

“See and my Order as a simple Religious, and as such I have taken a vow to go to any mission wherever I am ordered to go, and I am most ready to do so—the humbler the position the more obliged I should consider myself to shed my blood and give my life a thousand times, if I were able, for the glory of Christ and the propagation of the holy Faith. In conclusion, reflecting that I am in a cell, without occupying myself with missions, I shall abide by the order of my Superiors and remain resigned to do the will of God and attend only to the salvation of my soul. . . .”

The Sac. Congregation also wished diligent enquiry made as to the attitude of the Carmelite Order to a nomination being made from its ranks, for:

“it was given to be understood that the Order is usually opposed to the missions, and would willingly extinguish the mission in Persia and the others in India—which agrees with what has been observed in past years about this Order. In the Persian mission, undertaken largely at the expense<sup>1</sup> of the Sac. Congregation, to go out to it is considered more of a” (temporary) “visit than a” (fixed) “mission, and the return of the Religious sent is” (eagerly) “awaited. It is to be seen also in letters from India, where the Order has closed some mission posts,<sup>2</sup> which were making much progress, and recalled the missionary Fathers. Then, too, Fr. Epiphanius had been against founding missions in Arabia on some pretexts vaguely explained to the Sac. Congregation. Further, the students at the seminary at Rome have diminished in numbers: language courses have not been initiated.<sup>3</sup> Letters from the Praepositus General, produced by Fr. John Thaddeus, indicate that the former is opposed to missions, and at the next Chapter General this question is likely to be discussed. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

This attitude, ascribed to the Definitory General of 1631 by the Sac. Congregation, merits notice because it explains much of the fact, inexplicable otherwise to the student three centuries later, that support of the missions—in sending more missionaries out to Persia, in providing them with funds from Europe, in encouragement and answering their written requests—became from 1630 onwards tepid and even negligible, not continuously, but markedly so at frequent intervals. Apart from opposition to the maintenance of missions in principle, there was, however, a great dislike felt by the Reformed Order to its sons being nominated to prelacies, especially diocesan sees.<sup>5</sup> As will be read in these annals, more than one of the missionaries in Persia recoiled with horror from nomination to a bishopric, steadily declining to depart, as they conscientiously believed acceptance would be, from the spirit of their Observance and calling.

In this case of 1631–2 several names, some of those of Carmelites, were considered for this nomination: the Procurator put forward that of Fr. Stephen of Pisa, formerly a Calced Carmelite: Fr. Archangelus of Jesus Mary, belonging to the great Genoese family of Spinola and a Definitory General at the time, was also proposed, and on 21.5.1631 the Sac. Congregation resolved to beg the Pope to make him Bishop of Isfahan; but he was determined not to accept a mitre, and died before long.<sup>6</sup> Fr. Virgilio Spada, brother of the cardinal of that family, was also strongly recommended, because he would have an income sufficient to endow

<sup>1</sup> There is no confirmation for this remark in letters from the missionaries: they had the Caccurri bequest, and otherwise to raise funds locally.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Tatta in Sind and Shiraz are meant: Fr. Epiphanius of S. John Baptist was Visitor General in 1629.

<sup>3</sup> *Regesta*, under 1.3.1633, vol. II, p. 106, mention that the Sac. Cong. de Prop. Fide had asked the Chapter General of the Order to appoint the Convent at Malta as a Seminary for the missionaries to learn Arabic.

<sup>4</sup> and <sup>6</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 209, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> The *Regesta*, or ‘extracts’ from the proceedings of the Definitory General of the Order, under 3.1.1630 record:

“Let there be represented to the Pope and to the Sac. Cong. de Prop. Fide the difficulties which arise over the appointment or assumption of a bishop for Persia and, on the supposition that one is to be appointed, it should be begged and urged that none of ours be appointed. . . . on account of the reasons and inconveniences set out. Also, on the supposition that the said bishop is bound to be taken from our Congregation, let there be proposed some of the more learned, senior, fitter and saintlier at present on that mission. . . .”