

“it” (the translation). “This is held to be a matter of the greatest importance, because it “has been ordered by a prince, who today is the conqueror of Persia and the terror of “Asia, and it is to be surmised that he has in mind to oblige all Christians of whatsoever “religion or sect scattered over those vast regions to follow one and the same religious law “and creed (Catholic, and schismatic Armenians, Nestorians who are also called Chaldaeans, “Georgians who follow the Greek rite, and the Christians of S. John so-called because “they make S. John Baptist the author of their beliefs and rites): and, as the schismatic “Armenians are for the most part rich and powerful, in case they should incline the mind “of the monarch in their favour, the Catholic religion would remain oppressed, whereas “on the contrary the latter would establish itself all the more firmly and would spread, “were it to please God to assist the good cause with His omnipotence.”

Bishop Philip Mary did not relate in any subsequent letter of his which is extant in Rome the outcome of the translations so arduously made into Persian of the Christian and Jewish scriptures, and of the Quran from its classical Arabic. But Fr. Urban of S. Elisaeus gave a detailed account of it to Fr. Leander of S. Cecilia, who used it in his book, *Secondo Viaggio*, and was himself in Baghdad at the time they took place. His account contains, interpolated, certain curious details of the history of the time which are worth note: and, as it is contemporary, first-hand information, the account given must be approximately correct.

Fr. Leander, then, explains that after his return from his Indian expedition Nadir Shah found the Uzbek Tatars in revolt and sent as commander against them his brother Ibrahim, who, however, was killed in the course of the fighting. Thereafter Nadir Shah went into winter quarters in Mazandaran:

“He perceived that he was left with few men to defend that vast monarchy, and to send “as succour . . . wherever he was asked for it, or where plunder attracted him. Causing “the soldiers to receive pay regularly and making them presents frequently therefore, not “only did he keep by him those whom he already had, but very soon he had others who “flocked from all sides spontaneously to serve him, in part attracted by the good pay, and “partly too in order to escape paying the heavy exactions and taxes, with which he burdened “his subjects. In order, too, that men of every race and sect might come the more willingly “to serve him, he showed himself indifferent to every and any religion. Having summoned “the divines of the chief creeds he ordered each one of them to make a version in modern “Persian of their scriptures, giving them to expect that he would afterwards choose that “which appeared to him the best law or creed, or else form of them combined one after “his own mind and fashion, and be himself its compiler.

“The Persian Mullas were enjoined to translate the Quran from the Arabic, although “according to the law laid down by Muhammad any such translation was prohibited, as “he (Muhammad) wished that that . . . book should be written in the Arabic tongue “alone. . . . The Jewish rabbis were ordered to translate the Old Testament: the Armen- “ians the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of the Apostles and the Apocalypse. Lastly, “the Catholic missionaries were bidden to translate the four Gospels. He had the edict “for this published in Isfahan, where in the palace of the Khan” (i.e. governor or daruga) “all had to busy themselves with this work: and they took almost an entire year¹ to complete “it entirely. The translators of the Gospels were Monsignor Philip Mary, bishop of Isfahan, “Fr. Urban of S. Elisaeus, Vicar Provincial in that country, where he had exercised the “office of apostolic missionary for forty years and is still carrying on with unabated zeal, “Fr. Thomas Aquinas—all three of them Discalced Carmelites, but the last-named died “while the version was still being made: and Fr. Raymond Berselli of the Order of Preachers, “the Father Superior of the Jesuits having been unable to take part as he had had an “apoplectic seizure. . . .”

¹ i.e. up to nearly the beginning of June 1741.