

In a letter in Latin, 14.10.1662,¹ covering a copy of a letter from himself to the Augustinians at Isfahan, Bishop Bernard of S. Teresa stated that he was obliged to sell all he possessed in his house at Isfahan to Monsieur Jean des Rousseaux, and authorized the Augustinians to hand over everything to that person's procurator, apparently the Dutch East India Company, or their agents. Through the Nuncio in Paris the Sacr. Congregation lodged a strong protest² with the king of France against the alienation of the premises and the real effects, and demanded restitution by the Dutch agents in Isfahan of the buyer.³ Moreover, this sale of the house and effects was not genuine, but feigned, according to a summary made in the Sacr. Congregation:⁴ and in 1666 it ordered sequestration of the income of Mgr Duval from the endowment of his see.⁵

This unsatisfactory state of affairs continued—it is true that at that date it would probably have been impracticable for a Catholic bishop to reside in Turkish Baghdad—until 30.6.1659, when the following minute by the Secretary of the Sacr. Congregation reported at the sitting of the Cardinals:

“it has pleased our lord (the Pope) to confer the coadjutorship of Babylon with future succession (to the bishopric), together with the administratorship of the diocese of Isfahan in Persia, on Dom Placid du Chemin, a French Benedictine monk, whom Mgr the Archbishop of Toulouse had proposed⁶ most insistently. Now there remains to be determined by your Eminences the difficulty of his stipend.”

And the rescript was issued:

“To the Nuncio in France, let him treat with the Bishop” (i.e. Mgr Bernard Duval) “and ascertain from him what he will offer for the stipend of the coadjutor. . . .”

The Bull of appointment of Mgr Placid du Chemin was dated 30.5.1661: he was consecrated Bishop of Neocaesarea.⁷ It was stipulated, however, that he should not receive the emoluments

¹ *S.R.*, vol. 231, p. 69.

² The funds, or most of them, for the purchase of the building in 1641 had come through or from the Sacr. Congregation.

³ *S.R.*, vol. 238, p. 278.

⁴ *S.N.R.*, I, p. 112. Already that year, 1666, and doubtless in connection with this dispute, the Sacr. Congregation had proceeded to have altered the arrangements for control over the considerable income accruing from the endowment of the diocese of Baghdad, as can be seen from a ‘Decree of the Sacr. Congregation held in the presence of His Holiness Alexander VII, 25.3.1666’:

“Since Urban VIII for a suitable endowment of the diocese of Baghdad or Babylon in the kingdom of Persia and for the maintenance of its bishop applied 6,000 Spanish doubloons, coming from a pious gift of a certain lady of French nationality, to be invested in so many non-transferable ‘Luoghi di Monti’ (as appears from the Brief issued about it on the 4th day of June 1638) in fulfilment of which there were purchased in the name of the Sacr. Congregation 107 ‘Luoghi di Monti . . . of the 3rd issue (of which in the year 1656 thirteen Luoghi were drawn, and their value then invested in thirteen Luoghi di Monti of the remodelled 2nd issue) and 49½ Luoghi di Monti of the new 2nd issue, the yield of which being reserved for the disposal of the bishops for the time being of that diocese, as can be seen from the Letters Patent . . . and, since from experience it was seen that it would be more useful for the administration and service of that diocese, if in the future the yield of the said Luoghi di Monti were drawn by the Sacr. Cong. de Prop. Fide and its officials, and then by its or their hands paid to the bishops themselves or to their lawful procurators, therefore His Holiness on the vote of the Sacr. Congregation decreed that the Brief of Urban VIII should be amended, or at least the title-deeds of the said Luoghi di Monti, so that these should not only run in favour of . . . the Sacr. Congregation as regards the capital sums, as they now and formerly do and did, but as to the yield also they should stand at the free disposal of the said Sacr. Cong. notwithstanding the reservation mentioned above or any other power whether in the Brief or in the Patents granting to the said bishops” (the right) “to claim the said yield, from whom it is specially and expressly taken away by the present decree, the other contents of the said Brief to remain in vigour, and, in case of a drawing, or amortization of the said Luoghi, as often as that may happen, the price must be re-invested always in the name and form specified and His Holiness ordered that such was the method to be followed” (see *S.N.R.*, IV, pp. 21–8).

Briefly, instead of the Bishop of Baghdad being able to draw and receive *direct* the interest on the endowment sum, in future the sums due would be drawn by the Sacr. Congregation alone, and it lay with the Congregation to pay the Bishop what was considered due to him (and it will be seen that some later Bishops complained of reduced payment, and asked for the whole yield of the endowment).

⁶ The Sacr. Cong. had cause to regret the heed paid to the Archbishop of Toulouse, for the person recommended is shown by numerous documents in the archives, e.g. a letter to the Pope of 2.1.1660, *S.R.*, vol. 236, p. 202, to have been quite unfitted for the office.

⁷ Quoted from *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 10, by the late Fr. L. Lemmens, O.F.M.