

of Fr. Benignus, including their plan to abandon Isfahan; while the Superior, Fr. Redempt, having succeeded in obtaining a passport for himself from the Wazir and left Lay Brother Diego to mind the convent at Isfahan, was on his way south to Hurmuz early in 1614 when Fr. Leander, who had set out from Hurmuz to relieve him, met him on the road with instructions to return and reopen the convent: this was after a council of the king's officers at Hurmuz, the Bishop of Cyrene and the Religious of both Orders had decided that in no wise should the convents at Isfahan be abandoned.

Here had better be interpolated a brief mention of the visit paid about May 1613 by Fr. Redempt, the then Superior at Isfahan, and Fr. Bartholomew Mary to the Katholikos, or patriarch, of the schismatic Armenians at Echmiadzin near Erivan—the place so frequently mentioned in Shah 'Abbas' negotiations with Rome—in order to deliver a Brief which Pope Paul V had written in reply to representations by the Armenians of their trials in the years immediately preceding. They had asked for the dispatch of a Papal representative. This particular Katholikos,<sup>1</sup> Melchisadech (= Malik Sadiq), then aged about 55, broken in health, but esteemed for his charity and generosity, was genuinely anxious for doctrinal unity with Rome, and after a solemn reception of the Carmelites in his cathedral, accompanied by his bishops and his clergy, he allowed Fr. Redempt to address the Armenian populace and explain the great interest of the Holy See in the Armenian Church and its misfortunes, the ardent desire of the Pope to see them reunited in communion with the Chair of Peter. Pope Paul V's letter with its exposition of the main tenets of Catholic Faith was read: and then the patriarch, bishops and vartapets retired for a time to discuss points in dispute, which the Katholikos endeavoured to smooth out as far as he could. When they returned to the church it was for him to assure the people that all the articles of belief enumerated in the Brief were acceptable except for (a) the anathematizing of Dioscurus and (b) abandonment of their own rites, uses and customs to follow the Latin rite as claimed by Popes in the past. The point over rites would not present difficulties, Fr. Redempt promised them; and he expounded to the assembly the arguments at the Council of Chalcedon against Dioscurus so convincingly, it would appear from the account recorded by him, that the Katholikos Melchisadech, standing at his throne, pronounced the words: "If it be thus, I swear obedience and submission to the Chair of S. Peter, following the example of our glorious apostle S. Gregory."

This was the first of a number of negotiations between the schismatic Armenians and the Carmelites, spread over the rest of the century, none of which produced any lasting effect, or made union an accomplished fact: in due course the important history of the Armenian Church and its dissensions will form the subject of further pages in this work; but it may be mentioned that shortly after this visit the Katholikos Melchisadech was deposed as the result of intrigue, and David did not continue the negotiations.

After that these two Fathers went on to visit the 'Frank' Armenians centred round Nakhchiwan, i.e. the Uniats under the charge of Dominican convents and a long succession

<sup>1</sup> It is strange that the report of Fr. Redempt refers to Melchisadech as "patriarch or Katholikos," for in the list of the primates at Echmiadzin given in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques*, vol. IV, 1930, Paris, he is specified as

"coadjutor from 1593 to 1628 during the reign of David IV (1587-1629). At the time of the occupation by Shah 'Abbas of Echmiadzin and its district the Katholikos David and his coadjutor, Melchisadech, had turned to the Shah. . . . The Katholikos David, an ignorant priest without prestige, was half converted by the Augustinians: and wrote to Pope Paul V that he recognized his superior authority and the infallibility of the Catholic Church. Along with 6 bishops, 109 priests and numerous deacons he also solemnly pronounced a profession of Catholic Faith, 12.5.1607, but, as opponents accused him of putting himself under the domination of Latin princes, he declared that his submission to the Pope was made dependent on the approval by Rome of all Armenian uses." (Rouen trans. of 1646 p. 379, from Fr. A. de Gouvea's book, Lisbon, 1611.)

"3. . . . Melchisadech was as ambitious as, but more clever than David. Both sought to win the favour of Shah Abbas I and to supplant one another. Denounced by David, his coadjutor was thrown into prison, and compelled by the executioners to swallow morsels of his own flesh. These misfortunes decided him to turn to the Pope. He had a profession of faith sent to Pope Paul V (15.5.1610), which was more precise than that of David. Three years later he declared himself quite ready to conform to the dogmas and rites of the Roman Church, because there ought to be only a single flock and a single shepherd (*Azarian*, pp. 202-20; *Chronicles of Stephen the Pole, 1617-1630*). Union with the Roman Church did not secure David's coadjutor from his pitiless creditors. He fled to Constantinople; but, after having held the patriarchate there for a year he was sent away. Finally, with the sanction of 'Abbas I, he decided to make over to his nephew, Isaac, his titles and his debts, and to take refuge in Lemberg. . . ."