

By contrast the activity of the Carmelites beginning in the last ten years of the reign of Shah Sulaiman attracts attention: it was largely due to the resolute leadership of one man, Fr. Elias of S. Albert, a Walloon from Mons; it centred round a determination on his part that the Carmelites should be established in Julfa—everything else in the area covered by the Mission was subordinated to that: it brought on a clash with the schismatic Armenians, which was only the first engagement in a protracted battle.

So much in this recital of the vicissitudes of this Mission in Persia, that is to say Isfahan and Julfa in particular, is taken up—and increasingly so in the eighteenth century—by the antagonism of Armenian schismatic clergy to missionaries from Europe persuading the people, and exhorting the spiritual leaders to ask for union with Rome and make submission to the Holy See, that the reader may well be puzzled regarding the reasons for such insistence on the one hand and such resistance on the other, and may welcome an account here, as concise as possible, of what the Armenian Church had been before A.D. 1600 and the arrival of the Carmelites. It is not straightforward, but tangled history full of apparent contradictions; and that this account may be the more authoritative the following excerpts are taken from the *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques*, vol. IV, 'commenced under the direction of Mgr (now Cardinal) Baudrillart, Paris, Librairie Letouzey, 1930'.

Greater Armenia was, at the period of its widest extent, bounded by the river Kur on the north, the Caspian Sea on the east, Mesopotamia on the south, the Euphrates separated it on the west from Lesser Armenia. Alexander the Great conquered it in his campaigns before 336 B.C.: Artaxias, a governor left by Antiochus, is said to have founded Artaxata, the capital of northern Armenia *circ.* 190 B.C.: his descendant Tigranes II, a vassal of the Parthian kings, conquered Lesser Armenia, and Syria up to Mardin. There were wars with the Romans in the period of Pompey and Antony, and again in the second century after Christ, the town of Artaxata being destroyed about A.D. 180 and a new capital, Vagharchapat chosen: Echmiadzin was founded near its ruins. The Armenian king Tiridates III with the help of the Romans in A.D. 296 regained the throne, defeating the Sasanian monarch, Narses: the protectorate of the Roman Empire over the provinces between the Tigris and Lake Van was recognized.

As to the adoption of Christianity by the Armenians, there is the evidence of the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, that in 312 the Armenians refused to abjure it, when soldiers were sent by the emperor Maximin: while S. Athanasius in the *Incarnatio Verbi* in 318 wrote that 'it was the triumph of Christ to have submitted to his laws impenetrable countries such as Armenia whose inhabitants were always at war'; but it is with S. Gregory the Illuminator the proto-saint of the Armenians, son of an Arsacid satrap, taken to Caesarea and baptized that the active history of religion opens. After Tiridates III, 278–87, had recovered the throne Gregory was taken to Caesarea and received consecration from S. Leontius about A.D. 294, according to the history of Sozomen: and thenceforward Armenia depended on Caesarea, the see of S. Basil the Great (and S. Basil in his writings discourses on the consecration of Armenian bishops). The first ecclesiastical centre, where S. Gregory resided, was at Astishat west of Mush, not at Echmiadzin, the political capital. His son, Aristakes, took part in the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325, and signed the decree: the Athanasian Creed was adopted in Armenia from the sixth century. However in 374 a puppet king broke with Caesarea and the Western Church, as well as severing friendly terms with the Romans. A division of regions between Theodosius the Great and Shapur III, the Sasanian king of Persia (384–9), gave to Shapur more than two-thirds of Armenia. Persecuted by the Sasanian Yazdigird I, A.D. 399–420, the Armenians revolted with the help of the emperor Theodosius II and obtained from Bahram (A.D. 420–3) a little more tolerance. In 405 Mesrop had stabilized the Armenian alphabet of 36 letters. When peace was made between Theodosius II and the Persians, Sahak sent Mesrop to Constantinople, where he was appointed 'Grand Vartapet', given equal authority with the Archbishop of Caesarea, and authorized to open schools, which the Metropolitan of Caesarea had not allowed. From that time the jurisdiction of Constantinople replaced that of Caesarea for the Armenian Church. Nationalist suspicion, and hostility towards Rome caused the Sasanian masters of the country to prevent the Armenian bishops from attending