Now I shall tell you what the Sultan told me one day in his chamber. He made everyone else leave his chamber, lords as well as others who were there, for he wanted to have a private talk between ourselves alone. And when they had all gone out, he asked me how Christians governed themselves in our countries. And I said, ‘Lord, well enough—thanks be to God.’ And he answered and said, ‘Truly, no. It is not so. For your priests do not serve God properly by righteous living, as they should do. For they ought to give less learned men an example of how to live well, and they do the very opposite, giving examples of all manner of wickedness. And as a result, on holy days, when people should go to church to serve God, they go to the tavern and spend all the day—and perhaps all the night—in drinking and gluttony, like beasts without reason which do not know when they have had enough. And afterwards through drunkenness they fall to proud speeches, fighting and quarrelling, till someone kills somebody. Christian men commonly deceive one another, and swear the most important oaths falsely. And they are, moreover, so swollen with pride and vainglory that they never know how to dress themselves—sometimes they wear short fashions of clothing, sometimes long, sometimes cut full, sometimes figure-fitting. You ought to be simple, meek and truthful, and ready to give charity and alms, as Christ was, in whom you say you believe. But it is quite otherwise. For Christians are so proud, so envious, such great gluttons, so lecherous, and moreover so full of covetousness, that for a little silver they will sell their daughters, their sisters, even their own wives to men who want to lie with them. And everyone takes another’s wife, and no one keeps his faith to another: and you so wickedly and evilly despite and break the Law that Christ gave you. Certainly it is because of your sinfulness that you have lost all this land which we hold and keep. Because of your evil living and your sin and not because of our strength God has given it into our hands. And we well know that when you serve your God properly and well, and serve Him with good works, no man shall be able to stand against you. We know too by our prophecies that the Christians shall recover this land again in the time to come, when you serve your God well and devoutly. But as long as you live as you do in wickedness and sin, we have no fear of you; for your God will not help you. When I had heard the Sultan speak these words—and many more which I will not repeat now—I asked him, with great respect, how he came by so full a knowledge of the state of Christendom. And then he had all the great lords and worthies that he had previously sent out called in; and he detailed four of them—great lords—to talk to me. These described to me all the manners of my country, and of other countries in Christendom as fully and as truly as if they had always lived in them. These lords and the Sultan spoke French wonderfully well, and I was astonished by that. Finally I understood that the Sultan sends some of his lords to different kingdoms and lands in the guise of merchants—some with precious stones, some with cloths of gold, some with other jewels—and that these visit all realms in order to size up the manners of us Christian men and spot our weaknesses. It seemed to me then a cause for great shame that Saracens, who have neither a correct faith nor a perfect law, should in this way reprove us for our failings, keeping their false law better than we do that of Jesus Christ; and those who ought by our good example to be turned to the faith and Law of Jesus Christ are driven away by our wicked ways of living. And so it is no wonder that they call us sinful and wicked, for it is true. But they are very devout and honest in their law, keeping well the commandments of the Koran, which God sent them by His messenger Muhammad, to whom, so they say, the angel Gabriel spoke often, telling him the will of God.