

“As to the time and seat” (to be chosen) “the king of Persia cannot propose anything definite, as he does not know what would be convenient to, or the plans of, the Christian princes. He puts forward none the less for consideration his opinion, that is to say, that he would desire that war should be waged in a part where the armies of the princes and his own would not be operating at too great a distance for their greater fame and because they would not be able to consult together about their plans, and in case of need give each other suitable aid. For this reason it would seem to him (the Shah) very convenient that it should be in Syria or Palestine for the successful outcome of the undertaking also, since those regions have few fortresses and are poorly provided with forces. Should this not be possible, or not be judged expedient, the king of Persia will not fail to create a very powerful diversion elsewhere, if the Christian princes should keep the Turk harassed in Hungary, or at sea with a fleet, so that he would have to divide his forces.

“As regards the second heading, ‘the Christian Religion,’ the king of Persia has easily been induced, by the mercy of God and for the greater pleasure of Your Holiness, to offer what had been sought in past times by so many Christian potentates, being moved thereto by the abovementioned interests and the advantage of his country from the desire he has of this confederacy, and also being courteous and mild by nature, very amiable to Christians, whom he is inclined to favour, particularly since he took to wife a Christian, daughter of Simon Khan, one of the Georgian kings. This is also a reason why many of the chief men at his court are Christians, as in particular the general of his army and many others. To this inclination and propensity of favouring Christians is to be added the fact that the Muhammadan creed of the Persians according to the interpretation given it by 'Ali thinks well of Christians out of charity, whereas the Turkish creed according to the interpretation of 'Uthman looks on them quite to the contrary. Prompted therefore by the abovementioned grounds the king of Persia offers to do and permit in favour of Christians all that for the more complete satisfaction of Your Holiness: and as a token of the sincerity of his mind and his genuine determination he has been pleased to set down this in a separate document which, as will be seen, contains this in substance, i.e.:

“(a) That he will cause to submit to the obedience of Your Holiness and the Holy Apostolic See all schismatic Christians in his realms whether Georgians, Armenians or of whatever other kind they may be; (b) that he will admit into his realms preachers and ‘founders’ of the Christian religion, and will grant the free practice of the same Religion with very wide privileges.

“As to the manner of introducing it smoothly at the beginning, it will be rendered easy by Your Holiness granting them the nuncio, for whom the Shah presses, because under cover of his staff and for the service of his people he can bring with him preachers and Religious, as many as he may wish, who will acquire greater freedom and will be able without impediment to go about spreading the Holy Faith in the hope that within a short time the results desired by all good Catholics will be seen to the glory of God and the exaltation of Holy Church. . . .”

An Italian version of Robert Sherley's credentials is extant.¹ After the usual grandiloquent prelude, and apostrophizing of the Sovereign Pontiff, it runs:

“. . . I have determined to inform You that recently there have arrived the Reverend Fathers² sent in Your name to me in token of the alliance and friendship there is between Us. They have set forth to Me all the business which You had bidden them communicate to Me. Wherefore, having learnt all those matters which they have represented to me in the name of Your Holiness, I had resolved to send one of Our most trusty servants to all the Christian Princes; but, since there was with me an illustrious personage, Don Robert Sherley, an English gentleman, who has been long in Our service, for that reason

¹ Fondo Borghese, Ser. IV, n. 52.

² i.e. the Discalced Carmelites.