

“or by consent money and goods from everyone in order to pay the fines on Julfa. I shall tell you briefly what he has done to me: on 8.5.1757 he took from me four valuable “deposits” (i.e. of money or valuables by Catholic refugees abroad) “. . . on 15.5.1757 he also took the goods deposited with, or given to the convent by . . . On 8.5.1757 he “also took from me and from others money to pay fines on Julfa, from me 12 Tumans: “a Georgian merchant named George paid for me, otherwise they would have mutilated “me with lashes. In three hours before daylight I had to find that money, and I was “twice given the bastinado . . .”:

and Bishop Sebastian was evidently deceived as to the extent of the desire for amity and concord on the part of the ‘Vartapet’ who had visited him—“a Vartapet in exile might be a “dove, but at home was a roaring lion”—for 5.1.1765, the Bishop of Baghdad notified¹ the Sac. Congregation:

“The heretical ‘bishop’ of Julfa who for several years past had taken asylum in Basra “along with a part of his flock has shown more zeal for heresy than our missionaries for “the Catholic Faith, because, despite his great age, and the easy tranquil life he was leading “at Basra, *about a year ago* he finally went back to Julfa, whence I have a report that he is “causing many anxieties to Fr. John Baptist de Bernardis, is doing all he can to quench “the Catholic Faith there. If there were several missionaries it would be easier to oppose his “vexatious proceedings and work effectively for the conversion of heretics. . . .”

It would appear from a letter of the Bishop of Isfahan, 2.5.1765,² that the Vartapet or schismatic ‘bishop’ of Julfa

“even wanted Fr. de Bernardis” (as the latter himself wrote) “to show him the letters “patent for his ministry, and, having summoned him to his tribunal, warned him threaten- “ingly not to put his foot in the houses of Armenians, even Catholic ones . . .”:

and the Bishop of Isfahan doubted whether by his going up-country himself evident harm would not be caused,

“. . . putting the few Catholics in danger of being entirely ruined by the persecution, which “the Armenian heretics would set on foot on hearing of the arrival of a Catholic bishop, “the more so as . . . there is united in the hands of their ‘bishop’ both civil and spiritual “authority. . . . I am certainly ready to admit that I should not be directly molested in “the matter of the exercise of religious observances, in view of the ‘farmans’ obtained from “the ‘prince’. But, instead, they would take the line of having me summoned before the “Persian judges (who can easily be corrupted by money) as *being responsible for all debts left “by the missionaries and for those of the poor Catholics*. They would accuse me of being the “principal cause of splits in the families” (i.e. religious discords) “and of the emigration “of all the Armenian subjects of Persia, who have gone to Europe—charges and accusations “all of them absolutely false. But to whom am I to turn to get them to listen to reason. . . .”

It is evident that this apprehension of being arrested, made responsible personally for the debts and taxes and obligations of refugee Catholic Armenians then in Europe or elsewhere, in addition to those of the Religious dead and living, apprehension of disrespect to their ecclesiastical character loomed large in the minds of both Bishop Sebastian and Bishop Cornelius, and was a principal reason why they shrank from, and adduced reasons against, going to Julfa. Indeed Bishop Cornelius argued that

¹ S.N.R., VII, p. 292.

² *Idem*, p. 308.