Among the Chaldaeans a definite result is perceptible of the work of missionaries of the Catholic Religious Orders in making a channel of communication with Rome and a bridge for those of their spiritual leaders who were brought little by little, by God's grace, back into the path of unity, from which the former great Church had strayed over a thousand years previously.

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In yet another direction connected with the Middle East the remarkable zest of the Sacr. Congregation and the missionary Orders during this half-century for exploring avenues for possible enterprise may be noted from Carmelite letters, though the Carmelites were not directly interested. About 1645 the Sacr. Congregation had dispatched two priests to ascertain the facts about a race

> "living near Samarqand, called Kalmas" (i.e. Kalmaks) "conjectured by some to be "Christians: 300–400 families of them were settled near Astarabad in Mazandaran,"

and the Prior of the Augustinians at Isfahan mentioned in a letter that

> "for the past four years they had had in their House at Isfahan the two priests sent for "this mission."[1]

With his keenness for any pioneer work and journey of discovery Fr. Dionysius of the Crown of Thorns went into some detail in 1653[2] about:

> ". . . the race called Kalmak, as to whom at present there is no certainty that they be "Christians, and only conjectures are being made. The first to send notice about them "to Rome was the Archbishop of Nakhchiwan in Armenia . . . to whom it was reported "by an Armenian merchant, who had returned from those parts, that at a certain place "he had found one morning the whole community assembled in a very large room, with a "venerable old man, who was wearing on his head a head-piece resembling rather a mitre, "according to what they said. The Archbishop had examined carefully the trader in "question, and from his word conjectured that this race might be Christian. . . . The "reverend Fr. Dominic, a Franciscan friar, was therefore sent as far as Khurasan" (Mashhad, capital of that province is meant) "which is a town with a large population on the "borders of Persia, more than 30 days' journey beyond Isfahan, but did not go any farther. ". . . What made me hope for some good was that a Muhammadan 'Religious' (a Darwish, "as they call them) from that town of Khurasan, who has roamed all Persia, assures me, "as an ocular witness, that in the province of Mazandaran in Persia, in the vicinity of the "town of Astarabad there are some villages of that race of Kalmaks. . . . This town is "24 days' journey from Isfahan and on the Caspian Sea. . . . Since, as everywhere in "Persia, one can travel without let or hindrance, I have thought that some service might "be rendered our Lord, because it would not be a little matter to win over those 400–500 "families. . . ."

This proved to be a false scent—no traces of those Nestorian propagandists of the early centuries have been identified among the Muslim Kalmaks—but a more notable development in the activities of the European Religious during the reign of 'Abbas II, again due to the initiative of the Carmelite Fr. Dionysius of the Crown of Thorns, was the campaign for baptism of moribund Shiah infants, so that they might as Christians pass directly into Paradise.

[1] *S.R.*, vol. 135, pp. 232, 292.

[2] 29.9.1653, O.C.D. 237 c.