

**A MISCELLANY  
ON NICHOLAS OF CUSA**

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### JOHN OF TORQUEMADA'S *EVIDENTES RATIONES*

In recounting his exposure to previous Western writings on Islam, Nicholas of Cusa reports that among the works he read was that of “the most reverend lord and cardinal of St. Sixtus, who with cogent reasons refutes the heresies and the errors of Muhammad.”<sup>1</sup> This cardinal of St. Sixtus in Rome was none other than the Spanish Dominican Iohannes de Turrecremata, i.e., John of Torquemada (1388-1468). Born and raised in Valladolid, John studied at the local university, later transferring to the University of Paris, where in 1425 he was awarded the degree of *magister theologiae*. As a member of the council of Basel and of the delegation seeking to implement the reunion of the Greek and the Latin churches, he became closely associated with Nicholas of Cusa, defending with Nicholas the authority of the pope over the Council. In 1439 he was elevated by Pope Eugenius IV to the office of cardinal; in 1440 he became bishop of Cádiz, and in 1442 bishop of Orense. Though his chief scholarly work was his *Summa de Ecclesia*, he was also known for his *Meditationes*. Yet, the work whose arguments Nicholas called cogent was the *Tractatus contra Principales Errores Perfidii Machometi*, written in 1459. This treatise was strongly influenced by Ricoldo of Montecroce’s *Disputatio contra Sarracenos et Alkoranum*. Indeed, the very title of John’s treatise is drawn from the opening words of Chapter 1 of the *Disputatio*: “*Primo igitur oportet scire qui sunt principales errores quos lex Sarracenorum ponit, in quibus maxime legi dei contrariatur.*”<sup>2</sup>

#### I

#### *John’s Approach Compared with Ricoldo’s*

Like Ricoldo, John aims to examine only Muhammad’s main errors, whose number he places at forty. Not only is his treatise

more highly organized than is Ricoldo's: it is super-organized—with the result that its explicit itemizing of every point of argument becomes an irritant. John adopts most of Ricoldo's objections, at times not hesitating to appropriate Ricoldo's own words. For example, in accusing Muhammad of sanctioning sodomy, he adds the qualifier "*licet ipsi sarraceni pallient quibusdam honestis expositionibus*"<sup>3</sup>—an expression borrowed directly from Ricoldo.<sup>4</sup> And, likewise, when in Chapter 14 he discusses the reliability of the four Gospels, he copies without acknowledgement Ricoldo's words from Chapter 3 of the *Disputatio*:

Nam quatuor evangelia non sunt scripta nec eodem tempore nec eodem loco nec eodem ydeomate nec ab eodem scriptore sed matheus in iudea in hebreo, Johannes in greco in grecia, Lucas in achaia etiam in greco, Marcus in italia in latino; et eorum translatio est facta per beatum Jeronimum et alios ante tempora machometi, et remanserunt exemplaria in omnibus linguis; ergo non poterunt per aliquos falsarios viciari quoniam manifeste sciretur.<sup>5</sup>

Even when John does not repeat Ricoldo's very words, he does nonetheless restate most of Ricoldo's other polemical points. But he also does something more: he amplifies these points, thereby strengthening the arguments of which they are a constituent part. Thus, John is not content merely to point out that Muhammad denies the Incarnation; rather, he proceeds to expound the doctrine of the Incarnation in terms borrowed from St. Anselm, St. Thomas, and the Scriptures. Likewise, when he examines the doctrine of the Trinity and Muhammad's rejection thereof, he draws upon Ricoldo's analogy between a human word and the Divine Word; but he embellishes Ricoldo's line of reasoning by introducing considerations from Anselm's *Monologion*, which itself is affiliated with Augustine's *De Trinitate*. Accordingly, the emphasis in John's *Tractatus* is different from that in Ricoldo's *Disputatio*. For Ricoldo expressly remarked that it is "*facilius ostendere fidem illorum esse frivolum quam probare nostram esse veram*";<sup>6</sup> and he therefore concentrated on exposing what he took to be the inconsistencies, the historical

errors, and the moral turpitude of the Koran. By contrast, John of Torquemada makes an additional effort: though not seeking to *prove* the truth of the Christian faith, he does nonetheless take pains (more so than does Ricoldo) to *fortify* Christianity by clarifying its teachings in the light of "rational" considerations. His treatise, therefore, has an apologetic dimension that helps set in relief its sharp polemic. Moreover, he renders more patent than does Ricoldo (1) his strategy, (2) his presuppositions, and (3) his argument-patterns.

1. John's strategy, as he tells us, is twofold: (a) to argue from Scriptural authority, which Muhammad himself is alleged to accept, and (b) to argue by appeal to *rationes convenientes*: "*Adversus hunc errorem procedemus sicut in precedenti. Inducemus in primo aliquas rationes convenientes ad hoc. Secundo inducemus testimonia sacrarum scripturarum, quas machometus ipse commendat, quibus et veritas fidei approbetur et error prae-fatus confutetur.*"<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere, with respect to another alleged error, John replaces the expression "*rationes convenientes*" by the expression "*evidentes rationes*," without making any special distinction between the two: "*Nichilominus nos, pro ampliori denudatione perfidiae machometi et sarracenorum, hanc falsitatem et errorem confutabimus tam auctoritatibus scripturae sanctae quam evidentibus rationibus.*"<sup>8</sup> After all, any *fitting* reason will have to be a *clear* reason; and so, it is understandable that John might substitute "*evidentes rationes*" for "*rationes convenientes*." Of course, the concept of *rationes* is construed by John broadly; for it encompasses not only appeal to philosophical principles and theological axioms but also to conventional wisdom concerning practical matters. For example, John argues in support of the proscription against polygyny by citing a claim made in Aristotle's *Physics*: viz., that as a woman seeks a man, so matter seeks form.<sup>9</sup> He then adds that, in accordance with nature, each material has only *one* actual form, not many.<sup>10</sup> And he concludes, somewhat enthymematically, that it would be contrary to the course of nature for a man to have many

wives.<sup>11</sup> This reasoning depends upon an acceptance of the metaphysical notions of form, matter, potentiality, and actuality, as well as upon Aristotle's (dubious) comparison between two relationships: the relationship of a woman to a man as compared with the relationship of matter to form. Nonetheless, John goes on to introduce a practical, empirical consideration as well: experience teaches, he says, that the custom of having many wives leads to family discord.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, when the topic turns to polyandry, John introduces a practical consideration: if a woman were permitted to have many husbands, there would arise an uncertainty about which man was the father of which child.<sup>13</sup> And John maintains that this uncertainty would detract from any of the husbands naturally feeling responsibility for rearing the children.<sup>14</sup>

When John resorts to marshalling Scriptural proof-texts, he does so in a manner that he believes to be straight-forward and uncontrived. Against Muhammad's claim to be a general prophet, John cites Matthew 11:13: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John [the Baptist]." And he construes this verse to mean that after the time of the Baptist there were to be no further general prophets.<sup>15</sup> But even here he adds a practical consideration borrowed from Ricoldo: A prophet is called a general prophet because he prophesies at large about many things. But, in that case, he must speak many different languages. Yet, Muhammad professed to know no language but Arabic. So Muhammad could not have been a general prophet.<sup>16</sup> Or again, John attacks Muhammad's conception of Paradise as a place of sensual delights by citing I Corinthians 2:9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard: neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him." This verse, he contends, disproves Muhammad's view, because Muhammad's Paradise is of the sort whose description does enter into human imagination.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, John agrees with Ricoldo that Muhammad did not intend his description of Paradise symbolically.<sup>18</sup>



Likewise, when the *Doctrina Mahumeti* is understood (imperfectly) by John as maintaining that the newly born infant Jesus consoled Mary in her physical travail,<sup>19</sup> he points out that such speaking on the part of an infant would constitute a miracle. And he adds that according to the New Testament the first miracle worked by Jesus occurred at the feast of Cana,<sup>20</sup> so that Muhammad's story does not accord with the Gospel record. At times, John, in dealing with certain of the errors that he ascribes to Muhammad, relies almost exclusively upon the appeal to Scripture, with which the doctrine in question is said to be inconsistent. Such is the case regarding Muhammad's claim that originally the sun and the moon were of equal brilliance and power (there being no difference between day and night) but that by chance Gabriel's wing touched the moon as he flew by, whereupon its brilliance became diminished.<sup>21</sup> John points out, in Chapter 32, that this story contradicts the account given in Genesis 1, where the distinction between day and night is said to exist from the beginning of the creation of the sun and the moon. In rejecting Muhammad's story John makes no explicit appeal to persuasions or argumentation from non-Scriptural sources. And yet, he is tacitly relying upon his previously introduced (Chap. 23) reasoning to fault Muhammad's view that angels are material beings. But even in Chapter 23 he does not *develop* his reasoning but, instead, simply alludes to the views of certain philosophers (including Dionysius the Areopagite) who regard all intellectual beings, i.e., all angels, as immaterial substances.<sup>22</sup> We are left to infer that an angel has no wings—that the word "wing" is but a metaphor when applied to angels. "For divine Scripture," states John toward the last part of Chapter 38, "sets forth intelligible things under a likeness of sensible things so that from the [sensible things] with which we are familiar we may learn to love things unknown."

2. John also explicitly sets out many of his presuppositions, doing so more frequently than does Ricoldo. In Chapter 15 he

states plainly that he is accepting various doctrines from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*—doctrines that he supposes either to have been already established by Aristotle as correct or to be known *per se*, i.e., to be self-evident. Thus, he claims to hold with Aristotle that whatever is corporeal is composed of parts, that a composite is ontologically later than the parts of which it is composed, that any composite consists of both the actual and the potential, and that the immaterial is more noble in nature than is the material. Elsewhere, he assumes with Aristotle that the end is better than the means thereto,<sup>23</sup> and he accepts the Thomistic view that *omnis nostra cognitio a sensu initium habet*.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, he assumes that the next life will not be less orderly than is the present life. And he seems to believe that “less orderly” means “less in accord with nature and reason.”<sup>25</sup> He accepts “natural law” as a basis for ethics,<sup>26</sup> and he teaches that man's true happiness must be in accord with that which is most noble in him, viz., his intellect, so that spiritual delights conduce to a happiness not attainable by way of sensual gratification.<sup>27</sup> In addition, he assumes that *amicitia liberalis* is superior to *amicitia servilis*, as well as assuming that *brutalis libertas* (i.e., licentiousness) is to be repudiated.<sup>28</sup> Though his assumptions are rightly subject to question by others, they are not unusual ones within the medieval Christian tradition; they are simply more explicit in Torquemada than in Ricoldo. Even the assumption about *homo erectus* is not innovative. That is, in Chapter 38 John asserts that man's having been created in such way that he walks erectly is not in vain but was done in order that he might look toward Heaven, whence his happiness derives.<sup>29</sup> This idea John ascribes to Lactantius, but others also had it.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, his assumption that Paradise (as described by Muhammad) and every other spatial region has finite dimensions<sup>31</sup> coheres with the Christian tradition and with medieval “common sense” as influenced by Aristotle.

3. The foregoing starting points are compatible with various argument-patterns. One of Ricoldo's typical techniques is to use

the *reductio ad absurdum*. We see this pattern clearly enough in Chapters 38 and 39. In attacking Muhammad's conception of Paradise, John presents us with an either/or: if there were a Paradise of sensual gratification, as Muhammad alleges, either it would or it would not also contain spiritual and intellectual delights (delights about which Muhammad is silent). John purports to establish (with the help of various philosophical and theological "axioms") the conclusion that in Paradise sensual pleasures and spiritual delights could neither co-exist nor exist successively. This conclusion entails that Paradise, as described by Muhammad, could not contain spiritual delights. But this implication, argues John, is theologically absurd, since it is absurd that man's higher nature, his nobler part, would remain unfulfilled.<sup>32</sup> So John concludes that a Paradise of sensual pleasures does not at all exist.

Like any good dialectician, Torquemada also attempts to anticipate Muslim defenses of Muhammad's views and then to refute these projected defenses. For example, in Chapter 39 he anticipates the objection that in Paradise the continued difference between male and female would be in vain unless sexual relations persisted. And he responds by claiming that these differences are not useless but serve to reestablish the perfection of human nature both in the species and in the individual.<sup>33</sup> Elsewhere, he marshals the Muslims' actual defense of their views, doing so not in order to clarify them but in order to rebut them. For instance, the practice of concubinage, say certain Muslims, cannot be scandalously wrong, since it was sanctioned even within the Old Testament; for Abraham and Jacob, David and Solomon had concubines. In reply, John endeavors to persuade his readers that though the patriarchs and the kings did have concubines, these were tantamount to wives, serving to bear offspring rather than to accommodate lust.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Rachel gave her own handmaiden to Jacob so that he could have offspring from her, according to Genesis 30. And Abraham took responsibility for the rearing and the education of the offspring from his concubines, as does a husband for the offspring from

his wife. God allowed the practice of polygamy at that time, alleges Torquemada, in order to produce more children, since in the world there was a scarcity of believers.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the patriarchs and the kings had many wives not on their own authority but by God's dispensation, he believes. But subsequently to the coming of Christ this practice is no longer authorized. For Christ is the fullness-of-grace that was being aimed at through the multiplication of worshippers-of-God.<sup>36</sup>

In searching out Muhammad's beliefs and motives, John also seeks to round out Muhammad's thinking. Why did Muhammad depict Paradise as a place of sensual pleasure? Because, surmises John, he believed that if any source of pleasure were absent therefrom, then human happiness there would be incomplete and thus Paradise would seem to be a less desirable state to those who were expecting a reward.<sup>37</sup> But having amplified Muhammad's reasoning, by adducing certain tacit considerations, John once again seeks to reduce it to the absurd: If all sources of pleasure must be found in Paradise, then there must be present—in addition to all varieties of tasty foods, ample wines, pleasing raiment, forests full of game for hunting—stables of horses for jousting, and so on. But in that case there would also be the dross produced by these horses—an idea he finds revulsive.<sup>38</sup>

What strikes one foremostly about John's argument-patterns is not their innovativeness, for there is nothing new about his techniques or his argumentative style. What strikes one is, rather, the determination with which he pursues, in great detail and with elaborate analysis, points that others might be inclined to deal with only summarily. (Thus, he is not content merely to bring up the issue of dross: he expatiates upon this theme). But, secondly, one notices that, in arguing, John moves clearly from technique to technique: when he points out an allegedly absurd consequence, he does so expressly; when he examines motives, he explicitly states that he is doing so; and when he anticipates Muslim arguments, he makes clear that he is hypothesizing and

conjecturing. Indeed, there is no subtlety in his reasoning: all of his points tend to be made overtly and deliberately. Even when, in places, his reasoning is enthymematic, it is manifestly so, and the missing premises are easily supplied by the reader. In all these respects John shows more leisureliness than did Ricoldo, who was more concise in elaborating Muhammad's *principales errores* and who, in attacking Muhammad, did not afford himself the luxury of (a) rehearsing extensively the traditional aspects of the Christian doctrine of the atonement, (b) advancing verse after verse of Scripture, and (c) musing over consequences that added no weight to his polemic.

## II

### *Views on Marriage and on Paradise*

Before comparing John's approach to Nicholas of Cusa's, we should look more closely at what the *Tractatus* says concerning marriage and concerning Paradise. For its elaborate reasoning, besides contrasting as strikingly with Nicholas's as with Ricoldo's, discloses important features of the late medieval Christian perspective.

John uses several arguments in concluding that polygamy and divorce are morally and divinely proscribed and in blaming Muhammad for permitting these practices. In addition to his appeal to Aristotle's comparison between woman-man and matter-form, and his inference that polygamy runs counter to the natural law, he reasons that if a man were permitted to have many wives, there would not be equal friendship between husband and wife. For where there are many wives to one and the same man, they become, as it were, handmaidens to the man, being governed by him, so that the friendship would not be between equals. Furthermore, he mentions that according to Aristotle intense friendship does not exist in relation to many friends. So if the man has many wives, whereas the wives have only one and the same husband, then there will be an unequal degree of friendship between a given wife and her husband, for

her friendship will be more intense.<sup>39</sup> Thus, her friendship will be *quodammodo servilis*: in a certain respect that of a servant.

In the foregoing reasoning several points are of special interest. First of all, marriage is viewed as an institution that provides not merely for the begetting and the rearing of children but also for meeting the human need for companionship and friendship. John believes that just as marriage constitutes a bond wherein a man's relationship to his wife is more intimate than is his relationship to anyone else, so within this bond a man's friendship with his wife is to be closer than with anyone else. Indeed, the friendship between a husband and a wife is meant to be maximal—not just in terms of sexual union (which brings even animals together in a certain bond of "friendship," thinks John) but also in terms of a domestic way of life.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, marriage is ordained as a domestic relationship that requires love between family members and special mutual concern about family affairs.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, he explains that this friendship ought not to be *servilis* but rather *aequalis* and *liberalis*, though he never develops these notions further. Thirdly, he assigns to both the husband and the wife the common responsibility of rearing the children.<sup>42</sup> That is, although in the practical way that life is traditionally organized the woman may spend more time with the children than does the man, she is not cast into the role of a handmaiden, nor is she to be burdened with rearing the children without the man's help. Moreover, she is to respect her husband and to receive from him an equal measure of respect in return. For otherwise their friendship cannot be other than *servilis*.

As regards the forbidding of divorce, John also appeals to the law of nature,<sup>43</sup> which he claims teaches the indissolubility of marriage, as does also Christ Himself.<sup>44</sup> But he appeals, as well, to practical factors: if both partners regard the marital bond as indissoluble, each will be more motivated to be faithful to the other. Moreover, he surmises, there will be less family dissension,<sup>45</sup> perhaps because of the greater faithfulness. Practical considerations and philosophical theory seem to intersect when he

claims that whoever (or whatever) impedes the certainty of paternity acts against nature. For he subsequently adds that divorce would cast doubt upon who a man's offspring were. Although he does not expand upon this point, presumably he means that if the woman remarried soon after the divorce, the next child might be that of either man. But he does not suggest that the remedy might lie with forbidding quick remarriage rather than with outlawing divorce. But why, then, did the Old Testament permit divorce? Here John's answer is intriguing: the lesser evil of divorce was permitted in order to prevent the greater evil of the husband's murdering his wife.<sup>46</sup> John stops short of asserting that Jesus permitted divorce (though solely on the ground of adultery) for the same reason.

Instead of making extended use of the notion of dispensations, John prefers to interpret the Old Testament in ways that render it directly in agreement with the New Testament. That is, although he does speak of the Patriarchs' polygamy as involving a special dispensation from God, he does not generally recur to asserting that God acts within history through different dispensations, different moral codes. Rather, he presumes that there is only one moral code, which God occasionally suspends in special circumstances (perhaps as when the Israelites "borrowed" utensils from the Egyptians prior to their exodus under Moses). For the most part, John strives to view the institution of monogamy both as complying with natural law and as mandated by Christ. Indeed, he claims, just as subsequently to Christ there are neither patriarchs nor prophets, so there are no further suspensions of the natural law. Moreover, the injunctions of the divine law are consistent with the teachings of the natural law.

As for Muhammad's view of Paradise, John follows Ricoldo in taking Muhammad's description literally: in Paradise human beings will make use of food, clothing, and sexuality. Likewise, he follows Ricoldo in pointing out that this description does not cohere either with the teaching of Christ or with the principles of reason. Christ taught that in Heaven there would be no mar-

riage and that human beings would be as are the angels.<sup>47</sup> (And, of course, it is unthinkable to John that sexual relations apart from marriage would ever be licit.) Moreover, the New Testament Scriptures teach that men will arise unto immortal life, which, *ipso facto*, is incorruptible. By implication, he believes, Scripture instructs us that whatever belongs to the present corruptible life will not belong to life in Heaven.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, ingestion, digestion, and excretion will not characterize the future life. And, hence, there will also be no bodily growth. For if food were ingested, reasons John, it would have to serve the same purpose as in this present life—viz., the promoting of nutrition and growth. But in that case, either the body, which would ingest food *in perpetuam*, would grow infinitely in size or the food would be excreted as dross.<sup>49</sup> Yet, both of these consequences are absurd, argues John. Even Muhammad admits (continues the argument) that in Heaven there will be no defecation but that elimination will occur in a manner comparable to sweating. However, contends John, Muhammad fails to realize that if the human bodies are incorruptible, no constituent of them can waste away.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Muhammad speculates that perhaps no elimination at all will take place but that there will occur something analogous to a child's being nourished in his mother's womb.<sup>51</sup> But the analogy lends itself to the objection about infinite growth.

Similarly, since sexual relations serve the primary purpose of begetting children, John tells us, then if there were such relationships in the next life, either they would be in vain or children would be begotten.<sup>52</sup> But they could not be in vain, for God ordains everything for a reason. So children would be born. But since there will be no death in Paradise, the population would increase *ad infinitum*. Yet, the region of Paradise, like every other corporeal region, is finite. Therefore, a new region would have to be created to accommodate the expanding population. But the new region would itself be finite and would itself become filled up; and so there would have to be Paradises



*ad infinitum*—something absurd to believe. But if Muhammad were to claim that in the future life men and women are to be sterile, then once again it would follow that sexuality was in vain—a view theologically unacceptable to John, who maintains that in Heaven human fertility will be even *greater*. For unlike in the present world there will be no sterility at all, he says, since human nature will exist in a perfected (but not actually reproducing) state.<sup>53</sup>

Not content to stop his argumentation here, John pushes ahead with the same topic: Muhammad alleges that in the future life eating will not be done to the sole end of nourishment and growth and that sexual relations will not be entered into for the sole purpose of multiplying the species; rather, ingestion and sexuality are for pleasure, in order that pleasure not be lacking in the state of reward.<sup>54</sup> John, in reply, alludes to St. Thomas's position in the *Summa contra Gentiles*: The next life will not be less well ordered than is the present life. But in the present life it is inordinate to seek only the *pleasure* of eating or the *pleasure* of sexual relations. These pleasures are accompaniments ordained by nature (and ultimately by God, who ordains nature) in order to induce human beings to take nourishment and to beget progeny—i.e., in order to induce them, for example, to labor at agriculture and to endure the pangs of parturition and the trials of rearing. Similarly, in the future blissful life redeemed human nature will not seek inordinate pleasures.<sup>55</sup>

But what if someone were to allude to the fact that before the Fall Adam was immortal and yet partook of food and engaged in sexual relations, so that immortality and sensual satisfaction of the appetites are not necessarily incompatible? To this hypothetical objection John replies that Adam's immortality in the Garden of Eden differs from his future immortality. For before the Fall Adam was conditionally immortal: if he did not sin (though able to), he would not be subject to death. But in Heaven Adam will be unconditionally immortal, i.e., uncondi-

tionally not subject to death; for he will be unable to sin.<sup>56</sup> Thus, his having partaken of sensual pleasures in the Paradise of Eden does not foreshadow his partaking of such pleasures in the morally and spiritually loftier Celestial Paradise.

Or again, suppose someone were to claim that just as Christ ate and drank subsequently to His resurrection, so in the future, resurrected state the saints will likewise eat and drink, so that Muhammad's image of Paradise is not in this respect mistaken. To this projected claim John's only riposte is that the resurrected Christ did not eat and drink in order to sustain Himself but in order to exhibit the reality and the power of His resurrection. The ingested food, assures John, was not digestively transformed into Christ's flesh and blood but was resolved into prime matter (*praeiacentem materiam*).<sup>57</sup> And this process, he purports, will not occur in the general resurrection, where such an exhibition of power will not be required.

Man's celestial happiness, declares John further, will consist in the exercise of the higher intellect, in the *visio facialis ipsius dei*, the *visio divinitatis*.<sup>58</sup> To see God in this way is to behold Him through the intellect; and in thus beholding Him, we will share in His beatitude, which itself does not derive from sensual pleasure.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, happiness (*felicitas*) is a proper good of man, so that animals cannot rightly be called happy. But carnal pleasures are common to men and to animals. Accordingly, Muhammad erred in locating happiness in such pleasures as these rather than in activities of the intellect, which animals do not possess.<sup>60</sup> In other words, since man's final end is something ennobling for him, it must befit that which is the most noble thing in him, viz., his intellect. And, of course, concludes John, sensual pleasures do not befit this faculty.<sup>61</sup>

Another argument used by John goes as follows: man's supreme perfection cannot consist in his being conjoined to things inferior to him but must consist in his being conjoined to some end higher than himself, the end being better than the means thereto. But if man's supreme perfection consisted in car-

nal delights, man would be conjoined with things lower than himself, viz., sensible things. So the Heavenly Paradise, the state of man's supreme perfection, cannot have luxuriating as its end.<sup>62</sup> Still another line of reasoning runs thusly: Man's happiness lies most of all in that which brings him closest to God, who imparts blessedness to men and to angels. But carnal pleasures, which bind the mind and blind the intellect's eyes, keep a man from approaching God. For this approach occurs via contemplation, which is impeded by carnal pleasures. Thus, happiness cannot consist of experiencing them.<sup>63</sup>

But why does John suppose spiritual and intellectual delights to be incompatible with sensual pleasures? He answers by explaining that the former draw human nature unto themselves and lay hold of it as a whole, not allowing it to feel, concomitantly, things carnal. Just as fire and water are not compatible, so neither are spiritual delights and carnal pleasures,<sup>64</sup> he explains. But can't the two exist successively? Well, he proceeds, if they were enjoyed only successively, then the state of happiness would ever be incomplete, since it would ever be lacking either the one or the other ingredient thereof. Moreover, since those who taste of spiritual delights immediately loathe carnal pleasures, then in Paradise men would not voluntarily return to things carnal, once having experienced unspeakable spiritual joy and ecstasy. They would return only as the result of force or through deception, neither of which is present there.<sup>65</sup> So, in last analysis, spiritual delight either is not present in Paradise or it is present alone, i.e., apart from sensual pleasure. But for reasons already given, it is foolish to believe that Paradise is not at all a place of spiritual joy. Indeed, in Paradise human beings will have lost all appetite for carnal pleasures,<sup>66</sup> for these latter cannot compare with the happiness that accrues from the soul's apprehending God face-to-face, as it were. And through the soul's radiant happiness the body will be glorified, so that it will be resplendent, impassible, refined, and agile. In this way *totus homo*, consisting of body and soul, will rejoice in the Lord.<sup>67</sup>

When Scripture speaks of feasting in Heaven, it does so only figuratively, asserts John. For example, in Luke 22:30 the expression "that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom" is meant metaphorically, as are also the words of Isaiah 25:6: "And the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people, in this mountain, a feast of fat things: a feast of wine . . . ." <sup>68</sup> More illustrative of the use of metaphor is Ecclesiasticus 15:3: "With the bread of life and understanding, she shall feed him: and give him the water of wholesome wisdom to drink." <sup>69</sup> Here we see that water and food symbolize wisdom and intellectual acquisition. "For divine Scripture sets forth intelligible things under a likeness of sensible things so that from the [sensible things] with which we are familiar we may learn to love things unknown." <sup>70</sup>

### III

#### *Torquemada, Cusanus, and pia interpretatio*

Nicholas of Cusa, while not disagreeing with John of Torquemada's reasoning, chose a different approach to the Koran. For he recognized the futility of John's having expounded many of his detailed *reductiones ad absurdum*. He recognized that John's objections regarding Paradise could all be undercut merely by ascribing to Muhammad a pedagogical motive: Muhammad described Paradise in voluptuous terms simply as a way of indicating—to those who were uneducated and who were unfamiliar with the joys of intellectual apprehension—that the state of future reward would render them truly happy. In speaking to the people, Muhammad made use of images that would appeal to them—images that the wise amongst them knew to be but symbols. Because Nicholas, through *pia interpretatio*, undercut the need for John's elaborate "refutation" of Muhammad's conception of salvation, his discussion remained on a high plane, where he did not worry about the amounts of dross and of urine that would accumulate in Heaven if there were banqueting and imbibing. Whereas John took over many of

Ricoldo's objections and developed them *ad extremum*, Nicholas put the best theological face upon Muhammad's doctrines so as to accentuate the rapport between Islam and Christianity. Though he too objected, for example, to Muhammad's sanctioning of polygamy and of concubinage, he was quick to point out that the Koran (1) praises the chastity of both the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist, (2) regards cleanliness as pleasing to God, (3) states that God will reward those who are good, and (4) considers God's greatest reward to be "nothing but everlasting, incorporeal joy."<sup>71</sup> Even when Nicholas accused Muhammad of sanctioning vileness and filthiness, he added that the wise among the Arabs would nonetheless be able to detect the divine word of God hidden beneath that which appears to be abominable.<sup>72</sup> And Nicholas himself strove to look for the best in the Koran, since he was convinced that the Koran, in its essence, discloses the light of the gospel.

So John of Torquemada had a "negative" influence upon Nicholas of Cusa; for after reading John's *Tractatus*, Nicholas decided not to emulate John's method of *reductio ad extremum et absurdum*. But did he have a positive influence as well? Ludwig Hagemann denies it:

Neben den oben genannten Quellen erwähnt Nikolaus von Kues noch zwei andere von ihm als katholische Schriften bezeichnete Arbeiten: Es sind dies die Abhandlungen "De rationibus fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum" des Thomas von Aquin sowie die Schrift "Contra principales errores perfidi Mahometis" des Juan de Torquemada. Als literarische Quellen kommen diese beiden Arbeiten nicht weiter in Betracht, so dass sich ein näheres Eingehen auf sie erübrigt.<sup>73</sup>

Hagemann may well be right. For even when we take a close look at *Cribratio Alkorani*, the Torquemadian influences that suggest themselves are inconclusive. For example, we find in Chapter 5 of the *Tractatus* the statement that Christ is the *facies omnium gentium*<sup>74</sup>—the Countenance of all nations. And we know that in *Cribratio Alkorani* I, 19 Nicholas has recourse to

this very misreading of the Koran. However, we may presume that Nicholas's use of this text was motivated by its appearance in Dionysius the Carthusian's *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti* (a work also read by Nicholas), since Nicholas in *Cribratio Alkorani* I, 12 directly quotes from Dionysius the Latin rendering of the Koranic excerpt that contains this expression.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, Nicholas's open appeal to the Sultan of Babylonia<sup>76</sup> and to the Calif of Baghdad,<sup>77</sup> at the end of *Cribratio Alkorani*, may well have been motivated by John's exhortation to the various Christian princes at the end of his *Tractatus*.<sup>78</sup> Still, the differences are sizable. For whereas John calls upon the Christian princes to rise up militarily against the Turks, Nicholas calls upon the Muslim magistrates to embrace Christianity and to command subjects within their jurisdiction to accept the gospel. For "the time is to come (as was stated earlier on the basis of the Koran) when there will be only the faith of Christ"; so "begin to draw near [to this faith,] and all the princes of the earth and of that [Muslim] sect will follow you."<sup>79</sup> Whereas Nicholas emphasizes the coming together of Christians and Muslims *in una fide*, John accentuates the force of arms<sup>80</sup> that the Christian princes are obliged to mobilize against the "enemies of the Cross of Christ."<sup>81</sup> Though Nicholas laments the fact that Muslims persecute Christians for their beliefs, and though he calls for the cessation thereof, he does not seek the forcible eradication of "the Muslim rite" (which, together with John<sup>82</sup> and others, he regards as initially having been shaped by the influence of Nestorian Christianity). Instead, he reproves Muslims for their persecution, and he takes comfort in the words of Christ: "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, someone might suspect that Nicholas's argumentation in *Cribratio Alkorani* I, 16 (71) was motivated by John's polemic in *Tractatus* 11. In particular, Nicholas in I, 16 disputes a particular interpretation of Surah 3:51, which purports to re-

produce Christ's words. Nicholas cites these alleged words in Latin translation: "*Deus enim mei vestrique dominus est.*"<sup>84</sup> If, says Nicholas, someone were to construe this passage as Christ's denying His own deity, then he would thereby have manifested his misunderstanding of the verse. For *that* interpretation would be incompatible with the Koran's (alleged) assertions (elsewhere) that the Gospel accounts are true; and, after all, asserts Nicholas, the Gospels themselves teach the deity of Christ. Here again we have an example of Nicholas's use of *pia interpretatio*. For Nicholas is construing the text in such way as to let it glorify God and bear witness to Christ. In accordance with *pia interpretatio* he is also here unwilling to accuse the Koran of contradicting itself. In addition, "it is perfectly befitting," he says, "for Christ, the Son of God, to call His Father His Lord. For, as the Gospel attests, He confessed that He had come as Son and Envoy in order to increase the honor and glory of God and not at all [in order] to seek His own [honor and glory]." <sup>85</sup> By contrast, Torquemada, in Chapter 11 of his *Tractatus*, contends that the Koran falsely ascribes to Christ the words in question—words which he repudiates as heretical, or as possibly being of diabolical origin.<sup>86</sup> Nicholas might perhaps have come across Torquemada's line of reasoning and might have adapted it to his own programmatic theme in *Cribratio Alkorani*. Or he might, once again, have been motivated directly by Ricoldo's *Disputatio* 15, where Ricoldo mentions the same surah and argues that it does not deny the deity of Christ, since Jesus, in accordance with His purely human nature, was a servant of God.<sup>87</sup> But the truth seems to be that Nicholas took note of Dionysius the Carthusian's quotation of this verse (viz., Surah 3:51) in Book I, Article 1 of his *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, where the verse occurs amid a longer excerpt from the Koran but where Dionysius does not specifically comment upon it.<sup>88</sup>

So, in last analysis, Nicholas seems not to have borrowed directly from John of Torquemada's *Tractatus* but to have chosen a different overall approach—one that coincides with his

theme of *pia interpretatio* as well as with his continuing aspirations for *religio una in rituum varietate*. Though both Nicholas and John appropriate many points from Ricoldo's *Disputatio*, each incorporates these points into a markedly different global perspective, as we have seen. John, for instance, insists that a oneness of truth and of faith is not common to all religious sects, since these sects differ on many substantive points.<sup>89</sup> The Apostle Paul himself, reminds John, spoke of there being only "one Lord and one faith."<sup>90</sup> At most, then, there is one true faith, which according to John is the Christian faith, whose Teacher professed to be "the way, and the truth, and the life."<sup>91</sup> Nicholas, for his part, does not disagree with John, whose reasoning he terms cogent. Nonetheless, he envisions (both in *De Pace Fidei* and in *Cribratio Alkorani*) the possibility of arriving at a unitary faith common to all religions—arriving, that is, at a set of essential beliefs which all believers in God can unreservedly accept. These beliefs, he thinks, will be essentially Christian. And so, he entertains the hope that the other religions will recognize that their own professed doctrines either presuppose or entail the truth of the essential Christian teachings. Thus, he does not dwell upon the sizable differences between the various tenets of the various religions but, instead, sets out to show that in these other religions—especially in Islam—the truth of the gospel message is tacitly present. And this point of view restrains him from emitting a rallying cry to Western political leaders to crush the Islamic movement forcibly. Unlike John, he does not dwell upon what, were it not for devout interpretation, he too would regard as the diabolical aspects of Islam.

So Nicholas, while making many of the same points as John and accepting John's arguments as compelling, did not find John's polemic profitable for his own goal of heralding a *pax religiosa*, a *pax fidei*. For to that end he needed, and introduced, *pia interpretatio*.<sup>92</sup>



170. *Disputatio* 7. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 204<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 141.

171. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 203<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 140. See also *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 196<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 127.

172. Ricoldo charges the Koran with inconsistency here. By contrast, Nicholas of Cusa, adhering to devout interpretation, aims to interpret the Koran (insofar as plausible) so as to render it self-consistent. See *CA* II, 12 (116:4-7) and *CA* I, 16 (71:1-6).

173. Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 143.

174. *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 196<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 127.

175. Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 99. Also see p. 339, end of n. 53: "Mediaeval contempt for the Islamic world as unphilosophical contrasts strangely with our modern concept of the mediaeval Latin West as *wholly indebted* for its philosophy to the Islamic East. Even if the modern view is correct, we need not assume mediaeval hypocrisy, but just a lack of historical perspective." (my italics). Here, too, Daniel blithely misdescribes "our modern concept of the mediaeval Latin West."

176. Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 245. Equally objectionable is Daniel's unqualified assessment on p. 263: "Those [missionaries] that turned to the Muslims sought, not the conversion of the infidel, but their own martyrdom."

177. Another example of Daniel's capability for a more balanced understanding occurs on p. 300, lines 2-8 of *Islam and the West* (2nd ed., 1966).

178. Note *CA* II, 12 (117:8-9): the Koran tacitly affirms Christ to be of the divine nature. See also *CA* I, 20 (85:13-14). Even Ricoldo states, at the end of his preface to the *Disputatio*, that he aims at conversion.

## NOTES TO TORQUEMADA'S *EVIDENTES RATIONES*

1. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA*, Prologue (4:7-8).

2. Ricoldo of Montecroce, *Disputatio contra Sarracenos et Alkoranum* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 195<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 125. (In all direct quotations from Latin codices I editorialize capitalizations, punctuation, and spellings whether I explicitly mention doing so or not.)

John is also responding to Peter the Venerable's call (in his *Summa Totius Haeresis Sarracenorum*) for Christian theologians to refute the Muslim heresy. See Codex Cusanus 108, f. 14<sup>vb</sup>; cf. pp. 210-211 of James Kritzeck's edition in his *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964).

3. John of Torquemada, *Tractatus contra Principales Errores Perfidi Machometi* (Brussels: Frères de la Vie Commune, ca. 1476). My references are to the printed copy in the Bibliothèque Alberti, Brussels, Catalogue number *Inc. B 1414*. The reference for the quotation marked by the present note is f. 42<sup>vb</sup>, a passage found in Chapter 36. I have also consulted Latin ms. 708-719 of the Bibliothèque Alberti, a ms. which also contains the *Tractatus* on ff. 109<sup>r</sup> - 150<sup>r</sup>. Moreover, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has an incunabulum of this work; it dates from 1475-76 and is catalogued as *Reserve D. 2685*.

4. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 196<sup>v</sup>: “. . . licet ipsi pallient quibusdam honestis expositionibus.” Cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 127.

5. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 14. Brussels edition, f. 27<sup>vb</sup>. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 3; Codex Cusanus 107, f. 199<sup>r</sup> [cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 132]: “. . . quatuor evangelia non sunt scripta nec eodem tempore nec eodem loco nec eodem idiomate nec ab eodem scriptore. Sed Matheus in Hebraico in Iudea, Iohannes in Greco in Asia, Lucas in Greco in Archaio, Marcus in Latino in Italia evangelium scripsit. Et eorum translatio facta est in Latinum per Ieronimum et alios ante tempora Machometi. Et remanserunt exemplaria in omnibus linguis. Ergo non potuerunt per aliquos falsarios viciari quia manifeste sciretur.” (Punctuation, spellings, capitalizations editorialized by me.)

6. I.e., it is “easier to show their faith to be unfounded than to prove ours to be true.” *Disputatio* 2. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 197<sup>r</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 128.

7. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 9. Brussels edition, f. 17<sup>va</sup>. In objecting to a given doctrine of Muhammad, John sometimes appeals first to Scripture and thereafter to reason, and sometimes vice versa.

8. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 14. Brussels edition, f. 27<sup>ra</sup> (some spellings editorialized by me).

9. Torquemada, *Tractatus*. Brussels edition, f. 40<sup>vb</sup>. Aristotle, *Physics*, I, 9 (192<sup>a</sup>). Cf. *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics by St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Richard J. Blackwell, et al. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 64-65.

10. “Sed secundum naturam est tantum una materia unius formae in actu, non plurium.”

11. It also follows, thinks John, that it is contrary to nature for a woman to have many husbands. But this conclusion is drawn by John not expressly from the foregoing argument but only from other considerations.

12. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 33. Brussels edition, f. 40<sup>vb</sup>.

13. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 33. Brussels edition, f. 40<sup>vb</sup>.

14. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 34. Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>va</sup>.

15. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 3. Brussels edition, f. 8<sup>vb</sup>.

16. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 3. Brussels edition, f. 8<sup>vb</sup>.
17. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, ff. 44<sup>vb</sup> - 45<sup>ra</sup>.
18. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 209<sup>r</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 148.
19. Surah 19:23-24 (Pickthall translation). Cf. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* II, 17 (147:1-4).
20. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 43. Brussels edition, f. 50<sup>ra</sup>. Gospel of John 2:11.
21. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 32. Brussels edition, f. 40<sup>rb</sup>. *Doctrina Mahumeti* [Codex Cusanus 108, f. 26<sup>vb</sup>, lines 2-8; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. I, p. 192]. See Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 9 [Codex Cusanus 107, f. 214<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 157.]
22. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 23. Brussels edition, ff. 35<sup>vb</sup> - 36<sup>ra</sup>.
23. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>rb</sup>: "*Finis enim melior est his quae sunt ad finem*" (spellings editorialized by me).
24. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 15. Brussels edition, f. 29<sup>ra,b</sup>.
25. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 43<sup>vb</sup>: "Vita resurgentium ordinatio est quam vita nostra. In hac autem vita inordinatum et vitiosum est si quis cibis et venereis utatur propter solam delectationem et non propter necessitatem sustentandi corporis vel prolis procreandae—et hoc rationabiliter" (some spellings editorialized).
26. E.g., in *Tractatus* 34: "*Inseparabilitas matrimonii videtur esse de lege naturae*." Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>rb</sup>.
27. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 39. Brussels edition, f. 46<sup>va</sup>.
28. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 33. Brussels edition, f. 40<sup>vb</sup>. *Tractatus* 35; Brussels edition, f. 42<sup>va</sup>.
29. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>ra</sup>. "Soli animalium ad aspectum caeli erecti summus ut summum bonum nostrum non in terra, non in censu, sed in summo esse crederemus . . ."
30. The gist of this notion is found in Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* I.91.3.ad 3.
31. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 43<sup>va</sup>.
32. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>va,b</sup>.
33. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 39. Brussels edition, f. 47<sup>rb</sup>.
34. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 35. Brussels edition, f. 42<sup>va</sup>.
35. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 33. Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>ra</sup>.
36. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 33. Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>ra</sup>.
37. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 39. Brussels edition, f. 46<sup>va</sup>.
38. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 39. Brussels edition, f. 47<sup>ra</sup>.
39. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 33. Brussels edition, f. 40<sup>vb</sup>. Cf. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 10 (1171<sup>a</sup>).

40. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 34. Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>va</sup>.
41. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 34. Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>vb</sup>.
42. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 35. Brussels edition, f. 42<sup>va</sup>.
43. See n. 26 above.
44. Matthew 5:32.
45. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 34. Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>vb</sup>.
46. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 34. Brussels edition, f. 41<sup>vb</sup>.
47. Matthew 22:30. Human beings will not, however, be like angels in being purely immaterial beings.
48. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 43<sup>ra</sup>.
49. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 209<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 149.
50. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 43<sup>va</sup>.
51. Cf. Ricoldo *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 209<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 149.
52. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 209<sup>v</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 149.
53. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 43<sup>va</sup>.
54. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 43<sup>vb</sup>.
55. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 43<sup>vb</sup>.
56. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 44<sup>ra</sup>. This point goes back to Augustine's *City of God*.
57. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 37. Brussels edition, f. 44<sup>ra</sup>.
58. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 44<sup>va</sup>. Cf. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book II, Article 6. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 41<sup>r</sup> - 41<sup>v</sup>; Tournai edition, p. 282, Col. 2, Sections A-B.
59. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 44<sup>va</sup>.
60. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>ra</sup>.
61. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>rb</sup>.
62. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>rb</sup>.
63. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>rb</sup>.
64. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>va</sup>.
65. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 45<sup>va</sup>.
66. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 39. Brussels edition, f. 47<sup>va</sup>.
67. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 39. Brussels edition, f. 47<sup>rb</sup>.
68. Translation from the Douay version. See Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 46<sup>ra</sup>.
69. Translation from the Douay version. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 46<sup>rb</sup>, where the grammatical subject is "deus".
70. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 38. Brussels edition, f. 46<sup>ra</sup>.
71. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* II, 19 (154:9-16).

72. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* II, 19 (158).

73. Ludwig Hagemann, *Der Kur'an in Verständnis und Kritik bei Nikolaus von Kues. Ein Beitrag zur Erhellung islamisch-christlicher Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: J. Knecht, 1976), pp. 67-68: "In addition to the foregoing sources Nicholas of Cusa mentions two other works, which he calls catholic writings. These are Thomas Aquinas's treatise *De rationibus fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum* and John of Torquemada's writing *Contra principales errores perfidi Mahumeti*. These two works play no role as literary sources, so that a closer examination of them is unnecessary."

74. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 5. Brussels edition, f. 12<sup>vb</sup>. The Latin words come, ultimately, from Robert of Ketton's mistranslation of Surah 3:45. See Codex Cusanus 108, f. 37<sup>va</sup>, lines 10-11.

75. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book I, Article 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 2<sup>i</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 239, Col. 2.

76. I.e., Muhammad II. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* III, 17. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 10. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 217<sup>i</sup>, where there is also a reference to an earlier *Soldanus Babiloniae*; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 161.

77. Nicholas mistakenly supposed there to be a Calif of Baghdad at the time he wrote *CA*. See *CA* III, 18-21.

78. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 50.

79. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* III, 17 (223:7-9).

80. "... maxime cum constet clarissime vos et magnitudine animi et rei militaris peritia militum robore et splendore armorum illis multo praestantiores esse" (spellings editorialized). Torquemada, *Tractatus* 50. Brussels edition, f. 58<sup>va</sup>.

81. Philippians 3:18. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 50. Brussels edition, f. 59<sup>ra</sup>.

82. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 1. Brussels edition, f. 6<sup>rb</sup>. *Tractatus* 11. Brussels edition, f. 21<sup>vb</sup>. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* Second Prologue (11).

83. Matthew 5:10. Translated from Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* III, 6 (181).

84. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* I, 16 (70:6). *CA* I, 8 (46:3-4). See also *CA* I, 12 (58:15-16); Nicholas takes all of 58:3-16 from Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book I, Article 1.

85. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* I, 16 (71:6-9).

86. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 11. Brussels edition, f. 22<sup>ra</sup>.

87. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 226<sup>i</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Cols. 174-175.

88. See n. 84 above.

89. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 21. Brussels edition, f. 34<sup>rb</sup>.

90. Ephesians 4:5. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 21. Brussels edition, f. 34<sup>ra</sup>.

91. John 14:6. Torquemada, *Tractatus* 21. Brussels edition, f. 34<sup>va</sup>.

92. A somewhat less tenuous case can be made apropos of Nicholas of

Cusa's *Cribratio Alkorani* in relation to Dionysius the Carthusian's *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*. We have already seen that Nicholas excerpts Surah 3:45-51 from Dionysius's Latin citation rather than directly from Robert of Ketton's translation as found in Codex Cusanus 108. (See n. 75 and n. 84 above.) And we may note, as well, certain parallels that do not seem to be coincidental. For example, like Dionysius,<sup>a</sup> Nicholas too uses the expression "*lex evangelica*."<sup>b</sup> Moreover, Dionysius at the outset of his treatise sounds conciliatory, mentioning that Muslims agree with Christians in many respects and that Christians love Muslims spiritually, even though they are adversaries.<sup>c</sup> Dionysius writes, self-professedly, in order to help bring about the conversion of the Muslims. Furthermore, Dionysius's analogy between the Divine Trinity and *mens, notitia, et amor*<sup>d</sup> lends itself to ready comparison with Nicholas's discussion of *mens, scientia, et voluntas* as a trinitarian analogy.<sup>e</sup> We may remember, too, that Dionysius shares many of Nicholas's views. He maintains, following Nicholas, that there is no comparative relation (*proportio*) between the finite and the infinite<sup>f</sup>—and thus also maintains that God as He is in Himself cannot be known by any finite mind, even though He can be beheld in the beatific vision.<sup>g</sup> This vision, he says, in agreement with Cusa, is that wherein man's future happiness will consist.<sup>h</sup>

Nonetheless, in spite of the extensive intellectual kinship between Dionysius and Nicholas, we must be cautious in ascribing influences. Nicholas is aware, from Dionysius,<sup>i</sup> of the story about Sergius the monk. But he also knows thereof from the anonymous *Rescriptum Christiani* (which appears in Codex Cusanus 108), from which he seems more likely to have borrowed it.<sup>j</sup> According to Dionysius, the Koran frequently states that the Gospels and the Old Testament come from God;<sup>k</sup> and Nicholas makes the same claim. But Ricoldo, too, makes this very point,<sup>l</sup> and it is more probable that Nicholas picked it up from him than from Dionysius. In the end, and all things considered, Dionysius's treatise is not at all conciliatory but amounts to a protracted attack upon Muhammad and his Muslim followers. There is little sign of the spiritual love that Dionysius proclaimed at the outset. In this respect, the tone of his treatise, as also of John of Torquemada's, differs strikingly from Nicholas's quest for *concordantia*, somewhat contrived though this quest may be.

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a. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book I, Article 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 27<sup>v</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 266, Col. 2, Section C.

b. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA III*, 18 (227:6). Cf. *CA III*, 11 (195:10-11).

c. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Proemium. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 1<sup>r</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 237.

d. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book I,

Article 11. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 19<sup>v</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 258, Col. 2, Section B.

e. Nicholas of Cusa, *CA* II, 2 and 3. See, above, n. 105 of Notes to Ricoldo and Nicholas of Cusa.

f. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book I, Article 12. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 20<sup>r</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 259, Col. 1, Section B.

g. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book II, Article 7. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 42<sup>r</sup> - 42<sup>v</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 283, Cols. 1 and 2.

h. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book II, Article 6. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 41<sup>r</sup> - 41<sup>v</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 282, Col. 2, Section B.

i. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book II, Articles 2 and 3. Codex Cusanus 107, ff. 33<sup>r</sup> - 34<sup>v</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, from p. 274, Col. 1 to p. 276, Col. 1. See also the passage in Peter the Venerable's *Summa Totius Haeresis Sarracenorum*, i.e., the passage found in Codex Cusanus 108, f. 13<sup>va</sup> or on p. 206 of James Kritzeck's edition (contained in his *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, pp. 204-211).

j. *Rescriptum Christiani*. Codex Cusanus 108, f. 116<sup>rb</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 13.

k. Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book II, Article 9. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 47<sup>v</sup>; cf. Tournai edition, p. 288, Col. 2, Section D.

l. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 3. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 198<sup>r</sup>; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 130.

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION TO TRANSLATIONS

1. *De Deo Abscondito* (composed sometime before 1445) was previously translated into English by Thomas Merton, whose version was published (as an exclusive edition and at an exorbitant price) by Dim Gray Bar Press in 1989. *De Filiatione Dei* was previously translated into English in 1696 by Daniel Foote. A microfilm of Foote's manuscript is obtainable from the British Museum (Sloane Manuscripts, 629, ff. 222-231<sup>b</sup>).

Though *De Dato Patris Luminum* (1445 or 1446) belongs to the present group of Cusan works, I have not here included an English translation thereof, inasmuch as this translation has already appeared in my *Nicholas of Cusa's Metaphysic of Contraction*.

2. The human mind, teaches Cusa, will never come to know the divine essence as it is in itself. [See *DI* I, 26 (88:15-20). *CA* II, 1 (88).] Nor will it