

“Nestorian and 200 Jacobites. The reverend Capuchin Fathers had made a very good start when years ago they established themselves,<sup>1</sup> and they were making a good harvest among these poor souls. But the Devil was active and led them astray; the Fathers wanted to make some small cells for themselves: the Pasha seized the opportunity to allege that they were making a church without sanction, and he put them in prison: he did the same to the master-mason, who was a man comfortably well-to-do, but was left poor out of this affair, though, notwithstanding, he continued to be steadfast and a zealous Catholic. Seeing that he could do nothing to the poor Fathers, the Pasha levied a fine of 5,000–6,000 piastres on the whole Chaldaean community, and then drove away the Fathers. They say that they have since obtained an order from the Court in Constantinople that they re-establish themselves. But the poor Christians have been so fleeced and rendered so timorous by the past fine that it will be a difficult matter to do them the service one would like. I found some who had a liking” (for the Faith) “and retained in their hearts the seed of the good doctrine they had learnt from the Fathers, but they had so great a fear, that they were afraid to be seen looking for me or that I should look for them. I am sure that the best means the Sac. Cong. could use to aid these poor souls would be to send some good missionaries—oriental—a Maronite for the Nestorians, and a Syrian for the Jacobites. Moreover this town (Mausil) has a hundred villages of Nestorian Christians around it, and others of Jacobites. That, reverend Father, is what I am able to write to you on this subject for the present. . . .”

Although properly speaking outside the scope of the ‘Persian’ Mission of the Carmelites, the subsequent history of this branch of the Chaldaeans or Assyrians had better be set down here.<sup>2</sup> Neither Mar Ilyas IV (1660–1700) nor Ilyas V (1700–23) resumed negotiations with Rome. Ilyas VI (1723–78) is said to have corresponded. It was left for John Hurmizd, the last descendant of the patriarchal family of Bar Mama, to go over definitely to the Catholic Church in 1830 and to take with him the see of Baghdad–Mausil and many Nestorians: he was proclaimed ‘patriarch of Babylon’ by Pope Pius VIII and died in 1838.

There had been for more than a century a third division, or subsection (which will in the 1740’s come to the notice of readers of this work). In 1672 Joseph, the Nestorian archbishop of Diarbakr, following the advice of the Capuchin missionaries, withdrew from communion with the (Nestorian) patriarch, Mar Ilyas IV and was very active in organizing the union of his people with Rome. Innocent XI granted him the pallium (1681) and title of patriarch.<sup>3</sup> The last of his successors, Joseph V (1779–1826), was only “Administrator” of the Chaldaean patriarchate: and then the whole of the Catholic portion of the Chaldaean race became merged in one under the patriarch John Hurmizd, mentioned above, and continues to this day under his successors, who usually reside at Mausil, although Baghdad is regarded as the principal city of their jurisdiction. In 1896 the Catholic Chaldaean clergy, secular and regular, numbered over 300: and the Catholic community in Mausil, Turkey and Persia some 66,000, approximately one-third of the Chaldaean race.

<sup>1</sup> Compare what Fr. Basil of S. Francis had written in 1639 (in Portuguese) from Baghdad, 11.12.1639 (O.C.D. 242 e.): “I was in Mausil, which has many more Christians, and where at present two Capuchin Fathers are—not with a church, as it is not permitted, but they say Mass secretly in their house. The Chaldaeans and Syrian Christians have churches erected prior to the coming of Muhammad into the world. The Turks have a ban in this connection against anyone making a new church or helping to rebuild those ancient churches, which causes much trouble. . . . This law does not exist among the Persians, so that in that country we can act with more liberty: and thus the Capuchin Fathers, who 10–12 years ago came here to Baghdad when it was in the hands of the Persians, now that the rule of the Turks has begun have been ejected. . . . Here in Baghdad there are remains of many ancient churches converted to uses of the Turks. . . .”

Fr. Basil was greatly impressed by the Chaldaeans:

“Today, the first Sunday in Advent according to oriental reckoning, I prayed in the (Chaldaean) church in Arabic: it is very touching to see how in this time of Advent, always 25 days with these people, no person, however small or big, eats flesh-meat or fish or eggs or milk-foods or drinks wine. . . .”

<sup>2</sup> The data in the following two paragraphs is taken from the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.

<sup>3</sup> See a Brief of Innocent XI dated 25.10.1683 in appendix (Arch. Vat., *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 76, p. 20) in which the Pope wrote to this Uniat ‘patriarch of the Chaldaeans’, Joseph I, about the profession of Catholic Faith he had sent by the Capuchin Fr. Bonaventura; while the Brief of Clement XI dated 2.7.1701 (vol. 83, p. 133) styled Joseph II ‘Patriarch of Babylon’—he had sent his priest Michael to Rome to express his regard for the Holy See.