THE ENGLISH INTEREST IN THE ARABIC-SPEAKING CHRISTIANS

Many reasons were given for studying Arabic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since most practitioners were theologians, theological arguments for learning the language of the Qur'an tended to prevail. One of these was the presence of the Arabic-speaking Christians: Greek Orthodox, Copts, Jacobites, Armenians, Maronites and Nestorians. Under Ottoman rule, they were regarded in the west as the victims of persecution who should in some way be assisted and possibly even liberated. Certain distinctions were made between these eastern Churches.

The one which aroused the greatest interest and the greatest sympathy was the Greek Orthodox Church. With a little good will on either side its doctrine was considered reconcilable with western Christianity. Just as the Greek Church had gradually drifted away from the west over the centuries so, it was believed, the two forms of Christianity might again drift together. The main doctrinal point of disagreement, the so-called dual procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son which the Greeks rejected, could surely one day be surmounted. Where the other eastern Churches were concerned matters were different. The Nestorians, with their distinction of the two persons in Christ, and the traditionally monophysite Churches of the Copts, the Jacobites and the Armenians who believed in the single, divine nature of Christ, were associated with the great heresies of the fifth century. Even the Maronites, officially in communion with Rome since the twelfth century, remained strongly tinged by the seventh-century heresy of monothelitism which admitted a single will in Christ. For the west to accept these other Churches on their own terms was by no means easy—yet Christians they remained. The western attitude was consequently marked by a combination of attraction and repugnance which increased with closer knowledge.
confession and extreme unction, the administration of the eucharist in both kinds, and the tendency to hold services in the vernacular. The synod of Brest-Litovsk and the missionary activity of the Jesuits meant, moreover, that the eastern communities, besides being persecuted by the Turks, were threatened by the Church of Rome. This brought about a protective attitude of Protestant churchmen who, even if they desired a union, were certainly determined never to impose one.

Interest in the eastern Churches inevitably led to the need for the improvement of knowledge. And for improvement there was room. If we except certain works on the Greek Orthodox Church, few of the accounts of the Arabic-speaking Christian communities in circulation by the early years of the seventeenth century were impartial, recent, or first-hand. Some of the most influential eye-witness reports dated from the thirteenth century. James of Vitry, one of the more popular authors, had been bishop of Acre before and during the Fifth Crusade. Two others, John of Piana Carpini and William of Rubrocks, were dispatched a little later (the former in 1245, the latter in 1254) in order to enquire about the Mongols who, the western Church believed, might still be converted to Christianity. A similar enquiry prompted Burchard of Mount Sion to visit the Levant and to record his experiences in 1283.

Writing when the myth of Prester John, the oriental Christian at the head of a vast army which would defeat the Muslims, was gaining in strength, these thirteenth-century travellers were optimistic and flattering about the Christian communities living in the east. According to Burchard, whose Descriptio Terrae Sanctae was constantly reprinted in the sixteenth century, they far outnumbered the Muslims. They were meek and godfearing and often remarkably similar in their piety and their use of the Scriptures to their brethren in the west. While reports written in the thirteenth century bore little relationship to the state of affairs in the sixteenth century, even if the truly large quantity of Christians living under Ottoman rule again encouraged the idea of a Christian alliance to overthrow a Muslim overlord. Nevertheless the thirteenth-century texts were read avidly and included in the first volume of the 1598 edition of Hakluyt's Principal Navigations. Medieval in tone too was another influential work, the Cosmographie Disciplinie Compendium of 1561 by the French Orientalist Guillaume Postel. Just as David Chytraeus was to do some twenty years later, Postel emphasized the number of Christians living outside Europe who were 'hitherto unknown to us'. He recalled the prophecies of the pseudo-Methodius according to which a King of the Romans would recover Christ's kingdom from the west to the east and spread the Gospel from the summit of Mount Calvary. He reminded the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I, to whom the work was dedicated, that the 'innumerable' Christians living in the Levant would play an important part in the plan. But here Postel proved an exponent of the standard Catholic attitude—these Christians had lapsed sadly into error. They too needed to be converted. Above all, they needed to be educated. For that purpose Postel recommended circulating Arabic translations of the Gospels. Once this had been done, Postel had no doubt that the eastern Christians would recover their original piety and, in their turn, convert the Muslims.

While medieval texts were being read and medieval myths refashioned, less fanciful contemporary eye-witnesses were composing reports which were heavily prejudiced. The French cosmographer André Thevet, who described the fauna of the Levant after a journey to the Holy Land in his Cosmographie de Levant of 1554, found that of all the creatures he encountered, the most bizarre and repugnant were the ministers of the Greek Orthodox Church who 'take no account of the sacraments of the Catholic Church and have no reverence for them'. In Jerusalem he met other Christians, Armenians, Syrians, Nestorians and Jacobites. His opinion was no better of these 'people who have always held fantastic views until this day, and have been blinded and enveloped in the darkness of error and ignorance'.

The prevailing Catholic attitude was that, unless they accepted communion with Rome as the Maronites had, the eastern Christians were in error. Even the more objective Giovanni Botero, whose description of the eastern communities in the fourth part of his Relationi universali (1596) was a popular source, lamented 'gli errori della suanazione' when discussing the Jacobites. Other widely read works were written with missionary zeal and the hope of imposing a union on the eastern Christians once they had shed their heresies. Such is the idea behind De procuranda Salute omnium gentium (Antwerp 1613) by the Spanish Carmelite Tomás de Jesús and the standard handbook on the Nestorians, Pietro Strozzi's De Dogmatibus Chalcedonorum Disputatio (Rome 1617). The Maronites alone were singled out for praise, especially after their cordial reception of the legate Girolamo Dandini in 1596 and their adoption of the latinized Roman missal (to be followed, in 1606, by the acceptance of the Gregorian calendar). Dandini's own report was not published until well into the seventeenth century but its content was known and was divulged by his fellow-Jesuit Antonio Possevino in his Apparatus Sacri of 1606.

If, to these works, we add the various passages on the oriental Churches in Baronius' Annales, we have the main sources used by the English in the early seventeenth century. While the 1598 edition of Hakluyt's Principal Voyages included most of the medieval reports, the 1623 edition of its sequel, Purchas His Pilgrimes, contained sizeable excerpts from the works which had since become available.
The English were slow to discover the eastern Christians. When they did so they were attracted by the idea of an ancient hierarchy in a national Church which could justify the existence of a national English Church. Two of the most prominent churchmen in the sixteenth century, Thomas Cranmer and John Jewel, had displayed a growing interest in the Greek liturgy, and investigation into the works of the eastern fathers was undertaken with particular industry beneath the protection of Lancelot Andrewes during his fellowship (since 1576), and his mastership (since 1589) at Pembroke Hall in Cambridge. His concern with the eastern Churches as well as his interest in Biblical studies prompted Andrewes to encourage the learning of Arabic and to patronize the man who did so much to introduce it into England: William Bedwell.

Bedwell matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1579, and became a scholar in 1584 and master of arts in 1588. While he was still at Cambridge Lancelot Andrewes imparted to him his plan of producing an Arabic-Latin lexicon and Bedwell set to work on the project which was to occupy him for the rest of his life, producing a specimen of some 800 pages by 1595. Among the first Arabic manuscripts he consulted were the works of those eastern fathers for whom Andrewes had such esteem—a selection of homilies by John Chrysostom and Epheus’s commentary on Genesis. It appears to have been largely on these texts that Bedwell based his opinion of the writings of the Arabic-speaking Christians.

The immediate purpose of Bedwell’s praise of Christian works in Arabic was to secure patronage. In Andrewes he had a patron, but to subsidize the publication of Arabic books required more power and money than were initially in Andrewes’ possession. Consequently he addressed others: Richard Bancroft, bishop of London, in 1603, and King James himself in 1604. In his appeals he advanced many of the standard reasons for studying Arabic, but in his dedicatory epistle to the king, attached to his transcription and Latin translation of the Arabic version of the Epistles of St John, Bedwell seems to have touched for the first time on the theme of the Christian Arabs. On this he elaborated still further in 1606, in a preface to the Arabic version of the Epistles to Titus and Philemon. It was addressed to his original patron Lancelot Andrewes, recently appointed bishop of Chichester, who was to present Bedwell with the vicarage of Tottenham High Cross in the following year.

The writings of the Arabs (wrote Bedwell) say nothing about purgatory, about the impious sacrifice of the mass, about the primacy of Peter and his apostles, about meritorious justification, and there is not a word about those other figments of the imagination. I call God to witness that in those proxim and elaborate commentaries on Genesis; those commonplaces, religious instructions and homilies circulated under the name of St Chrysostom about Joseph’s peregrinations in Egypt, and many others read by me sedulously and with all the diligence of which I was capable, you will find nothing (if I am any judge of religious matters) that savours of Papism, Pelagianism, Arianism, Epicureanism, Mohammedanism or Judaism—nothing that savours of heresy. Here superstition, indeed suspicion, is far off.

With a few exceptions, Bedwell concluded, ‘nearly all that I have seen, read, studied about religion is healthy and sincere, and clearly tells with, and applauds, the Anglican, in other words the catholic, Church’.

Bedwell, whose only experience of foreign countries was his journey to Holland subsidized by Lancelot Andrewes in 1612, had no direct knowledge of the Arab world. We may wonder to what extent his sources reflected the convictions of the Arabic-speaking Christians. His statements, moreover, remained in manuscript so there can be little question of any immediate influence on his contemporaries. They express, however, a passionate widespread in a distinguished circle of English and foreign scholars, attracted by both the Anglican Church and the study of Arabic. At the same time Bedwell’s words coincide with the beginning of an English interest in the eastern Christians which led to studies in comparative religion, to histories, and to expeditions to the Levant.

The scholars intrigued by Anglicanism—the Anglicanism of Richard Hooper and Lancelot Andrewes—had as a common objective the restoration of the ideal of a primitive Church with as few dogmatic points as possible. The more illustrious of these, the Dutch Arminian Hugo Grotius and the French Huguenot Isaac Casaubon, wished to organize a council of non-Roman Churches and thought of inviting the “Churches of Greece and Asia”. Both men practised and encouraged the study of Arabic, and Casaubon was to become a close friend of Bedwell and Lancelot Andrewes after settling in England in 1610. For many members of this ecumenical circle the eastern Churches, independent, ancient and hierarchical, remained an ideal of which they had no direct experience. We shall now see that a closer acquaintance, based either on study or on personal visits originally stimulated by the same ideal, often led to disappointing conclusions.

The first important English expedition to the Levant in the years following the composition of Bedwell’s dedicatory epistles was undertaken by George Sandys, the admirer of Grotius and the younger brother of Hooper’s great friend Edwin Sandys. Indeed, one of the purposes of George’s journey was to complete a plan which his brother had never been able to accomplish and
to acquire first-hand information about the eastern Churches with a view to a possible union. With the exception of the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria Cyril Lucaris, who was to have so many admirers in Protestant Europe, the Christians of the east impressed Sancys as unfavourably as they had the Catholic travellers of the previous century. Sancys’ Relation of a Journey begun An.Dom.1610 was first brought out by Bedwell’s publisher Richard Field in 1615. It expressed the full the author’s distress at encountering the Copts ‘infected with that heresie of one nature in Christ’, the Abyssinians ‘descended of the cursed generation of Chus’, the Jacobites whose founder ‘infected these countries with divers heretical opinions’, and the Maronites, ‘an ignorant people, easily drawn to any religion, that could not give a reason for their own: poor in substance, and few in number’. The degradation to which they had sunk was yet another instance of instability, allowing the reader to ‘draw a right image of the frailtie of man, the mutabilitie of what soever is worldly; and assurance that as there is nothing unchangeable saving God, so nothing stable but by his grace and protection’.11

Degradation, poverty and ignorance—these were the features which struck one English traveller after the other during his encounter with the eastern Christian communities. Charles Robson, on his way to take up his post as chaplain to the Levant Company in Aleppo in the late 1620s, had hardly recovered from the shock of seeing Roman Catholics in Leghorn when he discovered the Greek Orthodox in Myconos. ‘They continue so poore by reason of the Turkes pillages, that unless they were merry Greekes indeed, any would wonder what delight they could take in living, living in continuall fear, in continuall and extreme necessitie’. Robson ‘wondered at their ignorance and God’s Justice’ and that ‘scarcely one of a hundred’ could understand the Greek liturgy reminded him strongly of Roman Catholicism.12

Because of their ideological purpose the studies in comparative religion were more optimistic in their treatment of the eastern Christians, even if their degree of optimism varied. Edward Breewood’s Enquiries touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions through the chiefes parts of the world was edited by the author’s nephew Robert and published posthumously by Bedwell’s friend John Bill in 1614. Edward Breewood had been above all a mathematician. He had been appointed in 1596 as the first professor of astronomy at Gresham College in London. A contemporary of Bedwell’s, he had studied at Oxford, and his interest in the eastern Churches was connected with his antiquarian studies on the origins of episcopacy. In his preface Robert Breewood explained some of the objectives of his uncle’s work:

Lastly, whereas there are many christians in Greece, Asia, Muscovy, Egypt and Aethiopia, it was desired of him that he would more distinctly set downe

the Countries wherein they lived, their superiours to whom they are subject, and their differences from the Romane Church, that it might more manifestly appear, how idle are the common vaunts, amongst the ignorant of her amplitude, as though all the Christian world save a few Protestantes shut up in some obscure comer of Europe, professd the same faith she embraceth and were within the territories of her Jurisdiction. The falsehood of which glorious boastings are in part most lively discovered in this learned Tractate, describing the divers conditions of Christians in the East, North and Southerne Regions of the earth which have no subordination unto the Papall Hierarchie.13

Despite such an apparently benevolent aim, with its echoes of Postel’s Cosmographia, Edward Breewood’s book, which was reprinted regularly until 1674, was by no means sympathetic to the original beliefs of the eastern Christians. After listing the traditional errors of the Maronites (which he derived from Possevino and Tomás de Jesús) he went on to deprecate ‘this heresie of the Mononethites, springing out of that bitter roote of the Jacobites, touching one onely nature in Christ’. Yet Breewood saw that there was hope. Purified by suffering, the oriental communities were on their way to discovering the true religion:

So on the other side having now at length their harts humbled, and their wits tamed by that povertie and affliction, wherein the tyrannie and opposition of the Arabians and Turkes hath long holden them, it seemeth that the Lord hath taken pitie on them (as it is his propertime not to dispise humble and broken spirits, and to remember mercie in the middest of judgement) and reduced them, or the most of them, to the right acknowledgement of his sonne againe. For certainly, that they [the Maronites] and other Christians of the East, have (at least in these later times) disclaimed and abandoned, those hereticall phantasies touching our Saviour, wherein by their misleadrs they had been aunctiently poisoned (and which many Christians of these West parts, still charge them with all) doth manifestly appear . . .14

The confessions of faith which Breewood then listed (by the Jacobites, the Nestorians, the Armenians, the Copts of Egypt, the Abyssinians and the Maronites) had mainly been drawn up in order to please the Church of Rome and Breewood’s acknowledgement of the improvement of the eastern Churches could be regarded as a tribute to Catholic missionary activity. This, however, was far from his purpose. It is clear from his nephew’s preface that he, like Grotius and Casaubon, cherished the ideal of ‘a most sacred harmony betwene [the non-Roman Churches] in the more substantials points of Christian Religion necessary to, salvation’.15

Breewood’s disapproval of the ‘heresies’ of the cast was shared by the author of another similar work, Alexander Ross, former chaplain to Charles I, whose Pansebeia, or a View of all Religions in the World, appeared in 1655. Yet there was one book in which the delight in the eastern Christians’ refusal
to submit to Rome is such that their anomalous beliefs are excused, if not actually praised. This is Christianographie, or The Description of the multitude and sundry sects of Christians in the World not subject to the Pope. With their Unite, and how they agree with us in the principal points of Difference between us and the Church of Rome, written by Ephraim Pagitt. It was published in 1635, well before Pagitt’s later conversion to Presbyterianism, and composed while he was still a protegé of that great High Church patron of Arabic studies, Archbishop Laud. On the face of it Pagitt’s aim was the same as Brewood’s. ‘That which I intend in this treatise’, he wrote, ‘is, to show that there are many Christian Churches as well in Europe as in other parts of the world, that do not adhere to the Roman Church, nor acknowledge the Pope for their head.’ Just as Brewood’s study of the origins of episcopacy had led him to conclude that England had always had an episcopacy of its own which was completely independent of Rome, so Pagitt stressed the points of community between the independent Churches of the east and the independent Christianity of the ancient Britons. Unlike Brewood Pagitt was incensed by the Catholic assumption that the oriental Christians were in error. They deserved, rather, our prayers and sympathy.

Many of these Christians live under the Turk, and Pagans, and suffer very much for Jesus Christ sake which they might quit themselves of, if they would renounce their religion, and also might enjoy many immunities, and privileges, which they are for their religion only deprived of as before. The lamentable Calamities of these afflicted and distressed Churches, should cause all true harted Christians, in true sense and compassion of their miseries, to make their prayers, and humble petitions to Almighty God, to cast downe his pitiful eyes upon them: And farre be it from us to believe that all these Christians are excluded heaven, and plunged into hell for not submitting themselves enely to the Bishop of Rome.

While Brewood, Ross and Pagitt wrote about the eastern Churches in general an interest matured in one of these Churches in particular, the Coptic Church. The process seems to start with the remarkably enthusiastic welcome accorded in 1610 to Yusuf ibn Abū Ḍhaqān, also known as Josephus Barbatus or Abudacrus. Abudacrus was a Copt from Cairo who arrived in Rome with a letter for the Pope, Clement VIII, from the patriarch of Alexandria in 1595. In Rome he converted to Catholicism. He then made his way to Paris, where he gave Arabic lessons, acted as interpreter at court and to the French ambassador to Morocco, and entered that international circle of Arabists which extended over Europe. He met Isaac Cazaubon and two other French Arabists, Étienne Hubert and Jean Martin. He gave lessons to the young Dutch Arabist Thomas Erpenius. He wrote to Joseph Justus Scaliger in Leiden, endeavouring to solicit an invitation to the Low Countries. From

Erpenius he obtained a letter of introduction to William Bedwell in London. The extent of Abudacrus’ education and knowledge is difficult to fathom. Judging from his surviving letters his Arabic was not of the best and his Latin was poor. Yet he had a smattering of a great many languages: Hebrew, Syriac, ancient and modern Greek, Turkish, French and Italian, to which he later added Spanish and English. With this smattering he wrote a long way, publishing a work on Hebrew grammar, and leaving in manuscript various translations into Arabic, a study on the Copts, and an Arabic grammar.

Abudacrus arrived in England in the summer of 1610. He was recommended by Richard Bancroft, archbishop of Canterbury, to the vice-chancellor of Oxford university, John King, bishop of London, and he was praised in a warm letter by Thomas Bodley to his librarian William James. At Oxford he seems to have lectured briefly in Arabic, and to have transcribed at least one Arabic manuscript, presumably in Bodley’s library. In London, where he was awaited by William Bedwell and Lancelot Andrews, he met Miles Smith, future bishop of Gloucester, and saw his old acquaintance Isaac Cazaubon. Abudacrus remained in England until 1613 when, with letters from the Archduke Albert’s ambassador Ferdinand de Boisboeuf, he went to the Southern Netherlands and taught Arabic and Hebrew. Protected by the Archduke, whom he once served as interpreter, he subsequently lectured at the University of Louvain until he was ousted by his hostile colleagues. In 1618 he went to Bavaria where the distinction of his friends and patrons would seem to confirm the widely benevolent attitude towards the eastern Christians in both Catholic and Protestant Europe. Laden with further recommendations, he made his way to Austria, to Linz and then to Vienna. With the backing of the imperial librarian, Sebastian Tengnagel, he was appointed dragoman in Constantineople, a post he retained for over twenty years.

It may very well have been in Oxford that Abudacrus, finding someone prepared to correct his Latin, wrote his brief work on the Copts. It remained in manuscript for some sixty-five years until it fell into the hands of a member of the circle of Edmund Castell—Thomas Marshall, one of a number of scholars who had spent the period of the Commonwealth in disgrace or in exile and returned to England after the Restoration to take up a high academic post. After holding a Trappes scholarship at Lincoln College, Marshall had read from Oxford to Holland with the arrest of Charles I in 1647, and had become chaplain to the Company of Merchant Adventurers. Residing first in Rotterdam and then in Dordrecht he had encountered the younger Franciscus Junius, Isaac Vossius, and the greatest Arabist of his day Jacob Golius, all of whom seem to have encouraged his interest in Coptic and in the Copts of Egypt. Elected to a fellowship at Lincoln College in 1668 he returned to England
shortly after and was made rector of the college in 1672. Then, in 1675, he edited Abudacnu’s *Historia Jacobitarum, Seu Coptorum, in Egypt, Lybia, Nubia, Ethiopia tota, et in parte Cypri insulæ habitantium*. In his preface he said that it was soon to be followed by an edition of the Coptic Gospels. When he was still in Dordrecht in 1689, he had written to his friend Thomas Smith, recently appointed chaplain to the English ambassador in Constantinople, that

the first attempts in this obsolete literature must be a small wedge to make way for greater; I mean the rest of the Aegyptian Christian Monuments which are found in Italy or elsewhere. Nay, I think it may be used for a small bait to fish in the Nile withall. I should gladly see, Oxford Theatre bring forth the first fruits of that anciently famous Christian Church in Aegypt rather than any other place I know. Thomas Marshall never managed to achieve his ambition of producing an edition of the Gospels in Coptic. Abudacnu’s book was a very small bait, short and superficial—‘slight’, as Gibbon was to describe it in the following century. Nevertheless it was translated into English in 1692 and was reissued twice in the eighteenth century. Its fortunes are surprising in view of the appearance of a far more scholarly and informed study on the subject written while Marshall was preparing his edition: the *Histoire de l’église d’Alexandrie*, first published in French in 1677 by the German Johann Michael Wansleben. Because of his knowledge of Ethiopic, Wansleben had worked with Edmund Castell on his *Lexicon Heptaglotton*. His book on the Copts, an English version of which, *The Present State of Egypt*, appeared in 1678, was the result of an expedition to the Levant undertaken on the orders of Louis XIV’s minister Colbert. It was a work of considerable stature, based on some of the most important Arabic sources and rendering Abudacnu’s booklet all but entirely useless. In contrast to Abudacnu’s booklet, it emphasized the points of community between the Copts and the Roman Catholics. Abudacnu’s study remains unique largely because it was written by a Copt and was originally composed well before Wansleben.

**ISAAC BASIRE AND THE ALEPPo CHAPLAINS**

We now turn to a group of Englishmen who spent longer periods of time in the east, daily encountered the Christian communities and, in one way or another, tried to propagate the Anglican faith. The most dedicated was Isaac Basire, of French origin and by no means an Arabist. Formerly chaplain to Charles I, Basire was forced abroad, like Thomas Marshall, during the Commonwealth. After travelling through France and Italy, he decided that his mission was to spread Anglicanism in the Ottoman Empire. He accordingly departed for the Levant. In 1653 he wrote an epistle from Constantinople sustaining Britain’s age-old independence of Rome with a patriarchate of its own (much in the style of Pafi) and relating his efforts to distribute the Anglican catechism in Greek, Turkish and Arabic translations. He had been, he reported, particularly successful in Zante ‘spreading amongst the Greeks the Catholic Doctrine of our Church’. He went on to Syria ‘where, after some months’ stay in Aleppo, where I had frequent conversation with the Patriarch of Antioch, then resident there, I left a copy of our Catechism translated into Arabic’. Yet he encountered considerable opposition among the ‘Latins’, or the Catholic missionaries and their Uniate supporters. They threatened to inform the Turks about his activities and to have the patriarch put an end to them. They even threatened to murder him on his return from one of the Greek Orthodox churches. Undeterred, Basire proceeded to Jerusalem where he ‘received much honor, both from the Greeks and Latins’, and penetrated as far as Mesopotamia. After his success in the Middle East he proposed a communion with the Greek Orthodox Church and announced his intention (which he never accomplished) of pursuing his travels to Egypt in order to visit the Copts.

The other Anglicans in the Levant were less single-minded than Basire. These were the chaplains to the Aleppo factory of the Levant Company. However great their piety, their interest in the east went far beyond the objective of propagating Anglicanism. As scholars, and often as Arabists, they studied the language, the people and the culture and made of Aleppo England’s most vital link with Arab civilisation in the seventeenth century. Largely on account of its importance for the silk trade, Aleppo was one of the main commercial centres in the east. A factory had been established there in 1583, two years after the foundation of the Levant Company. By 1586 there was an English consul and, within about ten years (the exact date is unknown), there appears to have been a chaplain. The factory was lodged in the Khan al-Gumruk, one of the largest and finest caravanserais in the town which had been built in 1574 south of the Great Mosque. For much of the seventeenth century the English shared the Khan with the Dutch and the French, but the two other consulates subsequently moved to premises of their own.

In the seventeenth century the election of the chaplain was undertaken by the general court of the Company in London, usually after the candidates had preached a sermon before the assembly. Where the Aleppo factory was concerned, there seems to have been a preference for men educated at Oxford. This was in contrast to Smyrna, where a majority of the chaplains had been to Cambridge, and to Constantinople, where the two universities were equally
represented. With a single exception all the Aleppo chaplains had studied at Oxford. Charles Robson had been at Queen’s, Edward Pococke and Robert Frampton at Corpus Christi, Robert Huntington at Merton, and Henry Maudrell at Exeter College. Until the middle of the century the salary was £50 per annum besides a sum towards expenses, but this increased in the 1650s. The chaplains, who normally remained bachelors, often indulged in trade themselves, but their main function was to hold religious services in the consular chapel for the benefit of the employees of the factory. The number of merchants present increased steadily from about fourteen in 1596 to over fifty in the 1660s, and we know that when Robert Frampton, the future bishop of Gloucester, preached between 1655 and 1667, the English merchants were joined by other western Christians, especially by German Lutherans. This suggests a tolerant and latitudinarian attitude not uncommon in other factories, as we know from the case of Smyrna.32

Frampton left his mark on the Aleppo factory, as we see from the description by Henry Maudrell, himself appointed chaplain in 1695:

... such they still continue, as that incomparable Instructor left them: That is, Pious, Sober, Benevolent, devout in the Offices of Religion: in Conversation, innocently cheerful; given to no pleasures but such as are honest and manly; to no Communications, but such as the nicest Ears need not be offended at; exhibiting in all their Actions those best and truest signs of a Christian Spirit, a sincere and cheerful friendship among themselves, a generous Charity toward others, and a profound reverence for the Liturgy and Constitution of the Church of England. It is our first Employment every morning to solemnize the daily Service of the Church; at which I am sure to have always a devout, a regular and full Congregation....

Maudrell’s is not the only description of the atmosphere at the Aleppo factory. Some years earlier, in 1676, the naval chaplain Henry Teonge went on a picnic with the forty or so Englishmen just outside the city ‘where a princely tent was pitched; and wee had several pastimes and sports, as duck-hunting, fishing, shooting, handball, cricket, scruffio; and then a noble dinner brought thither with great plenty of all sorts of wines, punch, and lemonads.’33

Although Edward Pococke considered Aleppo a ‘very melancholy place’ it was attractive for students of Arabic. The town was regarded as the friendliest in the Arab world. Robert Frampton was so taken by it that he returned voluntarily after his marriage to minister to vicinities of the plague. Charles Robson, after an exhausting and dangerous journey from Alexandria, found ‘my welcome exceeding my hopes’ and Teonge added to his description of how a young Englishman had been seduced by the wife of a local official: ‘And this shews they love the English’.”

The Aleppo chaplains tended to acquire a sound knowledge of Arabic. Edward Pococke, chaplain from 1630 to 1636, had studied the language when he was still at Oxford under Matthias Pasner and had subsequently turned to William Bedwell. Not only did Bedwell give him tuition, but he also put him in touch with his future patron, William Laud, then bishop of London, who first wrote to him when he was in Aleppo in 1631. Only in Aleppo, however, did Pococke truly master Arabic. Besides improving his Hebrew and his Syriac and learning Ethiopian, Pococke arranged for a learned Muslim to give him regular lessons in classical Arabic and employed a Muslim servant with whom to practise the spoken language. With active practice and constant reading and translating Arabic texts he soon spoke it ‘with as much ease as his mother-tongue, and so well understood the criticism and niceties of it, that his speech pronounced him a master in it, in no sort inferior to the mufti of Aleppo.’34 Robert Frampton was also noted for his fluency. He used to describe the scepticism of his servant who observed him at work with his Arabic grammar. He consequently cast it away and ‘being master of their alphabet, came soon to read, but found observation the readiest way to an ability of converse’.

The factory of the Levant Company in Aleppo was conducive to study. It had a sizeable library, containing 228 volumes in 1668, and the chaplains had ample time to devote to research, to exploration and to collecting manuscripts and other antiquities.35 Some of the first English collections of Arabic and Syriac manuscripts were made by men who had worked at Aleppo: by Paul Pindar, consul in Aleppo from 1606 to 1610 before being appointed ambassador to Constantinople, and by the chaplains, Robson, Pococke, Frampton and, above all, Robert Huntington.

Henry Maudrell, chaplain from 1695 to 1701, travelled. He intended his Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem At Easter AD 1697 to be a supplement to Sanders’ work. His remarks on the eastern Christians were accompanied by observations on the landscape, the architecture and the archeology. Robert Huntington who was chaplain from 1670 to 1681, also travelled south, assembled an impressive collection of manuscripts, and pursued his investigations into the Samaritans. Frampton compiled a collection of Arabic proverbs ‘with an account of their original and present use and application, with a parallel of the European in various languages’.36 But of all the scholarly chaplains Edward Pococke was the most versatile. Besides translating al-Maydānī’s collection of six thousand proverbs, he studied the habits of the chameleon, confuting Pliny’s assertion that it could do without food. He also profited from his years in Aleppo to continue his Biblical studies. Fascinated by the entire area in which the Old Testament had been composed, he reached
alastair hamilton

a number of currently accepted conclusions about the meaning and translation of certain words and passages by observing local customs. He thus understood the exact significance of the image of threshing corn, performed in a way and with an instrument unknown in Europe. He also concluded that "kamalim in Ps.44:19 and "silotim" in Ps.68:10 were neither "dragons" nor "foxes", as they had respectively been translated, but the jackals he heard calling in the Aleppo nights.93

Among the most striking features of Aleppo was its international quality—an Epitome of the whole world,94 as Robson described it—and its large communities of Christians. The Christians with whom the English merchants and their chaplains had most to do were the Greek Orthodox. These they employed as servants, used as interpreters, and sometimes took as wives. Yet it was not only members of the Greek Orthodox Church who assisted the English scholars in their research and, above all, in their quest for manuscripts. Frampton received one of his most treasured manuscripts, a Qur'an, from the Armenian Uniate bishop Dawūd and included numerous other Christians among his friends.95 Huntington was in learned correspondence with Johannes Lascaris, the Greek Orthodox archbishop of Mount Sinai, with Hilarion Cigala, Orthodox primate of Cyprus, and above all with the Maronite patriarch of Antioch, Estefan al-Duwaihy.96

In these circles the chaplains attempted to propagate the Anglican faith. The most intense campaign was undertaken by Pococke in collaboration with Huntington. Besides a learned Muslim intermediary in the acquisition of manuscripts, Ahmad, Pococke had already made use in Aleppo of the services as a copyist of Thalhah, the brother of the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Antioch. He had met Cyril Lucaris, by then Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople, when he returned to the Levant in 1637 and acted as chargé d'affaires at the English embassy in Constantinople. On his way back to England in 1640 he stopped in Paris where he encountered Grotius and the Maronite scholar Gabriel Sionit.97 His first missionary effort was made together with Robert Boyle and was intended to introduce the Muslims to Christianity. This was the translation into Arabic in 1659, at Boyle's request and expense, of Grotius' *De veritate religionis christianae.* Boyle went on to subsidize Seaman's translation into Turkish of the New Testament and the Anglican catechism in 1666 and, through his interest in the eastern Christians, was exposed to the imposition of a man posing as a patriarch of Antioch.98

Pococke published his translation into Arabic of the Anglican catechism 'for the use of the young Christians in the East' in 1671 and dispatched 36 copies, together with copies of his translation of Grotius, to Huntington in Aleppo. Huntington distributed the books among his Christian acquaintances and urged Pococke to translate into Arabic the Anglican liturgy, offering £20 towards the expenses. His arguments for doing so included 'the need that the Greek Christians have of devotional books; their esteem for the Church of England above all others; their agreement with it in doctrine, excepting the points of the procession of the Holy Ghost and Transubstantiation.99 Although it was not Huntington but Oxford University that finally subsidized *Partes Practivae Liturgiae Ecclesiae Anglicanae* in Arabic, when copies arrived in 1675 Huntington again gave them to Christians such as the archbishop of Mount Sinai, to whom he recommended the Anglican Church.100

**Myth and Reality**

To what extent did the western view of the eastern Christians correspond to reality? In the west they were regarded as the victims of continuous persecution and for this reason, even in their degradation, they deserved sympathy. At the same time it was widely felt that they were eager to join the western Churches which had so much to offer—above all money and education, but also doctrine. Was this simply an illusion, or was there an element of truth in it?

First, let us take the conditions in which the Christians lived under Turkish rule. Certainly those oriental Christians living in the west were vociferous in their complaints, and few more so than the Greeks. In England one of the best examples is Christopher Angell. His account, *Christopher Angell, A Greek, who tasted of many stripes and torments inflicted by the Turks for the faith which he had in Christ Jesus,* was published in Oxford, in Greek in 1617 and in English in 1618. The detailed description of how the author was flogged by the Turks in their efforts to force him to recant was accompanied by woodcuts illustrating his treatment. But Angell was not altogether disinterested. He was staying in England and needed money to survive. His book was the medium by which he hoped to win the sympathy and generosity of his English patrons.101 The complaints from the Arabic-speaking Christians, whose communities had been accustomed to Muslim rule for longer than the Orthodox in Greece, tended to be less specific. In his correspondence with Pope Paul V in the early seventeenth century the Nestorian patriarch of Babylon wrote that he could not come to Rome himself 'since our oppressive rulers do not allow me to do so. Nor do they let me go to Jerusalem. They keep us like slaves and do not allow us to do what we want.'102 Similarly the Maronite patriarch al-Duwaihy wrote to Huntington that 'this garden which was once so fine and magnificent is now all the more desolate and down-trodden since, for about a thousand years, it has been under the tyrannical yoke
of the Infidel." 49

Certainly the Christians of the Ottoman empire had fewer rights than the Muslim subjects. They were second-class citizens. What rights they had were by no means always respected. Episodes like the flogging of Christopher Angelos could occur, and the most painful aspect of Ottoman rule was its unpredictability. The eastern Churches, moreover, were poor, and the poverty, aggravated by taxation, produced the ignorance which shocked western travellers. This was one of the reasons for the success of the well-educated and well-organized Roman Catholic missionaries. But if there was little liking among the oriental Christians for the Ottoman rulers, there was not always much more for the Christians of the west. Although it had occurred some centuries previously the first encounter between the Christians of the east and west had been catastrophie: the arrival of the crusaders who dealt arrogantly with their heretical eastern brethren, and, worse still, prejudiced their position, putting an end to the traditional tolerance with which they had been treated by the Muslims. Nor were the western Christians necessarily better in the seventeenth century. The Greek Orthodox community of Chios found its Church handled with more respect by the Turks than by the Venetians who occupied the island in 1694. 46 From the Turks, at least, the eastern Christians had no inquisition to fear. They were, on the whole, free to believe what they pleased. If we look at the few oriental sources, partial indeed, but written for an eastern rather than a western readership, we see that the lamentations about the Turks go little further than a habitual complaint about taxes. The chronicles composied by al-Duwayhi is instructive. There we see clearly who the true enemies of the Maronites were—not the Turks, so abomminated for the benefit of western readers, but the other eastern Christian communities, and above all the Greek Orthodox, always ready to manoeuvre the Ottoman officials against fellow Christians of a different persuasion. 51 In fact I noted them so desperate and crafty towards one another,' wrote Henry Blount, disgusted by the Christians during his visit to the east in 1634, 'as each loves the Turk better then they doe each of the other, and serve him for informers and instruments against one another.' This judgement was fully confirmed over a century later by the Scottish physicians of the Levant Company, the Russell brothers. 'The hardships they sometimes complain of suffering on account of religion', they wrote of the Christians in The Natural History of Aleppo, 'are always the consequence of intestine feuds among themselves; for the Turks never interfere, till incited or solicited by one or other of the parties.' 52

Yet the west did have something to offer the Christians of the east. It had money. Refugees and visitors benefited from the generosity of western governments. 53 It could provide education—academies and printing presses. Finally, certain western embassies in Constantinople could help to protect certain Christian communities. The most powerful embassy was usually that of Catholic France, and the ambassadors generally preferred Catholic Uniates to others. For some years after 1620, the embassadous of England and Holland could also be useful allies. In this period we find members of the Greek church looking with particular interest to Protestant Europe. Yet those Greek Orthodox churchmen who displayed a benevolent attitude towards Protestantism had more at heart the autonomy of the Orthodox Church from Rome, threatened as this seemed to be by the synod of Brest-Litovsk and the missionary advance, than a union with the Protestants. If, like Cyril Lucaris, they introduced too many Protestant tenets into their teaching, they were disowned by the other members of their church. 54

There is hardly any surviving evidence of the effect of the English attempt to propagate Anglicanism in the Levant. A letter written in the late 1730s by a Jesuit missionary in Aleppo is prejudiced, but there is little else.

The Gentlemen of the so-called reformed Religion would not dare to dogmatize here. Or at least, they would not do so with impunity. Some time ago an English minister, zealous for his sect, had printed at great expense a catechism after his own fashion: he hoped to instil into the spirit and heart of all the Christians the poison with which it was filled. But it was trampled under foot; it was torn; it was burnt, without the missionaries' having to make the slightest gesture. The Christians of all the nations of the Orient know not what it means to doubt the reality of the body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; and they are all so devoted to their fasts and their Lent that they would rather die than renounce them. They have also received from Antioch, their neighbour and their mistress in the Faith, the habit of praying for the dead. The invocation of the Saints, and particularly of St George, is so dear to them and so precious that they would have themselves cut to pieces rather than give it up. Nor can one add anything to the deep veneration which even the Turks have for Mary: they call her the Mother of the great Prophet Jesus, and venerate her in this capacity to the point of impaling the Jews who dare to blaspheme against her. What a strange contrast! Men born in the cradle of Christendom refuse to Mary honours and thus become the most implacable enemies of the Christian name. 55

The English minister referred to may well have been Robert Huntington and the reactions recorded by the Jesuit were illustrative of the amenable attitude of the eastern Christians. This same amenable led the Anglicans to believe they shared certain points with the Greek Orthodox and prompted those studies of the Church in the last decades of the seventeenth century which enabled us to chart the growing disenchantment.

Thomas Marshall's friend Thomas Smith, chaplain to the English embassy in Constantinople from 1669 to 1670, was still optimistic about the Greeks in his Account of the Greek Church, as to Its Doctrine and Rites of Worship,
published in Latin in 1676 and in English in 1680. He encouraged the plan to build a Greek church in London to relieve the necessities of those, whom either curiosity and love of learning shall draw into these parts, or Turkish cruelty and persecution shall drive and force out of their own Country; and at the same time to reduce them from those errors and corruptions, which have of late crept in among them, by bringing them into a nearer and more familiar acquaintance with the Doctrin, and rites of Worship establish'd in the Church of England. He deplored 'the sly artifices and insinuations and underhand dealing of the subtle Emissaries of Rome, who watch continually over the poor Greeks, and take advantage of their poverty and distress to bring them to a further compliance, and in time, to a down-right subjection', and exclaimed: 'What a Glorious design would it be, and how much for the honour of our Religion, if the Christian Princes would unite and enter upon a Holy War, and redeem the Oriental Christians from the burthen of this intolerable tyranny and slavery!' 155

Sir Paul Rycaut had been secretary at the embassy in Constantinople from 1661 to 1666 and subsequently consul in Smyrna until 1678. He published his Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches, Anno Christi 1678 in 1679. Despite a generally sympathetic attitude to what he encountered in the Levant, he was distressed by the state of the Greek Orthodox Church, the penury and ignorance of its ministers and the indifference of its members. Such, too, was the reaction of Henry Maunderell to the Greek Orthodox he met in Syria and the Lebanon. It was this disappointment, rather than the optimism of Pagitt or even of Thomas Smith, which culminated in the work of another former chaplain to the embassy in Constantinople. John Covel's Some Account of the Present Greek Church, with Reflections on their Present Doctrine and Discipline; Particularly in the Eucharist, And the Rest of their Seven Pretended Sacraments was published in 1722, the year of the author's death. Covel concentrated on a subject about which the Greeks were deliberately vague, transubstantiation. He thereby brought out one of the main differences in mentality between west and east: the western need for clear definitions of dogmatic points with which the eastern Christians were not particularly concerned.

Covel's insistence on dogmatic definitions was a far cry from the conciliatory ideals of Grotius and Casaubon. His book coincided with the last attempt for many years to form a union with the Churches of the east. This attempt was made in the small community of non-jurors, those Anglicans who believed that the 'catholicity' of the Church of England had been betrayed by the revolution of 1688. They continued to uphold, as Thomas Ken, former bishop of Bath and Wells, wrote in his will, 'the holy and apostolic faith professed by the whole Church before the division of East and West'. Between 1716 and 1725 a group of non-jurors endeavoured to negotiate with the Greeks and the Russians until the archbishop of Canterbury informed the patriarch of Jerusalem that they were impostors who did not represent the English Church. 57 Despite such failures, however, the attitude even behind the approaches of the non-jurors foreshadows the commendably disinterested approach of the Church of England in more recent times. In the nineteenth century missionaries were dispatched to the east in order to help and advise the Christian communities about reforming their own Churches. 58 The object was assistance rather than conversion, and one of the most active figures behind these endeavours, the topographer George Williams, consciously placed himself in a tradition that went back to Lancelot Andrews. 59

Conclusions

In England what was originally a Protestant attitude to the Arabic-speaking Christians soon became a specifically Anglican one. Admittedly the study of the eastern Churches could lead in various directions, and we find the puritan archbishop George Abbot inviting Cyril Lucaris to send young Greeks to England to study theology at the king's expense. Slightly later John Selden, in a controversial edition published in 1642, exploited the works of the tenth-century Melchite patriarch of Alexandria, Eutychius, in order to discredit the alleged antiquity of the institution of episcopy. 60 On the whole, however, it was supporters of episcopacy who were interested in the oriental Churches with their ancient hierarchies. William Bedwell, the High Churchman, the friend and protégé of so many Arminians both in Holland and England, illustrates a tendency that was to prevail. It was thus mainly Laudian Anglicans and royalists, such as Pococke, Marshall, and Basire, rather than Puritans and parliamentarians; non-jurors like Frampton and Ken rather than Whigs, who took an interest in the eastern Churches and, more generally, in Arabic studies.

Despite the Anglican interest in the eastern communities, England never profited from the presence of Arabic-speaking Christians in the way that France or the Vatican did. Abbadacius' brief visit to Oxford and London cannot be compared to the long and fruitful years spent by the Maronites Gabriel Sionite and John Heronite in Paris or by Abraham Echelleonius in both Italy and France in the seventeenth century, or to those spent by the various members of the Assemani family in Rome in the eighteenth century. With the exception of the studies on the Greek Orthodox Church, the works
of Smith, Rycaut and Covel, the English produced no work on the eastern Christians to compare with the books by Waneleben and Renaudot on the Copts. Nevertheless the Christian communities of the east continued to attract Arabists throughout the seventeenth century. Their poverty, their ignorance, even their observations drew criticism, but their presence stimulated Arabists to explore the Levant and when they did so they found the Christians to be valuable allies.

NOTES

2 For a survey of the development of unaniimity see Charles A. Frazee, Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453-1923 (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 5-220.
7 André Thaibert, Cosmographie de Levant, (Lyon, 1554), pp. 96, 171.
8 Giovanni Botero, Relazioni universali (Venice, 1555), fol. 65v.
10 Dandini’s report was first published fifty years later: Missione Apostolica al Patriarca e Maroniti del Monte Libano del P. Giovaneco Dandini (Cesena, 1656).
12 See Hamilton, William Bedwel the Arabist, pp. 9-12.
13 Bedwel’s dedicatory epistles are published ibid., pp. 106-20.
14 Ibid., p. 117. The original preface is in Ms Slo 1796, fols. 1r-26v, British Library, London.
18 Edward Brewood, Enquiries touching the Diversity of Languages and Religious through the chief parts of the world (London, 1629), sig. ** 2r.
19 Ibid., pp. 180, 183.
20 Ibid., sig. ** 4r.
22 Ibid., p. 175.
25 See Mrs 45, fol. 109a, Bodleian Library, Oxford. I am grateful to Dr Jane Barnett for her advice about Marshall’s papers.
26 E. Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, II, p. 861.
27 The True History of the Jacobites Of Egypt, Lybia, Nubia, etc. and their Origins, Religion, Ceremonies, Lawes, and Customs whereby you may see how they differ from the Jacobites of Great Britain. London (1692) was ‘translated by a person of quality’. Sir Edwin Sadler, Buck, of Temple Dinsley in Herefordshire who was candid about his ignorance of the subject and the purely casual manner in which he decided to study Abadacrus’ book. He was surprised, he said, ‘by finding the Name Jacobite upon it, an Appellation we now give to the followers of an unhappy Prince fled to the Foutch King for succour’ (sig.A2v.). Although Sadler was aware of the defects of ‘the Ancients, though unhappy erroneous Church in the whole East’ he also commented the virtues of the Copts, ‘their Piety, Simplicity, entire Obedience to a Patriarch, most unspeakable Zeal for the sacred Writing’ (sig.A3v-4r). Above all, however, Sir Edwin Sadler of Temple Dinsley, known otherwise solely on account of the magnitude of his debts which obliged him to sell the manor of Temple Dinsley, used Abadacrus’ history as a document of anti-Jacobite propaganda. It served to make a comparison between the ‘Old Jacobites’ (or the Copts) and the ‘New Jacobites’ of the translation’s own country, most unfavourable to the latter who, ‘instead of fearing their God, and honouring their King… fear their King, and dishonour their God’ and are all for ‘exalting the Protestant Religion, abolishing old English Liberty, and introducing Popery and Slavery’ (p. 32). In 1693 Sadler had a second edition printed in order to correct the numerous printing errors in the first: The History of the Copts, Commonly called Jacobites, Under the Dominion of the Turk and Abyssinian Empires. (London, 1693). On Sadler, see Robert Clutterbuck, The History and Antiquities of the County of Hereford, 3 vols. (London, 1827), III, p. 24.
28 By Johann Heinrich von Seelen in Lübeck in 1733, and in an edition by Siegfried Havercamp, annotated by Johann Nicolai, in Leiden in 1740.
29 Stimulated to study the Copts by the great student of Ethnological Hof Ludolf Wan- schelen had come from Germany to London in 1661 in order to see to the publication of Ludolf’s Ethiopian dictionary. There he met Castelli. On his return to Germany he was dispatched to Egypt and Ethiopia by Duke Ernst of Saxe-Gotha who wanted Wanchelen to enquire about the points of community between the Copts and the
Lutherans. Wansleben went no further south than Egypt, and then made his way to Rome, where he converted to Catholicism and became a Dominican. He subsequently travelled to Paris where he met Colbert. The sources for his Histoire de l'Église d'Alexandrie (Paris, 1677) include Abi al-Barakat ibn Kabar, Gabriel ben Tariq and others. For Wansleben's life see A. Pougenski, Finsiel, savant orientaliste et voyageur. Sa vie, sa disgrâce, ses œuvres (Paris, 1869).


41 Henry Maundrell, A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem At Easter AD 1697, 6th edn. (Oxford, 1740), sig.*Bv.


44 Twells, Life of Dr Edward Pococke, pp. 25-6; Holt, Studies, p. 5.


47 The Life of Robert Frampton, p. 19.

48 Twells, Life of Dr Edward Pococke, pp. 18-28.


50 The Life of Robert Frampton, pp. 39-40.


52 Holt, Studies, pp. 45, 49; Wakefield, 'Arabic Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library', p. 133; Twells, Life of Dr Edward Pococke, p. 76.


54 Twells, Life of Dr Edward Pococke, pp. 288, 293-300.


56 On Angelos see Colin Davy, Pioneer for Unity: Metropolis Kritopoulos (1859-1639) and Relations between the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches (London, 1987), pp. 77-82.

57 Pietro Strozzi, De Dignatibus Chaldaeorum Disputatio (Roma, 1617), sig.A3r.

58 R. Huntington, Epistola, p. 99.

