

“bordered with yellow, with Muhammadan emblems, because on it was depicted a half-moon and seven medallions, and on the other side a sword split up like a compass.¹ “Some seven persons followed on horseback, armed with arrows and cleavers: last there came the king garbed in a fur coat lined outside with green cloth, and a white *Turkish*² turban, also mounted on a horse, which was rather poor. . . . We saw all this as close as half a stone’s throw. . . .”

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The episcopal position in this reign, as it affected Persia, saw a number of changes. On 10.4.1669 Bishop Bernard of S. Teresa, for 27 years then an absentee from his diocese of Baghdad, died in Paris in the Seminary for Foreign Missions, of which he was so munificent and important a co-founder:³ for in October 1663 by deed he contracted to hand over to the procurators for the Seminary for Foreign Missions all those buildings which he had constructed in the previous years and his real estate, library, chapel and garden in the rue de Babylonne on the stipulation that he was to be allowed to reside in one of the houses, and to receive annually to the end of his life a pension of 3,000 livres.⁴ (On the previous 5th of April the Nuncio in Paris—the Archbishop of Thebes—had written to Rome of

“the very critical condition, with little or no hope of recovery of the Bishop of Babylon, “whose coadjutor, Mgr de Neocaesarea, unwilling to obey the Sac. Congregation de Prop. Fide, which had already ordered him to proceed to his residence in Isfahan, was recently “by instructions of their Eminences forbidden by me to make use of pontificals. . . .”)

For one reason, Mgr Placid du Chemin stood out for being paid an allowance for the previous six years, and for the house and ‘cathedral’ purchased and adapted at Isfahan by Bishop Bernard being restored to him, or others provided. During 1669, after the death of Bishop Bernard, Mgr du Chemin, who had succeeded by right of coadjutorship as bishop of Babylon, went to Rome, and the Cardinals of Propaganda decided to grant him travelling expenses

“so that he may continue his journey direct to his place of residence in Isfahan,”

and to assign a further sum for payment of Mgr du Chemin’s debts contracted in France on receipt of news of his arrival at Isfahan. A second time—and now to Shah Sulaiman, 28.9.1669—a Brief was issued recommending Mgr du Chemin, “who is being sent for the spiritual “welfare of the Catholics of Baghdad”.⁵ But the Bishop of Baghdad was:

“far from satisfied with these decisions and has presented a Memorial, in which he sets “out . . . that it is not convenient . . . for him to proceed direct hence (Rome) to Persia “. . . because he was unable to set in order his affairs in Paris before leaving. Therefore “it is necessary for him to return there. . . . He adds that, with the present wars between “the French and the Turks, were he to go to Turkey he might be captured . . . out of “suspicion that he was going in the name of the king of France and His Holiness to persuade “the king of Persia to make war on the Turks. . . .”⁶

¹ Could this have been a *Yazidi* standard?

² Emphasizing the difference—Persians wore red turbans.

³ A copy of the *Lettres du Roy pour l’établissement d’un Seminaire pour les Missions Étrangères*, beginning: “La Providence qui ne manque jamais, en cette occasion. . . . Notre très cher fils Bernard de S. Therese, evesque de Babilonne . . .” is to be found in *S.R.*, vol. 421, pp. 92–8.

⁴ The income belonging to the diocese had been attached because of the Bishop having alienated certain properties that were thought to belong to the Sac. Cong. (see *S.R.*, vol. 420, p. 168).

⁵ *Vide* Arch. Secr. Vat., No. 68, p. 243, Clem. IX, ann. 2.

⁶ *S.R.*, vol. 420, p. 158.