

“many wrong practices there are among them, and which many of themselves repudiate).¹
 “. . . The king, Shah 'Abbas . . . is 34² years old . . . of medium height, rather thin
 “than fat, his face round and small, tanned by the sun, with hardly any beard: very vivacious
 “and alert, so that he is always doing something or other. He is sturdy and healthy,
 “accustomed to much exercise and toil: many times he goes about on foot, and recently
 “he had been forty days on pilgrimage, which he made on foot the whole time. He has
 “extraordinary strength, and with his scimitar can cut a man in two and a sheep with
 “its wool on at a single blow—and the Persian sheep are of large size. He has done many
 “other feats and has found no one to come up to him in them. In his food he is frugal,
 “as also in his dress, and this to set an example to his subjects; and so in public he eats
 “little else than rice, and that cooked in water only. His usual dress is of linen, and very
 “plain: similarly the nobles and others in his realm, following suit, *whereas formerly they used*
 “*to go out dressed in brocade with jewels and other fopperies*: and if he see anyone who is over-
 “dressed, he takes him to task, especially if it be a soldier. But in private he eats what
 “he likes. He is sagacious in mind, likes fame and to be esteemed: he is courteous in
 “dealing with everyone and at the same time very serious. For he will go through the
 “public streets, eat from what they are selling there and other things, speak at ease freely
 “with the lower classes, cause his subjects to remain sitting while he himself is standing,
 “or will sit down beside this man and that. He says that is how to be a king, and that
 “the king of Spain and other Christians do not get any pleasure out of ruling, because
 “they are obliged to comport themselves with so much pomp and majesty as they do.
 “He causes foreigners to sit down beside him and to eat at his table. With that and
 “accompanying all such condescension he requires that people shall not want in respect
 “towards him and, should anyone fail in this regard, he will punish the individual severely.
 “So the more he demonstrates kindness to his subjects and the more familiarly he talks
 “with them, they tremble before him, even the greatest among them, for, while joking,
 “he will have their heads cut off. He is very strict in executing justice and pays no regard
 “to his own favourites in this respect; but rather is the stricter with them in order to set
 “an example for others. So he has no private friends, nor anyone who has influence
 “with him. Formerly there was in his service a great favourite of his, employed in removing
 “manure from the stables. The Shah promoted him, and the man got to become very
 “rich. In a chest of porphyry he preserved the patched garments which he had used to
 “shake out the manure and the harness of a mule. The Shah went to his house and
 “wanted to see all the riches he possessed. The man showed him (the Shah) everything.
 “When they came to the chest of porphyry, he said that he did not want to open it, because
 “all that he had exhibited belonged to his Majesty, only what was inside that chest was
 “his own property. Finally he opened it: and the Shah commended him for it. He had
 “kept those articles because he knew the king's temperament. While we were at his
 “Court, he caused the bellies of two of his favourites to be ripped open, because they had
 “behaved improperly to an ordinary woman. From this it comes about that in his country
 “there are so very few murderers and robbers. In all the time I was at Isfahan, i.e. 4

¹ The *Report on the Missions to Rome*, by Fr. John Thaddeus in 1624 stated:

“Other Christians residing in Isfahan are Armenians, Georgians, Jacobites, Syrians, Chaldaeans, whom the king
 “found in the towns which he had conquered back from the Turk, and transplanted to Isfahan—there are many of
 “these scattered about the kingdom, living according to their rites. *The first transplantation was in 1602 . . . before that*
 “*there were no Christians to be heard of, neither in Isfahan nor elsewhere in the kingdom*, but only Jews in fairly large numbers,
 “who had, and still have, their synagogues: the rest of the population was Muslim. By far the greater number of Chris-
 “tians living in the Persian empire are Armenians. . . . The *Jacobites* were formerly in large numbers, but were forcibly
 “made Muslim, and of these who renounced Christ the Fathers have reconverted some . . . and at present there live
 “more than 600 households of them in the Catholic Faith, and under the spiritual direction of the Fathers in question (see
 “in appendix of Latin Briefs that by Paul V, 3.11.1612). They have their churches, where all come to Mass and are called
 “Syrians; although, because they have so increased in numbers they have been put outside the city by the king, so that
 “they may build houses. But they have no church there, and are urging the Fathers to construct a church for the
 “assistance of their souls. . . . About 2,000 *Georgians*, who had become renegades, have been persuaded by Fr. John
 “Thaddeus to return to the Faith.”

² i.e. he had been born in 1574—as pointed out previously, this must be an error, for it would make 'Abbas only 55 at his death in 1629: it is perhaps a manuscript reversal of the figures, and these should read 43.