

“ . . . They do not have the custom of having holy pictures, and have only the holy cross, although, on explaining to them the grounds for having them, the Assyrians did not show obstinacy” (in the matter). “The priests do not observe the canonical hours.

“On Wednesdays and Fridays they abstain from flesh-meat, but from one vespers to the next, only eating when the sun has gone below the horizon. The patriarch has to observe perpetual abstinence, not only from the time when he is made patriarch, but from the commencement of his life his mother must abstain from flesh-meat all the time she is nourishing her child. Lent is observed by all with great severity: for they abstain also from wine, and do not eat more than once daily, a little before sunset; without even labourers being dispensed from it.

“ . . . The Chaldaeans observe many superstitions, even the ecclesiastics, such as divination by opening the book of the Gospel, and other ways of telling fortunes, days for travelling. . . .

“The points where the greatest difficulty is to be apprehended are the following:

“(a) for them to abandon the commemoration of Nestorius (in the diptych),

“(b) to make confession of all sins,

“(c) to regard matrimony as indissoluble,

“(d) for the priests not to remarry when the first wife dies (although this is a matter for authorization by Your Holiness).”

[In his letter of 29.9.1653—O.C.D. 237 c.—he added a fifth difficulty:

“above all the great fear they have of ill-treatment by the Muhammadan governors, were they (the Chaldaeans) to unite with us, because those tyrants seize on any pretext and occasion to ill-treat them, and extort money from them. . . .”]

“But there are on the other hand good foundations on which hope may be based for this community, with the help of God, to be brought back to the bosom of Holy Church:

“*Firstly*, the obedient regard they have for the holy See of Peter, as shown in particular by the letter of the patriarch, and they celebrate the feast of the prince of the Apostles with a longer Office than any other, beginning to say it in the afternoon some hours before sunset, and continuing all night up till about 3 a.m.

“*Secondly*, the poverty in which the patriarch and all the race live, partly because they are actually poor people, and partly because they are overtaxed and oppressed by the Khans, or governors on behalf of the Shah, who, as they are very far from the Court, are easily able to extort from, and charge to excess, people subject to them.

“*Thirdly*, the nobility and greatness of spirit which appears innate in this people, and which they display especially in wartime and in recognizing benefits conferred on them, so that in case Your Holiness should deem fit to grant the patriarch some financial help, it can be regarded as sure to give a great impetus to their being brought back (to union). “It is true that neither the patriarch nor any of his people asked me for this, or insinuated it at all.

“ . . . *Fifthly*, this patriarch and his community are totally separated from the patriarch of the Chaldaeans of Baghdad: he is not dependent on him, nor is he a rival of his, nor of others: and he would be able of himself alone to submit to union with the Holy See, without any communication with that patriarch of Babylon.

“Rome, 6th March (1653) feast of our holy Father Cyril.”

A note had been made on this report (by the Pope or Cardinal Prefect) that instructions had been given to the Secretary of the Sac. Cong. to find someone suitable to send to Persia in order to explore the affair with these Chaldaeans: and that Don Ferdinand Gioerida, who had been there on other occasions in the service of the Church, had been found—this was that nephew of Pietro della Valle's first wife Ma'ani Gioerida, a Chaldaean himself, of whom