

Bishop Fedeli, then, remarked in his letter, 4.3.1727:

“. . . the Armenians, from being useful to these Afghans from time to time, take advantage
“of the kindness of the latter, to molest the Catholics. . . .”

and again, 17.9.1727:

“. . . we enjoy our former liberty” (i.e. pastoral protection for worship) “over all Catholics
“there were in the time of the late king Sultan Husain: over the new (Catholics) who have
“become so in the time of the present reigning sovereign, *who is very well disposed towards*
“*the Armenians*, for the present we have no jurisdiction. It is true that the *raqam*, or royal
“order, was already prepared to cover the new Catholics also; but the hasty and precipitate
“sallying forth on campaign of the king¹ allowed no time for it to be issued. . . .”

Two months afterwards Bishop Barnabas resumed, at great length by exception:

“At last the Armenians have given vent to their passions, which they had been inwardly
“fanning. Already for some time past, by oppressing first this person, then another and
“by menaces to send them to prison . . . the (schismatic) bishop showed openly what
“was in his heart with regard to the Catholics (usually here called ‘Franks’). But I and
“the other missionary Fathers continued to affect indifference, and to put up with it;
“because we knew that there being a ‘fair wind’, on account of the special protection of
“this ruler, they might ‘launch out into the deep’ of a general persecution, and this mission
“be totally ruined. So we allowed them to go on, with marriages, baptisms, burials, etc.,
“to deprive them of any occasion whatsoever for abandoning it. In the meantime there
“came up the need for providing a priest for the church of the Sharimans, at which there
“was officiating only one neophyte, who did not afford satisfaction to the people, much
“less to the officials of that church, Catholics for long past: there were constant dissensions,
“and they became lukewarm in God’s service, and the people began to fall away. More
“than two years passed and, because of the death of the other Catholic priests, the Messrs.
“Shariman were always pressing me to ordain one, because they did not wish to become
“dependent upon the Armenian bishop, who was anxious to insinuate one of his own
“schismatics into this church: and, although I recognized the very great need. . . . I kept
“putting this off, month by month, because I wanted to wait for some reply. . . . Finally,
“as the need became more urgent and, in addition to the repeated request of the Messrs.
“Shariman there was also the advice of the missionary Fathers, I deemed it best to ordain
“a youth of proven character and sound belief. That greatly displeased the (schismatic)
“bishop and his priests, because they saw their penetration into that church barred, the
“more so by a priest who without exaggeration by his teaching proves to be a bulwark
“against all the priests in Julfa and has often confounded them” (in argument). “So,
“taking advantage of the present poverty of us missionaries, abandoned both in the matter
“of financial support and of protection (for the French consul last year was seized by an
“attack of apoplexy, which completely deprived him of speech and the use of the limbs
“on his right side, and the Dutch and English will not mix themselves up in it), they, the
“schismatics, laid an information, as they listed, in terms of gold, with a Mulla, whom
“they selected as magistrate, and before him we were then all cited, both Franks and
“Armenians. Each of us put forward his case, and produced the royal permits obtained
“from past Shahs: and, although our *raqams* were very clear, and set forth ample faculties
“for us to be able to perform all our functions and for all persons of whatsoever nationality
“to come to our churches, yet, despite all this, the arguments of the Armenians prevailed,
“and the Judge gave his sentence that in future the Armenians might not come to our

¹ Shah Ashraf the Afghan—perhaps the end of October 1726 is meant, when he marched out to defeat the Turks advancing on Hamadan.