

“Bishop of Baghdad but now of Isfahan, in the person of Fr. Bernard, and set him to be “bishop over it . . . he ordained that Fr. Bernard, Bishop of Baghdad, should be appointed “*Vicar Apostolic of the diocese of Isfahan during the absence of Fr. Timothy, bishop of that diocese, “or on the latter’s departing this life, with the faculty of residing in the said diocese of Isfahan, “since he can there effect more because of the Shah’s presence and other reasons considered “at the time of the dispatch of Fr. John Thaddeus, and also (with the faculty) of appointing “one or more vicars in it. . . .*”<sup>1</sup>

A Brief was issued, 18.8.1638,<sup>2</sup> and on 22.8.1638 Fr. Bernard of S. Teresa was consecrated by Cardinal Pallotta in the church of San Silvestro in Capite, Rome. Faculties were issued to him, 30.8.1638.<sup>3</sup> He quitted Rome, 14.9.1638, and reached Paris, 11.10.1638: and there he received instructions from Cardinal de Richelieu, and letters addressed to the Sultan of Turkey. Setting off 19.4.1639 from Paris and 10.7.1639 from Marseilles, via Malta and Smyrna he reached Constantinople, 2.9.1639, only to learn that all calculations on administering the two dioceses of Baghdad and Isfahan, both under Persian control, from Isfahan, had been shattered through the recapture of Baghdad by the Turks in December 1638.

To the student of history the criticism immediately presents itself—why in circumstances, where his two charges had by this event become separated inside two mutually hostile empires, Bishop Bernard had not made the attempt to establish himself in his see by right and, while still in Constantinople (as he was till 9.2.1640), to obtain the Turkish Government’s consent to his residing in Baghdad, instead of proceeding, as he did, to the diocese of Isfahan, of which he was only Vicar Apostolic *ad interim*. In so doing, to judge by the sequel, he made an error in tactics, and put back for a century any organization of the Catholic Church in Mesopotamia.

Even before he left Constantinople, in fact, in a General Congregation, 6.9.1939,<sup>4</sup> Cardinal Antonio Barberini reported that the Bishop of Baghdad (or Babylon) was

“pressing for some provision to be made lest the Apostolic Vicariate in the diocese of “Isfahan conferred on him by His Holiness should cease if Fr. Timothy, Bishop of Isfahan, “should betake himself to that city; because, as by the help and financial aid of certain “benefactors he is intending to found in that city a cathedral church for the Latin rite, he is “unwilling that another should enter into the enjoyment of his labours. . . .

“The Sacr. Congregation directed verbally that through the nuncio in Spain by way of “letter it should be notified to Fr. Timothy that His Holiness, considering his” (Bishop Timothy’s) “declaration, so very frequently made to the nuncio in Spain and to the Sacr. “Congregation, that he was unable to proceed to Persia for urgent reasons, desired to bestow “that diocese of Isfahan on a person who would reside in it, and accordingly had provided “him (Bishop Timothy) with the bishopric of Lystra.

“This was approved by His Holiness, 7.11.1639.”

A Brief of 13.2.1640 (vol. 881, p. 16) also made Bishop Bernard Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Ctesiphon. . . .

Proceeding therefore through Broussa, Tokat, Sivas, Bishop Bernard reached Erzerum, 4.4.1640, and thence, after crossing the Persian frontier, along the banks of the Araxes to Erivan (18.4.1640). On the following morning he made the half-day’s march to Echmiadzin in Armenia Major, residence of the Katholikos of the schismatic Armenians. The Bishop had with him two French Carmelites as his chaplains, and as his interpreter and general factotum

at Amid (Diarbakr) in which submission to, and union with, the Holy Roman Church was decided for the Chaldaeans. Turco-Persian wars had prevented the Holy See from seeing this union properly established: it was thought that, by placing a bishop in Baghdad, Christians there would be served and also the Missions in Isfahan, both places being under Persian rule.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide S.R.*, vol. 210, p. 9, which, however, gives the date of the decree of the Sacr. Cong. as 13.11.1639.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide Briefs*, vol. 62, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Faculties were issued to him, 30.8.1638 (*vide S.R.*, vol. 209, p. 131 *et seq.*).

<sup>4</sup> *Vide Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 10, by Fr. L. Lemmens.