

“because of the frequency of guests, who, as Shiraz is on the road from India, the Persian ports and Basra, are in the habit of seeking hospitality. . . . While there is not a single Catholic in all Shiraz and no Christians, save four or five Armenians, who go there to sell cloth and make wine, leaving their families in Isfahan. . . .”¹

Part of the buildings, and the large garden with pomegranate-trees on the outskirts of the town on the road to Lar had already been sold to meet debts and expenses when, returning to the East in the capacity of Visitor General, from Baghdad, 3.11.1646, Fr. Stephen of Jesus wrote that in his opinion:

“. . . it is necessary to found a House in Baghdad for . . . the good of souls and . . . I have ordered Isfahan to sell the rest of the House of Shiraz and let the proceeds, together with the fittings of that House, remain in deposit, destined for the founding at Baghdad. . . .”

From Rome the Praepositus General had disapproved of the abandonment of the Residence at Shiraz: and, after his arrival in Isfahan, 28.5.1649, the new Vicar Provincial, Fr. Dominic of S. Nicolas, replied:

“. . . Before I arrived, by order of the Fr. Visitor, Shiraz had already in fact been abandoned, the furniture taken elsewhere, nor did there remain anything except the dwelling-house, with a small cottage and courtyard. The large garden with the other buildings had previously been sold . . . all that it is possible to do now is to retain and preserve the church. . . .”²

During the years 1644–54 the house at Shiraz had had no resident Carmelite Father, but once Fr. Felix of S. Antony had succeeded as Vicar Provincial in 1654 his predilections led him to reside in Shiraz (perhaps inspired with the sentiment of thus at any rate preserving the Residence) rather than at Isfahan. (At that time, there were only two families of ‘Frank’ Christians resident in the capital of Fars:³ at Basra only three Christian households.)

But in 1656, unheeding of the affection of the other Religious for the traditions and associations of the old premises, this Vicar Provincial sold what remained of those acquired in 1623, and paid for so painfully, for some 8 or 9 Tumans:⁴ he built another Residence near the garden of the Khan, which was destined to be occupied continuously by the Fathers for some 80 years.

In more ways than one this reign was a restless period for the Carmelite Mission, and full of contrarities; but perhaps the most unsettling factor of all was a Bull of Pope Alexander VII regarding the control of the missions. The Vicar Provincial wrote:⁵

“I have heard that by a Brief of the Pope dispatched in September 1655 both the temporal and spiritual control of the missions has passed out of the hands of the Order into that of the Sac. Congregation (de Propaganda Fide): and this has afflicted us all greatly. . . . it is as if a son, who loved his father tenderly and desired to remain to be brought up by him, had been suddenly deprived of him. The Fathers are much disturbed at the thought that the Sac. Congregation may dally in dealing with affairs and not know the individuals it sends out” (to the missions). “They are thinking of returning to their provinces. . . .”

The Carmelites in Persia had first been warned of this by the former Vicar Provincial and Visitor General (1635–42), Fr. James of S. Teresa:

“We have received a circular letter, dated 21.2.1656, from Fr. James, written to all missionaries here, in which on behalf of our Fr. General he let it be known to all that

¹ Fr. Dionysius, 8.5.1645, O.C.D. 237 c.

² O.C.D. 237 c.

³ Fr. Dionysius of the Crown of Thorns, 27.3.1654, O.C.D. 242 e.

⁴ *Idem*, 3.1.1657, O.C.D. 237 c.

⁵ Fr. Felix, 24.10.1656, O.C.D. 237 i.