

“So, as quickly as could be we removed everything from our house, our weeping Catholics helping us to put the things into houses near by, in order that in the confusion many things should not be lost. Meanwhile the Vartapets, priests and common people feverishly demolished the chapel buildings, which was already 3 or 4 feet high, leaving the site covered with broken bricks.

“On these we then gathered together and sang the ‘Te Deum laudamus’, thanking the Lord for that outrage suffered through the preaching of his holy Gospel, at which those present were much touched. Then, after a brief exhortation, and a blessing given to our Catholics, the gate of the ruined chapel was closed from the inside and, when we had gone out, the Diwan Baigi’s officials shut and sealed it. All the neighbours were weeping, particularly the women, who from the doors of their houses watched us depart, but we comforted them by telling them to persevere and be constant and hope with us, by the help of the Lord.

“As a counterpart to the sadness of the Catholics was the delight of the heretics and schismatics, who were beating the boards which serve them instead of bells above their churches. At the great convent of the schismatic bishop there was still greater noise, drums and pipes celebrating this triumph of iniquity. On that day indeed the bishop in question granted a dispensation from the fast which precedes the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, which is observed by the Armenian ecclesiastics who call it ‘Quinquagesima’. So great and so insolent was the impiety of the enemies of the Roman Church.

“Meanwhile, when I reached the last house in Julfa, I desired to fulfil the precept of Christ our Lord and, taking off my shoes, shook off the dust from my feet. . . . The Persian officials of the Diwan Baigi, who were conducting us, understood the sign and said to one another that we wanted to show that the fault fell on the town. Continuing our journey we met two Portuguese Augustinian Fathers by whom we were courteously lent the two horses they had, and so we got away the quicker from those Persian officials.

“Arrived in Isfahan with a companion I went at once to visit the ambassador of Poland, with whom I found the Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, legate from the Pope. . . . After consultation over what had occurred it was thought advisable to send Fr. Joseph Maria Rousi, a Capuchin, and Monsieur Gaudereau, vicar of the Bishop of Baghdad, so that in the name of the archbishop, of Fr. Stephen, Provincial of the Dominicans of Nakhchiwan and of the reverend Zapolski, ambassador of the king of Poland, they should make a protest to the Diwan Baigi and state that news of the insult done us would be sent to the Christian princes, whom it would concern to show the anger due. He made reply that it was no matter to acquaint princes, as it concerned solely possession of a house taken without the due formalities, and it only remained for him to give the king more accurate information through the intermediary of ‘Itimad-ud-Dauleh, his chief minister.

“The schismatics, not satisfied with our expulsion from Julfa, turned on the Sharimans, and to the accusation of having sent money to Europe added the other of having changed from the Armenian sect to the Catholic religion. This with the zealots of Muhammadanism is a capital crime, as whoever wants to change his religion must profess that of his Shah, or die. But the Persian monarch commuted the sentence of the supreme penalty to a monetary punishment, which from larger sums was reduced to 550 Tumans. Although at the time I was greatly grieved over this these gentlemen consoled me by writing that they had never expended money more usefully and gloriously.¹ All that was insufficient,

¹ See covering letter of 10.8.1694, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 110:

“What most consoled me in this deplorable occurrence was to see the great constancy of all our Catholics, children and women as well as men. . . . But among them all there was no one to compare with our ‘Judas Maccabaeus’, Khwajeh Markar, the second-born of the five Shariman brothers, in front of the judge sent by the king with more than 100 men for the execution of this warrant, and in the face of the pseudo-bishop Stephen with all his schismatic clergy, of the Kalantar and all his faction who had gathered for this spectacle, declaiming against the malice and ignorance of that pretended bishop, and offering to let himself be cut in pieces rather than submit to the latter’s blasphemous errors and sacrilegious orders.”