

“your Reverence can come without any fear or risk whatever, you need not be afraid of  
“either mitre or crozier . . .”<sup>1</sup>

and, 23.12.1639, he died at the convent, Isfahan, a simple Religious.

The position by 1636 being that there was a canonical bishop of Isfahan alive in Spain, who had no intention of proceeding to his diocese, and the appointment to the bishopric of Baghdad having been thus declined, the Sac. Congregation was faced with the need of finding some solution. It was the period when the policy of Cardinal Armand de Richelieu to gain influence for France in opposition to that of Spain was stretching more and more afield: and the recommendation of the Sac. Congregation was determined in the following circumstances.

A certain Antoine de Ricouart, councillor in the Parlement of Paris, dying childless in 1629, his widow Elisabeth, *née* Le Peultre, residing in the rue de la Verrerie and owner of a property near Meaux, had become the benefactress of the Convent of the Carmelites also near that town. She died early in 1640, and for a number of years previously had desired<sup>2</sup> to devote part of her wealth to propagation of the gospel among infidels. During the years 1631-7 a certain Fr. Bernard of S. Teresa, of the province of Paris of the Carmelite Order, preached courses of sermons, especially in Advent and Lent in some of the chief churches of the French capital.

Born in 1597 of a family named Duval, this Carmelite,

“who already enjoyed a great reputation for eloquence and learning, and who had played  
“an important part in the foundation of a number of the Carmelite houses in France  
“(Rouen, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Marseilles, etc.) was at the time Prior of the Convent of  
“Crégy near Meaux, and confessor to Madame Ricouart. Because of his sermons both (the  
Queen) “Anne of Austria and Cardinal de Richelieu had him in great esteem. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

In or before 1637, then, Madame Ricouart, in pursuit of her pious object, made to the Sac. Congregation in Rome an offer of 6,000 Spanish doubloons to set up and found a bishopric in the East, attaching, however, the conditions that she herself be allowed to nominate the first bishop, and that all his successors must have been born in France. In transmitting her offer she put forward the name of Fr. Bernard of S. Teresa, then Definitor for the Paris province of the Order: and the Sac. Congregation found the offer so opportune as to accept it, conditions and all.

“In a special session, 11.12.1637, on instructions given by His Holiness on 7th December,  
“the Sac. Congregation had in consideration Fr. Bernard of S. Teresa, Discalced Carmelite,  
“who is proposed by a certain French person, who desires to endow a bishopric in infidel  
“countries, and the bishopric to be set up in Persia for the said Fr. Bernard,”

and agreed to both proposals.<sup>4</sup> On 27.12.1638 the Pope wrote to Fr. Bernard summoning him to Rome, where the Carmelite arrived early in 1638.<sup>5</sup>

“In a Secret Consistory, 28.7.1638, His Holiness by Apostolic authority made provision  
“for the church of Baghdad,<sup>6</sup> vacant by reason of the coadjutorship of Fr. Timothy, first

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* his biography in *Hierarchia Carmelitana*, by Fr. Ambrose of S. Theresia, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> A footnote by Fr. Ambrose to his biographical notice of Bishop Bernard in *Hierarchia Carmelitana*, part 2, refers to a contemporary diary for the reason for this desire, the lady having previously been noted for avarice. A young relative, intent on obtaining her wealth, had tried to poison her: she saw the sin of it.

<sup>3</sup> *Vide* publications of M. Leon Mirot, Conservateur at the Archives Nationales, Paris, e.g. “Le séjour du Père Bernard de Ste Thérèse en Perse” in *Etudes Carmelitaines*, 1933, and *Lettres écrites de Perse et de Syrie par le R. P. Bernard*, Clamécy, 1933.

<sup>4</sup> See *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 10, Baghdad.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide* M. Mirot's works quoted.

<sup>6</sup> *Hist. Miss.* relates that Baghdad was selected by the Sac. Congregation for the endowment by the French lady partly because in 1610 Elias, patriarch of the Chaldaeans, whose metropolis was Baghdad, had transmitted a profession of faith to Pope Paul V through his archdeacon, Adam, and following the Pope's reply in 1614 the Patriarch had convened a synod