

“But, once there is no longer there any European Father, the Armenians will no longer have any regard for the latter priests. The schismatic Armenian bishop and monks, in whose hands remains the authority for governing Julfa, will not fail to drive them away, with the risk that the mission there will be irremediably lost. . . .”¹

That was why Bishop Cornelius urged that, if the Sacr. Congregation were firm in withdrawing from the Dominicans the mission at Julfa, Carmelites should be dispatched to replace them.

“After having departed from Julfa to go to his new appointment, Fr. J. B. de Bernardis received fresh orders from Mgr Cornelius to return again to Julfa until instructions came from the Sacr. Congregation or another Religious arrive. So he is still here . . .”²

wrote Fr. John son of Isaac from Julfa, 10.5.1772: and Bishop Cornelius’ report in Rome of December 1772³ explained:

“As to the present condition of the missions in Persia, the tyrannical rule of Quli Khan and civil warfare which followed his death, just as they were the principal cause of the ruin of Persia, so they were also of” (the ruin of) “the missions in that country and of the very bad condition in which they continue to be through abandonment by almost all the Missionaries: at present in all that vast empire there is only Fr. J. B. de Bernardis, O.P., whom I took the liberty of retaining there in the position of my Vicar, notwithstanding the orders of the Sacr. Congregation which he had received to transfer himself to the mission in Mausil, because of the need for him to remain at Julfa to preserve the Catholic Armenian church, which I had succeeded in recovering a few years ago by giving over the administration of it to two native priests, former pupils of the Urban College, Fr. John son of Aratun and Fr. John son of Isaac. I anticipated that, were one European Religious at least not on the spot to uphold them, the schismatic ‘archbishop’, monks and priests there would not have failed to drive them away and take possession of that Catholic parish church, to the spiritual hurt of the small flock there, by virtue of the authority, temporal as well, which the Regent had granted to the said ‘archbishop’ . . . as your Eminence could not have foreseen. It is true that the Catholic flock there is reduced to a small number and has not grown by return of faithful who had emigrated and are scattered in other countries. Too much account should not be made of the difficulty made by many Catholic families, who have taken refuge in Venice or other far-off countries, about returning to their homeland, as it is known that the Armenian race is given over to trade. If trade reopens in Persia, as is hoped, they will certainly be the first to send their representatives and agents, at the least, because of the advantage, which they, better than any other race, know how to extract from it, being . . . natives of the country.

“Then, granted that the Catholics who have remained in Persia are at present reduced to a small number, what of it? Is the Catholic worker to rely solely on those who have already become Catholics, or on those whom, by the Divine aid and his own efforts as an apostle, he ought to hope to make by converting infidels and reconciling heretics to the Catholic Church?”

So Bishop Cornelius proceeded to recommend the re-establishment of certain missions in Persia, not merely in Julfa as previously, but with an eye to advantageous geographical distribution:

“In my opinion as a beginning of attempts to reopen in Persia four Residences are indicated as the most necessary and likely to be useful:

¹ This prophetic warning was fulfilled within 20 years, as would hardly have been the case with Religious from Europe ‘holding the fort’ as a point of honour.

² *S.N.R.*, VIII, p. 34.

³ *Idem*, p. 6.