based on the *Encyclopedia Judaica* ‘general’ transliteration rules (for detail see: https://brill.com/file-asset/downloads_static/static_fonts_simplehebrewtransliteration.pdf). For personal names we use established English forms where possible (so, Joseph Caro rather than Yossef Karo).

In order to maximize accessibility of the references in such multitude of languages as featured in this volume and facilitate dialogue across scholarly fields, all the titles of works originally written in non-Latin script are given in the footnotes in English translation, while a full transliteration of the title in original language is provided in the bibliography.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AO—*Archivum Ottomanicum*

Braude & Lewis—B. Braude and B. Lewis eds, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, 2 vols (New York, 1982)

BSOAS—*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*

CaMR—*Cahiers du monde russe*

CMR—*Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, Vols 1–5 (for the period 600–1500) edited by D. Thomas and A. Mallet; Vols 6–14 (for the period 1500–1800) edited by D. Thomas and J. Chesworth (Leiden, 2009–2020)

CSSH—*Comparative Studies in Society and History*

EI²—*Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1954–2003) (online edition: <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2>)

EI³—*Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd edn, edited by K. Fleet, G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas and E. Rowson (Leiden, 2007–present) (online edition: <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3>)

Historicizing Sunni Islam—T. Krstić and D. Terzioğlu eds, *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c.1450–c.1750* (Leiden, 2020)

İA—*İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 13 vols (Istanbul, 1940–1987)

IJMES—*International Journal of Middle East Studies*

JAOS—*Journal of the American Oriental Society*

JESHO—*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*

JNES—*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

JSAS—*Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*

OA—*Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies*

Orthodoxa Confessio?—M.-D. Grigore and F. Kühner-Wielach eds, *Orthodoxa Confessio? Konfessionsbildung, Konfessionalisierung und ihre Folgen in der östlichen Christenheit Europas* (Göttingen, 2018)

OTAM—*Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Araştırma Ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*

Ottoman Sunnism—V. Erginbaş ed., *Ottoman Sunnism: New Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 2019)

POF—*Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*

L'Union—M.-H. Blanchet and F. Gabriel eds, *L'Union à l'épreuve du formulaire: Professions de foi entre Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (XIIIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 2016)

RÉA—*Revue des études arméniennes*

ReMMM—*Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*

SI—*Studia Islamica*

TDVİA—*Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 44 vols (+2 supplements)
(Istanbul, 1988–2016) (online edition: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr>)

WZKM—*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*

15. FROM DOCTRINAL PERSUASION TO ECONOMIC THREATS: PAOLO PIROMALLI'S MISSIONARY WORK AMONG THE ARMENIANS AND HIS CONVERSION STRATEGIES¹

PAOLO LUCCA

INTRODUCTION

Preaching in Armenia is like trying to break off small branches, which would join again later. Toiling here [in Yerevan, next to the Armenian Catholicos] is like removing the soil to eradicate the tree.²

These words, written in 1634 by the Dominican missionary Fr. Paolo Piromalli, encapsulate his attitude towards Armenians (both Catholic and Apostolic) and his deep belief that his God-given mission was to work for the final union of the Armenian Church with the Roman. Indeed, for more than thirty years, between 1632 and 1664, Piromalli preached and toiled in various capacities among the Apostolic and Catholic Armenians in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, trying to turn the former from their 'heresy' and to eradicate from among the latter those liturgical practices and doctrinal beliefs which to him and to Rome appeared to be unorthodox. Still, he would see most of his efforts fail, notwithstanding the apologetic and triumphant tone of most of his letters and reports to the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, in which he often declared to be on the verge of negotiating the union with the Armenian Catholicos or other Armenian Apostolic high clergy. While his failure can be, in retrospect, partially credited to his 'rather difficult nature'³ and overzealousness, it is easy to recognize that it was wishful thinking to expect that the orthodoxy ratified at the

¹ Research for the essay was supported by the funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 648498).

² 'Predicar per l'Armenia è tentar alla rottura di ramuscoli, quali anco ritornarebbono ad unirsi; faticar cqui è cavar la terra per svellere l'albero dalle radici' (Piromalli, Letter to the Pope, APF, SOCG 59, fol. 211r).

³ Van den Oudenrijn, 'Bishops and Archbishops', p. 177.

Council of Trent (1545–1563) and intended primarily for solving the problems of European Christians⁴ could smoothly and without resistance be implemented in lands beyond Europe. In the early seventeenth century, however, the Church of Rome started an aggressive missionary policy towards Eastern Churches, with the aim of centralizing the administration and jurisdiction of missions. In 1622, Pope Gregory xv founded the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which was to supervise all missionary activities and regarded the Catholics of the Oriental Rite and their ‘dissident brethren’ more or less as one and the same:⁵ the ‘schismatics’ were obviously heretical, but, through the lens of the Latin-tailored orthodoxy, Eastern Catholics were also to be monitored and corrected due to their constant proximity to heresy.

Drawing on Piromalli’s letters and accounts, this paper will present the conversion strategies he adopted in his missionary work and what could be seen as a paradigm shift in his policy. In his *Account of his Own Successes*, written in 1637, Piromalli clearly embraced what at the time was a ‘classic’ approach: to discuss first the matter of the union with the local ecclesiastical hierarchies; then, when—as it often happened—this failed, to gather some disciples among the schismatics who would preach correct creed among local people on a more practical and day-to-day basis.⁶ However, in another account that Piromalli wrote in 1654, just a few months before being officially appointed the Archbishop of the Diocese of Nakhichevan, he claimed that although the Armenian ‘clergy was already educated and enlightened in the Catholic truths’, only the conversion of the wealthy Armenian merchant families of New Julfa could persuade other Armenians to embrace Catholicism. Since, as he wrote, ‘all missionary efforts are wasted’ in converting New Julfan Armenians, he maintained that it was necessary for the Pope to ask ‘the Princes of Venice and Tuscany’ to threaten the New Julfan merchants that they would be denied access to their ports, unless they chose to convert.⁷

This paper will consider this shift by discussing Piromalli’s attempts to bring the whole Armenian Church into union with Rome, including his role in the union of the Polish Armenian Church. It will also analyze his embracing of a more *Realpolitik* approach in light of the emerging Armenian merchant colony of New Julfa.

PROSELYTIZATION BY THEOLOGICAL DEMONSTRATION: PIROMALLI’S FIRST MISSION TO ARMENIA (1632–1637)

Piromalli was born in 1591 in Siderno, Calabria, and took his vows as a Dominican friar around 1610 at the Convent of Our Lady of the Annunciation in San Giorgio Morgeto. He studied in Naples and Soriano, and after 1628 left for Rome, where he became master of the novices at the Convent of S. Maria sopra Minerva. On October 10, 1630, he got his bachelor’s degree. He was said to be proficient in theology,

⁴ Flüchter, ‘Translating Catechisms’, pp. 5–6.

⁵ Dziob, *The Sacred Congregation*, p. 50.

⁶ Piromalli, *Relation de’ successi*, APF, SOCG 293, fols 24r–31r.

⁷ Piromalli, *Relazione trasmessa*, APF, SC Armeni, vol. 1, fols 13r–32r.

philosophy, logic, Latin, Greek, and a number of ‘oriental’ languages, among which was Armenian.⁸ On May 31, 1631, he was sent by *Propaganda Fide* as Apostolic Prefect to the Catholic missions of Eastern Armenia, where he arrived in April 1632.⁹ At that time, the region was under Safavid rule, since after 1603 Shah Abbas I reconquered Tabriz and Nakhichevan from the Ottomans. To discourage the Ottomans from invading and trying to win back the Safavid territories in the Caucasus, in

⁸ On the life and works of Paolo Piromalli, see Van den Oudenrijn, ‘Bishops and Archbishops’, pp. 176–180; Riggio, ‘Fra Paolo Piromalli’; Van den Oudenrijn, ‘De operibus Pauli Piromalli’; Van den Oudenrijn, *Linguae Haicanae Scriptores*, pp. 68–69; Eszer, ‘Sebastianus Knab’, pp. 221–234; Eszer, ‘Ôgostinos Baġeñç’, pp. 196–210, 231–233; Amatuni, ‘Oskan wrd. Erewanc’i’; Čemčemean, ‘The Activity of Brother Paolo Piromalli’; Čemčemean, ‘Paolo Piromalli Archbishop’; Longo, *Silvestro Bendici*; Longo, ‘Giovanni da Siderno’, pp. 292–294; Longo, ‘La “Relation de” successi”’; Busolini, ‘Piromalli, Paolo’; Halft, ‘Paolo Piromalli’; Windler, *Missionare in Persien*, pp. 312–317; Lucca, ‘Cleansing the Christian Vineyard’, pp. 48–54.

⁹ The establishment of a Catholic diocese in the territory of historical Armenia dates back to 1318, when the See of Maragha, in Persia, was entrusted to the Italian Dominican friar Bartolomeo de Podio. Tradition goes that a group of Armenian Apostolic monks from the K’rñay monastery—nowadays in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic—reached out to him and he successfully convinced them to unite with Rome, establishing an Armenian Catholic diocese in Nakhichevan. Between 1337 and 1344, the monks who had reached out to Bartholomew founded a new order, which was approved by Pope Innocent VI in 1356 and was given the name of *Ordo Fratrum unitorum S. Gregorii Illuminatoris*. These ‘unifying friars’ (*Fratres unitores* / *Ełbark’ miabanołk’*), accepted to give up the Armenian liturgic tradition for the Latin one, though continuing to use the Armenian language in the liturgy. They were subjected to the authority of the Dominican Master; still, they would remain an almost independent emanation of the *Societas Fratrum peregrinantium*—the Dominican missionary branch—for more than two centuries. Even if their diocese was ‘missionary’, at least nominally, they really engaged themselves in active missionary activities only in their first two generations. That was also the time when their number reached its peak: later sources speak of about 700 hundred unifying friars and some 50 convents in the mid-fourteenth century. Then, once the initial momentum and missionary fervor had run out, the *Fratres unitores* started occupying themselves mostly with administering their monasteries and parishioners, writing polemical works, and translating theological, philosophical, devotional, and liturgical works from Latin into Armenian. By the last quarter of the fourteenth century, their number was already reduced to less than a hundred friars: both the opposition of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the 1370s and the 1380s and the campaigns of Tamerlane at the end of the same century had a lot to do with this abrupt decline in their number. In 1583, as one of the results of the centralising tendencies of Counter-Reformation, the Dominican General Council decreed the suppression of the *Fratres unitores* as an independent Order and its absorption into the Dominican Order, and the Archdiocese of Nakhichevan became a Dominican province for all practical purposes. By that time, only 12 Catholic convents were left in the newly established *Provincia Nesciovaniensis Armenorum*. On the history of the *Fratres Unitores*, see Tournebize, ‘Les Frères-Uniteurs’; Van den Oudenrijn, ‘Uniteurs et Dominicains’; Van den Oudenrijn, *Linguae Haicanae Scriptores*; Delacroix-Besnier, ‘Les missions dominicaines’; Longo, ‘Relazioni d’Armenia’; Longo, ‘I domenicani nell’impero persiano’, especially pp. 35–44; Lucca, ‘La traduzione armena’, pp. 135–143; Lucca, ‘Cleansing the Christian Vineyard’.

1606–1607 Shah Abbas implemented a scorched-earth policy in the region between Tabriz and Erzurum, leaving it depopulated.¹⁰ Safavid and Ottoman campaigns through Armenia continued, though to a lesser extent, in the 1620s and 1630s, impoverishing and dispersing the population still further.¹¹ This was Piromalli's first impression right upon his arrival in the Armenian Catholic Diocese of Nakhichevan:

Talk to Our Holiness and tell him that Armenia is ruined: there are very few friars, and they are ignorant, villainous, and disgraceful.¹²

What Piromalli found there, and hastened to report to Rome 'for conscience sake', was, in his words, an Armenian Archbishop—*Ōgostinos Baĭenc'*—who lacked 'apostolic authority', and a community of friars whose liturgical books included the 'fancies of their predecessors [the *Fratres Unitores*] and schismatic rites, to which they [the Armeno-Dominican friars] conform in their chants and services',¹³ and whose convents were 'full of women and of sons of friars, with no seclusion nor obedience; and [there are] a thousand words against Jesus Christ and his most Holy Incarnation, and [they say] that the Pope is not the Pope *et alia innumerabilia*'.¹⁴ Piromalli, like *Propaganda Fide*, also conflated Eastern Catholic Churches and schismatics.¹⁵ Still, as it is apparent from his life and work, he must have thought that—for the greater

¹⁰ Farrokh, 'The Military Campaigns', especially pp. 84–93.

¹¹ Herzig-Zekiyan, 'Christianity to Modernity', p. 47. Finally, after the short-lived occupation of Yerevan and plundering of Tabriz by Sultan Murad IV in 1635, the 1639 peace accord of Qasr-e Shirin confirmed the frontier already agreed between the Safavids and the Ottomans at the 1555 Treaty of Amasya, with Eastern Armenia, Nakhichevan, and Azerbaijan remaining Persian (Matthee, 'Safavid Dynasty').

¹² 'Raggionate con N(ostra) S(antità) e diteli, che l'Armenia è rovinata, li fr(at)i pochiss(imi) ignoranti, scelerati, pieni di scandali' (Piromalli, Letter to Campanella, APF; SOCG 104, fol. 322r).

¹³ 'Devo per scrupolo di coscienza ... avvisar le Sig(norie) loro Ill(ustrissi)me, et Emine(ntissi)me, come ... fa necessario rivedere li loro breviarij et missali, perche si giudica haver molte aggiuntioni secondo le fantasie d'Antecessori, e riti de' scismatici, alli q(uali) sono uniformi nel canto e nelle cerimonie. ... Di tutto questo d(ovrebbe)e haverne autorità apostolica, mà io non la trovo ...' (Piromalli, Letter to the Cardinals, APF, SOCG 104, fol. 313r).

¹⁴ 'Li con(ven)ti pieni di donne, e di figli di fr(at)i, non si conosce clausura, ne ubidienza, mille parole contro Gesù Cristo, e della sua SS. Incarnazione, e ch'il papa non è papa et alia innumerabilia' (Piromalli, Letter to the Pope, APF, SOCG 104, fol. 315r).

¹⁵ This was a common sentiment among missionaries, even those who were of Armenian birth. For instance, the Armenian Dominican Brother Grigor Corcorec'i, apostolic missionary in Armenia, wrote in 1658 to the Secretary of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* that he felt that he had never failed to fulfil his duty—to preach to the Armenian people, both the Catholic and the Apostolic, and instruct them in the Catholic faith, meaning that, in terms of needing to be catechized, they were basically the same to him: '[I have] always preached and taught the Catholic faith to these peoples, not only here [in the Armenian Catholic diocese of Nakhichevan], but also I have gone many times to the Schismatics, and when I was with them I have always preached and done many good things, and for this reason they are fond of me ... *et sic semper laboro in vinea Domini*' (Grigor Corcorec'i, Letter to Alberici, APF, SOCG 222, fol. 32r).

glory of God, the Church, and possibly himself—schismatics were worthy of more consideration. After all, notwithstanding their liturgical abuses and their dubious traditions, Armenian Catholics were already under the jurisdiction of Rome. Armenian Apostolics, on the other hand, must have been to him like the evangelic ‘one sinner’ over whom, if he would repent, there will be more joy in heaven than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance (Luke 15:7). That Piromalli could have seen his own mission among the Armenians through the lens of this passage from the Gospel could be inferred from one letter he wrote more than ten years later to the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*, where he likened the Armenian Apostolics to the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32):

Because the Pope is like a father, and these are prodigal sons. When the prodigal son was returning to his father, his father did not wait for him to come to his house but went to meet him when he was still afar.¹⁶

Thus, at the end of June 1632, when barely three months had passed since his arrival in Nakhichevan, after exposing in his letters to Rome the ‘errors’ of Archbishop Ōgostinos Baĵenc^ć, and fearing retaliatory actions by him, Piromalli resolved to go to Yerevan and visit the prospective prodigal sons, ‘to study that language [Armenian] next to the Patriarch [the Catholicos Movsēs III Tat^ćewac^ći], ... given the good disposition he saw in the said Patriarch and his Vicar the *vardapet* P^ćilippos, although they were schismatic’.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Ōgostinos Baĵenc^ć managed to have Piromalli back to his diocese in Nakhichevan by August of the same year, and kept him in prison in the convent of Aparaner for 22 months, until June 1634, on account of his excesses.¹⁸

¹⁶ ‘Perché il papa è padre, e questi sono figlioli prodigi. Il figliol prodigo stando ancora da lontano et inviato al padre, quel padre non l’aspettò sin dentro la casa, ma andò all’incontro’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 259r).

¹⁷ ‘Per ... imparare quella lingua appresso il Patriarcha, ... per la buona inclinazione, che conobbe in esso Patriarcha, e nel suo Vicario Filippo Vartabiet benche scismatici’ (Piromalli, *Relazione trasmessa*, APF, SC Armeni, vol. 1, fols 21v–22r).

¹⁸ According to Ōgostinos Baĵenc^ć, upon his arrival, Piromalli ‘took over the convent [of Čahuk], dismissing its Prior and [the] Vicar General ...’ by appealing to the Pope’s authority, and ‘forbade the friars from officiating according to the Armenian [Catholic] rite even outside the doors of the church’. Baĵenc^ć added that, while Piromalli stated that he had been sent there as Vicar General, having no document in his possession to prove such a claim, he had forged the necessary patent letter with the aid of another friar. The novices the Armenian Archbishop ‘entrusted him ..., after a few days started saying that they had nothing to learn from that teacher but arrogance, lies, falsehood, and bad example in many things, especially because he kept money in great quantity that he spent on eating’. Moreover, when Baĵenc^ć dismissed Piromalli from the convent of Čahuk ‘because he had made himself loathed by everybody,’ the Dominican lied to him, saying that he would return to Rome, while instead he went ‘to Yerevan, which is four days’ walk from here, at the home of the schismatic Patriarch’ (Baĵenc^ć, Letter to the Cardinals, APF, SOCG 103, fol. 271r; for other accusations against Piromalli, see also Baĵenc^ć, Letter to the Pope, APF, SOCG 103, fols 263–264). In still another letter in the

However, after his liberation, instead of going back to Italy as he was expected to, Piromalli went again to Yerevan, to discuss the union of the Armenian Apostolic Church with Rome with the Catholicos P^cilippos Ի Ա՛բաեց[՛]ի, the former vicar of Movsēs III and now his successor. There he would remain for 16 months, trying to convince P^cilippos and other *vardapets* of the original orthodoxy of the Armenian Church, which, in his words, over the centuries had ‘erred in grammar, in philosophy, in historiography, in theology, and in the Holy Scripture’.¹⁹ His opinion was that the Armenian Apostolics had lost the ‘faith of St. Gregory’ and that Gregory’s profession of faith, as it was recorded in St. John Chrysostom’s *Sermo ... de Sancto inluminatore magno Gregorio*, was fully orthodox.²⁰

The ‘original orthodoxy’ of the Armenian Church was a common argument among Armenian Catholics and Catholic missionaries as well, and Piromalli was adamant in showing the Catholicos that

all of their disgraces were born out of ignorance, [... and since] all Christians are one body, we should also have one spirit, one faith, one Baptism, one mind, one understanding, and one language, nor is it possible in any way to say: “I am Armenian, you are Frank”; and I show this unity with the Roman Church in their first Patriarch St. Gregory the Illuminator ... on account of the covenant sealed between the same St. Gregory and Pope St. Sylvester ... and between Tiridates [III] king of Armenia and the emperor Constantine.²¹

To prove to Armenian Apostolics that they were mistaken in their faith, Piromalli wrote between the end of 1634 and the beginning of 1635:

summer of 1632, Baĵenc[՛] stated that, Piromalli, adding to ‘all of his excesses, [also] demolished a church in a field, where the people used to gather four times in the year to attend the Holy Mass, and made for himself an Italian oven with its bricks, to the great scandal of all the Catholics’ (Letter to the Pope, APF, SOCG 104, fol. 329r).

¹⁹ ‘La Chiesa Armena erra in Gramaticha, in Filosofia, in Historiegrafia, in Theologia, et nella S(an)ta Scrittura’ (Piromalli, *Relazione degl’errori*, APF, SOCG 293, fol. 4r).

²⁰ ‘Et [verbum] mortuum est quidem quantum ad humanam naturam, sed immortale stetit et mansit quantum ad divinitatem quae in illo erat, quia autem ex duplici natura unus efficitur Christus’ (*Patrologia Graeca* LXIII, vol. 12, p. 945).

²¹ ‘Tutte le loro rovine nacquero dall’ignoranza, ... come tutti i Christiani siano un corpo, et consequentem(en)te dovemo haver un spirito, una Fede, un batesimo, una mente, una Intelligenza, et una lingua, né si puol dir in modo alcuno, Io son Armeno, tu sei Francho & mostro questa unità nel primo loro Patriarcha S. Gregorio Illuminato con la Chiesa Romana, per la profession della Sa(n)ta fede la confermo, per il patto fatto dal medesimo S. Gregorio, da S. Silvestro Papa ... et da Tortada Re degl’Arm(e)ni et da Costantino Imperatore’ (Piromalli, *Relazione degl’errori*, APF, SOCG 293, fols 7r–v). Piromalli’s preaching to Movsēs and P^cilippos and his arguments relying on the original orthodoxy of the Armenian faith and the ‘union’ between St. Gregory and Pope Silvester are reported also in Grigor Daranalc[՛]ի’s *Chronicle*, where, according to the author, the initial and all in all positive attitude shown by the two Catholicos towards Piromalli and his preaching was the result of their lack of understanding the deceitfulness of the Dominican (see Nšanean, *The Chronicle of Vardapet Grigor*, pp. 582–585).

a booklet *De duabus naturis in Christo* with forty-five doctrinal proofs, many textual authorities from the Holy Scripture, of which more than 200 are from St. Cyril of Alexandria and other doctors of the Council of Ephesus, many authorities from the Armenian *vardapets* (preachers) and common doctors found in their books, and I replied to seventy points drawn from their books against the duality of the natures of Christ.²²

Given that Piromalli was a trained theologian and philosopher, this would remain his fundamental conversion strategy over the years to come: trying to convince the hierarchies of their errors and of the Catholic truths by theological demonstration, believing that the most direct way to win the schismatics was to uproot the entire tree of heresy, since ‘cutting off the branches would be useless, and it is only with greatest difficulty that they can be cut off’.²³ Still, he would soon have to know that theological debate with ecclesiastical leaders, even when they seemed to acknowledge they were wrong,²⁴ was not enough if one could not persuade the clergy *and* the people (or at least their notables), who had different day-to-day priorities from the religious elite. All this he would learn by experience. The *vardapet* Łazar—the prior of the convent of Etchmiadzin as well as one of Piromalli’s fiercest opponents—managed to convince Catholicos P’ilippos that, if the *vardapets* of the Lesser Armenia united with the Church of Rome, they would have him removed from his office.²⁵ In the end, P’ilippos followed Łazar’s advice and, although in February 1635 he had seemingly asked Piromalli to emend some Armenian doctrinal books according to the Catholic principles, between March and April of the same year he sent the Dominican away.²⁶ Followed by several disciples, Piromalli started preaching with some success among the people, teaching them devotional practices such as the rosary and ‘saving the disputes for the intelligent’. Among Piromalli’s disciples there were Kirakos (ca. 1605–1642) and Oskan Erewanc’i (1614–1675), both of whom left an important mark on confessional dynamics of the period,²⁷ as well as letters and

²² ‘[Ho] composto un libretto *De duabus naturis in Christo* con quaranta cinque prove dottrinali, molte autorità testuali della sacra scrittura, sopra ducento estratte da san Cyrillo Alessandrino et altri dottori del consilio ephesino, molte autorità de’ vartabetti armeni et dottori communi trovate nelli loro libri et risposto a settanta argomenti cavati da’ loro libri contro la dualità de le nature di Christo’ (Piromalli, *Relation de’ successi*, APF, SOCG 293, fol. 24v; see also Piromalli, *Relazione degl’errori*, *ibid.*, fol. 7r).

²³ ‘SS. Padre, cqui stà la radice cqui fà necessario scavare, che tagliar li rami è nulla, et con grandiss(ima) difficoltà tagliar si possono’ (Piromalli, Letter to the Pope, APF, SOCG 59, fol. 207r).

²⁴ In his *Relation de’ successi*, Piromalli states that the Catholicos ordered him to draw up a confession of faith for him to read and possibly sign (APF, SOCG 293, fol. 25r).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 24r.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 26v.

²⁷ Oskan had a pivotal role in the history of the Armenian printing and in 1666–1668 published in Amsterdam the first complete printed Bible in Armenian (getting for that a grant of 60 *scudi*

documents in which they speak highly of their teacher and his scholarship.²⁸ However, P'lippos wrote 'thundering letters against [Piromalli], calling [him] the forerunner of the Antichrist, slave of Satan, and deceiver of souls', turning the local clergy and the people against him.²⁹ Eventually, after thinking of fleeing to Persia (he would renounce the idea, fearing that the Catholicos would denounce him to the Shah, telling him that he wanted to give Armenia to the Franks, and that the Shah would put him to death), in January 1637, Piromalli arrived in Constantinople.³⁰ There, he engaged in preaching among the Armenians of the city. According to some apologetic reports by his brother Giovanni, he 'was invited by the Armenian schismatics to preach in their church' (the Armenian Apostolic church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Galata), where he gave '30 sermons to them, and there were five thousand attendees at his homilies'.³¹ However, according to Grigor Daranałc'i's, it seems that Piromalli managed to preach in the church of the Apostolic Armenians by claiming that he was a 'disciple' of Catholicos P'lippos, 'had become an Armenian [...] and had taken the authority of *vardapet*'.³² His exposure as a Catholic impostor by

from *Propaganda Fide*, provided that no intentional errors were found in the book: see De Veer, 'Rome et la Bible arménienne d'Uscan'. On Oskan's life and work, see Amatuni, 'Oskan *vrđ. Erewanc'i i-iii*'). In 1641 Kirakos—after excommunication by Catholicos P'lippos in 1637 and by the Patriarch of Constantinople Dawit' Arewelc'i in 1640—was elected as patriarch of Constantinople in the place of the same Dawit'. Following his election, prompted by the Theatine missionary Fr. Clemente Galano, he signed a confession of Catholic faith which he sent to Rome (Kirakos Erewanc'i, Letter to the Pope, APF, Lett. div. ling. 180, fols 375, 384), but he died from the plague a few months after, in 1642 (according to Galano, before he could obtain the independence from the See of Etchmiadzin: Galanus, *Conciliatio*, fols 180r–181v. On Kirakos, see Örmanean, *National History*, pp. 2464–2466).

²⁸ In a letter to the Pope that Kirakos wrote in 1637, he says that Piromalli 'taught him the truth' (Kirakos Erewanc'i, Letter to the Pope, APF, Lett. div. ling. 180, fol. 287). In his biography, Oskan Erewanc'i remembers Piromalli as 'much learned in all the teachings of wisdom' (*Life History*, p. 633; see also his letter to Paolo Piromalli, APF, Lett. div. ling. 180, fol. 299, which is addressed to 'my sublime and excellent master the *vardapet* Połos').

²⁹ Piromalli, *Relation de' successi*, APF, SOCG 293, fol. 28v.

³⁰ 'Ma il Patriarca ci faria bruggiar dal Re, suggerendole, che vogliamo dar l'Armenia in mano de' Franchi. Sendo io confuso, mi risolsi aspettar cqui in Constantinopoli ordine di quel, che devo fare, tanto più, tanto più, che spero che li discepoli maggiori pian piano seguitarano' (Piromalli, Letter to the Pope, APF, SOCG 293, fol. 10r; see also his *Relation de' successi*, *ibid*, fol. 30v).

³¹ 'Simul cum eis venit ad civitatem Constantinopolitanam, ubi, quando Armeni schismatici intellexerunt eius adventum, rogaverunt eum uti in eorum ecclesia praedicaret Verbum Dei. Res inaudita est ut schismatici invitarent praedicatorum catholicorum ut eis praedicaret. Ipse enim zelo salutis animarum triginta sermones habuit ad eos et qui concionem audiebant erant numerus quinquies milia' (I. [Piromallus] a Syderno, *Directorium*, pp. xxix–xxx). See also G. Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 27, fol. 170v: 'Al passaggio c'ha fatto per Costantinopoli fu invitato dall'armeni scismatici a predicar nella loro chiesa. Predicò una settimana intera con gran frutto di quelle anime.'

³² 'Hay em ełeal ew ašakert em P'lipposin ew vardapetakan išxanut'ıwn em areal k'arozeloy' (Nšanean, *The Chronicle of Vardapet Grigor*, p. 585).

the same *vardapet* Lazar that opposed him in Etchmiadzin stirred up controversies among the Armenian community,³³ until 1638 when Piromalli was sent by the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* to Lviv, in the Ruthenian Voivodeship of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with the mission of smoothing out the differences between the Armenian former-Apostolic Archbishop Torosowicz and the local elders (*seniores*) of the Armenian (Apostolic) community. On October 24, 1630, Torosowicz had made his confession of Catholic faith against the will of most of his nation. While opposing the said union, in 1631 the Armenian elders stated that they would accept it if Torosowicz were to be removed from his office, a condition to which Rome did not agree.³⁴

BUILDING UP A CRITICAL MASS: PIROMALLI AND THE QUESTION OF THE CHURCH UNION OF POLISH ARMENIANS (1638–1645)

Part of the differences between the Archbishop and the *seniores* was about the Armenian churches of Lviv, whether they were to pass under Catholic jurisdiction—as Torosowicz claimed—or continue to be run by Apostolic clergy—as the Armenian elders of the city demanded.³⁵ This was the occasion for Piromalli to experience firsthand that Church union could not happen in a vacuum, and appreciate the importance of having the people on your side, even when hierarchies had already been persuaded. Or, as it was the case at hand with Torosowicz, when one chose union in order to be elected bishop of the Polish Armenians by Melk'isēt' Gaṛnec'i, former and pro-Catholic co-adjutor of Catholicos of All the Armenians Dawit' IV, in exchange for helping him repay his debts.³⁶ In short, Piromalli was to understand that the conversion of the ecclesiastical leadership alone could not guarantee that the people would follow.

³³ Nšanean, *The Chronicle of Vardapet Grigor*, pp. 586–587 (see also Shapiro's paper in this volume).

³⁴ On the union of the Polish Armenians with the Roman-Catholic Church, see Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁶ According to Aṛak'el Davrižec'i, Melk'isēt' was said to be 'a vain man' and very generous in giving gifts and bribes to all, in order to 'win everybody's heart and make friends with everybody' ('Melk'iset' ... ēr ayr p'aramol ... Yoroy patčarē bašxēr aratur'eamb inč's amenec'un, ew zamenec'un zirsns hanguc'anēr ar ink'n, ew zamenesean arnēr ink'ean barekam': *Book of Histories*, p. 7). Melk'isēt' was offered 'a great deal of gold' to ordain Torosowicz bishop, which he did, 'hoping for an even greater deal of gold in the future' ('Ew mijnordac'n matuc'eal ar kat'uḥikosn əncayec'in oski bazum, ew xndrec'in arnel zNikōlayos abelayn episkopos. Ew kat'uḥikosn tesanelov zolovut'iwn ar jeṛn patrast oskwoyn, naew aknkalut'iwn ews yolovic' oskwoy arypayn, hačec'aw ōrhnel zNikōlayosn episkopos Ilovay': *ibid.*, p. 356). The seventeenth-century Armenian traveler Simēon Lehac'i—who was born in Zamość—also passes a very harsh judgment on Melk'isēt', whom he describes as 'old and gray-haired, light-witted and feeble, a heavy drunkard and too fond of money' ('cer 'w alewor, xelac' t'ap'eal ew yuž ankeal, yoyž ginēmol ew arcac'asēr': Akinean, *The Travel Diary*, p. 384).

After an initial idyll with Torosowicz,³⁷ when Piromalli started discussing the matter of the union with the local Armenians, he soon changed sides, blaming the Archbishop for slowing and hampering the achievement of the union.³⁸ It is debatable whether Piromalli was used by the Armenian elders as an ‘opportunity’ not only to represent ‘their claims [against Torosowicz] at the royal court in Warsaw ... and at the Apostolic see’ and resolve the religious conflict but also to ‘reinvent the story’ of the foundation of their colony.³⁹ However, the opportunity *he* saw in the Polish affair is crystal-clear. While he was in Armenia, he had dealt first and foremost with ecclesiastical hierarchies, and the people he had preached to were mostly peasants. The Armenian *seniores* of Lviv, on the other hand, were rich and wealthy merchants, urban notables who had access to the King and felt themselves entitled to speak out both to the Catholicos and the Pope against their own religious leaders. Most importantly, their requests were heard by the authorities and, even if not always answered, at least taken into consideration. In a nutshell, their say had a weight. Piromalli must have thought that by persuading the Polish Armenian elite of Lviv to recognize the original orthodoxy of the Armenian Church he could use that wealthy and powerful community as a critical mass and leverage for the Catholicos of All the Armenians to sign the union on behalf of the entire Apostolic Church. In the beginning of 1641, trying to persuade the Congregation to let the Armenians have at least one of their churches back, he addressed to Rome the following lines:

One can catch a big mouse with not much bread, and a way bigger fish with a little one; what is certain is that if this church would not be granted ... you cannot even imagine what you will lose. And I regret I will lose both what I have already gained and the hope of gaining.⁴⁰

³⁷ Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*, pp. 100–101.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁹ Osipian, ‘Forgeries and Their Social Circulation’, pp. 119, 123. While it seems that the first Armenian merchants settled in Lviv between the second half of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century, the elders of the Armenian community told Piromalli that Armenians were admitted to the city of Lviv in 1062 by the Ruthenian Prince Theodore (Fedor). On the reasons why the Armenians felt the need for antedating their arrival in the region, see Osipian, ‘Forgeries and Their Social Circulation’. What is certain is that Piromalli believed their version of the story, and on August 5, 1641, reported it to Rome (*ibid.*, pp. 122–123).

⁴⁰ ‘Con un tantino di pane si prende un grosso sorco e con un piscicolo uno molto più grosso; certo è che se questa chiesa non si concederà ... voi perderete quanto non vi potete immaginare: et a me dispiace che perderò l’acquistato e la speranza d’acquistare’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 293, fol. 258v; see also Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*, p. 105). Grigor Daranac’i tells in his *Chronicle* that Piromalli actually persuaded the King and the Pope not to give the churches back: ‘This evil monk, whose name is not worthy to be mentioned, has appeared and prevented them from giving [the churches back]’ (‘na ayn č’ar abełayin, or anuamb č’ē yišman aržani, i veray ku asani ew č’i t’oħur or tan’: Nšanēan, *The Chronicle of the vardapet Grigor*, p. 588). While this information is true, it concerns an earlier stage of

Piomalli reported that he had persuaded the *seniores* into acknowledging the errors of Eutyches and Dioscoros, professing two natures in Jesus Christ, and getting rid of the errors in their liturgy.⁴¹ The elders also agreed to send a mission with four delegates from Lviv to Catholicos P'lippos, who allegedly was in favor of the union.⁴² However, *Propaganda Fide* feared—not without reason—that the Polish Armenians were showing readiness to accept the union *only* because they wanted to have their churches back.⁴³ Accordingly, Roman Cardinals ordered Piomalli exactly the opposite to be done: to 'freeze' for the moment the question of the union of the Polish Armenians and to discuss first the 'universal union' with P'lippos.⁴⁴ In February 1643, Piomalli went back to Armenia together with the Polish Armenian delegates. According to his reports, Catholicos P'lippos was open to discussing the union and had acknowledged that he did not 'have the faith of St. Gregory' (the original, uncorrupt, and orthodox faith of the Armenian Church), to the great scandal of the

Piomalli's mission to Poland, when he still sided with Torosowicz: in 1639, the Dominican was granted an audience with the King and persuaded him that the Armenians had to obey Torosowicz and that the churches belonged to the Archbishop and not to the people (see Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*, p. 101). Arak'el Davrižec'i, who loathed Torosowicz and mentions only the siding of Piomalli with the Armenian people of Lviv *against* their Archbishop, actually gives a favorable portrayal of the Dominican, whom he describes as 'a vardapet ...from the order of Dominic, a wise and eminent man from the nation of the Franks ('i kargēn Dōminikosi ... vardapet omn, ayr imastun ew ereweli, yazgēn Frankac': Arak'el Davrižec'i, *Book of Histories*, p. 375).

⁴¹ Eutyches professed that Jesus Christ had only a single nature, which was divine, despite his incarnation (monophysitism). His Christological position was rejected in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, where dyophysitism (the coexistence of two natures, divine *and* human, in Jesus Christ) was affirmed, and Eutyches's disciple Dioscoros was condemned as heretic. The Armenian Church took no part in the Council of Chalcedon, which it officially rejected some hundred years later. Hence, the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches regarded all the Oriental non-Chalcedonian Churches—including the Armenian Apostolic Church—as 'schismatic' and 'monophysite'. In fact, the Christology of the Armenian Apostolic Church—and, for that matter, of other Oriental non-Chalcedonian Churches—should be more correctly labeled as 'miaphysite', since it affirms, according to the formulation of Cyril of Alexandria, the 'one incarnate nature of the Word of God', meaning that both divinity and humanity coexist in the person of Christ within a single nature. On the basic dyophysitism of the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria, see Van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology*.

⁴² Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*, pp. 102, 105; see also APF, SOCG 119, fol. 157r, where already in 1640 Piomalli claims to have gained the trust of 'nine out of the twelve [Armenian] leaders'.

⁴³ Schütz, 'An Armeno-Kipchak Document', p. 298.

⁴⁴ Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*, p. 107. That, at this stage, *Propaganda Fide* subordinated the union of the Polish Armenians to the union of all the Armenian Church, probably believing that the former could not be achieved without the latter, is apparent from a letter the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide* Mgr. F. Ingoli addressed to the Apostolic Nuncio to Poland Mgr. M. Filonardi in 1642, where Ingoli warned Torosowicz to stay in Lviv and keep guard over the churches, in case the Catholicos should not sign the union (APF, Lett. volg. 21, fols 64v, 94; see Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*, p. 108; see also APF, Acta 15, fol. 380).

Polish Armenians, who ‘heard him with their own ears’.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, fearing his opponents, P’ilippos gave Piromalli ‘some hope for the union, not of all the [Armenian] nation ... but only of those in Poland’.⁴⁶ Whether the Catholicos was only buying time because he, too, was interested only in the Polish Armenians having their churches back, or he really worried about those who were hostile to the union, his reply showed that, the worries of *Propaganda Fide* notwithstanding, the notion of building up a critical mass of wealthy pro-union Armenians *before* having the union signed by ecclesiastical hierarchies was not that far-fetched. Piromalli complied with the Congregation’s orders in his own way. For the following two and a half years he would be engaged in a strange minuet with a hesitating P’ilippos, who at one moment seemed to be ready and willing to unite, and at the next—at the instigation of the *vardapet* Simēon of Julfa and Gaspar, another priest sent by the Armenian community of Kamieniec, which opposed the union—issued ‘thundering precepts and decrees of excommunication’ against the Dominican.⁴⁷ Piromalli tried to come up on his enemy’s flank⁴⁸ by discussing the union with the Catholicos of Ganjasar Petros II Xanjec’i⁴⁹ and drawing into the discussion also the Catholicos of Cilicia Simēon II Sebastac’i.⁵⁰ (Note that, only four months before, Piromalli was asked by *Propaganda Fide* not to engage anymore in public disputations with the Armenian *vardapets*—which the Congregation deemed more harmful than useful—and to work only on the establishment of an Armenian college for the Armenian Catholic seminarians in

⁴⁵ ‘L’istesso Patriarca di propria bocca disse non haver la fede di esso Santo. Li legati di Polonia l’hanno inteso con li propri orecchi e ritornano molto sdegnati’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 233r).

⁴⁶ Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 229r; see also APF, SOCG 123, fol. 23; APF, SOCG 292, fol. 341.

⁴⁷ Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 229r. On this wavering attitude of Catholicos P’ilippos, see also a series of letters Fr. Jozeph do Rozario wrote in April 1644 from Isfahan (probably upon the instigation of Piromalli himself, who at the time was staying as a guest at the Augustinian convent of the city), complaining about the suffering and tribulations the missionaries had to endure on account of the opposition of the Catholicos and local Armenians (see Alonso, ‘El P. José del Rosario’).

⁴⁸ Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 229r.

⁴⁹ Ganjasar, in Caucasian Albania, served as the See of the Catholicosate of Ałunk’ of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The once independent Albanian Church had fallen under the religious jurisdiction of the Armenian Apostolic Church at the beginning of the eighth century. At the time of Piromalli, Ganjasar, under Persian rule, functioned as a separate bishopric of the Armenian Church. Its bishop, while still bearing the title of Catholicos, was ordained by the Catholicos of All the Armenians in Etchmiadzin and recognized its primacy in terms both of honor and authority.

⁵⁰ The Holy See of the Armenian Apostolic Church had been moved to Cilicia in 1116. In 1441, when the titular Catholicos in Sis refused the moving of the See back to Armenia, a new Catholicos of All the Armenians was elected in Etchmiadzin. From that moment on, the two Catholicosates coexisted in the Armenian Apostolic Church, with the ‘primacy of honor’ (but not of jurisdictional authority) of the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin recognized by that of Cilicia.

Nakhichevan.)⁵¹ A few months later, in one moment of idyll with P^cilippos, the Dominican even wrote to the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*, believing that all the three Catholicos were ready to go to Rome, and that the union would soon be signed, as in that period many Armenians were siding with Catholics.⁵²

Meanwhile, in 1644, the Armenian delegates from Lviv had left from Isfahan, where Piromalli had followed them, to Poland with letters of P^cilippos to the Polish King and the Pope, to which the Catholicos enclosed a confession of orthodox faith.⁵³ Nevertheless, another letter addressed by P^cilippos to King Vladislaus IV Vasa a few months later is quite telling of what the real intentions of the Catholicos were: while enclosing in the missive a profession of orthodox faith, P^cilippos did not deal with the matter of the union. On the contrary, he asked the King to give back the churches to the Apostolic Armenians and let them live according to their faith:

We address unceasing prayers to Your all-powerful Lordship, so that they [the Armenians] may live their life peacefully and tranquilly, according to the faith and statutes transmitted by [their] forefathers. ... Therefore we ask with affectionate supplications Your all-powerful Majesty that, as your ancestors kept our small herd in its faith and tradition until [the time of] Your Autocracy, also Your Autocracy ... may keep that miserable herd as it has been so far [and], looking after their privations, return their churches to them. ... And the confession of the Armenian Church according to the orthodox holy fathers, which the doctor of theology Paul [Piromalli] has asked, Your autocratic Lordship may get to know it on a separate letter.⁵⁴

⁵¹ General Congregation of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, January 19, 1644 (APF, Acta 16, fols 1v–12r).

⁵² ‘Si faranno in Roma tutti questi, nissuno mi impedirà l’unione, avverta che in questo tempo havemo molti con noi’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 246v). In the same letter, Piromalli once again suggested that it would have been wise to ‘comfort the Patriarch [the Catholicos], by giving at least one of the churches back to them [the Polish Armenians]’.

⁵³ Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 229v. However, the letter addressed to Pope Urban VIII was left unopened, owing to a breach of etiquette in its address (Petrowicz, *L’unione degli Armeni*, p. 114; Amatuni, ‘Oskan vrd. Erewanc’i III’, p. 273). A letter of Catholicos P^cilippos to Pope Innocent X is published in the *Archives of Armenian History* whose content is very similar to that of a confession of faith sent by the same Catholicos to Pope Urban VIII on 20 January 1642. In both letters, P^cilippos professed the coexistence of divinity and humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ, according to the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria (see Ałanean, *Archives of Armenian History*, pp. 89–99; see also Amatuni, ‘Oskan vrd. Erewanc’i III’, pp. 260–261; 271–274). Tone and content of the unopened letter could well have been the same.

⁵⁴ ‘...hanapaz ałōt’s matuc’anemk’ vasn mecazōr tērut‘ean jerum, zi xałālut‘eamb ew handartut‘eamb varesc‘en dok‘a zkeans iwreanc’ handerj hayrenawand krōniwk’ ew shmanōk’ iwreanc’. ... Vasn oroy siralir małt‘anōk’ xndremk’ i mecazōr t‘agaworut‘enē jermē, zi orpēs naxnik’n jer minč‘ew zjer ink’nakalut‘iwnd zp‘ok‘rik hōtd mer paheal en iwreanc’ krōniwk’n

That P^çilippos was more than anything else interested in giving the Polish Armenians their churches back was clear also to Piromalli, who complained to the Cardinal Prefect about how the Catholicos allowed ‘the confession of Eutyches to be professed in his churches [in Isfahan], and cursed publicly the holiness of our Lord [the Pope] because he had asked him to enter the union in his [letter] and [to confess] the faith of St. Gregory’.⁵⁵ In October 1645, a frustrated Piromalli addressed a letter to the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*, complaining again about the deviousness and lack of character of P^çilippos:⁵⁶ both unions—the ‘local’ one of the Polish Armenians and the

ew awandut^çeambn, noynpēs ew jer ink^çnakalut^çiund ...zta^çapeal hōtd aynpēs pahesc^çē, orpēs min^çew zayžm, ayc^ç arnelov zrkanac^ç doc^çin zekelec^çisn iwreanc^ç yink^çeans darjusc^çē. ... Isk zdawanut^çiwn hayastaneac^ç ekelec^çwoy æst ułłap^çar srhoc^ç harc^çn, zor xndreac^ç Pōlos astuacaban vardapetn, i miws t^çt^çin canic^çē ink^çnakal tērut^çiwnd jer’ (P^çilippos ı Ałbakec^çi, *Letter to King Vladislaus*; transcription in Kołodziejczyk, *The Relations*, pp. 344–347). In his letter, P^çilippos likens Torosowicz to a ‘shepherd turned into a wolf that has merciless devoured his herd’ (‘anxnayabar gišateac^ç zhōt iwr gayl eteal hovuin’). For the text of the attached confession of faith, see P^çilippos ı Ałbakec^çi, *Confession of the Orthodox Faith*.

⁵⁵ ‘Li spedi con lettere al Re di Polonia et a S. Santità, pregandoli li restituiscano le chiese e li manda il simbolo di Nicea per la dovuta fede; e nelle sue chiese si recita la professione di Eutiche; e biastema pubblicamente la S(antit)tà di nostro Signore per haverli dimandato nella sua l’unione e la fede di S. Gregorio’ (Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fols 229v, 243r). See also Arak^çel Davrižec^çi, who states clearly that ‘Catholicos P^çilippos entertained a great love and friendship for that Paul [Piromalli]’ only ‘to help our people and save the church of Lviv’ (‘P^çilippos kat^ço^çikosn bazum sēr ew barekamut^çiwn arar ænd Pōlosin ayn, vasn ōgti žo^çlovrdeann mero yew p^çr^çkut^çean ekelec^çwoyn Lovay’: *Book of Histories*, p. 375).

⁵⁶ ‘Questo patriarca è huomo da niente, ognuno lo rivolta, non ha stabilità veruna, né prudenza’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 65, fol. 329r). On the other hand, in a letter written presumably on May 25, 1644, when Piromalli was in Isfahan, P^çilippos complained to the Armenian head royal painter (*naqqash-bashi*) Yakobjean about the Dominican’s harmful involvement in the Polish crisis, and asked Yakobjean assistance for bringing him back to Etchmiadzin. According to the Catholicos, Piromalli was a bad influence on the Polish King and, even if both the Pope and the King had agreed upon the restitution of the churches to the Armenians, he had interfered by saying ‘one thing to the King, another thing to the Pope, and another to our people’. P^çilippos was also worried about the negotiations which Piromalli was carrying out with the Shah to bypass his authority, and asked Yakobjean to press and threaten local missionaries to produce a document which would grant the restoration of the churches to the Armenian Apostolics in Lviv (see Tēr-Grigorean, *Archives of the All Saviour’s Monastery*, pp. 44–46; see also Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, pp. 138–139; Kołodziejczyk, *The Relations*, pp. 357, 359, 363). Since P^çilippos says in his letter that he has already written to Yakobjean on the same matter, the *naqqash-bashi* could well be that ‘Armenian and great enemy of the Christian faith’ who, as Fr. Jozeph do Rozario reported to the Cardinal Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* on 3 April 1644, ‘forbade all Christians to come to our churches ... and the ban was lifted on condition that we write to Your Eminence about the churches of the Polish Armenians’ (‘hum Armenio, grandissimo inimigo da santa fé catholica, fes huma prohibiçāo que nenhum christāo viesse a nossas igrejas. ... se alevantou o entredito com condiçāo ques nos

universal one of the entire Armenian Church—were never so close but so far.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, in those very years, following his first stay in Isfahan, Piromalli came to consider yet another strategy for finally converting the Armenians to Catholicism. In Poland he had realized the importance of having the (right and wealthy) people on his own side; still, in that case, he had resorted to the old way of trying to persuade the prospective converts by means of theological demonstration. The encounter with the wealthy and powerful class of the Julfan merchants was to make him devise a new approach.

A REALPOLITIK OF CONVERSION: PIROMALLI AND THE JULFAN ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Starting from the seventeenth century, the Armenian neighborhood of New Julfa in Isfahan became the hub of Safavids' foreign trade in raw silk. Up until the mid-eighteenth century, the many-branched network of the Julfan merchants spanned north-western and eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires.⁵⁸ Apparently, the consequences of the affair of the Church-union of Polish Armenians 'proved to be untoward and calamitous', changing what up to that time was a relatively favorable attitude of the Julfan Armenians towards Catholic missionaries into a hostile and often violent stance.⁵⁹ Julfan Armenians were said to be against missionaries 'more than Moors were' and 'to do all possible evils

escrevesemos a V. Imminencia sobre as igrejas dos Armenios de Polonia': Jozeph do Rozario, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 217r; transcription in Alonso, 'El P. José del Rosario', p. 297). In the same letter, Catholicos P^olippos is said to be 'more hostile than one could ever be to the Holy Catholic Church' ('E he este Patriarcha tam grande adverso á santa Igreja Catholica que não pode ser mais': *ibid*; see also Jozeph do Rozario, Letter to Ingoli, *ibid*, 219r; transcription in Alonso, 'El P. José del Rosario', p. 296). Fr. Jozeph do Rozario mentions also the negotiations carried out by Piromalli with the Shah concerning the Polish Armenians, thus substantiating the Catholicos' fears. According to him, Piromalli was 'waiting for the Shah to give him a letter to the King of Poland' ('Está esperando carta do Xa pera o rei de Polonia': Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 222r; transcription in Alonso, 'El P. José del Rosario', p. 298).

⁵⁷ Actually, the union of the Polish Armenians with the Church of Rome was concluded only decades later, long after the death of Piromalli, thanks largely to the efforts of the Theatine clerics, and especially of Fr. Clemente Galano (1611–1666) and Fr. Louis-Marie Pidou (1637–1717; see Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni*, especially chpts. VIII–X). Piromalli's mediation was at best 'ineffectual' (*ibid*, pp. 99–115).

⁵⁸ On the history, organization, and geographic and economic scope of the Julfan Armenian trade network, see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*; Baghdiantz McCabe, *The Shah's Silk*.

⁵⁹ Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, pp. 135–136; Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, p. 321.

against [them], ... persecuting [them] more and more every day';⁶⁰ they were spreading 'slanders, errors, excommunications, and curses [against] the Roman Holy See, St. Leo, the Council of Chalcedon, and the Catholic people'.⁶¹ Indeed, if one compares these reports with others sent from Persia just a few decades before, the contrast is striking: around 1608, Persian Armenian clergy were said to be 'friendly towards the Latins and confess that they have received their faith from Rome ... the patriarch and ecclesiastics paid us great respect...';⁶² in 1619, New Julfans were described as 'staunch in recognizing and confessing the Primacy of the Roman Church and the obedience due to the Sovereign Pontiff';⁶³ as late as the late 1620s and the early 1630s, they were still 'asking for spiritual assistance' from Rome, and made promises of living according to the Catholic faith, if admitted to the Papal States for trading.⁶⁴ According to Ghougassian, such a change of attitude towards western missionaries could have been at least in part fostered by the Armenian Apostolic Archbishop of New Julfa Xaç'atur Kesarac'i. In 1630 Xaç'atur had been sent to Lviv by Catholicos Movsēs III in the attempt to mediate between Torosowicz and the Armenian community. As suggested by Ghougassian, his 'bitter experience in Poland, in which the Catholic Church had played a negative role', could have prompted him 'to fight off Catholic influence throughout his diocese' upon his return to New Julfa.⁶⁵ However, to my knowledge, no contemporary source describes Xaç'atur as blatantly anti-Catholic. In fact, Oskan Erewanc'i, who has been mentioned above together with Kirakos as one of the first followers and disciples of Piromalli, had been also a pupil of Xaç'atur, whom in 1631 he accompanied back to New Julfa when Xaç'atur got back from his mission to Lviv, and whom he described as 'a good-natured and pious man' in his autobiography.⁶⁶ Had Xaç'atur been anti-Catholic, Oskan's judgment would presumably have been less benevolent.

⁶⁰ 'Os Armenios ... nos são mas adversos que os mesmos Moiros'; 'Este Patriarca dos Armenios e o seus seguases nos são muito contrarios e nos fazem todo o mal que podem' (Jozeph do Rozario, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, 219r; transcription in Alonso, 'El P. José del Rosario', p. 296).

⁶¹ Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 248r.

⁶² 'Sono amici dei Latini, et confessano che hanno ricevuto la loro fede da Roma' (Paolo Simone di Gesù Maria, *Descrizione di Persia*; partial English translation in Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, pp. 155–163). Fr. Paolo Simone di Gesù Maria wrote that the Carmelites were welcome by the Armenian Apostolics, who said that 'St. Gregory, whom they venerate as their Patriarch, professed obedience to the Pontiff' (ibid, p. 157). On 12–13 May 1607, Catholicos David IV had professed obedience to the Pope in the church of the Augustinian convent in Isfahan; in that case, however, the Julfan Armenian clergy complained to the Augustinians and the Catholicos about not having been consulted, and the bishop of New Julfa, together with another bishop and some notables, refused to sign the same version of the letter of obedience sealed by the Catholicos (see Flannery, *The Mission*, pp. 131–137).

⁶³ Juan Thadeo de San Eliseo, Letter to Domingo de Jesús María, AGOCD 237, m, 13; partial English translation in Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol., 1 p. 232–235).

⁶⁴ See Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, pp. 294, 295.

⁶⁵ Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, pp. 135–136, 138.

⁶⁶ 'Ayr hezahogi ew srbasun' (Oskan Erewanc'i, *Life History*, p. 629).

Nevertheless, as his reforms and cultural initiatives aimed at strengthening the Armenian Church, they could well have promoted anti-Catholic sentiments as a collateral. As a matter of fact, by the late 1630s, the graduates of the school for higher education that Xačatur established at the All Saviour's Monastery in New Julfa 'became the main defenders of the Armenian faith against Catholic encroachment'.⁶⁷

While the Polish affair certainly had a role in it, this change of attitude could have been also due to the Julfan merchants fearing the fines and penalties imposed by the Shah's officials on those who wanted 'to become Franks', so that the 'the richer men [were] the most timorous'.⁶⁸ This could explain also why the Armenians who traded in Europe—and particularly those who traded in Italy—where they often became Catholics, were the same who, once back in Isfahan, most opposed the union, as Piromalli himself noted in 1644 when he first came to Isfahan and stayed as a guest at the Convent of the Augustinian Fathers.⁶⁹ However, this also could have been, at least in part, a reaction to the preaching of Piromalli to the Julfans. Indeed, when in Isfahan, the Dominican did not renounce one of his favorite activities, namely theological disputation with the local clergy and population. In his effort to

⁶⁷ Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, p. 138.

⁶⁸ Denis de la Couronne d'Épines, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 213r (see also, by the same friar and on the same tone, Letter to Mgr. Ingoli, *ibid.*, fol. 204r). Carmelite Provincial Fr. Domenico di Santa Maria wrote in 1646 that this change of disposition seemed to have been caused 'more by other dissensions in their private interests, than any real disillusionment on points of their creed' (Letter to Eugenio di San Benedetto, AGOCD 237, fol. 19; partial English translation in Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, p. 376).

⁶⁹ 'L'Armeni contrarij sono quelli che ritornano dalla Cristianità, benché ivi si confessino e comunichino, anzi questi più degl'altri' (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 233v). 'L'Armeni di Spahan et in particolare quelli che ritornano da Franchia sono li più contrarij all'unione, e più mordaci a divertir li populi dalla divotione che tiene a Roma' (Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 243r). See also a letter written by Fr. Jozeph do Rozario on the same days and at the same convent where Piromalli was staying: 'Pareseume era obrigado dar conta á Sagrada Congregação como esta nação está oie mais obstinada que nunca e todos os que fazem a profiçao da fé em Roma ou na India quando aquí tornão ficão hereges como dantes' (Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 222r; transcription in Alonso, 'El P. José del Rosario', p. 298). As late as 1711, Vicar Apostolic for the dominion of the Mughal in India Maurice of St. Teresa, passing through Tabriz, wrote to the Pope the following lines in the same tone: 'All Armenians coming to Italy, and particularly to Rome, deceive your Holiness and the Cardinals: *there* they give themselves out to be Catholics, and *here* they are the greatest persecutor of the missionaries and of true Catholics' (see Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 2, p. 1081). On this practice of conversion for 'strategic and practical reasons' among the Armenians who conducted trade in Manila and who often returned to the Armenian Apostolic faith upon coming back to New Julfa, see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, p. 63. Of course, a certain degree of flexibility was essential to succeeding in adapting to different political and economic contexts, and the New Julfan Armenians had 'multiple and fluctuating identities', 'changed their names and sometimes religion when residing in places beyond New Julfa', changing and adapting identities in their own trading lives (Baghdiantz McCabe, 'Opportunity and Legislation', pp. 64–65).

win some Julfan Armenians to his flock, with all his distinctive fervor, Piromalli reached the point of worrying the local missionaries. In 1646, the Carmelite Provincial Fr. Domenico di Santa Maria deemed his preaching style ‘unsuitable’ and ‘uncalled for’;⁷⁰ in 1647, the Capuchin Fr. Valentin d’Angers asked rhetorically how one could discuss with a man who used to debate cholericly, landing punches and insulting those who he was discussing with;⁷¹ in 1649 and 1650, Fr. Domenico di Santa Maria took up the issue again, expressing concern about Piromalli’s ‘violence’ and complained to Rome about the Armenians being ill-disposed towards ‘Franks’ on account of the Dominican ‘jousting’ with them ‘on controversial matters’.⁷²

Moreover, this opposition could have been also due to the fact that, in 1647, Piromalli had convinced Catholicos P‘ilippos, twenty-five of his bishops, and eight *vardapets* into signing a confession of faith, which they entrusted to him to hand over to Rome.⁷³ As it had happened forty years before with the profession of obedience to the Pope made by Catholicos Dawit‘ IV,⁷⁴ the initiative, carried out without the support of the Armenian Apostolic clergy in New Julfa, might have contributed to the growth and manifestation of anti-Catholic feelings. Moreover, after the death of Xač‘atur Kesarac‘i in 1646, a power struggle followed for the appointment of the new Archbishop, which saw the pro-Catholic faction defeated and its candidate Yakob Ĵulayec‘i leaving Isfahan for Armenia. In 1652, his main contender and strong opponent of Catholicism Dawit‘ Ĵulayec‘i was elected the new Armenian Archbishop.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, already in 1644, on the occasion of his first sojourn in Isfahan, Piromalli had taken notice of two important facts: the Armenian notables of New Julfa exerted a strong influence with the Armenian Apostolic hierarchies, and at the same time they feared that their opposition to western missionaries could hamper

⁷⁰ Domenico di Santa Maria, Letter to Eugenio di San Benedetto, AGOCD, 237, fol. 19; partial English translation in Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, p. 377. As a matter of fact, in Isfahan Piromalli would dispute not only with local Armenians and/or Christian ‘schismatics’, but also with Muslims (see Halft, ‘Paolo Piromalli’).

⁷¹ ‘Di quale maniera si può trattare con uno huomo che disputa sempre in colera, che da de li pugni, che dice de le iniurie a quelli con cui tratta’ (Valentin d’Angers, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 65, fol. 332r).

⁷² Domenico di Santa Maria, Letter to Bruno de Saint-Yves, AGOCD 237, fol. 24; partial English translation in Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, p. 377.

⁷³ Č‘amc‘ean, *History of the Armenians*, p. 621; Tašean, *Haupt-Catalog*, p. 112. This confession of faith had no practical consequences; actually, in the same year Piromalli was expelled from Armenia on account of his anti-Apostolic missionary preaching.

⁷⁴ Between 1607 and 1613 Catholicos Dawit‘ IV and his co-adjutor Melk‘isēt‘ Gařnec‘i addressed a series of professions of Catholic faith to Pope Paul V and King Philip III of Spain (see Ōrmanean, *National History*, pp. 2315–2317; Floristán–Gil, ‘Carta del patriarca armenio’; Gulbenkian, ‘Deux lettres surprenantes’; Floristán, ‘Las relaciones hispano-armenias’, pp. 58–59; Alonso, ‘Cuatro cartas’; Aral, *Les Arméniens catholiques*, pp. 245–246).

⁷⁵ Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, pp. 105–106; Baghdiantz McCabe, ‘The Socio-Economics Conditions’, p. 375; Matthee, ‘Poverty and Perseverance’, p. 471.

their trade in Europe in general and in Italy and France in particular.⁷⁶ Italy and France could be ‘problematic’ as to the settlement of Armenian merchants, because they were Catholic. Already in 1630, when the *kalantar* Khwaja Nazar asked the Vatican’s permission for the Armenians to establish workshops in Italy, the stipulated condition from Rome was that they were Catholics or willing to convert to Catholicism.⁷⁷ The Dominican soon put two and two together. His plan to build up a critical mass, which had failed to bring about theological change in the case of the Polish Armenians, had found a new community which could be swayed by threatening its economic interests: why not put this fear of the Julfans to good effect and use it as means for getting to the Catholicos and ultimately achieving the union? Piromalli first formulated the idea in a letter he wrote on April 5, 1644, from the Augustinian Convent in Isfahan:

I think it advisable to banish them from the Christian lands [Europe] as heretics, ordering the [Catholic] faithful not to trade with them under the pain of excommunication.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ ‘Due sono li principallissimi come principi in mezzo della natione, cioè Safrasi Bec e Poghos Calantar ... poiché se questi secolari comandano, tutti faranno, imperocché anche il patriarca teme di essi ... Condesceranno costoro anco per interesse proprio, atteso tutte le loro mercanzie sono in Europa e loro stessi dissero a quelli che volevano farmi male che hanno paura di esserli proibito il commercio di Italia dal Papa’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 248v). ‘Perché quelli primati et altri grandemente temono d’esser privati del commercio con Franchi, atteso tutte le loro ricchezza vengono dalla Cristianità d’Europa onde dicono che l’India degl’Armeni è Franchia’ (Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, *ibid*, fol. 249v). ‘Bisognano anco lettere alli capi dell’armeni e di tutta la natione in Persia, cioè a Paolo Callantare a Saurasis Bec et altri, come per altre mie avvisano, quando questi comandano anco il patriarca ubbidisce’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, *ibid*, fol. 259r). Three years later, Piromalli asked again from the Pope ‘una amorosa et esortativa [lettera]’ to the two notables (Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 65, fol. 331r). The Safrasi/Saurasi mentioned by Piromalli is in all likelihood Khwaja Safraz, who was the *kalantar* of New Julfa in 1636–1656 (on the office of *kalantar*, see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, pp. 185–188). That Safraz was well-disposed towards Western missionaries is attested also by some letters written by the Carmelite Fr. Balthazar of St. Mary in 1653; in these letters, however, the favor of Safraz is not said to be motivated by personal interest (see Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, pp. 378–379). Khwaja Boghos appears as ‘the richest and most powerful man in the Armenian nation’ in the already mentioned letter written by the Carmelite Fr. Denis de la Couronne d’Épines on 9 October 1643 (Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 213r).

⁷⁷ Baghdiantz McCabe, ‘Opportunity and Legislation’, p. 66.

⁷⁸ ‘Credo saria a proposito di scacciarli da cristianità come heretici, con una scomunica alli fedeli, che non negotijno con loro’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 233v). The Augustinian Father Joseph do Rozario had written some lines on a similar but milder tone just two days before: ‘Se na christiandade os principes christãos fizesem algumas demonstraçoens com os Armenios que ás suas terras vão, por ventura que esta missão se acrescentara, que muitas vezes fazem os homens por medo aquillo que por amor não querem fazer’ (Letter to Barberini, *ibid*, 222r; transcription in Alonso, ‘El P. José del Rosario’, p. 299; partial English translation in Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, p. 375).

In another letter written a few months after, while reporting that he managed to convert one of the Armenian notables of the city who had agents in Italy,⁷⁹ he added that, according to the new convert,

it should be ordered from Rome to all [Catholics] that in every place Armenians should be asked to accept the Roman faith, and those who do not accept it, should be banished; thus, we'll soon get to have twenty or thirty [of them] and the wall will be breached.⁸⁰

This figure of twenty or thirty converts as the critical mass which was needed to sway the entire Armenian nation occurs also in another letter; indeed, it seems that the Armenians who were in favor of the union persuaded Piromalli that, under the threat of banishing Armenian Apostolics from Italy and its trading network, they 'would start coming [would start converting], and after twenty or thirty of them, all Julfa would follow, and then all Armenia'.⁸¹ This could well explain his fervor in preaching, which during those years other missionaries viewed with concern, provided he really thought that a couple of dozens of converts would have been enough to win over all other Armenians.

Thus, after identifying the Apostolic See of Etchmiadzin as the 'root' to be extirpated for the union to be achieved, and after identifying the Polish Armenian community as the group to be won for the Catholicos to be swayed (the 'little fish' which had to be caught in order to catch the much bigger one), Piromalli began looking upon the 'notables of the Armenian nation of Isfahan' as the people 'on whom all depended',⁸² and asked the Pope to address a letter to them, reminding them of the benevolent disposition the Church had always shown by giving them freedom to trade in Italy, as opposed to the curses they articulated against the Roman Holy See.

The idea of asking for the intervention of western powers, in particular the Republic of Venice and the Grand-duchy of Tuscany, had been circulating among missionaries in Persia since the beginning of the 1640s, before Piromalli's arrival in

⁷⁹ Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 248v. Chick reports that two Augustinian Fathers testified in 1646 to the confession of faith of Khwaja Sarhat Shahrmanian (*A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, p. 376). Piromalli himself mentions the confession of faith of 'Choggià Sahrat' together with 'Choggià Manug' (Letter to Capponi, APF, SOCG 65, fol. 330r). We do not know for sure who was the notable converted by Piromalli in 1644.

⁸⁰ 'Da Roma si ordinasse per tutti, che si proponesse in ogni luogho all'armeni la fede romana, e chi non l'abbraccia fusse discacciato; e che così arriveremo in breve havervi 20 o 30 e il muro saria rotto' (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 248v).

⁸¹ 'L'Armeni di Spahan desiderosi dell'unione vorrebbero che si facesse qualche demonstratione, cioè che chi non accetta la fede romana, subito si discacciasse dall'Italia, lo che appena cominciato, cominciariano a venire, e quando fossero venuti 20 o 30, tutta Giulfa e poi tutta l'Armenia seguirebbe' (Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 249v).

⁸² 'Li Primi della Natione Armena in Spahan, dalli quali depende il tutto' (ibid, fol. 249r).

Isfahan.⁸³ However, it seems that it became more radical in 1644 with the suggestion that some ‘demonstrations’ needed to be made to Armenians by western powers. And it is probably not by chance that, besides Piromalli’s reports from that period, the first letters where one can find this argument expressed already *in nuce* come from the same Augustinian convent in Isfahan where the Dominican stayed as a guest for some months in that same year.⁸⁴

However, Julfan Armenians proved to be a difficult fish to catch.⁸⁵ Letters and reports from the 1650s describe them as ‘more opposed to conversion than ... ever in the past’.⁸⁶ Piromalli claimed that during his first three years in Isfahan he had ‘brought back the most part of them to the Catholic faith’, but the same *vardapet* Simēon, who in 1643–1645 had averted the union with the Polish Armenians, had led the people back again to the Armenian Apostolic faith, making them ‘deadly enemies of the Romans’.⁸⁷ It is probably for this reason, and maybe counting on the confession of faith made by Catholicos P̄ilippos in 1647 as a given, that he started to think that preaching and theological disputation were ‘wasted’ on Julfan Armenians, and that *only* threats to their economic interests could persuade them into the union with Rome.

⁸³ See for example the above-mentioned 1643 letter of the Carmelite Fr. Denis de la Couronne d’Épines, where he suggested *Propaganda Fide* to argue the ‘Duke of Florence and the Signory at Venice’ into appointing ‘someone as their resident agent’ in Isfahan and writing to Khwaja Boghos in favor of the missionaries (Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 213r). Fr. Denis stressed the same point once again several months later, in June 1644, in a letter where he explained that Khwaja Boghos was ‘very fond of the Catholic faith, but he cannot reveal it for many respects’ (Letter to Ingoli, *ibid.*, fol. 204r).

⁸⁴ The already mentioned series of letters were written in April 1644 by Fr. Jozeph do Rozario. In one of them one can read: ‘Es paresialhe aos religiozos missionarios desta Perçia que se na Europa e terras dos princepes catholicos se apertasem os Armenios ou se fizese alguma prohibiçãõ que não fossem a nossas terras, a fin que libremente nos deixasem pregar e ensinar a santa fê catholica’ (Jozeph do Rozario, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 62, fols 219r–v; transcription in Alonso, ‘El P. José del Rosario’, p. 296; see also, by the same Jozeph do Rozario, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 62, fol. 222r, and, by Piromalli, Letter to Barberini, APF, SOCG 65, fol. 285r). Interestingly enough, the same idea was accepted and implemented by the Armenian Apostolic Church too, obviously in the reverse direction: in a letter written on 18 October 1645, while asking the Pope to order not to trade with the Armenian schismatics, Piromalli mentions a *vardapet* in Constantinople who ‘excommunicated all those who want to buy the wares of Khwaja Peter, who became Frank’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 65, fol. 329v).

⁸⁵ In March 1648 Piromalli gives the figure of only ‘two converts in the current year’ (Letter to Capponi, APF, SOCG 292, fol. 352v). That actual conversion was a difficult victory to obtain is clear also from the case of Khwaja Boghos, who in 1647 is said to have become ‘fond of the truth insomuch that he acts as a missionary to the other leaders’ (Piromalli, Letter to Ingoli, APF, SOCG 65, fol. 331r), but still had to make his ‘promised confession’ one year later (Piromalli, Letter to Capponi, APF, SOCG 292, fol. 352v).

⁸⁶ Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, pp. 378–380.

⁸⁷ Piromalli, *Relazione trasmessa*, APF, SC Armeni, vol. 1, fols 28r–v.

It is in his 1654 report to the Pope that this idea can be found expressed fully. Piromalli illustrated the social context of the Armenian merchant community of New Julfa by elaborating on the financial influence it had on the Armenian Apostolic clergy and people:

Those Julfans divert the people from the Catholic faith, because they are the most powerful among the Armenian Nation in wealth, eloquence, and boldness; they can elect and remove the Catholicos whenever they want; and all the Preacher Bishops and clergy depend on them, since none of those has income coming, and they beg for their food and livelihood from them, and because of that they are obliged to obey their orders. On account of the control those Julfans exert all over the [Armenian] nation, there is no doubt that the union with the Roman Church could be achieved only if they want it, and if they do not want it, there is no way it could be achieved.⁸⁸

Then he went on to expound his new strategy to the Pope, reassuring him about the fact that the Armenian Church had already acknowledged its errors and the clergy yearned after embracing the Catholic truth, and emphasizing the ‘easiness’ of the solution he was proposing: since there were no more convenient ports to them than those of Venice and Livorno, and since Julfan Armenians feared falling out of favor with the rulers of the said cities, just one nod from the Grand Duke of Tuscany or the Doge would be enough to ‘subdue their power’.⁸⁹ Finally, after acknowledging the failure of all missionary work among Julfan Armenians (even if he sugar-coated this statement by preceding it with the bold claim that the Armenian Church was *already* theologically won), and reassessing that the matter of the union depended

⁸⁸ ‘Essi Giulfalini divertono i Popoli dalla fede Cattolica, perche sono i più potenti della Nazione Armena in ricchezze eloquenza et ardire: possono promuovere, e rimuovere il Patriarca quando vogliono; & tutti li Vescovi Predicatori, e Clero dipendono da loro, atteso che niuno di questi tiene entrata, e da quelli mendicando, ricevono il vitto, e sostentamento, per il che restano obbligati ad obbedire alli loro commandi. Per il dominio dunque, che questi Giulfalini tengono sopra tutta la nazione, senza niun dubbio volendo l’unione con la Chiesa Romana, si concluderà, e non volendo, in niun modo si effettuarà’ (ibid, fols 30r–v). Indeed, the Armenians of New Julfa, together with those of Constantinople, had the right to approve or disprove the appointment of a new Catholicos (see Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, p. 105).

⁸⁹ ‘Questi Giulfalini sono quelli Mercadanti, li quali negoziano le loro merci per tutta la Christianità, e fanno scala principale in Venezia, et in Livorno, da dove riportano tutte le loro ricchezze; & perche non hanno, ne possono avere altro Porto così comodo, temono grandemente d’incorrere la disgrazia di questi Prencipi. ... Per conchiudere dunque ... la Chiesa Armena oggi conosce, e confessa gli errori: & benche i Capi bramino di abbracciare la verità Cattolica, nondimeno è ritardato l’effetto da suddetti Giulfalini, la cui potenza può per le sud(dett)e ragioni esser piegata da ogni minimo cenno, ò della Ser(enissi)ma Repubblica di Venezia, ò del Ser(enissi)mo Gran Duca di Toscana. ... V(ostra) S(antit)à si degni far riflessione alla facilità, che porgono le sud(dett)e disposizioni, e mezzi per la unione, et obbedienza alla Santa Sede Apostolica di tutta la Nazione Armena’ (Piromalli, *Relazione trasmessa*, APF, SC Armeni, vol. 1, fols 30v–31v).

on their will, he stressed that the union could be achieved *only* if the Princes of Venice and Livorno intervene in a matter of such importance.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, the idea was destined to remain an exercise in style with no practical consequences, and Rome did not follow Piromalli's suggestion. It is true that in the previous centuries there had been papal bans against the trade with 'infidels' or 'heretics'. However, those bans were issued not because 'the Church could not tolerate the existence of trade with those groups per se' but because Rome could not allow 'the attempts of lay powers and lawyers to make their own sense of canon law and papal orders',⁹¹ and they certainly were not seen as a means of conversion. Rome failed or refused to use the Armenian merchant class of New Julfa as a bridgehead; in fact, when the Church started granting commercial privileges to the Julfan Armenian Catholic Shahrmanian family, it did so not as much in order to use them to get to other Armenians, but to reward them for the favors they had done to Catholic missionaries.⁹² Moreover, when in 1655 Piromalli was appointed Archbishop of the Armenian Catholic Diocese of Nakhichevan, he was forbidden to wield episcopal authority outside the Diocese, thus *de facto* debarring him from preaching to Armenian Apostolics.⁹³ Meanwhile, the opposition of the Armenian Apostolics in Isfahan intensified. Following the arrival in New Julfa of a large number of Catholic missionaries in the late 1640s, in 1654 the Armenians presented a petition to the Shah, who stopped the already authorized establishment of a Catholic church in the neighborhood and forced the missionaries to leave the Armenian quarter and move back to Isfahan.⁹⁴

CONCLUSION

In 1634–1635, when engaging in theological debate with the Catholicos in Etchmiadzin, Piromalli first met with a rather 'open' attitude, if it is true that—after the Dominican allegedly showed him all the errors of the Armenian Church—P'lippos

⁹⁰ 'Dalla parte degli'Ecclesiastici per esser già istruiti, et illuminati nelle verità Cattoliche, ... con certezza che tutte le fatighe de' Missionarij sono perse; la opera solamente de sud(dett)i Prencipi di Venezia, e di Toscana resta potente per tale effetto, i quali volendo mostrarsi di volere, quelli tutti si butteranno à lor piedi, e così l'unione si effettuarà. Il negozio è di grande importanza, e li mezzi sono efficacissimi' (ibid, fols 31v–32r).

⁹¹ Stantchev, *Spiritual Rationality*, p. 144.

⁹² Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, pp. 150–151; Korsch, 'The Sceriman', p. 368. As a matter of fact, as noted also by Baghdiantz McCabe, 'in the case of the Shahrmanians their Catholicism did help them settle in Venice but it is legislation and tax exemption that is key to New Julfan commerce in these ports, rather than religion' (Baghdiantz McCabe, 'Opportunity and Legislation', p. 66).

⁹³ Piromalli arrived in the Diocese in 1657, but after only three years, following clashes and disagreements with the local Armeno-Dominican clergy, he moved again first to Isfahan, in 1660, and then back to Italy, in 1662.

⁹⁴ Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, p. 381. In 1658, after almost fifteen years since Piromalli's first arrival to the city, there were only six Armenian Catholic families left in New Julfa (ibid, p. 382).

had given order to collect and *check* manuscripts, in particular those containing the works of Grigor Tat'ewac'i. In this way P'ilippos questioned, at least in principle, one of their most important theologians, who in the fourteenth century had written polemic works against the Catholics.⁹⁵ Unsurprisingly, this triggered a violent reaction on the part of some Armenian *vardapets*, who accused Piromalli of 'being a Frank and against their law and doctors', and—irrespective of the seeming openness of P'ilippos (and of his successor Yakob iv Ĵulayec'i)—the occasion prompted part of the clergy to line up in defense of their own tradition.⁹⁶

When in 1639 the question of the union of the Polish Armenians flared up, it marked a turning point in the relations the Ottoman and Safavid Armenian Apostolics had with Catholicism. Their attitude increasingly started to change, and more and more frequently tensions arose between them and the missionaries. In the case of the Julfan Armenians, Safavid imperial politics too had a role in that change of attitude: after the Treaty of Zuhab was concluded with the Ottomans in 1639, the Safavids lost interest in the Europeans as potential allies and their stance towards missionaries changed.⁹⁷ While during the reign of Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) the relations between the state and both local Christians and Catholic missionaries had been 'tolerably good',⁹⁸ they 'cooled off' under Shah Safi (r. 1629–1642) and were 'markedly cooler' under Shah Abbas II (r. 1642–1666).⁹⁹ Moreover, apart from the official stance the Shahs took *vis-à-vis* the domestic Christian communities during the first half of the seventeenth century, one should not forget that, unlike foreign missionaries, the indigenous Christian minorities were subjects of the Shah. The idea that foreign powers could have jurisdiction over indigenous Christian subjects could have dire consequences for their loyalty to the Shah,¹⁰⁰ and debating whether or not to acknowledge the Pope's authority was viewed as a conflict of loyalty.¹⁰¹ Also, starting from the mid-1630s, and in particular under Shah Abbas II, as a consequence

⁹⁵ Piromalli, *Relation de' successi*, fol. 26r.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 26v and *passim*.

⁹⁷ Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, p. 136; Baghdiantz McCabe, 'The Socio-Economics Conditions', pp. 375–376; Matthee, 'Christians in Safavid Iran', p. 24.

⁹⁸ Savory, 'Relations', p. 446. It should be noted that, as Matthee puts it, 'Shah 'Abbas' approach to Christians and Christianity was informed less by natural sympathies than by strategic considerations' ('Christians in Safavid Iran', p. 22): hoping for an alliance with European monarchs against the Ottomans, it was in his interest that Western missionaries and travelers reported favorably about his kingdom in Europe (Moreen, 'The Status of Religious Minorities', p. 125). On the other hand, Shah Abbas also used Western missionaries to keep the ulema at bay; at the same time, to maintain good relations with his own clergy, he allowed the ulema to harass and revile non-Shi'i minorities, if need be. He also managed to take advantage of the strained relations between pro- and anti-Catholic Armenians to keep them divided (Matthee, 'The Politics of Protection', p. 267).

⁹⁹ Matthee, 'Christians in Safavid Iran', p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ Savory, 'Relations', pp. 444–445. More often than not, when tensions arose between the missionaries and the Safavid state, local Christian communities—and the Armenians in particular—were the ones who took the brunt (Matthee, 'The Politics of Protection', p. 265).

¹⁰¹ Moreen, 'The Status of Religious Minorities', p. 129.

of the growing power of the ulema, the Shah's officials were given more latitude in their initiatives against non-Muslims, and a succession of Grand Viziers began to enact measures against the *dhimmi* population.¹⁰² Accordingly, the opposition displayed by the Julfan Armenian merchants to Catholic missionaries did not originate only from ethno-confessional reasons: while understanding that Catholicism could be an enticing and convenient solution for those who wanted to trade in Europe, they feared that their position with the Shah could be damaged if they converted or showed too much interest in the Catholic faith.¹⁰³ As a consequence, starting from the late 1640s, the Julfan Armenian community began to style itself as *the* stronghold of Armenian Apostolic orthodoxy, not only against Catholicism and Catholic missionaries, but also in direct conflict with the Catholicoi in Etchmiadzin and their more open attitude with Catholics.¹⁰⁴

Thus, as far as the Armenians are concerned, one can see a twofold stance in their reaction to Catholic missionary activity: apart from political considerations and the opposition of some members of the clergy, Etchmiadzin was more open to dialogue and willing to re-discover or at least take into consideration what missionaries argued to be the original orthodoxy of the Armenian Church.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Julfan Armenian merchants proved to be more 'conservative', starting a process of reformation of their ecclesiastical institutions to consolidate and reappraise the Apostolic tradition. In this sense, one does not have to wait for the 1680s or the 1690s to start discerning at least some signs of confessionalization among Armenians: Piromalli's activity since the 1630s seems to have prompted Armenians in various circles to start ask questions about their own practices and beliefs, discussing and disputing how they should approach Catholicism.

¹⁰² Matthee, 'Christians in Safavid Iran', pp. 26–28. According to Baghdiantz McCabe, the ulema were hostile not to the Armenians *tout-court* but to 'a new heretical movement among Armenians ... much akin to the Dervish cult', which 'spread among Armenian artisans ... beginning in the late 1630s' (Baghdiantz McCabe, 'Princely Suburb', p. 433). The measures taken by the Armenian clergy to repress the sect could have contributed to strengthening the Apostolic identity.

¹⁰³ Safavid officials see the Armenians who were closer to the Church of Rome and offered economic support to the missionaries 'as a fifth column' of dangerous sympathizers of the European powers, which explains some of the persecutions that the indigenous Christian minorities underwent in late Safavid Iran (Matthee, 'Christians in Safavid Iran', pp. 30–31).

¹⁰⁴ Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, pp. 101, 105–122. The election of Yakob Ĵulayec'i—the pro-Catholic defeated contender of the anti-Catholic Dawit' Ĵulayec'i in the election to the archiepiscopal See of New Julfa—as the new Catholicos of All the Armenians in 1655 played a major role in exacerbating the rift between the New Julfa clergy and the Holy See of Etchmiadzin.

¹⁰⁵ As a matter of fact, even if an actual union with Rome would never be negotiated, most of the Catholicoi of the seventeenth century—Dawit' IV Vaĵaršapatc'i, Melk'isēt' Garnecc'i, Movsēs III T'atewac'i, P'ĳilippos I Aĵbakecc'i, Yakob IV Ĵulayec'i, Nahapet I Edesac'i—seemingly displayed pro-Catholic sympathies and engaged in epistolary communication with the Pope, to whom they wrote letters expressing deference and submitted their confession of orthodox faith.

As for Piromalli and Rome, the three phases I have highlighted in the Dominican's career are not to be necessarily seen as parts of a linear and progressive course, or as the result of a deep and well-considered reflection on his part (which the scattered nature of his letters make difficult to discern) or that of *Propaganda Fide*. They are rather consequence of Piromalli moving from place to place, getting in touch with different social and economic contexts, and learning from his missionary work. Moreover, assessing the ratio between self-deception and self-propaganda in Piromalli's letters and reports is not an easy task. The enthusiastic and apologetic tones of his writings notwithstanding, one cannot believe that every time, in every place he went (the Ottoman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Safavid Empire), he really believed that he had (almost) managed to persuade Armenian clergy into acknowledging the Catholic truth, and that he had failed only because of the improvident involvement of some Armenian *vardapet*, who, inevitably, came to ruin his work.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, his representation of his interlocutors lacks any social or political consideration: they are 'good' or 'bad' depending on whether they accepted his preaching or not, regardless of the reasons they might have had for doing one thing or the other. Accordingly, Catholicos P'lippos is represented as an 'inconstant man' because of his seemingly wavering attitude, without considering how union with Rome could have affected his position with the Armenian clergy and the Shah, not to mention the idea that this 'wavering' could have been a strategic stance, coming from the religious leader of a people who historically looked to the Christian powers of the West to come and rescue them from Muslim rule.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, Piromalli complained about the duplicity of the Julfan Armenians—who, according to his reports, professed to be Catholic in the West and in New Julfa were fierce opponents of the Catholic missionaries—and the fact that they 'diverted the people from the Catholic faith', without acknowledging the social, political, and economic implications of their conversion to Catholicism in terms of their relations with the Shah. Interestingly enough, even when acknowledging that 'all missionary efforts are wasted' on Armenians, and admitting the inadequacy of *Propaganda Fide's* conversion strategies based on theological demonstration and the implementation of a specifically Tridentine confessional agenda (like he does in his 1654 report), Piromalli

¹⁰⁶ Ambitious and eager to advertise his supposed victories as he was, Piromalli could also count on his brother Giovanni to promote his virtues and commitment to his mission. Giovanni, a Capuchin friar, 'became the most enthusiastic and devoted spreader of the thought and adventures [of Paolo Piromalli] in the Western circles' (Longo, *Giovanni da Siderno*, p. 289). Exaggerations and overstatements were in any case common in letters sent to Europe by missionaries, who were in constant need for economic support from the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*. However, while mentioning the dire conditions he faced in his travels and missionary activities, it seems to me that the often-triumphant tone of Piromalli's letters was informed less by his actual need for money than by his personal ambition and eagerness to take 'official' credit for his work. In that sense, the fact that he started to sign his letters as Archbishop of Nakhichevan *before* formally obtaining that title is quite telling (see Busolini, 'Piromalli, Paolo').

¹⁰⁷ Matthee, 'The Politics of Protection', p. 258.

could not think of a different approach in his preaching. While questioning the practical effectiveness of this conversion strategy (by blaming the schismatics for its failure), what he suggested was a complete change of approach, where the union achieved with means other than theological persuasion (economic threatening) preceded *de facto* the doctrinal conviction of the people. Even if he realized that the strategy of *Propaganda Fide* did not work with Armenian Apostolics, he failed to adapt the theological content of his preaching to the situation at hand, and the only solution he could devise was a completely different one, one that did not question the intrinsic value of the other, because it played on a different level.

If we judge Piromalli's success by his own avowed goal of bringing the whole Armenian Church into the union with Rome, we would have to acknowledge that, some occasional and collateral success apart,¹⁰⁸ his entire career was essentially a failure; or, at best, it was like the proverbial mountain that labors to bring forth a mouse. Still, his fervent reports must have worked if in 1655 he was appointed by Rome as the Archbishop of Nakhichevan, despite his dubious success in Armenia, his failure in Poland, and his brisk, uncalled for, and ultimately ineffective methods known from the letters of other missionaries in Isfahan. Furthermore, Piromalli was appointed in spite of the opposition of the local Armeno-Dominican friars, with the result that three months after his arrival the entire Dominican clergy of the Archdiocese was in rebellion.¹⁰⁹ For that matter, the news of Piromalli's appointment was received with anxiety also by the Catholic missionaries in Isfahan, who—as the Carmelite Fr. Denis de la Couronne d'Épines wrote—were concerned about his 'violent and impetuous spirit, which had already given rise to great anger and dislike among the Armenians' against missionaries.¹¹⁰ Despite all of this, both Piromalli and *Propaganda Fide* seemingly did not regard the controversies and opposition prompted by his preaching as the signs of a failing strategy. Indeed, they lacked a critical reflection, if not on the content of their preaching, then on the method that would be acceptable to the Armenians. Instead, they shifted the problem on to Armenians themselves: it was not the missionaries' strategies that were to be blamed, but the Armenians who were ignorant and stubborn in persisting in their supposed 'errors'. In that sense, while the zeal, excess, and ambition of Piromalli made him stand apart from other missionaries, his stance is indicative of what was and would remain the position of the Roman Church, *Propaganda Fide*, and Catholic missionaries towards the Armenian Apostolics: they were regarded as obstinate and deceitful schismatics who were in error and needed to be converted.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, the above-mentioned cases of Kirakos and Oskan Erevanc'i.

¹⁰⁹ See Eszer, 'Sebastianus Knab', p. 230.

¹¹⁰ 'C'est un esprit bien trop violent et véhément, qui a causé très grandes altérations et aversions des Arméniens vers nous' (Denis de la Couronne d'Épines, Letter to Isidore de Saint-Joseph, AGOCD, 237, c. 25; quoted in Windler, *Missionare in Persien*, p. 316).

¹¹¹ This idea was so deep-rooted that Piromalli could write in absolute good faith that the Armenian Church 'erred [also] in grammar', and that, *unlike Latin*, the Armenian language was

To be sure, in the early seventeenth century, initial missionary efforts in Armenia were intended especially for Armenian Catholics.¹¹² Piromalli himself was sent as Apostolic Prefect to the Catholic missions of Eastern Armenia to establish a school where the Armeno-Dominican novices could be properly trained. Only after the Dominican went to Etchmiadzin on his own initiative to discuss the matter of the union with the Catholicos of All the Armenians, the Secretary of the Congregation of the *Propaganda Fide*, Mgr. Ingoli, believing in what Piromalli reported in his letters, asked him to persist in that line of action, regarding the prospective union as ‘more important than the school’.¹¹³ However, over the course of the seventeenth century, Armenian Apostolics acquired a reputation for being almost ‘unconvertible’ in their stubbornness and heresy, which became a *topos* in missionary letters and travel literature.¹¹⁴

In retrospective, a better and more fruitful approach would have probably been that undertaken over the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries by the Mekhitarist fathers, an Armenian Catholic Order founded at the beginning of the eighteenth century by the monk Mxit‘ar Sebastac‘i (1676–1749). The Mekhitarists believed that the Armenian Church ‘formally acknowledges ... all the truths of the Roman Church’, and that it ‘possesses and professes since the very beginning the orthodox faith, and division entered it only because someone understood differently the articles of

unsuited to express theological teachings because it lacked functions such as, among others, gender differentiation in nouns and adjectives (*Relazione degl'errori*, APF, SOCG 293, fol. 4r). The underlying idea was that, since the language of post-Tridentine theology was Latin, Latin was *the* language best suited to spread its doctrine. Accordingly, since its grammar was different from that of Latin, Armenian was inherently unfit for rightly and clearly conveying that very doctrine. It goes without saying that, if one questions even the ‘orthodoxy’ of the language used by the persons he is talking to, there is not much room for actual dialogue.

¹¹² See, for instance, the mission of Paolo Maria Cittadini to Nakhichevan in 1614: he and his companions were expressly requested by their Master General not to actively engage in theological debate with the Armenian Apostolics (see *Istruzione per li frati di S. Domenico*, APF, Misc. div. 22, fol. 198r; see also Lucca, ‘Cleansing the Christian Vineyard’, especially pp. 42–43).

¹¹³ ‘E già che si trova presso cotesto Pat(riarc)a Filippo veda anche d'apprendere la lingua Armena per discorrere con esso dell'unione, ch'il suo precursore dissegnava di fare con questa S(an)ta Sede, rappresentandogli ciò ch'altre volte hà fatto la sua nat(io)ne ... E s'ella havesse qualche speranza di ridurlo alla med(esim)a unione, non si partirà da lui, perché ciò importa più, ch'il d(etto)o Colleg(i)o’ (Ingoli, Letter to Piromalli, APF, Lett. volg. 15, fol. 69v). That Piromalli's visit to the Catholicos had not been previously planned by Rome is apparent from the tone and content of Ingoli's letter (see Lucca, ‘Cleansing the Christian Vineyard’, p. 50).

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, Chardin, who, in the 1660s, reported that ‘les Missionnaires font quelques progrès parmi le chrétiens orientaux, excepté pourtant parmi les Arméniens’ (*Voyages*, p. 158); and Sanson, who, in 1695, mentioned the obstinacy of the Armenian Apostolics and their ‘attache à leurs erreurs & leurs superstitions’ (*Voyage*, p. 165).

faith'.¹¹⁵ This conviction—and the fact that they had a deep knowledge of the Armenian language and religious traditions—enabled them to engage in a more productive dialogue with the Armenian Apostolics.¹¹⁶

Instead, an attitude based on suspicion and on a fundamental ignorance of the Armenian Apostolic tradition—which was wrongly regarded as heretic and an obstacle to the union with the Catholic Church—ended up yielding the opposite result from the one Piromalli and Rome were seeking, as it ultimately contributed towards the strengthening or re-defining of an Armenian Apostolic identity which was built *also* in opposition to Catholicism. Indeed, most of the western and the Armenian missionaries trained in Rome at the Collegio Urbano would embrace this very approach up until the mid-nineteenth century, engaging in an escalation of controversy and dispute with the Armenian Apostolics which, in 1831, resulted in the creation of the Armenian Catholic *millet* in the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent establishment of an Armenian Catholic hierarchy that halted once and for all any hope of the longed-for union.

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AGAD = Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (Warsaw)

AKW = Archiwum Koronne Warszawskie

AGOCD = Archivum Generale Ordinis Carmelitarum Discalceatorum (Rome)

¹¹⁵ 'La Chiesa Armena dal principio in qua ha e professa la vera fede Cattolica, ma siccome l'uso de' termini in materia di fede altri altrimenti intendevano, ed intendono, da ciò è entrata tra noi la divisione'; 'la Chiesa Armena formalm(ent)e come Chiesa ammette tutte le verità della Chiesa Cattolica Romana' (APF, SC Armeni, Misc. 32, docs no. 17 and 19).

¹¹⁶ However, they were opposed by the Armenian alumni of *Propaganda Fide*, who more often than not were accusing them of liturgical abuses and doctrinal deviations. Starting from 1714 and up to the mid-nineteenth century a series of investigations were carried out by *Propaganda Fide* and the *Santo Uffizio* which concerned the Catholic orthodoxy of the Mekhitarists, mostly on the basis of allegations coming from Western missionaries and the Armenian alumni of *Propaganda Fide*. They were accused of religious indifferentism, since they thought and taught that 'the difference between the Armenian Catholics and Apostolics was a mere nothing.' See, for instance, APF, SC Armeni, Misc. 35, fols 388–389: 'Dunque egli è un chiaro segno, che Mechitar, per riunire insieme i Cattolici, e gli eretici Armeni, teneva una strada di mezzo, cioè quella di indifferentismo, facendo intendere, essere cosa di niente la differenza, che passava fra li Cattolici, e gli Eretici Armeni [...]. Dunque sono altresì indifferenti tutti i Mechitaristi, i quali lodano una tal condotta del loro fondatore, e chiamano pacifiche quelle persone indifferenti.' By failing to capitalize on the activity of the Mekhitarist monks to proselytize among the Apostolics, *Propaganda Fide* proved once again its inability or unwillingness—at least when it came to Armenians—to rely upon someone who had a profound understanding of their national religious and cultural traditions, but who had not been directly trained at its school and did not speak its same post-Tridentine language. On the clashes between the Mekhitarist fathers and the alumni of *Propaganda Fide*, see Lucca, *Neither Fowl nor Fish?* [forthcoming].

APF = Archivum S.C. de Propaganda Fide (Rome)

Acta = Acta Sacrae Congregationis

Let. div. ling. = Lettere diverse lingue

Let. volg. = Lettere volgari

Misc. = Miscellanea

SOCG = Scritture originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali

SC = Scritture riferite nei Congressi

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