

only 1½ years, not in Mesopotamia but in Persia, and then passed over 25 years of the rest of his life in France: the third, Dom. P. du Chemin, had himself consecrated but then refused to proceed to the East and remained in France for nearly another quarter of a century when, on his death, the fourth in succession, Mgr Picquet, became Bishop of Baghdad. But within little more than two years he too was dead without having resided in Mesopotamia. The fifth bishop, Mgr Pidou, likewise did not reside within his diocese, though his episcopal life lasted over 20 years: of his two coadjutors with right of succession one had died immediately after arrival in Persia, the other declined to proceed to the East and resigned. Before the death of Mgr Pidou was known in Rome action was taken to find him yet a third coadjutor and, in the General Session of the Sac. Congregation, 26.4.1718,¹

“The Secretary reports with regard to the election of a coadjutor for the Bishop of Baghdad: ‘There is proposed for such a post by the Agent for the French bishops and missionaries of the Seminary at Paris the priest Dominic Mary Varlet, whom he asserts to be a good, pious and learned man, conversant with oriental languages and at present an apostolic missionary in America, sufficiently well provided with money and aged about forty.’”

The orders were issued:

“Let a letter be written to the Nuncio for information to be obtained about the qualifications of Dominic M. Varlet, in particular about his tenets and attainments: and for the Secretary to get into touch with Cardinals de la Trémoille and Gualterio, and write to them for information.”

Then, in the session of 15.11.1717 (?), the Secretary produced a

“certificate in original from the superior of the mission and from the seminary of the Archbishop of Bordeaux bearing witness that the petitioner is aged about 40, is now staying in the missions in America in the position of Vicar General for the Bishop of Quebec and is deserving praise for his charity and fear of God. . . .
“From Mgr the Nuncio so far no news has been received. . . .”

“The order was issued: ‘Let him be made coadjutor to (the Bishop of) Baghdad, if it should be the pleasure of His Holiness.’ On audience had of His Holiness, 29.8.1718, ‘His Holiness gave his consent. . . .’”

Only in 1719 did the Sac. Congregation learn from Isfahan that Bishop Pidou de St. Olon had died 20.11.1717: so, *ipso facto*, the newly consecrated Bishop of Ascalon succeeded as Bishop of Baghdad. The Sac. Congregation had been grossly misled as to the person recommended, who was a Jansenist. When eventually news came from the Nuncio at Paris² it was to the effect that he did not know Varlet: the latter had not called on him, although instructed to do so before proceeding to his post in the East. The Nuncio further wrote (p. 140) of the Seminary for Foreign Missions being then “a real seminary of Jansenists”. When the Secretary of State made further enquiries, he learnt from the Procurator for the Seminary for Foreign Missions that not only had Fr. Varlet left Paris, 18.3.1719, but that he had had himself consecrated too. Under pain of suspension, therefore, Mgr Varlet was informed by letter that he must take an oath before Mgr Barnabas Fedeli, Bishop of Isfahan, and write a letter of submission to the Nuncio in Paris. It was next heard that he was in Holland and had ordained Jansenist priests and publicly administered confirmation in a Jansenist oratory. A special session of the Congregation, 25.5.1719, wished it to be communicated to the Nuncio and others that

¹ Quoted from Fr. L. Lemmens' O.F.M.'s *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 10.

² *S.N.R.*, III, p. 116, 13.3.1719.