

"Second, if, besides the baptism of the Christians, the liberty of baptizing and re-baptizing themselves, as many times as they desire in accordance with their own custom, were allowed them. . . .

"Third, if it would be permitted them to celebrate matrimony according to their own rite, and, if they should not be obliged to give their daughters in wife to Christians, nor compelled to take wives from the daughters of Christians.

"Fourth, if it were permitted them to bury their dead according to their ancient customs.

"Fifth, if they were not obliged to eat the flesh of animals killed by Christians, Muhammadans, and others outside their sect, but the liberty should be left them of eating only meat killed by their own ministers according to their custom.

"We answered them that, as to the first condition, it depended on the liberality of His Holiness: and that the last would easily be granted them; but, as to the three others, they could in no wise be granted them, and the reason for this was explained at length to them. Then in particular those who had been baptized were questioned as to why they were not living in a Christian manner at all, but in Sabaeen fashion. They replied that they always thought that it was sufficient for them to be Catholics that they had been baptized in church, and that afterwards it was permissible for them to be baptized and re-baptized, marry and be married, and to live according to their former custom. It was explained to them that, when once the Divine law had been learnt to be true, in no wise was it allowable to a man to observe the rites of a false creed, and that no one could become a Christian unless first he renounced his old belief. To which those who had been baptized as adults replied that they had not understood that at all, and that, if they had understood that to be the case, they would by no means have allowed themselves to be baptized by the Fathers. And those who were baptized, when infants, said that they did not know what they were doing, and that they absolutely wished to live and die in the Sabaeen fashion. We were greatly amazed at these answers, and greatly regretted that in former years we had admitted a number of those mentioned to the sacraments of confession and the Holy Eucharist. . . .

". . . Therefore, from the time when we discovered such great unfaithfulness in this stubborn sect, we baptized none except certain who were in danger of death. . . ."

It would thus seem that from 1679 the Carmelites at Basra abandoned any attempt at proselytism among the Mandaeans. But this account will have served to give contemporary estimates of their numbers in the seventeenth century and specify places in Basra and Persia they inhabited: and to give definite historical reasons for the diminution in their numbers (in Persia by forced conversion from 1656, and in Basra district from emigration to the Portuguese possessions, where the descendants of many, doubtless, exist today no longer following Mandaean beliefs).

From the encyclopaedias it would appear that Fr. Basil, and above all Fr. Ignatius through his published book, were the first to make this isolated sect and its cult known to European enquiry generally. Before closing this account of an interlude in its history it will not be out of place to append some observations that are embodied in a monograph which the well-known literary man and advocate of Basra, Saiyid Muhammad Ahmad (formerly Khan Bahadur Mirza Muhammad, LL.B., C.I.E.) has written and been so courteous as to put at the disposal of the compiler of the present work: and his monograph is based on a small book recently published in Arabic by a Muslim student of the Mandaeans, who had devoted some time to conversing with them regarding their customs and tenets.

Firstly, as to their appellation, Subba (Sabaeen) it is well known that the Quran divided mankind into two portions—those of certain specified religious creeds and scriptures within the pale (so to speak) and the rest without the pale of the mercy of Allah, the former being known as *ahl-al-kitab* ("people of the book"). Thrice in the Quran their mention occurs: in the chapter entitled 'The Cow':