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Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World

Katharine Scarfe Beckett

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KATHARINE SCARFE BECKETT

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Abbreviations

Full titles are listed in the bibliography. Sigla of Old English psalter-glosses are listed in the bibliography under 'Old English psalter-glosses'.

Annales ESC	*Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
BL	British Library
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BNJ	*British Numismatic Journal*
Bodley 163	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 163
Cameron	Frank and Cameron, *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English* (cited by item number)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis
CHI	*Cambridge History of Islam*
CPL	*Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, ed. Dekkers
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EETS	Early English Text Society
EI^2	*Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition
Etym.	Isidore, *Etymologiae*
GA	*Graeco-Arabica*
Gameson	Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England* (cited by item number)
Gneuss	Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (cited by item number)

Historiae	Orosius, *Historiae aduersum paganos*
In Hier.	Jerome, *Commentarius in Hieremiam prophetam*
In Ezech.	Jerome, *Commentarii in Ezechielem*
In Isaiam	Jerome, *Commentarii in Isaiam*
LHNom.	Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*
LQHGen.	Jerome, *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
— AA	Auctores antiquissimi
— SS	Scriptores
— Ep.Car.aeu.	Epistolae Carolini aeui
— Ep.Mer.&Car.	Epistolae Merouingici et Carolini aeui
— ES	Epistolae selectae
NC	*Numismatic Chronicle*
OE Heptateuch	*The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, ed. Crawford
OE Malchus	The Old English *Life of Malchus*, ed. Assmann
OE Orosius	*The Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. Migne
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
Reuel.1	*Reuelationes* of pseudo-Methodius (first recension), ed. Sackur
Reuel.2	*Reuelationes* of pseudo-Methodius (second recension), ed. Prinz
Royal 5.F.xviii	London, British Library, Royal 5.F.xviii, 29v–32v
Salisbury 165	Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 165, 11v–20r
Settimane	*Settimane di studio del centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*
Vita Willibaldi	Hygeburg, *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eichstetensis*

1

Introduction

In AD 786, Bishop Georgius of Ostia, papal legate to England, wrote a letter to Pope Hadrian recording the decrees of two synods he had just attended in Mercia and Northumbria. The list of decrees reads unremarkably until the ninth item:

> Item nine. That no ecclesiastic shall dare to consume foodstuffs in secret, unless on account of very great illness, since it is hypocrisy and a Saracen practice.[1]

Why does the author introduce the idea of Saracen eating habits? Benjamin Kedar suggests that Georgius or his colleague, Theophylact, had some notion of Muslim fasting practice during the month of Ramadan, when food and drink may only be consumed between dusk and dawn. In the course of the synod, one or the other conveyed this information to the assembly as an example of how not to fast as a Christian.[2] There is no evidence that any Muslim had travelled as far west as England by this time. Arabic was not studied in Christian Europe before the late eleventh century; the Qur'ān was not translated into Latin until the twelfth.[3] The assembled Anglo-Saxon clerics can hardly have had the tenets of Islam at their fingertips. Still, they were able from this synodal decree to understand *Saracenus* as a pejorative term three centuries before the Crusades.

Within a few years of the synod, Offa, king of Mercia, had a peculiar gold piece struck in his name. This coin, now held by the British Museum, bears

[1] 'Nono capite, ut nullus ex ecclesiasticis cibum in secreto sumere audeat, nisi pr[a]e nimia infirmitate, quia hypocrisis et Saracenorum est'; 'Georgii episcopi Ostiensis epistola', ed. Dümmler, MGH Ep.Car.aeu. II, 22. Unless otherwise indicated, translations into English are mine.

[2] Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, p. 30.

[3] D'Alverny, 'Deux traductions', p. 71, and Bobzin, 'Latin Translations', pp. 193–6.

the legend *Offa Rex* and also, surprisingly, somewhat bungled Arabic inscriptions on obverse and reverse in imitation of an Islamic dinar.[4] That the script was not understood by the imitator is clear both from its miscopying and from the fact that it represents the Muslim declaration of faith in one God of whom Muhammad is the prophet. A number of explanations have been offered for this remarkable artefact: it may, perhaps, have been part of a gift to the pope, or an example of high-denomination coinage for international trade.[5] It is possible that the same Georgius and Theophylact who attended the synods of 786 brought the prototype of Offa's dinar to England.

These two curious survivals, the allusion by Georgius and Offa's dinar, present the observer with a number of questions. From what sources other than Rome might the Anglo-Saxons have learnt about Islam? If George means to denigrate Muslim fasting practice, why does he refer to *Saraceni* rather than to *Arabes* or some equivalent of the word 'Muslim'? Do other references to Saracens, Muslims or Arabs survive in Anglo-Saxon literature? Did any objects other than coins reach England from Islamic territories? Did Anglo-Saxons in the late eighth century, or later, perceive any connection between the Arabic inscription on the coin (which was thought worthy of imitation) and the Saracen fast (which was most emphatically not)? What – if anything – did they think about the newly instituted religion and empire of Islam? The aim of this book is to explore these questions and to attempt some answers with reference to texts and objects which have survived from Anglo-Saxon England. More broadly, the argument also draws upon Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens to contextualise and, to some extent, dispute the theory of Orientalism as formulated in Edward Said's famous book *Orientalism*, first published in 1978.

Mutual perceptions and contacts between medieval Europe and the Islamic world are the subject of a number of specialised fields of study, including the history of trade across the Mediterranean, numismatics, society and culture in the Iberian peninsula, the Crusades, Muslim writings about Europe and western Christian manuscript culture. Even a select bibliography on so many topics is precluded by constraints of space; works particularly relevant to Anglo-Saxon perceptions of the Arabs and Saracens are cited below. Apparently no cross-Mediterranean trade records, visual representations of contemporary Muslims or transcripts of dialogue with Muslims

[4] Illustrated in North, *English Hammered Coinage*, I, pl. 3, item 37.

[5] See below, pp. 58–91.

survive in England, and archaeological evidence for direct contact is scant. Evidence for Anglo-Saxon awareness of the Islamic world survives mostly in the form of literary records, and so, with two exceptions, the chapters below are concerned with written accounts of the Arabs and Saracens.[6]

Many studies have already addressed medieval literature on Islam in a wider European context – more or less ambitiously. One of the earlier English writers to take a critical stance towards earlier authors on the subject was Henry Stubbe (1631–76), whose own engaging account of Islam and Muhammad sadly only circulated in manuscript form.[7] During the first half of the twentieth century, Byron Porter Smith composed a monograph describing the story of Muhammad in English thought from the Middle Ages to Carlyle. Stubbe's 1954 editor, Hafiz Shairani, provided an appendix 'Containing Early Christian Legends and Notions Concerning Islam' which mentions examples of imaginative Christian calumny of Islam from Matthew Paris to Alexander Ross. Richard Southern wrote his well-known account, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, in 1962, and in it emphasised early medieval ignorance in contrast with later knowledge of Islam. The late Dorothee Metlitzki published *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* in 1977 to investigate more deeply the literary use of Islamic and Oriental sources in medieval English literature.

More recently, interest has tended to focus on the swift and exciting developments in western perceptions of Islam which took place during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, at a time when other European links with the Islamic world were also undergoing great change.[8] Thus,

[6] The exceptions are the first and second chapters, devoted respectively to a brief and basic history of Islam between the sixth and eleventh centuries, and to the travel of objects and people between Anglo-Saxon England and territories under Islamic rule. It should be noted here that this book does not address the subject of the monstrous races of the Orient. Useful works on the idea of an Oriental 'Other' as portrayed in early medieval accounts of the wondrous East have been undertaken by Campbell in *The Witness and the Other World* and Orchard in *Pride and Prodigies*. On pictures of Ismael in Anglo-Saxon England, see Ohlgren, *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Illuminated Manuscripts*, *s.v.* 'Ismael'; Schapiro, 'The Bowman and the Bird'; Farrell, 'The Archer and Associated Figures' (with the caveat that his treatment of Latin sources is occasionally unreliable); and Mellinkoff, 'The Round, Cap-Shaped Hats'.

[7] Stubbe, *Mahometanism*, ed. Shairani, pp. iv–xiii and 151–65; noted by Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 309–10, and Porter Smith, *Islam in English Literature*, pp. 71–2.

[8] Many studies, therefore, address the image of Saracens (Muslims, Arabs, etc.) in the *chansons de geste*: for example, Meredith Jones, 'The Conventional Saracen'; Gregoire, 'Des dieux

following the ground-breaking work by Charles H. Haskins and Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny some decades ago, the activities of the first western Arabists and the introduction of Arabic learning into north-western Europe constitute a topic in themselves, and have been the subject of many studies.[9] Other western portrayals of Muhammad and the religion of Islam from this period have been described by a number of scholars including d'Alverny, Norman Daniel and Jean Flori.

Analyses of Islam and the Muslims as they appear in texts dating from the Anglo-Saxon period, between the seventh and eleventh centuries, are somewhat scarcer. They usually form prolegomena to more detailed examinations of the later literature.[10] However, they provide partial answers for some of the questions raised above. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, for example,

Cahu, Baratron, Tervagant'; Y. and C. Pellat, 'L'idée de Dieu chez les Sarrasins'; Edmonds, 'Le portrait des Sarrasins'; Bancourt, *Les musulmans dans les chansons de geste*; White, 'Saracens and Crusaders'; Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 338–43 (Appendix 1, 'The Imputation of Idolatry to Islam'); *idem*, 'Sarrasins, chevaliers et moines dans les chansons de geste'; *idem*, *Heroes and Saracens* (includes a useful bibliography); and Flori, 'La caricature de l'Islam (the notes of which cite further recent works). Other portrayals of Islam at this time have been tackled in, for example, d'Alverny, 'Pierre le Vénérable et la légende de Mahomet'; Munro, 'The Western Attitude toward Islam'; Hill, 'The Christian View of the Muslims'; Daniel, 'The Impact of Islam on the Laity' and 'The Critical Approach to Arab Society'; Kedar, '*De Iudeis et Sarracenis*'; and Kelly, '"Blue" Indians, Ethiopians and Saracens'. Still useful is the compendious article written in 1889 by d'Ancona, 'La leggenda di Maometto in Occidente'. The above list constitutes a brief selection of literature on the topic.

[9] Charles Burnett recently lectured on *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England* (Panizzi Lectures, 1996); see also his editions of collected articles by d'Alverny: *La transmission des textes* and *Pensée médiévale en Occident*. A good overview is provided by the articles in *The Introduction of Arabic Philosophy into Europe*, ed. Butterworth and Kessel (including Burnett's 'The Introduction of Arabic Learning into British Schools', pp. 40–57). Useful earlier works in this field are Haskins, *Studies in the History of Medieval Science*, and d'Alverny, 'La connaissance de l'Islam en Occident' and 'Deux traductions'. Early astronomy in England is also discussed by McCluskey, 'Astronomies in the Latin West', and B. Eastwood, 'The Astronomies'. Makdisi suggests that the rise of scholasticism in twelfth-century western Europe was inspired by contemporary scholarly method in the Islamic world (see his 'Interaction', pp. 288 and 308–9 and, more particularly, 'The Scholastic Method').

[10] See, for example, Southern, *Western Views of Islam*, pp. 1–33; Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, pp. 49–79, and his *Islam and the West*, pp. 11–23. Daniel acknowledges the work of Kedar and Rotter on the early period of European understanding of the Arabs (*Islam and the West*, pp. 16 and 28–9). Wallace-Hadrill has discussed Bede's perceptions of the Saracens in some detail ('Bede's Europe', pp. 76–80).

discussed Bede's knowledge of contemporaneous Muslim activity in Europe around the turn of the seventh century.[11] Richard Southern and Norman Daniel have sketched some history and medieval usage of the terms *Saraceni*, *Ismaelitae* and *Agareni*, concerning which Daniel makes the significant point that, during the Middle Ages, *Arabes* – a word used comparatively rarely – indicated something quite different from *Saraceni* and the others.[12] It should be noted here too that ignorance of Islam was not necessarily the same as ignorance of Muslims. Daniel points out that until the twelfth century, the Muslims were generally portrayed by western authors as mere invaders without a religious aspect, which suggests that the early medieval imagination did not distinguish between (pre-Islamic) Arabs and Muslims.[13] To the important analyses by Southern and Daniel should be added the useful first chapter of *Crusade and Mission* by Benjamin Kedar, who further emphasises the key part played by early medieval writings in shaping later apprehensions of Islam.

These works focus on European writers who lived during or after the rise of Islam. The discussions by Daniel and Southern are furthermore chiefly concerned with 'attitudes and opinions of Latin Christians, and not primarily with the data available to them', and for the most part are also 'strictly confined to matters of religion'. So Daniel outlines his aims; so also a general emphasis in modern scholarship on new western perceptions of Islam as a religion during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[14] However, K. B. Wolf, among others, has elsewhere argued succinctly for the importance of the monastic curriculum of scriptural and patristic writings in shaping western perceptions of the Muslims.[15] If, as

[11] Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede's Europe', p. 79.

[12] Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, p. 53; Southern, *Western Views*, pp. 16–17. Sénac suggests that medieval authors used the terms *Saraceni*, *Ismaelitae* and *Agareni* in a state of confusion (*L'image de l'autre*, p. 14); I hope to demonstrate that this was usually not the case in Anglo-Saxon England.

[13] 'As in the early Carolingian period, so through the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, and until armed aggression became rewarding in the new epoch of success, the impact of the Arabs, usually as invaders, was not the impact of Islam or of anything specifically Islamic. No one clearly differentiated Arabs from other invaders, even uncivilized Northmen and Hungarians . . . References to the religion of the Arabs in all this period are sparse and slight' (Daniel, 'The Impact of Islam on the Laity', pp. 107–8).

[14] *Islam and the West*, pp. 24–5.

[15] 'Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain', p. 86. Lamoreaux, too, points out that eastern Christian authors first viewed the Muslims in the context of previously conceived

Daniel suggests, medieval authors did not distinguish between pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabs, it follows that authoritative pre-Islamic statements about the Arabs may have influenced medieval conceptualisations of the Muslims.

In fact, the very use of the name *Saraceni* to refer to Muslims suggests this kind of influence. A people called *Saraceni* had already been described by Jerome in the fourth century. Medieval authors in the West applied the same name to the new conquerors in the seventh century, attributing pre-Islamic characteristics to 'Saracens' who by then had become Muslims. This is acknowledged by Ekkehart Rotter in *Abendland und Sarazenen*, a detailed and widely ranging analysis of western perceptions of the Muslims during the seventh and eighth centuries.[16] Rotter notes that many early accounts of the Muslims drew upon writings which date from before the rise of Islam.[17]

As far as Anglo-Saxon literature is concerned, however, Rotter does not sufficiently emphasise the continuing influence of pre-Islamic authorities, especially Jerome. The writings of such authorities were not merely cited but recopied and read in their own right throughout the Middle Ages. Works by influential figures such as Jerome, Cassian, Augustine and Isidore combined prestige with currency. These and other authors are discussed in chapters 4 and 5 below to show how Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens were presented in the kind of literature that many Latinate Christians contemplated on a regular, perhaps daily basis.[18]

stereotypes of the Arabs ('Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam', pp. 11 and 24). Ogle shows that even in the twelfth century, Petrus Comestor depended on the writings of Jerome for his description of the Muslims ('Petrus Comestor', pp. 323–4). See also below, n. 17, on examples given by Rotter of patristic influence on early medieval accounts of Islam.

[16] See the review article by Daniel, *Al Masāq* 1 (1988), pp. 39–41.

[17] Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, p. 12 (Jerome cited by Adomnán); p. 70 (Jerome drawn upon by a continental chronicler); p. 90, n. 92 (Isidore cited by Bede); pp. 141–3 (Jerome as a source for Aldhelm's prose *De uirginitate*); and pp. 235–6 (Jerome cited by Bede). See, too, the articles in both the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (ed. Houtsma *et al.*) and the second (*EI*^{2}), *s.v.* 'Saracen', and Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 68–77 and 130–45. The topic is addressed in more detail in chapters 4–9 below.

[18] Lapidge, 'Anglo-Latin Literature', p. 4: 'meditation on the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory would have been the lifelong occupation of a monk'. See pp. 1–5 for an outline of the kind of literary curriculum which an Anglo-Saxon student of Latin might have addressed in a monastic school. On Latin learning in Anglo-Saxon

Such surviving influences from the past were complemented by various contemporary references to Islam. Rotter and Kedar argue that news of Islam both as a religious and a military entity was widely available before 1100 in even the extreme west of Europe.[19] Kedar mentions, for example, a reference by the mid-ninth-century biblical commentator Paschasius Radbertus which indicates that he knew Islam to be a monotheistic faith with similarities to Judaism and Christianity.[20] However, such an informed opinion seems to be exceptional. European commentary on Islam before the

England in general, see Lapidge's volumes of collected articles, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* and *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066*.

[19] Kedar comments: '. . . it is evident that a considerable amount of information about the Saracens did reach Catholic Europe between the mid-seventh and early eleventh century, and therefore it is inaccurate to describe this period . . . as the age of ignorance', and 'lack of interest rather than ignorance characterized the Catholic European stance toward the religion of the Saracens in the period under discussion' (*Crusade and Mission*, p. 35; see also pp. 25–34 on early medieval knowledge of Islam). Rotter notes: 'England und Irland liegen zwar am Rand der Welt, aber sie sind – wie solche Beispiele verdeutlichen – keineswegs vom Informationsfluß abgeschlossen' (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, p. 144). On English perceptions of Islam, Rotter discusses pilgrimages to Jerusalem which were made by or known to Anglo-Saxons (pp. 31–65) and refers to the writings of Bede, Aldhelm and Alcuin on the Arabs and Saracens.

[20] Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, pp. 30–1; he cites the original passage by Paschasius Radbertus on p. 205. See Paschasius' *Expositio in Matheum*, CCCM 56B, 1163; he describes Islam as a corrupt monotheistic faith which adopts material from both the Old and New Testaments but identifies itself with neither Judaism nor Christianity. This comment on Islam should be viewed alongside two others in the same work which together considerably strengthen Kedar's case for the availability of accurate information on Islam by the ninth century. In the first, discussing the description in the book of Daniel of the corruption of the Jewish faith and the desecration of the temple, *in templo abominatio desolationis*, Paschasius comments: 'In tantum ut in loco quo prius templum et religio fuit, Sarraceni phanum culturae suae habeant in modum sancti templi ad prophanationem sanctuarii quod sua lingua ut aiunt Myschydam uocant' (*Expositio in Matheum*, CCCM 56, 146). The second passage, in a similar vein, again connects the Saracens with the prophecies of Daniel: 'Unde idem propheta: "Consummatio, inquit, dabitur super desolationem Hierusalem". . . Sed in eodem ciuitatis loco nunc phanum Sarracenorum est in modum templi in quo nullus Iudeorum audet introire' (*Expositio in Matheum*, CCCM 56B, 1167). These remarks are of considerable interest both for the manner in which they describe the Saracen religion and places of worship as false copies of 'real' Christian faith (cf. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 58–63, on perceptions of Islam as an imitation of Christianity) and for the fact that Paschasius Radbertus had encountered a genuine religious term from the Saracen language: *myschyda* is a fair Latinisation of the Arabic word *masjid* which also gives the modern English 'mosque'.

Crusades is striking to modern readers for its lack of curiosity. It suggests that western thinkers were the more disinclined to realise the novelty of Islam because they already knew about 'Saracens' from the numerous earlier authorities.

Clearly, it would be of considerable interest to draw together and correlate all known references to the Saracens which were available to European readers over the five centuries between the rise of Islam and the more frequently studied period of the Crusades. Such a collection would, ideally, include not only mentions of the Saracens from works contemporaneous with the Islamic conquests, but also comments written before the rise of Islam which were known to later authors. One might then address the question not only of what relationship obtained between inherited and contemporary accounts of the Saracens during this period, but also what conceptual context for Islam already existed by the time it was first noticed in the West, and what changes (if any) took place in western perceptions of Islam between the early seventh century and the Crusades. As yet, however, no such broadly based catalogue and analysis exists; and on a European scale the sheer quantity of relevant material would be impossible to treat within the bounds of a single study.

However, a more limited investigation based on a number of texts known in Anglo-Saxon England can succeed, for a variety of reasons. The period of Anglo-Saxon literacy coincides almost exactly with the centuries in question (from the beginning of the seventh century, when Augustine's mission began preaching Christianity in England and Islam was revealed to Muhammad, to roughly 1100, when the increasing dominance of Anglo-Norman culture and the success of initial crusading efforts provide a convenient *terminus ante quem*). Furthermore, information about Islam could only arrive from or via the Continent, while many works by Anglo-Saxons such as Bede and Aldhelm were also known abroad. To the degree that western Christian authors and audiences drew upon a common literary corpus, information about Islam that arrived in Anglo-Saxon England is representative of that which circulated on the Continent. At the same time, a particularly rich legacy of Old English writings raises the possibility of discovering peculiarly Anglo-Saxon literary responses to imported accounts of the Saracens. Thus, though conclusions about early English perceptions of Islam and the Saracens in general would not necessarily be applicable across medieval Europe, they would provide a useful

starting point for further studies. Chapters 3 to 8 explore the available material.

Bearing in mind the possibility of studies ranging further in time as well as in space, chapter 9 of this book then pursues two ideas about Saracens which were known to Anglo-Saxon readers and which persisted through subsequent centuries of textual production in England. For centuries, it remained possible for the authors of Christian texts to state that the Saracens had named themselves wrongfully and associated their religious practice with the planet or goddess Venus. Examples are given from the twelfth to the seventeenth century. In the light of the later examples it can be seen that Anglo-Saxon readings and writings about the Saracens contributed to a long history of transmission in which similar information, repeated over and over again, was altered only as necessary to fit comfortably into new contexts. This remained as true after the Conquest as it had been before. The later examples may cause us to reconsider our ideas about authority and authorial intentions during the Middle Ages and they certainly prompt a re-examination of the idea that significant western awareness of Muslims as Saracens began more or less with the Crusades.

Briefly, new information about the religion and empire of Islam did reach England before the Norman Conquest, but it arrived in a context dominated by older, inherited images of the Arabs, Saracens and Ismaelites. Examination of Old English texts leads to a refinement of this picture: Saracens in the vernacular were presented in simpler and more concrete terms than their counterparts in educated Latin. Western writers sometimes combined old information with new but their explanations of people we now term Muslims were formulated within a framework of received ideas and definitions which often bore little relation to the contemporary situation in Islam.

Rare exceptions, such as the comment on Saracen fasting cited above, or a description of Muslim bureaucracy in the Holy Land by the English pilgrim Willibald, underline the discrepancy between received opinion and new information. The relationship between contemporary references to Muslims in Anglo-Saxon England and earlier Latin writings is addressed especially in chapters 3, 6 and 8 below. As Kedar noted, conservatism prevailed in the bulk of learned references to the Saracens while a scattering of contemporary witnesses recorded aspects of the changing political and religious scene.

ORIENTALISM IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

According to Edward Said, a comparable gap between inherited traditional concepts and new observations on Islam characterised Orientalist writings of the nineteenth century:

> As the commercial, political, and other existential encounters between East and West increased . . . a tension developed between the dogmas of latent Orientalism, with its support in studies of the 'classical' Orient, and the descriptions of a present, modern, manifest Orient articulated by travelers, pilgrims, statesmen, and the like. At some moment impossible to determine precisely, the tension caused a convergence of the two types.[21]

What place does postcolonial theory have in an examination of early views of Saracens? There are several reasons for looking more closely at the portions of Said's *Orientalism* which might apply to 'the Middle Ages'. Firstly and most simply, he characterises modern Orientalism in very general terms which invite comparisons with earlier periods. Secondly, his picture of Orientalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries includes a supposed historical link with some kind of medieval Orientalism but – between the diffuseness of Said's definitions of 'Orientalism' itself and the selective evidence he provides in *Orientalism* for the medieval centuries – it has been hard to know whether or not he has a plausible case. Thirdly, an examination of Anglo-Saxon perceptions of people whom Said assumes to constitute 'Oriental' subject-matter shows that Crusade-dominated and Empire-centred versions of history may cause us to read early medieval *Arabes* and *Saraceni* in a particular and inappropriate way. Fourthly, in relation to the second and third points, Said's own discussion more than hints that it would like to construct a Christian Middle Ages as the bad source, to some extent, of modern evils, and this is provocative enough in itself to warrant further examination.

Nothing is clearer from *Orientalism* than that discourses construct what they purport to describe. Said initially divides 'Orientalism' into three types. A generally Orientalist attitude had pervaded European thought since the earliest records of 'the basic distinction between East and West'. Another kind of Orientalism consisting of expertise about an identifiable Orient might also relate to some authors read in Anglo-Saxon England. A third, corporate institution of Orientalism can be observed from the

[21] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 222–3.

late eighteenth century onwards.[22] In the passage cited above, Said also distinguishes the categories 'latent Orientalism' and 'manifest Orientalism'. 'Latent Orientalism' is an inherent attitude and 'manifest Orientalism' a set of stated views and sometimes actions.[23] However, 'latent Orientalism', as used above, seems further to mean a conservative body of statements while 'manifest Orientalism' seems to signify statements about the immediate Orient in the here and now.

It is difficult to find a plausible alternative to the term 'Orientalism' when describing Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Saracens in relation to Said's thesis. This may be partly because it is difficult actually to point to a distinct corresponding phenomenon in Anglo-Saxon texts until the word itself, with its imperial freight, has been invoked, at which point it becomes difficult to see anything else. This problem is discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter below. In the meantime I have used the word quite vaguely, as Said does, glossing over the problem of whether 'Anglo-Saxon' can represent 'West' while 'Arabs, Ismaelites, Saracens' represent 'East'. Said's own bias is towards an 'Orient' represented by 'Islam'. It is more difficult to guess what might have constituted the East or the Orient to Anglo-Saxon readers. Said's 'basic distinction between East and West' may not be any more basic than other medieval divisions of the cosmos. This clearly circles back to the question of whether to see an omnipresent 'Orientalism' which then requires the construction of its corresponding 'Orient', or whether it is the appearance of an Orient in the literature which indicates that, a process of Orientalisation having taken place, Orientalism must be alive and well. At any rate, it seems that Said's ideas about medieval representations of an Orient must be clarified, if at all, by engaging with the texts themselves.

The problem of nomenclature arises again for less critically charged words. Not only have survivals such as *Arabs*, *Turks* and *Muslims* changed considerably in their usage, they also fail to overlap usefully with now-archaic terms such as *Saracens*, *Ismaelites*, *Hagarenes* or *Mahometans* which themselves are far from coterminous. A clear difference between *Arabes* and *Saraceni* emerges from surviving Anglo-Saxon literature – and it is doubtful whether 'Muslim' should ever automatically translate *Saracenus* in a text from this period, even when the text quite clearly refers to the (originally northern Arabian) adherents of Qur'ānic religion who assumed rule of Asia, Africa and Europe during the seventh and eighth centuries or later. Where

[22] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 2–3. [23] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 206.

a modern proper name seems to me too narrow to refer to people understood by Anglo-Saxon readers as *Saraceni*, for example, I have resorted to the modern English 'Saracen', intending to reflect medieval perceptions rather than my own and not expecting it to be thought equivalent with 'Arab', 'Muslim' or indeed any later brand of imagined Saracen such as those found in Sir Walter Scott's stories.

Reference to historical entities like 'the Arabs', 'the caliphate(s)' or 'the Muslim world' is also imprecise in the absence of any very clear contemporary agreement on the edges and gaps of the terms. Where I use 'Muslim' or 'Islam' in the course of discussion, it is for convenience and refers to our present-day identification of a religion and polity of Islam after the 630s. (The idea that there is one Muslim religion and one polity called Islam is of course itself untrue, although it was a single caliphate after Muhammad's death.) Other generalisations employed below, again for the sake of convenience, are 'Europe', 'Christendom', 'Christian thought', 'the West' and so forth. As suggested above, use of 'Muslim', 'Islam', etc. should not be taken to indicate that an Anglo-Saxon could conceive of a Saracen religion and government distinguished by any features which we would today recognise as characteristically Islamic.

In the passage cited above, Said is discussing 'latent' and 'manifest' Orientalism in the early nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, according to Said, these two kinds of Orientalism coincided, for reasons intimately bound up with western territorial expansion in the Orient and the new role of the Orientalist as governmental policy advisor.[24] His description raises interesting questions about the medieval perceptions which are supposed to have nurtured the most broadly defined and longest-lived aspect of his 'Orientalism'. Might it be that during the late eleventh century there occurred in the literate European understanding a comparable convergence of traditional and contemporary conceptions of Saracens which was equally bound up with western territorial efforts against Islam and the political role of the church? Without necessarily identifying 'Islam' with 'Orient', it would be interesting to propose a 'proto-Orientalism' in literary representations of the Crusades, which Said does not deal with in any detail except to describe modern responses to them.[25] Daniel has raised

[24] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 221–3.

[25] See Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 58, 75, 101 (Walter Scott on Crusaders), 168, 170, 172 (Chateaubriand on Crusades) and 192.

the question of what relationship obtained between western writings on Islam and western territorial expansion during the Crusades. Like Said on the later phenomenon of Orientalism, he seems doubtful as to the exact nature of their mutual influence at this point; he suggests that the military activity perhaps did not inspire the literature so much as arise from the same context.[26] On the other hand, Daniel quite clearly states a case elsewhere for a similarity between the medieval apprehension of Islam and nineteenth-century European empire-building, which he links explicitly with the idea of Crusade.[27]

It seems to be the case that in a number of literary exercises from the Crusades period, such as the translation of the Qur'ān by Robert of Chester in Toledo, Christian polemic or the *chansons de geste*, a new and perhaps more aggressive attitude towards Islam may be seen. Authors began to imagine the subjugation of the Orient, not in terms of apocalypse or God's punishment but as a present, active interference by the Christian West in Saracen territories. Both as a religion and an empire, Islam was to be corrected by means of the conversion of Muslims (hence the need for a Latin Qur'ān and an improved knowledge of Islamic belief) and forceful repossession of previously Christian territories (the act of which is celebrated in the *chansons de geste*, for example). Earlier representations of the Saracens, including those known in Anglo-Saxon England, tended to convey the idea of Christian superiority through examples of resistance and steadfastness rather than premeditated attack. Only at the end of the tenth century do we find examples in Old English literature of battles between Christian and Muslim armies.[28] Even in these cases, it is by chance that the Christian forces meet with Saracens who initiate hostilities. The early descriptions of Christian resistance may have been profoundly hostile towards the Saracens, but their authors apparently did not conceive of Christian armed forces wilfully entering Saracen territories *en masse* in order to seize control there.

This returns us to the question of literary constructs and the relationship between text and event, important considerations in Said's construction of *Orientalism* and his call for 'worldly' criticism engaged with real experience. Muslim armies never reached Anglo-Saxon England. Saracens, unlike

[26] 'I must stress that there is no proven causal relation between the Crusade and the literature . . . Without demonstration to the contrary, we should consider the mental and the physical expansion that took place in that age as concomitant phenomena' (Daniel, 'The Impact of Islam on the Laity', p. 108).

[27] Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, pp. 321–2. [28] See below, pp. 181 and 185.

Vikings, did not impinge directly upon Anglo-Saxon daily life. However, they had a long history in Latin ecclesiastical literature and a special status in Christian thought as the conquerors of the Holy Land. Many perceptions were shaped by text before Islamic events of European significance were generally known to have occurred. Anglo-Saxon awareness of Arabs and Saracens was governed by statements in conservative Latin works which circulated in their own right, were collated and redeployed by scholars such as Bede and also interacted with vernacular and (presumably) oral culture.[29] The textual interactions took place in literate environments, which is to say church, monastery and court. Ideas about the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens subsequently entered Old English primarily through translations from the Latin. The early medieval church played a crucial part in disseminating information from the Latin. Scholars have noted that the church mediated between Latin literacy and Germanic orality in the codification of Anglo-Saxon laws, for example. Latin has been described as 'the language of cultural and political power' during the early medieval period.[30] Richard Fletcher offers many examples of European Christian conversion motivated by the promise of material gain and discusses the 'top-down' approach of missionaries who sought royal and aristocratic converts as a means of effectively disseminating the faith and gaining patronage for the church.[31] Alexander Murray summarises the appeal that literate Christianity must have had for many in proposing that it offered 'the means for a better articulation of space and time . . . it could articulate higher human mental capacities'.[32]

[29] Brown, 'Latin Writing', p. 53. O'Brien O'Keeffe discusses examples of the interaction of Latin and vernacular orality and literacy in her influential study *Visible Song*; see especially pp. 1–14, 23 and 192.

[30] Rivers, 'Adultery in Early Anglo-Saxon Society', p. 21, and Brown, 'The Dynamics of Literacy', p. 110.

[31] See Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, pp. 160–92 and 236–55.

[32] See Murray, 'The Sword is Our Pope' (review article discussing Fletcher's *The Conversion of Europe*), p. 17, and Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading*, pp. 7–9 and 15–17. Graham, in *Beyond the Written Word*, examines the nature of the Qur'ān as a spoken book; the impact of writing on oral cultures is further analysed by Goody in *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, especially pp. 132–8, to which Green refers on altered perceptions of space and time in a literate society. For other recent discussions of literacy and orality in Anglo-Saxon England, see (generally) Olson, 'Interpreting Texts', pp. 123–4 and 136–7; Erzgräber, 'The Beginnings of a Written Literature'; Meier, 'Writing and Medieval Culture'; and Schaefer, *'Ceteris Imparibus'*. Stock's *The Implications of Literacy*, an analysis of orality and literacy in the tenth and eleventh centuries, remains important; likewise

The technology of such improved articulation was the written word – initially, the Latin written word.[33] As Ælfric noted, learning Latin brought its students closer to God but a little Latin learning was a dangerous thing.[34] I use the term 'literate' to mean the ability, however minimal, of an individual to understand something from Latin or Old English writing, or from hearing spoken Latin. Thus one who could recite a handful of psalms and had a vague idea of their meaning was in some sense literate, even if unable to read.[35] 'Literacy' was a quality of Anglo-Saxon society in general in that many who did not or could not read had access to written information through those who did and who talked afterwards about what they had read, or read it out loud to an audience. This access too would have been Christianised to some extent. The notion that conversion, literacy and institutional power were inextricably linked in the early medieval period raises interesting questions about the role played by the church in propagating views of the Arabs and Islam. Since Saracens were a written phenomenon in Anglo-Saxon England, how did their representation sit with the general function of literate endeavours at the time, which was to serve the Christian cause by bringing people closer to God – and further away from those who were not deemed godly?

In *Orientalism*, Said does not take up such themes, but then his concern is to emphasise the general continuity of certain western modes of thought. He indicates that medieval perceptions of Islam have already

Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record*, a fundamental work on the shift from oral to literate mentality in England; see especially pp. 149–50, 177–8, 186–9, 232–3 and 263. On literacy and orality as evidenced in specific Old English texts, see, for example, Opland, 'From Horseback to Monastic Cell' (*Beowulf* and poems by Cynewulf); Near, 'Anticipating Alienation' (*Beowulf*); and Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word' (legal documents). Richter emphasises the continuing importance of oral culture in a newly literate society (*The Formation of the Medieval West*, pp. 45–77). Huisman, in 'Subjectivity/Orality', offers an alternative view; see especially pp. 313–14 and nn. 8 and 35.

[33] Brown, 'Latin Writing', pp. 36–7 and 39; Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, p. 9; and Ong, 'Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought', pp. 31–5. Medieval Christian literate and Latinate culture are also discussed by Irvine in *The Making of Textual Culture*, pp. 88–117.

[34] Ælfric, *Grammar*, pp. 2–3 (on the necessity of learning Latin), and *Old English Preface to Genesis*, p. 77 (on priests with little Latin who take the Old Testament literally).

[35] Brown, 'Latin Writing', pp. 40–1.

been described by such scholars as Daniel, Southern and Metlitzki.[36] Said takes his examples mostly from the eleventh century or later and his engagement with early medieval authors consists of portraying Bede (*c.* 673–735) and Luther (1483–1546) as joint representatives of a continuum of medieval European prejudice against Islam.[37] His exposition, though admirably clear, somewhat begs the question of how enlightening it is to compare western perceptions of Islam at the beginning of the eighth century, when Bede's literacy was exceptional and the Muslim armies were only just entering Spain, with those of the sixteenth, when Europe was dotted with universities and Turkish pirates raided the English coastline.

Not surprisingly, *Orientalism* has during its influential life prompted a variety of responses, including charges of inconsistency and neglect of significant areas of scholarship.[38] Of particular interest with regard to the medieval period is the publication by Nabil Matar of *Islam in Britain 1558–1685*. Matar discusses a variety of ideas about Islam that permeated western Renaissance society in complicated and influential ways before the development of the western colonial interests which occupy Said. As Matar points out, western engagements with Islam during this period reflected the

[36] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 16 (on Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*) and 60–2 (on the work of Daniel and Southern). Said describes his methodology and choice of material on pp. 15–25.

[37] Said describes 'a general European attempt from Bede to Luther' to 'make it clear to Muslims that Islam was just a misguided version of Christianity' (*Orientalism*, p. 61). It is perhaps somewhat misleading to include Bede in this attempt, since he was, so far as can be determined from his surviving writings, ignorant of Muslim religious belief and not writing for a Muslim readership. Said is more persuasive when he writes that in the works of Bede, 'the Orient and Islam are always represented as outsiders having a special role to play *inside* Europe' (*Orientalism*, p. 71). Said comments more briefly elsewhere on the medieval period; see, for example, *Covering Islam*, p. 5. The question *quid Said cum Anglo-Saxonicis?* has already received one answer in the study of Orientalism and Anglo-Saxonism by Frantzen (*Desire for Origins*, pp. 27–61, 'Origins, Orientalism, and Anglo-Saxonism in the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries') who does not, however, address Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Arabs, Ismaelites or Saracens.

[38] Many of the initial criticisms are usefully summarised by Mani and Frankenberg in 'The Challenge of *Orientalism*', a survey and critique of responses to Said's work to the mid-1980s. Said himself takes up some of the charges in his 'Afterword' to the 1995 edition of *Orientalism*. See also Daniel's careful analysis in 'Edward Said and the Orientalists'. 'Orientalism' as defined by Said has continued to provoke comment and reaction, the numerous instances of which are not listed here.

fact that the Islamic Ottoman empire was the great political power of the day. Western writings at this time were not characterised by 'the authority of possessiveness or the security of domination which later gave rise to what Edward Said has termed "Orientalism"'; Matar notes as a consequence that it would be inappropriate to apply Said's theory to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[39] Said's argument that certain kinds of prejudice have continued to characterise western literature about the Orient would appear to be only partly borne out by Matar's comment that Renaissance English references to the Saracens and Islam were in places indebted to medieval writings and ideas.[40]

But – as Matar then points out later in his discussion – it is nevertheless possible, as Said had partly done, to identify certain long-standing characteristics in Christian European representations of the Orient. Matar's example is the continuing use of the Bible.[41] On the one hand, then, Islamic success and resistance during the Renaissance period provoked responses which cannot happily be defined as 'Orientalist'. On the other, because of that same success and resistance, Islam and Muslims 'would always remain the implacable "Other"',[42] a statement which draws close to Said's that 'Orientalism is never far from . . . a collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans . . .'[43] Said's brief, generalised model of Renaissance Orientalism is both expanded and corrected by Matar's closer inspection. It is Said's aggressive sweep across literary history that makes the thesis of *Orientalism* so provocative for other scholars, whether they agree or disagree with it. This suggests a methodological problem: how to do justice to the complexity of an individual period or theme (Islam in Renaissance England, Saracens in the *chansons de geste*, Saracens in Merovingian texts, etc.) whilst trying also to do justice to the entire history of some of the ideas found within that period or theme (Saracens are devoted to Venus, Muhammad is an Ismaelite, etc. – which Said does not take up)? Or, as Said asked concerning his own approach, 'How then to recognize individuality

[39] Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp. 11–12; on capture of Christians, western ineffectuality and the religious attractions of Islam, see, more generally, pp. 1–19.

[40] Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 157.

[41] 'Indeed, as Edward Said has shown, Orientalism, which became the overarching venue for "representing" Islam and for justifying Western colonization of the Levant and North Africa in the modern period, had extensive roots in Biblical images and allusions'; Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp. 186–7.

[42] Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 187.

[43] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 7.

and to reconcile it with its intelligent, and by no means passive or merely dictatorial, general and hegemonic context?'[44]

Daniel and Said both generalise from selected evidence to propose that European authors have always striven to denigrate Islam and the Orient, as conceived in literature, in ways which somehow remain medieval (or even ancient Greek). Concerning Anglo-Saxon England, there are reasons why Said's approach especially might be thought anachronistic in some respects, and these reasons are outlined in more detail below.[45]

As noted above, Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Gauls and other western European peoples of the Middle Ages first encountered the Muslims and the Orient through the Christian Latin literature of late antiquity. Here is the Venerable Bede (*c.* 673–735), interpreting Gen. XVI.12 on an angel's prophecy regarding Ismael, the son of Abraham by the slave Hagar:

> It means that [Ismael's] seed is to live in the wilderness – that is to say, the wandering Saracens of uncertain abode, who invade all those living beside the desert, and are resisted by all. But this is how things used to be. Now, however, to such an extent is '[Ismael's] hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him' that they oppress the whole length of Africa under their sway and, moreover, inimical and full of hate towards everybody, they hold most of Asia and a considerable part of Europe.[46]

Bede wrote this passage at a time when the Islamic armies were making great advances into previously Christian regions, and there is no doubt that the Saracens he refers to are these Muslim forces.[47] However, 'Saracen', as noted above, was not a new word. Bede and other erudite ecclesiastics had learned from pre-Islamic patristic writers that the name 'Saracen' had been adopted by the Ismaelites or Hagarenes of the Old Testament. The Ismaelites had taken their new name (according to western authors) in order to claim descent from Abraham's wife Sarah rather than from their real but

[44] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 8–9.

[45] See below, 'Conclusions', pp. 231–40.

[46] 'Significat semen eius habitaturum in eremo, id est Saracenos uagos, incertisque sedibus. Qui uniuersas gentes quibus desertum ex latere iungitur incursant, et expugnantur ab omnibus. Sed haec antiquitus. Nunc autem in tantum manus eius contra omnes, et manus sunt omnium contra eum, ut Africam totam in longitudine sua ditione premant, sed et Asiae maximam partem, et Europae nonnullam omnibus exosi et contrarii teneant' (Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim* [*CPL* 1344], CCSL 118A, 201; he cites Gen. XVI.12).

[47] See below, pp. 32–3.

less reputable ancestor, the slave-woman Hagar, who was Ismael's mother.[48] The terms *Saraceni*, *Ismaelitae* and *Agareni* had been used by Jerome (*d.* 420), a Christian scholar, to refer to Arab peoples living in the Sinai peninsula and Syrian desert. By the time the Muslims of the seventh century inherited the label *Saraceni*, it had been in use for several hundred years, and in a learned Christian context it rendered the conquerors immediately familiar and explicable.

The identities and characteristics of Old Testament Ismaelites, pre-Islamic Arabs and Muslims congregated and eventually mingled within the singular embrace of the name *Saraceni*. The process was of considerable significance for the history of western perceptions of Islam. For centuries afterwards, western authors defined and characterised Muslims using negative imagery from biblical exegesis and apocalyptic literature. This kind of interpretation continued alongside (and sometimes in) learned scholarly works on Islam well into the period dealt with by Said in *Orientalism*.[49] For Said, this kind of familiarisation represents a means of controlling the disquieting novelty of the Orient by rendering it tame: 'known, and therefore less fearsome, to the Western reading public'.[50] Yet he does not provide evidence for such a process of familiarisation in early medieval Western perceptions of 'the Orient' nor note the distinct Christian scholastic influence in his notional background of 'Orientalist-inclined' thought.

Still, several examples of what at first reading appear to be 'characteristically Orientalist thought' may be teased out from the passage by Bede cited above. First, there is the idea that Orientalism consists largely in the implicit boundary which separates the necessarily different and very often

[48] As Daniel (among others) has noted, the terms *Agareni* or *Ismaelitae* were thus often included alongside *Saraceni* as a corrective (Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, p. 53).

[49] Josiah Conder, for example, whose substantial work *An Analytical and Comparative View of All Religions* was published in 1838, elsewhere drew on Rev. IX.1–10 to describe the Muslim conquerors of the seventh and eighth centuries as a plague of diabolic man-eating locusts led by the fallen angel Destroyer ('The Apocalypse', p. 77). See, generally, Matar, *Islam in Britain*, 153–83; Stubbe, *Mahometanism*, ed. Shairani, pp. 210, 245–6 and 252–3; and Porter Smith, *Islam in English Literature*, pp. 14, 27–8 and 150–3 (nineteenth century); and see chapter 9 below on the survival of two specific notions concerning Saracens.

[50] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 60, where he refers to such processes as 'domestications of the exotic'.

dangerous, threatening 'Orient' – the 'Other' – from the western writer who describes it. Bede's repetition of the words 'everybody', 'all' (*omnes*, *universus*) in opposition to the Saracens makes it clear that 'everybody' in this case excludes 'the Saracens', and that Bede belongs with 'everybody'. Related to this is his proprietorial attitude towards Africa, Asia and Europe. Bede knew of two churchmen who had travelled to England from Africa and Asia, but he himself never set foot abroad.[51] Nevertheless, implicit in his comment is the idea that the continents belong to 'everybody' (namely, 'us') who is put upon by 'them', the unrighteous Saracens. Despite his distance from these events Bede felt himself to be perfectly well-qualified to comment in sweeping terms upon the Orient, the Saracens and their activities: they are, he says, undifferentiatedly shiftless, hateful and aggressive (*uagos, incertisque sedibus*; *exosi et contrarii*), to the extent that they have irrupted from the desert where, according to scripture, they belong. His assumptions seem to correspond with Said's description of Orientalism as a textual activity by which the literary West 'possesses' the East by virtue of superior knowledge, the tacit assumption being that the West knows how to portray the East better than the East itself. Finally, Bede presents the Islamic conquests in such a way as to affirm that, far from being a new phenomenon, they demonstrate what has been known all along about the Saracens. The situation, he implies, is not so much different as even more the case – a 'domestication of the exotic' which Bede brings about simply by qualifying a verse from the book of Genesis with the words *nunc autem in tantum* ('now, however, to such an extent').

However, Bede's motives for describing the Saracens in this way lack the colonising urge and the desire for material gain which, according to Said, characterise many modern western accounts of Islam. Nor does Bede suggest in the passage cited above that organised Christian intervention is necessary to correct and control Islam. He expresses resentment of Saracen dominion in previously Christian territories but displays no overt political agenda. Even such 'latent' Orientalism, according to Said, is by no means disinterested; it remains intimately involved with western approaches to political and economic power.[52] The ideological role which the Saracens could fulfil

[51] The two churchmen were Theodore of Tarsus and his North African colleague Hadrian. They travelled from their homelands to Rome, possibly in flight from Islamic incursions, and Theodore was appointed archbishop of Canterbury; they arrived in England in AD 669 and 670 respectively. See below, pp. 116–17.

[52] See, for example, Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 300–1 and 308.

for medieval Christian authors is encapsulated in the premise upon which the whole of Bede's passage is based: the Saracens oppose Christianity and so, to the extent that they are shown to be wrong, they demonstrate that Christianity is right. As far as Empire is concerned, Bede's literary representation of the Saracens constituted an aggrandisement, however small, of the institution of the medieval church. This is not really 'Orientalism', though, since 'Occident–Orient' does not seem to be a meaningful opposition with reference to Christian superiority over Saracens in Bede's presentation.[53]

Similar processes of opposition and criticism may be seen at work not only in other comments by Bede but in a number of texts mentioning the Saracens that were known in Anglo-Saxon England. All have in common the fact that they present the Saracens in unfavourable contrast with representatives of Christian civilisation. The Saracens oppose or provoke the Christians to no avail. They act as a foil for the virtue and eventual success of the Christians and, at last, confirm their righteousness. In Jerome's *Vita Malchi* (later translated into Old English), an account of how a band of Saracens captured an erring monk, not only does the monk manage to escape with his chastity intact, but the pursuing Saracens are providentially slaughtered, enabling him to sell their camels for a good price.[54] Ælfric describes how the Christian emperor Theodosius II faced a Persian enemy employing Saracen mercenaries, all of whom were ignominiously defeated by the imperial army.[55] Similarly, according to a few brief lines in one version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the German emperor Otto II gained a hard-won victory in AD 982 against a band of Saracens who had invaded from the sea with the intention of attacking Christians.[56] Even the statement in the *Vita S. Hilarionis* by Jerome that a band of regrettably pagan Saracens beseeched Hilarion for a blessing suggests that they acknowledged some spiritual superiority in the saint.[57] The only ideological difference (it might be argued) between these examples and the vastly longer and more elaborate *chansons de geste* is the will expressed in the latter to argue the logical conviction by force of arms. To select these examples is to present a picture

[53] See below, pp. 234–7.

[54] Jerome, *Vita Malchi* [*CPL* 619]; the Old English translation [Cameron B3.3.35c] is edited by B. Assmann.

[55] Ælfric, *Old English Judges* [Cameron B8.1.6], p. 416.

[56] O'Brien O'Keeffe, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C* [Cameron B17.7], p. 85; trans. Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 124.

[57] Jerome, *Vita S. Hilarionis* [*CPL* 618], PL 23, 41.

entirely in accordance with Said's argument that all western perceptions of the East are governed by the western desire for superiority. However, if the examples above were redissolved into their context, in which any number of hostile peoples are presented in opposition to an eventually triumphant Christianity, they would probably appear to make up one small corner of a much larger picture of 'anti-Christianism', not 'Orientalism'.

It has been recognised before now that Bede in particular played a crucial part in shaping medieval western ideas of the Muslims, and that he identified them with the Old Testament Ismaelites. It has also been recognised that several of his explanations are taken from the writings of Jerome, who was widely seen as a pre-Islamic authority on the Orient.[58] What is less often noted is the scale of such borrowings and the fact that the works of Jerome continued to be copied in their own right into the twelfth century and beyond.

It is, indeed, tempting to make a case for Jerome as the first great Orientalist. A fourth-century scholar who was well educated in the classics and identified himself with Roman culture, he moved to Syria in order to learn Oriental languages, translate the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek and pursue a life of ascetic study. At his home near Bethlehem he produced a large number of works, mainly aids to biblical study, which were to dominate medieval western perceptions of the Arabs and Arabia. His extensive commentaries on the text of the Bible can be regarded as the first writings to describe in detail, from an authoritative western Christian perspective, the geography, ethnology and culture of the Middle East to a European audience who would in nearly all cases never see the lands of the Arabs for themselves. It was the works of Jerome which initially disseminated the term *Saracenus* and its etymology to the medieval West. When Bede and other Anglo-Saxon writers used *Saraceni* to signify the Muslims of the eighth century, probably without knowing that they were referring to people in some way different from pre-Islamic Arabs, the name gained a new contemporary relevance but also set limitations upon what western observers could understand about Islam.

Jerome and Bede were not, of course, Orientalists in the sense of devoting their careers to the Orient *qua* Orient. They were exegetes whose primary literary task, as they saw it, was to expound the meaning of the Bible and

[58] See, for example, Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 72–3 and 247–51; Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede's Europe', pp. 77–9; and Southern, *Western Views*, pp. 16–19.

promote a correct understanding of Christianity. To the extent that their exegesis consisted of learned expositions on ancient Middle Eastern history, culture and linguistics as they related to scripture, it might fairly be termed an Orientalist pursuit but not 'Orientalist' in Said's meaning of the word.[59] Still, the main thrust of Said's argument about modern Orientalism is precisely that it is not dedicated to knowledge in and for its own sake, though its avowed end may be the furtherance of scientific learning. Rather, it constitutes a scholarly apparatus by which the threatening Orient may be mastered through textual representations of Orientals as naturally subordinate and inferior to European observers. The traditional statements of this apparatus, backed up by matching contemporary accounts of the Orient, informed 'scientific' justifications for western colonialist activities. Arguably, this process had parallels in medieval north-western Europe. The study of the Bible throughout the early medieval period, the avowed end of which was the furtherance of Christian belief, also involved the transmission of a commentary on the threatening Saracens which showed them to be 'naturally' subordinate and inferior to Christians. Combined with increasing western awareness of Islam, this earlier apparatus of beliefs informed the context in which the Crusades were promoted and justified as an activity sanctioned by the Christian church.[60]

Yet however far and in whatever direction one manages to pursue the argument for medieval Orientalism, it does not quite ring true. Perhaps it is because it lacks the teleological thrust of Said's *Orientalism*. All western commentary on the lands of the East tended for Said towards the last confident act of imperial, colonial rule, the consequences of which we now face. Individual studies of earlier periods suggest that things were often more complicated than that. But while this may detract from the momentum of

[59] In the discussion below, it may generally be assumed unless otherwise indicated that where the word 'Orientalism' appears, whether or not enclosed in quotation marks, it refers to Said's use of the word in his *Orientalism*.

[60] Much has been written on the origins of the Crusades. For an overview of the development of a religious justification for crusading, see the fundamental study by Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade* (and Gilchrist's response, 'The Erdmann Thesis and the Canon Law'); Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*; L. and J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality*; Runciman, *The First Crusade*; and Peters, ed., *The First Crusade*. Recently, Maier has directed attention towards the role of the minor orders in promoting the later Crusades: see his *Preaching the Crusades* and *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology*. The latter provides an edition of a number of model sermons meant for address to contributors to the crusading effort.

Said's thesis, it does not touch the period in which he is secure, between the eighteenth century and the present day, where, indeed, his argument achieves most conviction by integrating the long-lived notions embodied in the literature of the day with the political motivations and material desires which also characterised this period. The Crusades, by contrast with nineteenth-century colonial expansion, achieved comparatively little in the way of material gain, and eventually their successes fizzled out while the power of the Ottoman Empire continued to increase. The earliest theories about Saracens do not appear to have discouraged the idea of warfaring against Islam or 'the East', but nor can they be shown to be very tightly bound up with it.[61] They set a point of view, perhaps; they provided authoritative prejudices and claimed to deliver the information that needed to be known; but they cannot be argued to be a form of justification for ongoing or planned material domination of Oriental peoples and cultures.

Said's model of western European thought presented an abstract continuum of hostility towards the Orient, according to which authors drew their attitudes from a similar traditionalist mindset. This model – useful, if not valid – has been considerably refined since the first publication of *Orientalism*; but there has been little or no mention of the *traditio* itself in which very specific hostile concepts concerning 'Orientals' (descent from Hagar, Venus-worship, etc.) derived traceably from earlier texts and in turn directly informed a subsequent generation of writings, whether transmitted verbatim, rephrased or translated. Even if the haul of such repetitions is restricted to works known in England, and even allowing for the same idea to have occurred to different authors at different times, their existence demands a substantial remodelling of 'Orientalism' as Said presents it.

[61] An exception to this is provided by William of Tyre (1130–86), who reported Pope Urban to have uttered the following words: 'Hec igitur nostre salutis incunabula, domini patriam, religionis matrem populus absque deo, ancille filius Egyptie possidet uiolenter . . . Sed quid scriptum est? Eice ancillam et filium eius! Sarracenorum enim gens impia et inmundarum sectatrix traditionum loca sancta, in quibus steterunt pedes domini, iam a multis retro temporibus uiolenta premit tyrannide . . .' ('A people without God, the son of the Egyptian handmaid, has violently seized these cradles of our salvation, fatherland of our lord, mother of religion . . . But what is written? Cast out the handmaid and her son! For the wicked Saracen people, follower of unclean traditions, has from a long time ago oppressed the holy places, in which the feet of the Lord rested, with violent despotism'; William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, CCCM 63, 132. Cf. Gen. XXI.10, Gal. IV.28–30 and (on Saracens as descendants of Hagar) see below, pp. 93–5.

Said himself, on another level, suggested a parallel between Orientalism and the literary tradition to which Jerome, Bede (the only Anglo-Saxon author he mentions) and others vigorously contributed. 'My analyses', he writes, 'try to show the field's shape and internal organization, its pioneers, patriarchal authorities, canonical texts, doxological ideas.'[62] His phrasing suggests that Orientalism has enjoyed the kind of cultural dominion more usually associated with an orthodox faith administered in the form of an organised body of texts. Specifically, the vocabulary that Said deploys brings to mind the writings of the early Christian church, which, at least in those parts of north-western Europe that would later become the quintessentially Orientalist powers of France and England, achieved their authority and influence through centuries of industrious copying and citation during the Middle Ages.

Indeed, negative conceptions of Arabs and Muslims were first engendered in England and on the Continent as an aspect of literate thought at a time when the technology of writing was chiefly employed in the service of the church and textual authority was founded upon quotation from previous authorities. Yet, at the same time, Said – by rhetorically invoking an assumed repertory among his readers of negative associations with the medieval period that his critique largely ignores (suggesting that it was repressive, rigidly hierarchical, superstitiously resistant to new truths, unenlightened, barbaric, inferior, religiously extremist) – has himself to some extent 'Orientalised' the Middle Ages in denigrating the practice of 'Orientalism'.

[62] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 22. Elsewhere, Said again employs vocabulary which suggests something of a religious authority for Orientalists. Concerning the survival of the medieval conceptual repertoire through the eighteenth century, he describes: 'a lay order of disciplined methodologists, whose brotherhood would be based . . . upon a common discourse, a praxis, a library, a set of received ideas, in short, a doxology' (*Orientalism*, p. 121). Of the language employed by Cromer to describe western influence upon eastern colonies: 'His metaphor for expressing this effect is almost theological' (*Orientalism*, p. 213); of a paragraph by von Grunebaum: 'In most other contexts such writing would politely be called polemical. For Orientalism, of course, it is relatively orthodox, and it passed for canonical wisdom in American study of the Middle East' (*Orientalism*, p. 297); the *Cambridge History of Islam* 'is a regular summa of Orientalist orthodoxy' (*Orientalism*, p. 302), and so on. Note also his comment: 'The idea that Islam is *medieval and dangerous* . . . has acquired a place both in the culture and in the polity that is very well defined' (*Covering Islam*, p. 157; my emphasis).

Said promotes instead a mode of scholarship that he calls 'secularism' or 'worldliness', according to which the scholar is engaged with the world. Whether or not it is deemed appropriate to 'politicise' medieval studies, it can be useful on many levels to question the relationship between ideas and action; and, given the present interest in western ideas about Islam or Muslims in various parts of the world, it is useful to examine the history of earlier Christian ideas about the peoples of the Near East.[63]

The influence of canonical texts upon Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Islam has until now not been analysed, and the argument below remedies this lack. It is also an appropriate time to consider aspects of early English thought which have as yet remained largely unexamined by Anglo-Saxonists. Most of all, however, it is in response to Said's and Daniel's provocative annexation of 'the Middle Ages' as a source for Orientalist or imperial attitudes that I have tried to trace English perceptions of the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens during the centuries in which England remained a small and very distant power compared with the flourishing empire of Islam.

[63] Among the most recent studies, Richard Fletcher's *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation* (London, 2003) is a useful overview which I unfortunately did not see in time to include here. Fletcher discusses European views in general on pp. 1–66; most relevant to the present work are his references to Isidore on Ismael (p. 10), Bede on the Muslim conquests (p. 19), Willibald (pp. 22–3) and Arculf (p. 53). As he notes on p. 65, 'There were plenty of interactions but no interest in religion'.

2

Islam during the Anglo-Saxon period

Scholarly discussions abound on the inception and expansion of Islamic religion and government, on the development of Muslim schools of thought and relations with other religions and empires, and the flowerings and dissemination of Islamic architecture, astronomy, calligraphy, jurisprudence, literature, mathematics, medicine and philosophy (for example) over the past fourteen centuries. This chapter is based on secondary literature; it is not intended to provide new information nor original insights for historians but only a simple introduction to the religion and territories of Islam during the period 600–1100. The emphasis is on the topics most relevant to Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Arabs and Saracens: first, Islamic conquest and government around the Mediterranean and in north-western Europe and, secondly, some sample early responses by Christian observers who came under Muslim rule. It does not include any account of Muslim culture and government in southern Arabia or further east than present-day Iraq, nor of arts and sciences under Islam. Many eastern Christian accounts and all Jewish responses to the Muslim conquests have been excluded. Despite its limitations, it seemed important to include this partial outline of the history of Islam AD 600–1100 so that subsequent chapters about Anglo-Saxon contacts with Islam and literary representations of Arabs and Muslims might appear in some kind of historical context.[1]

The phrase 'the history of Islam' suggests one authoritative account of one monolithic institution. Said has suggested further that no western

[1] A note on transliteration: the vowels, *hamza* and *'ayn* in Arabic names and terms, unless they occur in terms already familiar in English, have been transliterated according to the conventions outlined in *EI*^{2}. An exception is 'Qur'ān', more familiar as 'Koran'. Underlining and underpointing of consonants is not included. *Qaf* is represented throughout by 'q'.

account of Islam can be separated from interests in authority and power.[2] He has criticised the methodologies of several well-established historians of Islam whose writings are commonly regarded as standard reference works on the subject. Said's criticism focuses on what he perceives as a tendency amongst scholars and the media in the West to abstract an 'essential' (and misleading) notion of Islam or the Orient which then serves European and American political and economic motives. The future for Orientalism may be happier; recent trends in historical scholarship tend towards versions of the past which emphasise a broad variety of sources and themes within a period rather than a scheme of unified progress. Many primary sources on Islam from the period AD 600–1100 have been or are in the process of being edited and translated, putting them within reach of non-experts. The first world congress for Middle Eastern studies in September 2002 at Mainz provided an opportunity for wider networking of expertise on topics related to Islam. 'The history of Islam' is becoming increasingly visible as history told by many authors at different times and places, writing individual versions of what they wanted to portray with more or less conscious bias.

Islam took root in the Arabian peninsula at the same time as Christianity in England. The early seventh century saw, on the one hand, Muhammad's call to prophethood in Mecca (traditionally ascribed to the year 610) and, on the other, Augustine's mission to Kent (established in 597). During the following decades of the seventh century, conversions and setbacks took place in both quarters, but both Islam and Christianity gained ground and continued to expand: the former with celebrated speed and success, the latter more sedately.

In Anglo-Saxon England, the earliest unambiguous references to Islamic activity which have survived were written down by Bede almost a century after the prophet Muhammad's death. They tell us that news of the conquests in Spain had rapidly travelled to England by then, but Bede's knowledge is in general too late and too vague to be useful as a historical source about Islamic rule and religion. More detailed information comes from Muslim histories and traditions and from other, non-Muslim accounts

[2] Said, *Covering Islam*, pp. lvii–lviii. In particular he addresses writings on Islam by Bernard Lewis; see, for example, *Orientalism*, pp. 296–300 and 314–20; *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 42–3, and *Covering Islam*, pp. 136–40. He also criticises the works of Gibb and von Grunebaum (*Orientalism*, pp. 105–7). Said's comments have prompted further critiques of these and other historians pejoratively termed 'Orientalist'; see, for example, the articles in Hussain, Olson and Qureshi, eds., *Orientalism, Islam, and Islamists*.

from the Continent, Constantinople and communities living in Syria at the time of the invasions. Some of these were written almost contemporaneously with the first conquests. However, the earliest primary sources incorporate a number of knotty problems. The non-Muslim accounts disagree with each other and with Muslim records and traditions concerning the first years of Islam. The historical validity of the earliest Muslim writings is disputed. All surviving accounts represent literate views of (at best) questionable impartiality. The difficulty of reconciling differing contemporary information on the rise of Islam makes any description of its first decades uncertain.

The terms *Islam* and *Muslim* derive from an Arabic verb meaning 'surrender', 'submit' and convey the idea of total submission (to God). A primary tenet of Islam is the unique nature of Allah, the Supreme Being, and the role of Muhammad as prophet of God. Islam, Christianity and Judaism acknowledge a common prophetic tradition. In theory they share a frame of reference consisting of coinciding material in the Torah, Old Testament and Qur'ān. However, Islamic authorities maintained that the original principles of Judaism and Christianity, revealed by the one God, had become corrupted over time. Muslims revere Abraham, Moses and Jesus as prophets of God but recognise Muhammad (*c.* 570–632) as the 'Seal of the Prophets', the man to whom God entrusted the final and definitive version of the Holy Word via the angel Gabriel in a series of revelations between 610 and 632. These revelations were later recorded and collated as the book called the Qur'ān. In Muslim eyes, Islam thus superseded both Judaism and Christianity. However, the earlier religions were still respected as valid revelations to Moses and Jesus by the same God who revealed Islam to Muhammad.

Perhaps the most immediate division between Muslims and Christians lies in their beliefs concerning the natures of God and Jesus. According to the Qur'ān, Jesus was a prophet of God who could perform miracles and was transported to heaven but who was a man. Christians view Jesus as Christ, an aspect of the Trinity and therefore as God (though Christian history is rife with controversies concerning exactly how much and in what way). By contrast, while Muslims revere Muhammad above all other prophets and look to the example of his life to a greater or lesser extent for guidance, they perceive him as human, not divine. According to Islam, God is absolutely indivisible and many Muslims regard belief in a threefold divine nature with some suspicion that it borders upon polytheism. Muslims approach

God not in Muhammad but through the prescribed actions of their faith and the recitation of the Qur'ān. Medieval Christian writers commonly misconceived Islam and Muslims to relate to Muhammad in the same way as Christianity and Christians to Christ; this contributed to the long survival of the term 'Mahometan' and its variants to refer to Muslims.

MUHAMMAD AND EARLY ISLAM

Muhammad was born around the year AD 570 into an old and respected family in the trading town of Mecca. His parents died when he was young, and he was brought up by his grandfather and uncle. In his thirties he married a widow and businesswoman called Khadīja and began to travel into the surrounding countryside in order to meditate. The first revelation of the Qur'ān to him is said to have taken place when he was about forty, in 610. At the same time, Pope Gregory's mission to the Anglo-Saxons had been preaching in England for a little more than a decade. Muhammad continued to experience revelations of the Holy Word and preached his religious insights to family and friends, making several converts but provoking hostility from others. In 622 he left Mecca, whose population had ceased to tolerate his presence, and emigrated to Medina, his mother's home. His journey is known as the *hijra* ('migration') and marks the first year of the Islamic calendar. Subsequently, Muhammad and new converts from Medina brought Islam back to Mecca and thereafter disseminated it far and wide throughout the Arabian peninsula in a series of determined and very successful military endeavours.[3]

The death of Muhammad in AD 632 initiated the rule for twenty-nine years of four of his close companions: Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī. However, after ʿUthmān was assassinated, Muʿāwiya (governor of Syria from 640) refused to acknowledge ʿAlī as caliph. In 661, ʿAlī himself was assassinated and his son then ceded his title to Muʿāwiya. This episode provoked civil discord and various sects appeared in support of ʿAlī's descendants as the rightful caliphs. Nevertheless, Muʿāwiya became the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, which was to govern from Damascus until AD 750

[3] See Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 67, 71–4 and 92, on the earliest skirmishes. On the life of Muhammad, see Cook, *Muhammad*, and Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, which is a translation of the standard Islamic source on the Prophet. A recent sympathetic biography is Barnaby Rogerson's *The Prophet Muhammed* (London, 2003). A recent sympathetic biography is Barnaby Rogerson's *The Prophet Muhammed* (London, 2003).

and the rise of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty, who moved the Islamic capital to Baghdad.

THE FIRST CENTURY OF ISLAMIC EXPANSION

By Muhammad's lifetime, the Graeco-Byzantine and Persian empires had been struggling with each other for centuries for control of the lands east of the Mediterranean. In AD 628, Heraclius, emperor of Byzantium, succeeded at last in defeating the Sāsānid Persian dynasty and made arrangements for remaining Persian troops to withdraw from the eastern Byzantine provinces. However, these districts were then lost almost immediately when Muslim Arab forces unexpectedly invaded from the south in the 630s. Various circumstances seem to have aided Muslim military success. Following the defeat of the Persians, Heraclius had never fully re-established his forces in the area. After many years of hostile disputes over the nature of Christ, Byzantine orthodox Christianity (the central, Melkite church) had lost influence with the Nestorian and Jacobite churches of the East. The late Roman system of supplying armies from local resources was undermined by a popular unwillingness to help.[4] Civilians were unarmed as part of imperial policy, and the largest eastern garrisons were concentrated against any new Persian menace rather than a threat from Arabia.[5] Furthermore, recurring epidemics had weakened the population.[6] It was in this context that the Arab armies began to have their first successes against Byzantine defences.

Preliminary skirmishes between Arab and Byzantine forces culminated in the battle of Yarmūk and the final capture of Damascus by the Arabs in AD 636. This was quickly followed by the surrender of Baalbek, Homs and Hama and the conquests of Jerusalem in 638 and Caesarea in 640. By the end of 641 the towns of Harran, Edessa and Nasibin further north were also under Muslim Arab domination.[7] The Muslim occupation of southern Palestine cut Egypt's overland communications with Byzantium and left

[4] Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, p. 49, and Lamoreaux, 'Early Eastern Christian Responses', pp. 6 and 24.

[5] Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 33–9, 41–2, 50, 71.

[6] As argued by Conrad, 'Epidemic Disease in Central Syria'.

[7] On the first conquests, see Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, especially pp. 66–180 (pp. 66–8 contain a detailed chronology of events), and Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 91–220.

Egypt ill-prepared to defend itself. Within a year of the initial Muslim attempt in 641 all Egypt was taken except Alexandria, which surrendered some years later in 646/7.[8] The Muslims built a garrison, Fūstat, below the Nile Delta, which served as a new capital and also as a military base from which to enter North Africa. Attacks on Constantinople during the seventh and early eighth century proved unsuccessful. The city was not to come under Muslim rule until the celebrated victory of Fatih Sultan Mehmet in the fifteenth century.

The Arab governors in Egypt for the most part retained the Byzantine administrative system which they had inherited.[9] This reflected similar practice in other newly conquered regions; Muslim Arabs generally seem to have replaced previous rulers whilst (initially, at least) leaving extant infrastructures undisturbed.[10] This 'top-down' approach doubtless minimised disruption to civilians and made immediate government and taxation much simpler.

Meanwhile, the islands of the Mediterranean were raided from Syria and, later, from North Africa. Unlike Crete, which was to serve as an exclusively Muslim naval base, Cyprus seems to have acted as a neutral springboard from which the Islamic and Byzantine empires could mount attacks against each other. This ambiguous status is reflected in an account of Cyprus given by the Anglo-Saxon pilgrim Willibald. In the course of a narrative describing his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the eighth century, he appears to have reported that the Greeks and Saracens shared the island.[11] A treaty of 688 arranged for the inhabitants of Cyprus to pay tax to both Byzantium and Damascus, and in a subsequent transfer of the population, some went to the Syrian and others to the Byzantine coast.[12] Further west, Sicily was attacked from Syria before 680 and later continued to be harried from the North African coastline, but the island was not occupied by Muslim troops until the ninth century.

[8] The local governor and patriarch, Cyrus, is supposed to have arranged for the peaceful handover of the city: see Kaegi, 'Byzantine Egypt', pp. 11–15, and Mazzaoui, 'The Conquest of Alexandria', pp. 172–3.

[9] *CHI* I, 175. See also Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, pp. 18–19 and 44–5.

[10] On the conquests of what became the central Islamic lands, see *EI*^{2}, *s.v.* 'Armīniya', 'Filastīn', 'Irāk', 'Misr' and 'Sūrya'. Constantelos discusses Greek sources on the first conquests in 'The Moslem Conquests'.

[11] *Vita Willibaldi*, p. 94.

[12] Kyrris, 'Arab-Byzantine Relations in Cyprus', pp. 162 and 165–6.

To begin with, the Muslim conquerors divided North Africa into two regions: central Ifrīqiya and, to the west, the Maghrib, between the coast and the Sahara. Arab troops first invaded this western region at the beginning of the eighth century and thus gained a route into Spain via the Straits of Gibraltar. Native Berbers formed an important element of the Muslim army which was to invade Spain in AD 711. However, North Africa itself later proved difficult for Islamic governors to control.[13] Many Berbers remained pagan or had already converted to Christianity.[14] The region tended to favour rule by the many native tribes, who emphasised democratic involvement in government and egalitarianism within strongly independent tribal societies.

Spain came under Muslim control after only two years of campaigning.[15] This rapid success seems to have been facilitated by the fragility of Visigothic rule in Spain. Al-Andalus (the Arabic name given to the Islamic area of the Iberian peninsula) was divided into districts, as Syria had been.[16] Governors were delegated by the caliph in Damascus or the local governor in Egypt. An appreciable proportion of the Andalusian population remained Christian (the Mozarabs) and looked to the independent, Christian north for moral and religious support. Muslim governors retained the original ecclesiastical divisions of Visigothic Spain and the urban Mozarab communities were organised under leaders who acted as their representatives and were responsible to the Islamic authorities.[17] After the conquest, the population of al-Andalus thus consisted of Berbers, a growing number of neo-Muslims, a minority of Arabs and a large proportion of unconverted Christians and Jews. The eighth and ninth centuries were marked by uprisings and conflict amongst the different sectors of this population.[18]

[13] On Islam in North Africa, see *EI*^{2}, *s.v.* 'Ifrīqiya' and 'al-Maghrib'; *CHI* II, 211–37; and Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, pp. 52–6.

[14] *EI*^{2} IV, 1188. Christianity continued to survive, especially in Carthage. On Christianity in the Maghrib under Islam, see Talbi, 'Le Christianisme maghrébin', and Cameron, 'The Byzantine Reconquest of North Africa', pp. 159–60 and 162–4.

[15] The three volumes of Lévi-Provençal's *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane* remain a standard reference on Islam in the Iberian peninsula. See also *EI*^{2}, *s.v.* 'al-Andalus'; *CHI* I, 406–39; and Kennedy, 'The Muslims in Europe', pp. 255–71.

[16] Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, pp. 121–2.

[17] Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, p. 75.

[18] For example, a rebellion in the late seventh century involved Berbers and the governor of Catalunya, who had allied themselves with a governor of Aquitaine. It was eventually suppressed by Hishām. See Meadows, 'The Arabs in Occitania', p. 26.

Meanwhile, Muslim troops made efforts to penetrate the lands beyond the Pyrenees. They took Narbonne and its surrounds, and in AD 725 an expedition reached Burgundy. Most famously, according to western histories, in 732/3 Charles Martel and an army of Franks defeated what was probably a Muslim raiding party at the battle of Tours and Poitiers. European writers (Edward Gibbon is often cited) have emphasised the significance of this victory, while Muslim historians seem to attach less importance to the battle or its conclusion.[19] In any case, it marked the furthest expedition of Muslim military into north-western Europe.[20] The division between al-Andalus in the south and Christian Spain in the north settled round the Marches, the borderland areas to the north-west of Saragossa, Mérida and Toledo where minor rulers could maintain some kind of independence.[21] Elsewhere, Muslim armies continued to attack Constantinople and the borders of the remaining Byzantine empire, but made no further large territorial gains during this period.[22]

THE ʿABBĀSID CALIPHATE, AD 750–1100

In AD 750, the Umayyad dynasty fell from power after an extensive propaganda campaign by supporters of another dynasty, the ʿAbbāsids, who then became the new rulers of the Islamic empire. The ʿAbbāsids moved the capital of Islam to Baghdad and adopted much Persian court ceremony and culture. With the transfer of the caliphate further east, control over Egypt loosened and the region suffered frequent uprisings in protest

[19] Meadows, 'The Arabs in Occitania', p. 27, and Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, pp. 18–19.

[20] Charles Martel failed to recapture Narbonne in 737, when it was defended by Christian and Muslim citizens together, but it was lost to Pepin in 759. During a famine in the second half of the eighth century, the Muslims withdrew from the area. Later Muslim expeditions were mounted against Narbonne in AD 793, 841 and 1020, and Provence was raided during the same period. From 891 the coastal town of Fraxinetum (Garde-Freinet) became a Muslim base and was to remain so for nearly a century (Meadows, 'The Arabs in Occitania', p. 27).

[21] The border between al-Andalus and Christian Spain is discussed by Collins, 'Spain: The Northern Kingdoms of the Basques, 711–910'; Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, pp. 44–6; and Moreno, 'Christian–Muslim Frontier in Al-Andalus'. On interreligious relations in the northern regions, see also Burnett, 'Cultural Contacts Between Christians and Muslims'.

[22] See Kennedy, 'Arab Settlement on the Byzantine Frontier'.

against taxes.[23] During the tenth century, Egypt then became the home of an ambitious independent dynasty, the Ismāʿīlite Fātimids, who claimed to be the rightful caliphs and set out to topple the ʿAbbāsids. After establishing their rule in North Africa, they entered Fūstat in AD 969, founded Cairo nearby as a garrison city and took over the rule of Egypt. From here they came to control Sicily, Palestine, Syria, the Red Sea coast of Africa, the Yemen and parts of western Arabia including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.[24]

Meanwhile, northern Syria came under the rule of another dynasty called the Hamdānids during the late ninth century. Throughout the tenth century the Hamdānids struggled independently against the Byzantine armies but eventually, at the end of the tenth century, acknowledged the Fātimids as suzerains. Further north still, Fātimid power was weaker and cities frequently changed hands between minor dynasties. In the early eleventh century, the Holy Sepulchre (under Fātimid control) was destroyed by Muslims. Commercial relations between the Fātimids and Byzantium broke off as a result and did not reopen until 1032. During the same period, the ʿAbbāsid caliphs in Baghdad became figurehead rulers under the control of a protectorate dynasty, the Iranian Buwayhids. Buwayhid rule came to an end when Islamic Turkish forces moved south-west from Central Asia, entered Baghdad in the mid-eleventh century and themselves took control of the caliphate. In 1071, the Turks defeated a Byzantine army at Manzikert and went on to conquer most of Asia Minor. In the late eleventh century, they briefly occupied Jerusalem. The Fātimids reconquered the city in 1098 – only to be defeated by the Crusaders the following year.

In AD 800, the caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd granted the rule of Ifrīqiya to the Aghlabid dynasty. The Aghlabids successfully suppressed outbreaks of Berber Khārijism and, in AD 832, undertook the capture of Sicily.[25] They went on to attack southern Italy, Sardinia, Corsica and the Maritime Alps and became for a while the supreme central Mediterranean power.

[23] See *CHI* I, 176–7, and Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, p. 181. Lapidus, p. 48, and Lombard (*The Golden Age of Islam*, p. 22) describe frequent Egyptian revolts throughout the eighth and ninth centuries.

[24] *EI*^{2} III, 853–4.

[25] The Khārijites were a religious faction who protested the decision to appoint arbitrators during the first Islamic civil war between ʿAli and Muʿāwiya. During the eighth century, very many of the Berbers of North Africa adopted Khārijism in rebellion against their Arab rulers. For a summary, see Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties*, pp. 22–3.

Eventually they succumbed to the Fātimids as the latter rose to power during the late ninth century, and in 909 the last Aghlabid ruler was driven out of Ifrīqiya into Egypt. When the Fātimids moved to Egypt in 972, they left North Africa to another dynasty, the Zīrids. The Maghrib was subsequently disputed for some decades between a number of petty dynasties. In the eleventh century the radical Almoravids (al-Murābitūn) invaded from the Sahara while aggressive bands of Bedouin called the Banū Hilāl entered the Maghrib from the east. The Almoravids founded Marrākūsh in 1062, united the Maghrib within twenty years and invaded Spain. They are remembered for their violent massacre of Christians in both regions.[26] Also during the eleventh century, the Zīrids expanded their territories further east in Ifrīqiya. The dynasty divided in 1041 and both branches became naval powers. However, they failed to prevent the Norman recapture of Sicily, and during the twelfth century Roger II harried their coastlines from the island, captured portions of the coast and demanded tribute.

THE TERRITORY OF AL-ANDALUS, AD 750–1100

In AD 756, the Umayyad ʿAbd ar-Rahmān I escaped the aftermath of the ʿAbbāsid revolution, came to Spain and founded his own Umayyad emirate centred on Seville and Cordova.[27] His dynasty was to rule until 1031. After the eighth century, most of the Spanish Umayyad period is characterised by war and revolts on the borders begun by Berbers, Arabs and neo-Muslims. ʿAbd ar-Rahmān II (AD 822–52) improved the Islamic position. He fought against the Franks, the Gascons and Banū Kasī of the Ebro Valley, put down a Mozarab revolt at Cordova and repelled a Viking landing on the coast of Seville. ʿAbd ar-Rahmān III (912–61) elaborated court ceremony and, in response to the caliphate claim of his enemies the Fātimids, also titled himself a caliph. However, early in the eleventh century the Spanish Umayyad caliphate collapsed, and from 1010 the first petty Andalusian kingdoms arose: Almeria, Badajoz, Denia, Granada, Huelva-Saltes and Saragossa. The Umayyads vanished from al-Andalus in 1031 and the age of the 'Mulūk at-Tawā'if' or 'Reyes de Taifas' began. This period

[26] Ye'or, *The Dhimmi*, pp. 60–1; see also Perlmann, 'Eleventh-century Andalusian Authors'.
[27] See *EI*^{2}, *s.v.* 'al-Andalus'.

of political fragmentation was also one of cultural brilliance.[28] However, towards the end of the eleventh century, local rulers appealed to the Almoravids for help against the military threat of the Christians who had captured Toledo in 1085. The Almoravids agreed, defeated the Christians in the following year, and took control of Spain for themselves.

THE ISLANDS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN, AD 750–1100

After a series of Muslim treaties with Byzantium, Sicily remained peaceful from the mid-eighth into the first quarter of the ninth century, but the island was not to remain in Byzantine hands. In 895–6, after many Muslim attacks, the Byzantines signed a peace treaty effectively handing Sicily over to Islamic rule.[29] However, the island retained a certain independence from the central caliphate and, when the Fātimids defeated the Aghlabids and inherited Sicily in 909, the inhabitants rejected the first two governors they sent and elected their own. In 969, the Fātimids moved to Cairo and left Sicily under a minor dynasty, the Kalbids. They ruled successfully for some time but eventually a breakdown in government led to more Muslim negotiations with Byzantium in the 1030s and partial Byzantine occupation of eastern Sicily for a few years.[30] At around the same time a Norman, Robert Guiscard, also established a principality on the island.[31] In

[28] On the petty kingdoms of the eleventh century, see Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings* and *EI*^{2}, *s.v.* 'Mulūk al-Tawā'if'. The forty or so territories varied in size from small city-states to large tracts of land; the rulers themselves varied in origin, some being Arab, others Berber or even, on the eastern seaboard, Slav. The number of kingdoms fell as the more powerful, such as the expanding Seville, subsumed the lesser (*EI*^{2} VII, 552).

[29] Breckenridge, 'The Two Sicilies', pp. 42–3. Between the 840s and the 870s, Muslim garrisons and possibly arsenals were also established at Bari and Taranto on the Italian mainland, threatening Naples (in AD 837) and even Rome (AD 846 and 849) and northern Italy. The emperor Basil I responded with campaigns in southern Italy between 876 and 886, but paid less attention to Sicily. Between 882 and 915, the renewal of Byzantine authority in southern Italy ended permanent Muslim occupation. However, a Muslim military colony near Garigliano continued to raid in Campagna and southern Latium: see Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, p. 117; Breckenridge, 'The Two Sicilies', p. 44; Watt, *The Influence of Islam*, pp. 4–5; and *EI*^{2} II, 130. More information on the Muslims in Italy may be found in *EI*^{2}, *s.v.* 'Ītaliya', and Daniel, *The Arabs in Mediaeval Europe*, pp. 56–9.

[30] *EI*^{2} VIII, 788, and Breckenridge, 'The Two Sicilies', p. 45.

[31] Watt, *The Influence of Islam*, p. 5.

1060 his brother, Count Roger, attacked Messina. It fell the following year and in 1072 Palermo surrendered, marking the beginning of full Norman rule on the island.[32]

Raiding attacks on Crete continued sporadically until, according to Arab historians, the island was taken over in 827–8 by a band of passing Andalusians. They conquered Crete, subdued the Christian population and established an independent emirate that casually recognised the ʿAbbāsids and subsisted mainly on piracy, though Crete also contributed to Muslim trade.[33] The island had its own naval base, and the inhabitants repeatedly defeated Byzantine forces and attacked its territories, often with Syrian aid. Muslim raids from the island continued until eventually in 960 Crete was recaptured by Byzantine forces. It was followed in 965 by Cyprus, which had always remained divided between Byzantine and Muslim rule.[34]

Even a cursory sketch of Muslim polities over the Anglo-Saxon period indicates that Islam was not at all the monolithic entity which medieval authors suggested when they referred to its peoples generically as *Saraceni*. Muslim governors and caliphs disputed a variety of territorial and religious claims and often maintained their political positions only with difficulty. The caliphate enjoyed diplomatic relations with the Byzantine empire while the borders between their respective territories remained subject to dispute. Substantial proportions of the original population in conquered areas remained pagan, Jewish or Christian. At times they were to suffer discrimination and persecution but many non-Muslims rose to high social positions under Muslim rule.

CHRISTIANS UNDER MUSLIM RULE

According to early Islam, the world was traditionally divided into *Dār-al-Islām* ('the House of Islam') and *Dār-al-Harb* ('the House of War': everywhere else), and the struggle of the former against the latter was the

[32] Abulafia suggests that this operation may have involved Italian commercial interests. The cities of Pisa and Genoa, whose occupants had already joined forces against the Muslims, attacked Palermo in 1063 ('The Role of Trade', p. 4).

[33] Christides attributes a Cretan dirham found in Gotland to growth in Fātimid trade ('Raid and Trade', pp. 63–4 and 79).

[34] See *EI*^{2} II, 130; *EI*^{2} III, 1084, and Fahmy, 'Muslim Sea-Power in the Eastern Mediterranean', pp. 72–3.

jihād, or 'striving'.[35] Truces were possible with non-Muslims, but in theory these could last for no more than ten years. However, if members of a conquered community agreed to a contract known as the *dhimma*, they might be allowed to remain in comparative peace. According to such a contract, Jews and Christians (and, later, Zoroastrians) were tolerated within Muslim society so long as they obeyed certain restrictions upon their religious activities and paid extra taxes.[36] The *dhimmī* (those who accepted such a treaty) formed an important economic resource for Arab rulers.[37] The exact nature of any contract depended on the demands and nature of the local Muslim community and its leaders. Nevertheless, in principle Islam offered general recognition and tolerance of Jews and Christians as 'people of the book', that is, people to whom a valid religion had once been revealed.[38] Early medieval Christianity offered no equivalent formal acceptance of Muslim faith. With the correct documents, non-Muslims from other lands could also visit the *Dār-al-Islām* for a limited time.[39] Such travellers included the eighth-century English pilgrim Willibald and his companions. While journeying in Syria the band had to obtain official papers which would permit them to travel safely in the Holy Land and obtain food.

Christianity in Eastern Syria and Mesopotamia was dominated by the Nestorian church, while Palestine, western Syria and Egypt were largely Monophysite. Both the Nestorian and Monophysite churches had suffered under orthodox rule.[40] Within a decade of the first Arab campaigns,

[35] *EI*^{2}, *s.v.* 'Dār-al-Islām' and 'Dār-al-Harb'.

[36] See Fattal, *Le statut légal*, especially pp. 71–81, on the general status of *dhimmī*.

[37] Fattal, *Le statut légal*, pp. 264–343, and Ye'or, *The Dhimmi*, pp. 52–4. Recommendations of tolerant and accepting Muslim behaviour towards non-believers may be found in the Qur'ān at II.256, XVI.125, XXV.63, LX.8–10, CIX, VI.107–8, etc.

[38] The *dhimmī*, as unbelievers, were not supposed to hold public office or obtain authority over Muslims; nevertheless, many did so, and proved useful to the Muslim authorities as representatives of minority religious communities. Equally, a phrase which may be translated 'no compulsion in religion' appears in the Qur'ān (II.56), but forced conversions almost certainly took place at times; see Fattal, *Le statut légal*, pp. 236–63 and 170–2; Ye'or, *The Dhimmi*, pp. 55–63; Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects*, especially pp. 18–36 and 127–36; and Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll-Tax in Early Islam*. Lombard asserts that there were no persecutions nor forced conversions during this period, indeed that the Islamic conquest 'allowed things to go on as they had before, in every sphere' (*The Golden Age of Islam*, pp. 4–5), which perhaps overstates the case a little for universal Islamic tolerance.

[39] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 47–8.

[40] Lamoreaux, 'Early Eastern Christian Responses', pp. 4 and 6–7.

Christian Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia had changed hands to come under Islamic rule. This cut off the orthodox church in the region from central Byzantine authority, and reduced its influence upon the minority churches. Muslim governors imposed new taxes uniformly upon the whole non-Muslim population. Christian writers who found themselves under Muslim rule reacted in a variety of ways. Certain minority religions in the newly conquered areas perhaps benefited from the change and in some cases left records of the Arab conquests which are notable for their lack of hostility.[41] By contrast, orthodox writers of the 630s such as Maximus the Confessor and Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem, vilified the Muslims. They explained their military success as the consequence of Christian sins and appear to have ignored the fact that a religion of Islam existed.[42] Jacob of Edessa, too, recounted that the sins of the Christians had delivered them to bondage and slavery.[43] Elsewhere, in Egypt, a chronicle from the last years of the seventh century similarly described the Muslims as violent invaders who brought humiliation and suffering as a result of Christian sin.[44]

Christian writers were to change their approach as it became clear that Islam was a persisting religious threat which could no longer satisfactorily be represented as a temporary chastisement. More sophisticated methods of dealing with this threat involved the writing of polemic, new hagiographies and, especially at the end of the seventh century, apocalypses which would locate Islam within a long-term Christian view of history. A highly influential example of the latter genre is the *Apocalypse* of pseudo-Methodius, a Syriac work from the last quarter of the seventh century. Like earlier writings, it described the rise of Islam as a punishment by God. The novelty of

[41] Brock, 'Syriac Views of Emergent Islam', p. 10, and Lamoreaux, 'Early Eastern Christian Responses', p. 4. Cahen envisages a medieval scenario characterised by mutual Christian and Muslim benevolent tolerance. He adds that no Christian textual authority denounced Islam during the early years of the conquests ('Note sur l'accueil des chrétiens d'Orient à l'Islam', p. 57), but perhaps this view is over-rosy.

[42] Lamoreaux, 'Early Eastern Christian Responses', pp. 4–7 and 11–18; Brock, 'Syriac Views of Emergent Islam', p. 20; and Kaegi, 'Initial Byzantine Reactions', p. 148. Crone and Cook provide references to a number of non-Muslim accounts of the rise of Islam in their notes to *Hagarism*; very useful is Hoyland's broad survey of early responses to Islam, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*.

[43] Jacob of Edessa, *Scholia*, p. 42. [44] John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, pp. 79–80.

the *Apocalypse* was to present the conquests as a sign of the impending Day of Judgement, thereby promising an end to Islamic rule and the ultimate triumph of Christianity. So widely copied was this work that by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period at least two Latin versions had found their way as far west as England.[45]

Later Christian authors such as the Nestorian patriarch Timothy I (AD 727–823) might also cite the Qur'ān to support a point of Christian doctrine.[46] Orthodox Byzantine writers, whose culture had lost some three-fifths of its territories to the Muslims, remained hostile from the beginning, and have left quantities of material denouncing Islam or outlining methods for Christians to refute it in dispute.[47] A well-known example is the chapter devoted to Islam by John of Damascus in his *De haeresibus*.[48] In this passage, the author describes Islam as a superstition of the Ismaelites and maintains that they had worshipped the morning star and Aphrodite until the accession of Heraclius in the early seventh century. He presents Muhammad as a false prophet who plagiarised from the Old and New Testaments to produce his own religion. John goes on to outline some arguments, based on information about Muslim rituals of pilgrimage, which Christians might use to justify their own religion and attack the validity of Islam.

News of the conquests reached western authors far more rapidly and frequently than information concerning Islam as a religion. In Burgundy, a work known as the *Chronicle of Fredegar* was composed during the seventh

[45] For a fuller account of this text, see below, pp. 140–64.

[46] Hurst, 'The Epistle-Treatise', pp. 378–80.

[47] See Kaegi, 'Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest', pp. 139–48, and his *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 210–13; more generally, Khoury, *Les théologiens byzantins et l'Islam*; Meyendorff, 'Byzantine Views of Islam'; Sahas, 'The Art and Non-Art of Byzantine Polemics', and his 'The Seventh Century in Byzantine-Muslim Relations'. On political relations, see Kennedy, 'Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy'; Hamidullah, 'Nouveaux documents'; Koutrakou, 'The Image of the Arabs in Middle Byzantine Politics', pp. 215–23; and, for the early tenth century, Jenkins, 'Leo Choerosphactes', 'The Date of Leo V's Expedition', 'The Emperor Alexander' and 'The Mission of St Demetrianus'.

[48] John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, pp. 60–7 and 426–38; trans. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, pp. 132–41. See also Sahas, 'John of Damascus on Islam: Revisited'; Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 13–14; and d'Alverny, 'La connaissance de l'Islam en Occident', pp. 580–3.

century which described the Islamic conquests almost as they were taking place.[49] Even in Anglo-Saxon England in the early eighth century, Bede, as noted above, knew that the Saracens had by then made extensive conquests in Asia, Africa and Europe. These reports present Islam only as a military, not as a religious entity. Such was also initially the case in Muslim Spain, where Islam appears to have been seen at the outset as a political phenomenon and as less of a religious problem to the Christian population than heresy and Judaism.[50] This was partly due to the actions of the Muslims themselves, who at first succeeded in segregating their communities and religion from those of the more numerous Christian and Jewish inhabitants. However, as time went on, more and more non-Muslims seem to have become assimilated within Islamic society, blurring the cultural divisions between Andalusian Christians, Jews and Muslims. Some Christians eventually seem to have felt the need to reassert a distinct identity by attacking Islam and the status it granted Muhammad. In the mid-ninth century, these attacks culminated in the so-called 'Cordoban martyrs' movement', in which some fifty Christians sought (and found) death by denouncing Islam and the Prophet in the city.[51] Other, perhaps better-assimilated Christians meanwhile denounced the victims themselves for seeking an inappropriate martyrdom, and were in turn criticised in the well-known anti-Islamic writings of a Christian priest, Eulogius, and a layman, Alvarus.[52] Other polemical texts by Andalusian Christians comment upon various aspects of Muslim faith, and during the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was through Spain that many western European readers learnt of Islam as a religion.[53]

Western contact with Islam was not restricted to Christian communities under Muslim rule. Pilgrims continued to travel into northern Spain to visit the shrine of Santiago de Compostela, and in the mid-ninth century two monks of Saint-Germain-des-Prés entered al-Andalus to collect

[49] Wallace-Hadrill has summarised previous scholarship on this chronicle (*The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, pp. ix–lxvii).

[50] Wolf, 'Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain', pp. 87–9.

[51] Discussed by Daniel in the context of other Christian perceptions of Islam (*The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, pp. 23–48).

[52] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 17–19, and Southern, *Western Views of Islam*, pp. 21 and 24–5. The famous passage by Alvarus in his *Indiculus Luminosus* (PL 121, 555–6), complaining of the Spanish Christian neglect of Latin and cultivation of Arabic, is also quoted in translation by Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, pp. 57–8. See also Wolf, 'Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain', pp. 90–3 and 96.

[53] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 20–3.

relics.[54] Other pilgrims included the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon missionary, Willibald, who left a written account of his pilgrimage through more distant Muslim territory in the Holy Land and Arculf, a Gaul, who also travelled to Jerusalem and whose journey was known to Bede. It is important to remember that western literature concerning the Muslims did not develop in the absence of direct personal contacts with the Islamic world. There existed opportunities, however rare, for literate western Christians (including Anglo-Saxons) to learn about Islam first-hand. Whether such opportunities inspired a view of the Saracens any different from Bede's portrayal of aggressive, anti-Christian marauders is an interesting question.

[54] Watt, *The Influence of Islam*, p. 14.

3

Anglo-Saxon contacts with Islam

Bede (*c.* 673–735) leaves no record that he knew of the Anglo-Saxon pilgrim Willibald (*c.* 700–87), an engaging character who spent several years in Muslim lands and smuggled balsam through customs in Tyre in a false-bottomed flask of petroleum. Although the two men were contemporaries, Willibald did not return to England after his travels through the Holy Land in AD 723–727, but became bishop of Eichstätt in what is now southern Germany. There, a nun of Anglo-Saxon origin called Hygeburg who had moved to Heidenheim composed the story of his life and travels known as the *Vita Willibaldi*. The *uita* was not written down until after Bede's death and seems never to have been known in England.[1] This text will be considered in more detail below.

Bede did know of a Gaul called Arculf who had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the period AD 679–682 and was shipwrecked on the west coast of England on his return.[2] After travelling overland for a time Arculf encountered Adomnán, bishop of Iona, who recorded his account of the holy places. Adomnán was evidently concerned to present a plausible account; he stressed that Arculf was a reliable authority who saw the holy

[1] The standard edition of Hygeburg's *Vita Willibaldi* is that by Holder-Egger, MGH AA 15, 86–106; Willibald's journeying in the Holy Land occupies pp. 94–101. This section is translated into English by Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, pp. 153–77. On the *Vita Willibaldi* in the context of western perceptions of the Arabs, see Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, especially pp. 43–65 and 235–7. On its literary background and style, see also Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil* III, 18–26.

[2] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* [*CPL* 2332], CCSL 175, 185–234; ed. and trans. Meehan, *Adamnan's De Locis Sanctis*, pp. 36–121; also trans. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, pp. 93–116. Rotter discusses this text in some detail (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, especially pp. 31–42).

sights with his own eyes.[3] He also occasionally noted that Arculf's account agreed with descriptions by earlier authorities, and mentioned some who had written on the same subjects.[4] The resulting work, known as the *De locis sanctis*, was presented by its author to Aldfrith, king of Northumbria (685–704), and then made available to other readers. Probably in 702–3, Bede read Adomnán's description of the holy sites and produced his own abbreviated version of the work, also called *De locis sanctis*.[5] The two versions of Arculf's journey by Adomnán and Bede contain the only eye-witness account of the Muslim territories we know to have been read in Anglo-Saxon England.

Adomnán's references to the Saracens are brief but valuable hints about Muslim worship in Jerusalem and Damascus and the toleration of Christian pilgrims by the Islamic authorities at the end of the seventh century. He mentions a Saracen house of prayer, *orationis domus*, a crude but large rectangular building constructed on some ruins.[6] Later, he says of Damascus that it possesses a great church in honour of St John the Baptist, and that some kind of Saracen church has also been built there which he describes as *quaedam etiam Saracinorum ecclesia incredulorum*. He also mentions that the Saracens have a king called *Mauias* (Muʿāwiyah I, caliph at the time).[7] According to Adomnán, this king was called upon to arbitrate in a dispute between 'believing' and 'non-believing' Jews (the latter, like the Saracens, referred to as *increduli*) in a dispute over ownership of a sacred relic of Christ. Despite having already categorised the Saracens as unbelievers, the author writes that their king not only called upon Christ to decide the

[3] For example: 'Sic mihi Arculfus, qui sepe sepulchrum Domini frequentabat, indubitanter emensus pronuntiauit' (Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 187–8); 'sancti Arculfi relatione cognouimus, qui illud propriis conspexit obtutibus . . . quam totus Hierusolimitanus ueram esse protestatur populus' (p. 192); 'Hucusque de locis sanctis . . . iuxta sancti Arculfi eorundem frequentatoris locorum certam narrationem sufficiat discripsisse' (p. 203).

[4] For example: 'ut alibi scriptum repertum est' (Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 199); 'Igitur nostri Arculfi . . . narratio cum aliorum scribtis recte concordat' (p. 200); 'Quam sanctus Hieronymus alibi narrat' (p. 211); 'sancti Arculfi . . . relatio per omnia concordet cum his quae ipsi superius de sancti Hieronimi commentariis' (p. 221).

[5] Bede, *De locis sanctis* [*CPL* 2333], CCSL 175, 251–80.

[6] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 186. Rotter suggests that this Latin phrase reflects the Arabic so closely that it may in fact represent a direct translation, perhaps by a Muslim guide (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 39 and 42).

[7] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 193.

issue but invoked him as the saviour of the world who suffered for the human race. Naturally, the 'believing' Jews eventually inherited the relic.[8] It is difficult to know what to make of the distinction between 'believers' and 'non-believers' here. It might be part of an attempt by Adomnán or Arculf to Christianise a story heard in the Holy Land, or it might represent some awareness of different sects of Judaism or Christianity encountered by Arculf. The story seems, in any case, primarily intended to vindicate belief in Christ or his relics through the reported miracle. The references to Saracen worship may reflect real practice but the dismissive tone is probably meant to cast Christianity as the one true faith.

Indeed, all three mentions of the Saracens seem calculated to vindicate Christianity in some way: the Saracen church is crude and built on ruins; or it is not really a church at all (*quaedam . . . ecclesia incredulorum*); and, in any case, their own king pronounces Christ to be a saviour. Having dismissed Saracen religion as of no account, Adomnán concentrates almost entirely on the Christian holy places that presumably seemed of more lasting importance. By contrast, Hygeburg's account of Willibald's pilgrimage is a riot of temporal detail. She herself seems to have felt some concern that the reader might not believe the narrative. Near the beginning, she emphasises that she is writing at Willibald's own dictation, so that no one may think it a frivolous tale.[9] Stylistically, Hygeburg indulged in a certain amount of embroidery, but there is also evidence that she did in fact work from the bishop's own words in drawing up his life story.[10] It is the only surviving record of direct contact between Anglo-Saxons and Muslims and deserves a closer examination.

Hygeburg recounts at length the route which the pilgrims took from the south coast of England to reach first Rome and then Jerusalem. Indeed, she seems to have recorded the name and situation of almost every human habitation encountered by Willibald's band on their way east and usually

[8] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 193–4.

[9] '. . . non ab alio reperta nisi ab ipso audita et ex illius ore dictata perscripsimus . . . Ideo dico hoc, ut nullus iterum dicat friuolum fuisse'; *Vita Willibaldi*, p. 105.

[10] The clearest example of this is in the sentence 'Ibi *morabant* unam noctem inter duabus fontibus, et pastores dabant *nobis* acrum lac bibere' (*Vita Willibaldi*, p. 96; my emphases). The slip from third to first person suggests that Hygeburg was working from a first-person account in composing her text. On this and other aspects of her written style, see especially Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil* III, 22–4.

also by what means they got there.[11] By ship the pilgrims travel from Southampton to Rouen, 'a market town on the Seine', and overland to Rome; after a long pause, the somewhat diminished band go on by land and sea to Asia. Following further journeying and visits to various holy sites, they cross the sea again to traverse Mt Chelidonium on foot and sail from there to Cyprus. They continue by ship to Antaradus, 'near the sea, in Saracen territory', and walk nine or twelve miles to Arca followed by another twelve to Emesa, today in Syria.[12] The sea-voyages were presumably undertaken on merchant vessels willing to take on passengers. The first, from Southampton to the market town of Rouen, was probably on a Frisian ship (likewise Arculf's return journey during which he was shipwrecked on the west coast of England).[13] The journey from Naples involved a ship that plied between Muslim and Christian territories: 'navem illi de Aegypto inuenerunt, et illic intro ascendentes, nauigauerunt in terram Galabriae'.[14] By this time, Egypt had been under Muslim rule for some eighty years and, clearly, contacts continued with the Christian world. The ship which the pilgrims boarded from Mt Chelidonium took them to Cyprus, *quod est inter Grecos et Sarracinos*, and to Antaradus *in regionem Sarracinorum*.[15] Willibald's band seems to have experienced no difficulty in reaching Saracen lands from Christian ports.

When they arrive in Emesa, however, the pilgrims abruptly run foul of the Muslim authorities:

Confestimque illi pagani Sarracini repperientes, quod adueni et ignoti homines illic uenti fuerunt, tulerunt eos et captivos habebant; qui nesciebant, de quali fuerant gente, sed speculatores esse illos estimabant, et captiuos eos ducebant ad quendam senem diuitem, ut uideret et agnosceret, unde essent. Ast ille senex interrogauit illos, unde essent aut quale fungerentur legatione. Tunc illi respondentes, ab exordio totam intimauerunt ei itineris sui causam. Et ille senex respondens ait: 'Frequenter

[11] From Rouen, the pilgrims travelled to a town called *Gorthonicum*, which Wilkinson takes to refer to Tortona, near Pavia in Italy (*Jerusalem Pilgrims*, p. 125, n. 6, where he also discusses some alternatives). Another possibility, producing a more direct route, is Sancerre.

[12] *Vita Willibaldi*, pp. 91–4. Wilkinson provides maps showing various sections of Willibald's route during the pilgrimage; see *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, pp. 124, 127 and 130; but see the note above on *Gorthonicum*.

[13] Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs* I, 90–1.

[14] *Vita Willibaldi*, p. 93.

[15] *Vita Willibaldi*, p. 94.

hic uenientes uidi homines de illis terre partibus istorum contribulos; non querunt mala, sed legem eorum adimplere cupiunt'.[16]

The statement by the wealthy old man that he had frequently seen people from Willibald's part of the world who desired nothing more than to 'fulfil their law' suggests that pilgrims from foreign lands were reasonably familiar. It is unfortunate that we have no more detailed description of the old man and the means by which he communicated with the westerners; whether they had a language in common, or an interpreter was involved, Hygeburg makes no mention of it.[17] Since the Muslims who seized the pilgrims took them to the rich old man in the first instance, the latter seems unlikely. Presumably they went to him because they knew that he would be able to communicate with the strangers. It is interesting too that the word *lex* is used with reference to their journey. Pilgrimage was a meritorious act for Christians and an obligation (if it could possibly be achieved) for all Muslims past the age of puberty.[18] If *lex* or a close equivalent was the word used by the old man, then he may have been characterising Willibald's

[16] 'Almost at once they were arrested by the pagan Saracens, and because they were strangers and came without credentials they were taken prisoner and held as captives. They knew not to which nation they belonged, and, thinking they were spies, they took them bound to a certain rich old man to find out where they came from. The old man put questions to them asking where they were from and on what errand they were employed. Then they told him everything from the beginning and acquainted him with the reason for their journey. And the old man said: "I have often seen men coming from those parts of the world, fellow-countrymen of theirs; they cause no mischief and are merely anxious to fulfil their law"' (*Vita Willibaldi*, p. 94; trans. Talbot, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, p. 162).

[17] Willibald seems to have noted nothing else concerning the religion of the Saracens, and it is doubtful whether the word *paganus* in this context signifies anything more precise than 'non-Christian' (Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 49–50). Anglo-Saxon authors occasionally described the Saracens in Old English as *hæðenra* with similarly vague meaning.

[18] Hunt characterises the motives of early Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land as 'a combination of biblical tourism and Christian devotion' (*Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 4), and there seems no reason to suspect that later Christians felt any differently. Christian tradition neither presents pilgrimage as an action specifically enjoined by God, nor preserves a formal distinction between a 'small' and a 'great' pilgrimage, as does Islam. The 'great' pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five obligatory actions of Islam which are known as its Pillars, along with prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the witnessing of one God. It seems to have been instituted since the earliest days of Islam. See *EI*^{2} III, 33. The Qur'ān, at II.158, II.196, III.97 and XXII.26–31, enjoins Muslims to make the pilgrimage if possible.

journey as a religious requirement in a way that would be appreciated by the Muslim captors.

No doubt somewhat worried by their brush with the authorities, Willibald and his companions then go to the palace to ask for passage to Jerusalem. The governor promptly incarcerates them as spies until such time as he should learn from the king what to do with them. In prison, however, the pilgrims encounter a sympathetic benefactor:

Cumque illi fuerant in carcere, confestim miro omnipotentis Dei dispensatione . . . unus homo fuit ibi negotiator, qui sibi in elemosinam et animae suae redemptionem uolebat illos redemere et de carcere eripere, ut liberi essent pergere in suam uoluntatem, et non poterat. Sed econtra cottidie misit illis prandium et cenam, et in quarta feria et in sabbato misit filium suum in carcerem, et eduxit eos ad balneum et iterum introduxit; et dominica die ducebat eos ad aecclesiam per mercimonium, ut de rebus uenalibus uiderent, quid eorum mente delectaret, et ille tunc suo pretio illis opteneret, quidquid illorum mente aptum foret. Illi ciues urbium curiosi iugiter illic uenire consueuerant illos speculare, qui iuuenes et decori et uestium ornatu induti erant bene.[19]

Could this record a characteristically Muslim attitude in the desire of the merchant to free the prisoners *in elemosinam et animae suae redemptionem*? Again, the similarities between Muslim and Christian ideal principles – and, possibly, Arab hospitality in either case – make it difficult to tell. According to Islam, redeeming captives and feeding orphans and the poor are signs of virtue; the Qur'ān refers to almsgiving as a righteous activity, to the wayfarer as a worthy recipient of alms and to the ransoming of captives as a meritorious act.[20] In this context, the subsequent generosity of the

[19] 'Whilst they were in prison they had an unexpected experience of the wonderful dispensation of Almighty God . . . A man was there, a merchant, who wished to redeem them and release them from captivity, so that they should be free to continue their journey as they wished. He did this by way of alms and for the salvation of his own soul. But he was unable to release them. Every day, therefore, he sent them dinner and supper, and on Wednesday and Saturday he sent his son to the prison and took them out for a bath and then took them back again. Every Sunday he took them to church through the market place, so that if they saw anything on sale for which they had a mind he could buy it for them and so give them pleasure. The citizens of the town, who are inquisitive people, used to come regularly to look at them, because they were young and handsome and clothed in beautiful garments.' (*Vita Willibaldi*, p. 94; trans. Talbot, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, p. 162).

[20] Stewart, *Unfolding Islam*, pp. 48–9 and 101.

merchant thwarted in his original intentions might make sense as a Muslim act of charity towards imprisoned travellers (assuming that difference of religion was not an issue in this case). Of course, a Muslim might only wish to benefit other Muslims, and charity might equally benefit the soul of a Jew or a Christian. It seems unlikely, too, that a Muslim would take the prisoners to church. Finally, it should be borne in mind that it was in Hygeburg's interests as a hagiographer to emphasise the divine providence enjoyed by the Christians in all their encounters and to make it clear that God cared for their every need.

However, there is no reason to doubt Hygeburg's statement that a church stood in the town of the governor's palace. The existence of non-Muslim communities in the Holy Land is confirmed later on in the *Vita Willibaldi*, where we learn that the Christians in Nazareth have to make payments in order to preserve their church from the Saracens, again described as *pagani*, who wish to destroy it. The church is still standing when Willibald visits and a further comment shows that synagogues too were permitted to exist under Islamic rule.[21] This account agrees with information from other contemporary sources, including the *De locis sanctis*, concerning medieval Muslim toleration of Christians and Jews if they paid extra taxes. The general picture of the town in which the pilgrims were imprisoned is agreeable. Aside from places of worship and the governor's residence, it evidently also had its own prison, public baths and market. According to Hygeburg, the townsfolk noticed the pilgrims because they looked attractive, but perhaps they also appeared exotic and novel. Otherwise the only clue that the appearance of Willibald's group may have differed from that of the local population is one mention of an *Ethiops*, perhaps a man with particularly dark skin, who acted as their guide for a while.[22]

The pilgrims, still prisoners (albeit fed, washed and well-dressed), enjoy further good luck when a Spaniard comes to talk to them. As it turns out, his brother works in the palace as chamberlain to the 'king of the Saracens' and is to prove a useful contact. The Spaniard, along with the ship's captain

[21] 'Illam aecclesiam christiani homines sepe conparabant ad paganis Sarracenis, qui illi uolebant eam destruere . . . Et inde pergentes, uenerunt ad montem Thabor, ubi Dominus transfiguratus est . . . Ibi sunt multe aecclesie et sinagoga Iudeorum . . . Et inde pergabant ad Bethsaidam . . . Ibi est nunc aecclesia . . . Et inde pergentes, uenerunt ad Cesaream, ubi fuit aecclesia et multitudo christianorum' (*Vita Willibaldi*, pp. 95–6).

[22] *Vita Willibaldi*, p. 100. On western medieval perceptions of dark skin colour and the Saracens, see, generally, Kelly, '"Blue" Indians, Ethiopians, and Saracens'.

who brought the pilgrims from Cyprus, accompanies the governor when he takes their case before the 'king': 'coram rege Sarracinorum cui nomen Myrmumni'. *Myrmumni* is a corruption of the Arabic title *amīr al-mu'minīn*, meaning 'commander of the faithful'.[23] After a certain amount of diplomatic activity behind the scenes, the authority judges sympathetically:

> Et cum locutio euenerat de illorum causa, ille Ispanius homo omnia que illi dixerunt ei in carcere suo intimauit fratre et illum rogauit, ut regi indicasset et in subsidia illis foret. Post haec itaque cumque omnes isti tres simul coram rege ueniebant et omnia iuxta ordinem intimando illo indicabant de eorum causa, ille rex interrogauit, unde essent; et illi dixerunt: 'De occidentale plaga, ubi sol occasum habet, isti homines ueniebant, et nos nescimus ruram citra illis et nihil nisi aquam'. Et ille rex respondit eis dicens: 'Quare nos debemus eos punire? Non habent peccatum contra nos. Da eis uiam et sine illos abire!' Alii homines, qui in carcere habebantur, debebant censum reddere unum tremesem, illis fuit concessum.[24]

Here it appears that a characteristic of Muslim culture if not religion has been recorded in the lack of knowledge about western Europe; very few Arabs travelled into Christian lands. The string-pulling by the Spaniard seems to have had the desired effect, and Hygeburg is almost smug in her satisfaction that divine favour spares the pilgrims the usual fine. Later, they also succeed in obtaining written permits to help them to find food and continue their tour of biblical sites.[25]

In their accounts of the Holy Land, both Adomnán and Hygeburg naturally focus on the Christian holy places which the pilgrims saw and the good fortune they enjoyed. Even the stories which tell us most about early

[23] Rotter notes that Willibald may not have meant that Myrmumni was the personal name of the caliph, but rather that it was a formal title (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 51–2).

[24] 'And when the conversation turned on their case, the Spaniard told his brother all that he had learned about them whilst speaking to them in the prison, and he asked his brother to pass this information on to the king and to help them. So when, afterwards, all these three came to the king and mentioned their case, telling him all the details from first to last, the king asked whence they came; and they answered: "These men come from the West where the sun sets; we know nothing of their country except that beyond it lies nothing but water." Then the king asked them, saying: "Why should we punish them? They have done us no harm. Allow them to depart and go on their way." The other prisoners who were in captivity had to pay a fine of three measures of corn, but they were let off scot-free.' (*Vita Willibaldi*, p. 95; trans. Talbot, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, p. 163).

[25] *Vita Willibaldi*, p. 100. On permits, see Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 53, 58, 63 and 237.

Muslim society – Willibald's sojourn in prison, Muʿāwiya's arbitration between Christians and Jews in their dispute over a sacred relic – seem to have been presented as demonstrations of divine favour. The Christians are treated with exceptional beneficence by the Saracens and are awarded the relic over their Jewish rivals. This portrayal of the Christian experience as an unmitigated success was characteristic of medieval *uitae*, whose purpose appears to have been to present Christianity as the way forward.[26] Nevertheless, a certain amount of extraneous detail is included in both accounts. Hygeburg tells us that the group was given *acrum lac* ('sour milk'; yoghurt?) to drink by local shepherds and that they saw the peculiar, mud-wallowing cattle of the region (water buffalo?). Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* educates its audience concerning the locusts and honey which John the Baptist ate in the desert, Dead Sea salt, houses on stilts and crocodiles.[27] Even the wildlife may be edifying. We learn from Hygeburg of an encounter with a wild lion, which, on the advice of their 'Ethiopian' guide, Willibald and his companions ignore. By the grace of God, she records, the lion did not devour them and they passed by safely.[28] The anecdote provides a moment of dramatic colour but is also another example of the divine providence that protects the pilgrims under all circumstances.

Despite such chatty detail and the emphasis which Adomnán and Hygeburg place on the reliability of the pilgrim's observation and the faithfulness of his recorder, there is a sense in which the pilgrimages were literature before they even started. They were inspired by the Bible, informed by western Christian literary traditions both of Holy Land itineraries and the Saracens, and eventually converted into texts part of the purpose of which was to help uphold the Christian *status quo*. The personae of Willibald and Arculf, as constructed by Hygeburg and Adomnán, are lenses through which the audience views Christian cultural space. To some extent their presentation reflected material reality, since surviving Christian enclaves in Jerusalem and other centres no doubt supported western visitors.[29] However, the realities not in accord with the literary tradition and Christian ideal – namely the religious practices and dominion of the Muslims – were dismissed as

[26] Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, pp. 59 and 245–51, and (for examples in translation from Latin to Old English) Whatley, 'Lost in Translation', pp. 191, 196–7 and 207–8.

[27] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 214 (salt), 217 (locusts) and 225 (stilt-houses and crocodiles).

[28] *Vita Willibaldi*, pp. 96 and 100–1.

[29] McCormick, 'Byzantium and the West', p. 376.

imitative or inferior or transformed into a validation of Christian superiority. This is nowhere more evident than in Adomnán's account of the dispute over the sacred cloth in which the Saracen king arbitrates. Praising Christ, he casts the cloth onto a fire so that it flutters up unharmed and the Christians receive it. The cloth might represent the holy territory for which Jews and Christians compete. The Saracens have seized it and seem to endanger it but nevertheless, Adomnán implies, all that is Christian will yet be returned unharmed to the Christians by God's intervention.[30]

Although the journeys made by Arculf and Willibald between England and the Holy Land are the only pilgrimages to have been recorded in such detail, they were not unique. The so-called C-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that in AD 884 two pilgrims left England for Rome and *Iudea*. Since they intended to visit the lands to which SS Thomas and Bartholomew travelled, the latter is probably a misspelling of 'Indea'.[31] At any rate, it was clearly their purpose to travel further east than Constantinople. A later entry in the same version of the chronicle states that in the year 1052, Swein, son of Godwin, having moved from England to Bruges following the dispute of Godwin and Harold with King Edward, travelled onwards to Jerusalem and in the course of his return journey died at Constantinople.[32] Presumably, the news was carried to England either by one who had accompanied him or by a messenger from Constantinople. The Worcester manuscript or D-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* relates that shortly afterwards, in AD 1058, Archbishop Ealdred of York travelled to Jerusalem, commended himself to God and donated a golden chalice worth five marks before returning to England.[33]

Here and in other cases described above, it is tempting to assume that when pilgrims returned, they carried goods or ideas from Islamic territories

[30] Said describes the 'vacillation' of the Orient in the eyes of western observers: it appears new and shocking on the one hand, known and owned on the other (*Orientalism*, pp. 58–9). The pilgrimage accounts present the new, Islamicised Holy Land as a yet known and owned Christian space.

[31] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C*, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 63.

[32] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C*, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 114. See also *The Abingdon Chronicle*, ed. Conner, p. 27.

[33] 'On þam ilcan gere Ealdred biscop . . . swa ferde to Hierusalem' (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Manuscript D*, ed. Cubbin, p. 76). Note, too, the statement by Æthelweard in his *Chronicon* (p. 47) that three Irish pilgrims, who are also mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, visited Alfred in the late ninth century with the intention of afterwards going on to Jerusalem (Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, pp. 113–14 and 282–3).

back with them.[34] This would provide support for some arguments that Islam exerted a direct influence upon Anglo-Saxon culture during the early medieval period. Such arguments include suggestions that Old English borrowed a word meaning 'horse' from Andalusian Arabic and that the story of the revelation of the Qur'ān to Muhammad influenced Bede's account of how Cædmon became a poet. It has also been suggested that the designs of certain coins of Offa were influenced by pieces struck in Aksum, in Ethiopia, which might have travelled after the Muslim conquests.[35] Unfortunately, the chronicle entries are too brief to be of use in evaluating these interesting theories, which are supported by somewhat scanty evidence. Yet Islam did exert some cultural influence upon Anglo-Saxon England, witness Offa's imitation dinar. How did the model for this imitation come to western Europe? Did English merchants deal directly with Syrian traders even as Bede wrote anti-Saracen polemic? Could Islamic coins in western Europe, like Willibald's balsam, be exotic purloins? Or merely left-over travel money? Despite the probable hospitality or charity of locals, it is hard to imagine that Willibald and Arculf required no funds at all for lodgings, guides and sea-voyages during the years they spent abroad.[36] Conceivably, pilgrims changed money on the way, at Rome or Cyprus, and brought a few Islamic pieces back with them.

KUFIC COINS IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

However, travellers' loose change could hardly account for the number and variety of Kufic coins from AD 600–1100 which have been found in England. 'Kufic' is a convenient term to describe coins from various provenances which bear early Arabic script. Such coins appear to have arrived in

[34] Hunt describes the urge experienced by early travellers to acquire relics such as small flasks of holy oil and articles specially manufactured for sale to pilgrims (*Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 128–37). Such flasks and their contents are described in detail in Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, pp. 17–29. Some later English 'pilgrims' were actually disguised merchants who took advantage of the frequent journeys made by pilgrims to avoid tolls, a problem mentioned by Charlemagne in a letter to Offa, king of Mercia (Alcuin, *Epistolae*, MGH Ep.Car.aeu. II, 145).

[35] Breeze, 'Old English *ealfara*', pp. 15–17; von See, 'Cædmon and Muhammed', pp. 231–3; and Juel-Jensen and Munro-Hay, 'Further Examples of Coins of Offa'.

[36] Hygeburg records a transaction when the pilgrims make their first voyage from Southampton to Rouen (*Vita Willibaldi*, p. 91). Boniface also paid to board a ship on his travels to the Continent; Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs* II, 82.

England along two routes. The first route, via the Continent, is characterised by finds of gold. Kufic gold seems to have circulated in western Europe during two periods: the eighth century, and between the late eleventh and mid-thirteenth centuries.[37] The first period in England is represented by two dinars from AD 724–43 which were found on the beach at Eastbourne in Sussex and by the hypothetical prototype of Offa's dinar towards the end of the century.[38] An early example from the second period is a gold quarter dinar or tari found at St Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, which originated from Sicily *c.* 1050–70. From the same period come three Kufic gold dinars struck in Spain, two from 1131 which were found in London and one from 1106 in Oxford. These coins may have arrived in the south of England as a result of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman trade with the Mediterranean.[39] Even

[37] Duplessy, 'La circulation des monnaies arabes', pp. 101–2.

[38] See 'Miscellanea', *NC* 9 (1846–7), 85; Blunt, 'A Gold Penny of Edward the Elder', p. 280, and Blackburn and Bonser, 'Single Finds – 3', p. 93. Another gold coin is said to have been found in the marshes below Arundel Castle in Sussex, but the date of its mint is unknown (Vaux, 'On the Discovery of Cufic Coins in Sweden', p. 14, and Carlyon-Britton, 'The Gold Mancus of Offa', p. 61).

[39] Blackburn and Bonser, 'Single Finds – 3', pp. 92–4, and Nightingale, 'The London Pepperers' Guild', especially pp. 123 and 128–9; for the period before 900, see also Lopez, 'The Trade of Medieval Europe'. Anglo-Saxon contacts with Aquitaine are thought to have existed from the tenth century, and may have provided another route for information and artefacts to arrive from Islamic territories; see Beech, 'England and Aquitaine', especially pp. 100–1. Earlier Anglo-Saxon coins and imitations have been found in Italy and Sicily, and may reflect pilgrimage contacts; Willibald, for example, travelled to Sicily to see Etna (Hygeburg, *Vita Willibaldi*, pp. 101–2). See Blunt, 'Four Italian Coins'; his 'Anglo-Saxon Coins Found in Italy'; Blunt and Dolley, 'The Anglo-Saxon Coins in the Vatican'; Kent, 'A South Italian Imitation'; and Dolley, 'A Hoard of Anglo-Saxon Pennies'. England may also have had contacts with Muslim Spain. An early nineteenth-century drawing shows a Spanish Umayyad dirham found in Dorset. The coin itself is no longer known, but can be identified as a dirham of Hisham II, probably from AD 999/1000. This constitutes interesting evidence for contact between Muslim Spain and England in the later Anglo-Saxon period, though it is also possible that the coin travelled via Scandinavia (Dolley, 'A Spanish Dirham Found in England', pp. 242–3). The former possibility is supported by a find of Anglo-Saxon coins from earlier in the tenth century in Roncesvalles, Spain (Mateu Y Llopis and Dolley, 'A Small Find of Anglo-Saxon Pennies from Roncesvalles', pp. 89–91). On other possible contacts between Anglo-Saxon England and Spain, see Chejne, 'The Role of al-Andalus', pp. 113–16 and 119; Lapidge, 'An Isidorian Epitome', p. 184, n. 3; Breeze, 'The Transmission of Aldhelm's Writings', pp. 5–8; Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's Prose Style'; and Hillgarth, 'Ireland and Spain'.

these few examples of Islamic gold coins which were lost in Anglo-Saxon times suggest that greater numbers were present above ground during the same period. Since gold was many times more valuable than silver, it would have been looked after with greater care.

The second route into England witnessed the arrival of silver coinage from Muslim lands via Scandinavia. Kufic coins, mostly dirhams, were hoarded in large quantities in Scandinavia, especially Denmark, during the ninth and tenth centuries. The coins were probably acquired as a result of tribute and raiding.[40] The largest of these collections contain thousands of Islamic coins.[41] They are dominated by silver from the eastern Islamic empire, and contain very little in the way of Andalusian specimens or gold. Scandinavian raiders and settlers carried lesser numbers of these coins to England and Ireland during the late ninth and first half of the tenth centuries. There they have been found both singly and in hoards (albeit considerably smaller than those of northern Europe), usually mixed with other coins and silver.[42] The same voyagers seem also to have been responsible for transporting Anglo-Saxon coins eastwards as far as Russia and Poland, and, especially after the last quarter of the tenth century, back to Scandinavia.[43]

Not surprisingly, Kufic silver in England usually lies within the Danelaw and dates to the close of the ninth century or beginning of the tenth. A notable exception is a hoard found in Croydon, which was dated to *c.* 875 and contained three Kufic coins along with hacksilver and ingots characteristic of Scandinavian hoards. The Croydon hoard is thought to be the earliest Danish silver known to have been concealed in England. The three Kufic coins are all ʿAbbāsid dirhams: two of Hārūn ar-Rashīd (AD 786–809) and one of al-Wāthik (AD 842–7). As a rule, ninth-century Kufic silver coins were brought into Scandinavia in large quantities only at the close of the ninth century or during the first half of the tenth. However, the relatively firm dating of the Croydon hoard shows that some Kufic silver had reached

[40] Sawyer, 'Anglo-Scandinavian Trade', p. 195.

[41] Hovén describes Scandinavian and especially Danish hoards in his 'On Oriental Coins in Scandinavia', pp. 119–28.

[42] For general accounts of Kufic coins found in early medieval western Europe, see Duplessy, 'La circulation des monnaies arabes', and Allan, 'Offa's Imitation of an Arab Dinar'. Kufic coins also reached Ireland; see Kenny, 'An Early Tenth Century Samanid Half Dirham'.

[43] Metcalf, 'The Monetary History of England', p. 135.

north-western Europe considerably earlier.[44] A more typical hoard was discovered at Cuerdale, near Preston in Lancashire, the burial of which has been dated to *c*. AD 903.[45] Other finds have been recorded in Yorkshire and Cumberland, again in Viking hoards from the ninth and tenth centuries.[46] Kufic silver coins also occur singly. Like the hoards, single finds characteristically date from the late ninth or early tenth century and occur within the Danelaw.[47] As with the hoards, however, there is an exception. This is a fragment of an ʿAbbāsid dirham, perhaps from the first half of the ninth century and of uncertain mint, which was found near Bridgnorth, Shropshire.[48] There also exist a few forgeries of Kufic silver which date from the period between the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century. They consequently belong to the same period in which genuine Kufic silver was arriving in England, and so would seem to have been forgeries of coins which were of current value.[49]

[44] Brooks and Graham-Campbell, 'Reflections on the Viking-Age Silver Hoard', pp. 97 and 99.

[45] Lowick, 'The Kufic Coins from Cuerdale', p. 21. The hoard was originally described as containing three or possibly four ʿAbbāsid silver dirhams dating from between AH 156 and AH 282 (AD 772/3–895/6). The presence in the original collection of another Kufic coin which is no longer to be found is indicated by a letter of 1842 concerning the hoard. In it, the author describes 'a small piece of Khosroes 2nd' which is now thought to have been part of an Arab-Sasanian dirham from Tabaristan (Dolley and Shiel, 'A Hitherto Unsuspected Oriental Element').

[46] See Dolley, 'A Neglected but Vital Yorkshire Hoard'; Vaux, 'An Account of a Find of Coins in the Parish of Goldborough'; and Strudwick, 'Saxon and Arabic Coins found at Dean, Cumberland', especially p. 179.

[47] A silver dirham minted at Bardhaʿah (between the Black Sea and the Caspian) and dated AH 277–9 (AD 890–92) was found near Wymesmold (Blackburn and Bonser, 'Single Finds of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Coins – 3', p. 96). A Sāmānid dirham of Ahmad II Ismaʿil (AH 295–301; AD 907–14), which was probably minted in al-Shash (Tashkent), was found in Postwick, Norfolk ('Coin Register, 1994', p. 148).

[48] In the same year another Sāmānid dirham was found in Bylaugh, Norfolk, probably minted in al-Shash, and dated to the reign of al-Muʿtadid (AH 279–89; AD 892–902); see 'Coin Register, 1995', p. 240. Linder Welin ('Some Rare Sāmānid Dirhams') suggests that the term 'mancusus' became current in the West because of the circulation of such dirhams. On this point, see also Lowick, 'A New Type of *Solidus Mancus*', pp. 179–80.

[49] One of these is an imitation of a Sāmānid dirham of Ismaʿil b. Ahmad (AD 892–907) found among other coins at Middle Harling, Norfolk. The coin bears the names of two

A small number of gold coins imitating Kufic originals have also been found in western and northern Europe. The existence of such forgeries might be taken to mean that Islamic gold, like silver, circulated in the West as currency and was therefore worth imitating. This theory, however, is only one of several put forward to explain the best-known western copy of a Kufic coin, the imitation dinar struck between 757 and 796 by Offa, king of Mercia.[50] In the late eighth century, as mentioned above, the king caused a gold piece bearing his name to be created in imitation of an ʿAbbāsid dinar of al-Mansūr from AH 157 (AD 774). Offa's dinar was procured in the nineteenth century in Rome, where it was very probably originally found.[51] It appears to be unique.[52] The reason for the production of this coin has been much debated. Gold coins from the early period are unusual in any case. Offa's dinar should be viewed in the context both of the gold currency of the time and other imitations of Islamic coins from western Europe. Other imitations are thought to have originated in Carolingian Europe or Anglo-Saxon England around the same time as Offa's dinar, during the last decades of the eighth or the first half of the ninth century.[53] For a number of reasons, it seems likely that Offa's unusual coin was minted as part of a payment to the see of Rome.[54] Alternative suggestions are that it was produced for trade abroad, as an indication of Offa's status or as an alms-offering.[55] The prototype of Offa's dinar is also the subject of some speculation. It could have been brought to England from the Continent

rulers, which is characteristic of some copies. The probable date of the forgery is thought to be some time between *c.* AD 893 and 902, that is, very nearly contemporaneous with the reign of the Islamic ruler (Archibald, 'The Coinage of Beonna', p. 17).

[50] For an overview of the reign of Offa, see Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 206–24, and, on his coins, see especially Blunt, 'The Coinage of Offa'.

[51] Blunt, 'The Coinage of Offa', p. 50.

[52] It was suggested that others formed part of a private collection (Metcalf, review of Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*), but Professor Metcalf has informed me that subsequently this proved (regrettably) not to be the case.

[53] See the discussions by Lowick, 'A New Type of *Solidus Mancus*'; Linder Welin, 'Elias Brenners Arabiska GuldPenning'; Allen, 'Edward the Confessor's Gold Penny'; and Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 326–31.

[54] Based largely on a letter by Pope Leo III recording that Offa sent a payment to Rome of 365 mancuses towards the end of the eighth century (Blunt, 'The Coinage of Offa', pp. 45–6, and Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 330). For the original comment by Leo, see Alcuin, *Epistolae*, MGH Ep.Car.aeu. II, 188–9.

[55] Several theories concerning the use for which Offa's dinar was intended have been put forward: see, for example, Carlyon-Britton, 'The Gold Mancus of Offa'; Allan, 'Offa's

by a traveller – perhaps by George and Theophylact, the papal legates to the English synods of AD 786. In any case, assuming that Offa's dinar was struck in England, the prototype or a near copy must also have been present. Unless it was itself an imitation, it can be classed as another example of Kufic gold known to have reached Anglo-Saxon England during the early period.

All these examples show that there was certainly contact, whether direct or mediated, between England and Muslim territories during the period AD 600–1100. However, to make sense of the kind and scope of the contact, the examples should be viewed within a larger European economic perspective. Even a limited history of medieval economics is outside the bounds of the present discussion, but it is possible to give some idea of the scholarly field. The past few decades have seen many refinements or supplements to the famous thesis proposed by Henri Pirenne earlier this century. To simplify, Pirenne argued that the Muslim conquests in the Mediterranean during the seventh century effectively ended East–West trade. In the absence of Mediterranean commerce, political power shifted north-west into Carolingian Europe.[56] However, others have interpreted the arrival of Islamic gold in western Europe between the seventh and eleventh century as evidence for the continuation or even increase of commercial relations between Christian and Muslim lands.[57] In his valuable article of 1956, J. Duplessy outlined

Imitation of an Arab Dinar'; Allen, 'Edward the Confessor's Gold Penny', pp. 266–9; and Blunt, 'A Gold Penny of Edward the Elder', pp. 280–1. Blunt ('The Coinage of Offa', p. 51) suggests that the coin was struck for overseas trade and summarises the above and other discussions concerning the dinar.

[56] Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*. See Ashtor, 'Quelques observations d'un Orientaliste', in which he cites Arabic and other sources to argue that Muslim trade interests moved from the Mediterranean to Russia and the Baltic region during the eighth and ninth centuries.

[57] Particularly influential have been Lombard, 'L'or musulman', in which he argued that Muslim gold injected new life into an exhausted western economy; Bolin, 'Mohammed, Charlemagne and Ruric', which made a case for substantial East–West trade contacts based on parallels between exchange values and Grierson, 'Commerce in the Dark Ages', with a similar thesis that the Muslim and Christian economies were closely interrelated. Lieber provides a useful discussion of scholarship to 1981 and argues for a higher level of commercial activity than had previously been supposed ('International Trade and Coinage in the Northern Lands'). See also Cahen, 'Quelques problèmes'; his 'Commercial Relations', pp. 1–3 and 9–15; and Metcalf, 'The Monetary History of England'.

scholarly trends to date, argued that a series of complementary studies would be necessary to do justice to the problem and published a catalogue of documentary evidence for the circulation of gold currency in Europe.[58] Recent studies suggest that although medieval Mediterranean trade was disrupted by the rise of Islam, it neither abruptly ceased nor burgeoned, and that trade contacts between Muslim and Christian territories were often initiated and maintained by western merchants.[59] Scholars often now supplement numismatic and archaeological evidence with literature concerning the movement of exotic goods from or through Islamic lands to western Europe.[60] In the mid-tenth century, for example, a Spanish traveller noted that the market at Mainz displayed a variety of imports from Islamic lands, including pepper, ginger, cloves, spikenard and dirhams from Samarkand.[61] As we shall see, various archaeological and written remains show that luxury goods from the East, including spices, also made their way to Anglo-Saxon England. It would be interesting to learn to what extent early English authors associated such goods with the Muslims who made them available.

IMPORTED ISLAMIC GOODS IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

On his deathbed in AD 735, Bede is reported to have made the following request:

[58] Duplessy, 'La circulation des monnaies arabes', pp. 101–4 and 118–20. He provides a catalogue of western documents on Islamic coins on pp. 135–52 (examples from before 1100 occupy pp. 135–8).

[59] See, for example, Cahen, 'Commercial Relations', pp. 21–2; Abulafia, 'Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe', pp. 415–19; and, emphasising the importance of Byzantium as a trading centre with contacts East and West during this period, Patlagean, 'Byzance et les marchés du grand commerce'.

[60] Of considerable interest is the article by Sabbe, 'L'importation des tissus orientaux', in which are mentioned such exotica as an expensively spiced rat which Charlemagne ordered to be presented to a collector of orientalia (p. 815, n. 5). More recently, Abulafia too has pressed for the finds of archaeologists and art historians to be taken into account in discussions of medieval economics ('The Impact of the Orient', p. 2).

[61] These items were noticed by Ibrāhīm b. Yaʿqūb, a Jew from Muslim Spain (Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe*, pp. 67–8). For the original account, see Miquel, 'L'Europe occidentale dans la relation arabe d'Ibrāhīm b. Yaʿqūb (X^{e} s.)', pp. 1059–60.

Quaedam preciosa in mea capsella habeo, id est pipera, oraria et incensa. Sed curre uelociter, et adduc presbiteros nostri monasterii ad me, ut ego munuscula, qualia mihi Deus donauit, illis distribuam.[62]

Pepper and incense, originating from India and the Middle East respectively, must have passed through Muslim hands on their way to Bede's valuables-box in the north of England. He does not mention how he acquired them. Small quantities of herbs or spices might be bought at a continental fair and sent to England as enclosures in letters or brought back as gifts by travellers. Perhaps Bede, who never journeyed abroad, acquired his peppercorns in this way.[63]

Anglo-Saxon contact with the Middle East had been established well before Augustine came to England or Muhammad preached in Mecca. During the pre-Islamic period of the fifth, sixth and early seventh centuries, a number of Anglo-Saxons were buried with various 'status-goods' of value and talismanic significance such as amethyst beads and cowries from the eastern Mediterranean or beyond. Such objects seem to have arrived mainly in Kent.[64] Items found at the seventh-century burial-site at Sutton Hoo indicate various links between eastern Anglo-Saxon England and the eastern Mediterranean, including as they do a Coptic bronze bowl, possibly a yellow cloak from Syria and a great quantity of Byzantine silver.[65] In

[62] 'I have a few treasures in my box, some pepper, and napkins, and some incense. Run quickly and fetch the priests of our monastery, and I will share among them such little presents as God has given me.' ('Epistola de obitu Bedae', ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 584–5).

[63] Cf. the balsam brought back from the Holy Land by Willibald. Alcuin mentions a gift of medicinal herbs which he received *c.* 782–96 (Alcuin, *Epistolae*, MGH Ep.Car.aeu. II, 100). Lull sent incense, pepper and cinnamon as gifts in the mid-eighth century (Boniface, *Epistolae*, MGH ES 1, 80).

[64] See Hugget, 'Imported Grave Goods', especially pp. 63 and 66–8 (amethyst and elephant ivory), p. 72 (cowrie shells) and pp. 92–4 (suggestions as to the nature of the movement of the goods and their place in the Anglo-Saxon economy). Reese describes examples of cowrie shells from Anglo-Saxon grave-burials in greater detail ('The Trade of Indo-Pacific Shells' pp. 180–20). Reese notes that cowries may have been imported because the ventral side of the shell was perceived to resemble female genitalia and so to represent a symbol of fertility; it also resembles a half-open eye, and may have constituted a good-luck charm (p. 189).

[65] See Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial III*, II, 740–3 (Coptic bowls), and also Mango, Mango and Care Evans, 'A Sixth-Century Mediterranean Bucket', pp. 306–8. On the yellow cloak, see Carver, 'Pre-Viking Traffic', p. 117.

many cases it is possible that such items were not merchandise, but arrived as booty, tribute or diplomatic gifts. By whatever means they came to be traded or given into England, these goods show that indirect links with the pre-Islamic eastern Mediterranean were established via the Continent and eastern English ports from the very beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period.[66]

Quite probably the Muslim conquests interrupted this network of contacts for some time, but trading links seem to have been renewed. One of the first Muslim influences on English science seems to have been a material impact upon medicinal ingredients. The names of several eastern ingredients appear in the Old English list of medical recipes known as the *Lacnunga* (from the tenth century), and Bald's *Leechbook* (apparently compiled from a variety of sources at Winchester in the late ninth century).[67] Some of the ingredients for these recipes, were they used, could only have arrived from territories under Islamic control. It would appear too that Anglo-Saxons managed to import not only drugs but many medical writings from the Continent into England, to the extent that the quality of Anglo-Saxon medicine before the eleventh century may have approached that known on the Continent.[68] Certainly, evidence survives that medical writings were in demand in England from an early date. Soon after AD 754, Cyneheard, bishop of Winchester, wrote to Lull, bishop of Mainz, requesting him to look out for medical texts:

[66] Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial III*, I, 164–5. See also Richards, 'Byzantine Bronze Vessels in England and Europe', especially pp. 210–26. On early sea-trade in north-western Europe, see Lebecq, 'On the Use of the Word "Frisian"', and his *Marchands et navigateurs* I, 23–34, 119–38 and 269–78; Ellmers, 'The Frisian Monopoly', p. 91; and Carver, 'Pre-Viking Traffic in the North Sea', p. 117. Islamic artefacts continued to enter north-western Europe throughout the medieval period and in many cases found new uses in a Christian setting. For a general discussion and catalogue of the arrival of such imports into north-western continental Europe, see Shalem, *Islam Christianized*.

[67] Cameron, 'The Sources of Medical Knowledge', p. 147. On Anglo-Saxon medicine, see also his 'Bald's Leechbook and Cultural Interactions'; 'Bald's "Leechbook": Its Sources and Their Use'; and, more generally, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*. Still useful are Talbot, *Medicine in Medieval England*, and Riddle, 'The Introduction and Use of Eastern Drugs'. Riddle in particular argues that a wide variety of eastern medicinal ingredients was known in western Europe (and England) during the early medieval period.

[68] Cited by Cameron, 'The Sources of Medical Knowledge', p. 137, who also lists the medical texts which could have been known in England by the eighth century (pp. 136–45). See also Adams and Deegan, 'Bald's Leechbook and the *Physica Plinii*'.

Nec non et, si quos saecularis scientiae libros nobis ignotos adepturi sitis, ut sunt de medicinalibus, quorum copia est aliqua apud nos, sed tamen sigmenta ultramarina, quae in eis scripta conperimus, ignota nobis est.[69]

Philipp Jaffé, an earlier editor of the letter, suggested the reading *pigmenta* rather than *sigmenta*, thus inviting the faint possibility that *pigmenta* might also be interpreted 'paint' or 'dye'; could *pigmenta ultramarina* elsewhere refer to the rare and costly foreign blue made from lapis lazuli?[70] During the early Middle Ages, eastern artists had realised that this mineral, found in Iran, Afghanistan and China, could be ground and combined with a binding medium to produce an intense blue pigment. Because the blue lapis lazuli occurs mixed with grey stone, rich pure blues for illumination could be obtained only with difficulty even when lapis lazuli was available. Such blues were not common in European illumination until after the late tenth century.[71] Nevertheless, centuries before this time, a range of blues of a rather greyer quality was used to decorate manuscripts including the Book of Kells and Durham Gospels. Analyses of the paints indicate that some blue colours in these and other early illuminated manuscripts were created by combining a fairly low grade of powdered lapis lazuli with varying proportions of chalk and indigo.[72] The date and provenance of the Book of Kells and the Durham Gospels remain contentious, but if lapis lazuli was employed in their production, it certainly arrived in the British Isles well before the end of the Anglo-Saxon period.[73]

However, Cyneheard is more likely to have been thinking of a foreign medicinal substance than lapis lazuli. By the mid-eighth century, a number

[69] 'Likewise [please send], if you are going to obtain any books of secular knowledge unknown to us, such as deal with medicinals – of which we have a fair number, but the overseas ingredients which we discover written in them are unknown to us' (Boniface, *Epistolae*, MGH ES 1, 247).

[70] Cameron, 'The Sources of Medical Knowledge', p. 137. Tangl refers to the edition by P. Jaffé (Boniface, *Epistolae*, MGH ES 1, xxxii and 247).

[71] See Mayer, *The Artist's Handbook*, pp. 48–9, and Fuchs and Oltrogge, 'Colour Material and Painting Technique', p. 148.

[72] The crystalline mineral content of the paint does not seem to be azurite (copper carbonate), which was more widely available and was also used during the medieval period to give a rich blue. However, until a more stringent analysis of the pigment can be made, it remains very probable rather than absolutely certain that the mineral involved is lapis lazuli; see Fuchs and Oltrogge, 'Colour Material and Painting Technique', pp. 134, 139 and n. 34.

[73] Fuchs and Oltrogge, 'Colour Material and Painting Technique', pp. 147–8.

of overseas ingredients must have become reasonably familiar. Substances such as pepper and silk are known to have reached England by the first decades of the eighth century. The example of pepper alone suggests that trade with Islamic lands must have been sustained throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Despite its Indian origins, pepper is mentioned more frequently in Bald's *Leechbook* and *Lacnunga* than many native ingredients. The Old English compounds *piporcwyrna* and *piporhorn* suggest that it was commonly used.[74] The Anglo-Latin poet Aldhelm (*c.* 640–709) composed a riddle whose answer was 'peppercorn', which again suggests that the spice would be familiar, at least to a learned audience.[75] Bede's possession of peppercorns has already been mentioned. The seventh- or eighth-century catalogue of eastern monsters known as the *Liber monstrorum* and also the *Wonders of the East* (composed in Latin and subsequently translated into Old English) both mention peppercorns, with an imaginative explanation of how they were gathered and why they are black. The explanation is based on a passage in Isidore's *Etymologiae*: the pepper is naturally white, and is guarded by snakes; men set light to the land and the snakes flee underground; the men can then collect the pepper, which has become blackened by the flames.[76] In the light of this various evidence it seems safe to conclude that pepper was well known and enjoyed from an early time in England, not only as a medicine but as a condiment.

Other exotic spices and medicinals apparently imported into Anglo-Saxon England included aloes, balsam, incense, myrtle and wild olive (from Africa, Arabia and the Near East); cassia, cinnamon, galbanum and ginger

[74] Cited by Banham, 'The Knowledge and Uses of Food Plants', pp. 243–5, along with a hand-signal signifying 'pepper' to be used by diners enjoined to silence.

[75] Aldhelm, *Enigmata* XL, MGH AA 15, 114–15; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, p. 78: 'I am black on the outside, covered with a wrinkled bark, but yet inside I have a shining pith. I season dainties, feasts of kings and extravagant dishes, also sauces and kitchen stews. But you will find me of no value unless my inwards are crushed for their shining pith.'

[76] *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Orchard, III.6 (pp. 308–9) and the Old English *Wonders of the East* [Cameron B22.2], ed. and trans. Orchard, §6 (pp. 188–9). The same information appears in the Latin source, also ed. Orchard, p. 176. The *Wonders of the East* survives in two manuscripts: London, BL Cotton Tiberius A.xv [Gneuss 399], dated *s.* x/xi, and London, BL Cotton Tiberius B.v [Gneuss 373], dated s. xi. It also mentions cinnamon in the nest of the phoenix; see *Wonders of the East*, ed. and trans. Orchard, §35 (pp. 181 and 202–3).

(from the Far East); and mercury (from Spain).[77] These were prescribed in recipes for a variety of ailments. Often, alternative recipes were given; this allowed the medieval physician to select the remedy best suited to what ingredients he had to hand. It might be argued that Anglo-Saxon recipes including eastern ingredients were ignored or not followed exactly, since the physician could always resort to a treatment containing more easily available substances. However, there is evidence against this idea.[78] It seems that the copying of recipes into Bald's *Leechbook*, far from being unthinking or indiscriminate, exhibits logical selectivity. Whole recipes containing rarely used exotic ingredients were frequently omitted, as were certain exotic ingredients from within a recipe, especially perishable materials. The remaining exotic ingredients which were copied into the *Leechbook* were probably available at least occasionally in Anglo-Saxon England. The real use of eastern spices in Anglo-Saxon England is also indicated by two recipes in the Old English *Lacnunga* which prescribe foreign ingredients (aloes, pepper, ginger, cinnamon, pyrethrum, zedoary and galingale) compounded with native ingredients according to typical English methods.[79] Interestingly, zedoary and galingale, which come from the Far East, appear in no Greek or Roman recipes and only became known in medieval Europe as a result of Arab trade. While it might with difficulty be argued that the eastern ingredients in Bald's *Leechbook* were copied from earlier classical exemplars without thought as to their usefulness to an Anglo-Saxon physician, the references in *Lacnunga* to zedoary (Old English *sidewar*) and galingale (Old English *gallenger*) suggest on the contrary that these and other eastern ingredients were known, available and used in England before the tenth century.[80] They probably also represent the earliest borrowings into English (via Latin) of vocabulary used by Arabs (and borrowed from Persian).

Having established that a number of expensive medicinal spices reached Anglo-Saxon shores, we can even gain an idea of what kind of container they might have arrived in. During archaeological excavations at Flaxengate in

[77] Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, p. 104, where he also notes that these ingredients are mentioned in the least derivative part of Bald's *Leechbook*.

[78] Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, pp. 101–2, and Riddle, 'The Introduction and Use of Eastern Drugs', pp. 189–92.

[79] *Lacnunga* [Cameron B21.3], ed. Cockayne, pp. 13 and 17.

[80] Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, pp. 105–6.

Lincoln, six sherds of an early Islamic pottery jar were found in parts of the site which corresponded to a period of Danish occupation during the first half of the tenth century. The sherds appear to have belonged to a utilitarian, turquoise-glazed vessel of a type produced in Syria during the ninth and tenth centuries. Since the quality of the ware is not very high compared with other pieces which were also produced in Syria at the time, it seems likely that the vessel was not itself the object of trade or plunder, but had been specially manufactured to transport (perhaps costly) contents. Lincoln fits the pattern of other Viking-age trading settlements and there is an area on the Flaxengate site which seems to have been a craftsmen's quarter. Consequently it has been suggested that this find may constitute evidence for an early trading centre in Lincoln.[81] The Syrian jar might have been brought to Lincoln by a Dane, or a trader in exotic goods such as the merchant who appears in the *Colloquy* written by Ælfric, abbot of Eynsham (*c.* 955–1010). This merchant dealt in (among other items) purples and silks, spices, gems and ivory.[82] The spices are plausible enough in the light of the evidence discussed above for their import.

The merchant's silks and purples, too, are known to have arrived in Anglo-Saxon England. On a small scale, silk was imported as another medical ingredient, prescribed twice in the *Leechbook* for suturing. A jaundiced patient is described in the *Leechbook* as being as yellow as good silk, perhaps meaning Chinese silk, which was a yellow colour.[83] Silks were also known on a grander scale. In a letter of 796, Charlemagne explained to Offa that he was sending him two silken garments among other gifts.[84] Five years later, Alcuin informed the archbishop of Canterbury that if he meant to appear before Charlemagne he must make certain his associates dressed modestly and not wear gold and silks.[85] In an archaeological context, few finds of silk in Anglo-Saxon grave-burials are known.[86] The most impressive examples of imported silk have been found among the relics of St Cuthbert in

[81] Adams, 'Early Islamic Pottery', pp. 218–19.

[82] Ælfric, *Colloquy* [Cameron C3], p. 33; the relevant passage is reproduced in Latin and Old English with a translation in Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs* I, 41–3.

[83] Bald, *Leechbook* [Cameron B21.2.1], pp. 56 and 358 (sutures), and 106 (diagnosis).

[84] Alcuin, *Epistolae*, MGH Ep.Car.aeu.2, 146.

[85] For other such references, along with examples of silk found in archaeological contexts in north-western Europe, see, generally, Sabbe, 'L'importation des tissus orientaux', and Michel, *Recherches sur le commerce, la fabrication et l'usage des étoffes de soie*.

[86] Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial III*, I, 412, n. 1.

Durham. The saint was originally enshrined in 698 and was translated in 1104; the silks seem to have been added at various stages in between.[87] The Durham silks have been discussed in detail elsewhere as gifts that constitute evidence for diplomatic contacts between Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Byzantine empire.[88] Although certain of the silks were manufactured in Constantinople, others had previously been imported from Islamic territories before being sent on, probably as royal gifts.[89] The value, compactness and exoticism of goods like silks and spices certainly rendered them appropriate gifts for monarchs. In the late tenth century, Elias, patriarch of Jerusalem under Abbāsid rule (*c.* 879–907), is reported to have sent letters and gifts of medicinal spices to King Alfred.[90] The statement is supported by a partial set of recipes in Bald's *Leechbook* which contain eastern ingredients such as balsam and zedoary and are accompanied by the explanation that Elias, patriarch of Jerusalem, recommended them to Alfred.[91]

Thus, a continuing network of trade and diplomatic links, however infrequent or casually organised, seems to have connected the western Christian, Byzantine and Islamic economies throughout most of the Anglo-Saxon period. Merchant ships carried people to the Continent and allowed a variety of goods, including spices and silk, to travel from or through the lands of Islam to England. The Islamic connection, however, remained unrecorded by the Anglo-Saxons. No association seems ever to have been made in England between textiles or medicinals and the Saracens. The *Liber monstrorum* records that pepper is found near Arabia but most Anglo-Saxon sources remain silent as to the origins of traded goods from so far east.[92]

[87] On the date of manufacture of the Nature Goddess silk and its inclusion in Cuthbert's tomb, see Higgins, 'Some New Thoughts on the Nature Goddess Silk', pp. 333–7, and Granger-Taylor, 'The Inscription on the Nature Goddess Silk', p. 341.

[88] Muthesius concludes that the Durham silks span six centuries and arrived from Byzantium and Islamic territories ('Silks and Saints', pp. 365–6). On the silk braids in the tomb, see Granger-Taylor, 'The Weft-Patterned Silks', especially pp. 311–21. Cf. the various articles on the Durham silks in Battiscombe, *The Relics of St Cuthbert*, pp. 378–524.

[89] On Byzantine domestic silk production and imports from the Islamic East, see Muthesius, 'The Byzantine Silk Industry', especially pp. 3, 11–13, 40 and 66; and her 'Silken Diplomacy' in general.

[90] 'Nam etiam de Hierosolyma ab El[ias] patriarcha epistolas et dona illi directas uidimus et legimus' (*Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. Stevenson, p. 77).

[91] 'Ðis eal het þus secgean ælfrede cyninge domne helias patriarcha on gerusalem' (Bald, *Leechbook*, pp. 289–91).

[92] *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Orchard, III.6 (p. 308); *Etym.* XVII.viii.8.

At the same time, western Christian writers, presented with eye-witness accounts of contemporary Islam in the Holy Land, continued to portray the area as a Christian territory in which the governing Muslims were no more than *pagani* or *increduli* whose literary role it was to further the cause of the Christian pilgrim. The tone of these pilgrimage accounts is very different from that of Bede or the Byzantine polemicists deploring the conquests, but the conclusion is the same: the Saracens remained peripheral in a Christian space which still morally and spiritually belonged to the Christian community.[93] The question suggests itself: where did the literary Anglo-Saxons think the Saracens belonged? Where had they come from? When Arculf visited the river Jordan, he noted with interest a spot marked by a wooden cross where, he was told, Jesus had been baptised by John: 'a quo usque in alteram ripam in parte Arabiae homo fortis iactare lapidem potest funda inpellente'.[94] The religious geography is striking. The other bank is so near, yet so far from Christian territory; only a stone's throw away, yet the wrong side of the baptismal waters. It is a different country: perhaps, even, it is the Orient. Surely it was from Arabia that the Saracens emerged to dominate the Holy Land.

[93] Bede, in his version of the *De locis sanctis*, adds the phrase *qui nostra aetate fuit* to the name *Mauias*. This is perhaps intended to suggest to the reader that the Saracen governor is to be understood only as the worldly governor of Damascus and not its true spiritual ruler.

[94] '. . . whence a strong man with a sling can hurl a stone into Arabia on the other side' (Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 213).

4

Arabs and Arabia in Latin

Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* implies but does not state that the Saracens might have come from Arabia. As mentioned earlier, readers of Latin in the early medieval period understood the word 'Saracen' as a contemporary term for the Old Testament peoples of the Ismaelites or Hagarenes.[1] These tribes were described in the Bible and biblical commentaries as inhabitants of the areas south and east of the Holy Land. An Anglo-Saxon reader well versed in biblical commentary would have seen in the Ismaelites a connection between the contemporary Saracens and the region of Arabia beyond the Jordan, both mentioned in Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*.

It should be emphasised that such a connection could only have been made by an educated Christian. Clear links between Arabia, Ismaelites and Saracens survive only in Latin exegetical texts. But even Latin exegetes did not, as a rule, describe the Saracens as an Arab people. Direct links between the Saracens and Arabia are rare compared with links between Saracens and Ismaelites, on the one hand, and between Ismaelites and Arabia, on the other.[2] The Arabs and Saracens seem to have been thought of in separate contexts. Arabs were mentioned not only in the Bible but also in classical writings, whereas the Ismaelites were only known from the Old Testament and Christian writings, and the Saracens only from works written after the second century AD. The Anglo-Saxons, however, first encountered all three peoples in the same Latin Christian context.

[1] See above, pp. 18–19.

[2] Rotter discusses Arabia and the Arabs as represented in writings of the early medieval period, along with the relationship between Arabs and Saracens (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 77–130). I draw on Rotter's analysis in this chapter, but would emphasise the continuing relevance of writings by patristic authors such as Jerome, Cassiodorus and Augustine in the curriculum of the Anglo-Saxons.

Conversion to Christianity necessarily introduced a culture of the book, since new adherents had to deal with a faith that was preserved and explained in writing and, moreover, in a foreign language. This is not to say that all converts learned to read and write in Latin, but that all depended upon written originals, even those who transferred whole texts to memory, or only heard the psalms or gospels read aloud.[3] Christian education in its turn introduced not only the names of peoples such as the Arabs or Ismaelites but also new ideas of space and time, particularly for those who studied the written corpus in detail. The books of the Old Testament contained ancient Jewish history and verse which had been appropriated as Christian scripture.[4] The gospels presented the teachings of Jesus in the context of Jewish history but also as a reaction against it, and Paul allegorised an Old Testament passage on Abraham's family to show that Christianity superseded Judaism and defined itself at least partly by contrast with it.[5] Christian scholarship drew upon the ancient written tradition in order to transcend it.

The onus thus fell upon subsequent generations of scholars to reconcile the Old and New Testaments in such a way as to demonstrate the validity of the latter. The books of the Old Testament were analysed, sometimes verse by verse, by immensely learned ecclesiastics such as Jerome in order to clarify their place within the Christian heritage. At the same time, Christian scholarship had inherited a number of writings from classical authors whose descriptions of the world complemented those found in the Bible. Access to various of these texts allowed Anglo-Saxon readers to locate themselves in relation to the crucial events and places of Christianity while setting these events and places within a larger framework of Roman and Jewish culture. Ideas about Arabia and Arabs, Ismaelites, and Saracens were introduced as part of this larger picture and played their own role in the formation of a shared history and identity for the literate Christian community. It is almost certain that even before they left for the Holy Land, Arculf and Willibald were guided by established Christian scholarly tradition in thinking of the Muslims as *Saraceni*. Their biographers Adomnán and Hygeburg

[3] See above, pp. 14–15; Lapidge, 'Anglo-Latin Literature', p. 1, and Brown, 'The Dynamics of Literacy', pp. 111–18.

[4] Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading*, pp. 28–9.

[5] Matth. XXIII, for example; Mark I.21–8; Luke IV.14–28; John V.39–47; for Paul's allegory, see Galat. IV.21–31.

presented the personal and Christian experiences of pilgrimage as the experiences related to established writings. Although they describe real travel as far as Islamic Arabia, the *De locis sanctis* and *Vita Willibaldi* are literary pieces, too, composed after the event. They display neither fear nor hatred of the Muslims but neither do they acknowledge any reason to be interested in their homeland or religion. They ignore the Saracens or present them as irrelevant except when their actions impinge upon Christians. 'Arabia' is mentioned only by Adomnán in relation to the baptismal river of the Jordan.

THE BIBLE AND JEROME

Unsurprisingly, books of the Bible itself were among the first texts known in Anglo-Saxon England.[6] At least the gospels and a psalter would have been necessary to the mission led by Augustine at the end of the sixth century, and probably some portion of the Old Testament arrived at the same time.[7] Many manuscripts have survived which bear witness to the availability of biblical materials in England during the early Anglo-Saxon period. These include, for example, the famous book of gospels from Lindisfarne and the Codex Amiatinus, both of which were copied and decorated to the highest standards around the turn of the seventh century. The Codex Amiatinus was produced along with two other pandects at the important scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow, but production of high-quality biblical manuscripts was not restricted to the north. The Vespasian Psalter contains an early example of the Roman version of the psalms and was produced in the early eighth century at St Augustine's, Canterbury. Two gospelbooks from the end of the eighth century may have been copied in the same scriptorium.[8] The earliest surviving manuscript evidence for books of the Old Testament in the south of England dates from somewhat

[6] On biblical books in Anglo-Saxon England, see especially Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 8–11, 39–54, 73–4, 219–22 and 445–9. See also Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, pp. 443–55, and Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, pp. 211–20. British Christianity in England seems to have had little widespread literary influence (Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 30–9).

[7] Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, p. 61.

[8] Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 76–7; on these three pandects, see also pp. 85–106.

later, perhaps the late eighth or early ninth century. However, parts of the Old Testament were known in the south of England from at least as early as the latter part of the seventh century. This is indicated by a set of biblical commentaries which were produced in the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian.[9] The Canterbury commentaries addressed the Latin translation of the Old Testament which Jerome had produced in the late fourth and early fifth century. This translation is usually referred to as the Vulgate. Since the Vulgate as known today contains some books which were not translated by Jerome, the books of the Latin Bible which are attributable to him are often also known more precisely as the Hieronymian text.

Jerome, the great churchman, scholar and patron saint of translators, composed many works besides his translation which were to have a profound effect upon western perceptions of the Arab world.[10] He was born around AD 347 and spent his youth in Rome, where an early training in the classics gave him an admirable Latin style and ready ability to cite a number of pre-Christian authors. Despite his experience of a traumatic vision of being punished by God for his love of the classics, Jerome seems to have continued to identify himself throughout his life with classical tradition and Roman culture.[11] He lived in the Arab world for a considerable part of his life and included numerous references to the fourth-century Arabs in his works. Jerome first moved to the Syrian desert around AD 375 and remained there as an ascetic for two or three years. During this time he began to study Hebrew, a language which he continued to cultivate throughout his life.[12] In 382, he returned to Rome, where Pope Damasus commissioned from him a revision of the Latin Bible. The papal request was prompted by a desire to see one reliable and standard version of the Latin Bible replace the

[9] Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 61–2. See also below, p. 117.

[10] On Jerome's life, travels and writings generally, see Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 46–90, and Quasten, *Patrology*, pp. 212–46.

[11] According to Rufinus, Jerome referred to 'our Cicero', 'our Horace' and 'our Virgil' with no sense of incongruity (Sparks, 'Jerome as Biblical Scholar', p. 512,). In a letter to Damasus, Jerome described himself using the phrase *homine Romano* (*Epistulae* [*CPL* 620] 15, CSEL 54, 64). The excellence of Jerome's Latin prose is well known; for the new version of the Bible, however, he abandoned polished Latin and resorted to a plainer and more immediate style (Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 163).

[12] See Sparks, 'Jerome as Biblical Scholar', p. 512, and Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 50 and 134.

great number of inferior translations which were by then in circulation.[13] Jerome returned to Syria the same year and stayed in or near Bethlehem while he corrected and retranslated the Latin Bible, a task which was to occupy him for over twenty years.

After completing the retranslation of the gospels in 383, Jerome continued with the remainder of the New Testament and then moved on to a revision of the Old Testament. Initially, he undertook this part of the project with reference to the Greek Septuagint, which he consulted in a copy of the *Hexapla* from the library at Caesarea. The *Hexapla* was a prodigious volume compiled by Origen in the first half of the third century. In six parallel columns it displayed the unvocalised Hebrew text, a Greek transliteration, the Septuagint and three translations into Greek by Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus. After some time Jerome decided that the Greek versions were an unsatisfactory source, and he turned to the original Hebrew to retranslate from the beginning. He seems to have regarded the Hebrew text as a faultless source, identical with the version from which the Septuagint was translated and therefore a faithful transmission of the original scripture as recorded by its first authors.[14]

The vocalised version of the books of the Hebrew Old Testament, known as the Masoretic text, was only produced between the sixth and the ninth or tenth centuries. Jerome, with the help of the different Greek versions mentioned above, worked on his translation into Latin from an unvocalised version of the Hebrew. In this version, as he pointed out himself more than once in his commentaries, the bare consonants of the Hebrew root may be interpreted in several ways depending upon which vowels are inserted by the reader. A good example of this problem concerns the group of consonants which signifies 'Arab', 'Arabs' and 'Arabia'. The same three consonants may also represent words meaning 'mixture', 'raven', 'evening', 'desert, plain, steppe' and 'poplar, willow'. Jerome was concerned to point out such alternative meanings and to explain their significance. At the same time that he was working on the new version of the Bible, he began to write

[13] On Old Latin books of the Bible, see Gribomont, 'Les plus anciennes traductions', pp. 51–8; Bogaert, 'La Bible latine', pp. 277–84 and 293–5; and Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, pp. 285–330. On p. 290 Metzger cites Augustine's famous complaint that translators of the Bible into Latin were 'out of all number'.

[14] Sparks, 'Jerome as Biblical Scholar', p. 532.

commentaries on its text to interpret and explain the Christian significance of the Old Testament, clarify difficult passages and supply Latin meanings for Hebrew terminology. Jerome's revised version of the scriptures should therefore be read in conjunction with his voluminous commentaries on the text.[15] The commentaries regularly cite the authorities of the *Hexapla* alongside classical authors and Jerome's own interpretations of Hebrew vocabulary and different levels of scriptural meaning.[16] Thus they provide not only a detailed exegesis of the Bible but also an account of Jerome's own choices and methods during translation.

Jerome spent more time on some books of the Bible than on others. He was not always consistent in his translation method and worked on the project over many years. Consequently, his revisions present some difficulties as a 'standard text'.[17] Nevertheless, they ultimately achieved the purpose of replacing the many unsatisfactory Old Latin versions which had proliferated during Jerome's lifetime. This did not happen immediately. Old Latin books of the Bible continued to circulate throughout the West for centuries, sometimes singly, sometimes bound together in pandects, often together with the Hieronymian versions of other books. By the end of the sixth century, books of the Hieronymian Bible were in common use and were also known in Anglo-Saxon England, but their validity was still subject to dispute and their copying could be far from perfect.[18] However, the importance of the Hieronymian version should not be underestimated. As far as Anglo-Saxon awareness of the Arabs and Saracens was concerned, the differences between the Hieronymian books of the Bible and the Old Latin versions did not significantly affect the information transmitted by one or the other to readers. Because of the wide and eventually dominant influence of the Hieronymian translations and the fact that the Arabs appear very similarly in the Old Latin versions, all biblical citations below are taken from the text of the Vulgate, unless otherwise stated.[19]

[15] For a listing of Jerome's commentaries, see Sparks, 'Jerome as Biblical Scholar', pp. 515–16.

[16] Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 86–8, 135, 158–63.

[17] See Sparks, 'Jerome as Biblical Scholar', pp. 519 and 522, and Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 72 and 162.

[18] Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, p. 445.

[19] *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. Weber *et al*.

THE ARABS AND ARABIA IN THE VULGATE

Much Old Testament history is set in areas which were historically inhabited by Arab peoples.[20] Tribes described in the Old Testament as inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula include Ismaelites, Hagarenes, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Midianites, Dedanites, Amalekites and Sabaeans. These names belong to peoples usually associated with an ancestor, after whom they are named, and a specific territory. By contrast, especially in the older books of the Old Testament, the word *Arabia* itself seems to convey little specific geographical or ethnic meaning. It is used as a collective or generic term for northern Arabian tribes or their territories which were more commonly referred to using specific ancestral names such as Ismaelites, Midianites and so forth. There is no genealogical list which mentions Arabs as an individual tribal group. *Arabs*, rather, is likely to have indicated a nomad or semi-nomad from the Syro-Arabian desert or the plains in the north-west of the Arabian peninsula, or one who had settled more permanently in the oases of these regions or southern Palestine.[21]

What could a western reader have learned about the Arabs from their various appearances in the Bible? In the earlier books of the Old Testament they appear as a group of nomadic desert peoples who perhaps subsisted as traders and had access to Arabian gold.[22] Later books of the Old Testament mention Arabs and Arabia more often than the earlier books and present them as a better-defined ethnic group of nomadic peoples who probably

[20] For example, biblical place-names such as Duma and Tema have been identified as sites in north-western Arabia; Duma is mentioned at Josh. XV.52 and Isai. XXI.11 and is now Jawf; Tema at Gen. XXV.15, Job VI.19, Isai. XXI.14 and Jer. XXV.23 and is modern Tayma (*The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, *s.v.* 'Arabia').

[21] See *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, *s.v.* 'Arabia'; *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, *s.v.* 'Arabia'; and *Neues Bibel-Lexikon*, *s.v.* 'Araber'.

[22] See Isai. XIII.20 (an Arabian tent-dweller); Ezek. XXVII.21 (Arabians bring flocks to sell in Tyre); III Kings X.15 and II Par. IX.14 (Solomon's payments of gold from *reges arabiae*, perhaps better translated as 'chiefs of Arabian nomads' than as 'monarchs ruling over Arabia'). Jer. XXV.24 lists the Arabian kings with the tribes of Dedan, Tema and Buz and 'all the kings of the west that dwell in the desert'. (The tribes are accompanied by *uniuersis, qui attonsi sunt in comam*. Other references to the cutting of hair by Arabian peoples are found at Jer. IX.26 and XLIX.32. The practice is prohibited to the Jews at Lev. XIX.27. Herodotus reported it as a religious practice among the Arabs (Montgomery, *Arabia and the Bible*, p. 30). However, see also below on Pliny's account of the Arab habit of shaving the beard and leaving the hair uncut.)

lived as mercenaries and herders south of Palestine and were not disposed especially favourably towards the Israelites.[23] In the New Testament, Arabs and Arabia seem to be associated with a region bordering the Holy Land (as in Adomnán's description).[24] In his letter to the Galatians, Paul allegorises the meaning of Arabia in an early piece of exegesis which also clarifies its geographical location. He writes that Hagar (Abraham's concubine and the mother of Ismael) is to be understood as Mt Sinai in Arabia and that she and her children are in bondage to Jerusalem. Hagar and Sinai signify the old law and covenant of Moses, whereas Sarah (Abraham's wife) and Jerusalem signify the new law of Christ. Paul presents Arabia, the region in which Sinai is located, in opposition to Jerusalem, the New Testament and Christianity.[25] This is a fair summary of their role as usually interpreted from the Old Testament. The overall picture of the Arabs as presented in the Bible is of a nomadic or barely settled people inimical towards the Israelites and subsisting as herders, mercenaries and possibly traders. *Arabia* seems generally to have designated the living-space of the Arabs, or perhaps, more specifically, the region immediately east and south of the Holy Land. If there is any change in the meaning of the word *Arabs* in the course of the Bible's history, it may well be that it narrows from a generic term for the nomads of the Arabian peninsula to one indicating a people with a more precisely northern Arabian ethnic identity.

Readers who wished to study and understand the Old Testament in depth turned to written commentary on the Bible. Here the works of Jerome exerted a great influence. Widely read and copied in their own right, they were also extensively cited by other authors and informed the

[23] See II Par. XVII.11, XXI.16, XXII.1 (which mentions *latrones arabum*); XXVI.7, II Esdra IV.7 (Arabs, Ammonites and Azotians oppose the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls); II.19, VI.1, VI.6 (the Arab Gosem attempts to subvert the project); VI.1 (Gosen grouped with enemies of the Jews); I Macc. V.39 (Arab mercenaries); XII.31 (Arab enemies of Israel); II Macc. XII.10–12 (Arab mercenaries who own flocks and tents; in the Septuagint these Arabs are referred to specifically as νομάδες; see *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, *s.v.* 'Arabia'). I Macc. XI.17 and 39 refer to individual Arabs: one is Zabdiel, who beheads Alexander, and another is Emalchuel, who brings up Alexander's son.

[24] Acts II.11 lists the Arabs after Cretans among the nationalities present at the descent of the Holy Ghost in tongues of fire; in Galat. I.17 St Paul mentions having travelled into Arabia from the Holy Land; Galat. IV.25 locates Mount Sinai in Arabia. Geographically, Paul seems to be referring to a similar area to that suggested in the books of the Maccabees and Esdra, that is, the northern regions of the Arabian peninsula just outside the Holy Land.

[25] Galat. IV.22–31.

understanding of many subsequent generations of scholars. Explanations and information concerning the lifestyle, homeland and exegetical significance of the Arabs are found in several of Jerome's commentaries on the prophets and the New Testament. Manuscripts of works by Jerome have survived from the eighth, ninth and especially the eleventh century in Anglo-Saxon England.[26] From one very early manuscript of his commentary on Ecclesiastes and citations from his writings by Bede, we know that Jerome's exegetical works were also read in England during the seventh century.[27] The information which Jerome conveyed was derived from earlier Christian authors, his own understanding of the scriptures, some personal experience while living in the Holy Land and, on occasion, reference to classical or Jewish literature. He borrowed freely, for example, from Josephus,[28] and twice cited Vergil concerning Arabian incense.[29] Most of all, he emphasised the importance of the Hebrew original of the Bible.[30] Jerome was concerned to clarify both the literal significance of individual words and the spiritual significance of the Old Testament text. Frequently, therefore, his method was to comment both on his process of translation in the Vulgate with reference to the Septuagint and the Hebrew and also to bring forward the allegorical Christian meaning of the Jewish history. He sometimes also outlined readings which he learned from previous commentators or alternative

[26] Some fifty manuscripts containing works by Jerome are listed by Gneuss as having been known in Anglo-Saxon England: see, for example, Cambridge, Pembroke College 17 and 91 (both from the ninth century) [Gneuss 128 and 136]; Shropshire Record Office s.n. (viii^2) [Gneuss 755]; Gerleve, Westphalia Abtenbibliothek, s.n. (viii^2) [Gneuss 829.5] and St Petersburg, Russian National Library, F.v.I.3 (viii^2) [Gneuss 840.6]. Jerome's works continued to be read until the end of the Anglo-Saxon period; see Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists', pp. 149–54.

[27] Würzburg Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.q.2, dating from the fifth century [Gneuss 944].

[28] Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 156. See also Luebeck, *Hieronymus quos nouerit scriptores*, *s.v.* 'Flauius Josephus'.

[29] Of Arabia, Jerome writes: 'unde et thus uenire perhibetur, dicente Vergilio: "centumque Sabaeo/thure calent arae"'; Jerome, *In prophetas minores* [*CPL* 589], CCSL 76, 202; he cites the same lines in *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 12, where he comments further: 'Saba a quo Sabaei, de quibus Virgilius: "Solis est thurea uirga Sabaeis"'. Some of Jerome's classical sources are noted in Duckworth, 'Classical Echoes in St. Jerome's Life of Malchus', and Luebeck, *Hieronymus quos nouerit scriptores*.

[30] This distinguished Jerome's exegetical style from that of other important commentators such as Eusebius of Emesa or Theodore of Mopsuestia; see Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 175 and 194.

interpretations of a passage, especially if the Hebrew root was ambiguous, so that to some extent at least readers might evaluate the meaning of the biblical text for themselves.[31]

JEROME AND OTHER COMMENTATORS ON ARABIA AND THE ARABS

As mentioned above, the Hebrew consonants for 'Arab' are a good example of a root which offers a variety of exegetical interpretations, potentially also signifying 'raven', 'plain', 'evening', 'mixture' or 'willows' as well as 'Arab' or 'Arabia'. Jerome took pains to make this fact clear to his readers. In his commentary on Isaiah he pauses at the word 'salicibus' in order to explain the problem:

> Pro salicibus in Hebraeo legimus arabim, quod potest et Arabes intellegi . . . quod nomen propter ambiguitatem transfertur et in coruos, atque occidentem locaque campestria . . . Torrentem salicum, Babyloniae accipe flumina, de quibus Dauid, 'In salicibus in medio eius suspendimus organa nostra': siue uallem Arabiae, per quam pergitur ad Assyrios.[32]

A little later in the same commentary, he digresses again to explain the same problem but this time interprets the Hebrew to mean 'Arabia': 'Verbum "Arab", ut saepe iam diximus, et "uesper", et "Arabia", et "coruus", et "planities", et "Occidens" appellatur'.[33] In a further two examples, Jerome encounters a disagreement between his authorities on what *Arabia* is to signify, and, characteristically, presents all the possibilities.[34] However, even Jerome may sometimes have interpreted mistakenly: at I Kings XVII.4–6, for example, the ravens which feed Elias in the eastern wilderness might

[31] Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 156, 163–7, 212–13 and 291–4.

[32] 'For "willows" in Hebrew we read "arabim", which can also mean "Arabs" . . . which name, on account of ambiguity, also translates as "crow", and "west" and also "low place" . . . Understand "the flood of willows" as the river of Babylon, of which David said "We hung our harps in the middle of it, in the willows": or the valley of Arabia, along which it continues to the Assyrians' (*In Isaiam* [*CPL* 584], CCSL 73, 178).

[33] *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 209.

[34] 'Pro Arabia quoque Symmachus, "inhabitabilem"; Aquila, "humilia" uel "plana"; Theodotio, "Araba" transtulerunt' (*In Ezech.* [*CPL* 587], CCSL 75, 713); 'Pro "torrente Occidentis", Symmachus interpretatus est, "uallem campestrem": Theodotio, "torrentem Arabiae": Aquila, "torrentem qui est in planitie"' (Jerome, *In prophetas minores* [*CPL* 589], CCSL 76, 312).

better be thought of as nomads.[35] Although Jerome often explains the element *arab* as meaning *loca campestria*, *planities*,[36] the most common interpretation he gives is that of 'evening' or 'west'; he briefly glosses *Arabia* as such in the commentaries on several Old Testament books. After outlining the whole range of interpretations available in the passage from his commentary on Isaiah cited above, Jerome suggests that though the root may be variously interpreted, he considers 'evening' or 'west' to be the chief biblical significance of the word.[37]

Jerome associated Arabia with the evening even when to do so was to depart from his own translation of the Bible. In a letter describing attacks from the north on Roman provinces he coined the epithet *septentrionis lupi* to describe the attackers. His 'wolves of the North' were based on a reference to *lupi Arabiae*, a phrase taken from the Septuagint version of Hab. I.8.[38] Jerome's commentary on this verse juxtaposes his new version of the text with that of the earlier Septuagint. The Greek, rendered into Latin, has: 'Et exilient super pardos equi eius, et uelociores erunt lupis Arabiae', while Jerome's translation from the Hebrew reads: 'Leuiores pardis equi eius, et

[35] *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, *s.v.* 'Arabia'. Jerome's ravens were to prove an enduring topos in Christian literature; see Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, pp. 11–12.

[36] *Arab* and related or similar words appear as follows in *LHNom.* [*CPL* 581]: *Araboth humilem, planam, atque campestrem*, CCSL 72, 78–9; *Araba occidens, siue uespera*, CCSL 72, 86; *Araboth humilia, plana, atque campestria*, CCSL 72, 88; *Arab insidiae*, CCSL 72, 89; *Araba multa*; CCSL 72, 89; *Betharaba, domus humilis, uel uesperae*; CCSL 72, 802; *Arabes, humiles, siue campestres*, CCSL 72, 91; *Arabiam, humilem, siue occidentalem*, CCSL 72, 155. The most frequent interpretations given in this gloss are those of 'low place', 'plain' – which translates the '-arab-' element in *araboth* and *betharaba* as well – followed by 'west', 'evening'. In the commentaries, on the other hand, by far the most common rendering of the word is as 'west', 'evening'. Two other interpretations, *insidia* and *multa*, only appear once each here.

[37] 'Ceterum nomen Arabiae, id est, uesperae et occidentalis, in aliis scripturarum locis diuersas intelligentias recipit' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 296). For other examples of 'Arab' translated as 'west', 'evening', 'sunset', see also *In Ezech.*, CCSL 25, 375; *In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76A, 588 and 696; and *In epistulas Paulinas* [*CPL* 591], PL 26, 390–1 (where Jerome defines it as *occasus*).

[38] Jerome writes: 'Viginti et eo amplius anni sunt, quod inter Constantinopolim, et alpes Iulias, quotidie Romanus sanguis effunditur . . . Ecce tibi anno praeterito ex ultimis Caucasi rupibus immissi in nos, non iam Arabiae, sed Septentrionis lupi, tantas breui prouincias percurrerunt' (*Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 570–1).

uelociores lupis uespertinis'.[39] Jerome's translation does not mention Arabs at all but in his commentary on the passage he retains the phraseology of the Septuagint for comparison. In his letter, he reverts to it for rhetorical effect. Apart from emphasising that the wording of the Septuagint remained familiar to Jerome and (presumably) to the recipient of his letter, the comparison of the northern marauders with *lupi Arabiae* suggests that Jerome perceived the Arabian tribes to be dangerous and uncivilised marauders themselves.

One uncivilised Arab trait as far as the Christian writer was concerned was their nomadic lifestyle. Jerome's commentary on Isaiah contains two images of the Arabs as desert nomads and dwellers in tents, an image also conveyed to the Christian world in Isaiah's own prophesy that Babylon would suffer such devastation that the Arab would not pitch his tent there. In one commentary on this passage, Jerome accompanies the Arab with a Saracen, presumably because he conceived of the Saracens too as tent-dwellers: 'Non enim tendet ibi Arabs Saracenusque tentoria'.[40] In a later commentary on the same verses, after mentioning that *Arab* signifies 'west' and 'evening', Jerome instructs the reader nevertheless to understand *Arab* literally, and without pejorative meaning, as the desert nomad. An Arab would, he writes, move there when he saw that it was deserted, for he always pushes into boundaries and, having forgotten things gone by, shifts himself on.[41] Here, Jerome uniquely instructs the reader to accept an interpretation of *Arab* not negatively but *in bonam partem*. Still, this representation of the desert-dweller who moves on beyond boundaries accords well with another description of Arabs in the commentary on Jeremiah. The prophet described Jerusalem lurking in the wilderness (Jer. III.2). In his commentary, Jerome linked the people of the Arabs with the word *latro*:

[39] Jerome, *In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76A, 584. The same distinction between 'evening' and 'Arabia' in Jerome's and the Septuagint's translations of the identical phrase occurs later at Zeph. III.1, which is cited by Jerome as *iudices eius sicut lupi Arabiae* in the Septuagint. Jerome's Vulgate reads *iudices eius lupi uesperae* (*In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76A, 694).

[40] *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 165.

[41] 'Non enim ponet ibi, postquam in pristina gloria esse desierit, Arabs tentoria sua, qui interpretatur "occidentalis" et "uespertinus"; ut in ea cupiat habitare, quam uiderit esse desertam. Arabs autem in praesenti loco in bonam partem accipitur: quod semper tendat ad finem, et oblitus praeteritorum, extendat se in priora'; *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 234.

Pro latrone, siue cornice, in Hebraeo scriptum est Arab, quod potest et Arabas significare, quae gens latrociniis dedita, usque hodie incursat terminos Palaestinae, et descendentibus de Jerusalem in Jericho obsidet uias: cuius rei et Dominus in Evangelio recordatur.[42]

Jerome purports to base his description on material in the Gospels. The passage he refers to is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke X.30–7). His treatment of the Arabs is interesting. He defines the entire people as *gens latrociniis dedita*, a people given to robbery, and describes one of their activities as besieging roads in Palestine somewhere between Jerusalem and Jericho, presumably in order to waylay travellers. This clarifies that Jerome is not referring to settled Arabs but to bandits of some kind. The phrase *incursat terminos Palaestinae* shows that at least as far as Jerome is concerned these Arabs have no right to be within Palestine but belong outside its boundaries. He writes that the Arab practice of waylaying travellers is current in his own time (*usque hodie*). He then identifies the robbers who attacked the New Testament traveller a few hundred years before as the originals of the fourth-century Arabs. By synthesising biblical information with local knowledge, Jerome conveys the idea that the Arabs are and always have been highway robbers. Furthermore, although the observation is Jerome's own, he presents it in such a way that it appears to be endorsed by scripture. The validity of the endorsement is doubtful. Jerome appeals for authority both to the Old Testament Hebrew, whose word for *latro* or *cornix* he says may also be interpreted 'Arab', and to the New Testament account of the thieves between Jerusalem and Jericho, whom he maintains to be Arabs. However, the Septuagint does not contain the word *Arab* here in its version of Jeremiah, and nowhere else does Jerome mention that *latro* is a possible interpretation of the Hebrew root for 'Arab', though *cornix* corresponds with the *coruus* he more usually mentions. Similarly, the New Testament parable does not mention Arabs at all in connection with the thieves, though two later travellers along the road are specified as a Levite and a Samaritan. It may be that Jerome's own

[42] 'For "robber", or "crow", "Arabe" is written in the Hebrew, which may also mean "Arabs" – which people, given to robbery, to this day invade the borders of Palestine, and besiege the roads for travellers coming down from Jerusalem to Jericho – a thing also noted by the Lord in the Gospels' (Jerome, *In Hier.* [*CPL* 586], CCSL 74, 31). The New Testament reference is to Luke X.30–7.

perceptions of the Arabs are informing his interpretation of the Bible, or perhaps he was influenced by the biblical linking of *Arabs* with *latro* at II Par. XXII.1 (*omnes maiores natu . . . interfecerant latrones arabum*), or by some other reference such as Pliny's description of the *Attali latrones* as an Arabian people.[43]

Since Jerome lived for many years on the outskirts of the Syrian desert in the north of the Arabian peninsula, it is not surprising that he should have mentioned the nomadic tribes who inhabited the same region. The fact that he saw the landscape and peoples of the Bible reflected in his fourth-century environment underlines the contemporary relevance of scripture in the mind of the great exegete. Jerome refers again in various works to the northern Arabian nomads. However, in these other writings he does not call them *Arabes*, but *Saraceni*. In the works of early Christian commentators whose writings were known in Anglo-Saxon England, the most common designation for the nomads of their own day was *Saraceni*. In the same Christian Latin literature, the name *Arabs* was largely restricted to classical and biblical references. When Bible met contemporary environment, as sometimes happened in the commentaries of Jerome, Arabs and Saracens might also meet, albeit rarely.

Christian writers frequently discussed Arabs and Arabia separately from each other. A good example occurs in the writings of Ambrose (339–97), the great sermoniser and prolific exegete. Works by Ambrose were known in England from at least as early as the eighth century.[44] In the *Hexaemeron*, one of his best-known commentaries, he described the desert of Arabia as a region between Egypt and Palestine and mentioned that the phoenix made

[43] (Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, VI.xxvi.125). Elsewhere in his commentary on Isaiah, Jerome again linked fourth-century Arabs with the biblical world. In an explanation of the Greek word *theristrum*, an item of clothing worn by Rebecca, Jerome wrote that it was a kind of robe worn even in his own day by the women of Mesopotamia and Arabia to protect their bodies from the heat: 'Habent et theristra, quae nos pallia possumus appellare: quo obuoluta est et Rebecca. Et hodie quoque Arabiae et Mesopotamiae operiuntur feminae: quae Hebraice dicuntur "ardidim", Graece θέριστρα: ab eo quod in θέρει, hoc est, in aestate et caumate corpora protegant feminarum'; *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 57. The same word is defined elsewhere by Jerome as a robe, a kind of Arabic garment worn by the women of certain provinces: *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 30.

[44] Manuscripts containing his work which survive from the eighth century include: London, Lambeth Palace 414, ff. 1–80 [Gneuss 516]; Boulogne, Bibliothèque Municipale, 32 [Gneuss 799]; and Kassel, Gesamthochschulbibliothek, 2°Ms.theol.21 [Gneuss 832].

itself a nest there of incense, myrrh and other aromatics in which to die.[45] Of the Arabs, he wrote elsewhere that they were a people who practised circumcision along with the Egyptians and Phoenicians.[46]

A similar dissociation between Arabia as a region rich in spices and the Arabs as an alien people occurs in the works of his near contemporary, Augustine (354–430), who is sometimes said to have converted to Christianity in his thirties as a result of hearing a sermon by Ambrose. One of the founding fathers of the western church, Augustine wrote numerous letters, biblical commentaries and works on the Christian faith which were widely known through the medieval West.[47] Much manuscript material containing his works survives from Anglo-Saxon England. Most dates from the eleventh century, but excerpts from his commentary on the psalms, in which he wrote about Arabian incense, survive from considerably earlier.[48] Augustine interpreted the people of the Arabs as *infideli* and *gentes*, in contrast with the Israelites.[49] He also described a heresy peculiar to Arabia according to which the soul dies and disappears along with the body to arise again at the end of time. Since no author of the heresy was named, Augustine explained that its adherents could be called *Arabici*.[50] Later, in the seventh century, the same information was retransmitted by Isidore in the fifth chapter of his *Etymologiae*. Of Arabia itself, however, Augustine commented that it was known for its aromatic products, which he called *bonas res Arabicas*. He also indicated that incense was typically found there.[51]

Others regarded the luxury of these Arabian spices with suspicion. They could be interpreted to signify the *gentes* themselves, or at least those who did not behave like members of the true faith. Cassiodorus (AD *c.* 485–580) was the author of at least three works to have been studied in Anglo-Saxon England: the *Expositio psalmorum*, *Institutiones* and *De anima*. The *Expositio*

[45] Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* [*CPL* 123], CSEL 32.1, 70 and 197.

[46] Ambrose, *Epistolae* [*CPL* 160], CSEL 82.2, 180.

[47] See Quasten, *Patrology*, pp. 345–50 (Augustine's life) and 403–62 (doctrine); see also Altaner, *Patrology*, pp. 487–94 (Augustine's life) and 496–516 (works).

[48] Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Grimm 132, 2 [Gneuss 792] and Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.f.43 [Gneuss 944.5], both dated to around the mid-eighth century. Another early example of Ambrose is Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 18.7.8, *s.* viii [Gneuss 255].

[49] Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* [*CPL* 283], CCSL 39, 981 and 983.

[50] Augustine, *De haeresibus* [*CPL* 314], CCSL 46, 337.

[51] Augustine, *Contra academicos* [*CPL* 253], CCSL 29, 20 and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, CCSL 38, 591.

psalmorum, a verse-by-verse commentary on the psalms, survives in several manuscripts, and was known in England from the early eighth century at the latest.[52] In this work, Cassiodorus took up the theme of Arabia as a land of spices in order to introduce negative connotations of luxury and physical pleasure. He explained in his commentary on Ps. LXXI that just as Arabia allures the sense of smell with various perfumes, so pleasure-seekers are tempted towards worldly enjoyments.[53]

Arabia as a land of spices or perfumes was a concept which went back to classical literature and was well developed in the *Historia naturalis* by Pliny. According to Pliny, Arabia was a rich land full of aromatics, called *Beatae* and *Eudaemon* and known principally for incense and myrrh, which he associated with the Sabeans. He described this Arabia as lying near Palestine or Judea and Egypt.[54] Pliny seems also to have associated the Arabia inhabited by *Nomades* or *Scenitae* ('tent-dwellers') with the nearby desert region of Syria.[55] The idea that the Arabs were one among several (or many) Arabian peoples had been current in the West for some time. Pliny described a group called *Arabes* along with many other tribes as inhabitants of Arabia in the sixth book of his *Historia naturalis*. They are listed along with the *Nomades*, who live on milk and raw meat, and the *Sabaei*, who gain their wealth from fertile woods bearing aromatics and gold among other products. A manuscript containing books two to six of Pliny's *Historia naturalis* survives from the first half of the eighth century, and excerpts are found in later manuscripts.[56] Pliny described the Arabs as follows:

[52] Lapidge, 'An Isidorian Epitome', p. 194 and n. 40; also Durham, Cathedral Library B.II.30 [Gneuss 237]; Cambridge, St John's College Aa.5.1, f. 67 [Gneuss 154]; and Düsseldorf, Universitätsbibliothek Fragm.K19:Z8/8 [Gneuss 822]. The latter two are fragmentary; all date from the first half of the eighth century.

[53] 'Arabia ponitur pro hominibus suaui et terrena se delectatione tractantibus. Nam sicut illa patria diuersis aromatibus sensum narium mulcet, ita isti ad delectationes mollissimas illecebris saecularibus inuitantur' (Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum* [*CPL* 900], CCSL 98, 653).

[54] Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, vol. 1, V.lxv.1–5, V.lxx.2–4, V.lxxiv.1–5, V.lxxxvii.2–7, VI.cxxxviii.1–2 and VI.cliv.3–4, for example. On Arabia and Saba and their inhabitants according to medieval sources, see Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 79–82 and 85–6.

[55] Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, vol. 1, V.lxxxvii.1–6, VI.cxxv.1–4 and VI.cxliv.1–7.

[56] The eighth-century example is Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss.Lat.F.4 [Gneuss 838].

Arabes mitrati degunt aut intonso crine; barba abraditur praeterquam in superiore labro; aliis et haec intonsa. mirumque dictu, ex innumeris populis pars aequa in commerciis aut latrociniis degit. in uniuersum gentes ditissimae . . . uendentibus quae e mari aut silvis capiunt nihilque inuicem redimentibus.[57]

A certain amount of information about Arabia from Pliny's *Historia naturalis* was retransmitted by Isidore, bishop of Seville, in his famous work on the origins of words usually referred to as the *Etymologiae*. Isidore lived and wrote at the beginning of the seventh century, and various of his writings were read in Anglo-Saxon England from an early date; his *Etymologiae* were known from at least the first years of the eighth century.[58] The 'etymologies' consist of definitions and explanations from a variety of sources, including Pliny, Orosius, Jerome and the Bible, which Isidore catalogued in books according to subject-matter.[59] He discusses the geography and natural history of Arabia mostly in books twelve to seventeen (on animals, the elements, the regions of the earth, cities and built areas, gemstones and plants). Isidore's description of the region of Arabia, which draws on Pliny, Orosius and the Bible, is considerably more detailed than his account of its peoples:

Mesopotamia . . . ab oriente Tigrim habet, ab occiduo Euphraten. Incipit autem a septentrione inter montem Taurum et Caucasum; cuius a meridie sequitur Babylonia, deinde Chaldaea, nouissime Arabia εὐδαίμον . . . Arabia appellata, id est sacra; hoc enim significare interpretatur; eo quod sit regio turifera, odores creans: hinc eam Graeci εὐδαίμον, nostri beatam nominauerunt. In cuius saltibus et myrrha et cinnamum prouenit: ibi nascitur auis phoenix, sardonyx gemma, et iris, molochites et paederota ibi inuenitur. Ipsa est et Saba, appellata a filio Chus, qui nuncupatus est Saba. Haec autem angusto terrae tractu ad orientem uersus ad Persicum sinum extenditur, cuius septentrionalia Chaldaea claudit, occasum sinus Arabicus.[60]

[57] 'The turbaned Arabs go with uncut hair, the beard shaven except on the upper lip; on others, this too is unshaven. Remarkably, of the innumerable population, an equal proportion lives as merchants or robbers. They are wealthiest of all peoples . . . by selling what they get from the sea and the woods and in turn repurchasing nothing' (Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, vol. 1, VI.clxii.1–7).

[58] Lapidge, 'An Isidorian Epitome', pp. 185–91.

[59] Also known in Anglo-Saxon England were Orosius's comments on the geographical location of Arabia and its peoples; his *Historiae* was cited by Bede and later translated into Old English, probably during the reign of Alfred. See below, pp. 175–7.

[60] 'Mesopotamia . . . has the Tigris to the east, the Euphrates to the west. It begins in the north between the Taurus and Caucasus mountains; from which follow southwards

Isidore wrote elsewhere that Arabia bordered Palestine, which agrees with the geographical information given above.[61] The name Saba (or Sheba) which he mentions occurs in the Bible to denote the kingdom of South Arabia, most famously in the passage describing the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon to hear his wisdom.[62] Jerome, referring to Ps. LXXI and the kings of Saba and Arabia, comments that the Hebrew actually reads 'the kings of Saba and Saba', the first 'Saba' spelt with the Hebrew letter 'sin', the second with 'samech'. According to Jerome, the two letters are the same in Latin and both names are now understood to mean Arabia.[63] Isidore repeats Jerome's identification of Saba with Arabia and locates the Sabaean homeland in the Arabian mountains of the Libanus and Antilibanus, where incense is found. He explains that the name 'Sabaei' indicates 'to supplicate, venerate' because it is with Sabaean incense that God is worshipped.[64] Saba appears several times in the Old Testament as an opulent region producing spices, gold and gems, in contrast with the flocks and herds of

> Babylonia, then Chaldea, lastly Arabia Eudaemon . . . called Arabia, that is, "sacred"; for so it is understood to mean; this is because it is a place rich in incense, giving forth perfumes: hence the Greeks call it "eudaemon", and we call it "blessed". In its ravines both myrrh and cinnamon occur; there the phoenix is born, and the gem sardonyx and crystal?, malachite? and opal? are found. The same is also Saba, named after the son of Chus, who is called Saba. This extends as a narrow stretch of land up to the Persian gulf in the east, and is bordered by Chaldea in the north and the Arabian gulf in the west' (*Etym*. [*CPL* 1186], XIV. iii. 13–14).

[61] 'Pentapolis regio in confinio Arabiae et Palaestinae sita . . .' (*Etym*. XIV. 3. 24).

[62] I Kings X.1–13; Saba appears also in Ps. LXXII.10, which was widely known through the many copies of psalters which were produced during the early medieval period.

[63] Jerome writes: '"Filii Regma, Saba et Dadan." Hic Saba per "sin" litteram scribitur, supra uero per "samech" a quo diximus appellatos Sabaeos. Interpretatur uero nunc Saba, Arabia, nam in septuagesimo primo psalmo, ubi nos habemus, "Reges Arabum et Saba munera offerent": in Hebraeo scriptum est, "Reges Saba, et Saba": primum nomen per "sin", secundum per "samech"' (*LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 12). Elsewhere, he comments: 'In Psalmis ubi scriptum est: "Reges Arabum, et Saba munera offerent tibi", in Hebraeo habet, "reges Saba et Saba munera offerent tibi": quorum unum Saba per "sin" litteram scribitur, alterum per "samech", quae nostrae litterae similis est' (*In Ezech*., CCSL 75, 375).

[64] 'Sabaei dicti ἀπὸ τοῦ σέβεσθαι, quod est supplicare, et uenerare, quia diuinitatem per ipsorum thura ueneramur: ipsi sunt et Arabes, qui in montibus Arabiae sunt, qui uocantur Libanus et Antilibanus, ubi thura colliguntur' (*Etym*. IX.ii.49); 'Hoc et Libanum uocatum a monte Arabiae, ubi Sabaei sunt. Nam mons eorum Libanus dicitur, ubi thura colliguntur' (*Etym*. XVII.viii.3). Isidore also quotes from Jerome on Saba and Arabia (*Etym*. IX.ii.18).

Arabia.[65] Jerome's statement that Saba is now called Arabia affirms earlier accounts of Arabia as a land of aromatics and of Saba as a land particularly associated with incense.

In the second chapter of book nine, Isidore describes the Sabaeans as Arabs. He explains that Ham's son Chus, the ancestor of the Ethiopians, had six sons, amongst whom was Saba, 'a quo progeniti et appellati Sabaei . . . Hi sunt et Arabes'.[66] These Arab-Sabaeans belong, according to Isidore, among the descendants of Ham. This gives them an entirely different ancestry from that of the Ismaelites, who are descended from Sem.[67] Isidore comments of Sem's descendants that they include the prophets and patriarchs, the people of God and Christ himself, and that they inhabit the lands of the south from the extreme east as far as the Phoenicians.[68] Therefore, according to Isidore's summary of biblical genealogy in the ninth book of the *Etymologiae*, the Sabaean Arabs are only very distantly related to the Ismaelites, Noah being their nearest ancestor in common. It may simply be that the information Isidore gives in the *Etymologiae* is incomplete. He writes only that the Sabaeans are Arabs, and not that all Arabs are Sabaeans. He gives the reader very little more information about the history or significance of the Arab races or tribes, but then his purpose is to provide brief information rather than lengthy analysis. Isidore merely mentions in a later chapter that the Arabs pierce their ears, their women wear robes to protect their bodies from the heat, and they make their tents from goat-hair.[69] The statement

[65] Ezech. XXVII.21–2: 'Arabia et uniuersi principes Cedar ipsi negotiatores manus tuae cum agnis et arietibus et hedis uenerunt ad te negotiatores tui; uenditores Saba et Reema ipsi negotiatores tui cum uniuersis primis aromatibus et lapide pretioso et auro'. Saba is described in similar terms at Isai. LX.6 ('omnes de Saba uenient aurum et tus deferentes') and Ier. VI.20 ('ut quid mihi tus de Saba adfertis et calamum suaue olentem de terra longinqua').

[66] *Etym.*, IX.ii.14. [67] *Etym.*, IX.ii.6.

[68] 'Sem dicitur nominatus, quod nomen ex praesagio posteritatis accepit. Ex ipso enim patriarchae et prophetae, et apostoli, et populus Dei, ex eius quoque stirpe et Christus, cuius ab ortu solis, usque ad occasum magnum est nomen in gentibus' (*Etym.* VII.vi.16); and 'Haec sunt gentes quae de Sem stirpe descendunt, possidentes terram meridianam ab ortu solis usque ad Phoenices' (*Etym.* IX.ii.9).

[69] 'Circumcidunt Iudaei praeputia; pertundunt Arabes aures; flauent capitibus intectis Getae' (*Etym.* XIX.23.7); 'Theristrum, palliolum est quo usque hodie Arabiae et Mesopotamiae mulieres uelantur, quibus in aestu tutissimo teguntur umbraculo. De quo in Isaia' (*Etym.* XIX.25.6); 'Cilicia Arabes nuncupant, uelamenta pilis caprarum contexta, ex quibus sibi tentoria faciunt' (*Etym.* XIX.xxvi.10).

pertundunt Arabes aures seems to be found only in Isidore, and only in the *Etymologiae* (but see Judg. VIII.25 on Ismaelite earrings). The comment on Arabian women's clothing closely echoes one of Jerome's and the Arabian tents of goat-hair are possibly from Pliny.[70]

The above examples are representative of the kinds of ideas which were available to Anglo-Saxon readers concerning the Arabs and Arabia from the first half of the seventh century (in the case of the Bible) or at least as early as the eighth (Pliny, Isidore and the church fathers). Even Anglo-Saxons whose Christian education was minimal would have encountered forms of *Arabia* and *Arabes* in the psalter. Those who read or heard more of the Bible might have noted that Arabia was a region outside the Holy Land and that the Arabs were nomads. Latinate readers who studied scripture in detail and read commentaries by earlier authorities would have developed a more sophisticated picture. Despite many differences between the information from the Old Testament, Pliny's *Historia naturalis* and Christian scriptural commentary, the sources agree in some basic respects. The land of Arabia seems to have had a dual aspect. The first element was its classical and Old Testament portrayal as an area rich in spices or incense and gold; this Arabia was often identified more specifically as Saba. The second was its presentation as a region lying somewhere between Egypt and Mesopotamia and bordering the Holy Land. The people of the Arabs, on the other hand, seem to have been known somewhat vaguely as one of many groups inhabiting Arabia. They were described as nomads and herders who also subsisted as mercenaries and perhaps merchants. In a Christian context they were sometimes presented as strangers or enemies to the people of God. They seem to have been regarded with no great favour by either the authors of the Old Testament or later biblical commentators.

The examples cited above do not present any particular link between Arabs and Ismaelites, and, although Jerome mentioned Arabs and Saracens in the same context, he did not present them as the same people.[71] This lack of connection between Arabs and Saracens characterised Anglo-Saxon literary perceptions of both peoples. However, the Arabs as known in

[70] *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 57. On goat-hair tents, see Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, VI.cxliii.10. The practice of spinning goat-hair is also mentioned in the Bible, at Exod. XXXV.26, for example.

[71] Other Graeco-Roman sources writing in the fourth and fifth centuries, by contrast, clearly identified Saracens with Arabs as well as with Ismaelites; see the fundamental study by Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs*, pp. 123–41 and 156–9.

Anglo-Saxon England did share several characteristics with the Ismaelites and Saracens, as we shall see. One interesting similarity was that all these peoples were presented by Christian authors as being distinct from and inimical towards the Israelites or Christians who were the people of God. This idea was based largely on interpretations of the Bible according to which the Old Testament Israelites were explained as signifying the New Testament Christian population. The representation of Arabia as an expansive territory outside yet bordering the Holy Land strengthened the idea that the inhabitants of Arabia, including the Arabs, were neighbours of, but also other than, the people of God. This idea was yet stronger regarding the Ismaelites because they were presented in opposition to the descendants of Isaac, Ismael's younger brother. Among Isaac's descendants were numbered the House of David, Christ and (according to the allegory first put forward by Paul in his letter to the Galatians) all Christians. Distinct from the Arabs, the Ismaelites fulfilled a similar but much more precisely defined role as enemies or rivals of the true faith. Even the Muslim conquests could be explained in terms of the Old Testament description of the Ismaelites as a hostile desert people who became a great nation by God's decree (Gen. XVII.20). Christian authors observed no equivalent analogy between the Muslim conquerors and the nomadic Arabs of the Bible, and perhaps that is why *Arab* seems to have remained a somewhat peripheral concept in Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Islam and the Orient. When the Muslim Arabs invaded Christian territories during the seventh and eighth centuries, it was their identity as Ismaelites *qui nunc Sarraceni appellantur* which explained their actions to a Christian readership.[72]

[72] '. . . who are now called Saracens' (*In Ezech.*, CCSL 75, 335).

5

Ismaelites and Saracens in Latin

The Arabs and Saracens shared a homeland, but occupied separate spaces in western Christian thought. By far the larger space was devoted to the Saracens and their relationships with Ismaelites, Israelites and other Old Testament tribes. Jerome comments on the kings of Arabia and the tribes of Tema, Dedan and Buz: 'Hae gentes in solitudine sunt, uicinae et mixtae regionibus Ismahelitarum, quos nunc Saracenos uocant et de quibus dicitur: qui attonsi sunt in comam'.[1] While he groups the kings of Arabia together with the Saracens, Jerome does not indicate their relationship beyond the fact that they inhabit the same region. However, he does make it plain that the Ismaelites lived in Arabia and were, by his lifetime, known as Saracens. His comment elsewhere on 'Arabas et Agarenos, quos nunc Sarracenos uocant' likewise does not state categorically that the Arabs and Hagarenes are identical.[2] Other references in Jerome's works suggest that the reader is to understand 'Arabs, and also Hagarenes, the latter now called Saracens'. It seems that Jerome thought of 'Ismaelite', 'Hagarene' and 'Saracen' as different names for the same people (who were not necessarily also Arabs). This is confirmed by a line in his continuation of the chronicle by Eusebius: 'Abraham ex ancilla Agar generat Ismael, a quo Ismaelitarum genus, qui postea Agareni, et ad postremum Saraceni dicti'.[3]

[1] 'These peoples are in the desert, neighbouring and mixed with the territories of the Ismaelites, whom they now call Saracens and of whom it is said: who are shaven-headed' (*In Hier.*, CCSL 74, 244).

[2] Jerome, *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 170.

[3] Jerome, *Interpretatio chronicae Eusebii Pamphili*, PL 27, 122. The writings of Eusebius on the Arabs were an important source for Jerome and other later commentators; see Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs*, pp. 95–112. Rotter discusses early medieval perceptions of the relationship

This relatively simple point could be elaborated as part of a sophisticated exegetical exposition. In a long passage of commentary on the phrase *onus in Arabia* from Isai. XXI.13, Jerome writes:

Quaerenti mihi et diu cum deliberatione tractanti quae esset Arabia, ad quam propheticus sermo dirigitur, utrum Moabitae an Ammonitae, et Idumaei cunctaeque aliae regiones, quae nunc Arabia nuncupantur, occasionem tribuit in hac eadem uisione quod sequitur: 'Auferetur omnis gloria Cedar, et reliquiae numeri sagittariorum fortium de filiis Cedar imminuentur'. Ismaelitas debere intellegi. Liber Geneseos docet ex Ismaele Cedar et Agarenos, qui peruerso nomine Saracenos uocantur, esse genitos.[4]

In the context of Isaiah's subsequent vision of Kedar, Jerome concludes that Arabia should be understood as the Ismaelites. Again, it is clear that he considered the Ismaelites (and Saracens) to be inhabitants of Arabia or nearby regions, but that as inhabitants of Arabia they were not necessarily to be identified with the Old Testament Arabs. Jerome purports to base his interpretation here on the book of Genesis, which, he says, teaches that Kedar and the Hagarenes, known as Saracens, are descended from Ismael.[5] However, his source does not state quite what he claims. Kedar is indeed listed among the sons of Ismael at Gen. XXV.14 but no Hagarenes appear in Genesis except by implication as possible descendants of Hagar (of whom only her son, Ismael, is mentioned). Saracens are not mentioned in any book of the Bible. Jerome's comment is reminiscent of the example cited in the previous chapter in which he described the Arabs as robbers on the basis of a New Testament parable which did not refer to the Arabs

between Ismaelites, Hagarenes and Saracens along with statements by Isidore and Bede (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 73–7).

[4] 'Having enquired of myself and for a long time examined with deliberation what might be the Arabia to which the prophet refers – whether the territory of the Moabites or of the Ammonites and Edomites and all the other regions which are now called Arabia – he presented an explanation in this same vision which follows: "All the glory of Kedar shall fail, and the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished" [Isai. xxi.16–17]. It should be understood as the Ismaelites. The book of Genesis teaches that Kedar and the Hagarenes, who are wrongly referred to as Saracens, were born of Ismael' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 207–8).

[5] Jerome twice identifies the Hagarenes as Ismaelites: *In Ezech.*, CCSL 75, 335, and *Interpretatio chronicae Eusebii Pamphili*, PL 27, 122. In both cases he also adds that they are Saracens.

at all. In the present case, too, Jerome is, to a certain extent, fabricating scripture.

The Hagarenes and Ismaelites appear throughout the Old Testament – often, like the Arabs, in a pastoral role. I Par. XXVII.30–1 describes an Ismaelite as King David's camelherd and a Hagarene as a shepherd. As Rotter comments, these two examples do not constitute any *erschreckenden Bilder*.[6] However, the majority of references to Ismaelites and Hagarenes are unfriendly. It was a group of Ismaelites, also called Midianites, who bought the unfortunate Joseph from his brothers and sold him into slavery in Egypt.[7] The Ismaelites were again linked with the Midianites as enemies of Israel in the story of their defeat by Gideon.[8] Exegetical accounts of the Saracens associated them with these peoples and usually referred to the same few biblical passages: Gen. XVI.12 on Ismael and his descendants; Ps. LXXXII.6–8 on peoples hostile towards Israel; Ps. CXIX.5 on the peace-hating inhabitants of Kedar and, occasionally, Amos V.26 on Israel and her worship of idols in the desert. Since the Ismaelites and the Hagarenes appear in the Old Testament but the Saracens do not, one is inclined to ask on what basis Jerome attributed the name *Saraceni* to these two peoples while also stating that the designation was incorrect (*peruerso nomine Saracenos uocantur*). A clue may be found in a reference to the Saracens by Cassian (*c.* 365–*c.* 433), a monk and spiritual writer and a direct contemporary of Jerome.[9] Like Jerome, Cassian lived for some years in Bethlehem.[10] He visited Egypt and then travelled to Constantinople and Rome before settling eventually in Marseilles, where he produced his best-known work, the *Conlationes*, a collection of reconstructed dialogues with Egyptian abbots. In the sixth of these dialogues, he writes:

[6] Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, p. 252.

[7] Gen. XXXVI.25–36 and XXXIX.1.

[8] The enemies are described as Midianites and Amalekites in the sixth chapter of Judges but a later reference states that they wear golden earrings because they are Ismaelites (Judg. VIII.25).

[9] At least three manuscripts containing part or all of the *Conlationes* have survived from Anglo-Saxon England, for example: Cambridge, St John's College 101 (D.26), ff. 1–14 [Gneuss 152], bk xii only; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 23 (4115) [Gneuss 627]; and Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 10 [Gneuss 700], which is partial, but includes bk vi. These manuscripts cover a period between the second half of the tenth century and the end of the eleventh. However, books of Cassian's *Conlationes* were known in England from the end of the seventh century, as witnessed by the fact that they were drawn on by Aldhelm (Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', p. 280).

[10] Quasten, *Patrology*, p. 512; see also pp. 513–23 on Cassian's life and works.

In Palaestinae partibus . . . solitudo uastissima est usque Arabiam ac mare mortuum, quo ingressa deficiunt fluenta Iordanis, et cineres Sodomorum amplissima extensione porrecta; in hac summae uitae ac sanctitatis monachi diuitissime conmorantes repente sunt a discurrentibus Sarracenorum latrunculis interempti.[11]

Cassian describes the desert in which the Saracens wander as lying near but not necessarily within Arabia. Later in the same passage, he mentions the local population in such a way as to suggest also that the Saracen desert-dwellers are distinct from the Arab town-dwellers, which reflects the distinction between *Arabes* and *Saraceni* already noted above.[12] Cassian also presents the Saracens as a group of violent bandits without referring to the Ismaelites or any other Old Testament tribe.[13] The passage succinctly outlines the place of the *Saraceni* as a nomadic people of the Syrian desert and northern Arabia who could be presented in contrast with the settled Arab population.

THE ORIGINS OF THE SARACENS

The genuine etymology of the word 'Saracen' remains obscure. It may have arisen as a Nabataean Arabic appellation for nomadic peoples living in the East, and be derived from an Arabic root meaning 'east', or 'marauder'; possibly it derived from a tribal name, or was adopted from a place-name. What is clear is that some time around the second century AD (four centuries before the lifetime of Muhammad), Latin writers began to adopt the term *Saraceni* from the Greek in order to refer to the nomads of northern Arabia. A term for 'tent-dwellers' already existed in the word *Scenitae*, but it did not refer exclusively to inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula. The term *Arabes*, likewise, was not specific to nomads, but referred also to settled Roman citizens and Christian Arabs. It may be, therefore, that *Saraceni* started life as a useful term which inhabitants of the Roman Empire used to describe

[11] 'In Palestine . . . there is a vast desert as far as Arabia and the Dead Sea, where the inflowing streams of the Jordan fail, and the ashes of Sodom are scattered over a wide area; in which some monks, richly living the highest and most holy life, were suddenly slain by the swift-roving Saracen brigands' (Cassian, *Conlationes* [*CPL* 512], CSEL 13, 153).

[12] The reference comes in a passage discussing the dead monks: 'quorum corpora licet sciremus tam a pontificibus regionis illius quam ab uniuersa plebe Arabum tanta ueneratione praerepta et inter reliquias martyrum condita, ut innumeri populi e duobus oppidis concurrentes grauissimum sibi certamen indixerint' (Cassian, *Conlationes*, CSEL 13, 153).

[13] Jerome represented them in a very similar way in his *Vita Malchi*. See below, pp. 109–14.

the combination of nomadism and Arab ethnicity.[14] The true etymology of the name was no better understood in the medieval West than it is today. However, another explanation of its origins already existed by the time the idea of the Saracens was introduced to literate Anglo-Saxons. The creation and dissemination by Christian patristic authors of their own etymology for the word 'Saracen' was perhaps the most significant development in the history of western literary perceptions of the Arabs.

The etymology, which was devised some time after the word 'Saracen' itself had come into existence, was based around the Old Testament story of Abraham and his wife Sarah.[15] Sarah, unable to conceive, had Abraham impregnate her slavewoman Hagar in order to get a son. Hagar duly gave birth to Ismael, who was circumcised along with Abraham as part of the first covenant of the Chosen People with God. Later, by God's intervention, Sarah herself conceived and bore Isaac. Ismael was then cast out into the desert at Sarah's behest along with his mother Hagar and lived there as an archer, inimical towards all.[16] His twelve sons inherited the lands across the north of Arabia. Meanwhile, Isaac, Ismael's younger brother, fathered Esau (Edom) and Jacob. Again, the older brother was passed over in favour of the younger, who became Israel. Isaac and Jacob were thus the ancestors of the Israelites, the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, and eventually the House of David and Christ himself.[17]

Jerome, perhaps following Eusebius or another early Christian source, postulated *Saraceni* as a formation from *Sara* along the lines of *Ismaelitae* from *Ismael*, *Madianitae* from *Madian* and likewise *Agareni* from *Agar*. In other words, a Saracen was one who claimed descent from Sarah. In fact, there is no evidence that Arabs ever referred to themselves as Saracens.[18] Historically, the Ismaelites may have formed an Arab confederation including such tribes as the Midianites and Amalekites. A number of Arabs of the fourth century believed themselves to be descended from Ismael, as

[14] On the genuine etymology of *Saraceni*, see Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs*, pp. 126–37. Gradually, the term became less specific. By the fourth century, Jerome was using *Saraceni* to refer not only to northern Arabian nomads but to town-dwellers in the Sinai peninsula. Subsequent western writers were to apply the name *Saraceni* to Muslim Arabs, Muslims in general and eventually even to non-Muslim peoples perceived as enemies of Christendom.

[15] Gen. XVI. [16] Gen. XXI.1–21.

[17] See Gen. XXXV.10–12 and Matth. I.1–16. [18] *EI*^{2} VIII, 27.

witnessed by contemporaneous historians.[19] It is possible that some Arabs and early Muslims referred to themselves as descendants of Hagar.[20] The term *Saraceni*, however, was unique to Christian writers and was widely promoted through the works of Jerome. Biblical exegetes seem simply to have assumed that the northern Arabs were descendants of Hagar's son Ismael and knew themselves to be congenitally inferior to Isaac's descendants because their ancestor was a slave and, furthermore, not the mother of the Chosen People. Consequently, the logic goes, Ismaelites began to call themselves Saracens in a rather feeble attempt to make it appear that they were descended from Abraham's free wife Sarah and not from her handmaid.[21]

Jerome's most explicit expression of this is: 'Μεταφορικῶς ergo per Madianaeos, Ismaelitas et Agarenos, qui nunc Sarraceni appellantur, assumentes sibi falso nomen Sarae quo scilicet de ingenua et domina uideantur esse generati, Scriptura significat'.[22] Ismaelites, Hagarenes and Saracens were thus clearly defined as the same people, and as a people who proved themselves to be untrustworthy and inferior by attempting to deceive the world concerning their genealogy. As though the Ismaelites unsuccessfully imitated the Chosen People in their homeland as well as their ancestry, they were described as living next to (but never in) the Holy Land. Ismael himself, according to Gen. XXI.21, inhabited the desert of Paran in the Sinai peninsula, while the tribes descended from his sons inherited a large strip of land across northern Arabia, from Havilah (just north of the Arabian Gulf)

[19] On the Nabataeans and Ismaelites as Arabs, see Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, pp. 177 and 343–4; on Ismaelism among fourth-century Arabs as witnessed by Sozomen, Theodoret and other historical writers of the time, *ibid.*, pp. 167–78, 382–3; and *s.v.* 'Isma'il' in *EI*^{2}.

[20] See Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 3–9, and Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, p. 70, n. 10.

[21] This etymology may originate in the works of Eusebius, but its wide dissemination was due to its explication in the works of Jerome; as Shahid comments: 'It was this image carried by the term *Saracen* [that is, of Arab nomads as Ismaelites] that found a new field for its vogue, probably through the prestige of St. Jerome in Latin Christendom, even before the Arab appeared in North Africa and the Iberian peninsula in the seventh and eighth centuries' (*Rome and the Arabs*, p. 159).

[22] 'Metaphorically therefore, by Midianites, scripture means the Ismaelites and Hagarenes, who are now called Saracens, evidently assuming falsely for themselves the name of Sarah because they wish to appear to be descended from a freewoman and mistress of the household' (*In Ezech.*, CCSL 75, 335).

as far as Shur (in the north of the Sinai peninsula). Drawing on Josephus' *Antiquitates*, Jerome explained this arrangement in more detail:

> Duodecim filii nascuntur Ismahelo, e quibus primogenitus fuit Nabaioth, a quo omnis regio ab Euphrate usque ad mare rubrum Nabathena usque hodie dicitur, quae pars Arabiae est. Nam et familiae eorum oppidaque et pagi ac minuta castella et tribus eorum appellatione celebrantur quoque: ab uno ex his Cedar in deserto et Duma alia regio et Theman ad austrum et Cedema ad orientem plaga dicitur.[23]

It is easy to see how marauding Arab tribes acquired the moniker *Ismaelitae*. Arab nomads were already referred to using the term *Saraceni*. They wandered the deserts of the Ismaelite homeland, displaying characteristically Ismaelite aggression. Etymology seemed to prove beyond doubt the identity of the Saracens as the disreputable Ismaelites and Hagarenes. In fact, etymology proved no such thing. *Saraceni*, according to Jerome and later authors, derived from *Sara*, not *Agar* or *Ismael*. But why should the Arabs not be entitled to trace their ancestry back to Sarah? The answer was that the Christian appropriation of the Old Testament also required the appropriation of Sarah and her offspring, since these were the people chosen by God. From the earliest days of Christianity, its exegetes had set out to demonstrate that Christians, not Jews, were the true (spiritual) descendants of Sarah.[24] Jerome was not about to admit the possibility of any other kind of claim on Sarah by *Saraceni*, except (it seems) a patently false claim which reflected badly upon the nomadic desert tribes who never actually made it.

Jerome's comments on the Saracens were widely read and copied and also retransmitted to the medieval West through works such as Isidore's *Etymologiae*. However, the tenuous link which the translator had made between Saracens and Arabia was not to be expanded upon. Isidore followed

[23] 'Twelve sons were born to Ismael, of whom the first-born was Nabaioth; the whole region from the Euphrates up to the Red Sea is still called Nabataea after him, and is a part of Arabia. And indeed their families, towns and districts, and small fortifications, and their tribes are known in this way. Cedar in the desert, and Duma, another area, and Tema, to the south, and Cedema, towards the east coast, are each named after one of them' (Jerome, *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 31). Jerome notes essentially the same information more briefly elsewhere: 'Et Nabaioth unus est filiorum Ismael, ex quorum nominibus solitudo appellatur, quae frugum inops, pecorum plena est' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73A, 697).

[24] The importance of this point perhaps originated with the fact that Abraham's family arrangements prompted the longest allegorical analysis in the New Testament: see Galat. IV.21–31.

Jerome in, for example, describing *Cedar* as an Ismaelite and a Saracen, but did not also define the name as a region or tribe of Arabia.[25] He described the dwelling-place of the Nabataeans, descendants of Ismael, as extending from the Euphrates as far as the Red Sea and echoed a faint connection between Nabataeans and Saracens which he had found in the *Historiae* by Paulus Orosius.[26] On the Saracen link with the Ismaelites, he is more definite. Isidore clearly identified the Saracens as Hagarenes and descendants of Ismael and followed Jerome in etymologising the name *Saraceni* as the product of a false genealogical claim by the Saracens themselves.[27] Isidore uses the phrase *peruerso nomine Saraceni uocantur*, which is taken directly from Jerome, and his *Hi peramplam habitant solitudinem* is very close to Jerome's *Hi per totam habitant solitudinem*.[28] Although Isidore was original in entertaining the possibility that *Saraceni* derives from a word for Syria, he himself undermined the credibility of this etymology because, he wrote, it is of gentile origin and (elsewhere) the gentiles are not to be trusted.[29] In the end Isidore returned to Jerome's authoritative statement that the Saracens only coined their new name because they wanted people to think they were descended from Sarah.[30]

Compared with Jerome's exegetical accounts, this information in the *Etymologiae* is very brief and gives no clue as to the spiritual significance of Ismael or the Ismaelites. This is appropriate for a reference book. Western

[25] 'Saraceni . . . Ipsi sunt et Ismaelitae . . . Ipsi Cedar a filio Ismaelis . . . Ipsi Agareni ab Agar' (*Etym*. IX.ii.57).

[26] 'Nabaioth filius Ismael, a quo Nabathaei, qui ab Euphrate in mare Rubrum habitant' (*Etym*. IX.2.7) and, on Nabataean and Saracen territory, *Etym*. XIV.3.17; cf. Orosius, *Historiae* [*CPL* 571], I.ii.24.

[27] 'Ismael filius Abraham, a quo Ismaelitae, qui nunc corrupto nomine Saraceni, quasi a Sarra, et Agareni ab Agar . . .' (*Etym*. IX.ii.6) and 'Saraceni dicti, uel quia ex Sarra genitos se praedicent, uel sicut gentiles aiunt, quod ex origine Syrorum sint, quasi Syriginae. Hi peramplam habitant solitudinem. Ipsi sunt et Ismaelitae, ut liber Geneseos docet, quod sint ex Ismaele. Ipsi Cedar a filio Ismaelis. Ipsi Agareni ab Agar' (*Etym*. IX.ii.57).

[28] Jerome writes: 'Liber Geneseos docet ex Ismaele Cedar et Agarenos, qui peruerso nomine Saracenos uocantur, esse genitos. Hi per totam habitant solitudinem' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 207–8).

[29] *Etym*. IX.ii.57 and VIII.x.12; noted by Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 68–9. The name of the Syrians (*Syri*), on the other hand, Isidore derives from *Surim . . . qui fuit nepos Abraham ex Cethura*, noting that modern speakers call the people *Syros* rather than *Assyros* which was their older name; *Etym.* IX.ii.50.

[30] Thus: 'ut diximus, peruerso nomine Saraceni uocantur, quia ex Sarra se genitos gloriantur' (*Etym*. IX.ii.57).

commentary elaborated a more detailed role for the Ismaelites according to which they functioned as enemies of the people of God. In this respect they shared certain characteristics with the Jews as presented in western exegesis, an aspect of their identity which Jerome did not elaborate upon but which appears in the works of other biblical commentators. Ambrose, for example, discussing the Ismaelites who bought Joseph and sold him into Egypt, wrote that Ismael signified the Jews.[31] He further described the Ismaelites as a people hating God, *odio habentes deum suum*.[32] Ambrose explained that Ismael represented the Old Testament and servitude and was to be contrasted with Isaac, who represented freedom and Christ. In this, he followed the allegory devised by St Paul in his letter to the Galatians (Galat. IV.21–31). In the context of other biblical interpretations, this potentially complicated Ismael's role. Allegorically, Ambrose wrote, Ismael represented the Jews. According to other authors, including Jerome, Ismael's historical descendants were the Ismaelites or Saracens, who were not identified with the Jews. This somewhat confusing distinction between Ismael's allegorical and his historical significance was clarified a little later by the great father of the western church, Augustine, bishop of Hippo.

Augustine, like Ambrose, most frequently mentioned Ismael alongside Isaac, presenting the pair as an allegory of the Old and New Testaments. Both testaments, Augustine explained, came from God, just as both Ismael and Isaac were sons of Abraham, but the younger son (and testament) was favoured over the older. Augustine emphasised that Ismael's mother Hagar was a slave and that Hagar and Ismael were cast out by Abraham's wife Sarah in favour of her own son, Isaac. By expounding the story of Abraham, Hagar and Sarah in this way, Augustine conveyed the need for Christians to reject the claims of the Old Testament in favour of those of the New.[33] The solution to the problem of the literal and allegorical meanings of Ismael, Augustine suggested, depended upon what sort of interpretation was required. As he commented in the context of a discussion on Isaac and Ismael:

[31] Ambrose, *De Abraham* [*CPL* 127], CSEL 32.1, 523, and *Epistolae* [*CPL* 160], CSEL 82.2, 160.

[32] Ambrose, *De Ioseph* [*CPL* 131], CSEL 32.2, 81.

[33] See, for example, Augustine, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* [*CPL* 270], CCSL 33, 19; *Tractatus in euangelium Ioannis* [*CPL* 278], CCSL 36, 116 and 117–18; *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCSL 40, 1784; *De ciuitate Dei* [*CPL* 313], CCSL 48, 454–6; and *Epistulae*, CSEL 34.2, 450 and 57, 225–8.

[H]aec certe doctrina apostolica atque catholica satis euidenter indicat nobis secundum originem carnis ad Sarram Iudaeos, id est Israhelitas, ad Agar uero Ismahelitas pertinere; secundum autem mysterium spiritus ad Sarram Christianos, ad Agar Iudaeos.[34]

Augustine goes on to explain that the same principle applies to Esau and Jacob. According to the flesh, Esau's descendants are the Edomites, and Jacob's the Jews; according to the spirit, however, to Esau belong the Jews and to Jacob the Christians. Thus, concludes Augustine, the statement by St Paul is fulfilled that the elder shall serve the younger, since the Christian population arose more recently than the Jewish (Rom. IX.6–13). This encapsulates a crucial point of Christian doctrine. Jewish identity was seen to involve racial descent (*secundum originem carnis*) from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, God's chosen. Christianity defined itself as a spiritual, not racial category and by means of a spiritual interpretation of the stories of Isaac and Jacob could distinguish itself from Judaism and simultaneously lay claim to the same favoured status in the eyes of God. Such analysis separated the significance of Ismael from that of the Ismaelites to some extent. Augustine was careful to distinguish between the meaning of Ismael and Isaac themselves and that of their descendants. Where Ismael appeared in a context which required that he represent the Old Testament, his people should be interpreted as Jews, rather than Ismaelites. Similarly, the Ismaelites in early Christian exegesis cannot be assumed always to embrace every quality of Ismael; his significance as representative of the Old Testament does not necessarily always extend to the tribe which bears his name.[35]

Such subtle distinctions did not always obtain. The identification of Saracens as Ismaelites frequently involved an observed correspondence between Ismael's traits as described in the book of Genesis and those of the late fourth-century Arabs whom Jerome called Saracens. Genesis described Ismael as the ancestor of a nation, circumcised, and an inhabitant of empty

[34] 'Surely, this apostolic and catholic teaching quite evidently shows us that, according to fleshly origins, the Jews, that is the Israelites, belong to Sarah, and, truly, the Ismaelites belong to Hagar; but, according to the mystery of the spirit, to Sarah belong the Christians and to Hagar the Jews' (Augustine, *Epistulae*, CSEL 57, 227).

[35] Despite such distinctions, after the late twelfth century Jews and Muslims (the latter still known as *Saraceni*) could be categorised together in canon law (Kedar, '*De Iudeis et Sarracenis*').

places.[36] Jerome similarly writes of the peoples on the Palestinian border: 'usque hodie populi circumciduntur, et praecipue Aegyptii, et Idumaei, Ammonitae, et Moabitae, et omnis regio Sarracenorum, quae habitant in solitudine'.[37] In another example, Jerome cites Gen. XVI.12 in his identification of Saracens as descendants of Ismael:

'[Ismael] erit rusticus homo: manus eius super omnes, et manus omnium super eum: et contra faciem omnium fratrum suorum habitabit' . . . Significat autem semen eius habitaturum in heremo, id est, Sarracenos uagos, incertisque sedibus, qui uniuersas gentes, quibus desertum ex latere iungitur incursant, et inpugnantur ab omnibus.[38]

Here, while the elements *in heremo* and *inpugnantur ab omnibus* follow the biblical account of Ismael, Jerome also stresses Saracen nomadism, which he regularly invoked using terms such as *uagantes* and *incertis sedibus*.[39] The phrase *incertis sedibus* is particularly resonant. Jerome employs it elsewhere to characterise the habitat of hateful or condemned people. He describes Tyre,

[36] Gen. XVI.10, XVII.20, XXI.13 and XXI.18 (a great nation); Gen. XVII.25 (circumcision); and Gen. XXI.20 (the desert).

[37] '. . . to the present day the people are circumcised, and especially the Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites, and all the Saracen region, who live in the desert' (*In Hier.*, CCSL 74, 101). On Ismaelite circumcision see also Jerome, *In epistulas Paulinas*, PL 26, 394.

[38] ' "This will be a rude man: his hand over all, and the hand of all over him: and he will live in the sight [lit. 'against the face'] of all his brothers." . . . It means then that his seed is to live in the desert, that is, the wandering Saracens of no fixed abode, who attack all the peoples who live next to the desert, and are fought by everyone' (Jerome, *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 20–1). It should be noted that Jerome here refers to an Old Latin translation of the Bible. The Vulgate has: 'Hic erit ferus homo: manus eius contra omnes, et manus omnium contra eum'. For other examples of Jerome's citation of Gen. XVI.12 (on Ismael) in descriptions of the Saracens, see *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 208 and *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 170.

[39] For example: '[uia] per quam Saraceni incertis sedibus huc atque illuc semper uagantur' and 'magis noctibus promouemus, quam diebus . . . propter insidias late uagantium Saracenorum' (Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, p. 54); 'ex Ismaele Cedar et Agarenos, qui peruerso nomine Saracenos . . . de quibus puto et poetam dicere: Lateque uagantes Barcaei' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 207–8); 'uastissima solitudo, plena ferocium barbarorum . . . quorum facit Poeta eloquentissimus mentionem: "Lateque uagantes Barcaei" ' (Jerome, *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 170). In the last case, though Jerome does not name the Saracens, it seems clear from his previous aside in the commentary on Isaiah that he had them in mind.

cursed in the book of Isaiah, as: 'uagus atque in orbe peregrinus et incertarium sedium, semper in angustia, iugiter in maerore'.[40] Of the Edomites, enemies of Israel, Jerome comments: 'non enim habent fundamenta nec domus, sed tabernacula, sedes semper incertas'.[41] A little later in the same commentary he adds: 'Non sint stabiles, sed semper incerti: ut sedem non habeant, et semper uoluantur instabiles . . . ita et haeretici non stant in sententia sua, sed semper dogmata mutant'.[42] Another example draws upon the biblical account of the exile of Cain. According to Gen. IV.15, Cain went out into the land of Nod, a name which Jerome glosses 'instabilis et fluctuans ac sedis incertae'.[43] The life of Cain exhibits a parallel with that of the Arabs in that they are both characterised in western exegesis as dwellers in the desert and in darkness.[44] As will become clear below, this was also true of the Saracens. It would appear that to have no fixed abode was not an acceptable characteristic; to describe the nomadic Saracens as *incertis sedibus* put them beyond the pale as outcasts or even enemies of good society.

[40] '. . . a fugitive and wanderer in the world and of unfixed abode, always in difficult straits, perpetually in lamentation' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 220).

[41] '. . . for they have neither foundation nor roof, but tents, abodes forever shifting' (Jerome, *Tractatus in psalmos* [*CPL* 592], CCSL 78, 386).

[42] 'They are not steadfast, but always insecure: as they have no dwelling-place, and always revolve unstably . . . likewise also the heretics do not hold to their opinion, but forever alter the teachings' (Jerome, *Tractatus in psalmos*, CCSL 78, 388).

[43] '. . . unstable and wavering and of unfixed abode' (Jerome, *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 7) Jerome noted further that Cain did not, as some thought, live in the land of Nod, but that the word explained the judgement of God in that 'huc atque illuc uagus et profugus oberrauit'. Cf. his description of the Saracens in the *Vita Malchi* (p. 42): 'incertis semper sedibus, huc atque illuc uagantur'.

[44] 'The chief characteristics of Cain's place of exile were that it was a desert place, a waste, solitary, and dark' (Williams, *Cain and Beowulf*, pp. 26–9); see below on the association of Kedar, son of Ismael, with darkness. Cain and the Ismaelites exhibit thematic similarities also shared by hateful types such as Grendel in *Beowulf*, ed. Wrenn: 'se þe in þystrum bad' (l. 87b: 'he who remained in shadows'); 'mære mearcstapa, se þe moras heold / fen ond fæsten' (ll. 103–104a: 'well-known prowler in the marches, he who held the wastes, marsh and fastness'); 'sinnihte heold / mistige moras' (ll. 161b–162a: 'in perpetual night he held the misty wastelands', with pun on *sin* also meaning 'sin'); 'feond mancynnes / atol angengea' (ll. 164b–165a: 'enemy of mankind, terrible solitary wanderer'), all of which recall characteristics of Cain and Ismael. See also below, pp. 160–61.

The desert in which the Saracens wander, referred to variously as *eremus*, *uastitas* or *solitudo*, is another common motif. Among the parts of Arabia inhabited by the descendants of Ismael, Jerome described Kedar particularly frequently as a region *in deserto*. Plains and waste places were already associated with the word for 'Arabia' in the Hebrew at Jer. III.2 and XXV.23 and throughout Jerome's commentaries as described above. Kedar appears as an area, often a waste, belonging to or characterised by the Saracens. There are several examples of this in Jerome's commentaries, including one reference to Kedar as an uninhabitable region of or beyond 'Saracen Arabia' ('Cedar, quae quondam inhabitabilis fuit regio trans Arabiam Saracenorum').[45] Jerome also writes: 'Cedar . . . regio Sarracenorum est, qui in Scriptura uocantur Ismaelitae' and 'Cedar . . . regio est solitudinis et Ismaelitarum, quos nunc Sarracenos uocant'.[46] It would appear that Kedar, son of Ismael, gave his name to a desert area in Arabia which was subsequently inhabited by Saracens. They are identifiable as Ismaelites both by etymology and this association with Kedar. It is worth noting that Jerome here included words such as *quondam*, *nunc* and *hodie* to indicate a difference between ancient scriptural nomenclature and the fourth-century term *Saraceni*. Such distinctions were rare.

It seems appropriate that Kedar should be linked with Arabia, given the meanings that Jerome assigns the two words. *Arabia*, as already discussed in the previous chapter, very often signifies 'evening', or 'west' in the works of Jerome. *Cedar* is defined as 'shadows' or 'shadowy' (or, alternatively, 'lamentation').[47] Occasionally, Jerome elaborates further:

> Arabia in lingua nostra uesperam sonat, quae noctis et tenebrarum principium est, omnisque qui habet initium peccatorum, uersatur in uespera . . . Cedar . . . interpretatur tenebrae.[48]

[45] 'Kedar, which was once an uninhabitable region across Saracen Arabia' (*In Isaiam,* CCSL 73A, 484).

[46] 'Kedar . . . is a region of the Saracens, who are called Ismaelites in scripture' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73A, 697); 'Kedar . . . is a deserted region of the Ismaelites, whom they now call Saracens' (*In Hier.*, CCSL 74, 16).

[47] *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73A, 484 and 697; *In Ezech.*, CCSL 75, 375. The meaning *moeror* is only found as a gloss in *LHNom.* (CCSL 72, 63, 119).

[48] ' "Arabia" in our language means "evening", which is the beginning of night and shadows, and all that has a beginning in sins, is performed in the evening . . . "Kedar" . . . means "shadows" ' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 296).

Iudices quoque eius quasi lupi Arabiae, occidentes uespere, et nil relinquentes in mane: non aspicientes ad ortum solis, sed morantes semper in tenebris.[49]

Hoc significat . . . quia Cedar interpretatur tenebrae . . . ut qui ante erant in tenebris, et nunc credunt in Dominum Salvatorem, de uertice montium clamitent.[50]

The imagery in the above passages contrasts the enlightenment of true faith with the dark of sin and godlessness, the latter represented by Arabia and Kedar. Jerome extends this imagery in his dense commentary on Isai. XXI.14–17. After defining *Arabia* as 'evening' and the beginning of night and sin, Jerome addresses the faithful: 'qui consummati estis atque perfecti, et habetis in uobis lumen scientiae Scripturarum, fugientibus de Arabia, et de saltu, occurrite cum aqua et panibus'.[51] The darkness of Arabia is contrasted with the light of scriptural knowledge. The enlightened are to bring loaves and water to those fleeing Arabia and its 'gladios haereticorum, doctrinam gentilium, blasphemias Iudaeorum'. In the remainder of the passage, Jerome repeats these images and adds that *Cedar* signifies 'shadows'. Then he explains that Kedar's glory will be taken away and that all its archers, a multiplicity of doctrines which were wounding those in the wood of Arabia, will be brought to nothing. After this the fugitives will be free to partake of the *aqua* and *panibus*. Arabia is presented in opposition to members of the true faith, who succour the fugitives from darkness with symbols of baptism and sacrament.

Other commentators on the Bible also discussed Kedar and in some cases drew on Jerome's definition of the word as *tenebrae*. They also identified Kedar with the Saracens by means of the Ismaelite connection. Cassiodorus, for example, explains:

Cedar hebraeum nomen est quod nostra lingua interpretatur tenebrae. Hoc ad saeculi huius pertinet amatores, qui tenebrosis actibus inuoluti, illa magis diligunt

[49] 'And their judges like wolves of Arabia, falling at evening and releasing nothing at morning: not looking towards the rising of the sun, but remaining forever in shadows' (Jerome, *In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76, 696).

[50] 'This signifies . . . that "Kedar" means "shadows" . . . as those who before lived in shadows, and who now believe in the Lord Saviour, should shout from the mountaintops . . .' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73A, 484).

[51] '. . . because you are complete and perfect, and have in you the light of the knowledge of scripture, run with bread and water to those fleeing Arabia and the forest' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 295–7).

unde perire noscuntur. Sed ut uerbi huius breuiter noscamus originem, Cedar Ismael filius fuit, qui genti suae nomen dedit, cuius fines usque ad Medos Persasque prolati sunt: hi nunc Sarraceni appellantur. Quo uocabulo competenter significat peccatores, inter quos se adhuc habitare suspirat.[52]

It is most likely that Cassiodorus adopted his allegorical explanation of *Cedar* as a Hebrew word from the works of Jerome whether directly or through an intermediate source.[53] His brief historical note on the Saracens may well also be derived from Jerome's writings, perhaps in combination with information from the book of Genesis. The source of the statement that the Saracen territory extended as far as the Medes and the Persians is less obvious. Perhaps it derived from the information in the book of Genesis that the twelve sons of Ismael inhabited the area from Havilah (just north of the Arabian Gulf) as far as Shur (in the north of the Sinai peninsula).[54] Cassiodorus does not state explicitly that the Saracens are to be thought of as either the literal community of sinners bewailed by the psalmist or the allegorical 'those who love this world'. Nevertheless, they appear in an unfavourable light by being closely associated with both and contrasted with the psalmist, who represents a lone Christian voice compelled to reside among the godless.

IDOLATRY AND THE SARACEN CULT OF LUCIFER

The representation of the Saracens as a people hostile towards God conforms with the status of the Ismaelites as spiritual enemies of the Israelites. The Ismaelites and Hagarenes appear in scripture and commentary as associates of a number of inimical and idolatrous Arabian tribes. As noted above, Jerome wrote in his commentary on the book of Ezekiel that by Midianites, scripture referred metaphorically to Ismaelites, Hagarenes and Saracens. The

[52] '"Kedar" is a Hebrew name, which in our language means "shadows". This pertains to those who love this world, who, wrapped with shadowy actions, greatly cherish those things by which they know they will perish. But so that we may quickly know the origin of this word, "Kedar" was a son of Ismael who gave his name to the people whose borders extend as far as the Medes and the Persians: they are now called Saracens. In which designation it suitably means "sinners", amongst whom [the psalmist] sighs still to be staying' (Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, CCSL 98, 1143. He refers to Ps. CXIX).

[53] *Cedar . . . interpretatur tenebrae* (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 296) and *Cedar interpretatur tenebrae* (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73A, 484).

[54] Gen. XXV.18; that is, from Egypt to Mesopotamia, near the lands of the Medes.

Old Testament itself described the Midianites as Ismaelites in the story of Joseph's sale to the Egyptians and the defeat by Gideon of the enemies of Israel.[55] In Ps. LXXXII.6–8 the Arabian tribes of the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites are listed along with the Hagarenes and the Ismaelites as religious enemies of Israel. Edom, Moab and the sons of Ammon are described as particular devotees of Chamos and Moloch and Israel is enjoined to shun them for fear of being converted to their gods.[56] The same peoples are also listed in several places with Sidon, the Canaanites, or the Philistines, all of whom were characterised as worshippers of Baal and Astaroth and also as foes of Israel.[57]

Christian commentators on the Bible interpreted the Israelites as God's people and therefore as the allegorical representation of the Christian community. Consequently, they followed the Old Testament in associating the enemies of the righteous with heresy, idolatry or paganism. Cassiodorus introduced the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites as enemies of Christ who belonged to the time of the Antichrist. He glossed the name *Ismaelitae*

[55] Gen. XXXVII.25, 28 and 36; Gen. XXXIX.1 and Judg. VIII.22–5.

[56] I Kings XI.1–2, for example, describes the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites and Sidonians as among the nations Israel should avoid because of their idolatry, and Solomon, influenced by his wives from these nations, later turns to false gods (I Kings XI.5–7). Moab is especially associated with Chamos, and the sons of Ammon with Milchom or Moloch (I Kings XI.7, 33; II Kings XXIII.13). Judg. X.6 relates how Israel fell to worshipping Baal and Astaroth and the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines; Judg. X.11–13 presents a similar list of peoples, including the sons of Ammon, who turned to foreign gods. Jerome groups Ismaelites or Saracens with the tribes of Edom, Moab and Ammon in his commentaries: 'Multarum ex quadam parte gentium, et maxime quae Iudaeae Palaestinaeque confines sunt, usque hodie populi circumciduntur, et praecipue Aegyptii, et Idumaei, Ammonitae, et Moabitae, et omnis regio Sarracenorum . . . Aegyptios, Idumaeos, Ammonitas, et Moabitas, Ismaelitas in solitudine commorantes' (*In Hier*., CCSL 74, 101). He identifies Ammon as a region of Arabia just south of Jerusalem (*In Ezech*., CCSL 75, 289); the sons of Ammon inhabit Arabia (*In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76, 227); the Moabites are described as Arabs (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 175); the territories of Edom, Moab and the sons of Ammon are grouped under the name *Arabia* (*In Danielem* [*CPL* 588], CCSL 75A, 930) and the sons of Ammon appear as *Arabia* and are also described as Ismaelites (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 207–8).

[57] The Philistines place Saul's armour in the temple of Astaroth at I Sam. XXXI.10; Judg. II.11–13 describes how the Israelites adopt the Canaanite cults of Baal and Astaroth. These cults are particularly associated with Sidon, for example at I Kings XI.5, 33, I Kings XVI.31 and II Kings XXIII.13 (*New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, *s.v.* 'Ashtaroth'). On the rivalry between Israelite and Canaanite religion, see Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, pp. 101–6.

as *oboedientes mundo, non Domino* ('obedient to the world, not to God'). He also gave meanings for the names of other Old Testament tribes including the Edomites (*sanguinei uel terreni*), Moabites (*peccatorem*), Ammonites (*populus turbidus*) and Amalekites (*populus lingens, id est fallaciter blandens*). Cassiodorus continues with a pejorative comment to the effect that these are the multitude who will gather under the Antichrist, and that their names are indicative of their nature.[58] All the glosses convey a negative image. Cassiodorus almost certainly derived them from a passage by Jerome on the same psalm.[59]

The Arabs themselves were not invariably defined in terms of these ideas. Rufinus, a contemporary of Jerome, praised Christian Arabs for the purity of their faith.[60] This contrasted, however, with the fact that a heresy had been named after the peninsula.[61] Jerome followed scripture in portraying Arabian tribes as idolaters.[62] In the various examples from his commentaries cited above, *Arabia* connoted the pre-Christian law of Sinai and the covenant of Abraham, heresy, or lack of Christian enlightenment. Twice, Jerome more explicitly associated Arabia itself with idolatry. His commentary on Isaiah explains the prophesy that Edom and Moab and the sons of Ammon, *omnis scilicet Arabiae latitudo*, would be converted, 'et in locis idololatriae Christi ecclesiae suscitentur' ('and in the places of idolatry the churches of Christ will be raised').[63] Later in the same commentary, on the phrase *Leuet desertum et ciuitates eius*, Jerome interprets the desert, its surrounds, Petra and Kedar as idolaters who would convert to the praise of God.[64] Ismael and the Ismaelites were guilty by association

[58] 'Haec enim turba perditorum quae sub Antichristo congreganda est, allusione talium nominum euidenter expressa est, ut merito tot malorum uocabula in illa intellegeres plebe congesta' (Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, CCSL 98, 764).

[59] Jerome, *Tractatus in psalmos*, CCSL 78, 386.

[60] Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, p. 279. However, Shahid notes also that Epiphanius, writing at around the same time, associated the provincial Arabs with heresy; see p. 278 and n. 126.

[61] 'Arabici nuncupati, eo quod in Arabia exorti sunt, dicentes animam cum corpore mori, atque in nouissimum utrumque resurgi' (*Etym*. VIII.v.59).

[62] '[Rex idolum] ammonitarum, qui appellatur moloch, et in lingua nostra, regem sonat' (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73A, 648); 'moloch idolum ammonitarum est' (*In Hier*., CCSL 74, 343); 'baal et astaroth a sidoniis, ut chamos a moabitis et moloch ab ammonitis' (*In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76, 85); 'bahal idolum sidoniorum' (*In Hier*., CCSL 74, 97 and, similarly, 226 and 340).

[63] *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 155–6.

[64] *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 484.

with these tribes and also as inhabitants of Arabia who represented the old covenant.

In his commentary on a passage by Amos which described the sojourning of Israel in the wilderness, Jerome expands on *Moloch*, the name of her idol, which he elsewhere glosses 'king'.[65] What this idol or image of a king represents, he writes, is explained by the phrase *sidus dei uestri*, which is in Hebrew *Chocab*:

'Et portastis tabernaculum Moloc uestro, et imaginem idolorum uestrorum, sidus dei uestri, quae fecistis uobis'. Ex hoc loco discimus, omnes hostias et sacrificia quae in deserto obtulit Israel, non Deo obtulisse, sed Moloch regi suo, cuius portauerunt tabernacula, et imaginem idolorum suorum statuarumque uenerati sunt. Et quae sit ipsa imago uel idolum, sequenti sermone demonstrat: 'Sidus dei uestri', quod Hebraice dicitur 'Chocab', id est, 'Luciferi', quem Sarraceni hucusque uenerantur.[66]

Chocab is a Latin transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning 'star' which is also used to refer to the planet Venus.[67] Jerome adds, interestingly, that the cult of Venus or Lucifer is still followed in the fourth century by the Saracens. This statement may have some historical basis. The planets, sun and moon were all objects of adoration in the Near East in Old Testament times.[68] Of the planets the most important seems to have been Venus, which was an attribute or image of the deities of several similar cults found between Mesopotamia and southern Arabia.[69]

[65] Jerome explained the meaning of *Moloch* as *rex* ('moloch . . . in lingua nostra, regem sonat') as noted above (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73A, 648).

[66] ' "And you have carried the tabernacle of your Moloch, and the image of your idols, the star of your god, which you made for yourselves." From this place we learn that all the offerings and sacrifices which Israel offered in the desert were not offered to God but to Moloch her king, whose tabernacles they carried, and worshipped the image of their idols and statues. And what that same image or idol might be, the next phrase indicates: "the star of your god", which in Hebrew is called "Chocab", that is, "Lucifer", whom the Saracens venerate to this day' (Jerome, *In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76, 296). Rotter comments that Eusebius too seems to have been aware that the Saracens worshipped a star, which he said was Venus (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, p. 247).

[67] *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, *s.v.* 'Stars'.

[68] See, for example, the warnings against such worship at Deut. IV.19 and XVII.3 and the description of Josiah's reforms at II Kings XXIII.5. On Old Testament star-worship, see Zatelli, 'Astrology and the Worship of the Stars'; Delcor, 'La culte de la "Reine du Ciel" '; and Olyan, 'Some Observations'.

[69] See Hempel, 'A Catalogue of Near Eastern Venus-Deities', p. 19. On pre-Islamic Arab worship of Venus, see Fahd, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale*, pp. 163–82 and 204. Classical

Jerome also mentions a fourth-century Saracen cult of Lucifer in his *Vita S. Hilarionis*. His source for this work was Epiphanius, who recorded that the Arabs of Petra and Elusa celebrated a feast of Venus.[70] In Jerome's account, the inhabitants of Elusa, in the north-east of the Sinai peninsula, gather *in templum Veneris* to worship their deity, who is also referred to as Lucifer. When they hear that St Hilarion is in town, the Saracens gather to beseech him for a blessing, and the saint prays that they may worship God more than they do stones.[71] The passage suggests that Arab worship at the time involved one or more stones or perhaps a stone image.[72] What the reference to Lucifer might mean exactly in this context has been discussed by Rotter.[73] Jerome and, later, the medieval West could draw on both a classical and a biblical, patristic tradition of meaning for the word. Classical tradition reflected the literal meaning of *Lucifer* as 'light-bearer' in assigning the name to the evening or morning star, also called Venus.[74] However, after about the third century, Christian writers also began to employ *Lucifer* as another name for the Devil.[75] The identification of the morning star with Satan is hinted at in Luke X.18, which describes Satan falling like lightning from heaven, and Isai. XIV.12–15, which details the proud ambition of Lucifer,

authors noted the eastern worship of Astarte, whom they associated with Venus: see Attridge and Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, pp. 55 and 88–9.

[70] Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, pp. 291–2, 437.

[71] '[Hilarion] . . . uadens in desertum Cades ad unum de discipulis suis uisendum, cum infinito agmine monachorum peruenit Elusam, eo forte die, quo anniuersaria solemnitas omnem oppidi populum in templum Veneris congregauerat. Colunt autem illam ob Luciferum, cuius cultui Saracenorum natio dedita est. Sed et ipsum oppidum ex magna parte semibarbarum est propter loci situm. Igitur audito quod Sanctus Hilarion praeteriret (multos enim Saracenorum arreptos a daemone frequenter curauerat), gregatim ei cum uxoribus et liberis obuiam processere, submittentes colla, et uoce Syra "Barech", id est "benedic", inclamantes. Quos ille blande humiliterque suscipiens, obsecrabat ut Deum magis quam lapides colerent' (Jerome, *Vita S. Hilarionis*, PL 23, 41).

[72] The anonymous pilgrim of Piacenza (*c.* 560–570) described the idol of the Saracens of Sinai as a stone, said to be white marble which changed colour in response to the moon to become as black as pitch (Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 10, 23–4 and 247).

[73] Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 247–9.

[74] Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, II.xxxvi.1–6 (cited in translation by Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, p. 248).

[75] Origen seems to have been the first writer to bring together the ideas of fallen star, fallen angel, adversary and serpent in the single person of the Devil. See Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, pp. 370–2, and Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, p. 130.

the 'son of the morning' who will be brought down to hell.[76] However, so far as Jerome's use of *Lucifer* is concerned, it is clear that he was referring to the star rather than to the devil. The Hebrew root he renders *Lucifer* only signifies 'star' or 'Venus', not 'devil' or 'adversary'.

In his commentaries, Jerome indicated with words such as *usque hodie* and *nunc* that in some cases he referred to contemporary Arabs and Saracens. In his letters too, he describes parts of the Holy Land as areas currently inhabited by Saracens: 'Arabas et Agarenos, quos nunc Sarracenos uocant, in uicinia urbis Jerusalem'.[77] He describes the desert area he dwells in as being close to the part of Syria in which the Saracens roam: 'In ea mihi parte eremi commoranti, quae iuxta Syriam Saracenis iungitur' and 'in ea ad me eremi parte delatae sunt, quae inter Syros ac Saracenos uastum limitem ducit'.[78] In another letter, Jerome makes a less direct but nevertheless unmistakable reference to contemporary Saracens. Writing of a sudden invasion over the borders of Egypt, Palestine, Phoenicia and Syria, he describes the attackers as barbarians 'de quibus tuus dicit Vergilius: lateque uagantes Barcaei et sancta scriptura de Ismahel: contra faciem omnium fratrum suorum habitabit'.[79] In these examples, Jerome described the Saracens as inhabitants of the Sinai peninsula and northern Arabia where Ismael and his descendants lived. The same area served as the backdrop for his *Vita Malchi*.

THE VITA MALCHI AND THE SARACENS

The *Vita Malchi* details the capture of the monk Malchus by Saracens in a desert area on the way to Edessa. This event must have taken place some time between the 340s and the 360s AD.[80] Jerome writes that at the time, Malchus was travelling with a group of men, women, elderly and young

[76] For a brief summary of apocryphal accounts of the Devil, see the *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, *s.v.* 'Devil'. In Islamic tradition, too, the planet Venus appears in connection with angelic fall from grace, and is interpreted as having been an idol in some versions of the story of Harut and Marut (Jung, *Fallen Angels*, pp. 127–9).

[77] Jerome, *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 170.

[78] Jerome, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 21 and 26. In his description of the life of St Paul, Jerome describes an area inhabited by hermits in similar terms: 'in ea eremi parte, quae iuxta Syriam Saracenis iungitur' (*Vita S. Pauli*, PL 23, 21).

[79] Jerome, *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 144.

[80] Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, p. 285; on pp. 283–8, he discusses the information which the *Vita Malchi* contains about fourth-century Arabs and its credibility.

on a road over which the Saracens used to wander ('uicina est publico itineri solitudo, per quam Sarraceni, incertis semper sedibus, huc atque illuc uagantur').[81] Early in the narrative, Jerome vividly relates the rush of the Saracen attack, their appearance and intentions, and the awkward haste with which the captives are transported into the desert on camel-back:

Et ecce subito equorum camelorumque sessores Ismaelitae irruunt, crinitis uittatisque capitibus, ac seminudo corpore, pallia et latas caligas trahentes: pendebant ex humero pharetrae; laxos arcus uibrantes, hastilia longa portabant; non enim ad pugnandum, sed ad praedam uenerant. Rapimur, dispergimur, in diuersa trahimur . . . cum altera muliercula in unius heri seruitutem sortitus uenio. Ducimur, immo portamur sublimes in camelis; et per uastam eremum semper ruinam timentes, pendemus potius quam sedemus. Carnes semicrudae, cibus; et lac camelorum, potus erat.[82]

This account of the Saracen appearance is unmatched for detail anywhere else in the writings of Jerome (or those of any other author read in Anglo-Saxon England). Jerome's careful description is perhaps intended to lend verisimilitude to Malchus' story. The bows and quivers carried by the Saracens accord with the biblical image of Ismael as an archer, but the Saracens are also armed with spears and, as is mentioned later on in the narrative, in some cases with swords.[83] Another interesting aspect of the account is the description of the attackers' clothing: they attack half-naked, wearing cloaks and boots. Later in the *Vita Malchi* the narrator explains that he too learns to wear a minimum of clothing on account of the heat of the air.[84] Although

[81] Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, p. 41.

[82] 'Then suddenly the Ismaelite horsemen and camel-riders attacked, their heads of long hair bound with fillets, and their bodies half-naked, wearing cloaks and wide military boots: quivers hung from their shoulders; brandishing unstrung bows, they carried long spears; they didn't in fact come to fight, but for booty. We are seized, scattered, dragged apart . . . by lot I and another young woman become the slave of one master. We are led, or rather carried high on camels; and through the waste desert, constantly fearing a fall, we hang more than sit. Our food was half-raw meat; our drink was camels' milk' (Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, pp. 41–2; trans. Mierow).

[83] Twice, Malchus' captor is described bearing a sword: 'herus ille . . . euaginato me coepit petere gladio' and 'dominus . . . euaginato gladio, nostrum exspectat aduentum' (Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, pp. 45 and 56).

[84] The later passage reads: 'Hic quasi clausus carcere, mutato habitu, id est, nudus ambulare disco. Nam aeris quoque intemperies, nihil aliud praeter pudenda uelari patiebatur' (Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, p. 43).

the men here wear little, Jerome elsewhere cites the heat of the Middle Eastern climate as a reason for the female inhabitants to cover up: in his commentary on Isaiah and *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*, he describes the *theristra*, which he glosses *pallia*, as clothing still worn by the women in Arabia and Mesopotamia to protect their bodies from the heat.[85]

The Saracen attackers in the story of Malchus are also described as having long, bound hair, *crinitis uittatisque capitibus*. However, Jerome's Vulgate and his commentaries on Jeremiah state that the peoples who inhabit the Saracen regions (presumably including the Saracens themselves) are short-haired.[86] A possible source for Jerome's long-haired Saracen attackers is Pliny's description of the Arabs.[87] Long hair might also have been part of a battle-image for a nomadic people; fighting Arabians are described in other sources as wearing long, dishevelled locks and having their forelocks cropped in defeat as a humiliation.[88] The Saracens of the *Vita Malchi* resemble desert Arabs in other respects. Malchus and his fellow-captive were fed on half-raw meat and camel's milk.[89] This, presumably, formed at least part of the diet of their captors too. Jerome mentions elsewhere that half-raw meat is typically eaten by nomads.[90] He also describes the kind of food eaten by Arabs and Saracens: 'Verbi gratia, Arabes et Saraceni, et omnis eremi barbaria, camelorum lacte et carnibus uiuit'.[91] Later in the narrative we learn that Malchus also eats fresh cheese and milk, presumably from the flock he is taking care of.[92] Jerome further notes elsewhere on the diet of the Arabs that they consider it vile to consume pork, at least partly because

[85] *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 57 and *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 30.

[86] Jerome, *In Hier.*, CCSL 74, 101: 'Aegyptii, et Idumaei, Ammonitae, et Moabitae, et omnis regio Sarracenorum, quae habitant in solitudine, et de quibus dicitur: "Super omnes qui attonsi sunt in comam habitantes in deserto" '; and *In Hier.*, CCSL 74, 244: '[Dedan, et Theman, et Buz] . . . in solitudine sunt, uicinae et mixtae regionibus Ismaelitarum, quos nunc Saracenos vocant. Et de quibus dicitur: "qui attonsi sunt in comam".'

[87] *Historia naturalis* VI.clxii.1.

[88] Seale, *The Desert Bible*, pp. 27–8 and 47.

[89] Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, p. 42.

[90] Jerome, *Aduersus Iouinianum*, PL 23, 294–5. Jerome associates Saracen desert raiders along the Syrian routes with the Huns quite closely elsewhere; see his *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 571. News of the Huns' attack on Syria had reached Jerome and friends of his in the summer of 395, and they temporarily fled Bethlehem for the coast (Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 210).

[91] Jerome, *Aduersus Iouinianum*, PL 23, 294–5.

[92] 'Vescebar recenti caseo et lacte' (Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, p. 43).

swine do not flourish in Arabia.[93] Pliny may have been his source for much of this information.[94]

The Saracens in the extract cited above share several characteristics with those described by Cassian in the sixth book of his *Collationes*. They live in the desert, they seem to have no fixed abode, and they appear in a sudden onslaught. However, Cassian's Saracens were more violent, slaughtering their victims rather than merely enslaving them, and the desert they inhabited would appear to be entirely barren and perhaps of some biblical significance, since it was the site of a punishment meted out by God to the sinners of Sodom. The desert in the story of Malchus, on the other hand, is not far from a river and acts as a home for the Saracen flocks and a number of wild animals. In the end, though, the function of the Saracens is the same. They are a sudden and violent danger which serves to emphasise the holiness or determination of Christians who might be martyred like Cassian's monks or resist and escape, as Malchus was to do.

First, he becomes a slave looking after his Saracen master's flocks. Malchus finds that this activity reminds him of various Old Testament figures. He chants psalms in the desert and feels content to have rediscovered a contemplative life. Nonetheless, the Saracen dangers which Malchus faces are not over. After a while, his master, seeking to reward him for the good maintenance of his flocks (or perhaps hoping to increase the number of his slaves), insists that Malchus take the female captive to be his wife. Malchus protests his Christian chastity but the Saracen forces him at swordpoint to accept her.[95] Fortunately the female prisoner too wishes to remain chaste and the couple keep up a pretence of being 'married' while in fact, as the narrator insists, they never lay a finger on each other. Life is still not satisfactory. Malchus's solitary contentment in the desert proves to have been deceptively enjoyable. He realises that he must return to the monastery so that he can help other Christians as part of a community, and manages

[93] 'Hi nefas arbitrantur porcorum uesci carnibus. Sues enim, qui glande, castaneis, radicibus filicum, et hordeo ali solent, aut raro apud eos, aut penitus non inueniuntur: et si inuenti fuerint, alimenta non habent, quae supra diximus . . .' (Jerome, *Adversus Iouinianum*, PL 23, 294–5).

[94] Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, VIII.ccxii.8 (on swine) and VI.clxi.1 (on the nomadic diet of milk and game). Luebeck notes that the information that nomads and troglodytes live on half-raw meat is also found in the works of Porphyrius (*Hieronymus quos nouerit scriptores*, *s.v.* 'Porphyrius').

[95] Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, pp. 43–5.

to escape across the desert. He and the female captive are pursued by the Saracens, but, providentially, a lioness kills their erstwhile master and his servant in a cave. The two fugitives collect the Saracen camels and travel back to civilisation, where they then sell their transport for a good price.[96] Years later, Jerome reports, he as a young man met the aged Malchus and subsequently wrote this account of his life to show that modesty cannot be held captive even among swords, deserts and wild beasts.

In this story, the desert again appears as a significant element in the representation of the Saracens. Jerome initially presented it as a landscape through which the travellers moved cautiously because they knew the danger of the wandering Saracen marauders. Malchus was only travelling in the first place because he was returning home from his life as a monk to claim an inheritance, a material motive which he himself criticises and comes to regret in the course of the narrative. It is this desire for worldly goods, a lapse from his monastic intentions, that first exposes him to physical danger. There is another, more positive aspect of the desert, however, which recalls for Malchus the Old Testament patriarchs Job and Moses, and evokes the life of the hermit. This dual role of the desert in the *Vita Malchi* is interesting: on the one hand, the landscape epitomises worldly peril and Malchus's exile from the communities of monastery and family while on the other, it enables him to enter into a world of religious contemplation. The reference to the Old Testament patriarchs may be significant here. Jerome suggests that with his forced journey into the Saracen wastes, Malchus also travels into a parallel desert of the soul in which he is subject to spiritual as well as physical dangers: he risks his chastity and sense of belonging to the community of the monastery. His psalm-chanting as he watches over the Saracen flocks, like the Old Testament itself, is beneficial but not enough to redeem his soul. Mulling over the words of Solomon, Malchus sees them as an exhortation to Christian communal life and determines to break free. In this little lesson on the relationship between Old and New Testaments, the Saracens, as part of the desert landscape, provide essential jeopardy. They are the means by which Malchus is exposed to sudden calamity, sexual temptation and an insidious contentment to which he must not succumb if he is to escape from the godless Saracen desert and the unsatisfying Old Testament desert to regain the true spirituality of the cenobitic life. In this respect, Malchus resembles the narrator of

[96] Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, pp. 50–9.

Ps. LXXI who complained at his solitary stay amongst the hostile people of Kedar.

The works of Jerome were particularly influential in shaping medieval conceptions of the Saracens. Indeed, he was probably the best-respected authority after the Bible itself. In cases where the meaning of Hebrew terminology was concerned, Jerome was the only source of information for most western commentators. As a western-educated Christian scholar and ascetic who inhabited southern Palestine for some years, it is not surprising that he should have conceived a negative impression of the Arabian tribes who raided at the edges of the desert and in AD 410–12 threatened the existence of one of Jerome's own religious communities in Bethlehem.[97] Since he also lived and wrote in Saracen territory, he was (so far as a western audience was concerned) in an excellent position to pronounce upon the people themselves. His comments were taken up by subsequent writers such as Isidore who themselves became widely cited authorities in the West. The broad dissemination in the early medieval West of Jerome's statements created an audience who understood the Saracens and the Old Testament Ismaelites as one and the same people which was connected with the region of Arabia and inimical towards Christianity. The Ismaelites were interpreted as the uncovenanted descendants of the hostile and desert-dwelling son of Abraham's concubine. This image promoted a strong religious antipathy towards their latter-day descendants, the Saracens. Patristic literature had an abiding influence on medieval conceptions of the Ismaelites and Saracens. Jerome's words were to be cited for centuries on the violence and wandering nature of the Saracens. Said again:

> Every writer on the Orient . . . assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies . . . The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences, and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore constitutes an analyzable formation . . . whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it strength and authority.[98]

Said locates Orientalism as a kind of commerce between writing about the Orient and politics in the Orient which was directed towards western material gain. The furtherance of reasoned science (philology, natural history, anthropology and so forth) provided the rationale. Scholars presented the

[97] Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 306, n. 53. [98] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 20.

Orient as somewhere different from their own space by describing it as less 'scientific' (more irrational, disordered, technologically backwards). In the late antique and early medieval period, analyses and interpretations of the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens arose as a result of the scholarly aim to understand the Bible. As a result, the difference of these peoples from literate westerners consisted in their being enemies of the people of God, desert-dwellers, marauders and symbols of spiritual perdition. Certain ideas about Islam and the Orient seem to be shared by scholars in both periods. This does not conflict with Said's thesis. However, it suggests that his definitions of 'Orientalism' could usefully be clarified. 'Latent' Orientalism and 'manifest' Orientalism – as Said defines them – and their complicated relations with literature, prejudice and institutional power can be read into western literature from at least as early as the fourth century. Even later expressions of European technological superiority find parallels in Jerome's descriptions of the Saracens as nomads and eaters of raw flesh or Adomnán's statement that although their house of prayer was large, it was crudely built on ruins. The articulation of a political identity and concomitant urge to increase its territorial holdings are perhaps unique to the modern period. Even so, the fact that many of the attributes of Said's 'Orientalism' appear in a medieval context signals the need to distinguish these more clearly from the elements that made the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries unique in shaping western conceptions of the Orient today.

The works of Jerome, Isidore and other Latin authors mentioned above were known from an early date in medieval Europe. According to their literary representations of the world, the validity of Christianity was upheld each time the Saracens who confronted them could be shown to be bad, wrong and different. Jerome succeeded in incorporating the fourth-century Arabs who lived near his home at Bethlehem into commentaries on the Old Testament Ismaelites. A similar process of assimilation was to take place when western Christian commentators of the seventh century and later described the Muslims in terms of pre-Islamic and biblical notions of the Ismaelites and Saracens. In Anglo-Saxon England, perhaps the first writings to emerge concerning the Saracens issued from the Canterbury school of two great scholars, Theodore and Hadrian, who had travelled to England from Rome even as the Muslim forces were sweeping across their homelands in the eastern Mediterranean.

6

Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens in early Anglo-Latin

Bede wrote of Theodore and Hadrian in his *Historia ecclesiastica* as learned teachers from Tarsus and Africa who, in the well-known description, poured the waters of wholesome knowledge into the minds of their students day by day.[1] Concerning the lives of Theodore and Hadrian before they came to England, Bede is silent but recent scholarship has supplied the details.[2] Theodore of Tarsus (602–690) spent the 660s and perhaps earlier years as an Oriental monk in Rome. Before this period, he was probably educated in Antioch and possibly in Edessa. If he was still in Syria in the year 636, Theodore may have been forced to leave by the Arab conquests. Hadrian (*c.* 630–709) was probably a native of Cyrenaica, in Libya. His move to Naples, where he became a monk, may well similarly have been prompted by the Arab invasions of Cyrenaica between the years 642 and 645. These two men thus represent a rare possible contact between England and the Islamic world during its earliest formation.[3]

Theodore came to England from Rome in 669 to oversee the new archiepiscopal see of Canterbury. He had been appointed to this post a year previously by Pope Vitalian (657–72) at the suggestion of Hadrian, at that time abbot of a monastery near Naples. Hadrian had in fact been Vitalian's first choice for the archbishopric when it fell vacant. After he had recommended Theodore for the position, Hadrian too came to England as Theodore's companion and colleague, probably arriving the following

[1] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, IV.2 (pp. 332–4).

[2] Lapidge provides the most up-to-date account and reconstructs the earlier careers of the two; see Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, pp. 5–81 (Theodore) and 82–132 (Hadrian).

[3] On other possible links between Anglo-Saxon England and the Syriac world, see Brock, 'The Syriac Background', pp. 49–53.

year. He subsequently became abbot of the monastery of SS Peter and Paul, later St Augustine's, in Canterbury.[4] Both men taught a variety of subjects in their school at Canterbury. Among the information which Theodore and Hadrian conveyed to their students were references to the Saracens and certain aspects of eastern life. These are found in a set of notes on the Pentateuch and gospels of the Vulgate. The notes appear to have been taken down during the course of a series of lectures given at the school of Theodore and Hadrian in Canterbury.[5] They are referred to below as the Canterbury commentaries and their author as the Canterbury commentator.

THE CANTERBURY COMMENTARIES AND THE SARACENS

The Canterbury commentator makes several asides – concerning, for example, rare birds and the outsize melons of Edessa – which point to personal experience of life in the Middle East.[6] It seems plausible that it was a recollection of the conquering Arabs that prompted the following, biting reference to the Saracens in an explanation of Gen. XVI.12 on the angel's prophecy regarding Ismael: '"Manus eius contra omnes": sic fuit genus eius Saracenis, numquam cum omnibus pacem habentes sed semper contra aliquos certantes'.[7] On the other hand, the comment could derive from the writings of Jerome. As indicated above, the biblical phrase 'manus eius super omnes, et manus omnium super eum' referred, according to Jerome, to 'Sarracenos uagos, incertisque sedibus, qui uniuersas gentes, quibus desertum ex latere iungitur incursant, et inpugnantur ab omnibus'.[8] The

[4] On the life and teachings of Theodore and Hadrian in England, and on other works by Theodore, see Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, pp. 133–89, and Lapidge, 'The Career of Archbishop Theodore'.

[5] The notes are best preserved in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, M. 79 sup., which dates from the eleventh century. On the authorship of the Canterbury commentaries and surviving manuscripts of their text, see Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, especially pp. 1–4 and 269–95.

[6] See Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries* Pent.I §413, pp. 35 and 374–5 (melons); Pent.I §360 pp. 84–5 and 364–5 (*porphirio*).

[7] '"His hand will be against all men" [Gen. XVI.12]: thus Ishmael's race was that of the Saracens, a race which is never at peace with anyone but is always at war with someone' (Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, p. 324; trans. Lapidge).

[8] '. . . the roaming Saracens of no fixed abode, who assail all the peoples bordering the edge of the desert, and are fought by everyone' (Jerome, *LQHGen*., CCSL 72, pp. 20–1).

Canterbury commentator certainly knew Jerome's commentary on Genesis, since he quoted it on the very subject of Ismael.[9] However, it is not certain that he cites Jerome on the subject of the Saracens. There is no echo of Jerome's syntax or vocabulary in the Canterbury commentator's phrasing, as there was in Isidore's quotations from Jerome.[10] Indeed, the two scholars are making rather different points, albeit on the same subject. Jerome described all peoples bordering the desert as victims of the wandering Saracens and thus emphasised the broad geography of their attacks. With *numquam* and *semper*, the Canterbury commentator suggests the endlessness of Saracen hostility. It seems likely that the Canterbury commentator knew of the Arabs as Ismaelites or Saracens, drew upon his own knowledge of the Arab conquests in the Middle East, and (quite probably with Jerome's earlier comment in mind) chose to underline the fact that hostilities with Ismael's descendants were ongoing. It is also possible that in writing 'numquam cum omnibus pacem habentes sed semper contra aliquos certantes', the Canterbury commentator was influenced by the sentiments of Psalm CXIX on the inhabitants of Kedar: 'Cum his qui oderunt pacem eram pacificus; cum loquebar illis, impugnabant me gratis'. The Canterbury commentator leaves no written evidence that he linked Kedar with the Saracens but he knew Ismael to be the progenitor of the Ismaelites and can hardly have been ignorant that Kedar was Ismael's son. Like Jerome and other commentators before him, he would have appreciated how apt were the words of the psalm to describe the Arab invaders from a Christian point of view.

The Canterbury commentator makes only one other direct reference to the Saracens. He explains, more clearly than Jerome had done, that their name was a current and inappropriate term for a number of Old Testament tribes: 'Madianitae et Hismahelitae et Madianei et Agarreni ipsi sunt qui nunc abusiue Sarraceni nominantur'.[11] The Canterbury commentator could

[9] The Canterbury commentator cited Jerome in a discussion of Ismael's age when he was cast out (Gen. XXI.10–21); see Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, pp. 328–9 and n. on p. 460; see also pp. 203–4 on Jerome as a source for the Canterbury commentaries.

[10] The versions of Genesis used by the two scholars also differed: the commentator quotes the Vulgate's *contra omnes* where Jerome cites *super omnes* from the Old Latin.

[11] 'Madianites and Ishmaelites and Madiani and Agarreni are the same peoples as those who are now inappropriately called Saracens' (Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, p. 338; trans. Lapidge). See also Lapidge's notes on pp. 466–7 and n. 16 below.

quite possibly have obtained this information from Jerome's works but, if he did, he has reworded and elaborated upon his source. Jerome stated more than once that *Saraceni* referred to the Ismaelites and Hagarenes. The Canterbury commentator lists the *Madianei* and *Madianitae* as well, as peoples now called Saracens. The Midianites appear in the Vulgate book of Genesis as the trading people, also called Ismaelites, to whom Joseph was sold by his brothers.[12] In his commentary on the book of Ezekiel, Jerome wrote that by Midianites (*Madianitae* and *Madianaei*), scripture was referring metaphorically to Ismaelites, Hagarenes and Saracens.[13] The form *Madianei* (or *Madianaei*) occurs rarely outside the works of Jerome. In the Vulgate he employs it as an alternative to *Madianitae*.[14] Jerome seems to have thought the terms interchangeable; he lists them together and glosses them using the same word.[15] Since the Canterbury commentator includes both *Madianitae* and the form *Madianei* and is known to have consulted the Vulgate rather than the Old Latin in devising his commentary, he probably took the name from the Bible. The link between Midianites and Ismaelites, combined with the common identification of Ismaelites and Hagarenes with Saracens, would have then supplied the Canterbury commentator with his list of peoples. It is also possible that he took all of the names together from a work by Jerome such as his commentary on Ezechiel.[16]

[12] Gen. XXXVIII.25–8. [13] Jerome, *In Ezech.*, CCSL 75, 335.

[14] The Septuagint and the Hebrew Bible use the same form of the name at Gen. XXXVII.28 and 36, while the Vulgate differs; both the Greek (Μαδιηναιοι) and the Hebrew (consonants 'mdn' with plural 'm') correspond better with the form *Madianaei* than with the Latinate *Madianitae*, and perhaps this is why Jerome used the alternative. Both *Madianei* and *Madianitae* appear in Jerome's translation from the Hebrew but not in other Latin versions of the Bible. References here as below are to the *Biblia sacra iuxta uulgatam uersionem*, ed. Weber *et al*.

[15] 'Madianaei uel madianitae diiudicantes' (*LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 69). Elsewhere, Jerome refers again to *Madianei* or *Madianaei* in contexts where the meaning 'Midianites' is appropriate: 'Aiunt enim, et Aegypti sacerdotes, et Ismaelitas, et Madianaeos praeputium non habere', and 'Illud quoque quod populo praecipitur Israel, ut odio sempiterno, et in posteros transmissa discordia, inimici sint Madianeis . . . in Israelitis, et Madianeis uita magis dissimilis, quam gens una damnata est' (*In epistulas Paulinas*, PL 26, 394 and 416). Also, referring back to Gen. XXXVII.36, he writes: 'Madianaei autem uendiderunt ioseph in aegypto phutiphar' (*LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 45).

[16] It has been suggested that the term *Madianei* may here signify the Medes, whose ancestor was thought to have been Madai, son of Iapheth, mentioned at Gen. X.2 (Bischoff and

The Midianites are described in Genesis as the descendants of Midian, son of Abraham by a woman called Ketura.[17] This is hard to reconcile with the fact that, also in Genesis, the Midianites are called Ismaelites, who must evidently be descendents of Ismael and therefore of Hagar. One way of resolving the problem is to interpret the name Ketura, which Jerome glosses as *copulata* or *uincta*, as another name for Hagar, signifying her situation as Abraham's concubine. However, the Canterbury commentator asserts that Hagar and Ketura are not the same woman (while noting that many think that such is the case): ' "Cethura" alia uxor Abraham, non Agar, ut multi arbitrantur'.[18] Again, this is rather different from Jerome's comment on the same subject, in which he acknowledges the problem but leaves the question open.[19] Another example of a disparity of opinion on the Orient between the Canterbury commentator and Jerome can be found in their glosses of the word *theristrum*. Jerome explained it as a *pallium*, a robe worn by the women of Mesopotamia and Arabia to protect their bodies from the heat.[20] The Canterbury commentator also defines it using the word *pallium*, but the rest of his explanation differs somewhat: '[id est] pallium

Lapidge, eds., *Canterbury Commentaries*, p. 466). However, in a biblical context the Medes are never associated with the Ismaelites in the same way as are the Midianites, and they tend to be referred to as *Medi*, not *Madianei*. Isidore, for example, writes of 'Madai, a quo Medos existere putant' (*Etym*. IX.ii.28). The region of Madian is described in Exod. III.1 as lying near the mountain of Horeb, another name for Sinai, and other sources locate Midian near Egypt or the Red Sea, sometimes across the whole north of Arabia, in the same area as that inhabited by Ismael and his offspring; see Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 30, 85, 87, 89 and 102. The Medes, on the other hand, lived beyond Mesopotamia far to the north-east, near the peoples of Parthia, Elam and Persia, with whom they are usually listed in the Old Testament. Since Jerome employed the name *Medi* to refer to the descendants of Madai and used *Madianei* and *Madianitae* interchangeably in connection with the Ismaelites and Saracens, it seems probable that the Canterbury commentator listed two versions of the same name both of which indicate descent from Midian.

[17] Gen. XXV.1–2.

[18] 'Ketura [was] another wife of Abraham, and was not Hagar, as many suppose' (Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, p. 330; trans. Lapidge).

[19] Jerome, *LQHGen*., CCSL 72, 30: 'Cetura hebraeo sermone copulata interpretatur aut uincta. Quam ob causam suspicantur Hebraei mutato nomine eandem esse Agar . . . Nos quod incertum est relinquentes' (' "Ketura" in Hebrew is interpreted as "linked" or "bound", because of which the Hebrews think the same to be Hagar by another name . . . which we pass over because it is uncertain').

[20] Jerome, *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 57, and *LQHGen*., CCSL 72, 30.

lineum subtile, quo se puellae cooperiunt et meretrices maxime'.[21] Both commentators wrote that *theristrum* meant a particular kind of light veil or clothing for women, but they differed quite markedly on the types of women who wore light clothing and, by implication, their reasons for doing so.

The Canterbury commentator, then, makes several interesting comments pertaining to Arabia and the Saracens. In each case information on the same subjects was already available in Jerome's commentary on the book of Genesis, but the accounts given by the Canterbury commentator differ in form and content from those of his predecessor. As we have seen, the Canterbury commentator was not ignorant of Jerome's work; nor, since he repeated Jerome's wording elsewhere in his own commentary, can the disparity be ascribed to an indifference to Jerome as a source of information. It is hard to imagine that any commentator could have ignored the great authority of the saint. Perhaps the Canterbury commentator declined to use Jerome's words in these particular cases because he wished to comment according to his own more up-to-date knowledge of the Middle East. The Canterbury commentator's description of the Saracens as *numquam cum omnibus pacem habentes* is quite possibly the first recorded reaction in an Anglo-Saxon context to the rise of Islam.[22] It should be noted, though, that the Canterbury commentator does not refer directly and unambiguously to the Arab invasions, as Bede was later to do at the turn of the seventh century.[23] The Canterbury commentator states only that Ismael is the source of the excessive truculence inherited by his descendants. This was a notion which was available to many well-read churchmen before the seventh century and was given great currency by Jerome. Here it can be assumed to have the Muslim Arabs in mind since it is expressed by a man who could not have been ignorant of the Arab presence in or near his

[21] '. . . that is, a finely woven linen dress, with which young girls – and especially prostitutes – clothe themselves' (Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, p. 338; trans. Lapidge).

[22] Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, p. 456. For further discussions of contemporary western reactions to the Arab conquests, see Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 235–64. Hoyland provides a comprehensive survey of eastern Christian responses in his *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*.

[23] Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 201. This reference to the Saracen possession of Africa, most of Asia and part of Europe could not have been made without knowledge of the Arab conquests.

homeland. Cassian, Jerome, Theodore and Hadrian were the earliest authors known to the English who could associate the Saracens of their own experience, whom we today know as Arabs, with Old Testament descriptions of the Ismaelites. To them, native Arab characteristics included attacks on Christians and Christian communities and, unsurprisingly, they provoked a bitter reaction.

The Anglo-Saxon poet and scholar, Aldhelm, attended the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian and also mentioned Saracens in his work.[24] In his prose *De uirginitate*, he drew on Jerome's *Vita Malchi* to describe the monk 'a Saracenis praedonibus et Ismaelitis grassatoribus obuia quaeque atrociter uastantibus captus'.[25] Aldhelm, characteristically, describes the Saracens in a striking manner; he is the only medieval author to refer to them using the terms *grassator* and *praedo*.[26] He briefly mentions the Saracens again in a note on a hermit who dwelt on the border between the Syrians and the Saracens and subsisted on a diet of five dried figs each day. The story of the hermit comes from Jerome's *Vita S. Pauli*, and Aldhelm includes it as an illustration of the difference between the words *carica* ('dried fig') and *carex* ('sedge') in his *De pedum regulis*.[27] It is notable that, although Aldhelm attended the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian, both occurrences of the word *Saraceni* in his writings derive from material by Jerome.

[24] Aldhelm alluded to his Canterbury education in a letter to Hadrian; see his *Epistolae*, p. 478 (trans. by Herren in *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, ed. and trans. Lapidge and Herren, pp. 153–4; see also Herren's notes on pp. 138–9).

[25] '. . . captured by Saracen pirates and Ismaelite robbers (who were) ravaging violently whatsoever was in their way' (Aldhelm, *De uirginitate*, ed. Ehwald, MGH AA XV, 270; trans. Lapidge in *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, p. 91; Aldhelm did not include Malchus in his verse *Carmen de uirginitate*). Cf. Daniel in his review of Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen* (p. 39): 'The fairly detached picture of Arabs in antiquity becomes unfavourable as the age of Islam approaches, and Aldhelm, in England, summarises opinion of them as "muggers and gangsters"'. To clarify Daniel's summary, the picture of Arabs as *Arabes* seems to have remained fairly detached, in Anglo-Saxon England, at least, while the picture of Muslims (not necessarily Arabs) as Ismaelites and Saracens certainly was unfavourable from the beginning.

[26] A possible parallel is Jerome's description of St Paul's one-time enmity towards the church: *quasi quidam grassator Ecclesiam et praedo uastabat* (Jerome, *In epistulas Paulinas*, PL 26, 324).

[27] Aldhelm, *De pedum regulis*, ed. Ehwald, p. 155; cf. Jerome, *Vita S. Pauli*, PL 23, 21, where he describes having seen monks living 'in ea eremi parte, quae iuxta Syriam Saracenis iungitur', amongst whom one lived on five figs a day: 'quinque caricis per singulos dies sustentabatur'.

BEDE AND THE SARACENS

Bede (*c.* 673–735) was born in the north of England a few years after the arrival of Theodore and Hadrian in Canterbury.[28] At the age of seven, he was consigned to the care of Benedict Biscop (?627–689), abbot of the monastery of St Peter at Wearmouth. Later, in the year 682, he joined the new sister-foundation of St Paul at Jarrow, also founded by Benedict Biscop, and afterwards remained there as monk, deacon and priest. During a lifetime of scholarship and prayer, Bede wrote numerous works including biblical commentaries, didactic treatises, saints' lives, verse and the famous *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* which he completed a few years before his death.

Bede seems to have taken some interest in events abroad during the early eighth century.[29] He read and copied Adomnán's record of the pilgrim Arculf's travels in the East, and the Saracens described by Adomnán reappear in Bede's own description of the Holy Land and his catalogue of place-names.[30] He was also the first native Anglo-Saxon to write on contemporary Arab activity in Europe. In his *De temporum ratione*, Bede mentioned the Saracen invasion of Sicily and subsequent return to Alexandria with an enormous amount of booty. He noted Emperor Justinian's ten-year treaty with the Saracens and his conflicts with them in Africa. On the Saracen siege of Constantinople, Bede, unlike other sources, wrote that it lasted for three years, not two, until the cold and hungry inhabitants prayed to God and a plague drove off the enemy. Bede also explained how the Lombard king Liutprand heard that the Saracens had invaded Sardinia, where the bones of St Augustine were held as relics, and so travelled there, paid a large ransom and took them away with him to a safer and more honourable location in Pavia.[31] In his *Historia ecclesiastica* the Saracens appear again, described as *grauissima lues Sarracenorum* ('a terrible plague of Saracens') who ravage Gaul

[28] For an introduction to Bede's life and times, see Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, especially pp. 3–37, 184–94, 298–309, and Brown, *Bede, the Venerable*, pp. 1–23. On Benedict Biscop and the foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow, see, for example, Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, pp. 155–83.

[29] See Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 236–40 and 235–8.

[30] Bede, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 251–80, and *Nomina locorum* [*CPL* 1346a], CCSL 119, 273–87.

[31] Bede, *De temporum ratione* [*CPL* 2320]: 'Sarraceni Siciliam inuadunt et praeda nimia secum ablata mox Alexandriam redeunt' (CCSL 123B, 527; cf. *Liber Pontificalis* I, 346); 'Hic constituit [Iustinianus] pacem cum Sarracenis decennio terra marique. Sed et prouincia

but quickly reap a just reward for their wickedness.[32] This is usually taken as a reference to the year 732 or 733 and Charles Martel's victory against the Arabs in the battle of Tours and Poitiers.[33]

Although the *De temporum ratione* and the *Historia ecclesiastica* mention the Saracens, neither says anything about the origins or nature of the people. Perhaps, by the time the *Historia ecclesiastica* was written (in about AD 731), Bede felt that no explanation of their origins was necessary. News of the Saracen attacks in Europe arrived in England at the same time or after the exegetical writings on Ismaelites and Saracens described above. If Bede did not always connect the Saracens with the Ismaelites, nor did he invariably connect the Ismaelites with the Saracens. In his *De temporum ratione*, Bede does not even reproduce the common medieval definition of the Saracens as Ismaelites in the note on Ismael. He merely writes: 'Abraham an. LXXXVI genuit Ismahel, a quo Ismahelitae: genuit autem Ismahel XII duces et uixit an. CXXXVII'.[34] However, as will become clear, it is not through Bede's chronicles but through his earlier commentaries and other biblical works that we learn most about the nature and characteristics of

Africa subiugata est Romano imperio, quae fuerat tenta a Sarracenis, ipsa quoque Carthagine ab eis capta et destructa' (CCSL 123B, 529; cf. *Liber Pontificalis* I, 366); 'Sarraceni cum inmenso exercitu Constantinopolim uenientes triennio civitatem obsident . . .' (CCSL 123B, 534; cf. *Liber Pontificalis* I, 402, where, however, the term *biennio* describes the length of the siege); 'Liudbrandus, audiens quod Sarraceni depopulata Sardinia etiam loca fedarent ulla, ubi ossa sancti Augustini episcopi propter uastationem barbarorum olim translata . . . misit et dato magno praetio accepit et transtulit ea in Ticinis ibique cum debito tanto patri honore recondidit' (CCSL 123B, 535). These comments soon became known on the Continent: see the *Historia Langobardorum* composed in the second half of the eighth century by Paulus Diaconus [*CPL* 1179], pp. 233–4, which cites Bede twice on the Saracens.

[32] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, V. 23 (pp. 556–7).

[33] The slight discrepancy in dates has been variously explained; for an overview, see Kirby, 'Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*: Its Contemporary Setting', especially pp. 906–7. Bede may have included the reference whilst revising the *Historia ecclesiastica*, as part of an optimistic ending which indicated that Christianity was victorious in Europe.

[34] 'Abraham begat Ismael at the age of eighty-six, from whom descend the Ismaelites: and Ismael begat twelve princes and lived one hundred and thirty-seven years' (CCSL 123B, 470). A similar and equally bare statement appears in the *De temporibus liber* [*CPL* 2318]: 'Abraham ann. C genuit Isaac. Nam primo genuit Ismahel, a quo Ismahelite' (CCSL 123C, 603).

the Saracens. Before later appreciation of his history of English Christianity, Bede was best known as an exegete. In his writings on scripture, he selected, retransmitted and in many cases developed the ideas of earlier exegetes on the subjects of Arabia, the Arabs and the Saracens, drawing on the writings of Pliny, Orosius, Jerome and Isidore among others. It seems appropriate (given the history of commentary on the Saracens outlined above) to study Bede's representation of contemporary Saracens in the wider context of their established exegetical and biblical significance and also in relation with the Arabs and Arabia as described by previous authorities.

BEDE AND OLD TESTAMENT ARABIA

Bede's methodical borrowing from earlier works, a habit by no means unusual in the Middle Ages, is commonly acknowledged.[35] He himself asks how readers could learn about the trees or aromatic herbs mentioned in the Song of Songs and found in such distant places as Arabia and India unless he made use of books by previous authorities.[36] Frequently Bede acknowledges his borrowings; discussing a tree of Arabia, Bede quotes an interpretation from Jerome and cites his *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*.[37] He draws on Pliny's *Historia naturalis* to describe a lunar eclipse in Arabia and the colours of different varieties of onyx found there and in other lands.[38] Although much of Bede's information on towns and regions of Old Testament Arabia is taken from Jerome and Josephus, Orosius also influences his geography.[39] His *De locis sanctis* derives almost entirely from Adomnán's work of the same name. Commenting on Genesis, Bede even includes a line or two of Vergil on the subject of the Sabaeans and incense: 'thurea uirga Sabaeis . . . centumque Sabeo / thure calent arae'. Here, though, it is almost certain that Bede got his Vergil at second hand, since Jerome quoted the same lines in his own commentaries and followed them with

[35] Laistner, *Thought and Letters*, p. 268.

[36] Bede, *In Cantica Canticorum* [*CPL* 1353], CCSL 119B, 180.

[37] Bede, *De tabernaculo* [*CPL* 1345], CCSL 119A, 59, where he refers to Jerome's definitions of the word *settha* or *settim* as *spinae* or *spinarum* (*LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 77; 84; 88 and 101).

[38] Bede, *De natura rerum* [*CPL* 1343], CCSL 123A, 215, and *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 49–50.

[39] Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum* [*CPL* 1357], CCSL 121, 167, which seems to be based on Orosius, *Historiae*, I.ii.18 and 21.

the same explanatory passage on the Hebrew spelling of 'Saba' which Bede also cites verbatim.[40]

Much information on Old Testament Arabia is found in just two of Bede's works. The first is the *Nomina regionum*, which draws on Jerome, Orosius, Adomnán and Isidore, and has been dated to some time between AD 709 and 715.[41] The second work, the *Nomina locorum*, is a similar catalogue composed a little later from the works of Jerome and Josephus.[42] From the *Nomina regionum* the reader learns that Arabia lies between the Arabian and Persian gulfs and is the home of many peoples, including the Saracens. Quoting Isidore, Bede adds that Arabia is supposed to mean 'sacred' because it produces incense, and thus it is called *beata*.[43] He notes that Damascus is now occupied by Saracens and ruled by their king, Mauias.[44] Syria has the greatest provinces (Commagena, Phoenicia and Palestine) apart from those of the Saracens and Nabateans, who number twelve peoples.[45] More

[40] Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 144: 'centumque Sabeo thure calent arae . . . Filii Regma: Saba et Dedan. Hic saba per "sin" litteram scribitur, supra uero per "samech", a quo diximus appellatos Sabeos. Interpretatur ergo nunc Saba Arabia. Nam in septuagesimo psalmo ubi nos habemus, "Reges Arabum et Saba munera offerent", in Hebreo scriptum est, "Reges Saba et Saba" – primum nomen per "sin", secundum per "samech", quae nostrae litterae similis est.' Cf. *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 12. See also Sutcliffe, 'Bede's Knowledge of Hebrew', pp. 302–4.

[41] Bede, *Nomina regionum* [*CPL* 1359], CCSL 121, 167–78; Laistner dates it to AD 709 or a little after (CCSL 121, v).

[42] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 273–87. Hurst comments briefly on the authorship of this work and dates it to around AD 716 (CCSL 119, v).

[43] Bede, *Nomina regionum*, CCSL 121, 167: 'Arabia autem sacra interpretari dicitur eo quod sit regio turifera odores creans; hinc eam Graeci εὐδαίμον, nostri beatam uocauerunt'; cf. *Etym.* XIV.iii.15.

[44] Bede, *Nomina regionum*, CCSL 121, 171: 'Damascus: nobilis urbs Foenicis quae et quondam in omni Syria tenuit principatum et nunc Sarracenorum metropolis esse perhibetur, unde et rex eorum Mauuias famosam in ea sibi suaeque genti basilicam dicauit . . .' Bede took the name *Mauuias* from Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* but it also belonged to a Saracen queen who converted to Christianity in the fourth century and was mentioned in the writings of Socrates and Sozomen, among others (Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, pp. 138–202). Bede, too, mentions *Manuia* [*sic*] *Saracenorum regina* and the conversion of her people in his *Martyrologium* [*CPL* 2032], PL 94, 838. Cf. Freculf (bishop of Lisieux 823–51), *Chronicon*, PL 106, 1221.

[45] Bede, *Nomina regionum*, CCSL 121, 176–7: 'Syria . . . regio est inter flumen Eufraten et mare magnum usque ad Aegyptum pertingens; habet maximas prouincias, Commagenam, Foeniciam, et Palestinam absque Sarracenis et Nabatheis quorum gentes sunt duodecim'; cf. *Historiae*, I.ii.24.

information about the internal geography of Arabia and particularly its Old Testament cities is given in the *Nomina locorum*. Asor was associated with Kedar and was a city of the Ismaelites in the desert.[46] Bede located Moab, Petra and Rabbath in Arabia.[47] To the south of Judaea, beyond Petra, he described the Amalekites as dwellers in a desert region.[48] Judaea's border with Arabia was represented by the Jordan.[49] Madian was located *super Arabiam* and lay between Mount Sinai and the *desertum Sarracenorum*.[50]

Bede refers more than once to the Saracen desert, and links it with Ismael in a comment that the region of Kedar lies there and is named after a son of Ismael.[51] It is not entirely clear from these two works alone where exactly the 'heremo Sarracenorum' is located. However, it should be borne in mind that the *Nomina locorum* and *Nomina regionum* were intended as aids to biblical study. The book of Genesis states clearly that Ismael lived in the desert of Paran.[52] In other books of the Old Testament Paran is often referred to using words such as *desertum* or *solitudine*.[53] According to Genesis, the homeland of Ismael's descendants stretched from Havilah as far as Shur across the north of Arabia.[54] However, commentators on the Bible frequently located the Saracens (as Ismaelites) in Paran too.[55]

Bede discusses the desert of Paran twice in connection with the Saracens. In his fullest explanation of the word, he strongly associates the two. The

[46] Bede, *Nomina locorum*: 'Asor . . . metropolim Ismahelitarum in deserto Hieremias' (CCSL 119, 273).

[47] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 283–4. Bede also describes Petra as an Arabian town lying in Edom (*In libros Regum quaestiones xxx* [*CPL* 1347], CCSL 119, 314).

[48] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 48.

[49] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 282: 'Iordanes fluuius . . . diuidens Iudaeam Arabiam et Aulonem atque usque ad mare mortuum fluens'. Bede also knew Adomnán's statement that from one bank of the Jordan a man could throw a stone over the river into Arabia (Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, CCSL 175, 213).

[50] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 277: 'Choreb qui et Sinai mons Dei in regione Madian super Arabiam in deserto cui iungitur mons et desertum Sarracenorum'. Cf. Bede, *Nomina regionum*, CCSL 121, 176: 'Sina: mons in regione Madian super Arabiam in deserto qui alio nomine Choreb appellatur'.

[51] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 277: 'Cedar regio in heremo Sarracenorum a filio Ismahelis Cedar ita cognominata'.

[52] Gen. XXI.21 and Num. X.12.

[53] Paran is described as a desert at Gen. XIV.6; Num. XIII.1, 4 and 27, and I Kings XXV.1.

[54] Gen. XXV.18, I Kings XV.7 and XXVII.8. See Hommel, *Ethnologie und Geographie des alten Orients*, pp. 555–7 and p. 555, n. 5.

[55] See Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 112–13 and 233–4.

name *Faran* alone, he writes, has come to mean a town across Arabia, right against the southern regions, adjoining the Saracens who wander in the desert; by contrast, the phrase *deserto Faran* identifies the region which scripture describes as the dwelling-place of Ismael, from whom are descended the Ismaelites and Saracens: 'Faran nunc oppidum trans Arabiam iunctum Sarracenis qui in solitudine uagi errant . . . In deserto autem Faran scriptura commemorat habitasse Ismahelem unde et Ismahelitae qui nunc Sarraceni'.[56] Elsewhere, Bede states explicitly that the Saracen desert is known as Paran.[57] Other references indicate that the desert of the Saracens is not, however, strictly confined to Paran, but occupies a more loosely defined area in or very near the Sinai peninsula. A Saracen desert, located *contra Orientem Rubri maris in Arabia*, is described as home to the Midianites in Bede's commentary on Habakkuk.[58] In his commentary on Genesis Bede quotes Jerome on the Saracens: 'in eremo . . . Qui uniuersas gentes quibus desertum ex latere iungitur incursant' ('in the waste . . . who invade all the peoples bordered by the desert'), and in the same work he accompanies Jerome's explanation of the biblical deserts of Kadesh and Shur in the north-west of Arabia and the Sinai peninsula with the phrase *Sarracenorum heremum*.[59]

Jerome is also an important source for Bede on the Christian significance of the Saracens and their homeland. Bede's commentary on Genesis, the fourth book of which was composed probably between AD 725 and 731,[60] contains a rare acknowledgement (already cited in the Introduction above) of the fact that on occasion Jerome might be somewhat out of date. Taking up the prophecy of the angel concerning Ismael, Bede begins with the words, 'Significat semen eius habitaturum in eremo, id est Saracenos uagos, incertisque sedibus. Qui uniuersas gentes quibus desertum ex latere iungitur incursant, et expugnantur ab omnibus.' So far this is excerpted

[56] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 278. See also his *In primam partem Samuhelis* [*CPL* 1346], CCSL 119, 231.

[57] Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 277: 'desertum Sarracenorum quod uocatur Faran'.

[58] Bede, *Commentarius in Habacuc* [*CPL* 1354], CCSL 119B, 392: 'Madianitarum autem gens ab uno filiorum Abraham ex Cethura, qui uocabatur Madian, originem duxit, et est in deserto Sarracenorum contra Orientem rubri maris in Arabia'.

[59] Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 232.

[60] See Jones, CCSL 118A, viii; on p. ix he also notes that Bede's *Commentarius in Genesim* is conventionally dated to 720.

directly, almost exactly verbatim, from Jerome's commentary on the same subject.[61] However, Bede then continues:

Sed haec antiquitus. Nunc autem in tantum manus eius contra omnes, et manus sunt omnium contra eum, ut Africam totam in longitudine sua ditione premant, sed et Asiae maximam partem, et Europae nonnullam omnibus exosi et contrarii teneant. Quod autem dicit, 'Figet tabernacula', morem gentis antiquum ostendit, quae in tabernaculis semper, non in domibus, habitare solebant.[62]

This passage is certainly the earliest surviving Anglo-Saxon description of the Arab conquests.[63] It is also a correction, or rather updating, of Jerome. Bede had probably gathered from the writings of Jerome that by the time the *Vita S. Hilarionis* was written, some Saracens at least were not nomads living in tents but inhabited desert towns such as Elusa. The *De locis sanctis* of Adomnán, which Bede certainly knew in its entirety, makes the more forceful point that, by the late seventh century, Saracens were occupying previously Christian cities such as Jerusalem and Damascus. In the passage above, the phrases *Sed haec antiquitus*, *nunc autem in tantum* and *morem gentis antiquum ostendit* test the links between the Saracens of Bede's day and their ancient ancestor Ismael: some things had changed, in that the Saracens no longer wandered in the desert and were no longer accustomed to dwell in tents rather than in buildings; some had not, in that the Saracens were fulfilling absolutely the words of the angel concerning Ismael's aggression. The seventh-century Arabs represented by Bede did not escape Jerome's earlier identification of the northern Arabian population as Ismaelite Saracens.[64]

[61] Jerome, *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 20–1.

[62] 'But this is how things used to be. Now, however, to such an extent is "his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him" that they oppress the whole length of Africa under their authority and, moreover, inimical and full of hate towards everybody, they hold most of Asia and a considerable part of Europe. As for why it says "will raise [his] tents", though, it indicates the ancient custom of the people, because they always used to live in tents rather than in houses' (Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 201).

[63] According to Jones: 'The reference to the Saracens . . . suggests a date after 721' (CCSL 118A, ix–x).

[64] Cf. Bonner: '[Bede] accepts the tradition and merely brings it up to date' ('Bede and Medieval Civilisation', p. 73). See also Southern's suggestion that Bede was the chief disseminator of the link between Saracens and Ismaelites (*Western Views of Islam*, p. 17), and the comments by Jones in his preface to Bede's *Commentarius in Genesim* (CCSL 118A, ix, n. 19). I would add that the tradition mentioned by Bonner consisted of writings

Although Jerome supplied the initial identification of Saracens with Ismaelites, Bede elaborated on the spiritual significance of the identification. In the fourth book of his commentary on Samuel, composed *c.* AD 716, Bede writes:

Narrat enim scriptura Ismahelem a quo genus duxere Sarraceni in deserto Faran habitasse illum uidelicet de quo dictum est: 'Eice ancillam et filium eius, non enim heres erit filius ancillae cum filio liberae'. Cuius uicinitatem turbulentam horrescens filius liberae, id est populus spiritali gratia renouatus, queritur dicens, 'Heu me quod incolatus meus prolongatus est, habitaui cum habitantibus Cedar', et cetera usque ad finem psalmi quae Sarracenos specialiter aduersarios ecclesiae cunctos generaliter describunt. Sed ut etiam de ancillae filiis, id est de huic saeculo seruientibus populis, Christus ad libertatem uocaret hosque secundum Isaac promissionis efficeret filios fugatus a superbis Iudaeis descendit in desertum Faran, hoc est humiliata gentilium corda suae gratia pietatis infudit.[65]

This is a dense and allusive passage. The immediate significance is that Ismael (ancestor of the Saracens) and his mother represent the non-Christians of the world. The first proponent of this allegory, minus the Saracens, was Paul in his letter to the Galatians,[66] and it was expounded further by Jerome and other biblical commentators.[67] In this version, Bede introduces David,

which, as well as informing later comments on Islam, were themselves current during the medieval period, and indeed served as the chief influence on medieval thought on the subject of Saracens and Ismaelites.

[65] 'For scripture proclaims [Hagar] to have led Ismael (from whom came the race of the Saracens) to the desert of Paran and to have lived there – namely, he of whom it is said: "Cast out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the servant shall not be heir with the son of the free." At whose troubling proximity the son of the free (that is, the population renewed in spiritual grace), shuddering, complains, saying: "Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Kedar", and the other [comments] until the end of the psalm which in general describe all the Saracens particularly as enemies of the church. But as, with regard to the son of the slavewoman (that is, the people serving this worldly age), Christ would call them too to liberty and would make them the sons of the promise according to Isaac, having fled the arrogant Jews he went down into the desert of Paran; that is, he filled the hearts of the gentiles with humility and the grace of his piety' (Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, CCSL 119, 231). The citation is from Ps. CXIX.5–7: 'Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est! Habitaui cum habitantibus Cedar. Multum incola fuit anima mea. Cum his qui oderunt pacem eram pacificus; cum loquebar illis, impugnabant me gratis.'

[66] Galat. IV.22–31.

[67] For example, see Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCSL 40, 1783–5, and Jerome, *In epistulas Paulinas*, PL 26, 391–3.

a type of both Christ and Christians, whose extended stay with the peace-hating inhabitants of Kedar is at first employed as a further allegory of the Christian community's distressing encounter with Ismael. This allusion to Ps. CXIX both gestures towards the Saracens again – Kedar was a son of Ismael – and recalls Bede's sentiment elsewhere that 'inter insidias hostium peregrinamur in terris'.[68]

In this case, the enemy is explicitly stated to be the Saracens. However, they are inextricably associated here as elsewhere with Ismael, son of the slavewoman, and the inhabitants of Kedar and Paran.[69] All these could also reasonably be glossed *huius saeculi* and *gentiles* in this context: they are in worldly servitude and can win manumission and spiritual irrigation through Christ, signified by David. The terms *gentiles* and *huius saeculi* occur more than once in other works by Bede to describe opposition to the church.[70] The desert near Egypt, as part of a spiritual landscape, represents the wanderings and barrenness of the earthly life in which the soul is a traveller.[71] Thus, Bede coordinates various associations and interpretations of Ismael, Kedar

[68] '. . . we are strangers on earth among the snares of the enemy' (*Homiliae* [*CPL* 1367], CCSL 122, 263). The idea of the Christian soul as a traveller away from God also derives ultimately from St Paul and is repeated by Bede throughout his exegetical and homiletic writings; see, for example, *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 210; *De templo* [*CPL* 1348], CCSL 119A, 185; *In Ezram et Neemiam* [*CPL* 1349], CCSL 119A, 268 (which cites Paul by name); *In Cantica Canticorum*, CCSL 119B, 216 and 260; and *Homiliae* [*CPL* 1367], CCSL 122, 275. The image was not confined to the exegesis of Bede; cf. Jerome, *Tractatus in psalmos*, CCSL 78, 256, and Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, CCSL 98, 1143.

[69] Bede interpreted *Faran* as 'onager siue frugifer aut ferocitas eorum' ('wild ass or fruitful or their ferocity'), the last of which seemed to him particularly appropriate 'propter incolas diros ac feroces Faran' (CCSL 119, 810).

[70] For example: 'Hoc effugii genus hodieque seruatur in ecclesia quando quis antiqui hostis insidiis uel huius saeculi laqueis circumfusus spei fideique suae munimine saluabitur' (*Expositio actuum apostolorum*, CCSL 121, 45) and 'Sed saepe contingit tot ac tantas inter se hostes ecclesiae, hereticos dico uel gentiles . . . Iudaei gentiles et heretici cum sint hostes ecclesiae cuncti alterutrum se singuli uerbi gladio feriunt' (*In primam partem Samuhelis*, CCSL 119, 117–18).

[71] Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, CCSL 119A, 267: 'Egressi enim sumus . . . de Aegyptia seruitute ut ueniremus ad terram repromissionis . . . Manebamus in tabernaculis et tentoriis per desertum longo tempore iter agentes donec ueniremus ad patriam cum in baptismo renuntiantes non solum satanae quasi regi Aegypti, id est tenebrarum, sed et omnibus pompis eius atque operibus huius saeculi uelut peregrinos nos in hoc mundo ac uiatores alterius autem uitae quam a domino speraremus ciues esse promisimus'. See, similarly, *De tabernaculo*, CCSL 119A, 85. The same theme is taken up in the Old English poem *The Seafarer* [Cameron A3.9], ed. Krapp and Dobbie, in which, as McPherson

and Paran on a literal and an allegorical level and with reference to both the Old and New Testaments. His explanation introduced into Latinate exegetical thought the idea that the Christian population endured among Saracens who were simultaneously the temporal and spiritual enemies of the church.

In primam partem Samuhelis was not so broadly disseminated during the early medieval period as other commentaries by Bede.[72] However, some of the identifications and interpretations brought together in the above passage can be found in a more diffuse form elsewhere in his writings. As noted above, Bede linked the desert of Paran with the Saracens at various points. He had also already explained in his commentary on Genesis that Ismael and his mother signified the Old Testament, schisms and heresies, and would rightly be discarded in favour of the new covenant of Christ as represented by Isaac.[73] Kedar, the son of Ismael, reappears in Bede's works several times. He refers to Ps. CXIX and Gen. XVI.12 on Kedar and Ismael respectively to help explain the meaning of the lines 'nigra sum sed formosa . . . sicut tabernacula Cedar, sicut pelles Salomonis' at Songs I.5.[74] His characteristic blend of biblical and contemporary information is again noticable:

Cedar Ismahelis fuit filius de quo dictum est: 'Manus eius contra omnes, et manus omnium contra eum.' Cuius praesagii ueritatem et exosa omnibus hodie Sarracenorum qui ab eo orti sunt natio probat et psalmista angoribus obsessus adfirmat cum ait: 'Habitaui cum habitantibus Cedar multum incola fuit anima mea cum his qui oderunt pacem eram pacificus'; neque enim Dauid aliquid odiorum ab Ismahelitis pertulisse legitur sed uolens exaggerare mala quae patiebatur a Saule

has indicated, the ocean also fulfils the function of the eremitic desert ('The Sea a Desert', pp. 116–17). On medieval western perceptions of the Saracen desert, Rotter concludes, 'Aus der Wüste kommt nicht Gutes; die Sarazenen personifizieren diesen Befund' (p. 113). The desert could also be a place in which to seek spiritual enlightenment. This idea was influential in the early Anglo-Saxon period but over time saintliness seems to have become associated with a cenobitic lifestyle. See Clayton, 'Hermits', especially pp. 147–51 and 167. See also Rollinson, 'The Influence of Christian Doctrine', pp. 280–1.

[72] Bede's commentary on the book of Samuel is known in only eight manuscripts, compared with over 950 manuscripts throughout Europe representing Bede's other exegetical works, 'perhaps because his extreme use of the allegorical method in this commentary proved distasteful' (Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, p. 299).

[73] Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 209 and 239–42.

[74] Songs I.5: 'I am dark but beautiful . . . like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon'.

uel ceteris aduersariis eius se gentis improbitate uexari questus est quae cum nullo hominum aliquando pacem habere curabat. At contra Salomon et nomine erat et uita pacificus.[75]

In Cantica canticorum is of uncertain date. Since it appears in the list of books at the end of *Historia ecclesiastica*, it can be assumed to have been composed before 731.[76] Its pointed hostility towards the Saracens and emphasis on their aggressive nature could be seen as another reason to group it tentatively with those works written by Bede after the year 711 and the Arab invasion of Spain.[77] The commentary on the phrase *nigra sum sed formosa* continues, and Bede establishes that Kedar and its tents, and, by implication, the Saracens, signify literally the dark side of the church:

Et notandum quod Cedar ipso iam nomine quod tenebras sonat uel peruersos homines uel immundos spiritus insinuat sicut Salomon quoque qui interpretatur pacificus etiam mysterio nominis ipsum indicat . . . Quidam hanc sententiam ita legentes: 'Nigra sum et formosa', dicunt quod ecclesia nigra sit in carnalibus suis uel falsis fratribus 'sicut tabernacula Cedar' formosa autem in spiritalibus 'sicut pelles Salomonis'.[78]

[75] 'Kedar was a son of Ismael, of whom it is said: "his hand shall be against all, and the hands of all against him", the truth of which presentiment is demonstrated today by the nation of the Saracens, hateful towards all, which sprang from him; and is asserted by the psalmist, beset by troubles, when he says: "I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Kedar; my soul hath long been a sojourner; with them that hate peace I was peaceable". Nor do we read that David suffered any hatred from the Ismaelites, but, wishing to magnify the ills he endured at the hands of Saul or other of his enemies, he bemoaned himself as harassed by the wickedness of a people that cared never a whit to have peace with anyone. But Solomon was peaceful both in name and life' (Bede, *In Cantica Canticorum*, CCSL 119B, 195). This description of the Saracens or inhabitants of Kedar, 'cum nullo hominum aliquando pacem habere curabat', recalls in tone if not its exact wording that of the Canterbury commentator, 'numquam cum omnibus pacem habentes sed semper contra aliquos certantes'. It is possible that both Bede and the Canterbury commentator also had Ps. CIX in mind when they wrote about the Saracen disregard for peace.

[76] In the preface to CCSL 119B, Hurst estimates it perhaps to have been composed in 720–30.

[77] Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede's Europe', p. 78. On his argument, see below, p. 137.

[78] 'And it is to be noted that "Kedar", now, by that very name, since it means "shadows", arrives at the meaning of either perverse men or unclean spirits, just as "Solomon" too, which is interpreted "peaceful", even signals the same thing by the mystery of the name . . . Some, reading this verse thus: "I am dark and beautiful", say that the church is as black in its worldly or false brethren "as the tents of Kedar", but beautiful in the spiritual "as the curtains of Solomon"' (*In Cantica Canticorum*, CCSL 119B, 195–6).

The interpretation of *Cedar* as 'shadows' comes from Jerome, but was used by other exegetes whose works were also known to Bede.[79] He extends the interpretation to signify wickedness, and contrasts it with *Salomon*, meaning 'peaceful'.[80] The idea is repeated in *De tabernaculo*, probably written in AD 720–5, where Bede explains the inhabitants of Kedar as 'his qui in tenebris errorum ac scelerum uersantur quod uocabulum Cedar sonat'.[81] Both etymologically and allegorically, the meaning of *Cedar* is unfavourably compared with that of the true Christian, and Kedar, son of Ismael, emerges in opposition to the church just as the Saracens and Ismael did in Bede's commentary on Samuel cited above.

Throughout Bede's exegetical works, the Saracens occupy the same ideological space as the erring, the worldly and the gentiles in opposition to the spiritual Christian fraternity; in short, as enemies of his church they enjoy the company of Jews, Philistines, heretics and the devil.[82] Following Jerome, Bede too describes them as idolaters, explaining: 'sidus Remphan, id est facturae uestrae . . . Significat autem Luciferum, cuius cultu Sarracenorum gens ob honorem Veneris erat mancipata'.[83] Rotter suggests that if a Christian reader here associated Lucifer with the devil he might have

[79] Cf. Jerome on Ps. 119 (*Tractatus in psalmos*, CCSL 78, 256): 'Cedar in lingua nostra interpretatur tenebrae . . . Diu fui in tenebris, diu uixi in tenebris, diu fui in corpore mortis huius'. See also Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, CCSL 150, 1783–4, and Gregory, *Homiliae ii in Canticum Canticorum*, CCSL 144, 36.

[80] Cf. Jerome: 'Salomon pacificus siue pacatus erit' and 'Salomon pacificus' (*LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 138 and 148).

[81] '. . . they who turn to the shadows of error and wickedness, which is what the word "Kedar" signifies' (CCSL 119A, 137). On the dating of the *De tabernaculo*, see Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Historia ecclesiastica*, p. cl.

[82] For example, describing the community of the faithful: 'renuntiantes non solum satanae . . . sed et omnibus pompis eius atque operibus huius saeculi' (Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, CCSL 119A, 267); also 'de abysso, id est de cordibus impiorum, diabolus et hereticorum trahens agmina secum pugnare coepit aduersus ecclesiam Christi' (*In primam partem Samuhelis*, CCSL 119, 93) and, on the Philistines: 'Et usque hodie spiritus immundi aduersus ecclesiam certantes stant superbo tumore elati . . . Philisthiim namque peruersos non minus homines quam angelos figurant uno eidemque diaboli regno militantes' (*In primam partem Samuhelis*, CCSL 119, 146).

[83] '. . . the star Remphan, that is, your created [idols] . . . means, then, Lucifer, to whose cult the people of the Saracens were attached on account of their worship of Venus' (Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, CCSL 121, 36). He is expanding upon the apostle Stephen's speech at Acts VII.43.

concluded that the Saracens worshipped Satan.[84] The connection is tenuous but interesting. Bede himself writes that the name of the king of Damascus is Aretas (described in the Old Testament as a king of the Arabs).[85] He then glosses *Damascus* as *sanguinem bibens* and *Aretas* as *descensio*, and explains that the city represents the adversities of this world, while the king represents the devil.[86] The connection between Aretas and the Saracen deity of Lucifer is weak. However, in that the Saracens inhabit Damascus and are enemies of the church, and Aretas, representing the devil, rules Damascus, there exists a tentative association between the Saracens and the devil on an allegorical level.

This association is not found in the works of Jerome, except insofar as a medieval reader might have misinterpreted 'Lucifer' as Satan rather than the evening star. Rotter acknowledges that an older, biblical image of 'pagan Arabia' might have influenced the shaping of a later image of 'pagan Saracens' but he suggests that Bede introduced something quite new into medieval thought with the possibility of Saracens as devil-worshippers.[87] Bede's allegorisation of the Arab king Aretas as the devil certainly appears to be original,[88] as would be the possibility of a devil-king having Saracen subjects, had Bede left any substantial evidence to connect the two.[89] However, concerning the link between the Saracens and Lucifer as, possibly, the devil, all the information given by Bede is already contained in

[84] See Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 248–9. [85] II Macc. V.8.

[86] Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, CCSL 121, 45, in which he allegorises the descent of Saul in a basket from the walls of Damascus as follows: 'Murus enim Damasci, quae sanguinem bibens interpretatur, aduersitas saeculi est, rex Areta, qui interpretatur descensio, diabolus intellegitur, sporta, quae iuncis palmisque solet confici, fidei speique coniunctionem designat'. Jerome also mentions the king in the phrase *Damascus (cui imperabat Areta)* (*In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 184).

[87] Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 246–8. He simultaneously concedes that only by error or lack of education could a medieval reader have assumed from Bede's writings that the Saracens were devil-worshippers.

[88] However, even this allegory may be implicit in Jerome. His *LHNom*. contains the glosses *descensio* and *descendens* for *Areta* and *Arad* and also a gloss *defluens* for *diabolus*; CCSL 72, 135. One might speculate that Bede conflated the similar meanings of *descendo* and *defluo* to associate *Areta* with *diabolus*. This cannot be proven, but given Bede's reliance on Jerome's glosses as demonstrated above, it is an attractive theory.

[89] Aretas was king of Damascus, which, according to Bede's *Nomina regionum* (CCSL 121, 71) and his version of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* (CCSL 175, 220), was ruled by a Saracen king in the late seventh century. Aretas was also known as a king of Arabia

Jerome's commentaries. Rotter briefly notes one of Jerome's glosses of the name 'Rafam' and the description in the *Vita S. Hilarionis* of the Saracens of Elusa and their stone-cult of Venus, but he does not appear to consider Jerome as a source for Bede on the meaning of 'Aretas' or 'Damascus' or even on the more general subject of Saracen Venus-worship.[90] Yet, in a commentary on the same passage of Amos to which Stephen and Bede refer, Jerome had already written that *sidus dei uestri* and *facturae uestrae* referred to Lucifer in precisely the context of the Saracen adoration of the star.[91] Jerome had also identified Lucifer with Venus in the *Vita S. Hilarionis*, and had elsewhere glossed the Hebrew name of the star (*Rafam*, *Refan*) as *factura nostra* and *facturae nostrae*,[92] the name of the city (*Damascus*) as *sanguinem bibens*[93] and the name of the king (*Areta*) as *descensio*.[94] The styling of Aretas as king of Damascus is also found in Jerome.[95] Although these elements are scattered among Jerome's works, Bede was accustomed to conflate data from different books and authors.[96] It might also be noted that Bede had little understanding of Hebrew and his definitions of the names *Remphan* and *Aretas* imitate Jerome's very similar glosses.[97] Further, although Bede clearly rewrote his source material, there remains a recognisable echo of the

(II Macc. V.8). However, Bede, following Adomnán, names the Saracen king Mauuias, not Aretas, and it seems unlikely that he meant to identify the Saracens as Arabs.

[90] Rotter (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, pp. 247–8 and n. 89) suggests that Bede followed Pliny in identifying Venus with Lucifer, and borrowed only Jerome's gloss of *Rafam* as 'facturae nostrae uel laxitati eorum' (*LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 148). 'Der Rest ist demnach einwandfrei Bedas Zutat' (*Abendland und Sarazenen*, p. 248).

[91] Jerome, *In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76, 296.

[92] The phrase appears slightly differently elsewhere: 'Refan, factura nostra, uel reliquies nostra' (*LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 123).

[93] Jerome, *LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 110: 'Damascus sanguinem bibens uel propinans'; see CCSL 72, 64 and 145 for further similar definitions.

[94] Jerome, *LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 154: 'Areta stupor uel descensio'. Note also the similar gloss of *Arad* or *Arrad* in the same work: *descendens* (p. 62), *descendi* and 'suscitauit descendens uel suscitauit descensionem' (p. 78) and 'consurrectio descensionis aut testimonium descendens' (p. 98).

[95] Jerome, *In Isaiam*, CCSL 73, 184.

[96] For example, Orosius with Isidore, or Jerome with Adomnán, on the subjects of Arabia and the city of Damascus respectively; see above, pp. 125 and 135, n. 89.

[97] See Sutcliffe, 'Bede's Knowledge of Hebrew', pp. 303–6, and Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, pp. 233–4.

wording employed by Jerome in his *Vita Hilarionis*.[98] It seems very likely that Jerome's writings inspired Bede's account of Venus as the Saracen deity.

Wallace-Hadrill proposes that Bede's perception of the Saracens and their religion changed during the early eighth century. He bases this argument on what he sees as a shift from a 'neutral' view in Bede's early work *De locis sanctis* (composed between 702 and 709) to the later comments on Saracen Venus-worship, along with other hostile references.[99] Wallace-Hadrill suggests that Bede's initial detachment towards the Saracens changed to hostility as a result of the Arab invasion of Spain and raids into Aquitaine.[100] This is a reasonable deduction, but any accurate reflection in his writings of an alteration in Bede's attitude towards the Saracens over time is compromised by the fact that he cited his sources almost verbatim on the topic. The only change which Bede made to Adomnán's account of the Saracens in the Holy Land was to add the phrase *qui nostra aetate fuit* to his description of the caliph, which, given the negative connotations of similar phrases elsewhere in the works of Bede, is not an expression of neutrality.[101] It is also hard to see how Bede could feel any detachment towards Islam, given that he must have read a number of hostile comments on the Saracens by Jerome and other authorities well before undertaking the composition of his *De locis sanctis* at the beginning of the eighth century and the *De temporum ratione* in about 725.[102]

Bede's works are significant in the history of English (and western) perceptions of Islam because of his reworking and updating of Jerome's earlier comments. Merely in terms of making exegetical information on the subject of the Saracens available to a yet wider audience, Bede reproduced much of what Jerome had already written. More interestingly for the role and significance of the Saracens in Christian history, Bede identified the Muslims of his own day with the Ismaelites of the Old Testament, using Jerome's descriptions of the fourth-century Arab nomads as a model. A

[98] Jerome has 'Colunt autem illam [*sc.* Venus] ob Luciferum, cuius cultui Saracenorum natio dedita est' (*Vita Hilarionis*, PL 23, 41), while Bede reverses the relationship between Venus and Lucifer in very similar words: 'Significat autem Luciferum, cuius cultu Sarracenorum gens ob honorem Veneris erat mancipata' (*Expositio actuum apostolorum*, CCSL 121, 36).

[99] Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede's Europe', pp. 77–8.

[100] 'Bede's Europe', pp. 78–9 and 83.

[101] See above, nn. 82 and 86.

[102] Jones, CCSL 123B, 241; Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, p. 4.

certain ambiguity in his phrasing meant that his comments, like Jerome's, suggested that the Bible itself taught that the Saracens were Ismaelites.[103] Bede's exegetical treatment of the Saracens was not simply a typological interpretation which presented the actions of the Ismaelites as a historical forerunner of the Muslim conquests. His descriptions dealt with the unalterable spiritual nature of Ismael and its continuing manifestation in the people of the Saracens. Multiple orders of meaning were involved. On one level, *Saraceni* was a word signifying a contemporary people, the Saracens, and *Ismaelitae* was a word indicating an Arabian tribe mentioned in the Old Testament. Examples of each used without reference to the other can be found in the works of both Jerome and Bede. Etymology indicated a connection between the names *Saraceni* and *Sara*, and between *Ismael* and *Ismaelitae*. The story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar and Ismael provided an ancient historical link between these names which touched on a sensitive area in Christian analyses of the Old Testament and definitions of self. According to the theory whereby the Ismaelites were ashamed of their birth and the name *Saraceni* was derived from *Sara*, the Ismaelites were thought to have altered their name to *Saraceni*. As a contemporary phenomenon, the *Saraceni* had conquered Christian lands and caused a rupture in the smooth progress of Christian history. On an allegorical level, the Ismaelites of the Old Testament signified all those who opposed the church and were cast out into the desert, the inimical wanderers of a dark spiritual wasteland. Over centuries of Christian thought, these various elements were linked together to create a well-defined and religiously inspired image of the Saracens. Bede's chief contribution to the history of western perceptions of Islam was to present the Muslim conquerors of the seventh century as a living verse of the Old Testament. The Jews were the only other potential candidates for such an incarnation of the spirit of Ismael. They had also for some time been consigned to a spiritual space in opposition to Christianity, but in the eighth century their continuing existence did not command the same alarmed attention as the Saracen military success.

The identification of Saracens as Ismaelites and of Muslims as Saracens were successive stages in a long tradition according to which *Saraceni*,

[103] For example: 'In deserto autem Faran scriptura commemorat habitasse Ismahelem unde et Ismahelitae qui nunc Sarraceni' (Bede, *Nomina locorum*, CCSL 119, 278) and 'Narrat enim scriptura Ismahelem a quo genus duxere Sarraceni in deserto Faran habitasse' (Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, CCSL 119, 231).

however they manifested themselves, could be assimilated within the terms of Christian history. In the West, such assimilation began as an abstract, highly literate process, involving detailed analysis of the Bible. The Muslims were realised as Ismaelites in a far more concrete manner in an eastern work known as the *Apocalypse* of pseudo-Methodius. The propagation throughout the West of texts which drew on this eastern apocalypse disseminated further ideas about the Saracens which extended, but did not contradict, the notions described above. The Mesopotamian author of the work referred to the Muslims throughout as 'sons of Ismael' and thus located them within exactly the Old Testament context that had already become widely familiar in the West. It is to the Latin recensions of this text which were known in Anglo-Saxon England that we now turn.

7

Pseudo-Methodius and the sons of Ismael

Three manuscripts from the end of the Anglo-Saxon period contain versions of the work known as the *Reuelationes* of pseudo-Methodius. Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 165, 11r–20v, contains a copy of an early and lengthy recension.[1] Another, later recension, constituting an abbreviation of the earlier text, is represented in London, British Library, Royal 5.F.xviii, 29v–32v.[2] A recent study of Salisbury manuscripts indicates that the folios of Royal 5.F.xviii which contain *Reuel.2* date from the late eleventh century and were copied in Salisbury at about the same time as the copy of *Reuel.1* contained in Salisbury 165.[3] Another example of *Reuel.2* known in

[1] The text of the *Reuelationes* contained in the Salisbury manuscript is referred to below as Salisbury 165; the first recension of the Latin *Reuelationes*, of which it is an example, is referred to generally as *Reuel.1* or 'the first Latin recension'. Salisbury 165 is not collated in any edition. However, it is clearly an example of the first recension of the Latin text as edited by Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte*, pp. 59–96. In his introduction, Sackur notes the existence of many such corrupt later copies of the first recension of the *Reuelationes*; he bases his edition on early manuscripts and one fifteenth-century edition (pp. 57–8). Even these display faulty Latin, which remains uncorrected in Sackur's edition (p. 59). Webber indicates that the scribe who copied Salisbury 165 worked in Salisbury in 'Group I', whose activities Webber dates to the end of the eleventh century (*Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury*, pp. 15–16 and 153, n. 48 (scribe xii, Group I copied the relevant folios). Twomey ('Ps Methodius: Revelationes', p. 33) erroneously describes Salisbury 165 as an example of the second recension.

[2] Referred to below as Royal 5.F.xviii; the recension of which it is an example is referred to as *Reuel.2* or 'the second Latin recension'. Readings from this manuscript are collated in the edition of the second recension of the *Reuelationes* by Prinz, 'Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung', pp. 6–17.

[3] Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury*, pp. 13 and 159, n. 5 (scribe ii from Group I copied the relevant folios).

Anglo-Saxon England is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 163 (Bodley 163). The text is contained in part of the manuscript which probably dates from the late eleventh century.[4]

The ultimate source of the *Reuelationes* was composed in Syriac in the seventh century, and purported to be an account by an early fourth-century bishop, Methodius of Olympus, of the ages of the world and the succession of earthly kingdoms up until the Day of Judgement. The Syriac original was in fact most probably composed in northern Mesopotamia more than three hundred years later, during the second half of the seventh century, and its author is therefore referred to as pseudo-Methodius.[5] The *Apocalypse of pseudo-Methodius*, as his work is often known, proved popular and gave rise to multiple Greek, Latin and vernacular translations and revisions. In the present discussion, the phrase 'the pseudo-Methodian tradition' embraces the original Syriac apocalypse along with all subsequent derivations. Of these the various medieval Latin versions are collectively termed the *Reuelationes*. The original source is referred to below as the Syriac *Apocalypse* and its earliest translation into Greek as the Greek *Apocalypse*.

Pseudo-Methodius modified an established genre in order to explain the new situation facing Christian Mesopotamia in the seventh century. He combined events and prophesies described in the Old Testament with his own account of the Islamic conquests in order to explain the Muslim successes as the will of a Christian God, assert the invincibility of the Byzantine empire and show that world history was moving rapidly towards

[4] See Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists', pp. 149–50, and d'Evelyn, 'The Middle English Metrical Version', p. 192; she collates variants from Bodley 163 in her edition of *Reuel.2*. Throughout the present discussion, *Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2* are cited according to the editions by Sackur (first recension) and Prinz (second recension) as described above in notes 1 and 2, except in the discussion of the *Old English Notes on Genesis* below, where d'Evelyn's readings from Bodley 163 are also considered.

[5] Reinink, 'Ismael, der Wildesel in der Wüste', p. 344. The Syriac text is represented in several manuscripts and is edited by Reinink in *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*. Accounts of the origins and contents of the Syriac *Apocalypse* of pseudo-Methodius may also be found in Ogle, 'Petrus Comestor', pp. 318–19; Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 13–33; and Palmer, ed., *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, pp. 222–6; the latter also contains a brief annotated bibliography of other recent editions and studies, pp. 227–9. The exact date of composition of the Syriac *Apocalypse* is debated; see Martinez, 'The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac', pp. 340–1, n. 9, for a summary of scholarship prior to Reinink's edition.

the triumph of the Christian kingdom of heaven.[6] He concluded with a description of a future Byzantine Christian ruler handing over earthly rule to God, followed by the confounding of the Antichrist and the coming of the Son of Man in glory. The optimistic outlook of the Syriac *Apocalypse* made it very popular among eastern Christians who had recently come under Muslim rule and it was quickly translated into other languages, including Greek.[7] The Greek *Apocalypse* influenced subsequent Byzantine apocalyptic writing and the medieval Alexander legend.[8] In the eighth century the Greek translation was translated into Latin, purportedly by one *Petrus monachus*, a man known only through a seldom-transmitted preface of questionable authenticity. The result was *Reuel.1* (of which Salisbury 165 is an example). Altered, in parts elaborated, but in general very much abbreviated by subsequent redactors, the *Reuelationes* continued to be widely copied and to exert an influence on various medieval writings.[9] *Reuel.2* (of which the English examples are Royal 5.F.xviii and Bodley 163) represents the first major revision of the primary Latin text. Thus the pseudo-Methodian tradition had already had a significant effect on eastern and western Christian perceptions of the Muslims before *Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2* were copied in England in the late eleventh century.

The pseudo-Methodian tradition conveyed to its audience the idea that, according to the pattern of Christian history, the Byzantine empire (*Romanorum imperium*) would not be overcome before the end of the world.[10]

[6] '. . . the author of [the Syriac *Apocalypse*] was convinced that he could give a coherent explanation for the Muslim oppression without major alterations in the traditional view. But in order to do that, he had to rework the whole tradition about the kingdoms and restate it afresh . . . Doubtless, the main tool . . . was the Scripture' (Martinez, 'The Apocalyptic Genre', p. 344); see also pp. 339–40 and 351–2.

[7] For a full account of the various Greek recensions of the text, see Lolos, *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodius* (first and second recensions) and *Die dritte und vierte Redaktion des Ps.-Methodius* (third and fourth recensions).

[8] Twomey, 'Pseudo-Methodius', p. 33; Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 13–14; and Reinink, 'Ismael, der Wildesel', p. 336.

[9] On the diffusion and influence of the pseudo-Methodian tradition in medieval England, see d'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', pp. 144–51.

[10] The terms *Romanorum imperium* or *regnum Romanorum* are used in the *Reuel.1* to refer to the Byzantine Greek empire; see, for example, *Reuel.1*, p. 80 (where *filii Hismahel* appear as the enemies of this Christian realm). The same phrase appears in the *Reuel.2*; see p. 14, where *rex christianorum et Romanorum* has the alternative reading *rex Gregorum* [*sic*] *siue Romanorum*. However, given the general shift in emphasis from East to West in the

Judging by the lengthy and bitter account of the 'sons of Ismael' in the Syriac *Apocalypse*, another purpose was to catalogue and condemn the recent upheavals of the Islamic conquests and rationalise them as part of some kind of optimistic eschatological vision.[11] All the texts discussed below retain the basic structure of the Syriac *Apocalypse*, which falls into two parts. The first is a 'historical' section which describes the succession of earthly kingdoms from the Fall up until the lifetime of Methodius. The second section consists of 'prophetic' writing which deals with the future domination of the earth by the sons of Ismael, their defeat in battle at the hands of the Christian emperor and his armies, the devastation wrought by the unclean peoples of the north, their defeat, the coming of the Antichrist and the end of the world. The fictional break between the past and the supposedly prophesied future is indicated by a change of tense during a description of events in the fourth century. This was in order to make it appear as though the division between history and prophesy occurred during the lifetime of Bishop Methodius, to whom the work was attributed. The actual division, however, corresponds with events some time after the Muslim conquests of the early seventh century, when the real author of the Syriac *Apocalypse* lived and wrote.[12]

The first Greek translation remained close to the original Syriac, including passages and references which were aimed at a specifically Mesopotamian audience; similarly, the primary Latin translation, referred to here as *Reuel.1*, is largely faithful to its Greek original. Nevertheless, various omissions and additions occurred during the transmission of the material, not to mention occasional confusions; many copies of the *Reuelationes* are written in ungrammatical Latin.[13] Some of the most significant changes in the Latin versions of the apocalypse seem to have occurred between the first and subsequent

second recension, it is possible that *imperium Romanorum* was understood by many and perhaps most western readers to refer to the Christian world centred on Rome: see *Reuel.2*, p. 11, where the phrases *regnum Romanorum* and *Romanum imperium* appear several times in the same context as that in which they were used in the first recension, and compare with the later, added phrase *Italia . . . parte intacta erit . . . Romana gentes* [*sic*] *non capietur* (*Reuel.2*, p. 12).

[11] Martinez provides a useful characterisation of Syriac apocalyptic writings ('The Apocalyptic Genre', pp. 339–40) and stresses their interest in past and present history.

[12] Prinz, 'Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung', pp. 1–2.

[13] Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 52–60, and Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte*, pp. 55–6.

Latin recensions; *Reuel.2* is characterised by extensive alterations and telescoping of events to suit the political and historical situation of the day. One such change was the addition of the term *Saraceni* to refer to the Muslim conquerors alongside the original *filii Ismahel* or *Ismahelitae*. The pseudo-Methodian tradition lent itself very well to this kind of emendation. Its central premise, that the true Christian empire would never fall and that Muslim triumph was a temporary and purifying chastisement to test the faithful before the (imminent) arrival of the kingdom of heaven, seems to have possessed a remarkably flexible and enduring appeal for generations of Christians confronting Muslim success. The names by which the Muslims were known in the various recensions indicate as much. By the beginning of the eighth century, the Ismaelites were referred to as the familiar Saracens, and in later redactions the same oppressors were renamed *Turci*. Almost a thousand years after the original Syriac apocalypse had been composed, excerpts from the *Reuelationes* were distributed among the defenders of Vienna to strengthen their resolve against the Muslim enemy during the second Turkish siege of the city.[14]

THE LATIN *REUELATIONES*

The present discussion is concerned with the particular statements about Muslim Arabs which the Latin *Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2* brought to Anglo-Saxon readers, and with how this information compared with accounts of the Saracens already known. For this reason, a discussion of the wider influence of the pseudo-Methodian tradition upon other medieval writings which do not mention the Muslims, including those known to or composed by Anglo-Saxon authors, has no place here; however, it should be noted that this wider influence did also exist, and in particular that the Greek *Apocalypse* as well as the various Latin *Reuelationes* was an important influence upon later Latin and vernacular literature.[15] The present discussion, however, focuses upon the transmission of *Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2* as represented by the texts contained in Salisbury 165, Royal 5.F.xviii and Bodley 163 (which agrees largely with Prinz's edition of *Reuel.2*).

[14] See Prinz, 'Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung', p. 2, and Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte*, pp. 3–9.

[15] See, for example, Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 151–225; Reinink, 'Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser'; and Verhelst, 'La préhistoire des conceptions d'Adson'.

These manuscripts contain examples of the first two of four distinct recensions of the Latin *Reuelationes*. These four recensions were identified by D. Verhelst who, with M. Laureys, has also produced an extensive, though not comprehensive list of the manuscripts which contain them, categorised by their incipits; it does not list Salisbury 165 and Bodley 163.[16] Critical editions of the first and second recensions have, as mentioned above, been produced by Sackur and Prinz. Examples of the first recension are found in manuscripts dating from the turn of the seventh to the eighth century, and the second recension seems to have been produced some time during the eighth century. Prinz has showed that *Reuel.2* is an altered and abbreviated form of *Reuel.1*. He illustrates the relationship between the two by displaying variants from the first recension as edited by Sackur and indicating many passages in which the readings of both recensions concur.[17] The text on which Prinz bases his edition of the second recension is taken from a comparatively early eighth- or ninth-century continental manuscript, with variants drawn from a group of four later manuscripts.[18] Two of these later four also appear in a separate list by M. W. Twomey of four manuscripts containing *Reuelationes* which might have been copied in England before 1100.[19] The other two manuscripts on Twomey's list are Salisbury 165 and Bodley 163. These are not mentioned by Prinz. Twomey

[16] Laureys and Verhelst, 'Pseudo-Methodius, *Reuelationes*: Textgeschichte und kritische Edition'.

[17] Prinz, 'Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung', p. 5.

[18] The early manuscript is Zurich, Zentralbibliothek C 65, 80v–88v (s. viii, St Gall). The group of four manuscripts comprises: St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek Nr. 569, pp. 252–7 (s. ix/x, of uncertain provenance); Vienna, Nationalbibliothek 492, 3v–8v (s. x, written in south-west Germany); Royal 5.F.xviii; and Oxford, St John's College 128. See Prinz, 'Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung', pp. 4–5.

[19] The four manuscripts containing the *Reuelationes* which, according to Twomey ('Ps Methodius: Revelations', p. 33), may have been copied in Anglo-Saxon England are: Royal 5.F.xviii [Gneuss 463.5], which is collated in Prinz's edition; Oxford, St John's College 128, also collated by Prinz; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 163 [Gneuss 555], not listed by Laureys and Verhelst in 'Textgeschichte und kritische Edition' and not collated by Prinz and, finally, Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 165 [Gneuss 749], not listed by Laureys and Verhelst and not collated by Prinz. By consensus, Salisbury 165 is thought definitely to have originated from England before 1100. The dates or provenances of the other three manuscripts have been debated but Bodley 163 and Royal 5.F.xviii almost certainly emerged from English scriptoria before the end of the Anglo-Saxon period; see above, nn. 3 and 4.

presents them both as further examples of manuscripts containing examples of *Reuel.2*.

However, a comparison of the text of Salisbury 165 with the two editions cited above shows clearly that the Salisbury *Reuelationes* contains a text which corresponds closely with *Reuel.1*, the 'primary Latin translation' edited by Sackur, and not the later *Reuel.2* as edited by Prinz. The wording of Salisbury 165 is very similar to that of Sackur's edition of the first recension (where it is not identical); in terms of structure and completeness, too, Salisbury 165 corresponds exactly with the text of the first Latin recension, while both differ greatly (and in the same ways) from the second recension. It would therefore appear acceptable when discussing the text of Salisbury 165 to cite the text of *Reuel.1* from Sackur's edition. At the same time, the other manuscripts listed by Twomey indicate that examples of *Reuel.2* were also known in England from at least shortly after 1100, and quite possibly from before that date. Further evidence for Anglo-Saxon knowledge of the second recension of the *Reuelationes* will be discussed below.

In both the historical and the prophetic part of the Syriac *Apocalypse*, and in both recensions of the *Reuelationes* described above, the 'sons of Ismael' play a prominent part. Their arrival has disastrous consequences for the adherents of the true faith whom they encounter and nefariously oppress; in each case, however, God ultimately delivers his chosen people from their oppression.[20] The representation of these *filii Ismahel* or *Ismahelitae* in *Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2* forms the main subject of the present discussion. Their first appearance occurs in a retelling of the biblical story of Gideon and his defeat of the Midianites and Ismaelites, enemies of the Israelites.[21] They later reappear in the prophetic section of the apocalypse, where they are described at far greater length and evidently represent the Muslim Arabs who were to be overcome in battle by the empire of the Byzantines or Romans, depending upon the reader's interpretation of the phrase *imperium Romanorum*. The prolix accounts of the Ismaelites in *Reuel.1* are too long to be cited in full. However, characteristic passages deserve to be compared with some accounts of the Saracens already known in Anglo-Saxon England. The pseudo-Methodian tradition of the Ismaelites coincides with

[20] See Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 36–51 (English translation of the Syriac), and Palmer, ed., *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, pp. 230–42 (for a closer English translation of only that section of the apocalypse which describes the Islamic conquests).

[21] Judg. VI–VIII.

western, Latin statements concerning the Saracens in several interesting respects.

THE ISMAELITE CONNECTION

The most obvious is the explanation of the Arabs or Muslims as Ismaelites. In Jerome's writings and, consequently, in many subsequent western works on the Saracens, the description of Ismael in Genesis provided the starting point for an account of the Arabs or Muslims, and passages of Old Testament prophecy were explained in terms of Saracen or Ismaelite activity. In *Reuel.1*, too, considerable importance was attributed to the supposed Muslim identity with the Ismaelites and with the citation of biblical passages as forecasts of Muslim activity.[22] This scriptural characterisation of the Arabs or Muslims as Ismaelites is perhaps the most important similarity between the account by pseudo-Methodius and those by authors known in Anglo-Saxon England, but there are others. *Reuel.1* stresses the significance of the name *onager* attributed to Ismael by God and defines it in terms of the desert home and aggression of the Ismaelites.[23] Jerome had already explained a meaning of *onager* which involved the ferocity of the people, but an Anglo-Saxon who encountered the first recension of the *Reuelationes* would not really have needed his explanation. The account in *Reuel.1* agreed with older descriptions of the aggressive nature of the Ismaelites, which, along with their desert origins, seems to be their chief defining feature according to most accounts.

Like earlier western writings, *Reuel.1* does not refer to the Muslim conquerors as Arabs. However, nor does it employ the term *Saraceni*, but refers consistently to the *filii Ismahel* or *Ismahelitae*. Nevertheless, it is likely that the medieval reader would have classed these Ismaelites as Saracens. First, their actions as described in *Reuel.1* were recognisable to readers with some knowledge of current affairs as those of the Muslim conquerors already known as Saracens in the West. Secondly, by the time *Reuel.1* reached Anglo-Saxon England, the literary relationship between Ismaelites and Saracens was well-enough established for Latinate readers readily to identify the pseudo-Methodian sons of Ismael as Saracens. The shorter account in

[22] On western exegetical accounts of the Saracens as Ismaelites, see above, chs. 5 and 6. The first recension of the *Reuelationes* cites Ezekiel, for example: 'quod dictum est per Ezechielem prophetam' (*Reuel.1*, p. 80).

[23] *Reuel.1*, p. 85; Salisbury 165, 17r.

Reuel.2 indicates that the eventual identification of one with the other was inevitable. The term *Saraceni* in the second recension refers unambiguously to the sons of Ismael and the two names are sometimes used together as synonyms: *Sarracini, filii Ismahel*. Elsewhere in *Reuel.2*, Saracens are simply mentioned in apposition with the Ismaelites.[24] In two cases, the phrase *manus Sarracinorum* appears independently of any mention of Ismael or the Ismaelites.[25] Clearly, the terms were interchangeable. The addition of the name *Saraceni* to *Reuel.2* may well have been prompted by the tradition of Jerome's, Bede's and others' remarks on the common identity of Saracens and Ismaelites.[26] However, this identification is not explained in *Reuel.2* in terms of the scholarly Christian etymology of *Saraceni* broadcast by Jerome and Bede and discussed above.[27]

The first example of the word *Saraceni* in *Reuel.2* is immediately followed by the list of places which would be consumed by battle, perish by the sword and become wastelands in the Saracen conquest: these include *Spania*, *Gallia*, *Iermania*, *Aquitania* and the islands of the sea. Italy, by contrast, would be partly conquered and partly remain whole.[28] In conjunction with the name 'Saracen', these regions are clearly intended to evoke Muslim raids in Europe and the conquest of Spain. The redactor revised the list of regions overrun by the Saracens so that *Reuel.2* would describe to its audience a recognisable European situation at the beginning of the eighth century. The first recension, by contrast, does not describe either the Old Testament Ismaelites nor the Muslim Arabs as *Saraceni*, nor does it contain the more detailed accounts of Muslim conquests or threats to European territories which were added by the eighth-century and later redactors of the Latin text. This means that the Anglo-Saxon reader of *Reuel.1* was reading a text which was closer to the original Syriac *Apocalypse* than the second recension but also less relevant to the contemporary situation in Europe. The revisions brought *Reuel.2* further into line not only with the extant traditions of western Christian scholarship but also with the contemporary

[24] *Reuel.2*, p. 10 ('Samisab rex . . . exiuit in deserto . . . in terra Ismahelitarum et possedebit castra filiorum Ismahel . . . deuictus est . . . ab Sarracenis . . . et tunc primum exierunt filii Ismahel').

[25] *Reuel.2*, p. 12 ('tradit illos Deus in manus Sarracinorum') and p. 14 ('liberauit eos de manus Sarracinorum').

[26] See Ogle, 'Petrus Comestor', especially p. 323, where he lists the relevant comments by Jerome and traces their medieval transmission.

[27] *Reuel.2*, p. 14. [28] *Reuel.2*, p. 12.

political situation on the Continent. They constitute a good example of how actual events could be assimilated into the academic structures which helped to maintain the scholarly *status quo* and affirm Christian literary 'possession' of Muslim activities and newly conquered territories in Asia and Europe.

However, western exegetical writings and *Reuel.1* differed in the way they identified the Muslims as Ismaelites. In the writings of Jerome and subsequent western commentators, the Saracens were defined as contemporary Ismaelites according to the etymology which explained them as the duplicitous descendants of Hagar through her son Ismael. The definition suggested that the Saracens shared certain characteristics with Ismael and the Ismaelites, who had been described in the Old Testament as hostile, violent and desert-dwelling. This suggestion seems to have been confirmed for Jerome at least by his own experience of the fourth-century Arab nomads from the Syrian desert and Sinai peninsula, who made raids on Christian communities in what he seems to have seen as a characteristically Ismaelite manner. Although Jerome flourished some two centuries before the lifetime of Muhammad, he provided an important example to later medieval writers on Muslims in identifying both the Ismaelites of the Old Testament and the Arabs of his own day as the same people, namely, the Saracens. This was parallelled in the writings of Bede when he confirmed that the eighth-century Muslims were the same Saracens again. The pseudo-Methodian tradition presented the identical notion, that the Muslim Arabs were the same people as the Ismaelites of the Old Testament. However, it achieved this not by means of a scholarly etymology but instead by using the same name to refer to both peoples and by establishing a series of resemblances between them. Thus the Old Testament Ismaelites and Midianites who devastate the Israelites in the historical part of the *Reuelationes* are described in a way which makes them resemble the later Muslim Arabs, and the Muslims in turn are described in terms that recall the Old Testament Ismaelites and Midianites.

This is brought about partly by employing Old Testament imagery from the book of Judges VI–VIII and partly from the author's own invention. *Reuel.1* describes the sons of Ismael as originally having been inhabitants of the desert. After they were defeated by one *Samsishaibus* they fled their homeland (*solitudinem Etthribum*; a reference to the city of Yathrib, later Medina) and moved into an uninhabitable land where they fought with the people of the Promised Land (*pugnauerunt cum regnis gentium . . . in terra*

promissionis). They are compared with locusts (*Erant autem quasi locustae*) and described as barbarians who wore no clothes (*nudo corpore*), ate camel's flesh 'stored in bags'? (*conpositae in utribus*) and drank the blood of animals mixed with milk (*bibebant sanguinem iumentorum . . . lacte mixto*). When these sons of Ismael had conquered the land and laid waste all the towns and regions, they made ships and travelled into the West as far as Rome, and took control of the lands there also.[29] They became arrogantly proud (*superexaltatum est cor eorum*). They were led by four tyrants, sons of Umee, called Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah and Salmunna, and with them fought against the Israelites. At this point the author draws a parallel between the Ismaelites and the Egyptians, and compares Gideon with Moses as the agency by which God redeemed the Israelites as his Chosen People. The pseudo-Methodian account of the Ismaelites ends with the statement that Gideon cast them out, and it is again noted that they originated from the desert or waste (*solitudine*) and were connected with Yathrib (*Ethribum*).[30]

According to *Reuel.1*, at this point, the sons of Ismael were to return in the future and oppress all lands again, and would only be defeated by the *imperium Romanorum* (that is, the Christian Greeks), who would utterly destroy them in battle. This prediction, one of several inserted into the historical section of the apocalypse, foreshadows the lengthy description of the later, 'future' Ismaelite invasion in which the Muslim Arabs are described as Ismaelites. *Reuel.2* here telescopes the intervening historical section and moves straight into the Islamic conquests. *Reuel.1* returns to the sons of Ismael with the statement that at the beginning of the new era, the kingdom of the Persians will fall (*eradicabitur regnum Persarum*) and the Ismaelites (*semen Ismahel*) will emerge from the desert (*de deserto Ethribum*). Like the earlier Ismaelites, the Muslims are portrayed as springing from the desert of Yathrib. However, instead of being described as literally eating flesh and drinking blood, these Ismaelites do so by being described as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy ('conplebitur quod dictum est per Ezechielem prophetam ". . . manducate carnes fortium et bibite sanguinem excelsorum"'). Similarly, the four literal leaders (Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah and Salmunna) of the Old Testament Ismaelites find parallels in the

[29] *Reuel.1*, p. 67; Salisbury 165, 12v. The sons of Ismael in *Reuel.2* are also described as blood-drinkers: 'bibebant sanguinem iumentorum mixte lacto' (*Reuel.2*, p. 11).

[30] *Reuel.1*, p. 68; Salisbury 165, 12v. For another example of the pride of the sons of Ismael as they gloried in their victory over the Christians, see *Reuel.1*, p. 89, and *Reuel.2*, p. 14.

account of the Muslims, in the form of a merciless punishment of destruction, perdition, decay and ruin ('castigatio sine misericordia . . interitus et perditio, corruptio quoque et desolatio').[31] Like the earlier Ismaelites, the Muslims are described as resembling locusts (*tamquam locustae*); the idea of the invading people as a plague is further emphasised by the phrase *in eis pestilentia et fames* ('in them [will be] sickness and famine'). The description of the Muslims again resembles that of the previous Ismaelites of *Reuel.1* in that they are portrayed as becoming overbearingly proud ('exaltabitur cor eorum . . . et in superbiam elabitur').[32] Similarly, it is prophesied that the later Ismaelites too will extend their sway throughout all territories as far as Rome.[33] Historically, this section appears to refer to the first advances of the Muslim Arabs out of the Arabian peninsula. *Reuel.2* abbreviates the original account considerably and emphasises the parts of special European interest.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE 'SONS OF ISMAEL' AND THE SARACENS

In several respects the Ismaelites of *Reuel.1* resemble the Ismaelites and Saracens of pre-Islamic western exegesis. This is not surprising, since both were based to some extent on the same information from the Old Testament. They are described as desert-dwellers and the enemies of the Israelites, and their defeat demonstrates the agency of God and the special status of the Chosen People. The sons of Ismael also share some characteristics with certain Arabian peoples described by Pliny, who wrote that the nomads subsisted on milk and raw meat, and Jerome, who mentioned that nomads ate half-raw meat and that the 'barbarians of the desert', including Arabs and Saracens, lived on flesh and camels' milk.[34] Jerome had mentioned too that as Malchus was carried through the desert by the marauding Saracens his food and drink were camel's flesh and milk. Also in the *Vita Malchi*, Jerome had indicated that the Saracens wore little or no clothing and that their attacks were motivated at least partly by greed for material wealth. It

[31] *Reuel.1*, pp. 80–1; Salisbury 165, 16r.

[32] *Reuel.1*, p. 83; Salisbury 165, 16r.

[33] *Reuel.1*, p. 89; Salisbury 165, 18v.

[34] 'Nomades, et Troglodytae, et Scythae, et Hunnorum noua feritas semicrudis uescuntur carnibus' (Jerome, *Aduersus Iouinianum*, PL 23, 294–5); 'Verbi gratia, Arabes et Saraceni, et omnis eremi barbaria, camelorum lacte et carnibus uiuit . . .' (*Aduersus Iouinianum*, PL 23, 294–5).

is interesting that these attributes of the Saracens in the *Vita Malchi* find a parallel in those of the Ismaelites in *Reuel.1*. It is possible that both accounts draw upon common eastern material, though separated by several centuries, or that in some regards both reflect real nomadic habits – the wearing of loose, light clothing is a plausible example.

However, the Ismaelites of *Reuel.1* also possess certain attributes which western commentators did not commonly associate with the Saracens and Ismaelites or their forebear, Ismael. Some such attributes seem to have had a biblical foundation: the phrase *quasi locustae*, for example, may well echo the descriptions of the Midianites and Ismaelites at Judg. VI.5 and VII.12, and the princes Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah and Salmunna are described at Judg. VII–VIII and listed in Ps. LXXXII.11–12 as enemies of Israel only a few lines after the Ismaelites and Hagarenes. Other characteristics appear to have been manufactured by the anonymous author of the original Syriac *Apocalypse*. These include the Ismaelites' drinking of blood, their ship-building and travelling as far as Rome. The ship-building presumably reflects the fact that Mu'āwiyah, first governor of Syria, established a Muslim navy.[35] The drinking of blood mixed with milk is probably included in order to suggest that the Ismaelites were an unclean people.[36]

Despite the interesting parallels between Saracen and Ismaelite characteristics in the writings of Jerome and *Reuel.1*, it is important also to note the literal differences. The sons of Ismael in *Reuel.1* are naked in order to indicate that they are barbaric, but also so that they may then sacrilegiously clothe themselves in holy vestments; the Saracens of the *Vita Malchi* are naked (Jerome explains) because of the heat of the desert. The sons of Ismael eat camels' flesh presumably because this is an unclean food (as is the blood with milk) and indicates that the Ismaelites are an unclean people; Jerome cites the nomadic diet as an example of the principle that one man's meat is another man's poison. The sons of Ismael devastate the land, confiscate property and demand high taxes because this forms part of their role as bringers of devastation and famine; Jerome's Saracens, on a literal level at least,

[35] Alexander, 'Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs', p. 57, n. 29; Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam*, p. 155.

[36] The consumption of blood is prohibited at Lev. XVII.10–14 and Deut. XII.16 and 23–5. The cooking of meat in milk is prohibited at Exod. XXIII.19. The combination of blood and milk may reflect a conflation of these and perhaps other dietary taboos.

seek booty in the useful form of slaves to look after their flocks.[37] In western literature, the actual aspects of the Saracens were to some extent separated from the allegorical, which yielded its meaning after interpretation. In *Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2*, literal and figurative meanings are presented simultaneously.

According to pseudo-Methodius, the Old Testament Ismaelites and, later, the 'sons of Ismael' overran not only the lands near the desert of Yathrib but also travelled into the West to continue their devastations. The lands listed in *Reuel.1* as becoming subject to the Ismaelite depredations included (in the attack of the biblical Ismaelites) Rome, Illyrica, Thessalonica and Sardinia,[38] and were to be (in the later attacks) Cilicia, Greece and Romania,[39] Cappadocia, Africa, Sicily and 'those who live near Rome'.[40] This agrees largely with the much more general statement by Bede that the Saracens had seized not only Asia and all of Africa but also a good part of Europe. However, there is certainly a perceptible eastern emphasis in *Reuel.1*, which describes no region further west than Rome. Bede, by contrast, was aware of Saracen attacks in the Iberian peninsula and France, which he condemned in his *Historia ecclesiastica*. The redactor of *Reuel.2* took into account the interests of a new readership and added the names of western European territories.

Bede was probably the only other author known to the Anglo-Saxons to describe the Saracens as a pestilence, *lues saracenorum*. His short phrase is not as descriptive as the graphic accounts in *Reuel.1* of how the Ismaelites, in numbers like locusts upon the wind, brought famine and plague to the land. However, it points to another similarity in the way the Muslims were

[37] However, it should be noted that the Saracens of the *Vita Malchi* and the Ismaelites of the *Reuel.1* are also similar in that they both represent trials and oppressions which must be endured and overcome by the Christians of the story in order for them eventually to triumph and thus make manifest the superiority of the Christian God; furthermore, both Ismaelites and Saracens can only become an affliction in the first place by the will of God as a punishment of Christian sin. Malchus leaves his monastery to collect an inheritance, and it is this material greed that exposes him to the physical and spiritual dangers of the Saracen desert; the Christians of pseudo-Methodius are stated to be suffering beneath the yoke of the Ismaelites on account of their previous offences against God.

[38] *Reuel.1*, p. 67; Salisbury 165, 12v.

[39] *Reuel.1*, p. 83; Salisbury 165, 16v.

[40] *Reuel.1*, p. 89; Salisbury 165, 18v. Alexander describes the regions which the Ismaelites overran according to the original Syriac *Apocalypse* (*Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 34–5).

presented in contemporary Christian literature. That they were described in terms of plague or pestilence strengthened their association with ideas of destruction and perhaps even suggested that, as agents of ruin, they were capable of bringing their native wasteland with them into previously civilised and fruitful territories.

The second recension of the *Reuelationes* also described the Old Testament Ismaelites as aggressive inhabitants of the desert ('exierunt filii Ismahel de herimo bella certare'), and included the information that they ate the flesh of camels and drank milk mixed with the blood of beasts. As in *Reuel.1*, the sons of Ismael were led by the four princes Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah and Salmunna and were defeated by Gideon.[41] All this information is included in one short section of the text, whereas in the first recension of the *Reuelationes* it occupied several folios. It seems safe to assume that, since so much of the original Latin was cut to produce the second recension, the statements which were retained were those deemed particularly appropriate or significant with respect to the situation in Europe during the early eighth century. It may therefore be no coincidence that such statements are those which best tie in with the descriptions of the Saracens or Ismaelites that were already circulating in the West.[42] The later Ismaelites of the second recension (i.e. the Muslim Arabs) are also referred to as Saracens and are similarly depicted as a people who emerge from the desert as a merciless punishment upon the Christian population: 'exierunt filii Ismahel de herimo et erit aduentus eorum castigacio sine misericordia'.[43] It is also explained (as in the first recension) that this punishment was brought about by the sins of the Christians.

However, the Ismaelites of *Reuel.1* differed from the Saracens of western exegesis in terms of the role they played as part of a written Christian history. *Reuel.1* attempted to justify the Islamic conquest of Christian populations and territories in a way which could comfort an oppressed Christian audience and exhort them to renew their faith. It argued that God repeatedly punished his people, that the Israelites had already been oppressed by the Egyptians and the Ismaelites (Exod. XI–XIV, for example, and Judg. VI.8–10) in order to be redeemed later by God's agency and that the people of the Ismaelites

[41] *Reuel.2*, pp. 10–11.

[42] The differences between the recensions are usefully summarised in d'Evelyn, 'The Middle-English Metrical Version', pp. 139–44.

[43] *Reuel.2*, pp. 11–12. The spellings *herimo* and *castigacio* are as they appear in his edition.

would again become the instrument of divine punishment. According to *Reuel.1* the sons of Ismael were to arise again when the empire of the Persians fell (*absortum fuerit regnum Persarum*), and would replace them as the enemies of the Byzantine empire ('aduersus Romanorum imperium filii Hismahel, filii Agar'). This is interpreted as a sign that the end of the world (*consumatio saeculi*) is nigh.[44] The author explains that the Ismaelites are not granted the power to conquer Christian territories because God loves them, but because of the sins and wickedness committed by the Christians (*propter peccatum et iniquitatem*).[45] The murderous and sinful Ismaelites (*homicidae et percorrupti*) are thus to act as a fire of testing (*ignis probationis*).[46] This justification for the Ismaelite devastation, so severe that men will despair of their life, is presented in the form of a rhetorical question asking how God could allow such events to take place unless to show the faith (or otherwise) of the subjugated Christian populations (*qui sunt fidelissimi . . . uel infideles*) and to separate the chaff from the wheat (*lollia a tritico*).[47] The idea that the Christians had been delivered into the hands of the Ismaelites on account of their sins was not original. It had already been expressed by Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem, during the first wave of the Muslim conquests, and it was to be expressed again.

Several of the passages described above indicate that the sons of Ismael were especially associated with the desert and in particular the desert of Yathrib. This link with the desert is another similarity between the sons of Ismael of the *Reuelationes* and the Saracens as already known in Anglo-Saxon England. We have already seen numerous examples of Ismaelites and Saracens as desert-dwellers in the Vulgate, early patristic writings, and the works of Bede. In the book of Genesis, Ismael was described as inhabiting the desert of Paran in the Sinai peninsula. Jerome described the Saracens as Ismaelites but also as a contemporary people who wandered and raided in the desert regions near Syria. The Saracens of his *Vita Malchi* captured Malchus and other prisoners from a road running through such a desert region and

[44] As Martinez has noted, this confident expectation of the last days belonged very much to the time and place in which the Syriac *Apocalypse* was originally composed ('The Apocalyptic Genre', pp. 351–2). Bede, for example, did not attach apocalyptic significance to the fall of Rome, and the Muslim conquests seem to have meant little to other western authors of apocalypse, in strong contrast with Christians living under Muslim rule; see Verhelst, 'La préhistoire des conceptions d'Adson', pp. 82–3 and 85.

[45] *Reuel.1*, pp. 80–1; Salisbury 165, 16r.

[46] *Reuel.1*, p. 86; Salisbury 165, 17v.

[47] *Reuel.1*, pp. 88–9; Salisbury 165, 18v.

carried them off as slaves into the waste. Bede continued the desert theme in his own exegesis. In *Reuel.1*, a variety of Saracen characteristics – their home in the desert, violent enslavement of Christians, comparison with pestilence and domination of previously Christian cities – are integrated in a single and vivid account of the Ismaelites as bringers of ruin and waste.

Reuel.1 thus extends and amplifies associations which were only tentatively made by western authors. The sons of Ismael are presented not only as originating from a desert and returning to it after defeat, but as embracing waste places and even possessing some of the inhuman qualities of the desert themselves. Where Bede indulged in a brief metaphor to describe the Saracens as a *lues Sarracenorum*, *Reuel.1* compares the sons of Ismael with locusts numerous upon the wind, states that they bring famine and emptiness and characterises them as ravishing the earth and its inhabitants not only of their established riches but also of their underlying qualities of fertility and fruitfulness. Each land which they destroy is listed with a phrase such as *in desolationem* or *erit in solitudine* to emphasise its waste condition. The Ismaelites will own cities which are empty (*destitute*) and will divide up the desert between them. They will destroy the trees of field and mountain (*lignum saltui et speciem montium*). The towns will be desolate (*desolabuntur urbes*), the lands will be without roads (*regiones sine uia*) because the population will be so shrunken; the earth will become sterile because of the blood that has polluted it (*polluitur terra a sanguine, et continebit fructos suos*). *Reuel.1* explains that the sons of Ismael are not men (*Non enim sunt homines*), but sons of the desert (*filii sunt a deserto exilientes*) and consequently they first appear in the desert (*ideo in desolationem prodiunt*).[48]

At this point the imagery takes a turn for the bloodier: when they first emerge from their desert home, the text announces, the Ismaelites will stab pregnant women (*habentibus in utero*) with swords so that mother and child are pierced simultaneously (*fetum . . . simul cum matribus*), and will dash the children from the shoulders of their nurses (*infantes ab umeris nutricum . . . percutient*).[49] One of the strongest characteristics of the Ismaelites in *Reuel.1* is this emphasis on graphic concrete images which find little parallel in the more distant and abstract exegetical accounts of the Saracens. The sons of Ismael are more at home in the company of the tribe of the Donestre in

[48] *Reuel.1*, pp. 82–5; Salisbury 165, 16v–17v.

[49] *Reuel.1*, pp. 85; Salisbury 165, 17v; cf. *Reuel.2*, p. 13, which includes the phrase 'Non sunt homines sicut alie gentes'.

Wonders of the East (who deceive men into approaching and then eat them) or Grendel (who devours flesh and quaffs blood with memorable gruesomeness) or any number of villains responsible for the often lingering martyrdoms of saints.[50] Sensational descriptions of violence did not require their audience to contemplate the nice intricacies of the spirit of the letter, but demanded reactions to more immediate questions about bodies and their role in extreme experiences. Both recensions of the *Reuelationes* emphasise biblical interpretation but their apocalyptic tone was a new departure in western thought about Islam and the Saracens. The *Vita Malchi* and its Old English translation come closest in presenting the Saracens as immediate physical entities. Jerome described their clothing and appearance, the milling confusion in which Malchus was seized, the panicky, uncomfortable journey made by the prisoners across the desert on camel-back and the violent implacability of the Saracen master as he forced Malchus at sword-point to accept a woman. The carnality of the sons of Ismael depicted in *Reuel.1*, however, goes beyond this. They couple with their women in the churches, kill the priests, seize the sacred vestments to clothe their children and put on their beds and over their horses; they tie up their animals in the holy monuments as though in a stable; they are like beasts in their food; they eat, drink and make merry, glorying in victory and desolation, boasting that the Christians will never find an escape from their hands.[51] Immediately following this section, the emperor of the Romans or Greeks rises up against them and annihilates them by the sword, ushering in the final events of history before the Day of Judgement.[52]

The kind of new information which *Reuel.1* brought to the Anglo-Saxon readership was mixed. On the one hand, it conveyed several notions concerning the sons of Ismael which closely resembled western exegetical descriptions of the Ismaelites and Saracens. On the other, unlike most earlier western exegetical accounts, it described the Ismaelites and catalogued the iniquities and atrocities they allegedly committed in vivid and emotive detail. *Reuel.1* also provided a rare contemporary account of the Islamic invasions, the historical value of which would have been unapparent, out of

[50] *Wonders of the East*, ed. and trans. Orchard, §20 (pp. 179 and 197); *Beowulf* [Cameron A4.1], ed. Wrenn, ll. 742–743a.

[51] *Reuel.1*, p. 89; Salisbury 165, 18v; cf. the briefer version in *Reuel.2*, p. 14, which adds, however, that the Saracens wear gold and purple, and retains their boast.

[52] *Reuel.1*, pp. 89–90; Salisbury 165, 18v–19r; as *Reuel.2* succinctly has it, 'destruuntur Sarracini, filii Ismahel, in gladio'.

context, to readers in the early medieval West. Specifically, the *Reuelationes* provided a very early reference to the people of the Turks and probably the first reference to the place Yathrib (Medina). These references to a people and town which were later perceived as very significant in the history of Islam would have meant little if anything to an Anglo-Saxon reader (and patently meant very little to some transmitters of the text who mangled the names).[53]

THE LATE OLD ENGLISH NOTES ON GENESIS

A group of twelfth-century Old English notes in the eleventh-century manuscript BL Cotton Claudius B.iv show that the pseudo-Methodian tradition continued to influence Anglo-Saxon culture after the Norman Conquest, though the annotator himself may not have been an Anglo-Saxon.[54] *Methodius* is cited in five of the notes. These, along with other notes which do not mention the name of Methodius, are of interest in trying to establish which recension of the *Reuelationes* the author worked from.[55] In the discussion below, the Old English notes are compared with readings from *Reuel.1* (as ed. Sackur) and *Reuel.2* (as ed. Prinz) and also readings from the slightly different copy of *Reuel.2* found in Bodley 163 (as ed. d'Evelyn; the copy in Bodley 163 is abridged at the beginning and therefore only provides partial evidence). The first Old English note reads as follows: 'Methodius cwað adam wæs gesceopa man on wlite of ðritig wintra and naþeles on ane

[53] In a somewhat confused passage, the *Reuel.1* mentions a kingdom of the barbarians as that of the Turks and Avars (*Turcorum et Abares*); *Reuel.1*, p. 80. The same phrase in Salisbury 165 reads *tirci et abaret* (f. 15v) which evidently reflects some corruption in the transmission of unfamiliar names. Indeed, the meaning of the passage as a whole seems to have suffered in translation in both the text of *Reuel.1* as edited by Sackur and the slightly differing version of the same recension which occurs in Salisbury 165. The reference to the Turks and Avars does, however, go back to the original Syriac *Apocalypse*; see Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 43–4, for a translation of the relevant section.

[54] I refer to the notes as the *Old English Notes on Genesis*, ed. Crawford. Crawford suggests on the evidence of their imperfect Old English that they were copied out in the second half of the twelfth century by a scribe without much understanding of the exemplar before him (*OE Version of the Heptateuch*, p. 418).

[55] The numbering follows the edition by Crawford. The Old English text is displayed according to the edition by Crawford with its original errors in grammar and orthography uncorrected. The Tyronian sign has been expanded. My translations attempt to make sense of the text in modern English.

dage and geara and æfter ðam and twa wintra. and þri wintra and ælla ða oðron'.[56] This does not quite correspond with either the first or second recension of the *Reuelationes* as they have survived (Bodley 163 does not contain the relevant passage). *Reuel.1* merely states that Adam and Eve were virgins in Paradise and were expelled after thirty years. *Reuel.2* is slightly closer to the Old English note in that it explains that God created man and a helper like him and called them Adam and Eve; here, too, the pair are driven out after thirty years.[57] However, there is no mention in either recension of the age of Adam when he was created. Unless the note is the result of a misunderstanding or mistransmission of the Latin explanation that thirty years passed in Paradise before Adam and Eve were expelled, one can only conclude that the original author of the Old English notes obtained the information from a different source, perhaps a slightly different version of the *Reuelationes* or another text attributed to Methodius, or that he mistakenly credited the statement to Methodius.

The sixth Old English note of the series reads: 'Methodius cwæð adam slep be is wife and hi gestrinde sunes and dohtra'.[58] Statements that Adam lay with Eve and that she conceived are found at Gen. IV.1 and 25, so it is unclear why the Old English annotator should have introduced his note with *Methodius cwæð*. As a statement attributed to Methodius, however, it corresponds only with a phrase in *Reuel.2* as edited by Prinz: 'peperit Adam et Eva filios et filias'.[59] No similar information appears in the first recension of the *Reuelationes* as it is edited by Sackur, nor as it appears in Salisbury 165. The next note in the series reads: 'Methodius cweð þa adam wæs ahund wintra and xxx cayn ofsloh abel þa wæs abel c wintra æfter þan adam and eue hine bewyppe hunð wintra'.[60] In this case, *Reuel.1*

[56] 'Methodius said Adam was made man in the appearance of thirty years and even so in one day and perfectly and after that two years and three years and all the others' (*Old English Notes on Genesis*, ed. Crawford, p. 419); Crawford cites the faulty Old English of this note in particular in support of his theory that the notes as we see them today were copied from an earlier Old English exemplar by a twelfth-century scribe who was unfamiliar with the language (p. 418).

[57] *Reuel.1*, p. 60; Salisbury 165, 11r.

[58] 'Methodius said Adam slept with his wife and they had sons and daughters' (*Old English Notes on Genesis*, ed. Crawford, p. 419).

[59] *Reuel.2*, p. 6.

[60] 'Methodius said when Adam was a hundred and thirty years, Cain slew Abel; Abel was then a hundred years; after that Adam and Eve mourned him a hundred years' (*Old English Notes on Genesis*, ed. Crawford, p. 419).

and *Reuel.2* agree that Adam was aged 130 years when Cain slew Abel.[61] However, the statement (not found in the book of Genesis) that Adam and Eve mourned Abel's death for one hundred years appears only in *Reuel.1*, including Salisbury 165: 'fecerunt planctum super eum Adam quoque et Eua annis C'. Manuscripts containing *Reuel.2*, including Royal 5.F.xviii, merely record: 'fecerunt Adam et Eva plantum [*sic*] magnum super illum'. (Again, Bodley 163 omits the passage corresponding with these two notes.)

Another Old English note, which does not cite Methodius, records that Cain killed Abel in Syria, near Damascus.[62] *Reuel.1* records no place for Abel's death and *Reuel.2* states it to have taken place in India.[63] At this point, however, the scribe of Bodley 163 has added *id est damascum* to the description of the place of Abel's death.[64] Since the other Old English notes cite information which was not contained in Bodley 163, it seems likely that both drew on another source. Jerome wrote that, according to Hebrew tradition, Damascus (*sanguinem bibens*) was so called because it was the site of Abel's death at the hands of Cain.[65] Bede glossed *Damascus* as *sanguinem bibens*, following Jerome, and described it as a city under Saracen rule.[66] As noted above, the sons of Ismael drank blood (*Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2*) and also polluted the earth with blood (*Reuel.1*).[67] These connections between Ismaelites, Saracens, Cain and Damascus are complicated and allusive but add to a profoundly negative picture of the Saracens. It has already been mentioned above that the Saracens as known in Anglo-Saxon England resembled Cain in their shiftless lifestyle and spiritual darkness.[68] In this and in their blood-drinking they also resemble Grendel, the monstrous wanderer in *Beowulf*, whose connections with Cain have been explored by

[61] Cf. *Reuel.1*, p. 60, and Salisbury 165, 11r. Prinz notes that a group of manuscripts including Royal 5.F.xviii agrees with the *Reuel.1* at this point ('Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung', p. 6).

[62] *Old English Notes on Genesis*, ed. Crawford, p. 419.

[63] *Reuel.1*, pp. 60–1, and Salisbury 165, 11r; *Reuel.2*, p. 6.

[64] D'Evelyn, 'The Middle English Metrical Version', p. 193. The numbering is somewhat confusing at this point, but there is no doubt that *id est damascum* refers to the scene of the crime.

[65] *In Ezech.*, CCSL 75, p. 373; see also *LHNom.*, CCSL 72, 145 (*Damascus sanguinis poculum*) and also 154 and 155 (*Damascus sanguinis potus*). Gen. IV.11 stated of Cain: 'Nunc igitur maledictus eris super terram, quae aperuit os suum et suscepit sanguinem fratris tui de manu tua'.

[66] Bede, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, CCSL 121, 45.

[67] *Reuel.1*, p. 85 (pollution of the earth with blood).

[68] See above, pp. 100–101.

Ruth Mellinkoff and Andy Orchard.[69] Later descriptions of the Saracens in Crusades literature would also draw on the idea that they were descended from Cain.[70]

The thirteenth Old English note reads: 'Methodius and Josephus gewriten þæt adam wæs twa hund wintra and xxx þa he gestrinde seth'.[71] This points clearly to neither the first nor the second recension of the *Reuelationes*. The number of years agrees with the first: 'CC^{mo} autem et XXX^{mo} anno . . . natus est Sedh'.[72] On the other hand, the fact that in the Old English these years are measured as part of Adam's life, rather than as part of the first millennium, more closely resembles the second recension: 'Anno autem tricentesimo et trecisimo vite Ade . . . natus est . . . Seth'.[73] The Bible itself states that Seth was born in the 130th year of Adam's life (Gen. V.3). It seems likely that the Roman numerals indicating how many hundreds of years Adam had lived before Seth was born became confused in one or another version of the text consulted by the compiler of the Old English notes, or that it was miscopied during the subsequent transmission of the notes themselves.

The eighteenth note, which does not cite Methodius, tries to explain that after Adam's death Seth divided his progeny from those of Cain, so that he (Cain? Adam?) went to *ybora landa* while Seth stayed on a mountain next to Paradise, with 'Cayn in ðon felde þe he is broðor ofsloh'.[74] Both recensions of *Reuelationes* describe the dwelling-places of the two brothers, but only the second contains a reading which might correspond with

[69] Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny, part I', and Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 58–85, especially p. 65 on the consumption of blood.

[70] Mellinkoff, 'Cain's Monstrous Progeny, part II', p. 192. Similarly, the sons of Ismael resemble Nabachodonosor, certain characters in the works of the *Beowulf*-manuscript and the medieval Alexander in exhibiting overweening pride just before their downfall, presumably on the model of Lucifer. See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 169 and 171.

[71] 'Methodius and Josephus wrote that Adam was two hundred and thirty years [old] when he begat Seth' (*Old English Notes on Genesis*, ed. Crawford, p. 420).

[72] Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen*, p. 61.

[73] *Reuel.2*, p. 6; d'Evelyn (Bodley 163), pp. 192–3.

[74] 'Æfter adames forðsiðe seth ytwæmde his ofspring fram caynes ofspringe þæt hi ywende to hære ybora landa and seth wuneda on ana munte beside paradise. Cayn in ðon felde þe he is broþer ofsloh' (*Old English Notes on Genesis*, ed. Crawford, p. 421); 'After Adam's death, Seth divided his offspring from Cain's offspring so that they went to the land [Hebron?]; and Seth dwelled on a mountain next to Paradise, Cain in the field where he slew his brother'.

ybora landa; a line or so before the account of Seth and Cain, it states that Adam was buried in Hebron ('mortuos est Adam et sepultus est in Ebron'). This is information not found in the first recension as edited by Sackur, nor does it appear in the Salisbury manuscript. Evidently, though, if the source of the note was an example of the later recension of *Reuelationes* as edited by Prinz, its information had become confused at some point during transmission.

The Old English notes citing *Methodius* provide a variety of information on the text of Genesis, some of which is contained in both recensions of the *Reuelationes*, some in only one, and some apparently in neither. They also include a note on Damascus which may correspond with a variant in the copy of *Reuel.2* in Bodley 163. Although the twelfth-century Old English notes on Genesis clearly draw upon some text from the Latin pseudo-Methodian tradition, they do not seem to derive from any of the three manuscripts containing *Reuelationes* which are known to have reached England by the end of the eleventh century. The additional note on Damascus in Bodley 163 suggests that other manuscripts containing either recension of the *Reuelationes* could easily have differed in some respects from the recensions as edited by Prinz and Sackur and that one such might therefore have provided the information cited by the Old English annotator. This would mean that, as well as Salisbury 165, Royal 5.F.xviii and Bodley 163 (and their exemplars), at least one other manuscript containing a text from the pseudo-Methodian tradition circulated among Old English speakers in England, perhaps before AD 1100. This seems plausible. Salisbury 165 and Royal 5.F.xviii were copied at the newly founded Salisbury Cathedral during a period of intense manuscript production at the end of the eleventh century.[75] It has been argued that the works copied by the Salisbury monks during this period were felt to be the most needful components of the new library. This suggests that both *Reuel.1* and *Reuel.2* were seen as desirable acquisitions which would further the intellectual pursuits of the Salisbury monks.[76] The fact that Bodley 163 was copied in England at around the same time indicates that English interest in the pseudo-Methodian tradition was not restricted to Salisbury.

[75] Webber, *Scribes and Scripts at Salisbury*, pp. 12–13 (scribe ii, Group I worked on Salisbury 165), and 15 (scribe xii, Group I worked on the same manuscript).

[76] Webber, *Scribes and Scripts at Salisbury*, pp. 29, 31 and 140–1.

The Syriac *Apocalypse* contained certain ideas about the Ismaelites which evidently appealed to western Christian readers. These ideas were retained in subsequent Latin revisions of the original source. Less immediately relevant aspects of the Syriac *Apocalypse* were eventually discarded or revised in order to produce *Reuel.2*, which more closely corresponded with the immediate historical situation of eighth-century Europe than the lengthier *Reuel.1*. Thus, in *Reuel.2*, the description of the Ismaelites as blood-drinkers and baby-killers, which agreed with extant notions of Saracen barbarity and ferocity, was retained from *Reuel.1*; long passages of historical description were omitted as unnecessary; and the term *Saraceni* and the names of regions such as Aquitaine, Italy and Germany were added, rendering the pseudo-Methodian tradition entirely relevant for a contemporary European readership.

Pseudo-Methodius, like Jerome and Bede, drew a number of parallels between the Old Testament enemies of Israel and the contemporary Muslims. This suggests an attempt to present the Islamic conquests not as an inexplicable or original phenomenon but rather as an example of behaviour which, though abominable, was consistent with what holy scripture had laid down since earliest times concerning the nature of the Ismaelites, and which therefore upheld the validity of scripture as well as giving meaning to historical event. Within both eastern and western Christian literary traditions, educated authors presented the Muslim conquests as a shock but no particular surprise. This is at odds with modern perceptions of the rise of Islam, which emphasise a distinction between the pre-Islamic Arabs and the Muslims, and tend to explain the success of Islam as at least partly due to the fervour of new religious conviction. As well as exegetical parallels, however, the second recension of the *Reuelationes*, revised to suit a western readership, introduced a major new idea concerning the Saracens: it described a succession of recognisable worldly empires in terms of biblical prophecy according to which the eventual destruction of the Saracens would be achieved by *rex christianorum et romanorum* with the sword.[77]

The addition of the name *Saraceni* to *filii Ismahel* to refer to the Muslims was only possible in the light of an extant exegetical tradition according to which the Muslims (*Saraceni*) were already known to be descended from

[77] *Reuel.2*, p. 14. *Reuel.1*, pp. 89–90, refers to 'rex Gregorum [*sic*] siue Romanorum . . . rex Romanorum'.

Ismael, to dwell in the desert, to be hostile, aggressive and distant from God.[78] This tradition, as we have seen, derived from scholarly and highly literate treatment of the Bible in Latin exegetical writings. As awareness of Muslim activity abroad increased and a growing number of Latin texts were translated into the vernacular, mentions of the Saracens began to appear in Old English. A century before the Crusades, some of these vernacular accounts of the Saracens from the tenth and eleventh centuries also presented a picture of Christian emperors fighting with armies against the Saracen foe.

[78] As has been outlined above and was suggested by Ogle in his discussion of Petrus Comestor's handling of pseudo-Methodius and the Saracens ('Petrus Comestor, Methodius, and the Saracens', pp. 323–4).

8

Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens in Old English

Bede, like pseudo-Methodius, concluded his history on an optimistic note as far as the Muslim conquests were concerned: the Saracens in Gaul received the punishment they deserved. A few years later Bede died, but Saracen attacks on Christian territories continued to excite Anglo-Saxon comment. Scholars and missionaries who had moved to the Continent referred to the Saracens in their letters. During Bede's lifetime, Boniface warned the Anglo-Saxon abbess Bugga that the perils of undertaking a pilgrimage to Rome included the present threat of the Saracens.[1] In another letter of 745–6 to Æthelbald, king of Mercia, Boniface described the Muslim attacks in Europe as an example of a divine punishment upon Christian sins: 'Sicut aliis gentibus Hispaniae et Prouinciae et Burgundionum populis contigit; quae sic a Deo recedentes fornicatae sunt, donec iudex omnipotens talium criminum ultrices poenas per ignorantiam legis Dei et per Sarracenos uenire et saeuire permisit'.[2] Perhaps he had seen an early copy of the *Reuelationes*. Later in the eighth century, Alcuin, writing to a Master Colcu in Ireland, echoed Bede's dismay at the extent of the Saracen depredations: 'heu pro dolor, quod idem maledicti Saraceni, qui et Aggareni, tota dominantur

[1] Described as 'minae Sarracenorum, quae apud Romanos nuper emerserunt' (Boniface, *Epistolae*, MGH ES 1, 48).

[2] 'As has happened to other peoples of Spain and Provence and the Burgundian populace; who so, retreating from God, committed fornication, until the almighty judge allowed the avenging punishments of such crimes to arrive and inflict their rage through ignorance of the laws of God and through the Saracens' (Boniface, *Epistolae*, MGH ES 1, 151). Cf. eastern Christian authors and *Reuel.1* on the Muslim conquests as a punishment upon a sinful Christian population; see above, pp. 40 and 154.

Affrica, et Asia maiore maxima ex parte'.[3] The fact that Alcuin added the phrase *qui et Aggareni* in a letter on current affairs shows that the identification of the Saracens with Ismaelites or Hagarenes in Latin was not limited to patristic expositions on scripture. At the same time, the patristic influence remained alive and well. Alcuin himself cited Jerome verbatim on the Saracen-Ismaelite connection in his set of questions and answers on the book of Genesis.[4]

However, the identification of Saracens as Ismaelites does seem to have been limited to Latin writings. For the vast majority of Anglo-Saxons, the Saracens remained a literary phenomenon at some remove from their own immediate concerns. After the mid-eighth century, there were no further Muslim conquests on the Continent comparable with the sudden expansion of Islam that prompted western comment in the seventh and early eighth centuries. Muslim exploits abroad were, in any case, never to demand such anxious attention from Anglo-Saxon authors as the Viking attacks on the English coast during the ninth and tenth centuries.

Nevertheless, to readers who conceived of themselves as part of a larger Christian community looking to Rome, the continuing presence of the Muslims seems to have remained of interest.[5] Roughly a century and a half after Bede's death, his *Historia ecclesiastica* was translated into Old English (probably as part of King Alfred's educational programme) and the phrase *grauissima lues Sarracenorum* became *se hefegosta wol Sarcina* ('the direst Saracen pestilence'). This and a number of other translated comments introduced ideas about the Saracens into the vernacular from the long tradition of Latin accounts discussed in the chapters above. Learning in England may have declined during the ninth century but it saw a revival from the beginning of

[3] 'But alas, that the same cursed Saracens (who are also [called] Hagarenes) rule all Africa, and the most part of greater Asia' (Alcuin, *Epistolae*, MGH Ep.Car.aeu. 2, 32). Cf. Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim*, CCSL 118A, 201. Alcuin continues: 'De quorum egressione . . . dudum, ut estimo, scripsi'. The previous letter to which he refers does not, unfortunately, appear to have survived.

[4] Alcuin, *In Genesim*, PL 100, 538: 'Quomodo manus omnium contra Ismaelem, et manus eius contra omnes [Gen. XVI.12]? Significat autem semen eius habitaturum in eremo, id est, Sarracenos uagos, incertisque sedibus', etc.

[5] On Rome as the centre of the early medieval geographical imagination, see Bridges, 'Of Myths and Maps', p. 70, and also Bede's famous comment on the location of Britain (*Historia ecclesiastica*, p. 14).

the tenth which involved extensive contacts with continental centres. There followed a steady commerce of books, scholars and ideas between England and the Continent which provided opportunities for contemporary news and views of the Saracens to make their way into Anglo-Saxon thought.[6] As in Bede's day, it can be assumed that such information provided in itself an unfavourable picture and also, in the minds of the more literate, met with an established canon of learned opinion which defined the Saracens as Ismaelites. In many cases, the news and views must have been conveyed orally, the spoken equivalents of the earlier epistolary comments by Boniface and Alcuin. Some literary clues suggest that by the end of the tenth century, the Saracens had become a familiar concept outside the Latinate readership in England; these examples will be discussed in more detail below. However, most Old English written references to the Saracens derive from Latin written sources.

Given the quantity and variety of Latin materials which were translated by Anglo-Saxon authors, it is not surprising that most examples of the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens in Old English depend to a greater or lesser extent upon earlier Latin accounts. At the same time it is noticeable that the three peoples were not associated with each other at all in vernacular literature. In the case of the Arabs, this is to be expected. In Christian Latin literature, too, the name 'Arab' was rarely linked with a contemporary people and even more rarely with the Saracens. *Arabia* occurred more frequently in Old English but, again following Latin sources, only in references to a classical or biblical people. The same is true again of the Ismaelites and Hagarenes. With the exception of one mention of the former in the Old English translation of Jerome's *Vita Malchi*, they appear solely in Old Testament contexts, unconnected with the Saracens. The etymology and exegetical analyses upon which depended the scholarly identification of Ismaelites and Saracens were evidently not held to be appropriate material for a non-Latinate audience. Ælfric expressed memorable anxiety that the literal sense of even the Old Testament itself might prove a dangerous resting-place for inadequate intellects, and took care, while translating scripture, to explain passages that might be misinterpreted.[7]

[6] Lapidge, 'Schools, Learning and Literature', pp. 6–9, 17–21, 28–9, 32–4 and 39–41, and 'Israel the Grammarian', pp. 89–92 and 103.

[7] Ælfric, *Old English Preface to Genesis*, pp. 76–7.

The Saracens nonetheless found their way into the vernacular in glosses, chronicles, homilies and translations. It is possible that they even entered that most characteristic Old English genre, heroic verse.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

A number of Old English poems are set in the biblical lands which Bede and other patristic authors had populated with Saracens, including *Exodus*, Cynewulf's *Elene* (in which Constantine's mother travels to the Holy Land) and *The Phoenix* (in which the bird travels from Paradise to Syria).[8] Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens are not mentioned in these works, and the evidence that they achieved a place in any vernacular verse is doubtful. The only possible poetic reference which has survived takes the form of the enigmatic name *Sercingas* in the Old English *Widsith*.[9] This poem, an account of the journeys made by its eponymous narrator, is known to us only from a version written down in the tenth century. Though the poem may have been composed originally as early as the seventh century, several lines containing the names of biblical and Oriental tribes are probably later interpolations. The term *Sercingas* may be an alternative form of the name *Seringas* in the same line, which probably refers to inhabitants of the Far East or Central Asia, but it could also reflect a corruption of the Old Norse *serkir*, meaning 'Saracens' or 'Arabs', or perhaps a variation on other Old English words for 'Saracens'.[10] A similar list of exotic locations and peoples occurs in the verse *Solomon and Saturn*, a dialogue-poem composed some time in the late ninth or tenth century. In this work, the Chaldean pagan sage, Saturn, declares in the course of a debate with Solomon the many lands and peoples he has visited. These include *cynn Arabia, lare Libia, land Syria*, and other eastern regions.[11]

[8] *Exodus* [Cameron A1.2], ed. Irving; *Cynewulf's 'Elene'* [Cameron A2.6], ed. Gradon, and *The Phoenix* [Cameron A3.4], ed. Blake. A twelfth-century Old English prose version of the Cross-legend refers to Arabia as a region about four days' travel from the eastern shore of the Red Sea (Napier, ed. and trans., *History of the Holy Rood-Tree*, pp. 2–4). The Old English story of the invention of the Cross does not mention Arabia; see *The Old English Finding of the True Cross*, ed. and trans. Bodden, pp. 61–3.

[9] *Widsith* [Cameron A3.11], ed. Malone, l. 75.

[10] Hill, ed., *Old English Minor Heroic Poems*, p. 98. See also Malone, ed., *Widsith*, pp. 91–2 and 197–8.

[11] *Solomon and Saturn* [Cameron A13], ed. Menner, ll. 195b–196. The prose dialogue between Solomon and Saturn contains a similar list of eastern regions but no reference to Arabia (*The Prose Solomon and Saturn* [Cameron B5.1], ed. Cross and Hill, pp. 25–40).

As in *Widsith*, the inclusion of such oriental names provides an impressively exotic background for the learning or skills of the narrator (though in *Solomon and Saturn*, it is Solomon's Christian wisdom that prevails). In the absence of any other references to either Saracens or *Sercingas* in verse, it is hard to judge how the name would have been understood. Joyce Hill has commented that neither *Seringas* nor *Sercingas* is likely to have conveyed more than an impression of eastern exoticism to the audience of the poem.[12] Compared with other forms of the Latin *Saraceni* in Old English contexts, *Sercingas* is unusual, but, given that the people appears elsewhere in Old English as *Sarcina*, it is possible that even if the name in *Widsith* is a form of *Seringas*, it could well have been understood as 'Saracens' by an Anglo-Saxon audience who had already learned of them from another source.

Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has analysed the place-names of the verse *Solomon and Saturn* in detail and has suggested that several may derive from the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister, a work in which the narrator similarly relates his supposed travels through exotic lands.[13] A number of manuscripts of the *Cosmographia* were known in Anglo-Saxon England from at least as early as the second half of the tenth century.[14] During his wanderings, Aethicus allegedly encountered the people of the Turks, who, he writes, worship their god using a great pile of stones cemented with bitumen.[15] By means of this edifice, which they call *Morcholon* (a name that Aethicus defines as

[12] Hill, ed., *Old English Minor Heroic Poems*, p. 98. Dobbie suggests that the tradition of the trial of wit between Solomon and Saturn has its origins in Talmudic and Arabic legends (*Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. lvii–lviii). O'Neill argues for a date and place of composition during the late ninth century in Wessex ('On the Date, Provenance and Relationship of the *Solomon and Saturn* Dialogues', p. 164).

[13] O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'The Geographic List', pp. 134–41; on pp. 133–5 she discusses the half-line *cynn Arabia* (186b).

[14] For example: London, BL, Cotton Vespasian B.x ff. 31–124, dated *s.* x/xi [Gneuss 386]; London, BL, Harley 3859, *s.* xi/xii [Gneuss 439]; Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 110, *s.* xii^{in} [Gneuss 718]; and Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Scaliger 69, *s.* x^{2} [Gneuss 839].

[15] I cite the Latin as it appears in the recent edition by Prinz: 'fecerunt aceruum magnum lapide ac bitumine congluttinatum, aedificantes pilas praegrandes mirae magnitudinis et cloacas subtus marmore constructas phyrram fontem gluttinantem et appellauerunt Morcholom lingua sua, id est stellam deorum, quae diriuato nomine Saturnum appellant' (Aethicus Ister, *Cosmographia*, p. 121). O'Brien O'Keeffe cites the relevant passage from the edition by H. Wuttke, *Die Kosmographie des Istrier Aithikos im lateinischen Auszuge des Hieronymus* (Leipzig, 1853) and provides a translation and comments on textual problems ('The Geographic List' pp. 136–7).

stellam deorum), the Turks worship Saturn. O'Brien O'Keeffe restates the case for *Morcholon* as the inspiration for a puzzling half-line, *Marculfes eard*, in the verse *Solomon and Saturn*.[16]

Aethicus's own source for the mysterious *Morcholon* apparently remains obscure. However, his passage on Turkish worship exhibits some striking parallels with Jerome's account of Israelite idolatry in the desert: 'Moloch . . . cuius portauerunt tabernacula, et imaginem idolorum suorum statuarumque . . . Et quae sit ipsa imago uel idolum, sequenti sermone demonstrat: "Sidus dei uestri", quod Hebraice dicitur "Chocab", id est, "Luciferi", quem Sarraceni hucusque uenerantur'.[17] *Morcholon* could plausibly be argued to represent a corrupt form of *Moloch*, and *stellam deorum* echoes *sidus dei*.[18] The fact that the planet and deity is described as Saturn rather than Lucifer in the later account may reflect confusion in Aethicus's source or a deliberate alteration, perhaps under the influence of other writings; Isidore, for example, had already connected Saturn with Babylonian idolatry.[19] It may also perhaps reflect an association between the Turks as baby-eaters and a general notion, inherited from classical tradition, of Saturn as the consumer of his own progeny.[20] The *Cosmographia* as a whole conflates a variety of material from (among other sources) the Alexander-legends, the pseudo-Methodian tradition, Isidore's *Etymologiae* and Jerome's commentary on the minor prophets (in which his explanation of *Moloch* is found). It is hard to believe that Aethicus described eastern worship of a classical planet-deity by means of a stone image and derived name (*deriuato*

[16] 'The Geographic List', pp. 136–8; *Solomon and Saturn*, ed. Menner, l. 180b.

[17] Jerome, *In prophetas minores*, CCSL 76, 296.

[18] Prinz (in his edition of Aethicus Ister's *Cosmographia*, pp. 40–1, n. 138 and p. 120, n. 192) refers to H. Löwe's suggestion that the form *Morcholon* may have resulted from metathesis, common in the *Cosmographia*, in a name which originally read *Morlochum* (identified by Löwe with the Punic deity *Molchomor*).

[19] *Etym*. VIII.xi.23, cited by O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'The Geographic List', p. 137, n. 66. See *Cosmographia*, pp. 321 and 324–7 for Aethicus Ister's use of the book of Amos, *Etym*. and Jerome's biblical commentaries.

[20] Aethicus stated that the barbarian (and Turkish) diet included *abortiua hominum* (*Cosmographia*, p. 168, n. 483). Ælfric explained that Saturn cannibalised his children (*De falsis diis*, p. 682). Aethicus's description of the eating of unclean foods resembles the pseudo-Methodian account of the Ismaelite diet. A further parallel is the shutting-in of twenty-two tribes (including the Turks) behind the Caspian gates by Alexander the Great. On this point, see the detailed study by Anderson which treats of Aethicus's Turks as descendents of Gog and Magog (*Alexander's Gate*, pp. 49–54).

nomine) independently of Jerome's account, though it may be that he encountered it via an intermediary, perhaps oral source. If Jerome is his source then, according to the argument whereby the author of the Old English *Solomon and Saturn* drew upon the *Cosmographia* for the phrase *Marculfes eard*, the element *Marculf* can be traced back ultimately to the *Moloch* of Jerome's commentary on Amos.

The *Cosmographia* and *Reuel.1* contain some of the earliest references to the Turks to have reached England, but no Saracens. In the case of the former, the restyling of Saracens as Turks and Lucifer as Saturn (whether by Aethicus himself or his source) may parallel the carefree reshuffling of classical and biblical idols to form Saracen pantheons carried out by the authors of the later *chansons de geste*. The adoration of any ancient idol was a suitably damning activity for eastern pagans. The ninth-century Old English *Martyrology* indicates as much in its story of Bartholomew's travels among the heathen in India.[21] The martyrologist (and, later, Ælfric) drew on a Latin life of the saint to describe a dramatic scene in which an angel revealed the god of the Indians to be a black-faced devil named Astaroth.[22] Thomas, who also travelled in India, is likewise said to have been encouraged to worship 'sunnan deofolgyld', an idol of the sun.[23] Objects of worship such as *Morcholon* or *Astaroþ* provided an instant pagan backdrop against which travellers or missionaries could shine as representatives of Christian civilisation. Though no Saracens appear during the travels of the saints, the Old English martyrologist is known to have drawn on a number of works which mentioned them including Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, *De temporum ratione* and *Martyrologium*, Aldhelm's prose *De uirginitate*, Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* and the *Liber pontificalis*.[24] Evidently, although Latin learning suffered a decline during the middle of the ninth century, information about the Saracens was preserved and disseminated in these and other writings.[25]

[21] No consensus has been reached on the precise dating of Old English *Martyrology*; see Lapidge, 'Latin Learning', pp. 437–8.

[22] *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, ed. Kotzor, pp. 186–7. Cf. Ælfric, *The Passion of St Bartholomew* [Cameron B1.1.33], pp. 445–6. Cross discusses the sources of the story of Bartholomew in his 'The Apostles', pp. 19–20. See also Herzfeld, *An Old English Martyrology*, p. xl.

[23] *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, ed. Kotzor, p. 265. Cf. Ælfric, *The Passion of St Thomas* [Cameron B1.3.34], p. 424. On the sources of this account, see Cross, 'The Apostles', p. 23, and Herzfeld, *An Old English Martyrology*, p. xlii.

[24] Cross, 'The Library', pp. 230–43.

[25] See Lapidge, 'Latin Learning', esp. pp. 436–9.

OLD ENGLISH GLOSSES

India is mentioned again in a similar apostolic context in the Old English gloss of a text usually known as the *Durham Ritual*, where the author connects it, unusually, with the Saracens. The *Durham Ritual* is a tenth-century Latin compilation of liturgical material for use throughout the year, collected with miscellaneous writings on a variety of subjects.[26] Aldred the Provost (his dates are unknown), the annotator of the Lindisfarne Gospels, provided an interlinear Old English gloss to the Latin liturgy towards the end of the tenth century. He also added educational material on the last four folios of the manuscript.[27] The Saracens are mentioned in an example of this educational but non-liturgical matter entitled 'Nomina locorum in quo apostoli requiescunt'. The Latin text describes the towns and regions where the apostles were buried. Among them, Thomas the Apostle was said to be buried in *india saracenorum*.[28] The Old English gloss has *india saracina*. No other surviving Old English text describes India as a home for the Saracens and, as noted in earlier chapters, Latin sources described their homeland as the desert areas immediately east and south of the Mediterranean. Several other eastern regions are mentioned in the list appended by Aldred, but none is connected with the Saracens.[29] It is possible that the adjective *saracenorum* was intended to distinguish the land of India which Thomas visited from other regions with the same name. In his homily on Bartholomew, Ælfric quoted earlier authorities on the fact that there were three nations of 'India': 'seo forme india lið to þæra silhearwena rice; seo oþer lið to medos; seo þridde to þam micclum garsecge'.[30] Bartholomew visited the third India. Perhaps the *india saracenorum* visited by Thomas was the second India, next to the land of the Medes. This accords with an authorial addition in the Old English translation of the *Historiae* by Orosius which specified a Saracen land lying east of Egypt. Aldred's India might then reflect earlier commentaries on the psalms such as those by Arnobius the Younger and Cassiodorus

[26] See Corrêa, ed., *The Durham Collectar*, pp. 76–8, and Lindelöf and Thompson, eds., *The Durham Collectar*, p. xi.

[27] Corrêa, *The Durham Collectar*, p. 76, n. 2. Aldred's additions include a list of Hebrew names given to kings, and explanations of eight Greek words. Perhaps his knowledge of an *india saracina* derived from a general interest in the East.

[28] Aldred the Provost, 'Nomina locorum', p. 196.

[29] Aldred the Provost, 'Nomina locorum', pp. 196–7.

[30] '. . . the first India lies next to the land of the Ethiopians; the second, next to the Medes; the third, next to the great ocean' (Ælfric, *The Passion of St Bartholomew*, p. 439).

which explained that the Saracens, as contemporary descendants of Ismael, lived from Palestine as far as the lands of the Medes and Persians.[31] The possibility that Aldred intended the term *saracenorum* to clarify his note on the apostle is interesting. Taking into account the addition of a 'land of the Saracens' in the *OE Orosius* (on which see below), it suggests that by the late tenth century the Saracens and their homeland were familiar enough to some Anglo-Saxons to be used as a point of reference in explanations of more obscure or ambiguous material. The fact that Aldred's additions are of an informal nature and glossed for the use of a less Latinate audience suggests further that the idea of a 'Saracen India' could have made some sense not only to a highly educated audience.[32]

The Saracens appear in no other Old English glosses. The *Microfiche Concordance to Old English* shows that examples of Arabia and the peoples of the Ismaelites and Hagarenes are far more common.[33] This is due to their appearances in Ps. LXXI.10 and 15 and Ps. LXXXII.6–7. Psalters were widely copied and glossed during the Anglo-Saxon period, and many converts to Christianity must have encountered the names of Old Testament peoples for the first (and perhaps the only) time while hearing or learning psalms.[34] It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to enter into a discussion of all Old English psalter-glosses, let alone attempt to outline relationships between them, but a few examples will serve to indicate the way in which they disseminated the names of the Arabs and

[31] 'Cedar Ismael filius fuit, qui genti suae nomen dedit, cuius fines usque ad Medos Persasque prolati sunt: hi nunc Sarraceni appellantur' (Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, CCSL 98, 1143). Perhaps Aldred mistook the antecedent of *hi* in the last clause as the Medes and Persians rather than Kedar. Arnobius the Younger commented similarly: 'Cedar unus ex filiis Israhel [*sic*] fuit, qui obtinuit solitudinem in regione orientis, quae a deserto Palaestinae usque ad terras Persarum extenditur, in qua parte nunc Saraceni inhabitant, quorum pater Cedar filius Ismahel esse reperietur lectione Geneseos. Hi odientes pacem eousque probantur, ut numquam cum gente aliqua foedus inierint pacis, ex quo orti sunt usque ad praesentem diem' (*Commentarii in psalmos*, CCSL 25, 204).

[32] Corrêa, ed., *The Durham Collectar*, p. 77.

[33] Venezky and diPaolo Healey, *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*.

[34] See Brown, 'Latin Writing', p. 40. Until the later tenth century, the Roman psalter (i.e. the version often described as Jerome's first revision of the Old Latin) was in common use in England. During the Benedictine Reform of the mid-tenth century, use of the Gallican psalter (a later, thorough revision by Jerome from the Hebrew and Septuagint) prevailed. All surviving psalters copied after the later tenth century are of the Gallican type; see C. and K. Sisam, *The Salisbury Psalter*, pp. 47–8.

Ismaelites.[35] The kings of the Arabs are described at Ps. LXXI.10 as *reges arabum* ('kings of the Arabs') in the Gallican and Roman versions of the psalter. Old English glosses render *reges arabum* in a variety of ways.[36] Among the manuscripts which contain glosses of this psalm, A, B, C and D (for example) gloss *reges* but not *arabum*, which is evidently to be read from the lemma; E has: *kininges of arabe*; F: *cyningas . . . arabialandes*; G: *cyningas þæs landes* [nothing specifying *arabum*]; J: *cyningas arabialandes* and K: *cin-incgas n* [*nomen*, for *Arabum*]. From *arabialandes* and *þæs landes* it is clear that the Latin *arabum* could be understood as a place as well as a people. The same verse in the metrical version of the psalms (the *Paris Psalter*) describes kings and nobles of Tarsus and the islands bringing gifts from Arabia and Saba.[37]

The Old English glosses of Ps. LXXXII.7 furnish another example of Jerome's influence on the subject of the Ismaelites. In this verse, Latin psalters list enemies of Israel: *tabernacula Idumaeorum et Ismahelitum, Moab et Agareni*, etc. A number of psalter-glosses (including D, F, G, J and K) gloss the name of the Edomites as *eorðlicra* ('earthly', 'worldly') and that of the Ismaelites as *synnahyrendra* (D and K: *synnehyrendra*) ('obeying sins'; unattested as a compound outside the glosses). E glosses *idumeorum* as *diobulgild hira* and *ismaelitum* as *þisum maelitum*. Apart from E, these glosses represent Old English equivalents for definitions given in Latin exegesis of the psalms. An example of such exegesis is the commentary by Cassiodorus which explained the Edomites as *sanguinei uel terreni* ('bloody or worldly') and the Ismaelites as *oboedientes mundo, non Domino* ('obedient to the world, not to God').[38] Cassiodorus himself took these definitions from Jerome's commentary on

[35] For an overview, see Pulsiano, 'A Proposal for a Collective Edition', pp. 169–71 and nn. 5 and 6. See also the earlier discussion by C. and K. Sisam, *The Salisbury Psalter*, pp. 52–75.

[36] Sigla are taken from Kimmens, *The Stowe Psalter*, pp. ix–x. Manuscripts, Cameron numbers and editions cited are listed in the bibliography of the present work under 'Old English psalter-glosses'.

[37] 'Cumað of Tharsis tires eadige / and of ealandum utan kynincgas; / þa him eardgyfu æðele bringað / of Arabia, eac of Saba; / ealle him leoda lacum cwemað' (Krapp, ed., *The Paris Psalter*, p. 30).

[38] In E, the lemma *idumeorum* is divided in two; *diobulgild* ('devil-worship', 'idolatry') consequently glosses *idum-* and *hira* ('their') glosses *-eorum*. The rendering of the Ismaelites as *þisum maelitum* is less easy to explain, but is perhaps the result of some confusion on the part of the glossator. On the gloss to E and the use of Cassiodorus, see Rosier, *The Vitellius Psalter*, p. 206 ('G' in bibliography under 'Old English psalter-glosses').

the psalms.[39] Interestingly, none of the Old English psalter-glosses gives comparable definitions for *Moab* and *Agareni*, the glosses for which consist simply of the proper names as in the lemmata.

THE OLD ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE *HISTORIAE ADVERSUM PAGANOS*

What such unglossed names might have meant to an Anglo-Saxon would depend on the level of his or her Latin. The geography and ethnology of the Holy Land and its environs were described in various works, including study aids to the Bible, Isidore's *Etymologiae* and of course earlier accounts of the holy places such as those cited by Adomnán in *De locis sanctis*. Isidore, Adomnán and Bede also drew heavily upon the well-known and widely diffused *Historiae* by Paulus Orosius. This work was composed in the early fifth century at the suggestion of Augustine as a historical defence of Christianity.[40] It was known in England from an early date, as indicated by its citation in the Leiden glossary, and continued to exert an influence throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.[41] One indication of the importance of the *Historiae* to Anglo-Saxon readers was its translation into Old English some time during the reign of Alfred, presumably as part of the king's educational programme. As well as interpolating the famous description of Ohtere's sea-journey to the far north, the translator made a number of additions to the text from sources including Pliny, Jerome and Bede.[42] In the original

[39] See above, pp. 105–6.

[40] *OE Orosius* [Cameron B9.2], ed. Bately, p. lv. The edition of the Latin *Historiae aduersum paganos* referred to below is that of Zangemeister, CSEL 5, by section and page number. Bately (*OE Orosius*, pp. lv–lvi) notes that Zangemeister's text is not exactly identical with the version of the *Historiae* used by the Old English translator.

[41] Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', p. 151. Perhaps a dozen manuscripts containing copies of the Latin *Historiae* survive from Anglo-Saxon England, of which one dates from the second half of the eighth, one from the early tenth and the others mainly from the eleventh century: these are: Düsseldorf, Hauptstaatsarchiv Z11/1, fragmentary, dated *s*. viii^{2} [Gneuss 820]; Exeter, Cathedral Library, FM S/1, 2 and 2a, fragmentary, *s*. x^{1} [Gneuss 259.5]; and, for example, Winchester, Cathedral Library, 1, *s*. x/xi [Gneuss 759] and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 163 (2016), ff. 1–227 and 250–1, *s*. xi^{1} [Gneuss 555].

[42] On the dating and authorship of the Old English translation, see Bately's analysis (*OE Orosius*, pp. lxxxvi–xciii and lxxiii–lxxxvi); on manuscripts containing this text and the

Historiae, the Saracens are mentioned once, as the inhabitants of a land near Arabia. The Old English version contains a slight alteration of this account and makes one other reference to the Saracens.

According to the *Old English Orosius*, the lands between the Tigris and the Euphrates are Babylonia, Chaldea and Mesopotamia, bounded in the north by the mountains of Taurus and the Caucasus and in the south by the Red Sea. Along that part of the Red Sea which thrusts northwards lie *Arabia and Sabei and Eudomane*.[43] Here it would seem that the translator mistakenly interpolated 'Sabei' from another source, since Orosius originally described only *Arabia Eudaemon* as an area lying between the Persian and Arabian gulfs.[44] The Saracens do not, according to the *OE Orosius*, live in Arabia, but somewhere in or near the region of Syria, which lies further west:

Of þære ie Eufrate west oþ þone Wendelsæ and norþ . . . oþ þæt land þe mon hæt Armenie, and eft suþ oþ Egypte, monege þeoda sindon þæs landes: Comagena and Fenitia and Damascena and Coelle and Moab and Amon and Idumei and Iudea and Palestina and Sarracene, and þeh hit mon hæt eal Syria.[45]

This differs somewhat from surviving Latin texts of the *Historiae*, which read 'maximas prouincias Commagenam Phoeniciam et Palaestinam, absque Saracenis et Nabathaeis'.[46] The translator seems to have misunderstood or ignored *absque*, if it was present in the text before him.[47] Perhaps his

relationships between them, see pp. xxiii–xxxix. On sources used by the translator apart from the Latin original, see pp. lxi–lxxii and (generally), her 'Geographical Information'; on the treatment of sources, see *OE Orosius*, pp. xciii–c.

[43] *OE Orosius*, ed. Bately, I.i (p. 10); cf. *Historiae*, I.ii (p. 14): 'ad meridiem succedit Babylonia, deinde Chaldaea, nouissime Arabia Eudaemon, quae inter sinum Persicum et Arabicum angusto terrae tractu orientem uersus extenditur'.

[44] *OE Orosius*, ed. Bately, pp. lxv–lxvi and notes on pp. 161–2; see also her 'Geographical Information', p. 45.

[45] 'West of the river Euphrates as far as the Mediterranean and north . . . as far as the land called Armenia, and then south as far as Egypt, there are many nations of the land: Commagenes and Phoenicians and Damascenes and Coelle and Moab and Ammon and Edomites and Judea and Palestine and Saracens, and nevertheless it is all called Syria' (*OE Orosius*, ed. Bately, I.i; p. 10); cf. *Historiae*, I.ii (p. 15): 'Syria . . . habens maximas prouincias Commagenam Phoeniciam et Palaestinam, absque Saracenis et Nabathaeis, quorum gentes sunt XII'.

[46] These are the words quoted by Bede when he cites a Latin version of Orosius on the lands near Arabia (*Expositio actuum apostolorum*, CCSL 121, 176–7).

[47] See *OE Orosius*, ed. Bately, pp. 161–2, and her comment in 'Geographical Information', p. 50.

comment indicates a common conception of *Syria* as a vague area somewhere between the Euphrates and Egypt which could be more properly defined using the names listed. Later in the translation, the Saracen homeland is located with greater precision as a land east of Egypt: 'Seo Ægyptus þe us near is, be norþan hire is þæt land Palastine, and be eastan hiere Sarracene þæt land, and be westan hire Libia . . .'[48] This mention of the land of the Saracens does not occur in surviving copies of the *Historiae*, and the translator must have added it on his own account or from another source such as Bede's *Nomina locorum*. The addition might indicate a particular interest in the Saracens and their homeland, or it might reflect no more than the translator's desire to include extra available information. Both references to the Saracens in the *OE Orosius* are chiefly notable for their lack of pejorative detail. All they convey is that the Saracens lived east of Egypt in part of Syria. This fact corresponds perfectly with earlier Latin statements that as Ismaelites they inhabited the desert of Paran in the Sinai peninsula, but can also be understood without knowledge of the exegetical link between Ismaelites and Saracens.

THE OLD ENGLISH VERSION OF THE *VITA MALCHI*

It is rare to find any link between Saracens and Ismaelites in the vernacular. The only explicit connection between the two in Old English occurs in a translation of Jerome's *Vita Malchi*, dating from the tenth or eleventh century.[49] The passage describing the capture of Malchus by the Saracens is on the whole a faithful rendition of the Latin narrative, only differing in

[48] 'The Egypt that is near us has the land of Palestine to the north, and to the east, the land of the Saracens, and to the west, Libya.' *OE Orosius*, ed. Bately, I.i (p. 11); cf. *Historiae*, I.ii (p. 16), which has only: 'Aegyptus inferior ab oriente habet Syriam Palaestinam, ab occasu Libyam, a septentrione mare Nostrum'. Bately suggests that the translator took the reference to the land of the Saracens from a work mentioning *Arabia Scenitarum* as a region to the east of Egypt, and that the identification of *Scenitae* with *Saraceni* was supplied by Ammianus Marcellinus (*OE Orosius*, pp. 162–3; 'Geographical Information', p. 48). Without detracting from the plausibility of this solution, it is perhaps also possible that the translator of the *Historiae* learned from the writings of Bede or Jerome that the desert of Paran and the lands immediately south of Palestine (i.e. east of Egypt) were inhabited by the Saracens.

[49] The *OE Malchus* occupies pp. 199–207 of Assmann, ed., *Angelsächsische Homilien*, no. 5 ('Drei Leben aus *Vitas Patrum*'), pp. 195–207. For the date of the translation, see Scragg, 'The Corpus of Anonymous Lives', p. 223, and Assmann, ed., *Angelsächsische Homilien*, p. xxxv.

some minor respects. As it is by far the longest and most detailed portrayal of the Saracens to make its way into Old English, this passage deserves to be cited in full:

Ða wæron þær Sarocine gesamnode, þæt hig sætnodan manna. And þa hit genealæcte, þæt hig sceoldon feran in þone frænan weg, þa gesamnodan hio micel wered tosamne, þæt hig mihton þa frænesse genesan. And in minum geferscipe wæron weras and wif, and þær wæs ealdra manna and iungra and lytelra cilda, swa þær wære hundsiofontig. And þa þiccodon þider semninga þa Ismaheli on horsum and on olfendum, and hig hæfdon geþwinglode loccas and scearp fex on hiora hiafde and healf nacode on hiora lichaman, buton þæt hig wæron mid ænlypigum riftum ymbhangene, and wide sceos hangodan on hira fotum and bogan hangodan on hiora eaxlum, and hig bæron lange sceaftas and ne coman hig na to fiohtanne, ac þæt hig woldan mid hloðe geniman. And þa wæron we gegripene and todælde. And þa ymb þrage, cwæð Malchus, and æfter longre yldo, þa ongan ic don hreowe mines siðfætes, and ic wæs gehloten mid anum wife in anes ceorles þeowdome. Ða wæron wit twegen on anum olfende þurh þæt rume westen and wit unc simble ondredon, hwonne wit sceoldon feallan of þam olfende and of ahreosan, and miccle ma wit hangodan be þam olfende, þonne wit þæron sæton, and uncer mete wæs healf soden flæsc and uncer wæta wæs olfenda miolc.[50]

The translator clearly attempted to reproduce the detail of the original even where he was not entirely certain of its meaning: thus *crinitis uittatisque capitibus* ('having long hair in bindings on their heads') becomes the painstaking 'hig hæfdon geþwinglode loccas and scearp fex on hiora hiafde'('they had bound (?) locks and rough (?) hair on their heads'). The

[50] 'There the Saracens were gathered, so that they might attack people. And when it fell out that they [the travellers] had to travel on that terrifying road, they gathered a large crowd together so that they might survive the terror. And in my band there were men and women, old and young and little children such that there were seventy. And then suddenly the Ismaelites came crowding in on horses and camels, and they had long hair ?bound and ?rough hair on their heads; and their bodies were half-naked except that they were wrapped in individual cloaks, and wide shoes hung on their feet and bows on their shoulders, and they carried long spears; and they hadn't come to fight but rather because they wanted to get away with loot. And then we were seized and split up. And then after a while, said Malchus, and after a long time, then I began to regret my journey, and I ended up by lot, with a woman, in the service of a man. Then both of us were on a camel [travelling] through that enormous desert and we were both terrified all the time in case we fell off and crashed down, and it was far more the case that we hung off the camel than sat on it; and our food was half-boiled meat, and our drink was camel's milk' (*OE Malchus*, pp. 201–2).

translator has not tried to render the Latin word-for-word but has expanded it to produce decent vernacular prose. 'Erant . . . uiri, feminae, senes, iuuenes, paruuli', for example, is broken up to form an alliterating pair ('wæron weras and wif'), and a separate triplet ('ealdra manna and iungra and lytelra cilda'); this gives the list a more familiar Old English shape. The physical fear of the camel-ride is vividly but somewhat awkwardly expressed in the Old English: the laconic *semper ruinam timentes* becomes 'wit unc simble ondredon, hwonne wit sceoldon feallan of þam olfende and of ahreosan'.

The translator acknowledges Jerome's authorship of the tale and introduces the first-person narrative with a sentence explaining that the narrator is Malchus. Later in the narrative and again at the end the translator states that Jerome recorded the story from Malchus.[51] The text is subsequently interrupted every so often to insert a phrase such as *cwæð Malchus*.[52] This puts the Old English at one remove from Jerome's original but asserts his authority as the source and emphasises that the story was originally a spoken account. The translator's alterations to the *Vita Malchi* seem intended to render the story as clear as possible for a vernacular audience. This is supported by the translator's treatment of the Saracens. Jerome had presented them initially as nomads wandering near the public road: 'Sarraceni incertis sedibus huc atque illuc semper uagantur'.[53] In the translation this becomes: 'þa wæron þær Sarocine gesamnode, þæt hig sætnodan manna'. In the context of other Latin works which vilified the Saracens or described Cain as a shiftless wanderer, Jerome's simple description of nomadism conveyed a negative image. Perhaps mindful that his audience might not previously have encountered the relevant writings by Jerome or Bede, the Old English translator tells us nothing about the general nomadic nature of the Saracens but credits them instead with a premeditated hostility which clarifies their role as villains from the start.

Part of the didactic significance of the Saracen attack in the Latin *Vita Malchi* was that Malchus suffered slavery because he had strayed from his life as a monk in order to collect an inheritance. This aspect of the story is preserved in the Old English and may indeed have been one reason for its translation.[54] The *Vita Malchi* presented an interesting relationship

[51] 'Sagað her on þissum bocum, hu Malchus spræc, se godes munuc. He cwæð . . .', and 'Hieronimus þa wæs forð sprecende, þe þis ærest awrat be Malchum' (*OE Malchus*, pp. 199 and 207).

[52] For example, 'cwæð Sanctus Malchus' and 'he cwæð' (*OE Malchus*, p. 199).

[53] Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, p. 41.

[54] *OE Malchus*, p. 201.

between the desert as home to the dangerous and corrupting Saracens and the desert as a place in which Malchus can cultivate an eremitic holiness which for him recalls the Old Testament figures of Job and Moses.[55] His solitary contentment turns out to have been delusive and he escapes the Saracen desert in order to return to monastic life. As well as emphasising the need to move on from Old Testament example to a Christian lifestyle, the *Vita Malchi* and OE *Malchus* recommend the cenobitic ideal over that of the solitary hermit, a sentiment which would have found favour among disseminators of Benedictinism.[56] The Old English translation includes the term *Ismaheli* as an alternative name for the Saracens, a collocation which occurs nowhere else in surviving Anglo-Saxon literature. It is unclear how readily comprehensible this name might have been. Anglo-Saxons who had learned Psalm LXXXII with the help of an Old English gloss that rendered *Ismaelitae* as *synnahyrendra* might recall that meaning, which would reinforce an image of the Saracens in opposition to Christian ideals. Unlike the Old English translation of Orosius's *Historiae*, the *Life of Malchus* presents a hostile picture of the Saracens as a people who lived according to *hæþenra þeawe*.[57]

INCIDENTAL NOTICES

The same word, *hæðen*, is used to describe the Saracens in other Old English translations from Latin. A passage in the *Old English Martyrology* relates how Liutprand, the Lombard king, rescued the relics of St Augustine of Hippo from the Saracens:

On ðone ylcan dæg bið Sanctus Agustinus tid þæs bisceopes ond þæs æþelan leorneres; se wæs on Africa londe, ond he þær his dagas geendode, ond he wæs arwyrðlice bebyrged in Sardinia ðære byrig. Ac þa hergodon þa hæðnan Sarcinware on þa stowe. Ða forðon Leodbrond, Longbearda kyning, mid micle feo gebohte Agustinus lichoman ond hine gelædde in Ticinan ða burh, ond hine þær gesette mid gelimplicre are.[58]

[55] *OE Malchus*, p. 202. [56] See Clayton, 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life', p. 167.

[57] Jerome, *Vita Malchi*, pp. 43–4 (PL 23, 56).

[58] 'On the same day [i.e. 28 August] is the feast of St Augustine, bishop and noble scholar. He was in the land of Africa, and he ended his days there, and was interred with honour in the city of Sardinia. But then the heathen Saracens raided the place. Then, therefore, Liutprand, king of the Lombards, bought the body of Augustine for a large price and took it to the city of Pavia and placed it there with all due honour' (*Das altenglische Martyrologium*, ed. Kotzor, II, 191–2).

Bede had already described the same incident in his own *Martyrologium*[59] and the *De temporum ratione*.[60] Neither provides an exact parallel. Perhaps the compiler of the Old English *Martyrology* consulted both works and added *hæðnan* on his own account to clarify the religious status of the Saracens who threatened the sacred relics.[61] The source which Bede himself drew upon remains obscure.[62] Some continental chronicles also contain entries dealing with Liutprand's journey, but, while it remains to establish the exact nature of the relationship between these and Bede's account, it seems that they drew upon his notice, rather than vice versa.[63]

It may have been a notice in a continental chronicle that inspired an entry on the Saracens in one version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the so-called C-text, which was copied in the mid-eleventh century, possibly at Abingdon but possibly (as a more recent editor has argued) at Canterbury.[64] For the year AD 982 it records that the emperor Otto II travelled to Byzantine territory and there encountered a large army of Saracens: 'And þy ilcan geare for Odda Romana casere to Greclande and þa gemette he þara Sarcena mycele fyrde cuman upp of sæ, and woldon þa faran on hergoð on þæt cristene folc'.[65] Otto engaged with the army and eventually defeated them, though not without trouble. The Saracens are not mentioned again, and appear in

[59] 'In Africa depositio sancti Augustini episcopi, qui primo de ciuitate sua propter barbaros in Sardiniam translatus est, et nuper a Liutprando rege Longobardorum Ticinum relatus, et honorifice conditus est' (Bede, *Martyrologium*, PL 92, 1023–4).

[60] CCSL 123B, 535.

[61] *An Old English Martyrology*, ed. Herzfeld, p. xl.

[62] Quentin notes no source earlier than Bede for the account in the *Old English Martyrology* of Augustine's second translation (*Les martyrologes historiques*, pp. 108–9).

[63] For example, see the *Annales Xantenses*, ed. von Arx, MGH SS II, 221 (the wording of which is very close to Bede's). By contrast, brief notices which do not mention the Saracens may be found in the *Annales Wirziburgenses*, ed. von Arx, MGH SS II, 239, and *Ex Adonis chronico*, ed. von Arx, MGH SS II, 318. Contacts between England and the insular establishment at St Gallen are well known. There were also contacts with Würzburg during the eighth and ninth centuries; see Sims-Williams, 'Cuthswith, Seventh-century Abbess of Inkberrow', p. 16, and Cross, 'The Apostles', p. 18. Continental monastic chronicles from the early medieval period contain numerous references to the Saracens which are of considerable interest but do not form part of the present discussion.

[64] Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. xxiv; but see O'Brien O'Keeffe, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C*, pp. lxxiv–xcii and lxxxix–xcii.

[65] O'Brien O'Keeffe, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C*, p. 85; trans. Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 124: 'And the same year Otto, emperor of the Romans, went to the land of the Greeks, and then met a great army of the Saracens coming up from the sea

no other version of the chronicle. It is worth noting too that the parchment is rough at the words *þara Sarcena* with some spreading of ink.[66] Perhaps this indicates a later erasure or insertion of the words. Similar information for the year 982 appears in many chronicles kept on the Continent. A chronicle of St Gallen, for example, gives a detailed account of a difficult battle in 982 between Otto and the Saracens in Byzantine territory.[67] It seems likely that the information in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was copied or summarised from a continental chronicle circulating in England, or that a visitor to a continental centre might have noted the information or heard it reported; or, possibly, that a continental exemplar served to update or refine the account in the English chronicle. The story was perhaps of interest to the Anglo-Saxon who included it in the entry because Otto had English relations.[68]

THE WORKS OF ÆLFRIC

Another battle between Saracens and a Christian emperor was described by Ælfric, the famous scholar and abbot of Eynsham, who flourished around the turn of the tenth century. Ælfric produced a number of works which mentioned Arabs as well as Saracens. However, he separated the peoples in a way that epitomises the almost total distinction between them that seems to have prevailed in Old English literature. The term 'Arab' appears in Ælfric's *Grammar* to illustrate the declension of two words ending in '-abs': 'In ABS geendiað twegen naman, an COMMUNIS GENERIS: *hic et haec Arabs* arabisc man (of þam lande ARABIA), *huius Arabis*'.[69] The other word in the category is *trabs* ('a beam'), which Ælfric explains in a similar way. An interesting aspect of this otherwise rather dry grammatical point is his addition of the Old English adjectival ending *-isc* to the Latin element *arab-*. Since it is not attested outside the works of

[who] wanted to make a raid on the Christian people'. The expedition, as Swanton notes, was to part of southern Italy (p. 124).

[66] O'Brien O'Keeffe, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C*, p. 85, note *s.v.* 982.

[67] *Annales Sangallenses maiores*, ed. von Arx MGH SS I, 80.

[68] In the same entry, the author notes the death during Otto's expedition of another Otto, nephew of Otto II and son of Leodulf, son of Otto I (936–73) and King Edward's daughter (O'Brien O'Keeffe, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C*, p. 85).

[69] Ælfric, *Grammar* [Cameron B1.9.1], ed. Zupitza, p. 65.

Ælfric and is accompanied in the example above by an explanation (*of þam lande ARABIA*), it is possible that he coined the vernacular adjective himself. Ælfric's *Grammar* is the only work surviving from Anglo-Saxon England to define 'Arab' straightforwardly as 'one from Arabia'. Whether or not previous authors had simply taken their readers' comprehension of this point for granted, Ælfric evidently felt it warranted clarification, perhaps as a result of his habitual concern to cultivate a good understanding of Latin amongst his audience in order to bring them closer to God.[70]

Ælfric employs the adjective *arabisc* three times again. Elsewhere in his *Grammar*, it describes the Arab nation as the home of the phoenix, which (Ælfric digresses to explain) is a bird which lives five hundred years, dies and rises again, signifying the resurrection of the body.[71] The same information is repeated at greater length in a passage found only in certain manuscripts of his homily for the first Sunday after Easter.[72] This latter passage also mentions the spices from which the phoenix constructs its nest, but Ælfric neither describes them as characteristic products of Arabia, nor gives any other details about the region or its people.[73] Elsewhere in his *Homilies*, the phrase *arabiscre þeode* describes the nationality of Herodias, daughter of an Arab king and wife of Philippus, in Ælfric's homily on the beheading of John the Baptist.[74]

Ælfric, by contrast, neglects the Ismaelites. They appear by name in the Old English Genesis in a section thought not to have been translated by Ælfric and are described only as the spice-traders to whom Joseph was sold by his brothers: 'hi gesawon twegen Ismahelitisce wegfarende men cuman of Galaad, and læddon wyrtgemang on heora olfendon . . . on Egypta

[70] As Ælfric himself explained in his preface; see Ælfric, *Grammar*, pp. 2–3.

[71] Ælfric, *Grammar*, p. 70: 'In IX PRODUCTAM on lange *ix* geendiað þas naman: *hic Fenix* (swa hatte an fugel on arabiscre ðeode)'.

[72] Ælfric, 'Hwær bið wyrta blostman?', p. 534: 'Sum fugol is gehaten fenix on arabiscre þeode æfre wuniende'. This passage is found appended to Ælfric's *Homily for the First Sunday after Easter* [Cameron B1.1.18].

[73] Another reference to the phoenix and its cinnamon occurs in the *Wonders of the East*, ed. and trans. Orchard, pp. 202–3, where, however, neither is presented as an Arabian wonder.

[74] Ælfric, *Decollation of John the Baptist* [Cameron B1.1.34], ed. Clemoes, p. 452: 'philippus . . . se gewifode on þæs cyninges dehter arethe arabiscre þeode'.

land'.[75] The translator refers to them as Midianites (*Madianisce*) in the same passage.[76] In his version of the book of Judges, Ælfric refers only to Midianites and not also to Ismaelites or Amalekites as in the Vulgate.[77] Nowhere does he identify the Ismaelites as Saracens, nor vice versa. The Saracens instead appear independently in the works of Ælfric as a people who, it seems, required no explanation.

Ælfric portrays the Saracens in one of his homilies as representatives of the desert and non-Christian inheritors of the Promised Land in a role which recalls that of the Ismaelites in the *Reuel.1*. He explains how the Romans harried the land and besieged the city of Jerusalem until the inhabitants starved, while robbers within the walls slew their own compatriots in their hunger. The resulting corpses could not be buried, because of the weakness of the survivors. Instead, because of their stench, they were thrown in hundreds over the wall. The Romans eventually conquered the city, destroyed its walls and temple, and slew the remaining inhabitants, so that the city was afterwards rebuilt elsewhere, and the site which it had previously occupied remained empty ever afterwards. Intriguingly, Ælfric then introduces the Saracens into his picture:

> Ða læddon þa Romaniscan þæt þær to lafe wæs þæs folces,
> fela hund manna, ham to heora burgum.
> And þær naht ne belaf on þam lande þæs cynnes,
> and is swa gefylled þæt, þæt hi foresædon,
> þæt hi wæron benæmode lifes and eardes.
> Is swa ðeah micel dæl þæs mancynnes gehwær
> wide tosawen, and Saracenas habbað
> þone æþelan eard, þe hi ær hæfdon.[78]

[75] 'They saw two Ismaelite travellers coming from Galaad, and bringing spices on their camels . . . to the land of Egypt' (*OE Heptateuch*, ed. Crawford, p. 173). Ismael's descendants appear in the *OE Heptateuch*, ed. Crawford, p. 150. Ismael himself is described in the *OE Heptateuch* and the Old English poem *Genesis*, as in the Old Testament of the Vulgate, as wild and truculent, an enemy to all and opposed by all (*OE Heptateuch*, ed. Crawford, p. 124; *Genesis*, ed. Krapp, ll. 2289–2294a).

[76] On Ælfric's translation in the *OE Version of the Heptateuch*, see Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection* I, 143, and Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's Works', p. 218.

[77] Ælfric, *Old English Judges*, pp. 406–8; cf. Judg. VII.12 and VIII.24.

[78] 'Then the Romans led away what was left of the people, many hundred men, homewards to their cities. And they left none of the tribe there in the land; and so what was foretold is fulfilled, that they would be deprived of life and land. But a great portion of the people is widely scattered everywhere; and the Saracens possess the noble land which they

The implication is that the Saracens, like weeds, moved in when proper civilisation was no longer to be found. The sons of Ismael in *Reuel.1* were far more vividly aggressive, but the principle that they and the Saracens represent the arrival of the wasteland and spiritual desolation in a previously living and holy landscape remains the same.

Another parallel with the *Reuel.1* is found at the end of Ælfric's version of the book of Judges.[79] Here, in a brief historical addition to scripture, Ælfric relates how the emperor Theodosius II (AD 408–50) crossed the Red Sea in pursuit of a captured comrade and was then attacked near the Euphrates by the king of the Persians, who had enlisted the help of a large force of Saracens:

> Þæra Perscis[c]ra cyning wæs ðam casere wiðræde; þa sende he his here him to and he eac gegaderode of þam Saraceniscum swiðe micele fyrde togeanes þam casere; ac Crist him sende to swa micelne ogan, þæt hi hig sylfe adrengton an hund ðusend manna on ðære miclan ea, Eufrates gehaten, and he wolde þa frið.[80]

A military link between the Saracens and the Persians was also indicated by pseudo-Methodius in his account of the second appearance of the sons of Ismael. When the empire of the Persians fell, the Ismaelites (*filii Hismahel, filii Agar*) would rise up in their place or on their behalf against the empire of the Romans (*pro illis aduersus Romanorum imperium*).[81] It is interesting that both pseudo-Methodius and Ælfric should have allied the Saracens or Ismaelites with the Persians against the Romans, especially in conjunction with the fact that both authors describe the Ismaelites or Saracens as the occupiers of a desolate Jerusalem.[82]

once owned' (Ælfric, *Homily for Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent* [Cameron B1.5.4], pp. 68–9).

[79] The text of Ælfric's *Old English Judges* [Cameron B8.1.6] appears in the *OE Version of the Heptateuch*, ed. Crawford, pp. 401–17. The historical 'epilogue' occupies pp. 414–17.

[80] 'The king of the Persians was opposed to the caesar; then he sent his army against him, and he also gathered together a very great force of the Saracenish [people] against the caesar; but Christ sent him such a great terror, that a hundred thousand men drowned themselves in the great river called the Euphrates, and then he desired peace' (Ælfric, *Old English Judges*, p. 416).

[81] *Reuel.1*, p. 80; Salisbury 165, f. 15v. The second recension does not link the Ismaelites and Persians in the same way; cf. *Reuel.2*, p. 11.

[82] It is conceivable that Ælfric learned the information that the Saracens currently occupied the site of Jerusalem from a work such as the *Expositio in Matheum* of Paschasius Radbertus, who also associated Roman and Saracen activity in the city in the same passage (CCCM 56B, 1167); but it may also have been general knowledge at the time.

However, the two accounts have no direct relation with each other: Ælfric's Persians and Saracens fight together against the Romans in the same battle, whereas in the *Reuelationes* the sons of Ismael emerge in opposition to the Romans only after the Persians fall. Unlike the Ismaelite-Persian connection and the Ismaelite occupation of Jerusalem in *Reuel.1*, Ælfric's two accounts are not part of a single narrative: the Roman siege of Jerusalem took place centuries before the lifetime of Theodosius. Furthermore, the source of Ælfric's description of the victory by Theodosius II is readily identifiable as a passage in the *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*, a history attributed to Cassiodorus.[83] The possibility cannot be excluded that Ælfric encountered material from the pseudo-Methodian tradition, but there is no evidence that Ælfric knew any recension of the *Reuelationes* of pseudo-Methodius.[84] The coincidences between the attributes of the Saracens as presented by Ælfric and those of the sons of Ismael in the *Reuel.1* are interesting in that they indicate common Christian perceptions of the Muslims in East and West from the seventh and early eleventh centuries. Like the appearance of Astaroth as the Indian idol in the story of Bartholomew, the

[83] *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*, ed. Hanslik, CSEL 71, 646–50. Ælfric condenses the original account considerably. Elsewhere in his writings, Ælfric drew on this work and the *De rectoribus christianis* by Sedulius Scottus (*fl.* 848) to describe several successful battles waged by the Christian emperors Theodosius I and Theodosius II (*se gingra*) against the heathens. Pope discusses these briefly in the context of a homily by Ælfric on kingship (*Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection* II, 727, 730 and 732); on this homily, 'Wyrdwriteras us secgað' [Cameron B1.4.23] see also Braekman, 'Wyrdwriteras'. Pope notes that the miraculous storm which aided Theodosius I in Ælfric's epilogue to the book of Judges (Ælfric, *Old English Judges*, p. 415) is derived from an earlier account by Sedulius Scottus (*De rectoribus christianis*, pp. 67–8). Ælfric's dependence on the *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* for his account of Theodosius II and the Saracens seems to have gone unremarked. Cf. the homily *De inuentione sanctae crucis* attributed to Bede (PL 94, 494–5), in which divine intervention brings victory to Constantine against a formidable Saracen enemy.

[84] Pope (*Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection* I, p. 164) notes that Ælfric knew Adso's *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*, which, as Sackur indicated, shares certain traits with the pseudo-Methodian tradition (*Sibyllinische Texte*, p. 102). As mentioned above, the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister was influenced by pseudo-Methodian material and was also known in Anglo-Saxon England. Anlezark ('The Old Testament Patriarchs', pp. 94–101) discusses the possibility that pseudo-Methodian material influenced Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies, but concludes that a more likely source is traditional material from the Syrian *Book of the Cave of Treasures* (which Anlezark states to be the ultimate source of the *Reuelationes*, but see above, pp. 141–2).

Indian idol of the sun in the story of Thomas and the *india saracenorum* of the *Durham Ritual*, they show that Christian authors independently tended to link the Saracens with the names of other non-Christian eastern peoples and gods, and attributed to them qualities such as idolatry, carnage, ruin and barrenness which were antithetical to the Christian ideal.

Ælfric evidently felt no need to explain his references to the Saracens and their anti-Christian activity. Given his well-known concern that his writings should be understood by a lay audience, this suggests that Ælfric was confident that the name of the Saracens would be recognised by the less literate.[85] References such as the *india saracina* of the *Durham Collectar* and the *sarcena* of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* show that, by the end of the eleventh century, Saracens were known in Anglo-Saxon England outside a highly educated Latin context. Earlier works continued to exert an influence: examples of Saracens mentioned by Orosius and Jerome were transferred into the vernacular through the *OE Orosius* and *Life of Malchus*. However, the method of selection of texts for translation seems to have limited the kind of information about the Saracens which became available in Old English. Exegetes such as Jerome and Bede had manipulated the idea of the Saracens in their role as Ismaelites to help define the identity of Christians and the still-young Christian church. Such sophisticated exercises remained a Latinate preserve. Vernacular writings conveyed a simpler and more concrete image, nonetheless effective as a basic tool of Christian teaching, and presumably deemed more accessible (and less prone to misinterpretation) for unlearned minds. While Ælfric very probably knew of the etymology that identified the Saracens as Ismaelites, he leaves no clue of it in his Old English works.

[85] Cf. Ælfric's description in *The Passion of St Thomas* of an unfamiliar Roman building constructed for the king of India: 'swylc weorc nis gewunelic to wyrcenne on englalonde/ and forþy we ne secgað swutellice heora naman' (p. 404). Ælfric elsewhere revised the details of eastern settings as they appeared in his sources, presumably to suit the Anglo-Saxon lay imagination; the desert in which his John the Baptist appears, for example, is described as a wood (Saunders, 'Vox Clamantis', pp. 19–21). Cf. also the fears Ælfric expressed in his preface to Genesis regarding the encounter of *sum dysig man* with the Old Testament (*Old English Preface to Genesis*, p. 76) and the cautious treatment by the Old English translator of the story of Hagar's concubinage (the translation is discussed in detail by Anlezark in 'The Old Testament Patriarchs', pp. 247–56). If the Saracens were *nis gewunelic . . . on englalonde*, one imagines that Ælfric would have offered some explanation.

It is true that basic elements of the earlier erudite accounts entered Old English: the translation of Jerome's *Vita Malchi* provided a connection between the Ismaelites and the Saracens (though it did not explain it according to the etymology disseminated by Jerome) and various psalter-glosses rendered *Ismahelitarum* as *synnahyrendra*, which, as indicated above, also derives from the exegesis of Jerome. Without being integrated within a larger structure of ideas about the Ismaelites, such elements would hardly have conveyed the detailed image of the Saracens available to an ecclesiastic such as Bede. However, they encapsulate the central notion, shared by the patristic writings, that the Saracens were hateful aliens. They also accord perfectly with newly arriving contemporary information about the Muslim conquests as represented by the entry on Otto II and his victory over the Saracens in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

The purpose of translating and glossing in Old English was presumably to make texts available, whether through reading or listening, to a wider audience than only the thoroughly Latinate. By the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, this wider audience had potentially heard of all three peoples of the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens, but it was the Saracens who appeared most frequently in the vernacular and in the most varied contexts. To what extent Anglo-Saxons also talked about the Saracens can only be guessed at. The letters from Alcuin and Boniface indicate that the Saracens provided a topic of conversation for Latin scholars on the Continent in the eighth century. The fact that they wrote home suggests that this was also the case in England, if only for some; but if Christian literacy initially brought new conceptions of space and time only to the Latinate among the Anglo-Saxons, these conceptions were evidently deemed important enough to articulate in Old English too. The audiences of the *Historiae* by Orosius, the *Historia ecclesiastica* by Bede and their Old English translations could conceive of the Saracens as contemporary marauders on the Continent whose homeland lay east of Egypt. Later Saracen appearances (in India in the *Durham Collectar* and among the ruins of Jerusalem in Ælfric's homily) indicate that they were no longer necessarily confined to texts directly translated from Latin sources and also that the authors who mentioned them knew they would be recognisable to Anglo-Saxons with little Latin education. Perhaps a development in Christian literary sensibilities regarding the Saracens may also be observed. Malchus became a slave to the Saracens, and Cassian's monks were martyred in one of their raids. Bede recorded with satisfaction

that the Saracens received a just reward for their wickedness in Gaul. In later years, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Reuel.1*, *Reuel.2* and Ælfric described armies of Saracens defeated by Christian emperors in battle. However, the question of just how widespread such ideas had become across the Channel by the time Pope Urban preached the First Crusade does not lie within the bounds of the present discussion.

9

Persisting theories about Saracens in post-Conquest England

> Hast thou not, close at hand, the Ishmaelite
> To cut thee work out, more then thou canst do?
> Camões, *The Lusiads*, trans. Sir R. Fanshawe, ll. 792–3

Soon after the Norman Conquest, a group of the more important English ecclesiastical institutions began what appears to have been an organised programme of copying patristic Latin texts from continental exemplars. During the next few decades (the first half of the twelfth century) this programme of copying seems to have spread outwards into smaller centres so that they, too, developed libraries of desirable texts which remained attached to the institution rather than to an individual (as book-collections had tended to do in Anglo-Saxon England). The second quarter of the twelfth century saw a dramatic increase in the number of texts being imported and copied throughout England. Desirable texts were, primarily, exegesis and classical writings. The four church fathers are well represented from this period, along with many secular Latin works and some in Greek. Scientific texts were also copied, as were contemporary biblical commentaries by continental authors.[1] It is safe to say that antiquated information about the Saracens continued to be newly circulated even as Christian European writers and readers got to grips with new texts about them – eye-witness accounts of the Crusades, pilgrims' tales and the like – and also new texts from

[1] Space does not permit a fuller discussion of literary developments in England during the twelfth century but see, for example, Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, pp. 4–20; Thomson, 'The Norman Conquest and English Libraries', pp. 27 and 33–9; Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 62–3; and, on a centre which acquired some unusual texts early in its library career, Thomson, 'The Library of Bury St Edmunds Abbey', especially pp. 624–33.

them – scientific literature and translations of religious works, including the Qur'ān.[2] This is not to suggest that post-Conquest readers, any more than Anglo-Saxon readers, took whatever Jerome or Isidore or Cassian had written on the Arabs or Saracens as an eternal verity on the topic. However, it appears that some readers of these authors felt that there was at least a grain of truth in the antique accounts.

Meanwhile, everyday relationships between commentator and Saracen had altered profoundly. Jerome had encountered the nomadic Saracen tribes as a result of his own move to the Syrian desert. Bede remained in England while news of Saracen encroachments abroad came to him along with peppercorns traded from India. During the first half of the tenth century, Adémar of Chabannes, who lived in Angoulême, west of Limoges, implies that Saracen speech was a comparatively familiar benchmark by which to judge the oddity of northern African dialects.[3] A list of decretals from northern France in the twelfth century declares that no one, cleric or lay,

[2] Even before 1130 this is apparent from the manuscript record. Paschasius Radbertus's commentary on Matthew, which displays a clear understanding of the name and function of the mosque, is known to have been copied in England in partial form (Preface and Book 1) before 1130 (Gameson, 81e). This compares with two copies of Jerome's *In Ezechielem*, in which Saracens are identified as Ismaelites (Gameson 153 and 758), four copies of *In Hieremiam*, containing comments on Saracens as Ismaelites (Gameson 155, 462, 573 and 829), five copies of *In Isaiam* asserting that the wrongly named Saracens are Ismaelites (Gameson 156, 156, 219, 684 and 830), five copies of *LQHGen* noting that Saracens are the violent descendants of Ismael and seven copies of *In prophetas minores*, in which Jerome mentions Saracen worship of Venus (Gameson 28, 140, 196, 220, 469, 470 and 720) – not to mention (on the subject of Venus) a copy of the *Vita S. Hilarionis* (Gameson 919). Similarly, Arab scholarship is represented by a single copy of Qusta ibn Lūqā's *De physicis ligaturis* (Gameson 349) while Isidore's *Etymologiae* (repeating Jerome on the subject of Saracens as Ismaelites) appears twenty-one times (Gameson 164e, 250e, 264, 279e, 280e, 404e, 500e, 521, 545e, 548e, 565e, 567e, 571, 652, 737, 764e, 768e, 777e, 779e, 799e and 853). It is not that contemporary facts about Saracens were unavailable; they were at this stage simply outnumbered by new copies of old texts.

[3] Adémar describes an incident which took place during Christian–Muslim struggles around Narbonne: 'Christiani . . . bello inuaserunt Agarenos, et uictoria potiti sunt, omnesque aut morte aut captiuitate cum nauibus et multis spoliis eorum retinuerunt, et captiuos aut uendiderunt aut seruire fecerunt, et Sancto Marciali Lemouice uiginti Mauros corpore enormes transmiserunt dono muneris'. The abbot wisely retained only two of the enormous Moorish captives in his service and divided the remainder among a number of pilgrims. Of the speech of the Africans, Adémar writes: 'Loquela eorum nequaquam erat Sarracenisca, sed more catulorum loquentes, glatire uidebantur' ('Their speech was not at all like Saracen;

shall be caught with a *pilleum Turcorum* – apparently a Turkish or Turkish-style felt cap.[4] In what surely constitutes an extreme of intimacy with the Ismaelites, the twelfth-century historian Orderic Vitalis describes a monastic household that employed as cook a Saracen who was also brother-in-law to the prior. Presumably the 'Saracen' was not a Muslim. This episode is examined in more detail below.

Despite the increased contacts between Christian and Muslim cultures, and despite increasing mutual knowledge among representatives of the faiths, early Latin analyses continued to inform later Latin and, eventually, English polemic, commentaries, histories and other writings on Islam. From the creation of the Vulgate Bible through the Islamic conquests to the Crusades, the learned pursuit of assimilating Saracens within a hostile and purportedly scriptural tradition survived far beyond the twelfth century. The idea of Saracens as Ismaelites and Hagarenes continued in England and abroad, often, ultimately, traceable to Jerome's writings. In many later cases, the author does explain the names *Ismaelitae* or *Agarenae*, but sometimes still puts them into an exegetical context intended to influence contemporary understanding and even action. In the late twelfth century, for example, William of Tyre (commenting from the East) reported that Pope Urban had described the Prophet as a descendant of Hagar and had presented St Paul's citation of Genesis on Hagar, *eice ancillam et filium suum*, as a literal injunction to Christian listeners to expel the Muslims ([*Sarraceni*] . . . *gens impia et inmundarum*) from Jerusalem.[5]

rather, speaking like puppies, they appeared to yap'); Adémar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, CCCM 129, 171.

[4] 'De pilleis. Item ut nullus clericus aut laicus habeat pilleum Turcorum'; *Consuetudines: Canonicorum regularium ordinis Arroasiensis constitutiones*, c. 234, ll. 1–2; CCCM 20, 213. This laconic interdiction is intriguing: did the fashionable set of northern France take to wearing imitation Turkish headgear in the wake of the First Crusade? Visibility of religion may have influenced the decretal; the following entry indicates that the beards of converts must be shaven but they may not cut their hair *urbano more*.

[5] William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, CCCM 63, 132; see above, p. 24, n. 61, for the relevant passage. The same definition appears in the writings of Bernard of Pavia and several other canonists, some published as late as the sixteenth century; see Kedar, '*De Iudeis et Sarracenis*', p. 212 and n. 21. Urban is recorded elsewhere as having sermonised that the Saracens were falsely so called, being actually Hagarenes: 'Paucos ante annos, gens a Perside Agarena, quam corrupte Sarracenam dicitis, sanctam ciuitatem Hierusalem, sanctamque terram inuadens, cepit, diripuit, incendit' (Urban, *Sermones*, PL 151, 580).

Post-conquest use of patristic example could vary a good deal. A few examples will suffice to set the scene. During the first decades of the twelfth century, Orderic Vitalis – born near Shrewsbury in 1075 and educated in England until the age of ten, subsequently a monk of Saint-Evroul in Normandy – began to compose his famous *Historia æcclesiastica*, a Latin account of Norman and English history.[6] In the seventh book of this work, Orderic described an unfortunate case of food-poisoning which befell Robert, abbot of St Eufemia in Brescia:

> Nam quidam genere Sarracenus arte pistoria Brixensi cenobio seruiebat. Hic sororem Willelmi prioris . . . in matrimonio habebat, et pro quadam latenti causa satisque parua occultum contra abbatem odium gestabat. Unde instinctu diaboli ferculum eius ueneno corrupit, imitatus Ismahelem patrem suum qui ferali ludo simplicem Isaac grauare studuit.[7]

Orderic's literary treatment of the Saracen is, by now, familiar to any reader who has also read Bede or Jerome on the Saracens. He identifies the baker as a son of Ismael and implies that malice and susceptibility to the devil's promptings are characteristic of the man's ancestry. Orderic then cites what sounds like a scriptural antecedent or type for the poisoning incident, but Genesis describes only Ismael at play.[8] To find a scene comparable with that described by Orderic, we must again turn to patristic exegesis and, specifically, to the works of Augustine, who commented on Gen. XXI.8–10: 'Ludebant simul Ismael et Isaac; uidit illos Sara ludentes, et ait Abrahae: "Eice ancillam et filium eius" . . . illa lusio, illusio erat; illa lusio deceptionem significabat'.[9] He goes on to cite St Paul's allegorisation of Ismael as the worldly community that persecutes Isaac, the spiritual community. Augustine focuses on the deeper implications of play and frivolity, exemplified in his own significant word-play *illa lusio, illusio erat*. Orderic recalls this or a similar conceit with the words *ferali ludo*, and the parallel is indeed

[6] Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History*, I, 2–5 and 79.

[7] 'It happened that a man of Saracen blood served as a baker in the Brescian monastery; he had married a sister of Prior William . . . and for some unknown but trivial reason nourished a grudge against the abbot. So at the instigation of the devil he put poison in his food, imitating his father Ishmael, who in an ominous game tried to harm the unsuspecting Isaac' (Orderic Vitalis, *Historia æcclesiastica*, IV, 22; trans. Chibnall, p. 23).

[8] See Chibnall's note (*The Ecclesiastical History* IV, 23–4, n. 5) and Gen. XXI.8–10.

[9] 'Ismael and Isaac were playing together; Sarah saw them playing and said to Abraham, "Cast out the handmaid and her son" . . . that play was a ploy; that play meant perfidy' (Augustine, *In Iohannis*, CCSL 36, 117).

apt: the food prepared by the Saracen baker appears wholesome but proves deadly (the abbot dies after thirteen days). Like Jerome and Bede, Orderic presented the Saracens of his own day according to the terms of established exegesis. It is not possible to understand his analysis of the Saracen without resorting to Augustine's analysis of Ismael as the persecutor of Isaac (or a similar text), and it is not possible to understand Augustine's references to the worldly and spiritual communities without resorting to Paul's letter to the Galatians, which in its turn draws upon the original Old Testament story of Abraham, Hagar, Sarah and Ismael in the book of Genesis. The event may have taken place in the twelfth century, but its representation by Orderic rests squarely within a much older exegesis.

Orderic's commentary on a contemporary Ismaelite Saracen seems to have circulated only as widely as his *Historia aecclesiastica* and was not, for example, translated into English before the modern period. Other works known to English readers, in which authors attempted to integrate a variety of statements about Arabs, Saracens and Ismaelites, did much better. During the thirteenth century, Jacobus de Voragine (*c.* 1230–98) composed his famous *Legenda aurea* or *Legenda sanctorum*. This work was reproduced in great numbers over the next few hundred years; well over a thousand manuscripts are known to survive, it was translated into various vernaculars (including English) and from *c.* 1470 it was printed widely and often throughout Europe. The section of the Latin original that deals with the life of Pelagius contains a long digression on the life and teachings of Muhammad, who is introduced as a fraud: 'Magumethus pseudo propheta et magus Agarenos siue Ismaelitas, id est Saracenos, hoc modo decepit . . .'[10] After describing how God tells Muhammad that he has rescued the prophet from poverty and idolatry, the author notes: 'Vniuersa enim gens Arabum cum Magumetho Venerem pro dea colebat et inde est quod adhuc sexta feria apud saracenos in magna veneratione habetur, sicut apud iudeos sabbatum et apud christianos dies dominica colitur'.[11] It must be assumed that a Latinate audience would supply the necessary information that *sexta feria* is also *dies Veneris* in order to understand the point. The passage is interesting for the way in which it places a hard fact about Islam – the Friday worship – in the

[10] Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Maggioni, II, 1261.

[11] 'For all the people of the Arabs along with Muhammad worshipped Venus as a goddess and thence it is that to this day the sixth day is held in great veneration among the Saracens, as the Sabbath is respected by the Jews and the Lord's day by Christians' (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Maggioni, II, 1263).

grip of very ancient ideas about pre-Muhammadan Saracen Venus-worship, even though the author had already acknowledged Muslim monotheism.[12] If Jacobus is drawing on Jerome directly here, it is as though he sees his opportunity to reinstate the reassuring concept *adhuc* which Jerome had expressed using *hucusque* so many centuries before, and which Bede had removed when he updated Jerome in mentioning a cult of Venus to which the Saracens had previously been addicted.

Reginald of Canterbury, who lived and wrote during the second half of the eleventh century and the first decade of the twelfth, travelled in just the opposite direction from Orderic Vitalis and shows a quite different relationship with his chosen patristic source. Reginald grew up in an area of northern France which he calls *Fagia*, probably Faye-la-Vineuse in north-east Poitou, and travelled to England after the Norman Conquest, arriving some time around or before 1092.[13] In 1082 he had begun to write a long verse-account of the life of Malchus based on the Latin story by Jerome. Some time between 1095 and 1107, while Reginald was resident in England, he finished this huge work and sent ten copies to various high-ranking ecclesiastical friends, some of whose responses survive along with a number of manuscripts containing the poem itself.[14] Although it enjoyed a limited circulation, Reginald's *Vita Malchi* is notable for its re-portrayal of the Saracens as pagans in the classical style. Their first appearance fits fairly well with Jerome's account. Malchus decides to return home from his monastery in order to collect his inheritance, and passes through the desert on the way (*arida, terribilis, sterili salsugine vilis*). In this waste lurk the Saracens, eager for prey:

> Has ita damnatas mortalibus atque negatas
> Terras centeni peragrare solent Saraceni,
> Causa praedandi, vastandi seu iugulandi.[15]

The detailed description which follows of the Saracens' appearance, mounts and intentions also follows Jerome and some of the earlier writer's

[12] 'Cum christianis autem conueniunt quia credunt unum solum deum omnipotentem omnium creatorem' (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Maggioni, II, 1262).

[13] Reginald of Canterbury, *Vita S. Malchi*, ed. Lind, pp. 9–10.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 11. Lind describes surviving manuscripts on pp. 21–5.

[15] 'So Saracens by the hundred are accustomed to traverse these lands that are lost and unknown to mortals, for looting, despoiling and slaughter' (*ibid*., p. 56, ll. 296–8). Cf. Jerome's words; see above, pp. 110–11.

vocabularly is reproduced: Reginald has 'Gentes crinite campis . . . Moabite . . . Et capiti uittas graciles . . . Portant' where Jerome portrays 'Ismaelitae . . . crinitis uittatisque capitibus'; according to Reginald, 'Ex umero pharetre pendent ferrugine tetre', while Jerome has 'pendebant ex humero pharetrae', and so forth. The final picture is certainly one of a primitive and violent desert people, named again as Saracens at the end of the passage: 'Heu Saracenorum subito fit praeda malorum'.[16]

Later, however, Reginald's Saracens drift away somewhat from what we might expect from a twelfth-century writer. There is nothing to identify the bandits of this story with the later Muslim Saracens who had created such an impression with their military and cultural successes. Reginald appears to be writing a poem which is set firmly in the past, no matter what its contemporary significance for monastic communities, and in which Saracens as aptly as any other ancient people may be subjected to a distinctly classicising trend. Two of Reginald's more whimsical interpolations (of which there are many, of a more or less digressive nature) are the scenes in which the desert captors pause to worship a number of gods and then compete for prizes in sports such as horse-racing and discus-throwing. Their deities include the god Pan, satyrs, Fortune, the moon, fauns, nymphs, Jupiter, Juno, stars (both *astra* and *stellae*), Thetis, dryads and Silvanus.

At first reading it appears that Reginald's enthusiasm for the antique has almost entirely absorbed the original character of the Saracens. To an extent this is the case; he loses the simplicity which made Jerome's version so much like a parable and which portrayed the Saracens as anonymous, violent, unchaste and vengeful. But Reginald's list of deities, as well as allowing him to show off his classical expertise within a metrical scheme, also reflects a tendency for Christian authors to attribute obscure forms of idolatry to the Saracens, especially during the twelfth century. In this respect the poem is a product of its time.

This is not to suggest, for example, that Reginald's *Vita Malchi* could provide us with a source for what Norman Daniel calls the Saracen pantheon, but his desert-dwelling *pagani* do demonstrate an authorial attempt to integrate classical stereotypes with Christian themes and concerns – an attempt perhaps made less ambitiously by vernacular authors with their inclusion of Apollyon and Jupiter among Saracen deities in the *chansons de geste*. The authors of the *chansons* used old or old-sounding godheads at least

[16] All these quotations *ibid.*, p. 57, ll. 313–32.

partly to add spice to their Saracens and put them clearly in the religious wrong. Otherwise, the Muslim enemies were defined according to strictly chivalrous terms and, moreover, were indubitably a contemporary subject. Reginald's programme is different from Jerome's in that Malchus's captors are much more antique Romans than they are Saracens. Characters are picked out of the crowd and given names and individuality from the beginning of the second book and, while some happen to be Saracens, there are other Arabian types among the pagan throng. Malchus's master is one such Saracen but he is distinguished from others by his skill in astronomy. The virtue of Jerome's simple account, in which a featureless mass of Saracens extended, as it were, one anonymous pseudopod in the form of the unchristian master over Malchus, was to imprison an individual conscience within the consequences of its ill actions and so lead it into contemplation and thereby some spiritual renewal. Reginald's Saracens are too individual (and lengthily described) to act as a mere foil for Malchus's journey of the soul, and too often referred to as *pagani*.[17] Their closest relatives may, strangely enough, be the named polytheistic individuals who feature as villains and sometimes (converted) heroes in the Crusade romances.

A similar process – the diminishment of recognisably Saracen content in a reworking of a Hieronymian text – can be observed much later in Caxton's translation of Jerome's *Vitas Patrum*. The English version (cited in the edition by de Worde in 1495) contains the stories of Hilarion and Malchus, but the Saracens of Jerome's original are conspicuous chiefly by their absence. Of the Saracen Venus-worshippers of Elusa, whom Hilarion persuaded into monotheism, Caxton writes: '. . . alle the peple were assembled for to doo sacrefyce to the Temple of Venus. In that Temple were many Paynems' but no more is said about their identity.[18] Similarly, in the story of Malchus, the Saracens only appear once as a rather vague collective threat to Malchus

[17] Between ll. 402 and 454 (end of book 1 and beginning of book 2), Reginald refers to the desert captors in four section titles: 'Ubi Pagani Illicitis Utuntur', 'Ubi Pagani Suos Laudant Deos', 'Ubi Pagani Sortes Iaciunt et Praedam Dividunt' (which detail from the original perhaps inspired Reginald's idea of the pagan games) and 'Ubi Pagani Ludunt Cum Cestibus'. Later, a contestant in one of the games is referred to as a Saracen, but others of the group are identified as belonging to different peoples. Malchus's master is described as a Saracen and also a magician skilled in reading the stars.

[18] Compare Jerome describing 'omnem oppidi populum in templum Veneris congregauerat. Colunt autem illam ob Luciferum, cuius cultui Saracenorum natio dedita est'; he refers to Saracens again in the next sentence (*Vita S. Hilarionis*, PL 23, 41).

and his companion as they flee.[19] Otherwise, the desert captors are referred to as *theues* when they first attack and Malchus's master is called a *lorde*. No mention at all is made of them as Ismaelites. This is all the more striking since other Oriental details of the story, such as being carried on camelback and subsisting on raw meat and camels' milk, are faithfully preserved.[20]

ADAPTATION AND SURVIVAL

The contrasts in the early twelfth century between Orderic Vitalis's handling of patristic material and Reginald of Canterbury's reworking of the *Vita Malchi* point towards the continual shifting of information about Saracens as authors put it to new use. Changes to their sources naturally reflect the individual desires of the (re-)writers who made those changes, and they also reflect different ways in which received information about the Saracens could develop. On the one hand, information could be synthesised: new information was made to conform with the old and was integrated, or old information was restated so that it could absorb new information and become so much the more valid a statement about contemporary Saracens. Bede achieved this in his 'updating' of Jerome on Saracen bellicosity; Orderic does the same in his treatment of the Saracen baker, and something similar can be seen in the appearance of Venus in the *Legenda aurea*. On the other hand, information could dwindle away or be altered in subsequent retellings until the Saracens no longer really constituted significant content. This is what seems to have happened in Aethicus Ister's garbled adaptation of Jerome's commentary on Amos, which came to refer to Turks and Saturn instead of to Saracens and Venus; it may also be evident in Reginald of Canterbury's partial transmogrification of Jerome's Saracens into classical pagans, and in the vanishment *en masse* of Saracens in Caxton's translation of *Vitas Patrum*.

Critics of Said's model of 'latent Orientalism' (which he extends, roughly speaking, from the beginnings of Greek literature to the present day) have

[19] 'They ranne . . . more by nyghte thanne by daye. By cause they fered the Sarrasyns. And also for to eschewe the grete hete of the daye' (Caxton, trans., *Vitas Patrum*, p. liii).

[20] 'For in comynge from Heroa for to goo in to Edysse we were robbyd of theues. And we were bitwene thre score & foure score in a companye. Emonge whom was taken a wife of one of my companye. And we were caryed upon two camellys unto the house of a lorde. And in goynge thyder we ete noo thynge but rawe flesshe. And dranke milke of camellis . . .'; Caxton, trans., *Vitas Patrum*, p. lii; cf. Jerome, cited above, pp. 110–11.

already noted that it does not take satisfactory account of the variety of opinions and perceptions expressed and displayed by western Europeans during different periods. As mentioned above, the deficiency of the Orientalism theory is already suggested in Nabil Matar's research on British attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire and Islam during the Renaissance. British perceptions of Ottoman Islam might have been characterised by hostility, but not by smugness; Islamic empire was too powerful, too advanced and (in some cases) too attractive to be 'possessed' by the West in the certainty of their European and Christian superiority.[21] Detailed analysis of the writings of a period show not only that responses towards varieties of Islam were many and different but that it is difficult, and likely misleading, to generalise plausibly about those responses.

The fact that Latinate authors in Anglo-Saxon England had thought the Saracens claimed Abrahamic descent might, by now, appear to be a distinctive feature of that particular period (as indeed it was). But the fact that Latinate writers continued to express the same idea throughout the Crusades and the late Middle Ages and then adapted it for use into the Renaissance and beyond argues for something less limited than a period feature (though perhaps more precise than 'latent Orientalism' in terms of demonstrable textual transmission).[22] Amidst all the change, the literary cross-currents and multifarious personal experience and the rising tide of what we are by now able to call more or less factual representations of Islam – all of which are absent from the very partial discussion below – some theories about the Saracens remained unchanged from generation to generation.

It is not possible within the space of a chapter (and perhaps not even within the space of another book) to explore fully the survival or re-emergence of late antique and early medieval ideas about the Saracens after the First Crusade. Other scholars have in any case gone over much of the

[21] 'In light of the Muslim impact on English commerce and society, it is not surprising that in their early modern relations with the Muslims, English writers did not express either the authority of possessiveness or the security of domination which later gave rise to what Edward Said has termed "Orientalism" ' (Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 11).

[22] Said and Matar mention European treatments of the Ismael/Hagar connection: Said, *Orientalism*, p. 268 (Massignon on Islam as the religion of Ismael and therefore of an excluded people), and Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 157 ('bastardy' of the Saracens due to their descent from Hagar). Neither author locates the Islam/Ismael topos within the longer tradition of the Saracens as Ismaelites.

ground already, and it would be both tedious and unnecessary to repeat the findings of Daniel, Kedar, Matar and indeed Said himself. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to illustrate the idea of a continuing tradition in post-Conquest English thought by roughly tracing it through the survival of two specific theories: first, the notion that the Saracens, more properly called Ismaelites or Hagarenes, had changed their name in order to claim descent from Sarah; and, secondly and more briefly, the notion that the Saracens were devoted to Venus. Both these ideas originated in exegesis of the Old Testament, as has been illustrated in the preceding chapters, and had been disseminated in western Europe largely as a result of the popularity of Jerome's commentaries and other writings.

It should be noted that similar ideas almost certainly occurred to different authors at different times. Even texts from the earlier centuries of the Middle Ages resist the drawing-together of all examples of Oriental Venus-worship, for example, partly because of continuing classical influences. It was, perhaps, the appealing solidity of concepts such as 'Hagar' and 'Venus' that helped to crystallise notions of Saracen illegitimacy or venality repeatedly around the same 'factual' core.

The catalogue below is provided in order to hint at how pre-Conquest ideas subsequently survived and developed in English writings. It is intended only to illustrate that such survival did take place and – it is hoped – to prompt further research into an interesting field which still has something to offer to contemporary theories of the Other.

Theory 1: the Saracens named themselves so, obscuring their descent from Hagar

As described above, this idea seems to have originated in exegesis of Genesis XVI, which Paul then allegorised in the New Testament in his letter to the Galatians. In Latin writings, the exegesis was combined with the information that the nomadic tribes of northern Arabia and the Sinai peninsula are called *Saraceni*. Jerome thus introduced the Saracens into his commentaries with reference to the appropriate section of Genesis to support his belief that they were in fact Ismaelites who had named themselves (falsely) after Sarah. During subsequent centuries, other authors appropriated the idea and either cited Jerome verbatim (as did Isidore) or reworded it (as did Bede). The Latin texts outlining this idea were not translated into Old English, although one mention of the Ismaelites survives translation in the Old English *Life of Malchus*, in a context which suggests to the reader or

hearer that they are the same people as the Saracens. However, Orderic's piece of twelfth-century exegesis on the Brescian Saracen cook shows that the received wisdom was still viable in new Latin contexts.

A later and equally impressive example of the encounter between received wisdom and new information occurs in the writing of Matthew Paris (*c.* 1200–1259), a monk of St Alban's and a historian interested (and able) in political matters. His best-known work, the *Chronica Maiora*, describes history from creation until AD 1259. The *Chronica* is largely based on a chronicle by Matthew's colleague, Roger of Wendover, but Matthew adds his own observations and embellishments and, from 1235, is an original source for history of the period. Under the year 1236, Paris observes:

De Sarracenis
Sarraceni peruerse se putant ex Sarra dici; sed uerius Agareni dicuntur ab Agar, et Ismaelitae ab Ismaele filio Abrahae. Habraham enim genuit Ismaelem ex Agar ancilla. Hismael genuit Calcar; Calcar genuit Neptis; Neptis genuit Alumesca . . . Abdelmelibe genuit Mauia; Mauia genuit Abderrachaman, qui secundum alios Abdimenef dictus est, qui genuit Machometh, qui nunc ueneratur et colitur a Sarracenis, tanquam summus Propheta eorum. Et sciendum quod Mahometh, Mahumeth, Macometus, Machomectus, Mahum, Maho, idem significant per diuersas linguas. Post Machomectum fuit successor tam regni quam superstitionis Catab; post eum Homar, qui contemporaneus fuit Cosdroe, quem imperator Eraclius interfecit.[23]

Matthew's immediate source for the first sentence, which opens the chapter on the Saracens, is almost certainly James of Vitry (*c.* 1160–1240) in his influential *Historiae Hierosolomytanae*. However, James does not include the genealogy of Ismael, and his description is not so full as Matthew's. What is most striking about the account is its integrated quality. Matthew purports to state his case completely and with authority. He includes a full genealogy

[23] 'The Saracens perversely believe themselves to be named after Sarah; but they are more rightly called Hagarenes, from Hagar, and Ismaelites from Ismael the son of Abraham. For Abraham begat Ismael of Hagar the handmaid. Ismael begat Calcar; Calcar begat Neptis; Neptis begat Alumesca . . . Abdelmelibe begat Mavia; Mavia begat Abderrachaman, who according to others is named Abdimenef, who begat Machometh [Muhammad], who is now venerated and adored by the Saracens, as the greatest of their Prophets. And it should be known that Mahometh, Mahumeth, Macometus, Machomectus, Mahum, Maho, mean the same in various languages. After Muhammad the successor of the kingdom as of the sect was 'Catab'; after him, 'Umar, who was contemporary with Chosroes, whom the emperor Heraclius killed' (Matthew Paris, *Chronica maiora*, RS 57, III, 344).

for Muhammad (with 'Catab' representing 'al-Kitāb' – 'the book', i.e. the Qur'ān), he lists forms of Muhammad's name 'which mean the same in different languages', and he nonchalantly locates 'Umar in time as the contemporary of Chosroes II (emperor 591–628) and Heraclius (emperor 610–641), rulers respectively of the Sāsanid and Byzantine empires. All this demonstrates to the reader Matthew's control over disparate languages and histories. At the same time, his impressive account all follows the initial, definitive statement that the Saracens are so called because they believe themselves to be descended from Sarah, and that they are in fact descended from Hagar through Ismael. As represented by Matthew Paris, Latin scholarship sees itself in a position to know more about the Saracens than the Saracens know, or will admit, about themselves. One may note too that the apparently Arab genealogy posits Ismael as ancestor of Muhammad, which a contemporary European audience must have taken as additional confirmation of the earlier Christian view: after all, the Saracens themselves traced their prophet back to Ismael! There is no indication that Matthew recognised the ancestry to have been honourable in Muslim tradition in returning to the elder son of the patriarch (and first monotheist) Abraham, and dishonourable only according to Christian exegesis; it is also worth noting that the Muslim tradition makes no mention of the name *Saracenus* or of an etymology from *Sara*, since they are Christian constructions.

Just over a century later, Ranulf Higden (*d.* 1364) wrote his own popular history, entitled *Polychronicon*. This work survives in many manuscripts and was also translated into English, once by Trevisa and also anonymously, *c.* 1440.[24] The theory of the Saracens as false claimants to descent from Sarah appears in it twice. The first example comes in a section of the work describing regions of the earth and the geographical peculiarities therein. On Cedar, Higden writes:

Cedar est regio in superiori parte Palaestinae, quam incoluit Cedar primogenitus Ismaelis, et post eum Ismaelitae, qui uerius dicuntur Agareni quam Saraceni, quia de Agar ancilla matre Ismaelis sunt progeniti; sed nomen de Sara sibi usurparunt.[25]

[24] On the sources and influence of the *Polychronicon*, see Edwards, 'The Influence and Audience of the *Polychronicon*', pp. 113–17, and Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle*, pp. 72–88 and 134–48. Taylor lists 117 surviving copies of the work and nine fragments (pp. 152–9).

[25] 'Kedar is a region in the upper part of Palestine, which Kedar, firstborn of Ismael, inhabited, and after him the Ismaelites, who are more rightly called Hagarenes than Saracens, since they are descended from the handmaid and the mother of Ismael, Hagar; but they usurped the name of Sarah to themselves' (Higden, *Polychronicon*, RS 41, I, 126).

The phrase *uerius dicuntur Agareni* suggests that Matthew Paris may have provided the source for this part of the comment on the Ismaelites; the rest of the explanation is more abbreviated than Matthew's, and, presumably, only a reader who recalled the story of Abraham would appreciate the significance that it was Sarah's name which had been abused. However, it remains clear that the Saracens had usurped the name and were more properly to be called after Ismael's mother, the servant. So far, there is no meaningful difference between Higden's version of the story and, say, a comment by Jerome or Isidore.[26] However, the historian goes on to explain the people according to their description in the apocalypse by pseudo-Methodius: they build no houses but wander in the desert, and emerge to overthrow cities, defile sacred places, kill priests and tether their beasts in the sacred places, on account of the sins of the Christians. Higden goes on explicitly to identify this prophecy with the emergence of *Machometus pseudo-propheta* who *nefariamque sectam Saracenorum commentauit*. As in the example by Matthew Paris, a varied body of information has been harmonised such that the statement of Saracen duplicity in the matter of self-naming is cleanly integrated with newer material.

Higden's second reference to the Saracens as renamed Ismaelites occurs in a stretch of early biblical history:

Abrahae natus est Ismael de ancilla Agar, qui tertiodecimo aetatis suae anno circumcisus est. Quem ritum adhuc sequuntur Arabes, quorum auctor Ismael fuit. *Genesis*. Hic postmodum uir sagittarius effectus progenuit ex sua uxore Aegyptia duodecim populorum duces, Saracenos, ex parte Sarae se uocantes; cum uerius sint Agareni, ab Agar matre Ismaelis, siue Ismaelitae ex patre sic dicti, seu Madianitae.[27]

Higden's phrasing again recalls that of Matthew Paris, using *uerius* to describe the Saracens' true status as Hagarenes. Also interesting is the reference

[26] Compare, for example, Jerome's comment that Ismaelites and Hagarenes 'nunc Sarraceni appellantur, assumentes sibi falso nomen Sarae quo scilicet de ingenua et domina uideantur esse generati', or Isidore's 'ut diximus, peruerso nomine Saraceni uocantur, quia ex Sarra se genitos gloriantur'; see above, pp. 95 and 97.

[27] 'To Abraham of the handmaid Hagar was born Ismael, who in his thirteenth year of age was circumcised. The which practice the Arabs, of whom Ismael was the father, follow to this day. *Genesis*. He, afterwards having become an archer, got of his Egyptian wife twelve leaders of peoples, Saracens, naming themselves after Sarah – when they are more rightly called Hagarenes, after Hagar the mother of Ismael, or Ismaelites, after their father, or Madianites' (Higden, *Polychronicon*, RS 41, II, 290).

to the book of Genesis as the source of the passage which describes the Saracens, when no Saracens appear in the Bible. This, again, is reminiscent of suggestions by previous authors that there was scriptural authority for the etymology: Jerome and Isidore had much earlier made statements concerning the Saracens' Ismaelite identity accompanied by the phrases *liber Geneseos docet*. This is not to suggest that the later author is working directly from either of the pre-Islamic sources; it is only to show that in the fifteenth century, as in the fifth, reliance was placed where possible on the Bible as authorisation of a statement. Higden differs from the earlier writers in clearly identifying the descendants of Ismael not only as Saracens but as Arabs, who imitate their ancestor 'to this day' in the matter of circumcision. He also includes *Madianitae* among the names by which the descendants of Ismael may be known, an uncommon inclusion but not a novel one.[28]

The translation of Higden's Latin *Polychronicon* into English brought the same information to a vernacular audience, although not, it seems, as wide an audience as had enjoyed the Latin original.[29] This perhaps changed when Trevisa's late fourteenth-century translation emerged in print. His version of the above passages renders them more or less faithfully, with some small alterations. The first explanation of the Saracen name thus includes the detail that 'for pryde þey toke wrongfulliche þe name of Sarra', where no equivalent for *pryde* exists in the Latin except by inference in the verb *usurparunt*.[30] The later, anonymous translator, who uses many more Latinisms in his English, returns to the phrasing of the original with the phrase *vsurpenge to theyme the name of Sara* and mentions no explicit ambitious motivation.[31]

The second passage by Higden is likewise translated into clear English by Trevisa, and again makes plain the fact that *Agarenes* or *Ismaelites* or even *Madianites* is a more correct term for the people commonly known

[28] The Canterbury commentator had done the same, and, before him, Jerome had interpreted the Old Testament Madianites as Ismaelites and Saracens. See above, pp. 104–5 and 118–20. Other Old Testament biblical peoples too might be drawn into the fray. For example, on the Continent in the early twelfth century, Pope Paschal II had referred to the unsavory fact that in Spain, Christians suffered 'per Sarracenorum uel Moabitarum tyrranidem' (*Epistolae et priuilegia*, PL 163, 276).

[29] Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle*, p. 138, lists nine manuscripts of Trevisa's English text.

[30] 'þe ofspringe of Cedar and of Ismael were afterwarde i-cleped Ismaelitae, and also Agareni more riȝtfulliche þan Saraceni, for þey come of Agar þat was Ismael his moder and serued Sarra, but afterward for pryde þey toke wrongfulliche þe name of Sarra and cleped hem Saraceni' (Trevisa, trans., *Polychronicon*, RS 41, I, 127).

[31] Anonymous translation of *Polychronicon*, RS 41, I, 127.

as *Saracenys*.[32] The second, anonymous translator reproduces the same information but appears slightly put off by the reference to Midianites. He transforms their appearance into an example of how a patronymic is formed: 'in trawthe thei [Saracenes] awe to be namede raþer Agarenes, of Agar moder of Ismael, other elles Ismaelites after Ismael, as Madianites were namede of Madian'.[33]

Later still, in a further refinement of the old etymology, John Foxe wrote that it was Muhammad himself who changed the name of the Ismaelites or Hagarenes to Saracens.[34] Foxe draws on *Polychronicon* and indeed cites it by name on occasion, but the notion that widespread use of the name *Saracen* arose from Muhammad's own command must be derived from another source or from his own views on the subject. Foxe's chief concern in the section of *Acts and Monuments* which treats of Islam is to describe, condemn and make sense of the Turkish empire, and so he telescopes history, slipping easily from Muhammad's Saracens to the Ottomans of the fourteenth century by simply omitting to mention any intervening events. With the contemporary church firmly in mind, it perhaps made sense for Foxe to attribute the origins of Saracen identity to the apocalyptic years surrounding the date AD 666 without considering any more ancient provenance, and then to move straight on to the Turks. This blithe approach appears to have characterised a number of histories from the same period.[35]

Occasionally, the case made is more sophisticated. Thomas Newton's *A Notable Historie of the Saracens*, for example, published in the second half of the sixteenth century, shows new developments in the theory. In the first book, Newton explains that four peoples inhabited the Arabian peninsula: the ancient Arabians; secondly, the Ismaelites (descended from Ismael, son

[32] Trevisa, trans., *Polychronicon*, RS 41, II, 292–4: 'Abraham hadde a sone Ismael i-bore of his seruaunt Agar, þe whiche Ismael was i-circumcised whan he was þrittene ȝere olde. þe Arabes vseþ ȝit þat manere of doynge. Ismael was hire auctor. *Genesis*. þis Ismael was afterward an archer, and gat on his wif þat was of Egipt twelue dukes, lederes of peple, þat cleped hem self Saracenys, as þogh þey were i-come of Sarra; but þey beeþ verrailiche Agarenes, for þey come of Agar Ismael his moder. Also þey beþ cleped Ismaelites, for þey come of Ismael; and beeþ Madianites also.'

[33] Anonymous translation of *Polychronicon*, RS 41, II, 292–4.

[34] 'Of this Machumet came the kingdome of Agarenes (whom he after named Saracens)' (Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, I, 166). More emphatically of Muhammad, 'His mother was an Ismaelite, whiche Ismaelites being a people of *Arabia*, wer called then *Agarens*: Whiche terme Mahumet afterward turned to the name of *Saracens*' (*Acts and Monuments*, I, 872).

[35] Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp. 157–8.

of Abraham, by his handmaid Hagar); thirdly, the descendants of Abraham's companion Ketura; and, fourthly, the descendants of Esau, son of Isaac, who are called Saracens by (allegedly) Pliny and Ptolemy.[36] The author explains:

For *Isaac*, *Esau* his father, was the Sonne of Abraham by his wife *Sara*. And they were called *Saracens*, both because they might thereby shew and testifie, that they were descended of the lyne of *Sara*, who was Mystresse, and not of *Agar* the handmaid as the *Ismaelites* were: and also that they might be discerned and knowen from the *Iewes*, who also had the verie same parentes and were proceeded out of the same stocke and Progenie. Among al these, the people *Scenitae* which inhabited *Arabia Deserta*, were most ualiant and warlike, having no habitation nor houses to dwel in, but wandred abroade and lay in Tentes in the open fieldes.

Very few other writers appear to have gone to so much trouble to distinguish the Saracens from the Ismaelites after many generations had solidly identified each with the other. Newton does a good job of finding workable distinctions between the various names, including the ancient *Scenitae*, whose characterisation here closely follows Jerome's phrase on the Edomites: 'non enim habent fundamenta nec domus, sed tabernacula, sedes semper incertas'.[37] Newton then explains that Muhammad was descended on his father's side from Esau or, some say, from Cedar, son of Ismael. He is, in any case, captured by Scenitae early in life and brought up by an Ismaelite. Eventually, after many trials, Muhammad succeeds in his religious endeavour and Mecca becomes 'Metropolitane Citie . . . replenished wyth none but *Mahometans*':

And not only *Mecca* but all *Arabia* besides (as they are people by nature lyght of beleefe and newfangled) embraced his pestilent errours. And from that tyme, all they whych yelded themselves to that Secte, were called by the name of *Saracens*, both because that errour sprong up and was first begonne by the Saracens, and also for that, *Mahomet* persuaded them that all the promyses, in the Scriptures promysed to the Seede of *Abraham*, belonged & appertayned to them.[38]

This is a fascinating attempt to negotiate the tricky issues surrounding the name *Saracen*. Newton indicates that pre-Islamic Saracens lived in Arabia

[36] Newton, *A Notable Historie*, p. 2. [37] Jerome, *Tractatus in psalmos*, CCSL 78, 386.

[38] Newton, *A Notable Historie*, p. 10. The same information is summarised in 'A Summarie or breefe Chronicle' at the end of the main work, in which the date 623 is given for Muhammad's appearance with the Qur'ān: 'And therewith seducing the light brayned Arabians and other fickle minded people of Asia, [he] called them Saracens' (p. 120). Cf. Acts XVII.21 on the novelty-loving Athenians?

and yet still succeeds in explaining the widespread use of the name as having been the idea of the people themselves. Moreover, he manages to incorporate in an explicit form the Christian view that the Saracens, by so naming themselves, were trying wrongfully to appropriate the Abrahamic legacy. Jerome had attributed the origin of this wrongful claim to the ancestors of the fourth-century Saracens; Newton simply brings it forward in time to the seventh century and locates it in the context of Qur'ānic claims upon Abraham.

The fact that Islam acknowledges many of the same prophets and events as Judaism and Christianity cannot at first have made it easier for Christian authors to view the new religious movement at all objectively. At the same time, the exegetically-inspired explanation of the Saracens perhaps died hard partly because earlier writings on Islam continued to find new life as printed editions. At the end of the sixteenth century, a copy of James of Vitry's *Historiae Hierosolymitanae* – the text which had informed Matthew Paris's account of the Saracens – appeared in print in Brussels, containing all the earlier author's views on Muhammad and Islam.[39] The following year, 1597, a quite different book which yet drew on the same ideas was published by the de Bry brothers. The book is for the most part devoted to the histories of various of the Ottoman sultans. These rulers' histories are followed by an account entitled *Acta Mechmeti I Saracenorum principis*. Before the main text begins, the author recounts in a note to the reader some key historical characters and moments from the book of Genesis (beginning, with a view to presenting a comprehensive account, 'Lectori benevolo, in principium creauit Deus coelum et terram . . .'). This note describes in short order the Flood, the population of the earth, and then comes to the impious inhabitants of the earth:

inter quos uel praecipuos Turcas statuimus, quorum historia*m* in praesenti libello tractamus, quosq*ue* originem suam ab Hagar ancilla Abrahae, quod et nome*n* Agarenorum innuit, deducere consentaneum est, licet alias Ismaelitae et Saraceni secundum ipsorum placitum, uocari uelint.[40]

[39] 'Fuit aute*m* Mahometus Ismaëlita, ex Agar ancilla Abrahae, ex progenie Ismaëlis, hominis ferocis, cuius manus contra omnes, & manus omnium contra ipsum. Licet enim Saraceni a Sara, tanquam ex libera, mendaciter & inaniter se nominent Saracenos; verius tamen Agareni ab Agar, quae concubina fuit Abrahae, debent dici' (James of Vitry, *Historiae Hierosolomytanae*, p. 10).

[40] 'Among whom, or, principally, we place the Turks, whose history we outline in the present work, and whom it is proper to trace in their origin from Hagar, handmaid of Abraham,

The prologue contains moderately dense and abbreviated Latin (abbreviations expanded in italics above). It does not seem intended for a casual audience, but forms part of what is, effectively, a book of detailed historical reference on the Turks. The main text of the *Acta Mechmeti* goes on to explain, under a woodcut of Hagar's casting-out, that scripture teaches us how Hagar became insubordinate after her conception of Ismael, was punished and fled, and was recalled by the angel who prophesied concerning her son that he would be fierce and warlike and opposed to all his brethren. The text continues: 'Hic nonnulli colligunt, et asserunt Turcicam gentem, ab hoc Ismaele descendere, quod olim is Arabiam incoluit, unde originem illi ducunt, qui Hagareni, et postea Saraceni appellati sunt'.[41] It is interesting, given the book's emphasis on Ottoman history in particular, that Turks should be identified with the Saracens, the Saracens, as in earlier accounts, having already been described as claiming ancestry from Sarah *secundum ipsorum placitum*.[42]

In a quite different style but with similar claims to biblical authority, William Vaughan's verse-history, *The Church Militant* (published in 1640), contains the following lines:

> Within this *Age* likewise the *Agarens*,
> By changing of their Names to *Saracens*,
> Intruded on the *Right* of *Abrams Heire*,
> On *Christs* as *Moses Lawes* and on the Faire
> Possessions of the *Church* in *Siriaes Land*,
> With *Aegypt*, which to his *Arabian strand*

which indicates the name of the Hagarenes; even if they wish otherwise to be called Ismaelites and Saracens according to their own opinion' (*Acta Mechmeti I*, preface ('Ad lectorem')).

[41] 'Several conclude this; and affirm the Turkish people to descend from this Ismael, as, long ago, he inhabited Arabia, whence they derive their origin who are called Hagarenes and later Saracens' (*Acta Mechmeti I*, pp. 1–2).

[42] There is earlier evidence that western Christian authors felt some need to explain the origins of the Turks in the same way that they could explain the origins of the Saracens. However, their attempts to build the Turks into a Christian historical framework did not usually include an explicit genealogy from Hagar. Rather, different writers pursued different theories (or imitated different sources). By the first half of the twelfth century, at least three hypotheses existed concerning the beginnings of the Turks: descent from the ancient Trojans (parallel with that of the Franks); identity with the Huns or another northern people, sometimes a people earlier locked behind the Caspian Gates by Alexander; and identity with the ancient Parthians.

> Now *Mahomet* doth adde, that by those Three
> The *Hornes* in *Daniel* might accomplisht be.[43]

Here, another element in the western representation of Muslims – the apocalyptic interpretation of their appearance in order to bring about the completion of biblical prophecy – has been combined with the older story of the Saracens' self-naming. However, Vaughan, like Thomas Newton, quite clearly attributes the change of name to the seventh century; the earlier idea that the Saracens had always been so called because of their own wish to claim Sarah as their ancestor had given way to the idea that Muhammad or his followers were responsible. The occurrence of this particular example from so late in the history of English thought (from, indeed, the beginning of the period to which Said credits the rise of what he describes as the 'manifest', explicitly imperial variety of Orientalism) might be attributed to something like an antiquarian eccentricity on the part of the author – except that others write the same.

In a small book published slightly earlier, in 1637, Sir Walter Raleigh (or another using his name) set out to describe the life and death of Muhammad, the conquest of Spain and the rise and fall of 'the Sarazen Empire'. During his discussion of Muhammad's background, Raleigh reports:

> This false Prophet and usurping Prince, pretended paternally to discend from the Patriarch *Abraham* by his eldest Sonne *Ismael*, and to avoyd the infamie of an unlawfull bed his successors affirmed that *Ismael* was the Sonne of *Sara*, not of the bondwoman *Agar* whereupon the Arabians (which is the undoubted name of that people) are by some writers (of *Ismael*) called Ismaelites, and by others (of *Agar*) Agarens. And (of *Sara*) Sarazens, but in this latter time they are distinguished by the name of Arabians Moores, and Mahometans, the first is proper only to those which inhabit in Arabia: the Moors are the progeny of such Arabians as after their Conquests seated themselves in that part of Affrica, the Mahometans is the generall name of all nations that professe *Mahomet*, as Turks, Tartars, Persians, &c.[44]

Raleigh is clearly updating earlier information: he follows his explanation of the names *Agarens*, *Ismaelites* and *Sarazens* – by which the Arabians were formerly known – with terms from 'this latter time' for three categories of Muslim, along with a guide to their correct usage, *Arabian* and *Moore* being geographically specific and *Mahometan* more generally religious. This

[43] Vaughan, *The Church Militant*, ll. 198–205; p. 136.
[44] Raleigh, *The Life and Death of Mahomet*, pp. 25–7.

account of peoples certainly seems more accurate and better aligned with today's understanding of the distinction between 'Arabian' and 'Muslim' than, say, the assertion made by Matthew Paris that Saracens 'uerius Agareni dicuntur ab Agar et Ismaelitae ab Ismaele'. However, in Raleigh's account it is European terminology which supplies useful names: the Saracens themselves (Arabs, Moors, Mahometans) provided false information. He differs from Matthew and earlier authors, and comes closer to Newton and Foxe, in claiming that Muhammad himself devised the theory of descent from Abraham. What is remarkable is that Raleigh, or whoever wrote under his name, managed to maintain the theory that the Arabians called themselves Saracens, after Muhammad had claimed descent from Abraham via Ismael, because descent from Ismael incurred 'the infamie of an unlawfull bed' – that is to say, the unwanted association with Hagar, the bondwoman.[45]

Raleigh's *The Life and Death of Mahomet* is a small volume, three and a half inches by five and a half, containing only about fifty-five words to a page. It is hard to imagine that it was intended for reference use or directed towards an erudite readership. It is by no means a work of polemic or religious doctrine; its bulk is taken up with exciting stories of conquest, resistance, abdicating kings and abducted daughters. Many of the learned works on Islam during this period were in Latin and most were printed in much smaller face than *The Life and Death of Mahomet*. In many cases, too, they either did not offer an origin for the name 'Saracen' or *Saracenus* or the word was newly etymologised from an Arabic root, in some cases even explicitly denying the earlier explanation using Abraham's Sarah. Hence William Bedwell, in his translation of a French work on Islam from 1615, had glossed:

> Sarraceni, Sarazins, Sarrasins, are those people which otherwise of the Ancients were called *Arabes*, Arabians. Neither were they so named of *Sara*, Abrahams wife, as some men do thinke, but of *Saraka*, which signifies *Furari*, to rob or steale. And indeed the Arabians have bene and are to this day accounted great sharkers and robbers.[46]

[45] Alexander Ross, who wrote the continuation of Raleigh's famous *History of the World*, stated that the Muslims, under 'Umar, 'in a short time subdued the East, and conquered the Persians, calling them Saracens now from *Sara Abraham*'s wife'. He provides no explanation of the significance of the claim upon Sarah, but retains the idea that it was the Muslims who originated the name.

[46] 'The Arabian Trudgman', *s.v.* 'Sarraceni', found at the back of Bedwell, trans., *Mohammedis Imposture* (unnumbered).

This is certainly a philologically ingenious alternative to the etymology from *Sara*, but it hardly presents the Saracens freshly; the name of the people is confirmed by their supposedly real behaviour, as though the relationship between word and object were not arbitrary but essential, just as the earlier etymology asserted. Indeed, the content of the definition recalls Jerome's categorisation of the Saracens as plunderers and marauders on the edge of the desert.[47] It is even possible that Bedwell gestured towards another (rhetorical) relationship between the supposed root *Saraka* and the English term *sharkers*.

An alternative origin for the name was offered a few decades later in a volume of 1649:

> the **Saracens* (a people so called from their inhabiting the Desart) . . . **Sarra* signifies in their tongue a Desart, and *Sahen* to inhabit. See *Sands* his Travell.[48]

This is verging on the neutral, though it disengages the Saracens from a millennium of Muslim urban life and culture, and its offer to pin the Saracens down by scholarly means might itself be interpreted as a form of Orientalism.[49] So, after this adoption of an Arabic etymology, the same author later explains the Saracen adoption of the Qur'ān in terms of their innate criminality and lustfulness:

> I never read that any Nation did voluntarily receive the *Alcoran* except the theevish *Saracens* of Arabia, because it was a friend both to their theevery and lechery, as permitting multiplicity of Wives and Concubins, and a reward for those that shall murther and rob.[50]

Clearly, while the etymology of *Saracen* from *Sara* might be dying away, not only the wish to understand the Qur'ān as an unholy text but the wish to continue thinking of Saracens as desert-dwelling thieves and lechers was alive and well during the seventeenth century. It corresponds neatly with stereotypical Orientalist thought as categorised by Said in

[47] Jerome, *LQHGen.*, CCSL 72, 20–1.

[48] *The Alcoran of Mahomet . . . newly Englished*, p. 402.

[49] See, for example, Said, *Orientalism*, p. 72: 'Rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts'.

[50] From 'A needfull Caveat or Admonition', p. 4, found at the back of *The Alcoran of Mahomet . . . newly Englished*.

Orientalism.[51] Descriptions of Saracens as robbers exist from the earliest biblical commentaries by Jerome; from Jerome, too, derived ideas that the Saracens were given over to lechery. Whether or not they could be described as a source for this seventeenth-century text, Jerome's writings provided the early introduction of both ideas and his authority gave them longevity amongst later writers.

Theory 2: the Saracens are devoted to Venus and/or stone-worship

Lechery or luxury amongst the Saracens is also associated with their supposed connection with Venus. This idea seems to have died out earlier in English thought than the idea that the Saracens had named themselves, but it still persisted for a remarkably long time, given the wide dissemination after the twelfth century of the knowledge that Islam is a monotheistic religion. It also appears in peculiar forms, which will be described more closely below.

Again, this is a theory which has its origins in biblical exegesis, and which was spread particularly widely because it was expressed by Jerome. As described above, the original biblical passage which inspired Jerome's comment on Saracen idolatry occurs at Amos V.26, discussing the idolatry practised by Israel in the desert: 'et portastis tabernaculum Moloch uestro et imaginem idolorum uestrorum, sidus dei uestri, quae fecistis uobis'. This Old Testament passage is then picked up in the New Testament and forms part of Stephen's speech in Acts condemning his audience for the persecution of the prophets. In his speech, Stephen adds the name 'Rempham' to refer to the *sidus dei uestri*.

Jerome, as noted above, later provided a commentary on Amos which added, concerning the worship of stars, the explanation that ' "sidus dei uestri", quod Hebraice dicitur "Chocab", id est, "Luciferi", quem Sarraceni hucusque uenerantur'; he further explained in his *Vita S. Hilarionis* that Lucifer could be identified with Venus, in whose temple the Saracens had gathered to worship when the saint arrived in town.

Jerome's tantalising comments informed subsequent generations of opinion about Saracen devotion to Venus. Bede took the idea from Jerome, and later commentators on the Continent such as Hrabanus Maurus or Haymo

[51] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 108: 'These contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilisation'.

of Auxerre took the idea from Bede or Jerome directly.[52] The idea that the Saracens (had) worshipped Venus seems to have been a contributory factor in the development of western Christian ideas about licentiousness – or, rather, venereality – in Islam, and may also have provided support for the notion (which sometimes appears almost as wishful thinking) that Islam was an idolatrous cult.[53] These ideas received further impetus when Christian

[52] Hrabanus Maurus (*c.* 780–856), *Expositiones in Leuiticum*, PL 108, 462: 'Est autem Moloch uel Melchom, ut saepe etiam legitur idolum Ammonitarum, quod interpretatur *rex uester* et sidus Dei uestri Rempham, id est, *facturae uestrae*, uobis pro Deo suscepistis. Significat autem Luciferum, cuius cultui Sarracenorum gens, ob honorem Veneris erat mancipata'. At around the same time, Haymo of Auxerre (mid-ninth century) commented similarly in his *Enarratio in duodecim prophetas minores* (PL 117, 117): 'sidus dei uestri, quae fecistis uobis . . . Sidus uero stellam dicit, quae a Saracenis infidelibus olim colebatur'. Interestingly, the much later commentary of Rupert of Deutz (*c.* 1075–1129) omits any indication that the idea of Saracen worship of Venus was now obsolete or at least ancient (Hrabanus Maurus adopted Bede's phrase *erat mancipata* and Haymo used the word *olim*). Rupert, in his *Commentaria in duodecim prophetas minores* (PL 168, 334), appears to cite Jerome almost verbatim: 'quae sit ipsa imago uel idolum, sequenti sermone demonstrauit, dicendo, "sidus Dei uestri", id est Luciferi, quam huc usque uenerantur Saraceni'.

[53] The most dramatic example of Jerome's commentary being turned to polemical use against Muslims is surely produced by Peter the Deacon of Monte Cassino, composing his *Registrum S. Placidi* some time after 1137. In this collection of (substantially forged) documentation appears the work called *Acta S. Placidi* which purports to be written by one Gordianus and contains an account of the saint's martyrdom in the first half of the sixth century, along with thirty companions, at the hands of violently anti-Christian Saracens who had sailed from Spain in order to eradicate Christianity (Rodgers, *Petri Diaconi: Ortus et Vita*, xxxi–ii and xlvii; AASS Oct III, 65–147). It is worth quoting this work directly in order to show how Peter adopts Jerome's phrasing for his own anachronistic purposes: 'Eodem tempore apud paganos, qui in Hispania inhabitabant, Abdala, impiissimus Christi insectator et hostis, regnum administrabat. Hic Christianae religionis culturam funditus de terra eradere, et Molochi templa et Luciferi culturam augere cupiens, centum nauium expeditionem congregauit . . . quemdam crudelissimum Agarenum, nomine Mamucha, ducem praeficiens . . . mandans, ut . . . Christianos ad daemonum Molochi, Rempham et Luciferi culturam compelleret' ('at the same time, Abdala (most wicked persecutor and enemy of Christ) ruled the kingdom among the pagans who lived in Spain. He, wishing to root out Christian religious worship from the earth and increase the following of Lucifer and temples of Moloch, gathered an expedition of a hundred ships . . . making a certain very savage Hagarene, Mamucha by name, its leader . . . ordering that he force the Christians into the worship of the demons Moloch, Rempham and Lucifer'; AASS Oct III, 130). Later, Peter introduces a Saracen who berates the Christians for persevering in their faith: ' "Assentite", inquit, "nobis . . . negate, Christum uestrum Deum esse, et nostro more Luciferum sidus Dei nostri Rempham excolite"' (' "Say yes", he said,

authors began to attack Islam through polemic directed at the Qur'ān and, particularly, the life of Muhammad. Permission to practise polygamy was upheld as an example of contemptible sensuality and authors also condemned what they thought to be Muhammad's promise to his followers of a paradise of fleshly delights after death. Specific references to Venus occur less frequently than these later condemnations and, often, not connected explicitly with them. However, there seems little doubt that earlier references to Venus-worship and devotion to idols in general paved the way for later, unfavourable interpretations of Muslim practice and they may also go some way to explaining the origins of western representations of Muslim idolatry.[54]

The idea that the Saracens had formerly been devoted to Venus-worship and therefore continued to hold Friday in honour was expressed in the *Legenda aurea*, as mentioned above, and thence made its way into very many manuscript copies, printed editions and, later, translations, including Caxton's English version in the late fifteenth century. In this example, it is acknowledged that Muhammad taught monotheism, but the author then emphasises the earlier days of idolatry. It appears from his account that followers of Muhammad still exhibit the mark of their erstwhile respect for Venus by worshipping on Friday.

The same idea, expressed more clearly, also turns up in Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, as had already the idea that the Saracens had named themselves. Higden explains:

Igitur Machometus utroque parente orbatus, sub patrui sui custodia annos pueritiae transegit aliquantoque tempore cum gente sua Arabica idolorum cultui deseruiuit, potissime tamen Veneris uenerationi deditus fuit. Inde est quod Saraceni adhuc

"to us . . . deny that your Christ is God, and, like us, adore Lucifer, the star of our God Rempham" "; AASS Oct III, 133). *Rempham* must reflect Stephen's speech in Acts, but the inclusion of *Lucifer* among the names of the idols and the connection with the Saracens indicate that Peter is also working directly or indirectly from Jerome's commentary on Amos. It should be noted that what might be viewed as quite dry exegesis has inspired a colourful account of a Saracen pantheon in a very bloody *passio*. While the *Acta S. Placidi* was written for use at Monte Cassino rather than for broad circulation, and while Peter should always be viewed as an extraordinary writer, his creation of Saracens who idolise a demonic trinity recalls both Reginald's version of Saracen paganism and, again, the efforts by the authors of the *chansons de geste* to bring Saracen gods to material life.

[54] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 341–2 (modern attempts to explain the origin of the idea of Saracen idolatry) and, more generally, his *Heroes and Saracens*.

diem Veneris celebrant sicut Iudaei suum Sabbatum solemnizant aut nos diem Dominicum.[55]

Higden's account does acknowledge that Muhammad and his followers take up monotheism afterwards, but the implication remains that their Friday worship represents a fond fossilisation of earlier idolatry (and lechery?). As with the example of Paris's genealogy for Muhammad which traced his ancestry to Ismael, the indisputable fact that Muslims do in fact worship with particular devotion on Friday, *dies Veneris*, must have supplied what looked like corroborating evidence for the ancient opinion that they were especially devoted to the goddess. Also as with the earlier example in Higden, this piece of information is then rendered into English, first by Trevisa and then by the later, anonymous translator. Trevisa's account was presumably perfectly clear to himself, but, like the example in the *Legenda aurea*, might have given pause to a reader who was not familiar with the connection between Venus and Friday:

þanne Machometus faderles and moderles was in his emes kepynge in his childhode; he worschipped mawmetrie somwhat of tyme wiþ his contrey men of Arabia, and he ȝaf hym specialliche to worschippe Venus, and þerfore it is þat ȝit the Saracens holdeþ þe Fridy holy as þe Iewes dooþ þe Satirday and we þe Soneday.

The second English translation, as found in MS Harley 2261, employs more Latinisms but manages nevertheless to anglicise the crucial point even further, to the point where it verges on the baffling:

The fader and moder of Machometus dedde, he was norischede in his infancy by his uncle, servynge idolatry with the peple of Araby, ȝiffen specially to the synne of lechery. Wherefore hit is that the Saracenys halowe the Friday as the Iues do Seturday, and as we do the Sonday.

Only by reference to the original Latin, or by a fairly inspired example of lateral Latinate thinking, or by utilising some other implicit link between Friday and lust, could a reader have appreciated the logical connection between *lechery* (*ueneris ueneratio*) on the one hand and *Friday* (*dies Veneris*) on the other. Otherwise, no sense is to be made of the word *Wherefore*.

[55] 'So, Muhammad's parents both being dead, he passed the years of his childhood in the care of his uncle and for a good deal of time devoted himself along with his Arabian kin to the worship of idols, but he was especially given to the adoration of Venus. Whence it is that the Saracens to this day celebrate the day of Venus as the Jews respect their Sabbath and we the Lord's day' (*Polychronicon*, p. 20).

John Foxe cited the *Polychronicon* in the introduction to the section of his fourth book known as 'The History of the Turks'. He quotes Higden, as noted above, on Muhammad as the namer of the Saracens, and shortly afterwards provides his own take on the significance of the day of worship: 'as we kepe the Sondaye, so they kepe the Fryday: which they call the day of Venus. He permitted them to have as many wyues as they were able to maintaine: to have as many concubines as they liste . . .'[56] Foxe again states that the Saracens had named themselves, and even leaves it ambiguous as to whether it is they or some generalised Latinate 'they' who call Friday the day of Venus. He has also shifted the grounds of the assertion away from any explicit suggestion that the Saracens adored the planet or goddess. Venus, according to Foxe, is the appropriate association to make with the holy day of Muhammad's followers; the juxtaposition of this information with the statements concerning polygamy and concubinage makes a point which is more about sensuality than idolatry. This has by now departed considerably from Jerome's 'sidus . . . Luciferi, quem Sarraceni hucusque uenerantur', but it appears to belong to the same continuum of thought about the Saracen relationship with Venus.

In later centuries, the idea of Muslim licentiousness became widespread in Europe, partly fuelled by misrepresentations of parts of the Qur'ān and Christian opinion of Muhammad's life. This concept tended to become associated with the idea that Venus signified lust, bringing the goddess newly into the fray. In some cases comments about Saracen sexuality may have been made with the exegetical comments about Venus-worship still in mind, but it is difficult to tell. Thus Bacon categorises Islam under the sign of Venus because of its voluptuousness.[57] This preliminary survey indicates that at least as far as edited texts known in England are concerned, examples of Saracen Venus-worship are rarer than the idea that the Saracens named themselves falsely. This must be partly due to the fact that Islamic monotheism did become well known reasonably early in the history of western thought about Islam. It is all the more surprising to find the record of their past idolatry reshaped and put to new use in the *Polychronicon* and Foxe's *Acts and Martyrs* in a form which nevertheless seems to derive ultimately from fourth-century biblical commentary.

[56] Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, I, 166B (bk 4).

[57] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 168. See also pp. 215 (William of Auvergne) and 243–4 (Marino Sanudo).

The term 'Saracen' may no longer credibly be used to refer to either Arabs or Muslims but the perception of Arabs as Ismaelites persists in some scripture-based thinking. An article in *The Revelation* (an electronic publication based in Canada) from the autumn of 2001 analyses political conflict in the Middle East in terms of 'biblical' revelation, closing with the line: 'Earth's final conflict appears to be the ancient conflict between Israel and Ishmael'. The article cites several passages from the Bible, including Ps. LXXXIII.2–8 (on the inimical tribes around Israel, including the Ismaelites and Hagarenes) and Jer. XXV.15–27 (on the neighbours of Israel, including all the kings of Arabia and those in the desert) to suggest an apocalyptic end due to overtake these peoples, identified with modern Muslim peoples and states. After citing various chapters in Genesis on the life and death of Ismael and the settling of his descendents, the article goes on: 'The family and religion of Ishmael has produced a mighty people. The ancient Biblical issues seem to remain the same . . . As much as world leaders try and deny it, the truth is that the world's current ills stem largely from the ancient conflict over the inheritance of the family of Abraham. It is a confrontation between Islam and the West.'[58]

The Revelation is not widely read and this article does not appear to derive immediately from early Christian exegesis of the Old Testament on the Arabs and Ismaelites. Indeed, it emphasises that the same concepts can be derived from the same texts in different times and places. Yet in effect it performs the same function as Bede's writing on the Muslim conquests, assimilating a contemporary phenomenon (opposing Saracens or Muslims) within a scriptural tradition of Israel and Ismael that promises a favourable outcome for Israel, the true believer. It is also an example of how exegesis and political desires may ally; and perhaps reinforces Said's assertion that the scholar is necessarily engaged with the world because ideas and interpretations continue to have real power on the ground. That assertion itself, perhaps, lies outside the scholarly realm.

THE TRANSMISSION OF IDEAS

Conspicuously missing from the above catalogue is any serious discussion of sources and textual culture during the various periods mentioned.

[58] *The Revelation* 12.1 (autumn, 2001); viewable at http://vvv.com/~revpublishing/islam.html.

Sometimes, it is easy to guess at what served as a source for an author's statement about Saracens; Matthew Paris's use of James of Vitry is a good example. In most cases (and in very many cases not listed above) it remains to provide the genealogy of an idea by showing its probable transmission. More work, for example, is necessary to clarify the succession of sources between Jerome and Foxe. It is unlikely that one specific concept about the Orient could securely be traced generation to generation from ancient Greek drama to the twenty-first century, but some might be traced more or less convincingly from the fourth to the seventeenth century, which is sufficient to have a considerable bearing on Said's thesis.

Also lacking above is any account of unedited writings. Manuscripts of twelfth-century commentaries on biblical books, for example, may well contain references to earlier exemplars such as Jerome and Bede and may repeat their statements on the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens. Such repetitiveness would make for a dull read but the dullness itself would provide a valuable insight into twelfth-century ideas about exegetical conservatism and authority on, among other subjects, the Saracens – a topic which was by then of greater contemporary involvement and interest than during the Anglo-Saxon period. On the same subject, it would be desirable to track the arrival in England after the Norman Conquest of commentaries written on the Continent during the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. The later importation of works by authors such as Remigius of Auxerre or Hrabanus Maurus emphasises that English perceptions of the Arabs, Saracens and Ismaelites were formed and reformed within a continental Latinate context.[59] This becomes progressively more pressing an issue as time passes and books become more numerous and more mobile. Ideally, the arrival in England of other texts concerned with the Saracens, old and new, would be plotted at the same time to illustrate the wider background.

This points to one other significant lack in the above account, concerning the place of the exegetically derived theories within the corpus of other medieval theories about Islam: the poisonous fables about imposture, violence and ignominy in the Prophet's life, for example; the portrayal of the Saracens as chivalrous enemies or ghastly villains in crusading literature (*chansons de geste* and eyewitness accounts); Muslims as living contemporaries

[59] Remigius of Auxerre, *Expositio super Genesim*, CCCM 136, 117 (rephrases Jerome on Saracen duplicity); Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leuiticum*, PL 108, 462 (repeats Bede on Saracen idolatry).

in histories, travelogues and pilgrimage reports; Arabs as philosophers and scientists, and so forth. Some particulars of these representations too enjoyed a long life and tell us something about what readers and writers wanted to believe about Islam during this period. However, the information which high-medieval authors constructed about Islam was not constructed in a void. It was composed to a greater or lesser extent in accordance with the information which was already available, and the information which was already available had for the most part been generated before Muhammad's lifetime. If pre-Islamic perceptions of the Saracens had died a death as soon as authors obtained more up-to-date information, their survival up to that point could be attributed merely to ignorance (as suggested by the title of Southern's first chapter). This was not the case, however. Authors adapted pre-Islamic theories so that they would sit comfortably with information about Islam and then persisted in reusing them even in the teeth of the evidence. Daniel suggests that this constitutes the establishment of a communal opinion due to ignorance or 'a special craving for unanimity',[60] but it is difficult to conceive of John Foxe as a craver of unanimity so much as a prolific author who desired that his enemies be shown to be in the wrong.

It is precarious to generalise about the defining viewpoint of an age, and one could hardly nominate a defining viewpoint to cover several ages. On the other hand, the findings of this chapter tend to suggest that in two cases at least we can point to stable and durable theories which remained verbally more or less constant (as expressed by authors read in England) over more than a millennium. The precise content of the assertions shifts, but the subject-matter and use made of it stay largely the same: Saracen association with Venus indicates religious wrong-headedness, whatever the exact nature of their association; wrongful Saracen self-naming indicates duplicity for no good purpose, whatever the exact intention or author behind the deed. Perhaps this is the kind of constancy which characterises latent Orientalism for Said: 'an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity'.[61] However, in the context of quite specific examples as outlined above, it is hard to know what might distinguish Said's 'unconscious positivity' from any other process of generating comfortable opinions, unless an Orientalist mentality just means the tendency to generalise about something which Said defines as 'Oriental'.

[60] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 283. [61] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 206.

Elsewhere, Said clarifies latent Orientalism as profoundly conservative, dedicated to self-preservation, transmitted from one generation to another. 'Orientalism staked its existence . . . on its internal, repetitious consistency about its constitutive will-to-power over the Orient.'[62] At first reading, this corresponds with Daniel's ideas about unanimity; but it suggests too conscious and motivated a process to fit with the peculiar survival of the pair of theories outlined above. In individual authors, such as Bede or Matthew Paris, one might visualise what can be called a will-to-power over the Orient in the desire to control it intellectually as part of a Christian history; and therefore perhaps a will-to-power in their treatment of earlier sources. It has already been argued that some Crusades literature, being intimately bound up with political and military aspirations for territories in the Middle East, might constitute a form of manifest Orientalism.

However, it seems as likely in many cases that inertia or indifference prompted the readoption of a theory that was convenient, consistent with the Bible and satisfyingly validative of one's own habits of mind. If a desire for ideological security equates with a will-to-power over the Other, Said's theory of latent Orientalism through the ages must be vindicated by these findings. Malice and ignorance helped the transmission of incorrect information about the Saracens; but while the most frenetic medieval and Renaissance attacks upon Islam tended to centre upon the Prophet and the Qur'ān in order to assert by all means that they must be wrong, the older theories sketched above seem to have been repeated for much longer in the vague expectation that Christian authors must be right.

The later development of these two theories also has something to say about how acceptable claims to truth were presented at various stages of English thought about the Saracens. At times, the Venus theory must have collided with increasing European awareness of Islam as a monotheistic religion. This certainly is the case towards the end of the period, when Higden and Foxe were writing. The form of the theory had altered by the fifteenth century to suggest that, despite Muhammad's monotheistic teaching, a fossilised idolatry remained in the continuing Muslim respect for Friday. The emphasis began to fall upon the Venus-content rather than the worship-content of the statement and it became a tributary for a body of European assertions concerning Saracen voluptuousness rather than religion – as in Roger Bacon's categorisation of Islam under the sign of Venus. It was no

[62] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 222.

longer acceptable by this point to lay claim to a truth while stating that the Saracens were outright polytheists or idolaters. The intended audience would presumably not have accepted the combination. It was, however, possible still to suggest religious inferiority by converting the statement of Saracen idolatry into a question of how genuine or how deeply-felt their monotheism really was. Later still, it became unworkable to build a truth-statement upon notions of Christian commonality and authors presumably realised too that the Venus–Friday relationship worked in Latin, not Arabic. Commentators on Islam resorted to different foundations of astrology and, later, the laws of Nature and scientific rationality – terms that readers could be expected to agree with.

Similarly with the self-named Saracens: they originated as false claimants to an inheritance which was only an inheritance according to Christian understanding. Their name was fake; they were dissemblers; Christian scholarship could tell you more about them than they themselves would really like you to know. The specific content of this idea involved the names Hagar and Ismael to begin with (well into the late Middle Ages). The idea arrived some time after the twelfth century that it was Muhammad who had made the false claim or invented the new name; this fits well with the general portrayal of him around this time as an impostor. Eventually, European commentators cottoned on to the fact that *Saracenus* was never a bid for Abrahamic inheritance by a set of eponymous impostors. They kept the elements of the statement which would still bear scrutiny: for a short time, this included the idea that names express nature, hence 'Saracens because they are thieves' or 'because they live in the desert'. A supposed innate relationship between name and nature then presumably ceased to validate statements and the earlier etymology was pooh-poohed; but new methods of secular knowledge provided ample means for stating as truth that Saracens (Arabs, Muslims) were untrustworthy, dissembling and yet open to the expert European gaze.

Is it possible to explain why these two theories in particular lasted so long? They were flexible and convenient; they attributed characteristics to the Saracens which, no doubt, European commentators who thought about it wished the Saracens to possess. They had very long authority. Jerome's name must again be mentioned here; as translator of the Bible, he remained a huge authority in matters textual and exegetical. They were both based on explanations of passages in the Old Testament and, too, both those Old Testament passages were also cited by apostles, as recorded in the

New Testament. Whether or not this had anything to do with the success of the theories in the minds of later writers, it is difficult to say; but it may have contributed to earlier medieval ideas about the importance of the Old Testament passages and therefore also the commentaries upon the passages. The two theories outlined above were based originally on erudite scholarship which could not easily be verified, with all the survival-value that that implies; and they conveyed efficiently the reassuring proposition that Saracens were unlike Christians in making false statements for self-serving purposes and worshipping the wrong ideal.

10

Conclusions

Perceptions of Saracens, Ismaelites and Arabs in Anglo-Saxon England were, to begin with, almost exclusively the result of literary engagement and not personal experience. Some experiential information can be found in, for example, Willibald's pilgrimage report, but these particular examples did not reach England during the period in question. Arculf's pilgrimage (which was read and used by Bede) appears more typical of the travel genre: Adamnán's report describes the holy sites first and foremost, drawing upon a variety of literary sources to do so, and includes information about Saracens only when their activities have impinged significantly upon the unquestioned rights of the Christians (whether for good or bad). His intention to show Christians and Christianity in a good light obscures the historical value of his comments on Saracens.

Saracens themselves were not given a voice in any texts surviving from this period, except, possibly, the *Vita Willibaldi*. Alcuin's reference to a *Disputatio Felicis cum Saraceno* may be evidence for an early form of religious dialogue, but the *disputatio* itself does not appear to have survived. A useful perspective on Christian literature about Saracens may be gained by comparing contemporaneous Muslim Arabic accounts of and references to Christianity and the West.[1] It is perhaps worth repeating the obvious point that the evidence collected above demonstrates clearly (as other scholars have also shown to some extent) that the beginnings of European thought about Saracens and the Islamic world lay many centuries before the Crusades and

[1] Daniel and Said themselves do not give any 'Orient' a voice in their books about western perceptions of that Orient, so it is perhaps not surprising that they show European literature to have been the 'one powerful discursive system maintaining hegemony over another' (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 339). Lewis demonstrated in *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* that Muslim authors have their own history of writing about non-Islam, the West and Europe.

that English ideas about Saracens were well developed before the Crusades began.

The first perceptions of Arabs, Saracens and Ismaelites in England were literary perceptions derived from written Latin and mediated through learned Christians. Furthermore, they were chiefly informed by pre-Islamic accounts of Arab peoples in and around the Holy Land. Written Latin offered space for a full spectrum of representations, from complicated allegorical analysis to bare chronicle entry. From the very beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Christian culture, readers might encounter both accounts of Saracens as biblical Ismaelites and accounts of Saracens as a contemporary nuisance: compare, for example, Jerome's or the Canterbury commentator's interpretations with Cassian's story of the monks killed by bandits. From Bede's lifetime, if not earlier, recent news about Saracens was arriving in England in documents such as the *Liber Pontificalis* and letters from abroad (Alcuin, Boniface) and also, presumably, by word of mouth. For a scholar, events in annals and oral reports fitted into a pre-existing exegetical scheme which related together Christians (Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and the heavenly Jerusalem), Ismaelites (Hagar, Ismael, Esau, the world, flesh and devil) and God. Hence Bede's success in combining Jerome's desert marauders with the eighth-century invaders of Christian lands to reconstruct a single Ismaelite-Saracen people.

As Bede famously said, England lies apart, in the far north-west.[2] The English made efforts to sustain connections with the Continent: trade and, with the establishment of the church, missionary, scholarly and peregrinatory expeditions to and fro. Throughout the period, business exchanges evidently took place between Muslim and non-Muslim merchants so that Anglo-Saxon England benefited from exotic goods imported from or through Muslim territory. An artefact such as Offa's gold dinar indicates a degree of sophistication in its attempt to evoke the right sort of wealthy and cosmopolitan background: I am the product, it seems to say, of a European England, looking eastwards to Rome and Byzantium.

Nevertheless, the material enemies of the Anglo-Saxons continued to arrive from the north, not from south and east as they did for Rome and Constantinople. As far as the vast majority of Anglo-Saxon readers was concerned, the ninth-century Viking raids must have not only focused attention upon the Danes as a more immediate problem than reported

[2] *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 14, ll. 1–3, and p. 16, l. 9.

Saracen invasions of more distant lands, but also inhibited the flow of materials between England and the Continent, including texts and information which could have described those invasions and their consequences in more detail. The relatively late arrival of the *Reuelationes* of pseudo-Methodius in England, compared with their earlier wide circulation abroad, is probably a case in point. The relatively sparse evidence surviving from Anglo-Saxon England is suggestive rather than conclusive concerning a general early English view of Saracens, but it is ample to show that the literary background for any such view was well developed and that many authors contributed during the period.

One must also bear in mind the possibility, however limited, of a continuing oral circulation of news or views which were never written down but which, perhaps, also inspired an interest or moulded a perspective. The Canterbury commentator's record of lectures by Theodore or Hadrian refers to Persian drinking cups, Edessan melons and inimical, wrongly named Saracens; what else might the two great teachers have disclosed in the course of a lesson or conversation? The stray decree from the end of the eighth century – 'cibum in secreto sumere . . . hypocrisis et Saracenorum est' – suggests that either George or Theophylact might have been in possession of other interesting information about Saracens.

Thus, even had eye-witness texts such as the *Reuelationes* been read by the odd scholar in England from as early as the eighth century, they might not have provided much in the way of new perceptions. The second recension of the *Reuelationes* was edited to bring it more into line with extant north-western literature on the Muslim conquests and a surprising quantity of writing had already made most of the same points, albeit more dryly. The student who gained sufficient expertise in Latin to work through the Old Testament with reference to Jerome's commentaries would find a reference to the Saracens and their violent vagrancy as soon as he reached Gen. XVI.12 and consulted the *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim* on the angel's prophecy concerning Ismael. If working on the psalter, he might have seen the comment by Cassiodorus on Psalm CXIX which explained that the peoples of Kedar and Ismael were now called Saracens and could be interpreted here to signify 'sinners'. The ready-reference of Isidore's *Etymologiae* provided a handy selection of information culled from Jerome: the Saracens, Ismaelites and Hagarenes and Kedar were all the same, and all known as Saracens as though descended from Sarah.

A full biblical study would mean also tackling the books of the prophets along with their accompanying commentaries. Bede consulted these and a number of contemporary sources to write his own exegeses which were in turn widely disseminated. Evidently, the Saracens as a present-day phenomenon commanded some interest by this time: not only did Bede reproduce Jerome's comments with reference to events around the turn of the seventh century, he also refined the older account and recorded various recent Saracen depredations. The ideas that the Saracens were falsely named and that they (had) worshipped Venus were both retransmitted in Bede's writings. His scholarship enjoyed a wide readership abroad as well as at home; later continental commentators and historians such as Hrabanus Maurus and Paul the Deacon drew on his work and included his statements about Saracens. News of current affairs involving Saracens very probably stimulated interest in these scholarly accounts of the people which largely agreed with one another; and the *Reuelationes*, when they arrived, expounded their case using much of the same biblical material. The familiarity to a European point of view of pseudo-Methodius' version of history is indicated by the rapid assimilation of the *Reuelationes* to the norms of the day in the second recension. The geography moved westwards and the enemies' name was changed from *filii Ismael* to *Saraceni*.

As far as the learned Latinate representation of Saracens was concerned, a pattern had settled into place that was not soon to change. Orderic's comment about the Saracen cook in the early twelfth century was still founded upon the etymology of *Saraceni* as 'self-proclaimed descendants of Sarah who are in fact descended from Hagar through Ismael'. In general, in Europe, such exegetical comments seem to have remained confined to Latin literature during the early Middle Ages.

In England, references to Saracens were, apparently, largely restricted to Latin writings until the tenth century. During the tenth century, comments on Saracens began to enter vernacular written literature in translation, by which time the Saracen identity as latter-day Ismaelites had informed educated western thought for centuries. Vernacular representations of the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens should be viewed within the context of the continuing Latinate mythology, bearing in mind the notion of appropriate truths. An audience that required materials to be presented in the vernacular was not thought suited to advanced explanations of the Latin words of the Bible along with their Greek and Hebrew antecedents, four-fold exegesis or the

careful negotiation of work by earlier scholars. It was unnecessary and inappropriate – possibly dangerous to the understanding – for the unlettered to enter into exegetical discussions of Saracens as latter-day representatives of Ismael, the son of Abraham. Inside a Christian community, it was possible to conceive of the Saracens as anti-Christian simply by reference to historical event: they attacked such-and-such a monastery, they oppress Jerusalem to this day. The written representations of historical events thus still formed part of a Christian literary discourse which was apparently supposed to be suited to a less erudite understanding. But it would be misleading to suggest an absolute distinction between 'learned' and 'unlearned' perceptions of the Saracens, or, amid energetic translation and glossing activity, between 'Latinate' and 'vernacular'. Nor was it necessarily the case that only the great scholars could transform and redeploy information. Aldred's intriguing reference to *india saracenorum* in the *Durham Ritual* indicates an educated awareness of the Saracens which does not obviously derive from a mere parroting of high exegesis.

The Benedictine Reform introduced new cenobitic ideals and promoted the translation and glossing of Latin texts (including the Old English translation of Jerome's *Vita Malchi*) and composition in Latin; meanwhile, Anglo-Saxon acquisition and transmission of verbal culture seems slowly to have been becoming more textual and less oral-mnemonic.[3] The vernacular enjoyed its status as a satisfactory prose medium. A rudimentary form of exegesis entered Old English in the form of glosses, so that *Ismaelitae* could be understood as *synnahyrendra*. Although the vernacular never offered to compete with Latin in becoming a medium for erudition, it seems unlikely that only the very highly educated would have appreciated literary references to the Saracens. Ælfric, a teacher who was careful to explain the difficult and the unfamiliar to a lay audience, provided no explanation at all for the Saracens in his writings. His accounts of their occupation of Jerusalem and battle with Theodosius II argue for a simpler, more widespread notion of the Saracens as a barbarian desert people associated with destruction and enmity

[3] On the origins and anglicising of the Benedictine Rule, see Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations*, pp. 226–60 (on the Old English translation of the Rule of St Benedict), 332–83 (revival of interest in the hermeneutic Latin style) and 425–7 (on the intellectual culture of late Anglo-Saxon England); evidence for a shift towards the textual end of the oral-textual continuum has been presented by O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, pp. 1–14, 23 and 192; see also Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 26–32, on use of documents.

towards the true faith. A general, perhaps vague conception of the Saracens as enemies of the Christian church was nourished by news of Muslim activities abroad such as the entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* on Otto II and his victory over the Saracens. It seems likely that many Anglo-Saxons had some understanding of the Saracens as inimical non-Christians without having much if any knowledge of their Oriental origins or of Latin literature and exegetical explanations of the Ismaelites.

Once the Saracens had been explained in biblical commentaries as Ismaelites, there seems to have arisen little or no opportunity in Anglo-Saxon England for Arabs to be identified with either people until well after the end of the period. Likewise, according to observation, the Saracens were a contemporary people not identified with the nomadic Arabs of the Old Testament. The idea of the Arabs in Old English literature seems to have faded away into grammatical examples and obscure inhabitants of the land of the phoenix until their reidentification with Hagarenes/Ismaelites/Saracens during the early Crusades. Arabia itself was mentioned more often than Arabs in Anglo-Saxon England but as an idea it seems mainly to have survived thanks to the psalter and a few classical references. The Ismaelites appear in vernacular versions of scripture only as the merchants who bought Joseph and, as mentioned above, as *synnahyrendra* in various psalter-glosses. They were not linked with the Saracens except by implication in one instance in the Old English *Life of Malchus*.

Saracens, by contrast, seem to have flourished in a wide variety of literary genres. By the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, they had appeared in writings suitable for every level of literacy, ranging from Jerome's analysis of Isai. XXI.13 to Ælfric's sermon on the destruction of Jerusalem. All such writings, Latin and Old English, provided consistent examples or explanations of the ways in which Saracens and Ismaelites opposed Christianity. Conceptions of the Saracens simply as heathen enemies aided the reader's construction of a sense of self and community which centred on the church. Authors perhaps expected that their audience would the more readily subscribe to peacefulness, orthodoxy, urban civilisation and divine favour within the fold of the Christian church if these qualities were implicitly contrasted with the undesirable Saracen traits of violent aggression, instability, ruin, idolatry and exile from God in a literal and spiritual desert. In this, the Saracens differed little from other spiritual villains such as heretics and persecutors, and, in the vernacular, the devil, Cain and Grendel. As adversaries of the righteous community, Saracens in both Latin and Old English share

a number of characteristics with other threatening figures. It remains to explore literary resemblances between Saracens and, for example, monsters, other eastern peoples, Jews or Vikings in Anglo-Latin and Old English literature.

To summarise: surviving evidence suggests that most Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Arabs, Ismaelites and the more contemporary Saracens were formed in a Christian literary matrix, since most people had no chance to witness Islam for themselves or hear a first-hand report – and even a pilgrim to Jerusalem such as Arculf or Willibald had been informed to some extent by the Christian literary corpus before arriving in Saracen territory. Between AD 600 and 1100, Anglo-Saxon awareness of the Saracens gradually diffused from a written Latin context to occupy a more general awareness. For the unlettered who learned about events abroad from a text – whether by reading Old English, hearing it read or hearing another's interpretation of vernacular or Latin material – biblical and historical event could speak for itself: the record showed that the Saracens and the tribes of Arabia were hostile towards God's chosen people. Arabia itself does not seem to have been characterised so much by indwelling Arabs as by other Old Testament peoples who, perhaps, appeared more significant in Christian history.

In many of the narrative examples cited above – such as Jerome's *Vita Malchi*, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, the chronicle entry on Otto II's defeat of the Saracens and Ælfric's story of the similar victory by Theodosius II – the Saracens or Ismaelites initially gained the upper hand or initiated hostilities only to be overcome in the end by divine providence or human representatives of the Christian faith. The popularity of both recensions of the *Reuelationes* on the Continent, and their circulation in England towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, suggests not only an increasing interest in apocalypse and prophecy but also a desire for reassurance among western readers of Latin that the distressing success of the Muslim conquests heralded an accordingly overwhelming Christian victory to come.

With the twelfth century and the gathering momentum of institutionalised military engagement with Muslim rulers, the information about eastern peoples which was available to a European audience changed very fast, becoming even more multifarious and inconsistent. During the first half of the twelfth century alone, many kinds of information proliferated, both old and new. Returning Crusaders must have reported their encounters with Saracens and the newer people of the Turks while, simultaneously,

commentaries from previous centuries were being retransmitted and up-to-date propaganda and polemic devised to encourage participation in the crusades. The Qur'ān was translated into Latin for the first time at Cluny under the direction of Peter the Venerable while the *chansons de geste* emphasised idolatry and polytheism as the characteristic religious attributes of the Saracens. Accurate knowledge of Islam as a religion and polity and of Muslims in daily life jostled with hearsay, wishful thinking, polemic and received opinion; information was acquired, generalised, distorted, consolidated and in some cases apparently created from scratch, and yet, in other cases, the received opinion survived for a surprisingly long time despite its patent inaccuracy.

Some statements which derived from the Latin literature on Ismaelite Saracens can still be identified long after the Norman Conquest. Jerome's initial observations, within a Christian tradition of thought, carried with them certain, perhaps inevitable conclusions, and these conclusions seem to have been favourably regarded by later authors. Saracens threatened Christians – and therefore (one might conclude) embodied the opposite of the agreed ideal; they were vicious and barbarian, not virtuous and civilised. They were Ismaelites or Hagarenes who had tried to claim the privilege of descent from Sarah – this meant that they were false dealers, yet their 'true' nature was on display to anyone with sufficient expertise to see it. They worshipped an idol, not Christ – their paradigm for the workings of life and the world was incorrect and primitive.

The wording of these initial observations was reproduced (often verbatim) by later Christian scholars until the observations came into conflict with different information which was also considered true. In some cases, new facts could be shown to revalidate the general tenor of an old conclusion. Although Jerome's statement, 'the Saracens adore Venus (they are misguided)' might not remain credible after it became clear that Saracens were monotheists, a writer could still associate them with Venus and introduce other material on concubinage and polygamy to show that 'they adore lustfulness (they are misguided)'. Later, from within a scientific discourse, one might say: 'they adore a god (they are misguided)'. In the same way, 'Saracens are really Ismaelites (they are underhand, but we know them)' easily enough evolved into 'Muhammad called them Saracens (etc.)' and then '*Saracen* means 'sharker' (etc.)'. The concluding prejudices which are assumed here will be familiar to anyone who has read Said on modern western views of Islam. Yet these two examples should not therefore be taken

to vindicate his theory. Said's general thesis has been very often discussed and it might seem otiose to take it up again here in any detail. However, in the context of a discussion about Anglo-Saxon literature, Said's and Norman Daniel's use of 'the Middle Ages' to understand the origins of later perceptions of Islam deserves closer examination.

'ORIENTALISM', 'IMPERIALISM' AND THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Said defined 'Orientalism' as an academic discipline, a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient and a mode of thought based on a perceived distinction between Orient and Occident. The latter category 'can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx'.[4] As noted near the beginning of this discussion, Daniel anticipated Said to a degree by writing in *The Arabs and Medieval Europe* that 'from the late 1600s till the present day, but most strongly in the eighteenth century, Western orientalism has run riot'. His portrayal of western thought about Islam is, at points, similarly breathtaking in its span of centuries and breadth of definition:

> Imperialism is a more important forward reach from the Middle Ages . . . the awareness of the Arabs that was formed in the Middle Ages contributed to the imperial movement of the nineteenth century. It provided much of the sense of being justified . . . Above all, imperialism has been the movement to control others for their own good, by which we mean, to force them to conform to our own patterns of behaviour, or, at least, to our ideal pattern. This seems to have been normal, whether conscious or not, and whether politically intended or not.[5]

Daniel's model of the relationship between medieval thought and modern activity is, like Said's, predicated upon the final result of European empire. Like Said's definition(s) of 'Orientalism', Daniel's of 'imperialism' runs close to becoming a comment on eternal human nature – so general that it may be applied to almost any act smacking of dominion, whether or not it has to do with 'an Orient' or 'an Empire'. Putting aside the question of whether such general definitions are appropriate, it is odd to suppose a single, homogenous 'Middle Ages' in direct relation to later events in this way.

[4] Said later notes the methodological jeopardy of combining such a broad approach with selected, specific examples; see p. 8 and, for his more personal response to criticisms of the method of *Orientalism*, p. 340.

[5] Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, p. 322.

Evidence from the previous chapter supports to some extent Daniel's idea that medieval concepts can be aligned with later European justifications for imperial expansion, and this is discussed in more detail below. However, his discovery of the origins of nineteenth-century political activity in 'the Middle Ages' is surprising. That Daniel at one point proposes a 'Middle Ages' extending until 1939 may go some way towards explaining a 'medieval' complicity in empire-building, but does not much clarify medieval textual evidence.[6]

The ways in which the textual evidence supports an idea of proto-'Orientalism' or proto-'imperialism' are rather general. They can be found with hindsight. Most Anglo-Saxon (and early medieval) accounts imply or state that triumphant Christians oppose humbled Saracens, whether or not the latter are also described as Ismaelites. It is possible to infer from this opposition a foreshadowing of Said's Orientalism in which triumphant West opposes humbled East – or to see an example of Daniel's imperialism in the movement to force others to conform to our own ideals.

According to Said, the overtly religious prejudice against the Arabs and Islam that is visible in such examples is characteristic of periods before the eighteenth century but in a cryptic manner has still not ceased to shape western thinking. During and after the eighteenth century, he argues, increasing secularisation of learning led to a western reappraisal of how to perceive the world and, ultimately, to the phenomenon of Orientalism itself:

> . . . the expansion of the Orient further east geographically and further back temporally loosened, even dissolved, the Biblical framework considerably. Reference points were no longer Christianity and Judaism, with their fairly modest calendars and maps . . . race, color, origin, temperament, character, and types overwhelmed the distinction between Christians and everyone else.[7]

The intellectual authority of the Bible and church became subject to academic scrutiny by scholars of archaeology, philology, anthropology and other secularising disciplines. These offered new and grander conceptualisations of space and time than could be expressed in the 'fairly modest calendars and maps' which had revolutionised western notions of the world during the early medieval period.

Said then suggests that medieval Christian modes of thought survived, hidden in the new eighteenth-century scholarship as 'a reconstructed

[6] Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, p. 2. [7] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 120.

religious impulse'.[8] An implicit prerequisite for his later Orientalists' hidden ideology would be an earlier 'constructed religious impulse'. Again, the phenomenon can be found if sought for. Something which might answer to that definition can be argued to underpin literary representations of Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens in Anglo-Saxon England (and, to an appreciable extent, early medieval Europe). An observation involving the Saracens very rarely survives simply as an observation. The causes and consequences assigned in literature from this period tend to fold events into a distinctly Christian pattern. The Saracens are not simply attacked, they are encountered in the act of intending to attack Christians and then prevented, despite heavy losses on the Christian side. Or they do not simply attack; they attack the site of Augustine's bones, which then have to be rescued at high cost; or they attack in Gaul, then are repaid by God for their perfidy. Before the rise of secularised language as the scholarly norm, we can easily suppose that a constructed religious impulse in the form of charged Christian expression was a determining factor in the composition and transmission of information about Islam, Ismaelites, Saracens and so forth.

However, there were exceptions, of a sort. The Saracens in Aldred's glosses and Orosius's *Historiae aduersum paganos*, both Latin and Old English, are not very demanding of causes or consequences. They just exist, in their particular India, or north and east of Egypt between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. Perhaps this location and categorisation by Orosius and Aldred also represent characteristically Orientalist geographical claims to know and own the East. If so, despite the status of the *Historia* as Christian apology and the glosses as Christian explication, their treatment of the Saracens and the Middle East in general belongs not with religious impulse but with a more ancient tradition of classification and hierarchy.[9] In the case of the Orosian geography, though, the same argument might as easily be applied to its divisions and listings of Scandinavia or mainland Europe. After all, in local terms, nearly everything lay east of England.

In fact, it is not at all clear from surviving Anglo-Saxon literature that it records any connection made between an abstract concept of 'the Orient' on the one hand and, on the other, the Arabs, Ismaelites or Saracens, or alienation from God, anti-Christian behaviour and contemptibility in general. As Said himself points out, the relevant distinction here lies 'between Christians and everyone else'. From an early medieval perspective, 'Christians versus

[8] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 121. [9] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 57–9.

Saracens' cannot be made into a meaningful predecessor for 'Europe versus Orient'. To suggest that it can is to exaggerate the place of the Saracens as the sole enemies of the church, and to assume without much evidence that they can also represent an inferior and exotic 'East'. Medieval religious literature involves triumphant Christians opposing humbled non-Christians; in terms of superiority, 'West' and 'East' may be, as it were, neither here nor there.

This raises the question of whether Daniel's 'imperialism' and Said's term 'Orientalism' – even 'latent Orientalism' – are not anachronistic when applied to pre-colonial texts. A theory about conceptualisation of the North in western medieval Europe might be proposed by contrast.[10] Anglo-Saxon literary reactions to the raids and then settlement by Vikings and Danes sailing from the north would compare very interestingly with the earliest Christian responses in the eastern Mediterranean and Constantinople to Islamic conquests from the south. The names used to refer to the raiders, including *hæþene* and *norðmenn*, suggest a religious-geographical perception.[11] Patristic writings indicate a tradition of regarding the north or the north-west as the seat of evil, based on exegesis of Isai. XIV.12–14 concerning Lucifer's throne in the north (*lateribus aquilonis*), and Jer. I.14 on the breaking forth of evil from the north (*ab aquilone*).[12] The tradition of Lucifer's throne was translated into Old English, which seems to have cultivated its own image of a watery, frozen, craggy hell.[13] As Thomas Hill has

[10] Such a theory could also admit a few perceptions of 'Muslim' peoples, since the Turks were thought by many commentators to be a characteristically northern, rather than eastern race, and were sometimes described as descending from the north; see, for example, Sigebert of Gembloux, *Chronica*, MGH SS 6, 302, and William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, CCCM 63, 114–15. In vernacular literature of the thirteenth century, too, Saracens and northern pagan armies appear to have been presented to all intents and purposes as the same or equivalent attackers, *King Horn* providing notorious examples.

[11] See, for example, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS C under the years 787, 937 (Battle of Brunanburgh) and 942 (ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, pp. 50, 78 and 79–80); and the Old English verse *Genesis*, ll. 1976–8 and 1995–6 on *norðmenn* in biblical adaptation.

[12] 'Quomodo cecidisti de caelo, Lucifer, qui mane oriebaris? Corruisti in terram qui uulnerabas gentes, qui dicebas in corde tuo in caelum conscendam super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum; sedebo in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis; ascendam super altitudinem nubium, ero similis Altissimo' (Isai. XIV.13); 'Et dixit Dominus ad me, ab aquilone pandetur malum super omnes habitatores terrae' (Jer. I.14)

[13] See, for example, Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. Clemoes, p. 179 (1.1.31–4), and *The Vercelli Homilies*, ed. Scragg, p. 316 (19.15–19). The cold northern hell of the *Visio*

pointed out, there also already existed a patristic division between north-west and south-east, which represented, respectively, the ungodly and the godly.[14] Generally speaking, the north was thus associated with Babylon, the devil, the Antichrist and the sinful chill caused by a lack of warm *caritas* in the heart.[15] The same distinction between the devil's direction and God's was expressed in Old English verse in *Christ III*, *Genesis A* (division north–south) and *Genesis B* (north-west–south-east). It is alluded to in Latin in two passages by Bede in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, the *Visio S. Pauli* and Stephen of Ripon's *Vita S. Wilfridi*.[16] At different times and in different languages, Alcuin, Byrhtferth and Wulfstan tried to explain the Viking raiders who attacked Anglo-Saxon communities as God's characteristic punishment of his chosen but sinful community (an explanation which had also featured in a number of Christian reactions to Muslim conquest).[17] Northern peoples appeared in texts on the Continent too, often simply as historical entities in chronicle entries, but quite regularly announced in biblical terms or with reference to Jeremiah.[18]

Aquilo according to a biblical author east of the Mediterranean could be reused as *aquilo* by a medieval writer who lived himself in northern Europe.

S. Pauli also appears famously in *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. Morris, no. 17 (pp. 209–11) where it is seen to lie northwards, and in *Beowulf*, ll. 1357–76; on the grim north, see also *Wanderer*, ed. Leslie, l. 104; *Seafarer*, ed. Gordon, l. 31; *Beowulf*, ed. Klaeber, l. 547, etc.

[14] Hill, 'Some Remarks', pp. 303–4.

[15] Salmon, 'The Site of Lucifer's Throne', pp. 119–20.

[16] Hill, 'Some Remarks', pp. 309–10. The passages in *Historia ecclesiastica* were then also translated into Old English.

[17] Alcuin, *Epistolae*, MGH Ep.car.aeu. II, 42–4, 45–9, 53–6 and 57–8 (Lindisfarne) and especially p. 55 in a letter to the brethren of Wearmouth-Jarrow: 'Vos maritima habitatis, unde pestis primo ingruit. In nobis impletum est, quod olim per prophetam praedictum est: "Ab aquilone inardescunt mala et a Domino formidolosa laudatio ueniet". Ecce fugax latro boreales insulae nostrae partes peruasit' ('You inhabit the shoreline, whence the plague first broke. In us is fulfilled what was said through the prophet long ago: "From the north evils flare up and from the Lord comes terrible acknowledgment" [Job XXXVII.22]. And see, the swift bandit invades the northern parts of our island'). Byrhtferth characterised the Vikings who martyred King Oswald as a biblical people of the north by citing Jeremiah's complaint; see his *Vita S. Oswaldi*, pp. 54 (Latin) and 55 (English). For Wulfstan, see *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, ed. Bethurum. On the earliest Christian responses to Islam, see above, pp. 39–42.

[18] See, for example, Abbo of Fleury, *Passio S. Edmundi*, pp. 71–2 (an important passage); Sigebert of Gembloux, *Chronica*, MGH SS 6, 302; and Folcuinus of Lobbes, *Gesta abbatum Lobiensium*, MGH SS 4, 61.

It could be moved around as convenient. This is not true of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalised *Orient*, which, despite Said's insistence upon its status as a literary construct, still has reference to a geopolitical constant. Bede criticised the Saracens wherever they were, and 'Eastness' had nothing to do with it. It is true that medieval readers inherited classical writings which discussed 'the wonders of the East', for example, in relation to the world-view of the ancient Greeks and the Roman Empire, but then north-western Europe had been marginalised and fabulised in the same literature and Britain itself was reinherited by its own inhabitants at the edge of the world. Is it possible that it was not until considerably later that a generally north-western European sense of political, geographic and cultural community allowed the abstract Orient, the concrete Orient and the Islamic Orient to be located in more or less the same place for all expected readers?[19] Today, substantial third- and fourth-generation Muslim and Hindu communities outside the Middle East and Indian sub-continent once again complicate theories of continuing Orientalist prejudice by eroding the geographic content of an 'Oriental' identity.

It seems to be the case that only hindsight can distinguish the 'Orientalism' of the Middle Ages from the same mixture of scholarship, xenophobia, historical record and outrage which characterised medieval Christian views of the North or, indeed, of Saracens. There exists (as yet) no sweeping analysis which involves – to take the example of 'the North' – early ideas about the diabolic *aquilo*, Wulfstan's exhortation to stand up to and fight the enemies of the North and eighteenth-century proposals to civilise the savages of the Arctic and make good use of their resources in the interests of the Empire.[20] Therefore we do not think in terms of an eternal 'Septentrionalist' mindset underlying western empire-building which could, in retrospect, turn patristic exegesis and medieval polemic about various 'norths' into a kind of pre-meditation of the imperial act. The modern reader of medieval opinions about the North cannot experience the history-telescoping *frisson*

[19] Compare twentieth-century views of the fixed West in, for example, Carrier, ed., *Occidentalism*.

[20] Nevertheless, there is a myth of 'the frozen North' as well as of 'the fabulous East' which might repay closer examination, particularly in light of recent proposals from Washington to make use of its northern oil resources. Furs and gold were sought from Alaska, the Yukon and further north from around the same period that colonial enterprise was being reflected in European literature, and several authors – Jack London and Rudyard Kipling among them – took up the topic of adventure and gain in a barbaric North.

that accompanies Said's account of the centuries of 'latent Orientalism'. This is to cast doubt, as several critics have already done, on Said's own construction of a unified Orientalist hegemony throughout all European thought.[21] In Anglo-Saxon England, at least, a poor view of Saracens does not seem to have involved a location *Oriens* nor a racial dislike different from any other dislike of peoples who lived outside civilisation.

Said also describes a conceptual movement from Christian claims about the Orient to scientific claims about the Orient in terms which suggest that the religious spirit of an earlier age had migrated into a new secular corpus. His insistence upon a medieval religiosity yet lurking in Orientalism is underlined by his repeated descriptions of modern Orientalists using metaphors of religious doctrinarianism. He seems to say that innately religious ideas simply altered their linguistic garb – that Christian patterns of history and the medieval conceptual repertoire continued to live under the disguise of science. To quote his argument more fully:

> But if these interconnected elements represent a secularizing tendency, this is not to say that the old religious patterns of human history and destiny and 'the existential paradigms' were simply removed. Far from it: they were reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in the secular frameworks just enumerated. For anyone who studied the Orient a secular vocabulary in keeping with these frameworks was required. Yet if Orientalism provided the vocabulary, the conceptual repertoire, the techniques – for this is what, from the end of the eighteenth century on, Orientalism *did* and Orientalism *was* – it also retained, as an undislodged current in its discourse, a reconstructed religious impulse, a naturalized supernaturalism.[22]

When Orientalism supplies the secular framework, the conceptual repertoire and the techniques as well as an appropriate secular vocabulary, it is hard to put one's finger on just where the 'reconstructed religious impulse' might rest in an Orientalist text. Perhaps it might consist in a supposed

[21] For example, see Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism*, p. 118, quoting W. Halbfass: 'One of the main problems of Said's conception is the blending of "highly selective historical observations" with broad philosophical and metaphysical "generalisations", with the latter often riding roughshod over the task of concrete historical interpretation. Resulting from the merger of "very specific and very general traits", Orientalism is in danger of appearing as a "historical and conceptual hybridisation that is no less a construct and projection than the so-called Orient itself".' The problem, here, is less that Orientalism is a construct as that it is, in places, an unpersuasive construct.

[22] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 120–1.

European wish for the conclusions of earlier observations about the Saracens to be correct even if the observations themselves had been formulated unacceptably. Like the Orientalists, medieval authors discussed Islam and the East using an appropriate conceptual and lexical framework to body forth their views and to evoke wider agreement. Whether or not the views remained the same when the discourse changed is not so easy to estimate, though Said and Daniel seem to assume, perhaps using Occam's razor, that the prejudices expressed in secular language were not only the same as earlier Christian prejudices but had derived from them. As Daniel comments on Said's scientific Orientalists:

> The great orientalists meant to achieve impartial judgements, and just to mean it was itself a major achievement, but their views by no means broke entirely with those of the Middle Ages. For us the chief lesson may be that 'scientific' methodology never did truly escape from its bundle of inherited prejudices of all kinds.[23]

The shifts undergone by the Venus-theory and the naming-theory suggest that what readers and writers held on to (at least until the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century) was the capacity of a statement to satisfy one or another of a limited repertoire of requirements that the Saracens/Ismaelites/Muslims be wrong: bad religionists, liars, lustful, bloodthirsty, ruinous. By the age of imperial Orientalism, centuries of wear had proven some of the Christian-grounded statements to be supporting very appealing implied generalisations about Muslims and Arabs – even though the statements themselves might have been wrongly constructed according to the truths of the day. The rise of secularism marked a complete change in what constituted acceptable authority for truth and therefore ushered in an entirely new discourse, but it did not, according to Said and the evidence above, change the repertoire of desired truths about Islam, Arabs, Turks and other entities called Oriental. One might compare the way in which the earliest patristic commentators adopted and then disseminated a new discourse – constructing, for example, Ismael as Judaism and Isaac as Christianity – when they made the Old Testament speak with a Christian tongue to re-express ancient dislike of the tribes not chosen by God.

The evidence outlined above questions Said's and Daniel's models of the relationship between medieval and early modern European perceptions

[23] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 324.

of the Orient. The relationship does seem to be characterised by certain generalised constants which were formulated in religious terms for many centuries. However, it does not therefore follow that the constants are a characteristically medieval and religious essence lurking in modern Orientalist discourse, nor that medieval and modern approaches to Islam are essentially similar. Christian discourse surely played its part in producing acceptable reasons for Europeans to assert their superiority over others, but once the Christian discourse is dropped, it is hard to say what might be characteristically religious or medieval about the desire to appear superior itself. If 'Orientalism' and 'imperialism' are defined vaguely enough to find examples of either in early medieval texts, their definitions are then also vague enough to allow examples from many other periods and places, which undoes the terms' meaningful correspondence with European activity abroad after the seventeenth century. If they are defined strictly according to European activity abroad after the seventeenth century, there are good reasons not to project back the views of that specific period of history on to earlier literature to create the apparency of a European perceptual monolith. It is ironic that there is good textual evidence for some verbal continuity in western perceptions of Saracens (if not Islam or the Orient) from the twelfth century into the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century and solid textual evidence that this verbal continuity originated not in the twelfth or thirteenth century, whence Daniel supposes yet-surviving medieval concepts to have derived, but in the fourth and earlier.[24]

The longest-lived representation of the Saracens in England was that of the people who falsely named themselves. By the eighteenth century, it had finally died away, coincidentally or not at around the same time that Said proposes that secularised, imperial, 'manifest' Orientalism began. During the same period, literary works started to appear which corrected earlier errors or even promoted a new image of an admirable Islam.[25] Simon Ockley summarises the writings of previous centuries in a passage which might stand as an epitaph for the biblical Ismaelites who really wanted to be Saracens:

> Amongst other blind Stories which some of the Christian Writers have told of the *Saracens*, this is one, *viz*. That they called themselves *Saracens*, because they would have the world believe that they were descended from *Sarah*, *Abraham*'s lawful wife;

[24] Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 306; and see above, pp. 90–115, on Jerome.

[25] See Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 309–10 and 322–6.

being asham'd of *Hagar* his slave, but the contrary is most evident, for they are neither asham'd of *Ishmael* nor *Hagar*.[26]

Ockley's modernism is signalled by his association of 'blind' with 'Christian'. He rejects the assumptions of an earlier age. His own understanding of the history of ideas should appear (we may assume) enlightened by contrast. Yet Ockley was no promoter of Islam and he still calls the people 'Saracens' while refuting the theory of their name. Is he providing correction simply for the sake of accuracy, or working to maintain a self-satisfied European scholarship about the East, or perhaps both? Is he proto-Orientalist or just post-medieval? As far as the present study is concerned, Ockley here represents the death of the old and the birth of the new. If we are to clarify the relationship between medieval and modern perceptions of Islam, the attitude of writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries towards their literary inheritance on the subject of Islam requires more detailed examination than Said has provided. It is no longer sufficient simply to date fossilised religious 'Orientalist' inspiration to the Middle Ages or Renaissance.

It is not clear how to resolve the problem of talking about the early medieval period without 'Orientalising' it in its turn as an intractable entity unable to speak comprehensibly for itself, requiring interpretation by experts to self-serving ends – or, alternatively, 'imperialising' it by forcing it to conform to our own expectations and desires. The generalisations undertaken by Said and Daniel in their definitions indicate inherent difficulties in seeking terminology with which to frame large theories about people and periods. We cannot discuss 'medieval' and 'Muslim' as though they referred to homogenous unities but there are few alternatives useful for presenting a broad picture. Similarly, a historical approach runs the risk of assigning origins and ends according to one modern patterning of events. It would be as misleading to suggest that Jerome was in some way a causative influence upon the rise of Empire as to suggest that *Sarah* was responsible for *Saracen*. This study cannot claim to be free from methodological flaws and generalising assumptions. However, I have tried to discuss texts from a limited space and time, and thereby draw conclusions about the propagation and survival of some very specific ideas about Saracens.

[26] Ockley, *The Conquest of Syria, Persia, and Egypt* (later published as vol. 1 of *The History of the Saracen*), p. 331.

Concerning Anglo-Saxon England and pre-Orientalist thought, it should be noted here that (surviving) perceptions of the Arabs, Ismaelites and Saracens in Anglo-Saxon England are characterised neither by the vituperations of later polemicists against Islam nor by the will-to-power of Said's Orientalists later still. In the Latinate culture of pre-Conquest England, much information about the Saracens appears to have been acquired and repeated for information's sake, so long as it presented them in an appropriately unfavourable light as non-Christians. The canonical authors (Jerome, Orosius, Isidore, Cassiodorus *et al.*), not requiring to be questioned, were transmitted as part of a useful and desirable corpus of learning which included the exegetical analyses of the Saracen place in Christian thought. The fact that this acceptance of earlier authority resembles that described by Said as a characteristic of Orientalism does not mean that medieval authors thought 'Orientalistically'.

In the vernacular, even when translated from Latin originals, references to the Saracens point to a different bias that is less exegetical and more narrative or encyclopaedic – more factual, in a way (bearing in mind that 'factual' does not necessarily mean 'objective' or 'accurate' and that Latin writings already included this type of information). The Saracens in the *Old English Orosius*, Aldred's notes and Ælfric's writings appear as people who do things and live somewhere, rather than as an abstract aspect of the anti-church, though their reported hostility in other vernacular texts certainly promoted the generalisation that they were violently different. Still, though they are presented in contexts which suggest their hostility, the Saracens are not discussed in terms of material resources or European political ambition. Nor did the now-powerful cultural division between East and West necessarily have the same power for an Anglo-Saxon readership, whose world might also divide readily into North and South.

Three other points should be mentioned. One is that if an earlier parallel or analogue for Said's manifest Orientalism is ever to be sought, it could perhaps be sought some time during the Crusades period or Roman rule east of the Mediterranean. The reason is that, according to Said's argument, notions of material gain to come from a controlled and named 'East' (*Outremer? Arabia?*) seem to be inextricably bound up with the literary representation of the territory to be acquired.[27] There was simply no possibility

[27] In line with recent ideas about 'Orientalisms' rather than 'Orientalism', and bearing in mind the danger of generalising all evidence for literary constructions of the Other into

of material possession of the East during the Anglo-Saxon period. In fact, even products traded through Muslim hands into Anglo-Saxon England remained independent in literature from any connection with Saracens. It would be interesting to establish whether the official adoption of a theory of crusade was preceded by any appreciable rise in the number of tenth-century European texts representing armed offence against Saracens, the desirable riches and wonders of the East, a sense of European political identity, inherent Christian right to control the site of Jerusalem and so forth. However, for the reasons outlined above, it is unlikely that any kind of 'Orientalism' can plausibly be argued to have existed before the colonial period.

The second point relates to the word 'Orientalism' itself. As argued above, Said has stretched this term beyond useful limits. He convincingly portrays an ancient tendency to denigrate the distant and different in support of one's own point of view; but to call this tendency 'Orientalism' means that his own denigrations of modern Orientalists and their writings in terms of the patriarchs and canonical texts of the Christian Middle Ages might also constitute a form of 'Orientalism'. However, his metaphors, explored literally, help to contextualise his own argument. As Daniel has argued, there are various ways in which one might conceive of medieval influence upon imperialist ambitions.[28] It may be time to think in terms of several or many 'Orientalisms' to reflect the very varied ways in which previous thinkers have related to the Orient.[29]

The third point is that despite extensive information available on Saracens, Ismaelites and Arabs, authors and readers in Anglo-Saxon England appear to have known of no such thing as Islam. This may also be true of some authors after the Norman Conquest and during the early Middle Ages in general on the Continent. The names by which Muslims were first known already had a considerable history in European thought; Islam was never new, since Saracens, Ismaelites and Hagarenes were already old

a theory of 'human nature', as noted in Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism*, p. 5, and Schwarz, 'Mission Impossible', pp. 4–5.

[28] Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, p. 322.

[29] Compare Al-Azmeh's recent book title *Islams and Modernities* (London, 1996). William Dalrymple provides a good example of a different kind of 'Orientalism' in *White Mughals*, showing that British settlers in India before the nineteenth century often converted to Hinduism or Islam, adopted local customs and married into the community.

and explained.[30] The first use by Muslims themselves of their own name is uncertain and this should be borne in mind when examining the early pilgrimage literature; but it is clear that 'Saracen' was already known and brought a freight of pre-assumptions with it. This is not to say that there were no early ideas at all about a Saracen religion; to modern eyes, two such ideas, hinted at by Georgius and Adomnán, do share characteristics with Islam (fasting and praying). Otherwise, our evidence for early Anglo-Saxon awareness of Saracen religion is Bede's use of *erat* concerning Lucifer 'cuius cultui Sarracenorum gens ob honorem Veneris erat mancipata', and this is not very good evidence at all compared with exceptional ideas such as Paschasius Radbertus's ninth-century description of a mosque. Saracen religious efforts were presented, when they ever appeared, as poor, misguided endeavours. The three available shreds of information did not form part of a larger, coherent set of ideas about Saracen faith. It runs the risk of anachronism for modern readers to think 'Muslim' for *Saracenus* in many texts dating from after the 630s, or to assume that Arabs, Saracens, Turks, Islam and a geographical Orient belonged in the same sphere of reference.

Educated Anglo-Saxons perceived the Saracens as a biblical people who lived near the Holy Land as they had done in the Old Testament. Their name was explained in terms of an entirely plausible etymology which identified them as Ismaelites or Hagarenes. Their characteristics were defined according to their ancestry in Genesis and they behaved correspondingly as Ismaelites ought, living as violent raiders on the edge of civilisation, worshipping false gods and persecuting the local Christian community of the Holy Land. The beginning of the seventh century marked no change in this picture except that in some meaningful way the Ismaelites had been permitted to leap their proper bounds. The possibility of Christians finding out about Islam was hampered by many problems during the Middle Ages. A significant factor, according to the evidence laid out above, was probably a general Christian acceptance of earlier ideas purporting to represent all that one needed to know on the subject.

[30] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 59: 'If the mind must suddenly deal with what it takes to be a radically new form of life – as Islam appeared to Europe in the early Middle Ages – the response on the whole is conservative and defensive'. Medieval European authors did not apparently perceive a radically new form of life in Islam.

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