

“to Baghdad: and vice versa I beg the Sacr. Congregation to attach the town of Basra to Isfahan (diocese), now that almost all my flock has taken refuge here; otherwise what is the use of my being a bishop and not being able to perform episcopal functions here in Basra. . . . I hope for a favourable reception to this petition, which would remove to some extent my bitterness and sadness at seeing that the Sacr. Congregation has deprived me for three years of my allowance. . . .”

(He also asked, as a minimum, for the title of Vicar Apostolic, or Delegate, while at Basra.)

From the records available Bishop Emmanuel of S. Albert (Ballyet) was one of the most active missionary workers the Carmelites had in their Eastern missions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a man of great capacity (his brother Fr. Symphorian, too, had been Praepositus General of the Order), evidently in touch by correspondence with Rome and France: no other Carmelite bishop was able to make three or four journeys to Rome and France as he did during his long term of office, and be absent, on long journeys often, for more than ten years from his residential post. More still, he was a staunch Frenchman: and this happened to be a period when the French were at war, and pursuing a forward policy in the East, too: he never lost sight that the endowment of the diocese had been provided by a Frenchwoman for a French bishop, and he deemed himself in charge of a French see as if in France. Just as he was the Carmelite who was chiefly responsible for putting Mesopotamian missions under French official patronage and for obtaining his own nomination as consul of France, so he regarded such a proposal, put forward by a non-Frenchman too, to detach a portion from a diocese as *lese-majesté* against France. One main result was to make him hereafter regard his brethren, the bishops of Isfahan, with an *oeil jaloux*—it antagonized him.

The Sacr. Congregation had passed on to him the proposal for comments, while he was in Paris after his visit *ad limina*. Those comments to the Cardinal Prefect, 20.9.1754,<sup>1</sup> were trenchant and caustic:

“The letter, with which your Eminence honoured me, reached me a few days ago, because it was addressed to Besançon, my native place, whence it has been sent on to Paris.

“I have been extremely surprised at the proposal of Mgr the Bishop of Isfahan, who desires to exchange the town and district of Hamadan in his diocese for the town of Basra, which is in mine—and that upon the pretext that several families from Julfa, his flock, have withdrawn to Basra.

“(a) I have the honour to inform your Eminence that the number of Catholic families from Julfa, which have withdrawn to Basra is limited to five or six,<sup>2</sup> in addition to some twenty heretical (families). If this motive sufficed to make such a change, Mgr the Bishop of Isfahan would have many more of his flock” (in Baghdad) “to lay claim to the city of Baghdad, seeing that all the Armenian Christians of Hamadan, without exception, have taken refuge there, besides a quantity of families from Julfa and other places in his diocese.

“(b) From Hamadan to Baghdad, there will not be found one single Christian. The house, the church at Hamadan have been entirely destroyed, the town itself is in ruins to such a point that there are not 200 inhabitants to be found. So I leave your Eminence to judge of the justice of such a proposal. . . . If the Bishop of Isfahan doubt for a moment what I am expounding, why does he

<sup>1</sup> S.R., vol. 759.

<sup>2</sup> These figures are quite at variance with Bishop Emmanuel's own report dated 15 Kal. February 1753 to Pope Benedict XIV, printed in Rome, 1753 (S.N.R., VI, p. 123):

“. . . Now (1753) on account of the Armenian refugees from Persia their number has so increased that there are about 200 families, of whom 160 are heretics with a bishop and priests—they have no church and some years ago asked permission of the government to perform their rites in a small room: the remaining 40 families are Catholics, partly of the Armenian rite, partly of the Chaldaean rite. They have only one single Armenian Catholic priest from Julfa, whom the Carmelite Fathers keep with them.”