

Sozomen, Eusebius, the Bollandists, Tillemont were invoked to show that under the Sasanian dynasty of Persia the see of Babylon [? sic] was pre-eminent—much in the same way as in the 1660's Bishop du Chemin of Baghdad had the ambition to be named patriarch besides retaining joint control of the sees of Baghdad and Isfahan.

This was followed, 15.9.1710, by an exhaustive treatise<sup>1</sup> from the pen of Père Jacques Villotte of the Jesuits, who had been for a brief time at Julfa in their mission: he now styled himself 'Procurator General of the French bishops and vicars apostolic in Eastern Asia' and, writing on behalf of the coadjutor Bishop of Baghdad, went on to claim that the first Bishop of Babylon was also Bishop of Isfahan! , seizing on the clerical error of the Bull in the case of Mgr du Chemin—"Babyloniensis seu Aspahamensis", already exploded and dismissed as of no signification by the Sac. Congregation of the Council, as has been seen. On that wrong premiss Père Villotte went on to propose to the Sac. Congregation de Prop. Fide that the bishopric of Isfahan should be "re-united" to that of Baghdad, or, at least, Mgr Pidou made Vicar Apostolic of the former,

"in order to give greater support to the missionaries in Persia—the Most Christian King" (i.e. Louis Quatorze) "has sent him a commission as consul of the French in Isfahan—or "else they" (the Sac. Congregation) "should make his coadjutor, Mgr the Bishop of Agathopolis, vicar apostolic" (for the diocese of Isfahan). "*His Most Christian Majesty desiring this favour*, as he has caused a petition to be made to His Holiness, and as in his name the Cardinal de la Trémoille also begs."

Already in its session of 16.12.1709<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Sacripante, the Prefect of the Sac. Congregation, reported that:

"Monsignor the Nuncio in Paris has transmitted to his Eminence Cardinal Paulucci a communication sent by Mgr Pidou de St. Olon, Bishop of Baghdad, in which he begs "His Holiness and this Congregation to invest once more his diocese" (i.e. Baghdad) "with the jurisdiction that it has in Persia, and especially in Isfahan, because after the new bishop" (i.e. Mgr Elias) "was given to that city, he (Mgr Pidou) retired to Hamadan . . . and now, "the see of Isfahan being vacant, he believes that together with his coadjutor he will be able to supply the need without any new election being required. . . . As therefore the see of Isfahan is vacant by the death of Mgr Elias, should your Eminences not judge it well to proceed to the election of a new bishop, they are begged to state (a) whether there is not occasion for the reuniting of the sees of Isfahan and Baghdad: and, should they not be inclined to accede to the request of Mgr Pidou, (b) whether, in order to provide for the spiritual needs, your Eminences would think fit to declare as vicar apostolic, or as administrator of Isfahan with a limited jurisdiction Mgr the Bishop of Agathopolis, coadjutor of Mgr Pidou, as was done in the year 1638 with Fr. Bernard, (c) if so, to fix the place of residence of such a vicar apostolic. . . ."

Although it was of the end of this century that it has been calculated that seventy per cent of the nominations to bishoprics were made, or desired, by temporal princes and not the Pope, small wonder that to such political, ambitious pressure of a nationalist complexion the Congregation of Propaganda Fide reacted. To those who have read the history of the first appointment of Bishop John Thaddeus in 1632 a proposal to "unite" Baghdad and Isfahan (which lay in two different, and usually hostile states) was preposterous on historical grounds, and fantastic for practical reasons. The reply of the Cardinals to the first proposition was, therefore, altogether negative:

"Let there be no innovation,"

<sup>1</sup> S.R., vol. 573, pp. 333-53.

<sup>2</sup> Vide *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 10, by Fr. L. Lemmens.