

“and ‘the House of God and of Jesus Mary’ written in large gilt letters, Latin above, Persian below, over it so that Muslims passing in the street and reading the names of ‘Jesus Mary often make signs of respect in its direction.”

From the biographical portion of this work too it is to the point to repeat here the energetic defence he had to offer against criticism, which had evidently been written from Rome, of the missionaries living too much in touch with king and people, insufficiently in cloistered retirement:

“They tell us to live retired in our cells and to look to ourselves, avoiding conversation with seculars, and particularly to abstain from going to see the king. O good God! how is it possible to put such things into practice, in themselves contrary to the mind of the holy Pontiff who send us here? The Pontiff orders us not to see to ourselves only, but much to the salvation of our neighbours, not of secular Christians and Catholics alone, but also of schismatics, heretics, infidels.

“Next, as to the king, let our Fathers read the Briefs of His Holiness with which we were sent, and they will find that in them the Pontiff chiefly introduces us to the Shah, begs him to give us access to his person, to hear and to favour us—a very evident sign of the intention of His Holiness—not that we should run away from him, but frequent him, considering sagely that on the king depends all the kingdom, and at least to be in his good graces. Further in this connection regard has to be had to the usage of these parts, and to the king’s character. There is no one at all of any note in this realm whom he does not want to have by him frequently. How much more is it not to be believed that he takes pleasure in being visited and paid court to by foreigners suspect both to him and to those of his religion as we are and persons sent him by the Sovereign Pontiff? That this is true is confirmed by the words of the king, who said to me, when some months ago I went to pay him my respects at Qazwin; then after I had kissed his hand the very first thing he said to me was that I had been a long time in going to see him. . . . But my reason for going to the Court was not for such a purpose, but . . . and to present to him the book of the Psalms translated by me into Persian, together with the Gospels in Arabic, which were accepted by the king with the greatest pleasure and deepest reverence. It is not to be despised that I should introduce this custom of presenting books to the king about our religion and that they should be graciously accepted by him because, with the precedent a door is opened for doing the like in future not only as regards royalties, but for distributing books among all the rest, in order to disseminate the word of God and the tenets of our Faith without them noticing it. . . .

“ . . . Together with the above-mentioned books I have also presented to the king an alphabet in Arabic, and acquainted him with the printing of Arabic and Persian letters, about which he showed much interest and expressed a wish to introduce it into his own country.<sup>1</sup> If we could have one” (set of type) “and introduce it here, it would be of great advantage to our Religion and the spreading of it: the Shah has even charged me to procure it; so that my visit to his Majesty was not a fruitless one. . . .”

A powerful, even crushing, answer to critics, with all the force of experience of a mission behind it—for how could one sent to evangelize in an oriental land live retired from any connection with the world!

The attitude towards the Armenians of a personality with so much influence as Fr. John Thaddeus gained in Isfahan also calls for attention in the light of the deviation of the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* P. della Valle’s, XIV, p. 425, under date 8.5.1619, referring to 18.6.1618:

“The Shah at once summoned the Fr. Vicar of the Carmelites, bidding him bring the book of the Psalms, translated into Persian. He did so, and also brought a book of the Gospels printed in Arabic and an Arabic alphabet printed by Raimondo, in order to let him (‘Abbas) see the manner of printing, with the letters enlarged four times” (i.e. natural size). “The Shah took great pleasure in those things and displayed great desire to have a type with Persian and Arabic letters. And he commissioned the Father to procure them for him by any manner of means from Rome.”