

**A MISCELLANY
ON NICHOLAS OF CUSA**

BY JASPER HOPKINS

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CONTENTS

PART ONE: Critical Analyses

Chapter 1: Nicholas of Cusa and John Wenck's Twentieth-Century Counterparts	3
Chapter 2: The Role of <i>pia interpretatio</i> in Nicholas of Cusa's Hermeneutical Approach to the Koran	39
Chapter 3: Islam and the West: Ricoldo of Montecroce and Nicholas of Cusa	57
Chapter 4: John of Torquemada's <i>Evidentes Rationes</i>	99

PART TWO: English Translations

Introduction	121
Chapter 5: <i>De Deo Abscondito</i>	131
Chapter 6: <i>De Quaerendo Deum</i>	139
Chapter 7: <i>De Filiatione Dei</i>	159
Chapter 8: <i>De Genesi</i>	181

PART THREE: Extended Reviews

Review I: <i>American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly</i> , 64 (Winter 1990). Special issue on Cusanus edited by Louis Dupré	211
Review II: Nicholas of Cusa, <i>The Catholic Concordance</i> . Translated and introduced by Paul E. Sigmund (1991)	229

<i>Praenotanda</i>	243
Abbreviations	245
Notes	247
Index of Persons	311

CHAPTER THREE

ISLAM AND THE WEST: RICOLDO OF MONTECROCE AND NICHOLAS OF CUSA

I

Some Problems of Assessment

One of the sources of Nicholas of Cusa's interpretation of the Koran is Ricoldo of Montecroce's *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*. Indeed, Nicholas, in the prologue to his *Cribratio Alkorani*, mentions having read a copy of Ricoldo's work in Rome and having found it more gratifying than the works of others on Muhammad and on Islam. The words "more gratifying than the others" ("*plus ceteris placuit*") attest to Ricoldo's influence on Nicholas. And, to be sure, when we examine the reasoning presented in Nicholas's *Cribratio*, we do find abundant traces of Ricoldo's earlier polemic. Born in Florence (ca. 1243) of the family of Pennini, Ricoldo seems to have assumed the cognomen "of Montecroce" later in life, after his visit to the Hill of Calvary in Jerusalem. As a young man, he entered the Florentine Dominican House of Santa Maria Novella in 1267, and in 1272 he was transferred to Pisa to teach the liberal arts. After having instructed primarily in Pisa but also in Prato (1287) and Florence (1288), he set out in 1288 on his preaching mission to the East—a journey that took him to Palestine and, thereafter, all the way to Baghdad, where he continued his study of Islam and the Koran and where he drafted the memoirs recorded in his *Itinerarium*. About the beginning of the fourteenth century, while now back in Florence, he wrote his polemical work *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*, also at times called *Disputatio contra Sarracenos et Alkoranum*, *Antialkoranum Machometi*, and *Impugnatio Alkorani*. On October 31, 1320 he died in Florence, where he had become prior of the Dominican community at Santa Maria Novella.

Norman Daniel in his study *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1966 edition) regards Ricoldo as among the scholars of the West who served to establish a "deformed image of Islam . . . in the conscious European mind" (p. 8). Ricoldo is among those who preferred "sometimes nonsensical, and often unpleasant and untrue versions of the history of Muhammad and of the tenets and practices of Islam" and who "did so even when sound information was available and when better might easily have been obtained" (*loc. cit.*). Daniel has almost¹ nothing good to say of Ricoldo, whom for the most part he regards as unfair, prejudiced, petty, pedantic, nasty, disingenuous, irresponsible, uncritical, ungenerous, and unjudicious. In the end, Ricoldo, as Daniel views him, "was too concerned with what are really only debating points. So much of what he wrote did nothing to illumine Islam for his contemporaries" (p. 67). And though, in Daniel's judgment, Nicholas of Cusa's polemical *Cribratio Alkorani* was not as objectionable as was Ricoldo's nearly perverse polemic, still Cusa was directly influenced by reading Ricoldo; and in Daniel's eyes "Cusa's *Cribratio* is rambling and repetitive, like Ricoldo's *Disputatio*. Here was a fresh mind working over old themes with varying success" (pp. 277-278).

In *Islam and the West* Daniel attempts to explain to us how and why Ricoldo and his likes transmitted to the West only a distorted image of Islam and of the Prophet Muhammad's life. But in the process of offering his explanation Daniel himself provides us with a highly tendentious representation of the contents of these Western works and of their authors' underlying thought processes. Contrary to Daniel's verdict, for example, Cusa's *Cribratio* is neither rambling nor reproachably repetitive; and it amounts to much more than simply a reworking of old themes. Similarly, Ricoldo's *Disputatio*, in spite of its strident denunciations of Muslims and its uncharitable construals of portions of the Koran, is surely not rambling and disordered; nor is it as pervasively unjudicious or as malevolently motivated as

Daniel makes out. In fact, certain points of Daniel's own book are repetitious—as, for example, his allusions to Ricoldo's irritation with the Islamic *shahadah* (pp. 43, 58, 155), his indication that Ricoldo and the others wrote mainly for Christian audiences (pp. 256, 263, 264), and his criticism of Ricoldo's misinterpretations to the effect that God prays for Muhammad (pp. 65, 259), that the Koran sanctions sodomy (pp. 143, 155), and that the Koran's language about Paradise is to be taken literally (pp. 61, 151). Moreover, Daniel's own book contains a remarkable incoherence. For it places great emphasis upon denigrating Ricoldo's views as being views that helped to determine the deformed image-of-Islam that became established in the West by the middle of the fourteenth century. But, in last analysis, Daniel inconsistently acknowledges (p. 234) that "Ricoldo's own work was little known in the Middle Ages. The *Itinerarium* was printed in modern times from a single manuscript, and the *Disputatio* owes its great fame to the Renaissance retranslation of the fifteenth-century Greek version by Demetrius Cydones; only three manuscripts of the original Latin are known to the present writer." So Ricoldo's work was little known by the middle of the fourteenth century, and what influence it had on the West came mainly through its effect on later writers such as Nicholas of Cusa, to whose *Cribratio Alkorani* Daniel's superficial treatment does grave injustice.

Not only does Daniel avoid examining Nicholas of Cusa's thought in a careful way but he also nowhere expounds even Ricoldo's *Disputatio* systematically. Instead, he deals with it piecemeal, citing now this passage, now that one. As a consequence, he misleads the reader, who is given no basis for appreciating some of the merits of Ricoldo's work—one merit being Ricoldo's insightful discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, another being his proceeding in accordance with an explicit outline and towards a stipulated goal. Though at times Ricoldo does interpret Islam unfairly, at other times he strives for some measure of even-handedness—as when he distinguishes between

what the Koran itself teaches and what certain Muslim commentators say,² or when he concludes the *Disputatio* by exploring how Muslims would reply to his harsh charges against them.³

Perhaps most objectionable of all about Daniel's own ungenerous approach to Ricoldo's *Disputatio* is that Daniel fails to judge Ricoldo's attitudes and motives in terms of Ricoldo's *Sitz im Leben* and of the perspective that was Ricoldo's by virtue of his having been educated in the Christian monastic tradition. Over and over again Daniel judges Ricoldo's work from a later viewpoint—a viewpoint that cannot fail to condemn Ricoldo as nasty, petty, and pedantic.⁴ Illustrations of Daniel's approach are everywhere evident. Typical thereof is the judgment expressed on p. 67:

There was a deeper weakness in Ricoldo's approach. He was lucky not to have to refute the very arguments that he used against Islam, but brought against Christian doctrine, as many of his very rationalist arguments would in fact be brought in later ages. He would not have appreciated being told that the Old Testament is often 'metrical', poetry not to be taken literally; or that it is far too repetitive in its praise of God; that it contains words that in another context might be considered indecent, or stories that a sceptic might consider fabulous, especially in their traditional interpretation; that it deals with wars, and fails to treat continuously of the virtues as a philosophical tract does; that inconsistencies can be alleged of it, and that it offends the order of time and the order of subject-matter and of logic. All these things have been said of the Bible since Ricoldo's day; any inspired book, whether true or not, will be liable to attacks of this kind.

The foregoing judgment is unfair because it fails to take account of the context of Ricoldo's criticisms; and it is also extremely inaccurate. To begin with, we may note that Ricoldo objected to the *poetical* style of the Koran insofar as he understood poetical style to be metrical style.⁵ He pointed out that in the Old Testament God did not speak in verse to Moses or any other prophet.⁶ Accordingly, he concluded that God was not accustomed to reveal his precepts in this manner, and he

inferred that this fact furnished a presumptive reason for deeming the Koran not to be God's revealed word. Ricoldo *could not* have been told, even from a later vantage point, that the Old Testament is often metrical (as Daniel states), because there are virtually no metrical passages in the Old Testament. Hebrew poetry (as in the Psalms) does not consist of rhymed or metered verse; nor does the Vulgate's Latin translation of the Old Testament recast Hebrew poetry into metrical style.

Moreover, there is no reason to believe that Ricoldo ever thought—as Daniel seems to imply—that poetry is not at all to be taken literally. For presumably Ricoldo would have been familiar with many poems such as Hartmann of St. Gall's *De Natali Innocentium Hymnus*.⁷

Dum natus esset Dominus,
Turbatur rex incredulus;
Magi tulerunt munera,
Quos stella duxit praevia.

Herodes rex interrogat,
Quo Christus nasci debeat,
Locumque dici flagitat,
Ut hunc necare valeat.

Adorant magi Dominum
Viamque carpunt aliam,
Nec saevi regis impiam,
Ultra vident praesentiam.
etc.

Poems of this sort can in most respects be taken literally; and Daniel can have no basis for claiming that Ricoldo either did not do so or ought not to have done so. Thus, Daniel is wrong with respect to his assessment of Ricoldo from the perspective of "later ages," as he says.

Similarly, on p. 67 Daniel does not accurately explicate Ricoldo's complaint about the Koran's repetitious praise of God. For Ricoldo is not bothered by the frequent praising-of-God *as such* but by the repetitious formulas-of-praise—for

example, the one that appears routinely after the mention of God's name ("may He be praised").⁸ This formula Ricoldo regards as but an empty ceremonial formality—and as irritatingly intrusive.⁹ (It is so intrusive, in fact, that Robert of Ketton's Latin translation of the Koran omitted it, as do English translations today.)

Regarding the Koran's use of indecent terms, we may readily understand—as Daniel cannot—why Ricoldo would have expected the Koran not to contain what he himself regarded as vulgarities. One word he finds objectionable is the word that he translates into Latin as "*futuo*"—a word so vulgar that he cannot remember even the Latin poets having used it, he says.¹⁰ Given that Ricoldo believes "*futuo*" to be the true meaning of the Arabic, his objection is neither petty nor outlandish.

Crucial to Ricoldo's case against the Koran is his claim, expounded in *Disputatio* 6, that contradictions are to be found in the Koran but not in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Examples of these contradictions are cited by Ricoldo and include the following:¹¹ (1) Muhammad is a universal prophet; yet the Koran was given to Muhammad by God in the Arabic language, and Muhammad knows no language other than Arabic. (2) Jews and Christians are numbered among the saved; yet, only Muslims are saved. (3) Unbelievers are to be killed and despoiled by Muslims unless they either convert or pay tribute; yet, Muslims ought to leave punishment to God alone. (4) Sodomy of women is permitted; yet, it is not permitted. (5) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were Muslims; yet, Muhammad was the first Muslim. (6) Augury is commanded; yet, augury is forbidden. (7) Muhammad is sent as-a-prophet only to the Arabs; yet, Muhammad is sent as-a-prophet to all nations. Whether Ricoldo is right or wrong about the presence of these contradictions in the Koran, there seems little reason to conclude that he is deliberately misrepresenting.

Similarly, Ricoldo seems to be speaking in good faith when he claims that no such contradictions are to be found in

Scripture—that the Gospels are consistent with the Old Testament and that the Gospels cohere with one another. Of the four Gospels one of them may not contain every item that is found in the others, he admits; yet, each of the Gospels is consistent with the others in regard to all doctrines necessary to the Christian faith.¹² By contrast, intimates Ricoldo, the Koran contains opposing views on theses that are vital to the Muslim faith, i.e., vital to the *lex Sarracenorum*. And though the Gospels contain teachings that human reasoning *cannot prove*, nevertheless, continues Ricoldo, they contain no doctrines that human reasoning *can disprove*. Had the nineteenth-century controversy over the synoptic problem arisen in Ricoldo's own day, it might or might not have troubled him. But even if it had, that fact by itself would not show that Ricoldo's objections to the Koran as self-contradictory were pedantic or merely debating points, as Daniel insinuates.

Daniel further misrepresents Ricoldo's position when he implies that another of Ricoldo's objections to the Koran can be redirected against the Old and the New Testaments: viz., that these themselves fail to "treat continuously of the virtues as a philosophical tract does."¹³ This verdict constitutes a misrepresentation, because Ricoldo nowhere accuses the Koran of failing to deal sustainedly with the virtues, as does a philosophical tract. Instead, he argues that unlike the teachings of the Gospels the Koran's account of the virtues is *not consistent with* the writings of the philosophers who have ratiocinated about the virtues and about the end of man.¹⁴ Daniel has misread Ricoldo's Latin text.

Nor can another of Ricoldo's charges be redirected against Scripture (at least not forcefully so): viz., that the Koran lacks temporal, historical, topical, and logical ordering. For since the surahs of the Koran are arranged in terms, principally, of length—so that the longer surahs come before the shorter ones—there is not the kind of chronological arrangement that Ricoldo finds in Exodus or in Ezra, in Luke or in Acts; nor is

there the sort of topical arrangement that he finds in Deuteronomy or in Hebrews; nor is there the "logical" order, or coherence, that is present in the reasoning in Job or in the epistle to the Romans. No doubt Ricoldo was wrong in expecting these orderings in the Koran, whose style and arrangement proceed along different lines from those of the Testaments.¹⁵ But *that* is the judgment that Daniel should pass—rather than suggesting, as he does, that Ricoldo's charge of orderlessness can in the same broad way be brought legitimately against the Testaments.

Finally, still with regard to the passage on p. 67 of Daniel's *Islam and the West*, the concluding judgment is theologically outrageous: "any inspired book, whether true or not, will be liable to attacks of this kind"—i.e., liable to all the foregoing charges, including the charge that the book contains inconsistencies and offends against the order of time and of logic. But, surely, if any book's claims are true, then (whether the book is inspired or not) these claims do not contain inconsistencies, historical mistakes, or fallacious inferences. Accordingly, the claims are not *liable to* these charges, whether or not anyone might someday be *likely to* hurl these charges. Insistence on the distinction between *liable to* and *likely to* is important, no matter whether Daniel himself would mistakenly regard it as pedantry.

As on p. 67, so also in general, Daniel's extensive criticisms of Ricoldo are unbalanced and indiscriminate, amounting to a virtual diatribe against the author of the *Disputatio*.¹⁶ To be sure, Ricoldo's work does contain instances of hyperbole ("*Falsitates quae ibi continentur sunt quasi infinitae*"),¹⁷ censoriousness ("*Nec recolo me invenisse in toto libro unum argumentum recta positione et convenienti ordine*"),¹⁸ calumny ("[*Machometus*,] *quidam homo diabolicus, primogenitus Satanae . . .*"),¹⁹ misinterpretation (e.g., of the passage "*Mulieres vestrae, aratura vestra; arate ut vultis*"),²⁰ error ("*Facit enim [Alkorum] speciale capitulum de formica . . .*"),²¹ special pleading ("*Certissima etiam est [evangelica doctrina] quia modo convenientissimo per-*

fecte intelligitur . . .),²² false attribution (“*Firmiter a sapientibus [eorum] creditur . . . quod principalis auctor ipsius Alchorani non fuit homo sed diabolus . . .*”),²³ and misconception (“*Machometus . . . Christum excellentissime commendavit super omnes alios prophetas . . .*”).²⁴ Nonetheless, the work deserves respect for its clear Latin style, its exposition of the Trinitarian analogy, its differentiation (though only occasional) between what the Koran says and how Muslim commentators construe what is said, its grouping of the Koran’s alleged flaws under different rubrics and into different chapters, its including a final chapter that projects Muslims’ response to the criticisms advanced, its comparison of the law of the Koran with the law of Moses, its admonition to the Muslims to read the Koran, its proposed doctrine of the “Messianic secret” (i.e., the view that Jesus did not openly proclaim Himself to be God), its open acknowledgement of its polemical strategy (“*Est autem facilius ostendere fidem illorum esse frivolum quam probare nostram esse veram . . .*”),²⁵ and its recognition that divine revelation must be consistent, so that if the Koran is from God, its teachings cannot deviate from the essential teachings of the Gospels, even as the Gospels are said not to deviate from the essence of Old Testament revelation (for Jesus came not to destroy the Law but to fulfil it).

II

Some Essential Linkages

Ricoldo’s influence upon Nicholas of Cusa was extensive, and it was both positive and negative. The many passages in Nicholas’s *Cribratio Alchorani* that either are drawn directly from Ricoldo’s *Disputatio* or else run remarkably parallel to it are amply documented in Ludwig Hagemann’s critical edition of the *Cribratio*.²⁶ We know, for example, that Nicholas borrowed from Ricoldo many alleged historical details about the life of Muhammad and about the origins of the Koran.²⁷ The *quidam sapiens* who is referred to at the outset of *Cribratio* I, 4 (29:2) is Ricoldo, as is also the *quidam devotus* of I, 5 (37:6) and the

quidam peritus of I, 6 (40:7). Like Ricoldo, Nicholas is contemptuous and abusive in speaking of Muhammad as licentious and as someone who makes God out to be a liar. But unlike Ricoldo he also accentuates the point that God's glory and the Gospel's truth are manifested in and through the Koran. Moreover, through *pia interpretatio* he attempts to put the theologically best interpretation upon various *prima facie* discreditable passages in the Koran, whereas Ricoldo was more likely to remain at the surface level of interpretation.

In what follows, let us, instead of aiming to ferret out every single trace of intellectual kinship between Ricoldo and Nicholas, focus more specifically upon four important areas of affiliation: (1) Nicholas's proneness to quibbling, (2) his use of *pia interpretatio*, (3) his Trinitarian analogies, and (4) his program of *manuductio*.

1. *Nicholas's quibbling.* When one first encounters instances of apparent quibbling in Nicholas of Cusa's *Cribratio Alkorani*, one may have a predisposition to ascribe them simply to his misunderstanding the Koran. For wasn't he working with a Latin translation of the Koran that was at times inaccurate? And wouldn't it be strange if the author of the profound *De Docta Ignorantia* and the astute *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* were to resort to trivial, hairsplitting objections? One instance that might seem to result more from misapprehending than from caviling occurs in *Cribratio* III, 2 (165), where, like Ricoldo, Nicholas finds fault with the first portion of the Koran's *shahadah*: "*Non est deus nisi deus.*"²⁸ In Robert of Ketton's Latin translation of the Koran, the initial part of the *shahadah* is usually stated as "*Non est deus praeter deum*";²⁹ but the meanings of the two formulations are the same. Both Nicholas and Ricoldo regard the formula as a mere truism—one that is equivalent to stating "*deus est deus.*" According to Nicholas, even an idolater could without qualms confess that *deus est deus*; for the statement, he says, is self-evidently true. And if the enunciation of this self-evident truth were tantamount to an act of saving faith, then not

only idolaters but almost all unbelievers would be saved, for no one who had reached the age of rational assent would refuse to affirm the proposition "*Non est deus nisi deus*" when presented with it. Ricoldo, for his part, also states that the belief *non esse deum nisi deum* cannot be salvific, since even the polytheist can subscribe thereto.³⁰ Indeed, adds Ricoldo, the proposition "*Non est angelus nisi angelus*" is likewise self-evidently true, as are other such propositions of the same grammatical form.³¹

If Nicholas had been more familiar with Ketton's Latin version of the Koran, he would have remembered Surah 37:4 (or one of its cognates), which says "*Non est nisi deus unus*,"³² and he would have realized that this expression captures the intent of "*Non est deus nisi deus*." For the Koran is not saying tautologically "God is God" or "God is only God." Instead, it is proclaiming that there is only one God—that there is no deity except God Almighty. But would Nicholas have regarded this belief as salvific? Not necessarily. For he would have been mindful of James 2:19: "*Tu credis quoniam unus est Deus: bene facis: et daemones credunt, et contremiscunt.*" And in the light of this verse he would have wanted to distinguish between *credere quoniam* and *credere in*.³³ Moreover, he would have had to become convinced that Muslims, who confess one God, not only *believe in* that God but also *believe in* Christ, the Divine Word of God—even as he had persuaded himself that Abraham, too, was saved by faith in Christ, to whose Messianic coming Abraham had looked forward.³⁴

So Nicholas does not construe properly the *credo* "*Non est deus nisi deus*." In fact, he seems to make little effort to put the best interpretation upon it; instead, he unhesitatingly treats it as tautological and as of no benefit to salvation, thereby following Ricoldo uncritically. But in other instances, as well, he imitates Ricoldo undiscerningly. In *Cribratio* III, 5 he asserts that because the God of the Koran "swears by a reed, a fig tree, a gnat, and many [other] such things, which are creatures,"³⁵ He thus acts in a subordinate manner. For ordinarily when one

swears an oath, one swears by a higher power or authority. Where there is nothing higher than oneself, one swears on his own authority, as God is recorded in Scripture to have done.³⁶ So Nicholas accuses the Koran of fostering the impression that God is not sovereign. And he goes even further, when, in the very same chapter, as also in III, 4, he charges the Koran with implying, inconsistently, that there are two Gods, one of whom is subordinate to the other.³⁷ Here Nicholas's entire reasoning, not worth repeating, is flimsy and carping—anything other than *pia interpretatio*.³⁸

Likewise, Nicholas is uncharitable in his understanding of Surah 6:161: "Indeed, I, to whom God disclosed and introduced that right and straight way, viz., [the way] of Abraham" ³⁹ For here he cavils over the reference of the word "I": does it refer to Muhammad or to God?, he asks.

If you answer "Muhammad," then surely these are not [the words] of God, nor must they be believed. Therefore, since Muhammad is testifying concerning himself, he proves nothing;⁴⁰ but you also said that those words, since they are written in the Koran, are God's [words]. These [claims] are incompatible with each other.

Once again, Nicholas is on unsolid ground, for nothing prevents the foregoing words both from being Muhammad's words and from being inspired by God, just as (Nicholas would have to concede) nothing prevents II Corinthians 12:1-9 both from being the words of the Apostle Paul and from being the voice of God through the Apostle.

Other examples of quibbling are abundant, but a final one will suffice. In *Cribratio* III, 5 (178) Nicholas points to another alleged inconsistency in the Koran. Muhammad, he claims, is commanded by God to read the Koran continually,⁴¹ whereas elsewhere in the Koran Muhammad is said to be illiterate.⁴² Here Nicholas gratuitously takes Ketton's verb "*legere*" to mean "to read," rather than taking it to mean "to recite." Since even someone illiterate might daily recite passages that he had committed to memory, no contradiction between the two passages from the Koran need be inferred.

Nicholas's polemic in his *Cribratio* would have been more persuasive, more rhetorically forceful, if he had left aside such captious considerations as the foregoing. Like Ricoldo, he was put off by the poetic style of the Koran⁴³ and by the Koran's apparent lack of organization,⁴⁴ its several glaring historical mistakes,⁴⁵ its disagreement with the Gospel,⁴⁶ its denial of the deity of Christ,⁴⁷ its discrepancy both with the Mosaic code and with the moral teachings of Christ,⁴⁸ its denial of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection,⁴⁹ its proselytizing through the use of force⁵⁰—indeed, he was put off by what he regarded as the Koran's proclamation that the way of salvation is broad and easy, rather than narrow and difficult.⁵¹ Like Ricoldo, Nicholas strove to preserve the glory of God and the honor of Christ; he was ready to inveigh against any religious pathway that seemed to him to diminish that glory or to detract from that honor. Neither he nor Ricoldo would have admitted that a single contradiction, error, or shameful precept could be found in Scripture.⁵² And their exaltation of Christ was such that they could never have accepted Muhammad as a prophet possessed of divine authority to reverse or to annul a single one of Christ's Scriptural teachings—whether about marriage, divorce, baptism, the eucharist, faith, Moses, the Law, angels, the requirements of human nature in the resurrection state, etc. Since Jesus had taught that divorce is permissible only on grounds of the marital partner's adultery, Nicholas and Ricoldo were necessarily scandalized by the Koran's less-strict view. And since Jesus had taught that in the resurrection state human beings would neither marry nor be given in marriage, they were equally scandalized by the Koran's talk about sexual relations that would take place in Heaven⁵³—relations which, given Jesus' teaching, they could interpret only as comparable to fornication and adultery. Given the appreciable differences between Christianity and Islam—differences ranging from the doctrine of God to the doctrines of salvation and of moral purification—Christian thinkers in the West could not readily adjust to the stunning success of Islam in making converts and to the imminent threat posed by Islam's military incur-

sions into Europe, with the possibility of even more such conversions.⁵⁴ Both Nicholas and Ricoldo attempted to explain why Islam was so successful in winning adherents; and both judged that the use of force played a sizable role to this end.⁵⁵

Given the remarkable differences between the two religions, it is wrong to expect European theologians, at the time that Islam began to be taken seriously in the West, to have entertained any other attitude toward Islam than a polemical one. Little purpose is served by presently excoriating these theologians, as does Daniel. Such excoriation represents a failure of the historian to rethink past thought by getting into the minds of past historical figures and seeing the historical world from within the framework of their presuppositions. To an historian who is able to rethink past thought, a figure such as Ricoldo of Montecroce will not look predominately petty, perverse, and pedantic in launching his polemic against Islam—even though there are moments when what is said may lapse into triviality or abuse. Muhammad, by his own admission, had come as a prophet without miracles. Yet, Christians and Jews were accustomed to test all prophets by the criteria of Deuteronomy 13, in accordance with which the belief arose that a true prophet is differentiated from a false prophet by his meeting three requirements: he comes from the people of God, he works a miracle or performs a wonder, and his teachings accord with previous revelation. Making use of these tests, Christian theologians had little alternative but to view Muhammad, who confessed to not working miracles, as having failed at least one of the three tests and, therefore, as having been a false prophet. In general, the theologians considered him to have failed all three tests. For they did not regard him as coming from the people of God, since God's blessing passed through Isaac, not through Ismael; nor did they judge his teachings to be consistent with those of the Old Testament and the New Testament. When Ricoldo points out that the Koran's composition in verse is different from previous revelation, in which God spoke in prose,⁵⁶ he is not arguing that

God was unable to reveal both Himself and His precepts in rhythmic style. Rather, on the basis of Deuteronomy 13, he is looking for, but does not find, a consistency of style as well as of content.⁵⁷

What is astounding is not that Western intellectuality, as represented by the church, roundly condemned the Islamic religion and the life of the Prophet Muhammad. What is astounding is far more that there arose a theologian such as Nicholas of Cusa, who, in spite of his own quibbling and calumniating, sought a *rapprochement* with Islam (1) by appealing to interpretations given to the Koran by the "wise among the Arabs,"⁵⁸ (2) by accentuating the Koran's love of virtue⁵⁹ (even though he credited this love to the influence of the Gospels), (3) by including at the beginning of his *Cribratio* a chapter extolling the Koran from the viewpoint of its adherents,⁶⁰ (4) by teaching (in *De Pace Fidei*) that, as Infinite, God is neither trine nor one⁶¹ (thereby paving the way for Muslims, as well as Jews, to draw intellectually nearer to Christianity), and (5) by endeavoring to find in the Koran expressions of Muhammad's exaltation of Christ (so that the Koran might be recognized by Christians to deify Christ, albeit esoterically). In short, it is not surprising that Nicholas or that Ricoldo associates Muhammad with the anti-christs.⁶² (For on any ordinary interpretation Muhammad does speak against the deity of Christ and the triunity of God; and in favoring polygamy he offended not only against the values of the West but also against the commandments of Christ, whether express ones or implied ones). But it is remarkable that Nicholas and, in an inchoate way, Ricoldo himself approach the Koran through *pia interpretatio*. For in accordance therewith Muhammad is seen not as an adversary of Christ but as a (partly unwitting) vehicle of Christ's self-disclosure to the Arabs. Nicholas acknowledges the fact that various Muslim interpreters make the following claim: viz., that the Koran "does not contradict any of the prophets but rather endorses them and corroborates the books transmitted to the prophets by God (viz., the Testament

of Moses, the Psalter of David, and the Gospel transmitted by Jesus Christ, the son of the Virgin Mary)."⁶³ Through *pia interpretatio* Nicholas uses this claim as part of his argument that the wise among the Arabs will see from the Koran that Christ is the Son of God and the Supreme Mediator between God and man. And insofar as (1) the Koran is supposed to contain the gospel in an esoteric way and (2) Muhammad is thought to have been converted to (Nestorian) Christianity, then Muhammad can be judged to have come from the people of God and to have disclosed what is consistent with past revelation. Since these two tests for a prophet are fulfilled, then it will not matter that Muhammad worked no miracles. For he will not be considered as bringing new revelation, since whatever does not agree with the Old Testament and the New Testament will be dismissed by Nicholas as false doctrine.⁶⁴

2. *Pia interpretatio*. We have already examined extensively, in Chapter 2, Nicholas's notion of devout interpretation. But some further refinements are now in order, given the topic at hand.

2.1. When we look at the sources either explicitly named by Nicholas in the Prologue to his *Cribratio* or contained in Codices Cusani 107 and 108, we find that none of them either explicitly mention *pia interpretatio* or tacitly develop the idea.⁶⁵ However, in rudimentary fashion the idea is found in Ricoldo's *Disputatio*. For in Chapter 9 he writes: "*Dicunt igitur Christiani Christum, qui est verbum dei, esse dei filium. Et quasi hoc idem dixit Machometus de eo, licet nesciens et non intelligens*": "Therefore, Christians say that Christ, who is the Word of God, is the Son of God. And, as it were, Muhammad said of Christ this very same thing, although not knowing and not understanding [that this is what he was saying]."⁶⁶ Ricoldo's point seems to have motivated Nicholas's declaration that "in the Koran the splendor of the Gospel shines forth to the wise . . . even beyond the intent of the [Koran's] author."⁶⁷

Or again, a rudimentary form of devout interpretation is evident in Ricoldo's way of answering his third question in Chapter 15—viz., the question of who or what is the word of God mentioned by the Koran. The reference cannot be to a vocal word, he says. For all good, true, and holy words can be called words of God; but "word of God" is used singularly in the Koran. Moreover, he continues, the Koran calls Christ *word of God*; and this appellation must indicate something more than that Christ speaks the word of God, for even other prophets do *that*, though in the Koran they are not called *word of God*. To assist with his interpretation Ricoldo introduces the theological consideration that "*quidquid est dei est deus*."⁶⁸ This Word of God, which by nature is God, is, qua Word, a person of God. And this person of God is the one through whom God spoke, or created, all things—even as the Koran states that God spoke all things by His Word. According to the foregoing interpretation, asserts Ricoldo, the Koran agrees with the Gospel of John.⁶⁹ In giving his interpretation, Ricoldo is striving to understand the Koran in a way that renders it consistent with the Gospels. In the present instance he tacitly concludes that the Koran is *committed* to a trinitarian doctrine of God in spite of Muhammad's intent to persuade readers of the Koran that Christ is not God.⁷⁰ And this conclusion is the result of *pia interpretatio*, though these very words are never used by Ricoldo.

Nicholas of Cusa, as we saw in the previous chapter, does develop at length the notion of devout interpretation, though he does not do so in a systematic way. A clear example of his use of this notion occurs in a context in which he raises a question that is cognate with one raised by Ricoldo in *Disputatio* 9: viz., why the Koran refers to Christ as *word* but not as *son*.⁷¹ Ricoldo points out that if, according to Muhammad, Christ cannot be the son of God, then how can Muhammad call him the spirit of God? That is, if God's simplicity and unicity prevent Him from having a son, why do they not exclude the possibility of His having a spirit? So just as Muhammad reasons—badly, accord-

ing to Ricoldo—that God cannot have a son because He has no wife, so, alleges Ricoldo, Muhammad should also reason that God cannot have a spirit because He has no wife. Either of the two inferences, believes Ricoldo, is similar to the nonsequitur that God cannot be substance, since he has no accidents, and cannot be living, since He does not eat and breathe. By contrast with Ricoldo, Nicholas deals with the issue in a more positive way: viz., by so interpreting the Koran that it thereby gives glory to God without taking away praise from Christ.⁷² For he surmises the following: “Since [the Koran] wanted to eradicate from uneducated idolaters all manner of [belief in a] plurality of gods, it did not want to give occasion-for-error to those who could not grasp intellectual sonship in any other way than as [sonship] is observed in the sensible world. Now, ‘word’ more closely corresponds to intellectual fecundity than does ‘son’.”⁷³ So according to Nicholas the Koran does not deny that Christ is the Son of God in the sense in which Christian theology teaches that He is. Instead, together with Christianity, it denies both that God has a temporally begotten son (i.e., a son who is not of the divine nature) and that He has a son who is a second God.⁷⁴

According to Nicholas the gospel message is secretly approved of in the Koran⁷⁵ where it is “covered over . . . by many foolish things”; nevertheless, hopes Nicholas, just as the Koran has led the unlearned among the Arabs to the belief in one God, so the wise among the Arabs will, in studying the Koran and the Gospels, be led from the law of the Arabs unto the truth of “the law of Christ”—will be led on the basis of a truth that they will find hidden within the Koran itself.⁷⁶ Nicholas endeavors to uncover this truth by sifting out the falsehoods and by interpreting the Koran in a way that makes it consistent with his understanding of the Gospels. In so doing, he expresses appreciation for the Koran, through which God speaks to the Arabs, both learned and unlearned.

2.2. Ricoldo, for his part, is more negative in emphasis. He tends to conceive of the covering over as a covering guise that

results sometimes from Muhammad's, sometimes from later Muslims' deliberate attempts to make the worse appear the better. For example, in Chapter 1 of the *Disputatio* he writes: Muhammad "in the chapter on the Cow seems to concede acts of sodomy with respect both to men and to women, even though Muslims camouflage [this concession] with certain honorable interpretations."⁷⁷ As Daniel is quick to point out,⁷⁸ Ricoldo is here putting the worst interpretation upon Surah 2:223 ("*Mulieres vestrae, aratura vestra; arate ut vultis*"), even though he knows, and expressly cites, the Koran's proscription against sodomy.⁷⁹ Yet, Ricoldo regards the *proscription* as a simple inconsistency with the *concession*, rather than using the clear prohibition to interpret the unclear meaning of the alleged concession in Surah 2:223. Nicholas himself mentions this surah, doing so in *Cribratio* II, 19 (156:2-5). And he there reproaches the Koran for its teaching, which he too presumably construes as permitting a man's sodomy with a woman. But in the same chapter he comments that the Koran praises chastity both in the Virgin Mary and in John the Baptist, that it also forbids copulation in holy places, that it commends cleanliness, and that (if we interpret it devoutly) it uses sensible images to teach truths about intelligible reality.⁸⁰ Still, when Nicholas is not looking at the Koran through the excusing eyes of devout interpretation, he is as scandalized as is Ricoldo concerning what he labels as the Koran's sanctioning of vileness and filthiness.

2.3. Accordingly, a major difference between Nicholas and Ricoldo regards the former's willingness to concede that the Koran's talk about sensual pleasure (obtainable both in this lifetime and in the next) represents discourse on the basis of *likenesses*—likenesses intended "to proclaim one conclusion: viz., that God is a rewarder of believers who serve Him."⁸¹ But Ricoldo expressly rejects this manner of "excusing" the Koran. According to him the Koran's lauding the pleasure derived from sensual beauty, copulation, and eating is not done *quasi per similitudinem vel exemplum*.⁸² And so, he finds the Koran to be at

odds with Scripture, which does make use of symbolisms and which depicts Jesus as having taught: "this is life eternal that they know You, the only true God" ⁸³ That is, Jesus taught that eternal life consists not in sensuality but in the intellect's enjoyment of God. Furthermore, notes Ricoldo, even the non-Christian philosopher Aristotle taught that the best life is a life in accordance with the intellect, not one in accordance with the senses. So Ricoldo repudiates the Koran's statements about Paradise, about divorce, about polygamy—repudiates them on the grounds that they are the seducing words of an author who is a false prophet. But Nicholas descries amid what he himself still regards as turpitude, a deeper teaching that coincides with the proclamation of the Gospels and with the injunctions of Jesus. And he is convinced that *even followers of the Koran* maintain that the Koran "does not contradict any of the prophets but rather endorses them" ⁸⁴ Amongst those followers, the wise will maintain that the Koran's descriptive images of Paradise are to be taken symbolically, not literally.

2.4. A final comparison between Nicholas and Ricoldo has to do with the nature of parables and the clarity of Scripture. Nicholas considers there to be truth hidden not only in the Koran but also in the Gospels. Much of this truth, he supposes, has already to a large extent been progressively revealed to us by God: "In its beginning period the Gospel . . . remained obscure and unknown to many but was made progressively more evident. And if this [procedure] had not been expedient, then Christ would not have spoken to the people in parables." ⁸⁵ Elsewhere, Nicholas speaks of the "mysteries of the Scriptures" that Christ disclosed ⁸⁶—and, presumably, is continuing to disclose progressively. Nicholas leaves the impression that his position is more moderate and judicious than is Ricoldo's. For in the Koran Ricoldo professed to find not concealment-from-the-unlearned but rather obscurity, whereas in the Gospels he purported to detect clarity even for the unlearned. For the Gospels, he says, are so clear that they can be understood by someone

uneducated. Even if they sometimes introduce certain likenesses, nevertheless "from the text itself there is clearly shown what is being said by means of the likeness."⁸⁷ Indeed, by faith the uneducated easily grasp the Gospels' teachings.⁸⁸ Ricoldo was not as unhesitatingly prepared to acknowledge as was Nicholas that the truth of the Gospels was contained in the Koran, though he did admit that the Koran points its readers to the Gospels: "*Cum igitur Machometus super omnes alios libros commendat evangelium et post illud vetus testamentum, coguntur Sarraceni recipere auctoritatem evangelii et veteris testamenti.*"⁸⁹ And he did make efforts to find within the Koran traces of God's triunity and Christ's deity. Yet, given Ricoldo's view about the Koran's lack of chronological, topical, and logical continuity, together with his conviction that the Gospels are utterly clear to the humble-hearted, he was in no position to take seriously the concept of *pia interpretatio*. Thus, he could not believe, as Nicholas later believed, that Muhammad, because of his conversion to Nestorian Christianity, seemed "unwilling to write anything against [the doctrines of] the most holy trinity and eternal begottenness. Instead, he condemned only [the doctrine of] a plurality of gods"⁹⁰

Perhaps because Nicholas (mistakenly) thought that Muhammad had become a Nestorian Christian, he was more prone than was Ricoldo to make use of devout interpretation. But we must remember that this method of interpretation is superimposed upon Nicholas's judgment that Muhammad was a false prophet whose book of "revelation" came from Satan⁹¹ and whose errors were products of an ignorance that at times was combined with the perverse intent of self-glorification.⁹² Nicholas's recourse to devout interpretation does not remove from his mind his own reasons for inveighing against Muhammad and the Koran. Rather, he deems devout interpretation to be applicable contrary-to-fact and in spite of the lies and the blasphemy that he continues to ascribe to Muhammad and the Koran. But he reasons: if one admits, contrary to fact, that the

intent of the Koran is not to detract from God or from Christ but to give glory to both, then “when one reads the Koran with this understanding, assuredly some fruit can be elicited [from it].”⁹³ In spite of Nicholas’s own quibbling, his misinterpretations,⁹⁴ and his outright errors⁹⁵—defects which detract from his interpretation of the Koran—his earnest attempt to make use of *devout* interpretation flows from his quest for *religio una in rituum varietate*.⁹⁶ This quest leads him to appreciate in the Koran the truth that he is convinced is enfolded in the major religions of his day. Accordingly, he balances his invective against the Koran with his praise of its glorifying God, its exalting Christ, and its summoning men to seek divine forgiveness through faith and to live lives of virtue with the assistance of divine grace. The fact that he deems any “beauty or truth or clarity” found in the Koran to be “a ray of the most lucid Gospel”⁹⁷ betrays the inevitable historical limitation of his perspective. Historical understanding would not be served by indignant present-day denunciation thereof à la Daniel. The proper judgment to make is the following: Nicholas’s approach to the Koran is notably superior to Ricoldo’s (or to Dionysius the Carthusian’s or to John of Torquemada’s); for in being more complex, it is also more insightful—more appreciative of the common bond-of-faith between Christianity and Islam.

3. *Analogies of the Trinity*. As Ricoldo remarks, the Koran depicts God as speaking of Himself plurally: “We commanded the angels to adore Adam.” “We created heaven and earth” “Let us make man in our image.”⁹⁸ And so forth. The “we,” reasons Ricoldo, cannot plausibly be said to refer to God together with the angels, because in the first quotation man is made not in the image of both God and the angels but in the image of God alone. So Ricoldo concludes that “we” signifies God Himself in His triunity. Secondly, he notes that the Koran several times alludes to a word of God and to a spirit of God. And he infers from Surah 4:171 that these are *the* Word of God and *the* Holy Spirit: “*O familia libri, nolite vacillare in lege*

vestra, et non dicatis de deo nisi veritatem: quia Christus Ihesus filius Mariae est nuntius dei et verbum dei, quod in ea posuit per spiritum suum":⁹⁹ "O People of the Book, do not vacillate in your law, and do not say of God anything except the truth: that Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, is the Messenger of God and the Word of God, placed in her by His Spirit." Thirdly, Ricoldo makes use of an analogy to symbolize God. When the human mind thinks, its thoughts are mental words¹⁰⁰ that the mind conceives. In the mind the act of conceiving and the word conceived are distinct. Moreover, each of them is imperfect; and neither of them is the mind itself or the man himself. However, in God, who mentally speaks forth His Word, both the Word and the Speaking are perfect; and both *are* the Divine Mind, or the Divine Being, itself. Since the One-who-speaks conceives (and understands) that of which He speaks,¹⁰¹ He may be referred to as *conceptio* (or *intellectus*). So in the Divine Mind there is both *concipiens* and *verbum* (or *conceptus*). But since whatever is of God is God, the *concipiens dei* is God, and the *verbum dei* is God, and, likewise, the *spiritus dei* is God and is distinguished by its own unique relations.¹⁰²

All of the foregoing is not especially interesting, since it was stated more elegantly, more amply, and more precisely by Anselm of Canterbury (among others) in his *Monologion*—although Anselm refers to the Father as Memory (*memoria*), the Son as Understanding (*intelligentia*), or Word, and the Holy Spirit as Love (*amor*).¹⁰³ Interesting is, rather, the fact that Nicholas of Cusa in his *Cribratio* revised Ricoldo's suggestive terminology. For in Chapter 15 of the *Disputatio* Ricoldo writes: "*Ex quo [Ihesus] est filius Mariae est verus homo et ex quo est verbum dei est verus deus. Non enim est deus compositus vel imperfectus ut homo, cuius verbum et conceptio mentis et ars et operatio non est homo. Immo quidquid est dei est deus.*"¹⁰⁴ This terminology suggests to Nicholas a symbolizing of the Divine Trinity as *comprehensio* (*seu mens*), *ars* (*seu scientia*), and *voluntas*.¹⁰⁵ Nicholas does not straightforwardly adopt

Ricoldo's terminology; nor does he borrow it in order to expand upon it. The most that can be said is that Ricoldo's statements in Chapter 15 of his *Disputatio* stimulated Nicholas's theological imagination, so that Nicholas formulated his own triadic terminology—something that Ricoldo nowhere in the *Disputatio* explicitly did. And Nicholas, in his formulation, comes close to the formulation of Dionysius the Carthusian in Book I, Article 11 of Dionysius's *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*.¹⁰⁶ It was an easy step for Nicholas to conceive of God's will (*voluntas*) as that by which God works or acts. In this way, then, he appropriated Ricoldo's terminology "*conceptio mentis*," "*ars*," "*operatio*," though he changed "*conceptio mentis*" to "*mens*" and changed "*operatio*" to "*voluntas*" and then used "*voluntas*" to refer to the Holy Spirit, as Ricoldo in the *Disputatio* did not do.

Nicholas's analogy of the Trinity is reminiscent not only of Anselm's in the *Monologion* but also of Augustine's in *De Trinitate*.¹⁰⁷ For both works liken the human mind and its operations to God and the persons of God. So in the spirit of these works Nicholas asks: "How would an artist paint with understanding unless he had in his reflection (*in mente*) that which he was painting? And how could he paint that which he has in his reflection if he lacked a knowledge of painting? And how would he finish with [the painting] if he were unwilling to? Hence, we see that will is neither know-how [*ars*] nor reflection and that know-how is not reflection."¹⁰⁸ And he follows up this reasoning with a comparison: "Since the Creator of all things understands that which He creates and since He knows it . . . and wills it, then with regard to the fact that the one Creator of all things is most noble and most perfect and most free, He is truly a trine Creator. And a likeness of the Creator is set forth in our intellect, which is one in essence and three in operation."¹⁰⁹

Nicholas also employs other symbolic analogies to the Trinity. In *Cribratio* II, 9 he alludes to a body of water that is, in equal measure, a spring, a stream and a pond. The spring is that

body, the stream is that body, and the pond is that body—even though the spring, the stream, and the pond are distinct from one another. Moreover, the stream is begotten from the spring, and the pond proceeds from both the spring and the stream. “Therefore, I concluded,” writes Nicholas, “that if I would leave aside the symbolism and would ascend unto Eternity, I would find Eternity to be trine and one in a truer manner than is this visible body of water.”¹¹⁰ This figurative illustration parallels Anselm’s in *De Incarnatione Verbi* 13 and, to a lesser extent, Augustine’s in *De Fide et Symbolo* 9.17. Still other symbolisms that Nicholas uses regarding the likeness of the Trinity are (1) fecundity, offspring, and love,¹¹¹ (2) oneness-of-begetting-love, equality-of-begotten-love, and union of the oneness-of-begetting-love and the equality-of-begotten-love,¹¹² and (3) the fact that *I* am a man, *you* are a man, *he* is a man.¹¹³ With regard to this third illustration Nicholas has in mind that “I,” “you,” and “he” refer to three distinct persons who are all of one specific humanity.¹¹⁴ “Whence, then, would these [three] persons have this [fact about themselves] if God the Creator were not likewise three with respect to persons and one with respect to essence?”¹¹⁵ But whereas three human persons are also three in number, the three divine persons are the same being.

Nicholas also mentions, as did Ricoldo, the Koran’s use of the plural subject in referring to God. And he cites some of the very same Koranic passages as did Ricoldo.¹¹⁶ Yet, neither Nicholas nor Ricoldo seems open to the possibility that the plural grammatical form represents merely a magisterial use, as when Pope Paschal, writing to King Henry I of England, says: “*Dulcissimae nobis dilectionis tuae litteras recepimus*,”¹¹⁷ meaning that he himself had received the letter. Nicholas’s refusal to countenance this alternative explanation of the plural grammatical form in the Koran represents another instance of his application of *pia interpretatio*. For through such devout interpretation he aims to show that the essential teachings of the Koran are

in alignment with the essential teachings of the New Testament and the Old Testament. And regarding the Old Testament, he followed the common medieval tradition of interpreting the plural references to God (e.g., “Come ye, therefore, let us go down and there confound their tongue . . . ”)¹¹⁸ as also confirming the Christian doctrine of Divine Triunity.

4. *Manuductio*. The term “*manuductio*” signifies *guidance*, a leading by the hand, as it were. In *Cribratio Alkorani*,¹¹⁹ and elsewhere,¹²⁰ Nicholas uses it in contexts where he is offering one or more illustrations that are supposed to help elevate our minds from the realm of the sensible to that of the intelligible—elevate them to the recognition that within this latter realm are found the closest likenesses for an understanding of Divine Being. This understanding can at best be symbolic, given the absence of all comparative relation between the finite and the infinite.¹²¹ Yet, even in *Cribratio Alkorani*, Nicholas reminds us that God knows and understands Himself,¹²² a view that is at odds with John Scottus Eriugena’s.¹²³ We have already seen examples of *manuductio* in Nicholas’s attempt to furnish experiential analogies of the Trinity—an attempt that he expressly relates to the Muslims:

Therefore, in order that every Arab may attain—as much as suffices for faith—unto the divine Fecundity, Offspring, and Love, I repeat: it is most certain that this world cannot exist and continue without fecundity, offspring, and love. For if these are removed, then the world must cease to exist. From the fecundity, the offspring, and the love there is one world Therefore, just as what is created is triune, so is also the Creator, since, of itself, what is created is nothing; indeed, all that which [the creation] consists in its being the image and the likeness of the Creator. Therefore, the trinity that is seen in a creature is from the Uncreated Trinity as an image is from its exemplar and as what is caused is from its cause Therefore, in the divine nature there is Fecundity,¹²⁴ Offspring, and Love.¹²⁵

Through this illustration Nicholas hopes to lead the Muslims to discern (1) that Christians do not believe in three Gods and (2) that Muslims profess truths that can be construed, under *pia*

interpretatio, as implying trinity in oneness-of-deity. For as we saw earlier,¹²⁶ Nicholas conceives of devout interpretation as something that not only he himself is doing with parts of the Koran but also as something that the wise among the Muslims may (and do) undertake with respect thereto.

Another example of *manuductio* is seen in the aforementioned illustration of the spring, the stream, and the pond—an illustration called by Nicholas an *aenigma*, i.e., a symbolism. *Manuductio*, he seems to be saying, proceeds most often by way of such symbolisms. But the context of *manuductio* is not necessarily that of explicating the doctrine of the Trinity, for the possibility of our apprehending any of the divine mysteries requires our being guided on the basis of sensible things. And, Scripture itself teaches that “*invisibilia . . . ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur, sempiterna quoque virtus eius et divinitas*”¹²⁷—a verse which in *De Possest* 2 Nicholas understands to mean: “The invisible things of Him, including His eternal power and divinity, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, by means of understanding created things.” Visible things, if properly discerned, may serve as symbolisms that will guide us to “embrace—in learned ignorance and through a transcending of the incorruptible truths which are humanly knowable—incomprehensible things incomprehensibly,” as Nicholas states paradoxically at the end of *De Docta Ignorantia* in his letter to Cardinal Julian.¹²⁸ He expresses the same point in Book One of *De Docta Ignorantia*: “Hence, so that your understanding may be sharpened, I will try to convey you more readily, and by sure *manuductio*, toward seeing these necessary and very true points. They will suitably lead you (provided you rise from the sign upward to the truth, by understanding [the meaning of] words symbolically¹²⁹) unto wondrous delight. For you will proceed on this pathway by means of learned ignorance, so that you will be able to see (to the extent granted to an ardent [seeker who is] elevated in accordance with the powers of human intelligence) the one and incomprehensible Maximum, the ever-

blessed one and trine God.”¹³⁰ So Nicholas’s conception of *manuductio* intersects with his overlapping notions of *docta ignorantia*, *aenigmata*, *pia interpretatio*, *via negativa*, and *Contradictio sine contradictione*.¹³¹

Nicholas’s statements regarding *manuductio* are comparable to those of Thomas, who in the *Summa Theologica* quotes Pseudo-Dionysius: “*Non est possibile humanae menti ad immaterialem illam sursum excitari caelestium hierarchiarum contemplationem, nisi secundum se materiali manuductione utatur.*”¹³² Though this quotation appears under the list of objections, Thomas endorses it once he adds the qualification that the ascension from the material likenesses to the immaterial reality is necessarily and markedly imperfect. With this statement about imperfection Nicholas would agree, except that he would radicalize it by arguing that all so-called analogical knowledge of God is really only figurative, only metaphorical. In his *Cribratio* he is not so much drawing upon Thomas as he is interacting with Ricoldo. For, once again, he finds Ricoldo’s terminology to be suggestive of important themes. And, once again, he appropriates the present theme without adopting Ricoldo’s very terminology. For Ricoldo in his *Disputatio* does not employ the word “*manuductio*”. Rather, he uses “*directio*,”¹³³ which substitutes for Ketton’s “*recta via*.” That is, in translating the Koran, Robert of Ketton frequently used the expression “*recta via*” where the Koran had *huda*. In Surah 5:46, for example, the Koran speaks of guidance: “And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was (revealed) before him in the Torah, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is *guidance* and a light, confirming that which was (revealed) before it in the Torah—a *guidance* and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil)”¹³⁴ (my italics). Ketton’s Latin translation of the Arabic reads: “*Christum item Mariae filium, cui commisimus evangelium, quod est lumen et confirmatio testamenti, et castigamen ac recta via timentibus deum, ad vestrae legis*

supplementum misimus"¹³⁵ (my emphasis). Ricoldo alludes to this same surah in the following words: "*Dicit autem ipse Machometus in Alkorano, in capitulo Elmeide: Limitamus vestigia hominum per Ihesum filium Mariae, veracissimum patenter, et dedimus ei evangelium, in quo est directio et lux et veritas manifesta*"¹³⁶ (my emphasis). So we see that the Arabic word "*huda*" (= "guidance") was construed by Ketton as "*recta via*" but was translated by Ricoldo with "*directio*".¹³⁷ Though Nicholas, when quoting from, and alluding to, Ketton's translation also uses the expression "*recta via*," nonetheless in the aforementioned chapter-titles of his *Cribratio Alkorani* he uses "*manuductio*". And this use seems to be motivated by Ricoldo's repeated mention of "*directio*" in Chapters 15 and 16 of his *Disputatio*, certain portions of which Nicholas directly quotes.¹³⁸ And this source of motivation seems to be the veritable one, with respect to *Cribratio Alkorani*, in spite of the fact that Nicholas also used the word "*manuductio*" in works that may predate his having read the *Disputatio*.

We have seen, then, that for Nicholas *manuductio* is related to an intellectual ascent that terminates in an imperfect insight into the nature of Divine Being. The intellectual ascent takes its impetus from a discernment regarding sensible objects and sensible images. Nicholas criticizes only those followers of the Koran who are "unwise"—those who are so attached to the sensible world and its titillations that they cannot mentally and affectionally detach themselves therefrom in order both to elevate their thoughts and to lift up their hearts. These followers he seeks to guide, through symbolic illustrations, along the pathway of ascent. But Muslims are not the only ones in need of such guidance. In *De Visione Dei* Nicholas offers *manuductio* to the monks of Tegernsee, so that, God willing, they may attain unto a vision of God that takes place beyond the sensibility and also beyond the coincidence of contradictions.¹³⁹ "I will attempt," says Nicholas, "*vos manuducere*—by way of experiencing and through a very simple and very common means—into most

sacred darkness.”¹⁴⁰ This guidance is initiated through a sensible image—the portrait of someone who, from the portrait, appears to us to be omnivoyant. And the guidance continues through Nicholas’s instructing the monks, in prayerlike fashion, that “one who ascends unto You, [O God,] must ascend beyond every limit and every end and [everything] bounded.”¹⁴¹ And it culminates in his concluding: “Therefore, the intellect must become ignorant and must be situated in a shadow if it wishes to see You. But how, my God, is the intellect in ignorance? Is it not with respect to learned ignorance? Therefore, O God, You who are Infinity cannot be approached except by him whose intellect is ignorance— i.e., whose intellect knows that it is ignorant of You.”¹⁴²

So *manuductio* plays a role in mystical theology, as well as in the polemic against Islam. But it also plays a role in speculative philosophy, as we recognize from such passages as *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 10 (29:16-19) and the immediately subsequent chapters. A further witness to *manuductio* within the domain of philosophy is found in Sermon 33, where Nicholas is endeavoring to give sense to the philosophical utterance “God is Pure Actuality and, thus, is the Beginning, the Middle, and the End of all potency”:

In order that this [point] may be grasped progressively through the ascent from sensible objects, let guidance (*manuductio*) be given as to the manner in which the ability-to-see is without end. Neither the eye through its sight nor the ear through its hearing is [ever] completely filled. Therefore, the vision through which we see that-which-is is something actual. “Ability to see without end” indicates that the actually absolute, infinite Vision is God. But note that this [seeing] is done by the intellect, not by the eye. And so, from all sensible things ascend unto the communal sense, and therefrom to reason, and from reason to the intellect. And thus you will somehow be able to see the manner in which it is most true that without a most pure Actuality, nothing can exist, although this Actuality is not comprehensible as it is [in itself]. For it can always be further understood by the intellect.¹⁴³

Here, in a sketchy way, Nicholas introduces considerations concerning sight, and he does so in order to illuminate the meta-

physical notions of actuality and *pure* actuality. Accordingly, metaphysical ascent, like mystical ascent, begins with the sensible world and concludes with “comprehending the Incomprehensible”—i.e., concludes with understanding why certain figurative expressions are appropriately applicable to God even though He cannot be known by us as He is in Himself.

III

Some Recapitulating Reflections

Nicholas of Cusa’s *Cribratio Alkorani*, we have seen, was extensively influenced by Ricoldo of Montecroce’s *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*, which Nicholas favored over the works of others on Islam. Nicholas’s attitude toward Islam is more positive than is Ricoldo’s, and less strident, even though it is fundamentally no less polemical. For Nicholas conjoins the notions of *manuductio* and *pia interpretatio*, whereas Ricoldo mistakenly supposes that *manuductio*, or *directio*, is possible apart from any “excusing” *pia interpretatio*. This fact is evident from Ricoldo’s uncompromising assertion about the Koran’s doctrine of heavenly rewards: viz., that the Koran’s promises of future recompense through pleasures and sensual delights are to be understood “*non . . . quasi per similitudinem vel exemplum*”—i.e., “not as by means of a likeness or an illustration.”¹⁴⁴ His judgment stands in stark contrast to Nicholas’s recourse to devout interpretation. Nonetheless, there are *glimpses* of rudimentary devout interpretation in Ricoldo’s work, as when he maintains that Muhammad unwittingly implied that since Christ is the Word of God, He is also the Son of God.¹⁴⁵ And these glimpses furnish Ricoldo with incentive to accentuate the gospel’s accessibility to the Muslims—i.e., to impress upon the Muslims the fact that the Koran contains the gospel message. Ricoldo maintains that the Koran “*super omnes alios libros commendat evangelium, in quo dicit quod est salus et directio*.”¹⁴⁶ And he states, furthermore, that if Muslims “would rightly accept the Koran’s advice [about the Gospels], then

without doubt they would be guided (*dirigerentur*).”¹⁴⁷ In these passages Ricoldo clearly links the Koran’s commendation of the Gospels with the Gospels’ guidance. And this linkage, which he elicits from the Koran itself,¹⁴⁸ induces him to urge Muslims to read the Gospels, whether or not they agree with Muhammad about their excellence.¹⁴⁹ Whereas Nicholas stressed that through devout interpretation the message of the Gospels could be seen to be contained in the Koran,¹⁵⁰ Ricoldo emphasized that the Koran pointed to the message of salvation that was contained in the Gospels rather than in itself.¹⁵¹ This difference of emphasis results from Ricoldo’s having only hinted at devout interpretation. Similarly, Ricoldo’s notion of *directio* is significantly different from Nicholas’s conception of *manuductio*. For Nicholas construes “*manuductio*” as the furnishing of an illustrative symbolism that will help disclose a truth about Divine Being, whereas Ricoldo’s understanding of *directio* is nontechnical.

Both Nicholas and Ricoldo were contenders against Islam—Ricoldo at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Nicholas during the middle of the fifteenth. Both were persuaded that Christ was the last of the prophets and that therefore Muhammad was a pseudo-prophet. Both were deeply offended by certain Muslims’ alleged claims that the Koran was intended by God to supplant the Old and the New Testaments and that whatever good there is in the Gospels was preserved in the Koran.¹⁵² In the face of these claims Nicholas asserted the opposite: whatever good there is in the Koran is due to the influence of the Gospels.¹⁵³ And he firmly disbelieved that the Gospels could ever be supplanted.¹⁵⁴ Following certain suggestions that he gleaned from Ricoldo, he chose to stress the *eminence* accorded to the Gospels by the Koran. And through both special pleading and unrecognized misapprehensions fostered from certain of Ketton’s mistranslations, he became convinced that the Koran paid tribute even to the *preeminence* of the Gospels¹⁵⁵ and that Muhammad regarded Jesus as the greatest of

the prophets.¹⁵⁶ Unlike Ricoldo, Nicholas resolved to sift through the Koran—not simply in order to identify its major flaws but, more importantly, to search out its hidden truths. For these were the truths that would show—to both East and West—that Islam could be brought into harmony-of-dogma with Christianity.

Norman Daniel in his *magnum opus*, *Islam and the West*, was unable properly to appreciate either the historical stature of Nicholas of Cusa or the significant contribution of Cusa's *Cribratio Alkorani*. To Daniel, Nicholas remains but "a fresh mind working over old themes with varying success."¹⁵⁷ Daniel did not succeed in getting beyond the quibbling aspects of Nicholas's and Ricoldo's polemics. Against Ricoldo Daniel's judgment is especially harsh and condemnatory. By not separating out Ricoldo's picayune points from his more able apologetic, Daniel leaves us with an incorrect historical impression. By not giving sufficient weight to Ricoldo's theological presuppositions—the presuppositions, after all, of Western Christendom—Daniel cannot render a sensitive explanation of many features of Ricoldo's polemic: e.g., Ricoldo's censuring of the practices of polygamy, concubinage, and easy divorce; his denouncing of the Koran's inconsistencies; his repudiating Muhammad's claim that Jesus had foretold of him, Muhammad, in the Gospels; his denying that Muhammad could have been a prophet of God or a messenger of God if his message abrogated portions of previous divine revelation and if he came without the power of miracles; and Ricoldo's excoriation of Muhammad for denying Jesus's crucifixion. Among Ricoldo's presuppositions were (1) that Christ was the consummation of divine revelation, so that no better revelation than Christ's could subsequently be expected;¹⁵⁸ (2) that Christ fulfilled, not destroyed, Torah;¹⁵⁹ (3) that the New Testament does not contradict the Old; (4) that neither the Old Testament nor the New contradicts itself; (5) that in God there is no fluctuation, no "shadow of alteration."¹⁶⁰ Given these, and other, basic beliefs, and given the remarkable

moral and cultural differences between Arabs and Europeans, Ricoldo could not have been anything other than outraged and scandalized by the Koran's teachings, including its overt denial of the dogmas of Triunity, Incarnation, and sacrificial Atonement.

Daniel's historical narrative lacks historical understanding—not because it contains historical *judgments* but because it is through and through *judgmental* at the expense of providing successful explanations. That is, Daniel betrays the historian's role not because he censures Ricoldo but because he is censorious, not because he repeats *ad taedium* that Ricoldo's interpretations of Islam are unfair but because he fails to explain satisfactorily what led Ricoldo to proffer such interpretations. Though Ricoldo, no doubt, distorted the nature of Islam, Daniel distorts the rationale and the motivation that led Ricoldo to his distortion. Three examples of Daniel's tendentious way of dealing with Ricoldo may be taken as typical.

1. To begin with, we may look at Daniel's account on pp. 182-183 of his book:

Ricoldo also developed the argument that Trinitarian faith is implicit in the Qur'an, which speaks of the *anima mundi*; which speaks with a plural pronoun for God, and which speaks of the Word and of the Spirit of God. He argued that if the latter terms were accidental there would not be, what the Qur'an certainly intends, something special in their application to Christ. Here he flatly contradicted the actual Islamic attitude; to appeal beyond the Muslim interpretation to the actual text of the Qur'an is not necessarily profitable.

Several things about this passage are misleading, by virtue of both what the passage says and what it leaves unsaid. First of all, Ricoldo does not attribute either to the Koran or to Muhammad himself the view that there is a world-soul (*anima mundi*). Rather, in Chapter 1 of the *Disputatio* he ascribes to Muhammad the doctrine that Christ is the soul of God (*anima dei*) and is of another essence than is God—an essence that is lesser than is God's. And he suggests that Muhammad, in formu-

lating this doctrine, was influenced by certain Platonists, who themselves spoke of a world-soul. In Chapter 2 Ricoldo repeats this same theme. But even there he does not state that Muhammad and the Koran speak of a world soul or speak of Christ as being that soul. Instead, he assigns this view to Muslim interpreters of the Koran who understand *anima dei* to be what the Platonist philosophers called *anima mundi*. So Ricoldo is here working with the Muslims' own interpretation of "*anima dei*" and not with a Platonisticlike interpretation that he himself is purporting to elicit from the Koran. Whether or not the Koran really does endorse this philosophical view of the Platonists remains for Ricoldo an open question. For Ricoldo himself is far from thinking that the interpretation of the Koran given by Muslims is in every case the correct one, especially since Muslims frequently disagree with one another regarding the meaning of the Koran and since they say¹⁶¹ that in the Koran are contained things understood by God alone.

Furthermore, Daniel needs to clarify, through an addition, the following statement of his: Ricoldo "argued that if the latter terms [viz., "Word of God" and "Spirit of God"] were accidental there would not be, what the Qur'an certainly intends, something special in their application to Christ." Indeed, Daniel needs to make clear that Ricoldo himself rejects the view that the term "Spirit of God" rightly has application to Christ, since within Christianity it is the name reserved for the Holy Spirit. And he needs to indicate that Ricoldo's argument goes beyond making the single point expressed in the foregoing quotation. For the argument also indicates that God *would not* speak of Himself plurally (as He does throughout the Koran) in accordance with merely an accidental word or spirit.¹⁶² Finally, Daniel should also add explicitly the consideration from *Disputatio* 15: the Koran and the Gospels speak of a single Word of God—something which there would not be if the Koran's expression "word of God" were intended in an accidental sense.¹⁶³ Ricoldo is reasoning more plausibly and forcefully than

Daniel conveys. Daniel's entire approach, here as elsewhere, involves superficially paraphrasing a string of passages from the *Disputatio*, without Daniel's ever taking the trouble to understand the passages both in their immediate contexts and against the background of Western Christendom's presuppositions. Instead, Daniel deals exegetically with Ricoldo in the highhanded way that he accuses Ricoldo (sometimes rightly) of dealing with Islam.

2. A second example of Daniel's tendentious way of dealing with Ricoldo's *Disputatio* occurs on p. 182 of *Islam and the West*: "It was better, he [Ricoldo] advised, not to begin immediately from divine principle, but to show them [viz., Muslims] one Christian law, and to be brief in all things. It was easier to show Islam false, than Christianity true. What was necessary was only to defend the reasonableness of the faith, to accept the unity of God, and to insist also on His simplicity; to point out that it does not follow that the discretion of Persons is untrue because it is incomprehensible." This quotation is supposed to capture the sense of what Ricoldo says at the outset of *Disputatio* 2. Yet, it does not do so accurately. Ricoldo does not advise that Muslims be shown "one Christian law," as Daniel says; rather, he advises that they be shown that their own law is useless (*vana*).¹⁶⁴ Even more incorrect is Daniel's second sentence, for Ricoldo does not say that what is necessary is *only* "to defend the reasonableness of the faith," and so on, in Daniel's sentence. Instead, Ricoldo states¹⁶⁵ that since it is easier to show the Islamic faith to be baseless than to prove the Christian faith true (e.g., the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation),¹⁶⁶ it is sufficient, in confronting the Muslims, to refute the reasoning that they advance. But their reasoning relates to many different doctrines—not just to those concerning God's unity, simplicity, and trinity. It relates to all the doctrines that Ricoldo aims to refute in his *Disputatio*. Moreover, in the attempt to refute these doctrines Ricoldo appeals not just to reasonableness but also to the authority of the Gospels—an authority to which the Koran

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itself bears witness, he says. And citing the occurrence of miracles within Christianity, he advises his Christian readers also to appeal to the fact of miracles and to the authority of the Gospels when they themselves are contending with Muslims, who, as he alleges, have no authorities and also no miracles of their own. Daniel has oversimplified, in a tendentious way, both the method and the aims of Ricoldo's polemic.

3. A third example of Daniel's tendentious way of dealing with Ricoldo's *Disputatio* is found on pp. 66-67 of *Islam and the West*:

The literalism of his [Ricoldo's] attack, which often he owed to the *Contrarietas*, went beyond reason; for example, over the supposed Qur'anic absurdity that God prays for Muhammad. If the Qur'an appeared to say such a silly thing, it must really say it; Arabs could not be allowed to explain what the Arabic meant.

Here Daniel fosters the misimpression that Ricoldo never asked himself how Muslims interpreted the Koran but was content blithely to impose his own interpretations.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, in dealing with Ricoldo, Daniel is oftentimes guilty of the very sort of exaggeration and overstatement that he ascribes¹⁶⁸ to Ricoldo and others. For we have already seen, in Section I above, how Ricoldo—sometimes, at least—does differentiate between what the Koran clearly says, even according to Muslim interpreters, and what various Muslim interpreters make out of what it elsewhere unclearly says. After all, in *Disputatio* 17 he alludes to Surah 3:7—a verse which distinguishes between these two categories of text: “He it is Who hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations—They are the substance of the Book—and others (which are) allegorical. But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it. None knoweth its explanation save Allah. And those who are of sound instruction say: We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heed” (Pickthall translation). And in *Disputatio* 4 he alludes to *exponentes doc-*

tores eorum: the Muslim teachers who interpret the Koran.¹⁶⁹ Elsewhere he remarks: “. . . *sicut etiam Machometus in Alkorano dicit. Si autem dicant Sarraceni . . .*”¹⁷⁰ So Ricoldo is not simply engaging in eisegesis—whether out of naiveté or from malice.

Similarly, when Ricoldo maintains, in *Disputatio* 6, that Surah 2:223 sanctions sodomy,¹⁷¹ he is fair enough to point out immediately thereafter that elsewhere the Koran condemns sodomy.¹⁷² Though he is aware that Muslim interpreters do not read Surah 2:223 as condoning this practice, he is not (as Daniel alleges) “like so many others, always willing to tell Muslims what they believed.”¹⁷³ Rather, he is telling Christians what he honestly thinks the Koran means, whether Muslims read it that way or not. Indeed, the reason that Muslims read the text differently from him, he thinks (as even Daniel points out about him), is that they camouflage this meaning with certain honorable interpretations.¹⁷⁴ Here Ricoldo is certainly not being charitable; but it does not follow à la Daniel that he is therefore being malevolent.

Daniel's assertions are frequently too unbalanced to count as history. For they go beyond the legitimate purview of historical imagination and become illicit nonhistorical speculations masquerading as historical truth. On p. 66 of *Islam and the West* he judges that “Ricoldo's attitude seems to represent that of his contemporaries in an extreme form. From all the polemic that he inherited, both the books and the living tradition, he constructed an encyclopedic refutation of Islam *from which nothing he had ever heard was omitted*, and this is specially noticeable in his treatment of the present theme” (my italics). It is difficult to see how Daniel qua historian could ever determine whether or not Ricoldo had never heard any criticism of Islam which was not subsequently included in his *Disputatio*. If this instance of overstatement were the only one of its kind, a reader might pass it off as literary hyperbole. But Daniel introduces such unsupported overstatements into his narrative again and again. “Because Christian thought is wholly bound up in the concept of

eternal life," he explains on p. 152, "the irrationality of Islam *propter finem quam promittit* has seemed to Christians so clear a mark of its invalidity." But, of course, the initial "because" clause is both historically and theologically naive, for Christian thought concentrates on many themes and concepts besides the concept of eternal life.

Just as Daniel exaggerates to Ricoldo's detriment, so he also exaggerates to Muhammad's benefit: "Muhammad, *always moved by religious considerations*, shocked Christians for this very reason, which made him always appear hypocritical"¹⁷⁵ (my italics). Once again, Daniel exceeds what the historical data warrant. In last analysis, Daniel's general approach to the medieval interaction between Christianity and Islam depends upon overstatement. For in explaining why there arose in the West such a sizably distorted image of Islam, Daniel writes: "The most probable explanation of what happened must be that Christians thought that whatever tended to harm the enemies of truth was likely itself to be true."¹⁷⁶ This judgment is malicious and crude, unworthy of a respectable historian. Daniel should strive for a more careful and more sensitive appraisal of his sources. That he is capable of presenting us with such an interpretation is amply evident from his insightful observations on p. 102: "It seemed very obvious to mediaeval Christians that Muhammad's behaviour with women alone made it quite impossible that he should have been a prophet. It is very interesting that the facts were so often invented, or else falsified, or just exaggerated; but, had they not been so, it is certain that the most sober relation of Muhammad's life would have caused Christians to say that no true prophet could conduct his personal life as Muhammad did his. In this matter there is little common ground between Christianity and Islam."¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

So we have seen that although many parts of Ricoldo's *Disputatio* and of Nicholas's *Cribratio* are captious and carping, there remains something more deeply intelligible about them,

from the viewpoint of Western medieval Christendom. Nicholas, more than Ricoldo, was able to adopt a perspective that sees the hand of God at work in Islam and in the Koran. And on this basis he entertained the hope that some of the many Muslims would come to believe with him that the Koran, if “rightly” understood, does not require their denial of Christian doctrines they now reject—indeed, would come to believe with him that the Koran tacitly approves these doctrines.¹⁷⁸ Nicholas, in his own way and as best he could, sought to promote some measure of tolerance and peaceful harmony between East and West.

Little is accomplished, in the name of advancing our historical understanding, by any present-day historian’s narrative use of overstatement, moral praise and blame, and retrojection of standards. After all, what is the point of asking, analogously to Daniel, how Ricoldo would have felt if he could have viewed the New Testament through the eyes of David F. Strauss and other nineteenth-century theologians—or if he could have viewed the Old Testament through the eyes of Julius Wellhausen? The fact is that he could not have done so, could not have foreseen or even surmised that some of the objections he brought against the Koran might also plausibly be brought against his own Scriptures. What is gained for historical understanding, we may ask, by an historian’s condemning Ricoldo for not charitably preferring Muslim’s favorable interpretations of the Koran to those less favorable ones of his own? Ought not the foremost task of a modern-day historian be to describe for us complexes of past events and spheres of past thinking, and to explain what caused those events and what conduced to that thinking? Of course, in order adequately to describe and to explain—in order, that is, to disclose to us that past epoch as seen at least partly through the eyes of its participants—the historian will have to be a good critic of his sources, a good judge of human nature. Once he has succeeded in describing, explaining, and weighing the data, he will be in a position (along, now, with the

rest of us because of his success) to judge the wisdom of the historical figures' actions or the merits of their ideas. He may want to denounce them or eulogize them. But these overt normative evaluations should neither substitute for, nor encroach upon, the accuracy of the descriptive and the explanatory foundations.

(even by wise Arabs) to be shady and abominable and vile?—[why] except because they are at variance with the Gospel's promises”

76. *CA I*, 14 (63:15).

77. Giovanni Santinello, *Introduzione a Niccolò Cusano* (2nd edition), *op. cit.*, p. 119.

NOTES TO RICOLDO AND NICHOLAS OF CUSA

1. We do find in Daniel occasional positive remarks about Ricoldo, such as on p. 172: “Ricoldo was charitable towards Islamic belief when it fell within his direct, as opposed to his literary, experience.”

In this present chapter, references to Ricoldo's *Disputatio* will be given in terms of Codex Cusanus 107 (Cusanus Stift, Bernkastel-Kues, Germany) and the printed text in *TB* (1550), Vol. II [i.e., in Vol. II of the 1550 revised edition of Theodor Bibliander's *Machumetis Sarracenorum Principis Vita ac Doctrina* (Zurich; first edition published in Basel, 1453)]. But I have also consulted Latin ms. 4230 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Latin ms. 449 of the Bavarian Staatsbibliothek in Munich, and Latin ms. Royal 13.E.IX of the British Museum. I use the chapter divisions found in Codex Cusanus 107, with which divisions Bibliander's printed text agrees. The text in Bibliander can serve only as a *pis aller*, since it is the translation of a translation—i.e., is the retranslation into Latin of a Greek translation of a copy of the original Latin text. As such, it is inferior to the ms. sources just cited.

In citing only the *Disputatio* and not Ricoldo's *Itinerarium*, I am dealing only with the one work of Ricoldo's that influenced Nicholas of Cusa. (The gist of the polemical points made in the *Itinerarium* against the Muslims is repeated in the *Disputatio*.) In this present chapter the Latin quotations from the *Disputatio* have been taken from Codex Cusanus 107, unless indicated otherwise.

2. See, below, the first two paragraphs of Section III.3 of the present chapter.

Regarding Ricoldo's knowledge of the Koran, note Ugo Monneret de Villard's verdict [*Il libro della peregrinazione nelle parti d'oriente di Frate Ricoldo da Montecroce* (Rome: S. Sabinae, 1948), p. 112]: “Vediamo ora quale conoscenza intrinseca Ricoldo ebbe del testo coranico. È certo che egli lavorò sempre direttamente sul testo arabo e si direbbe che non ebbe nemmeno conoscenza del l'antica traduzione latina di Roberto di Chester. Prova ne è che egli cita ogni surah col suo nome arabo, dandone poi la traduzione.”

3. Daniel regards this conclusion itself as unfair. *Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966 edition), p. 156.

4. Condemning a writer's ideas on the basis of standards of a later period

is certainly appropriate, provided that one also understands his thought—its origins, assumptions, and rationale—in terms of the context of the writer's own times. (*Tout comprendre* is decidedly not tantamount to *tout pardonner*.) Daniel is strong on condemnation from a later point of view, weak on understanding from within the historical figure's own *Weltanschauung*.

5. As George Sale explains: though the Koran "be written in prose, yet the sentences generally conclude in a long continued rhyme, for the sake of which the sense is often interrupted . . ." (p. 44 of the Preliminary Discourse to his English translation of the Koran [Philadelphia: J.W. Moore, 1855 (5th edition)]).

6. *Disputatio* 4. Codex Cusanus 107, ff. 200^v - 201^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Cols. 134-135.

7. I am not suggesting that Ricoldo was actually acquainted with this particular poem. I have taken this excerpt from pp. 342 and 344 of Henry Spitzmuller's *Poésie latine chrétienne du Moyen Age* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1971).

8. "*Et laudetur ipse*." On p. 58 Daniel does correctly identify Ricoldo's complaint as one directed against this intrusive formula and others like it. Nonetheless, on p. 67 he conveys a misimpression.

9. *Disputatio* 4. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 201^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 135.

10. *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 207^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 146, which does not have "*futuo*". (The Latin word "*futuo*" corresponds to a well-known vulgar, four-letter English verb that also begins with "F.") The Paris ms., on f. 168^{rb}, does not contain these several lines found in Codex Cusanus 107, f. 207^v, nor does the British Museum ms. contain them on f. 84^{rb}—though Munich 449, f. 129^r does have them.

See also *Disputatio* 4 [*TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 135]. The words "*coitus et luxuriae*," found in Bibliander's edition, do not appear on f. 201^r of Codex Cusanus 107. These words are not comparable to the words objected to by Ricoldo in his Chapter 8. Surely, Ricoldo knew that "*coitus*" and "*luxuria*" are words found suitably in even the Vulgate translation of the Old Testament. And in *Disputatio* 8 he himself uses the noun "*luxuria*" and the verb "*luxurior*".

Daniel is wrong when he claims, on p. 58 of *Islam and the West*, that Ricoldo objected to the Koran's use of the word "*coitus*". Daniel is also mistaken when he states unqualifiedly on p. 337, n. 30 that "the passages making the accusation of obscenity are omitted from the manuscripts of the Latin text and occur only in the Greek original of Demetrius Cydones and the Latin retranslation." For Daniel's statement holds true only of the passage in *Disputatio* 4, not also of the passage in *Disputatio* 8 as found in the Cusanus and the Munich codices.

11. *Disputatio* 6.

12. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, ff. 229^v - 230^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 180.

13. Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 67.

14. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 229^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 179. See also *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, ff. 196^v - 197^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 128. In *Disputatio* 5 Codex Cusanus has "*prophetis*" instead of "*philosophis*" (f. 202^r); but it has "*philosophis*" on f. 229^v (*Disputatio* 16).

15. Note Ricoldo's general statement to the effect that the Gospel is well-ordered. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 230^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 181. See also *Disputatio* 11. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 217^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 161.

16. On p. 297 of *Islam and the West* Daniel writes: "I have criticised Savary for his anxiety to prove a particular case at the expense of exactitude" Yet, this very charge of eagerness to prove a particular case at the expense of accuracy applies *a fortiori* to Daniel himself.

Sometimes Daniel, by his own confession as well as because of "anxiety to prove a particular case," cannot understand points that are obvious. For example, on p. 153 of his aforementioned book we find: "Discrepancy between the Qur'anic and Mosaic laws of witnesses mysteriously irritated Ricoldo, who pointed to it with that triumphant air characteristic of his work whenever he felt that he or his source had unearthed some particular conclusive and self-evident absurdity. What he thought so significant in this now escapes us." This point no doubt escapes Daniel, but it need not escape anyone else. Ricoldo is noting that the Koran requires *four* witnesses to establish the truth of an accusation of adultery, whereas the law of Moses requires *two or three*. Ricoldo presumes that God would not vary His requirement; and, thus, he infers that this discrepancy between the law of Muhammad and the law of Moses counts against one's considering the Koran to be God's authoritative word. Ricoldo is adducing a discrepancy, not a "self-evident absurdity," as Daniel undiscerningly claims. *Disputatio* 5. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 203^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 138. See Surah 24:4. Deuteronomy 19:15.

17. *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 197^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 128.

18. *Disputatio* 11. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 218^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 162.

19. *Disputatio*, Preface. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 194^v. (I have changed "*primagenitus*" to "*primogenitus*"); cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 124.

20. *Disputatio* 6. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 203^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 140.

21. *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 208^r has “*spale*” but means “*speciale*”; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 147. Surah 27 is entitled “The Ant”; but it does not deal with an ant as its subject-matter.

22. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 230^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 181.

23. *Disputatio* 13. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 219^v. (I have construed “*actor*” as “*auctor*”); cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 165. That is, the false ascription is the ascription of the belief to the wise among the Muslims.

24. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 228^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 178.

25. *Disputatio* 2. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 197^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 128.

26. *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*: Vol. VIII: *Cribratio Alkorani*. Edited by Ludwig Hagemann. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1986).

27. See Hagemann’s edition of the Latin text, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-313.

28. The entire *shahadah*, in Nicholas’s Latin is “*Non est deus nisi deus et Mahumetus est nuntius eius.*”

29. E.g., see Codex Cusanus 108, f. 103^{rb}, lines 16-17 and f. 35^{vb}, line 34.

30. *Disputatio* 8. See also Chapters 5 and 11.

31. Neither Nicholas nor Ricoldo has any inkling about the complex logical and ontological problems raised by present-day philosophers regarding the affirmation or the denial of utterances such as “*deus est deus*” or “*id quo maius non potest cogitari est id quo maius non potest cogitari.*”

32. Codex Cusanus 108, f. 89^{ra}, line 28; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. I, p. 139, line 5 [=Surah 47]. In *DI* III, 11 (253:24) Nicholas uses the expression “*non est nisi unus dominus Iesus potens omnia.*”

33. Cf. *DI* III, 11 (244:23-24: “*ut credatis quoniam*”) with *CA* III, 10 (192:16-17: “*in deum crediderint*”).

34. *CA* III, 13 (208) and *CA* III, 15 (214).

35. *CA* III, 5 (176:6-8). Surahs 68:1 and 95:1. In the Koran no mention is made of God’s swearing by a gnat. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 210^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 151.

36. Genesis 22:16. Hebrews 6:13.

37. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 195^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 125.

38. Note Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 99: “The favourite Christian technique was to decide what a text must mean without consultation of those most concerned, if these were Muslim authorities; often, what a text must mean was what was nastiest.” However, in discussing Nicholas of Cusa, Daniel never mentions *pia interpretatio*, a sizable oversight. See, however,

Islam and the West, second half of p. 61.

39. *CA* III, 18 (225:4-5): "Ego quidem, cui deus viam rectam atque directam illam scilicet Abrahae" Codex Cusanus 108, f. 50^{rb}, lines 32-33; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. I, p. 51 [=Surah 16].

40. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 3. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 198^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 130.

41. Surah 73:1-4.

42. Surah 7:158. See p. 221, n. 78 of J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's De Pace Fidei and Cribratio Alkorani: Translation and Analysis* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1990).

43. *CA* I, 4 (31:2-4): "Ex . . . poetico scribendi modo evenisse aiunt raro concordare historias in Alkorano descriptas cum ipsis in veteri testamento et evangelio positis."

44. *CA*, Second Prologue (16:3-10): "Nec est praetermittendum, quomodo capitula collectionis dicti libri legum Arabum non continuantur ad invicem, sed quodlibet de per se integrum existit et proprius est rigmus seu carmen plene mensuratum . . . Hinc ignoscendum mihi, si non videbor undique congruum ordinem tenere, quando confusissimi libri continentiam discutio."

45. *CA* I, 4 (32:8-14). *CA* I, 4 (33:8-13).

46. *CA* III, 2 (167:1-5). *CA* II, 19 (157:13-14). *CA* I, 6 (41:11-14).

47. *CA* I, 3 (28:4-6). *CA* III, 9.

48. II, 19 (154:16 - 155:16).

49. *CA* II, 12 (115).

50. *CA* III, 3 (170:1-2). *CA* III, 6.

51. *CA*, Prologue (7:12-13). *CA* III, 1 (159:4-7). *CA* III, 2 (165). Matthew 7:13. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 5 and 17.

52. Note Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 230^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 180. See also *Disputatio* 9. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 211^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 151.

53. See n. 48 above.

54. Note *CA* I, 3 (28:10-13): "And so, by means of this [persuading,] Satan attempts to completely eliminate from the world the evangelical faith, even as we see that many realms of Christians have already departed from true faith in Christ and have accepted the Arabs' law." Cf. *CA* III, 17.

55. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 10. Cusa, *CA* III, 6 (especially 180:11-13). *CA* III, 3 (170). Also note John of Torquemada, *Contra Principales Errores Perfidii Machometi*, Chapter 49. Latin incunabula B 1414 of the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels, folia 2^v - 59^r. Chapter 49 is found on folia 55^r - 56^v.

56. *Disputatio* 4.

57. Note Cusa, *CA* III, 1 (162:4-6): "In doubtful [matters] we must adhere to Christ, who said that He had come not to destroy the Law but to

fulfil it and that whatever things were written in the Law and in the Prophets were about Him." Also note *CA* I, 8 (46:6-8) and *CA* III, 11 (195:10-11). See especially Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 3: "Nos enim invenimus legem dei esse quandam catenam continuam ab eodem artifice fabricatam, ut unus anulus alteri cohereat et respondeat et unus propheta de alio prophetizat et mentionem facit et omnes alii prophetaverunt de Christo." Codex Cusanus 107, f. 198^r-198^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 130.

58. *CA* I, 9 (51:1-2). *CA* I, 6 (42:1). *CA* I, 8 (48:9-10). *CA* II, 12 (119:1-2 and 120:6-8). *CA* II, 13 (121:12-13 and 124:11-12). Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 13 (beginning part). Codex Cusanus 107, f. 107, f. 219^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 165.

59. *CA* I, 6 (41:7-11).

60. *CA* I, 2.

61. *PF* 7 (21:1-2).

62. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 1; Codex Cusanus 107, f. 196^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 126. *Disputatio* 10; Codex Cusanus 107, f. 216^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 159. Cusa, *CA* I, 6 (42:3). But Nicholas, drawing upon the *Rescriptum Christiani*, also regards Muhammad as a Christian of the Nestorian heresy. *CA*, Second Prologue (11). Cf. *CA* III, 18 (227:4-5). Ricoldo, in the *Itinerarium*, states that the Nestorians were Muhammad's friends and allies; he does not claim that Muhammad was a convert to Nestorianism.

63. *CA* I, 2 (26:9-12).

64. *CA* I, 6 (39:3-4): "It is evident that, within the Koran, only that which agrees with the Gospel ought to be called the light of truth and of the right way."

65. These sources are: Robert of Ketton's Latin translation of the Koran, Dionysius the Carthusian's *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Ricoldo's *Contra Legem Sarracenorum*, Peter the Venerable's *Summa Totius Haeresis Sarracenorum*, John of Torquemada's *Contra Principales Errores Perfidi Machometi*, Thomas Aquinas's *De Rationibus Fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum*, a letter from Peter the Venerable to Bernard of Clairvaux, and the anonymous works *Chronica Mendosa et Ridiculosa Sarracenorum*, *Generatio Mahumeti et Nutritura eius*, *Doctrina Mahumeti*, and the *Rescriptum Christiani* (which is the second part of the anonymous *Disputatio Christiani . . . et Sarraceni*).

66. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 214^r; Munich 449, f. 14^r; Paris 4230, f. 172^{rb}; British Museum 13.E.IX, f. 85^{vb}; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 156. Cf. *Disputatio* 15: "Igitur verum dixit Machometus quando dixit quod Christus Ihesus est filius Mariae et quod erat verbum dei; sed non intellexit." Codex Cusanus 107, f. 225^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 173.

67. *CA* I, 6 (42:1-2).

68. *Disputatio* 15: "Whatever is of God is God." Codex 107, f. 225^v.

69. John 1:3.

70. Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 1: "Summa vero intentio Machometi est quod Christus nec deus nec dei filius [est]" Codex Cusanus 107, f. 196^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 126.

71. *CA* I, 13 (62).

72. Cf. *CA* I, 14 (63:13-15).

73. *CA* I, 13 (62:2-6).

74. Cf. *CA* I, 17 (74).

75. Ricoldo himself intimates that the truth of the Gospels is partly contained in the Koran. But instead of emphasizing this view, he acknowledges (without endorsing) the assertion (of some Muslims) that whatever good there is in the Gospels is present also in the Koran, which is alleged (by the Muslims) to have replaced the Gospels (*Disputatio* 17). This acknowledgment contrasts with Cusa's strong assertion that what is of worth in the Koran is only whatever coincides with the truth in the Gospels.

76. *CA* III, 17 (223:10-17).

77. *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 196^v; Paris 4230, f. 161^{rb}; Munich 449, f. 122^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 127.

78. *Islam and the West*, p. 143.

79. *Disputatio* 6. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 203^v. The proscription occurs in Surah 7:80-84 [not in Surah 2 (The Cow), as Ricoldo mistakenly indicates]. The events referred to relate to the times of Lot. See Genesis 19:5.

80. "While I was reading the Koran, I noticed that very often mention is made of the day of awesome judgment as well as of Paradise and of Hell. And [this mention is] always [made] in different ways and through likenesses, since that which has never entered into human conception cannot be described otherwise than conjecturally, by reference to sensible things, which are images of intelligible things." *CA* II, 19 (154:2-6). Cf. *CA* II, 18 (150).

81. *CA* I, 18 (151:1-3).

82. *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 209^r; Munich 449, f. 130^r; Paris 4230, f. 169^{ra} mistakenly has "non . . . quasi per similitudinem sed evangelium"; British Museum 13.E.IX omits an entire section at the end of Chap. 8; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 148.

83. John 17:3.

84. *CA* I, 2 (26:9-10). Cf. *CA* II, 12 (116:4-7).

85. *CA* II, 12 (120:8-11).

86. *CA* II, 16 (139:16-19).

87. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 229^v. Cf. Paris 4230, f. 182^{rb}; Munich 449, f. 145^r; British Museum 13.E.IX, f. 92^{ra}; *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 179.

88. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 230^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II,

Col. 181. See also the reference in n. 87 above.

89. *Disputatio* 3. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 200^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Cols. 133-134.

90. *CA*, Second Prologue (15:1-3).

91. *CA* I, 1 (23:1-2).

92. *CA*, Prologue (10:4-5).

93. *CA* I, 7 (44:7-8 and 18-19).

94. E.g., Nicholas states (along with Ricoldo) that in the Koran Christ is said to be greater than all other prophets. *CA* I, 8 (45:2-3). Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 228^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 178. See Surah 2:253.

95. E.g., *CA* III, 12 (198:14-17). Nicholas did not realize that according to Joshua 24:2 Abraham's father was an idolater.

96. *PF* 1 (6:2-3). As early as 1431 Nicholas wrote: "Creditur enim per universum mundum Christum Dei filium de virgine natum. Hoc credunt Indi, hoc Machmetani, hoc Nestoriani, hoc Armeni, hoc Jacobini, hoc Graeci, hoc Christiani occidentales, ut sumus nos. Hoc Tartari non inficiunt, immo communiter, licet non advertant. Et nulla est hodie mundi natio, quin credat Christum verum Messiam, quem exspectabant antiqui, venisse exceptis Judaeis, qui eum tantum credunt venturum. Est enim omnium viventium una communis fides, unius summi cunctipotentis Dei et sanctae Trinitatis." Cusa, *Sermo* 2, "Ibant Magi" (8:4-16) in Vol. 16 of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, edited by Rudolf Haubst and Martin Bodewig (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1970).

97. *CA* I, 6 (41:1-2).

98. *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 223^r - 223^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Cols. 170-171.

99. *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 223^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 171.

100. Cf. Anselm, *Monologion* 32.

101. *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 225^r: "Quia igitur a dicente verbum concipitur et intellectualiter generatur, et illud quod ab alio generatur in similitudinem speciei et naturae dicitur, hinc est quod verbum dei dicimus filium dei." Cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 173.

102. *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 225^r: "Quidquid autem ex deo procedit, essentialiter est deus. Et isto modo verbum dei est deus. Unde verbum cum aliquo modo differat a dicente et concipiente verbum et in dei essentia non possit esse divisio vel distinctio, oportet quod sit ibi differentia personalis et quod verbum a dicente propriis et solis relationibus distinguatur, sicut etiam de spiritu sancto dictum est." Cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 173.

103. *Monologion* 61. Whereas Anselm refers to the *Son* as Understand-

ing (*intelligentia*), Nicholas refers to the *Father* as Understanding (*intellectus*). See *CA* I, 20 (84:11-12). *CA* II, 3 (94:6-10). According to Ricoldo, the Father is the *concupiens*, who begets the Son *intellectualiter*.

104. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 225^v. Cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Cols. 173-174: "Ex quo [Iesus] est filius Mariae, est verus homo: ex quo est verbum dei, est verus Deus. Non enim est deus compositus et imperfectus, sicut homo, cuius verbum et comprehensio mentis, et ars et actio, non est homo. Quicquid autem est dei, est deus. Unde et verbum dei, deus est: et intellectus dei, deus est: et actio dei, deus est." This last sentence is not contained in Codex Cusanus 107. In this sentence "*actio dei*" does *not* refer to the Holy Spirit but to God's speaking (or begetting His Word). Nonetheless, "*verbum dei*" refers to the Son, and "*intellectus dei*" refers to the Father.

105. It is possible that Nicholas was also prodded by Dionysius the Carthusian (himself influenced by Ricoldo), who speaks of the Trinity as *mens*, *notitia*, and *amor*. In *CA* II, 6 (101:11) Nicholas does use the expression "*verbum seu notitiam*" (accusative case), as well as the expression "*verbum seu conceptum*" (101:10; accusative case). Moreover, "*voluntas*" and "*amor*" are closely related theologically. (Augustine's trinitarian symbolism is *memoria*, *intelligentia*, *voluntas*, whereas Anselm's differs by substituting "*amor*" for "*voluntas*". And, indeed, Augustine himself on occasion says "*memoria, intelligentia, amor*" (*De Trinitate* 15.6.10). See Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Perfidiam Mahumeti*, Book I, Article 11. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 19^v; cf. p. 258, Col. 2, Section B of the modern edition found in Vol. 36 of *Doctoris Ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera Omnia* (Tournai, 1908).

106. See n. 105 above. In summary, then, Nicholas in *CA* speaks of the Trinity as *mens* (or *comprehensio*), *scientia* (or *ars*, *notitia*, or *conceptus*), and *voluntas* (or *amor*). In this context "*mens*," it now seems to me, is best translated into English by "reflection": as the human intellect is constituted by the operations of reflection, knowledge, and will, so the Divine Intellect also has three operations: Reflection, Knowledge, and Will. Note also Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.6.10 (*PL* 42:1065), where the trinitarian image of God in man is identified as *mens*, *notitia*, *dilectio*.

107. See also Chapters 3 and 4 of St. Thomas's *De Rationibus Fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum*.

108. *CA* II, 2 (91:7-11). In this passage Nicholas uses "*mens*" in a broad sense that signifies the intellect's reflection, i.e., its reflective activity: comprehending, envisioning, understanding, conceptualizing, or apprehending.

109. *CA* II, 3 (94:6-10).

110. *CA* II, 9 (110:2-4).

111. *CA* II, 5 (99).

112. *CA* II, 7 (104). See also *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 9 and *De Visione*

Dei 19 (84-85).

113. *CA* II, 10 (111).

114. Nicholas maintains that human nature is numerically distinct, though of one and the same species, in each individual man. See especially *Sermo* 35, "Oportuit Pati Christum," (5:1-9) in Vol. XVII of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, edited by Rudolf Haubst and Hermann Schnarr (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1983).

115. *CA* II, 10 (111:8-9).

116. *CA* II, 3 (96).

117. See *Epistola* 460 in F. S. Schmitt, editor, *Anselmi Opera Omnia*, Vol. 5, p. 409, line 3.

118. Genesis 11:7.

119. See the titles of *CA* I, 20; II, 5; II, 6; II, 7; II, 10.

120. *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 2 (8:4-7); I, 10 (29:16-19); I, 25 (84:17-21). *Sermo* 33 (4:7-9). *De Coniecturis* I, Prologue (4:1-3). *De Visione Dei*, Prologue (1:8-10). *De Li Non Aliud* 3 (9:1). See also Ludwig Hagemann, *Der Kur'an in Verständnis und Kritik bei Nikolaus von Kues* (Frankfurt a.M.: J. Knecht, 1976), pp. 72-73 and 162-172. Rudolf Haubst, *Die Christologie des Nikolaus von Kues* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956), 310-312. Rudolf Haubst, "Die Wege der christologischen manuductio" *MFCG* 16 (1984), pp. 164-191 (includes discussion).

121. *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 1 (3:2-3).

122. *CA* II, 6 (102:1-2). *CA* II, 1 (88:16). *De Docta Ignorantia*, I, 26 (88:19). *Sermo* 1, "In Principio Erat Verbum," (8:6-8).

123. Eriugena teaches that since God has no nature, He cannot know what He is. *De Divisione Naturae* IV.7 (*PL* 122:771).

124. In *CA* II, 8 (108:6-8) Nicholas quotes Isaiah 66:9: "Shall I myself, who make others to give birth, not give birth?, says the Lord. Shall I, who bestow upon others [the power of] begetting, be sterile?, says the Lord your God." See also *PF* 9 (25).

125. *CA* II, 5 (99:4 - 100:12).

126. Chap. 2 above.

127. Romans 1:20. Quoted from Nicholas's *De Possest* 2:3-5.

128. *DI*, Letter to Cardinal Julian (263:7-9).

129. The word "symbolically" here translates "transumptive" rather than "aenigmatica".

130. *DI* I, 10 (29:16-25).

131. Re *Contradictio sine contradictione*, see *DVD* 13 (55:1).

132. *Summa Theologica* Ia.88.2.ob.1 (see also ad 1), Leonine edition.

133. *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 226^v; Paris 4230, f. 180^{va}; Munich 449, f. 142^v; British Museum 13.E.IX, f. 90^{vb}. Cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II,

Col. 175, which has "*deductio*".

134. Pickthall's translation.

135. Codex Cusanus 108, f. 45^{va}; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. I, p. 40, lines 38-40. (In *TB* this passage occurs in Surah 12.)

136. *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, ff. 228^v - 229^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 178.

137. Whereas Codex Cusanus 107 has "*directio*," *TB* has "*deductio*". But "*deductio*" in the Bibliander edition represents not the original Latin of Ricoldo but a retranslation of Ricoldo's text into Latin from the Greek translation made by Demetrius Cydones. See n. 1 and n. 133 above.

138. E.g., a direct quotation occurs in *CA* I, 5 (37:5-10).

139. *DVD* 13 (54:14-15).

140. *DVD*, Prologue (1:8-10).

141. *DVD* 13 (53:1-2).

142. *DVD* 13 (53:6-10).

143. *Sermo* 33, "*In Nomine Jesu*," (4:7-23), delivered in 1444.

144. *Disputatio* 8. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 209^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 148. Cf. n. 82 above.

145. *Disputatio* 9. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 214^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 156.

146. "Above all other books [the Koran] commends the Gospel, in which it says there to be salvation and guidance." *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 226^r; I have corrected "*commadat*" to "*commendat*". See also f. 227^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 175.

147. *Disputatio* 15. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 227^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 176.

148. E.g., Surah 5:46.

149. "Si Machometo vestro de evangelio vultis vel non vultis credere, in evangelio legite." *Disputatio* 16. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 229^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 179.

150. *CA* I, 7 (44:17-25).

151. Though Ricoldo's emphasis differs from Nicholas's, Ricoldo does intimate that the Koran contains statements that imply that God is triune and that Christ is the Son of God. Ricoldo also notes that the Koran contains many true accounts that are found in the Old Testament and the New Testament. See *Disputatio* 9. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 211^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Cols. 151-152.

152. *Disputatio* 17. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 231^r; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 182.

153. *CA* I, 6 (41).

154. *CA* I, 6 (40:12-14): "For subsequent to Christ (the highest of all the

prophets, even according to the Koran) and subsequent to the book of the Gospel (the most perfect of all books), nothing better remained to be expected from God."

155. CA I, 4 (34:6-13). Cf. Ricoldo, *Disputatio* 3. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 200^r; cf. TB (1550), Vol. II, Cols. 133-134. But see also CA II, 11 (114:3-5). N.B.: Ricoldo, as well as Nicholas, speaks of the Gospels collectively and in the singular ("*evangelium*"). In English, at different times, I use both the singular and the plural translation. Cf., above, n. 43 of Notes to Cusa's Hermeneutical Approach.

156. CA I, 8 (45:4-7). CA I, 6 (40:12-14). CA I, 9 (52:3-4). But, on the other hand, see CA III, 11 (195:9-10).

157. *Islam and the West*, p. 278.

158. See n. 154 above.

159. See n. 57 above.

160. James 1:17.

161. *Disputatio* 17. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 231^r; cf. TB (1550), Vol. II, Col. 183. Cf. CA III, 5 (178:8). Surah 3:7.

162. *Disputatio* 9. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 214^r; cf. TB (1550), Vol. II, Col. 156.

163. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 224^r; cf. TB (1550), Vol. II, Col. 172.

164. Daniel should be following Paris Latin ms. 4230 (Bibliothèque Nationale), and the others, instead of Bibliander. The Paris ms. has "*vanam*," whereas Bibliander has "*unam*." Codex Cusanus 107 also has "*vanam*" (f. 197^r), as do British Museum 13.E.IX, f. 79^{rb} and Munich 449, f. 122^v. If Ricoldo does mean *una lex*, then it is not in the sense (as Daniel supposes) of "one Christian law" but in the sense of a single law for Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Cf. Cusa, CA III, 11 (196:1-2).

165. "*Est autem facilius ostendere fidem illorum esse frivolum quam probare nostram esse veram*" *Disputatio* 2. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 197^r; cf. TB (1550), Vol. II, Col. 128.

166. *Disputatio* 2: "*Et licet non habeamus rationes ad probandam trinitatem et alia quae sunt fidei*" Codex Cusanus 107, f. 197^r. Ricoldo is not directing his remarks in the first part of Chapter 2 exclusively at the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, for he says "*et alia quae sunt fidei*." Cf. TB (1550), Vol. II, Col. 129: "*Sed et si nobis non insint demonstrationes, ostendentes quae sunt trinitatis, et alia quae ad fidem pertinent*"

167. See n. 38 above.

168. See Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p. 183 (last two lines).

169. *Disputatio* 4. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 201^r; cf. TB (1550), Vol. II, Col. 136.

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

171. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 203^v; cf. *TB* (1550), Vol. II, Col. 140. See also *Disputatio* 1. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 196^v; 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^v; 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* I. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 195^v; 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^{vb}; cf. pp. 210-211 of James Kritzeck's edition in his *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964).