

Madonna of St. Luke. Ink and colours on silk. China. Ming dynasty, late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. The Field Museum of Chicago. Neg. #A113717c.
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THE JESUITS

Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts

1540–1773

Edited by

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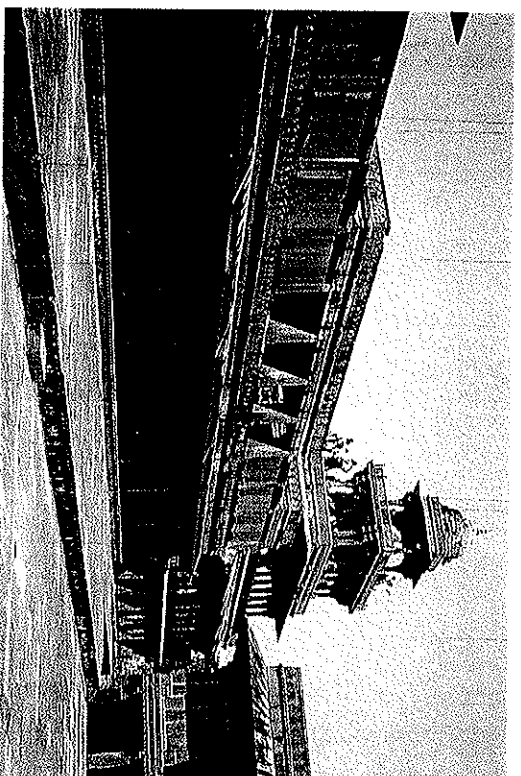
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GAUVIN ALEXANDER BAILEY

Like the individual missionaries themselves, Jesuit overseas missions were involved in a myriad of cultural activities, from astronomy and art to medicine and music. Nevertheless, most of these missions are remembered only for the most prominent of their many achievements. Thus the China mission is recalled primarily for its astronomical advances, with its remarkable literary and artistic contributions glossed over, and the Paraguay reductions are celebrated for their social and economic accomplishments, even though they also achieved the largest-scale production of art and architecture of any Jesuit mission in the world – not to mention their musical activities. The same goes for the Jesuit missions to the Mughal Empire in India. Although the Mughal mission is now rightly regarded as one of the most flourishing artistic exchanges in early modern mission history, it also provoked a literary partnership of great subtlety and erudition. Decades before the more famous Tamil – and perhaps Sanskrit – theological treatises of the Madurai missionary Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) set the world abuzz with their accommodation to Hindu cultural values, similar works in literary court Persian were dazzling the courts of the Mughal emperors Akbar (1556–1605) and Jahangir (1605–27). In keeping with Jesuit activities at court, many of them related closely to the fine arts, either in their subject-matter or because they were illustrated with delicate paintings in the miniature style of the day. Their Persian texts remain virtually unstudied.

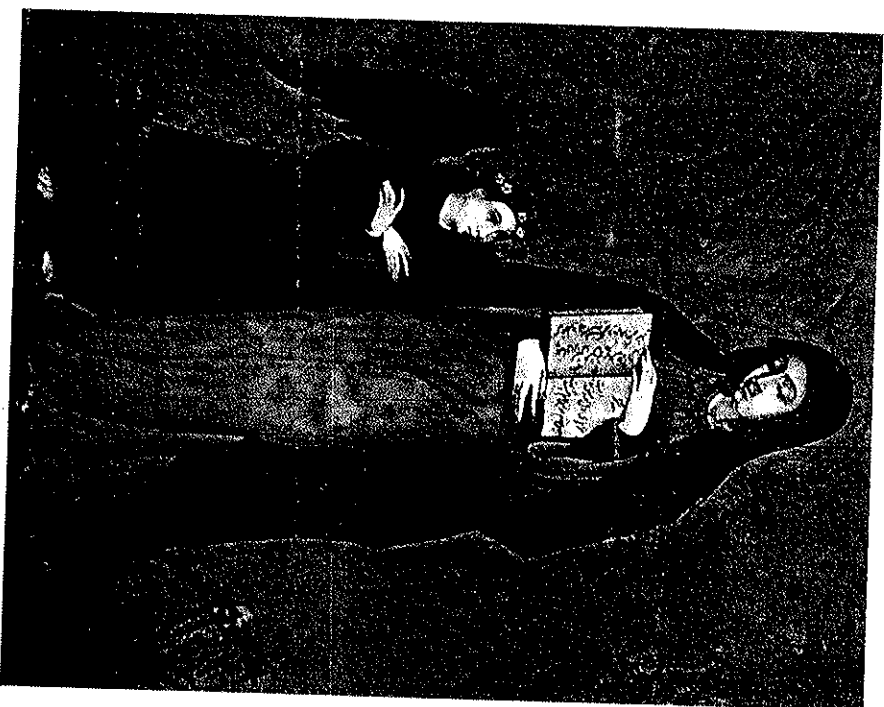
Founded in 1580 and lasting with two brief interruptions until the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, the Mughal, or 'Mogor,' mission was the fruit of two of the most accomplished missionaries in the Jesuits' first century, Rodolfo Acquaviva (1550–83), nephew of Father General Claudio Acquaviva, and Jerónimo Xavier (1549–1617), a relative of the co-founder of the Society and 'Apostle to the Indies' Francis Xavier. The mission was invited to Akbar's court for two main purposes: to provide Catholic debaters for an interfaith forum held



18.1. Imperial palace of Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri, c. 1568–78. Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.

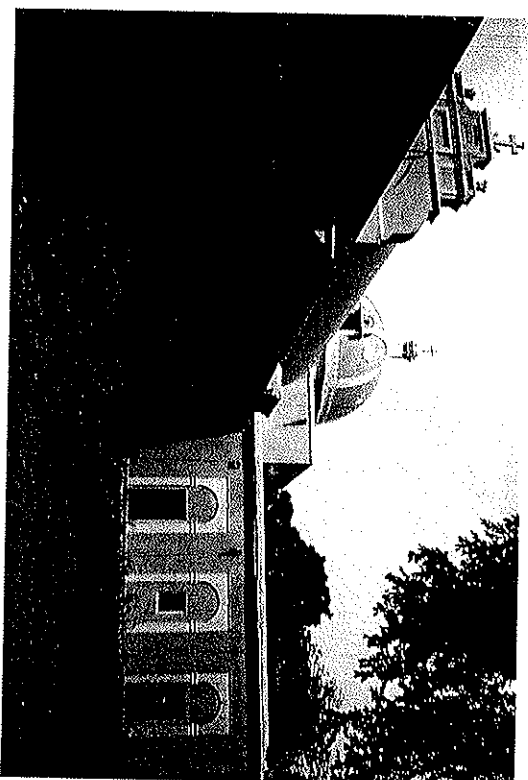
regularly in Akbar's palace at Fatehpur Sikri (fig. 18.1), and to provide works of European late Renaissance art for his enjoyment and his court artists' edification. The Jesuits were famously successful in both capacities. Late into the night they vanquished their Sunni, Shiite, Hindu, and Jain foes at the podium, and they provided such a representative collection of European engravings, paintings, and statues that Mughal artists were able quickly to master the Late Renaissance style (fig. 18.2). Akbar and Jahangir embraced the Fathers as their personal friends, helped erect churches in Mughal cities (fig. 18.3), and covered their palaces, gardens, tombs, jewelry, and royal albums with pictures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and a panoply of Catholic saints (fig. 18.4). But neither emperor ever entertained the slightest intention of converting to Catholicism. In fact, the Mughal mission of the Society of Jesus was – pastorally speaking – a fantastic and extravagant failure.

This statement requires some explanation. Akbar's goal in holding the religious debates was not to abandon Islam, as many have maintained, but to create a syncretic brotherhood – something like a masonic lodge – that embodied the best aspects of all of the world's religions. The focus of this brotherhood of elite nobles was none other than the emperor himself. He took advantage, for exam-



18.2. School of Abu'l-Hasan, *Virgin Mary and an Angel*. Colours and gold on paper, mounted on an album page. Mughal, c. 1590–5. Lahore Museum
Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.

ple, of the dual meaning of the Islamic proclamation *Allāhu Akbar* – translatable as both ‘God is Great’ and ‘God is Akbar.’ The emperor openly admired many aspects of Catholicism, and was sufficiently impressed with Jesuit rhetorical style and ritual to imitate them himself, but he never wavered from his original intention. His adoption of Catholic devotional art also was driven entirely by his



18.3. The ‘Old Cathedral,’ Agra. Founded c. 1599 and restored and enlarged in 1722 and 1835. Formerly the headquarters of the ‘Mogor’ mission of the Society of Jesus.
Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.

own agenda. Jesus, Mary, and the saints were used as royal propaganda, bestowing celestial approval on imperial rule and relating specifically to the person of the emperor, the queen mother, and other high nobility.¹ Even their context remained Indian, as biblical stories could be related to a wide range of Koranic and even Hindu parables and traditions, allowing the emperor to maintain ideological control over both major ethnic groups in his realm. But the Jesuits were also able to play the indoctrination game. Mounting a counter-offensive, the missionaries capitalized on the very same connections between Christian and Indo-Islamic culture that the emperor was using.

Among the most influential and intellectually accomplished media for proselytization employed by the Mughal Jesuits were the Persian-language catechisms and other theological treatises written between 1595 and 1607 by Jerónimo Xavier, by that time the superior of the Mogor mission. Xavier was assisted considerably by the Mughal court historian ‘Abd al-Sattar Ibn Qasim Lahori (fl. 1590s–1619), a man who, incidentally, remained strictly Muslim to the end and whose collaboration with Xavier was not purely a gesture of friendship; Xavier wrote about him in 1597, ‘These [Muslims] will do anything



18.4. School of Manohar. *The Emperor Jahangir with a Portrait of the Virgin Mary*. Colours and gold on paper, mounted on an album page. Mughal, c. 1620. National Museum of India, New Delhi. Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.

for money.² Xavier's Bible stories, lives of the saints, mirrors for princes, fictitious interfaith debates, and a Psalter constituted the first Catholic literature in Persian, or indeed any Indian language.³ They were written in a basic version of the literary Persian style and were full of metaphors and references taken from the mystical branch of Islam known as Sufism. Especially prominent were references to mirrors and the human heart, both of which were central to Sufi

allegorical language. These works also took advantage of the Neoplatonic cultural heritage that was shared by Islam and Christianity alike, derived from common classical roots that in many cases survived only thanks to early Islamic efforts. Written first in Portuguese and translated into Persian with the help of 'Abd al-Sattar, these works were presented in luxury editions to Akbar and Jahangir between 1602 and 1609. They are a rich and scholarly blend of textual references from East and West – a synthesis made possible by access to a remarkably comprehensive imperial library. In addition to Akbar's collection of Islamic and Hindu literature, Xavier and his Muslim collaborator were also able to dip into an impressive collection of European books that had been built over the years by Xavier's own mission and its two predecessors. This collection had artistic as well as literary value, since many books were lavishly illustrated with engravings and others included defences of the Catholic cult of images.

The Mughal library of European printed books appears to have been assembled specifically with Akbar's interfaith debates in mind. In fact, it echoed the kind of library owned by the great Jesuit preachers in Rome, who lectured by commenting on published texts, going over each paragraph or category by turn.⁴ The collection was strongly Scholastic, emphasizing works aimed at non-Christians and texts justifying the use of images, and it also included the fundamental Jesuit writings, as well as some books on Portuguese history and law to satisfy Akbar's interest in Europe. In 1595 an inventory listed four volumes of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologicae* (1266–73), the *Summa contra gentiles* (1259–64) aimed at non-Christians, and a diatribe against Muslims, Jews, and Eastern Christians called *De rationibus fidei contra graecos, armenos, et saracenos*,⁵ all of which were standard in mission libraries around the world. It also included a book by the sixteenth-century Aquinas scholar Domingo de Soto; two copies of the immensely popular *Summa peccatorum*⁶ by the Dominican commentator on Aquinas Cardinal Cajetan (1470–1534); a diatribe against Luther by Silvestro 'Præntus' (early sixteenth century);⁷ two copies of the influential *Manual de confesores et penitentes* by Martin de Azpilliceta 'Navarro' (d. 1555);⁸ the *Chronicles* (1454–9), a history of the world by the Florentine Dominican bishop St Antoninus;⁹ a history of the popes, probably the *Liber de vita Christi ac omnium pontificum* (History of Christ and the Popes) by Bartolomeo Sacchi 'Platina' (1421–81);¹⁰ a life of St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola; the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus; the Laws of Portugal; the *Commentaries* of Afonso de Albuquerque (1453–1515); and a Latin grammar by Father Manuel Alvarez.¹¹ Akbar also owned seven of the eight volumes of Plantin's (1514–89) monumental *Polyglot Bible* (1567–72), an atlas called the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1570) by Abraham Ortelius (1527–98), and, most important, Jerónimo Nadal's richly illustrated

Adnotationes et meditationes in evangelia (Antwerp, 1593), all of which contained numerous full-page engravings of the highest quality from the Antwerp workshop (fig. 18.5) and were studied avidly by Mughal painters.¹²

Moreover, we know that the Mughals read at least some of these books because Mughal and Jesuit sources both cite translations of specific texts.¹³ Abd al-Sattar, for example, wrote a manuscript in 1603 called *Thamraz al-Falāsifa* (The Fruit of Philosophy), a history of Greek and Roman thought that drew heavily on Akbar's European library, especially the *Chronicles* of St. Antoninus.¹⁴ In his introduction he writes that Xavier helped him translate these works just as he had helped the Jesuit superior with his literary works: 'The omniscient Emperor, whose granting of requests and fulfilment of wishes are his outstanding traits, summoned this one whose name is lost [i.e., Abd al-Sattar], and ordered that he learn the language of the Europeans and report in Persian on the mysteries of these nations ... I acquainted myself with Father Jerónimo Xavier, who is one of the most learned men of Europe ... to learn and acquire that language.'¹⁵ We know from Jesuit letters of the period that Akbar himself also ordered Xavier to translate 'some histories' and Bible stories from his collection into Persian, and constantly asked the Fathers to translate passages aloud during literary and religious soirees.¹⁶ In addition to Akbar's library, the Jesuit mission obtained other works to assist them in translating holy texts into Persian, most notably a printed Arabic Bible and a Persian Psalter written in Hebrew characters that had been brought to the mission in 1604 by a Vatican emissary, Giambattista Vecchieta.¹⁷

Historically, perhaps the most interesting of Xavier's Persian catechisms is a work called *Ayine-ye Haqq Ni'mā*, or *The Truth-Shining Mirror*, finished in 1609 and presented to Jahangir, although derived from earlier material.¹⁸ Written in the form of a debate among a priest, a philosopher (a thinly veiled reference to the emperor), and a mullah, this drama records some of the actual conversations held at the religious debates under Akbar and Jahangir. Much of *The Truth-Shining Mirror* compares Christianity directly with Islam, demonstrating a deep understanding of the latter. The first part is an explanation of Christian doctrine. Book One deals with humankind's need for a divine law; Book Two traces Christianity's teaching about God and tries to show how it conforms to logic; and Book Three treats the divinity of Christ. Next the author embarks on a lengthy comparison of the two religions: in Book Four he compares the biblical Ten Commandments with the commandments of the Koran; evaluates Christian miracles next to Islamic ones; parallels Christ's life with Muhammad's; questions the chastity of Muhammad; looks at Christian and Muslim prayers and pilgrimages; and, finally, points to the spread of Christianity over the globe as proof of its veracity. In Book Five Xavier tries to show how Christianity provides more aids to weak human nature than Islam or other religions. Although much of the basic structure of this book is based on Thomas Aquinas, it also addresses



18.5. Page from Jerónimo Nadal's *Adnotationes et meditationes in evangelia* (Antwerp, 1593) pasted onto a late seventeenth-century Mughal album page. Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul. Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.

specifically Muslim and Mughal issues, the result of years of speaking closely with the emperor and his mullas and studying firsthand the most common arguments posed by these men against Christian teachings.¹⁹

Most important for us, the third book of *The Truth-Showing Mirror* devotes a whole chapter to the use of images, about which the author remarks, 'What an astonishing invention, enabling one to bring things that are remote and long past close up to view!'²⁰ Xavier argues that religious images are necessary to remind us of the deeds of Christ and the saints, since humans are forgetful by nature, and he sees pictures as like a doctor reviving us and curing us of moral sickness – 'for human weakness needs every help it can get.'²¹ He points out that pictures 'bring to life and renew in the memory those things which these pictures resemble,' an effect that is produced 'more quickly and pithily' than by speech, 'because the tongue is too long-winded.'²² In a particularly eloquent passage Xavier evokes the manifold advantages of images according to post-Tridentine precepts by comparing verbal speech to the 'speech' of an image:

The speech [of an image] is an abbreviated book and brief worship. It is something that speaks without talking and is heard without the ear, something written that everyone understands; a letter that everyone can read; a book for the learned; an attribute that makes manifest things which are past and ancient. It is a mirror that reflects things held in trust [i.e., things that are not actually part of it] ... an assistant to the temperament, a teacher of the intellect; and it depicts intention.²³

Elsewhere he continues the mirror metaphor: 'Put a shining and clear mirror on the wall, and you will comprehend how it receives images on itself of things that are in this room, and displays them on itself.'²⁴ The reference to mirrors shows that Xavier was sensitive to the metaphorical language of Sufism.²⁵ In Sufi poetry paintings were often compared to mirrors, since they reflected an exact impression of their subject but did not themselves possess a soul.²⁶

In *The Truth-Showing Mirror* Xavier also applies Ciceroian rhetorical justifications to images, showing how they can delight, teach, and move (*delectare, docere, movere*), a revival of the classical oratorical theory that was favoured also by early Christian writers like Augustine and John of Damascus. Xavier is especially attentive to the anagogic qualities of art, as when he writes that images can be 'captivating' or 'bewitching.'²⁷ Elsewhere he draws on another classical notion, the Aristotelian concept of the 'inner senses,' common to both Islamic and Western European literature. In this passage he explains that images are capable of penetrating deeper into these regions than speech: 'Furthermore, those forms and media [i.e., images] pass deeper into all the inferior senses, and the more subtle they are the more easily they enter and take hold, until the intellect

becomes aware of these things, like pictures and phantoms.'²⁸ To medieval Europeans, the 'interior senses' were the imagination, memory, and common sense – forces capable of interpreting the disparate data collected by the five exterior senses. But this notion was also pervasive in the Islamic world, thanks to Neoplatonic philosophers like al-Kindi (795–865) and members of the Brethren of Purity (ninth and tenth centuries). In Islam the 'interior senses' were thought to act as a filter between the exterior senses and the intellect, and to participate in artistic creation and aesthetic perception.²⁹ Interior senses held perceivable data gathered from the senses in a 'treasury' and used these to elicit emotional responses from the viewer. Xavier's own justification of images resonates strongly with this tradition. He describes an image as a 'treasury ... in which worthy goods and parables are safely kept,' and later compares an image to the intellect, since it holds on to a 'perceivable thing' that has been gathered by the power of perception and conception.³⁰

Many of the topics in *The Truth-Showing Mirror* were discussed at length in the actual debates, and no doubt were recycled from them, especially a conversation held in Lahore in 1607, which was recorded in a contemporary letter.³¹ The setting was Jahangir's palace, where the emperor had invited the Jesuit Fathers to explain the Christian engravings – and the paintings by his own artists – collected in an album, so that he could learn not only their stories, but also the significance of their symbols and allegories.³² Jahangir asked many pointed questions that demonstrate a keen interest in the role of images and the function of allegory in Christian art. For example, he found it difficult to dissociate the notion of honour from physical beauty. When shown a *Crucifixion*, he asked, 'Why, if [you] adored Christ our Lord so much, did [you] paint him in such a dishonourable state?'³³ One of his nobles added, 'When we depict Christ we always paint him very beautifully and not on the cross.'³⁴ When the fathers explained that it was a great honour because it showed that Christ had died for our sins, they emphasized the mnemonic value of the wounds as reminders of his sacrifice – a theme discussed in *The Truth-Showing Mirror*.³⁵ With a typically Mughal sense of humour, Jahangir applauded the explanation and recalled a courtier whose eyes he had blinded because he was involved in an assassination plot, yet whom he kept around so that his disfigured face would discourage other potential rebels.³⁶

In another discussion a noble brought up the question of idolatry, asking the Jesuits whether they paid homage 'before an image of the Virgin, or before the Virgin herself.' The Fathers answered in Mughal terms: 'Sire, we do not venerate the images for what they are – we are well aware that they are merely paper or canvas with pigments – but for those whom they represent. It is just as with your fernans [royal decrees]: you do not touch them to your foreheads because they are papers covered in ink, but because you know that they contain your order and

will.³⁷ This sounds suspiciously like a passage in *The Truth-Showing Mirror* in which the Philosopher criticizes Christians for using images as a 'pretext to worship stone and wood ... How can you conceive that a logical man should worship a cross of wood or gold?'³⁸ But the notion of images as a mere reflection of a greater being or inner meaning was also a common theme in Islamic writing. Deriving from the Neoplatonic Sufi treatises of Ibn al-'Arabi (1165–1240), and later becoming a cliché in Persian verse, this concept divided reality into two aspects, 'inner meaning' (*ma'nī*, God and the spiritual world) and 'outer form' (*ṣūrai*, the moral world of appearances), the second of which was a mirror of the first.³⁹ Since *ṣūrai* also meant an 'image' or 'portrait', the pun was often applied to the figurative arts, which could be seen as a reflection of spiritual truths. The seventeenth-century Persian art theorist Sadiqi Beg Afshar, for example, wrote about his artistic training: 'I was able to discover how, by this art, what was intrinsically real [*ma'nī*] within a subject could be represented, to all appearances, through its external form [*ṣūrai*].'⁴⁰ By extension, gazing upon holy pictures could be seen as a direct means of perceiving God. Akbar's former regent Bairam Khan, for example, wrote that looking at the faces of prophets was equivalent to looking at God himself: 'The faces of the image [*ṣūrai*] of both worlds are painted by him: looking at Adam and John and Moses and Noah and Jesus is equivalent to looking at [God's] brilliant beauty.'⁴¹ Akbar himself believed it was possible to perceive the divine through images, and gave the example of dreams: 'The Imageless [*bi-ṣūrai*, i.e., God] cannot be seen either when one is asleep or when one is awake, but with our skill we can form an image. For example, dreaming about God is like this.'⁴²

In the 1607 debate, Jahangir was also curious about the function of symbols. When shown a picture of God the Father surrounded by *putti*, for example, he asked the Fathers to explain why the angels were placed there.⁴³ These *putti* must have struck the emperor as an appropriate symbol of reverence and honour, since he subsequently had some painted on many of his own portraits. Jahangir was also interested in the ability of a symbol to represent an abstract idea and asked the Fathers to explain the significance of a boar's head in an illustration of Sardanapalus: "'What is the significance of this boar's head which is shown here?'" [The Father] answered, "It is a symbol of the effect which dishonesty has, that the unchaste are unclean, etc."⁴⁴ Elsewhere, both in the debates and in *The Truth-Showing Mirror*, the Jesuits discussed the use of images in Europe (especially miraculous images in Loreto, Burgos, Catalonia, Montserrat, and Guadalupe), and the grace which God bestows on those who revere images and relics of his Son and saints.⁴⁵ Xavier wrote about the apotropaic function of holy pictures: 'We have plenty of evidence that God approves of the worship of these images: he has proved this by the miracles which he has granted in favour of

those who especially revere them.'⁴⁶ As at the end of Book Four, Xavier's main argument in favour of using images is that the practice is widespread throughout Europe and the world. The images chapter in *The Truth-Showing Mirror* was the clearest written manifestation of the power of devotional images that the Mughal court had yet encountered.

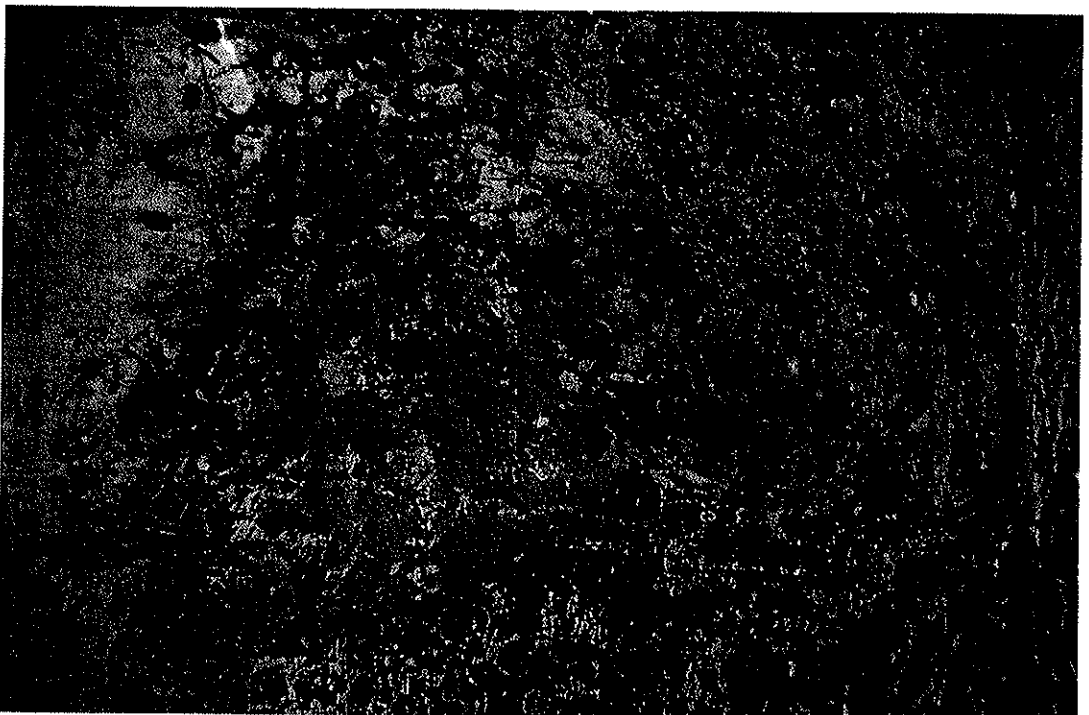
More directly pertinent to Mughal painting than *The Truth-Showing Mirror* was the *Mirā' al-Quds*, or *Mirror of Holiness*, finished in 1602, two copies of which were illustrated throughout with miniature paintings (figs 18.7, 18.8).⁴⁷ These lively pictures were not executed by the Fathers, nor were they engravings that had been pasted in. Instead, they were commissioned directly from Mughal artists under the leadership of the court painter Manohar in a style closely akin to the Indo-Persian idiom of the day, with rich landscapes and jewel-like colours. The results were not mere adaptations of engravings, although they do incorporate some quotations from prints. They also have little in common with traditional European Christological cycles such as those found in the printed Bibles of the period, since they make use of legends and stories that are not in the Gospel but were a staple of mystery plays.⁴⁸ And although they are painted in the courtly Mughal style used for poetical works such as the *Anwār-i-Suhaili* and *Nafahat-Us* manuscripts (1590s and 1600s), the *Mirā' al-Quds* pictures are very different in spirit and composition.⁴⁹ They are charged with a dramatic energy that is enhanced by stagelike architectural settings, elaborate props, vibrant gestures, and a variety of *mise-en-scène* figures such as priests and altar boys. All these features reveal the pervasive influence of the most visible source of Catholic propaganda on the mission, Jesuit theatre and liturgy.⁵⁰

Both Jesuit and Mughal sources record that religious services and festivals were held with great pomp and exuberance at the Mughal mission. Especially popular were the pantomimes and processions, which were a regular feature of mission life and which made the most of the Indians' own love of pageantry. Some events are reported to have drawn as many as ten thousand people.⁵¹ Lavish costumes and liturgical vestments highlighted events like Christmas, Easter, Assumption Day, baptisms, and funerals, which were further enhanced by curtains and candles, flowers, singing, organ and wind music, bell-ringing, fireworks, and the exhibition of pictures. The Jesuits even used gimmicks of a decidedly worldly character like mechanical apes and birds, a Neapolitan juggler, and a tightrope walker, prompting one English observer to call them 'prattling, juggling Jesuits.'⁵² The audiences were made up not only of commoners, but also of a substantial number of courtiers and even the emperors themselves. In fact, both Akbar and Jahangir regularly provided money, candles, cloth, and even decorative paintings for these events, and the festivals of the Christian year were incorporated into the Mughal social calendar.⁵³

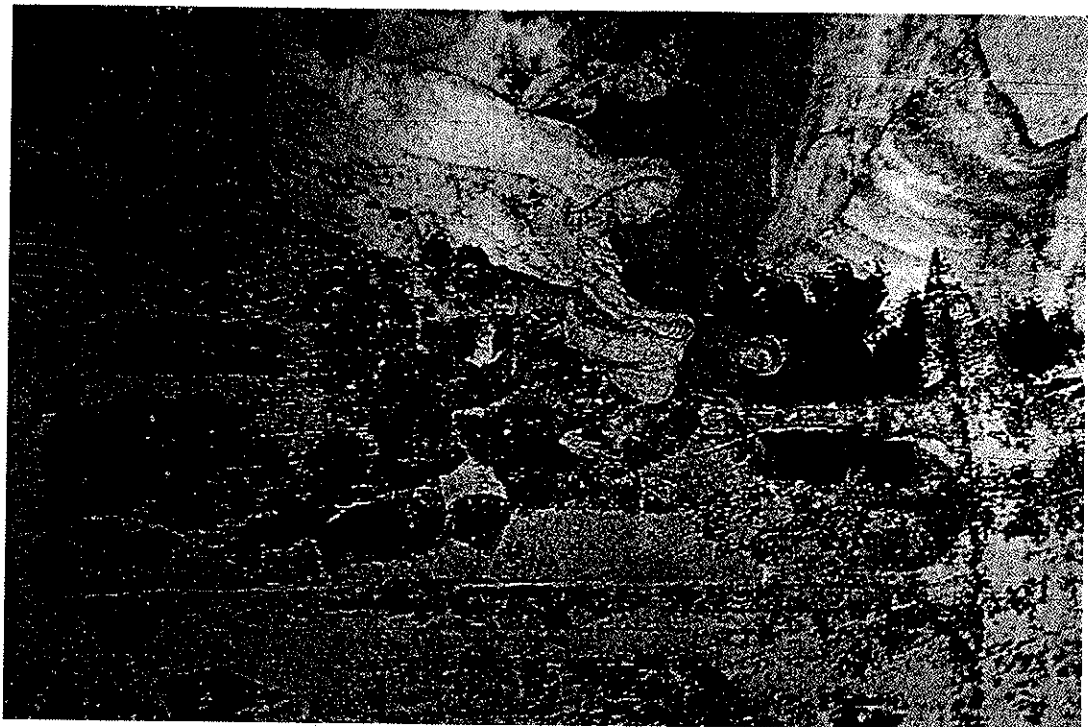
The Jesuits made two copies of the *Mirror of Holiness*, one for Akbar and the other for Prince Salim, the future Jahangir. According to contemporary accounts, Salim was not satisfied with the number of pictures in his copy and, in order to have the advantage over his father, he commissioned his own luxury edition with twice as many illustrations. Xavier wrote in a letter that Salim 'ordered it transcribed in very fine letters on extremely costly paper and ordered paintings made of every scene that could possibly be depicted ... He was not content with the scenes that were engraved by Father Nadal; he [had] these painted, and many others. It was an extremely lavish book, and in Rome one would make a great effort to see it.'⁵⁴ Since Nadal's book had over 150 illustrations, this book must have been very large indeed. Salim even embellished the edition which the Fathers had originally sent him by painting a golden cross on the frontispiece and another crucifix by 'the best painter he had' on another page, and by adding a Virgin and Child with the child's arms around the Virgin's neck to a depiction of Christ's name, and erasing the Portuguese caption and replacing it with a Persian translation.⁵⁵ His early interest in Christian devotional pictures presaged the extravagant Christian figural murals which he later commissioned for his palaces (fig. 18.6). A year after Akbar's death, in 1606, the Fathers also gave Jahangir a Persian Lives of the Apostles 'interspersed with many illustrations of their labours,' which unfortunately appears to be lost.⁵⁶

The illustrations to the *Mirror of Holiness* are highly reminiscent of theatre. In the *Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple* (fig. 18.7), for example, the setting is an elaborate stage, with real-life priests acting as commentators interspersed with costumed Gospel characters. A young catechumen, or more likely a small statue of the Madonna, is lifted up a ladder. The Jesuits are recognizable by their clean-shaven faces and long black gowns – they were known in Persian as *siyāpōsh*, or 'blackrobes.' Others even show catechumens and choirboys dressed in church vestments holding candles or explaining the action of the scene. According to contemporary sources, the mystery plays of the Mughal mission consisted of pantomimes accompanied by explanation and instruction by Fathers or catechumens, and often boys dressed as angels held placards with biblical text written in Persian.⁵⁷

The text of the *Mir'at al-Quds*, which is made up primarily of New Testament stories, reflects a typically Jesuit emphasis on the envisioning of biblical characters and their actions in a realistic, immediate, and tangible way, a characteristic which can be traced back to the 'composition of place' in the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁵⁸ The book describes in minute detail the facial features of its principal characters, for example, stressing the importance of accuracy in the likeness of the holy faces, as in this depiction of the Virgin Mary, which sounds like a set of instructions for a portraitist:



18.6. *Jesus as Saviour Mundi* (detail). Mughal mural painting, garden of Queen Nur Jahan, Agra, c. 1613–21. Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.



18.7. School of Manohar. *The Presentation of the Virgin* (detail). Colours on paper, from *Mir'at al-'Uyuds*, c. 1602. Lahore Museum. Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.

Mary was a girl of medium height, wheaten-coloured and long-faced. Her eyes were large and inclined towards blue. Her hair was golden. Her hands and fingers were long. A pleasing figure. In everything well proportioned. Her discourse was extremely mild. Her glance came from a modest and bashful face. Her apparel was humble and chaste. Such greatness and majesty appeared in her countenance that when the wicked and perplexed-hearted gazed upon her they pulled themselves together and became reformed. All her companions knew of her goodness and agreeable nature and humility.⁵⁹

The book contains similar descriptions of other figures, such as Jesus and John the Baptist. These reconstructions of holy faces are also acculturative, since they closely echo the Islamic tradition of *hiyva*, or verbal descriptions of the Prophet Muhammad's face, and the Hindu *stipasastras*, or image-making texts.

Even more interesting from the point of view of art history is the first story portrayed in the *Mirror of Holiness* (fig. 18.8). Deriving from early Christian times, the tale illustrated by *Abgarus King of Edessa* tells how Abgarus V of Edessa, when stricken by a life-threatening disease, sent his court painter to make a likeness of Jesus. Unable to do justice to his subject the distraught artist asked Jesus to imprint the likeness of his face onto a piece of cloth. This miraculous portrait, of course, cured the king immediately. In giving this story such prominence, the Jesuits stressed the importance of the cult of images in Catholic life. Obviously, Abgarus was also a thinly veiled reference to Akbar himself, since he too was a king who sent embassies and artists far and wide to find Catholic devotional images. As if the reference were not clear enough, the names 'Akbar' and 'Abgar' even use the same four letters in Persian.

Xavier's Persian literature had a profound and lasting effect on the intellectual life of the Mughal court, and his justifications for imagery were taken very seriously by his Muslim patrons. In 1608, the year after the great debate at Lahore, Jāhangir began to cover the walls of his public architecture with murals of Christian saints, a practice which soon was imitated by members of the nobility all over the country. A scant couple of years after the appearance of *The Truth-Showing Mirror*, he commissioned a series of highly emblematic self-portraits in a short-lived attempt to adapt the European Renaissance frontispiece to imperial portraiture.⁶⁰ The first Islamic paintings to make use of complex allegory, they are the direct result of discussions in the debates and in *The Truth-Showing Mirror*. Even details such as their use of ornamental *purni* and diadems can be traced, as we have seen, to specific conversations or textual references.

The influence of the Jesuit catechisms was felt in the literary world as well. They echo in the mystical poetry of Dara Shukoh (d. 1659), for example, the son of Jāhangir's successor Shah Jahan, the builder of the Taj Mahal.⁶¹ They were also the source of vigorous controversy in Islamic religious literature for



188. School of Manohar, *Abgarus, King of Edessa*. Colours on paper, from *Mirāt al-Quds*, c. 1602, Lahore Museum. Photo courtesy of Gauvin Alexander Bailey.

centuries to come. Several retellings of *The Truth-Showing Mirror* can be found in libraries in India and Europe, including one by the Persian theologian Sayyid Ahmad Ibn Zayn al-'Abidin, who wrote in 1623 the delightfully-entitled *A Clean Polishing Tool for the Brightening of the Truth-Showing Mirror* (*Misqal-i Safa dar Tahliya-i Āyine-ye Haqq Numā*). Apparently, however, Sayyid Ahmad's prose was not good enough to convince even its own author, since he is believed to have converted to Christianity in the end, after having read a counter-retutation of his refutation written by a zealous Franciscan working for the Propaganda Fide.⁶² Stories like this one remind us, along with the imperial debates and Xavier's writings, that the most flourishing and intriguing cultural encounters are precisely those that were characterized by active and healthy dialogue. And it was in this capacity that the Jesuits excelled, even when they knew that conversion was a virtually hopeless goal. As Francis Xavier himself wrote at the end of the first encounter in Jesuit mission history, a lengthy argument with a Swahili noble on the East African island of Malindi in 1542, 'After we had conversed for a long time, we still retained our own opinions.'⁶³

NOTES

- 1 Gauvin Alexander Bailey, 'Counter Reformation Symbolism and Allegory in Mughal Painting,' Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1996, and *The Jesuits & the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of Akbar* (Washington, 1998).
- 2 ARSI Goa 14 fol. 344a. 'Abd al-Sattar's literary talents won him a royal elephant and 1000 rupees from Jahangir; *Tuzuk-i Jahangir, or Memoirs of Jahangir*, trans. and ed. Alexander Rogers and Henry Beveridge, 2 vols (Calcutta, 1909–14), I 389, II 82. Not only did 'Abd al-Sattar remain a Muslim, but he even later wrote a work criticizing Christianity. It was a long time before Xavier mastered the intricacies of literary Persian. He wrote in the same 1597 letter: 'All our efforts are spent in learning the Persian language. We understand something of it but not yet everything, especially legal Persian, in which they try to put in as many words as they can for the sake of elegance' (ARSI Goa 14 fol. 344a); for more on Xavier's linguistic difficulties, see ARSI Goa 461 fol. 64h.
- 3 Listed in Arnulf Camps, *Jerome Xavier, S.J., and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire* (Schoenebeck-Beckenried, 1957), pp. 14–39.
- 4 Many of the books were the key texts used for lecturing and preaching by Jesuits such as Polanco and Nadal in Italy in the sixteenth century. In Rome these were 'the most important and influential texts of the day' (O'M. First, p. 146).
- 5 Identified by Camps, *Jerome Xavier*, p. 163. Father Manoel Pinheiro's letter of 3 September 1595 lists the 'Summa of St Thomas, one work against the heathen and

- another against the Jews and Saracens, etc.': Sir Edward Maclagan, 'Jesuit Missions to the Emperor Akbar,' *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1896): 68. Father Xavier's letter of 8 September 1596 adds, 'pare de S. Thomas contra gentes' (ARSI Goa 461 fol. 30a).
- 6 Pinheiro's letter does not give the title of Cajetan's book, but the *Summa peccatorum* was one of the most popular books on casuistry of the early Jesuits (O'M. *First*, p. 146).
- 7 Not Pope Sylvester II, as Maclagan suggests, 'Jesuit Missions,' p. 69.
- 8 Again, Pinheiro does not give the title, but this manual for confessors was one of the most prominent texts of the day (O'M. *First*, p. 146).
- 9 This is St Antoninus Pierozzi, or Forciglieni (1389–1459), whose *Chronicles* (1454–9) are a history of the world containing the lives of Greek and Roman kings and philosophers, as well as the history of various European nations. The ten printed editions date from 1484 to 1587, the last two of which (1586, 1587) were edited by a Jesuit, Peter Maturus; see James Bernard Walker, *The 'Chronicles' of Saint Antoninus: A Study in Historiography* (Washington, 1933). Akbar may also have possessed the *Summa confessionalis* by the same author, since it was a popular work with the early Jesuits in Europe (O'M. *First*, p. 146).
- 10 Pinheiro refers to it only as 'Historium pontificum' (Maclagan, 'Jesuit Missions,' p. 69), but O'Malley proposes that Platina is the most likely author. An Italian humanist and historian, Platina was the Vatican librarian under Sixtus IV (1475). In addition to the history of the popes, he wrote works on politics, philosophy, and rhetoric; John W. O'Malley, pers. comm., *Weber's New Biographical Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass., 1988), p. 874.
- 11 Pinheiro's letter from Lahore, dated 3 September 1595 (Maclagan, 'Jesuit Missions,' pp. 66–7); Xavier's letter from Agra, dated 8 September 1596 (ARSI Goa 461 fol. 30a). See also Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, trans. C.H. Payne (London, 1926), p. 63.
- 12 *The Commentary of Father Monerrate, S.J.*, trans. and ed. J.S. Hoyland and S.N. Banerjee (London, 1922), pp. 28, 37; Sir Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul* (London, 1932), p. 225; John Correa-Alfonso, *Letters from the Mughal Court* (Bombay, 1980), pp. 29, 42, 58. The engravings brought by the Jesuits were not 'cheap woodcuts' – Thomas W. Arnold, *The Old and New Testaments in Muslim Religious Art* (London, 1932), p. 40 – as many have claimed, but the work of the finest engravers of the day. The Antwerp Polyglot, for example, which was commissioned by Philip II of Spain himself, had pictures by Pieter van der Heyden after sketches by Pieter van der Borcht, Jan Wierix, Geeraert van Kampen, Pieter Huys, and Philips Galie; see *Biblia Sacra hebraice, graece & latinae* (Antwerp, 1569–72), and Josef Jennes, *Invloed der Vlaamsche Prentkunst in Indie, China, en Japan* (Leuven, 1943), pp. 46–7. Ortelius's atlas contained maps by Franz Hagenberg (1540–90).
- 13 These included the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, as well as the writings of the Scholastics (St Thomas wrote extensively on the use of images).
- 14 National Archives of India, New Delhi, 2713; India Office Library, London, Or. 5893. That same work included material 'mixed in from other histories' and from the Gospels (National Archives of India 2713 fol. 3b; India Office Library Or. 5893 fol. 7). All translations from Persian and Portuguese in this article are my own.
- 15 India Office Library Or. 5893 fols 5–6.
- 16 ARSI Goa 461 (8 September 1596) fol. 32. A letter written by Jerónimo Xavier on 16 September 1603 reports that Jahangir (still a prince at the time) read Nadal's book; ARSI Goa 461 (16 September 1603) fols 52b–53a.
- 17 Maclagan, *The Jesuits*, pp. 211–12; BL Additional 9854 fol. 15b (letter of 1604) and fol. 38a (letter of 1606).
- 18 BL Harley 5478. A table of contents appears on fols 14b ff.
- 19 Camps shows that Xavier used Aquinas's *Summa contra gentes* in preparing his own *Áyine-ye Haqq-Numā* (*Jerome Xavier*, p. 163).
- 20 BL Harley 5478 fols 278a–290a: 'On the Uses of Images and Their Veneration, and an Explanation of the Rationality of Them, and the Advantages of [Pictures of Christ] and of the Rest of the Saints.' The quotation in the text appears on fol. 280a.
- 21 BL Harley 5478 fol. 299a.
- 22 *Ibid.*, fol. 280b.
- 23 *Ibid.*, fol. 280b.
- 24 *Ibid.*, fol. 282a.
- 25 See Priscilla P. Soucek, 'Nizami on Painters and Painting,' in *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. Richard Ettinghausen (New York, 1972), p. 14.
- 26 *Ibid.*, especially p. 18. The metaphor is used here by Nizami.
- 27 BL Harley 5478 fol. 281a.
- 28 *Ibid.*, fol. 281b.
- 29 Gültür Necipoğlu, *The Topkapı Scroll* (Malibu, 1995), especially chap. 5.
- 30 BL Harley 5478 fols 281a–282a.
- 31 BL Add. 9854 fols 64a–76b.
- 32 *Ibid.*, fols 66a ff.
- 33 *Ibid.*, fol. 66b.
- 34 BL Add. 9854 fol. 68a.
- 35 *Ibid.*, Harley 5478 fol. 278b.
- 36 BL Add. 9854 fol. 68a.
- 37 *Ibid.*, fol. 67a.
- 38 BL Harley 5478 fol. 279a.
- 39 Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 1.260 n2.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 1.261.

- 41 *The Persian and Turki Divans of Bairam Khan*, ed. E. Denison Ross (Calcutta, 1910), p. 3. The translation is my own.
- 42 Attributed to Akbar, National Archives of India 2713 fol. 282a.
- 43 'He asked, "What is this?" I replied, "It is an image of God, not only because he looks like this, but also in order to demonstrate some of his attributes using this picture. For example, for this purpose angels are depicted as boys with wings, although he has none of these, etc. And in this manner he appeared to several prophets... Everyone painted him as he saw him'" (BL Add. 9854 fol. 67a).
- 44 *Ibid.*, fols 72a-b.
- 45 BL Harley 5478 fols 286a-b.
- 46 *Ibid.*, fols 286a-b.
- 47 MacLagan, 'Jesuit Missions' (n5 above), p. 87. Many copies were made of this work, two of which bear Akbar's seal, but only the Lahore one has its pictures intact. The original edition, presented to Akbar, is now in the National Museum in Lahore, and still has ten of its illustrations, and the copy sent to Prince Salim may be the one in the Bodleian, which no longer has any illustrations other than the illuminated cross mentioned in the sources, National Museum, Lahore, M-645/MSS-46. See Gauvin Alexander Bailey, 'The Lahore *Mirat al-Quds* and the Impact of Jesuit Theater on Mughal Painting,' *South Asian Studies* 13 (1997): 95-108.
- 48 These unorthodox stories, such as the transferral of the bodies of the Magi to Cologne, earned Xavier's work the criticism of the Protestant De Dieu, who published the Persian text in Leiden in 1638. See Ludovico De Dieu, *Historia Christi* (Leiden, 1638); MacLagan, *The Jesuits* (n12 above), p. 205.
- 49 Compare with Milo Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 72ff.
- 50 Bailey, 'The Lahore *Mirat al-Quds*'.
- 51 Camps, *Jerome Xavier* (n3 above), p. 230.
- 52 Noel Sainsbury, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, East Indies, China and Japan, 1513-1616* (London, 1870), p. 255.
- 53 Al-Badsoni, *Munakhab ut-Tawarikh*, trans. and ed. George S.A. Ranking, 2 vols (Calcutta, 1898), II, 304; see Bailey, 'The Lahore *Mirat al-Quds*', p. 97 n6, for more references.
- 54 ARSI Goa 461 fols 52b-53a. See also ARSI Goa 331 fol. 126a.
- 55 ARSI Goa 461 fol. 53a; MacLagan, *The Jesuits*, p. 226.
- 56 ARSI Goa 461 fol. 64a; Fernão Guerreiro, *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, trans. C.H. Payne (London, 1930), pp. 32, 44, BL Add. 9854 fols 64a, 53a.
- 57 ARSI Goa 461 fols 83b-84a; Henry Hosten, 'Mirza zu'l-Qarnain, a Christian Grandee of Three Great Mughals, with Notes on Akbar's Christian Wife and the Indian Bourbons,' *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 5:4 (1916): 153-4; Camps, *Jerome Xavier*, p. 235.

- 58 Witt, 'Prob...', p. 12; O'M. First, pp. 37-50.
- 59 The complete Persian text appears in De Dieu, *Historia Christi*, p. 31.
- 60 The literature includes Richard Etinghausen, *Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collections* (Delhi, 1961), plates 11-14, and 'The Emperor's Choice,' in *De artibus opuscula XI: Essays in Honor of Ervin Panofsky*, ed. Miliard Meiss (New York, 1961), pp. 98-120; Stuart Cary Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting* (New York, 1978), pp. 80-3; Asok Kumar Das, *Mughal Painting during Jahangir's Time* (Calcutta, 1978), pp. 213-28; Milo Beach, 'The Mughal Painter Abu'l-Hasan and Some English Sources for His Style,' *Walters Art Gallery Journal* 38 (1980): 7-33, and *The Imperial Image* (Washington, 1981), pp. 167-72; Ebba Koch, 'The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors,' in *Islam in India*, ed. Christian Troll (New Delhi, 1982), I, 14-32; Robert Skelton, 'Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting,' in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla P. Soucek (University Park and London, 1988), pp. 177-87; Amina Okada, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court* (New York, 1992), pp. 45-59.
- 61 This is reflected not only in Dara's own work, but in a treatise on religions called the *Dābīstān* (School of Manners) by Dara Shukoh's intimate friend Muhsin Fani (fl. 1618-70). The *Dābīstān* talks about the grace bestowed on images in terms similar to those used in *The Truth-Shewing Mirror* at the end of its chapter on images: '(Christians) offer likewise prayers in praise of the glorious Mary, saying that the Lord God diffuses abundantly his grace in any place in which the image of the blessed Lady Mary be present. In the same manner they consider the image of the Lord Jesus, and that of the holy cross'; Muhsin Fani, *The Dābīstān or School of Manners*, trans. and ed. David Shea and Anthony Troyer, 2 vols (London, 1843), II, 314.
- 62 MacLagan, *The Jesuits*, p. 208.
- 63 *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, ed. M. Joseph Costelloe (St Louis, 1992), p. 48.