

“to state that they desire a ‘Frank’ head, who can protect them, and they wish our Holy Father to protect them, saying also that, if they are in error in matters of faith, it is through ignorance and having no one to teach them. But, whenever the Holy See shall have warned them of their errors, they offer to amend these and obey whatever the Holy See commands. They ask for a college to be made in Rome for their boys, so that these may be there instructed in the Christian religion according to the Roman rite and on their return to Persia instruct others. To the upkeep of this the richer Armenians said they were willing to contribute annually. Their request regarding the printing of religious books, they added, arose through the books they had possessed having been partly lost in the wars, partly become old and full of errors by copyists. . . .”

The MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, chapter 37, book 5, part 3, adds the information that one of the ‘commissions’, which the Armenians begged Fr. John Thaddeus to undertake for them was that, having taken into their hands the entire silk trade from Persia computed to be worth 6,000,000 in Persian money (save for the share done by the English), they petitioned the Pope to allow them to open establishments in the Papal States for the sale of silk, and to furnish them with letters to other Christian sovereigns with the like end in view. If admitted to the Papal States, etc., they promised to live in a Catholic way, with their own rites, but with their priests in obedience to Holy Church.¹ An abstract of the proceedings of the Sac. Cong. de Prop. Fide, dated 19.3.1630 (with Cardinal Ubaldini charged with the enquiry) records a decision that several cardinals and prelates should hear Fr. John Thaddeus verbally in respect of the request by the Armenians of Julfa: that in due course (it is not clear whether on that day or in July) Cardinals Borghese and Ubaldini and the Cardinal of S. Sisto did hear him at the palace of Cardinal Borghese, when it was resolved that, if the suppliant Armenians were Catholics, they might be allowed dwellings to be erected at their own expense, together with the franchise of the ports only, in the Papal States and that, as to the college, it would be constructed, when the necessary funds had been provided. The books desired would be printed in Armenian in Rome at the cost of the suppliants, when the said books could be purged of errors.

During the following year or so, the Sac. Congregation, then with Mgr Ingoli as secretary, appears to have come to the conclusion that a resident Latin bishop in Persia was a desirability, e.g. in the minutes² made in the secretariat one reads:

“*On the need for making a bishop in Persia.*”

“From the letters of the missionaries in Persia asking for faculties for consecrating the oils and chrism there is clearly to be seen the need that kingdom has of a Catholic bishop, and of the Latin rite, who would be able not only to consecrate oils and chrism, but also to ordain priests and perform the other episcopal functions. In addition to that mentioned there are other reasons of consequence:

“(a) since the road for the conversion of Persians is being made accessible, according to what the Capuchins write, it would be as well to receive the converts into Holy Church with the Latin rites, so that the Armenian rite, which contains various errors derived from the Greek rite and in general, should not become current among them: this would be all the better done with a bishop, because simple missionaries will not be able to prevent Persians from being inclined to the Armenian rite, seeing that our rite would not please Persians (with their vainglorious and arrogant minds) owing to it lacking the majestic episcopal dignity which they can see in use among the Armenians.³

“(b) this bishop could in due time ordain Persians themselves who will gather a greater

¹ The difficulties, which arose in the eighteenth century in some of their Italian colonies, e.g. Leghorn, Venice, over the schismatic obstinacy of some Armenian merchants and their priests, will be noted in due course.

² *S.R.*, vol. 209, p. 91.

³ To those who can look back on the result, and who have seen the two races at close quarters, such reasoning is quite uninformed and mere theory: there was no movement for conversion from Islam and, if there had been, it would not have been to take the religion of a subject-race, rather downtrodden, like the Armenians.