

from India through Persia in 1658 had reported that there were only six Armenian Catholic families remaining at Isfahan—the rest were schismatics.<sup>1</sup>

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More unanimous and far keener the Carmelites are seen over the prospect of useful work in reconciling that branch of the Chaldaean church which at this period was mainly settled round the shores of Lake Urmieh in Azarbaijan, towards the Turkish frontier: and, so that the reader may grasp their position *vis-à-vis* the others of that race (in recent times known in Europe as 'Assyrian') also to be mentioned in this reign, the following outlines of their immediate past are given.

Elected Procurator of the 'Persian' Mission, to attend the Chapter General of the Order in Rome, Fr. Dionysius of the Crown of Thorns (a Belgian by race) set off from Isfahan, 22.5.1652; and, being a true apostle in his ardent zeal to search out communities offering a likely field for conversion from schism, or abandoned, he had the assent of the other Religious to his taking the route to Europe via Tabriz.<sup>2</sup> Because of oppression they were suffering from the Khan, or governor, there, fourteen Chaldaeans, heads of the Chaldaean community, had come to Isfahan: and, as they had not stopped long, all the Carmelites had been able to find out about them was that they dwelt four to six days' journey beyond the city of Tabriz; but they were only too eager to get into relations with these Assyrians.

Of them this notice is to be found in the preface to the book of Pietro Strozzi, *De dogmatibus Chaldaeorum*: and in Dr. Fortescue's *Lesser Eastern Churches*:

"After the great Christian Church of Persia in the middle of the fifth century had fallen "for the most part into schism, and periods of fierce dispute with the partisans of the "opposite Monothelite heresy, it became definitely Nestorian before the Arab conquest of "Persia in the seventh century. Cut off from the Western Church, and even from the "Eastern patriarchates by their heresy, rejected of all, the Nestorian church in Persia "endured till in the 15th century Timur the Lame in his career of destruction across Persia "swept the remnant of the Chaldaean Christians, after the massacres, into the mountains "of Kurdistan for refuge, and round about the Turco-Persian frontier. The 'patriarch "of Babylon' (Seleucia) became a hereditary office in one family in the 15th century; "but, after the death of Simeon (Shimun) Bar Mama in 1551, a party with influence broke "away from his nephew and nominated successor Simeon Denha, choosing the monk, "John Sulaka. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

" . . . Under Julius III (1549-55), as certain of the Nestorian Chaldaeans had seceded "from obedience to the 'patriarch at Babylon' and in abhorrence of the Nestorian heresy "had come into communion with the Catholic Church, the Sovereign Pontiff had appointed "for them, as they petitioned, a patriarch—the same whom for this reason they had chosen "—Simeon Sulaka, a monk of the Order of S. Pacomius.<sup>4</sup> He went back to his people "with the pallium of a patriarch and the title of 'patriarch of the Eastern Assyrians', and, "taking up his residence at Amid (i.e. Diarbakr) ordained archbishops, bishops and very "many priests. . . . And so the Chaldaean race, which up to that time had been subject "to the 'patriarch at Babylon', was divided into two parts. Then, Sulaka having been

<sup>1</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 238, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, vol. 292, pp. 535-42.

<sup>3</sup> For the first part of this historical sketch see Dr. Adrian Fortescue's *Lesser Eastern Churches*: the second part comes from an Italian translation of Strozzi's treatise, given in *S.R.*, vol. 292.

<sup>4</sup> " . . . He arrived in Rome 28th November of the Greek year 1864, corresponding with the Christian year 1552, "made his profession of Faith on 20.2.1553, and on 19.4.1553 was proclaimed Patriarch of the Chaldaeans" (*vide S.N.R.*, VII, p. 634, memorandum by Mgr S. Borgia) "by Pope Julius III. 'Abd-jesu made his profession of Faith to Pope Pius IV "on 17.3.1562, and received the Pallium. . . . Ayatullah died in 1580. . . . It was Simon Denha who abandoned Diarbakr "and transferred his residence to the mountains of Kurdistan. . . ."