

THE TRAVELS OF
SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE

PROLOGUE

Since it is so that the land beyond the sea, that is to say the Land of Promise which men call the Holy Land, among all other lands is the most worthy land and mistress over all others, and is blessed and hallowed and consecrated by the precious blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ,* in which land it pleased Him to take life and blood by Our Lady Saint Mary and to travel round that land with His blessed feet. And there He did many miracles, and preached and taught the faith and law of us Christian men as if to His children; and there He suffered many insults and scourgings on our behalf. And He who was King of Heaven and of Earth, of the air and the sea, and of all that is contained therein, desired to be called King of that land especially, as the prophet says: *Noli timere, filia Syon: ecce, rex tuus uenit tibi mansuetus*, that is to say, 'Thou daughter of Sion, fear not, for lo, thy king cometh unto thee, duly meek and mild';† and that land He chose before all other lands as the best and the most honourable in the world, for, as the philosopher says, *Virtus rerum in medio consistit*, that is to say, 'The excellence of things is in the middle.'‡ And in that land He wished to lead His life and suffer His hard Passion and death at [the hands of] the Jews for us sinful worms, to buy and deliver us from death without end, which was ordained for us because of the sin of our first father Adam and because of our own also. For, as for Himself, He never deserved any evil; for He never did evil nor thought ever evil. And He who was King of glory, mightiest and best, wished to suffer death in that place rather than in any other. For he who wants to do anything that he wishes to be openly known to all men, will have it openly cried in the centre of a town or city, so that it may be known to all parts of the city. In the same way He that was King of all the world wanted to suffer death at Jerusalem which is in the middle of the world so that it might be known to men of all parts of the world how dearly He bought man, whom He had made in His own likeness, because of the great love He had towards him. For

* See note on the translation, p. 37.

† John xii. 15; cf. Isaiah lvi. 110.

‡ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II.

a more valuable property He could not have staked for us than His own blessed body and His precious blood, the which He suffered to be shed for us. Ah, dear God! What love He had for His subjects when He who never committed sin would for sinners suffer death! Right well ought men to love and serve such a lord, and honour and praise such a Holy Land, which brought forth such fruit, through which man is saved, except it be through his own fault. This is the land that is promised to us as heritage; and in that land He willed to die, and to be seized of it, to leave it to His children. Each good Christian man who is able, and has the means, should set himself to conquer our inheritance, this land, and chase out therefrom those who are misbelievers. For we are called Christian men from Christ our Father; and if we be true children of Christ, we ought to lay claim to the heritage that our Father left to us, and win it out of strange men's hands. But now pride, envy and covetousness have so inflamed the hearts of lords of the world that they are more busy to disinherit their neighbours than to lay claim to or conquer their own rightful inheritance. And the common people, who would put their bodies and their goods in jeopardy to conquer our heritage, may do nothing without lords. For an assembly of the people without lords who can govern them is as a flock of sheep that have no shepherd, which part asunder and never known whether they should go. But if God would that their worldly lords were in good accord, and with others of their common people would undertake this holy voyage over the sea, I believe that within a little time our true heritage before said should be recovered and put in the hands of the true heirs of Jesu Christ.

And for as much as it is a long time past since there was any general passage over the sea into the Holy Land, and since men covet to hear that land spoken of, and divers countries thereabout, and have of that great pleasure and enjoyment, I, John Mandeville, knight, although I am unworthy, who was born in England in the town of St Albans and passed the sea the year of Our Lord Jesu Christ 1332, on Michaelmas Day, and since have been a long time overseas, and have seen and gone through many kingdoms, lands, provinces and isles, and have passed through Turkye [Turkey], Ermony [Armenia] the Lesser and the Greater, Tartary, Perse [Persia], Sirie [Syria], Araby [Arabia], Egipie [Egypt] the Upper and the Lower, Liby [Libya], Caldee [Chaldea], and a great part of Ethiopie [Ethiopia], Amazon[jia], a great part of Inde [India] the Lesser and the Greater, and through many other isles that are about India, where dwell many divers kinds of folk of divers laws and shapes - of these lands and isles I shall speak more plainly, and

shall describe a part of those things that are there, when the time comes, according as they come to my mind, and specially for those who desire and intend to visit the holy city of Jerusalem and the holy places that are thereabout; and shall tell of the way that they shall go thither, for I have many times travelled and ridden over it in goodly company of lords.

Of the way from England to Constantinople

In the name of God Almighty: he who wants to pass over the sea to Jerusalem, may go by many ways, both by sea and by land depending on the countries he comes from; many ways come to a single end. But do not think I shall tell of all the towns and cities and castles that men shall go by; for then I must make too long a tale of it. But only some countries and the most important places that men shall pass through to go the right road do I briefly intend to touch on. For, if a man comes from the western parts of the world - like England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland or Norway - he may, if he wants, go through Almayne [Germany] and through the kingdom of Hungary, which borders the lands of Polainie [Poland] and the land of Pannony [Bulgaria] and of Allesye [Silesia]. And you must know that the King of Hungary is a very great and mighty lord, and holds much important land. For he holds the land of Hungary, Savoy [Slavonia], Comany [Cumania], a great part of Bulgary (which men call the land of the Bulgars), and a great part of the kingdom of Ruscye [Russia], and that stretches to the land of Nyfeland [Livonia] and borders on Pruyssie [Prussia]. And through the land of Hungary men go to a city that is called Chuppron [Sopron] and by the castle of Newburgh, and then by the River Danuby [Danube]. This is a very big river which [rises in] Germany below the hills of Lombardy, and it takes into itself forty other rivers; and it runs through Hungary and Cresses [Greece] and Tracy [Thrace] and then enters the sea so powerfully and with such strength that the water is fresh twenty miles out to sea. And afterwards men go to [Belgrade] and enter the land of the Bulgars, and there you pass a bridge of stone that is over the River Marrok [Maritsa]. And then men pass through the land of Pyncras [Petchenegs] and come to Greece to the city of Sternes [Sofia] and to the city of Afynpayn [Philippopolis]; then to the city of Bradenople [Adrianople], and then to the city of

They wanted it to last a long time. And because they thought Christ's body would stink, they made the upright, on which His body hung, of cypress, for it is sweet smelling, so that the smell of His body should not be offensive to men who came by. And the piece that went across, to which His hands were nailed, was of palm; for in the Old Testament it was ordained that when any man had victory over his enemy he should be crowned with palm. And because they believed that they had the victory over Christ, they made the cross-piece of palm. And the tablet of the titles was of olive; for olive betokens peace, as the story of Noe [Noah] bears witness, when the dove brought the twig of olive in her beak, which signified peace between God and man. And so the Jews believed they would have peace when Christ was dead, for they said that He caused strife among them. And you should know that Our Lord was nailed to the Cross lying down, and therefore He suffered the greater pain.

Men of Greece and other Christian men too who dwell beyond the sea say that the wood of the Cross that we call cypress was of the tree Adam ate the apple from, and so they find it written. And they say also that their Scripture says that Adam fell sick and said to his son Seth that he should go to Paradise and beseech the angel that guards Paradise that he would send him some of the oil of the Tree of Mercy to anoint his limbs with, so that he might have healing. And Seth went to Paradise; but the angel would not let him in, but said to him that he could not have any of the oil of mercy. But he took four seeds of the same tree that his father ate the apple from and told him that, as soon as his father was dead, he should put these seeds under his tongue and bury him like that; and from these four seeds would grow trees that should bear a fruit through which Adam would be saved. And, when Seth came home again, he found his father nearly dead; and he did as the angel had told him with the seeds, from which sprouted four trees, whereof a Cross was made that bore good fruit, Jesu Christ, through whom Adam and all who come from him are saved and freed from death without end, unless it be through their own fault. This Holy Cross the Jews had hidden in the earth under the rock of Mount Calvary; and it lay there two hundred years and more up to the time when Saint Helena found it (which Saint Helena was mother of Constantine the Emperor of Rome). And she was daughter of Coel, King of England, that was at that time called Greater Britain. And the Emperor of Rome, when he was in that country and saw her great beauty, took her to wife and begot on her Constantine. And you must know that the Cross of Our Lord was in length eight cubits, and that beam that went across in length three

Constantinople, which was once called Bethsamoron [Byzantium], where the Emperor of Greece usually dwells. There is the best and most beautiful church in the world, of Saint Sophia. And in front of the church of Saint Sophia is a statue of Justinian the Emperor, well gilded over; it is made sitting, crowned, on a horse. This statue used to hold in its hand a round apple of gold; but it is long since fallen out of the hand. And it is said there that the fall of the apple is a token that the Emperor of Rome has lost a great part of his lordship. For he used to be Emperor of Romany [Romania], of Greece, of Asia Minor, of Surry [Syria], of the land of Iudee [Judea], in which is Jerusalem, of the land of Egypt, of Persia and Arabia; but he has lost all, except Greece, and that land only he holds. Men wanted many a time to put the apple back in the statue's hand, but it will not remain there. This apple signifies the lordship that he had over all the world. The other hand it holds lifted up against the west, as a sign of menace to evildoers. This statue stands on a pillar of marble.

2

Of the Cross and Crown of Our Lord

At Constantinople is the sponge and reed with which the Jews gave drink to Our Lord when He hung upon the Cross. Some men believe that half the Cross of Christ is in Cipre [Cyprus] in an abbey of monks which is called the Hill of the Holy Cross; but it is not so. For that cross that is in Cyprus is the cross on which Dismas the good thief was hanged. But not all men know that, and that is ill done. For in order to get offerings they say that it is the Cross of Our Lord Jesu Christ.

And you must understand that the Cross of Our Lord was made of four kinds of trees, as it is contained in the verse written here: *In cruce fit palma, cedrus, cypressus, oliua*. [In the Cross [are] palm, cedar, cypress and olive.] For the piece that ran up from the earth to the head was of cypress; and that piece that went across, to which His hands were nailed, was of palm; and the block that stood in the earth, in which a mortice was made, was of cedar; and the tablet above His head was a foot and a half long, on which the superscription was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and it was of olive. Of these four kinds of wood the Jews made Christ's Cross for they believed that He would have been hanging upon that Cross as long as the Cross might last. And so they made the foot of cedar; for cedar does not rot in earth or water.

The Crown of Thorns and the Passion

cubits and a half. A part of the Crown of Thorns with which Our Lord was crowned, and one of the nails, and the spearhead, and many other relics are in France in the King's chapel. And the Crown lies in a vessel of crystal, beautifully and richly made. A king of France bought these relics once off the Januenes [Genoese], to whom the Emperor had laid them in pledge for a great sum of gold. And even though men say that this Crown is of thorns, you must understand that it was of reeds of the sea* that were white and pricked as sharply as thorns. For I have many times seen both that which is at Paris and that which is at Constantinople; for they were both parts of one whole, made of reeds of the sea, but men have split them into two parts, of which one part is at Paris and the other at Constantinople. And I have a thorn thereof, which looks like a hawthorn, and it was given me out of great friendship. For many of them are broken and have fallen down in the vessel in which is the Crown, for they break when men disturb the vessel to show the Crown to great lords and to pilgrims who come thither.

And you must know that Our Lord, the night that He was captured, was led into a garden, and was there sharply interrogated; and there the Jews mocked Him and set a Crown on His head and pushed it down so hard that the blood ran down in many places on His face and His neck and His shoulders. And that crown was made of branches of hawthorn; and therefore the hawthorn has many virtues. For he who carries a twig of it on him, no thunder nor any kind of storm shall harm him; and no evil spirit may come into the house or any other place where it is. And in that same garden Saint Peter denied Our Lord thrice. Afterwards Our Lord was led before the Bishop and the officials of the [Old] Law in another garden, Annas's; and there too He was interrogated and ridiculed and crowned afterwards with a thorn that is called barberry, which grew in that garden. And that too has many virtues. And later still He was led into the garden of Cayphas [Caiaphas]; and there He was crowned with a briar rose. And then He was led into the chamber of Pilate; and there too He was accused and crowned. For the Jews set Him in a chair and clad Him in a mantle; and they made the Crown of reeds of the sea, and they kneeled to Him and

* 'Reeds of the sea' ('joncs de la mer' in the French) is meaningless in that it does not seem to indicate any identifiable plant. The iconographic tradition in the West suggests a crown made of some plant like gorse, whose French name (*ajonc*) is similar to that of the common reed (*jonc*). The material of the crown has been persuasively identified as the spines of the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) by H. St J. Hart in his important article 'The Crown of Thorns', *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 111, (1952) pp. 66-75.

crowned Him with it and said. *Aue Rex Iudeorum*, that is to say, 'Hail, King of the Jews'. And this Crown, of which the one half is at Paris and the other at Constantinople, Christ had upon His head when He was crucified. And therefore men should honour it, and hold it more worthy than any of the others. The shaft of the spear with which Christ was pierced to the heart the Emperor of Germany has; but the head of it is at Paris. The Emperor of Constantinople says that he has the spear-head; and that spearhead I have often seen, but it is bigger than that at Paris.

*Of the city of Constantinople,
and of the faith of the Greeks*

Also at Constantinople lies Saint Anne, the mother of Our Lady, whom Saint Helena had brought from Jerusalem. And there lies also the body of John Chrysostom, who was Bishop of Constantinople. And there lies Saint Luke the Evangelist; for his bones were brought from Bethany [Bithynia], where he was buried. And many other relics are there. And there are some vessels of stone, like marble, which men call 'ydrious',* which continually drip water and fill themselves each year. Constantinople is a very fair and good city, and well walled; it is three cornered. There is an arm of the sea that men call the Hellespont; and some call it the Mouth of Constantinople, and some the Arm of Saint George. And this water encloses two parts of the city. And further up towards the sea, on this same stretch of water, used to stand the city of Troy; but that city was destroyed by the Greeks.

Around Greece are many isles: that is to say, Calcas [Carki], Calistra [Thera], Oertige [Ortygia, Delos], Tesbiria [Lesbos], Minca [Paros], Flaxania [Naxos?], Melo [Melos], Carpateya [Scarpanto], Lempnia [Lemnos]. And in this region is the mountain Caucasus [Athos] which pierces through the clouds. There are also many other different countries and nations speaking different languages which are tributary to and obey the Emperor - Turcopole, Petschenegs, Cumania, Thrace, Macedonia, of which Alexander was King, and many others. In this

* *Enhydrius*, mentioned by Isidore of Seville and Pliny. Lewis and Short's dictionary glosses as 'an unknown gem'. Certain types of agate contain water occluded in cavities. The phenomenon referred to here may be due to condensation, of course.

region was Aristotle born in a city that is called Strages [Stagira], a little way from Thrace. At Stagira lies Aristotle, and there is an altar upon his tomb. And there men hold a solemn feast each year, as if he were a saint. And upon his altar they hold their great council and assembly, and they believe that through the inspiration of God and of him they will have the better counsel. In that country are very great mountains near the border of Macedonia. And among others there is one which is called Olympus, which divides Macedonia and Thrace; and it is high above the clouds. There is also another hill which men call Athos; and that is so high that its shadow stretches to Lemnos, which is distant from it nearly seventy-eight miles. Upon these hills the air is so clear and so pure that no wind can be felt there; and so no animal nor bird can live there, the air is so dry. And men say in those countries that once wise men went up on those hills and held to their noses sponges soaked with water to catch the air, for the air was so dry. And also up on those hills they wrote letters in the dust with their fingers, and at the end of a year they went up again and found the same letters that they had written the year before as fresh as they were on the first day, without any defect. And therefore it certainly appears that these hills pass beyond the clouds to the pure air.

In that city of Constantinople is the Emperor's palace, very fair and well built; and beside it is a fair place set aside for jousts. There are terraces made all round it, and steps, that men can sit on, one above the other, to see the jousting, so that no one shall get in anybody's way or hinder their view. And under the terraces are stables, well vaulted, for the Emperor's horses; and all the pillars are of marble. And in the church of Saint Sophia once upon a time an emperor wanted to lay to rest the body of his father, when he was dead; and as they dug the grave, they found a body in the earth, and on that body lay a great plate of gold; and thereon was written in Hebrew, in Greek and in Latin, *Ihesus Christus nascetur de uirgine Maria; et ego credo in eum*, that is to say, 'Jesus Christ shall be born of the Virgin Mary, and I believe in Him.' And the date when this was written and laid in the earth was two thousand years before the Incarnation of Christ. And that plate is still in the treasury of the church; and men say that the body was the body of Hermogenes the wise man.

And although the Greeks are Christian, nevertheless they vary from our faith. For they say that the Holy Ghost proceeds not from the Son, but only from the Father; and they are not in obedience to the Church of Rome, nor to the Pope. And they say that beyond the Greek Sea their Patriarch has as much power as our Pope has on his side of it. And

therefore Pope John XXII sent letters to them showing them that the Christian faith should be unified, and that all Christian men ought to obey a Pope, who is Christ's Vicar on earth and to whom God gave full power to bind and to loose; and therefore they ought to obey him. And they sent to him many answers; and, among others, they sent one saying, *Potentiam tuam summam circa tuos subiectos firmiter credimus; superbiam tollere non possumus; auariciam tuam summam saciare non intendimus. Dominus tecum sit, quia Dominus nobiscum est. Vale.* That is to say, 'We will believe your power is great over your subjects; we cannot support your great pride; we do not purpose to slake your great avarice. God be with you, for God is with us. Farewell.' And other answer had he none of them. The Greeks also make the sacrament at the altar of leavened bread; for Our Lord made it of leavened bread when he held the Last Supper. And they say that we err in making the sacrament with unleavened bread. And on Maundy Thursday they make that bread as a token of Our Lord's Institution, and dry it in the sun, and keep it all year and give it to sick men instead of the consecrated Body of Christ. And they anoint only once when they christen children, and dip them but once at the font. They do not anoint sick men; and they say there is no Purgatory, and that souls shall have neither joy nor pain before the Day of Judgement. They say also that fornication is not a deadly sin, but a natural one, and that men and women should only marry once; and, whoever marries more than once, their children are bastards and begotten in sin. Their priests too are married. And they say that usury is no deadly sin. They sell benefices of Holy Church, and so do men in other places; and that is a great scandal and disgrace. For now is simony crowned like a king in Holy Church. God can amend it when it is His will. They say also that in Lent men should not sing Mass except on Saturdays and Sundays. And they do not fast on Saturdays at any time of the year, unless it be Christmas or Easter Even. They allow no man who comes from this side of the Greek Sea to celebrate at their altars; and if it so chance that any do, they wash the altar immediately with holy water. And they say that there should be but one Mass sung at each altar each day. Moreover, they say that Our Lord never ate bodily food, but made an appearance of eating, feigning that He had, showing sign of man's nature. They say we commit a deadly sin in shaving our beards, for they say that the beard is a symbol of manhood and the gift of God. And they who shave their beards do it only to appear well to the world and to please their wives. They say too that we commit deadly sin in eating animals that were forbidden in the Old Law, like pigs, hares and other beasts that do

not chew the cud. And also they say we sin in eating meat on the three days before Ash Wednesday, and also in eating meat on Wednesdays, and when we eat white meat on Fridays. And they curse all those who do not eat meat on Saturday. Also the Emperor of Constantinople appoints the patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops, and distributes all the dignities of Holy Church in that country; and he deprives of office and goods those who seem to him unworthy. And so he is their lord both temporal and spiritual.

If you wish to know about the A B C E of Greece and what kinds of letters they use, here you can see them, and their names too:

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Α | α | β | β | γ | δ | ε | ς | ζ |
| alpha | beta | gamma | delta | epsilon brevis | zeta | eta | theta | iota |
| κ | λ | μ | ν | ξ | ο | π | ρ | σ |
| kappa | lappa | mi | ni | xi | o | pe | ro | simma |
| τ | υ | φ | χ | ψ | ω | ω | ω | ω |
| tau | chi | psi | chi | psi | omega | omega | omega | omega |

Of Saint John the Evangelist; and of Hippocrates' daughter, turned into the shape of a dragon

And although these things do not bear on teaching you the way to the Holy Land, nevertheless they do touch on what I promised to show you, that is to say the customs, manners and diversities of countries. And since the land of Greece is the nearest country that varies and is discordant in faith and writing from us and our faith, I have therefore put it in here so that you may know the differences between our belief and theirs. For many men desire to hear of unfamiliar things and take pleasure in them.

Now I return to teaching the way from Constantinople to the Holy Land. He who will go through Turkey goes to the city which is called Nyke [Nicaea] and so through the Gate of Chivotot [Cibotus, Gemlik] and the mountain of Chivotot, which is very high; it is [one and a half leagues] from the city of Nicaea. Whoever passes from Constantinople to the Holy Land by sea will go by the Arm of Saint George, and then, sailing in the Greek Sea, past a place where lies Saint Nicholas, and many other places. And first men come to an island which is called Silo [Chios]. And in that island grows mastic, on small trees; and it exudes from them like the gum of plum or cherry trees.

Then men pass by the isle of Patmos, where Saint John the Evangelist wrote the Apocalypse. And you must know that when Our Lord died Saint John was thirty-two years of age, and he lived after the Passion of Christ sixty-two years. From Patmos men go to Ephesus, a fair city, near to the sea. And there Saint John died, and was buried behind the altar in a tomb. And there is a fine church; for Christian men used to possess that city. But now it is occupied by Turks, and so is all Asia Minor; and therefore Asia Minor is called Turkey. In the tomb of Saint John many find nothing but manna, for some men say his body was translated to Paradise. And you must understand that Saint John had his grave made there while he was alive and laid himself in it alive; and therefore some say he did not die, but rests there until the Day of Judgement. And indeed there is there a great marvel, for men can see the earth of the tomb many a time stir and shift, as if there were a living thing underneath.

From Ephesus men pass by many islands in the sea to the city of Patera, where Saint Nicholas was born, and then to the city of Marc [Myra] where he was chosen to be Bishop. There grows a very good strong wine, which is called the wine of Marc. Thence men pass to the isles of Grece [Crete], the which the Emperor once gave to the Genoese. And thence men make their way by the isle of Cophos [Cos], and by the isle of Lango, of which islands Ypocras [Hippocrates] was once lord.

And some say that in the isle of Lango is Hippocrates' daughter, in the form of a dragon, which is a hundred feet long - as men say, for I myself have not seen it. Folk there call her the lady of that island. She was changed thus into a dragon from a fair damsel by a goddess who is called Diana. And it is said she shall remain like that until the time when a knight comes who is so bold as to dare to go to her and kiss her on the mouth. Then will she return into her own shape and be a woman; but she shall live only a little time afterwards. And it is not very long since a knight of Rhodes, a bold, capable fellow, said he would kiss

without wheels; for they shall find no provender except what they bring with them. They can stay there just as long as their food lasts, and no more. When spies of that land see Christian men coming to make war on them, they run to the towns and cry loudly, 'Kera, Kera, Kera'* and immediately arm to defend themselves. You ought to know that the frost and snow there is much harder than here; and so each man has a stove in his house, where he eats and drinks. For it is outrageously cold there, since it is the north side of the world, where the cold is usually more intense than in other places because the sun shines little there. And on the south side of the world in some places it is so hot that no man can live there for the appalling heat.

15

*Of the customs of the Saracens and of their law;
how the Sultan talked with the author of this book;
and of the beginning of Muhammad, etc.*

Now, because I have talked of the Saracens and their lands, I will tell you something of their laws and their creed, as it is contained in the book of their law, the Koran. Some call it *Messaph* [Arabic *mashaf*, 'holy'] and some *Harme* [horme, 'holy'] according to the language of different countries. Muhammad gave them this book. Amongst other things in that book is contained the statement, and I have often read and seen it there, that good men, when they are dead, will go to Paradise, and the wicked shall go to the pains of Hell. All Saracens believe this firmly. And if they are asked what paradise they are talking about, they say it is a place of delights, where a man shall find all kinds of fruit at all seasons of the year, and rivers running with wine, and milk, and honey, and clear water; they say they will have beautiful palaces and fine great mansions, according to their deserts, and that those palaces and mansions are made of precious stones, gold and silver. Every man shall have four score wives, who will be beautiful damsels, and he shall lie with them whenever he wishes, and he will always find them virgins. They all believe they will have all this in Paradise, and this is against our creed. The Saracens accept the Incarnation, and they will willingly speak of the Virgin Mary; they say that she was taught by an angel, and that the angel Gabriel told her that she had

* Compare the Arabic verb *karra*, meaning 'regroup and return to battle'.

been chosen by God before the world's beginning to conceive Jesus Christ and bear Him; they say she bore Him and yet was a virgin afterwards as she was before. And the Koran agrees with this. They also say that Christ spoke as soon as He was born, and that He was (and is) a holy and a true prophet in word and deed, and merciful and just to all, and without sin. They also affirm that when the angel saluted Our Lady and told her of the Incarnation, she was greatly ashamed and astonished at his words; they say this was principally because there was at that time in the district an evil man, called Takyna, who dabbled in sorcery, through his enchantments pretending to be an angel and deceiving young maidens often to seduce them. Therefore Mary was afraid, and conjured the angel to say whether or not he was Takyna. And the angel answered her and told her to have no fear, for he was God's true messenger. Their book, the Koran, also says that when Mary was delivered of her Child, in the shade of a palm tree, she was greatly ashamed and wept, saying she wished she was dead. And immediately the Child spoke and comforted her, saying, 'Be not afraid, for in you has God made His covenant for the salvation of the world.' And their Koran witnesses in many other places that Jesus Christ spoke as soon as He was born. That book says that Christ was sent by God Almighty into the world as an example and mirror for all men. It also speaks of the Day of Judgement, how God will come and judge all men; the good He will draw to His side and give them everlasting joy and glory, and the wicked He will damn to the unending torments of Hell. They say that Christ is the best among all the prophets, the most worthy, the nearest to God, and that He made the Gospels, in which are healthy doctrine, truth, and exhortation for those who believe in God; they say he was greater than a prophet, in that he lived without sin, gave sight to the blind, healed lepers and raised men to life again from the dead - and went to Heaven in His body. When they can get hold of written copies of the Gospels, they honour them greatly, especially the gospel of *Missus est**; that gospel those who are literate kiss with great devotion, and say it often in their prayers. Each year they fast for a whole month, eating only in the evening, and they keep them from their wives all that month. Those who are sick, though, are not obliged to perform this fast. The book, the Koran, also speaks of the Jews, saying they are wicked and accursed, because they will not believe that Jesus was sent from God; it also says they lie about Mary and her Son Jesus Christ, when they say they crucified Him. The Koran says they did not crucify Jesus, for God took Him up to Himself without

* Luke i. 26.

death and transferred the form and appearance of His body to Judas Iscariot, and it was him the Jews crucified, thinking it was Jesus. But Jesus, they say, was taken all alive into Heaven, and in His flesh will He come to judge the world. This Christians do not believe, and therefore they say that they do not believe correctly when Christians maintain Christ was killed on the Cross. All their chief ideas are in the Koran. The Saracens also say that if Jesus had been crucified, God would have acted contrary to His justice in allowing such a guiltless innocent to die; they say we are wrong about this. But it is they who are wrong. They freely admit that all the deeds of Christ, His sayings, His teaching and His gospels are good, and true; and His miracles also are true. They freely confess that the Virgin Mary was a good and holy maiden, pure and unspotted, both before and after the birth of Christ; and that those who believe perfectly in God shall be saved. And because they come so near to our faith in these points – and many others – it seems to me that they could be much more quickly and easily converted to our creed by the preaching and instruction of Christian men. They say they well know from their prophecies that the law of Muhammad shall fail as the law of the Jews failed, and that the Christian law shall endure to the end of the world. If a man ask them what their creed is, they answer, 'We believe in God, who made Heaven and everything else from nothing, and nothing was made except by Him. We believe the Day of Judgment will come, when each man will be rewarded according to his deserts. We also truly believe that all that God spoke through His holy prophets while they were on earth is the truth.' They also say that Muhammad in the Koran ordained that every man should have three or four wives. But now they take more, for some of them have nine; and each man takes as many concubines as he can maintain on his wealth. If any of their wives should sin against her husband and let another man sleep with her, it is then lawful for her husband to divorce her and take another wife in her stead; but he has to give her a portion of his property. When men speak of the Trinity to them they say that there are three Persons, but not one God. For their Koran does not talk of the Trinity. Nevertheless they grant that God has a Word, for otherwise He would be dumb; and a Spirit, or else He would be without life. When men speak to them of Christ's Incarnation, of how by the word of the angel God sent wisdom to earth and [shrouded Himself] in the Virgin Mary, they say all this is true and they believe it, and that God's Word has great power, and the man who does not know God's Word does not know God. They also say that Christ was God's Word; so says the Koran, where it says that the angel spoke to Mary saying, 'Mary, God

shall send to thee the Word of His mouth, and His name shall be called Jesus Christ.' Also they say that Abraham was God's friend, Moses God's spokesman, and Jesus Christ the Word and Spirit of God, and that Muhammad was the true messenger of God; of all these four Jesus was the worthiest and most excellent. Thus it seems that the Saracens have many articles of our faith, if not perfectly; so it would be the easier to convert them and bring them to our truth – especially those who are literate and know the Scriptures. For among them they have the Gospels and the Prophets and all the Bible, written in the Saracen language. But they do not understand Holy Writ spiritually, but according to the letter, as do the Jews; and so Saint Paul says, *Litera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat*, which is to say, 'The letter kills, but the spirit giveth life.'* Therefore some Saracens say that the Jews are wicked men, and cursed, because they have broken the Law that God gave them through Moses; and they say Christian men are wicked and evil because they do not keep the Commandment of the Gospel, which Jesus Christ ordained for them.

Now I shall tell you what the Sultan told me one day in his chamber. He made everyone else leave his chamber, lords as well as others who were there, for he wanted to have a private talk between ourselves alone. And when they had all gone out, he asked me how Christians governed themselves in our countries. And I said, 'Lord, well enough – thanks be to God.' And he answered and said, 'Truly, no. It is not so. For your priests do not serve God properly by righteous living, as they should do. For they ought to give less learned men an example of how to live well, and they do the very opposite, giving examples of all manner of wickedness. And as a result, on holy days, when people should go to church to serve God, they go to the tavern and spend all the day – and perhaps all the night – in drinking and gluttony, like beasts without reason which do not know when they have had enough. And afterwards through drunkenness they fall to proud speeches, fighting and quarrelling, till someone kills somebody. Christian men commonly deceive one another, and swear the most important oaths falsely. And they are, moreover, so swollen with pride and vainglory that they never know how to dress themselves – sometimes they wear short fashions of clothing, sometimes long, sometimes cut full, sometimes figure-fitting. You ought to be simple, meek and truthful, and ready to give charity and alms, as Christ was, in whom you say you believe. But it is quite otherwise. For Christians are so proud, so envious, such great gluttons, so lecherous, and moreover so full of

* II Corinthians iii, 6.

covetousness, that for a little silver they will sell their daughters, their sisters, even their own wives to men who want to lie with them. And everyone takes another's wife, and no one keeps his faith to another: and you so wickedly and evilly despite and break the Law that Christ gave you. Certainly it is because of your sinfulness that you have lost all this land which we hold and keep. Because of your evil living and your sin and not because of our strength God has given it into our hands. And we well know that when you serve your God properly and well, and serve Him with good works, no man shall be able to stand against you. We know too by our prophecies that the Christians shall recover this land again in the time to come, when you serve your God well and devoutly. But as long as you live as you do in wickedness and sin, we have no fear of you; for your God will not help you. When I had heard the Sultan speak these words – and many more which I will not repeat now – I asked him, with great respect, how he came by so full a knowledge of the state of Christendom. And then he had all the great lords and worthies that he had previously sent out called in; and he detailed four of them – great lords – to talk to me. These described to me all the manners of my country, and of other countries in Christendom as fully and as truly as if they had always lived in them. These lords and the Sultan spoke French wonderfully well, and I was astonished by that. Finally I understood that the Sultan sends some of his lords to different kingdoms and lands in the guise of merchants – some with precious stones, some with cloths of gold, some with other jewels – and that these visit all realms in order to size up the manners of us Christian men and spot our weaknesses. It seemed to me then a cause for great shame that Saracens, who have neither a correct faith nor a perfect law, should in this way reprove us for our failings, keeping their false law better than we do that of Jesus Christ; and those who ought by our good example to be turned to the faith and Law of Jesus Christ are driven away by our wicked ways of living. And so it is no wonder that they call us sinful and wicked, for it is true. But they are very devout and honest in their law, keeping well the commandments of the Koran, which God sent them by His messenger Muhammad, to whom, so they say, the angel Gabriel spoke often, telling him the will of God.

You ought to know that Muhammad was born in Arabia, and at first was a poor fellow, looking after horses and camels and travelling with merchants to Egypt, which at that time was inhabited by Christians. In the deserts of Arabia, on the highroad to Egypt, there was a chapel, and a hermit living in it. And Muhammad went into this chapel to speak with the hermit. And when he entered the chapel, the doorway, which

was very low, suddenly grew as tall as the gate of a great palace. This, as they say, was the first miracle he did, when he was young. After that Muhammad began to be wise, and rich, and a great astronomer. The prince of the land of Corodan [Khorasan] made him ruler and governor of his land; and he governed it wisely and graciously, so that, when the prince was dead, he married the princess, who was called Cadrige [Khadija]. This Muhammad had epilepsy, and often fell through the violence of that illness; and the lady sorrowed much that she had married him. But he made her believe that each time he fell the angel Gabriel appeared and spoke to him, and that he fell down because of the dazzling brightness of the angel. And therefore the Saracens say that the angel Gabriel often spoke to him: This Muhammad reigned in Arabia in the year of Our Lord 620; he was of the race of Ishmael, who was Abraham's son, whom he begot on Agar [Hagar] his handmaiden. And for this reason some Saracens are called Ishmaelites, some Agarrenes after Hagar, and some Ammonites after two sons of Loth [Lot], which he begot on his two daughters. Some, quite properly, are called Saracens, after the city of Sarras [Shiraz?]. Also Muhammad once well loved a good hermit who lived in the wilderness a mile from Mount Sinai on the road as one goes from Arabia to Chaldea and India – a day's journey from the sea, where Venetian merchants often come to buy merchandise. And Muhammad went so often to this hermit to hear him preach that his servants grew angry and disgruntled about it. For he went thither so often, and so eagerly listened to this hermit preaching that many a time he made his men stay awake all night long; and it seemed that his men dearly wished that this hermit were dead. So it happened one night that Muhammad was drunk with wine, and fell asleep; and while he slept, his men drew his own sword from its sheath and slew the hermit with it; when they had done this, they sheathed the sword again, all bloody. In the morning, when Muhammad woke and found the hermit dead, he was very angry and would have slain all his men, for he said they had murdered him among themselves. But with one accord and one voice they all said that he himself had slain him in his sleep, when he was drunk, and they showed him the sword all bloody; and then he believed that they were telling the truth. Then he cursed wine and all those who drink it; and therefore devout Saracens will not touch it. But they do have another kind of drink which is good and delicious and very fortifying, which is made of different spices; especially calamus, of which good sugar is made. Nevertheless some Saracens will gladly drink wine in private, but not publicly – for if they drink wine openly they will be censured for it. It sometimes

happens that Christian men become Saracens, out of poverty, or foolishness, or through wickedness; and the man who is chief master and judge of their law, when he receives them into their faith, says *La elles ella silia Machomet rores alla hec*, which means, 'There is no God but one, and Muhammad his messenger.'

Since I have told you something of the Saracens' law, of their manners and customs, I will tell you of the letters they use, with their names and shapes:
 almoy, betach, cathi, delphoi, ephothi, fothi, garophi, hethim, iocchi, kacchi, lothyn, malach, nahalet, orthi, porizeth, qutholath, routhi, salathi, tointhus, uzazot, yrtim, theth.

These are the names of the letters, and this is what they look like:

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| R | B | O | Z | Y | 16 | 6 |
| N | X | X | C | M | X | b |
| 5+ | E | U | ↑ | B | ≡ | z |

And here I will set down their letters in another way as I have seen them in other books; this form I like better than the other:

almoy, bethath, cathi, delphoi, ephothi, fothi, garophi, hechum, iocchi, kaythi, lothum, malach, nahalot, orthi, corizi, 3och, rutolath, routhi, salathi, thatimus, yrthom, azazoth, arotthi, 3otipin, ichtet.

These are the letters:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|
| R | B | a | M | Y | 16 | 6 | N |
| X | X | B | C | M | + | E | R |
| U | ↑ | B | ≡ | z | B | ≡ | z |

They have these four letters more than we do because their language is so different; they speak very gutturally. Just so, we in England have two other letters in our language that are not in their alphabet, that is, *band 3*, which are called 'thorn' and 'yogh'.

Of the lands of Albania and Libya; of the desires in the Watching of the Sparrowhawk; and of the Ark of Noah

Now I have told you about the Holy Land and the countries around, the ways thither, and to Mount Sinai, to Babylon and other places, which I spoke of above. Now I shall pass on and speak of different lands and countries that are beyond the Holy Land. For there are many diverse kingdoms, countries, and isles in the eastern part of the world, where live different kinds of men and animals, and many other marvellous things. Those countries are divided by the four rivers that flow out of the Terrestrial Paradise. Mesopotamia and the kingdom of Chaldea and Arabia are between two rivers; that is to say the Tygre [Tigris] and the Euphrates; the kingdoms of Media and Persia are between the Tigris and the Nile; and the kingdoms of Syria, of Palestine, and Phoenicia are between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean Sea, which stretches from the city of Marrok [Morocco] on the Spanish Sea to the Great Sea [the Black Sea]. So it stretches three thousand and forty Lombardy miles beyond Constantinople. Towards the sea which is called Occiane [Ocean] is the kingdom of Scithy [Scythia] which is quite surrounded by hills. Below Scythia, from the sea of Caspy [Caspian] to the River Thanay [Don] is the land of Amazonia, which is the Land of Women, where women live by themselves with no man among them. Then there is the realm of Albania, a great land; it is called Albania because the people of that land are whiter than the people of the lands round about. In that land are marvellously big powerful dogs, which fight with lions and kill them. Then there is the land of Hircany [Hircania], of Bactrice [Bactria] and many others. Between the Red Sea and the Great Sea Ocean to the south is Ethiopia and Upper Libya. For Libya the Lower begins at the Spanish Sea, where are the Pillars of Hercules, and reaches to Egypt and Ethiopia. In Libya the sea seems much higher than the land, as if it would overflow the land, and yet it does not pass its bounds. In that land is a great hill, which can be seen from far off, but men cannot get near it. In Libya, when a man turns to the east, his shadow is on his right side, as it is on his left in this country. In the sea of Libya no fishes are found; for none may live there because of the dreadful heat of the sun. Because of the great heat the water there is always as if it were boiling. And you should know that there are many more countries and isles in those parts of the world - it

would be too much to tell of all of them; but of some I shall speak more fully later.

A man who wants to travel to Tartary, or Persia, or Chaldea, or India, will take ship at Genoa, or Venice, or at some other port mentioned before, and so cross the sea and arrive at the port of Trapazonde [Trebizond], which is a good city, once called *Le Porte de Pounce* [The gate of Pontus]. In this city lies Saint Athanasius [Athanasius], who was Bishop of Alexandria, and who made the psalm *Quicumque uult*. This Athanasius was a great doctor of divinity, for he preached more profoundly of Holy Writ than others did; and so he was accused of heresy before the Pope. The Pope sent for him and had him imprisoned. And while he was in prison he made that psalm and sent it to the Pope and said, 'If I am a heretic, then everything written here is heresy, for this is what I believe.' And when the Pope saw that, he said it was exactly our belief and had him released, commanding that psalm to be said each day at Prime; he considered Athanasius a good and holy man. But Athanasius would never afterwards return to his bishopric, because wicked men had through hatred accused him before the Pope. Trebizond was once an appanage of the Emperor of Constantinople, but a mighty and rich man, sent by the Emperor to hold it against the Turks, kept it himself and had himself called Emperor of Trebizond.

From the city of Trebizond one goes to Lesser Armenia. In that country there is an old castle set on a rock, which in French is called '*le Chastel Despuere*', that is, in English, the castle of the Sparrowhawk. It is between the city of Larrais [Laiazzo, now Ayas] and the city of Percipre [Perschembre?], belonging to the Lord of Croke [Corycus]; he is a rich man and a good Christian. In that castle a sparrowhawk is to be found sitting on a perch, and a fair lady of Faerye sitting by it looking after it. And whoever will come and guard that sparrowhawk, keeping it awake continuously for seven days and seven nights (or, as some men say, three days and three nights) without company and without sleeping, will have this fair lady come to him at the end of the seventh day (or the third) and grant him whatever earthly thing he asks for; it has been tried many times. There came once a King of Armenia, a mighty lord and a worthy, and kept this hawk awake to the end of the appointed days. Then the lady came to him and told him to ask whatever earthly thing he wished, as he had done his task well. The King answered and said, 'I am a lord rich enough; therefore I ask nothing else but your body, to have at my desire.' And she answered and said, 'Foolishly and unwisely have you asked. For my body you may not have, because I am not an earthly but a spiritual creature.'

'Truly,' said the King, 'I will ask for nothing else.' 'Now I cannot draw you away from your folly,' said the lady, 'but I shall give you unasked what is righteous; for you and all who come of you shall have war and no lasting peace unto the ninth generation, and shall always be in subjection to your enemies and lack all kinds of goods.' Just so has it turned out, for the King of Armenia never had peace, but always war, since that time, and he and all that are his are poor and needy and live under the tribute of their enemies. At another time a humble man's son came and watched the sparrowhawk. He asked of that lady that he might be rich and fortunate in trade, to get worldly wealth; she granted it. He became the richest merchant of all that land, so that he could not count the thousandth part of his goods. So he was wiser than the King before him. After this there came a knight of the Templars and watched this sparrowhawk well; he asked that he might always have his purse full of gold, and the lady granted him his request. But she said that he was asking for the undoing and the destruction of his Order, because of the great pride in his riches and the great trust he put in his purse. So it turned out. It is good for him who is to watch this hawk that he be very careful not to sleep; for if he sleeps, he is lost forever, and shall never come again where men are. This castle is not on the direct route to those countries just named; but it behoves a man who wants to see wonders sometimes to go out of his way.

The direct route from Trebizond to Greater Armenia is to a city called Artiron [Erzerum], which used to be a fine, rich city; but the Turks have destroyed it. In the neighbourhood little wine is grown or any other fruits, for the land is high and cold; but there are many rivers and good springs which come underground from the Euphrates, which is a day's journey from that city. This River Euphrates comes under the earth from the direction of India and comes up again in the land of Allazar. Men go through Greater Armenia to the Sea of Persia. From the city of Erzerum you can go to a mountain called Sabissebella or Sabissacolle. Near it is another hill called Ararat (the Jews call it Thano) where Noah's ship rested after the Flood. It is still there, and can be seen from far off in clear weather. That mountain is seven miles high. Some men say they have been there and put their fingers into the hole where the Devil came out when Noah said *Benedicite*; but they are not telling the truth. * No man can climb that hill because of the snow, which is always there, winter and summer. And never a man went there since Noah's time except for one monk, who, through the grace of God, went there

* The story of the Devil has not been traced, though traditionally he was on board. There may be a reminiscence of a mystery play here.

and brought back a timber of the ship, which is still in an abbey at the foot of the mountain. This monk greatly desired to climb that hill, and so one day he set about it. By the time he had climbed a third of the way up, he was so weary that he could not go further, and he rested there and fell asleep. When he awoke he found himself once more back at the foot of the hill. Then he beseeched God to allow him to go up; and an angel came to him and told him to go up. He did so, and brought the plank down. Since then no man went there, and so those who say they have been are lying.

A little way from there is the city of Dayne [Ani], which Noah founded; and also the city of Anye [Ani], in which there used to be a thousand churches. From that mountain one goes to a city called Taurizo [Tabriz], a beautiful and noble place. By that city is a hill of salt, and every man may take what he wants. Many Christian men dwell there, paying tribute to the Saracens. The city of Tabriz was once called Faxis; it is one of the most important trade-centres in the world, and merchants come thither from many lands. There they manage to trade all kinds of merchandise that they seek. This city is in the land of the Emperor of Persia, and it is said that the Emperor takes more in that city in customs dues on merchandise than the richest Christian king in the world has to spend.

From this city men go via many towns and castles for many days in the direction of India, and then come to a city called Sodonie [Sultaniyeh] ten days' journey from Tabriz, and a fine and noble city. The Emperor of Persia lives there in the summer because the land is cool. There are many great rivers, which bear big ships. Then one travels for many days through many countries, and comes to a city called Cassach [Kashan], a good rich city, with plenty of corn and other victuals. Some men say that it was at that city the Three Kings met, who went to make offerings to Christ in Bethlehem; it is fifty-three days' journey from Bethlehem. From this city men go to another, called Beth [Yezd], a day's march from the Gravelly Sea. This is the noblest city in the Persian Empire; some call it Cardabago [Persian *Chau bagh*: 'royal gardens']* and others Vapa. The Saracens say that no Christian man

* This name is a result of a complicated corruption. The original possibly reproduced the Persian phonetically with some accuracy; it may then have been misread as 'chardabag', and then misunderstood as (in French) 'char Dabago'. A copyist, unable to understand this sudden reference to flesh (*char*) assumes 'appellent' has been omitted and supplies it, and adds a supporting detail; so that M S Harley 4383, for example, reads 'et l'appellent ils la char Dabago et le vin Vapa' (And they call flesh Dabago and wine Vapa - *vappa*, Latin 'flat wine'). It is

can dwell in that city for long and not die - no man knows the cause. Thence men make many days' marches through many cities, which would be too tedious to detail, until they come to a city called Carnaa [Persepolis], which used to be so big that its walls were twenty-five miles round. There the empire of Persia ends. And if you would like to know what kind of letters they use, here you can hear them:

Alma, Bem, Cem, Dem, Ethyn, Folthin, Gith, Hith, Iothyn, Kynyn, Lathyn, Moin, Nichoin, Ozeph, Phisan, Quinth, Yr, Seth, Toith, Vith, Xith, Ya, Zofin.

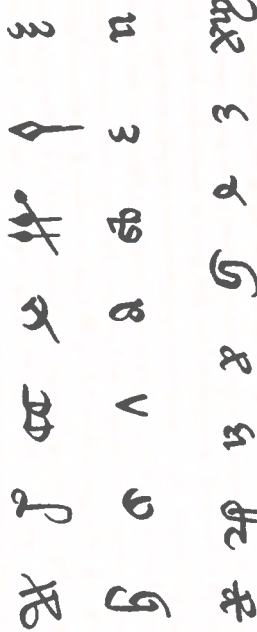
*Of the land of Job and of his age; of the clothing
of the people of Chaldea; of the land where women live
without the company of men; and of the knowledge
of and the properties of the true diamond*

When men leave Persepolis they enter the land of Job, a fair and good country, with great plenty of fruits and other riches. That land is called Sweze [Susiana?]. In that land is the city of Theman [Carmana?]. You should know that Job was the son of Are of Gosra [Zerah of Bosra], and was prince and ruler of that country. He was so rich he could not reckon the hundredth part of his goods. And although he was a pagan, nevertheless he served God very devoutly according to the custom of his creed, and his service was acceptable to God. Afterwards, through God's sufferance, he fell into great misfortune and poverty, when he was three score and ten years old. But God, mindful of his great patience and great humbleness, restored to him more riches and honour than he ever had before. Afterwards, when the King of Idumea died, he was made King, and, as some men say, his name was changed to Jobab. He lived there 170 years; when he died he was 248 years old. In that land of Job there is no lack of anything necessary to man's life. There are hills where a man finds manna more plentiful - and better - than anywhere else. Manna is called the bread of angels; it is a very white, sweet substance, sweeter than sugar or honey. It comes from the dew of Heaven falling on the herbage, where it coagulates and grows white.

to the credit of some scribe in Egerton's descent that he recognized the garble and saw that place names were at issue and not gastronomy. But his chances of a full restoration were slim.

Men make it into medicines for rich men, for constipation and the cleansing of too rich blood.

The land of Job borders the land of Chaldea, which is a big country. Their language is richer and fuller than that of any land on that side of the sea. The way there is by the Tower of Babel, as I said before, where the confusion of tongues was first made; it is four days' journey from Chaldea. In the realm of Chaldea there are very handsome men, well dressed in cloth of gold and precious stones. But the women are very ugly and ill-dressed, and they go barefoot. * They wear a nasty garment, baggy and knee-length, with long voluminous sleeves (like those of Benedictine monks) hanging to their feet. The hair of their heads is thick and black, and hangs to their shoulders. Their women are very swarthy and ugly to look at, and of evil behaviour. In the kingdom of Chaldea is a city called Ur, where Thare [Terah], Abraham's father, once dwelt. That was in the time of Ninus who was King of Babylon, Arabia and Egypt. This Ninus built the city of Ninive [Nineveh], but Noah started on it before; since however Ninus finished it, it is called Nineveh. In Nineveh was Thoby [Tobit] buried, of whom Holy Writ speaks. Abraham left Ur at the command of God, after his father died, taking with him Sarah his wife and his nephew Lot - at that time he had no children himself - and came to the land of Canaan and lived in a place called Shechem. This Lot was the one who was saved at the overwhelming of Sodom and Gomorrah. The folk of Chaldea have their own language, letters and figures; this is what they look like:



Next to Chaldea is the land of Amazoun [the Amazons], which we call the Maiden Land or the Land of Women; no man lives there, only women. This is not because, as some say, no man can live there, but because the women will not allow men to rule the kingdom. There was once a king in that land called Colopheus, and there were once men living there as they do elsewhere. It so happened that this king went to

* From here to the end of the alphabet is omitted in Defective.

war with the King of Scythia, and was slain with all his great men in battle with his enemy. And when the Queen and the other ladies of that land heard the news that the King and the lords were slain, they marshalled themselves with one accord and armed themselves well. They took a great army of women and slaughtered all the men left among them. And since that time they will never let a man live with them more than seven days, nor will they allow a boy child to be brought up among them. But when they want to have the company of man, they go to that side of their country where their lovers live, stay with them eight or nine days and then go home again. If any of them bears a child and it is a son, they keep it until it can speak and walk and eat by itself and then they send it to the father - or they kill it. If they have a girl child, they cut off one of her breasts and cauterize it; in the case of a woman of great estate, the left one, so that she can carry her shield better, and, in one of low degree, they cut off the right, so that it will not hinder them shooting - for they know very well the skill of archery. There is always a queen to rule that land, and they all obey her. This queen is always chosen by election, for they choose the woman who is the best fighter. These women are noble and wise warriors; and therefore kings of neighbouring realms hire them to help them in their wars. This land of the Amazons is an island, surrounded by water, except at two points where there are two ways in. Beyond the water live their lovers to whom they go when it pleases them to have bodily pleasure with them. Next to the land of the Amazons is a country called Termegutte [Terra Margine, east of the Caspian], a fair and pleasant country; because of the great beauty and richness of this land King Alexander wanted to build there his first city of Alexandria. For in that land he built twelve Alexandrias, of which this was the first; but it is now called Celsite [Seleucia, now Merv].

On the other side of Chaldea, to the south, is the land of Ethiopia, which is a great country, reaching as far as Egypt. Ethiopia is divided into two main parts, that is, the southern and the eastern parts. The southern is called Mauritayne [Mauretania], and the people of this part are blacker than those in the eastern part. In this part there is a well which during the day is so cold that no man can drink from it, and at night too hot to put a hand in. Beyond Mauretania, going by sea to the south, is a vast country, but it is uninhabitable because of the terrible heat of the sun. In Ethiopia all the rivers are so turbid and so salt because of the excessive heat of the sun that no one dare use them. The people of that country very easily get drunk; they have little appetite for their food, and commonly have diarrhoea. They live only a short time.

In that land, too, there are people of different shapes. There are some who have only one foot, and yet they run so fast on that one foot that it is a marvel to see them. That foot is so big that it will cover and shade all the body from the sun. In Ethiopia are young children whose hair is white, and as they grow old, their hair gets black. In this land of Ethiopia is the city of Saba, of which one of the Three Kings who gave gifts to Our Lord was King.

From Ethiopia you go to India through many different countries. You should know that India is divided into three parts, that is to say, India the Greater, which is a mountainous and hot land; India the Lesser, to the south, a temperate land; and the third part, to the north, so cold that, because of the great cold and continual frost, water congeals into crystal. On the rocks of crystal good diamonds grow, which are of the colour of crystal; but they are dimmer than crystal and as brown as oil. They are so hard that no metal can polish or split them. Other diamonds are found in Arabia, which are not so good, and softer. Some are found in Cyprus, which are still softer; and so they can be polished more easily. Also they are found in Macedonia; but those of India are the best. And some are often found in a mass, in the mines where men find gold, and those are as hard as those of India. And just as good diamonds are found in India on the rocks of crystal, men find good hard diamonds on the rocks of adamant in the sea, and on the mountains too — about as big as hazel nuts. They naturally grow in cube shapes. They grow together, male and female, and are fed with the dew of Heaven. And according to their nature they engender and conceive small children, and so they constantly grow and multiply. I have many times tested and seen that if a man takes with them a little of the rock they grew on, provided they are taken up by the roots and watered with the dew of May, each year they grow visibly, so that the small ones become bigger. A man should carry a diamond on his left side; then it is of more virtue than when on the right, for the natural bent of its growth is to the north, which is the left side of the world and the left side of a man when he turns to face the east.

And if you wish to know the virtues of the diamond, I will tell you them according to Ysidre [Isidore of Seville] *libro 16 Ethicorum, capitulo de cristallo*, and Bertalmew [Bartholomaeus Anglicus] *De Proprietatibus rerum, capitulo de adamante*. * The diamond gives to the man who carries it boldness (if it is freely given to him) and keeps his limbs healthy. It

* Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* xvi, 13.2; and see John of Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew's *On the Properties of Things*, ed. M. C. Seymour et al. (Oxford, 1975), Book xvi, cap. 8.

gives him grace to overcome his enemies, if his cause is righteous, in both war and law. It keeps him in his right mind. It protects him from quarrels, fights, debauchery, and from evil dreams and fantasies, and from wicked spirits. And if any man who meddles in sorcery or enchantments wants to hurt one who carries a diamond, he will not worry him. No wild or poisonous animal will hurt one who carries it. You ought to understand that the diamond must be freely given as a present, not coveted or bought, and then it is of greater power and makes a man more stalwart against his enemies. It heals the man who is lunatic; and if poison should be brought to the place where the diamond is, the stone immediately grows moist and begins to sweat, and men can easily polish it. But some craftsmen out of deceitfulness will not polish the stone, in order that it should be believed that the stone cannot be polished. In India too diamonds can be found of a violet colour, and somewhat brown, which are very good and very precious. But some do not like them as well as these others I have spoken of. Nevertheless they seem to me as good and as precious as the others; for truly, I have often seen them tested. They have others too which are as white as crystal, but they are dimmer and cloudy; still, they are very good and of great virtue. And they are nearly all quadrangular and pointed; but there are some that of their own nature are three cornered, and some six.

I shall say a little more about this stone, especially on account of those who export this stone to different countries to sell it. A man who wants to buy this stone must be able to recognize it with certainty because of the deceitfulness of those who sell them. Often to those who have no great knowledge of gems they sell pale crystals and other kinds of stones instead of diamonds, which are not so hard as diamonds; usually their points are broken off and they can easily be polished. But some jewellers will not polish them completely, to make men think that they cannot be polished. But the diamond can be tested in this way. Take the diamond and rub it on a sapphire, or on crystal, or on another precious stone, or on polished burnished steel. Then take the adamant, that attracts the compass needle, by which seamen are guided in the sea, and put the diamond on the adamant, laying a needle in front of it. If the diamond is good and full of power, the adamant will not attract the needle while the diamond is there. This is the test which they use overseas. But it often happens that the good diamond loses its powers because of the failings and dissoluteness of the man who carries it. Then it is necessary to make it win its powers again, or it will be of little value.

*Of the customs in the isles around India;
of the distinction between idols and simulacres;
of three types of pepper growing on one tree;
and of the well that changes colour each hour of the day*

In India there are very many different countries. It is called India because of a river that runs through that land, which is called Inde [Indus]. Eels of thirty feet long are found in that river. The people who dwell near the river are an ugly colour, yellow and green. In India there are more than five thousand good large isles that people live in, not counting those that are uninhabited. Each of these isles has many cities and towns, and many people. The people of India are not naturally disposed to travelling beyond their own country, for they live under [the influence of] the planet called Saturn. That planet performs his circle through the twelve signs [of the Zodiac] in thirty years; the moon, which is our planet, passes through the twelve signs in a month. Because Saturn is so slow-moving, men who live under him in that climate have no great desire to move about much, but stay in their own lands and desire no other. It is quite the opposite in our country. We are in a climate under the rule of the moon, which is a planet that moves quickly – the traveller's planet. So it gives us the desire to travel and visit different countries of the world, for it moves round the world more quickly than other planets.

Men travel through India by way of many countries to the Great Sea Ocean. Then they come to the isle of Chermes [Ormuz] whither merchants of Venice, Genoa and many other countries come to buy merchandise. But it is so hot there that the men have their testicles hanging down to their thighs because of the violent heat, which weakens their bodies. Men of that country who know what to do bind them up and use certain cooling astringent ointments to hold them up – otherwise they could not live. In this land and in Ethiopia and many other lands men and women frequently go to the rivers and lie in them all naked from undern [mid-morning] of the day until it be past noon, because of the great heat of the sun. They lie totally under water, except for their heads. Women there are not ashamed if men see them naked. Much ugliness can be seen there. In this isle there are ships made without nails or strappings of iron, because of the rocks of adamant in

the sea, which would attract ships to themselves. There are so many of these rocks in those parts that if any ship in which there was any kind of iron passed that way, it would be drawn to the rocks by the power of the adamant, and would never get away again.

From this island men go by sea to the isle of Cana [Thana], where there is great plenty of wine and corn. Once it was a very big island, with a good harbour; but the largest part of it has been washed away by the sea. The King of that isle was once so great and powerful that he fought against Alexander the Great. The people of that isle have a variety of religions: some worship the sun instead of God, some fire, some snakes, some trees, some the first thing they come across in the morning, and some worship simulacres and some idols. Now between simulacres and idols there is a great difference. For simulacres are images made in the likeness of something that occurs in nature, while idols are images made in the likeness of whatever a man wishes, that is not natural. Amongst all the varieties of animals you will not find one that has three heads – one a man's, one a horse's, another of an ox or of some other beast – as they make their idols. You must understand that those who worship simulacres honour them for the sake of worthy men, perhaps those who were doughty men in battle, like Hercules, Achilles and others like them, who performed many marvels in their lives. For they say they know well that they are not the God of nature, who made everything, but that they are beloved of God because of the marvels they performed. So they say of the sun; for it often alters the weather during the year, and gives heat to nourish the creatures of the earth. Because it is of such value, they say they are sure it performs God's will and that God loves it before any other thing; and therefore they worship it. They say the same about the other planets and about fire, because of the great good that comes from them. About idols, they say that the ox is the holiest animal, and most useful, on earth, for it does much good and no evil. They say they are sure that it cannot be without the special grace of God, and therefore they represent their God as half man and half ox, for man is the loveliest and best creature God made and the ox the holiest. They worship snakes too, and other beasts they meet first thing in the morning, especially those beasts which it is good luck to meet and after seeing which they are fortunate all the rest of the day, as they allege from long experience. So they say this lucky encounter comes from God, and therefore they have had images made like these creatures for their houses, so that they can worship them before they meet anything else. In this isle of Thana there are many wild beasts, like lions, leopards, bears, and others. There are

rats there as big as dogs are here; the men catch them with great mastiffs, for cats are too small. In this country, as in many others, when men are dead, they do not bury them; for the heat is so great that immediately the flesh is consumed, even to the bone.

From there men go to a city called Sarchie [Baroch?] a fine and good city. Many Christians of good faith live there, and there are many men of religion, especially friars. Thence one goes to the land of Lombe [Polumbum; Quilon] by sea. In that land pepper grows in a forest called Combar, and it grows nowhere else in the world but there. The forest is twenty-three days' journey in length. (There are two good cities, of which the one is called Flabryne [Bandinanah] and the other Zinglauns [Cranganur]. In both cities Christian men and Jews live in great numbers, for the country is fertile and good. But it is very hot, and so there is a great abundance of different sorts of snakes and serpents. You must know that the pepper grows in the manner of wild vines beside the trees of the forest, so that it can rely on them for support. Its fruit hangs in great clusters, like bunches of grapes; they hang so thick that unless they were supported by other trees, the vines could not carry their fruit. When the fruit is ripe, it is all green like the berries of ivy. They gather the fruit and dry it in the sun, then lay it on a drying floor until it is black and wrinkled. They have three types of pepper growing on the one tree: first, the 'long' pepper which ripens according to its own nature, then white pepper, which is not burnt or toasted with fire or heat of the sun, and the black pepper dried by a fire or the sun. They call long pepper *spothyn*, the black *fulphul*, the white *bonoile*. The long pepper comes first, when the leaves begin to grow; it is like the flower of the hazel, which comes before the leaves. Then comes white pepper, with the leaves, in great clusters, like green grapes. When it is gathered, it is white, and somewhat smaller than the black pepper. Finally the black pepper comes in great abundance. They sell only a little - or none at all - of the white pepper to other countries, but keep it for their own use, because it is better and more beneficial and more temperate in its operation than the others, and it will also keep its power longer. Understand that the heavier the pepper is, the better and fresher it is. Still, it often happens that merchants adulterate pepper when it is old, as Isidore says. For they take old pepper and soak it, scattering over it frothy matter of silver or lead, and then dry it again. Because of the increased weight it seems fresh and new. Of their three kinds of pepper, they have most abundance of the black. In that land, as I said, there are many different kinds of snakes and serpents because of the heat - and also because of the pepper. Some say that at certain times of the year when they go to

gather the pepper, they make fires here and there to burn the snakes or make them run away. But, with all respect, it is not so. For if they built fires round the pepper, they would burn the pepper and the trees it grows on, or shrivel them so that they would bear no more fruit; that is not true. On the contrary, they anoint their hands and feet and other places of the body with an ointment made of the juice of a fruit they call lemons, mingled with other things, and then they go boldly to get the pepper. The snakes and poisonous serpents run away when they perceive the smell of the ointment; in this way, truly, they get the pepper.

At the head of this forest is the city of Polumbum. Beside it is a mountain, from which the city takes its name, for the mountain is called Polumbum. At the foot of this mountain is a noble and beautiful well, whose water has a sweet taste and smell, as if of different kinds of spices. Each hour of the day the water changes its smell and taste. And whoever drinks three times of that well on an empty stomach will be healed of whatever malady he has. And therefore those who live near that well drink of it very often, and so they are never ill, but always seem young. I, John Mandeville, saw this well, and drank of it three times, and so did all my companions. Ever since that time I have felt the better and healthier, and I think I shall do until such time as God in his grace causes me to pass out of this mortal life. Some men call that well the *fons iuuentutis*, that is, the Well of Youth; for he who drinks of it seems always young. They say this water comes from the Earthly Paradise, it is so full of goodness. Throughout this country there grows the best ginger there is anywhere; merchants come thither from distant countries to buy it.

And in this country the people worship the ox, in place of God, because of the simple goodness of the animal. They say there that the ox is the holiest beast in the world and has many virtues. For six or seven years the ox will draw the plough and help to work for man's sustenance, and after that one can eat him. The King of that land always has an ox with him, wherever he may be, and honours it as his god. And the man who looks after this ox gathers the dung in one golden vessel and the urine in another. What he collects each night he takes on the morrow to their prelate, who is called Archiprothopaton, and he carries it to the King and says many blessings over it. And the King puts his hands in the urine of the ox, which they call gall, and rubs his brow and his breast with it. Then, with great reverence, he takes some of the dung and rubs it on his face and breast, as he did with the urine, to the intent that he may be filled with the virtues of the holy ox and that he

may be blessed by that holy thing. Following the King, other lords and princes act in the same manner; and after them, servants and others, each in their degree, as long as any of the stuff is left. In that land their idols, their false gods, have the shape half of a man and half of an ox; and in those idols a devil speaks to them and answers their questions. In front of these idols they often kill their children instead of a sacrifice, taking their blood and sprinkling it upon the images; this is how they sacrifice to them. And when any man dies in that country they burn his body so that he should suffer no pain by being eaten by worms when in the grave. If he has no children, they burn his wife with him. For they say it is reasonable that she should bear him company in the next world as she did in this. And if she has children, they let her live to bring them up if she wants to. And if she chooses to live with her children rather than to be burned with her husband, she will be deemed untrustworthy and unnatural, and she will never again be praised nor will any man thenceforth trust her. And if the wife die before her husband, he will not be burnt with her against his will; if it pleases him he can take another wife. Good vines grow in that country; there the women drink wine and not men. And women shave their beards, and not men.

*Of the judgements given by the hand of Saint Thomas the Apostle
in the city of Calamy; of the devotion and sacrifice offered
to idols there; and of the procession round the city*

From this land one goes through many different places to a country called Mabarou [Coromandel]; it is ten days' journey from the land I have just spoken of. It is a great kingdom, with many good cities and towns. In that land of Coromandel lies Saint Thomas the Apostle, his body uncorrupted, in a beautiful tomb in the city of Calamy [Mailapur], for he was martyred and buried there. Afterwards, though, the Assiriens [Syrians] took his body and transported it to a city in Mesopotamia that is called Edisse [Edessa]. But soon after it was translated again to the aforesaid city and laid in its tomb; and his arm, with the hand which he put into Our Lord's side after the Resurrection, when he said, *Noli esse incredulus, sed fidelis*,* lies outside in a reliquary. Men of that country judge who is right by that hand. For if there be a quarrel between two parties and each affirms right is on his side, they

* 'Be not faithless, but believing'. John xx, 27.

cause the case of each party to be written in a scroll and put these scrolls in the hand of Saint Thomas; quickly the hand casts away the scroll that contains the false case, and keeps the other. So men often come thither from far lands, to settle the right of a doubtful case between two parties. The church where Saint Thomas lies is large and beautiful and full of statues of their idols; these images are each the size of two men at least.

But there is one image which surpasses all the others in size, and it is richly adorned with gold and precious stones on all sides, and sits in a nobly decorated chair. It has round its neck as it were broad sashes of silk, embroidered with gold and precious stones. To that image people often come on pilgrimage with great devotion, as frequently as Christian folk come to Saint James [at Compostella]. And some of them, out of the great devotion they have for that idol, will constantly look at the earth as they walk, not looking about them, lest they should see anything that would hinder their devotion. Others come in pilgrimage carrying sharp knives in their hands, with which, as they go along, they wound themselves in the arms and legs and other places, so that the blood runs from their wounds in great profusion. This they do for love of that idol, and say that he who dies for love of that idol will be blessed indeed. Some of them bring with them their children and slay them, sacrificing them to that idol. They take their children's blood and sprinkle it upon the image. Some, too, from the time they leave their homes until they arrive at their idol, kneel on the earth with great devotion at every third step. And they bring with them incense and other sweet-smelling things to cense that image, as here we do the Host. In front of that image, there is as it were a pool or fishpond full of water; into it pilgrims cast gold and silver and precious stones without number as offerings. Therefore the priests who look after that idol, when they have need of any money to repair the church, or for any other thing pertaining to that idol, go to that pool and take out as much as they need. You must know that when there are great festivals of that idol – the dedication of a church, or the enthroning of the idol – all the country assembles there. They set this idol with great reverence in a chariot, arrayed in cloth of gold and silk, and lead it about the city with great solemnity. In front of the chariot there go first in procession the maidens of that land, two by two; and then all the pilgrims that have come from far countries, some of whom out of great devotion to that idol fall down in front of the chariot and let it roll over them. And so some of them are slain, some have their arms and legs broken; and they believe that the more pain they suffer here for the love of that idol, the

there beautiful maidens, not older than fifteen, the loveliest he could find, and boys of the same age; they were all clad in clothes of gold. These he said were angels. He also had three lovely wells made of precious stones enclosed in jasper and crystal, and other precious stones set in gold. He built conduits under the earth so that, when he wished, one of these wells would run with honey, another with wine, and another with milk, from these conduits. This place he called Paradise. And when any young noble of the country came to him, he led him into this Paradise and showed him all these things I have mentioned. He secretly had minstrels in a high tower where they could not be seen, playing on different instruments of music. He said they were God's angels, and that that place was the Paradise God grants to those He loves, saying, *Dabo vobis terram fluentem lac et mel*, which means, 'I shall give you a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Then this rich man gave these youths a kind of drink which quickly made them drunk; then they were more blinded than before, and thought they had indeed been in bliss. He then told them that if they would put themselves in danger of death for his sake, when they were dead they would come to his Paradise and would evermore be of the age of the maidens, that they would evermore live with them and have pleasure and dalliance with them and they should still remain always virgin; and that after a certain time he would put them in a yet fairer Paradise, where they would see God in His majesty and bliss and joy. Thereupon they all agreed to do what he wanted. Then he would tell them to go to such and such a place and slay some lord or man of the area who was his enemy; they were to have no fear, for if they were killed he would put them in Paradise. Thus he had many lords of the country assassinated; and many of these young men were killed in the hope of having the Paradise that he promised them. Thus through his deceit he avenged himself on many of his enemies. When the lords and rich men of the land perceived the malice and guile of this Catolonabes, they banded together and attacked his castle, slew Catolonabes, and destroyed all his wealth and the beautiful things in his Paradise, and razed his castle; still the wells are there and one or two other things, but not the riches. It is not long since it was destroyed.

* Leviticus xx, 24.

*Of the head of the devil in the Vale Perilous;
and of the customs of the peoples in different isles round there*

A little way from that place towards the River Phison [Ganges] is a great marvel. For there is a valley between two hills, about four miles long; some men call it the Vale of Enchantment, some the Vale of Devils, and some the Vale Perilous. In this valley there are often heard tempests, and ugly, hideous noises, both by day and by night. And sometimes noises are heard as if of trumpets and tabors and drums, like at the feasts of great lords. This valley is full of devils and always has been, and men of those parts say it is an entrance to Hell. There is much gold and silver in this valley, and to get it many men—Christian and heathen—come and go into that valley. But very few come out again—least of all unbelievers—for all who go therein out of covetousness are strangled by devils and lost. In the middle of the valley under a rock one can clearly see the head and face of a devil, very hideous and dreadful to see; nothing else is seen of it except from the shoulders up. There is no man in this world, Christian or anyone else, who would not be very terrified to see it, it is so horrible and foul. He looks at each man so keenly and so cruelly, and his eyes are rolling so fast and sparkling like fire, and he changes his expression so often, and out of his nose and mouth comes so much fire of different colours with such an awful stench, that no man can bear it. But good Christian men, however, who are firm in the faith, can enter that valley without great harm if they are cleanly confessed and absolved and bless themselves with the sign of the Cross; then devils will not harm them. Even if they do get out without bodily hurt, they will not escape without great fear; for devils appear openly to them, menace them, and fly up and down in the air with great thunders and lightnings and awful tempests. Good men as well as evil will have great fear when they pass through, thinking that perhaps God will take vengeance on them for their past sins. My companions and I, when we came near that valley and heard all about it, wondered in our hearts whether to trust ourselves totally to the mercy of God and pass through it; some turned aside and said they would not put themselves in that danger. There were in our company two Friars Minor of Lombardy, who said they would go through that valley if we would go with them; so what with their encouragement and the comfort of their words, we confessed cleanly and heard Mass

The Passing of the Vale Perilous

and took Communion and went into the valley, fourteen of us together. But when we came out we were only nine. We knew never what became of the remainder, whether they were lost or turned back, but we never saw them again. Two of them were Greeks and three Spaniards. Our other companions, who would not cross the Vale Perilous, went round by another way to meet us. And my companions and I went through the valley, and saw many marvellous things, and gold and silver and precious stones and many other jewels on each side of us - so it seemed to us. But whether it really was as it seemed, or was merely illusion, I do not know. But because of the fear that we were in, and also so as not to hinder our devotion, we would touch nothing we saw: for we were more devout then than we ever were before or after, because of the fear we had on account of devils appearing to us in different guises and of the multitude of dead men's bodies that lay in our path. For if two kings with their armies had fought together and the greater part of both sides been slain, there would not have been a greater number of dead bodies than we saw. And when I saw so many bodies lying there, I was very astonished that they were so healthy, without corruption, as fresh as if they had been newly dead. But I dare not affirm that they were all true bodies that I saw in that valley; I believe that devils made so many bodies appear so as to frighten us; for it is not likely that so great a multitude of folk should have really been dead there so freshly that there was no smell or corruption. Many of those bodies I saw seemed to be wearing the clothing of Christian men; but I well believe they came there from covetousness of the gold and other jewels in that valley, or because false hearts cannot stand the great fear and dread that they had on account of the horrible sights they saw. And I assure you that we were often struck to the earth by terrible great blasts of wind, thunder and tempests; but through the grace of Almighty God we passed through safe and sound.

Beyond that valley is a great isle where the folk are as big in stature as giants of twenty-eight or thirty feet tall. They have no clothes to wear except the skins of beasts, which they cover their bodies with. They eat no bread; but they eat raw flesh and drink milk, for there is an abundance of animals. They have no houses to live in, and they will more readily eat human flesh than any other. Thanks to them no pilgrim dare enter this isle; for if they see a ship in the sea with men aboard, they will wade into the sea to take the men. We were told that there is another isle beyond that where there are giants much bigger than these, for some are fifty or sixty feet tall. I had no desire to see them, for no man

The Poison Damsels

can go to that isle without being promptly strangled by those monsters. In these isles among these giants are sheep as big as oxen, but their wool is thick and coarse. I have often seen those sheep; and some men have often seen those giants catch people in the sea and go back to the land with two in one hand and two in the other, eating their flesh raw.

There is another fair and good isle, full of people, where the custom is that when a woman is newly married, she shall not sleep the first night with her husband, but with another young man, who shall have ado with her that night and take her maidenhead, taking in the morning a certain sum of money for his trouble. In each town there are certain young men set apart to do that service, which are called *gadlibiriers*, which is to say 'fools of despair'. They say, and affirm as a truth, that it is a very dangerous thing to take the maidenhead of a virgin; for, so they say, whoever does puts himself in peril of death. And if the husband of the woman find her still virgin on the next night following (perchance because the man who should have had her maidenhead was drunk, or for any other reason did not perform properly to her), then shall he have an action at law against the young man before the justices of the land - as serious as if the young man had intended to kill him. But after the first night, when those women are so defiled, they are kept so strictly that they shall not speak to or even come into the company of those men. I asked them what the cause and reason was for such a custom there. They told me that in ancient times some men had died in that land in deflowering maidens, for the latter had snakes within them, which stung the husbands on their penises inside the women's bodies; and thus many men were slain, and so they follow that custom there to make other men test out the route before they themselves set out on that adventure.

Another isle is to the southwards in the Great Sea Ocean where there are wicked and cruel women, who have precious stones growing in their eyes. They are such a nature that if they look upon a man with an angry intention, the power of those stones slays him with a look, as the basilisk does.

Near there is another isle, where the women make great sorrow when their children are born and great joy when they are dead. They call their friends together and make a feast and take the dead child and throw it into a great fire and burn it. And women who loved their husbands well, when they are dead, throw themselves with their children into the fire to be burnt. It is their opinion there that they are purged by the fire, so that no corruption shall ever after come by them,

and, purged of all vice and all deformity, they will pass to their husbands in the next world. The cause why they weep and sorrow at the birth of their children and rejoice when they die is that when they are born into this world they come to sorrow and trouble, and when they die, they go to the joy of Paradise, where rivers of milk and honey and plenty of all kinds of good things are, and a life without sorrow. In this isle the King is always elected; they do not choose the richest or noblest man, but him who has the best character and is the most just and true, they make their King. They also ensure that he is an old man and not young. In that isle too are very righteous judges; for they do justice and right to every man, to poor as to rich, and judge every man according to his guilt and not according to his state or degree. The King also may not put anyone to death without the assent and advice of all his barons. If the King himself commits a trespass, like killing a man or some other such notable thing, he shall be killed for it. But he will not be killed by a man's hand; rather they shall forbid any man to be so bold as to keep company with him, or speak to him, come to him, or give him food or drink. And so he dies for pure need, hunger, thirst, and the sorrow in his heart. No one who is convicted of a trespass is spared, neither for riches, high estate, dignity, high birth, nor for any kind of gift; every man shall have according to his deeds.

Beyond this isle there is another isle in the sea, where there is a great number of people. They never eat the meat of hares, geese, or hens; nevertheless they have many of them and rear them just for the pleasure and the sight of them. But they eat the meat of other animals and drink milk. In this country they marry their own daughters, and their sisters, and their female relatives, and live ten or twelve or more together in one house. Each man's wife shall be common to the others who live there; each of them takes other wives, one on one night, one on another. When any of the wives bears a child, it will be given to him who first lay with her who is the mother; and so there is no one who knows whether the child be his or another's. And if one says to them that thus they may father another man's child, they answer that so will other men do their own.

In that country and throughout the whole of India there are a lot of crocodiles, which, as I told you before, are a kind of long-bodied serpent. At night it is in the water, and during the day it lies on the dry land on rocks or in crannies in the ground; in winter they eat no meat, but lie as if they were half dead. This serpent will kill men and devour them; and when it eats it moves the upper jaw and not the lower, and it has no tongue. Each year in that land they sow a kind of seed which

grows up into small bushes; from them they gather cotton in great quantity. There is also a kind of wood which is so hard and strong that if a man burn it and cover its coals with ash, the fire will keep in for a twelvemonth or more. This tree has a marvellous number of leaves. And there are some trees that will neither burn nor rot. There are also hazels that bear nuts as big as a man's head.* There are trees that bear cotton, as in many other countries. There are animals, too, which they call *oraffes*; and in Arabia they call them *gyrfalcons* [giraffes]. It is a handsome beast, well dappled, of the same height, or more, as a great horse; his neck is twenty cubits long, and his crupper and tail are like those of a hart. He is well able to stand on the ground and see over the top of a house. In that land there are many chameleons, which is a small animal the same size as a [little wild goat];† it neither eats nor drinks, but goes along always with its mouth open, for it lives on air. Often it changes colour, going into all colours except white and red: now it will be of one colour, and then suddenly of another. [There are also there great serpents, six score feet long; they are of different colours – striped, red, green and yellow, blue and black, and speckled all over.]‡ There are others which have a crest like a cock's on their heads and walk almost upright on their feet; they are four or more feet long easily. They usually live in the rocks and mountains and hills. Always they have their jaws open, whence they spit their venom. There are also wild swine of several colours, as big as oxen in this country; they are all brindled like fawns or does. [And there are also hedgehogs, as big as wild pigs are here; we call them porcupines.]§ And there are lions quite white, big and strong. There are also other kinds of animals, as big as horses; they are called *louherans*, and some call them *touez*, and others *odenthos* [the rhinoceros]. They have black heads and three horns on the brow, as sharp as swords; their bodies are yellow. They are marvelously cruel beasts, and will chase and kill the elephant. There is also another cruel and dangerous kind of animal, of the size of a bear, and their heads are like bears' heads. They have six feet, and on each foot are two claws, long, huge and sharp. In the body they are like bears, but their tails are like lions' tails. There are also rats bigger than hounds; and geese all red except for the head and neck, which are black; they are much bigger than our geese. There are also many other kinds of beast in

* Coconuts. The other trees are probably ebony.

† So in the French and in Cotton. Egerton reads 'raa' which Letts in his edition read as 'rat'. It would match the size of the chameleon better, indeed.

‡ From MS Royal 20 B.X. Omitted in Egerton.

§ Omitted in Egerton, supplied from MS Royal 20 B.X.

that country and in the countries round about, of which it would be too long to tell all the natures and appearances.

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Of the goodness of the people in the isle of Bragman; of King Alexander; and why Prester John is so called

Beyond this isle there is another, large, fertile, full of people. They are good folk, honest, and of good faith and good living according to the nature of their faith. And even if they are not Christian, nevertheless by natural instinct or law they live a commendable life, are folk of great virtue, flying away from all sins and vices and malice, and they keep the Ten Commandments well. For they are not proud nor covetous, they are not lecherous nor gluttonous. They do nothing to another man they would not have done to themselves. They set no store by the riches of this world, or by possession of earthly goods. They do not lie, nor swear oaths for no reason, but simply say a thing is, or is not; they say that he who swears is about to deceive his neighbour. This isle these people live in is called the Isle of Bragman [Brahmin]; and some men call it the Land of Faith. Through it runs a great river, which is called Thebe. Generally all the men of that isle and of other isles nearby are more trustworthy and more righteous than men in other countries. In this land are no thieves, no murderers, no prostitutes, no liars, no beggars; they are men as pure in conversation and as clean living as if they were men of religion. And since they are such true and good folk, in their country there is never thunder or lightning, hail nor snow, nor any other storms and bad weather; there is no hunger, no pestilence, no war, nor any other common tribulations among them, as there are among us because of our sins. And therefore it seems that God loves them well and is well pleased by their manner of life and their faith. They believe in God who made all things, and worship Him with all their power; all earthly things they set at nought. They live so temperately and soberly in meat and drink that they are the longest-lived people in the world; and many of them die simply of age, when their vital force runs out.

When Alexander the conqueror reigned, and conquered all the world, he came to that land and sent letters to them who lived there, saying he would come and destroy their land unless they would be subject to him as other lands were. And they wrote letters back to him

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of this tenor: 'What thing could satisfy that man to whom all the world is not enough? You will find nothing here with us that would be a reason for making war on us; we have no worldly riches, nor do we desire to have any. All the places of our land and all our goods, movable and immovable, are common to every man. All our riches are our meat and drink wherewith we sustain our bodies; our treasure is peace and concord and the love that is between us. Instead of elaborate dress, we use a cheap cloth to cover our worthless carrion. Our wives, too, are not proudly and richly arrayed to please our eyes, for we consider such adornment a great folly, applying to the wretched body more beauty than God has naturally given it; our wives desire no more beauty than nature has given them. Our land serves us for two things: our livelihood while we live and for burial when we are dead. And up to this time we have always been at peace, of which you would now despoil and disinherit us. A King we have among us, not to right any man's wrongs - for among us no man does another wrong - but simply to teach us to be obedient. We need to have no judges among us, for none of us does to another except what he would have done to himself. Therefore you can take from us nothing but our peace, which up to this time has always been amongst us.' And when King Alexander had seen their letters and read them, it seemed to him in his heart that it would be a great pity and great unmanliness to hurt or trouble such folk; and he granted them a guarantee of peace, and bade them to continue with their good living and follow their good customs without having any fear of him, for he would not harm them.

Near that land is another called Oxidrace, (and another that is called Gynosciphe, where for the most part they follow the customs of the Brahmins, living innocently in love and charity each with another. They go always naked. Alexander the conqueror came to their lands; and as soon as he saw their manner of life and their loyalty and love to each other, he said he would not harm them, but told them to ask of him what they would, and he would give it them. They answered and said that worldly riches they would neither ask for nor have, but only meat and drink wherewith the feeble body might be sustained. For the goods and riches of the world, they said, are not lasting, but deceptive. But if he could give them things that were everlasting and not mortal, they would thank him much. The King answered them and said that he could not do so, for he himself was mortal as they were. 'Wherefore, then,' said they, 'do you gather the riches of this world, which is transitory and cannot endure? For whether you will or not, they will leave you, or you them, as happened to them who were before you.

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And out of this world you will take nothing with you, but naked as you came hither shall you pass hence, and your flesh shall turn back into the earth from which it was made. And therefore you should not think that anything can endure for ever, except God who made all the world. And yet, not having any regard to this, you are so presumptuous and proud that, just as if you were God, you would make all the world subject to yourself; yet you do not know how long your life will be, nor the hour of your going.' When Alexander heard these words, and others like them, he marvelled greatly and was greatly ashamed and went away from them and did them no hurt.) And even if these people do not have the articles of our faith, nevertheless I believe that because of their good faith that they have by nature, and their good intent, God loves them well and is well pleased by their manner of life, as He was with Job, who was a pagan, yet nevertheless his deeds were as acceptable to God as those of His loyal servants. And even if there are many different religions and different beliefs in the world, still I believe God will always love those who love Him in truth and serve Him meekly and truly, setting no store by the vainglory of the world - just like these folk and Job. And so Our Lord says by the Prophet Ysai [Hosea], *Ponam eis multiplices leges meas*, that is, 'I shall put on them my laws manifold.'* And also in the Gospel He says, *Alias oves habeo, que non sunt ex hoc ovili*, that is, 'I have other sheep which are not of this fold', † as if he said, 'Other servants I have besides those under the Christian law.' And with this agrees the vision which was shown to Saint Peter in the city of Jaffa, when an angel came from Heaven and brought with him all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds, and told him to take and eat; and Saint Peter answered and said, 'I never eat unclean beasts.' And the angel replied, *Quod Deus mundavit, tu ne immundum dixeris*, that is to say, 'Call thou not unclean that which God has cleansed.' ‡ This was done as a token that men should despise no men for the difference of their laws. For we know not whom God loves nor whom He hates; and therefore when I pray for the dead and say my *De Profundis*, I say it for all Christian souls and also for all the souls who need praying for. And of this folk I will say thus much: I believe they are fully acceptable to God, they are so true and good. There are many prophets among them and have been since antiquity; for in their isles was once the Incarnation of Christ predicted, how he should be born of a virgin - it was three thousand years and more before the time of His Incarnation. They firmly believe in the Incarnation of Christ, but they do not know the manner of His Passion.

* Misquoted from viii, 12. † John x, 16. ‡ Acts x, 15.

Beyond this isle is another that is called Pytan, where the folk neither plough nor sow the land, and neither eat nor drink. Nevertheless they are a very fair people, well coloured, well shaped, according to their stature; for they are little, like dwarfs, somewhat bigger than the pygmies. This people lives on the smell of wild apples that grow there; and if they go far from home, they take some of these apples with them, for as soon as they lose the smell of them they die. This people is not fully rational; they are very simple, like beasts. Near there is another isle, where the people are covered in feathers and rough hair, except for the face and the palms of the hands. They travel as well in water as on land; and they eat meat and fish raw. Here there is a great river, two miles broad; it is called Wymare. Beyond that river there is a great wilderness, so I was told; I saw it not, nor did I cross the river. But men living near the river told us that in those deserts are the Trees of the Sun and Moon, which spoke to King Alexander and told him of his death. Some say that the people who look after those trees eat the fruit of them and the balm that grows there, and live four or five hundred years through the virtue of that fruit and that balm. For there there grows plenty of balm, as in no other place I could hear of, except in Egypt next to Babylon, as I told you before. My companions and I would gladly have gone there; but, as we were told, a hundred thousand men at arms would hardly be able to cross that wilderness because of the great numbers of wild beasts that there are in that wilderness, like dragons and different kinds of serpents and other ravening beasts, which kill and eat all they can get. In this land I have just mentioned there are many elephants, all white; some are blue, and of other colours, quite numberless. There are also many unicorns and lions and other hideous beasts. Many other isles there are in the empire of Prester John, and many marvels; there is also great wealth and noble treasures, precious stones and other jewels, but it would take too long to tell of them all.

Now I shall tell you why this Emperor is called Prester John. There was once an Emperor in that land who was a noble and brave prince; he had many knights with him who were Christian, like he has who is now Emperor. And one day this Emperor thought that he would like to see the manner of the service in Christian churches. At that time Christian men occupied many countries towards those parts, that is to say, Turkey, Syria, Tartary, Palestine, Arabia, Aleppo and all Egypt. And so it fell that this Emperor and a Christian knight who was with him entered a church in Egypt on the Saturday in Whit week, when the Bishop was holding an ordination service. The Emperor watched

the service, and the way priests were made, and how solemnly and devoutly they were ordained. He then asked the knight what sort of people these were who were being ordained, and what they were called; the knight said they were priests. Then the Emperor said that no longer would he be called King or Emperor, but priest instead, and that he would take the name of the first priest who came out of the church. It happened that the first priest to come out of the church was called John; and so that Emperor and all the other Emperors since have been called Prester John, that is, Priest John. In the land of Prester John there are many good Christian men, living good lives, of good faith and religion; they are natives of the country. They have priests among them who sing Mass for them, but they make the sacrament of leavened bread, as the Greeks do. Also they do not say their Mass in exactly the same way as our priests do; they only say the *Pater Noster* and the words of the consecration with which the sacrament is made, as Saint Thomas the Apostle taught them long ago. They know nothing of the ordinals and additions of the court of Rome that our priests use.

*Of the mountains of gold, which the ants watch over;
and of the four rivers that come from the Earthly Paradise*

East from the land of Prester John is a large fertile land called Taprobane [Ceylon]. There is a rich and noble King in that isle, subject to Prester John. He is chosen by election. Here there are two summers and two winters in a single year, and harvest also twice in a year. And at all times of the year their gardens are full of flowers and their meadows green. Good and rational people dwell in this isle; there are many good Christian men among them who are so rich that they do not know the total of their goods. In former times, when people sailed there from the land of Prester John, they used ships of such a type that they needed twenty days to sail thither; but in the ships we use now they can do it in seven days. And as they sail they can often see the bottom of the sea in several places, for it is not very deep.

On the east there are two isles near this one, of which one is called Oriell and the other Arget [Pliny's Chryse and Argyre]; in those two isles the earth is full of gold and silver ore. And they are near the Red Sea, where it enters the Great Sea Ocean. And in those isles no stars

can clearly be seen shining, except for one they call Canapos [Canopus]; nor can the moon be seen there except in the second quarter. In this isle of Ceylon are great hills of gold, which ants busily look after, purifying the gold and separating the fine from the unfine. Those ants are as big as dogs are here, so that no man dare go near those hills for fear that the ants might attack them; however, men win that gold by a trick. For the nature of the ants is that when the weather is hot, they will hide in the earth from mid-morning till after noon; and then the men of that country come with camels and dromedaries and horses, load them up with that gold, and go away before the ants come out of their holes. At other times of the year, when the weather is not hot and the ants do not hide in the earth, they use another trick to get this gold. They take mares who have young foals, and hang on each side of each mare an empty container with the mouth of it uppermost, trailing near to the ground, and then send them forth early in the morning to pasture round the hills where the gold is, keeping the foals at home. Then these ants, when they see these empty containers, go and fill them with gold; for it is the nature of the ant to leave nothing empty near them - there is no hole or cranny or anything else that they will not fill. And when it is thought that the mares are fully laden with gold, the men let the foals out, and they neigh after their dams. Then the mares hear their foals neighing and hurry quickly to them, laden with gold. And in this way men get a great deal of gold; for the ants easily tolerate all sorts of animals, man excepted.*

Beyond these isles I have told you of, beyond the deserts in the empire of Prester John, going still east, there is no inhabited land, as I said earlier; only wastes and wilderness and great crags and mountains and a dark land, where no man can see by night or day, as we were told. That dark land and those deserts last right to the Earthly Paradise, in which Adam and Eve were put; but they were only there a little while. And in the east of that place the earth begins. But that is not our east, where the sun rises for us; for when the sun rises in those countries, it is midnight in our land, because of the roundness of the earth. For, as I said before, God made the earth quite round, in the middle of the firmament. The hills and the valleys that are now on the earth are the

* At this point follows a curious interpolation on Thule and a miracle of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. It is not found in any text except Egerton, and clearly has nothing to do with the author of the book. I have therefore omitted it. Its only slight interest lies in the further evidence it shows of the way redactors sometimes added what they thought to be germane material to the text they were handling.

result only of Noah's flood, by which soft earth was moved from its place leaving a valley, and the hard ground stayed still and became a hill.

Of Paradise I cannot speak properly, for I have not been there; and that I regret. But I shall tell you as much as I have heard from wise men and trustworthy authorities in those countries. The Earthly Paradise, so men say, is the highest land on earth; it is so high it touches the sphere of the moon. For it is so high that Noah's flood could not reach it, though it covered all the rest of the earth. Paradise is encircled by a wall; but no man can say what the wall is made of. It is all grown over with moss and with bushes so that no stone can be seen, nor anything else a wall might be made of. The wall of Paradise stretches from the south to the north; there is no way into it open because of ever burning fire, which is the flaming sword that God set up before the entrance so that no man should enter.

In the middle of Paradise is a spring from which come four rivers, which run through different lands. These rivers sink down into the earth inside Paradise and then run many a mile underground; afterwards they rise up out of the earth again in distant lands. The first of these rivers is called Phison or Ganges; it rises in India below the hills of Orobarens [Himalayas?], and runs eastwards through India into the Great Sea Ocean. In that river are many precious stones and plenty of the wood called *lignum aloes*, and much gold in the gravel. This river is called the Phison because many waters collect and join it, for 'Phison' means roughly 'gathering'. It is also called Ganges after a king who was in India, whom men called Gangaras; because it runs through his land it was called Ganges. This river is clear in some places, disturbed in others, in some places hot, in others cold. The second river is called Nile or Gyon; it rises out of the earth a little way from Mount Atlant [Atlas]. Not far thence it sinks down again into the earth and runs underground until it comes to the shore of the Red Sea, and there it rises again out of the earth and runs all round Ethiopia, and so through Egypt until it comes to Alexandria the Great; there it enters the Mediterranean. This river is always disturbed and is therefore called Gyon; for 'Gyon' means the same as 'troubled'. The third river is called the Tigris, that is, 'fast running'; for it is one of the swiftest rivers of the world. It is called Tigris after an animal of the same name, which is the fastest animal on foot in the world. This river rises in Armenia under the Mount Parchoatra and runs through Armenia and Asia to the south, and then turns into the Mediterranean Sea. The fourth river is called Euphrates, which is as much as to say 'bearing well'; for many good things grow

along that river. That river runs through Media, Armenia and Persia. And men say that all the fresh rivers of the world have their beginning in the spring that wells up in Paradise.

You should realize that no living man can go to Paradise. By land no man can go thither because of the wild beasts in the wilderness, and because of the hills and rocks, which no one can cross; and also because of the many dark places that are there. No one can go there by water either, for those rivers flow with so strong a current, with such a rush and such waves that no boat can sail against them. There is also such a great noise of waters that one man cannot hear another, shout he never so loudly. Many great lords have tried at different times to travel by those rivers to Paradise, but they could not prosper in their journeys; some of them died through exhaustion from rowing and excessive labour, some went blind and deaf through the noise of the waters, and some were drowned through the violence of the waves. And so no man, as I said, can get there except through the special grace of God. And so of that place I can tell you no more; so I shall go back and tell you of things that I have seen in the isles and lands of the empire of Prester John, which, relative to us, are below the earth.

Of the customs of the Kings and others living in the isles adjacent to Prester John's land; and of the honour which the son does to his dead father

There are other lands - if anyone wished to travel through them - by which men could travel right round the earth, and return, if they had the grace of God to keep to the right route, to their native countries which they set out from. So, in time, they would girdle the earth. But it would be a very long time before such a voyage was finished; and few men try it, because there are so many dangers, by sea and by land, besetting men who travel in foreign lands which would most likely fall on those who intended to make that long journey of circumnavigation. Still, it could be done well enough by God's grace. But men leave that long route and return from those isles I have mentioned via other isles surrounding the land of Prester John and the isles that are in his empire. In so returning, they come to an isle called Casson [Shansi]; and that isle is nearly sixty days' journey in length and more than fifty in breadth. It is the best land in those parts except for Cathay; and if

merchants visited it as regularly as they do Cathay, it would be better. For cities and good towns are there so thick on the ground that when a man leaves one city he immediately sees another city or good town in front of him, whatever direction he takes. This isle is very bountiful in all kinds of spices and all kinds of other goods, especially those that pertain to man's livelihood. There are many great woods full of chestnut trees. The King of this land is very rich and mighty, and holds his land of the Great Khan of Cathay, for that is one of the twelve provinces that the Great Khan has under him, as I told you before; not counting his own land and other small isles. From this land men go to another isle which is called Ryboth or Gyboth [Tibet]; that too is subject to the Great Khan. This is a good land, bountiful in corn, wine, and many other things. Men of this land have no houses to live in, but live instead in tents made of black felt. The principal city of that land is walled with black and white stones, all the streets are paved with the same kind of stones. And in that city no man is so bold as to shed blood - neither of man or beast - on account of their devotion to an idol that is worshipped there. In this city lives the Pope of their religion, whom they call Lobassi. He distributes all the honours and benefices that belong to their idols; and all the priests and ministers of the idols are obedient to him as our priests are to our Pope.

In this land it is a custom everywhere that when any man's father is dead and his son wants to honour him, he sends for all the kinsfolk, his good friends, priests of their religion, minstrels and others; and they carry the body to a hill with great solemnity and great rejoicing. When they get there, the most important priest strikes off the dead man's head and lays it on a great platter of silver, or of gold if he is a rich man, and gives it to his son. And then all his friends sing and say many prayers, and then the priests and religious men of their cult hew the body into small pieces and say many prayers. And birds of that land, familiar with this custom, gather there and hover around them - vultures, eagles, ravens, and other raptors; the priests throw this flesh to them, and they carry it a little way off and eat it. And then, just as priests in our country sing for the souls of the dead *Subuenite, sancti Dei*, so those priests there sing with a loud voice in their language, 'Regard and see how good a man this was, whom the angels of God come to fetch to Paradise.' Then the son and all his friends think that his father has been greatly honoured when the birds have eaten him. And the more birds that arrive the more joy have all his friends, the more they think the dead man is honoured. Then the son goes home taking all the friends with him, and he gives them a great feast; each one tells the

others in their mirth how ten or sixteen, or twenty birds came, just as if it were a great cause for rejoicing to them. Then the son boils his father's head, and the flesh from it he distributes among his special friends, giving each one a little bit, as a dainty. And from the cranium of the head he has a cup made, and he drinks from it all his lifetime in remembrance of his father.

From this land, coming in this direction through the land of the Great Khan for ten days' journey, is another good isle, whose King is rich and mighty. And in that land there is a lord who is marvellously rich; yet he is neither prince nor duke nor earl. Nevertheless many a man holds his land of him, and he is a lord of great wealth. Each year he has brought him three thousand horses laden with corn, and as many with rice. This lord leads a marvellous life. For he has fifty maidens who serve him each day at his meals and his bed, and do what he wills. And when he sits at his meals, they bring him meat, always five dishes at once; and while bringing them they sing a lovely song. They cut up his meat in front of him and put it in his mouth as if he were a child; for he cuts none and touches none with his hands, which he keeps always on the table in front of him. For he has such long nails on his fingers that he can hold nothing with them. It is accounted very noble, and a great honour, to have such long nails in that country. Therefore they let their nails grow as long as they can and cut them not. Some let them grow so long that they grow all round the hand; they think it is very noble, a mark of great gentility. The mark of nobility in women there is to have small feet; and so as soon as they are born, they bind their feet so tightly that they cannot grow as big as they should. These damsels I mentioned, as long as their lord is sitting at table, are always singing near at hand. When he has eaten enough of the first course, they bring five other dishes before him, singing all the while. And so they do to the end of the meal. And in this way this lord leads his life, following the ancient custom of his ancestors, which custom his successors will follow in the same way. And thus they make their belly their god, so that they achieve no worthiness or bravery, living only in pleasure and delight of the flesh, like a pig in a sty. This rich man also has a very beautiful rich palace, where he lives, of which the wall is two miles in circuit. Therein are many fine gardens; and all the pavement of the halls and chambers is of gold and silver. And in the middle of one of the gardens is a little hill, whereon is a little palace with towers and pinnacles all of gold; therein he will often sit to disport himself and take the air, for it serves no other purpose.

From this land men come through the land of the Great Khan, of

which I told you before, and so I do not need to go over it all again. Know that in all those lands, realms and nations, except for those inhabited by men lacking reason, there is no people which does not hold some of the articles of our faith. Even if they are of divers beliefs and creeds, they have some good points of our truth. And generally they believe in God who made the world, and Him they call God of Nature; and thus is the prophecy made true that says, *Et metuent eum omnes fines terre*, that is, 'And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him,'* and in another place, *Omnnes gentes servient ei*, that is, 'All people shall serve him.'† But they cannot properly talk of God, especially of the Trinity, because they have had no instruction. They know nothing of the Son, nor of the Holy Ghost; but they can speak of the Bible and especially of the book of Genesis and other books of Moses, and sometimes of the sayings of the twelve Prophets. And they say that those creatures that they worship are not gods, but they honour them for the great virtues that are in them, which may not be without the special grace of God. And about idols and simulacres they say that there is no people that does not have simulacres; they say that especially as they see Christian men with crucifixes and images of Our Lady and of other saints, doing honour to them. But they do not know that we do not worship those images of stone or wood for themselves, but in remembrance of the saints for whom they were made. They say also that angels speak to them in their idols, and perform miracles. They say truly, for they do have an angel inside them; but there are two sorts of angels, that is, one good, one bad, as the men of Greece say, Chaco [*κακός*] and Calo [*καλός*]. Chaco is the bad angel and Calo the good. But that is no good angel that is in their idols, but a bad one – that is, a devil who answers them and tells them many things to deceive them and maintain them in their idolatry and their error.

There are many other countries and other marvels which I have not seen, and so I cannot speak of them properly; and also in the countries I have been to there are many marvels which I have not spoken of, for it would be too long to tell of them all. And also I do not want to say any more about marvels that there are there, so that other men who go there can find new things to speak of which I have not mentioned. For many men have great delight and desire in hearing of new things; and so I shall cease telling of the different things I saw in those countries, so that those who desire to visit those countries may find enough new things to speak of for the solace and recreation of those whom it pleases to hear them.

* Psalm lxxvii, 7.

† Psalm lxxvii, 11.

And I, John Mandeville, knight, left my country and crossed the sea in the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1332; I have travelled through many lands, countries and isles, and have been on many honourable journeys, and many honourable deeds of arms with worthy men, although I am unworthy; I am now come to rest, a man worn out by age and travel and the feebleness of my body, and certain other causes which force me to rest. I have compiled this book and written it, as it came into my mind, in the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1366,* that is to say in the thirty-fourth year after I left this land and took my way to those parts.

[And forasmuch as many men believe nothing but what they see with their own eyes, or that they can imagine with their own natural wit, on my way home I made my way to Rome to show my book to our Holy Father the Pope. And I told him of the marvels I had seen in different countries, asking that he with his wise council would examine it, with different people who are in Rome, for in that city there are always men living who come from all the nations of the world. And a little while afterwards, when he and his wise council had examined it all the way through, he said to me that certainly everything was true that was in it. For he said he had a book in Latin that contained all these things and much more, after which book the *Mappa Mundi* has been made; and he showed me that book. And so our Holy Father the Pope has ratified and supported my book in all points.]†

Wherefore I pray that all those who read (or hear this book read) will pray for me, and I shall pray for them. And to all those who say devoutly for me a *Pater Noster* and an *Ave*, so that God may forgive my sins, may God grant a share in my pilgrimage and all other good deeds that I have done or may do in time to come up to my life's end. And I, as far as in me lies, do make them partakers in those good deeds, praying

* 1322 for setting out and 1356 for the writing in Cotton and Defective.

† This paragraph is a clumsy interpolation found only in the English versions of the *Travels* and one late-fifteenth-century Latin MS. The contradiction of the author's statement about writing his book at home in his old age is obvious; moreover, the popes did not return to Rome from Avignon until 1377, despite Urban V's ill-fated attempt. I have argued elsewhere ('Sir John Mandeville's Visit to the Pope: the Implications of an Interpolation', *Neophilologus* 54 (1970), pp. 77–80) that the interpolation might be used to attach a *terminus post quem* of 1377 to any English translation now known. In addition, its concern for papal approval might suggest that one important redactor recognized the controversial nature of some of the statements in the book, and, in the rapidly polarizing religious atmosphere of the time, sought to protect his work.

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to God of whom all grace comes, that He fill with His grace all those who hear or read this book, and save them and keep them in body and soul, and after this life bring them to the country where there is joy and endless rest and peace without end. Amen.

Here ends the book of John Mandeville.

APPENDIX I: THE ALPHABETS

Several texts of the *Travels* include a number of alphabets of the various countries described. Scribal transmission, both in the copying of Mandeville and in the texts from which the originals of the alphabets might have been drawn, has made many of the examples of the alphabets might degree. They are here reproduced (redrawn) from the Egerton MS, whose forms are more corrupt than those of the Paris text of 1371.

Mr Letts, in his *Sir John Mandeville, The Man and His Book*, concluded that the Greek was genuine with some corruptions; the Egyptian was genuine Coptic, but garbled; the Hebrew accurate in the names of the letters but corrupt in the forms; the Saracen was based on a corrupt Runic; and the Persian and Chaldean were doublets based (probably) on Nestorian-Syrian.

Obviously their usefulness is extremely limited. But it was not at all unusual for travel writers of this and later periods to introduce into their narratives alphabets or even small compendia of useful phrases. (Sometimes, as in the later expansions of Mandeville, or some sixteenth-century satiric Utopias, these are clearly fictional.) The inclusion of alphabets in the *Travels* thus indicates that the author has considered the common characteristics of the form he has consciously adopted, and may indeed have intended them as additional means of convincing his readers of the seriousness of his material. They, unlike us, would have had only a slight chance of checking them. All the indications are, as Mr Letts pointed out, that Mandeville took the alphabets from the best sources available to him: this, judging by the rest of the book, is what we would expect.