

“put to death by the Turks, at the instigation of the opposite party as it is said, in his place there was substituted 'Abd-jesu, a monk of the same Order, a man of wonderful erudition in a variety of languages and in knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, about whom in the life of Pius the Fourth there is distinguished mention; he came to Rome for confirmation (of his election) and was present at the Council of Trent. His likeness can be seen painted in the Sala Regia of the Vatican palace among the Cardinals and other prelates attending Alexander III, receiving at Venice the penitent Emperor Frederic. 'Abd-jesu gained very much ground, and converted many of the Nestorians to the Catholic Church, and spread wisely the authority he had received from the Apostolic See; his successors afterwards either did not know how, or were unable to retain it for themselves. For there succeeded to them Ayatallah, and he was also a monk of the same Order, who lived but a short time, and afterwards Denha Simeon, who from being archbishop of Jilu and Seert had been made patriarch, and was neither suitable in years nor in his (religious) knowledge and teaching. At the time when the bishop of Sidon went to the East as Apostolic delegate, leaving Diarbakr, where the other patriarchs of the 'Eastern 'Assyrians' had resided, he (the patriarch) had removed to the province of Zain [*? sic*] . . . on the Persian frontier. . . . In that place still remains today his successor, also called Simeon . . . far inferior, as we have heard, to his predecessors in the esteem and number of his subjects, so that the position of the 'patriarch at Babylon' now seems to have been restored to its former extent of influence through Simeon going, of his own free will as it were, into exile. . . .”

“So,” says the account submitted by Fr. Dionysius through the Sac. Congregation:¹

“we considered it useful to take the road to that region . . . in order to be able to represent the whole state of that race, and give an account of the same to Your Holiness and to the superiors of our Order. . . . After I had arrived in Tabriz and made enquiries where to find the patriarch of this community, I finally found him in a place called Khusruabad, three miles distant from Salmas and four days' journey from Tabriz. The patriarch was staying in this place, Khusruabad, and not in Zaina . . . the former residence of his predecessor; because *four years ago*² for fear of his life it behoved him to flee, and, having no hope of returning, he has fixed his residence in this place, Khusruabad, which is inside Persia and subject to the king of Persia. So, when I had met the patriarch, the first matter I said to him was to inform him that the object of my visit was the union of himself and his subjects with the Catholic Church, explaining to him the terms of union his predecessors had had with Holy Church and the Holy See of S. Peter, of which precisely they retained little or nothing. But, as he did not know the Persian language, which indeed is not current in these regions, I had to speak to him by the intermediary of one of his men who knew it. This interpreter, a good man and prudent, at once became much edified that I had made all that journey, impelled by charity alone and with the object of succouring their souls: he said that I had acted like the good shepherd, who when a sheep had strayed goes and looks for it in the midst of the other flocks, and takes it back to its own. So they, he said, being as it were lost sheep strayed from the flock of S. Peter to which they belonged, I had come that long way solely to lead them back to it . . . and other similar expressions of gratitude were used.

“And then the patriarch was induced to write to Your Holiness a letter in the ancient Chaldaean tongue, of which I insert here two copies of the translations, which the students of the Maronite College in Rome have made of it, and beg Your Holiness for greater precaution to deign to have it translated by someone who knows that language well:

“Prayers and blessings from the patriarchal see.

¹ S.R., vol. 292, pp. 535-42.

² This dates to 1648-9 the migration of the Assyrians of Mar Shimun's following to NW. Persia from Zain in (Turkish) Kurdistan.