

“But though the splendours of this race were at one time very great, still the Faith of the Roman Church has decreed triumphs of no lesser magnitude to the Persian virtues. For not a few of those born in those regions, who took the oath of allegiance to Christ, it has honoured with fanes and altars and included in the assemblies of the Saints, those whom We believe to be citizens of heaven and of the household of God and to be set over all the principalities of the world. Hence always fame has attached to the glorious Persian name in the Christian world, and besides there was a certain impression prevailing in the minds of our peoples that between Persian and Christians there was a sort of unwritten treaty of friendship and that the kings of those lands favoured our cause benevolently; and indeed this notion is extraordinarily strengthened by the priests and Religious who return to Italy. For they say that there the power of justice holds sway, the law of hospitality is observed, nor is it from labours on the battlefield alone but also from literary study that glory is sought: that the strongest defence of the royal throne is considered to be equity and mercy. It is nowise strange if with a sort of kindly bias of mind Your triumphs are considered by the whole Christian commonwealth as its own reliefs. Now We on being raised to the Pontifical throne by the goodness of God’s mercy, since the bliss resultant from virtue and the salvation of men ought to be to the glory of Our power, began with ceaseless prayer to beg the Father of mercies to encourage Our fatherly regard by prospering Your Highness.

“But after Your envoy in coming to Us had traversed all the great stretch of countries lying between and had handed over the royal letter whereby You signified Your goodwill for Us and offered Us friendship, as We knew that Pontifical solicitude would not be unwelcome to so great a king, We made up Our mind that henceforth it was meet that Your Highness’ fair fame should be a matter of principal concern to Us.

“For which cause, since the renown of Your royal name and the vastness of Your very celebrated realm not unoften draw Our thoughts thither, We have carefully pondered over the strength of Your power and the reasons for the general liking, so that We might be at last of some use to You. Now We understand that there are two things particularly which procure for You, O most puissant King, such great goodwill of the Christian nations, viz. hatred for the Turks and friendship with the king of Spain. For, being two princes formidable in the wealth of the tribute (you receive) and in the allegiance owned (you by various) races, while you are mutually bound by the salutary bonds of affectionate regard to the human race, you seem to effect a junction of East and West in the might of your power and you twain are able to thrust back the common enemy into his lurking-places in the north-country. Therefore God, the arbiter of treaties and witness in whose hand are the hearts of kings, must be entreated never at any time to allow quarrels to sunder this friendship which unites in amity both continents by the interchange of trade. Since therefore its preservation is the earnest prayer of our peoples and the boon of the Divine clemency, Your Highness can easily conjecture how unwillingly all have heard the report which recently made known that the Portuguese had been attacked by the Persians and the citadel of Hurmuz captured by Your soldiery. Certainly the Tyrant of the Turks who desires and meditates solely Your destruction cannot find a timelier relief to lighten the wretchedness of the Byzantine empire now being rent and torn in pieces.

“For he sees that the danger of ruin looms over himself if, labouring under revolts at home, he sustains the warring might of the Persian king which relies not only on its own strength, great as that is, but which also is fortified by the help and wealth of the allied Spaniards.

“And so We, who have the success of both of You at heart, cannot restrain Our voice in such a great crisis of affairs. The roar of the Ocean and the complaints of navigators do not allow Us to remain quiet in the frightful horror of the storm. Therefore, lest at any time a senseless silence be thrown in Our face, who are watching these perils, We have determined to address Your Highness so that We be seen to have at least brought that much help, which was in Our power, to stay the present ills.