

"The harvest is great, but the labourers few: . . . in four missions we are only two
"Religious. . . ."

Fr. Jerome was alone at Julfa, the Bishop of Baghdad the sole occupant of the Carmelite Convent in the city, in which he had been given lodging, a servant of the Residence, all there was at Shiraz.¹ Considering the number of students of Arabic and missionary subjects there had been at the seminary at S. Pancrazio about that period, it is not a little strange that recruits had not been regularly supplied, the stations fully staffed; but it was 20.3.1713² before the Procurator General in Rome is found applying to the Sac. Congregation to be allowed to dispatch two Fathers to Persia, and 30.5.1715 before two were dispatched from Italy, with another four following in May 1716.³ When they had all arrived in 1717 the mission consisted of Frs. Paul Augustine and Urban at Basra, Fr. Cyril at Shiraz, Fr. Faustin, Vicar Provincial at Isfahan with Fr. Alexander of S. Sigismund, Frs. Jerome and Philip Mary at Julfa and a lay brother. The Vicar Provincial himself described the position at the Convent in his letter of 1719:⁴

"Here, then, we are three in choir, and one lay brother, and we carry out our Observance
"on the footing of a 'house of study'. . . . We administer the Sacraments to the new
"consul for France" (? M. de Gardanne) "and all his household. . . . In this city there
"are only one Capuchin Father from Angers and two Portuguese Augustinians. . . .
"There are also the Dutch merchants and the English company who are kind to and respect
"us greatly, especially the English gentlemen from whom we receive many acts of charity,
"and in less than a year they have given us four (Religious) habits and two cloaks of good
"cloth without our having asked them for it: so I would like you, Father General, in your
"first letter to be pleased to write and charge me to salute these gentlemen on your behalf
"and thank them in your name for the great charity and kindness they bestow on us. . . ."

An anonymous "Compendious Narrative of the . . . Duties carried out by the Carmelite
"Fathers in Persia,"⁵ undated but written between 1695 and 1699, gives the following epitome
of work at this period:

"Our missions in Persia are established in four places—Basra, Shiraz, Isfahan and at
"Julfa, the most important centre of the Armenians in all the East. In Basra there are
"usually two Religious: their duties are to sing Mass and preach every feast-day: Maronite,
"Syrian and Armenian Christians come there, at times few, at others more in number,
"according to the ships coming from India and the prosperity of trade with Baghdad.
"Every week the Fathers go to the houses of the Christians and teach Christian Doctrine
"to their families. That is all that can be done in that mission. At Shiraz there are also
"two missionaries; but, on account of the few Christians there are, there is nothing else
"to be done but preach every Sunday and whenever the missionary is skilled in medicine
"he profits by the opportunity very often to baptize dying children of the infidels. At
"Isfahan city there are only two missionaries, whose business is to read the Gospel over
"the heads of the infidel sick—men, women and children, who come every day in large
"numbers and beg this favour.⁶

"So, when they (the Fathers) see that death is inevitable and near, they baptize them,
"i.e. the children under the age of 16. From what I have seen in the 'register' more than
"7,000 were baptized in this way, and all died; none of those baptized survived. Besides
"this it sometimes happens that some adult when in danger of death asks for baptism:
"as now there are two in Isfahan baptized by us who observe the holy Faith loyally, as
"far as it can be done in secret. In Julfa the principal mission work consists of singing Mass

¹ Fr. Jerome Francis, Julfa, 26.1.1716, O.C.D. 238 u.

² *S.R.*, vol. 586, p. 328.

³ *Idem*, vol. 608, p. 222.

⁴ O.C.D. 242 b.

⁵ *S.N.R.*, II, p. 281.

⁶ This vogue was continuing in 1710, witness Fr. Jerome Francis, 7.9.1710, *S.R.*, vol. 579, p. 105, and *S.N.R.*, III, p. 374: "in our Convent in Isfahan our whole mission is to read the Gospel over the heads of the Muhammadan women labouring in some sickness, who led by some faith continue to come to us to be cured."