

“mentally and physically blind, renounced the Christian Faith and was baptized once more among the Sabaeans . . . in June 1679. Also, a certain Christian secretly carried off a Sabaeen girl or young woman who, having been instructed in the Christian religion and baptized by our Religious who were there at the time, was given to him in marriage. After her husband’s death, being left in danger of apostasy, she was sent by our Fathers to Surat, where she married a Christian and from that time continued in the Faith. They are the only two of the Sabaeen sect who celebrated their marriage here at Basra in the church; but there are some, who were joined in matrimony in India in the Christian manner and on their return here rejoined their original sect. Note that it is found in the book that some, after celebrating their marriage according to the superstitious custom of the Sabaeans, ratified it in the church, but they dissembled in doing so, that they might obtain the goodwill of the Religious for themselves.

“As for burial, till now we have buried none of them, because, even if when sick in order to please the Religious they have made their confessions and received Communion, before they die they put on the seven pieces of the robe, which are a sign of their profession of faith, and give instructions to their relatives to bury them at once, before the news of their death reach the Religious. . . .

“. . . Therefore the two new missionary Fathers mentioned above . . . having taken the names of all those, whom they found in the book as baptized, began to invite them all to attend at church, and to preach to the rest that they should abandon their infidel creed and embrace the true Faith. In a few days our church was full of ‘Christians’” (if it be permissible to call them so) “and of catachumens; and there was not one among the Sabaeans who did not say that he wanted to be baptized: but, when warned that it was first necessary to leave the *terminus a quo* and then go on to the *terminum ad quem*, there was not one to be found willing to abandon the sect of the Sabaeans. . . .”

On 20.1.1679 four Carmelites arrived from Europe, on their way to the mission in Malabar, among them the future Archbishop of Ancyra, Fr. Peter Paul of S. Francis. So the Vicar took the opportunity and

“on the 24th January 1679<sup>1</sup> we summoned the Sabaeans to our hospice, both those who had already been baptized and the others not yet baptized, so that we might see whether there were any hopes of their true conversion, both of those who dissembled, as also of the non-baptized. The reason for calling them together was that, since their dissimulation in religious matters was a matter experienced and well authenticated, we had no small scruple about administering the sacraments to such a brood: a like scruple our Fathers of old had also had, as is clear from the book in which the names of the baptized are recorded, in which it is found written in the year 1624 in these terms” (the following words were in Portuguese, by Fr. Basil): “For some time now we do not baptize any Christian of S. John, because it appears to us a matter of evident scruple, as they remain in the power of their parents who are pagans, and neither know nor observe the law of Christ our Lord.” “Nor is there found in the book the baptism of anyone of this sect from that year, 1624, up to the year 1655, in which again they began to baptize them.

“And so, when very many came to our hospice on the day and at the hour appointed, in the presence of the Fathers Aegidius, Tussanus, Peter Paul and Amandus, I Fra. Agathangelus questioned them (the Sabaeans) as to whether they recognized the Catholic as the true Christian religion. They replied unanimously that they had in fact recognized it as such, and that part of those present had been baptized, and that their whole race would be baptized, the following conditions being observed:

“First, if the Pope would send them an annual grant of money towards paying the tribute which the Muhammadans exact from them every year, or, by intervening with the Sultan, would free them altogether from paying such tribute.

<sup>1</sup> See folios 39 *et seq.* of original manuscript of *Chronicle Basra* in Sir H. Gollancz’s edition.