

Ferdinand Gioerida, son of a brother of Pietro della Valle's Chaldaean wife who, baptized by Fr. Dimas at Baghdad, 26.11.1616,¹ had later been sent to Rome and, entered in the Urban College of Propaganda, had been ordained priest in due course—a man of value because of his knowledge of several oriental languages. At Echmiadzin Bishop Bernard delivered a Brief from Pope Urban VIII to the Katholikos,² with whom he was to take up once more the discussions regarding union of the Armenian church with Rome, which had last been active in 1629 in the time of the previous patriarch. Bishop Bernard found the Katholikos Philip in church with his monks and, after being regaled with a meal of parched pulse and salad, was invited to the refectory where the Armenian bishops and Vartapets were sitting on the ground: the Katholikos and the Bishop of Baghdad were accommodated with seats, and a little wine was served. On the following day, after the Bishop had been invited to attend the Armenian liturgy, he was entertained at the common table with the monks, who were given flesh-meat and wine, it being a feast-day. The Brief was presented to the Patriarch, who received it standing, kissed and then placed it on his head in sign of reverence, stating that the reply would be given in Erivan.

Judging the business on hand to be simple the Bishop of Baghdad started the same day for Erivan, whither the Katholikos followed him and sent an Armenian bishop and vartapet to compliment him. The next day these dignitaries came for him and, after he had mounted, guided him to the monastery where the Katholikos was residing. The party having dismounted not far from the door of the church, a vartapet put on Mgr Bernard a rich cope of flowered gold brocade and placed in his hands a cross of relics: and then he was conducted by two bishops and a large number of monks in procession into the church, at the door of which stood the Katholikos. On their taking their places, the latter saluted him by rising and placing his hand on his breast. After prayers a vartapet washed his feet. He was taken to a meal, and shown much attention. This civility continued for some ten days, during which the patriarch came to call on him three times, whereas in the ordinary course he left the monastery rarely: he recommended the Bishop of Baghdad to learn Armenian, because it would assist them to discuss their difficulties without the need of interpreters. To Mgr Bernard all these were signs of a favourable disposition of the Armenian patriarch towards the question at issue; but, on the union being broached, Katholikos Philip disabused him by contesting the primacy of Peter among the Apostles, and after a long and fruitless argument the Bishop of Baghdad took the road to Nakhchiwan, where he had been invited by the Archbishop of the Catholic or 'Frank' Armenians. On Ascension Day, 17th May 1640, Mgr Bernard celebrated pontifical Mass in their church. By the 22nd of that month he was in Tabriz: on 9.6.1640 he passed Sultanieh and, 7.7.1640, he was escorted with much ceremony into Isfahan by the Vicar Provincial, the Prior and other Carmelites (mounted on horses borrowed from the English 'Resident'), by the Augustinians and a number of Christians.

On the octave day of the Assumption (22.8.1640) when about to vest for Mass, the Bishop of Baghdad received the summons to make his first visit to Shah Safi. He handed to the Shah a portrait of Pope Urban VIII,³ which the monarch accepted with marks of esteem. Invited to remain to the midday meal, the bishop made his excuses, because he had not yet said his Mass. On his return to the convent he had the bells rung, to the surprise of the Persians, who took it to be an expression of the delight of the Bishop at having had the honour of an audience.

He set to work to acquire some Persian, though it would appear that to the end of his twenty months' residence in the country he had need of an interpreter in his discussions. A man of wide education, with some knowledge of Italian, Spanish and Portuguese as well as Greek and Hebrew, he made an impression on the Shah when it was ascertained that he was versed in astronomy and offered to teach it to Persians interested. Realizing the zest that intelligent Persians have for philosophical discussion, he recommended the missionaries

¹ See O.C.D. 237 b, a copy of the baptismal certificate.

² This Brief has not been observed in the *Epist. ad Princ.* series in the Vat. Secr. Archives by the compiler.

³ Can this painting still exist as a State possession, or privately in Iran?